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RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR JEWISH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN ARAD

Abstract: In Judaism, the study is a religious duty, because the pious Jew's life is governed by the requirements of the Torah. Therefore, Judaism is a religion of the book, of the study of the Scriptures. This explains the organization of a Hebrew educational system at all levels, in all times and in all the places inhabited by Jews, as one of the major concerns of any community, illiteracy being almost unknown. The same happened in the Jewish community in Arad, one of the representative communities of Transylvania where, in time, there were various Jewish educational institutions, both religious and secular: elementary school, high school, Torah Talmud or yeshiva.

Keywords: Judaism, religious education, secular education, Talmud Torah, Yeshiva.

1. Studying the Scriptures as an expression of God's will

The Hebrew people are a people for whom the study is and was a primary occupation, with religious and secular connotations. Without spirituality, without an effort to study and know the word of God, we can not talk about a Jewish identity. Therefore, “studying appears naturally as an essential condition for the survival of Judaism and the Jewish people and it has always been so” (Sirat, Lemalet, 2003, 29). Law revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai had to be known, taught and studied day and night and had to be celebrated in worship. Transmitting the Torah – the Talmudic sages say - it's like being at the foot of Mount Sinai again (Eisenberg, 1995, 127).

Judaism is the religion in which worship and study go together, they even shared the same houses, because in many cases the synagogues were houses of study (*bet midrash*).

If the first name of the synagogue is „Beit-Haknesset”, which means „the house of the community”, the second name is „Beit-Hamidrash”, that is „the house of study”, its main function being the place where Tora is read (Rosen, 1992, 5-6). In this regard, the Talmud states that 'the place where the teaching is, there should be the prayer, too' (*Talmud Bavli*, Tractatul Berahot, f. 6), imposing the conclusion that teaching is a priority to prayer, paving the way for prayer. From here we deduce the importance enjoyed by the study of the Scriptures in Judaism, and by sciences in general. The fact that only a very limited number of Jews did not know how to read and write, illiteracy rates being, therefore, very low at all times, is a significant fact. And the same Talmud stated that there was an inquiry from Dan (the northern tip of the Jews) and to Beersheba (southern extremity of the Jews) and they found that there is no child, boy or girl, over three years that can not read or explain the

comments and the purity laws. Obviously, the children of three years could not write, but everyone was able to read, which is unique in a religious tradition in the world today. The conclusion that René-Samuel Sirat, former Chief Rabbi of France, stated was that "we can say that the desire to eliminate illiteracy was established for the Jewish people over twenty eight centuries ago" (Sirat, Lemalet, 2003, 30). René-Samuel Sirat referred to king Ezechia who, in the 8th century B.C., decided to answer to the power of the sword of the Senaherib, the superpower of that time, through the development and generalization of an education based on the Torah.

The education of children is not a simple expression of family responsibilities, but one of the requirements of the Jewish law. In Deuteronomy, God shows that the transmission and acquisition of His Commandments by young people should stay permanently in the attention of parents: "The words that I say to you today shall be in your heart and in your soul; you shall plant them in your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6: 6-7). There are other Old Testament prescriptions concerning the priority that the Jewish communities had in educating their children. The book of Proverbs states the importance of education as follows: "Train a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22: 6). And also Solomon shows that "A wise son hears his father's teaching, and the mocking nor rebuke" (Proverbs 13: 1).

Mishnah indicates the age that is favorable for the study: "Five years is the age at which to study the Bible, ten years for the study of the Mishnah; at thirteen, the child is obliged to observe the commandments and fifteen years is the time to start studying the Talmud" (Cohn-Sherbok, 2000, 163).

