

Light

Categories: Objects

Yiddish equivalent of the German word Licht (light). Before the ghetto, candles of various sizes were sold in the East by street traders, mainly children. The candles were usually placed in menorahs, and thus as Hanukkah candles¹. In the ghetto, candles were a rarity. Thin, small candles were made from tallow and sold in the streets on Friday evenings before the Sabbath. Children, sometimes also adults, would stand on street corners and try to persuade pedestrians to buy their products, shouting, "Lecht! Lecht!"² In the first months of the ghetto, these small, slender candles with wicks made from home-spun cotton thread cost no more than a few pfennig. In the beginning of 1944, the unit price increased to 1 Mk - in the case of bigger candles, 3 Mk. A devout traditionalist had to pay about 50 Mk for Hanukkah candles. There were several thousand families in the ghetto who used to kindle lecht on Sabbath, meaning that they used candles of that type.

Oskar Rosenfeld

Footnotes

1 The expression appears in the original text. Hanukkah candles are used with a ninebranched candleholder and lit at the time of Hanukkah, not on a Sabbath evening.

2 Lecht - dialectal form, in standard Yiddish the word is licht.

Resources

Encyclopedia, s. 123.

Tags

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