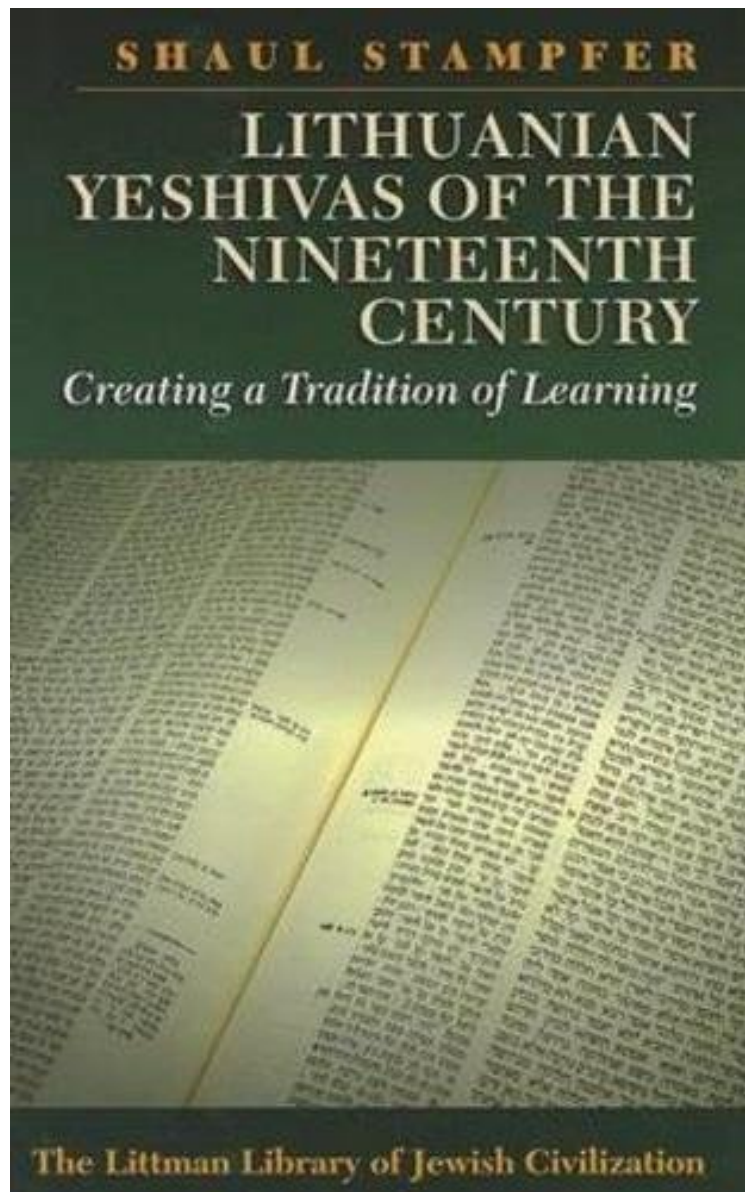


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Lithuanian Yeshivas of the Nineteenth Century: Creating a Tradition of Learning (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization)

Shaul Stampfer

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Jewish Civilization):

One of the key ways in which the traditional Jewish world of eastern Europe responded to the challenges of modernity in the nineteenth century was to change the system for educating young men so as to reinforce time-honoured, conservative values. The yeshivas established at that time in Lithuania became models for an educational system that has persisted to this day, transmitting the talmudic underpinnings of the traditional Jewish way of life. To understand how that system works, one needs to go back to the institutions they are patterned on: why they were established, how they were organized, and how they operated. This is the first properly documented, systematic study of the Lithuanian yeshiva as it existed from 1802 to 1914. It is based on the judicious use of contemporary sources - documents, articles in the press, and memoirs - with a view to presenting the yeshiva in its social and cultural context. Three key institutions are considered. Pride of place in the first part of the book is given to the yeshiva of Volozhin, which was founded in 1802 according to an entirely new concept - total independence from the local community - and was in that sense the model for everything that followed. Chapters in the second part focus on the yeshiva of Slobodka, famed for introducing the study of musar (ethics); the yeshiva of Telz, with its structural and organizational innovations; and the kollel system, introduced so that married men could continue their yeshiva education. Topics covered include the leadership and changes in leadership; management and administration; the yeshiva as a place of study; and daily life. This English edition is based on the second Hebrew edition, which was revised to include information that became available with the opening of archives in eastern Europe after the fall of communism.