

Plucked from the Fire Anshel Sheratzki / Asher Aud

# Plucked from the Fire

Anshel Sheratzki / Asher Aud



I am  
Anshel Sheratzki,

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# Plucked from the Fire

by  
Asher Aud



Produced by: Mor High School - Maccabim-Reut.

Pupils of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and accompanying parents - Mahzor "Kaf Alef"

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התכנים, הנתונים והעריכה הם על אחריות המחבר/ת

In October 2014, we set out, a group of parents and their twelfth grade children, to Poland as part of a delegation from Mor High School in Modi'in-Maccabim-Reut. Throughout the journey, we visited the cities, camps and ghettos of Poland. Our most profound experience throughout this journey was meeting with Asher Aud, the delegation Live Witness who told us his touching and unbelievable story. His words, which were spoken on the ramp in Auschwitz-Birkenau, were etched into our hearts and gripped us long after. Therefore, we saw it imperative to publish Asher's story, so many others will be able to read and hear the war story of one survivor, who survived the Inferno and rose up against it.

One survivor, who survived several concentration camps, today devotes his life to the preservation and passing down of the memory of millions to both children and adults. With the help of the Mor students, who committed themselves to the mission and helped finance it, and with the substantial contribution of the parents who helped push the project forward, initiating the writing of this book - this book materialized while Asher shared his memories and his story unfolded. For the first time in his life, Asher's story was put into writing with the help of the biographer Sigal Ziv.

We hope the story of Asher, who survived the holocaust and made a home in Israel, will touch and seep into the hearts of the youth who walked beside him in their journeys to Poland. We thank everyone who helped bring this book to print.

Yael Yoschpe, in the name of the parents, Kaf Alef class of Mor High School.  
August 2015.







"Many thoughts run through my mind along the journey...  
How much can these children imagine, and how much can they  
understand about what we endured?  
How will it penetrate their consciousness?  
What will remain, to be passed on?  
To look into the eyes of these children, with every new journey,  
To see the excitement on their faces,  
Their tears,  
Their pain,  
Their identification.  
For me, that's everything.  
I look at these children and draw from them the strength to continue.  
I look at these children  
And feel that they are my victory;  
Ours..."  
**Asher Aud**





# Prologue



*Epitaph on the mass grave for the  
Jews of Żdunska Wola*





## **“Mother, this is where we part ways”, I said.**



We were at the cemetery, my mother, my little brother Gabriel, and myself. Of all the graves, we found ourselves near the grave of my grandmother...how symbolic. In one moment, I realized it was time to say goodbye. Mother looked at me, her eyes gazing deep into my thin bones, stabbing my heart. I was shaken. I do not know where my insight came from. I cannot reproduce what led me to say these sharp words as I stood next to my grandmother's grave, words that were the last I said to her...ever. I see her face, remember every detail and expression, and hear the screams around us. Until today. Every day. As if over seventy-five years have not passed.

It was August, 1942, the climax of the war. Twelve thousand Jews lived in the city of my childhood, Zdunska Wola, in Poland. Four thousand of them had been deported or killed by the Germans since the Nazis invaded Poland, including my father, Samuel Hirsch, and my oldest brother, Berl. The eight thousand Jews left were taken to a wide field. German soldiers walked among us. Babies were ripped from their mothers by being lassoed around their necks and discarded into trucks. Those who fainted from the blows were thrown in as well. For three days we experienced abuse while being transported to the Jewish cemetery located outside the ghetto. Its length was about three hundred meters and it was surrounded by a large wall.

The Germans drove us to the edge of the cemetery and made everyone line up along the wall, between two rows of German soldiers. My little brother, Gabriel, went first, followed immediately by mother and then me. The soldiers were brutal, beating us constantly, each one delivering his "gift": a thrash with a stick, a whip, a kick with a boot. The beating did not hurt me. My body suffered it in silence. Each lash to my brother, each punch to mother's body, hurt as if someone had cut my flesh.



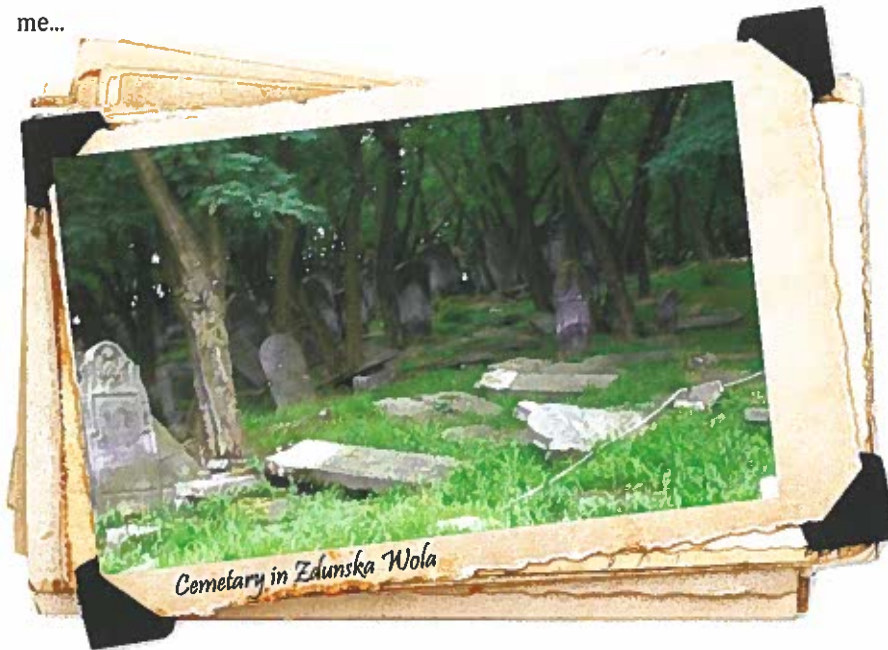
We passed about two-thirds of the wall as a German soldier stuck a stick out in front of me. Instinctively, I stood at attention. "Ja das ist gut", he said, "Yes, that's good", and told me to turn left. Twelve hundred people, including me, were referred to the left. Seven thousand others were ordered to keep straight. My mother, Yocheved, and brother, Gabriel, were among them.

The Germans gave us bread rations while to the second group, rations of bread were thrown into the air. Day after day, we watched in horror. Reluctantly, we gazed at our families, friends, and members of the town attacking the little food that was thrown at them while Germans responded by throwing rocks or shooting at them. It was our fifth day away from our homes. The hunger was unbearable.

After two days, they took us from the cemetery. I noticed my mother and my brother, Gabriel, and can still see their eyes, even now.

We went through the town streets on our way to the train station. Polish residents took to the streets to watch. I did not see sorrow in their faces.

I went in a column of Jews, dragged along with the crowd, my mother's eyes before me...



*Cemetery in Zdunska Wola*



# Childhood in Zdunska Wola



*The market in the town square*



## Childhood in Zdunska Wola



I was born in the town of Zdunska Wola, in Poland, in 1928. The birth certificate of my brother, Berl, two years my senior, was not found in the town. Later, when I grew up, I discovered that in 1926 there was a wave of immigration from Poland. My Uncle Gabriel, my mother's brother, said that my parents tried to leave Poland, but their attempt was unsuccessful due to an incident in the border town of Lititob which delayed them. My brother was born during the emigration attempt, and my parents were forced to turn back.



*The gravestone of my grandfather,  
for whom I am named.*



There were five of us living in a small one-room house: my father, Samuel Hirsch, my mother Yocheved, my oldest brother, Berl, I, Anshel, and my younger brother, Gabriel, two years my junior. We all had Jewish names.

When Gabriel was born, a large family celebration was held that I remember well. A beer keg with a pump (plunger) was brought to our house, and chickpeas (arbas) and beer were served, both traditional refreshments. It was the only joyous event that I remember well. We could not celebrate Berl's Bar Mitzvah because the war broke out.

The town where I grew up was not particularly large, with thirty-two thousand inhabitants, almost a third of them Jews.

Synagogues, ritual baths, and Jewish schools were numerous, along with youth groups including the Zionist Youth, Hashomer Hatzair, Bnei Akiva and Jewish parties such as the Bund, a Jewish socialist workers' party.

My mother's family lived in Zlotchiv. I met her parents - my grandparents - only twice. I remember them vaguely, as I was very young.

Their family name was Rubinstein, but beyond that, I knew nothing about them. My grandfather, Reuben, was a scholar. Our visit to them was the only time I had left our town.

In her last days, my grandmother lived in our house. I remember her lying next to my father's sewing machine. Grandma died in our home and was buried in the cemetery in Zdunska Wola.

Chava, my mother's sister, lived in our town. I knew her very well, but I did not know her sisters, Tzirel and Linda. Her brother, Gabriel, became part of our lives after the war.



*My grandfather Reuben*

My father's parents, Selig Wolf and Bracha, nee Brust, lived near our home and so, naturally, we had a strong relationship with them and I loved them very much.

My grandfather had a bread bakery. Above the stove was a kind of clay berth that absorbed the heat from the oven. It was always warm and cozy there. My brothers and I loved to sit on, sleep or play near it. It was our corner and no one bothered us there.

Every afternoon at three o'clock, my grandfather stood in the yard of the "heder" where I studied and handed me a roll of his own making. Fresh sweet rolls. A happy midday treat. I waited expectantly for grandpa every day. Even when I grew older and went to elementary school, I would go less often to the *heder*, but every day at three o'clock I went to visit the courtyard for my grandfather's roll. I refused to give up the pleasure.

Apart from the family members who lived near us in town, I did not know my family. My father had two brothers, one of them called "Isaac", and a sister who lived nearby. I never got to meet his other two sisters.

The house in which I grew up was small, and a part of it was used by my father as a workshop. We had no running water, and the toilet was in the yard. My job was to bring buckets of water from a well that was four houses down from us. I always carried two buckets. I did this twice a day. The water was used for washing and cooking.

My father was a tailor, and my mother helped him with the sewing. In the workshop section of the house was a large table designed for cutting fabric and where the sewing machine stood. At the other end of the room was a big bed and a large closet; it was one room in which we worked and slept, all of us together.

I was five in 1933 when my uncle Gabriel, my mother's brother, and his wife came to see us from Zlotchiv to say good-bye, before immigrating to Paris. I did not understand how we would find them a place to sleep because the house was already so crowded. When I asked, I was told that my uncle and his wife would sleep in the same bed with my parents, my older brother and I would sleep at their feet, and the little one would sleep in the crib.

Years later, a wooden wall was built that divided the room into two: the bed and the dining table were in one room and the workshop was on the other side, together



with the stove. My father used to work for the gentiles, stitching their pants and jackets. Gentiles visited our home, but warned us lest we inform on them for buying from Jews. "Orel mevin kol ois", which means, "the uncircumcised understand every letter", was a prevalent Yiddish saying. It meant to remain silent and say nothing because the non-Jew understands everything. Dad was a member of the Bund Party and used to go to conferences and party meetings.

The house was run very modestly, and was, for me, a safe and happy place. Food was not scarce but we had nothing extra in our pockets. My parents maintained a traditional lifestyle, and Fridays were especially sacred to us, its customs infused in my heart to this day. Every Friday morning, father visited the hairdresser and I joined him. I sat in a corner on the floor and watched how the barber shaved my father's face as he and his friends debated various issues of supreme importance. They were a crew of men, a kind of parliament. One of the topics they talked about is etched in my memory. It was in 1933, and I was about five. Hitler came to power and anti-Semitism in Germany was rising. The group did not give the matter much attention. They chuckled humorously and moved on to other topics, never imagining that, a few years later, they, too, would experience what the Jews of Germany experienced. From the barbershop, we went together to the mikveh, our weekly bath. It was a ceremonious occasion for, during the week, we did not get to bathe. We returned home, put on clean and festive clothes, and walked to the synagogue.



*The synagogue*



Mother prepared the traditional Sabbath foods for Friday night dinner that I can still taste to this day: jellied calf's foot, gefilte fish, soup with noodles, "laundered" (boiled) chicken and *tsimms*. The house held a sacred atmosphere. To this day, when the Sabbath enters, I feel the same atmosphere that brings me back to thoughts of my parents' house. This feeling is so strong that sometimes I am filled with anguish and feel unwell. My family knows not to leave me alone on Friday nights.

On Saturday mornings we were up early and went together to the synagogue. For me, it was primarily a social gathering for all the children. After the prayers we gathered at my grandparents' home, and sometimes at my aunt's house (my mother's sister), or at my uncle's. We ate the *chamin* that my brother and I brought from my grandpa's bakery, where it had been cooking in his big oven since Friday. I loved Saturdays with my family.

Sometimes on Saturdays we walked on the avenue lined with chestnut and walnut trees that was close to our house. As a boy, it was, "Saturday's big trip". Later, when I visited the town, I noticed a small street with about twenty trees, just two hundred yards away from our house.

In the reality in which I grew up, dialogue between parents and children was very limited. Our parents took care of our basic needs, including food, a bed and an education. The emotional dimension was given almost no attention, therefore Saturdays and family meals were the only quality family time.



## My childhood was surrounded by studies, and by activities in the youth movement.



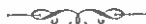
At the age of three I started going to the *heder* from morning until evening. I was put on the first bench, studied the holy language of Hebrew, learning to recognize the letters of the aleph-bet and how to vowelize them. The *rebbe* was a revered figure for us. I had the “honor” several times of feeling his strength when he struck my little palms with his ruler.

Speaking Hebrew was routine for me and I knew the *Amidah* prayer by heart. Although I did not know the meaning of all the words, I could read and identify them. These studies provided me with knowledge that served me well later on, as an adult. I enjoyed going to the *heder*. All the children played together in the yard during breaks. At home, however, I did not have much to do. When I grew a little older, I used to get away often, spending many hours in the youth movement.

At the age of seven I started studying at the elementary school, as was usual in Poland at that time. After school I went straight to the *heder*, where I studied until evening, returning home after dark. There were two primary schools in town. One was headed by a male director (“*kirobnik*” in Polish) and the other was headed by a directress (“*kirobnitz’keh*” in Polish). Both schools were co-ed, and I don’t know why and how the division was made. I was sent to the school headed by the male director.

School was very structured, with especially strong discipline. During the lesson, children dared not get up from their seats. Only during breaks were we allowed to go out and play in the yard.

We played hide and seek, or “five stones”, a game using small bones. We would dig a trench, put nuts into it, and see how many nuts could “escape” while being pushed



into the ditch. We played with stones in the same manner. "*Floch*" was another game we played by placing a plank over two stones, with a second plank placed over it at a slant. When the bottom one was struck, we'd watch to see how far the top plank would fly.

The language spoken at school was Polish. While not spoken at home, it was the dominant language on the street and in the marketplace. Occasionally we hosted gentiles in our home who spoke Polish, so I knew the language. We spoke Yiddish at home. Our parents knew Polish but never taught us the language.

Evening studies in the heder were focused on the weekly Torah portion. We read the sentences in Hebrew and translated them into Yiddish in their entirety, so we did not always know the meaning of each word separately.

I started going to the youth movement at the age of nine, two years before the outbreak of the war. The decision about which movement to join was mainly social. We went where our friends went. Our parents did not direct us. My older brother, Berl, went to Hashomer Hatzair, my cousin to Bnei Akiva. I joined the Zionist Youth, where they talked to us about the Land of Israel and Herzl. The images they showed us are engraved in my memory to this day. Zionism was not a top priority for me, and we didn't even discuss it at home. I enjoyed the social gatherings, activities and games.

One evening, when I was around ten years old, I was returning home from youth movement activities around 19:00 when a teacher named Bolshove from school recognized me in the street and demanded that I show up at school the next morning with my parents. They were reprimanded because it was unacceptable for a child to walk around after dark. In fact, today, it is one of the few memories I have from my elementary school days.

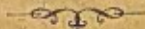
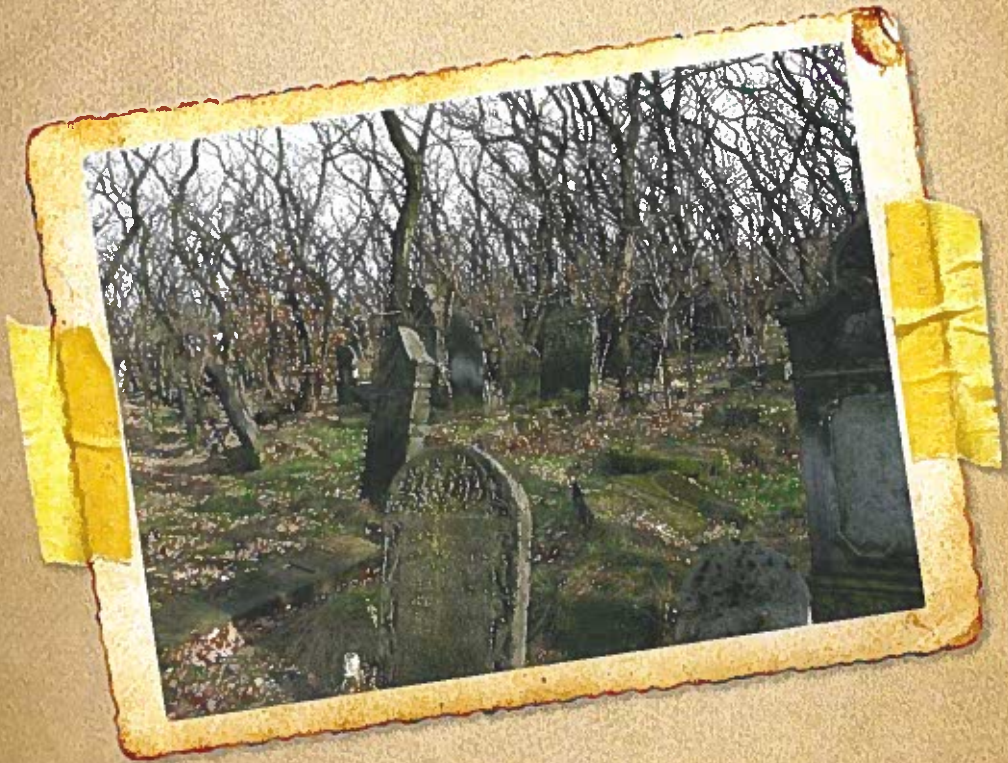
I was eleven years old when my life changed overnight.

My childhood ended abruptly.

A new reality was imposed on us.



# Winds of War



## Winds of War



It was a pleasant conversation, near my grandfather's home. We returned from a family celebration, happy and excited. My mother, grandmother, grandfather, father, brother and sisters, stood talking together before we went into the house. None of them was shouting, nobody was singing. Our voices may have been raised, but only slightly higher than usual.

A Polish policeman suddenly appeared and began shouting at them, until he recognized a familiar face. It was the face of my Uncle Isaac, a respected community member and financier who owned wood and coal warehouses.

"Mr. Sheratzki", the policeman mumbled and almost fell to the floor, begging for forgiveness. Then he walked a few feet away from where we stood and shouted, "Dirty Jews!" It was 1937, and the first time I encountered an expression of hatred. Jew-hatred.

I was not aware of the manifestations of anti-Semitism. If I was, they are suppressed in my memory. My parents might not have revealed them deliberately, depriving me of knowing about most of them. After all, I was a young child when the winds of change began to plague Poland and neighboring countries. My parents did not share anything, and certainly not what was happening in the country. However, the rules were clear: I was not allowed to go far from home on my own.

## September, 1939



The aerial attack on our town was unexpected. Nobody had prepared us for it. German planes bombed our town and the surrounding towns. The battlefield came



to our area and people from small towns near the border began arriving in Zdunska Wola. My aunt was among them. I walked toward Waleska Street, a distance away from my house, to meet her. Mother was afraid and sent my older brother, Berl, to bring me back home. When he found me, he grabbed me and dragged me until we got to the marketplace, where he lay me down on the ground and started hitting me. "Go back home," he shouted. The alarm sounded, and Berl and I had time to run to the gate of the market. A loud explosion sounded. In the same place where we had been just a few moments earlier, a bomb fell. There were shouts from all sides. Chaos. We ran home. The war had come to us.

Jewish residents of the town fled north toward Warsaw, the capital, in order to get as far away as possible from the German border. My mother and father decided to join the crowd. To save ourselves we had to escape as quickly as possible, a joint resolution taken by all who tried to save themselves. The whole community was in mortal danger.

Mother managed to pack a few belongings and clothes, tied them into sheets and gave each of us a "package" to carry. No one told us where we were going. The Germans were approaching and we had to flee. There was no time for words.

There were no cars, and nor carts. We were forced to walk on the road. I was an eleven-year-old boy, torn away from home by my parents from a place that was once safe for us, but now, we did not know what our future would be.

Another alarm. With our remaining strength we ran, looking for a corner in which to hide. We all crowded behind a tree. We could hear the noise of the approaching bombers. Suddenly, boom! Then ... silence. My older brother, who was slightly exposed, took a bullet in the shoe. Fortunately, though the bullet pierced his shoe and made a hole in it, it did not hit his foot.

When it seemed that the aircraft had passed, we continued walking quickly. We reached the barn when the German troops caught up with us. We were a large group of people, trying to hide. Shots were heard from all sides.

Reluctantly, we had to return home, my mother, brothers and I. Dad continued to run, but the Germans eventually caught up with him, and after a week or two he was back home.

## The “*aktion*” began when we returned home.



The Germans rounded us up to three locations: Stentchitzkeh Street, where we lived, and Ogradova-Yodengasse and Shtekovska Streets. Thus, we were cramped and crowded into a ghetto, with no real shelter and no protection, under the watchful eyes of German soldiers. Luckily, we were able to stay in our house. For now.

