HAYIM ZELIG SLONIMSKI AND THE FOUNDING OF **HA-TSEFIRAH**: THE EARLY CAREER OF AN EAST EUROPEAN JEWISH ENLIGHTENER AND POPULARIZER OF SCIENCE, 1810-1862

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SUBMITTED IN SEPTEMBER, 1991
A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.
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This M.A. thesis is dedicated to the blessed memory of my beloved mother Aliza Frieda Z'L (1937-1985), the daughter of Chaya Vita (nee Wallach) Z"L (1900-1977) and Elimelekh Leib Z"L (1896-1967), and sister of Alexander Ariel Z"L (1933-1968). My mother, grandparents and uncle, the Narcizenfeld family of Lezhensk, Poland and Jerusalem, Israel, were survrivors of the Holocaust whose righteousness and abundance of selfless love, warmth and kindness always guides me.

T.N.Z.B.H.

Preface

I found writing a biography of the early career of Hayim Zelig Slonimski most rewarding. It was not an easy task. Slonimski did not write memoirs and information regarding certain aspects of his life, personality and social interactions is scant and scattered. Since Slonimski is renowned as the foremost popularizer of science in the Jewish Enlightenment movement or **Haskalah**, an examination of his biography warrants highlighting a variety of issues, not only his own remarkable personal accomplishments.

Concomitantly, I chose to focus on the historical context in which Slonimski operated, within the constraints of an M.A. Thesis. The substantial achievements of his predecessors in scientific pursuits within the Jewish tradition and the development of the **Haskalah** movement in Eastern Europe within the socioeconomic and political context of his time, are emphasized, and a comparison to Mendelssohn's career concludes this study.

The transliteration of Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish names adopted here, follows,as much as possible, the usage of the Encyclopedia Judaica. However, the title of Slonimski's Hebrew newspaper **Ha-Zefirah** is transliterated as **Ha-Tsefirah** in order to clarify the pronunciation for the English reader.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Prof. Eugene Orenstein for his devotion and support, without whose immeasurable contribution, completion of this thesis would have remained an elusive goal. I am also indebted to Dr. Alexander Guterman, Prof. Gershon David Hundert and Prof. B. Barry Levy for graciously interrupting their work to read portions of this thesis and offering their learned advice. My thanks go to Stanley Foo, MA from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, for aiding me in editing this work. Naturally, I am solely responsible for the completed work.

I would also like to thank Prof. Ruth R. Wisse, who encouraged me to come to study at McGill and has been my mentor since then; l'amitié de M. le professeur Pierre Anctil, et son apport a mes connaissances dans les domaines de l'histoire du Québec et de la vie canadienne ont fait de mes études supérieures une expérience mémorable; and, last but not least, my father, Shlomo Sneh, whose enthusiasm for Jewish history inspired mine.

Abstract

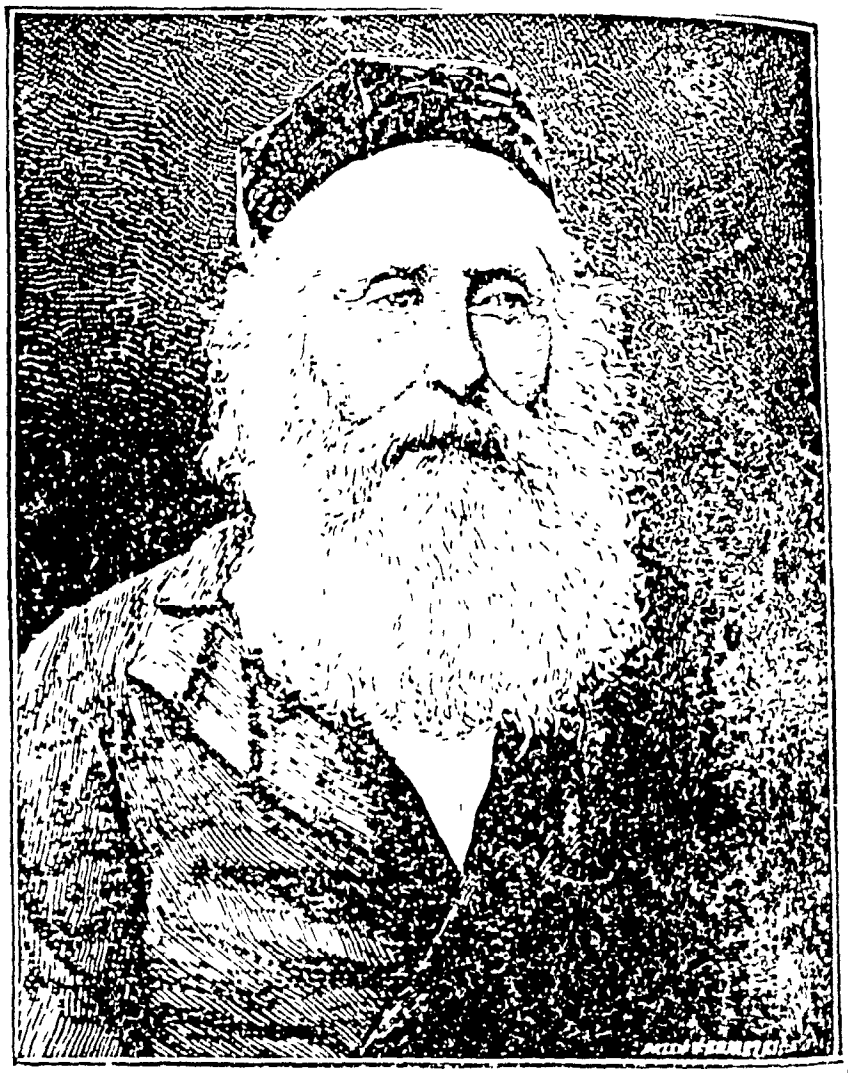
There has been relatively little historical analysis of the life and work of Hayim Zelig Slonimski (1810-1904), the foremost popularizer of the sciences in the Eastern European Jewish Enlightenment movement. Initially inspired by the rationalist trend and discussion of scientific matters in the classical Jewish religious sources, he succeeded in linking these traditionally sanctioned modes of thought to the burgeoning field of nineteenth century science.

Slonimski thought that the dissemination of scientific knowledge among the traditionalist Jewish readership would strengthen their commitment to rationalism and the belief in progress, fundamental principles of liberalism, and thus facilitate the secularization and modernization of Eastern European Jewry. He was eminently successful in his strategy of using the holy tongue, Hebrew, to popularize modern science among his traditional readers. His periodical **Ha-Tsefirah** [The Herald] represents a significant and unique contribution to the advancement of the Jewish Enlightenment's program among Eastern European Jewry.

Résumé

Relativement peu d'études historiques ont été' consacré a la vie et a' la l' oeuvre de Hayim Zelig Slonimski (1810-1904), le principal vulgarisateur scientifique du mouvement des lumières juif de l'Europe de l'Est. S'inspirant de la tendance rationaliste et de la discussion de questions scientifique que renferment les textes classiques de la religion juive, il a réussi á faire un lien entre les modes de pensée traditionnels et la science foisonnante du dix-neuvième siècle.

En disséminant des connaissances scientifiques parmi l' auditoire juif traditionaliste, Slonimski comptait affermir leur rationalisme et leur croyance au progrès, et aux principes fondamentaux du libéralisme. Ainsi a t' il pu faciliter la laïcisation et la modernisation de la communauté juive est-européenne. Sa stratégie, qui consistait a l'utilisation de la langue sainte, l'hébreu, pour répondre la science moderne parmi ses lecteurs traditionalistes, fût couronnée de succès. Son périodique, **Ha-Tsefirah** [Le Annoncer], représenté une contribution tant unique qu' importante au progrès du mouvement des lumière parmi les Juifs de l'Europe de l'Est.



חיים זעליג סלאנימסקי

Photo taken from Jacob Shatsky, The History of the Jews in Warsaw (Yiddish), Vol. II, New York: YIVO, 1947.

Chapter I

Introduction

From medieval to early modern times, the mainstream of Ashkenazi Jewry lived in relative spiritual and cultural isolation. The study of the **Torah**, in the broadest sense of the word, Jewish law and lore, was often pursued to the exclusion of all other subjects, and mysticism permeated a great deal of the religious, social, and intellectual life of the European Jewish ghettos. Nonetheless, a smaller but important strain of Jewish scholars displayed an awareness of philosophy, mathematics, natural sciences, and foreign languages and composed tracts on these subjects in Hebrew.[1]

The interest in secular studies and sciences was tolerated in traditional Jewish life as utilitarian. It was an ancillary tool for understanding Jewish Law, not a competing source of authority. This distinction was highlighted by the foremost spiritual leader of Eastern European Jewry, the Gaon of Vilna, R. Elijah ben Solomon Zalman (1720-1797).[2] Jewish intellectuals were inextricably linked to the Law as its interpreters and teachers, and their role was to clarify the Law so that contemporary Jewish communities could faithfully abide by it.

In the eighteenth century the European Enlightenment began to affect a growing number of Jews who reacted against the status quo in Jewish spiritual, intellectual, and social life. These Jews embraced the Enlightenment ideology as a means for reconciling the needs of the Jews and Judaism with the modern world. **Haskalah**, derived from the Hebrew word **sekhel** meaning **ratio**, is the Hebrew term for the Jewish Enlightenment. A proponent of the movement is known as a **maskil** (plural: **maskilim**).

The fundamental changes in the socioeconomic and political condition of Central European Jewry - the growing urbanization, the rise of a liberal bourgeoisie, the new demands of the centralized state, and the decline of the autonomous communal authority and rabbinic jurisdiction - fostered the formation of an elite which supported the enterprise of the **Haskalah** movement. First and foremost, the **maskilim** wanted to revise the traditional Jewish educational curriculum, supplanting

the focus on the Talmud with an interest in secular studies and European aesthetic values. They encouraged adaptation to the dominant society in language, dress, and manners, rejected the traditional Jewish feeling of exile and alienation, and preached loyalty toward the modern centralized state. Another plank in the **Haskalah** platform advocated more productive Jewish occupations, by leaving petty trade and usury and entering the crafts and agriculture. The main goal of the **maskilim** who advocated the transformation of the traditional Jewish community was, naturally, legal emancipation. The formerly restricted and self-segregated Jewish masses were also encouraged to associate more freely with gentiles on the intellectual, cultural, and social level.

Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), was the German-Jewish philosopher who stimulated the **Haskalah** movement. He and his disciples cultivated biblical Hebrew as the pure language for the clear expression of Jewish religious thoughts and values. The **maskilim** sought to develop a European sensibility through the renewed study of the language and the text of the Bible. They therefore stressed the need to study not only the Pentateuch, but also the Prophets and the Writings. Perhaps they also believed that since the Christians accepted the Bible, manifesting the common Judeo-Christian heritage, it could serve as a bridge between the Jews and the emerging civic society.

The **Haskalah**'s Hebrew literature in Central Europe did not, however, experience a great development beyond the first efforts of the Mendelssohnian Circle, due to rapid assimilation. Indeed, linguistic and cultural assimilation made rapid strides within the new liberal Jewish circles, whose members had rejected the vernacular of the Jews, Yiddish, as a corrupted, primitive jargon.

Most Jews in this group found their spiritual, intellectual, and social desires fulfilled in German. They no longer needed Hebrew, while the religious traditionalists of the old school could not accept the Berlin **Haskalah**'s tendency to perceive biblical Hebrew as the only relevant element of the Jewish spiritual heritage. Such an admission would exclude a corpus of Jewish religious literature created

during the course of two millennia, including the **Mishnah,** the Talmudim and the medieval works, in which the rabbinic tradition was formulated.

In contrast to Central European Jewry, Eastern European Jewry was larger in absolute numbers as well as in proportion to the general population. In the nineteenth century, the level of traditional Jewish learning was generally higher and this type of learning was more widely diffused in Eastern European Jewish society than in Central European Jewry. Due to demographic, socioeconomic, and political factors, the process of integration and assimilation of the Jews in gentile society was restrained in Eastern Europe, thus giving Hebrew the potential to become a literary medium for secular expression.

The **Haskalah** originated in the early 1770s in the Mendelssohnian Circle in Prussia's capital, Berlin. It spread eastward to the Jewish communities in the Slavic lands along two major routes - via the Austrian Empire from Vienna and Prague to Austrian Poland (Galicia), and then across the border to the Jewish communities of the Ukraine under Tsarist rule; and from Berlin and Koenigsberg, East Prussia's capital, to the Jewish communities bordering on East Prussia, i.e. Polish-Lithuania, and the Baltic region within the German socioeconomic and cultural sphere, as exemplified by Courland.

The **Haskalah** movement made headway among such Eastern European Jewish communities within several decades, though its growth was inhibited by the traditionalists' fear of its heretical tendencies as well as by its periodic collaboration with the assimilatory and suppressive policy of the Tsarist authorities.[3] At its zenith in the second half of the nineteenth century, the **Haskalah** had succeeded in penetrating Eastern European Jewry with its ideas and influence. Hayim Zelig Slonimski (1810-1904), a mathematician, an astronomer, and an accomplished inventor who was credited with devising a calculating machine, in addition to major improvements in the steam engine and the telegraph, was one of the leading champions of the second generation of the **Haskalah** in Eastern Europe.

In the history of the Jewish Enlightenment Slonimski was acclaimed as the foremost popularizer of science in Hebrew. He believed that the scientific

understanding of natural phenomena would facilitate the entry of tradition-bound Jews into modern society. The personal portrait that emerges from analyzing Slonimski's career is of a cultivated man versed in the Talmud and the sciences. Indeed, he personified the widely quoted credo of the **Haskalah** coined by the distinguished **maskilic** poet Judah Leib Gordon: **Heyeh 'adam be-tsetkha vi-yehudi be-'ohlekha.** [Hebrew: Be a man in the street and a Jew at home].[4]

Israel Zinberg (1873-1938), noted historian of Jewish literature opined that,

Slonimski utilized his great knowledge above all in disseminating useful information among the old-fashioned Jewish public, which spent all its days in the "tent of Torah" and had such a slight notion of the modern sciences. He was not at all willing to content himself with the fact that the secrets of the distant heavens with their infinite worlds and planets had been disclosed before his eyes; he also strove that the light of all of the strange worlds that had been revealed should become bright and clear in all the corners of the old Jewish study-house.

Slonimski is virtually the only one among the old **maskilim** who was extremely popular **among all** strata of the Jewish reading public. He alone understood the secret of throwing a bridge over from the old to the new. And **this** bridge was trusted by all, so assuredly and cautiously was it constructed. Even the orthodox could not get over their surprise at how ingeniously Slonimski calculated, 'according to the **Laws of Mathematics**,'[5] the '**Foundations of Intercalation**,'[6] how he explained so simply and so comprehensively to them, the scholars and eager students, whence the **Kochevei de-Shavit** ("the comets")[7] derive, familiarized them with the **Toledot Ha-Shamaim** ("History of the Heavens"),[8] with the development and the movement of the planets. And Slonimski had a masterful understanding of how to veil the true scientific content in such a purely Jewish form that it was in no way to be recognized that this is something new or strange, and not a simple continuation of what is written in the old sacred books.[9]

Indeed, Slonimski was conservative, self-taught, and rooted in tradition, personifying the development of the Lithuanian branch of the Eastern European **Haskalah** movement and a variety of phenomena associated with it. Living to the age of ninety-four, his career spanned almost the entire nineteenth century; he died in Warsaw on May 15, 1904, and a huge crowd honoured him at the funeral.[10] Mark Baker concludes that Slonimski typified the enlightened Lithuanian Jew: "He was half **maskil** and half **mitnaged** [Hebrew: An opponent of **Hasidism**]."[11]

Slonimski was born in Bialystok in 1810. He overcame the handicap of growing up in the traditional Jewish society of an Eastern European provincial city, thanks to his talents and diligence. This disadvantage meant that Slonimski received no formal education in the sciences and lived in relative intellectual isolation during his formative period.[12]

Slonimski travelled extensively in Europe. His first major journeys were to Vilna and Koenigsberg. In the late 1830s, he came under the guidance of his future father-in-law, Abraham Jacob Stern (1769-1842), a renowned Jewish mathematician, scientist, and inventor. Slonimski was consequently based in Warsaw, where an influential segment of the Jewish community was less traditional. Thanks to his extraordinary professional success and brimming personality, Slonimski was able to befriend prominent German scientists such as Alexander Von Humboldt (1769-1859), who introduced him to dignitaries, including the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795-1861) - a rare achievement for an Eastern European Jew of his time. These encounters, and his acknowledgement of the instrumental role German culture played in the European Enlightenment, conditioned Slonimski and earned him the reputation of a Germanophile.[13]

In traditional Jewish society, he was able to raise his own status by writing in acceptable terms for the Jewish readers who studied in the **Beit-Midrash**, the religious house of study. Slonimski also tutored interested students, participated actively in the Jewish community, contributed to the scientific world, and associated with many distinguished gentiles, scientists and statesmen alike.

A prolific author of Hebrew books and articles in various periodicals, Slonimski believed that his own Hebrew journal would be the most effective tribune to impart the ideals of the Enlightenment. The polemic he sparked by questioning the accuracy of the traditional Jewish calendar taught him an important lesson.[14] Thus, he applied a strategy aimed at disseminating scientific knowledge while avoiding controversy as much as possible.[15]

Concomitantly, he utilized the new opportunities offered by the 1855-1868 era of reforms initiated by Tsar Alexander II (1828-1881).[16] Slonimski launched **Ha-**

Tsefirah [The Herald] as a Hebrew weekly in Warsaw in February, 1862, and was the publisher, editor, and chief contributor. Joseph Klausner (1874-1958), the distinguished historian of Hebrew literature, complimented Slonimski for educating a generation in the sciences through the medium of **Ha-Tsefirah** - the first Hebrew organ devoted mainly to scientific subjects.[17]

Ha-Tsefirah's publication was interrupted after the appearance of twenty-five issues, adding up to two hundred pages. The last issue in its first stage appeared in August, 1862. **Ha-Tsefirah** was the only Hebrew newspaper published in the Kingdom of Poland, i.e. Russian Poland.[18]

This discontinuance was due to his departure from Warsaw to Zhitomir, the capital of the Ukrainian province of Volhynia. Political tensions and economic difficulties on the eve of the 1863 Polish insurrection had a negative impact on Warsaw. Slonimski, moreover, was partial to Russian rule, though his outlook envisaged a more cosmopolitan society in which Jews and gentiles could share in the cultivation of knowledge and science.[19]

Slonimski's loyalty and social advancement brought him a position of security and gratification in 1863. In that year, the Tsarist authorities nominated him as the inspector of the state-sponsored modern rabbinical seminary in Zhitomir. The seminary was in operation along with its sister institution in Vilna since 1847. Slonimski was also selected at the same time to join the ranks of the government bureaucracy in Zhitomir. He assumed the role of Chief Censor of Jewish Literature for South Russia. Accepting these positions was a milestone in Slonimski's career, marking a substantial departure from traditional patterns.

Slonimski held these two posts in Zhitomir for eleven years until the rabbinical seminary was closed by the Russian authorities in 1873. The Tsarist officials did not initially allow Slonimski to resume publication of **Ha-Tsefirah** in Warsaw, so he renewed its appearance in Berlin in 1874.[20] Slonimski returned to Warsaw to publish **Ha-Tsefirah** in September, 1875. There, it continued to appear until 1886 as a weekly and from then until its final closure in 1931 as a daily.[21]

Nahum Sokolov (1859-1936), a renowned Hebraist who would become president of the World Zionist Organization, began as Slonimski's chief assistant in 1879, assuming the editorship of **Ha-Tsefirah** between 1886-1910. Sokolov gave this publication a new dimension - it became more political. **Ha-Tsefirah** became less scientifically oriented, diverging from the agenda put forward by Slonimski.

The pioneer modern Hebrew writer Reuven Brainin (1862-1940), was first introduced to the **Haskalah** through the works of Slonimski, and befriended him in 1885. According to Brainin, Slonimski vehemently opposed Sokolov's support for Zionism. Slonimski denounced Jewish nationalist aspirations as destructive, portraying them as harmful fantasies, and even expressed disillusionment with the renaissance of the Hebrew language and literature during the later part of his life.[22]

Slonimski remained deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, in the classical sources of Judaism and observed the commandments to the very end of his life, though Slonimski's commitment to mainstream religious views abated in the final stage of his career.[23] This gradual development is characteristic of his eclectic personality. His career demonstrates evolution and integration of divergent factors, rather than a decisive, revolutionary impetus.

Furthermore, Slonimski was an active **maskil** and a Hebrew writer who influenced the Jewish community throughout his life. His life and work represented and encouraged the trend towards integration into the emerging modern civic society on the one hand, and the renaissance of the Hebrew language on the other.

Slonimski provided some Jewish education for his children, born of his 1842 marriage with Sarah (1824-1897), the daughter of Abraham Stern.[24] Their European names, lives, and careers as well as those of their descendants reflect the rapidity with which Jews, inspired by the Enlightenment, assimilated into the host societies and cultures and rose to leadership positions in the sciences and liberal arts. The acculturation into modern society chosen by Slonimski's children and

grandchildren also illustrates the fluid nature of the new Jewish identity as it emerged during the nineteenth century.

The Slonimskis, descendants of an Orthodox Polish-Lithuanian Jew, chose to adopt various national and religious identities: Polish-Jewish, Polish-Catholic, Russian-Orthodox, Russian-secular, and American. A socioeconomic, cultural, and religious transformation which often took place during the course of several generations, was accomplished by the members of the Slonimski family during the course of a few decades.

As conversion to Christianity was almost indispensable to a successful career in the majority society, many of the Slonimskis chose to apostatize.[25] Alexander Guterman, a prominent historian of the Jewish intelligentsia in Poland, explains that Hayim Zelig and Sarah Slonimski's interaction with the Jewish elite and prominent Tsarist officials was characterised by toleration and realism, which translated to reverence and submissiveness in their conduct. Thus, the environment in which the Slonimskis raised their children encouraged their conversion.[26]

Concomitantly, Slonimski did not disown his descendants or sever contact with any of them, but rather applauded their success, and even sympathized with them, though he was initially upset at their decision.[27] Slonimski understood the quandary of those who did not deem remaining a Jew as spiritually fulfilling, aesthetically satisfactory, socially gratifying, and economically enriching. He empathised with their desire to avoid the constraints and the vicissitudes experienced by Jews, since a better life was available in the greater society.[28] The diversity of

the choices made with regard to national and religious affiliation shows the relative ease with which they adjusted to new and different identities.[29] As the family history reveals, wherever they resided, the Slonimskis merged with the local elite.

Slonimski's son Stanislaw (1845-1913), was a physician who converted to Catholicism. He lived in Warsaw and chose a Polish national identity. Stanislaw's son, Antoni (1895-1976), was a major Polish poet of the twentieth century and a progressive Positivist.[30]

Slonimski's son Leonid Zinovievitch (Zhitomir, 1850-Petrograd, 1918), was a prominent Russian lawyer, economist, and a renowned journalist.[31] He married Fanny Wengeroff, the daughter of a prominent upper-middle class Russian Jewish family.[32] Leonid and Fanny Slonimski had children who also excelled in their careers. The first, Alexander (Minsk, 1881-Moscow, 1964), was a Russian literary critic and novelist;[33] the second, Nicolas Leonidovich (St. Petersburg, 1894-), is a distinguished Russian-American musicologist, conductor and composer;[34] the third, Mikhail Leonidovich Slonimski (St. Petersburg, 1897-Leningrad, 1972), was a prominent Soviet writer and an active public figure.[35]

Slonimski's son Jozef (1860-1933), was a Polish Jew, a teacher, and a linguist who published English, French and German instruction books, following short-lived medical studies in Berlin.[36] He invented a unique, but obscure neo-Romanic language. Inspired by the multi-lingual environment in Bialystok and Warsaw, Jozef Slonimski attempted to emulate Esperanto, and provide a vehicle for international communication.[37] This language, however, did not capture a wide audience.[38]

Jozef Slonimski's creation of the **Universal Romanic Language** is probably the result of the interest his father expressed in the efforts to

> invent one language that is common to all European languages, so that all nations will unite to speak in one tongue about shared matters.[39]

Jacob Shatzky (1893-1956), the foremost historian of the Jewish community in Warsaw, his own birthplace, informs us that Slonimski had at least two more children: David, a lawyer, an assimilated Jew who became a Zionist, and an unnamed daughter who married Moyshe Mikhel, the son of the Jewish publisher Alexander Levinski. **Ha-Tsefirah** was printed in his facilities between 1885-1895. Slonimski also had several children who died prematurely.[40]

Hayim Zelig Slonimski's life and his lineage vividly illustrate the introduction of modernity to Eastern European Jewry and its consequences. The Slonimski family represents the advancement, not only in Eastern Europe, but also in Western society, of a significant segment of Jewry. Jews were formerly confined to the periphery of society; they were often treated as pariahs; they were labelled in derogatory terms, as members of an ostracized religion as well as an inferior race.

But, many Jews had successfully integrated into the civic society during the course of the nineteenth century. In fact, they achieved distinction in various fields of science and culture. The Slonimskis were in the vanguard of culture and society, and provided leadership in their chosen fields.

Considering all of his achievements, surprisingly little research has been conducted on the career of Hayim Zelig Slonimski. Slonimski, moreover, did not write his memoirs. He usually merits a few pages in scholarly histories of Eastern European Jewry and of Jewish literature,[41] though a few biographical sketches have been published.[42]

To date, however, no major analytical work on his life has appeared. It is the aim of this thesis to fill this lacuna. This study compiles a variety of sources examining Slonimski's roots and career. Indeed, a synthesis of the scholar and his roots, contemporaneous personalities, ideological, and political developments of the

time, is the focus of this M.A. thesis. The major issues are the heritage of Jewish scientific scholars, the **Haskalah** movement, Slonimski's hometown Bialystok, his works, his adopted city, Warsaw, the history of modern Hebrew periodicals in Eastern Europe, and the publication, goals and the content of **Ha-Tsefirah**.

NOTES

1.Michael Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825-1855 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), 50.

2.R. Elijah compared the function of those who study the sciences within the Jewish tradition to the role of confectionaries, cooks, and bakers, in serving the king in I Samuel 8:13. Thus, the sciences are of value only to clarify the Jews' understanding of the will of the King, the Deity. See Immanuel Etkes, "**Ha-GR"A ve-ha-haskalah: tadmit u-matsi'ut**." ["The Gaon of Vilna and the **Haskalah**: Image and Reality"], Immanuel Etkes and Yosef Salmon, eds., Studies in the History of Jewish Society in the Middle Ages and in the Modern Period Presented to Professor Jacob Katz on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday by his Students and Friends [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1980), CCIV.

3.Yehudah Slutsky, The Haskalah Movement in Russia [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Historical Society of Israel, The Zalman Shazar Centre For The Furtherance Of The Study Of Jewish History, 1977) 9-17.

4.J.L. Gordon (1830-1892) is popularly known by his Hebrew acronym **YaLa"G**. See Michael Stanislawski, For Whom Do I Toil?: Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry. (Oxford: University Press, 1988), the authoritative biography.

5.In Hebrew: **Yesode Hokhmat ha-Shiur** (Zhitomir: 1865).

6.In Hebrew: **Yesode ha-Ibbur** (Warsaw: 1842, and 1852; Zhitomir: 1865. See below, chapter III.

7.The correct title in Hebrew is in the singular: **Kokhva De-Shavit** (Vilna: 1835); this is the Talmudic term for comet, see below, chapter III.

8.This book was published in Warsaw, 1838, and Zhitomir, 1866 - see below, chapter III.

9.Israel Zinberg, A History of Jewish Literature trans. and ed. by Bernard Martin. (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College and Ktav Publishing House, 1978), vol. xi, Part Twelve: "The **Haskalah** Movement in Russia," 181.

10.Abraham S. Hershberg, Pinkos Bialystok [Yiddish: The Chronicle of Bialystok] (New York: 1949), vol i, 238, points out that Slonimski's grandfather, Yekhiel Nekhes, a prominent Bialystok Jew (see below, chapter III), also lived to ninety-five.

11.Mark Baker, "The Reassessment of Haskalah Ideology In the Aftermath of the 1863 Polish Revolt," Polin 5 (1990), 227. For a broader explanation of the term **mitnaged** see below, chapter II.

12 Zinberg, History, vol. xi, 179, asserts that, "It is indubitable that if Slonimski had grown up under different circumstances and obtained a regular education, he would have acquired great renown as a clever inventor in the technical-scientific realm."

13.Baker, "Reassessment" 227.

14.See below, chapter III.

15.Joseph Klausner, Historiah shel ha-sifrut ha-'ivrit ha-hadashah [Hebrew: History of Modern Hebrew Literature]. 2nd edition. 6 vols. (Jerusalem: Achiasaf, 1953-1956), vol. iii, 124.

16.Klausner, History, vol. v, 11.

17.Eisig S. Silberschlag, From Renaissance to Renaissance: Hebrew Literature from 1492-1970 (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970) 177.

18.Baker, "Reassessment" 222.

19.Baker, "Reassessment" 226-7.

20 See below, chapter V.

21.Alexander Guterman, Tsemihat ha-zeramim ha-hadashim be-hevrah ha-yehudit be-polin keli she-hi mishtakephet be-kitvei-ha-'et ha-yehudiyim (ba-polanit, yiddish, ve-ivrit) beim ha-shanim 1861-1881 [Hebrew: The growth of new tendencies in the Jewish society in Poland as it is reflected in the Jewish periodicals (in Polish, Yiddish, and Hebrew) between 1861-1881] Unpublished doctoral dissertation. (Jerusalem, Hebrew University, 1983), 23, who provides an abundance of bibliography discussing Slonimski's career and the contents of **Ha-Tsefirah**.

22.Reuven Brainin, Fun Mayn Lebns-Bukh [Yiddish: From My Life-Book]. (New York: ICUF, 1946) 372-377.

23.Brainin, Lebns-Bukh 372-377. In his later days, Slonimski questioned the validity of the miracle associated with the festival of **Hanukkah**. This 1892 article expressed his gradual detachment from the tradition, and possibly his jealousy at **Ha-Tsefirah**'s unparalleled success under Sokolov.

24.See below, chapter III.

25.Nicolas Slonimski, writes in his recent autobiography, Perfect Pitch: A Life Story (Oxford: University Press, 1988) 14, that his family decided to adopt the Greek Orthodox faith, being the official religion in Russia, as to avoid discrimination, although they were agnostics.

26.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 38.

27.Brainin, Lebns-Bukh 374-375.

28.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 38.

29.Isaac Landman, Ed. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Ktav Publishers, 1969) 569. Parts of the synopsis of the Slonimski family history are based upon the relevant information found here. Landman, though applauding them as "scholars artists and scientists" makes the mistake of referring to the Slonimskis as merely "a noted Russian family." Indeed, as becomes evident below, many of the Slonimskis preferred Polish culture, although several of them did choose the Russian milieu.

