

# **A History of Yugoslav Jews (I)**

**FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE END  
OF THE 19TH CENTURY**

by Yakir Eventov  
edited by Cvi Rotem

English summary translated by Hannah Shmorak  
and edited by Richard Laufer

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## INTRODUCTION (pp. 17—24)

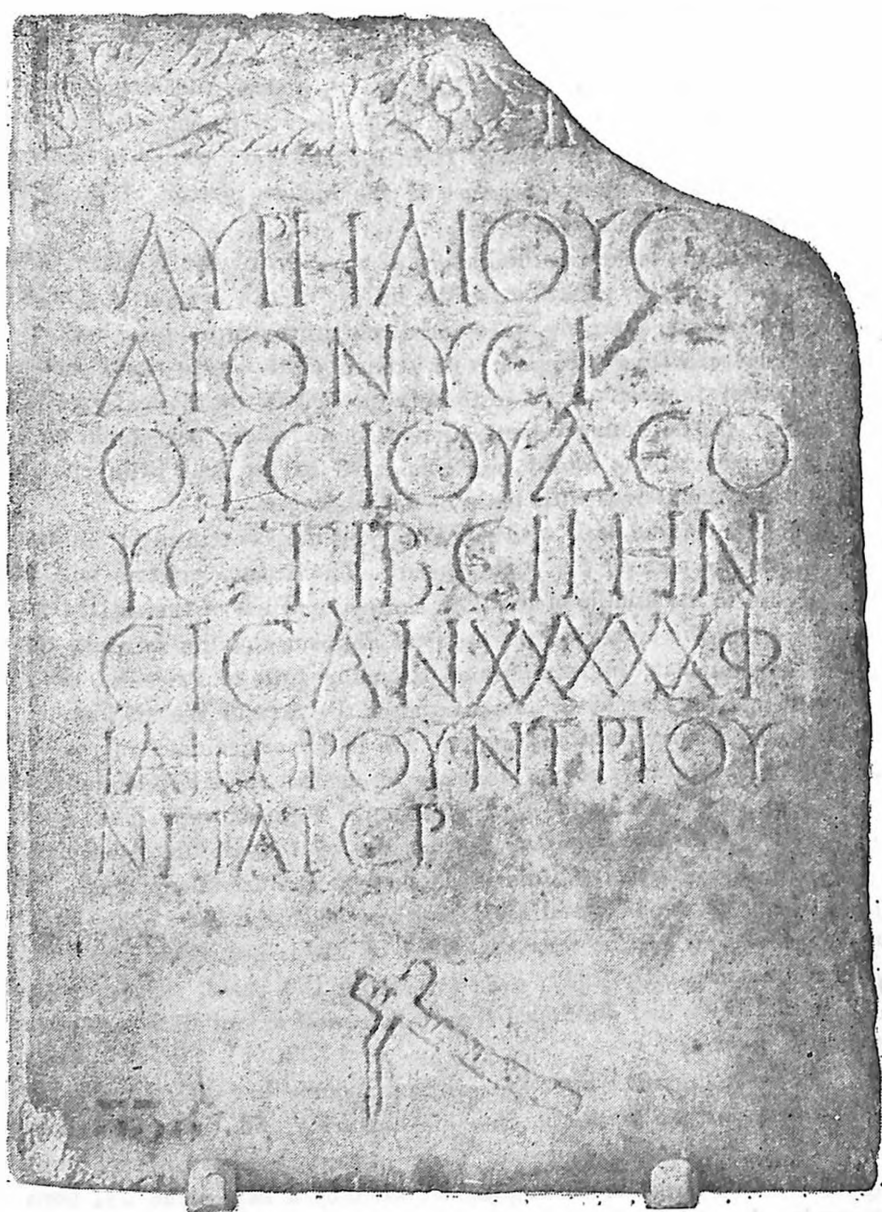
In the atmosphere of Eretz Israel Jewish historiography has met with an unhampered natural development even where it is not concerned with the history of this country itself. Here the Jews are actors in their own story rather than mere stage props in the historic drama of the peoples they were dispersed among.

The time has come for the history of the Jews of the Western Balkans to be reviewed in this light. So far the history of this section of the Jewish people has remained largely unexplored and unrecorded. This book is the first attempt at filling the gap. It is written in the hope that the subject may prove of interest to the historian, the scholar and the layman, and particularly to the younger generation of Jews whose parents have come from that part of the world but who have so far had little chance of familiarising themselves with their own background.

The first volume deals with the history of this community from ancient times until the end of the 19th century. The second volume will bring the story up to the middle of the 20th century and tell of the social ferment of that period, the emergence of political Zionism and the spiritual revival that accompanied it, the immigration of young Jews to Palestine, the Nazi holocaust and the fate of its survivors after the Second World War.

Time and space naturally are the two major co-ordinates of the events related. The beginnings of our story are set against the scene of the Roman Empire of which Dalmatia and Macedonia formed part. The Jews of Dubrovnik were spared neither the horrors of the Middle Ages nor the excesses of the Church Militant in its counter-reformational zeal. Under Ottoman rule in the 17th and 18th centuries, when the glory of the Sublime Porte was already on the wane, the Jews of Serbia and Bosnia had a brief spell of prosperity. By 1941, over a span of 150 years, the Jewish community in Croatia had developed from a hotbed of assimilation into a centre of Jewish revival.

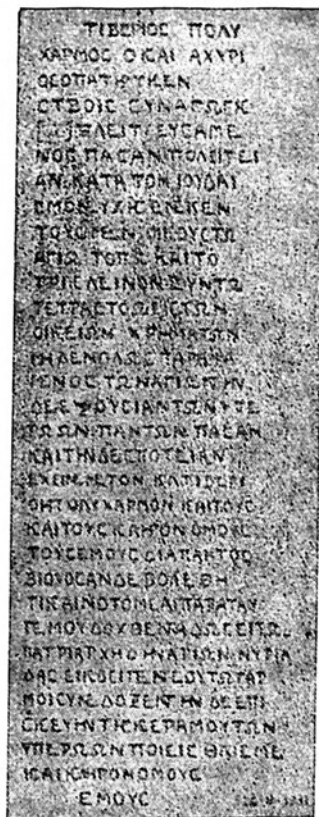
The book describes both the external factors that affected the Jewish communities in the southern Slavonic countries and the general Jewish events that shaped the course of their history. In 1918 these countries united to form the state of Yugoslavia, whereby a new name was born — "Yugoslav Jewry" —, a term hardly ever used before World War I. Our



Tombstone of Aurelius Dyonisius, a Jew from Tiberias — Benkovac, Dalmatia, 2nd Century



Polyharmos' Pillar — Stobi, 2nd Century



Greek Legend on Polyharmos' Pillar

purpose is to trace the history of this Yugoslav Jewry, that is all those Jewish groups which lived at various times during two thousand years within the territories of present-day Yugoslavia. In the northern Balkans and the neighbouring provinces lived the Ashkenazi communities; in the south — the Romaniotes, the descendants of the ancient Greek Jewry. Family names such as Papo and Romano are now the sole reminders of the Sephardi (Spanish) Jews' connection with the Romaniotes. Among these Jews we also find the name Ashkenazi, which indicates that many a refugee from Central Europe — *ashkenazi* in Hebrew — was admitted into the Sephardic communities of the Balkans, as were the fugitives from Portugal. The Jews who in the course of the centuries came to settle within the territories of Yugoslavia via Dubrovnik can hardly be regarded as a homogeneous group, though the majority seem to have come from Italy.

Before the birth of Yugoslavia in 1918 the Jewish communities of Serbia, Bosnia, Vojvodina, Dalmatia and Croatia had been residents of various territories of pre-war Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and of Serbia. Thus they had been not only ethnically heterogeneous but also divided by political frontiers. From 1918 onward the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities gradually merged into a single whole.

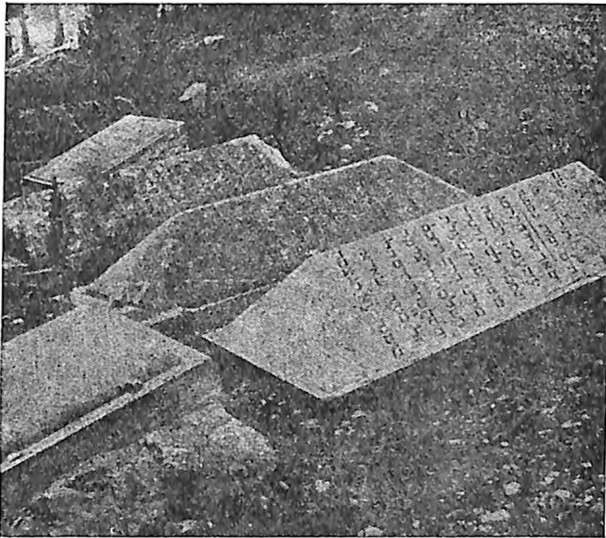
#### UNDER THE ROMAN EAGLE (pp. 25—36)

In 1878 the Italian archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi found a 4th century inscription on a tombstone in the ancient cemetery of Solin, reading, "Here lies a man buried according to the sacred laws of Christianity." Rossi discerned a Hebrew stylistic influence in this legend as nothing resembling it had been found on the pagan or Christian tombstones of the late Roman period, and suspected the presence of a Jewish cemetery in the neighbourhood. In 1956 Branimir Gabritchovich found two fragments of a tombstone in the Solin digs on which he deciphered the inscription: "May no unwanted trespassers desecrate this tomb, be they Jews, Christians or . . . ani . . ." A lively archaeological controversy ensued about the mutilated word, but for our purpose suffice it to note the specific reference to Jews.

A tombstone in Benkovac on the slopes of Mount Velebit in Dalmatia, commemorated one Aurelius Dyonisius, a Tiberian Jew of the 2nd century A.D. In 1960 a Jewish grave was found in Ducea near Titograd in Montenegro, which is believed to date from the end of the 3rd century A.D.



A 4th-Century Tombstone at Solin, on which Jews are mentioned



16th-Century Tombstones in the Maryan Graveyard at Split

In Stobi in Yugoslav Macedonia two so-called Polyharmos pillars were discovered in the thirties among the ruins of a church apparently erected on the foundations of a synagogue. One of them bears in Greek the name of their Jewish donor and a stipulation which gave rise to a dispute about the status of the Patriarchs during the Roman period.

#### UNDER BYZANTINE RULE (pp. 36—38)

With the decline of the Western Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity the position of the Jews in Dalmatia and the southern Balkans soon deteriorated. Christianity was adopted by the State and in the name of the newly acknowledged Church restrictions against Jews were issued by successive Councils and Synods. They were deprived of religious freedom and of sources of livelihood, and subjected to a variety of social sanctions. Conditions became particularly hard for the Jews under the rule of the Eastern Byzantine Empire, which covered parts of present-day Yugoslavia as well as some Greek cities from where Jews tried to emigrate to the territories of the southern Slavs. The severely persecuted Greek-speaking Byzantine Jews, known as Romaniotes, thus dispersed over many countries including those occupied by the southern Slavs. They later merged with the mass of Jews from the Iberian peninsula who came to settle in these parts.

#### THE GHEVALLIM (pp. 39—44)

Like numerous Medieval documents also those referring to the Ghevallim are rather vague. Who were these people?

Bulan, the King of the Khazars whose domain extended from the Crimea to Astrakhan, decided somewhere in the 8th century to get converted to Judaism. The Byzantines at Kherson tried to convince him of the superiority of the Christian religion, and the Arabs of the neighbouring countries made similar efforts on behalf of the Islamic faith. This time, however, Judaism won out and the king and many of his subjects became Jewish. From the middle of the 8th century till the beginning of the Mongol invasion of the European continent, the extensive Khazar territories were in fact a Jewish state.

