

## MOMENTS FROM THE LIFE OF IULIU BARASCH (1815–1863): DOCTOR, PROFESSOR AND PROTECTOR OF HIS PEOPLE

TRENUCI IZ ŽIVOTA IULIUA BARASCHA (1815. – 1863.),  
LIJEČNIKA, PROFESORA I ZAŠTITNIKA SVOJIH LJUDI

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### SUMMARY

*In 1842, at a time when Romanian society was taking its first steps towards modernization, a Jewish man from Galicia chose to settle in Wallachia. This man was a physician with a medical degree in “medicine and surgery” obtained at the University of Berlin, spoke two widely spoken European languages (French and German), and was concerned with diverse areas of knowledge, such as philosophy, natural sciences, law, and more. As an ethnic Jew, he made a remarkable career in Wallachia. He was a physician in the country’s medical service, professor, hospital director, journalist, and philanthropist. He founded the first children’s hospital in the country and two influential newspapers. He campaigned for the political rights of Wallachian Jews and the modernization of the synagogue cult. He gave public conferences in the country and abroad and translated and wrote several books. The physician’s name was Iuliu Barasch, and this study tries to reconstruct his life and medical activity between 1842 and 1863 in Wallachia, a period marked by social unrest, revolution, war, and cholera epidemics, but also unionist actions, political and social reforms. For this reconstruction, I researched documentary material in archives, the press of the time, journals, memoirs, and specialized literature.*

**Keywords:** Iuliu Barasch, Wallachia, biography, diseases, children’s hospital, quarantine

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## INTRODUCTION: WHO WAS IULIU BARASCH? FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COLLEGE YEARS

Iuliu Barasch was born in 1815 in Brody, a town in Habsburg Galicia (present-day Ukraine). The name received at birth was not Iuliu, but Yehuda. His mother's name was Hana Landau, and she came from a Hasidic Jewish family in Poland, a family that produced several generations of prominent rabbis, businessmen, diplomats, and intellectuals (Schwarzfeld, 1919, p. 9). His father, Mordechai Barasch, was a well-known member of the Jewish bourgeoisie from Brody, whose profession as a bank clerk did not bring him enough income to support his family as he wished, so he was forced to reorient himself to the fur and exotic goods trade. The new job proved to be beneficial for the family, especially for the education of the two children, Eisic and Yehuda.

Yehuda was the youngest child of the Barasch family. Until he went to school, he had received a solid education at home from a teacher of Hebrew studies, a "famous scholar at the time, Mise Meir, who instructed only a small number of gifted students" (Schwarzfeld, 1919, p. 19). At an adequate age, little Yehuda was enrolled in the "Commercial Israelite School" in Brody (Barasch, 1894, p. 45). At school, Yehuda proved to be a diligent and promising student, so his parents began to make plans for his future. From Brody, he went to Tysmienice in Poland, then to Leipzig in Saxony, intending to thoroughly study the *Talmud* and *Torah* and become a rabbi, as his parents wished (Cernovodeanu, 1999, p. 128). In the schools of these two cities, he studied more than just holy books. In Tysmienice, he joined a group of intellectuals who followed the Haskalah (an Enlightenment-inspired movement of reformist Jews from the Habsburg Empire). In Leipzig, he discovered the works of the philosophers of classical antiquity and became passionate about German philosophy (Herşcovici, 1999, pp. 241–242). In 1839, he went from Leipzig to the University of Berlin to complete his studies in philosophy (Siupiu, 2019, p. 216). However, in addition to philosophy, the young Barasch was now attracted to the natural sciences. Not daring to tell his parents that he had changed his mind about the profession, he enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine at the same University, then wrote to Eisic, his older brother, to inform him: "You know, brother, that I chose medicine as a career long ago and this is where my mind is now exclusively directed, although - God willing - I will also take the doctoral exam in philosophy in the future, for I remain forever attached with my heart to philosophy and the social sciences, apart from the specialty of medicine" (Schwarzfeld, 1919, p. 23).

At the University of Berlin, most of the professors were renowned scholars (for example, Johann Lukas Schönlein (1793–1864), the professor who supervised his

doctoral thesis), so the student Barasch wondered if he would have the time and strength to accumulate the necessary knowledge in order to practice his chosen profession as well as possible (Buda, 2022, pp. 121–122; Izsak, 1956, p. 18). In the end, he passed all the exams, and in 1841, he defended his doctoral thesis with the title *Synopsis impetiginum seu Conspectus omnium morborum cutis chronicorum*. The thesis, which is a dermatology-related topic, was signed with his Latinized first name, Julius Barasch (Figure 1).