While initially, education was mainly religious, in time, they began to distinguish between secular and religious education. Thus, in the late seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century there is a shift in the mentality of the Jews of Europe, from the test of compliance with the modernist trends of the societies in which they lived. It is the opening period, the output from the self-imposed ghetto, the Jews modernizing of the social landscape (Rotman, 2000, 174). Not even the Jewish education could ignore these social realities that transformed the entire communities. It is the period in which traditional education is left by more and more young Jews for secular education systems; Jews learn to read and write in Gothic, giving up the Hebrew characters, in order to be able to draw the best acts of sale. On the other hand, parents send their children to work before accomplishing their Jewish education, fact which caused serious damages to the Talmudic studies. During this period it was lamented that the "Offspring of the Jewish families (even the girls!) learned French, Italian and German, even dance, but could not find an hour for the learning of Mishnah and Gemariah. And he also added: (Eibeschutz notes) you can not pray without understanding what you read. And teaching children should not be entrusted to the incapable and to the incompetent..." (Hayoun, 1999, 14).

In this context, in which the Jews of Europe try to integrate more and more in the societies in which they lived, the Romanian Hebrew education in general (Rotman, 1999), and that of Arad, in particular, may also be included.

2. Jewish educational institutions

In this chapter we will refer to both contemporary educational institutions, as well as to the traditional ones, with a considerable attention to show how the education of a Jewish believer was and is achieved.

2.1. Primary and secondary education

Nowadays, children begin their Jewish religious education in primary schools, the curriculum including religious and secular knowledge. In such schools, starting at the age of seven, children learn Jewish language and the language of the country they are living in. Torah knowledge is a priority when the child starts the study of the sacred books, sweets being often placed between the pages of the book, to encourage the study of Torah and to see that its study is sweet and pleasant (Cohn-Sherbok, 2000, 163). From a very young age, whole passages from the Bible are studied and memorized, but the study also extends to an understanding of Jewish life. The focus is on the Jewish studies, although children (boys and girls) are trained in subjects of a secular nature (Cohn-Sherbok, 2000, 164).

Even in the Jewish education one can notice the presence of secularization, in that, fewer children in the diaspora undergo the religious education, and the percentage of those who attend secular education system is steadily increasing. For these children, the synagogues organize a system of additional Jewish studies, or Sunday after classes, but it is often perceived as secondary, the emphasis being on the secular education. And even if some attend the Jewish education as a secondary system, most of them complete their study of Judaism at this age, coinciding with the celebration of *bar* or *bar mitzva*, agreeing on the knowledge of some precepts of the faith of their ancestors. This reality creates the premises of increasing secularization in the Jewish communities outside Israel.

At the age of fourteen, Jewish children go from elementary to secondary educational system. There, students turn their attention to the study of Mishnah, Talmud and the ethics (*Musar*). Starting from the lowest possible period in the teachings of Judaism, aims to provide a thorough preparation for the child's life and subsequent completion of studies. This stage lacked in the girls' education, at least until the early twentieth century, girls being instructed at home regarding the household problems and preparing for the foundation of a family (Cohn-Sherbok, 2000, 165). Nowadays, the US educational system has secondary schools where girls are admitted, such as the one called Beth Jacob, which provides Jewish and secular education for four years (between fourteen and eighteen), but the subjects that the girls study are different from those of the boys because the ultra-Orthodox Jews do not encourage the study of the Talmud by women.

2.2. Beth midrash ("house of study")

Beth midrash is a center of religious education which usually belongs to a synagogue or a synagogue complex. As an expression of the importance they attach to Judaism instruction and education of believers, *Beth midrash* was the main place of study of classic Talmudic texts and commentaries, sometimes being a place of prayer of those who attended it. Torah study is given a special attention in Judaism, so the place where the Torah is studied is considered even more sacred than the synagogue itself. It is therefore permitted the sale of a synagogue

in order to purchase or build a *bet midrash* (Wigoder, 2006, 99-100). However, the place of study is inside the synagogue building, coinciding with it.

