

## Summary

Thirty centuries ago, the ruler of a long forgotten empire put some thoughts down on paper. Even after nearly three millennia, his thoughts still provide spiritual support and teach the modern man wisdom. During the ages, an adjective describing a human quality was added to the king's name.

The (Midrash) has a story explaining this quality. When a young prince is born, Archangel Gavriel descends to the child to carry out the will of the G-d Almighty, Creator of the World, and asks him what he would choose, if the choice was offered: might and riches or wisdom. According to the legend, King Solomon, who later becomes a great ruler, chooses wisdom. The story ends by telling us that the All-creator awards him not only with wisdom, but also with might and riches, since he made an insightful and astute choice befitting a ruler.

The first citation in my essay is based on 'Wisdom of Solomon'. The summary is also quoted from the T'nach, the Holy Book.

"A time to be born, and a time to die;  
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak..."

Reading through the previous pages, one could review the historical ages of the Kecskemét Jewry, the system of their society, organisation, divisions, life – and their perishing.

In order to have a future, we need to be aware of the past. This striving has been a quality of the thinking man ever since the dawn of time.

During the past decades, the religious and cultural life of the Hungarian Jewry has become more and more concentrated in the capital, Budapest.

From the 1980s on, we can barely find a dozen bigger towns in the countryside with an active Jewish community.

In the 90s, after the political system change, religions enter an era of neo-renaissance, while provincial Judaism keeps stagnating and even disappears from many settlements in regions overall the country – in the Great Plains, North Hungary, West and East Hungary.

I have been in service of the community for over ten years now, and during this time, I have come to realise that all the way till 1944, Hungarian Jewish life meant provincial, rural communities. The heart and soul of Judaism had been mostly or even decisively outside of the capital. Provincial communities, called "Shtetl" had their own customs and traditions, which made Hungarian Jewish communities strong, colourful and versatile.

Breathing a new spiritual soul into the tired body of the provincial Jewry is an enormous task. Today, a Jewish community in the countryside counts no more than 50 to 80 people. Still, looking at the demographic data we can see that in a bigger provincial town – such as Kecskemét, which counts as many as 150,000 inhabitants with its suburbs, and about a thousand of them have ties to the Jewish traditions – there is a basis for long-term community building.

Decades are needed to get these people once again involved in everyday Jewish life. The work has already begun, but progress is slow, as everything has to be started anew; both secular and religious Jewish aspects of the community need to be re-organised. We need to find the new members of the congregation, just as they need to find their synagogue. The Hungarian Jewry cannot reach their past intellectual and spiritual heights without a complete renewal of provincial Judaism.

In the provincial towns where Hungarian Jewish culture was an important factor, there hasn't been anyone in the past more than sixty years to reach out to the others, to teach and shape future generations. But the wheels of time keep spinning: ages come and go, and our new dawn shows the way ahead of us with a bright new ray of light.

King Solomon wrote that everything had its own time. There is a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together. There is a time to keep silence, and a time to teach – a time to hear loud and clear words of wisdom both within the walls of the synagogue and outside of them.