

of young students devoted in their enthusiasm for Torah study. At certain periods the principal of the yeshivah would examine the students once in each term (*zeman*).

In the 1860s opposition began to be voiced in the Jewish press to the yeshivot. Only the extreme *maskilim* demanded that they should be closed down; others criticized their system of study and its contents and wished to introduce general subjects, as had been instituted in the rabbinical seminaries in Germany and in Western countries. R. Berlin adamantly opposed any changes of this nature. However, when the *Pahlen Commission was sitting in St. Petersburg and discussing the Jewish question, a number of Jewish communal leaders regarded it necessary to demonstrate to the authorities that the Jews were ready to make changes. On pressure from them in 1887 a number of prominent rabbis, including Isaac Elhanan Spektor, Joseph Baer Soloveichik, and R. Berlin, convened in St. Petersburg, and at this meeting it was decided on the appointment of a special teacher to instruct the yeshivah students in Russian and arithmetic, provided that these studies would not be conducted within the yeshivah, but outside it. Volozhin yeshivah refrained from translating this decision into practice.

Despite the vigilance of the supervisors and the severe discipline in the yeshivah, external influences began to infiltrate there. At first the influence of the *Musar movement had begun to be felt. Study of ethical works like *Hovot ha-Levavot* and *Mesillat Yesharim* won acceptance by many. This opened the doorway to a religious awakening in the *musar* spirit despite the reservations of the heads of the yeshivah. On the other hand the ideas of *Haskalah were increasingly disseminated in the yeshivah and in the 1880s the Hovevei Zion also attracted many students. R. Berlin's sympathy with the latter helped to propagate its ideas in the yeshivah.

However, the spiritual excitement raised by these influences did not end there. A growing number of students read Haskalah literature in Hebrew and other languages despite the energetic opposition of the principal. The *maskilim* began to demand changes in the yeshivah's regime, which finally brought intervention by the Russian educational authorities. On Dec. 22, 1891, the Russian minister of education published the "Regulations concerning Volozhin Yeshivah," which defined the yeshivah as a private open educational institution, and its pupils were required to study general subjects to elementary school standard. The regulations stated that any digression from them would lead to the closing down of the institution. R. Berlin did not agree to the regulations, and on Jan. 22, 1892, the authorities announced the closure of the yeshivah. R. Berlin and the students were expelled from Volozhin.

However, a few years later the yeshivah was reopened. In 1895 the government permitted use of the yeshivah building as a place of prayer. The students reassembled and laid the foundation for reviving the yeshivah. It continued to expand and develop until World War I (from 1899 under R. Raphael Shapira as principal). When the battle zone reached the vicinity of Vilna, the heads of the yeshivah left Volozhin with the rest of the Jewish refugees for the Russian interior (Minsk). The yeshivah did not resume activity until 1921. It existed, though with reduced numbers and influence, until the liquidation of the last 64 students in the Holocaust. The last to head the yeshivah were R. Jacob Shapira (d. 1936) and his son-in-law Hayyim Wulkin, who perished in the Holocaust. Many of the students of Volozhin yeshivah distinguished themselves in Hebrew literature and public leadership, including H. N. *Bialik, who left an enduring monument to the yeshivah in his poem "Ha-Matmid," and M. J. *Berdyczewski.

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[S.ETT.]

