

מוקדש לזכות
החתן הנעלה והמצויין חבר מערכת של גליון זה
הרה"ת ר' לוי יצחק וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא שי' דובאוו
לרגל חתונתם בשעתומ"צ ביום ו' תמוז תשע"ה

כ"ף מנחם - אב
יום הסתלקות כ"ק הרה"ג והרה"ח המקובל וכו' ר' לוי יצחק ז"ל שניאורסאהן

Encounters with
HORAV LEVI YITZCHAK SCHNEERSON,
THE REBBE'S FATHER

The Unbreakable Spirit



"I was happy to receive your letter...especially after hearing so much about the activities that you did during those years for my father. This assistance brings very great blessing, to fulfill your heart's desires for good, for you and for your relatives."¹

This letter is one of the many instances that the Rebbe expressed his gratitude to those who merited to assist the Rebbe's father, HoRav Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, especially during his years of exile in Chi'ili and Alma Ata.

Often, at farbrengens in conjunction with Chof Av, HoRav Levi Yitzchak's *yom hilulah*, the Rebbe would instruct them to say *l'chaim*, and bless them that the merit of the *baal hahilula* bring much revealed good for them and their families.

In honor of Chof Av this year, we present our readers with the stories of some of the individuals who merited to be with HoRav Levi Yitzchak during those difficult years, and had the opportunity to be of assistance to him and Rebbetzin Chana.



The interviews published here are transcripts of conversations conducted by **Jewish Educational Media's** *My Encounter with the Rebbe* project, which has documented thousands of interactions with the Rebbe. Our deep gratitude goes to **Rabbi Elkanah Shmotkin**, **Rabbi Yechiel Cagen** and the *My Encounter* team for making these priceless memories of the Rebbe's father available for this publication.

