

Naum Bitman With His Mother Basia Bitman



My mother Basia Shub and I, Naum Bitman. Photograph taken in 1944 in Frunze (Kirgizia), in evacuation. The photo is signed "To dearest Daddy from me and our son".

I can hardly remember anything from my childhood before the war. I remember my grandmother - she was always taking care of me at home. Grandmother spoke Yiddish with those who could understand it. I remember there was matsa at home. I do not remember any Jewish celebrations at home, but I remember matsa. I liked it very much. Another thing I remember is that they always gave me money at Hanukkah. Mother and grandmother spoke Yiddish to one another, and the sisters spoke Russian.

The war was a surprise for our family or anybody else. On Sunday, 22 June 1941, mamma was waiting for her friend to go to the beach. We were waiting, too. We called mamma's friend and she said: "Basia, don't you know? Haven't you heard what happened?" And she told mamma about the war. Then they started crying. We had a housemaid, Tonia, a village girl, at that time. When she heard about the beginning of the war, she took me in her hands and cried out: "War!". I got so scared that I couldn't talk for about two weeks. And then I was stammering for the rest of my life actually. During my last year at school I took some medical treatment and it helped a little. But always, when I get nervous I stammer, This is a kind of memory that I have of the first day of war.