Naftole-Hertz Shein With His Brothers And Niece



This is my father Naftole-Hertz Shein with his brothers. From left to right: Efroim, my father, Leib, Abram, Isroel, Pesach and the eldest niece of my father and his siblings, Ruth, the daughter of their sister Ester. The photograph was taken in Valga in the 1930s.

My grandparents got married on 2nd September 1892 and their marriage was registered by the rabbi of the town of Parnu. They apparently left the town as all their children were born in the Estonian town of Valga, on the border with Latvia.

There were six sons and three daughters. The eldest child, Rohe-Gitl, was born in 1893. She was called by the Russian name of Rosa. My father’s elder brother was called Efroim, and he was born in 1896. He was named after Great-grandfather. My father was born in 1898, shortly after his grandfather Naftole-Hertz Efroim Shein died. So Father was named Naftole-Hertz. In 1900 Ester was born and Ella followed in 1902. The next son, Leib, was born in 1903 and Abram in 1904. Then came Isroel in 1906 and the youngest, Pesach, was born in 1911.

When grandfather Sholom-Iosif got married, he made a living on cattle breeding. Then he was involved in timbering. The elder sons, Efroim, my father and Leib did not get secular education, they went only to cheder. They were elder sons and had to work to help their father. They were hard-working. Our family was rather well-heeled, but it was gained by hard labor. The daughters and younger sons got both Jewish and secular education. Though father did not manage to go to lyceum, he knew how to count well, was knowledgeable about timber, graders of wood, measuring timber. He was well up in everything related to work.

The family was very religious. There was a synagogue and a prayer house in Valga. The prayer house was at my grandfather’s place. The kashrut was observed at home. The family followed Jewish traditions. All members of the family went to the synagogue on Sabbath and on Jewish holidays. Yiddish was spoken at home. Everybody spoke good German and Estonian.