

Mina Beitler And Her Family



This is my father's family. From left to right standing in back row: my father's sister Channa, my father Leibl Beitler, his brother Ruvim Beitler. Father's sisters Liba, Tsilya, grandmother Mina holding her youngest child Joseph, grandpa Yankle Nison Beiler are sitting, his son Chaim and daughter Rachel are sitting. The picture was made in Zagare in 1930.

My grandmother Mina gave birth to 11 children, out of whom 9 grew up and two died in infancy. Children were born almost every year. When grandpa was alive the family scraped through somehow. When he died in 1930, grandma had to earn for a living. She started selling fish. She and her sons Rubim and my father Leibl went to Klaipeda, Latvia to buy fish and sell it afterwards on our market. When she ran out of money, she borrowed it from people and paid back after her next trip.

My father Leibl Beitler was the eldest in the family. He was born in 1909. Then in 1910 Channa was born. She was as beautiful as grandmother Mina. Channa married a worker from Siaulia Zoiberblat and lived with him in Siaulia. Her husband was an underground communist. He was imprisoned for several times due to his communistic activity before the Soviets came in the Baltic countries. Channa had three kids- Yankle and Ester were my age and the youngest boy was born shortly before the outbreak of Great Patriotic War.

Father's second sister Tsilya, born in 1912, got married at the age of 16 and left for Birobijan with her husband. He worked at the construction site, got sick and died. Tsilya and her daughters Anna and Nina came back in Lithuania.

After Tsilya, Ruvim was born in 1914. He was a simple man, always doing the jobs that other people were not willing to. He was a stevedore, a janitor, a cobbler etc.

Father's sister Liba, born in 1915, was actually the homemaker. Grandmother was trying to earn money to provide for the family and Liba did all the work about the house, looked after younger kids, cooked food, did the laundry and other things the homemaker was supposed to do. In 1938 she married a barber Abramovich and gave birth to son Yankle.

Father's next brother Moishe, born in early 1920s, perished during the war. He was in the 16th Lithuanian division, and did not come back from reconnoitering assignment. He was single.

Father's sister Rochel, who turned 16, when the war started, was enrolled in soviet army as a volunteer. She was a nursing aide, went through entire war and got Red Star Order. After war she lived with grandmother Mina, then married a tinsmith Joachim. She did not have her own children, so she and her husband fostered a boy Itschik. They left for Israel in late 1970s.

In 1927 grandmother gave birth to son Chaim. He was 5 years older than me. We was my friend and protector when I was a child and I grew up.

The youngest grandmother's child Joseph was born in 1930, practically before grandfather's death. They said that sick grandfather was still able to hold him. Joseph was very handsome and resembled grandmother more than any other kids. Joseph had a good voice. Everybody loved him, especially the girls.

My father Leibl, the eldest, was the most apt as grandmother used to say. He was tall, strong, meek and kind, the protector of the weak. Grandmother once told a story. When father was 19 he saw a gang of drunk Lithuanians teasing a Jew. He removed a shaft and had the gang leave the place. Father's family was very poor, so he finished only 4 classes of Jewish public school. Then he was apprenticed by a cobbler. Before he turned 22, he helped grandmother and went with her to buy fish. When he got married, she started working as a cobbler.