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**The Jews of Óbuda, Miskolc, and Pest:
A Grassroots Genealogical Approach**

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Avant Propos – a Genealogical Approach to Jewish History

In a recent episode of the NBC television show *Who do you think You are?*, a show in which Hollywood actors and other entertainers search for their family roots, two historians helped a well-known movie actor turned country singer trace her family history back to turn of the twentieth century New York City and then further to a mid-sized Polish town in the late nineteenth century. As the historians showed document after document to the celebrity's delight and amazement, one could not help but note the synergy between the research methods that these historians used and the genealogical aim of this woman. To the eye of an ordinary viewer, history and genealogy appeared to be highly compatible and complementary scholarly disciplines.

Yet such synergy is far less common in scholarly circles and in the world of Jewish Studies, where genealogy has yet to attain recognition as a serious form of scholarly research. This is especially odd in light of the proliferation of sub-disciplines within the larger field of Jewish Studies during the last half-century. As Jewish Studies practitioners have looked increasingly to other disciplines for new perspectives on well-trodden scholarly territory, the predominant sub-fields of Jewish Studies – history, thought, literature, theology, and Rabbinics – have been joined by newer lenses through which to re-examine the Jewish past such as cultural, urban, and gender studies. At the same time, existing areas of Jewish Studies such as Jewish History have become more complex. Jewish social history, for example, has expanded from an amalgam of *Alltagsgeschichte* and a Weber-esque history of institutions, to include, among other things, the history of childhood and the family.

Despite this proliferation of sub-disciplines and growing complexity within the scholarly world of Jewish Studies, the field of genealogy remains largely outside the pale of "legitimate" scholarship and a less than fully respected way of studying the Jewish past. This despite the fact that the methods employed and results produced by genealogical studies are, at the very least, inherently complementary to Jewish Studies research and, in some cases, indispensable. That genealogy has been relegated to the periphery of Jewish Studies reflects the convergence of several tendencies. The growing professionalization of Jewish Studies during the last half-century, spurred by a proliferation of Jewish Studies programs and departments at North American colleges and universities, galvanized the line between professional and independent scholars; or, to paraphrase Todd Endelman, between scholars by avocation and scholars by profession.[1] The latter often see the former, operating without the status of an appointment at and the resources of a major institution, as dilettantes serving, at best, in an auxiliary role to the professionals. In the absence of university programs or appointments in Genealogy, genealogists generally operate as independent scholars and are thus easily pigeon-holed into this putative lesser category of researchers.

One of the by-products of the increase in the number of Jewish Studies sub-disciplines, moreover, is a proliferation of Jewish Studies terminology, particularly in those areas of Jewish Studies whose oeuvre is often clogged with a myriad of theoretical models and opaque esoteric terms. For some scholars, the absence of such models and terminology – and the sheer straightforwardness of genealogical research – suggests the lack of a certain scholarly demeanor. Yet this sort of aversion says less about the quality of genealogical research and more about the surplus of jargon elsewhere. In addition, the tendency of genealogical

researchers to focus on the more recent past,   and particularly the periods of the interwar, Holocaust, and immediate post-war periods for which there an abundance of historical documentation – makes it easier for critics of genealogy to dismiss such ventures as superfluous.

Furthermore, the often personal nature of genealogical research reinforces the image of genealogy as a soft discipline. As Anthony Joseph, a genealogist and a historian of Anglo-Jewry, noted more than twenty years ago, "It is essential to acknowledge the purely personal factor in motivating genealogical research and in making exploration possible...genealogy is a branch of self-discovery."[2] For Joseph, the personal dimension of genealogical research is an asset. In the face of prevailing notions of objectivity and scholarly distance, though, a personal quest to discover and reconstruct one's family history is seen as mutually exclusive with the historian's or anthropologist's quest to discover and reconstruct a part of the past accurately and without personal bias or agenda. The genealogical researcher in search of family roots, the argument goes, is more apt to allow an emotionally vested interest cloud and romanticize that which is discovered. This claim is especially resonant with respect to the highly complex nature of Hungarian Jewish History, particularly prior to the First World War. In this case, conventional and popular assumptions about Hungarian Jewry's lachrymose character, which make sense when researching the period after 1918, simply do not pertain with respect to the pre-1914 period.

To be sure, the personal nature of a genealogical research distinguishes genealogy from social history , its closest kin within the clan of historical sub-disciplines. While genealogy and social history focus on similar subjects, and often the same sorts of subjects, the aim of genealogy is generally different from that of social or family history: whereas genealogists focus on reconstructing the generations and wanderings of individual families and, at times, extended families or clans; social historians aim at illuminating a particular historical moment or event by situating individual Jews and Jewish families in a broader social, political, and cultural context. To put it another way, genealogy is micro-history often as an end in itself; social history uses micro-history as a means of elucidating a larger situation at the grassroots level.

