

# **Promoting Jewish Education in Russian Empire, 1850-1919**

**Fond F-348 Promoting Jewish Education Society  
in Russia; Opis' 1**

**Fond F-1208 Women's gymnasium in  
Belotserkovsk, 1850-1919; Opis'1**

**Fond FR-5004 Jewish educational society Tarbut,  
1918-1919; Opis' 1**

**Fond FR-5005 Jewish Union Gamore, Kiev  
Province 1918-1919; Opis' 1**

**By Vladimir Danilenko,  
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of the Kiev Oblast**

From the State Archive of the Kiev Oblast (GAKO) comes a collection of documents pertaining to Jewish public organizations of the early 20th century that worked to foster education among Jews in the Russian Empire. The collection contains the following files (*fondy*): **F-348** on the Kiev branch of the Society for the Promotion of Education among Jews in Russia (1903-1918, 167 items); **F-1208** on the women's gymnasia, or classical school in the city of Belaia Tserkov, Kiev province (1850-1919, 17 items); **FR-5004** on the Jewish cultural and educational society Tarbut, located in Kiev (1918-1919, 2 items); **FR-5005** on the Jewish Gamore Union, Kiev province (1918-1919, 5 items).

The Society for the Promotion of Education among Jews in Russia (OPE), founded in St. Petersburg in 1863, was the key Jewish cultural and educational organization in Russia. The OPE's Kiev branch was formed on 24 December 1903 with decisive assistance from Lazar' Iosifovich Brodskii, a prominent Kiev industrialist, and M.-E.Kh. Mandel'shtam, a medical doctor (they headed up the Committee of the OPE Kiev branch in 1903-1904 and 1904-1912 respectively.) During the First World War, the OPE helped to establish schools for refugee children, centers and boarding schools for preschool training; it continued to operate under civil war conditions for up until 1920, when it was closed down.

The OPE had operations in 5 provinces of Ukraine: Volynia, Kiev, Poltava, Podolia and Chernigov. Under its charter, the Kiev branch was to promote lower, secondary and higher education among Jews.

The Kiev branch had a full-time president and a treasurer and operated in its area at its own discretion, turning to the central organization only when necessary, though they did send information and progress reports to St. Petersburg. The branch set up 4 commissions: (1) for general matters of education; (2) for matters of higher education; (3) for matters of secondary education; (4) for matters of lower education. The branch meetings examined matters pertaining to training and education, logistics and subsidies for Jewish community schools; approved curricula (including that on Judaica-related topics); provisioned clothes, footwear and food to the poorest pupils; arranged exemption from tuition fees; hired teachers for its schools; and set up advanced training courses for teachers; founded examination commissions to monitor teaching.

This *fond* contains two *opisi*; its items (*dela*) are arranged in a chronological order. The *fond* remained in secret stacks and was inaccessible to researchers until 1958. Examples of its contents include the minutes of meetings held by the OPE's Kiev branch and of its commissions; materials and minutes of general meetings of society members in 1913-1914; the OPE Charter (1914) and proposed amendments to the Charter (1917); correspondence with the OPE governing body, with the boards of Jewish communities and societies and with schools; information on the committee's operation; reports on sums received and spent; distribution of the *cosher* meat tax; reports by the committee's authorized representatives on their findings during their inspections of schools in urban and rural areas around the Kiev and Volynia provinces (1916); on the state of Jewish women's schools; reports and information on the operation of Talmud-Torah centers; correspondence on granting subsidies to various Jewish education institutions and kindergartens; lists of staff; payrolls listing teachers and support staff of Jewish schools and Talmud-Torahs; layouts and drawings of the premises of Jewish educational institutions; ledgers of outgoing documents; and so on.

Also included in this *fond* are drafts of the organization charter; a program of a Higher School of Jewish Knowledge; documents concerning a pogrom in the town of Rechitsa, Minsk province, (1904); materials of the Gomel' conference on the position of Jewish children's homes (1917); correspondence with Jewish organizations on convening a congress of Jewish religious communities of Ukraine and giving them material assistance (1917-1918); the program, bulletins and other materials of the 7<sup>th</sup> All-Russia Zionist Congress (1917); text of articles written for the *Vestnik evreiskogo prosveshcheniia* [Bulletin of Jewish Enlightenment]; and so on.

The documents are in Russian, English, Hebrew, German, Polish and Ukrainian.

**Fond F-1208** brings together documents concerning two secondary educational institutions: a Russian women's classical school [gymnasia] and Dr. M.N. Mitlin's Jewish private women's school.

This *fond* contains one *opis'* arranged in chronological order with documents of the Belaia Tserkov Jewish women's classical school included in *dela* 6 to 22.

Included in the documents are a letter from the director of public training centers of the Kiev province to the director of the Belaia Tserkov women's classical school (gymnasia) requesting a confidential inquest into the complaint of a Belaia Tserkov official rabbi against a teacher at the Belaia Tserkov school of G. Annopol'skii, who, he alleged, ignored religious rites, angering the students' parents (1851). Among the documents of M.N. Mitlin's Jewish women's classical school is a reception book and registers of six main and two preparatory classes which include personal data of the pupils – their dates of birth, religion, class and so on.

