

Contributions to a History of Jewish Education in Bihor in the interwar period. The Orthodox Israelite Gymnasium in Oradea (1922-1938)

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THE JEWISH community in Bihor has contributed substantially to the development of the economic, social and cultural life in the area. A few characteristics of this community included seriousness, responsibility, practical sense, respect for culture and education. Throughout history, the Jews had to endure being ignored, despised, tormented, but also admired by their neighbours and the authorities of the time.

Knowing the history of the Jews from the city on the Crișul Repede river – beyond its fascinating, human side, both synchronic and diachronic – is essential to understanding the mechanism that triggered the development of this city situated on the country's western border.

As far as the relations of the Jews with the Oradea society are concerned, these were characterised by tolerance and mutual respect. The city was “by definition” an open, multicultural, multiethnic one. Dukta Atos argued that these characteristics were indeed visible in the civil society of the city on the Crișul Repede river: “Oradea accepted everyone; [this city] loved talented people and would not leave these alone.” Szabó Dezső expressed himself in the same manner: “There were here [in the city] all kinds of contradictions, but also solidarity and division, all the sources of the future...because life here was happy and vibrant.”¹

The Jews paid particular attention to education, especially primary education. The increase in the number of Jewish schools in Transylvania was done gradually, especially in the second half of the 19th century, following the agreements signed

between the community and the Austrian-Hungarian authorities.²

After the formation of the dual monarchy in 1867, there was a congress of the Jewish communities in Hungary and Transylvania held in Pesta between 1868 and 1869; this congress adopted a general plan of organising confessional schools in every community, lay education being coordinated by the state elementary schools created in keeping with the new legal regulations.³

On a regional level, the representatives of the Jewish communities in Crişana and Maramureş gathered in Oradea in 1850, where they discussed the issue of the relationship between school and state institutions. Opinions were divided: some were in favour of maintaining traditional education (which meant teaching in Hebrew and Yiddish), while others supported the new legislation (including the use of Hungarian and German in schools).⁴ Even though there were less fortunate periods in the history of Transylvanian Jewish education, these did not critically affect the mentality of the community that considered education, teaching and the teacher to be the very pillars of their existence.⁵

After the creation of the Romania national unitary state, the Jews became the third largest minority in Greater Romania, representing 4.2% of the total population.

As far as the Jewish organisations and associations in the interwar period are concerned, one should mention here the Union of Romanian Jews, formed in 1923, including, besides the Jews in the Old Kingdom, communities from Bessarabia, Transylvania and Bukovina. The first president of the Union was dr. Wilhelm Filderman. Its statute, adopted in 1929, stipulated that the Union of Romanian Jews was primarily concerned with the protection of the individual and collective rights of the Jewish population of Romania, rights included in the state's Constitution and in the international treaties.

The Union paid particular attention to education, asking the state to grant a more substantial support to the Jewish private and confessional schools. The Union, through the Jewish Parliamentary Club, formed in 1928, constantly raised the issue of violating certain rights and liberties of the Jewish community in the Bucharest parliament, in meetings, public and media debates, forcefully condemning a series of antisemitic actions.⁶

The 1923 and 1924 Ordinances issued by the minister of public education, dr. Constantin Angelescu, placed the schools of the minorities outside the immediate concerns of the state. According to these regulations, the Jewish confessional schools could not legally function without an authorisation obtained prior to the historical event of 1918. Their curricula should include a minimal number of subjects also taught in school states. Also, the exams of the subject taught in Romanian had to be held in the same language before a commission appointed by ministerial order and in the students' mother tongue

in the case of subjects taught in Yiddish. The school certificates and diplomas certifying the completion of studies could not be issued by the management of the Jewish schools, and the final exams – taken before an education inspector appointed by the ministry – had to be paid for by the candidates. The immediate consequence of applying these decisions was the disappearance of many primary and secondary school that had been supported by the Jewish communities at great cost.⁷ Consequently, the leaders of the Jewish communities described the Angelescu Law of Education as an involvement of the state in the internal affairs of private and confessional schools organised by the minorities living in Greater Romania.⁸