During this period Hasdai Ibn Shaprut served as *Vizier* (minister) at the court of Khalif Abdurrahman III (912-961) in Cordova. A delegation from the Byzantine Empire confirmed to him the existence of the Khazarian realm under the reign of a Jewish monarch, Joseph. The delegation was



willing to take a letter to this king, but to Ibn Shaprut's disappointment this letter was returned from Constantinople.

A further opportunity to come in touch with Khazar arose with the arrival of a delegation of the Ghevallim, two of whose members were Jews — Mar Shaul and Mar Joseph. They expressed their willingness to deliver Ibn Shaprut's letter to their king who would see to it that it was forwarded to the Khazar monarch via Hungary, Russia and Bulgaria.

The controversy about the Ghevallim mainly concerned the location of their kingdom. Some fifty years ago historians tended to identify it with the Croatian kingdom of the 10th century. It appears that the Arab historiographers used that name to refer to the inhabitants of the mountainous coast of Dalmatia with which Spain entertained a lively commerce by sea (*gebl* in Arabic means mountain). In the 10th century this coast was under the rule of the sovereign state of Croatia. Ibn Shaprut in his letter to King Joseph mentioned "the King of the Ghevallim who are Siklab"; while the Arab Ibn Khaldoun refers to the eastern Adriatic coast as the Shore of the Sakalib. One of the quarters of Palermo, the capital of Sicily, was called Harat Askaliba — the Slav Quarter. Ibrahim Ibn Yakoob, who travelled through the southern Slavonic countries in 965, also refers to the Croats as Sakalib — Slavs — adding that "theirs is a land of high mountains".

#### UNDER THE CHURCH MILITANT (pp. 45—70)

The Jews of Croatia and Slovenia, two provinces that are considered as a unit from the Yugoslav point of view, shared a common fate during the Middle Ages. At the time of the Crusades they found refuge for over four hundred years in Slovenia, where there had been only few previous Jewish settlements. There was an older Jewish community at Ptuj, while at Judenburg in Styria Jews were recorded as early as 1080 — sixteen years before the First Crusade. The well-known exegete and expert in *halakhic* law Israel ben Petahya Isserlein (1390 to 1460) lived in Maribor (Marburg) and wrote authoritative decisions in form of Questions and Responses which are the most important source for the history of the Slovenian Jews.

The latter apparently disappointed the hopes their Slovenian hosts had placed in them: the money supply became neither cheaper nor more plentiful. They were thus gradually ousted from most fields of economic enterprise; by the time of their final expulsion the only occupations open

to them were the wine trade and money lending.

Jews were also living in the southern part of Slovenia, in the Krayn district. There is evidence of a medieval Jewish community in Ljubljana, whose members enjoyed greater privileges than were accorded to Jews in any of the neighbouring countries. Nevertheless anti-Jewish sentiments developed in Slovenia quite some time before the Black Death of 1348-1349. In spite of all, Maribor became a small Jewish centre. This Jewish settlement is first mentioned in a document dated 1277. The name of the Jewish quarter hugging the city wall has remained unchanged to this day, although for hundreds of years — since the expulsion — no Jews have set foot there.

During the persecutions and expulsions of the Jews from Germany and Austria in 1427-1430, Itzhak Zarfati repeatedly urged the scattered exiles, including the Jews of Slovenia, to take refuge in the Ottoman Empire, but the majority refused to heed his call.

The Holy Roman (German-Austrian) Emperor was finally persuaded by the Assembly in Maribor to give up the regular income derived from the Jewish tribute and to accept instead a lump sum paid by the town dwellers to the Imperial Treasury. On the 18th of March 1496 the Emperor signed an Edict expelling the Jews from Styria and Corinthia. The expulsion came into force on January 6th, 1497. Also the citizens of Ljubljana managed to buy a similar Edict from Emperor Maximilian, which was issued in Innsbruck on the 1st of January 1515. The Jews of Slovenia escaped to the neighbouring territories — some southwards to settle in Trieste, Gorizia and Gradisca in the Italian provinces under the rule of the Hapsburgs, while others escaped eastwards to Burgenland in Western Hungary.

The historical evidence about the Jews in Croatia during the Middle Ages is much scantier than the sources relating to the Jewish community in Slovenia. There is no doubt, however, that at least in Zagreb, the Croatian capital, Jews lived at that time. I.K. Tkaltchich has discovered a judgment of the Zagreb Court in a case of theft dated 17th April 1444, in which the Jews of that city are mentioned twice; it is alleged that they had bought the stolen goods, and that the accused had entered the *Domus Judeorum* (the Jewish House) at night, though the document does not specify the character of "the house".

In Serbia, too, there is evidence of a Jewish settlement during the Middle Ages. Here their history is closely related to that of the Byzantine



Jews. The denomination "Jew" appears twice in imperial gift charters. In a decree dated 1337 Emperor Stevan Dushan made over to the Monastery of Treskavac an estate near Prilep, extending "from the valley of the Jews down to the Jewish watershed." In a latter document dated 1361, his son Stevan Urosh ceded the tax collected from the Jews to the Lavra Monastery of Khalkidhiki.

As for Dalmatia, a document of 1397 refers to the construction of a Jewish synagogue at Split, and gravestones dating back to 1573 have been preserved to this day in the ancient Jewish cemetery on nearby Mount Marian.

A prominent role was played in the history of this town by Daniel Rodriguez, a Jew who, in the face of vigorous opposition and difficulties, managed, in 1592, to build a deep-sea harbour which attracted remarkable shipping business. In 1667, just as the Venetians were tightening their anti-Jewish legislation, the Jews of Split distinguished themselves in the defence of the city against the Turks. David Pardo, who was later to become Grand Rabbi of Sarajevo and earned fame as a Jewish scholar and writer, spent 18 years of his prime in this city.

At Shibenik, the municipal authorities failed to attract Jewish capital until the arrival of the brothers Raphael and Gershon Suess in 1569. Not even after that date was there an organized Jewish community at Shibenik; at times not a single Jew lived there.

In some Istrian towns Jewish merchants and bankers existed throughout the Middle Ages. They came from nearby Venice and settled in Istria under so-called *capitoli*. In 1380 the first Jewish bank was opened at Koper. After 1513 the street of the Jewish bankers was called "the ghetto", which name persisted long after the last Jew had left. At Rovinj the entrance to the ghetto was known as the Gate of the Bearded.

In the municipal archives of Zadar an important document has been preserved — the agreement between the local Commissioner of the Hungarian-Croatian King Sigismund, and the Jews. In this agreement, signed in 1398, that is shortly before the conquest of the town by Venice, the King undertakes to respect the Jewish rights and property; by force of the same agreement the Jews were exempted from the jurisdiction of the Church.

#### THE PEARL OF THE ADRIATIC (pp. 71—114)

Dubrovnik was founded by the fugitive emigrants of Epidaurus after



The Ghetto Square at Piran, Istria

the destruction of their town by the Avars in 639. It is known as the Pearl of the Adriatic not only because of its entrancing landscape but above all because of its ancient treasures and invaluable archives. Here Jewish historiography was in luck — the archives of Dubrovnik contain ample testimony of its tiny Jewish community.

The first Jew who lived there in 1326 was a physician of unknown name. He is mentioned in records referring to the years between 1204 and 1358, when the Republic of Dubrovnik stood under the protectorate of Venice. From the end of the 14th century Jewish names in the archives appear with greater frequency to become rather prominent in the following three hundred years. A licence given out in 1421 by the Chancellor approves a commercial partnership between Perera Bonaventura, a Catalonian Jew and "temporary resident of Dubrovnik", and Isaac Durante, another Jew from Catalonia. After 1492 there was an increased influx of Jewish merchants whose presence at Dubrovnik led to the economic prosperity of the entire city, especially of its shipping business. The years of the big emigration of Jews from Spain and Portugal led to the foundation of a Jewish community at Dubrovnik at whose head a Consul was placed. His main function was apparently the collection of Jewish taxes on behalf of the Republic's Treasury.

Then, in 1502, a calamity in form of a blood libel befell the Jewish community of Dubrovnik. In the suburb of Plotche an old woman was killed and ten Jews were arrested on suspicion of murder for ritual purposes. Two of them died under torture, four were burned at the stake, while a physician named Moses was strangled in prison. The remaining three were banished from the town. After this blood libel the situation went from bad to worse until, in May 1515, all the Jews including the Marannos were finally exiled. The majority found shelter in Turkey. A number settled in Italy, mainly in the province of Apulia, where they did their best to interfere with the supply of wheat to Dubrovnik — the only retaliation they were capable of in return for the anti-Jewish attitude of the Dubrovnik Government.

In 1532, however, Jews were again in the town. This time they had not come from the West but from the South — from Salonica, the various towns of Western Greece, and from Albania. In 1538 foundations were laid to a revived Jewish community, rather small but all the more splendid. In the relative freedom of a changed Dubrovnik they found the possibility of a decent livelihood. True, the growing immigration of Jews

brought with it certain curtailments, mainly by demand on the part of the Church. Nevertheless, the cautious rulers of the town deemed it expedient to bow to the will of their powerful ally, the Sultan of Turkey. Again and again during the 16th and 17th centuries the Turks demanded of Dubrovnik to take in and spare the Jewish refugees, the victims of the West. Any maltreatment of the Jews was likely to bring about the Porte's ill-will toward the tiny Republic. But Turkey, too involved in international tangles, did not always stand by its threats. Already in 1540 a series of anti-Jewish regulations were issued at Dubrovnik, confining the Jewish residence to a number of buildings, obliging them to wear the yellow badge and hat similar to that imposed on their brethren in some Western countries, and so forth. Those who could afford left for Turkey. In 1546 the remaining Jews were confined to a veritable ghetto — a narrow street not far from the Town Square, with high walls at both ends and gates that were locked at night.

In 1590 Dubrovnik was seized with a panic at the report from her Constantinople agent that a neighboring pasha planned to dispossess the Republic of the Konavle territory. The disaster was averted through the efforts of a Jewish physician by the name of Abeatar (Evyatar) who had only recently set up his practice at Dubrovnik. He first smuggled to his co-religionists in Constantinople 200 thalers, then another 900. By means of this bribe a *firman* was secured to put an end to the pasha's arbitrariness. Such and similar other patriotic acts induced the Republic of Dubrovnik to plead for its Jewish doctor whose practices the Church tried to proscribe.

However, the Republic's protection did not reach another doctor, the great Amatus Lusitanus, who had settled in the town about 1556 or 1558. A physician of renown and prominent scholar, he hoped to be appointed municipal surgeon. He had written a seven-volume work entitled *Centurionum septem*, each volume containing one hundred medical case histories. The sixth volume concluded with the famous Amatus Oath declaring that the great doctor had always had the well-being of his patients at heart rather than his personal advantage, never discriminating Jew from Christian or Moslem. Nevertheless, under pressure from the local physicians and the Church, the city fathers turned down Amatus' application for licence of medical practice in the town.

Small as the Jewish community of Dubrovnik was it gave home to a brilliant lyrical poet, Dr. Isaiah Cohen, known by his various pseudo-

nymys as Didacus Pyrrhus, Jacobus Flavius, Jacob Eborensis or Lusitanus. His influence on his contemporaries was considerable, and although he wrote in Latin the inhabitants still proudly remember his name. He maintained good relations with the aristocracy and citizenry as well as with the local poets, artists and scientists. His poetry bears all the typical marks of the period. His contemporary Shlomo Ohev and the latter's grandson Aaron HaCohen wrote two works in Hebrew, *Shemen Tov* and *Z'kan Aharon*.

