

Iafa Benjamin Kohen



This is my mother Iafa Benjamin Kohen knitting on the terrace in her house in Israel. The photo was taken in the 1970s in Tel Aviv.

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 parents also insisted that we further our education. When my parents wanted to go for a walk, they asked us to draw or write something interesting, made up a variety of artistic activities, then they came back and pointed out our best works. I remember that my sister Milka was the first to start learning to play the violin. She had

private lessons, which also affected our family budget. In order to pay the teacher my mother prepared a large table cover, which she gave to her instead of money.

On the whole, our family was part of the Jewish community in the town of Samokov, which was not big. The high Jewish holidays such as [Yom] Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Pesach, Purim, Sukkot, Lag ba-Omer, Tu bi-Shevat we always celebrated at home and at the synagogue. Of course, we had the best time when we celebrated them at home. Like all Jewish children, we also loved Purim most. It was most fun then. Usually our parents prepared some cheap things, because they did not have money to buy us expensive gifts. But every time my mother made some nice and colorful purses, in which we put sweets, candies and other sweet things. Then we made a contest who would remain with most sweets in their purse. And whoever won, was considered the most important child.

I studied philosophy in Sofia University 'St Kliment Ohridski' [The St. Kliment Ohridski university in Sofia was the first school of higher education in Bulgaria], but I did not graduate. When I was a student I helped my parents a lot. I went shopping with my mother who was always busy, I helped her in the sewing, cooking, cleaning. I also helped my father who had a hard time earning money from the shop and I sold instead of him the clothes sewn by my mother.