

Abram Lejbl Grynberg



This is my, Icchok Grynberg's, oldest brother, Abram Lejbl Grynberg. You can still see some stains on the photo - these are some marks of a seal, I suppose. The photo could have been used in an ID, but I don't know who took it. Most probably it was taken in 1934, before he left for Brasil.

In our family Mother gave birth twelve times. Because, among religious Jews, [there is a saying] 'every year comes a prophet', which means that each child which comes into this world is never a problem, but brings happiness. That's the way it is with religious Jews. Four infants died right after birth. They came down sick with some ordinary illness, but quickly died. Eight of us were left. Later, one brother and one sister died in an epidemic, so there were six of us left until the war. And so: Abram Lejb was the oldest one. He was born in 1910. Then my sister, whose original Jewish name was Rywka, Rywka Rutl. She was born in 1913. Then one more sister - Sara. After Sara, in 1921, I was born. Then, a year later, my younger brother came into this world. His name was Srul Motl.

Then there was a break and one more sister came - Malka, born in 1927. All names I'm giving are Jewish, original, as they were used every day.

I was the worst child of all. I was a rather unsettled child, very lively, very energetic - a little rascal. The oldest brother often used to beat me up, with his fists, whenever I got into trouble. I was very bored. I was going to cheder since I was 4. It was an unpleasant time. All day long I was sitting at school, and had no time to play. Through the window we saw children who were walking around, playing with their toys. Whenever we wanted to play ball or something, we would sneak out of the cheder. We would leave when the melamed was busy with other children. When the river was frozen, we liked to slide. A kid always wants to move a little - we went out on ice, there was no one around, sometimes the ice gave in. I remember after one Pesach we all started attending a different cheder. I didn't like going there. I was a bit older then. I remember how they chased me on a street because I didn't want to go to the cheder. A teacher and Father came and were yelling: 'You go to the cheder!'. I really didn't want to go, because it was unpleasant. But in the end I got used to it and I studied.

My eldest brother, Abram Lejbl, was a baker. In 1939 he served in the Polish Army in the 72nd Infantry Regiment in HrodnaGrodno. He wasn't as religious as parents. Even before the army he belonged to Poalei Zion. When he came back from the army, he immediately went to Brazil. Mother had a brother there, Aaron Kuperman. (He came from Rozan and in the mid 1920s went to Brazil with his family. He had two girls and one boy.) They invited my brother. It was an obvious thing that when he arrived there, he couldn't work as a baker. In Brazil, whenever someone was hired, that was a big deal. Jews who came as immigrants usually ended up being salesmen - ambulants [from Spanish "wandering", that is a door-to-door salesmen]. They went to villages and towns to sell various goods: clothes, dress fabric... They used to sell on credit. (They had a piece of paper called 'klaper' [Yiddish: something worn on the lapel of a suit] where they would write their clients' debts. Brazilians were very honest and reliable, so it was safe to sell to them on credit.) All immigrants started like that, because there was no other work. And later, once they made enough money doing this, they opened stores and usually became merchants. In 1946 my brother opened a furniture store. He didn't live long. He died in 1952. He didn't get married.