

Lidia Lieberman's Mother's Relatives



This photo was taken in Odessa in 1929. This is the family and relatives of my mother Vera Lieberman. From left to right in the row sitting on the bench: three persons unknown to me, my mother's sister Tsylia Jerusalimskaya and her daughter Asia, my maternal grandfather Shama Ostrovski, my maternal grandmother Surah-Beila Ostrovskaya, my mother's brother Isaac's wife Eva, their daughter Lena and my mother's brother Isaac and my grandmother's sister Betia. Back row, from left to right, standing: a man whom I don't know, my mother's brother Solomon Ostrovski and his fiancée Fira. Sitting in the lower row: my grandfather's niece Tsylia and her husband.

My grandfather Shama was born in the 1870s. I don't know where he came from. All I know about his relatives is, that my grandfather's brother David Ostrovski and his wife and their son lived in Zhytomir. Grandfather Shama lived in Shpola [Zvenigorodka district, Kiev province]. My grandfather owned a small feather pillow and mattress factory. There were few employees working for him. Grandfather's family was wealthy. They lived in a house with a garden. My grandfather wanted to give education to his children. He closed his business and moved to Odessa in 1917. My grandfather and grandmother lived in a big sunny room on the 2nd floor in Baranov Street. I don't know what grandfather Shama was doing during the Civil War. Since I remember him he was logistics manager at the fur factory in Odessa located near the railway station. My grandfather was a tall, broad-shouldered slender and handsome man. At least, I saw him as such. My grandfather had a pointed beard and moustache. He cared about us a lot. He was always worried that grandmother didn't give us enough food. Once grandmother asked him to give me semolina at the dacha. He put in a large piece of butter and an egg. I ate it and felt sick. I even had a high fever. When I had scarlet fever and had to stay in bed my grandfather visited me every day bringing me chocolate and fruit. Grandfather Shama was religious. He knew Yiddish and Hebrew. He attended the synagogue in Pushkinskaya Street regularly before the Great Patriotic War. After the war he went to the synagogue in Peresyp [in an industrial neighborhood in the outskirts of Odessa]. He prayed at home. He liked family gatherings on Jewish holidays when there were 20 or more members of the family celebrating. He told us, children, about the holidays. Grandfather Shama died of a lung disease in 1947. He bequeathed his religious accessories to the synagogue: a tallit, a

tefillin and probably something else. I don't know the details. For this grandmother Surah was granted a seat of her own at the synagogue. My grandfather was buried at the Jewish cemetery in takhrikhim (cerements) according to Jewish traditions. His old friend recited prayers in our house through the night.

My grandmother Surah-Beila was born in the 1870s. I don't know her maiden name or place of birth. Grandmother Surah was a wonderful housewife. She was an excellent cook. I liked hamantashen with poppy seed filling and fludn [pies with nuts and jam]. On Friday evenings grandmother always lit candles. They observed kashrut in the family. Grandmother Surah and grandfather Shama observed Pesach. I remember a big dish in the center of the table, a decanter and special wine glasses around it. Wine was poured in glasses and matzah put on a linen towel. My cousin sister Asia or I were to steal a piece of matzah so that nobody saw us. Of course, they just pretended they didn't see us. I was always shy and so was Asia and we kept pushing each other to avoid doing it. There was a chicken bone, horseradish, a carrot or beetroot and something else - I don't quite remember. Matzah was to be dipped in wine. Adults had to drink four glasses of wine. I also remember that the door was left open for Elijah the prophet to come into the house. During the Great Patriotic War my grandmother and grandfather were in evacuation in Stalinabad [Dushanbe since 1961; 3,250 km from Odessa], in Tajikistan, where we were, too. After the war we returned to Odessa. I remember that after grandfather Shama died my mother and I went to pick my elderly grandmother from her prayer on the Yom Kippur from the synagogue in Peresyp. It was hard to get inside, so crowded it was. Grandmother Surah died in 1961 and was buried at the Jewish cemetery. Grandmother Surah and grandfather Shama had six children: four sons and two daughters. They all finished a secondary school.