Introduction

On August 26, 1827, Nicholas I issued the Law on Conscription Duty, targeting Jews in the western provinces of the Russian Empire, known as the Pale of Jewish Settlement. He intended to make these Jews useful, and ended up making them imperial. The Pale of Settlement Jews feared that their induction into the military would transform them into Russian Christians; they did not expect that it would turn them into Russian Jews. In the long run, the army service wrought changes in the Jews' physical appearance, forged new forms of Jewish consciousness, facilitated the acquisition of new skills, ignited Jewish patriotic fervor, militarized Russian and Jewish public discourse, and opened for Jewish soldiers the doors to equality and emancipation. This volume examines the military service of the roughly million-and-a-half East European Jews who served in the Russian army between 1827 and 1917, tracing their evolution from tolerated aliens into His Majesty's loyal subjects.

Notwithstanding Catherine the Great's previous efforts to integrate Jews formally into society as merchants or urban dwellers, Jewish conscription constituted the autocratic Russian regime's first aggressive attempt to bring them into the empire. Unchallenged for some thirty years before Alexander II's Great Reforms, this measure had more dramatic ramifications than Nicholas I's later bid to acculturate Jews by means of state schooling or by subjecting their traditional communities to the authority of the Crown Rabbis (*kazennye ravviny*). Russia drafted its Jews into the empire before permitting them to educate themselves through it or to engage it politically.

While, elsewhere in Europe, the introduction of the draft put an end to the Jews' exclusion from society at large and from the body politic, the conscription of Russian Jews was a unique enterprise. In Austria, Prussia, and France, the army helped transform a society of subjects into a society of citizens, serving as an intensive school for the creation and training of a new man: the "citizen-soldier," to use the language of Jean-Paul Bertaud. Jews in these countries entered the draft pool either simultaneously with the extension to them of civil rights or immediately thereafter. Austria admitted Jews into the army in 1788–1789, France in 1792, and Prussia in 1813. European rulers saw

Jewish personal military duty as an essential precondition for full Jewish equality. If Jews sought civil parity, it seemed commonsensical that they should be required to fulfill their obligation to the state that conferred upon them the yearned-for privileges. The readiness of Jews to sacrifice their lives for their country demonstrated to Austrians, Prussians, and French that they deserved equal rights.

Unlike the way it happened in Europe, Russia simply and summarily drafted her Jews into the state. For nineteenth-century Russian rulers duties superseded rights, and the obligations of the individual to the state overrode the state's responsibilities to the individual. Jews were required to serve for twenty-five years, obtaining no civil freedoms in exchange for this enormous, mandatory sacrifice. The moment they joined their regiments, their families and communities regarded them as dead. It was not until nearly a century after they had begun serving in the military that Russia emancipated its Jews; even then, the change occurred only as a result of the demise of the old regime, in February 1917.

Nourishing and Challenging Popular Legends

With the exception of pogroms, no other issue in nineteenth-century Russian history has aroused as much bitterness among East European Jewish historians as has Jewish conscription. Yiddish, Russian, and Hebrew historical narratives regard the conscripted Jew as the contemporary embodiment of the biblical Joseph, whose brothers sold him into Egyptian bondage. The traditional Jewish community, the merciless sons of Israel (Jacob's biblical name), sold their defenseless teenaged brothers to idol worshippers; that is to say, they allowed the *kahal*, or East European communal organization, to conscript their youth into the Russian army. Both professional and amateur Jewish historians invoke the story of a betrayed and abandoned Jewish boy, associating Jewish service in the Russian military with religiously conceived exile. The shtetl family is portrayed as the heartbroken Jacob and Rachel, bemoaning the untimely loss of their son. It comes as no surprise that dozens of stories and memoirs, generally regarded as trustworthy, tell the story of an alleged real figure captured by merciless *khapers*, the communal kidnappers: he was the only son of a neighbors' family, sometimes named Yossele, the Yiddish diminutive for Joseph, or Ierukhim, perhaps Hebrew for "God, have mercy."

The myth was so powerful that, as Yuri Lotman once observed, life began imitating literature; memoirists often accounted in their autobiographies for what they read, not for what they had experienced. In every shtetl there was a Jew claiming to have a widowed neighbor whose son had been captured by the *kahal* and dispatched to the army. This massive corpus of literary sources provided a convenient pool of images shaping Jewish memories. Only at the beginning of the twentieth century did the narrative change; the theme of exile gave way to the image of a captive Jew who became a soldier and succeeded in maintaining his Jewish identity, albeit no longer a purely religious one. This version, too, was prefigured by the biblical Joseph, who, *mutatis mutandis*, not

only survived his exile but, due to his extraordinary talents, prevailed. The Siberian snows had replaced the Egyptian desert.

