

Ari Smith
Mitzvah Class
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My Most Interesting Relative
My Grandmother, Myfanwy Smith

My grandmother's grandparents came from Belarus, which used to be part of the USSR. They came to England in 1890 when they were very young and were married in London. Then they moved to South Wales where her grandfather had a draper's shop. Her mother, their first child, was born in Wales in 1894 and went to Cardiff University and the Sorbonne in Paris to study French. Women didn't usually go to universities back then. My grandmother's father's parents settled in Dublin, Ireland. Her grandfather became a moneylender.

My grandmother's parents were living in Palestine in the 1920's. Her mother went to Liverpool, England to have her child. After my grandmother was born, they returned to Palestine. She lived in the German colony of Jerusalem until she was nine years old and they lived in an apartment. When Hitler rose to power, her family decided that, as Jews, they should move to Talbieh which was a Jewish district. In 1936, her father was shot at during an anti-Jewish riot in Jerusalem. The assassin did not kill him and the British government immediately transferred him to Uganda, which was part of the British Empire at that time. In 1936, she was 12, my grandmother went to a boarding school in London.

WWII broke out in 1939 and went on in Europe until 1945. My grandma had to go to a school 30 miles outside London. During that time the Nazi's did not bomb London though, they were too busy conquering other countries. From 1943 to 1945, she was in Pharmacy school in London, which was being bombed continuously during that time. There were many nights when London was being bombed and she was in the middle of coming home. One time she was coming home on the London subway, and the railway lines ahead of her were hit by a bomb where the underground came out into the outdoors. She had to get out and walk the rest of the way home, which was three or four miles of area that was burning because of the bombings.

She emigrated to the United States in August 1968 with my grandfather and my mother and her three sisters. They initially lived in Chapel Hill, North Carolina for seven years, and then moved to Cincinnati, Ohio.

My grandmother and grandfather joined a Humanistic congregation in 1980, when it was founded in Cincinnati. The congregation was called BethAdam. She joined a Humanistic congregation because she was not happy with the philosophy that if you pray enough, good things will happen. She liked the philosophy of Humanistic Judaism more because she had no conflicts with the sermons. Before she joined, she and her parents went to an orthodox synagogue. She celebrates Hanukkah and Seder at home. She feels that being Humanistic lets her be honest about being Jewish, and she has no reservations about the services.