

TSILYA MICHLIN GOLDIN was born on October 10, 1908, near Bobroysk. Her parents, Zelig Michlin, 1876 – 1945 and Genya Simkina, 1880 - 1950 were religious Jews. The father was a schochet (kosher slaughterer) and a mohel (performs ritual circumcision). The family of eight children grew up in a big house – the father was a well-respected Jewish scholar. But, Tsilya recalls the pogroms of 1920-23 where Jews (including her father and mother) were beaten or severely injured. The father continued to perform Jewish rituals in secret, but the children could not go to Jewish schools and the government policy did everything to suppress Jewish culture. During the years 1918 to 1922 there was a civil war and foreign forces (first a German occupation and then then a Polish occupation) forced Tsilya and her family to hide in the forests. It continued to be a difficult time for the family, the oldest brother was shot in the face (but lived) and the mother became sick and it fell to Tsilya to take care of her. Tsilya could not get a job in Bobroysk since she was Jewish, so she went to Gomel in Belorussia in 1928. Tsilya was 20, when she met Mendel Goldin aged 30 at her aunt's home. They married in a secret Jewish ceremony in 1930. Tsilya had three daughters, all born in Gomel (Fira Goldin, 1932, Clara Estrina, 1938-1975, Raisa Krugman, born 1941). Due to the war, the family was relocated to Uzbekistan in 1941 where they stayed for 4 years. Tsilya and her parents and daughters lived in overcrowded barracks and she picked cotton. Food was scarce and Tsilya recalls that she and the daughters all were bloated due to malnutrition. Her father died just after the war of starvation. Tsilya's husband Mendel fought in the war as an explosives expert and came back to Gomel very ill with a skin disease. The family reunited in Gomel only to find their house was bombed. Later the house was rebuilt and all five of them had to live in one room while another family occupied the rest of the house. It was a very difficult life. Eventually, Mendel recovered and went back to work as a foreman in factory that made lumber byproducts such as rosin and sealing wax. With the help of Tsilya's sister they bought a used piano and a cow. Two of the daughters learned to play and become music teachers. They lived in that one room for 40 years until 1982. The oldest daughter Fira married in 1952 and emigrated to Israel where she now lives in Haifa. The middle daughter Clara went to study in Leningrad and achieved high honors – unfortunately she died due to a physician error in surgery. The youngest daughter, Raisa lives in Chicago where Tsilya emigrated in 1988. Tsilya has 6 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. While her daughters never practiced Jewish traditions due to suppression in the Soviet Union, the grandchildren living in the US and Israel are practicing Jews.