Students of East European Jewry found it difficult to free themselves from the grip of their traditional narratives. Jewish memory perceived current experience as a manifestation of the biblical narrative; "though the actors change, the scenario remains fundamentally the same."[1] The encounter of East European Jews with the Russian military fitted this paradigm perfectly. If it was not the treacherous sale of Joseph, it could be Rachel bemoaning the fate of her children, Hannah sacrificing her sons, or even Abraham offering Isaac. Appealing to Jewish collective memory, Jewish historians rarely considered the introduction of conscription for Russian Jews as part of a general European process of modernization. Instead, they depicted it in terms of exile, suffering, starvation, humiliation, and forced baptism, all of which are utterly alien to the enlightened spirit of modernity. They identified the military with the imperial administration, deeming both to be backward, intolerant, and anti-Jewish. The military acted precisely upon orders from the autocratic Russian Pharaoh. Conscription was a cruel device of Nicholas I, a noted antisemite, expressly designed to put an end to what he himself had described as "one of the most harmful religions."[2]

Jewish historians did not notice that, according to Nicholas I, religions were essentially harmful. Nicholas I's vision, as will be discussed later, betrayed a strong Enlightenment agenda, and therefore demanded a context of enlightened politics. But the collective memory could not conceive of Nicholas I in terms of the Enlightenment; Jewish history in Russia was uniformly regarded as a book of tears. The realities of the twentieth century shaped the Jewish vision of the nineteenth. The historical narratives of Russian Jews sought to instill a spirit of ethnic solidarity with suffering brethren. Narratives of Russian Jewish conscription were not appreciably different from medieval and early modern chronicles of Jewish martyrdom. The Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed; Jews were exiled from the Holy Land; and new calamities replicated old ones. This cyclical vision of Jewish history defied modern historical sensibilities, but vividly conveyed genuine Jewish feelings about past events and the significance Jews adduced to them. The Russian army came to exemplify the evil realm of Esau. Ending up in the army signified spiritual, if not physical, death. New myths came to replace the old ones: a nineteenth-century Russian Jewish writer resorted to the romantic imagery of Goethe's *Erlkönig* (the Forest King) to tell the story of a Jewish boy who died out of fear of conscription.[3]

[1] Haim Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 37.

[2] V. O. Levanda, ed., *Polnyi khronologicheskii sbornik zakonov i polozhenii kasaiushchikhsia evreev, ot ulozheniia Tsaria Alekseia Mikhailovicha do nastoiashchego vremeni, 1649–1873 g.* (SPb.: Tip. K. V. Trubnikova, 1874), 261–262.

[3] Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *Evrei v russkoi armii, 1827–1914* (M.: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2003), 384–387.

The themes of exile and suffering, generally referred to in Yiddish as *golus* (in Hebrew, *galut*), permeated every important Jewish narrative of the past. In 1912, Joseph Boyarsky, an American Jew of East European origin and an amateur historian, related that, in 1827, Jews received the order to serve in the army. They had to undergo "actual service, twenty-five years, with very small pay, next to nothing." The authorities imposed "cruel treatment" upon them. Indeed, "[o]nly conversions saved them from suffering."[4] Simon Dubnow, a preeminent historian today regarded as the founder of East European Jewish historiography, wrote, in his three-volume history of Polish and Russian Jews, that the promulgated "military constitution" surpassed the Jews' worst expectations. Their conscription was received as a sudden blow that destroyed their lifestyle, their time-honored traditions, and their religious ideals. They endured their prolonged service amid extraordinary hardship. Their commanders beat and ridiculed them "because of their inability to express themselves in Russian, their refusal to eat *treifa*, and their general lack of adaptation to the strange environment and to the military mode of life."[5] Iulii Gessen, another prominent Russian Jewish historian much less well known in the West, argued that Nicholas I devised conscription in order to "effectively break the religious and national structure of Jewish life."[6] Echoing East European scholars such as Dubnow and Gessen, Louis Greenberg further dramatized this issue. In his view, military service concealed the malicious agenda of baptizing the Jews.[7]

Salo Baron, the first holder of a Jewish studies chair in the United States, repeatedly argued against what he dubbed the "lachrymose" concept of Jewish history that presented historical narratives as unremitting martyrdom. Ironically, Baron's otherwise acute sense of social context abandoned him in his analysis of conscription; there he bowed to the Jewish collective memory. It is perhaps because of his influence that subsequent historians described the draftees as "Jewish victims of the *rekrutchina*" (conscription).[8] Among the

[4] Joseph Boyarsky, *The Life and Suffering of the Jew in Russia: A Historical Review of Russia's Advancement Beginning with the Year 987 A.D. to the Close of the Nineteenth century; a Description of the Special Laws Enacted against the Jews and Reasons Thereof* (Los Angeles: Citizen Print Shop, 1912), 49.

