CHAPTER TWO

THE MASKIL AND THE PRINCE: PRIVATE PATRONAGE AND THE DISSEMINATION OF THE JEWISH ENLIGHTENMENT IN EASTERN EUROPE

After having been received in Połtawa in a truly touching manner by Adam Walenzki, I am in your estates, my dear, where I delight heart and soul in all of the love and recognition that you have here. In entering your lands I have been received by several thousand people, Jews and Christians, minor nobles, burghers, the old and the young, who presented me with bread and salt, raising their hands to the sky and crying, “God bless our Prince and Princess, their children and grandchildren.” I resisted none of their pure effusions; thereupon I began to cry from the bottom of my heart, having only the desire to see you here.¹

Izabela Fleming Czartoryska to Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, Stara Sieniawa, Podolia, September 1, 1804.

The “Polishness” of Mendel Lefin’s Podolian background shaped his vision of the Jewish Enlightenment, which he proffered as a remedy to eighteenth-century Polish Jewry’s deepening spiritual malaise. Encouraged and challenged by his trip to Berlin, Lefin returned to Podolia in the 1780s, hoping to continue his participation in the Haskalah as it developed in German lands and to formulate an ideological and educational program suitable for his Polish brethren. Yet, just as the historiography on the Haskalah in Eastern Europe has bypassed the Podolian stage of its development, most historians have assumed that the Polish environment offered no stimulus to the Haskalah.² Yet, when Lefin returned to Podolia, he settled in Mikołajów, a private town between Międzybórz and Satanów under the authority of Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski (1734–1823), the patriarch of one of Poland’s most important magnate families. Czartoryski was not only General of Podolia, one of the wealthiest magnates in Poland, holding estates in Central Poland, Lithuania, Przemyśl, and Podolia, but also a leading supporter of

¹ 6090 III, EW 623. The Czartoryski Family Archive. The letter is dated with both 1804 and 1805, but archival notations affirm 1804 as the accurate date because the letter mentions Seweryn Potocki, who died in March 1805.

the Polish Enlightenment that had begun to flourish under the reign of King Stanisław Poniatowski, his cousin. Czartoryski’s active and personal patronage of Lefin enabled the latter to become a major figure in the emergence of the Haskalah in Eastern Europe.

At some point soon after Lefin’s settlement in Mikołajów — we don’t know exactly when — he met Czartoryski. Gottlober’s version of their meeting relates that Czartoryski, whose permanent home was in the family castle in Międzybóz, was touring his estates and fortuitously chanced upon a small shop run by Lefin’s wife. Once in the shop, Czartoryski noticed on the counter a mathematical text by Christian Wolff, the German Enlightenment philosopher and mathematician known for his belief in the compatibility of reason and revelation, and whose works enjoyed wide currency among enlightened circles in Poland and among Prussian maskilim. Startled to see such a learned German book in a small Jewish store, he inquired after the proprietor, and thus began the friendship between the Polish magnate and the enlightened Jew. In Gottlober’s words:

The prince was shocked [to see Wolff’s book] and asked the Jewish woman: “Whose book is this?” She answered, “My husband investigates it night and day, and sometimes when he comes here he cannot separate from it and brings it with him to the store, too.” . . . R. Mendel Lefin came and stood before the prince. Now Mendel Lefin was neither attractive nor fit, and his face was covered with pimples. However, when he opened his mouth to speak, his words were filled with grandeur and glory. Wisdom, understanding, and reason hovered upon his lips, which were filled with grace. The prince spoke with him and heard his vast wisdom. When the Prince learned that Lefin was a disciple and friend of the great sage, [Moses] Mendelssohn, who had already left his mark on the world among the respected thinkers of Germany, and whom the Prince revered, from that time forward, he [Czartoryski] supplied R. Mendel Lefin with all of the needs for permanently maintaining a house from the Czartoryski treasury. [Czartoryski] also [gave Lefin] monthly supplies of beer and whisky that were so abundant that his wife was able to sell the extra spirits. Czartoryski also gave him unlimited golden ducat[s] to withdraw

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3 When Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski’s father, August Aleksander Czartoryski, married Maria Zofia Sieniawska Denhoffow in 1731, he acquired the Sieniawski estates, which were the second largest in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and ensured his family’s prominence in Polish politics for the next two centuries. W. H. Zawadzki, A Man of Honour: Adam Czartoryski as a Statesman of Russia and Poland, 1795–1831 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 8.

from his treasury, and Lefin saved all of this money in order to give it as charity to the poor in their time of need.\footnote{Abraham Baer Gottlober, “Russia,” *Hamaggid* 17 (1873): 356. Gottlober, who never met Lefin personally, received the physical description of Lefin from Mordecai Suchostober, Lefin’s disciple who helped edit his translation of the *Guide of the Perplexed* and taught in the rabbinical seminary in Zytomierz (Zhitomir). The contrast between Mendelssohn’s physical ugliness and his spiritual beauty owes much to the paradoxical image shaped by Isaac Euchel (1756–1804) in his biography of Mendelssohn published in *Hame’assef* in 1789: “He [Mendelssohn] was not handsome; nonetheless, all who regarded him found him pleasing because wisdom illumined his face.” Cited in Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah vehistoryah: toldotav shel hakarat-ever yehudit modernit* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1998), 87.}

The hagiographic and apocryphal tone of Gottlober’s account notwithstanding, we know that Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski became Lefin’s patron sometime in the 1790s, first hiring him to tutor his sons in mathematics and philosophy and later helping to publish his political and literary works. Czartoryski provided Lefin with a lifelong stipend and made great efforts to ensure that his beneficiary found comfortable lodgings in which to work, as is attested in the following deposition written by Czartoryski to Tomasz Bernatowicz, the administrator of his Podolian estates:

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Honorable Gentleman Bernatowicz, Stolnik\footnote{A title denoting a mid-level bureaucrat or steward.} of Lithuania: Disburse five golden ducats to the Jew, Mendel Lefin, each month beginning from March 1, 1797 until I give you different orders. Second, I stipulate that he be given a house in which to stay (if there is something in reserve) and if, unfortunately, there is nothing, [a house should] be built for him quickly in proportion to his needs, but comfortable enough for him to live in during the winter. While the erection of such a building is taking place, I am obliged to consider accommodating him in Mikolajów.

Submitted in Sieniawa, March 10, 1797.
Adam X [Kazimierz] Czartoryski.\footnote{Published in Majer Babajan, “Mendel Lewin i książę Adam Czartoryski,” *Cheilia*, no. 5313–5314 (7–8 stycznia 1934): 10. Tomasz Bernatowicz was a graduate of the National Cadets School founded by Czartoryski and Poniatowski, and became employed by the Czartoryskis as administrator of their Podolian estates sometime after 1782. See Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, *Pamiętniki i Memoriały Polityczne, 1776–1809* (ed. Jerzy Skowronek; Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1986), 92. He figures large in the Czartoryski correspondence, both between Czartoryski *fils* and his father, Adam Kazimierz, as well as between Izabela Czartoryska and her husband. See, for example, 6338 IV, EW 1503, 28 June, 1802, 93; 6338 IV, EW 1503, 3 July, 1802, 147; 6338 IV, MS EW 1503, 19 March 1803, 187-190; 16 May, 1803, 199; 26 May, 1803, 205, etc. On July 27, 1809, Adam Kazimierz expressed concern to Adam Jerzy that they might lose the services of Bernatowicz. See Czartoryski, *Pamiętniki i Memoriały Polityczne*, 397.}
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As a generalization, the definitive influence of the German cultural sphere on the Haskalah in Eastern Europe cannot be denied, but Czartoryski’s patronage of Lefin suggests that in individual cases the Polish nobility was...
interested in connections with enlightened Jews and that elements of enlightened Polish noble culture influenced certain maskilim. Here it is important to emphasize that Lefin continued to live in Podolia with Czartoryski’s support, spending time in Międzybóź and Mikołajów, until the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century. He visited the Prince on his estates in Puławy and Sieniawa, areas under Austrian rule after the first partition, and was in Warsaw during the Four-Year Sejm (1788–1792) at Czartoryski’s behest. Lefin also travelled to St. Petersburg with the young Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski in the early years of the first decade of the nineteenth century. When Lefin left Podolia for Austrian Galicia — sometime in the second decade of the nineteenth century — he was still supported by the Polish magnate. The Czartoryski-Lefin patronage relationship suggests that a small group of Jews and Christians had common cultural and intellectual concerns and interests, at least for a brief period of time, in the last years of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The continuity of the Czartoryski Family’s patronage of Lefin into the nineteenth century speaks to the abiding “Polishness” of the southeastern borderlands after the partitions. The territories of Podolia and western Ukraine ruled by Russia after the third partition were unequivocally Polish, a status recognized by Poles and Russians alike, the latter referring to those areas as “gubernii acquired from Poland.” The feudal character of the southeastern Polish borderlands posed innumerable problems for the new rulers, not the least of which was the tradition of noble republicanism, with its well-defined rights and privileges that had distinguished the Polish szlachta. Russia was not a feudal society, but an autocracy that dictated its subjects’

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9 Throughout the nineteenth century, Polish irrendentism in Galicia and in the southeastern borderlands posed formidable challenges to both Imperial Russia and Austria. Revolutionary insurrection only erupted against Russian rule, but Polish national consciousness was cultivated by the intelligentsi who remained in the partitioned lands and by emigré patriots who found refuge in London and Paris. See Stanislaus Blejwas, Realism in Polish Politics: Warsaw Positivism and National Survival in Nineteenth Century Poland (Yale Russian and East European Publications; New Haven, Conn.: Yale Concilium on International and Area Studies, 1984); Andrzej Walicki, The Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Nationhood: Polish Political Thought from Noble Republicanism to Tadeusz Kościuszko (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989); Peter Brock, “Polish Nationalism,” in Nationalism in Eastern Europe (ed. Peter Sugar and Ivo Lederer; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 310–72.
status from above, without any recourse to a medieval legal tradition.\textsuperscript{10} Unwilling to manage the social consequences of the peasant (or, better, the serf) question, which would have required expropriating the ruling elite, the Russian tsars maintained the socio-economic status quo and the dominance of the Polish nobility in the newly acquired kresy.\textsuperscript{11} Thus, the feudal character of the southeastern borderlands persisted until mid-century, when the peasant question exploded throughout the region (in 1846 in Austrian lands, in the European-wide revolutions in 1848, and, finally, in Russia, in 1861 with the emancipation of the serfs).\textsuperscript{12}

The relationship of the Polish nobility to “its” Jews and serfs likewise endured into the new century, a relationship that was predicated on the traditional feudal economic and political structure of the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{13} Lefin looked to Czartoryski, not to the Russian or Austrian state, as a source of political authority. Despite his interest in the cultural program of the Toleranzpatent (Edict of Toleration), Lefin expressed reservations about absolutism as a whole and about Joseph II’s political agenda, particularly with regard to military conscription of the Jewish community.\textsuperscript{14} Although he participated in the debates over the reform of the Jews, first in the Four-Year

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{zawadzki} Zawadzki, \textit{A Man of Honour}, 86.
\bibitem{toleration} Between 1781–1789, Emperor Joseph II issued a series of Toleranzpatente (Edicts of Toleration) for the provinces under his rule. On December 18, 1788, he extended the obligations of conscription to the Monarchy's Jewish community. Certain exceptional communities, such as the Jews of Mantua and Trieste, were not conscripted. See Lois C. Dubin, \textit{The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture} (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 148–52 and Eisenbach, \textit{The Emancipation of the Jews in Poland}, 55. The Toleranzpatent for Lower Austria on January 2, 1782, is the most well-known of the edicts and promised religious tolerance in return for the abolition of Jewish communal autonomy. Joseph II’s toleration edict for Galicia will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.
\end{thebibliography}
Sejm in Warsaw and later as a behind-the-scene advisor to Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, who was on the "Unofficial Committee" involved with Imperial Russian legislation on the Jewish question, the issue of the reciprocity (the quid pro quo) between internal Jewish reform and emancipation that characterized the Haskalah in German lands is completely absent from Lefin’s writings. Mendel Lefin’s identity as a maskil was bound to the late eighteenth-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and to the culture of private patronage that had flourished in the private towns of the Polish nobility and had granted the Jews extensive communal, religious, and cultural autonomy.

The Czartoryski-Lefin relationship was that of patron and protégé, defined by the mutual dependence between the Polish magnates and the Jews living on their private lands. There was no economic parity between Lefin and Czartoryski and no broad societal consequences of their friendship. Yet, the relationship served the interests of both men. Czartoryski’s interest in Lefin was part of the prince’s extensive commitment to the cultivation and dissemination of the Enlightenment while Lefin’s connection to Czartoryski allowed him to gain access to the arena in which Polish reformers debated reform programs for the Jewish community. The two men shared a common vocabulary of “rationality,” “Enlightenment,” and the

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“rights of Man,” as well as a commitment to reforming the Jewish community in Poland. Yet, Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski and Mendel Lefin’s motivations for the reform of the Jewish community of Poland exhibited a dissonance between patron and protégé. As a moderate maskil, Lefin was preeminently concerned with the internal transformation and spiritual reorientation of Polish Jewry. Czartoryski, on the other hand, was preoccupied with reforming Polish society in order to protect its liberties and sovereignty from the assaults of the partitioning powers. His fundamental concern regarding the Jews reflected the need to reform the Jewish community as part of an overall strategy to prevent further attacks on what was left of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

As with all of the debates over the reform, transformation, régénération, and civic and political emancipation of the Jews that raged throughout Europe between the French and Russian Revolutions, there existed a wide spectrum of views — both among Jewish and Gentile proponents of change, as well as among its opponents — in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the period of partitions and reforms.18 Most of the historiography on this epochal period has not taken into account the Polish arena, even though it was due to the partitions that eastern Ashkenazic Jews — arguably the very members of the Jewish community that European society deemed in need of reform and transformation — were thrust within the borders of absolutist Europe. Although little known, debates over the condition of Jewish society and the question of inclusion of the Jews into a reformed Poland took center stage in the Four-Year Sejm (1788–1792), preceding, and then simultaneous with, the contentious debates over Jewish status in the French National Assembly. The arguments and counter-arguments about Jewish participation in the Polish body politic, and even more specifically, in the municipalities, took place simultaneously with the French debates, and illuminate the influence of West European ideas on Polish society, the existence of an important, if small, group of Jewish activists interested in the Enlightenment, and the particular drama of the partitioned Commonwealth in the throes of survival, reform, and tentative modernization. The Czartoryski family was central to all of these currents.

"The Family" and Pre-Partition Reform

The Czartoryski princes traced their lineage back to Gedymin, the Grand Duke of Lithuania. The marriage of Prince Kazimierz Czartoryski (1674–1741), the Vice-Chancellor of Lithuania, to Izabela Morsztyn (1671–1758) marked the beginning of the Polish nobility’s intoxication with French culture. Their daughter, Konstancja (1696–1759), married Stanisław Poniatowski (1676–1762); one of the sons of that union would become King Stanisław August Poniatowski (1734–1798), Poland’s last sovereign. When Prince Kazimierz and Izabela’s son August Alexander wed Maria Zofia Denhoffow in 1731, he acquired the Sieniawski estates, the second largest landed fortune in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski was their first son; his wealth was so great that when he divided his estates in 1812, they included twenty-five towns and townships and 450 villages, which were valued at almost fifty million zlotys. These unions of money, power, and culture ensured the dominance of the Czartoryskis, who were known for two centuries simply as “The Family,” in Polish politics.19

“The Family” had been associated with political reform since the 1720s, advocating various programs to modernize Poland, such as remedying the constitutional imbalance by abolishing legislation by consensus (the notorious liberum veto that held a virtual stranglehold over the parliamentary process) and strengthening the crown, ensuring longer, more regular meetings of the Sejm, prohibiting Confederacies (the nobility’s well-protected right of armed rebellion) and reducing the power of the military office of Hetman. But other magnate interests, particularly that of the Potocki family, stymied such reform efforts, no doubt because they suspected that a reformed Poland modeled after the Czartoryski plan would secure the political hegemony of “The Family.” Attempting to interest a strong foreign power in their reform efforts, the Czartoryskis sent Adam Kazimierz to St. Petersburg in 1762 to ask Catherine II for help. This turn toward Russia, inspired by a genuine desire for reform but coupled with a bid for power, proved to be the first step in the slow and steady Russian subjugation of Poland from mid-century, through the era of partition, and well into the nineteenth century. Catherine II rejected “The Family’s” choice of Adam Kazimierz as the next king of Poland, choosing Stanisław Poniatowski, Czartoryski’s cousin, instead. When Poniatowski was elected to the Polish throne, which he ascended at the Coronation Sejm of December 1764, he did so beholden to Russia.

