

Selim And Seyfi



This is a picture of my two sons, Selim and Seyfi Isman. The one on the left is my elder son, Selim and he is 9 years old in this photo. Seyfi, my younger son, is 7 years old.

The photo was taken on Burgazada, the second of the Prince's Islands on the Sea of Marmara. Our house was at Cakiltasi street. Most of the Jews tried to spend their vacations on one of the islands and bought or rented houses according to their budgets.

Suzan, took care of Selim and Seyfi very well. We never went on trips, leaving them to someone to care of them. Only when they grew up, she felt comfortable about leaving them behind, and thus we went abroad. We had the children's Barmitzva [bar mitzvah] ceremonies at the B'nai Brith hall.

We used to speak French and Spanish, with my late wife. Of course we also spoke Turkish. We usually spoke Turkish with the children. In this way, the children became acquainted with these two languages when they were small.

We were able to give a good education to our children. Selim went to the primary school at Yeni Kolej. [Literally New College, it is a private Turkish school that has a reputation of being very easy to finish] He then finished secondary high school in Saint Michel [French Catholic school], and the high school in Saint Benoit [French Catholic school]. [In the Turkish education system, primary school was 5 years, then came 3 years of secondary school and then another 3 years of high school or lycee] He started the Faculty of Law at Istanbul University and graduated from there. He is working as a lawyer. He married Verjel Abuaf, whom I love very much, and regard like a daughter, at the Neve Salom Synagogue, in 1971. They had two sons, from their marriage. In 1973, my first grandchild, Eytan was born. He was a very good student. He finished Robert College [15]. He then finished Business Administration at the University of Istanbul. He started his working life. He married Sibel Almelek, in May, 2004. They moved to Izmir [third biggest city in Turkey] and settled down there, because of their businesses. My youngest grandchild, named Koray (Selim's second son) is 17 years old, and still studying at the Jewish High School in Ulus.

On the other hand, Seyfi finished the primary school in Yeni Kolej, the secondary high school in Saint Michel [French Catholic school], and the high school in Ata Kolej. He then went to Israel for a year. Upon his return from Israel, he studied to become a dentist in Istanbul. Now he's continuing on with his career, as a good dentist. He married Suzetta whom I regard as a daughter, and love very much, in 1975. In 1979, my granddaughter, Nisya was born. Nisya, finished Bilgi University. She is now the manager of the Jewish Museum. Hopefully, we'll have Nisya married in June.

When we were raising our family, we especially always celebrated Pesah and Hanuka [Chanukkah]. We took a lot of care to do as required. I still recite the Shema in the mornings and at nights. I always wanted my children to go the synagogue more often. But it didn't happen that way. My elder son Selim, was a student of Saint Michel, and there was school on Saturdays then. I had sent Selim to Mahazike Tora [21]. Nisim Behar was his teacher there. When he said " Oh! How can you go to school on Saturdays", my son Selim lost his interest in the synagogue. Now, he only goes to the synagogue when it is required to do so.

Seyfi learned how to read and write in Hebrew when he was in Israel. He is a little bit more interested. But he also only goes to the synangogue when it is required to do so. On the other hand, I go to the synagogue every week on the island. During winter, I sometimes go to the Sisli Synagogue. I always said to my children to teach Judaism to my grandchildren. Thanks to my daughter-in-laws, they did whatever they could have done about it. Because they themselves do not care too much, the grandchildren don't either. But thank God, all of them are aware of their Jewishness and are proud of it.