Jewish tradition says that the first *bet midrash* served Shem, son of Noah, and his grandson Eber. *The Midrash* lists several biblical characters who established one *bet midrash* or studied in such a place (Wigoder, 2006, 100). In antiquity are mentioned several houses of study, among which may be mentioned the study house of Shammai and Avtalion, wisemen from the first century BC., and of Hillel, one of the wisest men of the nation. In the Middle Ages and in later periods there was one *bet midrash* in every city, being run by the community, where Talmud was studied by men. Even those who are not ready to become rabbis and worked elsewhere, found a daily moment before or after work, to come to study here.

Nowadays, such places of Jewish education communities have ceased to exist, and only some synagogues have one *bet midrash*. Each *yeshiva* also has one *bet midrash*, that special place of study, and the men of the community attend it.

2.3. Yeshiva

Yeshiva (pl. *yeshivot*) is an academy dedicated to the study of the Talmud and sacred texts. Such academies existed in the Holy Land and in Babylon since the first century. BC. In the first century, following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, Johanan ben Zakai founded an academy in Yavne, which soon became famous. In Babylon, since the third century academies were established at Sura and Pumbedita, which attracted many young people.

In modern times (19th century), throughout Eastern Europe there were several academies, including the most popular, those of Telshe, Ponovezh, Slobodka, and the Hasidic ones at Liubavici and Lubin, all of which were destroyed by the Nazis. After the war new academies were created in Israel, the United States and Europe. Currently, these Talmudic academies have many students, as more Jewish families have the opportunity to send their children to school (Cohn-Sherbok, 2000, 170).

In *yeshivot* the method is working in pairs of two students, who discuss the meaning of certain sacred texts in the Yiddish. Twice a week, the rector lectures on the portion of the Talmud which is then studied, and a teacher teaches Jewish morality (*Musar*). The duration of the study is four years, graduates are able to embrace a career as a rabbi, but many choose to follow secular professions.

3. Jewish Education in Arad

The first two Jewish families settled in Arad, in western Romania, in the early eighteenth century, precisely in 1717, after which their number grew constantly. Gradually, specific Jewish institutions appeared in the town on the Mureș river. The first institution of this kind was Chevra Kadisha (1729), which dealt not only with Jewish funeral and cemetery administration, but, if possible, ensured health care for the Jews of Arad. Interesting to note is that Chevra Kadisha preceded the community itself, i.e. the Jewish organization from Arad, its General Assembly representing the forum that took decisions for all members. Much later appeared the first circle of religious studies (1785) (*The History of the Jewish People of Arad*, 1996, 33). In the nineteenth century, there will appear the problem of building a synagogue, but just like in other cases, the school building prevailed, so that the school was built before the synagogue.

In 1828, after lengthy delays, the foundation stone for the building of the synagogue was laid, and in 1834 its construction was completed, being declared as the property of the Austrian Emperor Francis (see **Appendix, Photo 1**). Nowadays, the building which houses the offices of the Jewish community of Arad also functions as a Neolog synagogue, the Orthodox synagogue are not being used by the community. (see **Appendix, Photo 2**). At that time, Chief Rabbi of Arad was famous Aaron Chorin (1766-1844), the reformer rabbi (Mehr, 2000, 31-32). Among the institutions that the Jews founded in Arad, in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, due to the donations of the wealthy, we can mention: the orphanage for girls, the house for orphan boys, the nursing home, the charity home, the popular canteen, the Jewish hospital, help associations and the elementary school.

Regarding education, the first part of the twentieth century, especially in Bucharest, in the south of Moldova, Banat and Dobrogea there existed "Israelite-Romanian" schools, primary and secondary schools, which taught religion classes 2-4 weekly, in Jewish, but not Jewish language and Jewish history concepts. The schools were of the assimilation type. In the Orthodox Hebrew environments in Transylvania, in Arad, Cluj, Satu-Mare, Baia Mare and Oradea, there were numerous yeshivot schools where thousands of young people have continued their education and continued to live a Jewish life between the two wars (Rosen, 1991, 128).

