

## Stela Benaroy, Berta Pando And Milena Benaroy



In this photo you can see my daughter Stela – on the right, me and her mother-in-law Milka Benaroy who has been my friend since childhood. We are traveling by train from Sofia to Yambol. The year was 1992. We are all happy and smiling. That was our first reunion with the children after they had left for Israel.

In 1991 my daughter Stela, her husband, his brother and his sister-in-law left for Israel to make an aliyah. They took my grandson – Moischo [diminutive from Mois] – along. At that time he was six. Our granddaughter, who was two years old, stayed with us. We moved to Yambol to look after her and started living with my sister. My grandson, Moischo, couldn't get used to Israel. He had to start school but couldn't learn the language for two or three months so they got him on the plane and returned him here. He started school here in Yambol. My daughter and son-in-law spent 11 months in Israel but nostalgia returned them to Bulgaria – they even had to pay a refund of 10, 000 dollars. The money they had earned was used to pay the loans back. Now they live in Yambol.

I have leftist beliefs. The changes of 1989 [on 10th November, 1989 after 35 years of rule, Communist Party leader Todor Zhivkov was replaced by the hitherto Prime Minister Peter Mladenov who changed the Bulgarian Communist Party's name to Socialist Party] brought a lot of difficulties for me. My life was changed entirely. We became very poor. In 1991 I was taking the biggest working pension of 185 leva [around 90 euro], during the Kostov government [1997-2001] it became 61 leva [around 30 euro].

I had a friend from Yambol – Milka Godzes. She was a Jew too. Her father had started going blind gradually since the age of ten or twelve. Her father and my father were friends. My dad helped him by reading the lessons aloud to him so that he could finish the third year at school. When Milka was born, he saw and afterwards lost his sight completely. Milka married a Jew, too. We were friends with her because she was only a year and three months younger.