[5] Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland: From the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, trans. I. Friedlander (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916–1920), 2:21, 28–29.

[6] Iulii Gessen, *Istoria evreev v Rossii* (SPb: L. Ia. Ganzburg, 1914), 200.

[7] Greenberg uses heavily charged language: "In addition to the sadism engendered by the military system, officials were led by their anxiety to please the monarch to employ the cruel means mentioned above to gain converts." In other words, there was no way out for a drafted Jew, whether a twelve-year-old cantonist or an adult, other than to be baptized. Those who resisted and who managed secretly to practice Judaism "were committed to prisons and monasteries and subjected to 'corrective' torments, which many of them endured for years without recanting their original faith." See Louis Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia: The Struggle for Emancipation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), 1:51–52.

[8] Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jews under Tsar and Soviets* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 35–38. Russian Jewish historians, surveying nineteenth-century East European Jewry, vividly depicted the suffering of Jewish soldiers, which improved the lives only of drafted children. See,

previous generation of Jewish historians, only Saul Ginsburg and Isaac Levitats, both known for their balanced and nuanced judgments, cautiously expressed some doubt about the received wisdom, noting that conversion may not have been entirely the motive for Jewish conscription.[9] However, the myth prevailed. Emulating the classics of the religiously shaped Jewish historiography such as *Zikhron Yaakov* by Jacob Lipmann Lipschitz, the collective memory of Russian Jews absorbed the story of Joseph's enslavement and exile into what Thomas Mann called the "Egyptian pit."

Fernand Braudel famously suggested that one consider geography for an understanding of historical continuities.[10] Unlike western and central Europe, where Jewish migration was sometimes limited but Jewish residence mostly was not, the kidney-shaped Pale of Jewish Settlement, occupying fifteen western provinces of the empire, seemed an impenetrable border. In the 1820s, only Jewish guild merchants and Jewish alcohol distillers were allowed into Russia's interior. For the one million Jews whom Russia inherited from Poland following the Polish Partitions of 1772–1795, the Pale was a swarming, albeit Jewish, place of residence, whereas Russia's interior was anything but a Jewish realm. At the end of the nineteenth century, no more than 4 percent of Jews resided beyond the Pale; as of 1820, this figure was so minuscule as to be inconsequential. Abolished de jure only in February 1917, the early nineteenth-century Pale circumscribed the settlement and legal inequality of the Russian Jews. Both imperial capitals were closed to Jews. Relatives of Jewish conscripts serving in Austria, France, or Prussia could visit them in their barracks, but Jews in the Pale were unable to do so, either legally or financially. The latter families bemoaned their losses because they felt that their sons were being sent away, outside the Pale, and into the army – forever. To a shtetl Jew, the Russian interior was comparable to the biblical Jew's Egypt: a vast, mighty land, immersed in idolatry, brimming with filth, and frighteningly non-Jewish. In this unimagined territory, family and community were both too remote to offer any assistance. Geography came to signify time.

Jewish narratives of the Russian Jewish military experience are colored by biblical and liturgical patterns of historical reconstruction and by a certain misleading reductionism. With all due respect to the religious sensibilities of traditional nineteenth-century East European Jews, one should question their claims that Jews on Russian army service should not be regarded as Jews. Contrary to the assumptions of Jewish historians, the Jews who served in the Russian army had much in common with their brethren in the Pale. Additionally, depressing stories about a twenty-five-year term of service obfuscate

among others, Henry Tobias, *The Jewish Bund in Russia: From Its Origins to 1905* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972), 2.

[9] Isaac Levitats, *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1772–1844* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 59, n. 49.

