

Abe-Shmul Medved And His Youngest Daughter



This is a picture of my father, Abe-Shmul Medved, and my youngest sister, Vera. The photo was taken in Zaporozhye in 1935 when my father was visiting us. My father was a very religious man. He observed all Jewish traditions and followed all laws. He went to the synagogue to pray every day, and on holidays he even sang at the synagogue. He also prayed at home with his tallit and tefillin. I even remember some words from what he sang on Saturday evenings at home, but I have no idea what they mean. I don't know where my father studied if he studied at all. There were religious books in Yiddish at home, which he used for praying, but there were no fiction books. My father was used to hard work in the village. He got married at 17. His first wife came from the family of colonists. I don't know her name. They had six children. In 1898 my father's first wife died. After that he wanted to have another wife at home. Shadkhanim recommended somebody in Ekaterinoslav. It was my mother to be. My mother, Khasia, was born in Ekaterinoslav in 1875. When I grew up I often wondered what it was like to marry a man with grown-up children. My parents had twin girls, Feigele and Esther, in 1900. My brother, Iosif, was born in 1903, I followed in 1906, and my youngest sister, Vera, in 1913. We were all born in Novozlatopol. According to the census of 1901 the population of Novozlatopol was 817 and 669 of them were Jews. I remember our house well. Like all other houses in the colony it was built from self-made bricks. Bricks were made in wooden frames filled with a mixture of sand, clay and water. They were dried in the sun and removed from the frames. There were three rooms in our house. The children slept on planks installed on bricks: my twin sisters, Iosif, Mayer and I slept there. My parents and little Vera slept on a similar bed in the same room. My older sisters slept in the other room. There were a big table, benches, cupboards and a box in the third room. There was no other furniture in the house. We sowed wheat and barley, and kept horses and cows. We had a big kitchen garden where we could grow what we needed for a living, and cellars full of barrels with pickled cucumbers, tomatoes, watermelons and sauerkraut. We kept chickens, ducks and turkeys. It was all a lot of work. We never hired employees. We never heard anybody saying unpleasant things about Jews. On holidays

like Rosh Hashanah, Purim, Chanukkah and Yom Kippur people went out into the streets singing, dancing and saying hello to each other. All inhabitants of the colony got together to chat, crack jokes and enjoy themselves. They all spoke Yiddish to one another. Later they all went to the synagogue, a two-storied building. Men prayed downstairs, and women were upstairs. The school was a one-storied brick building. We studied Russian, arithmetic, geography and the history of Russia at school. Boys and girls studied together. There was a big portrait of Tsar Nicholas on the wall above the blackboard in our classroom, and we sang the Russian anthem, 'God, save the tsar?', every morning. There were no religious classes at school. [Editor's note: The tsarist government was interested in the assimilation of Jewish farmers and tried to distance them from Judaism and Jewish traditions. The government opened Russian elementary schools in colonies.] I was a success at school. Our schoolteachers weren't Jewish and didn't live in the colony. They arrived at school on a horse-driven cart every morning. My sister Vera moved to Zaporozhye after finishing school where she went to study at the factory school [evening higher secondary school]. I spent my vacations and days off at home. When the Great Patriotic War broke out Vera was living in Kiev. She worked at a big plant that evacuated. After the war Vera returned from evacuation and settled down with me in Kiev. Vera lived with me until she got married. Her marriage failed, she got divorced and received an apartment from the plant where she was working. Vera, remarried. Her second husband was a nice Jewish man, but he died after 5 or 6 years of their life together. Vera met another man, but their relationship also failed. She died in 1980. She didn't have any children.