HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL PROGRAMS-II



Ervin Birnbaum

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Ten More Original Programs Commemorating the Shoah

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Holocaust Memorial Programs *- II*

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This book is dedicated
to my pure, wonderful, beloved family members
who were murdered by the Nazis in the Shoah

My maternal grandparents:

Eliezer David Krischer and Ita Bergman

My paternal grandparents:

Eliezer Birnbaum and Amalia (Malcsi) Bergman

My aunt and uncle:

Chayei-Sara Krischer and Shlomo Klagsbald
and their three young children: Haim-Eber, Miriam, and Yehuda-Leib

My aunt and uncle:

Esther-Malka Krischer and Shimon Gluck

My great-aunts:

Rivka Matel-Bergman and Leiba Bergman

My great-uncle:

Joshua Bergman

My cousins:

Ela-Malka Abraham, Samuel Birnbaum, 3 girls of the Beranek family,
and Shlomo Schlamovitz, who was taken away in front of our very eyes
(I'll never forget the look on his face as he was led away)

And other members of our extended family

A NOTE FROM THE FAMILY

Baruch Dayan Emet

Our Patriarch, Rabbi Ervin Birnbaum, departed this life on July 24, 2022 (25 Tamuz, 5782).

His death is a grievous loss to our family and our community. To us, this second volume of his Holocaust Memorial Programs represents a memorial and tribute to him, as well as to the heroes of the Shoah, both martyrs and survivors.

He and the rest of the Shoah survivors witnessed and contributed to the amazing modern miracle of the rebirth of the People of Israel in its ancient homeland. As an individual, and as a community leader and educator, he devoted much of his life to that great historic endeavor.

Our family was blessed by his warmth, caring, wisdom and idealism.

We are grateful that he got to see the first volume of this anthology in pre-publication form. He would be very glad to know that both volumes will help community leaders and organizers present moving Holocaust Memorial Programs in their localities and organizations.

In this spirit we remember him and celebrate his life work while wishing you all success in yours, for the betterment of Israel and of all humankind.

The Birnbaums

Israel,

June, 2023

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL PROGRAMS-II

Ten More Original Programs Commemorating the Shoah

INTRODUCTION

This anthology presents a collection of programs relating to the Holocaust (the Shoah) perpetrated by the Nazis and their collaborators. Each focuses on a specific location (such as Kovno or Mauthausen), aspect (such as God and the Shoah), person or event (such as Chana Szenesh, or the Wannsee Conference). They were originally designed to be presented to an audience, but can be read aloud in any group setting, or serve as a Holocaust reader.

Each program is original and unique. Dealing in depth with a single theme leads to a stronger response and more lasting impression. All were presented at Congregation Bet Israel, Netanya, and without fail, audience participants responded with sustained silence and tears in many eyes. Every presentation opened with an introductory responsive reading followed by a song. Then the main body of the program was narrated by volunteers, with appropriate songs performed to break up the content and for enhanced effect. Programs concluded with a special reading and Kaddish, lighting six memorial candles, Yizkor prayers, and singing Ani Ma'amin and Hatikva. The recommended format and readings are presented in the appendix.

I used various sources to research the topics herein, and often translated Yiddish and German sources myself. Any errors are my own. A selected bibliography appears in the back of the book. I thank and salute the authors of these works.*

It is my fervent hope that these programs will be useful to you in organizing a meaningful Holocaust Memorial experience, or Holocaust study. They are even more relevant as Holocaust survivors dwindle in number. They are meant to teach and touch hearts and minds while commemorating the horrific historical events and the lives of the millions caught up in this relatively recent and most evil genocide in the annals of humankind. We stand together and vow that we will never forget, and that nothing like it will ever be allowed to happen again.

ERVIN BIRNBAUM

Netanya, Israel, June 2022

* *These programs were created for live presentation — for audiences gathered to remember, mourn, and learn. Professor Birnbaum wrote as a survivor, an educator, and a witness to history, drawing on decades of reading, study, and personal experience. His sources included the works listed in the selected bibliography, as well as articles and testimonies citing primary sources — but because the programs were designed for the stage rather than the page, formal citations were not part of their original form.*

The historical record on which these programs rest is well-documented. If you nonetheless encounter an error or ambiguity, please email me so that future editions may be corrected: aitonbirnbaum@gmail.com Thank you.

AB

The *Bad Arolsen Archives,* Jewish Pride and Heroism

Surprising insights have begun to emerge from this monumental archive of material relating to the fate of specific people caught up in the Holocaust

See appendix for suggested introductory section.

Back in April, 1945, World War II was still raging and the world knew little about gas chambers, genocide and the Final Solution. A 21-year-old Russian sat before a clerk of the U.S. Army Judge Advocate's office, describing the furnaces at Auschwitz, the Nazi death camp where he had been prisoner until a few days before. He said:

"I saw with my own eyes how thousands of Jews were gassed daily and thrown by the hundreds into pits where Jews were burning… I saw how little children were beaten to death with clubs and thrown into the fire… Blood flowed in gutters… Jews were thrown in and died there; more were taken off trucks and cast alive into the flames."

Today the Shoah is known in dense and painful detail. Yet the young Russian's words leap off the faded onionskin page with a rawness that transports the reader back to that horrendous time that we would love to, but cannot -- and are not allowed to -- forget.

What also makes the eyewitness testimony of the young Russian remarkable, is that it lay hidden for 62 years in an archive in a place called Bad Arolsen, Germany, unavailable to the public. Time stopped there in April, 1945.

A small fraction of the archive contains testimony taken by the Allies upon liberation of camps and prisoner-units in diverse places, in the last few months of the war. However, the **Nazis themselves** kept stunningly precise and detailed records. A German insider working on the archives for long years, noted: "This reflects the bureaucracy of the devil". It was very significant to them to record for posterity their mastery in the art of mass-murder. They were perfectionists.

Only at the end, when the Nazis recognized that their situation was hopeless, did they stop documenting their ongoing atrocities and begin marching Jewish prisoners directly from the trains to the gas chambers without registration.

The Allies conveyed the vast amount of surviving material to the German town of Bad Arolsen, where it was sorted, filed and locked away in a former barracks of the Waffen-SS, the Nazi Party's elite force. The material is stored in long corridors of drab cabinets and neatly stenciled binders packed into floor-to-ceiling metal shelves. The index cards alone fill three large rooms.

An Agency known by the name of International Tracing Service, an arm of the Red Cross, was put in charge of the archives. Despite the protests of survivors who were anxious for any scrap of information about their dear ones, the material was concealed from the public because of an insipid international law designed, as it were, to safeguard victims' privacy.

By now, most of the interested family members who survived the war -- parents, children, brothers, sisters -- are dead. The vital element of gaining personal solace and inspiration from evidence of the fate of their loved ones has been lost. The material, however, maintains an eternal, intrinsic value as testimony to the astounding human capacity for infinite good and infinite evil.

The archives defy Holocaust-deniers. As we lose eye-witnesses who experienced the Holocaust, the existence and availability of archival information left behind by the Nazis themselves, gathered by the Allies, and sorted mainly by Germans, gains significance of historic magnitude.

In November, 2006, 62 years after the truckloads and trainloads of material were deposited in Bad Arolsen, the archives were declared officially open. But until March of 2007, when this program was prepared, not a stitch of information had been released to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Information quoted here had to be attained through diverse sources, including the Associated Press, the "U.S.A. Today" and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Perhaps the vastness of the archives will be grasped from some figures:
It consists of 16 miles (25 km) of **tightly packed** files; records of 17.5 million people -- Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, mental patients, physically disabled, political prisoners and other "undesirables" -- persecuted during the Nazi regime's 12 years in power.

There are 50 million pages, in thousands of filing cabinets, including scraps of paper found in victims' clothing; last messages, notes thrown to the wind from trains, across electrified wire fences, over fortified walls; letters sent and received; meticulous transport lists; labor documents and medical records; death registers, recording the arrest, transportation and extermination of victims; as well as pieces of jewelry, watches, and other knick-knacks.

A plain manila envelope contains a wallet, some snapshots, and a naughty typewritten joke about women in the army belonging to Cornelis Marinus Brouwenstijn. With relatives long deceased, there is no one left to apply for the return of the mementos that might have provided precious solace to family members.

In some cases, precise transport lists document the head lice found on prisoners' heads. Each prisoner listed in a separate line by name and identification number, the number of lice found, and even the size of the lice scrupulously recorded as "*klein, medium, gross*"...

The archives contain the full "Shindler's list" -- the names of 1,000 prisoners -- 700 men and 300 women -- saved by Oskar Schindler, who told the Nazis he needed them to work in his factory.

There is Mauthausen concentration camp's "*Totenbuch*", or Death-Book, which records in exemplary, meticulous handwriting, crowded single-spaced on each page, how on April 20, 1942, Hitler's birthday, a prisoner was shot in the back of the head every two minutes around the clock. This exquisite birthday present for the Fuehrer was ordered by the Mauthausen camp commandant. "It must have been tiring just to write this, let alone to kill them all", remarked a German insider. One shudders to note that each prisoner is recorded, line by line, name, identification number, and exact hour ***and minute*** of execution. The column "cause of death" states simply, "executed" -- each and every line.

Among the millions of files, some carry well-known names, such as Annaleese Marie Frank, better known as Anna Frank. Her file offers a paper-trail from Amsterdam to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. It records her date of birth -- June 12, 1929, her Amsterdam address before going into hiding -- Merwedeplein 37, the date she was deported to Bergen-Belsen -- September 3, 1944, her arrival, and her death from typhus a few days before liberation at the age of 15.

Final Journey – A Holocaust Song. Words and music: Aiton Birnbaum

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=za_c3F8wnlo

(Performed by Sheer Birnbaum)

A page of fifty names from Buchenwald, each with vital statistics, lists the people who were sent to Dora, an infamous German underground factory that produced the lethal V-1's and V-2's that wrought havoc in London toward the end of the war. Virtually **none of the thousands who were**

on Dora transports survived its terrible slave labor conditions. One of the names on the list is Nicholas Schwartz, age 14 at the time. His name is **crossed out** with a neat and straight black life-line. Miki Schwartz, at the time this program was prepared, resided in San Diego, California. In a filmed interview, when asked if he was aware that he was listed on the Dora transport, his face reflected incomprehension. He did **not** know. When the impact of the question hit home, he began trembling uncontrollably. He was saved by an invisible hand, the secret coming to light 62 years later, as information from the Bad Arolsen archives began to trickle out.

What already emerges clearly from the archives is that the number of detention camps was vastly under-estimated. Postwar historians estimated a maximum of 7,000 sites. Researchers of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the first outsiders with access to the files, now identify over 20,000 camps and ghettos of various types, deserving a seven-volume encyclopedia.

The information from Bad Arolsen is reputedly being cross-filed according to diverse categories, such as medical experimentation, armed revolts and similar. There seems to be no category for unarmed Jewish resistance, or for Jewish pride in the face of certain death. Yet, such categories have a heroic quality, a dimension all their own, deserving more than fleeting mention.

Each Holocaust survivor -- and in a sense we are **all** Holocaust survivors -- has a right to a sense of great pride that we never cowered, never crawled in the dust before the Nazis and their cohorts. Said Walter Faigen, a survivor from Buchenwald's barrack 66 -- in a statement recorded at Bad Arolsen: "Breaking down, this is **one thing we never did in the camp.** We never wanted to break down in front of the SS-men, to give them the pleasure of seeing us breaking down."

We sang of pain; of hope; of longing; of love; we cried in our hearts -- but **we never whimpered before the foe.**

Shtiler, Shtiler, Lomir Shveign

Quiet, quiet, let's keep silent,
Graves are growing here.
Secretly planted by our foes,
To the heavens rise our woes,
Out to Ponar leads our way
Yesterday, tomorrow, every day.

Hush, my child, dry your tears,
weeping is of no avail.
Our foe neither sees nor hears
The depth of our tragic tale.

Shores enclose even the seas,
There are limits to tragedies.
Only our pain – without end –
Noone is now here to mend.

Shtiler, Shtiler -- Words: Shmerke Kaczerginsky; Music: Alek Volkovisky

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYr0v-FHOXg

(Performed by Chava Alberstein)

The Jews of Kelem, Lithuania, were ordered to line up at the edge of the pits they had been forced to dig. Facing them were the machine gun emplacements, manned by German soldiers. The rabbi of the community, Rav Daniel Moshowitz, turned to the German officer in charge to request he be allowed a few parting words to his congregation. The officer, with a smirk, gave him a minute. In a calm, steady voice, as he would normally teach Torah, the rabbi reminded his congregants of *Kiddush Hashem*, the martyrdom Jews suffered over countless generations. **"We are now facing Kiddush Hashem**. Join me in accepting our fate in a calm spirit, to the glorification of God's Name". The Rabbi then turned to the German officer and said: "I finished. You can begin."

Efraim Kravcsinky relates: "Twelve of us were marched out of town about one km., and commanded to dig two ditches. We were then ordered aside. Two groups of Jews were soon brought to the ditches. Spurred on by kicks and whips and barks of the SS, they were ordered to undress and kneel facing the ditch. Among them was the Rabbi of the community. He instructed them not to kneel, but to lift themselves up on their toes and hands. As the Germans trained their guns on them, the Rabbi yelled out: '*Yidden, es wet zein gut. Leint Shma Yisroel.*' 'Jews, it will be alright. Recite the Shma Yisroel' (Hear O' Israel…). Not a single one of them cried as the Germans opened fire."

Mir Leben Eybig (We'll Live Forever)

Mir leben eybig - es brent di velt…
Mir leben eybig -- mir zeinen do!

We carry on, in world aflame.
On, with nothing and no name.
Burst in anger – awful foe
Before you we'll not bow low.
Hour by hour, on we strive
We want to live, we shall survive!

Mir Leben Eybig -- Words: Leyb Rozental; Music: traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZnvx3sRkOg

(Performed by Louisa Lyne and *di Yiddishe Kapelye*)

Alternative: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiJ-Xh4s-8M

The last transport from Buchania was taken on August 2, 1943. A group of Jews was left behind, as a clean-up squad, among them the baker, Herschel Tziml, and his son. There were also about a hundred Jews still hiding in bunkers, despite ongoing, fruitless searches of the Gestapo and Polish police. For several weeks in the darkness of the night, the baker and his son secretly brought water and bread to those in hiding. One night they were spotted coming home with empty baskets and jugs. They were dragged to the Gestapo courtyard and interrogated in separate corners of the yard.

The father was promised that if he revealed the locations of the hideouts, his son would be spared. Thereupon the father cried out with all his might: "I command you, son, in the name of the God of Israel and for the honor of your father that you reveal nothing to the murderers! They will kill us anyway!" At this, the son broke through the cordon of soldiers, raced to his father, embraced him and cried out to the Nazis, with their guns raised: "Shoot us, murderers, we shall betray no one, no one!" They were both shot, holding on to each other in a mighty embrace.

By SS order, it was prohibited to give birth to a child in Theresienstadt. The head of the *Judenrat*, Yakov Edelstein, was determined, nevertheless, to save some Jewish babies. He did that by first covering up for the expectant mothers, then by hiding the babies, and eventually, by falsifying identity cards for them using cards of children who had died.

He was caught by the SS who went on a rampage. They arrested him and his family, including his nine-year-old son, Daniel, and sent them to Auschwitz, where Edelstein was kept in a punishment cell without light, food or water, or even room to stand. In mid-June, 1944, he was released to a barracks, and became buoyant with hope. But just a few days later, on June 20th, he was forced to watch while his wife and young son were executed. Then he himself was shot. An eye-witness, Yossl Rosensaft, recalled:

"Yakov was in the same barracks as I was -- number 13 -- on that Monday morning. He was saying his morning prayers, wrapped in his Tallit. Suddenly the door burst open, and SS Lieutenant Franz Hoessler strutted in, accompanied by three SS men. He called out Yakov's name. Yakov did not move. Hoessler screamed: 'I am waiting for you! Hurry up!' Yakov turned around very slowly, faced Hoessler, and said quietly: 'Of the last moments on this earth allotted to me by the Almighty, I am the master, not you'. Whereupon he turned back to the wall, and finished his prayers. He then folded his Tallit unhurriedly, handed it to one of the inmates, and said to Hoessler: 'I am now ready'. Hoessler stood there all the while without uttering a word, and marched out when Edelstein was ready. Edelstein followed him, and the three SS men made up the rear. We never saw Yakov Edelstein again".

Farvos iz der Himl

Farvos iz der himl geven nechtn loiter
Fun fraid hot geshaint jede gass?
Farvos iz di zun aza lichtige, route,
Farchmuret haint, beiz un in kass?

Why in the past was the sky so much lighter,
Joy everywhere to be seen?
Oh, why is the sun which could never be brighter
Clouded now, angry and mean?

Dry all your tears, forget all misgiving,
Mourning the past -- not for you!
A new day is coming, certainly coming,
When sunlight will sparkle anew!

Farvos iz der Himl -- Words: Leyb Opeskin*; Music: unknown

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DOTHgU3LtE

* Leyb Opeskin, co-founder of the Vilna partisans, was killed the day before its liberation.

On the eve of the liquidation of the Jewish community in the Lithuanian town of Moliat, a young Jewish woman by the name of Tzipora wrote a parting letter to her husband, Moshe, who had managed to escape with two of their children, Buna and Beila. The address Tzipora wrote on the letter in English was "Mr. Bok, Post Office Alberton, Transwaal, South Africa. Presumably that's where they had family, and that would be their eventual contact point. Most probably, the letter was thrown out of the building where the Jews were assembled before the "Aktzion". A Lithuanian woman found the letter and held on to it, awaiting an opportunity that might allow its delivery. The letter was written in Yiddish:

> Dear Moshe, Buna and Beila,
>
> *Halevai* (I hope) that you are all healthy. We will pray for you in the *Olam Habah*, in the world to come, before the Almighty. The person who will deliver this letter to you deserves a great reward. We are fasting already two days and are now ready for the *tevach* – the slaughter, tomorrow. Our *Yahrzeit* will be the 29th of August. Please remember the date. Father is no more at home, and who knows? It's a long time that he is gone. We are dressed, all of us, together with my dear children, and are waiting, all of us together, in the *Bes Hamidresh* (the religious study-hall). We are fed up already with this life, and have prayed repeatedly that we be delivered by death. On *Rosh Chodesh Av* (first day of the month of Av) they lined us up to shoot us, but a miracle happened. If God will have mercy upon us today, that will be another miracle. Moshe, they want to hurt your children, our little children. That's what they want. So be well, and be strong. Let us Jews here sacrifice, so that you and the children with you may be delivered.
>
> Your Tzipora

Mame, Mame

I don't want to give a thought
To what I've lived through, what I sought,
Since from home I went away
Darkest memories -- night and day.

Somber hours, dreary ways,
Rob me of all warm repose,
Oft at night, no one in sight
To Mom in dreams, my cry goes:

Mother, mother, kind and mild,
Send a blessing for your child;
If God wills, we'll survive this trial,
Then perhaps we'll meet, in just a while.

In *Lager Stuthoff*, the week before Yom Kippur, the Jews were starved to their limit. On Yom Kippur, the holiest day and a day of fasting, the Nazis ordered the Jews into the courtyard. Steaming hot, delicious soup, brimming with vegetables, was ladled out to them, the aroma carried to the farthest corners of the camp. A dream. The Jews were served large portions standing in their places, without having to wait in line. No pushing, no shoving, being **served**. With big smiles on their faces, the Nazis wished a hearty appetite to all and urged them on to eat and enjoy the delicious food, specially prepared for Yom Kippur. The devil and his disciples prepared a veritable feast for this festive occasion. A silent murmur passed up and down the lines. A message of defiance: Hold out! Don't give them the satisfaction! Don't touch the devil's portion. We will endure! We will show them who we are! They can break our body, but they can't break our will! They can stop us from eating, but they can't force us to eat!

No one touched the food that glorious day in *Lager Stuthoff*. Many of the Jews in that courtyard had never fasted on Yom Kippur, but <u>that</u> memorable Yom Kippur -- they did. <u>That</u> memorable day they demonstrated their resistance, their true strength, their courage. <u>That</u> glorious Yom Kippur, in their stunning way, the Jews demonstrated that they are not slaves to raw and cruel might. Indeed, in their defiance, the Jews triumphed and proved themselves to be masters over their fate. A seemingly insignificant act of refusing food to thwart the tyrant, turned into a mighty symbol of resistance -- where other means were not available.

Es Shlogt Di Sho

The hour strikes,
We scan the horizon.
Dawn shall soon come.
The sky shall turn blue.

Though now it's pitch-dark
We patiently await the day
When all memory of the foe
shall be washed away.

Es Shlogt Di Sho -- Words and music: Kasriel Broydo

www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRl7QIVdJR8

(Performed by *WanDeRer Quartett*)

Compare: https://tinyurl.com/4jzdvjk2

Surrounded by the stench of death, utterly humiliated, stripped of their clothing, cruelly beaten, tortured and starved, infants thrown alive into searing flames before the eyes of their parents, and parents massacred in front of their children -- the Jews were not stripped of their dignity. They had no weapons to resist but the weapon of pride. They had nothing to fling in the face of their foes -- except their fierce will to live. They seemed to possess the faith, the hope and the trust ingrained in the very fiber of their being that the Jewish People will endure, will survive, and will ultimately triumph over its enemies. Indeed, a thousand years hence, our marching steps through history will yet thunder:

Mir zainen do! Anachnu po! We survive!

Oh, never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive!

From land of palm trees to the land of distant snow,
We are here, with our pain, and with our woe,
But wherever our blood was shed in pain,
Our fighting spirit will resurrect again.

Tomorrow's sun will gladden our today,
The past with bitter foe shall pass away.
But should the sun at dawn briefly delay,
Then let our call ring loud and clear: it's on the way.

Not lead, but blood, inscribed this song we sing,
It's not a caroling of birds upon the wing.
But 'twas a people midst the crashing fires of hell
That sang this song, and fought courageous till it fell.

So never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive.

Jewish Partisans' Song -- Words and music: Hirsch Glick

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wgYnYSg3Zs

(Performed by Chava Alberstein)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzPShrawxLc

(Performed by Paul Robeson)

✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡

See appendix for suggested concluding sections.

Chana Szenesh: Ever Young and Indomitable

The bravery of a young Jewish girl behind enemy lines

See appendix for suggested introductory section.

His disciples asked the Rebbi of Kotzk: "Why did the Holy One, Blessed be He, create darkness?"

The Rebbi replied: "So that He might have a place to hide Himself from man."

✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡

A scene from a destroyed Ghetto:

The Wehrmacht had overwhelmed the Ghetto. No signs of life were left. As the Nazi soldiers relaxed, they were surprised by gunfire again being opened upon them. Evidently the Germans underestimated the group of fighting partisans who chose to make their stand "to the last". Withering Nazi gunfire wasn't long in coming, and soon the remaining partisan nests were just a heap of rubble… But a single gun refused to be silenced, and kept hammering away.

Creeping up the rubble, the German soldiers caught the sole partisan who continued the fight. He turned out to be a ten-year-old boy. The boy was brought to the commanding officer who did not know whether to kill the child on the spot or not. Finally, he told the young partisan:

"I have one healthy eye. The other is a glass eye. If you can tell me which is my glass eye, I will not kill you."

The child looked at the officer for a moment, and said: "Your left eye is the glass eye."

"How did you know?" queried the surprised officer.

The child answered: "Because in your glass eye there is still a touch of humanity!"

✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡

God has great respect for children. It was the cry of the drowning infants in ancient Egypt that stirred God's mercy and redemption. When that young boy declared that the glass eye was the sole remaining human expression in man, God knew His time had come. He was stirred to compassion and mercy. But, alas, even God was helpless in the face of Nazi evil. And so, the Holy One, Blessed be He, wrapped Himself in His impenetrable cloak of darkness, and withdrew. God went into hiding…

✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡

The events to be described here took place between March and May, 1944. Thirty-two Jewish volunteers from the Land of Israel set out on missions inside Nazi-occupied Europe. They were young Jews from Palestine who made a desperate attempt to breach the curtain of silence, and bring a wisp of hope to their beleaguered brethren, being consumed in the fires of hell. Seven of them never returned, and have become legends:

Refael Reiss Zvi Greenhut Ben-Yakov
Peretz Goldstein Abba Berdichev
Enzo Sereni Aviva Reich
Chana Szenesh

The number of reports and eye-witness accounts of Nazi atrocities toward the Jewish People began as a trickle, early in the war. The stories were dismissed by the Allies as nightmarish fantasies. But by mid-1943, the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto was watched by the world in amazement, and it highlighted the desperate plight of the Jews and the horrendous intent of the Germans. By mid-1943 the atrocity reports had swelled into a flood that no sane person could dismiss any more.

But for the "civilized world", the Jews were expendable. The "civilized West" could turn a blind eye and ignore the Jews' situation with impunity.

The Jews under the British Mandate in Palestine pleaded that the gates of the Jewish National Homeland be opened to their people being burned to cinders in Europe, but their pleas were in vain. The Nazis were the executioners, and the Allies decided not to be the saviors.

The Allies had lost many airmen -- more than they could afford -- in their bombing of the Rumanian oil fields of Ploesti. Thirty-two Jews from the Land of Israel volunteered to parachute behind enemy lines, and to establish a clandestine network toward an escape and rescue attempt. The volunteers were told that if they first succeeded in the military mission of rescuing the pilots, ONLY THEN might they go on to try and save Jews.

With such an arrangement, the British had everything to gain and nothing to lose. Thus, an idealistic and intrepid group was brought together to train intensively for their unique mission. They learned to be spies and rescuers, radio operators and flyers. Each of them spoke the language of their target country. Each was to operate under an assumed name, as a Palestinian member of the Royal Air Force. In case of capture, they would at least theoretically be entitled to treatment accorded Prisoners of War under the terms of the Geneva Convention.

The first mission took off on March 13, 1944. Chana Szenesh was in that group.

Chana Szenesh was born in Budapest 23 years earlier, into a well-to-do, assimilated Hungarian family. She was sensitive and introspective and had a poetic nature. The growth of her Zionist consciousness coincided with the rise of Nazism. When Hitler attacked Poland and unleashed the Second World War on September 1, 1939, Chana left her parents' home for the Land of Israel as an idealistic Zionist and Jew. After a short interlude in a training school in Nahalal, she settled at Kibbutz Sdot Yam, near Caesarea.

She was very happy on the kibbutz, and her younger brother joined her. She was universally loved, and her poetry much-admired. But her happiness was marred by her people's tragic fate. Disturbing news came in dark waves from Europe. She began to feel the pull of destiny. Early in January 1944 she noted in her diary that she ought to return to Europe to do something to help, rather than just sit with folded hands, in a safe place. Some weeks later she wrote:

> "How strangely things develop! On January 8, I wrote of the idea which suddenly stirred me. A few days ago, a comrade told me of this mission being planned...just what I dreamed of... I feel a fatality in this, just as at the time before I went to Palestine. Then, too, I was not my own master. I was caught by an idea that gave me no rest. I knew I would enter Palestine, no matter the obstacles in my way. Now I again feel this tension towards an important and necessary task -- and the inevitability of the task."