Barasch's decision to latinize his first name should be viewed from the historical context of his cultural and professional development. In the first half of the 19th century, it was still fashionable for the “late” humanists of Europe to latinize their names. Barasch's passion for medicine, natural science, and philosophy marked him as a genuine humanist. Also, the Latinization of the first name proves that he adhered to Haskalah from conviction and not just out of a desire to reject an outdated religious authority. His belief was that Jews must integrate into the land where they settled and culturally adapt to the new times. In this sense, after settling in Wallachia, Barasch advocated for the modernization of customs, language, fashion, and mentalities within the Jewish community. Nevertheless, he also supported the preservation of the specific identity, representative values, and traditions of the “Israelite confession” (that should be based on the religion of Yahweh, but also modernize some ritualic elements, i.e., the prayer should be done solemnly and be “accompanied by beautiful songs”) (Bihl, 2021, pp. 23–24; Herşcovici, 1999, p. 241).

With a medical degree in hand, Iuliu Barasch considered practicing medicine in the Netherlands—a liberal and prosperous country, separated from Belgium in 1830—but after a discussion with his family, he gave up the idea and headed for Jassy, the capital of Moldavia (Barasch, 1894, p. 107). In 1840, Moldova was ruled by Mihail Sturdza (1834–1849), who, in the context of the country's modernization process, was looking for new taxpayers to increase the country's budget and was pursuing a policy favorable to the settlement of foreigners in the Principality. Many Jews from Habsburg Galicia and Russia took advantage of this policy. In the first half of the 19th century, amidst wars and territorial changes in the Habsburg Empire and the Russian Empire, the Jewish population was in a difficult situation characterized by ethnic discrimination, excessive taxation, and religious intolerance. In search of a better life, many Jews chose to emigrate to the Romanian Principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia), settling in cities and ports where they could have liberal occupations (mainly in the craft sector and commerce). In this regard, the city of Jassy was significant as the number of Jews increased from 5,765 in 1820 to 30,460 in 1859. According to the calculations of historian Dan Dumitru

Iacob, Jews constituted approximately 46% of the population of Jassy in 1859 (Iacob, 2015, p. 115). In the cities of Wallachia, the number of Jews was much smaller. Roughly 3,600 Jews were registered in Bucharest, representing 2.9% of the capital's total population in 1860 (Rotman, 2015, p. 39). Among the Jews who preferred to emigrate to the Romanian Principalities were many physicians who were attracted by the large offer of jobs in the country's health system and also in the private sector (Livadă-Cadeschi, 2013, pp. 86–91; Trăușan-Matu, 2022, p. 360).

Iuliu Barasch hoped for a medical career and a dignified life in Moldavia, but was unfortunate (Schwarzfeld, 1919, p. 29, pp. 333–334). In the fall of 1841, after a failed attempt to obtain the certificate of free practice in Jassy<sup>1</sup>, he arrived in Bucharest, the capital of the Wallachia. At this time, Wallachia (similarly to Moldova) had a complicated legal status. It was under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire and the protectorate of the Russian Empire. This situation was imposed on the two countries by the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829, which ended the Russo-Ottoman War (1828–1829) and considerably strengthened Russian influence in the Balkans to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire. Between 1829 and 1834, the Romanian Principalities were occupied militarily by Russia and ruled by its representative, the Russian general Pavel Kiseleff (1788–1872). Under the supervision of Governor Kiseleff, the first concrete measures to modernize the principalities were taken, including the introduction of the Organic Regulations (*Regulamentele Organice*, 1831–1832), the first constitutions for the two countries, and the implementation of a quarantine system on the Danube, as a barrier against the coming plague and cholera epidemics from Asia. Kiseleff's rule ended in 1834, but Russia, with the agreement of the Ottoman Empire, appointed trusted persons as rulers: Alexandru Dimitrie Ghica (1834–1842) in Wallachia and Mihail Sturdza on the throne of Moldavia. By these means, Russia retained control in the Principalities until 1853, when the Crimean War outbreak (1853–1856) ended Russian influence in the Principalities. Defeated in the war, Russia lost the status of protector over the Principalities, which passed under the collective guarantee of the Great European Powers. The Paris Peace Treaty (1856) enshrined the new status of the two countries and opened the way for their union (1859) and the creation of Romania (Ardeleanu, 2008, p. 57; Boia, 2007, pp. 74–75).

