
Three Lists of Students Studying at the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1879

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This essay makes available three previously unpublished lists of students studying at the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1879.¹ Introductory comments that will help place the lists in historical context are followed by the publication of the lists.

¹ The lists are taken from a file preserved in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives (Lietuvos Valstybes Istorijos Archyvas) in Vilnius, catalogue number LVIA F.381, Ap.19, B.649. The file (649) is entitled: “File of the Vilna Gubernia Management, on the proposal of His Excellency the Governor to close the existing Jewish school in Volozhin, Oshmiany district, called Eshibot.” The file was opened on June 7, 1879 and closed on July 25, 1880.

We are indebted to Laima Tautvaisaite, Director of the Archives, for granting us permission to publish the lists in *Turim*, in honor of Rabbi Dr. Bernard Lander. Special thanks to Regina Kopilevich, researcher at the Archives, who transcribed the often intractable handwritten Russian (Cyrillic) lists into Latin letters, so that they could be reproduced here for readers not adept in Russian. She also provided the photographs of the originals of the three lists, portions of which are appended to this essay. Her efforts are greatly appreciated.

As is well known, the Czarist authorities closed the Volozhin Yeshiva permanently on January 22, 1892 (according to the Julian calendar).² Prior attempts by the Czarist regime to close the Volozhin Yeshiva met only with partial success. Such attempts were made, for example, in 1824, 1856, and 1858.³ When in 1847 the official rabbinical seminaries – sanctioned by the Czarist regime – were opened in Vilna and Zhitomir, it became evident that the Volozhin Yeshiva and its rabbinical graduates stood in the way of the Czarist agenda. For the Jewish populace would only appoint rabbis ordained by the Volozhin Yeshiva (and other traditional Yeshivot, e.g., the Mir Yeshiva); certainly, the traditional Jewish communities refused to recognize the graduates of the Vilna and Zhitomir rabbinical academies as legitimate rabbis. This accounts, in part, for the animus of the governmental authorities toward the Volozhin Yeshiva during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴

A major attempt to close the Volozhin Yeshiva took place in 1879. In a previous essay, Genrich Agranovsky outlined the contents of an 1879 file – preserved in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives in Vilnius – that describes this attempt

² The most reliable and comprehensive study of the Volozhin Yeshiva is Shaul Stampfer, *הישיבה הליטאית בהתהוותה*, revised and expanded edition (Jerusalem, 2005), pp. 29-266. Much useful information can still be gleaned from earlier studies such as Samuel K. Mirsky, “ישיבת וולוז'ין,” in S. K. Mirsky, ed., *מוסדות תורה באירופה* (New York, 1956), pp. 1-86; Eliezer Leoni, ed., *וולוז'ין* (Tel-Aviv, 1970), pp. 3-274; and Moshe Tzinovitz, *עץ חיים: תולדות ישיבת וולוז'ין* (Tel-Aviv, 1972). Regarding the closing of the Volozhin Yeshiva in particular, see the reports (of students who attended the Volozhin Yeshiva in the last decades of its existence) gathered together in Immanuel Etkes and Shlomo Tikochinski, eds., *ישיבות ליטא: פרקי זכרונות* (Jerusalem, 2004), pp. 59-218. Cf. Jacob J. Schacter, “Haskalah, Secular Studies and the Close of the Yeshiva in Volozhin in 1892,” *Torah u-Madda Journal* 2 (1990), pp. 76-133.

³ Stampfer, op. cit., pp. 208-214.

⁴ See Genrich Agranovsky, “Materials on the History of the Volozhin Yeshiva Found Among the Documents of the Vilna Educational Region,” [in Russian] *Vestnik Evreiskogo Universiteta* 11:29 (2006), pp. 327-338.

in detail.⁵ Briefly, the Vilna Governor-General, Petr Albedinsky, became privy to information that Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin (1816-1893) – famed head of the Volozhin Yeshiva – was involved in a “secret society engaged in counter-governmental activity.”⁶ This led to an investigation of the Volozhin Yeshiva. A special agent, Krylov, was dispatched to Volozhin, where the heads of the Yeshiva, students, and local residents were interviewed. Evidence was gathered, including a list of “foreign” residents in Volozhin – consisting primarily of students of the Volozhin Yeshiva – prepared by the local Pristav, testimony was recorded, and reports were filed. The upshot of all this was that Rabbi Berlin was vindicated,⁷ but the Yeshiva came under

⁵ See previous note. See also the contemporary accounts in the Jewish newspapers of 1879, as recorded in E. Leoni, ed., וולוז'ין, pp. 127-128, and in M. Y. Berdyczewski, “תולדות ישיבת עץ חיים”, 3 האסף (1886), pp. 241-242. See the additional sources cited in Stampfer, op. cit., p. 154 and pp. 215-216.

⁶ File, p. 26. Specifically, the file indicates that the interception of a letter allegedly signed by Rabbi Berlin in 1879, and addressed to a rabbi in London, proved that such a secret society existed – and triggered the investigation of the Volozhin Yeshiva that followed.

⁷ According to the file, the letter allegedly signed by Rabbi Berlin was proven to be a forgery. It was not signed by Rabbi Berlin (but by someone else). Moreover, the ensuing investigation found no proof for the existence of a “secret society engaged in counter-governmental activity” relating to Rabbi Berlin or to the Volozhin Yeshiva. The file provides no details about how the forgery was exposed. Fortunately, a student who was studying at the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1879-80 – his name does not appear on any of the lists published here – and who was close to Rabbi Berlin, left a memoir about this very event. Eliyahu Aharon Mileykowski (1860-1947) began his studies at the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1877. In 1892 he was appointed Rabbi of Grajewo in Poland; in 1912 he became Chief Rabbi of Kharkov in Ukraine. In 1928 he settled in Palestine and was appointed head of the rabbinic court (ראש בית דין) of Tel-Aviv, a position he held until his death in 1947. His memoir, translated below from the Hebrew, appears in his שו"ת אהלי אהרן (Tel-Aviv, 1936), vol. 2, pp. 218-220:

Lastly, I wish to record here for the reader an astonishing event that took place in Rabbi Berlin's house during the period I was studying at the Volozhin Yeshiva. At the time, the very existence of the Yeshiva stood in the balance. The event had to do with the form of Rabbi Berlin's [Hebrew] signature, as we shall describe. Rabbi Berlin used to sign his names צבי and יהודא with only one “yod” shared by both names [i.e., צבייהודא]. That is, the final letter of

his first name צבי also served as the opening letter of his second name יהודא. He signed all his letters in this manner, as is well known. It is astonishing that this small letter of the alphabet saved Rabbi Berlin from great misfortune, even as it brought relief to the holy Volozhin Yeshiva. The event occurred in 1880 or thereabouts, and I was by then a frequent and welcome visitor in Rabbi Berlin's home – which is why I am familiar with all the details of the matter. One bright day, the Chief of Police of the Vilna Gubernia, surrounded by other officers and policemen, appeared at the entrance to Rabbi Berlin's home and informed him that they came to search his home. This, they explained, was due to information about him that had come to the attention of the higher authorities. After assigning guards to the entrance of the house, the Chief of Police began his search. All the rooms, the nooks and crannies, basement, bookcases, desk drawers, and the like were searched. All written documents were confiscated. First, all the letters on the Rabbi's desk were taken, letters that had been signed and sealed and were about to be taken to the post office. Then they gathered into sacks all the handwritten manuscripts of Rabbi Berlin – of which there were many – and all the ledgers listing the Yeshiva's income and expenses as well as those of the Yeshiva's emissaries, and the registry of students, and miscellaneous letters. The sacks were then bound and sealed with the official seal of the governmental authorities. A coach was summoned and all the sacks were loaded on it. After the Chief of Police completed his search, Rabbi Berlin asked him what it was all about. The Officer removed a letter from the cuff of his sleeve, covered its content, leaving only its signature exposed. He asked Rabbi Berlin: "Is this your signature?" The Rabbi examined the signature and said: "Yes, that is my signature." (So masterful was the forgery!) The Officer then said to the Rabbi: "Read the letter and see what you wrote!" Rabbi Berlin read about how he had allegedly informed someone in London that he [Rabbi Berlin] had received the forged Russian currency that had been sent to him from London. All the forged currency had been used in good stead and he now asks that more be sent to him as soon as possible. If I remember correctly, the forged letter also spoke about students who dodged service in the army and, instead, were attending the Volozhin Yeshiva, and similar bizarre matters. Under all these comments appeared Rabbi Berlin's signature, as if he had admitted that the comments were made by him. Rabbi Berlin informed the Officer that although the signature appeared to be his, he proclaims openly that he never wrote or signed such a letter! The Officer responded that an official investigation was under way, which was why all the materials were being confiscated and sent to the Office of the Governor General of the Vilna Gubernia. He further informed Rabbi Berlin that he was under house arrest, and then turned to leave. Rabbi Berlin then reminded himself of something that could perhaps serve as a key to proving that the letter was a forgery. Namely, he reminded himself that he always signed his first names צבי and יהודא with only one "yod" that

served as the final “yod” of צבי and as the opening “yod” of יהודא. The letters that the Officer had gathered from Rabbi Berlin’s desktop – they had all been signed and sealed prior to the Officer’s appearance in his home – would prove this to be the case. Rabbi Berlin suggested that the signatures be compared, to see whether or not the forger had paid attention to this detail as well. In the presence of all who were standing in the room at the time, the Officer removed the letters from the sack, and compared the signatures from the letters in the sack to the signature on the letter in question. What Rabbi Berlin had claimed was proven to be true. In all the letters from the sack his names צבי and יהודא were written with one shared “yod,” and in the letter in question the two names were written with two “yods,” one for each name. Clearly, Heaven had interceded in order to expose the forger. The Officer prepared an official report regarding the matter and indicated that, doubtless, the anomalous spelling would play an important role in the investigation. He then parted from the Rabbi and went his way. Several months passed and Rabbi Berlin had not been summoned to appear before the governmental authorities. During this period, the mood in Rabbi Berlin’s household was one of despondency and deep anxiety. Aside from the concern about Rabbi Berlin’s personal fate regarding the accusations arising from the forged letter, there was even greater concern about the fate of the Yeshiva and its supporters. What led to this greater concern is the following. At the time, the Volozhin Yeshiva – as far as the governmental authorities were concerned – was officially closed. Its entire existence was covert. Already in the period of Rabbi Itzele Volozhin (d. 1849), some 30 or 40 years earlier, there was some violation that led the governmental authorities to close the school. But given the circumstances of the time, there was no problem in keeping the Yeshiva open despite the order to close it down. This was especially the case in a small town like Volozhin, where only one minor official represented the governmental authorities. So Rabbi Itzele Volozhin continued to operate the Yeshiva after its “closing,” even as before. Such was the legal status of the Yeshiva when it came under the control of Rabbi Berlin, of blessed memory. Under his watch, the Yeshiva grew considerably both in student population and in terms of its income and expenses. Also, the number of its emissaries grew from year to year. By the time of the crisis of the forged letter, the annual budget had reached the sum of 10,000 rubles, a significant sum in those days. Until that time, the governmental authorities knew nothing about this. Now that all these matters were revealed to the governmental authorities via the impounded letters and ledgers of the Yeshiva – all of them done without the permission of the authorities – only God knew how it would all end. It was well known that such violations were severely punished in Russia. But because God was pleased with Rabbi Berlin’s conduct, the “yod” came along and saved the situation, and brought relief to the entire Yeshiva. For finally, Rabbi Berlin was summoned to appear before the authorities in Oshmiany, the district capital, several hours distant from

harsh criticism for not having applied for a license of operation from the appropriate governmental authorities. Henceforth, the Yeshiva would have to abide by all governmental regulations and file reports as required by law.

Two key issues at stake were whether or not the Yeshiva needed to be licensed at all, and the precise number of

Volozhin. He came at the appointed time and waited in the waiting room. Those who accompanied him revealed [later] that he was not at all despondent. He recited passages from the Mishnah by heart, testing his memory against the miniature printed copy he held in his hand, as was his practice. When he entered, the Chief District Officer greeted him warmly, asking him to be seated, and informed him of the results of the investigation, as follows. First, he was found innocent of all the charges against him that were based on the forged letter. Therefore, all the impounded letters and ledgers were being returned to him. Second, it had become apparent that despite the fact that the Volozhin Yeshiva had been closed by the authorities, Jewish students continued to come to the Yeshiva in order to study, without any detrimental effects. Therefore, the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Education agreed to recognize the Volozhin Yeshiva from now on, and grant Rabbi Berlin the authority to deliver his lectures in the future, as he had done in the past.