Illustration 1

*Dzieci Żydowskie (Jewish Children)* by Jean-Pierre Norblin (1745–1830)
(The Princes’ Czartoryski Foundation at the National Museum in Cracow, Poland)
Illustration 2

Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, by Josef Kapeller (1761–1806)
after J. Grassi, Warsaw
(The Princes’ Czartoryski Foundation at the National Museum in Cracow, Poland)
Illustration 3

Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, by A. Geiger after J. Abel, Vienna.
(The Princes' Czartoryski Foundation at the National Museum in Cracow, Poland)
Illustration 4

Izabela Fleming Czartoryska, by Giuseppe Marchi (1735–1808), London
(The Princes’ Czartoryski Foundation at the National Museum in Cracow, Poland)
Stanisław August Poniatowski’s election in 1764 marked the beginning of a new cultural era in Poland. The king keenly felt a sense of urgency to transform Poland’s moribund political structures given that the six Sejmy (parliaments) prior to his coronation had been stymied by the ill-famed liberum veto, the Sarmatian principle by which one man could block the unanimity necessary to effect legislation in the Sejm. He hoped, despite the Commonwealth’s dependence on Russia, to institute moderate reforms that would encourage constitutionalism and his unpublished “Anecdote historique” outlined a program to strengthen the executive and legislative branches of the Polish government through hereditary election of the king and institution of majority rule in the Sejm, which would be in permanent session.

Many of Poniatowski’s proposed reforms reflected the influence of the Enlightenment — in its most generic European-wide meaning — on Poland and the growth of an indigenous Polish Enlightenment since 1764. Contemporaneous with its Western European counterparts, the Polish Enlightenment drew on the writings of the German Aufklärer and the French lumières while addressing specific Polish problems, such as the liberum veto, the moribund state of the nation’s cities, and the dissoluteness of the impoverished serfs. Unlike the West European movements, the Polish Enlightenment was borne by the nobility and the king, not by the educated middle classes.

King Stanisław August Poniatowski and Prince Adam Czartoryski were two of the most important patrons of the movement. Drawing on the influence of new ideas — such as Wolffian philosophy — spread by Poles educated in foreign universities during the reign of his predecessor, August III, the new king set about creating a center in the royal court for the cultivation of Enlightenment ideas with specific emphasis on the criticism and rejection of the old, antiquated myths and ways of life that had led to the country’s...
He also helped to found a school and a school commission, and promoted the journal, Monitor (1765–1785), all of which became institutional expressions of the new, “enlightened” spirit.

In 1765, Poniatowski helped to establish the Knights’ School (also called the Cadet Corps) to educate qualified officers and public servants along the lines of the best innovations of the Piarist educator, Stanisław Konarski. In 1740, Konarski had started the Collegium Nobilium, a high school for the sons of gentlemen, as a direct challenge to Jesuit domination of education. His school’s curriculum focused on modern languages, mathematics, and science, and introduced riding, outdoor games, and French drama as part of the curriculum. Spreading the ideas of Bacon, Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Wolff in a campaign against the old scholastic curriculum, the Piarist movement also turned to classics of the Polish renaissance, particularly the work of Copernicus, to anchor the beginnings of the Polish Enlightenment in its own national past. Faith in the liberalizing power of education extended to a criticism of Poland’s political structure. Konarski’s pamphlet, “On the Means to Successful Government” (Warsaw, 1760–1763), located the roots of Poland’s problems in the liberum veto, as well as on the nobility’s selfishness. A similar combination of a progressive critique of the educational and political systems with a desire to protect the noble republicanism of the Commonwealth informed the new Knights’ School.

Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski was a generous benefactor of the new Cadet Corps and served as the school’s first commandant. He supplied the library with its core 10,000 volumes and was instrumental in bringing John Lind from England to be the school’s first director. The Knights’ School taught classical and modern literature, geography, history, and law. No formal religious instruction was provided, although mass was performed. Secular morality was the guiding principle of the school, underscored by the Enlightenment trio of reason, utility, and obligation to the state and to one’s fellow man. Polish was the language of instruction. The Knights’ School’s explicit emphasis on the duty to the state, as opposed to the individual (in this case

23 Klimowicz, “Polnische Literatur und Kunst im Zeitalter der Aufklärung,” 98.
24 William J. Rose, Stanislas Konarski: Reformer of Education in Eighteenth-Century Poland (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929); Henryk Hinz, “The Philosophy of the Polish Enlightenment and its Opponents: The Origins of the Modern Polish Mind,” Slavic Review 30, no. 2 (June 1971): 344; Cambridge History of Poland, 82-86. This turn to Polish Renaissance classics underscores the distinctive national coloring of the Enlightenment in Poland, a feature shared with the Haskalah, as well. In contrast to Peter Gay’s analysis of the philosophes’ appropriation of Greco-Roman classics to shape their supposed non-national, universalist Enlightenment, Polish exponents of the Enlightenment, while translating and reading ancient classics, “returned” not to ancient Greece and Rome, but to Poland’s “Golden Age,” the sixteenth century. For treatment of the Enlightenment as a return to universal paganism, see Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: An Interpretation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966).
noble) interest, found its most famous representative in Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746–1817), the republican insurrectionist who, after fighting in the American Revolutionary war, returned to Poland and attempted to defy the Commonwealth’s third, and final, partition.25

Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski also fostered his commitment to the Enlightenment through the important role he played in the National Education Commission (Komisja Edukacji Narodowej), which, founded in 1773 with monies from the recently dissolved Jesuit order, was Europe’s first modern ministry of education.26 The Commission created a network of secular middle schools with the goal of instilling Enlightenment values into the next generation and was responsible for overseeing Poland’s two great universities in Vilna and Cracow. With Czartoryski’s help and financial assistance, some of Europe’s most distinguished intellectuals, such as the French physiocrat Pierre-Samuel Dupont de Nemours (1739–1817) and the Swiss mathematician, Simon L’Huillier, were brought to Poland to advise the Commission, as well as to tutor the young Czartoryski sons.27

Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski’s interest in the Enlightenment extended to the literary realm, which he nurtured through patronage and in his own writings. In 1763, he co-founded (with Poniatowski’s help) the moral weekly, Monitor, which, modelled after Britain’s Spectator, published essays, letters, articles, and reportage in a semi-scholarly vein. Its objective, like that of its English exemplar (and, notably, of Moses Mendelssohn’s Hebrew moral weekly, Qohelet musar), was popular education: to bring new ideas to the literate public.28 Monitor was renewed in 1765 with the support of his cousin, the king, and, in fact, became the main voice of royal support for reform. Appearing twice weekly until December 1785, Monitor’s articles aimed their moralistic barbs at irresponsible and uncivil szlachta behavior (drunkenness, arrogance, and deceit). The weekly also reflected Poniatowski’s and Czartoryski’s interest in physiocracy and published numerous articles on agriculture and new methods of cultivation. A few issues even boldly suggested that serfdom be abolished. The moralistic essays still left room for articles on

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26 School reform in the Habsburg Monarchy and in Prussia was also galvanized by the dissolution of the Jesuit order. In Austria, Pope Clement XIV ceded all of the Jesuit schools, colleges, houses and other property — which equalled over 13 million florins — to Maria Theresa, who established a commission to reform the Austrian education system. See James Van Horn Melton, Absolutism and the Eighteenth-Century Origins of Compulsory Schooling in Prussia and Austria (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 210.
27 Zawadzki, A Man of Honour, 17.
translation theory, the refinement of the Polish language, and reviews of contemporary theater.\textsuperscript{29} Czartoryski himself published theater criticism and theory under the pseudonym \textit{Teatralski}. \textit{Monitor} also fostered a literary link between the West European and Polish Enlightenments by bringing translations of classics of medieval and early modern thought, as well as new writings by the \textit{philosophes}, to its reading public. The journal cultivated a new spirit of intellectual creativity and restlessness that advanced Polish culture and literature.\textsuperscript{30}

Unfettered by the demands of the crown (a political position that he did not want) and blessed with a huge personal fortune, Czartoryski enjoyed the life of a renaissance intellectual. He cultivated knowledge of eighteen languages, and was interested in literature, history, the arts, natural sciences, chemistry, political economy, and military strategy. He travelled extensively, particularly in England, and nourished his own private "republic of letters" with the works of many of Europe’s greatest eighteenth-century luminaries, many of whom, like himself, were freemasons. Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, and later his son, Adam Jerzy, belonged to the Parisian Lodge, Les Neuf Soeurs, whose membership included Dupont de Nemours, G. B. Mably, F. Wonsowicz, Joachim Heinrich Campe, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, A. Strzecki, and Tadeusz Kościusko. Benjamin Franklin was elected “Venerable” of the lodge in 1781.\textsuperscript{31} These personal connections proved useful to Czartoryski as he cultivated a private “enlightened” court on his lands. Puławy, the Czartoryski estate on the Wisła River about 110 kilometers south of Warsaw, became one of Poland’s most vital cultural and intellectual centers in the late eighteenth century under the direction of both Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski and his wife, Izabela Czartoryska, even competing with

\textsuperscript{29} Lukowski, \textit{Liberty’s Folly}, 220.
\textsuperscript{31} Many members of the lodge were Philanthropists, including Campe and Pestalozzi, and their interest in educational reform and Czartoryski’s respect for Franklin influenced the former’s choice of the civic catechism for the new Polish Knights’ School. See Ernst A. Simon, “Pedagogic Philanthropism and Jewish Education (Hebrew Section),” in \textit{Jubilee Volume in Honor of Mendel Kaplan} (ed. Moshe Davis; New York, 1953), 149–87; and Nicholas Hans, “UNESCO of the Eighteenth Century: \textit{La Loge des Neuf Soeurs} and its Venerable Master, Benjamin Franklin,” \textit{Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society} 97 (1953): 513–24. For an important study on the relationship of freemasonry to the Enlightenment, see Margaret Jacobs, \textit{Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); on the catechism for the Cadets School, see Jean Fabre, \textit{Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski et l’Europe des Lumières} (Strasbourg: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l’Université de Strasbourg, 1952), 147, 156. Several members of Alexander I’s “Unofficial Committee” were also masons, underscoring the progressive bent of freemasonry at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century.


Witebsk (Vitebsk), to a lyceum in Krzemieniec, where he rigorously studied Latin, French, and Polish literature, knowledge that proved indispensable for securing a position as Czartoryski’s secretary for French and Polish correspondence. In residence at Czartoryski’s estate in Sieniawa, Bernatowicz made frequent trips abroad — to Vienna, Munich, and Dresden — in order to expand his intellectual interests, all at the prince’s recommendation and expense. He began to write in Sieniawa, turning first to translations and then to comedies and novels, becoming a significant cultural figure in his own right.\textsuperscript{36}

\textit{On the Eve of the First Partition}

Despite Poniatowski’s interest in reforming the Commonwealth in the spirit of an enlightened monarchy with a strong noble-led legislature, he was unsuccessful at convincing a majority of the nobility that reform, which required attenuation of their privilege, was necessary for the stability of the country. Critically important to Poland’s defense was the abolition of the \textit{liberum veto} to prevent legislative quagmire and the raising of a strong, standing army. The \textit{szlachta}, however, increasingly paranoid about Enlightenment rhetoric that included a social program, resisted reform and allowed their xenophobia to prohibit civil tolerance of non-Catholics at the \textit{Sejm} of 1764. Catherine, positioning herself as a protector of dissidents, used the religious issue to impose more control on Poniatowski, and thwarted the Czartoryskis’ reform efforts in 1768 by forcing the Polish Parliament to accept a Russian guarantee of Polish liberties and to extend rights to non-Roman Catholic Christian dissenters (Russian Orthodox and Protestants). The Polish nobility, always zealous in the defense of its privileges and liberties, organized against Russia in the Confederation of Bar (1768–1772), with the concomitant goal of deposing Poniatowski, whom they viewed as Catherine’s pawn. Although Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski had supported earlier reform initiatives, he could not fail to sympathize with the Confederates who sought to throw off the Russian yoke. Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski secretly supported the Confederation of Bar, as did his father and uncle. His support for the Confederates illustrates the paradox of Polish republicanism: defense of Poland’s liberty meant protection of noble privilege and could easily be wed to resistance to political reform.\textsuperscript{37}

The confederates’ rebellion alarmed Poland’s powerful neighbors, Turkey, Austria, and Prussia, and resulted in the First Partition, with Poland being stripped of almost one-third of its territory and over one-third of its

\textsuperscript{36} Polski \textit{słownik biograficzny}, 1 (Cracow: Komitet redakcyjny, 1935), 465.

\textsuperscript{37} Walicki, \textit{The Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Nationhood}, 10.
chapter two

Prussia received 5 percent of the territory and approximately 580,000 people; Russia took 12.7 percent of the territory and 1,300,000 people; Austria acquired 11.8 percent of the territory and 2,130,000 people. The treaty of partition was signed on July 25/August 5 (Julian calendar/Gregorian calendar), 1772.39

Catherine’s new, post-partition ambassador to Poland, Otto Magnus Stackelberg, did his utmost to keep Poland quiescent, but reform-minded szlachta were aware that the partition of 1772 was an ominous warning that if they did not begin to address Poland’s political problems, its belligerent neighbors would be only to happy to carve up the remaining sections of the former Commonwealth among themselves.40 The Czartoryskis’ clandestine support of the Confederation of Bar led them to become the mainstay of the opposition party to the king after 1775. This party (alternatively called the Opposition, the Magnate Party, and the Ministerial Party) was a heterogeneous group of progressive enlighteners and traditional magnate republicans; of the latter, most were hostile to any kind of political reform. What bound them together was their hostility to Russia’s control of Poland. A series of reform measures was passed at the Sejm of 1775–1776, which included reforming the judiciary and creating a Permanent Council that was supposed to strengthen the executive. Yet, soon thereafter, Catherine insured that Poniatowski’s opponents would be elected to the Permanent Council and the five Sejmy that met between 1778–1786 did almost nothing. A law codification project spearheaded by Andrzej Zamoyski never came to fruition and the standing army’s numbers rose only pitifully, from 16,100 in 1778 to 18,300 by 1786, compared to Prussia’s ranks, numbering 190,000, and Russia and Austria with much more. By 1788, the Opposition had organized sufficiently to win over forty percent of the deputies to the Sejm. Hostile to the Permanent Council and to the king, their leadership, including Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, Kazimierz Nestor Sapieha, Ignacy Potocki, Michał Oginski, and Karol Radziwiłł, turned to the new Prussian king, Frederick William II, who was eager to challenge Russia’s control of Poland, and convinced other members of the Diet to undo the Russian system that had ruled Poland since 1775. Flexing their muscles, the Opposition demanded full Russian withdrawal from southeastern Poland and in January 1789 voted for the abolition of the Permanent Council in favor of a Parliamentary Committee.41 Debate ensued and what had begun as a regular meeting of

38 Lukowski, Liberty’s Folly, 189–205 and Zawadzki, A Man of Honour, 14–16.
the Sejm stretched into the Four-Year Sejm (1788–1792), which also became known as the “Great” Sejm, culminating in the promulgation of the Constitution of May 3, 1791.

Reforming Poland, Reforming Poland’s Jews

Scholarly discussions of the debates over inclusion of the Jews in the new body politic at the end of the eighteenth century have been dominated, until recently, by the French model. In France, as has been recounted many times, the French National Assembly spent over two years discussing whether or not to include the Jews in the new republic, a debate that was spurred by an economic crisis and peasant unrest in Alsace, a province heavily populated by poor, traditional Ashkenazi Jews much like their Polish brethren to the east. After many months of debate, the Assembly emancipated the Sephardic Jews of southwest France, who in many ways had already been integrated de facto into French society; twenty months later, all of the Jews of France were given full political rights, a decision reached as a necessary result of the adoption of the new Constitution, which formalized the separation of church and state and granted religious freedom implied by the promulgation of the “Declaration of the Rights of Man as a Citizen.”

It is important to recall, however, that inclusion of the Jews as individuals in the new France was not uncontested, both by Jews and Gentiles alike. The debates that raged during the National Assembly included those who argued for the immutability of the Jewish condition and, thus, for their inadmissability into French society. Even ardent proponents of Jewish emancipation, like the Jacobin priest Abbé Grégoire, hoped that the dissolution of societal obstacles to Jewish integration would pave the way to total Jewish self-annihilation: conversion to Christianity, in other words.


