

Todor Chelibakov's 80th Birthday Party



Here you can see my husband Tosho [diminutive from Todor] at his 80th birthday party, together with my grandchildren. We are in a restaurant in Plovdiv. Standing on the left is Victor, hugging his fiancée Eva Mashiyah. On the right is Robert. Tosho and I are sitting in front of them. The year is 2005.

In 1948 I wanted to leave for Israel very much but my parents didn't agree. Suddenly all my friends were gone and I felt the need to meet with people, so I went to the Youth Union in our neighborhood. There I met my future husband, the Bulgarian Todor Petrov Chelibakov. He was also a member of the Youth Union, and led the theater group. We also saw each other at parties, birthdays. He sang very well and was a very direct and sociable person, the Bohemian type.

My mother was strongly against our marriage. My parents talked against him and Bulgarians as a whole. Then they stopped talking to me for seven or eight months because of my decision to marry him. My family's resistance was very strong and lasted eight months. In 1952 I left home. I got married in 1952. We were married by a registrar in front of two witnesses only. Before that my father had met Todor a couple of times to persuade him to leave me, saying I was a spoiled girl, we wouldn't have any children, I had a weak heart or they would leave for Israel and I would decide to join them sooner or later.

Todor always said, 'I haven't chained her to myself. If she decides, I am ready to do anything for her, but I can't keep her by force.' Todor is a very tolerant man. He reacted calmly to the attitude of my parents towards him and towards Bulgarians. You can rarely meet such a man. He didn't feel angry towards them. He would only say, 'They are your parents, this is what they think is right for you. We have no right to judge them.'

Even after we got married I told him that it wasn't accepted among Jews to call your parents-in-law grandmother and grandfather, and he should call them 'mama' and 'papa.' And he addressed them in this way. When welcoming my mother into our home, he literally bowed to her. He indulged her

every wish and brought her everything she wanted.