1930). Prague was no longer a center of Talmudic studies during the interwar period; rabbis from Czech lands had to study at rabbinical seminaries in Austria, Germany, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary. Only a small group of Orthodox Jews lived in Bohemia, many of them immigrants from Subcarpathian Rus’ and some from Galicia. In contrast to the situation in Germany, the Reform religious movement was not prominent. The majority of Bohemian Jews visited synagogues only on the High Holidays. Between 1912 and 1930, Hayim Heinrich Brody served as chief rabbi of Prague.

The Moravian population was more observant and—as a result of the existence of sizable Jewish communities in small towns that had administrative autonomy until the end of World War I—the Jewish religious as well as ethnic identity of Moravian Jews was more secure. In northern Moravia and in Silesia, many Polish Jews, who came during World War I and stayed there, strengthened the traditional character of the local Jewish communities.

In Slovakia, which formed part of Hungary until 1918, the Jewish community was formally divided into Neolog (Reform) and Orthodox communities, as well as those who followed neither movement, who were referred to as Status Quo. In 1928 the Neolog and Status Quo communities amalgamated to form the Yešurun federation. Whereas in the western parts of Slovakia the majority of Jews—including the Orthodox—had undergone considerable acculturation, in the eastern parts of Slovakia the Orthodox Jews still followed traditional patterns, with Hasidism exerting considerable influence. There were several yeshivas in Slovakia, including Bratislava, Galanta, Trnava, Huncovce, Šurany, Dunajská Streda, and Košice. Although the yeshiva of Bratislava, made famous by Hatam Sofer, went into decline during the interwar period, the city continued to be the major center of Orthodox practice in Slovakia, with a third Orthodox synagoge rising alongside the two others in 1924.

The region of Subcarpathian Rus’ had strong Hasidic communities. The overwhelming majority of local Jews spoke Yiddish and was faithful to the local Hasidic rebbes. Even during the interwar period, struggles between different Hasidic dynasties—Munkatsh, Spinka, Belz, Vizhnits, Kosov-Vizhnits, and Sandz—were common. The best-known yeshivas in Subcarpathian Rus’ were in Chust, Mukachevo, and Užhorod.

Regional variations in religious behavior can also be illustrated by examining the percentage of mixed marriages. Between 1928 and 1933, roughly 19 percent of marriages that involved a Jewish partner were intermarriages. In Bohemia the figure was 43.8 percent, in Moravia 30 percent, in Slovakia 9.2 percent, and in Subcarpathian Rus’ 1.3 percent.

National Identity

Varying patterns of acculturation and traditionalism in Czechoslovakia produced a wide spectrum of national identities within the Jewish population. Uniquely in the European context, Czechoslovak Jews could claim to be Jewish by nationality even if they lacked knowledge of a Jewish language or membership in the Jewish religious community. This status was guaranteed by the official interpretation of Article 128 of the Czechoslovak constitution of 1920.

Despite the accelerated adoption of the Czech language by the vast majority of Bohemian Jews during the interwar period, the organized Czech Jewish movement was in decline. Though nearly half of the Bohemian Jewish population registered their nationality as Czechoslovak in the 1921 census, the majority did not feel any need to belong to Czech Jewish organizations. By contrast, Zionists strengthened their positions; the number of members was growing and their political position was secure due to the establishment of the Jewish National Council and the Židovská Strana (Jewish Party). [See Zionism and Zionist Parties; Židovská Strana.]

In Moravia, more than 50 percent of the Jews (by religion) claimed to be Jewish by nationality. This identification was a consequence of the more traditional way of life and the specific demographic situation of Jews in that region. Most Moravian Jews were German-speaking; by registering their nationality as Jewish, they demonstrated their loyalty to the Czechoslovak state, which struggled with the problem of having a large German minority.

In Slovakia, too, the majority of Jews...