Judaism's Encounter *with* Other Cultures

Rejection or Integration?

edited by

Jacob J. Schacter

A Jason Aronson Book

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Oxford

3

Rabbinic Openness to General Culture in the Early Modern Period in Western and Central Europe

Shnayer Z. Leiman

INTRODUCTION

In a very profound sense, the debate between *Torah only* and *Torah and derekh erez* enthusiasts is a misplaced one.[1] The extreme positions are imaginary constructs that no serious Torah scholar embraces. That is, no serious Torah scholar would deny the value of *derekh erez*, whether defined minimally as "gainful employment," or maximally so as to include in its purview secular wisdom and all aspects of general culture that enhance one's understanding and appreciation of God's creation: *the earth in its fullness, the world and its inhabitants* (Psalms 24:1).[2] He could do so only at the risk of undermining Torah itself. On the other hand, no serious Torah scholar who embraced *Torah and derekh erez* ever denied the centrality of Torah, or imagined that *Torah* and *derekh erez* were axiologically separate but equal realms.

Certainly, in the last three hundred years, the preeminent exemplar of *Torah only* was the Gaon of Vilna (d. 1797). The Gaon did not merely refuse to earn a living; he refused to be gainfully employed either as a rabbi or rosh yeshiva. Instead, he devoted a lifetime to the diligent study of Torah for some twenty hours per day. Regarding his daily regimen, his sons reported as follows:

---

1. The binary terminology used here was introduced by R. Shimon Schwab, *These and Those* (New York, 1967), 7.

2. *Derekh Erez* in rabbinic parlance bears a variety of meanings, but never "secular study" or "general culture." See, e.g., the entry *derekh erez* in *Enzyklopedyah Talmudit* (Jerusalem, 1956), VII, 672–706. The plain sense of the term at its *locus classicus*, M. Avot 2:2: *"yafeh talmud torah 'im derekh erez"* appears to be "worldly occupation" or "gainful employment." See, for example, R. David Z. Hoffmann's German translation of, and commentary to, M. Avot 2:2 in *Mischnaiot*[2] (Berlin, 1924), 332. The broadening of the term *derekh erez* in that context to include secular study, and even more broadly to include general culture, while rooted in medieval commentary, is a modern phenomenon. For the medieval roots, see R. David b. Abraham Maimuni, *Midrash David*, commentary to M. Avot 2:2 (Jerusalem, 1991), 26. For pre-Hirschian broadening of the term in the modern period, see R. Yishmael ha-Kohen (d. 1811), *She'elot u-Teshuvot Zera' Emet* (Livorno, 1796), II, 119a, §107. Cf. the usage by R. Samuel Landau (d. 1834) in a passage from 1816, cited below, p. 165.

> Throughout his lifetime, he never slept more than two hours in any twenty-four hour period. He never slept for more than a half-hour at a time, and during that half-hour his lips recited *halakhot* and *aggadot* in a whisper. When the half-hour elapsed, he gathered strength like a lion, ritually cleansed his hands, and began learning in a loud voice, after which he went back to sleep for a half-hour. It was his practice to sleep three half-hours in the evening and one half-hour during the day.[3]

His singular devotion to Torah knew no bounds. Again, the testimony of his sons—who sometimes received the short end of his singlemindedness—is impeccable.

> He never inquired of his sons and daughters regarding their occupation or economic well-being. He never sent them a letter inquiring about their well-being. When any of his children came to visit him, even though he rejoiced greatly, for often they had not seen him for a year or two, he never inquired about the well-being of their family or regarding their occupation. After allowing his son to rest for an hour, he would urge him to return immediately to his studies, saying: "You must make amends in my house for the study time forfeited during your journey here."[4]

It is difficult to imagine what else one could do in order to surpass the Gaon as a *Torah only* enthusiast. Nevertheless, the Gaon's attitude toward secular wisdom was hardly rejectionist, as evidenced by the following passages:

R. Barukh Schick of Shklov (d. 1808):

> When I visited Vilna in Tevet 5538 [1778] . . . I heard from the holy lips of the Gaon of Vilna that to the extent one is deficient in secular wisdom he will be deficient a hundredfold in Torah study, for Torah and wisdom are bound up together. He compared a person lacking in secular wisdom to a man suffering from constipation; his disposition is affected to the point that he refuses all food. . . . He urged me to translate into Hebrew as much secular wisdom as possible, so as to cause the nations to disgorge what they have swallowed, making it available to all, thereby increasing knowledge among the Jews. Thus, the nations will no longer be able to lord it over us—and bring about the profaning of God's name—with their taunt: "Where is your wisdom?"[5]

3. Introduction to *Be'ur ha-Gra, Shulḥan 'Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim.*

4. Introduction to *Be'ur ha-Gra.*

5. *Sefer Uklidos* (The Hague, 1780), introduction. It is unclear whether the justification given at the end of the passage cited here is to be ascribed to the Gaon of Vilna or to Schick. See David E. Fishman, "A Polish Rabbi Meets the Berlin Haskalah: The Case of R. Barukh Schick," *AJS Review* 12 (1987): 95–121, especially pp. 115–19, who argues persuasively that it is to be ascribed to Schick.

