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Cultural Development in Slovakia and Societal Activities of Jewish Communities in Historical Context

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Introduction

Undoubtedly, the Jews have represented religious and ethnic community¹, which has, from its very beginning up to the present, undergone plenty of dramatic changes. Despite the less favourable developmental conditions², which were typical for Jewish religion, as an axiological religious movement, throughout its whole existence³, Judaism has had its supporters all over the world⁴.

1. Something about history of Jewish community in Slovakia

By tradition, the first Jews came to Slovakia along with the Roman legions⁵. There were many important business routes leading through Slovakia, such as

¹ P. Salner, *Židia na Slovensku*. Available at: <http://www.ludovakultura.sk/index.php?id=390>.

² In the whole history of human race, there has never existed such an intense hatred towards any other ethnic group. Antisemitism in the 20th century, when the Nazi murdered six million Jewish men, women, and children, was the peak of this extreme cruelty (M. Keene, *Svetové náboženství*, Bratislava 2003, 192 p.).

³ *The basics for the life of Jews is 613 precepts and commandments; it is called Mitzvah* (P. Spiegel, *Kdo jsou Židé? Společnost pro odbornou literaturu*, Brno 2009, p. 25).

⁴ M. Vasilová, *Židovské spolky na Slovensku*, Žilina 2013.

⁵ Several authors (P. Salner, op. cit., M.S. Ďurica, *Jozef Tiso a Židia*. Bratislava 2008, J. Jelínek, *Židia na Slovensku v 19. a 20. storočí. I. časť*. Judaica Slovaca, Bratislava 1999) associate the first arrival of Jews in Slovak territory with the arrival of Roman soldiers: "The Slovak nation

the Amber Road. However, several authors dealing with this matter⁶ question the permanent residence of Jewish communities in Slovakia of that time. However, it is provable that during the development of societies in the Slovak area, frequent cultural contact with the members of *Jewish communities along with the large-scale migration⁷ of Jewish population in Europe took place⁸*. The first part of the Jewish ethnic group came from western Europe, or rather from Bohemia, Moravia and Austria to establish Jewish communities in the western part of Slovakia. The second ethnic group was formed by the Jews from the Carpathian Ruthenia⁹. The difference between the two communities was in the way of life, education, etc.

The majority of recorded Jewish activities were connected with trade. Jews, a certain part of whom came here with the Staré Uhry along with Mohammedans participated in trading with indigenous people¹⁰.

Only later did the more permanent settlement in the Slovak area occur. King Koloman allowed the Jewish immigrants to settle in bishop's seats¹¹. The history of Jews with regard to the area of Horné Uhry is too difficult to study since these Jews were not considered to be an ethnic group¹².

Sources claim that in 11th – 12th century, Jewish religious community in Trnava had already existed. Jewish traders are mentioned in the 13th century¹³ as well as the first communities, for example, in Devín, Banská Štavnica, Šaštín or Holič¹⁴. Historian H. Gold, mainly on the basis of period Jewish sources, claims

was forming... no later than 6th or 7th century AC. Slovak people encountered the Jewish traders, who had, since the first century, accompanied the Roman legions, first as slaves and then as traders".

⁶ Some authors, such as Hradská, question the older permanent settlement "through the area of Slovakia up to the north, there were important business routes which Jewish traders took; however, there is no substantial evidence that they would settle in Slovakia permanently" (K. Hradská, *Židovská Bratislava*, Bratislava 2008, p. 9).

⁷ Jews are not opposed to migration as they had not had home in the past. Jewish communities are in almost every country in the world. The largest Jewish society is currently in the USA; roughly 5.9 mil. Jews (M. Keene, op. cit.).

⁸ R. Büchler, *Slovenskí Židia, niekoľko historických a sociálnych pohľadov*, [in:] *Slovenskí Židia*. Múzeum SNP, Banská Bystrica 1991, p. 7.

⁹ The Jews did not form any Jewish ethnic group for a long period of time. The establishment of Jewish society in Slovakia was the result of the migration, which started in the middle of the 17th century.

¹⁰ D. Veselý, *Dejiny kresťanstva a reformácie na Slovensku*, Bratislava 1998, 186 p.

