

Mazal Asael With Her Mother Delicia Eshkenazi And Brother Samuil Eshkenazi



This is a photo taken in Sofia in the 1930s in the yard of the house on 37 Odrin Street where we used to live. I am on the left and I am holding my boss's child in my arms. My mother is sitting next to me and my younger brother Samuil is on the right. My first home was on Opalchenska Street. It was a run-down, two-floor brick house where we lived together with some other families. We had electricity in the house. All the occupants were Jewish. We had a neighbour who breast-fed me

after I was born because my mother couldn't, and our neighbour had a baby at the same time. This house no longer exists. A new one was built in its place and the children of the previous owners live there now. All my maternal and paternal relatives lived in the Jewish neighborhood. I don't know how long I lived in the house on Opalchenska Street for we moved while I was still a very little girl. We lived at many places until 1943 ? on Ovcho Pole, Odrin, Slivnitza and Naicho Tsanov streets. I suppose that my parents were really poor and they had to move very often. We lived on Odrin Street for the longest period of time, in two different houses. These houses no longer exist and there are big blocks in their place now. My brothers and I were already grown up when we lived on that street. My brothers were taken from there to the labor camps in the 1940s. We lived together with Bulgarians in Odrin Street but I never felt a negative attitude towards us though one of them was a member of Brannik. (Brannik was a pro-fascist youth organization. It started functioning after the National Defense Law was passed in 1939 and the Bulgarian government formed its pro-German policy during WWII. Brannik's members regularly maltreated Jews.) In every house we lived we had a little space and it was never enough for our big family. There were two Jewish schools in Sofia, one in the center of the town and one in our neighborhood. The children of the richer Jews who lived in the center used to study in the central school. I went to the one on Osogovo Street. Everything in the school was free of charge for us. The textbooks were free and sometimes we were even given shoes and clothes. I went to the Jewish school until the third grade (equal to today's seventh grade); up until then, I had studied there for four years. We used to study all day at the Jewish school: general subjects in Bulgarian in the morning; and the same subjects, such as reading, writing and mathematics, in Hebrew in the afternoon. In the upper classes we started studying Jewish history, too. One of the subjects we studied was Tanach. We studied the history of the Jewish people and the Five Books of Moses. We also had religion class, taught in Hebrew.