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The Ḥatam Sofer's Nuanced Attitude Towards Secular Learning, Maskilim, and Reformers

Introduction

Rabbi Moshe Sofer (1762-1839), commonly referred to as Ḥatam Sofer (after the title of his famous halakhic work), served as Rabbi of Pressburg, a major city in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, beginning in 1806. Subsequently, he became one of the principal leaders of the Orthodox Jewish community in Central Europe in the first four decades of the 19th century. R. Sofer was at the forefront of the orthodox struggles against the Jewish Reform movement.¹ A towering halakhic authority whose rulings and opinions were sought by many from near and far, he was also known as a *zaddik* and as a person of unwavering principles to which he adhered regardless of the personal struggle required.² He was charismatic and was reputed to be graced with the Divine Spirit,

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even to receive visions of events in the future and in far away places.³ As a result, he had a profound influence on religious Jewry, particularly in Hungary, Poland, and all of Central Europe, both during and after his lifetime. His views on many religious issues continue to carry great weight to this day.

Ḥatam Sofer's influence was enhanced by the yeshivah which he founded in Pressburg in about 1806. It eventually became the largest yeshivah in all of Europe,⁴ probably unrivaled in size since the great yeshivot of the Babylonian Gaonim one thousand years earlier. His yeshivah served as a bastion of Orthodox Jewry in central Europe. Its graduates were appointed to leading rabbinical positions and were prominent in the battles against the Jewish Reform movement throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Ḥatam Sofer has been portrayed by his close disciple, R. Hillel Lichtenstein (as well as by the latter's son-in-law, R. Akiva Yosef Schlesinger), as extremely zealous and rigid in his opposition to certain practices and trends. They reported him as extremely antagonistic to secular studies and to the *Haskalah* and Reform movements in general, and as hostile to certain individual adherents in particular. In their view, Ḥatam Sofer's attitudes are typified by his well-known slogans: "All that is new, is forbidden by the Torah";⁵ "The children of Israel go forth with *Yad Rama*"⁶ (reflecting his insistence on strict adherence to the *Shulḥan Arukh*); "If we would have the power, it would be my view to expel them [the Reformers] from our borders . . . and their community would be like the community of Zadok, Bietas, Anan, and Shaul".⁷ This is the view of Ḥatam Sofer commonly held today.

However, for a more rounded, complete and accurate understanding of Ḥatam Sofer's views on secular learning, *maskilim*⁸ and reformers, one must look at the wider record. I will argue that such examination discloses a much more variegated and nuanced attitude—even, at first glance, ambivalence. His views appear to have changed over time, progressively becoming more stringent, especially in the last few years of his life.⁹ We will also explore R. Sofer's attitude to the use of German, especially in preaching, since this was affected by his views regarding secular studies.

Secular Studies and the Use of the German Language

In order to understand Ḥatam Sofer's attitude, we must examine the following four different kinds of evidence, always considering their time

and context. Such a breakdown permits a comparison of Ḥatam Sofer's attitude as indicated by one type of evidence with that reflected in other types. There are four main sources of evidence regarding Ḥatam Sofer's attitude:

(a) Ḥatam Sofer's own actions, including written approbations issued for books. (b) Testimony regarding his attitude by those who were personally close to him. These include his children, grandchildren, leading disciples, and confidants. (c) Attitudes of these relatives and confidants, themselves. Since they revered Ḥatam Sofer, regarding him as their role model, we may assume that their views reflected his. (d) R. Sofer's writings, including his responsa, *derashot*, and letters.

Actions

Numerous acts of Ḥatam Sofer reflect a favorable attitude toward secular learning. Thus, he lived in Mainz as a young man and spent considerable time studying and gaining proficiency in a wide variety of secular subjects, including geography, mathematics, history and astronomy.¹⁰ These studies are described by a disciple, R. Leib Landsberg¹¹ and by a grandson, R. Shelomoh Sofer. The latter wrote, "He was expert in geometry and algebra. . . . He had a vast knowledge of mathematics. . . . He was also expert in anatomy . . . and, similarly, he was an expert in astronomy and physics . . . and he began to write a book on these disciplines in order that this knowledge should be available to his disciples. . . ."¹²

One of Ḥatam Sofer's disciples reported that an expert mathematician once visited Ḥatam Sofer and showed him a complex mathematical problem that he had been unable to solve. Ḥatam Sofer solved the problem in minutes and the expert expressed his astonishment. Ḥatam Sofer retorted, "You work with *regel*, but I work with my head." [*Regel* in German, means regular or ordinary. In Hebrew, it means, foot.]¹³

In later years, R. Sofer read the *haskalah* journals, *Bikkurei ha-Ittim* and *Ha-Me'asef*, and perused books on medicine and science written by non-Jews. He was in contact with some of these authors in connection with his halakhic responsa. At times, he disagreed with their views.¹⁴

Moreover, throughout his life, R. Sofer studied the classic medieval work on Jewish concepts and ethics, *Ḥovot ha-Levavot*, by R. Baḥya Ibn Pekuda, and urged his disciples to study it regularly.¹⁵ This may be further indication of a positive attitude to secular learning, as R. Baḥya presents a favorable attitude to the study of nature at the beginning of chapter 2.

His knowledge of secular studies, however, was not limited to scientific fields. R. Yaakov Zvi Hersch Fleissig, a disciple of Ḥatam Sofer, reported that Ḥatam Sofer had said that he surpassed philosophers in his knowledge of philosophy.¹⁶

Furthermore, according to one source, which is, admittedly, of doubtful validity, Ḥatam Sofer, in or about 1819, gave his consent to a proposal by R. David Katz Friesenhausen. The latter urged the establishment of rabbinical seminaries in Hungary, Galicia, Bohemia, and Moravia that would teach secular subjects. Their curriculum would include Latin and other languages, philosophy, and various secular disciplines, in addition to the Talmud and Codes.¹⁷ Eventually, even according to this source, R. Sofer withdrew his consent from the venture because of his fears regarding the spread of the Reform movement.¹⁸ But in 1820, R. Sofer (together with all the members of his *beit din*) consented to the establishment of a vocational school in Pressburg and signed the by-laws of its governing organization.¹⁹ The school trained students who were not able to study in the Yeshivah in carpentry, construction, weaving, shoe making, tailoring and farming.

Ḥatam Sofer also demonstrated a positive attitude towards secular studies in writing approbations for the publication of scientific books, and employment recommendations—even as Rabbi and *Rosh Yeshivah*—for authors of secular works.

Among the works for which he issued approbations was *Parpera'ot la-Ḥokhmah*²⁰ by K. Schwerloss. In that approbation, R. Sofer wrote, “He knows mathematics and showed his great knowledge in this work which he composed to ease the way for those who study Euclid, and I tasted the pleasant nectar of his words.”²¹ He similarly wrote, in 1833, in support of Loeb Leopold Dukas’ German translation of Rashi’s commentary on the first five books of the Torah, published in Prague. Ḥatam Sofer wrote that the author had studied in his Yeshivah in Pressburg, “. . . and, thereafter, turned to the way [which goes] through the vineyards of the wise men, in other wisdoms and in the languages of the nations. . . . When God will help him to print the rest of this work, I will purchase one copy at whatever the price is, and others should learn from me to do likewise, to support him and help him.”²² Apparently, he was pleased that his disciple had progressed in secular learning and had become fluent in the German language. (See below for Ḥatam Sofer’s views regarding use of German.)

In 1819, R. Sofer also wrote a warm letter for R. David Katz Freisenhausen, recommending him for a position as community Rabbi

and Rosh Yeshiva. Among other praises, the letter stated, “He is certainly worthy of appointment as rabbi in a large community and of establishing a yeshivah there for older and younger students. . . . All should honor him and his Torah, so that a community seeking a rabbi will know to appoint him to the post”.²³ As mentioned above, R. Katz Friesenhausen was noted for his expertise in many secular disciplines and authored books in Hebrew on these subjects. Additionally, Ḥatam Sofer wrote an approbation for *Shevilei Olam*,²⁴ a book on geography by Shimshon Ha-Levi Bloch. R. Sofer wrote, “In our community, he has distributed his books because they are useful”.²⁵ He likewise wrote a letter of recommendation for the poet Shelomoh Levinson, author of secular works, recommending him for a position in Vienna as the director of a Jewish school there.²⁶

At the request of a friend, Shelomoh Rosenthal, a *maskil* and philanthropist, Ḥatam Sofer wrote a number of letters in defense of one of the leading *maskilim* of that era, R. Shelomoh Yehudah Rappaport. R. Sofer had received many communications complaining about R. Rappaport’s religious views and actions, and lamenting R. Sofer’s persistent defenses of Rappaport. In fact, the sage R. Shelomoh Kluger, of Brody, had practically discontinued his relations with Ḥatam Sofer over this matter. Nevertheless, R. Sofer continued his defense of Rappaport, and later, also supported his candidacy to become Rabbi of Prague, one of the most important communities of Central Europe.²⁷ His last letter on behalf of Rappaport was written to the community of Tarnapol in 1839, just three months before R. Sofer’s death.

Ḥatam Sofer’s stand on the issues of secular studies and that of the German language were related to his fears regarding the growing laxity in religious observance. German was the key to secular culture (few, if any, books in Hebrew were available on secular disciplines); it also was emblematic of modernity and was the language of the pulpit for Reform rabbis. Ḥatam Sofer’s actions regarding use of the German language, nevertheless, indicate a degree of openness to its utilization.

Thus, R. Sofer hired a tutor to teach his sons and daughters German, including grammar, so that they would be able to read newspapers and be able to write letters and documents.²⁸ In 1821, he advised the city of Fuerth to hire R. Aharon Yehoshua Hertzfeld of Rawitz, who had not been a candidate, as their rabbi. R. Sofer emphasized that R. Hertzfeld, having mastered the German language in addition to his erudition in Torah, would be able to represent the Jewish community effectively before the non-Jewish authorities.²⁹ R. Sofer and his son, R.

Avraham Binyamin, also approved several of their disciples preaching in German. These disciples included R. Elazar Strasser, R. Israel Isaac Aaron Landsberg, and R. Yehiel Schlesinger. R. Sofer's son-in-law, R. Binyamin Shlomo Zalman Spitzer, also preached in German.³⁰

We have already seen Ḥatam Sofer's approbation of Dr. Dukas' German translation of Rashi. In 1834 (towards the end of his life), R. Sofer even approved a German translation of the Talmud by Dr. Ephraim Moshe Pinner. A year later, however, at the request of a number of rabbis (and for additional reasons which he refrained from disclosing), he publicly withdrew the approbation.³¹ In 1836, R. Sofer gave his approbation to a work in German, *Maḥaneh Yisrael*, by Ber Frank, (a confidant of his) and praised its "pure German". The work dealt with halakhic laws of special concern to women.³² R. Sofer also customarily recited the Haggadah on Passover eve in German, as well as in Hebrew, so that the children, and all present, would understand it.³³

Testimony By Those Who Knew R. Sofer Intimately

In addition to his own actions and recommendations, Ḥatam Sofer's approach to secular learning may be gleaned from the testimony of his disciples.

It is reported that R. Moshe Schick (generally regarded as R. Sofer's prime disciple) related that, initially, Ḥatam Sofer had consented to rabbinical seminaries that would teach secular subjects and German. Subsequently, he retracted his approval.³⁴ R. Schick also stated that "All who merited to go in his [R. Sofer's] shadow know that since his youth, he loved both Torah and secular learning, and that he encouraged his relatives and students to learn writing, language and whatever was necessary".³⁵ R. Schick additionally said that he had personally heard from his *rebbe* that the study of secular subjects and other languages was neither harmful nor forbidden in certain cases, specifically in the case of those who were true to the Torah, and who studied secular disciplines and foreign languages in order to be able to influence people.³⁶ Moreover, according to R. Schick, R. Sofer approved the use of the German language in preaching and otherwise if this would spread knowledge of the Torah and adherence to the Jewish faith.³⁷ This was in contrast to the views of numerous rabbis in Russia and Poland.³⁸

Similarly, R. Shimon Ehrenfeld, a grandson of R. Sofer, asserted that his grandfather had loved true wisdom and had never distanced himself from the sciences and secular studies. R. Sofer's reason was that they all

have their basis in the Torah. Any opposition that Ḥatam Sofer expressed to secular studies was directed against acquiring such learning from heretical books.³⁹ A similar thought was expressed in 1865, in an anonymous pamphlet published in Pressburg. It purported to be authored by a group of people who were students and contemporaries of Ḥatam Sofer, and who called themselves, “Torah Learners.” The pamphlet stated that, contrary to some claims, Ḥatam Sofer did not dislike secular studies in general, but disapproved of acquiring secular learning from books published by non-believers.⁴⁰ Another student of R. Sofer reported that his master was against study of secular subjects only out of fear that a pre-occupation with them might cause one to veer from Torah observance.⁴¹ R. Sofer’s high regard for those areas of secular learning needed for Torah studies was reported by his disciple, R. Yaakov Hirsch Ya’avetz ha-Levi. He added that his master had been well versed in those secular subjects needed for his study of Torah.⁴²

Rabbi Sofer’s disciple, R. Ḥezekiah Plaut, wrote that one year before he died, R. Sofer told his students as follows: those disciples who had been commanded by their parents to study and master “various matters” [matters other than Torah], are directed by him to learn [those matters] from gentiles, and not from Jewish scoffers (“*apikorsim*”).⁴³ This seems to imply that R. Sofer did not regard secular studies *per se* to be forbidden by religious law, but was only concerned with the context in which these studies were taught.

A follower of Ḥatam Sofer who favored secular learning reported that R. Sofer said, “The Torah is true and the wisdoms [are true], and two truths cannot contradict one another.”⁴⁴

However, Ḥatam Sofer’s close disciple, R. Hillel Lichtestein, reported a contrary view of his teacher’s attitude. We will discuss this conflicting opinion later.

The Attitude of The Ḥatam Sofer’s Children, His Closest Associates, and Disciples

The views of Ḥatam Sofer’s children also may reflect on the attitudes of Ḥatam Sofer himself. His son, R. Shimon Sofer, later rabbi of Cracow, served as a delegate to the Reichstadt in Vienna and spoke fluent German.⁴⁵ Moreover, Yeitel Geiger, R. Sofer’s daughter, spoke German, and one of his sons-in-law, R. Binyamin Shelomoh Zalman Spitzer, preached in German, and was fluent in that language.⁴⁶

Ḥatam Sofer’s son, R. Avraham Binyamin Sofer (known as *Ketav*

Sofer), was very close to his father, who designated him as his successor as Rabbi of Pressburg. In 1862, R. Avraham Binyamin approved the candidacy of R. Azriel Hildesheimer to become the head of the yeshivah of Pressburg and chief lecturer to the students there. R. Hildesheimer was well known for his advocacy of secular studies in yeshivot, and these subjects were taught in his yeshivah in Eisenstadt. R. Avraham Binyamin was, additionally, prepared to incorporate secular studies into the curriculum of the yeshivah of Pressburg, following this model.⁴⁷ R. Hildesheimer was also to become the “Second Rabbi” of the Pressburg community, and to deliver sermons in German. Subsequently, at a conference of two hundred Orthodox Rabbis in November 1868, R. Avraham Binyamin took a similar public stand, and suggested introducing secular studies in all yeshivot in order to comply with the compulsory education laws of the state.⁴⁸

It is generally assumed that R. Avraham Binyamin adopted his father’s views fully. Accordingly, if Ḥatam Sofer had, indeed, been inalterably opposed to secular studies, then it seems reasonable that his son would not have gone against his father’s wishes publicly. His proposal to incorporate secular studies in the curriculum of the Pressburg yeshivah would have been a resounding departure from his father’s position. Rather, the son may have followed his father’s own example in initially approving R. David Katz Friesenhausen’s proposal for rabbinical seminaries teaching secular studies (if the report by Shelomoh Schick, detailed above, is true). Perhaps R. Avraham Binyamin felt that his father’s reasons for subsequently withdrawing his approval no longer applied. Moreover, since state law now mandated secular studies, the talmudic principle of *dina de-malkhuta dina* (“the law of the kingdom becomes a law of the halakha”) governed. Furthermore, R. Avraham Binyamin may have felt that there was a greater need in his time for secularly trained Orthodox rabbis who were also fluent in German. Such rabbis would have greater rapport with their German-speaking congregants, and also would be more able to deal with the non-Jewish authorities. Accordingly, he may have reasoned that his father would now also have approved of secular studies.

