

Soibel Kozhushnyan



This is Soibel Koyhushnyan, nee Gitelmaher, my mother. The picture was taken in Soroca in 1905.

The first child born to my Grandmother died an infant in the 1880s. After that Grandmother didn't have children for many years. When she was on the verge of leaving for Kharkov in 1886, where Grandfather was doing his army service, her neighbors wished her to bring back two children, according to a family legend. Our family always remembered that wish of our neighbors with a smile. Their good wish was realized. In 1887 Grandmother gave birth to twins in Kharkov. The twins were my mother Soibel and her brother Aron. In a year or two a girl, Tuba, was born, then a boy Motle followed his sister.

When Grandmother died Mother became the head of the family, though she was only fourteen. She was a real homemaker: cooked food, washed linen, cleaned, helped Grandfather raise his younger children. I don't know whether Mother got some education. I think she finished a couple of classes in the lyceum. Mother was very literate: she could read and write in Russian and Romanian. She was an erudite. Besides, Mother was very strong-willed. She was actually the head of the family. She had the last word in decisions made by her siblings and later on my father didn't take any actions, even connected with his work, without having a word with my mother.

My mother's family was very religious. After Grandmother's death my mother, being the head of the family, made sure that the rites and traditions were observed. She prepared the house for Sabbath by herself. Sabbath candles were lit by her. My mother told me that once on Sabbath when she was reading a prayer the curtains caught fire from the candles. Mother was at a loss. She couldn't interrupt the prayer. Then she started to cry out the words of the prayer, in order to draw attention to herself, for people to see the fire.