

Eugenia And Samuel Eiferman In The Braila Synagogue



My wife and I at the synagogue on Pesach, in 1999.

My wife's name is Eugenia Eiferman nee Paraschiv. She's Romanian. She was born on 17 December 1931. I met her at a friend's place in 1951, right after she had graduated from high school. She had attended the economics high school in Braila, which was then called the Middle School for Finance. Both her parents had been married once before. My wife has a sister whose name I don't know. Her father had two boys: Vasile Paraschiv, born in 1926, and George Paraschiv, who died in December 1989.

We got married on 1 April 1952. It is true that, before the war, the custom for Jews was to marry within their faith; but I married a Romanian. My mother didn't oppose my decision. Things ceased to be that strict after the war, so no one was surprised. My mother always addressed her daughter-in-law as "Mrs. Eiferman". She was an educated woman who worked as an accountant.

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...

On Pesach we buy matzah from the Jewish Community and we cook traditional dishes. They're not too particular - you need to have chicken or beef, soup, stake, "meatballs" made of potatoes with eggs and matzah flour. There are fasting periods when you're not allowed to eat certain foods. But I can't observe the fast because I'm on medication. We still get aids from the Community: 8 parcels per year.