

Moshe Kraus

THE LIFE OF

Moshele Der Zinger

How Singing Saved My Life

The Toby Press

*The Life of Moshele Der Zinger:
How Singing Saved My Life*

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The Toby Press

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Foreword

I first met Cantor Moshe Kraus over twenty years ago, when we were both members of the Holocaust Remembrance Committee in Ottawa. I was charmed and fascinated by the diminutive man with snowy white hair, old-school manners, and regal bearing.

Little did I know that Cantor Kraus and his lovely wife Rivka would become such an important part of my life. To this day, he is the only person in the world who calls me Brachele, the Yiddish version of my Hebrew name, Bracha.

I knew that Cantor Kraus was highly respected in Ottawa. But it was not until I had the privilege of traveling to Germany with him in 2005 that I truly realized how many lives he has touched around the world.

We were there to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. At every event – even walking to synagogue in Hanover – people came up to Cantor Kraus to introduce themselves, shake his hand, and remind him of something he had taught them or done for them.

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Many Bergen-Belsen survivors remembered him as “Moshele der Zinger,” whose beautiful tenor voice and trove of Yiddish and sacred music had kept their hopes alive – and in many cases restored their faith – during the living nightmare of the Holocaust.

But the true highlight of this trip with “Moshe Kraus, Superstar,” as I teasingly called him, was the memorial ceremony among the mass graves at Bergen-Belsen. When Cantor Kraus sang the *El Maalei Raḥamim*, the Jewish prayer for the souls of the departed, I felt as if his voice had captured the collective anguish of those who had been murdered by the Nazis.

He was remembering them, yes, but he was also speaking to the Eternal on behalf of those who had no one to speak for them.

I have been fortunate enough to hear some of the stories in this book firsthand, told in his inimitable style – sometimes with tears in his eyes, sometimes with his trademark twinkle. But to read so many of these stories and anecdotes in one book, along with details of his life and the rich tales his father told him, is a real gift.

And I love the fact that the reader doesn’t need to know anything about Judaism or the traditions of hasidic Jews to appreciate the book. Cantor Kraus, a lifelong teacher, has made sure that we have the background and context to understand his stories and his principles.

This book includes a photo of Cantor Kraus with the late Elie Wiesel. When the renowned writer, Holocaust survivor, and human rights activist came to speak in Ottawa in 2005, he made time in his whirlwind schedule to have tea with the Krauses.

As we sat on the Krauses’ balcony on a balmy September afternoon, it was clear that Prof. Wiesel still looked up to his *rebbe*, the man who had been his cantor, teacher, and mentor in the Transylvanian city of Sighet (now part of Romania).

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They sang snippets of the old songs, and the years melted away as they reveled in each other's company and anecdotes. It was a gift to bear witness to this touching reunion.

This book beautifully captures the life of the *ḥazan*, teacher, sage, and storyteller the world knows as Cantor Moshe Kraus. And as I read it, I hear the voice and feel the laughter and tears of my dear friend, Moshele.

*Barbara Crook
Ottawa
January 2023*



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Many other people deserve special recognition:

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Mr. Mitchell Rose, who put my spoken words into written form;

Mrs. Lynne Cohen, whose assistance was invaluable as I was attempting to bring my story to life in a straightforward and engaging manner;

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Three people became involved in the last stages of production: Frank H. Scheme, a good friend and a brilliant professional photographer, who provided the beautiful picture on the cover

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of this book; and Genevieve Hone, a friend who happened by, read the manuscript, and was greatly moved by it. She worked diligently to prepare the manuscript for publication. Thank you to publisher Matthew Miller of The Toby Press for bringing this book to completion, as well as to Reuven Ziegler, Caryn Meltz, Aryeh Grossman, Tomi Mager, Tani Bayer, Leah Goldstein, and Rachel Miskin.

Many other people have contributed in the thoughtful ways of friendship, each in their own manner. Thank you all for your encouragement and help.

Introduction

These days, I enjoy sitting by the large living room window in our comfortable Sandy Hill apartment in Ottawa, staring out over the rushing Rideau River. I have come to appreciate, and maybe even identify, with this meandering river, which is right in back of my building, across a partially landscaped yard, and down a small embankment. The Rideau, which I've learned is about one hundred kilometers long, looks like it should flow in the opposite direction. But it travels north, bubbling and splashing, to finally empty into the mighty Ottawa River not too far from where I live.

As I gaze, I also reflect. I spent a lifetime singing, and I loved almost every minute of it. As a child prodigy, singing came easily to me. My talent gave me an exhilarating career as a *hazan*, or cantor, and it took me all over the world. It was a fulfilling profession that I still cannot quite believe is over.

Since I am 100 years old, I am probably living in the last home I will know, but I am happy. My beautiful wife Rivka and I – married 71 years – have resided in this building for over forty

peaceful years. Our apartment is small enough that Rivka can still do the housework, which she does so attentively each week. Every Thursday, the apartment is immaculately cleaned in preparation for Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath. And it sparkles, like her eyes.

I am grateful. Sometimes I wonder which comes first, the blessings or the gratitude. Of all the lessons life has taught me, a very big one is that the more thankful I am for the good and positive experiences God has given me, the more of them He continues to give me. Is He proud of me? Does He expect more gratitude from me even at my old age? I often wonder about these things as I watch the river flow.

My thoughts wander so much these days. Maybe it is time to organize them and write them down. I speak six languages: Yiddish, Hebrew, Hungarian, Czech, German, and, of course, English. I taught myself English from scratch. I have never had a lesson. It is the last language I learned, and it is still sometimes a bit challenging. But for some strange reason, I now actually think in English when I think of my past. Why? Maybe because when I talk to people these days about my history, I speak their language, English.

Different episodes of my life will sometimes fly into my mind too quickly. I hope to get all the important information written out properly. I will have to be patient and let the thoughts come clearly and wistfully. I survived great pain and horror in my youthful years. I was in Bor, a labor camp in Yugoslavia, and in Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp in Germany, for nine and eleven months respectively between 1943 and 1945. I almost died more than once during that time. By the grace of *HaKadosh Barukh Hu*, the Almighty God, and thanks to the strong British army, I was liberated instead. I am still bursting with gratitude for my freedom after so much terror.

Bergen-Belsen is long over I know, but, especially since I retired a few years ago, the experiences somehow manage to rise up in my mind and grip my soul when I am least prepared. It seems

to happen most often when I am alone in our home, when Rivka goes shopping or to the apartment swimming pool. She comes home and finds me sitting on the couch or by the window watching the river, and crying. I can't seem to numb completely those horrendous feelings from the Holocaust. I just can't believe it still hurts after all these years. There is no answer as to why. If somebody gives you an answer, tell him he's a liar. There is no answer.

