

Viera Slesingerova With Her Daughter And Friends In Israel



This picture was taken in Israel, near Lake Kinneret. I am second from left. To my left is my friend Miriam; we met in the ghetto in Lodz. To my right there is another friend of mine, also called Miriam; we were together in the labor camp Mezimesti by Broumov. And the first from right is my daughter Helena. After 1968, my husband considered emigrating to Israel, but I talked him out of it. He was a great supporter of Israel, which was one of the reasons why he was thrown out of the Party. I was never a Zionist, nor were my parents, but I was interested in what was going on in Israel. However, the coverage in Czech newspapers of the conflicts over there were very biased. The Israelis were seen as the ones who had caused the war, as the aggressors. I went to Israel to visit Aunt Alzbeta about a year after my husband's death in 1981. I managed to get there in 1982 after complicated dealings involving my permit, which I was surprised to get. I spent a month there with my aunt. She was already 80 at the time, and we were both very happy to see each other. The second time I went to Israel was on a trip organized by the Jewish community of Prague. That was just after 1989, but my aunt was no longer alive then. Since then, I've been there another three times. My cousin Laci's son still lives there, and he now has a large family, with six sons. Apart from Hebrew, he can also speak Hungarian, Czech and Slovak. I can communicate with his children in English, but his wife speaks only Hebrew. Other than that, I go there to see the 'girls' from Mezimesti. My son Honza was born in 1951, my daughter Helena a year later. Both are living in Prague. Honza completed his secondary education and Helena has a university degree in economics. Helena works as an economist for a law firm and Honza is a computer programmer for a bank. I have two grandchildren. I taught English to both of my children and to my grandchildren. I didn't bring them up in the Jewish tradition, but they always knew that I was Jewish. Honza even joined the Jewish community, as I did in the 1980s. During the Communist regime I corresponded with Aunt Alzbeta in Israel and she was here once on a visit, so my children have known everything about it since they were children. Later on, they learnt about the Holocaust themselves. My granddaughter was with me in Israel and she liked it there very much. I can remember that my grandson, when he was little, once asked me what Jews were. I said to him, 'Well, have a look at

me, do you think I'm different from anyone else?'