

## Aron Ishakh Making A Speech



As far as I remember this picture of my husband Aron Ishakh was taken on the occasion of Rosh Hashanah in 2001 in the Jewish club in Ruse.

As a matter of fact, during the totalitarian period, when we were deprived of our estates, we were also deprived of our synagogues. I am speaking of the two synagogues: the big Sephardi one and that of the Ashkenazim. The small Sephardi synagogue was demolished in 1935 because it was then almost in ruins and the Jewish community took a decision to demolish it. An apartment block

was built on the site. The big synagogue was given as an atelier to a town council sculptor and he made his sculptures in there. So our synagogue started looking like a bungalow.

The Ashkenazi synagogue was given to the state lottery and they built twelve small rooms in it. When we were given back our estates in 1989, we were also given the two synagogues. We had a double problem to solve. We had to pull down the inner walls in the Ashkenazi synagogue in order to transform it into a synagogue and a club again.

We needed money, but we didn't have it. That is why we sold an estate. I am speaking of an old house that was in the possession of a Jew who immigrated to Palestine before 1948. The house remained as a property of the Jewish community in Ruse. It was located on Alexandrovska Street, and we started the reconstruction. That happened in 1992.

Meanwhile, the big Sephardi synagogue started falling into ruins. It was crumbling away in front of our eyes, but we didn't have the money to reconstruct it. We asked for 100,000 BGN [which equals some EUR 50,000] from the central governing body of Shalom in Sofia – but the sum was very high and there was nobody to give it to us.

That was the reason why the governing committee of Ruse's Shalom decided to sell it to an Evangelist sect. All the Jews in Ruse are convinced that it is a sect, not a widely accepted branch of the Christian religion. And we sold it. They spent USD 120,000 to reconstruct the building.

It is sad, but it looks now exactly the way it did 50 years ago. But it is no longer functioning as a synagogue. And it will never be a synagogue again, because we don't have funds to buy it back from the Evangelists.