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156 yrs. ago in Romania:
Scots mission to convert the Jews

Volume 3, Number 3  Spring 1995
... but first, a word from your editor

We lead off this issue with two very interesting articles, one from Prof. Gyemant with his insights into the history of Jewish Romania, and the other excerpts from a book written 150 years ago by missionaries from the Church of Scotland and their impressions of Jews in Romania during the High Holy Days. From Prof. Gyemant we get an overall picture of the conditions that existed for our ancestors over the course of history, while the Scots provide us with views of life and religion as seen by Gentiles whose purpose was to eventually convert the Jews of Romania.

As is usually the case, our members have provided us with many, many interesting facts and queries that hopefully will help us in our search for data about our relatives.

The Romanian Family Finder, which was originally scheduled to appear in this issue, is being postponed until the Summer issue to allow ALL members to provide us with the information necessary to complete the finder. So a reminder to members who have yet to provide us with the names and towns they are researching, get us the information, or any changes and updates, as quickly as possible.

Coming up in a few months is the 1995 Summer Seminar of Jewish Genealogy in Washington. There will be a few opportunities dealing directly with Romanian research, primarily a talk by our Paul Pascal expanding on last summer's trip to the 'old country' and a "birds of a feather" meeting for Romanian researchers. And there will be other opportunities for conducting research in our nation's capital. Marlene Zakai gives an overview of what to expect in this issue.

From a personal standpoint, I am looking forward to being there, if for nothing more than to meet face-to-face with all of these names and voices I've been communicating with during the past several years.

It has taken more than a year and a half, but we finally have arrived at the point where Romanian names are now being spelled with Romanian characters. It wasn't easy, because it meant learning a completely new word processing program. We have been using Ami Pro 3.0, which we still believe is the fastest, friendliest word program. But Word Perfect 6.1 has the Romanian character (and Hebrew and many other language characters), so a combination of the two is now being used. We hope you appreciate the difference.

... and now for the hard part

It is with very mixed emotions that I must tell you that I will be stepping down as editor of ROM-SIG NEWS.

Little did I dream two years ago when I offered to fill in "temporarily" to keep a fledgling idea going that it would turn into a two-year love affair.

The very idea that a journal could exist solely on the basis of its subscriber-members SHARING their information with each other through ROM-SIG is mind-boggling to any professional, but all of you have made it work! And this beautiful idea of sharing is what has been so compelling to me.

But now it is time to step down and let others bring new ideas and energies to ROM-SIG.

I will finish out the subscription year that ends with the next summer issue. Now it is up to all of you and our advisory board to decide this newsletter's future.

Is there someone among you who is willing to take over the job? If you think you might be interested, please contact me or any of the other Advisory Board members as quickly as possible. And come to the Romanian Birds of a Feather session in Washington to learn more about ROM-SIG's future.

Gene Starn
Scot Missionaries to Jews in Romania in 1839

High Holy days, other impressions they had 150 years ago

First of two parts

EDITOR'S NOTE: In 1839 the Church of Scotland sent missionaries into Europe to convert Jews. They published a book of their journey, "Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews in 1839." Quoting from the preface of this old book: "The writers had only one object in view during their journey, namely, to see the real condition and character of God's ancient people, and to observe whatever might contribute to interest others in their cause."

The Church of Scotland felt "it our duty and our privilege to promote the cause of the Jews among our brethren. If the Church take hold of the skirt of the Jew, God may remember her for Zion's sake."

Below we have excerpted portions of those chapters dealing with Romania. The illustrations are from the book.

* * *

Galatz [Galaji, in today's Romania, ED.] contains about 10,000 inhabitants. Many of the streets are paved with wooden planks laid across, something after the manner of American corduroy. Many are totally unpaved and consequentially dusty in summer and muddy in winter. The houses are chiefly built of wood, white-washed and covered over with clay. Even the churches are wooden edifices. Brandy-shops abound in every street. In the market, we saw the cuca, so common in Syria, exposed for sale.

We were interested in the number of Jews we met, and the numbers we saw busy in their shops. All wear the broad German hat or Russian fur-cap and Polish gown. All have the mustach, beard and ringlets, and all appeared to be either mechanics or money-changers, seated at little tables on the street. The people seem very industrious, not, as in the East, sitting lazily with the pipe in their mouth. The women share in the general industry. They spin from the distaff even when walking to and fro. Their dress is not very peculiar except the head-dress which is generally a shawl over the head, fastened under the chin. It is often white, resembling that of the Genoese women.

The soldiers oppress the people. A few days ago a party of soldiers came to a man who had got leave to fish for an hour on the river, entered his boat, took away his written permission, and then laid claim to all the fish he had caught.

In the afternoon we set out to visit the Jews of Galatz. We entered the shop of a Jewish watchmaker, a pleasant gentle young man from Odessa, who had settled here to escape being taken as a recruit into the Russian army, the ukare having ordered twelve men to be taken out of every hundred including both Jews and Christians. He told us that there are 30 Jewish families here who have an old synagogue, which is very small; but that eight German families from Vienna are building a new one for themselves because, few as they are, there is a disunion among them. They have no rabbi, and hence every one tries to be above the other, and does what is right in his own eyes.

We entered the shop of a respectable money-changer who, after making our acquaintance, put on his best broad hat and conducted us to the Rabbi, whom we found in the court of his house. He was a mild intelligent man with the eye of a student. At first he seemed suspicious of us because (as we learned afterwards) the Greek Church persecutes him, and hearing that we were Christians, he supposed that we were Greeks. We told him our object in coming from Scotland was to visit the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and our desire for their salvation. We were then conducted to the Synagogue, a poor, small edifice, with a still smaller one adjoining. Two or three Jews gathered round us; and one old Jew was busily engaged in devotion—an ignorant man, but of a serious cast of countenance. At the door was a collection-box with this inscription in Hebrew: "Alms—a gift in secret pacifieth anger."

This started a conversation in regard to the manner of pleasing God and turning away his anger. They spoke of their brethren in other places. We asked if the Jews here collected for those in the Holy Land; they said, that they did, at all their marriages.

They have no school for their children; but as a substitute they put several children under the occasional instruction of one of their number. The Jew who acted as our guide said that he heard there were new "Epicureans (that is, unbelievers) even at Jerusalem, and that they had built a synagogue there." He referred no doubt to the Christian church now building on Zion, and the few converts already gathered in Jerusalem.

They said they could not but hate Christians, for they were everywhere oppressed by them. For example, the preceding year some Jews had caricatured the Greek priests and their religious service in a play—in consequence of which, twelve of their number were cast into prison and forced to pay 5,000 ducats to save their lives. The Ionian Greeks also burn a Jew in effigy every year at Easter, though the Government has at last forbid it.

They asked us, "if we belonged to the Epicureans"—and on hearing us quote Hebrew texts, they would scarcely be persuaded that we were Christians. They have no idea of a Christian possessed of feelings of kindness and love toward them. Few of them speak Hebrew, all use German, and they also know the Wallachian language. They said that they had no want of employment, and that every one had a trade. Most of the money-changers were Jews. The rabbi said that there were 500 Jews in Galatz, but the Vice-Consul thought that there must be 2,000.

In the evening we went to Ibraila, three hours distance. Throughout the next day we visited the town. It is clean and airy, with broad streets of which a few were causewayed. Many of the houses were brick but the most were only one story high. Acacia-trees were planted round them and here, too, we saw for the last time olivetrees full grown. The stork's nest was common here as in Galatz, and in one courtyard two or three tame storks were walking about, no one venturing to injure them. In the Bazaar, stones were used for weights as in the East. The Danube flows deep and full past the town. The trade in grain is increasing, and the town rapidly rising into importance. It has at present a thriving population of 6,000.

We entered the shop of a Jewish watchmaker, a pleasant gentle young man from Odessa, who had settled here to escape being taken as a recruit into the Russian army, the ukare having ordered twelve men to be taken out of every hundred including both Jews and Christians. He told us that there are 30 Jewish families here who have an old synagogue, which is very small, but that eight German families from Vienna are building a new one for themselves because, few as they are, there is a disunion among them. They have no rabbi, and hence every one tries to be above the other, and does what is right in his own eyes.

He said that he had in his possession two tracts addressed to Jews, distributed by missionaries at Jerusalem, and brought here by a travelling Jew, for no missionary had ever visited this country. This simple account convinced us of the vast important of furnishing our missionaries with abundance of clear, spiritual and pungent tracts addressed to Jews. Who can tell to what bosom the good seed may be carried, and there be made to spring up?

He has also heard that in England several Jewish students had become Christians; and that Christian tracts addressed to Jews had found their way into Russia.
Scot Missionaries to Jews in Romania
(Continued from the previous page)

By this time about a dozen Jews had gathered round who conducted us to the synagogue. Among them was a mild young man, a Spanish Jew, of a remarkably fine appearance and very kind to us. He could not speak any language except Spanish, though he understood a little German. Along with him was a friend, a German Jew, equally interesting and very affable.

We were standing at the spot where the new synagogue was building, while the Jewish workman were sitting down to their midday meal at our side. They asked Mr. Calman if he wore the tsitsith. In reply he told them that "they wore none, for the real tsitsith should have a fringe of blue, and not white strings." They then said, they believed Messiah would come yet and that many in Smyrna and other parts of Turkey thought he would come next year. On this Mr. Calman told them that the main thing to be known was the object of his coming, which was to take away sin, whereas, the Jews have at present no way of pardon. "You keep the Sabbath," said he, "that you may be forgiven—you go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, that you may be forgiven—you think whoever walks four yards on the Holy Land will be forgiven—you eat three meals on Sabbath, pray over graves, keep the day of atonement, all in order to find forgiveness; and yet you are never satisfied that you have found it. Your conscience is never at rest, which it would be if that were the true way of pardon. Would God leave his people without some atonement for sin, after Jerusalem was destroyed and sacrifices done away? No; he left them Messiah. You yourselves offer a cock and a hen on the evening before the day of atonement, which proves your own conviction that you still need a sacrifice. Now, Christians have peace, not terror, during life, and can die without fear, knowing that they are going to a reconciled Father—not like you, who are so uncertain of your state, that even in the hour of death you engage the prayers of rabbis and of your children to be made for you after you are dead."

The young German Jew heard with great interest, and then said, "That the Jews now had more faith than Abraham; for they believed God's word with having seen miracles."

