

The 'Good Future' Community Center In Kyustendil



This is the 'Good Future' community center in Kyustendil in 1932. This is the celebration of the 25th anniversary since its establishment. I am on the stage, playing. My father's brother - Dr Mordehai Lazar and his wife Blumeta Lazar are also in the picture.

There were several Jewish 'chitalishta' [community centers] in Bulgaria, but the oldest one was in Kyustendil. Its name was 'Dobro Budeshte' [Good Future]. There was one in Dupnitsa also. It was called 'Suglasie' [Agreement]. Ours was set up in 1906 and was housed in an annex especially built for the Jewish school at which I studied. [Actually the community center in Dupnitsa was called 'Consciousness' and it was set up in 1902, which means that it's older than the one in Kyustendil, which was set up in 1906. It existed until 1941.] There was a library in that community center. Its main activity was to organize celebrations of different Jewish holidays. For example, a Purim night was organized. On that occasion several children from the Jewish school were invited to sing. I took part in these choirs also. I still recall the songs. We sang traditional melodies only, but religious fanaticism wasn't present. We also had a costume ball for Purim. We used to prepare the masks a whole month before the event and everyone did his best.