

Naum Bitman's Family



Right to left (2nd row): my grandmother, my mother's father, Teviee Shub; beside him my mother's brother Shelik, born in 1910; my grandmother, mamma's mother, Haiya Shub (Serebrianaya); mother's brother Zalman Shub, born 1906.

First row right to left: Mother's sister Asia Shub, my mother Basia Shub and mother's younger sister Dvosia Shub.

Photograph taken about 1917-1918 in Zhytkovichi (Belorussia).

My grandfather's name was Teviee (my mother's father). His last name was Shub. I don't know where he was born, but he was living with his wife and children in the town of Zhytkovichi in Byelorussia. In 1921 they moved to Kiev.

Zhytkovichi was a far away place. There lived Byelorussians, Russians and other nationalities along with Jews. They were living there peacefully. Almost half of the population was Jewish, but mamma often repeated that they had never felt any disparage or discrimination. Mamma attended school and cheder.

The people in town respected grandfather Teviee very much. He was a shoihet, or cutter. He studied his trade in Warsaw and received a diploma. He could slaughter poultry and cattle. The capability to slaughter cattle was especially respected. The people, Jewish, Byelorussian and Russian among them, keeping cows, bulls and poultry were addressing my grandfather asking him to do his job.

My mother said they had a house of their own. It was a small wooden house. I don't know how many rooms there were in the house, but it was good to have their own house. I cannot say what they had, but I know that although they were not living in luxury, my grandfather's work enabled them to be relatively well-doing. He was given meat and was paid well for his work. They were not in need of anything.

Grandfather didn't have any assistants - he worked alone. Grandfather was religious, as his work required following religious rules and traditions. However, I cannot say how deeply religious he was, as I didn't know him. As I have already mentioned, he studied in Warsaw. Here is what

happened to him once.

He came to Warsaw. It was a big town. My grandfather liked many things about it, and many of them he saw for the first time in his life. He had his picture taken in Warsaw. Then he went to Zhytkovichi and showed the picture to people. They were shocked, and the only thing they could say was: "He bought a picture in Warsaw, and the person in the picture looks exactly like Teviee!" They didn't understand that it was possible to be photographed. This can give you an idea how distant from civilization this town was.

Things went well until 1918, when all kinds of gangs (the gang of Zelyoniy - the gang leader - and others) started coming across this area.

I am only aware of one episode, very hard for us, the one that actually caused my grandfather's early death. Mamma often told us about this. Few bandits captured my grandfather and said "We shall cut off his ears". That's what they wanted - just to cut off his ears. The whole family was in such panic that they had to turn to other people for help. Somehow they all stood for grandfather and rescued him. They told the bandits how grandfather was always helping all people - Jewish, Byelorussia and other people and how much he was respected and loved.

That was generally a quiet location and the bandits just happened to come across that area. But my grandfather didn't live long after this. He had died before we moved to Kiev in 1921.

They might have been living in that little town much longer, they might have remained there. But then the first gangs started coming over this area and the bolsheviks followed them, throwing out of their homes into the streets a number of Jewish families, including my parents' family.

Some relative offered shelter to them. But it was such a tragedy for them. And it was particularly hard for my grandfather, as he was the head of this family. He had six children by then, and the family was homeless. He couldn't endure the fact of it and died in 1918. I don't know exactly how old he was, but he died young.

My grandmother's name was Haiya, her last name was Shub (nee Serebrianaya). Grandmother was born in 1886 in Zhytkovichi. I know that she had brothers and sisters. But I only know her younger brother. His name was Lev Serebrianiy. I don't know what he was doing before the war, but after the war he lived in Lvov. I don't know what his position was, but his work had to do with the return of Jewish people from other countries after the war. Many of them didn't want to come back, believing that they would be subject to repression. Lyova was arrested. He was charged for intentionally keeping the Jewish people from returning to their Motherland. He was sent in exile on Kolyma and spent over nine years there. He returned home after Stalin's death.

Well, after my grandfather's death my grandmother remained with six children and no means of existence or a home. They moved to Kiev in 1921.

The oldest sister Asia Shub was born in 1905. After her came brother Zalman (Zelik) Shub, born in 1906. Then was brother Shelik, or Sasha, born in 1910. Then came my mother Basia. Mamma's younger sister Dvosia Shub was born in 1916. And the last one, Gersh, Grisha, born in 1918 some time before my grandfather passed away. We don't even have his picture.

Mamma's sisters Asia and Dvosia got married later. Asia kept her own last name and Dvosia took her husband's last name - she became Tarakanskaya. Asia worked as cashier all her life. During the war the sisters were in evacuation. Then they returned to Kiev. Asia died in 1987, and Dvosia Tarakanskaya is still alive. She lives in America with her son. Mamma's brothers Zalman Shub and Gershl Shub perished on the front during the great Patriotic War. Brother Shelik was shot by the Germans in Kiev in 1941. Later I will tell about it in more detail.

The war was a surprise for our family or anybody else. On Sunday, 22 June 1941, mamma was

waiting for her friend to go to the beach. We were waiting, too. We called mamma's friend and she said: "Basia, don't you know? Haven't you heard what happened?" And she told mamma about the war. Then they started crying. We had a housemaid, Tonia, a village girl, at that time. When she heard about the beginning of the war, she took me in her hands and cried out: "War!". I got so scared that I couldn't talk for about two weeks. And then I was stammering for the rest of my life actually. During my last year at school I took some medical treatment and it helped a little. But always, when I get nervous I stammer, This is a kind of memory that I have of the first day of war.

Grandmother Haiya was living with us. Every day she saw the person that betrayed her son to the Germans. This was eternal torment for her. Grandmother lived until 1964.