

The Revah Family And The Kohen Family



From left to right you can see my sister Milka Revah, my father Benjamin Shemtov Kohen, and the child of my sister-in-law (at the back) but I cannot remember the name of her kid. The two women in front are my mother Iafa Benjamin Kohen and the mother of Rofat Revah (I cannot remember her name). The picture was taken in 1953 in Tel Aviv.

My mother's name is Iafa Benjamin Kohen, nee Levi, and my father's name - Benjamin Shemtov Kohen. They were both born and raised in Samokov. My mother had primary education and my father - secondary high school education. He knew French, because his parents wanted him to go to study in France, which did not happen, because my father was the first born child and his duty was to stay and support the family, who was not very well-off. My father believed in communist ideas, but I did not remember if he was a member of the party or if he was involved in illegal party activities. In this sense my father was more of an idealist and communist in beliefs than an active party member. My mother was apolitical. But I remember that my mummy never stood still, always doing something. At first my mother sewed clothes for my father's shop. My father often worked as a travelling salesman to the nearby villages so that his children would have enough food and clothes.

My sister Milka [she was born in 1921 in Samokov] became a social worker in Israel (she had a university education in Bulgaria) and now she has two lovely sons there.

In 1947 I married Avram Melamed. We met through a group of Jewish friends from Plovdiv. I was in Plovdiv visiting my sister who had just married Rofat Revah from Plovdiv. Friends of his decided that I and Avram Melamed were perfect for each other and made everything possible to convince us in that. The main person 'to blame' for our marriage was Morits Assa, the former chairman of the Organization of Sofia Jews 'Shalom', who lived in Plovdiv at that time. The story is quite unusual. I was introduced to Avram the day before he left for the USSR, where he was about to spend 5 years

at a university (he graduated as an engineer there). At first, I thought I was only one of the many friends who came to see him off. But they had something else in mind, which, after all, I did not mind. While we were talking to each other, I suddenly heard Morits Assa saying 'Lora and Avram are getting married tonight.' And everyone started taking out some treats - potatoes, meat. 'Congratulations! Happy wedding! Have a nice journey, Avram! And Lora will be here, working and waiting.' At that time I was helping Morits with the administrative work, I was something like his secretary.

The next day Avram told me: 'I am leaving.' We left for Sofia where he had to take the plane to Moscow. There we went to marry before the registrar. But we had no witnesses. We went out on the street, looking for people to become our witnesses. We asked one stranger, and we found another acquaintance who agreed. And so, my husband left. But before that he said, 'We will organize the wedding when I come back. And remember, no going out with other men.' But a year passed, then a second, a third, a fifth... and we still had no wedding. Meanwhile my elder son Sheni [Shinto] was born in 1948.

At first I lived with my sister and my brother-in-law in Plovdiv. My sister's husband advised me not to go to the relatives of my husband, because I did not know them, but I thought the right thing was to go and live with them. So, I went to live together with my parents-in-law in Plovdiv. My husband's sister and brother also lived with them. His brother's name was Samuel Melamed, but I do not remember her name. At that time I was working as a weaver. I gave all my money to them. In fact, everything was for them, even the food. The situation grew unbearable especially in 1948 when they understood that I was pregnant and I was going to have a baby.

Before Shinto was born my husband's relatives moved me from Plovdiv to Sofia. And there, while I was pregnant in the last month, they showed me where I would live. I went upstairs to the third floor and I nearly fell downstairs with the baby.... My husband's mother and brother were coming behind me. When my son was born, I wrote a letter to my husband and his answer was: 'A boy, something to be proud of!' He neither asked me how the delivery went, nor how the child was. Very often the money for the baby went for the needs of my husband's relatives. Then my brother Sinto came, took my child and gave him to my parents who had still not emigrated to Israel. They looked after young Shinto. At that time I was working as a weaver in the Slatina factory in Samokov. My family dispersed in 1948 when all my relatives except for me emigrated to Israel.