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# THE *MASKILIM* OF ROMANIA AND THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY: "THE ROMANIAN ISRAELITES"

**LUCIAN-ZEEV HERȘCOVICI**

***Abstract.*** The aim of this paper is to answer some questions concerning the identity of the *maskilim* of Romania, mainly those of the second generation, called "the generation of 1878" or "the generation of the Congress of Berlin". They called themselves "Romanian Israelites," similarly to the *maskilim* of other countries, just like the "French Israelites," "German Israelites," "Russian Israelites," and so on. What was it that defined their Jewish identity and what their Romanian one? When did this "Romanian Israelite" identity appear? Under what conditions did the new kind of *maskil* of the "generation of 1878" emerge, and why did these *maskilim* struggle for emancipation? Did this identification influence the Romanian Jewish community on issues other than emancipation as well? In fact, the "Romanian Israelite" identity appeared with the *maskilim* of the first generation of Moldavia and Wallachia, in the fifth decade of the 19th century, under the double influence of the *Haskalah* ideology and the national-cultural Romanian Renaissance. The refusal of the succeeding Romanian governments to naturalize the Jews gave an impetus to the *maskilim* to fight for emancipation, mainly after the 1878 Berlin Congress. In their polemics related to Romanian citizenship, they used various arguments to demonstrate that the Jewish presence in Romania dated back to ancient times, that they were descendants of Jews who had lived on these lands from the antiquity and the middle ages. They also tried to convince the entire Jewish community to accept the "Romanian Israelite identity" and apply for individual naturalization. They promoted the idea of a double identity, Jewish ("Israelite") from the viewpoint of religion and ethnicity, and Romanian from that of nationality.[1]

***Keywords:*** Jews; Romania; Haskala; Emancipation; Identity.

## The beginnings of the Romanian-Israelite identification

The Romanian Israelite identification emerged in the 40s-60s of the 19th century among some *maskilim*, most of them immigrants coming to

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Moldavia and Wallachia from Galicia or Russia (Ashkenazim) and even Turkey (Sephardim). Although the Romanian- Israelite identification was not directly related to the *Haskalah*, it developed simultaneously with the *Haskalah* ideology. This identification included both cultural and political elements. At first, its supporters did not consider conversion to Christianity. The group of young *maskilim* of Jassy led by Moshe Eisic Finkelstein who asked, in 1847, the Moldavian prince Mihail Sturdza to open a modern Jewish school justified their demand by stating that Jewish children should study modern sciences, just like Christian children, but also the Torah, because they should grow to be good Moldavians, as well as good Jews (Herșcovici 2009, 111-120). Though the participation of the Jews in the revolutions of 1848 in Moldavia and Wallachia was minor, the few Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews who contributed to the revolution in Wallachia demanded emancipation. This was the case with Davicion Bally and Bernard Dov Popper, the former in several articles published in the journal *Pruncul Român* (The Romanian Infant), and the latter in a manifesto (Niculescu 2008, 84, 88-89, 174-185). The Romanian-Israelite identification took a clearer shape in Wallachia with the publication, in Bucharest, in 1857, of the bilingual (Romanian-French) journal *Israelitulu Românu – L'Israélite Roumain*, (1857) as its very title indicates. The journal was edited by Aaron Ascher, a Sephardic Jew, and Isaac Leib Weinberg, an Ashkenazi Jew, and its editor-in-chief was Dr. Yehuda Julius Barasch, a physician who had immigrated from Galicia, and a well-known *maskil*. Although the journal appeared for only 24 weeks, it helped develop the notion of a Romanian-Israelite identity among the few *maskilim* of Bucharest. Particular note should be made of an article published by Isaac Leib Weinberg in the journal, asking for the establishment of a choral temple in Bucharest, and proposing that its members renounce foreign protection and adopt Romanian (i.e. Wallachian) citizenship. His idea was to combine Wallachian citizenship with Jewish religious Reformism, in the hope that this would secure the good will of the Wallachian government, which did not happen (Weinberg 1857; Halevy 1935; Rotman 2017, 354-357). In fact, neither of the two special national assemblies of the Romanian Principalities (*divanurile ad-hoc*) accepted his proposal. Instead, they decided that Romanian citizenship would only be given to Christians (Iancu 2009, 55; Hitchins 2013b, 354-357). The

Romanian-Israelite identification thus remained only an ideal, which could not be applied in practice.

