

## Episode 21 – Haskalah and the Jewish dilemma: Exclusion or Assimilation

Hello, I am Adrian Iosifescu, your host of the History of Romanian Jews podcast and this is episode 21 where we will discuss the millennial Jewish dilemma: Exclusion or Assimilation in the context of the Haskalah in Romania.

You just listened to the Haskalah Yiddish anti-Hasidic song 'Der Filosof', The Philosopher. A link to the song is provided in the Notes.

### Haskalah

Haskalah, meaning "wisdom", "erudition" or "education", is viewed as the Jewish version of the European Enlightenment, an intellectual movement among the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe. It arose as a new ideological approach during the 1770s, and its last stage ended around 1881, with the rise of Jewish nationalism. The movement advocated against Jewish reclusiveness, encouraged the adoption of prevalent attire over traditional dress, while also working to diminish the authority of traditional community institutions such as rabbinic courts and boards of elders. It pursued a set of projects of cultural and moral renewal, like the revival of Hebrew language for use in secular life while concurrently strove for an optimal integration in the surrounding society. The Haskalah promoted rationalism, liberalism and enquiry. The movement encompassed a wide spectrum ranging from moderates, who hoped for maximal compromise, to radicals, who sought sweeping changes.

Its exponents called themselves Maskilim and exhorted and implemented communal, educational and cultural reforms. Haskalah collided both with the traditionalist rabbinic elite, which attempted to preserve old Jewish values and norms, and with the radical assimilationists who wished to eliminate or minimize the existence of the Jews as a separate collective.

Ha'Meassef, or "the Collector" in English, was the first Hebrew organ of the Haskalah. Founded in 1783 in Koenigsberg by pupils of Moses Mendelssohn, Hame'assef was devoted to the education of youth, the increased use of the Hebrew language, and raising the general cultural level of the people. Its publishers described themselves as Maskilim and this monthly Haskalah journal served as a literary and ideological platform for the initial Haskalah movement.

Isaac Euchel, who was the most active in organizing the Haskalah movement, crowned Moses Mendelssohn head of the movement. Mendelssohn's extraordinary success as a popular philosopher and man of letters revealed the possibilities of integration and acceptance of Jews among non-Jews. Mendelssohn also provided methods for Jews to enter the general society of Germany. A good knowledge of the German language was necessary to secure entrance into cultured German circles, and an excellent means of acquiring it was provided by Mendelssohn in his German translation of the Torah. This work became a bridge over which ambitious young Jews could pass to the great world of secular knowledge.

The emergence of the Maskilic canon reflected the movement's central and defining enterprise, the revival of Hebrew as a literary language for secular purposes. The Maskilim's attitude

toward Hebrew was derived from Enlightenment perceptions of language as reflecting both individual and collective character. To them, a corrupt tongue mirrored the inadequate condition of the Jews which they sought to ameliorate. They turned to Hebrew as their primary creative medium. They turned to the Bible as a source and standard, emphatically advocating what they termed "Pure Hebrew Tongue" and lambasting the Rabbinic style of letters, which mixed it with Aramaic. They also preferred the Sephardi pronunciation, considered more prestigious, to the Ashkenazi one, which was linked with the Jews of Poland, who were deemed backward.

