

Nissim Kohen As A Child With His Grandmother Bohora Haravon, Brother Albert Kohen And Mother Sarina Kohen



This photo was taken in Kyustendil in 1932-33. It shows me (first from left), my mother Sarina Kohen (first from right), my grandmother Bohora Haravon and my second brother Albert Kohen.

My mother's kin comes from Kyustendil. My mother's parents Yuda and Bohora Haravon lived there. I went there every summer when I was a student in the first grades of the Jewish school. My grandfather was a tinsman and my grandmother - a housewife. My mother's kin is very large. She had six brothers - Yosif, Rahamim, Shimon, Nissim, Chelebi and Mois Kohen. What is interesting about them is that my grandmother's parents left as early as the beginning of the 20th century, around 1906-1907 to the blessed land (Palestine at that time) to die there. They left their lands, their children and set off. My mother Sarina Kohen was 8-9 years old then. As far as I know my grandparents have graves in Jerusalem.

There were a lot of Jews in Kyustendil. They had their own synagogue and a community house. My grandparents lived in the Jewish neighborhood, which was around the synagogue. I remember that they lived in a small house, which had a ground floor and another floor. A relative of my grandfather's lived on the ground floor. His name was Manoah, and on the next floor lived my grandfather's family and my uncle Isak Haravon.

My mother had graduated primary school and started studying in a vocational school which she did not finish due to lack of money. She kept her notebooks from the vocational school for many years. They contained sewing designs, which can be drawn only by a professional designer nowadays. My mother had a hard life. She had two more boys after me, but they died. My first brother Leon was born in 1927 but he died of diphtheria in 1933. In 1929 my second brother Albert was born. He died in 1934.

My mother got seriously sick of typhus. At that time Leon, my younger brother, and I were sent to my grandmother's house in Kyustendil and my father took care of my mother at home. When she was pregnant with my sister in 1937, my mother had a serious appendicitis crisis. A surgeon from the Jewish hospital in Sofia came and ordered them to transport her to Sofia for an operation. My father made a stretcher out of blankets and with the help of the neighbors we transported her to the hospital, where she underwent an operation. Some months later my sister Sofi was born. In the beginning of 1938 a lot of people close to my mother died - firstly, her brother Chelebi and then her mother, who had come for the funeral of her son. Then in the summer of the same year her father died. The same year, 1938, I got very sick of acute typhus and was admitted to hospital. While I was in the hospital, there were the so called 'blockades'. Streets were blocked by soldiers and no one was allowed to go out. Those blockades were set up when governments were replaced and when there were serious changes in the power structures. They lasted for a couple of days. Blockades were also set up when illegal people were searched for. I do not remember the reason for the blockades when I was in hospital. Then my mother stood up to the soldiers and wanted to come and see me in the hospital but she was not allowed.