

**Fayvl Yavitsh Alvin (Philip Alwin) reconstructs from memory the temporary gravestone erected on the grave of Yánkele Vaynshteyn (Jacob Weinstein) at the Mikháleshik cemetery, with accompanying letter to Dovid Katz**

**Translated by Lena Watson from the original Yiddish text**

Here lies buried  
The young man Jacob  
Son of Chaim  
Murdered by  
The Young Man Yitskhok  
Son of Tsvi Khonon

**May his soul be bound in the bonds of eternal life**

This is roughly what was written on the little board on his grave for a whole year. Then they put up a gravestone. I handwrote it, but the letters were printed.

Stay well and strong.

Fayvl

Dear friend, Hirshe-Dovid, son of Menke Katz the kohen,

I received your nice letter today, as well as the two checks, for which I'm unable to thank you as much as it is appreciated – although I've run into difficulties in the sense that the banks won't readily exchange them, so I don't know yet. I think in my next letter I'll be able to let you know about the fate of the checks.

A little thing that upsets me is this: on p. 20 of *The Forward* of Friday, 17 January 1992, there was a notice about your yearbook, *Oxford Yiddish*, but I didn't find Yánkele's story. I enclose the notice with this letter.

Now, you thank me for the photo I sent you. I'll explain how it came about. I've known my friend Bernard [Mendelovitch] from London since 1956. When I traveled to Israel to visit my only surviving son of my three children – because my wife and two children had been torn away from me by the murderer of all times, Hitler, may his name be obliterated... I've got my eldest son left, who was in a concentration camp with me for five years, and now he's with me in America. Since my wife had a brother, an actor, who worked in the same theater as Bernard and the late actor [Harry] Ariel, I stopped in London to visit my brother-in-law and made Bernard's acquaintance. We've been good friends since. This summer, Bernard spent two weeks at my son's, and we're best friends to this day and correspond all the time. He's the one who sent me the photo and asked me to send it to you. I did what he'd asked me to do, but it is my friend Bernard who should be thanked, not I. If you don't have his address, I'll send you his new address in this letter.

You ask me in your letter who Motke's father was. The shtetl Jews used to call him Kivitse. His proper name was Akive-Yitskhok, this is how he used to be called up to the Torah. I had to chuckle at the question that he was Motke's father... If I had to make a statement and swear in court, I'd most certainly refrain. I don't even know whether Kivitse himself knew.

When I wrote to you about Yánkele's grave, it was all about the little board that stood on Yánkele's grave. The board stood during the first year after his death. There were two boards nailed together, about a yard from the ground, with block letters painted on them in black. I'll send you the image of the board in this letter. It's easier for me to recall the text from the board than the gravestone because I saw the board more times than the gravestone. The last five letters don't form one word, they're all separate because each letter has its own meaning. It's hard for me to translate them into Yiddish, but if you know a rabbi there who knows both languages, he'll explain it properly.

You also ask about the word [for 'then', 'at that time'] was used in Mikháleshik. Young people used to say 'damolts', but older people used the word 'yemolt' because it was easier for them to pronounce.

I'm about to finish my story 'Fires in Mikháleshik.' It contains ten pages. Next week, my son will mail it to you. I hope that we'll exchange many letters before you travel to Mikháleshik. Until then, I wish you all the best in the world. In my next letter, I'll tell you more about the ferry ['parom'], which Mikháleshik residents used to pronounce as 'prom.'

Once again, my heartfelt thanks for the checks.

Most respectfully,

Fayvl Alvin