

Marim Haller

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Botosani

Romania

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Mrs. Maly, Marim Haller, is a very welcoming, cheerful person, wearing a wide, warm smile on her countenance for everyone. She is rather short, and despite her age of 91, she is very energetic. Ever since her husband died, she has been living alone for 10 years in their two-room apartment. She reads the press, cooks – I enjoyed a very well done ginger bread when I visited her on Rosh Hashanah. She also attends the synagogue every now and then – that’s where I made her acquaintance –, even though she is a little disappointed, for in the room reserved for women – and where, to tell the truth, one couldn’t hear much of the religious service –, they only talk, discuss cooking recipes, and don’t read prayers.

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My family history

I didn’t meet any of my grandparents. I know that the grandparents from my father’s side were living in Harlau, in the county of Iasi. [*Harlau is located 58 km south-east of Botosani.*] My grandfather’s name was Nuta (Nathan) Ghebergher.

My father had 2 sisters – Sura and Ruhla – both of whom I’ve met. The name of one of his sisters after she married was **Sura Solomon**. I didn’t know her husband, he died during World War I, too. She had 3 children. Their names were: Nathan, Benu, and Slima. I grew up together with her children, they were about my age. They lived in Maxut, a hamlet near Harlau, part of the village of Deleni. [*Maxut is located 3 km north-west of Harlau, Deleni is located 6 km north-west of Harlau.*] But they too moved to Harlau afterwards. My aunt kept – as was customary in those days – a small store in the countryside, in Maxut, and they lived off it. And after they moved to Harlau, they had no income, she lived off her pension [*a war widow’s pension*]. Nathan Solomon was about 5 years older than me. He was married to Esterica. But I no longer remember whether he had any children or not. He had a store, something like that, or he was employed in a store. He lived in Harlau. He also died there, in Harlau, but I no longer remember when. Benu was a pharmacist – the pharmacist Solomon –, he actually had a drugstore in Botosani. Slima was married to Zizi Aron – Aron is the family name –, who is still living in Israel. And his son’s name is Avram Aron – people call him Adolica –, I don’t know what he does for a living but, in any case, he has a very highly placed position, he is living in Petah Tiqva. They had no other children – he was their only child.

The name of **Ruhla**'s husband – the other sister of my father – was Avram Kesler. They lived in Iasi, but I no longer remember what they did for a living. Their sons' names were Leon and Saul. Ruhla had another son as well, David Kesler, who lived in Dorohoi, and who had a daughter, Jeni Kesler. Jeni Kesler was an actress at the Jewish Theatre in Iasi [*Ed. note: The first professional theatre in Yiddish was founded in Gradina "Pomul Verde" (The "Green Tree" Garden), today the Park in front of the National Theatre in Iasi, as it was intended for a Jewish audience, the vast majority of Jews living in the Podul Ros suburb.*], and then in Israel. She was married to Martin Bercovici, who also had a bachelor's degree, but I forget in what field. They got married here, and left to Israel. I couldn't tell you whether Jeni is still alive. I believe so. But we haven't exchanged letters for a long time. She also had a little brother, his name was Solomonica, I think.

My father, **Calman Leib Ghebergher**, was born in Harlau. I never knew my father, for he went to war when I was a few months old, and he didn't return. I don't know what he did for a living. He was a very good man, everyone loved him and had a kind word to say about him, that's what my mother used to tell me.

Nor did I know the grandparents from my mother's side. The name of the grandfather from my mother's side was **Buium Klein**.

All I know is that my mother's brother was a very endowed man, as they say. His name was **Avram Klein**, but everybody called him Avromta. He was a tall, handsome man, and he was renowned, he was very well read, had a Jewish culture. He observed tradition, he often went to the shil [*shul*]. He also performed prayers at the temple on many occasions. But he did so voluntarily, didn't receive any money for it. He was a pious person. He was about 5 years older than my mother. He had a leather shop in Botosani. My uncle died when he was around 90 [*probably in the 1960's*]. He died here, in Botosani, he has a monument at the cemetery together with his wife.