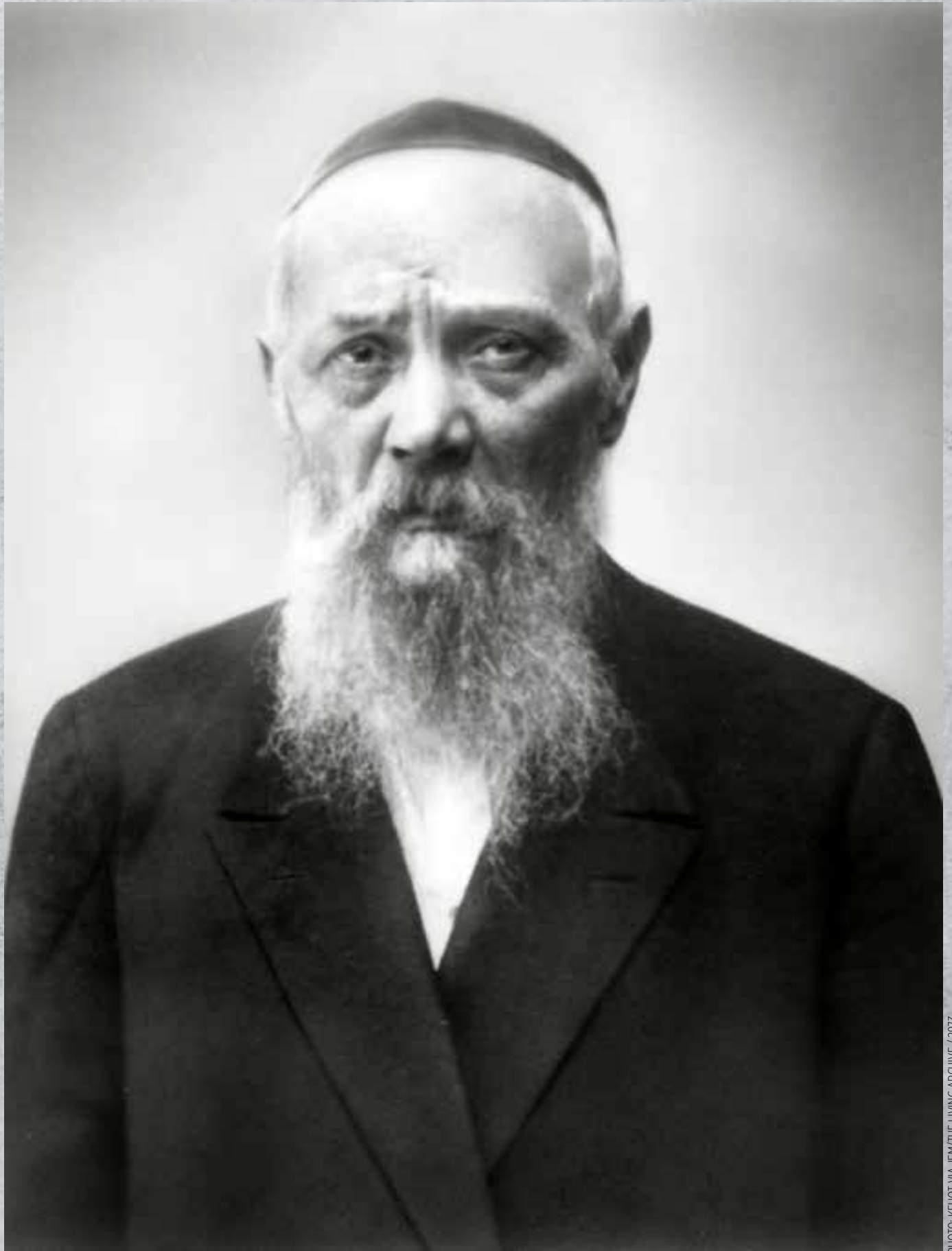


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Rabbi Leibel Raskin

PHOTO: JEM / MY ENCOUNTER



Rabbi Leibel Raskin a”h, the Rebbe’s shliach to Morocco, was 11 years old when his family came to Alma Ata, and they merited to be with the Rebbe’s father.

Bringing HoRav Levi Yitzchak

In the year 5704 we found out that HoRav Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, the rav of Yekatrinoslav, had been exiled to Chi’ili, Kazakhstan, and his five year sentence was set to finish in the coming February or March.

The law in Russia at the time stipulated that someone who was sentenced to five years of exile must serve an additional five years after he completes his initial term. That being the case, it was essential to arrange that HoRav Levi Yitzchak’s sentence be terminated before the culmination of the five year sentence, so that he should not be subject to that law, and be able to leave his place of exile in the near future.

The vast majority of Chassidim were living at the time in Samarkand [after fleeing the advance of the Nazi armies in the west]. There were just a few families—including ours—that were located in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, which was relatively close to Chi’ili. (My father told me that he later understood that the reason, *b’hashgacha pratit*, that we were located in Alma Ata—instead of in Samarkand with the rest of the

Chassidim—was in order to come to HoRav Levi Yitzchak’s aid.)

Alma Ata was a very large city; at the time, it had over a million residents. When we would walk down the street, we would see almost only women; all of the men had been drafted to the war effort. My brothers were all old enough to be in the army, and my father was eligible as well. It was with the Frierdiker Rebbe’s *bracha* that they managed to evade the draft.

With us in Alma Ata were two brothers, Hirshel and Mendel Rabinovitch. Mendel had previously served in the military, where he had sustained injuries. He still wore his military uniform—which enabled him to do many things that regular civilians were not capable of—and he and his brother were both immensely dedicated to HoRav Levi Yitzchak.

It was Mendel who organized the entire scheme to save HoRav Levi Yitzchak. He traveled to Chi’ili over Pesach that year, and while there he arranged that HoRav Levi Yitzchak should be freed immediately after Yom Tov.

On *Isru Chag*, the day after Yom Tov, they traveled together through Zumarda

and arrived in Alma Ata. Our family, along with other families of anash, came to the train station to meet HoRav Levi Yitzchak and Rebbetzin Chana. We children were told that this was the Tzemach Tzedek’s grandchild, and the Rebbe’s *mechutan*. [As youngsters, we all knew about the [Frierdiker] Rebbe; we often wished “*L’chaim, der Rebbe zol zein gezunt.*”]

After their arrival, an apartment was rented for them. Hirshel Rabinovitch was the one who helped HoRav Levi Yitzchak the most, but the rest of Anash were involved as well. Our family, my sisters and my brothers, were very close with him in particular.

The Message of Matan Torah

At the time, HoRav Levi Yitzchak would often sit and speak for hours long, sometimes taking a person’s name and explaining its inner meaning with *gematrios*, etc. But as I was a young child, I did not understand his words.

