Episode 15 – Hasidic Judaism and Romania

Hello again, I am Adrian Iosifescu, your host of the History of Romanian Jews podcast and you're listening to episode 15. Today we will be discussing Hasidic Judaism in its relationship to the Romanian lands.

Btw, you just have listened to Hasidim music. For the full song and other melodies please follow the links provided in the episode notes.

Haredi Judaism

Let's talk first about **Haredi Jews**.

Strictly Orthodox Jews are often referred to as Haredi, which stems from the Hebrew word *hared*, meaning to tremble. Added meaning is drawn from a verse in Isaiah, in which God says: "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at my word." Haredi is something of a catch-all term and encompasses a broad range of groups who are socially conservative Orthodox Jews but of varying practices and traditions. They are united however, in their absolute adherence to the Torah in determining every aspect of their lives.

Defining people as Orthodox is a comparatively modern thing that did not come about until the advent of Reform Judaism in the 19th century. The term "ultra-Orthodox" is frowned upon, as the "ultra" is thought to suggest extremism. While some may refer to themselves as Haredi, others may use the term *heimishe Yidden* meaning traditional Jews in Yiddish (the word is pronounced with a long i rather than a short one, as in the racial slur).

The Haredis are loosely divided into *Hasidic* and *Misnagdim*.

Misnagdim which literally means opponents was a religious movement among the Jews of Eastern Europe which resisted and opposed the rise of Hasidism in the 18th and 19th centuries. The *Misnagdim* were particularly concentrated in Lithuania. The most severe clashes between the factions took place in the latter third of the 18th century; the failure to contain Hasidism led the *Misnagdim* to develop distinct religious philosophies and communal institutions, which were not merely a perpetuation of the old status quo but often innovative. The most notable results of these efforts, pioneered by Chaim of Volozhin and continued by his disciples, were the modern, independent *yeshiva* and the Musar movement, a Jewish spiritual practice that gives concrete instructions on how to live a meaningful and ethical life. Musar is virtue-based ethics, on the idea that by cultivating inner virtues, we improve ourselves. This is in contrast to most Jewish ethical teachings, which are rule-based. Since the late 19th century, tensions with the Hasidim largely subsided, and the heirs of *Misnagdim* adopted the epithet of **Litvaks**.

We will leave Misnagdim for now and return to our main topic, Hasidism.

Hasidic History & Beliefs

Hasidism is a lifestyle and ideology that each sect expresses differently, though they share the common values of love of God, love for all Jewish people, and love of studying the Torah.

The Hasidic movement was founded in the 18th century by Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer (ca. 1698 – 1760), known as the Baal Shem Tov (which means “master of the good name”), born south of the Prut, in the northern frontier of Moldova in Romania. Little is known for certain about Israel ben Eliezer. Though not a scholar, he was sufficiently learned to become notable in the communal hall of study and marry into the rabbinic elite, his wife being the divorced sister of a rabbi; in his later years, he became wealthy and famous, as attested by contemporary chronicles. Apart from that, most information about him is derived from Hasidic hagiographic accounts. These claim that as a boy he was recognized by one "Rabbi Adam Baal Shem Tov" who entrusted him with great secrets of the Torah, passed in his illustrious family for centuries; that Baal Shem Tov later spent a decade in the Carpathian Mountains as a hermit, where he was visited by the Biblical prophet Ahijah who taught him more; and that at the age of thirty-six, he was granted heavenly permission to reveal himself as a great kabbalist and miracle worker.
By the 1740s, it is verified that he relocated to the town of Medzhybizh, western Ukraine, and became recognized and popular in Podolia (west-central and south-western parts of Ukraine and in northeastern Moldova) and beyond. It is well attested that he emphasized several known kabbalistic concepts, formulating his own teachings to some degree.
He taught about God’s love for all Jewish people. Also important to his teachings was an emphasis on one’s individual connection to God through the Torah and mitzvahs (good deeds and divine commandments from the Torah). The Baal Shem Tov stressed the immanence of God and his presence in the material world, and, that therefore, physical acts, such as eating, have an actual influence on the spiritual sphere and may serve to hasten the achievement of communion with the divine (*devekut*). He was known to pray ecstatically and with great intention, in order to provide channels for the divine light to flow into the Earthly realm. The Baal Shem Tov stressed the importance of joy and contentment in the worship of God, rather than the abstinence and self- mortification deemed essential to becoming a pious mystic, and of fervent and vigorous prayer as a means of spiritual elation instead of severe asceticism, but many of his immediate disciples reverted in part to the older doctrines, especially in disavowing sexual pleasure even in marital relations. In that, Baal Shem Tov laid the foundation for a popular movement, offering a far less rigorous course for the masses to gain a significant religious experience. At that time, the Hasidim, Hebrew for “pious ones,” numbered in the millions in Eastern and Central Europe.