The Polish debates over inclusion of the Jews into Polish society, which took place during the Great Sejm simultaneously with the discussions underway in the French National Assembly, did not result in the emancipation of the Jews. The term “emancipation,” which has come to mean “political emancipation,” the extension of full political rights to the Jews as individuals, was not on the agenda of Poland’s reformers at the end of the eighteenth century for the reason that Poland, like Imperial Austria and Imperial Russia — the societies in which most of the world’s Jews in the eighteenth century actually lived — were not engaged in nation-state building, which required the total dissolution of medieval corporate bodies, religious, legal and economic. Moreover, the revolution in human consciousness in which human “rights” were considered “self-evident” because of the separation of society into a civil/public realm and a confessional/private realm protected by a “neutral” state apparatus and encoded in law, had not occurred.44 The social organization of Polish society, its tenaciously feudal socio-economic structure, the reluctance of its noble class either to cede any of its power to the crown or to the other estates or to cultivate a native burgher class, and the unique relationship between the magnate class and the Jewish population thus defined and delimited the parameters of the Enlightenment proposals offered by enlightened Poles and Jews alike at the Four-Year Sejm. It is, therefore, far more accurate to speak of “inclusion” of the Jews, and not their “emancipation,” in the Polish context.45

The triumph of the Opposition Party, dominated by the nobility, led to the municipalities’ demand for political participation in the life of the Republic. The degenerate state of Poland’s towns was inextricably linked to szlachta desire for complete control of and hostility to urban life. But no discussion of reform could proceed without recognition of the claims of the urban classes and of the municipalities themselves. Because at least two-thirds of the Republic’s town dwellers were Jews, any discussion of the extension of

44 See Lynn Hunt, ed. and trans., The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History (Boston: Bedford, 1996). As Lois Dubin writes about the Habsburg context: “But in contrast to the emancipation proffered French Jews in 1790–91, the Habsburg process was partial and incremental: the enlightened absolutist state never struck the eventual bargain of emancipation — full integration and citizenship in exchange for relinquishment of communal autonomy — with its Jewish subjects. It was anticorporatist, but again, only to a degree. . . . Its own state-building was not sufficiently extensive or thoroughgoing to do away with corporate bodies; at most it succeeded in coopting and weakening them.” Dubin, The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste, 195.
political rights to the burgher estate could not but provoke a debate regarding the Jews, their place (or lack thereof) in the estate system, and their inner reform. \(^{46}\) It is not surprising, therefore, that discussion of the Jewish question emerged with the opening of the Four-Year Sejm on October 6, 1788.

The debates at the Four-Year Sejm regarding the Jewish question were conducted in the context of a European-wide discussion about Jewish emancipation, both civic and political. Civic emancipation, in contrast to political emancipation, meant the abolition of the innumerable laws discriminating against the Jews while retaining the latter’s formal corporate separateness. Reformers and conservatives alike were well aware of the Prussian Jewry ordinance (April 17, 1750) and the Austrian Toleranzpatent (January 2, 1782). Christian Wilhelm Dohm’s influential pamphlet, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, the very title of which implied that the condition of Jewish life needed improvement, appeared in a Polish adaptation in Warsaw in 1783. \(^{47}\) As well, members of the Polish intelligentsia, and some Jewish petitioners, knew of the debates raging in France. \(^{48}\) Between November 1788 and January 1790, at least fifteen pamphlets, of which thirteen were published, were written dealing with the Jewish question.

In Poland, discussion over reform of the Jews took place in the midst of rising tensions between Christian burghers and their Jewish competitors in Poland’s royal towns. The 1768 Sejm’s decision to restrict Jewish privileges and rights to earn a living through trade had led to mass Jewish migrations from Lublin, Vilna, Warsaw, Cracow, Poseń, Przemysł, Opatów, Torn, and Bidgosć. Although the animosity between burghers and Jews was not new, it escalated after the 1768 Sejm. In Warsaw, these tensions culminated in a riot in May 1790, which brought to the fore one of the pronounced triangles of economic hostility in the Commonwealth: noble-Jews-townspeople. \(^{49}\)

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\(^{48}\) The degree of interest in France among Polish reformers, both Gentile and Jewish, is disputed among scholars. Eisenbach, Cygielman, and Etkes all deemphasize the knowledge of the French debates in the Warsaw press, while Israel Bartal and Guterman point to connections between the French and Polish discussions of Jewish reform. For a full discussion, see Bartal, “‘The Second Model’: France as a Source of Influence.”

\(^{49}\) On the riot, see Shmuel Cygielman, “Regarding the Suggestions of Mateusz Butrynówicz, a Representative of the Great Sejm, for the Reform of the Jewish Community of Poland
focused on the issue of membership in the municipality, the Four-Year Sejm debates grew to encompass discussion of Jewish attire, taxation, lease holding on breweries and taverns, and communal autonomy. Although many of the proposals written by Christian Poles for the Sejm about the reform of Jewish communal life shared the generic Enlightenment assumption that inclusion of the Jews in the body politic was contingent on the quid pro quo of their inner transformation into “useful” citizens, there was no consensus of opinion about how to effect this transformation.

Andrzej Zamoyski, a conservative nobleman, brought a petition to the Sejm in 1788 about the burghers and peasants that touched on the Jewish question. Seeking to limit Jewish and Polish contact and to reduce economic competition between Poles and Jews, Zamoyski felt that the right of residence for Jews in Polish cities should be curtailed. The Jews, he argued, should be forbidden to employ Christian domestics and any individual Jew who could not show that he was either a tradesman with property valued at at least 1,000 zlotys or an arendar (lessee), artisan, or farmer should leave Poland. His proposals garnered the support of the conservative clergy, but were rejected by the Sejm. Other conservative voices in the Sejm vigorously defended the feudal system and noble prerogative and either ignored or anathematized the Jews.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Father Stanisław Staszic, an important Enlightenment ideologue who was critical of noble republicanism and a champion of the burgher estate, advocated in his Warnings for Poland that Jews be subjected to the general law of the municipalities. His conclusions regarding the civic integration of the Jews, however, were predicated on a virulent anti-Semitic view of Jewish economic behavior. Ignoring the nobility’s involvement in distillery and brewing, Staszic offered an alarmist argument to the effect that peasant drunkenness...
was due entirely to Jewish dominance of the liquor trade, referring to the Jews as “locusts.”

Hugo Kołątaj (1750–1812), an advocate of the burgher movement and active exponent of the standardization and rationalization of national life in Poland, wrote, in his *Anonymous Letters*, “O nation! If merciful Providence permits you to stand on the threshold of true liberty . . . be bold to write one code for all men and one legal procedure for all provinces.”

He displayed a tolerant attitude toward the Jews, arguing in *Political Right of the Polish Nation* that “the human rights of Jews are to be respected no less than the rights of any other human beings.”

Kołątaj was particularly sensitive to the anomalies of Jewish economic life in Poland (the perennial competition with the burghers and the Jews’ unenviable role of middlemen between the peasants and the nobility) that fueled anti-Jewish resentment. It was Kołątaj, then Vice Chancellor of the Sejm, who intervened on behalf of the Jews during the May riot and expressed to Stanisław Malachowski, the speaker of the Sejm, that the perpetually seething tension between Jews and Poles would erupt if reforms were not promulgated. Yet, despite Kołątaj’s open-minded attitude toward expanding the civil rights of the Jews, his commitment to the French model of integration meant that he favored abolition of the kahal and the compulsory prohibition of traditional Jewish garb as the means to further the rapprochement between Jews and Poles.

In 1789, Mateusz Butrymowicz reissued, in revised form, an anonymous 1785 pamphlet (*The Jews, or the Urgent Necessity of a Reform amongst the Jews in the Lands of the Republic*), now entitled *How to Turn Polish Jews into Citizens Useful for the Country*, which did not go as far as Kołątaj’s suggestions for incorporation of the Jews into the burgher estate. Butrymowicz advocated a change in the legal and residential status of the Jews, arguing for their inclusion into a “state citizenship,” but he remained unprepared to support the abolition of the feudal structure. His pamphlet discussed the “condition” of the Jews, implying their potential for change if the social forces of their oppression were relieved. He advocated Polonization of the Jews through the abolition of the kahal, abandonment of Yiddish, prohibition of the importation of Hebrew books and of Jewish traditional dress, and “productivization” through the redirection of Jewish economic activity away from trade and commerce toward handicrafts and agriculture. Recognizing the Jews’

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55 Cited in Goldberg, “The Changes in the Attitude of Polish Society,” 44.
human rights, Butrymowicz argued against the state’s interference in Jewish religious life, but implicitly called for the transformation of Judaism, with its cultural-national foundations, into a "confession." Thus, despite his good intentions, Butrymowicz, too, felt that an almost complete vitiation of Jewish cultural and religious distinctiveness had to precede integration into Polish life.\(^\text{57}\)

There was an occasional voice among the debators, like that of Józef Pawlikowski, which articulated the position of preserving Jewish culture with integration into the life of the state. Pawlikowski argued, "We have agreed to be tolerant of their religion. By what logic, then, shall we now interfere with it, with its holidays, with its fasts? Why should we be towards them like the Spaniards of old?\(^\text{58}\) Let us not force them to change their garb! Let us instead act towards them so as to make them feel not aggrieved but happy with being Poles."\(^\text{59}\) Pawlikowski’s position was singular also in that he blamed the impoverishment of the towns on peasant misery, rather than on Jewish exploitation, and focused on the nobility’s role in the subjugation of the serfs.\(^\text{60}\) On the whole, however, the main current of Polish discussion regarding reform of the Jews called for a state-initiated limitation of Jewish communal autonomy and culture, an effort which could not but be perceived by the majority of Poland’s Jews as a threat to the very existence of Jewish life.

Although the issue of how to reform Jewish life had been raised as early as 1775, it was the 1790 Warsaw riot mentioned above that forced the question of the Jews onto the agenda of the Great Sejm. On May 19, 1790, Jacek Jeziorski (1722–1805), Castellan of Łuków, suggested that a "Commission for Jewish Reform" be appointed. The Commission was composed of three Senators and six members of the Sejm, including Kołłątaj and Tadeusz Czacki (1765–1813), a liberal reformer who recognized the civic rights of the Jews.\(^\text{61}\) Kehillah representatives, as well as enlightened Jews like Lefin, had been


\(^{58}\) Pawlikowski was referring to fifteenth-century Spain, which "offered" the Jews a choice between conversion or death as a means to "integrate" them into Spanish society.

\(^{59}\) Cited in Goldberg, “The Changes in the Attitude of Polish Society,” 42.

\(^{60}\) Eisenbach, *The Emancipation of the Jews in Poland*, 79.

involved from the beginning with the Sejm debates on the relationship of the Jews to the burgher estate, the right of Jewish domicile in Polish cities and the level of Jewish taxes. The Commission itself felt obligated to pay attention to current Jewish opinion and eleven Jews, Dr. Eliasz Ackord, Dr. Jacques Calmanson, Zalkind Hourwitz (via a Polish adaptation of his French Apologie), Dr. Solomon Polonus, Dr. Moshe Markuse, Mendel Lefin, Avraham Hirszowicz, Pesach Haymowicz, Shimon Wolfowicz, Joshua Herszel ben Joseph (Józefowicz), and Zevi Hirsch ben Shaul (Shaulowicz), presented petitions to the Commission. Lefin’s participation was assured by his relationship to Prince Adam Czartoryski.

The petitioners, ten of whom were born within the boundaries of the Commonwealth (Solomon Polonus was born in Amsterdam, the son of a Jew from Vilna) represented the intelligentsia of Polish Jewry: four doctors, one factor, two literary men (Lefin the fortunate one with a noble benefactor, Hourwitz living impoverished in Paris), one royal administrator, one syndic (royal representative) in the Warsaw Jewish kahal, and two rabbis. As in France, the eleven petitions ranged in opinion among those which championed the full, unlimited integration of the Jews into Polish society, those which urged the civic emancipation of the Jews, but resisted the complete dissolution of Jewish communal autonomy, and those which rejected any reform of Jewish life whatsoever.

Little is known about Ackord, except that, born in Mohylew, he made his way to Berlin, where he earned a degree in medicine in 1783. He must have had contact with Mendelssohn and the maskilim in Prussia for the former helped to get Ackord appointed to the Berlin academy. He then came to Warsaw, where he worked as a women’s doctor, and then translated the anonymous pamphlet employed by Butrymowicz into German, dedicating it to the king. The pamphlet regarded the condition of the Jews sociologically, not unlike Dohm’s treatise, positing that hostile Gentile legislation had played the decisive role in shaping the condition of the Jews. Their reform, therefore, was predicated on being included in the burgher estate. The pamphlet, however, did not call for the abolition of the feudal system.

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63 On the category of “maskilic physician,” a Jewish doctor who, indebted to Enlightenment categories and analysis of the condition of the Jews, advocated their reform, focusing specifically on the connection between the physical regeneration of their “diseased” condition and their improved social, civil, and political status, see John Efron, Medicine and the German Jews: A History (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001): 64–104.

64 The discussion below is indebted to Guterman, “The Suggestions of Polish Jews toward the Reforms.”
Ackord’s decision to translate the pamphlet into German suggests that his audience was not Poland or its reformers, but Western Europeans.

Born in Chrobishów, near Zamosć, Jacques Calmanson studied in France, Germany, Turkey, and Russia, and trained as a doctor. He returned to Poland and settled in Warsaw, where he cultivated contacts with both royal and noble circles. At the end of his life he was a freemason. In 1784, Calmanson wrote a pamphlet to the king regarding taxes that the Jews were allegedly hiding from the royal court and then in 1791 translated a Hebrew text into Polish, which invited the representatives of the kehillot (Jewish communities) to come to Warsaw to meet with the king with the implicit suggestion that the Jews could help pay off the royal debt. Given Castalan Scypion Piattoli’s intense negotiations to relieve the king of his debt through an annual tribute paid by the Jewish communities that, in turn, would be granted a form of emancipation into Polish society, it is reasonable to assume that Calmanson and Piattoli were in contact with one another. Calmanson also had ties to the Czartoryskis, perhaps through masonic circles. In 1786, when Warsaw was under Prussian rule, he published his Essai sur l'état actual des Juifs de Pologne et leur perfectibilité and dedicated it to Hoym, the administrator of Prussian Poland. Later, Calmanson translated the pamphlet into Polish and dedicated to Tsar Alexander I, who, in gratitude, sent Calmanson a gift of cigarettes through the mediation of Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. The pamphlet is notable for Calmanson’s description of Hasidism, which he saw as an obstacle to the transformation of the Jewish community: “This sect in Poland was not known at all twenty years ago. It originated in Międzybóz in Podolia and its founder was an enthusiastic rabbi who exploited the ignorance of the people, who are in love with miracles. It therefore dawned on him to pretend to be a prophet.”

Zalkind Hourwitz, the Jewish co-winner of the famous Metz Essay Contest of 1785 in which contestants were asked to respond to the question, “Are there means of rendering the Jews more useful and more happy in France?” did not petition the Polish Sejm directly. His essay, Apologie des Juifs en réponse à la question: est-il des moyens de rendre les Juifs plus heureux et plus utiles en France?, penned in 1787, appeared in Poland in Polish translation in December 1789, only ten months after it was published in France. Born outside

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65 N. M. Gelber, “Ksiądz Piattoli a Sprawa Żydowska na Sejmie Wielkim,” Nowe Życie 1, no. 6 (Grudzień 1924): 321–33.
66 Eisenbach believes the translation was done by J. Czechowicz, as Uwagi nad stanem niniejszym Żydów polskich i ich wydoskonaleniem (Remarks on the Present Condition of the Polish Jews and on their Perfectibility, Warsaw, 1797). See Eisenbach, The Emancipation of the Jews in Poland, 533, footnote 172.
Lublin in 1751. Hourwitz, like other self-conscious modernizing Polish Jews, had made his way to Berlin, where he was a tutor. In 1774, he travelled to Metz and then settled in Paris. Hourwitz’s French pamphlet was notable for its uncompromising demand that Jews be granted equal rights, without any appeals for retention of corporate status and rabbinic prerogative. He rejected outright the quid pro quo so prominent in debates over Jewish rights, rejecting any calls for the inner transformation of the Jews as a prerequisite for their inclusion in the nation-state. The Polish rendition of the Apologie differed from the original, which was strongly anti-clerical in tone. Despite its criticism of the rabbinate, the Polish version defended the Talmud.

Little biographical information exists about Avraham Hirszowicz. His memo, entitled Projekt do reformy i poprawy obyczajów starozakonnych mieszkańców Królestwa polskiego (Project for the reform and improvement of the customs of the Jewish [“Old Testament”] residents of the Kingdom of Poland), directly appealed to the king, urging a top-down approach toward the reform of the Jews. His suggestions pointed to Jewish economic behavior as the primary cause of the Jews’ condition and encouraged the king to make the Jews useful to the state by forbidding early marriages, redirecting them away from commerce and trade and toward agriculture, enacting sumptuary laws, and using royal funds to create employment.

Pesach Haymowicz, too, was close to the royal court, and his suggestions for the reform of the Jews reflect his position. From Opatów, Haymowicz arrived in Warsaw in 1754, where he was appointed as a syndic — there were five in Warsaw until the end of the Republic — of the Jews. His responsibilities included raising taxes, adjudicating cases in the royal court, and monitoring Jewish employment and residence in the city, in short, keeping an eye on the Jewish community for the king. Eventually, Haymowicz was removed from his position, but wrote his petition, Project for the organization of Jewish courts, to Mydłowski, the burgrave of the city of Plock, according to suggestions offered by a man of the Old Testament, Pesach Haymowicz, the former syndic of the Jews of Warsaw, in the spirit of one still in the king’s inner circle. Its primary aim was to reduce Poniatowski’s debt, and Haymowicz was undoubtedly cultivated by Piattoli for that purpose.