R. Abraham Simḥah of Amtchislav (d. 1864):

I heard from my uncle R. Ḥayyim of Volozhin that the Gaon of Vilna told his son R. Abraham that he craved for translations of secular wisdom into Hebrew, including a translation of the Greek or Latin Josephus,[6] through which he could fathom the plain sense of various rabbinic passages in the Talmud and Midrash.[7]

The Gaon of Vilna's sons:

By the time the Gaon of Vilna was twelve years old, he mastered the seven branches of secular wisdom. . . . [8] First he turned to mathematics . . . then astronomy.[9]

R. Israel of Shklov (d. 1839):

I cannot refrain from repeating a true and astonishing story that I heard from the Gaon's disciple R. Menaḥem Mendel. . . . [10] It took place when the Gaon of Vilna celebrated the completion of his commentary on Song of Songs. . . . He raised his eyes toward

6. Josephus was known to medieval Jewry via a garbled Hebrew version, which was thought to be the original Hebrew version addressed to the Jews, called *Yosippon*. Modern scholarship has established that this Hebrew version originated in the tenth century; see, e.g., David L. Flusser, ed., *Sefer Yosippon* (Jerusalem, 1980), II, 3–252. This was distinguished by the Gaon and others from the original Greek text of Josephus (first published edition: Basel, 1544), and its many Latin translations (first published edition: Augsburg, 1470), addressed to the Romans, which were referred to as *Yosippon la-Romiyyim*. Obviously, the Gaon would have preferred a Hebrew rendering of the original Greek, but one suspects that this call for a translation was addressed to eighteenth century Jews adept in Latin.

7. Letter dated 1862 appended to Kalman Schulman's translation of Josephus' *The Jewish War, Milḥamot ha-Yehudim 'im ha-Roma'im* (Warsaw, 1862), II, v–vi.

8. The term *seven branches of wisdom* (Hebrew *sheva' ha-ḥokhmot*) was unknown to classical Jewish literature prior to the medieval period, when it was often read into Proverbs 9:1. The concept, which seems to have originated with Varro (ca. 116–27 B.C.E.), culminated with the seven branches of learning of medieval scholasticism: the trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. For two interesting "Jewish" versions of the seven branches of wisdom, see R. Baḥya b. Asher (end of thirteenth century), commentary on M. Avot 3:18, in R. Charles Chavel, ed., *Kitvei Rabbenu Baḥya* (Jerusalem, 1970), 591; and R. Jonathan Eibeschuetz, *Ya'arot Devash*, ed. Makhon Yerushalayim (Jerusalem, 1984), II, 122–23. In general, see Dov Rappel, *Sheva' ha-Ḥokhmot: ha-Vikuaḥ 'al Limmudei Ḥol be-Yahadut* (Jerusalem, 1990), 12–66.

9. Introduction to the Gaon of Vilna's commentary on the Torah, *Adderet Eliyahu*, ed. M. Shulsinger (New York, 1950), 6.

10. R. Menaḥem Mendel of Shklov (d. 1827) was instrumental in the renewal of the Ashkenazic community of Jerusalem during the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

> heaven and with great devotion began blessing and thanking God for endowing him with the ability to comprehend the light of the entire Torah. This included its inner and outer manifestations. He explained: All secular wisdom is essential for our holy Torah and is included in it. He indicated that he had mastered all the branches of secular wisdom, including algebra, trigonometry, geometry, and music. He especially praised music, explaining that most of the Torah accents, the secrets of the Levitical songs, and the secrets of the *Tikkunei Zohar* could not be comprehended without mastering it. . . . He explained the significance of the various secular disciplines, and noted that he had mastered them all. Regarding the discipline of medicine, he stated that he had mastered anatomy, but not pharmacology. Indeed, he had wanted to study pharmacology with practicing physicians, but his father prevented him from undertaking its study, fearing that upon mastering it he would be forced to curtail his Torah study whenever it would become necessary for him to save a life. . . . He also stated that he had mastered all of philosophy, but that he had derived only two matters of significance from his study of it. . . . The rest of it, he said, should be discarded.[11]

Even if one allows for a measure of exaggeration in these reports, in fact they were published by contemporaries of the Gaon (with the exception of the second report which, however, is reported in the name of a contemporary of the Gaon) who knew him personally. Moreover, the tradents themselves were men of integrity whose scholarly credentials were impeccable.[12] These, then, should hardly be treated as

11. *Pe'at ha-Shulḥan*, ed. Abraham M. Luncz (Jerusalem, 1911), 5a.