Beyond these sensitive issues, the interwar Jewish communities managed to support their own network of schools, though tremendous efforts, which were important to the general structure of Romanian education in the period analysed. They transmitted their respect and love for education to the younger generations, who loved school and its spirit; this attitude is proven by the memoirs of a former Oradea student, named Ney András: “We would go there every morning like we were going to our very own fortress.”⁹ In any case, the “Jewish community of Oradea – it was mentioned in a speech presented during a festive event in the history of the Orthodox Israelite Gymnasium – who has a history of more than 260 years, paid proper attention to the education of youth from a very early age and, ready for any sacrifice, strove to serve the cause of culture by establishing well-organised schools...That is why we need to commemorate with piety and gratitude the memory of the distinguished community leaders¹⁰ who worked so long and hard to establish this school.”¹¹

Another proof of the Jews’ interest for education is reflected in the statistics of the time, especially those between 1921 and 1935, which show a very high percentage (7.6%) – compared to other minorities - of Jewish children enrolled in elementary schools who would go on to graduate from higher education.¹²

The Jewish students did not have major difficulties integrating themselves in the Oradea schools. For example, they enjoyed a normal treatment based of respect and collaboration in the Premonstratens High School (a state science school). However, the leaders of the community warned about the fact that the state schools might not meet all the religious demands of the Mosaic cult. This was a reasonable statement, because religion had played a crucial role in this history of the Jews, who, more than any other people, preserved traditions and mentalities that other civilisation had either lost or adopted through the inevitable passage of time.

Consequently, around the year 1678, when the Oradea Orthodox Jewish community was formed, there was some discussion concerning the establishment of their own school, with the declared intention of serving “the cause of culture”.

Following the enlightenment reforms introduced by emperor Joseph II, the community was first able to create a primary school in 1786; however, this was located in a venue inappropriate for educational purposes. This functioned until 1815, when the school teacher passed away. The institution resumed its activities in 1830 and, seven years later, it was moved to a space suitable for education.

During the revolutionary events of 1848-1849, the school stopped its activities, the archival documents showing that, beginning with 1855, it had 8 grades, four for girls and four for boys.

The tensions within the local Jewish community resulted in the transformation of the school in a private school entirely subsidised by the Orthodox Israelite community in 1870. Following the efforts of chief rabbi Maurițiu Fuchs, the primary school was reinstated in 1882. Six years later, a secondary civil school for boys was founded, followed, in 1897, by a similar one for girls. The venue of the boys' school was situated on Mihai Viteazu St. (inaugurated in 1892), while the girls' school was located at no. 2, Cuza Voda St.¹³

After the beginning of World War II, and especially after the Vienna Dictate, the situation of Jewish communities took a visible turn for the worse. The academic year 1943-1944 was not completed, the boys' gymnasium being included in the Oradea ghetto, while the venue of the girls' school was transformed by the Nazis in a carpentry workshop.¹⁴ After October 12, 1945, when Oradea was liberated, efforts were made to resume the activity of the gymnasium. Some of the classes were held together because of the small number of students. A kindergarten also functioned in the same location as the boys' gymnasium beginning with 1945.¹⁵

The declared aim of the two secondary schools was "keeping young people on the path of an honest, moral, modest and hardworking life."¹⁶ The new school was "the only Orthodox Israelite cultural institution in the country."¹⁷

The two buildings of the gymnasium had spacious and well-lit rooms in keeping with the legislative demands of the time, as well as large, accessible corridors and suitable didactic equipment. At the end of each academic year, repair and maintenance works were carried out, while the spaces where the teaching process took place were repainted.¹⁸

During the 1937-1928 academic year, the boys' school had 8 classrooms, a laboratory, a teacher's lunge, a teaching staff meeting hall and an archive for keeping official documents. Modern didactic equipment was bought, such as tools for physics (at a cost of 650 lei), mathematics (650 lei), geography (2400 lei), and music. Romanian historical paintings and portraits of some prominent figures of Romanian literature were also bought for the sum of 3000 lei. The Gymnasium for Girls, located on the second floor of the Cuza Voda St. building, has six classrooms. It also had a physics and chemistry laboratory, equipped with specific tools worth 15000 lei. Geographical maps and other auxiliary didactic

tools were also bought.