Jewish mysticism is an essential part of Hasidic teaching. Hasidic leaders strive to make Jewish mystical texts (such as the Kabbalistic writings of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Isaac Luria) accessible and practical to all followers. Music and stories are an important part of the Hasidic culture, inspiring a deeper connection between man and God.

Hasidism is noted for its religious conservatism and social seclusion. Its members adhere closely both to Orthodox Jewish practice and the traditions of Eastern European Jews like various special styles of dress and the use of the Yiddish language, which are nowadays associated almost exclusively with Hasidism.
Hasidic teachings emphasize God's immanence in the universe, the need to be one with Him at all times, the devotional aspect of religious practice, and the spiritual dimension of corporeality and mundane acts. *Hasidim*, the adherents of Hasidism, are organized in independent

sects known as "courts" or dynasties, each headed by its own hereditary male leader, a Rebbe. Reverence and submission to the Rebbe are key tenets, as he is considered a spiritual authority with whom the follower must bond to gain closeness to God. The various "courts" share basic convictions, but operate apart and possess unique traits and customs. Affiliation is often retained in families for generations, and being Hasidic is as much a sociological factor – entailing birth into a specific community and allegiance to a dynasty of Rebbes – as it is a religious one.

Historic Causes for Hasidism

Let's look briefly at factors which can be said to have characterized and influenced this period of Jewish history when Hasidism had spread:

One of the main causes was the **confounding instability of Jewish life** in those years as experienced by the Jewish communities in Podolia and South Eastern Poland which included (a) the massacre of entire Jewish communities perpetrated by the enslaved Ukrainian peasants rebelling against their Polish masters during an uprising during 1648-1668, headed by Bohdan Chmielnicski; (b) the Russo-Swedish war which was fought for control of the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom. This conflict took place during 1654-1656 in Poland and Lithuania and resulted in mass murder of thousands of Jews who were charged as traitors by the Poles; (c) the continuing Muslim Tatar incursions into the Ukraine to capture white slaves for the markets in the Moslem world (1660-1699) (d) the Turkish invasion of Podolia (1672-1699); (e) "The Great Northern War" (1700-1721), that was fought between Russia and Sweden on Polish soil in relation to the coronation of August II from Saxony as the King of Poland, who was supported by the Russians Tsar and rejected by the Swedish King. This war was followed by an internal Polish war, the war of the Polish Succession 1733-1738 between August III (supported by the Russians) and Stanislaw Leszczynsk (supported by the Swedes).

The loss of life within the Jewish community in the Ukraine and in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth between the years 1648-1768 was overwhelmingly in the sheer numbers involved in the course of the Ukrainian revolt (over one hundred thousand Jews perished at the hands of the Cossacks according to Polish historians. Mass pogroms of Jews also broke out in those areas from which Polish forces had withdrawn) and the various wars and invasions that followed.

The second phenomenon that marked this period in Jewish history was the rise of **Sabbatianism**, a prophetic messianic movement founded by Sabbatai Zevi (1626-1676) in the last third of the 17th century. Sabbatai Zevi was actively supported by the so-called "prophet" Nathan of Gaza (1643-1680) who maintained that the gift of prophecy had been restored and that he had been divinely informed that Sabbatai Zevi is the messiah. Sabbatian teachings entailed messianic hopes of both meta-historical vengeance against those who murdered thousands of helpless Jews, as well as messianic hopes for redemption of those who survived.

