

Samuel Eiferman In The Braila Synagogue



I am the one to the left. The one in the middle is Mr. Bernstein and the one to the right is Mr. Luthmar. The photo was taken at the Synagogue in Braila on 9 October 2000. Mr. Luthmar was then teaching us Hebrew.

I go to the Jewish Community on every holiday; on certain occasions I even go there twice a day. Men sit in the right half and women sit in the left half. There are very few of us left - only 14 of us still attend the services. The youngest Jew is 60 years old. There are only three men in Braila who are older than I am: Bernstein, 81, [Max] Wolf, 84, and [Silo] Oberman, 86. [Ed. note: Centropa also made interviews with Mr. Max Wolf and Mr. Silo Oberman.] When none of them shows up, I'm the oldest man in the synagogue.

My wife goes to the synagogue too, but only on major holidays, 3-4 times a year. Women don't attend the regular service. Prayers are read in Romanian because most of us can't speak Hebrew. In fact, Bernstein and Mr. Luthmar are the only ones who can. I can speak Yiddish though. Bernstein and I are the only ones in Braila who can speak Yiddish well. The rest can barely understand it because they grew up in the Kingdom, where Yiddish wasn't that widespread. Their fathers may have spoken it, but the Jews of my generation didn't learn it.

For a long time I didn't care too much about keeping the Jewish traditions. It was only after the Revolution that I began to pay attention to them. Holidays are a nice thing, after all. We have the Passover, then Rosh Hashanah in October, then Chanukkah. I wasn't familiar with the customs; all I could do was remember my days as a child and have my wife cook the same things as my mother used to: meatballs with noodles, beans with noodles, dumplings, meatballs with mashed potatoes...

I often go to the Jewish Community in Braila. We have a local club where we gather with our spouses, many of whom aren't Jewish. There's also a women's club where members reminisce about the old days. Unfortunately, there are so few of us left.