Aaron HaCohen left a deeper imprint on the history of Dubrovnik than any other Jew before or after him. Born there at the end of the 16th century, he was made Rabbi of the community while still a fairly young man, and served in this office until his death in 1656. He was a gifted rhetorician, a brilliant exegete and writer. During his time the community met with various calamities such as the blood libel of 1622, the Yeshurun trial and, finally, expulsion. In 1652 HaCohen restored and enlarged the ancient synagogue in the ghetto and the old cemetery, the Zhudioski Grebi, which was in use even as late as 1910. The synagogue, the oldest fully preserved one in Yugoslavia, has remained unaltered to this day. HaCohen meticulously recorded the events that overtook his community, and the collection of his sermons contains a description of the blood libel and trial of 1622.

The second blood libel differed from the first one only in its details. This time its victim was a Jewish merchant by the name of Isaac Yeshurun. In September 1622 a girl from the suburb of Pile, daughter of a certain Julius Longo, disappeared. After prolonged search her body was found in the home of Maria Matkova, apparently an insane woman. She admitted killing the girl but in her defence insisted that she had done so on the instigation of the Jews who needed Christian blood for the forthcoming Feast of the Tabernacles. The only Jew she could name was Isaac Yeshurun. Even after six weeks of torture under arrest Yeshurun did not break down. Then Matkova was convicted and executed. Nevertheless the Senate of the Republic decided to expel the few Jews still left at Dubrovnik who had tried in vain to obtain Yeshurun's release, among them Aaron HaCohen. Yeshurun was granted a reprieve only in March 1625. He was immediately exiled and left for Jerusalem. The Yeshurun Miracle was, for hundreds of years, commemorated in the Hanukka prayers of the Jews of Dubrovnik.

In 1667 the city was devastated by an earthquake and thousands



ספר

אברהם אבינו  
יצחק אבינו  
יהודה אבינו  
דוד אבינו  
משה אבינו  
אהרן אבינו  
על הדאש שיווד על חוקן

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יצחק אבינו  
יהודה אבינו  
דוד אבינו  
משה אבינו  
אהרן אבינו

בו נעזר הכבוד והיו בני הבורים בלאום זה סודות נפיקים עתיקים ושתקים  
ובפיקים ענה פרושים ודורשים מקדשים אשר בארץ. הנה הבורים

הנבורים האבורים מקלה רוב האשר דוקקל וימן כסודות שלמה  
אברהם אבינו אהרן אבינו ושלמה דה עומד לנו; ענה אברהם

ותלמיד יחיד רוב הכולל החסוד הקנה בסודות אברהם

הבורן עוקל חנה חמט סתתמים שלמים

חמטים ישמט חמטים ויחיד יחיד חמט

שנדיים בעינים:

דפם בוינ צימאד סטלל

ענה השמן הטוב

הנה כפון חקן כל יח חמטם סטלל סטלל סטלל

Appresso l' Illustris. & excell. consistorio Venedranis.



Per Antonio Rizzi.

Con licentia Disuperiori.

"Shemen hatov u'zkan Aharon" by Shlomo Ohev and Aaron HaCohen — Venice, 1657

killed. Most of its wealth and art treasures were destroyed. The small Jewish community lost thirty-nine souls, a considerable part of its total number. It recovered some of its prosperity at the end of the 18th century, but the anti-Jewish laws were still scrupulously enforced by the authorities. In 1804, shortly before the fall of the Republic, a decree finally put an end to coerced conversion of Jews by the Church.

#### UNDER THE TURKISH CRESCENT (pp. 115—128)

The Turks' first encounter with Jews in Anatolia was during the conquest of Brusa in 1326. The new rulers granted extensive privileges to the Jews — free access to crafts and trades as well as the right to buy property in any place. In Turkey anti-Jewish excesses were rare although the 24 articles of Omar's Covenant, regulating the policy of Moslem rulers towards their non-Moslem subjects, remained in force. Its provisions were gradually mitigated until, in the 19th century, the only discrimination against non-believers was a *per capita* land levy. In many localities, moreover, *Chifut khans*, or Jewish courtyards, were set up — a Turkish version of ghettos.

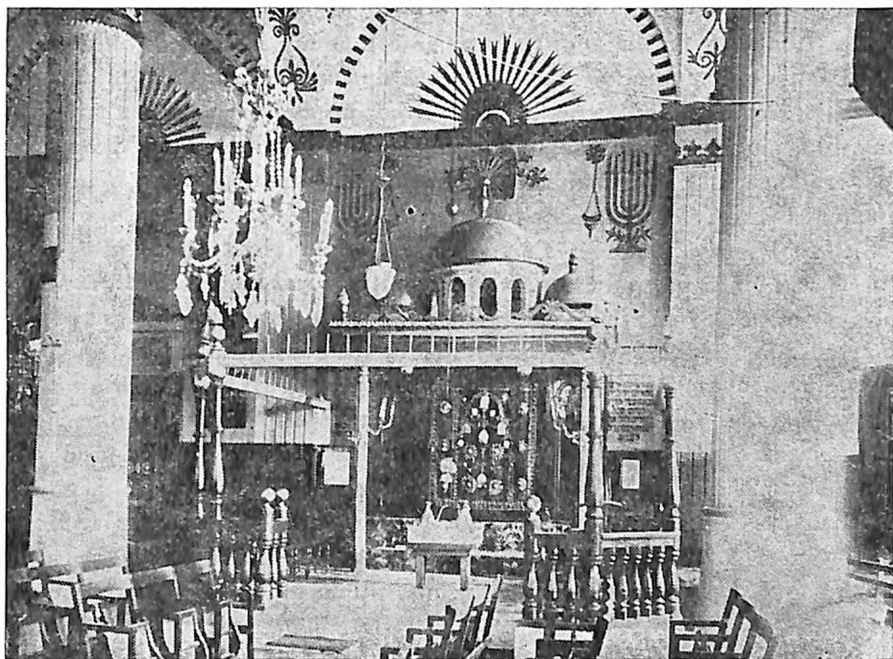
During the time of Turkey's glory the Jews were treated well and help was extended to the Jewish refugees from Spain. As the story of Don Joseph Nassi shows, the Ottomans used the services of the Jews against the enemies of the Empire.

After the expulsion from Spain, the Ottoman Empire became the most important haven for Jews. At their height the communities of Constantinople, Salonica and Safed were regarded as centres of culture, learning and wisdom for the world Jewry. The romance between the Jews and the Turks lasted for some two hundred and fifty years, until the accession of Murad III in 1574. Towards the end of the 16th century, as the situation worsened, substantial numbers of emigrants from Constantinople and Salonica settled in present-day Bulgaria. A smaller contingent went from Salonica to Macedonia and from there to northern Serbia, branching out still further to Bosnia.

Salonica is here of particular significance. Throughout the Ottoman period it had rather a strong influence over the descendants of the Sephardic Jews in Serbia and Bosnia who maintained close cultural and economic relations with this centre of Jewish life. After the Spanish expulsion the Jewish quarters assumed a distinctly Sephardic-Spanish character. Ladino replaced the Greek vernacular and the many other



Synagogue at Dubrovnik



The "Aragon" Synagogue at Bitola, destroyed during the Second World War

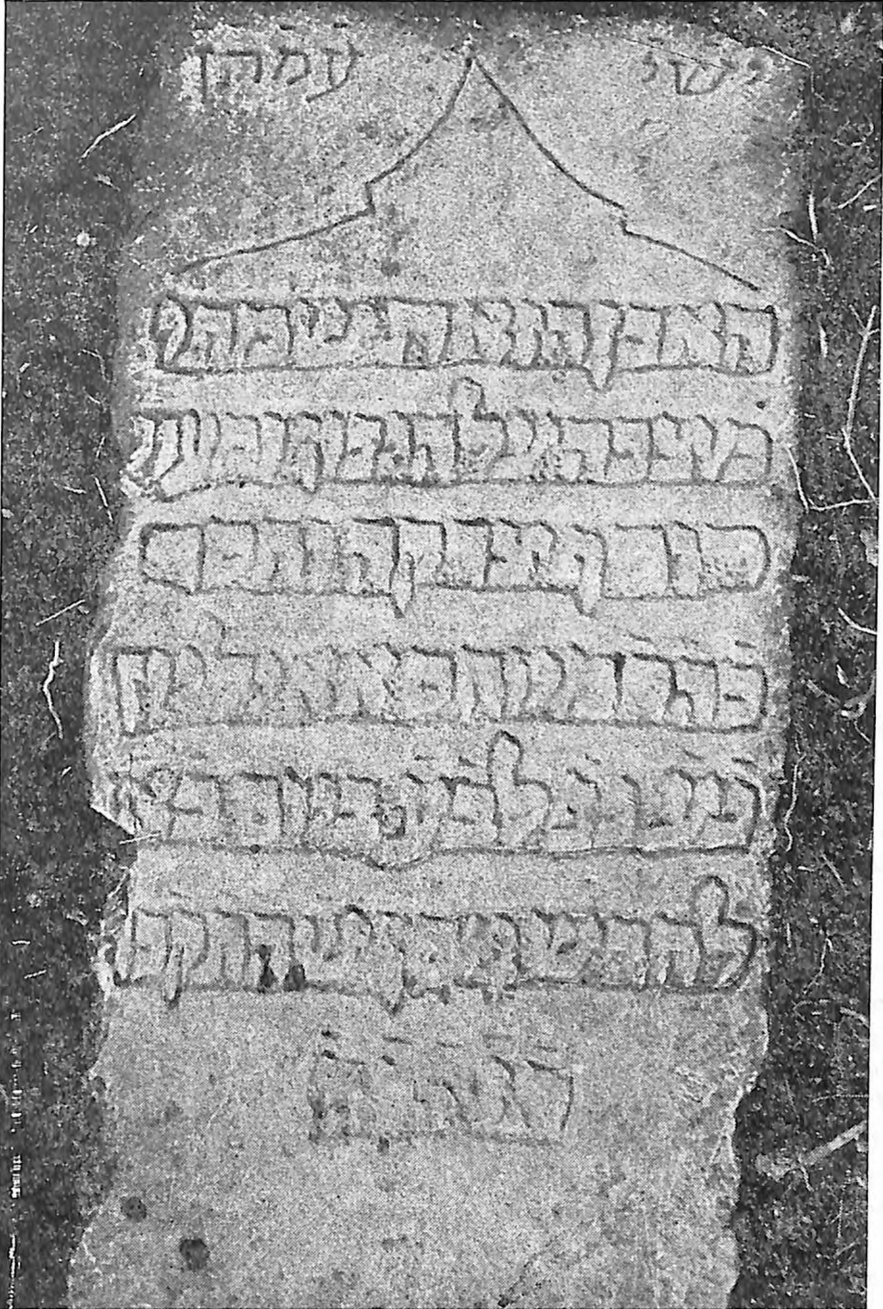
languages of the Jewish Diaspora, to become the *lingua franca* of the community. Spiritually the entire period is dominated by the mysticism of the Safed school, veneration for its originator, *Ha'ari* (Rabbi Isaac Lurie Ashkenazi), accompanied by a passionate yearning for the Messiah whose advent was expected any day. All these were stones for the foundation of a homogeneous Jewish community into which the Jews who had earlier been dispersed all over Europe and were now scattered throughout the Ottoman Empire, were to merge.

Salonica was one of the first Jewish communities in Turkey to have Hebrew printing presses, schools and colleges. In the second half of the 17th century the Messianic movement of Shabtai Zvi won numerous disciples at Salonica by whom the Jewish communities of Serbia and Bosnia, particularly that of Belgrade, were influenced. Although no direct link can be traced between the "Court of Shabtai the Messiah" and the communities of Serbia and Bosnia, the study of the *Zohar* and the mystic lore of the *Kabbala* had stirred up Messianic hopes among the Jewish people. The ground had been prepared, so that between 1650 and 1666 the Shabtaist movement was hopefully welcomed by the oppressed Jewish masses in Europe, Asia Minor and Africa.