30.Antoni Slonimski was born a Roman Catholic Pole. He completed his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Together with his renowned Jewish friend Julian Tuwim (1894-1953), Antoni Slonimski was a founding member of and contributor to the influential Polish poetry magazine **Skamander** in 1918.

Czeslaw Milosz, an authority in Polish literature and a leading author himself, observed that Antoni Slonimski was "A rationalist, a pacifist... he expressed in the 1930s the despair of the liberals threatened as they were by the rise of National Socialism in Germany and by chauvinist, Anti-Semitic Rightists in Poland, while to the east Stalinist Russia did not give much reason for hope." See Czeslaw Milosz, Ed., Postwar Polish Poetry (An Anthology), 3rd expanded edition. (Berkeley et. al: University of California Press, 1983), 5

Antoni Slonimski neither hid his Jewish background nor ignored Jewish themes, though was a practising Catholic. He travelled to British Mandate Palestine and published a joyous book of verse **Droga na Wschod** [Road to the East, 1924] His play **Rodzina** [Family], staged in 1933, warned in a comical way against the "Aryan" racial concept in general and Anti-Semitism in particular.

Antoni Slonimski had a profound emotional regard for the Jewish people, and he was convinced that there is no escape from one's Jewish background. In "Road to the East" he expressed his amazement at the revival of the ancient Jewish nation, and the conflict in his heart between the "two homelands." Antoni Slonimski was full of remorse for he was "born in a land that will never fully accept him." See Joseph Klausner, "Slonimski, Antoni" Ha-Entsiklopedyah Ha-Ivrit [Encyclopedia Hebraica]. (Tel Aviv: 1974), vol. xxvi, 80.

Furthermore, the personal pain he felt when confronting the Holocaust may be detected in poems such as his **Piesn a Janusz Korczak** [Song About Janusz Korczak], **Ahaswer** [On the Wandering Jew], and **Elegia Miasteczek Zydowskich** [Elegy of the Jewish Townships]. See Antoni Slonimski, 138 **Wienzy** [138 Poems]. (Warsaw: 1979).

Antoni Slonimski writes at length about his family in his 1957 Wspomnienia Warszawkie [Polish: Memories of Warsaw]. Of particular importance to him were Hayim Zelig and Stanislaw Slonimski, his grandfather and father. He strongly defended the Jews and Israel in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli Six-Day-War, and condemned the wave of Anti-Semitism that ensued in Poland at that time.

31.Thanks to the liberal era during the reign of Alexander II (1855-1881), new opportunities were opened for Jews, especially those who choose to assimilate. Indeed, Leonid (also known by the German form of his name, Ludwig) Slonimski, embraced the path of complete Russification and converted to the Russian Orthodox faith.

He studied Law in Kiev until 1872. Leonid Slonimski defended small- scale peasant farming in Russia against those liberals who advocated sweeping agrarian reforms in the Russian Empire. He expressed his stern opposition to any fiscal policy to further artificially the enrichment of financiers to the injury of agriculturists and labourers.

His original critique of Karl Marx's hypothesis in economics, "The Economic Doctrine of Karl Marx," which refuted the prime tenets of Marxist economic theory, appeared in Russian in 1898, and was also translated into German. Leonid Slonimski published the text of the Russian constitution with a preface that caused the official suppression of the book, in 1906.

32.Fanny Wengeroff's mother, Pauline Wengeroff (nee Epstein, 1833-1916), was born in Bobruisk, Byelorussia, in the Pale of Settlement. She married Hanan, a Jewish banker from Minsk. Her impressive memoirs in German, Memoiren Einer Grossmutter: Bilder aus der Kulturegeschicte der Juden Russlands im 19. Jahrhundert [Memoirs of a Grandmother: Pictures of the Cultural History of Russian Jewry in the nineteenth Century], is a rich source for the gradual secularization and Westernization of Russian Jewry, reflecting the life of an affluent Jewish family in the era of transition from tradition to modernity, and the crisis which ensued. Pauline Wengeroff describes the pre-modern Jewish community with sympathy, and she depicts the inevitable destruction of the old way of life with resignation and regret.

The Wengeroffs established a distinguished Russian intellectual and cultural family: The eldest and only son, Semyon Afanahseyevich Wengeroff (1855-1920), was a prominent Russian literary critic, bibliographer, and editor. The second child, Zinaida Vengerova (1867-1941), was a renowned Russian literary critic. She immigrated to the U.S.A. following the Bolshevik revolution. The third child, Isabelle Vengerova (1877-1956) was a famous pianist and a music teacher. She, too, immigrated to the U.S.A.

33.Alexander Slonimski was educated in St. Petersburg. He turned to an exhaustive study of Pushkin under the influence of his uncle Semyon Wengeroff (see above), and edited the Soviet Academy edition of Pushkin's works and wrote the script for the Pushkin centennial film "The Youth of the Poet."

34.Following his studies at the St. Petersburg Coservatory, Nicolas Slonimski left Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution and immigrated to the U.S.A. in 1923, where he distinguished himself as an interpreter of modern music. For details of his extraordinary life see his autobiography, Perfect Pitch.

35.Mikhail Slonimski studied in the Faculty of History and Philosophy at St. Petersburg University. In 1919, in what now became Petrograd, he organized the symbolist literary group **The Serapion Brothers.**

Mikhail Slonimski's most famous book was **The Lavrovs** 1926, a fictionalized history of his family which portrays a young intellectual who is won over to the side of the Communist revolution, and describes the downfall of a prominent Russian family as a result of War the revolution.

36.Examples: Will You Speak English (Warsaw: 1891 and 1900).
Sprechet Eire Deutch (Warsaw: 1901).
Franzuische Metodie (Warsaw: 1920).
Do You Speak English (Warsaw: 1927).

37.It is curious to note that the inventor of Esperanto, the optometrist Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof, was also a Jew from the city of Bialystok.

38.Nicolas Slonimski writes fondly about his uncle in Perfect Pitch, 25-6. He depicts Jozef Slonimski as a tragic yet humorous character, who had great talent and ambitions but lacked the power to execute them.

39.Baker, "Reassessment" 227, as quoted from Ha-Tsefirah 1 (Feb. 4, 1862) 1; and highlighted by Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 28.

40.Jacob Shatzky, The History of the Jews in Warsaw [Yiddish]. 3 vols. (New York: YIVO, 1947), vol. iii: 255, 262 and 338.

41.Examples: Klausner, History, vol. v, 123-125 and 130-131. Jacob Solomon Raisin, The Haskalah Movement in Russia (Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1913) 199-203. Jacob Shatzky, The Cultural History of Haskalah in Lithuania: From Past Times to Hibbat Zion [Yiddish] (Buenos Aires, The Central Union of Polish Jews in Argentina, 1950) 93 and 125. Zinberg, History, vol. xi, 179-183.

42.Examples: Jehudah David Eisenstein, "An Orthodox Scientist: The Career of Hayyim Selig Slonimski, Who Popularized Science Among the Russian Coreligionists." New Era Illustrated Magazine (New York: July 1904). 126-129. Isaac Nissenbaum, "HaSaS: A Biographical Essay." Ha-Tsefirah Jubilee Volume [Hebrew] Warsaw, Ha-Tsefirah Press, 1912, 1-6.

Chapter II

Background to Slonimski

A. Jews In Science

Hayim Zelig Slonimski's role as a popularizer of science in Hebrew cannot be viewed solely as a product of external influences. Throughout Jewish history there has existed a continuous interest in the sciences within the tradition. Indeed, a true command of the **Halakhah** required a knowledge of astronomy and mathematics for calculations of the calendar, animal and human anatomy, the theories of combustion and causality, and a variety of botanical and medical information.

Since geometry was required for calculating the size of irregular plots of land, and a knowledge of mathematics was crucial for rendering decisions concerning inheritance, compendia of these laws occasionally began with mathematical instruction. Astronomical treatises, employed to calculate the workings of the calendar, were often introduced by an extensive chapter on geometry, and the laws of probability were a notable component in the codification of many problems associated with the dietary laws.[1]

The development of secular studies, however, was chronically thwarted in European Jewish communities. The mainstream spiritual leadership of these communities was opposed to the reading of works by gentile authors, and maintained that erudition in the Talmud and the Bible, in the codes and mystic lore, sufficed. These guardians of traditional Jewish society cultivated their spiritual and cultural separation and enforced the oligarchic and hierarchic structure of its governing body.[2] In medieval times this elite, though widely engaged in commerce with non-Jews, at home and abroad, was often opposed to the acceptance of a rationalistic **Weltanschauung** and the pursuit of secular studies, and most Jews viewed gentiles and secular ideas with distrust.

Jews were forced to accept their political subjugation to the Christian state, although they were unwilling to sanction the validity of its ideology. The values espoused by the host nation were generally considered either insignificant or

subversive, and a gentile, no matter how meritorious, usually could not be accepted as a role model. The Jewish community generally perceived external intervention as hostile, deducing from history that gentile intentions posed an acute threat to its unique character and integrity. Furthermore, the Jewish elite rejected a number of reforms introduced by the host society as a threat to its supremacy in its own community.

A classic example of the problem which rationalism and science created in the Jewish community, even when they were deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, is found in the achievement and influence of Moses Maimonides, traditionally known by his Hebrew acronym **RaMBa"M** (Cordova, 1135-Cairo, 1204). His career and the controversy he triggered illustrate the conflict during medieval and early modern times. Maimonides, a paramount rabbinic authority, codifier, philosopher, and physician, is probably the most prominent and celebrated Jewish figure of the Middle Ages.

He exerted a tremendous influence not only on medieval Jewish philosophy, but also on the formation of modern Jewish thought. In "The Guide for the Perplexed," he presents a synthesis of Aristotelian rationalism and Judaism which in Jewish tradition is the most significant work to reconcile religion with philosophy and science. "The Guide" provided later Jewish scholars with a dramatic introduction to epistemological speculation. Maimonides became the primary symbol of philosophic endeavour by promoting rationalism in normative Judaism during medieval times. His work facilitated the study of philosophy and stimulated interest in the sciences.

The Maimonidean Controversy pertains to a complex of disputed religious and cultural issues with a notable socioeconomic underpinning. Fundamental concerns included the role of the Talmud and whether it supersedes other works, especially those of Maimonides, the question of hierarchical versus intellectual and personal leadership, reason and philosophy and their relation to faith and tradition, the appropriate education a Jew should receive, i.e. what curriculum should accompany the study of the Torah, the proper understanding of anthropomorphism

as expressed in the Bible and the Talmud, and the meaning of theological concepts such as miracles and the bodily resurrection.

Maimonides' attempted synthesis of Jewish monotheism and Greco-Arabic Aristotelian philosophy was received with enthusiasm in some circles, mainly the upper stratum of Jewish communities, and with horror and dismay by others, who being of a lower socioeconomic standing were closer to popular views of Judaism and were imbued with mysticism. Such people dreaded the corrosive effect of Greek thought on Jewish belief.

Maimonides' innovative thinking was often provocative. His critical attitude toward the study of the Talmud, his questioning of the leadership of established institutions, as well as his opposition to financial support for the study of the Torah in general and rabbis in particular, fanned the polemic. The controversy, in which many distiguished rabbis and scholars participated, persisted throughout the Middle Ages.

The Maimonidean Controversy resurfaced in Renaissance Italy and in the flourishing Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The struggle to achieve a rational interpretation of Judaism, enriched through an understanding of the sciences, had a special impact on Polish-Lithuanian Jewry.[3] According to the historian Jacob Shatzky, Hayim Zelig Slonimski could look back some two and a half centuries to a tradition of rationalism and science which developed in his home territory.[4]

A forerunner of this tradition was Joseph ben Isaac Halevy. Born in Lithuania in the second half of the sixteenth century, he played a crucial role in introducing Polish-Lithuanian Jewry to a critical study of Maimonides. Halevy acquired knowledge in medieval religious philosophy and taught many rabbinic scholars in Prague, where he lived most of his life. In his two major works, Halevy interpreted Maimonides' thought as presented in "The Guide for the Perplexed."

His reading, though dominated by rationalist literature, ranged far and wide. His interest in philosophy began to take precedence over his Talmudic study, and although he cited traditional Jewish commentators in his work, prominent non-Jewish

philosophers such as Aristotle and various medieval Arabic philosophers, are frequently mentioned with admiration.[5]

Halevy's explication of traditional Jewish sources with his acknowledged debt to non-Jewish thinkers, manifests a bold commitment to intellectual freedom within the contemporary Jewish milieu. His books advanced the emergence of Lithuanian-Jewish scholarship, though the interest in science was not continuous. These studies combined traditional Talmudic study with the pursuit of scientific interests.[6]

A leading exponent of this approach was Joseph Solomon ben Elijah Delmedigo of Candia, (1591-1655), a renowned and prolific Jewish scholar, rabbi, and traveller.[7] As the name indicates, he was also a distinguished medical doctor. He contributed tremendously to the advancement of the study of science among Jews in early modern times and authored **Sefer Elim-Ma'ayan Ganim** [The Book of Elim-The Fountain of Gardens, Amsterdam, 1628-1629], the first printed Hebrew book profusely illustrated.[8] This book was utilized by Slonimski in his first book, **Mosde Hokhmah** [Foundations of Wisdom, 1832].[9]

Delmedigo lived for many years in Poland-Lithuania and Livonia as a private physician to Prince Radziwill of Vilna.[10] He personifies the influx of Jewish doctors coming to Poland from Western Europe.[11] Since the fourteenth century Jewish physicians played a significant role in Poland. They contributed to the progress in medical practice, to the study of the natural sciences, and facilitated the advancement of enlightenment among Jews.[12]

An outstanding representative of this tradition is Tobias Cohn, (Metz, 1652-Jerusalem, 1729). The scion of a distinguished family, he became a renowned royal physician, a philosopher and a Hebrew writer.[13] He received a traditional Jewish education, and studied medicine abroad, obtaining his degree, despite many difficulties, from Padua in 1683.[14] Cohn practised briefly in Poland, but fled to the Ottoman Empire due to the Chmelnitsky Uprising of 1648-1656. He became the court physician to five successive sultans in Istanbul, eventually settling in Jerusalem in 1714, devoting himself to religious studies.

Cohn's life work, **Ma'aseh Tuviyah** [The Deed of Tobias], was published in Venice in 1707.[15] It was an authoritative popular medical handbook, displaying a particular concern for the health of Polish Jewry, containing profusely illustrated treatises on various sciences.[16] His work was highly praised by both Christian and Jewish scholars, and his findings stimulated more successful research.[17] Cohn advocated combining traditional Judaism with the benefits of scientific development. He criticized the **Kabbalists** for their detachment from reality and attacked ignorant anti-Jewish attitudes common among Christians.[18]

Dr. Moses Wolf was a distinguished seventeenth century Polish Jewish physician, and a pioneer in popularizing knowledge of medicine and hygiene among Jews in their spoken language, Yiddish.[19] His books were aimed at readers who did not have easy access to doctors, and were therefore written in simple language.[20] The Gaon of Vilna was instrumental in promoting the study of science among Lithuanian Jews,[21] and was widely viewed as a forerunner of the Haskalah movement.[22] R. Elijah expressed personal interest in, and wrote books about, many branches of science, and he told R. Barukh Schick,[23]

> that for every deficiency of knowledge a man has in the sciences, he will have a hundred deficiencies of knowledge in the science of the Torah; for Torah and science are closely related. And he commanded [Schick] to translate everything possible of the sciences into our holy tongue...in order to spread knowledge among our people Israel.[24]

The legacy of R. Elijah therefore stresses the obligation to carefully study, and strictly observe, the Jewish Law. This was, however, to be complimented with acquiring extensive knowledge in the sciences, and his biography personified the possible harmony

> between total immersion in the talmudic world, living absorption in mysticism, and considerable interest in certain fields of secular knowledge, to all of which he brought an ardently believing heart, a keenly analytical and critical mind, and an iron will and self discipline.[25]

This combination, with its receptiveness to rationalism, was accepted by a significant segment of the spiritual and communal leadership.[26] Many Lithuanian

Jews, however, expressed their emphasis on articulate and precise learning of the Talmud by enroling in great numbers in the **Yeshivoth** of the **mitnagedim**, and academies of great distinction flourished in Lithuania in contrast to their precipitous decline in the West.[27]

The increasing acceptance of rationalism, the growth of scientific knowledge and the use of scientific method since the mid-seventeenth century led to the gradual rejection of traditional religious and social beliefs and attitudes, i.e. the fundamental dogmas of medieval society.[28] Furthermore, the "Maimonidean side" of the historic controversy was given a new expression, more secular and radical, by Moses Mendelssohn in the eighteenth century. In the European Jewish milieu, this development, strengthened by the emancipation era, which was ushered in by Joseph II's Edict of Toleration of 1781 in Austria and the French Revolution, facilitated the onset of a new movement in Jewish life, the **Haskalah.**

The number of European Jewish students in secular institutions of learning, and the number of Jewish physicians in Poland in particular, grew consistently.[29] More educated Jews followed the ideas of the **Haskalah**, and influential Jewish scholars, many of whom were from the Lithuanian school, propagated rationalist thought and cultivated the study of the sciences. These intellectuals forged new patterns, as they fell under the sway of the Berlin **Haskalah**, and journeyed west to participate in its activities.

These Eastern European scholars wrote in Hebrew, as they were rooted in Judaism and believed that Hebrew was the primary language of Jewish spiritual and intellectual discourse. In addition, the traditional Jewish readership generally could not read a modern European literary language. Thus, the only plausible strategy they could apply to attain influence and acceptance within the learned sector of traditional Eastern European Jewish society was to use Hebrew.

Many **maskilim** believed that an invigorated Hebrew language should be used to introduce the traditional Jewish intelligentsia to European intellectual and cultural life. The acceptance of modern European thought would encourage Jews to participate actively in civic society. The **maskilim** would come to view Hebrew not

simply as the traditional holy tongue reserved for sacred study and prayer, but as a viable language that could convey the knowledge of science and society. The rebirth of modern Hebrew would be brought about by blending its biblical and **mishnaic** strata with modern terminology,[30] thus serving as the spiritual and intellectual language of the Jews, facilitating the complete revival of Judaism and the Jews.

It was R. Israel of Zamosc, (ca.1700- 1772), who brought his great store of secular knowledge, particularly mathematics, accumulated within the boundaries of traditional Judaism in Poland, into the European arena in Berlin. As his name denotes, he grew up in Zamosc, in the Lublin district of Poland, which became a centre of the **Haskalah** movement. He studied and taught the traditional talmudic-centred curriculum at the local **Yeshiva**, simultaneously becoming an expert in philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy.[31]

R. Israel moved to Berlin in 1740. A year later he published his first and foremost work in Hebrew, **Nezah Israel** [The Eternity of Israel]. This book represents a pioneer attempt to apply secular knowledge and critical method to the interpretation of biblical and Talmudic literature. In the introduction, he criticized the wide use of the **pilpul** technique at that time and suggested a more rational and organized method of analyzing the Talmud.[32]

R. Israel resided in Berlin for seven years, under the patronage of Daniel Itzig (1723-1799), the famous Prussian Court Jew and champion of the **Haskalah**. There, R. Israel became one of **Haskalah**'s founders. He tutored the young Moses Mendelssohn, and Aaron Gumperz, a physician, an early **maskil**, and a distinguished Hebrew writer.[33] Their instruction focused on philosophy, especially Maimonidean, in addition to mathematics, astronomy and the sciences.[34] Given the way R. Israel pursued his studies, he aroused the ire of Jewish religious fanatics, and he was often forced to change his residence.[35] He eventually settled in Brody, a major **Haskalah** center he helped cultivate.[36]

R. Barukh Schick (1744-1808), came from Shklov, an east Byelorussian city, which emerged as a center of the **Haskalah** during the late eighteenth century. A

prominent physician, born into the rabbinic elite,[37] he had a typical biography for a man of his background and calibre, namely that of a scholar ascending the ladder of rabbinic and communal leadership, thanks to his learning and kinship ties.[38] He started studying the sciences relatively early, and he later associated with Berlin's Mendelssohnian Circle. Schick published two Hebrew books during his stay, in 1777.[39] In these works, and others that followed, he demonstrated knowledge of secular subjects and languages and applied critical method in his scientific studies.[40]

Schick was conditioned by the critique of the early **maskilim** of rabbinic Judaism as obscurantist and antithetical to science, and he introduced scientific learning to traditional Jews in an apologetic manner. Schick combined the sciences and the **Torah**, trying to prove that Judaism is wise and understanding. He was therefore a paradigm of nineteenth century rabbis, for whom science was divorced from contemporary theological, social, cultural, and political dilemmas.[41]

Moses Marcuse, (1743-ca.1800), came from Slonim, in Polish Lithuania, Slonimski's ancestral home.[42] A prominent Polish Jewish physician and instructor in public health, he focused on preventive medicine and hygiene. Marcuse studied medicine at the university of Koenigsberg, settling in 1774 in Poland, and practised in cities such as Vilna and Shklov.[43] Despite his contempt for the language, Marcuse, a true **maskil**, published his popular medical handbook, **Ezer yisroel: seyfer refues** [An Aid to Israel: A Book of Cures], in Yiddish so that it would be accessible to the Jewish masses who needed it most. Printed in Poritzk in 1790, this was the first book to be published in modern Yiddish.[44]

An influential Jewish physician was Marcus Herz (Berlin, 1747-Berlin, 1803), a classmate of Marcuse, a philosopher, and a member of the Mendelssohnian Circle.[45] He befriended Kant, Lessing, and the king of Prussia. The Herz salon attracted the most prominent enlightened Berliners, both Jews and gentiles.[46]

R. Judah Leyb b n Asher Margolioth (1747-1811), a rabbi and preacher, was another precursor of the **Haskalah** movement in Eastern Europe whose roots were in the rabbinic elite.[47] Margolioth served as a rabbi in Poland, and travelled extensively in Europe, where he met a variety of Jewish scholars and rabbis.[48] First

and foremost among them was Moses Mendelssohn. From 1805 onward, Margolioth resided in Frankfurt on the Oder.

Margolioth immersed himself in medieval and current Hebrew scientific and philosophical literature, as well as the emerging literature of the **Haskalah**. His investigation aimed at modern research, but due to his isolation from up-to-date European learning Margolioth was unaware of the progress made in the sciences. His own works were therefore based on classic authorities such as Maimonides and Aristotle, reflecting the popular scientific views of antiquity as interpreted by the medieval authorities.[49] Margolioth emphasized the exigency for social justice, and denounced the ill-treatment of the poor by the elite in the Jewish community. He assailed the pursuit of luxury, prevalent among the rich.

Margolioth opposed **Hasidism** for what he considered to be its irrational excesses, and also objected to the study of philosophy, which he regarded as undermining faith.[50] He criticized Mendelssohn for his call in **Jerusalem** to abolish excommunication as a means of spiritual coercion in Judaism. Margolioth, however, did encourage the study of Hebrew grammar, the sciences, and mathematics, which was in accordance with the program of the **Haskalah**.

Margolioth was probably the first Polish Jew to discuss natural philosophy in Hebrew.[51] The ten volumes published during his lifetime contain a variety of subjects such as biblical interpretation, natural philosophy, ethics, responsa, homilies, liturgy, Jewish holidays, poetry, and linguistic studies.[52] These books, and Margolioth's own career, express the initial willingness among traditional elements of Eastern European Jewry, in the early days of the **Haskalah** movement, to accept social reforms and even secular studies. Many were ultimately disillusioned when they witnessed the radical results of the Enlightenment in Western and Central Europe.

The early modern philosopher Solomon Maimon (1754-1800) was born in Poland-Lithuania, and joined the Mendelssohnian Circle in Berlin in his youth.[53] He married at twelve, experienced **hasidic** life, became disillusioned with it, and then studied medicine in Berlin. In 1770 Maimon severed his connection with traditional

Judaism with the publication of his critical commentary on Maimonides' "Guide for The Perplexed." He then devoted himself to the study of philosophy, following Moses Mendelssohn and Immanuel Wolff, becoming the most incisive student and critic of Kant.[54]

Phineas Elijah Hurwitz (1765-1821) was a Hebrew writer and an early **maskil** of Lithuanian origin who travelled extensively in Poland, Hungary, Germany, and Great Britain.[55] He gained considerable scientific knowledge, although he claimed not to have mastered any European language.[56] A traditional Jew, he changed his outlook because of continuous discourse with scholars and constant exposure to new ideas.

Hurwitz's most influential work, **Sefer ha-Brith** [The Book of the Covenant], 1797,[57] was a primary source of scientific information for Jews who could not read a modern European language.[58] He condemned those Jews who engaged solely in traditional study and petty trade for their lack of comprehensive knowledge needed in daily life and in order to earn an honest living. Hurwitz warned that this abnormality would jeopardize Jewish existence and urged the Jewish masses to diversify their occupations, focusing on manual labour.

Joseph Schonhak (1812-1870) was a popular and prolific Hebrew writer in the natural sciences.[59] He led a retired life, devoting most of his time to his studies and writing. His career, moreover, was contemporaneous with Slonimski's and they share certain similarities. Schonhak was born in Tiktin (Tykocin), close to Bialystok, Slonimski's birthplace, and both published pioneering scientific works in Hebrew, though Schonhak was also known for his linguistic studies.[60]

Furthermore, both contributed to familiarizing traditionalist Hebrew readers with modern developments in science by synthesizing Jewish religious sources with modern European research so as not to antagonize their readers with a blatantly anti-religious or otherwise offensive presentation. Conveying modern scientific knowledge in a language and form accessible to the traditional readership became the salient feature of Hayim Zelig Slonimski's contribution to the Eastern European **Haskalah** movement.

In addition, the transformation of Hebrew into a modern language with a scientific terminology was tremendously affected by Joseph Schonhak. He may be considered the forerunner of Shalom Jacob Abramovitch (1835/6-1917, popularly known as Mendele Mokher Seforim - Mendele the Bookseller) and Slonimski as a popularizer of science in Hebrew.[61]

The aforementioned personalities represented a significant class among the pioneer **maskilim** in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. They were observant Eastern European Jews who studied both classical Jewish religious literature and the sciences; they endeavoured to disseminate knowledge of the sciences among the tradition-bound Jews of Eastern Europe; their work was generally characterized by the attempt to reconcile Judaism and science, i. e. it sounded an apologetic note to prove the wisdom and validity of Judaism even in the modern age.

These early **maskilim** provided a paradigm for later modernizing Jewish scholars and intellectuals such as Slonimski. Many of the nineteenth century **maskilim** approached secular studies with an eye to harmonizing them with Judaism. They were neither emotionally nor intellectually totally detached from earlier religious, cultural, and social concerns. The environment in which each **maskil** experienced his formative years is therefore crucial. Indeed, Slonimski can only be understood in this context.

B. Bialystok - A Jewish Community on the Threshold of Modernization

Bialystok,[62] the birthplace of Hayim Zelig Slonimski, lies at the junction of national borders and trade routes. The Lithuanian Grand Duke Gedimin established this settlement in the western periphery of historic Lithuania in 1320.[63] Bialystok was built on the banks of the **Biala** river which flows into the **Suprasl**, a tributary of the **Narew**, which flows into the **Vistula** river. These waterways were used intensively as commercial routes and the town, a natural marketplace, became an economic centre for the entire region. Bialystok was an early centre of industrialization in Russian Poland and played a special role in the modernization of Polish-Lithuanian Jewry.

The city is situated in north-eastern Poland, in close proximity to the former East Prussian border, where the Byelorussians, an agrarian people, were the majority. At the Union of Brest in 1386, in which the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania was created, Bialystok came under the tutelage of the Polish king, becoming the seat of the region's ruler, the **Wojawoda**.

The first evidence of a Jewish presence in Bialystok dates back to 1514. This Jewish community was a member of the central institution of Jewish autonomy in the Polish Kingdom, the Council of the Four Lands (**Vaad Arba Aratzot**).[64] Bialystok and its Jewish community experienced rapid economic growth, promoted by the manorial overlords of the Branicki family, during the eighteenth century. Bialystok received independent municipal status in 1745,[65] and in the same year the autonomous Jewish community obtained self-governing status within the Council of the Four Lands.[66]

The strength and vitality of the Jewish community under Polish rule was recognized by the permission granted to the leadership of the autonomous Jewish community board (**kehillah**) to participate in municipal elections in 1749. Jews in Christian states were customarily excluded from participating in city councils. The 1759 initiation charter of the craft guilds explicitly admits Jewish membership despite the fact that the guilds were generally hostile to the Jews as competitors and non-

Christians. Thus, this inclusion attested to the strength of Jewish participation in this branch of the economy, as well as to the pressure applied by Count Branicki on the guilds.[67]

As a result of internal weakness and external pressures, the Polish Kingdom gradually lost the bulk of its territories, and, finally, its independence. Following the Polish partitions and the ensuing Napoleonic wars, Bialystok passed first to Prussia in 1795, and then to the Russian Empire in 1807. Under Prussian rule, Bialystok and its surrounding region formed the province of New East Prussia. German entrepreneurs and skilled workers created and developed the textile industry in the city and its satellites. The Germans initially opted to maintain a monopoly in this industry by legally excluding Jews from positions of expertise. Nevertheless, Jews worked closely with the German pioneers, and the textile industry rapidly emerged thanks to Jewish initiative, investment, and commercial skill. Jews financed workshops run by a number of demobilized Saxon soldiers who had been professional weavers and spinners and had now settled in Bialystok.

Many Jews acquired spinning, weaving, knitting, and dyeing skills, gradually freeing themselves from dependence upon German expertise.[68] The Germans' role in the textile industry and the proximity to East Prussia secured their importance in Bialystok and guaranteed that German language and culture would occupy a substantial position in the city. For a certain segment of Bialystok Jewry, association with Germans was not merely an economic necessity, but also expressed the yearning of liberal Jews to "better themselves," i.e. to modernize through the mediation of German **Kultur** imported from Koenigsberg, East Prussia's capital.[69]

As a result of the 1807 Tilsit Accord, the Prussians withdrew and Bialystok came under Tsarist rule. During the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in 1812/13, there was a brief French occupation of the region.[70] The Jews of Bialystok, disillusioned by the failure to gain emancipation in the Napoleonic sponsored Duchy of Warsaw, cooperated with the Russians.[71] Russian rule over the lion's share of Polish territory, which lasted over a century, was ultimately sealed, with modest territorial revisions, by the 1815 Vienna Congress Accord.

The period of transition after the collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, hurt the legal status of the Jews. As the Tsarist Empire was not a corporate state sharing in the feudal heritage of Roman law, it did not confer the right of autonomy to all segments of society.[72] Moreover, Russia had been hostile to a Jewish presence, had prohibited Jewish settlement in its territory and therefore did not have a Jewish population.

