

Sophia Abidor With Her Mother And Sister



This is a picture of my mother Dora Burda (nee Magner), sister Zina Ermann (nee Burda), and me (on the right). The photo was taken in Odessa in 1927. My parents lived in neighboring houses and had known each other since their childhood. They got married in 1920. After the wedding my parents lived in my mother's room. My father Semyon Burda worked as a tailor and my mother was a housewife. I was born in 1922. I was named Sophia and that name is written in all my documents. My sister Zina followed in 1925. My parents divorced six months after my sister was born; I don't know why. We stayed with my mother and my father left us. He had a room in a communal apartment in the same street where we lived. He gave my mother some money to support his children, but it wasn't enough. My mother had to go to work to support us. She went to work at the confectionery factory. She was a smart woman. Of course she would have had a different life if she had had an opportunity to get education, but since she had no education she had to work as a laborer all her life. She worked very hard and got tired. My mother was a beautiful woman, but she always had this tired expression that made her look older. I don't think she ever had enough sleep or rest. She came home late from work and had to do the housework such as cooking and washing. Early in the morning she ran to buy food at the market. She didn't spend much time with us. We lived in a 50 square meter room. There was a wardrobe with a curtain next to the door to the hallway. This created a small hallway in our room; the rest of the room was our dwelling. There was a sofa that served as a bed for my mother, two small iron beds, a table and four chairs in the center of the room where we had meals and where I did my homework. My mother's parents had a similar room, only that it was furnished better because her parents had some old pieces of furniture. Before my parents' divorce we celebrated Jewish holidays at home. My mother was an atheist, but my father was religious and observed all traditions. I was 4 when they got divorced, but I remember a little how my father conducted seder on Pesach. He sat at the head of the table wearing a white shirt and his tallit. We moved the table to the sofa and sat on the sofa. There was delicious food on the table. My father said a prayer. Adults had some wine, which was poured into silver cups. My sister and I had water mixed with a little bit of wine. There was a glass of wine in

the middle of the table that wasn't meant for anyone. My father told me that it was for Elijah the Prophet, who came to every Jewish house to bless the family on Pesach. My father said a prayer, helped me to say my words and then spoke himself. I didn't understand a word since he spoke Yiddish and we only spoke Russian at home.