

Judith Begam And Family



The Begam family: my grandfather and my mother are sitting, my grandmother and her cousin Antokolsky are standing. The photo was taken in Vilno in 1896. My mother Judith Begam was born in Vilno in 1895. She was the oldest sibling. She had a younger sister, my favorite aunt Maria, born in Vilno in 1897, and a brother, Lev Begam, born in 1903. My grandmother on my mother's side, Enta Antokolskaya, was born to the Antokolsky family in 1872. She was very proud to stem from the Antokolsky family. They emerged at the beginning of the 19th century. There is a town called Antokol near Vilno. Her family's name originated from this town and the Antokolka River, and her

Jewish ancestors got their family name from the names of this area. Some of her Antokolsky relatives received very good education back in the 19th century, and some were craftsmen. One of the most remarkable men was the sculptor Mark Antokolsky [1843-1902]. He created many monuments and always remembered his Jewish roots. My grandmother was his niece. An outstanding Soviet poet, Pavel Antokolsky [1896-1978], was my grandmother's nephew. My grandmother came from a poor branch of this family. Her father was a craftsman, a leather specialist, and had nothing but the pride of his famous family name. My grandmother got some basic education at home. She was taught to read and write in Yiddish in order to pray and do the housekeeping. She was very talented and learned Russian, she spoke it with no accent and read many classics. She married a craftsman, Movshe-Girsh Meyer Begam, born in Vilno in 1870, who was working in her father's shop. I have no information about my grandfather's family. My grandparents observed Jewish traditions, went to the synagogue and spoke Yiddish in their family. I cannot say how seriously they believed in God, but on the outside they made things look alright.