Even so, at the very least, one would expect social historians – especially historians of childhood and the family – to regard genealogical findings minimally as useful building blocks on which to reconstruct the contours of Jewish family and communal life. Yet this is often not the case. Clearly, the aversion to genealogy among Jewish Studies professionals runs deeper than the dividing line between professional and independent scholars, and between the objectivity of the former and the putative personal motives of the latter. Rather, this aversion reflects a broader ambivalence toward pre-nineteenth century Jewish scholarship that has profoundly impacted the character of Jewish Studies since its inception with the rise of *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* nearly two centuries ago. As Yosef Yerushalmi noted more than thirty years ago, the scholarship of the Wissenschaft and its intellectual progeny reflected a rupture with the Jewish past. In claiming mastery over the texts of earlier generations, the scholars of the Wissenschaft regarded their own methods and training as superior to that of earlier generations of Jewish scholars; and the genres through which they presented their findings as superior to the scholarly genres of the past.[3]

The latter included a conspicuous genealogical component that dated back to the ancient world and to the texts of the Hebrew Bible, referred to in the Hebrew Bible as *Toldot*; and in Rabbinic literature as *Shalshelet ha-Kaballah* [chain of tradition]. In classic Jewish texts from the Bible

and through the Early modern period, with few   exceptions the Jewish past was described and recalled genealogically and seldom historically. For this reason, to the extent that a historical approach to studying and writing about the Jewish past required or at least reflected a break with a pre-existing genealogical approach, genealogy was associated with an antiquated form of scholarship that had been supplanted by the modern scholarship of the Wissenschaft school. Indeed, it is ironic that the antiquity of genealogy in the study of the Jewish poses a formidable impediment to the inclusion of genealogy in the pantheon of Jewish Studies disciplines.

Though formidable, this impediment is not insurmountable. On the contrary, advocates of genealogy as a legitimate area of discourse within the canon of Jewish Studies can find much encouragement in the fact that there is an area of Jewish Studies, now regarded not only as legitimate but as one of the most rigorous, which was once equally excluded and marginalized: the study of Jewish mysticism.   Prior to the 1920s, when Gershom Scholem convinced the Jewish Studies world to acknowledge that a thorough study of Kabala and the history of Jewish mysticism was essential and indispensable to understanding the Jewish past and present in all of its nuances, serious Jewish Studies scholars regarded these areas of inquiry as antiquated and, at best, as a distraction and deviation from the real and essential aspects of Jewish History and culture.

In retrospect, the manner in which Scholem won a position of prestige for Jewish mysticism can serve as an archetype or template on which to gain similar entree for genealogy. First, Scholem expanded the study of Jewish mysticism in terms of its breadth and depth. He extended this area of inquiry beyond the standard mystical and kabalistic texts that earlier Wissenschaft scholars had used to delineate the Jewish mystical tradition and demonstrate its anemic insignificance, *inter alia* Ezekiel 1, the Book of Enoch, the *Zohar*, and the tales of Hassidic masters.   By analyzing and critiquing hundreds of mystical texts that had hitherto been studied, if at all, by *mekubalim* and not by academic scholars, Scholem demonstrated how little of the Jewish mystical tradition its critics and disparagers actual knew.

More important perhaps in the rehabilitation of Jewish mysticism as a serious academic discipline was the fact that, as Scholem increased the number and range of mystical texts available for critical scrutiny, he was able to discover through these texts a crucial dimension within Jewish History that scholars had heretofore largely ignored: the importance of "antinomian" currents in maintaining a sense of dynamism within the Jewish world or, at the very least, within the traditional world of Jewish ideas scholarship.[4] In other words, Scholem studied mysticism not only to understand mysticism, but to shed new light on the Jewish experience as a whole. In this way, he collapsed what had been a firm boundary between mysticism and other forms of Rabbinic literature to the point where the critical examination of mystical writings is now on par with comparable study of legal and philosophical writings.

Needless to say, Jewish mysticism and genealogy are very different disciplines. Yet the way that Scholem re-invented the study of Kabala as a well–respected scholarly discipline can also be emulated to attain a similar sort of acknowledgment for the field of genealogy, particularly with respect to expanding the range of sources and using genealogical methods to shed light on broader historical developments and historiographical debates. The emphasis on single or multiple generations of individual Jewish families, for example, naturally complements what has been a forty-year endeavor to focus on rank and file Jewish men and women rather than on Jewish elites and ideologues.

Hungarian Jewry and Genealogy – Sources and Methodological Problems

In these respects, the history of Hungarian Jewry can be significantly enhanced by acknowledging the benefits of genealogical methods and findings. The formidable obstacles that genealogists face when trying to trace family roots back to the early nineteenth century or earlier are not that different from the impediments that confront the social historian. The three Hungarian Jewish communities under consideration here – the Jews of Miskolc, Óbuda, and Pest/Budapest – illustrate the complementary relationship between Jewish social history and genealogy.   In each case, the particular experiences of individual Jews and Jewish families make it possible to probe beyond broader brush strokes of Hungarian Jewish History and to consider how individual Jews were affected by these larger changes on a day to day basis.

Yet, as with the case of rehabilitating Jewish mysticism, the collapsing of the boundary between genealogy and social history must begin with a more expansive and inventive use of primary source materials that moves beyond more conventional venues of genealogical research. With respect to Hungarian Jewry, this means looking beyond, for example, the censuses of 1869 and 1848, and birth, marriage, and death records. To be sure, all of these materials provide considerable information – family names, size, occupation, and sometimes place of origin. On the whole, though, these sorts of data provide little other than a series of reflected facts and seldom a window into the day to day life of a particular family.

