

Adela Levi With Her Sisters



One of the few photos, on which almost all the sisters are together, from left to right: Ester, Sofka, Mazal (Mimi), our mother Viza Nissim Cohen (nee Moshe Alvas), Nissim (Mimi's husband), I and Raina. Only Rashel is missing. She was in Israel. The picture was taken in Sofia in the 1950s. I didn't think about leaving for Israel but my sisters, who were married and whose relatives were leaving, also had to leave. The boyfriend of my younger sister Mimi had to leave with his parents, his sister was already there. So, Mimi married him and immigrated. My other sister Rashel was already married and since her husband was leaving with his mother and his father had already died, she also immigrated. Now during the second mass aliyah six or seven years ago my sister Sofka also immigrated. My husband and I didn't think about immigrating, but we always felt something pull us towards Israel and my husband went there every year. We didn't immigrate because there was nothing we could do there. We didn't expect to find work there. We weren't particularly well-off after 1950. We lived a normal life and went on holidays to the mountains, in resting homes. So, we weren't rich, but not poor either. I was very scared by the wars in Israel in 1967 and in 1973 and especially when the six-day war started. At that time my mother, mother-in-law and my father-in-law were in Israel on a visit. And they hurriedly came back: they boarded a ship, because there were no planes at that time. My husband and I went to Varna to meet them and they were absolutely exhausted when they arrived. They needed a whole day to recover. We were badly affected by the disconnection of the diplomatic ties with Israel because we had a lot of relatives there whom we visited every year. Especially with my younger sister, who traveled to international youth festivals and always passed via Bulgaria. Her husband was a conductor and took part in choirs and youth festivals. My sister was a singer in a choir and they almost always passed via Bulgaria to visit us. Otherwise, we had no problems to visit Israel even when the diplomatic relations with Israel were banned. The Netherlands was representing the interests in Israel in Bulgaria and their embassy issued the necessary documents. It wasn't a problem to get a visa for Israel if you could prove that you had relatives there, except if your whole family was leaving with you. The condition in Bulgaria for traveling to the so-called 'capitalist countries' was to

leave a member of the family behind: if the child went somewhere, the parents had to stay, and if the parents left, the children had to stay. The aim wasn't to allow families to emigrate. I have been there four or five times. Once I also took my daughter who was 13 or 14 years old. I had a feeling that I had been denied a promotion at work for being a Jew, not only when I worked for the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but later on too. But no one said anything.