[10] See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 23.

the fact that, beginning in the mid-1830s, this term was reduced to fifteen years for all recruits. Finally, being conscripted into the reformed army of 1874 differed considerably from being drafted into the pre-reform army of 1827; consequently, the service of Jewish soldiers also differed. Whatever the emphasis on change or continuity between the two Russian armies, pre-reform and reformed, it is misleading to discuss late nineteenth-century military duty in terms of the conscription of the 1820s. After 1874, the country was in flux, the army was different, and Jewish society underwent significant changes. Nonetheless, one should not dismiss altogether Jewish popular narratives; an object of study in their own right, they provide cultural historians with an opportunity to trace the history of feelings and meanings embedded in the writings of the founders of East European Jewish historiography, who resolutely disassociated European modernization from the Russian experience.

The first revision of the Russian Jewish military encounter belongs to Michael Stanislawski, although the Cold War cast a shadow on his research. While the American military historian William Fuller obtained access to Russian archives (despite anti-American animosity) and an American Slavicist, John Klier, obtained access to Jewish archival documents by pretending he was researching Russian history, Stanislawski could not access Jewish sources in the archives of the former USSR. Instead, he employed broad contextualization, placing Nicholas I among the enlightened European monarchs, exhausting the primary sources available in the United States, and ultimately arriving at the conclusion that still holds true thirty years later, in light of the thousands of newly available documents: Nicholas I did not intend to baptize the Jews through conscription; rather, he intended to integrate them into the larger Russian culture by "standardizing them through the military."[11] Yet, even if Nicholas I's intentions had become transparent when studied in context, Russian primary sources were required to describe Jewish experience in the army. Lacking these, Stanislawski drew heavily upon available Jewish narratives, according to which a Jew serving under Nicholas I had little alternative to converting to Christianity. Most recent English- and Hebrew-language books about Jews in the Russian army further elaborated this view. Its power is so pervasive that students of Russian Jewry working in Russia with access to archives were scandalized by a dissenting opinion. Indeed, their bias stemmed from a parochial community-focused approach to the Jewish conscription.[12]

This book seeks to further demythologize traditional historical narratives, drawing upon the writings of John Klier and other colleagues who described the

[11] Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), 15.

[12] See, for example, critical reviews of my Russian-language monograph on the Jews and the Russian army, such as Aleksandr Lokshin, *Ab Imperio*, no. 4 (2003): 659–666; Valerii Dymshits, "Igra v soldatiki," *Narod knigi v mire knig*, no. 2 (2004): 9–11; Mark Shteinberg, "Chto zhe delali evrei v russkoi armii?" *Mezhdunarodnaia evreiskaia gazeta*, no. 49 (2003). Some of the suggestions in these (and other) reviews convinced me to include in the English book a comparative account of Jewish combat performance and Jewish military acculturation.

Jewish encounter with the Russian military. Although this volume refutes Klier's assumption that Nicholas I "envisioned military service as an assault upon the religious beliefs of the Jews," it corroborates and elaborates upon other of his findings. Klier correctly claimed that raw statistics provide an indispensable source for a nuanced understanding of Russian Jewish conversion, and that the Russian Orthodox Church was reluctant to perform such conversions.[13] He also asserted that the large number of Jewish minors drafted, while a moral burden to their communities, was not the consequence of a criminal decision by the regime. *Jews in the Russian Army* concurs with Klier that, from the inception of the Great Reforms, Jewish conscription precipitated a perennial argument over Jewish emancipation between the Jewish enlightened leadership and Russian Judeophobes.[14] This study maintains that, until 1917, Russian Jews increasingly supported the imperial army. Their patriotism was evinced by the disproportionately large number of Jewish recruits, who proved their civic responsibility and their eligibility for full Russian citizenship. At the same time, Russia's conservative social institutions and her military hierarchy propagated the myth of Jewish draft dodging, primarily to forestall any discussion of Jewish civic equality. Consequently, Jewish soldiers became a central focus of the integrationist agenda; debate as to whether or not the Jews deserved the Russian version of modernity raged across the entire Russian political spectrum.

Benjamin Nathans undertook another significant step toward understanding the role of the military in modernizing the Russian Jewish political discourse. Although the army was not the focus of his groundbreaking research on Jews living outside the Pale of Settlement (that is to say, the most acculturated, integrated, and imperialized Russian Jews), Nathans made a number of observations that assist in demythologizing the encounter between Jews and the Russian army. He demonstrated the extent to which military service was part of Russian Jewish emancipation. Jewish deputies (*shtadlans*) in the capital spared no effort in convincing the authorities that Jews who completed military service should be accorded permission to settle outside the Pale of Settlement. Military authorities maintained that the empire's civil regulations should not affect Jews in the military or reserve soldiers. These and other observations of Nathans confirm that the military saw itself as a separate entity, with its own laws; that Jewish soldiers who finished their service (including the cantonists) became thoroughly Russified while still retaining their Jewish identity; and that restoring the imperial context corrects some misleading assumptions upon which previous scholarship had rested. *Jews in the Russian Army* further develops these ideas, demonstrating that, in a country as vast as Russia,

[13] John Klier, "State Policies and the Conversion of Jews in Imperial Russia," in Robert P. Gerachi and Michael Khodarkovsky, eds., *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 93–112.