To this end, there are two types of source materials that, to date, have not been fully mined for information. First, there are the protocols of the *Kehilla* and of other Jewish communal institutions such as the *Hevra Kadisha* – which was often the oldest Jewish communal institution in a given locale and, at times in Hungary, even predated the creation of the *Kehilla* – and the *Hevra Shas.*[5] In each of these protocols, a local scribe reported – with varying detail – the transactions and discussion that took place at the periodic meetings of communal or societal officers. From the vantage point of a present-day genealogist, most useful among these transactions and discussions are those in which a member of the community or *Hevra* would engage its officers or tribunal in the form of a petition, complaint, or lawsuit. The lion's share of these engagements involves charitable contributions and requests for charitable assistance, on the one hand, and complaints and lawsuits regarding intra-communal or intra-societal commercial disputes, on the other.

In addition to these intramural sources are an assortment of archival documents that describe the interactions between Jews and other Jews, Jews and their Christian neighbors, and Jews and the various levels of government.[6] These sorts of sources, though they do not yield names of individual Jews or families as readily, are equally important, not least of all, because of the convoluted social and political hierarchy that predominated in nineteenth century Hungary. More than anything else, these sources give a sense of what it meant for Jewish individuals and groups to deal with a multi-layered officialdom that included royal, county, and municipal officials, in addition to local nobles and magnates. Together with the protocols, these sorts of sources can not only yield heretofore unknown or un-catalogued genealogical data, but also provide a new venue through which to re-examine Hungarian Jewish History as a whole from a more grassroots perspective.

Though these protocols and other sources are readily available, they are under-explored for several reasons. First and foremost, these are difficult to read, not only because they are written in multiple languages – Hebrew, Yiddish-Deutsch, German, Magyar, Latin, or some awkward combination of these languages – some or all of which are often inaccessible to the

twenty-first genealogist and even to many   professionally trained historians; but also because they are in manuscript form. In addition, much of the information contained in these records does not deal directly with individuals or individual families, but rather with the concerns of the Jewish community as a whole or of a particular communal organization. Thus it is necessary to wade through scores of pages to tease out the names of a few hundred individuals.

There is also the matter of availability and accessibility. Until recently these materials were available only as archival material in Budapest, Jerusalem, and New York. The recent revolution in communication – specifically the invention of digital photography and the ability to transfer documents from inconvenient microform to more user-friendly forms like CD-Rom and DVD – has made it possible to acquire these materials and read them from the comfort of one's home computer or lap top rather than trying to navigate the limited access and less conducive conditions of an archive.   Yet, even with all these technological improvements, these documents are far less accessible than other source materials.   Reading and analyzing them requires not only a working knowledge of multiple languages, but also the time and commitment to read through the often illegible penmanship of nineteenth and early twentieth century communal scribes. Nonetheless, the more genealogists make use of this sort of information, the more difficult it will be for their critics to dismiss genealogical research as anything less than rigorous, substantive, and intensive.

In this regard, it is also important to note at the outset the limitations and pitfalls that arise when using communal protocols as a source of information. The principal limitation stems from the fact that these documents were never intended to be used as sources of information for genealogical research. Rather, these data were recorded so that a particular Jewish community could keep track of its own revenues and expenses, the overall needs of its constituents, and its status and situation vis-à-vis various levels of government officialdom.

Oddly enough, the largely un-self-conscious nature of this material is both its strength and its weakness as a primary source. It is a strength because this material, recorded with neither posterity nor a particular ideological agenda in mind, is inherently reliable – and, to borrow from the standard of modern jurisprudence, would certainly qualify for the business records exception to the hearsay rule. At the same time, the pre-occupation in this material with commercial affairs, revenues, and the status of the Jewish community as a whole limits the amount of information regarding a particular individual or family. Not surprising, this material includes more about elite individuals and families than rank and file Jew and families. This means that the information regarding a particular individual or family, especially regarding rank and file individuals or families, is fragmented. Using this material to construct mini-biographies of individuals or families entails piecing together fragments scattered across pages and pages of documents.

Especially noteworthy is the lack of information in these materials regarding the religious orientation or practice of these Jews. Rather, the type of information that can be gleaned most readily from these sources record those moments when rank and file Jews came into contact and conflict with the *Kehilla* and its *Bet Din* or other communal institutions, most notably: applications for residence permits, philanthropic transactions, purchasing seats in the synagogue, and disputes over commercial contracts and estate planning.   Based on these sources, in fact, it would not be entirely evident that there was a major split within Hungarian Jewry between Orthodox and Neolog. Even the records of the Pest/Budapest *Hevra Shas,*

often presumed by historians to be the   mainstay of the Orthodox community of Pest, makes little or no explicit reference to Orthodoxy or to the Orthodox Jewry's putative animus toward or distrust of non-Orthodox Jews. If nothing else, this suggests that a re-examination of Hungarian Jewry through the lens of genealogy might reveal that the ideological dimension of this conflict did not resonate in day to day Jewish communal life as intensely as has been commonly presumed.

