

My Grandfather



We can see Senor Abravanel in this photograph..

My mother's mother Flor Abravanel and father Senor Abravanel on the other hand were a family from Salonika (Today it is a city in Greece. But during the years we are talking about Bursa and Salonika were cities of the Ottoman Empire). My mother's father Seneor Abravanel was a manager of a bank in Salonika.

His brother Jozef Abravanel was the ambassador for Portugal. His wife Viktorya and only son Jak were the other members of the family. My maternal grandmother Flor Abravanel was a teacher in Salonika. [The information given uses the term "profesora de eskola": school teacher. This indicates an elementary school teacher rather than a teacher of a specific subject].

I remember my maternal grandmother living across the fire station in Shishane (Shishane is the district where Neve Shalom is today. During that time the Jewish community lived in this district. The area they called "Kula" was the surrounding area of Galata Tower. A lot of merchants from the fish seller to the sundries/notions store manager were Jewish. The largest fire organization of Istanbul was at the Shishane plaza. Only Jews lived in a lot of the houses then. Fresh Han is an example of this). When I came to Istanbul from Bursa, the city that looked so big to me would seem even bigger from the iron-barred windows of my grandmother's. Flor Abravanel who remains in my memory with her wrinkled face and the pieces of cake she gave me would seat me on the corner of the window at her house with a pillow and enable me to see the surrounding area. I still like sitting at the window, watching the people passing by in the street probably as a habit acquired from those days.

When we compare my father's and my mother's families, we encounter different things. The Jews of Salonika, that is to say, my mother's side were people with a more modern outlook. There were differences in the education levels as well. Because Salonika was a European city nonetheless, whereas Bursa was an Anatolian city. (This difference wasn't really considered in those days because both cities, Bursa and Salonika were cities that belonged to the Ottoman Empire. With the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the declaration of the Turkish Republic, Salonika and Bursa took their place in history as a city in Greece and Turkey respectively).

I do not know how Menahem Sages and Camila Sages, and how Senor Abravanel and Flora Abravanel met or married. These subjects were not broached next to us.