On March 3, 1944, on a clear moonlit night, just past midnight, Chana parachuted into Tito-controlled Yugoslavia, together with Reuven Dafni, Yona Rosenfeld and Abba Berdichev. Tito's partisan headquarters briefed the parachutists regarding their mission. Chana was prepared to enter Hungary when suddenly word came that the Wehrmacht had invaded and occupied Hungary in a surprise, lightning operation. None of the mission-planners had taken such a possibility into account. To a former Hungarian citizen, the danger of crossing the border and operating inside Hungary suddenly escalated a thousand-fold. Chana was stunned by the unexpected development. Her comrade-in-arms, Reuven Dafni wrote:

> "Chana maintained a cool head under all circumstances. In her darkest hours she drew on amazing internal resources of strength and courage. In the plane, toward our destination, she awakened the admiration of our trainers and flyers. Her face was shining, she exuded humor and joy. Here and there she winked encouragingly, her ever-ready smile flashed confidence. Her joy was contagious, and she perceptibly dissipated our tension. The very first time I saw Chana break down weeping, and weeping bitterly, was when we were informed that the Germans had occupied Hungary. It was tragic news for her, and for all of us, even though we others were going to operate in Rumania or Slovakia. Weeping, Chana cried out: 'What shall happen now to the million Jews in Hungary? They are in Nazi hands. And we are forced to sit here!'"

Many thought that Chana's mission would simply be aborted. Indeed, the partisans advised against her crossing the border into Hungary. But let us hear from a first-hand witness who was there in the Dolomite mountains of Yugoslavia. Reuven Dafni continues in his memoir:

> "Chana allowed thoughts of defeat no quarter... My tongue fails me in describing Chana's last hours in Yugoslavia. She was overflowingly joyful. She exuded freshness, alertness and a sense of confidence. She was so pleasant and warm and concerned with us, so thoughtful and open-hearted! She spoke of her dreams when we would all return, and meet once again, in Eretz Yisrael:
>
> > 'When we shall return to the Land, we shall hire a big bus, and arrange a big *tiyul* throughout the Land. First and most of all, we shall visit the settlements whose *chaverim* participated in this venture. We shall arrange evening parties in those settlements, and we shall spin the tale of all that now happens to us, and all the gimmicks and bluffs we had to employ to wiggle through. We shall continue to travel and celebrate and tell the story for a month!!!'

> We parted at the corner of the village. My eyes followed that Israeli girl, who marched with such courage toward an unknown fate... I did not know then that I would never set eyes on her again."

Shortly before Chana struck out for the Hungarian border, she handed Reuven Dafni a little four-line poem. She scribbled it in her clear handwriting on a little piece of paper while waiting impatiently in Yugoslavia for her rendezvous with destiny. Four lines expressing her credo.

> *Ashrey Ha'Gafrur*: Blessed be the Match
>
> Blessed be the match that burns out igniting flames;
> Blessed be the flames that burn in the secret recesses of the hearts;
> Blessed be the hearts that know how to cease beating in honor;
> Blessed be the match that burns out igniting flames

Events moved swiftly. Soon after crossing the border, Chana was captured, carrying in her possession the damning evidence of a radio transmitter. She was grilled by the police about her activity, but refused to reveal the objective of her mission. She would not confess to anything incriminating. Her captors then confronted her with one of her contacts, Pierre, who had also been captured, and who -- unlike Chana -- had broken under torture.

> "Now, Pierre, tell your friend what it is that you revealed to us, so we shouldn't have to waste our time on her. Tell her that we know she is a Jewess, born in Hungary, and that the British army sent her as a spy. Tell her that with the radio equipment she was going to transmit information to the British Air Force Headquarters in Cairo, to help guide their bombers to sow death and destruction in Hungary. And tell her that eventually we can open the mouth even of an Egyptian Sphinx, and she had better tell us her name, before it is too late."

Pierre stood - head bent - he didn't dare look at her. Chana hid her face in her hands. They were left alone for a moment. Pierre could only sob -- "Forgive me". And Chana -- "For what, Pierre? You told them only what they already knew."

Though Chana never broke, eventually the police discovered that she had a mother still living in Budapest. On June 17, Chana's mother was summoned, completely unsuspecting, to Army Headquarters. And who could describe the events of that encounter better than Mrs. Catherina Szenesh, the mother of Chana, herself?

> "After long years of separation, I again met my daughter, face to face -- in a Hungarian jail! It was the most horrendous encounter of my life. One day I received a letter via the Red Cross, signed by my daughter and son. I was happy and calm. Their future is secure, I thought. Two weeks later, still basking in my happiness, a policeman knocked on my door, and took me to the Court of Investigations. I did not know the why or wherefore of it. The interrogations lasted for hours. They asked me about my children, and their letters. I did not have the faintest notion of how my children could be linked to this investigation. After all, both of them were in Israel. Yet the question was thrown at me repeatedly – 'Where is your daughter?' I kept reiterating – 'In Israel'... 'In Caesarea'... Genuinely, I knew no other answer.
>
> But my heart started trembling and suspecting. Indeed, one of the interrogators eventually declared: 'Your daughter is NOT in Caesarea. She is right here -- in the next room!' I got up. The door was opened, and Chana entered under guard. Until that moment, she had not been made aware of my presence either. Both of us were so taken aback by this sudden meeting, and under such hellish circumstances, that we could not produce a single sound. I completely failed to understand what was happening. Chana was in a terrible state. Her face was blue and swollen. Her front teeth were missing, knocked out. Her hair was disheveled, and her clothing was in tatters. WHAT had happened? The policeman turned to me, and said, 'Tell your daughter that she must reveal the truth, otherwise you will not see her again'. And then he left. We fell into each other's arms, shaking-- without a word."

In the beginning of September, three Israeli parachutists (Peretz Goldstein, Yoel Palgi and Chana Szenesh) found themselves in the same prison, and had some rare moments of communication. But on September 13 they were separated again. The two men were transferred to another military prison. Chana was left where she was. Yoel Palgi wrote:

"We parted from Chana in the prison courtyard. She threw us a mischievous smile and pointed a 'Thumbs up!' It was the last time I saw her in life, that wonderful, blooming Chana…"

Her mother wrote about events two months later, in her entry of November 7, 1944:

> "On November 7, I got to the prison gate and asked permission to see my daughter. I was told that the officer had a task to perform, and he was the only one who could handle this. When he returned, he tried to invent all sorts of excuses, and at the end he said: 'It's too late. You have no daughter to speak to'. I collapsed under the impact of those fateful words. I understood then, that even while I waited for his return, the officer had been supervising the task of the execution. A few days later I received a note that Chana had written to me before her execution:
>
> 'My dearest Mother, Only this can I tell you: A million thanks. And I beg your forgiveness, if possible. You will well understand why no more words are necessary. With boundless love, Your daughter.'"

Eyewitnesses tell: Chana was brought to the prison courtyard and placed before a firing squad, facing the wall. They wanted to place a cover over her eyes. Instead, she asked permission to face the fire with her eyes open. Thus did she meet death -- a true daughter of Israel, her heart aching for her mother, her heart paining for her suffering People. She knew that her flame would soon stop burning in her heart. She knew that her heart, to the last, would beat in honor. And she knew that even as her flame ceased, it was a blessed flame that ignited so many others.

Before her mission, Chana Szenesh wrote another poem. She realized that she lived in a world spewing fire and brimstone. Yet, though the Holy One, Blessed be He, hid from the world, from the odor of burning flesh, from children being slaughtered, and from glass eyes showing more warmth and understanding than living eyes, her young voice wrote paeans of praise in awe of our beautiful and wondrous world. And just as her little poem "Blessed Be the Match" expressed her true self, so did this other poem – which, set to music, has become one of the most powerful songs about the Shoah in modern times -- reflect her deepest inner yearnings:

> *Eli, Eli* - My God, My God,
> *She'lo Yi'gamer le'Olam,*
> May these things never end:
> The sand and the sea,
> the murmuring waters,
> lightening of the sky,
> and human prayer!

Halicha b'Kesarya (Eli, Eli) -- Words: Chana Szenesh; Music: David Zehavi

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipo7923nFU0 (Performed by Chava Alberstein)

None of the parachutists attained their prescribed objectives. Their missions were doomed from the start. Yet a special aura of drama and gallantry surrounds them and their exploits. They broke the silence and passivity of onlookers during the Holocaust, and they cracked the trance-like helplessness that gripped many of its victims. They were a heroic bunch of youngsters ready to leave their havens of security to face Hitler's armed might, ready to declare together with the victims: We are here!

Yes, we are here even amidst the crashing fires of hell. We are here, even if abandoned by the "civilized" West. We are here to march with you, toward a future bright and shining, wherein evil's darkness shall be no more because humanity's light shall shine forth again!

Oh, never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive!

From land of palm trees to the land of distant snow,
We are here, with our pain, and with our woe,
But wherever our blood was shed in pain,
Our fighting spirit will resurrect again.

Tomorrow's sun will gladden our today,
The past with bitter foe shall pass away.
But should the sun at dawn briefly delay,
Then let our call ring loud and clear: it's on the way.

Not lead, but blood, inscribed this song we sing,
It's not a caroling of birds upon the wing.
But 'twas a people midst the crashing fires of hell
That sang this song, and fought courageous till it fell.

So never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive.

Jewish Partisans' Song -- Words and music: Hirsch Glick

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wgYnYSg3Zs

(Performed by Chava Alberstein)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzPShrawxLc

(Performed by Paul Robeson)

And thus, a legend was born -- the legend of the thirty-two Parachutists, of whom seven met their deaths; among them, Chana Szenesh.

What a toll our foes took from us throughout the ages! And in our generation alone fully one-third of our People - SIX MILLION! What rivers of Jewish blood were spilled by our enemies, while an indifferent humanity stood by, apathetic and silent!

Though our foes frequently managed to break our frail bodies, they never succeeded in breaking our indomitable spirit. Amidst the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto and from the gas chambers of Auschwitz, from the ravine of Babi Yar and from the Ponar Forest, from the death marches, from the gallows, and facing firing squads -- we declared our everlasting faith in our survival.

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See appendix for suggested concluding sections.

Denmark and its Jews in the Holocaust

See appendix for suggested introductory section.

When the German army occupied Denmark on April 9, 1940, Hitler wanted to show the world that Germany could be a benevolent conqueror. He wanted to make a positive example of Denmark, but it was not to be. A Danish citizen named Lisbeth Kress recorded the following:

"The King was our center of affection. We demonstrated our love for him and he reciprocated. King Christian the 10th would ride through the city of Copenhagen to show the people he was well and still in charge. Every morning, he would pass by where I worked in a department store across from City Hall exactly 9:50. No matter who was in the store, all of the workers would excuse themselves and say to the customers, 'You must wait. The King will be passing very soon, and we want to greet him.' Whoever was in the store would usually join us.

One such morning there were quite a few German soldiers in the store, and the time for the King's appearance was getting close. A sales-girl announced that the King was going to pass by very soon and they would have to wait because we wanted to greet him. The people in the store followed her outside. Shortly afterwards the King came riding by and saluted us, as usual. After the King passed, one of the Germans remarked in awe, 'He was all alone. Who protects him?' The sales-girl hit her chest and answered, 'We do!' The German soldier was duly impressed."

In January 1942 Himmler and Heidrich put pressure on the German Foreign Office to have the Nuremberg Laws applied to all occupied Western countries. The Nuremberg Laws reduced all Jews to serfdom, unprotected by the law of the State. King Christian threatened to abdicate if the laws were imposed on Denmark. When the Germans cautiously approached the Danes about introducing the Yellow Star, the King said: "The Jews are a part of the Danish nation. We have no Jewish problem in our country. If the Jews are forced to wear the Yellow Star, I and my whole family will wear it as a badge of honor."

In September 1942 Gestapo Chief Heinrich Muller, proposed that action be taken against the 1,350 Jews who had fled from Germany to Denmark. These Jews had been deprived of their German nationality and were, therefore, stateless. Muller wanted to return their German citizenship so the

Reich could resume control over them. The Danish government, in a rare gesture for those times, decided to protect them and did not distinguish between the refugees and native-born Jews.

In January 1943, three years after Denmark fell under German occupation, at a student festival in Gjorslev, the Danish students invited everyone to join in singing two national anthems dear to the hearts of Danes. The Germans present were not surprised when the first anthem sung was the Danish national anthem, but they were stunned when the second was not *Deutschland, Deutschland Uber Alles* but the Zionist national anthem, *Hatikva*!

The war was going badly for the Germans. Their offensive in Russia had failed, the Allies had invaded Italy, and the *Afrika Korps* had surrendered at El Alamein. The Germans were draining Denmark's food supply and the Danes were growing restless. By August 1943, acts of sabotage against German installations had increased markedly.

In mid-September special Gestapo commandos from Eichmann's office arrived in Copenhagen to enforce the Final Solution on Danish Jews. On September 29, 1943, Rosh Hashanah eve, Rabbi Marcus Melchior stood before the Holy Ark, *Aron Hakodesh*, of the 110-year-old Copenhagen Synagogue. Not dressed in his usual rabbinical robes, Rabbi Melchior began, "There will be no service tonight. I have very important news. I received word that tomorrow the Germans plan to raid Jewish homes throughout Copenhagen, to arrest all Danish Jews for deportation to concentration camps. They know that tomorrow is Rosh Hashanah and our families will be home. The situation is very serious. We must act immediately. You must contact all Jewish relatives, neighbors, and friends and tell them to warn all Jews. You must do this immediately, within the next few minutes, so that within the next few hours everyone will know what is happening. By nightfall, we must all be in hiding!"

On Rosh Hashanah 1943 Gestapo squads roamed the streets, broke into synagogues and homes, and made arrests on the spot. It was reported that 600 Jews were deported to Poland. On October 3 Copenhagen University closed for a week, "in view of the disasters that have overtaken our citizens". The flight of the Jews to the coastal towns in early October was chaotic and hasty. Most of the Danish Jews captured by the Germans were seized during this period.

Final Journey – A Holocaust Song. Words and music: Aiton Birnbaum

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=za_c3F8wnlo

(Performed by Sheer Birnbaum)

What was needed was an organized method of getting the fleeing Jews from their diverse places of hiding to collection points, so that fishermen could ferry them across the Scagerak Sound to Sweden. The first pivotal point established in Copenhagen was Staffeldt's Book Shop where Jews could hide. A signal was developed: if the store was free of Germans and the coast was clear, a copy of Munk's Poems appeared in the window and Jews could enter safely. If the book was absent, Jews had to keep away.

The first experience involving a group of Jews in the bookshop was grim. The group included ten frightened children who had been hidden in a cellar. At one o'clock in the morning, one of the children became hysterical. Soon all of the children were screaming uncontrollably. A nearby physician was roused from bed and told that there was an emergency. When he arrived at the back room of the store and saw the screaming children, he decided to inject them all with a sedative, causing them all to lose consciousness. Later on, such injections became a valuable and regularly employed procedure on the sea-crossings to Sweden. Since crossings took place from numerous points, some of them were particularly long, in which case physicians gagged and taped the mouths of the children so that they would remain quiet after the injections wore off.

The second pivotal hiding point in Copenhagen was the Bispebjerg Hospital. The entire hospital staff eagerly mobilized for the rescue effort. It began when a medical resident discovered forty Jews hiding in the woods south of Copenhagen. Germans were in the area and an arrangement was needed that would allow for a safe pickup and hideout. After receiving permission to house the Jews temporarily at the hospital, the student decided to bring them there by staging a mock funeral. The refugees were dressed in black and carried flowers while following a hearse through Copenhagen to the cemetery on hospital grounds. Rumors of the hospital's readiness to help them spread rapidly amongst the Jews. Soon, instead of the 40 persons originally spotted in the woods, there were 140 lined up in front of the hospital gate. The doctors decided to house them in the Psychiatric Ward, one of the places the Germans were least likely to search. Within days, more than 2,000 Jews passed through the Bispebjerg Hospital on the way to their escape by sea.

Let us return to Lisbeth Kress' story about those crucial and dangerous days. Her husband worked for the Danish Government Welfare Department. On October 1, 1943, the head of his department called him into his office and said, "We have reliable information that the Germans are getting ready to round up all Danish Jews and ship them to a concentration camp. I suggest that you do not stay in your home tonight, and tomorrow try to cross to Sweden."

Lisbeth continues, “My husband instantly called me at work and we agreed to meet at home as soon as possible. We sat down and began making plans. As a newly married couple, we had few things to sell. We counted the money and knew it wasn’t enough to get us to Sweden.

″My husband remembered that I had a new bicycle. He rode it to a bike shop, and asked the owner, ′How much would you give me for it?′ Looking the bike over, the owner asked, ′Who owns the bike?′ My husband answered, ′My wife’. ′Have you got any more?′ My husband replied, ′I have my own bike but it’s old and the tires are worn out, so I don’t think it’s worth much.′

″While he was keeping my husband busy, the owner whispered to an employee to phone the police. A policeman arrived and first spoke to the shop owner. And then turned to my husband: ′Why are you selling your wife’s bike?′ ′I need the money,′ my husband replied. ′And what do you need the money for?′ -- asked the cop.

″By now my husband realized what was going on and he was annoyed. ′I will tell you what I need the money for. I want to save my wife’s life and my own.′ The policeman looked at him for a few seconds and said, ‘Are you Jewish?’ When my husband nodded, the policeman turned to the owner and said, ′Make sure you give this young man all the money the bike is worth!’ He shook hands with my husband and wished him luck.

″My husband hastened home, we quickly packed the absolute essentials, left for the train station, and boarded the first train going north. Since the German high command had imposed a curfew with no one allowed out after dark, we reached only about eight to ten kilometers north of Copenhagen. As we stood on the platform wondering what to do, a young high school student approached us and asked, ′Are you looking for a place to stay tonight?′ ‘Why do you ask?’ we inquired cautiously. The young fellow responded, ‘Because I have a list of homes that are safe.′ He then gave us a name and address. Arriving there, it took us some time before we found the courage to ring the bell. To our amazement, we were received as if we were close relatives.

″Our hosts were an elderly mother and her daughter, both very cultured and refined and devout Christians. We talked for hours. They invited us to dinner, and wouldn’t let us leave in the morning without breakfast. As we said goodbye, their last words were, ′We will pray for you.′

"Heavy hearted, we returned to the train station and boarded another northbound train, aiming to reach the sea, facing Sweden. When we had been on the train for a while, out of nowhere a young woman from my husband's office suddenly appeared before us and said, 'I have been going back and forth all morning in the hope of finding you. I was sent to give you this.' She handed my husband an envelope and left. When we opened the envelope, we found 200 kroner from my husband's department head, plus a letter of introduction and recommendation to Stockholm's Welfare Department. Needless to say, we were very moved and brought to tears.

"Our destination was a small fishing village 80 or 90 kilometers north, called Gilleleje. By the time we arrived, we could see that Jews were crowding the waterfront, looking for fishermen willing to take them across the water to Sweden. By now the fishermen were being threatened with jail and confiscation of their goods by the Germans, who used their attack dogs to smell out refugees hiding in the holds of the boats.

"My husband found a fisherman and asked him if he could take us to Sweden. He responded, 'There have been many people asking the same question. I can go to jail. My boat can be confiscated… Come back in an hour and I'll give you my answer.' When my husband returned an hour later, the fisherman inquired, 'How much money have you got?' My husband responded, 'I have 500 kroner.' The fisherman said, 'Come back at 2 a.m. and we will leave.'

Dugit nosa'at mifrase'ha shnayim	A two-sailed skiff is swaying, in the currents drifting
U'mal'ache'ha nirdemu kulam	All of her sailors – fallen fast asleep
Ru'ach noshevet al pnei hamayim	Winds upon the waters, gusting and shifting
Yeled pose'ah al ha'hof dumam	Boy pacing on the shore, in a silence deep
Yeled pa'ut hu ve'agum einayim	He is so very small, sad of eye and shaken
Shotfim hamayim la'merchak ein sof	Dark ocean waters -- stretching ever more
Im lo ye'oru kol mal'ache'ha	If all her sailors won't now awaken
Keytzad tagia hadugit la'hof	How shall the little boat -- e'er get back to shore

Dugit Nosa'at – Skiff Adrift ; Russian lyrics: Maxim Gorky & Tatiana Sykorskaya
Hebrew: Natan Yonatan. English: Aiton Birnbaum. Music: Lev Schwartz.

https://tinyurl.com/36zs7w5f (Performed by Netanella and Oded Ben Hur)

"When we returned at 2 o'clock, there were many people waiting. The boat wasn't very big. The fisherman lifted up a board and one by one we all went down into the hold. There was no room to sit so we all stood. The smell of fish was overwhelming. When we were a short distance from the Danish shore, the fisherman started the motor. To us it seemed so loud we were sure that all of Denmark could hear it. The waves became very rough, and most of us became seasick and had to use our hats as chuck-up bags. In a few hours we reached a small village called Hoeganes. We were finally safe! We were finally in neutral Sweden!"

More than 6,000 people whose parents were Jewish, 1,376 who had one Jewish parent or who were converts to Judaism, and 686 non-Jews who were married to a Jewish partner, were smuggled into Sweden on fishing boats. The asylum granted by Sweden was quite unique. Many nations protested the destruction of Europe's Jews, but Sweden was one of the only countries to give physical refuge to over 8,000 Jews who managed to escape and reach her shores.

It is worth noting that many of the Jews seeking to escape were of modest means. The Danes themselves financed the cost of transportation for those who couldn't pay, which averaged 500 kroner per person, about $100 in those days. For example, one of the rescue organizers, Aage Bertelsen, school master of the Arrhus Cathedral College, sent a pastor to a lumber merchant, Johannes Fog, to ask for a loan for the purpose. While handing over 2,000 kroner with a promise of 10,000 more, the merchant asked the pastor, "Who is Mr. Bertelsen?" Within ten days Johannes Fog gave almost 150,000 kroner to the rescue project. Money was given without any accounting or guarantee of repayment. Bertelsen's home in the fishing village of Lyngby became known in underground circles as, "the house with the blue curtains". His work expanded into a rescue team of 60 people who eventually smuggled more than 1,000 Jews safely to Sweden. Bertelsen himself was ultimately forced to escape to Sweden and his wife was arrested by the Gestapo.

The rescue work went on and help came from many directions. The Danish police warned of German soldiers. Pastors handed out blank baptismal certificates. Pharmacists supplied free medicines. Children rang doorbells to collect funds for the cause. Nowhere in Europe did so many people respond to the disaster that struck the Jews as in Denmark.

After the war, the spirit of human decency did not diminish. The Danish government granted every Danish Jew who returned 4,505 kroner with which to start anew, and the greeting was not as it was in Poland or Rumania: "What! You are still alive?" The Danish Jews were met with "welcome home", a bouquet of flowers and keys to their former homes.

A word about Sweden: Neutral Sweden's help also deserves to be remembered, respected, and greatly appreciated. Sweden was able to extend help to the Jews without fear of Nazi retaliation due to Germany's dependence on Swedish iron ore for its war effort.

Lisbeth Kress goes on to report: "When we returned to Denmark after the war in Europe ended, we found that our neighbors had moved all of our belongings into the attic for protection. We got everything back, not so much as a pin was missing. When my husband returned to his office, his pay for 22 months was waiting for him."

Thus, the courage of the moral leaders and good citizens of Denmark, combined with the indomitable spirit and will of the Jews, helped many potential victims to survive.

Mir zainen do! Anachnu po! We survive!

Oh, never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive!

From land of palm trees to the land of distant snow,
We are here, with our pain, and with our woe,
But wherever our blood was shed in pain,
Our fighting spirit will resurrect again.

Tomorrow's sun will gladden our today,
The past with bitter foe shall pass away.
But should the sun at dawn briefly delay,
Then let our call ring loud and clear: it's on the way.

Not lead, but blood, inscribed this song we sing,
It's not a caroling of birds upon the wing.
But 'twas a people midst the crashing fires of hell
That sang this song, and fought courageous till it fell.

So never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive.

Jewish Partisans' Song -- Words and music: Hirsch Glick

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wgYnYSg3Zs

(Performed by Chava Alberstein)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzPShrawxLc

(Performed by Paul Robeson)

The moral courage so plentiful in Denmark was, alas, in short supply elsewhere in Europe during those fateful years. Six million Jews were murdered by the cruel Nazi beast all over Europe and North Africa, wherever the Nazis managed to gain a foothold, and most nations kept silent and did nothing to help.

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See appendix for suggested concluding sections.

"The Way to the Heavenly Journey" --
The Horrors of Fort Nine, Kovno

This program describes an awful killing system implemented in Lithuania

See appendix for suggested introductory section.

Without warning or declaration of war, the full might of the *Wehrmacht* crossed the Russian frontier on June 22, 1941. The second largest city of Lithuania, Kovno, was attacked the very first day of the onslaught. The Russians, who had occupied the city since September, 1939, fled.

Lithuanians welcomed the advancing Germans with jubilation and took control of the city. False rumors were deliberately spread that Jews had been sniping at the entering German forces. Without delay, the head of the Lithuanian partisans issued a warning that for every German killed, 100 Jews would be executed.

Kovno's Jews were in panic. Over a quarter of the city's population was Jewish, and with the outlying suburbs they were some 50,000 strong. But the smell of Jewish blood was in the air.

A day after Kovno's fall, high school and university students, and units of Lithuanian partisans staged a pogrom in the Slobodka suburb of Kovno. It was the seat of the famed Slobodker Yeshiva. For long years God's word was faithfully studied in its hallowed halls. Torah, Jewish learning and modern Jewish scholarship radiated from its institutions to the four corners of the globe. In cold blood, 3,000 Jews were killed there that night by axes and knives, and by being burnt alive. The pleas of the learned sages and their disciples fell on deaf ears. For reasons known only to the Most High, God turned away from the suffering of His People…

Eli, Eli, lama azavtani: My God, my God – Why have You forsaken me?

In fayer, in flamm host du unz gebrent --
My God, my God, you roasted us in all-consuming fire --
But we refuse to go under.

Like our *ovos-avosenu* -- our fathers of old
We shan't give up on You
And shall triumphantly declare:
Shema Yisroel A-donai E-loheinu A-donai Echad!
Hear O' Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!

Eli, Eli, Lama Azavtani -- Words and music: Jacob Sandler/traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE95WpTS3WI

(Performed by Eli Henig)

A new day dawned with no relief. The local population was now excited. Filled with anticipation, they amassed at the yard of the "Litukis" garage. Sixty Jews were marched out, savagely beaten with iron rods, humiliated and tortured by varied means. Tubes used in the garage were stuffed down the victims' throats and the waterflow opened till their bellies burst.

Simultaneously mass arrests took place under the flimsy pretext of hunting down Jewish communists. But the objective was unmistakable: the Lithuanians were reveling in the anguish of defenseless Jews. Without distinction, old and young, men, women and children were driven to the "Forts" for final handling.

The "Forts of Kovno" were built by the Czars in the previous century, as a protective belt around the city against foreign invaders. Owing to the inspiration and genius of the Nazis and their Lithuanian henchmen, the forts were now applied in service of the "Final Solution". There were altogether nine forts. As we shall see, "Fort Nine" earned itself an enduring place in the annals of inhumanity. In due course, it was termed "The Slaughterhouse".

In line with the "Final Solution", less than a month after the German conquest, the leaders of the Jewish community were ordered by Gestapo commandant Rauke to organize the orderly transfer of the Jews to designated Ghetto areas. A so-called "Big Ghetto" and, adjacent to it, a "Small Ghetto" were established.

Regulations were imposed: the Yellow Star of David became obligatory, at first only in the front, then also on the back; Jews were forbidden to use sidewalks, public transport and parks; to listen to or possess radios; to employ non-Jews; to transport property, or to hide goods. Death was the penalty for the slightest breach of these and numerous other regulations.

To prove they meant business, the Germans captured twenty-six Jews who snuck out of the Ghetto to scrounge for food and relieve the excruciating hunger gripping its people. They were declared guilty of breach of regulations and shot in the public square. The fate of two dozen Jews caught without the Yellow Badge, trying to make contact with the outside world, was identical.

