

Nesim Alkabes And Wife Erna



In this picture taken in 1989, it shows more or less how we are in the last few years. I, Nesim Alkabes, was born on July 21st, 1920 in our brick home that was 30 m. further from Galata Kulesi [A neighborhood on the European side where Jews congregated in the beginning of the 20th century] with the help of a midwife.

My first school was where Neve Shalom Synagogue is located now [A neighborhood called Shishane that Jews preferred at the beginning of the century]. We had a synagogue called Knesset there, below the Synagogue we had our Jewish primary school. After I studied for 3 years in this school, I went to Saint Benoit for junior high and graduated. When I was only 8, my father provided me with 5 years of religious education in the form of two hours twice weekly from Rabbi Gabay who came to our house, just as his father had done for him. My father was very wealthy; we would pay the Rabbi 2 liras a day, sugar cost 28 kurus (the cost was decided by Atatürk then). "bu iki lira babama bir bardak su gibi gelirdi" "These two liras were like a glass of water for my father" [this is his saying]. As result when I celebrated my bar-mitzvah, my Hebrew and knowledge of the Torah was excellent. We celebrated my bar-mitzvah ceremony by inviting three priests from my school and our relatives to our house on a Sunday.

I was called to military service between 1942 and 1945. I was a soldier in the 3rd regiment of the 2. Airforce battalion for 36 months, i.e. 3 years. In the first year of this period, we built the Malatya airport by mixing sand with cement and water. In the following 6 months, we dug gutters that were 2 m. deep in Adana airport to drain rainwater and filled them up with stones. The next 6 months I was a "writer" in the Çanakkale Bölüğü (regiment). I would take roll call every morning and evening. I would look for runaways, I would grant doctor's visits to the sick ones. Here also they were building an airport, the soldiers were working under harsh conditions. These soldiers needed 2000 calories a day, I took care of the food supply. I spent the next year in Yakack Samandra [a neighborhood on the Asian side], and the last six months in Zonguldak Kokaksu as the writer of the

regiment. There were quite a few Jewish youth from Izmir and Istanbul in this regiment.

I met my wife Erna Adoni, who was born on December 25th, 1924 and raised in Kadıköy, in 1947 at a party given by a mutual friend, and we liked each other. Because she is a graduate of St. Benoit like me, she speaks it as well as I do. When we decided to get married, Erna was 22, and I was 27. We married at the Zulfaris Synagogue on August 10th, 1947 [On the European side, in Karaköy, where the Jewish museum is located now].

Erna and I had three daughters from our union. Our oldest daughter Sara was born in 1948, Rosita in 1950, Stella in 1954. All three of our daughters attended elementary school in Isik Lisesi. Sara and Stella finished Saint Benoit French highschool later on. Rosita, on the other hand, graduated from Robert College. After completing their education, our oldest daughter Sara, married Erol Penso following 8 years of dating, on March 29th, 1970, in Neve Shalom. This photograph is of that day, after the synagogue, it was taken in Sara's home where she lived for a long time.

They always lived on the European side, in a modern house. They raised two sons named Ceki (1972) and Niso(1974). Our daughter Sara always wished to study in college, while she was raising her family, (1997) she entered the university placement exam which is very hard and got accepted to the French Language and Literature faculty in İstanbul Üniversitesi, graduated in 4 years. She has the right to translate and translates books and scientific articles. Their son Ceki has been married to a nice girl for two years, Niso on the other hand is engaged, G-d willing we will marry him in December. Currently we reside in the same apartment.

Our middle daughter Rosita married Jojo Balibarisseev (September 30th 1973), a chemical engineer who graduated from the Bosphorus University, in NeveShalom after finishing highschool.... My son-in-law worked for long years with Charles Danon who owns the Istanbul branch of Guido Modiano which is centered in Italy. In 1980, Mr. Guido offered my son-in-law a job in Italy since he was very happy with his work. In this way the family moved to Milan. Their two children Semi (1977) and Rifka (1976) are now grown up. Their son Semi works in a very important advertising company in Italy. Their daughter Rifka studied child psychology in a university in London. During that time she married Remi Menenson (Ashkenazi Jew, French origin) in 2004. They currently reside in London. Rifka works as a child psychologist in a Jewish school in London.

Our youngest daughter Stella graduated from the Bosphorus University with a degree in chemical engineering with outstanding achievement. With the help of the Israeli government she did her masters and doctorate in "The Weismann Institute of Science" in Rehovot for 8 years. After graduating she sent all her diplomas to New York and applied for a job. Of course she was accepted, she has been working as an academic for 20 years while continuing her research. She is now a United States citizen and is single. She comes every summer to Istanbul for 3 weeks to see us.