His wife's name was Seindl, and they had 8 children: 4 sons and 4 daughters. Clara Rintler, Saly Haimovici, Roza Flaisher, Liza Malis – these are the daughters. And these were the sons: Marcu – the youngest –, Iancu, Iulius, and ... oh my, what was his name – I can't remember it just now. They were all older than me. The youngest of them was 4-5 years older than me. All of them graduated high school. The boys were merchants, their father's trade. But not all of them lived in Botosani. **Iulius** lived in Targu Ocna, he too ran a leather shop. [*Targu Ocna is located 82 km south-west of Bacau.*] I once went to visit them, I was young back then. He had 2 sons, the name of one of them was Beno Klein. **Clara Rintler** – uncle's oldest daughter – lived in Targu Ocna, she got married there. They had a son, Beno Rintler. **Liza Malis** lived in Falticeni. [*Falticeni is located 27 km south of Suceava.*] **Saly Haimovici** and **Roza Flaisher** lived in Botosani. Saly's husband's name was Max Haimovici, he ran a haberdashery store in the old downtown of Botosani, around the corner. They had children, but I don't remember their names. They all left to Israel after World War II.

Leon Flaisher was Roza Flaisher's husband. They ran a furniture store here, in Botosani, on Dragos Voda St. There is a synagogue right at the top of the street, and their house was located next to the synagogue. They had 2 children: a son, Marcu, and a daughter, Alexandra – Sanda, Salica. They both have a bachelor's degree, they graduated from I.E.S. [*The Institute for Economic Studies*]. Marcusor is married to a Christian, her name is Tuti. She is Romanian, but she converted to Judaism. They left to Israel. And they have a daughter – Raluca, who has a bachelor's degree herself by now. Alexandra's married name, was Rosianu – Rosenberg. Her name was Rosianu, they

issued Romanian names as well. They live in Bucharest. Sanda is about 10 years younger than me.

My mother had yet another sister, **Dora Solomovici**. She was 1 or 2 years younger than my mother. She lived in Botosani as well. On Calea Nationala St., as you head towards the cemetery, way up, that's where she lived when the children were small. Her husband – whom I haven't met, either – died, and left her with 4 children. However, all of them graduated high school, they made a life for themselves. These were my 4 cousins: Liza, Tili, Benu, and Lazar. Lazar was the eldest, followed by Liza – she was 1 year older than me. Benu and Tili were younger – Benu was 1 year younger than me and Tili was 3-4 years younger than me. And my aunt was left a widow to raise the children, and my uncle – Avram Klein – supported her and the children. He took care of most anything when the children were little – he supplied them with various things, gave my aunt spending money. And there was also the money that the eldest child earned – **Lazar**. My aunt sent him as apprentice to a watchmaker, he learned watchmaking, and he helped supporting the household, as much as he could. He learned watchmaking because my uncle said he had to learn a trade. And he worked as a watchmaker here, in Botosani, but he worked for an employer, he didn't run his own shop. He was a very good lad. But he had tuberculosis and died when he was young, when he was in his 30's. He wasn't married. He is buried here, in Botosani.

Benu graduated from the Superior School of Commerce, and the girls graduated high school. **Liza** won the title of Miss Botosani. I no longer remember how she was voted. All I know is that she was declared Miss Botosani. She had beautiful blue eyes. Liza got married in Bucharest, her name was Liza Schwartz afterwards. Her husband died not long after they got married. Liza didn't have any children. She died in Bucharest, I forget when. In any case, it happened later on, for I knew her even when she was in her 40's, 50's. **Benu** was married to Martzy Schuffer and had a child – I no longer remember its name. Benu worked at the Scanteia newspaper, his name was Barbu Stoian, but I couldn't tell you if he officially changed his name or only published under that name. [Ed. note: *The Scanteia (Spark) newspaper, instrument of the Romanian Communist Party Central Committee, started to be legally published in 1944*].

The name of the youngest, **Tili**, was Puscaciuc – her husband's name. She is married to a Christian and has 2 children: Sandel and Raluca – accomplished children, they both have a bachelor's degree. I'm not on such good terms with Tili – I no longer remember what it was that made us drift apart. However, I still thought about calling her on the phone to see if she was still alive, how she was doing, for it's been years since I no longer have any news of her. She is the last of my cousins that might still be alive.

