

## Mayer Rafael Alhalel



This is me. The photo was taken in 1966 in Vidin. You can see the medals I received throughout the years for my work for society and the [communist] party. The first medal I received was the so-called People's Medal of Labor on the occasion of the 20th anniversary since the political changes from 9th September 1944 [when Bulgaria turned from monarchy into constitutional republic]. Later, I received the medal 'Red Flag of Labor' for my work during the construction of the Chemical Plant in Vidin. Then I received the Cyril and Methodius Order of 2nd Degree as an award for my leadership of the cultural activities in Vidin. After that as a chairman of the Fatherland Front I received another 'Red Flag' medal [a broad left wing umbrella organization, created in 1942, with the purpose to lead the Communist Party to power]. I also received other not so important medals on the jubilee anniversaries of 9th September 1944. I didn't immigrate to Israel for a number of

reasons. Firstly, I had to stay in Cherven Bryag after my escape from the camp to help my sister in her work, because her husband was an ailing man. He had his own factory for paper products and I could be useful to him as a printer. I lived and worked for them from 1944 until 1949, when my sister immigrated to Ramat Gan in Israel. She asked me to go with her, but now I had another reason to stay in Bulgaria. When I settled in Cherven Bryag, I was immediately made a member of the local UYW organization, where I gladly took part in their social activities. Naturally, I soon joined the Party. I became a member of the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1950. Immediately after that I was elected chairman of the Komsomol there. Later, I became chairman of the Party Committee. I was also head of the organizational department. After that I was chairman of the Fatherland Front. Then I was appointed representative of the Central Council of the Trade Unions. Those were very prestigious positions, which earned me the respect of my fellow citizens and provided a peaceful life. Besides, my family was financially well-off, which isn't to be underestimated. But the most important thing for me was the respect of my fellow Bulgarians. During the whole totalitarian period and especially when I lived in Cherven Bryag, I was always treated with much respect and warmth. I have never had problems because of my origin.