

The Lebyan Family



This is the family of my mother, Libe Farbirovich, nee Lebyan. She is thirteen years old here. She is standing second from the left in a long dress. From left to right: her younger sister Alexandra Lebyan, my mother Libe, her mother - Leya Basya Lebyan, 43 years old, her father - Simon Lebyan, 48 years old, her sister - Dunya Lebyan. Leya Basya is holding Anya Lebyan, my mother's youngest sister, she is one year old here. The picture was taken in a photo-studio in Sukhinichi in 1910.

My maternal grandfather's name was Simon Leibovich Lebyan. He was born in 1862 somewhere in Smolensk region. Grandfather sewed hats, he was a hatter. He was a very nice person and was completely under the thumb of my grandmother, who was very strict and serious. But at the same time Grandfather satisfied many of our whims.

My grandmother observed traditions, but in a rather limited way. On Pesach she changed dishes from the common to Pesach ones and Grandfather tinned the samovar, so that everything would be like new for Pesach. To tin means to clean, polish the dishes. They were not Orthodox Jews. They dressed like petty bourgeois, as did everyone else in town. However, they attended the synagogue and I visited them there. Before his death, my grandfather became a very pious man, began to attend the synagogue regularly and read religious books, though in Russian translation. Unfortunately, neither my grandfather, nor my grandmother knew Yiddish and spoke Russian at home all the time.

They lived rather poorly: Grandfather earned little money, he even worked as a carter for some time, and Grandmother had to bake pies and sell them at the market-place. They rented a room in a wooden one-storey house from a Russian family. There was certainly no water supply system, no heating or electricity there. They had to go to the water-pump at the end of the road. They had a Russian stove in their room with a stove-bench. They also had a small vegetable garden, where they grew vegetables; and a small husbandry, hens and a cow that Grandfather milked. No one helped them; that's why they worked hard. Their children were busy with their own households and lived separately. My grandparents had very good neighbors and were not interested in politics. They had no other relatives except for us, their children and grandchildren in Roslavl. We had the kindest and closest relations with them.

My grandparents had four children: my mother Libe and her younger sisters Alexandra, Dunya and Anna. I don't know when they were born. Dunya died of galloping consumption at a young age. Alexandra got married and left for Donbass and Anna lived and studied in Moscow.

My mother, Libe Simonovna Farbirovich, was the eldest child in her family. She was born in 1897 in Sukhinichi. She must have had some education, because she could read and write in Russian, it was her mother tongue; though she didn't have any special education. Maybe she studied at home, with a private tutor. Mother was a very beautiful woman with wonderful long hair. She wasn't religious at all; she didn't attend the synagogue and didn't teach us to do so.