

Benumin Katz



This is my father Benumin Katz. This is a photograph from our family album that I had with me during my studies in Kharkov and then in evacuation. This photo was taken in Ozarintsy in 1927.

My mother and father came from Ozarintsy town in Vinnitsa region [about 300 km from Kiev], which was Vinnitsa province at the time. Ozarintsy was one of many Jewish towns in Vinnitsa region that was within the pale of Settlement in Russia. All Jews in Ozarintsy were religious. Despite the struggle of Soviet authorities against religion the synagogue in Ozarintsy was not closed until the middle 1950s. Jews celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays and observed Jewish traditions. Of course, the time had its impact on the Jewish way of life. The generation of my grandmother wore wigs and kerchiefs and long dark clothes. Men had beards and wore hats or caps, but the following generations wore casual clothes, did not cover their heads, women did not cut their hair before the chuppah. On Jewish holidays all Jews went to the synagogue anyway. Many men went to the synagogue before work on weekdays.

There were five children in my father's family. My father's oldest brother moved to USA before the revolution and there were no contacts with him. The rest of my grandparents' children lived in Ozarintsy. I don't remember their dates of birth. The oldest was my father's brother Mehl, then came Moishe and my father Benumin, and their younger sister Bluma. Bluma died in the year when I was born. My father and his brothers went to the cheder. My father could read and write in Hebrew and Yiddish and knew prayers. They also finished the 7-year Jewish school. My father's brothers helped their father with taking care of the sheep. After the revolution of 1917 my father went to study at the rabfak. After finishing it he went to work as an accountant in the Jewish kolkhoz in Ozarintsy.

I don't know how my parents met. Since they both came from Ozarintsy where their families lived in the same street and my parents must have known each other. My parents got married in 1921. They had a traditional Jewish wedding. Mama said that there were tables installed along the street and the whole village celebrated their wedding. My parents lived with my father's parents. My grandfather had a big house. My father worked as an accountant in the kolkhoz. My mother was a housewife. My parents observed Jewish traditions, but their appearances were no different from those of Ukrainians. Men didn't have beards or cover their heads. Mama only wore a kerchief to go to the synagogue or on Sabbath and Jewish holidays.