

Matvey Breizman



This is my father Matvey (Morduch) Breizman. This photo was taken in Zhytomyr in 1930. My father was the oldest child in the family. The name Morduch was written in my father's documents. Later he was called with the Russian name of Matvey. They observed Jewish traditions in the family. The family was poor. My father started to work when he was young. He was the oldest in the family. Shortly after moving to Zhytomyr he became an apprentice to a watchmaker whose last name was Poliak. My father lived and had meals in his house. Poliak didn't charge them for education and accommodation, but my father had to work for him for free for two years. My father stayed in his shop after his training was over and worked there until he got married. When my maternal grandmother fell ill with tuberculosis they decided to have my mother married off as soon as possible so that she didn't have to depend on her relatives in case her mother died. This was in

1921. My grandmother turned to shadkhanim, matchmakers, that offered her to have my mother marry my future father. My grandmother called my mother to come to Zhytomyr where she announced that my mother was to meet a man. My mother met my father. They liked each other. My mother was a quiet, shy and pretty girl. My father was twelve years older. My mother didn't want to marry him. She cried and begged her mother to let her be, but my grandmother insisted that my mother obeyed her. My father was a decent man and had a profession. They got engaged and my mother stayed in Zhytomyr. They had a traditional Jewish wedding about a month later. My father found a facility that he wanted to rent for his clock shop, but it turned out to be cold and wasn't appropriate for work. Besides, my father would have had to pay taxes on it. He went to work at another clock shop. He was very skillful and had a lot of work to do. When he returned home from work he continued working. He got orders from owners of clock shops that had nice facilities with fancy signboards, but they couldn't do the work. Those owners paid my father 50% of the cost of their orders. My father was a strong man, but the fact that he had to sit all the time had an impact on his health condition. My mother was a housewife. My father wanted to provide for the family and thought that he could afford to have my mother take care of the house and family. My father was an intelligent and advanced man. I don't know where he learned music. He had a Jewish friend that was a tuner. My father and his friend often played the violin and this tuner's daughter accompanied them on the piano. My father also read a lot. He read books in Yiddish that my grandfather had left him. We had many books at home: most of them were books in Yiddish and Hebrew. My mother and father went to see Jewish performances at the theater.