

Hana Muchnik With Her Family



This is our family. Standing from right to left: I, Hana Muchnik, my older sister, Elka Muchnik, and my brothers Haim and Anchel Muchnik. My parents Duvid and Golda Muchnik are sitting. This photo was taken in the Elzon Photo Studio in Orhei before Haim moved to Palestine in 1927.

My father, the oldest in his family, was born in the early 1880s. I don't know whether my father had any education besides cheder. All I know is that he was a rather literate man. My parents' marriage was prearranged, as was quite common in Jewish families.

My mother was born in 1886. I think she must have studied with a visiting teacher at home: this was quite common with wealthier families. She could write and read Yiddish like my father. My parents didn't tell me about their wedding, but I think it was a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah and lots of guests. After the wedding my parents lived in my grandfather Joiseph's house. In 1908 Mama gave birth to a girl. She named her Elka. My older brother Haim was born in 1910, and in 1915 my second brother, named Anchel after my deceased grandfather, came into this world. My mother had no other children for a long time before I was born on 18th September 1923.

Though I was the youngest of the children and one would have thought I was to be everybody's favorite, I felt like nobody needed me at all. My sister and brothers, who were much older than me, ignored me and didn't want to play with me. My parents didn't take any account of me and would, in my presence, discuss subjects that were not appropriate for a child to hear. So I heard my mother telling a neighbor that I was an unexpected child and a 'burden,' and I think this affected my whole life. However, I can't say that I was mistreated. I had everything I needed and even more, but I lacked warmth and love that each child needs so much. Aunt Beila, who was living with us, was my favorite. I followed her and demanded that she played with me and she never refused me: she played with dolls and stones, read me fairy tales and told me stories. I guess this also helped her to suppress her longing for her own children.

There was a number of Zionist organizations in Bessarabia in those years. My older brother Haim moved to Bucharest at the age of 15 and entered a vocational school. Haim became a high-skilled worker. He also became fond of Zionist ideas of restoration of Israel [then Palestine]. He joined a

Zionist organization of young people, I don't know the name of this organization, and was preparing for repatriation to Israel. In a camp in the Carpathians he met and fell in love with a Jewish girl named Tubele. When he told Mother about Tubele and his intention to marry her, our mother got very angry: Tubele came from a poor family and wasn't our equal. Haim left his fiancée and moved to Israel in 1927. He got married there and had a daughter. Haim was involved in the establishment of the kibbutz settlements in Israel. In his letters he tried to convince Anchel to move to Israel. Anchel moved to Palestine in 1936. However, shortly after he moved there, he was killed by terrorists.