Mr. Calman replied, "That to believe these things merely would not save them; the devils also believed, and were devils still."

Another Jew standing by said, "We have no sin; for we keep Sabbath, eat no pork, drink no wine which a Goi, (a Gentile) has touched, never eat without washing our hands, and we wear the tsitsith."

Mr. C. turned to him, "God wishes something more than all this—the heart. Is your heart right with God? Do you dare to say that you love him at all times? Even while you are putting on the tephillin, do not your thoughts wander? Therefore, you are sinners, and where are your sacrifices? You have none even on the day of atonement."

The Jew answered, that repeating or reading the passages of the Torah that describe sacrifices was as good as offering the sacrifices themselves.

Mr. C. replied, "God has never said so; and you yourselves are not satisfied that is so; for if you were, you would not go away to seek pardon still by pilgrimages." He then told him of those Jews at Smyrna who are willing to be Christians, only retaining their Saturday and festivals.

This Jew who seemed so interested followed us along the streets and told us of his brethren. He said that "their ignorance here was lamentable, and their pride excessive. Every one wished to be head. They needed to be taught their own language for none could speak Hebrew and few understand it. If a school were instituted, he believed it would be well attended. At present, parents who are able send their children to be educated at Vienna."

He then told us much of Rabbi Bibas from Corfu, whom he called a grand rabbi, who lately passed through Ibraïla on his way to Bucharest, travelling to seek the reformation of his brethren, and who had preached to the Jews here. He said that "the seven wisdoms, or sciences, are meant, such as music, astronomy, etc. When a man is well, if he take medicine it will do him harm; but if he be ill, then he must put away bread and take the medicine. Now, the law is bread, but the Jews are sick, they are ignorant and degraded. You must therefore lay aside the study of the law and take the medicine, which is the seven wisdoms or sciences spoken of here."

This rabbi had left a deep impression upon the Jews here and elsewhere. The young man spoke with great admiration of him and his sentiments, and especially of this one, that the Jews must be instructed in science and in arms, that they may wrest the land of Palestine from the Turks under the conduct of Messiah, as the Greeks wrested their country.

The Jews think themselves better treated in Wallachia than in Moldavia, where lately an additional tax was attempted to be imposed on them; and this may account for the great freedom with which they spoke to us. Yet even here they suffer.

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It was three o'clock in the morning (Sept. 8) when we reached Bucharest. We should have arrived the preceding evening, but lost several hours at the different post-houses from our ignorance of the language and inexperience in this mode of travelling.

We went first to the Khan Rosso, to which we had been recommended, but after knocking and waiting half an hour, our answer was "Nui loghi," "no places"—"no room." Our drivers next found out the Casino di Martin; but no one would reply to our knocking. While we were lingering cold and weary in the open street of this strange city, we heard the loud hum of many voices, and saw a large upper room lighted up—it was the Jewish synagogue, for this being their New Year season, the devout portion of them spend the greater part of the time in continual prayers. The watchmen on the street and our postillions imitated their loud cries in ridicule of their devotions; so true are the words of Moses, "Thou shalt become an astonishment, a byword, and a proverb, among all the nations whither the Lord shall lead thee."

Many Jews were now hastening through the dark streets to the synagogue, and one seeing our dilemma offered to conduct us to a khan. No other help being at hand we thankfully accepted his services, and
Scot Missionaries to Jews in Romania
(Continued from the previous page)

followed him through several streets till he brought us to a very large caravanserai, called Khan Manuk, overhanging the muddy stream Dembrowitz, where we found an empty room, in which we spread our mats and thankful for the mercies of the past day, sought rest.

Bucharest contains 120,000 inhabitants. The Greek churches alone amount to no fewer than 366. There are also two Roman Catholic churches, one Lutheran, and one Calvinistic. There are no mosques, for by the treaty of Adrianople in 1829, no Mahometan is allowed to possess property or hold a domicile in either province.

In regard to the Jews, we were told that they are better treated in this province than in Moldavia, for there an attempt was made to overtax them; but not so here. Every Jew must bring a certificate that he can earn a livelihood by some trade before he is allowed to settle.

As to the number residing here, we found it impossible to ascertain this province than in Moldavia, for there an attempt was made to overtax them; but not so here. Every Jew must bring a certificate that he can earn a livelihood by some trade before he is allowed to settle. The Consul was of opinion that a missionary in Bucharest would require 250L a year. He must have a house with four rooms, which would cost 25L, or 30L of rent. He must maintain several servants, for each will do only his own peculiar work; and the state of the streets is such in winter that he must keep a carriage and two horses, as every respectable person does.

Provisions are cheap; a lamb may be got for two shillings, a sheep for four shillings and sixpence, and an oke of meat (that is 2-1/2 lbs.) for one piastre, that is about twopence. But firewood is very dear. A large family often pay 50L a year for this article alone. The expense of travelling from England to Bucharest, the Consul estimated at 30L.

As to the prospects of success, he thought that any direct attempt to convert the Greeks would be immediately fatal to any mission. A Jewish missionary must confine his labours to the Jews, and not interfere with the natives. The light will spread indirectly. The only danger to a mission is that the priesthood, fearing its indirect influence, of a trumpet. They also believe that every New Year's Day is a kind of day of judgement. "Every year, on the festival of Rosh Hashanna, the sins of every one that cometh into the world are weighed against his merits. Every one who is found righteous is sealed to life. Every one who is found wicked is sealed to death."

Accordingly they imagine that Satan at this season comes before God specially to accuse every soul. In order, therefore, "to confuse Satan," and prevent him from bringing forward his accusations, and also "to change God's attribute of judgement which was against them into mercy," their wise men of blessed memory have ordained that the trumpet should be blown on the first day of the month Elul every year.

The old rabbi made use of a small ram's horn, which he had difficulty in getting to sound. One rabbi chanted the word of command, תְּלֵילִית (teileih), at which the other blew through the horn. Nine times this was repeated, and the last was a long blast; then all present shouted and imitated the sound with their hand and mouth.

They resembled a company of children imitating a military band, and for the heart-rending fact that these very follies form part of the strong delusion to which God has given up his ancient people, the whole scene would have been irresistibly ludicrous. The prayers that followed were offered with great vehemence, and a rabbi and three young men sang well the Psalm which does not now apply to Israel, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."

In another Polish synagogue close by, we saw the same ceremony. We also visited the Spanish synagogue, where the Jews present were handsomely dressed, and the Jewesses whom we saw at the gate, were enveloped in silk mantles edged with fur. They were engaged in the same ceremony, only they did not seem to be so zealous, and went through it with greater dignity. Alas, Israel, "children are thy princes, and babes rule over thee!" "The Lord hath taken away from Judah the stay and the staff, the judge and the prophet, the prudent and the ancient."

In the afternoon we went to the synagogue again, in expectation of seeing the Jews march down to the riverside and "cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," which they do by shaking their garments over the water, as if casting their sins out of their bosom. But we were too early, and were told that they wait till it is dusk, when the people of the town will not observe them.

The Jews here, in gaining their livelihood, are employed by persons of all religious persuasions, so that they do not depend on their brethren for supply of work. Perhaps nine out of every ten carpenters are Jews, and no questions are asked in employing them, except regarding their capacity as workmen.

This is a most important fact, which would remove entirely the difficulty so often felt by Jewish missionaries in the support of inquirers and converts.

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(Continued from the previous page)

might bring in the arm of Russia to put it down; and Russia could easily
do this in their own secret way if they had the will. (Sept. 10.) In the
forenoon set out to call on Samuel Hillel, a Jewish banker, who was to
introduce us to Rabbi Bibas of Corfu. By mistake we were led to the
house of a wealthy Spanish Jew and ushered into a fine suite of
apartments. Several Jewish ladies came in fully dressed for the festival
of the season. They received us very politely and after discovering our
mistake, directed us to the banker’s house.

He was not at home, but we found his son (who said that he had
seen us at the synagogue), and his three daughters, richly attired,
wearings diamonds on their head—for the daughters of Judah, even in
their captivity, have the same love for gay apparel that they had in the
days of Isaiah. In conversation with the son, we soon discovered that
he was one of those Jews who care little about Palestine, and do not
expect a Messiah, believing that education and civilization alone can
exalt the Jews, to which he added,—“a knowledge of arms, that they
might defend their land when they got possession of it.”

We afterwards saw his father, who conducted us to the house
where the rabbi of Corfu was lodging. Rabbi Bibas received us politely.
He spoke English with great fluency, told us he was a native of
Gibraltar, and was proud of being a British subject.

On our entrance, he excused himself for not rising, a slight
indisposition and the fatigue of traveling obliging him to he on the sofa.
We said, “The Eastern manner became one of his nation.” He replied,
“No, no! the Jews are not Easterns” We said, “Abraham came from the
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“No, no! the Jews are not Easterns.” We said, “Abraham came from the
distant East.” “True, but you are not to reckon a nation by their first
parent.”

Immediately he began to speak of the situation of the Promised
Land, asking us to say, Why God chose Israel for his peculiar people,
and that portion of the earth as their land? Much conversation arose on
these points, and as often as we tried to break off and introduce
something more directly bearing on our object he stopped us by
affecting great logical accuracy, and holding us to the point if we had
any pretensions to the character of logical reasoners.

He denied that God ever meant the Jews to be a people separate
from other nations, asserting that He intended them to enlighten all the earth, a duty which
they must still perform whenever it shall be in
their power. If they had means like the English
they ought to send out missionaries. When we
gave this reason why God chose Israel to be his
peculiar people, “that the Lord wished to show
that he was a sovereign God,” he disputed this,
because His sovereignty was already known to
the heathen. He thought we must be content to
reckon it among the secret things that belong to
God. He then suddenly started another specu-
lative question, “Where Eden was, and how
four such streams as Moses described could
have existed, since they are now nowhere to be
found.” On this point he at length rested satis-
fied with the remark that it must be true, be-
cause declared in the Word of God.

After this he signified to us that it was the
hour of prayer, and we must excuse him from
further conversation at present. He showed great craftiness and skill in
keeping the conversation from turning upon matters of experimental
religion; for that was evidently his aim.