During a century of activity, the Maskilim produced massive contributions which formed the first phase of modern Hebrew literature. In 1755, Moses Mendelssohn began publishing *Qohelet Musar* "The Moralist", regarded as the beginning of modern writing in Hebrew and the first journal in the language. Between 1789 and his death, Naphtali Hirz Wessely compiled *Shirei Tif'eret*, or "Poems of Glory", an eighteen-part epic cycle concerning Moses, that exerted a strong influence on all neo-Hebraic poets in the following generations. Joseph ha-Efrati Troplowitz was the Haskalah's pioneering playwright, best known for his 1794 epic drama *Melukhat Sha'ul*, or "Reign of Saul", which was printed in twelve editions by 1888. Judah Leib Ben-Ze'ev was the first modern Hebrew grammarian, and beginning with his 1796 manual of the language, he authored books which explored it and were vital reading material for young Maskilim until the end of the 19th century. Solomon Löwisohn was the first to translate Shakespeare into Hebrew. Avraham Dov Ber Lebensohn was primarily the leading poet, with his 1842 *Shirei S'fat haQodesh*, or "Verses in the Holy Tongue" considered a milestone in Hebrew poetry, and also authored biblical exegesis and educational handbooks. Abraham Mapu authored the first Hebrew full-length novel, *Ahavat Zion*, or "Love of Zion", which was published in 1853 after twenty-three years of work. Judah Leib Gordon was the most eminent poet of his generation and arguably of the whole Haskalah; his most famous work was the 1876 epic *Qotzo shel Yodh*, or "Tittle of a Jot".

The central platforms of the Maskilic "Republic of Letters" were its great periodicals. The first was the Königsberg (and later Berlin)-based *Ha-Meassef* we already mentioned, launched by Isaac Abraham Euchel in 1783 and printed with growing intervals until 1797. The magazine had several dozen writers and 272 subscribers at its pick, making it the sounding board of the Berlin Haskalah. The movement lacked an equivalent until the appearance of *Bikurei ha-I'tim* in Vienna between 1820 until 1831, serving the Moravian and Galician Haskalah. That function was later fulfilled by the Prague-based *Kerem Hemed* from 1834 to 1857, and to a lesser degree by *Kokhvei Yizhak*, published in the same city from 1845 to 1870. The Russian Haskalah was robust enough to lack any single platform. Its members published several large magazines, including the Vilnius-based *Ha-Karmel* (1860–1880), *Ha-Tsefirah* in Warsaw and many others, but the probably most influential of them was *Ha-Melitz*, launched in 1860 at Odessa by Aleksander Zederbaum.

Haskalah ideals were converted into practical steps via numerous reform programs initiated locally and independently by its activists, acting in small groups or even alone. Members of the movement sought to acquaint their people with European culture, have them adopt the

vernacular language of their lands, and integrate them into larger society. They opposed Jewish reclusiveness and self-segregation, called upon Jews to discard traditional dress in favor of the prevalent one, and preached patriotism and loyalty to the new centralized governments. They acted to weaken and limit the jurisdiction of traditional community institutions – the rabbinic courts, empowered to rule on numerous civic matters, and the board of elders, which served as lay leadership. The maskilim perceived those as remnants of medieval discrimination. They criticized various traits of Jewish society, especially child marriage – traumatized memories from unions entered at the age of thirteen or fourteen are a common theme in Haskalah literature – the use of anathema to enforce community will and the focus on only religious studies.

Maskilic reforms included educational efforts. In 1778, partisans of the movement were among the founders of the Berlin Jewish Free School, or *Hevrat Hinuch Ne'arim*, “Society for the Education of Boys”, the first institution in Ashkenazi Jewry that taught general studies in addition to the reformulated and reduced traditional curriculum. This model was applied elsewhere. Joseph Perl opened the first modern Jewish school in Galicia in Tarnopol in 1813, and Eastern European *maskilim* opened similar institutes in the Russian Pale of Settlement and Poland. Matters of faith were taught in rationalistic spirit, and the curriculum was augmented by general studies like math, vernacular language, and so forth.

Haskalah quickly spread from Germany throughout Europe. Poland and Lithuania were the heartland of Rabbinic Judaism, with its two streams of Talmudism centered primarily in Lithuania and Belarus, and Hasidic mysticism popular in Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Russia. It adapted its message to these different environments, working with the local governments to influence secular educational methods, while its writers satirized Hasidic mysticism, in favor of solely Rationalist interpretation of Judaism.

