

Did Solomon have siblings?

The short answer is yes.

The long answer is we don't know how many, and we have only indirect information on the one sibling of whom we are most certain.

The best information we have comes not from the Old Country but from America.

In 1978 Milt made the acquaintance of Sylvia Meidenberg Rosenberg, who wrote him a letter [Johna, need a link. The letter is in Dropbox: Letters, columns, etc.] in which she said her grandfather Joseph "was your father's uncle."

[Note: The names Maidenberg and Meidenberg are equivalent, both transliterated from Russian.]

In later years, Mike and Sylvia grew close, both animated by an interest in the history of the family. Sylvia died in 2013.

If Joseph was David Maidenberg's uncle, he would have been the brother of David's father Solomon.

Their ages line up. Joseph was born in 1856 and died in 1940. Solomon was born in 1860 and died in 1939.

Joseph arrived in America in 1900, apparently a few years before the arrival of Ida Cohen ("Tante Haika"), the sister of Solomon's wife Perel, and the relative with whom David and Rosa lived after their arrival in 1906. It is likely that Haika sponsored David and Rosa's voyage.

David had a long, warm relationship with his aunt, who on occasion visited the family in Marion, Indiana.

Joseph's descendants included Morris Meidenberg, who in the 1930's moved to Miami Beach, where he built hotels. The Indiana Maidenbergs visited the Florida Meidenbergs. There is an 8mm film showing them. There is a photo of Toby and Mike as children in front of one of Morris's properties, the Sunrise Court Bungalows. Behind them is Abe Meidenberg, Morris's son, who died in 1958.

These close ties ebbed away over the years. The Meidenberg and Maidenberg families lost touch with each other until the tie was restored first by Milt and then by Mike.

There are some problems concerning the Joseph-Solomon connection, however. For one, there is no documentary evidence (such as a census list compiled in Russia). We have only Sylvia's recollection.

Second, we cannot be certain that Joseph understood "uncle" in precisely the way we define the relationship. It is possible he was using the term in a more general way to indicate a close family relationship.

Sylvia also wrote that Joseph called Haika a "cousin", which cannot be the case. Sylvia later told Mike that Joseph also called David "cousin." So there is reason to be concerned about the accuracy of the relationship.

Nevertheless, the preponderance of evidence is that Joseph and Solomon were in fact brothers.

In the letters, Amnon writes (1982):

When I was quite young I heard that Solomon had a brother whose name I cannot recall, to my shame. Prior to 1900 he left the Ukraine for France and a year or two after he went to another country. From that time his tracks have been lost and attempts of Solomon and my father to find out where he lived were not crowned with success.

The date that Amnon gives is consistent with the possibility that this brother is Joseph, who arrived in America in 1900.

From the trip journal:

I ask him about a brother of Solomon who, Amnon had written in one of letters, had gone to France.

Amnon explains that when the brother reached France, he wrote a letter to Dzygovka saying that was where he was. The brother was never heard from again. It is possible he remained in France, but he could also have emigrated to America or somewhere else. We do not know the brother's name.

While the Indiana Maidenbergs retained a longtime memory of Haika, there was no mention of Joseph. It is possible that David was in touch with him. In any case, the fact that Toby and Mike visited Joseph's son Morris' hotel shows ties were retained up to 1950.