

## Boris Lerman And His Grandson Vadim



This photograph shows me and my grandson Vadim at home in 2006. He appeared in St. Petersburg granted a leave of absence during his service in Chechen Republic.

My son graduated from the College. He was a qualified engineer. His documents were ready for departure to Israel. Later he got ill and died. It happened in 1995.

So I remained together with my wife Haya Wolfovna. Our grandson Vadim is the only heart close to our hearts. He was born on August 28, 1985. He promised to take the place of our son for us, and we promised to replace his father. At present he is a professional soldier. He participated at war in the Chechen Republic [Chechen Republic is situated in the Caucasian region of Russia]. During the summit in summer 2006 he was in security detachment in Saint Petersburg airport Pulkovo.

My daughter-in-law (Vadim's mother) is Russian. Once we decided to send our grandson to a Jewish summer camp, but to our surprise they did not take him: they required to present documents confirming Jewish nationality of his mother.

Some words about my childhood.

The Jewish school was very small, there were small classrooms with school desks for pupils (3 seats each). Our teachers were very strict, but fair. We took examinations making no cribs. Teachers were very competent and did their best to help us in our studies, to help us grow up worthy Jews.

People were in need everywhere. There was shortage of everything: copybooks, pens, pencils, ink, etc. At school they gave us 1 textbook for 2 or 3 pupils. From spring till autumn we went to school barefoot. Sometimes they gave children 1 or 2 pairs of boots, but they always fell to share of pupils who had no fathers.

There were a lot of poor families. In some houses there were dirt floors, and its windows were at the ground level. Only tailors, shoemakers, tinmen, tradesmen, and office workers managed to make both ends meet: they always had work.

While I was little, I did not visit kindergarten, I stayed at home with Mum, my brothers and sisters. I do not remember that we were especially amused somehow: we always had tasks about the house and in the vegetable garden (irrespective of age). We also used to help grazing a cow and a horse. We lived in the wooden house. In winter we closed one half of the house to save firewood for heating. We had neither bathroom, nor bath-house; therefore we had to rent a bath-house for washing (only in 1935 we made our own bath-house). We had no orchard, only a vegetable garden with potatoes and other vegetables. We kept a cow and poultry. Parents never had servants. Children always fulfilled work according to their possibilities.

Financial position of our family was extremely modest since only father worked. You remember that our parents had got 10 children (7 of them lived at home, while the elder children left home for other places of living). It was impossible for us to survive without vegetable garden and a cow.

At home we had only religious books. Other books we borrowed at school. We did not subscribe to newspapers, but bought them. There was a library in Ushachi, it was possible to borrow books there, too.

Our family was religious, we strictly observed all Jewish traditions (kashrut, Sabbath). We celebrated all Jewish holidays and visited synagogue. Despite our poverty, we celebrated Sabbath and holidays according to all religious rules and traditions. Parents were members of the Jewish community.

Parents had got 8 sons and according to Tradition they arranged bar mitzvah on the 8th day for each boy.

Members of our family ate only kosher food. We had separate dishes for dairy and meat dishes, and special set of plates and dishes for Pesach (it was kept in the garret well packed in the large basket).

A month or more before Pesach it was time to make matzah. In 1930s authorities did not forbid to make matzah officially, but they actively propagandized against it. At school teachers strictly warned us not to take part in making matzah and threatened to expel from the Pioneer organization. Mum asked each participant to keep my assistance in strict secret. Everybody did.