The third phenomenon that affected Jewish life in the period of the formation of Hasidism was "**the Catholic reaction**" within Poland occurring in the last third of the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century. The Catholic Church in Poland was threatened by the dissemination of the ideals of the Protestant Reformation in neighboring countries (Germany, Prussia,

Czechoslovakia, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Denmark) and initiated a number of steps to strengthen its exclusive sacred position in the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom. Those steps included reinstating those medieval anti-Semitic constraints which included the coerced conversion of Jews to Catholicism, the abduction of Jewish children in order to baptize, and raise them as Christians, false accusations against Jews in all economic, social and religious dimensions, the publication and dissemination of anti-Semitic literature, as well as the frequent orchestration of murderous blood libels.

Finally, another factor was the **decline of the traditional authority structures**. In general, the magnates and nobles held much sway over the nomination of both rabbis and communal elders, to such a degree that the masses often perceived them as mere lackeys of the land owners. The leaders' ability to serve as legitimate arbiters in disputes, especially those concerning the regulation of leasehold rights over alcohol distillation and other monopolies in the estates, was severely diminished. The reduced prestige of the establishment, and the need for an alternative source of authority to pass judgement, left a vacuum which Hasidic charismatics eventually filled. They transcended old communal institutions, to which all the Jews of a locality were subordinate, and had groups of followers in each town across vast territories.

Also, the formative age of Hasidism coincided with the rise of numerous **religious revival movements across the world**, including the First Great Awakening in New England, German Pietism, Wahhabism in Arabia, and the Russian Old Believers who opposed the established church. Hasidism rejected the existing order, decrying it as stale and overly hierarchic. They offered what they described as more spiritual, candid, and simple substitute.

The propagation of Kabbalah made the Jewish masses susceptible to Hasidic ideas, themselves, in essence, a popularized version of the teaching. Indeed, Hasidism actually emerged when its founders determined to openly practice it, instead of remaining a secret circle of ascetics, as was the manner of almost all past kabbalists.

Hasidic Organization

In the early days of the movement, a particular Rebbe's following usually resided in the same town, and Hasidim were categorized by their leaders' settlement: a Hasid of Belz, Vizhnitz, and so forth. Later, especially after World War II, the dynasties retained the names of their original Eastern European settlements when moving to the West or Israel. Thus, for example, the "court" established by Joel Teitelbaum in 1905 in Transylvania remained known after its namesake town, Sathmar, Satu Mare in Romanian, even though its headquarters lay in New York, and almost all other Hasidic sects likewise – albeit some groups founded overseas were named accordingly, like the Boston Hasidic Dynasty.

Akin to his spiritual status, the Rebbe is also the administrative head of the community. Sects often possess their own synagogues, study halls and internal charity mechanisms, and ones sufficiently large also maintain entire educational systems. The Rebbe is the supreme figure of authority, and not just for the institutions. The rank-and-file Hasidim are also expected to

consult with him on important matters, and often seek his blessing and advice. There are several "courts" with many thousands of member households each, and hundreds of smaller ones. The rebbe is personally attended by aides known as *Gabbai* or *Mashbak*.
Many particular Hasidic rites surround the leader. On the Sabbath, holidays, and celebratory occasions, Rebbes hold a *Tisch* (table), a large feast for their male adherents. Together, they sing, dance and eat, and the head of the sect shakes the hands of his followers to bless them, and often delivers a sermon. A *Chozer*, a "repeater", selected for his good memory, commits the text to writing after the Sabbath (any form of writing during the Sabbath itself being forbidden). In many "courts", the remnants of Rebbe's meal, supposedly suffused with holiness, are handed out and even fought over. Often, a very large dish is prepared beforehand, and the Rebbe only tastes it before passing it to the crowd. A central custom, which serves as a major factor in the economics of most "courts", is the *Pidyon*, or "Ransom", better known by its Yiddish name *Kvitel*, "little note". Adherents submit a written petition, which the master may assist with on behalf of his sanctity, adding a sum of money for either charity or the leader's needs.

As of 2016, there were over 130,000 Hasidic households worldwide, about 5% of the global Jewish population. Approximately half of Hasidic Jewish people live in Israel, another 30-40% live in America, and the rest live in communities across the world, most notably in London, Antwerp, and Montreal.

