

Berta Mazo's Paternal Grandfather And His Family



This photograph taken in 1920s in Malaya Vishera and I do not know by whom. The photograph shows my paternal grandfather Yakov Mazo, his sister, his wife Lubov, their daughter Anna and their grandsons Lazar and Alexander.

My paternal grandfather's name was Yakov Samuilovich Mazo. I do not know where he was born. He died in 1930s in Leningrad. And my paternal grandmother's name was Lubov Mazo. I do not remember her patronymic, I also have no information about the place of her birth, but to my opinion, she came from Poland. She died earlier than grandfather: in 1928 in Malaya Vishera [a small town near St. Petersburg]. Our family moved there from Krucha when I was under 3 years old. There my grandmother and grandfather had got a house. They used to follow the plough and earned their living by agriculture (I think so, because in fact they had got no profession). I remember that they had got a large garden. In that garden there were different trees, including apple-trees. They kept a cow. My paternal grandfather was a handsome man with a long beard. He knew Jewish history, Yiddish and Hebrew very well, therefore people in the synagogue held him in high respect. He used to read much; he had got a lot of Jewish books, including different prayer books. I still keep some of them at home. Children used to come to our place to study Hebrew, including me and 4 my cousins. It was not a school, he taught children for his delectation (nothing else). We studied Hebrew (it was linear learning), and I remember some words till now.

My paternal grandparents were very religious. They spoke both Yiddish and Russian with each other. My grandmother was a housewife; she was a real *cordons bleus*. At their house there was a Russian stove, and she baked there wonderful rolls (I liked them very much!). There was no need in assistants, because grandparents had got 3 daughters, and all of them helped about the house. As far as I remember, there was no electricity or running water. They observed all Jewish traditions, including kashrut. They attended synagogue and celebrated Jewish holidays. Grandparents wore everyday clothes (grandmother usually put on a skirt and a jacket, and she did not wear a wig). They never discussed political problems, and were members of no organizations. In Malaya Vishera

there was a large Jewish community: Jews of different professions lived in different city districts. Of course my grandparents communicated with other Jews. Among them I remember a dentist (he lived with his family in a two-storied house near the river) and a therapist. I do not remember their neighbors, because grandparents' house stood apart from others and their next-door neighbors lived rather far from it.

My cousins were very nice to me, I was their only sister. They were very cheerful and loved music (especially Lasar, my elder brother). They took me to theatres, for instance to the Theater for Young Spectators and Maryinsky Opera and Ballet Theater. My cousins Lasar, Solomon, Alexander and Grigory were sons of my aunt Bella Yakovlevna and her husband Efim Shlionsky.

Anna Yakovlevna lived in Sestroretsk [a suburb of Leningrad], she worked in a drugstore as the pharmacist. For some period of time she lived with us at our place.