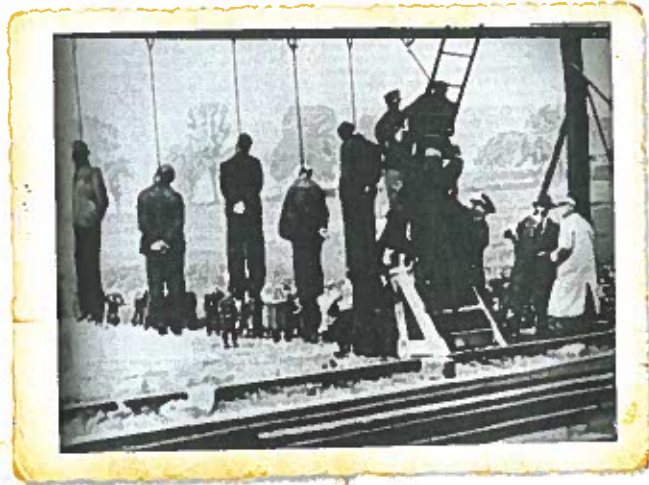
One day, they took all the Jews into a wide field in the ghetto. The elderly, the pious ones, those wearing wigs, were the targets, the main objective for injuries. German soldiers began to beat them brutally. At the end of the day, ten innocent people were hanged in the street, in front of everyone.

A few weeks later we were again ordered by the German troops to concentrate in the field. They cut the hair and beards of the elderly, and began beating them. No one dared to rebel. People were anxious for their lives. Ten more Jews were hanged.

*The transition  
to the ghetto*



*Hanging of Jews on  
Purim March 3, 1942*



This was the way the Germans humiliated us, trampling the dignity and honor of the respected. The only sins of these twenty people were that they were influential dignitaries in the community.

The third action was not long in coming. This time the victims were men. They were removed from the ghetto and assembled in a large building in the center of the market. Many shops lined the market square which was a large courtyard.

The men were held in the courtyard for three days, beaten and humiliated, side locks and beards cut off. The younger ones, my father among them, were sent to prison in the nearby town of Sheratz, the town whose name gave us our last name, Sheratzki. Most of them did not return home.



I missed my father. I escaped from the ghetto to see him. I was a blonde, blue-eyed child and looked like a "sheigetza"(gentile) so I was not afraid of being spotted. I found a way to escape, and broke out.

The inner side of Sheratzka Street was part of the ghetto, but the German and Polish residents, who lived on the outer side, often left the gate open. I managed to sneak out this way many times, smuggling potatoes and other food, among other things.

The way to the prison was not familiar to me, as I had never been away from home. I wandered the streets, asking people for directions. I knew Sheratzka Street, and logic told me that the roads were close to one another. I discovered that there was a coach that led to it. I jumped on and sat in the back. Each time the coachman lashed the whip back, he hit me. I did not feel the pain. When I arrived at the prison I had a bruised face, but I saw my father. We hugged. I was excited.

I had to come and see my father. I did not understand the significance of the danger, and even I had, it was stronger than me. As a child, death is not a real term. In innocence, you think that if caught, at most, you will be punished; beaten in the worst case. I returned home on foot, a journey of fourteen miles. Easy.

After a few weeks, my father was released from prison and returned home.

In the next aktion, the men were taken back to the market, and many of them were deported, including my father. I never saw him again.



*Jewish forced laborers*

My older brother, Berl, went to work outside the ghetto. Support of the family now rested on his shoulders. The payment he received for his work was scarce, not enough to live on. Trying to help my family, I also found a way to earn a few pennies. I gathered cigarette butts that people tossed away, emptied them of the little tobacco they contained, and refilled them, selling them as cigarettes. This was our way to exist, to survive.

There were aktions every day. The uncertainty was unbearable. We did not know what was going to happen. The Germans did not let up, and in the next aktion, men were taken to the market, and then sent to a labor camp. Berl, thirteen years old, was among them.

What would we do now? How would we get money?

I decided to go out to work in Berl's place, but I was afraid that I would not be let out of the ghetto because of my young age. At 4:30 am, I stood in the line for those going out to work. The Germans arranged us in groups of five. Under cover of darkness I managed to squeeze into one of the lines and go out of the ghetto with the men.

Berl had been working at a construction site building prefabricated structures for the Ukrainians who came to Poland to help the Germans attack the Jews. I told my superiors that Berl was sick, and that I was sent to replace him. I did not tell them he was sent to the camp.

Despite the physical difficulties, I did a good job and proved myself as a serious worker. I won the sympathy of my superiors and asked to be recognized in my own right, and not just as a temporary replacement for Berl. I was accepted, but was immediately given another position that was supposed to be easier.

Reality was less pleasant. I had to dig foundations. We worked in the rain, freezing cold and frost, with nothing to protect our bodies from the harsh weather conditions and our fear of the Ukrainians. They looked after us very well, going from one to another, beating us with a stick.

One of Ukrainians hit me ten times. At one point I could not bear the pain and ran away. When I tried to return to work, he found me and beat me again. I hurried home. The walk took about seven miles and was difficult, not because of fatigue



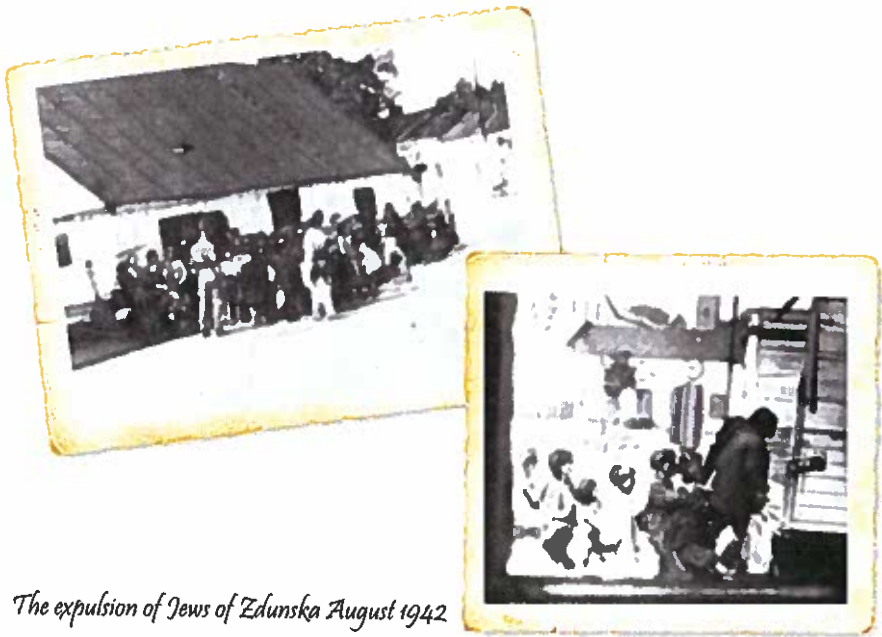
and the distance, but because my pockets were heavy, I managed to smuggle several kilos of potatoes and flour that I bought from some of the Poles who worked with me in the camp.

The quantities I brought were larger than we are able to consume, allowing my mother to sell some of the goods to the neighbors.

I felt obligated to do everything I could so that mother and Gabriel would have something to eat.

As I said, a few days later, we found ourselves in the cemetery near my grandmother's grave.

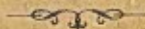
This time we all were called in the aktion - mother, Gabriel and I. Father and Berl had already been taken from us. In a quick selection I was sent to one side of the cemetery, and mother and Gabriel were left behind. From then on, I was on my own. Anshel. Eleven years old. Was it eleven? It's the age when children mainly play..



*The expulsion of Jews of Zdunska August 1942*

# Lodz Ghetto

A war of survival from day to day



## Lodz Ghetto: a war of survival from day to day



We were in the Jewish cemetery for a number of days until the Germans ordered us to get into a long line. We walked throughout the streets of the city, towards the railway station. We went through the marketplace, where there were townspeople. I remember their expressions. I cannot say I saw sadness in their faces.

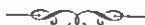
We were put into cattle cars and sent to the Lodz ghetto, a distance of just forty-eight kilometers in five days of traveling that was exhausting. The windows were closed and there was no air to breathe, causing us horrible choking. People stepped on each other. The air was thick and dense, with no place to move, everyone trying to find a bit of breathing room. I sat curled up inside myself. I knew if I tried to lie down I would be stepped on. Those whose bodies were overburdened, collapsed and died.

I had to relieve myself, like everyone else, but it never occurred to me to do it in the train car, even though I felt I could not take any more stress on my stomach and my body.

The door opened. Finally. Some air.

"Anshel, jump", said a Jewish policeman in the car who knew me. I jumped down and found myself facing a German soldier who stood in front of me. "Why did you get down?" He asked. "A Jewish policeman gave me permission to take care of my needs," I said. The soldier turned me around to face the wall and began firing several shots at me. Bullets whizzed around me and I prayed that one would hit me and the nightmare would end. Someone must have been guarding me from above, because I have no other way to explain why the bullets missed their mark.

The German soldier stopped and hesitated for a few seconds. He put the gun to my neck, moments that went on forever. I would not mind dying, I just wanted everything to end. "Just pull the trigger", I said to myself.



"You were lucky," the soldier said scornfully, "Get into the carriage and be the last one out," he ordered. I did as he said, not daring to disobey.

They put us into the Lodz ghetto.

I was alone, an eleven-year-old boy who had never before left home, except for a brief visit to Grandpa. I walked a few meters from the gate, and I stood, wondering.

What to do now?

I did not know what was allowed and what was forbidden. Who was against whom?



The hours passed, I do not know how many. From then on and throughout the war years, the concept of time lost its meaning for me. I probably lost consciousness for a while. I awoke in darkness. I found myself standing beside a house so I walked in, sat down on the stairs, dozing on and off until morning.

I went outside and walked slowly, each step accompanied by uncertainty and fear. I looked around, checking again and again that no one was chasing me.

The day passed and darkness began to fall again. I went into the stairwell. I felt my stomach begin to "shout". I found myself next to a hill of trash, people picking through it, looking for crumbs to satisfy their hunger. I joined them and I was able to put something in my mouth.

I was around people, and this was a kind of relief, momentarily. I was happy. It was even more comforting than food. They were strangers, but their presence made me feel safe.

One day, I heard some people on garbage hill talking about a straw shoe factory in the ghetto that needed workers. I decided to try my luck, and got a job there as a porter. I had to load and unload trucks of straw, or food coming into the kitchen, such as potatoes. The work was physically hard. The Dasa family was responsible for the work and ran everything with a firm hand. When unloading the food, all sorts of items would fall to the ground. Larger, older people followed the proceedings with wide eyes. Luckily, they took into account the fact that I was a child and spared me from the hardest work.

In return I got soup once a day, and weekly food rations that were given to everyone who worked in the ghetto. A little flour, a little oil, sugar and a piece of bread. I found a small suitcase in which I locked my precious commodities.



*Children working  
in straw shoe factory  
in the ghetto  
(Photos courtesy of  
Yad Vashem)*

I met a man at the factory who allowed me to live in his room, along with two other roommates. One day when I returned from work, I tried, but could not open my suitcase. I took it to a locksmith who tried to open it, gently, of course, so as not to spill the little oil inside, but then I was shocked. The suitcase was empty. Stripped of food. Next week I would have to settle for only the daily soup.



*Distribution of bread in the Lodz ghetto*

This was not the only time my food was stolen. I made friends in the factory with an older woman who was mostly a sympathetic ear to me. I told her about the theft of my weekly ration. "I have a great apartment, I live only with my husband, and no children. Come live with us, you will be our child," she suggested.

I was happy about the proposal and gave the woman my food stamps. Once again, I found that only the strongest win the war of survival. Every evening when we returned from work, we sat down to share a meal. The woman sat on one side of the table, her husband on the other side. I got some water. I never got food. And so it was, every night.

After a while I left the apartment and went to live alone in a small room that I found in the ghetto. Here, no one would take my food.



One day I suffered from a toothache. One of the workers at the factory told me he was a dentist and offered his help. I went home with him where he filled my tooth. For years, several dentists in Israel were unable to remove the filling he had put in my mouth.

## I became ill

Typhus claimed many victims. There were no drugs and no hygienic conditions. I could not stand up, let alone walk. To get around, I walked on all fours, like a dog. I had to go to work, otherwise I could not get the weekly food ration.

Most of the day at work I lay on a bench. Allowances were made for me and I was permitted to sleep. I can still see the same bench before my eyes, where I lay for hours, my body loose and my strength low.

I had a problem. A tram went down the ghetto's main street. Jews who had to pass from one side of the sidewalk to the other had to cross over a bridge. German



*Jews crossing the bridge linking two parts of the ghetto*

soldiers stood guard regularly on both sides of the bridge. I lived on one side, and the factory was on the other side. Every day I had to cross the bridge.

I knew that anyone not fit to work could easily be killed. I knew that people disappeared all the time. I realized that I could not allow the Germans to see me on all fours. I went to work in the dark, and returned to my room after dark.

I could not keep any food down. When I recovered a bit, I asked for my daily soup ration. I needed food for revival. I do not know how many days passed before I could get back on my feet. I was skin and bones. Finally, I came back to life.

Later, when I was much older, I needed surgery to remove a cancerous tumor in my stomach. The eleven-hour surgery went on longer than expected. When the doctor came out of the operating room, my wife, Chaya, asked him why the operation had taken so long. The doctor said he had to cut out my spleen because it was swollen and fused together. "He probably had typhus many years ago," he said. It was then that I realized for the first time that in those days, my body was able to overcome typhoid fever without medicine and almost without food.

About two years ago I went back to the Lodz ghetto, a dark and difficult period in my life. Even my days at Auschwitz were easier. When I say that, people do not understand how it could be possible.

I revived myself with small portions of food. I don't remember ever changing clothes. I washed my face with water I carried in a bucket or bowl, not daring to even think about a shower.

I went from my room or stairwell to the factory and back again. Every day. I only knew two streets in the ghetto: Fibzenha Street 5, where I lived, and Meritzinske Steet, where the factory was.



*Jews crossing an  
Arian Street*

I was lonely, hardly exchanging a word with people. I think of myself as a single stone during those days of war. My mind was a blank. Empty of dreams. There was no one else. Even mother and father were not there.

How did I get through a day, a minute, an hour, with only one thought? It was a kind of automaton. Each day that went by was another day that I had won.

Today, it seems to me that this was my way to survive. The fact that I did not think of anything else was actually an advantage, because all my desire was focused on getting through the day. Out of a desire to live.

The Germans began to liquidate the Lodz ghetto. Trainloads of Jews left the ghetto every day.

The factory manager took me under his wing, asking me and some of the other Jews to help him build a wall of shoes behind which we could hide. We did not manage to build the wall. The Germans sent us, too, to the train station. To Auschwitz-Birkenau. In those days, those names did not mean much to me.



*Jews being deported from the Lodz ghetto in cattle cars*

# Auschwitz-Birkenau: my brother watches over me



## Auschwitz-Birkenau: my brother watches over me



I had never been on a train. Until the war broke out... We made the journey to the Lodz ghetto empty-handed. When we left our homes, we never imagined that we would not return to it.

When we left the Lodz ghetto, we had already learned from experience. People came with suitcases containing mostly food, the little bit that they had managed to save while in the ghetto.

"Luxury travel" is the way I describe the trip from the Lodz ghetto to Auschwitz-Birkenau. This time the trains traveled faster than the hard drive we'd had to the Lodz ghetto. The "luxury" didn't last long..



*People transported to Auschwitz*



## Coming to Auschwitz



The train doors opened hastily, and loud shouts were heard from all sides, urging us to run quickly between two rows of German soldiers. Each soldier volunteered his "gift" to us, either a whip, a stick, or a kick with his boots. At the end of the line was the famous doctor, Dr. Josef Mengele.

His hand was inside his jacket, only a cruel thumb poking out, moving left and right, right and left, fateful movements indicating who would live and who would die.

Again, my destiny improved. Without understanding where I was going, I was sent to the camp. To live. For now.

Before entering the camp we endured a humiliating ceremony. Made to remove all our clothes, we stood as naked as the day we were born. All the hair was shorn from our bodies. Naked, we were made to run from mountain to mountain; mountains of clothes.

Grab a shirt, and God forbid someone dared to take two. Grab some pants and two shoes.

"Hurry, hurry," screamed the soldiers and amazed us with their sticks and guns. Did I take two matching shoes or shoes that belonged to two different pairs? Not important. There was no time to check. Procrastination meant a few more blows of the gun to a skinny body.

Auschwitz-Birkenau was built of camps. Every two rows of huts were called a "camp":

A, B, C, D, E, the hospital, the experiments camp, and the crematorium, e.g., the ovens. I was sent to Camp E - block four.

During the day, remaining inside the block was not allowed. Only outside. It was bitterly cold. We stood in groups. Those who had a little power stood in the middle of the line to absorb heat from the others. As a child, I was driven to the outside of the line most of the time.





One day while standing outside, a man appeared who introduced himself to me as Jacob Weinstein. "Anshel, is that you? Your brother Berl is here, in the D camp". Berl had heard from others in Auschwitz from our town that I had survived the liquidation of the ghetto and was sent to the Lodz ghetto. It was known that all the Jews of Lodz had arrived in Auschwitz, and Berl was waiting for me.

We went over the fence. Jacob began to shout, "Berl! Berl!" Someone came out from the other side and said, "Berl is at work, come back in the evening." We went back to camp number four. I noticed that something was going on.

The line-up.

I ran and joined one of the lines. All the children were taken out of the lines and brought to block twenty-two. Everyone who entered the block was handed a portion of bread. The door closed. The Germans did not want us mingling with the children outside who hadn't yet received their portion of bread, lest someone get two servings.

I was locked in the block, but I wanted to go see my brother, Berl. What would I do now?



I went to one of the "*blockarists*", the name given to those responsible for the block. They were, for the most part, political prisoners, Polish or German, with large bodies, who did not hesitate to use their physical strength and were, at times, very violent towards the Jews.

I asked to go to the toilet located outside the camp. One block of toilets were used by all the prisoners in the camp. As collateral, the blockarist took my bread. "Woe to you if you do not come back soon," he shouted at me.

I ran to Jacob Weinstein and told him that I was locked inside the block. "Somehow I managed to get out," I said, "But I do not know if I can get out again

I quickly ran back to the block. The blockarist refused to return my portion of bread to me. In the evening, all the children were locked inside the block. Twelve hundred children.

We all lay down on the floor next to each other, each with his head in the opposite direction of the one next to him. And so the lines were composed.

Shouts. A mess. Twelve hundred children in one crowded block.

The blockarists ran through the rows, beating us with sticks. The fact that they trampled on us, hurting us, did not bother them. On the contrary. Their attempts to silence us caused more commotion.

I thought I heard someone calling my name, "Anshel Sheratzki! Anshel Sheratzki!" The noise and commotion made me think I was imagining it.

At 04:30, wake-up time, I realized that I hadn't imagined it. At the door stood Jacob Weinstein. "You know what happened here last night?" he asked. "The whole camp was on its feet. Your brother wanted to go through all of them. Everyone was shouting 'Anshel Sheratzki', 'Anshel Sheratzki. Your brother wanted to pass through the electric fence to look for you."

Jacob took me to the electric fence. Berl was standing on the other side. He did not recognize me. "Anshel, is that you?"

I looked like a skeleton. He was fat. Berl went into his hut, took out bread and sausage and threw them at me. "At 07:00 I'm coming to work in your camp," he promised. And he kept his promise.





I walked around with Berl from hut to hut. He introduced me to all the "important people", meaning those in charge of the blocks, and the people who worked outside who were in charge of the work. They pushed food into my hands when they saw how I looked. We walked around all day. In the evening, Berl returned to his camp. The meeting with Berl left me quite indifferent. Just as the toughest events "passed over me", so went the meeting with Berl, unaccompanied by any special excitement. Something in my heart just went blank.

Berl arrived at Auschwitz in 1942. He earned status because he managed to survive. At that time, everyone who managed to survive there for two or three years achieved this status.

Berl worked in the women's camp. He smuggled food, gave greetings from women to men and men to women. It turned out that the real trading took place behind the scenes in the camps. In return, he received food and other items such as gold and diamonds, as payment. Those who emptied the train cars arriving with Jewish prisoners often found valuable items left behind. Of course, they had to hand them over to the Germans, but some dared to take them for themselves to improve their conditions. It was a kind of labor exchange.

Thus, Berl began to meet people and to take care of himself, and later on, took care of me. I am convinced that I would not have survived Auschwitz if he had not watched over me.

Throughout the period of my stay in the camp, we met a total of two or three times, but from the day we first met, he cared for me through his friends.

Most of my days in block twenty-two were spent roaming around. I was sent to work only a few days. I tried not to run into the German guards and the kapos. The encounter with them might result in, at best, a beating..

Wagons were the only mode of transportation one could use to get around in the camp. They were used to transport corpses, merchandise and food. Those who worked with the wagons were lucky, as was I. When we carried food, we could always find a vegetable peel or something that had accidentally spilled from a barrel that we could lick to satisfy our hunger.

The less pleasant part was collecting the bodies. Passing among the barracks after the line-up, we loaded corpses onto the wagons and led them out of the camp. This did nothing to me. It was a war of survival.

The will to live allowed me to overcome it all. Mental strength that I was not aware I had in those days, pushed me to continue, not to think about things too deeply, but to continue to live with them. A kind of defense mechanism enabled me to get through each day. Perhaps if I had thought about what awaited me, I would have realized that there was no point in living and then, all I had to do was to approach the electric fence and put my hands on the wires...

The Germans did not like the suicides because they caused power outages. Most of them were not Jewish. When a suicide was discovered, the other prisoners were punished. Once, the Germans took an entire village to Aushwitz because the residents rose up against German policy. The next morning, all the villagers killed themselves on the wires, which looked like clotheslines.

A few days after my meeting with Berl, the commander in charge of the block came to us, passing from child to child asking, "Who wants to work with potatoes?"

Out of twelve hundred children, two did not want to. One was a sick child, the other was me. "Why should I go to work?" I thought. "I have enough to eat as long as I stay close to my brother, and what's to keep me away from him?"

One thousand one hundred and ninety-eight children were sent to the gas chambers and crematorium. There were no potatoes there.

I remained.

Who was watching over me?

Before long, twelve hundred new children filled the barracks. One morning at roll call, those responsible for the block called to one of the children who was taller than all the others. They put him against the wall, put a board on his head and affixed it to the wall with a nail. The child's height was 1.7 meters.

One by one, the children were asked to pass under the board. Only those who were his height could stay alive. Other than the child, nobody was. And again, twelve

hundred and ninety-eight children made their way to the gas chambers. Again, I was almost the sole survivor, this time thanks to friends of my brother who found me a place to hide until the storm passed.

