

Ronia Finkelshtein's Mother Adel Finkelshtein



My mother Adel Izrailevich, photographed shortly after her 20th birthday. The picture was taken in the photo shop of L.G. Izrailevich, in Doctor Gurvich's house in Alexandrovskaya Street, in Poltava. My grandparents on my mother's side had six children. Their oldest son, Savva, was born in 1887. My mother Adel was born in 1890, Sonia in 1892, Nyura in 1896, Aron in 1898 and the youngest, Tania, in 1902. Savva and Aron finished cheder, my mother and her sisters studied in grammar school for a few years. After that my mother didn't work or study. She was helping my grandmother about the house. My grandparents were very religious and my mother, being their older daughter, did her best to please them. My mother went to the market to buy a chicken and took it to the

shochet to have it slaughtered, and she bought all kosher food for them. My grandfather knew Hebrew. He said prayers every morning and evening and a blessing before every meal. They had a mezuzah on the door: a small box with a prayer inside. They touched it with their hands and kissed it before going into the house. It was believed to protect from evil. I liked the big bookcase in my grandparents' home: I enjoyed looking at the books. I couldn't read at that time and don't know exactly what kind of books they were, but I remember some bigger volumes in Hebrew and the Torah among them. The rest of the books were in Russian. My grandparents spoke Yiddish, especially when they wanted to conceal the subject of conversation from us. They also knew Russian. They celebrated all Jewish holidays and honored traditions. They went to the synagogue every Saturday and on Jewish holidays. I don't know how my parents got acquainted. Aunt Nyura told me that my father was engaged when he met my mother, but when he saw her, he fell in love with her at first sight. He left his fiancée and married my mother. My mother's parents were religious, so my parents had a traditional Jewish wedding. My grandmother told me that there was a chuppah installed in the yard of their house: a velvet canopy on four posts. My mother wore a fancy wedding gown and a white veil covering her head and face. My father wore a new suit. The rabbi said a prayer, gave his blessing and pronounced the marriage contract. My mother's relatives, neighbors and my father's friends came to the wedding. There were tables laid in the yard and klezmer musicians playing at the wedding party.