

Perl Berznitskaya And Her Family



This is my mother's family. In the bottom row sitting from left to right: my mothers' brother Alter Fleisher, my mother Perl Berznitskaya; in the second row sitting: my grandfather Velvl Fleisher, Grandmother Mihle holding my sister Ester Aronovich in her hands, my mother's sister Reizl is standing to the left and another sister, Zlata, is standing to the right. I do not know the woman in the center. The photograph was taken in Veisiejai in 1883.

My maternal grandfather, Velvl Fleisher, was a fisherman. He was born in 1846. In his adolescence Velvl was a very good fisherman. With time he became the manager of a large fishing cartel, consisting of over 50 people. He knew the behavior of fish, where it was in summer and where it hid in winter, and almost all the time he could determine the time and place for angling. My grandfather was probably the most experienced fisherman in Veisiejai, as two competitors - fishing enterprises - tried hard to hire him. He had a rather big boat, a solid wooden vessel, which was on the bank, near my grandfather's house. Velvl lived in a small wooden house, which he had built when he was young. It consisted of three small rooms and a kitchen with a stove, which was used for heating and cooking.

Mihle, who was about ten years younger than her husband, was practically illiterate. She was a housewife and took care of the children, which was customary for Jewish families back then. Both Velvl and Mihle belonged to the middle class, though not to the upper. They were religious. At that time all middle-class families, including the Fleishers were religious. Mihle didn't appear in public without a wig and Velvl always wore a cap or a hat. Of course, he put on a kippah and tallit when he went to the synagogue. Without knowing how to read Mihle learnt all the prayers by heart and sometimes said a prayer holding the prayer book upside down. Grandfather wasn't very literate either. He only went to cheder. He knew how to read, though he had no time for that. Grandfather

had to work hard to earn bread and butter for the family. During the fire Velvl's house burnt as well. Grandfather managed to reconstruct it once again in the same place. He didn't live there for a long time. He died in 1928. Grandmother Mihle survived her husband by 13 years and lived to see the Great Patriotic War. She was murdered by fascists during one of the first actions in the town in summer 1941.

Velvl and Mihle raised their children in the Jewish tradition - the boys went to cheder and the girls were not pampered with education, as they were supposed to help about the house and it was much more important for them than being literate.

My mother, Perl Berznitskaya, nee Fleisher, was born in Veisiejai in the 1880s. Mother finished a Jewish elementary school. She was literate and knew how to read and write. Before getting married she helped her mother about the house like most Jewish girls.