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LGBTQ Religious Archives Network Oral Histories

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Title

Levi Alter Oral History Interview and Transcript

Date

February 4, 2018.

Extant

1 hour 49 minutes interview (three files) and 1 transcript

Abstract

Rabbi Dr. Levi Ethan Alter discusses the medical abuse he faced as an intersex child, as well as his involvement in FTM groups as an adult and starting his own medical corporation. He discusses his ordination and his work in clinical pastoral education and bioethics, advocating for intersex people.

Biographical

Rabbi Dr. Levi Ethan Alter is an Orthodox Jewish rabbi. He is the spiritual leader of his congregation of Holocaust survivors and the CEO of a healthcare corporation. His previous professional experiences include being on the clinical faculty of UCLA Medical Center and a university department chairman. The Alexander hasidic (pietist) movement was founded in Poland in 1880 in Aleksandrow, it was the second largest hasidic group in Poland after Ger. The shtiebl (hasidic synagogue) of the Alexander hasidim in Ostrolenka was the house of Lewtan the baker. Every member of our family but seven, along with the rest of the six thousand Jews of Ostroleka, were lost in the Holocaust. My father was Shimon ben Zev Wolf HaLevi. His mother was Golda bas Shimon, born in Ostroleka Poland and sister of Alexander and Shalom who died in the Holocaust, who my son Alexander Shalom is named after and Sarah who died in the Holocaust, who my daughter Sarah is named after. My mother is Chana bas Kalev. Her mother was Elisheva bas Yosef and her mother was Malka bas Feivel. I had three older brothers, Mendel Chaim, Hershel Rafael and Anshel Gavriel. I am the fourth, Levi Ethan, in the middle, but was the oldest, because my three brothers each died right after being born prematurely. I

had three younger siblings, Shmuel Dov Baer, Shulamis Yocheved and Tzipporah Miriam. My youngest sister Tzippy died of cancer, so my mother has buried four of her seven children.

I am married to Rebbetzin Dr. Yona Ruth Alter, a physician, and have nine children: Rabbi Royi Israel is a pulpit rabbi in New York City, Michael David is a social worker, Gavriel Aiden who died when he was 27 of a congenital lung disease, Chaplain Aleksander Dmitri, Chaplain Alexander Shalom, Bernard, Rabbi Shamai Meir is a hasidic rabbi in Jerusalem, Elizabeth and Sarah Lior.” He is the fourth generation of intersex individuals in his family. An internationally sought-after expert on intersex concerns, he has been called upon on a regular basis to advise physicians concerning the treatment of intersex newborns and is involved with policy making at the international level. His current work for trans inclusion in religion, health care and other fields includes being a keynote speaker and organizer for major conferences and events, interviews on LOGO, MTV, MSNBC, Newsweek, BBC Radio and many other documentaries and media appearances. He is the President of FTM International, spanning more than twenty countries and over thirty years building FTM lives, families and communities (www.FTMI.org). He was honored with the Icon Award from Trans Unity Pride for lifetime service to the transgender community.

This interview was conducted by Mark Bowman, the executive director of LGBT-RAN. He holds a Master of Divinity degree from Boston University School of Theology and has played a key leadership role in establishing a number of religious ventures and programs.

Scope and Content

Rabbi Dr. Levi Ethan Alter is an Orthodox Jewish Rabbi and the fourth generation of intersex individuals in his family. He discusses the medical abuse he faced as an intersex child, as well as his involvement in FTM groups as an adult and starting his own medical corporation. He discusses his ordination and his work in clinical pastoral education and bioethics, advocating for intersex people.

Access

Open to all researchers.

<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/levi-ethan-alter>

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Languages

Collection material is in English

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Tags

Alter, Levi Ethan

Trans activism

Jewish (Orthodox)

Clergy Activist