

**MEMOIRS OF YAACOV-LEIB MENDELSON**

**Written in 1920**

**Reflecting on his journey from the Ukraine  
area of Russia, to Australia,  
prior to WW1,  
leaving behind his wife and child**

**Translated from the original Yiddish  
in the 1960s.**

**At the time of writing, his surname was  
Komesarook**

## THE PROCESS OF MY MIGRATION.

J. L. MENDELSON.

### 4. I. 1919.

On the 22nd. Dec. 1913, I took into my hand, my wander stecken, (travelling swag.) The day was a Sunday morning, the weather was very bad, and it was snowing, but not too cold, the heaven was grey, and the wind blew wild.

The atmosphere of the day, was like my heart, heavy, like when winter wants to show its strength.

It was 10 in the morning, as I left MYADLA, after saying goodbye to my wifes family. I found my wife at my parents house, crying. Her face showed that her heart told her, what was to come, utter loneliness. And so with a broken heart, she started to pack for me.

My father looked very bad that day, and sad as he was, he got ready the sled, for our journey to the station. The station was 25 kil. away.

My Mother that morning cried badly, as did my sisters, who also helped my wife with my luggage

My 2 little brothers, didn't know what was going on. My elder brother was coming to the station to say goodbye to me, and I myself, to tell the truth, felt very

as what I looked at my wife, child, parents, sisters & brothers

felt very heavy in the heart. To tell the truth I really wasn't fully aware of what as happening, that Sunday.

How a man leaving his birthplace, really doesn't know what to expect.

At the time of writing these lines, 5yrs, have passed, and I have made a life in this strange South Continent. The 5th Continent of the world.

To this day, I say, that if one knew what lay ahead of him, he would never leave his homeland. Ones birthplace, will always remain ones home, till you lose it.

My heart ached for my family, as I'm sure theirs ached for me. The only one that didn't miss me would have been, my small son, for he was only 4mths and 6 days old, on that Sunday.

Chapter 2.

9th Jan. 1919.

Its 12 o'clock and visitors, come to see me, in our small house. A lot more than the house could take. I have my child in my arms and everyone looked particularly at me. My heart told me, that I alone will be missed from now on, by all those from who, up to this day had warmed me, when cold and were happy when I was. How dear is the piece of soil where one is born. Till he loses it. Only a person who becomes a immigrant can understand.

My Mother asked me to stay for the last meal. We all sat at table, and I have my eyes around the table and wondered if and when I would ever see them again, and I knew that they felt like I. The dinner was like someone would throw hot water on stones. The watch ticked on, the time passed and limited minutes remained in the friendly company.

5 years are over since I crossed the ocean, a family scattered, and this strange world, no friends did I have. Very often I am under the pressure of loneliness, in this strange world. Where is my wife, child, mother, father, and good friends that I left behind. The friendship between brother and sister, is different in Russia, than in this country that my ship has brought me to.

An Uncle who came to say goodbye in Russia, is in the house and said " In the street it rains and it will be impossible to use a sled, to go to the station, He will lone us a horse and so, with 3 horses and a wagon that had 2 wheels, they put in my luggage and then, there was only room for me and my father to sit.

And so I went to the station.

15th. Jan. 1919.

Actually they told me that the watch had already passed 1 pm, and now its the last minutes, when I have to say goodbye to everyone.

The moment of my destiny was facing me. To be parted from all I loved.

Then started a cry from them all. My wife fell on my neck, everyone cried, I alone didn't cry. I had my child in my arms and with all my strength I pressed him to my chest. An aunty approached me and by force, had to tear him away, and told me to leave. Then everyone told me "Its time to leave ", leave where to?

With my " wonderstecken " ( wandering cane, swag ), I had to become familiar.

I started to embrace everyone in the room, and press them to my chest, and kiss them goodbye, but I understood they were already far from me. At that moment I was already separated from them, and G'D, alone knew, for how long, and if not forever.

And so I left the four corners of that room, where my Mother gave birth to me, and that piece of land under the sun, where I was brought up, and grew up.

On crossing the threshold at the door, I was throwing a glance back, to make sure that I had taken leave of them all. Every single person there, was very dear to my heart, even strangers that came in , I loved when I took leave of them. I embraced them,

for already, I felt the total loneliness that I will face from now on. And it was true because the moment I stepped on the new soil, I was encircled in loneliness, and met all that was strange to me.

