

Hava Goldshtein With Her Sister Sheindlia Goldshtein



I, Hava Goldshtein and my sister Sheindlia Goldshtein photographed in Poltava in 1926. My sister went to school that year. In 1919 my older sister Sheindl was born and on 24 February 1924 I, Hava Goldshtein, was born. My grandfather Mosey often came to stay with us, children, while our parents were away. He told us stories and fairy tales about wood goblins, witches and house spirits in Ukrainian. My mother told me that after pogroms made by Denikin troops during the Civil War

grandfather did his best to conceal his Jewish identity. Grandfather never went to the synagogue that functioned in Poltava even after 1917. We didn't observe any Jewish traditions at home, only father prayed quietly in the corner of the room. In 1926 my sister Sheindl went to a Russian secondary school. I don't even know whether there were Jewish schools in Poltava. Our mother took us to a photo shop in the central street to get photographed just out of curiosity and this was the first time in my life that I was photographed. In 1927 our family moved from Poltava to a Jewish settlement in the Crimea that was formed with the help of Joint. We settled down in the village of Kalay, Djankoy district. In the Crimea life was gradually improving: my father began to work as veterinary and my mother became a milkmaid at the farm. We began to observe some Jewish traditions in Kalay. My father didn't eat pork and often argued with mother who that didn't follow the kashrut. Every Friday there was a general cleanup of the house and we, children, got involved in it. We washed the floors, dusted the furniture and scrubbed casseroles and kitchen utensils. We laid the table in a big room and our family and all other tenants of the house got together at the table. Saturday was a working day in the collective farm. Before Pesach we baked matzah and cooked Gefilte fish, chicken broth, meat stew and made pastries and pudding from matzah flour. At Purim mother made triangle pies with poppy seeds - the so-called 'HamanOman' ears' [hamentashen] that we liked. My father fasted at Yom Kippur and my mother joined him. Children didn't fast - our father believed that we would learn everything when we grew up. I don't remember other holidays. We made dolls from rags, played with a ball and ran in the streets. In few years we received a small house of our own with two rooms, a kitchen and an open terrace. We didn't have a garden or livestock. Our father provided well for the family and life was inexpensive. There was a plot of land near the house that my father planted with diminutive fruit trees. The most amazing thing was running water in the house: there was a water pump facility built in the village that supplied water to the houses. My mother was very happy about it.