The Haskalah also resulted in the creation of a secular Jewish culture, with an emphasis on Jewish history and Jewish identity, rather than on religion. This, in turn, resulted in the political engagement of Jews in a variety of competing ways within the countries where they lived on issues that included the struggle for Jewish emancipation, involvement in new Jewish political movements, and later (in the face of continued persecutions in late nineteenth-century Europe), the development of the ideology of Zionism. One commentator describes these effects as “The emancipation of the Jews brought forth two opposed movements: the cultural assimilation, begun by Moses Mendelssohn, and Zionism, founded by Theodor Herzl in 1896.

### **Romanian Haskalah**

In the Jewish communities of the Romanian lands the Haskalah movement began and developed later than in the Jewish communities of the neighboring countries; an organized Haskalah movement emerged at the beginning of the 1850s.

As you may recall from previous podcast episodes, The Romanian Constitution of 1866 allowed the naturalization of foreigners of the Christian religion only. The Romanian

government claimed that it could not give Romanian citizenship to the Jews, because they didn't speak Romanian, and because they live as an isolated group. Anti-Semitic steps adopted by the government persecuted the Jewish minority. The "Jewish question" in Romania became an international concern. In October 1872, an international Jewish conference with delegates from France, England, Prussia, Belgium, Netherlands, USA and Romania was organized in Brussels, whose aim was to find a solution for the Jews of Romania. The majority of the delegates suggested improving the situation of the Jews in Romania and decided on the foundation of a special committee in Vienna, to act for the improvement of the situation of the Romanian Jews. This committee, which acted as an executive commission, was called "Kommittee fuer die Rumaenischen Juden" Committee for Romanian Jews. This Vienna committee asked the Jews of Romania to find modern schools and to send their children to them, because only this way would they be accepted by the Romanians who would cease to see them as foreigners. The authors mention that there are modern Jewish schools, which function on the base of the principles of the Haskalah in only three towns of Romania: Bucharest, Galatz, Botoshani, and this may not be sufficient.

The Haskalah movement in the Jewish community of Romania was strongly influenced by the Haskalah movement of the Jewish communities of Galicia and Bucovina, which were Austrian provinces in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many Maskills of Romania came from Galicia.

One Maskill who came from Galicia was **Benjamin Schwarzfeld**. Benjamin Schwarzfeld was born at Stanislawow, Galicia in 1822 as the son of a traditional merchant. He received a traditional education, learning Torah and Hebrew language, as well as a modern education, learning the German language, and became a maskil. Benjamin Schwarzfeld founded a modern school in his native town; this school was active for only two years. In 1849, Benjamin Schwarzfeld moved to Jassy, invited by the local *maskil* Mikhel Alter Finkelstein to marry his daughter, Channah-Leah. At the marriage ceremony, the bride's father and the bridegroom dressed in modern rather than traditional clothes: this was a first for the Jewish community in Jassy.

Later, Benjamin Schwarzfeld became a friend of the *maskil* teacher and rabbi Matitياهو Simcha Rabener, the editor of the Hebrew review Zimrat Ha'aretz of Jassy where he published articles. In 1860, when the government published a circular inviting the Jews to change their traditional clothes for modern ones and proposed that they send their children to public schools, Benjamin Schwarzfeld supported this idea. He also renewed his support of Jewish education based on the ideology of the Haskalah movement. He purchased ground to build a school, which he built with his own money. In 1860, three modern Jewish schools opened in Jassy. His polemics on the cultural situation of the Jews of Romania from 1873, as well as his activity as a maskil active in the founding of modern Jewish schools in Jassy are an interesting chapter of the history of the Haskalah movement of Romania. In a polemical article, published as a Hebrew language leaflet in 1873 as a response to the claim by the Committee for Romanian Israelites of Vienna, that the low level of modern education of the Jews of Romania does not justify their emancipation, Benjamin Schwarzfeld argued that the level of modern Jewish education in Romania is not so far behind that existent in Galicia and Russia. Benjamin Schwarzfeld opposed the idea of

so-called "merited emancipation" held by the Committee of Vienna, and affirmed that emancipation would advance modern education among Romanian Jews, who would be more interested in modern education if they were integrated into Romanian society. In his leaflet, Benjamin Schwarzfeld deals with the state of modern education among the Jews of Jassy, where he lived. Benjamin Schwarzfeld's response to the Committee of Vienna remained unknown to historians of Romanian Jewry for a long time.