Both schools had access to a modern gym with specific equipment worth 30000 lei.¹⁹

During the 1922/1923 academic year, there were 208 students enrolled in the boys' school and 283 students in the girls' school. The number of students enrolled in both schools dropped slightly in the following year, a more notable difference being visible in the boys' school, where there were only 183 students (25 fewer than in the previous year). Generally speaking, this decreasing trend was maintained throughout the interwar period; an increase in the number of enrolments was visible in the academic years 1933/1934, 1934/1935 and 1935/1936.²⁰

The gymnasium did not have a dorm, because the majority of students were either from Oradea or from its neighbouring towns. Those coming from other counties (Severin, Timiș, Storojineț, Arad, Sălaj, Satu Mare Maramureș, Someș, Târnava Mică) lived with various families in Oradea and were checked up on regularly, especially by their form masters.²¹

The majority of students enrolled in the two gymnasiums were Romanian citizens belonging to the Mosaic faith.²²

A ministerial order issued for the academic year 1933-1934 obliged all students to wear uniforms; the Oradea Israelite gymnasium was the first in the country to apply this regulation, which showed that the management of the institution took very the application of school regulations very seriously. At the same time, the students received a mark book recording their academic results, in addition to their student IDs with photo.²³

The teaching staff of the secondary school for boys was made up of 19 teachers during the academic year 1922/1923. In the following year, there were 17 members of the teaching staff. Generally speaking, the number of teaching staff varied between 15 and 20.²⁴

The gymnasium had a numerous and carefully selected teaching staff; the management invested energy and money with the aim of implementing an education process that could keep up with contemporary pedagogical demands: "we always knew that these expenses were the most profitable ones, whose good results will always be felt in the life of Jewish society."²⁵

At the end of each semester, the teaching staff wrote reports to the parents, detailing the students' grades and was actively involved - especially through the activity of the form masters - in evaluating the students' results and in identifying the most efficient means to improve them in close collaboration with the parents. The roles played by family and school in educating the youth were two essential issues discussed during the frequent meetings between teachers and parents. At the same time, the members of the teaching staff took part in professional

conferences organised during the academic year, where they analysed matters concerning the improvement of the education process. For instance, during the academic year 1923/1924, the teaching staff of the secondary schools for boys and girls organised 4 common conferences and 7 separate ones, all coordinated by the headmaster of the boys' school, Marc Biró. These meetings were focused on discussing educational issues, orders of the ministry and the regional inspectorates, the new regulations applied in education, etc.

There were also some periods of system crisis. These were primarily caused by the economic difficulties after the "great war". Problems also occurred during the 1928/1929 academic year, when the two secondary civil schools were transformed into 3-form gymnasiums, the 4th form being a transitional one. This was an ad-hoc adaptation to the new system of education, which upset the previous mechanisms for drafting curricula and organising the structure of academic years. However, the teaching staff, through solidarity and commitment to the values of education, managed to overcome the critical moments of tension so that their "noble calling" – according to an internal document of the institution – was carried out conscientiously to educate the youth."

