

Hel'ke Umova



This is my paternal grandmother Hel'ke Umova. This photo was taken in Tallinn in 1919.

My father's parents lived in Tallinn. I don't know where exactly my grandfather and grandmother were born, but they both came from Estonia. My grandfather's name was Haim Umov, and my grandmother's name was Hel'ke. Her maiden name was Vigodskaya. My grandfather was a tailor, and he was a good one. He had wealthy clients who ordered clothes from him. My grandmother didn't work after getting married. Their family was wealthy. I didn't know any of my grandfather's relatives, but my grandmother had a brother, who lived in Tallinn. He had died before I was born, but I grew up with his son Stakh.

Grandmother Hel'ke had many children, but a few died in infancy. Six of them survived: four boys and two girls. My father Hilel was the oldest of the children that survived. He was born in 1902. After him came his sister Tsypa. The next one was Abram. Then came my father's brother Elias and his sister Zisle, but I don't know the sequence they were born in. The youngest one was Yakov.

My father's family spoke Yiddish. It goes without saying that they spoke fluent Estonian, too. My grandparents were religious. I don't know how deeply religious they were, but they observed Jewish traditions and taught their children to do so. They celebrated Jewish holidays at home and went to the synagogue together. Before 1944 there was a very beautiful choral synagogue in Tallinn.