3.1. Elementary School

In Arad, the elementary school was established in 1832, the school building being on Piața Lupei, no. 2, being raised due to the donations of Juliana Dobler, the Baron Adolf Neumann and Jacob Hirschl (*The History of the Jewish People of Arad*, 47). Nowadays, the building belongs to School no. 2 (see **Appendix, Photo 3**). From 1835 there were two mixed classes of pupils, in 1854 the level of education was extended to seven years, and in 1855 they founded a school for girls, a model school for that time in Arad. To the same period dates the Jewish vocational school (1851) with 12 trades, converted in 1872 into a state school, with German as teaching language, with two classes of 35 students (Miksa, 1896, 4, 30). The school initially functioned with 12 teachers. The issue of school funding was covered 85% by the community of Western Rite, by the Baron Adolf Neumann or by the Orthodox community contribution, so only one third of the students had to pay tuition fees. In terms of teaching, the teachers were of value, and the education program constituted a model for other schools in Transylvania. After 1918, with the changes brought by the annexation of Transylvania to the mother country, the teaching language became Romanian.

Even if the school activity in the twentieth century was under the leadership of the Western Rite community, the children from the Orthodox Hebrew families have not suffered because the two religious communities in Arad had a good collaboration. At the basis of their excellent collaboration was the assumption that the Community institutions equally included candidates from both religious communities.

The Jewish schools of Arad represented a true model for the schools in the communities in Transylvania, both through their organization and the curricula they had. Even if there were financial problems in the Jewish community, given the unfavorable times, salaries and pensions of teachers have not suffered. This is due to the importance that the training of young people enjoyed in the Jewish community. For example, in the school almanac published

in 1932, 100 years after its foundation, we find that in fiscal year 1931-1932, the community of Western Rite which was larger, covered 85% of the total, the rest being covered by the Orthodox community. Baron Adolf Neumann contributed with large amounts to the education of youth. This unity carried out around the school provided scholarships, and provided free meals for about 60% of pupils and other facilities in the form of clothing and footwear (*Almanach of Jewish School of Arad, 1932*).

After 1918, with the annexation of Transylvania to the mother country, Romania, the question of the language of instruction arose. At that time there were still not enough teachers to teach in Romanian or in Jewish, as the new regulations claimed. Therefore, "the curators of the school and the community leadership of Western Rite agreed on the introduction of the Romanian language from 1922" (*The History of Jewish people of Arad, 47*). Jewish elementary school gained fame due, mostly, to the teachers who taught here, among whom we can mention: Shreinka Lazarus (the first director of the school), Leo Jeitelesz, Back Ignatius Kanitzer Lazar, Fuchsel Carolina, Steiner Rozalia, Ottenberg Wilhelm, Pfefferkorn Abraham, Seidner (Szilagyi) Albert, Leopold Grünwald, Neumann Armin and Schütz Wilhelm (*Almanach of Jewish School of Arad, 1932*). In the twentieth century the teachers were: Eckstein Mor Mor Lefkovitcs, Schreiber Ileana (the directory of the girls'school), Groszman Desiderius (headmaster of the boys' school for over 10 years until 1936 and president of the Union of Hebrew Teachers of Transylvania and Banat), Kronowith Mor (headmaster of the boys' school in 1936), but we can also mention the teachers: Irina Kornai, Weisz Fanny, Foldes Anna Margaret Kaufman, Luger Nicole Szántó Serena, Szántai Louis, Szöllösi Hedda, Sebok Daniel and many others. We must mention Rabbi Avram Löwenkopf, former rabbi of the community in Orșova, good scholar of Jewish and Jewish teaching that began his activity during the last years of the school.