Shimon Wollowicz, born in 1755 to a wealthy Jewish family in Vilna, was educated in Polish law. By 1785, when a new rabbi was to be appointed to the Vilna kahal, Wollowicz emerged as one of the chief opponents of the candidate, Shmuel ben Avigdor, and of the kahal. A social conflict within the Vilna community raged for almost thirty years, known as Mahloqet harav (The

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Dispute over the Rabbi). Wolfowicz contended that the kahal leadership was insensitive to the plight of poorer members of the community and that the kahal’s extensive debt was particularly burdensome to the lower social classes. The conflict escalated, involving the woyewoda (the palatine of a province with responsibility over its Jewish communities) of Vilna, the magnate Karol Radziwiłł, and in 1786 Wolfowicz was arrested and imprisoned. Shmuel ben Avigdor became the rabbi of Vilna. While in prison (on Radziwiłł lands), Wolfowicz wrote Wieżeń w Nieszwiezu do Stanów Sejmujących o potrzebie reformy Żydów (A Prisoner in Nieszwiez to the present Sejm regarding the need to reform the Jews, 1789–90). The pamphlet was dominated by Wolfowicz’s conviction that the kahal was incompatible with modernization and reform. He urged its dissolution and the separation of Church and State. Upon Wolfowicz’s release from prison, Shmuel ben Avigdor was then ordered by Radziwiłł to resign his position, illustrating Wolfowicz’s influence on the magnate.

Joshua Herszel ben Joseph (Józefowicz), the rabbi of Chełm, responded directly to Butrymowicz’s reissuing of the anonymous pamphlet in February 1789 with Myśli stosowane do sposobu informowania Żydów polskich w poz�ecznych Krajowi obywatełi (Thoughts regarding the means of reform of the Jews of Poland into useful citizens of the state), whose title echoed Butrymowicz’s, as did its content. Józefowicz’s work challenged all of Butrymowicz’s assumptions about the alleged debased condition of the Jews, rejecting the Polish reformer’s contention that the Jews as they were were harmful to the state.69 With regard to Jewish economic activity, Józefowicz illustrated how contemporary Jewish economic activity was both productive and varied, and repudiated the claim that Jewish religious behavior — particularly Sabbath and holiday rest — led to idleness. The Polish nobility, not the Jews, were responsible for the oppression of the peasantry. Defending the Jews against charges of misanthropy, a common canard directed at the Talmud, he argued that Jewish law encouraged morality and discipline and was compatible with a Christian state. Józefowicz defended distinctive Jewish dress, although he conceded that there was no Torah law that commanded a particular Jewish costume. He cavilled against the prohibition on importation of foreign Jewish books into Polish territory on the grounds that they encouraged broader cultural and economic horizons, beneficial to all. Józefowicz accused Butrymowicz of blaming the entire Jewish community for the faults of individuals and, finally, expressed his view that any reform of Jewish religion would assault the basis of Judaism. Józefowicz’s pamphlet was a full defense of traditional Polish-Jewish life and a rejection of the assumption that a change in Jewish civil status has to be antecedent by a reform of Judaism and of the Jews.

69 See Cygielman, “Regarding the Suggestions of Mateusz Butrymowicz.”
themselves. He continued to advocate on behalf of his traditionalist position even after the Declaration of the Constitution of May 3, 1791, urging the king to see that the Constitution placed the Jews at the mercy of the burgher class, who despised them. This appeal underscores Józefowicz’s traditional political posture; the rabbi preferred an alliance with the king that preserved Jewish communal autonomy to changes that may have afforded Jews individual freedoms, but left them without either royal or noble protection.

Zevi Hirsch ben Shaul (Shaulowicz) came from a family with connections to the Polish royal family. His grandfather, Meir Margoliot, the head of the rabbinical court of Ostróg (Ostraha), was selected by the king as the chief rabbi of Ukraine and Podolia in 1777.70 Meir’s son, Shaul, then head of the rabbinical academy in Zbaraz, inherited the position, and went on to become the rabbinical authority in Komarno and Lublin.71 His son, Zevi Hirsch ben Shaul, made a traditional appeal to Poniatowski on September 13, 1791 that he not promulgate any new legislation regarding the Jews without consulting the rabbinic leadership. He also assured the king that the Jewish community, in exchange for preservation of their communal autonomy, was not reluctant to offer him financial assistance. Zevi Hirsch’s “Thanks to Stanisław August on January 17, 1792 (the king’s nameday),” penned in Hebrew, but which appeared in Polish translation, echoed the long-standing political posture of the traditional rabbinate: the Jews preferred feudal Polish rule to the unknown, be it Austrian, Prussian, or Russian rule.72

Solomon Polonus, born in Amsterdam to a Polish-Jewish family, was trained as a doctor, and belongs, like Hourwitz, Markuse and Lefin, to a group of modernized Polish Jews who were well aware of the French debates over emancipation. Polonus himself translated several documents from French into Polish between August 3, 1789 and October 21, 1791, intending them for publication. He wrote Projekt wszelbeam reformy Zydów (Project regarding the reform of the Jews) defending the “usefulness” of Polish Jewry. His pamphlet urged religious tolerance that would allow the Jews to practice Judaism freely, and argued that the bestowal of civil rights upon the Jews, including the end to all residential restrictions and the right to purchase land, would be beneficial to the state. His proposal also recognized the oligarchical structure of the contemporary kahal and suggested that future elections

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70 Menahem Nahum Litinski, Sefer qorot Pololyah veqadmoniyut hayehudim sham (Odessa: A. Belinson, 1895), 65–66.
72 Eisenbach, The Emancipation of the Jews in Poland, 122.
should be predicated on education; only Polish-speaking Jews should be enfranchised. The reformed rabbinate and kahal should be supervised by the King’s minister of police, a position equivalent to a minister of the interior. On the hotly contested issue of military conscription, Polonus came down firmly on the side of the quid pro quo: five years of military service should be sufficient to guarantee the full receipt of civic rights. Polonus’s proposal reflected his wish for full civic emancipation of the Jews within the confines of the feudal Polish republic with the king still at the head. He continued to hold this position during Poland’s last days, supporting the Kościuszko rebellion and criticizing the Russians in a speech he gave in a Vilna synagogue on May 17, 1794.

Moses Markuse, born in Slonim in the northeast of Poland in 1743, began his medical studies in Berlin, with the famed Marcus Herz, and then moved to Königsberg in 1766, where he married. He returned to Poland in 1774. There he was a physician to the King and to some members of the Crown Treasury Commission between 1782–1790. During the Four-Year Sejm, Markuse penned his Seyfer refues haniqra ‘Ezer yisroel’ (The Book of Remedies that is called ‘The Help of Israel’), the first modern Yiddish book written explicitly for East European Jews. Its subtitle, “for the classrooms in the country of Poland (lehadarim bemedinas folin),” designated its audience. A free adaptation of the Swiss physician Samuel-August Tissot’s Avis au Peuple sur sa Santé (Paris, 1761), Seyfer refues was published in 1790 with the assistance of Michał Bobrowski, a Polish nobleman. Markuse’s book, although devoted to the dissemination of popular medicine and to a campaign against medical quackery, was also preoccupied with Jewish economic life, whose concentration in petty trade he blamed on traditional Jewish education, which kept children indoors and valorized study over physical labor. Reform of Jewish education could remedy the Jews’ idleness and lack of productivity. Markuse also attacked the reliance of traditional Polish Jewry on medical charlatans, the ba’alei shem (amulet makers) that traversed the Polish countryside. Unlike Calmannson, however, Markuse’s critique of ba’alei shem was not directed at Hasidism as such, but derived from his ambition to professionalize the state of Jewish medicine, much as had Tissot in his original work.
significance of *Sefer refu'as* lies less in its direct effect on the debates over Jewish status in the *Sejm* than as testimony to the influence of general Enlightenment ideas on Jewish exponents of reform during the Commonwealth’s last days. Bobrowski’s financial support of Markuse also attests to the dependence *maskilim* had upon the patronage of reform-oriented Poles.

Mendel Lefin wrote a variety of works, both published and unpublished, which bear on the civic reform of the Jews and the Jewish community: *Essai d’un plan de réforme ayant pour objet d’éclairer la Nation Juive en Pologne et de redresser par là ses moeurs* (Essay of a Reform Plan Whose Object is the Enlightenment and Redress of the Morals of the Jews of Poland),75 *Liqqutei kelalim* (Selections of Rules),76 “*Teshuvah*” (Responsum),77 and *Entwurf eines Rabinsystems in den Gutern Ihrer Durchlaucht des Fursten Adam Czartoryski, General von Podolien* (Outline of a Rabbinic System in the Estates of Your Highness, Prince Adam Czartoryski, Prince of Podolia).78 Linguistically diverse (French, Hebrew, German), all of the materials are informed by Lefin’s relationship to the Czartoryskis.79

The prince’s interest in Lefin as a Jew should be understood as a consequence of the dense Jewish settlement in the southeastern Polish border-
lands. Central to the colonization efforts of the Polish nobility from the mid-sixteenth century onward, more than 30,000 Jews lived on Czartoryski holdings by 1765, playing an essential role in the latifundia economy.\footnote{Rosman, \textit{The Lords' Jews}, 214.} Any change in Poland’s political and economic structure would have an enormous impact on this large “estate,” as well as for magnates like the Czartoryskis, who were economically dependent upon the middle-class acumen of Jews living on their holdings. Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski’s involvement with Lefin thus underscores the tie between the Polish magnate class and “its” Jews on the eve of the Commonwealth’s last chance for internal reform.

Czartoryski’s relationship with Lefin gave him direct access to the Jewish community, whose opinions he was interested in hearing as he formulated reform plans for Poland. He endeavored to cultivate other enlightened Jews besides Lefin, although the latter was his most successful and consistent Jewish protégé. On April 23, 1800, Heinrich Gottfried Bertschneider, the librarian of the University of Lwów (Lemberg), wrote to Friedrich Nikolai in Berlin at Czartoryski’s request. The prince, wrote Bertschneider, “inquires after Solomon Maimon, whose autobiography was published by [Karl Phillip] Moritz. I believe the Prince has philanthropic intentions regarding this man. If you, yourself, were willing to write to the Prince through me, he would be very satisfied to correspond with you at this opportunity.”\footnote{The letter to Nikolai is cited in Raphael Mahler, \textit{Divrei yemei yisra‘el} (Rehavia: Worker’s Library, 1956), 1:72.}

Czartoryski may also have been the silent voice behind the Enlightenment efforts of Dr. Eliaz Ackord.\footnote{Czartoryski’s connection to Ackord is speculative, but suggestive. Recounting the prince’s fortuitous meeting with Lefin in Mikołajów, A. B. Gottlober mentioned a Dr. Akelschmidt who accompanied Czartoryski on his tour of the Jewish communities in his lands. But, Jacob Shatzky argued that there was no doctor by that name in Poland at the time and that Gottlober, notoriously sloppy with names and times, confused the name of Akelschmidt with that of Eliaz Ackord. See Jacob Shatzky, “Recensions: Review of A. Friedkin’s \textit{Avraham Baer Gottlober un zayn epokhe},” \textit{Pinkas} 1 (1927–28): 102–68.} Moreover, Czartoryski’s interest in the Jews extended to curiosity about the amuletic and alchemic practices of contemporary Jewish mystics. When in London in 1772, Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski met with Samuel Falk, the Ba’al Shem of London — as had the recently deposed King of Corsica — perhaps seeking aid for Poland after the first partition.\footnote{Michal Oron, “Mysticism and Magic in Eighteenth-Century London: Samuel Falk, the ‘London Ba’al Shem’,” in \textit{Sefer Yisra‘el Levin} (ed. Re’uven Zur and Tova Rosen; Tel Aviv: The University of Tel Aviv, 1995), 2:19, footnote 57. On Samuel Falk, see Cecil Roth, “The Cabalist and the King,” in \textit{Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History} (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), 139–64.}

Finally, Czartoryski’s devoted patronage of Mendel Lefin was a product of the prince’s active cultivation of a group of unknown European writers and...
intellectuals, without regard to national origin or religious confession, whose ability to create and thus to gain artistic and literary renown was entirely due to his beneficence. Lefin’s productivity was directly related to Czartoryski’s patronage, which was an indispensable component of the beginnings of the Haskalah in Eastern Europe. As in Berlin and Szklow, the existence of a group of wealthy benefactors or even of a single well-endowed patron made all the difference in whether or not aspiring maskilim could devote their energies to writing. Members of the Jewish community who directed their literary aspirations toward a transformation of Jewish life needed a livelihood to support their cultural work, particularly because their writings fell beyond the purview of traditional Jewish literary creativity. Early maskilim like Solomon Maimon, Joel Brill Loewe, Salomon Dubno, Herz Homberg, and Israel Zamość travelled to Berlin, where they became private tutors in the homes of eighteenth-century upper-class households, particularly for the children of wealthy Berlin Jews. Joshua Zeitlin, a prosperous Russian Jew, turned his estate of Ustia in Mohylew, near Szklow, into an oasis for a variety of turn-of-the-nineteenth-century Jewish intellectuals, including Barukh Schick and Lefin himself. While the later Haskalah in Prussia would be buttressed by the emergence of a cultivated middle class interested in the Enlightenment and committed to funding its institutions — printing presses, journals and schools — the system of private patronage was essential for the support of the East European Haskalah and the Polish Enlightenment.

Lefin became acquainted with members of the Czartoryski cultural circle while spending time on the Czartoryski estate in Sieniawa, and was cultivated by Izabela Czartoryska, Adam Kazimierz’s wife, a patron in her own right. Izabela’s estate in Puławy was a magnet for European culture and she was an important collector of both artistic people and their creations. Lefin held Izabela Czartoryska in special regard, attested by this panegyric he wrote to her on behalf of the Jews of Mikołajów in 1805:


85 Lowenstein, The Berlin Jewish Community, 39, and 209, footnote 26. Christian intelligentsi were also employed as tutors in wealthy magnate homes; Scypion Piattoli, for example, was a tutor for both the Potockis and the Lubomirskis. Gelber, “Ksiądz Piattoli a Sprawa Żydowska na Sejmie Wielkim,” 321.

Words of Thanks

We have lived and been sustained by the generosity of your hands for many days and years. Far away, you have been hidden from our eyes. We have only thanked your name and your memory. Indeed, we have been jealous even of those who only see your image on a tablet, an inchoate substance impossible to stir [even] with all the rams of Nevayot. (Isa 60:7)

Come please, now, your Highness, accept all of these yearning hearts that offer words of good will before you. Accept now the reward for your justness to Israel from the Lord their God. Take delight in these eyes, which regard you and are filled with love, issuing honor and emitting song, gladness, and joy for you. Regard these whispering tongues and their silent lips and see us standing, all of us, mute statues, awed and silenced now, from our abundant joy in you.

