

Kravets Hirsh-Leyb, Grandfather Of Mera Shulman With His Daughter Shulman Haya And His Son-In-Law Shulman Alter



This photograph shows my maternal grandfather Hirsh-Leyb Kravets and my parents Alter Leybovich Shulman and Haya Hirsh-Leybovna Shulman, nee Kravets. The photograph was taken on January 9, 1939 in our apartment in Riga. Most probably it was taken by an invited photographer.

That day my younger brother was three years old and they celebrated the Day of Opshern [hair trimming]. You see, according to Jewish Tradition, it is forbidden to cut boy's hair before he is three years old. To tell the truth, they cut his hair before, but nevertheless the holiday was arranged.

My maternal grandfather Hirsh-Leyb Kravets was a tailor. One day he gave up his business and became an owner of a furniture store. It seems to me he had several stores. My grandfather perished during World War II on the territory of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic. We do not know neither the way he died, nor when it happened. My maternal grandfather lived in a huge apartment in the center of Riga. In his apartment there were five or seven large rooms. After the death of his first wife (my grandmother) my grandfather lived there with his second wife.

My maternal grandfather was irreligious. However, observing Jewish holidays, he arranged circumcision for all his sons. He visited synagogue on holidays and sometimes on Fridays. Sabbath celebration at his house was something like celebratory family dinner. Kashrut observance was reduced to purchasing of kosher meat. They never bought non-kosher meat. Jewish holidays were celebrated without fail.

Another grandfather was more sociable, loved his grandsons and played with them. Grandfather's shop was situated in the same street with my school, and we usually met in the morning at a bus stop and went in the same bus. I was happy: he always returned me money for my bus ticket (and I already had money for ticket from my parents!), and sometimes gave me some more money. Most

often the given sum averaged 32 kopecks - enough for four bus trips! Once I was late for the bus and managed to see only my grandfather's fluttering raincoat. It was wormwood to me. Of course the point was not only and not so much as money: my grandfather loved me very much, and I returned his feelings. You see, I was his elder (and the only one during four years) granddaughter.

This is almost the only one photograph kept safe, where my parents are young, that is why I'd like to tell the story of their acquaintance. Nobody introduced my parents to each other. Daddy had courted a girl, who emigrated to America. She was a daughter of the owner of that furniture shop, where he worked as a salesman. Daddy went to rabbi and said 'What shall I do? I am ready to follow my beloved girl to America.' And rabbi answered 'Ih look, he has not enough Jewish girls here! He will go to that America!' At that time Daddy met my Mum. He invited her to the cinema and they went on. Certainly they got married in the synagogue under chuppah according to the tradition. My parents always dressed as secular people.

My parents differed greatly in their educational level. Mother was much better educated than father. She finished a high school, therefore she knew Russian well. She brought me up in Russian language. I really imbibed it with my mother milk. Mum made an agreement with my father that he would not spoil me with his Yiddish. That was why while I was a little girl, my Daddy was almost silent. Father's relatives told him 'Oh, why did you marry an educated girl - will she count grains before putting them into the copper?' And Daddy answered 'No, she will not count grains, she will train the child and help him to do lessons.' My father realized the value of education very well, though he himself lacked it so much.