Another Maskil who came from Galicia was **Yehuda ben Mordehai Barasch**. Julius (Yehuda) Barash was born in Brody, Galicia in 1815 into a Hasidic family. As a youth he had a traditional Jewish education, before eventually engaging with the ideas of the Haskalah. He studied philosophy at Leipzig University and in 1839 changed to a doctorate of medicine at the University of Berlin, which he completed in 1841. Barasch tried to settle in Moldavia, but the authorities refused to give him the license to practice medicine, so he settled in Wallachia. In 1842, he was a physician in Călărași, then in 1845, in Craiova and finally settled in Bucharest. He taught natural sciences at the Saint Sava Academy in 1852 and then was a professor at Bucharest's School of Medicine and Pharmacy. Beside working as a doctor, he became a radical and ardent Romanian patriot as a friend of C. A. Rosetti and Ion Heliade Rădulescu. He was a popularizer of medical science and of natural science in general, and the first Jewish Romanian journalist. In 1856—1859 he edited a journal *Isis sau Natura* (Isis or Nature), the first popular science magazine in Romania. The magazine published studies of astronomy, hypothetical articles about the plurality of worlds or about the most popular inventions of the time, such as aerostat and submarine. In 1858, Barasch was also the founder of the first children's hospital in Bucharest. From 1858 to 1860, he treated some 2,000 children in a 40-bed facility in his own house, in the Crucea de Piatră quarter of the Dudești neighborhood of Bucharest. In 1857, together with Aaron Aser, a Sephardic Jew, and A. Vainberg, an Ashkenazi Jew, Barasch edited *Israelitul Român* ("The Romanian Israelite"), the first Romanian-language newspaper of the Jewish community in Romania, that was to remain in print for almost 100 years.

Particular note should be made of an article published by Isaac Leib Weinberg in the *Israelitul Român*, asking for the establishment of a choral temple in Bucharest, and proposing that its members renounce foreign protection and adopt Romanian citizenship. His idea was to combine Romanian citizenship with Jewish religious Reformism.

The first generation of Maskilim in Romania were influenced and led by Jews like Benjamin Schwarzfeld and Yehuda ben Mordehai Barasch, born abroad, who's native tongue was German and Hebrew. The second generation of Romanian Maskilim were born in Romania and their native tongue was Romanian and Hebrew. These are people like Elias, Moses and Wilhelm Schwarzfeld, Moses Gaster, Lazăr Șăineanu and Moise Ronetti-Roman.

The focus of the first generation Romanian Maskilim was the revival of Hebrew language for use in secular life and Jewish education beyond just the religious one in order to facilitate Jewish integration into the Romanian society. They advocated for the need to emancipate the Jews and for the Jews to learn the Romanian language and integrate into Romanian society, becoming "Romanian Israelites".

The second generation of maskilim, the generation of 1878, was in many ways different from the first. Many of them were Romanian speakers, and among them many were researchers of Romanian philology, folklore and literature. They were naturally influenced by the ideology, thought, and orientation of the maskilim of the previous generation. They adopted the "Romanian Israelite" identity almost by default, claiming that they were Jews by faith and Romanians by nationality. They were tributary to the works of Maskilim Jacob Psantir, who had "demonstrated" the presence of the Jews in Romania from the antiquity and the middle ages, thus "proving" the existence of Jewish roots in Romania. They used his method to justify their own demand for emancipation: because they were not foreigners, but natives, they were entitled to receive citizenship, even though they were of Mosaic religion. The second generation Maskilim emphasized the Jewish efforts for emancipation and naturalization of Romanian Jewry. All of the maskilim of the second generation joined the struggle for emancipation and tried to present themselves as leaders of the Jewish population in this fight. They also promoted the ideology of the Haskalah, striving to attract Jewish children to the schools based on it. But it was not easy, because many communities had a hard time functioning, or in certain cases even ceased to exist, due to the conflict between traditionalist and Hassidic Jews on the one side and progressive Jews, or maskilim, on the other. These schools were more and more difficult to maintain as many Jews stopped paying the tax on kosher meat to the community, which was thus left without funds. In the traditional communities, Hassidism became stronger: Hassidic courts were founded at Ștefănești and Buhuși.