#### MACEDONIA (pp. 129—139)

The history of the Serbian Jews is commonly identified with that of the Belgrade community. It is true that during the centuries of Ottoman rule the majority of Serbian Jews lived at Belgrade, but there were ancient communities in the Macedonian cities of Bitola and Skopje too. Not long ago, Z. Efron found some Hebrew tombstones of the 18th century also at Dojran near the Greek border.

The Iberian refugees founded two communities at Bitola, which they named Aragon and Portugal whence they had come. Here Jews lived uninterruptedly from the beginning of the 16th century down to the Nazi holocaust in 1943. The "big courtyard" in the Jewish quarter is frequently mentioned in the 17th century minutes of the Turkish Court at Bitola. This town was the southern gateway to Serbia through which the Jewish immigration from Constantinople and Salonica imported not only industrial products but also the Messianic ideas from Safed. Until the beginning of the 20th century it remained the Jewish centre of Macedonia. In the 1903 census 8,200 Jews were counted, about 10 per cent of the town's total population. They were highly susceptible to all that was going on



Tombstone of Rabbi Meyhas at Dojran, Macedonia, dating from the year 1766

in the Jewish world and lived an intensively Jewish life themselves. Yet the Community's economic resources gradually dwindled. Towards the end of the 19th century the Jewish residents of Monastir-Bitola began to emigrate. After the 1943 disaster not a single Jew was left in the town.

Skopje has an even more ancient history. The town was destroyed in an earthquake in the 6th century but was rebuilt. In the Middle Ages Skopje, situated at a vital highway junction, became an important commercial centre. Her small community like other communities in the Ottoman Empire shared in the effort to take in Iberian refugees and at the end of the 16th century admitted a number of Maranno families from Italy, Spain and Portugal. Until 1943 there were several families members of the Dönme sect, descended from Jewish Shabtaists who had been converted to the Islam. Down to the 17th century no discrimination in commercial life was practised against the Jews; also the former Marannos of the Pinto, Vidal, Abarbanel and Kalai families found prosperity in various business branches. Several Jewish merchants, known as consuls, acted as commercial agents for big foreign firms. Among the well-known Rabbis of the town the names of Moshe Leon, Moshe Bardashi, Joseph Handel, Aaron and Shlomo Abayov and Eliahu Arbaro should be mentioned.

#### SERBIA (pp. 139—171)

After the Battle of Kosovo (1389) the Serbian front moved north. For over a hundred years the Turks made repeated unsuccessful attempts to take the town of Belgrade until it finally surrendered to Suleiman the Magnificent in 1521.

A local tradition has it that there have been Jews in Belgrade since time immemorial. In the 16th century the city had two communities, one Ashkenazi and one Sephardi, the former being the older, its founders having fled to Belgrade from Hungary and Germany during the Middle Ages. The Sephardis came in the 16th century with the conquering Turkish armies. The Community's development in the Jewish quarter of Jaliya set in with the arrival of Meir Angel, the first Rabbi of Belgrade, who wrote some treatises on the Jewish law, the *Halakha*. The community prospered and grew in spite of the intellectual and cultural decline of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire. In 1617, on the initiative of Yehuda Lerma, a Yeshiva was opened which was to become a famous centre of Jewish learning. The *Sepher Shemot*, the great treatise of the prominent *halakhist*

# ספר

## שמות

והוא הכבוד שנותן אנשי נבאים שנותן הקודש וכוונתו  
 וקפדו נאמנו ושאר לאומות הגוים וקפדו שנות  
 עבודתו ומאיות מדונה ומאיות ככתבה ועם ועם  
 כלשון אשר לקטתי וחברתי לי לשמי בעיר ודון  
 שבתה ככל גרשון חכהו על להם בטבת זית רענן  
 לעולם ובטבתו חסר עלין וקפו ימים ועשתו  
 ויטעו בו די מחסורם אשר וחסר להם וקפדת  
 קפדתי מרוב נגד כל הקודש כפאר הלוה לו ומה  
 אבראמוס יקרא הקדמותו שופעל חובה למי שפסק  
 בגיטין וקדושתין חיד וקפדו כעצתו ובמרוט לענין שפסק  
 חלבת כחשף עיניו תחזיר מערים  
 פקודים וקפדו

### כונניציה

מחנה בעיון בארץ על החכם חלום החסיד סעניו  
 כהנהר מישל כהר מדברי וכות נמה  
 Appello Illustris & excell. comitibus  
 Vindraminis

Per Antonio Rizzini  
 Comitiatus De Superiori

Simcha ben Gershon HaCohen's "Sefer Shemot"

Simha HaCohen, was written in Belgrade. The contribution of the Belgrade Jews to Jewish religious literature in the 17th century has no parallel in the history of Yugoslav Jewry. The last important writer of the Belgrade school was Joseph Almosnino, a native of Salonica who completed his studies in the S.G. HaCohen Yeshiva of Belgrade. His writings, *Edut beYosef*, published posthumously by his son Isaac, are the most characteristic work of the Belgrade school. When the Turks laid siege to the city in September 1688, the Jews were expelled and Joseph Almosnino died in exile at far-off Nicolsburg in Moravia.

The peace treaty signed in Pozharevac in 1718 assured to both Austrian and Turkish subjects unrestricted residence and commerce rights in each other's territory. Thus Turkish Jews settled in Vienna, the Austrian capital, as well as in Temesvar and in the Hungarian capital of Buda, and founded there Turkish (Sephardi) communities. While they had full trading privileges in these towns, Austrian Jews were granted merely temporary residence and were subject to the Jewish poll tax.

With the conquest of Serbia by the Austrians in 1718 the situation of the Jews deteriorated in spite of the country's economic prosperity. Apart from a ritual slaughter-house no communal activities whatever were permitted to the Belgrade Jews, so that this town ceased to exist as a centre of Jewish life. After the Austrian retreat in 1739 a few Sephardic Jews returned in the wake of the Turkish armies and restored the community. Shlomo Shalem, a well known scholar of the time, was appointed Rabbi.

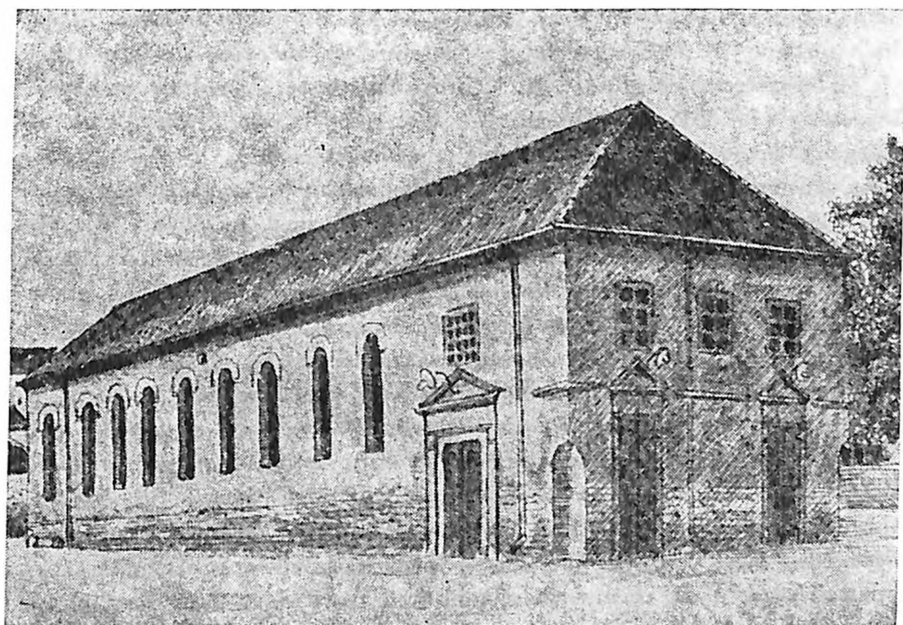
In the succeeding years the town changed hands several times until it returned to the Turks in 1791. One of the first steps taken by the new governor, Topal Pasha ("the Lame"), was to take revenge on the Jews who had remained in the Jewish quarter instead of leaving together with the Ottoman armies. Many of them were imprisoned. So was Rabbi Magriso, who died in prison.

At the outbreak of the Serbian rebellion under George Petrovich Karageorge (1806-1807) most Belgrade Jews escaped to Zemun, Novisad, Bosnia and the various Austrian towns. Those who stayed behind were forcibly converted. Conditions improved for the returnees with the accession of Prince Milosh Obrenovich (1815-1839 and 1859-1860). The Prince went on fighting the Turks and in 1827 their occupation of the country was ended. In 1833 Milosh obtained virtual independence for his principality. The Turkish pasha remained only in the Citadel of Belgrade which served him as residence till 1867.





Shlomo Shalem, Rabbi of Belgrade, 1750—1761



The Dorchola Synagogue in Belgrade (1819—1942)

In 1830 the Turks published their last official document relating to the Serbian Jews — an Imperial Ordinance (*hati-sherif*) reaffirming, in true Ottoman style, the Jewish right of residence, commerce, land acquisition and property without, however, relieving the tax burden. Prince Milosh tried to improve relations between Jewish and Serbian merchants and frequently demonstrated his pro-Jewish sympathies. Among his favourites were Israel Hayim, Chairman of the Belgrade Community, and Joseph Schlesinger, the military band conductor. Israel Hayim's son, Hayim Davitcho, became the Prince's financial adviser. In 1835, however, the Turkish Intelligence Department grew suspicious of his underground political activities, so that he was compelled to escape to Vienna, following his father who had already left in 1813.

In 1842 Milosh's son was deposed by his rivals. The new rulers under the leadership of Prince Alexander Karageorge promised their supporters to rid the provincial towns of Jews. By a decree all Jews living in the country and in the capital were evicted and confined to the courtyard of the Belgrade Citadel. The severity of this order was somewhat relaxed in 1856 when the Jews were allowed to reside in the suburbs of Belgrade. Not content with this partial concession the Jews, on the 12th of April 1858, boldly submitted a petition to the State Council demanding civil equality and freedom of trade in all provincial towns in accordance with the assurances contained in the *hati-sherif* of 1830.

The concessions granted in 1856 proved to be sham anyway. At the beginning of 1861, sixty Jewish families mainly from Shabac, who had somehow managed to elude eviction and had remained in the province, were ordered to move to the Belgrade Citadel. An ordinance to that effect was passed by the Senate in 1861 and confirmed by Prince Mihajlo, Milosh's son. The Jews submitted a memorandum to the Prince, demanding the civil rights assured them by the 1833 treaty which established Serbia's independence and was guaranteed by both Russia and Turkey. The concluding sentence of the memorandum was an outcry of despair: "Should Serbia be unwilling forthwith to comply with our demands, let her expel us all — and we will seek another homeland".

