

Michal Maud Beer With Her Mother Katharina Stecklmacherova And Her Sister Karmela Ben Dom



This photo was taken in 1938, and from the left pictures me, Michal Maud Beer, née Stecklmacherova, my mother Katharina Stecklmacher, née Steinerova, and my sister, Karmela Ben Dom, née Stecklmacherova. The photograph was taken in a studio in Prostějov.

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur - High Holidays, that's what Jews as well as Czechs called them. When in fall our Christian neighbors saw us go to the temple in our best clothing, they'd say: "The Jews are having their High Holidays." Our family wasn't religious, but despite that we'd all go to the temple for the High Holidays. In our large temple in Prostějov, Grandma and Mom would go upstairs to join the women, and Grandpa, Dad and I, while I was small, would sit downstairs amongst the men. When I grew up some, I also had to go upstairs to join the women. I didn't like doing it - I felt better downstairs amongst the men.

From Grade 1 I was learning to read Hebrew in religion class; I didn't understand almost anything, but in the temple I tried to read the prayers along with the rabbi and with the religious community. During breaks we'd walk on the small square in front of the temple, and the narrow Jewish streets of the former ghetto. We'd greet each other, and wish each other a good New Year; our grandmothers and grandfathers still in old Hebrew: "L'shanau tauvo" we young ones already in modern Hebrew: "L'shanah tovah."

For Yom Kippur, we'd bring apples to the temple, with fragrant cloves stuck in them, for our grandmothers and mothers - to ease the all-day fast. Standing at the entrance to the temple would be the shammash, Mr. Bleichfeld. Always kind and smiling, even though the children didn't always behave in an exemplary fashion.