

Beniamin Joheles With His Apprentices



This is my father Beniamin Joheles (first from left) with his apprentices in the electric mechanic work shop in Vilnius. The photo was taken by the Leonard photo studio in 1930. My father was born in Vilnius in 1898. I don't know whether he attended cheder, but I think it was mandatory for all boys. I have no information about where my father studied. My father knew Yiddish, Russian, Lithuanian, Polish and German. He was trained to become an electric mechanic at a company in Germany and later stayed to work with this company. He became a highly skilled mechanic. By the time he met my mother at his older brother Grigoriy Golunski's place, he lived in Kaunas and worked as an electric mechanic at the railway station. My parents had their wedding in Vareny on 22nd July 1921. My parents got married under a chuppah at the synagogue and had a traditional Jewish wedding. It couldn't have been otherwise in Jewish families at the time. My parents rented an apartment in Kaunas. I was born on 22nd May 1922 in Kaunas. I was named Feige, but since my early childhood everybody called me Fania, which is a Russian name. In 1927 my sister Riva was born. This was when my father got arrested for being a Polish citizen having received his passport in Vilnius. He was accused of espionage. My grandfather Velvl's apprentice, a rather high official, pulled strings for my father. My father was released from prison, but was to leave the town within three days. I have some vague memories of us moving out. I remember the horses dragging our wagon across a little river. We crossed the border between Lithuania and Poland and arrived in Vilnius, which belonged to Poland at the time. My father's parents and sisters lived there and we found ourselves staying with a big Jewish family all of a sudden. They all shared love and support. My father went to work as an instructor of an electric mechanic laboratory of the polytechnic school of the organization of the workers' union. My father became a valued teacher at this school. However, he wasn't paid his regular salary in full: they usually paid him about 20 percent and put the rest on credit. Once his credit had accumulated into a big amount, the management paid half of it to my father. My parents believed it to be a huge amount of money and decided to have winter coats made for them for this money. However, my father's salary wasn't enough to cover all family expenses and when my parents managed to get a suitable lodging my father opened his own

electric technical shop.