

Seindla And Pinhas Schatz With Their Daughter, Haia Sura Grunberg



This here is a photo of my mother, Haia Sura Grunberg, nee Schatz, as a child, and her parents, Pinhas and Seindla Schatz, taken in Iasi in 1893, when my mother was five years old. I don't think it was a special occasion, they just wanted to have a photo together; you can see, if you look closer, that there was some retouching done by the photographer, as it used to be done back then: my grandmother's waist is quite slim, like she is wearing a corset, but of course that was not her real waist, at her age and after having a baby! My mother, Haia Sura, or Haia Surchi, as they used to call her, was their only child, and she was born in 1888 in Iasi.

My maternal grandfather, Pinhas, or Pincu, as the Romanians used to call him, Schatz, was born in Iasi in 1852, and he was a grain shop owner; he kept two modest stands in a market place that had recently opened back then. He sold all sorts of cereals like flour or corn flour, and macaroni and sugar, products which didn't come in contact with meat. He spoke Yiddish, but Romanian as well. I know my maternal grandparents had a house of their own, but I never knew that house; I only really knew them once they lived in the same house as us. I know from my mother that in my grandparents' former house there hadn't been electricity; she had ruined her eyesight reading during the night or learning with an oil lamp. That old house was in Sfantu-Lazar neighborhood, which was a Jewish, or half-Jewish neighborhood, mostly intellectual Jews lived there.

My grandfather was a religious man, quite religious, because his father had been a scholar: he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and High Holidays, wore tefillin and observed kashrut. He

didn't have payes or a beard and he never shaved with a blade. He went to the mikveh every morning and when he came home from work in the evening, he washed, changed his clothes, took a religious book he had from his father, and went into a corner to read, that was his relaxation. Also, every evening he said his prayers singing, he had a beautiful voice like his father. He wore tefillin when he prayed at home, but not the tallit, he wore it only in the synagogue.

He was married to my grandmother Seindla Schatz, nee Fainaru, who was born in Iasi in 1866. She spoke Yiddish as well, and she too was religious: she lit candles every Friday evening and she cooked kosher food. She observed the Sabbath, but she only went to the synagogue on the High Holidays. She didn't wear a wig or a kerchief. I don't think she had any schooling, she was a housewife, but she helped my grandfather at the counters in the market: she sold merchandise, at the retail counter, and my grandfather sold at the wholesale counter. Their business was rather good, the market was near the law court in Iasi, and a lot of people did their shopping there.