

The Oldest Photograph Of The Family



My father's mother, father and their grandchildren, a very old photograph.

I never knew my father's father Menahem Sages and my father's mother Camila Sages. The only information I have about them are their images on faded pictures. My grandfather with a fez, and my grandmother with a headscarf, they had to live during the time of the Ottoman Empire. During the period of Ataturk's revolutions (Ataturk established a lot of changes in clothing, alphabet etc. after forming the Republic in 1923. Because of this reason, the men who lived before the declaration of the republic wore fez's, and the women burkas. Ataturk abolished the fez and the burka. The people who lived during this period knew the Arabic alphabet which was the old Turkish. Reading and writing with the Latin alphabet happened after the declaration of the republic). Menahem Sages and Camila Sages was a family who observed religious rules meticulously, who spoke Turkish but did not consider Turkish to be their mother tongue. They lived in Bursa (It is a city in the region of Marmara. It was the capital for a period of time during the Ottoman Empire, with an old historical background, famous for Uludag (Mt. Olympus), its hot springs and silk commerce. Today Uludag is a ski resort).

Menahem Sages and Camila Sages were members of the Jewish community who resided in Bursa (Bursa was the most advanced Jewish community of its time. There were 3 synagogues. Yirush, Mayor, Etz Hayim. All of these synagogues served their own Jewish population flawlessly. The community in Bursa had a Jewish club also. Balls would be organized in these clubs). Among the family members I can remember are Tia Sultanicha and Tia Mazaltucha (Tia: aunt in Judeo Spanish). While my older brother got a spanking for his misdeeds, I would silently laugh to myself, and Tia Sultanicha or Tia Mazaltucha would say "Y tu mereses haftona" (And you deserve a spanking) and incite my father needlessly. Words and discipline methods were futile, they did not serve anything. My father would insist doing it his way and showed me preferential treatment over my older brother.

Since Tia Mazaltucha and Tia Sultanicha's financial situation wasn't too good, on Thursday evenings, they would take their share of the food cooked for the Sabbath. Even though I don't have much information about their spouses, I know that Tia Mazaltucha had two children named Michel and Ester, and Tia Sultanicha, Leon and Viktorya. I did not see these children very often in the following years.