



Sixth Meeting - Moti Cheruti - the Ural Mountains

As I had already discovered, my father, together with his siblings-in-law and friends, fled to Russia. They arrived in the Ural Mountains. In my opinion, it is correct to say that they were exiled there.

The Russians did not receive well the Jewish refugees who had fled from occupied Poland to Russian soil in order to save themselves. Although, they did in fact take in these refugees, they only - or primarily - did so from financial motives. The refugees were required to carry out work in their professions, such as tailoring and shoemaking, for the Russian Army's units. They were mainly concerned with the welfare of their officers.

The others, who lacked the required professions, were employed in arduous physical labour. They mainly worked in logging, quarries and in all other backbreaking forms of toil. Many died of hunger, the freezing cold and exhaustion. They were not accustomed to working and living in such conditions. The fact is that none of them, except for my father, survived. Was it due to the gruelling labour or the cold that they succumbed, or was it perhaps to the hunger? That was another mystery that accompanied me.

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As a result of an article about my volunteer work for Holocaust survivors, which featured in the periodical *Yediot Ha'Sharon* and on the Ynet website, I was contacted by a man named Moti Cheruti, who wished me to verify what his rights were as a Holocaust survivor.

After a conversation and conducting an examination, it turned out that he had already received his full rights. But, nearing the end of the conversation, he mentioned in a few words the Ural Mountains. So I asked him to tell me his tale.

He was seven-years-old when the Second World War broke out. His family left the town of Jarosław, where they lived, and they went to Lwów, where they met his aunt - his father's sister.

Lwów was then under Russian control. They were moved to Russia - to the Ural Mountains, to a place called Sverdlovsk. The journey from Lwów to the Ural Mountains took about two months. They made most of the way on trains intended for cattle.

As stated, Jews exiled to the Ural Mountains were put to strenuous labour. Many of them died, as they were not accustomed to living and working in unbearable conditions. Luck was on the side of the Cheruti family, which was originally named "Chrapliwa". Moti's father was a cobbler. As an excellent craftsman, he enjoyed many privileges and his life was relatively comfortable. In 1942, the family was transferred, by the Russians, to the city of Samarkand in Uzbekistan, as a token of appreciation for the services his father had rendered the Russian soldiers and, especially, to the officers.

After the War ended, their intention was to return to Poland. But, due to the rumours of the rising antisemitism there, the family decided to travel to Germany, to the city of Ulm, where they were put into DP camps.

The Cheruti family made *aliyah* in November 1948 - at the very same time my parents and I boarded the ship "Marathon London" at the port of Marseilles. The Cheruti family were transferred to the Immigrants' House in Pardes-Chana and, after a few months, moved to Jaffo, to Street 60 [nowadays the Giv'at Aliyah neighbourhood]. For lack of any other testimonies and information, I assume that the quest my father and his friends made was an analogous one.