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<sup>1</sup> In Moldavia, the right to free practice was obtained following a competition organized by the Health Commission. However, sometimes, for different reasons (personal or professional), the examining committee made rejection decisions, even if the candidate had prepared honorably for the exam. In 1846, English physician John Mason was in a similar situation to Barasch when he took the exam for a license to practice medicine in Jassy, in Moldavia (Mason, 1860, pp. 12–14).

Doctor Barasch arrived in Bucharest in the midst of the country's modernization process when there was a great demand for specialists in the medical field. As soon as he appeared before the Health Commission for the verification of his doctorate diploma, he obtained the right to free practice (*Buletin Oficial al Prințipatului Țării Românești* 58/1851, p. 229; Gyémánt & Benjamin, 1999, p. 260). The joy of success was immeasurable. It was the beginning of a new life in a new country for him. He just had to bring his whole family. At the time he arrived in Wallachia, Iuliu Barasch was married to Leia Gritz, the daughter of a merchant from Tysmienice. The marriage took place in 1832. At that time, Iuliu was seventeen years old, and Leia was twenty-two. Leia Barasch came to Wallachia in 1843, after Iuliu Barasch established himself in Călărași, but she could not integrate into Wallachian society (Schwarzfeld, 1919, p. 19). After a while, they decided to separate. Their child, Friedrich, studied law at the University of Vienna, where he also settled and practiced law (Schwarzfeld, 1919, p. 333).

Free again, Iuliu Barasch married Sophia Landau in 1855 in Budapest. This time, he had better luck. Sophia came from a family of rabbis and influential businessmen (Petrescu, 2022, p. 196)<sup>2</sup> from Pest and was a gentle, modest, and jovial woman. She remained by Barasch's side until the end, and after his death, left alone and unable to manage the pension given by the Romanian state, she went to her relatives in Vienna (Schwarzfeld, 1919, p. 19). Three children were born from the marriage with Sophia: Oscar, Marcel, and Melania. Against expectations, none were attracted to medicine. Oscar (the eldest son) became an engineer, and Marcel dealt with commerce. They both chose to live in Paris. Melania married a lawyer and settled in Vienna (Schwarzfeld, 1919, pp. 333–336).

Before entering the state medical service, Iuliu Barasch practiced for two years as an "ophthalmologist" and generalist in Bucharest. In 1843, he was offered the position of "quarantine physician" in Călărași (*Almanah al Statului*, 1844, p. 60; Trăușan-Matu & Buda, 2022, p. 27). Back then, being a quarantine physician was very dangerous as plague and cholera were very contagious diseases for which no cure existed at the time. Barasch immediately accepted the job and left Bucharest. He saw the appointment decision as a social promotion and hurried to inform his family (Schwarzfeld, 1919, p. 23).

Iuliu Barasch remained in Călărași for three years, from 1843 to 1845. During this time, although contagious diseases managed to bypass the barriers placed in

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<sup>2</sup> Sophia's brother, Horace Landau (1824–1903), was a banker and, temporarily, the representative of the Viennese Rothschild Bank in Constantinople, Turkey (See Petrescu, 2022, p. 199).

their way, he managed to prevent the spread of plague and cholera epidemics from the south of the Danube through the use of quarantine. He spoke little of this success. In a letter sent for publication to the Viennese journal “Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift”, he just briefly mentioned that “when the plague was haunting beyond the fortress of Silistra, located on the right bank of the Danube”, the city of Călărași (located on the left side) “remained untouched all the time” (Barasch, 2023, p. 274; Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift, 26/1854, p. 412). After that, his reputation as a physician grew and spread throughout the “Ialomița County” so that in April 1845, the governors of Wallachia promoted him to the position of “county physician”, entrusting him with the medical administration of Dolj County (Buletin Gazetă Oficială a Prințipatului Țării Românești, 42/1845, p. 167).