I often think about those events, when the distance of a step lay between me and death. How did I survive?

After all, I did not run. I'm not a religious person, and yet, it seems as though a divine hand was there, watching over me. I have no other way to explain how I survived.

One day a German political prisoner came to me. "Anshel, I'm a friend of your brother, Berl. I came to take you to work outside the camp."

Today I assume that the prisoner had business dealings with my brother, and through this association, I got the job. I was also tattooed with a number on my arm, which became my insurance policy. When there was a selection, I showed the Germans the number on my arm which ensured that I would survive, at least until the next selection. Those who did not have a number on their arm were considered temporary prisoners, and their days in Auschwitz were numbered.

I started working at a factory for melting metals, about 50 kilometers from the camp. My official job was to dismantle screws from broken aircraft and car parts that could be re-used, but it was not for this reason that the German prisoner arranged the work for me.

The children of Auschwitz were used as auxiliary power for the significant trading that took place behind the scenes. I had a large coat with many pockets where I stored vodka bottles and cigarette packs. The German, who also worked at the factory, gave me daily supplies and got the valuable items back from me when we returned to camp. The Germans refrained from searching the children, so the local "traders" used them as couriers.

I was not afraid of being caught. I was not afraid of anything. Often, when Allied forces attacked the area from the air, sirens were heard. If it was while we were on our way back from work, we had to remain standing in the road, bent over, with our hands up. The Germans fled to a safe place.



One day there was an alarm and we were delayed for a few hours until we could return to camp. My block waited only for me. I was the only one who went to work. Only when the last of the prisoners entered the block did the German troops enter to check it.

"Undress", I was ordered by a German soldier. I carefully removed my coat. All my thoughts were on the four cigarette packs inside. I was naked. Thirty-five lashes. I felt nothing. The main thing was that my coat was not checked. If they had found the cigarettes, I did not stand a chance.

Another time I received forty blows. This time, they ordered me to remove my coat, but I did not have to disrobe. In my pockets were four bottles of vodka. I thought only about them.

I didn't feel these forty blows, either. The bottles of vodka were intact. Vodka and cigarettes meant life. I watched over them carefully. I asked for life.

Sometimes I met the German prisoner in one of the blocks with a few of his friends, other children like me who were used as smugglers. We played with cigarettes. We threw them on the ground, like the game of pick-up sticks. If one cigarette landed on another, the pitcher would earn points. Sometimes while playing, the tobacco would be dispersed, and there were children who used to smoke it. I gave the tobacco away as gifts. The German prisoner who helped me did not exchange a word with me. At some point we slept in the same bunk; he on a berth built for two people, and I, with seven other people, on the same berth.

Berl was no longer in the camp. He was sent to a labor camp in the area of Poznan. The people he sent to watch over me did their job well.

I was lonely, but I had food and lacked for nothing. When I tell people I had it good at Auschwitz, people laugh, embarrassed. In life, everything is relative...

The end of 1944. Allied forces' aircraft dropped bombs on the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. We looked up at the sky. We hoped to see the bombs falling on the camp. We asked that they hurt the Germans, the crematoria. It did not happen.

When we started to hear the Russian cannons, they took us from Auschwitz in the direction of Mauthausen. It was a death march.





# Auschwitz- Mauthausen: Death March



## Auschwitz-Mauthausen: death march January, 1945



January frost in Poland. Snow, rain, gray skies, black days. The Russian artillery thundered and the Germans, who sought to take advantage of the Jewish labor force, urged all prisoners of Auschwitz-Birkenau out of the camp.

We walked in lines, day and night, in the bitter cold, stumbling, most of us skeletons. Those whose bodies could not make the trip, fell to the ground and were left on the road. Those who trailed behind were shot. The longer we walked, the narrower the lines became.

At night we lay on the cold road. I woke up one morning and tried to get up but could not, because my shirt was stuck to the ice on the road.

Somehow I managed to take it off. I got up, pulled it out of the ice and put it on again. My pants were stiff as cardboard. This experience apparently burned deep into my subconscious. For decades, I suffered from the cold, in winter and summer. The body remembers the injury, even when it is suppressed. Seventy years would pass before I would have a corrective experience.

One night, as we lay on both sides of the road, we heard shots. We could see the fire coming out of gun barrels, but we could not know what was happening. Later, I realized that the shots were aimed at forty-three people who tried to escape that night. A delegation from the Shabak (the Israeli General Security Services) later found a gravestone in a village that was etched with numbers. It turned out that a priest had found the bodies, buried them and placed a headstone on the grave, carving on it the numbers found on the arms of the victims. It was the only signs of identification he had for the individuals. Following the discovery of the monument, the identities of twenty-three victims were determined by the numbers.



A ceremony took place, attended by family members of the murdered, and a new monument was inaugurated, engraved with 23 names.

Until that discovery, I used to say in my lectures that we went on the death march as skeletons and not as human beings, because no one got up and ran away. Even when we noticed a partisan on the way, I did not see anyone who tried to escape from the lines to try and save his life. This is the experience I remembered. When exposed to this story, I realized that I was wrong. Apparently, there were people who tried to escape, who wanted to live.

The journey continued through villages and forests. There were even some sections where we traveled by train. A few hours of comfort for tired feet. When we crossed Czechoslovakia, there were Czechs who came to the train and gave us food. I don't remember if I managed to quell my hunger.

And again we walked. One step and then another.

Where were we going? What would happen now? I did not know. I did not think. I wanted to live. I did not think further ahead.

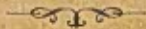
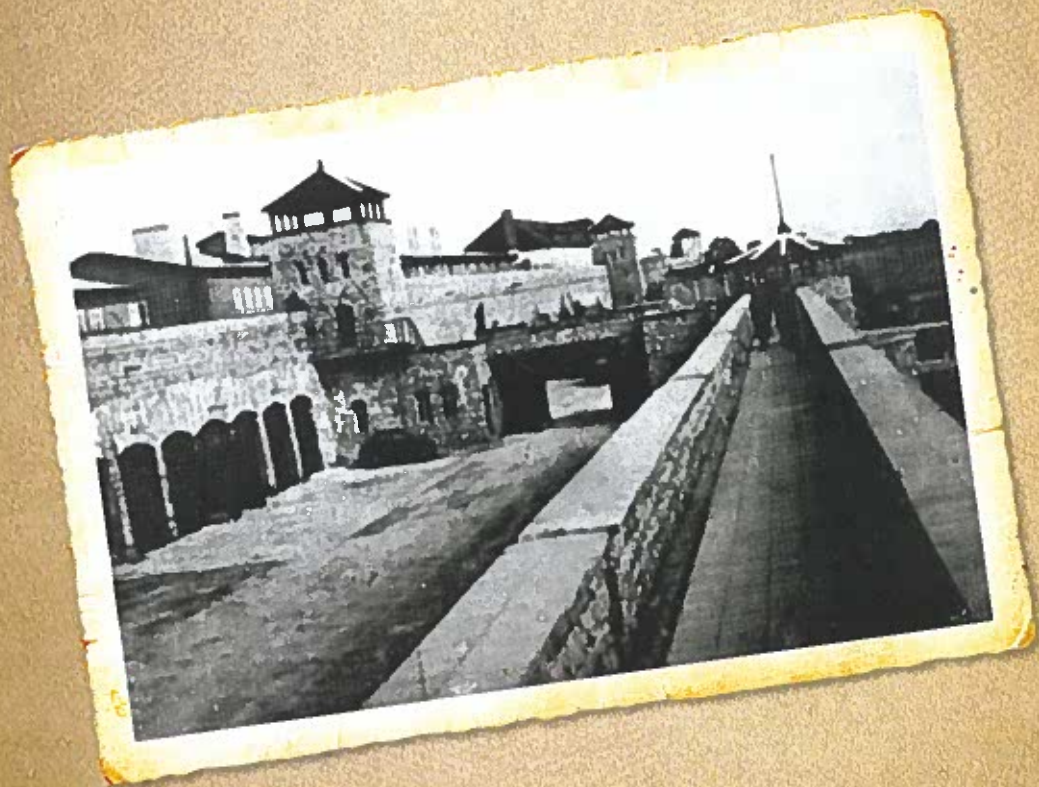
How to get through the next step. And the next. Followed by... without falling. That was my only thought.







# Mauthausen, Austria: almost giving up



## Mauthausen, Austria: almost giving up



Mauthausen was a barracks camp in Austria, where Polish and Christian prisoners were held. We Jews were divided amongst the barracks. We received a "special" role: when the Germans entered the barracks, they would stand in the middle. Polish and Russian prisoners sat around them, and we Jews were made to crawl on all fours around the Germans as they whipped us with horsewhips or kicked us with their boots.

The floor of the barracks was made of wood painted with red lacquer. Before entering the hut, we had to take off our shoes and leave them outside.

One day, a Russian prisoner stole the boots I had brought with me from Auschwitz. I cried and begged him to give me back my boots, but this did not help at all. A Polish prisoner approached me and told me to contact the person responsible for the block and explain what had happened. I thought it was probably hopeless, but I was convinced to try.

I entered the room of the man in charge, where he sat playing chess with a Russian prisoner. In tears, I explained what happened.

"Get out," he ordered.

When I left, I saw the Russian standing and laughing.

"One day I'll get you back," I said to him in his language.

The block leader, a German political prisoner, followed me out. "You? Take revenge?" he said and flicked me.

I fell to the ground. He kicked me with his boots. I stood up. He struck me with another blow and I could not get up anymore.

As punishment, he sat me down by the door, with my legs bent and my hands holding the two back legs of the chair. He told me to sit until the Germans entered the block, and then to tell them what I had said. My fate was clear.



For a moment, I no longer cared. I wanted a German soldier to arrive and for the business to end. I wanted them to finish me off, just like when we got to the Lodz ghetto and the gun was close to my neck. These were the two times when I hoped to die. I wanted to die.

A few hours passed, and I continued to sit with the legs of the chair in my hands, slipping occasionally and returning to the same position with the assistance of some of my friends.

Suddenly, the alarm sounded. God protected me once again. The Germans refrained from entering the camp during an alarm. They were afraid. If not for the alarm, I probably would not have survived.

One of the Polish prisoners came to me and suggested that I ask for forgiveness. "It will not help", I replied, but then, I convinced myself and turned to the person responsible for the block.

"Well," he replied, "Get in a line".

Later, when the Germans again made us crawl around them, I made sure to stay away from him, doing everything to avoid his attention. Again, my behavior was dictated by my desire to live.

Hungarian Jews arrived at Mauthausen, and the Germans built another tent camp to which they transferred all the Jews. Most days we walked around doing nothing.



*Barbed wire fence and guard tower, Mauthausen, Austria*

After the tent camp was filled, a German aircraft appeared in the sky and dropped bombs on it. Crowds of people were killed. Luckily, no bombs fell near me.

The scenes were tough. Among other things, I saw people eating the flesh of those killed in the bombing.

Hungarian Jews were in the majority so group leaders were selected among them who were responsible for the distribution of bread to the camp's population. We children hardly got to taste this bread because they took most of it for themselves and their relatives.

Fortunately, a German political prisoner, tall and handsome, would bring a pot full of soup for the children. He was a man of extraordinary courage. Apparently, he had connections that enabled him to perform this kindness, but I knew it was not easy for him. It was a noble and extraordinary deed. I wish I knew his name, to thank him.

One day, the thunder of Russian cannons was heard. We were taken to Gunskirchen, a camp of huts in a muddy forest, in Austrian territory. "Camp Decay", as we called the place. Many died due to the harsh conditions and food shortages.

I slept on a cot, and every morning I discovered that some of those lying next to me were no longer alive. The decline in the bunk forced me to step on "a carpet of dead." I hardly saw food. Here, too, the Hungarian group leaders received the rations, and we children went hungry.

I do not know how much time passed. One day we saw the Germans fleeing. We were in a dense forest, but we realized that we could leave.

A few hours of walking brought us to the road. American tanks appeared in front of us. Had the war ended?

*Mauthausen camp inmates during the liberation*



## Independence. Still far from freedom...



The Americans took us to a place called Hoersching, in Austria, where twenty-two of us boys lived in a German villa.

We were provided with food and clothing, but we felt that this was not enough to satisfy our needs. At night, we removed army rations from the US Army trucks. In the morning we went to the Austrian villages and exchanged them for eggs and chickens.

I would eat twelve eggs for breakfast and a chicken for lunch. For the body, it was a kind of trauma, after weeks of starvation. We felt ill, and were hospitalized. Four boys died. They survived the camps, but their bodies could not survive this radical change. After we recovered, we returned to the villa. We lived together. We went everywhere and did everything together, even going back to playing like children. For example, we took a cart and pushed it up a slope, then sat in it and slid down. Rations provided to us by the Americans, and especially those we stole from them, turned me into a certified dealer. I knew how to get along. Among other things, I sold vodka and 96 proof alcohol. I had to taste from the bottle before I sold it, and the taste was nothing special.

We received American uniforms, and were even filmed wearing them. This is actually the first picture I have of myself. I looked at myself in the picture and saw a boy of sixteen. I did not ask myself where the child was. I did not think about anything.

Not far from the villa was a US Army airport. We used to go there every afternoon. Each teenager adopted a pilot. My pilot would give me chocolate, spoiling me with delicacies. One day he offered to ask the camp commander for permission to take me with him to America. The camp commander refused. "No problem," the pilot said, "When I take off, you'll join me. I'll take you to Paris where you will accompany my brother, a pilot on the Paris -New York line, and he will take you to America." I was quite indifferent.



In the following weeks I got updates from the pilot who said that the flight to Paris was postponed due to various problems. One day, I arrived at the airport and saw the pilot waiting for a plane. "Anshel, will you go to America?" I asked myself. "I have seventeen brothers who are my family now. Do I leave them and go to a place where I do not know anyone?" I was scared. I did not go to the pilot. I was afraid if I went to him he would force me to go to America. I turned around and went back to the villa. In Hoersching there was not much to do. There was a sense of relief, and food was plentiful, but I do not remember joy. I felt a little more freedom, but it was limited. I was confused. I did not know what was going to happen. What was supposed to happen? What did I want?

Representatives of the Jewish Brigade arrived after a while. They were, among other things, locating Jewish children who had survived the death camps and bringing them to Israel. Deputies wore tags with what looked like the wings of an angel with the Star of David on them. At this point, I turned my face to Israel since there was no longer any other option for me. Not yet for ideological reasons, this was the route I had been assigned to by others.

We were smuggled from Austria to Italy in British Army trucks. These journeys were illegal. At night we approached the border and were told to maintain complete silence. We lay under the tarps, struggling to breathe quietly.

We were able to cross the border. On Italian soil we opened our tarps and immediately started singing. We were happy and relieved. We had not been caught. We arrived in Bari. On the way, I met Miriam, a young woman traveling with her mother. They put us up for a few days in what we knew was only a transit station. I met two guys who were with me at the villa, and we went out together. One of them bought me ice cream. It was the first ice cream I had eaten in years. I returned to the room where some of us who had crossed the border together were living and told Miriam happily that I had eaten ice cream. "You ate ice cream and didn't bring any to Miriam?" asked Miriam's mother. The way she said it hurt me. I was offended. I had a few new pillow cases in my pack, and did not know how they had gotten to me. I took a few of them, went out and sold them, and bought two ice creams for Miriam

and her mother. When I came back, I gave her mother one of the ice creams. "Miriam is doing laundry in the shower. You can give it to her, but I do not know if she will take it." I reached out to Miriam with the ice cream. She said "thank you", naturally. From then on, I stopped talking to her.

Later, we sat on a beach in Santa Maria, all the guys gathered around Miriam, and I, sitting on my own. One of my friends came up to me and asked, "Why is Miriam annoyed with you?" "You go ask her," I replied. "I still do not know why he will not speak to me," was Miriam's response. This was my big victory in front of the guys, proving to them that I had dumped her, and not the other way around. It was a children's story. Perhaps one of the first signs of a return to life...

From Bari we were taken by train to the village of Santa Maria. There were boys who sat on the roof of the train, so I, too, wanted to find a place on the roof, but without success. In one of the towns where the train traveled back and forth to switch tracks, a few of us got off, hoping to find a place on the roof when the train returned. But the train did not return. A US representative in the station's office called a brigade representative but because it was Friday there was not much that could be done. We realized that only on Monday could someone come and pick us up.

A Yugoslav whom we met there told us that we were sixteen miles away from Santa Maria, so we decided to start walking. "What is sixteen miles to us?" we joked. The Yugoslav joined us, and as evening began to fall, we walked and walked for several hours until it was completely dark. At this point, the Yugoslavian told us we had thirty more kilometers to go.

"Guys, I think for us it's enough, let's lie down and rest," I suggested. We lay down under a tree and fell asleep within minutes. In the morning we got up, looked at each other and burst out laughing. It turned out that we had slept on red earth, loam that now colored our faces and clothing.

We walked a few more hours, passing a home along the way where we got some water to wash our faces. We kept going until we detected the gate with the Brigade symbol. By this time, we were organized. Here, we were welcomed. We showered, ate, and later were taken to Santa Maria.



In Santa Maria, we were divided into seven groups - six groups of boys and one group of girls - all of us children. Food was plentiful, and the Brigade took care of us. Santa Maria is located in an estuary. We swam our way to the dining room. Paula Moses, who later became the wife of journalist Noah Moses, stayed with us and cared for us. She was the one who handed us our food, always with a smile because she did not understand Polish, and spoke to us in Hebrew. She distributed one spoonful and then another, asking, "Enough?" in Hebrew ("Dai" in Hebrew, "Ten" in Polish).

We kept busy doing various things by ourselves. Going to the beach was one of our pleasant pastimes. We studied Hebrew and tried to talk to each other in the language as much as possible. One day we went to the movies, a distance of ten kilometers. We took a wrong turn on our way back and walked all night. We were, of course, free, but I cannot say I felt that something good was happening. Not yet. The war was over but continued personally for me. I was sixteen, but I had lost my childhood.

The joy was gone.

It was as if my life was in the hands of others.

Although I cannot compare the trip to Auschwitz or the Lodz ghetto to traveling to Italy and Israel, nevertheless, I had the feeling that I continued to be led. They took me, without my knowing where, and without asking me where I wanted to go.

In November, 1945, about six months after I arrived in Santa Maria, four hundred children got approval to immigrate to Israel. We were the last group to receive immigration certificates from the British. We made our way to Israel on the ship, "Princess Kathleen". The trip was not easy. The sea was rough, a lot of children were sick and many vomited. I hung on. Somebody was watching over me.

## An unplanned meeting in Verona



A few years ago, I accompanied a delegation from the IDF to Poland, attended by members of the Brigade and their families. Once a year, a military expedition is sent to Poland and Italy to visit villages where Brigade soldiers who were killed in World War II are buried. The British army bury their dead where they are killed, regardless of their origin or religion. Members of the Brigade are buried in cemeteries in various places, and memorial ceremonies are held there on the anniversary of the war's end. In Verona, a city where the Nazis were conquered by the Israel Brigade after the Americans failed to do so, the municipality held a ceremony where I was invited to speak.

I told the representatives of the Brigade about the journey that my friends and I made from Austria to Italy. With me at my table was Israel's Brigade chairman, Mr. Peltz. When I finished talking, he stood up and said: "I was the one who came to you. I was a company commander. I was ordered to go to Hoersching quickly to bring a group of children from there." I was excited.

We mounted the stage together and told the story in detail. Another man stood up and said: "I was your driver."

A circle closed.





# Magdiel

## Alive once again



**IDENTITY CARD**

No. 174356/S

Name of holder ANSHEL SIERADZKI

Place of residence MAGDIEL

Place of business Magdiel

Occupation Agr. school pupil

Race Jewish

Height 5 feet 6 inches

Colour of eyes blue

Colour of hair fair

Build Normal

Special peculiarities None

Signature of issuing officer [Signature]

Appointment [Signature]

Place Tel-Aviv Date [Blank]

Office stamp hardly over photograph.

Signature of holder [Signature]



## Magdiel: alive once again



In November, 1945, I arrived in Israel. My homeland. I still could not feel. The first stop in Israel was the Atlit Detention Camp. The normal procedure took place: disinfection with DDT, a cot, some clean clothes.

A few weeks later I was sent to an agricultural education school for youth called, "Magdiel Mosinson" (Magdiel is now a neighborhood in Hod Hasharon.) The institution itself was established in 1941 and took in boys and girls like me, Holocaust survivors, most of whom came to Israel alone, without parents or families.

In the first weeks I was in a kind of shock. Suddenly, I was part of a group. We lived together. The joy came back into my life and I started to have pleasant experiences, even a girlfriend named Edith Adler.





The institution's management was aware that most of us had not studied throughout the war, and created a special study program for us in order to complete the material. I was in the eleventh grade. We studied for half the day and devoted the second half to working in various industries. Every three months we moved to another industrial experience, with the intention of gradually becoming acquainted with all branches of the agriculture institute. I worked for nine months in the economic sector, because the director liked me and requested permission for me to continue working with him.





We were a cohesive group of eighteen members. We worked together in the field, studied, laughed, and sang. The choir was directed by Mr. Stein. We felt that we had each other, which gave us a sense of security. We were not part of the other children on the moshav, and had nothing to do with them. To some extent you could say that for them, we were outcasts.

We spoke only in Hebrew, a decision we made the longer we spent in Italy. Azriel, our guide, also a Holocaust survivor from Lithuania, taught us the language. In fact, he was much more than a guide to us. He was like a father.

Some of my friends had families in the country, and sometimes I joined them when they went to visit their relatives in Tel Aviv, Bnei Brak and Givatayim. These were weekends when I had a break from school.

Those who had families also had a few pennies from their relatives. The money went for movies in Kfar Saba. We never went all together, so as not to be caught by the institution's director. In fact, we were not allowed to go out on our own.

On one occasion when I went out, and one of my friends turned to me and said: "Anshel, you should stay behind."

"I stayed behind yesterday", I insisted. "You're going at my expense," he said. I was hurt. For the first time since I came to Israel, I dared to cry.

When I returned I met a woman from the village who worked in the laundry. I told her about the humiliation I felt. "You want money? Go to the farm and offer to work on Saturdays. Then you will have money," she said.

