

Seraphima Gurevich With Her Family



This photo was taken in 1949 during my mother's brother and sisters' visit to Chernovtsy for Pesach celebration. Sitting in the first row left to right: Lialia, my mother's brother Yankel's daughter; my mother's older sister Riva and her grandson, grandmother Sylka, and my mother's younger sister Hana. Standing in the second row left to right: Mina, my mother's brother Mikhail's daughter, my mother's younger sister Bronia, I, and my mother Elizabeth Gurevich. After the war my grandmother lived with us, and it was she who introduced Jewish traditions into our family. We celebrated Soviet holidays as it was a tradition in our family, but we also began to celebrate Jewish holidays. At first we did this for the sake of my grandmother. It was difficult for her to go shopping or to cook, so my mother and I did these chores. We did the shopping and cooking under the supervision of my grandmother. We didn't have the opportunity to follow the rules of kashrut, but we didn't eat pork and tried to keep meat and dairy products separate. In 1948 the synagogue in Chernovtsy was closed. There was a bakery in town where they secretly made matzah before Pesach. We went there late in the evening bringing flour, and picked up the matzah the following morning. It was like in a detective story: we had to knock on the door in a certain way, say a password, and then the door was open. The Soviet authorities would have closed the bakery and arrested its owner if they had found out that they were baking matzah. There were also Jewish drivers who delivered matzah to homes. We usually ordered a lot of matzah to share with the poor and old people who couldn't go through this whole process themselves. Only in the 1990s was the synagogue open again. My grandmother taught me to cook stuffed fish. It is probably one of the most complicated dishes of Jewish cuisine. I can also cook other traditional foods. We also celebrated Sabbath in our family. We put a white tablecloth on the table and my grandmother lit two candles. We often had family reunions at Pesach. My mother's brothers and sisters and their families came from other towns. My grandmother conducted the seder. She was the only one who remembered how to do it. My grandmother was very happy to see the family all together.