

Meer Kuyavskiy With His Twin Brother Benjamin Kuyavskiy



This is a photo copy of our picture, which has been kept despite of all the horrors of the camps and ghetto. It is currently kept by brother in Canada. To the left is I with my twin brother Benjamin Kuyavskiy. The picture was made in Lodz in 1930, when we were five years old.

My mother gave birth and raised four sons. The first-born Moishe was born in 1914, my brother Isaac was born in 1917. The twins were born on 16 January 1925. I was the older one. My brother Benjamin came into world 15 minutes later. Our parents did not have their own house. They rented an apartment, where we were born and spent our childhood and adolescence.

My mother was raised in a religious family and strictly observed Jewish traditions. She always wore wig and only in postwar times she took it off keeping abreast with the times. We only had kosher food. Meat and poultry was bought only in kosher meat stores. Live poultry, purchased on the market, was taken in synagogue to shochet by some of the elders. When I grew up a little bit, it became my responsibility.

My education started at cheder which was typical for the boys of that time. I went to melamed, who also taught my elder brothers. At times there were up to 30 people in the class, but sometimes there were only four. We were taught how to pray in Yiddish, but I was not eager to study as I wanted to play with children outside. I went to cheder for half a year, but my elder brothers insisted that Benjamin and I should go to the school where subjects were taught in Polish. There

were all kinds of Jewish educational institutions in Lodz. There was Yiddish elementary school not far from us, but my brothers fairly thought that I should study for having a chance to continue education in state language. Many guys who went to Yiddish school spoke broken Polish and they could not think of continuing education their education in the institute. My elder brother Moishe and Isaac finished Jewish school, where subjects were taught in Polish and thanks to them my brother and I also went to that school. Moishe and Isaac did not go on with their education as both of them became excellent furriers, they made fur coats and hats and earned pretty good money. They wanted their junior brothers to get higher education. They were willing to help us in that.

There were only Jewish children in our school, the teachers were also Jews with the exception of some Polish teacher and some other. It was prohibited to speak Yiddish in our school. We were told to go to Yiddish school if we did not want to speak Polish. Of course, we spoke Yiddish with each other as it was easier for us. Other than that, it was an ordinary compulsory school with the additional classes in Jewish religion, history and traditions. I was among Jews, and my friends were only Jews. We even had frays with the students from Polish schools, though there was nothing serious, just ordinary conflicts, taking place between the students of different schools and lyceums. Those conflicts had nothing to do with the nationality. I was a mediocre student, I liked sciences, though I never got higher mark than 'good'. My brother Benjamin since childhood happened to be gifted, especially in liberal arts - literature and history.