

## Secularization in the first *moshavot* and attempts to combat it through education

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The first wave of immigration of Jews to the Land of Israel began in 1882, in a movement that would later be called the First *Aliyah*. Most of those early immigrants were from traditional east European families who maintained strict adherence to Jewish law. Examination of the historical reality in the first colonies, however, shows that the majority of their second and third generations were no longer religiously observant. A great deal of research has been devoted to the reasons for this phenomenon. This paper examines the following questions: Did parents contest the phenomenon of secularization sweeping through the *moshavot*? In what ways did they try to combat secularizing influences on the younger generation? The discussion will concern three colonies, with focus on a distinct characteristic of each of them: Rishon LeZion, Petah Tikva, and Rechovot.

In effect, the schools in the colonies that were established and managed by representatives of Baron Rotschild, like those that were established by residents of the colonies themselves, gradually became a workshop for the creation of the 'new Jew' whose values were predominantly nationalist, while religious values were marginalized. The struggle against these schools varied: some colonies opposed them more intensely than others; in some instances outside forces joined in the battle. Secularization would become part of the conflict between the Old *Yishuv* and the New *Yishuv*, while the rabbis of Jerusalem organized the *Shomrei Torah* alliance to establish alternative schools in the colonies meant to strengthen Torah learning and observance. These efforts did enjoy limited success, but nonetheless, by and large the descendants of the First *Aliyah* did not remain loyal to Jewish tradition.