

Rifca Segal



This is me, Rifca Segal, in a picture that was taken in 2003, I believe. The Jewish Community in Botosani requested this picture for their records, as I am one of their assisted. The fact that I worked for 10 years with the children in the Talmud Torah classes gives me the right to an occasional package of food supplies and medicines. They needed a photograph for their records in Bucharest. I don't like this picture; it makes me look so old and ugly... But I gave it as it came out. Those who don't like it shouldn't look at it!

From 1991 until 2001 I taught Hebrew and talmud torah classes for children at the Community. There was a man named Stechelberg who taught there before me, he left to Israel, I knew Ivrit,

there was nobody else, and they asked me to do it. I was no teacher, but I liked it. They sent me punctuation books from Israel – for you must teach children the punctuation at first. There were 18 pupils in the beginning, then there were 12, 10, 9, 8, and in the end there were 4 of them left. I don't teach anymore, for there is no one to teach to, there are 2-3 children.

What traditions do I still observe now? For instance, I don't sew, wash or perform any kind of work on the Sabbath, I don't clip my fingernails. You aren't allowed to bathe, either, but I do, I don't observe that part. And I don't do these things on all other holidays. Even if the washing machine washes, I don't. As for ironing clothes, I don't do it during the rest of the year, either, I got used to the way they do it in Israel: they don't iron clothes. If you really want to observe tradition to the letter, you aren't even allowed to write. For instance, you aren't allowed to eat salami or poultry that wasn't sacrificed by the hakham. But what can you do? I eat them, on holidays as well.

I don't go to the synagogue on Yom Kippur. I'm not an atheist. I'm not a religious person, either, but I fast on Yom Kippur and on this day. It's the least I can do. I observe the fast fully, I don't even drink water, I only take my medicine without any water.

Ever since I started teaching children, so after 1991, I have been going to the synagogue on Simchat Torah, and I was going there with the children. For there was a choir, and a choir conductor as well, and they sang in the choir. But now they no longer sing at the synagogue here in Botosani – the people are old. On Pesach: that's the only time when I go to the community's canteen.

I never lit candles on Friday evening, even if I had candlesticks. You have to light candles after you get married, not before that. And I regret that very much, I regret it profoundly, I regret I didn't light candles as long as my husband was alive – I have no interest in the period that came after that. I observe very strictly the cult of the dead. I go to the cemetery very often.

I can say that I lead a good life. I can't complain about anybody. I complain about the fact that perhaps I should have had a higher retirement pension. But other than that... As long as I have my good health. One of my hips aches, my legs hurt... I avoid standing up when I am in society and someone can see me – I stand up with great difficulty. But when I walk, I walk. But I am young at heart.