Remember these servants among the myriads of our brethren, the House of Israel, who are close to you, so they will be able to appear before you, worthy to be your favored [subjects] upon whom you bestow your mercy. But we, in this unforeseen hour, only need to quench the thirst of our eyes in the glory of your face in order to engrave the likeness of your image on our hearts as a memorial for all the days of our lives.87

Izabela was not unmoved by this display of gratitude and remarked to her husband, “I am at the end of my travels in Ukraine and Podolia. I arrived here [Mikołajów] yesterday with a cacophony of song [by] Jews and Christians, as in all of your lands, my dear, where I have been received in a manner that I will never forget.”88

Lefin’s reform proposals were influenced by the Haskalah in Berlin and by the French Enlightenment, but his keen awareness of the specific conditions of Polish Jewry — the relationship of the Jews to the magnate class, his sensitivity to age-old Christian hostilities to Judaism, and his perception of Polish Jewry’s spiritual crisis — shaped his writings at all times. Lefin’s suggestions for reform of the Polish-Jewish community were not merely reactive proposals, but constructive suggestions for the renewal of a rational, but traditional, Jewish life in Poland. This can been seen already in his first published work on the reform of the Jewish community of Poland, Essai d’un plan de réforme ayant pour objet d’éclairer la Nation Juive en Pologne et de redresser par là ses mœurs, which appeared anonymously in Warsaw in 1791.89

Written for the National Education Commission on which Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski served, the Essai d’un plan de réforme reflected Lefin’s moderate conception of the Haskalah; it also illustrated his sensitivity to the

87 The Joseph Perl Archive, JNULA, 4° 1153/8. The poem is dated 2 Elul [August 27], 1805.
88 Izabela Fleming Czartoryska to Adam Kazimierz, September 16, 1805, Mikołajów. 6050 III, EW 623.
89 On dating the pamphlet, see Guterman, “The Suggestions of Polish Jews toward the Reforms,” 70.
external pressures bearing upon the Jewish community of Poland. Although the *Essai d’un plan de réforme* was written with Czartoryski’s patronage, Lefin was not a mouthpiece for the prince. Lefin’s *Essai d’un plan de réforme* can be read as a rejoinder to a kind of modern public disputation — in the medieval meaning of a staged dialogue between the representatives of Judaism and Christianity — over the character of the Jews and Judaism taking place at the Four-Year Sejm. Acutely aware of the animosity toward the Jews that informed much of the Polish discussion of the “Jewish Question,” as well as of the historic hostility of the Polish Church to the Talmud, Lefin penned the *Essai d’un plan de réforme* both as an apologia on behalf of Judaism and as a proposal for the reform of the Jewish community. He revealed in an unpublished manuscript entitled “Teshuvah” that he composed the French pamphlet in response to deputy Hugo Kołłątaj’s order and the National Education Committee’s agreement (later slightly modified by Father Scypion Piattoli) for all Jewish men to shave their beards. Prior to the eighteenth century, most Jewish men — although there were differences in style between East and West European Jews — wore beards in fulfillment of the biblical commandment, “You shall not round off the side-growth on your head or destroy the side growth of your beard” (Lev 19:27), and, if they shaved, did so only with a permissible tool, a pair of scissors, not with a razor. In the course of the eighteenth century, when being clean-shaven became marked as “modern,” or “Western,” the Jewish beard, a metonym for the

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90 Literary hostility to the Talmud was well attested in Poland already by the seventeenth century. Authors such as Mojecki (*Jewish Cruelties*), Hobicki, Miczniski, and Sleskobski published tracts criticizing the Oral Law. *The Talmud of the Jewish Faith* (1610, Cracow) became the source for the first Polish encyclopedia’s (1745) entry “proving” the commonplace belief that the Talmud required Jews to use Christian blood on Passover. Between 1547–1787, there were eighty-one cases of ritual murder accusation in Poland, and the blood libel loomed large in the Frankist disputation in Lwów in 1759. See Majer Balaban, *Letoldot hatenu’ah hafranqit* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1934), 160–61; Goldberg, “The Changes in the Attitude of Polish Society,” 41; Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews*, 175–77; Zenon Guldin and Jacek Wijaczka, “The Accusation of Ritual Murder in Poland, 1500–1800,” *Polin* 10 (1997): 99–140. One of the central anti-Talmud texts employed by Polish writers of the eighteenth century was Johann Andreas Eisenmenger’s *Entdecktes Judenthum*, which cited the Talmud as the source for the Jews’ poisoning community wells during the Black Death. See Cygielman, “Regarding the Suggestions of Mateusz Butrymowicz,” 88–89 on the anti-Jewish stereotypes employed by Mateusz Butrymowicz in his pamphlet.

Jewish male himself, became scrutinized and contested by Jews and Gentiles. Kołłątaj’s order struck at the heart of the aesthetic and sexual codes of modernization. Lefin, distrustful of any political changes that would dissolve Jewish corporate and religious autonomy, reacted strongly against Kołłątaj’s decree and penned his pamphlet as a defense of Jewish religious practice.

Many Polish reformers saw rabbinic Judaism, and particularly the Talmud, as an obstacle to the integration of the Jews into Polish life, and the pamphlet literature circulating in Warsaw at the time of the Great Sejm was full of these attitudes. Lefin countered this assault upon Jewish religious life with a discussion of the historical development of Judaism and its fundamental compatibility with an enlightened Polish state. He began the Essai d’un plan de réforme with a bold assertion of the centrality of religion in Jewish life and an equally dauntless claim of the Talmud’s universalism:

Religion is the most powerful and the most active motive of the Jewish nation, and one can draw essential advantages even from its prejudices; that is why it is very important for every political reformer to know them [the prejudices] thoroughly. The Talmud, which places the love of one’s fellow man as the foundation of its entire system, is its [the Jewish nation’s] principle code of law.

Acknowledging that much of the Talmud was concerned with fine legal discussions about how to fulfill Jewish ceremonial law, and acutely aware that Christian polemical literature had historically viewed the Talmud as the source of Jewish separateness and alleged misanthropy, Lefin insisted that its

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92 Elliot Horowitz, “The Early Eighteenth Century Confronts the Beard: Kabbalah and Jewish Self-Fashioning,” Jewish History 8 (1994): 95–115. By the end of the eighteenth century, many westernized Jews viewed the beard as a sign of the cultural and aesthetic backwardness of their East European brethren from whom they sought to distance themselves. Max Lilienthal, a German maskil who travelled to Russia on behalf of the Russian government, remarked that the Russian-Jewish maskilim, were “Dirty, bearded Jews who are barely touched by the rays of enlightenment.” Cited in Steven J. Zipperstein, The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986), 52. Emphasis is mine. In his Autobiography, Solomon Maimon viewed his decision to shave his beard as a sign of his modernity and rationality, symbols that were not lost upon the traditional chief rabbi of Hamburg, who said in dismay upon meeting Maimon: “You also are not unknown to me; I examined you as a boy several times, and formed high expectations of you. Oh! is it possible that you have altered so’ (Here he pointed to my shaven beard). To this I replied that I also had the honour of knowing him, and that I remembered his examinations well. My conduct hitherto, I told him, was as little opposed to religion properly understood, as it was to reason. ‘But,’ he interrupted, ‘you do not wear a beard, you do not go to the synagogue: is that not contrary to religion?’” Solomon Maimon, An Autobiography (trans. J. Clark Murray; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1954), 261. Emphases are mine. Being clean-shaven was a precondition for Jews seeking admission to the Berlin Lodge (Grosse National-Mutterloge zu den drei Weltkugeln) at the end of the eighteenth century. See Katz, Jews and Freemasons in Europe, 1723–1939, 22. Scores of other examples exist.

93 [Lefin], “Essai d’un plan de réforme,” 410.
many “sound maxims” touched upon Jewish morals, and that “even the ceremonial laws have a relationship to morals and are only different aspects of “the [commandment to] love one’s fellow man [as oneself].” Lefin’s words reflected the eighteenth-century’s preoccupation with universal morality and his own commitment to the defense of traditional rabbinic Judaism and its main text, the Talmud, against charges of immorality and religious parochialism.

Throughout the Essai d’un plan de réforme Lefin described Judaism in a manner that he believed would be palatable to his Polish readers, but his words also reflected his perception that the rational rabbinic Judaism inherent in the Talmud had been diverted and debased by mysticism and irrationality. Although Lefin acknowledged that a legitimate esoteric tradition existed within the Talmud, he insisted that the internal censoring mechanism of the tradition protected this elite teaching from abuse by the ignorant. He wrote:

It [the Talmud] was very selective about the choice of those that it believed worthy of being initiates; it demanded very pure morals, a penetrating mind, formidable erudition, and an advanced age, etc. Most of those men who penetrated it [the esoteric tradition] often retreated from it with a fearful respect. [The prohibition against entering the PaRDeS (the “paradise” or “orchard” of the esoteric tradition)] is repeated many times in the Talmud. In Lefin’s view, Moses Maimonides was the next link in the great chain of tradition after the Talmud. But the Maimonides he presented to his readers was not the codifier of the Mishneh torah; rather, he was the philosopher of The Guide of the Perplexed. Lefin argued that Maimonides understood correctly that metaphysics was equivalent to the esoteric tradition of the Talmud. Using his great intelligence, the philosopher was able to develop systematic, concrete and “reasonable” foundations for most of the ceremonial law. Moving on to a discussion of the subsequent perversion of the true spirit of the Talmud, Lefin pointed to the philosophic sectarians of the post-Maimonidean period who “took infinitely more from Greek scholars than from Jewish scholars, started to allegorize everything, denied the resurrection of the dead, and ended up becoming atheists.”

94 Ibid., 418, footnote 1.
95 Ibid., 419, footnote 2. b. Hagigah 14b relates the story of four men (Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Aher, and R. Akiba) who entered a pardes (orchard), of which only one, R. Akiba, left unharmed. By the thirteenth century, the Talmudic narrative and the word pardes had been transformed into an acronym denoting four methods of Torah exegesis: P (peshat, literal or plain sense), R (remez, allusive), D (derash, homiletic) and S (sod, esoteric). See Gershom G. Scholem, On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 55.
96 [Lefin], “Essai d’un plan de réforme,” 410. In his own lifetime, Maimonides was compelled to defend his belief in resurrection of the dead. See his “The Essay on Resurrection” in Moses Maimonides, Crisis and Leadership: The Epistles of Maimonides (ed. David Hartman and
made Maimonides’s philosophic work — and the interest in non-Jewish sciences — suspect among the Jewish community as a whole. In Lefin’s view, the rejection of philosophy and of non-Jewish learning proved disastrous to the course of Polish Jewish history. Vulnerable in the wake of the Maimonidean controversy, the Jews found comfort and refuge in the “pious ignorance” of Talmudic casuistry and mysticism. These religious streams — excessive Talmudism and foolish mysticism — were the extreme foils to Lefin’s conception of a moderate, rational Talmudic Judaism purged of its kabbalistic element. Both extremist tendencies resulted in a kind of collective irrationality. Decrying Polish Jewry’s overzealous attention to the minutiae of the ceremonial law and its belief in the miraculous at the expense of “rational” behavior, Lefin wrote:

The most corrupt men, who nonetheless perform many ceremonial laws with fervor, pass for just and honest [men], whereas men with integrity are regarded as impious if they fail [to fulfill the ceremonial law] one time. [For example,] during a winter night, two young men were thrown into a granary filled with hay. The house caught on fire, the wind blew very severely and terribly, and [these young men] battled the fire and were engulfed in flames and suffocating smoke for a long time . . . until they saved the village from certain destruction. These two generous young men were forgotten the next day, during which time someone was discovered who piously took a secret bath in cold water and whose devotion is believed to have saved the city.97

Lefin placed the greater part of the blame for the irrationality of his brethren on the influence of the mystical tradition, which he believed had been revitalized with the appearance of the kabbalistic text, the Zohar, and had spawned the Hasidic movement of his own day. He argued that the staunch conservatism and low cultural level of Polish Jewry was due to the hegemony of misguided kabbalistic influence. Lefin did not mince words when criticizing Hasidism to a non-Jewish audience, believing that Polish reformers shared his contempt for mysticism.98 "Essai d’un plan de réforme" derided Hasidic enthusiasm and its embrace of simple faith and mocked its

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97 To that end, Lefin recommended in the second part of "Essai d’un plan de réforme" that the National Commission of Education should confer a prize upon the individual who wrote the best practical treatise critiquing mystical writings, including the Zohar, the Zend a vesta (hymns from Zarathustra) and the works of Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), in order to expose their irrationality, thus drawing their “credulous readers away from these works.” Such critical works would, in Lefin’s words, “move the torch of reason away from the magical lantern of their imaginations.” See [Lefin], "Essai d’un plan de réforme," 417. For Lefin’s critique of the faculty of imagination, see Chapter Three.
Lefin disparaged the Hasidic preoccupation with miracles, but reserved his greatest contempt for the leaders of contemporary Hasidism (the zaddikim), and their aura of putative sanctity. Citing Jean La Bruyère, the French essayist whose *Les Dialogues Sur Le Quietism* had attacked religious enthusiasm and extreme pietism, Lefin wrote:

> They [the Hasidim] believe prophecy and donation (*le don*) effect miracles, which they attribute to the leaders of their sect as an article of faith. “By virtue of his assuring that he has seen a marvel, a man of the people falsely persuades others that he has seen a marvel,” [says] La Bruyère. It is actually [considered] a meritorious deed [among their disciples] if one contributes to their [*les chefs de leur secte*] amusement in such a manner as to give them the right disposition in which to receive inspiration from [their] higher knowledge, or at least if one takes an interest in praising them as much as is possible to ensure their reputation. . . . Making the elaboration of their fame a religious duty and belief in them, above all, an article of faith, is an ingenious tactic that serves the great Lamas of this sect. . . . This is why they [the zaddikim] pretend to serve their proselytes and are enriched considerably by their donations. Their faithful disciples have frequent occasions to convince themselves of their leaders’ great merit by contemplating their numerous courts comprised of rich pilgrims who visit them from many places, as well as by the elegance of their tables laden with silver dishes and with the most exquisite foods. Just as these great men know how to ennoble themselves through these earthly pleasures, they are believed to obtain the remission of sins more surely than the ancient laws that command tears and lamentations.

The charismatic authority of the zaddikim was, Lefin believed, suspect. He was particularly enraged by their claim to an exclusive, even prophetic, relationship with God. Recoiling from what he believed was Hasidic contempt for traditional rabbinic Jews, Lefin wrote:

> These ones [the zaddikim] care even less in their allocation of souls [than Shimon bar Yochai did]. They regard the knowledge of ceremonies, which motivated the Rabbis, as a base measure worthy of a peasant. Instead, the real proprietors of the souls [i.e. the zaddikim], [who have] secret qualities and are above ordinary conceptions, have the good fortune to be regarded as God’s confidantes. . . . The true souls consist of a web of instantaneous feelings of truth and exalted senses, which is infinitely above the twaddle, called investigations and reasons of the other, false souls. . . . [They believe that] these

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100. The rejection of Hasidic miracles, particularly of miraculous births, became an important feature in the later Galician and Russian Haskalahs. Benjamin Rvilin’s *taqanah* (communal edict) in Szklów from 1787, which concluded that miracles were a contradiction to natural science, was an exceptional early example of a mitnaggedic critique of Hasidic miracles. See Fishman, *Russia’s First Modern Jews*, 120–21.


102. Earlier in the *Essai* Lefin asserted that Shimon bar Yochai, the ancient rabbinic figure to whom the *Zohar* is traditionally attributed, had denied a soul to non-Jews. See [Lefin], “Essai d’un plan de réforme,” 411.
noble souls [the zaddikim], like aspects of the divine essence, have an active influence on everything that is intended by creation. In their opinion, even miracles, which they perform daily, are but a natural consequence of the “association of their ideas.”

Compared to the zaddikim, whose claims to leadership and power were based solely on false charisma and manipulation of the Jewish public, particularly of its youth, the Talmudic casuistry belabored by Poland’s rabbinic elite should be, in Lefin’s view, “deeply blessed.” Lefin’s comment illustrates that though East European maskilim like himself criticized what they believed to be the insular, or “baroque,” tradition of early modern Polish Jewry, they did not reject the rabbinic culture of Ashkenaz in its entirety. Lefin’s conception of the Jewish Enlightenment, as well as that of his moderate disciples, strove to restore the past glory of Polish Jewry, which had been ossified by its exclusive intellectual engagement with commentary on the Talmud, and was being further subverted by Hasidism.

For Lefin, who believed not only in the permissibility of studying Gentile sciences, but also in their efficacy in renewing Jewish faith, one of the most deplorable aspects of contemporary Hasidism was its scorn for non-Jews and non-Jewish knowledge. In his reading of Jewish history, Lefin argued that the suspicion of philosophy after the Maimonidean controversy had caused the Jewish community to reject all Gentile knowledge as heresy and to find refuge in the Zoharic view that no non-Jew deserved to be called a human being. The cultivation on the part of the Hasidim of a sense of superiority and exclusivity through their rejection of non-Jewish learning struck Lefin as a contradiction of the universalism inherent in creation itself. He wrote: “Man is particularly beloved by God. God created him after his divine image. He created all of mankind from Adam alone so that no one would derive from a particular origin, etc.”

103 Here Lefin is criticizing the Hasidic belief in the theurgic power of the zaddik, whose actions in the mundane world, his followers believed, were capable of influencing the supernal realm. The zaddik’s ability to cleave to the Godhead enabled him to stimulate the Divine’s efflux upon his followers. See Ada Rapoport-Albert, “God and the Zaddik as the Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship,” in Essential Papers on Hasidism (ed. Gershon David Hundert; New York: New York University Press, 1991), 299–329. On theurgy, see Moshe Idel, Kabbalah: New Perspectives (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988).

104 Lefin, “Essai d’un plan de réforme,” 411–12. The phrase “association of ideas” will be discussed in Chapter Three.

105 Ibid., 412.

106 The Zoharic belief in the divine origin of the human soul implicitly excluded Gentiles as recipients of the Godhead’s emanation. The Zohar stated that non-Jews only had a nefesh hayyah (a temporal, animal soul) and not a neshamah, a supernal soul. On the theory of the soul in the Zohar, see Isaiah Tishby, ed., The Wisdom of the Zohar (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), 677–807, particularly 725, 727.

107 Lefin, “Essai d’un plan de réforme,” 415. Lefin is freely interpreting the phrase niva adam yehudi (man [Adam] was created alone) that appears in m. Sanhedrin 4:5, t. Sanhedrin.
The second half of *Essai d’un plan de réforme* lay the foundation for Lefin’s detailed reform proposals, which focused on the creation of a state-appointed rabbinate, the establishment of a Polish Normal School, and the cultivation of literary works that would expose the folly of Hasidism. The most characteristic feature of Lefin’s proposals is their emphasis on moderation and the use of positive incentives rather than external compulsion for change. Lefin wrote, “In general, one needs, as much as possible, to use attractive resorts for engaging the people in the observation of the [state’s] law. . . . It is appropriate to blend the repugnant, but salutary, medications furtively with the exquisite tidbits for it [the Jewish people].”