After sealing off the Ghettos, the Germans began a series of systematic surprise *Aktzionen* that eliminated a thousand Jews here, 1,500 there – each time shocking the Jewish population.

Each of these minor *Aktzionen* had its own character. There was the *"Aktzion* of furs", when each Jewish household was deprived of the last shred of its furs on behalf of the *Wehrmacht* facing the Russian winter. Furs not handed in brought instant death to the family hiding them.

There was the "*Aktzion* of books", that ordered handing over all books to the authorities. Insubordination resulted in immediate death. The Germans confiscated over 100,000 books.

If the *Aktzion* of furs aimed to freeze the Jews, the *Aktzion* of books tried to drain their soul and their spiritual resources. Each was accompanied by its quota of dead.

There was the *"Aktzion* of the Intelligentsia". The Germans requested five hundred academically educated young men for work in the city archives. A number of academicians volunteered for what promised to be interesting work. The morning they walked out neatly-dressed to their job was their last. Sometime later, news reached the Ghetto that they were marched through the city straight to their death. They didn't even see the archives from afar.

Four months after their arrival, the Germans began their first large-scale *Aktzion*. Commandant Rauke personally delivered the following order to Dr. Elkes, head of the *Judenrat*:

"The government decided to separate the workers from the non-workers in the Ghetto. For that reason, the non-working element shall be resettled in the area of the Small Ghetto, whereas the workers shall be in the Big Ghetto. The *Judenrat* is obligated to make sure that every Jew report at six in the morning on October 28, at Demokrat Square for proper disposition. Whosoever shall be found outside the Square shall die. No one is allowed to leave the Ghetto that day, house doors must be left open, the dangerously ill may stay home but a statement to that effect must be pinned to the entrance of the house."

Upon departure of the Gestapo Commandant, heavy silence settled on the *Judenrat* office. Dr. Elkes finally broke the silence.

"There isn't much doubt what is in the offing, is there? They need our working power. The non-working element is dispensable. Can anything but death await them?"

The *Judenrat* debated for hours whether to assemble the Jewish population of the Ghetto in accordance with Gestapo orders, or to refuse. They interrupted their deliberations only for a short evening visit with their families so as not to awaken suspicion that something terrible was imminent. Then they reconvened.

Later that night they sent a delegation to Kovno's chief spiritual authority, Rabbi Shapira, to get his opinion on the matter, based on Jewish law and morality. His answer was clear cut:

"If the *Judenrat* has reason to hope that by fulfilling the German order -- the Ghetto, or part of it, can be saved, it must do so."

Next day the *Judenrat* utilized all available channels to investigate the true intent of the Germans. Rauke learned of their anxiety and returned to the Ghetto with the soothing assurance:

"You have no cause for any concern and suspicion. This is purely an administrative matter and nothing else".

Despite its qualms, the *Judenrat* decided to follow German orders. Posters distributed throughout the Ghetto informed people of the Gestapo's decree.

There was twelve-hour advance notice. Every Jew had to report at 0600 at Democrat Square in the center of the Ghetto. The Square was surrounded by heavily armed German troops, SS and Lithuanian militia. The nearby hills around the Ghetto swarmed with curious local inhabitants. At ten o'clock the murderers went into action.

Suddenly, women, children and the elderly were pushed to one side; the men and young families to the other. By no means was this a simple resettlement. This was an outright selection.

Eyewitness Sima Yeshunsky recalled: the motion of a German finger determined one's fate. Here for life, there for death. Panic seized everyone as families were rent apart. A mother cries for her child: a child for the mother -- can wounds so deep ever heal?

Farvos iz der Himl

Farvos iz der himl geven nechtn loiter
Fun fraid hot geshaint jede gass?
Farvos iz di zun aza lichtige, route,
Farchmuret haint, beiz un in kass?

Why in the past was the sky so much lighter,
Joy everywhere to be seen?
Oh, why is the sun which could never be brighter
Clouded now, angry and mean?

Dry all your tears, forget all misgiving,
Mourning the past -- not for you!
A new day is coming, certainly coming,
When sunlight will sparkle anew!

Farvos iz der Himl -- Words: Leyb Opeskin*; Music: unknown
www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DOTHgU3LtE

* Leyb Opeskin, co-founder of the Vilna partisans, was killed the day before its liberation.

This selection sent over 10,000 Jews to Fort Nine, which was by then fully prepared to engulf its victims. Unbeknown to the Jews, fifteen gigantic pits had been dug into the Fort's hillside. From the Fort's moist underground caverns, the victims were driven in groups of 120 to the pits where they were mowed down by machine gun fire and covered with lime; then the next group was driven out for the same treatment, and so on.

The story of resettlement in the Small Ghetto turned out to be pure fiction.

Henceforth, Fort Nine would loom large over the Ghetto, casting a dark shadow of death over all its inhabitants, as well as over Jews as far as Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna, Prague and beyond. In the month between November 15 and mid-December, 1941, alone -- 30,000 Jews from these cities were transported to Kovno and butchered there. Fort Nine emerged as a ghastly *extermination camp* -- in the language of the German masters: *Vernichtungstelle Kauen*.

For all intents and purposes, the entire Ghetto became a concentration camp -- *Konzentrationslager Kauen*. It contained mainly men and women capable of a full day's slave labor in the factories and the military airfield, contributing to the German war effort while on starvation rations.

It took some time for the alert, searching, and suspicious Germans to realize that the Ghetto still housed numerous "unproductive" elements. The Jews of the Ghetto were not ready to give up on life and freedom. With immense self-sacrifice the underground organization of the Ghetto, in close partnership with the *Judenrat* and the Jewish Ghetto Police, managed to save thousands of children and elders in underground bunkers.

The Kovno Ghetto excelled in its spirit of defiance from the very start. Already at the pogrom in Slobodka the day after the German invasion, individuals displayed superb courage.

Ben-Tzion Fine, a factory worker, split the skull of the first *pogromchik* who broke through the door of his home with an axe.

A young man by the name of Strazs, who had worked as a bank teller, attacked one of the murderers and gouged out his eye.

The blacksmith, Shlomo Katz, and the carpenter, Yitzhak Friedman, fought with their working tools against the attackers who were equipped with guns.

In many homes where whole families were slaughtered, marks of desperate struggle were left behind. At the gates of houses and yards, at the entrances to basements and cellars, many defended themselves to their last breath until they were literally hacked to pieces.

In the apartment of Akiba Puchert, a large inscription was found on the wall that he evidently wrote in his last gasps with a shaking finger in his own blood: *Nekomeh* -- Revenge.

Nekomeh became the watchword of the Kovno Jews. *Nekomeh Yidden!* It was found as a last will and testament in Ghetto homes and in Fort Nine. *Yidden, Nekomeh!* Engraved with fingernails in unyielding cement walls, or with bloody fingers as the defiant Jew's last act.

The spirit of individuals makes up the spirit of a group. Jewish resistance groups in Kovno began organizing virtually from the day of the German conquest, and their activities did not cease until the Germans literally leveled the Ghetto to the ground.

Illegal Zionist groups and Jewish communist cells began to build a resistance organization, define its objectives and determine its methods of operation. But the difficulties involved in organizing resistance were enormous. The Jews were untrained. They had no firearms. Random German selections threatened to break chains of contact by removing key resistance members from the Ghetto. They were surrounded by an exceptionally hostile local population, ready to denounce them at every step.

They faced a ruthless, cold-blooded enemy with no qualms about reprisals or torturing Jews to death in agony. There were no forests near Kovno in which to hide. The closest anti-fascist partisan units were fifty kilometers away and they, too, were saturated with hatred for Jews.

It is doubtful whether the Kovno Ghetto resistance could have made a move without Dr. Elkes, the *Judenrat* and the Jewish Police. A survivor offers an example:

One of the participants at the founding meeting of the underground, by the name of Zak, reported that he could gain access to a pistol, but had no money to buy it. It was decided to turn to Dr. Elkes, who replied: "You don't need to convince me." The money was made available, Zak bought the pistol, and got it into the Ghetto. It was deposited with Ika Greenberg, a key member of the resistance and of the Jewish Police. The first resistance cell for training and handling a gun was thus established.

It was thanks to the *Judenrat* that members of the resistance were placed in work battalions which had the highest chances of survival. Everything possible was done to help the resistance develop to a point that would allow for a Ghetto revolt, or a breakout from the Ghetto to a distant partisan base in the forests.

Leading elements of the resistance were quietly drawn into the administrative echelons of the *Judenrat* and into the Jewish Police, until it was difficult to distinguish between them.

Simultaneously, the *Judenrat* and Jewish Police had the awful task of assigning people to transports of unknown fate, but in contrast to other Ghettos, they did so with heartfelt sensitivity.

As in the first "*Grand Aktzion*" so with every subsequent Nazi Action, the *Judenrat* agonized over cooperation with the Nazis, or refusing cooperation despite the consequences. And though suffused with members of the resistance whose opinion was solicited, it was deemed necessary to buy more time. *Nekomeh* burnt in their hearts, but they weren't ready.

In October, 1941, the resistance organization decided to undertake the dangerous escape from the Ghetto into the Augustova forests. Departure took place in groups of six. With the help of the Ghetto Police, they were smuggled through the first danger point, the gate of the Ghetto.

A survivor, Berl Gimpel, testified: When my group was twenty kilometers from Kovno, we were spotted by some local Lithuanians. They denounced us to the authorities. We managed to proceed another three kilometers and we were surrounded by a group of Lithuanian Nazis, armed to their teeth. Within minutes Berl Lavin fell dead and Meir Zelinger lay seriously wounded.

They led us to a town eight kilometers away. Meir was on a wagon, writhing in pain with a bullet in his belly. Berl Levin's body remained abandoned in the field. We swore with a solemn oath that under no circumstances would we betray anyone. We reached town. The murderers commanded me and Simcha Idelsohn to dig a pit near the police station. They put Meir in the pit. He was fully conscious. Simcha asked one of the guards to shoot Meir in the head in order to end his travail. The guard refused. Meir knew precisely what was going on. He asked Simcha to step heavily on his heart, perhaps it will speed death. Racked by sobs, we were compelled to cover Meir with earth. I said Kaddish.

Most of the resistance members who tried to reach the Augustava forest fell into the hands of the Gestapo. They were interrogated under excruciating torture. No one betrayed anything. They wound up in Fort Nine. Those who remained in the Ghetto were determined not to give up. Despite the enormous losses suffered by the resistance, their spirit was not broken. They continued to seek *Nekomeh* -- and they continued to seek life.

Es hot uns dos leben gerufen
Dos leben fun zunige teg
Tzu eins, tzvei, drei…
Du veist vo du geist un farvos!

Life calls out to us, and then
Life can be so good again.
We hear its beat, up the street,
One-two-three; one-two-three.
Echoing from each and every wall
Every house, each shop and stall,
Our spirit, our will, and this our song.
Come with us and march along!

When summoned to life we could stay
in days that were sunny and gay,
and all that were there, seemed to walk as on air
by themselves, as they went on their way.
"1, 2, 3," – "1, 2, 3," -- to work, with spirits high.
Every step will resound, on the echoing ground
when you know where you're going and why!

Tzu Eins, Tzvei, Drei – Words: Leyb Rozenthal (after Hans Eisler); Music: traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMNq_NigT74

(Performed by Henry Sapoznik)

In the fall of 1943, when the fortunes of war began turning against them, the German High Command decided to erase traces of the "Final Solution". Fort Nine at this stage already had 100,000 bodies buried in its horrific pits. Each pit was 100 to 120 meters long, four meters deep, and three meters wide. Strong hands were needed for the task of exhuming the bodies and getting rid of them. The Germans assigned a contingent of sixty-four Jews to the task, among them members of the resistance who had been caught in the Nazi web.

The work was systematically organized. Motor shovels began by removing the top layer of earth. In the process, limbs were torn off torsos, and heads severed from bodies. As the ghastly sight was revealed, it became obvious that many of the victims did not die instantly. The signs of terror on so many faces -- mouths wide open, gasping for air, choking -- indicated that only a few were actually killed by the bullets; most were buried alive.

Once the earth was removed, the so-called “drawers” went into action. Equipped with long rods with hooks, they would hook firmly into a body and yank it out. Where bodies did not yield, limbs were cut off till the body was freed. The drawers also had the duty of checking for hidden valuables in the bodies, and extracting gold teeth from the mouths of the victims. So admirable was German efficiency: to the very end, nothing was to be wasted.

Next came the turn of the “porters”: Two dead bodies per stretcher, handled by two porters. The bodies were carried near the fire and dumped on the ground.

Layers of wood and layers of bodies alternated to a height of four to five meters. Three hundred bodies could be burned in one pyre. A ditch round the fire collected run-off fat.

The *Brandmeister* (Master of the burning) kept a meticulous count of the bodies burnt. Torn hands and feet of men and women, children and infants, were dumped like so many logs onto the fire; but each skull counted as a person. Skulls fulfilled another function: prisoners were made to drink their daily ration of liquid from a skull.

When the fire burned down, it left heaps of unconsumed bones. These too required handling: to collect and deliver the pieces of bone to "crushers" that pulverized them to powder. The dust was then dispersed to the wind, so that no trace remained.

Since this whole process was meant to erase the evidence of Nazi inhumanity, it was clear to the workers that upon completion of their horrific task, they too would be eliminated. They therefore desperately mobilized themselves to seek escape.

Though the work of eliminating the traces of "the slaughterhouse” took place outside the Fort -- it was actually inconceivable to escape. Outside the walls, the group was very heavily guarded and the prisoners went out to work with shackles on their ankles to limit mobility. Therefore, only from within could escape be contemplated. Yet, it seemed utterly impossible. Anybody who knew Fort Nine would have laughed at the idea; Fort Nine was considered impregnable.

Every thought, every free moment, focused on the sole objective: to get out. Every inch of space within the cell was repeatedly checked for any crack. The prisoners in their cells were under frequent surveillance by the Nazi guards, and they could barely make a move without threat of being apprehended.

Then one of the prisoners discovered a rusty, locked door in the back of the cell. It blended into the cement wall and was virtually invisible. They managed to open it. It led to a small, dank storage room. In that storage room, hidden from view, they began working, painstakingly digging. The earth that was dug up, was removed by the prisoners in their pockets on the way to work, so as to avoid any noticeable accumulation that would arouse suspicion.

The goal was to clear a tunnel that would reach beyond the perimeter of the Fort. They were driven by an obsession that kept them going day and night. As a survivor wrote: "We did not want to be killed the way our brothers were, but to resist! To fight! To take revenge! *Nekomeh!*"

The date for escape was set. It had to be the night of December 24, when the guards would be at their Christmas celebration, drinking, and singing loud.

Christmas eve arrived. After the last count of the prisoners for the night, the heavy iron gates were locked. The sound of the guards' heavy boots receded on the stairs. Fast as a whip, each man wrapped rags around his shoes to soften their steps. In the tunnel, they would be passing under the very room where the guards were celebrating.

The descent into the tunnel began. The men moved carefully: No noise. Don't fall. Don't get hurt. Watch out. You are within reach of freedom. Don't spoil it now. The first prisoner reached the end of the tunnel and stepped out into the open. He was *actually out*, unshackled. And after him came the others: two, three, four -- all sixty-four. All of them were out. Out of the Slaughterhouse; out of Fort Nine. All sixty-four, ready for life, ready for *Nekomeh!*

By prior agreement, without a sound, they divided into four groups. One to head for the Rodniky Forest. One for the Augustova Forest. One for neighboring settlements. One back to the Kovno Ghetto. Indeed, within reasonable time, the group aiming for the Ghetto managed to smuggle itself back there, undetected. The indomitable Chaim Yellin, head of Ghetto resistance, was beside himself with joy, along with their other comrades and friends. The returnees had risen from the dead. The first ever to escape from Fort Nine.

There were immediate practical considerations. No doubt, within a short time the SS search parties would be fanning out in all directions. Their search would include the Ghetto. They would use their dogs. At the risk of his life, the Rabbi heated up the *Mikveh* in the middle of the night, to allow the escapees to rid themselves of the reeking smell of corpses with which they had lived for

weeks. Their clothes had to be burned immediately to destroy every trace of them. Luckily, all these activities were carried out undetected and without a hitch.

Dr. Elkes met with the group that very night. A deposition was drawn up testifying to their experiences. It was a brief statement about the goings-on in Fort Nine and about the attempt of the Third Reich to cover up the traces of its bestiality. The escapees signed it one by one. The memorandum was put into the safest place, so that people should remember and never forget Fort Nine of Kovno and its 100,000 victims.

Momentarily, a feeling of triumph pervaded the Ghetto.

Mir Leben Eybig (We'll Live Forever)

Mir leben eybig - es brent di velt…
Mir leben eybig -- mir zeinen do!

We carry on, in world aflame.
On, with nothing and no name.
Burst in anger – awful foe
Before you we'll not bow low.
Hour by hour, on we strive
We want to live, we shall survive!

Mir Leben Eybig -- Words: Leyb Rozental; Music: traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZnvx3sRkOg

(Performed by Louisa Lyne and *di Yiddishe Kapelye*)

Alternative: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiJ-Xh4s-8M

Fort Nine continued to cast its terrifying shadow over the Ghetto. In March, 1944, the whole Jewish police force was ordered to report for muster. It sounded routine. They appeared, unsuspecting. Suddenly they were surrounded by *Waffen SS* and their cohorts. Without any explanation they were led off to Fort Nine.

The Ghetto was put under the strictest curfew. The Gestapo, Russians and Lithuanians, began a house-to-house search for children. They brought axes and hatchets with them and started breaking through walls, ceilings and floors looking for hiding places. Any child under thirteen who was found, was dragged to one of the waiting trucks.

When mothers ran after their children, the SS unleashed their dogs at them. Some clinging mothers' heads were smashed by rifle butts before their children's panic-stricken eyes. Eyewitness, Dr. Aron Peretz, relates:

"One mother who was deprived of her three children pleaded with the SS guard on the truck to give her back a child. Gleefully, he ordered her up the truck and commanded her to choose.

"Three pairs of hands lifted to the disconsolate mother: three crying voices: Mame, Mame! Three pairs of anguished tear-flooded eyes. The mother could not do it. She stumbled off the truck with no child."

In Fort Nine, police chief, Moshe Levin, was the first to be taken for interrogation. Only now did it emerge that the Gestapo -- perhaps its suspicion aroused by uncanny Jewish survival ability -- had planted spies in the Ghetto. Through them it learned that the Jewish Police had been actively engaged in hiding children and helping the resistance. The Gestapo wanted to know the hiding-places. Moshe Levin refused to release information and died under torture.

Next in line for questioning was assistant chief, Yehuda Zupowitch, followed by the superintendent of the Jewish Police, Ika Greenberg. Yehuda was a particularly striking, handsome man. When he returned from interrogation, his friends could not recognize him. His face was bashed in and distorted with pain, his body broken. But his spirit seemed unscathed. He declared in a voice full of fervor:

"Our young lives are lost. Let us then die as heroes and not betray the hiding places of thousands of innocent children. Let our conscience remain clear to the end."

When Ika Greenberg was summoned, he called out: "*Chaverim*, our hour arrives. Hold out, be strong with pride, till your last breath: Do not give the henchman satisfaction. Let them not have cause to ridicule us. Do not fear death!"

Writes an eyewitness: "His words made a deep impression. Utter stillness settled on us. We then took leave one from the other and promised each other to bring honor to the name of our people. We were determined to be silent -- and so we were."

Lomir shvaign, vaiter svaign, nit kein vort geredt,
Lomir mit farmachte oign murmlen a gebet.

Be silent, always silent,
Say not a single word.
In your heart, to God just pray
For faith and trust and hope this day.

(Alternative: *Sounds of Silence,* Simon & Garfunkle)

The *Police Aktzion* exterminated the Ghetto's Jewish Police. And 1500 children discovered in various hideouts were taken to be killed at Fort Nine, in that particular *Kinder Aktzion*.

Moshe Levin, Yehuda Zupowitch, and Ika Greenberg became legends.

In the beginning of July, 1944, the SS Commandant informed Dr. Elkes that the Ghetto would be shut down and its inhabitants transferred to Germany. In its last gasps, the Ghetto reacted with a violent outburst of energy. The people were determined not to move voluntarily, come what may. In feverish activity new bunkers were carved out. All available hiding places were sought. Some people readied for a breakthrough at more accessible points of the Ghetto fence and enclosure wall. But for this final cleanup action, the Germans brought in reinforcements to improve on the ratio of one SS to six Jews, that they were compelled to maintain in the Kovno Ghetto. They surrounded the Ghetto in three concentric rings, trying to make sure that no living creature would be able to sneak through.

Dr. Elkes made a last desperate attempt to save the remnant of Kovno Jewry, an attempt that bordered on suicide. In a private interview with the SS Commandant, he summarized the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis and their cohorts in the Ghetto of Kovno. He called to his attention that:

"All the details have been recorded and transmitted to safe places and to the free world. The war is now drawing to an end, and soon all those responsible for the unspeakable crimes will be held

accountable for their brutality. I and my Council solemnly declare that we will be willing to testify on your behalf before any international tribunal of law if you shall refrain from the total elimination of the Ghetto."

It proves Dr. Elkes' integrity and courage that he dared to take such a stand. It also proves the unusual respect in which he was held that the SS Commandant did not kill him on the spot, though he refused Dr. Elkes' offer with indignation.

For five days the Germans went on a veritable rampage. At first they threw resisting Jews into waiting trucks. Then they stopped all pretense and shot resisters on the spot. They set houses on fire and as people tried to escape, the Nazis gunned them down. They threw victims alive into the flames. Soon the whole Ghetto was on fire. The sky was dark with smoke, the horizon turned crimson, as a once-glorious Jewish community expired in anguish and woe.

In the final days of the Ghetto, when the sky should have collapsed on the ghostly apparitions still moving within it, the slogan of the victims was: "*A sho gelebt is oich gelebt…*" Life for an hour is also life. Use every hour. Live every minute. And cherish it!

When the order to eliminate the Ghetto was given, there were still about eight thousand Jews left. The fire burned the Ghetto to the ground. Yet, by some miracle, about one hundred Jews survived under the ruins and saw the dawning of a new day.

All told, 92% of the Jews of the Kovno Ghetto were murdered; only 8% survived.

About halfway up the hill to Fort Nine, the Nazis had put up a sign pointing toward the Fort. It bore the inscription:

Der weg zu himmelfahrt

The way to the heavenly journey

It was the journey to heaven for tens of thousands of our brothers and sisters. But not only the way the Nazis meant. For it was not the way to Jewish oblivion, to be annihilated and forgotten. Fort Nine and other horrific places like it did not destroy Jewish determination to live and carry on... *Zog nit keinmol az du geist dem letzten veg...* No one ever dare say that we have reached our road's end. Never! Never!

Mir zainen do! Anachnu po! We survive!

Oh, never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive!

From land of palm trees to the land of distant snow,
We are here, with our pain, and with our woe,
But wherever our blood was shed in pain,
Our fighting spirit will resurrect again.

Tomorrow's sun will gladden our today,
The past with bitter foe shall pass away.
But should the sun at dawn briefly delay,
Then let our call ring loud and clear: it's on the way.

Not lead, but blood, inscribed this song we sing,
It's not a caroling of birds upon the wing.
But 'twas a people midst the crashing fires of hell
That sang this song, and fought courageous till it fell.

So never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive.

Jewish Partisans' Song -- Words and music: Hirsch Glick

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wgYnYSg3Zs

(Performed by Chava Alberstein)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzPShrawxLc

(Performed by Paul Robeson)

The Ghetto of Kovno was remarkable. Even in the darkest, most horrendous days, when its children were being butchered like lambs and buried alive in the pits and its men were being savagely tortured, the Ghetto was sustained by an unwavering faith that somehow the Jewish People would yet take *Nekomeh* and survive. Drowning in bitter anguish and steeped in excruciating pain, each of the Jews acted in the firm belief that a better day would arrive.

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See appendix for suggested concluding sections.

Liberation -- Back from the Dead: Personal Testimonies

These eye-witness accounts open a window
into the hearts and minds of survivors at war's end

See appendix for suggested introductory section.

For three years and four months, between September, 1939 and January, 1943, Nazi Germany rode the crest of the wave, moving from victory to victory.

It was the historic battle at Stalingrad in January, 1943, that signaled the turning of the tide. Simultaneously, Rommel's *Africa Korps* suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Allies. Clearly, Hitler's might was finally beginning to decline.

The highly successful Anglo-American Invasion at Normandy began on June 6, 1944. The battle was far from over, but its outcome was no longer in doubt. Two weeks later, on June 20, 1944, the long-awaited Russian offensive began.

Optional: Begin humming Russian military march in background.

The offensive developed on a wide front with such formidable power that within days the German forces were devastated. The road to the Germany lay open.

On April 21, 1945, Zhukov's Russian armies reached the outskirts of Berlin. On April 25, patrols of the US 69th infantry division met Russian troops 75 miles south of Berlin. The final days of the Reich had arrived.

On April 30, 1945, Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin. Seven days later the Third Reich was history.

Optional: Complete march at moderate strength.

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The Allied offensive brought a wisp of hope to the desperate inmates of the concentration and extermination camps, slave labor camps and ghettos, and to the members of the underground.

Anticipation of Allied victory should have increased German concerns about their accountability for the genocide of the Jewish People. In fact, the opposite happened: Germany, in its collapse, spared no effort to bring the remnant of Jewry down with it to the very portals of hell.

When war's end finally came in 1945, we were too exhausted to appreciate the moment of freedom and too dazed to realize what was happening. In the hour of liberation and rebirth, the darkness of that long and terrible night was not easily dispelled.

Di Nacht

Síz keiner mit mir in di nacht
Di nacht nor alein iz mit mir

There's no one with me in the night,
Darkness, nothing else in sight.
On roads obscured by darkness dense,
Hollow stillness – all I sense.

I go on, long is my way,
The clouded night does not hear.
Where to? Where? – ask my steps.
No answer comes to my ear.

There's no one with me in the night,
Darkness alone is with me.
On and on in lonely despair –
But where to, silent roads, to where?

Di Nacht -- Words: Aaron Domnits; Music: Mikhl Gelbart

https://tinyurl.com/4hr4fmh6

(Performed by June Tabor)

The first Nazi concentration camp was set up at Dachau, on the outskirts of Munich, on March 22, 1933. Organization of the camp was entrusted to Theodore Eicke. Himmler had arranged his release from a psychiatric ward for the purpose of taking command at Dachau.

Within the camp, thousands of inmates feared life daily, and feared death even more. Millions of Germans traveled by train between Munich and Nurenberg, passing virtually within hands reach of the camp.

As early as 1938, Dachau held over 20,000 inmates. It developed into a camp of varied "scientific" experiments.

- Prisoners were placed in pressure chambers and subjected to high altitude tests until, amid excruciating pain, their lungs burst -- to benefit the German *Luftwaffe*.
- Inmates were injected with lethal doses of typhus and jaundice to study their reaction -- for the benefit of the Reich's general population.
- Jews were subjected to 'freezing' experiments in icy water -- to derive lessons for the benefit of the German Navy.

Much of the equipment of the "scientific" laboratories and of the crematoria was successfully dismantled before the arrival of the Allies. Thousands of inmates were subjected to death marches in an attempt to elude the advancing Allied forces and postpone their liberation. Only when the camp was cut off from Berlin, at the end of April, 1945, did it finally come under the control of American Forces.

Among the inmates of Dachau was Menachem:

We were in a satellite camp of Dachau. With the approach of the enemy, the Germans started evacuating the camp. A forced march began. It lasted for days without end. Surrounded by German guards, we were pushed onward, without any particular goal in sight, just to get away from the Americans.