Historians tend to be wary of accounts reduced to writing some 56 years after the events they allegedly describe – and rightfully so. Moreover, in this case, portions of the account clearly come from hearsay, i.e., testimony the author heard from others. Nonetheless, Mileykowski's account of how the forgery was proven – coming from a student who was at the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1879 and who was particularly close to Rabbi Berlin – can hardly be dismissed out of hand. For photographs of the originals of 5 letters written and signed by Rabbi Berlin between 1880 and 1888, all with one shared “yod” for his first names, see Reuven Dessler, *שנות דור ודור* (Jerusalem, 2000), vol. 1, pp. 181-196. For additional photographs of his signature with the shared “yod,” see Meir Berlin, *רבן של ישראל* (New York, 1943), p. 151; Ben Zion Shapiro, ed., *אגרות הנצי”ב מוולאזין* (second edition, Jerusalem, 1990), p. 586; and *אגרות הנצי”ב מוולאזין* (Bnei Brak, 1993), pp. 338-342. Regarding the role played by Rabbi Berlin's signature in exposing the forgery, see also the sources cited by Stampfer, *op. cit.*, p. 154, n. 73. It should be noted that strewn throughout Mileykowski's writings (see especially, aside from his responsa, his *דבר אליהו* [Tel-Aviv, 1930-1946], 3 vols.) are reports about the Volozhin Yeshiva, Rabbi Berlin, and other leading Lithuanian rabbis – all of whom he knew personally. These passages are worthy of further study. It is surprising that none of Mileykowski's accounts of Volozhin were included in the Etkes and Tikochinski volume cited above, note 2.

students in attendance at the Volozhin Yeshiva. In a deposition signed by Rabbi Berlin (the signature is in Hebrew – or, more precisely, in Yiddish⁸ – and reads: נפתלי הירש בן יעקב בערלין), he indicated that, traditionally, every Chief Rabbi of a city had a Yeshiva attached to the synagogue.⁹ That being the case, he did not think it was necessary to apply to the government for permission to operate a Yeshiva. The number of students studying at a particular Yeshiva depended largely upon the reputation of the local Chief Rabbi. While rumor had it that over 400 students were studying at the Volozhin Yeshiva, in fact – claimed Rabbi Berlin – there were not more than 60 students enrolled at the Yeshiva. He prepared a list (in Hebrew) with the names of the 60 students and presented it to Krylov. The Hebrew list is included in the file and is published below (list 1).¹⁰ The list was also translated into Russian (in Cyrillic script) and included in the file, and the Russian list (in Latin script) is published below (list 2).¹¹

Doubtless, Rabbi Berlin was trying to outwit the authorities in order to keep the doors of the Volozhin Yeshiva open. Rabbi Berlin was Chief Rabbi of Volozhin, and traditionally, he had the right (even: obligation) to open a Yeshiva and

⁸ In his Hebrew correspondence, responsa, and published writings (during his lifetime), Rabbi Berlin always spelled his name: נפתלי צבי יהודא [יהודה: or:] ברלין. He never used the Yiddish equivalent of Zvi, הירש, or the Yiddish spelling בערלין. It would appear, then, that he reserved his Hebrew signature for writing Torah and for correspondence in Hebrew, and used his Yiddish signature when signing secular documents. As is well known, Rabbi Berlin neither read nor wrote Russian. A comparison of the form of the Hebrew letters of Rabbi Berlin's Yiddish signature with that of his Hebrew signature establishes beyond cavil the authenticity of the signature in the file.

⁹ File 649, p. 12, verso. For the Yeshiva as a communal institution under the aegis of the Chief Rabbi – a distinctive 16th-19th century phenomenon – see Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis* (New York, 1961), pp. 192-198, and Mordechai Breuer, *אוהלי תורה* (Jerusalem, 2003), pp. 311-314.

¹⁰ File 649, pp. 13-13a.

¹¹ File 649, pp. 14-15.

to guide its students.¹² Such local Yeshivot, funded by the local population, usually supported some 5 to 20 students at best, not 60.¹³ Indeed, such institutions never imagined that they needed to be licensed by the governmental authorities. But Volozhin was an international Yeshiva with students from all over the world, supported by Jewish communities throughout the world. It was hardly a local Yeshiva, supported by the local Jewish community. Quite the opposite, it was the Yeshiva that supported large segments of the local Jewish community. The Yeshiva paid the local householders for providing the students with room and board.¹⁴ More importantly, the Yeshiva of Volozhin in 1879 almost certainly had between 150 and 300 students.¹⁵ In context,

¹² The founder of the Volozhin Yeshiva, Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin (d. 1821), served as Chief Rabbi (אב בית דין) of Volozhin. He established the tradition that every head of the Volozhin Yeshiva must also serve as Chief Rabbi of Volozhin, and such was the practice until the closing of the Yeshiva. In this instance, Rabbi Berlin was the beneficiary of the foresight of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin. For the letters of appointment as Chief Rabbi of Volozhin proffered to various members of the Volozhin dynasty, see M. Rabbinowitz, "תעודות לתולדות הישיבה בוולוז'ין," 5 קבץ על יד (1951), pp. 221-233.

¹³ Breuer, loc. cit.

¹⁴ Indeed, the Yeshiva was a major industry in Volozhin, as many shops (also providers of transportation and innkeepers) provided services for the students and their guests. See, e.g., E. Leoni, ed., וולוז'ין, p. 320. Cf. I. Etkes and S. Tikochinski, op. cit., p. 113.

¹⁵ This is easily determined by examining the student population – from the testimony of eyewitnesses – in the years preceding and following 1879. Max Lilienthal (d. 1882), liaison between the Czarist officials and the Jewish community, visited the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1842. He reported in the name of Rabbi Itzele Volozhin (d. 1849) that between 200 and 300 students were enrolled in the Yeshiva in 1842. See Max Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in David Philipson, ed., *Max Lilienthal American Rabbi: Life and Writings* (New York, 1915), p. 347. Zalman Epstein (d. 1936), Hebrew essayist and critic who studied at the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1875, reported that over 200 students were enrolled in the Volozhin Yeshiva in that year (I. Etkes and S. Tikochinski, op. cit., p. 75). Rabbi Berlin himself, in a personal letter written in 1875 (unbeknownst to the Czarist authorities) wrote that he was responsible for raising the funds to support "approximately 150 students." [Other students at the Volozhin Yeshiva, it should be noted, were supported entirely by their own families or by their communities of origin.]

Rabbi Berlin – who sought to persuade the authorities that only a minimal number of students were enrolled in the Yeshiva and, hence, there was no need to report to the authorities – claimed, perhaps, that he had only 60 students who came specifically to study with him in order to be ordained by him as rabbis, i.e., as decisors of Jewish Law.¹⁶ This, of course, may have been true, but it was hardly the whole truth. Conveniently, he made no mention of the vast majority of students who came to study Talmud and not to earn rabbinic ordination. It is also possible that he meant that only 60 students attended his lectures. Students at the Volozhin Yeshiva were free to attend the lectures of the two heads of the Yeshiva (in 1879: Rabbis Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin and Raphael Shapiro [1837-1921]), to attend the lectures of the one or the other, or not to attend any of the lectures. It is conceivable that out of a population of, say, 150 or 200 students, only 60 chose to attend regularly Rabbi Berlin's lectures. Again, even if true, it hardly represented the whole truth.

