
Tamara ALONI

OVER THE MOUNTAINS INTO ALBANIA



Tamara Aloni was born in 1936, in Banjaluka, to mother Rašela, née Vajnstajn and father Alfred Abraham Turnauer. From her marriage to David Aloni she has three sons. Avik finished geography and tourism and works for the Eged bus company. Doron is a mechanical engineer and an Israeli Navy officer and the youngest, Gil, completed commercial school

After the second world war, in Haifa, Tamara completed training as a nursery school teacher for children up to two years of age. She lives in Haifa.

As soon as my twin sister Zlata and I were born, my father and mother separated.

My grandmother felt that Mother, because she was now alone with two children, should return to Skopje where she could take care of us while Mother worked as a seamstress. We lived in Skopje until the war broke out in 1941.

My mother's sister Tamara had a Serb friend, Savo Poleksić. When Savo saw what was happening to Jews in Belgrade, he decided to save Tamara. He took her to a village in the Banat part of Romania, to his mother, and hid her from the eyes of the occupying force. There Tamara hid in a dugout during the day and only came out at night. No one but Savo's mother and her sister knew about Tamara in the dugout. At the

same time, Savo sent a message to Tamara's family in Skopje. The message read that they should all get out of town as soon as possible and immediately flee towards Albania, so that they should not share the fate of the Belgrade Jews, who had all disappeared and about whom no one had any information.

Mother took this warning very seriously and immediately decided that we should flee. It was a very brave decision for her to head for a completely unknown place with two children. I don't remember, because I was only six at the time, and Mother never told me, what roads we took while we fled. I know that we crossed mountains and that Mother would pay people to take us across borders. And so we reached Albania, a place by the sea. I don't remember the name of the town, but I do remember that my sister and I went to the seashore to collect driftwood to use as fuel for heating and cooking.

In this seaside town we lived in a little room. I don't know what we lived on, but I presume that Mother supported us by sewing.

I remember my sister and I going to school. I think we attended two years of primary school there. I still remember our teacher, who wore a black veil over her face and, every morning without exception, would slap us across the fingers with a ruler.



Tamara today, with her husband, daughter-in-law and son

We moved and changed accommodation frequently until finally, I don't know how, we arrived in Bari in Italy. From Bari we got to Santa Cesarea. At this time the war ended.

We were then transferred to Milan where the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee took us in, fed us, dressed us and put us up in some facility where *madrihim* (youth leaders) had arrived, sent by Sohnut. They were responsible for gathering abandoned Jewish children without parents and taking them to Palestine. Mother agreed we should go to Palestine, so we were taken to Florence, to Villa Poggiolini, where there was a centre for children to await travel to Palestine. The centre was called *Aliyat Hanoar Hadati* (Youth Aliyah of the Religious). We were there for a year and a half, learning Hebrew, the Tanah and the Torah in preparation for our departure for Palestine.



Life fulfilled: Tamara's grandchildren

In October 1947, we set off for Palestine on a ship called the *Transylvania*. We travelled with the Fuks family as their children. They had a passport and a certificate issued by the authorities allowing them to move into Palestine with their family.

On our arrival in Palestine, we were given accommodation in Kfar Hanor Hadate – Kfar Hasidim (Religious Youth Village – Village of the Orthodox). This was a farming village whose founders were Hasidic Orthodox. We immediately began attending school, but were also obliged to do two hours of farm work every day after school.

Six months later our mother arrived with her second husband, and took us from Kfar Hanoar. This was the beginning of normal life with our stepfather, who was a second, good father to us and with whom our mother had our brother Heskijel. We settled in Haifa where I still live.

At the end of this incomplete story of my life journey, the story of the greatest tragedy that befell us, I blame myself for not asking Mother about our time of hiding and wandering around. I have the feeling that I am missing part of my life which I think would be very important for me to pass on to my children as a legacy.