I am no stranger to crying. Though I have always been a stable person, and though I am almost always happy and contented, since World War II, crying has come easily to me on sad occasions, and even on very joyous ones. In fact, I cry easily during exceptionally moving situations, including deeply spiritual moments. I can't help it. Shedding tears is one way I express myself. I have even been referred to as the crying *hazan*.

Since my time in Bergen-Belsen, I have a very hard time remembering exactly when certain events took place. Sometimes, for instance, I cannot remember when I was in Mexico City, yet I lived there for part of the 1970s. When I think quickly about an experience in Mexico, I wonder if it took place three years ago or three months ago. The very best psychiatrist in South Africa tried to help me. He couldn't. He told me to live with it. That is what I have done.

Fortunately, there has been much laughter in my life, too. I am pleased that I cultivated a cheerful personality, which has manifested itself most of the time. For my cheeriness, God has rewarded me with much peace of mind. Thankfully, this positive attitude also helped me to share some sparks of happiness and joyful songs, even in the darkest places.

It is difficult sometimes to believe that my life has been so long already. Watching the endless flow of water reminds me of the steady harmony we, my dear Rivka and I, have enjoyed; that quiet calm and serenity we have achieved for ourselves for the greater part of our lives. When I stare at the Rideau, at its fresh

white-capped rapids continuously moving, sometimes I am carried back to times I thought I had forgotten forever. But I can't forget. I must try hard not to forget.

I was a professional *hazan* for more than seventy years. Can you imagine that? During those years, I sang at religious services, concerts, and *smahot*, the last being happy Jewish celebrations such as marriages and bar mitzvas. Fortunately, I was also able to bring comfort to many, many crying souls, at funerals, *shivas* – those weeklong mourning periods after cemetery burials of close Jewish relatives – and even in the Nazi labor and concentration camps. After the war, it continued to be important for me to try hard to ease the pain of people who were hurting, particularly those in mourning. I remember exactly the moment I decided to never take financial advantage of the bereaved. I made this important decision when I was younger than thirteen, maybe only eleven.

As a child singing sensation, maybe 75 percent of my time was given to travel for *Shabbatot* (the plural for Shabbat) in different towns throughout Eastern Europe in order to sing for congregations during religious services. Arriving early one week, on a Thursday afternoon, I was at the home of the community's cantor, when he came running into the kitchen and bellowed to his wife, "You can go now to the market and buy a duck! I had a fat funeral today." I remember listening with all the attention a young boy can muster. For some strange reason, I recall what I was eating at that moment: a flaky *borekas* with tea. Why do I remember that? I have no idea. Maybe because I compared it to duck, the most luxurious dinner item a person could buy at that time. "A fat funeral," I thought. I had never heard this expression, but I was no fool, and I understood what he meant. My host meant that he had been generously compensated at the funeral where he had just sung.

In truth, I was mortified. I asked myself privately, so no one could hear, "Am I supposed to make my living from people's fat funerals? Not a chance." I made a *neder*, a promise, an oath, that

when I became an adult *hazan*, I would never, ever, take money for funerals. I never did, not a penny, not for funerals or even *shivas*. I would get checks in the mail from people who did not know this policy of mine, and I would send the checks back with a letter: “As much as I appreciate your kind gesture, I am returning your gift in the hope that you will receive it in the spirit in which it is meant. I do not accept gifts from people in their times of sorrow. I hope to meet you at *smahot*.”

In my long career, I never met another *hazan* who did this. In fact, the other cantors and rabbis who heard about my policy did not like it at all, because it cast them in a dim light. While I am on the subject of career-long self-commitments, let me mention here that I sang as a *hazan* every single Shabbat, every single weekend, when I had a contract. It is not uncommon for *hazanim* (the plural of *hazan*) to take off the Shabbat the week before each of the six major *yom tovim* (religious holidays), to rest their vocal cords and maybe practice a little. I never did this in my life. I believed if my job was to *daven* (pray) and sing for Shabbat and the *yom tovim*, then that meant all of them. My singing voice never suffered from this commitment.

Okay, it is decided. I am going to record my life in a book, this book. I want people to know what I went through and suffered, and then to see that I overcame the dreadful devastations of the Nazis and managed to live a full and wonderful life. The Nazis murdered almost my entire family: my two parents, five of my eight siblings, about twenty of my uncles and aunts, and almost one hundred cousins – cousins who never had a chance to know the joy of adulthood and marriage. I hope my experiences will help people understand that suffering does not have to exclude the possibility of a good and positive survival, a rich and happy life. I want people to know that I came to have a blessed and wonderful life, despite the past.

Now I would like to give the first of a few history lessons. It is important, before I begin relating my personal journey, to write a bit about Hasidism. The hasidic movement – into which I am proud to have been born – is often referred to as ultra-Orthodox Judaism. To me it is just Judaism, but that is neither here nor there. Hasidism started in the 1700s in Eastern Europe, when poor, uneducated, young Jews were drifting away from Judaism at a rapid pace. It is not hard to understand why they did that. Judaism is very wonderful in every way, but it is also a complicated and intellectual religion, requiring a focused and curious mind. Judaism is, in fact, a system of law not totally unlike British Common Law, though one major difference is that Jewish law dates back a few thousand years further than the eight hundred-year-old English Magna Carta.

The destruction of the Second *Beit HaMikdash* (Holy Temple) – which took place in Jerusalem in 70 CE – has meant that for two thousand years, a good portion of Jewish learning has not been practiced or conspicuously relevant. But that does not mean that Jews do not learn it intensely, like all serious law students. Jewish learning has the added beneficial effect of continually refining an individual's character in every kind of positive way. All Orthodox Jews, including hasidic Jews, believe that when *Moshiah*, the Messiah, comes to save humankind, the Temple will be rebuilt and all Jewish law will be practiced again. The main point here is that Jewish law requires a very engaged mind to study and follow it. These uninformed young individuals who were fleeing from Judaism didn't even understand what was being said at the *tisch* (lit. "table," joyous and public celebrations around the rabbi's table). The unschooled youth hardly knew what was going on in the synagogues.

The first Hasid ever, the great Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov, explained to many of these untaught men that performing any mitzva – any commandment from God – is

as important as the most imperative mitzva of learning Torah. For example, he taught that the mitzvot (the plural of mitzva) of lighting Shabbat candles and eating kosher food were significant individually and on their own. This concept brought many poor, illiterate Jews running back to their religion. That soon led them to study Torah and for many of them to become *talmidei hakhamim*, Jewish scholars. Before long, the hasidic *talmidei hakhamim* equaled no less in number than the *mitnagdim hakhamim*, the non-hasidic Jewish scholars.

The number of hasidic Jews in the world today is hard to estimate, but it is surely more than half a million, which is many, many fewer than the number of Hasidism – maybe 2.5 million – wiped out by the Nazis in their genocidal madness. Each hasidic Jew belongs to a specific hasidic group, or sect, with its own special name, for example, Lubavitcher. There are so many groups: Bubov, Belz, Ger, Satmar, and Bostoner Hasidism, to name but a few of the hundreds still surviving. I grew up a member of Munkatcher Hasidim. Most groups derive their title from the Eastern European city in which they started. It goes without saying that the vast majority of members within each hasidic group at one time lived in the same community, though today in many cases there is more than one community for a particular group.

