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THE PICTURE AND THE POEM

Ms. Sivan Rahav-Meir started her report with:

This is one of those stories that you would tend to think is a fairy tale, unless you heard it firsthand:

Boris Heikin, 87, grew up in Kharkiv, Ukraine – where he was denied his Jewish heritage and identity. He made *aliyah* in the 1990s. Recently,¹ he sat with his family and looked through old pictures; among them was a picture of his grandfather, who was a religious Jew. Behind the picture were written words in Hebrew, which Boris didn't understand at all.

Ina, his daughter, translated them for him. It turns out that they came from the poem of a Russian-Jewish poet, Simon Frug, and were written down by his grandfather:

*The time is near when our Nation
The son that forgets who his parent is,
Will not understand even one word of his own language,
The Holy Tongue in which his Torah is written.*

The daughter says these lines speak precisely about her father, who has difficulty understanding Hebrew. She added:

“We all had a feeling that this was not meaningless, that this is his grandfather’s will for us to keep the legacy.” She continued:

“We called “Hebron Tefillin” to order *tefillin* for my father for the first time in his life. Pinchas Dell, a *sofer* (scribe) and a guide in the factory, was moved by the story. He is used to making *tefillin* for boys approaching age 13, not an elder who is 87 years old.”

“He came over to my father’s home specially to teach him how to wrap *tefillin*. Later, my father sat and watched YouTube videos in Russian

¹ Around six years ago, a number of months before this article was originally published in 2019.

on how to put on *tefillin* in order to practice it, and now he keeps this practice up.

“We learned from him that it is never too late – that all the attempts of big empires to turn our light off will never succeed and that even very old prayers in the Ukraine can be revived and fulfilled in Rishon LeZion after almost 100 years. My father’s grandfather was so afraid that the chain would break, but here in Israel...it didn’t.”



Boris Heikin, 87

the poem

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Source: Modified by Yerachmiel Tilles from an article by **Sivan Rahav-Meir** in her column, “Torah from a TV Anchor,” and reprinted in the Jewish Press, 18 Sivan 5779/June 21, 2019

*Sivan Rahav-Meir* is a famed and much admired Israeli journalist, primetime news reporter, publicist, and TV and radio anchor.

Why this week?: The mitzvah of tefillin is mentioned in this week’s Torah reading, Ekev (6:8).