12. R. Bezalel Landau, *Ha-Gaon he-Ḥasid mi-Vilna*, third edition (Jerusalem, 1978), 217 and 225–26, n. 16, questions the authenticity of Schick's report, suggesting that Schick's Haskalah leanings led him either to invent the report in its entirety or, at the very least, to misconstrue whatever it was the Gaon had said. While it is certainly true that some Haskalah enthusiasts recreated the Gaon in their own image—see, e.g., E. Etkes, "The Gaon of Vilna and the Haskalah: Image and Reality," (Hebrew) in *Perakim be-Toledot ha-Ḥevrah ha-Yehudit bi-Yemei ha-Beynayyim u-ve-'Et ha-Ḥadashah* (Jersualem, 1980), 192–217—there is no evidence whatever that Schick engaged in such activity. For the extent of his Haskalah leanings—if they can be called such—see Fishman's study (cited above, n. 5). His integrity, to the best of my knowledge, has never been called into question. The fact remains that Schick, a Polish talmudist who served as *dayyan* in Minsk, published his report during the lifetime of the Gaon. Its content complements and is in harmony with all else that is known about the Gaon's attitude toward *ḥokhmah*. R. Abraham Simḥah of Amtchislav (see above, n. 7), a nephew and disciple of R. Ḥayyim of Volozhin, the Gaon's disciple, refers to Schick's report approvingly; so too the editors of the classic biography of the Gaon, *'Aliyot Eliyahu*, ed. Lewin-Epstein (Jerusalem, 1970), 45, n. 25. Landau's suspicion, at least in this case, appears to be unwarranted. The Gaon's positive attitude toward *ḥokhmah* was sufficiently well known during his lifetime, and immediately afterwards, that many in Eastern Europe assumed he was the author of an anonymous desk encyclopedia of general science and Jewish thought that appeared in Hebrew in Bruenn, 1797. The true author, R. Pinḥas Eliyahu Hurwitz, was forced to reveal his name in the second edition (Zolkiev, 1807) in order to set the matter straight. See R. Pinḥas E. Hurwitz, *Sefer ha-Berit* (New York, 1977), second introduction, 7b.

imaginary tales that were reduced to writing for the first time many generations after the events they purportedly describe. Clearly, the Gaon viewed secular wisdom positively and instrumentally, i.e., its value depended upon the light it could shed on Torah.

In recent years, the Gaon's positive view of secular wisdom appears to have received unexpected support from the publication of R. Hillel of Shklov's *ha-Tor*. R. Hillel (d. 1838) was a disciple of the Gaon who settled in Jerusalem in 1809. His *Kol ha-Tor*, an eschatological work based on the Gaon's teaching, remained in manuscript form until 1946, when several fascicles of the original appeared in print. Fuller versions were published between 1969 and 1994 in Bnei Brak and Jerusalem. R. Hillel cites, in the name of the Gaon of Vilna, an elaborate eschatology in which the spread of secular wisdom among Jews at the end of time plays a decisive role in bringing about the ultimate redemption of mankind.[13]

Conversely, R. Samson Raphael Hirsch (d. 1888) and R. Azriel Hildesheimer (d. 1899), the modern architects of *Torah and derekh erez*, lived, breathed and taught the centrality of Torah. They repeatedly underscored their conviction that *derekh erez* was subservient to Torah (more about which see below, *passim*). The issue, then, is not whether secular wisdom may (or even: ought to) be pursued, but rather: which secular disciplines, under what circumstances, and by whom. The Gaon of Vilna, for example, was not prepared to interrupt his daily regimen in order to master Greek or Latin and read Josephus in the original. But he felt quite comfortable in encouraging other Jews, whose obligation to study Torah—at least in theory—was no different than the Gaon's to translate Josephus into Hebrew.

The extreme positions aside, a spacious middle ground remains, embracing a broad spectrum of opinion—ranging from those who tolerated general culture only under the most circumscribed of conditions, to those who, for example, embraced secular study enthusiastically, and even incorporated it in the yeshiva curriculum.

