

Lilya Braginskaya



This photo of me was taken when we were in evacuation, in a village in the Republic of Udmurtiya. At the time, I was about 16 years old. I was born on July 9, 1926, in Kiev. My father, David Izrailevich Braginsky, was an engineer. He worked at a factory that made plastic items. He was killed during the war, approximately in 1942. We knew little about the course of the war, and had no idea what the Germans did to the Jews. We did not get a single letter from my father from the front. We learned about his death, somewhere in Austria, after the war. My mother's name was Roza Lazarevna. They were a beautiful couple. At home, we spoke Russian; Mother and Father would speak Yiddish when they wanted my sister and I to remain ignorant of what they were saying. Neither my sister nor I wanted to learn Yiddish - at the time, it was out of fashion. War

broke out unexpectedly. When we were evacuated, I worked in an office, wearing special winter boots and a padded jacket; ink would freeze in the ink pot. Our family was split up. My mother and uncle were sent to one section, I was sent to another section, 18 kilometers away. From the time I was 15, until my mother's death after the war, I never lived with her again. Before the war I finished only eight grades. During the evacuation I had no chance to study, and after evacuation I could not study - I had to earn my living. I went to work at a trust company; while I was working, I studied and got a bookkeeper's diploma. For more than 40 years, I worked as a bookkeeper in various establishments. On August 3, 1947, when I was 21, I got married. My husband, Kushel Finberg, was our neighbor. My mentality had been Soviet, rather than Jewish, with its two main characteristics: first, atheism; second, internationalism. There was simply no place for Jewish traditions or faith. We all believed in Communism and feared nothing. The war and the Holocaust radically changed my mind. With my marriage, my life began to fill with Jewish traditions and Jewish religion again. Thanks to my mother-in-law, keeping the main rituals and attending synagogue became a normal thing for us.