See אגרות הנצי"ב מוולאזין, letter 34, p. 66. R. Raphael Shapiro (d. 1921) – who in 1879 served as Associate Head of the Volozhin Yeshiva – in a deposition included in file 649, p. 12, testified regarding the student population that “at the present we cannot definitely determine their number; at times it may reach 200, but never 400 as assumed by Mr. Krylov.” Isaac Nissenbaum (d. 1942), the Religious Zionist leader who first came to the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1884, reported that there were 300 students in the Yeshiva at that time (I. Etkes and S. Tikochinski, op. cit., p. 101). Moses Eleazar Eisenstadt (d. 1943), rabbi and educator, was a student at the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1886. He reports that there were between 300 and 350 students in the Yeshiva at that time. See M. E. Eisenstadt, “ישיבת וולוז'ין,” *העבר* 14 (1967), p. 161. In the light of the above, one can safely assume that over 200 students were studying at the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1879.

¹⁶ This interpretation of Rabbi Berlin's claim that only 60 students were enrolled in the Yeshiva is supported, in part, by the testimony of Rabbi Raphael Shapiro in his deposition to Krylov (see previous note). Rabbi Shapiro testified that the majority of students came to Volozhin to pray, to study religious books, and to master the religious precepts. Only a minority of students came for the purpose of becoming *more hora'ah* [מורי הוראה], i.e., decisors of Jewish law.

Krylov learned otherwise from the local residents. According to a document included in the file, Berka (son of Mordechai) Persky testified orally that some 400 students were enrolled in the Volozhin Yeshiva, but he refused to sign the testimony recorded in his name.¹⁷ The Pristav prepared a list (in Russian, Cyrillic script) of 144 “foreign” residents in Volozhin (mostly Yeshiva students) who had presented their passports to him for inspection. The list is included in the file and is published (in Latin script) below (list 3).¹⁸ Included among the 144 names on the Pristav’s list are 59 out of the 60 names on Rabbi Berlin’s list.¹⁹ Thus it would appear that close to 144 students were enrolled in the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1879. One suspects that many more students – without passports – were also studying at the Yeshiva.

It is not our purpose to identify the names on the lists or to attempt an analysis of what became of the students named on the lists. This we leave for others. Nonetheless, we initiate the discussion by identifying briefly six names on the lists.

List 1, §23 (=list 3, §131). **Nahum Yudelevich** was born in Salant in 1862. Wealthy businessman and public servant, he was a delegate to several Zionist Congresses. In 1921 he moved to Riga, and in 1933 he settled in Palestine.

¹⁷ File 649, p. 11.

¹⁸ File 649, pp. 7-10. The list is described as coming from the Pristav of the 4th station of the Oshmany district, and as being a register of the foreigners and people from other towns residing in Volozhin. It should be noted that all the “foreigners” on the list are male and Jewish! Moreover, an examination of the 47 instances where the list records the age of the “foreigner” yields an average age of 18.5 years old. Given that Volozhin was hardly a tourist attraction in the nineteenth century, and that it had no economic base to speak of, one suspects that the vast majority of “foreigners” were students at the Volozhin Yeshiva.

¹⁹ Entry 19 of Rabbi Berlin’s lists (in Hebrew and in Russian) does not seem to appear on the Pristav’s list (list 3).

He died in Tel Aviv. He was a brother-in-law of the Telzer Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Hayyim Rabbinowitz.²⁰

List 1, §25 (=list 3, §21). **Idel Bengis**' full name was: Yehudah Idel Hayyim ben R. Zvi Hirsh. Born in 1862 in Shnipishok, Vilnius, he was an older brother of the renowned Rabbi Zelig Reuven Bengis (1864-1953), who also studied at the Volozhin Yeshiva (and later served as Rabbi of Kalvarija and ultimately as head of the Edah Ha-Haredit in Jerusalem). Idel Bengis was appointed rabbi of "New" Liepaja in Latvia in 1899.²¹

List 1, §30 (=list 3, §130). **David Fayyans**, born in Nesvizh in 1860, earned his rabbinic ordination in 1882 from – among others – R. Reuven Ha-Levi of Daugavpils; R. Samuel Zibertinski and R. Eliyahu Eliezer Grodnenski of Vilnius; R. Isaac Elchanan Spektor of Kaunas; R. Joseph Ha-Levi Soloveitchik of Brest-Litovsk; and R. Eliyahu Hayyim Meisel of Lodz. He served as Rosh Yeshiva in Knyszyn and as Rabbi of Bialystok. He was a leader of the Mizrachi movement in Poland, and died in Bialystok in 1935.²²

List 1, §36 (=list 3, §38). **Shlomo Ezra Mer** (b. circa 1860) served as a *dayyan* in Rietavas. He then moved to Panevezys, where he was a founder of what ultimately became the world renowned Yeshiva of Panevezys. He devoted his life to the study of Talmud, and studied all day and every day in Glickel's Kloiz. When the Panevezys Yeshiva was first founded (at the turn of the century), it was housed in Glickel's Kloiz, and Rabbi Mer served as one of the instructors in Talmud at the yeshiva.²³

²⁰ See Berel Kagan, יידישע שטעט שטעטלעך און דארפישע יישובים אין ליטא (New York, 1991), p. 306.

²¹ See Samuel Noah Gottlieb, אהלי שם (Pinsk, 1912), p. 105.

²² See M. Tzinovitz, op. cit. (above, note 2), p. 384. Cf. אנציקלופדיה של הציונות הדתית (Jerusalem, 1971), vol. 4, columns 222-223. For his photograph, see David Sohn, ed., ביאליסטאק (New York, 1951), p. 22.

²³ See Samuel Kol, אחד בדורו (Tel Aviv, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 244 and 252. Cf. Berel Kagan, op. cit., p. 554.

List 1, §57 (=list 3, §2). **Isaac Anixter**. This entry is of particular interest. It indicates that a student from Chicago, Illinois was studying at the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1879.²⁴ Isaac Anixter was the only son of Rabbi Yehudah Eliezer Anixter (1829-1914). The latter was born in Panemune, just outside of Kaunas, studied in various yeshivot, and was ultimately appointed a *dayyan* in Kalvarija. In 1869, he emigrated to the United States. He resided in New York until 1878, when he was appointed Rabbi of Congregation Beth ha-Medrash he-Hadash in Chicago. He served as rabbi of that congregation (except for a brief stint in Rochester, New York) until his death in 1914 in Chicago. He authored and published a major work of Talmudic commentary, responsa, and homiletics entitled *הידושי אב"י* (Chicago, 1904). In the introduction to the volume, Rabbi Anixter explains that the abbreviated term *אב"י* in the book's title serves, in part, as a memorial to "my only son, who died in the prime of life," *אייזיק בן יהודה*.