The present-day number of hasidic sects remains high, perhaps as high as four hundred, despite the fact that hundreds of individual sects were totally annihilated by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Most are now headquartered in Israel or the United States, though they still retain the name of the Eastern European towns from which they originated. A unique characteristic of each hasidic group is that it virtually always has a leader for life: a *rebbe*, who is like a sovereign to his followers. When that *rebbe* dies, he is succeeded by another *rebbe*, usually a blood relative, but not always. The oldest of these hasidic dynasties reaches back to the 1750s.

As an example, the current Munkatcher Rebbe, Rabbi Moshe Leib Rabinovich, is the seventh *rebbe* since the dynasty started in the town of Munkacs, Hungary, in the early 1800s. His father preceded him as *rebbe*, and his father's predecessor was his father-in-law, who himself was preceded by his own father. The largest Munkatcher community is in Borough Park, Brooklyn, where Rabbi Rabinovich himself lives. But there are other major Munkatcher communities in and around other areas of New York, such as in Williamsburg and Monsey. There are also Munkatcher communities in Israel and Australia.

A word about titles. In the book you will see *rav*, *rabbi*, *rebbe*, *reb* and *tzaddik*. They are not exactly interchangeable, but they all refer to the great leaders and teachers of the Jewish faith.

Another thing to know about Hasidism is that they love to tell stories; they always have, and no doubt always will. It is a major part of hasidic culture. Hasidic tales comprise a collection of stories, many told since the beginning of Hasidim. It is true that the people who tell them and create new ones are at various levels of religious observance, but everyone who does relate them is motivated and inspired by the hasidic tradition of transmitting our values and moral philosophy through stories. Hasidic tales were made for and are passed on as part of the concept of *Raah maaseh yizkor halakha shiru laHashem ki gamal alai*. This roughly means, "Seeing is believing, and I will sing praises to the Lord that He has protected and saved me." My *melamed* (teacher) in *heder* (primary school) explained that *gamal* here means "protects like an umbrella."

Why am I telling you all this? To explain why this book has many hasidic tales, and why I have frequently told them. Every part of my life has been influenced by *hazanut*, Jewish songs, but also by hasidic culture and stories. My father was a great storyteller, like my *zaide* – my grandfather – and also like my *zaide's* father. This goes even farther back. Thus, I am a storyteller. A great one? I am not sure "great" describes me in this line of work. But I have

been told by many that I am certainly not bad at it, though being a *hazan* has always been my career and my central focus.

Let me tell a quick story about the Baal Shem Tov, since I just introduced him, and you can decide how well I am doing. It is very painful to bury a wife with whom you've shared a harmonious life for forty years. The Baal Shem Tov – may his merit protect us – went through this. He lost his *rebbetzen*, his wife, after forty glorious years. He was walking silently with his pupil Rav Josef Kitzes after her funeral. Suddenly, he stopped, turned to Rav Kitzes and said, "I want you to know that everything I achieved, everything I accomplished, everything I am, is thanks to the *rebbetzen* whom I just left behind in the cemetery." The two moved on. The Baal Shem Tov stopped again, turned to his pupil and said, "I want you to know, Rav Josef, that I never let a day pass in our forty years of marriage without telling her my grateful thoughts about her." When we consider that the great Baal Shem Tov, who dealt all day in the higher spheres with holy thoughts, found every day the time to come down from his spiritual heights in order to pay tribute to his *rebbetzen* and thank her for her devotion, shouldn't we do the same?

Something else I must explain is the writing style of this book. As you can already see, I have chosen to write at the level of non-Jewish readers who know virtually nothing about Judaism. And I have also chosen to explain Yiddish and Hebrew phrases within the text, rather than in footnotes, which I feel can interrupt the flow of the content. Forgive me if I slip into Hebrew or Yiddish phrases that some readers will not understand. As far as possible, I translate them immediately after writing them.

Also, the way particular words are displayed – for example, italicized non-English nouns and verbs, or non-italicized non-English proper nouns – may seem complicated and even lacking uniformity, but as much as possible this is not the case. Please do not dwell on this aspect of the style, but know that the book's

wording style has a simple internal consistency. Any errors in this area of the writing are completely my own fault.

This brings me to one more literary “device” that is indispensable for me in this lifetime project: my assistant writer. If words seem to come directly from my lips and my mind and yet do so in a coherent and structured fashion, it is due to the extraordinary efforts of professional writer Lynne Cohen.

The content in the chapters that follow is primarily arranged in chronological order. However, the book is not perfect in this regard, either. Chapter One focuses on my early life, until age eight when my singing voice was discovered. Chapter Two details the years roughly between 1930 and 1942, presenting my youthful singing tours around Eastern Europe, along with my early exposure to Nazism. This chapter also mentions the great *tzaddikim* (righteous persons) and *rebbe*s I was privileged to meet in my life, and describes these brief fortunate encounters. My experiences before, during, and right after my time in the Bor and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps are the topic of Chapter Three.

Chapter Four focuses on my initial stay in Israel, my position as Chief Cantor for the Israeli Defense Forces, and my unforgettable wedding. Chapter Five is about Rivka and my six years from 1952 in Antwerp, Belgium. Chapter Six describes our years in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 1958 to 1970, and our return to Israel for eighteen months. Chapter Seven is about our life in Mexico City, from 1973 – when the Yom Kippur War broke out – to 1976. Chapter Eight chronicles my life in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Following the conclusion is a chapter entitled, “Tales My Father Told Me.” Here, I have written down the original stories that have been passed on orally in my family from parent to child for generations, but have not been included elsewhere in the book.

I sincerely hope and believe you will enjoy your reading.

Chapter One

Uzhhorod

I was born August 15 in either 1922 or 1923 – I will explain this confusing statement later – in a tiny hospital in the city of Uzhhorod. I came out small and I came out screaming, a sound totally unlike the beautiful, captivating voice that would later define my life. I must have been pleased to join the world, if you can believe my mother, of blessed memory. She took me home after a few days in the hospital and gazed in wonder at me for what seemed like hours, or so she told me years later. She often reminded me that I was almost always a contented baby. I was her first of nine children.

It was easy to be happy growing up in Uzhhorod, a largely peaceful and enchanting place. Its history, though, is another story: a confusing one to be sure, and more than a little bumpy, but also fascinating overall. You might even say this: If Uzhhorod had been a child, it would have been very unhappy, that is if you believe stability is best for children! For most of the time while I was young, Uzhhorod was in Czechoslovakia, which was in those years thankfully democratic. Located currently in Ukraine,

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it is near the borders of Hungary – another country to which it belonged in recent history – and Slovakia. Uzhhorod felt like a big city to a little boy, but the population in 1910 was only seventeen thousand, so the "city" was actually quite small. It was a capital city, though. In fact, in 1919, a few years before I was born, part of the region of Subcarpathia was officially assigned to Czechoslovakia, and Uzhhorod authoritatively and proudly became its administrative center.

