

Semyon Ghendler's Grandfather Iegoshua Leiba Shlyoma Oks



This is my maternal grandfather Iegoshua Leiba Shyoma Oks. This photo was made in Zhitomir in 1947 near the house where my grandfather lived.

My mother's father Iegoshua Leiba Shlyoma Oks was born in Zhitomir in 1878 and grandmother Esther was born in Zhitomir in 1880. My grandfather finished cheder and went to work. He became

a high skilled cabinetmaker. Before the revolution he worked for his employer and after the revolution he went to work for the 'Bogatyr' furniture shop that became a furniture factory in the 1930s. My grandfather earned well. After the revolution he manufactured furniture on private orders. My grandfather was very religious. In the 1930s, when I knew him, my grandfather wore a small well-groomed 3-4 days' growth beard. He also wore a cap or a hat, but I never saw him wearing a kippah. My grandfather always prayed before going to work with his tallit and tefillin on. On Friday, Saturday and Jewish holidays he went to the synagogue. His employers respected him so much that they allowed him to not come to work on Saturday. Instead, he came to work on Sunday to do his portion of work. My grandfather's portrait was on the board of honor of the factory.

I remember visiting my maternal grandfather and grandmother at Chanukkah. Of course, I learned the name of the holiday later, but I remember delicious doughnuts that my grandmother made and I also received some money from them. My grandmother made delicious pastries and the biggest offence for her was when somebody told her that they had eaten more delicious doughnuts. My grandfather took me to the synagogue: a big two-storied building in the center of Zhitomir.

In 1941 we were evacuated. We arrived in Cheliabinsk in the Ural, 1500 kilometers from our home. Cheliabinsk was a big industrial town. There were many plants in the town and many enterprises evacuated from the western part of the country. We stayed in the evacuation agency few days until we were accommodated in a barrack with other families. It was a wooden barrack with plywood or curtain partitions. My mother, my sister and I and my grandfather Iegoshua and my grandmother Esther lived in one of these small room. Our life was gradually setting up. My grandfather went to work as a carpenter in the "Cheliabstroï" construction company. My grandfather got along well with his colleagues. My grandfather and grandmother tried to observe Jewish traditions. There was no synagogue in Cheliabinsk and my grandfather prayed in a corner of our room twice a day. My grandfather didn't go to work on Saturday. He discussed this condition before getting this employment and his management showed understanding of his requirement.

After the war we have returned to Zhitomir. My grandfather died in 1963. He was buried in the Jewish section of the town cemetery in Zhitomir. I don't know whether anybody recited the Kaddish for them.