To prevent Jews from entering Russia's vast hinterland, the massive Polish-Jewish population acquired as a result of the partitions was confined to the newly annexed western territories that comprised most of what became known as the Pale of Settlement.[73] Bialystok was now located on the western border of the Tsarist Russian province of Grodno in the Pale. The disposition of the Tsarist regime toward the Jews was vividly displayed in the introduction of severe anti-Jewish restrictions in the 1804 constitution.

Upon his accession to the throne of Russia in 1801, Tsar Alexander I decreed an investigation of the Jewish communities and appointed supposedly impartial members to a commission for this purpose. The mandate of the special "Committee for the Amelioration of the Jews" was to submit unbiased proposals to improve the predicament of the new Jewish population in the Tsarist Empire.[74] Ostensibly, all concerned parties were invited to present their point of view. The inquiry was prompted, as stated in its charter, by other objectives. The preamble commenced with the hope that it would work for the true welfare of the Jews, "as well as for the advantage of the native population of those Governments, in which these people are **allowed** to live [emphasis added]."[75]

The Committee submitted its conclusions in 1804, and its findings influenced the status of Russian Jewry and Imperial policy toward the Jews to the very end of the Tsarist regime in 1917. It called for a transformation of the Jews through institutional reform. The recommendations presented the Jews with a combination of liberties and disabilities, clearly aimed at serving the exclusive interest of the Tsarist Empire.

On the positive side, the public schools were opened to Jews. They were even granted the right to open their own schools for "secular culture," contingent on either German, Russian, or Polish being the language of instruction. Legal privileges, such as the allocation of crown estates and the right to buy vacant lands, and financial incentives, such as tax exemptions, were promised to induce Jews to enter agriculture and, to a lesser degree, industry and handicrafts.

The Tsarist regime was inconsistent in its policy to encourage the occupational diversification of the Jewish population in general, and to turn it to agriculture in particular. Due to frequent policy changes and bureaucratic opposition and incompetence, Jews were deprived of most of the promised financial incentives.

On the negative side, the Jews were confined to the Pale, forced to pay a much higher levy than the rest of the population, put under the authority of local municipalities and the jurisdiction of the state courts, while closely supervised by the police. The autonomy of the Jewish community was thwarted, and its power diminished in legal and economic affairs. The Jews were indicted by the Tsarist Commission of Inquiry, as primarily responsible for the chronic alcoholism, poverty and misery prevailing among the peasantry. They were accused of being a parasitic element in the rural agrarian economy, and were threatened with immediate expulsion from many villages, and many were consequently displaced physically and harmed economically. These measures caused a steady flight of Jews from the villages to the towns and cities of the Pale, and their effects were strongly felt in Bialystok during the reign of Nicholas I in 1825-35 and 1845.[76]

Furthermore, Bialystok flourished economically and enjoyed rapid urbanization in the aftermath of the Polish Insurrection of 1831, attracting many displaced Jews from war-torn areas. Bialystok also hosted a huge army garrison as it was situated just inside the borderline between Russia and the Russian-ruled Kingdom of Poland as well as in close proximity to the East-Prussian border.[77]

Concomitantly, Bialystok was enriched by a constant flow of state investments in the form of subsidies, experts, and the supply of modern technology. Situated just east of the borderline, it was not hindered by the trade barrier erected between the

annexed Polish provinces and the rest of the Tsarist Empire, imposed as a punishment for the 1831 Polish uprising, and Bialystok's textile production was exempt from this onerous tariff.[78]

Bialystok also benefited from trading with the Polish markets of the western provinces of the Empire. Its economic position was greatly strengthened by the construction of the Warsaw-St. Petersburg railway in the second half of the nineteenth century.[79] As a response to the second and stronger Polish insurrection of 1863, the Tsarist regime launched a forceful political and cultural campaign to Russify the former Polish territories.

Bialystok, moreover, was located at the point of convergence of three powerful cultural influences, Polish, Russian and German. These stimuli, in addition to the unique Lithuanian Jewish tradition of rationalist scholarship and Hebraism, the **Litvak** tradition, moulded the distinctive character of the Jewish community of Bialystok.

The second generation of the **Haskalah** movement in Eastern Europe was primarily Lithuanian, whereas in central Poland few **maskilim** were active.[80] The Lithuanian **maskilim** wanted to avoid the relative isolation experienced by fellow Enlighteners in other regions of Eastern Europe. Thus, they were active among the Jewish masses, and had to placate traditional Jews, who would not countenance any tampering with the sacred texts, while advancing their program of modernization. The heterogeneous Jewish community of Bialystok, with its modern economic life and European character, rendered the Jews more receptive to the ideas of the Enlightenment. Indeed, the centre of the **Haskalah** moved, in the early nineteenth century, from Berlin eastward.[81]

The **Litvak** tradition was characterized by a distinct synthesis of conservative convictions with the application of a rationalist approach to the study of the corpus of classical religious learning. This tradition began to fracture due to the growing discrepancy between the practice of confining inquiries to the Jewish Law on the one

hand, and the **maskilic** urge to probe studies which ultimately challenged its basis on the other.

Concomitantly, an increasing number of **maskilim** began to call for far reaching reforms in the system of study and teaching of Judaism. Prominent among them were the Hebrew poets and writers of Lithuania: Abraham Dov Lebensohn (**Ada"m ha-Cohen**), (1794-1878), his son Micha Yosef Lebensohn (**MICHa"L**), (1828-1852), Judah Leib Gordon (**YaLa"G**), (1830-1892), Abraham Mapu (1808-1867), Reuven Braudes (1851-1902), Peretz Smolenskin (1842-1885) and Moyshe Leyb Lilienblum (**MaLa"L**) (1844-1910).[82]

A product of the **Litvak** tradition and appearing at the time of the rise of industrialization in Bialystok, Hayim Zelig Slonimski's finely wrought balance between tradition and modernity gained him the position of a leading **maskil** in the nineteenth century.

NOTES

1.B. Barry Levy, Planets, Potions and Parchments: Scientific Hebraica from the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Eighteenth Century Montreal et. al: Published for the Jewish Public Library by McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990, 5.

2.Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, **Hagut ve-Hanhagah** [Hebrew: Thought and Leadership]. (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1959).

3.Raphael Mahler, Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century. Translated from the Yiddish by Eugene Orenstein, and from the Hebrew by Aaron Klein and Jenny Machlowits Klein. (Philadelphia et. al: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985), 41-3.

4.Shatzky, **Haskalah** 93 and 125.

5.Halevy wrote two major works. The first was **Giveat ha-Moreh** [The Decisor's Hill, Prague: 1612]. The book was published by R. Yom Tov Lipmann Heller (1579-1654), an outstanding rabbinic authority and commentator on the **Mishnah**, who also introduced and annotated the text. The title combines a Hebrew play on words based on Maimonides' **Moreh Nevukhim** [The Guide for the Perplexed], and a biblical site in northern Israel. The second was **Ketonet Passim** [A Coat of Many Colours, Lublin: 1614]. See Shatzky, **Haskalah** 16.

6.Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "Lithuania-The Structure and Trends of Its Culture," Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook 1973 (Jerusalem: Keter, 1973), 121 and 125. See also Chapter III below for a detailed analysis.

7.Delmedigo (= Delmedico) was known by his vocation, his Hebrew initials, and place of birth as **YaSH"aR** (Yoseph Shlomo Rofe) Mi-Candia, that is of the island of Crete. His father was the rabbi of Crete, and the scion of a distinguished rabbinic lineage. Levy, Planets 59.

Delmedigo studied at the University of Padua, and lived in such major European cities as Constantinople, Prague, Hamburg, and Frankfurt a M. He befriended prominent European scholars such as Galileo, whose astronomical thinking influenced his own, Ari ibn Rahmadan, an Egyptian mathematician, and R. Leone Modena, the controversial Italian rabbi with whom he discussed **Kabbalah**. Delmedigo, moreover, befriended Karaites, who were more open to secular learning.

Delmedigo supported the astronomical innovations of Copernicus, Brahe, and Galileo against the classic teachings of Ptolemy, which he mastered. In addition, Delmedigo exalted Kepler as the greatest mathematician of the age. See Israel Halpern, Eastern European Jewry: Historical Studies [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1968), 388-393.

8.The title alludes to a name of a place cited in Exodus 15:27, where there were twelve wells and seventy date trees.
Halpern, Eastern Europe 390, notes that the publication of **Sefer Elim- Ma'ayan Ganim** was sponsored by the prominent Dutch Jew and Hebrew publisher of Amsterdam, R. Menasseh Ben-Israel, during the time Delmedigo sojourned there. Several noted rabbis, including Modena, Luzzatto, Saraval and Jacob Levi, affixed letters of approbation.

9.See below, chapter III.

10.Raisin, **Haskalah** 24, and Halpern, Eastern Europe 388-393. Delmedigo praised the economic and spiritual prosperity of these Jewish communities in the first half of the seventeenth century.

11.Most of them obtained their degrees in Western European centres of higher learning: German universities such as Frankfurt on the Oder and Koenigsberg, or Italian institutions in Salerno and later in Padua. Eighty Jews obtained medical diplomas in Padua alone from 1517 to 1617, and many more Polish born Jews did so in the years to come. Since a large portion of them later indeed practised in Poland, the populace distinguished them as the "Padua physicians." See Leon Wulman, "A History of Jewish Physicians in Poland from Earliest Times to World War II," Louis Falstein, ed., The Martyrdom of Jewish Physicians in Poland. (New York: Medical Alliance-Association of Jewish Physicians from Poland, by Exposition Press, 1963), 12-13 and 22. Other physicians came from medical faculties in Amsterdam or Montpelier.

12.They earned much respect, and established a tradition of dependable and erudite doctors. It is evident through the titles they were accorded, and the financial benefits that were bestowed upon them by the royal court or feudal lords. Wulman, "Jewish Physicians" 13 and 25-39.

13.Cohn's family resided in Safed, in the Upper Galilee. His grandfather, Eliezer Rofe (Dr. Lazar), was a famous physician in Cracow. Cohn's father, Moses of Narol, a scholar and a mathematician, was a rabbi in Metz who died when Cohn was nine years old. Cohn was then sent to relatives in Cracow.

14.Cohn and his friend Gabriel Felix of Brody, decided to study medicine abroad. They first went to Danzig, where they were tutored by a local Jewish doctor, Hayim. Subsequently, they enroled, with the endorsement of the Prussian Prince Frederick William, at the medical faculty in Frankfurt on the Oder, where Jews were allowed to study since the mid-seventeenth century. The antagonism of both the professors and the students, however, with their consistent efforts to convert them to Christianity, forced both Cohn and Gabriel to leave.

Instead, they went to Padua, Italy to complete their studies in earnest; Cohn specialized in hygiene, under the instruction of Solomon Conehano, a Jewish physician from Venice. Both Cohn and Gabriel received their medical degrees in 1683.

15.Later it claimed five more editions, and was reprinted several times in the nineteenth century.

16.The book focused on natural sciences such as astronomy, botany, cosmography, geography, human biology, meteorology, and magnetics. It was divided into four volumes in five parts, with two sections. The first dealt with questions of philosophy and theology, the second was devoted to medicine, pharmacology, and obstetrics.

17.Wulman, "Jewish Physicians" 20-21.

18.Cohn had great expertise in medicine, and was one of the first doctors to accept Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood. His medical methodology applied innovative techniques, and Cohn conducted pioneering research in paediatrics and surgery. In addition, he rejected magical healing by laymen, and facilitated the eradication of superstitions prevailing among Jews. And yet, Cohn was very much a medieval man in the field of cosmography. He dismissed the heliocentric theory of Copernicus because it contradicted certain biblical accounts, and even unequivocally denounced him as "the first born of Satan."

19.He was born in Mezhirech, Greater Poland, studied in Rome, and practised in Bonn, later in Kalisz.

20.Both his books were published in Amsterdam. The first, in 1677, was **Yerushas Moyshe** [Moses' Heritage]. It contained a hundred and ten chapters. The second, in 1679, was **Yorum Moyshe** [Let Moses Exalt], contained a hundred and thirty-nine practical medical prescriptions. These works captured a wide readership, and famous Italian physicians awarded them letters of approbation. Their success merited more editions even thirty years later. Wulman, "Jewish Physicians" 22-23.

21. Known by the Hebrew acronym **HaGR"A**, he was accepted as a paramount authority in the interpretation of Jewish religious law, in recognition of his vast erudition, encyclopedic memory and charismatic personality.

R. Elijah told his disciple, R. Barukh Schick of Shklov, that the study of sciences is crucial. See David E. Fishman, "A Polish Rabbi Meets The Berlin Haskalah: The Case of R. Barukh Schick," AJS Review 13 (1987), 95-123.

R. Elijah is famous for his denunciation of **Hasidism** and his guidance of its opposing movement, the **mitnagedim**. He preferred the traditional pattern of leadership in Judaism, believing that true charisma inhered only in the **Torah**, not in its teachers, and that the popularization of mysticism was inherently dangerous because of the potential for antinomianism. Stanislawski, Gordon 10.

22.Etkes, **Gaon**, CXCII-CCXVII. As the distinction in the title between image and reality suggests, Etkes concludes that describing R. Elijah as a forerunner of the **Haskalah** is exaggerated and anachronistic. R. Elijah's attitude toward science, however, facilitated further studies of secular subjects by several of his disciples, such as Barukh Schick of Shklov (see below).

23.See below.

24.The excerpt is from Fishman, Schick 95-96, translated and quoted from Schick's **Uklides** (The Hague: 1780), introduction (unpaginated).

25.Ben-Sasson, Lithuania 126.

26.Ben-Sasson, Lithuania 120-34.

27.Zipperstein, **Haskalah** 191.
The curriculum of these institutions was based on a rigid interpretation of the Jewish law. These **Yeshivoth** were instrumental in fighting the **hasidic** gains made in neighbouring Poland.

The leadership of non-**hasidic** Jewry was vouchsafed to the disciples of the Gaon, such as Rabbi Hayim ben Isaac of Volozhin (1749-1821), and they attempted to translate their master's teachings into a pedagogic theory that was supposed to lead not only to virtuoso scholarship, but also to increased spirituality and heightened awe of the divine. See Stanislawski, Gordon 10-11.

Later, the conservative **Musar** movement, founded by the Lithuanian Rabbi, Israel Lipkin Salanter (1810-1883), was able to incorporate **mitnagedic** and **hasidic** elements by stressing Torah study alongside preaching ethical conduct based on **Halakhah**. See Ehud Luz, Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement (1882-1904). Translated from the Hebrew by Lenn J. Schramm. (Philadelphia et. al: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1988), 11. See below, chapter III, for the career of Yom Tov Lipman - Lipkin's son and Slonimski's student.

28.For a detailed analysis of the process, see: Owen Chadwick, The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century. (Cambridge: University Press, 1975). This study offers an insight into the foundations of the philosophical and social causes

of secularization as of the mid-seventeenth century, as well as into the consequences in the twentieth century.

29.Poland awarded the first diploma for a locally trained medical doctor in 1727. Wulman, "Jewish Physicians" 9.

30.See Shalom Spiegel, Hebrew Reborn (New York: Macmilan, 1930). A major contributor to this project was Mendele Mokher Seforim, see below.

31. The **Haskalah** in Zamosc benefited from the Austrian occupation at the time of the Third Polish Partition, 1795, until the city passed into Tsarist Russian hands in 1809. This city was the birthplace of the renowned Yiddish and Hebrew writer I.L. Peretz (1851-1915), who discussed the impact of the **Haskalah** on his home-town in his memoir, **Meyne zikhroynes**. See Yehudah Aryeh Klausner, "Zamosc, the City of I.L. Peretz" [Hebrew] Heawar 9 (1962), 98-117.

32.In Talmudic and Rabbinic literature, pilpul refers to a sharp dialectic used particularly by Talmudists in Poland since the sixteenth century.

33.Aaron Gumperz (Berlin, 1723-Hamburg, 1769), was the first Prussian Jew to obtain a medical degree. The degree was granted in 1751 notwithstanding the opposition of the University of Frankfurt on the Oder. During his prolonged activity in Berlin, he befriended Lessing, and later introduced him to Moses Mendelssohn, thus fostering an exemplary friendship in the history of the European Enlightenment.

34.Later Mendelssohn introduced R. Israel to many distinguished non-Jewish scholars, notably Lessing and Friedrich Nicolai, both of whom praised his erudition.

35.R. Israel was a versatile and prolific Hebrew writer. He authored scholarly books analyzing medieval Jewish works and personalities. His commentary on **Sefer Ru'ah** [The Book of Spirit], attributed to Judah Ibn Tibon, focused on the philosophical terms and foreign words in Maimonides' "Guide for the Perplexed" (Jessnitz, 1744). Several of his works were published posthumously: **Nezer ha-Demah** [The Crown of Tears], was a didactic work in poetic prose against immoral conduct, and embodies an implicit criticism of **hasidic** ideology. It was published in Dherrfurth: 1773, and Lyck: 1862. **Otsar Nehmad** [A Cordial Treasure], was a commentary on Judah Halevy's **Kuzari**, (Vienna: 1790). **Tuv ha-Levanon** [The Wealth of the Lebanon] was a commentary on Bahya Ibn Pakuda's **Hovat ha-Levavot** [The Duty of the Hearts]. Other articles on astronomy and natural sciences were left in manuscript. They also highlighted scholars such as Delmedigo (see above), and Isaac ben Joseph Israeli (see below).

36.For an analysis of Brody's development see Mahler, Hasidism, 32-3.

37.His father, a respected **Talmudist** and **halakhic** authority, served as the communal rabbi in Shklov for twenty years. Schick's maternal uncle was the distinguished **halakhist**, R. Aryeh Leyb Gunzburg, widely known for his authoritative work as the **Sha'agat Aryeh** [The Lion's Roar].

38.For the definitive analysis of his career see Fishman, Schick 95-123.

39.The first, **Amude ha-Shamayim-Tiferet Adam,** [Pillars of Heaven-The Glory of Adam; Adam also represents humanity] was devoted to astronomy, human anatomy, physiology, and hygiene. The second, **Yesod Olam** [Foundation of the Universe], discussed astronomy and utilized a 1310 medieval classic of the same name authored by Isaac ben Joseph Israeli, a Spanish Jew and astronomer in the first half of the fourteenth century. It dealt with geometrical problems of the earth in the Ptolemaic system, the seasons of the year, and astronomical calculations. This book was republished many times and widely translated. It was used by Slonimski in his own scholarship (see below, chapter III).

40.Fishman, Schick 113, lists them. Schick, moreover, is famous for his Hebrew translation of Euclid's **Elements,** The Hague: 1780. In the introduction he quoted remarks he heard from R. Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, in support of the study of science. See Fishman, Schick 95-96. Regarding R. Elijah and his remarks see above, chapter I and below, chapter III.

41.Fishman, Schick 120-1.

42.Chone Shmeruk, Yiddish Literature in Poland; Historical Studies and Perspectives [Hebrew]. (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1981), 164-203. Shmeruk refutes Marcuse's claim that he came from Central Europe, and exposes the attempt to disguise his authentic background.

43.Marcuse's mentor was R. Raphael Ha-Cohen of Hamburg, an Orthodox rabbi, who strongly opposed the **Haskalah** movement, and advised Marcuse to write his book in Yiddish, rather than Hebrew. He held rabbinic positions in the Polish cities of Pinsk and Posen. Ha-Cohen and other rabbis of Volhynia affixed letters of approbation to Marcuse's major work.

44.Shmeruk, Yiddish 186.

45.Like Mendelssohn, Herz was the son of a poor Torah scribe. He was destined for a mercantile career, and at the age of fifteen he moved to Koenigsberg, working as a clerk. Four years later, he attended lectures by Immanuel Kant at the local university. It was the beginning of a close friendship. Kant later chose Herz as his dissertation "advocat," they corresponded intensively for many years, and their

dialogue was pivotal for the evolution and understanding of Kant's views, in his 1781 book "Critique of Pure Reason."

In 1766, Herz had to discontinue his studies, for want of means, and thereupon became secretary to the wealthy merchant Ephraim, with whom he travelled in the Baltic provinces. In 1770, Herz returned to Berlin, where he joined Mendelssohn's circle, and befriended Lessing. Herz completed his medical studies at Halle, in 1774, supported by David Friedlander. Later that year, he was appointed physician at the Jewish hospital in Berlin, quickly establishing a reputation for professional excellence.

In 1777, Herz commenced to deliver public lectures on philosophy and experimental physics. He instructed many students and prominent personalities of Berlin, among whom was the royal family of Prussia, and the future Frederick William III. In 1787, the king conferred the title of Professor on Herz, and awarded him with financial benefits.

46.See below, chapter III, for its effect on the prominent German scientist, who was Slonimksi's friend, Humboldt.

47.He was a descendant of the leading sixteenth century Ashkenazi rabbinic authority, R. Mordecai Jaffe, who studied astronomy and mathematics before occupying the rabbinate of Grodno.

48.He held rabbinic positions in Bodzanow, Szebreszyn, Plock and Lissa (Leszno).

49.Isaiah Trunk "Yude leyb margolyes," in Saul Goodman's Amerikaner Yiddisher Kibbutz in Profile [Yiddish] (New York: 1988), 339-347.

50.Trunk, "margolyes" 344-5.

51.Jehudah David Eisenstein, Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. viii, 329.

52.His most important book, was **Or Olam Al Hokhmat Ha-Teva** [Light of the World - on Science, Frankfurt on the Oder, 1777]. The main point of this work, was the taxonomy of the "Wisdoms" into sciences, mathematics, physics, and metaphysics. The art of leading men was divided into politics, economics and ethics. This book was enthusiastically praised by several Russian and Polish rabbis.

53.During his spiritual and intellectual quest, Maimon travelled to Slonim, Slonimski's ancestral home-town. See below, chapter III.

54.Its critical study, as of 1780, especially the concepts of "Substance," the "Objective" versus the "Subjective," and "Consciousness," was to form the basis of his lifework. Maimon's major work **Versuch uber die Transcendentalphilosophie** [German: A Study Of Transcendtal Philosophy, 1790], was acclaimed by Immanuel Kant, who remarked that Maimon alone of all his critics had mastered the true meaning of his

philosophy. This book also directed the path of most subsequent scholarship on the subject.

55.His parents were from Vilna, and he was born in Lvov, during their journey to Buczacz, Galicia.

56.Shlomo Nash, "Noah H. Rosenblum: A Moderate and Original Observer of Literature and Philosophy [Hebrew] **Hadoar**, [New York: vol. LXVIIII, No. 20 (2961), April 1990], 26-28. Rosenblum suggests that **Sefer ha-Brith** was an important and informative work, but the author was very concerned to win the reader as a buyer of the book. Hence, its contents and ideas had to appeal to the widest readership possible. Rosenblum argues that Hurwitz's denial of proficiency in any European language was unfounded and suspects it was a precautionary measure against the traditionalists' fear of external influences. Rosenblum, moreover, maintains that Hurwitz's attention to **Kabbalah** (see below), and his claim that he originally wrote the manuscript in Yiddish, were in accordance with this strategy. In those proto-**maskilic** days, the **Kabbalah** did not negate scientific research, and was highly popular.

57.Hurwitz published it anonymously, in two parts, Bruenn: 1797. Many more editions were published throughout the nineteenth century in cities such as Lvov, Vilna and Warsaw. See Getzel Kressel, Cyclopedia of Modern Hebrew Literature [Hebrew]. 2 vols. (Merhavia, Israel: Sifriat Poalim, 1967), vol. i, 589. An addendum to the exhaustive review of the book lists nineteen editions available in Israel's National Library.

58.Hurwitz's professed intention was to focus on the second part of the volume, discussing metaphysical issues, such as **Kabbalah**, based on Hayim Vital's views and philosophy, utilizing Kantian ideas. The most popular and practical part of the book, however, was its first section, an introduction to the sciences, through an anthology that presented disciplines such as astronomy, physics, hydrology, geology, geography, mineralogy, botany, zoology, physiology, human anatomy, and psychology.

59.In his **Toledot ha-Aretz** [The Chronology of the Earth, Warsaw: 1841], a pioneering three-part natural history, Schonhak endeavoured to create a taxonomy of the natural world, and to elucidate the scientific terms in comprehensible Hebrew. The data was classified in three categories: animal, vegetable and mineral. A full characterization of the object and its habitat was provided. Finally, citations were provided for all items mentioned in the Bible, the Talmud, and in midrashic literature.

Schonhak's proficiency in ancient Hebrew literature produced another major work: **Ha-Mashbir**, or **Arukh ha-Hadash**, Warsaw, 1858. It was an Aramaic-German rabbinical dictionary, based on Nathan ben Jehiel's **Arukh**. His **Sefer ha-Milluim** or **Ha-Mashbir ha-Hadash** [The Book of Additions or The New Supply, Warsaw, 1869],

was an addition to his studies in that field, Kressel, Cyclopedia, vol. ii, 923, and Klausner, History, vol. iv, 133, and 467.

60.Neither Encyclopedia Hebraica nor Encyclopedia Judaica found him worthy of an entry.

61.Klausner, History, vol. iv, Section 8: "The Sciences in Hebrew," identifies the link between Schonhak, Slonimski and Mendele. For Mendele's career see Klausner, History, vol. vi, 315-475, Patterson, Novella 4-5.

62.Known in Russian as Belostok.

63.Historic Lithuania (which corresponded with the Jewish concept of Lithuania), was co-extensive with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, [Magnum Ducatus Lithuaniae], a territory which encompassed ethnic Lithuania, north-eastern Poland, Byelorussia, and parts of the northern Ukraine.

64.Hershberg, Bialystok, vol. i, 13, which is the basis for this survey.

65.In the legal terminology this act is known as the granting of the Magdeburg Rights.

66.Previously Bialystok was subjugated to the jurisdiction of the Jewish community of Tiktin (The common Jewish name; the Russian is Tykotsyn; the Polish is Tykocin), the head community of its province (**Galil**). Bialystok was developed by its manorial overlords, the Counts of Branicki, through encouraging handicratts and trade. Israel Halpern illuminates the contribution of Duke Branicki to the economic and administrative development of Bialystok, and his special relationship with the Jews, in "Duke Branicki and the Jews in Bialystok," Halpern, Eastern Europe 152-154.

This advance led to obtaining self-governing status within the Council of the Four Lands in 1745, coinciding with the award of independent municipal status. Tiktin finally relinquished its economic and administrative authority over Bialystok and its vicinity in 1771.

See also Mordechai Nadav, "The Extension of the Authority of the Tykocin Jewish Community Board over Surrounding Jewish Communities," [Hebrew] **Gal-Ed** 11 (1989), XXIV, and Halpern, Eastern Europe 142-148.

67.Commencing in 1769, when additional guilds representing blacksmiths, shoemakers, and carpenters were gradually established in Bialystok, Jews were granted membership and equality in terms of admission. However, in compliance with a European tradition, the Jews had to assume two-thirds of the expense incurred by Polish troops in transit through Bialystok in 1759.

68.In addition, many Jews continued to earn their livelihood as army purveyors, whereas other merchants imported tea from the east, or a variety of other commodities.

69.See below, chapter III.

70.Piotr S. Wandycz, A History of East Central Europe, vol. vii: The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918 (University of Washington Press, 1974), 56-60.

71.In the Duchy of Warsaw itself "the Jews were the only inhabitants to greet them [the Russians] openly, waving banners embroidered with Alexander's monogram." See W. Tokarz, "From the History of the Jewish Question in the Duchy of Warsaw" [Polish] **Kwartalnik Historyczny**, 16 (1902), 270-1. "In Bialystok, Halpern, a Jewish merchant, personally received a ring from Emperor Alexander I for information he gave the Russian armies during this campaign." See D. Kandel, "The Jews in 1812," [Polish] **Biblioteka Warszawska**, year LXX (1910), vol. ii, 159-60. Both works are cited by J. Stanley, in his monograph "The Politics of the Jewish Question in the Duchy of Warsaw, 1807-1813," Jewish Social Studies 44 (1982), 59.

72.Stanislawski, Nicholas XI.

73.The official decree that finally constituted the Pale came only in 1835, though restricting the legal residence to the westernmost fringe of the Russian Empire attended the Tsarist conquest of these territories. Most were annexed from the former Polish kingdom between 1772-1795, though New Russia and Bessarabia used to be part of the Ottoman Empire. Ostensibly, the restrictions were meticulously imposed by the Russian administration, triggering expulsions. Liberal tendencies and bribery, however, conditioned their application.

The Pale consisted of heterogenous geographic units, which may be divided into six regions:

1. The ten provinces of Russian Poland: Kalisz, Plock, Warsaw, Lomza, Piotrikow, Kielce, Radom, Lublin, Siedlice and Suwalki.
2. The two Lithuanian provinces: Vilna and Kovno.
3. The four Byelorussian provinces: Grodno, Minsk, Vitebsk and Mohilev.
4. The five Ukrainian provinces: Volhynia, Podolia, Kiev, Chernigov and Poltava.
5. The three provinces of New Russia: Kherson, Ekaterinoslav and Taurida.
6. Bessarabia

See Steve J. Zipperstein, "**Haskalah**, Cultural Change, and Nineteenth-Century Russian Jewry: A Reassessment," Journal of Jewish Studies 34 (1983), 195.

74.The members were: Count Viktor Pavlovich Kochubei (1768-1834), the first Minister of the Interior, and a confidante of Alexander I; his close adviser Count Mikhail Mikhailovich Speranskii (1772-1839), who was sensitive to Jewish pleas; Gabriel Romanovitch Derzhavin (1743-1816), the Minister of Justice and a prominent Russian poet, who specialized in Jewish issues; Count Zubov, the Governor-General

of New Russia; the Polish Prince Adam Czartoriski, an Assistant-Minister for Foreign Affairs and a close friend of Alexander I; and Count Seweryn Potocki, a member of the Senate. See Simon Dubnow, History of the Jews in Russia and Poland. 3 vols. (New York: Ktav, 1975), vol. i, 335-345, provides a detailed analysis of the events and their consequences.

75.Dubnow, History, vol. i, 342.

76.A massive effort to halt the imposition of the 1804 constitution yielded only minor amelioration due to the action of the delegates of the Jewish communities who tried to secure the protection of various Tsarist officials and institutions.

77.Norman Davies, God's Playground: A History of Poland in Two Volumes. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), vol. ii, 95 and 320, states that during the 1831 Insurrection, a Russian army of one hundred and twenty thousands men, commanded by General Diebitsch, was stationed in the Bialystok region, ready to strike at the rebels.

78.Wandycz, History, vol. vii, 123. Wandycz analyzes the rise of Bialystok and Lodz as textile centres.

79.Zipperstein, **Haskalah** 205, emphasizes the significance of transportation in general, and the railway system in particular, in the spread of modern currents. Zipperstein shows that in Jewish communities located along a commercial route, the **Haskalah** movement had greater impact, and provides a substantial bibliography on this subject.

80.Mahler, Hasidism 203-207, explains this discrepancy. He stresses the resistance of the **hasidic** leadership, the lack of a legacy of interest in the sciences alongside the classic Jewish sources advanced by the Gaon of Vilna, the lower level of cultural development, and the absence of an urban, gentile middle-class element with whom the Jews could identify.

