

Iosif Yudelevichus And His Family



This is our family - I, mother, my brother David and father -during vacation in Kemery. We are on our way from the bath. There are sulfur bathhouses are in the background, 1935-36.

I remember myself from the age of five. Since early childhood my brother I had been close. We were called - Dodya and Osys, pronouncing our names separately. I remember the apartment, where I spent my childhood. There were five rooms in it- one room was after another. The first two rooms were occupied by father. At that time my father was one of the most famous lawyers on civil cases in Kaunas and made pretty good money. There was a large dining-room behind father's office. Of course, there was a kitchen, but I cannot recall my being there. We, children, had the governesses.

I was growing a good and a robust boy, but mother being frightened by brother's feebleness (he was afflicted with rickets in early childhood and was constantly getting ill), looked into the way we were dressed and fed. In summer our family went on vacation for two months. The first month was spent in Kemery and then we went to Buldury- the spa with salves, baths and all kinds of treatments. At that time it was customary to spend summer on the coast. Many of our relatives came there with children, so we were not bored. Later on we spent summer vacation in Palanga. Parents often had rest and recreation abroad. They went to Karlovy Vary, to the spas in France, Switzerland. Usually they went on vacation separately. There were few times when they went together.

When mother came back from vacation in 1934, she decided that brother and I should be taught music. There was no musical instrument. We went to a lady, who taught us music. We were as if glued to a piano for an hour. Both brother and I were against it. We did not like our music classes. Father, having decided that it was useless, talked mother into giving up our music education. My parents were not religious. Moreover, they did not observe Jewish traditions. That is there is nothing for me to say on family traditions, or Jewish holidays marked in the family.

I was a rather developed child. I often was present at my brother's studies and I had learnt letters before going to school. When parents were to choose where I should study, they chose secular Jewish lyceum Shvabes right away. My brother also studied in this lyceum. I went to Shvabes lyceum in 1934. Our wonderful teachers and headmaster Rutskus made a real team of like-minded people. The ideas of repatriation to Israel were delicately nurtured in the lyceum. Other than that it was an ordinary school, where subjects were taught in Ivrit. We had religion classes. I was not a bad student. I liked to spend my spare time running around with my friends in the hallway and play children's games. Here in lyceum I got a better understanding of Jewish holidays and traditions. Chanukkah was marked in lyceum. There was a pageant on Purim. I also knew about Pesach as there was a general seder in lyceum, carried out by director or some of the teachers. Shavuot was marked as well. On the eve of every holiday we were expressly told about the history and origin of the holiday. There was a period of time when I was the member of Jewish Scout organization. We marched, learnt all kinds of sports techniques, went hiking and were explained the rules. There was a strong Zionist spirit in lyceum. There were members of Beitar organization. They wore brown shirts, without even knowing that brown color would be soon disgraced by fascists. I did join Zionist organizations.