

Solomon Meir

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Botosani

Romania

Interviewer: Major Eموke

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Mr. Solomon Meir is a short person, calm and cheerful by nature, who likes to make jokes. He was never married, and has been living alone since 2003, after the death of his sister. He is active among the Jewish Community in Botosani, which he attends every day, and he waits for any petty assignment – such as gluing postal stamps, going to the post office, etc. – outside his official office of gabbai. He has extended knowledge about the mosaic religion acquired during his childhood, which is why he performs the religious service at the synagogue in Botosani on Friday evenings, Saturdays, and on holidays.



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My family background

I only met one of my great-grandparents, the great-grandfather from my father's side – my father's grandfather –, his name was **Smil Meir**. He lived in Bucecea. I've never been there, I never visited him there, but during the last years of his life, during his old age, he came every year to Botosani to visit my grandfather Lupu Meir during winter, that's how I got to know him. He was in his 90's when he died in 1940. I was little, I was 7 at the time. That's all I remember about him, the fact that he was bearded. Whereas my grandfather and my father didn't wear a beard anymore, but he – my great-grandfather – did wear a beard.

The names of the grandparents from my father's side were **Lupu Meir** and **Maria Meir**. My grandmother was born in a village near Botosani, the village of Vorona, and my grandfather was born in the village of Bucecea. Before she got married, my grandmother worked for her father. My great-grandfather – his name was Solomon, I wear his name – was a tailor and his trade was tailoring, he had a tailor's shop at home. People didn't use cloth in those days – they wore thick

long coats, peasants' clothes. He was a countryside tailor. He initially worked in the village of Vorona, and then he too moved to Botosani, on a backstreet. My grandmother had a brother in Botosani, his name was Iancu something, I forget. I'm sure about Iancu, for I called him uncle Iancu. He had a family, he had an ironmonger's shop. His wife was a housewife - I forget her name just now. They had 2 daughters, they weren't married. One of them was Rebeca, Beca, and the other was Saly.

After my grandfather served his concentration period and military service - a total of 9 years -, he married my grandmother - my grandmother was 18 when she got married, and my grandfather was 30 - and they lived in Bucecea until 1906. I won't tell you what he did for a living in Bucecea, I don't know. They moved to Botosani in 1906. My grandfather had an inn here in Botosani, he didn't have any employees, they ran it themselves.

My grandparents were religious persons. We, Jews, must attend the synagogue twice a day. As my paternal grandfather was busy trading, he didn't really go to the synagogue every day. During the week, he performed the morning and evening prayers at home, by himself, and he attended the synagogue only on Friday evening and on Saturday. I was mostly raised by my paternal grandparents. As I was only a child of 4-5 - I was barely of school age -, they would tell me straight away: 'Put some clothes on,' and take me along to the synagogue.

My grandfather and my great-grandfather Smil Meir had a *thales kutn*, meaning a small tallit. It comes from *katan* - *katan* means small in Hebrew. The one for children is called *lapsadechal*, and the one for grown-ups is called *thales kutn* [*tallit katan*]. You wore it under your shirt. Usually, you didn't tuck it inside your trousers, and it had those fringes, *tzitzit*, 2 in front and 2 in the back, a total of 4, which were visible from under your clothes. They wore it [*the tallit katan*] at all times. And they donned another one at the synagogue, on Saturdays and during the week [*if they attended the synagogue*]. They didn't wear a caftan, neither my great-grandfather nor my grandfather.

The grandparents from my father's side left to Israel in approximately 1952-1953 - I entered the workforce in 1951, they were still here -, they lived in Pardes Hanna. My grandfather died in Israel, but I don't remember when. And my grandmother returned to Romania, she died here, and she is buried in Botosani. But I don't remember in what year she died. She was in her 80's.

My father had a sister, her name was **Rasela**. She was married, her husband's name was Iser Smil - Smil was his family name. They lived here, in Botosani, as well, my uncle had a grocer's shop here in Botosani, and he was employed at a gas station after the war. He died here, in Botosani, and my aunt left with the children to Israel in 1965. They had 2 children, a daughter - Caspi - and a son - Lica Smil. They have families of their own now, children, they also have grandchildren. In 1969, when I traveled to Israel, my cousin Lica Smil lived in Trumpeldor - a village, a small town near Rosh Haniqra [*Kefar Rosh Haniqra*], a few kilometers from the border with Lebanon -, he lives in Naharia now. I still keep in touch with them, but very rarely.

My father's name was **Herscu Meir**, he too was born in the village of Bucecea in 1902. He was an ordinary person, he graduated 4 grades of primary school. I think my father didn't serve his military service, on account of his illness - he suffered from epilepsy -, and it wasn't mandatory in those days.

The name of my grandfather from my mother's side was **Manase Leibovici**. My grandparents were from the village of Sulita, my grandfather ran a manufacture store. He was a religious person, as, in order to eat kosher, he bought a cow, he had his own cow, and he didn't buy milk from anyone else. My grandfather died in 1940 in Sulita. [*Sulita is located 35 km south-east of Botosani.*] He died young, he had high blood pressure, there were no medicines available in those days – back then, the usual cure for high blood pressure was placing leeches behind people's ears –, and he died in 1940, he might have been in his 50's – 60's, he wasn't very old when he died.

My grandmother's name was **Ruja**. This grandmother from my mother's side was a very gentle person. After my grandfather died, my grandmother lived in Sulita for about 1 year – from 1940 until 1941 – after which she was evacuated to Botosani. In 1941, Jews from all small towns and neighboring villages were evacuated to Botosani [1](#). My grandmother came to Botosani with one of my mother's sisters and they lived together, they rented a room from someone.

When she returned home, she returned with a cow, a calf, that is, which she brought home from Botosani. It is stated, written in our ritual that the food you eat must be kosher, and she had her own cow, so that the milk was kosher, and she also made butter and sour cream, so that these were kosher as well. If you don't have a cow, if you go to somebody else, to a Christian [*to buy milk*], you bring your own pot, so that they milk the cow in your own pot.

My grandmother died in the 1960's, she is buried here, in Botosani.

The grandparents from Sulita, the ones from my mother's side, had 3 children: my mother – who was the eldest –, a son – Herman Leibovici, who was 2-3 years younger than my mother – and finally, they had another daughter – Maria, she was the youngest.

The son, **Herman Leibovici**, was killed in the Bucharest rebellion of 1941. He went to the synagogue to recite the Kaddish for his father – for my grandfather – and they shot him there. [*The pogrom in Bucharest represented a series of reprisals against Jews that took place during the legionnaires' Rebellion of 21st-23rd January 1941. In addition to occupying the main governmental and administrative buildings in Bucharest, the legionnaires attacked and robbed the Jewish stores on Ducești St. and Vacaresti St., the two neighborhoods being set on fire.*

http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pogromul_de_la_Bucure%C5%9Fti. The failed coup d'état intended by the legionaries during 20th-27th January 1941 culminated with the pogrom of the Jews in Bucharest; after its defeat, Ion Antonescu established military dictatorship.]