81.See Israel Bartal, "Radical Enlightenment and Jewish Socialism," Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies: Held in Jerusalem, August 16-21, 1981 [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1984), 15-16. Bartal focuses on the characteristic of Lithuanian Jewry, and his analysis of its salient features is applicable to Bialystok. And
Immanuel Etkes, "The Question of the Forerunners of the **Haskalah** in Eastern Europe," Tarbiz 57 (1987), No. 1, 95-114. [Hebrew].

82.The definitive analysis of Gordon's biography is Stanislawski, Gordon. For a cogent analysis of Mapu's career see David Patterson, Abraham Mapu: The Creator of the Modern Hebrew Novel. (London: East and West Library, 1964). For Micha Yosef Lebensohn's career see Jacob Fichman, introduction to **Shire Michal** [Hebrew:

The Poems of Micha Yosef Lebensohn] (Tel Aviv, Dvir, 1964), 9-39. For the others see: David Patterson, The Hebrew Novel In Czarist Russia. (Edinburgh: University Press, 1964), and Klausner, History, vol. iii, 116-119.

Chapter III

The Early Life and Work of Hayim Zelig Slonimski

A. Slonimski's Formative Period: 1810-1834

In addition to his immediate roots in Bialystok, Hayim Zelig Slonimski was greatly affected by the heritage of his family. As the name denotes, the Slonimski family came from Slonim, in the vicinity of Bialystok.[1] The **Haskalah** movement made headway in Slonim in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, initiated by R. Shimshon ben Mordekhai (ca.1734-1794). Getzel Kressel, the foremost lexicographer of Hebrew literature, praised R. Shimshon for being the most prominent proto-**maskil** in eighteenth century Eastern Europe.[2]

R. Shimshon combined knowledge in classical Jewish sources with an abundance of scientific knowledge. He was greatly affected by the teachings of the **Gaon** of Vilna,[3] and his outlook was similar to that of his close friend, R. Barukh Schick of Shklov.[4] Schick was sent to him by the **Gaon** for the approval of his translation of **Euclid**.

R. Shimshon served as the local rabbi between 1769-1791, supported by the manorial overlord, Prince Michael Kazimierz Ogiński. Ogiński actively promoted Europeanization to encourage enlightened Polish culture.[5] R. Shimshon had a strong cohort of disciples.[6] He also acquired a remarkable collection of books on scientific and Jewish subjects, prompting a visit by Solomon Maimon.[7]

This era in which the Enlightenment thrived was short-lived due to Tsarist oppression in the first decades of the nineteenth century.[8] Nonetheless, Hayim Zelig Slonimski's grandfather, R. Benjamin Bishke, who was born in Slonim, joined this circle. His interests conditioned the attitude of the Slonimski family to the sciences.[9]

R. Benjamin Bishke's son, Hayim Zelig Slonimski's father, Jacob, was born in Slonim. He married into the family of an affluent scholar and communal leader in Bialystok, Yekhiel Nekhes. Jacob, however, maintained close family ties and commercial contacts with his hometown. He was buried in the old cemetery of

Bialystok between two rabbis, which, in a traditional community, indicates his respected status.[10]

Hayim Zelig Slonimski, also known by his Hebrew acronym HaZaS,[11] the eldest of four children, three sons and a daughter, was born in Bialystok on March 31, 1810, 25 **Adar Sheni** 5570 according to the Jewish calendar.[12] The second son, Abraham, became a textile manufacturer and the third, Jonah, sold glass. Very little is known of the daughter, Simke.[13]

Slonimski earned the coveted title of **Illui**, reserved from Talmudic times for child prodigies, thanks to his intellect.[14] Nissenbaum, comments that

Already as a child, Slonimski was celebrated for his outstanding ability, diligent intellect, lucid understanding, and desire to learn.[15]

At that time Slonimski concentrated on studying the traditional Jewish sources. Nissenbaum stresses that already at an early age

Slonimski had a special inclination for various 'calculations'... was attracted to them, and he immersed himself in their details and gained the reputation of a 'Master of Mathematics.'[16]

Slonimski studied independently at his maternal grandfather's house of study, commonly known as "Yekhiel Nekhes' **Beit-Midrash.**"[17] This "renowned institution" educated several distinguished figures.[18] Hershberg remarks that Yekhiel Nekhes imparted to his grandson talent and knowledge in mathematics, rather than rabbinic erudition.[19] Thus, the impact of his paternal and maternal grandfathers was instrumental in directing Hayim Zelig Slonimski's career.

Slonimski married his first wife when he was eighteen, in 1828. His wedding came at a relatively late date in the eyes of traditional society, where a male of his standing was usually married off in his early teens. Slonimski's belated marriage may be due to his devotion to his studies and his high social status. The sources are conspicuously silent on this marital union - even his wife's name is unknown. Slonimski divorced her in 1842. He married Sarah Stern shortly afterwards.[20]

As was customary at the time, the young couple received room and board for three years with the bride's parents in the town of Zabludow.[21] There Slonimski

met and befriended Yekhiel Mikhl Zabludowski (1804-1874), who later exerted a tremendous influence on Slonimski during the latter's formative period.

Zabludowski was born into a renowned family of scholars and manufacturers who had a substantial share of the textile industry in Zabludow.[22] He established an independent pharmaceutical business for himself, which reinforced his awareness of the importance of science and current scientific research. His fluency in German proved very useful to his scholarly pursuits. In turn, Zabludowski transmitted his vast knowledge to Slonimski.

Y. M. Zabludowski's influence is attested to by Eliezer Halbershtam, a relative and a fellow **maskil,** [23] who viewed him as the embodiment of "faith, wisdom and a gentle soul."[24] As one of the early **maskilim**, Zabludowski contributed philological studies of Talmudic texts to prestigious Hebrew periodicals such as **Ha-Karmel** and **Ha-Maggid**,[25] later becoming a leading member of the group that founded the largest and the wealthiest **Beit Midrash** in Bialystok in 1862.[26]

Zabludowski tried to prove the rationality of the Talmud. He applied his proficiency in both Latin and German in the course of his research, though he wrote in Hebrew. In **Ruah Hayim** [Spirit of Life] and **Mey Mikhal** [Waters of the Stream],[27] he annotated obscure passages in the **Midrash Rabbah.**[28] In addition, Zabludowski published **Mishan Mayim** [Water Supply]. In these studies, he explained various legends in the **Talmud** and **Midrashim**, notably those presented in the Passover **Haggadah.**

Zabludowski's instruction helped Slonimski to become proficient in German.[29] Slonimski received Hebrew and German books from him. These works were hidden in "Yekhiel Nekhes' **Beit-Midrash.**" Slonimski read these tracts voraciously. He spent long nights immersing himself in secular studies, focusing on physics, mathematics, and chemistry, and concentrating on calculating the appearance of the new moon.

Slonimski gradually lost interest in a rabbinic career during his three year residence at the home of his in-laws, as he embraced the principles of the **Haskalah** movement. He did not, however, forsake the observance of Judaism. He continued

to study classic Jewish works, but his focus shifted to acquiring scientific knowledge. Slonimski's initial source was outdated medieval Hebrew literature. Later his scope of interest and actual readings expanded into modern German scholarship.[30]

Among the Hebrew works that Slonimski mastered were: Joseph Solomon Delmedigo's **Sefer Elim: Ma'ayan Ganim** [The Book of Elim: Fountain of Gardens, Amsterdam, 1628-1629], a volume that focused on mathematics and astronomy;[31] R. Eliyahu Henes' **Shvile de-Rakia**, [The Paths of Heaven]; Raphael Hannover's **Tekhonat ha-Shamaim** [Astronomy]; Maimonides' study of the sanctification of the new moon and the calculation of its appearance; R. Shimeon Waltsch's **Neveh Kodesh** [Spring of Holiness]; Isaac Israeli's **Yesod Olam** [The Foundation of the Universe].[32]

Slonimski was able to impress foreign scholars early in his career, thanks to his vast knowledge. His grandsons, Antoni and Nicolas, report an anecdote highlighting the extent of his competence.[33] A German astronomical expedition, assigned to observe a solar eclipse in Bialystok or Zabludow around September 1828, was amazed by Slonimski's knowledge of the German language and scientific research. Antoni Slonimski substantiated this story with circumstantial evidence.[34]

When the three year **kest** at his in-laws' home elapsed, Slonimski returned to Bialystok. His brother Jonah employed him at his glass-cutting company. During his spare time Slonimski read every new book that came into his hands.[35] When the factory closed, Slonimski resettled in Zabludow and opened a grocery store. His wife operated the business, while he devoted himself completely to **Talmudic** studies during the day and scientific pursuits at night. He travelled often, visiting his family in Bialystok and other cities in the region, the most important of which were Vilna and Koenigsberg.

Vilna was the celebrated "Jerusalem of Lithuania." It had, by that time, become a commercial center, and the Jews, who were more than a third of its population, were strongly represented in the growing middle-class, although they were restricted to certain quarters of the city. To many among the emerging Jewish bourgeoisie, joining the **Haskalah** movement was a means of integration into the modern urban society which was developing.[36]

The legacy of the Gaon of Vilna, R. Elijah, and the circle of early **maskilim** in the 1830s and 1840s, facilitated the formation of a hospitable environment for Slonimski's pursuit.[37] The Romm Press, which had a virtual monopoly in Lithuania until 1862 due to Tsarist restrictions on the printing of Hebrew and Yiddish works, would later publish his first books.[38]

Koenigsberg, East Prussia's capital, was distinguished for its academic tradition, highlighted by Kant's career. Furthermore, Koenigsberg's political and cultural connection with Berlin, and its geographical proximity and strong trade connections to Lithuania, expedited the establishment of a branch of the **Haskalah** movement there. This headway inspired the pioneer **Haskalah** Hebrew periodical, **Ha-Meassef** [The Collector], at the end of the eighteenth century.[39] Koenigsberg was probably the first foreign metropolitan centre Slonimski visited. In 1838, several noted scholars from this city intervened on his behalf in Warsaw.[40]

In Bialystok Slonimski quickly acquired the ambiguous reputation of being a **maskil**. However, a growing number of Jews favoured his path, applauding his breadth of knowledge in areas previously relatively neglected by Eastern European

Jewish scholars, and he was well respected. Several members of his wife's family did complain about his concentration on the so-called "vanities," and some traditionalists opposed his moderately critical modern doctrines. The elders of the local **Beit-Midrash**, for example, challenged his claim that the earth revolves around the sun and not vice versa. Naturally, thanks to his superior rhetoric, Slonimski emerged as the clear victor.[41] Such debates endeared Slonimski to a waxing segment of the Hebrew readership. Indeed, he was highly motivated, a successful tutor, and, in accordance with the pedagogic strategy of the **Haskalah** to imbue scientific works with modern ideology, Slonimski opted to publish articulate and original scientific studies at an early age. Initially, he wrote books and articles, and later published his own periodical, **Ha-Tsefirah**.[42]

Judah David Eisenstein, a contemporary **Yeshiva** student in Miedzyrzec (Mezritsh, in the neighbouring region of Podlasia), and thus a representative of Slonimski's intended audience, celebrated Slonimski's pedagogic skills, and mentioned three outstanding students:

> Among the scholars who owe their eminence to his tuition are Professor Herman Shapir[a], of Heidelberg, and Professor Lipkin, of Kiev. He also gathered followers and inspired imitators of his method and style. Perhaps the best example was Rabino[v]i[ch], in his work, **Ha-Menuhah Ve-ha-Tenuah** [Rest and Motion], on physics and mechanism (St. Petersburg: 1867).[43]

Herman (Tsvi Hirsch) Shapira (1840-1898), was one of the first leaders of **Hibbat Zion** and political Zionism, the originator of the ideas of the Jewish National Fund and the Hebrew University. Born in Lithuania, he showed outstanding ability from early childhood. He served as a rabbi and **Rosh Yeshiva** in a Lithuanian **shtetl**. Shapira began scientific and linguistic studies in Kovno in 1866 and moved to Berlin in order to pursue them. He was forced to return to Russia due to lack of means.

He engaged in commerce in Odessa and other cities and earned enough to fulfil his dream -he returned to study mathematics at the University of Heidelberg and achieved academic acclaim in the field.[44] Shapira received the title of associate professor of higher mathematician at Heidelberg in 1877. After the Russian **Pogroms** of 1881 Shapira founded the **Hibbat Zion** movement and even envisioned the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language. Herman Shapira became an enthusiastic supporter of Herzl's new political Zionism and participated in the First World Zionist Congress in 1897. In his later years he adopted a religious philosophy and way of life.[45]

Yom Tov Lipman Lipkin (1845-1875), was a Russian mathematician and the son of the founder of the **Musar** movement, R. Israel (Salanter) Lipkin.[46] He began as an autodidact in higher mathematics and went on to study at German universities receiving a Ph.D. from the University of Jena in 1870. He developed a mechanical device for changing linear motion into circular motion and his Cinematic system was included in many Russian and foreign textbooks.

Yehudah Leib (Leon) Rabinovich (1862-1937) was a Hebrew writer, editor, and physicist known by his Hebrew pen name **Ish Yehudi**. He studied medicine and physics and in 1887 he began to publish popular articles on science and related issues in **Ha-Melits** and **Knesset Yisroel**.[47] In 1890 he won a gold medal at the Paris Exhibition for his inventions.

Most of Slonimski's teachings aimed at widening the horizons of traditional Jews by imparting to them basic concepts about nature and mathematics. He combined the mentality of the traditional world with modern knowledge in a popular, easy to understand language. Eisenstein asserted that

His principal aim was to reach the class of Jews who knew no other language than Hebrew, and to get as many readers as possible.[48]

Eisenstein further maintained that Slonimski's

strict conservatism in religious matters, gained for his teachings the implicit confidence of his readers, and enabled him to overcome the prevailing apprehension that religious principles were in danger of being sacrificed in the interest of science.[49]

Slonimski was not interested in creating literature or composing poetry. The noted Hebrew writer David Frischman, recalling his personal encounter with him, observed that "One cannot conceive of a greater contradiction than Slonimski and poetry."[50]

Later reflections by Nahum Sokolov, Slonimski's protegè, provide further insight into Slonimski's personality and professional capability. Sokolov's recollection of Slonimski is probably the best first-hand account of Slonimski's attributes, although Sokolov could not have been objective.

Sokolov admired Slonimski as a person and as a mentor, for his unique brilliance, intellect, thirst for knowledge, the wealth of information which Slonimski possessed, and the breadth of his interest. Appraising Slonimski's devotion to his studies, Sokolov stressed his outstanding sincerity, deep concern for accuracy and detail, and the scope of his successful, widely read publications. Sokolov also valued Slonimski's evident power of integrating research.[51]

Zinberg opined that Slonimski's personal attributes and moral persuasion, were subjected to his goal,

> to disseminate as much 'knowledge of nature' as possible, in the narrow alleys of the Jewish 'pale'. In regard to this matter, the cold, intellectual mathematician and astronomer, became a fervent enthusiast. He was deeply persuaded, that only the natural sciences, only positive technical knowledge, could bring redemption, tear Jews out of the congealed 'four cubits' in which they have been fixated for so many generations, and arouse their interest in the free European world with its marvellous inventions and immense technology.[52]

B. Slonimski's Early Career: (1834-1862)

Hayim Zelig Slonimski began publishing books in 1834. His works played an important role in the dissemination and development of the **Haskalah** movement in Eastern Europe. Since they treated the sciences, rather than current political and social issues, they were well received even by the Tsarist censors.

Abraham Uri Kovner (1842-1909) was a radical **maskil**, a Hebrew writer and pioneer of modern Hebrew literary criticism. In contrast to his acerbic critique of the prevalent elitist approach of many **maskilim**, their obsession with flowery biblical language and their tendency to futile polemics, he extolled Slonimski's vantage point and commitment to the masses:

Slonimski should be praised because as a well-known inventor he still had time to devote his talents to bring to the Hebrew-reading public scientific information written simply and clearly.[53]

Furthermore, as Paperna analyzed, Slonimski vividly demonstrated the leading role Hebrew could assume in the advancement of modern scientific knowledge among Jews through his concise and exact writing style.[54]

Slonimski's first book was printed by the prominent Romm publishing house of Vilna and Grodno.[55] Slonimski failed to raise sufficient means to print the comprehensive mathematics treatise which he completed in 1833. Nonetheless, he was able to publish a part of this manuscript as his first Hebrew book, **Mosde Hokhmah** [Foundations of Wisdom].[56] As was common then, philanthropists and rabbis played a crucial role in the publication process. Moyshe Rosenthal, an affluent **maskil** entrepreneur from Vilna, furnished Slonimski with financial support for the printing expenses.[57] Being a prudent **maskil**, securing the approval of influential Jewish religious leaders was vital for Slonimski's long-term goals. "...since his head was mostly occupied with earthly matters."[58]

Slonimski wanted to assure the traditional Jewish readership that a scientific work in Hebrew did not pose a challenge to the traditional concept of **Torah** study but could be incorporated in it. Thus, Slonimski requested and received a laudatory

introduction by one of Vilna's eminent rabbis and a leading **mitnaged** of the time, R. Abraham Abele ben Abraham Solomon Posvoler, who was known for his willingness to grant letters of approbation even to **maskilim** who wrote controversial works. Posvoler used superlatives in the Aramaic language to applaud the superior quality of Slonimski's scholarship and continues in Hebrew by celebrating his wisdom and understanding of science.[59]

Slonimski reports an interesting anecdote regarding his encounter with Posvoler. It illuminates the thirst of some traditional leaders for secular knowledge, and bears witness to Posvoler's admiration for Slonimski's achievements. Slonimski went to Vilna specifically to request Posvoler's approval, and after having stayed at the **Beit Midrash** for a week,

> he found that those who came to be examined for [rabbinic] ordination received their award without delay, while he was put off from week to week. Ill at ease, Slonimski approached the venerable rabbi and demanded an explanation: 'You grant a **semikah** (rabbinical diploma) so readily, why do you seem so reluctant when a mere **haskamah** (approbation) is the matter at issue?' To his surprise the reason given was that the rabbi enjoyed his scientific debates so much, that he would not willingly part with the young author.[60]

Slonimski utilized the early scientific knowledge he acquired from his intensive reading of medieval and early modern Hebrew sources.[61] In his introduction to **Mosde Hokhmah**, however, Slonimski points out that these were generally outdated and insufficient and stressed the significance of contemporary German research. Thus, he contributed to broadening and modernizing the scientific studies of earlier Jewish authorities.[62] Slonimski produced a treatise on the principles of mathematics and incorporated a fair amount of algebra. Being an autodidact himself, he was clearly aiming to encourage and enable self-teaching by keen, avid students.[63]

In the following year, 1835, the whole civilized world awaited Halley's Comet. This extraordinary celestial phenomenon used to cast terror upon the inhabitants of earth throughout human history - many perceived the comet as an ominous sign, a harbinger of bloody, unfortunate events.[64]

The English astronomer, Halley, Newton's disciple, scientifically calculated its path, and firmly established the comet's seventy-five year elliptic course. As the newspapers wrote much about the comet's expected appearance, however, apocalyptic speculations developed and rumours were rampant in the Jewish streets and even in the study-houses.[65]

Encouraged by the success of his first book and concerned with expressions of primitive irrationality among Jews, Slonimski was prompted to pen a popular work on astronomy. Kovner states that his aim was to uproot any superstitions prevalent among traditional Jews.[66]

Like **Mosde Hokhmah, Kokhva de-Shavit** - the Talmudic term for comet - was published in Vilna. The printing was funded by Slonimski's close friend Abraham Zackheim.[67] Slonimski acquainted the reader with a synopsis of the history and the progress in scientific research in modern astronomy, focusing on Kepler's theory and Newton's laws. The study focused particularly on the structure of comets and planets.[68]

In the introduction, Slonimski indicates his determination to educate traditional Jews in the natural sciences:

My object is to interest, enlighten and delight Jewish students; as a recognition of the fact that science is no stranger to the Torah and religion; that both were granted by the God of Truth.[69]

Eisenstein later reflected on the tremendous impact of this work

The book found its way into **Beth Midrash** and the **Yeshiva**. It was whispered among the youthfull students that a star-seer had risen in Israel who had discovered the ways of 'Kochba de Shebit'. The name was familiar as it is mentioned in the first treatise of the Talmud; but they could not believe that a mortal man could comprehend the irregular movements of that mysterious and erratic star, since Mar Samuel, to whom 'the paths of the heaven were as clear as the pathways of his native town, Neherdaeh, in Babylon', frankly admitted that the comet was something he could not understand. The final appearance of Halley's comet settled in their minds the conviction that there was something in modern science, after all.[70]

Indeed, Reuven Brainin, who grew up in the heart of a Belorussian **hasidic** community the 1860s and 1870s, reports that this book, and the others that followed,

educated Jewish students and enriched their awareness of the sciences and nature. This diffusion of knowledge by way of reading Slonimski's works, persisted into the 1890s, despite opposition from traditional leaders and teachers.[71]

In 1836 and 1838 Slonimski tried unsuccessfully to establish himself in Warsaw.[72] Jews were obliged to obtain a permit in order to live in the city at that time, and those without the right of residence were required to purchase an entry ticket on a daily basis, which Slonimski could not afford. He was literally starving when he was arrested by the police for staying in Warsaw while avoiding payment of the fifteen Kopecks required for the daily authorization.[73]

Slonimski's primary objective in these visits was to gain the friendship of dignitaries who would sponsor the publication of another manuscript. During his stay in Warsaw he met leading scholars and statesmen.

First and foremost among them was Abraham Jacob Stern (1769-1842). Stern was a renowned Jewish mathematician, scientist, and inventor, who would become Slonimski's father-in-law by 1840. By that time Slonimski had divorced his first wife, sending her back to her parents in Zabludow, and married Stern's daughter Sarah (1824-1897). Stern exerted an enormous influence on his son-in-law, and his guidance encouraged Slonimski to focus on the practical sciences.[74]

Stern was born in Hrubeszow in the Lublin district of Poland. Later, he moved to Warsaw to extend the scope of his education. Stern developed an interest in mathematics while acquiring proficiency in the Talmud. His vast knowledge, originality, fluency in leading European languages, notably German and French, and his pleasant personality and social popularity, earned him an exceptional reputation. The fact that Abraham Jacob Stern remained an orthodox Jew (albeit anti-**hasidic**) who retained his full beard, earlocks, and kaftan, made him an object of curiosity and wonderment in the eyes of many gentiles. European intellectuals and people of high society were astounded that a traditional Jew "from the ghetto" could master "their" science and culture and even achieve a leading position in this realm.

Stern travelled extensively, and "was probably the first Jew of Warsaw that in his tours saw the world."[75] In the course of those journeys, he encountered many

Enlightened Jews. Stern revealed his technical and theoretical talents by improving the mechanism of the watch, inventing a threshing machine, and a calculator in 1812. In 1815, Senator Novosiltsov introduced him to Tsar Alexander I and obtained a substantial annual pension of three hundred and fifty Rubles for Stern from the Imperial treasury.[76]

Stern was a member of the consultative council of the Committee For Jewish Affairs in Russian Poland established by the Russian authorities in 1825. In this capacity he became involved in submitting the plan for the proposed rabbinical seminary in Warsaw, as an instrument in the fight against the spread of **Hasidism**.

In 1826, however, Stern refused an offer to serve as its principal. As an orthodox Jew he had misgivings regarding the institution's primary goal. Stern could not accept the policy of forced Polonization and anti-traditionalism, preferring a policy of propagating modern culture and science within the framework of traditional Judaism.[77]

Furthermore, Stern was highly respected by non-Jews. He was honoured as the only Jewish member of the Royal Society of the Friends of Science, and later appointed as an official government censor for Jewish literature. He utilized his personal reputation to defend Jews by publishing books and pamphlets in Polish refuting anti-Jewish allegations and sinister attacks.

While in Warsaw, Slonimski also met the conservative Russian viceroy in Poland, Ivan F. Paskevich (1782-1856). He was known for suppressing the Polish Uprising of 1831 and had earned a reputation of receptiveness to Jewish requests if offered a substantial bribe.[78] Paskevich admired Slonimski, and was instrumental in easing his successful visit to St. Petersburg.[79] Paskevich helped Slonimski to circumvent the legal difficulties involved in travelling to St. Petersburg, though in this case he did not receive any pecuniary incentives for his efforts. Furthermore, Paskevich encouraged Mathias Rosen to finance Slonimski's trip. Rosen (1804-1865), a Warsaw banker and Jewish communal leader, was famous for helping the needy and fostering the influence of the **Haskalah** movement through educational projects.[80]

Slonimski, moreover, established an impressive reputation in Polish academic circles. The most notable of his admirers among the Polish scientists Franczak Arminski, a professor of mathematics and astronomy, and the director of Warsaw's observatory. Arminski furnished Slonimski with part of the expenses to publish his work.[81]

Slonimski befriended other prominent scientists. Raphael Mahler lists them: Friedrich Wilhelm Bechsel (1784-1846), a distinguished astronomer and mathematician from Koenigsberg; Karl Gustav Jacob Jacobi (1804-1851), a Jew who chose to apostatize and served as a professor of mathematics, first in Koenigsberg, later in Berlin;[82] and Friedrich Georg Wilhelm Stroda (1804-1851), a celebrated German astronomer who headed pioneering projects in the Tsarist Empire and was active in St. Petersburg, and established the Royal Observatory in Polkievo.[83]

As Mahler shows, Abraham Stern utilized the support of these dignitaries when he attempted to obtain a residence permit for Slonimski, who having married Sarah Stern, had been based in Warsaw since 1842.[84] Stern employed Article 3, Clause 4 of the September 7, 1824 Royal Decree to petition the Commission for Internal and Religious Affairs, on February 11, 1842.

This regulation granted Jews who rendered useful services to the state the privilege to live in Warsaw without paying the daily fee. Stern asserted that this exemption should apply in Slonimski's case, "in acknowledgment of his high aptitude, a man who contributes tremendously, by his scientific research, to the enlightenment of his coreligionists."

Slonimski joined this appeal to the Tsarist authorities, emphasizing humanitarian grounds. He argued that in modern times it is inappropriate to search people like horses when they enter a city, a humiliation he had to endure every time he came to stay with his wife and her family. Slonimski mentioned his contribution to scientific research only at the end of his application.

The petition was supported by several renowned Polish and German scholars who met Slonimski earlier, valued his achievements and interceded on his behalf.[85] Stern's application was therefore reviewed even posthumously. On March 20, 1842,

Warsaw's municipal office recommended its approval, but the Commission for Internal and Religious Affairs rejected it on April 30, 1842. Slonimski was therefore deported to Bialystok, and he became a permanent resident of Warsaw only in 1852.

The book Slonimski wanted to publish during his first visit to Warsaw, entitled **Toledot ha-Shamaim** [History of the Heavens], appeared there in 1838. It was accompanied by approbations from the two leading lights of the **Haskalah** movement at that time: R. Solomon Jehuda Leib Rappoport (**SHI"R**), (1790-1867), and R. Nachman Krochmal (**RaNa"K**), (Brody, 1785-Tarnopol, 1840).

Rappoport was a renowned, moderate **maskilic** scholar. His prolific writings incorporate all aspects of Jewish studies, especially history and religious thought.[86] Rappoport emphasized Talmudic approval of astronomical studies and praised Slonimski for his contribution to the field. Krochmal, who also lived in Galicia, was an accomplished scholar and philosopher. He focused on modern historical and literary studies and did critical research in the origin and development of Judaism. He applauded Slonimski's astuteness as a popularizer of science - his coherent, concise writing style and the comprehensible conveyance of an abundance of knowledge.[87]

In **Toledot ha-Shamaim,** devoted to astronomy and optics, Slonimski presented a compendium of astronomical calculations, accompanied by specific tables. He also advocated, in the largest and most significant part of this work, a unique theory which contradicted the calculations commonly applied in the use of the traditional Jewish calendar. Slonimski supported his assertion by tracing the historical origins of the canonized Jewish calendar and argued that a substantial error had crept in.[88]

Based on meticulous calculations, Slonimski concluded that a divergence had evolved in the course of time, between the relation of the Jewish month of **Nissan** and the vernal equinox between the Jewish month of **Tishri** and the autumnal equinox. By the nineteenth century this discrepancy increased significantly, and the Jewish calendar was four days ahead of the actual solar time.

Thus, rejecting the traditional view, Slonimski suggested a highly plausible explanation to account for the emergence of the contemporary Jewish calendar.

While the Israelites sojourned in Egypt, they adopted the prevailing solar calendar, reckoning thirty days per month, or three hundred and sixty days to a year. The Jews did not adopt the lunar system until the Babylonian exile, when they also adopted the names of the months employed there. The present Hebrew calendar has been in use only since the tenth century of the Common Era.

Slonimski's view, that the Jewish calendar as we know it today was developed and instituted in the tenth century, contradicts the traditional one, that the Jewish calendar dates from time immemorial and was passed down through the ages by the sages, until the ninth century, when R. Ada ben R. Ahava, a disciple of Raba, of the fifth generation of the **Amoraim** in Babylonia, formalized this calendar in his famous Tekufot de Rav Ada [The Equinox of Rav Ada]. According to R. Ada, the Jewish year is composed of 365.216822 days. By contrast, Slonimski computed that the inaccuracy totalled 0.00456 days per year when compared to the correct time, and relied on Maimonides, who noticed this discrepancy already in the thirteenth century.

Slonimski's contention was unprecedented. At an early part of his career he developed a bold and original conception of the evolution of the Jewish calendar, which is widely accepted today.[89] From his youth onward, Slonimski did not attempt to shield traditional Jewish belief against critical scientific method, although he remained observant in religious matters.

This theory started a vituperative controversy among Jewish scholars and rabbis. The practical and the symbolic significance of the calendar in ordinary Jewish life was indisputable. The calendar embodied the Jewish tradition in daily ritual and provided a crucial link to both religious practices and the national history of previous generations. As Patterson observed, "The rhythm of the religious calendar was suffused with the glow of a universe tinged with the divine."[90]

Judging from the loss of their juridical supremacy in Western and Central Europe, the Jewish leadership in Eastern Europe, protective of its pedigree, sought to maintain its communal authority. The traditional establishment was therefore reluctant to trust the critical modern scholarship introduced by the **Haskalah** movement.

The Jewish elite perceived itself as the custodian of the rabbinic heritage. Many members of this social stratum viewed the **maskilim** as reckless, ruthless individuals who disparaged the foundations of Judaism. They suspected that tolerating public scrutiny of ancient doctrines would jeopardize their own social and spiritual authority, couched in the Jewish tradition. Thus, the attempt to expose the traditional calendar to a historical and scientific critique, antagonized several orthodox Jewish intellectuals.