### Israelite identification and Romanian identification with Yehuda Julius Barasch

The social, political, cultural and religious orientation of the *maskil* Yehuda Julius Barasch (1815-1863) (Herșcovici 2009, vol. 1, 125-244) may help us better understand the double, Romanian and Israelite, identification. The Galician born *maskil* benefited from a religious education, having prepared to become a rabbi. While studying philosophy and medicine in Prussia he published several articles in Hebrew and German in various Jewish publications of German-speaking countries identified with the *Haskalah* ideology. It was also at about that time that he started writing his main work, the Hebrew book *Sefer Otzar Chokhmah*, the first part of which was published in Vienna in 1856. But it was in Wallachia, where he came in 1841 seeking work as a physician, that he published most of his works – in Hebrew, German, and Romanian. His identification with the *Haskalah* ideology was by then evident. But he was a moderate *maskil*: in his Hebrew book he asked East European Jews to learn sciences, and justified his demand with quotations from the Talmud. But in his German articles he asked assimilated Jews to take the example of the East European Jews and learn the Torah, thus actually trying to prevent complete assimilation. In Wallachia he met other *maskils* of Galician and other origins, and established good relations with the Wallachian (later Romanian) authorities. Because it was difficult for him to establish good relations with the traditional Jews of Bucharest, he preferred to join the Sephardic community, which he considered more open, although he was an Ashkenazi Jew. He decided not to become a member of the Choral Temple (Reform) community. But he did accept to be the principal of the modern Jewish school set up by the Community of Prussian and Austrian Jews with the help of the consuls of the two states, with German as the language of instruction (1850). A year later, when a Jewish modern school was founded by the Community of Ashkenazi (i.e. Polish) Jews of Bucharest, with the encouragement of the

state authorities, and with Romanian as the language of instruction, he lent his support to this new institution as well and gave a speech in which he identified himself as a Jew of "Romania" (i.e. Wallachia). On the other hand, Barasch's identification as an Israelite is clearer in his polemics with Israel Pick, a former principal of the Jewish modern school of Bucharest, a Reform rabbi and German teacher, later a convert to Lutheranism. Pick advocated for the necessity of a general monotheistic religion, whose aim should be to convert the "pagan Chinese" to monotheism. Barasch rejected this idea and proclaimed his distinctly Jewish identity: in the early 50s of the 19th century, he even wrote that he was a follower of Judaism as a philosophy (Barasch 1854). In the early 60s he became a fighter for emancipation, while continuing to maintain his double identity. In an anonymous booklet published in French in Paris in 1861, *L'Emancipation Israélite en Roumanie*, (Barasch 1861a) he explained the advantages the state would have if it granted citizenship to its Jewish inhabitants. Some chapters of this book had actually been published previously as articles in *Israelitul Român – L'Israélite Roumain*, under the penname "B". We know that it was in fact Barasch who wrote both the articles and the booklet, which was printed with the assistance of a French diplomat, Armand Levy. It is interesting to note that in the booklet, Barasch again launched a virulent attack against conversion to Christianity, but only in regard to those Jews who converted for social and material reasons, asking the representatives of the new religion to reject these converts. A thorough analysis of all the aspects of the booklet reveals the double identity of its author. The booklet was translated into Romanian by M. Feldmann-Câmpianu, a Jewish *maskil* of Jassy, and published in the same year (Barasch 1861b). The translator's double name, Jewish-German and Romanian (in fact a Romanian translation of the Jewish German name) indicates his own dual identity. It is possible that he did not know who had authored the booklet, which was signed "a Romanian Israelite", both in Romanian and in the French original. M. Feldmann-Câmpianu was himself the publisher of the bilingual Yiddish-Romanian journal *Gazeta Română-Evreiască* (Jassy, 12 March – 12 May 1859), which had the same orientation: promoting dual Romanian-Jewish identity. Barasch's double identity may also be seen in his will: the two executors he appointed were his friends, the Romanian politician Constantin A.

Rosetti and the Jewish banker Jacob Loebel. Moreover, Barasch's Jewish funeral was attended by state officials who presented him as a good Romanian (Schwarzfeld 1919, 76).