In 1863, as the Government was still obdurate, a group of 131 Belgrade Jews sent a memorandum to the British Consul Ricketts with the request to bring their plight to the attention of Queen Victoria. They demanded observance of the Anglo-Turkish agreement providing for a guaranteed freedom of movement and trade to Serbian Jews, and pleaded

for the Queen's intervention unless their just demands were satisfied. When Ricketts turned to the Serbian Foreign Minister Garashanin he was told that copy of the memorandum had been forwarded to the Prince; the Minister hoped something would be done in the matter. At the intercession of the Alliance Israélite Universelle with the Turkish Government, Ali Bey, the Turkish Plenipotentiary in Belgrade, likewise called upon Garashanin reminding him that Serbia's undertaking towards the Jews was an integral part of the Anglo-Turkish agreement. In 1864 Moses Montefiore, Chairman of the Board of Deputies, turned to the Prince of Serbia by a letter sent through the Foreign Office in London. In his answer, Garashanin assured Montefiore of the Prince's benevolence toward his Jewish subjects. The reasons why they had not yet attained civil equality were "such as no responsible government could disregard." Thus none of these numerous interventions bore fruit. The Belgrade press helped to turn public opinion against the Jews; the Shabac paper *Svetovid* attained the limit by demanding that the country's economy be immediately rid of Jews and Jewish influence. Such incitement resulted in public riots on the 16th of January 1865, during which two Jews, Jacob Alcalay and Shlomo Abinun, were killed.

In 1867 the Serbian Foreign Minister Ristich announced certain reliefs regarding the eviction of the Jews from provincial towns; yet at the same time Prime Minister Garashanin declared that Serbia would grant the Jews no further concessions. Great Britain made her support of the Serbian claim to the Citadel of Belgrade contingent on the grant of free movement and full civil equality to the country's Jews. When Gorchakov, the Russian Foreign Minister, was informed of the British stipulation he replied that Russia, though having full understanding for Britain's desire to improve the condition of the Serbian Jews, yet could not totally disregard the contention of the Serbs that they were faced with the necessity of defending their own interests against Jewish usury. Britain then in plain words insisted on the repeal of the entire anti-Jewish legislation, but Garashanin's attitude remained intransigent. In 1869 the *Skupština* (Serbian Parliament) passed a new Constitution assuring equal rights to all citizens except the Jews whose residence remained confined to Belgrade.

This again elicited a wave of protests from foreign consuls, but the Foreign Minister Matich, in October 1869, rebutted their intervention on the grounds that the Jews of Serbia in fact enjoyed full religious

freedom, their rabbis and schools were ascertained Government subsidies and they could vote and were eligible for the *Skupshtina* and the local councils. The restrictions relating, according to Matich, only to social life were intended to prevent the increase of the Jewish population. The Minister simultaneously reiterated all the commonplace accusations of Jewish arrogance, reserve, mistrust toward gentiles, and so on. Nevertheless, in 1878 the Congress of Berlin made it incumbent on the Balkan States, including Serbia, to grant their Jews full civil rights. Russia alone at that Congress spoke up in defence of their anti-Semitic attitudes. After a delay of ten years Serbia finally submitted to the Berlin resolutions. The Constitution of 1888 granted the Serbian Jews full equality with their non-Jewish compatriots.

The Belgrade community has been organized along modern lines since the chairmanship, in 1866, of Yehiel Ruso, who was followed, between 1869 and 1896, by S.H. Davitcho, M.H. Farhi and J.M. Alcalay in that order. In the nineties, the Chief Rabbi of Belgrade was Shimon Bernfeld, who wrote a book on Jewish history which was translated into Ladino by J.M. Alcalay.

Although Jews were bound to military service yet until 1877 the higher ranks were closed to them. In that year the first Jew, A. Ozer, was elected to the *Skupshtina*, which was, however, dissolved after the opening session.

In 1869 a small Ashkenazi congregation was founded in Belgrade against the protest of the Sephardis who were afraid of a split within the small Jewish community. Among the leaders of the Ashkenazi community at the end of the 19th century Dr. B. Bril, L. Breslauer, J.L. Levenson, Dr. Sh. Pops and M. Stern should be mentioned.

Towards the end of the century assimilationist tendencies could be observed. Ladino was regarded as an obstacle to true Serbo-Jewish *rapprochement*. The young Jews regarded Serbian nationalism as a jumping board to social and political co-operation. In order to popularize the Serbian parties among Jews, the Jewish academic youth joined them in numbers. This attitude found expression in the Belgrade Ladino monthly *El Amigo del Pueblo* edited by Eli (Elich) Sh. Behar in 1888-1892, as well as in the articles written by A.M. Ozerovich, H.S. Davitcho and J. Mandil for various Belgrade papers. The assimilationist articles of D.A. Cohen were rather popular at the time; they were printed in book form in 1897 under the title *Besede* (Sermons). D.A. Cohen's brother, Leon Cohen,

the first Jewish academic painter in Serbia, remained closer to his people, and his paintings (Joseph's Dream and others) all deal with Jewish topics. The first Jewish associations furthering Serbo-Jewish *rapprochement* were also founded at that time. Among them was the Serbo-Jewish choir (1880) and the *Potpora* (Support), an association (founded in 1897) whose aim was the advancement of education among youth. The assimilationist momentum was weakened through the efforts of the early Zionists. The decisive year was 1897 when Dr. David Alcalay took part in the first Zionist Congress in Basel.

In the three decades from 1837 to 1867 thirty five books, some in Hebrew and others in Ladino, were printed at the Prince's press in Belgrade. Among them were reprints of Israel Najara's poems, fragments from the mystical literature of the Safed school, Joseph Caro's *Shulhan Arukh* — the codified Jewish law — and others. These books were also distributed in western Bulgaria, the place of origin of many a future member of the Belgrade Jewish community.

#### BOSNIA (pp. 173—210)

During its extended rule over the Province (*Vilayet*) of Bosnia, the Ottoman Empire made laborious efforts to propagate the Islamic faith and culture which had been modified by the Arab civilization and style of life. The influence of Arab architecture is still discernible in the designs of many buildings in Bosnia.

After the battle of Kosovo (1389) the Turks for some time held only a number of strongholds along the border. Later, however, they also fortified the town of Vrhbosna, which was renamed Sarajevo in 1465. By the end of the 16th century the entire former kingdom of Bosnia had fallen into Ottoman hands. At first the new Ottoman regime was a pacifying factor, but relations between the Empire and the province soon went downhill. Already in the 17th century signs of degeneration and corruption became apparent. Appointments to local offices led to frequent serious upheavals throughout the 19th century. This state of permanent unrest prompted the Congress of Berlin in 1878 to entrust Austria with the occupation of Bosnia and pacification of this troublesome territory. After the Austrian occupation a number of the more loyal Moslems preferred to emigrate to Turkey. Some of them settled in Palestine, along the shore of Caesarea.

The foundations for a permanent Jewish settlement in Sarajevo were laid in 1565. Three court decisions of that year are extant relating to

litigations between Jews and Moslems. The proceedings of the *Sharia* (religious Moslem) Court show that the Jewish quarter in Sarajevo was set up in the confined space of a courtyard (*Chifut khan*) in the centre of the city near the main town square. In the course of time the Jewish quarter was shifted to the north-western slopes of the surrounding hills. The new quarter, Bjelave, was much more spacious than the narrow old courtyard ghetto.

The Community's account books, the so-called *pinakes* (derived from the Hebrew *pinkas*, a note-book) were a reliable historical source until autumn 1941 when the Germans removed them from the archives of the Sephardic community. They have not been rediscovered since. According to the number of family heads having seats in the synagogue in 1779, the community must have been about a thousand strong at that time.

It is alleged that Nehemya Hayim ben Moshe Hayon, one of the followers of Shabtai Zvi, was born in Sarajevo about 1650. He himself claimed Safed as his birthplace admitting though that his parents had come from Sarajevo. Accused by rabbinical circles of being an undercover missionary of Shabtaism, he kept wandering from place to place. Well versed in rabbinical literature and the mystical lore of the *Zohar* and *Kabbala*, he stirred up the Messianic hopes of the Jews. In 1683 he moved from Salonica to Belgrade, stayed there until 1687 to be captured the following year by the Germans at Valona. After his release he returned to Salonica. From 1698 to 1702 he lived in Nablus, Jerusalem and Sidon. According to stories spread by the rabbis of Constantinople (among whom he was all but popular) he was a permanent failure everywhere. In Jerusalem he was banished by the rabbis who proclaimed a *herem* against him. One of his plans was to settle Shabtay's disciples at Tiberias. Despite his attachment to Judaism and the Land of Israel he continued his travels through Europe and North Africa until the end of his days.

An outstanding figure in the history of the Sarajevo Jews was David Pardo. Born in 1719 in Venice where his father, Jacob Abraham, a native of Dubrovnik, held the office of teacher and rabbi (*hakham*), David settled in Split and lived there from 1746 to 1764. Elected rabbi of the local community, he soon won fame for his profound knowledge of the *halakha*. It was there that he wrote his first work, *Shoshanim leDavid*, a two-volume commentary on the *Mishna*. His second great work *Maskil leDavid*, an expository treatise on Rashi's exegesis, was published in 1761. In Sarajevo Pardo found his second home. He was instrumental in setting up

a charity organization there and founding a *yeshiva* that was to gain renown among the Jewish communities of the time. Here he also wrote his *Lamnatzeah leDavid* dealing with the land ownership problems in the *Mishna*. His *Mikhtam leDavid* is a collection of responses to questions in religious matters that had been brought before him. His most important work *Hasdei David* was a commentary on the *Tosephta* to which he devoted the last twenty years of his life (1772-1792). Many of his poems found their way into Spanish and Italian prayer books for the Jewish holidays. In 1781 Pardo went to the Holy Land, a step that was fully appreciated by his congregation. His departure was a festive event, and the Community's approval of his moving to the Land of Israel recorded in the *pinkas*.

The only connection tying the so-called *Hagadah of Sarajevo* with that town is the fact that it was found there and placed in the local museum. It has been variously ascribed to 14th century Jewish artists in Spain, Catalonia, Provence or Venice. However divided opinions may be about its origin, its excellent beauty and artistic values are undisputed. In general the Jews of Sarajevo were renowned for their superior taste manifested, among other things, in their women's costumes and handicraft.

It is significant that the Jews of Bosnia were concentrated in Sarajevo for a long time. Though under Ottoman rule their relations with their gentile neighbours were peaceful enough, they were nevertheless isolated. They still spoke the Castilian language and jealously watched over the Spanish folklore and costumes, faithful to the tradition of their fathers.

An interesting sidelight is thrown on the history of the Jews of Bosnia, those of Travnik in particular, by some letters preserved in the State Archives of Vienna, which were written by the Austrian consul in Travnik, Mittesser, to his superiors in Vienna. Four of these letters are reproduced in the Appendix to this book. During the first half of the 19th century Travnik was the seat of the Sultan's Governor in Bosnia, and also that of French and Austrian consuls who turned it into an espionage centre. The Governors seemed on the whole to have little contact with the Jews; yet two of them, Mustapha Pasha and his successor Mehmed Ruzhdi Pasha, were involved in an abortive extortion attempt in the twenties of the 19th century.

The reforms introduced towards the end of the Ottoman regime (1851-1877) gave fresh impetus to Bosnian economy in which the Jews took prominent part. They had representatives appointed to the local

councils; Isaac Effendi Shalom, the first Jewish doctor to attain academic degree, was even elected to the High Council of the *Vilayet*. Late in his life he went to Jerusalem where he died. His son, Shlomo Ziver Shalom, together with Shlomo Javer Barukh, represented the Sephardi Jews of Bosnia in the Turkish Parliament.

Ashkenazi Jews from Galicia, Bukovina, Slovakia and other countries first immigrated in numbers after 1878, though some stragglers had been in Bosnia already at the end of the Ottoman period. They first came in with the Austrian army as soldiers, artisans, railway employees, administrators, doctors, engineers and so on; with their arrival the social structure of Bosnian Jewry underwent a change. The first Ashkenazi community was founded in 1880 at Sarajevo; later on there were Ashkenazi communities also at Tuzla and Banjaluka. Relations between Ashkenazis and Sephardis were often disturbed by mutual accusations, particularly during the time of Kallay, the Hungarian Minister in charge of the occupied territories. At the turn of the century about a quarter of the total Jewish population of Bosnia were Ashkenazi Jews.

