

Mesko Nikolai The Dining Room Of The Jewish Religious Community In Mukachevo



This photo was taken in the dining room of the Jewish Religious Community in Mukachevo. Behind me can be seen many small photographs. They show various Mukachevo rabbis, but also various Jewish institutions and events. The photo was taken on the occasion of some celebration, probably in 2003 . Our synagogue stands in Beregovskaja Street, at No. 3. After the war there was only one Jewish community in Mukachevo. Around 700 to 750 of us returned [after the Holocaust], in the meantime the older ones have died, many emigrated to the USA, Germany, Israel and Canada. Today about 750 Jews live here. In 1952, or 1955, the religious community asked Kiev to send us a

rabbi. And they did. Rabbi Hoffmann arrived. After his arrival Chaim Hoffmann founded a kitchen for poor Jews. About 30 Jews regularly visited the synagogue. In the beginning Rabbi Hoffmann behaved well. Slowly, though, he began to institute things in the synagogue that we weren't used to. This led to the community splitting in two. About 12 to 14 people who participate in prayers daily stayed with the rabbi. Now they pray where the kitchen used to be. Our religious community - under the leadership of chairman Leibovich - has about 25 men who regularly attend prayers. We pray where the Torah is. Many Russian Jews who don't know how to pray live here. A large majority of Jews don't participate in prayers. They only go to synagogue during the high holidays. Rabbi Shapira's grandson, Rabinovitz, had prayer books specially printed so that beside the Hebrew prayers there's a Russian translation, so they could read it. There are few of us that know how to pray properly [meaning to pray from Hebrew prayer books - Editor's note]. There's only five of us. Of these five, only three know how to lead prayers, Mr. Leibovich, Weider, who was born in 1922, and I. Leibovich leads prayers during the week. I lead prayers only on Friday evening, Saturday, and on other holidays. I also have to note that in Ruthenia it's only in Mukachevo that there's a synagogue where there are prayers every day, morning and evening. In other towns people go to pray mainly on Friday evening, on Saturday and holidays. We pray, morning, evening, every day. When our chairman, Leibovich, is away, I lead prayers. Shapira's grandson, Rabinovitz, who lives in the USA, is constantly helping us, whether it's with prayer books or supporting the kitchen, where they cook daily. We have a beautiful kitchen. He sends us money, and when necessary, he sends us bocherim from a yeshivah for the high holidays.