¹¹ This fact is supported by the Mohučská Commemorative Book, which depicts the martyrs from the times of Crusader campaigns somewhere between 1250 and 1300. It appears that there existed also Jewish religious community during the times of Rabbi Jonach. In the part "Pressburg martyrs, rabbi Jonach and companions", other generations are coldly and clearly announced that during the first three historical pogroms in Europe, bloodshed occurred here, too. However, nothing can be found about the date of this event. In: H. Gold, et al., *Židia v Bratislave v minulosti a súčasnosti*, Bratislava 2010.

¹² J.A. Jelínek, *Židia na Slovensku v 19. a 20. storočí*. I. časť, Judaica Slovaca, Bratislava 1999, p. 10.

¹³ H. Gold, et al., op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁴ K. Hradská (op. cit., p. 10) also claims that the Pressburg Jews were first mentioned in the code *Menor* from Mainz.

that an important Jewish community existed here in the middle of the 13th century. Both in Bratislava and Nitra, a considerable amount of Jews, who were defended in a solidary way by Slovak people, was apparent. Párovce pri Nitre were labelled in 1113 as “*Mons Juderoum*” (Jewish mountain) and in 1248 “*Castrum Judeorum*” (fortified Jew settlement).

When the population in Horné Uhry was decimated, the first Hungarian kings supported newcomers and all “guests” of various ethnic origins. They specifically respected the Jews and made use of their services. In the course of time, many Jewish communities were founded (Trnava, Topoľčany, Trenčín, Devín, Banská Štiavnica, Šaštín, Holíč, Skalica, Prešov) and their number had been increasing. Favourable climate was the reason that larger groups of Jews came to Slovakia also from Austria and Germany and some Jewish families came from Poland. In the 13th century, several Jews even earned the title of nobility, such as Comes Teka Iudaeus. The rulers appreciated their hard work and diligence; however, the newcomers started to fall out of the favours sequentially. The status of the Jewish immigrants improved during the reign of Ondrej II. (1205–1235), who besides the benefits for Jewish people also appointed some Jews and Saracens as advisors¹⁵. Despite the Church disfavour, which acted against the Jew religion since they considered the expansion of this Jew religion to be a threat, the Jews were supported also by the next king. King Béla IV (1206–1270) issued a decree of Jews’ rights in Hungary in 1251, which meant that the Jews had become the subjects of a king with their own rights and responsibilities. Moreover, the king appointed Jew Henul as his chancellor and pledged the Komárno castle with its revenues to Jew Wolfel and his sons. After that, the Jews lived calm and peaceful lives for more than a hundred years and their communities had been developing in Slovakia¹⁶. However, the situation had worsened in the second half of the 14th century. Opinions of rulers would often change and King Ľudovít I (1342–1382) expelled all the Jews from Hungary in 1360¹⁷. The situation had similarly changed in other European countries too.

Being different has always been the most frequent source of misunderstanding and intolerance¹⁸ in the world. Hence, the significant differences in way of life, religion and culture were also the reason that indigenous people, taking the favourableness of social situation into consideration, accepted the newcomers

¹⁵ The favour of the ruler was represented also by the support of intelligence, since he was surrounded by the Jewish people. Archbishop of Esztergom Robert (1226–1239) threatened to lay them under an interdict, if the Jews are not removed from offices. He had jurisdiction over nearly whole Slovakia and he put a catholic curse on the Hungarian Kingdom. When the King promised rectification, the curse was cancelled. D. Veselý, *Dejiny kresťanstva a reformácie na Slovensku*. Bratislava 1998, p. 13.

¹⁶ M. Marek, *Národnosti Uhorska*, Trnava 2011.

¹⁷ For example the Jews expelled from Bratislava settled in the nearby Hainburg and as early as 1367 came back to Bratislava and were returned their possessions.

¹⁸ Z. Bauman, *Modernost' a holocaust*, Bratislava 2002.

contradictorily. Several negative trends against the Jewish culture, but mainly against the Jews themselves, occurred due to several reasons¹⁹. As has been already mentioned, the most formidable barrier was caused by the Church disfavour. Later, however, pragmatic and economic reasons also came into being since the Jews efficiently competed with the native people with regard to trade²⁰. Thus, the relationships deteriorated primarily in the period of economic decline and recession. The municipal authority of Bratislava introduced *Judenbuch* (the Jew book) in 1371, which contained the regulations about trade relations between the Jews and the Christians²¹. Generally, the broad public – ordinary people, reacted more favourably in comparison to the representatives of the ruling and Church circles.

