

Sara And Abraham Mandel



These are my maternal grandparents, Avram and Sara Mandel. The photo was taken in the 1930s in Aghiresu.

My grandfather was a learned man too: he had studied a lot, mostly religion, but he was also cultivated. He was a very active and modern person, although Nadasu was a small village and there were only three Jewish families living there.

Back in those days, there were many Jewish beggars who came and went. Most of them were from Maramures, a region where Jews were very religious. Of course, they got to our village too, for being a beggar makes you resourceful and gets you anywhere. My grandfather was very religious and it's worth mentioning that he would keep those beggars for weeks, providing them with food and shelter. This way, he could have a religious service, as, with Jews, you need at least ten men in order to hold such a service. This was done in the house - there was no temple, since the Jews were so few in the village, so they couldn't afford a temple, and there were not enough people for it.

My grandfather had enough room for those beggars, whom he offered shelter, food, plus money. He could afford it. He kept all the necessary objects of cult in his house. He had prayer books. With Jews, it's much easier than with Christians. With Jews, a room and two candles, or even a single one, are all that's required in order to recite the prayers. Of course, there are specific prayers, like in the Christian faith: the morning prayer, the afternoon prayer, the evening prayer, the prayer for the holidays, the Friday evening prayer, the Sabbath prayer.

My grandfather was a hard-working, energetic and intelligent man. He had no tolerance for what he found inappropriate. We, the grandchildren, had to obey him. We had a lot of respect for him. He didn't allow us to do what wasn't right. Beside that, he had his principles, and we generally borrowed these principles: honor, honesty and especially respect for the elderly.

My grandmother, Sara Mandel, had been born somewhere in the vicinity of Bistrita - Lechinta, if I remember correctly. My grandfather was her second husband. All I know about her first was that he drowned trying to save somebody when the River Nadas flooded the village. It was after this incident that my grandmother married my grandfather. In fact, the estate had been inherited from the first husband.

Grandmother was an extraordinary woman; she was kind and intelligent. As she came from a region inhabited by Transylvanian Germans, she had learned their language. Not only could she speak German, but she could also read and write, which constituted a very rare thing back in those days. As for my grandfather, he spoke his native tongue, Yiddish, and also Romanian, Hungarian and German. I owe most of my foreign language skills to them.