Accepting her advice, I began to work on the farm on Saturdays from five in the morning until noon, when we had to show up for lunch at school. Work in the fields was plentiful, and now I also had money. My friends saw that it was good and also began to work. Slowly, almost everyone would do as I did.

The work was certainly an experience, but I figured I would never be a farmer. Why? Because the farmer had get up at five in the morning to work with me, and paid me eighty cents a day. He gave his regular employee, who worked for him the rest of the week, a dollar a day, which means he saved 20 cents on me when I worked for him on Saturdays. I thought to myself, if a farmer has to get up at five in the morning on Saturdays, I do not want to be a farmer.

For the first time in years, I felt human again. Alive. Things were good. The school was like home to me.

Several members of the group received personal letters from their families. Two of them also received invitations to travel to the United States. In those days I went back to thinking about my parents and my brothers. I thought to myself, "What if I find family and they want to invite me to the United States or elsewhere?"



*A trip to the Sea of Galilee*



I remembered the anti-Semitic incident when a Polish policeman called us "dirty Jews", and it was then I realized that my journey from childhood in Zdunska Wola was over. I realized that I belong here. In Israel. It was clear to me that I would stay, doing everything possible to help build the country. My country.

I started to look for remnants of my family. I remembered that in the ghetto we received packages from my mother's sister in Argentina, so I began looking there. Unfortunately, my search did not produce results.

I listened regularly to the radio program, "Search for Relatives", that was broadcast every day at noon. Many of the immigrants who arrived after the war listened to this program daily, hoping to find their loved ones. I did not find anyone. I believed that everyone had perished.

I did not think about the past. I concentrated on the present. Emboldened, I dared to think about the future.

After graduation, we were committed to enlisting for a year or two in the Haganah or the Palmach. I joined the Haganah and moved to Kibbutz Ayelet HaShachar. This time it was my choice. For the first time in my life.



# In the Ranks of the Haganah



## In the ranks of the Haganah



Kibbutz Ayelet HaShahar served as a training camp for the Haganah. For two weeks we trained, learning the secrets of fighting, and for another two weeks we worked in various industries in order to finance ourselves.

Here, too, I belonged to a group of friends. I had no other home and did not think about another one. The regional commander of the Haganah made sure that most of our physical needs were met. Who thought of other things?

Weekends were divided between Ayelet HaShachar and Magdiel, where I had a girlfriend who was in the age group below mine.



*Tent housing*

A new settlement near Yesod Hama'ale arose quietly on the ground, similar to the settlements of Homa and Migdal, and we joined in at night to help build it.

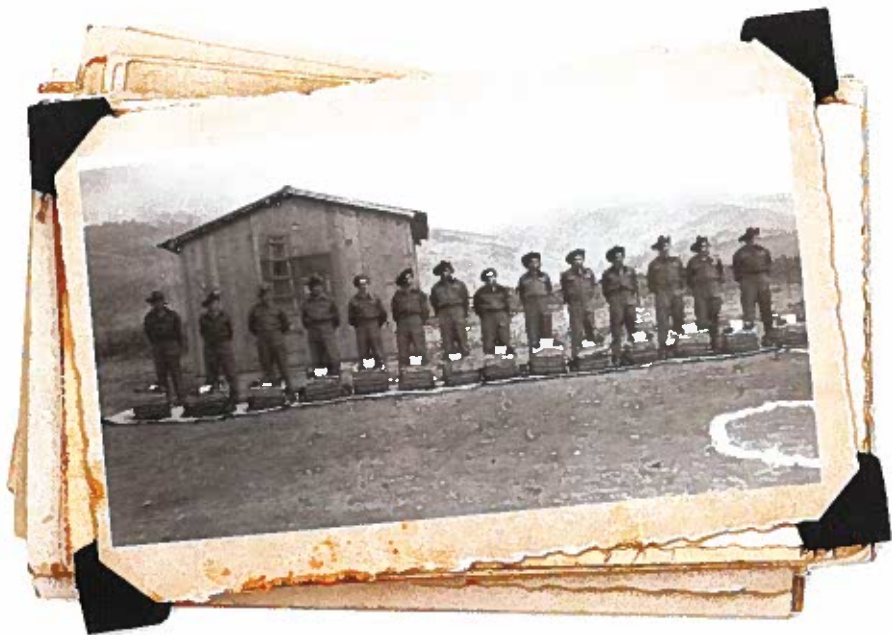


The Haganah decided to train us as Jewish watchmen in the British police so we were sent to a children's village near Afula which was, in those days, the Police Academy of the British police. After a series of month-long training exercises, we became watchmen.

The watchmen were the Jewish Settlement Police, and worked as part of the British police and the Jewish Agency, an initiative that operated from 1936-1939 until the establishment of the state, defending the Jewish settlements, the various factories and transport routes against harassment by Arab gangs. Watchmen were considered extra policemen, that is, members of the British police auxiliary force, who were added because of the lack of manpower with the notion that this might lead to more quiet in the country. In fact, we were actually commanded by the Haganah, who used the forces and their weapons in its various defense and settlement activities.



*Watchmen securing convoys*



We moved to Kibbutz Dan where we worked for two weeks, one week doing various tasks as watchmen, and one week of training.

I worked a lot in the fields. I would wake up in the morning, go to the dining room, and look at the list to see which job I'd been assigned, enter the dining room, drink a cup of tea with bread and jam, and go to work. I would go to the stable, take out the horse and harness it to the wagon, attach the plow and head off to plow or perform other agricultural tasks. I started work at six-thirty in the morning. At nine o'clock the bell rang announcing breakfast, after which I would harness the horse to the wagon again and return to plowing. At noon it was the same procedure. At exactly twelve o'clock it was time for lunch.

The work was monotonous and rather dull.

"Anshel, tell me, what's the difference between you and the horse?" I asked myself one day.

You do not have to think; the horse is here, I'm here. I had trouble with the fact that it took away any thoughts. In those days, I decided that I would not be a kibbutznik.



I was a watchman for seven months or so. It was an interesting period, when I felt for the first time that I shared in the protection of my country. When I was at Magdiel I made the decision to do my best to defend my homeland, and now I had the opportunity to do so.

We had legal weapons, and at night we kept watch over the Jewish settlements and fish ponds of Kibbutz Dan. In 1947, Syria took occupation of Tel al-Qadi (Tel Dan). At dawn, we climbed the hill and took it back, taking the Syrian flag with us. It is interesting that this action is not documented in the history books.



We escorted convoys throughout the Galilee. On one of these trips, in the area of Biriya and Ein Zeitoun, near Safed, an Arab came out and started shooting at the convoy. Palmach troops with us who carried automatic weapons, shot in the direction of the source of fire (Palmachniks were not allowed to use weapons). One of the Arabs absorbed nine bullets in the legs. The British came to us in Biriya and asked who had fired.

"We all fired," we responded. "We were watchmen, and we all fired." In fact none of us had. The British checked our guns, looking for the smell of gunpowder. They took us to Safed and confiscated our weapons. Thus, we earned a few days off, as we could not escort convoys without weapons. A few days later, the guns were returned to us and we returned to full service.



We also had hand grenades, which were banned for use. On the 29th of November, after the UN resolution ending the British Mandate and the establishment of the State, we traveled from Dan towards Rosh Pina. Near the Arab village of Salha, which no longer exists today, the Arabs erected a barrier and threw stones at us. Shlomo, our platoon commander, was hit in the head. We jumped out of the truck, got on the ground and responded with live fire. The British police took us to the police station in Halsá (today Kiryat Shmona) to interrogate us. We knew that the British must not discover the grenades. Our friend, Jonah Cohen, from Yesod Hama'aleh, a truck driver, arrived at the police station and was able to quickly take our grenades before the British did a body search on us.

In another incident, Yitzhak Silberberg, one of our members, jumped out of the truck to open a barrier at a checkpoint erected by the Arabs to stop the convoy of supply trucks and public transports. We opened fire on the Arabs who had put up the barrier, and as soon as Isaac opened the checkpoint, we jumped into the trucks and drove off. Isaac ran after the truck and finally caught up with us, about five kilometers away, having taken a bullet to the head. I was in the last truck when Isaac reached it, removed his hat and asked me, "Is my head ok?" His ranger's cap was perforated, but miraculously, the bullet had not touched his head.

Another event in which I took part was an exciting experience for me, personally. One Sunday, the security officer from the village of Nachalim, located at that time in the Upper Galilee near Beit Hillel, went next door to Kfar Salha to buy cigarettes. Some Arabs attacked and almost killed him until he finally remembered that he had a gun, took it out and killed one of the attackers. The Haganah was worried that the Arabs would take revenge on the residents of Nachalim so they sent us, the watchmen, as reinforcements. We were hosted and fed by the families. "Anshel, there is a family in this village from Zdunska Wola. Maybe you want to meet them?" asked the father of the family where I was staying, after I told him where I came from.

I did not initiate efforts to search for my family, because in these situations I was always asked how I stayed alive while their family members had not, and I found myself apologizing for surviving. Once again, I politely declined. We stayed in



Nachalim for about a week, and one day, I was in the yard with my host when Moshe Guterman arrived, the man who had come to Israel from my childhood home. My host introduced us. Moshe, who was delighted to see me, invited me to his house. I knew Chaya, his wife, who of course wanted to know about my family, and they talked about their families. It turned out that Chaya was a relative of my father's. I remembered when they left Poland, although I was a little boy at the time. I had found the only family I had in the country. Chaya and Moshe led a religious life, and I later kept in touch with them and went to their home for vacations. When Chaya gave birth to her son, Arileh, I accompanied her, as a watchman, to the hospital in Tiberias. Later, the village was evacuated and all its inhabitants were transferred to Petah Tikva. The name, Nachalim, didn't change.

Those were beautiful days at Kibbutz Dan. I had a girlfriend named Alina, a new immigrant, and we were a cohesive group, "the watchmen of Kibbutz Dan", detached from the kibbutz members. We ran around, bathed in the Dan River in summer and winter, and laughed a lot. We patrolled from Ma'ayan Baruch to Kfar Szold, and crossed the Jordan River on foot.



We worked in the fish ponds, sometimes taking fish and cooking them in a large tin of oil under the guise of doing laundry (because the kibbutz members did not allow us to fish from the ponds). We made meals fit for kings.

Although we worked for two weeks in various industries, the kibbutzniks felt that we were taking advantage of them, especially since we took fish and sometimes a chicken from the coops. We were considered "trouble-makers".

We drove to nearby Kibbutz Dafna to buy cookies and other treats, sometimes bringing groceries from Tiberias. I opened a kind of kiosk for the guys. I had a closet where I always kept cookies and cigarettes. I do not remember how I started this temporary kiosk, nor how I had the money to start buying supplies. I'm pretty sure it was not just a business, because I sold everything without profit. It was a "social business", a way to give treats to my friends.

In early 1948, an infantry detachment began to arrive. They were field soldiers, recruits of the future army, and because we were very familiar with the area, we toured with them at night. During the day we continued to escort convoys, and were the only ones who were officially able to bear arms to protect the convoys. I was busy and the days passed quickly.

It was clear that war was only a matter of time...



*Newspaper headline: A Jewish state declared*



# Enlisted, but not a soldier



## Enlisted, but not a soldier



I remember well the UN resolution establishing the state. We were on Kibbutz Dan, listening to the radio, and we were celebrating. I had no time to stop and think about myself and the way I made it from the ghetto and Auschwitz to Israel, because I lived in a group and I adjusted to it.

Immediately after the announcement, with the outbreak of the War of Independence, a watchman by the name of Marcel Tobias took us under his wing. He was a military man through and through, and we went out to fight. We were actually a special unit, still not attached to any regiment. We wandered wherever we were needed. In Marcel's armored car we went, for example, to Mishmar HaYarden. There were recruits there who had fled, fearing the fighting, and we were tasked with bringing them back to the battlefield. When the alarm sounded, the bus and truck drivers would leave their vehicles on the road and run away. I would drive the vehicles to parking lots, without a driver's license and without fear.



"Anshel, come work with me," Severin Horowitz, a Polish volunteer and a senior in the military hierarchy at the time, said to me. I told him that I belong to Marcel's watchmen and refused his offer. Very quickly, ranks were being handed out to members of the emerging military. Severin got the rank of captain, accepted the role and suggested that I receive the rank of lieutenant.



Marcel was married and Poptz'ik, his pregnant wife lived in Rosh Pina. In the evenings I could be on the roof with a friend and he would yell at me, "Anshel, get me a car, we're going to Poptz'ik's". I would take the division commander's vehicle, travel with him to see his wife in Rosh Pina, and return two hours later to the police station in Rosh Pina.

When Poptz'ik was about to give birth, we took a car and drove her to the hospital in Tiberias, and after the delivery we took her back to Rosh Pina.

We were attached to Battalion 91 and our home base moved to a castle near Haifa.

We rented a studio apartment for Poptz'ik and the baby in the Krayot. The war was in full swing, but Poptz'ik said she was not ready to go to the Krayot until we went to Rosh Pina to pick up the baby's belongings. I promised her we'd go on another occasion, explaining that we had no time and were overcome with work. Every time I asked Marcel for permission to travel to the Krayot, he came back and said, "No time". Finally, I decided to take a truck and go with Poptz'ik to Rosh Pina. When I returned, Marcel stood at the gate. "Anshel, where have you been?" he asked. "Rosh Pina", I said and got a slap. "Go to jail," he said angrily.

I spent a day in prison from morning until night, until my friends, some of whom were guards there, took me to see a movie in the camp. After the movie, I was sent to trial. The sergeant who brought me to trial was also my friend. I took left-right strides into the room, with open shoes on. Marcel admonished the sergeant. "Bring him in like a soldier," he said. I went in again, and then again, and then shouted, "What kind of place is this, holding a trial at midnight?" The sergeant was ordered to return me to prison.

The next day Poptz'ik came to camp and asked to see me. Marcel sent one of the sergeants to get me. I told him that I was a prisoner and could not leave. Marcel came himself and took me to meet Poptz'ik. This brought the affair to an end.

We were sent as reinforcements to the Fallujah pocket (now the Plugot Junction area), and prepared to fight in the orchards of Kibbutz Givat Brenner. I was given responsibility for a group of immigrants from Hungary, although none of them understood Hebrew or Yiddish. I refused to go out with them to fight, and Marcel subsequently sent me to prison in Givat Brenner. A day or two later, Severin came to visit me and Marcel took me out of jail. I was given another group, and together with them, I fought in the Fallujah pocket against the Egyptian forces.

Once again, it was probably a higher power that kept me safe.



From the base in Tira we returned to the military camp near Afula, where Unit 9 was disbanded. I was annexed to the 7th Division and moved to Senjin, division headquarters near Nahariya.

In Senjin they had trouble finding me a job. One day, the camp commander called me in and said: "I have a deficit of one hundred and fifty pounds in the canteen, maybe you can help me?" I said, "What's the problem?", and suggested that we make sandwiches in the kitchen, sell them and eliminate the debt. It worked. When the paymaster responsible for salaries was released from division headquarters, I was asked to replace him.

All I had to do was distribute salary payments, work that took two hours a month, with a clerk to assist me. So I was able to go out for fun every night, sometimes dancing in Nahariya, where I first met Chaya, who eventually became my wife. Chaya was from Jerusalem, and in those days was to undergo leg surgery at Rambam Hospital in Haifa. While preparing for surgery there was a siren and all non-urgent patients were sent home, Chaya among them. Her mother decided to take her for a few days' holiday in the seaside resort of Nahariya. Chaya came out to spend the evening in "Cafe Ginati", where we first met.

In fact, a friend of mine actually had his eye on Chaya. She seemed too young for me, being three years younger. I was twenty-one and she was eighteen. It would take months until we met again.

After Senjin we moved to Julis, and from there we often used to get away to Tel Aviv to have fun. I would take army money and lend it to those who needed. To those who had no money for a movie, I lent fifty pounds. To others who needed something else, I gave them money. They all paid me back. In fact, only one "yekke" has yet to return my fifty pounds.

Weekends in the camp were not easy for me. We would go for "afters" in Haifa. When I saw a dog on the street, I burst into tears. This dog must have a home, yet I have nothing, I thought. Many of the watchmen went home to their families, and I was left alone. Yet I never imagined that one day I would create my own family.

I was my own master, and I had no bosses. In fact, when I felt I was really in the army, I asked to be released.



I was invited to the general sergeants' meeting when the camp commander declared in his opening remarks, "The subject is Saturday duty". I got up and said, "What am I doing here? I will not be on Saturday duty". In response, the camp commander said, "You will be on duty this Saturday". I'd never before done these shifts. I was a free man. Why would I suddenly start now doing them now?

On Sunday, the fifteenth of February, I went to the office of the Personnel Directorate and met Uri Joffe, head of the directorate, whom I knew as a field soldier back when he came to us at Dan. I asked him to arrange a meeting for me with Babaleh, who had been our watchmen commander until he became the operations officer for the Northern Command. "What do you need him for?" asked Uri. "I joined the army twice," I explained, "once in February, 1948 and again in May, 1948. I even have two serial numbers: 107765 and 369744. I need confirmation of this in order to be released."

"I can give you permission," said Uri, and a moment later gave me a release order dated February 1, 1950.

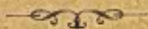
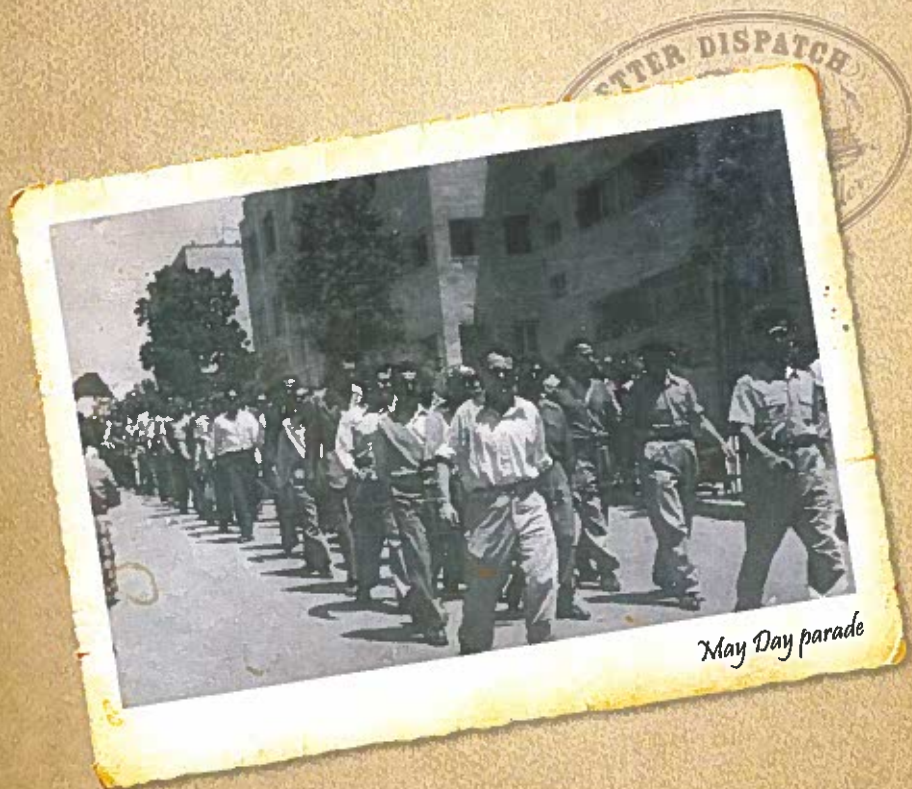
I returned to camp with the order, and Joe Eisen, the camp's commanding officer, offered to promote me to the rank of officer without taking an officers' course, if only I would continue my service, but I told him that I was finished with the army, once I realized I was really in the army.

"Anshel, where will you go? You do not have a family, you do not have anyone," Joe tried to convince me.

"Until now I thought I was a free man," I said. "I realized that I wasn't when I was called to Saturday duty. Tomorrow there could be another commander who doesn't know any better, who will give me other tasks that don't suit me."

I stayed at the base another two weeks and then was released. I had no idea where I was headed. Still, I trusted in myself that I would get by.

# First steps as a civilian



## First steps as a civilian



The day of my release was one of the snowiest days of the winter of 1950. The same day, I decided to go to Jerusalem. I knew that the Eidelkind family lived there, distant relatives of mine (the wife was a distant relative whom I had met at Chaya and Moshe Guterman's home in Nachalim. They had a storage room in their home that we emptied, and there I stayed. I had no other home and no other relatives.

What does a person do who wants to continue existing? I thought about it and concluded that I needed to learn a trade. An occupation gives one a foundation in life. I started looking for work. Someone tried to get me a job in the post office, but I did not want to be a clerk. Then I was offered shift work at Egged, but I was looking for something more organized - eight hours per day. I wanted to study.

I applied for a course to learn about mechanical frames through a program for retraining released veterans at the "ORT" school.

I studied in the mornings and worked in the afternoons as the director of housekeeping at a neighborhood center for religious women in Baka'h, on Bethlehem Road. For a time, I was also responsible for border security for the Ministry of Defense, for the area from the Zion Gate to the Mandelbaum Gate, a border that was held by citizens and not by the military.

On Fridays I played cards with friends until 2:00 a.m. and then would immediately take a bike ride along the border and back. That was my job.

Once we had to knock down the wall of the neighborhood center for girls. I hired a professional contractor who asked for two hundred pounds for the work. I refused to pay that much for the three hours of work he had done. When he heard my opinion, he said, "I see you understand the profession. Come work for me." I explained that I was learning a profession and did not want to leave in the middle.

He insisted, trying steadily for five months to convince me, but I continued to resist. When I finished my education, I was hired by IMI, Israel Military Industries. The contractor was still trying to convince me to join him. "Anshel," he told me, "One day you will work for me." He asked me how much I make, and I said thirty-seven pounds a month. He offered to pay me eighty-five pounds a month, but I did not leave the military industry. Perhaps I could have been a big contractor, but I preferred to continue my work. Working at IMI was, for me, a way of contributing to the state, and this was important to me.

