

Episode 29 – Remarkable Romanian Rabbis and Tzadikim

Hello, I am Adrian Iosifescu, your host of the History of Romanian Jews podcast and this is episode 29, where we'll be discussing some of the remarkable Romanian Rabbis and Tzadikim. Tzadik means "righteous person" or "just one". The term refers to individuals who embody high moral and ethical standards, living lives of spiritual devotion.

By-the-way, you just listened to the song "Every Yid's a Big Tzadik" sang by Mendy Worch. A link to the full song is provided in the episode notes.

There were many famous rabbis in the history of Jewish life in Romania but given the podcast limitations we will focus here only on those who had the most impact on Romanian Jewry social, cultural and religious life.

On the political and social front, three names stand out: Jacob Itzhak Niemirower, Alexandre Şafran and Yehuda Leib Tsirelson.

Rabbi Dr. **Jacob Itzhak Niemirower** was one of the most important leaders of the Romanian Jewry in the first half of the 20th century. He was a Modern rabbi, theologian, philosopher, historian and astute politician. Rabbi Niemirower served as the first Chief Rabbi of Romanian Jewry between 1921–1939, and was a member of the Romanian Senate from 1927 until his death in 1939. An ardent supporter of Zionism and a courageous fighter against antisemitism, Dr. Niemirower defended the civil and human rights of Romanian Jews and led them on the path towards modernization of community life, in the spirit of what he called Cultural Judaism; this meant adhering to Jewish tradition while remaining open to the Romanian language and culture and to universal influences.

Jacob Itzhak Niemirower was born on March 1, 1872, in the Galitzian town of Lemberg, then under Austrian administration, now Lvov in Ukraine. His father, Nahum Niemirower, was a Jewish trader. The family moved later to Iaşi, in the Romanian Kingdom. He received his first lessons of Torah from his paternal grandfather, then from the melamed, Jewish teacher, Mendel Barasch. From them he acquired a good knowledge about the Hassidic teachings. Later Jacob became the pupil of the famous rabbi and dayan (religious judge in a Jewish religious court) from Lemberg, Rabbi Isaak Aharon Ettinger. In 1890 Niemirower went to study in Berlin, where he became acquainted with the Haskalah and with the Western philosophy. There he met the German philosopher and Judaist Moritz Lazarus who became one of his best friends and exercised a great influence on him. Niemirower studied at the Neo-Orthodox Theological Rabbinical Seminary of Berlin, and had as teacher one of its founders, rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer, ideologist of the Modern Jewish Orthodoxy. As demanded by the curriculum, he attended university secular studies in parallel, philosophy, history and Oriental studies in Berlin. In 1895 he got the title of doctor in philosophy with "Magna cum laude" at the University of Bern, in Switzerland. His PhD thesis debated about the reciprocal relations between free will, conscience, reward and punishment. At the end of the theological studies, he got the license of Orthodox rabbi from the rabbi Ernst Abraham Biberfeld.

On his coming back to Iași in 1896 he won the hearts of many of the local Jews and succeeded to be elected in 1908 as chief rabbi of this important community. During those years he was very active in supporting the new created Zionist movement: in 1897 - 1898 renewed the Zionist association "Oholey Shem", God's Tents, which functioned in the past under the leadership of Dr. Karpel Lippe. He also took part in the editing of several Zionist gazettes like "Răsăritul", Romanian "The Sunrise". He attended the Zionist Congresses of 1905 and of 1908. In 1908 Niemirower launched the term of "synthetic Zionism", which, in his view, had to integrate the political Zionism, the line of Theodor Herzl, with the practical Zionism, that of the resettlement in Palestine.

Rabbi Niemirower was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the modern Jewish education system which tried to integrate the study of Judaism and Hebrew language with the secular studies, including country's vernacular. He facilitated the founding of Jewish schools and the establishment of a theological seminary, a society for Jewish education called Sharon, and a society for Jewish studies. He also strongly promoted the idea that world-wide Jewish cultural life should be led by a "Jabnean Academy" which should be founded in Jerusalem; its function should be the cultural renaissance of Judaism; similar to the School of Jabne, a significant center of Jewish learning established following the destruction of the Second Temple. In 1906 Dr. Niemirower was among the founders of the Cultural Society "Toynbee Hall" in Iași. That was a kind of Jewish popular university under Zionist inspiration, which had the cooperation of a lot of intellectuals and celebrities from Romania and abroad. Here came to lecture during the first ten years Jewish personalities like Bernard Lazare, Nachum Sokolov or Sholem Aleichem, who delighted the public with lectures from his stories and novels in Yiddish.