There was one occasion, however, that I did understand his message:

In Alma Ata we had a shul, located in a cellar, and I remember that HoRav Levi Yitzchak came to daven there on Shavuos [5704]. He recited *Akdomus*, which stood out in my memory, since in our home, we were careful to follow *minhogeit Chabad*, and we therefore never recited it. (I later learned that the Rebbe would also recite it on his own every Shavuos.)

Afterwards, HoRav Levi Yitzchak delivered a *drasha*. It was a speech that even we—young children—were able to understand. (Aside for myself, there were a few other young children in Alma Ata; one of them was Gedalia Zeideh, a grandchild of the Shpoler Zeideh.)

HoRav Levi Yitzchak spoke then about *matan Torah*. He spoke mainly to the children, saying that we need to know

HE SAID THAT EVEN OUR FRIGHT FROM THE GOVERNMENT MUST NOT HINDER OUR ACTIVITIES.

that we cannot be *nispoel* from anything around us, we need to grow in *limmud Hatorah* and fulfilling mitzvos, and not be afraid of anyone; our will must be the *Aibershter's* will. He spoke very clearly, elucidating his idea very well. Since I was a young child, I do not remember all the details, but his main message was that we have to behave in a way that even our fright from the government will not hinder our activities.

The day after Shavuos they discovered his illness; in Russian they called it *shatucheh*. To our dismay, the illness worsened from day to day. I remember that my brothers would go to his house every day to assist him to put on tefillin.

The *histalkus* was on Chof Menachem-Av; he was 66-years-old.

Immediately after his passing it was necessary to find a place for his burial. My father was the *shliach* to go to the cemetery to locate a burial plot. My father bought six plots, and he later acquired a significant amount of metal (which was quite an accomplishment during the war years) to create a barrier around the *kever*, so that there would be some sort of Ohel.

During the *levaya*, I remember my father tearing *kriah*, and announcing that those who want to touch the *aron* should first go to the mikvah.

A Night With the KGB

After HoRav Levi Yitzchak's *histalkus*, the anash families in Alma Ata 'merited' to a 'Shabbosdike guest'—every week, a KGB informant would come spend Shabbos with us.

My father was a *mohel*, and he would often secretly do *brissen* for children who were already a year or two old. A few weeks after the *histalkus*, an individual came to my father and requested that he perform a *bris* for his child, who was already two-years-old.

My father agreed, and he left our home with his *chalat* and his *milah* instruments. That night, six o'clock arrived, seven o'clock, and my father still had not returned. Ten o'clock, twelve o'clock, we began to consider going out to search for him.

Around six o'clock in the morning, my father returned. He was unrecognizable; while he had been away his hands and feet had been tied and his beard had been shorn. We only recognized him by his voice.

He told us, that as he had been getting off the tram car, he was accosted by a man exiting a vehicle who began shouting at him: "You are a thief; you have stolen from the kindergarten."

My father protested that he had nothing to do with a kindergarten, but the man ordered him to enter the vehicle and dragged him inside. He was taken to the central NKVD headquarters where he was locked in a cell.

In middle of the night, he was called to an interrogation, and they told him:

"Raskin, what have you done again? What have you brought here, again a Schneerson story?" This was already seventeen years after the Frierdiker Rebbe had left Russia.

"We thought we got rid of him, he is already in America; and here you bring



RABBI LAIBEL RASKIN (L) AND RABBI DOVID RASKIN (R) TOGETHER WITH THEIR FATHER, RABBI YAAKOV YOSEF RASKIN (C).

PHOTO: JEM / MY ENCOUNTER

another Schneerson, and again you are making 'Schneerson' issues!"

They then proceeded to relate the entire *drasha* that HoRav Levi Yitzchak had spoken on the past Shavuos, about *chinuch*, about Shabbos and about *kashrus*.

My father related that they had tortured him the entire night. Every hour they would allow him a break for a half-an-hour; he would fall asleep and then they would wake him again and try to pry the names of his acquaintances from him.

As dawn approached, someone (with a Jewish countenance) entered the room and said, "*Her zich ein*; we will let you go now, on condition that you sign that you will not disclose anything we have spoken about here. Additionally, you must become 'one of ours.' If you sign the document, we will let you go."

Two weeks after he was released, my father put a *tichel* around his face, took off his glasses, and escaped together with my sister to Moscow. The rest of my family remained in Alma Ata until Teves 5705.



