

Zoltan Blum And Iosif Farkas At The Monument Of The Victims Of Holocaust



In this photo I am together with Mr. Iosif Farkas at the Monument of the Victims of Holocaust in Dej, Cluj county.

Mr. Farkas is the president of the Jewish Community from Dej. The photo was taken on the 12th October 2004, on the Holocaust Memorial Day in Romania.

The monument is across the street where the synagogue is settled. It represents the people like we were during the deportation: old man with children with luggages on their back. It is very interesting.

I am the only Jewish survivor of the Holocaust in Gherla. I take care of the synagogue that was left in this town.

After I came back from deportation, I didn't observe all the religious traditions.

I have to admit I didn't keep the kashrut, for instance. Since there weren't enough Jews for a minyan in Fizesul Gherlei anymore, I came to Gherla for the high holidays:

Purim, Pesach, Yom Kippur, and Rosh Hashanah. But I didn't keep the Sabbath as a holiday - I worked on Saturday... That was a sin. I did recite the Kaddish for my parents though.

Now I'm the only Jew left in Gherla. I always go to Dej or Cluj for the high holidays. And I fast.

As a Jew, I always felt a bit fearful... I kept to myself more than others. I did play with other kids, but I hesitated before going to the teacher's or to the priest's house... I think I was born with this. I was fearful under the communist regime too.

Did I have faith that things would get better after the war? When I came back from deportation, no one welcomed me with open arms.

There were some who said 'The poor man, he has returned... Let's give him a slice of bread.' But there were others who thought 'He should've stayed there!'

That's why I say there are two kinds of people in the world: good and bad. I experienced this first hand. It's true, I was a bit of a coward in the sense that I didn't go after the ones who took away our things while we were gone.

But my brother spotted a guy who was using a pair of scales that had belonged to our store - back then, this was a valuable item, especially if you were penniless.

The guy wouldn't give it back, so my brother took his case in front of the mayor. Eventually, the man was forced to return the pair of scales.

The friends we had in Gherla were Jews, Hungarians, and Romanians. We used to visit the Jewish ones especially on Purim, when we exchanged the traditional cakes.

When I was little, I would go around with cakes more often than after the war.

All these troubles caused some of the faith to be lost... But a rabbi said: 'In the middle of all this cruelty, turn not to God, but to Man, for he is the one responsible.'

[Editor's note: This phrase can be heard on the occasion of the Holocaust commemorations.

Mr. Blum may have heard it from Liviu Beris, survivor of Transnistria, vice-president of the Romanian Holocaust Survivors' Association.]