Having said all that, these documents provide considerable additional information that can significantly augment the information found in more easily accessible and more frequently mined sources such as census data and birth records. The mundane nature of communal protocols, for example, allows historians exploring the Hungarian Jewish past no less than the genealogist trying to reconstruct a family tree to probe beyond the standard tools of inquiry: for historians, this means looking beyond newspapers and polemical writings, which often consist of intellectuals essentially yelling at each other through the years; for genealogists, this means exploring the limited information that can be gleaned from census data, birth and death records, and the occasional memoir.

Yet expanding the sources of genealogical research is only the first step. It is no less essential that such research help in fashioning a more nuanced understanding of Jewish History. In this regard, too, the history of Hungarian Jewry provides a useful venue, especially with respect to a still-prevalent tendency to model Hungarian Jewish History according to the contours of German-Jewish History. In general, historians of Hungarian Jewry have focused on the two aspects of Hungarian Jewish history that highlight the similarity to German-Jewish History: Hungarian Jewry's path to political emancipation as the "false dawns" of the 1780s (the abortive reforms of Joseph II) and 1848, followed by full emancipation at the end of the 1860s; and the ideological conflict and eventual schism between religious progressives i.e. Reform and Traditionalists, i.e. Orthodoxy. Hungarian Jewish historiography has thus veered away from ordinary Jews and mundane aspects of Jewish communal life, preferring instead to emphasize the vocally ideological segments of Hungarian Jewry: the most fiercely Orthodox and the most intensely progressive and assimilated. In this regard, shifting the historian's attention from larger political and ideological matters to a more grassroots approach will help unglue Hungarian Jewish History from a German-Jewish paradigm.

As one studies Hungarian Jewry from the vantage of individual families, striking similarities between Hungarian- and Polish-Jewry begin to appear. Even a brief overview of the Jewish communities of Miskolc, Óbuda, Pest and (with respect to the post-1873 period) Budapest, oriented around a grassroots approach that explores Hungarian Jewish History as an amalgam of the histories of individuals and individual families, points to the Polish-Jewish character of Hungarian Jewish History. The "Polishness" of Hungarian Jewish History is especially evident in two respects. First, the very existence of each of these Jewish communities was rooted in the relationship between Jews and their magnate benefactors through much of the eighteenth century.   This reflects how this bi-lateral relationship expanded during the nineteenth century into the triangular relationship between Jews, magnates, and the Hungarian royal crown; and shows how individual relationships between Jew and magnate benefactor matured into a broader relationship between the Jewish community and the Hungarian State. Second, the religious schism between the Orthodox and Neolog Movements was superimposed on a more amorphous interaction between traditional and progressive Jews. Indicative of this amorphousness is the Orthodoxy community of Pest that, for reasons of practicality, was never driven entirely or even primarily by ideological considerations; but, rather, found ways to function

within the diverse and cosmopolitan city of Pest (and, after 1873, Budapest) – a trend exemplified by the pragmatic outlook of the Pest *Hevra Shas.*

What follows, therefore, are brief sketches of three Hungarian Jewish communities for whom there is an cache of under-explored documents like those heretofore noted and described. Each sketch focuses on those aspects of each communal history most pertinent to the task of extracting genealogical data. The sketch of the Jews of Óbuda, therefore, describes and unravels the complex corporate hierarchy in which Óbuda and its Jewish community was immersed, thus allowing for a clearer understanding of the interactions between Jews and various officials. In the same way, the sketch of Miskolc focuses on the complex communal organization and development of Miskolc Jewry, notably the role that *Hevra Kadisha* played as default *Kehilla* council prior to the establishment of an actual *Kehilla*, and the relationship between the Jewish leaders of Miskolc and Borsod County; this allows for a clearer understanding of the intra-communal squabbles that Jewish leaders in Miskolc addressed. Finally, the sketch of Pest/Budapest focuses on the complexity and diversity of this, the largest, Hungarian Jewish community – a sort of catch all that encompassed the aspects of Jewish communal life in Óbuda and Miskolc, but also the emergence of a large Orthodox enclave. This provides the context for the Budapest *Hevra Shas*.

The Jews of Óbuda, 1775-1795

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, Óbuda Jewry was among the largest Jewish communities in Hungary. Much like in Poland, and the Czech Lands, privately owned market towns like Óbuda were the most hospitable places for Jews to reside in Hungary. Most Jews in Óbuda were immigrants or the children of immigrants, mainly from Bohemia and Moravia. Jewish settlement in Óbuda was made possible by the fact that the Zichy Family, the magnate family that had owned and ruled the town since the Jews first arrived in 1727, wanted Jewish subjects in Óbuda for the usual reasons. They (quite correctly) presumed Jews to be fiercely loyal and willing to pay handsomely for the patronage and protection of a magnate benefactor. What's more, they knew that Jews were taxable subjects with liquid capital who would stimulate commercial development and, as their commercial partners, enrich the Zichys coffers. In particular, the Zichys aimed at establishing a commercial foothold in neighboring Buda, to which Óbuda was adjacent commercially subordinate; and in Pest, which was located just across the Danube. Though not allowed to settle in Buda or Pest, under the Zichys' aegis Jews could trade at the commercial fairs in both towns. The profits from these transactions would, the Zichy family hoped, translate into revenue for them in the form of annual taxes and periodic bribes and other such "gifts."

