

Ernest Galpert With His Schoolmates And Tutor Chaya Moshkovich



This is a picture of me and my schoolmates in the schoolyard. In the center is our tutor Chaya Moshkovich. I am the first on the right in the first row. The photo was taken in Mukachevo in 1933. At the age of six I had to go to elementary school. Jewish children went to Czech elementary schools for boys and girls. We had to study at the elementary school and cheder at the same time. School started at 9 in the morning. I had breakfast and went to cheder at 6.30, as usual. We recited prayers and at 8.30 I went to elementary school. After classes I went home to have lunch and then went back to cheder where we had classes until evening. I returned home late in the evening and did my homework for school. However, the schoolteachers knew that we had a busy curriculum at cheder and didn't give us much to do at home. When I was to start elementary school my father cut my payes. He didn't want me to be different from other children fearing that they might tease me. Senior boys at cheder had long payes and so did my father and grandfather and I wanted to be like them. I began to cry when he was cutting my payes, but my father said that while I was a child he was to decide on the length of my payes and when I grew up I could decide for myself. When I turned 14 or 15 I secretly cut my payes being shy to wear them. My father reminded me how I had cried when he had cut my payes. I wore a tzitzit. At school I hid it under my shirt, but I never took it off. We were told different things at cheder and at school and I often got confused about it. Once I came home after a class in natural history with tears in my eyes. I said, 'Our rabbi told us that God made this world in six days, but our teachers at school tell us different. Who do I trust? Our rabbi or our teacher?' Though my father was a Hasid he was a kind and smart man and understood that this was a collapse of my understanding of this world and a catastrophe for me. He said the following, 'You listen to both. What the rabbi says you study for cheder and at school you say what your teacher requests. When you grow up you will find out what's right for yourself.' I had all excellent marks at school and had no problems at cheder. On Saturday I visited my grandfather and he checked what I had learnt at cheder during the week. If he was happy with what he heard he always gave me candy.