Lefin’s commitment to moderation was both ideological and tactical. In fact, the theme of moderating between two extremes was a leitmotif of all of Lefin’s work — it appears most starkly in his *Sefer heskhon hanefesh* (*Moral Accounting*, 1808) — and is reiterated in the *Essai d’un plan de réforme* to propose specific ways through which to redirect the Polish Jewish community away from the poles of mysticism and rote Talmudic casuistry toward the rational rabbinic path paved by Maimonides. Yet, Lefin also penned his proposals with tactical considerations in mind. He was fully aware that the traditional Polish Jewish community absorbed by the Habsburgs after the first partition had responded with fear and suspicion to Joseph II’s decrees in the *Toleranzpatent*. Moreover, he distrusted the “well-intentioned” proposals of most Polish reformers. Lefin thus wrote the French pamphlet, emphasizing the centrality of religion for the Jewish community of Poland, as a means of urging the Polish authorities to refrain from interfering in internal Jewish affairs and to design reforms compatible with traditional Jewish rabbinic culture.

Lefin’s defense of communal autonomy was not only a response to Gentile intervention into internal Jewish life. It was also a strategy to protect the Jewish communal authority from the alternative form of Jewish leadership represented by the Hasidim. Throughout *Essai d’un plan de réforme*, Lefin emphasized the need to engage the traditional Polish-Jewish rabbinate in the

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8:4, and b. Sanhedrin 37a, “Why was man [Adam] created alone? So that the zaddikim would never say, ‘We are the descendants of a zaddik [to the exclusion of others].’” Emphasis is mine. Lefin defended rabbinic writings that used the word “man” to mean Jew, not Gentile, by arguing that such writings only applied to commandments that were obligatory for Jews alone. Joseph Perl mentioned Lefin’s opinion in one of the former’s unpublished writings on the Talmud. See Heb. 38.7075, “Notes to Joseph Perl’s Literary Work,” and the Joseph Perl Archive, JNULA, 4° 1153/72, 3b.


109 [Lefin], “*Essai d’un plan de réforme,*” 416.

struggle against Hasidism and considered it, despite its obvious failings, a necessary ally against the new mystical group. For example, a strong, traditional rabbinate supported by the state and secure in its power could even encourage productive work among the followers of the Hasidim by rewarding those who cultivated wheat for *matsah* (unleavened bread for Passover) and kosher hemp for clothes. This would have the added benefit of diversifying Jewish economic activity. In *Liqqutei kelalim*, he suggested that the Jewish community "spin, weave, and prepare its clothes from the products of Jewish craftsmen, so that the people will see that these crafts sustain the artisans."\(^{112}\)

While Lefin championed moderate reform of the Jewish community, the authority he wished to confer upon the state-appointed rabbinate was immoderate, even authoritarian. Lefin believed the state-appointed rabbinate should exercise complete control in the realm of culture. He argued that the rabbinate should have the power to censor books; the primary goal of the state rabbis’ censorship campaign should be the suppression of the *Zohar* and all its commentaries. This rabbinate should also distribute copies of Jacob Emden’s *Mitpahat sefarim* (*Covering of the Scrolls of the Law*), which challenged the antiquity of the *Zohar*, and issue a new edition of *The Guide of the Perplexed* that could “be understood by the simplest people.”\(^{113}\) Lefin also suggested that the National Education Commission should establish a Jewish Normal School in Warsaw, in which Polish would be the language of instruction, and whose graduates would be allowed — to the exclusion of all others — to receive approbations from the state-rabbinate for their publications. The texts at this school would include Polish translations of Scripture, which, he argued, would enable Polish Jews to appreciate the “sublime poetry of their ancestors that they have [until now] never understood.”\(^{114}\) Reading Hebrew through Polish would force the Jewish community to admit that they owed the discovery of the beauty of their own religious poetry to a non-Jewish language, challenging the Hasidic rejection of non-Jewish culture as inherently heretical. Last, Lefin proposed that satires and comedies be written about the Hasidim to expose the foolishness of their commentaries.

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advice which he later followed by writing *Making Wise the Simple* (*Mahkimat peti*) and *The First Hasid* (*Der erschter khosed*), two anti-Hasidic satires that are no longer extant. He hoped that these critical works of parody would challenge the Hasidim to defend themselves in writing, which, in turn, would spur the creation of "reasonable and eloquent writings, which the nation absolutely lacks."  

Lefin had a clear sense of audience in the *Essai d’un plan de réforme*. According to his comments in "Teshuvah," the deputies of the National Education Commission — here Czartoryski’s hand can be felt — urged Lefin to write the pamphlet anonymously and in such a manner as to disguise its Jewish provenance. Lefin continues to explain that he crafted the *Essai d’un plan de réforme* to appear as neutral as possible, with no special pleading on behalf of the Jews. He learned this strategy, he explains, from a Talmudic story in *b. Me’ilah*. The Talmud describes the case of a certain Reuben, the son of Istroboli, who disguised himself as a Roman in order to thwart three anti-Jewish decrees (i.e., violating the Sabbath, proscribing circumcision, and compelling transgression of the laws governing sexual relations). The Romanized Reuben, no longer recognized as a Jew, posed three carefully constructed questions to his antagonistic audience so that each response would require the lifting of the respective hostile edict. The ruse worked until Reuben was unmasked, relates the Talmud, and the Romans “came to know that he was a Jew, and [the decrees] were reinstated.” Lefin’s literary tactics — penning it in French, the cultured language of the Polish magnate class, and publishing it anonymously — he hoped, would allow its “objective” admission into the debate over the Jews. If the reformers discussing the future of the Jews suspected its Jewish source, Lefin reasoned, they would in all likelihood dismiss its contents as particularistic and reject the *Essai d’un plan de réforme*’s claims of the reasonableness of Judaism and its compatibility with the modern state.

Lefin’s tactics in writing the *Essai d’un plan de réforme* in French and without personal attribution underscores the polemical nature of the debates over the Jews at the Four-Year *Sejm*. He clearly felt that conscious dissimulation was necessary to defend traditional Ashkenazic Jewish culture, particularly

115 Ibid., 415.
116 Anonymity was also a feature of Lefin’s Yiddish translation of Proverbs (Lemberg, 1814) and of an anonymous anti-Hasidic Yiddish comedy, *Di genarte velt* (*The Duped World*), which probably appeared in the second decade of the nineteenth century and relied on Yiddish translations of Proverbs that are very close to those innovated by Lefin. Meir Wiener believed that Lefin himself had written the book. See Meir Wiener, *Tsva der geschikte fun der yidisher literatur in nayntsnt yorhundert* (Kiev, 1940), 38.
117 The Joseph Perl Archive, JNULA, 4° 1153/72, 3a.
118 *b. Me’ilah* 17a.
the Talmud. As he relates in “Teshuvah,” Lefin deliberately cited contemporar
cy non-Jewish political and social theorists in the Essai d’un plan de réforme
to bolster the pamphlet’s authority and “objectivity.” Reaching eastward, far
outside standard Jewish defenses of the Talmud, Lefin cited the maxims of
Confucius in defense of ceremonial law, “You should never dispense with
that which the ceremonial prescribes . . . however minute, however incon-
venient and unnecessary they appear to you.”119 He even went so far as to
quote great writers “who are haters of Israel.”120 On the last page of the essay,
directly below the citation from Confucius, Lefin cited Voltaire, arguably the
eighteenth century’s most towering intellectual figure and a man known by
his contemporaries, including the maskilim, as a foe of the Jews.121 The title
of Lefin’s Essai d’un plan de réforme included the “redressing of Jewish mo-
rals,” a subtle allusion, perhaps, to Voltaire’s own Essai sur les Moeurs (Essay on
Morals), in which the French philosophe criticized alleged Jewish greed,
misanthropy, and fanaticism. Lefin, of course, repudiated the Voltairean
belief in the fundamental incompatibility of Judaism and the modern state,
but, in keeping with the pamphlet’s artful dissimulation, allowed a non-
Jewish writer to articulate his point of view. Bookending the Essai d’un plan de
réforme, and earning pride of place on its front cover, was a citation from
Montesquieu, the eighteenth-century French enlightener perceived both as a
moderate voice within the chorus of the Enlightenment and as Voltaire’s
ideological opposite on the Jewish question.122 Essai d’un plan de réforme
boldly defends religion by citing Montesquieu’s most famous work, De l’Esprit
des Lois (The Spirit of Laws), on its frontispiece, “One must pay great attention
to the disputes of theologians, but it is necessary to conceal it [that atten-
tion] as much as possible. . . . Religion is always the best guarantee that one
can have of men’s morals.” In the notes that follow the body of the Essai d’un
plan de réforme, Lefin quoted Montesquieu again in order to inveigh against
the use of legislation as a means to transform culture. The example he cited,
Montesquieu’s well-known censure of Tsar Peter I’s 1698 edict requiring the
Muscovites to shorten their beards and clothing, was carefully chosen, a

119 [Lefin], “Essai d’un plan de réforme,” 417.
120 The Joseph Perl Archive, JNULA, 4° 1153/72, 3a.
121 On Voltaire’s attitudes toward the Jews, see Hertzberg, The French Enlightenment and the
Jews, 10, 286–87, 290, 297 and Frank E. Manuel, The Broken Staff: Judaism through Christian
Eyes (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 193–201. On Voltaire as the blem-
ish in the image of the Revolution for enlightened Jews who advocated political emancipa-
tion, see Shmuel Feiner, “‘The Rebellion of the French’ and ‘The Freedom of the Jews’: The
French Revolution in the Image of the Past of the East European Jewish Enlightenment,” in
122 On Montesquieu’s moderation in general, see Henry F. May, The Enlightenment in
America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 40; on his moderation regarding the
barely veiled allusion to Kolhatj’s decree ordering Jewish men to shave their beards.123 While Lefin cited Voltaire as part of a strategy to disguise his authorship of the Essai d’un plan de réforme, his use of Montesquieu revealed his true beliefs about reforming the Jewish community of Poland. If the educational changes initiated by the National Education Commission were implemented with respect for traditional rabbinic Judaism, then the “Jewish nation will fulfill its obligation or, rather, effect its wellbeing — that it has yet to understand — on its own.”124 A moderate plan of reform based on “attractive resorts,” not on compulsion, would be the only means to assure the successful transformation of the Jews and their integration into a modern Polish state.

In all of his writings, Lefin underscored his commitment to a moderate process of change initiated internally by the Jewish community by maintaining the importance of the kahal and traditional rabbinic prerogative against suggestions by Polish reformers and other maskilim for their abolition. Yet, the decentralized political situation of pre-partition Poland, in which the nobility — particularly the magnate aristocrats — held enormous political and economic power, created a two-tiered (and competitive) system of political authority for Poland’s Jews. Thus, when Lefin argued for the protection of the kahal, he was doing so against the combined assault of the king, the national Sejm, and the Sejm’s representatives, whose political authority extended to royal (free) towns. But the relationship of the Jewish community in private noble towns to “their” lords was far less autonomous than Lefin’s words to the Sejm suggest. His proposals for the reform of the Jewish community, both in Liqqutei kelalim and in the later work, Entwurf eines Rabinersystems, an unpublished German manuscript on the rationalization of the rabbinate, reflect a much more dependent, symbiotic relationship with the magnate class. Lefin wrote both Liqqutei kelalim and Entwurf eines Rabinersystems in the general context of that relationship and within the particular parameters of his personal bond with Czartoryski.

In the private towns of the Polish nobility, both the kahal and the Christian municipality were subject to the magnate, who had the authority to review their respective operating budgets and courts.125 Thus, the “autonomous” Jewish courts in the estates of the Czartoryskis were an integral part of the owner’s court system. Even criminal matters and appeals between Jews were directed to his court.126 While the Jewish kahal represented autonomy

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123 [Lefin], “Essai d’un plan de réforme,” 420.
124 Ibid., 414. Emphasis in the original.
126 Rosman, The Lords’ Jews, 56.
and the abiding power of Jewish tradition for the Jews, it merely served as a convenient institution for the collection of taxes, the preservation of order, and the administration of one group of subjects for the magnate. Because the magnate class generally viewed the Sejm-imposed Jewish head tax as siphoning off the limited resources of the Jewish community living under its jurisdiction, they tried, as much as they could, to reduce the kahal-imposed taxes on their Jewish subjects. The magnates, therefore, viewed the kahal as a competitor for their personal authority and strove to have absolute control over it. The lord either intervened directly and dictated kahal affairs or rendered the kahal powerless by bypassing its authority and dealing instead with individual Jews. Typically, the non-Jewish authority confirmed kahal election results and supervised Jewish communal authorities.\footnote{127}{Ibid., 70, 188, and 191.}

Even the venerable institution of the communal rabbi was dependent upon and subject to the magnate’s authority. The kahal rabbi fulfilled a number of functions: adjudicating Jewish law, chairing the rabbinical court, officiating at weddings and divorces, and providing religious instruction to the community in the form of sermons and classes. He was on the kahal payroll, but augmented his earnings through gifts and fees charged for specific functions. Although the privileges extended to the Jews of Poland-Lithuania by the magnates included the right to select a rabbi, the nobles sought to control these appointments by turning the rabbinic office into an *arenda*, a lease held by the highest bidder. The individual who won the nobles’ *konsens* (rabbinic license) was granted the rabbinic office and the right to accept the kahal’s salary and the additional gifts and commissions. In Moshe Rosman’s words, “By the eighteenth century . . . the rabbi was not a salaried employee of the *kehilla*, who owed them his livelihood and hence his loyalty. He was a lessee whose lease was the magnate’s to give and to enforce.”\footnote{128}{Ibid., 201 and Teller, “The Legal Status of the Jews,” 57–59.}

The dependence of the kahal rabbi on the authority of the magnate is starkly evident throughout *Liqqutei kelalim* and *Entwurf eines Rabinersystems*. In *Liqqutei kelalim*, Lefin repeatedly refers to the “Prince” and his support for reform of the Jewish community.\footnote{129}{Lefin, *Liqqutei kelalim*, in Gelber, “Mendel Lefin of Satanów’s Proposals,” 293–95 and 297–300.} For example, if an accused party wanted to appeal the adjudication of the Jewish court, his only recourse should be to appeal to the state rabbi, whose authority derived from the “Prince’s [Czartoryski’s]” appointment. Final arbitration of such a dispute, therefore, rested with a rabbinical figure both part of but separate from the community. Furthermore, Lefin wrote: “The kahal’s register (*pinqas*) must be brought to
the “Prince’s court, may His Honor be blessed, once a year and read in its entirety there. Any legitimate and equitable suggestions made by the Prince, may His Honor be blessed, should be appended and affixed to the register, which will be authorized by the court’s seal, as a law in perpetuity.”130

In *Liqqutei kelalim*, Lefin made suggestions for the reform of the kahal following extensive analysis of the causes of its corruption, such as abuse in the election of communal representatives, corruption in the administration of the public treasury, and concentration of economic life in trade and leasing. Writing in Hebrew, Lefin did not restrain his criticism, which was pointed, even bitter. Many of his words echoed those of non-Jewish critics. But, unlike Polish reformers who advocated abolition of the kahal, Lefin sought to maintain and reform Jewish communal autonomy. Key for Lefin was the cultivation of a modern, non-Hasidic rabbinate whose affective and spiritual authority derived from the Jewish community, but whose communal power derived from the Gentile rulers.

Lefin’s view of the power that should be bestowed upon this state-rabbinate underscored the specific East European context of his proposals. Unlike many of his maskilic peers in Berlin, Lefin did not advocate the disbanding of the Jewish community’s medieval corporate status as part of a reform program predicated on the assumption of all local prerogatives by the centralized absolutist state in its monopoly on power. Rather, he believed the rabbinate, reformed and appointed by the state, should retain its power to excommunicate. In *Liqqutei kelalim*, Lefin recalled a disagreement he had had with Moses Mendelssohn over the appropriate degree of the non-Jewish authorities’ involvement in the internal life of the Jewish community.131 Mendelssohn’s uncompromising commitment to individual moral, ethical, and religious autonomy led him to the conclusion that only total civic freedom, which allowed for the untrammeled expression of religious conviction, could liberate the individual. Matters of conscience had to be separated from the state, and from any form of compulsion, in order for religion to retain its ideal purity. In contrast to Christian Wilhelm Dohm, who had argued in favor of the retention of Jewish courts and their powers, Mendelssohn believed Jews should be evaluated by Jewish law, but in the courts of the

130 Ibid., 292. Emphasis in the original.
131 Lefin wrote, “I also discussed this matter with the sage, R. Moses from Dessau [Mendelssohn], and except for one thing that annoyed him greatly, meaning, that according to him the general burden of this business should be placed upon the Ruler, may His Honor be blessed, he did not make any suggestions, except regarding some small details in a general way. But I do not want to be involved with them [the non-Jewish authorities], except to be free to publish publications and good advice, for if not, I must worry lest jealousy and hatred, which spoils everything and destroys all benefit for the Jews, God forbid, rise up against me.” See ibid., 287. Emphasis in the original.
state, and he opposed the writ of excommunication (herem) on the grounds that true religious beliefs could not be coerced. Although Mendelssohn himself rejected the equation that full Jewish participation in European society was contingent upon the community’s regeneration, he supported the state-building efforts of enlightened absolutism. He therefore urged the disbanding of the traditional Jewish communal municipality and dissolution of the rabbinic prerogative of excommunication. Lefin did not. Because the full political emancipation of the Jews, as opposed to the alleviation of their civic status, was never on the agenda of the Polish reformers, Lefin never felt pressured to argue for the political dismemberment of Jewish communal autonomy as a prerequisite to the granting of Jewish rights. The quid pro quo, implicit in so many of the exchanges on the emancipation of the Jews of Prussia, was absent in Lefin’s writings.