## Chaya and I



On the day that I arrived in Jerusalem, I met Chaya again. I went to town on the last bus that arrived there before the roads were blocked, following the snow. Chaya says that I was standing alone in snowy Zion Square. "What are you doing here?" she asked me as she came out of the seminar she attended. I told her I had been released from the army and I had come to town, and she gave me her address.

I waited. I bided my time until I went to visit her at home. Chaya seemed too beautiful, elegant and intelligent for me. In the meantime, I had other girlfriends. After I was hired by IMI and started making money, I realized that I could afford to go out with a girl like Chaya.

I went to her home and told her that I hadn't gotten there until this moment because I had no money. She was hurt. "Because of money?" she said.



Meanwhile, Chaya had graduated from the seminar and had begun working in Kfar Maas. I went often to visit her there, and our friendship blossomed.

In my eyes, Chaya was gorgeous. I loved her. Once, we went to a party and Chaya got angry with me for dancing with one of her friends who was very short and, according to Chaya, "came up to my belt". She said angrily, "If only you'll marry her." "I'll marry you," I replied.

When we wanted to get married, Chaya's mother, a cooking teacher and director of the kitchen that prepared meals for educational institutions in Jerusalem, objected.



She wanted a man of Hungarian origin for her daughter. In the same breath she told me that Chaya did not know how to do anything in the home. In response I said, "I know how to cook. I'll take the kitchen on as my responsibility". "Chaya", she said in a private conversation, "You have no family, and he has no family so you will raise your children in isolation, just as I raised you in isolation." Her parents were divorced and her mother felt alone, without family. It did not bother Chaya. "I dreamed of a blond man with blue eyes....and it was magic. Asher's blue eyes always spoke to me. His warm gaze radiated a kindness that fascinated me," she recalls. "I knew he had survived the Holocaust and was alone in the world, but beyond that I knew nothing. In those days I also did not understand the significance of the Holocaust."

One day I was sitting in Chaya's mother's living room and she offered me coffee. I drank the whole cup and only afterwards, when others drank theirs, did it turn out that there was salt in it, instead of sugar. It was not intentional, but I passed another test in which I proved that I am not a complainer. I was approved as the bridegroom. Eventually Chaya told me that her mother loved me very much...

I bought a ring, but I lost it and had to borrow twenty pounds to buy a new one. We were married on the twenty-second of March, 1953 at Cafe Rehavia. I was thrilled. I wasn't alone anymore!

We got our first apartment from IMI. The factory had buildings in the Sheikh Badr neighborhood, where we were given a room. Before moving in, I had to empty it of all sorts of weapons that had been left in it, taking them to a darkened hut outside. I had almost finished clearing the room, and only one Davidka shell remained. I took it into the hut in complete darkness and suddenly heard an explosion under my foot. It turned out that I had stepped on a detonator, a device that ignites the explosive shell. I was convinced I had lost my leg. I called Eliezer, the guard who stood outside, "There goes my leg," I said. He put me in the empty room, laid me on the floor, took off my shoe and sock and everything was intact... a miracle. I got up and told the guard, who also lived in the building, that we would not be neighbors.



"We don't want this apartment," I told Chaya. "Grenades and explosives are rolling around outside and I'm scared. Besides, my boss lives upstairs, and if I ever want to pretend I'm sick, I won't be able to".

Chaya didn't buy the story, realizing that I wasn't telling the truth. "Tell me what really happened," she asked. I told her the truth.

One of our friends left his apartment in Jerusalem for the benefits of life on a kibbutz. He had an apartment in the Mamila neighborhood and we got it through the key money program. In this apartment our first son was born, Shmuel Zvi, or "Tziki". We named him after my father.

The Mamila apartment was in a firing zone. We heard shots almost every night and had to run with little Tziki in our arms through Independence Park and the Muslim cemetery, to Chaya's mother's house. After a year, we concluded that this apartment was not suitable for us.

I found an apartment in the German Colony with three huge rooms on a large plot. I paid two hundred pounds in key money for it. The house was at the end of the street, very close to the Arab town of Beit Safafa. When Chaya arrived and saw the location she refused to move in. We lost the two hundred pounds (a very high sum in those days) and we canceled the deal.

We rented an apartment in the Bukharan neighborhood - two tiny rooms and a kitchen. The rent was higher than the apartment in the German Colony. We shared a yard with all the tenants in the building, and all the tenants took turns washing the courtyard. Once, after fulfilling my duty of washing the yard, a neighbor approached me and said: "Anshel, I suggest you stop washing the porch because soon my wife will demand it from me." I told him that nothing would happen if he did it, and he said: "Anshel, I'm serious." "So am I," I replied. "Very soon you will leave this apartment," the neighbor threatened. Indeed, at some point the neighbors began harassing our child and after six months, we had no choice but to leave.

We lived in a few more apartments until we were settled in our last one in Ramat Beit Hakerem.

In one of the apartments where we lived, on Zev Chaclai Street in the Bayit V'gan neighborhood, I had a heart attack. Chaya alerted Magen David Adom and the paramedics had to tie me to a stretcher to get me down the stairs. The sight broke Chaya's heart. For eight years, she had been a volunteer with Magen David Adom and an ambulance driver who often took people from their homes bound on stretchers. But when she saw me tied down, she couldn't stand the sight.

"Asher was still in the hospital when I decided to purchase a first floor apartment in Ramat Beit Hakerem," she says. "I brought the plan to the hospital and told him, "We're moving. You will never be tied to a stretcher again. I bought an apartment". This wonderful apartment was paradise for us. I lovingly cultivated the garden adjacent to it, but my many trips abroad gave Chaya a sense of insecurity. "I was afraid to be alone, especially at night. I slept in my clothes to be ready to flee if thieves came," she said. In those days, a plan was established to build a home for assisted living, "Achuzat Beit Hakerem". We were its first tenants.





# Chaya's story

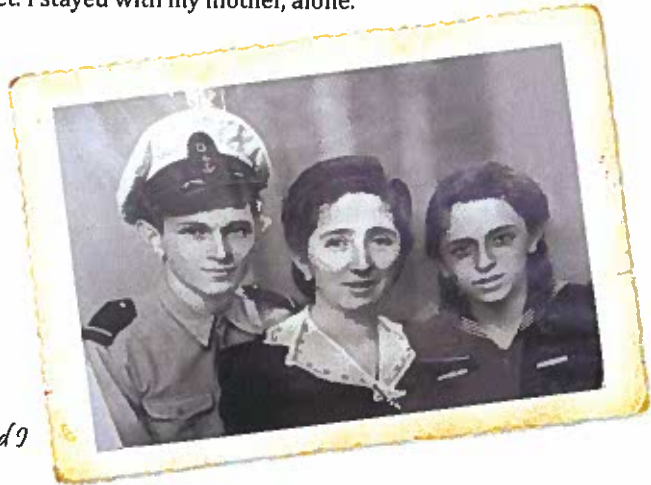


## Chaya's story



Chaya says...

"I was born in Jerusalem, a second generation Jerusalemite. My father, Moshe, of the Adler family, came from Hungary. My mother, Sarah, from the Rotter family, arrived in Israel as a pioneer from Transylvania in the 1920s. When all her friends went to a kibbutz, she remained in Jerusalem. I am the youngest daughter in my family. My older brother, Joseph, the namesake of my second son, studied at the maritime school in Haifa. He was supposed to go to England to study. He was being sent by the Israel Maritime League, but two weeks before he was supposed to leave, he drowned in the Kinneret. I stayed with my mother, alone.



*My mother (center), my brother Yossi (Joseph) and I*

When I got older, I worked as a kindergarten teacher, although I wanted to be a beautician. The world of beauty always attracted me, but my mother, a Hungarian scholar, did not want a beautician for a daughter. When I wanted to go to nursing school, I was not accepted. I was told that because of my physical condition I would not be able to function as a nurse, which required a lot of walking.



My foot problem is a souvenir I carry from a Purim party in the second grade, circa 1938. I participated in a dance, dressed up as the queen of flowers, and then woke up crying in the middle of the night, with severe leg pain. It was discovered I had an inflammation in the bone marrow. Israeli doctors did not know what to do about it. There were three children with life-threatening illnesses, and one of them had his leg cut off. They also wanted to amputate my leg, but my mother announced that they would not do this to her daughter. She decided to go with me to the city of Cluj, in Romania, where she knew a doctor with whom she had previously been involved, but who had not been willing to go with her to Israel, even though he was willing to convert for her.

One day we appeared at the hospital, without informing him we were coming. My mother talked to the nurse, who went in to see the doctor. The door remained open while the doctor examined the file. "Where has this girl come from?" we heard the doctor ask. "Palestine," the nurse replied.

"She must be a Jew, so let her die," he said.

My mom heard it and went into the room, shocked. A sharp altercation developed between her and the doctor about the "Jewish girl". I will never forget it.

We left the hospital and went to the Jewish hospital, where they took me in.

While I was in the hospital, my mother took my brother, who was 11 years old, to a lecture by Ze'ev Jabotinsky. In those days, Jabotinsky went to one Jewish community after another, calling for the Jews to immigrate to Israel because "the earth is burning."

Who listened to him? Nobody. Perhaps a few individuals.

Jabotinsky heard my mother and my brother speaking Hebrew to each other. "What is a Jewish boy doing in the diaspora?" he asked my mother. She told him about me. "Get the girl from the hospital and go home," he said.

That day, my mother took me from the hospital. It was just before the war broke out. In the streets, the mood was grim. Jabotinsky was like a prophet for us.

From the hospital in Cluj we went to Costantza, a Romanian port city, where we stayed in an apartment belonging to an acquaintance of my mother's. We waited for a ship to sail to Israel.

One night my mother woke us with a start: "Quickly! There's a ship!" We grabbed the few items we had and went to the port. The ship was designed for transporting poultry, and we were given a small room. We reached the port of Jaffa on 01.09.1939. It was the day on which Hitler invaded Poland.

Mother accompanied my every step. Take my wedding to Asher, for example. The wedding took place in the poshest place in Jerusalem, "Cafe Rehavia". Everyone wanted to get married there, but not all of them managed it. But for the daughter of Mrs. Adler, yes. There was nothing that my mother wanted for her daughter that she did not achieve.

Asher, in turn, was mischievous, very optimistic, and always believed that things would be fine. There were many instances when I did not understand him. For example, after years in the country, he did not have pajamas. I bought him a pair of light blue pajamas that matched his eyes, with stripes. He never once wore them, and only years did I realize why. Such pajamas he wore at Auschwitz. Of course, he never told me.

Even after I learned to cook many special dishes, Asher always preferred to eat only "laundered" (boiled) chicken, and noodle soup. I hated it until I realized it was his connection to his mother. After all, he had left home with nothing. No picture, no candle holder, nothing that characterized his family. What was left was the memory of the foods his mother cooked. Only a few years ago did I suddenly realize this, after years of arguments that we could have avoided"...

# The Israeli Military Industry family



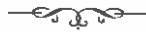
## The Israeli Military Industry family



I worked at IMI from 1957 to 1998. It was my first job and my last. I started as a professional operator and very quickly was appointed as shift manager. I was the first in the country to operate metal processing machines and other automatic machinery.



*Membership card of the Land of Israel Workers Party.*



Gradually I ascended the ladder. I became a department manager and production manager, deputy plant manager, safety manager and in recent years ran the industrial high school where we implemented a four-year training format. I turned this school into one of the best professional schools in Jerusalem.



הסתדרות הכללית של העובדים בישראל

מועצת פועלי ירושלים

למר אשר אודי  
מנהל בית הספר תע"ש

מזכרת מטקס סיום שנת  
הלימודים בתע"ש, 12.7.83.

הוקרה

10/1 הרצל

מוזכר המועצה



During these years I took on some educational challenges in the belief that I could help and support boys and girls in need. For example, I had a very clever student who was on the verge of expulsion. The social worker called and told me he was part of a gang of poultry thieves. He was absent from school for a week and was discovered to have spent that time in prison.



When I met the boy, I made him swear to completely sever his connection with the gang. "Anshel," he said, "I'll do whatever you say." I took him on as a personal project, convinced everyone he should remain in school, and later he graduated with honors.

We absorbed fourteen of "Eitan's (Rafal Eitan's) boys" into the school. When I went to meet them, the school principal told me, "These are criminals. Nothing will work with them." They were given all kinds of roles at the factory. Five or six of them came to my department. I noticed that one of them worked like a demon. One day I came to the factory and was told that he was absent. He had been sent to prison. I said I wanted to visit him, and the officer in charge of the team told me he was a criminal. "Nothing will help," he insisted.

I insisted on visiting the boy, and he told me about the events of the weekend which led to his arrest. "Look, Anshel," he said, "On Friday, everyone went on vacation, so I got on the train. I went to Haifa, then back to Tel Aviv and then back to Haifa, but

then the train stopped. I got a ride back to the soldier's house in Jerusalem, but there was no one there so I broke down. I "took" (e.g., stole) a jeep and went to Bat Yam. At the entrance to the city, the first policeman who saw me stopped me and sent me to prison. "

I appeared at the boy's trial and explained to the judge that this was a person who felt better in prison than in normal society. "I have a feeling that this boy can be rehabilitated", I said, "therefore he should be punished, but do not arrest him." I asked the judge for a trial period of one year. The boy returned to the factory. I made sure he was regularly hosted on weekends by another employee, a farm owner on Moshav Sho'eva, in order for him to avoid having to search for a place to stay. The trial period was successful.

He continued to work at the factory after his release from the army. When he went for reserve duty he was shaking with fear. "Do whatever they say," I warned him. I was relieved when he returned. Later, he married, and they had a little girl. I heard that he wanted a divorce. I arrived at his home, and his wife claimed he hit her. I warned him again. He stopped beating her, but they divorced and he later remarried. "Anshel," he told me one day, "If you tell me to jump off the roof, I'll jump." I get much satisfaction from this story. I felt that I had saved a person; I gave him a chance to rebuild his life, a new life. I was a significant figure in his life, and I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say that my words were the words of God for him. Today he has three children, and is a hard-working taxi driver who tells his passengers about me.

Every year on Holocaust Remembrance Day, I held a ceremony with my students in memory of the six million. I never told my story. I did not tell people what I went through. These were years in which I kept it all inside of me. I did not talk because it is not easy to talk about. It means re-living the story. It is not easy to live the story every day. I have not forgotten and I was not ashamed. I just did not speak. In those days I had more important tasks, such as work and family. At least, that is what I thought.



At the age of sixty, I retired, despite the CEO of IMI telling me he had another role for me. I decided I wanted to leave on two legs rather than four. I was able to work for forty years, without even once feeling that I had no desire to go to work. I progressed step by step up the ladder, until I got to senior management levels. Even after retirement, the work never stopped.

IMI was actually my first family. My wedding guests were all employees of IMI. My character witnesses in front of Chaya's mother were the plant manager and the chief engineer. She turned to them to get their opinions of me.

I am still in contact with the people at IMI, my secretary makes sure to send me greetings on every holiday, and I am still invited to celebrations and events. I serve as chairman of the military industry retirees in Jerusalem. Family always remains family.



*IMI employees Purim party*

## Establishing a family

Parallel to the developments in my professional career, Chaya and I started our family and brought three children into the world: Shmuel Zvi (Tziki), Joseph (Yossi) and Sarit. The children are my biggest victory. When Tziki was born I was overwhelmed with emotion. I fainted at his bris and again at his Bar Mitzvah.

Tziki's Bar Mitzvah was probably the most exciting event in my life. I had not had a Bar Mitzvah, which was amended at my grandson Gev's Bar Mitzvah. Tziki bought me a prayer shawl and phylacteries and, at the Western Wall, at the age of 70, I put on tefillin for the first time.



*Tziki's bris,  
with Moshe Baram*



When we arrived from the hospital with Tziki, I had him in my arms and was afraid to move. I had never held a baby in my arms. I chose to be a father who was very involved in his children's lives. I bathed them, fed them and enjoyed just watching them eat. Occasionally a feeling of great victory arose in me. After all I went through, I had a family here that I could feed with my own hands. A family of my own.



*Chaya and Tziki*

As they grew older, the children were exuberant and very active. Sometimes this caused problems with teachers at school. I was tough on them, and a strict disciplinarian. I always took the teacher's side, despite Chaya's defense of the children. That finished the first time I saw our children's friends come to our house to copy our children's homework. Until then, when we attended parent- teacher conferences, the parents of the other kids praised the diligence of their children, while I complained that my children were not doing enough. I realized that if teachers are told that a child is diligent, they believed it, and vice versa. After that, I

stopped complaining. I realized that my children were fine, and decided to stand by them, even if, in my heart, I thought they were not doing enough...

On Saturdays I would take the children to visit Chaya's mother, their only grandmother. When she died, we bought a car and loaded it with food on Saturday mornings and left the city. At the Nachshon junction I would ask Chaya if she wanted to continue straight, to Tel Aviv and the north, or go left towards Masmiah and the south. Our friends had families to go to on Saturdays, we did not, so we went on trips.

The needs of the children were our top priority. I decided that my surname was deficient, and it shouldn't be deficient for them. When Tziki went to kindergarten, we were still in a period of scarcity, after years of austerity. Fruits and vegetables were very expensive. Still, there were children who came to kindergarten with apples, bananas, and other fruits that were considered 'luxuries'. When I heard that, I went and bought those fruits, and we kept them at home. We did not touch them. We knew that these fruits were for Tziki to take to kindergarten. It took a major effort to find these fruits. It is hard to believe today, when they are all so easily available, in abundance.

Our kids were disciplined and we were very devoted and rigorous parents. For example, when we lived on Koresh Street, the children enjoyed playing with the neighborhood children in the square outside. At 8 pm our children were required to come home. "Why do I have to come back at 8 pm when everyone else is still out playing?" protested Tziki. "At the Fast Hotel (a hotel in a poor neighborhood nearby) there are children who have nothing to eat, and in our house there is a poor child who has to come home at eight in the evening, while other children are still out playing".

One day Tziki came home from school with a friend, followed by a teacher who walked behind them, listening to their conversation. "I want to be rich, a millionaire," the friend said. "I want to have a lot of money so I can give charity to the needy," said Tziki. It seems that the desire to give is genetic.



During vacations I made sure the children did not wander around aimlessly. My neighbor had a stationery store. "I'll give you twenty pounds if you pay Tziki ten pounds and let him work with you during vacations," I suggested. This arrangement proved successful. There were years in which Tziki worked at IMI during vacations. Yossi also worked during the holidays, but he was cleverer. I wanted to offer him a job at IMI but he knew how much Tziki made and said, "What he earns in a month I can earn in a day." He began to paint roofs and houses, and actually did well. Yossi stood out from an early age for his technical sense. I will never forget how, at the age of two, I took him with me to fix a flat tire on Jaffa Street. He closely followed all the action. "Move over," he said to the tire repairman. You're in my way". Sarit studied at a school near the university (Aliyada), and as usual, I went to the teachers to complain that she was not studying enough. "We are teaching her how to learn and how to find information," her teachers would tell me, not paying too much attention to my complaints.



## From Sheratzki to Aud

The Sheratzki name probably originated from one of my family members who came from the town of Sheratz. In 1968 I was sent abroad by the Ministry of Defense. Anyone traveling on official duty was asked to hebraicize both his surname and first name. I wanted to change the family name to "Sarid" (remnant) because of its symbolism and because of the similarity to Sheratzki. My children were opposed to it because such a change would send them again to the end of the line in kindergarten and school. As a result, I chose the name "Aud" (glowing ember) that well described my story as an ember, plucked from the fire, as a Holocaust survivor.

If it were up to me, I'd rather have kept my childhood name of Sheratzki, to continue the family dynasty. After seven years it is permissible to return to the original family name, but my children had already adopted the name so I decided to give it up. Today, in my lectures, I always refer to my new name as well as my childhood one.



*Purim parties*



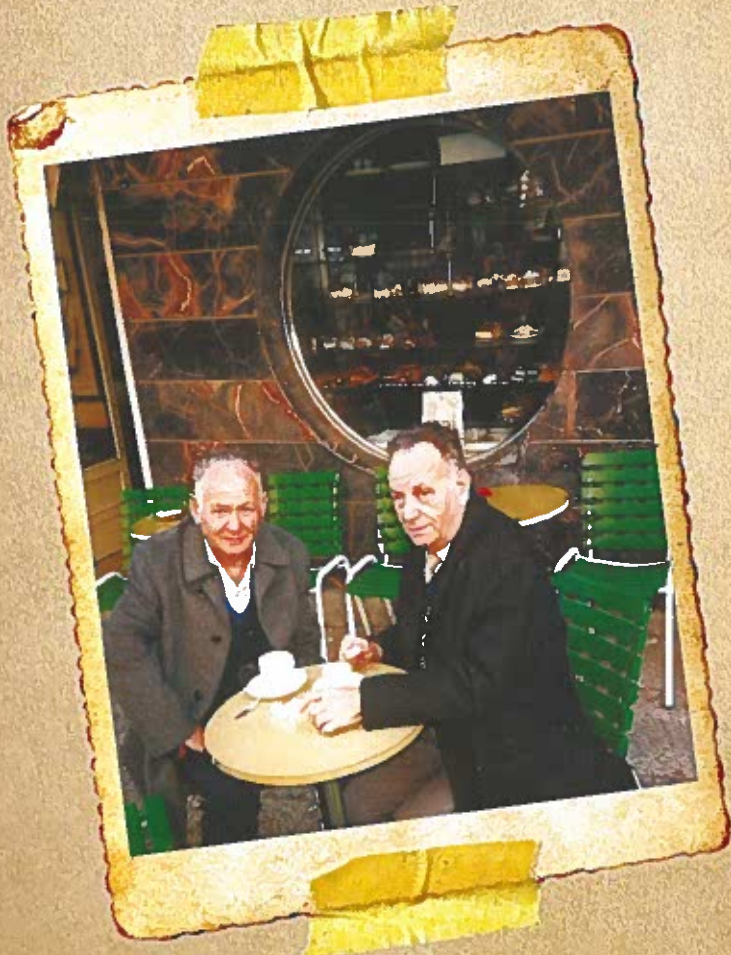


*Spending time together*





# A brother, suddenly, in mid-life



## A brother, suddenly, in mid-life



From time to time, the Ministry of Tourism sent us tourists in Israel who wanted to meet local families. At our house, we hosted tourists who sat with us for coffee and listened to speeches on Zionism. In 1983, we were asked if we would host a couple with an eleven-year-old child. Our Sarit was the same age, and we thought it would be interesting, so we agreed.

