

Markus Presser



This is my father Markus Presser. The photo was taken in Boryslaw (today Ukraine) in the 1920s.

This is one of the photograph's I got from my cousin Howard. Howard (Hagaj) Gelb was the son of Simcha, my mother's eldest brother. Howard was born in Poland; in 1926 he emigrated with his parents to the United States. Ten years ago he came back to Poland, the country of his childhood. We were together for several days and I became very close to him. When Howard went back to the States, among the family papers he found photographs of my family and sent them to me. These are the only pre-war photographs I have. The rest was lost.

Maybe my father was not a total atheist, but he certainly didn't practice. I remember he went to the synagogue only during Yom Kippur. He said to me once when I was maybe 12, that God's place is in one's heart. Human beings don't have the strength within them to act justly and need to have an image of someone who leads them.

Had my father also thought about leaving for Palestine? I don't know, I never had a serious conversation with him about that. What he told me sounded like a beautiful fairy-tale. He said Hebrew will once join the Jewish people of all nations. He said that in the future there will be no poverty, that the Jewish people will go to Palestine, that everybody will have work and access to education. But he never talked about the details of how that was to be achieved. There was a good deal of romanticism in my father's beliefs. Or maybe there was realism?

I never thought of those as real plans that would concern us in the near future. I needed a few more years to be able to seriously talk to my father about all that. My mom also talked about Palestine, though after the death of my father less so. I think she assumed that wasn't a deep conviction. Palestine was a type of an antidote for what was happening to the Jews in the Diaspora.