The terms *hasid* and *hasidut*, meaning "pietist" and "piety", have a long history in Judaism. The Talmud and other old sources refer to the "Pietists of Old" (*Hasidim haRishonim*) who would contemplate an entire hour in preparation for prayer. The phrase denoted extremely devoted individuals who not only observed the Law to its letter, but performed good deeds even beyond it. The first to adopt the epithet collectively were apparently the *hasidim* in Second Temple period Judea, known as Hasideans after the Greek rendering of their name, who perhaps served as the model for those mentioned in the Talmud. The title continued to be applied as an honorific for the exceptionally devout. In 12th-century Rhineland, a loosely defined area of Western Germany along the Rhine, or *Ashkenaz* in Jewish parlance, another prominent school of ascetics named themselves *hasidim*; to distinguish them from the rest, later research employed the term Ashkenazi Hasidim. In the 16th century, when Kabbalah spread, the title also became associated with it. Jacob ben Hayyim Zemah wrote in his glossa on Isaac Luria's version of the Shulchan Aruch that, "One who wishes to tap the hidden wisdom, must conduct himself in the manner of the Pious."
The movement founded by Israel Ben Eliezer in the 18th century adopted the term *hasidim* in the original connotation. But when the sect grew and developed specific attributes, from the 1770s, the names gradually acquired a new meaning. Its common adherents, belonging to groups each headed by a spiritual leader, were henceforth known as Hasidim.
This linguistic transformation paralleled that of the word *tzaddik*, "righteous", which the Hasidic leaders adopted for themselves – though they are known colloquially as Rebbes or by the honorific *Admor*. Originally denoting an observant, moral person, in Hasidic literature, *tzaddik* became synonymous with the often-hereditary master heading a sect of followers.

In most Hasidim groups, apostates, people who abandoned their Hasidic community, may face threats, hostility, violence, and various punitive measures, among them separation of children from their disaffiliated parents, especially in divorce cases. Due to their strictly religious education and traditionalist upbringing, many who leave their sects have few viable work skills or even command of the local language, and their integration into the broader society is often difficult.

Hasidic Garb

Within the Hasidic world, it is possible to distinguish different Hasidic groups by subtle differences in dress. Much of Hasidic dress was historically the clothing of all Eastern European Jews, influenced by the style of Polish–Lithuanian nobility. Furthermore, Hasidim have attributed religious origins to specific Hasidic items of clothing.

Hasidic men most commonly wear dark overclothes. On weekdays, they wear a long, black, cloth jacket called a rekel, and on Jewish Holy Days, the bekishe *zaydene kapote* which in Yiddish means a satin caftan, a long black jacket, but made of satin fabric traditionally silk. Most Hasidim do not wear neckties.

Various symbolic and religious qualities are attributed to Hasidic dress, though they are mainly apocryphal, and the clothes' origin is cultural and historical. For example, the long overcoats are considered modest, the shtreimel, a fur hat , is supposedly related to shaatnez, the biblical prohibition against wearing wool and linen together in the same garment, so the fur hat keeps one warm, without using wool. The fur headdresses on the Sabbath, once common among all wedded Eastern European Jewish males and still worn by non-Hasidic Perushim, Jewish disciples of the Vilna Gaon, Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, who left Lithuania at the beginning of the 19th century to settle in Palestine.

On Sabbath, shoes are lace less, in order not to have to tie a knot, a prohibited action. A *gartel,* Yiddish for belt, divides the Hasid's lower parts from his upper parts, implying modesty and chastity, and for kabbalistic reasons, Hasidim button their clothes right over left.

Hasidic men customarily wear black hats during the weekdays, as do nearly all Haredi men today. A variety of hats are worn depending on the group: Chabad men often pinch their hats to form a triangle on the top, Satmar men wear an open-crown hat with rounded edges, and *Samet* (velvet) or *biber* (beaver) hats are worn by many Galician and Hungarian Hasidic men.