Religious consolidation of the Jewish associations in the western part of the Horné Uhry terminated before the end of the 18th century since the migration of the Jews from Moravia, Bohemia and Austria stopped²². It is important to mention that this happened sooner in comparison to the communities living in the eastern part of Horné Uhry (today's eastern Slovakia). It was also due to the gradual equality of legislative conditions²³ why the Jews lived contentedly. They inclined more towards the Hungarian and German language and were loyal to the monarchy. Hence, they accepted the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic with discomfiture, but they sequentially adapted to the new social conditions.

2. Jewish organisations in Slovakia

Organisations and associations were established due to pragmatic reasons and focused on the support of various groups of population. Such organisations were found in times when both individuals and groups could not count on the support of official institutions in the country. The Jewish community had learnt,

¹⁹ We could be dealing with the century of oppression, persecution and subsequent discrimination, segregation, even inclusion (P. Salner, op. cit.; B. Róna, *Holokaust po slovensky*, Bratislava 2000; Keene, op. cit.; V. Cabanová, *Školská inklúzia v kontexte prehlbujúcich sociálnych nerovností*, "Acta humanica" 2 / 2006 : Rovnosťou príležitostí k sociálnej inklúzii, p. 16–22.).

²⁰ Unfriendliness towards the Jews is connected with their diligence, entrepreneurial spirit and the ability to trade. Later, however, the rulers of various areas found out how much they had lost due to the absence of Jewish population and they started to call them back (H. Gold, a kol., *Židovská náboženská obec v Bratislave v minulosti a súčasnosti*, Bratislava 2011).

²¹ M.S. Ďurica, *Jozef Tiso a Židia*, Bratislava 2008, p. 9.

²² R. Büchler, *Sociálne trendy v slovenskom židovstve*, [in:] *Slovenskí Židia*, Múzeum SNP, Banská Bystrica 1991.

²³ Joseph II of Austria issued the Patent of Toleration – the Jews were allowed to settle in towns and in the country. Citizen equality of rights (1867) and religious equality of Jewish religion (1895). See: J.A. Jelínek, *Židia na Slovensku v 19. a 20. storočí. I. časť*, Judaica Slovaca, Bratislava 1999, p. 9–13.

during this period of diaspora, how to be self-sufficient and demonstrated a high degree of cohesion and mutual support. This cohesion and togetherness in difficult times only confirmed both the unity of Jews and the strengthening of their religious life²⁴. The Jews showed a strong inclination towards organizing themselves and to creating new organisations, primarily due to somewhat complicated historical experiences.

The missions of these organizations were highly important to the Jews. Apart from enabling the Jews to be active, the organizations also supported their activities and developed the spirit of solidarity and togetherness. Some organizations were big in numbers and some communities had a so-called mass membership²⁵.

The Jews had already been developing societal activities in the 18th century²⁶. Societal activities for the support of the community were developed in the 19th century. Austria-Hungary ceased to exist and new countries were formed – the Czech nation, Slovak nation and Carpathian Ruthenia. Cultural tradition of Austria and Germany prevailed in Bohemia and Moravia. Jews who stayed in Carpathian Ruthenia under difficult economic conditions remained faithful to Jewish culture, which had its roots in Poland and was connected to rabbis and Chassids. The interwar period was the period of stabilisation of the Jewish communities; the Jews lived peaceful lives and were developing rich community activities²⁷. “The Jews underwent radical changes due to the long-term separation from Jewish centres during the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic”²⁸. This contributed towards the mutual togetherness.