Suspicious of the intentions of Polish reformers advocating dissolution of the kahal, Lefin nonetheless readily conceded that the kahal was riddled with corruption and mismanagement, which had led to Jewish communal indebtedness and to a debasement of Jewish morality. Discussing the inner decay of the Polish-Jewish community in medical terms, Lefin began with a plea for moderation:

An experienced physician who wishes to supervise the care of old wounds that have been festering in a sick body for a long time will be extremely circumspect and reluctant to use aggressive medications to close the wounds hastily . . . So, too, when the leader of the community needs to make fences and restrictions before the breaches of the age, he should be forbidden to make use of punitive edicts. On the contrary, he should guide [the community] by very gentle reforms, [gradually] persuading it to adhere to them.

Echoing the comment in “Teshuvah” that the non-Jewish authorities did not know what was ultimately beneficial for the Jewish community, Lefin negatively compared the techniques of “integration” of medieval Christian Spain to the enlightened agenda of Emperor Joseph II:

The kings of Spain thought of themselves as just and righteous, [believing] their abundant humility filled them with mercy. They tortured Israel grievously in order to admit them [the Jews] — through forced conversion — into the Christian paradise. Even Emperor Joseph II should be distrusted; he wanted to subjugate the Jews and force them to become soldiers for his own benefit.

Lefin’s emphasis on moderate solutions, however, did not prevent him from vigorously attacking the causes of corruption and decadence that he believed

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134 Ibid., 287.
had weakened the Jewish community. The first part of *Liqqutei kehalim* excoriates kahal elections and the management of the public treasury. In Lefin’s view, the election process was inherently biased in favor of the upper classes, who controlled the candidate selection process and engaged in nepotism. Other forms of corruption included buying influence and increasing local taxes to pander to the Gentile authorities.135 The deficiencies in the management of the public treasury included haste, haphazardness, and arbitrariness, in short, irrationality. In lieu of a careful accounting of revenues and expenditures, vague estimates fell prey to intimidation and nepotism, and led to an unfair allocation of the taxes necessary for running communal institutions. This internal corruption caused numerous disputes and, in turn, exacerbated existing class divisions within the Jewish community, in which the poor fell victim to the whims of the wealthy.136

Lefin outlined several ways to root out corruption in the systems of communal representation and taxation. The rationalization (i.e. the organization, standardization, and formalization) of the process of legislating *taqkanot* (communal edicts), of raising money, and of distributing funds from the communal treasury, Lefin believed, would result in greater accountability of communal representatives, greater representation in the communal institutions, and a more upright way of life among his brethren. Nodding toward the idealized vision of Lithuanian Jewry held by many maskilim, with the towering intellect of the ga’on of Vilna at its helm, Lefin suggested that all reforms of the Polish-Jewish kehillot be based on the internal edicts “of Vilna and Grodno, those [communities] renowned for reason and justice.”137

In order to preserve the Jewish community’s internal autonomy, which protected its cultural integrity, Lefin insisted upon Jewish selection of its communal supervisors with Gentile oversight of the process. The first step for improving the accountability of the communal representatives in their adjudication of public needs, Lefin concluded, was the creation of a permanent communal register, “a special book [in which] all of the details of the public events, appointments, decisions, accounts, taxes [would be enumerated] . . . [This record] will show the later generations how their ancestors acquitted themselves in every difficult matter; even the lists of minor taxes

137 Ibid., 287 and 292. Vilna, the capital city of Lithuania, was the home to the ga’on, Elijah, around whom the rabbinite struggle against Hasidism in the eighteenth century centered. See Immanuel Etkes, “The Vilna Gaon and the Haskalah: Image and Reality,” in *Penaqim betoldot hahevrah hayehudit bymeı̂n habeinayim uva’et kahadashah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1980), 192–217.
for immediate needs will be listed and saved in the public book.\textsuperscript{138} Apparently, communal \textit{pinqasim} had not been adequate in preventing corruption.

Second, the group of communal representatives, to be called the “committee,” would meet at least once a week to supervise the needs of the community. Their meetings would take place in a special, closed chamber, opened only for the purpose of their meetings, and in which “the public account registers and account books would be stored.” Before a representative could enter the inner sanctum of the committee’s chamber he would have to take two oaths, “an oath of public trust” that he would not be biased [in his adjudication of law] and “an oath of secrecy” that he would not disclose any information about the process taking place inside the chamber. In contrast to what Lefin perceived to be the raucous and chaotic manner in which communal reforms of the past had been legislated, the atmosphere in the committee’s chamber would be one of “permanent calm and quiet.” He wrote: “It should be forbidden to speak of impertinent matters or engage in any individual or secret discussions. If someone transgresses this law, the guards at the door will drag him outside in shame, in addition to [the other representatives’ imposing] a financial fine toward the charitable coffer [upon him].”\textsuperscript{139}

Third, although the public was forbidden entry into the committee’s chamber, Lefin hoped to democratize the running of the Jewish community by making at least a symbolic overture to public participation in the process. The closed committee chamber, therefore, would have one small window through which “any common man” could “extend his request on a letter.” This window would be the avenue of communication between the Jewish public and their representatives during the discussion, voting, and signing into law of the reforms. Moreover, “one whose suggestion letter was accepted in the public register three times, even if he was not from among the nominees [to the committee from his occupational group, would be] nominated immediately and welcomed into the committee without hesitation,” provided he was at least twenty-five years old and literate. Lefin stressed the importance of formalizing and standardizing this procedure. After a fixed amount of time for discussion, a secret vote would be taken on color-coded ballots indicating support or rejection of the proposed measure. Majority rule would decide the outcome. Lefin hoped that secrecy, a careful counting of ballots, and a formal, collective oath taken by the representatives renouncing any prior predilections or commitments would guard against “guile and deceit.” The entire process would be transcribed into the public register by

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 291.
the speaker of the kahal, the law stamped into the book with the committee’s seal.\(^{140}\)

The second series of suggestions for reform in *Liqqutei kehalim* was devoted to reform of the management of the communal treasury. Lefin directed his comments to rooting out corruption in the kahal’s economic life by making the tax burden on all segments of the Jewish community more equitable. His comments were theoretical because the autonomous collection of taxes by the elders of the Jewish community had been annulled by the *Sejm* of 1764. The 1764 Parliament had “reformed” the structure of taxation of the Jewish community by swelling the obligatory head tax to two zlotys for both sexes (thereby limiting the discretion of the kahal elders who in the past had allotted the tax burden according to the various communities’ ability to pay) and forbidding the regular conventions of the Council of the Four Lands, the national, super-kahal of Poland-Lithuania.\(^{141}\) “If the collection of taxes were still transmitted to us,” wrote Lefin:

> Then we [would be] obligated to simplify it through any type of effort and strategy, in any case, because we [unlike the non-Jewish authorities] know the true economic status of our brethren. . . . When we find the poor oppressed due to [their requirement to] pay a large sum in one fell swoop, then we could exchange the head tax for the meat tax or for the tax on bread, [or] for the money required for wood, [and exchange] the household’s tax for the candle tax . . . without changing the government’s commands. In any case, we will have lightened the burden of our poor brethren and protected ourselves from the complaints and grumbling associated with these [burdensome taxes].\(^{142}\)

Taxation from within the community was necessary to protect against abuse by the Gentile authorities. An equitable allocation of taxes required, in Lefin’s view, a rationalization and standardization of the procedure. Ridding the process of the imposition of taxes for an unexpected need (i.e. the fortification of the walls of a synagogue or the creation of a new charity fund for the disabled poor) of the haste and arbitrariness that characterized the process in the past would place the new tax structure on a fair and just basis. Moreover, the need for the new taxes and their apportionment should be made public by the reformed administrative committee detailed above.\(^{143}\)

As he had suggested in the *Essai d’un plan de réforme*, Lefin extended the need for rationalization and standardization to the rabbinate. He suggested that the provincial rabbis keep meticulous records of their revenues (e.g. from writing writs of divorce) and expenses that would be evaluated collectively with the state rabbinate every three years. As individuals they would be

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\(^{140}\) Ibid., 291–92.


\(^{143}\) Ibid., 294.
taxed appropriately and without bias, and any transgressor would be fined accordingly. Taking aim at those rabbis who might be disposed toward the Hasidic practice of having large meals with their disciples in exchange for \textit{pidyonot} (donations), Lefin suggested that “every kind of expenditure . . . that is not for the general good should be cancelled and all group meals and feasts on public disbursements should be forbidden.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 295. Emphasis in the original.}

The dependent nature of Jewish communal authority is even more starkly evident in \textit{Entwurf eines Rabinersystems}, which Lefin bestowed upon Czartoryski as a parting gift on April 4, 1794, when the prince left Sieniawa to fight in the Kościuszko Insurrection, the Commonwealth’s last stand against final dismemberment. Lefin penned \textit{Entwurf eines Rabinersystems} at the beginning of the rebellion, hoping it would be successful, restore order to Poland, and allow Czartoryski to effect his reform plan. \textit{Entwurf eines Rabinersystems} was Lefin’s direct appeal to Czartoryski for help in reforming the corrupt rabbinate on the magnate’s estates.

As he had concluded in \textit{Liqqutei kelalim}, Lefin explained to Czartoryski that the degenerate condition of the rabbinate was due to the election process, the uncertainty of rabbinic income, the sad state of the judiciary, the widespread custom of rabbinic gifts, and, implicitly, the competition for the \textit{konsens}, which led to corruption. Lefin believed Czartoryski’s appointment of “virtuous” chief rabbis, who would in turn select righteous subordinate rabbis, would be the first step toward reform of the rabbinate. He next reiterated his proposal for the creation of a formal rabbinic fees book to prevent arbitrary fluctuations in rabbinic salaries. All of the subordinate rabbis should be required to keep a careful book of receipts. Any transgression, such as a bribe or undocumented receipt, should be immediately punished by the chief rabbi.\footnote{Lefin, \textit{Entwurf eines Rabinersystems}, 30.} A formal procedure for meting out fines, as well as one for hearing appeals, should be a permanent part of the \textit{konsens}. The authority of the district rabbis, who should be men of unimpeachable integrity, would be strengthened by awarding them a ten-year license, and their rent (\textit{konsens}) to the Prince should be reduced for their travel expenses. The subordinate rabbis’ rent could be reduced if they proved their honesty by passing an examination.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 31.}

The suggestions in \textit{Entwurf eines Rabinersystems} presuppose a commonality of interests between Lefin and his Polish patron, but they also exhibit the same awareness of audience that characterized Lefin’s suggestions in the \textit{Essai d’un plan de réforme}. In \textit{Entwurf eines Rabinersystems}, Lefin assumed that Czartoryski would support his proposals for the rationalization of rabbinic
selection, the standardization of rabbinic salaries and fees, and the selection of district rabbis. Why? Lefin knew that as men of the Enlightenment, both he and Czartoryski shared a commitment toward rationalizing state and estate institutions. Second, Lefin believed Czartoryski could not but accept suggestions that would make life on his estates more orderly, and a standardization of rabbinic fees would ensure that the magnate receive as high a fee for the rabbinic konsens as he could. Cleaning the rabbinic house and resolving a source of internal Jewish communal discord could only be in Czartoryski’s interest, and Lefin cleverly addressed those concerns in the first part of Entwurf eines Rabinersystems.

Yet Lefin’s preoccupation with Hasidism and his profound distrust of the movement remained central to all of his writings, including these specific proposals for reform. Assuming that enlightened members of the Polish magnate class such as Czartoryski shared his negative view of mysticism, Lefin used Entwurf eines Rabinersystems to advance his anti-Hasidic agenda, but only in a footnote at the end of the pamphlet. Lefin not only made specific suggestions to Czartoryski about individuals suitable for the position of district rabbi, but also urged the prince to empower his administrator, Tomasz Bernatowicz, to support the new rabbis against the Hasidim:

I know of a small number of competent district rabbis, such as Rabbi Beerish Rapoport, the former Międzybóz rabbi, and also the current Klewań and Międzyrzec rabbi. The first [Rapoport] is to be particularly recommended on account of his mature age, his general valued moral conduct, and his venerable origin [i.e. his yikhes, rabbinic lineage]. In addition, his considerable assets of several 1000 # [a kind of currency] can guarantee his incorruptibility in the future. Meanwhile, Sir von Bernatowicz’s masterful skill will be required to protect Rabbi Rapoport against the settled Międzybóz nest of zealots, particularly against their cunning general.147

This footnote from Entwurf eines Rabinersystems reveals that Lefin’s choice of district rabbi had to be an individual with irreproachable qualities: impeccable rabbinic lineage, authority and experience, maturity, financial independence, and, most importantly, assured anti-Hasidic leanings. Rabbi [Dov] Beerish Rapoport (1737–1803), a scion of one of the great Polish-Jewish rabbinic families, was a fitting choice. Dov Beerish’s paternal grandfather was none other than Hayim ha-Cohen Rapoport, whose stand against the Frankists earned him an enduring name in later maskilic polemics against Hasidism because of the ideational connection maskilim drew linking Sabbatianism, Frankism, and Hasidism.148 His son, Aryeh Leibush Rapoport (1720–1759), was head of the yeshivah of Lwów, but died early, leaving two sons,

147 Ibid., 32.
148 See [Joseph Perl], Bohen tsaddiq (Prague, 1838), 113 and Weres, Haskalah veshabta’at, 106.
Moshe Simha, who became head of the rabbinical courts in Bolechów and Jericzów, and Dov Beerish.

In 1754, Dov Beerish Rapoport married Miriam, the granddaughter of Jacob Emden, the noted anti-Sabbatian polemicist. In 1771, Rapoport became head of the rabbinical court in Międzybóz and Lefin undoubtedly became acquainted with him from the time he spent living in the Czartoryski castle there. The two men later participated in a meeting held in Berdyczów in 1809, in response to the Tsar’s order expelling the Jews from Russian villages. Lefin hoped that a rabbi of the character of Dov Beerish Rapoport supported by the Prince’s administrator would be a match for the “cunning general” of the Międzybóz Hasidim, who could be none other than Barukh of Międzybóz (Medzibozh), the grandson of the Besht and a central figure in Podolian and Volhynian Hasidism between 1780 and 1811. Barukh was known for his awe inspiring and arrogant bearing by Hasidim and anti-Hasidim alike.

The footnote also demonstrates, albeit obliquely, Lefin’s belief that Hasidism, particularly the leadership of the zaddik, whose position of authority rested on the support of his followers and not upon his being awarded the konsens by the Polish lord, posed a threat to Czartoryski’s control of the Jews on his lands. Lefin hoped that by appealing to Czartoryski’s interest in maintaining the magnates’ control of the traditional rabbinate he had found a strong ally in his maskilic battle with the Hasidim. As he had articulated in “Teshuvah,” Lefin believed that the Hasidim welcomed the efforts of those Polish reformers who wanted to weaken the traditional rabbinate: “Thus they [the Polish reformers] really wanted to annul the power of excommunication . . . (and the sectarians already rejoiced about this and agreed with this opinion wholeheartedly).” Lefin’s comments in the Essai d’un plan de réforme and Entwurf eines Rabinersystems showed how defensive and defenseless the traditional rabbinate had become by the 1790s against the charismatic power of the Hasidim. In the Essai d’un plan de réforme, he stated that the Hasidim had “shattered” and “humiliated” the traditional rabbis who, “formerly intolerant, have become gentle as lambs and only hope for a refuge

150 Arthur Green, Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: The University of Alabama Press, 1979), 95–98 and Dubnow, Toldot hahasidut, 2:208–13 and 312, where Dubnow calls Barukh the “general of the army of Hasidim in Podolia” with regard to the latter’s conflict with Shneur Zalman of Lady (Liady) over the collection of money for Jews expelled from Russian villages in 1808.
151 The Joseph Perl Archive, JNULA, 4° 1153/72, 3a.
from the persecution of their adversaries [the Hasidim].”

Thus, while Moshe Rosman has argued that the magnates’ systematic intervention into the kahal may have been one of the forces that led to the disintegration of the Polish-Jewish community in the eighteenth century and also “indirectly encouraged the development of Hasidism, which was based on a charismatic leadership operating independently of the autonomy structures,” Lefin’s comments in Entwurf eines Rabínensystems suggest that certain members of the Jewish community hoped the magnates’ intervention into the kahal at the end of the eighteenth century would protect it from the onslaught of Hasidism.