Following a Biblical commandment not to shave the sides of one's face (Leviticus 19:27), male members of most Hasidic groups wear long, uncut sidelocks called payot (or *peyes*). Some Hasidic men shave off the rest of their hair. Not every Hasidic group requires long peyos, and not all Jewish men with peyos are Hasidic, but all Hasidic groups discourage the shaving of one's beard. Most Hasidic boys receive their first haircuts ceremonially at the age of three

Hasidic women wear clothing adhering to the principles of modest dress in Jewish law. This includes long conservative skirts and sleeves past the elbow, as well as covered necklines. Also, the women wear stockings to cover their legs; in some Hasidic groups, such as Satmar or Toldot Aharon, the stockings must be opaque. In keeping with Jewish law, married women cover their hair, using either a *sheitel* (wig), a *tichel* (headscarf), a *shpitzel*, a snood, a hat, or a beret. In

some Hasidic groups, such as Satmar, women may wear two head coverings, a wig and a scarf, or a wig and a hat.

Hasidic Family
Hasidic Jews, like many other Orthodox Jews, typically produce large families; the average Hasidic family in the United States has 8 children. This is followed out of a desire to fulfill the Biblical mandate to "be fruitful and multiply".

Most Hasidim speak the language of their countries of residence but use Yiddish among themselves as a way of remaining distinct and preserving tradition. Thus, children are still learning Yiddish today, and the language, despite predictions to the contrary, has not died. Yiddish newspapers are still published, and Yiddish fiction is being written, primarily aimed at women. Even films in Yiddish are being produced within the Hasidic community. Some Hasidic groups, such as Satmar and Toldot Aharon, actively oppose the everyday use of Hebrew, which they consider a holy tongue. The use of Hebrew for anything other than prayer and study is, according to them, profane, and so, Yiddish is the vernacular and common tongue for most Hasidim around the world.

Hasidic Dynasties
In Israel, the largest Hasidic concentrations are in the Haredi neighborhoods of Jerusalem, including Ramot Alon and Batei Ungarin, in the cities of Bnei Brak and El'ad, and in the West Bank settlements of Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit. There is considerable presence in other specifically Orthodox municipalities or enclaves, like Kiryat Sanz, Netanya.
In the United States, most Hasidim reside in New York, though there are small communities across the entire country. Brooklyn, particularly the neighborhoods of Borough Park, Williamsburg, and Crown Heights, has an especially large population.
Another large population resides in the hamlet of Monsey in the Hudson Valley region of New York; in the same region, New Square and Kiryas Joel are rapidly growing all-Hasidic enclaves, one founded by the Skver dynasty and the other by Satmar.
In Britain, Stamford Hill is home to the largest Hasidic community in the country, and there are others in London and Manchester.
In Canada, Kiryas Tosh is a settlement populated entirely by Tosh Hasidim, and there are more adherents of other sects in and around Montreal.

There are more than a dozen Hasidic dynasties with a large following, and over a hundred which have small or minuscule adherence, sometimes below twenty people, with the presumptive Rebbe holding the title more as a matter of prestige.
Many "courts" became completely extinct during the Holocaust, like the **Aleksander** Hasidic dynasty from Aleksandrów Łódzki in Poland, which numbered tens of thousands in 1939 and barely exists today.
The largest sect in the world, with some 26,000 member households, which constitute 20% of all Hasidim, is **Satmar**, founded in 1905 in the Romanian Satu Mare and currently based in Williamsburg, Brooklyn and Kiryas Joel. Satmar is known for its extreme conservatism and opposition to both the state of Israel and Zionism. The sect underwent a schism in 2006, and

two competing factions emerged, led by rival brothers Aaron Teitelbaum and Zalman Teitelbaum.
The second-largest "court" worldwide, with some 11,600 households (or 9% of all Hasidism), is **Ger,** established in 1859 at Góra Kalwaria, near Warsaw. For decades, it was the dominant power in Israel and espoused a moderate line toward Zionism and modern culture.
The third-largest dynasty is **Vizhnitz**, a charismatic sect founded in 1854 at Vyzhnytsia, Bukovina. A moderate group involved in Israeli politics, it is split into several branches, which maintain cordial relations. The main partition is between Vizhnitz-Israel and Vizhnitz-Monsey. In total, all Vizhnitz sub-"courts" constitute over 10,500 households.
The fourth major dynasty, with some 7,000 households, is **Belz**, established 1817 in namesake town of Belz, north of Lviv, in Ukraine.
The **Bobover** dynasty, founded 1881 in Bobowa, West Galicia, constitutes some 4,500 households in total, and has undergone a bitter succession strife since 2005, eventually forming the "Bobov" (3,000 households) and "Bobov-45" (1,500 households) sects.

