

Bela Muller With His Son's Family



The picture was taken in the 1990s in my son's apartment in Kolozsvár. Next to me, on the left, is Lazslo sitting. On my right is my granddaughter Renata and my daughter-in-law Agnes. We were and are living in an environment where the majority are Christians, so it's natural for us to respect the Christian holidays, like Christmas. We don't observe them, of course. As opposed to this, we try to observe every Sabbath and Pesach, but this is more like a commemoration than a holiday. And we started doing this only at the beginning of the 1990s. In 1989 we hoped the dictatorship would come to an end and the economic situation would bounce back. I look back disappointed to those hopes we had there. The situation hasn't improved very much since then, as we are living in the same poor conditions. The only difference is that we have more freedom. After 1944, I didn't abandon my religion, but I didn't go to the synagogue, I wasn't a religious man. There's an old saying, according to which the closer one gets to 'Joe Black', one remembers one's childhood and one's origins. Now, as a retiree, I began to go to the synagogue. And currently I perform different activities at the Jewish community of Kolozsvár, and I'm a member of the management. I'm in charge of the religious issues. My official title is 'consilier cu probleme de cult' [counselor in charge of religious issues]. I ended up at the community because after 1989 they needed someone who knows the religious prescriptions. Since they knew I got a religious education, they asked me to get involved in the activities of the community. I have to tell you I'm not going to the synagogue because I'm religious, but because the Jews are the only nation on the face of the Earth whose history is strictly bound to religion. So going to the synagogue means for me to tend to the Jewish tradition. And this is how the majority of the other Jews in Kolozsvár feel. Currently there are around three hundred Jews living in Kolozsvár. The community is a very old one, and we have no rabbi, of course. Despite all this we are trying to practice the religious traditions, and we observe every holiday: Sabbath, Chanukkah, Pesach or Purim. We teach our youth the Talmud Torah, and we have a choir, as well. Talmud Torah includes learning Hebrew, and the choir sings Jewish religious songs, such as Avadim Hayinu and Dayenu. I would like to emphasize that we are doing this because we want to maintain the Jewish traditions.