

Josif Kamhi's Family In The Vitosha Mountain



This is a photo of my family on an excursion to the Vitosha Mountain in the 1930s. I am in the first row sitting on the right. Next to me is my sister Donka Dimitrova, nee Kamhi, and next to her my brother Perets Kamhi. My mother, Berta Kamhi, nee Koen, is the second on the left in the second row and first on the left is my cousin, the daughter of my mother's elder brother Bohor. Third from left to right in the second row is Aunt Sophie and next to her is an unfamiliar man. Next to him is my father Albert Perets Kamhi. We could not afford to go on vacation. But my father often took us on excursions to Vitosha near Sofia. Once, when we did not have any money, we went on foot from Sofia to Boyana Lawns, a region in Vitosha. The distance is around 10 kilometers. We carried food, spent the whole day there and returned by tram. We really must have been in a bad financial state if we could not afford to go there and come back by tram. My grandfather Perets Kamhi had a butcher's, which he probably passed on to my father. It was on Klementina Blvd, present-day Stamboliiski Blvd and on Paisii Street. I do not remember if they sold kosher meat. My father was forced to move from that store, because he had only rented it. Another butcher took the store, probably by offering higher rent. He continued selling meat and working with the customers that my father had attracted. My father opened another butcher's but it was further away from the center and he did not have so many clients. So he went bankrupt. That happened around 1940. He started work in a factory processing leather. Before he went bankrupt, my father earned good money. When he moved the shop, our financial situation worsened. At that time we also had to pay a big sum every month as installment for our new apartment. We managed to pay all the installments by 9th September 1944. My mother Berta Kamhi also worked but from home. She had a sewing machine and made handkerchiefs and singlets. We, the children, helped her. My brother Perets Albert Kamhi and I went to the central market and sold the so-called 'ikonomia' – very fine sand, which was used in dish washing. We offered it packed. We also sold toothpicks, paint and shoelaces. We sold them by going from house to house, and we got the goods from the merchants who owned shops.