Wedding Photo Of Yanita And Plamen Slavchevi

This is a wedding photo of my granddaughter Yanita Slavcheva (nee Alhalel) and Plamen Slavchev. The picture was made in 1990s in Sofia. Now they are both in Israel where they raise their child.

I have two children, whom I love very much. The elder one, Streya Mayer Puncheva (nee Alhalel), was born in 1949. She graduated from the chemical technical school in Vidin [port city on the right bank of the Danube in Bulgaria, 220 km. away from Sofia]. She has been working as a chemist in the local meat processing plant for a number of years. My younger daughter Sheli was born in 1954

and is a construction engineer. Unfortunately, she does not have children. Besides Yanita, I also have a grandson from Streya, whose name is Lyubomir. He is director of Bulbank in Sofia and he also has children. They are Konstantin Punchev and Mihaela Puncheva. Yanita now lives in a kibbutz. She has a daughter Viara (nee Slavcheva, but I cannot remember her new family name). She has a family in northern Israel (I do not remember the name of their kibbutz).

After my wedding my husband Mayer Rafael Alhalel and I went back to Vidin where we looked after our parents. To be honest, there was a moment when we thought about leaving to Israel. But our parents - his and mine - did not want to, because the four of them already felt old. And yet, many Jews older than them left their life in Bulgaria and emigrated. The Vidin community has been getting smaller and smaller due to the two big aliyahs (immigrant waves) in 1947-8 and 1991. In fact our community now is no more than 20 people, most of whom are half-Jews from mixed marriages. The only 'pure' Jews, as we call ourselves proudly, are I, my husband Mayer Alhalel, our daughters Streya Puncheva (1949) and Sheli Vladeva (1954), the elder lawyer Marco Primo and the chairman of the Regional Organization of Jews in Bulgaria Jacques Solomon, a relatively young and energetic man. These people are also my closest friends and relatives.

I went to Israel twice with my husband before 10th November 1989 [on this date after 35 years of rule, Communist Party leader Todor Zhivkov was replaced by the hitherto Prime Minister Peter Mladenov who changed the Bulgarian Communist Party's name to Socialist Party]. The first visit was in 1964 and the second in 1973. The third time was in 1993. I see the remarkable difference between the early and late Israel, in a positive sense, of course. What is important is that we like Bulgaria more. That is why I stayed here. But I miss the family of my granddaughter, who is in Israel.