#### FROM CĂLĂRAȘI TO CRAIOVA. IULIU BARASCH, DOCTOR OF THE DOLJ COUNTY

Taking charge of the Dolj county’s state of health, Barasch established his office in Craiova and, with the enthusiasm specific to the age of thirty, began his work. Responsibilities were on par with the position and involved: “monitoring the health of the inhabitants and cattle”, managing epidemics and epizootics, speeding up the process of vaccination against smallpox, medicalizing venereal disease cases, providing “medical-forensic and sanitary police” services, and implementing the orders of the Quarantine Committee. For these services, he received a salary of “5,000 lei per year” (Almanah al Statului, 1850, p. 79), approximately half the salary that quarantine inspector Nicolae Mavros received annually (Petrescu, 2020, pp. 139–165)<sup>3</sup>.

Barasch had to provide such a long and diverse list of medical services due to an acute shortage of doctors and qualified medical personnel in Wallachia. The first Faculty of Medicine in Romania was established in 1869, in Bucharest. Until the society could benefit from the services of physicians trained at the Romanian faculty, it had to rely on the services of foreign doctors. To attract them to Wallachia, the governors offered generous salaries and privileges. In the middle of the 19th century, according to a list of physicians published by the government official publication, there were 78 physicians and two veterinarians working in Wallachia’s medical service (Buletin Oficial al Prințipatului Țării Românești, 58/1851, p. 229). They had to supervise a population of 2.5 million inhabitants and their animals. Although these figures should be taken more as orders of magnitude than precise

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<sup>3</sup> Nicolae Mavros (1786–1868) was the General Inspector of the Danube quarantines of Moldavia and Wallachia from 1830 to 1854, when the office was abolished.

data, I estimate that in 1851, a physician in Wallachia was responsible for an average of about 32,000 patients. The list reveals something further: with a few notable exceptions (Ștefan Piscușescu, Nicolae Kretzușescu, Gheorghe Polizu, Ștefan Capșa, etc.), the doctors were foreigners, including some Jews: Ignaz Mayer, Constantin Laibu, Morit Slehter, Solomon Steger, Benedict Stainer, Morit Werthaimer, Iacob Felix, and others (*Buletin Oficial al Prințipatului Țării Românești*, 58/1851, p. 229). The last one on the list, Dr. Iacob Felix (1832–1905), had a successful career in Wallachia; he was a professor of hygiene at the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest (1869–1902) and director of the Public Health Service between 1892 and 1899 (Brătescu, 2004, pp. 160–161).

In the middle of the 19th century, the people of Wallachia suffered from many diseases that we still have today, and Barasch had to find solutions to treat or alleviate them. It often happened that people suffered from several diseases at the same time<sup>4</sup>, and the chance that the diagnosis would be correct was quite small, a fact that displeased him. Even the treatments did not help him much. Around 1850, the syringe for skin injections had just been invented. Aside from the smallpox vaccine, quinine (used to treat malaria), citrus fruits (recommended to treat scurvy), digitalis (a strong cardiac tonic, used in case of dropsy), laudanum (valued for its pain-relieving and calming properties, but also for stimulating creativity), and mercury (used to treat syphilis), there were no effective drugs or antibiotics, and no one could observe what was happening inside a living body affected by disease. As a rule, when someone got ill, Barasch would draw a little blood with a leech or lancet, recommend an appropriate change in diet, cupping, enemas, or refreshing baths, prescribe a remedy, which patients could prepare themselves, and if the treatment was more complicated, he could call on the services of a chemist (Barasch, 2023, pp. 283–287). In case of a surgical problem, the physician would treat wounds, lacerations, ulcerations, burns, and simple fractures. He could also straighten a sprain, treat a dislocated ankle under chloroform anesthesia, sew up a wound, or excise an infected area (Trăușan-Matu, 2011, pp. 269–282).

When he wanted to move his mind away from illness and suffering, Iuliu Barasch took refuge in reading and writing. After returning from the patients, evening after evening, he sat at the writing table and read and annotated papers on various subjects. While reading, Barasch got the idea to write a natural science book in Romanian. He had no pretense to make an original contribution to specialized

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<sup>4</sup> In addition to epidemics of plague, cholera, and smallpox, the most widespread diseases that Barasch encountered in Wallachia were: syphilis, malaria, scarlet fever, dysentery, measles, mumps, tuberculosis, croup, and exanthematic typhus (eruptive fever), angina pectoris, hemorrhoids, and different sickness of the stomach.

knowledge. He simply wanted to share the wonderful world of science with interested people and, thus, combat ignorance and prejudice. The project became a reality in 1850, when his work, *Minunile naturii* (The Wonders of Nature), was published. The book reveals the author's encyclopedic interests. It illustrates how a scientist (physician, in this case) can contribute to a discipline by taking ideas and knowledge from fields adjacent to his profession (physics, chemistry, botany, astronomy, etc.) and adapting them to his own field of expertise (Barasch, 1850).

