

Simha And Avram Geron



These are Simha Geron and Avram Geron - my maternal grandparents - in the beginning of the 1920s in Ruse.

My maternal grandfather's name was Avram Geron and my grandmother - Simha. He had a business with leather - he went from village to village, collected leather, processed it and sold it. I remember him. I was six or seven years old when he died and my grandmother died later when I was a university student. They also knew only Spanish [Ladino] and Turkish. They lived in Razgrad, but they did not have their own flat. They had three daughters - Rebeka, Ester and Rashel, and one son Yosif Geron. He was the eldest. During the [First] Balkan War and World War I my uncle and my grandfather enlisted as soldiers. Then the family moved to Ruse and my mother, who was the eldest of the sisters, worked as a seamstress to support her mother and sisters. They did not live in their own flat there either. They dressed in plain clothes. My maternal grandparents were religious, went to the synagogue and we celebrated with them the high holidays like Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. My uncle was also religious but his sisters were not. My grandparents did not go on vacations and they did not have maids.

The Jewish community lived in the Jewish neighborhood which was outside the center of the town. It consisted mostly of one-floor houses and not only Jews lived there. The place where I lived from 4-5 years of age until 13 years of age had four houses in one yard. Jews lived in two of the houses and Bulgarians in the other two. Throughout the years we kept in touch with the children of our Bulgarian neighbors. The mother in one of the families died young and my mother also looked after the children. Turkish people also lived next to us. All the children from the nearby houses gathered together and played games. Our house had three rooms and a kitchen. The four of us - my parents, my brother and I lived there. My grandmother and my uncle paid rent in another house. We had a toilet, a bath and electricity.

There were two synagogues in Ruse -one of them was owned by the Sephardi Jews. It was big and beautiful. The other one was owned by the Ashkenazi Jews. There were two or three religious officials in the Sephardi synagogue and one chazzan in the Ashkenazi one. The rabbi is something like the bishop. He is more of a teacher than a preacher. There was also a shochet and a slaughter house at the synagogue. We brought there hens and chickens. Around 50 000 people lived in Ruse at that time. The Jewish community was around 3 000 people. There was a Jewish primary school. I graduated that school and so did most of the Jewish children. The school was a one-floor house in the Jewish neighborhood. Besides the big synagogue in Ruse there was a smaller one - midrash. The Ashkenazi synagogue is nowadays a club of the Shalom organization.