I remember Uzhhorod as a Jewish city, a fantastic hasidic city. Everyone spoke Yiddish, at least the Jews did, at home and in the streets. Uzhhorod was full of synagogues and other Jewish organizations. We had *mikvaot*, ritual baths; a *beit din*, a court that deals in matters of Jewish law; and a *hevra Kaddisha*, the Jewish burial society. To be part of the *hevra Kaddisha* in Uzhhorod was a special honor. In 1904, a majestic central synagogue had been built. Around the same time, a Jewish hospital and a home for the aged had also been established. There were of course *hederim* and *yeshivot*, both Jewish schools, the latter for older boys and more intensive learning. My *heder*, or Jewish elementary school, had opened in 1890, and soon after, at least two more Jewish schools, including a *Talmud Torah* afternoon Hebrew school and another *yeshiva*, were opened.

As a boy, I certainly remember there were non-Jewish children in the town, but we experienced virtually no antisemitism on normal days. We formed school groups with non-Jews for certain activities. We sometimes played soccer together with them. I do not remember any bad things being said to Jews. There was no cheating us, ever, not in games and not in business. The only time we experienced violent behavior by non-Jews was on Christmas Eve. Early in the day every Christmas Eve, hours before the local priest's inflammatory sermon about how the Jews had killed Christ, my father would nail thick wood over the windows and doors. At midnight, my parents would wake me and all my siblings and

instruct us to sit very still, and not to cry or scream. Suddenly, there was riotous shouting and running outside: “Death to the Jews! Kill all the Jews! Beat the Jews!” Stones and bricks were thrown at the homes where Jews lived. I always heard my mother crying softly, though we children sat quietly, terrorized. The next morning, when my father, brothers and I walked to *shul* (synagogue), we saw burned houses and broken windows. We were very, very fortunate that our home was never vandalized during these rampages, but we ached for our friends, and of course helped repair their damaged property.

We had brilliant and famous rabbis in Uzhhorod. The one I remember best is Rabbi Elimelech Kahane. There was also a chief rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried, who was a *dayan*, one of the judges in the *beit din*. This rabbi, in the mid-nineteenth century, wrote the *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh*, a universally-known shortened version of the Code of Jewish Law. These two outstanding rabbis worked side by side for several years before I was born. Besides Rabbis Kahane and Ganzfried, other phenomenal rabbis came from Uzhhorod, including Rabbi Meir Eisenstadter who, in the 1850s, exerted enormous spiritual sway on the Hungarian Jews; and Rabbi M. Klein, who famously translated Rabbi Moshe Maimonides’ twelfth-century book *Guide for the Perplexed* from Arabic into Hungarian.

Then there was Rabbi Myron Shapira, whose last *derasha* (sermon), was simply brilliant. He gave it on the night of *Kol Nidrei*, which is the service named after the alluring prayer recited at the beginning of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Rav Shapira arrived at the *shul*, and we could all tell he was quite sick. Still, thousands were packed into the synagogue, they so badly wanted to hear him. He slowly walked up to the *Aron Kodesh*, the Holy Ark that holds the Torah scrolls. He opened the *Aron Kodesh* and said, “*Yidden, siz tzeit tsui vinen,*” Jews, it is the time to cry. And the crying poured out. I will never forget

that. Where have you ever heard a rabbi give such a *derasha*? He closed the *Aron Kodesh* and he began *Kol Nidrei*, as tears streamed down our faces.

Uzhhorod's Jewish community dates back to about the sixteenth century, developing significantly at the end of the eighteenth century, and expanding further in the second half of the 1800s. A former stronghold of Orthodox Jews, including Hasidim, Uzhhorod was at different times named differently, including Ungvar, Hungvar, and Unguyvar. Uzhhorod's current name, not surprisingly, comes from the Uzh River, which slices the city into two parts. *Horod* means "city" in Rusyn, an East Slavic language of the Rusyns, an Eastern European ethnic minority. Today, Uzhhorod – though small – is only a somewhat famous city to the world, but for Jews, it has always had great significance. As mentioned, historically, Uzhhorod has been bounced around, metaphorically speaking, belonging to at least four different countries even in my lifetime, including Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Soviet Union, and now Ukraine. It has been ruled by many different leaders, and types of leaders, going all the way back to the sixth century.

In 2010, I wanted to make a brief visit to my hometown, but a funny thing happened on my way to Uzhhorod: I could not get in because I did not have a visa. Stopped at the Ukrainian border, my wife Rivka and I were told we would need the proper documents to visit the town of my birth. I laughed because it seemed ridiculous to need a visa to visit the town in which I was born and grew up. I showed the border official my passport and explained that we were only going to stop in Uzhhorod for about an hour, just to see some of the old places I knew. Thankfully, I did not have to bribe the official. (That is a joke; I never bribe authorities.) The guard decided to let us in either because he agreed it was stupid

to require a visa for a one-hour visit to a hometown, or because he took pity on us, since we looked exhausted.

Anyway, he let us in after all, and we had a wonderful last visit to my hometown. It was great to see that Uzhhorod – after the Holocaust – still had some strong Jewish life, a community center, a *shul*, and at least one Jewish school. We also heard there was a local magazine called *Gut Shabbos* – which focuses on Jewish activities and events in the Carpathian Mountain region – but we didn't find a copy. We were told that the Uzhhorod Jewish community currently oversees the nearby Jewish communities of Munkacs, Khust, Vinogradova, and Rachov.

My parents – who had seven siblings each – were Myer and Henya Kraus. They both came from families of prominent European rabbis. Myer – who was born in Szmotor, Hungary – had a father who was both a *dayan* and *shohet*, a ritual slaughterer. My mother's maiden name was Nuchomulvitch, her father was Rabbi Wolf Nuchomulvitch, and her family lived in Kish Dubrony, a tiny village near Uzhhorod. Like Uzhhorod, Kish Dubrony was in Czechoslovakia when I was growing up, and is today in Ukraine.

With God's constant help, my parents made sure my siblings and I grew up in a close and happy family. As mentioned, I was the oldest of nine children: five boys and four girls. We were all about one to three years apart in age. Only one sister is alive today in 2022, the year 5782 in the Jewish calendar.

I was born in 1922, but my papers are wrong. They say 1923. Why? It's a funny story. After WWII, I was kicked out of the Displaced Persons hospital after liberation because the doctors said, "You are not sick. You are only weak. You have to leave." So, I wanted to join the group that was getting the best food. The distributors there asked my age. My English was not very good. I said I was born in 1922, but they wrote it down wrong. They wrote 1923. Soon thereafter, I decided to go home to get some identification documents, including my birth certificate. I traveled to Uzhhorod, only

to discover that its city hall had burned to the ground and all the records were lost. I had to get witnesses to swear I was born in 1922, not a year later. But for some reason, my official papers still say 1923. I accept that it does not matter one little bit, not anymore. Maybe when I turn one hundred it will matter!