Evsey Neymotin

Reb Evsey Neymotin is a retired nuclear scientist and former refusenik living in Columbus, Ohio.

His father, Reb Yosef Neymotin, was one of the activists secretly spreading Yiddishkeit in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan

THE DEALINGS WERE BEING DONE WITH THEIR FINGERS; SHE DID NOT SPEAK THE KAZAK LANGUAGE, AND HE DIDN'T SPEAK RUSSIAN

in Alma Ata, they didn't have a rav, so my father made arrangements that certain individuals should go to Chi'ili, and bring HoRav Levi Yitzchak and Rebbetzin Chana back with them. This was no easy task, since he had been exiled there, and he was forbidden to leave the square kilometer of his location. If he were to leave, he would immediately be arrested and sent to prison. Additionally, this was Russia in a time of war, where one could not move from one place to another without official permission.

Before obtaining the permits however, they had to find out where HoRav Levi Yitzchak was living. They calculated that if Rebbetzin Chana was living there, they should be able to locate her at the marketplace on Friday, as she would be buying food items for Shabbos. They went to the Chi'ili bazaar, as it was called, an indeed, they met an obviously Jewish woman negotiating with a Kazakh merchant over some goods. The dealings were being done with their fingers, as she did not speak the Kazakh language, and he didn't speak Russian.

They immediately approached her, and they confirmed that yes, this was Rebbetzin Chana.

Now that they found HoRav Levi Yitzchak, my father arranged that the location of his exile be switched from Chi'ili to Alma Ata. As I said before, this was no small feat, but my father was an outgoing man, and he was friendly

permission to leave.

He made the distant journey deep into the depths of Russia, and he miraculously managed to find my mother somewhere in Kazakhstan. Together they traveled to Alma Ata, which was not far from their location and was considered safe from the onslaught of the war. Additionally, Alma Ata was home to a considerable group of anash families.

While living in Alma Ata, the Chassidim heard that there was a rav, HoRav Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, living in Chi'ili, where he was exiled after he was arrested and tortured in 1939 for spreading Yiddishkeit and teaching Torah to Jewish children.

Chi'ili is a suburb of Alma Ata, but it does not compare at all. It is a terrible place to live. It is a purely a Kazakh place, where only Kazakhs live. They did not speak Russian, so the Rebbe's parents came into an environment where they could not communicate, and it was a terrible life.

Food for Shabbos

While there were many Chassidim living

Life in Alma Ata

My parents lived in Leningrad in the 1930s, where being an observant Jew was very difficult; there was a six day work week, and everyone was required to work on Shabbos. My parents tried various tricks to be able to get off of work, but they didn't manage to earn money that way, so they had practically nothing to eat.

At the time, my mother had a brother living in Crimea, where there was a Jewish settlement for agricultural work. This was a new accomplishment of the Soviet Union; they were trying to encourage Jews to work the land, and in that region food was easier to come by. Since they did not have anything to eat in Leningrad, my uncle brought my mother to his settlement in Crimea, while my father stayed in Leningrad.

Sometime later, the Germans attacked Leningrad, and my father, along with other individuals, searched for ways to escape, which was practically impossible at the time. Somehow, he was able to bribe a police officer, and he obtained

with many police officers. I remember these parties in our house, where all the Russians and Jews would be drinking together and befriending each other, kissing each other, as if we are all friends. It was all a lie, there was no friendship; it was simply a show. But with these connections, and with the aid of a bottle of vodka, my father was able to arrange that HoRav Levi Yitzchak's place of exile be moved to Alma Ata.

An Everlasting Merit

Now that they were coming to Alma Ata—which is a very good thing—what are they going to eat? They need food; for food you need money, and it was a very poor neighborhood.

Therefore, every week—usually on Friday—my father would go around to all of the Chassidim living in the area and collect money, which he would then give to HoRav Levi Yitzchak. He did so even after the *histalkus* of HoRav Levi Yitzchak, until Rebbetzin Chana left Alma Ata.

HoRav Levi Yitzchak became the de-facto rav of the community, and he did everything a rav usually does. Once, while describing the characteristics of the various people in Alma Ata—this person is strong in Torah, this person is strong in this, etc.—and about my father he said, “Yoskeh is a *chassidische bayndeleh*.” My father was very happy with this description. He wasn't expected to become a big Torah scholar or anything, and he was fine with his capabilities.