The decision of the Romanian government to grant individual naturalizations instead of a general emancipation inevitably influenced the Maskilims' approach to the question of double identification. Some of them, who were disappointed and ceased to believe in the possibility of ever receiving emancipation, began to support the idea of Jewish nationalism. This was the case of Samuel Pineles and Karpel Lippe, who became adepts of Jewish nationalism, without, however, giving up their fight for emancipation. Later, others followed their example, particularly in the aftermath of a series of anti-Jewish laws, which led to many expulsions from villages.

In the early 80s of the 19th century, the Haskalah movement began to show signs of disintegration. New currents, such as radical Haskalah, assimilation, Jewish nationalism, and Jewish socialism, came to replace it. It may be said that the nationalists and the assimilationists were brothers beneficiaries of the Haskalah movement, but in dispute. Both inherited the modernizing ideas of the Haskalah, but while the former adopted the idea of emigration to Palestine and renounced the idea of a double identity, the latter emphasized the will to remain in the country, supporting liberalism and integration. The first moderate assimilationists were also Maskilim of the second generation. They had historical interests and practical reasons for trying to sustain the idea of the double identity and of the right to obtain citizenship with historical arguments. Most of them were born in Romania. They spoke Romanian and were graduates of the Romanian-Jewish modern schools. They saw themselves as Romanians of Mosaic religion.

The second generation of Romanian Maskilim provided a number of firsts: the first Romanian-language Jewish poet – J.B. Brociner; the first novelist to deal with topics pertaining to Jewish life – Elias Schwarzfeld; the first chronicler of the Jews in Romania – Jacob Psantir; the first woman of Jewish origin to write literary sketches in Romanian – Ana Jurescu; the first Romanian-language Jewish theater play - Moise Ronetti-Roman; the first historians of Jews in Romania – Elias and Moses Schwarzfeld, the first epigraphist – Wilhelm Schwarzfeld, the founders of the first generation of Romanian linguists and philologists – Moses Gaster, Lazăr Șăineanu.

The Schwarzfeld family was the first family of modern Jewish intellectuals in the Romanian space.

**Elias Schwarzfeld** was the first son of Benjamin and Chaia Schwarzfeld. He was born in Iași in 1855. In 1872, together with other young publicists educated in Romanian schools, he founded the first polemic Jewish newspaper – Vocea Apărătorului (Defender's Voice). As first editor of the Fraternitatea (Brotherhood) newspaper, he denounced the persecution faced by Jews by publishing polemic articles about the expulsion of the Jews from the locality of Brusturoasa. As a result, Elias was expelled from Romania along with ten other Jewish intellectuals. He settled in Paris, where he continued his research into the history of Jews in Romania. He was a member of the J.C.A. (Jewish Colonization Association), an organization that encouraged Jewish emigration from Romania to Canada and the United States.

**Wilhelm Schwarzfeld** was born in Iași in 1856. He was initiated into the study of Hebrew by his father, Benjamin Schwarzfeld. After graduating from high-school and receiving a bachelor degree, he became a student at the Faculty of Letters in Iași, but later decided not to continue his education there, devoting his time to individual study. In 1880, he settled in Bucharest to resume his studies in Letters and remained there until November 1885. After the expulsion of his brother Elias and the close-down of the Fraternitatea newspaper, he returned to Iași, where he explored tomb inscriptions in the local Jewish cemetery together with archaeologist Nicolae Beldiceanu and Judaism scholar M. Braunstein-Mibaschan. He returned to Bucharest to write at the Egalitatea (Equality) newspaper for many years.