In addition, professional competition and even personal jealousy compounded the emotions involved in the controversy. Slonimski pleaded that his study of the natural sciences showed his admiration of the orderly manner in which God conducts the world by way of invisible powers and fixed, immutable laws, whereas he merely dissociated divine power from human errors.

His opponents denounced this distinction between the purity of heavenly authority and the fallibility of traditional interpretation. They claimed that the implicit stance in Slonimski's criticism, characteristic of the literature of the **Haskalah** movement, is a departure from strict adherence to the premises of traditional Judaism.[91]

Concomitantly, a literary war regarding the Jewish calendar was fought in the **Haskalah** press between 1840-1871.[92] Several respected scholars participated on both sides. Among Slonimski's most vociferous supporters, in what was semi-humorously labelled "The 30 Years' War," was Abraham Stern.[93]

A second defender was Jacob Eichenbaum (1796-1861), a talented mathematician and a poet. He grew up in a traditional community and acquired a superior knowledge of Hebrew. Eichenbaum's interest in mathematics motivated him to study German, prompting him to become a **maskil**.

Eichenbaum's career was typical of a nineteenth century **maskil**, although his conduct was extreme. He publicly violated a number of commandments.[94] Eichenbaum contributed to a variety of Hebrew periodicals, such as Jost's **Zion** in Frankfurt a M. and Fin's **Pirhey-Tsafon** [Flowers of the North] in Vilna, both in 1841.[95] He was appointed as a teacher in the government-sponsored Jewish school

in Kishinev, and as its director in 1844. Eichennaum became the director of the Rabbinical Seminary in Zhitomir, in 1850.

Following Eichenbaum's death, Slonimski replaced him as director of the Rabbinical Seminary in Zhitomir and followed his policy of opposing **Hasidism.** Indeed, Eichenbaum's career presents similar patterns to that of Slonimski. Like Slonimski, he published a mathematics textbook in Hebrew, **Hokhmat ha-Shiurim** [The wisdom of mathematics] in 1857 and was involved in a polemic regarding calculations - Eichenbaum's was against the French mathematician Franker. Eichenbaum also petitioned the governor-general of Kiev in February, 1851. He requested permission to issue a Hebrew periodical entitled **Lekah-Tov** [A Good Lesson], but was refused. However, Eichenbaum devoted much of his literary effort to flowery **maskilic** poetry while Slonimski always retained a utilitarian approach to his writing.[96]

A third defender was Solomon David Luzzato (1800-1865), a distinguished writer and scholar in Hebrew and Italian, who is probably the most widely acclaimed in this group. Better known by his Hebrew acronym **SHaDa"L**, Luzzato presented an emotional and anti-philosophical conception of Judaism, and his Hebrew poetry is also permeated with a nationalist spirit. His chief merit as a scholar academic is in the areas of biblical exegesis, Hebrew philology, and the history of Hebrew literature.

A fourth defender was Daniel Ratner, who published **Mishpat Emet** [Hebrew: Right Judgement, St. Petersburg, 1885].

Slonimski was a proficient student of rabbinic literature and had the support of leading scholars, whose calibre far exceeded the standing of his opponents. He was undeterred by the implications of his controversial statements. Slonimski was therefore perceived by some as a serious threat to the tradition. He failed to convince his adver aries of the correctness of his thesis and to damper their opposition.

Noted opponents of Slonimski were: first and foremost Mendel Hirsch (Zvi) Pineles (1806-1870) an influential contemporary Orthodox scholar.[97] In his book

Darkah Shel Torah [Hebrew: The Path of the Torah, Vienna, 1861], Pineles strenuously opposed Slonimski's theory. Abraham Ber Gottlober commented on that dispute.[98] He denounced the personal vehemence and uncontained anger which Pineles displayed toward Slonimski. Gottlober maintained that Pineles should have adhered to the emotionally-detached standards of academic discourse.[99]

Matityahu (Mathias) Strashun of Vilna (1819-1885), was a Jewish scholar, a devoted reader who knew many languages, had an extensive knowledge of philosophy, history, and astronomy, and acquired a substantial library. He was called to mediate between Slonimski and Pineles.[100]

Second in his personal vehemence was another **maskilic** scholar, Gabriel Judah Lichtenfeld (1811-1887).[101] He authored a series of books: **Zaphnath Paaneach** (Warsaw: 1874),[102] **Tosefet La-Eravon** [Hebrew: An Addition to the Deposit, Warsaw: 1875], and **Cohen Leloe Elohim** [Hebrew. A Priest Without A God, Warsaw, 1876], in which he severely criticized Slonimski's mathematical methods and conclusions. Lichtenfeld specifically referred to Slonimski's **Yessode Hokhmat ha-Shiur** [The Laws of Mathematics, Zhitomir: 1865]. A third polemicist was Abraham Epstein (1841-1918), a rabbinic scholar and historian, who developed an interest in the natural sciences. He combined his knowledge of rabbinic literature with European scholarly methodology to publish books on Jewish literature, especially the Talmud. Epstein disputed Slonimski's assertion that the Jews did not adopt the lunar calendar until the Babylonian exile. Epstein maintained that the Jews always followed the current solar-lunar combination in an article in I. H. Weiss' **Beit ha-Midrash**.

Slonimski sustained the tremendous pressure he encountered in the course of this prolonged polemic thanks to the considerable reputation he had previously acquired. In certain traditional circles, however, Slonimski's religious sincerity and ethical and professional standards were called into question. He was even branded a subversive and a heretic by the ultra-conservative elements within Eastern European Jewry.[103]

Slonimski participated in the Hebrew periodical **Kerem-Hemed** [A Pleasant Vineyard] in the late 1830s and early 1840s.[104] He published the first part of **Yessode ha-Ibbur** [Foundations of Intercalation], a compilation of articles on the Jewish calendar controversy, in Warsaw in 1842.[105] The complete treatise was printed in 1852.[106]

Slonimski, moreover, was able to produce a substantial number of inventions, which greatly strengthened his professional status, thanks to his consistent research. His most famous state of the art invention, a calculating machine, was a perfection of a prototype invented by Stern.[107] Following Stern's death in 1842, Slonimski revised the original blueprint and travelled with his final model to Koenigsberg.

For exhibiting the complete design of the calculating machine, Slonimski was awarded the prestigious Demidoff prize, designated for outstanding inventors, in 1844, by the Imperial Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. This endowment included a substantial reward of two thousand five hundred Rubles. In 1845, Slonimski published an article in Russian explaining his method in the Academy's journal.[108]

Furthermore, upon the recommendation of the Russian Ministry of Education, Count S.S. Uvarov, the city of St. Petersburg granted Slonimski the title of Honourary Citizen in 1845.[109] It was a rare distinction for a Jew, since at that time only fifty Jews throughout the Tsarist Empire qualified for this prestigious award. As a result of the Jews' lack of elementary civil rights in the Tsarist Empire, Slonimski received only limited privileges, and the title was personal, not hereditary.[110] Nonetheless, this status awarded Slonimski substantial benefits, i.e. exemption from paying some taxes, which helped him financially, and priority in winning government franchises, which was of little use. Slonimski's children, moreover, had easier access to higher education, which facilitated their entry into the greater society.[111] In addition, Slonimski was spared the penalty, albeit highly unlikely, of being flogged.[112]

Indeed, the invention of the calculating machine marked Slonimski's economic entry into the vast European market. He sold the patent rights to a British firm for the handsome sum of four hundred British Pounds Sterling.[113] These prizes and

contracts, in addition to the aforementioned benefits the Tsarist regime accorded him provided Slonimski with scholarly, social, and monetary gratification. They enabled him to devote his time to scientific research without financial constraints. Enjoying such a comfortable life-style was a luxury for a **maskil** who was not independently wealthy.[114]

Concomitantly, in 1844 Slonimski travelled for the first time to Berlin, where he befriended prominent German scholars.[115] The most notable among them was the dean of German scientists Alexander Freiherr (Baron) Von Humboldt (1769-1859). He was a naturalist and explorer who figured prominently as a scholar and popularizer of science during the classic period of physical and biogeography.[116] Humboldt and Slonimski's scholarly association quickly turned into a close friendship and produced a steady correspondence. This relationship earned Slonimski the nickname "the Jewish Humboldt."[117]

Humboldt's most important work, **Kosmos**, was clear account of the universe as then known. Simultaneously, Humboldt was able to communicate the scientist's excitement and aesthetic enjoyment he experienced in his discoveries. This encyclopedia made a valuable contribution to the popularization of science. It was quickly translated into all major European languages.

Humboldt had some previous experience with Jews and Judaism. The wife of the famous **maskil** and doctor Marcus Herz, Henrriette Herz, whose salon attracted the elite of Berlin, taught him the Hebrew alphabet, exchanged German letters with him written in the Hebrew script, and introduced him to **Haskalah**'s contemporary "Berlin circle."[118] Slonimski utilized these professional and social contacts to publish articles regarding the Jewish calendar in the local **Journal der Matematik.**

Humboldt later introduced Slonimski to the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795-1861). A part of Humboldt's fascination with Slonimski's personality was due to his unique Jewish characteristics. Unlike the assimilated German Jews, Slonimski retained his customary attire and thick beard. He did deem it appropriate, however, to shave his beard before being introduced to the King. Humboldt was

exceptionally disappointed. Whereas Friedrich Wilhelm IV had met many scientists dressed in modern clothing, Humboldt had hoped to introduce him to a brilliant Jewish inventor who still looked like his "backward" brethren.[119]

This visit deeply impressed Slonimski, and in its aftermath the Jewish community of Berlin requested that he dedicate a book in Hebrew to Von Humboldt. Slonimski states in the introduction that he concluded writing the manuscript in time for the celebration of Humboldt's eighty-eighth birthday on September 14, 1857, and the book was published in Berlin in 1858. The work was naturally entitled **Ot Zikaron le-Alexander Von Humboldt** [Commemoration of Alexander Von Humboldt], and claimed two more editions.[120]

Slonimski presented a biographical sketch of the exciting and exemplary life of Humboldt, together with a scientific yet a popular summary of Humboldt's **Kosmos**.[121] Slonimski viewed German as the foremost European language of science, education, and culture.[122] He wished to confer a similar role to Hebrew in Jewish life. Furthermore, **Kosmos** served as a paradigm which Slonimski aimed to emulate in his own works.

The work commences with an approbation by Humboldt. It follows with a citation that Slonimski marshalled from Psalms 8:4:

> What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him, you made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour.

Slonimski strove to demonstrate that progress, the knowledge and understanding garnered by the later generations, are the most significant manifestations of that "glory and honour." Slonimski's citation of that biblical verse provides a formidable juxtaposition of recognized past achievements with future hopes. Slonimski made use of traditional references, although he departed from the traditional view of the spiritual superiority of antiquity. This is evident already from the first lengthy and scarcely punctuated paragraph of the text:

> As the heavens are higher than the earth the conduct and thoughts of human beings in this current age is superior to that of ancient peoples and their deeds. And as the east is distant from the west so have the sciences and erudition removed themselves

from the boundaries set for them by past generations. There is no end to the tremendous accumulation of information that has grown and developed on top of the orchards of wisdom, which sent its fruits and flowers to all the corners of knowledge and scholarship. - There is no end to the abundance of human activity and dexterity which has spread upon the earth among all nations and tongue - Human beings have breached the walls of time and place which have secluded them in the past, and have extended their comprehension to every object under the skies. The many tests and experiments that have been accumulated in the course of numerous generations, and the longing of the human heart to search and find the logic behind everything existing under the sun, have revealed to us the extent of the creative forces and natural powers which we never grasped before, and the more effort human beings devote towards observing and researching their foundation, the greater the number of new discoveries of the earth which spring to their eyes, which attest to the shortage in tests and experiments in these obscurities, consequently increasing incredibly the deeds of contemporaneous scientists, to extract from the earth natural wisdom [of its secrets] which is greater than the land, and to pump wisdom and cognizance from its springs of knowledge which are wider than the sea.[123]

The work then continues with a most complimentary biography of the family and the upbringing of Humboldt, an admiring depiction of German culture and its educational institutions, and a glorifying appraisal of the Prussian state system. It is obvious that Slonimski hoped Jews would emulate them; Humboldt would serve as a role model.

Of the many personal and scholarly virtues Slonimski attributes to Humboldt's genius, the most prominent are his thirst for knowledge, and the courage and excitement displayed by his extensive travelling throughout the world.[124] Above all, Slonimski applauded Humboldt's personal sensitivity and devotion, at a substantial economic cost, to his chosen area of expertise.[125] In 1846 Slonimski moved to the city of Tomaszow Mazowiecki. The financial rewards he received for his calculating machine enabled Slonimski to devote his time to his studies and allowed him and his family a more comfortable life.

In 1847 Slonimski visited London. Such a voyage was a great event in the life of an Eastern European Jew of his generation. He wrote an article - "The Intercalation Laws of the Israelites" -for the local Hebrew periodical, **Sefer ha-Assif** [The Book of Collection].[126] In this study Slonimski substantiated his claim concerning previous errors in the intercalation method. The research presented data

in complicated tables, providing total accuracy in intercalation calculations. In 1851 he published yet another article discussing intercalation and astronomy, in **Ha-Yonah** [The Dove].[127]

Slonimski resettled in Warsaw in 1852. There, he was involved in Jewish communal life, attended the **maskilic** synagogue of the **Neorim** [Enlightened], and was later involved in an attempt to establish a public library.[128] Slonimski also published books in Warsaw. The first was titled **Al Metziut ha-Nefesh ve-Kiyumah Hutz la-Guf** [Hebrew: The Essence of the Soul and Its Existence Outside the Body].[129] It is plausible that he felt obliged to validate his credentials as an observant Jew after suffering a formidable attack because of his non-traditional stand on the development of the Jewish calendar. Thus, authoring a work in defence of a traditional doctrine incorporating scientific and philosophical concepts, was most prudent. It might reflect his private thoughts in the course of the trying days of the controversy.

Slonimski glorified in this work the perfect order within the divine creation and was particularly conscious of the living species. The work defined the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, couched in rational terms. With this work Slonimski followed the footsteps of the pioneer of the **Haskalah** movement, Moses Mendelssohn, who wrote on the subject in his **Phaedon**, 1767.[130] Nonetheless, Moses Leib Lilienblum (1843-1910), a prominent Hebrew writer and a leading Zionist, claimed in his memoirs that reading this book in his childhood convinced him of the opposite.[131] This may have been the real purpose of this publication, though the text is, **prima facie**, a scholarly work.

Slonimski published the complete version of his popular book **Yessode ha-Ibbur** [Foundations of Intercalation] in 1852.[132] This volume was probably the most widely read among his works, and had two more revised editions. Its total sales exceeded seven thousand copies.[133] In this text Slonimski presents detailed tables which supply new evidence substantiating his position on the calendar issue. This intensified involvement indicates the tremendous intellectual and emotional impact of this prolonged polemic on his career.

Slonimski's contribution to the scientific world was further illuminated by three more practical innovations he developed. The first, in 1853, was a lead plating process for iron vessels.[134] It was original and very practical, but thanks to the simplicity of this process several businessmen were able to ignore patent rights, much to its creator's chagrin.[135] The second invention, in 1854, was a new material for the steam engine. It was widely used in maritime transportation. Slonimski later sold this invention to Barzig, an entrepreneur from Berlin.

In 1856 Slonimski proposed an electrochemical device. It obviated certain difficulties in simultaneous transmission of quadruple telegrams by using a single wire.[136] This invention was devised in co-operation with Aaron Bernstein (1812-1884), a German Jew, a mathematician, and a scientific writer, who was also one of the founders of the Reform movement in Judaism.

In 1858 Slonimski travelled to Berlin where he published the book dedicated to Von Humboldt's career. In 1859, Slonimski published a brochure, in Russian, containing a detailed description of his aforementioned method for quadruple telegraph transmission.[137]

Continuing his intensive and productive excursions, Slonimski went in 1860 to Rostov on the Don. His prolonged journey back to Warsaw entailed a voyage by land to Odessa. This city was a major centre of the **Haskalah** movement at that time.[138] There he probably discussed his contribution to the upcoming **Ha-Melits** with its editor, Alexander Tsederbaum.[139] Later Slonimski went to Vienna. He was able to make the final leg of the trip to Warsaw only afterwards. Slonimski was obliged to follow such a complicated itinerary due to Draconian Tsarist laws. These regulations restricted the Jews to the designated Pale of Settlement.[140]

Upon his return to Warsaw Slonimski published several scientific articles in the bilingual Polish-Jewish periodical **Jutrzenka Ayelet ha-Shahar** [Dawn]. The **Jutrzenka** appeared between 1861-1863.[141] Slonimski also published an article on the human nervous system in 1861, titled "On the Time Emotions Run Between the Body and the Brain," incorporating German scholarship and reports of English people he met on their reaction to travelling in trains and thunder storms.[142] This feature

was published in the first volume of Vilna's liberal Hebrew periodical, **Ha-Karmel**, whose editor was Samuel Josef Fin (1818-1890).[143]

In 1862 Slonimski published two articles in the second volume of **Ha-Karmel**'s literary-scientific supplementary, **Ha-Sharon**. The first item was "On the Method of Baking **Matzah** in England." In it Slonimski gave a positive account of how an ancient Jewish ritual is conducted in a technologically-advanced modern society. His report was based on what he saw on his trip to London in 1847. Slonimski wished to weaken the influence of those traditionalist rabbis who opposed the baking of **Matzah** with the aid of mechanization. The second feature, titled "On the Course In Which Mercury Circles the Sun," discussed Slonimski's favourite subject, astronomy.[144]

These publications, and the liberal era ushered in by Tsar Alexander II as of 1855, facilitated the next project in Slonimski's career, which was probably his most challenging undertaking. It was the publication of a Hebrew weekly scientific newspaper, **Ha-Tsefirah**.[145]

Indeed, by establishing **Ha-Tsefirah**, the first Hebrew periodical devoted mainly to scientific issues, in February 1862, in Warsaw, Slonimski helped generate more popular interest in the field. This goal was achieved not by preaching the optimistic vision of the **Haskalah** movement, but rather simply through disseminating scientific knowledge and providing Hebrew readers with access to a vast corpus of secular information.[146]

C. Slonimski's Attitude Toward Languages

Slonimski encountered European culture at a relatively early phase of his intellectual and personal development, by reading extensively. At first, external influence pertained merely to scientific matters, but later it reflected on his overall perspective. The formation of crucial elements in Slonimski's independent thinking, namely receptiveness to ideas derived from non-Jewish sources, and his later criticism of traditional institutions, may be traced to this exposure to foreign views.

Slonimski was sensitive to both Jewish and gentile views of the linguistic division within his own community. Hebrew, the eternal Holy Tongue, was praised as the language of Jewish spirituality and intellectual creativity, and credited with forging the Jews into a nation. Hebrew was therefore considered superior to Yiddish by traditionalists and modernists alike.

In addition, many **maskilim** considered Yiddish, their mother tongue, to be a product of the ghetto, a badge of the isolation and degradation of pre-modern Jewish life, and treated it with explicit aversion. Yiddish was portrayed as a degraded jargon which the ignorant masses were forced to use, only because they were not yet given the opportunity to master the superior form of "pure" German.[147]

Slonimski decided that Hebrew would be his linguistic medium early in his career. As his background was rooted in the **Beit-Midrash**, Slonimski wished to bring the message of science and modernity to the traditional literate and scholarly segment of Jewish society, whose intellectual language was Hebrew. Furthermore, he strove to provide leadership in diffusing the ideas of the Enlightenment, which would rejuvenate his brethren, in conjunction with strict adherence to Jewish Law, and the solemn observance of Jewish rituals, to which Slonimski remained loyal to his last day.[148]

Slonimski, as a follower of the principles of the **Haskalah** movement, became conscious of the urgent need to fundamentally change the gentiles' negative image of the Jews as a backward people. He savoured the wealth of knowledge his familiarity with German language and culture had to offer, which was enriched by his

voyages to Koenigsberg.[149] Slonimski believed that the German language is easy to learn and the best means to know the truth.[150]

The **Verein fuer Kultur und Wissenschaft des Judentum** [Society for the Culture and Science of Judaism] promoted a substantial heritage of careful and systematic German Jewish scholarship in the humanities and history, a respect for facts, meticulous research, and a reliable scientific methodology.[151] The German language served as a bridge to the enlightened European culture it embodied. In addition, it offered cultural neutrality in the nascent Russo-Polish conflict. Preferring German helped the **maskilim** to desist from making a public choice in this fierce controversy. This combination made German an attractive choice and a role-model in its precision for Eastern European **maskilim**.[152]

Thus, Slonimski later opined that

> without German, there can be no cultured, educated Jew. As Hebrew once was in Palestine, so now the German language is with the European Jew.[153]

This outlook was in accordance with the common European trend in which German rapidly replaced French, in the course of the nineteenth century, as the major culture carrier.

The **maskilim** utilized Jewish multi-lingualism to combat centrifugal forces at work politically, socially, and geographically. Their reasons combined the liberalism and progress that German symbolized with the politically cogent strategy of refraining from declaring an allegiance to either ruling Russians or subject Poles.

Having incorporated this area into the Russian Empire, the Tsarist Empire slated it for Russification. In contrast, Polish nationalists who contested Russian rule, strove to maintain the position of Polish as the dominant cultural language in the eastern borderlands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Slonimski therefore conformed to an inclination of many **maskilim**. In essence, he blended an ideological tactic with a neutrality necessitated by the political reality. Slonimski was initially among the **maskilim** who favoured German over Russian within the broad context of competition between the representatives of Berlin's **Haskalah** circle and those wishing to Russify the movement.[154] His

admiration for German culture was invigorated by his later visit to Berlin and the glorifying book he composed in honour of Humboldt in 1858.[155]

Nonetheless, as Slonimski's career progressed he identified with the Tsarist Empire and its official language, Russian, a likely scenario for a **Litvak** Jew.[156] Shatzky, moreover, suggests that Slonimski was one of the few **maskilim** who did not think in Polish in Warsaw, though he spoke Polish fluently. Slonimski associated with Russian speaking Jews, although the liberal leadership of his community was polarized and pro-Polish.[157] He expressed his loyalty to the Tsarist Empire, although he tried to be neutral and apolitical.[158]

In the aftermath of the 1863 Polish uprising, the conflict between Russian and Polish increased. Slonimski participated in a debate regarding the language of instruction in the rabbinical seminary he headed in Zhitomir between 1863-1873.[159] This polemic reveals that he initially preferred German and subsequently endorsed Russian, though he published several articles in both languages.[160]

In 1864, the **Kievski Telegraf** demanded that Slonimski change the language of instruction in the rabbinical seminary in Zhitomir from German to Russian.[161] Slonimski replied that

> It is impossible to exchange the German language for the Russian... as long as it is forbidden to publish in Russian a textbook of Jewish history, a religious cathecism, or a translation of the prayer book. How can we help ourselves if even the Bible itself is not allowed to be published in Russian translation? As previously, the only literature on the science of Judaism that we have in our possession is still all German.[162]

In addition Slonimski tried later that year, to no avail, to persuade the Russian censorship to allow such translations. He asserted that they would generate interest, in "the language of the fatherland," thus expressing his allegiance to the Empire.[163] In 1867 Slonimski endorsed the use of Russian. He sanctioned teaching Jewish subjects, general and scientific studies in Russian, and expressed this opinion in a brochure he published in Russian in that year.[164]

Slonimski was throughout his public life a "Hebraist."[165] He was a pioneer in the tremendous effort to revitalize and invigorate Hebrew. He promoted this process through introducing, in his books and **Ha-Tsefirah**, a vocabulary of technical terms created partly by himself. Indeed, the joint effort of **maskilim** such as Slonimski facilitated the renaissance of the Hebrew language. They expedited the emergence of movements which transformed Jewish uniqueness into a modern identity.[166]

Finally, a contemporary critic of Jewish literature, Abraham Jacob Paperna (1848-1919),[167] celebrated Slonimski's competence to demonstrate that the Hebrew language is developed to such a degree that scientific works can be written in Hebrew, [since it is obvious that] the author knows how to use the language well.[168]

The Hebraism of traditional Jewish intellectual life as well as the **Haskalah** prompted Slonimski to commence his public activity relatively early. His strategy aimed at a gradual transformation of Jewish attitudes, focusing on the possible harmony between traditional roots and the Enlightenment. For Slonimski, like other contemporary conservative Eastern European **maskilim**, the **Haskalah** movement offered reconciliation, not a struggle.[169]

NOTES

1.Slonim is situated in the valley of the **Shchara**, a tributary of the **Neman** (**Nemunas**) river. The city arose as a fortified point, developed into a regional market, and became part of Lithuania in 1316. Slonim served as an administrative and economic centre for the district of Grodno. The Polish **Sejm** [national parliament], convened in Slonim between 1631-1685, and annual fairs were held in the city. The Jews settled in Slonim early in its history. The first documentary evidence of their communal existence dates back to 1551. The Jews assumed a pivotal role in the economic life of Slonim. They were engaged in the wholesale trade in furs, hides, wheat and timber, in crafts, and operated mills, in addition to involvement in the traditional occupations of contracting, purveying, leasing feudal privileges, and distilling and selling alcoholic beverages.

2.Kressel, Cyclopedia, vol. ii, 357.

3.See above, Chapters I and II.

4.For an analysis of his career see above, chapter II.

5.Kalman Lichtenstein, "A Monograph on Slonim's Jewish History," Pinkas Slonim [Hebrew: The Chronicle of Slonim] (Tel Aviv: N.D.), XXXIII-XLI.

6.Lichtenstein, Slonim XXXIII-XLI. Lichtenstein further highlights the polemic between several of R. Shimshon's disciples who became prominent **mitnagedim**, and **hasidic** advocates.

7.Lichtenstein, "Slonim" 12. For Maimon's biography, see above, chapter II.

8.Slutsky, **Haskalah** 12.

9.Lichtenstein, "Slonim" XXXVIII.

10.Hershberg, Bialystok, vol i, 236.

11.Many of his writings, notably in **Ha-Tsefirah**, were signed with these initials. The use of an acronym as a signature has a long tradition in Hebrew letters.

12.An early biographer of Slonimski, Nissenbaum, "Slonimski," I and Kressel, Cyclopedia, vol. ii, 504, give the 25th of **Adar Sheni** as his birth-date, whereas Hershberg, Bialystok, vol. i, 236, lists the 21st of **Adar Sheni**.

R. Isaac Nissenbaum (1868-1942), was a rabbi, Hebrew writer, and a religious Zionist activist in Poland. He is famous for the time he spent in Bialystok, Slonimski's birthplace, serving as the secretary of R. Samuel Mohilever, the foremost

religious Zionist leader at the turn of the century, and chief rabbi of Bialystok. Nissenbaum, moreover, was one of the later editors of **Ha-Tsefirah**.

13.Hershberg, Bialystok in both volumes, provides information about the Slonimskis' later deeds. See especially, vol. i, 420, and vol. ii, 34 and 112.

14.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127.

15.Nissenbaum, "Slonimski" 1.

16.Nissenbaum, "Slonimski" 1.

17.This house of study was established by Nekhes and his daughter Leah in 1820. It was the first **Beit-Midrash** to be built outside the communal synagogue's courtyard. Due to the population growth Bialystok experienced in those days (see above, chapter II), the two existing houses of study, which were adjacent to the synagogue, could not accommodate the surging demand. The whole street was later named after this **Beit-Midrash**. Thus, Nekhes reinforced his leadership position in the community, by responding to an acute demand. Hershberg, Bialystok, vol. i, 276-7.

18.Hershberg, Bialystok, vol. 1, 278, lists several names.

19.Hershberg, Bialystok, vol. i, 192.

20.See below.

21.The first indications of a Jewish settlement in this town, situated south-east of Bialystok, can be traced to the end of the fifteenth century. An important commercial centre, Zabludow was the venue for several meetings of the Lithuanian Jewish Council during the seventeenth century, when its exemplary wooden synagogue was built.

In conjunction with the development of its weaving and tanning industries in the course of the nineteenth century, the Jewish population of Zabludow grew considerably, and the Jews formed a majority of its inhabitants.

22.A survey of the index in Hershberg, Bialystok, vol. ii, 469, clearly indicates the importance of this family and the diversity of its activities. See vol. i, 228-9 and 233-234, which provides details on the achievements of Zabludowski's descendants.

23.Hershberg, Bialystok, vol. i, 214, depicts his career.

24.Hershberg, Bialystok, vol. i, 233, where more sources, such as the carving on his tomb and bibliography are discussed.

25.For an analysis of these periodicals, see below, chapter IV.

26.Hershberg, Bi lystok, vol. i, 284, lists him first among the twelve "most respectable men of the [Jewish] street and its environs," i.e. of the community that established the **Beit-Midrash.**

27.The title is a play on words, Waters of the Stream or Water of Michal, the author's first name.

28.Zinberg, History, vol. xi, 179.

29.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127, mentions, without providing specific details, that during Slonimski's childhood in Bialystok, "He learned elementary German from a near-by village smith, and borrowed the necessary books from a friend."

30.Zinberg, History, vol xi, 180.

31.See above, chapter II.

32.See above, chapter II.

33.For their biographies see above, chapter I.

34.Nicolas Slonimski, Perfect Pitch 24-25, and Guterman, Jewish Periodical 255, who quotes Antoni Slonimski.

35.Nissenbaum, "Slonimski" 1.

36.Now known as the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, its Polish name is Wilno, Russian Vilna, known to the Jews as Vilne, commonly Romanized as Vilna. For a historical survey of Vilna's Jewish community, see Israel Cohen, Vilna (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1943).

Joseph Klausner presents a plethora of primary sources, in addition to an integrative analysis, in his **Vilna ba tkufat ha-Gaon: ha milhamah ha-ruhanit veha-hevratit ba-kehilat Vilna ba-tekufat ha-Gra** [Hebrew: Vilna During the Period of the **Gaon**: the Spiritual and Social War in the Community of Vilna During the Time of "Ha-Gr"a"] (Jerusalem: 1942).

For an examination of the literary, cultural and political situation in Vilna during this period, see Stanislawski, Gordon 8-12. Note especially his overall appraisal, that "Vilna shone as one of the brightest stars in the constellation of Jewish life in Eastern Europe."

See David Aberbach. "Vilna and the Literature of Reform: 1825-1855," Glenda Abramson & Tudor Parfitt, eds., The Great Transition: The Recovery of the Lost Centers of Modern Hebrew Literature (Oxford: Center for Postgraduate Studies, 1985), 99-102, for an understanding of the salient features of the Hebrew literary centre established in Vilna during the same period.

37.See above, chapter II.

38.The Shapiro printing house of Zhitomir, owned by descendants of the Baal Shem Tov's disciple R. Phineas of Korets, was indispensable for **hasidic** literature. Romm's press in Vilna published some **maskilic** books. Since the bulk of the output consisted of standard religious works, however, which were purchased by traditionalist orthodox Jews, the publisher was extremely cautious not to print any volumes that might be perceived as heretical. Whereas the Romm Press (which did accept a number of conservative **maskilic** works) had a monopoly on the printing of Jewish books in Lithuania until 1862, it was imperative for Slonimski to gain its acceptance. See Shmeruk, Yiddish 162.