## Aspects of the dual identity in the thought of Rabbi M.L. Malbim and Naphtaly K. Popper

The polemics between Naphtaly K. Popper, teacher of Hebrew and Jewish religion, and principal of the Jewish school of Bucharest at the end of the 50s and beginning of the 60s of the 19th century, and Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Mikhel (Malbim) are well known (Herșcovici 2009, vol 1, 455-474, 511-559; Popper 1874). This was a conflict between a more liberal *maskil* trending toward the modernization of the religious service, and a more conservative *maskil*, opposed to such reform. However, while elements of a double identity, Jewish and Romanian, were present in the thought of both, their dispute was not in this field. Naphtaly K. Popper published the bilingual (Yiddish-Romanian) journal *Timpulu – Dye Tzayt*, together with his friend, Cornelius Kahane, a German teacher at the same school (Bucharest, 17/29 May – 7/19 August 1859). Their main aim was to disseminate the *Haskalah* ideology. But they had a secondary aim as well. While they approached the Jewish readers in order to convince them to accept the illuminist ideas, they also approached the Romanian Christian readers in order to introduce them to Judaism. In an article, Popper and Kahane militated in favor of changing the Jewish traditional clothes, in order to break down the social barriers between Jews and Christians. Later, Popper translated the *Siddur* (the Jewish prayer book) into Romanian and published booklets in which he promoted the idea that Jews should speak Romanian and become Romanian citizens. In hiss turn, Rabbi M.L. Malbim (in Bucharest between 1858-1864), published a special sermon in honor of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1862) at the anniversary of the Romanian Principalities' Union, advising Jews to be friends with the Romanians, a people that had suffered like them throughout history (Rosen 1969, 376-410).

**Other *maskilim* of the first generation, fighters for emancipation and double, Romanian-Israelite, identification**

The idea of double identification was also supported by some *maskilim* from Moldavia, such as Mordechai ben David Strelisker (Marvad Sat), Sigismund Carmelin, Matityahu Simcha Rabener, Hillel Kahane, Benjamin Schwarzfeld (Heșcovici 2014a, 95-114; Herșcovici 2014 b: 187-209; Herșcovici 2011, 59-70; Herșcovici 2015; Strelisker 1868; Schwarzfeld 1873). 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." Strelisker, a Hebrew writer and an activist of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, compared the situation of the Jews in the Habsburg Empire with that of the Jews in Romania, stressing the importance of the emancipation of Romanian Jews for their patriotism. In some of his writings, Rabener too spoke of the Romanian patriotism among the Jews. Carmelin, a journalist writing in French and Romanian, also expressed his view on Romanian Jewish patriotism, in the context of his advocacy for modernization and emancipation. In his turn, Jacob Psantir was the first *maskil* of Romania who understood that Jews should know the history of Romania and the place of the Jews in Romanian history (Herșcovici 2009 vol 1: 668-683; Psantir 1871 &1873). He tried to justify the necessity to emancipate the Jews on the grounds of their roots in the Romanian past. His thesis was that Jews had lived on Romanian lands since late antiquity until the 19th century, and were therefore a part of the Romanian people (who had been very tolerant toward them). Certainly, his "sources" were partly faked, partly borrowed from other books, but this was the first time (1872) when a Jewish *maskil* of Romania, convinced of his Romanian-Israelite identity, tried to explain it not only to other *maskilim*, but also to the other Jews of Romania, in a book in the Yiddish language. Psantir actually took the idea from the Romanian intellectual Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, a self-declared antisemite, despite the fact that he had a Jewish grandmother, who published a booklet on the tolerance of the Romanian people toward "the foreigners" in which he maintained that the Jewish presence in Romania dated back to ancient times (Hașdeu 1992, 75-86). Under the influence of Romanticism, the idea of a Jewish presence, and

therefore of some "Jewish roots," in Romania since late antiquity gave birth to a new trend: besides the increase in the number of adepts of the Romanian-Israelite identity and of Romanian Jewish patriotism, we now witness the emergence of a form of Romanian nationalism practiced by Jews. Such nationalism could be seen in the polemics concerning the emancipation, until 1919, but also later, in the period between the two World Wars, and even, partly, in the Communist times (after 1956).