**Moses Schwarzfeld** was born in Iași on 8/20 December 1857. In 1874, Moses made his debut as a publicist in the Revista Israelită of Iași. For two years, he was a medicine student in Bucharest, after which he decided not to continue and joined the students of the Faculty of Letters. During this period, he helped print the first Calendar pentru Israeliți (Calendar for Israelites), under the editorship of A. L. Löbel. As a publicist, Moses Schwarzfeld made a name for himself in the pages of the Fraternitatea (Brotherhood) newspaper, where he first wrote simple notes and travel descriptions, and later signed polemical articles. He was also a great biographer and memoirist.

Fraternitatea (Brotherhood), was founded in 1879 and marks the beginning of a new era in Jewish publishing, as it openly fought for equal rights of the Jews in Romania. In 1881, Elias Schwarzfeld became the new editor of Fraternitatea, changing the defensive stand of the paper, as it had been influenced by Rabbi Beck, the first editor of the newspaper. Fraternitatea

is the first publication to succeed in publishing, in a pro-Zionist manner, a series of excerpts and original documents referring to local Jews, thus seeking to demonstrate the ancient history of the Jews on the Romanian lands and the need to grant them equal rights.

Egalitatea (Equality) was founded by Moses Schwarzfeld in 1890, modelled after Fraternitatea. The publication focused on Jewish life in all its aspects (the struggle for emancipation and cultural progress, the promotion of Zionist ideology, the fight against anti-Semitism and assimilationist trends), as well as on the political struggle (through the Union of Local Jews and later, the Union of Romanian Jews, which further became the Jewish Party. As of 1907, the newspaper became involved in the political Zionist movement, becoming the official outlet of the Jewish National Fund. In 1910, the newspaper joined the Union of Local Jews (Uniunea Evreilor Pământenii – U.E.P.), which promoted the interests of the community both in the country and abroad. In terms of political representation, the Union (which was renamed Uniunea Evreilor Români – the Union of Romanian Jews in February 1923) took action to eliminate discrimination in the granting of civil and political rights to Jews of the Country. Egalitatea is the longest-running newspaper of the Jewish community, having been published continuously from the last decade of the 19th century until the late 1940s.

Emblematic figures of the generation of Jewish intellectuals from the end of the 19th century, Moses Gaster and Lazăr Șăineanu were initially followers of moderate assimilationism, but they ended up heading in different directions: Moses Gaster towards Zionism, and Lazăr Șăineanu towards a radical form of assimilationism that involved conversion to Christianity.

**Moses Gaster** was born in Bucharest into a renowned Jewish Austrian family which had settled in Wallachia at the beginning of the 19th century. He was the eldest son of Abraham Emanuel Gaster, who was the consul of The Netherlands in Bucharest and Pnina Judith Rubinstein, who came from a rabbinical dynasty from Berdichev. After having taken a degree in his native city (1874), he proceeded to Leipzig, where he received the degree of PhD in 1878 and then to the Jewish Seminary in Breslau, where he gained the rabbinical diploma in 1881. He was lecturer on the Romanian language and literature at the University of Bucharest (1881–85), inspector-general of schools, and a member of the council for examining teachers in Romania. Gaster was a central figure of Hibbat Zion in Romania and played a central role in the 1882 establishment by Jews from Moinești of the Samaritan settlement in Palestine later known as Zichron Ya'akov. Having been expelled from Romania by the Romanian government in 1885 for allegedly "being a member of an irredentist society", he went to England. In 1887 Gaster was appointed rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation in London. A few years after, the Romanian government cancelled the decree of expulsion and, following the publication of the work 'Chrestomație Română', he was awarded the Romanian medal first class "Pentru Merit" by King Carol I and invited him to return; however, he declined the invitation.

