

Sofia Gauzner



This is a picture of my grandmother Sofia Gauzner, nee Khasileva. The photo was taken in the studio of Kodesh, in Kamenets-Podolsk in 1903, before her wedding . I remember my grandparents on my father's side very well. My grandfather David Gauzner was born in Zvenigorodka in 1881. Unfortunately I don't know where he studied. In our family archives there are still several postcards that my grandfather had written to my grandmother, 'To Mademoiselle Sofia Khasileva, Kalyus.' All of them are written in Russian, in smart handwriting, grammatically perfect, which indicates my grandfather's good education. My grandmother was born in 1883 in Kalyus Podolsk province. How they got acquainted, I can't say, but such a loving pair as those two, who spent more than 50 years together, I've never seen. My grandparents got married in 1903. After the wedding my grandfather

moved to Mogilyov-Podolsk where he owned a dry goods store. My grandparents always lived with us. Grandmother Sofia was one of the most adored and beloved persons in the whole world for me. She was a housewife, but what a brilliant one! She was an exceptionally organized person, very strict, accurate and composed. I remember that she was magnificent in cooking sour sweetbread with red sauce; and the hamantashen she baked for Purim were simply delicious! She told me the story of Haman and Mordecai and what the meaning of hamantashen was. And the boy I was then, I bit off Haman's 'ear' and said, 'Now he gets what he deserves!' As far as I remember, my grandparents didn't observe any Jewish traditions. It never occurred to me to ask if they prayed or believed in God. Outwardly nothing was manifested. At home they spoke Russian and changed to Yiddish when they wanted to hide something from me. Maybe they spoke to each other in Yiddish when they were in their room. I guess Yiddish was their native tongue when they were still children and lived with their parents. But once they became immersed into the life of such a civilized and international city as Odessa, they changed to Russian. There wasn't a single book in Yiddish at home, as far as I remember. My grandparents went into evacuation with us, and returned home to Odessa after it was liberated. As far as I know, my grandparents had three children: Ezeikiel, Tanya and my father Yakov.