

Naum Tseitlin



This is my paternal great-grandfather, Naum Tseitlin. The photo was taken in Vitebsk. I don't know exactly when it was taken, I presume it was in the middle of the 19th century.

I can only remember a few facts about my paternal great-grandfather. He lived in Belarus, and the main residence of the entire Tseitlin family was the provincial town of Mstislavl.

During the war I happened to pass through this town, and when we came across a Jewish cemetery, quite by chance, my comrade, a soldier like me, said: 'Look, Tseitlin,' pointing at a marble monument. I went up and saw that it really was Tseitlin. I looked at the next – Tseitlin, too. A whole row of Tseitlins. That is, an entire burial place for the Tseitlin family. And I noticed the years. The graves were not only recent, but dated as far back as the 1700s, that is to say that Tseitlins were already living in Mstislavl in the 18th century. I then recalled that in the days of Catherine the Great our ancestors moved to Russia, coming through Germany, the Baltic states, and finally settled in this very place, in Belarus.

I noticed that those were only men's tombstones, and remembered what Father used to tell me. According to Jewish custom, men are buried in one row, and women in another, so that a husband's and wife's graves will be found in different places. Only men's tombstones. And a lot of names that I knew so well. My father also told me, that names recurred in our family. My name is Naum, my father's Efim, his father was Yakov, Yakov's father was Naum.