In 1911, despite being Ashkenazi, Dr. Niemirower was invited by the Sephardi Jewish community of Bucharest to be its rabbi. In 1921 Dr. Jacob Itzhak Niemirower was elected as Grand Rabbi of the Romanian Jewry, then as Chief Rabbi, a new office created by the community of Bucharest.

As chief rabbi he was elected in 1926 to the Romanian senate, the first Jew to receive such an appointment, and was recognized by the government as the representative of all Romanian Jewry. By force of his intellect and personality he became the chief figure in the religious as well as in the general communal life of Romanian Jewry.

As remarkable as his activities have been, he is mostly remembered and admired for his tremendous efforts on behalf of the Romanian Jews in order to get them the Romanian citizenship. As a representative of the Jews in Romania rabbi Niemirower took part to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919, together with Dr. Wilhelm Filderman, the leader and founder of the Union of the Native Jews political party. They became close partners in the defense of the Romanian Jews rights. As the result of their efforts, he had the satisfaction to witness the recognition by the Romanian authorities of the civil rights of all Jews in the Romanian state in 1923.

Given the rise of the Nazi- type antisemitism in his country and in Europe, in 1938 rabbi Niemirower visited Palestine in order to check, the possibilities of a mass emigration of the Jews from Romania.

On November 18, 1939 Jacob Itzhak Niemirower died in Bucharest. He was buried in the old Jewish Orthodox cemetery of Bucharest.

Dr. Niemirower published over 650 articles and numerous books in German, Romanian, French, Hebrew and Yiddish languages.

Another important leader of the Romanian Jewry in the first half of the 20th century was **Alexandre Şafran**.

Rabbi Şafran was born in Bacău, and received his doctorate in philosophy from Vienna University in 1933. He briefly succeeded his father as rabbi in Bacău, before becoming the chief rabbi of Romania in 1940, at 29, the youngest chief rabbi in the world.

As you may know, in September 1940 Romania allied to Nazi Germany and, under Nazi influence, had begun to introduce anti-Jewish laws. Refusing to emigrate to British-controlled Palestine, Şafran was among the senior Jewish leaders arrested in July 1941 after Romania entered the Second World War. Şafran used all his diplomatic skills to have everybody freed, telling the Bucharest police chief they would be "official hostages" for their community's good behavior. Şafran lobbied the Orthodox Patriarch Nicodim, whom he remembered as a "grim, ruthless old man of the antisemitic priesthood" in his successful campaign to have the Yellow Star badge abolished soon after its introduction in Romania.

In December 1941 all Jewish organizations were abolished, and Safran helped set up a Jewish Council which worked underground. Despite the dangers, he lobbied tirelessly to try to prevent successive waves of deportations of Jews from Romania to death camps. He worked closely with the Vatican nuncio Andrea Cassulo, sympathetic members of the royal family and even the dictator Ion Antonescu's wife. In 1942 Şafran used his contacts with ambassadors, notably the Swiss René de Weck, the queen mother Elena, and church officials, including the papal nuncio Andrea Cassulo, to convince Antonescu to resist German demands for the wholesale deportation of Jews. The majority of the Romanian Jews were saved from the German camps fate because of Şafran's efforts.

As World War II continued, the Jewish Council organized efforts to aid and lobby for the return of Jews deported to Transnistria. That so many had survived was testament to Safran's tenacity. "The first Passover after the liberation was a true celebration of freedom" he later recalled. The Soviet deputy foreign minister Andrei Vyshinsky received him in Bucharest in November 1944. In 1945 he worked with composer George Enescu to raise relief funds for the Romanian famine, including a United States tour. The violinist Yehudi Menuhin brought great encouragement to the traumatized Jewish community when he visited Bucharest's choral synagogue and Safran's home, in 1946.

However, Şafran refused to cooperate with Communist authorities after the war, and, in 1947, was forced into exile to Geneva, Switzerland, with his wife and children. In 1948, he became chief rabbi of Geneva, where he remained until his death. He would not see Romania again for 50 years.

In the late 1940s, Safran had travelled to the United States, where he met Albert Einstein at Princeton University. Einstein gave him a photograph of himself with a personal dedication, which Şafran kept on his desk.

Şafran was an early pioneer of Jewish-Christian relations; he maintained warm relations with Cardinal Augustin Bea, the leading Catholic advocate of better interfaith relations. Indeed, Bea travelled to Geneva to consult him many times during the Second Vatican Council.

