

Rediscovering Schools for Jewish Girls in Tsarist Russia

Before 1925, most girls didn't have an education. They only knew how to peel potatoes.¹

This summary of the state of education of Jewish girls in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, delivered by a European-born rabbi to a reporter from *The New York Times* in 2000, is fairly typical of the standard picture of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. There is an assumption either that girls received no education at all or that whatever education they did receive was so paltry as to be unworthy of attention. As stated in the popular anthropological study of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, *Life is With People*:

Her education has a somewhat desultory character. Sometimes the girls study in the same room with the boys, sometimes in a separate room. They may have the same melamed or a different one, possibly the wife of the boys' melamed. Their daily sessions are much shorter than the boys', often not more than two hours, for they must run home to help their mothers about the house and to take care of the children. For them, study is marginal to their primary activities, while for boys it is the major occupation and goal.²

Not just the lay community, but scholars of the Jewish past have consistently described a bifurcated reality wherein all boys attended the traditional *heder*, and girls, quite simply, did not. No work on Eastern Europe is complete without a thorough appraisal of the function of the *heder* in communal life, but little or nothing is said about schools for girls. To offer just one example, Louis Greenberg, writing in the 1940s, opened his lengthy description of the *heder* system with the observation that 'In fact, there was practically no illiteracy among Russian Jewry, for almost every male – and in many cases females too – could read the prayer book and the Bible.'³

What emerges from the general historiography is a highly gendered understanding of education. Historians relegated education to the sphere of male experience, inevitably treating male learning as normative and female education as marginal, exceptional and beyond the pale. Even when authors recognised that normative patterns of education may have existed for Jewish girls as

well, these were not considered a worthy topic of enquiry. It was thus possible for learned and rigorous academics simultaneously to dismiss women's education and to make reference to intriguing exceptions.

In the past few decades this situation has begun to change. Scholars have both challenged the general assumption that Jewish girls received little to no education and focused on particular examples.⁴ We now know that Jewish women in the second half of the nineteenth century took part in a great variety of formal and informal educational opportunities but there is still much work to be done in cataloguing the range of possibilities and integrating these findings into the larger historical narrative.

This article seeks to meet these further goals by examining both the phenomenon of private schools for Jewish girls and the effect of these schools on the development of modern Jewish education in late Imperial Russia.

Early schools for Jewish girls

Shevel' Perel' opened the first school for Jewish girls in the Russian territories of the Pale of Settlement in Vilna in 1831.⁵ A number of biographical details suggest that Perel' was unusual, even in the relatively enlightened city of Vilna. Born in 1801, he received his primary education at home, rather than in the *heder*, and then entered the Vilna Gymnasium. Attendance of Jews at Russian schools was still extremely rare at this time and, on graduation, he was probably one of only a handful of Vilna Jews entirely fluent in Russian. Soon after marrying and starting a family, Perel' applied for permission to open a private school for Jewish girls. His application stressed his commitment to creating a Russian-speaking Jewry, and his belief that this could be accomplished through training girls. The education ministry approved Perel's application and he opened the school he would successfully run for more than three decades.⁶

In the next few years a handful of other Jewish educators sought permission to open schools for Jewish girls. However, it was not until the major 1844 Statute on Jewish education that such schools began to open in large numbers. The 1844 legislation introduced mandatory government-sponsored schools for Jewish boys and regularised the application and oversight of private Jewish schools. It also created a new tax on ritual candles to fund the new school system.⁷ At the point when the new legislation went into effect, there were five private schools for Jewish boys and two for girls in the Pale. The government quickly set about incorporating the formerly private boys' schools into the new system. From that point onwards the education ministry looked with disfavour on applications to open private schools for Jewish boys. These would constitute competition for the new public Jewish schools. Private schools for Jewish girls, however, were another matter entirely. From 1844 to the early 1880s well over 100 private schools for Jewish girls opened in cities, towns and *shtetlach* throughout the Pale of Jewish Settlement.⁸

While the historical record contains virtually no mention of these schools, the newly reopened archives of the tsarist education ministry has literally hundreds of such records. Beginning in the 1830s scores of educators communicated with the ministry about their private schools for Jewish girls. It is not possible to speak of a system of schools for Jewish girls in late nineteenth-century Russia, or even a network. To use the word movement would imply some articulated and agreed upon set of goals whereas there is little evidence of any direct interaction between the educators who ran private schools for Jewish girls. In essence, each of these educators made decisions based on his or her own set of goals and on local conditions.