My family lived in a neat and tidy apartment on the first floor of a three-story building on Foe Street, a main street in Uzhhorod. The apartment had three large rooms, plus a kitchen, which had a bed in it. That's right. One of the children slept in the kitchen, but we moved the bed out during the day. My parents had a bedroom, and there was a large dining/living room. There was one other bedroom for the children. Except for the lucky child who got to sleep in the kitchen, all the children, boys and girls alike, slept together in the same room, even with the babies.

As children, we were incredibly close. I used to bring my siblings gifts when I was older after traveling around Eastern Europe to sing as a *hazan* and give concerts. And no, they were not jealous of me at all. The opposite in fact. They were very happy for me. All the younger kids tried to copy my singing. It was so cute. We were such a close family. We loved each other. There was no fighting. We all helped our parents. We all made meals. We were a nice, happy family. We children had so much respect for each other and our parents. As the oldest child, I had to help my mother a lot. I had to clean. And I, of course, had to help with the younger children. There were always young ones who needed to be cared for, bathed, dressed, rocked, fed – you name it. I enjoyed helping, because my mother was grateful. When they grew older, my sisters always helped my mother, too.

It was well known in Uzhhorod that our house was exceptionally clean. In fact, one day, the mayor visited our house. I do not remember how it came about that he was there, but he was in the house. A few days later during a public speech, he said, "No one should say, 'I am poor, and that is why I don't clean.' I know

a family with nine children whose house is immaculate. You must go and see their home, how clean it is. And they are certainly not rich people.” That was what the mayor said.

Once in a while I made the *hallot*, the special bread for Shabbat. It was my mother’s habit to make *hallot* every Friday morning for Shabbat, which started later in the day at sundown. Early one Friday, I changed the clock in my parents’ bedroom so she could sleep longer. I set it back one hour. Then I made the *hallot* myself. When she got up, she screamed, “It is so late! The *hallot*! They won’t be ready!” But they were already baking in the oven. My mother was incredibly happy.

My father – whom we children called Tatty, Yiddish for father – was an officer in the Czechoslovakian army in World War I. I was very proud of him for that. He was very busy earning a living, but he also helped my mother whenever he could. None of that macho “it’s women’s work” for my father. He was happy to roll up his sleeves and help with the babies and children, whatever needed doing. He set a great example for his sons. It was hard to make money for his family. He had several jobs. He began working as a *shoḥet*, like his father, but my tatty was a gentle man and this work was hard for him to carry out. So, he needed to do something else. As it turned out, besides being a fantastic storyteller, my father had beautiful handwriting. He decided to change jobs and become a *sofer*, a scribe, a job for which he was much in demand. While he did that, he also became a *melamed*, a teacher, and his students loved him.

Another job he sometimes did was selling matza – unleavened bread – which is eaten on Pesah (Passover). When I was very young, I sometimes went with him as he made his deliveries. I remember clearly once a small Gypsy boy – whom I knew from around the neighborhood and who was about four years old – followed us saying, “matza, matza, matza!” I was laughing, but my tatty told me this little boy had probably been born and raised as

The Life of Moshele Der Zinger

Jewish for a few years, until he was taken by the Gypsies. I later learned my father was right. But the boy – when he was much older – ultimately found his way back to Judaism. I met him in Israel many years later, when we were both adults.

My father's brand of Hasidism was Spinka. Tatty actually began as a Ziditshov Hasid; however, after the death of the Zidichover Rebbe, he had a choice to consider. He could either continue to make the arduous journey across the Czechoslovakian border to visit his deceased *rebbe's* successor and son, or he could start to follow the late *rebbe's* son-in-law, Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Weiss (the Chakal Yitzchak) of Spinka, who lived closer (in fact, in the same country as we did). Partly for convenience, he ultimately picked the latter option.

I do not think we were poor. As a child I never thought we were, but what do children know? I remember for the longest time my mother had only one dress for Shabbat. This seems underprivileged, yet she took such good care of it. It always looked brand new to me. During the week, she pressed it between two clean sheets. I used to say I had two mothers. One during the regular week, when she ran after nine energetic children, and one on Shabbat, when she wore the beautiful dress and she looked like a queen, relaxed and smiling. On Shabbat, when all the children were dressed up in their nicest clothes, my father, in his finest suit, would take five perfectly behaved boys to *shul*, while my unruffled mother in her gorgeous dress would come later with the four angelic girls.

I think my father made a good living. We were probably middle class for the times. Things were especially good after I started making a lot of money as a child singer. As I will describe in more detail in Chapter Two, I became very popular in Eastern Europe when I was quite young. I gave concerts. I traveled very far

frequently, and I came home with my pockets full of coins, since back then there were no simple checks. I would dump all the coins on the kitchen table. I didn't really understand money very well. All I knew was that it made my parents happy, so I was happy. I know my family's life improved when I started to sing.

Back to my father. Tatty was not the best at construction jobs around the house. He rarely did even the lightest "men's work." For instance, everyone – Jews and non-Jews, at least during peaceful times – used to cut the grass with their hands, but my father never did this. He was asked why he didn't join the men in the common social setting of sitting on the ground, chatting and pulling off the top of the grass. He said "If I get used to it I will forget and do it on Shabbat, which is forbidden, and that's why I never do it." I believed him of course, but I also thought that when it came to unpleasant men's work, he preferred not to do it.

As the oldest child, I got some extra time alone with my tatty, which I treasured. Sometimes, just the two of us ventured into the countryside, where we would visit Jewish farmers. These rural folks were admirable and interesting, but they had quite different experiences than Jews who lived in town. For instance, they had almost no exposure to yeshivot or *bokherim*, yeshiva students. Jewish children growing up on farms generally learned about Judaism from their parents, at home. Once, when my tatty and I were visiting a Jewish farm, the farmer was really impressed with my *payot*, my sideburns, that were long for religious reasons. They fell almost to my shoulders. He asked me to test his son, to ask him what he knew about Judaism. So, I asked the youngster, "What do you know?" Shyly, he mentioned that he knew his *Alef-Beit*, which meant he knew all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. His father wanted to have *nahat*, pride, so he urged me to go ahead and tell his boy to say all the letters. I did what the farmer asked, and his son recited the *Alef-Beit* perfectly. Then I wondered what else I could ask the child to do. After some thought an idea came

to me. "Now say the *Alef-Beit* backward," I prompted. He turned around and said it again while standing with his back to us. We all laughed so hard, the sheep started bleating.

