

Kofman Raikhchin And His Brother



In 1999 I went to Israel to visit my brother and sister. This photograph was taken there (in the city of Akko).

Now I'd like to tell you about my brothers and sisters.

My elder brother Paltiel was born in 1922.

He did not come back from war: he was killed in 1944 in Lithuania. My brother was prodigy. At school he was interested in physics, mathematics, and astronomy. He studied at different circles together with me. He was my first and best friend. I am sure Paltiel could have achieved much, but he was killed so early in life. He left for front from Petrikov. Later we left for evacuation and knew nothing about him (he knew nothing about us, too). At that time a radiobroadcast was devoted to people bereaved of their relatives. Thanks to that broadcast, my brother found us, and we corresponded till the day of his death.

My sister Sofiya was born in 1926 in Petrikov (like all of us). She studied at Jewish school, then at Russian one. After the end of the war she returned to Petrikov. They found a groom for her in Bobruisk (oh, that everlasting fame of shadkhanim!). That person (his family name was Zaichik) was a loyal supporter of soviet political regime all his life long. He held a high post in the national education institution. When authorities started struggling against cosmopolitanism, he was dismissed and sent to a school in the suburb of the town as a teacher. Soon he became a director of that school. But as soon as it became possible to emigrate to Israel, he immediately got ready for a trip to Israel. People tried to persuade him to stay here, he was offered different posts, but he was

inexorable. He said 'I cannot live in the country which treated me that way.' They left in 1979 with their 3 sons. My sister did not study anywhere after school, but she managed to master profession of bookkeeper without any assistance.

My second brother Isaac was born in 1928 in Petrikov. By the beginning of the war he finished only 4 classes. When we reached the terminal of our evacuation (Uzbekistan), my sister got fixed up in a job as a bookkeeper. She was very sociable, quickly began speaking Uzbek language, enjoyed esteem and love of local residents. One day an Uzbek made a strange request: he asked her to let our younger brother Isaac go with him. He was engaged in supplying activity, as our father did in Petrikov. He had to go from one distant mountain village to another, therefore he needed assistant. So my brother spent with him all the time we were in evacuation. We saw him only occasionally. He enjoyed his life, did not miss us very much, and made a lot of new friends. After evacuation my brother returned to Petrikov together with us, but soon he remained there alone: I left Petrikov for study, Sofiya got married and left for Bobruisk, and Daddy had already died by that time.

After a while Isaac moved to Sofiya (to Bobruisk), but it turned out to be uncomfortable for him. I suggested him to come to my place in Leningrad. He arrived and some time we lived together with him in our hostel, but he had no residence permit. Therefore he found a factory where they gave that sort of permit and a place in a hostel. It was a factory for processing leather. My brother finished secondary school without attending lectures, and entered Technical School for light industry employees. [Technical School in the USSR and a number of other countries was a special educational institution preparing specialists of middle level for various industrial and agricultural institutions, transport, communication, etc.] After the Technical School he graduated from the Textile College and worked at one of the Leningrad factories. In 1988 he left for Israel together with his son (his wife had died by that time).