It was the month of May, but it was bitter cold at night. Our people had been without food for days. Exhaustion and starvation took their toll. Apathy, disorientation, an irresistible longing for a moment's rest set in. Some sat down. Some keeled over, unable to take another step. The moment one touched ground, a German guard's gun barked. Nobody bothered with the dead. The march continued, without a moment's interruption, relentlessly.

I was luckier than most. Before my deportation to Dachau, I was a locksmith in Kovno, and so I was assigned to the locksmith's shop in town. There was a big sack of sunflower seeds in the shop. Just before the march, I tied my shirt up around my waist, to form a bag and filled my shirt with sunflower seeds. During the march I would stuff handfuls of sunflower seeds into my mouth. The oil of the seeds kept me going, gave me the strength to continue.

We lost count of days. One day at sunset we found ourselves in a valley surrounded by hills. All around on their rims there were German guards, loaded weapons in hand. It was snowing. I and two friends tried to use our blankets to set up a tent with the help of some branches. But the makeshift arrangement didn't work. It didn't matter though, for during the night the constantly falling snow gave us a warm, protective blanket, with a few hours of rest.

At the crack of dawn, I woke. First thing, I looked toward the crest of the hills. They were bare. No one in sight. No guards. No guns. Ever so slowly I crawled out from under the snowy blanket. Carefully I took a few steps, bracing for the possibility that I may any second hear the clatter of a machine gun. Another few steps. Silence. I straightened up, looked around, and started walking toward the highway. I barely reached it, when in the crimson light of dawn I heard a low rumble.

Then I saw it. Unmistakably, clearly, I saw it. The tank. It was an American tank.

We were free.

Mir Leben Eybig (We'll Live Forever)

Mir leben eybig - es brent di velt…
Mir leben eybig -- mir zeinen do!

We carry on, in world aflame.
On, with nothing and no name.
Burst in anger – awful foe
Before you we'll not bow low.
Hour by hour, on we strive
We want to live, we shall survive!

Mir Leben Eybig -- Words: Leyb Rozental; Music: traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZnvx3sRkOg

(Performed by Louisa Lyne and *di Yiddishe Kapelye*)

Alternative: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiJ-Xh4s-8M

By mid-January 1945, the Red Army began its winter offensive aiming for Berlin. The road to Berlin went through Auschwitz. Evacuation of the camp by the SS proceeded in haste. Traces of all crimes needed to be eliminated.

Two months earlier, SS-head Himmler had already commanded the destruction of the crematoria. With the exception of one installation which continued working virtually to the very end, the rest of the crematoria and gas chambers were blown up.

All written records were ordered destroyed. The transport lists of those who went straight to the gas chambers; the documents at the camp hospitals; experimentation records, and the general records of the barracks.

The Canada barracks, with the confiscated articles of camp inmates, were to be emptied. During December and half of January over 500,000 articles of clothing were sent to Germany. The rest were burnt in the barracks for lack of time to organize their dispatch.

By the time of the Russian offensive, much of the main camp and its satellites had been emptied. Still, some 70,000 living skeletons remained. On January 18, 1945, the last westward move began on foot. This was the final phase: a huge death march. No laggards survived.

In the frenzied rush of evacuation, some, more dead than alive, were overlooked and left behind in the vast Auschwitz complex.

At 3 p.m. on January 27, 1945, a small reconnaissance group of the First Ukrainian Front entered the camp area, and 1,688 days of the history of Auschwitz came to an end.

Among those few liberated in Auschwitz was Frank.

As I descended from the cattle wagon onto the Auschwitz ramp, the Kapos pointed at the chimney stacks and sarcastically remarked: "See that smoke and fire? That's where your mother and father will be soon!" In addition to my dear parents, two of my brothers perished in Auschwitz. And my sister, the very last day before liberation.

I was shifted to a satellite camp of Auschwitz, called Lagisha, where we worked on factory construction. Two youngsters tried to escape. The SS didn't shoot them -- or hang them -- they beat them to pulp. And we were forced to watch, as their unrecognizable bodies were carried through the camp -- a warning to any who might toy with the idea of escape. That was Lagisha.

Then came Camp Yavozhno, with continued work on factory construction and coal mining. There were about 4,000 of us. We preferred the coal mines, despite their dust, for it was warmer there, in the belly of the earth. Our cruelest enemy -- in our single-sheet prisoner clothes and torn footwear -- was the cold, even worse than hunger. At the daily 0430 morning *appell*, toes often froze to the ground. When the "selections" took place, with fierce regularity, those people were doomed.

Over and over, I told myself: "I will go home. I will go home." That's what kept me going: my hope to get home.

But a couple of days before the Germans evacuated the camp because of the enemy's advance, I couldn't walk anymore. In their haste to get away, pushing people into forced-march columns, the Germans neglected to take care of the few skeletons left behind.

The Russians arrived several days later. They took those still alive into the hospital of the nearest town. After a week I was determined to go free. With some other survivors, I headed for the main Auschwitz camp. It took us three days to cover the few miles. People came looking for relatives and friends. However, my goal was to get home, to the place of my birth and wonderful memories of childhood in Rumania. The journey took me eight months, being detained and diverted by the political powers that be.

Less than two months in my hometown convinced me that what used to be my home offered no future for a Jew.

Begin soft music of "Tell me where shall I go"

I was a Displaced Person -- a DP. And so, I found my way to DP Camp Leipheim in Germany, where I spent three years. Only in 1949 did my sun rise and my new life begin, <u>really</u> begin.

Vil ahin zol ich gein (Tell me where shall I go)
Lyrics & Music: Samuel Korntayer, Oscar Strok, Leo Fuld, Sonny Miller & Sigmunt Berland.
https://tinyurl.com/z3zusekr

(Performed by Hunk Brodt, Shai Abramson and IDF choir; from 1:30 in the clip.)

The forced evacuation of the camps, prompted by the advance of the Allied forces, proceeded amid total chaos. Evacuation was on foot, with inadequate footwear and sparse clothing. There were no supplies, no food and no drinking water.

The prisoners on these evacuation marches faced indescribable tortures. Hundreds, thousands, whose strength failed and who fell, were shot on the spot. That is why these marches were called "death marches."

On occasion a marching column stumbled upon a train heading in their direction. To speed the evacuation, the German guards would commandeer the train and load thereon the vastly

diminished and weakened human cargo. The feeling of relief at such a moment was, however, purely ephemeral and premature.

Like the marching columns, so the rolling trains were death traps. Still not a bite of food and not a drop of water – with the additional threat of Allied bombing, by pilots assuming that German troops were being transported on the trains.

Among those on one such train was Livia, certain the train was on the way to freedom:

The train moves on. All day. All night. We have been in the cattle car a whole week, without food, without water. The night seems endless. The rattle of the train goes on forever.

The first flickers of dawn pierce the car, and I realize that we have been standing for some time. I must have dozed off after all. In the cattle car everyone is asleep, the dead and the living dead.

Where are we? I want to peer between the slats but I cannot move. My limbs seem frozen. Better lie still and wait. Wait for the train to move again. Wait for the familiar rattle which has become the only rhythm of life.

Slowly, eyes open all around. No one moves. No one breaks the numb compulsion of motionlessness. We lie still and wait.

In midmorning sounds reach us. Human voices.
A shadow is cast into the wagon. Then another. The voices seem quite near now. With effort, I lift my head.

Two tall men in strange uniforms stand in the doorway. They look at us with a curious expression. One of them shakes his head and says something to the other one. I do not understand what he says. I am very tired. It is difficult to concentrate. Then the two tall men in the strange uniforms leave the wagon.

In a few minutes a heavy-set officer with reddish cheeks appears. He speaks very loud in a strange Yiddish: "Who are you?... Are you Jews?"

A few seconds later he repeats: "Who are you? Do you understand me? Can you hear me? Can you speak Yiddish? Who can understand me?"

We all stare without answering. Finally, Martha, nearest to the entrance whispers: "Who are you?"

"We are Americans. But who are you? Are you Jews? Are you men or women?"

"Americans?!"

We all struggle into a sitting position. "Americans!" So it has come. We are liberated. It is all over. We are free. The Americans have finally come. We are free. They've come at last. At last.

So this is it. Liberation. It's come. My mind is blank. I do not comprehend. I am very tired. I am fourteen years old, and I have lived a thousand years. This is freedom. These are our liberators... Americans. I'm numb with cold. With hunger. With death and blood, and the rattle of the train rolling on and on…

I am free at last. Why don't I feel it? Why don't I feel it?

Eli, Eli, lama azavtani: My God, my God – Why have You forsaken me?

In fayer, in flamm host du unz gebrent --

My God, my God, you roasted us in all-consuming fire --
But we refuse to go under.
Like our ovos-avosenu -- our fathers of old
We shan't give up on You
And shall triumphantly declare:
Shema Yisroel A-donai E-loheinu A-donai Echad!
Hear O' Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!

Eli, Eli, Lama Azavtani -- Words and music: Jacob Sandler/traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE95WpTS3WI

(Performed by Eli Henig)

The Red Army completed its encirclement of Budapest on Christmas eve, 1944. Within the city, the only Ghetto still in existence in all of Nazi-occupied Europe was in utter dread. Rumors said that the Nazis had mined the Ghetto and, as a last act of hatred, would blow it to smithereens.

The city still had a number of "Protected Houses" under flags of neutral nations. Since it was an open secret that these houses sheltered thousands of Jews, it was expected that they would be attacked and ransacked.

The Germans and their Hungarian *Nyilash* accomplices were also well aware that Budapest was the last refuge of the Jewish underground in Hungary. A final attempt to break Jewish defiance before yielding to the Russian onslaught was therefore anticipated.

None of these fears turned out to be futile. The population of the Ghetto, which was 100,000 in December, was diminished by 20,000 as of January 18, 1945, the day of liberation. Many of the "Protected Houses" were emptied of their inhabitants, who were marched to the Blue Danube and, from its pastoral banks, shot into the majestically flowing, freezing waters. The hunt for Jews went on to the very moment of liberation.

Here is the story of my two brothers, Franz and Miki, as they told it:

We were using false Aryan papers, and hiding with our mother in the air-raid shelter of a three-family home as the Red Army approached Budapest.

It was one of those rare moments of eerie quiet between the house-to-house battles around our street, strange to the ear, so used to continual explosion of mortar shells and the rattle of machine gun fire. No one in the shelter spoke. We relished the silence.

Suddenly, there came an imperious knock at the gate. No one moved. Then a longer series of knocks. And then another. Someone reluctantly climbed up the stairs to check. A minute later a company of uniformed *Nyilash* appeared.

"Identifications", rasped the man in front. One by one they checked the residents of the shelter. Only the rustle of documents broke the now-heavy silence.

"You two come with us!"

No questions. No explanations. Everybody understood everything in that deadly silence. A last glance at mother, who was ghost-pale. A warning, almost commanding glance not to dare make a move and betray that she was somehow linked to us, as we were marched off under suspicion.

We weren't the only ones. In the street there were already half-a-dozen young men, surrounded by a strong *Nyilash* guard. We were marched toward the center of town. Evidently, we were being taken to *Nyilash* headquarters, a place of interrogation and executions. On the way we stopped several times at different houses. The group of suspected Jews grew to nearly two dozen. We were lined up in the middle of the street, in a marching column, on the way to our final destination. Only the clatter of *Nyilash* boots was audible: left-right-left, left-right-left. And the quickened beating of our hearts.

The winter sky was turning more and more gray as evening approached. From the distance the drone of airplanes gradually grew louder with each eternal second. The first Russian plane ominously appeared out of the gray at the end of the street. At its tail another, and behind it yet another. Ra-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta -- machine guns began spitting fire, strafing the street mercilessly.

"Take cover!", screeched the *Nyilash* captain. And as everybody -- guards and captives -- ducked into the gates and passages of the nearest houses, we exchanged a lightning glance indicating full rapport. The message was clear: "Run for your life!"

Amid hails of bullets, we raced down the street, turning at the nearest corner, and turning again, just in case the *Nyilash* guards spotted our escape. But thankfully, the guards at that point were apparently busy saving their own skins.

Thus we escaped. It was January 16, 1945. Thirty-six hours later, an eternity, liberation arrived.

Song: *Va'ani Tefilati* (My Prayer) Words: Psalm 69:14:

As for me -- my prayer to you, Adonai, may this be a time of grace; Oh God, in Your abundant loving-kindness, answer me in truth with Your salvation.

https://tinyurl.com/559j6p9x

(Performed by Nitzan Birnbaum)

Ne Csuggedj

Don't despair, don't weep, O Israel!
Let us end these sorrowful hours,
Bear these dreadful times with strength --
Our garden will soon bloom with flowers.

Our strength will come from the legions of youth
Ready to sing with a new song;
With the song on our lips and faith in our hearts
Through storms and tempests we march along.

Faith is the watchword on our flag,
We raise it wherever we may be.
So lift up your hearts and look straight ahead
Our people will soon again be free!

The Czernowitz Ghetto was established in 1941 -- only to be immediately earmarked for liquidation. The Jews were summarily driven out of their temporary shelters. In freezing weather and deep snow, a march of hundreds of kilometers began. Thousands fell and perished…

On the track where Napoleon's armies fell apart, and where Hitler's armies almost collapsed in the face of the most implacable foe -- the Russian winter -- the driven Jews tried to hold out.

Under-clothed and undernourished, the Czernowitz Jews tried to support one another, mother holding on to son, and son to mother.

Not only the German soldiers and their Romanian allies -- the locals, too, were hostile. They deprived the half-frozen, half-blinded and staggering Jew of his last shirt for a slice of bread.

Among the younger people in the endless marching column was Moshe:

We were transported to Guriefka, a tiny village on the Black Sea, not found even on a detailed map of Ukraina. Eight hundred young Jews were assembled there in December, 1942, to build a

bridge across the Bug River, to allow an orderly retreat of the remnants of the German forces defeated at Stalingrad. We were organized into slave labor battalions.

The winter was bitter, food extremely scarce. In the barracks we were eaten up by flies. Sanitary conditions were non-existent. Typhoid was rampant. Selections were frequent. Our numbers were regularly decimated.

One day we were unloading a shipment of food supplies for the military. In our arms we carried bread to the depot. I couldn't resist and stole a loaf of bread. In the process, I noticed that I was spotted. I ran for my life, and managed to elude the pursuers. Yet, I remained deathly afraid that they would recognize me.

A week later, as the front inexorably approached, the Germans decided to show us what any escape attempt would lead to. They chose ten people for hanging. *We* had to build the gallows. A big gate-like contraption had to be erected, precisely over the disgusting pit, that served as the latrine for hundreds of people. We were all lined up by the latrines, facing the gallows. From the line-up the Germans selected hangmen for the gruesome task. Tall for my age, taller than most of my group, I stood in the third row. The Germans were scrutinizing our lines. I tried my best to shrink to non-existence.

I was petrified, not only because I could have been chosen to execute a fellow inmate, but because I was haunted by the nightmare that they may yet recognize the bread thief and hang me too over the latrine.

The rope by which one of the condemned men hung tore. He fell. In a broken voice he pleaded for mercy, promising to be an exemplary worker and inmate. The Germans ordered him hung a second time, by his own belt.

For days afterwards, while using the only latrine in the camp, we had the bodies of our comrades dangling over our heads like grotesque marionettes.

Shortly thereafter, Russian partisans occupied Guriefka, to be followed by the Red Army. I had only one overpowering desire: to find my mother. I had parted from her in nearby Evashkovce. Driven by obsessive hope, I made for the road. Two days and one night I walked, or rather dragged myself, as if drawn by a magnet -- till I reached Evashkovce and there, amazingly, I found my mother.

That was the only moment of joy and light in the darkness of that long night. Indeed, we were liberated. But for the moment, liberation and freedom carried no meaning. The heart seemed to be ripped out of its place. The soul burnt out. The brain reacted mechanically.

But at last, the wellsprings of life reopened and the promise of a future beckoned.

Es hot uns dos leben gerufen

Dos leben fun zunige teg

Tzu eins, tzvei, drei…

Du veist vo du geist un farvos!

Life calls out to us, and then
Life can be so good again.
We hear its beat, up the street,
One-two-three; one-two-three.
Echoing from each and every wall
Every house, each shop and stall,
Our spirit, our will, and this our song.
Come with us and march along!

When summoned to life we could stay
in days that were sunny and gay,
and all that were there, seemed to walk as on air
by themselves, as they went on their way.
"1, 2, 3," – "1, 2, 3," -- to work, with spirits high.
Every step will resound, on the echoing ground
when you know where you're going and why!

Tzu Eins, Tzvei, Drei – Words: Leyb Rozenthal (after Hans Eisler); Music: traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMNq_NigT74

(Performed by Henry Sapoznik)

Not to give in, and not to passively accept one's fate were forms of resistance to Nazi tyranny. For these it wasn't necessary to join armed partisan units or operational groups of the underground. It may have entailed securing a set of false papers, and clothing oneself in an Aryan identity.

Not everyone could do that. Those who had a distinctly Jewish look had to forego that option, for their true identity would be discovered, leading to dire consequences. Those who could not "keep their cool" under questioning, were also well-advised to avoid that stratagem. Those who could not totally identify with their new Aryan self by memorizing data of a whole family tree and its geography, needed to hide or somehow escape.

To become a confident and competent Aryan required ingenuity, intelligence, good memory, and the ability to make quick decisions. One of those "Aryans" was Pauline, whose false identity led her from Gorlice in Poland to Villach in Austria by the end of the war.

The tolling bells and fluttering white flags signal the end. British tanks thunder through the streets of the Austrian town of Villach. It is May 8, 1945.

I am apparently free!

What is the meaning of this word? What does it mean to be free with such a load of worries and fears for my husband and other relatives? When I left them behind with my new Christian identity, locked in the Ghetto of Gorlice, I had an inkling of the fate awaiting them. My mother, father, and sister had been taken to Belzec and murdered, suffocated by gas. My little brother was sent to a concentration camp. My brother-in-law and my sister-in-law were murdered in Auschwitz. My husband sealed in the Ghetto. I remember the nagging doubts whether it was right on my part to leave them behind. And now, three years later, as I emerge "liberated" in this pretty Austrian town, I feel more confused than ever.

Where am I to turn? Who am I? What am I? Where do I belong? My mind plays with the thought of going back and searching for relatives and acquaintances. But I am afraid of the truth. I am scared at the thought of hearing my own true name said aloud by someone who may recognize me -- of having my identity uncovered, of losing the second one which I have grown used to. I doubt if there are any Jews left in Poland, or for that matter, anywhere!

I am standing on the sidewalk looking at the road. There is nowhere to go on this day of liberation, as the local populace welcomes the British army. How long have I been standing here? Suddenly a truck passes by, a flag, blue and white, fluttering over it. And the Star of David, the Magen David! A current runs through me. I tremble. So there are Jews somewhere. They do still exist!...

I start looking for Jews. I run through the little town looking at the soldiers, at their faces, each of them, the ones on the streets, the ones on duty guarding each bridge, each public building. I look them in the eyes, seeking a Jew. I follow their movements. I try to guess who is a Jew by his pronunciation, by his face. I am hoping to discover a Jew by some sixth sense, by telepathy. I search for many hours, deep into the night. Only very few answer me at all. Then one, finally, when asked in my clipped German, "*Verstehen sie Deutsch?*", replies in our plain Yiddish, "*Yo, ich farsteh.*" (Yes, I understand.)

I begin plying him with questions about Jews and Judaism. He wishes to know the reason of my interest. Caution does not allow me to betray myself. Who would vouch for my safety if some reversal occurs in the fortunes of life? After having lost my entire family, living through the extermination of my people, I am suspicious and distrustful of anybody I meet. I am absolutely unable to tell the truth, to reveal my life-saving secret and admit that I -- I too -- am a Jew! I would not admit it even to myself.

I struggle inside. My personality is split. Rent in two parts, I am a Polish Christian, according to the papers which saved my life. But in my heart, and in my thinking and judgment, I am, and I remain, totally a Jew. Somewhere deep inside me, down in my unconscious self, there is an entire world buried, and to reach it is frightening. It is a world murdered and dead. Being Jewish is to me an indication of death.

Only much later, in Italy, under the care and guidance of a psychiatrist, do I begin to emerge from my split personality, and regain some measure of relative peace. At that time, I am invited to a special meal in the officers' club.

Suddenly I notice Matzot on the table. I am deluged by memories. An officer reads my inner upheaval on my face. "Do you know what these are?", he asks. "Matzot." "When do you eat Matzot?" "On Pesach." And now my floodgates open:

In a trembling, choking voice I start singing the opening verse of the Pesach song "Echad mi Yode'a", in a tune remembered from my childhood and youth in my father's house. The entire hall

falls so very silent, you could hear a pin drop. And slowly, hesitatingly, their voices begin joining mine. With tears in their eyes, these hardened members of combat units sing the song with me. They understand, no questions asked.

I had come back from the dead.

Optional: Soft humming of Anachnu Po, or *Echad Mi Yode'a.*

Despite the diabolical foe, despite the silence of the Allies, despite the apathy of our supposed friends, despite the sea of hatred that encompassed us, despite the gas that choked us and the fire that consumed us -- we are back from the dead, risen from the grave:

Mir zainen do! Anachnu po! We survive!

Oh, never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive!

From land of palm trees to the land of distant snow,
We are here, with our pain, and with our woe,
But wherever our blood was shed in pain,
Our fighting spirit will resurrect again.

Tomorrow's sun will gladden our today,
The past with bitter foe shall pass away.
But should the sun at dawn briefly delay,
Then let our call ring loud and clear: it's on the way.

Not lead, but blood, inscribed this song we sing,
It's not a caroling of birds upon the wing.
But 'twas a people midst the crashing fires of hell
That sang this song, and fought courageous till it fell.

So never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive.

Jewish Partisans' Song -- Words and music: Hirsch Glick

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wgYnYSg3Zs

(Performed by Chava Alberstein)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzPShrawxLc

(Performed by Paul Robeson)

✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡

See appendix for suggested concluding sections.

The Terrible Granite of Mauthausen

See appendix for suggested introductory section.

One of the books about Mauthausen carries the title: *Nad pieknym modrym Dunajem* -- "Over the Pretty Blue Danube". Indeed, Mauthausen village's baroque exterior and beautiful setting give the impression of a fairy-tale town. A survivor reminiscing about the ascent from the unloading station to the camp, writes of the breathtaking view that for a moment let him forget his suffering.

Behind that dreamy façade, from August 8, 1938 till May 5, 1945, was one of the most brutal death camps produced and operated by Hitler's Germany.

The camp was situated in Austria. Immediately after the *Anschluss* of Austria in March 1938, Heinrich Himmler toured the Mauthausen quarries. It was decided to build a camp near the main granite quarry. In mid-May 1938, the first prisoners were brought in for the building of the camp, all of them hardened German criminals. Once the camp was completed, these very same criminals were given supervisory positions as barrack-elders and SS-aides who vied to exceed their masters in cruelty.

Mauthausen was intended only for prisoners "for whom there was no prospect of being brought back into the fold". This meant that the transfer of a prisoner to Mauthausen was tantamount to a death sentence. The camp housed Jews as well as a substantial number of political prisoners who were considered a direct threat to the Fuehrer and the Nazi regime. The presence of these *two distinct groups*, both considered outcasts, allows for interesting comparisons. Although the "others" were deemed anti-social threats to the Reich deserving liquidation, their treatment was far more lenient than that meted out to the "subhuman" Jews.

Non-Jewish survivors who write of their bitter experiences in Mauthausen almost inevitably emphasize the "special treatment" reserved for the Jews. Bruno Baum writes: "For many years, the lifespan of a Jew amounted to a maximum of three days".

From the Memoirs of Jean Lafitte: "In this camp they kill those who do not die fast enough. Food is so distributed, work continues under such conditions, that a perfectly sound person cannot survive beyond six months. First, they destroy Jews and Communists. Thousands of Jews were pushed over the cliff into the deep quarry. On occasion Jews were kept in the quarry when rocks were detonated, sending their broken bodies flying through the air."

Vaclav Bedrych, an eyewitness, writes about a transport that arrived from the Czech Protectorate. The Czech group as a whole was treated with particular brutality, but the Jews among them got the worst of it. "During their ascent from the railway station to the camp" -- he writes -- "the Jewish prisoners were *already* segregated. Eleven of them were murdered *before* reaching the camp." In the camp, Jews were housed together with others in the barracks, but were not assigned places on the pallets and were forced to sleep on the floor.

Another eyewitness, Dobrovolny, writes: "The Jews only received half the food we received; so we tried to supplement their portions from our own rations, but our increasing hunger weakened our resolve. Each of us knew well how much we needed that slice of bread which we were denied, and *the Jews, without exception, were in any case condemned to death*".

Medical help was forbidden to Jewish inmates. Bandages were not available to them and they used paper or other items instead. In the many instances when Jews were used for medical experiments, sedatives were not applied.

With no medical care, Jews who were unfit for work or contracted typhus or tuberculosis, were transferred to the sub-camp of Gusen to be disposed of. On a single day at Gusen, 420 Jewish children between the ages of 4 and 7 were murdered by SS doctors using heart injections.

The disposal of the Jews was accomplished in the cheapest possible way. Some examples:

One night, 600 unfit inmates were beaten to death with axes, sticks and shovels.

Kapo Van Loosen, Kapo Klockman and Block-elder Schroegler specialized in the method of killing the unfit or ill by drowning them in tubs and small barrels.

In some cases, inmates were hanged by their hands, arms tied behind their backs, on the numerous trees around the Gusen sub-camp. This method of murder derived from a medieval system of torture. People "hanged" in such a way usually died most painfully after prolonged suffering.

One of the ghastly methods of disposing of inmates was invented by SS officer Karl Chmielevski and warmly embraced by the Commander of Mauthausen. The Commander had an obsession for cleanliness and hygiene -- in the winter. Bathing was made mandatory, but after their bath, inmates were forced to stand for hours in snow, in temperatures of minus 16 degrees Celsius, in front of their barracks. The maxim was unequivocal: "Cool off daily". Repeatedly, between 40 and 200 inmates were brought to the showers, exposed to cold water and then to the freezing cold. The victims usually lost consciousness after thirty minutes and died.

These were inexpensive methods that produced desired results. In addition, Mauthausen and its sub-camps had their public hangings, gas chambers, execution by a single shot, and the always present crematorium.

There was the twice-daily dreaded *Appell* -- roll call, compulsory for all, alive or dead, not yet removed from the list. The account had to be absolutely exact. Thousands stood in orderly lines. If one was missing, hours would pass until the matter was clarified. A veritable torture.

As far as the Jews were concerned, Mauthausen was an *extermination camp in the full sense of the word.* All Jews sent to the camp during 1941/42 perished in an extremely short span of time. All Jews sent to Mauthausen in 1943, died the same year.

In 1944, the Germans decided to better exploit the prisoners' working potential. Yet, with the arrival of each new Jewish transport, an immediate selection was carried out. The sick, the weak and the little ones were eliminated. The others were exposed to deprivation, physical and psychological isolation, a sense of being utterly forsaken, and sent to the kind of work that doomed them to perish within a short time.

Eli, Eli, lama azavtani: My God, my God – Why have You forsaken me?

In fayer, in flamm host du unz gebrent --
My God, my God, you roasted us in all-consuming fire --
But we refuse to go under.
Like our ovos-avosenu -- our fathers of old
We shan't give up on You
And shall triumphantly declare: *Shema Yisroel A-donai E-loheinu A-donai Echad!*
Hear O' Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!