39.Tsemah Tsamriyon, Ha-Meassef: The First Modern Periodical in Hebrew [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 1988), 41.

40.See Raphael Mahler, "Abraham Stern's Lobbying for the Exemption of Hayim Zelig Slonimski from the 'Togtsetl'," [Hebrew] Heawar 9 (1962), 107-112.

41.Nissenbaum, "Slonimski" 1.

42.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127.

43.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127.

44.Among his publications was the mathematical work **Mishnat ha-Middot** in Hebrew [The Study of Measures] which appeared in German translation in 1880.

45.In Reuven Brainin's periodical in Hebrew **Mi-Mizrah u-mi-Ma'arav** [From East and West] of 1894 he published two fragments of a book in which he attempted to synthesize modern science with traditional Judaism.

46.See above, chapter II. for his career and the foundation of the **Musar** movement.

47.Slonimski also published in these periodicals, see below.

48.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127.

49.Jehudah David Eisenstein, the entry "Slonimsky, Haim Zelig," The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York. 1905), vol. xi, 409.

50.**Kol Kitvey David Frischman: ve-Mivkhar Targomav** [All of David Frischman's Writings: and a Selection of his Translations) (Warsaw: Merkaz. 1924), vol. ii, 27.

51.Nahum Sokolov. **Ishim: Ktavim Nivharim** [Hebrew: Personalities; Selected Writings] (Jerusalem. 1958), 135.

52.Zinberg, History, vol. xii, 27.

53.Morris Neiman, A Century of Hebrew Literary Criticism 1784-1884 (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1983), 123.

54.Neiman, Criticism 179. Jehudah Leib Sosnitz collected and edited an anthology of Slonimski's articles, entitled **Maamre Hokhmah**, [Essays in Science, Warsaw, 1891]. It gathers together features mostly from **Ha-Tsefirah**.

55.One of the three principal Jewish communities in Lithuania, Grodno, or Horodno, received its charter from Grand Duke Witold already in 1389. Though it had to bear the brunt of violent opposition from local inhabitants and the consequences of foreign invasions, Grodno became a noted centre of Jewish learning, as of the sixteenth century. Distinguished rabbis and scholars such as Mordechai Jaffe earned Grodno/Horodno the honour of being pronounced **Har-Adonai**, Hebrew for "the mountain of God." Economically, the main Jewish occupations, were commerce, primarily in agricultural and timber products, and crafts.

As Grodno was a leading member of the Lithuanian Jewish Council, and the seat of the Lithuanian state court of appeal, it assumed the responsibility for the care of Jewish affairs in general, while undertaking Jewish defence in libel cases in particular.

The first Hebrew book to be published in Lithuania, was printed in Grodno in 1788, on the royal press. A second Hebrew press, established in Grodno in 1793, formed the core of the celebrated printing and publishing house owned by the Romm family. Thus, their early publications, including Slonimski's **Mosde Hokhmah**, bore the imprint "Vilna and Grodno."

56.Nissenbaum, "Slonimski" 1.

57.The Rosenthal family resided in Bialystok and Vilna. Both branches distinguished themselves as active supporters of the **Haskalah**'s educational enterprise. In Vilna the Rosenthals utilized their influence at the Tsar's court to secure a permit to open a school in the spirit of the **Haskalah**. Subsequently they provided the funds required for its establishment. In turn, the institution's Principal was Nissan Rosenthal; he hired many young promising **maskilim**. Notable among them was Mordechai Aaron Gunzburg (commonly known by his acronym **RaMa"G** 1795-1846), a renowned Hebrew writer and influential critic, see Klausner, History, vol. v, indices.

In 1838 Moyshe Rosenthal met the Russian Minister of the Interior, Count S.S. Uvarov. Rosenthal represented a group of **maskilim** seeking help from the authorities to introduce the teaching of Russian and other European languages in Jewish schools. Uvarov told them that opposition from traditional rabbis hindered the prospect for their admittedly positive request. See Shatzky, **Haskalah** 86, 88 and 97.

58.Nissenbaum, "Slonimski" 2.

59.Posvoler (d. July 29, 1836) served in his youth as rabbi in the Lithuanian town of Posvol. Thus he acquired his name. In 1802 he moved to Vilna where he became a head of the rabbinic court. Posvoler contributed to the rabbinical works of several contemporary orthodox writers, although he left no independent literary work.

Posvoler was distinguished as the only traditionalist rabbi of the time who affixed a letter of approbation to Rabbi Isaac Ber Levinsohn's 1828 work, **Teudah be-Yisrael**. Levinsohn (1788-1860), known by the Hebrew acronym **RIBa"L**, was celebrated for being the father of the **Haskalah** movement in Russia. This famous manifesto played a pioneering role introducing the **Haskalah** to Russia, as it exhorted the Jews to learn European languages and apply themselves to manual and agricultural labour. See Immanuel Etkes, intro., Isaac Baer Levinsohn's **Te'udah Be'Yisrael** [Testimony in Israel] (Photocopy of the Vilna and Horodno edition, 1828). [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Centre, 1977), 12.

In addition, Posvoler awarded a letter of approbation to a work by Vilna's leading **maskil**, R. Mordechai Aaron Gunzburg (see above). Klausner, History, vol. iii, 122.

60.Raisin, **Haskalah** 199.

61.See above.

62.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127.

63.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127, who observes with appreciation that "Slonimski's career is an example of self-education." See also Neiman's comparison between Moses Mendelssohn, Isaac Ber Levinsohn, and Slonimski, who were not only autodidacts, but were also "universally honoured." Neiman, Criticism 116.

64.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127.

65.Zinberg, History, vol xi, 180.

66.Neiman, Criticism 146.

67.Hershberg, Bialystok, vol. i, 237.

68.A second edition of Kokhva De-Shavit, with supplements, was published in 1857.

69.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127.

70.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127.

71.Brainin, **Lebns-Bukh** 18, 19, and 35.

72.Shatzky, Warsaw, vol. ii, 126.

73.Mahler, "Stern" 107-112.

74.Nissenbaum, "Slonimski" 3.

75.Shatzky, Warsaw, vol. i, 284.

76.Nicolas Slonimski, Stern's great-grandson, repeats, in his Perfect Pitch, 22, an anecdote he heard from his family of the meeting and its circumstances: Stern was invited to "demonstrate his arithmetical prowess to Tsar Alexander I, an extraordinary honour for a Jew. A court adjutant proposed a mathematical problem. The Tsar, who himself dabbled in science, dipped his quill pen into ink and began his calculations on a large sheet of paper. No sooner had he reached his preliminary arithmetical operation, however, than [Stern] announced the solution. The Tsar looked at him quizzacily. 'The machine is good,' he said, 'but the Jew is bad.' It was indeed a serious breach of etiquette to outsmart the sovereign."

77.For the history of this institution see Sabina Levin, "The Warsaw Rabbinical Academy, 1826-1863," [Hebrew] **Gal-Ed** 11 (1989), XXXV-ILVIII.

78.Pinkas Ha-Kehilot: Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities: Poland: Vol. IV: Warsaw and Its Region [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad VaShem, 1989), 34.

79.See below.

80.Shatzky, Warsaw, vol. ii, 126.

81.Nissenbaum, "Slonimski" 2.

82.See below.

83.Mahler, "Stern" 107-112.

84.See Mahler, "Stern" 107-112.

85.See above.

86.Shir was born in Lemberg, Galicia, (Lwow) of a celebrated dynasty that claimed many rabbis and scholars. During his childhood, Shir immersed himself primarily in traditional Jewish sources, but also in secular studies, notably in the sciences.

Shir was a rabbi, and travelled often, mainly within the boundaries of the Habsburg Empire. Following a short residence in Brody, a major **Haskalah** center, Shir resided in Tarnopol, where he combatted the local **Hasidim**. From 1840 to his death, Shir was the Chief Rabbi of the large Jewish community in Prague. He associated, with other doyens of the **Haskalah** movement, such as Krochmal (see below), Zunz, and Luzzato. This interaction enriched his scholastic aptitude immeasurably.

Shir was a prolific writer. He probed a variety of Jewish subjects, biblical, Talmudic and Gaonic. Shir, moreover, was an eminent Hebraist. He published biographical sketches of distinguished figures such as R. Saadia Gaon. His studies in Jewish history paved the way for further research in this field, by applying critical methods.

Furthermore, Shir composed pamphlets opposing **hasidic** mysticism on the one hand, and the assimilatory tendency espoused by the Reform movement in Judaism, on the other. He advocated, however, a conciliatory and integrative approach towards the adherents of both these ideologies, so as to maintain a united Jewish community.

87.Krochmal's goal was to emulate Maimonides, and guide the intelligentsia of his time into reconciling Judaism with modern secular knowledge. He is considered the father of Jewish cultural nationalism leading to Zionism. Furthermore, Krochmal was influenced by Hegelian philosophy of national growth and decline. His philosophy of Jewish history is found in **Moreh Nevukhe ha-Zeman** [Hebrew: The Guide for the Perplexed of the Age], this **magnum opus** was published posthumously in 1851.

The chief aim of this work was to integrate the epic of the Jewish people into world history. Krochmal claimed that the Jews were under the influence of the "Absolute Spirit" that manifests itself in history. The "Absolute Spirit," which Krochmal identifies with God, shaped the national and religious character of the Jews. Thus, Krochmal facilitated the shift of attention from Judaism as an abstract religion, to the active side of Judaism which is expressed through the deeds of people. He advocated a more liberal attitude in Jewish society, so as to secure a consistent, productive national regeneration.

88.A revised and amended edition of this book appeared in Zhitomir in 1866, where Slonimski resided at that time.

89.See **Ha-Entsilopedyah ha-Ivrit** [Hebrew: Encyclopedia Hebraica] (Tel Aviv: Encyclopedia Publishing Co., 32 vols, with 2 Supplementaries, 1949-83), vol. xxi, 353, where Slonimski is cited in approval.

90.David Patterson, "Moving Centres in Modern Hebrew Literature," Abramson, Great Transition 6.

91.Judah Leib Gordon had similar experiences, though more severe. See Stanislawski, Gordon 81.

92.Nissenbaum mentions **Kerem-Hemed**, **Ha-Yonah**, **Ha-Levanon**, **Ha-Maggid**, **Ha-Tsefirah**, **Beit ha-Talmud** Z. Frankel's monthly **Ha-Kerem**, and **Ha-Assif**.

93.See above.

94.Stanislawski, Nicolas, 113.

95.Stanislawski, Gordon 15, describes **Pirhey-Tsafon** as "...the first Hebrew literary periodical in the Russian Empire. This very modest collection was planned as an annual conduit of **Haskalah** prose and poetry, but had so measly an audience that it collapsed after two issues. Still, it set an important precedent as the first example of what would soon become the dominant vehicle of Jewish Enlightenment in Eastern Europe."

96.Neiman, Criticism 123, and Zinberg, History, vol. xii, 7. Kovner, while applauding the beauty of Eichenbaum's poems, expressed regret for Eichenbaum's overextended devotion of time to art. Kovner complained that Eichenbaum's most famous poem, **Ha-Qosem** [The magician], focused on ancient Egypt rather than current Jewish life. By contrast, his poem about the chess game, **Ha-Krav** [The battle] was celebrated by Zinberg for its articulate depiction of the game in biblical Hebrew.

97.Pineles was born in Austrian eastern Galicia, and moved to Brody when he was fifteen, where, while working in trade, he studied the German language and sciences, especially mathematics,and calculations regarding the Jewish calendar. He published articles in the field as of 1835. In the early 1850s, Pineles moved to Odessa. He later resided in the Romanian city of Galatz. In addition to his lengthy polemic with Slonimski, Pineles also wrote features regarding Judaism and current affairs in **Ha-Maggid**.

98.Gottlober (1811-1899), was a **maskil**, a researcher, and Hebrew and Yiddish writer who spent most of his life wandering through Eastern European Jewish communities. He was active in Jewish periodicals, became a Zionist in the later part of his life, and was an astute observer of human nature.

99.Abraham Baer Gottlober, Memoirs and Travels Ed. by R. Goldberg [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, Bialik Institute, 1976), 23, quoted from **Ha-Maggid** 18 (1874), 418.

100.Pineles describes Strashun's mediatory role in **Ha-Maggid** 19. (1858), 149

101.Lichtenfeld was born in Lublin and studied mathematics and European languages alongside the traditional rabbinic education. Lichtenfeld published instruction books in mathematics such as **Yediot ha-Shiurim** [The Knowledge of Algebra], Warsaw, 1865. His polemic with Slonimski extended into the 1870s. Lichtenfeld is also known as the father-in-law of the distinguished Yiddish writer, I.L. Peretz.

102.The term is derived from Genesis 41:45. There, Joseph earned this title thanks to his unique ability to interpret dreams. A literal translation of the phrase provides for "a person capable of deciphering a code."

103.Brainin, **Lebens-Bukh** 19 and 375. Brainin recounts how his grandfather, an Orthodox Jew steeped in tradition, told him that even if Slonimski writes that two and two are four it is tantamount to heresy!

104.For the history of **Kerem-Hemed** see below, chapter IV.

105.Kressel, Cyclopedia, vol. ii, 505.

106.See below.

107.See above for a detailed account of Stern's career. Nicolas Slonimski, Perfect Pitch 21-23. reports that his "mother said that he [Hayim Zelig Slonimski] had invented the electric telegraph, but never patented it." (P. 22) And Nicolas Slonimski further depicts an episode in which the Soviets claimed, by virtue of Slonimski's project, the credit for that invention in August 23, 1952.

108.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 128, and Mahler, "Stern" 111, cite additional coverage in the Russian and German press. The Russian weekly of St. Petersburg in 1840, the **Lithuanian Courier** in 1841, and the **Prussiche Konigliche Staats Zeitung** [German: The Prussian Koenigsberg Journal] in 1841, reported this invention.

109.As his grandson Nicolas proudly quotes, in his Perfect Pitch, 15, the "Russian Encyclopedia," not only awarded him a formidable entry, but also "described him as an eminent Hebrew scholar and scientist."

110.Stanislawski, Nicolas 7.

111.See above, chapter I

112.Wein, **Pinkas** Warsaw 34.

113.Nissenbaum, "Slonimski" 3.

114.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 23.

115.Nissenbaum, "Slonimski" 4, lists them: Jacobi, [who, as noted above, helped Slonimski in his futile attempt to acquire residence rights in Warsaw in 1842, and had since moved from Koenigsberg to Berlin], Reiss, Eideler, and others, including the noted representative of **Wissenchaft des Judentums**, Dr. Michael Sachs, who later recommended Slonimski for composing the book commemorating Humboldt's career (see below).

116.Humboldt was widely acclaimed as an indefatigable collector of scientific data and was assigned as tutor to the Prussian Crown Prince, the future Friedrich Wilhelm

IV. The former East Germany's main university in Berlin was named after him, and so was the Ocean current off the coast of Peru.

Humboldt's initial specialization was mining. He travelled intensively throughout Europe and South America. The experience he acquired in these expeditions proved vital for Humboldt's pioneering and multidisciplinary research in nature. These studies included topics such as botany, climatology, forestry, meteorology, oceanology, and volcanology. As a result of the difficulties he encountered while climbing the Andes, Humboldt became the first person to ascribe mountain sickness to a lack of oxygen in the rarefied air of great heights.

117.Hershberg, Bialystok, vol. i, 239, and Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 253.

118.See above.

119.David Frischman, **Ha-Tsefirah** Jubilee Volume (Warsaw: **Ha-Tsefirah** Publications, 1912), 95-99.

120.The second edition in 1874, and the revised third edition in 1885, both in Warsaw.

121.The introduction is bi-lingual, in Hebrew and German.

122.See below.

123.Hayim Zelig Slonimski, **Ot Zikaron le-Alexander Von Humboldt**. (Berlin: 1859), 11.

124.A large proportion of the book is dedicated to details of those journeys. See especially 12 and 16.

125.See, for example, 17-18.

126.This scientific literary annual appeared in London and Leipzig between 1847-49. It was edited by Zvi Hirsh ben Yehezkel Philipowsky (1816-1872). The publication assembled features dealing with the Jewish calendar, astronomy, history and Hebrew literature. In 1851 Philipowski printed a critical edition of **Sefer ha-Ibbur** [The Book of Intercalation], of Abraham Ibn-Yikhye. In 1868 in London Philipowski published his own research about the Jewish calendar entitled **Moed ha-Moadim** [The Holiday of Holidays], where he denounced Slonimski. Slonimski responded in Nahum Sokolov's **Ha-Assif** (Warsaw: 1885), vol. i, Part 2, 14-16.

127.Also known as **Knesset Yisroel** [Hebrew: The Congregation of Israel], it appeared in Berlin.

128.Levinsohn, Warsaw 172, 297-298, and 335. Wein, **Pinkas** Warsaw, 42.

129.Slonimski dedicated the work to R. Berish Hacohen Yoelsh a contemporary Hungarian **maskil** from Transylvania. Yoelsh apparently furnished Slonimski with financial assistance, which enabled the publication of his manuscript. Yoelsh was in close contact with the Anglo-Jewish philanthropist, Moses Montefiore. The work was revised and republished in Warsaw in 1858. This second edition was reprinted twice: in Zhitomir, 1866, and Warsaw, 1880, during Slonimsk's respective residence in both cities.

130.For a comparison of Mendelssohn's and Slonimski's careers, see below, chapter VI.

131.Kressel, Cyclopedia, vol. ii, 506, cites Lilienblum's **Hetat Neurim** [Hebrew: Sins of Youth].

132.As mentioned above, Slonimski published the first part of **Yessode ha-Ibbur**, in Warsaw, 1842.

133.The book, revised and appended, was published in Zhitomir, 1865, and reorganized for the third edition, printed in Warsaw, 1869. The book, moreover, was later translated into German and English.

134.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 128.

135.Eisenstein, **Otsar Israel**, vol. vi, 203-4.

136.Nicolas Slonimski, Perfect Pitch 23. The information is quoted from an article, ["Glorious Pages in the History of National Science and Technology"], written by two Soviet military engineers, Lt-Cols. Gorodnichin and Shlyapobersky, published in the Soviet Red Army paper **Krasnaya Zvezda** [The Red Star], of August 19, '952." Jehudah David Eisenstein emphasizes in The Jewish Encyclopedia 410, that "The system of multiple telegraphy perfected by Thomson (then already Lord Kelvin) in 1858, was based on Slonimski's discovery.

137.Nicolas Slonimski, Perfect Pitch 23. The account is taken from a Soviet periodical (see above). A copy of this brochure was found at the Central State Historical Archives in Leningrad.

138.For the definitive history of Odessa in general and its Jewish community in particular, see: Steve J. Zipperstein, The Jewish Community of Odessa from 1794-1871: Social Characteristics and Cultural Development (Los Angeles: University of California, 1980), and its complimenting article "Jewish Enlightenment in Odessa: Cultural Characteristics, 1794-1871," Jewish Social Studies 44 (1982), 19-36.

139.**Ha-Melits**'s debut was on September 29, 1860 (see below, chapter IV). Zinberg, History, vol. xii, 20, applauds the popular scientific articles which Slonimski published in it.

140.For the history of the Pale of Settlement see above, chapter II. Ossip (Joseph) Rabinovitch utilizes this example to substantiate a bitter complaint against the Tsarist authorities, which he published in his Russian-Jewish newspaper **Razvest,** 1860.

141. See below, chapter IV.

142.Gedaliah Elkoshi, "The Hebrew Press in Wilno in the XIX Century," [Hebrew] **Heawar** 14 (1967), 82.

143.See below, chapter IV.

144.Elkoshi, "Wilno" 91.

145.See below, chapter V.

146.Klausner, History, vol. iv, 124.

147.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 3-5.

148.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 126.

149.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 28.

150.Jacob Shatzky, Jewish Educational Policies in Poland From 1806 to 1866 [Yiddish] (New York, Yiddish Scientific Institut. YIVO, 1943), 195.

151.Robert M. Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History (New York, Macmilan Publishing Co., 1980), 583.

152.Shatzky, **Haskalah** 125.

153.In a letter he wrote in 1864 to Leon Rosenthal, Zinberg, History, vol. xii, 146. Rosenthal (1817-1887), was a fellow **maskil** and a Russian financier, one of the founders and treasurer of the Society for the Promotion of Culture Among The Jews of Russia. See below for information about his family.

154.Baker, "Reassessment" 227.

155.See below.

156.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 28.

157.Shatzky, Education 193.

158.Baker, "Reassessment" 226-7.

159.See below, chapter V.

160.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127.

161.In addition, the Governor-General of Kiev was active at that time in investigating the Jewish attitude toward science and languages. Neiman, Criticism 92-95.

162.Zinberg, History, vol. xii, 146.

163.He published his appeal in **Kievlianin**, as quoted by Zinberg, History, vol. xii, 146.

164.Zevi Scharfstein, History of Jewish Education in Modern Times [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, Reuven Mass, 1960), vol. i, 332.

165.A noteworthy example of Slonimski's acclaimed standing as a "Hebraist" is his entry in The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. xi, 569, which commences with this precise definition.

166.See below, chapter VI.

167.For an analysis of Paperna's career see Neiman, Criticism 175.

168.Neiman, Criticism 179. Paperna referred also to other leading Hebrew writers, such as Mordechai Aaron Gunzburg, Abraham Mapu, and Solomon Maimon (see above, chapter II).

169.Etkes, **Teudah** 12-13.

Chapter IV

Background To **Ha-Tsefirah**

A. Warsaw in 1862

Warsaw was the capital of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between 1595 and its final partition in 1795. The city was granted the privilege **de non tolerandis Judaeis** in 1527, which meant that Jews were not allowed to settle in the city.[1] Only a handful of affluent Jews succeeded in circumventing this barrier, and Jews established formidable settlements in the outskirts of Warsaw only in the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century the Jews had to purchase "day certificates" from the city administration to receive permission for temporary residence in Warsaw. Those who violated the rules were subject to heavy penalties, including a fine and exile from the city. The statute was abolished in 1811 during Prussian rule, reinstated in 1815, and eventually annulled only in 1862.

In the mid-nineteenth century Warsaw was the largest city and the leading political, cultural, and economic centre of Russian Poland. In the aftermath of the 1830-31 uprising, two powerful tendencies were vying for public support: Polish nationalism, and Tsarist-inspired Russification.[2] The initiation of Warsaw University followed a prolonged and complicated political process.[3] The campus was a hot-bed of Polish nationalism, and the faculty and students joined the ranks of the National Guard in the uprising against Tsarist Russia in November, 1830. As a result the university was closed in 1832, compelling Poles to study in Western Europe.

Twenty-five years later, in 1857, the Royal Warsaw Medico-Surgical Academy was founded. Jews attended it, but they were forbidden admission to the pharmaceutical department. In 1862 it was incorporated into the **Szkola Glowna** as its medical faculty. Many of its alumni joined the ranks of the Polish army during the 1863 uprising. The academy soon emerged as the "the mainstay of education in the country, the gathering place for scholars and their pupils, representatives of various ideas and trends of opinion."[4]

One of the most important factors in Warsaw's reality was its ethnically mixed population. Jews were the second largest group in this city, though the majority were

Roman-Catholic Poles. In the first decades of the nineteenth century the Jewish community enjoyed rapid demographic, economic, and culture growth.[5] A conflict persisted between the **mitnagedim** and their **hasidic** adversaries throughout the nineteenth century.[6] The **maskilim** had their own synagogue, **Neorim** [the Enlightened]. The polemic contributed to the cultural growth, but caused an internal division.[7] A group of young **maskilim**, in addition to aggressive professional publishers, facilitated the centrality of Warsaw in Jewish literature in general, and Hebrew literature in particular, for Russian Jewry communities throughout the Tsarist Empire from the 1860s onward.[8]

B. The Periodicals

Until the nineteenth century Hebrew was perceived by Jews mainly as the Holy Tongue. Its position as a religious medium reflected the medieval definition of the Jews as a Holy Congregation. So the **Haskalah**'s attempt to change the Jews and adapt them to modern European standards required a transformation of the role of Hebrew.

The Eastern European **maskilim** and their readership were rooted in Judaism, and Hebrew was the language in which they studied and prayed. These modernizing intellectuals wanted Hebrew to become a vehicle for critical studies, and a medium for secular literary creativity.[9] Hebrew, moreover, had the merit of being politically neutral in the conflict between the Polish and Russian nations.

Books were personally satisfying and conveyed the message of the Enlightenment. Nonetheless, it was easier to communicate with Hebrew readers through a different form of the popular literary media, the periodicals. The periodicals provided the most important arena for public debate, since the **maskilim** did not often consider books as the best means to disseminate their ideology, because of the small demand for these works, which were often published by the authors themselves, although through the solicitation of prepublication subscribers, the **Pränumerenten**, secured a moderate following.

Better results were achieved by periodicals, as they offered a variety of subjects appealing to a wider readership. Yehudah Slutsky explains that whereas the Yiddish press and periodicals appealed to the masses, and the Russian-Jewish press was geared toward the Russified Jewish intelligentsia. The Hebrew periodicals were read mainly by the **Yeshiva** students and the **Baale-Batim**, those members of the urban middle-class who were well versed in the Bible, the Talmud, and rabbinic literature.[10] The reader's thirst for current news, and his growing consciousness of a significant reality beyond the traditional Jewish orbit, encouraged the development of the Hebrew periodical from the low level of primitive didactism to that of a sophisticated instrument for the dissemination of higher knowledge from various fields and disciplines.

The periodicals played a vital role in overcoming the suspicions of many Eastern European Jews who were initially averse to innovations. While they speeded up the

development of the **Haskalah** movement and modern Hebrew literature, they also reached a larger audience. They were usually the result of a group effort, appeared frequently, and provided news and information on contemporary life, thus satisfying a larger public interest. At the same time, the development of a wider interest in science in general, and in astronomy in particular, found a resonance in contemporary Romanticism, whose intention was to harmonize human existence with nature. This aspect of the **Zeitgeist** also helped in the creation of a periodical devoted mainly to the sciences.

In the Jewish sphere, the Romantic concept also began to stimulate new focus on the distant past when Jews were rooted in the soil of their homeland, the Land of Israel. The images of a healthy and heroic life were drawn from the Bible but they were used to endorse the contemporary Enlightenment values of activism. Thus, using traditional sources, the **maskilim** produced a camouflaged critique of rabbinic Judaism and the ghettoized Jewish life which it guided.

The ground was therefore prepared for the transformation of Judaism in accordance with the modern vision prescribed for it by the **Haskalah**. The **maskilim** imparted carefully selected information about the sciences and news on world affairs through popular periodicals, which led to a fundamental change in Jewish life.

The periodicals, moreover, served as the tribunes for the new Hebrew publicists. The pioneering Hebrew periodical **Qohelet-Musar** [A Preacher of Morality], published by Moses Mendelssohn in Germany in the 1750s, emphasized the need for the Jews to return to nature and to their ancestral language, biblical Hebrew. **Qohelet-Musar** promoted optimism, European aesthetic values, and advocated a redistribution of Jewish occupations from a concentration in trade to more productive vocations in agriculture and the handicrafts. It called for a fundamental change in the traditional Jewish educational curriculum criticizing, albeit implicitly, traditional doctrines and conduct.[11]

A similar manifesto was issued by Naphtali Herz Wesseley in his **Divre Shalom ve-Emet** [Hebrew: Words of Peace and Truth] in 1782, where he differentiated between the "human knowledge" and the "knowledge of the Divine." Wesseley wished Jewish youth to blend the study of human society, modern European languages and the sciences with the

observance of the religious requirements of Judaism. He even stressed that the "human knowledge" preceded chronologically the "wisdom of God."[12]

This pattern continued in the Hebrew periodical **Ha-Meassef**, published in East Prussia's capital Koenigsberg, in the late eighteenth and very early nineteenth century. **Ha-Meassef** focused on publishing Hebrew literature and poetry which conveyed Enlightenment ideals, and studies concerning the Hebrew language, Bible, philosophy, and the Talmud. Furthermore, **Ha-Meassef** published a substantial amount of features discussing Jewish history, current events, and biographies of outstanding Jews throughout the ages.[13]

Kerem-Hemed appeared in Vienna between 1833 and 1843. It was co-edited by Solomon Judah Rappoport (**SHI"R**) and Samuel Judah Goldengred,[14] and became an important vehicle of the **Haskalah** movement, notably among Galician and Italian Jewish scholars. **Kerem-Hemed** boasted a more assertive role for the Jews in politics. It was less apologetic and more nationalistic than other contemporary Jewish periodicals in Western Europe, notably its German counterparts, in regard to the future of the Jews and Judaism.

Despite numerous efforts to establish a Jewish press for the Jews of Russian Poland and the Pale of Settlement, as early as 1823, vigorous and durable Jewish newspapers in Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, and Russian, appeared only in the late 1850s and early 1860s. In 1823, **Der Beobachter an der Weichsel**, [The Spectator on the Vistula], a bilingual newspaper in Polish and highly Germanized Yiddish, appeared for a short duration. It was a rather dry and uninspired publication, whose main function was to inform the Jews of government laws and policies affecting them. In any case, there were not yet a significant number of Polish Jews who could read the languages used in this paper.

Most of the early periodicals were collections of essays and poems with little relevancy to their time. They were essentially products of the liberal atmosphere of Russian society, associated with Alexander II's "Era of Great Reform."[15]

By the 1850s, the **Haskalah** movement grew stronger. More people were affected by its spirit, and the opposition to it began to weaken. These changes widened the horizons of formerly insulated Jews. Many of them were now eager to acquire knowledge concerning on a variety of subjects, ranging from current Jewish and world news, to the natural sciences

and history. The conflict between different opinions in Russian-Jewish society found its expression in the Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian-Jewish press. The Jewish press, especially its Hebrew component, served as a major driving force in the cultural revolution which affected the transformation of Russian Jewry.

The need for a continuous periodical literature began to be satisfied in the late 1850s and the acceptance of one publication stimulated the need and increased the demand for more periodicals, both weeklies and monthlies. **Ha-Maggid** (Lyck, East Prussia), **Ha-Karmel** (Vilna), **Ha-Melits** (Odessa), and **Ha-Shahar** (Vienna) were the pioneers in the emergence of a modern Hebrew periodical literature. In contrast to the Russian-Jewish press, in which Russification dominated, the Hebrew periodicals were a platform for the ideals of those **maskilim** who searched for a bridge between the **Haskalah** and their faith, between secular European culture and Jewish culture in a Hebrew form.