On a different occasion, my mother was privileged to receive a *bracha* from HoRav Levi Yitzchak.

The Histalkus

At some point, HoRav Levi Yitzchak asked my father to get a certain medicine from the pharmacy. While he was there,

my father asked the doctor why HoRav Levi Yitzchak looked so pale. The doctor answered, “Do you want me to tell the truth? I really can't tell you.” That was because HoRav Levi Yitzchak had become terminally ill.

Once, my father entered their house, and he saw that Rebbetzin Chana had a very serious look on her face, and HoRav Levi Yitzchak was crying. Rebbetzin Chana asked him, “Why are you crying?” he answered, “Who am I leaving you with? I'm crying about leaving you alone.” This was the last time my father saw HoRav Levi Yitzchak before he passed away.

In the years after the *histalkus*, my father would tend to the grave of HoRav Levi Yitzchak. He would clean it and repaint the letters when they faded, and he arranged for others to take care of it when he was unable to.

At one point, the *matzeivah* needed to be completely repainted, and my father, along with Hillel Liberov, did not know if they were permitted to touch the *matzeivah*. In the end, they hired a Russian to do the job, which he did very well. Later they sent a picture of the

renewed *matzeivah* to the Rebbe, and he approved of it.

Over the years, my father arranged that a mikvah be built. We had a one-and-a-half story home, and in the basement of the house, my father, with the help of people from Tashkent, built the mikvah. It was the only mikvah in all of the three Soviet Republics.

People from all over that would come to *daven* at HoRav Levi Yitzchak's *tziyun*, would come to *toivel* in our house beforehand. Additionally, women who needed a mikvah would travel to our house as well.

I remember my father working very hard to heat the mikvah. The insulation of the basement was not good, but he always put in a lot of effort to heat it, especially when women would come to use the mikvah.

The existence of this mikvah, in fact, was the reason the Rebbe did not allow us to leave the Soviet Union for a very long time. He felt that if we left, the mikvah would be destroyed and women would have nowhere to go.



THE TZIYON OF HORAV LEVI YITZCHAK IN ALMA - ATA, KAZAKHSTAN



Moshe Brandler

Reb Moshe Brandler was a young child when his family arrived in a city near Alma Ata.

At eleven-years-old, he had the merit to be with HoRav Levi Yitzchak, and to assist him periodically. Although they were not a family of Chassidim, his family, along with many others, gravitated towards HoRav Levi Yitzchak, being that he was the bastion of Yiddishkeit in that remote region.

HIS COUNTENANCE WAS SO STRIKING, ALL OF THE NON-JEWS, THE KAZAKS, WOULD BOW THEIR HEADS IN DEFERENCE UPON SEEING HIM

in deference upon seeing him. Other Yidden who lived in Alma Ata, even the non-religious, who initially did not want to speak to him, began to be drawn to him. After beholding his appearance, and hearing him talk to others, they also began to come and ask his advice, and to appreciate his warmth and depth of understanding.

Years later, when I told the Rebbe that I had the merit to be together with his father, he blessed us that the *zechus zol aich beishtein*. At the time, my wife had become pregnant at an older age, and all of the doctors warned us that she will miscarry. I told my wife that if the Rebbe said that we have the merit, then everything will surely be alright. Sure enough, with Hashem's help, a healthy baby girl was born, after many years of waiting for a daughter.

Mincha With the Rebbe's Father

When HoRav Levi Yitzchak lived in Alma Ata, he was generally too weak to walk to shul, and he would have a daily *minyan* in his home.

I lived then in a suburb of Alma Ata called Ili, which was a two or three hour train ride from the city, together with a Lubavitcher Chassid by the name of Leizer Leningrader and his son, who was a skin doctor and went by the name Shkovlanov. They would often travel to the city to see HoRav Levi Yitzchak, and I would sometimes join them.

While there, we would join his *minyan* for *mincha*. When there were not enough people, we would go ask others to join, and we had a set list of who we knew we could ask and who we could not. Between *mincha* and *maariv* HoRav Levi Yitzchak would give a *shiur* in *Mishnayos*. On one occasion, he performed a wedding while I was there, and I merited holding one of the poles of the *chupah*.