In addition to his stance regarding secular studies in yeshivot, R. Avraham Binyamin recommended and backed the candidacy of R. Shraga Feivish Fishman to become the *maggid* of Pressburg and to preach in German. He also supported his disciple, R. Avraham Glassner, to become the rabbi of the Gyonk community, although R. Glassner had publicly declared that he would not cease reading secular books.⁴⁹ The permissive attitude towards secular learning in R. Sofer’s family is

expressed in a poignant entry in the diary of R. Avraham Glassner. He was married to a daughter of R. David Zevi Ehrenfeld (a son-in-law of R. Sofer), and was a close disciple of R. Avraham Binyamin. R. Glassner wrote that both his mother-in-law (R. Sofer's daughter) and his father-in-law had urged him to acquire general knowledge, or at least, knowledge of Hungarian and German. "A half-year ago, my mother-in-law . . . came to me, and my father-in-law agreed, when they saw that I did not occupy myself at all with secular books. They pressed me strongly, saying, 'Why don't you also study other subjects? At least, go learn the Hungarian language and the language of studies [German] in good taste and reason, because these are crucial. It is not possible to attain any position without these two languages.'" ⁵⁰

Like those of Ḥatam Sofer's family, the views of his close disciples reflect his own proclivities. R. Mosheh Schick maintained that the study of secular subjects and languages was permitted to those who were well versed in all aspects of Torah; specifically, those who had acquired adequate knowledge of Talmud and the Codes. Such scholars would not be harmed by such studies. Moreover, community rabbis would benefit from secular knowledge. It would increase their stature with their congregants, and would therefore help them to improve the religious and moral status of their flock. Secular learning would also help them to dispel false impressions about Judaism. ⁵¹ Moreover, R. Schick sent his son to study at R. Azriel Hildesheimer's yeshiva in Eisenstadt, where the curriculum included secular studies. The language of instruction was German. ⁵² R. Schick also ruled that schools for children could teach secular subjects together with religious studies, if the teachers were Heaven-fearing and glorified Torah over all other disciplines. He noted that an Orthodox journal in Germany had reported that such schools had been established throughout that country, with marvelous results. ⁵³

R. Zalman Banhart, another of R. Sofer's close disciples who officiated as a *dayan* in R. Sofer's *beit din*, wrote a letter to R. Azriel Hildesheimer. He expressed delight that R. Hildesheimer had consented ". . . to explain in proper German style all that I have written in my German (in Hebrew letters) . . . so that it may be understood by all men and women who seek to read it." ⁵⁴ Similarly, R. Yisrael Isaac Aaron Landsberg, who dined at R. Sofer's table every Shabbat and studied under him for approximately nine years, was well versed in secular studies. ⁵⁵

Numerous disciples of Ḥatam Sofer served as community rabbis or preachers, with his blessing. He was aware that they would preach their sermons in German. These rabbis included R. Elazar Strasser, R. Israel

Isaac Aaron Landsberg, and many others. R. Yehiel Schlesinger, another disciple, later preached in German every Sabbath in Pressburg, after R. Sofer's death.⁵⁶ Rabbi Daniel Prostitz, head of the Pressburg *Beit Din*, and a confidant of the Ḥatam Sofer, wrote in 1841 to Ketav Sofer that one could recommend as a rabbi one who was a master of German and well versed in secular studies, if the candidate was adorned with Torah and fear of Heaven.⁵⁷

The views of these disciples suggest a positive outlook towards secular studies and preaching in German on the part of Ḥatam Sofer. However, Rabbi Hillel Lichtenstein, a prominent disciple, reported a sharply different version of his views. He maintained that his rebbi believed that secular studies were forbidden and that preaching in German was prohibited. In support of this view, he cited R. Sofer's Last Will and Testament, which states, ". . . one should not preach in the language of the nations".⁵⁸ R. Lichtenstein also referred to a responsum written in 1839, the year of R. Sofer's death (see later).⁵⁹ As we shall see, some of Ḥatam Sofer's *derashot* and other writings provide support for R. Lichtenstein's position.

Conceivably, the contrast in the views of R. Lichtenstein and R. Schick regarding Ḥatam Sofer's attitudes was shaped by the different years in which they studied with him. R. Lichtenstein studied with Ḥatam Sofer in the last few years of his life, 1832-1837, when, arguably, R. Sofer's attitudes became more stringent, as detailed below. R. Schick, on the other hand, studied with the Ḥatam Sofer in earlier years, from about 1821-1828, when R. Sofer's views in these matters may have been more lenient. Accordingly, both disciples may have accurately recorded Ḥatam Sofer's views in the years in which they studied with him. This theory is not completely convincing, however, since R. Meir Eisenstadter (known as *Maharam E"sh*), one of Ḥatam Sofer's earliest and premier disciples, claimed that his teacher held extreme views on these matters, which R. Eisenstadter adopted.⁶⁰ Moreover, R. Schick continued to be in close touch with R. Sofer and his children, living in a nearby town even after he left R. Sofer's yeshivah in Pressburg. Consequently, he would continue to have been acutely aware of Ḥatam Sofer's attitudes.

Ḥatam Sofer's Writings

R. Sofer's writings with regard to secular studies and preaching in German do not appear to be consistent. They range from selective approval to hostility, especially in the last few years of his life, his views

appearing to have changed over time. After reviewing his principal writings on this issue, I will seek to explore and resolve his seeming fluctuations in this matter.

In his early years in Pressburg, R. Sofer explicitly expressed his belief that children could be taught general studies in addition to Torah. Nevertheless, in their first few years in school, only Torah was to be taught.⁶¹ In a sermon delivered in Pressburg in 1811 regarding the Talmudic statement (*Berakhot*, 28b) “Keep your children from *higgayon*,” he said,

. . . Some explained the term, *higgayon*, to refer to other wisdoms. This implies that you should keep your children [from studying them] but you should not keep yourselves [from studying them], since all of the wisdoms are perfumers and cooks for the Torah and they are doorways and gates to it. He who has no knowledge of anatomy, cannot know the laws of *tereifot* well, and the wisdom of mathematics and geometry are [necessary to understand the laws of] *erubin* and *sukkah* and for the division of the land [of Israel to the Israelite tribes], and so on.⁶²

In 1813, R. Sofer praised R. David Zinzheimer (who had been appointed to an official position by Napoleon) for his general knowledge and linguistic abilities.⁶³ Similarly, in 1818, he wrote, “I do not say that one should not learn the languages of the nations” and “I maintain that reciting poems and praises [in German in the Synagogue] does not deserve such an uproar.”⁶⁴ He also expressed regret that there was no Jewish school for the training of physicians.⁶⁵ Consistent with these statements is his assertion that one who has learned Torah since his youth and has filled his mind with it will not easily come to sin, even if he learns secular wisdom afterwards.⁶⁶

Furthermore, in 1827, he delivered a *derashah* asserting, “The commandments to teach children have two reasons: one, so that they will grow in Torah and will not become learned, Heaven forbid, in the other wisdoms when they are young. [Otherwise,] they will already have drunk the bad waters and will not accept [the Torah]...One does not have to fear this in the Holy Land [the land of Israel]. . . .”⁶⁷

Although the evidence from Ḥatam Sofer’s actions, family and early writings suggests a somewhat benevolent outlook towards secular studies, later writings articulate a different attitude. In 1832, seven years before his death, R. Sofer delivered a *derashah* in which he quoted Ramban’s Introduction to his commentary on the Torah:

King Solomon, peace be upon him, merited [to master] all of the wisdoms of the world. This was only through his study of the Torah. It is from this

that he mastered [knowledge of] all of nature and [to understand] what is above and what is below, because all of these are contained in the Torah. . . . The other [secular] wisdoms that one derives from it [the Torah] are acquired according to the principle, “God’s secret is revealed to those who fear him.” [So, too, they are derived from the Torah] in order to know what to respond to scoffers, and so that people will not say, “The wise men of Israel are not knowledgeable in our wisdoms and regarding nature. . . .”⁶⁸

This indicates R. Sofer’s belief that all wisdoms could be derived from the Torah.

However, in another *derashah* (year unknown), R. Sofer initially concedes that mastery of all of the secular wisdoms is necessary to fulfill the laws of the Torah. Still, one should study only Torah, since one can derive from it all knowledge of secular wisdoms.

In truth, our Torah is small in size, and contains a number of stories that occurred, and some laws, rules and ordinances that the Jewish nation should follow. However, this [latter] is impossible unless they know all of the other wisdoms, since it is impossible to receive witnesses [and thereby establish the new] month, unless we know all of the details of the travels of the sun and the moon and their paths. It is impossible to judge a magician if we do not know the roots of the magician and the wisdom of the people of the East, nor [to know] the laws of *tereifot* unless we know the discipline of anatomy in the greatest detail and depth, and [it is not possible to understand] the songs of the Levites unless we know the discipline of music, nor to divide the Land of Israel [among the Israelite tribes] without knowing how to measure the land, and the disciplines of geometry and geography, nor [to master the rules of] hybrid seeds and their nourishment without knowing agronomy. . . .

Yet, there is not a single mention of all the above [disciplines] in the Torah and we do not have any book which was composed about these matters. The other nations have wise men and many books on all of these, and we would be forced to study all of these from their books. But, God said, “You shall study it [the Torah] day and night,” and our Sages said, “Do not move from it [the Torah]. When it was asked, “Is it permitted to study *hokhmat yevanit* [Greek wisdom]?” they replied it should be studied at a time when it was neither day nor night, since it [the Bible] says, “You shall study it [the Torah] day and night” (*Menaḥot* 99b) and there is no available time to study all of these [the Torah and secular subjects] . . . and it does not give Him [God] any pleasure if we occupy ourselves with their [the other nations’] books. If so, from where will we know all that is necessary for [to follow the laws of] the Torah? Accordingly, it must be [the case] that the roots of all the wisdom of the world are planted in it [the Torah] and still more, the hints of the secrets of the Torah, such as what is beyond wisdom.⁶⁹

R. Sofer does not state explicitly here that secular learning is forbidden. Rather, he says, "There is no free time to learn all of these," and "It does not give Him pleasure *if we occupy ourselves with their books.*" He seems to be discouraging spending a great deal of time on secular subjects, to the neglect of Torah studies. He does not, however, ban secular learning outright.

The fact that the sermon was not intended as a prohibition of secular learning is indicated by its very content. The basis of Ḥatam Sofer's conclusion regarding secular studies is his interpretation of the talmudic phrase, *ḥokhmat yevanit*, as referring to secular wisdoms. Yet, he certainly would not rule that secular subjects were proscribed predicated on this understanding. After all, R. Sofer was undoubtedly aware that one view in the Talmud itself (*Sotah* 49b) makes it clear that the term does not refer to other wisdoms. Rather, the phrase alludes to a code language known to Greek Hellenist rulers and their co-workers.⁷⁰

Furthermore, R. Sofer surely knew that one view in the Talmud understands the biblical injunction that he cites, "You shall study it day and night" in a very different way than he. It holds that this *mizvah* may be fulfilled simply by reading the passages of *keriat shema* in both the morning and evening, rather than requiring study of the Torah all the time.⁷¹ R. Sofer, a master halakhist, would not have relied on such weak proofs to forbid secular learning. Rather, he seems to be using the talmudic sayings for homiletic purposes in his sermon, knowing that the public was aware of the principle, *ein meshivim al ha-derush*. One does not refute a homily, since the sermonizer is permitted to interpret liberally—the preacher's equivalent of poetic license.⁷² Furthermore, R. Sofer's words are unclear regarding the extent to which Jews are discouraged from "occupying ourselves" with secular learning. Does "occupying ourselves" refer to spending all of one's time, or even to spending part of one's time, with secular learning?

R. Sofer's later *derashot* come down more sharply. In a sermon in 1833, he criticized Jews who ". . . teach their sons the methods of businessmen, the language of non-Jews, and bookkeeping, so that they would have a ready source of livelihood, and additionally, in order to beautify themselves and to look well in the eyes of the nations and nobles, to be like gentiles, to know their wisdoms and languages and to grow long hair."⁷³ This statement, though somewhat ambiguous, could be interpreted as condemning Jews who study secular subjects, rather than Torah, for the wrong reasons, including assimilation.

The notes recorded by R. Sofer's grandson at a *derashah* delivered in 1834 reveal a still more restrictive view toward secular studies.

The nations of the world probe deeply into nature, this one in astrology [astronomy], this one in philosophy, and this one in music, and so forth. Each one is expert in one area. [For] Israel, however, it is written, "You shall study it [the Torah] day and night," and he [the Jew] does not have permission to occupy himself with other wisdoms, other than Torah, to know the laws of God and its teachings, or in prayer to the Lord, our God, [who answers] whenever we call Him.⁷⁴ (*Emphasis added.*)

R. Sofer's words, "he [the Jew] does not have permission," implies a prohibition on secular learning. This statement appears to contradict the evidence produced earlier. While, "does not have permission" does not carry the same weight as "forbidden by Torah law," the meaning of the passage is problematic in view of his earlier statements.

Ḥatam Sofer's Last Will and Testament (written in 1837 and supplemented in 1839), raises further questions. R. Sofer wrote that a rabbi should not deliver sermons in the language of the nations. He also warned his children to beware of foreign literature and culture.⁷⁵ The will specifies at the beginning that it was written for "you, my sons and daughters, my sons-in-law, my grandchildren and their children." Nevertheless, some believed that R. Sofer meant his will to apply to all.⁷⁶

In 1839 (one year before his death), R. Sofer criticized those who, in subscribing to halakhic documents, signed their names in Latin letters, instead of using Hebrew letters. He contended, furthermore, that employing foreign languages was among the "eighteen matters" which were prohibited by religious enactments.⁷⁷ It was in order not to run afoul of these prohibitions, according to R. Sofer, that Jews in earlier times deliberately employed corrupted versions of foreign tongues. Implied in his words is that this is why many Jews spoke Yiddish, rather than "pure" German.

In that same year, 1839, R. Sofer addressed a responsum to a community that was very lax in Torah observance. It was claimed that the *shoḥet*, who was also the cantor of the community, blatantly failed to slaughter a chicken properly, violated the Sabbath, committed adultery, and made remarks denigrating the Jewish religion. R. Sofer was unwilling to rule that the *shoḥet* should be discharged, since he had been cleared of the charges by a local rabbi. R. Sofer did, however, write that the *shoḥet* should study Torah, not secular books, and that the community (which had no rabbi) should appoint one. The rabbi "should not be one who reads secular books and [delivers sermons in] foreign lan-

guages, because it is forbidden to receive Torah from such a rabbi's mouth. [Appointing such a person as rabbi] is like setting up an *asherah* [a tree for idol worship] in the sanctuary of the Lord."⁷⁸

R. Sofer did not specify whether this ruling applied only to that particular community and its rabbi, or to all communities. It is possible that he intended these harsh words only for such a community where religious unobservance was obviously prevalent. Nevertheless, his words are a powerful statement of antipathy to secular learning.

It might be argued that R. Sofer's seeming ambivalence regarding secular learning and the use of German might be explained by distinguishing between his theoretical views and his acts. Thus, philosophically, he may have opposed secular learning, unless this was derived from the study of Torah, itself. Operationally, however, he acted otherwise.

This explanation, however, is not satisfying since R. Sofer has been universally regarded as a very principled person, who acted in accordance with his deep convictions.

Ḥatam Sofer's Attitude Towards *Maskilim* and Reformers

R. Sofer's opposition to Reform and Haskalah is well known, and was widely publicized by his disciple, R. Hillel Lichtenstein and the latter's son-in-law, R. Akiva Yosef Schlesinger. They are reflected in his famous slogans, noted above, "All that is new is forbidden by the Torah" and "The children of Israel go forth with the hand of *Rama*." R. Sofer's attitude is also evidenced by his expressed desire, noted above, to expel Reformers from the community of Jews, if he would have the power to do so.

Nevertheless, Ḥatam Sofer corresponded with a number of well-known *maskilim*, such as R. Zekharya Yeshayahu Katz Joles⁷⁹ and even R. Shlomo Yehudah Rappaport, who published Reform-oriented views.⁸⁰ Despite the furious opposition to Rappaport by many of the Orthodox Jews in his town, Tarnopol, R. Sofer, until the end of his life, continued to support him. Ḥatam Sofer was not deterred by the severe criticism by R. Shelomoh Kluger of Brody that caused the latter to practically stop communicating with him.⁸¹ In 1839, shortly before his death, R. Sofer wrote still another letter in Rappaport's defense and attempted to quiet the opposition to him.⁸² R. Sofer was also on friendly terms with many other *maskilim*.⁸³ He heaped profuse praise upon R. Zvi Hersh Ḥayes, a rabbi-*maskil*, who was in close touch and corresponded with numerous *maskilim* and Reformers.⁸⁴ R. Sofer was on very friendly terms with, and spoke highly of, R. Wolf Heidenheim as late as

1836.⁸⁵ R. Sofer continued his friendship with Heidenheim although the latter had approved in writing the religious reforms instituted by the Jewish Consistory at Kassel, headed by the trailblazing radical Reformer, Israel Jacobson.⁸⁶

Also, at the request of R. Yisrael Wahrman, a rabbi in Budapest, who was close to the Reform movement, R. Sofer wrote an approbation in 1822 for a work on geography, *Shevilei Olam*, by Shimshon Halevi Bloch.⁸⁷

R. Sofer was also on amicable terms with a number of other *maskilim*, in addition to the five mentioned above. One was R. Moshe Mintz, a noted rabbi who was regarded by many as also a *maskil*.⁸⁸ Another rabbi-*maskil* with whom R. Sofer was on amicable terms was R. Moshe Kunitz. The latter, perhaps because he was misled, contributed to a Reform book of polemics, *Nogah Zedek*. This work was attacked bitterly by R. Sofer and numerous rabbis and was in the center of the controversy regarding the establishment of a Reform Temple in Hamburg.⁸⁹ Another rabbi-*maskil* befriended by R. Sofer was R. Aharon Yehoshua Hertzfeld of Ravitz. R. Sofer praised him for his fluency in the German language, and recommended him for a position as rabbi of an important community.⁹⁰

The aforementioned positive relationships with leading *maskilim* and Reformers appear inconsistent with the often acerbic condemnations that Ḥatam Sofer leveled at Haskalah and Reform during the same period of time.⁹¹ Some scholars have claimed ambivalence in Ḥatam Sofer's actions and utterances in many different spheres of activity, not just those relating to the Reform and Haskalah movements.⁹²

Cordial Relations Between Prominent Rabbis and *Maskilim*

The existence of cordial relations between rabbis and some *maskilim* and reformers in that era is hardly surprising. One noted authority on Hungarian Jewry of that epoch has observed, "The boundaries between rabbinic and Haskalah cultures were not sharply defined in Hungary and the Bohemian provinces."⁹³ There were quite a few prominent rabbis and heads of yeshivot who were very religiously observant, particularly, in Moravia and Bohemia, but were also *maskilim*, interested and engaged in secular learning.⁹⁴

R. Sofer himself did not object to the inclusion of letters from a number of noted *maskilim* in *Eleh Divrei ha-Brit*. This was a collection of letters from Orthodox rabbis all over Europe directed against the

Jewish reforms in Hamburg in 1818. R. Sofer was a key figure in this collection, three of his letters were included, and he was very influential in obtaining letters from prominent rabbis.⁹⁵ He could have protested their inclusion in the collection, but did not do so. The collection included a letter by R. Shmuel Bernstein that proclaimed reverence, in oversized, bold, print, for both Moses Mendelssohn and Naftali Hertz Wessley.⁹⁶ Yet, R. Bernstein designed his above letter to battle the Reform movement. His praises of Mendelssohn and Wessely indicate that he must have felt that these two would also have opposed the Hamburg reforms. Still more arresting, R. Sofer himself addressed a responsum to R. Bernstein in 1819, one month after R. Bernstein's letter appeared in *Eleh Divrei ha-Brit*, and addressed him with extraordinarily laudatory titles.⁹⁷ By that time, R. Sofer, presumably, had seen R. Bernstein's letter in R. Sofer's copy of *Eleh Divrei ha-Brit*. Moreover, R. Sofer did not demur when the collected letters were edited and translated into German by Salomon Jacob Cohen, the editor of *Ha-Me'asef*, and *Bikkurei ha-Ittim*, journals of the *Haskalah* movement.⁹⁸

The Campaign Against Reform and the Mendelssohnian Heritage

Ḥatam Sofer played a leading role in a multi-faceted battle to stem the tide of Reform and *Haskalah*, and he galvanized the opposition to these movements. His numerous *derashot* and letters to individuals and communities all over Central Europe formed a crucial element in this campaign. In addition to his key role in the *Eleh Divrei ha-Brit project*, his yeshivah in Pressburg, the largest in Europe, graduated thousands of students during his thirty-year tenure as its *Rosh Yeshivah*. Many of them became rabbis in communities throughout Central Europe and were very active in this struggle.