Nonetheless, there were notable similarities between the schools. This work will focus on two aspects of the private schools for Jewish girls: financing and Judaic studies. I will argue that the educators who opened and ran private schools for Jewish girls pragmatically balanced their ideological motivations with very real concerns about funding and retaining communal goodwill.

Financing the schools

As of 1851 the annual tuition fee at the Jewish girls' school of Shevel' Perel' in Vilna was ten silver roubles. Families who wished to take advantage of supplementary non-academic courses, such as handicrafts, music and dance, paid 50 roubles. There was also an option of taking meals at the school, for 150 roubles per year.⁹ For the sake of comparison, the education ministry estimated that in 1843 Jewish families paid between 35 and 100 roubles annually to send their sons to *heder*.¹⁰

What is interesting about Perel's tuition is not just that the annual fee was quite low, but the fee scale. Perel's fee scale was carefully designed to attract as many students as possible, while encouraging the wealthier families to subsidise the school. By charging a mere ten roubles per year, Perel' was assured that the aspiring Jewish bourgeoisie and intelligentsia of Vilna could afford to send their daughters to his school. In this way he succeeded in filling his school with the requisite number of pupils. At the same time, Perel' wanted to make sure that the needs of the upper classes were met, and that he could afford to keep the school open. He thus designed a set of supplementary offerings to meet the expectations of the monied elite.

Some of the same motivations are visible in the pricing of the school of Aron Frud in Berdichev. Frud offered four tuition options. Students who stayed at the *pension* were charged 180 roubles per year. Half-pensioners (that is, those who slept in their own homes but took meals at the school) paid 125 roubles and non-resident students paid between 50 and 20 roubles per year depending on the family's resources. In addition, there were ten slots available at no cost to students from poor families.¹¹ Like Perel', Frud offered wealthy families prestigious and attractive ways to spend their money. The elite of the

Jewish community could match the experience of their wealthy Christian neighbours in sending their daughters to boarding school. At the same time, Frud not only offered a sliding scale of payments for families of modest means, but also actively recruited among the poor by offering scholarship positions.

Other schools offered less sophisticated fee scales but clearly worked within the same framework. Many schools offered weekly instruction in both music and French as paid electives. Over time more and more principals made scholarship positions available in their schools. The rewards for having a robust student body became clear as both the government and certain private and communal bodies began to award subsidies to successful private schools.

Subjects of instruction

Just as educators used pricing to achieve diverse goals, so the educational content of the schools reflected more than academic concerns alone. The curricula of the private schools had to meet the requirements of both the government and the local consumers. This goes a long way towards explaining why the schools were so similar in academic offerings. Every school about which there was documentation offered some sort of instruction in religion (*zakon bozhyi*) and in the Russian language. In most cases other languages were offered as well, in particular German. Quite a few taught French, although sometimes as an elective for which the family had to pay extra. More than half of the schools offered some level of Hebrew instruction. Only a few offered instruction in either Yiddish or Polish. These subjects, as well as arithmetic, penmanship and crafts, served as the core curriculum for the vast majority of private schools for Jewish girls.

Jewish subjects

Religion, a central course in all schools, could be taught in many ways. In reality, prayer served as the common denominator of religious courses. In and of itself this shows the entrenchment of traditionalism. Either because educators did not want to offend the traditionalists within the communities, or because even they were unable to escape the dominant paradigm of what women should know, the major focus of religious education was on prayer. Just as Jewish girls tutored by family members or by paid tutors in their homes were most likely to learn the rudiments of Hebrew reading and prayers appropriate to a woman's life, so the situation remained in the new schools.

The principal of a Jewish girls' school in Berdichev in 1854, for example, equated religion and prayer. His two-year course of study began with learning prayers for the Sabbath and new moon and progressed to studying the prayers associated with holidays and with women for the second year. However, whereas in the home setting a girl would learn to read prayers aloud directly from the prayer book and perhaps have access to a Yiddish translation, in the

Berdichev school all prayers were studied in German translation using the text *Yesodi ha-da'at* by the Polish *maskil* Ben-Zev.¹²

In fact, many of the principals expressed their modern leanings in the supplementary subjects offered. Abram Bruk-Brezovskii expected his first-year students to master Hebrew reading and to memorise the Ten Commandments, in addition to their prayers. By the second year, an element of sacred history was added to the curriculum.¹³ In the school of Vol'f and Khaia Gringol'ts in Odessa, the study of prayer was to be supplemented by reading short biblical stories in the text of Peter Beer.¹⁴ David Shtern in Mogilev taught a catechism as well as prayer.¹⁵

