

Attenders Of The Sofia Synagogue On A Saturday Morning



This is a photo of the men most frequently visiting the [Great] synagogue - the third one to the left is Leon Burla, who can blow the shofar. Next to him is his father Vitali Burla, who was a member of the [Israeli] Spiritual Council. Vitali is a very clever man, a mathematician. He used to be a lecturer for many years, but unfortunately he got ill. The sixth from left is my brother Isak Levi, the seventh is called Razon, and currently he lives in the Home for elderly people [supported by the Jewish community]. The second from left is Kiril Ivanov - he had a Bulgarian name, yet he has officially taken a Jewish name - Itzhak Benavram (as his mother is Jewish). The picture was taken at the synagogue on a Saturday morning in the 1980s.

My eldest brother is called Isak Levi and he is a textile technician. He is a widower already with a daughter: Ema. They both live in Sofia.

In totalitarian times people visiting the synagogue were treated as suspicious characters. If an official of Jewish origin was spotted visiting the synagogue, he became a subject of persecution. There wasn't a law forbidding visits to the synagogue, on the contrary, the state financially supported the synagogue. Yet, it was forbidden for children, young people and citizens here. All religions were treated in that way, and this didn't only happen to us. Religion was considered something bad which had to be abolished. There is also another thing: as a whole, the Bulgarian people aren't fanatics concerning religious matters, unlike the Catholics, for example. This could also be one of the reasons that in Bulgaria there weren't large manifestations of anti-Semitism.