VOLOZHINER, HAYYIM BEN ISAAC (1749-1821), rabbi and educator, leading disciple of R. Elijah b. Solomon Zalman the Gaon of Vilna and of R. Aryeh *Gunzburg (author of *Sha'agat Aryeh*). R. Hayyim was the acknowledged spiritual leader of non-ḥasidic Russian Jewry of his day. Hayyim distinguished himself both in the theoretical and practical spheres. In 1802 he founded the renowned yeshivah of *Volozhin (later to be named Eẓ Hayyim in his honor), which became the prototype and inspiration for the great talmudic academies of Eastern Europe of the 19th and 20th centuries, and similar schools in Israel, the United States, and elsewhere. His yeshivah, which the poet H. N. *Bialik was later to call "the place where the soul of the nation was molded" transformed the whole religio-intellectual character of Lithuanian Jewry. Imbued with his educational philosophy, it raised religious scholarship in Lithuania to the unique status it was to enjoy there until the Holocaust. It attracted students from afar enhancing the dignity of their calling. Hayyim set high standards for admission, insisting on extreme diligence and constancy of study, and instituted in the yeshivah the system of collegial study (*havruta*), preferring it to self-study. The talmudic methodology, which was introduced by Hayyim into the yeshivah, was that of internal criticism of texts which he had learned from the Vilna Gaon. Though humble and of pleasant disposition, Hayyim was fearlessly independent in his scholarly endeavors. His insistence upon "straight thinking" (*iyun yashar*), as opposed to the complicated dialectics common to much of the talmudic discourse of his time, led him occasionally to disagree even with decisions of the Shulḥan Arukh, albeit with appropriate reverence. The theological framework for Hayyim's educational philosophy is contained in his posthumously published *Nefesh ha-Hayyim* (Vilna, 1824), which is addressed primarily to "the men of the yeshivah." Quoting widely from Kabbalistic as well as rabbinic sources, R. Hayyim elevated the study of the Torah to the highest value it had ever been accorded in Judaism. He held the hypostatized Torah to be identified with the mystical *Ein Sof, and he therefore considered study of Torah as the most direct form of unmediated communion with God. In reaction to the ḥasidic thinkers, he defined *Torah li-Shemah* as study for the sake of understanding, rather than as ecstasy or mystical theurgy, regarding this as the ideal form of motivation for study. This cognitive teleology of Torah study was allied with an emphasis on the objective performance of the commandments and a corresponding devaluation of the subjective, experiential component of religious observance. In the great polemics of his day between the Ḥasidim and the *Mitnagedim*, R. Hayyim was the acknowledged leader of the latter. He was the leading ideological spokesman for

classical rabbinism, his critique of Hasidism being thorough and deliberate. Yet in the communal aspects of the controversy, he was a decided moderate. Thus, despite his enormous reverence for the Vilna Gaon (rivaling the loyalty of Hasidim to their *zaddikim*), he did not sign the ban against the Hasidim. Both these attitudes, that of theological firmness and personal mellowness, were revealed in the *Nefesh ha-Hayyim*, which thus became a mitnaggedic response to the dialogue begun by the hasidic teacher, R. *Shneur Zalman of Lyady, and the beginning of the reconciliation of the two groups. The hasidic reaction to R. Hayyim's critique was reflected in the pseudonymous *Mezaref Avodah*, published in Koenigsberg, 1858. R. Hayyim was also the author of a number of important responsa, published in *Hut ha-Meshullash* and *Kedushat Yom Tov*; *Ru'ah Hayyim*, a commentary on Mishnah *Avot* (and, like the *Nefesh ha-Hayyim*, posthumously published by his son and successor, R. Isaac); and of a number of introductions to works of the Vilna Gaon. See also *Musar Movement.

[No.L.]

VOLOZHINER, ISAAC BEN HAYYIM (d. 1849), talmudist and yeshivah head. Son of the founder of Volozhin yeshivah, popularly known as "Itzele of Volozhin," he acquired some secular knowledge, including foreign languages. Isaac taught at the yeshivah during his father's lifetime, and, upon his father's death, succeeded him as principal and became rabbi of the Volozhin community. After the Russian government closed the yeshivah in 1824, Isaac continued to maintain it, the local authorities closing their eyes to his activities. He exercised a profound influence on all the Lithuanian communities, particularly among the *Mitnaggedim*. Eliezer Isaac and Naphtali Zevi Judah *Berlin, both of whom taught in the yeshivah, became his sons-in-law, and on his death assumed the leadership of the yeshivah. Volozhiner took an active part in communal affairs. In 1824 M. *Lilienthal sought his support in the establishment of Jewish schools under government auspices. In the summer of 1843, together with M. M. *Shneersohn, Jacob Halpern, and B. Stern, he participated in the conference called by the government on the education of Jews, and defended the stand of the Orthodox circles, who objected that government-run schools might prove a danger to Jewish education and would be fruitless without political rights for Jews. In the end, however, he was compelled to submit to the demands of the government. He was one of those who gave approvals to the textbooks published by the government for Jewish children. He also gave his approval for the publication in Vilna of Mendelssohn's *Biur*. When asked for his reaction to the Russian government's degree ordering the style of clothing to be changed, he ruled that "the law of the government is binding" provided that it applied to all the inhabitants of the state. While taking part in the conference, Isaac obtained the government's permission to maintain the Volozhin yeshivah. He published *Nefesh ha-Hayyim* (Vilna, 1824), his father's ethical work, with his own glosses and a biographical introduction. He died in Ivenitz, in the district of Minsk. *Millei de-Avot* (1888), his homiletical commentary on *Avot*, was published posthumously.