My mother's sister married in 1946, her married name was Katz, and she had a son, Manase Katz. They were very religious – they weren't Orthodox, but they were religious –, they observed all holidays and the kashrut, everything. They lived in Botosani. My uncle, Moise Katz, was an accountant. He worked in many places, [*among which was*] the Moldova Textile Works – he was accountant-in-chief there. After he retired, he worked as an accountant for the Community. They left together [*the whole family*] to Israel in 1980 and lived in Beersheba. My uncle died at the end of 1989 or in 1990 – because I traveled to Israel in 1989, that's why I know –, my aunt died after her husband, but I don't know when. They were both retired, and my cousin worked as an economist at a factory. My cousin's wife was a Chemistry teacher in Israel. They married while they were still here, in Romania, they had a daughter when they left to Israel, and they had another son there. My cousin died of cancer in Israel, more than a year ago [*in 2005*], but his two children are still living there.

My mother's name was **Elka Meir**, and her maiden name was Leibovici. She was born in Sulita in 1907.

My parents met each other through matchmakers – shadkhan. After he married, my father ran a grocer's shop in Botosani, a small shop. My father was harsher on us, children, my mother – like all mothers – less so. Well, he had to be harsher on me when I was a child, if I was getting into mischief. He beat me from time to time, he... If I told him that this or that boy had beaten me, he would say: 'Serves you right. Don't you go play with him anymore!'

Our house was on Calea Nationala St. It was demolished when the systematization arrived. In exchange, we received an apartment in a block of flats, where I still live to this day.

I had a sister, **Beti Meir**. She was younger [*than me*], she was born in 1937. She attended the Professional School of Commerce. She worked as a cashier in a food shop. She wasn't married, I wasn't married either, we lived with our parents and afterwards [*after the parents died*], we lived together. She died in 2003.

Growing up

My name is **Solomon Meir**. I bear the name – Solomon – of my great-grandfather, the father of my grandmother from my father's side. It is customary for Jews to name a child after a deceased person. I was born in the city of Botosani in 1933.

In fact, I learned Yiddish at home, as a child. Jewish [*Yiddish, that is*] was spoken in our home – naturally, Romanian as well, but also Jewish –, and I learned it from my parents. But I attended the cheder after I was 5 and a half, a school where they taught you to read and write in Yiddish; I learned to read the siddur, the prayer book – it is written in Jewish, not in Hebrew. [*Editor's note: This might be a misapprehension, because it is possible that the siddur was/is translated and taught in Yiddish along with the Torah, but the aim was that the boys can pray in Hebrew. The cheder is an elementary Jewish school where boys of three-five begin their education. According to tradition, the first step was teaching the Hebrew alefbet, the texts of the siddur in Hebrew, then reading the Torah with Yiddish translation. The language in which the children were taught was Yiddish.*] And I attended the cheder until 1939. The Germans invaded Poland in 1939 [2](#), and many Poles fled here from Poland, and there was a great rush of cars, something unusual for the city of Botosani – there weren't that many cars in Botosani. And as the cheder was at a distance of around 2 km, 2 km and a half from home, I had to walk there by myself and my parents didn't allow me to attend anymore – we were afraid of cars. The Poles came in cars, trucks, they were very well-off. They settled here, across Romania, and part of them returned to Poland after a few years, others remained here for good.

In 1940, at the age of 7, I was enlisted at a Romanian school – as the principal of that school, which was located near our home, was a friend of my father's – but I was pulled out of the school on the basis of the racial law in force at that time, in 1940. [*Editor's note: In October 1940, Jewish pupils and students were denied access to public education of all degrees. The Jewish people were free to organize private primary and secondary schools. Jewish schools were allowed to function but they weren't allowed to be advertised. The graduation diplomas were not recognized by the state and had no practical validity regarding the graduate's admission into a profession.*] Afterwards, I stayed home during that year and my father enlisted me at an existing Jewish school in Botosani. I

graduated 4 grades of primary school.

During the war

There were other restrictions as well for Jews during World War II. From around 1941 until 1944 we wore the yellow star in Botosani [3](#). We were allowed to go to the market to buy things only after 10 o'clock. Life was very hard for us during the war. As long as we had our home where we lived, we sold some of the things we had, my father had a grocer's shop, we sold a weighing scale, we sold this and that.

We were evacuated from our house in 1942 on the basis of the racial law [1](#) of Romanian cleansing, and we had to move to a different place, we paid rent. The house had been our property. A Christian liked that house, for it was near the street, he moved in and started a business there, a store. Both in our house and in that of my grandfather, Lupu Meir. My grandparents moved in with one of their daughters, Rasela. And we moved somewhere else, we lived with some relatives, over at uncle Ianu's place, a brother of my grandmother Maria Meir. It was still in Botosani, only we formerly lived near the train station, and we moved downtown. Still, it was a shack used as a kitchen during summer, we had to live in difficult circumstances, nevertheless. Of course, we didn't get along that well, for our living there wasn't really to their liking.

My parents were taken to forced labor. My father was initially taken somewhere around Husi, and then to Macin to a stone quarry. I forget in what year he was concentrated, but it was after wearing the yellow star became mandatory, and he stayed there until 1944, he returned home after the Russians entered Romania. My mother performed forced labor as well. She was forced to go to a military unit here, in Botosani, I don't know what she did there, I couldn't tell you. She received no payment there. But as we were poor, my mother worked for more well-to-do people as well, she worked instead of those women. The wife of that respective family had to go to do forced labor, my mother would go in her stead, and she would pay my mother for that.

We were freed by the Soviet army on 7th April 1944. *[On 7th April 1944, Soviet troops occupy Botosani and 3 days later they also occupy the port city of Odessa. The situation of German-Romanian troops in Crimeea is critical. By mid-April, Soviet troops were placed along the disposition Verba, Kolomeea, Iasi to the north, Orhei, Dubasari, the Black Sea. In accordance to the agreement reached at Teheran, on June 23, the Red Army unleashed a large-scale offensive at the end of June, which pushed the German troops as far as 600 km back, occupying Byelorussia, the west of Ukraine, parts of Lithuania, Latvia and Poland.*

http://www.studentie.ro/Curs_Istoria_secolului_XX_A_DOUA_MARE_CONFLAGRATIE_A_SECOLULUI_XX--citeste-nr692.html] A month or two before the Russians came, or was it a week - I don't remember exactly -, the Christians who lived in our house left, they were evacuated. Or perhaps they moved to another place, somewhere else in Romania, I couldn't say. But the majority of Romanians who were employed in state institutions in Botosani moved to Oltenia, in the area around Bucharest. For instance, those who worked at the post office, at CFR, at... And that's when we moved back in our house. If the Russians arrived on April 7, we moved back in our house around April 10. For there was great bustle around the city, with army troops, we couldn't move about the city right away. We found very few things inside the house. For we had no room to store our things where we moved, and they were destroyed.

After the war

After I finished the 4 grades of primary school, in 1945, my father enlisted me at the Commercial High School in Botosani, where I graduated only 2 grades because a monetary reform was implemented [4](#) and my father complained that he won't have the money to pay the schooling tax – the education reform hadn't been introduced yet [5](#) and you had to pay a tax to go to school –, and I entered a trade in 1947, I think. He enlisted me at a school for professions run with French funds, it was called ORT [6](#) – Organisateur Reconstruction de Travail, meaning Jewish Workforce Reconstruction – active around the world, not only in Romania, as this ORT school had branches in many countries. I studied there for 3 years. I graduated in 1950 and obtained the qualification of lathe operator.

