

# Traces of Jewish life in Sighetu Marmatiei, Romania

## THE JEWISH CEMETERY OF SIGHETU MARMATIEI

*„May the mound be the witness...“*

The title comes from the biblical history of Patriarch Jacob, who raised memorial mounds in three situations: when he left home, when he returned home and when his beloved died.

*Tombstones sinking in the ground...*

*Tombstones with epitaphs worn out by the time...*

*Tombstones guarding through the years...*

*Graves marked by stones...*

*Graves with tombstones wrenched by profane hands,*

*destroyed or built in the anonymity of the house walls or the pavements.*

*Ruined and lonely cemeteries.*

According to the Talmud, the cemetery always has to be built outside the city, at a minimum distance of 30 meters from its outskirts. During the development of the towns, the cemeteries reached up to their centre.

Most often cemeteries like the one in Sighet are surrounded by high walls. At the entrance, we are welcomed by the mortuary, the place where the ritual of washing the dead is performed. In some mortuaries, the walls are decorated with an antique text called “Tsiduc Hadin” and the mortuary is called “The House of Tsiduc Hadin”, which means that the mournful, despite the suffering, accepts the Divine truth. The furniture of the mortuaries is very basic and is made of wood, stone, bone and tin.

The tombstones are usually simple (some of them have only writings or some Jewish motives carved on them), but the symbols are mostly recent. The second order forbids idols, which is the reason why in Jewish cemeteries we do not find statues, reliefs or inserted photographs.

One of the most distinct and interesting places is the rabbi’s tomb: he is buried in a separate place, with ornate inscriptions, which are more expressive than the others. The tomb has the shape of a tent or a tent-shaped roof.

As in many European Jewish cemeteries you can find monuments dedicated to all the people killed during the Holocaust, which are called “Monument of the Soap”. These are built on mass graves and usually hold pieces of RIF soap (which indeed stands for “Reichsstelle für Industrielle Fette” [Imperial Institute for Industrial Fats] but has since then often been believed to mean “Reines Juden Fett (Pure Jewish Fat) – seemingly declaring the soap to be made from the fat derived from burning the bodies of Jews killed in the concentration camps.

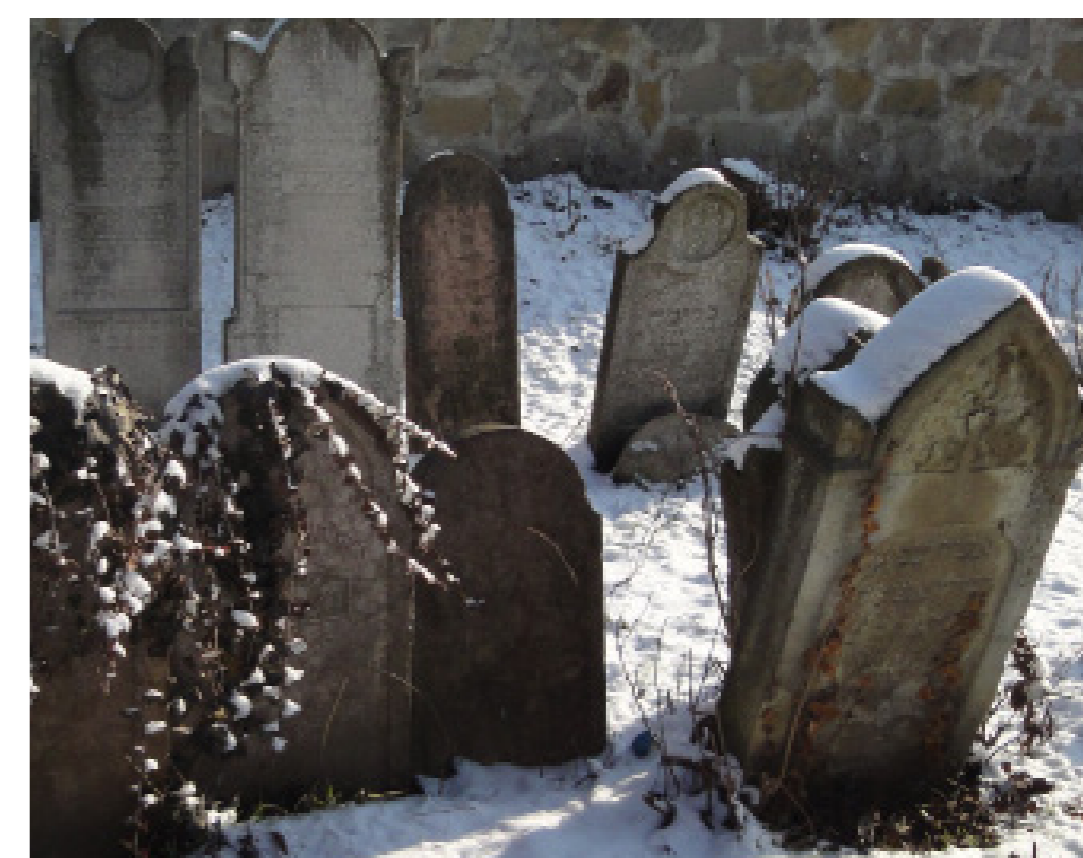
Nowadays some of the cemeteries are touristic attractions, while others remain peaceful and undisturbed by anyone, just as the Jewish law says. Rest in peace.



Tombstones sinking in the ground



Walls around the cemetery



The mortuary: the place where the ritual of washing the dead is being made.



Tomb of the rabbi



„Monument of the soap“



City hall, remembering to the Jewish people which lived in Sighetu Romania

On the right: picture of Elie Wiesel, his mother and his two sisters before leaving Sighetu Marmatiei to the death camp Auschwitz.

During the second world war the Jewish community lost most of his members. Only 2000 of 13000 Jewish survived. After ending of the second world war most of them emigrated, e.g. to the United states. Also Elie Wiesel, who received the nobel price for his work remembering the past and the responsibility that we have to ensure that such things do not happen again .

70 years after the deportation of the Jewish community to the death camps the Jewish community consist of 130 members. But the Jewish community has many contacts throughout the world. Many native Jews or their relatives come back for remembering the past times.



Elie Wiesel and his family