

Abram Bashmet



I, Abram Bashmet. This photo was taken in 1933, in Odessa by my uncle Aizik in his private photo room.

I was born in 1926. Before I turned eight, I was only allowed to play in the yard. My mother even beat me or punished me making me stand in a corner, if I left the yard. She was afraid of bad influence of hooligans, 'shpana' as they were called in Odessa. When I turned eight, my parents used to send me to buy bread in a shop. I hardly ever went out with my parents. They were busy at work and I spent my time playing with other children in the yard.

We lived in Knizhny Lane that was called so due to the nice building of the library in the center of it. When I turned ten, I began to borrow books from this library. My mother read a lot and we had many books at home: my mother read Russian and world classics and was also fond of detective stories. I remember a story teller in Odessa. His surname was Haimovich and he always told sensations and news. There were always rumors that either a comet would fly by, or a meridian had broken and they spread fast and then there were books on this subject written. We could also borrow books from him: he charged 2-3 rubles for 3-4 days. My mother loved opera and ballet, and she took me with her to the theater. I remember how I admired the luxury of the Opera Theater.

In 1933 there was famine, I remember it well: we were miserably poor then. I remember that my mother and father had golden rings and they took them to the Torgsin store to buy bread or something else. My father even had to take our pillows to sell them at the market. My father went to work at the garment factory. We didn't have coal or wood to heat the apartment. I fell ill with measles. It created complications with my eyes: I had a squint, poor sight and long sight. I even couldn't go to school at the age of seven: my parents decided I needed to get better.

A year later life began to improve. To prepare me for school my mother decided to send me to a Froebel tutor who had finished a Froebel school before the revolution of 1917. There was a group of children. She taught us to read and write in Russian. She was a Jew, Faina Markovna, an intelligent woman. She was very good at teaching children. We sang and learned poems, went for walks in parks, and in the evening she took us to our homes. We had our snacks with us and our Froebel tutor watched that we ate what we had with us.