

Frida Khatset's Uncle Gersh Khatset With His Fiancee Nina



My father's brother Gersh Khatset and his fiancee Nina. Photo studio 'L. Kraevskiy in Kiev'. Kiev, 1913.

My grandmother and grandfather on my father's side were deeply religious: my grandfather had a Torah and there was a mezuzah over their door: a box with a scroll with a prayer written on it. My grandfather had a black and cream striped tallit and a leather tefillin: two small boxes with long leather straps to be worn on the forehead and hands. My grandfather strictly observed Jewish traditions and went to the synagogue as long as his condition allowed.

Before the Revolution of 1917, the Khatset family was wealthy: they could afford to take a vacation at the seashore in the Crimea or Caucasus.

My grandmother and grandfather had five children. Gersh Khatset - he was the oldest brother. He was born around 1883. I don't know whether he went to cheder. Gersh finished Commercial school in Kiev where they had advanced studies in commercial mathematics, commercial correspondence, commercial geography and accounting. Gersh received special secondary education in this school and entered Kiev Industrial College. Upon graduation from there he became a leather specialist. However, he couldn't find a job according to his specialty and worked as an accountant. He was shortsighted and like my father, was not subject to military service. His wife Nina was Christian and Gersh was baptized too. My grandfather and grandmother were not happy about their son marrying a Christian girl and Gersh's baptistry was a hard blow for them. But they could only but accept

what happened. Gersh kept in touch with his parents, but they remained cold and polite with him and his wife, although they didn't mind them visiting. I remember Gersh, Nina and their daughters Ira and Tamara visiting. Gersh's or our family weren't religious and we never touched upon any religious subjects. Before the Great Patriotic War they moved to Gorky - I guess they did it since Gersh couldn't find a job in Kiev. I believe they stayed there during the war. Gersh worked as an accountant in Gorky. He retired and died from cancer shortly after the war in 1945. His wife died some time in 1950s. Tamara lived in Moscow and worked as a translator at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She knew French very well. She and Ira studied French when they were children. Ira became a doctor. She lives in Gorky, she sometimes calls me on my birthday.