In meetings with Pope John Paul II in 1984 and 1985, Șafran urged the Vatican to establish diplomatic relations with the State of Israel, something not achieved until 1993.

Despite his tumultuous life, Șafran remained pre-eminently a scholar, working right up till his death. Asked once if he was preparing another book, he responded with a smile: "I'm always working on a new book." He wrote several books including a memoir. His best-known writings are on the Kabbalah.

He was elected an honorary member of the Romanian Academy in 1997.

He is buried in Israel beside his wife, Sarah.

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Tsirelson was the Chief Rabbi of Bessarabia, a member of the Romanian parliament, and a prominent Jewish leader and posek (a legal scholar who determines the application of halakha, the Jewish religious laws derived from the written and oral Torah). Yehuda Leib Tsirelson was the son of the Rabbi of Kozelets, Moishe Chayim. He was considered a prodigy at a young age and became the Rabbi of Priluki at the age of nineteen. From 1880 he served as a rabbi in Poltava until 1908 when he was appointed religious and crown rabbi of Kishinev. In 1911 he was one of the signatories of a letter by 300 prominent Russian Rabbis against the antisemitic Beilis affair case. That same year he received the title of honorable citizen of Russian Empire. In 1912 he was among a core group of Jewish leaders and Rabbis who laid the foundation for the Agudath Israel movement.

In 1918 Bessarabia became part of Romania and Rabbi Tsirelson was nominated Chief Rabbi of the whole Bessarabia. He developed there a Jewish educational system, beginning from kindergarten and ending with yeshiva. Many prominent rabbis, including future Rabbis of Rîbnița (Rabbi Chaim Zanol Abramowitz) and Buhusi, studied in his yeshiva.

In 1898 he participated in the first all-Russian Zionist conference in Warsaw.

In 1920 having knowledge of the Romanian language, he was elected to represent the Jews of Bessarabia in the Parliament of Romania in Bucharest. In 1922 he became the only Bessarabian Jewish representative in the parliament. In parliament, Tsirelson tried to warn about the growing antisemitism in Romania, but the delegates refused to publish his speeches in the parliament periodical.

After the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia, he was labeled by communist-backed newspapers as an anti-Soviet agent.

He was killed when the invading Germans bombed Chisinau in June of 1941.

On the religious front, we will focus on two remarkable rabbis: Avraham Mattisyahu Friedman and Joel Teitelbaum.

Rabbi Avraham Mattisyahu Friedman was a leading Hasidic Rabbi and the founder of the Ștefănești dynasty. He was the son of Rabbi Menachem Nochum and was born on the eighth day of Hanukkah 1847 in Sadigura, close to Cernauti, today in Ukraine. At his brit milah, his grandfather, the Ruzhiner Rebbe, gave him the second name Mattisyahu after Mattathias Maccabee, the High Priest.

Rabbi Avraham Mattisyahu was 21 years old when his father, Rabbi Menachem Nochum, died in 1869. After much pleading and the approval of his uncle, Rabbi Avraham Yaakov Friedman, the first Rebbe of Sadigura, Rabbi Avraham Mattisyahu agreed to fill his father's position, a role he held for 64 years.

His influence over Romanian Jewry was immense and his following numbered in the thousands. He was revered by Jews and Christians alike. On his annual visit to Bucharest, all the shops were closed in his honor and tens of thousands of people came out to welcome him. The presence of his court turned Ștefănești into one of the most important Hasidic centers in Eastern Europe. Three of the ten synagogues in the town were located in the Rebbe's courtyard and daily at his table 60 poor people ate. The Rebbe also looked after the welfare of many devout Hasidim who cut themselves off from the outside world in order to pursue their divine service. Among those who stayed for months or even years in his court were Rabbi Chaim Zaslavsky, the Ribnitzer Rebbe, and Rabbi Eliezer Zusia Portugal, the first Skulener Rebbe.

The second Ștefănești Rebbe died on July 15, 1933. His funeral, held in the town of Iași, attracted 50,000 mourners. As he was never blessed with offspring, he had invited his sister's son, Rabbi Menachem Nochum of Itskani, to Ștefănești in order to succeed him.

The grave of the second Ștefănești Rebbe became a hallowed pilgrimage site for Jews and Christians alike, attracting thousands of visitors on his yahrzeit and the depositing of thousands of prayer notes written in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Romanian in his ohel (a house structure built over the grave). Ștefănești became one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Europe for the Hasidic Jews.

