

**The Dr Moshe Carmilly Institute for Hebrew and Jewish History  
and the Library of Jewish Studies**

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**Keywords:** Dr Moshe Carmilly Institute for Hebrew and Jewish History, Jewish Studies Library, Jewish community of Cluj, *Studia Judaica*, *Biblioteca Judaica*, Margo and Egon Marc Lövith

**Abstract**

In the former Orthodox synagogue of Cluj nowadays functions a part of the Dr Moshe Carmilly Institute for Hebrew and Jewish History founded in October 1990 as part of the Babeş-Bolyai University's Faculty of History and Philosophy and the Jewish Studies Library founded in 1999. Both institutions are under the aegis of the former chief rabbi of the Neolog Jewish community in Cluj, Dr Moshe Carmilly Weinberger, prominent personality of Cluj in the interwar period. The paper presents the manifold activity of these cultural establishments which preserve and hand down to the younger generations the cultural and historical heritage of the nowadays reduced but until World War II flourishing Jewish community of Cluj.

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**Dr Moshe Carmilly Institute for Hebrew and Jewish History** was founded in October 1990 as part of the Babeş-Bolyai University's Faculty of History and Philosophy in Cluj-Napoca and it functions within the Department of Medieval History and Historiography being the first institution of this kind in Transylvania.

Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger was an emblematic figure in Cluj between 1936 and 1944 when he led as chief rabbi the Neolog Jewish community of the town. He was born on April 7, 1908 in Budapest from Transylvanian Jewish parents. When he was two years old, his family decided to return to Transylvania, Moshe Carmilly spending his childhood in the Bihor county village Vaşcău, then in Oradea and Satu Mare. He studied Judaism at the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau, Germany (today Wrocław, Poland), at the Rabbinical Seminary

of Budapest and at the Pázmány Péter University in Budapest where he obtained the scientific title doctor in Judaism with the distinction *summa cum laude* in the year 1934. He was elected chief rabbi of the Neolog Jewish community in Cluj in 1936.<sup>1</sup>

During World War II Dr Moshe Carmilly helped Jews from all over Transylvania to escape into Romania and then to leave to Palestine being at the head of the Refugees' Rescue Committee, founded in 1936.<sup>2</sup> In May 1944 he left Cluj, just a day before the Jews of Cluj were ghettoized, and took refuge in Romania. In 1948–1950 he was cultural and immigration officer at the Israeli Consulate in Budapest. Later he was headmaster of elementary and high schools in Israel, as well as assistant-director for education and culture in the administrative body of the town Netanya. In 1957 he moved to the USA, becoming professor emeritus at the Yeshiva University in New York.<sup>3</sup>

After December 1989, Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger recommenced his visits to Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca being his favourite destination. His last visit was made in autumn 2007 with the occasion of the international Judaism conference organized by the Institute of Judaism.

The Institute bearing his name has two main lines of activity: education and research. The educational programme is intended for the students who would like to attend Jewish studies and also for those interested in Jewish language, history, culture and civilization. This programme is structured in three years, functioning within the Faculty of History and Philosophy as Jewish Studies specialization beginning with the academic year 2001/2002.

Already in 1998/1999 a MA programme (of two years) and a PhD programme (of three years) of Jewish studies had been started. Since October 2000, there have been groups attending a programme of Jewish language and culture at the Faculty of Letters of the Babeş-Bolyai University, Applied Modern Languages and Philology specialization.

Beginning with the academic year 2000/2001 the institute organizes courses which prepare secondary and high school history teachers to teach the Holocaust in the Romanian schools. The lectures of the seminar *Teaching the Holocaust in the Romanian schools* are held by

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe\\_Carmilly-Weinberger](http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe_Carmilly-Weinberger)

<sup>2</sup> Carmilly-Weinberger, Moshe, *The Road to Life. The Rescue Operation of Jewish Refugees on the Hungarian-Romanian Border in Transylvania, 1936–1944*, New York, Shengold Publishers, 1994, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> [http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe\\_Carmilly-Weinberger](http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe_Carmilly-Weinberger)

professors from Romanian, and also professors invited from prestigious universities all around the world.