Each of these additional Judaic offerings was to some degree modern. Focusing attention on the Decalogue, for example, allowed the educator to highlight Judaism's universalist and ethical teachings as opposed to the more particularist aspects which offended modern sentiment. The teaching of Jewish history rather than simply the Torah allowed for an unprecedented degree of interpretation and even mild biblical criticism. Similarly, excerpting and editing didactic stories from the Torah was a far cry from the traditional method of reading through the entire text beginning with Leviticus. And, of course, the catechism was a method of teaching adopted from Christianity and favoured in modern Jewish schools in Germany. In fact, all these innovations were based on pedagogic ideas from Western Europe and many of the texts came from there as well.

Although studying prayers in German translation was quite common, Hebrew reading was also offered in many of the schools.¹⁶ At a new school in Grodno, Hebrew was part of the religion curriculum, as stated in the educational plan: 'Jewish religious and scholarly subjects: Hebrew reading and translation from Hebrew to Russian, writing from a hand-written text, from a printed text and from dictation. Prayer and explanation of Jewish religious customs.'¹⁷ In this instance, Hebrew comprehension was part of the study of the language. It was more common for only reading and writing to be taught. In Kherson, for example, the academic plan for the Dubinskiis' school listed Russian, German, French and Hebrew but explicitly stated that grammar of only the first three languages would be taught.¹⁸ It should be remembered that teaching Hebrew in a systematic manner to anyone, let alone girls, was still new in these years.¹⁹

A few of the schools offered a more rigorous Jewish studies curriculum. These were often the same schools whose general studies curricula were also broad.

General studies

In addition to religion, every private school for Jewish girls in the Russian Empire required extensive instruction in the Russian language. In many cases

this was the single course with the most hours and clearly the central goal of the principal. If the Jews were ever to become a part of Russian society, speaking the language fluently was a necessity. Principals and writers often restated this point. Yehudah Leib Gordon, who ran a private school for Jewish girls in the Lithuanian town of Tel'she before he became a renowned Hebrew poet, said the following to his pupils, on the occasion of the opening of the school in 1865:

Mothers play a pivotal role in the instruction of children. Hearken to my talk, my dear daughters! Do not forget: you are responsible to God, to our fatherland, and to posterity for the home education of your children. So if, for example, you speak Russian in the home and do not mix jargon [Yiddish] with your pure Russian, it will be easy for your children.²⁰

Inspectors and dignitaries visiting the schools were always sure to comment upon progress in Russian.

It is, of course, difficult to know exactly how the Russian language was taught in each of these schools. The academic plans suggest that immersion was a key tool employed by educators. It was not uncommon for all general studies subjects to be taught in Russian. This closely paralleled the government Jewish school system in which religion was taught in German and all other subjects in Russian. Other plans stated that all subjects would be taught in Russian, without excluding religion.²¹

In addition, Russian was taught in an academic manner. Teaching methods at the time relied heavily on both dictation and recitation. Abram Bruk-Brezovskii described his method in an article in *Sion*: 'Russian language: reading with translation into German, taking dictation, learning by heart certain articles of prose and poetry chosen by the principal, and grammar. Special attention will be paid to practical learning.'²²

Aron Frud in Berdichev described a spiraling grammar-based programme, which sounds quite modern. In the preparatory class his students covered reading in Russian and the parts of speech. By the first class they were working on word combinations and by the second on composition. In the third class word composition, agreement and case work allowed for more sophisticated writing. Finally, in the fourth class the students focused on subordinate clauses, accents and review.²³

In addition to religion and Russian almost all Jewish girls' schools offered German, penmanship and arithmetic. Quite a number also offered a weekly course in women's crafts. It would seem that this course was not meant to prepare girls for employment but rather for their future role as home-makers. French, music and dance were offered at many schools and especially those seeking to attract the daughters of the wealthy elite. A minority of schools offered courses in history and geography, even fewer in science.

