

Gracia Albuhaire With Schoolmates



This is the Jewish school in Karnobat. I am the third girl from the right in the bottom row. The photo was taken in the 1930s. I went to the nursery school and then to the Jewish school where I studied until the 4th grade. I had lessons in Hebrew and Bulgarian, and then we had an exam and transferred to a Bulgarian school - first to an elementary school and then to high school. Our teachers changed very often - in an unfamiliar city, with no company in the Jewish neighborhood, they must have felt bored. Almost every year we had different Hebrew teachers. I suppose they attended courses, perhaps in Sofia, and they came out there to teach us. I remember all of them. In the nursery school my teacher's name was Benzion. He was a dark-eyed, nice man, who lived in my classmate Mois's house. I was in love with that teacher. He also paid attention to me - he used to take me in his hands, put me on his knees and told me fairy tales. And I stared at him with an open mouth. In the 1st grade another teacher came - Pesach was his name - he was a big man, a little rusty. Then came Lili - in the 3rd grade - from Plovdiv; she was short, fluffy and very nice. I remember only that once she visited us and in my garden there was one hyacinth and I picked it and gave it to her. My mother said, laughing: 'This was the only one you had'. In the 4th grade our teacher was Abramovich from Romania. He didn't know a single word in Bulgarian and therefore he was always looking for someone to accompany him. And it was announced that everybody who knew Hebrew should assemble. He chose me. I accompanied him all the time - to the barbershop, the food shop, as though I was 'sewed' to him in order for him to manage. I learned Hebrew quite well, yet so many years have passed since then and I don't remember the words anymore. But I remember him. At school we spoke more Bulgarian, while at home we spoke Judezmo. In Sofia they call it Ladino but we used to call it Judezmo-Espaniol. We had lessons in Hebrew and Bulgarian, then we had an exam and transferred to a Bulgarian school - first to elementary school and then to high school.