In November 1865, a number of Ḥatam Sofer's students and followers, citing his teachings, convened a gathering of Orthodox Rabbis in Michalovce, Hungary. They issued a rabbinic decision and manifesto against Reform innovations, required maintenance of substantial dividers in the synagogue between men and women, and mandated retaining the *bimah* in the center of the synagogue. The conclave also prohibited preaching in German, wearing canonical robes by cantors, and other matters.⁹⁹ This assembly and its decisions resonated throughout Central Europe and influenced many other rabbis and community leaders to vigorously oppose Reform innovations.

The organized Orthodox opposition to Reform was further reflected in a convention of approximately two hundred Orthodox rabbis in Budapest, in November, 1868. They met to plan for elections to the forthcoming Jewish Congress mandated by State law. Ḥatam Sofer's spirit dominated the convention, and his influence was exemplified by the unanimous choice of his son, R. Avraham Binyamin, as chairman.¹⁰⁰

R. Sofer perceived Moses Mendelssohn as a founder of the Reform movement and abhorred him. Accordingly, he vigorously opposed the use of Mendelssohn's biblical commentary, *Biur*, and his accompanying German translation.¹⁰¹ Ḥatam Sofer's disdain for that work had the effect, in practice, of greatly limiting the use of the *Biur* in many communities. Despite R. Sofer's stand on this issue (and that of some other orthodox rabbis), however,¹⁰² a number of his close disciples (including, R. Moshe Schick, his most prominent disciple) did use and cite from it.¹⁰³

Remarkably, Ḥatam Sofer did not, as far as we know, publicly denounce Mendelssohn, nor did he preach any *derashot*, nor write any letters condemning him. On the contrary, in the one responsum in which R. Sofer mentions Mendelssohn, he refers to him respectfully as "R.M.D." (R. Moshe of Dessau, the "R." being a title of esteem). R. Sofer even utilized the same respectful title in his Last Will, in which he directs his descendants not to touch Mendelssohn's works.¹⁰⁴

Ḥatam Sofer's principled disdain for Mendelssohn and his opposition to use of the *Biur* was in distinct contrast to his peers. An imposing array of leading rabbis, talmudists, and religious leaders of the time had a high regard for Mendelssohn.¹⁰⁵ Even R. Sofer's eminent father-in-law, R. Akiva Eger, of Pozen, wrote an approbation for the *Biur*, and also noted that he was subscribing to purchase it.¹⁰⁶ R. Yehezkel Landau (author of *Noda be-Yehudah*) praised the *Biur*, and indicated that he might have issued an approbation for it, if not for the fact that it was accompanied by a German translation.¹⁰⁷ These two rabbis were widely regarded as the leading talmudic sages of their time. R. Mordekhai Benet, the Chief Rabbi of Moravia, also issued his approbation.¹⁰⁸ R. Sofer's staking out this rather lonely position is, perhaps, a testimony to his prescience, since his view of Mendelssohn became the dominant attitude among Orthodox Jews in less than a century after his death. Leading Torah sages and rabbis continued, however, to give it warm approbations, even many years after Mendelssohn's death. It was also cited as authority for halakhic rulings as late as the twentieth century.¹⁰⁹

The foregoing approval of Mendelssohn and his associates by the most prominent Torah sage and rabbis, reflects a fact not widely appre-

ciated today. Opposition to Mendelssohn and Wessely by Orthodox rabbis spread gradually and became nearly universal only in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Until that time, many rabbis regarded these two as simply *maskilim*, who would, themselves, have opposed the Hamburg religious reforms. *Maskilim* who were religiously observant were acceptable to Orthodox rabbis who had a high regard for secular learning. Thus, both R. Samson Raphael Hirsch and R. Azriel Hildesheimer, the leading battlers against the Reform movement in mid-nineteenth century Germany, were lavish in their praise of Mendelssohn.¹¹⁰

Courteous Relations Between Ḥatam Sofer and Individual Moderate Reformers

Despite their sharp objections to reforms, Ḥatam Sofer and other Orthodox rabbis maintained courteous relations with individual Reform rabbis and laymen. These interactions were not, however, as warm as their rapport with certain *maskilim*. The civil contacts with Reformers were carried on especially where these could result in practical benefits. Thus, both R. Sofer and R. Mordekhai Benet of Nicholsburg wrote cordial letters to Lazar Biederman, a leader of the Reform Jews in Vienna. They praised him highly in their letters, while requesting jobs for their relatives and students at the *Kultustemple*, the community synagogue.¹¹¹ Despite the fact that this synagogue was founded and run by Reformers,¹¹² its Rabbi, Isaac Noah Mannheim, had moderated his Reform views. The *Kultustemple* did not have an organ, women sat on a balcony, and prayers were in Hebrew.¹¹³ Consequently, it came to be regarded as a suitable place of employment for Orthodox Jews. R. Sofer's candidate, R. Eliezer Horowitz, was hired for a position there as a *kashrut* supervisor, prayed in the *Kultustemple*, and taught in the religious school conducted by Rabbi Mannheim.¹¹⁴ When Rabbi Mannheim visited Pressburg for a particular event, leaders of the Orthodox community there set out rich furniture and expensive carpets and made other extensive arrangements to welcome him.¹¹⁵

Perhaps the desire for civility and the hope of obtaining benefits caused Ḥatam Sofer to address extremely laudatory praises to Leib Schwab, a principle ideologue and leader of the Neologist reform movement in Hungary. This movement was regarded by Orthodox Jews in Hungary as anathema and as a version of the German Reform movement.¹¹⁶ R. Sofer called Schwab, "*ha-ma'or ha-gadol ha-muflag, moreinu ha-rav*" (the great and outstanding light, our master and teacher).¹¹⁷ It

should be noted that Schwab refrained from introducing radical reforms in Budapest, where he was Rabbi.

As mentioned previously, R. Sofer objected strenuously to the founding of a *primaerschule*, a school in Pressburg founded by *maskilim* and emphasizing secular studies according to the program of *Haskalah*. Nevertheless, R. Sofer hired a teacher at that school, Mendel Stern, to be a tutor for his children at home in Hebrew language and grammar.¹¹⁸ He further approved of a Jewish school for girls, *maedenschule*, founded in Pressburg in 1829 by Lazer Horowitz. Secular subjects were taught at the school, which was housed in the same building as the *primaerschule*. The girl's school was supported by people in the Orthodox community as well as by *maskilim*. R. Sofer himself was on the Board of the girl's school,¹¹⁹ and people in both communities aided the school.¹²⁰

The civil interactions that existed between Orthodox rabbis, *maskilim*, and moderate Reformers are reflected in the activities of Ber Oppenheim and in his relationships with numerous Orthodox rabbis. A leader of the Jewish community in Pressburg, he was a leading supporter of the *primaerschule* and helped to spearhead much of the opposition to R. Sofer in Pressburg in the early 1820's. According to Shelomoh Sofer, grandson of Hatam Sofer, Oppenheim had, as a youth, been identified by R. Nathan Adler as an *apikoros*. R. Adler had warned his students not to associate with him because he was a prime source of ritual defilement.¹²¹ Yet, Oppenheim published a halakhic work, *Mei Be'er*.¹²² Like many other prominent rabbis of that era, R. Sofer wrote a halakhic responsum to Oppenheim, published in *Mei Be'er*, and addressed him as "my friend".¹²³ R. Sofer also tolerated and permitted a separate *minyan* of *maskilim* and moderate reformers to conduct religious services in Pressburg. This was on condition that those who officiated at the services should not wear "priestly garments" and that *piyyutim*, liturgical poems, should not be deleted from the services.¹²⁴

The foregoing occurrences indicate that the boundaries between Orthodox Jews and *maskilim* were not always clear, and that civil relations existed even between Orthodox rabbis and some moderate Reformers. R. Sofer's actions must, therefore, be understood in the context of his era. It would be anachronistic to project back to his time the concept of separation between these groups that is prevalent today.

Hatam Sofer's Halakhic Philosophy and Principles

Hatam Sofer's halakhic philosophy, and the principles and strategies that he employed in dealing with opponents, provide keys to resolving the apparent ambivalence in his acts, rulings and writings.

In combating Reform and Haskalah innovations, R. Sofer adopted a number of strategies. One of them was to apply a principle, "It is good to elevate a prohibition"—that is, to make a religious prohibition seem more serious than it might really be in order that people should treat it with the proper seriousness. This principle includes omitting the citations of lenient views that would downgrade the seriousness of a prohibition.

He expressed this halakhic philosophy quite explicitly in his 1836 letter to R. Zvi Hersh Hayes.¹²⁵ The letter deals with an attempted innovation by Reform Jews to delay the burial of a corpse for a few days. The purpose of the postponement of burial was to ensure that the presumed deceased was not really still alive. R. Sofer ruled that delaying burial beyond the day of death violated two biblical precepts: an affirmative commandment, "You shall bury him on that day", and the negative commandment "You shall not let his body hang on a tree" (*Devarim* 21:23).

R. Hayes pointed to authorities who held that only one biblical precept was involved in postponement and that the rule mandating burial on the day of death might even be rabbinic, not biblical. R. Sofer responded,

They [the Torah sages] were careful not to open the door and to search for leniencies for those of our nation who search for breaches [in the fence of the law]. This is what they desire, and if they would find an opening, be it as small as the tiny hole in a needle, they would make breach after breach. . . . I wrote that keeping a corpse [overnight] entails violation of an affirmative and negative biblical command [although you cite contrary views by authorities], since, at any rate, the Ramban wrote that. This makes no difference nowadays, and *it is good to elevate a prohibition* [to overstate it and make it appear more stringent]. You relied on the view of the *Havvot Yair*, which has been shunned [by halakhic authorities], who says that the basic prohibition was only a Rabbinic one. However, *one should not reveal this matter*, since, because of our many sins, there are many nowadays who say they are not concerned with a Rabbinic prohibition, since God did not command [it]. . . ."

R. Sofer then cites a lenient ruling in a responsum by R. Yehezkel Landau, author of *Noda be-Yehudah*)¹²⁶ and comments "It would have been better not to print this Responsum in order not to give assistance to deliberate sinners. . . ."

Surely, R. Sofer must have been aware that adherence to his principle of “elevating a prohibition” would apparently contravene the biblical prohibition of adding *mizvot* to the Torah (*Devarim* 4:2).¹²⁷ This principle could also run afoul of the biblical precept, “Distance yourself from falsehood” (*Shemot* 23:7). This is precisely what R. Hayes responded to Ḥatam Sofer.¹²⁸

How did Ḥatam Sofer justify the deliberate overstatement of religious prohibitions?¹²⁹ It is possible that he was guided by talmudic principles that give wide discretion to specified *posekim* to violate biblical law as a temporary expedient when “the hour requires it”. These authorities were empowered to issue halakhic rulings contrary to biblical law, even if this entailed taking someone’s life—provided, that this is done to achieve certain overriding policy goals. The main purpose for which such a halakhic ruling is permitted is to preserve religious faith in the face of a widespread and serious threat.¹³⁰

Halakhic decisions of this type have had a long history in halakhic Responsa literature for more than a millennium. They were applied by leading *posekim*, such as *Rashba*, *Rosh* and many others, and are recorded as applicable law in the *Shulḥan Arukh*. Ḥatam Sofer himself commented extensively on this principle.¹³¹ Given the circumstances that prevailed in his time, R. Sofer could reasonably have considered Reform and Haskalah as serious threats that made this halakhic principle applicable. He feared that these movements could lead to the destruction of the traditional Jewish religion. Accordingly, it became his key policy goal to halt the growth of the Reform and *Haskalah* movements and to combat their ideology. This objective became particularly crucial to him after a Reform Temple was established in Hamburg in 1818 and in view of the rapid spread of the Reform movement.¹³²

Accordingly, in Ḥatam Sofer’s view, the threat that this talmudic principle was designed to counter was similar to the peril that existed in his times. The Talmud had applied this emergency rule to Jewish Hellenists, who were trying to persuade all Jews to abandon observance of the Sabbath and the fundamental tenets of Judaism (*Yevamot*, 89b). To R. Sofer’s mind, the Reformers and *maskilim* in his time had the very same goals. They, too, advocated wholesale abandonment of *Shabbat*, *kashrut*, and other fundamentals of Judaism.

To be sure, before R. Sofer could apply this emergency principle, he had to determine that no equally effective alternative was available to him that would not entail violating religious tenets. He also had to consider the facts and circumstances of each case and to weigh the ramifica-

tions, expected outcomes, and ultimate effects of all possible alternate rulings by him. This was especially important where, as in Ḥatam Sofer's case, he contemplated making halakhic rulings based on goals and halakhic policies, rather than on normal "black letter" legal doctrine.¹³³ Only if he concluded that the urgent needs of the hour demanded it, and other alternatives were not suitable, could he apply the emergency principle. Apparently, though, he did so and decided to apply the emergency principle in order to meet the needs of the hour and stem the tide of Reform and Haskalah. This rule, as noted above, could also authorize him to advocate that lenient halakhic views should not be publicized.¹³⁴

Perhaps, then, R. Sofer did, in fact, follow a consistent path in his conduct regarding such matters as secular learning, use of the German language, and relations with certain *maskilim* and Reformers. In applying the emergency principle, he would act in the way that appeared to him most effective to meet the needs of the hour and to stem the spread of the Reform and Haskalah ideology.¹³⁵

Consequently, R. Sofer's conduct might have been entirely consistent.¹³⁶ However, it could appear discordant to one not aware that he guided his behavior by employing the emergency principle, and that he weighed the possible consequences of each case. Today, nearly two hundred years later, we cannot know the precise circumstances surrounding each of R. Sofer's actions, nor how he weighed the circumstances and possible outcomes for each action that he contemplated. We are also unaware of his exact calculus in deciding what steps, if any, were appropriate under the prevailing circumstances.

Another explanation of R. Sofer's ambivalence is that he was often faced with conflicting considerations. For example, he firmly believed that secular learning was indispensable for the understanding of Torah, and should, ideally, be obtained solely through Torah study. Yet, he also realized that the ordinary layman was unable to obtain secular skills and knowledge in this way. Similarly, he realized that the rapid spread of secular education among Jews, often mandated by state law, made secularly educated rabbis very desirable. These would have greater standing and influence in their communities, which consisted of a growing portion of secularly educated congregants. Hence, he may initially have approved of rabbinical seminaries teaching secular subjects, though he later rejected this practice because of the increasing inroads of the Reform movement.

So, too, R. Sofer was aware of the rapid spread of the German language as the vernacular in everyday use in Central Europe by Jews, who often understood no other language. He therefore realized that German

translations of Torah and Talmud could be very helpful. At the same time, he also recognized that fluency in German might make Jews more receptive to the literature and ideas of German Reform and to German-speaking Reform preachers. Knowledge of German would also enable Jews to read German books and periodicals, thereby introducing them to Gentile culture and secular values. These would, almost inevitably, reduce the quality of their religious observance. Consequently, Ḥatam Sofer became averse to the cultivation of fluency in the German language, as well as its use in preaching.¹³⁷

The conflict between these various considerations might account for his initially consenting to a German translation of the Talmud, but later changing his opinion. Likewise, R. Sofer's hired tutors to teach his children the rudiments of arithmetic, and to read and write in German, including communications with State officials. Similar considerations apply to his recommendation of German speaking rabbis for important communal positions, because they would be able to deal more effectively with governmental authorities.¹³⁸

Also helpful in understanding Ḥatam Sofer's conduct is that special considerations may have motivated him to maintain friendly relations with leading *maskilim*. As a student of R. Nathan Adler, just as Ḥatam Sofer was, R. Heidenheim was a peer of R. Sofer, and thus on friendly terms with him since their youth. Furthermore, unlike other Reformers, R. Heidenheim was a scholar, highly regarded as a masoretic expert and an authority on grammar and liturgical texts.¹³⁹ He published numerous prayer texts for Jewish Holidays that received wide approbations from prominent rabbis, including R. Sofer's revered teacher, R. Pinḥas Hurwitz (author of *Hafla'ah*).¹⁴⁰ Ḥatam Sofer felt that many *piyyutim*, would have been lost, if not for R. Heidenheim's work.¹⁴¹ For that matter, each of the other *maskilim* mentioned above was a noted talmudic scholar, and each wrote well-regarded talmudic treatises. Their talmudic scholarship, alone, may have earned them R. Sofer's respect. In the case of R. Rappaport, R. Sofer's favorable letters were written at the request of Shelomoh Rosenthal, a *maskil* who had assisted R. Sofer in many ways over the years. R. Sofer may have found it difficult to refuse to return the favors.