Isaac, who was born in Kalvarija in 1857, was brought to the United States in 1871, when he was about 14 years old. After studying in schools in New York, he was sent to study

²⁴ See M. Y. Berdyczewski, op. cit. (above, note 5), p. 236, who writes: "Rabbi Berlin increased the number of students from 100 to 400. He caused the fame of the Volozhin Yeshiva to spread to all lands, so that students came to study at the Yeshiva from England, Germany, Austria, and America." For evidence of an American student who studied at the Volozhin Yeshiva between 1881 and 1883, see Nathan Kamenetsky, *Making of a Godol* (Jerusalem, 2004), vol. 1, part 2, p. 888. For evidence of American students studying at the Mir Yeshiva in 1887, see I. Etkes and S. Tikochinski, op. cit., p. 315. American Jewish students were studying even earlier (in the 1860s) at a Central European yeshiva that included secular study in its curriculum. See, e.g., the list of students and their countries of origin in R. Azriel Hildesheimer, *Dritter Bericht über die öffentliche Rabbinatsschule zu Eisenstadt* (Halberstadt, 1869). (We are indebted to Michoel Ronn, Associate Director of Libraries at Touro College, for kindly bringing to our attention – in the name of Rabbi Yitzchok Stroh of Brooklyn – the reference to Hildesheimer's Eisenstadt Yeshiva.) See also Yechiel Goldhaber's reference to American Jewish students studying at the Eisenstadt Yeshiva in his "רבי עזריאל הילדסהיימר ברבנות איינושט" (2006), p. 243.

at the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1879.²⁵ Thus, he may well have been the first Jewish student in the United States sent abroad to study at a Lithuanian Yeshiva. In 1880, he was back in the United States, and enrolled in H.B. Bryant's Business College in Chicago. He became a bookkeeper, then entered the tailoring business, then served as a salesman, peddler, and laborer. He died in 1901, apparently of typhoid fever, and is buried in Chicago. He left a wife and six children.²⁶

List 3, §14. **Abraham ben Hayyim Hofenberg.** Born in 1853, he studied at the Mir Yeshiva, then in Kaunas under R. Eliezer Gordon. In 1872 he received rabbinic ordination from R. Alexander Mosheh Lapidus (1819-1906) of Raseiniai. He then studied for six consecutive years at Volozhin, ultimately earning additional rabbinic ordinations from R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, R. Raphael Shapiro, and

²⁵ Aside from the appearance of his name on the list of students, a deposition signed by Isaac Anixter – and taken by Krylov – is included in file 649, p. 11, verso. It reads (in Russian):

Aizik Anikter [sic], 22 years old, a citizen of the United States of America, has been in Volozhin since April 1879, at the behest of his father, a rabbi in Chicago who recognizes the Rabbi of Volozhin as the highest [rabbinic] authority. He sent me here to master the prayers, as well as the Jewish religious responsibilities and laws. I plan to return [to the United States] in May 1880. We study by ourselves in Volozhin. I have nothing else to say on this topic, therefore I sign,

Isaac Anixter

Either Anixter was primed, perhaps by Rabbi Berlin, to say precisely what would best serve the interests of the Volozhin Yeshiva or else he was a very clever Yeshiva “bocher.” The deposition itself served as an indication that any negative decision by the governmental authorities would have ramifications well beyond the borders of Czarist Russia.

²⁶ See Charles B. Bernstein and Stuart L. Cohen, *Torah and Technology: The History and Genealogy of the Anixter Family* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 220-222. The authors write that “the life of Isaac Anixter, the only son of Rabbi Eliezer, is clouded in obscurity.” Indeed, they were unaware of the fact that Isaac had studied at the Volozhin Yeshiva. They also were uncertain about the date of his birth (either 1857, 1861, or 1864). The deposition (see previous note) establishes 1857 as the correct date of birth.

R. Hayyim Soloveitchik. In 1887 he was appointed Rabbi of Vaskai, north of Panevezys. He was the author of קול ברמה (Vilnius, 1906), a dirge on the pogroms suffered by the Jewish communities at that time.²⁷

List 1

1. גרשון בן בן ציון לעווי מדראביאן
2. נח מינדלין מהלובאקע בן יצחק
3. זעליג זאקס משאלאנט
4. אפרים שיינפעלד מבויוסק
5. אבא אפאלצין מלוקניק
6. בן ציון גאלדבערג ממיר
7. משה בן אהרן דאלגינאוו משורז²⁸
8. בנימין באראוויץ מאזארניצע
9. מאיר בן אלי' בערמאן מראזינאי
10. חיים ליפשיץ מנישוויז
11. משה אהרן ציטרין מבאדקא
12. אברהם ליב בן מענדיל לובין מקרוילע
13. יחיאל ארודענאק מראדנא אויעזוד קלימעוויץ²⁹
14. משה קליבאנאוו מבארישעוו
15. אידל בן שמואל ממיר שפירא
16. ראובן דיקשטיין מפאריץ
17. יואל שרים מלאחאוויץ
18. אהרן דובראווקע מקריצוב
19. אברהם יצחק קאהאן מסלוצק
20. אייזיק יפה מלידא
21. דוד טעביל בן יוסף זעלקינד מזעבין
22. אברהם משה בן יצחק קאפלאן מלוקניק
23. נחום יודעלעוויץ מסאלאנט טעלזער אויעזוד³⁰
24. בער וואלף קריסטאהל מייעדוואבנא
25. אידל ביינגעס משניפישאק
26. נחמי' אימערמאן מסלוצק
27. אברהם פרידמאן מזעמבראו

²⁷ See Samuel Noah Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 345. Hofenberg frequently consulted his teacher, Rabbi Berlin, for halakhic rulings. See Rabbi Berlin's שו"ת מנחת דבר (Jerusalem, 1993) for numerous responsa (e.g., vol. 5, responsa 13, 22, and 37) addressed to Hofenberg.

²⁸ Surazh. See Gary Mokotoff, et al, *Where Once We Walked* (Bergenfield, N.J., 2002), p. 364.

²⁹ Klimovitz (=Klimovichi) district.

³⁰ Telzer (=Telšiai) district.

