

Gisya Rubinchik's Aunt Haya Shur With Her Sons Misha And Lev Shur



My father's sister, Haya and her sons, Misha (in the middle) and Lev (to the right). They had this picture taken in Shklov in 1941 right before the war. Aunt Haya was my father's third sister. When her husband, Vladimir Shur, was still alive, their family lived in the neighboring settlement Kopys on the Dnieper river. Lev was their older son. Their second son, Zyama, fell from a swing and struck his head against a stone. I was still small, when he died. Their third child, Mishenka, was born in Shklov, where Aunt Haya moved to get help from her mother, my grandmother Sore-Riva. Right then Haya's husband, Vladimir, committed suicide. As it became clear later, the reason for this act was nonsense, or better, his kindness. Someone had borrowed 90 rubles of community money from him and hadn't paid back the debt. Vladimir was supposed to report it. He felt such remorse, as if he had embezzled the money, and hung himself. It was such a horror, I remember, when it happened. Haya fell ill after this news, bleeding from her throat. The children and she had found shelter in our house, although it was already rather crowded, because other people lived in the second half. We studied together in one class at school with Lev. Lev perished at the age of 22 on the front at the border of Latvia during the first days of the war. Misha and Haya were buried alive in Shklov in the mound between the lake and the Dnieper River, in the very same place, where the mill once stood, where my father and grandfather worked. For three days the ground was stirring on that spot, and groans of people were heard from under the ground. All my relatives were murdered there: my mother, father, both grandfathers, both grandmothers, my sister Sonya, Aunt Haya, Misha; and, thousands of other Jews. I didn't know about it back then. After the war I wrote many letters to official bodies in Minsk and many other places. I was searching for exact information, but it was in vain. I got no answer whatsoever. Later I learned everything about this tragedy from eyewitnesses.