“Cultures of the west and the east were present in Slovakia along with the cultures of Slovak revivalists from the 19th century. The influence of Hungarian culture was recognized in the south of the country whereas the Polish culture was detected in the northeast”²⁹. Modern Jewishness is connected with urban culture. Due to the trends of the first Czechoslovak Republic, the Jews were concentrated in larger towns and migrated from the eastern part of the country to larger towns in the west³⁰. The Jews primarily settled in the western part of to-

²⁴ Belongs to one of the very few traditional religions, which keeps traditions alive and these traditions are applied in modern times, which are typical of undermining the faith and questioning the traditional values of life (for further information, see M. Keene, op. cit.).

²⁵ K. Hradská, *Židovská Bratislava*, Bratislava 2008, p. 165.

²⁶ There are 19, mainly religious, but also educational, cultural and political institutions in the listing of the Jewish communities since 1871 (Landa in: P. Salner, *Židia na Slovensku medzi tradíciou a asimiláciou*, Bratislava 2000).

²⁷ Which came to an end when the fascism took over. Mass anti-Jew propaganda completely changed public opinion along with political thinking of that time. This resulted into the termination of Jewish organisations and Jewish culture in Slovakia. The end of Jewish Bratislava of that time was inevitable.

²⁸ R. Büchler, op. cit., p. 10.

²⁹ A. Nir, *Chodníčky v ohnivom kruhu*, edícia: Judaica Slovaca, Bratislava 1994, p. 13–14.

³⁰ R. Büchler, op. cit., p. 11).

day's Slovakia, but they also had their organisations in other parts of the country, which were closely connected with the ones in Pressburg. During the democratic activities in an interwar Bratislava, the Jewish community does not close itself into the family privacy but, conversely, demonstrated an interest to participate in running the whole society³¹. This clearly shows that this very characteristic that Jews had provided the basis for creating Jewish organizations. The Jews have always respected and followed their traditions³². By means of religion and faith, the Jews penetrated each part of societal life of the community. Thus, it is nothing to be surprised at that mainly the Jewish religious communities played an important role concerning the establishment of Jewish organisations in the Czechoslovak Republic of that time. According to P. Salner, these favourable conditions resulted in a rich, institutional and informal societal life and the Jews participated actively in this life³³. From the point of view of their activities, one can distinguish various religious organisations, associations and various supporting and charity organisations³⁴. The following map demonstrates where religious communities were formed and still exist nowadays:



Organisations kept their members (members of religious community, women and the youth) active and as such occupied a substantial role with regard to the social care, health care, education, development of physical condition, or social inclusion. Moreover, they helped poor families, children, orphans, widows and the elderly.

³¹ P. Salner, *Mozaika židovskej Bratislavy*, Bratislava 2007, p. 46.

³² K. Hradská, *Židovská Bratislava*, Bratislava 2008.

³³ In: P. Salner, op. cit.

³⁴ Information about Jews is gathered from the period magazines, minutes, but also from police records.

Jewish communities, and later some larger organisations, were responsible for keeping the organisation functional and providing material security. Particular organizations had already had certain amount of money at their disposal, which was mostly obtained from patrons. It is remarkable that some of the organizations only had little expenses in comparison to the possessions they had. Jewish charitable organizations were either orthodox and neological at the same time or exclusively orthodox.

Organisation *Chevra Kadisha* (Saint brotherhood) acted as a voluntary group in some places³⁵. Mostly, however, it functioned as a funeral organisation which supervised funeral ceremonies, so that everything went according to the traditional Jewish customs. The organisation also took care of a burial ground. After a funeral, they tried to cheer the bereaved, they prepared the first food and provided prayer quorum during the first days of the deepest grief. Due to the significance of these ceremonies in a life of each Jew, funeral brotherhoods could be found approximately in the 14th century in larger European Jewish communities with proper statutes. In connection with this, H. Gold claims: "Our orthodox Chevra Kadisha was founded in the 80s of the 17th century and arises from the statutes of Prague Chevra Kadisha, which was established in 1562 by Eleasar Askenazym"³⁶. Activities of this organisation did not focus merely on funeral supervision, but also supported individuals who were socially at risk and maintained the functioning of other organisations and associations. They had to visit the ill, act as carers, help with the confessions of sins and say prayers for the dead. According to the statutes of Jewish communities, every community was advised to have its own Chevra Kadisha³⁷. The members of this organization were called "Mitasekin" or "Gomle chassodim".

