

## Victoria Almalekh (nee Levi) And Rebeka Levi With Relatives



On this picture you can see in the second row (from right to left) my father Yosif, my mother Rashel, Rebeka Moreno and her husband David. In the first row (from right to left) you can see their son David, me, Victoria, and my sister Rebeka. The picture was taken in a photo studio in Vidin [port city on the right bank of the Danube in Bulgaria, 220 km. away from Sofia] in the 1940s. There is neither inscription nor a stamp of the photo studio. The two velvet dresses we were in on were made by my mother, and the white collars were a gift from my cousin Rebeka, who was a seamstress.

I don't remember a Sabbath with the table set before my father came home. And it was not only for Sabbath. That's how it used to be till I got married and left the family. Somebody would sit at the table before my father... This was impossible. Usually he would read something on his chair and he had to stand up and sit at the table so all of us (the rest of the family) might sit. We weren't allowed to eat before he did no matter whether we were starving. And we never rummaged in the cupboards to eat not at the right time. There simply was an order. The only food that had to be hidden at home were candies. And this used to happen in the war years when there wasn't a box of chocolates at every corner. I last had some chocolate some time in primary school and lost tracks of chocolate all the way to finishing the nurse school. There was none. The only thing that used to be hidden in those days was chocolate. The most common treat in those years was a spoon of jam and some cold water. That wasn't bad but those things had passed by and there were supposed to be some chocolates in case somebody was to drop by. You should have something to put on the table. My parents would even talk in Romanian about where the chocolates were hidden. We talked in Ladino, Romanian and Bulgarian at home.

Although there was some order I wouldn't say our family was too patriarchal. We felt quite free. I knew other families where what children were reading, who they were friends with, which houses they went to was under strict control. My sister and I were free to choose who of our friends to invite to our place and who to pay a visit to. But despite that the spirit in our family was quite patriarchal.

Both my father and my mother were really devoted to the family. The most precious things for them were we - their daughters.