

Kazbolat's brother is killed by Cossack horse thieves and he avenges him by killing the thieves and becomes a wanted man. He realizes that he cannot stay in the Kabarda and asks his friend Hashem that he should bring his family to Anapa on the West Coast, for immigration to Istanbul.

The Cossack soldiers begin harassing the village and employing harsh tactics to discover the hide-out of Kazbolat, and during the skirmish Hashem is captured and imprisoned. This puts the family's plans for immigration in jeopardy. Hashem is helped by two village friends to escape from the prison but during the fight he also kills a Cossack soldier and becomes a fugitive himself. Hashem and his friends and relatives decide to hide in the mountains and then find a safe way to catch up with Kazbolat.

In the meantime Kazbolat is waiting as a guest of the Bzhadough Circassians outside of Anapa, and is getting ever more worried for the delay of his family's arrival. Kazbolat befriends one Bzadough Circassian and eventually meets another one who had originally immigrated after 1864 (the mass Migration) and had returned to the Kavkas. During a meeting at an elder's house this man recounts the story about the disastrous mass migration of the Circassians to Ottoman Turkey.

These events are displayed in flash-backs showing the heart-wrenching experiences of the departed and their fatal voyage on old decrepit Ottoman ships. Nearly half of the more than 2 million souls perish on this voyage of tears. The film slowly reveals the secret agreement made between the Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia for the deportation of the Cherkess nation to Turkey; The Russians wanted the Caucasian lands for their newly emancipated peasants and the Ottomans wanted soldiers for her various wars in the Balkans. The Cherkess nation becomes the victim of this conspiracy and unwittingly abandon their homes and hearths to seek refuge in a Moslem state.

Weeks pass and Kazbolat hears no news from his family. He decides that he must return to the Kabarday to find out what happened. But when he secretly gets back to his village, an elder tells him the story of what happened and so Kazbolat rides into the mountains looking for them.

Kazbolat finds his family surrounded by mountain bandits and saves them and they all travel to Anapa and further to Istanbul.