

# Epstein Family

## **Eli-Leizer HaLevi Epstein**

Rabbi of Zenden, in his 80s

strict, sure of himself and his code through most of his life, seen as seen as a fanatic by village and by his children

Sholem Shachne Katzenellenbogen's father-in-law

**Elka'le Epstein:** first wife, 3 years younger than Eli-Leizer, mother of their 6 children

traditional wife and mother, got along with everyone

**Tamara:** second wife, and distant cousin of Eli Leizer, and 30 years younger married ~6 weeks after Elka'le's

death. Seen as tempering the Rabbi's extreme behavior, but dies suddenly, not long after the marriage

**Vigasia:** third wife, widow herself, marries in same year as Tamara's death

Not well educated or cultured, but fiercely intelligent. From Bolekhev, where sons still live. Skilled at sizing up situations and people. A force to be reckoned with, "loud and brassy." Speaks the truth, even when it is not welcome. Had raised 3 sons on her own, all devout, all now successful clock-makers,"refined" and respectful of their mother.

## **Eli-Leizer and Elka'le's Children** (listed in birth order, I think)

### **Refael Leima Epstein**

m. **Manya Epstein** ( they have children, but these are not named)

rabbi in small town of Dalhinev, poor village made poorer in WWI

at wife's urging, because of their extreme poverty and hunger, accepts father's request to move back to Zenden to be Dayan, where he is miserable, terrorized by his father. Manya and he move with their family to America. Eli-Leizer actually approves- "I've realized...you are not well suited to take over my rabbinate. You're a compromiser by nature...Maybe there [US] you'll help turn it [the wagon of Judaism] right side up again." pages 159-160

### **Henna'le**

m. **Sholem Shachne Katzenellenbogen** (see **Katzenellenbogen** family)

### **Kona**

m. **Banet Michelson**, shipping clerk, free thinker, happy only when beating someone in chess  
live in Warsaw

2 daughters: **Tubya** and **Bania**

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## Epstein children, continued

### Sarah Raizel

unmarried, lives in Warsaw, manages a paper shop “better than her bosses” (p.107)  
lives with younger sister **Chavtche**, pays all Chavtche’s bills, indulges her travel and extravagant spending  
has no expectation that she herself will marry, fearful that Chavtche will marry and leave her

### Chavtche

unmarried, living with her sister Sarah Raizel, later engaged to **Leopold Silverstein**  
happy with her life, does whatever she wants, believes “nothing is worth sacrificing oneself for” (p.107)  
angry that her father married **Vigasio**- whom she expects to try to appropriate what Chavtche sees as her rightful inheritance

### Shabse-Shepsel

m. **Draizel Halberstadt**, daughter of **Menashe Halberstat**, who had been rich but notoriously miserly. He ran a dinnerware shop but hated to part with anything. Packed the best goods into crates, and stored them, unused. A year after her father dies, Draizel starts spending the considerable fortune she inherited, opens the crates. Shabse-Shepsel courts her because nobody believes he has a chance.

**Shabse-Shepsel** himself- a piece of work. His primary joy seems to come from humiliating himself and everyone else in his life. Plunges into one money-making scheme after another, one disaster after another, as his family agonizes about what to do about him. **Vigasio**’s sums things up: that he is his own worst enemy, and that Draizel enjoys her suffering- otherwise she would leave him.