In general, his style of speech was very serious. Whenever he spoke, it was always regarding Chassidus or the *parshas hashavua*; one would never hear him taking part in a regular conversation. His countenance was very serious, and he would dress just as he did in Yekatrinoslav, with a black *sirtuk*, etc. This was very uncommon at the time, and I do not know how he managed to obtain such clothing.

His countenance and appearance were so striking, that when he would walk down the street, all the non-Jews—the Kazaks—would bow their heads

WHEN HE WAS IN EXILE, HORAV LEVI YITZCHAK HAD NO ACCESS TO INK AND PAPER WITH WHICH TO WRITE HIS TORAH, SO REBBETZIN CHANA HAND-PRODUCED INK FROM VARIOUS PLANTS, AND HORAV LEVI YITZCHAK WROTE HIS TORAH ON THE MARGINS OF SEFORIM. AS THE INK WAS HAND-MADE FROM THE PLANTS AVAILABLE, THE HA'AROS ARE WRITTEN IN MANY DIFFERENT COLORS.





Reb Gedalia Mazal was a child living in Alma Ata during the period of HoRav Levi Yitzchak's exile there.

His father, Reb Yisrael Avraham, was a Chossid who lived in the city who had the merit to have a close relationship with HoRav Levi Yitzchak. Young Gedalia therefore merited to see and hear, and retain memories of, much of what was going on in HoRav Levi Yitzchak's surroundings.

Golus Mitzrayim

During the time that we lived in Alma Ata, my father had a close friend by the name of Hirshel Rabinovitch, with whom he would often converse with regarding his *parnassah* among other subjects. One day, I think it was towards the summer, Hirshel told my father that they are trying to arrange for HoRav Levi Yitzchak to be able to leave Chi'ili and move to Alma Ata. Indeed, within a short period of time—yet with an immense amount of effort—HoRav Levi Yitzchak and Rebbetzin Chana arrived in our city.

My younger sister often reminisces about the impression HoRav Levi Yitzchak made upon her and her young friends when he arrived in the city. He had a very unusual appearance, even in comparison with other *rabbonim* which we knew.

It was a time of terrible oppression. HoRav Levi Yitzchak once commented that S.S.S.R. (in Hebrew) is *b'gematria mitzrayim*, and while the Yidden were

in *mitzrayim*, they did not change their names, language, or dress. This was already three or four years into the war, and people had lost everything, including their most prized possessions. My father for example, no longer had his equipment that he used in his profession as a photographer (a line of work in which he was able to work independently, and was therefore able to keep Shabbos). People were under terrible pressure, and no one dressed properly or allowed themselves to buy new belongings.

Within all of this chaos, a Jew suddenly appears, dressed in a dignified manner, with black rabbinic garb and a hat. All this, in addition to his saintly countenance, caused heads to turn in his direction. We constantly saw how, when walking in the street, non-Jews would remove their hats and bow their heads in deference to HoRav Levi Yitzchak.

I remember the first time he came to our shul—which was a simple room, half sunken into the ground. In those days, people did not converse much; when we

would come to shul, we would simply *daven*, and do nothing more. That day was no different. However, when the davening was over and HoRav Levi Yitzchak began to speak, we understood that this was something different, something special. We felt that this wasn't just an external dignity, but a truly *pnimiusdiker* nobility and holiness.

Akdumus

One story that stands out in my mind happened on Shavuos that year:

Our *minyán* in the makeshift shul was made up of Yidden from all backgrounds, each with his own unique set of *minhagim*. On Shavuos, a discussion began as to whether to recite *Akdumus* or not. My father, being an *ohev Yisrael* par excellence, proposed that instead of arguing back and forth we simply put the question to HoRav Levi Yitzchak, and do as he will direct us.

My father went over to HoRav Levi Yitzchak, who told him (I couldn't hear it at the time, but so it seems) that we should recite it. [Years later I found out that the Rebbe would say *Akdumus* quietly, to himself every year.]

When everyone heard what HoRav Levi Yitzchak had said, a small commotion erupted. One of those present, a chassidisher Yid named Tzalke, who would review a *maamar* at *shalosh seudos* every week, went over to HoRav Levi Yitzchak and told him that in Lubavitch, by the Rebbe, the custom is not to recite *Akdumus*.