There was an additional factor that worked to the advantage of Jews in Óbuda.   Óbuda straddled the line that divided Western and Central parts of Hungary. Western Hungary (Transdanubia) had been ruled by Hungarian magnates on behalf of the Habsburg crown without interruption since the early sixteenth century, and was affected by the defining developments of the period: reformation, counter-reformation, and the rise of Absolutism. Jews in the market towns of Western Hungary were subject to the harshness of Absolutist rule, meaning severe limitations on residence, travel, and commerce; and an array of onerous taxes imposed on as many different items and aspects of Jewish communal life that the magnates could think of taxing. For these Jews, the Reforms of Joseph II brought a significant reprieve from the austerity of Magnate rule.

By contrast, Óbuda was situated at the western end of the part of Hungary. This region had been largely depopulated following the defeat of the Ottoman Turks at the end of the seventeenth century, and was still being rebuilt and repopulated through much of the eighteenth century. Consequently the Zichys invited Jews to settle in Óbuda on favorable terms that were more akin to the terms granted by Polish magnates to Jews in the eastern reaches of Poland than to those granted by Hungarian magnates in western Hungary. Remarkably, this was true even vis a vis the privileges that the Zichys gave Jews in Óbuda in comparison with those they had give Jews in their western Hungarian possessions.

More specifically, Jews in Óbuda were allowed to travel with Zichy protection freely throughout the Zichy Estate and elsewhere. Jews were allowed to buy and sell virtually anything, and there was no limit to the number of Jews that who could reside in Óbuda.   Even after Óbuda was acquired by the Habsburg royal crown from the Zichy Family in 1765, most of the privileges were left intact and no restrictions added. In this sense, the imposition of the reforms of Joseph II in the 1780s were largely a lateral step for Jews in Óbuda from one favorable set of rights and obligations to another, rather than a sudden reprieve as they were for Jews in Transdanubia.

This lateral move, though, meant a growing complexity in the corporate hierarchy that governed Óbuda and its Jews. Whereas previously Óbuda Jews had dealt exclusively with the Zichy Family, after 1766 Óbuda and its Jews dealt with an array of officials that included county officials such as the local prefect and county magistrates who were assigned by the county to deal with Óbuda Jewry on behalf of the Hungarian National Diet and the Habsburg Crown, Count Zichy *qua* county High Sheriff, and the city council. The archival sources pertaining to Óbuda Jewry span the years 1776 and 1810 are drawn primarily from the protocols of the Jewish Community, but also from legal and commercial documents that were appended to or copied into these protocols. More than anything else, they reflect the ways that Jews in Óbuda navigated the complex political and social hierarchy through their commercial and administrative interactions with various government officials and manipulated it to their advantage. In addition, these documents include records of commercial and personal transactions between Jews in Óbuda, including numerous lawsuits that came before the *Bet Din* regarding commercial arrangements, communal taxes, loans, and inheritance. By the end of the eighteenth century, Óbuda Jewry had erected a full array of communal institutions, including a *Kehilla* that was empowered first by the Zichy Family and then the Habsburg Crown to manage the affairs of the Jewish community and operate a *Bet Din* [tribunal], a *Hevra Kadisha* [Burial Society], a cemetery, schools, and synagogue, and a rabbinate.

Most Jews in Óbuda were traditional in the purest sense of the term. There was little in the way of religious [8]innovation, but equally little in the way of Orthodoxy. Rather, Óbuda Jewry resembled the Jewish communities of eighteenth century Central and Eastern Europe prior to the rise of intra-communal squabbles over religious observance. In no small part, the religious mood of Óbuda Jewry was rooted in the practical aspects of day to day Jewish life. This is illustrated most vividly that the communal rabbis of Óbuda Jewry, who themselves participated in the ongoing navigation of the political and social hierarchy.

By the time such squabbles erupted into full-scale polemics and conflicts in Hungary, Óbuda Jewry was very much in the shadow of the much larger and rapidly growing Pest Jewry. By the 1830s, Óbuda Jewry was no longer a leading Hungarian Jewish community; after 1838, when much of the town of Óbuda was destroyed by a massive flood, Óbuda Jewry became largely an extension of Pest Jewry. Even though Óbuda Jewry insisted on maintaining its autonomy with

respect to Pest Jewry after Óbuda and Pest   were amalgamated in 1872, the towering shadow of Pest Jewry reduced Óbuda Jewry to the status of the scores of smaller Hungarian Jewish communities that were subordinate to larger ones.

The Jews of Miskolc, 1812-1850

Miskolc, the County seat of Borsod County, is located approximately 150 miles northeast of Budapest. Like Óbuda, the Jewish community of Miskolc began under the tutelage of local magnates. The Jewish community dates back to the 1720s, when a small group of Jewish immigrants from Moravia were given permission to settle there. Typical of Hungarian Jewish communities, the status of Jews in Miskolc ebbed and flowed with the general fluctuations in the Hungarian political hierarchy.

Yet the particular dynamics of magnate-Jewish relations in Miskolc were complicated by the unusual status of the city itself.   The city of Miskolc was neither privately owned by an individual magnate family, like Óbuda, nor a chartered city with the right to exclude Jews. Rather, it was a "crown city" (*koronai város*) a status that combined elements of a royal free city and a market town.   In practical terms, this meant that control over the town, and, by extension over the Jewish community, was determined by an ongoing struggle between several local magnate families, the Bishop of nearby Diosgyor, and the county diet. The involvement of the latter further complicated the status of the city, as county nobles and the royal crown struggled for control over this influential institution from the beginning of the eighteenth century until the 1860s.