On our rising to take leave and mentioning that love to Israel had
brought us to visit him, he declared that he loved Christians exceedingly,
and that no Christian loved the Jews more than he did the Christians.
He said that he was traveling for the sake of his degraded brethren
to see what might be done for them; and was anxious to meet with Sir
Moses Montefiore on his return from the Holy Land. He disliked our
reference to Scripture. Thus, on his remarking that the Jews must have
been a very holy people since God so preserved them, we replied in the
words of Ezekiel, “Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be
it known unto you.” But he hastily changed to another topic.

(Sept. 11.) We visited again our friend Rabbi Bibas, and resolved
this time to take the start of him in the topics of conversation. Mr.
Calman at once began by showing the wickedness and folly of several
things taught in the Talmud. The rabbi’s first answer was, that the
Talmud was written by those who composed the Sanhedrin, and that
God commanded us to bow to their decision on pain of death. Then he
explained away its apparently immoral precepts, but in defending its
errors in history and geography, plunged into gross absurdities, by
endeavouring to prove from the Bible that the Holy Land was of
immense extent, and that Jerusalem once contained millions of people.
In proof of the latter he referred to a passage, where so many thousands
are said to have been “at Jerusalem;” but he insisted that 2 must be
rendered “in Jerusalem.”

He wished to show us that Messiah must be a mere man, and directed us to the description of Ezekiel’s temple,
where the “Prince and his sons” are mentioned. We explained that
Messiah was not there spoken of, but the Prince over Israel under him.
His only remark to this was “Oh, then you give us two rulers!”

He admitted the state of his people at present to be most wretched.
In Poland especially, he said, they were grossly superstitious, for they
understood every thing in the Talmud literally. Indeed, he had not gone
to speak with the Polish rabbi believing that it would be useless on
account of his ignorance. The first remedy was to remove their
ignorance. He would have the Jews gathered and educated in schools,
where they should read and learn the Bible till ten years of age; the
Mishna from ten to fifteen, and the Talmud from fifteen to twenty. He
thought that the collections for the Holy Land ought to be given up, and
that the Jews there ought to be obliged to work even were it by the
bayonet. Sir Moses Montefiore’s plan of purchasing land for them in
Palestine he considered useless, as long as there is no security for property there. The people
must first be educated and taught the sciences. He believed from Zechariah xiv 14, which he
translated, “Judah also shall fight against Jerusalem,” that many of the Jews are yet to fall
into infidelity, and fight against their brethren. We now attempted to speak still more closely to
his conscience, but he refused to argue on the Messiahship of Jesus except in writing. We
showed him the end for which we had left our country and were seeking after Israel. He
asked, “For what good?” We answered, “To send teachers to Israel.” “The moment they
begin to teach Christianity all Jews will turn
away from them.” “No (we said), some will
receive the truth,” and we pointed to Mr. Cal-
man.

The rabbi started and looked quite surprised, for he had not suspected that our friend was an Israeli; then
added, “Ah! well there are one or two.”

We then pressed upon him to compare the blind and wretched state
of the dry bones of Israel described in the prophets with what he knew to be the real condition of his people and solemnly urged him to inquire if the blood of Jesus, which they were rejecting, might not be the very "fountain for sin," by which Israel was to be saved. He seemed surprised by our earnestness, evidently felt our sincerity, and we parted good friends.

(Sept. 13.) We bade farewell to Bucharest at 9 a.m. and set out for Foxshany (Focsani). There we visited the Jews, of whom there were about 60 families in the town, all Polish, ruled by a rabbi who is maintained by his brethren and carries on no trade. We were told that they have four teachers, each attended by a few children and supported by the high remuneration which is given by parents for their education. One man gave 12 rubles, or 2L 10s a month, for two children; and another paid 13L for five months for his family.

And yet these children learn very little. The Jew who took us to the postmaster spoke to us on the object of our visit and we explained to him the only way of salvation.

Most of the Jews here are mechanics, very many are tailors and shoemakers. We found such a measure of sincere devotion among them that no one would lend us his horses or accompany us on the morrow, simply because it was the Jewish Sabbath. They have two synagogues and one "Beth-midrash," or public room for study.

This evening was the commencement of the "Day of Repentence," (יניווי ד"ל יומ תשובה,) a name given to the Sabbath immediately preceding the "Day of Atonement." On the morrow the Rabbi was to preach a sermon urging them to repentance, and this is one of the two occasions during the year wherein they have a regular sermon, the only other sermon being at the Feast of the Passover.

In the 10 days between the New Year and the Day of Atonement, the Jews abound more in almsgiving and prayers than during all the rest of the year. Accordingly both their synagogues were full of worshippers, loud and active in their devotions, even the little boys were rocking to and fro, and reading prayers with great earnestness, their gestures resembling those of the Jews of Saphet more nearly than any we had seen.

When the service was over, a crowd came round and asked who we were and whence we came. We said that "we came from a far country out of love for Israel to tell them the way of forgiveness."

Not knowing what to make of us they at last demanded "whether Messiah had come or was to come?" We answered, "that both were true, that he had come once to die and was to come a second time in glory." Many turned away on hearing this, and would listen no more.

The following day about five o'clock in the evening we reached Birlat (Birlad). It is pleasantly situated, occupying, like all Moldavian towns, a large space of ground and have a population of 10,000.

We had seen Jews in the streets on Saturday when we arrived; and now we met one, who led us to their synagogue. There are 130 Jewish families from Russia, Austria and Germany who live quietly here and, generally speaking, suffer no persecution. In the synagogue two lads entered very eagerly into conversation with us in German. We began by telling them how different Christians in England and Scotland were from those in their country. They wondered much and asked, "If we wore Tephillin," i.e. phylacteries. We said, "No, for this is not commanded in the Word of God, but only in their traditions."

We then spoke a long time on the Scriptures being the Word of God, whereas the Talmud was the word of man. We referred to their prayers; showing that they did not procure pardon, but that Messiah only could do this by becoming surety for us. Both of the young men were very attentive and greatly surprised that we believed the Scriptures (Taner) as firmly as the Jews do.

Meanwhile, a group gathered around Mr. Calman. They told him that they all believe in the divine authority of the leader of the Chasidim in Russia, a Rabbi of wealth who used to have attendants and a band of music followed him whenever he rode out in his carriage. He had a chamber in his house where it was believed that the Messiah will stay when he comes; and at the beginning of each Sabbath went into this chamber, pretending to salute Messiah and wish him "Good Sabbath." He had two fine horses, on one of which Messiah is to ride, and himself upon the other.

Not long ago, being accused before the Emperor by the Jews who were not Chasidim of sending great sums of money to the Holy Land and teaching that it is no sin to cheat the Government by smuggling, he was imprisoned at Kow, and though large sums have been offered for his release, he is still in prison.

They also spoke of another Rabbi of the Chasidim at Navoritz in Poland who had been warning the Jews against the belief that Messiah would come that year or next year, being afraid that they would turn infidels if Messiah did not come.

When they spoke of their present misery, Mr. Calman said that they should inquire whether the cause of it was not their rejection of Christ? They said they still expected Messiah and that he is to come when their nation is either very corrupt, or very pure, even as the leper was counted clean either when his whole body was white or when there was no sign of leprosy at all. Therefore, said they, there is no need of our repenting before he comes. We gave them some tracts and left them.

En route we rested two hours in a pleasant khan called Tata-maresti. While there a sick Jew coming up in a cart, we spoke to him and gave him a little medicine which relieved him. The poor man was so grateful that he sent back a messenger with the offer of money as a recompense.

Meanwhile another interesting Jew spoke with us. He could not believe that we were Christians because we knew Hebrew. We told him about the Christians in England, and the duty of searching the Scriptures. He said that many Polish rabbis forbid the reading of the Bible;
Scot Missionaries to Jews in Romania
(Continued from the previous page)

that he had a fine boy whom the rabbis wanted to begin the Talmud, but he was
resolved not to permit him, and spoke of a Jew in Jassy who was
called an Epicurus by the Jews because he studied the Bible so much.
He said that there were 50 families of Jews at the village of Nacoush
near Jassy, and more at Washiui.

As we proceeded, the character of the country became more
varied. Our way lay through a fine open valley with meadow land
enclosed by wooded hills. A smooth river flowed through the vale.
Late at night we arrived at Washui (Vaslui) and found one Jewish khan
already fully occupied with Jews on their way to Jassy to keep the day
of atonement there. In another we found a wretched lodging though the
poor people gave us their best apartment and slept in the verandah
themselves.

We spread our mats on the clay floor and attempted to sleep, but
in vain. We cared less for this, however, because it was the night
preceding the day of atonement, and we had thus an opportunity of
seeing the curious ceremony which then takes place.

On the eve of that solemn day it is the custom of the Jews to kill a
cock for every man and a hen for every woman. During the repetition
of a certain form of prayer, the Jew or Jewess moves the living fowl
round their head three times. Then they lay their hands on it as the
hands used to be laid on the sacrifices and immediately after give it
to be slaughtered.

We rose before one a.m. and saw the Jewish Shochet, or "slayer",
going round the Jewish houses wakening each family and giving them a
light from his lantern in order that they might rise and bring out their
"Ciporah" or "atonement," namely the appointed cock and hen.

We walked about the streets; every where the sound of the
imprisoned fowls was to be heard, and a light seen in all the dwellings
of Israel. In two houses the fowls were already dead and plucked. In
another, we came to a window and saw distinctly what was going on
within. A little boy was reading prayers and his widowed mother
standing over him with a white hen in her hands. When he came to
a certain place in the prayer, the mother lifted up the struggling fowl and
waved it round her head repeating these words, "This be my substitute,
this be my exchange, this be my atonement; this fowl shall go to death
and I to a blessed life."

This was done three times over, and then the door of the house
opened and out ran the boy carrying the fowl to the Shochet, to
be killed by him in the proper manner.

How foolish and yet how affecting is this ceremony? This is the only blood that is shed in Israel now. No more does the blood of bulls
and goats flow beside the brazen altar, the continual burnt-offering is
no more, even the paschal lamb is no more slain; a cock and hen killed by
the knife of the Shochet is all the sacrifice that Israel knows. It is for
this wretched self-devised sacrifice that they reject the blood of the Son
of God. How remarkably does this ceremony show a lingering
knowledge in Israel of the imputation of sin, of the true nature of
sacrifice, and of the need of the shedding of blood before sin can be
forgiven! And yet so utterly blind are they to the real meaning of the
ceremony, that the rabbis maintain that it is not a sacrifice, but only
obtains forgiveness as being obedience to the traditions of the elders.
So that the words of the prophet are strictly true, "The children of Israel
shall abide many days without a king and without a prince and without
a sacrifice."