There may have been other factors as well. By maintaining amicable relations with certain *maskilim* and moderate reformers, Ḥatam Sofer might be able to prevent their moving further way from strict religious observance; in turn, they could be helpful in influencing their more radical fellows to moderate their conduct. Sometimes, R. Sofer's conduct

may have reflected temporary concessions that he felt compelled to make in order not to lose the war against Haskalah and Reform. This was true even in his own community of Pressburg, where the community leaders were often *maskilim* or Reformers, who fought many bitter battles with him.¹⁴²

R. Sofer's Principle To Act Cordially to All

Ḥatam Sofer utilized another principle in his personal conduct that may have affected his conduct toward *maskilim* and Reformers. He made it a point not to attack any person *ad hominem*, and to act civilly in all disputes. In a responsum in 1819, he wrote, "I have been very careful not to quarrel with any person. No one at all is ever named in any of my letters and they do not disclose any personal quarrels, only truth battling with falsehood."¹⁴³ In response to a request by his colleagues to write a sharp letter of rebuke, he wrote in the same responsum, ". . . to write him words of reprimand and conciliation, without shouts, screams and quarrels, is not contrary to my words." R. Sofer carried out this principle faithfully in practice, as testified to by students. One of them wrote, "One never heard him speak disparagingly of any person whatsoever, even to those who were known, and whom he believed, to be deliberate sinners and *apikorsim*. On the contrary, he received such people with a friendly face."¹⁴⁴ Moreover, people who knew him testified that as long as a person was religiously observant or, at least, did not scoff at religion, Ḥatam Sofer did not dislike him simply because he was a *maskil*.¹⁴⁵

Ambivalence Toward Secular Learning in Reaction to the Spread of Reform and Haskalah

R. Sofer's changing positions with regard to teaching secular subjects in schools appear to have been due to his concern over the spread of the German Reform and Haskalah movements.¹⁴⁶ The rapid growth of these movements, emphasizing secular culture, made R. Sofer leery of secular learning by Jews, especially by children. It kindled a fear that it would cause them to forsake Torah observance. Hence, whereas in 1811 he delivered a *derashah* tolerant of some secular education for children, his subsequent *derashot* increasingly stressed that all secular knowledge should be obtained from Torah.¹⁴⁷

It is possible that R. Sofer may have pronounced his tolerance of secular education for schoolchildren when he learned that leaders of the

Jewish community of Pressburg planned to establish a primary school emphasizing secular studies.¹⁴⁸ R. Sofer may have wished to avoid antagonizing them, hoping that he could influence them to stress Torah studies if such school were ever established. In fact, the school, with an emphasis on secular studies, was eventually opened in April, 1820.¹⁴⁹

R. Sofer also agreed to the founding of a vocational school in 1820, and signed its by-laws.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps R. Sofer believed that this institution, which was designed to prepare its students to earn a livelihood, might blunt the effect of the secular studies school that opened that year. It might also possibly diminish the threat that a *haskalah* secondary school might eventually be founded.

The spread of the Reform and *Haskalah* movements and the increasing use of the German language by the Jews of Central Europe tore R. Sofer in opposite directions with regard to the use of German. He realized that familiarity with the German language and culture would wean Jews away from religious observance. Yet, he was prepared to utilize the German language to spread Torah knowledge and was well aware that fluency in German was extremely important for community rabbis. The dilemma that this posed continued to torment him throughout his life.

Chronology bears out the hypothesis that the spread of Reform, *Haskalah* and the German language exerted a pronounced effect on R. Sofer's worldview, particularly, in his later years. Thus, it was in 1839, the last year of his life, that Ḥatam Sofer expressed his most extreme views on these matters. He may also have been particularly disturbed in that year when Abraham Geiger, a leading Reform theoretician, was invited to head a prominent Reform congregation in Breslau. In that year, R. Sofer wrote a responsum in which he maintained that speaking foreign languages was an ancient prohibition, one of the "eighteen matters" adopted during the second Temple era.¹⁵¹ In that responsum, he criticized the signing of one's name in Jewish legal or religious documents, using Latin letters, instead of Hebrew. Moreover, it was in that same year that he penned the responsum in which he directed a lax community to hire a rabbi who would not preach in German and mandated the *shoḥet*-cantor, who had been accused of serious religious violations, to stop reading secular books.¹⁵² In that same year, he reaffirmed the provisions of his last Will and Testament in which he asked his children to maintain a distance from secular works, and wrote against preaching in German.¹⁵³ In that very year, 1839, however, he wrote yet another letter in defense of Rappaport. It therefore appears that his concern with Reform was not the decisive consideration in all circumstances.

Of course, all human beings manifest inconsistencies. Nevertheless, we have identified in Ḥatam Sofer principled reasons behind his seeming ambiguities during his very active and long life.

Mistaken Representation of Ḥatam Sofer's Views By Later Followers

Despite the substantial evidence to the contrary adduced above, it is commonly believed by the heirs to R. Sofer's tradition that he saw absolutely no use for secular learning. They also claim that he had never bothered to acquire secular knowledge.

Thus, R. Yosef Naftali Stern, publisher of R. Sofer's *derashot* and other works, wrote,¹⁵⁴ "The opposition of our master, of blessed memory, to secular studies is so widely and well known that it is hardly necessary to cite examples for this from his numerous warnings and lectures of chastisement. . . ."

However, as detailed above, R. Sofer's son and heir to his views, R. Avraham Binyamin, was willing to have secular studies in the yeshiva of Pressburg. He expressed this view even at a time when this was not compelled by the State. Furthermore, beginning with the latter years of the nineteenth century, the *Roshei Yeshivah* of the yeshivah in Pressburg, who purported to follow in R. Sofer's ways, permitted the students to study secular subjects for a number of years. This was done to conform to state law. At the yeshivah itself they were also taught to master the German language and to orate in it, although this was not mandated by state law.¹⁵⁵ Rabbi Stern¹⁵⁶ was swayed by some of Ḥatam Sofer's writings, and disregarded evidence we saw earlier—his other writings and actions, and the testimony of his close family members and disciples.

Similarly, R. Shelomoh Sofer, a grandson, in a biography of his grandfather, *Ḥut ha-Meshulash*, described R. Sofer's secular studies in Mainz, "He also acquired knowledge of other sciences needed for the understanding of the Torah from books written by the greatest scholars of *our nation*" (emphasis mine).¹⁵⁷ But, as Ḥatam Sofer himself had stated in several *derashot*, there were no Jewish books from which to acquire secular learning, and Jews were compelled to acquire such learning from gentiles and their books.¹⁵⁸ These comments of R. Shelomoh Sofer are especially surprising, given that he must have been aware of his grandfather's writings on this subject.

So too, another descendant of Ḥatam Sofer, R. Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer-Schreiber, a great-great-grandson, quoted R. Shelomoh

Sofer's above description nearly word for word. However, he changed the language to read, "He sat there in a house full of books and devoted himself to Torah and the fear of heaven."¹⁵⁹ All references to his forebear's secular studies were deleted.¹⁶⁰

The fact that Hatam Sofer's views underwent such distortions is distressing. But we must confront the fact that the overall record—including his writings and actions—seems inconsistent.

Conclusion

Nearly 200 years have passed since R. Sofer's demise, and it is impossible to reach definitive, precise conclusions about the true views of this complex personage. His conduct appears to have been affected by many factors. These included his apprehensions concerning the growth of the Reform and Haskalah movements, and his halakhic philosophy and principles of conduct. Moreover, the particular circumstances in which he operated in each instance could seriously impact his conduct. Further impairing our ability to ascertain his views is the apparent likelihood that they changed over time.

It is incontestable, however, that R. Sofer believed that knowledge of certain secular subjects was indispensable for understanding Torah and for halakhic rulings. Philosophically, however, he was opposed to secular studies and felt that these should be acquired by studying the Torah itself. R. Sofer did not clarify how the ordinary Jew, one who was not an outstanding Torah scholar nor endowed with *ruah ha-kodesh*, divine inspiration, could acquire secular knowledge in this way.

R. Sofer expressed the view, perhaps under pressure, that secular subjects could be taught to boys in Jewish schools, provided that they were preceded by intensive and prolonged Torah studies. He did not, however, object to secular subjects in the girl's elementary school in Pressburg.

It deserves to be noted that R. Sofer apparently did not regard acquisition of secular learning as a value in itself, but only as a tool for the understanding of Torah. Nor, apparently, did he stress the necessity of the study and understanding of nature in order to appreciate the greatness of God. Similarly, he did not emphasize that the development of one's mind and the acquisition of secular learning were inherent religious obligations, on the basis that the mind was created by God and, therefore, should be utilized to its full extent.¹⁶¹ Nor, did he stress appreciation of beauty. He did, however, compose many poems.¹⁶²

Have we achieved a satisfactory resolution of Hatam Sofer's appar-

ent inconsistencies—on the one hand, his acts and the views that he expressed orally to those close to him, and on the other hand, his writings, particularly the *derashot*, the two responsa of 1839, and his Last Will and Testament?

One is perhaps justified in claiming that the matter remains not fully resolved despite all of the rationales suggested above. Hopefully, this article will stimulate further exploration of this subject by others, leading to additional enlightenment.

Notes

I am indebted to the following persons (in alphabetical order) for their comments, references, and insights: Dr. Sol Cohen, my brother-in-law Rabbi Abraham Moshe Kahana, Professor Shnayer Z. Leiman, Dr. Moshe Samet, my brother-in-law Rabbi Yitzchak Sender, Professor Michael K. Silber, Rabbi Shmuel Singer, and Rabbi Dr. Walter S. Wurzbürger z”l.

1. For details, see the exposition and footnotes in Moshe Samet, “The Beginnings of Orthodoxy,” *Modern Judaism* 8:3 (October, 1988): 249, 255; idem, “*Kavvim Nosafim le-Biografyah Shel ‘ha-Ḥatam Sofer*,” in *Torah Im Derekh Erez*, ed. Mordechai Breuer (Jerusalem, 1987), 65-73; idem, “*Halanat Maitim*,” *Asufot*, 3 (1989): 413-459; idem, “*Ha-Shinnuyim be-Sidrei Beit ha-Kenesset: Emdat ha-Rabbanim Keneged ha-‘Mehadshim’ ha-Riformim*,” *Asufot* 5:3 (Jerusalem, 1991): 345-404; Michael K. Silber, “The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition,” in *The Uses of Tradition*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Cambridge, MA, 1992), 28-84; idem., “The Historical Experience of German Jewry and Its Impact on Haskalah and Reform in Hungary,” in *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model*, ed. Jacob Katz (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1987), 107-157; Michael A. Meyer, *A Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988), 122, 154; Y. Ben-David, “Beginnings of Modern Jewish Society in Hungary During the First Half of the 19th Century,” *Zion* 17 (1952): 101-128.
2. Examples of this trait are cited in Yaakov Katz, “*Kavvim Le-Biografyah Shel ha-Ḥatam Sofer*,” in Katz, *Halakhah ve-Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1984), 370-371.
3. See the examples and sources cited in Yaakov Katz, *Ibid.*, 372-373, 374, 376, and R. Sofer’s own statements in his *Sefer ha-Zikaron Me’et ha-Ḥatam Sofer* (Jerusalem, 1957), 2-3.1
4. The yeshivah started out with about forty students in 1806-7, increased to about 150 by 1809, had about 250-300 in 1821 and possibly, on occasion, had about 400. See Shelomoh Sofer, *Hut ha-Meshulash* (Drohobycz, 1908), 62, 84; Moshe Sofer, *Sefer ha-Zikaron* (Pressburg, 1810), 50; B. Z. Hamburger, *Zikhronot u-Mesorot al ha-‘Ḥatam Sofer’* (Benei Brak, 1996), 64; inscription on Ḥatam Sofer’s tombstone. In contrast, the yeshivah in Volozhin, founded by R. Ḥayyim Volozhiner in 1802-3, had about 50-100 students by the time of his death, possibly, about 200 in the era of his son R.

Izeleh, and 250-400 towards the end of the 1800's under R. Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, the *Neziv*. See Norman Lamm, *Torah Lishmah—Torah For Torah's Sake* (New York, 1989), 28.

5. For example, Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer*, Y.D.:# 19; E.H. 3:#130
6. For example, *ibid.*, O.H. 1:#103; E.H. 1:#98, 3:#130. In this slogan, the word, “רמ”א” (the acronym commonly used for the co-author of the Jewish Codes of Law, R. Moshe Isserles) is substituted for the word “רמה” in the Biblical verse in *Shemot* 14:8.
7. Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer* 6:#89. This group was numerous and influential in the first millennium C.E. and its members were regarded by many as no longer Jews.
8. The term “*maskilim*” or “*maskil*”, as used herein, refers to persons who either claim, or are widely reputed, to be *maskilim*. This entails beliefs or practices of least one of the following: emphasis on Biblical studies; an anti-talmudic and anti-halakhic ethos; emphasis on reason, not religious tradition, as a yardstick of conduct and beliefs; reduced observance of Jewish religious laws; a belief that secular culture, values, and philosophy are of central importance; the view that Jews should participate in the general culture of non-Jews; a desire for assimilation with non-Jews in language, dress, and manners; favoring the breakdown of barriers between Jews and gentiles; downgrading the concept of Israel as an elected people; frequent communication with, and writing to *maskilim*, or publishing materials in *haskalah* periodicals.

Obviously, since the guidelines are so broad and varied, determining whether or not any particular person is a *maskil* is a matter of personal judgment, and is subject to debate. Some persons, as indicated hereafter, may easily fall into more than one category, particularly, rabbis who were also *maskilim* in one respect or another.
9. Some examples: In 1800, he permitted shaving one's beard, and wrote, “I do not understand why there is such a tumult about this.” Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer*, O.H.: #159. He also permitted wearing short jackets—a practice, which, like shaving, was the style of the general population—instead of the traditional long coats, and he permitted learning the vernacular and secular subjects. See M. Samet, *Kavvim*, note 1 above, 259. Yet, in 1809, he prohibited shaving in all forms, except with an instrument made of wood or bone. See Moshe Sofer, *Sefer ha-Zikkaron* (Jerusalem, 1957), 20. Moreover, in 1833, he criticized R. Yeḥezkel Landau, author of *Noda be-Yehudah*, for permitting shaving during the intermediate days of a festival. See Responsa, O.H.:#154. The tone of the last two pieces implies unhappiness with shaving the beard, in general. See M. Samet, *Kavvim*, note 1 above, 69. (Nevertheless, close associates of his, such as Ber Frank and Hirsch Levov, respectively the Secretary and the Head of the Pressburg community, were clean-shaven. Michael Silber, *Shorshei ha-Pilug be-Yahadut Hungariyah*, Ph.D thesis (Hebrew University, 1985), 259, f.n. 62
10. Moshe Sofer, “Rabbi Mosche Sofer,” *Israelit* (1861): 496. This was published during the lifetime of Ḥatam Sofer's son, R. Avraham Binyamin Sofer (known as Ketav Sofer), and presumably, with his approval; Meir Hildesheimer, “The German Language and Secular Studies: Attitudes Towards Them in the Thought of The Ḥatam Sofer and his Disciples,” (hereafter, “The German Language”), *Proceedings of the American Academy*

for *Jewish Research* (Jerusalem and New York, 1996):160.

11. *Eleh Toldot* (Pressburg, 1876), 10
12. Shelomoh Sofer, *Ḥut ha-Meshulash* (Tel Aviv, 1968), 6b. He stopped writing this encyclopedia of the sciences when such a work, *Sefer ha-Berit* (Zolkiev, 1807) was published by R. Pinhas Eliyahu Hurwitz. See also Shelomoh Sofer, *Ibid.*, 29b, 99; Meir Hildesheimer, “The German Language,” note 10 above, 153-4; A.H. Weiss, “*Zikhronotai*” *Genazim* I (1961):19; Y.H. Ya’aveḥ ha-Levi, *Sefer ha-Mor Deror 1* (Vienna, 1892), Introduction, 7.
13. Y.H. Ya’aveḥ ha-Levi, Introduction to *Sefer ha-Mor Deror*, note 12 above.
14. Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer*, Y.D.: # 338. See Meir Hildesheimer, “The German Language,” note 10 above, 153-154 for numerous citations supporting this view from the writings of Ḥatam Sofer.
15. For example, see Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer*, O.H.: #185 and H.M.:# 90.
16. A.H. Weiss, note 12 above, *ibid.* Yet, R. Sofer expressed his opposition to the study of philosophy. *Derashot* (Sereta, 1929; reprinted New York, 1971), 81a, 112b, and referred to the “defilement of philosophy,” *ibid.*, 304a.
17. Shelomoh Schick, *Mi-Moshe Ad Moshe* (Muncacs, 1903), 38b, 39 cites his teacher R. Moshe Schick as his source. This is the only source for this claim, and I have been unable to find other evidence to confirm it. Moreover, there is no mention in any of R. Moshe Schick’s writings of this approval by R. Sofer. Such mention would be expected, particularly in those places in which R. Schick disputes the view put forth by some that R. Sofer had a very negative view regarding secular learning. (See *Likkutei Teshuvot Ḥatam Sofer*, ed. Y. Stern [London, 1965]:# 82, p. 73-75; Responsa *Maharam Schick*, O.H.: #70, 306,307). R. Schick could have supported his contentions by citing R. Sofer’s approval of the seminaries, instead of relying simply on his own understanding of R. Sofer’s views. Shelomoh Schick’s claim is subject to further doubt since he is known to have strongly favored secular education for Jews. Support for his views from Ḥatam Sofer would, therefore, have been very desirable for him. Further verification is, therefore, needed to substantiate the assertion about R. Sofer’s approval of Rabbinical seminaries.
 What can be verified is that R. Sofer wrote a letter recommending R. David Katz Friesenhausen as qualified to serve as rabbi or *rosh yeshiva*. See *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, section on letters, #13, p. 83. Shelomoh Schick also makes the surprising claim that the Ḥasidic Rebbi and noted zealot, R. Moshe Teitelbaum (author of *Yismah Moshe*) gave his consent for these seminaries.
 If R. Sofer did, indeed, give his approval, he was more permissive than the Vilna *Gaon*. The latter had favored secular studies, but, apparently, only by individuals who would acquire such knowledge outside of the yeshivah, without formal instruction. See Aaron M. Schreiber, “*Hashkafato Shel ha-Gra Al Ḥashivut ha-Haskalah ha-Kelalit ve-Al ha-Kesher le-Yemot ha-Mashiah*,” (hereafter, “*Hashkafato Shel ha-Gra*”), *Bekhol Derakhekha Da’ehu* 9 (Bar-Ilan University, Summer, 1999):16.
18. Shelomoh Schick, *Mi-Moshe Ad Moshe*, note 17 above; Meir Hildesheimer, “The German Language,” note 10 above, 130, 157; Yehudah Naḥshoni, *Rabbenu Moshe Sofer, ha-“Ḥatam Sofer”* (Jerusalem 1986), 215.
19. Ber Frankel, *Bikkurei ha-Ittim* (Pressburg, 1832). Y. Naḥshoni, *Rabbenu Moshe Sofer*, note 18 above, 217.
20. Vienna, 1814

