

Fani Abuaf On Her Wedding Day



This picture was taken on my and my wife Fani's wedding day.

My wife Fani who was born in 1927 fell in the street when she was about 10 or 11 years old, and caught an infection from her wounds. There was no penicillin at the time, the infection spread to her ankles. She had various surgeries in Or Ahayim and had to stay in the hospital for a long time. She stayed for such a long time there that she became very friendly with the nurses and learned a lot. She made a vow to herself: "the day when I am able to stand up, I will volunteer in this hospital and help the patients as much as I can".

With time Fani became a very good nurse who was in demand. When she had clients outside the hospital too, she started earning money. She provided the livelihood of her house after that day.

My cousin Rafael who went on to become a very famous cantor in Israel later on, was a salesperson in "Nelson", a store where they sold needles, threads and fabrics, next door to the store where I worked as a shirt-seller. Rafael was my neighbor during the day, and Fani's neighbor during the evenings, so he matched the two of us. He first disclosed his idea to my father. My father loved Fani very much. When my mother approached me with the offer: "My goodness, mom, what are you saying, we are cousins", I said. My father said: "What difference does it make, she is a very capable and respectful girl who we know very well and appreciate. I say think about it, you cannot find a girl like this all the time". "Fani is a very hardworking, open-minded girl who earns very well. There are no drawbacks according to the Torah either", he said. We started looking at each other differently after that day. We started going out together and getting to know each other and were promised to each other with a small ceremony among the family. Fani started coming to our house on Sabbath evenings. As I said before my father was quite big and burly. He would just about fit in the armchair he sat in. He loved Fani so much that he would try squeezing in the armchair where he barely fit and say "Come next to me Fanika". My mother and father had Fani sleep next to them because it was hard for us to go back at night. When we were engaged, Kemal was still a bachelor and a ladies' man, when he returned home late from parties, because my father was very conservative, he would immediately stomp on the floor with his cane "Çafteyava el patin" (hit the floor) so that he would go up to his room without delay, because both Fani and my older brother Davit's fiancée Luiza were at home.

After staying engaged with Fani for a few months, we married in August of 1951, in the Zulfaris Synagogue while we both were 23 years old. My cousin Rafael Abuaf who was their cantor, met us and my wife Fani outside the synagogue and brought us all the way till Ehal Hakodesh (in front of the closet where the Torah's are kept). Thanks to him, the memory of our wedding is special still. After the synagogue, we went to Bomonti Beer Gardens with all our friends and family; we had a few appetizers, drank beer from barrels, we sang and danced with my older brother and his friends' band. After we left there, we listened to music and danced at the Park Hotel with our closest friends. We spent that night in that hotel in a room overlooking the sea. The next morning, after breakfast, we went to Yalova Thermal Hotel (on the south border of Marmara Sea, close to the city of Bursa) to spend our week of honeymoon.

Our oldest daughter Verjel who was born in June of 1953 brought us a lot of luck. After her birth, everything worked out for the better. Until that day, because we did not have much money, we shared a house with Fani's older sister Sara, her husband Anri and my mother-in-law. A short while before her birth, business in the store started to work like clockwork, a specific clientele was formed, and I took the plunge and bought a tiny flat at Shishane (on the European side, where Jews

lived together) to live with Fani alone and moved in.

Verjel attended 2. Coeducational Jewish elementary school, a Turkish middle school and completed her education in Turkish Highschool. She worked in the accounting department of my store for a while. We married her in 1971 at the age of 18, with Attorney Selim Ishman who was an acquaintance of a friend of ours, in Neve Shalom Synagogue. We celebrated the evening of the wedding in a place in Tarabya as a family [a neighborhood on the shores of the Bosphorus].

Verjel's family lived in Shishli like us. Their son Eytan was born in 1973. After finishing Robert College, he graduated from Marmara University, Faculty of Business Administration. Eytan who settled in Izmir in the year 2001 to work for the firm named Koroza, married Sibel Almelek in 2003 in Shishli Etz Ahayim Synagogue. The newlweds currently live in Izmir. Sibel studied art history in London and graduated. She is pursuing her master's degree at this time and teaching in September 9 University at the same time. Our daughter Verjel had another son they named Koray in 1985. Koray graduated from Ulus Jewish Highschool in 2006. He is studying Business Administration at Koch University at the moment. Verjel and her family have been living in Yenikoy since 1998 [one of the neighborhoods on the Bosphorus].

In 1957, our younger daughter Meri was born. My wife Fani wanted my daughters to play the piano, I then imported a "Bluthner" brand piano in 1963 and started our daughters with the piano with Shahan Arzuni. The girls liked this teacher a lot and gave a concert within a very short time like a year, with all the students of Mr. Shahan.

Meri finished Saint Michel, and even though she had won entrance to Istanbul University, French Philology department, she could not go to school for more than a few weeks, the anarchy was at such a scary level, that I could not permit my daughter to go to school. Meri also worked in my store, sometimes in accounting, sometimes in other internal departments. She married Robert Schild in 1978 in the Ashkenazi Synagogue. We celebrated the wedding in Divan Hotel as a family.

They had sons named Percy in 1980, and Larry in 1984. Percy finished German Highschool, and studied International Business in Reutlingen in Germany. From there he went to the United States and did his master's. He returned to Istanbul in 2001 and started work in Siemens in the treasury department. We are going to marry Percy who is now working in the Consulting department, to architect Rivka Geron in March of 2007.

Larry who is a graduate of Austrian Highschool on the other hand went to Israel in 2005, he lived in Haifa in a kibbutz for a year and learned Hebrew. He started studying business in Herzlia University starting in September of 2006.