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[Y.S.]

VOLPA (Pol. *Wolpa*; Yid. *Volp*, *Volpe*), town in Grodno oblast, Belorussian S.S.R. A Jewish community existed there from the early 17th century. In 1766 there were 641 Jews in Volpa who paid the poll tax; they numbered 700 in 1847; 1,151 (58% of the total) in 1897; and 941 (54.3%) in

1921. In the 17th century the community built a wooden synagogue which became famous for its original beauty. Besides their traditional occupation with commerce and crafts the Jews in Volpa engaged in domestic farming. In 1886 there were two tanneries, a dye works, and a brewery. Lack of rail connections prevented further industrial development and the Jews of Volpa took to gardening and tobacco growing, becoming expert in these fields. Before World War I there were 29 Jewish farms on an area of 242 hectares (597 acres); 73 hectares (180 acres) were Jewish owned and the rest were rented from gentile farmers. In 1921, 429 of the 941 local Jews made their living by farming. With the beginning of Polish rule in 1919 the armies stationed near Volpa incited much anti-Jewish activity. In 1929, the Jews were forbidden to grow tobacco, their main source of livelihood. Some of them turned to vegetable farming, cucumbers for pickling being their special crop.

Zionist organizations such as Erez Yisrael ha-Ovedei were active in Volpa between the two world wars. There were a Hebrew *Tarbut school and a Hebrew and Yiddish library each containing 3,000 volumes. The community was annihilated in the Holocaust.

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[D.R.]

°VOLTAIRE (François-Marie Arouet; 1694-1778), French philosopher. No writer contributed so much as Voltaire to the destruction of the traditional beliefs fundamental to European society before the French Revolution: belief in the divine right of monarchy, in the legitimacy of the privileges of the nobility, and in the infallibility of the Church. Voltaire's philosophical convictions were those of a deist, not an atheist. It is also noteworthy that he attacked the biblical belief in the unity of mankind; to Negroes, for instance, he attributed an inferior and separate origin. The better to ridicule the established Church, or, in his own words "*Écraser l'Infâme*," Voltaire preferred to concentrate his attacks on the Old Testament and its followers, the Jews; this he did in such a manner that in anti-Semitic campaigns in the following centuries he was used as an authority and frequently quoted. From the psychological point of view it seems that the anti-Semitism of Voltaire, far from being a tactical stratagem, expressed in the facility of his attacks against the Jews, was primarily a result of his hatred for the Church. For instance, it is characteristic of Voltaire that in his polemics with Isaac de *Pinto, he forgot the habitual formula which followed his usual way of signing, "*Écrasez l'Infâme*," and signed instead: "*Voltaire, chrétien gentil-homme de la chambre du Roi très-chrétien*." Historically speaking, Voltaire's outlook was a powerful contribution to the creation of the mental climate which made possible the emancipation of the Jews, but at the same time it prepared the ground for the future racial anti-Semitism. Just after Voltaire's death, Zalkind *Hourwitz, librarian to the king of France, wrote: "The Jews forgive him all the evil he did to them because of all the good he brought them, perhaps unwittingly; for they have enjoyed a little respite for a few years now and this they owe to the progress of the Enlightenment, to which Voltaire surely contributed more than any other writer through his numerous works against fanaticism." Two centuries later this judiciously balanced judgment seems to have been only partially warranted. Recent scholars such as A. Hertzberg (see bibliography) have seen Voltaire as one of the founders of modern secular anti-Semitism (see *Anti-Semitism).

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