Most of the Hebrew periodicals were conservative, reflecting the biography of their founders, who were self-taught moderate **maskilim**, deeply rooted in Jewish culture, e.g. David Gordon (editor of **Ha-Maggid**), and Samuel Fin (editor of **Ha-Karmel**), in addition to Slonimski. The majority of these people were also religiously observant, and tried to find ways to prevent the disintegration of Jewish society. They therefore advocated gradual reforms and an extension of Jewish creativity. Some of them, with the exception of Slonimski, helped to establish the early pre-Herzlian Zionist movements, which tried to meld faith and enlightenment and to cultivate the public's knowledge of Hebrew language and literature. Nonetheless, the inherent contradictions in this synthesis gradually became discernible.[16]

The periodicals were the school for many literary talents and enabled them to develop their abilities. Most of the poets and novelists of that time began their literary careers in these periodicals. They published here first and only later collected their works in books. Many used pseudonyms, fearing the reaction to their progressive views by their community or unsure of their talents. As the authors tended to describe, especially at the onset of their career, events in their environment, they brought literature close to everyday life.

Though the literacy rate was higher in the Jewish sphere, this phenomenon was similar to existing patterns in the neighbouring European press. Severe problems, however, existed due to the complicated socioeconomic and political context in which Eastern European Jewry lived - the fundamentalist, isolationist segment of the rabbinate opposed any scrutiny of religious affairs, and the oligarchic communal leadership objected to any criticism of its rule. The Hebrew language itself was not yet sufficiently developed to easily convey modern concepts, ranging from science, culture, and art, to world affairs. These problems, coupled with political subjugation to the external authorities and censorship, affected the manner in which the **maskilic** writers, and Slonimski in particular, functioned.[17]

Moses Eliezer Beilenson (1835-1908), a prominent Hebrew writer, analyzed the reasons which led the Tsarist authorities to grant permission for the publication of Jewish periodicals, especially in Hebrew. Most Jews could not understand Russian. The Yiddish vernacular was not yet widely used in modern writing. So the periodicals in Hebrew, the respected literary language of the Jews, could be read by many Jews who otherwise had no access to modern European language and the necessary information it conveyed. Beilenson suggested that those officials who permitted the publication of Hebrew periodicals believed they would publicize the myriad of government laws and regulations concerning the Jews and advance the government's aims for the Jewish community.[18]

Furthermore, a primary goal of the Tsarist authorities was to foster the loyalty of the Jews to Russia by lending support to those Jewish leaders and writers who praised the regime. The periodicals would also provide a badly-needed means of communication for the various Jewish communities of the Empire. They would provide a forum to deal with Jewish affairs that the general Russian press was not interested in and would afford Jewish writers and members of the Jewish intelligentsia a proper vehicle for self-expression under the scrutiny of Tsarist censors.

The leading **Haskalah** Hebrew publications during the 1860s were **Ha-Maggid** [The Speaker] in Lyck, East Prussia on the Russian border; the liberal monthly **Ha-Karmel** in Vilna; and **Ha-Melits** [The Advocate] in Odessa. The first issue of **Ha-Karmel** appeared on July 14, 1860, after its editors Samuel Joseph Fin (1818-1890), and Dr. Aaron Goldenblum,

had overcome many excruciating political and bureaucratic obstacles. This newspaper focused on historical essays, literary criticism, and current affairs and it lasted until 1881.[19] Several historians described **Ha-Karmel** as the most arid and unsophisticated of all the Hebrew newspapers, reflective of the conservative nature of the Lithuanian **Haskalah**.[20]

On September 29, 1860, Alexander Tsederbaum (1816-1883) published the first issue of **Ha-Melits** in Odessa only after a difficult struggle to obtain government permission Bolder and more politically involved than its fellow periodicals, **Ha-Melits** was received with enthusiasm by the Hebrew readership and enjoyed a wide circulation.

Daniel Neufeld (1814-1874) was a contemporary Polish Jewish scholar, educator, and communal activist in Warsaw, whose pro-Polish views caused his temporary banishment to Siberia. His career sheds light on the context in which Slonimski operated, as Neufeld personified tendencies within the Jewish community in Warsaw and the development of the Jewish periodicals. His staunch pro-Polish views, however, contradicted Slonimski's. Neufeld also edited the Jewish section of a general Polish encyclopedia, studied Napoleon's Sanhedrin and his establishment of a Consistory in Poland, and translated the Bible into Polish.

Neufeld advanced conservative views in religious matters, was sympathetic toward the Hebrew language and literature, but opposed Yiddish as a stumbling block to Jewish progress. He favoured a scientific study of the Jewish heritage as a means to integrate past and present and called for a compulsory study of the Jewish religion, Hebrew, Jewish history, and the geography of the land of Israel as an integral part of a modernized Jewish educational curriculum. He considered **Hasidism** a positive force, since the **hasidim** were not closely allied with the Tsarist Russian regime as many of the **maskilim** were. He hoped

that the **hasidic** rabbis would encourage Polonization of the Jews, since they were rooted in the Polish regions in which Russification did not make headway.

By contrast, Neufeld opposed the assimilationist tendencies of influential **maskilim** in Galicia, a tendency which he regarded as a break with the Talmudic erudition that characterized Jewish life. That tradition embodied, he argued, a successful synthesis of human rationalism and political astuteness which preserved Jewish spirituality.[21] Between 1861-1863 Neufeld published and edited the bilingual Jewish weekly, **Jutrzenka** [Dawn, also known by its Hebrew name **Ayelet ha-Shahar**], which expressed Polish-Jewish solidarity during the uprising against Russian rule in 1863. Its goals were the diffusion of secular knowledge and European culture, the encouragement of Jewish loyalty toward the restored Polish state, and the defense of the Jews against their enemies. Therefore **Jutrzenka** published studies on Polish Jewry in which Neufeld emphasized Jewish integration into the greater Polish society, encouraged a synthesis of Jewish and Polish culture, and cultivated Polish patriotism.

Hayim Zelig Slonimski was acquainted with all of the aforementioned periodicals and felt that Eastern European Jewry in general, and Russian Jewry in particular, were placed at a disadvantage due to the lack of a Hebrew periodical devoted chiefly to the field of science. He envisioned **Ha-Tsefirah** as the appropriate response to fill in this lacuna.[22] Indeed, we will focus on its goals, publication process, and contents in the next chapter.

NOTES

1.The only exemptions Jews enjoyed were for a temporary sojourn, during sessions of the **sejm** (the Polish Parliament), which was widely used during the "Quadrennial **sejm** of 1788-92, or for court trials. Jews who came to Warsaw for a short treatment by Christian physicians were also excluded. During such visits, which had to be confirmed by a note from a medical practitioner, Jews were forbidden to bring their families, unless they could prove that these required the services of a Warsaw physician.

2.Stephen D. Corrsin, Warsaw before the First World War: Poles and Jews in the Third City of the Russian Empire. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 7.

3.The college's nucleus in Warsaw was established in 1809. Since the only other Polish academy, the Jaggelonsky University of Cracow, was then under Austrian control, a group of renowned Polish physicians then established the semi-private College of Physicians. In 1817 Warsaw University was launched, and the college became its medical faculty.

4.Wulman, "Jewish Physicians" 36-38 and 42-4.

5.Corrsin, Warsaw 9. Whereas in 1810 Jews constituted at least eighteen percent of Warsaw's entire population, in 1861 they accounted for close to a third.

6.For the roots of this conflict see above, chapter II.

7.Shatzky, Warsaw, vol. ii, 102.

8.Miron, Loners 370-81.

9.Etkes, Teudah 8.

10.Slutsky, Haskalah 16.

11.Tsamriyon, Ha-Meassef 13-21.

12.Tsamriyon, Ha-meassef 14-20.

13.Tsamriyon, Ha-meassef 49-255.

14.For Rappoport's career, see above chapter III.

15.Baker, "Reassessment" 221.

16.Luz, Parallels 5-8.

17.Meyer Waxman, A History of Jewish Literature: Vol 3. From the Middle of the Eighteenth Century To 1880. 2nd ed. (New York: 1980), 333-334.

18.Beilenson published this evaluation in his Hebrew periodical, **Alei Hadas**, Odessa, 1865-1866. 25. This hypothesis was utilized by Ezra Spicehandler, "Odessa as a Literary Centre of Hebrew Literature." Abramson, Great Transition 77-8.

19.Zinberg, History, vol. xii, 21-27.

20.Baker, "Reassessment" 222.

21.Abraham Levinsohn, The History of the Warsaw Jews [Hebrew]. 2nd ed. (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1953), 168-169.

22.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 127-8.

Chapter V

Ha-Tsefirah 1862

A. Publication And Goals

In order to publish **Ha-Tsefirah** Hayim Zelig Slonimski had to overcome political and financial problems. On December 7, 1857 Slonimski joined a group of prominent **maskilim** in Warsaw who petitioned the inspector of the Warsaw educational district. This group included Hilary Nussbaum (1820-1895), a Jewish educator and writer, Jacob Rotwand, the head of the Jewish community in Warsaw, and Jacob Eisenberg, the inspector of government schools for Jewish children.[1] They requested a license to issue a weekly in Polish and Hebrew named **Izraelita** or **Ha-Yisra'eli** [The Israelite], promising to concentrate on imparting scientific knowledge and high standards of morality, rather than politics.[2]
Slonimski lobbied simultaneously for a permit to issue a Hebrew weekly. Zinberg celebrates Slonimski's motivation:

> As soon as **Ha-Melits** and **Ha-Karmel** appeared, it became Slonimski's only dream to establish a journal, but with a definite goal: to disseminate "matters of wisdom and science" and, above all, "knowledge and nature." After arduous efforts, he finally succeeded...[3]

Slonimski knew that the only possible way to obtain a publication license was to apply directly to the Minister of Education in St. Petersburg, which he did in April, 1859.[4] He reminded the Tsarist officials that **Ha-Maggid** was published in Lyck, just beyond thee border in East Prussia, and was widely read by their Russian Jewish subjects. He argued that this fact warranted the publication of a similar periodical in the Russian homeland, under their own jurisdiction and control.[5] The application process for the permit was both intricate and delicate. The authorities suspected that the tone of the intended publication would be pro-Polish.[6] The Chief Censor of Jewish literature, C. Czersker, and his assistant, the prominent **maskil** Jacob Tugendhold (1794-1872), used their power and influence to impede the publication

of such an organ. Slonimski's request was officially rejected on July 9, 1859, and so were his renewed appeals.[7]

Slonimski's wife, Sarah, was highly instrumental in the establishment and the management of the journal, exerting a substantial influence over its contents.[8] Indeed, Sarah Slonimski had excellent contacts with Tsarist officials, and did not hesitate to utilize them for the benefit of **Ha-Tsefirah.**[9] The intervention by friends of the Slonimski family in the upper echelons of the Tsarist administration, and the liberal attitudes in the Warsaw bureaucracy - expressed in the permission granted to Daniel Neufeld to publish **Jutrzenka-Ayelet ha-Shahar** - secured a positive reply.[10] The authorities granted Slonimski the permission to publish a Hebrew journal at the end of 1861.[11] The original name of **Ha-Tsefirah** was **Izraelita** or **Ha-Yisra'eli,** [The Israelite], which corresponded to the original group request. The new name implied optimism as the Jews herald a new era in their history.[12] The content indicated a stronger link to nature and the real world in accordance with the focus on scientific issues in **Ha-Tsefirah.**[13] **Ha-Tsefirah** was not only the first Hebrew newspaper in Warsaw. It was the only Hebrew newspaper to be published in the Congress kingdom, that is Russian Poland.[14] Most of its readers, however, were Jews who lived outside the Polish lands - Russia, Lithuania, and the Ukraine.[15] The initial phase of **Ha-Tsefirah** was relatively short. Only twenty five issues, adding up to two hundred pages, appeared between February and July of 1862.[16]

Hayim Zelig Slonimski advertised the forthcoming first issue of **Ha-Tsefirah** in a prospectus circulated in the beginning of January, 1862.[17] In this pamphlet he announced the four basic purposes of **Ha-Tsefirah.** They resemble the reasons offered by Beilenson for Tsarist interest in the publication of Hebrew periodicals, albeit they were written in a more pragmatic manner.[18] The goals were:

1. to announce official decrees relevant to the Jews and convey information on current events in the Empire;

2. to present news and to chronicle Jewish life in other countries, and to provide biographies of eminent Jews figures past and present;

3. to impart common sense and wisdom called from cherished, ancient works, and to advance human virtues and high moral standards; and
4. to spread a comprehensive understanding of nature, the sciences, the crafts, and modern inventions. This dissemination of knowledge would be aided by diagrams and illustrations to demonstrate their beauty and utility.[19]

Furthermore, Slonimski presented his goals in the manifesto introducing **Ha-Tsefirah** to its readers in the first issue. Here he stressed **Ha-Tsefirah**'s aim to disseminate the knowledge of nature, the sciences, and recent inventions, and he down-played other objectives.[20]

During its first period of application **Ha-Tsefirah** was devoted primarily to the popularization of scientific knowledge among the Jews.[21] As Slonimski was a scholar rather than a journalist, the columns of **Ha-Tsefirah** were filled with instructive features on a variety of scientific topics rather than ideological manifestos.[22] Slonimski wrote the majority of the articles, which usually consisted of his own original studies. Mendele Mokher Sforim praised Slonimski's publication of mathematical problems and the answers of the readers to them. This type of dialogue allowed **Ha-Tsefirah** to reach Jews throughout the Pale of Settlement.[23]

Furthermore, Jehudah David Eisenstein applauded Slonimski who, in contrast to other contemporary Jewish writers, respected traditional values.[24] He maintained that Slonimski

urged the maintenance of the ancient rabbinical studies, and pleaded only for part of the students' time to be devoted for general studies. **Ha-Tsefirah** was thus singled out as the only Orthodox organ and was read even by the **hasidim**, while the other papers were considered more or less irreligious.[25]

In the educational realm "Slonimski's idea was to teach the Jews the rudiments of the sciences, especially astronomy, geography, and mathematics."[26] **Ha-Tsefirah** was able to assume a leading role as an exponent of the **Haskalah** movement by combining current affairs concerning Jews and non-Jews alike, the biographies of distinguished personalities, and historical features. This periodical therefore exerted

much influence upon Jewish life. Indeed, **Ha-Tsefirah** occupied a primary place in the subsequent development of Jewish thought and Hebrew literature.

Slonimski skilfully wove into **Ha-Tsefirah** scientific features, biographical articles of outstanding figures, historical articles, journalistic reports, practical information, official decrees issued by the imperial Tsarist authorities, and personal recollections, creating from all of these themes a collage, through which his own views and attitudes combined into a coherent narrative.

Slonimski's Hebrew writing was excellent by mid-nineteenth century standards.[27] A.U. Kovner compliments his style as coherent, eloquent, concise, and dynamic, showing the subtlety, liveliness, perception, and sensitivity of a novelist.[28] This reputation allowed Slonimski to reach a readership in "the farthest hamlets in Russia."[29]

Slonimski was competent in responding promptly to the thirst for information.[30] He was particularly sensitive to current political and cultural developments, the most significant of which was the complex situation created by increasing Tsarist control over the Jews. Like other periodicals at the time, Slonimski recorded edicts without comment, simply attributing them to the Tsar in St. Petersburg.[31] **Ha-Tsefirah** enjoyed a congenial working relationship with the Tsarist Censorship, thanks to this non-belligerent policy and its focus on scientific content.[32]

Slonimski was reluctant to participate in political controversy and refrained from discussing the turmoil which culminated in the Polish Insurrection of 1863, though he did praise the emancipation of the serfs and the abolition of the daily permit required of many Jews to enter Warsaw.[33] He, however, paid a substantial price for operating in the scrutinizing traditional Jewish milieu, and had to closely monitor the contents of **Ha-Tsefirah**, avoiding sensitive issues. Slonimski had to choose between three possible tactics to confront these circumstances to further his strategic goal, i.e. to reconcile the **Torah** and the sciences: return to mainstream traditional Jewish society, separate himself from it or win the allegiance of a significant segment of traditional society. A return would have required relinquishing

his unique identity as a **maskil.** It would have meant abandoning his goal of spreading the ideas of the Enlightenment and of scientific knowledge. He was a leading exponent of the **Haskalah**'s views prior to 1862, and to renounce his cause would have been a total surrender. Complete separation from mainstream Jewish society would have meant even a greater toll on such an involved, committed man. Confining himself to narrower circle of friends and family would have been contradictory to Slonimski's personality, ideology and vision.

By contrast, winning the allegiance of a significant segment of traditional society could be achieved if Slonimski provided leadership to a defined stratum of Eastern European Jewry. He clearly aimed his books, articles and **Ha-Tsefirah** at the **Baale-Batim**, the urban middle-class Jews, and the young students of the **Beit-Midrash** in adherence to the ideological and political boundaries set by the Tsarist censorship, and he manipulated the texts he published accordingly.[34]

B. Contents

Political servility and loyalty to monarchy and state were salient features of the Jewish Diaspora, as formulated in the Talmudic phrase **Dina De-Malkhuta Dina** [The Law of the State Prevails]. This conduct, characteristic of the history of Austrian Jewry which closely identified itself with the ruling Habsburg dynasty, was emulated by the alliance of the Russian **maskilim** - though not by their brethren in the Polish lands - with Tsarist authorities.[35]

Slonimski praised the emancipatory decree regarding the Jews issued by the Russian-dominated Kingdom of Poland on the eve of the insurrection of 1863.[36] In a pronounced departure from this rather apolitical stance in **Ha-Tsefirah**, Slonimski outlined in an editorial the commitment the Jews have to emancipation:

> To fulfil the obligations of the state and her laws like the other nations, to walk justly in educating our children in the ways of the **Haskalah** and in ethics (**Musar**); to learn the language of the state and the necessary sciences for entering into the state society; to remove the barrier that divides us from our brethren in this land, so we shall no longer be strangers in a foreign land nor a nation within a nation...[37]

As Raphael Mahler points out, since the time of the Mendelssohnian circle the **Haskalah** advocated the notion that there are common human values which cross cultural barriers.[38] Thus, when Slonimski wrote and edited **Ha-Tsefirah** he conformed to a strategy of imparting knowledge rather than debating the nature and the future of the **Haskalah**. Indeed, he had deduced from his own experience that controversy brought negative results.[39]

So he adopted a more productive strategy to attract prospective members to the **Haskalah** movement in Eastern Europe. One tactic which first appeared in **Ha-Meassef**, was to introduce the readers to role models, Jews and gentiles, who had distinguished themselves in their communities. Slonimski thus prescribed standards to Jews, by which they should conduct their own careers, guiding them on how to improve their personal performance by emulating the excellence demonstrated by the carefully selected personalities.

These role models embarked upon a successful modern Jewish path. The majority depicted in **HA-Tsefirah** were still alive in 1862. The achievements of deceased persons were also recommended through an obituary. Their impressive legacies were spotlighted to encourage Jewish participation in the development of the modern world.

The readership of **Ha-Tsefirah** consisted mainly of those who came from the traditional background of religious studies in Judaism. Most of them lacked, however, a solid foundation in secular studies such as the arts and sciences. Slonimksi's depiction of the exemplary lives of both modernized Jews and gentiles aimed at combatting the traditionalist attitude which advocated detachment from the non-Jewish orbit. Slonimski's method could be called narrative explanation. "Narratives are stories, a telling that something happened. A narrative explanation, presumably, presents an account of the linkages among events as a process leading to the outcome one seeks to explain."[40]

In **Ha-Tsefirah**'s first issue an obituary was published about a prominent French Jew, Samuel Cohen. It exemplified the criteria and tactics applied by Slonimski to present his concepts of cherished virtues renowned people possess.[41] The obituary included Cohen's traditional upbringing and his intellectual pursuit of different fields of interest. His fluency in several European languages, moreover, not merely the French of his homeland, was pointedly stressed, as it allowed him to master an abundance of information from many sources.

Besides publishing books, Cohen's literary activity involved producing the pioneering **Archive Israelite** in French, though he maintained strong allegiance to the Hebrew language. He was also committed to Jewish communal life, advocating the ideology of the **Haskalah** by serving first as a teacher, later as a principal in a school. Naturally, Slonimski was aware of the dire need of the **Haskalah** movement for professional educators and so tried to encourage young students to pursue this career.

Cohen also expressed his social sensitivity through a personal sacrifice highlighting his adherence to his principles. He lived in poverty in order to fulfil his

vision, an exemplary conduct further highlighted by contrast with the materialistic lives of some unnamed colleagues in his community.

Being a leading light, Cohen was granted the highest recognition offered by the French state. He received an award from the French Legion of Honour - a distinction rarely bestowed on Jews at that time. His sons also followed in his footsteps. It is not surprising therefore that Slonimski concludes his extremely appreciative appraisal of Cohen's life long commitment to his favourite cause by remarking that "We should all admire his highly esteemed value."[42]

A second French Jew applauded was the famous magnate the Baron de Rothschild. Rothschild's philanthropic act of distributing loaves of bread among the poor, was used to make a political point.[43] This observation reflects not only the ingratitude displayed by this particular European power, accompanied by expressing a hope for a prompt improvement in that unfortunate situation, but also consists an implicit call for the same reform in the legal status of the Jews to take place in the local setting of the Tsarist Empire.[44] Consolidating his critical position on the matter of full emancipation, Slonimski celebrates a gentile, Dr. Homn, a maverick fighter for legal and social equality for the Jews in his native German city-state of Wurttenberg.[45]

The impressive career and rapid academic success of the Italian philologist and linguist, Garaziadio Isaia (Elhanan) Ascoli (Gorizia, 1829-Milan, 1907), presented Slonimski with an opportunity to demonstrate the extent of advancement a modern Jew can enjoy. Ascoli pioneered in studying dialects and phonetics. He devised a model classification of Italian dialects based on his research in the origins and development of the Latin, Celtic, Turkish, and Oriental languages.

Ascoli had not received any formal higher education, but he made notable contributions in comparative linguistics. He published his first work in 1854, and founded a periodical for linguistic studies in 1873. Ascoli, moreover, was appointed professor at the University of Milan in 1861, which prompted the report in **Ha-Tsefirah**. An extremely personable man, he held this chair until his death, training generations of Italian linguists. Ascoli also later attained prominent political and

academic positions. He became a member of the Italian Senate and the Council for Higher Education as well as of honourary orders and academies of science of several European countries.

Furthermore, Ascoli researched Jewish linguistic history, and he authored papers on Hebrew, Latin, and Greek inscriptions on early medieval Jewish tombstones in southern Italy. He tried unsuccessfully to comprehend the ancient Etruscan language through the use of Hebrew.

Ascoli is presented as a "sage" in **Ha-Tsefirah**'s feature. Slonimski celebrated Ascoli's appointment to a full-time professorship at the University of Milan, teaching Sanskrit.[46] Proficiency in such an obscure language was exceptional by nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish standards. Slonimski's article, which praises a Jew for engaging in modern research and critical study, for contributions to the advancement of universal knowledge and understanding and for achieving success in gentile society is couched in traditional terms, i.e. these tremendous accomplishments were the result of divine inspiration.

Ascoli's biography is therefore prescribed as a role-model for Jews, encouraging them to acquire knowledge in disciplines far removed from traditional Judaism. Furthermore, he was a successful, " itodidact scholar from a provincial city who moved to a metropolitan cultural centre, tutored students, and later founded a periodical. Indeed, the analogy to Slonimski's own career and that of his son Jozef is striking.[47]

An expanded feature is devoted to the famous Laemel family, associated with the Court Jews of Vienna. The glorifying description is titled "The Laemel Family in the Capital City of Vienna," and is part of the series "Nobles of Israel." Slonimski footnotes the essay with the methodological and ideological explanation, that

> I have copied the story of these renowned people from the German language...to show my readers that with the help of God Jews are no more short of meritorious personalities than the noblemen of the [gentile] nations, who found themselves to be well-liked by the kings and rulers of Europe. It was not only their material wealth that has endeared them and has elevated them to greatness, but also their wisdom and honesty which made them noble (**Adleshtand**).[48]

Slonimski stressed, as he introduced the saga of the Laemels, that the founder of this dynasty, Moyshe Aaron Laemel, combined financial success in enlightened Austrian society, with adherence to the Jewish Law. Laemel was distinguished as

respected and dignified thanks to his status and high position. He was extremely proud of his well-esteemed family name, since it has always remained pure from any wrong-doing. He took for himself as a wife the daughter of a highly-acclaimed G-d-fearing rabbi,[49] who bore his sons.[50] His [eldest] son Samuel Fabbi had a generous heart and was spiritually rich, G-d has blessed him with tremendous wealth, and lived all of his life in his native city Vienna, the locality in which he received so much honour and praise from his brothers,[51] where he also joined his ancestors,[52] on the twenty-second of April in the Year 1616 according to their counting.[53] On his gravestone these words are enshrined for eternal glory: 'From the Laemel family, in the **Torah** and practising of virtues he worked, from the day he was able to; he returned favours, welcomed guests and fulfilled all of their wishes.'[54]

Implied herein is an elitist criteria of materialistic reward for good deeds - no social protest against those who excelled in making money, provided that they contribute some of it back to their community. This opinion, moreover, conforms to the former item discussing Baron Rothschild. It is a far cry from socialist views endearing the cause of the average, impoverished Jew, which were soon to permeate the agenda of Eastern European Jews.

The descendants of the Laemels are praised by Slonimski's for their devotion to the Jewish community, adherence to the **Halakhah**, and dedication to traditional Jewish scholarship. Many of them, moreover, became rabbis and scholars, although Slonimski mentioned that in his day there were converts to Christianity in the family.

The second issue of **Ha-Tsefirah** offers more examples of the new image of the Jews which Slonimski espoused and encouraged.

He spotlighted the career of a virtuoso Jewish harpist residing in the Saxonian city of Weimar.[55] Isidore Latta [56]

whose name is well known for the glorification of music and who has achieved the liking of his local prince...was honoured by being named as the conductor of the royal court, the prince provided him with a handsome pension from his treasury.[57]

Slonimski uses the success story of Latta's musical career to make the following point. An outstanding artistic talent could appear even among the culturally isolated and backward Jews of Warsaw. Latta's example should be

emulated by young talented Jews. It is advisable for young people with talent and ambition to leave their hometowns for cities with greater educational, economic and cultural opportunities. Slonimski indicated his preference for the promotion of modern, secular, cultural, and aesthetic values, rather than for the traditional Jewish ones. Aesthetic notions rarely exist in isolation from other ideological considerations. Slonimski continues by observing that

This player was born in our city Warsaw [58] and already in his childhood showed signs that nature [59] has endowed him with a wonderful power to attract his listener's heart with his pleasant melodies; high ranking members of our city and its nobles, provided the funds to send him to Paris to receive lessons at the local fabulous conservatorium for the study of music, and their wish was fulfilled, since now his helpers will rejoice to witness him performing in front of kings and rulers of lands.[60]

Displaying social awareness, Slonimski praises four "Honourable members" from Kovno for founding a new society, "Support for the Needy,"[61] which, though maintaining certain safeguards, would furnish the poor with basic funds for their needs without requiring them to deposit any goods or guarantees. Slonimski applauds this effort to help unfortunate individuals through enlightened philanthropy.[62]

The next item of news tells of the appointment of a Jew, who wrote a history of the Jews in France and Spain, as Procurator General of Corsica. Again Slonimski's emphasis on the significance Jewish participation in civic society and the fact that virtuous Jews can receive recognition and respect in the gentile world.[63]

To expand the horizons of his readers to the great world beyond their local scene and traditional Jewish concerns, utilizing the piquant and the exotic, Slonimski presented a two-part feature on the Fiji Islands. He expressed his identification with Britain as a civilizing power, perhaps implying comparison to the function the Russian regime should fulfil in the life of its Jewish subjects. A further parallel deduced that Europeanization and secularization should play a major role in the lives of Jews in the Pale. Slonimski also inferred that certain negative aspects of the exotic life of the Fijian people are reminiscent of aspects of Judaism which require reforms, and that traditional Jews may learn a lesson from the positive features of this society such as the role of women.

The existence of the Fiji islands was unknown to the overwhelming majority of Eastern European Jews in 1862. Situated in the Pacific basin as part of Oceania, Fiji's exotic character offered the author a splendid opportunity to convey a lesson to the readers that otherwise might be censored or perceived as harmful to the fabric of traditional Jewish life.

While all contemporary authors had to adhere to the censorship imposed by the Tsarist regime and adapt to its ideological, religious, and linguistic demands, the Jews in particular had to bear the brunt of close scrutiny. To ease any suspicion of their intentions, Jewish writers, expressing themselves in either Hebrew or Yiddish, had to be extremely careful since they were perceived as a hostile and foreign element even in that multinational empire.

For many authors who espoused the views of the **Haskalah**, however, the problem of avoiding censorship by the traditional Jewish authorities and of making their message acceptable to traditional Jewish sensibilities was perhaps as serious as that of the external Tsarist censorship. Deeply concerned about the loss of their spiritual and communal leadership, pivotal Orthodox figures, who otherwise fought each other for adhering to **hasidic** or **mitnagedic** teachings, endeavoured to shield their people from the assimilatory fate of their brethren in central Europe. They combined forces to attack the modern concepts that endangered their traditional - position of power in the Jewish community. To successfully publish and circulate among the majority of the Jewish audience, the author had to use a most subtle form of writing. Conveying Slonimski's message of modernisation in **Ha-Tsefirah** was a complicated task.

On many occasions **Ha-Tsefirah** published accounts of "innocent" journeys around the globe covering remote areas. These items were descriptive and geared towards encouraging Jews to obtain further knowledge and expand the horizons of the **Beit-Midrash** scholars beyond their traditional curriculum rather than openly criticize Jewish conduct. Being the prudent, moderate **maskil** he was, Slonimski published the unique Fiji Islands feature only after **Ha-Tsefirah** had acquired its positive reputation

as a weekly. Indeed, it was in the fourteenth issue of **Ha-Tsefirah** that for the first part appeared.

The opening statement of the feature leaves the reader with no doubt about the lesson to be learned. The author lauds the positive change that modernity has brought in the life of these remote islands. It is not difficult to see the implication that the **Haskalah** can play this role in transforming tradition bound Eastern European Jewish life.

The language of this report was confined to a dull juxtaposition of biblical and medieval vocabulary still awaiting its later enrichment by modern Hebraists.[64] The description commenced with a value judgement: "As the world changes its times, so does the entire universe surrounding it."[65] Ostensibly, this was only a simple statement attesting to the change that has obviously transpired.

This acknowledgement, however, implied a departure from traditional perceptions to which Jews were previously accustomed, epitomized in the words of Ecclesiastes 9:1 "There is nothing new beneath the sun." This departure was achieved in several ways. The feature is profuse in terms foreign to the Jewish milieu, which meant that the author is attempting to introduce secular Western concepts into the traditional vocabulary.