The new cultural directions of the time were also adopted by the teachers of the Israelite gymnasium, who were active leaders in the committees of numerous cultural and charitable societies organised by the local Jewish community in the spirit of the interwar period.²⁶

The courses taught covered a wide range of topics. Thus, the subjects taught in secondary school, included in the curriculum, were: Hebrew language and religion,²⁷ the Talmud, Jewish history, geography, drawing, descriptive geography, Romanian, mathematics, physics, chemistry, history, law, civic education, natural sciences, calligraphy, home economics, gymnastics, vocal music, elements of agriculture, French and Hungarian.²⁸ In order to promote a complex, open and practical secondary education, headmaster Biró initiated the educational programme "Training the craftsmen" in the academic year 1921/1922, whose aim was the organisation of a seven-grade industrial-agricultural school. His intention materialised only in 1945.²⁹

The management of the gymnasium decided, based on the order of the regional inspectorate no. 4327/1922, that subjects would be taught in Romanian beginning with the next academic year, while Hungarian, which had been the language of instruction, now became an elective subject. This was a rather serious problem for both students and staff, because Hungarian was used on a regular basis in the family or community. Romanian was learned gradually to a satisfactory degree, according to the annual inspection reports.

According to Ernest Neumann's accounts (who was a former gymnasium student), mornings were occupied by learning the subjects in the curriculum,

and the afternoons by the study of the Talmud.³⁰

Throughout the interwar period, the two gymnasiums were inspected by the local, regional and national authorities, but also by the leaders of the Jewish community. Relevant examples in this respect were the official inspections in 1925/1926, led by Alexandru Pteancu, Gh. Bota, Simion Gogan, T. D. Sperantia. Following such an inspection, G. Bota praised the teaching staff and the school results in his report: "I found impeccable order and cleanliness everywhere. I am satisfied to report that I noticed remarkable progress as far as the learning of Romanian was concerned."³¹

The overall sanitary conditions in the school were acceptable, there were few cases of people suffering from contagious diseases. Considerable sums of money were spent to maintain the school clean throughout the period in question (2524 lei in the academic year 1922/1923); the school's doctor, Ioan Sándor, consulted and prescribed free medication to all the students with limited material possibilities. A more precarious state of health was reported in the years 1927/1928, 1928/1929 and 1934/1935. Numerous cases of scarlet fever, diphtheria, typhoid fever, some of them resulting in deaths, were reported then,³² despite drastic measures taken by the school committee (suspension of classes, isolation of the sick, disinfection of classrooms, preventive vaccination of students and staff, etc.)³³

Special attention was given to the consolidation of the religious and moral sentiment among the students, in the spirit of traditional Jewish religion. Chief rabbi Benjamin Fuchs took a personal interest in the way in which religion was taught in school through regular inspections. Consequently, a report on all the school activities carried out was drafted at the end of each academic year. These reports showed that the majority of gymnasium students had impeccable moral and religious standing. They took part in religious services coordinated by their religion teachers who often gave special lectures for a better understanding of some religious issues. The documents mention a few names in this respect, such as dr. Samuel Feldmann, Iacob Kupfer and David Weisz. There were also separate study groups where the students were coordinated by a rabbi teacher, for a better understanding of Hebrew spirituality.

The specific activities of the educational process were completed by the organisation of numerous school festivities with students from both primary and secondary grades. For instance, during the festivities organised for the coronation of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie on October 15, 1923, the Oradea school was represented by professor Nicolau Avram and his students, who took part in the procession organised by the soldiers present at the event. Periodic festivities took place on Hanuka,³⁴ when the school organised cultural and religious festivities attended by large crowds. The students of the Israelite

secondary school also prepared cultural and artistic manifestations to mark important national history days such as December 1, January 24, March 27 (the unification of Bessarabia and Romania), November 28 (the unification of Bukovina and the Old Kingdom), October 13, Heroes' day, as well as any other significant dates for the Romanian people. We would like to mention here only two relevant moments with larger impact in society. The first one occurred during the 1928/1929 academic year, when the students contributed to celebrating the 50th anniversary of Dobrogea's unification with Romania, and the second one in 1934/1935, when 120 students took part in an event appreciated by the entire Oradea community.³⁵