Jewry was minuscule until the 1820s, numbering only a few hundred at the turn of the nineteenth century. Rapid growth ensued, and the Jewish community reached 1,000 by 1835, nearly 3,000 by mid-century, and exceeded 10,000 by the eve of the First World War. Though never as prominent as Pest or Budapest, Miskolc was an important regional center of commerce, politics, and cultural life. Once they dislodged the entrenched "Greek" merchant guild, Jews in Miskolc dominated commercial life throughout Borsod County and beyond.

The leadership structure of Miskolc Jewry was a complex web of Jewish communal organizations.   Like all but a handful of Hungarian Jewish communities, the Jewish community of Miskolc was not officially recognized until the 1830s. Hitherto the leadership of the *Hevra Kadisha*, which since its founding in 1767 had been the only officially recognized Jewish communal institution in Miskolc, acted as the default leadership of the Jewish in lieu of a recognized *Kehilla*. As such the *Bet Din* of the *Hevra Kadisha* was the de facto adjudicator of Jewish disputes; and the elite families that ordinarily would have dominated the ranks of the *Kehilla*, instead dominated the officer core of the *Hevra Kadisha*.

As with the city of Miskolc, the most complicated aspect of Jewish communal administration was the relationship between the Jewish community of Miskolc and the Jewish community of Borsod County. Beginning in 1825, a county-wide Jewish council for Borsod County was authorized by the County Diet to supervise the collection of the Toleration Tax. This organization evolved within a few years into a county-wide *Kehilla*. Although never as well-defined and prestigious as the super-communal councils of Poland, Moravia, and Lithuania, the County-*Kehilla* vied to maximize its jurisdiction over local Jewish matters. In particular, it vied with the leaders of Miskolc Jewry for dominance in Borsod County – a development that was complicated by the

fact that many of the same Jews were active   participants and leaders of both. Once the Miskolc *Kehilla* was recognized by the County Diet, the *Hevra Kadisha* was subordinated to its authority, while the county-*Kehilla* became largely an extension of the Miskolc *Kehilla*.

In no small sense, the history of Miskolc Jewry was remarkable for how unremarkable it was. Miskolc Jewry was distinguished more by gradual developments than dramatic watershed moments, and by smaller minor disputes rather than major dramatic conflicts. This unremarkable character is perhaps best illustrated when one considers the religious outlook of Jews in Miskolc. Miskolc Jewry was a hodgepodge of moderate traditionalists and modern progressives, few of whom had patience for religious radicalism of any sort – German-style religious Reform no less than Orthodoxy. Following the schism within Hungarian Jewry between Orthodox and Neolog, Miskolc Jewry wavered for nearly decade before ultimately affiliating Orthodoxy. Even thereafter, though, Miskolc Jews never fully embraced the ideological mandate of Hungarian Orthodoxy, but, rather, repeatedly defied Orthodox strictures. For example, during the 1890s, Miskolc Jewry came into conflict multiple times with leadership of Orthodoxy by insisting that sermons in the main synagogue be delivered in Magyar.

Emblematic of this moderate traditional approach was Moses Ezekiel Fischmann, the chief rabbi of the Jewish community from the 1830s through the late 1860s. Fischmann was an avowedly traditional and pious Jew, who insisted that all religious matters meet the standards established by the *Shulchan 'Aruch*. Yet he was equally insistent that these standards neither necessarily required stringency in every matter nor precluded innovations in some instances. In the early 1860s, for example, Fischmann sanctioned certain innovations in the newly constructed great synagogue, including sermons in the vernacular, a professional cantor and choir, and greater decorum. For this, he was severely criticized and assailed by Hillel Lichtenstein, the Ultra-Orthodox rabbi of the neighboring Jewish community of Szikszó, which was located just across the Sajó River from Miskolc. Most Jews in Miskolc, though, were even less high profile in their religious behavior. For them, religious life was defined more by connections to and involvement with various religious institutions and organization.

The Jews of Pest, 1860-1872/Budapest, 1872-1910

Pest Jewry was one of the fastest growing Jewish communities in the world during the nineteenth century.[9] From a fledgling enclave of barely 1,000 Jews in 1800, Pest Jewry grew to more than 200,000 by the turn of the twentieth century. The rapid growth was accompanied by a staggering increase in the religious and cultural diversity of this Jewish community. In addition to housing the largest progressive Jewish community in Europe – the Neolog community of Pest and, later Budapest, numbered more than 130,000 – Pest Jewry also included more than 10,000 Orthodox Jews. Although a small minority of Pest Jewry, this Orthodox enclave was still among the largest enclave of Orthodox Jews in Europe.

Like the Jewish communities of Óbuda and Miskolc, the beginnings of Pest Jewry were rooted in the relationship Jews and Hungarian magnates, the aforementioned Zichys and the Orczy Family. The Zichys, sensing an opportunity to benefit from the commercial expansion of Pest, attained permission for Óbuda Jews to trade in Pest – even though officially Pest was off-strictly limits to Jews.   In this way, Zichy sponsorship eventually provided the basis for the first Jews to settle permanently in Pest.