As a family, we sometimes went to my uncle's farm for a holiday in Debrecen, which I am pretty sure was in Hungary when I was little. We would go for a brief summer-holiday break. My uncle was not just a farmer, but also a *shoḥet*, so we were able to get some free kosher meat to bring home when we visited him and his family. Later, when I was older and in yeshiva, and spending a great deal of my time singing as well as learning, I would go to that farm by myself. It was a holiday for me alone. My parents recognized that I needed to get away. I went by myself every summer when I was seven, eight, nine, ten, and eleven years old to get a break from everything, even my siblings. I was so much in demand for my singing, I needed time away from everyone. But when I visited the farm, I would of course sing for my uncle and auntie and their many children.

One summer I was there, when my auntie gave birth to her thirteenth child. The midwife yelled at me to go to the *shul* where my uncle was studying and tell him that his wife had had another boy. They already had twelve boys! I ran to the nearby *shul* and told my uncle "*Mazal tov! Congratulations! You have a baby boy.*" My uncle stood up slowly and walked over to the window. He looked out, and up, and yelled to the *Ribono Shel Olam*, to God: "We will see who will get tired first!" In case it is not obvious to you what he meant, he was telling God he would not stop having children until he had a girl, and he was daring God to give up first, to get tired first, creating only boys for his family. After that baby, his wife gave birth to three girls. On a horrific note, this entire extraordinary family of sixteen children and their loving parents were murdered in Auschwitz.

This uncle, father of sixteen children, had a vast, colorful garden in his yard where he enjoyed sitting and learning. At the

same time, all his boys would do their learning inside the house. In fact, it was quite normal for Jewish children to be relatively pale – compared to their non-Jewish counterparts – because they spent so much time learning indoors. When I was visiting my uncle’s farm one time, I decided to join my uncle outside instead of sitting in the house with all my cousins. I sat with him in the garden for a few hours each day for about a week. If I may say so, I got an attractive tan on my face. When I arrived home, my surprised mother stared at me. After a moment she gasped and screamed: “My God, you look like a *goy* (non-Jew)!” A touch of Jewish humor from the old country.

With all my chores and jobs and learning, growing up could be difficult sometimes, but the difficulty was unimportant compared to the love I felt for every baby sibling that came along. After me came Rivka, Gittel, Yoel Hershel, Chaim, Yitzchak, Pinchas, Shideleh and finally little Chana Pesal. I can never mention my sisters and brothers without remembering that five of them, the youngest five, lost their precious lives in Auschwitz, the biggest Nazi death camp. I still tear up when I think of them. My loving parents were lost at that horrific death camp, too.

As I mentioned, before the Holocaust, all of us children and our parents formed a close family, very affectionate, very loving, very caring. My parents set an excellent example. They never fought or screamed at each other, so we never did either, at least not too much. You know how siblings can be. But we never rebelled in any kind of serious way. We never even thought of rebelling against our parents.

That is not to say I was always perfectly behaved. In case it is not obvious yet, I have always had a great sense of humor. And since a young age, I have had a fondness for pulling pranks. Here

I will tell an inspiring story about my tatty, of blessed memory, and how he handled me after a naughty episode at the local *heder*. The principal had come to our home and told my tatty about my uncharacteristic bad behavior. I was a young boy. I do not remember the bad act or my exact age, but I think I was no more than seven. I thought my father would be really upset with me. He called me into his room. He told me to sit down. He said, "I want to tell you a story. The story goes like this. There was a family with just one son, a son who was awfully spoiled. He misbehaved constantly. He was bad. He did all the wrong things. His father tried to teach him. His mother tried to teach him. Nothing helped. So, one day his father said, 'Listen son, whenever you do something wrong, I will put a nail in this wall. Each time.' So, he started. He put in one nail then another nail, then another, until the wall was full of nails. One day years later when the boy was sixteen, he came into his father's study and he saw all the nails. He thought, 'My God, that is ugly. What will I do? I think I am going to change my ways. I am going to behave, because this is hideous.' After that, not only did he do the right thing, but whenever he did something positive, and when he listened to his father and mother, his father took out a nail. A few years later there were no nails left.

"One day, when the boy had become a young man, he came into the study and he saw the wall. There were no nails, but it was full of holes. He looked at it, recalled the past, and burst out crying. So, his father asked him, 'Why are you crying? When the nails were being put in you didn't react. But now when the nails are gone, you cry.' All the young man said to his father, philosophically, was: 'The nails are gone, but the holes remain.'"

Education was always easy for me. When I was five years old, my father first took me to *heder*. The *melamed* showed me the letters,

alef, beit, etc., from a book on the Hebrew alphabet. He asked me to read them. Then he closed the book, paused, opened it again, then asked me to show and name for him as many letters as I could. I was able to name all 22 letters, with no problem. As I recited each letter correctly, candy fell from above. The *melamed* was holding a broom over my head with candy resting at its top. He would shake the broom to make the candy fall. I was so happy. It was candy from heaven!

In *heder* at seven years old, I was number one in the class. In fact, I was usually the only one who had *kushiot* – questions – for the *rebbe*. I was an inquisitive child, and I asked good *kushiot*. The *rebbe* really liked my questions. One day, when we were discussing marriage in class, I asked him what *shelo kedarko* meant, because he had mentioned the term. I didn't know then – but I learned years later – that I was asking him about sex. He hit me, and said, “And *kedarko* you know already?” *Kedarko* is the heterosexual way to have sex and *shelo kedarko* is the homosexual way. Very soon after, he apologized for hitting me, realizing that I was too young to understand the topic or what I was even asking.

When I was a young child, it was *heder, heder, heder* almost all the time. I also spent many hours at home and in the synagogue studying. Indeed, I spent most of my waking hours learning from the Torah and other sacred texts appropriate to my age. Sometimes I would get up at 4 a.m. to learn. Then I would go to Shaḥarit, the morning religious service, at 6 a.m., then have breakfast, and then go to public school from 8 a.m. until noon. I came home for lunch, and then I went to *heder* until 6 p.m. I seemed to be always busy learning.

I had lots of friends at *heder*. Many of them were older than I. As children, we would sit and learn together in the yeshiva or the synagogue. We had no television, no movies, no organized sports, no video games, no baseball. We really did not play much, as we were always learning. When we found a little time for play, it was

often the game called marbles. But instead of using glass marbles, we used nuts, and when you won a round, or hit another player's nut, you got to keep and eat it. Sometimes, we would run and play in the grass in the fields at the edge of the neighborhood, but only until we were discovered by the adults. Then it was back to the books. I rarely took time off school, but visiting my grandparents was important, so sometimes the family would go on a weekday. When I was perhaps six or seven years old, my *zaiide* died during one of those visits. I was alone with him while he was resting in bed. He said to me, "I am not feeling well," so I brought him some water. I helped him to wash his hands and his beard. I said, "I love you," and then I left him alone. He died right at that moment. He closed his eyes and that was it. I have always felt honored to have been the last person to speak to him and to help him.