We left Washui about two o'clock in the morning while it was yet
dark and at seven rented for some hours at a wretched khan, large and
nearly empty, under a shed. There were several extensive marshes near,
from which dense exhalations were rising, drawn out by the morning
sun. These must render this part of the country very unwholesome.

Proceeding northward up a long valley, the summits of the hills
being generally covered with trees, the appearance of the country
gradually improved and in the afternoon we came to a really pleasant
view. The valley was closed up with hills finely wooded with elms, wild
apple trees and plums, richly laden with fruit. The woodbine and hop-
plant were twining round the trees and many wild flowers gave a charm
to this wilderness.

Our road was directly over the ridge of hills and our
postillions continued to urge on their horses with their barbarian cries
till we reached the summit. A deep wooded ravine now lay beneath and
beyond it the vast undulating plain of Jassy. Several miles off the city
appeared of great extent, the houses white, spires glittering and much
verdure around.

ROM-SIG members, Romania hold important roles at DC seminar

At least two of ROM-SIG's members will be on the podium at
this year's 14th Summer Seminar on Jewish Genealogy, to be
held in Washington, D.C., June 25-29.

Paul Pascal and Miriam Weiner have been announced as
speakers at two different sessions. Word is that Pascal will elab-
orate on his findings of last summer regarding the Suidits
and their place in Romanian history. According to the preliminary
schedule, he will be speaking at
7:30 p.m., Tues., June 27.
Weiner, who has made many
trips to eastern European coun-
tries, will undoubtedly expand on
her research experiences in
former Soviet countries.

On Tues. afternoon, a Roma-
nian special interest group meet-
ing has been tentatively scheduled for 1-2 p.m. At that time,
attendees may exchange their ideas on furthering research for
Romanian ancestors.

The conclave actually begins on Sun., June 25th with a num-
ber of activities, including registration, a beginner's seminar, vari-
ousorientation meetings and a reception in the evening.
Research at the National Archives, the National Holocaust
Center and the Library of Congress is available each day, with
special trips planned for Baltimore and Annapolis research. Dur-
ing the seminar there will be speakers from Israel, Lithuania,
Russia, Poland and other parts of the globe, including the Carib-
bean.

Climax of the seminar is the banquet on Weds. evening with
Arthur Kurzweil as guest speaker, although some other meetings
are set for Thurs. morning.

There is still ample time to make plans to attend the seminar,
considered the annual highlight for genealogists world-wide.
More information may be obtained by writing to the JGS of
Greater Washington, Roberta Salt, 9024 Falls Chapel Way, Potomac, MD 20854, or Rita Krakower Margolis, 11112 Arroyo
Dr., Rockville, MD 20852.
The Jews from Romania
An Historical Destiny

by Ladislau Gyémánt

To reconstruct the historical destiny of the Jews in Romania, which is still mostly a blank page in Romanian history, is a task that remains to be performed by research. Early attempts were made by Hasdeu and Iorga to trace "the history of the religious tolerance in Romania" or "the history of the Jews in our countries". These came as a result of the bitter dispute on the civil rights of the Jews at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the present one. But these did not have the expected follow up impact for further research on this important matter.

The beginnings of the Jewish history on Romanian territory are veiled by the legendary aura of scholarly Humanism and militant Romanticism. Like the other peoples from the Southcentral East European area, the Jews in Transylvania in mid-19th century, were looking for support in the past based on the old legend told by Johann Lebel, a priest from Talmaciu, who lived during the 16th century. He explained the origins of the name of his village as having its root in the Talmud, its bearers being called in to help the Dacian king Deccebal against the common enemy, the Romans, after the Temple in Jerusalem and the Jewish state were destroyed by the Roman legions of Titus. Popular imagination has added to, or overlapped such scholarly constructions with local legends, linking the remains of Dacian, Roman or medieval strongholds to names attributed to some hypothetical Jewish colonists.

For example, archeology still furnishes certain data concerning the presence of Jews in our area in the first centuries of the modern era. Coins issued by Simon bar Kochba, the leader of the last great Jewish uprising against the Romans in Judea, were discovered in the neighborhood of some Roman fortresses in Dacia. Also objects with Hebrew inscriptions on altars dedicated to gods worshipped by the hellenized Jewry from diaspora are other elements which state a Jewish component both in the Roman troops stationed in Dacia and among the colonists who were brought from "all over the Roman world," according to the Roman historian Dio Cassius, in order to secure the newly conquered province.

These sporadic and scanty beginnings of Jewish life in old Dacia, fall victim to centuries of invasions of the so-called "barbarian" peoples following the collapse of Roman rule. It is only in the Middle Ages that the written culture, Latin or Slavic, offers accounts that prove the birth and flourishing of a Jewish society in the Romanian provinces. After the indirect, uncertain clues of the 12th-13th centuries, especially in the following 14th-16th centuries, more and more cogent documentary proofs appear concerning the Jewish component in the history of Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia.

The Jews came to the Romanian provinces from the western part of the continent (Germany, Bohemia, Hungary) and the north (Poland). They also came from the Ottoman Empire in the south, where the Sephardic Jews, expelled from Catholic Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella, found a tolerant shelter.

Their economic role was as intermediating the trade on the road that linked Poland to the Ottoman Empire, crossing the territory of Moldavia, and also the relations established between the big cities of Transylvania (Cluj, Bârgăo, Sibiu) and the regions across the Carpathian or the southern Danube area.

The second important field of Jewish economic activity in the Romanian lands was the furnishing of credit, necessary both for the rulers and for the town and village communities. The pretenders to the throne got their nomination by resorting to the services of the Jewish creditors, who were influential in Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. The nobility, the so-called boyars, as well as the townspeople, raised money from the Jews, who thus were integrated, step by step into economic and social life, gaining property, paying taxes, getting involved in trials both as principals or witnesses. The Jewish physicians, who are to be found at the courts of the Moldavian, Wallachian or Transylvanian princes, were called, sometimes with great sacrifices, to Poland or the Ottoman Empire.

This economic and social role, which becomes clearer as the documentary materials become available through publication, is tightly linked to involvement in the complex cobweb of the international politics of the region.

The Jewish doctor Isaac Beg, of the Middle East ruler Ouzn Hassan, during his mission to Europe for an anti-Ottoman alliance, mediated the peace between Stephen the Great of Moldavia and Mathias Corvin of Hungary, a treaty in 1473 with the mutual granting of trade privileges.

In the second half of the next century, Jewish personalities, influential at the Ottoman court, got directly involved in the political life of the Romanian countries, supporting and crediting pretenders to the throne, or integrating Jewish tradesmen in a large system of obtaining and transmitting information in the region, necessary to the Ottoman Empire in expansion.

Joseph Nassi, Duke of Naxos, originally from Portugal, an advisor and favorite of the Sultan, supported the access to the throne of Moldavia of princes Alexandru Lăpuşneanu and Ionan Vodă cel Cumplit, and in 1571 even was himself considered as candidate to the throne.

Among the creditors from Constantinople who financed the Wallachian prince Michael the Brave to get the throne of Wallachia, influential Jewish creditors from the Turkish capital played an important role.

What was the attitude of the Romanian society towards the increasing economic, social and political role of the Jews? An outstanding specialist in medieval history, Prof. Şerban Papacostea, makes use of the formula "hostile tolerance". The term tolerance is
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defined by the unlimited opportunity for Jews to settle, freely move about and economically function in the Romanian provinces, reaching the status where they could own property and even hold public positions. The protection of the law, free practice of their religion, the setting up of synagogues and schools complete this favorable facet of the Jewish status in Moldavia and Wallachia during the Middle Ages.

Still it is mixed with hostile feelings manifested at three distinct levels: mental, juridical and political.

As for mentalities, both popular and cultivated, the prejudices against the Jews, made guilty for the death of Jesus, prejudices imbibed by the Christian church, were at work. The mural paintings of the monasteries in Moldavia and religious writings placed the Jews among pagans or heretics, of those guilty of the saints/martyrdom, of those doomed to the flames of Hell.

With the juridical codifying of the Pravila from Govora, The Romanian Book of Learning (Cartea românească de învățătură) or The Setting of Rights (Indreptarea legii) in the time of the princes Matei Basarab and Vasile Lupu, differences between the legal treatment of the Jews and Christians are stipulated, meaning forbidding conversion to Judaism and favoring those who wanted to convert to Christianity by granting pardon for all the previously done deeds. The fact that the Christian priests were forbidden to have any kind of relationship with the Jews—to have meals in their homes, to resort to Jewish physicians, although not generally observed—is indicative of the mental state and juridical mentality that rejected the Jewish phenomena.

As for everyday policy, the hostile attitude was potentiated by the competition between local and Jewish tradesmen, the discontent of the debtors with their creditors and viewing the Jews as agents of the Ottoman power and policy in the Romanian provinces (not a completely roundless view). Hence, the restrictive economic measures taken by princes like Petru Șchiopul or Eustăiu Dahija, and the beginning of the struggle for anti-Ottoman liberation by repressive measures against creditors of all creeds, including the Jews. They were imprisoned and compelled to surrender their fortunes to Stephen the Great or were simply killed by Michael the Brave or Aron the Tyrant.

The Russian sources from the time of the Moldavian prince Petru Rareș sanctioned severe measures taken against the Jews including expulsion from Moldavia.

On the other hand, the trade privileges and tax exemptions granted by princes Alexandru cel Bun, Ștefan Tomșa or Constantin Brâncoveanu should not be forgotten. Also keep in mind the protection offered to the Jews by Vistire Lupu when they were facing the Cossack or the Tartar invasions. The advice given by Matei al Mirelor to the prince of his time: to observe and keep the promises he had made to the foreign tradesmen, including the Jews, which make his name famous in their faraway countries, complete this ambivalent picture of the status of the Jews in the medieval Romanian society. It was characterized by restraint and prejudices of both newer or older origin but with a dominant trend of permissive tolerance.