The couple and child, the Diran family, came to us from East Berlin. They said their cantor had told them about fish in jelly (gefilte fish) so we invited them to eat gefilte fish with us on Friday night. The women lit the candles at home, and I took the father and child to the synagogue. I opened a prayer book for them and they followed the prayers fairly well. It turned out that they knew how to read Hebrew.

After dinner, we sat down to talk. The mother said she was a folk dancer, and the father was the principal actor at a theater in East Berlin. They traveled and exhibited their arts throughout Eastern Europe, areas which were, at that time, still closed to the Western world.

Tziki suddenly had an idea. He said, "Dad, they travel all over the world of darkness in Eastern Europe, perhaps someone from your family lives there. Maybe they can search for your family." At that moment, I thought about my brother, Berl. After all, the last time I saw him was at Auschwitz in 1944. I knew he was older than I, but I did not know how old he was. I had very little information to give them.

I parted from the Dirans, knowing they would try to find my brother, but I did not have high hopes.

The two continued to roam around Eastern Europe and managed to find my brother. They sent him a letter but he did not answer, fearing it was from the KGB. They sent



him a package, and on one of his trips to Germany, he arrived at their home to find out who was behind the shipment.

"How do you know me?" he asked. "We do not know you, but we know your brother in Israel, Anshel."

The same day, Chaya answered a phone call from Germany. I was abroad. "Your brother-in-law is here," said Mrs. Diran, "Do you want to talk to him?" Chaya was very excited. It was the first time she heard the term "brother-in-law" in relation to her. Berl started speaking in German, so Chaya asked him to speak in Yiddish.

"I forgot my Yiddish", he said. "Berl, Yiddish is your mother tongue and one doesn't forget their mother tongue," Chaya answered.

I returned to Israel and called Berl in Poland. He lived in the city of Slupsk. I was very excited. We talked a bit, but we could not speak freely yet with those in Eastern Europe.

After the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, I invited Berl to come visit us in Israel. For a month he lived in our house. Berl explained that he did not look for me because in Auschwitz, he saw that I didn't have a number on my arm and assumed I had been there waiting for selection.

After the war, he was released by the Russians and returned home to Zdunska Wola. There, he found no family, no home, nothing, so he decided to deny his Jewishness in order to return to the living. He married a Christian woman and had two children, a son and daughter, Henike and Irene. It turned out that many Jews were living in Poland, hiding and denying their Jewishness.

One day, I called him. His son, Henike, answered.

"Hello," I said, "This is your Uncle Anshel".

"I do not have an uncle named Anshel," he said.

"I am your father's brother."

"My father does not have a brother."

"He slept in my house for about a month."

"No, he was among friends."

My brother, it seemed, had not even told his own children that he had a brother in Israel.

I told his son the whole truth. When his father came home, Henike scolded him for not revealing the story to his family. At that time, my son, Tziki, was serving as an Aliyah emissary in South Africa. Berl, who now felt free to be open, boasted about Tziki to his son.

Henike contacted a friend of ours living in Germany and obtained Tziki's address in South Africa. He wrote to Tziki, asking for assistance to move to South Africa. Tziki did not answer his letter because his perception of his role was to assist Jews to immigrate to Israel, not to foreign countries.

By the time Tziki returned to Israel, Aliyah from the Former Soviet Union was at its peak. He told me he was handling permits for a married couple comprised of one Jew and one non-Jew, and that if Henike and his wife were willing to convert, he could help them make Aliyah. I told Henike that if they were willing, I would invite them to come Israel and was prepared to bear all expenses for the transition. "I'm ready, but my wife and kids are not," he replied.

Two weeks later, in April, 1990, we received a letter telling us that he was prepared to "make Aliyah". It turned out that my friend in Germany had persuaded him.

On July 1, 1990, Henike, his wife, Ilona, and their two children, Maya and Moti, arrived in Israel. On July 2, the two children started a summer camp in Jerusalem, and on July 5 their parents began to study Hebrew at an "ulpan". I arranged for an apartment for them. Henike started working, and we gained new family members. Two years later, Mickey, their third child, was born. The circumcision ceremony was conducted in our home. The three children call me grandpa and I'm proud of it.

When he was in the fourth or fifth grade, Moti turned to me and said, "Grandpa, I want to be circumcised." I turned to a friend who served as a hospital administration at Misgav Ladach hospital and asked for his help. Two days later, I stood with Moti in the hospital at 7:30 in the morning. The rabbi who came refused to perform the circumcision because of a personal conflict he had with my friend. He insisted we get permission from the chief rabbi of the hospital. I ran around all morning looking

for the chief rabbi, but couldn't find him. "Grandpa I'm hungry", said Moti, who had been fasting prior to surgery. I bought him food, which obviously meant that the circumcision could not be performed that day.

Henike decided to have an official circumcision ceremony according to the religious courts, so I initiated the process of conversion for him. I appeared three times before the rabbinical court, but the rabbis refused to approve his application.

In the seventh or eighth grade, Moti asked me again to be circumcised. And again, the same events occurred at the hospital. I started shouting until the walls shook. "The child cannot go to pee in school without embarrassment!" I shouted. The mohel left, and the doctor did the circumcision.

Over the years, Berl and I kept in touch regularly. He used to visit me every time I came to Poland, and I spoke with him regularly from Israel via Skype. He died three years ago.







*From the right: Sarit, me, Berl and Chaya*

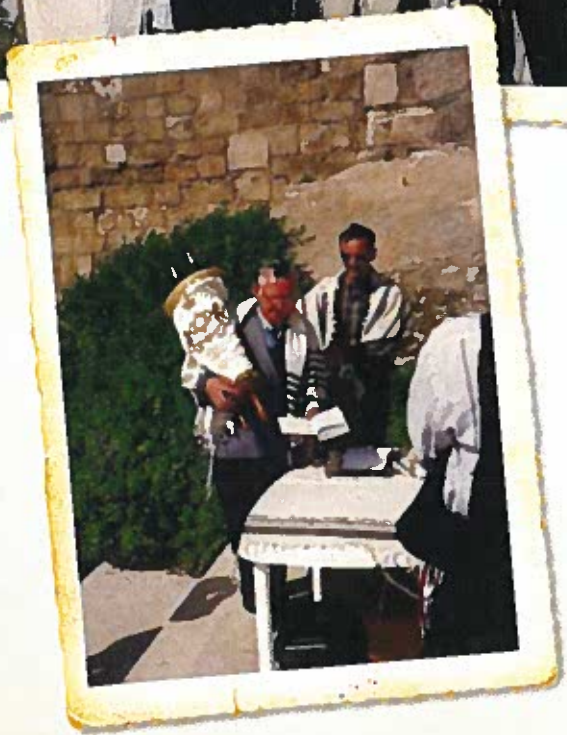
**With my beloved children and grandchildren.**













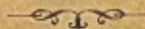








# Retirement, but not from work...



## Retirement, but not from work...



During my retirement vacation I heard on the radio about a Zionist institution looking for volunteers to help immigrants. I called the number advertised and announced that I would take responsibility for the institution's Jerusalem branch. I visited all the ulpanim (Hebrew language schools) collecting the immigrants' resumes and assigning them work in factories. I had over two thousand CVs at home. I would send a doctor to work as a cleaner at Hadassah Hospital, telling him where to meet a specific professor who could help him move forward. The engineers were sent to work in factories where they could later integrate as engineers. Indeed, many of these matchmaking attempts proved successful.

I had a problem with people ages 45-50. I could not find them work. I found a solution with the Yad Sarah organization. We agreed that they would train twenty-six people to repair wheelchairs, and half of them would be retained for employment, later. When the course was over we held a ceremony where I said that it was the first time that being present at such a ceremony saddened me. They asked me why, and my answer was that it was sad for me to think that thirteen adults would now have to go out and look for work again. The Director General of Yad Sarah answered that all twenty-six would work there.

Parallel to this position, I served as the volunteer overseer of internal training for the Ministry of Labor. My job was to approve financial aid for enterprises that employed new immigrants. When I got to factories to confirm one worker, I showed the factory owners plans for how they could absorb two workers by changing their methods. Thus, I was able to arrange jobs for a great many immigrants.

Today I serve in a variety of public functions, all on a voluntary basis, happy to have the strength to continue to contribute:

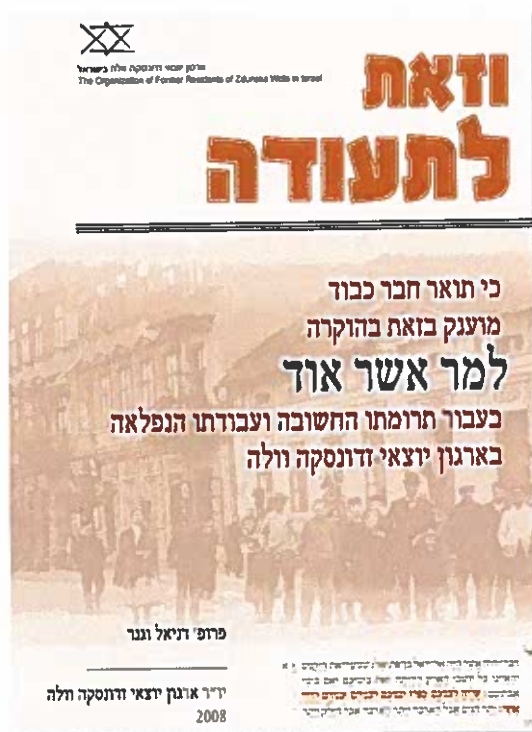


Chairman of the Forum of Holocaust Survivors,  
 Committee Chairman, Holocaust Survivors Pensioners Council of Jerusalem,  
 Chairman, Retirees of IMI Jerusalem,  
 General Secretary of the umbrella organization for pensioners in Jerusalem,  
 Acting Chairman of "Yesh", the organization for orphaned children of Holocaust survivors,  
 Board Member in two community centers - "Ziv" Beit Hakerem and the Youth Center,  
 Member of the Executive Council for the Aged,  
 Member of the "Eden" Community Television (photographer and editor)  
 Lecturer "Yad Vashem" (Hebrew and English)  
 Lecturer in schools and military camps on the Holocaust  
 Volunteer witness accompanying schoolchildren and officers of the IDF patrols to the death camps in Poland, and the Jewish Brigade heritage sites in Europe  
 Lecturer at state and public ceremonies

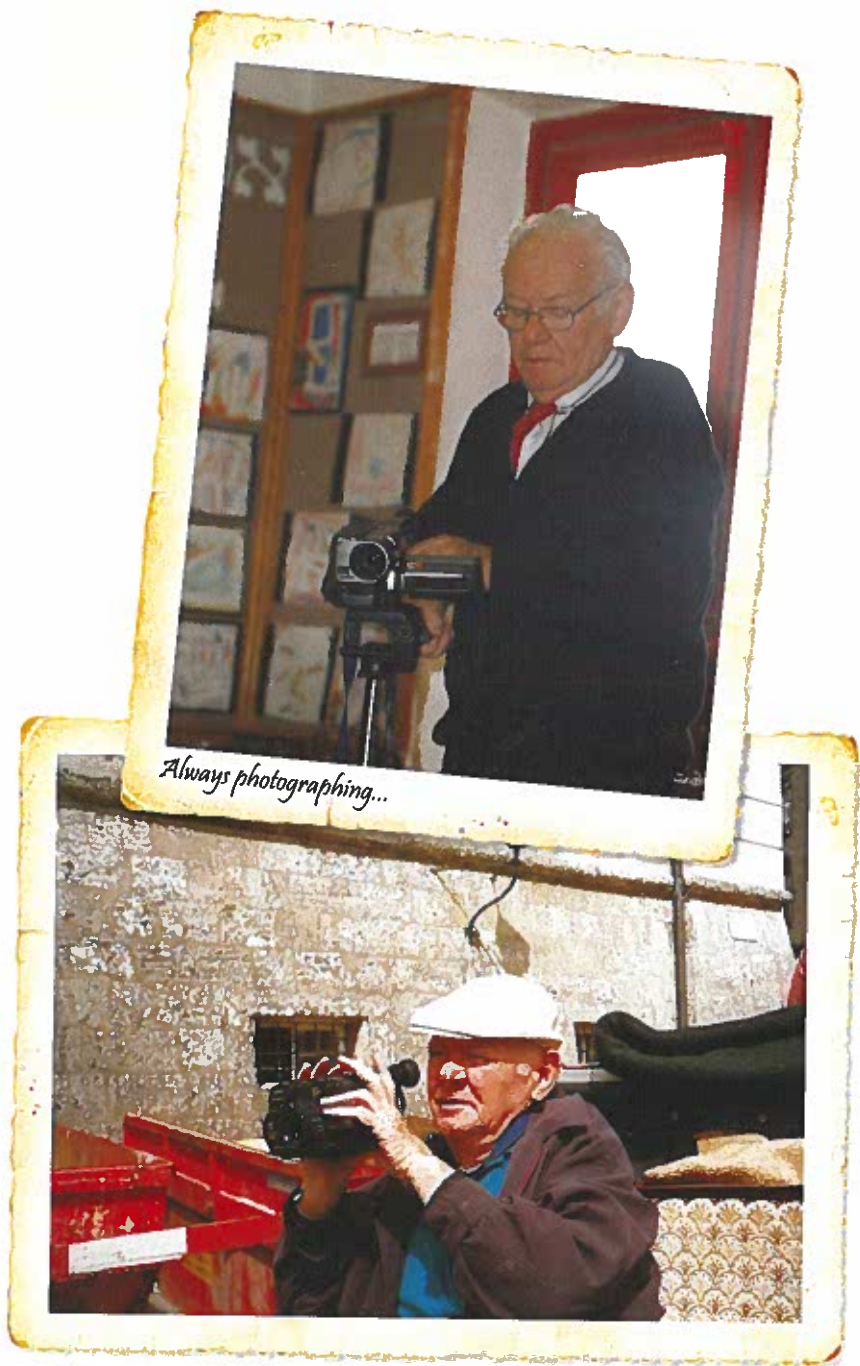
In the past I've served as:

Assistant Secretary  
 of Holocaust Survivor  
 Pensioners  
 Chairman of "There,"  
 Jerusalem branch  
 Member of the board of the  
 World Jewish Congress in  
 Israel

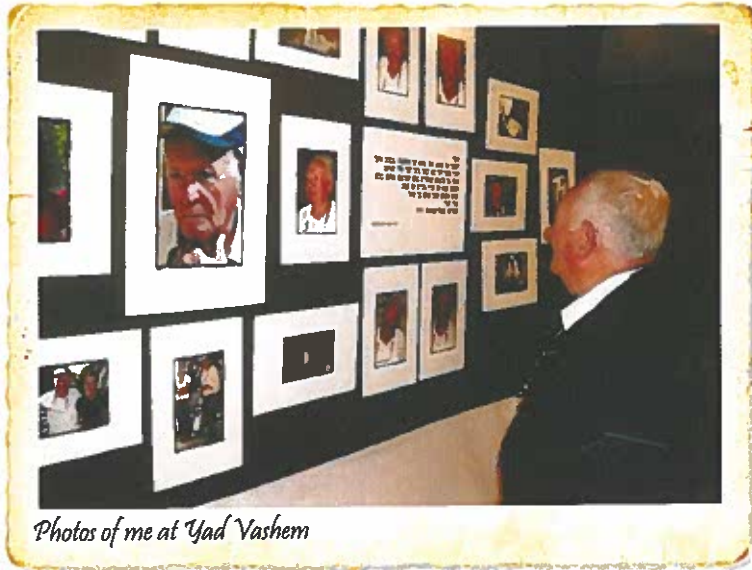
And more to come...



*Certificate for activities on the Zdunska Wola Organization.*



*Always photographing...*



*Photos of me at Yad Vashem*



*Meeting with graduates  
of Magdiel*





# Starting to talk





## Starting to talk



I never wanted to see a movie or read a book on the Holocaust. Once, Chaya and I watched such a movie and didn't sleep all night. When I started talking about this period, I could not finish a sentence without crying. I felt uncomfortable, for example, talking to the children. I would not allow the memories to go too deeply in my life. I did not want them to get in my way. I would say that between my children and me we had a "gentlemen's agreement". They didn't ask, and I didn't tell. Chaya claims that Tziki tried several times to get me to talk, without success. When Sarit was twenty-one and served as an education officer, she participated in a day of activities at the Jerusalem Theater. A Holocaust survivor came and told his story. A journalist from "B'Machane", the IDF newspaper, approached her and asked to interview her. She told him that her father was a Holocaust survivor but that she didn't know anything about him.

When she returned she cried to Chaya, "This is my father's story and I do not know anything?"

The memories come back to me at certain moments. On Fridays, for example, my thoughts go back to my parents' house. All these years, I have tried to surround myself with family on Fridays. If Chaya and I were alone, depression overtook me. I'm still very sensitive on this day.

The memories would arise when I met with friends from Magdiel. We would tell stories, often in Yiddish. But beyond that, I was not ready to talk about that time.

A few years ago, Chaya told me about "Amcha", an association that provides psychological treatment to survivors. Twice a week for a year and a half I met with a psychologist at Amcha. I cried for an hour. At the end of this period, I went to the psychologist and said, "I've been coming here for a year and a half, sitting for an hour and crying. What's the point?" I have a wound full of pus inside of me. It lies



quietly, so why should I provoke it?" He agreed with me. I stopped going.

I chose not to return to Poland. More than once I thought I wanted to go, but was afraid I couldn't handle it psychologically. I was a member of the committee for emigrants from Zdunska Wola. In 1990 we decided to organize a trip to Poland, to lay a plaque in memory of those murdered in Chelmno.

Chaya told me I should go, but I would not listen. I said I was not mentally ready to return to Poland. For three years, we grappled with it. Finally, it was decided that a delegation would go on June 29, 1993. Two days before the trip, Chaya said, "Asher, do you know that you must go to Poland?"

"How can I go? There is no room on the plane," I said.

"There is a place on the plane. You just need to go downtown and pay". Chaya understood the real reason for my refusal was not about a place on the plane.

It turned out that Chaya had gone to the travel agency that day and was told that there were still two seats available. She asked that they reserve the two places, saying, "I'm not going to pay for them yet because I do not know if my husband will go, but I'm going home to work on it."

I told Chaya that I really wanted to go, but was afraid. "I'll come with you. You've always protected me. This time I'll protect you," she said.

I was very excited when we boarded the plane and throughout each day of the journey. At this stage I already felt like I was closing a circle. "I love you", I said to Chaya before the plane took off. We held a bouquet of flowers that our son, Yossi, had given us. I placed it in the crematorium at Chelmno.

On the way to the cemetery in Zdunska Wola, I remembered how everything had changed when the Nazis entered the city and rounded up all the Jews in the ghetto. When I got to the cemetery I began looking for my grandmother's grave. I neared the grave where I was separated from my mother and little brother, Gabriel. I was sent to the Lodz ghetto, while my mother and my brother were apparently sent to Chelmno. I stood in the cemetery and saw my mother and brother before me at the moment of my separation from them, as if they were still alive. It happens to me every time I go there, whenever I talk about them and tell the story.

My brother, Berl, joined me on the journey. He could not remember anything, and I remembered every detail, as if it were only yesterday that I left the city and not fifty years ago. One of the things I remembered in those moments was the sense of fear that stayed with me from the moment we started to flee from the Germans until I got to Magdiel. There was constant fear - sometimes less, sometimes a little bit more - but I was always afraid.

The cemetery's appearance was appalling. High grass covered the paths, and the graves were barely visible. We discovered a mass grave of two hundred and nineteen people, covered with rocks. I was shocked. We called a gentile to give us a quote for havng a respectable headstone made. He asked for ten thousand dollars for the job. "If we succeed in raising the money, we will come back with the children", said Chaya.

*"The appearance of the  
state of the cemetery"*



We met Elizabeta, a teacher at the local school who wrote a master's thesis on the subject of the Jews of Zdunska Wola. She became my liaison on the spot.

"In the cemetery, after forty-two years of living with Asher, I learned for the first time how he was separated from his mother and brother," says Chaya.

When we returned to Israel we started collecting funds for the construction of the headstone. A year later we returned to the cemetery. The headstone stood on the mound. We were fifty-four people, second and third generations of the Holocaust, who inaugurated the memorial stone in front of the chief rabbi of Warsaw, the mayor and a representative of the Polish government. Joseph, Tziki, and his wife were also with us. "If God kept me around to replace this gravestone, it was worth staying alive", I said at the ceremony. "Apparently I survived in order to tell what happened here.

From then on, I started talking.

"You're basically a living gravestone for all the townspeople and your family," says Chaya. I feel like I'm keeping the memory of my family, the Jews of the city and the six million alive.

Before the ceremony at the cemetery there was a meeting at City Hall with the mayor and a representative of the government. I made a map showing Zdunska Wola the way I remembered it as a boy of eleven, before the war. I included synagogues, yeshivas and seminaries. Older people told me that what I described was accurate.

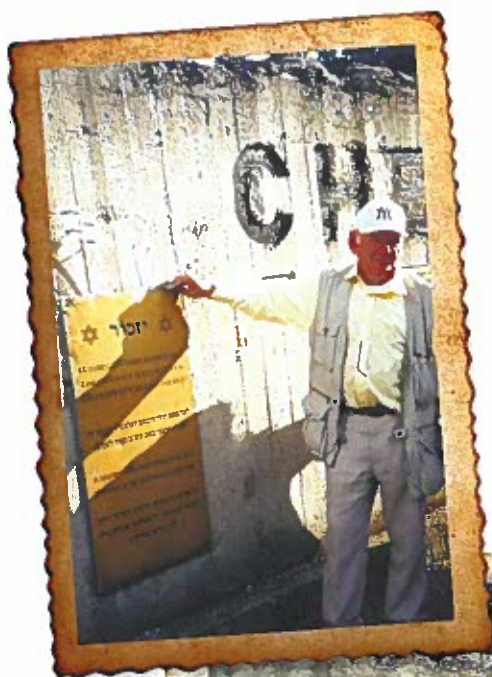
*Ceremonial Plaque*



Since then, during all my missions to Poland with teens, I insist that we visit the city cemetery, and the young people spend several hours working there, pulling weeds and clearing the paths, in order to maintain its character.