21. Y. Naḥshoni, *Rabbenu Moshe Sofer*, note 18 above, 215; Meir Hildesheimer, "The German Language," note 10 above, 163. Moshe Samet, however, denies that the approbation was given for this work, and claims that the approbation was given for a work on Halakhah. (M. Samet, *Kavvim Nosafim*, note 1 above: 66). Regardless, the approbation speaks favorably of secular learning, such as mathematics.
22. *Likkutei Teshuvot Ḥatam Sofer*, note 17 above, # 28, p. 8.
23. *Ibid.*, letter No. 13, section on letters, 83; David Katz Friesenhausen, *Mosedot Tevel* (Vienna, 1820), 13a.
24. Zolkowe, 1822
25. *Likkutei Teshuvot Ḥatam Sofer*, note 17 above, section on approbations, # 13; Meir Hildesheimer, "The German Language," note 10 above, 163, f.n. 139.
26. Yehudah Naḥshoni, *Rabbenu Moshe Sofer*, note 18 above, 215; Y. Y. Greenwald, *Li-Flagot Yisrael be-Hungariyah* (Deva, 1929), 17-18.
27. *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, # 56, p. 94.
28. R. Hezekiah Feivel Plaut, a disciple of Ḥatam Sofer in his *Likkutei Haver Ben Hayim*, III (Pressburg, 1840), 4b.
29. *Likkutei Teshuvot Ḥatam Sofer*, note 17 above, section on letters, # 20, p. 84-85. Shelomoh Sofer, *Hut ha-Meshulash*, note 12 above, 27b-28a; Y. Y. Gruenwald, *Le-Toledot ha-Reformazion ha-datit be-Germaniyah u-be-Hungariyah* (Jerusalem, 1972), 72; Y. Naḥshoni, *Rabbenu Moshe Sofer*, note 18 above, 215.
30. Shelomoh Sofer, *Iggerot Soferim*, (Vienna-Budapest, 1928), section on *Kitvei ha-Ketav Sofer*, 2; Meir Hildesheimer, "The German language," note 10 above, 134-140.
31. *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, section on letters, # 38, p. 90.
 Ḥatam Sofer indicates there that he was not disclosing all of the reasons for his change of mind. Some of the reasons may be those set forth by Zevi Lehren of Amsterdam and by R. Akiva of Breslau (See S. Sofer, *Iggerot Sofrim*, note 30 above, 70-78). Ḥatam Sofer's views, reflected in his initial approval of such a translation, were shared by R. Eliezer Fleckeles, who saw a need for a German translation of the Talmud so that all Jews could understand the words of *Hazal*. R. Fleckeles was one of the prime disciples of the *Noda be-Yehudah*, and head of the Prague *beit din*. Meir Hildesheimer, "The German Language," note 10 above, 140.
32. *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, section on approbations, #4, p. 2.
33. Shelomoh Sofer, *Hut ha-Meshulash*, note 12 above, 50b. Meir Hildesheimer, "The Attitude of the Ḥatam Sofer Toward Moses Mendelssohn," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* (1994):186.
34. Shelomoh Schick, *Mi-Moshe Ad Moshe*, note 17 above, 38b. For problems with this claim, see footnote No. 17, above.
35. *Ibid.*, 39
36. Responsum of R. Moshe Schick in *Likkutei Teshuvot Ḥatam Sofer*, note 17 above, p. 74.
37. *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, 75.
38. See Aaron M. Schreiber, "Hashkafato Shel ha-Gra", footnote 17 above, 5, 21.
39. *Hatan Sofer* (Ungvar, 1874), 2a.
40. *Ketav Yosher Divrei Emet* (Pressburg, 1865)
41. A.H. Weiss, "Zikhronotai," *Genazim I* (1961):10.
42. *Sefer ha-Mor Deror I*, note 12 above, introduction, p. 7.

43. H.F. Plaut, *Likkutei Haver Ben Hayyim*, note 28 above, *ibid.* See B.S. Hamburger, *Zikhronot*, note 28 above, 216. This disciple wrote that one never heard from R. Sofer words that slandered or tarnished the reputation of any person. This included even those whom he firmly believed to be deliberate sinners and scoffers (“*apikorsim*”). On the contrary, he always received such people with a pleasant demeanor.
- Another of R. Sofer’s disciples reported an incident related to him by an old man. This man told him that he had asked R. Sofer, then in Mattesdorf, regarding a book that he saw in the rabbi’s house. R. Sofer responded that it was a book of Euclidian geometry. Yaakov Hirsch Ya’avez ha-Levi, *Sefer ha-Mor Deror*, note 12 above, *ibid.* See B.S. Hamberger, *Zikhronot u-Mesorot Al ha-Hatam Sofer* (Benei Berak, 1996), 305.
44. *Nogah ha-Yareah*, pamphlet No. 5, published in 1872; Yehudah Nahshoni, *Rabbenu Moshe Sofer*, note 18 above, 213.
45. R. Yosef Naftali Stern, in his Introduction to Rabbi Shimon Sofer’s *Mikhtav Sofer 1* (Jerusalem, 1952), 56.
46. Meir Hildesheimer, “The German Language,” note 10 above, 134-135
47. Mordechai Eliav, “*Mekomo Shel ha-Rav Ezriel Hildesheimer be- Ma’avak al Demutah ha-Ruḥanit Shel Yahadut Hungariyah*,” *Zion*: 7(1962); Meir Hildesheimer, “*Rabbanei Hungariyah va-Aseifat Mikhaloviz*,” *Kiryat Sefer* 63, 3(1990-1991): 948; S.Z. Leiman, “Rabbinic Openness to General Culture in the Early Modern Period in Western and Central Europe,” in *Judaism’s Encounter With Other Cultures*, ed. Jacob J. Schacter (Northvale, New Jersey and Jerusalem, 1997), 204. It was also reported that Ketav Sofer expressed his regret that he had not mastered German and secular subjects. See Meir Hildesheimer, *Rabbanei Hungariyah*, *ibid.*, 947.
48. In 1867, pursuant to the orders of the Austrian Minister of Education and Religions, approximately 200 Orthodox Rabbis met to consider a course of action relating to the establishment of a General Congress of Hungarian Jews. A proposal to approve the founding of a Rabbinical Seminary was voted down and condemned. Ketav Sofer then suggested that secular studies should be introduced into the yeshivot, including his yeshivah in Pressburg, as a way to deflect demands to create a rabbinical seminary. Ketav Sofer stated that if the Austrian government would enact a law requiring secular studies, then the halakhic rule of “*dina de’malkhuta dina*” [the law of the state becomes a law of the Halakhah] would apply and must be obeyed. At this, R. Zvi Hersh Friedman, the Ḥasidic Rebbi of Liska, cried out, “A rabbi in Israel should have nothing to do with *bildung* [secular subjects] or the sciences. It is enough that he knows how to sign his name in German or Hungarian, and no more.” At that point, many of the assembled rabbis who were opposed to this view made a demonstrative exit, followed by R. Yirmiyahu Löw and his sympathizers, who opposed the views of the Ḥasidim, in general. This is how the conference came to an end. Michael Silber, “The Emergence of Ultra Orthodoxy,” note 1 above, 43; Yaakov Katz, *Ha-Kera Shelo Nit’ahēh* (Jerusalem 1995), 143. (Katz reports a different version of which group stormed out first); Moshe Samet, “The Beginnings of Orthodoxy,” *Modern Judaism* 8:3 (October, 1988): 249.
49. Meir Hildesheimer, “The German Language,” note 10 above, 140-144, 147-149.
50. R. Glassner wrote as follows

זה כמו חצי שנה באה אלי חמותי הצנועה תחי וגם חמי הסכים על ידה באשר שלא עסקתי כלל בספרים חצונים והציקוני באמריהם לאמר למה לא תשלח יד גם בשאר דיעות. עכ"פ [=על כל פנים] לך ללמוד לשון הוגריה ולשון הלימודים בטוב טעם ודעת כי זה כל האדם ומן הנמנע שתגיע לשום תכלית בלי לשונות הללו.

See Yosef Cohen, *Hakhmei Transilvanyah* 11 (Jerusalem 1989), 37; Meir Hildesheimer, "The German Language," note 10 above, 149; Yaakov Katz, *Ha-Kera Shelo Nit'aheh*, 85.

51. *Hiddushei Agadot Maharam Schick Al Masekhet Avot* (Jerusalem 1985), *Mishnah* 1:11; Responsa *Maharam Schick*, O.H.:#309 and Y.D.:#335; *Maharam Schick ha-Shalem Al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem 1990), 46,128,174.
52. Other leading rabbis in Hungary also sent their sons to this yeshiva. These included Rabbi Yehudah Aszod, who corresponded in Halakhah with R. Sofer, and others. Meir Hildesheimer, "Toward a Portrait of Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer," (Hebrew) *Sinai* 54 (1964), 75; Shnayer Z. Leiman, "Rabbinic Openness to General Culture in the Early Modern Period in Western and Central Europe," note 47 above, 203.
53. Responsa *Maharam Schick* (Muncacs, 1881), Y.D.:# 232.
54. This writing is included in his book, *Minḥah Tehorah*. This work contains an approbation by Ketav Sofer, who praised R. Hildesheimer for having formulated the text in proper German. Meir Hildesheimer, "The German Language and Secular Studies," note 10 above, 101.
55. See his *Zekhor le-Avraham* (Jerusalem 1972), 307; R. Leib Landsberg, *Tiferet Banim Avotom*, an unpublished manuscript, cited in Meir Hildesheimer, "The German Language," *ibid.*, 137
56. Meir Hildesheimer, "The German Language," *ibid.*, 134-140.
57. Shelomoh Sofer, *Iggerot Sofrim*, note 30 above, section on *Kitvei ha-Ketav Sofer*, 2.
58. R. Hillel Lichtenstein, Responsa *Beit Hillel* (Satu-Mare, 1908), # 34, 35, 39.

On the other hand, R. Schick and Ketav Sofer maintained that Ḥatam Sofer objected only to preaching in German by those who were irreligious. According to these disciples, R. Sofer had no objection to preaching in German by religious preachers, especially if use of this language would have greater appeal to congregants. Yaakov Katz, *Ha-Kera Shelo Nit'aheh*, note 48 above, 86-88.

In assessing the reliability of R. Lichtenstein's claim, we must remember that he was less than twenty-five years old when R. Sofer died. We may surmise that on these sensitive issues, R. Sofer would express his views more freely and clearly to his older students, and particularly, his son. They were on much more intimate terms with him and had known him well for a far longer time than had R. Lichtenstein. Moreover, Ḥatam Sofer criticized R. Lichtenstein for not attending his weekly Torah classes in which Ḥatam Sofer used to expound on the history and position of Jews in the Diaspora, and where the issues of secular learning and preaching in German were likely to come up. R. Lichtenstein, who, initially, absented himself noticeably from these classes, was, therefore, less likely to grasp the nuances of his master's position on these issues. R. Lichtenstein, however, took this criticism to heart, and thereafter attended all of these classes. See R. H. F. Plaut, *Likkutei Haver Ben Ḥayyim*, note 28 above, 236a; Z. H. Heller, *Beit Hillel ha-Shalem*, (Muncacs, 1893), 6.

R. Lichtenstein's son-in-law, R. Akiva Yosef Schlesinger was the main

propagandist who was responsible for popularizing the view that Ḥatam Sofer was an extreme zealot, violently opposed to secular studies and preaching in German. R. Schlesinger, however, was only two and one-half years old when Ḥatam Sofer died, and never heard his opinions personally. He is, therefore, not a primary source for Ḥatam Sofer's views.

59. Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer*, *H.M.*:# 197.
60. Yaakov Katz, *Ha-Kera Shelo Nit'ahēh*, note 48 above, 49. R. Eisenstadter studied with Ḥatam Sofer even before the latter became Rabbi of Pressburg and continued to study with him for many years thereafter. He and R. Schick are generally considered to be R. Sofer's two principal disciples. R. Eisenstadter is one of the main sources cited by R. Schlesinger to buttress his claims that Ḥatam Sofer forbade secular studies and speaking in German.
61. R. Yehezkel Landau (author of *Noda be-Yehudah*) held a similar view. Moshe Samet, "M. Mendelssohn, N.H. Weisel ve-Rabbanei Dorom," in *Mehkarim be-Toledot Am Yisrael ve-Ereẓ Yisrael*, ed. E. Gilboa (Haifa, 1970), 254; Meir Hildesheimer, "The Attitude of the Ḥatam Sofer Toward Moses Mendelssohn," footnote 33 above, 173-174, f.n. 81. Both Samet and Hildesheimer cite numerous sources to substantiate this. R. Naftali Ṷvi Yehudah Berlin, *Neẓiv*, of Volozhin had a similar view. See Hanna Katz, *Mishnat ha-Neẓiv* (Jerusalem, 1990), 114.
62. *Derashot Ḥatam Sofer* 1, note 16 above, 112a in Hebrew pagination, 225 in English pagination.
63. *Derashot Ḥatam Sofer* 1, *Ibid.*, 80b, 81b (162-164 in English pagination).
64. Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer*, 6:#86
65. "... שבעוונותינו הרבים אין לנו מדרש חכמות הרפואה וכל רופאי ישראל לומדים בבית מדרש לאומיים וחכמים" *Ḥidushei Ḥatam Sofer, Ḥulin* 61b.
66. Moshe Sofer, *Torat Moshe Tlita'i* 2 (1913), 49a.
67. *Derashot Ḥatam Sofer* I, note 16 above, 23a (45 in English pagination). This conclusion resembles his view that in the Land of Israel, "not only [is it permitted to teach one's children how to] work the land, but [one may also] teach them other occupational skills, for the settlement and honor of the Land of Israel, so that people will not say that there cannot be found in all of the Land of Israel a shoemaker, builder, and so on, and they will bring them from far-away lands. Accordingly, teaching all occupations [in the Land of Israel] is a *mizvah*." See his *Torat Moshe, Shofetim*, 160 (36 in newer editions); Ben Zion Strasser, *Daat Ḥatam Sofer*, I (New York, 1996), 13.
68. *Derashot Ḥatam Sofer* I, note 16 above, 51b (102 in the English pagination). R. Sofer also indicates here that mastery of secular subjects by Jewish Torah scholars avoids profaning the Name of God, and prevents non-Jews from saying that, unlike them, Torah scholars are ignorant of secular knowledge. R. Sofer does not offer an explanation here of how secular learning would be acquired by ordinary Jews, who do not merit having God's secrets revealed to them, nor does he explain how those who are not prophets or unusually learned in Torah would learn secular wisdom. Nor does he deal with the widespread ignorance of secular learning among many Jews who have devoted time and effort to study of Torah. This phenomenon appears to contradict his view that secular knowledge may readily be obtained from Torah study.
69. *Derashot Ḥatam Sofer*, note 16 above, *Derashah* for the eighth day of *Tevet*, 100b; 202 in English pagination.
70. Talmud, *Sotah*, 49b; see also the commentary of *Rashi* and *Me'iri* ad loc. See

Ramban, who was much admired by Ḥatam Sofer, and who lauds the acquisition of other wisdoms in R. Yiḏḥak de-Min Aku in his *Me'irat Eynayim* (Jerusalem, 1993), 53-54, *Parshat Noah*.