If soon after 1918 in several Transylvanian cities with significant Jewish population, such as: Timișoara, Oradea, Cluj Jewish schools were established, in Arad a similar initiative started in 1941, due to certain historical circumstances. In the few months (September 1940 - January 1941) the legionary Antonescu period several measures were taken against the Jewish population of Romania. Among them, we mention some aimed at education, only one month after the *numerus clausus* had been applied, which meant that only 6% of the Jewish children and young people had access to public education at all levels, *numerus nulus* was adopted which meant that all Jewish children were to be removed from the state education system.

3.2. The Jewish High School (1941-1945)

In 1941 a Jewish high school was founded in Arad, in the harsh conditions during the Second World War, while other communities nearby (Timișoara, Oradea, Cluj) have had such institutions for some time (*History of Jewish people of Arad, 47*). By harsh conditions we mean excluding Jewish students from all state schools, which required special measures. In this situation, the care of the Jewish community in Arad was to ensure the education of youth. Therefore, some of the students studied Hebrew at home with teachers from the former state school, among which we mention: Tauszk Ana, Raab Agneta, Rosenfeld Maximilian, Berkovitz Ivan, others in the ABC private school, led by Professor Katz Sigismund, and at the end of the school year, all went to Timisoara to give their exams in Jewish High School. The equipment absolutely necessary to establish The Jewish High School in Arad was made possible by the donation of one million lei, made by industrialist Dan Oszkar, the amount being received from

the manufacturer Stein Ármin for the success of a transaction (*Az aradi zsidó Liceum alapításának 50-ik évfordulójára, 1991*).

The school was opened on 21st November 1941 functioning as a high school for boys in the building on Seminar Street (See **Appendix, Photo 4**), and later appearing the high school for girls. The Director of the High School for Boys was Chief Rabbi Nicolae Schönfeld, and as director of high school for girls was elected Mrs. Eva Balkany.

It is interesting to speak about the subjects and teachers who taught at this school, among whom we mention: dr. Nicholas Schönfeld and Emil Kahan (Hebrew language, religion and History of the Jewish people), Sigismund Katz, who closed the private school ABC (Latin and Philosophy), Eva Balkany (Romanian and French), Agneta Raab (French and English), Tiberiu Rosman (Mathematics), dr. Lorant Deutsch (Law), dr. Achilles Fälticeneanu and dr. Ladislaus Haber (Anatomy and hygiene), Alexander Amigo (French and Latin), dr. Ella Schlosser (German and French), Vasile Kardos (French), Martin Nacht, Edit Kardos and Moses Malva (Romanian), Heini Teller (Mathematics and Physics), dr. Joan Kalmár (Law), Nacht Libertine Haimovici (Natural Sciences), Jacob Léb and Stephen Löb (Natural Sciences), Joseph Téthi (Geography and History), Viorica Szmuk (History), Eugen Czeisler and Gisela Lebovics (Physics and Chemistry), Emerich Stökl (Chemistry) Cecilia Merlaub and Joan Spitz (Drawing), Ștefan Schön (Mathematics), Ignatius Goldziher and Tiberiu Epstein (Music), Rodica Novac (German, French), Florian Egon (Physics), Berti Rothschild (Mathematics) (*History of Jewish people of Arad, 106*).

A first difficult period that the Jewish high school education in Arad had to face was determined by the requisition of the school building in the spring of 1942, on which occasion they rented the first floor of a building on the boulevard (the present headquarters of PNL - see **Appendix, Photo 5**), where the high school for girls will function, too.

The curators were Eugen Tauszk (chairman), Aladár Lakatos, dr. Eugene Gabos, dr. Joseph Újhelyi, Dr. Joan Rado, Dan Oszkar, dr. Francis Deutsch and Charles Kabos. They also had the support from the executives of several prestigious high schools in the city, such as school inspector dr. Giurchescu Nicholae and directors Ascaniu Crișan (Moise Nicoară) Bucurescu Florica (Elena Ghiba Birta) and Vasile Suci (Business School). The smooth running of the educational process meant a quality educational process, and compliance with state school curriculum, which were contributed to by the teachers from other schools in Arad, such as Mihai Păun, Joan Niciu and Eduard Găvănescu, although they were part of the teachers of Moise Nioară of Arad, they were active in the Jewish High School. The end of year exams and the baccalaureate were recognized and certified by the state after August 23rd, 1944 (*The History of Jewish people of Arad, 107*).