I concluded that I must talk to teenagers so that those who hear me will be able to say they heard these things first-hand from someone who was there. For years, this room inside me was locked, and in one day, rather than finding the key, I broke down the door. It's not easy for me, but I don't do it to find relief. When young

people, adults and army officers hear me talk during these trips and testimonials, they understand that it must not be allowed to happen again. So I must do it. It is difficult for me and I continue to pick at the wound, but this is a victory for me. From the moment I decided to tell my story, I have not stopped. I lecture two or three times a day at Yad Vashem and travel to Poland several times



*Ceremony  
commemorating  
the placement of  
the memorial  
plaque at  
Chelmo*



a year giving testimony as a witness, to youth delegations and members of the military, Defense Ministry and police. I take part in many events and am invited to lecture at various forums. It is physically hard - sometimes I stand for three or four hours during a testimonial - and of course it is mentally difficult. When I tell about the events of the war I can see the images before my eyes. I cry aloud, I cry in my heart, but feel a sense of satisfaction and pride that I am able to make these missions. Once, I went to Germany to talk to a community of Christian Friends of Israel in a hall containing five hundred seats, but it was filled with fifteen hundred people. The solution was to allow people to stand and to open an adjacent hall where my words were transferred via speakers.

Information about the event was published in newspapers. Subsequent invitations to speak at other events followed. In another town I was asked to speak prior to a children's concert at a local school. I spoke in German to fifteen hundred school children.

Every day I meet new people, all of whom promise to continue to pass on my story. Children come up to me, excited to give me a hug. They don't forget me and my story, making it worth the emotional cost.

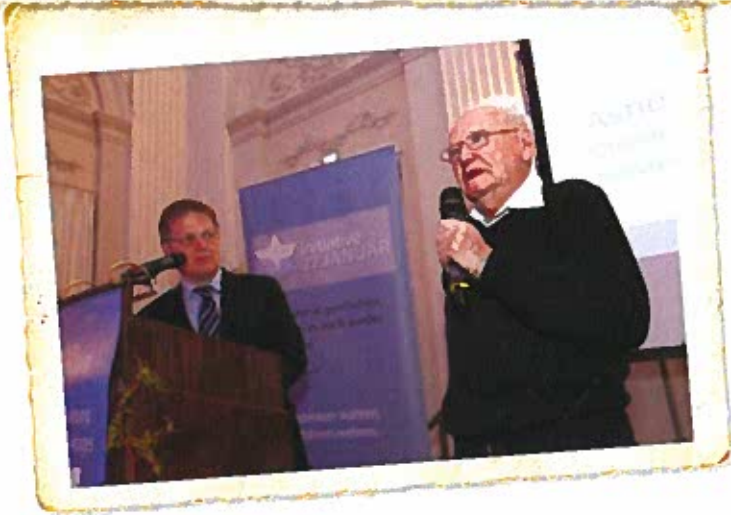
On one of my journeys with IDF officers, we were to travel from Warsaw to Krakow. We left Warsaw at six thirty in the morning and arrived in Krakow after midnight. Roads back then were run-down and difficult to drive on, and we saw few cars, but many horse-drawn carriages. We went through the camps and ghettos. It was a long and tedious day.

When we arrived at the hotel in Krakow I was afraid I'd collapse. I lay down on the bed with my clothes and shoes on. I told myself that if I awoke in the morning, it would be the last time I'd go on these journeys. I did not sleep most of the night and in the morning, I went down to the dining room. I was met by the brigade commander. "Asher", he said, "I want to express my remorse. I have not done enough in my units to tell them about the Holocaust, and I promise you today that this will change. And I will personally begin to examine my family's roots." I told him about my thoughts during the night and said that because of his words, I would continue to take these trips.





*Press conference in the Bundestag*



*→  
Newspaper article reporting my visit to Germany*

# Bei seinen Erzählungen wird's totenstill

Ascher Lid berichtet von seinem Überleben in Auschwitz / Überwältigender Besucherandrang in Bad Lieberzell

von Andrea Rad

Bei Lieberzell, 67 Prozent der Deutschen werden als fast ausnahmslos langhaarig erdelt, nicht weil dort heute noch beschließen in Bad Lieberzell während die Menschen schweigend stehen zu dürfen.

Wegen des kalten Windes im August die Veranstaltung "Ausschwerung eines Auswanderers" wurde im Foyer des Bürgerhauses stattliche Gäste kamen und um ein erfolgreiches Gespräch angeht. Doch stößt er wieder zurück auf einen (Ausschwerung) und eine Erinnerung an die Lieder und Gedichte die ihm noch heute die Ohren klingen lassen und die ihm...

Was dieses Konzert ist, ist nicht zu beschreiben in geschichtl. -genet. Pausen. Die von "Ausschwerung" in die Musik der Lieder und Gedichte die ihm noch heute die Ohren klingen lassen und die ihm... (Ausschwerung) und eine Erinnerung an die Lieder und Gedichte die ihm noch heute die Ohren klingen lassen und die ihm...

Auch insgesamt über die Natur und Schönheit der Landschaft, die ihm noch heute die Ohren klingen lassen und die ihm... (Ausschwerung) und eine Erinnerung an die Lieder und Gedichte die ihm noch heute die Ohren klingen lassen und die ihm...

„Ich war damals noch ein junger Mann, der die Welt entdecken wollte. Ich war in der Armee und habe viele Abenteuer erlebt. Ich habe viele Menschen kennengelernt und viele Erfahrungen gemacht.“

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Ascher Lid berichtet von seinem Überleben in Auschwitz / Überwältigender Besucherandrang in Bad Lieberzell



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## Wie aus fünf doch 30 Jahre wurden

Landrat ernt Alt-Landrat Hans Werner Köbbel zum 70. Geburtstag

von Andrea Rad

„Wie aus fünf doch 30 Jahre wurden“ - das ist die Überschrift der 70. Geburtstagsgala des Landrats Hans Werner Köbbel. Die Feierlichkeiten wurden im Foyer des Bürgerhauses in Bad Lieberzell abgehalten.

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# Ich habe Auschwitz überlebt!



Das ist... Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...

Das ist... Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...

Das ist... Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...

## 59. Sie werden den Klavierschläger an den Hals werfen und auf den Laster

Das ist... Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...

## Die... Klavierschläger... auf zwei

Das ist... Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...

Das ist... Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...

## DER NEUE DOBL... ALLES BEGINNT



Das ist... Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...

Das ist... Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...



Das ist... Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...  
 Ich habe...

On every trip, I feel that my talks make a powerful impact on my listeners. If I were not convinced of this, I would not do it. I do not get paid for it. It is simply my mission.

I get many letters of thanks. For instance, a woman who was with me on a high school trip wrote to me. After completing her army service as a singer in the IDF troupe, she was scheduled to perform in a recital in Tel Aviv. She auditioned for the role that was supposed to be a "piece of cake" for her, but at the last minute, another woman auditioned and got the part. In a letter she wrote to me afterwards she said, "After that, I wanted to commit suicide. But at that moment I thought of you and our journey to Poland. I suddenly realized that it was not really important."

Another person wrote to me after his sister was killed in a terrorist attack, "After being with you, I learned that one must continue living."

I remember the people who refused to send their children on these journeys. One father claimed it was a waste of money. One day I convinced him to come along himself. Since then, he has become a devotee. My bank clerk said to me one day, "It costs five thousand shekels and my daughter is so sensitive." I told her that she should allow her child to go, and if she later regretted her decision, I'd pay for the trip. She paid, of course.

I think everyone should go on journeys like these. To see and to experience is the only way to understand what happened there.

The journeys are becoming difficult for me, but I feel that I cannot stop them. When I watch the children leave after listening to me, I have the feeling of "never again" - the feeling that they will do everything they can to prevent this tragedy from occurring again. I understand the size of my contribution and feel I must go on.





*Lighting a torch with  
Chief of General Staff  
of IDF Benny Gantz*



*Majdanek, 2003*



*Meeting between Israeli officers of the IDF and high ranking German officers in Berlin*



*Mission to Poland with a Torah Scroll commemorating Han Ramon*





12.2.2015

אשר אוד היקר,

אנחנו מבקשים להודות לך מקרב לב, על הסכמתך, נכונותך והגעתך להשתתף בסמינר "יחודי", ראשון מסוגו, של מנהיגי ומובילי תנועות ואירגוני נוער, מישראל, גרמניה, פולין, צ'כיה ואוסטריה.

הסמינר שהתקיים בקראקוב ובמזיאון אושוויץ בירקנאו, היה תחת הכותרת: "70 שנה לשחרור אושוויץ - מדברים חינוך" על תפקידינו כמובילים חברתיים וערכים בחברות שלנו היום.

חני אפרימוב, שכתבה והובילה את הסמינר, אמרה לנו מיד, שלא יכול להיות כנס משמעותי שכזה בלי לפגוש ולשמע סיפור ומסר של ניצול אושוויץ, ולא יכול להיות אדם ראוי ומתאים יותר ממך, אשר.

כך פנינו אליך. הסכמת ברצון ואף שינית תכניות בכדי להתאים ללוח הזמנים שביקשנו.

אישי יותר, המרשימה והכנבשת, נוכחותך, השתתפותך ודבריך בסמינר, השיחות האיטיות שקיימת עם כל מי שרק ניגש אליך והיו רבים כאלו, ובוודאי העדות המרגשת, סיפורך האישי, שלא השאיר עין אחת יבשה, בליבו של מחנה ההשמדה אושוויץ 1, היוו נדבך מרכזי בכנס כולו.

המסר המשמעותי כל כך שלך, למשתתפי הסמינר, אלו המובילים מיליוני בני נוער וצעירים בחמשת המדינות שלהם, נחקק בלב כל: "המשיכו אתם להיות 'עדים', נושאי לפיד הזיכרון, של הנורא מכל שבני אדם ביצעו - השואה".

איש מהנוכחים לא ישכח את תפילת ה"קדיש" שנשאת, בינואר 2015, 70 שנה לאחר השחרור, בחושך ובשלג לצד הביתן היהודי. יהודי, ציוני, מנצח, גאה וחזק, בעל משפחה לתפארת, כשכל משתתפי הסמינר סביבך נושאים אליך עיניים, "עושה שלום במרומיו הוא יעשה שלום עלינו ועל כל ישראל" ואמרנו אחר כך - "אמן".

תודה רבה,

נפתלי דרעי

שלומית רוקן-ליבנה

מזכ"ל

רכזת פרויקטים והדרכה

מועצת תנועות הנוער בישראל

מועצת תנועות הנוער בישראל



תשע"ה

# על יסודי מכבים רעות - מו"ר

יניצואי השואה הנם נר זיכרון החי בגאון, הנושאים לימים את סיפורי הקהילה  
והמשפחה ואג סיפור השואה הכואב. כל סיפור הוא לזכר ומלאו וכן חובה עלינו להגיד  
ולפניה כל סיפור, כל לדג כל זיכרון. על ידי הנצחה בזיכרון, אנו פושטים את הזיכרון  
פאישי אחק מן הזיכרון הקולקטיבי שלנו כלים.

( ד"ר אלה נס )

## תודה

### ל: אשר אוד

ברצוננו להביע את תודתנו והערכתנו להסכמתך  
להצטרף כאיש עזות לאסע פולין

אנו אודים לך על העזות הארצית החום והאהבה  
שהענקת לתלמידי השכבה באסע פולין.

ישר כח!!!

תלמידי שכבת יב' אחזור כא'

והצוות החינוכי

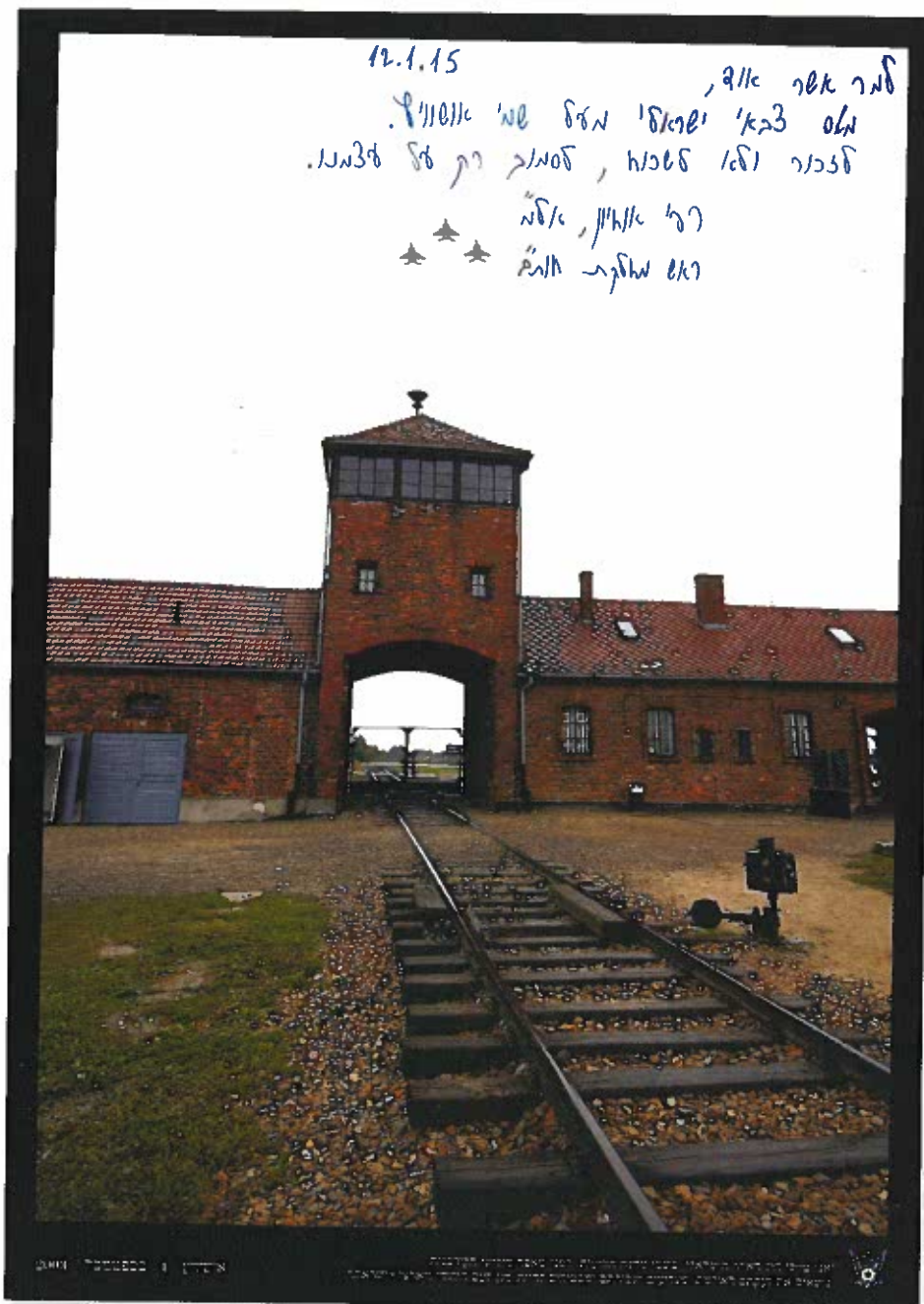
*Certificate of thanks from the Mor High School Maccabim-Reut*











*Israeli aerial demonstration over Auschwitz*



*Letters of thanks from high schools*

26/4/15

לכבוד  
מר אשר אוד הנכבד

ברצוננו להביע שוב את תודתנו לנכונות שלך להגיע לביה"ס ולהרצות בפני התלמידים והצוות.

הענקת לנו הזדמנות נדירה לשמוע עדות חיה של ניצול שואה. אכן נפלה זכות גדולה בחלקנו לשמוע אותך, כפי שמנהלת ביה"ס עדי זיסקינד כתבה בתגובה לדבריך והקריאה ביום השואה.

מצו"ב דברי המנהלת.

בתודה ובכבוד רב

שגיא כוכבת/א לרביה



רח' רבי חיים 3 טל. 02-5666794 פקס 02-5665371

ביום שלישי בבוקר נפלה בחלקי הזכות לשמוע את אשר אוד, ניצול השואה. נפלה בחלקי הזכות מכיוון שלא ירבו עוד הזדמנויות כאלה לשמוע ניצולי שואה, אולי עוד עשר או עשרים שנה. במרחק הזמן השואה בוודאי תראה כמו היסטוריה רחוקה ואולי עבור בני נוער בעתיד, היא תהפוך להיות דבר לא מעניין מלימודי היסטוריה שקרה פעם ולא קשור למציאות חיינו.

אבל נפלה בחלקי ובחלקכם הזכות לשמוע את אשר אוד, לא רק מעצם היותו ניצול שואה, אלא גם בגלל הסיפור שהוא השמיע באוזנינו. לאחר ההרצאה המשכתי לחשוב ולדבר הרבה על מה שהוא סיפר לנו. ניסיתי להבין מה הוא רצה שנלמד מהסיפור האישי שלו? אילו לקחים הוא רצה שנלמד? איזו אסונות הוא רצה למנוע מאיתנו? ואלה הדברים שאני למדתי מהשיחה איתו ושאני לקחתי איתי.

ראשית הוא רוצה שנזכור שאין לנו ארץ אחרת. הוא רוצה שנזכור שגם כשאנחנו מקטרים, וגם שאנחנו לא מרוצים, מהמצב הכלכלי והחברתי, מהחינוך ומהביטחון, אנחנו במצב טוב מאי פעם, כי יש לנו מדינה, משל עצמנו. שבה אנחנו לא נרדפים ולא שנואים ולא מוצאים להורג. הוא רצה שנזכור את זה ונלחם על קיומה של המדינה הזאת, הוא רצה לספר לכם את זה כדי שיהיה לכם ברור שזו זכות אך קודם כל חובה לשרת את המדינה הזאת, להתגייס לצבא ואחר כך להיות אזרחים שומרי חוק. הוא רצה שכולנו נדאג שהמדינה הזו תמשיך להתקיים, שלא נשנא אחד את השני, שלא תהיה בנינו שנאת אחים, לא בשל דעות פוליטיות שונות, בשל עדתיות שונה, צבע עור או מכל סיבה אחרת. ושנזכור שגורל משותף של עבר ושל עתיד מחבר את כולנו.

שנית, הוא דיבר על השפלה. ההשפלה חזרה שוב ושוב בשיחה איתו. ההשפלה היתה שם כשגילחו למבוגרים סביבו את השערות, ההשפלה היתה שם שהיכו בו בשוט ובעטו בו ברגל גסה, ההשפלה היתה שם כשהכריחו אותו לחזול על הרצפה, לאכול מערמות של זבל, להסתובב ערום, ההשפלה היתה שם כל הזמן. אני חושבת שאשר אוד רצה לגרום לנו לחשוב על גרש ההשפלה. מדוע יש לנו צורך להשפיל אדם אחר? איזה רווח יש בזה? וגם לאן השפלה לוקחת אותנו כבני אדם? ההשפלה, מהשוורש שפל, היא הדרגה הנמוכה ביותר שבני אנוש מסוגלים להגיע אליה, היא תמצית הרוע והאכזריות. ההשפלה שהגרמנים, הארים העליונים, רצו לגרום לכל מי שנחות, שמתחתיהם להרגיש, ליודים, פולנים, רוסים, צוענים, נכים, הומוסקסואלים, מפגרים- היא נקודת השפל הנמוכה ביותר שהגיע אליה האדם בהיסטוריה האנושית שלנו. פגיעה באחר, השפלה של אחר היא הדבר השפל, הנמוך ביותר שאדם יכול לעשות.

שלישית, אשר רצה להראות לנו איך האדם יודע להיות גם לא שפל, כמה כוחות ותעצומות יש בו וכמה רחוק הם יכולים להוביל אותו. כנגד כל הסיכויים, אשר כילד, שרד את האקציות, כנגד כל הסיכויים הוא שרד את הגטו, את עבודות הפרך, את המחלות, את אוושיץ בירקנאו ואת צעדת המוות. והיו שם אנשים טובים בדרך. היה שם את אחיו שלמרות המחסור הגדול לא חסך ממנו אוכל ודאגה וחום והגנה, והיו שם אינסוף יהודים שלמרות כל הסיכון עמדו מאחורי הגדר וקראו בשמו, והיו לו שם חברים שלא גנבו ממנו ולא פגעו בו ולא השפילו אותו, למרות שיקלו, חברים שדאגו ועזרו וחלמו יחד ועלו יחד להקים את מדינת ישראל.

לסיכום, אני חושבת שאשר אוד רצה שכל אחד ואחת מאיתנו יזכור שגם בנקודות השפל הנמוכות ביותר שלנו, גם כנגד כל הסיכויים, אנו צריכים לבחור להיות בני אדם, טובים, דיביים, אכפתיים דואגים, מקבלים את האחר. אנו צריכים להישמר מהשפלה של אדם אחר, בין אם הוא חבר או בין אם הוא שונה מאיתנו, כי השפלה היא מדרון חלקלק. אל לנו להיות כמו המרצחים הנאצים, אל לנו לפגוע באחר, עלינו להילחם על הזכות והחובה להיות בני אדם טובים שראויים לחיות במדינת ישראל.

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## 'Ik sliep op een vloer bezaaid met dode mensen'

Concentratiekampen. Duitse soldaten. De dodenmars. Asher Aud heeft het allemaal doorstaan. Met zijn kinderen heeft hij er tot op de dag van vandaag niet over gesproken. Toch reist hij regelmatig naar allerlei landen om zijn verhaal te delen. Ook in dit bijzondere jaar, zeventig jaar na de Holocaust. Inmiddels is de gelukkige en trotse opa woonachtig in Jeruzalem. "Ik ga niet weg uit Israël. Ook niet voor tien miljoen euro."





