

UNCHANGINGNESS IN CHANGE

The Changed Self-image of Budapest Jewish Groups in the Interwar Years as a Result of the Changed Borders in the Carpathian Basin¹

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Abstract: In Central Europe the social and cultural processes within various groups of Jews before the First World War were determined by the imperial frames. While the nation states that came into being set the general frames, the attitude of the Jews towards modernity as a process, their religious and cultural strategies extended beyond these frames. The new borders drawn after the First World War fundamentally changed the social and cultural environment in which the earlier Jewish strategies had emerged and functioned; and shaped their attitude towards Hungarian symbolic politics. After 1920 there was also a change in the proportions of the different Jewish trends in Hungary. The group strategies of the denominations and movements represented in the Hungarian-language Jewish press in Hungary interpreted Hungarian symbolic politics after the Trianon peace dictate in different ways and incorporated these interpretations in their discourses. The borders appeared not only in their physical state as an unbridgeable reality that had to be dealt with but also created new borders in the organisation of groups and society.

Keywords: borders, cultural memory, symbolic politics, Orthodoxy, Chasidism, Neology, Zionism, Hungary, Trianon peace treaty

“There are countries that are surrounded for miles by mountains and forests, so that one can only leave them through gates. Hungary is such a country.”

(Rashi commentary on the Babylonian Talmud Yoma 11a)

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