The documents are in Russian.

The **FR-5004** *fond* contains documents of the Tarbut, a Kiev-based Jewish cultural and educational society. Tarbut was founded in 1917 to promote education in Hebrew. It resulted from amalgamating the many societies and Hebrew studies amateur groups based on a decision made at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tsirei Zion Conference and the Petrograd Conference of Zionists. The charter of Tarbut was registered by the Kiev circuit court on 17 June 1918. The society founded or subsidized a considerable number of educational institutions (training courses, classical schools, teacher seminaries) where Hebrew was the language of instruction, as well as a number of publishing houses and periodicals. When the RSFSR Peoples Commissariat of Education banned the teaching of Hebrew in August 1919, they were closed down (though some continued to operate clandestinely).

This *fond* contains one *opis'* arranged in chronological order. Before 2004, the *fond* was in secret stacks and out of researchers' reach.

Included are documents of the archives of the Tarbut Central Committee in Ukraine: correspondence with educational institutions and Zionist organizations; local reports on new Tarbut-sponsored educational institutions and the raising of funds for running them; applications and requests for filling teacher vacancies and enrollment in summer Tarbut teacher courses; invitations to attend the opening ceremonies; minutes of teachers' meetings; lists of students; teaching aids (in particular, a table showing the sources of Jewish history); brief notes of lessons; teachers' reports; fragments of Jewish newspapers; lecture announcements and so on. Also included is the Charter of the Tarbut book publishing cooperative society, which was founded "with the view to provide textbooks to Jewish schools and individual customers," most of which were in Hebrew.

The documents are in Hebrew and Russian.

The **FR-5005** *fond* contains documents of the Kiev province Gamore Jewish Teachers Union. It was formed as a regional section of the All-Ukraine Gamore Jewish Teachers Union, organized in Kiev in September 1918. Under its Charter, approved on 8 March 1919, its objective was to “create a Jewish school, single, secular, compulsory and free on the basis of the labor principle with the national Jewish language (Hebrew) as the language of instruction” and “to bring together Jewish teachers of Kiev and the Kiev province ... on the grounds of campaigning for their professional interests.” To achieve these objectives, Gamore had plans to uphold its ideas before the appropriate organizations, spread these ideas amongst Jewish teachers, found kindergartens and schools of various types, pedagogical museums, libraries, community centers, amateur groups; to open a legal office to give teachers legal advice, to take the lead in all forms of their economic struggle and so on. These plans, however, were not to be fully implemented because, following the ban in the summer of 1919 on teaching Hebrew, Gamore and its close associate Tarbut were closed down.

This *fond* holds one yet-to-be-structured *opis*'. The *fond* was declassified in 2004.

Included documents are: minutes of meetings held by the organizing committee of the Gamore All-Ukraine Jewish Teachers Union; a letter from the Kiev province Gamore Jewish Teachers Union (9 March 1919) to the Kiev municipal executive committee with a request to register the union (appended to it was its charter and the minutes of the general meeting of the 8 March 1919 that approved it); a letter to the Council of Teachers Unions with a request to grant Gamore the right to due representation (it was also noted that its members could not be members in the other Jewish teachers' trade union existing in Kiev); a briefing paper (an untitled typed text) on the shared and diverging positions of Gamore and the Jewish Teachers Union; leaflets urging people to join the Gamore union; lists of its members with personal details; telegrams, postcards, letters and, in particular, correspondence with Tarbut; notices of its planned summer courses for Jewish teachers; lectures; teaching aids, including those pertaining to history of pedagogy; the charter of the *Erd un Arbet* book publishing cooperative company; financial and economic documents (accounts, cash receipts) and other documents.

The documents are in Hebrew, German and Russian.

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**Fond F- 1208**  
**Women's gymnasium in Belotserkovsk, 1850-1919**

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13	Preparatory form for young children of Belaia Tserkov Jewish women's high school run by Dr. M.N. Mitlin in 1918-1919 academic year.	7	21
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**Jewish educational society Tarbut, 1918-1919**

File No.		Number of pages	Film number
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1	Correspondence with Jewish schools, lists of Tarbut members, notes and leaflets in Yiddish.	256	22
2	Tarbut book publishing cooperative articles of association.	15	22

**Fond FR-5005**  
**Jewish Union Gamore, Kiev Province 1918-1919**

File No.		Number of pages	Film number
	<b>Opis' 1</b>		
1	Minutes of Kiev province Jewish teacher professional union of Gamora, organizing committee meetings.	88	22
2	Rules and a memo dealing with the Kiev province's professional Jewish teacher's union, Gamora.	27	22
3	Correspondence, accounts and receipts in Yiddish.	47	22
4	List of Gamora members in Yiddish.	5	22
5	An exercise book with notes in Yiddish.	10	22