There are two other populous Hasidic sub-groups, which do not function as classical Rebbe-headed "courts", but as de-centralized movements, retaining some of the characteristics of early Hasidism. **Breslov** rose under its charismatic leader Nachman of Breslov in the early 19th century. Critical of all other Rebbes, he forbade his followers to appoint a successor upon his death in 1810. His acolytes led small groups of adherents, persecuted by other Hasidim, and disseminated his teachings. The original philosophy of the sect elicited great interest among modern scholars, and that led many newcomers to Orthodox Judaism to join it. Numerous Breslov communities, each led by its own rabbis, now have thousands of full-fledged followers, and far more admirers and semi-committed supporters. It is estimated that the fully committed population of Breslovers may be estimated at 7,000 households.
Chabad-Lubavitch, originating in the 1770s, did have hereditary leadership, but always stressed the importance of self-study, rather than reliance on the Righteous. Its seventh, and last, leader, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, converted it into a vehicle for Jewish outreach. By his death in 1994, it had many more semi-engaged supporters than Hasidim in the strict sense, and they are still hard to distinguish. Chabad's own internal phone-books list some 16,800 member households. No one succeeded Schneerson, and the sect operates as a large network of communities with independent leaders.

Let’s now take a closer look at two of the major Hasidim communities, the Satmar and the Chabad.

Satmar Hasidism
Satmar Hasidism originated from the city then Szatmárnémeti, in Hungary, now Satu Mare in Romania, where the sect was founded in 1905 by Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum as an offshoot of the Sighet dynasty (from the Sighet town in Romania) which was led by Teitelbaum’s father. When his father died, the position of Grand Rebbe passed to Teitelbaum’s older brother. A small following viewed Joel as the true heir and chose to follow him from Sighet to Satu Mare. ln 1928 he was appointed the chief rabbi of Satmar. This caused major conflicts within the Jewish

community, but Teitelbaum eventually accepted the position and became a prominent Hasidic leader.
In March 1944, the German Army occupied Hungary. The Jewish population was moved to the Satu Mare ghetto and then quickly deported to concentration camps. Most died in these camps. Rabbi Teitelbaum was spared by a rescue mission that sent him to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, with the knowledge that he would soon board a train for Switzerland, and then go to Palestine. His family died in the German camps.
In 1946, after two and a half years in Palestine, Rabbi Teitelbaum moved to the United States. Rabbi Teitelbaum set out to make a secure home for his followers in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, after most of the Satmar sect was killed during the Holocaust. Thousands of Hasidic Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe whose communities were destroyed moved to Williamsburg and became loyal members of the Satmar sect during this time. Because of America's separation of church and state, Teitelbaum was better able to establish the Satmar sect as an independent community with its own network of business and social institutions. The Satmar chose Williamsburg because they saw it as a place separate from the material and cultural distractions of middle-class Jewish life because it wasn't already a Jewish neighborhood.
Due to continued population growth and the challenges associated with living in a crowded city, the Satmar sect began constructing Kiryas Joel, a new all-Hasidic village in upstate New York. After Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum's successor Moshe died in 2006, a divide in the sect occurred when both his sons wanted to lead the Satmars. Now, Aaron Teitelbaum leads the Satmars of Kiryas Joel, and his brother Zalman Teitelbaum leads the Satmars of Williamsburg. Kiryas Joel's population is now over 25,000, and is estimated to become a city of 100,000 by 2040.