In 1968 Dr. Joseph Brayer, former av beis din (head of the rabbinical court) of Ștefănești and as of 2006 rabbi in the Tiferet Avraham Matitياهو Synagogue in The Bronx, New York, initiated a plan to reinter the Rebbe's remains in Israel. The body was exhumed under the direction of Dr. Moses Rosen, Chief Rabbi of Romania, and reinterred in the Ruzhin plot in the Nahalat Yitzhak Cemetery in Giv'atayim, Israel. This new gravesite also became a shrine for people in need of blessings and salvation, with thousands of visitors each year on the Rebbe's yahrzeit.

Back in Romania, Orthodox Christian peasants continued to light candles and leave prayer notes in the Rebbe's empty ohel in the hope that the Rebbe would still intercede on their behalf.

The second Ștefănești Rebbe is considered to be one of the hidden tzaddikim of his generation. The rabbi from Ștefănești was famous for the miracles he performed in his time life and even after.

On one occasion a Hasid came to the Rebbe, crying that his daughter had fallen ill with typhus and was in a desperate condition. Her hours were numbered and only a miracle could save her. The Rebbe gave the Hasid his personal spoon which he used every morning to eat breakfast, and a piece of his bread, and told the Hasid to feed the bread to his daughter with the spoon. Although the girl couldn't swallow and hadn't eaten anything in days, she readily consumed the Rebbe's shirayim (leftovers from a Rebbe's meal) and a few days later she was back to herself and lived to a ripe old age. The spoon, handed down from generation to generation, is still a family heirloom today.

The Rebbe also healed the child of a Romanian boyar, who had come to ask him the help. The landowner no longer knew how to deal with the disease that tormented his child and no doctor could heal. The Rabbi made for the boy a little man out of clay called "midbrie", and the child was cured immediately. The boyar was so thankful that he gave the Rabbi a carriage.

There is also the story of a Jewish woman who could not have children. She tried and tried and, desperately, she came to the Rebbe's grave in Ștefănești to pray. After that she had three children.

Another remarkable Rabbi was **Joel Teitelbaum**, the founder of the Satmar dynasty, a prominent Hasidic rebbe and Talmudic scholar. He was probably the best known Haredi opponent of all forms of modern political Zionism.

Joel Teitelbaum was born on January 13, 1887, the fifth and youngest child of Grand Rabbi Chananyah Yom Tov Lipa Teitelbaum and his second wife, Chana Ashkenazi. Chananyah served as the rabbi of Sighetu Marmăției in Romania, was the dean of the local Rabbinical seminary, and the leader of the eponymous Hasidic movement based in the city. He was the great-grandson of Moshe Teitelbaum, a disciple of the Seer of Lublin, who was one of the main promulgators of Hasidism in Hungary. The rabbis of the Teitelbaum family were known for their highly conservative stance, and their opposition to the Enlightenment, Neolog Judaism, and Zionism.

Joel was renowned for his intellectual capacities from a young age. At his bar mitzvah, he delivered a sermon of several hours concerning an issue from the Shabbat tractate in the Talmud. He was stringent in matters regarding ritual purity, and would lengthily prepare for prayer by meticulously cleaning himself.

In 1904, just several days before his father's death on 15 February, the 17-year-old married Chavah Horowitz, the daughter of Abraham Chaim Horowitz of Polaniec.

Teitelbaum's older brother Chaim Tzvi Teitelbaum succeeded their father in all three of his posts. A small faction of Hasidim regarded Joel Teitelbaum as the appropriate heir, and he was also supported by his mother. He then moved to his new father-in-law's residence in Radomyśl Wielki, and remained there for over a year.

On September 8, 1905, he settled in Satu-Mare or Satmar in Yiddish. Despite his youth, supporters opened a study hall for him. He gradually began to attract a small local following. In 1911, Teitelbaum was invited by the Jewish community in Orshiva (now in Ukraine), then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to serve as their town's rabbi. During his stay there, he established a local seminary and spread the ideas of Hasidism among the populace. Upon the outbreak of World War I, he returned to Satu-Mare, where his old study hall gradually developed into a full-fledged seminary.

The chief Orthodox rabbi of Satmar, Yehudah Greenwald, died on March 9, 1920. Several of Teitelbaum's supporters advanced his name as a possible candidate for the vacant office but he was opposed by the non-Hasidic majority in the community, the modernists, and the Zionists, as well as by many Hasidim.

In 1922 Joel Teitelbaum returned to his community in Orshiva, then in Czechoslovakia.

