

David And Haia Finchelstein With Their First Granddaughter



This is a photograph of my parents with their first granddaughter, the daughter of Moise, one of my brothers. The little girl's name was Fani. She is now 65, so the photograph was taken during the war, around 1941-1942. I think the photograph was taken in Iasi, in the public park in front of the National Theatre, for my brother's family lived in that neighborhood. Fani is living in Israel at present, but she is very ill and is hospitalized in a ward for terminally ill patients.

My father, David Finchelstein, was born in Pascani around 1884. He was a very smart and learned person. Despite having no studies, he learned to read and write by himself, as he was a self-taught man. He acquired a solid general culture on his own by reading Romanian newspapers, but also Jewish ones. Still, as a boy, my father was sent to the cheder, and he learned Yiddish there. He could read and write perfect Yiddish. He attended only "the small cheder," there were several levels. He worked as a carpenter in Iasi. I don't recall my father talking about his period in the army, but I think he did the military service, as Jews were required to serve in the army until 1918-1920.

I don't know many details about how my parents met. I don't remember them talking about it at home. I think they got married around 1910. Of course there was a religious ceremony performed by a rabbi. In any case, I can say that in our home the relationship between my father and my mother was very good, in spite of the fact that it was a home with many children, and whenever there are children quarrels may always ensue. In turn, we inherited the spirit of this relationship based on good concord; we got along very well as brothers, but with our spouses as well.

My mother was a housewife, she raised 9 children. I don't remember my mother ever going to bed or waking up at the same time as we did. We always went to bed and she stayed up longer, for she still had chores to do. In the morning she got up long before us in order to get us ready for school or work. We always found her where we left her, about the house, doing the chores. And let us not forget that washing machines or other possibilities of making life easier didn't exist in those days.

She washed by hand, we didn't even have running water. Sometimes, when the material situation of our household was better, mother used to hire a woman to do the laundry. She collected the dirty laundry during a week or two and, if she managed to hire a woman to help her with the laundry, they washed all the laundry and stretched it out to dry in the courtyard. All the courtyards were full of washed laundry. This was during summer, it was harder during winter, when we strung the laundry to dry inside the house. Mother was a very hard-working woman. It was only when the girls were a bit older and could take over some of the household chores, that my father started taking my mother out for a walk, or to the park once in a while during summer. That's how it was in all households, not only in our home. She was always cooking, back then people ate cooked food at lunch and at dinnertime. Young people nowadays can't even imagine the kind of life that our mothers led.

My father worked for the CFR until he left to Israel in 1952, when emigration peaked. He left by boat from Constanta, I accompanied there myself. My mother left with my father and I didn't get to see her alive anymore when I first visited them in 1969. She died in Israel in 1960. My father died in Israel at 84 around 1970. Mother didn't get another job in Israel, father did some carpentry, they lived from a social pension.