### The *maskilim* of the 1878 generation and the "Israelite Romanian" identity

The second generation of *maskilim*, the generation of 1878, was different from the first. It included *maskilim* born in Romania, mainly in the 40s-50s of the 19th century, besides those who had immigrated from other countries. Many of them were Romanian speakers, and among them 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 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. While their double identity came as a natural continuation of that of the members of the previous generation, now it was the historical aspect that became central. Unlike Jacob Psantir, they wrote in Romanian. However, because they were not professional historians; they began investigating the history of the Jews of Romania as dilettantes, by collecting documents, some of which were fake (although they were not aware of it), or by using historical studies as sources of information, not as studies. In 1886 they founded the *"Julius Barasch" Historical Society*, following the juridical change in the Romanian legislation, which under article number 7 of the 1866 Constitution allowed for the naturalization of Christian foreigners only. In the

previous decades, the Romanian authorities had attempted to attract the Jews to learn the Romanian language and attend public schools. Now, however, public schools enrolled exclusively Romanian children; foreign children were only accepted in special cases, while Jewish children could only join in if there were any free places left, and only if they paid tuition fees. The authorities divided foreigners living in Romania into two categories: those who were foreign subjects, and those with no protection. The latter did enjoy some rights and obligations, but not the same as the Romanian citizens. For instance, a law of 1876 provided for their possible conscription in the Romanian army. The Jews who felt they had a double identity were glad to join the military. One year later, in the Independence War of Romania, 883 Jewish soldiers were drafted in the Romanian army, some of them volunteers. They demonstrated their Romanian patriotism, and some of them were rewarded for it, such as Mauriciu Brociner, who was promoted officer (Solomovici 2017, 133-139). Many hoped to receive citizenship, some even hoped for a general emancipation. These, however, were not *maskilim*. These were young men interested in getting access to the majority society, and tried this method to reach their goal.

In dealing with the question of the double identity and the Romanian authorities' refusal to naturalize the Jews, note should also be made of the persecutions to which the Jews were subjected in the 60s and 70s of the 19th century, which triggered the reaction not only of the Romanian Jewish leaders, but also of various international Jewish organizations. Representatives of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, *Anglo-Jewish Association*, *Israelitische Allianz* demanded that the Romanian government cease the persecution and grant emancipation to "the Romanian Israelites." At the same time however, another idea emerged among the Jews of Romania as a reaction to this persecution: that of emigration, especially to America. Supported by the US consul in Bucharest, Benjamin Franklin Peixotto, who happened to be Jewish, this idea came in contradiction with that of Romanian patriotism and double identity. The proposal was therefore deliberated at an international Jewish conference concerning "the Romanian Israelites" organized in Brussels in 1872 (Iancu 2009, 115-117; Herșcovici 2009 vol. 1, 38). Most participants rejected the idea of emigration, supporting that of patriotism and double identity, expressing the fear

that offering the possibility of emigration as an alternative could be dangerous. The solution foreseen by those present was to pressure the Romanian government to cease the persecutions and grant emancipation to all the Jews. Of course, this political international conference also influenced the Jewish *maskilim* of Romania, encouraging them to choose the double identity.

Various circumstances took their toll on the evolution of the idea of a double identity among the second generation of Romanian *maskilim*. These circumstances related to demography, culture, religion, society, politics and economy. The situation of the Jews in Romania could be compared with that of the Jews in Russia-Poland, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire: Romania and its Jewish community were not an isolated island in the heart of Europe (Durandin 1995, 8). While the Jewish community of Romania evolved later than that of the neighboring empires, it moved in the same direction. Not only were many of the *maskilim* of the second generation born and educated in Romania (mainly in the Romanian-Israelite schools) and spoke both Romanian and Yiddish fluently, but they were also less religious than those of the previous generation. Many other Jews of this generation were well-integrated into the economic life of Romania: even if they were not *maskilim*, they were influenced by the education received in the "modern" Jewish schools founded by the *maskilim.* In these schools, they benefited from a Romanian patriotic education, in parallel with a Jewish one. Their Jewish identity acquired new facets: cultural, ethnic, modern-religious (i.e. conservative Reform). They wanted Romanian citizenship not only in recognition of their double identity, but also in order to be able to integrate into the majority society. Some of them saw their economic success as a form of patriotism, as their own contribution to the development of the country.

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 *Haskala*, 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. It is possible that the *admor* of Buhuși, Rabbi Yitzhak Friedmann, for instance, was more influential than the *maskilim*. Still, although he did not mention the question of double identity, even he asked his coreligionists to continue the fight for emancipation. In the early 80s of the 19th century, the *Haskala* movement began to show signs of disintegration. New currents, such as radical *Haskala,* assimilation, Jewish nationalism, and Jewish socialism, came to replace it. But this was also the time of a major political event, both for Romania and for the world at large: the Congress organized in Berlin in 1878.