The room fell silent; it was possible to hear a pin drop, and we all heard HoRav Levi Yitzchak's reply. He asked Tzalke, "Tell me, do you remember what was done by the Rebbe on the night of Shavuos?"

"Do you know why *Akdumus* was not recited by the Rebbe? It was because we

TODAY, HORAV LEVI YITZCHAK SAID, WE HAVE TWO SUCH STICKS: ONE BELONGING TO HITLER, AND ONE BELONGING TO STALIN.

had to hear the *maamar*, then review the *maamar*, go to mikvah, say the entire Tehillim, recite Tikkun, and review the *maamar* once again. So what time was left for anything else?

“And what have you done this past night? Did you review a *maamar* twice? Perhaps even once? Did you go to the mikvah? Were you awake the entire night reciting Tehillim and Tikkun?”

Needless to say, everyone became quiet and recited *Akdomus*.

Our Enemies

After HoRav Levi Yitzchak settled in Alma Ata and recovered a bit of his strength, he began to leave his home from time to time. I remember once that he came to a *simcha* of one of the Chassidim; Hirshel Rabinovitch’s brother. In fact, it was this brother that was entirely dedicated to HoRav Levi Yitzchak and did his utmost to assist him in every way that he possibly could.

Present at the *simcha* were about ten or fifteen people, which was a considerable crowd in those days. We realized that HoRav Levi Yitzchak had not been broken or affected by all that he had endured in Yekatrinoslav and Chi’li, but we still hoped that he would not express all of his thoughts in such a public setting. This was especially relevant on this occasion, for present there was a Jew who wasn’t very intelligent, and was known to tell over everything he saw to his family. This individual had a son that seemed to have ties with the authorities, and over time we began to realize that whatever occurred in the father’s presence would later be mentioned during interrogations that would take place in the following months. My father himself experienced the effect of this informer.

However, our hopes were for naught.

That week was *parshas Matos Mas’ei*. In his talk, HoRav Levi Yitzchak said that throughout Jewish history there have been many different *matos*—sticks; there was the staff of Moshe Rabeinu, and then there are sticks which are used to break *Yiddishe beiner*—Jewish bones. Today, HoRav Levi Yitzchak said, we have two such sticks: the one belonging to Hitler, and the one belonging to Stalin.

Everyone present began immediately looking around the room, taking into account who was present at the talk and

who wasn’t. But HoRav Levi Yitzchak continued:

Everyone thinks that Hitler and Stalin are two opposites, since they are fighting each other, but in essence they are one and the same: their goal is to get rid of the Yidden. A proof for this is in the *gematria* of their names; both Hitler and Stalin have the same *mispar katan*².

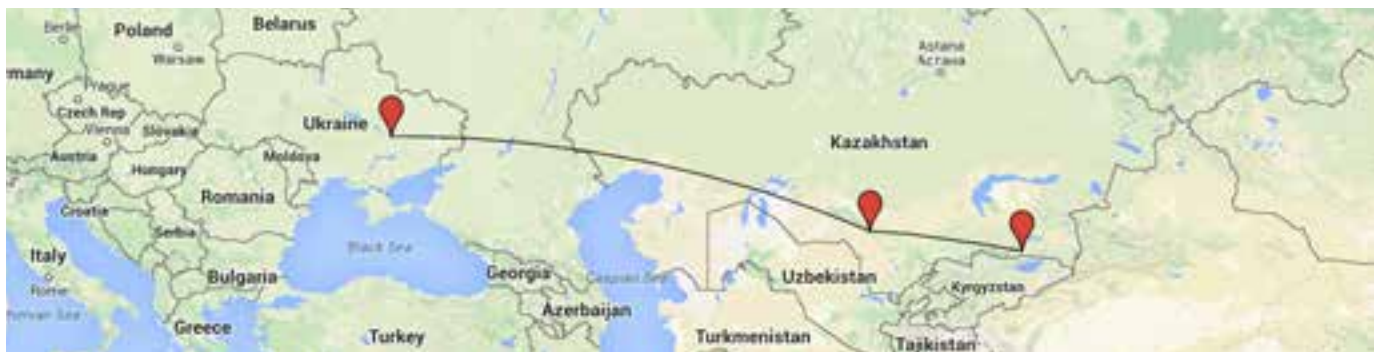
HoRav Levi Yitzchak spoke much more on that occasion, however due to my young age at the time, I do not remember most of it.