On March 29, 1925, he was appointed chief rabbi of Carei. He moved to the city about a year later.

On June 11, 1930, Joel was invited to serve as Satmar's chief rabbi. He accepted but arrived in the city only on February 27, 1934. With 334 students, his rabbinical seminary became Satmar's largest, having more pupils than all other three seminaries combined.

In August 1932, he visited Jerusalem. A small party there sought to appoint him as the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of the city, in the wake of Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld's death, but Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky eventually received the post.

In the winter of 1936, the Romanian king Carol II made a visit to the city of Satmar. A large parade consisting of thousands of soldiers and courtiers accompanied his arrival, and the

municipality prepared a large stage upon which all the religious and municipal leaders of the town stood. Teitelbaum was there with all other religious leaders. When the king approached the stage, he surveyed all the people who stood on it, and started walking in Teitelbaum's direction, who was holding his rabbinical stick in one hand and his hat in the other. Two priests started walking towards the king, but he ignored them. Teitelbaum, suddenly noticing what was happening, saluted and said the blessing "Shenatan MiChvodo LiVnei Adam" (who gave from his honor to human beings). The king gave Teitelbaum his hand. The moment was documented by a Jewish photographer, and was published in the Romanian press. Several days later, the king was asked why he approached the Orthodox rabbi first, and he responded: "Immediately when I walked toward the stage, I surveyed all those who were standing on it. My heart was attracted to this rabbi due to his appearance that radiated spirituality."

In 1940, following the Second Vienna Award, Satmar again became part of Hungary.

Prior to the Holocaust, Teitelbaum ignored the threats to the Jews of Transylvania, and failed to engage in the preparation of rescue and aid plans.

When the Germans invaded Hungary, Teitelbaum's closest associates sought a safer way to smuggle him out by bribing two junior officers, drivers of a Red Cross ambulance, who agreed to drive a group of Jews to Cluj in return for money. The travelers included Joel's family and several wealthy families who paid most of the costs. The attempt failed, and Teitelbaum was arrested and sent to the Cluj Ghetto. Baron Fülöp von Freudiger, director of the Orthodox congregation in Budapest, selected eighty rabbis, among them Joel, and other prominent figures, and paid for their inclusion in the passengers' list of a special train, which was to depart Transylvania for a neutral country. On June 30, 1944, once negotiations with the Germans had been concluded, the passengers boarded a special train that was planned to proceed to Switzerland, but was eventually diverted to Bergen Belsen. The group was held in a special section, in better conditions than those of other groups. Although the group included several notable figures, Teitelbaum was given special consideration. The group's physician exempted him from roll calls, and volunteers performed the tasks imposed on him. With the help of the SS officer Herman Krumei, the final arrangements were made, and Teitelbaum was transferred to Switzerland with some Jews from the group. Upon his arrival in Switzerland, he was accorded preferential treatment by the authorities. In August 1945, several hundreds of the special train's passengers, Teitelbaum among them, left Switzerland for the port of Taranto in Italy. On the 30th, they boarded the ship Ville d'Oran, which arrived in Haifa in the morning of 2 September. During his stay in the British Mandate of Palestine, he resided in Jerusalem, at the house of his nephew and son-in-law, Lipa Meir Teitelbaum. After a year, the Satmar Rebbe emigrated to the United States. He arrived in New York on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, on September 27, 1946, aboard the motor vessel Vulcania. He settled in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, with a small group of supporters.

In late April 1948, the Satmar Hasidim established "Congregation Yetev Lev", named after his grandfather, which was registered as a religious corporation. The community's regulations, accepted in April 1952, decreed that Teitelbaum was the supreme spiritual authority over the members.

In 1951, although not a resident of Israel, Teitelbaum was appointed to the ceremonial office of President of the anti-Zionist Congregation of God-Fearers in Jerusalem. After the death of Zelig

Reuven Bengis on May 21, 1953, he also succeeded him as the God-Fearers' Rabbinical Court chairman.

In 1955, Teitelbaum founded the Central Rabbinical Congress, which he headed for the remainder of his life. From the early 1960s, the rabbi's envoys sought to establish a rural settlement, in which the congregants could be secluded from the outside world. They eventually managed to purchase land in Monroe, upstate New York, where they built Kiryas Joel (Town of Joel). The first families settled there in 1974.

He died on August 19, 1979. Over 100,000 people attended his funeral in Kiryas Joel. He was succeeded by his nephew, his older brother's second son, Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum.