On 1st February 1951 secured a job at the Mechanics Center in Botosani, where I worked for 40 years. I worked as a lathe operator for about [almost] 25 years. During the last years I was also a foreman and a CTC operator [*Editor's note: CTC is a Romanian abbreviation for Controlul Tehnic al Calitatii (Technical Quality Control)*]: I was a foreman for approximately 2-3 years and a CTC operator during the remaining period of time – around 14-15 years. I was in the army for 3 years, from 1953 until autumn 1956, I was doing construction work for the railroad work brigade. At first, I was sent to the county of Suceava, then I was stationed in Bucharest at the construction equipment station of CFR. I had the rank of front-ranking private.

After the war, father worked as a worker at a mill or two, and then as a tax collector from markets, he distributed the receipts for the tables. [*Editor's note: He collected the daily fee for renting a table.*] My mother didn't work anywhere. She died in Botosani in 1986. Father died in Botosani as well, in 1988, he is buried here, at the Jewish cemetery.

There were about 35,000 inhabitants living in Botosani before World War II, and about 15,000 of them were Jewish. During the war – as all the Jews from smaller towns were evacuated, that number rose to 22,000 Jews.

I believe there were around 50 synagogues in Botosani. I went to one that was close to where we lived. The synagogue that I attended as a child didn't have a rabbi, a hakham used to come there, he performed the religious service. [*Editor's note: According to Alan Unterman (Dictionary of Jewish traditions) among the Sephardim Jews the rabbi was also called hakham (in Hebrew: wise), but according to Dr. Slomo Leibovici-Lais (President, World Cultural Association of Jews from Romania) who lives now in Israel, writes in his 'Lexicon' that the name of hakham 'in Romania was addressed to the shochet' (book supported by 'Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture' and 'Biroul pentru Comunitati din Agentia Evreiasca' (i.e. the Office for the Communities of the Jewish Agency), Liscat haKehiot). Also see: (<http://www.dictionarromanenglez.ro/en/dictionary/haham>)*] There was also my uncle – the husband of my father's sister, User Smil –, and he performed the religious service as well, for he had the necessary knowledge.

There were rabbi assistants, around 2-3 rabbis, and several hakhamim – there were around 4-5 hakhamim. There were only 2 shochetim for fowls, around 2 hakhamim worked in each of them. And after the war, when our numbers diminished, we only had a single hakham in the city. Now there is one in the entire country.

Only the over-religious people used the mikveh, they went and dove there. Brides had to go to the mikveh before getting married as well, the rabbi wouldn't perform the wedding ceremony if they didn't have a receipt from the bathhouse proving that they went to the mikveh. This was the

custom, the bride had to go to the mikveh with the wife of the best man – with an interfiret, as they say. My mother too went to the mikveh when she was “the wife of the best man” – that was after the war. A cousin of mine, Manase Katz, got married, and my mother went to the mikveh with the bride, the wife-to-be, and I think she also went there on another occasion, I forget who the bride was. It wasn’t customary for Jewish married women to go to the mikveh around these parts. Perhaps this custom existed in other places. Let me tell you that the Jews living in Transylvania were much more religious than those from Moldavia.

We went to the bathhouse. The Community had a bathhouse in Botosani. The Jewish bathhouse had steam and bathtubs. The bathtubs were separate, there was a room with bathtubs cabins. There was a steam oven at the steam bathhouse. There were steps there, it was like a stand, and you went up the steps. You took a steam bath, you soaped and washed yourself right there. Initially, there were wooden pails – the pails were narrow, they weren’t very wide –, which you used to pour water over yourself and bathe. And then they modernized it and buckets were installed. There was a 1st class and a 2nd class section, and it was the same for the steam section. The 1st class section was a bit more clean, more orderly. There were no separate rooms for men and women; instead, there were separate days for men and women.

According to Jewish tradition, a boy comes of age at 13: he dons the tefillin which he wears to cover his head and around his wrist and he thus comes of age. *[Editor’s note: According to tradition a boy is allowed to put on the tefillin for the first time on his bar mitzvah day and he is asked to the Torah reading too. The tefillin is donned only during the weekdays, and not on high holidays or on the Sabbath, because it’s a sign which serves to remember the religious obligations – the holiday itself is a remembering.]* This ceremony is performed only on a Monday or on a Thursday when they read the Torah. For they also read the Torah on Saturday, but you don’t wear the tefillin on Saturday, and that’s why they do it either on Monday or on Thursday. You have to be a day over 13 in order to come of age – at least one day –, if that day isn’t *[a Monday or a Thursday]*, you do it a few days later, it’s alright. And that’s when they ask the young man to read the Torah, they give you an aliyah with the Torah, you must read everything that is read during that respective day. People are invited to the synagogue, they serve sweets, those who are more well-to-do also organize a dinner party at home... and that’s how it goes. And that’s when my father gave me the tefillin – in the meantime, I bought another set, for those were destroyed with wear. I wasn’t given a tallit then, it wasn’t customary. Now they have modernized, they also give you a tallit at 13. On my bar mitzvah, I only had to wear the tefillin. *[Editor’s note: In many places only married men put on the tallit during the prayer.]* *[Editor’s note: It is traditional for a boy to celebrate becoming **Bar Mitzvah** during the Sabbath after his **Bar Mitzvah**, he may read from the Torah and Haftara, give a d’var Torah (homily), and/or lead part of the prayer services. http://www.judaica-guide.com/bar_mitzvah/].*

My parents observed religious traditions. We, Jewish people, have separate dishes for milk and meat. When you buy a new, unused pot, you have to run it through a course of running water: which is to say that you have to immerse it 2-3 times *[in a course of running water]*, there is also a prayer that is recited on that occasion – it can be found in the prayer book as well – and that’s it. You do this with every new dish you buy, be it a plate, a glass, a pot, a pan and so on. *[Editor’s note: If a new metal or glass eating utensil is bought from a non-Jew, it has to be doused (which is called tevilat kelim) before the first usage. The dousing has to be done in a place where women*

can also douse, usually in a mikveh.]

Meat has to be processed by a special person, by the hakham. And only the front part of cattle is for consumption. Which is to say that if cattle have 13 ribs, only 11 of them are used as kosher meat, while 2 ribs are left aside with the hind part. And the entire front part was for consumption, and the hind part was sold to Christians. After the cattle are sacrificed, the butcher takes the meat, carves it, and gives it to people. And no later than 72 hours after bringing the meat home, you have to kosher it at home. You place it again in water for half an hour and an hour later you place it in salt for a bit, and then you wash it. Meaning, you are not allowed to eat blood, and in order to drain the blood, you had to salt the meat – that was the purpose of it. *[Editor's note: The procedure of koshering the meat was the following: the meat rinsed thoroughly was soaked into lukewarm water for half an hour, so that the salt would be able to drain out the blood. Then they rinsed it again, removed the tendons and cut it; after that they salted it exhaustively with medium hard salt, and put it on an inclined surface so that the blood would flow out of it. The liver had to be broiled as well (like the meat which wasn't fresh, but resulted from a three days older slaughter). The meat had to be left like this for at least one hour, then it had to be rinsed three times.]* And it depends on what you eat. If you eat cheese, you can eat meat after about an hour. If you only drink a bit of milk, you can eat meat after about, say, half an hour. And if you eat meat, you can eat dairy only after 6 hours. **[Editor's note: Meat and dairy is strictly separated in a kosher household, a certain length of time must pass between the consumption of meat and dairy. The length of time varies ('For each river has its own flow' – says the Talmud, that is to say every region should follow its own habit): the wise determined that six hours must pass between eating meat and milk; the rabbis in Germany and France permit the consumption of dairy three hours after eating meat. One can eat meat half-an-hour after eating milky food (with the exception of hard cheese) and after rinsing their mouth, since these can be digested in a shorter time.]**

Here, in Botosani, most Jewish women baked homemade bread for Saturday, it was called hala [*challah*]. My mother baked as well, either kneaded bread or rolls. She baked less often after the war, she used to buy the bread. You place two loaves of bread on the table and you cover them. After we returned from the synagogue, my father performed the prayer ritual for the wine, drank some wine, then he recited a prayer [*for the bread*] and sliced the bread.

