

Anatoli Kraemer



That's me. The photograph was taken in Tartu in the 1920s.

I was born on 24th April 1924. I was called Anatoli. For some reason I did not have a Jewish name. My father did not live with us for a long time. He was not a bad man, but he had a great flaw, which was not characteristic of Jews, he took to the bottle. I was a year and a half, when Mother divorced

him. Father moved to Tallinn after the divorce. We never spoke about him at home.

After my parents' divorce, I saw my father only several times. I remember, once he came to us looking very weak after a drinking bout. He asked Grandfather for money. Grandfather did not give him anything and Father asked me to help him. He must have thought that I would ask Grandpa, but I did not do that. I loved tinned soldiers. I had a great many of them. They cost a lot of money and my kin always gave them to me on special occasions, like birthdays etc. I was sorry for my father as he looked so miserable. Thus, I gave him my soldiers so that he could sell them and have money.

On Yom Kippur adults always fasted for 24 hours according to the tradition. Small children were released from fasting. When I started going to lyceum, I was also supposed to fast. I was very active and agile, feeling hungry all the time. I managed to snatch some food in the kitchen, without anyone seeing it. Adults spent the whole day in the synagogue on Yom Kippur praying, until the first evening star appeared in the sky. My cousin Alexander and I went to the synagogue with the adults, but we could not stay there all day long, so we played football with other Jewish guys in the yard of the synagogue.