There was an implicit criticism of those elements who endeavour to ignore the fundamental change that had occurred throughout the world as a result of modernity. Even if the transformation originated in the gentile orbit, the Jews living in the nineteenth century were affected by it. Slonimski continued by stressing the point: "What used to be is already gone and what will occur is unknown."[66] This observation contradicted deeply-rooted doctrines of the Jewish tradition that ancient dogmas prevail regardless of troubled times, and that notwithstanding ephermal problems observant Jews will enjoy stability and consistency. This outlook challenges the **hasidic** belief that the **Tsaddik** is accorded absolute power over the fate of his followers. It disputes, moreover, the faith in the divine promise of continuity in theology and in the rabbinic institutions of the Jewish community, upheld by the **mitnagedim.**

Slonimski provided a positive evaluation of the transformation: "Indeed, these lively times are much more blessed than previous periods, and carry much more weight." This is an explicit rejection of the idealistic image the rabbinical leadership presented of the supposed privileges the medieval system offered European Jews. So a combination of negative perspective of the past with a genuine sigh of relief and cheerfulness, when entering the present circumstances invigorates the message.

The consistent repetition of the Hebrew word **hadash**, that is "New," in the following excerpt, indicates the spirit of this feature. Furthermore, this quotation bears witness to the weakness and poverty of the Hebrew language style of the time. This phenomenon is characteristic not only of the majority of items presented in **Ha-Tsefirah**, but also of most of **maskilic** literature at that time.[67]

Since these days are so much different from ancient times, old experiences are sleeping for ever and new features renew our way of life every moment with new themes. The new concepts evident upon earth overcome us all, bringing new spirit into our life. The person who is breathing the fresh air of new times should hurry and perform great deeds among the people of his country of residence.[68]

The final sentence was a decisive call for prompt action, by everybody everywhere. The paragraph concluded with a self-explanatory historiosophical notion: "Who will [dare to] judge the nations and the people wherever they are now by the standards of you."[69]

A liberal attitude of freedom of the mind to pursue any logical venture, freed from past conventions imposed by the rabbis, permeates his next lines:

Since a man at this time arranges his own schedule and access to the wisdom and its treasures, in which whatever is desired can be obtained, from the spiritual height of heaven he can bring wisdom down, from the lowest ground he can dig it up, and from the deepest sea he can retrieve it.[70] The honour of this time is enormous, and blessed it is for all those who know how to seek the proper object at the right time.[71]

The intention of this paragraph was clearly to negate tradition in the sense that old is not better than new and that even the Holy Scriptures advocate progress.

A nature oriented, realistic depiction of the difficulties looming ahead follows this optimism. It prepares the reader to enter a foreign setting and culture:

But, contradictory to this every land is different than the other, and no person is like the other, as the day is clear to us at noon in front of the sun at its peak, walking at the dusk of life which is beneath our legs in the other stretch of land, and while the nations of Europe preside over all the wisdom and knowledge, there are still people in far away lands who worship the follies and kneel to the worthless. We do know there are still even in our days many people who are wild and reckless in far away seas and remote islands, who are removed from any kind of knowledge, and do not possess the teachings of humanity. These people behave like animals, and neither comprehend nor appreciate the difference between them and the wild beasts, although they are human. This is due to a heritage of misconduct and evil received from their ancestors in the span of many generations.[72]

The last paragraph unequivocally denounces those who adhere to past conventions and convictions. Even if the description were too overt and extreme to be directly related to the Jewish scene, the passion of the argument rendered ulterior motive and implicit intention highly plausible.

Only by 1861 did the British navy "...put an end to the follies of the wild people and to their wickedness and their deplorable acts."[73] The following sentence provides the final blow to old traditions :"...since a new spirit... of human wisdom blew in their nose transforming them into becoming new souls."[74]

Slonimsksi's accounts of the peculiar way the Fiji islands were incorporated into the British Empire reveals a few points. The readers sees, first, his admiration for the sophisticated conduct and strategy of British diplomacy; secondly, the prominent position of scholars required to secure a successful conclusion to this pursuit: thirdly, a general criticism of ritual slaughter.[75]

The story amounted to a covert call for the **maskilim** to rebel against unacceptable traditions and take power from the current prevailing rabbinic elite, whose will for generations was supported by the government, the Ashkenazic tradition of adhering to the leadership of the elders, and the absence of an alternative in society itself. However, this distinction was gradually declining as of early modern times.[76]

Slonimski analyzed the negotiating tactics of American and British officials. They were successful in securing the total surrender of power to Her Majesty Queen Victoria's High Commissioner in 1861 following an incident in which Fijian pirates

stormed an American ship. The Americans demanded compensation from the Tui, that is the title of the local king whose name was Ekembe, he replied by declaring that not all the inhabitants of the island are his subjects.

The Americans deviously led him to one of their ships, imprisoned him and threatened that unless he paid compensation they would murder him. Faced with this unprecedented dilemma, the king opted to solve this conundrum through the help of the British consul assigned to his kingdom together with Christian missionaries.

The shrewd British envoy applied the classic technique of divide and rule. He exploited this unique opportunity of Ekembe's desperate situation. He promised Ekembe British support provided that he abdicate his position immediately; the hostage king promptly obliged. The consul then travelled back to his homeland to secure the approval of his superiors for his actions and tactics.

He was granted official consent, but only if he would persuade the second ruler, who exerted influence on the rest of the territory comprising the Fiji islands. To help the consul to succeed he was accompanied by an unnamed high ranking diplomat and "one scholar who is wise and knowledgeable in the nature of trees and plants, Bertold Zeemon his name." The mentioning of the scientist's full name exemplifies the priorities **Ha-Tsefirah** promoted in regard to the leadership and crucial help science and its experts provided all aspects of life and society. Upon their return to Fiji, these three honourable delegates quickly executed their mandate. Zeemon, moreover, conducted an elaborate project to estimate the horrendous extent of ritual killing and cannibalism in the name of this pagan cult. Of particular interest for Slonimski are Zeemon's findings that traditional women did not eat human flesh, that special ovens were dedicated to roast the human flesh, and that special forks were used by the natives, otherwise used to eating with their hands, for this savage feast.

The inclusion of these elements in the description of a barbaric culture, so far removed from any basic Jewish ethic, highlights several ideas. Women could serve as role models; in Fiji they affected a change in the prevalent cannibalism.[77] Whereas they were subservient in traditional Jewish life, the **Haskalah** accorded them

a higher status, implying that men can learn from them. There was also a reference to the exclusion of women from partaking in certain religious rites reminiscent of **Halakhic** demands. Women were therefore more pure and worthy - by their power of persuasion the wives of the mercenaries saved sailors of a wrecked ship that drifted ashore from being eaten by the cannibals. Inferred is a call for action among Jewish women against their current deprived situation and low status in Jewish society.

The comparison to the strict separation between meat and milk dishes and cutlery by Jews insinuates a paganistic tendency, or at least a critique of the Jewish tradition, as the writer implicitly associates this unique division apparent in the Jewish law with deplorable primitive acts. The writer assumed a leading spiritual role in the traditional Jewish community, by posing as a biblical prophet preaching against those who adhered to a vain belief in sinful idols. This strategy was in conjunction with a common claim of adherents of the **Haskalah** movement that they were the genuine followers of the original biblical path, while condemning the deviations of the rabbinic "Talmudic Judaism."[78] Indeed, while Slonimski did not want to desecrate the Jewish faith, his criticism of it, by way of inserting these elements, is striking.

C. Closure And Renewal

The growing political tension and economical difficulties that preceded the 1863 Polish Insurrection did not allow **Ha-Tsefirah** to thrive in its first year.[79] The number of its subscribers, moreover, never exceeded a few hundred.[80] This situation encouraged Slonimski to accept a government offer to serve as the Chief Censor of Jewish literature in South Russia, based in Zhitomir, Volhynia in 1863,[81] in conjunction with becoming the director of that city's state-sponsored liberal rabbinical seminary, replacing Jacob Eichenbaum.[82]

Slonimski wished to continue **Ha-Tsefira**'s publication. He actively pursued this prospect, in a manner characteristic of his utmost commitment to this undertaking. Slonimski had to face complicated problems which ultimately rendered his attempt futile. Three major difficulties existed. Tsarist regulations forbade censors from editing periodicals under their supervision. In addition, the owners of the only Jewish Hebrew Press in Zhitomir were **hasidim** who refused publications associated with the **Haskalah** movement - though they did utilize Slonimski's annotations to the **Mishnah**, which attests to his personal reputation in traditional circles.[83] Finally, the government permit for **Ha-Tsefirah**'s publication was limited to Warsaw.[84]

In spite of this unfortunate situation, Slonimski did not immediately relinquish his aspiration. He requested the help of the Society for the Promotion of Culture Among The Jews of Russia in St. Petersburg to convince Russian authorities on his behest to make an exception in his case and allow him to publish and edit **Ha-Tsefirah** in Zhitomir. Slonimski's plea proved politically impossible, though the Society was famous for its pro-Russian inclination and excellent contacts within the Tsarist bureaucracy. In addition, Slonimski wanted the Society to establish new printing facilities in Zhitomir, which was not realistic due to financial constraints and government policy.

In 1864 the editor of **Ha-Melits** Alexander Tsederbaum, offered Slonimski an autonomous scientific section in his periodical. However, disagreements over editorial independence and policy provoked a swift end to this collaboration.[85] The financial, administrative, and personal obstacles compounded the political problems and caused the failure of Slonimski's vigorous attempt.[86]

In spite of these misfortunes, Slonimski still searched for a suitable candidate to replace him at the helm of **Ha-Tsefirah**. His initial nominee, Judah Leib Gordon, declined, due to the insufficient salary proffered, and his expectation for a better post in the ranks of the Jewish school system.[87]

In 1865 Slonimski presented a second choice, his personal friend, S.J. Abramovitch (Mendele Mokher Sforim), who lived in Zhitomir.[88] Slonimski suggested that Abramovitch be the editor, while he would provide him with consistent help. His role would have been designated as Abramovitch's adviser. Abramovitch, however, had not yet achieve fame at that time, and was thus rejected by the Society. The Society's representatives claimed that only Slonimski's reputation could secure a successful scientific periodical. In addition, Slonimski had two onerous financial demands. The first was promising contributors a substantial amount of free copies. The second was a grant of one thousand Rubles. The Society agreed to these conditions, but Slonimski's refusal to resign his position as a censor and the negotiations came to an end fruitlessly.[89]

In response to public demand, Slonimski renewed the publication of **Ha-Tsefirah** publication twelve years later. This revival followed the closure of the seminary in Zhitomir by the Russian regime on July 1, 1873. This closure was part of an overall Imperial policy - the Tsarist bureaucrats were disillusioned with the value of rabbinical seminaries and Crown schools, because they failed to effect a rapid Jewish assimilation.[90]

The Tsarist regime initiated the two modern rabbinical seminaries in Vilna and Zhitomir in 1847. They were closely associated with the German liberal rabbi, Dr. Max Lilienthal (1815-1882), and Count S.S. Uvarov (1786-1855), the Tsarist Minister of Education, were created especially for the Jewish youth and received ambivalent

response from Jewish leaders. These institutions purported to effect a **rapprochement** between the Jews and Christians of Russia morally, intellectually, and, ultimately politically. The prevalent attitude among the Jewish masses, however, was of unmitigated loathing and disgust, as perception of their hostility toward the Jewish tradition was swift. This perspective led to the subsequent failure of the seminaries.[91]

The Tsarist officials therefore ceased to believe in the ability of these colleges to bring about a rapid assimilation of the Jews in Russian society and culture, in a manner similar to the transformation of German Jewry, though these institutions did educate the next generation of Russian **maskilim** and brought about the creation of an indigenous Jewish culture in the Russian language.[92]

The Tsarist authorities refused to extend the 1862 privilege, and Slonimski had to resume the publication of **Ha-Tsefirah** in Berlin from July 8, 1874 to September 1, 1875. He was assisted by Judah Leib Kantor (1849-1915), a **maskil** who studied there at the time, and would become a pioneering journalist.[93]

Meanwhile the Society for the Promotion of Culture Among the Jews of Russia, based in St. Petersburg, petitioned the Interior Minister to restore the license while helping Slonimski with administrative, financial, and marketing issues.[94] Thanks to its efforts, the permit was renewed on September 9, 1875, when the publication office was finally returned to Warsaw.[95] Based in Warsaw, **Ha-Tsefirah** continued to be published until 1931. It was a weekly magazine until 1886 and later became a daily newspaper.[96]

Nahum Sokolov joined **Ha-Tsefirah** in 1879. He became its editor in 1886, and turned it into a daily. Under his guidance **Ha-Tsefirah** devoted more space for current affairs and feuilletons than for scientific issues. Before retiring in 1910, Sokolov was a leading advocate of Zionism, and the contents of **Ha-Tsefirah,** previously dedicated to the classic themes espoused by the **Haskalah** movement, changed accordingly. **Ha-Tsefirah** continued to appear until 1931.[97]

NOTES

1.Levinsohn, Warsaw 173.

2.**Izraelita** was the original name of **Ha-Tsefirah** and the future name of a different Polish-Jewish periodical.

3.Zinberg, History, vol. xii, 28.

4.He submitted this application on April 21, 1859 according to the Julian calendar.

5.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 25.

6.Zinberg, History, vol. xii, 58-9.

7.Shatzky, Education 142.

8.Zagorodsky commented on Sarah Slonimski's personality and contribution to her husband's career. He provides that she knew only little Hebrew, but was fluent in Polish, Yiddish, French and Russian. She helped Slonimski select adequate material for his research, and managed the accounting for **Ha-Tsefirah**. See Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 256

Sarah Slonimski, moreover, knew by heart the names and addresses of its few hundred subscribers, reaching one-thousand-five-hundred only in the 1870s. See Dan Miron, When Loners Come Together: A Portrait of Hebrew Literature at the Turn of the Twentieth Century [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1987), 59.

9.Shatzky, Warsaw, vol. iii, 348 and 377.

10.For lists of Slonimski's friends in academic circles throughout Europe see above, chapter III. For Neufeld's career see above, chapter IV.

11.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 25.

12.A newsletter carrying the same title has been published in eighty copies in 1823 by the Galician **maskil** Meir (Max) Halevy Leteris in Zolkiew. See Eisig Silberschlag, "Hebrew Literature in Vienna 1782-1939." Abramson, Great Transition 34.

Furthermore, names of other contemporary Hebrew periodicals such as Daniel Neufeld's **Jutrzenka-Ayelet ha-Shahar** [The Morning Star], Peretz Smolenskin's **Ha-Shahar** [The Dawn], and Abraham Ber Gottlober's **Ha-Bokker Or** [The Morning

Light] and Osip (Joseph) Rabinovich's Russian-Jewish newspaper **Razvest** [The Dawn], conveyed and promoted a similar message.

13.See for example a poem on this theme by Micha Yosef Lebensohn (**MiCHaL**) (1828-1852), entitled **Ha-Tsefirah**, **Shire Michal**, 160-1.

14.Baker, "Reassessment" 222.

15.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 29.

16.From 4 **Adar Rishon** to 27 **Tamuz** 5622 according to the Jewish calendar. Traditional dating appeared at the top of each issue of **Ha-Tsefirah**.

17.Kressel, Cyclopedia, vol. ii, 506.

18.See above, chapter IV.

19.Zinberg, History, vol. xi, 180, and Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 25-26.

20.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 25-6.

21.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 28.

22.Klausner, History, vol. iv, 124.

23.Neiman, Criticism 93.

24.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 128, compares and favours Slonimski's moderation to Peretz Smolenskin's vehement attacks on traditional curriculum in **Ha-Shahar**.

25.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 128.

26.Waxman, Jewish Literature, vol. ii, 432.

27.See above, chapter III, for Krochmal's praise.

28.Neiman, Criticism 123.

29.Mendele Mokher Sforim praised **Ha-Tsefirah**'s success in an article he published in **Ein Mishpat**. See Neiman, Criticism 93.

30.Neiman, Criticism 93.

31.Baker, "Reassessment" 226.

32.Nahum Sokolov reports in **Bemarot ha-Keshet** [Hebrew: Perspectives from Throughout the Rainbow]. (Jerusalem: The Zionist Library of The Jewish Agency, 1962), 207-211, on the relationship with Tsarist censors in charge of **Ha-Tsefirah** in the 1880s, which reflects on previous patterns.

The censor assigned specifically to **Ha-Tsefirah**, Feodorov, was a convert to Christianity, formerly known as Tsvi Greenbaum, who previously served in this capacity in Kiev. He was supportive towards **Ha-Tsefirah**. The Chief Censor was Ryzscow, an enlightened bureaucrat, meticulous in his work. He loved speaking German, and tried to emulate Western European manners.

33.Baker, "Reassessment" 226.

34.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 31-32.

35.Baker, "Reassessment" 221-249.

36.Baker, "Reassessment" 226.

37.Baker, "Reassessment" 226.

38.Mahler, Hasidism 36-39. See also above, chapter IV.

39.See above, chapter III, for details of the notorious "Thirty years war."

40.Paul A. Roth "Narrative explanations: The case of History." History and Theory 27 (1988), No. 1, 1.

41.**Ha-Tsefirah** 1 (Feb. 4, 1862): 3.

42.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 3.

43.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 3.

44.The feature appears in **Ha-Tsefirah**, 1:. 3.

45.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 3.

46.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 3.

47.For a synopsis of Jozef Slonimski career, see above, chapter I.

48.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 5. The German term **Adleshtand** is used in quotation by Slonimski himself.

49.A common practice among the ruling circles of the Jews was to marry a distinguished scholar into a wealthy family, enriching their prestige.

50.A biblical form which counts only the men, as they were considered the only legitimate heirs to a family's wealth and prestige. In such circumstances daughters were not mentioned.

51.Slonimski conveys the message, that Jewish gratitude to the hospitality they enjoyed in Vienna justifies Laemel's loyalty to the non-Jewish milieu, with its refined culture.

52.A biblical form of stating a death.

53."Their" applies to the "Nations", meaning the gentiles. The conspicuous absence of the Jewish date could have been particulary perturbing to many of the readers. Even if the source Slonimski uses does not mention it, finding the exact date according to the Jewish calendar should not have been difficult. The mere fact that a scholar, who spent so much time on stucying the accuracy of the Jewish calendar (see chapter IV), refrained from inserting the corresponding Jewish date, suggests Slonimski's partiality to secular criteria with regard to success.

54.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 5.

55.Later known for its role in the post- World War I Germany.

56.That is a Germanized name used as substitute for the traditional Israel. Once again Slonimski finds it succinct to limit the description to gentile terms, thus clearly favouring the "Europeanization" of the Jews.

57.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 5.

58.The entire entry is within the section "Warsaw News."

59.Sic!, not G-d.

60.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 5.

61.In Hebrew: **Somekh Noflim**.

62.The item appear under the section "News from Kovno." The names of these men are: R. Benzion Hernes, R. Moyshe Leib Meller, R. Naphtali Dechhoyzer and R. Elimelekh Bregovisky.

63.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 10.

64.See above, chapter III.

65.**Ha-Tsefirah**, Warsaw, Iyar 8, 5622, 1862, 105.

66.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 10.

67.See above.

68.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 10.

69.Ibid.

70.Facilitates metaphorical language used in Job? translate from Job through a concordance.

71.Ibid.

72.Ibid. Slonimski continues by deploring their former habits of Cannibalism, further lamenting their unfortunate situation prior to the introduction of civilization to Fiji by the British in 1861.

73.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 105-106.

74.**Ha-Tsefirah**, 1: 106.

75.A similar message was conveyed by songs and fables. Example: the disgust of sacrifice displayed by Judah Leib Gordon's "Between the Lion's Teeth." See Stanislawski, Gordon 63-66.

76.Gershon David Hundert, "Discipline and Deference In Early Modern Lithuania." Community and the Individual Jews: Essays in Honour of Lavy M. Becker. (Philadelphia: Reconstructionist Rabbinical College Press, 1986), 148.

77.See Stanislawski, Gordon 27 and Braudes in Religion and Life Patterson, Novella 16-18, for an elaboration of this theme.

78.Etkes, **Teudah** 3-19.

79.Baker, "Reassessment" 222.

80.Guterman, Jewish Press 26.

81.While in Zhitomir, Slonimski continued the line of his predecessor, Jacob Eichenbaum, of combating **Hasidism**. Slonimski even protested publicly against his colleague, Eliezer Z. Zweifel (1815-1888), who asserted that **Haskalah**'s view of **Hasidism** is distorted. Slonimski assured his fellow **maskilim** that the consensus

among faculty members at the rabbinic seminary in Zhitomir is different. See Shalom Spiegel, Hebrew Reborn. (New York: Macmilan, 1930), 131-2.

82.For Eichenbaum's career see above, chapter III. As Zinberg, History, vol. xii, 118 noted, "virtually all the prominent Hebrew writers of that time were also simultaneously teachers in the Jewish government schools." He mentions, among others, Samuel Joseph Fin (see above, chapter V), Adam Ha-Cohen Lebensohn, Abraham Ber Gottlober (see above, chapter III), H. Z. Slonimski, Eliezer Z. Zweifel (who taught in Zhitomir, see above), and Judah Leib Gordon (see above, chapter III).

83.Yehudah Aryeh Klausner, the entry "Slonimsky, Haim Zelig" Hebraica, 1980, vol. xxvi, 80.

84.Klausner, History vol. iv, 123.

85.For Tsederbaum's career and **Ha-Melits** see above.

86.Klausner, History vol. iv, 124-5.

87.Stanislawski, Gordon 52. Regarding Gordon's distinguished career see above, chapter III.

88.For his career, see above, chapter III.

89.Nissenbaum, "Slonimski" 5.

90.Isaac Levitas, The Jewish Community in Russia, 1844-1917. (Jerusalem: Posner and Sons, 1981), 47.

91.Stanislawski, Nicholas, 69-96, and Aberbach, Vilna 102.

92.See Levitas, Community 45-55, and Stanislawski, Gordon 18.

93.Kantor was a student in the rabbinical seminaries in Vilna and Zhitomir, becoming a "government rabbi" in the Pale. He later studied medicine in St. Petersburg and Berlin edited Russian periodicals. Kantor applied his experience as he became the first publisher of a Hebrew daily in the Tsarist Empire, **Ha-Yom** [Today] in 1886, which had a supplementary discussing scientific issues **Ben-Ammi** [The Son of My People]. Kantor upheld the classic **Haskalah** views on universalism, and therefore did not join the ranks of the Zionist movement.

94.Shatzky, Warsaw, vol. iii, 307-8.

95.Eisenstein, "Slonimski" 128.

96.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 23.

97.Guterman, Jewish Periodicals 23.

Chapter VI
Epilogue

A. Slonimski and Mendelssohn

A comparison between the salient features of the biographies of Slonimski and Mendelssohn helps in the understanding of Slonimski's career in the broader context of the history of the **Haskalah** movement, though Slonimski was neither as important nor as pioneering in the nineteenth century as Mendelssohn was in the eighteenth.

Similar patterns govern the private and public lives of Mendelssohn and Slonimski. Both came from families which had modest means, but stressed education, a likely scenario in traditional Jewish families. Both came from the periphery - Dessau and Bialystok, and moved to the cultural and political centre in their region - Berlin and Warsaw, which conditioned their personal growth; both had to work hard in clerical jobs to earn a meagre living in the early part of their career - Mendelssohn in a silk factory, Slonimski in his brother's business, and both had to support themselves, serving as private tutors in the homes of various wealthy families. Later, as they acquired a solid reputation among their peers, their situation improved substantially.

Slonimski moved first to Zabludow, within the Pale of Settlement, where he was instructed by Yekhiel Mikhl Zabludowski, a diligent student of the scientific aspects of the Talmud. Slonimski was able to move to Warsaw only in his thirties, following an excruciating legal process, where he was tutored by Abraham Stern, whose personal loyalty to the Tsarist regime and devotion to inventions are striking. Thus, originally steeped in Jewish sources, Slonimski's training was conducive to specialization in applied scientific studies and the scope of his social interaction extended to the greater society.

Mendelssohn, in contrast, left the provincial milieu in his early youth. He was guided by R. Israel of Zamosc, and Aaron Gumperz, early **maskilim** more illustrious

and rebellious figures than Slonimski's early teachers. Their scholarly and social interests extended beyond the Jewish sphere, conditioning Mendelssohn's career.

Enjoying the more hospitable environment major cities had to offer, Mendelssohn and Slonimski befriended many prominent scholars and statesmen who sponsored them and the publication of their books. Royal Academies as well as city councils awarded both prizes and honourary titles. Both, however, had legal problems establishing permanent residence due to the prevailing restrictions imposed on Jews.

Mendelssohn and Slonimski were distinguished scholars, self-taught, original, and successful in their careers. They left their mark on their generation, the Jewish people and their respective disciplines - Mendelssohn as a philosopher, Slonimski as a scientist and inventor. They aimed to spread knowledge among the Jews through books and articles. In 1858 Slonimski even wrote a book on the existence of the soul outside the body, titled **Al Metziut ha-Nefesh ve-Kiyumah Khutz la-Guf** [The Essence of the Soul and Its Existence Outside the Body], which was based on Mendelssohn's 1767 **Phaedon.**[1]

Furthermore, both were rooted in the Jewish tradition, kept a strong Jewish identity throughout their life, and observed the Jewish Law. Mendelssohn advanced Jewish participation in the evolving modern European society through a return to the biblical foundation of Judaism, an essential element of Christianity and European civilization. He wrote chiefly in German and emphasized European aesthetic values. Mendelssohn also encouraged goals extending beyond the boundaries of the Jewish community. To realize these goals, the Jews depended on gentiles. So Mendelssohn advanced the integration into the greater society in central Europe.

By contrast, Slonimski tried to establish a bridge between the traditional Talmudic Judaism and the **Haskalah** pursuit of knowledge within the Jewish community. His method was teaching the sciences in Hebrew and advocating a closer attachment to nature. This introduction of secular concepts in the Hebrew language eased an internal transformation in Eastern European Jewry, preparing the ground for a strong Jewish identity not necessarily connected to religion, but still divergent

from its surroundings, though assimilation and the use of European languages was a pattern chosen by many **maskilim.**

Modern tendencies in Eastern European Jewish life were already visible in the final part of Slonimski's life. Examples: Jewish nationalist movements including Zionism; Jewish branches of Socialism, such as the **Bund** or **Poale-Zion**; the evolution of traditional Judaism into **mitnagedim, hasidim.**

Mendelssohn and Slonimski aroused the ire of many of their traditional coreligionists for their intellectual integrity and persistence in imparting knowledge, although they lived in assimilated Jewish communities in comparison to their respective hometowns. Both had to bear the brunt of traditional Jews denouncing their work - Mendelssohn for his famous **Biur**, the pioneering translation of the Bible into German, Slonimski for his criticism of the accuracy of the Jewish calendar.[2] These controversies hindered the progress of their careers, though the effect in Mendelssohn's was much larger.

Mendelssohn's frequent discussions with Christian scholars led to a polemic, spearheaded by Lavater, urging him to convert. Mendelssohn obviously rejected this challenge, though at the cost of severe health problems. H.Z. Slonimski also remained a loyal and observant Jew. Nonetheless, most of their descendants converted. They found it essential as a means for social and personal gratification, and many of them provided leadership in the liberal arts, such as Felix Bartoldy Mendelssohn (1809-1847) and Antoni Slonimski.[3]

This analogy highlights the differences between **Haskalah**'s origins in the German **Aufklarung** and its later Eastern European branch. Central European **Haskalah** was advanced by the emancipation process and relative economic prosperity and was therefore more susceptible to assimilation. By contrast, the Eastern European branch of the **Haskalah** was conditioned by cultural barriers, political problems, state suppression, poverty, and hardship, and its evolution tended to be more nationalistic and less assimilatory, though its level of acculturation was considerable.

B. Conclusion

Throughout history, ideological and political factions are strongly identified with key individuals who helped to mobilize support for their new cause through the quality of their own actions. Another vital element in the emergence of a new group into public life is the adoption of an adequate strategy. A coherent manifesto accompanied by a pragmatic platform and an enthusiastic, inspiring leadership is the formula that history prescribes for successful movements.

Indeed, throughout his life, Slonimski was deeply rooted in the traditional Jewish milieu. Nonetheless, he engineered notable changes in style, material, and contents which permeated the Eastern European Jewish literary and scientific agenda, by writing books and publishing **Ha-Tsefirah.** Most of his descendants chose to apostatize, and provided leadership in their communities.

In fact, faith ceased to be powerful enough to convince many of the young **maskilim** of its absolute truth. Counter-Traditionalism suggests a dialectic tendency of drifting away from tradition - while still following a declining amount of its basic characteristics, never totally rejecting it, but clearly preparing the grounds for its final removal likely to occur within the span of no longer than a few generations. Counter-Traditionalism was a temporary compromise for those who still wished to maintain some degree of a traditional facade, while including a substantial amount of newly-created concepts. For various reasons, primarily personal or ideological, this phase already embodied the radical shift soon to take place. The much-feared internal strife, causing rapid deterioration in social cohesion, leading to communal disintegration, was thus delayed.[4] The paradigm suggested above strongly favours the notion that history often follows the Hegelian model. This vision tacitly approves the transition upheld by a few carefully selected people, in a moderate refined manner, later to transform this "Quiet Revolution" into an inevitable chain of actions, leading to a complete polarization. This polarization inevitably leads, when occurring in the Jewish context, to either nationalism or assimilation in the secular segments of

society, whereas in the orthodox circles, it is conducive to the growth of mystical beliefs or religious nationalism.

Slonimski produced popular textbooks in which he successfully handled complicated issues. He hoped to generate appreciation and elicit a positive response from some important groups, which included the elite and the urbanized middle-class of Jewish society, i.e. the broader Hebrew readership. His outstanding achievements included inventions and his career in the Tsarist bureaucracy, allowing him to win acclaim as an enlightened Jew from representatives of another group - the influential and affluent of gentile society.

Founding **Ha-Tsefirah** was the project that asserted Slonimski's reputation as a "**Maskilic** Entrepreneur." As Samuel Finer defines it:

> This term indicates the type of **maskil** who, alongside his intellectual occupation in writing books, dedicates considerable effort to practical activity, whose interest lies in the organizational and institutional aspects of the **Haskalah** movement.[5]

Indeed, Slonimski gradually established himself as a renowned and illustrious scholar. Evolution, rather than revolution, is the appropriate description of his life. Being a **maskil** offered him reconciliation, not struggle.[6] Thanks to the quality of his popularization of science, his own scientific and technological inventions and the recognition given him by leading lights of Europe, Slonimski won the respect of fellow **maskilim** and was able to provide leadership for the **Haskalah** movement of his generation in Eastern Europe.

NOTES

1.See above, chapter III.

2.This criticism triggered the notorious "Thirty Years War." See above, chapter III.

3.See above, chapter I.

4.For a close examination of another phrase that utilizes the "Counter" term to advocate an ideological departure from a previous historical convention see David Biale, Kabbalah and Counter-History. (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1979).

5.Samuel Finer, "Isaac Eichel: An Entrepreneur of the **Haskalah** Movement in Germany," Tsion 52 (1988), 4: 430.

6.Compare Etkes, **Teudah** 12-13,

Chapter VII

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