There can be no question that the dominant position of East European *gedolei yisrael* in recent memory has been the open rejection of general culture. This, despite—and sometimes due to —the advent of modernity and the opportunities and benefits it has provided for the Jewish community at large. The Ḥatam Sofer, R. Yosef Baer Soloveitchik (author of *Bet ha-Levi*), the Ḥafeẓ Ḥayyim, R. Elḥanan Wasserman, the Ḥazon Ish, R. Aharon Kotler—and virtually every Ḥasidic Rebbe of note—are among the many Torah giants who shared this view.

Orthodox teaching, however, has never been in the habit of speaking in only one voice. Diverse figures such as Rabbis Samson Raphael Hirsch, Ẓadok ha-Kohen of

13. See *Kol ha-Tor* (Bnei Brak 1969); R. Menaḥem M. Kasher, *Ha-Tekufah ha-Gedolah* (Jerusalem, 1972), 409–575; and the recent, fuller, annotated version of *Kol ha-Tor* (Jerusalem, 1994), esp. pp. 115–126. Much mystery, however, surrounds the publication of *Kol ha-Tor*. The original manuscript has not been made available to the public. Thus, it is unknown how much of the original manuscript was published; how much of it was actually written by R. Hillel of Shklov; and whether or not the quotes in the name of the Gaon of Vilna were actually said by him.

Lublin, Israel Salanter, Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook, and Joseph B. Soloveitchik reflect the incredible richness, depth, and latitude of Orthodox thought in the modern period. Alongside the dominant position of rejection of general culture, there were other *gedolei yisrael*—some sat on the *mo'ezet gedolei ha-Torah* of Agudat Yisrael, others would occasionally join together on broadsides with members of the rabbinic court of the *'edah ha-ḥaredit*—who embraced general culture. Some did so enthusiastically; others reluctantly. Some were natives of Central and Western Europe; others of Eastern Europe. Some thought it esential that the yeshiva curriculum address and incorporate aspects of general culture; others thought it proper for certain individuals to embrace general culture, but not institutions (i.e., yeshivot).

The aim of this essay is to present, if only in outline form, a representative account of *gedolei yisrael* in the early modern period (i.e., the nineteenth century) who sought to relate Torah teaching to general culture. Our focus will be primarily, if not exclusively, on their differing viewpoints vis-à-vis general culture, on the institutions they engendered, and on their impact on the Jewish community at large. This essay does not purport to be an exercise in either history or biography; nor does it make any claim toward comprehensiveness. Rather, it is an attempt to engage in intellectual prosopography, i.e., to present a portrait of one aspect—albeit a crucial one—of the attitudes of a select group of *gedolei yisrael* who confronted modernity with an openness to general culture. Any attempt to portray all *gedolei yisrael* in the modern period who, in one form or another, reacted positively to general culture would have resulted in a lengthy monograph, at the very least. Such a volume would surely have tested the patience of most readers, and—in any event—would have moved well beyond my ability.

No hidden agenda need be sought in the presentation. It is intended to be largely descriptive and, hopefully, accurate. Wherever possible, the positions of the *gedolei yisrael* will be presented in their own words.

One final word. Feelings run high about some of these figures and their respective positions on Torah and general culture. In the heat of argument, their positions have often been misconstrued and misrepresented. It will be no small accomplishment if their views are set out dispassionately and accurately. To the extent that there is an agenda in this presentation, it is a transparent one: to demonstrate that the positions described in this essay are real, not imaginary. They are legitimate alternatives within Orthodoxy, to be accepted, rejected, but not ignored by those genuinely committed to traditional Jewish teaching.

SETTING

Rabbinic responses to general culture do not occur in a vacuum. Since our focus is on the modern period, it is essential that we develop a sense of what distinguishes

materialism, ethical relativism, and the like, all of which have either contributed to, or are manifestations of, man's alienation from God), the most distinctive feature of modernity vis-à-vis the premodern period has been the precipitous decline in spirituality, or if one prefers, in traditional religion. Whereas for Nathan Hanover religion was the central force of Jewish life—and one suspects that he took for granted that it had always been so in the past and would continue to be so in the future—for the modern Jew, as for modern man, religion is, at best, on the periphery of his consciousness. Religion can become meaningful and fulfilling only with the greatest of effort, always against the grain, in a never ending struggle where absolutely nothing can be taken for granted.

The radical transformation that Jews have witnessed and experienced in the last two hundred and fifty years is perhaps best brought home when one considers the simple fact that Reform Judaism, Conservative Judaism, secular Jews, the academic study of Judaism, the emergence of the American Jewish community as the largest—and one of the most powerful—in the world, political Zionism, and the State of Israel neither existed, nor could have been reasonably predicted, two hundred and fifty years ago.

