

Isroel Lempertas And His Family



This is my family. From left to right is my mother's sister Rahil Levinson, mother's sister Anna Kabo, is behind her, the third to the left is grandfather Faivush Levinson, my brother Mihil-Duvid Lempertas is on his lap, mother's sister Shifra Mets is standing next to him, to the left from her sitting is my father Itshok Lempert, my mother Luba Lempert holding me next to him. The picture was made in Mazeikiai in 1927 on the occasion of aunt's Anna visit. My maternal kin was born in Mazeikiai. I remember my maternal grandfather Faivush Levinson. I reckon he was born in 1860s. Grandfather was melamed in cheder. As I was later told by his students he was a very advanced person and a teacher. He gave not only traditional knowledge in cheder, but he also tried to tell more about nature, birds and flowers, read unreligious books of modern authors. As far as I know, grandfather Faivush Levinson was not truly religious man. I do not recall him in kippah or with a hat on. He died in 1933. He was buried in Mazeikiai Jewish cemetery in accordance with the Jewish rite. Faivush had many children. My mother's brothers left for America in early 1920s. All I know is their names - Louis and Benjamin. There were 5 daughters, including my mother born in 1897. The eldest sister Shifra was couple of years older than my mother. Her husband Aba Mets did not have a permanent job. He got by odd jobs. Shifra and Aba had two sons- Rafael, 4 years older than me and Nahman, who was my age. Two of my mother's sisters lived in the USSR. Elder sister Liya, who was one or two years older than my mother, left for Baku, Azerbaijan, where her husband lived. Before departure for Russia, my mother's second sister Anna (it was the name she was called during the soviet times, and her original Jewish name is unknown), who was 2 years younger, worked as a child-minder in the Jewish kindergarten in Mazeikiai. In early 1920s Anna illegitimately ran away from Moscow, USSR with her Jewish husband Kabo. My mother Luba Levinson was educated at home. I do not remember her saying that she went to lyceum. Grandfather Faivush taught his children himself. Yiddish was my mother's native language. Born in Tsarist Russia and having spent her adolescence there, she was well up in Russian, both written and oral. As for Lithuanian, she spoke with a heavy accent like most of Jews. Like many Jewish ladies, mother did not work when she was young. She lived in her parental house and helped grandmother with chores. My father Itshok Lempert was born in 1887. I do not know where he was born. Father was a very educated man. He finished lyceum and most likely some other education. Apart from mother

tongue Yiddish, he was fluent in Russian. I cannot say how good was his Lithuanian, but it was definitely better than mother's. Father was exempt from the service in the tsarist army as he had myopia alta. Father was much respected in Mazeikiai. He worked as a chief accountant at the Jewish bank in Mazeikiai. He was a highly skilled accountant. He even had students. They came home to my father and he gave them private lessons in book-keeping. Apart from book-keeping and teaching, father was also involved in some social work. My parents got married in Mazeikiai. I do not know if their wedding was Jewish as both of them, especially father, were unreligious. They might be married under chuppah out of mere respect for the relatives in order to observe the tradition. In 1923 my elder brother was born. He had a double name Mikhl-Duvid. He was named Duvid after grandfather, but I do not know the reason for his second name Mikhl. At home brother was called Duvid. I was born on the 17th of November 1925. I was named Isroel after one of my great grandfather, I do not know paternal or maternal. The surname of my father and grandfather was Lempert. I was born in independent Lithuania, so a Lithuanian version of my Jewish name was written in my birth certificate, namely Lempertas I still carry that name.