My mother's name was **Sura**, daughter of Buium [*Sura bat Buium*] – my grandfather's name was Buium. That's how they named children in those days. And the family name was Klein. She could read and write Romanian, she could even read Jewish [*Yiddish*], but I don't know about the rest [*, what her studies were*]. She was a very cheerful, kind-hearted person. She helped others very much. People used to go begging in those days. There were various older Jewish women who would come by our house and ask for alms. And my mother would always give to others from the little that she had. She was a very kind woman, and a very good housewife – all her grandchildren loved her. She cooked 100% kosher. She was a religious person.

Growing up

I was born in Harlau in 1915. Officially, my name is Marim, but people call me Maly. I was named after a neighbor whom my mother knew. At school, I was registered as Marim Nuta, even though my father's actual name was Sin Nuta, after his father. Formerly, that's how people were named, Sin Nuta, Sin This, Sin That – son of Nuta, son of this, son of that. *[Editor's note: The word "sin" is a dialect form of the Yiddish "zun" (zin)=son.]* Afterwards, I secured an attestation from the court of law stating that Nuta and Ghebergher were the same name. It doesn't matter, I changed it afterwards, when I got married.

I was born late in their life. My mother wanted children, but it was a very long time before I was born. I know that I was born after 10 years, 10 years after my parents married. I had no brother or sister. My father died in the war [*World War I*], I lived with my mother. My mother administered a business in the house, in the very room where we lived – half the room was occupied by the store. She sold tobacco, cigarettes, and she also received a pension after my father – that was our livelihood. My mother loved me very much. Seeing that it was only after 10 years of marriage – for she couldn't bear children – that she had me... I was the apple of her eyes. I don't recall her scolding me. Perhaps she scolded me if I did some mischief, but I don't remember.

We lived at the outskirts of Harlau, and my father's sister lived in a village, in Maxut; well, it was at a distance of 1 km from where we lived, we walked up the hill and reached her place. And then we used to go to her place, in the countryside. On foot. Her children and I grew up together. We played with dolls, we also played Popa Prostu' *[Editor's note: it is a card game called "foolish priest".]* – but I forget how it is played.

I started going to school at the Romanian school in Harlau. There was also a Jewish school, but I completed *[the first 4 grades at]* the Romanian school. That's where my mother enlisted me. I believe we lived in Harlau until I was about 10.

And afterwards we moved to Botosani, my mother and I. We lived in a rented house on Dragos Voda St., which had 2 rooms and a kitchen, and mother would rent one of the rooms to tenants – she rented one of the rooms, and we lived in the other room – so that we could get by, she rented the room to pupils – that's how life was in those days!

I started attending the Commercial School in Botosani, it consisted of three grades, and then, if you wanted to, you could continue studying there. After that, I attended the Superior School of Commerce, another 4 grades. I graduated the Superior School of Commerce in 1934. I didn't have to pay schooling taxes as my father had died in the war. And I was a prize-winning pupil, I was a good pupil. I couldn't continue my studies, even though I sat for an exam and passed it. I sat for an admission exam at the Commercial Academy in Bucharest, but I didn't continue my studies. There was no one to support me financially, my mother was alone, life was hard. I had a job, and I had to support my mother as well.

I entered a job when I was 13, and I was already earning money by then. Little as it was, but it helped to support the household. If my mother was unemployed... *[I would go to]* School during half of the day, *[and go to]* work during the remaining half. It was like this: if I had classes in the morning, I would go to school in the afternoon. If I had classes in the afternoon, I would go to work in the morning, and again at 4 in the afternoon when I returned from school. And I worked until evening. My employer's name was Solomon Margulies, he had a store where colonial products were sold, retail and wholesale – he also sold products wholesale to others who supplied themselves

from him. At first, I was hired as a commercial intern – but I was paid for it. We were required by the school to complete a period of internship. And by completing my internship there, I remained employed afterwards as well, and worked as an accountant.

The name of Solomon Margulies's wife was Seindl Margulies, but people called her Janeta. They had two children, a son and a daughter. The son, Lica Margulies, died on the Struma [1](#). He left to Israel and died on the ship. He was 1 year younger than me [*was born in 1916*]. His sister, Aniela Margulies, is also younger than me, we may be some 6-7 years apart [*was born around 1920-21*]. She married after World War II, at the end of the 1940's, beginning of the 1950's. The wedding took place here in Botosani, they left to Israel afterwards – she was already married when she left. She left to Israel early on, around 1950. Indeed, I have no news of her anymore.