R. David Friesenhausen: Precursor of *Torah and Derekh Erez*

Doubtless, his colleagues in Berlin called him "Wrong Way" Friesenhausen. During the second half of the eighteenth century, Berlin had become the mecca of enlightened Jewry. Under the aegis of Moses Mendelssohn, leader of and spokesman for the burgeoning Haskalah movement, Berlin became the center of attraction for Jewish intellectuals the world over. Marcus Herz, David Friedlander, Isaac Satanov, Solomon Dubno, Hartwig Wessely, Mendel Lefin, and Solomon Maimon were among the many who made the trek to Berlin, in some instances from as far East as Podolia.[18] Friesenhausen, an intellectual no less talented than many of Mendelssohn's colleagues mentioned above, would, after a residency of close to ten years, leave Berlin for Hunsdorf [Hunfalu], a Hungarian village hidden in the deep backwater of the Carpathian Mountains. That he sought employment and a wife, and eventually found both in Hunsdorf, is clear. But why Hunsdorf? Short of a chance archival discovery, historians will never know the answer to this question. But one suggestive solution has been proffered by Meir Gilon, a modern historian, and after a brief account of Friesenhausen's life, we will present it for the reader's consideration.[19]

Born in the Franconia region of Germany in 1756, Friesenhausen spent the first

18. In general, see Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (London, 1973), 346–420.

19. Meir Gilon, "R. David Friesenhausen: Between the Poles of Haskalah and Ḥasidut,"

thirty years of his life as a Torah Only enthusiast. He studied at the yeshiva in Fuerth, devoting his time entirely to the Talmud and the Codes. Apparently, the effects of the Enlightenment eventually permeated the walls of the yeshiva at Fuerth, and Friesenhausen became an avid reader of treatises on science, mathematics, and even philosophy. He left Fuerth for Berlin in order to pursue his new interests. During his stay in Berlin (1786–1796), he continued to study Torah intensively, allocating no more than two hours per day to secular study. In 1796, his last year in Berlin, he published the first of two books he would publish in his lifetime, *Kelil Ḥeshbon.* A treatise on algebra and geometry written in lucid, almost elegant Hebrew, its unabashed purpose was to make the results of these secular disciplines available to those who could not read modern languages. A letter of approbation from R. Ẓevi Hirsch Levin (d. 1800), Chief Rabbi of Berlin, was appended to the work. In it, R. Ẓevi Hirsch attests that during Friesenhausen's entire stay in Berlin "his Torah study was primary and habitual, whereas his secular study was secondary and sporadic." Shortly after the publication of *Kelil Ḥeshbon,* Friesenhausen left for Hunsdorf, where he was appointed *dayyan* and served with distinction on its rabbinic court until he moved to Ujhely in 1808. There, he served eight years on the rabbinic court of R. Moses Teitelbaum (d. 1841), author of *She'elot u-Teshuvot Heshiv Moshe,* and founder of the first Ḥasidic dynasty in Hungary.[20] Friesenhausen left Ujhely in order to arrange for the publication of his magnum opus, *Mosedot Tevel,* a treatise on astronomy that advocated the acceptance by Jews of the Copernican theory. Indeed, Friesenhausen was among the first Jews to look kindly on Copernicus and his theory.[21] Published in Vienna in 1820, it also included a new proof for Euclid's eleventh axiom, as well as Friesenhausen's autobiographical last will and testament. With the publication of *Mosedot Tevel,* Friesenhausen retired from public activity, spending his last years in the home of his son in Karlsburg in southern Transylvania, where he died in 1828.[22]

Despite his advocacy of *ḥokhmah,* Friesenhausen stressed the centrality of Talmud study throughout his writings. Although *ḥokhmah* clearly had its place in the curriculum, Friesenhausen never got his priorities confused. Indeed, he repeatedly

(Hebrew), in Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, ed., *The Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest* (New York, 1986), Hebrew section, 19–54.

20. R. Yosef M. Sofer, *Ha-Gaon ha-Kadosh Ba'al Yismaḥ Moshe* (New York, 1984).

21. In general, see Andre Neher, "Copernicus in the Hebraic Literature From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (1977): 211–26; Hillel Levine, "Paradise Not Surrendered: Jewish Reactions to Copernicus and the Growth of Modern Science," in R. S. Cohen and M. W. Wartofsky, eds., *Epistemology, Methodology and the Social Sciences* (Boston, 1983), 203–25; and Michael Panitz, "'New Heavens and a New Earth': Seventeenth to Nineteenth Century Jewish Responses to the New Astronomy," *Conservative Judaism* 40:2 (1987–1988): 28–42.