Usually, on Friday, after baking the bread – for that's how it was in my days, when I was a child, people used brick ovens –, over-religious Jews finished [*preparing*] the food, absolutely everything necessary for the Saturday meal, they placed the food [*what they ate for lunch on Saturday*] in the oven – it was called cholent. You took the bread out of the oven, you took absolutely everything out of the oven, you oiled the oven door, placed the food inside and retrieved it on Saturday at noon. That was in order not to light the fire, for we are not allowed to light a fire on Saturdays. My parents didn't make cholent, I won't lie to you, they simply didn't; my grandparents prepared it every now and then. Usually, they prepared an appetizer, it depends on what we had in the house. This is what we prepared from eggs: you beat raw eggs, mixed them with vinegar and boiled them, and they thickened, turned into a sort of glycerin, sometimes you also added the legs of a rooster or chicken – it was called petcha. And then we had soup and meat with beans or something else as a side dish for second course.

There are 2 ways to prepare petcha. They also call petcha meat jelly, when you take the marrow from the shin of a cow's front legs – for Jews don't eat the hind legs –, you boil it, and what you get

is also petcha, a meat jelly.

My mother always lit candles on Friday evening. She lit 3 candles. These [*the number of lit candles*] are customs. Some light 5 candles, as the Torah, the Holy Scroll, is divided into hamushim – that’s how the books are called – and many people light 5 candles because there are 5 books, 5 hamushim. [*Editor’s note: The Torah is also called hamisa humse Torah – from the Hebrew word hames which is five – because the Torah consists of five books. Literally means “the five of the fifth”: humas=fifth, humasin=fifths. So, the proper word is not hamusim (which means armed), but humasim.*] This is a custom, these customs are called menugam – the translation of menugam is custom. Jews had standard customs – which you have to observe – but there are “z” customs that people observed – they did things like this somewhere, like that somewhere else. [*Editor’s note: It is customary to light two candles, although some families light more, sometimes in accordance with the number of children.* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabbat>]

We went to the synagogue on Friday evening and on Saturday. In fact, Saturday is for us, Jews, the highest of holidays, that’s how people see it. Saturdays and the Great Day, Yom Kippur, these are the biggest holidays, you aren’t allowed to cook on these days. As for the rest..., you are allowed to cook. Well it isn’t customary to cook on New Year’s, on Rosh Hashanah, as you go to the synagogue. But on all other holidays, if the holiday isn’t on a Saturday, you are allowed to cook, but you must eat the food during that day, so that there is no food left over after the holiday. Well, it’s alright if there is a little food left over, as long as you don’t have a large quantity of food left over after the holiday. That’s because you prepared it for the holiday, and you would eat it when the holiday is over. [*Editor’s note: One is allowed to cook on a high holiday – unlike on Sabbath –, but only an amount of food that can be eaten during that day, eventually a small amount of it can remain.*] For instance, if the Seder evening isn’t on a Saturday, you can cook on that day. And if, for instance, as is the case now [*in 2007*] the first days of Rosh Hashanah are on a Thursday and Friday, after which comes Saturday, I cooked food in advance to last me throughout all 3 days, as I live alone. But if you don’t have time and want to prepare food for Saturday during these 2 days of holiday, on Thursday or Friday, there is a prayer that you have to recite prior to this, it is called “Eref tahsilam” [Eruv Tavshilin] – which is to say that you have prepared food for Saturday. On a holiday, but you prepared the food for Saturday, and you eat it on Saturday. So if it’s on a holiday, you recite this prayer before preparing the food for Saturday. You don’t do it if it’s not on a holiday. And when you recite the “Eruv Tavshilin,” usually you have to boil an egg and have some bread, something, which you keep beside you as you recite the prayer, and you eat this on Saturday in addition to the food you prepared. [*Editor’s note: If the high holiday is on Friday, the question is how to cook for the Sabbath, because one is allowed to cook only the amount of food for one day. The solution is to start the cooking for the Sabbath before the beginning of the high holiday, and this can be continued during the holiday. We have to create an Eruv Tavshilin, which is an Eruv of the cooked food: one eats some boiled or fried food (usually an egg) with bread and recites the appropriate blessing. So, the Eruv Tavshilin refers to this procedure and not the name of a prayer.* http://www.ou.org/torah/article/grunfelds_daf_yomi_erv_tavshilin/]

Or if it’s on a day of fasting – for we have around 4 or 5 fasts during the year – on Saturday, you postpone the fast until Sunday, for you aren’t allowed to fast on Saturday, save on the Great Day. For instance, this year [*in 2007*] Yom Kippur will be on a Saturday, and you fast on Saturday, you don’t postpone the fast until Sunday. These are the other fasts besides Yom Kippur: Sur Beteivis [

Asarah be Tevet in Hebrew], Ester Tanas and Tisibov [*Ta'anit Esther and Tishah BeAv in Hebrew*]. Tisibov, which is held to mark the destruction of the first and second Temple, is a fast like Yom Kippur, in other words, Yom Kippur and Tisibov are 25-26 hours fasts. For all other fasts, during Sur Betevis - 10 Tucan Tevis - and during Ester Tanas, before Purim, you fast during the day, meaning you are allowed to eat at night [*after the sun sets*]. [Editor's note: *If the fast is on a Sabbath, then it must be postponed. One doesn't keep the fast of Esther if it is on a Sabbath, and does not postpone it to Sunday either, because the following day is Purim, but one keeps it on the previous Thursday. The most important fast is Yom Kippur (Tisri 10) - the law of observing it is explicit in the Torah - and it lasts 25 hours (from sunset until sunset), the same stands for the Tisa be-Av fast. All other fasts last from sunrise until sunset. The Bible refers to the other five fasts, but observing them was commanded by the sages. The five fasts: Com Gedalja (Tisri 3), Asarah be-Tevet (Tevet 10), Ta'anit Esther (Adar 13), Siva ashar be-Tammuz (Tammuz 17), Tishah be-Av (Av 9). And there is the fast of the first born, the Ta'anit bekhorot, before Pesah (Nisan 14) - the first born are fasting in remembrance of their escape in Egypt - this can be replaced with studying the Torah.*]

We must use different dishes on Passover. Or, those who don't have other dishes boil them very well, they kosher and use them [*the dishes they use for everyday use*]. Koshering is done as follows: you place the smaller dishes in a much larger one, you boil them there, and in addition, using another stove ring or the fire inside the stove, you heat a piece of metal until it becomes red-hot and you throw that metal in the water, so that it boils with force. And those who have other dishes use them, you don't have to kosher those, for they are special dishes for Passover. My mother had a second set of dishes for Passover. I still have, to this day, a second set of dishes. Usually, we stored the dishes for Passover in the attic. But nowadays I store them on a shelf - I don't have an attic since I live in a block of flats.