28. אלי' מזיטיל עפשטיין
29. אהרן בן גרשון בערמאן מקארטינגע
30. דוד פאייאנס מנשוויז
31. ישראל יצחק לאקשין מקלימעוויץ
32. הירש שור מקארטינגע בן יוסף
33. מרדכי לאפאן מפאריץ
34. שלמה חיים בן משה יודא פאלאנסקי מפאלאנקע
35. חיים מסמארגאן גרינהויז
36. שלמה עזרא מער בן יעקב מסאדווע
37. אורי' בן בנימין ברוידא מבאפטע
38. טובי' בן לייזר בערינשטיין מיורבריק
39. אברהם עפשטיין מסלאנים
40. זלמן יצחק האלאנד משאלאק
41. שמחה בן נחמן ראטנער משקלאב
42. אברהם הירש קרעמער מוואבאלניק
43. אייזיק נתן נאפאלסקי מבריסק
44. ישראל בן משה קאוונער מפראייסק
45. שבתי מרדכי ראבין מזידיק
46. משה פאשוט מווארשא
47. שאול ליפמאן מזאגר שאחוט
48. אלי' בער בן שמואל טראצקע מאוטייאן
49. חיים ראיז מבריסק
50. יעקב פיין מווארעץ
51. גוטיל צמח קראמער מטוקום
52. אהרן ממאיישאד זוסמאן
53. לייזר בערקאוויץ רובינשטיין מהאלאוויצינא
54. קאווקאזער³¹ מאיר דאגילאו
55. שבתי ראבינאוויץ מנאווערדאק
56. מאיר קונקעס מהאלאבאקע
57. אייזיק אניקסטער משיגאגע³²
58. וואלף פריידין מחאסלאוויץ
59. יעקב שטראשון מוילנא
60. שאול שעוועלאוויץ בראדסקי מוילנא

³¹ The Caucasian.

³² The spellings שיגאגע and שיגאג are commonplace in Lithuanian Hebrew. Thus, in three letters of approbation to R. Yehudah Eliezer Anixter's חידושי אב"י (Chicago, 1904) – see above, p. 12 – by Lithuanian rabbis, Chicago is spelled שיגאג. One of the letters was written by R. Raphael Shapiro of Volozhin, who probably was a teacher of Isaac Anixter in 1879. It was also the practice of R. Yehiel Michal Epstein (d. 1908) of Novarodok to spell Chicago as שיגאג. See his שאלות ותשובות: השולחן: כתבי ערוך השולחן: (Jerusalem, 2007), pp. 83 and 86.

List 2³³

1. Gershon son of Bentsel Levin
2. Nevakh son of Itsko Mindlin
3. Zelik Zaks
4. Efroim Sheinfeld
5. Abel Apeltsin
6. Bentsel Goldberg
7. Movsha son of Aron Dolginov
8. Beniomín Borovich
9. Meer son of Elia Berman
10. Chaim Lifshitz
11. Movsha Aron Tsitron
12. Abram Leib son of Mendel Liubin
13. Yokhel Arudenik
14. Movsha Klebanov
15. Idel son of Shmuila Shapiro
16. Rubin Dikshtein
17. Yevel Shorim
18. Aron Dubrovkin
19. Abram Itsko Kagan
20. Aizik Iofe
21. Dovid Tevel son of Yosel Zelkind
22. Abram Movsha son of Itsko Kaplan
23. Nokhim Yudelevich
24. Vulf Krishtol
25. Idel Benges
26. Nekhemya Imerman
27. Abram Fridman

³³ Lists 2 and 3, often but not always, list the student's (or: "foreigner's") father's name. Regarding lists 2 and 3, it is notoriously difficult to read the handwritten Cyrillic script, and in some cases the readings presented here are uncertain.

-
28. Geilia Epshtein
 29. Aron son of Gershon Berman
 30. Dovid Fayans
 31. Izrael Itsko Lokshin
 32. Girsh son of Yosel Shur
 33. Mordukh Lapan
 34. Shlioma Chaim son of Movsha Yudel Palanski
 35. Chaim Gringous
 36. Shlioma Israel son of Yankel Mer
 37. Urya son of Beniomín Breida
 38. Tevel son of Leizer Berenshtein
 39. Abram Epshtein
 40. Zalman Itsko Golland
 41. Simkho son of Nakhman Ratner
 42. Abram Girsh Kremer
 43. Aizik Nosel Napolski
 44. Izrael son of Movsha Kovner
 45. Shepshel Mordukh Rabin
 46. Movsha Poshut
 47. Shevel Lipman Shokhot
 48. Elya Ber son of Shmuila Trotski
 49. Chaim Raiz
 50. Yankel Fain
 51. Gutel Tsemekh Kromer
 52. Aron Zusman
 53. Leizer son of Berko Rubinshtein
 54. Meer Dogilov
 55. Shepshel Rabinovich
 56. Meer Kunkes
 57. Aizik Anikshter
 58. Vulf Freidin
 59. Yankel Strashun
 60. Shevel son of Shevel Borodzki

List 3³⁴

1. Vilgelm Tum
2. Isaak Anikster
3. Eliash son of Getsel Gurvich
4. Meer son of Leib Chernikhel
5. Girsha Fainberg
6. Abram son of Mendel Rogov
7. Shlioma Chaim son of Yudel Polonsky
8. Gershel son of Benitsel Levy
9. Movsha son of Abel Movshovich
10. Abram son of Tsodik Idelman
11. Movsha son of Girsh Ryvlian
12. Chaim Pergament
13. Nokhim son of Movsha Inormas
14. Abram son of Chaim Gofenberg
15. Yudka son of Chaim Pobalkin
16. Zelman Galpern
17. Chaim son of Faivish Koved
18. Chaim son of Abram Grigauz
19. Motys Sokolover
20. Mortkhel Bialostotsky
21. Idel son of Girsh Bengis
22. Chaim Koton
23. Itska son of Berko Rabinovich
24. Meer Tabak
25. Gershka son of Leib Belostotsky
26. Zelik son of Mendel Lundin
27. Vigdor Bykhover
28. Shaul Lipman Abramovich
29. Shmuila son of Aron Reznik

³⁴ List 3 often lists where the “foreigner” hails from and where the “foreigner’s” passport was issued. It sometimes lists the “foreigner’s” age. Here, we have only listed the names of the “foreigners.”

-
30. Leiba son of Girsh Brodotsky
 31. Zalman son of Itsko Shragin
 32. Moshko Kaplan
 33. Meer son of Shimon Tabak³⁵
 34. Shlema Leiba son of Movsha Kusilev
 35. Girsha Leiba son of Yankel Berlin³⁶
 36. David son of Yosel Zalkind
 37. Yekhiel son of Nekhel Gerer
 38. Ezra son of Yankel Mer
 39. Solom son of Yankel Aizenberg
 40. Nokhim son of Yudel Olnevich
 41. Mordukh Movsha son of Leib Lifshets
 42. Betsial Lipel son of Chaim Maizel
 43. Movsha son of Leib Polonsky
 44. Nosel Yankel son of Girsh Nepolsky
 45. Touvya son of Leizer Bershtein
 46. Giliary son of Faivish Trop
 47. Abram Girsha son of Khatskel Kremer
 48. Abram Yankel son of Shebshel Reishkip
 49. Meer son of Elya Berman
 50. Gershka son of Shmuila Shmukler
 51. Rubin son of Shmuila Dikshtein
 52. Manul son of Meer Shapira
 53. Movsha Girsha son of Itsko Abramovich
 54. Abram Itska son of Berko Poliachek
-

³⁵ It is possible that this is an erroneous second listing of entry 24. It appears more likely, however, that these are two different (perhaps related) persons, since different dates of issue (April 10, 1879 and May 23, 1879) are listed for each of the passports.