Eli, Eli, Lama Azavtani -- Words and music: Jacob Sandler/traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE95WpTS3WI

(Performed by Eli Henig)

Each transport had its own story. Here are some typical examples.

In January 1945, during the general evacuation of Auschwitz, a transport of more than 9,000 prisoners arrived to Mauthausen. Upon arrival, the Jews were separated from the other prisoners and forced to wait for hours in the courtyard of the camp in freezing conditions until the rest of the prisoners were registered. By then, many who had reached the camp alive had frozen to death.

Eyewitness Mary Krauss reports: "In the distance we saw a huge wall. We were halted and waited for hours in the snow. Enormous iron-studded wooden doors, twelve feet high were opened by soldiers and through them went our long column into a large square. Over the top of the entrance door was written: 'Those who enter through these gates never leave through them.'"

In February 1945, 6,000 inmates were crammed into freight cars in Camp Grossrosen for delivery to Mauthausen. Eleven days later the train reached the Mauthausen rail station. Without food, water and sanitary facilities for eleven days, 130 to 150 pressed together in each wagon in a standing position, of the 6,000, only 1,200 arrived alive. Of these, 180 fell on the way from the station to the camp and were shot on the spot. 645 more died within a month from hunger. Upon Mauthausen's liberation on May 5, 1945, only 32 of the 6,000 Grossrosen transport were still alive.

The last large group of prisoners sent to Mauthausen consisted of Hungarian Jews. From autumn of 1944 onward, tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews were sent to build a line of fortifications on the Austro-Hungarian border to stop the relentless Russian advance. With the approach of the front during March 1945, the prisoners were forced to march on foot to Mauthausen.

Mauthausen was overcrowded with evacuees from Auschwitz and other camps, so a tent compound was erected inside to house the Hungarian arrivals. This consisted of fourteen huge circus tents, each housing 3,000 to 4,000 people. The tents had no bunks. Prisoners could find rest only on the muddy ground. There was no sanitation of any kind -- no running water or lavatories -- only holes in the ground. Rations were minimal. Each day there were 150 to 200 deaths in the tents from typhus and dysentery. Tent dwellers remained under those conditions for 15-20 days, until the process of selection in Mauthausen allowed for transfer to the big camp.

Incontrovertible testimonies show that though other nationalities -- Poles, Russians, Czechs, Gypsies -- suffered greatly at the hands of the Nazis, none compared in their suffering to the Jews.

At the helm of this pyramid of torture stood the Camp Commander, Franz Ziereis. In the office, over his desk, hung the following admonition:

Ein Pfui dem Mann	Shame on the man
der nicht schlagen kann.	With rod too light.
Noch lebt dass Gebot:	The law to apply:
Schlag tot, Schlag tot!	To death you smite.

The SS guards were all carved out of the same granite. They had an insatiable desire to murder and differed from each other only in the mechanisms they employed to fulfill their individual sadistic fantasies.

Eyewitness Mary Krauss again: "Eight inmates, their ankles shackled to a revolving wheel just raised off the ground, were driven round by SS men, whipping them until they dropped dead."

A survivor, Vandor Andor, describes an SS guard who would systematically shoot everyone in the working platoon who didn't march in precise formation. "He was the embodiment of death. One couldn't tell why and at whom he would lift his deadly weapon. When we approached him, all of us, together, in rhythm, without thinking, whispered: *Sh'ma Yisroel, Sh'ma Yisroel, Sh'ma Yisroel…* Would it be our last *Sh'ma Yisroel?...* We walked rigidly, chest out, saluting him. Only when he was out of sight did we collapse, thankful for yet another hour."

Lomir shvaign, vaiter svaign, nit kein vort geredt,
Lomir mit farmachte oign murmlen a gebet.

Be silent, always silent,
Say not a single word.
In your heart, to God just pray
For faith and trust and hope this day.

(Option: *Sounds of Silence,* Simon & Garfunkle)

Initially the prisoners were forced to work in the stone quarries. This was the worst. *There* every SS felt like Pharaoh himself. Gigantic blocks of granite had to be transported, like in ancient Egypt. Pharaohs used the granite to build themselves pyramids – enduring memorials for all eternity. The SS also built themselves enduring memorials in the granite quarries – pyramids of Jewish corpses.

Modern machinery for stone-breaking and transporting wasn't available. For that matter, neither was antiquated machinery. Everything was accomplished by the limitless source of manpower, the starving prisoners. Those who fell were immediately replaced. Turnover was constant. Even Dante's hellish inferno was far better than the stone quarries of Mauthausen.

By Himmler's personal order, each boulder had to weigh more than 50 kg and had to be delivered by the 186 steps leading from the quarry below to the camp level above. On the path, the SS and Kapo whips cracked incessantly. Men crawled on all fours under the backbreaking burden, down and up, down and up. Countless numbers collapsed, earning them a bullet from the watchtower.

> Every morning, day by day,
> shoes clatter on the stony way.
> Tired feet groan and moan,
> rubbing against granite stone.
> If you seek help, wherever you turn,
> solid doors are locked firm.
> Enough -- *genug* -- leave me alone!
> hammer the shoes against deaf stone.

Consider song: *Schoin Genug*

In the quarry the SS and their henchmen found diabolical ways to amuse themselves. In a single day, March 31, 1943, in the presence of Himmler and before his very eyes, 1,000 Jews from Holland were thrown from the 50 meter-cliff -- their bones and brains, marrow and blood splattering over the granite. The Nazis termed the quarry the *Wiener Grabben* (the Viennese graves), and jokingly dubbed the doomed Jews "paratroopers".

Among those who perished in the quarries of Mauthausen, in contravention to the Geneva Convention for the treatment of military prisoners, were 47 U.S. flyers. Their fate was graphically described in the following eyewitness account at the Nuremberg Trials:

The 47 officers were led barefoot to the quarry… At the bottom of the steps, the guards loaded boulders on the backs of these poor men who had to carry them to the top. On the first trip the prisoners bore rocks weighing about sixty pounds each and they were accompanied by blows… The second journey the stones were still heavier, and whenever the poor wretches sank under their burden, they were kicked and hit with a bludgeon… In the evening 21 bodies were strewn along the road. The 26 others died the following morning.

In the beginning of 1945, Abba Berditchev, the Israeli parachutist who attempted to aid his fellow Jews, was executed here after his capture in the Slovakian uprising. He shared with his young colleague, Chana Szenesh, the firm belief in a better world where good shall prevail.

Eli, Eli - My God, My God,
She'lo Yi'gamer le'Olam,
May these things never end:
The sand and the sea,
the murmuring waters,
lightening of the sky,
and human prayer!

Halicha b'Kesarya (Eli, Eli) -- Words: Chana Szenesh; Music: David Zehavi

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipo7923nFU0 (Performed by Chava Alberstein)

Jewish inmates and the prisoners of the special Punishment Unit, had to do the hardest and dirtiest work in the camp, subject to atrocities of SS men and Kapos. They were forced to empty the cesspools under inhumane conditions -- naked and running on the double.

One of the most heartrending sights was that of Jewish children, all naked, emptying the latrines with buckets. To accomplish their task, they stood in the excrement up to their waists. Only a few days before, these children had been cuddled by doting parents, fed, protected and put to bed with soothing lullabies.

Those who could treat children in such an inhumane manner shrank from nothing. Dr. Herbert Heim specialized in the preparation and production of human heads for diverse purposes. Some were exhibited in the local Pathological Museum. He sent others to friends as special gifts, to be used as paper-weights or as decorations.

SS officers Chmielevski and Seidler tanned human skin. From this leather they had books bound, and made lamp shades and leather cases.

In addition to labor in the quarry and cesspool cleaning, at a later stage, from the beginning of 1944, when all of Germany and Austria fell within reach of Allied bombers, prisoners were employed building subterranean concrete spaces and tunnels. These were to be used for assembling German buzz bombs and rockets. Natural caves in Gusen were enlarged into one of the largest subterranean production areas ever created. The work was done mainly by Jewish men deported from Hungary and Poland.

The work inside the tunnels, especially the "*Bergkristall*" tunnel, was the most lethal, undertaken in heat and dust and under constant threat of death. Criminal Kapos beat and murdered during work with no compunction. With no safety measures in place, many prisoners were killed by accidents. After 12 hours of labor other prisoners had to carry their bodies back to camp to account for them at the next roll call.

An SS man, Marshalek, testified at the Nuremberg trials that, according to an order by Himmler, when the Allied forces drew near, the prisoners were to be led into the tunnels of the *Bergkristall* factory, after which the entrance was to be blown up by explosives. The goal was to eliminate any witnesses who could testify to the manner in which the German war effort was conducted.

Even under those dreadful conditions, hope did not die. In the Spring of 1944, a group of prisoners began to organize for resistance.

Es hot uns dos leben gerufen

Dos leben fun zunige teg

Tzu eins, tzvei, drei…

Du veist vo du geist un farvos!

Life calls out to us, and then
Life can be so good again.
We hear its beat, up the street,
One-two-three; one-two-three.
Echoing from each and every wall
Every house, each shop and stall,
Our spirit, our will, and this our song.
Come with us and march along!

When summoned to life we could stay
in days that were sunny and gay,
and all that were there, seemed to walk as on air
by themselves, as they went on their way.
"1, 2, 3," – "1, 2, 3," -- to work, with spirits high.
Every step will resound, on the echoing ground
when you know where you're going and why!

Tzu Eins, Tzvei, Drei – Words: Leyb Rozenthal (after Hans Eisler); Music: traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMNq_NigT74 (Performed by Henry Sapoznik)

The Germans were wary of resistance within the camp. To forestall it as conditions worsened, the number of SS guards was increased from 1,500 in 1943, to 9,000 in 1944. Surveillance became more rigid. Turnover of prisoners increased substantially as many were liquidated at random, without cause, to eliminate any possibility of conspiratorial organization.

Yet, on February 2, 1945, some 500 prisoners staged a breakout. First, they stormed the watchtower, with rocks and two fire extinguishers in their hands. Oblivious of casualties that

littered the area of attack, they overpowered the guards in the tower and turned the machine gun on the other German fortifications and reinforcements. By throwing wet clothing on the electrified barbed wire fences, they blew their electrical charge and made them dysfunctional. This daring and courageous attack resulted in the escape of only 8 prisoners. The rest were killed in the attack or recaptured and put to death. In retaliation, over two hundred prisoners were forced to stand outside in the freezing night after being doused with cold water. None survived.

Di Nacht

Síz keiner mit mir in di nacht
Di nacht nor alein iz mit mir

There's no one with me in the night,

Darkness, nothing else in sight.

On roads obscured by darkness dense,

Hollow stillness – all I sense.

I go on, long is my way,

The clouded night does not hear.

Where to? Where? – ask my steps.

No answer comes to my ear.

There's no one with me in the night,

Darkness alone is with me.

On and on in lonely despair –

But where to, silent roads, to where?

Di Nacht -- Words: Aaron Domnits; Music: Mikhl Gelbart

https://tinyurl.com/4hr4fmh6 (Performed by June Tabor)

Despite impossible odds, however, hope and love could not be squelched. Incredibly, though all energy and will-power were needed for hourly survival, music was created in the camp. In March 1944, Remy Gillis composed the *Chant d'Espoir* -- Song of Hope. Gracian Guzinski composed a humorous *Concentration Camp Dance*. A gifted prisoner even composed an *International Concentration Camp Hymn*. Song and hope apparently never die in the human soul, even in the shadow of death, wallowing in filth and excrement.

Neither does love. Listen to the song "*Asma Asmaton*", from Mikis Theodorakis' "*Ballad of Mauthausen*", expressing the anguish of a Jewish prisoner on learning that the beautiful woman he loves has just been taken to her death.

"Asma Asmaton" – *Words:* Iakovos Kambanellis; Music: MikisTheodorakis
https://tinyurl.com/3x7b7yj9 *(performed by Joan Baez)*

The human being is normally a fragile reed. Yet, under conditions of utmost stress, the fragile reed can turn to steel. The more life-threatening a situation, the stronger the impulse to cling to life. If reality is not under our control, we turn to fantasy to cleave to life and hope for the future.

"I don't want to die", stated an inmate, "If they don't kill me outright, I will survive. Here we can triumph only in one way: If we stay alive!... In the depth of the granite quarry, surrounded by 40-to-60-meter steep stone walls, every morning there is a deafening moment's silence. 150 people stand at full attention without batting an eyelash. They are being counted by the *Kommando-fuhrer*. You could hear a pin drop from a distance. And every morning at that very same moment a bird that built its nest high upon the overhanging cliffs bursts into song. It greeted the majestically rising sun. I never heard music as beautiful and sublime as this."

Mach tzu di eygelech -- Ot kumen feigelech.

> Dear child, close your little eyes.
> Above your head, a little bird flies,
> circling round, with song profound.
> Satchel in hand -- on we roam,
> in fire and ashes -- now our home.

Words: Isaiah Shpigl; Music: David Beyglman
https://tinyurl.com/yc677w44 (performed by the Zamir Choir of Boston)

"Time: Dawn. Place: the depth of the granite quarry. For two hours we work in the thick fog and bitter cold. Then the sun starts breaking through. The shadows begin withdrawing toward the granite walls. The sun's rays warm our backs. We feel as if a new stream of life flows through us. It doesn't last long, but it is a precious moment."

And again: "Someone glanced over the shoulder of the German guard at the headlines of the German paper, "*Der Folkischer Beobachter*". It reports that Charkov was re-occupied by the Russians. The news spread through the marching column heading for the quarry. In a few minutes we shall start working. We will begin our daily battle. We had nothing to eat, but the news gave us renewed strength. We know that somewhere, very far from us, in the vicinity of the Dnieper, soldiers are pressing forward. We must hold out. Victory will be ours if we survive. How nice it is when we can hope!"

Es shlogt di sho! They declared:
Brothers, the hour has struck!
Mir Zeinen Do! We are here!
Although today we are stuck
in darkness -- have no fear,
The day shall dawn when one and all
We shall see this evil fall!

Es Shlogt Di Sho! -- Words and music: Kasriel Broydo
https://tinyurl.com/bdexycnr (Performed by *WanDeRer Quartett*)

"When the war ends" -- *Otan Teliossi O Polemos* -- is a life-in-death fantasy of a Jewish Mauthausen internee who dreams of the end of the war, or of life in surreal images. To the girl he has seen only across the barbed wire which segregates the male and female prisoners, "the girl with the frightened eyes and frozen hands", he calls out: "Don't forget me -- wait for me, so that we can meet, and kiss, and walk in the sunny streets among normal, ordinary people...when the war ends...or when we meet at the gas chamber."

And yet,
despite the diabolical foe
who turned us into parachutists without parachutes
in the quarries of Mauthausen;
despite the gas that choked us,
the fire that consumed us,
the showers in sub-zero temperature that turned us into pillars of ice;
despite our skulls being used as weights and decorations,
and our bodies mutilated in medical experiments;
despite the anguish, torture, pain and suffering --
DESPITE IT ALL --
We are back from the dead!
Risen from the grave!
We are here!

Mir zainen do! Anachnu po! We survive!

Oh, never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive!

From land of palm trees to the land of distant snow,
We are here, with our pain, and with our woe,
But wherever our blood was shed in pain,
Our fighting spirit will resurrect again.

Tomorrow's sun will gladden our today,
The past with bitter foe shall pass away.
But should the sun at dawn briefly delay,
Then let our call ring loud and clear: it's on the way.

Not lead, but blood, inscribed this song we sing,
It's not a caroling of birds upon the wing.
But 'twas a people midst the crashing fires of hell
That sang this song, and fought courageous till it fell.

So never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive.

Jewish Partisans' Song -- Words and music: Hirsch Glick

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wgYnYSg3Zs

(Performed by Chava Alberstein)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzPShrawxLc

(Performed by Paul Robeson)

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See appendix for suggested concluding sections.

The Jews and God in the Shoah

See appendix for suggested introductory section.

Among 230 French non-Jews taken to Auschwitz was Madame Claude Courturier. The following is from her testimony given on January 28, 1946 at "The Trial of German Criminals":

I was opposite Block 25, the notorious "Waiting Block", to which Jewish women were brought naked from the barracks. These were women who had been judged too sick or too frail to work. From Block 25, after being kept for up to a week without food or water, they were all sent, invariably, to the gas chambers. Uncovered trucks would drive up to the block and the naked women were piled on them, as many as the trucks could hold. Each time a truck started, the famous Hessler ran after the truck and, with his bludgeon, repeatedly struck the naked women going to their death.

It was that kind of group that the Czech Rudolf Vrba, author of "I Cannot Forgive", saw being put on open lorries to be taken to the gas chambers. "They knew that they were going to the gas chamber", he later recalled, "and they were quiet. Somehow people were accustomed to live with the moment, with the knowledge that death will come." But, when the lorry motors started, their sound created a panic. A terrible noise arose, "the death cry of thousands of young women, reduced to skeletons. At that point many tried to jump off the lorries, knowing that they can't succeed. But still they tried."

Among the most remarkable documents to have survived the war is a manuscript written in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Its author was a member of the *Sonderkommando*, the special Jewish work battalion whose job was to extricate the dead bodies from the gas chambers, cart them to the cremation ovens, incinerate them and dispose of the ashes and any remains. The *Sonderkommando* had an additional special assignment: to deliver the inmates of Block 25 from the trucks into the gas chambers.

Here is an excerpt from the manuscript buried in a jar, in the ground near Crematoria III, that was discovered in 1962, written by Salmen Lewental, of the *Sonderkommando*. He relates the story of a girl from the Bedzin Ghetto, delivered on a lorry from Block 25, who, as she lay helpless in her last minutes, had the following to tell.

She was the only one left of a large family. Though undernourished, she was in good health and was working hard. She thought she would survive. Eight days ago, Jewish children were not allowed to go to work. Whether they looked well or not, whether they were healthy or sick, they were lined up in front of their barracks and led to Block 25. They were ordered to strip naked, allegedly for a physical examination.

They were shut in for three days and three nights without a drop of water or a crumb of bread. "If they had shot us then, or gassed us, it would have been better", she said. "Death would not have impressed us at all... On the eighth day, after many hours of waiting in the frost naked, we were loaded onto lorries and dumped here on the ground. Such is the sad end of our last mistaken illusions. We have been, evidently, cursed even in our mothers' wombs, since such a sad end fell to our lot."

Another girl spoke up, reports Salmen Lewental: "I am still so young, I have really not experienced anything in my life, why should death of this kind be my fate? Why?" She spoke very slowly in a faltering voice. She sighed heavily then added: "And one should like so much to live a little longer…" A shiver passed through the body of the young girl. She called desperately, "Mamme!" and then spoke no more. Those were her last words.

At Block 25, as the women were being loaded onto the lorries, a rabbi's son, Moshe Sonnenshein, called out in Vrba's presence: "God -- Show them your power -- This is against You." Nothing happened, Vrba reports. Then Sonnenshein cried out: "There is no God. There is no God!!!"

Many Jews shared Moshe Sonnenshein's conviction: "There is no God". The calamitous march of events shook many pious Jews from their traditional moorings. Some rebelled against God, conducting war against Him. They spit on Jewish tradition, ate *treif* not merely for the sake of physical survival -- which was permitted by some of the Ghetto Rabbis -- but rather to spitefully transgress Jewish traditions and God's Law.

In one Warsaw congregation the news that the Jews would be further confined within the ghetto arrived just as the Cantor was about to start chanting *Neilah,* the closing service of Yom Kippur. It is that time of prayer when Jews rise to their highest pitch of fervor. The Gates of Heavenly Mercy are about to close, and before they do -- one hopes to sneak through just one more prayer, one more plea to the Heavenly Father, for life, no more, just life for us and our dear ones…

Upon getting the news regarding the Ghetto, the Chazan halted the Service and refused to go on. Simply refused. The Congregation was dumbfounded, the Rabbi in shock, members of the Bet Din stunned and confused. What is one to do? Who ever heard of such a thing? To refuse davening Neilah? To refuse completing the Yom Kippur Service? But the Chazan was adamant. "What use is there in praying Neilah when the Gates of Mercy are already locked?" What use is there pleading *Ptach Lanu Sha'ar*?

Ptach lanu sha'ar, be'et neilat sha'ar, ki pana yom.
Open the gates unto us, as the gates are about to close, for the day is ending.
https://youtu.be/ts6YSpBAKvM
(Performed by Shai Abramson and choir)

What gates would God suddenly open when hundreds of thousands of us had already been maimed and mauled, devastated and drowned?... Were the gates only about to be closed? Look, look and see, said the Cantor, they are already shut tight, slammed shut in our face, fastened by a hundred locks, and the key in the hand of a Satan before whom God is powerless! *Ptach lanu sha'ar?!* Who? God? Satan? Who has the keys? Who has the power? Who is almighty?

Many years earlier the great Rebbi of Berdichev wished to summon God to a *Din Toire* (Trial by Torah) for letting His People down, for allowing a poor tailor in His flock to wear his fingers to the bone, barely eking out a living. He settled himself in front of the open Ark on *Yom Kippur* Evening before the *Kol Nidre* prayers and challenged the Almighty on behalf of the poor, pleading their case and demanding justice.

How many *Din Toires* were declared on God during those gruesome days, when the righteous were made to suffer excruciating pain far beyond normal human endurance? How many baskets of sighs were deposited before the celestial throne? How many jars of most delicate crystal

containing shattered hearts? How many cries of writhing mothers choked off on earth reverberated through the serene heavenly abode?

How did God stand up to the *Din Toire* with the mother who wrapped her little boy in a pillow and threw him from the wagon, shouting: "Take him, there is some money to look after him", but then saw an SS man run up, unwrap the pillow, seize the child by its feet and smash his head against the wagon as she howled in horror and pain? How did God face up to that *Din Toire?*

How did God stand up to the *Din Toire* with the child who was left clinging around the neck of its mother, shot in the head before its eyes, who in her innocent helplessness could only offer the mother what the mother had given her when in need of comfort, a sweet melody, a soft lullaby - *Shluf Shoin, Shlug*. How many *Din Toires*, O God, *tatenyu*, Our Father?

Din Toire Mit Gott – R. Levi Yitshak Berditshever's Kaddish; Music: Leo Low

https://tinyurl.com/2euwvav3 (Performed by Moshe Oysher)

Endless *Din Toires* with God.

Yet, even while Moshe Sonnenshein cried out in utter devastation, "There is no God!", and the Chazan in Warsaw refused to *daven Neilah*, and Jews had their countless *Din Toires mit Gott*, it is remarkable that even in the face of such hellish reality religion did not disintegrate. Amazingly, many Jews managed to cling to their beliefs.

Indeed, in many places religious observance and tradition took on renewed vigor. Already in the early days of the Nazi rise to power in Germany, Leo Baeck, and especially Martin Buber, exhorted the Jews to hold fast to their faith and conviction, to preserve their pride and courage.

In a spontaneous response to persecution, synagogues filled to overflowing. They were not only houses of prayer, but the locus of solidarity and solace, compensating for the isolation outside. People who had never been in a synagogue before came to pray or, at least, to be with other Jews. After November 1938, when synagogues were torched all over Germany, Jews continued meeting in clandestine places of worship.

With the outbreak of the War and the conquest of Poland, the entire enterprise of traditional Judaism was forced underground. All functions pertaining to the observance of Judaism were outlawed, including religious study and teaching, *shechita* and the use of the *mikveh*. All over Poland, Jews prayed in secret. Though in some places public prayer was officially permitted, the Jews quickly learned that those assembled were subject to humiliation and terror at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators, for their sadistic sport and recreation. So Jews prayed in secret.

Chayim Kaplan, noted diarist of the Warsaw Ghetto, writes: "Public prayer in these dangerous times is a forbidden act. Anyone caught in this crime is doomed to severe punishment. If you will, it is even sabotage and… subject to execution." But Jews prayed in thousands of secret *minyanim*, some 600 in Warsaw alone. They prayed in cellars, attics, back rooms, behind drawn blinds, with men on guard.

In Cracow, services were held in two prayer houses thanks to the cooperation of Jewish policemen who worshipped there and who warned the congregation when German police could be expected.

Prayer took on new solemnity and urgency, with special petitionary prayers augmenting the regular service. In the Kovno ghetto, morning and evening, the Psalm *Mima'amakim Keraticha Yah* -- Out of the depths have I called You, O God -- was added. The penitential prayers, *Tachanun*, composed for the most part during the tragic days of the Crusades, were recited daily, accompanied by weeping and lamentation -- especially when reaching the exclamation *Shomer Yisrael, Shemor She'erit Yisrael* -- O Guardian of Israel, protect the remnant of Israel, and suffer not Israel to perish.

Shomer Yisrael, Shemor She'erit Yisrael – Music: Rabbi Shlomo Carlbach

https://tinyurl.com/22ta2bpw
(Performed by Rabbi Shlomo Katz)

The truly pious became even more pious and saw God's hand in everything. For believing Jews, the conviction that their sacrifice was required as a testimony to Almighty God was more comforting than the supposition that God had forsaken them altogether. On the *Umschlagsplatz* in Warsaw, on that terrible day in August 1942, an elderly Jew exhorted the despondent masses sunk in the misery and squalor of their surroundings: "Jews, don't despair! Don't you realize that we are going to meet the Mashiach? If I had some schnaps, I'd drink *lechayim* to him".

There were very few -- observant or non-observant, devout or skeptic -- who did not look for the sign of the coming of the Mashiach, openly or covertly, admitting or denying it. They sought it in the holy writ, in an especially radiant star in the sky, in an unanticipated turn of events -- something, anything that one could latch on to, that would prolong faltering hope, lift sagging spirits, give strength to go on.

Day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, the Jews waited for God to manifest His Presence. They waited for God to erase the satanic laughter from the torturer's face, for train wagons to be derailed, for a crematorium chimney to collapse. No need to open the earth under the Nazis' feet, or for an outbreak of pestilence in their midst, or for any of the Biblical plagues to strike them down. No full-fledged miracle, *Gotenyu* -- just a sign that You care.

Even a little sign, some holding action – showing that You are still around. That you still hear the terrorized wailing rising from Block 25, from the clandestine shuls in Warsaw, from the mother howling in pain as her child's head is smashed against her wagon. That You are watching. That You have not become deaf and blind to good and evil, for all eternity.

If there was a sign, it was not noticeable. Not in Warsaw and not in Kovno. Not in Vilna and not in Lodz. Not in Auschwitz and not in Mauthausen. Not in Prague and not in Budapest. Maybe it could not penetrate the thick clouds of ashen smoke that covered the once-cheerful skies.

And yet, the demolished Jew, unbelievably, kept clinging to You, kept waiting for You... and continued to ask: Where are You now, and where were You when we so needed You?

Where?... At Treblinka. At Treblinka somebody seemed to have found God. At Treblinka station, before the trains were uncoupled and sent into the death camp twenty coaches at a time, the Polish railway-man, Franciszek Zabecki, witnessed and later reported the following scene.

"I saw a policeman catch two young Jewish boys who tried to escape. He did not shut them in a wagon. Perhaps he was afraid to open the door in case others would escape. I was on the platform, letting a military transport go through. I asked him to let the boys go. The assassin did not budge. He ordered the bigger boy to sit down on the ground and take the smaller one on his knee, then he shot them both with one bullet. Turning to me, he said: 'You are lucky that was the last bullet.' Round the huge stomach of the murderer there was a belt with a clasp, in which I could see the inscription '*Gott Mit Uns* -- God is with Us'."

No lightning struck the metal clasp, the enemy's triumphant declaration: *Gott Mit Uns*. God, did you change sides? Did You find a people more loyal to you? Did you abandon us?

Why did You do that to us?

