

Elkhonen Saks With His Sister Ite Saks



This photo shows my sister Ite Saks and me. It was taken in Valga on my second birthday in April 1929. My parents got married in 1921. The wedding was held in the Valga synagogue. My mother received a small marriage portion, and they opened a small family store in the city of Valga, where they worked together, trading in all kinds of trifle: haberdashery, linen, etc. Mother embroidered tablecloths, napkins and towels beautifully. Those were also sold in the store. The family lived very modestly. They rented a small apartment in an old house. The apartment consisted of four rooms: one was big, the others very small. The house was heated with stoves, water pipes; electricity was only introduced ten years later. At the end of 1921 my sister was born. My mother was frequently sick, so she was helped around the house by an elderly Latvian lady, Zelma. Zelma was illiterate, but very kind and nice. I was born in 1927. My birth, I think, was the reason for my mother's death. She died when I was only 7 days old. My sister told me that when mother was alive all Jewish traditions were observed in the house. She tried to cook kosher meals only, observed Sabbath and celebrated all Jewish holidays. After her death all the housework was done by Zelma. As a boy I believed that Zelma was my mother because she looked after me. The first language I started to speak was Latvian. At the same time my sister and my father taught me Yiddish and I knew it perfectly well by the time I turned 3.