The documents referring to the academic year 1937/1938 mention the existence of student choir organised by the Oradea Orthodox Israelite Gymnasium. The boys' choir was coordinated by professor Vasile Peta, and the girls' choir by professor Margareta Braun. The two choirs delighted the audience who attended the school festivities and other cultural and artistic events.³⁶

The students did not fail to celebrate their venerable and experienced teachers during academic festivities. They paid homage to their headmaster, Marc Biró, during the academic year 1925/1926, when he celebrated 25 years in education. The festivity took place in the Oradea Commerce Hall and was presided over by Árpád Hegedüs, one of the principals of the „Dr. Kecskeméti Lipót” Jewish High School for Boys founded in 1920. The distinguished professor was greeted by warm speeches made by: Alexandru Leitner – a former student, Grigore Bota on behalf of the local school authorities, Benjamin Fuchs – the representative of the local religious community, Iosif Silbermann – the school sponsor, professor Gh. Sofronie – on behalf of “Gojdu” High School, Izidor Szilos from the Oradea Jewish High School, dr. Géza Tabéry – the leader of the Oradea Journalists' Union and Adolf Schustek – on behalf of the „Szigligeti” Literary Society. At the end, professor Biró expressed his belief that “this celebration is meaningful only if it speaks about the undeniable power of culture and about the appreciation of educational, unselfish work in favour of the community, of human understanding, brotherly sympathy and genuine love for other fellow humans.” Professor Ida Salamon was celebrated during a similar event, on the 25th anniversary of teaching in the Oradea Jewish gymnasium. In the academic year 1935/1936, Benjamin Fuchs, the chief rabbi of the community, received the homage of all the gymnasium students.³⁷

In 1938, the gymnasium celebrated its 50th anniversary. On this occasion, one was reminded about the difficult initial moments, as well as the happy times when the prestige of the institution was consolidated. Speaking about the history of the gymnasium, Benjamin Fuchs reminded the audience that “school was the most precious treasure of the community and we need to keep it safe.”³⁸

The headmaster of the school also gave a warm speech in which he emphasised the significance of the anniversary, urging the teaching staff to manifest the same diligence and solidarity in the future, together with the entire Orthodox Jewish community in Oradea.³⁹

Both gymnasiums also organised school exhibitions in an attempt to establish an unmediated cultural contact with the audience. During the academic year 1925/1926, the girls organised a needlepoint exhibition appreciated by the visiting audience and the local school inspector George Bota. The 804 pieces were exhibited in two classrooms under the coordination of professor Etelca Kun. Similar exhibitions were also organised in the following years. Those who visited them were impressed by the creativity of the young Jewish students, the variety of colours and the aesthetic quality of the pieces.⁴⁰

The students' need for spiritual enlightenment was also reflected by the creation of a gymnasium library that grew every academic year especially through book donations and purchases.⁴¹ The library had 1108 volumes in 1938, many of them in Romanian.⁴² According to the reports drafted by librarians for the school committee, the students were "happy to read" the library books, and the teachers discussed the borrowed books with the young readers.⁴³ There was also a library for the teaching staff containing 604 volumes, according to the 1938 records.⁴⁴

The school committee of the Oradea Orthodox Israelite gymnasium chose to organise school trips both as extracurricular activities and as a modern didactic tool focused on the students. These trips played an important role in the education of the young students who – as stated in the school reports – were very open to natural phenomena and environments or to art elements. Such trips were organised in the neighbourhood of Oradea, the most frequent of them to Băile Episcopale and Băile Felix. The students and their teachers entertained themselves by watching educational films and attending theatre performances organised by the West Theatre or other national theatre companies.⁴⁵

According to school records, after graduation from the gymnasium, the students went on to attend rabbinical, commercial and industrial schools; only a small percentage of them did not pursue any further education.⁴⁶ Among the gymnasium graduates, one can count many rabbis, leaders of the Jewish community, lawyers, professors and doctors. We would like to mention only a few examples of prominent personalities belonging to the interwar Oradea Jewish society: Beniamin Fuchs, Alexandru Ullmann, Felix Ullmann etc.⁴⁷

