

Jacob Stiepelman



This is my father, Jacob Stiepelman, the picture was taken shortly before the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War in the 1930s in Kishinev.

My father, Jacob Soifer, the youngest of the sons, born in the early 1890s, changed his name to Stiepelman. Father didn't get any education. He even didn't go to cheder. Grandfather Ihil was his teacher and he gave all his knowledge to his favorite son. Father was a very religious man. He even went to bed in a kippah. He lived with my grandfather at that time and spent his time studying and praying before he got married. He was not that young when he got married. It was a prearranged marriage. His wife-to-be was from the Moldovan village Gura Galbeney. Her name was Haya Feurman.

My parents rented an apartment in Kishinev after their wedding. Grandfather helped them out for a while until Father had acquired a profession. Then Father learned how to become a shochet. Every week he went to the small town of Khyncheshtch, where the butcher who taught him lived. My parents didn't stay in Kishinev for a long time, and moved to Khyncheshtch, looking for a job. The old butcher, my father's teacher, sent all his clients to my father. Father became a very skilled butcher. He could cut poultry, and he also knew how to slaughter cattle. In every house we used to live, there was a shed where my father did his job. There were huge hooks where fowl was placed and there were tubs with straw or boxes with sand underneath for the seeping blood. Father was very hard-working. Not every Jew was able to pay my father for his job, but my father couldn't leave a Jew without a kosher Sabbath chicken. That is why my father worked for free sometimes. Each Friday Father rented a cart to go to the villages, where at least one Jew was residing, to cut chicken for Sabbath. Sometimes my father came back home empty-handed.

Father didn't make much money, but it was enough for the family to get by. Mother was a wonderful housewife, coping with a lot of housework: baking fresh bread, cooking an apple pie. keeping the house in order and taking care of the children. In 1923 my sister Bluma was born, and the next year Rahil was born. My elder brother Motle was born in 1927. Then I was born on 10th September 1934 in the town of Khyncheshtch. I was named after my grandmother Riva, who had passed away by then.