

Sapse Katz



This is a picture of my father, Sapse Katz. It was taken in 1939 in Cernauti, when I was ten years old. I don't remember if it was a special occasion or not. I think it wasn't, because my father is wearing his every-day clothes, the ones he wore when he went to work. You can also see his writing pen popping out of his pocket, so it must have been a regular day. Maybe all his colleagues decided to have their picture taken. My father was born in Carlibaba in the 1890s, but he lived with my mother in Ceranuti. I don't know why or when he moved to Cernauti. He learned tailoring in Carlibaba when he was young, like his brother Lazar, but he worked in the forestry industry like his father. He never told me, but I think his father wanted his sons to have some qualifications before

learning more. In Cernauti he was a clerk in a timber station; he had a small notebook with him, where he had written a lot of mathematical formulae, which he used in his office, calculating timber cubing, for example. He wasn't an exuberant person, but he got along well with the people around him. He knew German, Romanian and Yiddish, and had his father's inclination towards calculations. He taught me how to calculate, when I was only five years old. He was proud of me and showed all his friends what his son could do. He took good care of me; he took me swimming and sleighing. I remember he made my first pair of skis; he got some wood, boiled it and then forced them to curve. But he wasn't very affectionate and he didn't talk to me about my problems. My father went to work in an office, so he dressed accordingly: in trousers and a jacket. My father wasn't very religious, he didn't keep Sabbath because he had to work on Saturdays and he didn't pray every day; but when he could, on the high holidays, he went to the synagogue, maybe even every four weeks; he loved to socialize and chat. My mother was more religious than him, she tried to respect Sabbath: she would ask a Ukrainian neighbor to come and light the fire, and she avoided hard work. Every Friday evening she cleaned the house, baked challah, lit the candles and said the prayers. Evenings like those were like a light among all my childhood memories. She always went to the shochet to have the chickens slaughtered. My father didn't study religion with me, but he sent me to cheder two or three times a week, from the age of six until I was around ten years old. He didn't want to send me to do further studies in a yeshivah, but it was tradition and I think my mother wanted me to have some basic knowledge about Judaism.