

Tsylia Kivnik's Family



My mother's sister Tsylia, her husband and children. The photo was taken in the 1920s in Berdichev.

My grandfather and grandmother on my mother's side, Joseph and Khaika Kivnik, were born in Berdichev in the 1870s. My mother's family was moderately religious. They celebrated holidays, observed traditions and followed the kashrut. They dressed up to go to the synagogue on Saturdays, and on weekdays they prayed at home. On Yom Kippur they fasted, including children over 5 years of age. They spoke Yiddish at home and Ukrainian with an accent to their Ukrainian customers.

My grandfather was a bricklayer. He constructed houses. He built a big three-storied house for his family. His children and grandchildren lived in this house. They didn't have a kitchen garden or a garden - they bought all their products at the market. They had many children: my mother had ten sisters and three brothers. My grandmother was a vivid lively woman. The family wasn't wealthy, so she always tried to find work to contribute to the family budget. She always wore a shawl. She used to buy milk from a wholesaler and sold it at a retail price to her neighbors. The man who delivered milk to the town was my future father, Nahman Grinberg.

I don't remember the names of all of my mother's sisters, their husbands and children. My mother's brothers studied at cheder, and the sisters studied with a teacher at home. Later all of them finished the Jewish elementary school in town. The sisters got married, were housewives and raised their children. They lived in the house that my grandfather had built, and there was enough space for them and their families there. Every family had sort of an apartment in this big house, which had as many rooms as the children my grandparents had. From the 1920-1930s 30 to 45 people lived in the house: my mother's parents, the 13 families of my mother's siblings and more than 15 grandchildren.

My mother's sisters, including Tsylia, were shot by the fascists in Berdichev fortress in 1941 along with the rest of the Jewish population of Berdichev.