

Yakov Rubin



This is my father, Yakov Rubin, photographed when he was in captivity in Austria during World War I. The photo was taken around 1916. My father was born in Oleshevka in 1882. There was no cheder in the village. My father and his brothers and sisters attended classes with a melamed, who came to the village once a week. He taught them to read and write in Yiddish. My father didn't have the traditional bar mitzvah at the age of 13 since in 1895, shortly before he was to come of age, my father's parents died one after another. My father's older sisters and brother had their own

families. My father became an orphan. A Jewish joiner, who lived in the same village as my father, took him to teach him his profession. So my father became his apprentice. My father followed his family to Chernigov in 1907. He became a skilled cabinetmaker. In the same year my father met my mother through matchmakers and they got married a year later. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah in the synagogue and many guests from Chernigov, Gomel and other nearby towns came to the wedding. After the wedding my father rented an apartment for his family. He became a very skilled cabinetmaker and could provide well for the family. My mother became a housewife. My older sister, Riva, was born in 1910 and my second sister, Sonia, followed in 1914. When Sonia was about two months old my father was recruited to the tsarist army. World War I began and our father went to the front. Our mother received two letters from him and then she received the notification that he was missing. It turned out that he was in captivity in Austria where he stayed until 1918. Our father told us that prisoners of war were treated decently. They wore their uniforms and insignia. My father worked for a master in Austria and returned home as soon as he got a chance after the October Revolution of 1917. Our father returned at the end of 1918. I was born on 17th August 1919. I was their youngest and favorite daughter, a 'love child', as my father used to say. My mother and father loved each other, even though they got married through a matchmaker, and my mother was happy that my father had come back from Austria.