³⁶ Although the first name, last name, and patronymic are precisely those of Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, head of the Volozhin Yeshiva, this entry cannot be referring to him. Since he moved from Mir to Volozhin in 1830, after almost 50 years of residence in Volozhin his name could hardly appear on the Pristav's list of non-locals! In fact, the Pristav's entry specifies that this entrant hailed from Novarodok.

55. Izrail son of Movsha Kovner
56. Srol son of Leib Shterenfeld
57. Itska son of Nokhim Zolezon
58. Borukh son of Itska Semiatytsky
59. Chaim Leiba son of Yankel Tsalkov
60. Aron son of Yosel Zusmanovich
61. Meer son of Leib Shulman
62. Leizer son of Berko Rubinshtein
63. Leizer son of Movsha Tzorkelshtein
64. Simkha son of Nakhman Ratner
65. Yankel son of Nokham Leibovich
66. Abram son of Yankel Kaudan
67. Azriel son of Aron Lunevsky
68. Iosel son of Idal Zagalski
69. Mordukh son of Aron Gilai
70. Yankel son of Abram Dymant
71. Leibus son of Shmerko Klepfish
72. Sholom Ruvelevich
73. Abram son of Efroim Epshtein
74. Eliash Ber son of Shmuila Trotsky
75. Iser Ber son of Kushel Liubchansky
76. Yankel son of Yovel Boyarsky
77. Mendel son of Aron Reznik
78. Chaim son of Matys Fronberg
79. Chaim son of Kalman Muzykant
80. Shakhna son of Kalman Muzykant
81. Shmuel son of Yosel Kotynke
82. Shevel son of Shevel Brodsky
83. Gutman Tseiman Kramer
84. Girsha son of Aron Fraidelman
85. Bendel son of Zelman Libzon
86. Khaziel Osher son of Beniamin Shtutssel
87. Berka Notol Minkhin
88. Shmuel son of Izrael Rasvonsky
89. Yankel Itska son of Yosel Rubinshtein

-
90. Yankel son of Leizer Strashun
 91. Mortkhel son of Kolev Daunlaitsky
 92. Girsh Yankel son of Ovsei Yankovsky
 93. Shebshel son of Movsha Mashiukov
 94. Meer son of Zelik Glezer
 95. Kalman son of Evsei Ekelchik
 96. Movsha son of Yankel Bolotnikov
 97. Neukh son of Shneyer Levin
 98. Eliash Vainberg
 99. Yankel son of Nota Khaikind
 100. Yankel son of Mordukh Fain
 101. Mordukh son of Sholom Ashkonad
 102. Zalman Itska son of Abram Lipman Goliand
 103. Rubin Berko son of Yudel Yankel Gilels
 104. Movsha son of Leizer Gekht, he is also [called] Shchupak
 105. Kalman son of Meer Izrailit
 106. Shaul Lipman son of Abram Sokhet
 107. Moisei Pushet
 108. Yekhil son of Itsko Rudenok
 109. Abram Leiba son of Mendel Libin
 110. Bentsian son of Itsko Golberg
 111. Girsh son of Yosel Shur
 112. Efroim Shenfeld
 113. Abram son of Fridman Nachka
 114. Chaim son of Yudel Lifshits
 115. Moshko Aron son of Zalman Gersh Tsytron
 116. Abram Movsha son of Itsko Kaplan
 117. Aizik son of Arye Iofe
 118. Moisei son of Aron Dolginov
 119. Benjamin son of Shmuel Borevich
 120. Meer son of Zalman Kunkes
 121. Volf Ber Krishtal
 122. Meer son of Elya Berman³⁷
-

³⁷ This seems to be an erroneous second listing of entry 49.

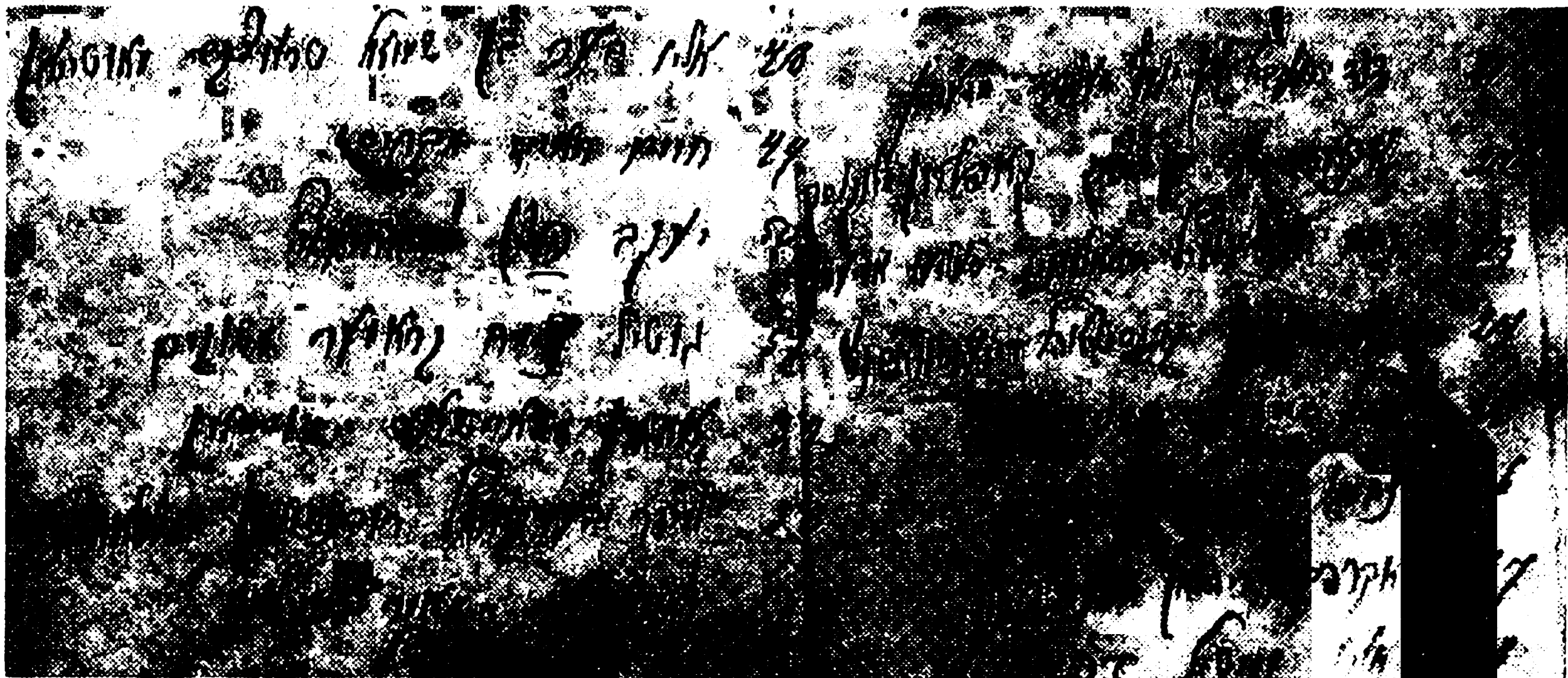
123. Nekhim son of Movsha Imerman
124. Elya son of Lipman Epshtein
125. Idel son of Shmuel Shapiro
126. Abram Fridman
127. Ruvin son of Shmuila Denshtein
128. Yankel son of Mordukh Fain³⁸
129. Aron son of Gershon Berman
130. Dovid son of Shmuila Fayans
131. Nokhim son of Shlema Yudelev
132. Mordukh son of Itsko Lopan
133. Movsha son of Chaim Klebanov
134. Aron son of Simon Dubrovkin
135. Abel son of Chaim Apeltsyn
136. Neukh son of Itsko Mindlin
137. Vulf son of Smuila Freidin
138. Izrail Itska son of Borukh Lokshin
139. Yewel son of Yosel Sorin
140. Zelik son of Itsko Leib Zaks
141. Aizik Nosen Yankel son of Gersh Nepolsky³⁹
- 141.⁴⁰ Benjamin Chaim Yankel son of David Raiz
142. Shepshel Mortkhel Rubin
143. Urya son of Benjamin Braude
144. Mier son of Semen Dygilev
145. Shepshel son of Abram Rubinovich
146. Leizer son of Aizik Vilinkin

