

Siima Shkop With Her Classmates



This is me (4th to the left) with my classmates. It was the third grade of the Jewish school in Tartu. After the third grade we parted and joined different classes as there were not enough students at this school to open up the 4th grade. Unfortunately, much time has passed and I do not remember my friends' names. The picture was taken shortly after my father's death. So, that's why I look sad. The photo was taken not far from our school in Tartu in 1929. I entered the Jewish secondary school in 1928. The teachers were good. By the way, some of them later taught at the Tallinn Jewish lyceum. Our teacher at the first grade was Vilenskaya, a very beautiful lady. She taught me how to read and write. She and her friends staged plays in German at the school theater in Tartu. Then she taught German at Tallinn school. We had wonderful teachers. One of them, Levitin, seemed an old man to me. He taught us Ivrit and the Tannakh in Hebrew. Of course, he did not tell us all the things, he picked only the subjects that we would understand, and covered the most important things. He also commented - sharing what one rabbi said on a certain subject and what opposite opinion was expressed by another rabbi, and we tried to find out which opinion was correct. Then I understood he did not only teach the Tannakh, he wanted us to learn how to think, analyze and have our own opinion, even it differs from the common point of view. He also told us interesting stories, which I still remember. My teachers also arranged extra-curriculum activities. There was a school theater, we staged plays, gave performances dedicated to the main Jewish holidays. There were a lot of spectators - kin, friends - and all praised them. A school choir also gave a performance as well as the students of the dancing and gymnastics studio. The concert program was always very comprehensive and it was interesting for both - spectators and participants. One of our teachers, Levin, came here from Poland. He knew a lot of nice Jewish songs and taught us those. I have very bright recollections from school times. I kept in touch with many of my classmates after I left school. I studied there only for three years. When I finished the third grade, there were not enough students to form another class. Thus we had to go to different schools. There were eight girls in my class, and the four of them, including me, went to an Estonian school.