

In Bursa



You can see my father, myself and a cousin in this picture across our home in Bursa. The house across the street from ours had shutters on. . All of the Jews in Bursa lived on the same street. On both sides of the hill full of trees were houses lined up. Only Jews lived until the place we called Chatafirin (Forkbakery). We had 3 synagogues, Yirush, Mayor and Etz Hayim. We were crowded, we were like siblings. We would eat and play together with the daughters of the poor families who came to our house as helpers. The house we lived in was three stories. Like the twin houses of today, we could go to the neighbor's house from the stairs in between. The basement of this house where the ground floor was a grocery store, served almost like a refrigerator. Every kind of document and food was kept there. On the top floor, in the entrance which was called "kortijo", were the kitchen, bathroom and laundry. We had a sofa, armchair and a table with a golden mirror in our livingroom. When I see these end tables in decorating magazines, I understand that the saying "If there was a demand for old things, flea markets would flourish" is not very valid. The floors were linoleum, the stairs made of wood. Sparkling the linoleum was a symbol of cleanliness. The wooden stairs, on the other hand, squeaked. The cleaning supplies were not as strong probably. Soft soap, white soap, bleach was used. Clean water flowed from the taps always, there were heating stoves in each story, and in the kitchen stoves were lit. My father Jak Sages was born in Bursa (1881). He came and went to Istanbul often. He wasn't very educated but he was an esteemed merchant. My father's good looks were legendary. He had good relationships with the women in his factory. He was a tough father. He had an authoritarian attitude with his wife and son, when it came to me, he melted down. He was cool toward religious matters, some of the arguments he had with my mother were even about how to apply our religious traditions. When the

usher knocked on our door on Saturday mornings and yelled "Monsieur Sages al kal" (Mr. Sages to the synagogue), I would respond "En la fabrika de Paskal" (at the factory of Paskal). During the hours when the usher came to the door and encouraged the community to go to the synagogue, my father would be at the factory to prevent the silk cocoons from tangling with each other. Silk commerce was his life. There was a concept of spinning wheel for silk. He was an expert in this subject. He knew how to produce more silk from less cocoons. (Even today Bursa is at the heart of textile commerce). He always protected his good name in the commercial circles. In the last years of his life, he moved to Istanbul with my mother at the insistence of my older brother. He died in Istanbul in 1975.