Lefin believed that he and Czartoryski shared certain Enlightenment beliefs. But he no doubt understood that their motives for reforming the rabbinate derived from different sources. Lefin did not dwell on those differences. Rather, he closed the pamphlet with a flowery coda invoking their shared interests:

Your Highness, keep this document as a memento of Your worthy convictions (for never yet has a great man in Poland affirmed so truthfully, and with deeds, the right of mankind, as well as [the rights] of the Jewish nation): May the God of the oppressed increase Your noble pleasures — soon in this war, Your Highness — with a renewed brilliance of fortune and honor, as well as with the implementation of this plan in its place.

All of the works above illustrate that Lefin’s determination to reform the Jewish community in Poland was related to, but not dependent upon, the national debate in the Commonwealth on the Jewish question. Lefin continued to appeal to Czartoryski for help in reforming the rabbinate even after the disappointing declarations of the Constitution of May 3, 1791, which, hindered by the magnates’ unwillingness to challenge Poland’s feudal structure, offered no new solutions for the problems facing the Jews or the serfs. Despite its limitations, the Constitution was greeted with euphoria, even by the Jews, but had little chance to be implemented, as conservative magnates, known as the Targowica Confederates, banded together to oppose it. Adam

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152 [Lefin], “Essai d’un plan de réforme,” 413.
154 Lefin, Entwurf eines Rabínensystems, 36.
155 The Constitution’s declaration of principles established a hereditary monarchy, made the ministers of state accountable to the Sejm, abolished the liberum veto, and proclaimed all armed associations (the Confederaacies) illegal. It made no real steps toward the emancipation of the serfs. Stone, Polish Politics and National Reform, 1775–1788, 82.
Kazimierz and Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, both of whom had shown unequivocal support for Poland’s “gentle revolution” of 1791, a phrase coined by Kollataj to distinguish support for moderate change using Poland’s existing institutions from the violence of the French Revolution, refused to join the conservatives. Catherine II supported the Confederates and attacked Poland in late May 1791, quickly forcing the ill-equipped Polish army to surrender. The territorial concessions of the Second Partition were ratified with Russia on July 22, 1793 and with Prussia on September 26, 1793. The Kościuszko Insurrection, the Commonwealth’s last and most extensive military campaign in the era of the partitions, involved the participation of almost all strata within Polish society, including Jews and peasants. But the patriots were no match for the partitioning powers. The Polish troops capitulated on November 9, 1794, and the final agreements marking the end of independent Poland were completed from January to March 1797 with Russia and Austria gaining the most new territory. Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, who had played an important role in the military campaigns against the partitioning powers, left Poland for England, returning to his homeland later as intercessor with Alexander I, Catherine II’s successor to the Russian throne.

The political dismemberment of Poland, however, did not spell the end of the feudal estate structure of the Commonwealth. Although the Russian Tsar and not the Polish king now embodied the highest political authority in the lives of the Jews of the former southeastern lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the absolutist Russian Empire had as little interest as the Polish nobility had had in radically transforming the socio-economic structure of society. For the Jews of Russian Poland living in private, noble towns, Poland’s magnates still comprised the Gentile political authority under whose protection they lived. Lefin’s views of how to effect reform within the Jewish community did not shift dramatically with the new political reality. He continued to advocate moderate civic reform of his people through his relationship with the Czartoryskis and their involvement with the new Russian legislation on the Jewish question.

Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, Lefin, and the Russian Legislation of 1804

Historians interested in Mendel Lefin have generally viewed the Constitution of 3 May’s disappointing treatment of the Jewish question as the end of his involvement with the civic reform of the Jews. Yet, Lefin’s long-term

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156 Lukowski, Liberty’s Folly, 256–63.
relationship with the Czartoryskis allowed him indirect influence on the Russian Legislation of 1804, Tsar Alexander I’s attempt to cope with the huge Jewish population he had inherited with the partitions of Poland. Lefin endeavored, through Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, to infuse the legislation with the spirit of moderation that characterized his earlier reform writings (*Essai d’un plan de réforme, *Liqqutei kelalim, “Teshuvah,” and *Entwurf eines Rabinersystems*).

The treaty of January 26, 1797 marking the end of Poland’s existence required the former Polish nobility to choose one of the partitioning rulers as its sovereign. Catherine II had seized most of the Czartoryski’s estates in the third partition and threatened to sell them if Prince Adam Kazimierz would not swear loyalty to her. Because of his extensive holdings in the territories west of the Zbrucz River, now known as the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski had become an Austrian Field Marshal. Determined not to lose his eastern lands, Adam Kazimierz sent his two sons to St. Petersburg in 1795 with the hope of appeasing Catherine’s demands. The mission was successful: the trip ensured that the Czartoryski estates would not be expropriated, as were the lands of other Polish nobles in August 1795, and the Czartoryski sons became Gentlemen of the Russian Court. Although the much cherished liberty of the Polish szlachta, which was so intimately bound to national sovereignty, was smashed with the final partition, the nobility, including the Czartoryskis, retained much of their economic power and legal status until the mid-nineteenth century.

The ascension of Tsar Alexander I to the Russian throne in 1801, after the short reign of his unfortunate brother Paul, opened the possibility of introducing enlightened reforms into the Empire. The Jewish question became part of the general reform considerations because the third partition resulted in Russia’s acquisition of 320,000 Jewish souls from the former southeastern borderlands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Alexander I formed his “Unofficial Committee,” comprised of Nicholas Nivosiltsév, Count Paul Stroganov, Count Victor Kochubei, the minister of internal affairs, and Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, in June of that year to advise him on administrative, peasant, legal, educational, and Jewish reform. The young advisors shared a conservative commitment to reform that looked to rationalization, not democratization, as the cure for Russia’s ills, and they never

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seriously addressed restructuring or abolishing serfdom. Becoming a close friend of Alexander I, Adam Jerzy Czartoryski attempted to work within the context of Russian control of Poland to maintain some of pre-partition Poland’s liberty throughout the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Between 1802 and 1806, he was appointed foreign minister. In October 1802, he became curator of the University of Vilna. Between 1813 and 1815, he played a prominent role in Russian-Polish affairs in the semi-independent “Congress Kingdom” of Poland. Czartoryski’s presence on the committee was a link between the Polish Enlightenment and the debates of the Great Sejm and the reforming impulse of Alexander I’s reign. Concern for improving the legal status of Russia’s new Jewish population, all of whom lived on former Polish territory, was a hallmark of Adam Jerzy Czartoryski’s efforts in Russia.

On November 9, 1802, Alexander I convened a special committee for the “Amelioration of the Jews” with Gabriel Derzhavin (the minister of justice who had suggested in 1800 that the Jews be expelled from villages in western Russia and resettled in southern Ukraine), Kochubey, Count V. A. Zubov, Mikhail Speransky, and two Polish nobles, Adam Jerzy Czartoryski and Seweryn Potocki. The committee consulted with several Poles, including Tadeusz Czacki who was known for his liberal attitude toward the Jews, and with the Jews themselves. Abraham Peretz, Nota Notkin, and Judah Leib Nevakhovich of Szklów (the author of the *The Lament of the Daughter of Judah*), enlightened Jewish businessmen living in St. Petersburg, appealed to the committee to introduce reforms for the Jews of the Russian Empire. Representatives from several kehillot also travelled to St. Petersburg, suspicious of the intentions of the committee, to make their voices heard.

Mendel Lefin, too, was in St. Petersburg at the time of the deliberations of the “Committee for the Amelioration of the Jews.” He was there both as a friend of the Czartoryskis and as a tutor to Zevi Hirsch Peretz, the grandson of Joshua Zeitlin, on whose estate near Szklów he wrote *Sefer heshbon hanefesh*. Lefin had been recommended to Zevi Hirsch’s father, Abraham Peretz, by David Friedländer. Lefin contributed to the Committee as a behind-the-scene advisor to Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, undoubtedly at the behest of his

163 Morley, “Czartoryski as a Polish Statesman.”
patron, Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, who, in March 1803, advised his son that “Mendel is the most suitable (najzdatniejszy) man to give his thoughts regarding the arrangements for the Jews. Write to [Tomasz] Bernatowicz to ask him if he [Mendel] is healthy enough to make the trip. [If so], then it will be necessary to provide transportation and housing for him, and I will write to Bernatowicz.” Lefin’s deep-seated commitment to reforming and transforming his people through moderate reforms generated from within the Jewish community surely affected his patron’s son. In 1803, Adam Jerzy wrote to his father, with whom he was in regular correspondence about the subject of the Jews and other reform issues:

Soon a translation of this ukase [about the creation of an advanced seminary for the catholic priesthood attached to the University of Vilna] will come to you, my dear father. Soon, too, I expect that the new arrangements regarding the Jews will be successful. Mendel is already here. As much as possible we are trying to let moderation, justice and the good of the Jews themselves influence these arrangements.

He confirmed his commitment to reform of the Jews in a letter to his mother in March 1804:

I have also spoken [to my father] about the Committee of the Jews, a subject discussed in the papers that you have sent to me, my dear mother, on my father’s behalf. I will profit from them and as a member of the Committee I will endeavor to do as much as possible for this class of men and make them as useful as they can be for society.

A long project entitled “Thoughts on Improving the Civic Position of the Jews” found in the Czartoryski family archive may also have been written by Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. The content of the pamphlet echoes many of Lefin’s reforms. For example, the project suggests that the Jews themselves be consulted on the reform of their community and that unemployed Jews be placed in workhouses. The pamphlet in the Czartoryski archive also urged that Jews attend schools with either Russian or German as the language of instruction, but that the state should not tamper with any aspect of their religious instruction.

In Liqqutei kelalim, Lefin had emphasized that any reform of the Jewish community should come from its internal edicts and in the Essai d’un plan de réforme he made the specific suggestion that the district
rabbis should be empowered “to forbid the support of (through a misunder-
stood commiseration with) the idle poor who are capable of working, and
even to use their power of excommunication to oblige them to yield to the
workhouses that have been established.”171

Moderation, the use of positive incentives, was a central feature of the com-
mittee’s deliberations on how to acculturate the Jews. The liberal cast of the
deliberations owed much to Adam Jerzy Czartoryski’s participation and fami-
liarity with the range of debates about the Jews that had occupied the Four-
Year Sejm.172 A journal entry of the Committee on September 20, 1803 read:

Transformations brought about by governmental force will generally not be stable and
will be especially unreliable in those cases where this force struggles against centuries-old
habits, with ingrained errors, and with unyielding superstition; it would be better and
more opportune to direct the Jews toward improvement, to open the path to their own
benefit, overseeing their progress from afar and removing anything that might lead them
astray, not employing any force, not setting up any particular institution, not acting in
their place, but enabling their own activity. As few restrictions as possible, as much
freedom as possible. This is a simple formula for any organization of society! In the
calculation of the variables determining human action, the basic foundation ought
always to rest on private gain, the internal principle which never stops anywhere, and
which evades all laws that are inconvenient. . . . Everywhere that governments thought
merely to command, there appeared only the phantom of success, which was maintained
for awhile in the air, and then disappeared together with the principles that gave birth to
it. In contrast to every undertaking carried out insensitively are those generated by
private gain, freely maintained, and only patronized by the government, which were
shown to be maintained by an internal force, a firm basis established by time and by
personal benefit.

In every respect the Jews should be encouraged toward education, preferably by means of
quiet encouragement, organized by their own activity.173

Although Lefin’s influence on the committee cannot be directly traced, the
journal’s emphasis on moderation resounds with the tone of the Essai d’un
plan de réforme, Liqqutei kelalim, and Entwurf eines Rabinersystems. In fact,
Shmuel Ettinger has argued that the entry cited above was nothing more
than a translation from Montesquieu’s De l’Esprit des Lois, Book 19, chapter
14.174 Lefin had cited the very same chapter and verse in his Essai d’un plan de
réforme. While Montesquieu’s ideas had spread among liberal sectors of both

171 Lefin, Liqqutei kelalim, in Gelber, “Mendel Lefin of Satanów’s Proposals,” 292 and
[Lefin], “Essai d’un plan de réforme,” 417.
172 Daniel Beauvois, “Polish-Jewish Relations in the Territories Annexed by the Russian
Empire in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century,” in The Jews in Poland (ed. Chimen
Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky; London: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 81 and
Louis Greenberg, The Jews in Russia: The Struggle for Emancipation (New Haven, Conn.: Yale
University Press, 1944), 1-9.
Russian and Polish society, it is still highly probable that Lefin’s respect for Montesquieu’s moderate position on changing culture influenced the Committee — through Adam Jerzy Czartoryski’s intercession — to cite the French *philosophe* and stress reform of the Jews through positive incentives.\textsuperscript{175}

Although the Russian state was ultimately unwilling to address the socio-economic problems of the southeastern borderlands and to integrate the Jews into the Empire, the Imperial Statute Concerning the Jews, promulgated on December 9, 1804, was liberal and enlightened compared to the legislation of Tsar Nicholas I (1825–1855), which later had a decisive effect on the transformation of Russian Jewry.\textsuperscript{176} The 1804 decrees maintained the existence of the Jewish municipality and its responsibilities for raising taxes; limited the terms of kahal elders and required that they learn either Russian, German or Polish; admitted Jews to municipal councils and general courts of justice; allowed the Jewish community to maintain its own network of elementary schools provided they incorporate the use of general languages; and did not mandate the compulsory resettling of the Jews.\textsuperscript{177} The most punitive aspect of the decrees was clause thirty-four, which prohibited the Jews from holding the leases on taverns, drinking houses and inns, and forbade them from selling liquor. The Polish landlords who tried to circumvent the law were to be subject to fines, but, in fact, it was in the interest of both the Jews and their Polish lords to retain these traditional Jewish occupations.\textsuperscript{178} As a result of this commonality of interest — and of Russian reluctance to tackle the problem of the serfs directly — there was no fundamental change in the socio-economic structure of Jewish communal life within Russian lands until Tsar Nicholas I’s reign. The government also stepped back from any internal involvement with intra-Jewish politics, and allowed the establishment of non-kahal supervised prayer groups, “[in cases of communal conflict in which] one group among the Jews will not want to participate in the other group’s synagogue.”\textsuperscript{179} In practice, this meant that there were no obstacles to the flourishing of Hasidic *minyanim* (*prayer quorums*).\textsuperscript{180}

Clause thirty-four, however, also stipulated — in relation to Jewish involvement with liquor arendas — that from January 1, 1807, no Jews were to be

\textsuperscript{176} Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*.
\textsuperscript{178} Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews*, 141–47.
\textsuperscript{180} Fishman, *Russia’s First Modern Jews*, 21.
allowed to live in the villages of Astrakhan, the Caucasus, Little and New Russia. This aspect of the edict, which was formalized in February 15, 1807 at Derzhavin’s urging, had the disastrous result of initiating an expulsion of Jews from villages, which alarmed the representatives of the Jewish communities, who attempted to stay the ruling. An inadvertent result of the harsh measure was the momentary unity of the conflicting groups within the Jewish community. Sometime in 1809, a diverse group of Jews, including Barukh of Międzybóź (Medzibozh), Levi Isaac of Berdyczów and other Ukrainian Hasidim, Dov Beerish Rapoport, Joshua Herszel Józefowicz, Mendel Lefin, and Tobias Gutmann Feder (a maskil who would later attack Lefin’s Yiddish writings), all met in Berdyczów to discuss ways to contravene the expulsion edict.¹⁸¹ Their negotiations were ineffective, but the chaos that ensued in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars meant that the expulsions ceased. When the final boundaries between the Congress Kingdom of Poland and the Pale of Settlement were drawn on June 9, 1815, Jewish life in the southeastern borderlands settled back into its older patterns.

For Lefin, the 1804 legislation had two important effects. First, it sanctioned in law what had occurred in practice: the triumph of Hasidic separatism in most of Eastern Europe, and the retreat of the Russian authorities — for the time being — from direct involvement in internal Jewish cultural politics. Second, the 1804 edicts ended Lefin’s political involvement with the non-Jewish authorities in his campaign against Hasidism. Schooled in the politics of the pre-absolutist “Noble Republic,” Lefin could no longer appeal to the Czartoryskis, now dependent upon the Tsar and the Austrian Emperor, to intervene in the culture wars of the Jewish community. Rather, Lefin followed his own advice and continued his struggle against Hasidism on the literary battlefield. From his perspective, the work of changing the spiritual course of Polish Jewry had just begun. Returning to Mikołajów, Lefin endeavored to effect that change by creating a body of literature for East European Jewish youths, including original satires and philosophical essays, translations of Scripture, and adaptations of West European travelogues and American Enlightenment thought, and infusing them with his anti-Hasidic agenda.

¹⁸¹ Halpern, “R. Levi Isaac of Berdyczów,” 342–44. On Feder, see Chapter Four.