

Lidia Lieberman's Maternal Grandmother Surah-Beila Ostrovskaya



This is my maternal grandmother Surah-Beila Ostrovskaya. This photo was taken in Odessa in the 1930s.

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.