They, the Margulies family lived in Carol Square. The Margulies store selling colonial products was downstairs, on the ground floor, and they lived on the first floor. It was located opposite the monument. [*Ed. note: The monument "Major Ignat's machine gun company mounting an offensive," erected by the Botosani-born architect Horia Miculescu and inaugurated in 1929.*] There was a park in Carol Square, and there were stores on both sides of it. It was still part of downtown Botosani, but it wasn't located on the main street.

There were very many Jews in Botosani before World War II. There were more than 10,000 Jews living in Botosani back then. [*By means of immigrations from Galicia, "through natural growth," the number of Jews was going to increase significantly: in 1832, there were approximately 1477 Jews living here; in 1930 – approximately 12,000 Jews, today there are only 125 left. The Jewish Community of Botosani.*] There were only Jewish stores throughout the old downtown area: manufacture shops, stores selling colonial products, an inn, 2 restaurants – there were all kinds of stores. All the traders in downtown Botosani were Jewish. There was Moscovici, Oizderovici, there were many of them. There was only one Christian trader – his name was Anchele.

There were youth organizations, Zionist organizations. Such as the Hashomer Hatair [2](#), I don't remember any other. But I couldn't attend the meetings as I was at work, and I didn't enter that organization. I didn't have that much spare time, since I was working for my subsistence. I was working very hard. I even put in extra hours until late into the night, and I was tired. Both school and work at the same time. Do your homework, this and that – I had no spare time.

I used to go to the cinema every now and then, and the odd ball. There were balls organized by Jews. The ballroom was rented. There were several ballrooms. One was located where the cinema still stands nowadays – the Popovici hall. It housed a movie theatre. And the cinema was suspended when a ball was organized, and it became a ballroom. Usually, it was Gypsies who played at balls, they were the ones who provided the music. But they could play Jewish music very well and they played it at balls. I wasn't too keen on dancing. I couldn't dance very well, I only knew a couple of dances. Well, when the partner would lead during the tango, I would dance, but when it came to other dances... I never waltzed. I didn't know how to waltz. There were also meetings of the Jewish youth, and I used to attend those. Several activities were performed there... There was also a Jewish library, and they conducted reviews of the books in the library, they would discuss a specific book, analyze it, everyone offered their opinion. We used to meet at a classmate's place on many occasions and began discussing books, authors.

We used mixed languages at home – both Romanian and Jewish, Yiddish. I knew a little Hebrew, but I forgot it. I didn't learn it at the cheder, I took private lessons – I paid for and received private lessons –, but very few. I might have been 9-10. I started receiving private lessons from a teacher. He used to come over at our place, if not, I would go to his – it varied. In fact, he wasn't an actual teacher, he simply knew Hebrew. But I dropped out afterwards.

Religious life

My mother, my uncle – they were pious people. I couldn't say the same for myself. My mother was religious. She cooked 100% kosher. That's what we had at home – kosher. There was no other way in those days. Almost everyone kept kosher. People didn't eat milk and meat mixed together. And they didn't mix the milk dishes with those for meat, everything was kept separate. I didn't really observe this tradition. That's life.

Nobody in our family wore a wig or had their hair cut short. But my mother always covered her head with a head kerchief. She wore regular clothes. As the fashion was in those days. Dresses coming down below the knee. It seems that clothing back then was as it is nowadays, with little differences.

She went to the synagogue on holidays and very rarely on Saturday. As a child, I used to go with my mother to the synagogue. My mother stayed inside the synagogue and we, the children, used to go in and out. Later, I didn't go to the synagogue anymore.