As a reward for his hard work, *The Wonders of Nature* helped Barasch assert himself as a writer who addressed issues beyond his field of specialization. I suppose this book played a significant role in reigning Prince Barbu Știrbei's (1849–1856) decision on 4 June 1851 to appoint Iuliu Barasch as a professor of natural history at the St. Sava College in Bucharest (Barasch, 1850, p. 1). He was also recommended for this appointment due to his doctorate from Berlin, good command of two widely spoken European languages (German and French, in addition to Hebrew, Latin, and Slavic), and his solid scientific and literary background. However, it must be emphasized that these titles and abilities would not have mattered if the laws of the country had been against him. From this point of view, Doctor Barasch was lucky as he practiced at a time when Wallachia's legislation did not specify any incompatibility between foreign citizenship or ethnicity and serving as a teacher or physician in the state health service (Iancu, 2006, p. 57).

### BACK TO BUCHAREST. THE BEST YEARS OF LIFE

In the summer of 1851, after being assigned as a professor of natural history at the St. Sava College, Barasch returned to Bucharest. He charmed his students through the quality of his lectures and his dignified, teacherly demeanor. He enjoyed the company of young people, and he tirelessly reminded them that science is not limited to information gathering and debates, but must also aim at developing applications. Through his conscientious way of teaching, his reputation grew and requests for professorships multiplied. Doctor Barasch taught botany at the Agricultural School (1857), forest botany at the Forestry School (1857), natural sciences at the Military School (1859), and held two courses at the National Medical School (1856): one on natural history and another on comparative physiology (*Monitorul Medical al României*, 10/1862, p. 75). Lastly, he taught “German, Hebrew, and Yiddish” at the Israelite School (Cernovodeanu, 1999, p. 135).

The teacher occupation was honorable and enjoyable, leaving plenty of time for other pursuits, such as scientific research and writing. As Barasch loved to research and annotate, the works accumulated. In addition to *The Wonders of Nature*,



Barasch is the author of numerous other works, including three school textbooks (two being his own contributions<sup>5</sup> and one being a translation<sup>6</sup>), a philosophical encyclopedia<sup>7</sup>, a “folk hygiene” course<sup>8</sup>, a travel diary<sup>9</sup>, a study on the types of European philanthropic establishments<sup>10</sup>, another one on the medical situation in Wallachia<sup>11</sup>, and two brochures meant to popularize medical practices.<sup>12</sup> Finally, his interests also included dramaturgy, being the translator of a play authored by S. Mosenthal (1858).

Although reconciled with his work as a teacher, the young physician did not give up the dream that one day he would be able to practice medicine again in the country’s health service. After four years of waiting, on 12 July 1855, Iuliu Barasch was hired as a physician at the “blue district” of Bucharest (Buletinul Oficial al Țării Românești, 56/1855, p. 22).<sup>13</sup> It was a dream come true. Thus, in addition to teaching and writing, he had to reserve time for medical practice, which was no easy task. The job involved providing daily healthcare services at the medical office of the district: vaccinating children and adults, giving free consultations, and writing prescriptions. The medical office work had to be supplemented with fieldwork. At least once a week, the physician had to survey the markets and streets of his district for types of products that “could harm the health of the community, such as meat, bread, fish, fruits, and others”, as well as disease generating centers, “as were the streets”, garbage pits, and puddles “with stagnant water” (Vîrtosu & Oprescu, 1936, pp. 45–46). For the services he provided, the physician received “eight hundred lei per month” (Buletinul Oficial al Țării Românești, 16/1853, pp. 61–62).

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<sup>5</sup> Barasch, I. (1861–1862). *Manualul de Botanică Silvică, în uzul elevilor de la Școala de Silvicultură*. 2 Vol. Bucharest: Tipografia Statului Nipon; Cursul elementar de istorie naturală, pentru uzul claselor superioare gimnaziale în România. 3 Vol. Bucharest: Tipografia Statului.