You must clean the house, the bread must disappear, anything that leavens [*the chametz*]. [*Throughout Passover*] That which leavens must disappear from inside the home. There is a ritual for that. Two evenings prior to Passover - which is to say: for instance, if Passover was the day after tomorrow, this evening you should place morsels of bread [*around the house*], turn off the light and go collect all the bread morsels by the light of a lit candle. There are two passages that you must recite, one before and one after collecting the bread, and you burn the bread the following day. This is called belches humaza [*bdikat chametz, the search for chametz*]. And the following day you have to burn the bread you collected, no later than 10, 10 o'clock in the morning. You burn it somewhere outside, or if there is a fire burning in the house, you can throw it into that fire. You also recite something when you burn it. Anyone, a man - even a single person - could perform this. The head of the family or, if there was no head of the family, a male member of the family had to perform this ritual. And you aren't allowed to eat bread after that [*during the Pesach*], you eat potatoes, meat, eggs. [Editor's note: *Before the search one should recite the blessing of biur chametz, then after the search the bitul chametz. On the next morning, before 10 am. or when the local rabbinate decides, one must burn the chametz and recite an other blessing. The search for chametz is done by the head of the house, if he is not present, then his wife, or another grown-up from the family.* <http://www.ou.org/chagim/pesach/pesachguide/maze/basic8.htm>]

You set aside everything that contained flour, pasta, rice - all these things that leaven. You aren't allowed to keep jam in the house, either. It [*Pesach jam*] must be made using separate Passover dishes. And truly kosher jam is prepared only from green, unripe plums and cornel-berries - as

these are sure not to have worms. [*Editor's note: The worms and other bugs along with their eggs are not kosher, so eating them is forbidden. Those foods which usually don't contain worms, like bananas or tomatoes, they don't have to be examined, but when it is more likely to contain something, then it should be done (e.g. in case of the cherry). According to this the green plum and the cornel-berry belong to the first category.*] Those who were over-religious prepared it. Because if they knew they will have guests who were over-religious they offered them this kind of jam. My mother sometimes prepared jam from unripe plums, but she never prepared it using cornel-berries. She prepared walnut jam, black cherry jam. We still kept the jars inside the house, but they were placed somewhere where we didn't go during these 8 days of Passover. People used to draw up sale-and-purchase contracts for the things that leaven. When I was a child, the synagogue helper would go to everyone's house, record what you had, and leave. You sold them to someone who wasn't Jewish. It was a sort of business, meaning that the rabbi, for instance, sold the things for 1 leu [*Editor's note: Romanian national currency*] and the respective citizen told you, when you bought it back: 'Pay me 1 leu and 20 bani, or 1 leu and 10 bani.' The rabbi recorded the transaction, but the merchandise remained at home. But how else? Could he gather the merchandise from the entire city? Someone had jam, someone rice, someone wheat flour, corn flour. Formerly, each city had a rabbi, and he took care of this [*selling the chametz locally*]. But nowadays, since there is no rabbi... They still utilize [*use*] this method [*nowadays as well, but*] on a national level, the rabbi records it on a national level. He sends a fax to all cities in Romania informing you what you should send, and you send a fax to Bucharest. We don't send them the entire list, we enter the names of 8-9-10 people from here, from Botosani, and that's that. And he sells the things to a Christian, but the goods remain here, in Botosani.

We buy the matzah. Years ago, before the war, it was prepared here, in Botosani – under the supervision of the rabbi, of course. The flour from which they make matzah, which doesn't leaven, must be observed so that the wheat doesn't germinate – if the wheat started to germinate, the flour wasn't kosher anymore. The flour was observed closely and it was ground at a special mill – the mill was cleaned prior to this –, it was ground and you made unleavened bread from it. There were several mills here, in Botosani.

There are 2 seder evenings. Only in Israel is there 1 seder evening, and here, in galut – in the diaspora – there are 2 seder evenings. There is the Aguda – it is called Haggadah, Haggadah translated into Romanian means story – and you read that story and perform the entire ritual that needs to be performed. My father read the Haggadah in Hebrew. In Bucharest, when rabbi Rosen [7](#) was still living, he told it in Romanian so that all those living in Bucharest understood what it was about, I am sure I attended the seder ceremony performed by rabbi Rosen twice, perhaps even three times, for I was a mashgiach, a ritual supervisor in Bucharest. But father didn't translate it at home.

Usually, as laid down by regulations, you must be seated on pillows. But we no longer sat on cushions, my father sat on a chair. He had no cushion [*underneath him*]. The rabbis, they are the ones who sit on a pillow.

There is – it is called *kara* – a kara for unleavened bread, made from cloth and embroidered, which has three compartments, for you must place inside it 3 slices of unleavened bread, of matzah. And before the ceremony starts you take a piece from one of the slices – afikoman –, and you hide it, so that Elia Novi should come and take it. And there is one large porcelain plate, with several

compartments, where you place an egg, a small piece of fried meat, some greens, the root of a parsley, horse radish, something bitter – for it symbolizes the time when the Jews underwent the bitterness of the desert, which they traveled across for 40 years [*Editor's note: Actually the bitter herb (maror) symbolizes the suffering and the bitterness of the Jews' slavery in Egypt.*] – and a potato. And this plate is called a kara as well. Nowadays, here, in Botosani, we don't have a kara like that, but we use a flat plate – where we place everything. We ate soup and meat as well, only it was prepared using potatoes and unleavened bread, matzah, instead of bread.

A male child – either the youngest or the eldest – must ask the 4 questions – di fir kashes in Yiddish. [*Editor's note: 'Ma nishtana' in Hebrew and 'Di Fir Kashes' in Yiddish.*] I was the eldest child in our family, for there were no other children [sons], and I asked the 4 questions. I also had a sister, my parents' daughter, but it wasn't the daughter who asked the questions. Daughters can ask the questions, too; if there is no son, the daughter asks the questions.

Everyone must have a glass, everyone must drink 4 glasses of wine – arbaa koyses. Arbaa means 4 in Hebrew. You prepared a glass for the prophet as well, and you opened the door for Elia Novi to come. It was my sister who opened the door, since she was the younger one. This is a hoax – for do you think anyone came? But that is the custom... Afterwards, you closed the door. If Passover came early during the year and it was cold outside, we opened the door only for a few minutes and then we closed it. And those who liked to drink drank the prophet's wine as well.

Of course, you hid the afikoman. A child would steal it, and then you had to give the child something in return in order to redeem it, otherwise you couldn't go on with the second part of the seder evening, which followed after the meal. I used to peep to see where father hid it, but he hid it so that we could see, so that we could steal it. Either my sister or I. As a reward, we received candy or whatever... [*they could give us*].

I don't have an ear for music and usually I don't sing, I never sang. My father doesn't have an ear for music either, it wasn't customary [*it wasn't usual*] for us to sing at home. People sing "Had Gadia!" [*usually at the end of the seder evening*], but I don't know these songs anymore, I believe I didn't even know them, because if I had no ear for music...

