

American zone, 1947–49

by [Israel Zoberman](#) in the [June 29, 2022](#) issue

Particularly drawn to a patch of trees,
steady company, barbed wire closing in,
Grandpa Tzvi and I, a toddler, wandered
Germany's Wetzlar DP camp, his hand
holding mine in reassurance as we explored
the paths of my lost childhood.

I hugged those trees and left a soft kiss,
gratitude for their consenting murmuring
and sweet aroma. In that German garden
of Eden with Grandpa, I became one
of those trees while biting a ubiquitous apple.
A photo proves it.

And Grandpa, a martyred Polish rabbi's son,
approved and reminded me in Yiddish, of course,
that Grandma Rachel anxiously awaited our
daily return to her safe embrace.

Grandpa, ravaged from Soviet forced exile
with hard labor in the frozen desert of Siberia
and later harsh conditions in Kazakhstan,
where I was born in 1945, died in Chicago.
I was not there to hold his hand.

I remember and always will, but did he
remember me when his life began to fade away?
In Israel I was too young to really know
what he knew well—that I, a refugee child,
whose life was a sign of divine Providence
amid a spared Surviving Remnant, had felt
a blessed bond.

I am now a grandpa and a rabbi, yearning,
craving once again to feel in flesh the imprint
of that guiding touch.