<sup>6</sup> Beleze, G. (1854 & 1855). *Istoria naturală. Potrivită pe înțelegerea copiilor cu întrebări și cu figure*. Translation from French by Iuliu Barasch. Bucharest: Tipografia Colegiului Național.

<sup>7</sup> Barasch, I. (1856). *Liber thesaurus scientiarum in lingua hebraica, continens fundamenta omnium scientiarum*. Wien: J. Holzvarth.

<sup>8</sup> Barasch, I. (1857). *Cursul de igienă populară, dat în lecțiuni publice de duminică în anii 1854 și 1855 în Colegiul Național*. Bucharest: Tipografia Colegiului Sf. Sava.

<sup>9</sup> Barasch, I. (1894). *Itinerar în Cracovia, Galiția, Bucovina, Moldova și Muntenia în 1841–1842* [Wanderung durch das Krakau’sche, Galizien, Bukowina, Moldau und Wallachei]. Translation by German by Elias Schwarzfeld. Bucharest: Redacția ziarului “Egalitatea”.

<sup>10</sup> Barasch, I. (1853). *Despre unele din institutele filantropice în Europa*. Bucharest: Tipografia Colegiului Național.

<sup>11</sup> Barasch, I. Beitrag zur Kenntnis der medizin-endemischen Verhältnisse der Walachei. *Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift*, 26/1854, 412–414. The paper would appear in several issues of the magazine between 1854 and 1855.

<sup>12</sup> Barasch, I. (1854). *Despre asfixie sau leșin la oameni*. Bucharest.

<sup>13</sup> In Bucharest, the districts were designated by colors, not numbers.

Also, as a district physician, Barasch was part of the Medical Council of Wallachia and had to oversee (together with colleagues from the five districts of Bucharest) the country's medical service (*Almanahul statului*, 1858, p. 60). Until the health reform of 1874, the Medical Council was the institution that granted the right of free practice and controlled the market of medical services. This meant that no physician had the right to write a prescription, and no chemist could prepare medicines without a certificate of free practice from the Council.

While being a district physician (first in the blue district, then in the black district), Iuliu Barasch started visiting the workshops of artisans and craftsmen and had the idea to record his observations on the living and working conditions of the workers. He soon began to make connections between occupations and diseases. This is how he came to the conclusion that occupations influence the development of various diseases. He noted, for example, that “dyers, gardeners, and brewers suffer from rheumatism and arthritis,” that “furriers are subject to tuberculosis,” and “children who work in factories are thin, pale, scrofulous, and do not live long” (Barasch, 1850, pp. 150–153). Based on these observations, he held public conferences, drawing attention to the effects of working environments on health.

Another important contribution to the health of children came from Barasch, who was very sensitive to their sufferings. In 1858, in order to ease their pain, he established the first children's hospital in Wallachia, in Bucharest, at his house on Dudești Street, located in “Stone Cross District, 42” (Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale [hereafter ANIC], Fond Ministerul de Interne. Direcția Sanitară, dosar 577/1857, f. 3-5; Roman, 2019, pp. 139–140). He designed it as a charitable medical institution for “sick and poor children”, with a capacity of “up to 40 beds”, with rooms for mothers and nurseries separated from those of children and with a consulting room, where “generous physicians of the Capital” were going to give “free prescriptions and remedies to sick children” (ANIC, Fond Ministerul de Interne. Direcția Sanitară, dosar 577/1857, f. 4–6). Families with financial means from Wallachia could also call on the services of physicians at the hospital, but for a fee. The success of the children's hospital inspired Barasch to pursue other philanthropic projects. He had the idea of founding a nursery for workers' children who were forced to stay away from their homes and an asylum for the mentally sick (Barasch, 1853, pp. 9–10). He succeeded only with the hospital; the other two projects could have become a reality if he had lived longer.

Usually, success arouses envy, and Iuliu Barasch is a good example of this phenomenon. Several physicians who did not take kindly to Barasch's position and performance attacked him with accusations and complaints. A complaint that led

to his dismissal was signed by the French-born doctor Robert Macaire and was submitted to the Medical Council towards the end of 1858. The signer complained that Barasch held several posts in the service of the state and did not have enough time to do a good commissioner job (*Buletin Oficial al Țării Românești*, 4/1859, p. 41). On 12 January 1859, the members of the Medical Council voted to remove Barasch from the position of “black district commission physician” (*Fraternitatea*, 20/1883, p. 158).

