

Isaac Berkovits And His Grandsons Avi And Rimon Kaplan



These are my sons Avi on the left and Rimon in the middle, with my father, Isaac Berkovits. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1952. I met my husband-to-be Marcus Kaplan in the last but one grade at school. Both of my parents liked Marcus and things were evolving, so I was to marry him after leaving school. But the war was unleashed on 22nd June 1941. We left on 9th July 1941. The five of us went: my parents, my brother Rudolf, my sister Vera and I. It was a long and tiring trip and finally we reached Arsk station, in Tatarstan. All those who were evacuated were split up in kolkhozes. On 27th February 1942 my future husband and his brother Abram were mobilized in the Estonian corps of the Soviet army. Early in the morning Marcus and I walked to the regional center and got our marriage registered at the local regional council at 8am. At 9am my husband was at the collection point and was to join the front line. We didn't see each other for three and a half years. We only started our life together when he came back from the front. Our first son was born in 1946. I called him Rimon. Our second son was born in 1948 and we called him Avi. Both of my sons were circumcised. It was mandatory and natural for my husband and I. There was no synagogue in Tallinn at that time. It burned down in 1944. There was a smaller place, a prayer house. The circumcisions were made at our place. We invited a surgeon who did things the way they were supposed to be done. We kept on observing Jewish traditions at home. Of course, it was hard to do that, but we did our best. Matzah was not sold there. There was no place to buy candles for Chanukkah, and there was no chanukkiyah. We managed somehow. We taught our sons the Jewish traditions, the history of the Jewish people. Our sons knew all about the Jewish holidays and the purpose of each of them. We were not ashamed of being Jews and didn't try to hide it. We also marked Soviet holidays: 1st May, 7th November. They were just additional days off at home. Only the Victory Day, 9th May was a true holiday for us.