22. R. Yekutiel Y. Greenwald, *'Korot ha-Torah ve-ha-Emunah be-Hungariyah* (Budapest, 1921), 40–41 and notes.

criticized those on the (religious) left whose primary energy was expended on *ḥokhmah* at the expense of Torah. A careful reading of his descriptions of those on the left leaves no doubt that he had in mind the radical Haskalah, as it developed in the post-Mendelssohnian era. Friesenhausen, of course, witnessed that development first hand, and could speak about it with authority. With this in mind, Meir Gilon has suggested that Friesenhausen deliberately left Berlin for Hunsdorf as a protest against this new radical Haskalah, and in search of pristine territory where he could realize his educational goals free of its corrupting influences.[23]

Friesenhausen's critique, however, was hardly confined to the left; he also had to contend with the right:

> I appeal especially to all those who fear God and tremble at His word, that they not heed the false claims of those who plot against secular wisdom . . . , unaware that those who make such claims testify against themselves, saying: "We are devoid of Torah, we have chosen folly as our guide." For had the light of Torah ever shone upon them, they would have known the teaching of R. Samuel bar Naḥmeni at Shabbat 75a and the anecdotes about Rabban Gamaliel and R. Joshua at Horayot 10a. Also, they would have been aware of the many talmudic discussions that can be understood only with the aid of secular wisdom. Should you, however, meet a master of the Talmud who insists on denigrating secular wisdom, know full well that he has never understood those talmudic passages whose comprehension is dependent upon knowledge of secular wisdom. . . . He is also unaware that he denigrates the great Jewish sages of the past and their wisdom, as well. Worst of all are those guilty of duplicity. They speak arrogantly in public, either to appease the fools and gain honor in their eyes, or out of envy of the truly wise, disparaging those who appreciate secular wisdom, yet in their hearts they believe otherwise.[24]

Friesenhausen was neither a founder of Reform Judaism, as some have suggested, nor a Maskil.[25] He was a precursor of the *Torah and derekh erez* movement. He was, perhaps, the first traditional Jew in modern times to address the curricular repercussions of *Torah and derekh erez* which, as we shall see, became the hallmark of the various educational institutions—ranging from the Jewish day school to the Jewish university—that combine Torah and secular study under one banner. This occurred when Friesenhausen proposed that a rabbinical seminary be established in Hungary for the training of rabbis and teachers.[26] Friesenhausen was motivated largely by a desire to rescue Jewish youth from the snare of the "smooth talkers, armed with secular knowledge garnered from the handbooks, who ingratiated themselves to the wealthy, and who hold talmudic scholars in disdain," i.e., the Berlin Haskalah

23. Gilon, "R. David Friesenhausen," 26.

24. *Kelil Ḥeshbon* (Berlin, 1796), 8b.

25. See Sandor Buechler, "A zsidó reform úttöröl Magyarországon," *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* 17 (1900): 107–19.

26. *Mosedot Tevel*, 89a–93a.

of the 1790s.[27] His frustration over the failure of his publication to make *ḥokhmah* palatable to the traditional community also encouraged him to seek an alternate, more direct route, in order to advance his cause. Friesenhausen prepared an elaborate curriculum in German and submitted it in 1806 to the Hungarian government for approval. After much procrastination, it was officially rejected by the government in 1813 on the following grounds:

1. There were no Jewish funds available to finance the proposed institution, nor was it feasible to levy new taxes among Jews for this purpose;
2. The government's educational goal was to assimilate the Jew into general society by destroying Jewish insularity. Friesenhausen's proposal would perpetuate and solidify Jewish insularity; and
3. Jewish schools were no longer necessary, as Jews could now study in Christian schools.[28]

While those were the official reasons, it is likely that Jewish influence wielded behind the scenes contributed significantly to the rejection of Friesenhausen's proposal—and perhaps for good reason.[29] In any event, the second reason listed above may well have been the best compliment Friesenhausen ever received in his life. If the Hungarian governmental authorities really believed what they said, then they apparently understood better than most that *Torah and derekh erez* would save, rather than destroy, Judaism in the modern period.

