

Elca And Herscu Meir



These are my parents, Elca and Herscu Meir. The photo was taken in the 1930s.

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

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!'

My parents observed religious traditions. 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. We 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. We went to the synagogue on Friday evening and on Saturday. 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.

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.