A strong sense of solidarity and mutual aid developed within the Oradea Orthodox Israelite gymnasium, a fact proven by historical documents. Thus, teachers urged the students who were better off to help their colleagues who were less fortunate from this point of view. Such aid usually took the form of books,

clothing and shoes. Such items also came from the local Jewish community either from private individuals who supported the gymnasium (traders, industrialists, etc.) or from legally organised cultural and philanthropic associations, such as the “Round Table” Society, the “Rongyos” Table Society, the Society for the Protection of children, the “Balaško” Mutual Aid Society, etc.

The Oradea Orthodox Israelite Gymnasium succeeded in making a name for itself within the Bihor interwar system of education, both through the quality of its teaching staff and through the results obtained by the students of the two secondary schools. The teachers were true educators in the spirit of the new ideas and were not passive towards the problems of the city during the often unstable and contradictory interwar period. In addition to their effort to “enlighten” the students, the teachers also took part in the cultural, artistic and religious activities organised by various patrons, playing an important role in spreading interest for school and culture within the Jewish community. They also encouraged their students to form choirs and organised school exhibitions and libraries, to participate in the representative cultural and artistic manifestations promoted by the cultural societies and associations in Oradea and in the religious services, at the same time urging their students to read and subscribe to various publications. Education was and remained one of the main preoccupations of the Oradea Jewish community; that is why there was a fruitful cooperation between the school committees and the presidents of the community, visible especially in the complete integration of the gymnasium in the social life of the community.

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Notes

1. Tereza Mózes, *Evreii din Oradea*, Editura Hasefer, București, 1997, p. 95.
2. Victor Neumann, *Istoria evreilor din Banat*, Editura Atlas, București, 1999, pp. 47, 52.
3. Ladislau Gyémánt, *Învățământul evreiesc din Transilvania. Perspectivă istorică*, on <http://adatbank.transindex.ro/inchtm.php?kod=304> (accessed on 21.02.2011).
4. Victor Neumann, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.
5. *Ibidem*, p. 53.
6. Camelia Crăciun, „Assimilation as Alienation: Identity Problems in the Intellectual Debates of the Interwar Generation”, in *Studia Judaica*, XVIII, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, p. 274; Corneliu Crăciun, „Structuri instituționale și stări demografice ale unor comunități evreiești din județul Bihor, în perioada interbelică”, in *Revista bihoreană de istorie*, 2008, no. 10-11, p. 16; Andi S., *Evreii în România interbelică*, în *Interacțiuni etnice*, no. 32, February 2009, on <http://www.interactiuniethnic.ro>.

