

Rachil Mikhelson



This is my mother Rachil Mikhelson, nee Rozenblit, as a student of the Riga Conservatory. This photo was taken in Riga in 1924.

Yakov Rozenblitt, my maternal grandfather, came from Odessa, southern Ukraine. He had finished Odessa University before getting married. He was a chemical engineer. My grandmother Henrietta came from Riga. I don't know how they met, but they did and got married. I know that after getting married they lived in Odessa for some time. Mama told me her family moved to Riga after World

War I. My grandfather and grandmother weren't fanatically religious, but they observed Jewish traditions. The children received primary Jewish education. At least, they knew Jewish traditions and religion. However, the family focused on secular education. My grandfather believed that only an educated person could be successful. He arranged for it that his son and daughters had higher education. They were all very cultured. My grandfather had a big library, and the children studied music and foreign languages. They often went to theaters and concerts. They spoke Yiddish, German, and a bit of Russian. Solomon, the oldest son, finished the Law Faculty of Riga University. Esphir and Mama studied at the Conservatory. Esphir was a violinist, and Mama was a pianist. After finishing the Conservatory, Mama worked as a teacher at a music school.

My parents got married in 1930. Our family spoke Russian in my childhood. Russian is my mother tongue. When my parents didn't want me to understand the subject of their discussion, they switched to Yiddish. They didn't teach me Yiddish. When I was born, Mama took maternity leave for some time to breastfeed me. Later she went back to work. We had no nanny. Perhaps, my parents couldn't afford it. My father's sisters Emma and Yevgenia were more than willing to take care of me having no children of their own. Mama took me to one of them before going to work in the morning and picked me up after work.