

Sarra Shpitalnik With Her Father Shlomo Molchanskiy



This is me with my father Shlomo Molchanskiy at the Budaki resort, today Primorskiy, Odessa region. This photo was taken in 1938. My father and I went there about three times: my mother wasn't allowed to go to the sea. We rented a room, bathed and lied in the sun. When I was seven, we bought an apartment in the building in the yard connecting Yekaterininskaya Street and Chasovennyi Lane. There was running water, electricity and gas in the house. There were 26 apartments in the building and all tenants were Jews by some coincidence. It was a whole Jewish settlement: a real eshuv. There were all classes of Jews: from one who married a prostitute to very intelligent educated families. They spoke Yiddish, but knew Russian and many spoke Romanian.

We had an apartment on the second floor which comprised four rooms: two had windows on the ceiling, always dirty. My grandmother, who worked and lived with us, had her own room, my parents had a bedroom and there was a living room. I slept in the living room, and had a desk covered with green cloth in my parents' bedroom. One of our relatives, who later perished during the Holocaust, had made this desk. My parents had a nickel-plated bed decorated with shining balls. The rest of the furniture was plain. We had many books in Russian and Yiddish at home. I had my own collection of books in Romanian and Yiddish. Though my father was an atheist, he knew and honored Jewish traditions. He was a real Jew deep in his heart. He had a good conduct of Hebrew and Yiddish and was interested in everything Jewish. He read books mainly in Yiddish: Mendele Moier Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, Perez. My father was friends with Yakov Sternberg, a wonderful Jewish poet, who lived in Bucharest. Yakov Sternberg was born in Lipkany, and so were other writers and poets like Eliezer Steinberg, Moshe Altman. Bialik called this group 'Lipkany Olympus.' Yakov Sternberg was also one of the founders of the Jewish Theater in Bucharest. He visited us whenever he came to Kishinev. I remember how he taught my mother to make coffee the Romanian way.