When I was only eleven years old, during the weekdays, I went to live in Munkacs, the town of my hasidic *rebbe*, and attended his yeshiva. While there, I received important lessons in helping the poor. Every week, the other *bokherim*, who happened to be a few years older than I – would take the school wagon and the horse around to the local villages to collect food both for the yeshiva and also for the poor people in town. The *bokherim* would visit storekeepers and wealthy farmers who were happy to donate food – potatoes, corn, milk, vegetables – and sometimes even money. Though it was always the older boys who were allowed to go, I desperately wanted to join them. Why? It looked like such an adventure! I begged the *rosh yeshiva*, the head of the school, that I be allowed to go with the older boys. He said I could go if I passed a test on the material we had learned already that week. Of course, I passed with flying colors, and therefore earned permission. When the time came, we all went off with the horse and wagon.

At some point, we arrived at a farm where we were invited in for lunch. The nice farm lady was serving some kind of beans,

which I hated. I didn't even like the smell. In those days, many people – including my family – ate beans frequently as they constituted the most inexpensive yet healthy meal to make. For some reason, I could never get used to eating them. My taste buds rejected them even before my stomach did. When the really kind farm lady left the kitchen for a moment or two, I took the beans off my plate and slipped them into my pants pocket. She came back and screamed, “Oh! You love the lunch! You are already finished. You want more!” She was so happy. It was hard for me to disappoint her, but I coughed and sputtered, “No thank you, I am much too full.”

In yeshiva in Munkacs I had a *hevruta*, a partner with whom to study Torah. The son of a well-known chief rabbi in Hungary, he was brilliant, a first-rate partner. In some ways, he was a better learner than I. We used to get up at four in the morning some days and sit on the windowsill to study together. One day, I noticed he wasn't himself. I asked him what was wrong, but he said nothing. For the next few days I noticed his bad feelings again, yet he kept telling me he was fine. Finally, he broke down and told me he was having a recurring dream. In the dream, a milkman was complaining, saying, “I miss your *Kaddish*,” the prayer said by family members when a close relative passes away. “I don't understand this vision,” he said. There were no phones, so he couldn't just call home for family support. I told him to go home and tell his father what was happening. He took my advice right away. His father told him to forget it, it was just a dream. But interestingly, he learned the town's milkman had died. He continued to have the dream while visiting his parents, and he complained again about the problem to his father. Finally, his father took him to see the milkman's widow, and she broke down crying. She told a story that

would change his life. “When I was pregnant, your mother was also pregnant, and we both had boys at the same time. But your mother could not produce milk, so I had to nurse both her baby and my baby, which I was happy to do, of course. Your mother would bring her baby to me during the day and the night, but it became too difficult, so she decided to leave her baby son with me during the nights. One night, when he was only a few days old, her baby died. My husband and I were distraught beyond words. We discussed what we should do. Because we were poor, humble people, we knew we could never give our son a great life. But with the rabbi and *rebbetzen*, our child would have everything he could ever need or want. He would grow up in a wonderful home and have the best education. We decided to tell the rabbi and *rebbetzen* that *our* child died. We gave them our child to raise as their own. That child was you.”

Now he understood. He came back to Munkacs and said *Kaddish* for his biological father, but he never told anyone, not a single soul, besides me. To this day, I am the only person with whom he shared this information. I do not want to write his name because his family, now living in America, still does not know about his real birth parents.

You might say that, when I was growing up in Uzhhorod, things were a little backward, or old-fashioned, and my family was no exception. In fact, the first time I saw a bus when I was a young boy, I ran to my mother and I said, “Mommy, Mommy, there is an apartment moving on wheels!” We never read newspapers or listened to the radio. Not at all. Instead of newspapers we got the *Munkatcher* newsletters, which were all about Torah, Jewish values, and Jewish rituals. Other than sacred religious books, just about all that was read by Jews were these hasidic papers.

Sometimes, for secular news, bulletins were stapled to a board on a wall outside city hall. People, but not many Jews, would gather round to read about local ordinances or other information.

One other important form of communication was shouting. A trumpeter would come to the middle of town and blow his instrument loudly. When lots of people had gathered around him, he or another man with him would announce the news of the day, such as where the Germans were advancing in the war. There was an ancient joke about the trumpeters, which I must tell. The trumpeter announced: “We killed two thousand Russians!” The crowd shouted back, “How many of our men were killed?” The trumpeter responded, “That is being announced in Moscow!”

On a more serious note, a trumpeter in Sevlush – a hasidic town before World War II, and the hometown of famous nineteenth-century composer Bela Bartok – once saved the Jews from a deadly pogrom. From my understanding, this town experienced more than its share of pogroms right up into the twentieth century. During riotous pogroms in Sevlush, the bad *goyim* would break into Jews’ homes, kill them, and then steal their silverware, candelabras, and other precious belongings. Once, the day before Yom Kippur, the town’s rabbi was learning in his office when he heard a loud rapping on his window. He looked up and saw the town trumpeter. He let him in. “What can I do for you?” asked the rabbi. “The bad *goyim* of this town are planning to burn down the synagogue with all the Jews in it on the night of *Kol Nidrei*,” the trumpeter replied. “They know this is the one time in the year when entire families come to the synagogue to hear the opening prayer of Yom Kippur. You won’t be able to escape. They plan to lock everyone in. Then they are scheming to steal from all the Jews’ empty homes, take their silver and anything else they want. I am taking a huge risk telling you. If they knew I was here with you, they would kill me.”

The stunned rabbi asked, “How do you know this? And when exactly are they coming? I thought relations with the gentiles in

Sevlush were improving.” The trumpeter answered, “They are planning to attack the synagogue when you are about to sing *Ki hinei kaḥomer*.” The rabbi was surprised to learn that the non-Jewish trumpeter knew the prayer that begins with “Behold, as the clay is in the hand of the potter.” “When you are about to sing those words,” continued the trumpeter, “they aim to launch the attack. But I will warn you by blaring my instrument just as I see they are gathering together. I know where they propose to meet. You will have enough time to announce to the congregation what the *goyim* intend to do, and to lead your people into the hills behind the town where you can all hide.” This is exactly what happened. Two Jews stayed close by the *shul* to let the others know when the disappointed *goyim* had disbanded. Once alerted, the Jews returned to the *shul* and continued the service to the end.

Days later, the rabbi went to the trumpeter to ask why he had risked his life to warn him. The trumpeter told this story, “When I was a little boy I had a cruel stepmother. She used to give me bagels she had baked to sell in the town market. She knew exactly the amount of money I was to return home with. One day, I stumbled and lost a coin. I was terrified to go home. I sat and cried by the side of the road. The *rebbe* of the town was passing by, and he stopped to ask me why I was crying. I told him. He reached into his pocket and gave me the exact coin I needed. I never forgot his kind gesture, and that is why I warned you.”

