

Fira Usatinskaya's Cousin



This is a picture of my cousin, the daughter of my mother's oldest sister. I don't know their names. The photo was taken in Palestine in the middle of the 1920s and was sent to us in Ilinty. I know very little about my mother's parents. They lived in Gaisin, Vinnitsa region. My mother's father, Srul Pivchik, was born in the 1860s and was either a shochet or a senior man at the synagogue in

Gaisin. The family was poor. I only have one photograph of my grandmother Esther. She was younger than my grandfather. She was born in the 1870s and was a housewife. I also know that my grandfather and grandmother died long before my parents met in the 1910s. My mother had two sisters and a brother. They got secondary education. They left their parents' home as soon as they grew up. They were all religious people and observed Jewish laws and traditions throughout their life. My mother's oldest sister, born in 1890, moved to Palestine with her husband. I don't know her name or the names of her three daughters, who were born in the Promised Land. I only remember her letters that we received before the Great Patriotic War and some time after, which smelled magnificently of exquisite perfume. There were beautiful people wearing fancy clothing in the pictures that she sent. They were my cousins and their husbands. I felt envious, of course. In 1967, when the Soviet press began to indict Israel my mother tore all letters and photographs from there apart because she was afraid that our connection with Israel would be revealed. I don't know what happened to my relatives there. Perhaps, I still have cousins and nephews in Israel. Only one photograph of my cousin, whose name I don't know, survived. It was taken in the middle of the 1920s and sent to us from Israel [then Palestine]. Sarra, my mother's second sister, and her brother Gedali lived in Bessarabia.