### IULIU BARASCH, NEWSPAPER FOUNDER AND ACTIVIST FOR THE RIGHTS OF JEWS IN WALLACHIA

Since his student years, Iuliu Barasch was attracted to journalism and published texts in “*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*” and “*Jahrbuch für Israeliten*”, where under the pseudonym Raphael Sincerus, he authored texts about the life and culture of Jews in the Balkans (Cernovodeanu, 1999, p. 128). After settling in Bucharest, he regularly published articles in journals like “*Buletinul Oficial*” (The Official Bulletin), “*Revista Carpaților*” (The Carpathian Magazine), “*Românul*” (The Romanian), “*Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift*” etc. His articles in the Romanian press had a wide range of subjects. They referred to topics such as agricultural crops and current animal diseases (*Buletinul Oficial* [al Țării Românești], 27/1854, p. 107), the history of epidemics, hygiene, occupational diseases, and Romanian and European legislation. Without going into further details, I should also mention that most of the texts instructed peasants on how to raise their animals healthily or do modern agriculture. Lastly, he also wrote texts encouraging self-medication with homemade remedies (Barasch, 2023, p. 130).

However, Iuliu Barasch aspired to have his own magazine with a scientific orientation and professional collaborators. The project was not strictly within everyone’s reach. Founding and managing a newspaper requires a large-scale operation and a unique talent different from that of an ordinary journalist. Nevertheless, Iuliu Barasch succeeded twice. The first journal, “*Isis sau Natura*” (Isis or Nature), was founded in 1856 in Bucharest (Figure 3). A journal named “*Isis*” existed in the German space since 1817, started in Jena by the naturalist Lorenz Oken (1779–1851), and it is very likely that the profile of this journal was the source of inspiration for Barasch’s project (Brătescu, 1964, p. 130; Koszor-Codrea, 2022, pp. 47–51; Popescu, 2022, p. 318). *Isis or Nature* was the first magazine in Wallachia dedicated exclusively to the popularization of natural science. On its pages, one can find articles about the latest discoveries or theories related to the field of natural sciences. For example, Iuliu Barasch was the first to write in Wallachia about Darwin and Darwinism, about the theory of natural selection or about the

concept of “nature” (Isis sau Natura. Jurnalul pentru răspândirea științelor naturale și exacte în toate clasele 3/1862, p. 20; Popescu, 2022, pp. 293).

Shortly after its publication, “Isis or Nature” became a popular, respected, and influential newspaper. The journal circulated through Romanian urban schools, being offered to students for free or as a prize. In January 1861, five years after its publication, the newspaper changed its name to “Natura” (The Nature). In 1866, three years after Barasch’s death, the journal disappeared from the Romanian press.

Barasch’s second publishing project took shape in 1857 and was named “Israelitul Român” (The Romanian Israelite). In addition to Doctor Barasch, Isaac Leib Weinberg, Aaron Ascher, and Armand Lévy also contributed to the paper. All of them were known as prominent representatives of the Haskalah and campaigned for the political rights of the Jews from Wallachia and Moldavia. The newspaper, launched as a reaction to the Paris Peace Treaty (1856) and in the context of the rising national unity movement of the Romanians, was the vanguard of the Jewish community in its effort to promote “tolerance and equality before the law, without distinction of religion” (Israelitul Român, 1/1857, p. 1; Trăușan-Matu, 2019–2020, pp. 169–170).

In 1857, although enjoying some civil rights, the Jews of Wallachia faced a ban on acquiring real estate in the countryside and difficulty in acquiring naturalization. Article 379 of the Organic Regulation emphasized that citizenship can be acquired by “any foreigner, of any Christian rank” (Negulescu and Alexianu, 1944, p. 131). In the article titled “On electoral rights” from the newspaper “Israelitul Român”, Barasch pleaded for the correction of this situation using the following argument: “Every human being has natural rights, the most important of which are freedom and the right to possession” (Israelitul Român 6/1857, pp. 1–2). In the end, although some legislative initiatives attempted to favorably regulate the Jewish situation between 1866 and 1878, in the context of the affirmation of Romania’s independence, some new legislation appeared that encouraged anti-Semitism. Despite this, the Israeli community did not abandon the cause; it continued to demand its rights firmly and with dignity (Petrescu, 2022, pp. 193–194). The fulfillment of these demands for full civil and political emancipation would only be brought about by the Constitution of 1923 (Ciupală, 2009, p. 127). As for the exercise of their profession, we can say that in the middle of the 19th century, the Jewish doctors in Wallachia had an honorable position and could make a career in the service of the state or the private sector, whether they converted to Christianity or refused to do so (Bărbulescu, 2018, p. 294).