Under the Austrian regime the Bosnian foreign trade, which had mainly remained in the hands of the Sephardis, prospered and flourished; a number of Jewish money lenders turned into bankers while others set up new industries — textiles, cigarette-paper, etc. There was a simultaneous increase of the Jewish proletariat so that in the eighties about one third of Sarajevo Jewry dwelled in slums.

For the Sephardi Jews of Bosnia Sarajevo was a cultural centre in the *Galut*. In the second half of the 19th century the number of philanthropic and educational institutions grew considerably. The Ladino language and Spanish cultural values were loyally preserved and adhered to. During the first decades of the Austrian regime there was little incentive for assimilation. The Sephardi Jews were loath to abandon their way of life for the sake of becoming Croats, Serbs or Bosnians. Their social ambitions found ample outlet in their own associations such as *La Humanidad*, *La Gloria* and, above all, *La Benevolencia*, an educational cultural society. They had their own choir. *La Lira* (lyre) which in due time won country-wide fame, and which was the first society that joined the Zionist movement *en bloc*.

#### CROATIA (pp. 213—265)

Since the early Middle Ages the area encompassed by the Drava,



Danube and Sava rivers has been known as Pannonian Croatia. Geographically it is an extension of the Hungarian plain. Driven southward by the turbulent events of the seventh century, the Croats, a Slavonic tribe, during the Great Migration of Peoples settled within the borders of Pannonia and Dalmatia, a territory that repeatedly shifted from Franco-roman to Byzantine rule and *vice versa*. Theirs was the first independent South Slavonic state on the Adriatic. Upon its collapse in 1091, the Hungarian occupation allowed the Croats but limited autonomy which was even more restricted under the Hapsburgs. The onslaught of the Turks put an end to the Kingdom of Croatia. In the 16th century the Hapsburgs retreated on a broad front and Ferdinand's plan to set up military border zones came to nil. After the 1699 Treaty of Srijemski Karlovci, however, the Austrians resumed this project; parts of Croatia were put under military rule, and restored to her only in 1881.

At the beginning of the 19th century the Croatian capital Zagreb was no more than a small sleepy town in a remote corner of the Austrian Empire. A few buildings, some dating from Medieval times, left perching on its two hills — St. Stephen Cathedral on the Kaptol and a cluster of secular buildings on the fortified Gritch — were the only vestiges of lost Croatian independence. Nevertheless Zagreb became the centre of the Illyrian Revival, a political movement aiming at the unification of the South Slavonic peoples.

The pan-Slavic Illyrian ideals were not pursued with any measure of consistency. In 1867 an agreement was reached between the Germans and Hungarians living in the Austrian Empire. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was born and the Hapsburgian Emperor became also King of Hungary. The national aspirations of the other peoples united under Austrian rule were simply disregarded. The Croats were expected to reach a similar understanding with the Hungarians; it took the form of a "Compromise" signed in 1868 allowing the Croats restricted autonomy. At the same time the Hungarian annexed the Adriatic port of Fiume. The Hungarians went on ignoring the rights of the Croats stipulated in the "Compromise", yet they managed to hold sway till the very collapse of the Monarchy in 1918, when the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was formed.

By a resolution in 1729 the *Sabor* (Croatian Parliament) refused to grant the Jews the residence right in Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia. But a decade later they began to infiltrate again from Hungary and

Austria as peddlars, craftsmen and merchants. First came the war refugees compelled to run away during the Austrian retreat from Belgrade in 1739. They were allowed to settle in the small border town of Zemun which was under army administration. They usually wandered on, but 19 families — Sephardis and Ashkenazis — stayed behind. A number of descendants of these first settlers remained at Zemun until the 1941 disaster.

Ironically enough it was by an order of 8th October 1753 signed by no other than Maria Theresa, a strong upholder of the Church, that Jews were allowed to stay at Zemun. The permit encompassed merely thirty families, and was inheritable by only the eldest son of the family. Even this limited tolerance was made conditional upon the payment of the Jewish tax which secured them restricted freedom of movement and occupation, while the acquisition of landed property was forbidden them altogether.

In spite of all restrictions, by the middle of the 18th century the Jews of Zemun had penetrated not only into the military border zone but also into Slavonia which had hitherto been "clear of Jews". At Osijek, the fortified capital of Slavonia, two Jewish families of altogether eleven persons obtained residence permits in 1746 — again through the benevolence of Maria Theresa, the Catholic Empress.

In the history of Yugoslav Jewry mention should be made of Burgenland. Already in the 16th century the Jews who had been exiled from Styria and Krayn took shelter in Burgenland. They came in much bigger numbers in 1670 after being banished from Vienna, while some found ways to Moravia. During the reign of Maria Theresa both newcomers and old Jewish residents of Moravia were subjected to persecutions. At a loss for a better choice they slipped across the border into Hungary settling mainly on the estates of the rich landowners from Burgenland. From there they crossed into the contiguous provinces, until finally one could find Jews settled all over Hungary from the district of Bratislava in the north down to Zala in the south.

In 1782 Joseph II, Maria Theresa's successor, issued his Toleration Edict, and six years later the Army Conscription Law. By the beginning of the 19th century the Jewish Communities of Moravia and Western Hungary, including Burgenland, had emerged as a particular factor known as the Central European Jewry, which was to become the cradle of many a founder of Jewish communities in Croatia. The first Jews had come by appointment of rich Burgenland landowners as managers of their

estates in Croatia. They were followed by others who crossed the rivers Drava and Mura to settle in the villages and small towns along the Hungarian border. So while in the other Balkan countries Jews were mostly concentrated in towns, in Croatia they were dispersed in rural areas. Later in their wanderings across Croatia the Jews converged mainly on three towns. The first Jews came to Varazhdin in 1777; ten years later they made their appearance in Zagreb, the capital; and in 1789 we find the first Jews at Karlovac. At Zagreb, apart from the Gritch, they chose also the Kaptol for residence, mainly along and around the Lashka Street. Those were religious Jews from Burgenland and Hungary, strict observers of the Laws and the Tradition, the core of the orthodox community that was to be founded at Zagreb. As long as the Church was the municipal administrative authority they were under the protection of the Bishop of Zagreb.

Officially the Zagreb community was founded in 1806, about 50 years after the community of Zemun. Yet the Jewish question occupied the Zagreb central authorities as early as 1729, and again in 1771 and 1783. The problems were at the same time treated by the town of Varazhdin in Borough Councils and in municipal meetings. The result was regularly the same — the Jews were denied residence rights and even admission to the towns except on market days. The first exception were six Jewish families whom Count Erdödy took under his tutelage in 1777, housing them in his own mansion in the centre of Varazhdin.

Until the forties of the 19th century repeated expulsion orders were issued by the towns of both Karlovac and Varazhdin. Attempts to expel them from the district of Karlovac were made in 1830 and again in 1838. None of these orders were actually implemented, but they were used by the Croats as a permanent scourge against the unwelcome Jew. The small community of Krizhevci north-east of Zagreb was founded as late as 1844 though Jews had lived there long before.

In 1840 the joint Hungarian-Croatian Parliament assembled in Buda and dealt, *inter alia*, with the Jewish question. A proposal to grant the Jews civil rights was rejected owing to obdurate opposition by the Croatian delegates. Nevertheless a law was passed binding also for Croatia, according to which the Jews were granted residence permit in any Croatian locality where they had their domicile on the date of the promulgation, barring the mining districts. In 1843-1846 the *Sabor* again had the Jewish question on its agenda, but only canceled the Jewish tax.

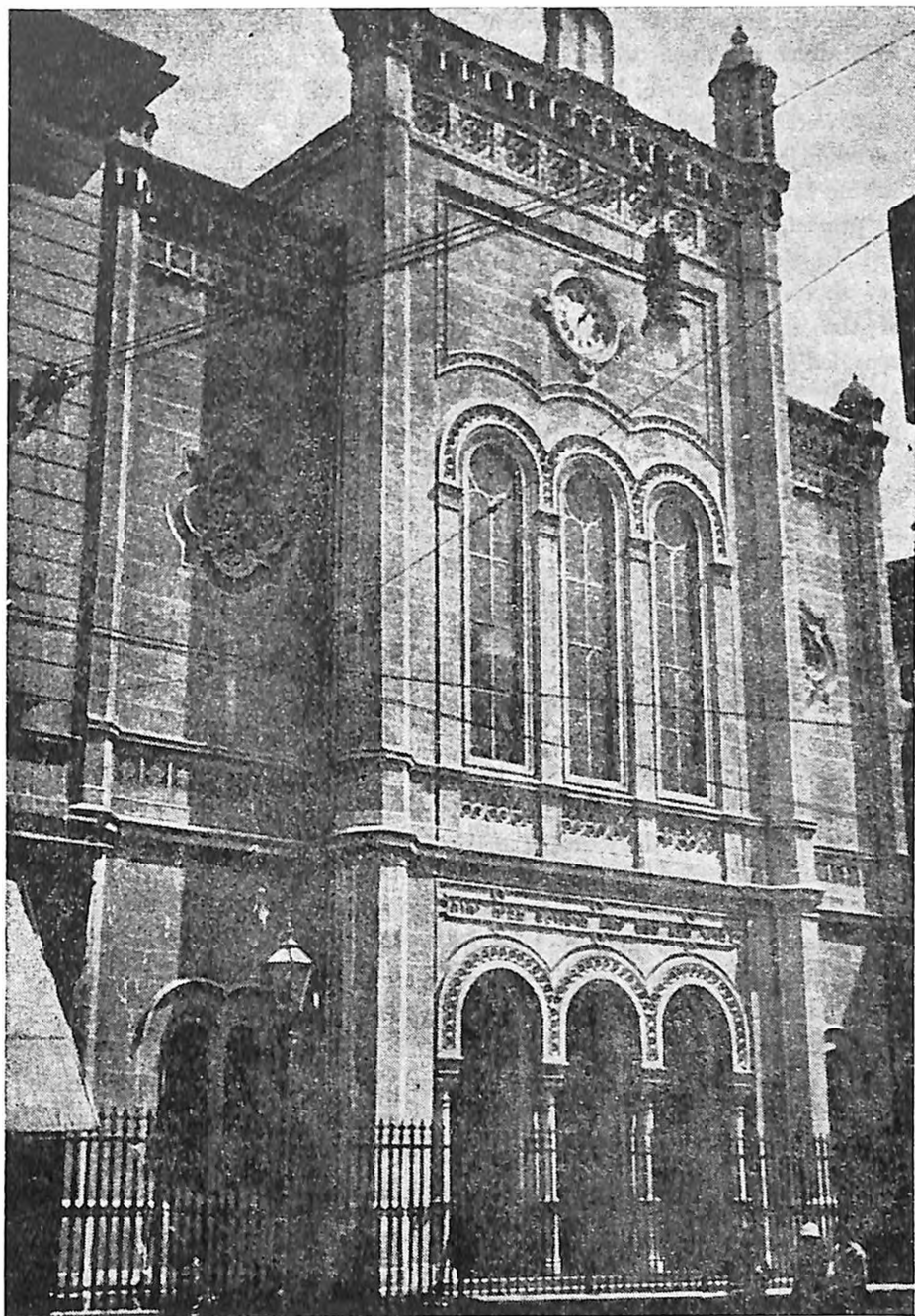
The assimilationist tendencies spreading among the well-to-do Jews in Vienna, Berlin and Paris had somewhat belated repercussions in Croatia. The conservative circles, especially the residents of Laska Street within the municipal limits of the Kaptol Episcopate, looked with disfavour upon the reformist tendencies of Rabbi Moshe Goldman. In 1841 they severed their connection with the Jewish Community and for fifteen years maintained a separate orthodox community. When the first Jewish school was opened in Zagreb Goldman was put in charge of Jewish education over the protests of the orthodox Jews who demanded his dismissal. In 1849 Rabbi Goldman abandoned his community for good — to adopt Christianity and disappear from the Jewish scene.