**The 1878 Berlin Congress and its consequences**

In 1876, following the revolts in the Balkans and their pitiless repression by the Ottoman government, an international conference was organized, which led to no result. The Russian Empire used the occasion to return to the Danube delta and offered to recognize Romania's independence in exchange for permission for the Russian army to cross the country, plus a territorial swap, Dobrogea for Southern Bessarabia. Finally Romania agreed to participate in the war, and consequently proclaimed its independence on May 9, 1877 (Hitchins 2013a, 50-66). It was a good occasion for Jewish leaders to manifest their Romanian patriotism and double identity by supporting the war effort. This was also the case with some *maskilim*, such as Abraham Leib Loebel of Bacău, who expressed his support for the war, for Romanian patriotism, and for the idea of double identity in his journal in the Romanian language, *Prezentulu* (= The Present Time). Because of the Oriental Question, the position of Romania had to be resolved by an agreement between the Powers of Europe after the Crimean War, in an international meeting. To this end a Congress was organized in Berlin in 1878. Romania was not involved in the decision making process at this congress. In an attempt to obtain Romanian citizenship, the political leaders of Romanian Jews

convinced the international Jewish organizations and important Jewish personalities from Western countries to put pressure on the Romanian government by conditioning the recognition of Romania's independence and transformation into a kingdom on the emancipation of the Jews. This is how article number 7 of the Romanian Constitution, which gave citizenship to Christians only, was finally changed. The Jewish men who had participated in the 1877 War of Independence received Romanian citizenship soon thereafter. But other Jews could only obtain Romanian citizenship through a special individual law that had to be voted in both chambers of the Romanian Parliament. Jewish leaders advised the Jews to apply for citizenship, and many did, but to no result: their petitions were not even discussed. Very few Jews received Romanian nationality before World War I (Iancu 2009, 160-190).

**Jewish nationalist and assimilationist trends**

In the 80s of the 19th century, a difference started to slowly emerge between the attitudes of the *maskilim*: some became adepts of the assimilationist trend and some of the nationalist trend. 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. Between those who joined this trend were brothers Israel and Zwy Eliezer (= Hirsch Lazăr) Teller, *maskilim* and Hebrew writers. It is interesting to mention that these four *maskilim* who became nationalist Jews, as well as others, were originally Galician Jews who had immigrated to Romania. Samuel Pineles, a businessman, was the secretary of the local committee of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* in Galați, where his father, Hirsch Mendel Pineles ("Shalosh"), a *maskil*, writer and businessman

himself, had actually founded the committee a few years before. In his turn, Karpel (Nathan Pethachya) Lippe was a physician in Jassy, a writer in Hebrew, German, and Romanian, and, as mentioned before, a fierce fighter for emancipation. The Teller brothers were teachers of Hebrew at several schools founded by the Romanian *maskilim* in Botoșani, Focșani, and Galați, and writers in Hebrew, who had initially supported the ideology of the *Haskala*, as well as emancipation and double identity. All these *maskilim*, born in the 30s-40s of the 19th century, belonged to the generation of 1878. Jewish nationalism, however, renounced the idea of double identity, and brought instead an emphasis on philanthropy. The expulsion of 11 "foreign journalists" (i.e. Jewish *maskilim*) in 1885 and the professional discriminations between Romanians and "foreigners" consolidated the new trend. A renewal could also be seen at this time of the interest in emigration to Eretz Israel, the country mentioned by Jews in their prayers every day, as an alternative to the elusive emancipation. The intention was to prove that Jews could work the land too, because they were connected to it, so the anti-Jewish hate should cease: the Jew was not to be seen as a parasite who could not work in agriculture. This idea was even presented in a Hebrew novel, *Dimaat ashuqym, o hayehudym beRomanya* (=The weeping of the persecuted, or the Jews in Romania) (1890), written by David Yeshayahu Silberbusch, himself a Galician *maskil* who became a nationalist Jew and who lived for a while in Romania (Herșcovici 2009, vol. 1, 743-959; Ilan 1968; Klausner 1958; Lippe 1879; Lippe 1902; Teller I. 1881; Teller Z.E. 1904; Silberbusch 1890).