Friesenhausen's mostly utopian proposal called for the establishment of three regional rabbinical seminaries, one each in Hungary, Galicia, and Bohemia-Moravia. In each region, a careful selection process would yield twenty students, aged nine to eighteen, who would make up the entering class. A two-tiered system would be instituted at the seminary: a lower level for ten students aged nine to thirteen, and an upper level for ten students aged fourteen to eighteen. Aside from being knowledgeable in Torah and personally observant, members of the faculty would have to be adept in secular study. The upper level teacher would have to be expert in Talmud; the lower level teacher would have to possess pedagogical talent. Appropriate stipends would be allocated to students in order to provide for all their needs. At age eighteen, a special fund would be established for the student so that he could study undisturbed for a period of ten years. When he married (at age eighteen or later), the funds would be transferred to him. During this ten year period, he would study Torah and *ḥokhmah*, after which he would be qualified to serve as a

27. *Mosedot Tevel*, 89a.

28. Buechler, "A zsidó reform," 118; Gilon, "R. David Friesenhausen," 31.

29. See below, (p. 162) regarding the likely response of the Jewish right and left to Friesenhausen's proposal. Doubtless, some of Friesenhausen's rabbinic colleagues were alarmed by the possibility that it would lead to governmental control of all Jewish institutions of higher learning in the Hungarian empire.

rabbi or teacher in the community. Fifteen years after the founding of the seminary and by government fiat, only graduates of the seminary would be allowed to officiate as rabbis and teachers.

Friesenhausen envisioned the following curriculum: At the lower level: students would arise early and study Bible and Hebrew grammar for one-and-a-half hours prior to prayers and breakfast. After breakfast, they would study Talmud until noon. At noon, they would devote an hour to physical education, followed by lunch and a rest period. The remainder of the afternoon (2:00–8:00 P.M.) would be devoted primarily to Talmud study. From two to three hours of the late afternoon would be set aside for secular study, which over a period of years would include: writing, arithmetic, language of the country of residence, German, and Latin. At the upper level, more intensive study of Talmud would be combined with the study of the Codes. Secular study would now include: geometry, astronomy, physics, biology, history, and speech.[30]

Neither the right nor the left would have supported Friesenhausen's claim at exclusivity, which in effect would have rendered all Torah Only institutions obsolete, and would have forced all rabbis in the Hungarian empire to have been graduates of one of the three government approved rabbinical seminaries.

In his last will and testament, Friesenhausen elaborated on the ideal curriculum he wished his descendants to pursue. He wrote:

> From age thirteen to age seventeen or eighteen, let them focus primarily on those tractates and talmudic discussions relating to *Shulḥan 'Arukh Yoreh De'ah*. From then on, they should study in depth the talmudic tractates from the orders of *Nezikin* and *Nashim*. They should also study the four divisions of the *Shulḥan 'Arukh* in proper sequence, including all the decisions from the earliest times to the present. Among contemporary authorities, none sharpens the mind better than R. Jonathan Eibeschuetz [d. 1764], especially in his *Urim ve-Tumim*, a particularly profound work. *Ẓiyyun le-Nefesh Ḥayyah* by R. Ezekiel Landau [d. 1793], and *Pnei Yehoshua* by R. Jacob Joshua Falk [d. 1756] are well worth studying, especially when examining a *sugya* in depth."[31]

For those of his descendants not able or inclined to pursue a rigorous program of Talmud study, Friesenhausen prepared a no less pious alternate curriculum which, after the age of thirteen, focused on vocational training. In setting out the arguments in favor of learning a trade, Friesenhausen wrote:

> In this age, when we have neither field nor vineyard to cultivate, even talmudists would do well to learn a trade. Unless, of course, their love of Torah leads them to make Torah their occupation, at which point God, in His merciful manner, will arrange for others to do their work for them. . . . Know that any land whose inhabitants are not expert in the

30. *Mosedot Tevel*, 89a–90a.

31. *Mosedot Tevel*, 76a.

various occupations will not succeed. For how can a land thrive without experts in the various occupations? Whatever occupations they are lacking in create lacunae that are not filled. Indeed, when God will gather in the exiles of Israel, we will need experts in the various occupations. If we continue as we are today, how will the Jewish state be able to conduct its affairs? Will God open windows in heaven and lower down experts in the various occupations? Will we import them from the nations surrounding us? This is a sad state of affairs. I too have suffered in my old age because I did not learn a trade in my youth.[32]