As late as 1767, though, the census taker   could still report that "no Jews live in the city of Pest." A handful of Jews settled during the 1780s under the aegis of Joseph II's Patent of Toleration. Many more settled illegally during the 1780s and 1790s, preferring to risk the chance of eviction rather than be subjected to various municipal and royal residence taxes.

The sponsorship of the Zichys was complemented by the expansion of Pest itself beyond the walls of the Inner City (*belváros*). From the 1770s on, a network of new neighborhoods were constructed by the Habsburg crown, which came to known as the outer city (*kulváros*). The physical expansion of the city outpaced the administrative expansion, which made it easier for Jews and others to live illegally in the outer city. Furthering this tendency was the construction of a large apartment complex in Terézváros (Theresa District), the largest neighborhoods of the Outer City, by the Orczy Family. This large complex quickly became a haven for illegally residing Jews – most of whom lived in Terézváros – and, by 1800, the center of the Pest Jewish community. [10]

Initially, the Jewish community of Pest was not acknowledged by any level of government. Instead, Jews were allowed to reside in Pest as individuals with no recognition of a Jewish community until 1833. By the time this recognition came, though, the number of Jews in Pest numbered nearly 20,000, thus the *Kehilla* that was created in 1833 lacked the means to govern the Jewish community in the classical sense of the Jewish communal administration. Instead, the *Kehilla* managed the affairs of Pest Jews through the medium of a series of communal institutions that collectively met the religious needs of Jews in Pest, in particular, the *Hevra Kadisha*, the Dohany Street Temple, the Rabbinical Seminary, and the Pest Israelite Women's Association.

Yet each of these institutions was created by progressive-minded Neolog Jews. The small but growing Orthodox community that appeared in the 1860s erected its own communal institutions, among which was the Pest *Hevra Shas*. This organization had only a few hundred members during the 1860s, but grew to more than 3,000 by the turn of the twentieth century. The *Hevra Shas* and its rabbi, Hayim Sofer, emerged as the heart of the Orthodox sub-community of Pest Jewry. Though ostensibly an Orthodox organization, the *Hevra Shas* acted more as mediator between individual Orthodox families in Pest and the rest of the Jewish community, and between Orthodox Jews and the general population of Pest. More than anything else, members of this organization raised and donated money to help feed and clothe the Jewish poor, build and renovate Jewish schools, provide for victims of war and natural disaster, and organize social events (qua group learning.)

What emerges from the brief composites of Óbuda, Miskolc, and Pest is a notion that life as a Hungarian Jew was less about public debates over emancipation and public disputes between Orthodox Jews and their non-Orthodox adversaries, and more about day to day efforts to carve out a decent life for oneself and one's family. The still prevailing image of Hungarian Jewry as fractious and contentious may reflect as much about Hungarian Jewish historiography as it reflects about the reality of Hungarian Jewish history. It is not surprising that sources written by the ideological creators and champions of Orthodoxy or the sermons and writings of their rabbinic supporters focus on and magnify the ideological strife that divided Hungarian Jewry. By the same token, however, it is not surprising that focusing on more mundane sources that record the ordinary activities and interactions of rank and file Hungarian Jews suggests that Hungarian Jews were not as divided one from the other as the ideological rifts within Hungarian Jewry

suggest. This presents a picture of Hungarian   Jewry that is far less dramatic that the conventional one, but more accurate.

The Databases – and their Use

As indicated in the section on "Sources" above, this study is based in large part on an analysis of the minutes various communal institutions and of an assortment of relevant archival records. In the process of examining these sources, the names of all Jews appearing in them were extracted and entered into two databases, one for Óbuda-Pest/Budapest and the other for Miskolc. These databases are posted on the Website as **Appendices 1** and **2** and can be accessed via the electronic links on the page for this research project (from the main menu, under RESEARCH/Hungarian Protocols).

In compiling them, careful note was made of the date and location of the reference to a specific name, as well as of the context of that reference - for example, in the framework of a commercial transaction, an interaction with local or national government, a lawsuit at the local *Bet Din* or simply as a name on a list of conscripts. Where possible (in a minority of cases), Hebrew patronyms were noted.

The databases are searchable by name, patronym, source, language and location, as follows:

Field 1 - Name

In choosing between Yiddish, German, and Magyar names (e.g. Yona, Jonah, Jonas), the form originally used in the source has be preferred. As the sources were in several languages, a single individual may appear under alternate names. This problem is complicated further where a family has Magyarized its surname, e.g. from Gross to Nagy or from Klein to Kis.

Field 2 - Patronym

Year 3 – Year

Year 4 - Location

Location refers to an individual's place of residence when the particular reference, transaction or event took place. The vast majority of entries listed are Óbuda, Miskolc, Pest or Budapest, but other towns occasionally appear. Note: prior to 1872, the location of Pest rather than Budapest has been indicated since, strictly speaking, the latter did not exist before that date.

Field 5 - Source

To assist users seeking to pursue a particular data entry further, the source from which the information was extracted is indicated as follows:

1 – *Óbudai iratok* [Documents Pertaining to Óbuda] is a collection of documents located in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (Jerusalem) and contains the Protocol (Minutes) of the Óbuda Jewish Community (*Pinkas ha-Kehilla*) and other related documents in Hebrew, Yiddish-Deutsch, German, Magyar, and Latin.