Mit fayer un flam host du uns gebrent
You had us walk through flame and fire.
Again and again, You tested our resolve.
True, we failed you ever so often.
But we returned. Your children returned home, to You,
only to You, always to You.
WHERE are You now, in our greatest hour of need?
Where is our God whom the enemy claims as his own?
Got mit uns! He declares jubilantly in our face.
God, the foe mocks Your children:
You foolish Jews! You thought God is with you.
Got mit uns!
God has left you long ago.

Eli, Eli, lama azavtani: My God, my God – Why have You forsaken me?

In fayer, in flamm host du unz gebrent --
My God, my God, you roasted us in all-consuming fire --
But we refuse to go under.
Like our *ovos-avosenu* -- our fathers of old
We shan't give up on You
And shall triumphantly declare:
Shema Yisroel Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad!
Hear O' Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!

Eli, Eli, Lama Azavtani -- Words and music: Jacob Sandler/traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE95WpTS3WI

(Performed by Eli Henig)

Some of our people actively rebelled against God, like Moshe Sonnenshein and the Chazan in Warsaw, or those who were ready to challenge God to a *Din Toire*, and question Him -- *Lama Azavtani*, why did you allow the destroyer of Israel to claim -- *Gott mit uns*?

Some deepened their belief and, in the face of *Fayer Un Flam* (fire and flame), clung to the Almighty with a superhuman tenacity difficult to comprehend. They greeted the fiery *Meshiach* as they walked into the gas chambers and the last words on their lips were *Shema Yisroel*.

Some -- perhaps most -- did not become active rebels against God, or more observant believers in Divine Providence, but they did become more conscious Jews.

Somehow, the intensity of persecution resulted in a strengthened Jewish consciousness.

The ancestral faith gave support to Jewish life.

The idea of being chosen -- absurd as it may sound under the circumstances -- cemented the community together with an unparalleled solidarity.

Secret pride at being the Chosen People through the ages strengthened Jews' will to live.

Those who walked, or were driven, to their death did not fall on their knees and beg for mercy.

There was an intangible, mystical element, that made our martyrs hold their heads high.

Believer and non-believer shared an unshakable faith that this appalling destruction would not mark our end;

-- that from the ruin and ashes of today a brighter tomorrow would yet emerge;

-- that from this horrendous agony a new strengthened Jew shall rise, a new People, a new Nation;

-- that somehow, from the deepest wells of Jewish existence, not only the observant believer who accepted and acquiesced, but also the unobservant non-believer, who denied and rebelled -- even while writhing in agony -- adhered to the impossible, absurd, insane belief, under the circumstances, that :
Got un zein mishpet iz gerecht: God and His Judgments are just.

Der Yid hot in zein Leiben a Treist-wort of zein Broch,
Un dos hot im gegeiben zein alter Zaide noch.

Un was far a Shlechts es treft dem Yiden,
Wos zol im nit geshein,
Trugt er doch ales shtil un zufridn
Azoi wi gornit gewen.

Zan Punem wert blas, zane Oign ganz nas,
Zain Harts wert fargossn mit Blut.

Zu shtiln zain Shmertz, un zu sterkn zain Hertz
Nemt er zich traistn damit:

Az Got un Zein Mishpet iz gerecht
Men tor kainmol nit zogn az Got iz shlecht.
Wail Got weis wos Er tit
Imzinst shtruft Er kainem nit.
Got un Zain mishpet iz gerecht.

Throughout his life the Jew has a word of comfort for his troubles
And this he received from his old grandfather.
No matter what evil befalls him,
Whatever trouble he stumbles on,
He carries everything with a sense of quiet and acceptance
As if nothing happened.
His face becomes pale, his eyes teary.
His heart beats faster.
To calm his pain and to strengthen his heart
He takes comfort in the thought
That God and His judgment is right.
He would never say that God is bad
Believing that God knows what He does
That God does not cause pain without cause
That God and His judgment are right.

Song: *Got un zein mishpet iz gerecht*

https://tinyurl.com/4mmp4tdt

(Performed by Solomon Small {Smulewitz})

✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡ ✡

And then there were those who drew on their own inner resources to take their fate into their own hands. Wherever God be now, whatever His inscrutable plans and judgments, we must act ourselves, for ourselves. People like Aba Kovner, Mordechai Anielewitz, Itzik Wittenberg, leaders of resistance in Warsaw, Vilna and many other places, did not say: Don't trust God. What they did say was: Jews! Wake up! Trust in yourselves! Not like sheep. We had our Maccabees. We can do it again. Fight! If not for your life, then for your pride, for your honor, for your glorious name. Fight with the conviction that the Jewish People shall continue, shall endure, shall outlast any enemy -- be it the Nazi, be it Amalek, be it Satan himself. No, never say that you have reached the very end!

Mir zainen do! Anachnu po! We survive!

Oh, never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive!

From land of palm trees to the land of distant snow,
We are here, with our pain, and with our woe,
But wherever our blood was shed in pain,
Our fighting spirit will resurrect again.

Tomorrow's sun will gladden our today,
The past with bitter foe shall pass away.
But should the sun at dawn briefly delay,
Then let our call ring loud and clear: it's on the way.

Not lead, but blood, inscribed this song we sing,
It's not a caroling of birds upon the wing.
But 'twas a people midst the crashing fires of hell
That sang this song, and fought courageous till it fell.

So never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive.

Jewish Partisans' Song -- Words and music: Hirsch Glick

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wgYnYSg3Zs

(Performed by Chava Alberstein)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzPShrawxLc

(Performed by Paul Robeson)

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See appendix for suggested concluding sections.

Wannsee:
An Irreversible Turning Point in the History of Infamy

See appendix for suggested introductory section.

On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany plunged the world into its bloodiest war ever. It sent Europe, and eventually the globe, on a road filled with anguish and pain. Even the worst premonitions could not envision the transformation the few crucial war-years ahead would bring to the image of humankind.

It was not only the vast carnage of over 40 million people.

Skillful historians could perhaps prove that former wars were proportionately equally bloody.

It was not so much the ruin brought to flourishing cities.

Conquerors of former days may have been equally destructive.

It was not even the application of genocide.

The Ottomans committed genocide against the Armenians just two decades before World War II.

It was rather the methodology of the carnage and ruin, and the special techniques of genocide:

* the master-minding and construction of humankind's most effective murder machine ever --

* its system and order and calculatedness --

* its almost hygienically sterile assembly-line process --

* the meticulous attention given to every single small detail in that process --

* the masterful camouflage --

* the cleverness, astuteness, and ingenuity applied --

* the deep understanding of human psychology and insight into anticipated human reactions --

* the unstinting application of the best of human genius in the service of evil.

These set the conduct of Nazi Germany during World War II apart from any prior war in the annals of history. World War II did not merely cause murder, execution, and slaughter on a massive scale. It bore a uniquely conceived murder machine, an awesome process developed by extraordinary human intellect and articulated at a conference of doom, *Am Grossen Wannsee*.

It is commonly assumed that Hitler designated several substandard peoples for annihilation. There were indeed Communist Commissars, Gypsies and Polish officers in concentration camps and in front of firing squads. But it is undeniable: the Jews were a separate category altogether.

Six weeks after the *Wehrmacht* unleashed its attack on Russia, Field Marshall Goring on behalf of the Fuhrer sent the following order to the head of the SS, Reynhardt Heydrich:

> "I hereby charge you with making all necessary preparation...for bringing about a complete solution to the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence in Europe. Wherever other governmental agencies are involved, they are to cooperate with you."

Heydrich was given sweeping authority to mobilize all necessary resources for the implementation of the "final solution", as it became discreetly known in highest German circles. The target was exclusively the Jews. Only the "Jewish question" requires "complete solution" in Goring's order; the "final solution" was applied only to the Jews.

Heydrich proceeded in three stages:

> First stage: a half year of preparation;
> Second stage: the one-day *Am Grossen Wannsee* Conference;
> Third stage: three years of implementation.

The Conference stage was the shortest, but it was the axle around which the whole process revolved.

Heydrich was an efficient organizer. Soon the SS machine swung into action to prepare the necessary data, canvass the land, check on locations where a new and daring plan could be safely executed, examine means of operations, and feel out local and general reactions.

But Heydrich and his cohorts did not limit themselves only to data collection and bureaucratic procedure preliminary to the Conference. Since the ultimate objective was the elimination of the Jewish race, they saw no reason to delay certain measures that would advance the objective even before an ideal, fool-proof system could be attained.

As civilized people, they regretted the crude methods they needed to employ in the transition stage -- such as pogroms and ghettos -- but these were certainly better than sitting idly on their hands while the Jewish race carried on as usual.

The Ghetto system was tightened;
the isolation of the Jews heightened.
The Ghetto had a rhythm all its own,
with fears and anguish rarely shown;
For it had to go on with life,
carry the burden, face the strife.
The unforgettable Ghetto,
full of *Eicha's* lament and woe.

Mamele: A Kovno Ghetto Song – Music: Percy Haid

https://tinyurl.com/jta35tkf

(Recording by United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC)

Prior to the Fuhrer's explicit order, Nazi leaders groped for stopgap solutions to the Jewish Question. The conquest of Poland and then of Russian territory offered both opportunity and ideal theatres of operation. The Germans played on deeply ingrained anti-Jewish hatred in the occupied countries. With the enthusiastic help of local populations, hundreds of thousands of Jews were savagely murdered in brutal attacks and by specialized killing units.

The special SS commando units, called *Einsatzgruppen*, saw their heyday before the Conference. They followed closely on the heels of the advancing *Wehrmacht* into conquered Russian territory, to eliminate the surprised Jewish population by lightning strike. Close to a quarter of a million Jews were liquidated by the *Einsatzgruppen* and their local henchmen in the half-year preceding the *Am Grossen Wannsee* Conference. They turned some places into veritable slaughterhouses.

Certain names became more than geographical designations and have remained engraved forever in the annals of infamy. Who can forget the ravine of Babi Yar near Kiev? Will one ever stop shuddering at the mention of Fort Nine in Kovno? Will we ever cease reacting with a sigh and a bitter tear at the mention of the forests of Ponar near Vilna?

Shtiler, Shtiler, Lomir Shveign

Quiet, quiet, let's keep silent,
Graves are growing here.
Secretly planted by our foes,
To the heavens rise our woes,
Out to Ponar leads our way
Yesterday, tomorrow, every day.

Hush, my child, dry your tears,
weeping is of no avail.
Our foe neither sees nor hears
The depth of our tragic tale.

Shores enclose even the seas,
There are limits to tragedies.
Only our pain – without end –
Noone is now here to mend.

Shtiler, Shtiler -- Words: Shmerke Kaczerginsky; Music: Alek Volkovisky

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYr0v-FHOXg

(Performed by Chava Alberstein)

With most of the preliminary work done, Heydrich sent out invitations for a conference on a "final solution to the Jewish question" for January 20, 1942, to take place at *Am Grossen Wannsee*. Heydrich invited fourteen of the highest-ranking Nazi government officials to participate.

A new policy of annihilation was about to be inaugurated. With the Wannsee Conference, systematic mass extermination and ethnic cleansing attained a respectable place at the apex of human accomplishment. Truly an irreversible turning point in the history of infamy.

Am Grossen Wannsee is a fashionable avenue in Berlin along the shores of a beautiful lake, lined by elegant homes. In one of these -- the mansion at 56-58, which served at the time as a Gestapo guesthouse -- the fifteen Nazi leaders met to take action on Hitler's directive "for bringing about a complete solution to the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence". Owing to its location, the fateful conference became known in history as the Wannsee Conference.

The Nazi leaders who gathered together at the *Am Grossen Wannsee* were not newcomers to Jewish anguish and death. Some of them designed the Ghettos. Some were in contact with the *Einsatzgruppen*. Some had helped engineer the pogrom of *Kristallnacht* throughout Germany as early as November 9, 1938.

On *Kristallnacht* , the Night of Broken Glass, thousands of Jews were killed, wounded and interned in concentration camps, thousands of Jewish homes and businesses were plundered, and over 1400 synagogues went up in flames at the nod of Nazi henchmen.

Even then, the stench of murder and Jewish death hung in the air. The Nazi leaders savored it; the world evidently did not find it obnoxious enough to protest it, and Jewish pleas for help went unheeded by the civilized world.

By that early stage and for seven years to come -- even with the ground burning under the Jews, their homes in flames and threatening to become their graves -- the world turned a deaf ear to the Jews, a blind eye to their plight, a stony heart to their fate, indifferent to their suffering.

And yet, despite the useful experience of *Kristallnacht*, despite grand rehearsals of slaughter at Ponar, Babi Yar, and Fort Nine, despite the perspectives gained by the *Einsatzgruppen* in the mass-murder of Jews, the Germans were still in unchartered territory when it came to the systematic mass extermination of the entire Jewish People, projected at Wannsee.

The difference was not merely quantitative. In fact, a productive day at Fort Nine, or Babi Yar, sent more Jews on their "Heavenly Journey" – the Nazis' euphemism -- than a busy day at the newly-founded extermination centers that worked with scientific German precision. There was obviously more to the systematic extermination of Jews than mere numbers or sheer magnitude.

Humankind was confronted here by a brand-new concept, according to which human beings are eliminated not because they resist, or fight, or pose a threat with arms in hand. They are done away with in geriatric homes and hospitals, in the maternity ward and nursery -- because by their very existence they are perceived to endanger, contaminate, and defile.

They contaminate and defile and are intrinsically bad, not because they have been caught stealing, cheating, or otherwise defying the law, but because they have Jewish genes which make their blood poisonous and perilous to the purity and welfare of the human race.

It was to be the significant contribution of the Wannsee Conference, that the elimination of Jews was to proceed henceforth with machine-like precision. It was to become a neat and clean decontamination and sterilization process. No one would need to dirty their hands any longer in the fumigation procedure as the world gets rid of its vermin.

Every civilized nation made its special contribution to the improvement of humanity. France brought Europe liberty, equality and fraternity; from England came the Magna Carta; the glorious contribution of the German people to humankind would be to rid it of the Jew, the diabolical international Jew whose sole aim is the enfeeblement and ultimate destruction of civilization, the hook-nosed imperialist-capitalist exploiter, the depraved bolshevist-communist conspirator, the bloodthirsty warmonger.

The instrument of the German people to attain its noble aim and save the world from the Jewish menace was presented and honed at the Wannsee Conference.

Reinhard Heydrich presided over the conference in a truly business-like fashion. It actually lasted altogether 85 minutes; 85 minutes that sealed the fate of the Jewish People and radically changed the texture of the human soul forever. Outwardly nothing dramatic happened. Heydrich spoke, giving a country-by-country account of the number of Jews to be "evacuated". He then explained what would happen to the "evacuees":

"The Jews would, in the course of the Final Solution, be brought to the East. In big labor gangs, with sexes separated, the Jews capable of work would build roads, in the course of which a large part would undoubtedly fall away through natural decline. The final residue would have to be treated accordingly."

Thus Heydrich. The phrase “treated accordingly”, like the phrase “Final Solution”, were camouflage slogans well-understood by all those present at the conference. The stark outlines of Belzec, Maidanek, Treblinka and Auschwitz began taking concrete shape. But the large chimneys did not cast a shadow on the conferees. Neither did a whiff of Zyklon B gas hit their nostrils. The words of Heydrich were greeted, according to eyewitness participant Adolf Eichmann, by “extraordinary enthusiasm”.

It was decided that the vast administrative mechanism of the Third Reich was to be put at the service of the liquidators, determined to eradicate the gruesome evil from the face of the earth. Everything was scientifically precalculated, so as to kill the most Jews with the least effort, to eliminate them totally, with minimum trace and noise, and maximum benefit to the Reich.

Jewish hair would be provided for German pillows, to guarantee sound sleep and sweet dreams on the home front. Jewish bodies would be melted down for fat to produce soap, to ensure proper Aryan sanitation and impeccable hygiene. Mountains of Jewish shoes and of Jewish spectacles would be placed at the disposal of the *Heimat*. Tender Jewish skin would provide lampshades, and laughing Jewish eyes -- necklaces. Stunning inventions of the German genius.

Do not assume that over the Wannsee Conference hung a heavy cloud of gloom appropriate to its fateful and ominous character. If you envision German ministers coming to the Conference, belabored by a sense of deep responsibility for the decision they were about to take in pronouncing a death-sentence over an entire people, you could not be more mistaken.

The discussion over the “Final Solution of the Jewish People” was relaxed and easy-going, and when concluded, the participants proceeded to a delicious lunch. They were justifiably pleased. They had convened for a purpose and the purpose was accomplished. The Jewish people, that subhuman race, the vermin of humankind, would soon get their just deserts.

Appropriately, the Conference ended with a jovial toast over French brandy. The architects of the new hell on earth had good cause to be satisfied. Their conception surpassed the old model crowded with tortured souls who, guilty as they were, might nevertheless somehow atone for their misdeeds and be allowed to survive. In the new hell, formalized and engineered in the fashionable villa on that elegant street by that lovely lake, *Am Grossen Wannsee*, there was no room for exceptions, forgiveness, or procrastination. It was a definitive, terse death sentence for the Jewish People -- to be carried out at the earliest opportunity. It offered only a one-way street, a dead-end from which there was to be no return.

After the Conference, Eichmann wrote: "Heydrich, Muller and your humble servant sat cozily around the fireplace, peacefully talking shop and giving ourselves a rest."

They sat comfortably imagining how hundreds of thousands of Jews would soon be shoved into cattle trains, on their final trip to concentration and extermination camps. "Peacefully" they talked shop about implementation of their plan to murder Jewish men, women and children in gas-chambers, and burn their bodies to ashes in crematoria.

And while this surrealistic play was staged at Wannsee, where was our God, the God of Israel? Eli, Eli! Where are You?... For all intents and purposes, God had abandoned His People... God of compassion, Father and King, why do You turn away from us? Why do you forsake us?

Eli, Eli, lama azavtani: My God, my God – Why have You forsaken me?

In fayer, in flamm host du unz gebrent --
My God, my God, you roasted us in all-consuming fire --
But we refuse to go under.
Like our *ovos-avosenu* -- our fathers of old
We shan't give up on You
And shall triumphantly declare:
Shema Yisroel Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad!
Hear O' Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!

Eli, Eli, Lama Azavtani -- Words and music: Jacob Sandler/traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE95WpTS3WI

(Performed by Eli Henig)

The *Wehrmacht*'s newspaper, *Die Front*, wrote: "The Jewish question has passed from theoretical to the purely practical stage and, indeed, not just in Germany, but on an increasing scale in the other European countries... The fate of the Jews is now unfolding in accordance with the laws of justice that care nothing for petty sensibilities and that incorruptibly serve the good of humanity. The verdict on the Jews in Europe has been spoken."

“The laws of justice” demanded that even children not be spared, for there was no room for “petty sensibilities”. Sentiments were out of place in such a setting. That is for weaklings, for Jews. The Aryan has to be hard and withstand the temptation of sentiments.

Said Heinrich Himmler, at a meeting of his SS officers:

> “The Jewish race is being exterminated. That’s quite clear. It is in our program. Elimination of the Jews -- and we are doing it... To have stuck this out and at the same time to have remained decent... this is a page of glory in our history which has never been written and is never to be written.”

With *Am Grossen Wannsee*, Jewish existence became wrapped in total darkness where the sun never penetrated. The irreversible decision to kill a whole people had been made. Not only the SS were involved, or the henchmen of the Nazi Party: the elite of the German Civil Service had registered their support. With no compunction. Enthusiastically. All that preceded Wannsee was but a prelude: Kristalnacht, the yellow patch, Ghettos, labor battalions, *Einsatzgruppen*.

At his trial in Jerusalem, Eichmann, who had taken the minutes of the Wannsee Protocol, recalled: "At that moment, I sensed... I was free of all guilt... Who was I to judge? Who was I to have my own thoughts in this matter?"

Hitler’s words to a confidant, Rauschning: “Nature is cruel, therefore we, too, may be cruel. If I don’t mind sending the best of the German people into the hell of war without regret for the shedding of valuable German blood, then I naturally have the right to destroy millions of men of inferior races who increase like vermin.”

The Wannsee Conference gave ultimate justification to the Nazi mission and Hitler’s dream of destroying the Jews. Totally. Uncompromisingly. Unconditionally. Immediately. With no prick of conscience. The end was ennobled. No if's, and's or but's. All means were to be put at its disposal.

Destroying the Jew became a highest strategic priority. It took precence over moving war material to the fronts.

An industry of death emerged.

Its structure was simple: barracks for hundreds of thousands in central locations not far from railroad junctions: storerooms, barbershops, "showers", crematoria.

Its fuels: Zyklon-B gas, or carbon-monoxide.

Its raw material to be processed: Jews.

> Jews of all ages,
> Jewish men and women -- and children,
> thin Jews and fat Jews,
> tall Jews and short Jews,
> ordinary-looking Jews and strikingly handsome Jews,
> commonplace Jews and highly intelligent Jews,
> religious Jews and secular Jews,
> rich Jews and poor Jews.

All Jews -- by decree of Wannsee – were now raw material to be processed in the new industry of death.

The delivery of the raw-material to the factory was somewhat more complex than the structure. It required the organization of hundreds and even thousands of cattle cars and freight wagons. It necessitated their orderly loading at the *Umschlaggsplatz* of each major city, their clearance with transport authorities between points of departure and ultimate destinations, and the disgorging of the raw material at the threshold of the death factory.

Despite the complexities, for three years the trains rolled relentlessly from West, East, South and North to the killing centers that were established in the wake of the Wannsee Conference. Nothing but nothing interfered with operations -- not from land, not from sea, not from air. The operations were overseen by that evil genius, Adolph Eichmann.

The fire -- fed by the bodies of Jewish mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, grandfathers and grandmothers -- was never quenched in the crematoria, which worked almost continually at full capacity. However, neither was the glow of hope in Jewish hearts that we would overcome. Despite the incredible baseness of humanity, despite its unbelievable genius for cruelty, its total viciousness, its stupendous might -- we never ceased believing that we would somehow endure.

We sang with un unfathomable faith, an awesomefaith, a faith that was more incredible than the base brutality of humanity, more amazing than its genius for cruelty, and more stupendous than its viciousness and might – even as we still sing with an unearthly conviction and deep fervor:

Ani ma'amin be'emuna shlema
Beviyat hamashiach
Ve'af al pi she'yitmahme'ah
Im kol zeh -- ani ma'amin!

I believe in perfect faith
in the coming of deliverance.
And even though it may be delayed
nevertheless -- I continue to believe.

We knew that we shall overcome. The few who had firearms at their disposal in the Ghetto of Warsaw and in the forests, or those who had no weapons and were armed solely with defiance; the members of the underground and the conscripts in the slave labor battalions; those who marched to the edge of the pit or those driven into the gas chambers -- we knew without a speck of doubt that we shall survive, that we shall triumph. Debased and tortured and diminished as we were, that we would rise from the grave, skeletons turning into a formidable army, and our marching steps would yet thunder: We are here, marching, with head held high into a future full of promise.

Mir zainen do! Anachnu po! We survive!

Oh, never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive!

From land of palm trees to the land of distant snow,
We are here, with our pain, and with our woe,
But wherever our blood was shed in pain,
Our fighting spirit will resurrect again.

Tomorrow's sun will gladden our today,
The past with bitter foe shall pass away.
But should the sun at dawn briefly delay,
Then let our call ring loud and clear: it's on the way.

Not lead, but blood, inscribed this song we sing,
It's not a caroling of birds upon the wing.
But 'twas a people midst the crashing fires of hell
That sang this song, and fought courageous till it fell.

So never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive.

Jewish Partisans' Song -- Words and music: Hirsch Glick

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wgYnYSg3Zs

(Performed by Chava Alberstein)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzPShrawxLc

(Performed by Paul Robeson)

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See appendix for suggested concluding sections.

By the Might of the Spirit:
Resistance of the Soul in the Shoah

See appendix for suggested introductory section.

Introduction

This presentation is dedicated to those of our people who stood up to the colossal grinding Nazi machine not by physical might, but by the spirit of their faith. In every pore of their tortured body and soul, they believed that, despite persecution and death trains, despite torture and death marches, the People of Israel shall live.

They are true heroes. Our fathers and mothers, brothers, sisters and children, who were trampled into the dust of the earth and yet managed to draw from some mysterious source the spiritual strength to gaze up and fix their eyes on the wondrous stars in heaven.

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Hungary, 1942, deportation of Jews who had escaped to Hungary had begun. Gottesman squealed.

The policeman stopped him because of his Batja-manufactured shoes, from Czechia. Fearing torture, when taken to the police station, he spilled everything. This is the record of his confession:

"I, M. Gottesman, crossed the border between Hungary and Slovakia at night. Upon entering the city of Kosice, I looked for a synagogue. At morning services, I made inquiries. I needed new identification papers. All present agreed that I should see Reb Eilish for advice and help. I went to see Reb Eilish in his home. Two days later he gave me a set of documents and a new identity."

The police handed the case over to the much-feared Gestapo. Tracing the sources of false documents that helped Jews avoid capture and deportation to concentration camps, was the responsibility of the agency specializing in state security and combating enemies of the Reich. The Gestapo acted without delay. Two plain clothes men appeared at Reb Eilish's address.

They knocked imperiously at the two powerful oak gates blocking the courtyard. They knocked again, with increasing impatience. One of them checked for another entrance, there was none. After several minutes the gate was opened by an apologetic, shuffling grandmother who reported that her son, Reb Eilish, wasn't home.

Reb Eilish's house was thoroughly checked and then placed under constant surveillance. Members of the household claimed that he was out of town and expected back at the end of the following week. When the end of next week came, it turned out that he is sometimes delayed in his travels, and one never can tell when he may return.

Realizing that these were merely delay tactics, a very angry Gestapo officer barked at the three children that if their father did not report by six o'clock that very evening at police headquarters, their mother would be taken in his place and they would never see her again.

Minutes before six o'clock in the evening, Reb Eilish -- who had been hiding behind an ingeniously masked movable wall in the cellar of the house -- walked through the gates of the formidable police station, into Gestapo headquarters.

Reb Eilish answered the questions put to him by the Gestapo interrogators.

"I don't want to suffer unduly", he admitted with disarming frankness.

"I know you will get the information out of me one way or another -- if not in a straight confession, then by torture. I am no hero, just a plain human being who tried to help a fellow Jew in immediate danger of being taken to an unknown fate."

Several interrogators surrounded him. The questions came in rapid-fire succession:

"Where did you get the identification blanks?"

"From Jews who worked in the offices years ago."

“Who are they?”

“Shaye Schwartz worked in the birth registration office, and Miki Pasternak with citizenship.”

“Addresses!”

“Schwartz’s address is Main Street 27, and Pasternak’s Zrinyi 4.”

“When did you start working on false papers?”

“Some eight months ago, when deportations from Slovakia started in earnest and some managed to escape across the border to our town.”

“How many false identifications did you issue?”

“Approximately 15.”

“Not approximately. Precisely how many -- and the names. We want the names.”

“I beg your pardon; I didn’t keep records.”

“You better start remembering. You caused us enough trouble already chasing after you for weeks, and tying down several members of our team.”

One of the men threw him a pad and a pencil. He was marched off to a solitary cell. Next morning Reb Eilish produced a list of 18 names. Upon further questioning, he again willingly cooperated. He volunteered all the information he had about the people he helped.

Regrettably, the addresses of most people he was in no position to supply since they were just passing through town. Their goal was to reach Budapest. A few were alien residents in town, and the addresses of these Reb Eilish readily offered.