To be a member of this organisation was an honour for everybody. Thus, each organisation of this type kept a record concerning the names of its members and contributors along with every resolution connected with statutes of organisation as well as the important documents regarding the activities of this organisation. Gradually, records, resolutions, statutes and documents contained more and more data and were also amended. The exact date of the establishment of Chevra Kadisha in Bratislava is impossible to set. The first written record in the book is from 1696. It is interesting that Chevra Kadisha had 335 members in 1934³⁸. Financial means were obtained from various sources; apart from the support of patrons, the organisation got the money from membership fees, gifts or cemetery fees³⁹.

Poal Zedek was established in 1831⁴⁰. The main aim of this organization was to support the Jewish spirit and the Mishna method of teaching in terms of the soul sal-

³⁵ P. Frankl, *Židia v Žiline*, Žilina 2008, p. 499.

³⁶ H. Gold, a kol., *Židia v Bratislave v minulosti a súčasnosti*, Bratislava 2009, p. 49–50.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ P. Frankl, *Židia v Žiline*, Žilina 2008, p. 96.

³⁹ Dudeková, in: www.dejiny.sk.

⁴⁰ H. Gold, a kol., *Židia v Bratislave v minulosti a súčasnosti*, Bratislava 2010, p. 120.

vation of deceased members during the mourning year. Poal Zedek also supported poor and ill members. Rabbi Judah Löw ran this organisation for 56 years⁴¹.

The main aim of *Menachem Avelim* was to provide support for people in mourning days, when the families were short of money. Chatam Sofer was its founder. The chair of this organization was Moše Gelber, vice-chair Juda Grünwald and controller Lazar Rosenber. The seat was on Schulhof 4⁴².

The aims of *Pikuach Nefesh* (founded in 1701) were to help people in need. As a charity organisation, it focused on procuring medical aids and instrumentation. The members of the organisation transported the ill to the hospital, provided for treatment, offered contribution towards treatment and sometimes transported doctors to the seriously ill ones. Persons in charge of this organization: Simon Grünhut, Hugo Gross and Max Jellinek⁴³.

Ahavat Chaverim organization was established in 1908⁴⁴ to support its members in situations such as giving birth, death, or marriages. Besides its main activities, the organization was involved in the distribution of wood, coal and clothes to the poor in winter months. The organization had approximately 450 members. Being a leader of this organization for 20 years, Josef Luzzato was elected as an honourable chair. During its existence, the organization had distributed 150,000 Czech crowns. The seat was on Židovská Street no. 26.

The only goal of *Dobročinnosť* organization (1903)⁴⁵ was to provide interest-free loans for small traders and self-employed people. The organization enabled the beginners to set up workshops. The finances were sought within all the circles of Jewish community in order to demonstrate the typical Jewish sense for charity and work connected with various financial difficulties. The chair of this organization was Emil Popper and vice-chairs were Abg. Dr. Julius Reisz and Mortz Waservogel. The seat was on Lorenzertorgasse 11 (Laurinská Street in Bratislava of that time). This organization is also typical of positive contribution to Jewish population.

Jerucham Jossim (Boy's orphanage) was established when cholera spread to new places in Pressburg and many Jewish families lost either their breadwinner or both parents. This resulted into the increased number of widows and orphans in the Jewish community. Having reacted to this issue, the main Rabbi Moše Schreiber, with the help of the citizens, established boy's orphanage. At first, orphans were supported by financial aid and then they were given rooms in a big house next to the synagogue, where 10 orphans were placed. A foster parent

⁴¹ After Judah Löw died, his son Samuel Löwy and profesor Max Österreicher took his place. The organisation premises were on Fruchtplatz 2 (today's Kollárovo Square) (for more information, see: H. Gold, *Židia v Bratislave...*).

⁴² H. Gold, *Židia v Bratislave...*, p. 132.

⁴³ The Office was on Schulhof 4.

⁴⁴ H. Gold, *Židia v Bratislave...*, p. 134.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

took care of these orphans⁴⁶. Holding a celebration to mark the 100th anniversary of this organization, Israeli orthodox religious community gave them a plot of land, where they later, using the gifts of Jewish people, built a modern boy's organisation. When the orphans finished their elementary education, they were placed to town school or to Jesode Hator School. Thus, they were provided with education according to their abilities. The organization also provided accommodation for grown-up orphans⁴⁷.

