



The Story of a Life: Memoirs of a Young Jewish Woman in the Russian Empire

Anna Pavlovna Vygodskaia

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Originally published in 1938 and never before available in English translation, *The Story of a Life* is a rare and fascinating historical account of Jewish childhood and young adult life in Tsarist Russia. Anna Pavlovna Vygodskaia was born in 1868 and spent the formative years of her life in the very heart of the Pale of Settlement. As a young woman, Vygodskaia dreamed of attending the Higher Women's Courses in St. Petersburg to achieve the independent, purposeful life she so desired. At a time when the vast majority of Jews continued to reside in small market towns in the Pale, Vygodskaia liberated herself from that world and embraced the day-to-day rhythms, educational activities, and new intellectual opportunities in the imperial capital of St. Petersburg.

In her young adult life, Vygodskaia was not drawn to revolutionary politics or tempted by the allure of emigration but chose instead to integrate herself into an emerging civil society. Vygodskaia's determination to become a "useful person" and work for the greater social good shaped the future course of her personal and professional development. Eugene M. Avrutin and Robert H. Greene offer a faithful and readable translation of Vygodskaia's autobiography and an introductory essay that illuminates the historical context of her world.

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