It may be said that the nationalists and the assimilationists were "brothers," sons and beneficiaries of the *Haskala* movement, but in dispute. Both inherited the modernizing ideas of the *Haskala*, 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. Their working language

was Romanian: they wrote in Romanian and some of them went as far as doing research in Romanian philology, trying to find parallels between Jewish and Romanian folklore and literature. It all started with a group of young *maskilim*, centered around the annual *Anuar pentru Israeliți* (=Yearly Almanac for the Israelites), founded by Moses Schwarzfeld and published first in Bacău and then, from the second year onward, in Bucharest, between 1877-1899, and the weekly *Fraternitatea* (=Brotherhood), published by Isaac Auerbach and Elias Schwarzfeld in Bucharest, between 1879-1890. This group included the brothers Elias, Wilhelm and Moses Schwarzfeld, Moses Gaster, Eliezer Schein-Șăineanu, Aizic Taubes, the Sephardi *maskil* Solomon I. Rosanes, Rabbi Meir Beck, Moise Ronetti-Roman, and others. In the first phase, the group was also joined by some *maskilim* who later became nationalist Jews, such as Israel Teller, Naphtaly Herz Imber, Karpel Lippe, Matityahu Simcha Rabener (who was actually from an older generation, but preferred the company of the youth). Proof of their double identification stands the publication of translations into Hebrew of Romanian poems with patriotic subjects, such as Vasile Alecsandri's *Cântecul gintei latine* (=Ode of the Latin Race) and *Peneș Curcanul* (=Peneș the Bobby), translations made by Aizic Taubes, Matityahu Simcha Rabener, Naphtaly Herz Imber and Israel Teller. It is interesting to note that the members of this group who wrote historical articles came up with a new explanation, that the hate against the Jews and the refusal to grant them citizenship were not originally Romanian ideas, but a Russian import. This was in fact a new form of apologetics, a result of the Romanian-Russian conflict, which forced Romania to accept the Russian terms on Southern Bessarabia. Another topic of these apologetics, in line with the Romanian nationalist ideas, was that the Jews of "wild Hungary" found a refuge in tolerant 14th century Wallachia; this had to do with the fact that Austro-Hungary did not recognize the rights of the Romanians in Transylvania. The Jewish apologists adopted these new elements of Romanian nationalism in order to justify their own idea of a double identity. They claimed not only that the Jews of Romania had been living on these lands since Dacian and Roman antiquity and that the Romanian princes had always been tolerant to them, but also that the rejection of the Jews was a result of the Russian imposed *Regulamente*

*Organice* (=Constitutional Regulations). This was just another false interpretation, but one that was used by the Jewish apologetics in their fight for emancipation and double identity. Such thesis was presented especially by Moses and Elias Schwarzfeld, particularly after the latter's expulsion from Romania in 1885. Although settled in France, Elias Schwarzfeld, doctor of administrative sciences, did not apply for French nationality until shortly before World War I: he continued to identify himself as a "Romanian Israelite." Another case is that of Moses Gaster. A doctor of letters, and also a Conservative Rabbi who received his rabbinical title from the Breslau Seminary, he became a specialist in comparative literature and folklore. In his scholarly studies, he researched Romanian folklore and tried to compare it to Jewish folklore. Although appreciated by Romanian academics, he too was expelled in 1885. After settling in England and becoming the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of the Jews of the British Commonwealth, he became a leader of the entire British Jewry. But he continued to research Romanian folklore and to maintain academic relations with Romania. Later, the order of his expulsion was cancelled, but he returned to Romania only to visit. The setting up, in 1886, of the *Societatea Istorică "Iuliu Barasch"* (=The "Julius Barasch" Historical Society), led by Moses Schwarzfeld, S. Tauber, and Isaac David Bally, just after the expulsions of 1885, in a period of violent debates concerning the emancipation, when the "Israelite Question" was hotter than ever, marked the beginning of a new phase in the polemics using historical elements. This society was active for three years only, but managed to publish a periodical named *Analele Societății Istorice Iuliu Barasch* (=Annals of the Julius Barasch Historical Society), aimed, of course, at fighting for emancipation using historical proofs. Another aspect of its members' ideology was the idea of the double "Romanian Israelite" identity. While its members were not successful politically, they were successful in discovering documents that later proved very useful for historians.

There were two approaches to assimilation: a moderate one, which maintained the idea of double identity, and an extreme one, advocating for total renunciation to Judaism. In the first case, intermarriage was accepted, without conversion to Christianity. The second was about individual conversions to Christianity. The first case was reflected in