[14] John Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question, 1855–1881* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 332–349 (Chapter 14, "Dead souls: Jews and the military reform of 1874").

permission to settle outside the Pale became the center of a debate in St. Petersburg, solved by the local administration and by military authorities elsewhere. Nineteenth-century Russian history was imperial but not homogeneous: local histories and grassroots reconstruction provide a more nuanced vision of Russian realities.

Unlike its Russian version, the present English edition virtually excludes literary references, and dispenses with a separate discussion of the image of the Jewish soldier in Russian Jewish literary discourse; Olga Litvak, in her monograph on the literary responses to conscription, has substantially addressed this topic.[15] Litvak explored the many traditional Jewish myths that shaped the portrayal of Jewish recruits in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian belles lettres. She represented the military experience in Russian Jewish discourse as a tension "between the ideological embrace of modernity and persistent anxiety about its disruptive social effects." Her approach suggested a promising prospect of exploring the Jewish encounter with the Russian army using the method of social imaginary – something that still remains a scholarly desideratum. It is particularly instructive that, as Litvak noted, the images of Jewish soldiers "mobilize the meaning of exile" in the Jewish imagination, not only for Jewish lay readers but also for Jewish historians of the early twentieth century.

Like Litvak's monograph, an extensive essay by Mordechai Zalkin shed light on yet other feedback to conscription: that of the rabbinic leadership.[16] Zalkin assembled a wide array of literary sources, rabbinic responsa and correspondence, memoirs, nineteenth-century Jewish historiography, and articles in the contemporary Yiddish and Hebrew press in order to reconstruct a complex, but by no means homogeneous, perception of the Jewish conscription by East European rabbis, including Hasidic. Although Zalkin's emphasis was on the contemporary criticism of the elitist approach of rabbinic leadership to the praxis of the draft, he pointed out the existing – and unbridgeable – gap between the grassroots reality of the conscription and the *halakhic* (related to Judaic Law) debates about "whom to have drafted." Zalkin is quite right assuming that in most cases East European rabbis, with all their good intentions, could not influence the communal decisions to exempt members of financial and intellectual elite from the conscription; as a result, the draftees came from poor families. However, both Litvak's and Zalkin's musings about "social effects" and "reality" need a much better comparative perspective and broader historical, social, military, and cultural context – exactly what *Jews in the Russian Army* seeks to recreate.

[15] Olga Litvak, *Conscription and the Search for Modern Russian Jewry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), cf. Petrovsky-Shtern, *Evrei v russkoi armii*, 357–413.

[16] Mordechai Zalkin, "Bein 'bnei elohim' li-'vnei adam': rabanim, behurei yeshivot ve-ha-giyus la-tsava ha-rusi ba-me'ah ha-19," in Bar-Levav, Avriel, ed., *Shalom u-milhamah ba-tarbut ha-yehudit* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 2006), 165–222.

Drafting European Jews

One of the key tools in the creation of modern European empires was the social transformation engendered by military service. The need to convert tolerated subjects into loyal citizens engaged in the defense of a state with which they had come to identify loomed large in the state-making agendas of European monarchs, ranging from Joseph II and Nicholas I to Napoleon and Friedrich Wilhelm III. They viewed military duty as a means of recasting feudal state members of disparate social, ethnic, or religious groups into the empire's mold. Standardizing the empire started with the standardization of loyalties. The military draft realized a multifaceted agenda: it replaced any loyalties to a corporate group with loyalty to the state and its institutions; it provided military training, enabling the troops to fight more effectively than did the mercenaries; it exerted control over the various groups who comprised the draft population; and it forged a military-based process of citizenship and state-building.

