

Leon, Liza And Gavriel Levi



In this picture you can see me and my parents Liza Levi, nee Burla, and Gavriel Levi in Sofia. It was taken in the 1940s, a short time before they left for Israel. I was a young boy when my relatives left for Israel. I was enthusiastic. In 1948-49 I was about 22 years old and I believed that I belonged to the place where I was born and that I had to stay and live here. Israel was a chimera for me, at least at that time. I thought I wouldn't be able to make it there. I thought that I was rooted in Bulgaria. Of course, I am a Jew but I am also a Bulgarian citizen and I love the country I have lived in. I don't know if it was the wisest decision because my life would have been completely different if I had gone there. But it's a choice I made. I didn't blame the people who left. I was very sorry that my family was separated. They all left because my elder brothers, my father and my mother had suffered a lot from the monarchy reign in Bulgaria. They thought that if they went there, they

would live in their own country and nobody would point a finger at them because of the fact that they were Jews - 'second hand' people. My friends who left are still my friends. In 1959, the first time I was allowed to go to Israel and see my family, I met many of my friends and they treated me just like they used to before. Many of them had succeeded in making a good life for themselves there.