Moise Ronetti-Roman (=Aron Blumenfeld)'s play *Manasse* (Ronetti-Roman 1996: 209-210). The author, probably born in Galicia or Bucovina, was a fluent speaker of German, Romanian, and Yiddish, with a good knowledge of Hebrew. He worked for a while as a translator at the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In Bucharest he was member of a group of *maskilim*. In the beginning, he wrote and published articles in Hebrew. Later he began to write literary works – poems, essays, a play – in Romanian. He opposed Jewish nationalism and criticized Jewish emigration to Palestine, as his essay *Două măsuri* (=Two Measures) shows. In *Manasse*, he tackled the issue of intermarriage as well as the conflict between traditional Judaism and "de-judaized" Judaism. The play's characters represent the three generations of a family: the grandfather, Manasse, a religious and Torah educated Jew, representative of traditional Judaism; his son and his son's wife, both entirely assimilated, who lost the Jewish culture but did not adopt a modern one instead; the daughter and the son of the son, educated in the spirit of the values of modern culture. The dispute is between the grandfather, Manasse, and the granddaughter, Lelia, i.e. between Jewish traditional values and modern values. Finally, old Manasse dies, and Lelia marries her boyfriend, a Christian intellectual, rejecting a Jewish marriage of convenience. An interesting aspect is that the young Christian intellectual respects old Manasse and his values, and the old Jew Manasse also respects the young Christian intellectual. The dispute is between two cultures, but finally victory belongs to the idea of liberalism and double identity. Lelia marries her boyfriend without converting to Christianity and tells this to her grandfather: she does not betray the religion of her ancestors, but decides to live in love, as a Romanian Israelite.

**Radical assimilation**

To understand total, radical assimilation, we must consider the biographies of some of the *maskilim* who started by becoming moderate assimilationists and ended by converting to Christianity. All of them were deeply rooted in Romanian culture and society. They went a long way, from a process of Romanianization to complete assimilation,

without however denying their Jewish roots. By 1890 there were two assimilationist journals in Bucharest, *Înainte* (=Forward) and *Asimilarea* (=Assimilation). But the best source for understanding this transformation can be found in the biographies of Adolf Weinberg (later Alexandru Vianu), Solomon Katz (later Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea), Lazăr Schein (later Lazăr Șăineanu) and Hayman (later Hariton) Tiktin. Some historians assumed that these Jewish intellectuals accepted conversion only so as to obtain naturalization. In our opinion, this is not entirely true. Let us take the case of Hayman Tiktin (1850-1936). Born in an Orthodox Rabbinical family, in Breslau (Prussia), he became a *maskil* very probably against his family's will. Upon being sent to Jassy to get married, he began learning the Romanian language with a private teacher, none other than the Romanian poet Mihail Eminescu, who noticed Tiktin's gift for foreign languages and convinced him to study philosophy and linguistics, for which Tiktin returned in Germany, to attend the courses of the University of Leipzig. After completing his PhD in 1884, he returned to Jassy and became a Romanian language philologist. Naturalization was not a problem for him as his wife, the daughter of a banker, received citizenship together with her parents, and he was able to exchange his Prussian nationality with a Romanian one without the need to convert. As a specialist in Romanian linguistics, he wrote a significant German-Romanian dictionary, which was accepted by the Romanian Academy, and wrote studies on the history of linguistics. Indeed, when he needed to use ancient Romanian texts, that could mostly be found in the property of the Orthodox Church, in the archives of monasteries, it was easier for him to appear there as a Christian. But his identification with the Romanian culture was genuine, and very strong. Later, after moving to Berlin in 1900, where, following his conversion to Orthodox Christianity shortly after his arrival, he was able to secure, in 1904, a position of professor of Romanian language at the prestigious Humboldt University, he acted as a pro-Romanian German and did not get back in touch with his German-Jewish family. Although living in Germany, he published the last volume of his seminal dictionary in Romania, with the support of the Romanian Academy. Moreover, it seems that during the latter part of his life he approached Catholicism (and perhaps even converted to it), as the

publication of a commentary to the two biblical books of *Samuel* in a Catholic scholarly theological series, at a Catholic publishing house in Germany, in 1922, may indicate, considering that this commentary is essentially Christian: it is based mainly on Latin Catholic sources, although it does include some Greek Orthodox explanations as well as a few Jewish interpretations (naturally, Tiktin knew Hebrew very well). Tiktin died in 1936 in Germany, shortly after the Nazis rose to power. It is interesting to note that his wife and daughters did not convert, and one of his daughters, Sylvia Tiktin-Schmierer, became a leader of Jewish life in Galați in the 20s-30s of the 20th century. So, we may literally speak about a double identity in his family, Jewish and Romanian (Herșcovici 2013, 283-294; Ionescu 2006, 43-56; Tiktin 1922.