The Gestapo now had plenty to go on, and went hunting. After several days of search, however, they discovered that all the people named by Reb Eilish had moved from town in recent weeks

and could not be traced, or were lost in the teeming sea of humanity in Budapest. The two civil servants who had supplied the blanks for the identifications had also disappeared.

The Gestapo, gleefully looking forward to a big coup, was left with an empty bag -- except for Reb Eilish himself. It did not take long to figure out that beneath the frank admissions and disarming exterior, lay a determined will not to betray a single fellow Jew.

Not only did he help Jews, not only did he hold the Gestapo at bay for weeks, he also made fools of them! The Gestapo leaders were furious. Yet, they weren't ready to dispose of Reb Eilish. Too much valuable information was stored in this defiant Jew.

Beneath the facade of a naive, simple, cooperative person, there was a treasure-house of information that could lead to the capture and exemplary punishment of dozens, maybe hundreds, or even thousands of Jews who were masquerading with false identities, using false papers. So the Gestapo transferred Reb Eilish, and imposed a blanket of dark secrecy as to his where-abouts.

Di Nacht (In the Night)

S'iz keyner mit mir in di nacht

Di nacht nor alein iz mit mir,

Di vegn farchmuret un shtum

Di shtilkeit alien vandert um.

Ich gei, s'iz a vaiter der veg,

farvolknt un toib iz di nacht.

Vuhin, vuhin, freg di ritm fun di trit

Zei gebn kein entfer mir nit.

S'iz keyner mit mir in di nacht

Di nacht nor alein iz mit mir

Vos vayter un vaiter ahin

Vuhin, shtile vegn, vuhin?

There's no one with me in the night,

Darkness, nothing else in sight.

On roads obscured by darkness dense,

Hollow stillness – all I sense.

I go on, long is my way,

The clouded night does not hear.

Where to? Where? – ask my steps.

No answer comes to my ear.

There's no one with me in the night,

Darkness alone is with me.

On and on in lonely despair –

But where to, silent roads, to where?

Di Nacht -- Words: Aaron Domnits; Music: Mikhl Gelbart

https://tinyurl.com/4hr4fmh6 (Performed by June Tabor)

The rumor machine now had its heyday. Had Reb Eilish been executed? Or deported? Agonizing uncertainty prevailed. Even Geza -- the police-contact who for years had supplied Reb Eilish with authentic blanks for the identification papers and whose anxiety matched that of the family – was unable to cull any reliable information.

Weeks passed. Finally scraps of news emerged. It was learnt that Reb Eilish was transferred to the infamous Gestapo interrogation center, the Kohner Castle, in a different part of the country, in Munkacs. Locals told of terrifying screams that often pierced the night, emanating from the feared

castle. Only prisoners who had to be interrogated in unconventional ways in order to elicit information were brought to this place.

When this news reached Reb Eilish's community, many fell into deep despair. It was difficult to imagine how such a delicate person would be able to withstand the horrendous treatment in store for him -- and once he would start talking and telling the truth, numerous Jewish families in town would be tragically affected.

Lomir shvaign, vaiter svaign, nit kein vort geredt,
Lomir mit farmachte oign murmlen a gebet.

Be silent, always silent, say not a single word.
In your heart, to God just pray, for faith and trust and hope this day.

Song: *Va'ani Tefilati* (My Prayer) Words: Psalm 69:14:

As for me -- my prayer to you, Adonai, may this be a time of grace; Oh God,
in Your abundant loving-kindness, answer me in truth with Your salvation.

https://tinyurl.com/559j6p9x

(Performed by Nitzan Birnbaum)

In the Kohner Castle, beating was the order of the day. Each prisoner got his share of caning on a daily basis. The only surprise was which part of the body would be the focus that day: the soles of the feet, the palms of the hands, the arms, the back, or perhaps indiscriminately the whole body.

Food rations were minimal to none. A typical method of refined torture revolved around food: prisoners would have to catch seven live flies in a water-glass in order to get their food ration.

Flies weren't lacking. As a matter of fact, the underground dungeon -- constantly, though dimly lit, with about thirty men to a cell, some wallowing exhausted in their own excrement -- was filled with nasty flies. But just try to catch seven live flies in a glass. One is no problem, maybe even two or three. But when you attain your fourth catch, by the time you introduce it into the glass, two others escape. Men forced to catch seven flies, would eventually collapse from exhaustion and hunger, mission unaccomplished.

Back in Reb Eilish's community in Kosice, the Jews were in constant fear, everyone expecting the worst. The *Stropkover Rebbe* called on the Jews to unite in a day of prayer, and many gathered at the cemetery. Over the graves of the righteous they prayed to the Almighty, to give Reb Eilish strength to face the Gestapo, and not utter, God forbid, the names of Jews he had helped.

For long weeks, Jews in Kosice prayed not for Reb Eilish's life, health and wellbeing, but for his sealed lips. And besides praying, they collected large sums of money. Then the miracle occurred: Reb Eilish was bailed out. The precise mechanism of the transaction remained a secret. But **Reb Eilish did not divulge a single name of any use to the Germans**. He saved hundreds. What more, he continued his life-saving work relentlessly after his release.

Es hot uns dos leben gerufen
Dos leben fun zunige teg
Tzu eins, tzvei, drei…
Du veist vo du geist un farvos!

Life calls out to us, and then
Life can be so good again.
We hear its beat, up the street,
One-two-three; one-two-three.
Echoing from each and every wall
Every house, each shop and stall,
Our spirit, our will, and this our song.
Come with us and march along!

When summoned to life we could stay
in days that were sunny and gay,
and all that were there, seemed to walk as on air
by themselves, as they went on their way.
"1, 2, 3," – "1, 2, 3," -- to work, with spirits high.
Every step will resound, on the echoing ground
when you know where you're going and why!

Tzu Eins, Tzvei, Drei – Words: Leyb Rozenthal (after Hans Eisler); Music: traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMNq_NigT74 (Performed by Henry Sapoznik)

The story of Reb Eilish is no doubt just one of many that need to be told before it is too late, before sinking into oblivion with the passing of generations. Such a little story reflects more than the actions of an individual ready to help. It speaks of the grandeur of the Jewish spirit, and of the heroic qualities of our people in the face of overwhelming odds.

Only in few places could our people actually organize themselves for active resistance. The hundreds of Jewish communities where this was impossible drew their strength to live -- or to die with dignity -- from some mysterious inner well-spring of the collective Jewish spirit that speaks compellingly in accents of continuity and eternity.

Our people was not dumb, deaf, or blind. If we refused to believe where we were being taken, if we refused to consider that the freight trains carried us to a fiery death, it was not necessarily due to naivete, or to stupidity. It was a defense mechanism in the face of lack of alternatives.

We knew deep in our hearts what was going on. We heard the rumors. We were even presented with occasional facts. It wasn't simply a statement of blind, simplistic, inane faith that "to us it won't happen".

It was, instead, a declaration that: "we refuse to accept", "we refuse to despair", "we refuse to give up", "we will carry on", "NO MATTER WHAT, WE WILL CARRY ON!" And we carried on in the labor and extermination camps, in the forests and hiding places, on death marches and in the ghettos.

The Ghetto had a rhythm all its own,
With fears and anguish rarely shown;
For it had to go on with life,
Carry the burden, face the strife.
The unforgettable Ghetto,
Full of *Eicha's* lament, full of woe.

Ghetto! Dich Fargesn vel ich Keinmol Nit! -- Words: Katriel Broide; Music: unknown

www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdQ7rRGVgxk (Performed by the *Kolot HaLev* Choir)

Poems and songs, letters and diaries show the clear-sightedness of our people, and a complete awareness of what awaited them. Postcards sent from Ghettos and camps to relatives back home spoke about Uncle "*Malech Hamoves*" (the Angel of Death) due to visit soon – or about an upcoming visit to Tante Malcsu -- an aunt who died years before.

Songs of longing for Mame, Tate, loved ones and friends, reflecting the end of the road as well as yearning for continuity in the future, were sung at clandestine gatherings. Some poems, like "The Garden" written by thirteen-year-old Franta Bass, have survived. A young boy walks among rose bushes. He knows that when the roses come to bloom, "the little boy shall be no more".

Yet, we carried on and did not collapse. We clung to hope, come what may, to the last breath. For what's the use in giving up hope and being "realistic", when reality means death, and we cannot change or remedy the situation?

Some may say: Facing the truth, we could have resisted, even if passively. We could have stood our ground, and refused to move toward the trains, toward the gas chambers or pits.

It happened indeed in some places. In Auschwitz, a contingent from Czechoslovakia, already naked and shaven, stood by the entrance to the "showers". At this point they realized that the rumors that had reached them were true. They refused to budge at German command, stood their ground and sang in full voice the Czech anthem "*Kde domov muj*". Within minutes the Germans rushed in reinforcements who shoved the singing group bodily and at gunpoint into the showers -- this time gladly making it known that a group of Jews had refused orders and therefore, by law, had been justifiably executed. It was a massacre they could gleefully publicize.

Perhaps a wholesome instinct dictated that if nothing could be achieved by any show of force lacking true muscle, the best we could do was to brace ourselves for any fate; to draw on our inner reservoirs of hope, faith, trust, and refusal to succumb, relying -- in the face of impossible odds -- on the mystery of Jewish continuity and Jewish eternity…

Mir shmidn un shmidn
Bai tog un bai nacht,
Di ringen zei vern
On oifher gemacht.

By day and by night
With no end in sight
We forge links of a chain
Uniting peaks and plain.

The bitter today
Will connect at last
A glorious tomorrow
And our golden past.

Mir Schmidn; Words: Shmuel Wolman; Music: Michal Gelbert

https://www.zemereshet.co.il/m/song.asp?id=1249 (various versions)

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Chaim Kaplan lived in Warsaw. He wrote in his Diary, January 16, 1942: "The whole nation is sinking in a sea of horror and cruelty... I do not know whether anyone else is recording the daily events. The conditions of life which surround us are not conducive to such literary labors... Anyone who keeps such a record endangers his life, but this doesn't alarm me. I sense within me the magnitude of this hour and my responsibility to it. I have an inner awareness that I am fulfilling a national obligation."

Kaplan sensed the magnitude of the hour.

--What magnitude?...

> The people were dying of starvation. There were three to a single bed -- even in the hospitals, even in the section for contagious diseases.

--What magnitude?...

> We were walking skeletons. The dead lay unattended in the streets, left naked, for even a shirt or a belt might fetch a bite of bread, or a small potato.

--What magnitude?...

> We were being piled on to cattle wagons and driven to a fiery rendezvous with death.

What magnitude does Kaplan sense under such conditions?

In the midst of the crashing fires of hell, Kaplan senses that the Jew won't go under.
--He refuses to oblige his enemy and just die.
--He will stand up to all pressures.
--He won't collapse, not physically, not mentally, not spiritually.

Therein is the magnitude of the hour. In the inner strength that we displayed. In our struggle. Even in our thrashing about -- often producing convulsive, jerking motions rather than graceful, elegant, harmonious movements. All these reflected a powerful national will: the will to survive.

Eli, Eli, lama azavtani: My God, my God – Why have You forsaken me?

In fayer, in flamm host du unz gebrent --

My God, my God, you roasted us in all-consuming fire --
But we refuse to go under.
Like our ovos-avosenu -- our fathers of old
We shan't give up on You
And shall triumphantly declare:
Shema Yisroel A-donai E-loheinu A-donai Echad!
Hear O' Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!

Eli, Eli, Lama Azavtani -- Words and music: Jacob Sandler/traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE95WpTS3WI (Performed by Eli Henig)

To survive became the People's mandate. Kaplan's "inner awareness" that he was "fulfilling a national obligation" gave his personal survival meaning on a higher plane. He understood that, through him and through everyone who defied the satanic Nazi drive to wipe the Jewish People out and leave no trace, the Jews would ultimately triumph.

So Kaplan records an impressive account of our people's struggle for survival under unspeakable circumstances. He shows immense pride in our people's will and ability to endure in the most fiendish hell the creative human mind ever conceived. He thus fulfills a national obligation on a double count: He survives, and he bequeaths to future generations an objective account of the Jewish miracle of survival. This is the stuff of true heroism.

An observer writes: "Kaplan's diary is an echo of the death cries of the Warsaw Ghetto... Life was forfeit. Survival was in doubt every hour, the angel of death hovered all around... It is a record of a bloody period, of persecution, torture, starvation, deportation and death."

It is all that -- and much more. It is also a record of triumph: of lying in the pit, yet embracing the heavens; of wallowing in the dust yet gazing up at the stars, at eternity. Like Emanuel Ringelblum and Anna Frank, so Chaim Kaplan mirrors not only fears but dreams, not only terror but love, not only sadness but joy, not only bloodshed but peace.

Un zol vi vayt
Noch zayn di tzait
Fun libe un fun sholem,
Doch kumen vet
Tsi fri tsi shpet,
Di tseit -- es iz kein cholem.

The new song, one of peace and of love
Far though it be, as it would seem
Slow from below or fast from above
Will surely come -- this is no dream!

I hear the ode of love and joy:
A marvelous creation --
In every note, without a ploy,
The sun's manifestation.

We shall arise, post this long night
To cheer and joy, and be alright.
I hear its echo in the air,
It's a voice that does declare:
No more hatred, no more strife!
Sing love and peace, to joy, to life!!!

Dos Naye Lid (Un zol vi vayt) -- The New Song. Words: Avrom Reyzen

“Anyone who keeps a record of events endangers his life”, writes Kaplan. Yet he could not resist the compulsion to write, rooted in his clear perception of the magnitude of the hour.

Like Chayim Kaplan, so Emanuel Ringelblum felt compelled to record the events of those fateful days, though by doing so, he imperiled himself and his whole family, who eventually paid with their lives for his activity.

At the end of August, 1939, he was in Geneva attending the 21st World Zionist Congress. Germany was about to invade Poland, but in contrast to numerous other Polish delegates, he opted to return to Warsaw. He felt his place was with his people.

When the *Wehrmacht* surrounded Warsaw and a mass evacuation of the city began, he again opted to stay and not run. By October, 1939, he organized a secret society – "*Oneg Shabbat*" to record events affecting the Jews. Some of his co-workers gathered raw information, some recorded it in written form, while others took responsibility for safeguarding the written material.

Jews in those days “would commit nothing to writing that might be regarded as suspect if found during a raid." Ringelblum's group continued to record events despite the risk.

What impelled him to do so? At first, he had practical considerations. He hoped to inform the world of what was going on and solicit the aid of the nations for the persecuted Jews. When it became clear to him that this hope was futile, he continued nonetheless.

It was to be his revenge, and the revenge of the whole Jewish people. Even if they perished to the last, they would live for posterity. Future generations would know what went on in the Ghetto and in the camps under the heels of the Nazis, as a result of these records.

Ringelblum is succinct. One line tells volumes. He relates:

“The children are no longer afraid of death. In one courtyard, the children played a game of tickling corpses”.

“At a funeral for small children from the Wolska Street Orphanage, the children from the home placed a wreath at the graves with the inscription: “To the Children Who Have Died of Hunger -- From the Children Who Are Hungry”.

With compassion, but with utmost objectivity, Ringelblum records:

--Over 90,000 people died of starvation in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941…

--Over ten individuals die every hour, around the clock, 365 days a year, from starvation alone…

--It is rare for any family member to turn up at a burial, and if they do, it is for the corpse's shirt…

--Every day several smugglers are shot. The smugglers say: "Rather die fast from a bullet than slow from hunger."

Ringelblum records not only the misery, but also the spirit of the people:

Holiday celebrations -- prohibited by the Germans -- were held nevertheless…

--There were classes for children...

--There were courses of all sorts: engraving, watchmaking, architectural drawing, and more…

--There were lectures, dramatic programs, reading circles, debates and contests…

--There were poems by little children about the essential goodness of humanity…

--Several theatres carried on, to the very end…

Amidst all the agony and squalor, the human intellect, the Jewish spirit managed to function. Ringelblum declares triumphantly just a month before the final destruction of the Ghetto began: "We did not lose our human characteristics. Our minds are as busy as they were before the war".

Vos darfn mir veinen
Vos darfn mir klogn
Mir veln noch frankn
A Kaddish noch zogn.

We need not cry
We need not sigh
After Frank the Hitlerite
We shall yet Kaddish recite.

We need not feel sorry
Nor need we worry
Soon shall the worms dine
On Hitler's earthly shrine.

We shall one day all-together
Shoulder to shoulder -- we shall weather
And with God's help -- know in advance
On the Nazis' graves, we shall dance.

Vos darfn mir veinen (Words: Henech Kon)

The same invincible spirit pervaded concentration, extermination and slave-labor camps. Surrounded by the stench of death, breathing skeletons and walking corpses, our people gave incredible testimony to the power of hope and faith.

In Terezin artists kept painting, though those caught had their fingers chopped off and were beaten to a pulp to reveal where their paintings were hidden. The preservation of the paintings, testimony to living reality, was a defiant and dangerous form of resistance.

The children produced drawings, sketches and paintings that may perhaps lack artistic perspective, but mirror the children's fears and dreams, the terror lurking in every uniform, their search for light and joy and peace, their thirst for love, their hunger for life.

Far from Terezin, a small group of imprisoned Jews managed to accomplish the impossible. They escaped from "Fort Nine", in German parlance-- the surest way to heaven. They reached the Ghetto in Kovno. There was no doubt that within a short time SS search parties would arrive in hot pursuit of the only surviving witnesses to the hellish conditions in the Fort. The Nazis would be using their dogs to track them down.

At grave risk to his life, the Rabbi heated up the Mikveh bath in the middle of the night, to allow the escapees to rid themselves of the reeking smell of corpses with which they had lived for weeks. The clothes in which they escaped had to be burnt immediately to destroy every trace.

That too was an act of defiance, a dangerous form of resistance.
Not by might of arms -- but by the might of the spirit.

Small acts,
prosaic acts,
self-effacing gestures
not calculated to impress,
yet bearing the imprint of heroism.

Reb Eilish in Kosice, Chaim Kaplan and Emanuel Ringelblum in the Ghetto of Warsaw, the painters in Terezin, the Kovno Ghetto Rabbi, and many others, certainly hundreds, probably many thousands -- they defied the almighty Satan with stunning daring, in small acts of heroic resistance. Each act triumphantly declared:

Mir zainen do! Anachnu po! We survive!

Oh, never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive!

From land of palm trees to the land of distant snow,
We are here, with our pain, and with our woe,
But wherever our blood was shed in pain,
Our fighting spirit will resurrect again.

Tomorrow's sun will gladden our today,
The past with bitter foe shall pass away.
But should the sun at dawn briefly delay,
Then let our call ring loud and clear: it's on the way.

Not lead, but blood, inscribed this song we sing,
It's not a caroling of birds upon the wing.
But 'twas a people midst the crashing fires of hell
That sang this song, and fought courageous till it fell.

So never say that you have reached the very end,
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend,
Because the hour for which we yearned will yet arrive,
And our marching steps will thunder: We Survive.

Jewish Partisans' Song -- Words and music: Hirsch Glick

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wgYnYSg3Zs

(Performed by Chava Alberstein)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzPShrawxLc

(Performed by Paul Robeson)

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See appendix for suggested concluding sections.

Looking Back: Perspective on the Shoah

See appendix for suggested introductory section.

_____ years have passed since the end of the Holocaust and the day of Liberation.

_____ years since the frightful discovery that Six Million Jews were murdered in the course of the preceding six years.

Over eighty thousand Jews killed monthly.

Eighteen thousand five hundred every week.

In the course of six years, on the average, two thousand seven hundred and forty killed every day.

My God, my God, how **could You** stand by with folded hands?

Eli, Eli, lama azavtani: My God, my God – Why have You forsaken me?

In fayer, in flamm host du unz gebrent --
My God, my God, you roasted us in all-consuming fire --
But we refuse to go under.
Like our ovos-avosenu -- our fathers of old
We shan't give up on You
And shall triumphantly declare:
Shema Yisroel A-donai E-loheinu A-donai Echad!
Hear O' Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!

Eli, Eli, Lama Azavtani -- Words and music: Jacob Sandler/traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE95WpTS3WI

(Performed by Eli Henig)

At dawn on the first of September, 1939, with no forewarning, the first wave of the German air force zoomed across the Polish border, hitting its targets. Within three weeks, a nation of thirty million people submitted to the formidable might of Germany. World War II had begun, but even the worst premonitions could not imagine the extent to which the globe was about to be turned into a house of carnage.

That very day, September 1, 1939, the *Tiger Hill* sailed out of a Rumanian port carrying 1,600 Jews. They were attempting to reach the shores of the Land of Israel, then under the control of the United Kingdom which held the temporary UN Mandate to govern Palestine. The British had declared Jewish immigration to their ancestral homeland illegal.

The ship was spotted by a British patrol boat which opened fire, killing two passengers. The *Tiger Hill* fled out to the high seas, but running short on fuel, food and water, made another desperate attempt to land at Tel Aviv. Two hundred of the so-called "illegals" managed to reach shore and escape in the darkness of the night. The remaining 1,400, were captured by the British mandatory forces and interned at a detention camp. September 1, 1939.

It sounded an ominous note of warning to the Jewish People, that the VERY DAY when the diabolical Nazi designs were unmasked beyond any shadow of a doubt, the Mandatory power determined, nevertheless, to block the entry of the fleeing Jews to their Land. The British totally abandoned the solemn promise of the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which guaranteed the Jewish People a National Home in the Land of Israel. The Jews were now caught between the Germans who wanted to destroy them and the rest of the world who did not want to save them.

The *Tiger Hill* was not a singular episode. In the course of the next several months, desperate attempts were made by Jewish groups who felt they had little to lose by at least trying to escape. Among them were refugees on the *Rodnitzer*, which successfully landed 828 passengers on the shores of Netanya.

Bachashai S'fina Gosheshet – Words: Yithak Shinhar; Music: Shalom Postolski
https://tinyurl.com/3hd396uu (Performed by Dani Golan)

While the Mandatory Power blocked escape and the rest of the world did nothing to save the Jews caught in the Nazi vise, the German murder machine swung into action.

The "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" was conceived and masterminded directly by the Fuehrer in March 1941. Its practical details were worked out in parallel with the German's plan for their great offensive against Russia. The first victims of the ingeniously organized "Final Solution" were destined to be the Jewish communities trapped in that German offensive.

The entire Russian frontier exploded on June 22, 1941, when the surprise German attack was unleashed. Nine million fighting men joined battle along a 1,600 km front from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The Stalin Line was pierced in several places by superior German force. Even in their retreat, Russian forces fought valiantly.

By December 1941, the German armies and their allies had advanced 900 km on their total front and stood within sight of Moscow. The first Russian counter-attack was yet to come.

Prior to crossing the Russian frontier, four mobile killing units -- called *Einsatzgruppen* -- were set up under Gestapo control, each consisting of 500 to 900 men, whose objective was the liquidation of Jews and other undesirable elements in the conquered territories. The *Einsatzgruppen* moved close on the heels of the advancing *Wehrmacht*.

By December 1941, in less than a half a year, over half a million Jews had been murdered by the *Einsatzgruppen* and their local collaborators in occupied Russian territory.

In three mass shootings, 27,000 Jews were massacred in the city of Riga in November 1941.

In the infamous Fort Nine of Kovno -- referred to by the Germans as "the slaughter ground" -- 70,000 Jews were killed in just a few months. Thousands were slaughtered within days in Zhitomir and Dwinsk, in Slonim, Kobrin, Pinsk, Baranovice, Minsk and more. In seven nights of slaughter 30,000 Jewish residents of Vilna were shot in the nearby Ponar forest.

Poignant songs, songs of farewell and elegies of yearning for loved ones, were dedicated to these places. Among them is a song "Shtiler Shtiler Lomir Shweigen, Kvorim Vaksn Do -- Quiet, quiet, let's keep silent -- graves are growing here". Its music was composed by a talented eleven-year-old youngster, Alek Volkovisky, in the Ghetto of Vilna.

Shtiler, shtiler, lomir shveigen, Kvorim vaksn do

S'hoben zei farflantzt di soinem, Grinen zei tzum blo.

Quiet, quiet, let's keep silent,
Graves are growing here.
Secretly planted by our foes,
To the heavens rise our woes,
Out to Ponar leads our way
Yesterday, tomorrow, every day.

Hush, my child, dry your tears,
weeping is of no avail.
Our foe neither sees nor hears
The depth of our tragic tale.

Shores enclose even the seas,
There are limits to tragedies.
Only our pain – without end –
Noone is now here to mend.

Shtiler, Shtiler -- Words: Shmerke Kaczerginsky; Music: Alek Volkovisky

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYr0v-FHOXg (Performed by Chava Alberstein)

But the place that holds the record for a day's murder -- even over such ghastly places as Auschwitz and Treblinka, Sobibor and Mauthausen, Bergen-Belsen and Maidanek -- is Babi Yar.

No one but no one, even in their worst fantasies, foresaw what 36 hours at the end of September, 1941, coinciding with Rosh Hashana, held in store for the Jews of Kiev. Had anyone suggested the truth, they would have been considered out of their mind.

Ten days after the German occupation of Kiev, all the Jews of the city were ordered to appear overnight at a designated staging point, on pain of being shot on the spot if found elsewhere.

That last night at home, the Jews were desperately alone, fervently hoping for the promised resettlement, summoning all their resources of faith that they would survive the ordeal.

Di Nacht

Síz keiner mit mir in di nacht
Di nacht nor alein iz mit mir

There's no one with me in the night,

Darkness, nothing else in sight.

On roads obscured by darkness dense,

Hollow stillness – all I sense.

I go on, long is my way,

The clouded night does not hear.

Where to? Where? – ask my steps.

No answer comes to my ear.

There's no one with me in the night,

Darkness alone is with me.

On and on in lonely despair –

But where to, silent roads, to where?



Di Nacht -- Words: Aaron Domnits; Music: Mikhl Gelbart
https://tinyurl.com/4hr4fmh6 (Performed by June Tabor)

But starting the next morning, in the beautiful ravine of Babi Yar, within earshot of the residents of Kiev, machine guns rattled away minute by minute, hour by hour, only stopping briefly at night. 38,000 Jews were slaughtered in 36 hours -- only because they were Jews.

What the Nazi's did was incomprehensible. Here is an example from one camp:

In Camp Gusen in the course of one day, 420 Jewish children between the ages of four and seven were murdered by SS doctors and their helpers with heart injections. In one night, six hundred inmates who had become unfit for work were beaten to death. On a regular basis, the unfit or ill were drowned in tubs and small barrels. In some cases, inmates were hanged by their hands, arms tied behind their backs, on the numerous trees surrounding Gusen, to die slowly in agony. These were inexpensive methods that produced the Germans' desired results.

It was a total nightmare for the Jews everywhere. Throughout the Nazi realm in Europe and North Africa, in the cities and towns, in the Ghettos and camps, each day was an eternity for every Jew. The ingenuity of the civilized Western mind, combined with the bestiality of which humans at-their-worst are capable, produced a well-oiled machine of slaughter unimaginable even to writers of horror stories. Everything was designed to murder the Jews, even their children, whose only crime was that they were born Jews.

Eliminating the Jews was a top priority. It took precedence even over strategic-military needs. Manpower that could have been utilized in the war effort was destroyed because it was tainted by Jewish blood. Trains that could have served the military were diverted to deliver Jews to gas chambers. In the midst of a total war on several fronts, masterminds of the Third Reich were put to work devising the most efficient methods for destroying the Jewish People and hiding the deed.

People with even one-quarter Jewish blood in their veins were doomed. Ministers and priests were taken from church altars and nuns from their convents if they had one Jewish grandparent. They were shipped along with the Jews, with crucifixes and holy beads in their hands, and crosses around their necks, to the gas chambers of Auschwitz. In vain did they protest that they were devout Christians.