Apart from the ideas launched by Moses Gaster regarding the evolution of the literary Romanian language, the importance of this work lies precisely in the selection of texts that will constitute a working tool for philologists for a long period of time. Despite his expulsion in 1885, his contribution to philological research was recognized by some of Romania's prominent public figures, so that in 1929 he was elected an honorary member of the Romanian Academy.



In 1925, Gaster was appointed one of the six members of the honorary board of trustees (Curatorium) of the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) in Vilnius alongside Simon Dubnow, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Edward Sapir and Chaim Zhitlowsky. Rising in worldwide Jewish affairs he became vice-president of the First Zionist Congress in Basel, and was a prominent figure in each succeeding congress. Gaster's residence in London served as the venue for early talks between prominent Zionists and the Foreign Office in 1917. The first draft of the Balfour Declaration was written at the Gaster home on 7 February 1917 in the presence of Chaim Weizmann, Nahum Sokolow, Baron Rothschild, Sir Mark Sykes and Herbert Samuel. Other visitors to the Gaster home included Winston Churchill, Vladimir Lenin, and Sigmund Freud. Gaster left his valuable collection of Romanian medieval manuscripts to the Romanian Academy.

**Eliezer ben Moshe Schein**, later known as **Lazăr Șăineanu**, was born in 1859 in Ploiești into a modest Jewish family. He attended primary school and gymnasium in Ploiești, high school in Bucharest and in 1887 graduated from the University of Bucharest, obtaining his degree in letters in 1887 with a work entitled “Încercare asupra semasiologiei limbei române” (Essay on Romanian Semasiology) in which he analyzed the semantic changes of words when they pass from the religious to the secular register. The publication of the work by the Romanian Academy gets him the University's Hillel Prize which represented confirmation of the importance of this work in Romanian linguistic research. He became a specialist in Oriental and Romance studies, as well as a Germanist. He became known for his contribution to Yiddish and Romanian philology, his work in evolutionary linguistics, and his activity as a literary and philological comparatist. Șăineanu also had innovative contributions to the investigation and anthologizing of Romanian folklore, placed in relation to the Balkans and East Central European traditions, as well as to the historical evolution of Romanian in a larger Balkans context, and was a celebrated early contributor to Romanian lexicography.

A member of the non-emancipated Jewish-Romanian community, Lazăr Șăineanu stood for the Haskalah ideas, and opted in favor of Jewish assimilation into the Romanian mainstream. In 1889, Șăineanu applied for naturalization, which, according to the 1866 Constitution, a Jew could only receive by special act of the Romanian Parliament and in exchange for exceptional merits. The effort, which consumed some 12 years of his life, pitted him against the antisemitic current in politics and the scientific community. His repeated requests for naturalization were eventually unsuccessful, but propelled him to the center of a political conflict which opposed the antisemitic current to the advocates of tolerance. In 1901, Șăineanu and his family left the Kingdom of Romania and resettled in France, where the scholar lived until his death.

Becoming known for his pioneering work to the study of Middle French and his investigations into the origins of argot, as well as for his critical essays on 16th-century writer François Rabelais, he was a recipient of the Institute de France's Volney Prize in 1908.

Despite the antisemitic campaigns and the voluntary expatriation, Șăineanu's reputation with the Romanian public was largely unharmed, and his works went through new Romanian-language editions: *Dicționarul universal* alone was reissued a total of nine times before 2009.

The integration of the two Jewish intellectuals, Moses Gaster and Lazăr Șăineanu, into Romanian culture, as Romanian intellectuals, was only partially achieved and was facilitated by

their interest in studying philology and folklore in Romania, an aspect considered by the cultural and political authorities as proof of patriotism.

