

The Finkels With Haim Meer Hersch And Mina Blaicher



The one on the left in this photograph is Mina Blaicher, an in-law of my husband - meaning the sister of Froim Blaicher, the husband of my husband's sister -, my husband, Mikel Finkel, is the one next to Mina, in the back row; our son, Gustav Finkel, is the one in front of him, I, Berta Finkel, am the one on their right, and the old man on the right is Haim Meer Hersch, the old man who lived with us after my mother-in-law died. This photograph was taken in the courtyard of the house where we lived, on Zimbrului St.; on the left, you can see the roof of the stable where we kept the sheep.

I, Berta Finkel, married here, in Botosani, in 1951. We lived with my parents-in-law, at their place on Zimbrului St. My parents-in-law lived in the kitchen, which was a separate building, and we lived in two rooms. My mother-in-law died in 1955, and my father-in-law died in 1960.

We took an old man in the house when my mother-in-law died - his name was Haim Meer Hersch -, so that my father-in-law didn't sleep alone. In former days, there were poor people who begged for alms. And this man had the habit of doing that, he begged with yet another person. But after we took him in, we didn't let him beg anymore. And there was a canteen in those days [the canteen of the Jewish Community in Botosani], he went to the canteen every day, they served him meals, and the Community [the Jewish Community in Botosani] gave him food as well, they gave him everything he needed, for he was a poor man, even if he lived with us. For I couldn't provide for him. But since there was the Community and they could spare... They also gave him clothes, they gave him everything. I don't remember the year when he died, my own children were of school age, they were grown by then.

I wasn't a member of the Communist Party, nor was my husband. I didn't have a job. We raised sheep. That's what my husband did for a living before we got married. We had a large garden where we lived, we also had an enclosure in the back, and he had room for the sheep. And there was this man, who didn't live with us, he only came during spring to milk the sheep. Then, around May, when sheep are put to pasture, they constructed a sheepfold, and we sent the sheep to the sheepfold. There, at the sheepfold, on the pasture, it was a different matter, it was out of the city. I used to go to the sheepfold myself, I went on foot, I sometimes brought my daughter along, even though it wasn't nearby. That's what I mean, each of us worked, for I don't know how to describe the work that I did. But I seem to remember we had many sheep. We had 20, 30 sheep. You couldn't keep too many sheep, for the number of sheep you could keep was very strictly regulated during the Ceausescu's regime. You weren't allowed to put the sheep to pasture in the spring, when the grass starts growing. You weren't even allowed to let them out of the courtyard until it was time to put them to pasture. People always put the sheep to pasture as late as May, you weren't allowed to do it sooner. I had to keep them at home, feed them. And I did, what could I do? And I had to keep the homestead clean, the courtyard as well, I couldn't let it get dirty. They didn't come to check every day, but still, they did so when they remembered to do it, the courtyard had to be clean as well, everything had to be clean. That's how it was during the Ceausescu regime. They erected the sheepfolds in May - everyone brought planks, this and that. That's where the sheep were kept until autumn, when the cold sets in, and then the sheepfold was dismantled. Two shepherds lived there, and people took milk by turn. When your turn came, you went to the sheepfold, and took as much milk as you were due. It was very hard. We had a hard time raising sheep as we did, stop asking me questions about it.