My mother used to sacrifice a fowl every Saturday, she also did so during the week if needed. She didn't raise fowls, she bought them. It was like this, everyone had a small cage and kept a bird or two there until they sacrificed them. But they didn't raise them. She took the birds to the hakham to be slaughtered – people couldn't do without a hakham. *[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 the 'Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture' and 'Biroul pentru Comunitati din Agentia Evreiasca' (ie. the Office for the Communities of the Jewish Agency), Liscat haKehiot)]* There were kosher butchers at the market as well, who sold kosher meat. It wasn't mixed with treyf. And only the upper part of the animal was sold, the lower part wasn't for consumption. That's according to my knowledge. Only when it came to larger animals. *[Editor's note: Among the four-footed animals the artiodactyl and ruminant animals are kosher, like the cattle and the sheep. The joint tendons have to be eliminated, but this requires to be done with skill. If there is no expert, it is simpler to consume only the upper part. This came into the general use.]* We ate all the meat of fowls. Including the gizzard and the leibara *[the liver]*. People cooked "anghiact" – meaning you chopped the liver, added onion and mixed in a little oil and salt. This was served as vorspeiss *[appetizer]*.

On Friday she baked some very nice, kneaded bread – coilici. *[Ed. note: Coilici is a variant for challah, similar to the word „kajlics“ used by some Hungarian-speaking Jews in Romania. Both words have as origin the Hungarian word „kalacs“.]* And when she lit the candles she placed them on the table and covered them; she lit the candles when she recited the prayer. She always used to light 6 candles on Friday evening. I forget why 6. *[Ed. note: It is customary to light two candles, although some families light more, sometimes in accordance with the number of children].* She

always lit candles on holidays.

We always had meat soup on Friday evening. There was also a vorspeiss [*appetizer*] – either some “essigfleisch”, or meatballs, pite [*petcha, here is a variant of the calves' foot jelly*], something. You cook a regular soup, you take the meat out of the soup together with a bit of soup, then add sour cherry preserve – it was the sour cherry that made it sour –, and you have essigfleisch. Pite [*petcha*] is as follows: after boiling the soup, you add an egg to the soup liquid and let it curdle, add some more lemon juice or a bit of vinegar, stir, and add the meat to the mix. This is usually cooked from entrails: joints, legs, neck. We ate the meat from the soup, and then there was stewed fruit and, if we had it, something sweet for desert. Usually, my mother prepared kighi [*kugel*]. It's like a pudding, you prepare it on Saturday – you can use apples, or other fruit. And we had kighi at the end of the meal.

On Saturday, lunch consisted of a vorspeiss [*appetizer*] – whatever you had, you could even prepare a salad –, and then we had soup, meat with pickles, something, and then we had kighi. Saturday's dinner was less pretentious, you ate whatever you had. Mother didn't work on Saturday. No, God forbid! Neither did uncle – the store was closed on Saturday. It was completely closed. An acquaintance would drop by our home on Saturday to light the fire for us, check if it was still burning... And you paid for that.

Mother had separate dishes for **Passover**, it was stored separately, in the attic. That was the custom. And when Passover approached, she would take the dishes down from the attic, wash them, prepare them, go to the hakham to have the fowl sacrificed, start preparing the food. She recited a prayer, and I believe she used to throw the small morsels of leftover bread into the fire. We didn't eat bread, flour, or pasta. Everything made from flour was removed from inside the house, a prayer was recited, and we had a room that we didn't use, that's where everything was stored, and it was retrieved 8 days later.

Usually, on Passover she cooked soup and ‘parjoale’ – meatballs with onion and garlic – it depends, she cooked all kinds of dishes. The food on Passover was almost the same as on all other days. Meaning that the difference wasn't that great. We didn't eat bread, we ate matzah, keisal [*keyz*], latkes. Keisal is a pudding made from eggs and matzah flour, which is cooked in the oven and then sliced. It isn't sweet. You eat it with meat, if you cooked anything that involved a sauce. People cooked borsch with meatballs. The borsch was made from beet, you prepared it in advance. You placed the beet in a jar and you made borsch for Passover. Water turned sour. You took the beet and left it to macerate in water. And it turned sour. And you used that to make the borsch sour. After boiling the greens and vegetables for the borsch [*for the soup*], you added that to the mix. And you also used the borsch to prepare the meatballs. Either that or lemon. Lemon was allowed. You gave it a sour taste by using lemon juice.

We never had a Seder evening organized at home – my father died during the war – but I've seen it done. We visited my mother's brother on many occasions during the first 2 days. The boys were grown by then, they asked questions [*Mah Nishtanah*], I don't know what. Well, it was a family reunion. The afikoman was hidden away, somebody would find it and steal it. They had to pay in order to get it back. I didn't even try to look for it [*I would let my cousins do it*].