Everything was well prepared for my journey, to the station. My father was already sitting in the waggon and waiting for me, to sit beside him. After I left the house, I circled the waggon again and again before I took my seat. I saw the people assembled there, like a funeral, that was the thought that entered my mind, they stood there,

one would stand next to a died man, because at that moment I felt more died than alive. My mother with tears rolling down her cheeks, called out again and said to me

"My child dont forget to take leave of the, Mezuzahs which are on the doors." She already knew then, that I dont believe in it, and I only did so, for her sake.

I asked my father to start on our way and I didn't want anybody to go with us.

My father started to leave the yard. My wife followed the wagon, and everybody behind her. My mother, sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, friends and neighbours.

About 3 minyan ( 10 men make up 1 minyan ) of people stood there with tears in their eyes. It was a miserable day, it was raining again, so we could'nt go at a good speed, and as we started so did the snow. As we passed my uncles house, we gained a little speed, and at that point everybody was torn away from me. I again felt sadness and suffering. My wife and mother embraced me once more and cried bitterly. My mother cried out to me " My child do not forget us, and write". An uncle tore them away from me, but they still followed for a long time, and I kept looking at them, till the snow became too thick for me to see them, and to the time of writing, I see them no more

23rd. Jan. 1919.

They followed me for a long time, and the snow was getting heavier, and the last group had become too tired to go any further, they asked me to take leave of them. I understood that this was the last minute of friendship, that every moment was shortning it, and I have embarrassed them again, and asked them to show my wife and child, the love they have shown me.

The snow became solid and thick, and a cold wind started to blow. When I couldn't see them anymore, I asked my father to stop the wagon, because I wanted to sit with him. We travelled for a long time with out speaking to each other. I have never before seen him as sad as at this moment. Actually he started to cry, and he said to me " You see my child, who are we left with in our elderly days". I felt his pain, as much as my own, and I didn't imagine what kind of troubles I will face in the foreign land. We couldn't speak of anything, for our hearts were full of bitterness

3 Feb. 1919.

After 5 or 6 hours of travelling, on the 2 wheels of the wagon, we arrived at 8pm, at the station ROZOVKA.

We stopped at an Inn, because my train was due in 3 hours, on its way to KATRINXLOV. At the station I was met by brother, he had come to say goodbye to me. One of my dear friends from Rozovka told me, that my father in law was coming to the station. He wanted me to stay a day or two, for he said that his son in law, had a proposition for me. His proposition was completely out of place, but my voyage to Australia wasn't to my liking, the same I felt, about going to his son in law. My whole life at that moment wasn't to my liking. Against my will at that moment. My father in law wanted to please me, but the last few hours I wanted to spend with my father and brother, and they had disappeared.

Shortly afterwards we entered the station and there was my father and brother, with my luggage. I followed them like an exile to a foreign land, who doesn't know what awaits him.

While waiting at the station, I could hear my father crying, it was dark and we saw a comet in the sky, or what we call a falling star, one moment we see it, and then its gone. I tried to remember every detail, that my eyes could take in, but I really remember more now at the time of writing these lines. But only a migrant can truly understand how I felt. Standing in front of the train, I came to the last minutes with my father and brother.

My father in law was sitting in train and I heard the bell ring for the third time and after that the Russian whistle. My friends disappeared till this day.

6th. Feb. 1919.

When I entered the train it started to move, and soon I couldn't see any more, my father and brother. I still didn't feel utterly alone, because my father in law was sitting next to me, and so in silence we travelled. We had nothing to say to each other, but not wanting to aggravate him, and also wanting to ask him why, he wanted me, to see his son in law at KREVORA, but as I respected him, I remained silent. When the train stopped at FALOCAS, he asked me, "where are we and what was the time". That was the whole conversation. I told him. 3hrs later we left the train. His son in law was waiting for us. I didn't know this son in law. 3 oclock on a Russian Dec. morning we arrived, very tired, and still had 8 to 10 kil., to go to his home in CREVORA. We went by wagon. What does one not do in life, for a father in law, when he loves his wife. Its like the Russian proverb "If you like to slide, you have to carry the sledge". After 2 hrs of travelling in wagon, we arrived at 5 oclock in the morning at Krevora, full of snow. I asked my brother in law that I need to rest, because I'm very tired and distressed, as well he could see. He showed me where to lie down and rest. I fell asleep instantly.

18th. March 1919.