The other popular place to learn word-of-mouth news and gossip was the town *mikve*, the ritual Jewish bath. When Polish or other Jews would come to our town during World War II, they would come to the *mikve* and tell us horror stories about the Nazis. But we didn’t believe them. They would describe unimaginable atrocities being perpetrated against Jews in Poland and elsewhere, but we could not accept their words as truth. I remember bathing, sitting, and talking in the *mikve* before Shabbat with the newcomers in town, and listening carefully to learn what was happening

Chapter One: Uzhhorod

outside our little world. But we – the simple, naive, devout Jews of Uzhhorod – thought the visitors were lying. We thought they were making up false tales because they wanted *rahmanut*, pity. “Yes,” we said amongst ourselves out of their earshot, “they want us to feel sorry for them.” We wanted to help them, but we didn’t know how because we just did not believe them.

Mementos


SHOMRE HADAS
7"ד

קהל שוחרי החונת בקירונו מוזמנים לתפלת שבת מרוססת עם אורחינו הדגול
 גדול החונת בדורינו, הש"ץ הסהולל, הדיוק בכל קצווי תבל בנעימות תפלתו
ר' משה קראוס נ"י אשר כיוץ פאר בעירנו לפני כסטים שנה
 שבתות החון ר' בנימין טילר הזמקולה בניצוחו של ז"ר אברהם דוין

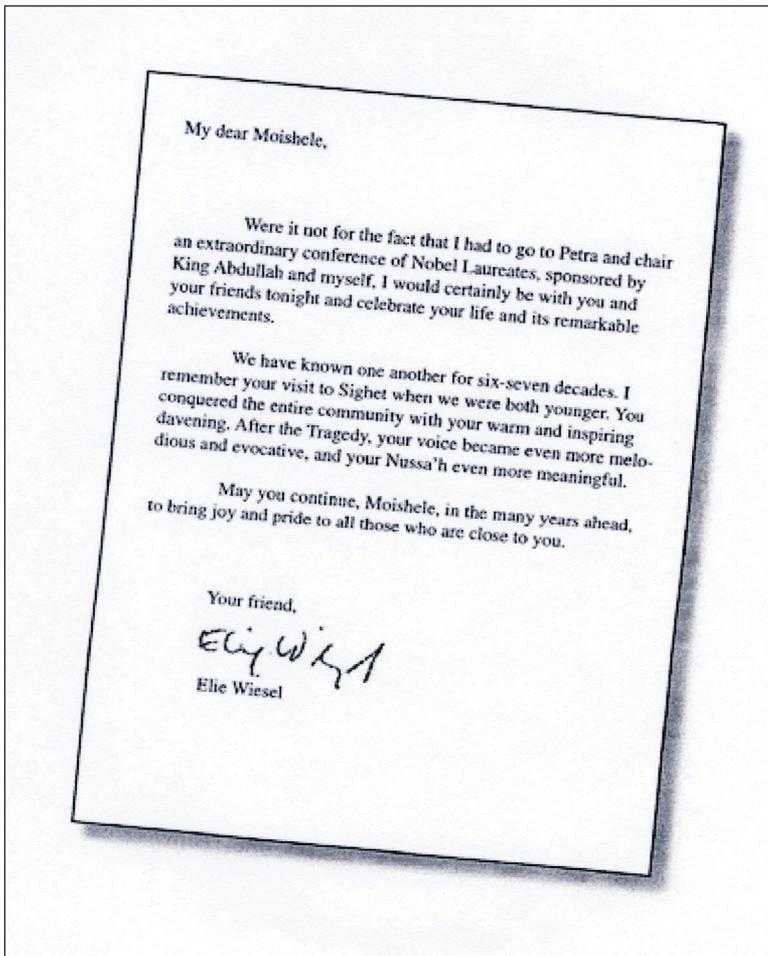
*De hele gemeenschap wordt uitgenodigd om een opbeurende Sjabbat T'filot waarin
 de legendarische Chazzan **Moshe Kraus** de T'filos zal leiden
 de deelname van onze Chazzan **Benjamin Muller** en het koor van de Shu
 onder leiding van **Dr. Andre Deutsch***

**תפילות שבת
 עם החון העולמי
 ר' משה קראוס**
**Shabbos met
 Moshe Kraus**

Shabbos Parashas Emor
 8 dagen in Omer, Mei 3 2014
 Shacharis begint om 9:00 AM
 In de Van den Nestlei Shuhl
Kiddush na het oeked

בום שבת קודש פרשת אמור
 ג' אייר ת"י בעומר התשע"ד
 שחרית תתחיל בשעה 9:00
 בבית הכנסת וואן דן-נסטל"י
 קדשא רבה לאמר תפלה

Shabbat with Cantor Kraus in Antwerp



Letter from Elie Wiesel

The Life of Moshele Der Zinger

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Mr. Nesho Kraus

I am delighted to hear that you are celebrating your one hundredth birthday. I send you my warmest congratulations on this happy occasion and good wishes for an enjoyable day.

Elizabeth B.

Congratulatory Messages from Her Majesty The Queen

Her Majesty The Queen personally approved this message, which was specially designed for the transmission of Her Majesty's best wishes to Canadians. The photograph was taken during The Queen's Royal Tour, from June 28 to July 6, 2010. Her Majesty visited Halifax, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Toronto and Waterloo.

Message de félicitations de Sa Majesté la Reine

Sa Majesté la Reine a personnellement approuvé l'utilisation de ce message pour transmettre ses meilleurs vœux aux Canadiens. La photo a été prise durant la Tournée royale de la Reine qui s'est déroulée du 28 juin au 6 juillet 2010. Sa Majesté avait alors visité Halifax, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Toronto et Waterloo.



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Her Majesty The Queen in Right of Canada/ Sa Majesté la Reine du chef du Canada/ Michael Peiris and/Levy Corry de L'Esplanade, Rideau Hall

The Life of Moshele Der Zinger

From the desk of

RIVKA REICHBERG

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At this momentous occasion, at the marking of your 100th birthday (*ad me'ah v'esrim*), I remember the tumultuous times that have passed over us.

The childhood years we spent growing up together with our siblings in the home of our holy parents (may their blood be avenged);

The agonizing war years we spent in the concentration camps under the claws of the evil Nazi beast;

And with G-d's grace we have survived, flourished and are now approaching our 100th birthday.

My dear brother, I find the pen and paper not eloquent enough to express my feelings to you, my older brother, whom I always looked up to – and who always thought about me and my welfare.

So many years have passed, yet your dedication to me and my great love to you has never diminished, it has actually grown and deepened.

May the Holy One blessed be He, to whom you have cleaved to and believed in during the most difficult times, bless you and your dear, devoted wife Rivkah, who is always faithfully at your side.

May you be blessed with many more long years, enjoying continued good health, to be happy and content, and able to carry on with your daily lives, until we merit the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our day, amen.

Your devoted sister,

Rivka Reichberg (Kraus)

