

Gerts Ushpits



This is my father Gerts Ushpits. The picture was made in Shakai in 1930s.

I knew my paternal grandparents very well. My mother died when I was two. Her death was caused by some complications after parturition. After mother's death they actually raised me. Father got married for the second time and his wife treated me like a step mother, so my paternal grandmother took me to her place. I grew up in her house. In spite of the fact that grandparents were actually like parents to me, I cannot recall grandfather's name. Grandmother's name was Sarah. Grandfather was born in early 1860s. Grandmother was couple of years younger. They lived in a small Lithuanian town Prenai [about 70 km from Vilnius]. Here grandmother had his own house and churn. Grandfather died from heart stroke in 1935 was survived by grandmother for several years. Granny lived to see outbreak of war and was murdered by fascists along with other Prenai Jews.

My father Gerts Ushpits, born in late 1880s in Prenai, did not get any other education but cheder and several classes of elementary Jewish school. He was literate. I do not know how my parents met, I think their date was arranged with the help of Jewish matchmakers- shedchens. After wedding they settled in Shakai. They had a two-storied stone house. Their store was on the ground floor of their house. Father was the owner of that store. In 1914 my elder brother Meishe was born and in 1917 my sister Leya was born. I was the third in the family. Of course, I do not remember mother. I only remember the warmth of her touch. In 1924 mother gave birth to a daughter, she died shortly after parturition. Soon mother died.

I can say I did not have childhood since then. Almost right after mother's death father got married and a stepmother appeared in the house. I do not remember her name. All I know is that she was much younger than my dad. My paternal grandmother was very sorry for us children and decided to take the youngest to her. Thus, shortly after stepmother appeared in our house, I was taken to Prenai. My childhood and adolescence were spent there. After mother's death I also lost father. He practically took no interest in me and came in Prenai very rarely. He was like a stranger to me. Grandparents were like parents to me.