71. *Menahot* 99b; See also Talmud *Berakhot* 35b to a similar effect.
72. אין משיבים על הדרוש, cited in R. Yiḏḥak b. Yehuda ha-Levi, (13th century), *Pa'ane'ah Raza* (Amsterdam, 1757), 7a
73. *Derashot Ḥatam Sofer* 1, note 16 above, 27a (53 in English pagination).
74. *Derashot Ḥatam Sofer* 1, Ibid., footnote, 100b, 101a (202-203 in English pagination). This *derashah* was printed from lecture notes by a student, and as such, it is not as authoritative as R. Sofer's own words would have been. This is especially true here where the student's lecture notes are not consistent with words penned by the lecturer himself in other sermons. Additionally, a class lecture does not constitute a halakhic ruling given for public consumption. Lectures to a close circle of students are sometimes more exploratory in the views expressed, than halakhic rulings. Additionally, students might be held to a stricter code of conduct than is required or expected from members of the general public.
75. Moshe Sofer, *Sefer ha-Zikkaron*, note 3 above, 119; B.S. Hamburger, *Zikhronot u-Mesorot*, note 43 above, 280.
76. R. Akiva Yosef Schlessinger, *Lev ha-Ivri* (Levov, 1869), Second Introduction, 5-6; Idem, *Na'ar Ivri* (Vienna 1903), 16b; see Hillel Lichtenstein, *Responsa Beit Hillel*, note 58 above: #34, 35, 39.
77. *Responsa Ḥatam Sofer*, 2 E.H.:# 11. The "eighteen matters" are discussed in the Talmud, *Shabbat*, 13b and thereafter. These had been issued during the Second Temple era, nearly two thousand years earlier, and included prohibitions designed to discourage assimilation
78. *Responsa Ḥatam Sofer*, H.M.:# 197
79. Joles subsequently supported the Russian government's educational program in 1842, drafted by Max Lilienthal, to compel all Jewish children to study secular subjects. Ḥatam Sofer, as late as 1831, highly praised Joles. R. Sofer called him, "a great man, who is fit to be a *kohen gadol*" (Joles was a *kohen*). *Responsa Ḥatam Sofer*, H.M. #205; See also *Koveḏ Teshuvot Ḥatam Sofer* (Jerusalem, 1973):# 44, 64; *Teshuvot ha-Ḥadashot Ḥatam Sofer* (Jerusalem, 1949):# 33; M.A.Z. Kinstilicher, *Ha-Ḥatam Sofer u-Benei Doro* (Benai Brak, 1993), 132. See also R. Sofer's letter to Joles, in which R. Sofer describes some of his (R. Sofer's) personal predilections. Shmuel ha-Kohen Weingarten, *Ha-Ḥatam Sofer ve-Talmidav* (Jerusalem, 1945), 45; Yaakov Katz, "Kavvim le-Biografia Shel ha-Ḥatam Sofer," in Katz, *Halakhah ve-Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1984), 366, f.n. 85.
80. Rappaport wrote works of biblical criticism, published articles in Reform publications, and was called a heretic by the sage R. Yosef Shaul Natanson. In 1816, he was placed under a ban in Lemberg, with the approval of the sage, R. Yaakov Orenstein. Bruria David, *The Dual Role of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chayes: Traditionalist and Maskil*, unpublished doctoral thesis (Columbia University, 1971), 387, 396, 398, 405, 445, 446. Ḥatam Sofer's letters on behalf of Rappaport were written at the request of R. Sofer's friend, Shelomoh Rosenthal. The latter, a noted *maskil*, had studied with R. Mordechai Benet of Nicholsburg, and was on friendly terms and corresponded with Eliezer Lieberman, a prominent Reformer. Lieberman was the author of *Or Nogah*, essays in defense of religious reforms, published in

1818. This work was at the center of the polemics regarding the establishment of a Reform Temple in Hamburg. Lieberman and his works were the focus of many attacks by R. Sofer. Rosenthal also supported Aharon Horiner, a radical Reformer, until Horiner came out in favor of moving the Sabbath to Sunday. R. Sofer attacked Horiner bitterly and repeatedly. M.A.Z. Kinstlicher, *Ha-Ḥatam Sofer*, note 79 above, 370; M. Samet, *Ha-Shinuyim*, note 1 above: 58, 361.

81. *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, # 56. A lay scholar in Tarnopol, Mendel Mohr, wrote a sharply critical letter to R. Sofer, and threatened to publish a pamphlet attacking him. Y.Y. Greenwald, *Ozar Nehmad* (New York, 1942), 86; B. David, *The Dual Role*, note 80 above, 405, citing Shimon Bichler, *Shay le-Moreh* (Budapest, 1895), 46.
82. *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, section on letters, # 56; M. Samet, *Kavvim Nosafim*, note 1 above, 67.
83. Moshe Samet, *Kavvim Nosafim*, note 1 above, 55-73. His amicable relations and even friendships with *maskilim* are also detailed in Moshe Samet, “*Ha-Shinuyim be-Sidrei Beth ha-Kenesset*,” note 1 above, 373-377, 390-394.
84. See Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer*, O.Ḥ.:# 54,79,208. R. Hayes was very close with Nahman Krochmal, a leading *maskil*. He also corresponded with numerous Galician *maskilim*, including, Shimshon Bloch, Hirsh Pinelis, and Jacob Reifman, let alone, S.Y. Rappaport, with whom he later quarreled. Although he rejected and wrote strongly against Reform, R. Hayes corresponded with Abraham Geiger, a champion of Reform, and with Leopold Zunz. The latter was a *maskil* who sympathized with the spirit of Reform (but not with all of its acts), and was the founder of “Jewish Science” (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*). R. Hayes also tried to establish continuing contact with Zehariah Frankel and Julius Fuerst. He kept in close touch with, and had the highest regard for, Isaac Marcus Jost, a leading Reformer and a noted bible critic. As late as 1848, R. Hayes published lavish praise (which he had written a number of years earlier) of Israel Jacobson, who founded the first Reform congregations in Germany. R. Hayes called him “a prince in Israel”, “perfect man”, and “honored sage.” This appears to be going much further than called for by his principle (see his *Kol Sifrei* II, 976) not to attack, personally, those with whom he disagreed. For citations to all of the above, see B. David, *The Dual Role*, note 80 above, particularly, 50-54, 421, 424.
R. Hayes was referred to as a *maskil* by R. Yosef Shaul Natanson, and as one of the Reformers by R. Mordekhai Yaffe. See Y.S. Natanson, Responsa *Shoel u-Meshiv*, (5th edition, New York, 1953):#26; Mordechai G. Yaffe, *Tekheilet Mordekhai* (Jerusalem), 111. See B. David, *The Dual Role*, note 80 above, 442. R. Natanson did, however, refer respectfully to R. Hayes in a number of places. See Meir Hershkovitz, *Mahara”z Ḥayut*, (Jerusalem, 1972), 448, note 515.
85. R. Sofer referred to Heidenheim as “the glorious wise man,” “our master and teacher” etc. see *Kovez Teshuvot* (Jerusalem, 1973), #12, 48; Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer*, H.M.:#77; O.Ḥ.#9; Meir Hildesheimer, “The Attitude of The Ḥatam Sofer Toward Moses Mendelssohn,” footnote 33 above, 171; M.A.Z. Kinstlicher *Ha-Ḥatam Sofer*, note 79 above, 90-91.
86. Jacobson subsequently became the first one to conduct Reform prayer services in Zessen and then in Berlin, and was one of the foremost champions of Reform. See Michael A. Meyer, *A Response to Modernity*, note 1, above.

R. Heidenheim also included a preface by a noted Reformer, Michael Creisenach, in *Siddur le-Benei Yisrael* (Roedelheim, 1831), the *siddur* Heidenheim published. Creisenach founded a boy's school in Mainz that was conducted according to Reform principles. He later became a teacher in Frankfurt, where he conducted Reform services, which were widely emulated elsewhere. Heidenheim's approval of the reforms of Kassel are set forth in his foreword to Menahem Mendel Steinhardt's *Divrei Iggeret* (Roedelheim, 1812). Steinhardt was one of the three principal directors of the Consistory of Westphalia that promulgated the first Jewish reforms. See M. Samet, *Kavvim Nosafim*, 67, and id., *Ha-Shinuyim*, 349. Heidenheim also published the Pentateuch with Moses Mendelssohn's German translation. Meir Hildesheimer, "The Attitude of the Ḥatam Sofer," note 33 above, 171, footnote 77.

87. *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, *haskamot* section, #13, p.4. The second edition of Bloch's book carried an approbation by R. Moshe Kunitz, a well-known rabbi-*maskil*. Perhaps, not realizing the true extent of the proposed reforms, Kunitz contributed to the Reform book of essays, *Nogah Zedek*, in defense of the Reform Temple in Hamburg. His co-author was the radical Reformer, Aharon Horiner. Eliezer Lieberman was the editor, and author of a companion volume, *Or Nogah*. Moshe Samet, "Ha-Shinuyim," 355; Meyer Waxman, *History of Jewish Literature*, III (New York, 1960), 409. Consequently, Bloch's book had the unusual distinction of carrying approbations by both Ḥatam Sofer and by a contributor to a leading Reform polemical work bitterly attacked by R. Sofer.
88. See Moshe Samet, *Ha-Shinuyim*, 358, 360, 361, 390. R. Mintz initially supported Aharon Horin, who became a zealous Reformer, and he wrote an approbation for one of Horin's books. R. Sofer, who was aware of R. Mintz' relations with Horin, requested R. Mintz to prevail upon Horin to recant. R. Mintz complied. M. Samet, *ibid*.
89. See Bruria David, *The Dual Role*, note 80 above, 445 and M. Samet, *Ha-Shinuyim*, 355.
90. *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, section on letters, #20, p. 84-85; M. Samet, *Ha-Shinuyim*, note 1 above, 375. Rabbi Hertzfeld gave his approbation to the 1831-1833 edition of Moses Mendelssohn's "*Biur*."
91. R. Sofer's children and disciples also reflect his ambivalence in their vividly contrasting versions of his views. On the one hand, his son, *Ketav Sofer*, and his chief disciple, R. Moshe Schick, who studied with Ḥatam Sofer in earlier years, report a more liberal attitude. On the other hand, his disciple R. Hillel Lichtenstein and other respected disciples who studied with Ḥatam Sofer in his last years, detail an extremely stringent view. It is possible that Ḥatam Sofer's views changed over time. Both groups may, therefore, have a basis for their contrasting claims regarding Ḥatam Sofer's attitudes, and this may possibly explain his seemingly ambivalent conduct.

The ambivalence in Ḥatam Sofer's approach may explain why he is regarded as a revered role model by German Jews, adherents of R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, who value secular studies. At the same time, R. Sofer is venerated by pious Hungarian and Polish *Ḥasidim* for whom secular learning is anathema. I am indebted to Rabbi Shmuel Singer for this insight. It is also possible that neither group is aware of the full range of Ḥatam Sofer's expressions on this subject.

92. One scholar, Dr. Moshe Samet, who has devoted many years to studying Ḥatam Sofer's acts and works, concluded, "There is no doubt that one can discern in the personality of Rabbi Moshe Sofer internal struggles, hesitations, doubts and even internal contradictions. These were possibly caused by the time, that is, whether earlier or later in his life; possibly caused by place, that is, the city or the events. . . . Nevertheless, even the perspectives which he expressed in his later years, when the spread of Reform became more troubling to him, do not seem to be consistent and show considerable ambivalence." Moshe Samet, *Kavvim Nosafim*, note 1: 66 ff. For a similar opinion, see Michael K. Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy," note 1 above, 29-30.

Some of the examples cited by Samet are: in 1810, Ḥatam Sofer rejected the notion of placing a ban on Reform Jews (Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer O.H.:#* 122). In or about 1819, however, R. Sofer said that if he could, he would separate the Reformers from the Jewish community and forbid intermarriage with them. Responsa 6:# 89. This was the same stand that he took with regard to followers of Shabbetai Zevi. See Responsa *Y.D.:#* 322. But in 1838, one year before his death, he turned down the idea of separating Orthodox Jews from others. Responsa 6:#83. He also tolerated the existence of a separate *minyān* in Pressburg by Reformers and maskilim, provided that they did not deviate from traditional halakhic norms regarding prayer. Shelomoh Sofer, *Ḥut ha-Meshulash*, note 12 above; Michael Silber, *Shorshei ha-Pilug*, note 9 above, 42).

Samet also cites Hatam Sofer's seemingly ambivalent attitudes toward *Ḥasidut* and Ḥasidim. While friendly in some respects, he criticized them for a number of practices, including a stinging criticism of a noted Ḥasidic rebbi in Hungary, R. Yitzchak Taub of Kalev. See S. Sofer, *Iggerot Sofrim*, note 30 above, 38-39. He also wrote in a letter to the effect that the *talmid ḥakham* was trapped between Ḥasidim on his right who profaned, and *apikorsut* (scoffing) on his left. Similarly, Samet claims that R. Sofer appears to have had ambivalent attitudes with regard to the Land of Israel. More strikingly, despite Ḥatam Sofer's famous slogan, "The children of Israel go forth with the hand of Rama" (Responsa *O.Ḥ. 1:#*103, *E.H. 1:#*98, 130), he did not rule in accordance with the Rama in a number of instances. Also, R. Sofer disagreed with those who felt that a decisor (*posek*) may tilt the Halakhah whichever way he wishes. On the other hand, he felt that "We do not have even one clear rule." *Derashot ha-Ḥatam Sofer* 3, note 16 above, (*Derashah le-Rosh ha-Shanah* for the year 1790), and M. Samet, *Kavvim*, note 1 above, 72. Samet also claims that although R. Sofer was against leniencies for his generation, he issued a number of notably lenient rulings.

It has even been claimed that many of R. Sofer's halakhic rulings seem inconsistent. However, the claimed halakhic inconsistencies can usually be resolved by resort to purely halakhic principles. See, e.g., Yisakhar Dov Goldstein, *Likkutei He'arot Al ha-Ḥatam Sofer*, (Jerusalem and Brooklyn, 1969). Goldstein adduces resolutions for numerous problems raised with regard to R. Sofer's halakhic rulings, including those that seem to be inconsistent. Also relevant, I would argue, is Ḥatam Sofer's halakhic philosophy, as well as the time, circumstances, place and the particulars involved in each halakhic ruling, as discussed in the text below. This is true of every great *posek*. Accordingly, his statements and actions may have been affected by the

context, and by the goals he sought to accomplish with each ruling. So, too, he had to take into account the ill effects that he sought to avoid in each instance, given the particular circumstances of each case.

93. Michael K. Silber, "The Historical Experience," note 1 above, 113.
94. Examples are R. Wolf Boskowitz, one of the leading talmudists of that time, author of *Seder Mishneh*, R. Shimon Oppenheimer (a member of the *Peit beit din*), R. Azriel Brill, a member of the *Peit beit din*, R. Moshe Perls, head of a yeshiva, and R. Barukh Jeitteles, the undisputed head of the Prague *Haskalah* who was the head of a yeshiva, as well. M. Silber, "The Historical Experience," note 1 above, 113-115.). R. Oppenheimer composed a book on astronomy, and R. Brill had previously served as a teacher in the state public school, the *normalschule*.

R. Yehezkel Landau (perhaps, the leading Torah sage of his era, author of *Noda be-Yehudah*), had a high regard for secular learning, as indicated by his issuance of numerous approbations to secular works on mathematics, geography, philosophy, history and grammar. Moshe Samet, "M. Mendelssohn, N.H. Weisel ve-Rabbanei Dorom," note 61 above, 233, 254. In 1782, R. Landau cooperated in the founding, by *maskilim* in Prague, of a Jewish school in which the students also studied secular subjects. R. Landau insisted, however, that Torah studies should be pursued first and receive primary emphasis. Moshe Samet, "M. Mendelssohn," *ibid.*, 254; Meir Hildesheimer, "The Attitude," footnote 33 above, 173-174, f.n. 81. Both cite numerous sources.

To the list of prominent rabbis who lauded secular learning, one should add, R. Zarakh Eidlitz, probably the most respected member of the *beit din* of R. Yehezkel Landau. Rabbi Eidlitz published works on trigonometry and related subjects, e.g. *Melekheth Makhshavah Al ha-Mispar ve-ha-Ḥeshbon*. Leading Torah sages in that era and in immediately preceding generations pursued secular learning, (such as R. Elijah, the noted *Gaon* of Vilna, R. Avraham Abele Pasviler (who served as head of the *beit din* of Vilna for thirty years), R. Yonatan Eibschutz and many others. See A.M. Schreiber, "Hashkafato Shel ha-Gra," note 17 above: 20. Strange as it may seem to current sensibilities, R. Yehezkel Landau was eulogized by Yosef Efrati, a leading *maskil* of that time, as rushing into the welcoming arms of Moshe Mendelssohn in the world to come! M. Silber, "The Historical Experience," note 1 above, 115.

Accordingly, it is understandable that a person's pursuit of secular learning did not automatically engender distrust, estrangement, and separation from him by Orthodox Jews.

95. See M. Samet, *Ha-Shinuyim*, note 1 above: 378. These *maskilim*, whose letters were included in the collection, were most notably, R. Shmuel Bernstein, a rabbi-*maskil* of Amsterdam, and R. Moshe Tuvia Zundheimer, a co-worker of Wolf Heidenheim.
96. R. Bernstein was a great *talmid ḥakham*, yet also a *maskil*, who contributed to *Ha-Me'asef*, a noted *Haskalah* journal. He was also, for a while, on cordial terms with Israel Jacobson, a pioneer Reformer. M. Samet, "Ha-Shinuyim," note 1 above, 378. The latter had headed the Reform Consistory in Kassel, and subsequently instituted the first Reformed religious services in Zessen, and then in Berlin.
97. Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer*, *E.H.* 2:#139; M. Samet, *ibid.*, 378, 382.

98. See M. Samet, *ibid.*, 373.
99. Yaakov Katz, *Ha-Kera Shelo Nit'ahēh*, note 48 above, 92 ff.; Michael K. Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy," note 1 above, 37-40.
100. Yaakov Katz, *ibid.*, 139 ff; Michael K. Silber, *ibid.*, 43-44.
101. See e.g., *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, # 82, p. 73, 75.
102. Meir Hildesheimer, "The Attitude of the Ḥatam Sofer," note 33 above:162-173. Similarly, a number of Ḥasidic leaders, including R. Naḥman of Breslav, R. Zvi Hirsch of Dinev, R. Ḥayyim of Tchernowitz and R. Horowitz' brother, R. Shmuel Shmelke, of Nicholsburg, were vehemently opposed to the *Biur*. See, e.g., Moshe Samet, "M. Mendelssohn," note 61 above, 255-256.
103. For details, see Meir Hildesheimer, "The Attitude," note 33 above:182-186. This casts grave doubt upon claims (e.g., in the Reform organ, *Orient* 32, 1840) that Ḥatam Sofer placed a ban on Mendelssohn's works. Hildesheimer, *ibid.*, also makes the startling claim that a complete set of Mendelssohn's *Biur* was contained in the library of R. Josef Zvi Duschinsky, a Hungarian rabbi, the head of the *beit din* of the *Edah ha-Ḥaredit* of Jerusalem for many years. He had a reputation as an extreme zealot.
104. In taking this approach not to attack Mendelssohn directly, Ḥatam Sofer seems to have followed the course taken by his forerunners, R. Pinḥas Horowitz, his teacher, and the eminent R. Yeḥezkel Landau. The latter two refrained from publicly denouncing Mendelssohn directly, although both denounced his disciple and co-worker, Naftali Hertz Weisel. Moshe Samet, "M. Mendelssohn," note 61 above, 240-244, 246-247.
105. Their high regard, even esteem, for Moses Mendelssohn is evidenced by the admiring letters that the sages, R. Yaakov Emden and R. Yehonatan Eibenschutz, sent to Mendelssohn. Y. Elbogen (ed.), *Ketavim Ivriyim* 3, *Kol Kitvei Moshe Mendelssohn* 16 (Berlin, 1929), letters Nos. 2, 109. Moreover, more than eighty rabbis from all over Europe subscribed to purchase Mendelssohn's work, *Netivat ha-Shalom*, commonly called the *Biur*. (In addition to Mendelssohn, parts of the *Biur* were written by Shelomoh Dubnow, Naftali Hertz Wessely (Weisel), Hertz Homberg, and Aharon Yaroslav. See Peretz Sandler, *Ha-Biur la-Torah*, Jerusalem, 1941, 180, 181, 216). The subscribers included renowned Torah sages, heads of yeshivot, heads and members of *beit dins* of prominent cities, authors of prominent Talmudic works, and community rabbis. Among them were the following: R. Nathan Adler (subscribed to Dubnow's edition), R. Zeckel Wormser (known as *Ba'al Shem* of Michelstadt), R. Shmuel Shtrashun of Vilna (*Rashash*), R. Yosef Zekharya Stern, of Shavli; R. David Zinzheim of Strassburg, France (eulogized by R. Sofer, *Derashot* 1, note 16 above, 162-167), R. Yaakov Etlinger (*Arukh le-Ner*). In addition, *Ktav Sofer* and members of his *beit din* subscribed to Mendelssohn's German translation of *Shir ha-Shirim*, with a commentary by Samuel Deutschlander, which referred to the *Biur* in a number of places. See also P. Sandler, *ibid.* For details of the above, see Meir Hildesheimer, "Moses Mendelssohn in Nineteenth-Century Rabbinical Literature," *Proceedings of the American Society for Jewish Research* (1988), 79, and 106. See in general, M. Samet, "M. Mendelssohn," note 61 above, 233-257.