The state administrations asserted that the readiness of individuals to perform military duty manifested their loyalty and their preparedness for citizenship. Although making Jews useful was a top priority of various European programs for what French enlightened politicians called the regeneration of the Jews, the utilitarian agenda was not the only driving force behind their conscription. Sometimes Jews found themselves included in the draft pool because of a ruler's political or philosophical convictions, such as his devotion to the *Polizeistaat* (well-managed state) concept or to an Enlightenment agenda, rather than for practical reasons. In Austria, for example, Joseph II decided to draft Jews against the advice of his war ministry; his radical ideology prevailed over his pragmatism. He argued that "[a] Jew 'as a man and as a fellow-citizen' had duties that could not be palmed off, duties he was obligated to perform in person."[17]

Ten years before the French National Assembly concluded that the army was the ideal institution for promoting good citizenship, Joseph II resolved that military service was a pivotal crucible for forging useful subjects. Jews, seen through the prism of Enlightenment as nonproductive, if not parasitic, would have to undergo cultural Germanization, legal unification, and militarization. These three measures were crucial in transforming the Jews of Austria, devoted to their corporate groups, communities, and territory, into Habsburg Jews. Joseph's resolution to draft his Jewish subjects conformed to the utilitarian goals stated in his 1782 Edict of Tolerance, and resulted largely from his discovery that the partition of Poland had doubled his country's Jewish population. In 1788, he ordered the conscription of Jews, allowing their enlistment into the transportation and artillery corps as drivers and auxiliaries. In

[17] See Michael Silber, "From Tolerated Aliens to Citizen-Soldiers: Jewish Military Service in the Era of Joseph II," in Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rozenblit, eds., *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe* (New York: Berghann Books, 2005), 19–36, here 25–26.

1789, the imperial administration extended obligatory military service first to traditional-minded Galician Jewry and then to Jews in the entire Austrian empire, who enrolled in the infantry.

Between 1790 and 1806, as Joseph's successor curtailed the enlightened Jewish policy, the war ministry allowed Jews to replace conscripts with ransom. But, with the campaign against Napoleon, Jews once again found themselves in the conscription pool. In Austria, some 36,200 Jews entered active service during the second decade of the nineteenth century. This number more than ten times exceeded the number of East European Jews to whom Russia extended the draft ten years later. Although the military bureaucracy rejected the idea of organizing Jewish conscripts into a single army unit to facilitate the observance of their religious rites, it did allow some important concessions. For instance, it commissioned new uniforms, manufactured so as to satisfy the requirements of the biblical laws of *sha'atnez*, which prohibited the interweaving of flax and wool.[18] The rabbinical leadership grudgingly supported the new social demands upon their brethren: Rabbi Ezekiel Landau of Prague praised Jewish obedience to the state, while Rabbi Ishmael Cohen, in his *Zerah Emet* collection of responsa, permitted the Jews of Mantova (which was then Austrian territory) to bear arms on the Sabbath.[19]

Perhaps as early as 1802, and certainly by 1815, the Austrian War Council allowed Jewish army privates to become officers. In 1825, it accepted Jewish doctors into the military at the officer rank. At the same time, it severely limited Jewish upward mobility in the territorial reserve and judicial corps. Before the formal emancipation of Austro-Hungarian Jews, in the 1850s–1860s, there were between 10,000 and 20,000 Jewish regular troops participating in military campaigns. Some of them, like Karl Strass of Bohemia, volunteered for a light infantry regiment. In 1849, at the age of twenty-one, he became the first Jewish lieutenant in the emperor's Hungarian hussar regiment.[20] Thanks to the emancipation of 1867, Austrian Jews liberated themselves from the last vestiges of medieval inequality. Grateful to the emperor, they welcomed the introduction of universal conscription. After 1867, the number of Jews in the army grew rapidly, reaching 60,000 in 1902, which constituted 4 percent of the army: a

[18] See Deut. 22: 11, and *Shulkhan Arukh*, Yoreh Deah 299: 4.

[19] See Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 149, and Shlomo See Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantova* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1977), 96, n. 304. Significantly, the greater the level of Jewish acculturation, the more they were willing to serve in the military. Thus, Mantua and Trieste (ironically, both communities exempt from the conscription) supported the idea of obligatory Jewish service, whereas Galician Jews protested. See Simonsohn, *Jews in the Duchy of Mantova*, 475, n. 501. The letter of the Trieste Jewish community supporting the new civic duty as the way to teach Jews to "love labor and hate idleness" influenced the perception of Jewish military service among Jews in German-speaking lands. See Dubin, *The Port Jews*, 150–151.

[20] On his career, see István Deák, *Jewish Soldiers in Austro-Hungarian Society: Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture*, no. 34 (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1990), 8–9.