

Motel Meilakhs With His Son Lev Meilakhs



This photograph was taken in the apartment of my elder son Lev in St. Petersburg sometime in the 1990s.

My elder son Lev was born in Stepnyak in 1944. My second son Alexander, Sasha, was born in Rossosh in 1947. Lyuba, my wife, went to work in a school as soon as our children got older. During my whole life I had a rather modest income, so we lived very modestly but amicably. I have two children and a granddaughter, who is a non-believer, an atheist. From the first days of my sons' conscious life my children knew that I was a Jew, and knew that I suffered from persecution. I tried as much as possible to tell them not only about my life, but also about the society, in which we lived.

Jewish culture is very close to them. They felt their Jewishness right after graduation from the institute. They couldn't get a job. My younger son Sasha, having a diploma with only excellent marks, except for the History of the Communist Party, and being already an author of his first printed works, couldn't find a job. He was unemployed for almost a year. All this is described in his novel 'Confession of a Jew.' My children very deeply felt and realized that their numerous problems with various officials were caused by their being Jewish. And I was working as a teacher by that time. I was not so much susceptible to such problems.

I remember one interesting fact. A personnel manager once came from the famous Arzamas-16, where they were working on atomic bombs. Her mission was to select the two best students of Leningrad University to work in Arzamas-16. They were asked to arrive at a certain place with their suitcases packed. When the guys arrived, my son was rejected. At the last minute they found out that his father was Jewish, moreover – a person subjected to repressions, and my son wasn't hired. After that he had no occupation for half a year.

Both my sons had problems entering colleges, Lev less so, but Sasha had quite a hard time with that. In Stepnyak my elder son Lev had a friend, a Tartar. He went to Leningrad one year earlier than Lev and entered the university. Lev came to Leningrad in 1960 and passed examinations, too, but wasn't admitted. But he applied to the Polytechnic Institute at once and successfully graduated from it. My younger son Sasha went to Moscow in 1965 to enter the Moscow State University, passed all examinations with best marks, but failed to find his name in the list of the admitted. Then he went to Leningrad to join Lev, and passed examinations to the Leningrad State University, the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics. Thus both my sons are mathematicians.

My wife Lyubov died in 1997. She had two strokes and she gave up. We lived in Novosibirskaya Street. After that Lev took me to live with him and now I'm staying with his family. My granddaughter Alya lives here, too, she is a student of the Polytechnic Institute, 19 years of age, and my Russian daughter-in-law, Lena. I have very good relations with all of them, but Alya is taking the best care of me.