

The Kremer and the Eishishki, families of Kurenets  
by Moshe Kremer

I was born in Kurenets in 1926. I was the youngest child of Chana, born in 1890 in the hamlet Kusta (a small farming community near Kurenets ) My mother was the daughter of Bluma and Pinchas Eishishki. My father was Mendel, born in Kurenets in 1880 to Eshka Ester nee Alperovich and Yehushua Leib Kremer. My father Mendel had 4 children with his first wife Miriam, daughter of Cherna and Cheikel Velvel Alperovich. Baruch was born in 1905. Baruch was a merchant. He was married to Batia and lived in Molodechno with their children Yehoshua born in 1928 and daughter Miriam born in 1939 (just before the war started). My very smart sister Busia Bushka was born in 1906. She was married to Meir Shkolnik who was born in 1903. They lived in Kurenets. Bushka was a confidential unofficial advisor and therapist to the women of Kurenets. In extreme cases of rape or jilted young women she even arranged for abortions. Jacob was born in 1907 and lived in Svir with his wife Ester Henya ,he was a merchant. Chaim was born in 1911. He lived in Kurenets with his wife Zlata nee Dokshtzy from Dolhinovo. They had a baby girl during the war. He was also a merchant. His mother Miriam passed away while giving birth to him.

Some of the older siblings.



My brother Baruch who was murdered by the Nazis in 1942. His children survived the Holocaust.



Chaim Kremer (1911- 1959) survived the Holocaust.



My parents; Chana and Mendel Kremer

Since Miriam Kremer passed away when all of her four children were still very young, my father married my mother Chana and she helped him raise the kids from his first wife as if they were her biological children. In 1914 my parents had their fifth child, my brother. Gershon. He was a merchant and lived in Kurenets before the war. In 1918, they had their sixth child, my sister Henia. She was clever and beautiful. She was a book keeper and lived in Kurenets. The seventh, my sister Ashka was born in 1921 (she is my only full sibling who survived the Holocaust. She lived with her husband and 2 daughters in Chicago) The eighth, my brother Yehoshua was born in 1924. Then I was born in 1926 with a twin brother. He passed away when he was still a baby. .



My sister Henia Kremer (1918- 1942). She perished in the Holocaust.



My Sisters Eshka and Bushka, shortly after the war ended.

Here is what the well-known Rabbi Landau wrote about my Kremer/ Kramer family of Kurenets:

"At that time, a person who became important in our town was Yekutiel Meir Hakoen Kremer (the brother of my father). He was very God fearing and honest in his ways, and he would teach Mishna to the community of the old shtiebel. His father was Reb Yehoshuah Leib Hakoen Kremer the Melamed. Reb Y. Leib was very knowledgeable in all the Mishna and many times would repeat the Mishna by heart. All his sons were honest and God-fearing people. Besides Yekutiel Meir, there was Nachman Yosef Kremer, Mendel Kremer, and Chaim Zalman Kremer. All of them were businessmen, and Yekutiel Meir was also a merchant. He had a flour store but he was still busy learning Torah. Whenever you passed by his store you could see that there was a book in his hand. He was the son-in-law of Reb Yehiel Yentes and lived in his house. His brothers-in-law were the son of Yakov Mendel Markon, the owner of the flour mill in the village Ivontseovich, near Kurenets. Another brother-in-law was Zishka, son of Shimon Alperovich. Everyone in Kurenets respected the family."

Another sister of my father was Dobe Isaacson who immigrated to Eres Israel. She was the great grandmother of Gilad Jafet (owner of Geni and My Heritage). Both wives of my father came from very respected families. My mother was the oldest daughter of Pinchas and Bluma. Her siblings lived in Kurenets with their families Her brothers were Gershon, Mordechai and Zeev Ayeshisky. Her sisters were Batia Gurevich, Sara Alperovich and Bela. Sadly not one of them survived the Holocaust, but the children of Batia Gurevich and Sara Alperovich survived and came to Israel after the war.

Our family was considered well-to-do. My father and my older brothers were merchants. They would buy grass from farmers who collected it in the many forests that were found in the area. My father had a special process that made the grass into feed for livestock. The feed was sent to Germany and Belgium and sold to Jewish merchants who lived there and they sold it to the farmers in their countries. We had a good income. My father had a phone (only two other households had phones in Kurenets of the 1930s).

My father was very generous. He hosted minyans at our house twice a week. 90% of the residents of Kurenets were Jewish. Zionist organizations and Youth movements were very popular (especially the socialist Hashomer Hazair). Like most young kids in Kurenets, I attended the Tarbut school which had six grades. We spoke Hebrew in class in almost all subjects (other than the mandatory Polish class where the teacher was a non-Jew named Matarass who during the Holocaust was appointed a mayor of Kurenets by the Nazis. He tried to save his students and at the end paid for it with his life.

The teachers for other subjects were trained in Jewish-Zionist teaching schools in Vilna. Such was the nursery/ kindergarten school teacher Rashka Shulman and Rivka nee Spector/Gurevich whose father was born in Kurenets. (Rivka survived the Holocaust.)

I had many cousins in Kurenets. Most of them were slightly older than I. I was also very close with the children of the sister in law of my sister Bushka Skolnik. Motik and Elik Alperovich. They lived next door to us. Life was very good for me in my childhood.

