

Saul Bertram



This is a photo of my father Saul Bertram. It was taken in 1907 in Cracow.

My grandparents Abraham and Estera Bertram had four sons. Bernard was the eldest, and then there was Saul, my father. The third one was Salomon. He was the only one of the brothers to survive the war. As to the fourth one, I don't know what he was called; he died before I had a chance to meet him. He might have been called Jankiel.

Father was a watchmaker and jeweler. When my dad was working in Belgium as a diamond cutter, Grandma had him come back. She said she was ill. He came and stayed. What his mother probably wanted was for him to get married, for him not to be a bachelor.

I remember my bar mitzvah. My father's family came, which meant my father's brother, my father's sister-in-law, and her daughter. There was no one there from Mom's side. The only other person there was Granddaddy. My uncle was there, all from the Bertrams' side. And there was my rebbe, the beak who prepared me for my bar mitzvah, Nuchim Schpitz. He was this thin man who promised me that he would bring me a watch. And apparently he bought me a watch for my bar mitzvah in Vienna, but he said that it had been stolen. When I repeated that to dad, he said to me: 'khusid ganev'. 'Khusid' [Galician Yiddish] means Hasid, and 'ganev' means 'thief'. He could have said 'liar', but he said it so sharply because Dad was a 'misnaged' [an opponent of Hasidism].