In the space of Jewish culture, Moses Gaster and Lazar Șăineanu published a series of studies and articles with polemical, social and educational nuances in support of the cultural program developed by the intellectuals of the second generation of Maskilim, grouped around the most important Jewish periodicals and cultural societies, a program that resumed the objectives of the first generation of Maskilim: self-emancipation and the acquisition of civil and political rights. Unlike Moses Gaster, who constantly protested in the Jewish political press against discriminatory legislation against Jews by the Romanian authorities and eventually moved towards Zionism, Șăineanu was more reserved in this regard, considering that such an attitude was not suitable for a career in scientific research and chose a path of assimilation, converting to Christianity. Christianization was seen by Lazăr Șăineanu as a way to obtain the status of Romanian citizen and to finally have his professional merits in the field of Romanian philology recognized.

Another interesting personality was **Moise Ronetti-Roman**, born Aron Blumenfeld into a Hasidic family in Jezierzany in Galicia. As a teenager, he moved to Moldavia and worked as a Hebrew tutor. In 1869, Ronetti-Roman left for Berlin to study medicine, philosophy, and philology, but did not graduate. In the same period, he contributed articles in Hebrew to Ha-Magid under the name Mosheh Roman. Throughout his life he avoided using his true surname and even kept his given name a secret. Upon his return to Romania in 1874, Ronetti-Roman determined to become a Romanian writer, and contributed satiric pamphlets and articles on social issues to Romanian-language newspapers. He made his mark as a poet with a long romantic poem, *Radu* (1878); at the same time, he wrote for the conservative newspaper *Timpul* (Time) in Bucharest, where he befriended the poet Mihai Eminescu and the playwright Ion Luca Caragiale. Together they attended meetings of the prestigious literary society Junimea. After marrying Eleonora Herșcovici in 1883, he moved to Davideni, in Neamț county, to live on an estate leased by his father-in-law. In 1898, Ronetti-Roman published the essay *Două măsuri* (Two Measurements), taking a daring and original approach to issues of Jewish status in Romania and to relations between Jews and Romanians. The work also included a melancholic meditation on the disappearance of the traditional Jewish world and its values, which the author regarded as eroded by the general modernization process. The Zionist movement, which he considered to be a mere utopian vision, could not in his mind prevent the disappearance of Judaism. His essay also included a critical analysis of Romanian policies toward Jews who, after their emancipation, were expected to be “good and faithful sons” to their homeland. Ronetti-Roman’s themes in *Două măsuri* were transposed in his impressive drama *Manasse*, produced in 190), which established his reputation as a major Romanian playwright. The protagonist in this work is Manasse Cohen, an elderly Jewish man from a small town in Moldavia, who fanatically defends Jewish religious tradition. His son, Nissim Cohanovici, is a merchant living in Bucharest who maintains just a superficial connection to the Jewish community, resulting from the psychological pressure exerted by Manasse’s demands. Nissim’s children, Lazăr and Lelia, have a more genuine inner life than their father, caring about their grandfather and respecting him for his deep faith, but they are modern people who foster universalistic and socialist ideas and are perfectly integrated into the Romanian intellectual environment. Lelia’s decision to marry a

Christian lawyer causes the old man tremendous suffering, eventually leading to his death. When *Manasse* was staged in Iași and later in Bucharest, it stirred up a good deal of controversy and protest within nationalist and antisemitic circles, especially triggered by Manasse's central monologue on the hostility of the Christian world to Jews and Judaism. More than a decade after the play's premiere, polemics concerning its theme continued to be extremely intense, even leading to street demonstrations and government or court interventions to ban its performances. The play strongly influenced a generation of Jewish writers who made their mark after World War I, and the antagonisms and dilemmas related to Jews' integration into Romanian society were frequently referred to in allusions to this play.

I 'm hoping I was able to illustrate the cultural and political challenges faced by the Romanian Jews of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the context of the Haskalah spread in Romania, exemplified by the cases of some well-known Jewish intellectuals in Romania of that time.

Until next podcast episode, be well.