Girl's orphanage was established by Dr. Leopold Stein, Dr. Moritz Passner, Antonie and Ignaz Leitersdorf and M.C. Bettelheim⁴⁸. The organisation is also mentioned in Grünsfelda's list⁴⁹. They bought a two-storeyed house, where 8 orphans were raised. After completing the elementary education and town school, these girls were employed as officers, seamstresses and other positions which were only suitable for Jewish girls.

Organisation for the Support of Widows and Orphans and Ezra – Organisation in Need⁵⁰ – both were of a charitable and socially-nursing character: they helped the poor, widows and orphans by means of regular financial support (monthly support and holding a lease). Ezra organisation, in comparison to the former one, provided material support (fuel, clothing etc.), but also medical, financial and law support. Both organisations had a broad base.

Israelite Old People's Home – the beginning of this organization dates back to April 18, 1869, when Benedikt Freistadt returned to his birth place and arranged a Jewish meeting. The following appeal was issued: "We have gathered here today to establish the Israelite Old People's Home and we declare willingness to provide a contribution towards the foundation of this community and we will also pay an annual contribution, the amount of which will be determined later. We will also, with gratitude, accept even the smallest gift"⁵¹. This appeal was successful. However, the founder had never experienced the fame and expansion of the old people's house. He died in 1883, but in 1879, he succeeded in persuading the great philanthropist Isrel Abraham to donate 6,000 florins. One of the first founders was Chevra Kadisha with the donation of 4,000 florins. In 1888, Herman Steiner submitted a proposal of realisation; it was, however, realized in 1894, when the founder and a chairman of orthodox community Joel Wolf, after the resolution of municipal community on November 2, 1892, paid himself 7,510 florins for a house on Maria Theresa Street (today's Židovská

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ There were approximately 30 beds, a dining room, a study room, room for the ill, bathroom, prefect room, administration office, caretaker office, two workshops, store rooms, and there was central heating too (H. Gold, *Židia v Bratislave...*, p. 126).

⁴⁸ For more information see: *ibid.*

⁴⁹ P. Salner, *Židia na Slovensku medzi tradíciou a asimiláciou*, Bratislava 2000.

⁵⁰ Ezra organisation had roughly 700 members.

⁵¹ H. Gold, *Židia v Bratislave...*, p. 127.

Street no. 50) and thus created the Foundation House of Joel Wolf. The old people's home was ceremonially opened on August 18, 1894 and they accepted 8 elderly people out of 16 requests. Therefore, 20 year-old dream of the founder came true⁵². Since the beginning of this organization, they had taken care of 230 elderly people. In 1931, additional storey was added due to the further requirements from applicants with regard to spatial issues⁵³.

*Jewish central social care*⁵⁴. This was an organization that used to help all the poor people, who were not provided with help from other organizations. Subsequently, a proper record keeping about all the ill and all the poor was done. The organization's task was to ensure everyone would receive help and receive it in the same extent, so that it would not happen that some poor and sick were supported and some were not. Consequently, this aid was divided among individual poor and ill people depending on how much they needed it and depended on it.

Jewish Nursery School (Jewish protectory). This organization was founded in 1891⁵⁵ by Tedesco Foundation; Herman Tedesco⁵⁶ was the head of the organization. After his death it was his family which supported the whole Pressburg Jewish community.

*WIZO*⁵⁷. Out of the numerous women's organizations from the interwar era, this one was an international one with branches in numerous Slovak towns. Also, other smaller organizations were being founded in order to support Jewish girls and women, such as *Jewish educational institution for nurses*⁵⁸, *Jewish girl's organization* and *Organization for wedding the brides*. The first one existed for only 3 years, the second one's goal was to provide clothes for children and support poor families. The third one was based on financing weddings of poor young girls.

Jewish organization for clothing the children. On the initiative of Josef Frankl, the organization was established in 1928⁵⁹ in order to provide support for poor children. It involved 250 members of all society classes of Jewish popula-

⁵² Ibid., p. 127–128.