A similar situation occurred in the Principality of Transylvania. Making themselves useful as tradesmen, creditors and intermediaries in commerce with the Ottoman Empire, and also as physicians at the courts of the princes Ştefan Boesklay, Gabriel Bethlen or Gheorghe Rákóczi, the Jews in 1623 were granted a fundamental charter of rights which regulated their socio-economic and juridical status up to the middle of the 19th century. The privilege, issued by prince Bethlen, with the context of his policy to revigorate the economy of his principality through colonization, ensured the Jews the freedom to settle and move in the country, to freely practice the trade, to observe and practice their own religion with no discrimination at all. Later these rights were nuanced and amended by the assembly of the Estates of the Principality (the so-called Diet) and were included in the code of laws. For example, the right to settle was limited to the town of Alba Iulia, trade was to be performed on condition of observing the privileges of the towns and Estates and the specific attire for Jews was imposed again. These privileges, reiterated periodically in the 17th and 18th centuries, provided the Jews in Transylvania with the opportunity to engage in more and more dynamic economic activities and lead a life governed by traditional specificity.

The protocol of the community from Alba Iulia (the first and for a long time the only organized Jewish community in Transylvania) reflects a system of internal organization, having a rabbi who was at the same time the Chief-rabbi of the Jews in Transylvania, a local leadership elected by majority vote, its own judicial institutions and taxes destined to cover the needs of the community, with two synagogues for the practice of cult by the Ashkenazi and Sephard Jews.

The 18th century, which marks the borderline between the pre-statistical period to the statistical one, enables us to evaluate the presence of the Jewish population in the Romanian provinces. In Transylvania, the new Hapsberg rule established in 1690, inaugurated the precise practice of recording the human and material resources in the Empire, introducing conscription and censuses. The first general census of the Jews in Transylvania in the time of Maria Terezia (1779) recorded 221 Jewish families with 460 children. The first modern census conducted between 1769-1786 upon the order of the Emperor Joseph the 2nd, recorded in the Great Principality of Transylvania 354 Jewish families with 2,092 members, compared to a population of 1,440,986 inhabitants, with represented .14 percent of the total population.

In the western parts (the counties of Arad, Bihor, Maramures, Satu Mare) as well as in the region called Banat, the number of Jewish people recorded at the same time was 6,804. Up to 1840 the demographic evolution of the Jews in Transylvania was rather low, their number never exceeding 3,000-3,500. A demographic increase occurred in the years preceding the 1848 Revolution, when the number of the Jewish inhabitants doubled, and after the Revolution, the Austrian census recorded a new doubling so that a figure of over 15,000 Jewish inhabitants was recorded in the territory.

The reason for this increase is to be found in the massive immigration from the west and north (Hungary, Galicia, Bucovina) under more favorable economic and social circumstances due to the relative stability offered by the Great Principality. In spite of this continuous increase, the Jewish population in Transylvania was less than one percent of the total 2,100,000 inhabitants in Transylvania at the time of the census.
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After the 1867 juridical emancipation, the Jewish population increased considerably from 23,536 inhabitants in 1869 to 64,074 in 1910, with an increase in percentage from 1.2 percent to 2.4 percent for the territories of historical Transylvania. For the whole territory of present Transylvania (including the western parts as well as the Banat) before World War I, the Jewish inhabitants reached the number of 223,082.

In Moldavia and Wallachia, the first census was taken by the Russian authorities who occupied Moldavia in 1774 and records 1,300 Jewish families out of which 171 were in Iaşi, 105 in Cuceava, 92 in Cernăuţi, 59 in Hoinţ and 41 in Botoşani. After Bucovina fell under the Austrian rule, successive records point to a decrease of the Jewish families from 650 in 1776 to 175 in 1785 as a result of the measures taken by the Austrians to expel the Jews. With the easing of the restrictive rules later, there is an increase to 354 families in 1791.

In the first half of the 19th century, the available data for Moldavia show a massive increase of the Jewish population from 11,732 inhabitants in 1803 to 79,164 in 1838. The explanation for this growth is to be found both in the spontaneous process of immigration from the Polish and Russian regions, which experienced a poor economic situation as well as a severe restrictive anti-Jewish policy, and the colonization done by princes, boyars and the Church with a view toward showing the values of their domains which materialized the setting up of 60 new settlements up to 1848 with a majority of Jewish population. Adding to this the natural increase of population due to early marriages, the ritual sanitary and food prescriptions, abstinence and the tradition of a stable family, one can find in broad lines the reasons for an increase in the Jewish population under 1859-1860 to 134,100. Of these 124,897 lived in Moldavia and only 9,234 in Wallachia. In the same period (1856) the Jewish population in Bessarabia, under Russian rule, reached the number of 78,751.

Up to the end of the century, according to the 1899 census, the number of Jews in Romania doubled, reaching the figure of 269,015 which representative 4.5 percent of the total population. Before World War I, in 1912, the census recorded a slight decrease in figures and proportion (239,967 inhabitants, 3.3 percent of the total) as a result of non-granting of civic rights and the process of emigration.

Simultaneously with the demographic increase of the Jewish population in Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania in the 18th and 19th centuries, there took place significant developments on the institutional level. The supreme authority over the Jewish communities and of regulating the prerogatives of the Chief-rabbis, as well as setting up an educational system which was meant to be better than the traditional religious school. These projects were similar in many points of the resolutions of the Jewish Congress from Hungary in 1868 after the Austro-Hungarian dualism was settled. Representatives from Transylvanian communities took part. The main effect of the centralization of institutional and educational system proposed by the Congress was materialized in the break between the Jewish communities, which lasted until the end of World War II.

Thus, those who recognized the decisions of the Congress set up Congressist or Neologue communities, as opposed to their adversaries who set up communities declared as Orthodox (supporters of severe observation of rituals and of full comminatory autonomy) or Status quo-ants (partisans of maintaining conditions existing previous to the Congress).

But beyond these internal fights for institutional, cultural and religious renewal, the main issue that concerned the Jewish society in the 18th and 19th centuries was that of emancipation and of gaining full civic rights. The first half of the 18th century in Transylvania is marked, from the point of view of the official policy towards the Jews, by ambivalence characterized by an alternation of restrictive measures taken by central and local authorities and by a periodical renewal of the privileges gained by Jews in the previous century.

The situation of the Jews worsened sensibly during the reign of Maria Terenția when, within the generalized system for Hungary, a special burdensome tax was introduced for the Jews in the western parts. In the Banat, a regulation adopted in 1776 under the title of Judenordnung, restricted drastically the number of admitted Jewish families, restricted free mobility, the right to practice certain trades, introduced obligatory living in special districts, and limited the social and economic relations between the Jews and the Christians. This restrictive-oriented policy climaxed in 1779-1780 when all the Jewish

In Transylvania, the increase of the Jewish population made it possible for new Jewish communities to be established in the first half of the 19th century, besides the only legally existing in Alba Iulia. These communities, which had their own rabbis and lay leaders, urgently claimed more and more participation in the election of the Chief-rabbi and institutional decentralization simultaneously with cultural, educational and confessional reforms. The conflict between the supporters of the renewal and those of the traditional system became more acute when the last two Chief-rabbis were appointed, one about 1820 and the other in 1845-46. In the years preceding the 1848 Revolution, the contradicting points of view were expressed in the press-dispute carried on in the Hungarian and Saxon newspapers from Transylvania.

Concomitantly, in the western parts a strong center advocating a radical religious reform was formed in Arad when the Chief-rabbi Aron Chorin declared himself in favor of easing the rigid ritual customs, the renewal of the ritual and the introducing of Hungarian or German as sermon languages instead of Hebrew. But the reform movement was met with hostility by the traditional circles led by the Orthodox rabbis.

After the 1848 Revolution, the supporters of the institutional and educational reforms managed to organize two conferences of representatives of the Jewish communities in Transylvania. In the 1852 and 1866 conferences there were formulated projects of reorganizing the communities and of regulating the prerogatives of the Chief-rabbis, as well as setting up an educational system which was meant to be better than the traditional religious school. These projects were similar in many points of the resolutions of the Jewish Congress from Hungary in 1868 after the

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population from Transylvania had to be concentrated in Alba Iulia, was forbidden the practice of any profession but trade, and immigration in the province was stopped.

The death of the Empress and the coming to the throne of Emperor Joseph the 2nd prevented the putting into practice of these projects and the new era of Josephinism brought in a new spirit in the imperial policy towards the Jews, namely that of tolerance.

Keeping in mind that Joseph the 2nd set as a main objective the integration of the Jewish population into the class of useful citizens, he emitted in 1783 the edict of tolerance for Hungary, which was applied also to the Jews from the Banat and the western parts of present Transylvania. This meant access to guilds and training in various trades, free entrance to public schools and universities, the humiliating distinctive signs were removed and opportunities to set up a specific school system was opened.

In exchange, the Jews were asked to integrate into the general educational system, to introduce Latin, German or Hungarian in their official documents and, later, the adoption of German names was ordered. In Transylvania, certain partial measures, like permission to practice freely Jewish economic activities (paddling or brandy distilling) or stopping midwives from baptizing newly-born Jewish babies, are but a few positive signals, but unfortunately an edict of tolerance for this area never materialized.

In the first half of the 19th century the question of emancipation was strongly debated at both the central and local institutional levels, as well as in the political press of the time. In the circumstances when the emancipation of the Jews was an item in the reform-program proposed by the liberal nobility, the Jews from Banat and western parts were beneficiaries of the measures legislated by the Diet in Hungary in 1840, regarding the right to settle and live in all the towns except the mining ones, of opening new factories and of practicing all trades and commerce.

In spite of the numerous statements issued by the Jewish communities requesting civil rights similar to those granted to the other inhabitants of the country, the Diet of Transylvania did not take it into consideration such claims until 1848.

Simultaneously with such initiatives on official level in order to improve their social status, the Jews from Transylvania kept on struggling on the local level for rights to settle in towns (mostly in Cluj, Tirgu Mureș and Brașov), to freely practice economic activities and to freely observe the customs of their cult and to build synagogues. The 1848 Revolution was followed by an outburst of anti-Jewish manifestations in the main towns from Hungary and Transylvania and instead of the long desired emancipation, the Neo-Absolutist Austrian regime after 1849, annulled even some of the rights gained in the previous years.

But at last the natural process of emancipation, imposed by modernization of the society, materialized in 1867, in the circumstances when the new Dualist Austro-Hungarian regime was trying to confer itself an aura of legitimacy also by solving in a liberal spirit this situation inherited from an anachronical world characterized by restrictions and prejudices of medieval sources.

