

## Mochiu Rotaru At A Passover Celebration



This is a Passover celebration, the first seder evening at the canteen of the Jewish Community in Botosani, which many of the Jews attended. In the back row I recognize my father, Mochiu Rotaru, the first on the right, facing us. The one standing is the rabbi who conducted the ceremonies in Botosani in those days - I forgot his name. The others are various citizens attending the seder evening. I believe I wasn't present at this ceremony. As you can see, most of them are older people. The photograph was taken in 1972, the Jewish year is also recorded, 5732.

We lived in Saveni until 1961 and afterwards we all moved here, to Botosani. During our stay in Botosani, my father was employed by the Community as administrator of the ritual restaurant, the Jewish Community canteen in Botosani, for a few years, until his death. He died of a heart attack in 1975.

The first time he performed the seder ceremony after we returned from Transnistria I was of school age, I must have been six. When we were little we didn't realize he was performing this ceremony. And he hid the slice of matzah, we forgot all about it, you see, he had told us beforehand how it was going to be, he had told us to simply find it, that he would see, he would give us a present, something, he would give us some money. But we forgot. We found it and we secretly went into another room while father didn't notice, as we did everything in secrecy, and ate the slice of matzah. We weren't really hungry, but there wasn't so much matzah as nowadays, and father would buy only a few slices, as was the custom. We didn't have much money, for it was just after the war, there was widespread poverty. It wasn't like today, when you go and buy a whole box, or two, or three. And when we returned, Father said: 'Well, let us see the afikoman' - that's what it's called. And we looked at one another, we exchanged some glances... 'Come on, let us see it, that is the rule, you must show it! We will give you something for it.' 'Well, we ate it!' There was no question of reward anymore, we had taken it ourselves.

Until his death, father always observed the seder on Passover. But in those years when it was performed at the canteen, he attended it at the canteen. They started performing it at the canteen

around 1970. In the old days they didn't have these activities with canteen service. Afterwards, there was a canteen here in Botosani where 50-100 persons ate lunch every day.