10 in the morning my brother in law came into my room and told me to get up. I washed and dressed, they prepared for me tea and we started to talk about my voyage. And like you receive a good brother in law, or a guest who you know little of, they did me. They did their best to give me a kind reception. If they hadn't offended me about my voyage, I wouldn't have any thing against them. After the meal, I sat with my brother in law in his office.

He started to needle me, " Why are you going to Australia, which is really only a Colony where statistics show a very small population, the climate is very, very hot, and the people are black. What can you do without money and language."

I must add that partly, my brother in law, had spoken to the point, but to understand the course of my leaving Russia, he didn't want to understand, and if I remember well, neither did any one in Krevora, they were angry with me. The next day at 12 oclock noon , I started to prepare myself to continue my voyage from Krevora, and my angry father in law, asked me to wait one or two more days, because yet another brother in law, and his wife, were to come, not to take leave of me, but to try and change my mind. I felt the anger of every one there. My brother in law spoke to me a lot, but the rest of the family, only looked at me in a funny way, for that was the way they wanted to react. That 24th Dec. 1913, I felt that friends such as they, I didn't need.

At 3 oclock I told my brother in law to take me back to the station, and shortly after, a cart did take me to the station. I took leave of them all, after wishing them the best. I have never heard from them again.



26th. March. 1919.

After a few hours on a Russian cart with 2 horses, I arrived at 5 in the afternoon at TXAPLINE station. I was to wait for 3 hours, for the train to WARSAW, and there a desolation fell over me, and truthfully from that Tues. 24th Dec, 1913, the word of solitude, started for me, as to this day.

A couple of times I left the station to go out to the street. I started to observe all around me. The sun started to set in the sky, you could see here and there a light star, light from the shining full moon, lighted up the border of the sky and evening became lighter, as if the night finished, but night had not started yet, and so contemplating the richness of nature, I started to take leave of this land. I entered the station and bought a ticket to KALISH. Shortly after the train pulled up to the platform and after 3 whistles, I was ready with my luggage, to continue my voyage.

When I left TXAPLINE on the way to KATRINISLOV, I started to feel bad, I was feverish my whole body felt either hot or cold. At 3 in the morning I had to change trains, and still an other change of trains, some 2hrs later, and then I got to FASTOV station at 9.30 in the morning and then had 3hrs to wait for train to WARSAW. At Fastov station I met many Jews, with long black coats (kapotas) and large fur rimmed hats (strymal), big long noses, and long ear locks (payes), and that's what we call "Itze Mayer" ( typical religious Jewish character). They looked like decent people, so I said to them " how about, if you don't put on your Tullis ( prayer shawl) and Tvillen ( Lacteries\_ small leather box with thin strips attached ) in a place where everybody looks at you strangely". They replied with a proverb, " This world is also a world". And so with Yarmelka on their heads, wrapped in tullis, they continued to pray, at the station.

3rd. April. 1919.

After 12 noon I continued my journey from Pastov station to KOVELLA.

I had to change trains again, at 5 in the afternoon I arrived at Warsaw.

I had often been warned to be careful of thieves, and pickpockets.

Outside the station, stood the Droskis ( handsome cabs ), the drivers called out as loud as possible " Kalisha station, Vienna station ". The drivers stood with

wide trousers and very small caps, that had a button in the middle. I called one and he took me to Kalisha station. I arrived at 7 in the evening, and there I saw porters, with a few travellers, and 2 students from Mariopol, where I got to know them, and continued with them to Kalish. On the 26th Dec. 1913. at Kalish station in Warsaw I wrote my first letter, to my wife and parents, reporting of my voyage so far. I didn't write them much, but I felt my great loss and to this day, I still do. My letter was very short.

At 12 minight the train left Warsaw, to Kalish. Shortly after leaving Warsaw we approached the frontier - The frontier of the motherland, and the heart started beating faster and we all remained silent. One of my co- travellers said, " It must be now 2 in the morning, who knows if my mother is asleep". I believe that he imagined that she was walking in the room, sad, in tears, and is looking for her Isak (son). I felt very sorry for him, as it reminded me again of my wife, child, parents and family that I had left, and I also was close to tears, but I must stay too hard for tears.

At 6-30 in the morning the " Itze Mayers", started to come out from under the seats, and came down to the Kalish station. The controller took my ticket, searched me and my belongings, and let me enter the station. My 2 fellow travellers continued in same train, to Berlin.