The case of Lazăr Șăineanu (1859-1934) (Șăineanu 1880; Șăineanu 1889, 85-93; Șăineanu 1901; Vornea 1928; Voicu 2008) was somewhat different. Born in a traditional, poor Jewish family as Eliezer ben Moshe Schein, he received both a traditional and a modern education. His writings demonstrate that he was a connoiseur of Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish, and a speaker of Yiddish. He became a *maskil* and wrote a biography of Moses Mendelssohn (published in Bucharest in 1880), for whom he had a great admiration. It is interesting to note that he compared Moses Mendelssohn to the Romanian writer and politician Ion Heliade-Rădulescu, which is an indication of his double cultural identification from an early stage in his career. Later he studied philology at the University of Bucharest with Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu. Eliezer Schein (Șain) changed his name and became Lazăr Șăineanu, circa 1883. Simultaneously, he began to publish articles on Jewish themes as well as historical-apologetic studies in *Anuar pentru Israeliți* (=Yearly Almanac for the Israelites), becoming friends with other *maskilim*. Two years later he became a member of the *Societatea Istorică "Iulius Barasch"* (="Julius Barasch" Historical Society). His philological articles dealt with the history and semasiology of the Romanian language. After two years of studies in France and Germany, he returned in Romania and wanted to teach at the university. In 1889 he was accepted as a substitute teacher to Hasdeu's chair, but without payment, because he was not a citizen. Șăineanu married the daughter of a rich Jewish family, influenced by the *Haskala* ideology, the Samitcas, of Craiova. He began a difficult fight to

obtain citizenship. In 1887 he published a biography of Jacob Psantir, which was translated into Hebrew by Menachem-Mendel Braunstein (=Mibashan) and published in the periodical *Otzar Chokhmah* in 1889. In 1889 Șăineanu published a study on the Yiddish vernacular in Romania, *Studiu dialectologic asupra graiului evreo-german* (=Dialectological Study on the German-Jewish Vernacular), hoping that this "vernacular" would disappear and therefore a written record of it should be kept. In 1896 he published *Dicționarul universal al limbei române* (=Universal Dictionary of the Romanian Language), which became a classical work in its field and knew many editions. These works demonstrate his double identification. But Șăineanu did not succeed in obtaining Romanian citizenship, due to the opposition of Vasile Alexandrescu-Urechia, a Romanian scholar who saw him as a rival. Gradually, his identification became more Romanian. In 1899 he converted to Orthodox Christianity, unlike his wife and daughter, who did not. However, he still did not receive Romanian citizenship. Finally he moved to France, changed his name into Lazar Sainean and became a specialist in the language of Rabelais, but not before translating into French his study about Yiddish. When his mother-in-law went to London and visited Rabbi Moses Gaster, Șăineanu's friend from the time when they were both *maskilim* in Romania, and proposed that they rekindle their friendship, Gaster accepted on condition that Șăineanu returned to Judaism, which he refused. Surprisingly, although he never returned to Romania or visited it again, he identified himself more and more as a Romanian, even as a Romanian nationalist, and published new editions of his dictionary there. In an autobiographic booklet, published in Romanian and French in 1901, Șăineanu presented himself as a victim of antisemitism. He maintained that he was a Romanian patriot and that his rejection, under the accusation of not being a Romanian patriot, was simply false. In reality, he was rejected by rivals. It is interesting that in the later editions of his dictionary, Șăineanu really appeared as a Romanian nationalist and a convinced Orthodox Christian, as his definitions of certain words and biblical names indicate. One should also note the absence of certain words and terms related to Jewish life. In Șăineanu's 1928 biography and bibliography, signed "Luca Vornea" (but probably authored by himself), people were criticized for having mentioned his Jewish origin,

as well as that of Moses Gaster and Georg Brandes. Considering Șăineanu's earlier double, Jewish and Romanian, identification, it may be inferred that he probably took conversion as part of his identification with the Romanian culture and people, without totally abandoning his Jewishness. It is relevant to mention that his younger brother, Maier Schein (Șain), also converted to Christianity under the name of Constantin-Marius Șăineanu, possibly under elder brother's influence. But in his case assimilation was quasi-total.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the idea of a double, Jewish and Romanian, or "Romanian Israelite," identity, had an important place among the Romanian *maskilim*. Although it appeared among the *maskilim* of the first generation, it became stronger among those of the second generation, who also fought for emancipation. The idea appeared even stronger after the disappearance of the *Haskala* movement, and took different forms among those who joned the new currents, which replaced it.

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