Mendelssohn's associate and co-author of the *Biur*, N.H. Wessley, was also highly praised by many prominent Rabbis, although he was sharply attacked by R. Yeḥezkel Landau and R. Eliezer Flekeles. The latter subse-

quently praised him. R. Shmuel L. Bernstein, of Amsterdam, lauded him in his letter, which was included in the *Eleh Divrei Ha-Berit* collection. Also, R. Yisrael Lifshitz (in his commentary, *Tiferet Yisrael* to the *Mishnah*, Avot 3:11). M. Samet, “M. Mendelssohn,” note 61 above, 246. R. Yaakov Ettlinger, (author of *Arukh le-Ner*), quotes him in his approbation to Wessely, *Ohelot Naftali* (Berlin, 1842) and R. David Zvi Hoffman cited him as authority for a halakhic ruling. Responsa *Melamed le-Ho’il*, Y.D.:# 64, p. 62 (Berlin, 1926). See also Meir Hildesheimer, “The Attitude of the Ḥatam Sofer Toward Moses Mendelssohn,” note 33 above:159, footnote 59.

Additionally, Mendelssohn’s *Biur* and, particularly, the third volume, *Va-Yikra* (authored by his associate, Wessely), were cited with approval and used by numerous prominent Torah sages, including those in Lithuania. There are even claims that R. Eliyahu, the *Gaon* of Vilna, regarded as the epitome of piety and religious conservatism, was extremely fond of the *Biur*, especially the volume of *Va-Yikra*. Kalman Schulman, “*Toledot R. N.H.V.*,” in Wessely’s *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet*, (Warsaw, 1886), footnote on p. 15. Schulman’s claim must be treated with caution since he associated with *Haskalah* groups that tried to buttress support for Mendelssohn by claiming the support of R. Eliyahu. Similarly, the historian Heinrich Graetz claimed that he, himself, had seen a letter written by R. Eliyahu, the *Gaon* of Vilna, in which he defended Mendelssohn. M. Samet, “M. Mendelssohn,” note 61 above, 248. Given Graetz’ well known antipathy to Orthodox Judaism, and because this letter is not extant, Graetz’ claim cannot be relied upon.

Many of R. Eliyahu’s closest disciples and associates, and others who were in frequent contact with him, subscribed to, and wrote praises of Shelomoh Dubnow’s edition of the *Biur* on *Bereishit* and *Shemot*. (These volumes were identical with the earlier Berlin edition, except that Mendelssohn’s German translation was deleted and replaced by the Aramaic translation, *Targum Onkelos*. Dubnow states this explicitly in his introduction to his notebook of subscribers, and it emerges clearly from many of the approbations.) Dubnow’s notebook and the subscriptions are reprinted in David Kamenetzky, “*Haskamateihem Shel Gedolei ha-Rabbanim la-Ḥumashim Shel Rebbe Shelomoh Dubnow*,” *Yeshurun* 8 (New York, 2001), 713, 716, and 726-727.

Those in Lithuania who subscribed to and wrote praises of Dubnow’s edition of the *Biur* included R. Eliyahu of Vilna’s closest disciples and associates: R. Ḥayyim Volozhiner and his brother R. Shlomo Zalman Volozhiner, R. Noah Mindis, R. Shmuel Avigdor (the Rabbi of Vilna), R. David Broida, R. Dov Ber Trivash, R. Moshe bar Yehudah Leib, R. Yisrael Rappaport (the four leading *dayyanim* of Vilna), R. Moshe Meisels, R. Binyamin Rivlin, R. Yosef Pesselis, and numerous other prominent rabbis and leaders of the Jewish community in Vilna. In addition to the foregoing, hundreds of people in Lithuania, including many prominent rabbis, subscribed to Dubnow’s edition of Mendelssohn’s *Biur* to *Bereishit* and *Shemot*. See David Kamenetzky, *ibid.*, 711, footnotes 2 and 3, and 713-729.

Moreover, the *Biur* was utilized until about 1896 in the Yeshivah *Ez Ḥayyim* in Jerusalem, founded and managed by R. Yosef Zundel of Salant’s son-in-law, R. Shmuel Salant, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem. Meir Hildesheimer, “Moses Mendelssohn,” in the first paragraph above of this note:130, note 160. R. Hayim Kanievsky, a noted contemporary talmudic

- scholar in Israel with a reputation for zealotry, advised me in a recent note that he had it on good authority that many prominent talmudic scholars had examined the *Biur* on *Va-Yikra* and could find no fault whatsoever with it.
106. His approbation, and that of R. Yaakov Zvi Meklenberg (author of *Ha-Ketav ve-ha-Kabbalah*) were issued to the edition (Berlin 1831–1833), which bore the title *Mekor Hayyim*. R. Eger's approbation contains a formula, commonly used in rabbinical approbations, that his policy is not to grant approbations. Nevertheless, he states that he is subscribing to purchase the work, and addresses the editor, Jeremiah Heineman, with laudatory titles. Moreover, R. Eger's language seems supportive of the work. R. Eger not only subscribed to the *Biur*, but also read it closely. This can be seen from his disagreement with Mendelssohn's translation of a biblical verse, which R. Eger cites in his *Hidushei R. Akiva Eger* to the Talmud, *Meggilah* 16a (I am indebted to Professor S. Z. Leiman for this reference) and his favorable citation of Mendelssohn in a letter (*Jahrbuch der Judisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 3, 1905, 76). See also, M. Samet, "M. Mendelssohn, N.H. Weisel ve-Rabbanei Dorom," note 61 above, 256. According to R. Akiva Yosef Schlesinger (*Lev ha-Ivri* 1, 81b-82a.), R. Eger was the well-known rabbi referred to by R. Sofer, when he expressed unhappiness with that rabbi's support of the *Biur*. This took place in R. Sofer's discussions with R. Moshe Schick. See M. Hildesheimer, "The Attitude," note 33 above, 166. Two of R. Eger's prominent disciples, R. Eliyahu Guttmacher of Greiditz and R. Zvi Hirsch Kalischer also had a high regard for Mendelssohn and cited him in their works. A third disciple, R. Yosef Zundel of Salant, owned the *Biur* and appended his handwritten notes to it. (This volume can be seen in the National Library in Jerusalem). See Meir Hildesheimer, "Moses Mendelssohn," note 105 above, 83, footnote 14 and p. 130, f.n. 160.
107. R. Landau wrote of Shelomoh Dubnow's edition of Mendelssohn's *Biur* to *Bereishit* and *Shemot* (large portions, and possibly all, of which were written by Dubnow), that it was "a delightful work, which he called, *Biur*, a selection of pearls, sayings from the great commentators of the Torah, and he added much in great measure of his own. . . ." R. Landau states his awareness that the Dubnow edition was a reprint of the earlier Berlin edition. The text of R. Landau's approbation appears in David Kamenetzky, "*Haskamateihem Shel Gedolei ha-Rabbanim*," note 105 above, 719. See also Yehoshua Mondsheim, "*Haskamot Shetukot mi-Volozhin u-mi-Vilna*," *Or Yisrael* 4 (1999), 16. R. Landau was opposed to Mendelssohn's German translation because that translation was intended, and was being used, to teach young children. Since the translation was in a "very deep German," it was incomprehensible to children not familiar with the German language. Accordingly, much of the teaching time was spent to teach children the German language so that they could understand the translation, with little time left for Torah studies. In addition, Mendelssohn's translation "made our Torah into a maid that helped the German language to come into more widespread use." Moreover, the translation would give Jews access to German literature. This would adversely affect their religious observance. (These thoughts appear in R. Landau's approbation to the translation of the Torah into a simpler German by Zussman Geluga, Prague, 1785, and in his aforementioned approbation to Shelomoh Dubnow's edition of the *Biur*. The same thought appears in R. Landau's *Zlah*, *Berakhot*, 28). See also Moshe Samet, "M. Mendelssohn, N.H.

Weisel ve-Rabbanei Dorom,” note 61 above, 242 and 254.

Followers of Mendelssohn widely believed, apparently in error, that R. Yehezkel Landau had issued a ban on the *Biur* work, and was vehemently opposed to Mendelssohn and the *Biur*. The various claims of a ban on the *Biur* that was placed, or threatened, by R. Yehezkel Landau, are gathered and refuted by Moshe Samet, “M. Mendelssohn,” note 61 above, 240-244.

Moreover, R. Shmuel Landau, son of R. Yehezkel Landau, who succeeded his father as head of the Prague *beit din*, subscribed to the *Biur* and recommended it in a *derashah*. See *Ahavat Zion* (Warsaw, 1881), *derashah* No. 12; Moshe Samet, “M. Mendelssohn,” note 61 above, 241. Meir Hildesheimer, “Moses Mendelssohn,” note 105 above, 102. It does not seem likely that R. Shmuel would have done this if his father were strongly opposed to Mendelssohn. Similarly, R. Yehezkel Landau’s other son, Yaakov, claimed that his father had defended Mendelssohn from people who expressed criticisms orally to him, and his third son, Yisrael, subscribed to the *Biur*. See R. Yaakov Landau’s letter to the author, reproduced in the Introduction to Juda Jeitteles, *Mavo ha-Lashon ha-Aramit* (Prague, 1803). Meir Hildesheimer, “Moses Mendelssohn,” note 61 above, 102. Yaakov’s claim is confirmed by Avigdor Levi of Glogau. In a letter sent from Prague in response to Moses Mendelssohn’s inquiry, Levi advised him that R. Landau had rejected all attacks on Mendelssohn. Avigdor Levi, *Iggerot RM”D* 1 (Vienna, 1794), 10b; M. Samet, “M. Mendelssohn,” note 61 above, 291. R. Yehezkel Landau’s grandson, Moshe Landau, actually published the *Biur* in 1836. Meir Hildesheimer, *ibid.*

See, however, purported copies of three of R. Yehezkel Landau’s letters published in Yisrael Natan Heschel, “*Da’atam Shel Gedolei ha-Dor be-Milhamtam Negeg ha-Maskil Naftli Hertz Weisel*,” *Beit Aharon ve-Yisrael* 8:1 (Brooklyn, New York, *Tishrei-Heshvan 1993*):162-163, and *Beit Aharon ve-Yisrael*, *Ibid.*, 8:3 (*Shevat-Adar 1993*): 123-125, and 126-127, 1993). These letters contain sharp criticisms that, because of their ambiguous wording, might be interpreted as directed at Mendelssohn, as well as his associate, Naftali Herz Wessely (Weisel). However, although they are claimed to be in R. Landau’s handwriting, the copies are unsigned. Moreover, they contain extremely vile denunciations and name-calling that are not characteristic of R. Landau. In my opinion, the derogatory expressions in the letter seem to refer to Wessely, not to Mendelssohn. First of all, R. Landau refers to Mendelssohn respectfully in this letter, with the honorary title, “R.” (“RM”D” is an acronym for R. Moshe Dessau. R. Landau never employs the title, “R”, for Wessely in these letters). This honorary title is completely out of place if the vile denunciations which follow immediately apply to Mendelssohn. Secondly, the biting, derogatory language is nearly identical with the language that R. Landau utilizes with reference to Wessely in his other two letters published by Heschel. The second letter (on p. 123), which deals directly with Wessely, again refers respectfully to Moses Mendelssohn.

Nevertheless, R. Landau, in this letter, does appear to also attack Mendelssohn, albeit indirectly. R. Landau denounces requests made to governmental authorities to prosecute rabbis, and Mendelssohn is known to have approved of such action. (See, e.g., Heschel, *Ibid.*:123, note 19). Moreover, Wessely was a devoted disciple of Mendelssohn. The latter fully supported Wessely in his battles with the numerous rabbis who attacked him

after he sharply criticized rabbis in his pamphlet, *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* (Berlin, circa, 1782). Attacks on Wessely can, therefore, be understood as also censuring Mendelssohn. See also R. Landau's *Derushei ha-Zlah*, (Warsaw, 1799), No. 39. Additionally, there is also a report that R. Landau became so agitated at the mention of Mendelssohn that his hat fell off his head. "Das Rabbinat Prage Jecheskel Landau," in *Paschelas Israelitischer Illustrierter Volks Kalender* 32 (Prague, 1884), 94-96. (I am indebted to Professor Shnayer Z. Leiman for this reference.) Definitive conclusions regarding R. Yehezkel Landau's view of Mendelssohn must, therefore, await the authentication of the above letters, further investigation and, perhaps, the uncovering of additional writings of R. Landau.

108. Vienna edition, 1818. It is noteworthy that neither R. Eger, R. Mecklenburg, nor R. Benet mentioned the name, Mendelssohn, nor the title, *Biur*, in their approbations. R. Benet was also reported to have been very fond of this work, and knew it well. See Yaakov Avraham Benet, *Toldot Adoni Avi M'H'R' Mordechai Benet* (Offen, 1832), 22; Moshe Samet, "M. Mendelssohn," 256; A.H. Weiss, *Zikhronot*, note 41 above, 36; Meir Hildesheimer, "Moses Mendelssohn," note 105 above, 94. R. Benet also gave approbations for a number of works of Hertz Homberg, a radical Reformer, who wrote the last volume of the *Biur* to *Devarim*. M. Hildesheimer, *ibid.*, 90; and *id.*, "The Attitude," note 33 above, 74, 175.
109. Responsa *Melamed le-Ho'il*, Y.D. (Berlin, 1926):# 64, p. 62. See also Meir Hildesheimer, "The Attitude of the Hatam Sofer Toward Moses Mendelssohn," note 33 above, 159, footnote 59.
110. R. Hirsch felt that had Mendelssohn completed his work, the Reform movement might never have come into being. R. Hirsch termed Mendelssohn, "one of the noblest sons of Israel" and "a strictly religious Jew, and yet . . . brilliant and highly esteemed as the German Plato." R. Azriel Hildesheimer, founder of the Rabbinical Seminary and head of the Adat Israel community in Berlin, termed Mendelssohn "the great worldly sage." He claimed that Mendelssohn was a loyal adherent of the Jewish religion, but that his disciples and children crudely distorted the essence of his philosophy. Mendelssohn, therefore, could not be held responsible for their actions. S. R. Hirsch, *Iggerot Zafon* (Jerusalem, 1952) Letter 18; *Jeschurun* (Frankfort, 1885), 833-834; Mordechai Breuer, *Modernity Within Tradition* (New York, 1992), 58-59, 61, 71; Meir Hildesheimer, "Moses Mendelssohn," note 105 above: 111-112.
111. Moreover, R. Mordechai Benet wrote a very laudatory letter to Mordechai Leidesdorfer, a leader of the Reform movement in Vienna, most of whose children had already converted to Christianity. M. Silber, *Shorshei ha-Pilug*, note 9 above, 267, f.n. 129.
112. Its Rabbi, Isaac Noah Mannheim, had previously conducted Reform services in Copenhagen, with prayers recited in the vernacular, rather than in Hebrew, accompanied by music of Christians composers.
113. M. Silber, *Shorshei ha-Pilug*, note 9 above, 46- 47.
114. M. Silber, *ibid.*
115. M. Silber *ibid.*, 47.
116. Yaakov Katz, *Ha-Kera Shelo Nit'ah*, note 48 above, 53-55. In fact, however, the movement originally appears to have been, in general, much more moderate than the German Reform movement, and was somewhat comparable to the Jewish Conservative movement in the United States.

