

Rashel Levi (nee Pinkas), Sason Pinkas And Rebeka Pinkas



On this picture you can see (from right to left) Rashel Levi (nee Pinkas) (my mother), my cousin Sason Pinkas and my aunt Rebeka Pinkas. There is no stamp of the photo studio or any other inscription on the picture. Most likely it was made in a photo studio in Vidin [port city on the right bank of the Danube in Bulgaria, 220 km. away from Sofia] in 1926. Its back was designed as a postcard.

My mother, Rashel, was from a wheat-trader's family – her grandfather and her father Sason were intermediary wheat-traders. They didn't use to plough or mill the wheat but to trade with it. It had to be kept in big warehouses built only of ashlar. Their windows were right under the roof. At first the wheat had to be bought and kept there until it was sold. Warehouses like those supplied carriages and ships. Vidin's plain is quite fertile and besides the Danube is a convenient navigable route.

My mother (after finishing a Jewish school and junior high school) was the last one to get married. She knew Ladino and Ivrit, which she had probably studied at the Jewish school. She was the youngest child in the family. Her brothers and sisters – Sara, Soultana, Haim and Yosif were already married and everybody had settled down in a different house.

We were often visited by different people, but mostly relatives. For instance, on a big holiday everybody would come to our house after the synagogue, because we lived right in front of the temple. Mom would usually not be able to go to the synagogue, because she had to prepare everything. Grandma would be one of the first. She used to have a paid seat (one of the best). She had always insisted on that. Papa was the one who would pay for it. In most cases mom would stay at home on some holidays like Erev Sabbath. Rosh Hashanah was an exception. So when they got out of the synagogue after Erev Sabbath, for instance, they would come to our place. They wouldn't have dinner at our place because everybody had already cooked dinner at home, but they would have a boiled egg, drink a glass of rakia (sort of brandy), and wish Sabbath Shalom to each other. I remember the roses on Shavuot. Mom used to grow some beautiful roses in our yard. On a holiday she would get up at 8 a.m. put them in separate vases while they were still dewy and wait for the relatives to come from the synagogue. On Shavuot we used to have some rice-pudding at home at all costs. We were not rich, and every rite was performed for decency's sake! My parents always found ways and money to observe the ritual. A Shavuot with no milk.