Purim isn't a holiday – it is a miracle, but it is celebrated as a holiday. It is a day for making merry, the day on which Jews celebrate their being rescued. Formerly [*before World War II*], we had a very good time on this occasion. People bake cookies, wear masks, some visit their relatives, their friends, and they make merry together. I didn't go with the grown-ups, I was only a child back then. Here, in the Diaspora, only older people [*grown-ups*] called on people's houses. Here, in Botosani, only men did that. Musicians would come playing a violin or a kobsa, most of them were Gypsies, they knew by then certain songs that people played on Purim. They used to come to Botosani 2 weeks ahead of Purim, for they were Gypsies living in villages, and they offered an audition in the marketplace, so that people could decide if they played well. Jews would gather and listen to the audition. And they would hire them. But they came every year, they already knew one another. And they went to play music from house to house with those who wore masks. Especially the poor wore masks and called on other houses – they earned some money from the people they called on. They smeared their faces, wore some rather mothey clothes, went from house to house and said: 'Ant iz piram morgnen iz uz, gatman a bonicli in vartmah a rus!' – 'Today is Purim, tomorrow Purim will be no more, give me some change and throw me out.' [*Editor's note: This is a Yiddish phrase*

which might differ in pronunciation from region to region – „Haint iz Purim, morgn iz ois, git mir a grosn un varft mikh arois!” – Today is Purim, tomorrow won't be, give me some change, then throw me out! The word grosn=change can be replaced by the local name of the coin, like in Romania the "bani" which is the "bonicli" in a diminutive form.] They also came to our house. People prepared sweets: hamantashen is the Jewish name of a cookie shaped like a triangle – for that was the shape of Haman's hat, his cap had that shape.

There is another holiday, it is called Sviz, Savua, [Shavuot], when people only eat dairy products. On the day of the Shavuot we, the Jews, were given the 10 commandments and the Torah. It is a holiday, people go to the synagogue, they read the prayers that need to be read for the holiday – instead, it is customary to eat dairy products on this day. People prepare triangular dumplings with cheese filling, they also prepare some sort of pie made with cheese obtained from cow's milk, a type of strudel filled with cow-milk cheese filling. These are the main types of food that people eat on that day, and they drink milk afterwards. In Israel, this holiday lasts for a day. Normally, here, in the Diaspora, the holiday lasts for 2 days – you eat dairy products throughout both days –, as they perform the Memorial Prayer during the second day [Yizkor].

Chanukkah is an 8-day holiday. There is a special prayer that is recited each evening, and candles are lit. My grandparents used oil for this, and so did we at home. There was a large votive light – a chanukkiyah – with a small metal tray, and you placed an oil wick inside each tray, you lit it and it burned until the oil ran out. And there was a candle – it is called shamash – which was used to light the oil wick, and which must burn at all times. And you place this candle next to the votive light, on that same small tray. You lit one during the first evening, 2 during the second evening, and so on. All members of the family must light a candle on Chanukkah. On the first evening, it is the head of the family who lights the first candle; afterwards, [during the following evenings] every member of the family recited the prayer and lit a candle, turn by turn. If the family had fewer members, they lit the candles several times. Normally, the chanukkiyah is placed by the window. But many people didn't place it by the window, for they had window curtains, and they were afraid they would catch fire. My grandparents and parents didn't place the chanukkiyah by the window, they placed it on the table.

Usually, children receive presents. As a child, I liked Chanukkah the most, as we received money – Chanukkah gelt, that's how it's called. We received Chanukkah gelt from our parents, relatives, we used to buy sweets – what children can buy. And there are also spinning tops [dreidel] which spin – they have letters written on them, and with each letter you either win or you don't. I had spinning tops myself, I played with the other children. I don't remember, perhaps I played for money, but it was small amounts, small change.

On Chanukkah, people usually eat triangular dumplings made from potatoes, fried onion – you can also use meat, if you want to, but people usually didn't. You lay a sheet of dough and cut round shapes out of it using a glass. Normally, they have to be bigger rather than smaller, as you also have to place filling inside them – a mixture of potatoes and fried onion and oil –, and then you press the sides together and it has an oval shape. You boil them afterwards, and you serve them on a plate with a spill of oil and fried onion. People also prepared borscht – a type of borscht made with dumplings, it was a traditional dish on Chanukkah. At home, we too prepared dumplings filled with potato filling, after which we filled one dumpling with husks in order to have a laugh. Only one dumpling was filled with husks, so that someone gets tricked into eating it. It was served

separately to someone, and they placed the dumpling filled with husks on the plate. My uncle, User Smil, who was my grandparents' son-in-law, was tricked one year when he visited my grandparents. And ever since then, he sliced each dumpling on the plate with a fork before eating it...

Sukkot is the holiday of tents. It celebrates the 40 years during which Jews wandered through the wilderness and lived in huts. My grandparents used to build a sukkah. It is made from wood planks so that there is enough room for a table and a few chairs inside it – it depends on the number of family members – and it is covered with corn stalks, straw – and on many occasions when it rained, it would rain on the food on your plate. The sukkah was adorned; if you had a rug, something, you placed it inside, you hung fruit that were available during that season: grapes, apples. Sukkot lasts for 8 days, and meals are served inside the sukkah during this time, usually lunch meals. There were no special dishes. My parents didn't build a sukkah, they were neighbors with my grandparents and they went over to their place, the entire family had lunch over there. Perhaps people even slept inside the sukkah elsewhere, our family didn't. And people go to the synagogue, but only men do. In my family, women attended the synagogue only on New Year's – on Rosh Hashanah – and on Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement.

During the first day of the New Year, on Rosh Hashanah, you go to a place with water in order to cast away your sins – you shake your pockets clean [*Taslich*]. The entire synagogue would go, everyone who attended, of course. In Botosani, people went to a pond. There are 2-3 ponds in the neighborhood – which is to say, they aren't in the neighborhood, you actually have quite a bit of walking to do in order to reach them.

We also went to weddings, if there were weddings in the family, but also to weddings of friends and acquaintances. The wedding ceremony was performed according to tradition. There is a four-legged canopy, the rabbi comes and performs the wedding under that canopy. You place the canopy wherever you find room for it – at the synagogue or at home, if you have room for it. Formerly, it was brought to wedding halls. The canopy and the rabbi arrived there by carriage; first you wrote the engagement, in the presence of witnesses, and then the wedding paper was drawn up in the presence of witnesses – it is signed by 2-3 witnesses. And that's all. And then the groom breaks a glass with his foot by stepping on it, and the wedding sponsors dance around the groom and bride.

My father attended the synagogue every day after he retired, but he couldn't do so prior to his retirement, he had to go to work.

I attended the synagogue during communism as well, for I wasn't a member of the Communist party. Well, when I had a job, I couldn't always go to the synagogue. But on holidays I took some days off or, if not, a leave of absence, and I would go to the synagogue. I was a lathe operator, and we worked in three shifts. It depended on which shift I was working, if I had the time, I also attended the synagogue on Friday evenings and Saturdays.

From 1992 I was a ritual supervisor – it is called *mashghiach* – for the Federation [*the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania*]. The Federation in Bucharest made a request asking whether they could send there someone from Botosani. You weren't required to have special studies, I know these things from my family, my family fully observed the kashrut, and I knew the rules, but I was examined by rabbi Rosen [7](#). I couldn't move there permanently, for my sister was still alive, I had

to come home as well, spend time with her, and I went there for 4, 5, 6 months, and then I returned home where I stayed for several months, after which they called me there again. In the meantime, during the period that I was in Botosani, they hired someone else. I worked like that, intermittently, for 2-3 years.