2 – *Prothocol fun der löbliche Borchoder [sic]   Comitat israelitischen Gemeinde welch dieses jahr erschafte worden ist/Protokol mi-bnei ha-Komitat Borsod nityased bish'at asefat bnei ha-Galil zum Tolerantz Anlag bishnat 5585* [Protocol of a County Council convened by 1820 to assess and collect the Toleration Tax from Jews in Borsod County] covers the years 1825-1851 and thus overlaps with other protocol documents. It is written in Yiddish-Deutsch and is 139 folio-style pages long. Entries are not numbered and sporadically dated.

2a – *Ha-Protokol He-Hadash* [The New Protocol] is to be found in the Jewish Theological Seminary MS collection and is the minutes of the *Hevra Kadisha* (Burial Society), covering the period 1812-1842. It is written in Hebrew and Yiddish-Deutsch and is 141 folios long. Individual entries are numbered and frequently, but not always, dated. Occasionally, when a date is included, it is not an exact date but, in some cases, simply a month (e.g. August 1820).

2b – *Borsod vármegyebeli Izraelita község jegyzőkönyv* [The Protocol of the Borsod County Jewish community] is the minutes of the Borsod County *Kehilla*. It covers the period from January 1840 through May 1847. It is written in Hungarian with regular pagination. Entries are numbered and dated.

2c – *Protocolle der Ehrsammen Israelitische Gemeinde* [Protocol of the honorable Jewish Community], is the minutes of the Miskolc Kehilla. It covers the period May 1835 through May 1846 and has entries in both Yiddish-Deutsch and Hungarian. After 1839, it is written solely in Hungarian. The pages are folio-style, beginning with page # 226:a, and ending with page # 456:b. Entries are numbered and dated.

Field 6 – Page no.

Field 7 - Language

The source language is indicated - whether Hebrew, Yiddish-Deutsch, German, Magyar or Latin.

Field 8 - Context

A minimal description is offered to situate the person in a particular place and time in order to assist genealogists or social historians to pursue a lead further.

<u>**Notes**</u>

1. Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (JPS Press: Philadelphia, 1979) x..
2.Anthony Joseph, "Genealogy and Jewish History," *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* XXXIV (1994-1996) p. 113.
3. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*.
4. David Biale, Gershom Scholem: *Kabala and Counter-History*
5. To cite several examples: *Prothocol fun der löbliche Borchoder[sic] Comitat israelitischen Gemeinde welch dieses jahr erschafte worden ist/Protokol mi-bnei ha-Komitat Borsod nityased bish'at asefat bnei ha-Galil zum Tolerantz Anlag bishnat 5585* is the protocol of a county council convened by 1820 to assess and collect the Toleration Tax from Jews in Borsod County. It covers the years 1825-1851, and thus overlaps with other protocol documents. It is written in Yiddish-Deutsch, and is 139 folio style pages long. Entries are not numbered and sporadically dated; *Ha-Protokol He-Hadash* [The New Protocols] is the

protocol of the Jewish Burial Society and cover the period 1812-1842. Jewish Theological Seminary MS . This collection is written in Hebrew and Yiddish-Deutsch. It 141 folios long. Individual entries are numbered and often but not always dated. When a date is included, it is not always a specific date but, in some cases, a month (e.g. August 1820); *Borsod vármegyebeli Izraelita község jegyzőkönyv* [The protocol of the Borsod County Israelite community] is the protocol of the Borsod County Kehilla. It covers the period from January 1840 through May 1847. It is written in Hungarian with regular pagination. Entries are numbered and dated; *Protocolle der Ehrsammen Israelitische Gemeinde* [Protocol of the Respectable Israelite Community], is the protocol of the Miskolc Kehilla. It covers the period May 1835 through May 1846. It has entries in Yiddish-Deutsch and Hungarian. After 1839, Hungarian it is written solely in Hungarian. It is written in folio style, and beginning with page #226:a and ending with page #456:b. Entries are numbered and dated; *The Protocols of the Budapest Hevra Shas.*

6. To cite one example: *Óbudai iratok* [Documents Pertaining to Óbuda] The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (Jerusalem). This collection includes the Protocol of the Óbuda Jewish Community (Pinkas ha-Kehilla) and other related documents in Hebrew, Yiddish-Deutsch, German, Magyar, and Latin;

8. This brief summary of the Jews of Miskolc draws mainly from Howard N. Lupovitch, *Jews at the Crossroads: Tradition and Accommodation during the Golden Age of the Hungarian Nobility* CEU Press 2007, which uses many of the primary sources alluded to here. See especially chapters 2,4,5, and 7.

9. On the Jews of Pest and Budapest, see Michal Silber, "Budapest" in *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2 Volumes edited by Gershon Hundert. Yale University Press. 2008; and *Jewish Budapest : Monuments, Rites, History* edited by Kinga Frojimovics et al Central European University Press 1989.

10. For a more detailed analysis of the beginnings and expansion of the Jewish Community in Pest, see Howard Lupovitch, "Beyond the Walls: the Beginnings of Pest Jewry" in *Austrian History Yearbook* 36 (2005) 40-64.