After Hitler came to power in 1933 my father's business had some challenges. Jewish businesses were closed by the Nazis in Germany. It was the main country in which my father sold his products. Eventually he was able to find buyers in Poland and other countries in Europe and did ok until September of 1939.

Poland was attacked by Nazi Germany and with the agreement between the Nazis and Soviet Russia, our area became part of the Soviet Union.

Most Jews in Kurenets welcomed the Soviets. At least Jews who were simple workers were equal to any other Soviet citizens and their children were entitled to free schooling (including colleges) For families like ours, it was not so good. On my father's and older brothers ID it said that they were former business owners and as such not allowed to live in big cities like Minsk or Moscow.

Our school become a public school in Yiddish. Hebrew was considered a Zionist language and was not to be spoken in school. Zionist organizations were dissolved. Yiddish culture was fine since the Soviets consisted of many different cultures.

Our business was closed and my father retired. My older siblings found other jobs working for the Soviets. The Soviets were ready to send some of our family to Siberia for capital activities in the spring of 1941 but did not have time to do it since the Nazis attacked Russia in June of 1941. It would have been better if we would have been deported since almost all the Jews who were deported survived.

Much of the story of Kurenets during the Holocaust was already recorded by other survivors. Regarding my family my brother Baruch with wife Batia and children Yehoshua and Miriam moved from Molodechno to Kurenets right away. Baruch perished in Kurenets in 1942. His wife and the two children escaped to the forest with my parents and my brother Chaim. My brother Yaakov and his wife Henia stayed in Svir. Eventually they were taken by the Nazis to a hard labor camp in Estonia and were murdered there in 1943.

Meir Shkolnik, the husband of my sister Bushka perished in Kurenets in 1942. Bushka escaped to the forest and survived. My brothers Gershon and Yehoshua perished in Kurenets in 1942. My sister Henia perished in Vileika .My sister Eshka survived in the forest. On the early morning of the killing of the Jewish community of Kurenets ,our family went into hiding together with the Alperovitz family (in-laws of my sister Bushka). Since it was a very foggy morning and the family could hear some Nazi collaborators looking for us they decided that it would be fine for Motik Alperovitz and I to try to escape to the forest and if it is possible to eventually return and take the rest of them. Motik and I ran to the forest. Just before we reached it a Ukrainian collaborator heard us and started shooting in our direction. He could not see us because of the fog and assumed that we were killed when there was no sound. We were able to reach deep in the forest but at one point I was lost alone in the forest not knowing the area (unlike me, Motik knew the area well) after some days I found Motik and our families' members who were able to escape late at night after the killings. We lived outdoors in the deep forest. We would beg the farmers from the area for a little food and we would get warm by sleeping next to bone fires. As



winter was coming, we built zimlankas (covered bunkers) in the ground and covered them with plants to hide them. Tragically my parents and my sister-in-law Batia contracted typhus and passed away, I and my brother Chaim recovered. There were two blockades by the Nazis and we ran away to the marches to hide in the muddy waters. In one blockade, 4-year-old Miriam was left alone in the zimlanka. A miracle occurred and we found her alive when we returned many hours later. In 1943, I joined the Soviet partisans. Our job was to blow up trains.



As the war ended in our area I was conscripted to the red Army. I served for many years. By the time I was allowed to immigrate to Poland as an old Polish citizen (1958), I was married with two children and we lived in Oshmany.



From Poland we immigrated to Israel. There we met with my niece Miriam (now Gdor) who was adopted by Rivka Alper, a relative of her grandmother Miriam Kremer from the Alperovich family.

Tragically, her brother Yehoshua was killed as a soldier in the Israeli army during the war of independence in 1948. He was only two weeks in Israel when he was killed in a battle in Dgania. In Israel we also found my first cousin Israel Alperovich who also survived as a partisan and also our cousins Zalman, Leah and Gershon Gurevich (Gorev) who survived in the forest with their father Nathan. On my father's Kremer side, there was Moshe Kremer born in Kurenets in 1935 to Yechiel and Zisla. His brother Zalman Kremer was born in 1931. Their father Yechiel



perished. They survived with their mother. Moshe was an important person in Kibbutz Ein HaShofet, A brother of their father Yechiel was Shaya (Yishayahu) Kremer (1908- 1981). He also survived and came to Israel. He lived with his wife and daughter in Haifa.

My 3 surviving siblings went to Germany as soon as the war ended. My sister Emma Eshke married a Holocaust survivor Leo Greisdorf. They had two daughters; Chana and Ruth. My sister Bushka married Shmerl Lipski Leeb.

My brother Chaim married Zoya and had a son Michael in Germany in 1950. From there they immigrated to the US with their new spouses and newborn Michael in 1950.



Moshe Kremer with his sister Bushka and his wife at the wedding of his son Menachen and his bride Dori.



From left: my brother Chaim, my sisters  
Eshka and Bushka, Eshka's husband  
Leo, and the young girl Miriam Kremer  
Gdor



Shaya Kremer with wife and daughter.



My nephew, Holocaust survivor  
Yehoshua Kremer (1928-1948)





On the right, my cousin Shaya Kremer. On his left, his nephew Zalman Kremer, his sister-in-law, and his nephew Moshe Kremer.

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