The research activity of the Institute has for its aim to discover, to take into account, record on microfilm and to research all the archive documents referring to the Jews in Romania as well as the Jewish books in Hebrew, Yiddish, Romanian, German, Latin or Hungarian extant in the Romanian archives and libraries, to study Jewish genealogy, the Jewish press in Romania as well as to inventory the Jewish graveyards in the country. In the same line, the Institute has been organizing every year since 1991 international scientific conferences on themes regarding the history and culture of the Jews in Romania on which participate specialists of this domain from Romanian and foreign universities. In 2007 took place the 17<sup>th</sup> international Judaism conference having as a theme *Philosophy and the Kabbalah*.

The Institute also has a rich editorial activity publishing the yearbook *Studia Judaica* since 1991. Professors and specialists have published a series of volumes among which we mention: Carmilly-Weinberger, Moshe, *A zsidóság története Erdélyben (1623–1944)* [The History of the Jews in Transylvania (1623–1944)], Budapest, MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1995; Radosav, Maria, *Gramatica limbii ebraice moderne* (The Grammar of Modern Hebrew Language), București, Editura All, 1998; Carmilly-Weinberger, Moshe, *Cenzură și libertate de expresie în istoria evreilor* (Censorship and the Freedom of Expression in the History of Jews), București, Editura Hasefer, 2003; Gyémánt, Ladislau, *Evreii din Transilvania. Destin istoric* (The Jews of Transylvania. Historical Destiny), Cluj-Napoca, Institutul Cultural Român, 2004; Fărcășan, Simona, *Între două lumi. Intelectuali evrei de expresie română în secolul al XIX-lea* (Between Two Worlds. Jewish Intellectuals of Romanian Expression in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century), Cluj-Napoca, Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2004; Ursuțiu, Claudia, *Senatori și deputați evrei în parlamentul României (1919–1931). Între reușită și eșec* [Jewish Senators and Deputies in the Romanian Parliament (1919–1931). Between Success and Failure], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2006; Radosav, Maria, *Livada cu rodii. Carte și comunitate evreiască în nordul Transilvaniei (secolele XVIII–XX)* [The Orchard with Pomegranates. Jewish Book and Community in the North of Transylvania (18–20<sup>th</sup> Centuries)], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Argonaut, 2007; Carmilly-Weinberger, Moshe, *On Three Continents. An Autobiography*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura EFES, 2007.

The Institute also started a collection entitled *Biblioteca Judaica* comprising the following volumes: Carmilly-Weinberger, Moshe, *Istoria evreilor din Transilvania (1623–1944)* [The history of Transylvanian Jews (1623–1944)], București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1994; Carmilly-Weinberger, Moshe, *The Road to Life. The Rescue Operation of Jewish Refugees on the Hungarian–Romanian Border in Transylvania, 1936–1944*, New York, Shengold Publishers, 1994; Carmilly-Weinberger, Moshe, *Drumul vieții. Operațiunea de salvare a evreilor refugiați pe granița ungaro–română în Transilvania 1936–1944* (The Road to Life. The Rescue Operation of Jewish Refugees on the Hungarian–Romanian Border in Transylvania, 1936–1944), Cluj-Napoca, Fundația Culturală Română, 1996; Dörner, Anton E., *Evreii din comitatul Satu Mare în secolul al XVIII-lea (1723–1760)* [The Jews of Satu Mare County in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (1723–1760)], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 1998; Carmilly-Weinberger, Moshe, *Út a szabadság felé! Zsidó menekültek megsegítésének története a Holocaust idején: Erdély, 1936–1944* (The Road to Freedom! The History of the Rescue Operation of Jewish Refugees during the Holocaust: Transylvania, 1936–1944), Cluj-Napoca, Editura Sincron, 1999; Gyémánt, Ladislau, *Evreii din Transilvania în epoca emancipării (1790–1867)* [The Transylvanian Jews in the Age of Emancipation (1790–1867)], București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2000; Dörner, Anton E., *Evreii din comitatul Satu Mare în secolul al XVIII-lea (1761–1781)* [The Jews of Satu Mare County in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (1761–1781)], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2000; Carmilly-Weinberger, Moshe, *The Jews in Transylvania (1644–1623)*, Jerusalem, Rubin Mass, 2003.

