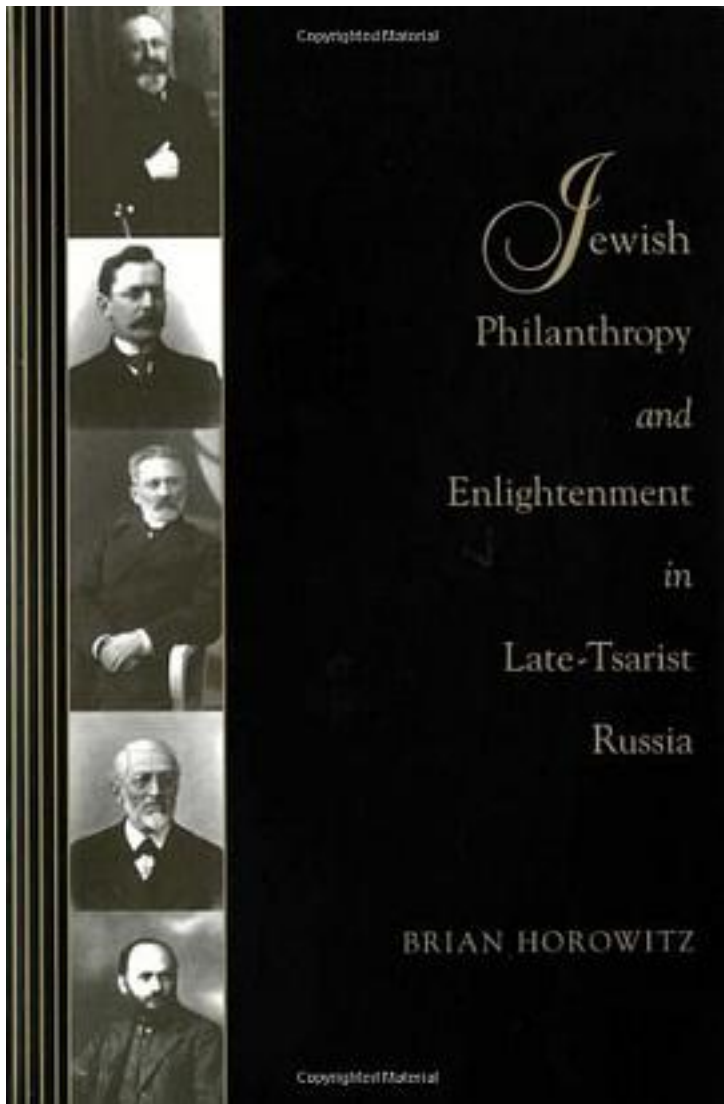


Jewish Philanthropy and Enlightenment in Late-Tsarist Russia



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The Society for the Promotion of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia (OPE) was a philanthropic organization, the oldest Jewish organization in Russia. Founded by a few wealthy Jews in St. Petersburg who wanted to improve opportunities for Jewish people in Russia by increasing their access to education and modern values, OPE was secular and nonprofit. The group emphasized the importance of the unity of Jewish culture to help Jews integrate themselves into Russian society by opening, supporting, and subsidizing schools throughout the country. While reaching out to Jews across Russia, OPE encountered opposition on all fronts. It was hobbled by the bureaucracy and sometimes outright hostility of the Russian government, which imposed strict regulations on all aspects of Jewish lives. The OPE was also limited by the many disparate voices within the Jewish community itself. Debates about the best type of schools (secular or religious, co-educational or single-sex, traditional or 'modern') were constant. Even the choice of language for the schools was hotly debated. "Jewish Philanthropy and Enlightenment in Late-Tsarist Russia" offers a model of individuals and institutions struggling with the concern so central to contemporary Jews in America and around the world: how to retain a strong Jewish identity, while fully integrating into modern society. Brian Horowitz is Sizeler Family Chair of Jewish Studies and director of the German and Slavic Studies Department, Tulane University. He is the author of "The Myth of A. S. Pushkin in Russia's Silver Age".

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