While he was not arrested after that talk, my father—and I’m sure others as well—spoke to HoRav Levi Yitzchak, asking him to remember where he came from, and what could lie in store for him.

[After the *histalkus*, I witnessed a few occasions where ‘they’ came to ‘speak’ to my father. Being that he was not a Lubavitcher Chassid and he had been very close to HoRav Levi Yitzchak, the KGB tried to pry out of him details of the activities within the Chassidic community in Alma Ata, as well as details regarding HoRav Levi Yitzchak. My father ultimately had to flee, and was not even present at my bar mitzvah].

Sheineh Elteren

A few weeks later, on Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai, everyone was walking together to some specific location, and my father and I were walking together



HORAV LEVI YITZCHAK WAS EXILED FROM HIS HOMETOWN IN YEKATRINOSLAV TO CHI’ILE, AND LATER TRAVELED TO ALMA ATA - A DISTANCE OF OVER 2,000 MILES.

with HoRav Levi Yitzchak. HoRav Levi Yitzchak spoke to my father about the *parshas hashavua*. Why is it, he asked, that the *tochecha*, the rebuke to the Yidden in our *parshah*, seems to finish by the verse “*Vezacharti es brissi*—and I will remember the covenant with Yaakov, etc.,” but then suddenly continues for a few more verses, “*Uvaah haaretz*, etc.” Why is it that in middle of the *tochecha* our forefathers are suddenly mentioned?

My father began to think about the question, but HoRav Levi Yitzchak continued:

“I will tell you, Reb Yisrael Avraham. Those who have *sheineh elteren*, those who have good forefathers, forefathers like Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, *zey shmeist men merer*, they get whipped more; they get a *tosefes*, an additional portion.

“I am telling this to you, Reb Yisrael, for you are a grandson of Reb Zushe. But as I tell it to you, I am thinking about myself as well.”

The Merit Will Stand By You

My father was present on the night of the *histalkus* of HoRav Levi Yitzchak; he was right beside him during those last hours and minutes. He later told me that he realized that HoRav Levi Yitzchak was whispering something the entire time. He did not raise

his voice, and it seemed that he was not talking to the people around him, but rather upwards, to an entirely different ‘address.’

At some point he stopped whispering, and he asked my father to bring him *negel vasser*. Then he said—my father told this to me numerous times—the following words:

“*M'darf zich greiten iberchappen oif yenne zeit*—we must prepare to go over to the other side.”

When we—the young children—were woken up early the next morning, we were shocked to hear that HoRav Levi Yitzchak had passed overnight. We were told that our help was needed. The burial had to take place that very day, and being that there were no telephones, the Yidden of the city all needed to be notified.

I was all but eleven-years-old at the time; my sister went around to tell all of the Jews living in the immediate area, while I traveled to the city with the tram. I went around to the shuls and to the houses of Yidden that I was acquainted with. The message I relayed was, “My father asked me to tell you that HoRav Levi Yitzchak was *nistalek*.”

Due to the situation at the time—the exile, and the war—every person was wary of his friends and neighbors, and even his own relatives, so no one expected such a huge turnout. Yet people turned up from all ends of the city, and even beyond. The *levaya* took place with the coffin being carried on shoulders all the way to the cemetery. I remember that those who did not go to mikvah that day were not allowed to touch the coffin.

Every year when Chof Av comes around, I am pained by the fact that I did not have the understanding and the *regesh* to retain more of the memories of my encounters with HoRav Levi Yitzchak. **D**

1. The Rebbe's letter to Reb Hirshel Rabinovitch, 17 Menachem-Av, 5721; Toldos Levi Yitzchok vol. 2 p. 644

2. A *mispar katan* is a form of *gematria* in which the total sum is added up against each other. The calculation of HoRav Levi Yitzchak seems to be according to the Russian pronunciation of Hitler and Stalin (as Rabbi Mazal pronounced them during his interview), as they are spelled in Yiddish:

7 = 322 = גיטלער

7 = 160 = סטאלין

THE PIYUT OF “AKDOMUS” RECITED IN MANY COMMUNITIES BEFORE KRIAS HATORAH ON SHAVUOS.

THOSE WHO HAVE FOREFATHERS LIKE AVRAHAM, YITZCHAK AND YAAKOV, ‘ZEY SHMEIST MEN MERER’

