

Jemma Grinberg's Grandmother Riva Deich



My grandmother Rivka Deich, my mother's mother. The photo was taken in 1925 in Kiev. My grandmother Rivka Leibovna Deich (maiden name Misserov) lived in Vinnitsa. After she married my grandfather, they went to live with her family. In a few years they bought a house and my grandfather became a pharmacist. My grandfather Shloime was shot by bandits during the civil war. The Bolsheviks expropriated his pharmacy and the family had to split up, in order to find work and accommodation. They moved to Kiev. After the death of her husband, my grandmother Rivka lived with the family of her son Aron. She was very religious and, although Aron and his family didn't believe in God, they respected my grandmother's faith and created conditions that allowed her to pray, observe Jewish traditions, and celebrate holidays. I saw my grandmother only once in 1936 when the whole family got together in Kiev to celebrate her 70th birthday anniversary. We were staying with Uncle Aron's family. I remember that when it was time for my grandmother's morning prayer she was to be left alone in the room. My older sister Regina was a self-willed girl

and refused to leave the room. She told me later that she saw her grandmother reading her prayer from her prayer book. During the war my grandmother and Aron's family were evacuated to Perm. When they heard that the Germans had shot the parents and relatives of Aron's wife Riva, along with other Jews in Rostov, my grandmother stopped believing in God. She exclaimed that God wouldn't have allowed this to happen. My grandmother also did something extraordinary. She wrote a will in Yiddish and hid it in the lining of her skirt. She told her children to strictly follow her Will after her death. My grandmother died in Perm in 1943 and it turned out that she had bequeathed her body to the medical institute because she wanted to serve people in this way. Her children did not dare to disobey her, and did as she had wished. About 30 years after the war, while my cousin was on a business trip in Perm, she found employees of this institute who remembered this unique occurrence. They gave my cousin a preserved part of grandmother's body and my cousin buried what was left of my grandmother.