Teitelbaum was famous for his vocal opposition to Zionism in all arenas. He encouraged his followers to form self-sufficient communities, without assistance from the State of Israel, and forbade any official engagement with it. Before World War II, most Hasidic rabbis, as well as many other prominent Orthodox rabbis and leaders, believed that God had promised to return the Jewish people to the Land of Israel under the leadership of the Jewish Messiah, who would arrive when the Jewish people had merited redemption. While awaiting the Messiah, the Jewish people were to perform the mitzvot, and were not to antagonize or rebel against the Gentile nations of the world. In the years following the Holocaust, Teitelbaum undertook to strengthen this position. In Teitelbaum's view, the founding of the modern State of Israel, founded by secular as well as religious Jews, rather than the Jewish Messiah, violated a Jewish commandment that Jews should wait for the Messiah. Moreover, Teitelbaum taught that the existence of the Zionist State of Israel was actually preventing the Messiah from coming.

The last Rabbi we will discuss here is probably well known to you; **Rabbi Solomon Schechter**. He was a rabbi, academic scholar and educator, most famous for his roles as founder and President of the United Synagogue of America, president of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and architect of American Conservative Judaism movement.

He was born in Focșani, Romania, to Rabbi Yitzchok Hakohen, a shochet, "ritual slaughterer", and a member of Chabad hasidim. He was named after its founder, Shneur Zalman of Liadi. Schechter received his early education from his father. Reportedly, he learned to read Hebrew by age 3, and by 5 he mastered Chumash (a printed book containing the Five Books of Moses, also known as the Torah or Pentateuch). He went to a yeshiva in Piatra Neamț at age 10 and at age thirteen studied with one of the major Talmudic scholars, Rabbi Joseph Saul Nathanson of Lemberg. In his 20s, he went to the Rabbinical College in Vienna, where he studied under the more modern Talmudic scholar Meir Friedmann, before moving on in 1879 to undertake further studies at the Berlin Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums and at the University of Berlin.

In 1890, after the death of Solomon Marcus Schiller-Szinessy, he was appointed to the faculty at Cambridge University, serving as a lecturer in Talmudics and reader in Rabbinics.

His greatest academic fame came from his excavation in 1896 of the papers of the Cairo Geniza, an extraordinary collection of around 300,000 documents of rare Hebrew religious manuscripts and medieval Jewish texts that were preserved at an Egyptian synagogue. The find revolutionized the study of Medieval Judaism.

Jacob Saphir was the first Jewish researcher to recognize the significance of the Cairo Geniza, as well as the first to publicize the existence of the Midrash ha-Gadol. Schechter was alerted to

the existence of the Geniza's papers in May 1896 by two Scottish sisters, Agnes and Margaret Smith (also known as Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson), who showed him some leaves from the Geniza that contained the Hebrew text of Sirach (ethical teachings, written approximately between 196 and 175 BCE by Yeshua ben Eleazar ben Sira - Ben Sira, a Hellenistic Jewish scribe), which had for centuries only been known in Greek and Latin translation. Letters, written at Schechter's prompting, by Agnes Smith to The Athenaeum and The Academy quickly revealed the existence of another nine leaves of the same manuscript in the possession of Archibald Sayce at University of Oxford. Schechter quickly found support for another expedition to the Cairo Geniza, and arrived there in December 1896 with an introduction from the Chief Rabbi, Hermann Adler, to the Chief Rabbi of Cairo, Aaron Raphael Ben Shim'on. He carefully selected for the Cambridge University Library a trove three times the size of any other collection, which is now part of the Taylor-Schechter Collection.

He became a Professor of Hebrew at University College of London in 1899 and remained there until 1902 when he moved to the United States.

In 1902, traditional Jews, reacting against the progress of the American Reform Judaism movement, recruited Schechter to become President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTSA). Schechter served as the second President of the JTSA, from 1902 to 1915, during which time he founded the United Synagogue of America, later renamed as the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

He died in 1915, and is buried at Mount Hebron Cemetery in Flushing, Queens.

Schechter was an early advocate of Zionism.

He was the chairman of the committee that edited the Jewish Publication Society of America Version of the Hebrew Bible.

Schechter's name is synonymous with the findings of the Cairo Geniza.

He placed the JTSA on an institutional footing strong enough to endure for over a century. He became identified as the foremost personality of Conservative Judaism and is regarded as its founder. A network of Conservative Jewish day schools is named in his honor; several dozen Solomon Schechter Day Schools across the United States and Canada.

This concludes the episode on Romanian Rabbis.

Until next podcast episode, be well.