

Iosif Golod



My father Iosif Golod. The photo was taken in 1934 in Kiev. My father was born in Khvoyniki in 1902. Khvoyniki was a small village in Belarus. There were 30 Jewish families, who peacefully resided in the village. The Jews were craftsmen. There were Russian, Belarus and Polish inhabitants in the village, and all nationalities respected each other's traditions and faith. There was a synagogue and a cheder in the village. Like all other Jewish boys my father finished cheder and Jewish elementary school. When he was 14 he took over his father's profession. He became a tailor and left his parents' house for good. He rented a room. He had a sewing machine and quite a few clients. My father and my mother fell in love with one another in their teens and got married in 1918, before the pogrom during which my mother's parents died. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah and a rabbi, a number of guests and klezmer musicians. My parents settled down in my grandfather's house. My older brother, David, was born in 1919. It was hard for my mother to live in Khvoyniki where her family had perished. She convinced my father to move to

Kiev. They sold their house, hired a horse-driven cab, moved to Kiev in 1922 and bought an apartment there. I have dim memories of our apartment: there was a room with my father's Singer sewing machine and his desk for cutting fabrics in the middle of the room. My father didn't allow me to touch his sewing machine because it was his precious working tool. He worked as a fabric cutter at the garment factory and did some work at home to make some extra money. My mother also did some sewing at home for her clients. When my father was at work she allowed me to turn the wheel of my father's sewing machine. Our father was a gloomy and withdrawn man. I don't remember him playing or talking with his children after he came home from work. He hardly ever talked with our mother either. She often cried, and only when I grew up did I get to know that my father was unfaithful to her. He always had other women. My parents weren't religious. They spoke Yiddish to one another and Russian to us [children], but we also knew Yiddish well. My father worked on Saturdays. We didn't know a thing about kosher food. We only celebrated Pesach. Our father brought matzah home in advance. My mother made gefilte fish that were so delicious that I can still remember its smell and taste. She also made chicken broth, fruit jelly and pastries from matzah flour. On Pesach my father came home early, washed himself, put on a clean shirt and the family sat down at the table. We just had a festive dinner, he never told us about the holiday or any other Jewish traditions or holidays.