These private schools for Jewish girls opened in towns and cities throughout the heavily Jewish-populated regions of Russia were essentially grassroots affairs. Educators recognised a niche and opened schools for the local Jewish girls. For the most part, they received no guidance from either government or communal authorities. Nonetheless, the schools they created were strikingly similar. They designed Jewish studies curricula to meet the expectations of the Jewish communities from which they drew their students while at the same time introducing new concepts and approaches. They made the Russian language a central pillar of their schools because gaining permission to open a school required such a commitment and because they themselves were Russian-speaking and envisioned a more culturally and linguistically russified Jewish community.

New developments

This need to avoid alienating the traditional masses while appealing to the more enlightened Jews and to the goals of the education ministry led to the creation of schools that can be termed moderate but, I would argue, not conservative. There can be no question that the founding principals of these schools, in both fee structure and academic offerings, made every effort to attract pupils from across the Jewish community. For a school for Jewish girls to succeed in maintaining the support of families ranging from wealthy to poor, and from traditional to enlightened, the curricula had to be modern and useful without being radical.

However, this did not mean that the schools were static or lacking in innovation. While making a concerted effort not to offend the more traditional members of the Jewish communities where they lived and worked, educators in private schools for Jewish girls were constantly experimenting with new materials, pedagogic methods and school structures. In particular, they struggled with how best to meet the needs of poor students, how to effect integration between Jews and their Christian neighbours, and whether and when girls and boys could be taught together.

Beginning in the late 1860s, for example, principals of schools for Jewish girls started to recognise that providing scholarships to daughters of the poor was not sufficient. These girls were often unable to graduate and, even when they did, were no better prepared for making a living. The writer and activist Mariia Saker bemoaned the situation in an 1871 speech later printed in the Russian-language Jewish periodical *Den*⁷:

The old bazaar and Jewish street where the mass of Jewish women fried beneath the scathing sun in summer and became numb in their rags in the hard frost of winter clearly show that it is the utter lack of knowledge that chains these unfortunates to such a mode of life ... There are certainly more profitable and pleasant occupations but there is no school – no trade school – in which a Jewish mother can enrol her daughter to acquire such knowledge.²⁴

There were thus efforts to introduce training in crafts that could actually be put to use in the marketplace. In 1881 the first trade school for poor Jewish girls opened in Odessa.²⁵ Thereafter both trade schools and sections within other schools devoted to more in-depth training in such skills as sewing opened with increasing frequency. By the end of the 1890s more than 500 girls studied in four communally funded vocational schools for Jewish girls in Odessa alone.²⁶

Similarly, the virtual closure of the state school system for Jewish boys in 1873 presented a new challenge. Educators sought ways to teach boys in their girls' schools while retaining communal and governmental approbation. Although providing equal educational opportunities to boys and girls had long been a goal of some among the *maskilim* ('enlighteners'), staying in business required strategic decisions. In 1877 Lev Kaplan opened a co-educational Jewish school in Minsk. He soon had a candle tax subsidy to help with his 42 girls and 21 boys. It is probably not coincidental that soon afterwards Il'ia Rakavshchik, who had run a private school for Jewish girls in Minsk since 1864, began teaching boys as well.²⁷ Rakavshchik saw an opportunity to expand his school and better compete with other schools. He also saw that Kaplan's experiment had been successful. In the coming decades even communally funded institutions like the Talmud Torah would begin to build on the successes of the private girls' schools and turn to educating girls as well as boys.

At the same time, other principals were struggling with how to integrate Jews effectively into the non-Jewish environment. Although a minority of Jewish parents was willing, by the 1870s, to send their daughters to Russian schools, where instruction in Russian Orthodoxy was mandatory and classes held on Saturdays, most were not willing to sacrifice so much for acculturation. Jewish educators responded to the growing interest in interaction with the surrounding society by opening their private girls' schools to Christian girls and by offering to teach courses in the Jewish religion in Russian schools.²⁸

The same type of experimentation and incremental change surveyed in these three examples would most likely have continued had it not been for the sweeping changes in the Russian Jewish community at large.

The end of the beginning

Historians continue to argue over the significance of 1881 as a turning point in Russian Jewish life. To what degree did the pogroms, the legal backlash against Jews and the abandonment by the Russian liberal intelligentsia change Jewish life inexorably?²⁹ Based on the data regarding educational patterns, there can be no question that the pace of change quickened considerably beginning in the 1880s.³⁰ Whereas previously various educators committed to the *Haskalah* or to a more vague goal of russification had painstakingly experimented with modifications to the traditional *heder* curriculum or offered

Jewish girls a primary education that was modern in certain aspects yet acceptable to traditionalists, they did so with a commitment to gradual change. By the late 1880s the idea of radical transformation became possible.

