

Josif Kamhi In The Jewish School



This is a photo from the Jewish school, taken in Sofia in 1931. I am the third from left in the first row. There are some Jewish children from the orphanage. They stood out from the rest because of the clothes from the orphanage they were wearing: they are first, second, third, fifth and sixth from left in the third row. When I was a child, I was sent to a nursery in the central Jewish school. We learned songs and games there. In Sofia there were two Jewish schools. One of them was in the center and the other in the Jewish neighborhood in Ilichbunar. I was not very good at foreign languages there. I was not able to learn Ivrit well, neither French, nor any other languages. Ivrit was taught after the fourth grade in the Jewish school. We started with general subjects in Bulgarian – natural studies, history. Honestly speaking, we did not learn spoken Ivrit there; we only read texts from the Talmud. We did not have any foreign teachers. Our Ivrit teacher's name was Margolis. I did not know any Ivrit before I started going to school. There were two classes in the school. The rich children studied in one of the classes. I studied in the other one together with the poorer children and those from the Jewish orphanage. But there were many excellent students in our class. I was best at maths. We studied for seven grades in the school. I was a member of the rightist organization Betar. In fact, I understood nothing about politics. It so happened that the brother of a classmate of mine was chairman of Betar and he gathered a group of us and made us members of Betar. He told us about Herzl and the founding of the Jewish state. We studied in the Jewish school for half a day and then we could stay in the yard to play sports. We played various games, mostly tag and marbles. All of my friends were from the Jewish school.