

Matilda Levi With Her Grandmother Vida Behar



Here I'm with my favorite grandmother: Vida Behar. The picture was taken in Karnobat around 1928, which means I was nine years old or so.

My paternal grandmother Vida Hason came from Bourgas, my grandfather brought her from there. She came from a notable family. My grandmother was a real housewife though she could write. I wondered why, when she started writing something, she wrote from right to left. She didn't explain. I suppose it must have been a text in old Turkish; I don't know even now what it was. She spoke fluent Turkish.

I spent all of my childhood at my father's mother's. She took care of me all day long and combed my hair. When I woke up my hair was always messy, curly somewhat. My mother didn't have enough patience to comb my hair. She used to start combing me but it hurt me a lot. I sometimes even ran in my nightgown to my grandmother's who lived on the same street. And my grandmother asked me, 'Your mother pulled your hair again, didn't she? Come here.' And she put me on a little chair with a mirror and said, 'Take a look at yourself and tell me how you want me to style your hair.' She started to form a curl here, a circle there, I was really glad because she didn't pull my hair.

At Grandmother Vida's, there was a big basement where the pickled vegetables were stored. My grandmother made fine pickled vegetables. She took those round fleshy peppers and filled them with parsley, carrots, cabbage and so on. There was sauerkraut, too. I really liked the pickled vegetables and the beans she baked. Grandmother Vida cooked it in an earthenware pot. She used to put it under the stove, it was a very primitive stove, and it stayed there until noon in the heat and formed a crust.