As circumstances for Jews in the Russian Empire deteriorated, those Jews who remained came to embrace new ideological solutions to the situation. In an atmosphere of violence, deprivation and brutally strict quotas in Russian education and professions, Russian Jews wanted to send their children to schools that offered some hope for the future.

By the turn-of-the-century period, educators were no longer opening private schools for Jewish girls on the old model. The schools they opened, whether they were trade schools where Zionism was taught, religiously mixed schools devoted to full acculturation, or Yiddishist schools committed to inculcating socialism, promised much more than basic literacy. Furthermore, these schools expanded at a rapid rate as other doors increasingly closed to Jews. As mentioned above, there were two private schools for Jewish girls in 1844. New schools opened their doors continually throughout the subsequent decades so that by 1883 there were 66 modern private schools for Jews, most of them either for girls or mixed. By 1893 there were 232 such schools. Five years later 338 private Jewish schools provided instruction to 6,534 boys and 8,710 girls.³¹

It is perhaps not surprising that historians chose to record these later schools, with their fiery rhetoric and clear continuity into the present. The impact of Zionism and socialism on Jewish life continues to be felt. However, I would argue that these radical educational institutions would not have been possible without the moderate ones that preceded them. At the beginning of the nineteenth century formal secular education did not exist in the Russian Jewish community. The private schools for Jewish girls opened between 1831 and 1881 helped to introduce secular education into the Jewish community and to make formal education normative for Jewish girls. They also provided a fertile ground for experimentation in new ideological and pedagogic methods. Even within the limitations imposed by Jewish communities and the government, these schools managed to implement a variety of new approaches to teaching the Jewish religion, to experiment with how best to meet the needs of poor students and to integrate boys and girls and Jews and Christians in the classroom. These gradual developments enabled the radical transformations to come.

In a sense it was the very success of the private schools for Jewish girls which eventually not only led to their demise, but also shielded them from historical enquiry. Private schools for Jewish girls were a crucial ingredient in the transition of Russian Jewry into modernity. However, as the pace proceeded, and the traditional community's structures and strictures broke down, moderate and mildly innovative schools were no longer enough. The schools had served their purpose in making the next generation of schools possible, but all memory of them was swept away in the maelstrom of change.

The rediscovery of private schools for Jewish girls, and their reintroduction into the historical narrative, sheds new light on the Russian Jewish experience. These schools provided a bridge between the traditional educational patterns in place at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the radical ones that had almost supplanted them by the end of the century. The discontinuities no longer seem so extreme in light of this missing link. They also help us to understand the political activism of Jewish women by the end of the century. Further research on Jewish women's education in Tsarist Russia will help us to understand more about Jewish women's lives and about Russian Jewry as a whole.

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NOTES

- 1 Quoted in Laurie Goodstein, 'Women Taking Active Role to Study Orthodox Judaism', *The New York Times*, 21 December 2000, A23.
- 2 Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is With People: The Culture of the Shtetl* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 125.
- 3 Louis Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia: The Struggle for Emancipation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 56.
- 4 Deborah Weisman, 'Bais Yaakov: A Historical Model for Jewish Feminists', in Elizabeth Koltun (ed.), *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives* (New York: Schocken, 1976), 139–148; idem, 'Bais Ya'akov, 'A Women's Educational Movement in the Polish Jewish Community: A Case Study in Tradition and Modernity', MA thesis (New York University, 1977); and idem, 'Bais Ya'akov as an Innovation in Jewish Women's Education: A Contribution to the Study of Education and Social Change', *Studies in Jewish Education*, Vol. 7 (Jerusalem), 1995, 278–99; 'Hinukh banot datiyot bi-Yerushalayim bi-tekuvat ha-shilton ha-Briti' (The Education of Orthodox Girls in Jerusalem Under the British Mandate), PhD diss. (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993); Shaul Stampfer, 'Gender Differentiation and Education of the Jewish Woman in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe', *Polin*, No. 7, 1992, 63–87; Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), chap. 2; Avraham Greenbaum, 'Heder habanot, u-banot be-heder ha-banim, be-mizrah eropa be-tekufah she-kedma la-milhemet ha-olam ha-rishonah' (Heders for Girls and Girls in Heders for Boys in Eastern Europe Before the First World War), in Rivkah Feldhay and Immanuel Etkes (eds.), *Hinukh v'istoriah: heksherim tarbutim u'folitim* (Education and History: Cultural and Political Contexts) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1999), 297–303; Semion Kraiz, 'Bate-sefer yehudim be-sefa ha-rusit be-Rusia ha-zarit' (Russian-Language Jewish Schools in Tsarist Russia), PhD diss. (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1994); Iris Parush, *Nashim kor'ot: yitronah shel shuliyut ba-hevrah ha-Yehudit be-mizrah Eropah ba-me'ah ha-tesha 'esreh* (Reading Women: The Benefit of Marginality in Nineteenth-Century East European Jewish Society) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2001); 'The Politics of Literacy: Women and Foreign Languages in Jewish Society of 19th-Century Eastern Europe', *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1995, 183–206; 'Readers in Cameo: Women Readers in Jewish Society of Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe', *Proof texts*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1994, 1–23; 'Women Readers as Agents of Social Change among Eastern European Jews in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Gender and History*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1997, 60–82; and my 'Educational Options for Jewish Girls in Nineteenth-Century Europe', *Polin*, Vol. 15, 2002, 301–10.
- 5 The social and educational circumstances for the Jews of the Kingdom of Poland, although officially part of the Pale of Settlement, were already so different by this time that this study will