On **Purim** we were invited over at my uncle's, Avram Klein's, and a large table was laid, with all the children, his sister, we all got together. It was beautiful! We ate, talked, laughed, sang. I forget

what songs we used to sing. I don't have a musical voice and that's why I didn't even remember the songs. I believe that we, the children, used to wear masks. I used to go out of the house, put the mask on, go inside again, they pretended not to recognize me... I was little! I think my cousins wore masks as well. But I can't recall any of their mischief. And other people came, sang. And they were given money, food. Jews came as well, there were all sorts of people. The Jews [*acquaintances, friends*] paid visits to each other. Grown-ups didn't wear masks. For you didn't even let them in if they wore masks – you couldn't know whom you were dealing with.

On Purim my mother baked cakes. Hamantashen were ever-present. I myself bake hamantashen today, and offer them to the people I know. And that's how it was, people sent each other cakes, they offered them to you when you visited them. And you would keep hamantashen to last you from Purim until Passover, in order to have them as farfostan before Easter. To farfost – that's how they say in Jewish –, meaning that you had a meal before fasting. You ate whatever food you had, a good, full meal, and at the end, you also had hamantashen for desert. And that was a closure, you didn't eat bread for 8 days, during Passover. Farfostan occurred several times a year, both on Passover, and before Iom Kipar [*Yom Kippur*]. [*Editor's note: Before the beginning of the fast, on the afternoon before Yom Kippur there is the "seuda mafseket", the traditional meal before the fast. The word farfostan is the Yiddish variant of the German word Vorfasten, which means 'before the fast.'*]

I don't remember any details about **Chanukkah**. I did have a spinning top. I received Chanukkah gelt from my mother, from relatives, and I bought whatever I had to buy, whatever I needed.

On Sikkes [**Sukkot**], people built a sukkah and even ate inside it. We didn't build one, we went to our uncle's. We didn't do this every day, he invited us to come over, say – once or twice. He built the sukkah in their courtyard. It was like a pavilion made from planks and wood, fitted with chairs and a table. They decorated it with paintings – rather regular paintings –, carpets, they also decorated it with apples with leaves and everything – just like that, still attached to twigs. In the evening, when we left the sukkah, we removed all the things, lest they should get stolen! It usually served for eating lunch. A prayer was recited on this occasion as well. It was recited before and during the meal, and a broche was performed for the bread, the wine, for everything.

The main holidays were **Ros Hasuna** [*Rosh Hashanah*] and **Iom Kipar** [*Yom Kippur*]. We performed the kapores before Yom Kippur. [*Ed. note: Kaparot is a ceremony performed by some Jews on the evening before Yom Kippur, when sins symbolically transfer from individuals to a white rooster and a white chicken for women.*] Both my mother and I had a chicken. We didn't mix them. You held it by the legs and wings, placed it on top of your head and turned it. In the meantime, mother read the necessary prayers, and I repeated after her. And then the chickens were sacrificed during the holidays. On the evening of Yom Kippur we were summoned to perform the offostan [*affasten*] and we were given sweets and some liquor, without fail. [*Editor's note: The offastn or affasten is also a Yiddish word, means to stop or finish the fasting. This is also a somewhat ceremonious feast.*] People baked honey cake, especially on holidays – on Rosh Hashanah, on [*the evening of*] Yom Kippur. As a child, I fasted until 12 on Yom Kippur – I broke the fast afterwards. I brought along a parcel of food – for my mother was at the synagogue, I would go to see her –, and I ate on my way there or outside together with the children.

I forget on what holiday, but I know people went to a fountain, somewhere where there was water – and this was a tradition. I used to go as well, to enjoy myself. You could go to a fountain or to a creek if there were any. And everything was shaken to remove the dust. All the sins were shaken off and left there. *[Ed note: This tradition is called tashlich – an expression describing the symbolic casting away of sins. Devout Jews gather by a river and recite prescribed passages that speak of God’s willingness to forgive a repentant sinner.]*

During the War

Life was pretty hard for us during World War II. I lived with my mother here, in Botosani. Jewish children weren’t allowed to attend school [3](#), but I was exempted and could go to school, as I was a war orphan. My father died in the 1916-1918 war, and, as a result, I was allowed to attend – even though Jews couldn’t attend school, I did. *[Editor’s note: Mrs Haller was in her 20s when the anti-Jewish laws started, so she had already finished school long time before.]* I wore the yellow star [4](#) on my chest when I went out into the street. I didn’t have to wear it at school. I used to wear it until I arrived at school, and take it off once there. There might have been other restrictions for Jews as well, but I no longer remember. The head is small, there isn’t enough room for everything.

