

Leon Levi



Here you can see me, photographed in the 1950s in the yard of one of the houses we used to live in before World War II. You can see that there is no house left. It was ruined. This place is on Positano Street in Sofia. At the time I was born and at the times I remember, Sofia was much different than it is now. We used to live mainly around the Jewish quarter, the so-called luchbunar or 'Trite kladenetsa'. Of course, we used to rent houses and very often changed our lodgings but for the greater part we lived in this quarter. There were lots of Jews there, some 50,000 people. The relations between us were very warm and close. The community center, now called Emil Shekerdzhiski, was built there at those times. That was Bet Am - the Jewish house, a very nice

house, where we used to gather regularly. A Bulgarian Jewish children's choir was formed there. Life in Sofia was way more different than it is now. I can compare it only to the life in some underdeveloped cities in Asia and, especially, in the Arab countries. There was electricity mostly in the center of Sofia in those days. In the suburbs there was only electricity in several houses, the majority of the houses didn't have any. I remember that we used gas lamps. We used to live on 121, Positano Street. We rented two rooms there. Once a builder from the town of Trun came and settled in a room in our yard. We already had electricity at that time. One evening the builder came to our place and started wondering at what exactly the bulb was. He even tried to light up his cigarette from the bulb. Of course, he couldn't manage to do so and we had to explain to him that electricity happened to be something completely different. The streets were dusty and dirty then, they weren't even asphalted. You could see electric lamps here and there in the streets, although we - the children - used to break them by throwing stones at them.