

The Children And Teachers In The Jewish School In Vidin



This is the whole Jewish school in Vidin in 1936 or 1837 together with the children and the teachers. I am the sulking girl on the lowest row dressed in the most colorful dress.

My hometown is Vidin, or Bdin, as they called it in the past. I was born in one of the Bulgarian towns on the Danube River in 1930. Every Jew born in Vidin remains in love with this town and the country. As a child I loved going for long walks along the river. If you stop at the bend of the river, you can see Kalafat straight in front of you. Here, in Vidin, people like saying metaphorically that the lights of Kalafat are like the lights of life, because at first they are broad, then the river waters shrink them more and more until they dissolve in one single ray. My parents - David Avram Levi (1898 - 1969), a Sephardi Jew, and Rashel Avram Levi (nee Benjosef, 1899 - 1975), half Ashkenazi Jew, were also born here. I have a sister - Ester David Fintsi (nee Levi), who is five years older than me. She was born in 1925 in Vidin. She lives in Sofia now and she worked as a clerk. She has two daughters: Madlena and Sheli Fintsi, who also live in Sofia.

I also remember that the Jewish school was only up to the fourth form (equivalent to the present fourth grade). Adon [meaning 'mister' in Ivrit] Haim Levi, also from Vidin, taught us Ivrit from the Torah, and before that we read fairy tales in Ivrit. But we studied the letters for a whole year. After that adon Niko (Nissim) Sabetay taught us Ivrit and I also liked him as a teacher. Of course, at first I made mistakes all the time, it was very hard to learn Ivrit, because no one at home knew it. But I gradually got used to it and I even started to like it. I still remember one of the teachers (but I do not remember his name). I only remember that in the first grade we had a special teacher, who was also a headmaster. He taught us in gymnastics. We had classes outside near the Danube, that's why I loved them. There was also a chamber mandoline orchestra in the school and my father came to conduct us. At that time I learned to play the accordion (that instrument was very popular at the start of the previous century). When I finished the Jewish school, I had to continue my education in the local Bulgarian high school, which was also close to Kale [The old Jewish

neighborhood in Vidin, very close to the Danube River]. I was glad, because I liked learning. We also had many teachers and new subjects, which I found interesting. From the school subjects I also loved literature, because I loved reading. As a child I read mostly the classics, such as Hugo, Balzac, Stendhal, Mayne Reid, Jack London, Jules Verne, [Maxim] Gorky [Russian writer, publicist and revolutionary, 1868-1936]. Moreover I had good marks. All the Jews in the school had good marks and no one had better marks than us. I loved our maths teacher, Miss Vasileva. Most of the girls loved her, because she was nice to us.