- consider only the 15 Russian provinces of the Pale. For more on Jewish education in the Polish provinces, see Sabina Levin, 'Bati-ha-Sefer ha-elimantariim ha-rishonim l'yeladim bnei moshe be-Varsha, be-shanim 1818–1830' (The First Elementary Schools for Children of the Mosaic Faith in Warsaw), *Gal-Ed*, Vol. 1, 1973, 63–100.
- 6 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive, RGIA), *fond 733, opis' 97, delo 485, listy 2–4* (personnel form completed by Perel' in 1850). The standard Russian archival notation system will be used hereafter: *f.* (*fond*), *op.* (*opis'*), *d.*, *dd.* (*delo, dela*), *l.*, *ll.* (*list, listy*), *ob.* (*oborot*). Perel' carried on a prolific correspondence with the education ministry. See, for example, RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 97, *d.* 295 and *op.* 98, *dd.* 466, 139.
 - 7 *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii* (Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire), Second Series, Vol. 19, 18,420, 13 November 1844 and supplement in *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnago prosvieshcheniia (1840–1855)* (Collection of Decrees of the Ministry of Education, 1840–1855), Vol. 2, Part 2 (St Petersburg, 1876).
 - 8 See my 'Private Schools for Jewish Girls in Tsarist Russia', PhD diss. (Brandeis University, 2003), chap. 4 and 279–83. The first such schools opened in the larger cities with relatively enlightened Jewish populations. However, circumstances at the time, as well as the success of the first schools, soon led other educators to open schools in new locales. Of the 122 schools identified in my dissertation, 56 were in the Vilna Educational Circuit, 25 in the Kiev Educational Circuit, 3 in the Odessa Educational Circuit, 3 in the Derpt Educational Circuit and 2 in St Petersburg. It is impossible to reach an accurate accounting of the number of girls who passed through these schools. The Ministry of Education mostly left the oversight of private schools to local offices and did not effectively collect data on the number of schools, their enrolment, or how long they stayed open. Of the 26 schools for which accurate enrolment data were available, the average number of pupils was close to 60. Thus even if each school had been open for only one year, more than 7,000 girls would have passed through the system. Of course, many of the schools stayed open for a much longer period.
 - 9 RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 98, *d.* 139, *l.* 5 (announcement for Perel's school printed in 1851).
 - 10 RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 97, *d.* 20, *l.* 75 *ob.* (internal education ministry report on Jewish education).
 - 11 RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 98, *d.* 427, *ll.* 4–6 *ob.* (1859 plan for the school of Aron Frud in Berdichev). Frud's school was one of a fairly large minority which offered wealthy students the option of room and board on premises. Most of the schools were not residential.
 - 12 RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 97, *d.* 898, *l.* 2 (academic programme for Jewish women's school in Berdichev, 1854).
 - 13 RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 98, *d.* 96, *l.* 7–7 *ob.* (academic programme for Jewish women's school in Kherson, 1856).
 - 14 RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 98, *d.* 96, *l.* 4 (academic programme for Jewish women's school in Odessa, 1856).
 - 15 RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 98, *d.* 378, *l.* 5 (academic programme for Jewish women's school in Mogilev, 1859).
 - 16 The Russian language does not offer a clear distinction between the languages Hebrew and Yiddish. The term *evreiskii*, used in the academic plans, literally means Jewish and is ambiguous. Nonetheless, it is clear from the context that the educators teaching *evreiskii* in their schools generally meant Hebrew and not Yiddish. In most cases where further detail, such as an academic programme, is available, there can be no question that Hebrew was meant. For example, the term ancient Hebrew language (*drevnii*) is often used in these more detailed documents. Other *programmy* refer to the teaching of 'points' or the system of Hebrew vocalisation which is not used for Yiddish (see, for example, RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 98, *d.* 161, *l.* 5). One exception is the school of Shevel' Perel' where a bilingual broadsheet advertising the school translated the Russian *evreiskoe* as 'Yidish' in the Yiddish section (RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 98, *d.* 139, *l.* 5). Where corroboration was not available, I have assumed that Hebrew was the language taught in all schools.
 - 17 RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 97, *d.* 673, *l.* 2 *ob.*
 - 18 RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 97, *d.* 233, *l.* 1.
 - 19 For more on the teaching and function of Hebrew in Eastern European Jewish society, see Shaul Stampfer, 'What Did "Knowing Hebrew" Mean in Eastern Europe?', in Lewis Glinert (ed.), *Hebrew in Ashkenaz: A Language in Exile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 129–40; and idem, 'Heder Study, Knowledge of Torah and the Maintenance of Social