To these important contributions made by the Institution members numerous articles, studies and conference lectures held and published in different Romanian and foreign scientific journals are added.

The **Jewish Studies Library** was founded in 1999 and it is, together with the Institute, under the aegis of the former chief rabbi of Neolog Jewish community in Cluj, Dr Moshe Carmilly Weinberger. The library functions in no. 13 Croitorilor Street (near Mihai Viteazu Square), in the old Orthodox synagogue, the former Sas Hevra Temple. In 1898 a Talmudic school was founded with the same name, and in 1922 the synagogue was erected.<sup>1</sup> Having ceased to function as a synagogue, the

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<sup>1</sup> *Memorial Volume for the Jews of Cluj-Kolozsvár*, New York, Sepher-Hermon Press, 1988, p. 100.

building housed several firms (optician's shop, photo laboratory as well as furniture warehouse). In 2004 a part of the Institute and the Library moved to this new headquarters purchased and renovated by the university.

The Jewish community of Cluj-Napoca was one of the most flourishing Transylvanian Jewish communities. The first community was established here in 1866. This was the Orthodox Jewish community which maintained its traditionalist line.<sup>1</sup> In 1881 the Neolog community following a reformist line was founded.<sup>2</sup>

In Cluj-Napoca there were and functioned five big synagogues and over ten Jewish houses of worship. The synagogue in Paris Street, nowadays housing the *Antena 1* studio, is the oldest. The synagogue in Barițiu Street is the *Tranzit House* in the present, and the synagogue in Croitorilor Street is the headquarters of the *Institute for Hebrew and Jewish History* and the *Jewish Studies Library*. The synagogue in Horea Street, called the *Deportees' Temple*, is the only one which functions in the present, here taking place the religious service especially in summertime and with the occasion of the great holydays. This synagogue was blown up when the Hortyst troops retreated from Cluj, being rebuilt in 1949. There was also a smaller synagogue which lasted until the communist era, when, in 1967, it was decided to demolish it in order to construct the building of the *Fashion House*.<sup>3</sup> In wintertime the religious service takes place in the single remaining House of Worship, that in no. 16 Dávid Ferenc Street.

There were also four Jewish cemeteries: an old Jewish cemetery in Aviator Bădescu Street; another Jewish graveyard known for its oldness is the one in no. 114 Turzii Street. These two burial places are no longer used, two newer cemeteries being used for burials, one situated in no. 1 Șoimului Street and the other in no. 156 Turzii Street. In the latter there is also a monument erected in the memory of the Holocaust victims.

After World War I a Jewish hospital was also founded in no. 19–21 Croitorilor Street. This had functioned until 1948 when it was nationalized.

Near the synagogue in Croitorilor Street, in no. 34 A. Șaguna Street there is the centre of the Jewish Community of Cluj and in no. 5–7

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Mircea Moldovan, "A No Longer Existing Synagogue in Cluj-Barițiu Street", in *Studia Judaica*, No. II, 1993, p. 158.

Paris Street the Jewish Canteen. Both function in the present, the Institute and the Library being in close collaboration with the members of the Jewish community.

The Jewish Studies Library is under the double patronage of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library and the Dr Moshe Carmilly Institute for Hebrew and Jewish History. The specific architecture, the singular décor and the double tutelage make this library exceptional.

The majority of the publications in the Library’s collection come from the donations of Romanian and foreign institutes or natural persons with whom the Institute collaborates. There is a line of acquisition and international exchange through “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library as well through which the newly edited works in the domain are purchased and publications are exchanged with fifty foreign partners.

Being a library with a special area of interest, unfortunately it does not collaborate very well with many Romanian publishing houses since few institutions publish books related to this topic. Thus a great part of the publications come from *Hasefer Publishing House* in Bucharest, the publishing house of the Jewish Community Federation in Romania. This was founded on 1 May 1995 having in its programme to publish numerous works on the history of Jews, Judaism, Jewish philosophy, Jewish literature, art albums, encyclopaedias, dictionaries.