In the school year 1944-1945 there began to manifest two opposite trends; one supported by the Zionist movement, which wanted the continuation of high school and another of the community members of the Western Rite and the curator, who felt that, because of the high costs, the school activity should cease. Interesting to note is that the daily newspaper, *Patriotul* in its issue of 1st November 1944 published both the calling of the initiative committee for school maintenance and the notice announcing that they could not provide the material basis for reopening the school. The newspaper appears on the 24th September 1944, with a subtitle "Organ of Antifascist Fight". It had an editorial board lead by Petre Bele. It continued to appear till 2nd August 1949, when it changed its name, from "The Patriot" to "The Red

Flame”. The newspaper had a subtitle”Organ of the County Committee of the Romanian Labour Party and of the Temporary County and City Committee” In a compromise, the school remained another year, i.e. until 1945, in a more restricted form, only the first four classes, both girls and boys. There was elected a new curator board that included two members of the Zionist trend in the community of Western Rite (dr. Kalmár Joan and dr. Deutsch Francis) and two members of the Orthodox community leadership (Ladislaus Haber and Stephen Krausz). In 1945 the high school closed its doors permanently, the Community of Western Rite claiming lack of funds to ensure adequate materials (*The History of Jewish people of Arad*, 107).

Even if it had a short life, the memory of the Jewish school in Arad marked the collective memory of the community in this city so far, people still remembering with nostalgia the existence of this educational institution.

3.3. The Jewish religious education in Arad, Talmud Torah

Jewish religious education existed in Arad. After the outbreak of the First World War, several Jewish Polish families settled in Arad, and became part of the Orthodox community here, which was one of the most prestigious communities in Transylvania. These families, including some Hasidic ones, such as Stauber, Feldmann, Ganz, Fisch families organized their own minyan, and they built a house of prayer and worked to establish a Torah Talmud, because until then, they had only melameds (private teachers). The melameds Joseph Schapira or Hermann Lebovitz taught alef-Beith in their own homes (*The History of Jewish people of Arad*, 86).

Setting up a Talmud Torah in the fourth decade of the twentieth century, under the authority of the Jewish community meant the increase of the quality of this form of education, the melameds being, in this case, the employees. In this way ” free tuition could be ensured for students without financial means. The first postwar melamed employee was Rabbi Friedmann a refugee in Arad... The first Gabbai was Moshe Kremer and his successor Salomon Wurzel” (*The History of Jewish people of Arad*, 86). In time, Talmud Torah increased and reached to form five classes. Among the prominent teachers of this school we would name: Schmajovits, Fischer, Menczer, Stern, Steiner, Mozes, Schieber, Klein, Weinberger, Haberfeld, Gottlieb etc. The community leadership decided to send Professor Jakob Steiner to London, as he was an English speaker, to collect funds to financially help the community and to facilitate the completion of the building of the synagogue, action that ended in a tremendous success.

Related to the Talmud Torah from Arad there is a beautiful story of Chief Rabbi Dr. Moses Rosen of Romania, described in his book of memories entitled *Dangers, Trials, Miracles*, inspired when he was sent to inspect this form of Jewish education in the West of the country, September 1948, two and a half months after his election as Chief Rabbi. The context was marked by the struggle of the Chief Rabbi and the Democratic Jewish Committee (DJC's) of Communist orientation for Jewish religious education, DJC wanting the abolition of all classes of Talmud Torah. Because Moses Rosen's confession is an illustrative one for the period of the coming of communism on the one hand and the post-Holocaust trauma of the Jewish community, on the other hand, with its tragic and comic situations, I will allow to render it entirely, despite its length. «The conflict became more acute every day. I decided to resign and at the same time, to make a gesture to mean a public demonstration for the help of the Talmud Torah: I went to Arad, with the sole purpose, to inspect the Talmud-Torah courses. At that time, apart from the Neologs (the reformed Jews), who lived in this city in the western

