

Szulim Rozenberg With His Family



This photo was taken at the wedding of my mother's brother Jankiel's son. I am standing on the left, next to me is Rajzla, then Ryfka, and then Rubin, her husband. Seated are my mother Dwojra and my father Szmul.

When I was born there were already 5 children at home before me. The eldest, Golda, was 18. They were thinking, about her, to get her married, but they were having trouble. She worked, she was a very resolute, bright girl. But what? She didn't mix with company. And because she didn't mix with company, she didn't have any friends. My second sister, Rajzla, who was about 3 years younger than her [b. 1903], went to the organization [Bund] and she had friends. And then there was the first son, who was called Ksil, born in 1905. So he was 13 when I was born and he went to cheder like all the other boys. Then there was Menasze, born in 1908, and in 1912 a third daughter was born, Ryfka, who was 6 years older than me, but she went to Polish elementary school. That was the first one who went to school.

I liked my mother very much but she was a very unhappy woman, because she had not food to give her children. In winter we bought 2 sacks of potatoes and into the cellar, and a little onion, and that was our food. And the only thing, it was so tragic for Mother, was that she couldn't make Sabbath, because for Sabbath you had to have a few zloty to buy a fish, to buy a little bit of meat. Later, in the 1930s, my eldest sister Golda lived in Czerniakow and was doing well. Streetcar no. 2 went from there to us, so she would come to do her shopping on Mila Street. She would come, take Mother, and bought for Mother too. So that Sabbath was Sabbath, and I would take the chulent to the baker [Jews often took chulent to the baker's on Friday evening to put it in the baker's oven, to have a warm meal for the Sabbath, when they weren't allowed to cook]. You understand how that whole life went on?

Father was always busy, always smiling, always dashing off somewhere, always had some idea. He matched couples together, for instance, was a bit of a shadkhan, and found them apartments. And he would forget to take money. Apart from that he was always thinking of somebody. But he was very cheerful. He had a friend who was a half-rabbi. He wasn't an official rabbi, he just wore this

round fur hat. He was very poor too, but very decent. They used to go the bar on Fridays and pay so that they could go on Saturday and drink a little glass of vodka. And he would come home in such a good mood, come to his wife and kissed her, and she would say: 'Oy! What are you doing?' So he would say: 'Let my children learn how to love a wife.'

Father had a little manufactory until the 1930s, which was in our house. There were about 12 people in it. When things were going worse, he made a pair of high boots, warm ones, with fur inside, took them under his overcoat and went out into the Polish district. He saw a woman selling apples, sitting at a cash desk, and it's cold there. And he comes in and says: 'Put them on, Ma'am.' She puts a shoe like that on, and then she doesn't want to undress it... And when he'd sold that pair he could buy material for another pair, and we had enough to eat for a few days. Only what? It was hard for him because he had no-one to second him. The eldest son, Ksil, he'd learned to make uppers and started work in the factory, but the first strike at Father's it was he who organized.