

Daniel Saltiel



This is a picture of my maternal grandfather, Daniel Saltiel.

Daniel Saltiel had gone to school. He went to a Turkish school, but he probably learned more at the Jewish school.

Daniel's first business was to sell and place windows. He used to say that he had put all the windows at the warehouses of the old railway station. He then changed his profession to a lumber merchant.

That was when I was around ten years old or even younger. When he grew older, he couldn't carry glass and climb up anymore. So he started as a lumber merchant and went really well.

He mostly brought wood from Romania and Yugoslavia, while he would bring the top quality wood from Sweden. Grandfather was not the first one in the business, but he was good. He worked hard, he would travel for business especially around eastern Macedonia.

Many times he also went to other Balkan countries for supplies. Very often, he would visit Romania and Yugoslavia. His employees were an accountant and a porter. They were both Jewish.

He opened his shop first at Aggelaki Street. This area is where the brothels, but also the wood suppliers were. When Aggelaki Street changed and became a busy street, all the wooden suppliers moved to the area by the old railway station.

This area used to be called "New Xyladika" and it is near there that my father had his factory. They were almost neighbors.

This must have been around 1930. In fact, he was so close to the train station that every day he went to work, he would stop at the station for his coffee. He liked watching the trains go by.

And when it was time, he would go and open the shop. He would go home early. He was back at around 7 in the evening. He always came home early. He never stayed out later in the evening, which was strange.

Daniel knew Turkish. He spoke a bit of Armenian and Hebrew, and he knew how to read too. I don't know if he spoke Hebrew, but he certainly knew how to read. He didn't know French very well.

All the merchants and manufacturers spoke many languages. My grandfather learned Greek because of the business. He had to learn Greek because he was working not only with the Jews, but also had many other customers.

He mainly worked with the regions of Serres, Drama, and Kavala where he always went by train. And he had a habit: he always used to take many things with him on the train, food and the rest. He would eat and offer to the whole wagon. And it didn't matter who he was travelling with.

Grandfather Daniel went to the cinema only with his grandchildren. He wouldn't take his wife and go watch a film, no. Four or five friends would gather at Almosnino's cafe and chat.

They would joke around and play. They used to tease the women that were going by. And they would eat a dessert. Daniel used to go there after closing the shop.

Because they were closing early they would meet up around five or five thirty at the Almosnino. They would sit outside in the summer and inside in the winter.

Daniel was not so religious but he kept the traditions. I remember that everyday he would get up and first thing he would read for half an hour.

And then he would get ready, drink his coffee and go to work. He bought kosher meat, that's for sure. I don't know if he kept the Kashrout, maybe he did at the beginning but later on, not as much. I don't remember them having different utensils for the milk and different for the meat.

But he definitely bought kosher meat. He never made a habit of going every Saturday at the synagogue. When it was a religious holiday he would go. He went at the Bet Saoul synagogue

because it was near to his house.

I think that grandfather Daniel voted in the Community's elections. I believe so, not that I am not sure of it; he voted neither the leftists, nor the Zionists, but the liberals that were in favour of assimilation. Without being absolutely certain, I think that he supported them.

He read the French newspapers and he also bought the "Aktion". He would either buy the "Aktion", "L' Independant", or "Le Progres", but he would always buy one newspaper. They were friends with a journalist that wrote for the Independant and signed as I.N.