

Levi-Itshak Derbaremdiker



This is my father Levi-Itshak Derbaremdiker. The photo was taken in Berdichev in 1941. My father was named after his famous great-grandfather. He was born in 1887. Before the Russian Revolution he worked as a clerk in a store. During World War I he served in the tsarist army as a private in Kiev. He learned to speak and write in Russian. After his retirement from the army he became a craftsman. After the Revolution my father changed many professions to provide for his family. I remember he was a soap-boiler at some stage. He worked in our kitchen where he had a big boiler to make soap. He bought beef fat and all necessary ingredients, mixed them together and boiled them for a long time stirring the mixture with sticks. Then he poured it into special forms. The whole family was involved in this process. Of course, it smelled awful but we got used to it. In 1928 the NEP came to an end and my father went to work at a shop. At one time he even was

the manager of a shop, as he was more intelligent than the others. The Soviet power struggled against religion and declared Saturday a working day. My father didn't like to argue. He went to work on Saturday but didn't do anything on this day. For the rest of his life my father was involved in soap and soda powder production. He was a kind, wise and considerate man. In the evening he used to read books and newspapers in Yiddish to the family. I still have newspaper cuttings from 1897-1898. They certainly have historical value. When the Jewish center opens in Kiev I will take them there. My mother was always my father's most passionate listener. In 1961 my father received an apartment in the new neighborhood in Kiev, Otradny, but he didn't stay there long. He wasn't feeling well and we took him to our place. He died in 1972. My father always said to me, ?You live in this new difficult world. You were raised as a Jew and you went to cheder. Whatever happens in your life don't change your nationality.?