³⁸ This seems to be an erroneous second listing of entry 100.

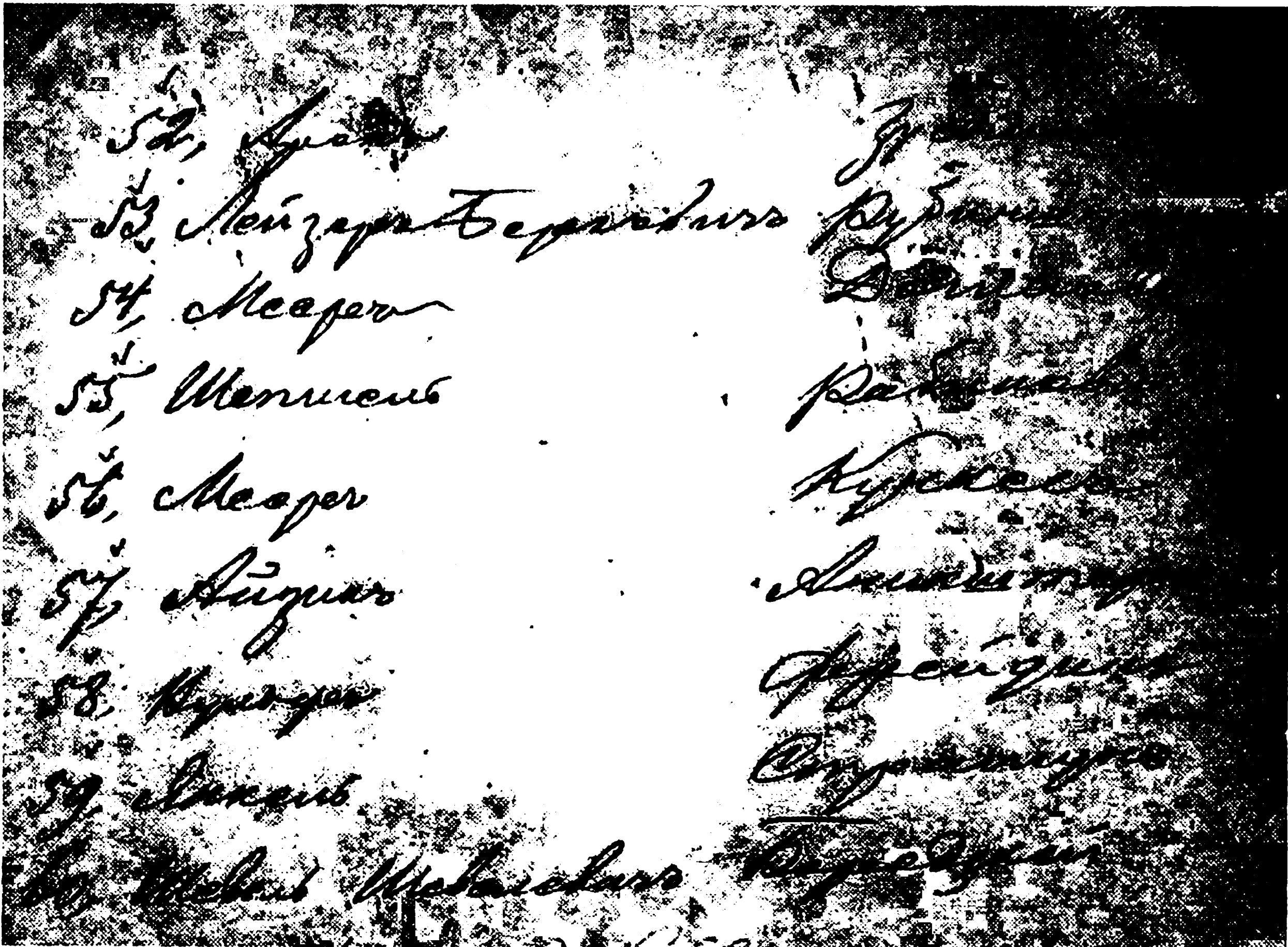
³⁹ This seems to be an erroneous second listing of entry 44.

⁴⁰ This entry should have been numbered 142, but is mistakenly listed as (a second) 141. Thus, in the original document the total number of entries on the Pristav's list concludes with entry number 146, when in fact 147 entries are listed. See, however, notes 37, 38, and 39 which indicate that three different persons were mistakenly listed twice. Thus, the total number of different persons listed on the Pristav's list is 144.

Appendix



List 1, Entries 21-27 and 48-54



List 2, End

[illegible]

List 3, Entries 1-4

[illegible]

Deposition of Rabbi Berlin and Signature

[illegible]

Deposition of Isaac Anixter and Signature