The emancipation of the Jews in Moldavia and Wallachia, and in the united Romania after 1859, proved to be a slow and more difficult process, although in mid-19th century the conditions seemed more favorable for a positive solution. The liberal generation that prepared and carried out the 1848 Revolution considered in the programs of this Revolution either "the emancipation of the Israelites and equal rights for all the citizens of other denominations" (The Islaz Proclamation), or "the gradual emancipation of the Israelites" (The Desires of the National Party in Moldavia, by Mihail Kogălniceanu). Being attracted by these perspectives and interested in economic, social and institutional modernization, the Jews supported the Revolution. Outstanding personalities like the financiers Davicion Bally and Hillel Manouch, the painters Barbu Iacobescu and Daniel Rosenhal, the physician Iuliu Barasch, brought their contribution to the fight for the objectives of the 1848 Revolution. This cooperation was maintained in the period of the struggle for the unification of the two Romanian Principalities, and the reign of the first prince of the united Romania, Alexandru Ioan Cuza, seemed to open possibilities to materialize the civil emancipation in the coming years.

Thus, outstanding Jewish personalities were appointed to important public positions, and the communal law of 1864 ensured the Jews the right to participate in the municipal elections. The Civil Code, issued in the same year, offered the possibilities for individual naturalization of the Jews after a 10 year stay in the country.

After Cuza was overthrown the attitude towards the question of Jewish emancipation radically changed. Adopted under the pressure of street demonstration, the 7th article of the Constitution 1866 granted the right of naturalization only to the persons belonging to Christian denominations. The liberal governments in power until 1872, led by such outstanding personalities like Ion Brătianu, Mihail Kogălniceanu or Ion Ghica, inaugurated a series of anti-Jewish restrictive measures (mass expulsion, interdiction of settling in the villages, and stoppage of economic activities), measures worsened by the abuses of the administrative apparatus that was meant to put them into practice.

There are a lot of reasons for this radical change of attitude of the generation of 1848 in the Jewish question. At economic level, the massive demographic growth of the Jewish population, due to immigration and natural growth rate, and the orientation of the Jews toward professions specific for the middle class which was taking shape in the Romanian society of the time (trade, handicrafts, finance, industry, leasing) brought about the negative attitude of the liberal political forces, who considered the Jewish competition as an obstacle in the building of the Romanian social strata that constituted their basic support. In the electoral system established in 1866, organized on the basis of electoral categories named colleges, the naturalization and the civil emancipation of the Jews would have meant a radical change in the balance of forces in the 3rd college, the main stronghold of the liberal forces. As a last point in the internal political life in this respect, the formation of a liberal Moldavian fraction; strongly xenophobic and anti-Jewish, whose support was essential for maintaining the liberal governments in power, contributed to this restrictive policy towards Jewish emancipation.

As for the conservative political forces, they proved to be much...
The Jews from Romania
An Historical Destiny
(Continued from the previous page)

more moderate in their policy concerning the Jews. They were representatives of landholders, interested in exploiting their economic resources with the help of the Jewish leaseholders and, obviously seeking social and political interests opposed to their liberal political adversaries. So it is not a mere chance that the conservative government of Lascăr Catargiu, between 1872-1876, considerably mellowed the anti-Jewish measures of the previous governments. Political personalities like P.P. Carp, Titu Maiorescu and Take Ionescu perseverently supported the idea of a fair solution for the Jewish issue in Romania.

In the circumstances when emancipation had become a reality to Europe and the international Jewish organizations had gained a remarkable political influence, the issue of Jewish emancipation in Romania transcended the area of economic-social or internal party confrontations and became the object of interest for the Great Powers within the context of the delicate "Oriental issue".

When the 1878 Congress in Berlin traced the new political frontiers in the Balkans, the Great Powers conditioned the acknowledgement of Romania's independence to the modification of the 7th article of the Constitution in the sense of ensuring civil and political rights irrespective of religious denomination of the citizens. Being met with strong opposition by the political forces in Romania, the modification of the Constitution triggered a real political storm. New elections took place, changes of governments followed, and long and tiresome negotiations with the European capitals delayed for more than a year the recognition of independence won in 1877-1878.

Eventually, taking advantage both of the specific contradictions and interests of the Great Powers (England, France, Germany, Russia), and the hesitating attitude of some of the Jewish leaders, a surrogate "solution" for the 7th article was issued. It offered the possibility of individual naturalization for the Jews who had a longer than 10 year stay in the country, with one exception, that of block-naturalization of the 863 Jewish participants in the War of Independence. This solution gaining civil rights proved entirely unpracticable and the number of Jews who were naturalized between 1878-1913 did not exceed 529.

In the years following this infelicitous solution until the first World War, especially restrictive legislation became an added aggravating factor. It drastically limited Jewish participation in industry and trade, in liberal professions, in public administration as well as hindered access of the Jews to instruction of any degrees and legalized the system of eliminating the Jews from the villages and their expulsion from the country.

In order to counteract this discriminatory situation, the Union of Native Jews was set up in Bucharest in 1910 which assumed the task of coordinating the struggle for emancipation. The internal and international actions, as well as the support of European public opinion, of the international Jewish organizations prepared the field so that the favorable conditions created after World War I, made the Jewish emancipation in Romania become a reality due to the decrees emitted in 1919 by the Ion I.C. Brătianu government, and to Romania accepting the guarantees comprised in the Treaty of the Minorities adopted at the Versailles Peace Conference, including them in the Constitution adopted in 1923.

The civil emancipation, the gaining of civil rights did not mean the expected and hoped for solutions in the Jewish issue. The social integration of the Jews proved to be a process, which due to its implications, transcended juridical emancipation. It triggered and aroused sensitivities with tragic effects. So, on one hand, the opportunities gave the Jews by emancipation in economic, social and cultural life, gained them important positions in economy, finances, press, liberal professions, culture and education.

On the other hand, as a reaction, it gave birth to modem, organized anti-Semitism, which proposed in a programmatic way to eliminate the Jewish factor from the society. To its turn, the Jewish society beyond some elements and tendencies to assimilate, proved as a whole refractory to such a process which presupposed as its end, renouncing to their own specific individuality.

From this complex situation, which appeared after the achievement of civil emancipation, the Jewish society tried to find solutions in three ways. Part of the Romanian Jews adopted the ideology and mode of action of modern Nationalism under the specific manner of the Zionism movement which proposed the transformation of the Jews in a modern nation with its own state on the territory of ancient Israel, with a language, culture and national institutions as all the other nations have. This movement was extending its influence beginning in the latter half of the 19th century. Zionist conferences and conventions, as well as organizations, planned and achieved the gradual emigration of a part of the Romanian Jews to Palestine, under Ottoman occupation, and after the World War I, under British mandate.

Another section of the Jewish society oriented itself towards the leftist and extreme left movements, considering that the solution for the Jewish problems are to be found within the frames of a general organization of the society, which with the doing away of any economic and social injustice, was to wipe out the roots of ethnic and confessional discriminations. The supporters of such orientations played an important role in the organization and development of the Socialist movement in Romania, having as its most important ideologist Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea. After World War I, both the Social-Democrat and Communist movements had an important Jewish component.

The last, the third sought for solution, was that of integrating into the Romanian society by preserving the specific cultural and spiritual individuality, and in conditions of guarantees concerning equal civil rights. It was the Union of the Romanian Jews that militated in favor of this idea, which paved the way for a political and parliamentary solution by participating in the elections in coalition with the Romanian government parties (the National-Liberal Party and the National-Peasant Party) and by winning seats in the Parliament. In Transylvania a section of the Jewish population looked at the Hungarian Party, while others constituted the National Union of the Jews from Transylvania, of Zionist orientation.

The inter-war period marked a strong affirmation of the Jewish element in the social and political life in Romania as well as in cultural life and the press. An important Jewish network of commemorative, philanthropic, cultural, sports and artistic institutions materialized in Romania.
During the ascent of the extreme rightist movement of Fascism in Europe, in Romania, too, the alarming signals of an anti-Semitic movement became manifest. It was a much stronger movement than ante-bellum traditional anti-Semitism as far as its objectives and methods are concerned. The organization called Legion of Archangels Michael set for itself the task to completely and physically eliminate the Jewish factor from Romanian society and made known its intentions not only in a press and literature of extreme aggressiveness, but also in violence against the Jewish physical persons and their goods.

After the victory of Nazism in Germany, the anti-Jewish pressures grew stronger, extended to the official and legislative level. The signal represented by the law of Romanian labor exploitation in 1934 which made provisions for limiting the proportion of non-Romanian employees and of managers in economic enterprises, the ephemeral Goga-Cuza government, at the end of 1937 adopted the first open anti-Jewish law. They revised citizenship endangering the civil rights of thousands of Jews from among the 756,930 recorded in the 1930 census.

If the economic boycott declared by the Jewish firms against the government and the international protests proved efficient in the sense that this government had to resign after three weeks in the summer of 1940, the complex situation created by the successes of Hitler's Germany in the war, the fall of France, Romania's main ally, the major losses of territory following the Soviet ultimatum and the Viena Diktat, made the Gigurtu government introduce new anti-Semitic legislation aligned to the Nazi model.

Paroxistic in dimensions during the dual government of General Antonescu and the Legion (Sept. 1940-Jan. 1941) and continuing to be in practice in the field of economy especially, after January 1941, the anti-Jewish legislature circumscribed those who fell under its provisions according to the racial criteria of Nurenberg, annulled the civil rights and liberties, decreed the expropriation of all Jewish goods (within the so-called Romanizing process), eliminated Jewish labor from the enterprises, introduced numerus nullus in education and liberal professions, established restrictions of mobility, concentrated the Jews from the countryside in towns, enforced compulsory labor and burdensome taxes and dissolved the institutional system of the Jewish communities.

If not all of these repressive legislative measures were put into practice with perseverance, especially the sudden elimination of the Jewish specialists being supposed to affect the war effort of the economy, the period of participation at the government of the Legion aggravated the situation of the Jews by physical violence which transcended quite the frames of this oppressive legislation, phenomena which climaxed with the massacres during the rebellion of the Legion at the end of January 1941 against Antonescu.

