

Semyon Goldwar's Paternal Grandfather Avrum-Leizer Goldwarg



My grandfather on my father's side Avrum-Leizer Goldwarg. The photo was taken in Odessa in the 1900s.

My grandfather was born in Berezovka, Kherson province [90 km from Odessa] in 1845. At that time Berezovka had Jewish and German population. The Germans were called 'dachi' - probably a derivative of 'deutsch'. People communicated in German and Yiddish. At home my grandmother and grandfather spoke Yiddish, but they also knew Russian that they used with my mother and me. My grandfather was a religious man and attended the synagogue - he was a gabbai, a warden in the synagogue. [The interviewee means a shammash and not a community representative, what gabbai really means.] This was an elective position and the Jews usually elected the most decent and honest man. My grandfather was a horse dealer. He went to Odessa and other towns to buy the weakest and most miserable horses that he cured in his own stables and sold at a higher price. This was how he made a living. His family was wealthy for its time. They had a 3-hectare plot of land and two houses. They leased the smaller house and lived in the bigger two-storied house: my grandfather, grandmother and their younger son Isaac and his family. We also stayed there when we visited Berezovka. They had a big orchard and a big barn with grain.

In the late 1920s my grandparents moved to Odessa to join their children there. They lived with their son Isaac's family. I remember visiting my uncle. There was a mezzanine in their apartment where my grandfather used to pray and I peeped into the keyhole. He put leather cubes on his hand and forehead and put on a thallith and prayed swinging. He died from pneumonia in 1931 at the age of 87. He was buried according to the Jewish tradition. He was put on a white sheet on the floor and there were candles burning. Then he was taken to the main synagogue in Rishelievskaya street on the corner of the Jewish Street. This was my first time in synagogue. It was a beautiful building with columns of the Corinthian Order, benches for men in the lower tier and women's area in the upper tier. My grandfather was covered with a black cloth with a hexahedral star on it. My grandfather was a very respectable man and he was carried by people in their hands from the synagogue to Jewish cemetery - the distance of about 3 km. Many people came to his funeral. I remember the ride in a horse-driven cart where elderly Jews were sitting, since they couldn't walk such a long distance. The community installed a gravestone on my grandfather's grave. I can't remember where exactly his grave was. I tried to find his grave in 1948, but I failed.