

The Engagement Photo Of Lea And Leon Beraha



This is our engagement photo - taken just a little while before our wedding. It was taken in Sofia in 1952. My husband Leon Beraha and I are standing, my parents-in-law are sitting. The brooch that my mother-in-law is wearing is a present from me. My mother-in-law was a wonderful, exceptional person. We loved each other very much. By 1947 I was alone. My future husband was a student in the USSR. My father died in my arms. My sister Eliza got married and left for Israel. My brother Betzalel and his family followed my sister at my mother's request. In 1949 my mother also left for Israel. It was very hard for me. In order to escape from loneliness, I took part in two consecutive brigades. There I fell and broke my hand. I was falsely diagnosed with bone tuberculosis. Later it turned out that I had simple sciatica. From one sanatorium to another I finally reached the Workers' Academy in Varna, where I finished my high school education. There I was put into a plaster cast and during the whole year they took me to exams on a stretcher. I gained a lot of weight and weighed some 90 kilos as a result of total immobilization. I was lucky that my husband visited me. I told him that I didn't intend to marry him because of my illness. Upon his return to Moscow my husband took my tests to the Institute for Bone and Joint Tuberculosis. The professor there concluded that I have no tuberculosis whatsoever. According to him it was more likely to be rheumatism or something of that kind. And above all he recommended that I should start moving. I stood up and fell immediately. My wonderful, loving mother-in-law realized that I was suffering and came to see me. I lived with her for two years, before marrying my husband. We lived in one room - my father-in-law, my mother-in-law, my husband's brother and his wife. We lived very well. My mother-in-law was an extraordinary woman. She still wouldn't believe that I had tuberculosis. She used to hide good food from the others. She took me out into the yard behind the house and made a huge effort to persuade me that I had to eat for the sake of my husband, who was so good-hearted and whom I loved. I loved her very much and later took care of her. She also died in my arms.