The anti-Soviet war that broke out in June 1941, turned the violence from exception into mass practice. After the pogrom from Iasi and the "death trains" from Moldavia at the end of June 1941, there followed that autumn the massacre and mass deportation of the Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina to Transnistria, they being considered as "foreign Jews" and declared as favorable to the "Bolshevik enemy". In the summer and autumn of 1942 the plans for mass deportation of the Jews from old Romania and southern Transylvania to the extermination camps in Poland were at work.

The opposition of the Romanian political and spiritual elite, foremost of whom the Royal House, the leaders of political parties, the heads of the Church as well as the activity of the Jewish leaders (mostly Wilhelm Fiederman), and not in the least, the change of the course of the war after the battle of Stalingrad, put an end to this project and thus about 300,000 Jewish lives were saved out of the 441,293 recorded in the 1941 census on the territory of former Romania, southern Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina.

In northern Transylvania, under Hungarian administration after the Viena Diktat in August 1940, the 151,125 Jews recorded in the 1941 census, were subjected to the anti-Jewish legislation in action for some years in Hungary, a legislation of racial character and pursuing the elimination of the Jews from the economic life, liberal professions, public services and education. The German occupation in March 1944 and the Szalasi government hastened the state of things toward the tragic finale of ghettoization and deportation of 131,633 Jews from northern Transylvania up to June 1944. The courageous stand taken by ecclesiastics, as the Greek-Catholic Metropolitan Iuliu Hasu and the Roman-Catholic Bishop Martron Aron, the salvation activities initiated by Jewish organizations with the support of some intellectuals and peasants from the region, did not help even in limiting the proportion of the disaster.

The Jewish population in Romania reduced to half compared to the period between the wars (428,312 Jews in 1947) set its hopes, after the terrible shock of the Holocaust, in the new regime, democratic in the beginning, Communist later, which promised to solve once and for all national injustices. So, it is not by accident that the Jews participated in the building up of the new socio-political and economic system, which, unfortunately, proved very soon to be the deceiving veil of a new dictatorship.

The sheltered expectations and disillusion with the Communist system, corroborated with the appearance of the State of Israel, brought about a change of orientation of the Jews from Romania towards emigration, so that the number decreased from 146,264 in 1956 to 24,667 in 1977. The Ceausescu regime accelerated this process, so that the latest official census (1992) recorded no more than 9,000 Jews in Romania, an undoubtful sign of the crepuscule of a history of half-a millennium.

Even if physically the Jewish presence in Romania becomes more and more symbolical, the imprint of the Jewish contribution to the building up and flourishing of the Romanian society will remain as perennial goods of the national treasure of values which a historiography that aspires to fulfill its duty, is bound to preserve in the conscience of the coming generation.

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More records found in Cluj; hints of others elsewhere

"CLUJ RECORDS FOUND" screamed the news received from ROM-SIG member Gary Palgon, president of the JGS of Atlanta, late last month. He went on to say that "copies of 20 vital records on my Buchwald family from Cluj were received from Dr. Ladislau Gyemant, after only several weeks of correspondence." Included were the English translations of the documents.

Palgon is only one of many who sent inquiries to Gyemant, but the first who has received information by mail and notified us. In addition to the photocopies, which Palgon described as "almost like photographs, 7 inches by 9 inches in size and very clear," he received a map of the Cluj area which he had asked for.

The records dated from 1860 to 1924 including a set of documents verifying the birth of his great-grandfather.

Palgon had written to the Civil Records Office in Turda and Cluj in the past only to be told that "no records exist," according to Palgon.

Other members have also written us about their researcher efforts. Philip Leonard has been in touch with Jewish people on the Internet in Romania who are interested in doing genealogical research. He is also talking to a friend who had been going to Galati to arrange for his church members to do research as a fundraiser. Leonard feels that most of the current professional researchers "are asking unreasonable sums."

Glenn Gorelick, after a second letter from Dan Jamura, learned that he had been unable to find the information he was seeking. "I was impressed," said Gorelick, because he returned the original $10 check Gorelick had sent when he couldn't find any information.

We are still awaiting word on the progress being made with people to research the national archives in Iasi.

Third Dorohoi volume underway; Sponsor needed for English version

A third Dorohoi book is about to published, according to David Shlomo, president of the Organization of Israeli People Born in Dorohoi. In a recent letter Shlomo says this book will deal with the Judaism and Zionism in the district of Dorohoi. It's publication is expected in a few months.

Then, writes Shlomo, they hope to prepare an abbreviated volume in English, summarizing the three volumes in one 250-page book.

"We need a sponsor," he writes, "to assume the responsibility and help us financially." He hopes "this special task is fit to a person who is a descendant of an honorable family coming from Dorohoi." He estimates the cost would be about $20,000 to $25,000.

Shlomo says he still has some 30 to 50 copies of the original two books "assuming they send us honorable donations to cover our financial deficit.

For more information, you may write directly to:
David Shlomo, President
Association of Israeli People Born in Dorohoi
P.O. B. 134, Kiriath Bialik
17101 Israel

Writing to Moldova archives? Here's the correct mailing address:

Thanks to member Adina Gertz, here is the correct address for contacting the Moldovan archives:

National Archives of the Republic of Moldova
Dzerzinsky str., 67
Kishinev 277028,
Republic of Moldova
The telephone number of (+7-) 218-011.

New Eastern European Research Guide to be published by FEEFHS this year

The Federation of East European Family History Societies, of which ROM-SIG is a member, will be publishing its latest resource guide, according to the latest bulletin from FEEFHS.

More than 60 genealogical societies are members of the Federation, but we are the only one representing researchers from Romania.

The Federation will conduct its 1995 convention on Aug. 4-5 at the Holiday Inn, Middleburg Hts., Cleveland, OH. A Friday evening banquet and a Saturday luncheon are planned. ROM-SIG member Arlene Rich, President of the JGS of Cleveland, is among the speakers on the program.
COULD GRANDFATHER HAVE BEEN FUSEGeyer?

I am seeking sources of specific information of records on turn-of-the-century "fusegery" groups and wondering if my grandfather may have been among them.

My grandfather, Jacob David Schaffer, was born 1895 in Faleshti, Bessarabia, son of Isaac Joseph Schaffer and Sarah Rapoport. His last place of residence before coming to the U.S. was Odobest, Romania. He came to the U.S. in May 1907. (The ship departed from Liverpool so I don't know his voyage's continental point of origin). That's about all I know, culled from a passenger list and citizenship papers.

Since he was a young carpenter, Faleshti being an agricultural community, going from Faleshti to Odobest moved him westerly and, I am told, he was one of few survivors of a Bessarabian pogrom. Does it therefore seem likely that he may have been part of a 1905 Fusgeyer group?

If that line of reasoning makes sense (please tell me if it does not), I would like to document it. Do lists of names, dates, specific itineraries exist for the Fusgeyer groups? Did any originate from Faleshti? Any leads would be appreciated.

Deborah Schaffer
P.O. Box 201
Greenfield, MA 01302-0201

HUNGAROGENS' SAY THEY RESEARCH IN ROMANIA

Hungarogens was established in 1988, consists of one lawyer, one archivist and two genealogists, one of this historians is an university professor and the director of the Jewish archive.

We have agents in the different countries, separated from us in Trianon 1920. In Rumania our co-worker is also professor and member of the Academy, he is teaching Judaism, and is a very experienced researcher of family-history, ratherly of the Jewish people.

We have with his aid access in Rumania to all archives of the country. Sorrowly a big part of Jewish records and historical sources were distroyed by the nazis and the Iron Guard.

Our charges are adjusted to the task self, generally costs a full family-history research betw. 3-600 USD. We provide our climents with duplicates of the originals, or with authorized certificates.

We would be appreciated in this respect by our mutual satisfieing collaboration.

A HARMATH, manager
HUNGAROGENS
Genealogical Research Bureau
H-1085 Budapest VIII,
Jozsef krt. 50.
Hungary

See you in Washington on June 25-29??
THE POWER OF PERSEVERANCE
A true story by Phyllis Blumenfeld

In 1961, long before I became interested in genealogy, my husband lost his Aunt Betty, who was supposedly his father's sister. At the funeral I asked my father-in-law why the rabbi did not cut his clothing or at least a black ribbon as is the modern custom. He replied that Betty was not his real sister.

Curious, I questioned him further, but never got a clear answer. The only thing mentioned was by my husband's sister, who thought that her father had married Betty's mother, but it was never made clear to us; it was like the 'family secret', perhaps some long ago buried shanda.

Betty's husband Jack died in 1969, and that was the last time we saw the family, because the oldest daughter, Paula, lived in Toledo and the two other daughters, Helene and Joan, moved to Calif.

In 1980 when I became interested in family lines, I tried to contact Paula, but the number was disconnected and there was no one by her name in the Toledo area. I tried all the large Ohio cities to no avail. I even tried LA for the remaining sisters but was unsuccessful.

Then in 1993 I bought a computer and joined one of the BBSs and subscribed to JewishGen. I kept posting a message looking for the long-lost Paula.

Lo and behold! last June someone in Alaska saw my message, and e-mailed me that Paula was a good friend of her mother and father, but that she had passed away in 1977. I called her mother who eventually got me to Betty's husband, now remarried and living in Michigan, and the phone numbers of the other two long-lost sisters in Encino, Calif.

From them I got the whole story of who Aunt Betty really was. She was my father-in-law's first cousin who was raised by his mother, because Betty's mother had abandoned her at birth.

This was my first knowledge that my father-in-law had a brother. Now we have all of these pictures to identify. CAN YOU HELP US? DO YOU RECOGNIZE ANY OF THESE PHOTOS?
ROOTS TO ROOTS IN MOLDOVA (formerly Bessarabia) by Miriam Weiner

The changing boundaries of Eastern Europe not only keep the map makers working overtime, but also make it difficult for many of us to identify the current name of our ancestors' country of origin.

If your family came from the area once known as Bessarabia, you would look for "Moldova" on the current maps, located between Ukraine and Romania.

My first visit to Moldova in early 1992 began with a train ride from Kiev to Kishinev, a grueling 16-hour trip with stops at numerous cities and villages along the way. By comparison, the trip by car between the two cities is only ten hours depending upon the time necessary to cross the border.