117. Responsa *Ĥatam Sofer, E.H.*, # 11. Ĥatam Sofer also called him, “his exalted eminence, may he live long. . . . May God bless you and us with peace, blessings, and all good things, as appropriate for a respected lord [as you].” In contrast, however, Ketav Sofer, R. Sofer’s son, described Schwab as one who was not inwardly, as he appeared to be outwardly, “*ein tokho ke-baro*.” Shelomoh Sofer, *Iggerot Sofer*, note 30 above, section on letters of Ketav Sofer.
118. 102. M. Silber, *Shorshei ha-Pilug*, note 9 above, 45.
119. M. Silber, *ibid.*, 44. Dr. Moshe Samet has advised me that he once possessed a photostat of a *maedenschule* document that listed R. Sofer as a member of its Board of Trustees.
120. M. Silber, *Shorshei ha-Pilug*, note 9 above, 45. Moreover, R. Sofer, in 1831, issued his approbation for the book, *Benot Zion*, written by the school’s head, Lazer Horowitz, which dealt with the teaching of religion and ethics to girls. Ĥatam Sofer stated, “I approve its publication with joy.” M. Silber, *ibid.*
121. S. Sofer, *Ĥut ha-Meshulash*, note 12 above, 95-96.
122. Vienna, 1829. See M. Silber, *Shorshei ha-Pilug*, note 9 above, 46.
123. After Ĥatam Sofer’s death, his son, R. Avraham Binyamin Sofer, praised Oppenheim lavishly. He called him, “crown of the elders, the outstanding rabbi, this sage who has acquired wisdom, who draws waters from the well dug by the nobles of the Torah, who is endowed with sharpness and good sense.” This praise may have been related to the fact that Oppenheim, an influential community leader, had encouraged the selection of R. Avraham Binyamin Sofer as Rabbi to succeed his father. M. Silber, *ibid.*, 46.
- The diverse friendships and activities of Shelomoh Rosenthal also exemplify the complex web of amiable relations that sometimes existed between *maskilim*, Orthodox rabbis, and Reformers in that era. Rosenthal was on extremely friendly terms with R. Sofer and in frequent correspondence with him. Yet, the same time, he was also on friendly terms and corresponded with Eliezer Lieberman, one of the most prominent Reform leaders. In 1834, Rosenthal wrote to R. Sofer and advised him, in all seriousness, to turn for help to a noted moderate Reform rabbi, Gavriel Ullman. Rosenthal suggested that R. Sofer ask Ullman to prevent Aharon Horin, a radical Reformer, from coming to Pest to gather additional supporters for Reform. Rosenthal appeared to have no doubt that R. Sofer would seriously consider taking his advice. R. Sofer did, in fact, write to a *maskil*-rabbi, R. Moshe Mintz, and requested him to attempt to prevail on Horin to recant. R. Mintz, who was on friendly terms with R. Sofer, was also friendly with Horin, had supported him, and wrote an approbation for one of Horin’s books. Moshe Samet, “*Ha-Shinuyim*,” 358, 360, 361, 390; Responsa *Ĥatam Sofer* 6:#93.
124. M. Silber, *ibid.*, 39-40.
125. *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, p.109. This letter was, in fact, not included by R. Sofer’s children when they published his Responsa.
126. Responsa *Noda be-Yehudah*, 2nd edition, O.Ĥ.:# 99. R. Landau felt, that on the contrary, it was desirable to publicize leniencies at a time when many people commonly violated religious laws. Emphasizing prohibitions would drive them further away from Judaism.
127. For example, Rambam rules explicitly that one who claims that the prohibition of eating the meat of a fowl together with milk is biblical, rather than rabbinic, violates the aforementioned precept. *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Mamrim 2:5*.

128. R. Zvi Hersh Hayes, *Kol Sifrei Maharaz Hayes* (reprinted Jerusalem, 1958), section on *Darkei Hora'ah*, footnote on p. 270. R. Hayes did not also respond that R. Sofer's position might constitute a violation, in spirit if not in letter, of the prohibition regarding מגלה פנים בתורה שלא כהלכה, a deliberate misstatement of the Halakhah. Possibly, such a statement would have been disrespectful, since such violation calls for the extreme sanction of losing one's portion in the world to come (*Avot* 3:15).
129. Possibly another example of Hatam Sofer's enlarging a prohibition is his claim in Responsa *Hatam Sofer, E.H.*, #11 that use of foreign languages and the signing of one's name in Latin letters in documents were also included in the prohibitions called, "the eighteen matters." These were enacted in the era of the Second Temple. Talmud, *Shabbat* 13b. Even R. Sofer's premier disciple, R. Moshe Schick, disputed this view. *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, p. 74. I have not been able to find any other *posek* who adopted Hatam Sofer's position, except for one contemporary Hasidic Rebbe, R. Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam. Responsa *Divrei Yaziv, Y.D.* (Union City, New Jersey, 1977), # 52.
- Hatam Sofer claimed the existence of this prohibition in spite of the fact that the Mishnah records the view that Greek letters were used in preference to Hebrew letters in labeling containers in the second Temple. Mishnah, *Shekalim* 3:2. If Greek letters were permitted to be used in the sacred precincts of the Temple, why should use of Latin letters be prohibited in civil documents? Moreover, the use of Greek letters in the Temple is even more striking since the prohibition of the "eighteen matters" was, according to some, enacted in order to combat Greek Hellenist influences. See Hershel Schachter, *Mi-Peninei ha-Rav* (New York, 2001), 155, citing the view of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchick.
130. The Talmud, *Yevamot* 89b states, ". . . a *beit din* may smite and penalize [kill, even if this is] not according to the norms of the Torah; not, however, in order to violate the words of the Torah, but *in order to make a fence about the Torah*. It happened that a man rode on horseback on the Sabbath in the days of the Greeks, and he was brought before the *beit din* and they stoned him, not because he deserved this [penalty], but *because the hour required it*" (Italics added). Similar language appears in the Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 27. These sections of the Talmud also authorized certain decision makers to rule contrary to Biblical law, in the areas of marriage and divorce. For similar rulings in other areas, see, e.g., Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 13a and *Tosefot*, ad loc., s.v. *Amar Abaye*; *Berakhot* 16a, *Tosefot*, ad loc. s.v. *Ve-Hotam*; *Yevamot* 88a, *Tosefot*, ad loc. s.v. *Mi-Tokh*; *Nazir* 43b, *Tosefot*, ad loc. s.v. *Ve-Hai*; see also *Kol Kitvei Z.H. Hayes*, section *Torat Nevi'im, Hora'at Sha'ah*, 29.
131. See, for example, Responsa *Hatam Sofer, O.H.*:# 208. See also *Tur* and *Shulhan Arukh H.M.* section 2 and 388. For further exploration and application in practice of this principle, permitting violations of Biblical law by authorized Jewish religious decision makers in many areas and times, see Aaron M. Schreiber, "Positivism, Policy, Morality and Discretion In Jewish Law," *Dinei Israel* (Annual of Jewish Law, Tel Aviv University Faculty of Law) 19 (1997-1998):1, and Id, *Jewish Law and Decision Making: A Study Through Time* (Temple University Press, 1978).
132. The growth in the number of reform congregations and rabbis is suggested by the number of conferences of Reform Rabbis convened only a few years after Hatam Sofer's death: in 1844, in Brunschweig; in 1845, in Frankfurt;

and in 1846, in Breslau.

133. For further discussion of this topic, see Aaron M. Schreiber, “Positivism, Policy, Morality and Discretion In Jewish Law,” and idem, *Jewish Law and Decision Making: A Study Through Time*, note 131 above.
134. R. Sofer was not prepared to go further and to use this principle to kill, as in the Talmudic case set forth in *Yevamot* 89. Note, however, that even without resort to this emergency talmudic principle, other talmudic precedents exist for withholding disclosure of lenient rulings, or for ruling stringently. This is so even when not required to do so by ordinary halakhic norms. Talmud, *Kiddushin* 39a, *Nedarim* 23b, and *Bava Mezia* 91b.
135. R. Sofer may also have been guided by Rambam’s rationale and explanation of the aforementioned talmudic principle that permits authorized *posekim* to take drastic measures to meet the needs of the hour. Rambam wrote (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Mamrim* 2:4):
- Just as a physician amputates a person’s hand or foot in order that the entire [person] may live, so many a *beit din* rule at all times to violate some of the laws [of the Torah] temporarily, in order that all of them may be preserved.
- R. Sofer’s position may well have been summarized by his disciple, R. Hillel Lichtenstein. The latter compared the Jewish community to a “weak, sick, body [that] needs more care and protection than a healthy body”. Ḥayyim Sofer, *Kan Sofer* (London, 1962-1963), letter no. 61, p. 54-56.
136. It would be ironic if R. Sofer, indeed, battled Reform and *Haskalah* relying on a rationale that resembled their principal contention—namely, that the times required changes in the laws of the Torah.
- If this view of Ḥatam Sofer’s policy motivations is correct, he would then be a prime exemplar of a policy and goal-oriented *posek*. This would throw light on a puzzling phenomenon. On a number of occasions, Ḥatam Sofer remarked to his son that it did not matter that the proofs that he cited in his responsa were weak. His decisions were correct irrespective of the proofs. Y. Naḥshoni, *Rabbenu Moshe Sofer*, note 18 above, 147. These incidents are often understood to mean that Ḥatam Sofer’s rulings were inspired by Divine guidance. Possibly, however, Ḥatam Sofer may have meant that his rulings were designed to reach goals that he thought desirable in each particular case. Accordingly, the soundness of the legal proofs that he had cited to support his rulings did not affect the correctness of his decisions. Indeed, these proofs may even have been simply window dressing designed to make the rulings seem to be in accord with traditional legal principles. I am indebted to Rabbi Shmuel Singer for this insight.
137. See, e.g., Responsa *Ḥatam Sofer E.H. 2: #11*, where he wrote against signing one’s name in Latin letters in Jewish legal or religious documents, and claimed that speaking regularly in a foreign language was a violation of the “eighteen matters” that were prohibited from the time of the Second Temple era.
138. See his letter recommending Rabbi Herzfeld for a rabbinical position based, in part, on his mastery of German. *Likkutei Teshuvot Ḥ.S.*, note 17 above, section on letters, #20, p. 84.
139. For details, see Meir Hildesheimer, “The Attitude,” note 33 above, 171, f.n. 77.
140. Moshe Samet, “*M. Mendelssohn, N.H. Weisel ve-Rabbanei Dorom*,” note 61 above, 247.
141. *Kovez Teshuvot Ḥatam Sofer*, note 79 above, # 48.

142. For a vivid description of these battles, see M. Silber, *Shorshei ha-Pilug*, note 9 above, 17.
143. Responsa *Ĥatam Sofer* 6:# 85.
144. Yaakov ha-Levi Ya'avez, *Sefer ha-Mor Deror*, note 12 above, 6; B.S. Hamburger, *Zikhronot*, note 4 above, 306. Once, a visitor from Poland came to R. Sofer's synagogue on a festival and sang a selection from Psalms and its translation into German by Mendelssohn. When R. Sofer's disciples began to shout at the visitor and wanted to remove him from the *bimah*, R. Sofer scolded them, encouraged him to continue, and waited patiently until he finished. He thereafter invited him to dine at his table. Yaakov ha-Levi Ya'avez, *ibid.*
145. See the comments of R. Moshe Schick in his letter to R. Hillel Lichtenstein, reprinted in *Likkutei Teshuvot*, note 17 above, 73-75; *Ketav Yosher Divrei Emet*, note 4 above.

Ĥatam Sofer's principle of cordiality may have moved him to write approbations for secular books, when requested to do so by certain individuals. Thus, at the request of R. Yisrael Wahrman, the rabbi of the city of Pest, he approved a book on geography by Shimshon Halevi Bloch. R. Sofer must have been aware of R. Wahrman's Reform and *Haskalah* activities. Wahrman played a leading role in the establishment of a school in Pest, which followed Reform and *Haskalah* programs. In founding the school, Wahrman contacted a number of leading Reformers in Berlin and Kassel to solicit their assistance in forming the curriculum. See Michael Silber, "The Historical Experience," note 1 above, 121. Yet, R. Sofer may have felt that by maintaining cordial relations with R. Wahrman, he might succeed in preventing him from going still further and introducing reform innovations in Pest. In fact R. Wahrman did refrain from doing so.

146. R. Sofer, himself, stated that he was very concerned with the spread of the *Haskalah* and Reform movements towards the end of the eighteenth century, (Responsa 6:#86), and was moved by the appeal to him in 1810 to join other rabbis in taking drastic steps to combat the Reform in Westphalia (*id.*, Responsa *O.H.*:# 122) and the governmental abolition of the authority of community rabbis in the 1790's (see his *derashah* of 1811). His concerns must have been heightened by the founding of the Reform temple in Zessen in 1810, in Berlin in 1817 and in Hamburg in 1818, together with the publication of Reform prayer books and polemical works in 1818 and thereafter. The reforms in the Hamburg Temple prompted him to undertake a leading role in organizing the *Eleh Divrei ha-Berit* collection of letters and to write letters to rabbis all over Europe in this effort. See M. Samet, "*Ha-Shinuyim*," note 1 above, 374 ff; Yaakov Katz, "*Kavvim*," note 2 above, 377-382.
147. One should bear in mind, however, that one cannot refute a sermon, nor grant authoritative weight to a *derashah*, as reflected in the aphorism אין משיבים על הדרוש. Rather, we assume that a *derashah* is not, necessarily, intended to be taken literally. Consequently, R. Sofer's strictures in his *derashot* against secular studies and use of German may, perhaps, be understood in this vein.

See also Talmud *Baba Batra* 130b, אין למדין מפי למוד ולא מפי מעשה, "עד שיאמרו הלכה למעשה" ("One cannot derive a halakhah, not from what is said [by the Rabbi] in the midst of studying a subject [with his students], nor from a ruling made in an actual case, until they say, "[This is] the rule [to be

applied] in an actual case.”) See also Talmud *Shabbat* 12a, הלכה ואין מורים כן, “It is the *halakha*, but one does not apply the rule.” For a detailed exploration of this principle, see R. Zvi Hirsh Hayes, “*Darkei Hora’ah*,” in Hayes, *Kol Kitvei Maharaz Hayes* (Jerusalem, 1958), 217.

148. See note to I *Derashot Hatam Sofer*, note 16 above, *Parshat be-Shalah*, 112 in Hebrew pagination, citing H.F. Plaut, a disciple of Hatam Sofer, in section II of his *Likkutei Hever Ben Hayyim*, note 28 above, *Parshat be-Shalah*.
149. M. Silber, *Shorshei ha-Pilug*, note 9 above, 24.
150. M. Silber, *ibid.*, 39 and f.n 83. See Y. Y. Greenwald, in his *Ozar Nehmad*, note 81 above, 73, note 1, who says that Hatam Sofer consented to this because of the “evil winds [of reform and *Haskalah*] that were blowing” [in Pressburg]. R. Sofer might also have agreed to such a school to meet the need for occupational training without resort to secular studies, especially, in view of the serious economic downturn that was impoverishing many Jewish families in Pressburg. M. Silber, *ibid.*
151. Responsa *Hatam Sofer*, E.H. 2:#11.
152. Responsa *Hatam Sofer*, H.M.:#197.
153. In the Will, R. Sofer admonished his descendants not to touch the books of “R.M.’D.” This abbreviation is, generally, taken to mean R. Moshe Dessau, the name by which Moses Mendelssohn was commonly known. Others, however, disagree with this interpretation, and claim that the letters in the Will were “HMD”, a word used for romantic novels. See Meir Hildesheimer, “The Attitude,” note 33 above, 145-156.

These three stringent actions, all in the last year of his life, were the chief evidence adduced by R. Lichtenstein and R. Schlesinger to prove that Hatam Sofer held extremely stringent views on these subjects. See e.g., the first paragraph of R. Lichtenstein’s letter proposing the conclave in Michalovce, and the subsequent ruling of that body, both of which relied on the above mentioned actions of R. Sofer. See Yaakov Katz, *Ha-Kera*, note 48 above, 94; Meir Hildesheimer, “*Rabbanei Hungariyah*,” note 47 above, 942.

It may be relevant that Hatam Sofer expressed his most extreme views in the last year of his life. A little known incident may make it conceivable that R. Sofer became particularly sensitive to, and was more easily disturbed by, events in his last years. This was possibly due to his deteriorating health. His grandson, Shelomoh Sofer, records that in the last five years of his life, Hatam Sofer was agonized by the complaints against him voiced by Yonatan ha-Levi Alexanderzohn. R. Sofer ruled that he could not become a communal rabbi. R. Sofer became so inordinately distressed by Alexanderzohn’s complaints that his grandson reported, “I heard from reliable sources that because of this wicked person, the holy Hatam Sofer said towards the end of his days, ‘I can no longer bear [or continue with] the world. . . .’” Shelomoh Sofer, *Iggerot Soferim*, note 30 above, 32.

Thus, the spread of Reform and *Haskalah* may have disturbed him in his last years even more than they might otherwise have done. These may have caused him to become even more fearful of the effects of secular learning and use of German. This does not, however, seem to be a reasonable explanation of all of Hatam Sofer’s seeming ambivalence.

154. *Ha-Hatam Sofer Al ha-Torah, Bamidbar*, Introduction, 8-9 (Jerusalem, 1982).
155. Asher Anshel Miller, *Olam Shel Abba* (Jerusalem, 1984), 55.

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156. See also to the same effect as R. Stern, R. Y. Weiss, *Madrikh le-Ben Torah mi-Maran ha-Ḥatam Sofer* (Jerusalem, 1989), 128-142, 155-156.
157. *Ḥut ha-Meshulash*, 6b.
158. See e.g., *Derashot Ḥatam Sofer*, note 16 above, *Derashah for Eighth of Tevet*, 202.
159. Avraham Shmuel Sofer- Sofer, *Ketov Zot Zikaron* (Jerusalem, 1976), 56.
160. Moreover, R. Sofer's writings have been censored. Some of his followers reprinted his *Ḥidushim* to the Talmud in 1954, and deliberately deleted the following section at the end of his *Ḥidushim* to *Seder Mo'ed*. This portion deals with the time of the beginning and end of the Sabbath, and provided,
 One should know that we accept the view that [the time] from sunset until the stars emerge is 24 minutes or 35 minutes. . . .
 These followers, apparently, believed that the times for the beginning and end of the Sabbath cited by Ḥatam Sofer, were too early. R. Sofer, when in Pressburg, acted according to the tradition established there by his predecessors. Ḥatam Sofer's followers appear to have preferred the view of *Rabbenu Tam* and feared that R. Sofer's writings would mislead others to follow his views.
161. Rambam and other earlier notable religious authorities, including Rabbi Bahya Ibn Pekuda in his *Hovot ha-Levavot*, espoused some of the foregoing notions. This work was studied regularly by Ḥatam Sofer, and was strongly recommended by him to his students and followers.
162. See, e.g., R. Sofer's *Shirat Moshe* (Pressburg, 1857); Moshe Samet, "Kavvim Nosafim," note 1 above, 69.