

Simon Rapoport



This is me when I was a student of the Jewish lyceum. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1938. I went to Jewish lyceum in 1932. When the lyceum was founded, most of the children knew neither Ivrit, nor Yiddish, so the subjects were taught in Russian and Ivrit was one of the subjects. Gradually more subjects were taught in Yiddish. My elder sister Polina studied in that lyceum in the period when subjects were taught in Russian. When my brother Samuel was studying there, subjects were taught in Russian only at the elementary school. When I entered the Jewish lyceum, Ivrit was taught from the first grade. I always had a propensity to languages and soon I was pretty good in Ivrit. It was not hard for me to study. The lyceum was secular and Jewish religion and traditions were taught like one of the subjects. Teaching was in Ivrit with the exception of military class, taught by the captain of the Estonian army, and gymnastics, also taught in Estonian. He had his own system of physical training. He made us work out. I am grateful to him for that. First, my

results were miserable and I had the poorest score. Then I started working and training hard and became a pretty good athlete. I enjoyed being able to stand out. I found going in for sports very challenging and spent a lot of time on that. I was master of sports in wrestling and took the first prize at a competition in Tallinn. It was not a bad result. My rivals were strong Estonian guys. Maybe it was my good physical stamina which helped me survive later on. When I studied at the Jewish lyceum, I took an active part in the Zionist movement. I was a member of the youth Zionist organization Betar. Jabotinsky was at the head of the organization of the leaders of the right Zionist movement. Betar's ideology differed much from many Jewish organizations. Betar members were taught that Jews were supposed not to pay more attention to praying, which would not help in the foundation of the state, but to learning craftsmanship, tilling and military professions. Israel needed those people as it was to be formed and protected.