

Semyon Ghendler's Grandfather Iegoshua Leiba Shlyoma Oks



This is my maternal grandfather Iegoshua Leiba Shlyoma Oks. This photo was made in Zhitomir in the late 1930s for the board of honor of the 'Bogatyr' furniture factory where my grandfather worked as carpenter.

My mother's father Iegoshua Leiba Shlyoma Oks was born in Zhitomir in 1878 and grandmother Esther was born in Zhitomir in 1880. My grandfather finished cheder and went to work. He became a high skilled cabinetmaker. Before the revolution he worked for his employer and after the revolution he went to work for the 'Bogatyr' furniture shop that became a furniture factory in the 1930s. My grandfather earned well. After the revolution he manufactured furniture on private orders. My grandfather was very religious. In the 1930s, when I knew him, my grandfather wore a small well-groomed 3-4 days' growth beard. He also wore a cap or a hat, but I never saw him wearing a kippah. My grandfather always prayed before going to work with his tallit and tefillin on. On Friday, Saturday and Jewish holidays he went to the synagogue. His employers respected him so much that they allowed him to not come to work on Saturday. Instead, he came to work on Sunday to do his portion of work. My grandfather's portrait was on the board of honor of the factory [Editor's note: every factory, plant, or any other state enterprise in the Soviet Union had a board of honor with portraits of the best workers of the factory. It was a great honor to have one's portrait there]. Grandmother Esther was a housewife. She always dusted their tiny apartment. They lived in two rooms and had a kitchen, but when their children grew up and moved out they had a tenant in one room. I loved visiting my grandfather and grandmother and remember their room very well. They had a beautiful carved cupboard that grandfather made himself, a wardrobe and chairs with high carved backs. There were snow white napkins on the cupboard that my grandmother made and seven little elephants: a symbol of happiness at the time. I knew only one grandfather's brother named Moishe. He was a jeweler in Zhitomir. I saw him several times. He was a presentable man with a beard. Moishe died shortly before the Great Patriotic War.