⁵³ When the storey was completed, there were 35 rooms, 70 beds, a large dining room and 4 bathrooms. Július Kann made the completion of the storey possible. Max and Mariska Neumann gave the old people's home a house on Palisády no. 48 on 11th April 1915 (ibid.).

⁵⁴ The head of the organization was its founder – Dr. Julius Reisz, who achieved, with the help of prominent Jewish society, considerable success in terms of organization activities. The separate part which dealt with the ill Jews also existed within the organization. Dr. Theodor Reisz was responsible for this department along with the support of the board of Jewish movements and organizations. The people who could not be taken to a Jewish hospital were supported by the Jews in terms of medical help or being given the proper medicine (H. Gold, *Židia v Bratislave...*).

⁵⁵ K. Hradská, op. cit., p. 165.

⁵⁶ After his death in 1844, he bequeathed 12 million guilders to his family.

⁵⁷ Ženská medzinárodná sionistická organizácia, see P. Frankl, *Židia v Žiline...*

⁵⁸ During its three years of existence, it helped only 3 women find a job (see H. Gold, *Židia v Bratislave...*).

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 135.

tion. Its main goal was to clothe children. This resulted in a total number of 258 fully or partially dressed children in winter clothes. The organization used annually approximately 15,000 Czech crowns for these purposes.

Girl's group *Agudas Jisroel*⁶⁰. The aim of this organization was to support poor children in winter seasons. They provided clothes and warm underwear for such children in need. For instance, anaemic children were sent to a spa for a recovery. At the same time, girls were being prepared for taking care of the ill and the needy by visiting the ill in hospitals and providing them with refreshment.

Toras Chessed was established in 1852⁶¹ on the initiative of the farewell speech of the rabbi Chajim Sofer, when he left Bratislava. It aimed to support education. The organization received a gift of 42,000 guilders in form of a lottery ticket from Fanny Sonnenfeld which won the main prize. Using the gift, the organization was able to provide the Torah disciples and rabbi candidates with weekly guilder allocation since they had successfully completed their education⁶².

Malbuš de bachurim and *Mensa De Bachurim* focused on education and pupils at schools. These two organizations took care of education and provisions, particularly by trying to provide education to children from poor families. The former discreetly supported the pupils of public rabbi school, again, especially the poor ones. They were given namely clothing so that they have something to come to school in. The latter also focused on providing food for poor pupils. As they were public school pupils, they received lunch and dinner from the organization. One part of food support was free and the other part was for a low amount of money the pupils had to pay. This amount was lowered and more pupils could afford to pay for it. The organization's activities were financially supported, by means of which they were able to obtain a canteen but also money for kind. The aim of *Chevra Gedaulo de bachurim* was the procurement of free food for the pupils of Yeshiva. The poor pupils were given breakfast and coupons for lunch and dinner.

Makabi sport club. This club was founded in 1912, when several young Jews decided to compete in sport also with other nations. These Jews included: Robert Neumann, Isidor Seidler, Ludwig Beck, Jakob Grünhut, Josef Pollak, Emil Kurzweil, Josef Mayer and Julius Falk.

Makabi youth organization. It was established in Bratislava in 1912, however, in Žilina only in 1931. Its focus was wider, although the sport club was

⁶⁰ The group was founded by Jakob Joel Braun, A. Schreiber, Rosa Schlenger, Lazar Kohlmann, Philipp Benedikt, Juliska Grünsfeld and Janka Soffer. The honourable president of the group was the wife of the main rabbi A. Schreiber and the vice-president was Rosa Kohlmann. The Office of the organization was on Zochová Street 3/B in Bratislava then.

⁶¹ H. Gold, et al., *Židia v Bratislave...*, s. 119.

⁶² *Toras Chessed's* seat was on Kapučińska Street no.7. Being an important Jewish organization it is at Jozef Grünsfeld's registry of organizations from 1932, see P. Salner, *Židia na Slovensku medzi tradíciou a asimiláciou*, Bratislava 2000.

significant, as the main mission of the organization was to reinforce the physical robustness of the Jewish and consolidate the morals⁶³ of the Jewish youth. The following types of sport were involved in the sport club: tennis, swimming, box, football, wrestling, track and fields, fencing and ping pong. The club was able to win the Slovak national title in wrestling. The organization *Hakoach* was of a similar nature. The sport club was gradually creating conditions for its activities. Consequently, a tennis stadium and a corresponding stand with seats was built.

