

Lazar Gurfinkel



This is a picture of me when I was 6 months old. My older brother, Moisey, was born in 1913, and my sister Pesia followed in 1916. I was born in 1924. I was named Leizer after my grandfather on my father's side who died in 1913. In Hebrew my name is Eliezer, which means 'God is help'. In 1918 my parents moved into another house. My father bought a big house in one of the main streets - a better location for his business - and he moved his pharmacy into it, too. We lived in that house until World War II. There was a backyard, a shed and a well in the yard. The pharmacy occupied three rooms, the biggest of which served as the sales area. Powders were prepared in another room, and tinctures and decoctions were made in the third room. There were also

storerooms for pharmaceutical utensils. Our family was lodging in four rooms: a living room, a dining room, my parents' bedroom and a children's room. There were also a kitchen, a verandah and a few storerooms in the house. When I was small I slept in my parents' bedroom. Later, me and my brother and sister shared the children's room. There were two beds, a wardrobe, a sink, a table, two chairs and a bookcase in the room. We dined and received guests in the dining room. There was a table, six chairs, a cupboard and a sofa in the room. Our living room was beautifully furnished. There were four windows, carpets and curtains on the windows. There were pictures on the walls, ancient vases and a crystal chandelier. Romanian was the state language in Bessarabia from 1918, but Jews mostly spoke Yiddish or Russian. We spoke Russian at home. Sometimes my parents spoke Yiddish when they didn't want us to understand what they were discussing. We had a Ukrainian nanny. She was kind to me, and I was attached to her. I learned Ukrainian from her and Russian from my parents. I actually spoke a mixture of these two languages. I learned Yiddish when I was about 5 years old from the children I was playing with. We lived in a Jewish neighborhood, and all our neighbors were Jewish. I couldn't read or write in Yiddish, but I spoke it fluently.