

Shahne Berznitskiy And His Schoolmates



This is a group picture of my class of the Lithuanian lyceum in Veisiejai. The photo was taken in 1930. I am the second to the left in the top row. I do not remember the names of the students. Next to the teacher is the only Jewish girl in the class. She was sheltered by one Lithuanian during the war and after the Great Patriotic War she left for the USA.

At the age of six I went to the Jewish elementary school. The school was accommodated in two rooms of the synagogue. All subjects were taught in Hebrew: geography, biology, all kinds of songs and stories. We also studied the Lithuanian language. I did well at school and the four school years were easy for me. I wanted to go on with my education after finishing elementary school.

There was no Jewish lyceum in Veisiejai, just a Jewish elementary school. I entered the Lithuanian pre-lyceum school. It was easier for me to study as compared to other Jewish guys, as I didn't merely learn Lithuanian at school lessons, but also by means of communication. It was easy for me to enter pre-lyceum school and I did well there. My studies lasted four years. Having finished that school I went to Lazdijai, as there were no other institutions in Veisiejai. There I entered the Lithuanian lyceum. It was a state lyceum. I don't think the tuition was high. Father regularly gave me money either personally or via other people from time to time. For the time of my studies I never felt a bad attitude towards me. There was no anti-Semitism, none whatsoever. During the theological class we also studied the rudiments of Jewish religion. I lived in the place of my aunt Lyuba. She treated me as her own child.

After my father's death in 1930 I didn't go back to the lyceum, as I had to work and help out my mother. My uncle Benjamin gave me a job in his bakery. I became a classy baker within a year and a half. I had a secure profession. I worked as a baker in different Lithuanian towns for several years.