I went to the slaughterhouse in Bucharest. There was a very large slaughterhouse in Bucharest – it is called Grina – and that’s where they sacrificed the cattle for the ritual canteen of the Federation in Bucharest. I went there with 2 hakhamim and slaughtered animals. I was in charge of supervising the slaughtering. When they slaughter the cattle, they take the lung out and inflate it to see if air doesn’t escape, if it doesn’t have holes – to see if the animal wasn’t ill. They check the liver to see if it is clean. And they check the insides of the cattle’s stomach to see if there are no nails, metal chains, or what not there; if there were, it wasn’t good for eating anymore, it was no longer kosher. I also brought meat from there to Botosani. I also assisted the slaughtering here, in Botosani, whenever the hakham came. Now they no longer send a hakham here as the expenses for doing so are high.

I also worked at the home for elderly people in Bucharest. I lived there during the time that I stayed in Bucharest, and I worked as a mashgiach for the canteen over there, as well as for the Federation’s canteen where food was prepared for the assisted living in Bucharest. Usually, there were 2 kitchens at the homes for elderly persons. In Bucharest as well there are 2 kitchens with separate dishes, with separate silverware, everything was separate. There were 2 models – one model for meat and one for milk. Those need to be supervised as well. Until recently, the Federation ran 4-5 homes for the elderly. There were even more, but as Jews passed away, their number diminished, now there is a home for the elderly only in Bucharest and in Arad. They also accommodated Christians in these homes, but only those who worked for the Federation.

I was already working for the Community in Botosani the last time when I was in Bucharest. A new kitchen was being inaugurated at Balus, in Bucharest – which has been dismantled in the meantime. I was there for the opening, and I stayed there for 6 months on that occasion – from around January until after Passover. I haven’t been to Bucharest ever since.

I forget the year – in any case, I believe it was 10 years ago, if not more – when I was given the keys of the synagogue and started working here, at the Jewish Community in Botosani, on a full-time basis, my position is that of a gabbai. The gabbai is not supposed to hold the synagogue’s keys, but as there was no synagogue helper and no shammash, I hold the keys as well. But I’m in charge of running the entire synagogue, of organizing the holidays, when people have to be called to perform the aliyah for the Torah, I am the one who has to call them, say their names, all these things.

There was a canteen here, in Botosani, and I had to supervise the kitchen. The girls working there were Christian and I had to supervise them, to make sure they did everything properly. I had to light the fire in the morning and stir the food. For lighting the fire and stirring the food must be done by a Jew – Christians are allowed to do that too, but a Jew must stir the food as well. You don’t have to say any prayers while stirring the food. You have to say a prayer only when you bake bread, there is a prayer that is said when the dough has risen, before placing it inside the baking tray. I also had to supervise the koshering of the meat. I supervised all these things. I believe the Canteen in Botosani was closed some 10 years ago. There were few Jews, the diagram was too

busy – you had to prepare food for a few persons and the costs of running the place and the electricity bills were too high compared to the amount of food that was cooked. [*Editor's note: In order for a food not to become treyf "bisul nokhri" = „cooked by a non-Jew" a Jew must also attend the cooking. For instance, he has to light the fire before the food is put on the stove, or he has to put the food on the stove. The same stands for bread-baking (like the fact that he has to place the bread in the oven to bake). He must take a challah from the dough and burn it after reciting the appropriate blessing (which is not a prayer).]*

Jewish funerals are very simple. Here, in Botosani, after someone dies they are placed on the floor with the legs towards the door, towards the exit, a candle or two are lit and placed at their head and they are buried the following day. The custom in Israel is to bury the dead 3-4 hours after they die – because of the intense heat, that's why. Over here, people are buried the day after they die. The deceased is taken to the chapel – we have a chapel in the cemetery – and they wash and dress the body in funeral clothes. They are buried wrapped in a shroud. A shirt, a pair of trousers, a shroud, a hood over the head to cover it, and that's all. And the trousers are closed – just as if they were attached to the shoes [*as if the socks and trousers were one item of clothing*]. They bury the men with a tallit, and they remove the athura and the kotzitzis when they inter them. The tallit has an adornment on the back upper part, to a side – which is called athura – so that you know how to wear it [*in order to know which is the front and which is the back*], it is removed. And there are 4 tzitzit, one of them is severed. [*Editor's note: The tallit is put on onto the death's dress, one of the tzitzit is torn off, so they disable it from the further religious observance.*] The burial attire for women is exactly the same, with the exception of the tallit, which they don't wear.

In Harlau, Jews are buried without a coffin. They do it like in the old days. It is written in the Bible: men must lie directly on the ground. The dead are clothed with the same clothes for dead people, enveloped in this shroud, which is called takhrikhim [*Takhrikhim*, http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/367843/jewish/The-Taharah.htm] and they build a wooden rectangle without a bottom side, on which the dead are laid, That's how they did it in Harlau, I attended a funeral there and saw how they did it. I had never seen it done before I saw it in Harlau. Here, in Botosani, the bottom part of coffins isn't whole either, it is like a wooden rail. We had these bottomless boxes as well, but many years ago the SANEPID didn't allow it anymore. [*Editor's note: Sanepid – the name of the public health institution.*] And then an agreement was reached to make the bottom out of rails. They make a plain coffin from boards which aren't planed down, just like a box – they use nail to close the coffin.

The Jewish tradition for both weddings and funerals is that any Jew can recite [*the prayers that need to be recited*], it doesn't matter as long as he knows what needs to be recited. At funerals, both the muhla and the Kaddish are recited. The son must recite the Kaddish, if there is no son, then someone else must do it, but it must be a family member: the husband of the deceased – if the deceased is a woman –, the brother of the deceased. In order to recite the Kaddish, at least 10 adult Jews must be present. You can recite the muhla alone, without any Jew present, the person who conducts the burial ceremony recites it. And you must also recite Tzadik Adem, a paragraph from a book – that book is called Mona Lusi – either in the room where they dress the dead, or at the burial site, before placing the body inside the grave. [*Editor's note: They recite both muhla and the Kaddish at the funeral. The difference is that when the Kaddish is recited ten men have to be present; the muhla can be recited alone. For example, if it is the funeral of a Jew and there are less*

then ten men, the muhla can be recited by the leader of the ceremony. They also recite the Tzadik Adem – either in the room where the dead was dressed or before he is put in the grave. The Tzadik Adem is a paragraph from the book called Mona Lusi].

I sat shivah after my parents. You sit on the ground for 7 days. After that, men must say a prayer at the synagogue for 11 months without a day – they recite the Kaddish – for the dead – for there must be at least 10 people present when this prayer is recited – every day, including Saturdays. I went to the synagogue every day to recite the Kaddish for my parents, for there was a religious service every day. Now they no longer perform the religious service every day.

