

## Funeral Of Rabbi Chaim Eleazar Spira



This is a picture from the funeral of rabbi Chaim Spira. The photo was taken in Mukachevo in 1937. Mukachevo was a Jewish town. It was even called 'little Jerusalem' and it was a center of Hasidism. There was a yeshivah, a Jewish higher educational institution, in Mukachevo. The chief rabbi at the yeshivah was the popular Hasidic rabbi Chaim Spira [Shapira]. Rabbi Chaim Spira died in 1937. Hasidim from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Poland came to his funeral. My father took me to his funeral although my mother protested. She was afraid that I might be treaded down by the crowd. I can remember very clearly the funeral of Spira. The whole town was in mourning. There were black cloths on the houses and people wore dark clothes. It looked as though it got dark all of a sudden. Non-Jewish residents also came to the funeral. There were police patrols in the streets and policemen were wearing special safety hats in case of trouble. People took turns to carry the casket from the house where Rabbi Spira lived, across the town and out of town to the Jewish cemetery. Every five to ten meters the casket was handed over to another group of men. There were so many of those that were willing to carry it that the casket could have been easily handed over all the distance between Mukachevo and Uzhgorod. Men were carrying it on their shoulders to pay honor to Rabbi Spira. People were crying. However young I was I remember this overwhelming grief. So many people came to the cemetery that there wasn't an inch of space left there.