Romania, there were thousands Hasidim Rabbi from Satu-Mare (today we meet them at Bnei Brak or Mea Shearim). They still did not know me. To them I was the "Red Rabbi", who was recently elected with the support of the Romanian Communist government. Therefore, they were "prepared" for a *sui generis* welcome. When we entered the great hall, there were about 200 children with side curls. The teachers were wearing the traditional black velvet hats. A Yeshiva in the purest sense. In the midst of it, two red flags were waving, over which hung a... huge Stalin. Of course... the decoration of the room was strange and funny. The melamed, however, soon began... the "examination" which sounded something like this (in Yiddish): "Children, who is our father?" "Stalin, Stalin," replied the chorus, "Children, who are our friends?" - continues the teacher to ask. "The Great Soviet Union" - came immediately, a collective response. "And who were our enemies?" - Asked the melamed. "Anglo-American imperialists" - sound the students. Everything was fine. I did not dare to interrupt this childish game of big men. When the performance ended, I wanted to start an examination, to see how they are in reality. I asked, therefore, a child of 5-6 years if he had already learned a pericope of the week, telling me its name. I invited him to translate my first verses and he began after the classical method of Heider, in which each word was translated into Hebrew Yiddish text. "Ki Teitzei" "if you start" the child began "to fight" continuing "against your enemies". Here I interrupted him and asked him: "Who are your enemies?" "Ale goim - all Gentiles" replied the child. This response is a terrible tragedy; it is the time in which it was given. It was only three years after the Holocaust, years in which the whole world was silent, without moving a finger. Let's hope the time will come when we can forget the child's tragic response» (Rosen, 1991, 134-135) - M. Rosen ends his story from the Talmud Torah experience in Arad.

From this story we realize the influence that the Jewish religious education had in a city like Arad: the number of children attending courses - "200 children with side curls"; the study place that could accommodate all these children; the knowledge acquired: a 5-6 year old child knew the Scripture pericope of the week and could interpret it using the "classic method of Heider"; about the proper preparation of the Melamed, skillful in the study of the scriptures, but also in coping with situations that involved survival in a totalitarian regime that had just set up.

The existence of the Talmud Torah, i.e. a type of religious education in a communist atheist state, which suppressed the denominational schools of the large Christian denominations, including the theological academies, as that of Arad, is a miracle. This is the answer that Moses Rosen gives to the question how a Jewish religious education could have survived in Romania during those years (Rosen, 1991, 133). Moreover the existence of the Jewish religious education ensured the religious survival of the Jews in Romania, who, later, founded the first kibbutz sites of the newly founded state of Israel, "tens of thousands of copies of the Talmud-Torah arriving in Lod not in Vienna" - notes Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen (Rosen, 1991, 133). And this is largely due to his efforts, as he himself confesses.

3.4. Yeshiva in Arad

There have been requests for a higher religious education in Arad. At the Congress of the Jewish leaders held in Pest between 14th December 1868 and 23rd February 1869 the delegates of the Arad community, Paul Walfish and Ignatz Deutsch, supported by Rabbi Paul Steinhardt had two aspects: the creation of a representative body able to sustain the Jewish interests and the founding of a central rabbinic school. Without the necessary equipment for the synagogue institutes, the reform could not be achieved.

However, Arad created a yeshiva in the twentieth century. About this higher form of religious education there is little data. It is known, however, that in the third decade of the twentieth century a yeshiva in Arad functioned for a short period, under the Orthodox Rabbi Joachim Schreiber, enjoying great attention from the community.

