

Chaja Sznejser With Her Children



This picture was taken in Legnica in the 1950s. This is my wife Chaja Sznejser, nee Sznajser with our children: the oldest one - Dawid Berek - was born in 1947. He's standing first from the right. He was an electrician. The younger boy, Szama was born in 1950. He emigrated to Israel. My daughter Syma Gertner, nee Sznejser, was born in 1952. She lived in Poland for some time and then she emigrated to Denmark. In Israel Szama went straight into the army. Almost straight away he was injured and went to stay with family, my mother's cousin, Icek Kopciak. The Kopciaks had left for Israel earlier, and before they left they had lived in Legnica too. Icek worked in a co-operative, Model, where they made hats. But there in Israel Szama didn't want to stay with them. One day Kopciak's wife put some food out and he ate a lot. Szama was very ill, but he didn't say anything to her. And she went to her husband, who was in the garden, and told him that Szama had eaten a lot. And the window was open and he heard. And right away he wrote to me, 'Dad, I'm not going there again.' And after that I didn't have any more news from him. I just found out in a letter that he had died, and that he had left a few zloty. Well, I could at least have written back and told them to put up a headstone in the cemetery, but I didn't think, and I didn't do anything. Syma got married in Denmark. She was in contact with the Jewish community there. She lived with her husband and her mother-in-law. I went to stay with them. The mother-in-law was a Russian Jewess, not a very nice woman. When my daughter put food in front of me she looked kind of oddly. And then in 1993 my daughter died too. She's buried in Denmark in a Jewish cemetery. Dawid, my eldest son, didn't want to leave, because he didn't want to leave me. My wife died in 1986, right after the disaster in Russia [the April 1986 disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Ukraine]. She went out early in the morning, breathed in the air and that was it, at once. She died shortly afterwards. My son married here in Legnica. But then he threw his wife out. Because she told me that when she's in the kitchen she didn't want to see me. In my house! So Dawid threw her out. And they had a child, a son, Mariusz is his name. She taught him to be against his father. When Dawid wanted to talk to his son, he would run away. Then, when he got married, he didn't invite his father, and when they had a baby they didn't invite him either. It's only now that I'm in touch with him: he comes round from time to time, at last, after 35 years I'm a grandfather to him!

All that was hard for Dawid. And he paid child support money for 18 years. In the end he died too, in 2002. I prayed for him for a whole year, recited the Kaddish. I've given my grandson a lot of things his father left, because Dawid was always buying things for him, even though he couldn't talk to him.