

The Kohen Family



From left to right is my younger brother Miko Kohen with his son (unfortunately I cannot remember his name). The photo also shows my mother Iafa Benjamin Kohen and my father Benjamin Shemtov Kohen. The photo was taken in the 1970s in Tel Aviv.

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. I remember that my father worked in a small shop owned by him, but did not earn much money. I also remember that we were constantly short of money and my father had to carry goods on his horse to the nearby villages on Sundays. He carried the villagers' hats, which my mother sewed and knitted at home, as well as cotton, or other things they needed. The Bulgarians bought them and provided us with an income. 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.

We were four children: my eldest sister Milka Benjamin Revah (nee Kohen) was born on 13th April 1921 in Samokov; my elder brother Sinto Benjamin Kohen was born on 2nd January 1923 in Samokov and my younger brother Miko Benjamin Kohen was born on 26th June 1926, also in Samokov. My little brother Miko had inherited my father's talent and sang very well. Miko is the only one of us with secondary education. He became a lab chemist.

We lived in a small house in Samokov. We were about 10 people: my parents with their four children, my maternal grandparents, uncle and aunt, and their children. Our house had two rooms and a kitchen. We did not have a bathroom. We did not have electricity, nor running water. We used an ordinary wood-burning stove to warm the house. We got water from the faucet outside, even in the winter. The faucet was quite far from our house. So, my parents decided to build a faucet in our yard. I remember that we, the children, helped a lot to make it. And we did not have to go so far away for water. Besides, my mother wanted us to grow up healthy and strong. She

made us wash ourselves with cold water. They made us a special place in the house where we did gymnastic exercises.