

Michael Balan's Family



This is a family photo, taken in Odessa in 1926 when my paternal grandparents came to visit. From left to right: my father Mark Balan, my brother Abram Balan, my paternal grandmother Reiza Balan, nee Bashuk, my brother Nathan Balan, my paternal grandfather Michael Balan and my mother Fira Balan, nee Kosunskaya. My grandfather Michael was born in 1865. He was the first child in the family. He spent his youth in Mostovoye. Michael began to help his father when he was very young. In the late 1880s he married Reiza Bashuk, a Jewish girl from his village. My grandfather was a very business-oriented man. He often went on business to Odessa where he had acquaintances. In the late 1920s my grandfather sold his house in Mostovoye and moved to Beryozovka with my grandmother. They lived with their daughter Lisa. Grandfather often visited my parents in Odessa and Tiraspol. I remember his visits to Tiraspol. He wore traditional dark clothes, a long jacket and boots. He had streaks of gray hair, a beard and a moustache. He always wore a cap with a hard peak. My grandfather was religious. My father said he studied in cheder. I think he had food made specifically for him in our house since we kept a cow and pigs and he wouldn't have eaten pork. I don't remember whether my grandfather went to the synagogue in Tiraspol, but he always prayed at home. I liked to watch my grandfather preparing for praying covering his head with tallit and putting on a small box [the tefillin, on his forehead and hand]. Grandfather Michael died in 1939. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Beryozovka. I don't know whether he had a traditional funeral. My grandmother Reiza was born in 1863. She was of average height and was neither slim nor fat. I remember her wearing a kerchief, long skirts and long-sleeved blouses. I believe my grandmother was religious and observed all Jewish traditions, but I never took any interest in it and don't know any details. My grandparents spoke Yiddish. Grandmother Reiza died in Beryozovka on 3rd February 1937. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery. My parents got married in Mostovoye in 1919. I don't know what kind of wedding they had, but knowing my grandfather Michael's religiosity, I would think they had a traditional Jewish wedding. After the wedding the newly-weds spent some time with my mother's parents in Novoukrainka. After a few months, in 1920, the newly-weds moved to Odessa. At first they lived on Chicherin Street in the center of the town, but it turned out to be very cold and they moved to another apartment in Nezhynskaya Street in the same part of the town. My brother Nathan was

born in December 1922 and Abram followed in 1925.