

## Aunt Hana And Her Husband



This is my aunt Hana with her husband, whose name I cannot remember. She was my father's sister. I don't remember my paternal relatives. But I know that they were religious. This picture was taken in 1935 in Samokov.

My ancestors came to Spain more than five hundred years ago. After the Jews were persecuted from Spain, a big part of them settled on the Balkan Peninsula. Some of the Jews were killed by the Inquisition and another part adopted Christianity, but most of them left Spain and moved to the Balkans. The Jews in Greece, Turkey, Macedonia, Bulgaria, a part of former Yugoslavia and a part of Romania spoke a Spanish language from the Middle Ages. It was called Ladino or 'Spaniolit' as Bulgarian Jews often call it. My ancestors are Sephardi Jews like most Jews in Bulgaria, although some of them are a mixture of Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews. So, my ancestor's traditions and rites are Sephardi and they spoke Ladino.

My paternal and maternal grandparents were born in the beautiful Bulgarian town of Samokov. They were quiet and kind people with a great sense of humor. They dressed in cheap, but clean clothes. They did hard physical labor all day. About my paternal grandmother Mazal Shemtov Kohen and grandfather Nissim Shemtov Kohen I know only that he was a merchant and she was a housewife. They were both from Samokov, as was my mother's family. They were both religious, observed kashrut on Pesach, fasted on [Yom] Kippur, celebrated erev Sabbath and all high religious holidays such as Rosh Hashanah, Chanukkah, Sukkot, Lag ba-Omer, Tu bi-Shevat, Simchat Torah.