Sara Shmakovich And Her Relatives

This photo was taken in our yard. From left to right standing: my cousin Sara Shmakovich and her younger sister Taube Shmakovich. Sitting is my aunt Dora Haitman, Mama's younger sister. Our neighbor, whose last name was Ulman, is on Dora's left. This photo was taken in Riga in the 1930s.

My mother's family lived in Jaunjelgava, a small town in the north of Latvia. There were six children in the family. My mother's sister Sheine was the oldest. Then came Yakov. Liebe was the third child

in the family. My mama Hana was born after her. I don't know Mama's exact birth date. All I know is that she was born in the late 1890s. There was also a boy, born after my mother. Mama told me he drowned in a well in infancy. The last child was Dora. I don't know what kind of education Mama, her brother and sisters got. I think, it might have been a Jewish elementary school. At least, they knew sufficient Hebrew to read a prayer. They spoke Yiddish in Mama's family. My grandmother and grandfather were religious.

Dora's husband Robert Haitman, who was born in Riga, was a foreman of a chocolate shop of the confectionery factory in Riga. Dora used to work at this factory before getting married. In 1927 Dora's son Meishe was born. I loved Grandmother Haya dearly, and often visited her. I remember playing with my cousin Meishe. They always had a chocolate bear on the table. The factory employees were given a big discount on factory products, and Uncle Robert often brought chocolates home. Grandmother told us fairy tales and read stories from the Bible. In the mid-1930s Dora and her family moved to Palestine. Their daughter Sara was born one year before they left. In Israel their son Alik was born.

Mama's older sister Sheine also lived in Riga. Besides the older daughters Taube and Sara she had two sons: Menahem, born in 1922, and Zalman, born in 1924. Sheine was a housewife. Her husband and older daughters worked. Uncle Hershe was a butcher, Taube was a dressmaker, and Sara worked at the confectionery. Menahem, the older son, died from tuberculosis, when he was in his teens. Taube was an active Zionist, and emigrated to Palestine in the early 1930s.

Taube got married there. Her marital name was Psafka. When Taube got pregnant, she came to her mother in Riga. She stayed another year in Riga before she went back to Palestine with her son. Shortly before the war Taube visited her parents again. She was with her son. Sara was single and worked as a shop assistant in a store. Sheine's family bluntly refused to go into evacuation. All of them perished during the Holocaust.