

**TIMIȘU DE SUS,
February 17-20, 2005**

“*NESHAMA YEHUDIT*”, A SEMINAR MEANT TO HEAL ONE’S SOUL...

One of the numerous activities organized by the Youth Department of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania is, starting from this year, the “Neshama Yehudit” seminar (“Jewish Soul”). By using this title, its initiators – Sandra Segal, Eduard Kupferberg and Mirela Așman – made an invitation to the members of the Jewish Community from Romania so as to meditate on the idea of identity. The

biographies to one another just for a few minutes. Such a moment was not only extremely comical but also made it possible for them to make friends, no matter of generations. This is what the initiators really wanted to happen!

In the lecture that described issues starting from the first and second century of the common era, Eduard

and continuing with the effects of the prejudices inoculated in the collective mentality, she succeeded in making the audience understand exactly how it was possible for the atrocities of the legionary rebellion from Bucharest, the “death trains” from Moldova or the deportation in Transnistria to happen. The most powerful moment of this lecture was that of the family testimonials (painfully personal!) and a few memories of the lives of people who went through suffering that is hard to express by words. Once again, there was confirmed the veridicity of the saying “May not God give man as much as he can carry...” The subject of the options and dilemmas of the Jews during the communist regime from Romania was also very appreciated. This was not about history, but about events that influenced the lives of all the participants more or less.

discussion about the different trends in Judaism - ultra-orthodox, orthodox, reformed, conservative, reconstructive, neological - as well as about the way they were formed, their differences, number of adepts and ways in which one can join them.

The participants could thus rediscover the values of the Shabbat, that had become for many of us just like any other day, having lost the sense consecrated in the Torah as “Queen of the Week.” In a small chat between friends we tried to solve dilemmas as actual as in ancient times. And a walk in the snowy woods from Timișu de Sus made the participants understand with surprise that it is possible to escape the daily routine during the Shabbat.

During the program „Purim or the obligation to have fun”, Erwin Simsensohn used theatre techniques, dancing, games and... a little



organizers tried to make the 33 participants, at the first activity of this kind, watch their own soul in the mirror of sincerity, without borders or taboos. They tried to give a “recipe of feeling” – and this is only possible when there is feeling. As professor Bianca Știubea (she contributed even from Israel to making this pilot program) said during one of the activities, the organizers wanted to start from the way in which the historical evolution of the Romanian society, and implicitly, that of the local Jewish community, influenced the way in which we see Judaism today. Just like, from the psychological point of view, each human being looks for her/his own roots at childhood, from the sociological point of view, there is a logic of our actions and feelings today, as members of a diminished community. From the very first evening, the participants had the opportunity to participate in an “identity game.” It was not enough for them to learn about each other, and that is why the organizers invited the participants to “lend” their

Kupferberg, the “father” of this program, illustrated the way in which one of the largest Jewish communities from Europe was formed. At its apogee, this community numbered almost 800.000 people. It evolved in large periods of time; Sephardi and Ashkenazi, religious and enlightened, people who already adhered to the renewal of the Haskala; speakers of Ladino, Hebrew, Yiddish, German, Hungarian, Russian, Ukrainian or Czech, settled, little by little, in the Romanian Provinces.

Mrs. Sandra Segal, coordinator of the “Yosef Hirsh Pedagogical Center”, successfully presented a synthesis of the social and political life of the Jews from Romania in the period between the two world wars, and also came to the present moment, by using some touching testimonials about the suffering of the Jews from this part of the country during the war. Starting from the legislation that was discriminatory from the economical, social, cultural and educational point of view,



With the mysterious title “T”, the workshop that took part before the Shabbat tried to give a perspective on the personal way in which the human personality is built from childhood to the present. Surprisingly (though not for a psychologist!) the important experiences and moments were almost identical.

Beyond the lectures, the greatest wish of the participants was to talk, to share their dilemmas and the problems they have. At their demand, there was a

wine (which is compulsory when speaking, especially in the evening, about this holiday!). It is then that our souls, for this seminar was meant for the soul, and we hope that it will continue, laughed. We all laughed dearly, heartily, with a little sadness, or discreetly, and we all had the power to remember all the happy endings from the history of this people whose soul cried so many times.

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