

Chava Shteinberg And Riva Vilenskaya



This is a picture of my maternal great-grandmother Chava Shteinberg on the right and my grandmother Riva Vilenskaya, nee Shteinberg, on the left. The photo was taken on Chava's birthday in Radomyshl in the 1920s. My great-grandmother, was born in 1860. She was called 'Chava de husidka' [Chava the Hasid woman] and became a widow when she was young. She had three children. She was under the guardianship of Reizl Gorenshtein, a Jewish woman, a Hasid and the owner of a fabric factory. She contributed to charity and provided meals to poor Hasidim and made arrangements for their children: helped girls getting married and young men getting a job.

Reizl Gorenshtein played an important role in the life of our family. She supported Chava and helped her to raise the children. During the Soviet power Chava lived in Radomyshl with her daughter Basheva. I saw Chava several times when my mother and I traveled to this town. She died in 1937. She looked like everyone else. She wore a long black skirt, a blouse and a kerchief. She remained deeply religious until the end of her life. My grandmother Riva Vilenskaya, nee Shteinberg, born in 1880, was my great-grandmother's oldest daughter. My grandmother was betrothed to Isroel Vilenski, a young man from a Hasidic family before she turned 17. It was a common practice in Jewish families. Isroel, my grandfather, was only half a year older than Riva. He was born in 1879. His ancestors, in particular his paternal grandmother whose name I don't know, came from a rich family of a merchant of Guild. My grandfather Isroel and my grandmother Riva got married after a four-year engagement at the beginning of 1900. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah at the synagogue. The guardian of my great-grandmother, Reizl Gorenshtein, paid all wedding expenses, bought a gown and wedding gifts. She also employed Isroel at her fabric factory. First he worked as a spinner and then, after some training, he became a supervisor at the factory. He received an apartment from the factory. My grandparents had six children. Although my grandfather had a stable job and a house they weren't very wealthy and couldn't afford to give education to all children. Therefore, only my mother, Basia Vilenskaya, the oldest, got education before the Revolution of 1917.