

Jemma Grinberg's Family



This is a family photo, taken in Kiev in 1936 at a gathering to celebrate my grandmother's 70th birthday anniversary. In the upper row from left to right are: my Aunt Maria's son Semyon with his father Efim and his mother Maria, their tall son Lev, my mother and father, and Nelia, my mother's younger sister. In the second row from left to right are: Aron's wife Riva, their son Samuil, my grandmother Rivka, my Uncle Aron, my sister Regina, and my mother's sisters Bronia and Polia. In the lower row from left to right: Aron's daughter Naomi, Vitia (Nelia's son Victor), and I, Jemma Grinberg. 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 our 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 her a preserved part of grandmother's body and my cousin buried what was left of my grandmother.