Most organizations and communities were established in Bratislava first, but *Jewish youth organization's* (1899) first place of work was in Kežmarok. Karpathen-Post acknowledges with pleasure: "The youth which up to now was forced to look for entertainment in public joints can find pleasant and useful activities in the rooms of the organization now. The large attendance at scientific meeting that take place every week suggests that one can find understanding, spiritual striving for real love and enthusiasm for history and literature among the members of this organization"⁶⁴.

Hašomer Hacair youth movement was highly active in the cultural sphere during the years of the First Czechoslovak Republic, "the Jewish Solidarity was adapting to new reality"⁶⁵. The movement was of a leftist orientation, members were organized, wearing blue shirts. It was the Jewish young men from Poland, crossing Slovakia on their way to Palestine, who helped establish Zionist youth movement which, using the scouts methods, aimed at raising the young. The name of the movement was Hašomer (the guardian). They merged with the Kadima (forward) movement from the Carpathian Ruthenia. The new unified movement was called Hašomer Kadima. The movement requested their members to be ready for the life in Palestine. Creative methods, which emphasized the living in nature and fighting for justice and friendship, were implemented. Between the two world wars, the movement operated five kibbutzim, whose members settled in Palestine. Its name changed to *Hašomer Hacair* in 1928.

After the liberation, the movement restored its activity; it created homes for the youth of the street, whose dominant members were children. These children came back from the camps without parents. The movement operated kibbutzim, whose members went to Palestine and retraining centres were also established. Two kibbutzim were found in Palestine – kibbutz Šomrat and kibbutz Lehavot Chaviva. However, the groups from Hašomer Hacair from the Czech Republic and Slovakia also lived in many other kibbutzim.

With the help of Jewish religious community and existing Jewish social institutions and associations, the organization was able to achieve a notable success within helping others⁶⁶. After the end of the democratic regime a lot of its

⁶³ P. Frankl, op. cit., p. 105.

⁶⁴ N. Baráthová, *Židovská komunita v Kežmarku*. [online], [2014-10-02]. Available at: <http://www.ecavkk.sk/texty/zidia%20v%20Kezmarku.rtf>.

⁶⁵ A. Nir, op. cit., p. 13–14).

⁶⁶ H. Gold et al., *Židia v Bratislave...*, p. 138–139.

members moved to Israel, therefore, the movement stopped its activity as there was not anybody to lead it and support it anymore. Up to its dissolution Hašomer Hacair fought for freedom and justice and had been promoting these ideas for almost 28 years. The organization impacted the history of the Czechoslovak nation and its thinking by their ideas and concepts.

Conclusion

The activity of Jewish organizations and edification they worked on were beneficial not only for the Jewish population at the time of their existence. It was also reinforcing the economic and the whole cultural development of the Slovak society. By introducing the history of Jews in Slovakia, the complex relationships and the viability of the Jewish community in Slovakia are pointed out. We paid attention to particular Jewish organizations which were found in the 18th and 19th century and which were developing their activities in the same era. They significantly fulfilled social care and educational needs of the community and they were a model for the other groups of population in many respects. Jewish religious communities still do exist in Slovakia nowadays. The central federation of Jewish religious communities unites all the religious communities in bigger Slovak towns, such as Bratislava, Nitra, Žilina and Košice up to this day. They keep and promote traditional Jewish holidays and traditions, e.g. there is an organization called Ester in Košice which tries to preserve the Jewish culture and to support the Jewish community. All these activities deserve attention and further studies since they are a part of the European cultural heritage.

Summary

This contribution provides an insight into activities of the Jewish ethnic groups in modern age with the emphasis on cultural development in Slovakia, particularly in 17th, 18th and 19th century. Our main focus is on important milestones of this community as we would like to understand the context of collective influence of Jewish culture in Slovakia in the present day. We also point out the distinctiveness of Jewish activities which were a significant factor with regard to the life of the whole Slovak society of that time. Moreover, these activities gave the uplift to Slovak culture and possibly the entire society.