

# David Kohen In The Jewish Religious Class 'Shar Hatorah'



This is a photo of the Jewish class 'Shar Hatorah' with Rabbi Zema Rabbiner. The picture was taken in 1937 in Haskovo. I'm the third from the left in the last but one row. Rabbi Zema Rabbiner is the fourth from left in the first row. Teacher Kalmeykov is the third from the left in the first row. Here are also my classmates: Leon Kohen, Yuda Sason, Izak Benbasat, Haim Chazzan, Yusef Magriso, Nisim Benbasat, Malka (Suzana) Baruh, Solomon Isak Lazarov, Moshe Habiv.

The Jewish school in Haskovo was a four-year one. After that I attended a Bulgarian three-year junior high school and a Bulgarian five-year high school. In high school the Jews were free not to attend religion lessons. Our rabbi in Haskovo launched a course called 'Shar Hatorah' - Gate of the Torah, where we studied texts from the Bible, and I still remember almost the entire text of the first book in the Bible, which I had then learnt by heart. However, I was curious and used to attend the lectures in Christian religion. I learned by heart all their prayers only from hearing them. Once just before Easter, the teacher wanted to examine one of my classmates in prayers and he, alas, didn't know them. I whispered it to him, but the teacher heard me. She made me stand up and say not only this prayer, but some others, too. Then she scolded him for not knowing the prayers, as he was a Christian, and I, who was a Jew, knew them perfectly. Christian pupils were on special duties to attend the religious services in the churches on Sundays, and I didn't have to go. But I always went with the others. I didn't want to differ from them.