



A Hero of Jewish Freedom: A Modern Joseph's Journey from Hijacker to Rabbi

Rabbi Yosef Mendelevich

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Rabbi Yosef Mendelevich was born in the small Baltic state of Latvia after the Second World War. Latvia was then under Soviet occupation. Yosef received a Soviet education - far removed from Jewish faith and culture. His father, Moshe, was arrested by the Soviets when Yosef was 10 years old. His mother, Chaya Yenta, died soon afterwards. Despite his harsh childhood experiences, Yosef found his way to truth and faith and became one of the outstanding leaders of the Jewish revival in the USSR in the 1960's. He considers the spiritual forces which enabled him to remain proud and unbowed during his 11-year incarceration in KGB cellars and the forced labor camps of the Gulag a miracle from Heaven. A Hero of Jewish Freedom consists of short stories drawn from Rabbi Mendelevich's life experiences as a young Soviet Jewish freedom fighter imprisoned together with his comrades by the KGB after the failed attempt to hijack a Soviet plane and fly it to Israel. From within the KGB cellars and Gulag prison cells Yosef dedicates his soul to his belief and thus becomes a martyr of his faith, pledged to follow the way of the Lord G-d of Israel unswervingly. As each amazing story ends a new one begins, like an expertly threaded string of pearls. Yosef succeeds in bluffing the warders and smuggles into the top-security prison a Hebrew Bible, a Siddur and a Tallit. He prays in a pit carved in the snow. Miracle follows miracle. The author's unique style turns the book into a work of art and makes us feel we are with him in his cell. The book celebrates the triumph of the love of life and faith, and shows how the struggle of the few helped to win freedom for millions of people in the Soviet Union. The hero is released and flies to Israel following his historic 56-day hunger strike. These stories of indomitable faith and ingenuity will inspire people of all ages and beliefs. [Subject: Judaism, Biography, Mysticism]

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