

Meishe Edelstein's Passport



This is the first page of the Latvian passport of my father Meishe Edelstein with his photograph. When in 1940 Latvian passports were replaced with the Soviet ones, my father retrieved this page from his passport and kept it for the memory. This photo of the early 1930s was taken in Riga.

Generation after generation my father's family lived in the Latvian town of Ludza. I never knew my grandmother Hana Edelstein, my father's mother. She died before I was born. I knew my paternal grandfather Dovid-Leib Edelstein. He owned a store of leather goods. My grandmother was a

housewife.

There were three sons and two daughters in the family. I didn't know my father's two older brothers. They moved to Africa before I was born. I don't even know their names. My father was born in 1886, and was given the name of Elieizer-Meishe. When he fell seriously ill in infancy, he was given another name, Haim, to swindle death. In his documents his name was written as Haim-Elieizer-Meishe Edelstein. My father's sisters were born after my father.

My father, his brothers and all the boys in this small Jewish town studied in cheder. My father could read and write in Hebrew. I think he also had a secular education, but I never asked him about it. My father's parents were religious, and it could not have been otherwise in a little Jewish town. All Jews in Ludza were religious. All boys were circumcised shortly after they were born, and had their bar mitzvah at the age of 13. Bar mitzvah was a mandatory ritual. All Jewish weddings followed the Jewish traditions. The Jewish community of Ludza was very strong, and the better off supported the poor.

My mama and my father got married in Riga on Pesach in 1925. It goes without saying that they had a traditional Jewish wedding with a rabbi and a chuppah. Later my parents moved in with my grandmother and grandfather in Ludza. I was their only child. I was born on 1st January 1927 and was given the name of Hana-Leya after my paternal grandmother.