

Michal Warzager Holding The Torah In The Prayer House In Legnica



This picture was taken in our prayer house in Legnica. I'm on the left side, standing. The man who holds the Torah with me, his name was Brunengraber, and he left for Israel sometime in the 1980s. That picture was taken a short time before his departure.

I learned how to pray from my father, Jehide Warzager. He was very religious: he prayed all the time. He'd get up - he always got up early - and put on his tallit and prayed, even on weekdays, not only on the Sabbath. And he always wore a yarmulka - a velvet one he'd made for himself - and he made us wear one too. The Poles would stare at us, because it was so hot and there we were with our heads covered. I remember it like it was yesterday, how I had to wear a yarmulka day and night, as the saying goes. My father also had long payes and sometimes I'd trim them a little for him, when he asked me to.

I started to be regularly involved with the Jewish community in 1977. It used to be a big community, but nearly everyone's left [the Jewish community in Legnica now counts only few members, most of them are older than 70]. First the young people. And then I look around and - hmm, this one's gone, that one's gone. Some of them said nothing about leaving. Some of them told me that they were going to Israel, that they were going to eat oranges all day long, and that they wouldn't forget me and would send me packages. And it would have been nice to get even one package - half an orange, at least!

I always go to shul on Saturday, since if one or two people are missing, the service can't take place. I go, and I sit; it's not so tiring for me - just a little if I stand for half an hour at a time. Sometimes we have a memorial prayer for some deceased friend or relative. We recite a special Kaddish then - either I recite it, or the chairman does. The older folks who didn't emigrate attend pretty regularly. Every Saturday we have a half-liter of vodka, and sometimes someone smuggles in a bottle of their own, so we can always have a drink. And the little meal doesn't cost anything - they always prepare something for Saturday. For example a kosher chicken cutlet, potatoes with some gravy, and sweet tea with lemon - no wonder people attend! But not too many people - sometimes there's barely ten. It's a change of pace, anyway; with the meal and all, it lasts a couple of hours. We talk - we can't speak Yiddish, though, since not everyone there understands it. So we talk in Polish, and if I need to discuss something with the chairman, then we speak Yiddish.