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- Stratification in Traditional East European Society', in Janet Aviad (ed.), *Studies in Jewish Education*, Vol. 3, 1988, 271–89, as well as Iris Parush, 'Mabat aher 'al 'haye ha-'ivrit h'metah' (A Different View of the Life of the Dead Hebrew Language), *Alpayim*, Vol. 13, 1996, 65–106.
- 20 L. Gordon, 'Rech' (Speech), *Ha-Karmel* (Russian language supplement to Hebrew periodical), Year 6, No. 28, 1866, 122.
 - 21 See, for example, RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 98, *d.* 219, *l.* 2 *ob.* (plan for school of Isaak Kisin in Minsk, 1857).
 - 22 Abram Iakov Bruk-Brezovskii, 'Iz rechi skazannoi sodержatelem evreiskago devich'iago pensiona' (From a Speech Given by the Principal of the Jewish Girls' School), *Sion*, No. 20, 1861, 322.
 - 23 RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 98, *d.* 427.
 - 24 Mariia Saker, 'V to vremia kak ...' (At the Same Time as ...), *Den'*, No. 23, 1871, 351–52.
 - 25 O. Margulis, 'O professional'nom obrazovanii evreev v Odesse' (On the Professional Education of Jews in Odessa), *Sbornik v pol'zu nachal'nykh evreiskikh shkol* (Anthology for Jewish Elementary Schools) (St Petersburg, 1896), 394–95. For more on the curriculum, see *Spravochnaia kniga po voprosam obrazovaniia evreev* (Handbook on the Question of the Education of the Jews) (St Petersburg, 1901), 382.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, 395–98. In 1873 the government abandoned its grand plan to have all Jewish boys in government Jewish schools in favour of encouraging Jewish boys to attend Russian schools. To this end most of the government Jewish schools were closed and those that were allowed to remain open became basic grammar schools without religious education.
 - 27 *Pamiatnaia knizhka Vilenskago uchebnago okruga na 1879/80 uchebnyi god* (Almanac of Vilna Educational District 1879–80 School Year) (Vilna: 1879), 208.
 - 28 See, for example, RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 189, *d.* 189, *ll.* 1–2 *ob.* (request for Jewish religion teacher in Russian school, 1866) and RGIA, *f.* 733, *op.* 189, *d.* 411, *ll.* 1–17 (discussion of Jewish religion text books to be used in Russian schools, 1871).
 - 29 For work challenging the notion of strict periodisation and describing a gradual evolution, see, for example, Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983); Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); John D. Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question, 1855–1881* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).
 - 30 This contention is corroborated by the work of Steven G. Rappaport on Jewish education in Russia. See his 'Jewish Education and Jewish Culture in the Russian Empire, 1880–1914', (PhD.diss. Stanford University, 2000). In his introduction (p. 17) Rappaport explains his decision to begin his study in the year 1880 'because after decades of slow and sporadic development, this date marked a rapid increase in the establishment of reformed Jewish schools'.
 - 31 *Spravochnaia kniga*, 644, 647–48.