However, “Israelitul Român” was not only a Jewish socio-political newspaper, but discussed everything, including educational, moral, legal, and factual issues. It started as a bilingual weekly publication (Romanian and French) and had hopes of both domestic and international circulation and audience. Unfortunately, after 23 issues, the finances thinned out, and on 20 September 1857, the 24<sup>th</sup> and last issue of the newspaper appeared.

### CONCLUSION: BARASCH'S LAST THREE YEARS

A photograph from the period depicts Iuliu Barasch as a gentleman with an elongated figure, having an intense and piercing gaze, who inspires intelligence and kindness (Figure 1). He looks tall, handsome, and distinguished, with his hair combed to one side, a thick mustache, and a short, neatly trimmed beard. He is dressed in the fashion of the time, with a frock coat, stiff collar, and bow tie. The physician seemed satisfied; he was respected, valued, and invited everywhere. Contemporary sources mention him as being present in numerous places. He participated in the banquets given in honor of 24 January 1859 (the day when Romania was created)<sup>14</sup>, attended the Romanian Science Society, and was interested in painting, theater, and literature. He was kind not only to friends in need, but also to young scholars, giving them advice and promoting them in their careers. He also spent a lot of time collecting specimens related to natural history and man-made objects, which he exhibited in the “Cabinet of Curiosities” at the St. Sava College in Bucharest (Urechia, 1894, pp. 116–117). At some point, the extremely hectic life, the busy schedule, and the suffering caused by malaria weakened his body. Iuliu Barasch died on 31 March 1863 at the age of 48. He was buried in the Jewish Cemetery, located in Sevastopol Street, Bucharest (Figure 4).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Romania was founded in 1859 through the union of Wallachia and Moldavia. The unification process continued in 1878 with the addition of Dobrogea and culminated in 1918, when the Romanian state was completed by the addition of three historical provinces: Transylvania, Bucovina, and Bessarabia.

<sup>15</sup> In 1942, the decision was made to demolish the Jewish Cemetery on Sevastopol Street. This is how Iuliu Barasch's grave is now located in the “Filantropia” Cemetery in Bucharest.

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## SAŽETAK

Godine 1842., u vrijeme kada je rumunjsko društvo poduzimalo prve korake prema modernizaciji, jedan Židov iz Galicije odlučio se nastaniti u Vlaškoj. Taj je čovjek bio liječnik s medicinskom diplomom iz „medicine i kirurgije“ Sveučilišta u Berlinu. Govorio je dva široko rasprostranjena europska jezika (francuski i njemački) i bavio se različitim područjima znanja (filozofija, prirodne znanosti, pravo i drugo). Kao etnički Židov ostvario je zavidnu karijeru u Vlaškoj. Bio je liječnik u medicinskoj službi zemlje, profesor, ravnatelj bolnice, novinar i filantrop. Osnovao je prvu dječju bolnicu u zemlji i pokrenuo dvoje utjecajne novine. Zalagao se za politička prava vlaških Židova i modernizaciju kulta sinagoge. Održao je javne skupove u zemlji i inozemstvu i preveo i napisao nekoliko knjiga. Liječnikovo ime je Iuliu Barasch, a ovo istraživanje pokušava rekonstruirati njegov život i medicinsku djelatnost u Vlaškoj između 1842. i 1863. godine. To je razdoblje popraćeno društvenim nemirima, revolucijom, ratom i epidemijama kolere, ali jednako tako i unionističkim djelovanjem te političkim i društvenim reformama. Za ovu rekonstrukciju pretraživani su arhivski dokumenti, tisak toga vremena, dnevnici, memoari i stručna literatura.

**Ključne riječi:** Iuliu Barasch, Vlaška, biografija, bolesti, dječja bolnica, karantena