

Tsyliya Spivak's Father Mothel Rozhavskiy, Uncle Zيامa Kaplan And Yakov Kaplan With His Wife Basia Kaplan



This photo was taken on the occasion of my mother's brother Yakov Kaplan and Basia's wedding. This photo was taken in Chernigov in 1931. Sitting from left to right: Yakov Kaplan, my father Mothel Rozhavskiy and Yakov's wife Basia. Standing is my uncle Zيامa Kaplan.

My mother came from a big Jewish family living in Sednevo town in Chernigov province, 200 km from Kiev. I've never been to Sednevo, but my mother told me that it was like any other small Jewish town. There was a synagogue in the town. Jews commonly dealt in crafts and trade. My mother's father Borukh Kaplan, my grandfather, was a tradesman. My grandmother Tsyvah, who was 12 years younger than my grandfather, was a housewife and looked after the children. Sometimes she helped my grandfather in the store in the house where the family lived. They didn't have any other employees working for them in the store. They were selling haberdashery and household goods in their little store and Ukrainian customers of my grandfather from surrounding villages often came by my grandfather's store to buy what they needed. My grandfather got along well with Ukrainians. In 1919 his big family moved to Chernigov [regional center in the north of Ukraine, 220 km from Kiev] after selling their remaining belongings. In Chernigov my grandfather bought a small two-bedroom apartment in a private house where they lived until before the Great Patriotic War. My grandmother and grandfather were very religious people. They ate kosher food and celebrated Sabbath. The whole family got together on big religious Jewish holidays. There were 12 children born to the family, but before the Great Patriotic War there were seven of them left. The rest of the children died in infancy.

My mother's brother Yakov approximately born in 1908. He worked as a tinsmith foreman in 'Metallprom' shop. Yakov had a wife named Basia and three sons: Mark, born in 1935, Vadim, born in 1937, and Felix, born in 1939. When the Great Patriotic War began, Yakov was on military training in a frontier harrison. He was wounded during the first bombardment and sent to the rear. After his stay in hospital he was demobilized and joined his family in evacuation. After Chernigov

was liberated Yakov and his family returned home, but some time later they moved to Odessa where my mother's sister Sarrah lived at that time. Yakov died in the 1970s. Mark and his family live in Munich, Germany, Vadim lives in Moscow and Felix lives in Odessa. They finished Odessa Polytechnic College and have families, but we, regretfully, do not keep in touch.

My father was recruited to the czarist army during WWI and was in captivity. He got married after he returned to Russia. I don't know his first wife's name. In 1920 his son Irma and in 1922 his daughter Minna were born. After the daughter was born my father's wife fell ill. I don't know exactly what disease caused her death. In 1924 my father became a widower. He was raising his children daring not to bring them a stepmother. Only my mother with her love and kindness to children raised my father's trust. In 1929 my parents got married. They didn't have a wedding since none of them was religious. For some time after the wedding my parents lived in Bragin town in the neighboring Gomel region in Belarus. My father worked as a storekeeper at a mill. However, my mother was missing Chernigov where her parents and sisters lived and in early 1930, shortly before I was born, my parents moved to Chernigov.