

Moisey Sivashinsky With His Family



These are my maternal grandparents with their children. The photo was taken in Leningrad in 1925.

First row, from left to right:

my grandmother, Khana-Feiga Sivashinskaya, nee Nemoitina, my grandfather Moisey Sivashinsky and their daughter Polina Berlina, nee Sivashinskaya. Second row,

standing from left to right: their son Iosif Sivashinsky and their daughters Maria Starobina, nee Sivashinskaya and Serafima Gutman, nee Sivashinskaya.

Men, both grownup and small, wear hats. Grandfather is sporting a splendid moustache and beard because he was religious Jew. Only the two elder children are absent here:

Frida, my mother, who was in Paris at that time with her husband, where he studied at the Sorbonne; and Vulf, who also had a family of his own already and he did not live with his parents.

Grandfather Moisey, as well as grandmother Khana, came from a religious Jewish family.

The Sivashinsky family came from the kohens. Kohens have the highest level of sanctity, since their assignment is to serve at the temple and to perform sacred work.

They lived in one apartment with my grandmother's parents, the Neimotins. My grandmother liked that the apartment was located on the sixth floor, she said that she liked high stories, because there was a lot of light up there, closer to the sky and farther from the earth.

I remember a big beautiful escritoire of Karelian birch with a lot of various drawers. I loved when the cover of the escritoire was opened and I could open and close those drawers.

There were bookcases with ancient books in the long corridor; unfortunately, they were all burned in the siege. The entrance to the apartment was from the backstairs.

There was a big refrigerated cabinet in the kitchen, built into the wall below the window. Such a fridge was traditional for that time. The stove was a wood-burning one and Primus stoves were placed on it.

There was also a small cast iron basin. Near it stood a huge oak sideboard, one half of which was used the whole year round and the other contained everything that was used for the celebration of Pesach.

Grandmother prohibited everyone to touch those dishes for the rest of the year. All Jewish traditions were piously observed. They celebrated all the holidays when the whole family would gather, they kept kosher and prayed even at home twice a day.

Grandfather Moisey and grandmother Khana got married in 1900. They had the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony, with a chuppah. They had six children: Frida, my mother, Vulf, Sima, Maria, Iosif and Polina.