Despite his commitment to *ḥokhmah*, Friesenhausen was on cordial terms with the leading *gedolei yisrael* of his time. During his peregrinations, he met and "discussed Torah" with R. Nathan Adler (d. 1800) and R. Pinḥas Horowitz (d. 1805) of Frankfurt, R. David Sinzheim (d. 1812) of Strasbourg, R. Mordecai Benet (d. 1829) of Nikolsburg, and R. Moses Sofer (d. 1839) of Pressburg. One of the more interesting of these discussions is worth repeating here. Friesenhausen, a confirmed Copernican, was troubled by the fact that several kabbalistic works contained astronomical drawings that were clearly Ptolemaic in character. He was assured by the two outstanding kabbalists in Frankfurt—Rabbis Adler and Horowitz—that the Ptolemaic drawings were borrowed from medieval astronomical treaties and inserted into the kabbalistic works; they were not part and parcel of kabbalistic teaching.[33]

In 1819, Friesenhausen met with the Ḥatam Sofer in Pressburg. The latter wrote a letter of recommendation on Friesenhausen's behalf. It reads in part:

My colleague, the revered Rabbi David ha-Kohen of Fuerth, presently *dayyan* of Ujhely in Hungary, was known to me even when he was a youngster. He was among the most distinguished students in the yeshiva of Fuerth, renowned even then for the soundness and depth of his mind. By now he has added much Torah, for he has spent many years studying Torah, and has served as a decisor of Jewish law in many communities and lands. I have discussed Torah with him, orally and in writing. I have found him to be filled with the word of God, i.e., Torah. He is certainly worthy of appointment as rabbi in a large community and of establishing a yeshiva for older and younger students. Therefore, I take this opportunity to inform all members of the Jewish community about his credentials, so that all will honor him and his Torah, and so that a community seeking a rabbi will know to appoint him to the post.[34]

Friesenhausen's life foreshadows much that would occur in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rabbis Jacob Ettlinger, Samson Raphael Hirsch, and Azriel

32. *Mosedot Tevel,* 76b. For similar arguments regarding the necessity for Jews to engage in the various occupations when settled in the land of Israel, see R. Mose Sofer, *Ḥatam Sofer: Sukkah* (Jerusalem, 1974), 92 (*ad Sukkah* 36a); cf. his *Ḥatam Sofer 'al ha-Torah* (New York, 1977), 36a (*parashat Shofetim*).

33. *Mosedot Tevel,* 23a–b.

34. *Mosedot Tevel,* 13a.

Hildesheimer, for example, all attempted to establish rabbinical seminaries whose curricula incorporated secular study and bore a remarkable resemblance to that of Friesenhausen. Only Hildesheimer would succeed in doing so. Essentially, three broad categories of Jewish responses to modernity were possible: assimilation, isolation, and confrontation. Friesenhausen ruled out assimilation and isolation, opting for confrontation as the only viable Jewish response. It was a daring stance, especially then, and a lonely one. He won no friends, influenced few people, and spent a lifetime as a wandering Jew who was almost denied his rightful place—at the very least—as a footnote in Jewish history.

Torah Education in Western and Central Europe at the Start of the Nineteenth Century

One manifestation of the devastating impact of the Enlightenment on West European Jewry was the utter collapse of the traditional yeshivot almost overnight. The famous yeshivot of Metz, Frankfurt, Mannheim, Fuerth, Karlsruhe, Altona-Hamburg, Halberstadt, and Prague were still flourishing in the middle to the late eighteenth century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century all were in a precipitous state of decline. Students were no longer attracted to the yeshivot; traditional *ḥadarim*, which had once served as feeder schools for the yeshivot, were disappearing. The social mobility that was made possible by modernity led students to seek other more "progressive" forms of education, Jewish and secular.[35] Wealthy Jews, now under the influence of a new set of values, withdrew their support of the yeshivot.[36] Another manifestation of the devastating impact of the Enlightenment—certainly from an Orthodox perspective—was the founding and growth of the Reform movement, which introduced denominationalism into what had been a traditional and united Jewish community. The nineteenth century would be marked by internal Jewish polemic, and all the major players, whether Abraham Geiger, Zechariah Frankel, or Samson Raphael Hirsch, would be involved.[37]

A distinguished German Talmudist, R. Mendel Kargau (1772–1842), was a

35. Typical of the new schools that combined secular education with "progressive" religious education, was the Philanthropin in Frankfurt. Founded in 1804, it would mold several generations of Reform Jewish leaders. See Herman Baerwald and Salo Adler, eds., *Geschichte der Realschule der israelitischen Gemeinde (Philanthropin) zu Frankfurt am Main 1804–1904* (Frankfurt, 1904); cf. Mordecai Eliav, *Ha-Ḥinukh ha-Yehudi be-Germanyah bi-Yemei ha-Haskalah ve-ha-Emanzipazyah* (Jerusalem, 1960), 71–141.

36. Eliav, *Ha-Ḥinukh*, 142–55.

37. See Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Oxford, 1988).