Satmar Community and Culture
One of the fundamental beliefs that distinguishes the Satmar sect is their opposition to the state of Israel. They believe that the Jewish people were not meant to return to Israel through exertion of physical force, but were instead meant to wait for divine intervention and messianic destiny.
Another key tenet of Satmar beliefs is a rejection of modernity and a preservation of three things: names, language, and clothing. As leading 19th century Austro-Hungarian Rabbi Moses Sofer dictated, "all that is new is forbidden by the Torah." This belief has continued to govern the Satmar community. In modern day, technically the use of TVs, computers, and other technology is discouraged, but allowances are made in order to facilitate daily life and communication. Use of the internet is heavily restricted. An essential part of this rejection of modernity is the use of Yiddish as a primary language and the wearing of clothing that honor attire worn by their ancestors and also serves to separate and distinguish followers from the rest of the world.
Religious education is a top priority for the group, and the community runs its own schools known as yeshivas. Some who have left the community have alleged that the yeshivas teach minimal, if any, secular curriculum such as courses in English or math leading to graduates unprepared to function in the economy at a basic level. Community advocates dispute this fact, arguing that study of the Talmud, a central text of Judaism, provides all the necessary training for young people's growth.

The distinctions in education practices for Satmar girls and boys is representative of broader gendered assumptions for men and women in the community. Satmar boys engage in extensive study of Talmudic and Hasidic literature, while girls receive an education more focused on Jewish laws and Hasidic traditions. Girls receive more secular education in English, social studies, and sciences, as they are expected to obtain paid employment to help out their families financially and save for their own wedding and future families. However, the pursuit of higher education for women is discouraged, as it might interfere with their ability to have and nurture a large family.

Adult Satmar women often work, though they primarily take on roles with circumscribed responsibilities like secretary, shopkeeper, or yeshiva teacher. After marriage, many men go into full time study of the Talmud at a kollel (an institute for advanced study of the Torah and other religious literature reserved for married men), for a few years. As the couple matures and has their own family, strong emphasis is placed on the man supporting his family and community institutions. In general, modesty is the commanding principle of female life, and mixed social events, coeducation, or performing in front of men is prohibited.

Satmar marriages are usually arranged when women are between the ages of 18-22. Economic prosperity and social standing of the parents are the main factors taken into consideration in arranging a suitable marriage. Children of famous Satmar lineages, children of famous scholars and authors, or children of rabbis or institutional leaders are the most sought-after partners. At the wedding celebration, men and women celebrate separately with the bride and groom, and the two receptions are held simultaneously. The bride and groom are separated from the engagement until the wedding and are reunited in a ceremony in which the groom puts a veil over the bride's face, called the bedeken. Then, the actual ceremony takes place under a chuppah, a canopy over the couple. At the end of the wedding, family members or respected individuals come to dance a "mitzvah tantz" with the bride, a dance in which they hold one end of a long cord, and the bride holds the other end.

Chabad/Lubavitch Hasidim

Chabad, also known as Lubavitch or Habad originated from Eastern Europe and is one of the largest Hasidic dynasties. Chabad is one of the world's best-known Hasidic movements. Unlike most Hasidim groups, which are self- segregating, Chabad mainly operates in the wider world and it caters to secularized Jews.

Founded in 1775 by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the name "Chabad", is an acronym formed from the three Hebrew words formed from the three Hebrew words—Chokmah, Binah, Da'at—for the first three sefirot (emanations/powers by which God was said to become manifest) of the kabbalistic Tree of Life - "Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge"—which represent the intellectual and kabbalistic underpinnings of the movement.

The name Lubavitch derives from the town Lubavichi in Russia in which the now-dominant line of leaders resided from 1813 to 1915.

In the 1930s, the sixth Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, moved the center of the Chabad movement from Russia to Poland. After the outbreak of World War II, he moved the center of the movement to Brooklyn, New York.

Between 1951 and 1994, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson transformed the movement into one of the most widespread Jewish movements in the world. Under his leadership, Chabad established a large network of institutions that seek to satisfy the religious, social and humanitarian needs of Jews across the world. Chabad institutions provide outreach to unaffiliated Jews and humanitarian aid, as well as religious, cultural and educational activities. The global population of Chabad has been estimated to be 90,000– 95,000 adherents, accounting for 13% of the global Hasidic population. However, up to one million Jews are estimated to attend Chabad services at least once a year. Historian Jonathan Sarna has characterized Chabad as having enjoyed the fastest rate of growth of any Jewish religious movement in the period 1946–2015.

This concludes this episode. In the next episode we will discuss the Klezmer music and its connection to Romania.

Until then be well.