I worked at Margulies since 1929 until 1943. I remained employed at this store for colonial products for a very long time. And then I obtained a transfer to Societatea Hartia [*the Paper Company*], where I was in charge of bookkeeping until 1944. From June 1944 until September 1944 I worked for the City Hall of Botosani. Many goods had been confiscated from Jews in 1943-1944, or people left and abandoned their goods, which were taken over by authorities, and they all needed to be assessed and registered, and there was an institution in charge of this – Botosani Urban Goods.

After the War

Cooperatives were organized after the war, and I obtained a transfer to the Citizen’s Cooperative as head of department. After that I worked at the Alimentara Commercial Organization from 1948 until 1956, then at the Recolta [*the Harvest*] Regional Industrial Unit for Acquisitions – it was still an industrial unit for cereals, and you got transferred from one place to another because they always kept closing down and received a new name, everything was being reorganized. I also worked at the Ready-made Clothes Factory, and at the Medicinal Plants Industrial Unit from 1960, where I was accountant-in-chief already. I worked there until I retired in 1970. I never missed a day at work.

My husband was recommended to me by David Kesler, my cousin in Dorohoi. My husband was a teacher in Dorohoi, and my cousin knew him well. My cousin came with him to our house in Botosani. I went out with him for a walk, and [*on returning*] when he entered the house, he said: ‘We are engaged.’ And actually it wasn’t long afterwards that we got married. We saw and liked each other. At first sight. We knew details about each other beforehand from this cousin of mine. I knew what he did for a living, what sort of person he was, how he conducted himself. Mother was very fond of him.

His name was **Iacob Haller**, he was from Siret. He was 1 year older than me, he was born in 1914. He graduated the Faculty of Natural Sciences in Cernauti. At the time when I met my husband, his parents weren’t alive anymore. They were 2 siblings: his sister and him. His sister’s name was Rebeca. She lived with my mother after I got married. And she left to Israel afterwards. She didn’t marry.

I got married in 1946. I had a religious ceremony performed, in Margulies' house. He was actually my sponsor at the wedding. They wedded me. They had 4 rooms, and that's where my wedding was held. They brought a chuppah there, and Burstein performed the wedding. He was a Ruf [rav], he wasn't a rabbi. A Ruf who also performed chores – the slaughtering of animals for meat, kosher, what have you... *[Editor's note: The Ruf or Rof is a pronunciation variant of the Rav which has the same word root as the Rabbi. The difference between the two (mainly in the 20th century) is that the Rabbi is who was anoint, the Rav is who is an expert in the Jewish traditions, for instance, he is a important Talmud scholar. The Rav is an honorific title and not an authorized one. He could decide about dubious kashrut issues, because he had enough knowledge about it.]* The wedding sponsors hold you arm in arm under the chuppah, the groom stands still and you turn around him together with the sponsors. Afterwards a drink is given, the husband drinks, then you are given to drink. That's how the ceremony went. A wedding contract was drawn up [ketubbah] – I still have it, I ran across it the other day. And there were guests, a feast, people ate, just like at a wedding. The guests were relatives, acquaintances. There weren't many people. There were, say, enough persons to fit into a house.

I lived on Dragos Voda St. after I got married. That was our first house [home]. We paid rent. It was a large house, but we only had a room and an entrance hall, and our kitchen was in the courtyard. But our room was very nice, it measured 5 meters by 5. We had a dog when we lived on Dragos Voda St. And once it accompanied my husband to the high school and returned home all by itself. We moved here from Dragos Voda St., in a block of flats. We moved just after they finished building the blocks of flats. And we paid by installments and purchased the apartment. We never owned a home until we bought the apartment in a block of flats. Where could we get one?

