

## Rahel And Sinyor Behar



My grandparents are sitting in the first row. Their names are Rahel and Sinyor. Their granddaughter Zhanty Gershon, my aunt Bouka's daughter, is in front of them.

In the second row from left to right are: my aunt Rebeka Vagenshtain – my grandfather's daughter and my aunt. Next to her is my aunt Bouka Sinyor Gershon (by marriage), next to her is Ester Behar and next comes Sofi Samuil Behar, by marriage – Bidzherano – my aunt, my grandfather's daughter. The photo was probably taken during World War I because their husbands are missing. The photo is a photocopy. There is neither a stamp of the photo shop nor any other inscription. I only remember my grandparents.

The name of my father's mother was Rahel Behar (nee Kovo). I don't know when she had been born and she didn't have any idea about that either. When I was a child, she would often say that the Russian–Turkish war [A war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire aiming at the liberation of the Bulgarian and other Balkan nations from the Ottoman rule.] was in progress when she was twenty years old. She remembered those times because she got engaged then. She told me how she had seen my grandfather – her future husband Samuil Behar (? – 1936) for the first time on his way to the synagogue. He was walking past the house and she saw him, she was in the garden, and her father told her: 'This is your future fiancé.' My grandfather wasn't rich, just the opposite, he was very poor but he was said to have two pairs of hands and two of feet, and his feet could work as well. That meant that he was not only extremely hard-working but also very skilful. His work was connected with household utilities – locks, doors, he was the best installer of stoves on wood and coal and he was skilful in making pipes which were passing through the whole room in order to heat more. He was the only one who could make such pipe serpentines. He didn't have any education but spoke Ladino fluently and could also write in that language. He also knew Hebrew.

I don't know how he had learned those languages, somewhere on the roads probably. My grandfather died when I was six, in 1936. I have dim memories of him. For example, I recall that he used to have a white beard and moustaches. He washed his head and beard with water and soap every Friday. My granny was pouring the water and it was falling into a basin. Afterwards, he used to go to the synagogue and he was taking me with him.