- ro/articol.php?id=320&name=Evreii in România interbelică (accessed on 09.03.2011).
7. Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România de la emancipare la marginalizare 1919-1938*, Editura Hasefer, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 127, 130-131.
 8. *Ibidem*, p. 140.
 9. Apud Tereza Mózes, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
 10. The presidents of the Oradea Orthodox Jewish community, starting with 1900, were: Anton Schwartz, Alexandru Ullmann, Lazar Leitner, Samuil Nuszbaum, Maurițiu Ullmann, Iosif Reich, Iacob Mittelman, David Kohn, Ștefan Ullmann. All of them were involved in supporting the Orthodox Israelite Gymnasium. *Anuarul Gimnaziului și Școlii Primare Confesionale izr. ort. de băieți și fete din Oradea pe anul școlar, 1937-38 (The Yearbook of the Oradea Orthodox Israelite Gymnasium and Primary Confessional School for Boys and Girls for the Academic Year 1937-1938)* (henceforth: *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*), Tip. Cosmos, Oradea, 1938, p. 5.
 11. *Anuarul Gimnaziului*, 1937/1938, p. 3.
 12. Hary Kuller, *Presa evreiască din România*, Editura Tritonic, Bucharest, 2004, p. 47.
 13. National Archives – Bihor County Office (henceforth: AN-SJ Bh), *fond Gimnaziul izraelit ortodox Oradea*, inv. no. 1134, f. 1; *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1937/1938, pp. 7-8; Petre Dejeu, *Așezămintele culturale din municipiul Oradea și județul Bihor*, Tipografia “Transilvania”, Oradea, 1926, p. 80; Dragoș Ilinca, *O istorie zbuciumată a poporului evreu*, Editura Niculescu, Bucharest, 1999, p. 8; *Istoria orașului Oradea*, coordinated by Liviu Borcea, Gheorghe Gorun, 2nd edition revised and updated, Editura Arca, Oradea, 2007, p. 360.
 14. AN-SJBh, *fond Gimnaziul izraelit ortodox Oradea*, inv. no. 1134, f. 1.
 15. *Ibidem*, f. 1-2.
 16. *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1937/1938, p. 23.
 17. *Ibidem*, 1935/1936, p. 8.
 18. *Anuarul Școlilor medii și primare confesionale Ort. Izr. pentru băieți și fete pe anul școlar, 1925 -926 (The Yearbook of the Oradea Orthodox Israelite Primary and Secondary Confessional Schools for Boys and Girls for the Academic Year 1925-1926)* (henceforth: *Anuarul Școlilor medii...*), Editura comitetului școlar al comunității ort. izr. din Oradea, Tipografia și Librăria Rom. S.A., Oradea, 1927, p. 7.
 19. *Ibidem*, 1927/1928, pp. 3-4; *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1928/1929, p. 7; *Ibidem*, 1934/1935, p. 6; Corneliu Crăciun, *Contribuții documentare la istoria evreilor din Bihor* (henceforth: *Contribuții documentare...*), Editura Arca, Oradea, 2009, p. 78.
 20. *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1933/1934, p. 8; *Ibidem*, 1934/1935, p. 8, *Ibidem*, 1935/1936, p. 11.
 21. *Anuarul Școlilor medii...*, 1925/1926, pp. 7-8; *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1937/1938, p. 22.
 22. *Anuarul Școlii medii...*, 1927/1928, p. 10.

23. *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1933/1934, p. 10, *Ibidem*, 1934/1935, p. 10.
24. The school committee during the academic year 1922/1923 was made up of: Benjamin Fuchs, chief rabbi (inspector), Solomon Fuchs (president), Iosif Selezer (vicepresident), Iosif Mezey and Iacob Mittelmann (school counsellors), Edvard Rothbart (cashier), Bernat Berkovits and Isac Sternberg (Talmudthora instructors) and Marc Biró (school headmaster). *Anuarul Şcolii medii...*, 1922-1923, pp. 3-5; *Ibidem*, 1923/1924, pp. 4-5.
25. *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1937/1938, p. 5.
26. *Anuarul Şcolii medii...*, 1922-1923, pp. 3-5; *Ibidem*, 1923/1924, pp. 4-5; *Ibidem*, 1927/1928, p. 6; *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1928/1929, p. 7; *Ibidem*, 1934/1935, p. 1; *Ibidem*, 1937/1938, p. 5.
27. After the establishment of the Orthodox Israelite civil school in 1888, this subject was taught in keeping with the church authorities regulations. Roman-catholic or Protestant ministers were hired to teach religion to students belonging to different religious faiths. (*Anuarul Gimnaziului...* 1937/1938, p. 7).
28. *Anuarul Şcolii medii...*, 1923/1924, p. 10; *Ibidem*, 1925/1926, pp. 11-12.
29. Téreza Mózes, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
30. AN-SJBh, *fond Gimnaziul izraelit ortodox Oradea*, inv. no. 1134, f. 1; Corneliu Crăciun, *Contribuţii documentare...*, p. 77; [http://www.memoria.ro/?location=view&id=862/ernest neumann](http://www.memoria.ro/?location=view&id=862/ernest%20neumann) (accessed on 21.02.2011).
31. *Anuarul Şcolii medii...*, 1925/1926, p. 7; *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1928/1929, p. 7.
32. For instance, Adela Meiseks died during the academic year 1925/1926; she was a third grade student at the girls' gymnasium, an excellent student from all points of view. See *Anuarul Şcolii medii...* 1925/1926, pp. 5-6.
33. *Anuarul Şcolii medii...*, 1927/1928, p. 7; *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1928/1929, p. 11; *Ibidem*, 1934/1935, p. 10.
34. Jean-Christophe Attias, Esther Benbassa, *Dicţionar de civilizaţie iudaică*, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Bucharest, 1997, p. 317; this holiday lasts for eight days and commemorates the victory of the Maccabees against the Seleucid king of Syria, who had been trying to destroy Jewish religion and to Hellenise the people under his domination. See also <http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanuka> (accessed on 21.03.2011).
35. *Anuarul Şcolii medii...*, 1923/1924, p. 6, 9; *Ibidem*, 1925/1926, p. 9; *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1928/1929, p. 11; *Ibidem*, 1933/1934, p. 11; *Ibidem*, 1934/1935, pp. 11-12.
36. *Anuarul Gimnaziului...* 1937/1938, p. 17.
37. *Anuarul Şcolii medii...*, 1925/1926, p. 9; *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1929/1930, p. 15; *Ibidem*, 1935/1936, p. 14; Mihai D. Drecin, Gabriel Moisa, "Repere ale implicării comunităţii evreieşti în viaţa oraşului Oradea", in *Crisia*, 2009, p. 242
38. *Anuarul Gimnaziului...* 1937/1938, pp. 3, 6.

