Remembering the Jewish Community of

Ujfeheto, Hungary

Remembered by Ron Czik and Aram Elovic

Ujfeherto (pronounced Ooyfeherto) is a village in the Szabolcs (pronounced Shabolch) district of Hungary, 122 miles east of Budapest. The name translates to "New White Lake". This village was established in 1608, and by 1782 there were 393 Jewish families living there. Most Jews had emigrated from Poland to avoid the pogroms.

In 1836, Ujfeherto grew to become a "mezovareosh" (pronounced mezovarosh) or "market town" based on its size. By 1886, it was reduced to a "ngykoseg" (pronounced nudgekoseg) or "large village". Today it is again a "market town" with a population of about 16,000.

Just prior to World War II, Ujfeherto had a population of 16,000. There were 2,500 Jews (about 400 families). There were two shuls, one of which was Chassidic. At the time, Chassidic Jews made up about 80% of the total Jewish population. They called the town by its Yiddish appellation, Ratsferd. It was the home of the famous Reb Hershele of Ratsferd. Some Jews were able to escape from Ujfeherto before the Nazi nightmare started. Among those was Alexander (Shalom) Czik, the father of our member, Ron Czik. Others were not so fortunate. The deportations started the night that Passover ended in April, 1944. First taken were professionals like doctors; but the others soon followed until all Jews had been removed from the town. They were taken by wagons to the nearby rail line, where they were transferred to cattle trains. Their final destination was Auschwitz.

Today, the grandson of Reb Hershele, Rabbi Kestenbaum (a Satmar Chassid living in Williamsburg, Brooklyn) is a frequent visitor to the town. There he prays at the grave of
his grandfather in the Jewish cemetery. Over the years, Rabbi Kestenbaum has raised money for the preservation of the cemetery. A set of monuments have been erected in the center of town with the names of all the Jews who died in the Holocaust.

Today there are no Jews in Ujfeherto.