

SCHISM, SECTARIANISM AND JEWISH DENOMINATIONALISM

Hungarian Jewry in a Comparative Perspective

Central European University (Budapest)

Date: October 13-15, 2009.

Deadline: May 24, 2009.

Papers should be designed for a 20-minute presentation. Please e-mail your proposal (abstract 1-2 pages) and CV to jewishstudies@ceu.hu. Successful candidates will be notified by June 30, 2009. The conference language is English. A publication of the conference papers is planned.

Organizers: Prof. Michael Laurence Miller, Central European University of Budapest (Hungary); Dr. Adam Ferziger, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan (Israel), PD Dr. Andreas Brämer, Institut für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden, Hamburg, and University of Hamburg (Germany).

Homepage: <http://www.ceu.hu/jewishstudies>.

In *A House Divided: Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth-Century Central European Jewry* (Hebrew: 1995; English: 1998), Jacob Katz examined the links between Jewish separatism in Hungary and Germany, placing the Hungarian Jewish schism (1868–71) in a wider European context. By the 1860s, Hungarian Jewry was deeply divided along ideological lines, with the Neolog movement supporting cultural integration and moderate religious reform, and the Orthodox movement steadfastly opposing the outlook and lifestyle of their acculturated counterparts. The official split occurred in the aftermath of the state-sponsored »Jewish Congress« (1868–69), which aimed to establish a single, unified organization for the recently-emancipated Jews of Hungary, but instead, led to the institutionalization of the Neolog-Orthodox split. From 1871 onward, the Hungarian government recognized two separate national Jewish organizations, and each local Jewish community was expected to join either the Neolog or Orthodox one. While most communities did as expected, some chose to ignore the split by identifying with the pre-Congress status quo (status quo ante). Henceforth, Hungarian Jewry was divided into three groups: Neolog, Orthodox and Status Quo Ante.

The tripartite division remained one of the defining features of Hungarian Jewry until the middle of the 20th century, leaving its mark on Hungarian Orthodoxy, in particular. Until the Congress, a significant Hungarian Orthodox faction expressed positive attitudes toward certain aspects of European culture. Unlike Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, who wanted to hermetically separate Orthodox and non-Orthodox institutions, these Hungarian Orthodox moderates sought political compromises that would allow for Hungarian communal unity. The Ultra-Orthodox were rather marginal to the Congress, but they helped push the center Orthodox further to the right, and closer to the separatist ideology, which was predicated on the demonization of all aspects of modern culture and the exclusion of other Orthodox Jews who sought to minimize the conflict with non-Jewish culture and non-Orthodox Jews.

Hungarian Jewry was officially reunified in 1950, under pressure from the communist regime, but the Orthodox ideology of separation continues to play a role in contemporary Jewish life in Israel, North America, and even post-communist Hungary. Neology remains the largest Jewish denomination in contemporary Hungary, but even this movement is often defined in opposition to Orthodoxy, with little scholarly focus on its distinct institutional, theological and halakhic traditions.

The aim of the current conference is to serve as a platform for exploring fresh approaches and addressing less well-known aspects of the initial 19th century Hungarian conflicts. As such, it will advance further the burgeoning field of research into Hungarian Orthodoxy that has emerged in the last two decades. At the same time, it is hoped that the focus on the formative events will serve to reinvigorate the examination of the liberal Jewish ideologies and political profiles that have received limited attention in the recent past. The legacy of this framework, as already pointed out, has extended both chronologically and geographically beyond the 19th century Hungarian milieu. In order to properly evaluate the entire phenomenon of Hungarian separatism, studies will be encouraged that consider its impact on Jewish life under the fascist regime and Nazi domination, and throughout the communist and post-communist eras. Furthermore, comparative papers that introduce examples from other vicinities will be invited, as well as considerations of how Hungarian separatism has played a role in various Jewish communities throughout the world, during the 20th century as well as in contemporary times.

The conference will bring together established and younger scholars. Invited speakers will be, among others: Michael Silber, David Meyers, Rachel Manekin, Matthias Morgenstern. We do however welcome proposals from scholars currently researching the following topics: Orthodoxy, Neolog, Status Quo Ante; Yeshivas and seminaries: rabbinical training; Hungarian nationalism; attitudes toward language Jewish nationalism/zionism, Orthodoxy & Ultra-Orthodoxy; history of Halakha from a denominational perspective; Hungarian religious legacy outside of Hungary; geographical aspects: Oberland; Unterland; post-WWII religious life; Holocaust and the Schism.