

Benjamin Kohen With His Grandson Reni Kohen



This is my father Benjamin Kohen with his grandson Reni Kohen (I cannot remember his full name), son of my brother Sinto Kohen. The boy was 3 years old at that time. The photo was taken in 1959 in Tel Aviv.

My family dispersed in 1948 when all my relatives except for me emigrated to Israel. [Between September 1944 and October 1948, 7,000 Bulgarian Jews left for Palestine. The exodus was due to deep-rooted Zionist sentiments, relative alienation from Bulgarian intellectual and political life, and depressed economic conditions. Bulgarian policies toward national minorities were also a factor that motivated emigration. In the late 1940s Bulgaria was anxious to rid itself of national minority groups, such as Armenians and Turks, and thus make its population more homogeneous. More people were allowed to depart in the winter of 1948 and the spring of 1949. The mass exodus continued between 1949 and 1951: 44,267 Jews immigrated to Israel until only a few thousand Jews remained in the country.]

In fact, the decision was taken by my brothers and sister and my parents decided that they should follow their children. At that time I was already married. My sister Milka became a social worker in Israel (she had a university education in Bulgaria), my brother Sinto, who was studying medicine in Bulgaria became a famous doctor and my brother Miko (he is the only one of us with secondary education) became a lab chemist. They still live in Israel today and have good families, children and grandchildren. My sister has two boys, my brother Sinto - a son and a daughter, and my brother Miko - a son. All I know about their families is that Milka married before she left - to Rofat Revah in 1940, who was from Plovdiv and I lived with them in Samokov for a while.

I have been to Israel three times. I visited my relatives, friends and acquaintances. I remember that when I first arrived in Israel, I was welcomed by a sequence of sunny, bright, fresh and hot days. I

was most fascinated by the thriving greenery in Israel, which was everywhere - in the cities, kibbutzim, flats, on the roofs, roads, in the synagogues and parks. I also noticed that the beautiful magnolias, rubber plants, jasmine, hedges, grass and all flowers were looked after with love not only by the common people, but also by municipal employees.