Since that first visit, I have returned to Moldova six times and have spent most of the time working in the Moldova National Archives and visiting towns throughout the country: Orgayev, Soroki, Belti, Ataki/Atachi, Yedintsy, Khotin, Bendery, Kalar ash, Teleneshty, Lipkany and Faleshty.

Although I have worked extensively in archives throughout Poland and Ukraine, I can honestly say that the cooperation and general attitude of the archival personnel in Kishinev is unequalled in my experience. Beginning with the director of the archives, Dr. Mitru M. Ghitiu, he and his entire staff have shown great enthusiasm in showing me the vast material they have about the Jews in Bessarabia.

What complicates this research is not knowing where all the material could be. My first request was for an inventory of Jewish documents from Bessarabia which are now in the St. Petersburg archives.

My great-grandmother, Bela Rovinsky, came from Faleshty, a town in Central Moldova. How and why she later migrated to Sudikov, hundreds of miles north in Ukraine is a mystery to this day. In researching the Faleshty Jewish documents in the Kishinev archives, I found the marriage record of her parents, Edis Lesh and Josef Zelig Rovinsky.

Research in the Moldova archives required knowledge of Russian and Romanian or a multi-talented interpreter. For example, pre-1918 documents are in Russian; documents from the period 1918-1944 are in Romanian; after 1930, there were no separate Jewish registrations. Some of the types of documents to be found include:

- Registration of birth, death, marriage and divorce
- Census lists of Jewish community (includes several generations of one family with their ages)
- Immigration applications (with much data and sometimes a photo)
- List of students in Jewish schools
- List of Jews eligible for Army
- List of Jews in Orgayev ghetto
- Passport applications
- Extensive documentation from 1903 Kishinev pogrom
- Holocaust documents

It is seldom that I find an alphabetical index to names, but this archive has many name index books and in some cases they only have the index and not the documents themselves. For example, I have had much success working with an alphabetical index of births for the period 1829-1857 (Kishinev). Frequently, the indexes cover all of Bessarabia and are many hundreds of pages.

Because Jews were not permitted (officially) to live in towns within 50 kilometers of the border, they registered births, marriages and deaths in an "official" town elsewhere, perhaps where they had relatives. Therefore, in researching one particular family from Arachi, I found registrations for this family in Lipkany and also in Betsy. This registration system tends to sharpen one's detective skills.

As is true throughout the former Soviet Union, the archives staff is overworked and hampered by the lack of computers, few finding aids and the modern office equipment and office supplies we take for granted. Only one woman in the archives knows a few words of English. While they receive many requests from all over the world for research by mail, at this time it is not possible to comply because there is no reliable system for the transfer of money and also it is difficult for the staff because of language and the many days necessary to complete the research. Credit cards and checks are not household words in this country. According to absolutely everyone, sending cash through the postal system is a guaranteed "present" for some postal workers along the route.

The research process itself is tedious, lengthy and tiresome at times. However, the exhilaration of finding what you want and seeing the names and signatures of your ancestors is a reward that knows of no boundaries to the family historian.

If you plan to visit Kishinev and want to work the archives, Dr. Ghitiu and his staff are ready to welcome you and help in any way you can.

Miriam Weiner, a member of ROM-SIG, is a professional genealogist, an author and lecturer specializing in Jewish genealogy and Holocaust research. For information on tracing roots in Moldova/Bessarabia, send a self-addressed stamped envelope with the name of your ancestral town to Miriam Weiner, 136 Sandpiper Key, Secaucus, NJ 07094.
Family Stories

SCHECTER (ZISKIND) - ELIESCU (ELLISON)
My mother's family came from Iasi. Here is all the information I have been able to accumulate to date (unfortunately, I am a member of the oldest generation of our family and there are very few to turn to:

Great grandfather, Moshe Alter SCHECHTER (Aharon ZISKIND), died c.1892, was an innkeeper in Iasi. I know nothing about his wife.

Children: Solomon Schechter is reported to have left his wife and six children and came to U.S. They were unable to trace him once the family came here.

Celia Schechter (my grandmother), b. 6 Sept. 1855-58. She was married at age 14, bore three children (one boy who died and two girls, Sophie and Janette), became a widow when she was 19, married Samuel Eliescu (name changed to Ellison when they emigrated to England around 1898-99. While in Romania she had four daughters: Fann, Betty, Lee and Tonette. My mother, Ann, was born in Manchester in 1900.

Samuel ELESCU (ELLISON) was an innkeeper in Iasi and had orchards. His first wife, Annette, bore four sons and one daughter, all of whom, I believe, were born in Iasi. They are Simon, Louis, Ellis, Lazarus and Golda.

I have information on the children of Samuel and Annette and the children of Samuel and Celia. I am looking for information on the wife of Moshe Alter Schechter, their parents and siblings, and on Sophie and Jeannette.

Judith G. Lichtig, 31899 Gates Mills Blvd. Pepper Pike, OH 44124

GELBER/GILBERT
My family's name was changed! Allegedly it was Ghelber or Gherber or Garber. My gr.grandfather's name was Morris Gelber in New York. His father was Daniel. The exact last name is still unknown.

My gr.gr grandmother was Ethel. Daniel and Ethel died from smoke inhalation when their home burned down. They got their six children out. Moritz/"Moshe"/Morris came from Focsani. He was born about 1886-87. His two older brothers, Nissim and Velvel never left Romania. They were religious, had families and wrote some letters to the U.S. and Canada in the 1920s-30s. Morris' younger brother, Chaim "Hyman" Gilbert, settled in Montreal about 1914.

Morris and Hyman entered through Halifax, N.S., first. Morris' sister Rachel married Albert Morgolese in Romania. Hyman was born in Roman, Romania, and married "Tilly" Schwartz from Lestetz. Morris' sister, Anna "Satca" married Israel Spizack. She also settled in Montreal.

Morris died in 1941 in New York City. Hyman was a cantor and died in 1954 in Canada. Morris was a harness maker in Romania. It is believed he hitched a ride to Hamburg where he sailed to Nova Scotia. Rachel was probably the first family member in Canada. It is not known where Daniel and Ethel are buried but my major clue is that they were probably buried the same day, not too far from Focsani.

Terry Gelber, 7753 Caminito Bonanza #7-102, Carlsbad, CA 92009

MOSCOVICI
Despite the translator's description of the following letter as a rough copy replete with gaps due to the poor quality of the copy, it is a primary source of the life and the thinking of a Jewish farmer, who leased his land (Jews were not permitted to own land.)

Perhaps a reader might pinpoint the location of the farm, "Laciniti" or "Laeniniti". Perhaps, too, someone might explain what Soshnitz means.

A new genealogical problem has arisen from the allusion to an uncle in America. The brother of the writer of the letter, Eli Zeff, and his sons were the first Moscovici's to come to America. But no one knows about an uncle!

In 1967 in Israel, two weeks after the war I met Perla, the widow of a young soldier mentioned in the letter. He died in Romania but I've yet to learn what happened to him.

Perla Moscovici, her daughter, Misca Rabinowitz, and her husband, were hosts at the wedding of Shoshanna Rabinowitz Shild. The entire town of neighbors formerly from Romania, 750 people now living in Israel, were invited. I was invited and picked up by a cousin in his truck. It was a thrill to meet all the relatives I only knew from research.

The next morning I returned to America.

June Moscovitz

Laciniti (or Laeniniti)
November 18, 1907

Dear Nephew & Niece Yosef Moscovich,

I am informing you that I received the package, francs, postcard with great joy! I wish you that your daughter should ___ with great mazel, with your wife, together with your whole family ___ may you all be healthy always.

I had asked your Uncle Yankel to write about the fields, what they are like around you in America. Whether they are like the ones we have in Rumania. Or if they are worse. A new genealogical problem has arisen from the allusion to an uncle in America. Whether they are like the ones we have in Rumania. Or if they are worse. And how the work is done there and whether they give (clean produce) the kind of grain we get here. And how much an (acre) costs by you. It can be far from New York, even 50 or 60 miles away, but it should be near a stream. And there should be someone to do the work with. It doesn't matter how dear the cost of the work is. Because by us in Rumania, there is no longer any hope to ___ __. We sit with our souls in our hands in the villages. Only now did the government pass laws and only about Jews.

I hope to run 2 years with Soshnitz. I pray to G-d I should be able to get through it with grace.

Tell us what you know about your family.
Send to ROM-SIG, P.O. Box 520583, Longwood, FL 32752

June Moscovitz
Family Stories
Continued from the previous page

Perhaps I will be able to come to America if I could buy 100 acres of my own field. And it should be set up and organized, even if costs 25 to 30 thousand francs. Before I have to marry off my children (before I have to find a match). I would leave Rumania and come to America.

(Then follows family news and greetings.)

My nephew, Yosef, I ask you to write me whether your father has an occupation and whether he is no longer as nervous as he used to be. And whether Yankel has mastered the English language and if he is already saving money. And how was the grain harvest this year by you? By us they are saying that in America this year there is a great famine.

By us this year, everything went up and costs twice as much. By us the field in many places are very__. I ask you once again to send information about fields. If I were not occupied now with Soshnitz I would take a trip to America even if it cost me a thousand, eleven or twelve hundred francs to see if I have what to make it in America, if one can do just as well in Rumania, or even better.

Remain in good health, from me, your uncle, who send you many greetings, with your wife and whole family.

Benyomin Moscovici

SCHOENBERG

My eldest son, David, just returned from an Atlanta Jewish Federation trip to Israel. Before he left, I briefed him on some of the research I was doing and told him about Pardes Hanna, Israel, where there is a community of Jews, many of whom once lived in Telenesht (my home shtetl, now in Moldova).

Not only did he bring back a 345-page book (I guess you could call it a Yizkor Book, although I had already had what I believe is also a 127-page Yizkor book for Telenesht), but he also brought back some photos of the monument in Pardes Hanna dedicated in 1985 to those of Telenesht who died in the Holocaust. The monument is "surrounded" by a memorial wall containing stones with the names of the honored deceased.

The interesting thing is that I happened to be leaving a couple of days later for Cincinnati to visit another son and his family. Having noticed that the Youkis family of Cincinnati had donated the monument, I decided to call them when I was up there.

I did call and it has lead to some very interesting conversations with members of that family. I have already told them about ROM-SIG NEWS and given them some clues on tracing members of their family.

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SIGN IN A BUCHAREST HOTEL LOBBY:
"The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable."
---Submitted by Philip J. Leonard