

Haim And Paula Perla Iancu



This picture was taken in Iasi in 1944. On the left is my Grandfather Iancu Haim and the other person is my grandmother, Paula Perla Iancu. This picture has the following dedication: 'To our most beloved and dear friends, who have been dearer to us than our dearest friends. We will never forget you. May the Almighty Lord help us see one another in happiness. You have been kind, and you have been earnest both in joy, and in distress. May you be happy, our dear friends, may luck follow you wherever you may go, may your children bring you much joy. May your life be happy and do not forget us, for we love you and cherish you. We are united forever. May God protect you. Paula and Iancu Haim, 26th March 1944, our days of distress, the day of our parting.'

I met my other 'grandfather,' that is, my grandmother's second husband, the one named Haim; I used to call him 'Uncle Haim.' Iancu Haim was the one I met last, so I considered him my grandfather. My grandparents lived in Iasi, in the Podu Ros quarter. Their house was pretty small - it wasn't elegant or luxurious. They had electricity and running water, both in Barlad and in Iasi. They may have had those, but the houses they lived in were modest. They didn't own them - they paid rent.

My maternal grandparents didn't have animals. They didn't hire people to help them with the house either, because they weren't rich people. As far as I know, their financial situation was rather modest and they didn't have servants.

They spoke Romanian. They also spoke Yiddish, because Grandfather Iancu Haim used to sing at the synagogue. But the language they used at home was Romanian. I know very few expressions in Yiddish. They observed the tradition, but didn't speak Yiddish. Of course, there were some expressions that couldn't be translated into Romanian, but the use of Yiddish was only restricted to those.

Neither of my grandfathers wore sideburns - only the ultra-orthodox Jews did. They did wear hats. My grandmother dressed in an ordinary fashion. Only the wives of rabbis used to dress differently. My grandparents didn't have any political orientation; that was also because my maternal grandfather was a very religious man. As for their education, I don't know anything about it. My grandmother didn't use to tell me much, and I'm now sorry I didn't find out more things. I remember my grandmother from Iasi with Grandfather Haim; they were already nearing old age when I met them.

Grandfather Haim went to the temple every day and kept all the holidays. They didn't eat pork. When we sat at table, he would grab a piece of bread, dip it in salt, and say a prayer. This is what

he used to do before meals. My grandfather was the only one who said the prayer, because he was into religious things. Of course, they kept the holidays, and they ate kosher, just like they were supposed to. Back then, there was a slaughterhouse where they slaughtered cattle and poultry by kosher rules. Grandfather served as a shochet at the temple.

My favorite place to spend my childhood vacations was my grandparents' house. I used to go to Iasi and I felt great there. When I stayed with them in my vacations, my grandparents used to take me out for a walk in Iasi. My grandfather would go to the temple every morning and he would come back with pretzels and all sorts of treats. They had a courtyard, and, in the morning, when he came with the buttered pretzels on a string, it felt like an entire ceremony - like kids feel when they're at their grandparents'. The city of Iasi was renowned for its pretzels. And, besides, you know how it is with kids - their grandparents spoil them. The food at their place tasted better than what my mother cooked.