

## Bella Chanina



This is me, Bella Chanina. This photo was taken in Kishinev in 1929. I wrote in Romanian on the reverse: a souvenir to my dear Olga Dmitrievna and Yevgenia Dmitrievna from their former pupil Bella Fichgandler. 21st February 1938. They were my teachers in the lyceum.

I went to a Romanian school at the age of six and then went to study in the lyceum for girls. When my grandmother lived with us, we spoke Yiddish at home and when my grandmother was not with us, we spoke Russian. Since my mother was a Hebrew teacher in the 1920s, she tried several times to teach me Hebrew, but I didn't move farther than 'Alef, beth.' My mother was very strict about my studies at school. She even asked the teacher to be strict with me. I remember that I wasn't happy about it. My mother taught me to recite poems and I performed at school concerts, but on the condition that she left the hall, or I got confused, feeling her strict look on me.

We all wore black uniform robes of the same length. We lined up and the teacher measured the length with a ruler – they had to be 30 cm sharp from the floor. There were white collars and aprons, black nets to hold hair and a black velvet ribbon on the neck. There were Jewish, Moldovan and Russian girls in the lyceum. There was no anti-Semitism. I was good at all subjects at school, but my favorite teacher was the teacher of Geography, whose surname was Mita.