

Chasya-Ita Perlstein With Her Grandchildren



This is my mother Chasya-Ita Perlstein (second from left) in 1931 in Leningrad in my apartment with her granddaughters: Inna, my brother Iosif's daughter Inna (utmost left); Esfir (utmost right) and Irina in a dress with white laces (second from right), my brother Lev's daughters.

My mother Chasya-Ita Leibovna – we called her Chasita – was born in 1871 in Yanovichy borough of Vitebsk region. She learnt only the Yiddish language and knew it very well. She had big prayer books in Yiddish and she always read prayers to us. Mother spoke mostly Yiddish and a little Russian, since we lived close to Russians. But she couldn't write in Russian. Mom didn't wear a wig, she only wore a kerchief.

My parents led a typical Jewish way of life, observing all customs and traditions, separating dairy and meat products. The children were also raised in this atmosphere. We lived in comfortable circumstances, not poor and not rich. There was a small plot of land attached to the house, where Mother kept a small vegetable garden, she grew vegetables for our own consumption; we had a cow, a cow-shed, a hay-loft, a pantry and a barn. The house consisted of two rooms and a kitchen. It was very cozy. There was an entrance-room, a Russian stove, which was used for cooking and where it was possible to get warm. There wasn't much furniture, just the most necessary things: a table, chairs, a wardrobe and beds. There was a stove-bench.