

Elkhonen Saks' Uncle Haim-Leib Saks



My father's older brother Haim-Leib Saks. The photo was taken in Mozhaysk, Russia where he lived in the 1920s. My grandfather, Yehuda Saks, was a very caring father and tried to give his children at least some education. He sent his oldest son, Haim-Leib, to Vilno to study in a yeshivah. After graduation, before World War I, Haim-Leib was directed to go to Russia where he became a rabbi in the small town of Mozhaysk near Moscow. My grandfather was very proud of the fact that his son became a rabbi. Haim-Leib was a very educated person. He read the works of philosophers. He could speak about Marxism. Uncle Haim-Leib corresponded with Israeli rabbis on religious issues. This is what he was accused of and arrested for in 1935. He spent three years in the Soviet prison camps, but survived and returned to Mozhaysk in 1938. There he lived with his family until 1941. Certainly, he could not be a rabbi any more and had only occasional earnings. Haim-Leib, who was evacuated from Mozhaysk, lived in Samarkand with his children. He had four sons and two daughters. His wife died before the war. His older son, Josef, married a Russian girl in 1927, broke

with his Jewish roots and left the family of his father. The second son Motl was called up to military service, became part of the tank corps and was killed at the front. The youngest son was caught by the war in Belarus, while visiting his relatives, and murdered by fascists. Only the third son, Elya, and the daughters, Frida and Ite, remained with their father. Elya was about 18 years old then. Before the war he tried to enter university, but wasn't accepted because he was the son of a rabbi. Uncle Haim-Leib invited us to Samarkand. With much effort my father, my grandfather and me managed to get there at the end of 1942. After the war the Polish nationals received the sanction to return to Poland. Haim-Leib, his son and his daughters managed to get fictitious documents and left with some of their Polish friends. From Poland they quickly got to France. Both daughters married orthodox Jews there and left for the USA. Uncle Haim-Leib and his son Elya left for Israel. My uncle died in 1952.