

Salvator Israel With His Sisters



This is a photo of my husband Salvator Israel and his sisters: Rashel (the first from right), Sarika (the first from left), Rene (the third from left) and Hanika (second from left, on the chair). He had one more sister, Elizabeth, who is not in this photo. My husband is the only boy in the picture. The photo was taken in Plovdiv in the 1910s, where the Israel family lived. Their father Marko Israel was a respected merchant and the mother was a Hungarian Sephardi Jew, Leontin Demayo who had lived in Vienna and Budapest. They had six children. Hanika, one of their children died very young, when she was nine years old. This was a great shock for the whole family. My husband Salvator Israel was born in 1908 in Plovdiv. He wanted to become an agronomy specialist, but his father didn't allow him to and sent him to France to study medicine. Salvator went to study in France,

Montpelier, and graduated in Paris as a medical doctor. He lived in France for ten years and after he graduated, he became an assistant at the university. Then he had to go back to Bulgaria, because he couldn't support himself. On his return in 1938, he worked for a while in the state hospital in Plovdiv and then opened his own medical practice where he worked until 1941. That year he was mobilized as a district physician and later as a municipal physician in Karnobat during the war. That's how we met. Rene got married to Iosif Israel, who was a first cousin of hers, the son of her father's brother. Everyone was against their marriage, but they did it at the cost of not having any children, because of the blood relationship between them. My husband's father, Marko Israel, was a very strict man, but he wasn't able to prevent their marriage. When they lived in Bulgaria, Iosif was a very respected lawyer. After World War II Rene, Iosif and Sarika went to live in Israel. Sarika worked in some kind of ministry but I don't know exactly which. She was very well educated and knew many languages. One year later, after they had moved to Israel, Iosif got paralyzed after a heart attack. Sarika and Rene devoted their lives to look after him. Both sisters and Iosif lived together. Rene had a pharmacy on the first floor of her house and so she could work and look after Iosif, who was bedridden until the end of his life.