39. Corneliu Crăciun, *Contribuții documentare...*, pp. 80-81.
40. *Anuarul Școlii medii...*, 1925/1926, p. 9; *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1928/1929, p. 10; *Ibidem*, 1934/1935, p. 15.
41. In the academic year 1927/1928, the library acquired 181 volumes, which cost 6020 lei. The local inspector, Gogan, donated 49 volumes. The number of books was 651 in the next academic year, while in 1933/1934 the library had over 900 titles. Some of them were hardbacks of artistic importance. (*Anuarul Școlii medii...*, 1927/1928, p. 3-4; *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1928/1929, p. 7; *Ibidem*, 1929/1930, p. 8; *Ibidem*, 1933/1934, p. 7).
42. *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1937/1938, p. 12.
43. *Ibidem*, 1935/1936, p. 9; Corneliu Crăciun, *Contribuții documentare...*, p. 78.
44. *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1935/1936, p. 9.
45. *Anuarul Școlii medii...*, 1925/1926, p. 6.
46. *Ibidem*, 1923/1924, p. 8.
47. *Anuarul Gimnaziului...*, 1937/1938, pp. 7-8.

Abstract

The present study focuses on revising a fragment in the history of interwar Oradea Jewish education. More precisely, it will deal with presenting the educational, cultural and artistic life of the Oradea Orthodox Israelite Gymnasium. This was founded in 1888, when a secondary civil school for boys was inaugurated; a similar school for girls was opened nine years later.

The aim of the two secondary schools was to educate young people in a traditional religious spirit and keep them on a moral path in the new Greater Romania context. The new school was the only Orthodox Israelite cultural institute in the country. Beginning with the academic year 1928-1929. The civil school was transformed into a three-grade gymnasium, the fourth grade becoming a transitional one.

The gymnasium had a prestigious and carefully selected teaching staff. The institution was supported by the Oradea Orthodox Jewish community. It had adequate classrooms, physics and chemistry laboratories equipped with modern tools, a library, a gym, and modern didactic materials.

The students of the gymnasium organised school festivities and exhibitions, various cultural and artistic activities, taking part actively in all the cultural events promoted by the municipality and the local Jewish community.

Keywords

Jews, education, society, gymnasium, interwar

