

Isroel Lempertas And His Family



This is my family. The picture was taken on the background of the unfinished house, where the family of my mother's sister Shifra Mets lived. Standing: the tallest -Shifra's husband Aba Mets with a white scarf, to the left from him is mothers younger sister Rahil Kabo, one row lower is aunt Shifra and to the right is my mother Luba Lempert. At the bottom row to the left is my elder brother Mikh-David Lempertas, and I. Aunt Shifra's son Rafael Metz is in the stroller. Mazeikiai, 1930. My maternal kin was born in Mazeikiai. I remember my maternal grandfather Faivush Levinson. I reckon he was born in 1860s. Grandfather was melamed in cheder. Faivush had many children. My mother's brothers left for America in early 1920s. All I know is their names - Louis and Benjamin. There were 5 daughters, including my mother born in 1897. The eldest sister Shifra was couple of years older than my mother. Her husband Aba Mets did not have a permanent job. He got by odd jobs. Shifra and Aba had two sons- Rafael, 4 years older than me and Nahman, who was my age. Two of my mother's sisters lived in the USSR. My mother Luba Levinson was educated at home. I do not remember her saying that she went to lyceum. Grandfather Faivush taught his children himself. Yiddish was my mother's native language. Born in Tsarist Russia and having spent her adolescence there, she was well up in Russian, both written and oral. As for Lithuanian, she spoke with a heavy accent like most of Jews. Like many Jewish ladies, mother did not work when she was young. She lived in her parental house and helped grandmother with chores. My father Itshok Lempert was born in 1887. I do not know where he was born. Father was a very educated man. He finished lyceum and most likely some other education. Apart from mother tongue Yiddish, he was fluent in Russian. I cannot say how good was his Lithuanian, but it was definitely better than mother's. Father was exempt from the service in the tsarist army as he had myopia alta. Father was much respected in Mazeikiai. He worked as a chief accountant at the Jewish bank in Mazeikiai. He was a highly skilled accountant. He even had students. They came home to my father and he gave them private lessons in book-keeping. Apart from book-keeping and teaching, father was also involved in some social work. My parents got married in Mazeikiai. In 1923 my elder brother was born. He had a double name Mikh-David. He was named David after grandfather, but I do not know the reason for his second name Mikh. At home brother was called David. I was born on the 17th of

November 1925. I was named Isroel after one of my great grandfather, I do not know paternal or maternal. The surname of my father and grandfather was Lempert. I was born in independent Lithuania, so a Lithuanian version of my Jewish name was written in my birth certificate, namely Lempertas I still carry that name. Our family did not own any property and our parents always rented an apartment. Father was busy with his work and social activity and could not spend a lot of time with his children. Mother mostly took care of us. The air in our house, and conversations of our guests, mostly Yiddishists, affected our upbringing. Mother was a housewife, but she just ran the house, while others did all the chores. We always had a maid- a Lithuanian tacit and hard-working woman. As per order of my mother she cooked dinner, cleaned the apartment and did the laundry. My parents were not religious. Our family was middle class, it was not rich. Books, papers, father was subscribed for, were the priority in our house. Since childhood we used to read them. We had radio in the 1930s. It was rather rare and expensive back in that time. My brother and I were given a bike. There were few Jewish children who had a bike and it was a kind of luxury. In summer we went to dacha [summer house], which parents rented in a small Lithuanian hamlet.