The rush to clear the world of the plague of the Jew was so great that at least one country, Slovakia, headed by a Catholic priest, Josef Tiso, actually paid the Germans to remove their Jews. Early in 1942, the Germans requested 20,000 workers from Slovakia. Slovakia readily agreed to supply 20,000 young Jews with the proviso that **"in the spirit of Christianity"** families should not be separated. In subsequent negotiations, the Slovak Government agreed to **pay** five hundred Reichsmarks a person to Germany for the additional expenses entailed in the transfer of the Jewish families -- provided the Reich guaranteed that the Jews would not be returned to Slovakia.

Slovakia paid out a total of 45 million Marks to rid itself of its Jews. The first transport of Jewish Slovakian workers and their families reached Auschwitz on April 29, 1942, and most of them ascended heavenward in a pillar of smoke before nightfall.

Despite ingenious German attempts at camouflage and a network of lies, eyewitness accounts of sordid murders perpetrated by the Nazis did reach the world. Jan Karsky of the Polish Government in Exile was smuggled into the Ghetto of Warsaw and brought an eloquent personal account to London, telling of starvation, misery and death. Two people escaped Auschwitz. One actress escaped from the ravine at Babi Yar. A teacher from Vilna crawled out of the pits of Ponar. And others, who brought ghastly news of the death-mill grinding and devouring the oldest people on earth. They reported, but the world was not interested in the plight of the Jews.

Once the abandoned Jews realized what was happening, they fought back wherever they could and with whatever they could. They formed partisan groups in the forests. They rose against the tyrant in the ghettos. They resisted in the extermination camps.

In the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto that started in April 1943, it took the *Wehrmacht* almost two months to finally end of Jewish resistance. Germany brought Poland to its knees in three weeks. Within five days Holland capitulated to the German onslaught. Belgium resisted eighteen days. France forty-one days. It took the German *Wehrmacht* fifty-nine days to overwhelm the emaciated remnant of the Warsaw Ghetto. With virtually bare hands they faced artillery, tanks, warplanes and flamethrowers, adding a legend of courage to the glorious pages of Jewish history.

Under the most inhumane and impossible conditions, the Jews fought back, sometimes literally with bare hands, as they did in the entrance to the "showers" in Auschwitz, and in Treblinka. They recognized their slim chances of escape, yet they fought for human dignity.
In the Ghetto of Kovno, Ben-Tzion Fine, a factory worker, split the skull of the first Lithuanian who broke through the door of his home with an axe. In the apartment of Akiba Puchert, a large inscription was found on the wall that he evidently wrote in his last gasps with a shaking finger and his own blood: NEKOMEH -- revenge! --which became a slogan of the Ghetto.

In the terrible camp of Mauthausen, under constant surveillance by the sadistic 9,000-strong SS, the Jews tried to organize resistance. "I don't want to die", stated one inmate, "If they don't kill me outright, I will survive. Here we can triumph only one way: If we stay alive!"

Es hot uns dos leben gerufen
Dos leben fun zunige teg
Tzu eins, tzvei, drei…
Du veist vo du geist un farvos!

Life calls out to us, and then
Life can be so good again.
We hear its beat, up the street,
One-two-three; one-two-three.
Echoing from each and every wall
Every house, each shop and stall,
Our spirit, our will, and this our song.
Come with us and march along!

When summoned to life we could stay
in days that were sunny and gay,
and all that were there, seemed to walk as on air
by themselves, as they went on their way.
"1, 2, 3," – "1, 2, 3," -- to work, with spirits high.
Every step will resound, on the echoing ground
when you know where you're going and why!

Tzu Eins, Tzvei, Drei – Words: Leyb Rozenthal (after Hans Eisler); Music: traditional

www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMNq_NigT74 (Performed by Henry Sapoznik)

Five hundred prisoners staged an impossible breakout in Mauthausen on February 2, 1945. Of the five hundred, eight got away. The rest were killed. In retaliation for the attempted escape, the Germans forced two hundred other prisoners to stand outside in the freezing night after cold water was poured over them. None survived.

Examples of individual and collective bravery could be multiplied by the hundreds, especially as news of Allied victories began filtering through to the suffering and abandoned people.

In June 1944 the Allied expeditionary forces landed on the shores of Normandy. The great Allied invasion of Nazi Europe had begun -- and with it a race against death for the remaining Jews under Nazi rule.

In the face of stiff resistance, the Anglo-American forces advanced in the West. The Russians were pushing forward in the East. The collapse of the Nazi Reich was imminent. Yet, the ovens in the extermination camps kept burning day and night. As the Allied forces approached from West and East, the SS began blowing up the crematoria and destroying camp records. Horrendous death marches began. The Nazis drove their victims in sub-zero weather away from the advancing Allies to the interior. Those who had no strength left to walk, were shot on the spot.

In the last weeks of the war, ghoulish trains crossed the railway network of the crumbling Reich from one camp to another: from Auschwitz to Buchenwald, from Buchenwald to Dachau, from Dachau to Bergen-Belsen, with but one objective -- to deny their cargo the last chance of survival.

Two random examples of liberation:

In Camp Grossrosen, in February 1945, 6,000 inmates were packed into wagons. Eleven days later the train reached the Mauthausen railroad station. Without food or drink, with no sanitary facilities for eleven days, 130 to 150 pressed together in each wagon in a standing position, of the 6,000, only 1,200 arrived alive. Of these, 180 fell on the way from the station to the camp and were killed on the spot. 645 died within a month from hunger. On May 5, 1945, the day of Mauthausen's liberation, only thirty-two of the 6,000 Grossrosen transport were still alive.

The unbelievable moment of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen arrived in April 1945. But when morning dawned and suddenly there were no more SS, no vicious dogs, and no Ukrainian guards, many prisoners were in such desperate condition that they could not be nursed back to life anymore. Thousands died as soldiers of the liberating forces looked on, utterly helpless.

Upon entering the camp, advanced units of the Jewish Brigade of the British Army were met by an unbelievable sight: Thousands of corpses strewn about, limbs often intertwined, in heaps. In

the barracks the living and the dead were lying in embrace, almost indistinguishable one from the other. Not until many days later did the Allied doctors make the terrible discovery that many had died whose lives might have been saved. They had been too weak to call out or lift an arm, and so had been left to die unnoticed under the corpses. Thus, in Bergen-Belsen, even in the month of liberation, April 1945, 18,355 people died.

As in other camps, so in Bergen-Belsen, the Allies were helpless in combating disease and the alarming mortality rate. Finally, the inmates were evacuated to nearby hospitals and the torch was applied to the camp. Nowhere does fire burn better than in hell. Indeed, the fires speedily destroyed the hell of Bergen-Belsen and it was burnt to the ground. Today only mounds remain, marked: 1300 -- 1500 -- 1100 -- 1800 -- the number of skeletons interred in each area, after suffering Satanic tortures. Only the mounds remain, and an obelisk with the names of the lands of origin of the prisoners of the horror camp, and a modest, silent monument to the Jewish dead…

Lomir shvaign, vaiter svaign,
nit kein vort geredt,
Lomir mit farmachte
oign murmlen a gebet.

Be silent, always silent,
Say not a single word.
In your heart, to God just pray
For faith and trust and hope this day.

(Alternative: *Sounds of Silence,* Simon & Garfunkle)

_____ summers and _____ winters have passed; over _____years of wandering in the wilderness and eventual homecoming, of attempting to settle back into our three-dimensional existence and allowing the fourth -- incomprehensible -- dimension to fade.

Who could live with that fourth dimension?

Who could live with a dimension of planet Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, Maidanek and Treblinka, Sobibor and Chelmno,
Where time-spans are different,
And space is measured differently,
And breathing has to adapt to normally suffocating, clinging odors of burning flesh?

Over _____ times the meadows have bloomed with flowers,

And over _____ times, migrating birds have made their roundtrip journeys to suitable climes.

Over _____ years since the Shoah, we remain tuned to the sounds of the past, but our hearts beat to the drums of the future with hope and faith, with pride and confidence.

Anachnu Po -- We are here!

Lo Nazuz Mipo -- We shall not move from here!

Lanetzch Netzachim -- for ever and ever

Am Yisrael Chai! -- The People of Israel Shall Live!

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See appendix for suggested concluding sections.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Suggested Guide

APPENDIX B: Suggested Introductory Sections

APPENDIX C: Suggested Concluding Sections

APPENDIX D: Possible Anniversary Topics in this Volume

APPENDIX E: Selected Bibliography

APPENDIX A: Suggested Guide

As mentioned in the Introduction, all programs in this anthology were successfully presented at Congregation Bet Israel, Netanya.

This is how the programs were run:

Six to ten capable volunteer readers were recruited to recite different sections of the programs. In some cases, entire paragraphs or sections dealing with a specific topic were read by one reader. At other points in the programs, readers alternated line to line, to heighten the drama. Here and there, a song was introduced. (We used live performers, but you might choose otherwise. Since most of the songs we used – like many songs of the Shoah – are in Yiddish, consider ours strictly optional.)

Copies of the program were made for all readers with parts divided among them, and they met with the leader for at least one full rehearsal. Thus, each reader knew where they come in, and where they should be seated in order to reach their microphone without delay in the flow of the program.

GENERAL SUGGESTED STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATIONS:

1. Responsive reading and opening song
2. Body of the specific thematic program
3. "We salute," and the special Kaddish
4. Lighting of six candles
5. The memorial prayers (Yizkor)
6. *Ani Ma'amin* and *Hatikvah*

1. Each presentation opens with an introductory responsive reading that invites audience participation. The one-page reading is best copied and distributed to attendees. The program leader announces: "Welcome. We will begin our program with the responsive reading in your hands. Please respond loud and clear after me."

2. As described above, the body of the program is best subdivided among various readers. The programs herein include optional songs, with links to one possible version currently available on the internet. A singer or singers in Yiddish and Hebrew would be ideal to perform the recommended songs, although other songs that fit the theme can of course be substituted.

3. Presentations end with a concluding section, beginning with a special Kaddish for the Six Million. This requires two participants, one to chant the Kaddish phrase by phrase (the melody of the Yom Kippur "Ne'ilah" Kaddish is recommended), the other to call out the corresponding names of the ghettos, cities, and extermination camps. Wherever possible and appropriate, the last phrase mentions the specific place described in the program. (Alternatively, this may be done as a responsive reading, with the audience responding with the names of places -- requiring that they have the reading in hand.)

4. Lighting of six memorial candles: Ideally, each candle should be lit by a survivor or someone from the second or third generation, chosen and prepared in advance (good to have back-ups as well); they had best be ready and near at hand from the start of the program. For the candle-lighting, turn off lights, call each person by name – one at a time – and <u>briefly</u> give basic information on their connection to the Shoah (e.g., relatives' place of origin, deportation details, ultimate fate, etc.). After lighting their candle, they stand behind them until the end of the program.

5. Special Yizkor memorial prayers should be recited at this point in Hebrew and in your local language, preferably by two different people. Participants can be asked to rise. Ideally, the lights are still dimmed and the readers are equipped with small flashlights.

6. Lights back on, conclude by singing *Ani Ma'amin* and *Hatikvah*.

APPENDIX B: Suggested Introductory Sections

Responsive Reading for the Six Million Murdered in the Holocaust

Es Brent

Responsive Reading
for the Six Million Murdered in the Holocaust

LEADER: We gather here today to commemorate and honor the Six Million.

ALL: Six million innocent men, women and children murdered in the Shoah.

L: The Nazis killed them for only one reason: because they were Jews.

A: The perverted Nazi mind declared the Jew a threat to the purity of humanity, a threat to humankind.

L: The people who gave the world the Ten Commandments and the moral laws – a threat to the purity of humanity?

A: They who gave the world some of its greatest thinkers – a threat to humankind?

L: As a subhuman species, they were to be eliminated: Shot, hanged, drowned or choked to death by Zyklon-B gas.

A: By torture, slow starvation, by fire or by being buried alive – the stain of the Jew was to be wiped off the face of the earth.

L: But here we are; remembering with sadness and pride: ghetto fighters, partisans, and martyrs who marched to their deaths with heads held high.

A: We will never forget their sacrifice, heroism, devotion, and dedication.

L: They wanted to live as Jews. And though this was not granted them, thanks to them and despite the Nazis – Israel, Judaism and the Jewish People live on.

TOGETHER: REMEMBER, NOW AND FOREVER, PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND PEOPLE OF GOOD-WILL EVERYWHERE!

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ES BRENT

Can't you see, dear brothers,
Our village is aflame,
Billowing smoke equally smothers
Rich and poor, fit and lame.

Stones are cracking, walls are splitting –
Listen to the deafening roar.
Pleading, trembling, shaking, falling,
Our warm homes are no more.

On the streets, tender ones roam
Gripped by despair, loss and trouble,
Bereft of food, bereft of home
Searching 'midst piles of rubble.

Devoured by the raging fire
We seem ready for the butcher's knife.
No, brother! Do not tire!
Rise to hope! Rise to life!

Es Brent: Our Village is Burning
Words and music: Mordecai Gebirtig
www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XFQxLLEYvg
(Performed by Dudu Fisher)

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APPENDIX C: Suggested Concluding Section

With pride we salute…

Mourner's Kaddish

Lighting of six candles

Yizkor memorial prayers

Ani Ma'amin

Hatikvah

With pride we salute – *YITGADAL,*

With gratitude we remember – *YITKADASH,*

The victims who were murdered because they were Jews,

In _____ and many other sites of genocidal massacres.

The men and women of the slave labor camps,

The old and the young of the ghettos and shtetls,

The tortured in the camps of extermination,

Those who died fighting in the forests and cities and undergrounds.

They left us a legacy entwined in eternity,

Made more fertile by their pain,

Made richer by their blood…

Destined to endure as long as God on high shall endure…

YITGADAL VEYITKADASH SH'MEI RABAH…

Mourner's *KADDISH*

Yitgadal – Dachau
V'yitkadash – Theresienstadt
Sh'mei rabah – Ravensbruck
B'olma divra chir'utei – Treblinka
V'yamlich malchutei – Majdanek
B'chayechon – Fort Nine, Kovno
U'vyomechon – Belzec
U'vechayei d'chol Beit Yisrael – Chelmno
Ba'agala u'vizman kariv – Bergen-Belsen
V'imru, Amen – Auschwitz

Y'hei shmei rabah m'vorach l'olam u'leolmei olmaya.

Yitbarach v'yishtabach – Babi Yar, Kiev
V'yitpa'ar v'yitromam v'yitnaseh – Mauthausen
V'yithadar – Buchenwald
V'yitaleh v'yithalal – Warsaw
Sh'mei d'kudesha, b'rich hu – Kamenetz-Podolsk
L'eilah – Drancy
Mikol birchata v'shirata – Minsk
Tushbechata v'nechemata – Ponar, Vilna
Da'amiran b'olma – Birkenau
V'imru, Amen – Sobibor / exchange with one of the above

Lighting of Six Candles

YIZKOR AM YISRAEL

O People of Israel! Remember the holy congregations in the lands of our dispersion, that were uprooted and destroyed; our slain brothers and sisters who were tormented with all possible tortures of body and soul, in the concentration camps; who were maimed in public, on streets and in marketplaces; who were led to slaughter on death trains, buried alive, burned in holy sanctuaries with scrolls of the Torah; who were butchered, drowned, shot, gassed, or hung; whose honor was profaned, and whose blood was spilled by unclean hands. Remember – they died *Al Kiddush Hashem*, for the sanctification of God's Name!

O People of Israel! Remember your beloved children, pure and innocent, torn from the bosoms of their parents by savages, and led like lambs to the slaughter; who were put to death by a variety of means conceived by evil minds; who were left lying naked, in heaps along ghetto streets… infants and toddlers who, in front of their parents, were smashed against stone walls, cast out of windows, or tied in sacks and thrown alive from bridges into rivers – whose lives were nipped in the bud by cruel hands. Remember them! They died *Al Kiddush Hashem*, for the sanctification of God's Name!

יזכור

יִזְכּוֹר עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת קְהִילוֹת הַקּוֹדֶשׁ בְּאַרְצוֹת הַגּוֹלָה שֶׁנֶּעֱקְרוּ, שֶׁנֶּחְרְבוּ וְשֶׁנִּמְחֲקוּ... אֶת בָּנָיו וּבְנוֹתָיו הַמּוּמָתִים, קָרְבְּנוֹת מַמְלֶכֶת הָרֶשַׁע, שֶׁעֻנּוּ עִנּוּיֵי גּוּף וְנֶפֶשׁ בְּמַחֲנוֹת הָהֶסְגֵּר, שֶׁגֹּרְשׁוּ לְאֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה וְלֹא נוֹדְעוּ עִקְּבוֹתֵיהֶם, שֶׁנִּרְצְחוּ בְּהָמוֹן בַּשְּׁוָקִים וּבַרְחוֹבוֹת, שֶׁהוּבְלוּ לָטֶבַח בְּקִרוֹנוֹת-מָוֶת, שֶׁנִּקְבְּרוּ חַיִּים, שֶׁנִּשְׂרְפוּ בְּהֵיכְלֵי הַקּוֹדֶשׁ עַל גְּוִילֵי הַתּוֹרָה, שֶׁנִּשְׁחֲטוּ, שֶׁנּוֹרוּ וְשֶׁנֶּחְנְקוּ, שֶׁחֻלַּל כְּבוֹדָם וְשֶׁפַךְ דָּמָם בְּיָדַיִם טְמֵאוֹת ־ וְשֶׁמָּסְרוּ נַפְשָׁם עַל קִידּוּשׁ ה׳.

יִזְכּוֹר עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת יַלְדֵי מַחְמַדָּיו, טְהוֹרִים בְּנֵי טְהוֹרִים, שֶׁנִּגְזְלוּ מֵחֵיק הוֹרֵיהֶם בִּידֵי חַיּוֹת-אָדָם, וְהוּבְלוּ לָטֶבַח... שֶׁנֶּעֱרְפוּ וְהוּמְתוּ בְּמִיתוֹת מְשֻׁנּוֹת, וְנֶעֱרְמוּ עֲרֵמוֹת-עֲרֵמוֹת בְּרֹאשׁ חוּצוֹת... עוֹלְלִים וְיוֹנְקִים שֶׁנֶּפְצוּ אֶלֵי-קִיר, שֶׁשֻּׁמְּטוּ מֵחוֹמוֹת, נִזְרְקוּ בְּעַד חַלּוֹנוֹת, אוֹ הֻשְׁלְכוּ חַיִּים בְּשַׂקִּים לְמִצּוּלוֹת נְהָרוֹת, שֶׁחַיֵּיהֶם נִקְטְפוּ בְּאִבָּם בְּיָדַיִם אַכְזָרִיוֹת - עַל קִידּוּשׁ ה׳.

Ani Ma'amin

I believe in perfect faith

In the coming of the Messiah

And even if the coming be delayed

Nevertheless, I shall continue to believe!

Ani Ma'amin

Words based on the Rambam. Suggested music: Azriel David Fastag

www.zemereshet.co.il/song.asp?id=524 (various versions)

Hatikvah -- Israel National Anthem

Words: Naphtali Herz Imber;

Music: Samuel Cohen (after Smetana)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQCu9kl68Tg (IDF)

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APPENDIX D: Possible Anniversary Topics in This Volume

If you are looking for a program to commemorate an anniversary of specific events during the Holocaust, the following lists the programs in this volume according to the years in which major events described therein took place.

1938: Mauthausen, God and Shoah

1939: Mauthausen, Looking Back

1940: Denmark, Mauthausen

1941: Fort Nine, Mauthausen, Looking Back

1942: Looking Back, God and Shoah, Wannsee, Spirit and Soul

1943: Denmark, Fort Nine, Mauthausen

1944: Chana Szenesh, Mauthausen

1945: Anniversary of Liberation, Mauthausen, Looking Back

Possible Anniversary Topics in Volume I

1939: Mielitz, Warsaw

1940: Warsaw, Last Words

1941: Resistance*, Babi Yar, Terezin, Minsk, Vilna, Warsaw

1942: Resistance*, Minsk, Sobibor, Vilna, Warsaw

1943: Resistance*, Bergen Belsen, Sobibor, Vilna, Warsaw

1944: Resistance*, Bergen Belsen, Terezin, Last Words

1945: Resistance*, Bergen-Belsen, Last Words

* Resistance refers to the program "Like Sheep to Slaughter"

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About the Author

Ervin Birnbaum was born in 1929 in the city of Kosice, Czechoslovakia. He was the youngest of three boys, and the extended family was strongly connected. The family home adjoined that of his paternal grandparents, and he spent the happy summers and vacations of his childhood with his maternal grandparents in the village of Lipiany. When WWII broke out, his father (Reb Eilish) helped many Jewish refugees, especially from Poland, to obtain false papers and avoid capture.

Tragically, the Nazis deported and murdered Ervin's grandparents and many other relatives. His parents were determined to do all they could to save their children. Ervin and his brother Miki hid with other Jews in an attic above the Kosice theater, after their father made a financial arrangement with a friendly non-Jewish woman to supply them with food and water. Within days, however, the group received a note threatening that their location would be revealed to the Gestapo unless they deposited a large sum of money at a certain location.

Realizing that there would be no end to the blackmail, Ervin, Miki, and their cousin Shlomi risked the train ride to Budapest, hoping to hide there under assumed, non-Jewish identities. Shlomi was caught on the train, taken away, and never heard from again, but Ervin and Miki reached Budapest safely and hid out there. Blond-haired and blue-eyed, young Ervin found work at a Budapest sanatorium. Eventually he got his older brothers, Franz and Miki, jobs there too. Since their assumed identities used different surnames, they had to hide the fact that they were related, at peril of their lives. Their parents hid out in Budapest as well, separately and alone, also using false identities. Miraculously, despite several harrowing and extremely close calls, the entire nuclear family survived the Shoah, a rare achievement indeed.

After liberation, Ervin was determined to leave the blood-soaked continent of Europe behind and reach the Land of Israel, then under British control. In this effort, he led a group of young people from the Zionist *Hashomer Hatza'ir* youth movement on the "illegal" immigration ship *Exodus 1947*, attempting to breach the British blockade.

The Exodus was intercepted and forcibly boarded by British Navy forces after a fight at sea, resulting in several Jews being killed and many wounded. Nevertheless, the *Exodus* had a significant impact on world opinion and on the UN's decision of November 29, 1947, to partition Palestine and create a sovereign Jewish State once again, after 2,000 years of exile. Ervin tells the story here: https://tinyurl.com/54trfrkf

The British deported the passengers of the Exodus back to Germany, and Ervin ended up emigrating with his family to the USA. There he married Helen (Hadassa) Halperin, and after making up the lost war years of high school, he eventually earned a Ph.D. in Public Law and Government from Columbia University. He also studied at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and was ordained a Conservative rabbi, going on to serve as rabbi in Danville, Illinois, and in Rosedale, New York.

In 1970, Ervin, Hadassa, and their three boys made Aliyah to Israel; Ervin became a teacher and then principal of the English-Language High School (*Netiv Angli*) at Midreshet Sde Boker, in line with Ben Gurion's vision of a "Cambridge in the Negev." He later served as national supervisor of foreign language programs for Youth Aliyah, and rabbi of the Bet Israel Masorti Congregation in Netanya. He also served as Director of the World Council of Conservative Judaism, and was National Supervisor for the Israel Conversion Institute. In 1989 he founded a unique NGO, "She'arim Netanya," which offers multiple programs to assist the absorption of new immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union. As an associate professor in academia, he taught courses at CUNY as well as Haifa and Moscow Universities. Along with many articles, he has published *The Islamic State of Pakistan* (Pakistani Historical Society, 1957), *The Politics of Compromise: State and Religion in Israel* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1970), and on the history of modern Israel – *In the Shadow of the Struggle* (Gefen Publishing House, 1990).

Ervin Birnbaum's autobiography, *Turning Obstacles into Stepping Stones* (2019), is available on Kindle: https://tinyurl.com/mvhbn9fh. The first volume of his Holocaust Memorial Programs was released in 2022. His grandson Nitzan has composed a musical reflection on his dramatic life story which can be heard here: https://nanadisc.lnk.to/SabaProject

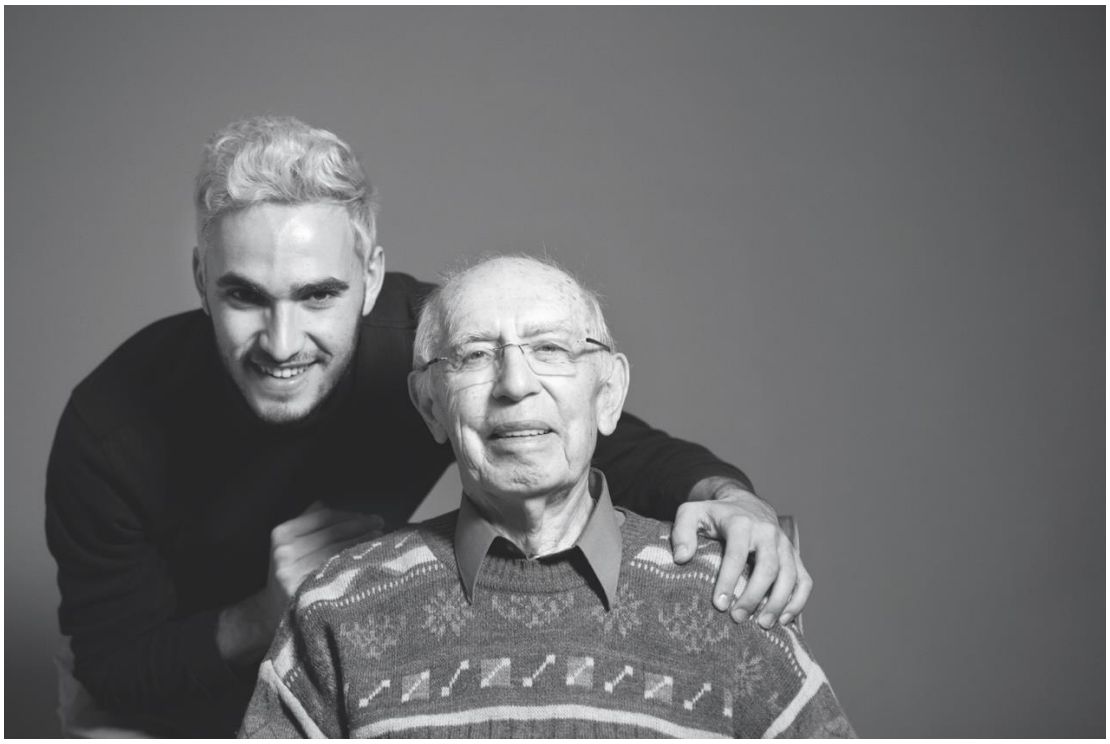


Photo with grandson Nitzan, from his "Saba Project"

In this second volume, Holocaust survivor **Ervin Birnbaum** presents an additional ten original Holocaust Memorial programs. Like the first volume, the book provides a resource for community leaders and educators seeking an accessible, ready-made format with compelling content for moving presentations. Fair warning: Much of the material is powerful and apt to elicit strong emotional responses in both program leaders and participants. Each program deals with a specific place, person, event or issue: the heroism of Chana Szenesh and questions such as "Where was God in the Holocaust?" Eye-witness testimonies reveal striking details of what actually happened in the Shoah in places such as the concentration camp of Mauthausen and the infamous Fort Nine of Kovno. In these programs, the actions and words of leaders and heroes, laypersons and authors, Jews and non-Jews in the Shoah echo through time to touch our hearts and minds today, and proclaim *Never Again!*