

Elkhonen Saks' Grandparents Yehuda And Rivke Saks



This is a photo of my paternal grandparents, Yehuda and Rivke Saks, taken in Valga in the 1910s. My ancestors both on my father's and my mother's side lived in Poland. It was from there that in the second half of the 19th century the families of my paternal grandfather, Yehuda Saks, and my maternal grandfather, Vulf Saks, came to Estlyandskaya province. They did it illegally, because Estlyandskaya province was outside the Pale of Settlement. My father's parents settled in the small town of Valga in the south of Estlyandskaya province. My grandfather Yehuda was very religious. He only ate kosher food, never worked on Sabbath and read prayers several times a day. For as long as his health permitted him he visited the synagogue on Sabbath and holidays. Grandfather wore the same type of clothes as other residents of our town. An ordinary suit, a coat and a hat. He always wore a kippah at home. He had a thick, but short and well-trimmed beard. He didn't complete a yeshivah but was very well acquainted with all Jewish laws and traditions and observed them very strictly. My grandfather was a small merchant. He toured around villages on a horse cart and sold various goods to peasants. The family wasn't poor, but neither rich. Grandfather didn't only travel within Estlyandskaya province on his cart, but also across Russia, and he even got to Palestine through Turkey in the 1880s. At that time a lot of Russian Jews emigrated to Palestine, but he decided to see first what the conditions for living in Palestine were like. He came back soon. He found that it was very problematic to move to Palestine with his family and remained in the small Estonian town of Valga. His four sons and daughter were born and grew up there. Their native language was Yiddish. My grandmother Rivke died in 1929 when I was only 2 years old, and I cannot remember her at all. After her death grandfather lived for a few years with our family, and in 1935 he moved to Tallinn where his daughter and one of his sons lived at the time. He passed away in 1943 in evacuation in Samarkand.