The Goldman incident was rather embarrassing for the Zagreb community. Its veteran officers resigned unwilling to continue their activity in circumstances that were not compatible with the dignity of Judaism. Under pressure from the authorities the rival camps finally reached a forced and only superficial reconciliation in 1853. Jacob Epstein, an enthusiastic young idealist, elected Community Chairman at the age of 32, tried to put an end to this dissension, but failed and resigned a year later. The rest of his short life was devoted to work within the *Humanitäts Verein*; at the age of 37, the disillusioned Epstein committed suicide. The charity institution he had worked for existed until 1945. With the appointment of Hosea Jacoby as Rabbi of Zagreb in 1868, matters changed for the better.

Some quite remarkable personalities were members of this community. At the end of the century a timber merchant by the name of David Schwarz tried to construct a dirigible airship; his heirs sold his design to Zeppelin whose name was given to future dirigibles. Anton Schwarz was the first Jewish professional musician in Croatia; he and the Serbian Jew Schlesinger are considered as pioneers among Jewish musicians in Yugoslavia.

On the threshold of a rapid economic prosperity the Jews of Croatia were given civil equality by the law passed on October 21st, 1873. By this law the *Sabor* granted full political rights to the Jews, except the right to perform conversions within the borders of the State.

The wave of conversions of Jews that swept over a number of European countries at the beginning of the 19th century took hold of Croatia only in its last quarter, when the Jewish spirit and consciousness were at a low ebb. In September 1883 the Jewish-Christian tension assumed



The Great Synagogue, Zagreb (1867—1942)

dangerous proportions as a result of the Tisza-Eszlar blood libel. The first demonstrations were meant as a protest against the Hungarian domineering insolence, but soon, by means of deft anti-Semitic incitations, they were turned into anti-Jewish riots. Starting at Samobor they spread to Zagorje and Zagreb where they took the form of a veritable pogrom lasting five days. The Jews did not react — not a single voice was raised in protest.

In the Slavonian capital Osijek the establishment of an organized Jewish community was forbidden for over a hundred years after the grant of the first permanent residence permit. Finally the prohibition was repealed in 1849. As in Zagreb, the community made rapid progress and already by 1880 it had grown to 1900 — 8 per cent of Osijek's total population of 23,000, the largest concentration of Jews in Croatia.

In the few last years of the 19th century Osijek was turned into a Zionist centre. Dr. Hugo Spitzer, son of Rabbi Samuel Spitzer, took part in Zionist Congresses from 1898 on. Rabbi Dr. Armand Kaminka preceded him by a year; he had the rare privilege of being among the delegates to the first Zionist Congress in Basel. J.N. Schulhof also was among the first to raise the Zionist flag. The Rabbi of the neighbouring town of Djakovo, Dr. Marcus Ehrenpreis, reported to the first Zionist Congress in Basel on the subject of Hebrew culture.

#### VOJVODINA (pp. 266—277)

Compared to the rest of the European Diaspora, the Jewish community of Vojvodina is of fairly recent origin. Yet it is older than the Croatian community.

The traces of the few Jews that lived there under the Ottoman rule have been lost, so that the earliest extant records of Jewish life in Vojvodina are of 1697, some hundred years before the Jews from Burgenland reached Croatia. These first recorded Jews inhabited the neighbourhood of Petrovaradin. After the Treaty signed between Turkey and Austria at Srijemski Karlovci in 1699, we find Jews at Novisad (then called Ratzenstadt — Serbian Townlet). The town's chronicles referred to them in 1719 as "an obnoxious lot", similarly to the attributes attached to the Jews of Zagreb by Croatian authorities.

Even in this hostile atmosphere the Hevra Kadisha was officially acknowledged in 1729, and there was a Jewish school in the town. Ten years later the first war refugees reached Novisad, among whom were

the Jews who had abandoned Belgrade upon the retreat of the Austrian army. Another decade later, in 1749, the Statutes of the Jewish Community of Novisad were confirmed.

In Novisad the Jews inhabited the *Jevrejska ulica*, that is the Jewish Street, in which they had acquired real estate in spite of all legal obstacles. When they attained full civil equality in 1867 their representatives became eligible to the Town Council. The Jewish community grew in number until, by the turn of the century, it was 2000 strong.

The founder of the Jewish Community of Subotica is believed to have been Jacob Hersh-Hirsh who got his residence permit there in 1775. Subotica had started developing from a village into an important commercial centre. The founding of a Jewish Community was approved in 1786, but only thirteen years later, after the intervention of the Crown's Commissioner, the Town Council allocated it a site for the construction of a synagogue. Approximately at the same time a local Jewish school was opened.

Apart from Novisad and Subotica there were some 50 congregations in Vojvodina. The most important ones were in Sombor (founded in 1828), Senta (before 1793), Veliki Betchkerek (now called Zrenjanin, in 1790), Vrshac and Pantchevo.

Until 1918 conditions of the Jews in Vojvodina were much the same as in Hungary. All but a number of orthodox Jews were liberal neologists, yet conservative enough to reject extreme reformism. In a multi-lingual environment and in spite of their Hungarian patriotism they managed to preserve their own singularity and the traditional values of Judaism. When in 1918 this province became part of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the Jews of Vojvodina merged into Yugoslav Jewry and in no small measure contributed to the common cause.

#### THE HARBINGERS OF THE JEWISH RENAISSANCE (pp. 278—305)

Yekutiel Hirschenstein and J.H. Alcalay were the two harbingers of Jewish revival in Yugoslavia.

Born in 1779 in Burgenland, Hirschenstein was appointed Rabbi of Varazhdin in 1812 and remained in that post until his death in 1849. It was due to his enormous personal efforts that the threat of expulsion was averted in 1820. He soon realized the futility of Napoleon's *Grand Consistoire* which convened in 1806 in Paris, and did not lose time to make the revival of Jewish people his main preoccupation and concern.





meinstenfalls das alle zum besten und zum Nutzen  
der feiligen Gesellschaft zu sein begehren.

In der Hoffnung das Ihnen meine Be-  
sorgnis und die da bin ich nicht weniger gerne  
als ich verantwortl. in mich Ihnen und der ganzen  
feiligen Gesellschaft mit Ihnen in dem beiseit  
zufriedenheit voll in die Zukunft

Ew.

Yekutiel Hirschenstein

Marsden am 7ten July 1837.

Yekutiel Hirschenstein  
Local Pastor

Facsimile of a letter written in German by Yekutiel Hirschenstein to C.F.G. Seyfart at Leipzig, dated July 7th, 1837

His Zionist ideas were expressed in his correspondence with Moshe Sachs of Jerusalem. During his stay in Vienna in summer 1836, the latter informed Hirschenstein of his efforts to get the Imperial Court interested in the resettlement of Jews in Palestine. Hirschenstein, delighted at the good news, disclosed to Sachs his own ideas about the future of the Jewish people in their own homeland. The main problem, he believed, was how to overcome the indifference of the Jews to their own fate and the world's imperviousness to their plight. Although he contemplated a theocratic government (by the *kohanim*) in the Holy Land, yet he advocated the employment of secular means in the resettlement of the country and in political action.

Of a different stamp was Yehuda Hai Alcalay. He was born in 1798 at Sarajevo where his father Shlomo was teacher. From him Yehuda learnt Hebrew and was introduced to the elements of Jewish erudition. Later he studied with the well-known scholars Rabbi Jacob Finzi and Rabbi Eliezer Papo. He moved to Zemun in 1825 and stayed there almost 50 years performing a variety of functions — educator, preacher, *hakham* and *magid*; finally, after the death of Rabbi Samuel A. Massad, he became Rabbi of Zemun. A pure Sephardi, he embarked on his literary career with a book written in Ladino, but his life's interest was devoted to the revival of the Hebrew language and the preservation of the Jewish people's unity. In his work "Like a Needle's Ear" published in 1849 he says: "Our worship and rites will no longer be *sephardi* or *ashkenazi*, nor shall they follow the customs of Poland, France or Italy, but will be Jewish — one faith, one law . . . All Jews shall return to their God in the Land of their forefathers; anyone living outside the Land of Israel resembles the Godless; Jews outside their land worship other gods . . ." And here is what he wrote in 1869 in a letter to the Hebrew paper *Halevanon*: "Our brethren are screaming for help and want to go to America, to Siberia; some desire to go back to Spain. They have all forgotten their own homeland though in their daily prayers they keep reciting endlessly, 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand wither.'"

After the foundation of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, Alcalay fought for the extension of its activities to Israel; he had also a share in the establishment of the Jewish Agricultural School at Mikve Israel in 1870.

Another concern of his was the plight of the Serbian Jews. Of course his main preoccupation was the revival of the Jewish nation as a whole,



Ychuda Hay Alcalay (1798—1878) with his wife Esther

so that he was inclined to disregard "trifling matters". Nevertheless in 1865 he rushed to the aid of the victims of the Shabac pogrom, writing about their calamity and urging the persecuted to leave for Eretz-Israel. It was the hopeless state of the Serbian Jews that prompted his own decision to leave the Diaspora. Despite the disillusionment he had encountered on his earlier visit to Jerusalem in 1871, he took leave of his tiny Community at Zemun in 1874 and settled with his wife at Jaffa not far from Mikve Israel, which he cherished as the budding hope of ultimate revival. He died at the age of 80 and was buried on the Mount of Olives, seventy years before the State of Israel came into being. Already twenty years after his death Zionist pioneers were active in Bosnia, Serbia, Slavonia and Croatia. Among them were such men as Dr. D. Alcalay, G. Nahmias, N. Landau, B. Zauderer, A.D. Levy, G. Seidman, J. Mevorach, J. Thau, Dr. H. Spitzer, Herman Licht and many others. Among them was also Dr. Alexander Licht, the future lifelong leader of the Zionist movement in Yugoslavia.

#### APPENDIX

##### THE ALCALAYS (pp. 313—315)

Since Moorish times there had been in Spain at least thirteen towns and other spots called Alcalá. The first Yugoslav Alcalays were carried off by the current of fugitives and came to Salonica where they took part in the progress of the city and contributed to the fame of the flourishing Jewish community. But the setback towards the end of the 16th century of both town and community caused the Jews to leave Salonica and seek a home in other parts. The Alcalays can now be traced to Bulgaria, and from here to Serbia and Bosnia. In the 18th century Abraham ben Shemuel Alcalay was rabbi in the Bulgarian town of Dupnica. One of his sons moved to Bosnia where he generated a ramifying family. Also from Bulgaria came Jacob M. Alcalay who was at the head of the Belgrade Jewish Community from 1886 to 1896, and who persuaded his Sofia born relative Isaac to go to Vienna in order to pursue Jewish studies. Later this Isaac became Chief Rabbi of Yugoslavia. The *hazan* Abraham Alcalay, too, moved to Belgrade from Bulgaria, and had thirteen sons. Some of the Belgrade Alcalays had not immigrated from Bulgaria direct but had made a temporary home at Zemun or Shabac. Some others, as for instance Dr. Solomon Alcalay, were born at Sarajevo.

To Bosnia the Alcalays had come either direct from Salonica or

through Bulgaria and Serbia. Salonica born Shlomo ben Moshe Alcalay lived and died at Sarajevo. Here his son was born — Yehuda Hay Alcalay, the herald of Zionism. Their relatives had taken home at Belgrade or Shabac and are mentioned in the works of Yehuda Hay Alcalay.