4. Conclusions

In Judaism we can not conceive the teaching, the instruction and the education separately from the need to study the sacred text, given the role the Torah knowledge has for the Jewish, thus surpassing the instructions for the sake of knowledge and passing into the sphere of religiosity, the gnosiological aspect of the study being replaced by the soteriological one, because the reading of the Scriptures means the opening of heavens - if we were to quote, in this context, the words of St. John Chrysostom. Torah is life for those who study it and he who stops the study of Torah endangers his life - Rabbi Jacob says (Mello, 1997, 107, 198). The very Jewish identity is given by the knowledge of the Torah itself. Hence the natural consequence, the lack almost entirely of illiteracy among the Hebrew communities, the special care for the education of children from infancy, from the age of three years, the genuine concern for the formation of libraries in each settlement, the acquisition of books representing a principal duty for a Jewish community established in a particular place.

The Jewish communities manifest the preoccupation for all forms of education, from primary up to higher education. This was more difficult in diaspora, but not impossible, it is even easier today in Israel, independent since 1948, but also in countries with significant Jewish communities (USA - for example).

The tragedy of the last century of the Jewish communities scattered throughout Europe was to leave the secluding attitude and try to integrate in the societies where they lived. Even if the answer was not an expected one, by assimilation with the majority, followed by longer or shorter periods of purging, completed by the massacres that followed the rise of Nazism. These trends of social integration subsumes both religious reforms which led to Neolog group, majority in Arad and the education system, trying to put the curriculum in line with the specific Jewish Romanian public education or even more, Jewish youth integration in mainstream education. The answer was, at least during the Legionary Antonescu (September 1940-January 1941) *numerus clausus* then transformed into *numerus nulus*. Of course, the Jews didn't have to suffer similar treatment, all the time.

The Jewish Community of Arad had the same concerns for the religious education (yeshiva) and the secular education (the high school), especially because, renowned European rabbis were active at a certain period of time. This goal could only materialize when the community was strong, numbering several thousand members (during the 19th and 20th centuries).

Even if the Jewish education in Arad remained only a concern for the historians, the recovery of the historical past of Arad education presents a specific community image. And, we must not forget that the Jew, so different in culture, traditions and religiosity, was for centuries our neighbour.

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Appendix

The Community Headquarters and the Neolog synagogue

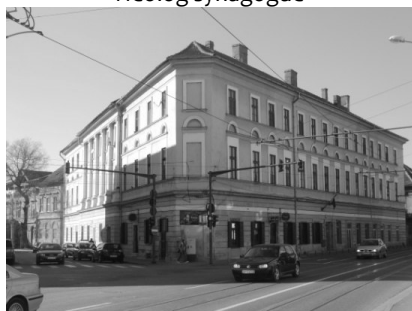


Photo 1

The Orthodox Synagogue



Photo 2

The Elementary Jewish School



Photo 3

The first location of the Jewish High School, Str. Seminarului



Photo 4

The first floor -The Hebrew High School, the building on the boulevard



Photo 5

Biographical note

Caius Claudius Cuțaru was born in 1974 in Arad, Romania. After graduating The Theological Faculty of Arad University in 1997, attended master degree courses at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of Bucharest University, 1997-1998, section "Doctrine and Culture". Between 2000-2002 attended post university studies at the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the Pontifical University "Santa Croce" in Rome. Between 1999-2007 attended courses for a doctor's degree in philosophy at The Faculty of Political Sciences, Philosophy and Communication Sciences of the Timișoara West University. Between 2007-2011 attended courses for a doctor's degree at The Faculty of Orthodox Theology "Dumitru Stăniloae" of the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, in Iași, with the thesis "*Homo Religiosus in the vision of Mircea Eliade*". He published several books and many professional papers in the field of philosophy, history of religions and theology, and took part in several national and international scientific meetings. In 2010 he was ordained deacon.