My husband obtained a transfer from the high school in Dorohoi to the "A. T. Laurian" High School in Botosani, and it wasn't long before he became principal of the "A. T. Laurian" High School. He was principal for a few years. He wasn't a party member – nor was I. He taught biology. He was known to be a good teacher. He was on the board of examiners for the baccalaureate examination, he was a highly esteemed teacher. He worked at the "A. T. Laurian" High School until his retirement. He retired around 1972-1973. And he departed [died] in 1996 and that's that.

My husband spoke both Romanian and Yiddish, too. He wasn't very religious, moderate I'd say. He went to the synagogue very rarely. He did so on holidays. Especially when prayers for the dead were performed, he always attended the synagogue as well. He also wore the tefillin at home from time to time.

I used to light candles on Friday night, and I still do, to this day. I pray for those that are no longer among us – I light these candles in their memory. I don't recite that many prayers. That's all I say – may they rest in peace! I light 2 candles – I've grown into this habit. The candlesticks are made from silver, I received them as a gift from our wedding sponsors, the Margulies family. I didn't have separate dishes for meat and milk. I didn't even eat meat and milk separately, I somewhat mixed them.

After my mother died, I sat shivah for 8 days in her memory. *[Editor's note: In Botosani, I have come across the custom of sitting shivah for 8 days instead of 7].* I honor my parents' memory very much. You place a rug on the floor, and you sit on it. You stand up from time to time. These are the customs. The dead are buried in white sheets. People make clothes for them, sew, but they must

be white, in any case. The dead are not dressed in a suit of clothes, no. You pay money to the Community, they buy them, manufacture them – a woman at the Community makes them. That's life!

When I was married and was on holiday, I used to go on vacation every year, at spas, at a resort or other, we used to go on organized trips. I used to go everywhere with my husband. We traveled to Cernauti, Chisinau, Leningrad, Moscow, Warsaw, Berlin.

I've been to Israel around 3 times. But I traveled there without my husband, for he had died. I don't remember in what years I traveled there. I've been to Jerusalem, Haifa. After that, I visited all the places on a trip. I've also been to the Dead Sea. I was thrilled by what I was seeing there. A beautiful country, a country built by means of hard work. Why, it was in the process of being built, it was just beginning, but still, beautiful things. Much has been done there. I always saw something new every time I traveled there. People worked there. A beautiful country, but it was surrounded by enemies. That's how it was.

How could I pass the time now? I read the press – “Adevarul” and “Monitorul de Botosani.” [Ed. note: “Adevarul” (The Truth), Romanian newspaper. It was issued weekly in Iasi during 1871-1872 and, with intermissions, daily in Bucharest between 1888 and 1951; “Monitorul de Botoșani” (The Botosani Monitor)] I have a subscription for the “Adevărul” newspaper, and I only buy “Monitorul...” once a week. I also buy books now and then, go out for a walk, a friend visits me once in a while – this, that. And time passes. The Leontes come to visit me too – Elena and Vasile Leonte –, who support me, look after me.

Glossary

1 Struma ship

In December 1941 the ship took on board some 750 Jews – which was more than seven times its normal passengers' capacity – to take them to Haifa, then Palestine. As none of the passengers had British permits to enter the country, the ship stopped in Istanbul, Turkey, in order for them to get immigration certificates to Palestine but the Turkish authorities did not allow the passengers to disembark. They were given food and medicine by the Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish community of Istanbul. As the vessel was not seaworthy, it could not leave either. However, in February 1942 the Turks towed the Struma to the Black Sea without water, food or fuel on board. The ship sank the same night and there was only one survivor. In 1978, a Soviet naval history disclosed that a Soviet submarine had sunk the Struma.

2 Hashomer Hatzair

Left-wing Zionist youth organization, started up in Poland in 1912, and managed to gather supporters from all over Europe. Their goal was to educate the youth in the Zionist mentality and to prepare them to emigrate to Palestine. To achieve this goal they paid special attention to the so-called shomer-movement (boy scout education) and supported the re-stratification of the Jewish society. They operated several agricultural and industrial training grounds (the so-called chalutz grounds) to train those who wanted to emigrate. In Transylvania the first Hashomer Hatzair groups had been established in the 1920s. During World War II, members of the Hashomer Hatzair were

leading active resistance against German forces, in ghettos and concentration camps.

3 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.

4 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.