

Isaac Yudelevich



This is the brother of my father Isaac Yudelevich. The picture was made in 1908 in Kaunas.

I have never seen any of my paternal ancestors. I know that my grandpa Lazar Yudelevich, was born in the 1860s in Jonava. He was a rabbi. His wife, my grandmother Gitel Chazan was ten years younger than grandpa. She died rather early, in the 1920s or earlier. When she died, grandpa left for Palestine. He got married there for a second time. I do not know his second wife's name. There

was grandfather's portrait in the house. I vaguely remember him. He looked stately having a beard, wearing a kippah on a small beautiful grey-haired head. He was as if still in grief, whispering something to himself. This is all I know about my grandparents.

Lazar and Gitel Yudelevich had three children. The eldest was my father Abram Yudelevich. Isaac was the middle son. He was born in 1896. He was a subcontractor before war. He took the orders for construction of the houses. He was in charge of a construction crew, practically having the functions of the foreman. Isaac lived in Kaunas with his wife Raya Melamed and daughter Giten, born in 1929. When Soviet army came to power, he had to be in hiding as he might be deported for being rather rich. He stayed with us for some time, but mother was against it thinking that our house could not serve as a shelter putting our family in danger. I do not know how, but Isaac was able to escape repressions and arrest. During Great Patriotic War all of them, including Raya's elderly mother were in Kaunas ghetto. Being rather active Isaac understood at once that they should get out from ghetto at any cost. He managed to ingratiate with Lithuanians, who were helping out Jews. All of them left ghetto in different time and by different means. Uncle Isaac was in hiding for a long time. He was sheltered by Lithuanians, passing from one reliable person to another. In 1943 he lived on a picturesque island on a farmstead of two Lithuanian brothers. Somebody gave away Isaac and he was found by politsei. Both Isaac, and brothers, who sheltered him, were beaten black and blue and imprisoned. He was sent to Estonian concentration camp from the prison, and then to Dachau. There he lived to see the liberation. All those years Isaac had known nothing about the fate of his family and he was sure that all of them perished. Uncle was afraid to come back to his motherland understanding that Stalin's camps would be imminent for him instead of the fascists' ones. He left for Palestine upon liberation. Being there he found out that Raya and Gitel were rescued. They lived in Vilnius. The family reunion took place only in 1972 as before that time Raya and Gitel were not issued a permit to depart for Israel. Being tortured by yearning for her husband in long separation, Raya had lived with him for ten years. Uncle Isaac passed away at an old age - 89 or 88 .