Usually, it is customary to lay the [*funeral*] tombstone 1 year after someone dies. But in Israel they do it after 30 days. It also depends on when you find the money for it. I believe I laid my mother's tombstone after about 2 years, if not more, as I couldn't find marble. I wanted to build a larger marble plaque and I couldn't find the marble for it. This was during the Ceausescu [7](#) regime, you couldn't find marble in those days. Anyway, I found some eventually and I built the tombstone. My father had also died by then, and that's why I know that I had it built after 2 years. You must say another prayer by the tombstone [*when it is laid*], to inaugurate it.

I liked Israel. I traveled to Israel on 2 occasions: in 1969 and once again in 1989 – 20 years later. I traveled to Trumpeldor in 1969, as my cousin, Lica Smil – the son of Rasela Smil – lived in Trumpeldor at that time – he now lives in Naharia. And in 1989 I visited both of them, I went both to Beersheba, where I visited Katz Manase, and here [*in Trumpeldor, where I visited Lica Smil*].

Glossary

[1](#) Anti-Jewish laws in Romania

The first anti-Jewish laws were introduced in 1938 by the Goga-Cuza government. Further anti-Jewish laws followed in 1940 and 1941, and the situation was getting gradually worse between 1941-1944 under the Antonescu regime. According to these laws all Jews aged 18-40 living in villages were to be evacuated and concentrated in the capital town of each county. Jews from the region between the Siret and Prut Rivers were transported by wagons to the camps of Targu Jiu, Slobozia, Craiova etc. where they lived and died in misery. More than 40,000 Jews were moved. All rural Jewish property, as well as houses owned by Jews in the city, were confiscated by the state, as part of the 'Romanisation campaign'. Marriages between Jews and Romanians were forbidden from August 1940, Jews were not allowed to have Romanian names, own rural properties, be public employees, lawyers, editors or janitors in public institutions, have a career in the army, own liquor stores, etc. Jewish employees of commercial and industrial enterprises were fired, Jewish doctors could no longer practice and Jews were not allowed to own chemist shops. Jewish students were forbidden to study in Romanian schools.

[2](#) German occupation of Poland (1939-45)

World War II began with the German attack on Poland on 1st September 1939. On 17th September 1939 Russia occupied the eastern part of Poland (on the basis of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). The east of Poland up to the Bug river was incorporated into the USSR, while the north and west were annexed to the Third Reich. The remaining lands comprised what was called the General

Governorship - a separate state administered by the German authorities. After the outbreak of war with the USSR

in June 1941 Germany occupied the whole of Poland's pre-war territory. The German occupation was a system of administration by the police and military of the Third Reich on Polish soil. Poland's own administration was dismantled, along with its political parties and the majority of its social organizations and cultural and educational institutions. In the lands incorporated into the Third Reich the authorities pursued a policy of total Germanization. As regards the General Governorship the intention of the Germans was to transform it into a colony supplying Polish unskilled slave labor. The occupying powers implemented a policy of terror on the basis of collective liability. The Germans assumed ownership of Polish state property and public institutions, confiscated or brought in administrators for large private estates, and looted the economy in industry and agriculture. The inhabitants of the Polish territories were forced into slave labor for the German war economy. Altogether, over the period 1939-45 almost three million people were taken to the Third Reich from the whole of Poland.

3 Yellow star in Romania

On 8th July 1941, Hitler decided that all Jews from the age of 6 from the Eastern territories had to wear the Star of David, made of yellow cloth and sewed onto the left side of their clothes. The Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs introduced this 'law' on 10th September 1941. Strangely enough, Marshal Antonescu made a decision on that very day ordering Jews not to wear the yellow star. Because of these contradicting orders, this 'law' was only implemented in a few counties in Bukovina and Bessarabia, and Jews there were forced to wear the yellow star.

4 Financial reforms in post-war Romania

Post-war Romania had two major financial reforms (in 1947 and 1952). The one of 1947 was necessary because of the grave post-war inflation, the biggest banknote was the 5 million lei by then. The new 1 lei used to be the equivalent of 20,000 old ones. Most affected by the stabilization were the peasants, because they mostly kept their money in reserve and at the same time the amount of exchangeable money was maximized. Due to this reform the government brought the inflation under control and the economy was revived. This emission still had the name of King Michael on it, but from 1948 on his name was gradually replaced by the country's name (the People's Republic of Romania). Starting in 1966 all the coins wore the *Socialist Republic of Romania* sigla. The second financial reform (1952) was realized by a centralized, socialist economy. Its main aim was to strengthen the national coin and to withdraw the money surplus.

5 Educational reform in Romania in 1948

Based on the new Romanian constitution, introduced in 1948, the 1948 'educational reform' stated that public education is organized by the state only, and that public education is secular (this way the denominational and private schools were outlawed, and were soon nationalized), and at the same time it introduced compulsory and free elementary education for everyone. According to the law it was compulsory to learn the Romanian language from the 1st grade, and in place of the French or Italian language the Russian language was introduced from the 4th grade. The compulsory elementary school became a 7-grade school, and was followed by a 4-grade high school. According to the educational reform, ownership of school buildings, dormitories, canteens

was transferred to the state, and the Ministry of Public Education became their administrant.

6 ORT

(abbreviation for Rus. Obshchestvo Rasprostraneniya Truda sredi Yevreyev , originally meaning "Society for Manual [and Agricultural] Work [among Jews]," and later—from 1921—"Society for Spreading [Artisan and Agricultural] Work [among Jews]") It was founded in 1880 in St. Petersburg (Russia) and originally designed to help Russian Jews. One of the problems which ORT tackled was to help the working Jewish youth and craftsmen to integrate into the industrialization. This especially had an impact on the Eastern European countries after World War I. ORT expanded during World War II, when it became a world organization with branches in France, Germany, England, America and elsewhere, in addition to former Russian territories like Poland, Lithuania and Bessarabia. There was also an ORT network in Romania. With the aim to provide „help through work”, ORT operated employment bureaus, organizes trade schools, provided tools, machinery and materials, set up special courses for apprentices, and maintained farm schools as well as cooperative agricultural colonies and workshops.

7 Rosen, Moses (1912-1994)

Chief Rabbi of Romania and president of the Association of Jewish Religious Communities during communism. A controversial figure of the postwar Romanian Jewish public life. On the one hand he was criticized because of his connections with several leaders of the Romanian communist regime, on the other hand even his critics recognized his great efforts in the interest of Romanian Jews. He was elected chief rabbi of Romania in 1948 and fulfilled this function till his death in 1994. During this period he organized the religious and cultural education of Jewish youth and facilitated the emigration to Israel by using his influence. His efforts made possible the launch of the only Romanian Jewish newspaper, Revista Cultului Mozaic (Realitatea Evreiască after 1995) in 1956. As the leader of Romanian Israelites he was a permanent member of the Romanian Parliament from 1957-1989. He was member of the Executive Board of the Jewish World Congress. His works on Judaist issues were published in Romanian, Hebrew and English.

8 Ceausescu, Nicolae (1918-1989)

Communist head of Romania between 1965 and 1989. He followed a policy of nationalism and non-intervention into the internal affairs of other countries. The internal political, economic and social situation was marked by the cult of his personality, as well as by terror, institutionalized by the Securitate, the Romanian political police. The Ceausescu regime was marked by disastrous economic schemes and became increasingly repressive and corrupt. There were frequent food shortages, lack of electricity and heating, which made everyday life unbearable. In December 1989 a popular uprising, joined by the army, led to the arrest and execution of both Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, who had been deputy Prime Minister since 1980.