The library collections contain approximately 3,000 volumes of books and 80 periodical titles. The publications are in English, Romanian, Hungarian, German, Italian, French, Hebrew and Yiddish. The arrangement of the collection allows the readers’ free access to all the publications, which means to all the information in the following domains of interest: general history of the Jews, the history of Diaspora Jews, the history of the Jews in Romania, anti-Semitism, Holocaust, Judaism, religion, philosophy, art, Hebrew language and literature, politics, Zionism etc.

The reference collection contains dictionaries in Hebrew language, encyclopaedias, lexicons, atlases, textbooks. The collection of periodicals has a singular publication: *Studia Judaica*, the yearbook of the Institute. This is published in English and contains papers presented in the yearly international conferences as well as other articles, studies and reviews. It has been published since 1991 (no. 1) the latest number (no. 14) appeared in 2007, having for editor the director of the Institute, University Professor Dr Ladislau Gyémánt.

The library also has a collection of extracts (documents, copies, periodical articles) as well as a series of audiovisual documents regarding the history of Jews and the Holocaust. From the point of view of computerization the entire collection can be found in the ProCite and Aleph databases of the Library. The library has 30 places for consulting the publications and the databases, the readers having to their disposal two computers. The reading public consists of undergraduate and MA students, teachers, researchers, PhD students and other categories of users, the access being granted on the bases of library membership cards.

The services offered by the library are the following: access to the database of the Jewish Studies Library; access to the online catalogue of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library and the databases subscribed to; consulting the publications in the reading room; short loans; speciality information.

In the old synagogue in Croitorilor Street where the Jewish Studies Library functions as well as a part of the Institute for Hebrew and Jewish History there is also an *Audio Video Laboratory* equipped with the necessary apparatus, the *Einstein Lecture Room* having 80 seats, as well as a room housing Egon Marc Lövith's permanent exhibition of paintings and sculptures.

Egon Marc Lövith is one of the most prestigious contemporary artists in the domain of sculpture, painting, graphic art and ceramics. He is also one of the survivors of Dachau extermination camp. He was born in Cluj on May 21, 1923 to a well-to-do family. His father, a watchmaker who studied in Switzerland, had come from the Crimea. He was taken prisoner in Transylvania in 1919 and remained in Cluj marrying a Jewish woman born in Transylvania from Lithuanian Jewish parents. Egon Marc Lövith's father had a watchmaker's workshop in Cluj, in Barițiu Street, but he was forced to immigrate to Mexico in 1924 having undergone physical aggression and his workshop having been destroyed by extremist bands. In 1926 Egon Marc Lövith and his entire family settled down in Distrito Federal Mexico. The first language he learnt was Spanish. In 1934 the artist's father died and he and his mother and sister had to come back to Cluj in 1936.<sup>1</sup>

In the period of the Vienna Award the artist was taken to forced labour then later deported to the Dachau extermination camp. His family was exterminated, but in 1945 Egon Marc Lövith was set free, coming back to Cluj together with his wife Margot, who had been prisoner in the

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Rus, *Egon Marc Lövith*, Cluj-Napoca, Alma Mater, 2003, p. 6.

same camp. Margot pursued the same artistic activities (sculpture, painting, ceramics, pastel, graphic art), graduating the Ion Andreescu Institute of Fine Arts in Cluj and becoming a teacher and head of the Sculpture Department in the same Institute.<sup>1</sup>

The *Margo and Egon Marc Lövith Room* in the former synagogue in Croitorilor Street has fifteen pictures and four sculptures having biblical themes, inspired by the tragedy of the Holocaust and self-portraits. Before the lecture room one can see another work of the artist, Albert Einstein's bust.

### **Illustrations**



The Jewish Studies Library

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.



The Jewish Studies Library



Margo and Egon Marc Lövith Room



Margo and Egon Marc Lövith Room



The Jewish Studies Library



Albert Einstein Lecture Room

Translated by Ágnes Korondi