The Alcalays of Sarajevo produced numerous personalities who were prominent in the public life of the community. Asher Alcalay became Chairman of the Sephardic community at the beginning of the 20th century. Dr. Vita Alcalay was member of the Bosnian Parliament towards the end of the Austrian regime. Albert Alcalay became a well-known Zionist leader.

David ben Moshe, who was born in Belgrade but belonged to a branch of the Sarajevo Alcalays, occupied a conspicuous place in Jewish life. He moved to Vienna and acted there as *hakham* and teacher of the Sephardic community. Also his Belgrade born son Moshe ben David was active as teacher and *hakham* in Belgrade and Vienna, were his speeches and sermons in Hebrew attracted attention. His son Dr. David M. Alcalay, together with his wife Rahel (grand-daughter of Yehuda Hay), was delegate at the First Zionist Congress of Basel; he later became a pioneer and foremost fighter for the cause of Zionism in Serbia and, finally, Yugoslavia. His son and daughter have settled in Israel.

#### THE SHALOM, PARDO AND ISRAEL FAMILIES (p. 315)

Joseph Hayim Shalom (d.1824) was *hekim* (undiplomaed physician). He married Rahel, daughter of Isaac Pardo (who was second son of the well-known Sarajevo rabbi David Pardo), and had with her eight children. Isaac (1806-1874) was the first Jewish doctor at Sarajevo with a university degree. He married Rahel Montiljo who bore him ten children. Their daughter Flora married Moshe Israel; some of their children are now in Israel. Another daughter, Esther, married the dental practitioner Jaacob Sumbul; one of their sons— Isaac Isidor — was Chairman of the Sephardic community and *La Benevolencia* at Sarajevo, and another son, the architect Shemuel, designed a number of Jewish public buildings in both Belgrade and Sarajevo.

#### SOME FAMILIES IN ZAGREB (pp. 316—323)

The story of the Priester family is typical enough of the cross-continent migration of the Central European Jews and of their life and activities in Croatia. The family's origin can be traced to Nicolsburg in

Moravia, a famous centre of Jewish learning. Jacob Cohen Priester (1711-1796) moved to Gradisca on the Isonzo River in Italy near the Slovenian border, a town which was under Austrian regime till the end of World War I. There the Priesters were authorized beef suppliers to the Austrian army. Immanuel Priester (1814-1882) made the round of cattle fairs at Varazhdin, Karlovac and Zagreb until in 1847 he decided permanently to settle in the Croatian capital. He and his descendants contributed in no small measure to the industrial development of Zagreb. The best known figure among them was Immanuel's nephew Girolamo (1845-1926) — the last member of the wealthy Priester clan. Remote from all intellectual pursuits his main concern was business. He founded a modern dairy and vegetable farm. He was a devout observer of the Jewish religion and tradition and missed no opportunity of publicly declaring his firm convictions and his devotion to Judaism.

In the 19th and 20th centuries three generations of the Ehrlich family played rather a prominent part in the economic prosperity of Croatia. They gave Zagreb quite outstanding architects, builders and contractors.

The Deutsch-Maceljskis were pioneers of the Croatian timber industry. They supported and financed the anti-Zionist movement of the assimilationists. Shortly before the Nazi holocaust, however, the last members of this family changed sides and contributed moneys for the Jewish Colonization in Eretz Israel.

The stories of some other families, too, display interesting patterns of integration into Croatia's Jewry. Most of the earliest members of the Jewish Community of Zagreb had come from Moravia and Burgenland. The Glesingers and three generations of the Rosenberg-Hirschls furnish some fine examples of the role the Jews played in Croatia, particularly at Zagreb.

Different again were the three generations of the Schwarz family at Zagreb. Ze'ev Wilhelm Schwarz, a man of great vitality and energy, took part in the creation of almost all the Jewish communal institutions, and was also active in Zagreb's municipal enterprises. In 1860, at the age of 28, he became chairman of the Community Council, at a time, too, when it had not fully recovered from the Goldman affair. Schwarz's undaunted spirit kept him in office for thirteen years during which time (1867) the large synagogue was built in the next vicinity of the town's main square on a site donated by the Priester family. Schwarz's son

Ludwig attained social and political prominence as a lawyer; at the age of 29 he was elected to the *Sabor*; for 27 years, that is until 1914, he was a delegate of the Unionists, the ruling party. He defended Strassnoff in the Zagreb show trial that aroused amusement throughout Europe. At the beginning of the 20th century he was requested by the Croatian Government to draft the Jewish Communities Law which was to regulate inter-religious affairs. The *Sabor* accepted his excellent draft, which became law on February 2nd 1906.

### THREE SONS OF AN ASSIMILATED GENERATION (pp. 324—338)

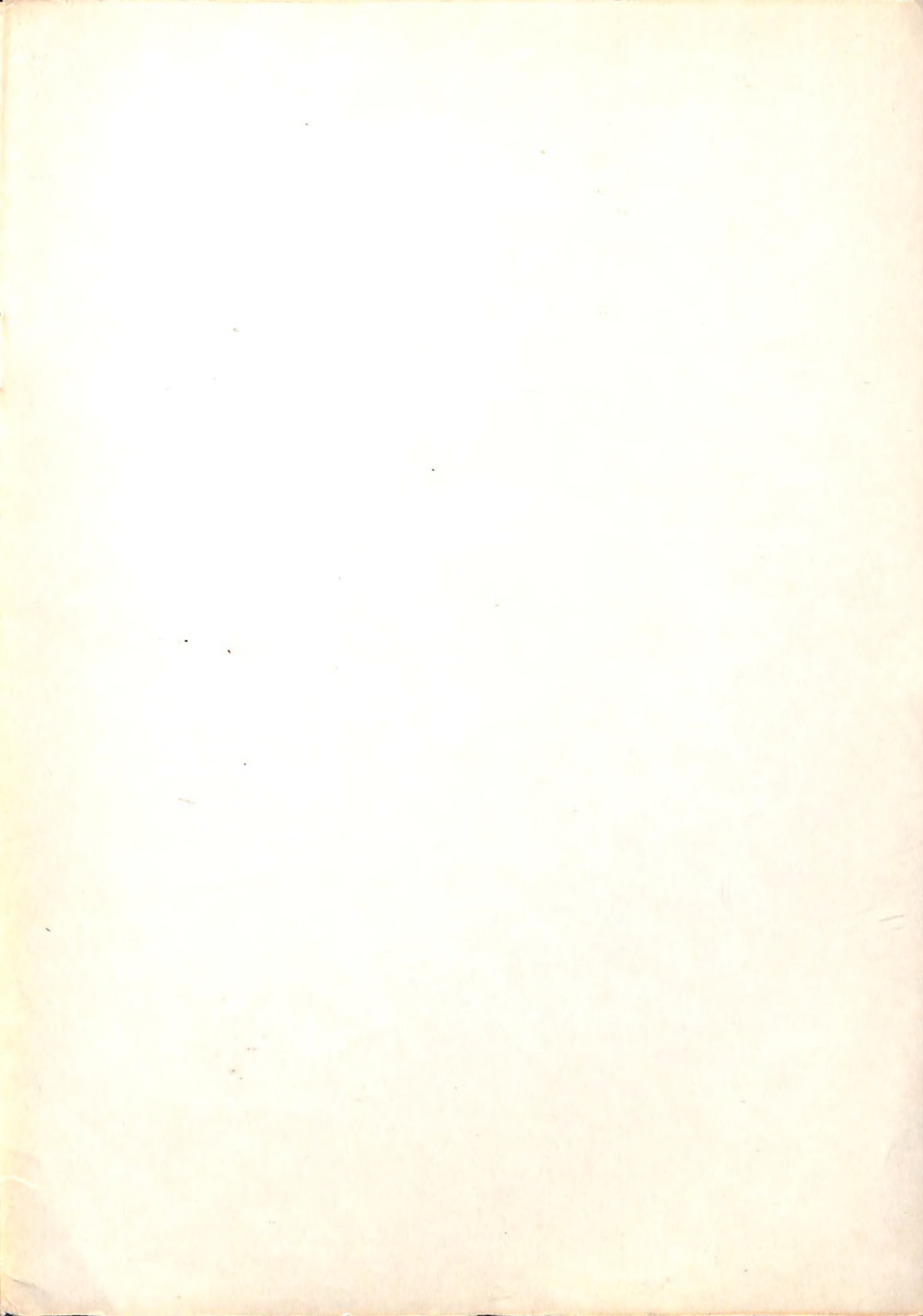
Two Jewish turncoats illustrate the hazards of assimilation which endangered Croatian Jewry already in the second half of the 19th century. Hinko Hinkovich was born as Heinrich Moses in 1854 at Vinica in the Croatian province of Zagorje. His parents had come from Rechnitz in Burgenland. In 1883 he was elected to the *Sabor* as a delegate of the Croatian nationalist opposition party of Startchevich. He became Christian in spite of a firm promise to the contrary he had given his mother. Later he gradually moved away from the anti-Serbian line of Startchevich and Frank, and joined more progressive political circles favouring the union of the Southern Slavs. In 1895 he and his wife left Croatia and lived a few years in Paris and London. In 1901 he was back again at Zagreb. The clash with local clerical circles was immediate. As defence attorney for 53 Serbs charged with treason before the court in Zagreb in 1908-1909, he achieved a remarkable triumph with the acquittal of the accused. Nevertheless he was soon himself charged with an offence against the press law and sentenced to six months imprisonment. He managed to escape to Paris, however, and stayed in Italy and France until 1913. With his reelection to the *Sabor* he returned to Zagreb, but as soon as the World War broke out, he again escaped to Italy. He spent the war years as a Yugoslav propagandist in Italy, Corfu, France, England and the U.S.A. and did much to further the cause of the Southern Slavs. As a republican, however, he fell foul of the Yugoslav Council. He was in Zagreb again in 1918, was ostracized by official circles, and had to fall back on the support of his Jewish relatives. Towards the end of his life he began to show signs of repentance for his defection. He died a lonely broken man in 1929.

Joseph Frank was born in 1844 as the son of Immanuel Frank, a timber merchant in Osijek. He graduated from the University of Vienna

and opened a lawyer's office in Zagreb. He, too, joined the Startchevich party. At the end of the century he managed to split it in order to be elected leader of the extremist Croatian Frankist party. He combated the discriminatory policy of Hungary and also refuted any alliance with the Serbs whom he accused of collaborating with the enemies of Croatia. He wanted to attain his Greater Croatia within a tripartite structure of the Hapsburg Empire, based on Austria, Hungary and Croatia. After Frank's death and the birth of Yugoslavia his party went underground but in 1941 its adherents, the *Ustashi* or rebels, became the rulers of Croatia which had been made "independent" by the grace of Hitler. Josip Frank's son-in-law was the notorious *Ustashi* Commander Slavko Kvaternik, and Frank's grandson, Dido Kvaternik, was responsible for the deaths of thousands upon thousands of Serbs and Jews in the extermination camps of his "independent" homeland.

Vid-Hayim Morpurgo's relation to Judaism is of a different kind. Born at Split in 1838 to an observant Jewish family, he dedicated his entire abilities to the Croatian cause in his capacity as bookseller, publisher, industrialist, banker and particularly as politician. Remarkable is his share in the success of the Croatian National Party /"narodnjaci"/ in the elections of 1882 in Dalmatia. Though he was not active within the Jewish community, he was loyal to his faith and was buried in the Jewish cemetery on Mount Maryan overlooking the city of Split.





1515, januar 1. Innsbruck.

*Handwritten signature*  
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1515, januar 1. Innsbruck.

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