## "Het is mijn verlangen dat onze geschiedenis niet wordt vergeten."

Asher was elf jaar toen de Duitsers een klein dorpje in Polen bezetten. Met duizenden Joden werd hij naar één van de vele getto's gebracht. "Daarna begonnen de Duitsers met acties. Iedereen moest toekijken hoe tien mensen werden opgehangen. Deze actie herhaalde zich later. Op een gegeven moment werden alle mannen meegenomen naar een groot huis. De meeste jonge mannen werden naar een concentratiekamp overgebracht. Op dat moment werd ik van mijn vader gescheiden. Hem heb ik sindsdien nooit meer gezien." Later werd hij naar een treinstation gebracht en met een grote groep naar een andere locatie gebracht. "Sindsdien heb ik mijn moeder en jongere broer nooit meer gezien."

**Dreigement van Duitse soldaat**  
De trein deed in totaal vijf dagen over 48 kilometer reizen. "Om mij heen zag ik mensen sterven. Ook ik had het erg moeilijk. Er was bijvoorbeeld geen wc." Uiteindelijk stopte de wagon in Auschwitz. "Een agent gaf mij toestemming om naar een toilet te gaan. Ik stapte uit. Waarna een Duitse soldaat mij tegenhield: 'Waarom ben je uitgestapt?' Ik moest tegen een muur gaan staan, waarna hij enkele schoten loste. Ze raakten mij niet. 'Je hebt nu geluk gehad,' zei hij. 'Ga terug naar de wagon.' Als straf moest ik als laatste uitstappen."

Asher kreeg een black-out. "Het was een kwestie van overleven. Iedere minuut. Iedere seconde. Op dat moment ben je eenzaam en kun je bij niemand terecht. We konden elkaar niet helpen." Eenmaal in het kamp moest iedereen zich uitkleden. Asher: "Onze hoofden werden kaal geschoren. Op een heuvel lagen

kampklere en schoenen, die de Joden moesten aantrekken. Uiteindelijk werd ik meegenomen naar kamp A, blok 4. Van een bekende uit mijn woonplaats kreeg ik te horen dat mijn oudere broer was gesignaleerd."

### Ontmoeting met broer

Via een kennis kwam Asher met zijn broer in contact. "Op een dag kwam een Duitse, politieke gevangene naar mij toe. 'Ik ben een vriend van je broer en zal ervoor zorgen dat jullie buiten het kamp kunnen werken.' Op mijn linkerarm werd een registratienummer getatoeëerd. Dit nummer was mijn redding. Daardoor werd ik erkend als kampwerker en kon ik in leven blijven." Als kampwerker kreeg hij iets meer te eten. "Wie onderdeel uitmaakt van het concentratiekamp moest het doen met soep in de ochtend en stukjes brood in de avond. Soep aten we met onze vingers." Tijdens de dodenmars droeg Asher een blouse, broek en schoenen (geen sokken). En dat allemaal tijdens winterse temperaturen onder het vriespunt. De dodenmars werd gebruikt om alle nog levende gevangenen uit de kampen te halen en zo sporen van de concentratiekampen uit te wissen. De mars eindigde in het Oostenrijkse Mauthausen. De situatie was ook daar één grote verschrikking. Gevangenen werden doodgeslagen, opgehangen, of doodgeschoten. "De vloer, waarop

ik sliep, lag bezaaid met dode mensen", herinnert Asher zich.

### Amerikaanse tanks

Op een gegeven moment arriveerden de Amerikaanse tanks. "De Amerikanen namen ons mee naar een andere locatie. In totaal waren we met nog 22 mensen overgebleven. De Amerikanen zorgden voor ons en gaven ons eten en kleren. Ons eten bestond onder andere uit eieren en kip. Ons lichaam was na de ontberingen niet bestand tegen zoveel voedsel. We werden allemaal ziek, en vier mensen overleefden het niet."

Een regeling van de Britse regering [White Paper, red.] zorgde ervoor dat Asher met vierhonderd andere kinderen naar Israël kon emigreren. Tussen 1940 en 1944 was er ruimte voor maximaal tien-duizend Joodse vluchtelingen per jaar. Later maakte hij deel uit van de Hagana, de voorloper van het Israëlische leger. Tien jaar geleden onderging Asher een elf uur durende operatie. "Mijn vrouw vroeg: 'Waarom duurde het zo lang?' Ze hadden mijn milt opengesneden. Die was opgezwollen." Het gevolg van jarenlang gebrek aan voedsel en medicijnen in de oorlogsjaren.

### Kinderen en kleinkinderen

Inmiddels is Asher gezegend met drie kinderen en tien kleinkinderen. Met zijn kinderen heeft hij tot op de dag van vandaag niet over de Holocaust gepraat. "Wanneer ik dat zou doen, kan ik geen zin uitspreken zonder te huilen. Er werd thuis simpelweg niet over gesproken." Waarom deelt hij dan toch zijn verhaal? "Het is mijn verlangen dat onze geschiedenis niet wordt vergeten."

Tekst: Jeffrey Schipper, cip.nl



# 'Wie een getuige hoort, wordt een getuige' - Elie Wiesel

Elie Wiesel is een overlevende van de Holocaust. Hij schreef veel over de Holocaust, maar zegt zelf geen antwoorden te hebben op vragen als 'wat het antwoord op Auschwitz moet zijn'. Hij vraagt zich af of er wel een antwoord is. Maar het belang van herinneren en herdenken van de Holocaust staat voor hem als een paal boven water.

"De doden vergeten is als hen voor de tweede maal vermoorden."

In een interview enkele jaren geleden zegt Wiesel: "Ik geef mijn leven voor het principe en het ideaal van herinneren en herdenken. Ik weet dat mijn generatie een soort 'bedreigde soort' is. We zijn er steeds minder en minder. Maar aan de andere kant denk ik dat de kinderen onze opvolgers zullen zijn. En niet alleen dat, ik ben leraar, ik spreek met mijn studenten, ik geloof dat wie een getuige hoort, op zijn beurt een getuige wordt. (...) Het is het voorrecht van de jongere generatie om te zeggen: 'Maak je geen zorgen, wij zullen er zijn, om over en namens jou te spreken.'"



column

## Wachten op de Zon

Het is doodstil in Jeruzalem. Weggedoken in het zachte leer van de taxistoel zoeven we door de uitgestorven hoofdstad van Israël, op weg naar het vliegveld. Doelloos wisselen de verkeerslichten van kleur. Het is midden in de nacht, verkeer is er nauwelijks.

Herinneringen aan de afgelopen dagen trekken in de stilte voorbij. Een flard van geagiteerd claxonnerende chauffeurs, als je even niet genoeg opschiet. "Geduld is niet het sterkste punt van de Joden", grinnikt iemand.

Ik kijk naar buiten. In gedachten zie ik ze liggen achter de donkere ramen van de voorbij flitsende woningen. Een diep ademende Israëli, slapend als een kind. Een paar huizen verder een snurkende Arabier. Even hebben ze geen weet van hun conflicten. Van de permanente dreiging en onzekerheid. Nu even geen agitatie en ongeduld. Het is tijd om te slapen.

"Weet je waarom mensen moeten slapen?" De vraag van de rabbijn, bij wie we een paar dagen geleden aan tafel zaten, klinkt nog na. Mensen moeten weten dat ze afhankelijk zijn, zegt hij. Dat ze niet zonder hun Schepper kunnen. Zo iets.

Een andere rabbijn, met wie ik gisteravond sprak, begint mee te praten. "De oprichting van de staat Israël is echt een wonder. Het is alsof God na de Holocaust wakker werd en vond dat er nu iets positiefs moest gebeuren." God, slapen? Dat kan toch niet?

Een paar weken later, veilig op Nederlandse bodem, sla ik de Bijbel open. Psalm 44: "Waak op, waarom zoudt Gij slapen, Heere!", lees ik. De rabbijn doemt weer op. In zwart-wit beelden zie ik ze voorbij trekken: de massa van miljoenen Joden, stuk voor stuk in eenzaamheid vechtend tegen de dood. Een stille schreeuw, uit vele kelen: Waak op, waarom zoudt Gij slapen?

De nacht duurt voort, nu Israël als in een kraag van vijanden tegen de Middellandse Zee ligt gedrukt. Terwijl de wereld slaapt, is het wrede dier dat Jodenhaat heet uit zijn dutje ontwaakt en sluipt weer rond. Maar nee, Israëls Wachter sluimert niét. Hij slaapt nooit. Niet tijdens de Holocaust en ook nu niet.

Nog steeds ligt de nacht over de wereld en over Israël. Het wachten is tot de Zon opgaat.

Chris-Jan de Leeuw is hoofdredacteur van Gezinsgids.



## Epilogue



My last twenty years have been dedicated to perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust. On my travels to Poland we walk around for days. On the surface, the country seems perfectly normal. But when you dig under the surface to seven decades ago, a very different reality is revealed.

I feel the reality that I experienced as a child, every time I come. Each time I return I connect to the sights of my childhood. I see my mother, father, and other family members. I see their images before me. I see people hanging and I hear the commotion at the time of the hangings, the crying and the screaming.

When I am in Birkenau, despite the deathly silence that prevails there, I hear the shouts, noise and commotion. Before me, thousands are scurrying around, just as they did then.

On the other hand, I am with the children of Israel, the IDF and police commanders, figures who have renewed the Jewish experience, a new generation of proud Israelis. They listen to my words and my descriptions, are excited with me, support me, ask questions and investigate, lovingly and proudly.



When I am in Poland, in the valley of death, the feelings of pain and grief are replaced with a sense of great pride. Being here is my victory - the triumph over evil and oppression. The triumph of the little boy whose childhood was nipped in the bud, becoming a journey of suffering and survival. As we walk together on soil soaked by the blood of our families, the recognition penetrates us and makes us one family, loving and cohesive.

My generation, the generation of Holocaust survivors, came to Israel broken, hurt and depressed. And yet we had the power to build the glorious State of Israel. We knew what it meant to live without a homeland and learned how important it is to have one.

I am convinced that the journey to Poland enriches the recognition that we must remember, and never forget.

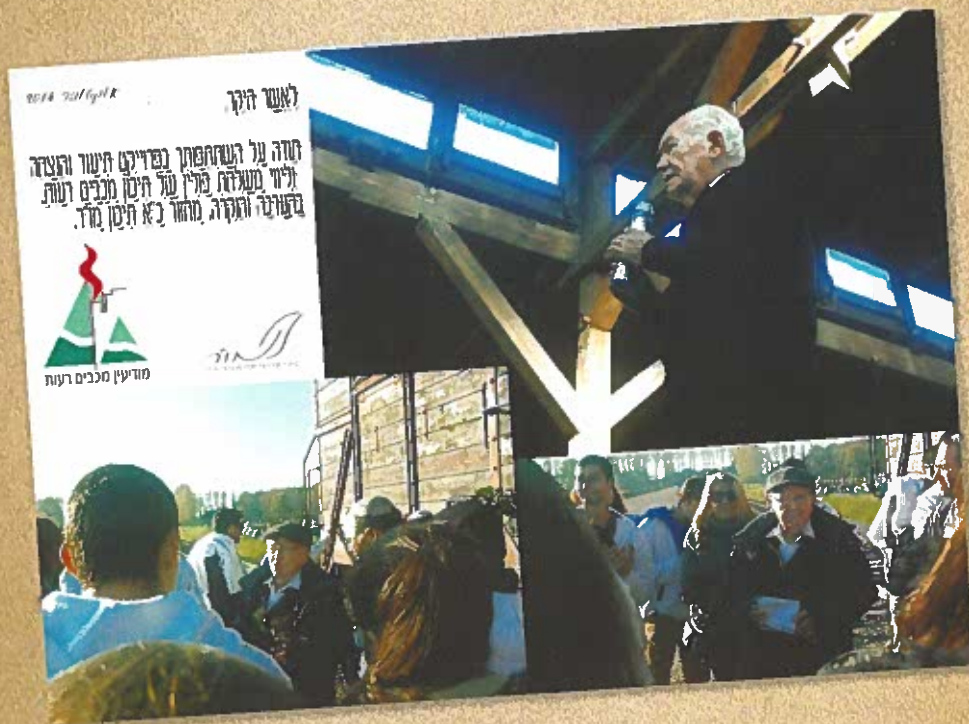
I cannot describe the way I feel today. There is no greater victory for me, and there is something divine about it.







# To Asher with love...



2014 2014

לאשר היקר

חודה על השתתפותו בפדיון תיעוד והצצה  
וליו משערת פולין על חיבון מנבים רעות.  
בשערה והקרה, מחודר בא היבון מוד.



מדיעין מכבים רעות



## And thou shall tell thy sons



We stand today on the accursed land of Auschwitz:

The accursed land, soaked with the blood and marrow of our Jewish brethren throughout its length and width, blood that cries out to God, "Where were you?" Blood that has turned this accursed land into the largest cemetery in the history of mankind.

The accursed land, on which the Nazi destroyer tried to annihilate forever the Jewish genius, genius that brought the world the best scientists, thinkers, philosophers, musicians, artists, economists, intellectuals, as well as the other creators of human culture.

The accursed land which lost its humanity and found the death of our people, who were slaughtered indiscriminately by famine, thirst, fire and gas, by sword, beast, bullet and strangulation, those sick with plague, and those who were shot and who hanged.

The accursed land, on which are buried dreams, religions, beliefs, desires, and aspirations, and on the other hand, a land that gave birth to the dream of the Jewish people, a dream of a homeland; a homeland where we would live as a free nation, safe, prosperous and proud. The dream was born, and its establishment was our revenge.

The accursed land on which, on the way to their deaths, families were separated, women to the right, men to the left, newborns and infants torn from their mothers' breasts and thrown into the valley of death. Terrified boys and girls cried, "Hear O Israel!" called, "Father!" shouted hoarsely, "Mother!" but their cries went unanswered. The accursed land on which we stand with you here today, dear boys and girls, we as representatives of your parents' generation, ask you to perform the commandment,



"And you should tell your sons and daughters," and, "Remember what Amalek did to you", commandments to maintain the intergenerational chain, the collective memory of the nation, and preserve the lessons of the past.

We are representatives of your parents' generation, the second and third generations of the rebirth of Israel, the generation that fought and dreamed, that built and restored the security of Israel and the Israeli economy, the generation standing here today, looking at you, seeing you standing here, tall and proud, and we are smiling... Smiling? Despite all this?

Smiling because you are our sweet revenge on the Nazi enemy, the descendants of survivors of the flames, standing here today, strong and beautiful, proudly raising the flag of the State of Israel, entwined branches in the renewed tree of the Jewish people. Smiling because we know that revenge will be that you will carry and pass on, wherever you go, to your children and your children's children, the memory of the Holocaust, the criminal acts of the Nazis. You are the ones who will pass on both the lessons and the message to future generations.

Smiling because we know that you are the bridge that will not allow it to be forgotten. You are the thread of life of the Jewish people, a link in the chain that we have nurtured and raised, a link in the inter-generational chain which will never be severed.

Smiling because we know that revenge will be that you, dear boys and girls, will bring education and enlightenment to the world, understanding and knowledge; you will bring the values of equality and human dignity, values of integrity, freedom and justice; peace and brotherhood, morality and ethics to the world.

Smiling because we know deep down that we are the present and you are the future;  
That we are the reality and and you are the dream;  
That we are the existence and you are the hope;  
That we are the torch and you are the eternal flame.

Smiling because we know you will never forgive and never forget!

**I love you and will always, always be proud of you,  
Eliad Shraga, Shai's father**

## Reflections, when I hugged my daughter, Dikla, near the mountain ash in Maydanek



The harrowing experience of touring the ghettos and extermination camps in Poland has left us all feeling shaken. Sadness seeps through us and tears choke us, and we want revenge on the murderers, or those of them who remain.

It is true that the tour of Poland strengthens the commandment, "Remember what Amalek did to you." The existence of our country is a reminder that as Jews we can no longer be lead like sheep to slaughter, and we can rely primarily on ourselves in the future. But there are other messages that we were not always able to internalize. They are not messages of hate and revenge, but a chilling reminder of the depths to which humanity can descend.

Even the Germans and their collaborators who participated in aktions, transports and death marches with enthusiasm or passively, were part of humanity. Even if we call them animals, they were ordinary people, members of a civilized nation, not aliens from another planet.

If it happened to them there, then it can also happen here tomorrow, even if not on such a huge scale. It could happen today, when everything is transparent and publicized. Even if you do not call it a "holocaust", it could happen on the "bad guys" side.

It can happen because of the belief that we are better than others, or that they deserve it.

It can happen because of intolerance of the political opinions of others of different cultures, religions, sexual orientation or skin color.

It can happen because of reluctance to cast doubt on a firm decision, and because of blind adoration of a charismatic leader, even if his megalomania leads to destruction.



It can happen because of indifference to the suffering of others, in a distant country or close to us, just over the fence, or simply by denying the holocaust of others that also occurred in the last century.

It can happen. But you can prevent it!

**Avinoam Porat**

**Maccabim, May 2015**



## A mother and son's journey...



At one of the parents' meeting at the end of the 2014 school year when my son, Or, 17, was at the end of eleventh grade and a spokesman for the delegation to Poland that was to take place at the beginning of the following school year.

I had always been ambivalent on the subject. I felt a desire to be part of this one-time experience, one that I didn't experience as a teenager, and to accompany him on the journey. So, with a lot of doubt and mixed feelings, I signed up for the parents' delegation.

Some of my family and friends did not understand why I had the desire to go through such a journey, focused on a subject so complex and loaded as the "Holocaust".

Of course my first thought as a mother was, how will Or endure such an emotional trauma? What awaits him? Will he be able to digest the enormity? How do I get through this journey since I plan to accompany him? Will I withstand the burst of emotions that could arise in the face of the sights, stories, and places? Ultimately, my maternal instinct took over, and with mixed feelings, I went to Poland.

Like anyone who feels uncomfortable in a situation of uncertainty, I did not know what to expect from the trip. I spoke with several people who had gone on the trip, but I did not feel I had gotten enough information to contribute to my experience. Everyone talked about other issues, and the overall message I got from everyone was that I would simply have to experience it personally.

As a teenager, I remember being fascinated by the Holocaust. Over the years, I purposely moved away from the subject. I did not want to feel the effects of the difficult scenes and horrors through movies or books. So when I made my decision to go, I feared the degree of intensity I would experience as I stood in places where these atrocities occurred in practice.



For me, the trip to Poland was powerful and meaningful. I realized that the adolescents who visit these places, where each absorbs the horrors in his own way, would go through the process of digesting the experience through the stories and testimonies heard, and that the experience could return during all kinds of situations in a person's life, even many years later.

Naturally, each person, according to who he is, gets different things out of the trip. Many moments were etched in my memory throughout the journey. One of the most powerful experiences for me was the visit to Auschwitz on the last day.

Auschwitz is considered a museum in Poland. There is a snack shop at the entrance, well-kept and tidy. On the way there, we passed built-up areas. It seems that the camp is surrounded by homes.

When we entered Auschwitz, we were accompanied by a local Polish guide, along with Ruth, the Israeli guide who accompanied us throughout the journey, as per the rules.

The Polish guide chose to open her explanations by describing the suffering of the Polish people and the number of Polish prisoners murdered in Auschwitz. It was very obvious. Only later did she point out that Jews were murdered here, as well.

The piles of shoes, glasses, suitcases and prostheses were chilling testimony of what happened there. For me, personally, it was hard to see the children's drawings that were copied on the wall of the Jewish pavilion at Auschwitz. As a mother, the murder of children in general and in this context in particular, is one of the most monstrous acts that one can think about. To see the world through the eyes of young children at the time through these paintings was unbearable.

At the end of the journey we arrived at Birkenau, where, in fact, the largest destruction of European Jewry occurred. In Birkenau, contrary to Auschwitz, there are no local guides or explanations. This was, in fact, the main death factory of the eradication industry, after the Germans were able to streamline the process, rising exponentially over the other camps.



In Birkenau we heard you, Asher Aud, read a section of your story about life in the camp, and its relevance to the here and now, as an Israeli and as a proud Jew. We first met you the night before, when you gave testimony about life in Poland from the outbreak of the Second World War to your immigration to Israel. The story left a deep impression on me; a boy's survival against all odds, at a time when all moral rules were being violated. I was pleased to take part in the project of writing your biography, initiated by Eliad Shraga, who forged ahead with the generous assistance of Yael Yoschpe, Maya Levin and Avinoam Porat. I know that bringing your story to light is a dream come true for you, and for that I'm very happy.

**Nili Menahemi**



## Student speeches at the end of the journey to Poland, October, 2014



As part of the documentation and commemoration project we had the privilege to meet Asher Aud, to hear his story and ask questions. Asher welcomed us to his home with a big smile. We sat down and listened to his powerful story and for a few moments we felt as if we were part of his extended family. It was important for us to take advantage of the opportunity we had while sitting with Asher to ask questions that were a little less trivial, and to try to hear stories and memories that aren't told every day. Not everyone gets to hear the story of our country first hand, and especially not teenagers our age.

Asher Aud, in his role at the Defense Ministry, had to change his name. He changed his name from Anshel Sheratzki, and selected the name, "Aud", symbolizing a charred piece of wood that did not burn all the way through, but left an ember. Asher survived two ghettos: the ghetto in his hometown of Zdunska Wola, and the Lodz ghetto. Additionally, he survived three concentration camps: Auschwitz Birkenau, Mathausen and Gunskirchen. He did not know he would survive, but he fought. Every day that he survived was his victory.

We never imagined that, almost a year later, we would meet Asher again, and even more, that we would go with him to Poland. To hear Asher Aud's personal story in Poland was a unique and different experience for us than hearing the story in his Jerusalem home. The story was very familiar to us, and we almost remembered it by heart, but to hear it together with our classmates, guides, and the teachers accompanying us after the personal process that everyone goes through inside himself, a process that begins with the preparation for the journey and continues through the journey itself, and includes visits to the Jewish shtetl before the war,





cemeteries, synagogues, labor and extermination camps, caused us to connect even more to the Holocaust in general, and to Asher's story in particular.

We experienced great excitement when Asher spoke in the synagogue in Krakow on Friday night. He broke into song, and all the students joined him, when we were in the barracks and on the ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he finished the story on the last day of the trip. The fact that delegations of Israeli high school students arrive each year to Poland is proof that, despite everything, the Jewish people won. It is because of those who struggled to survive, like Asher Aud did, that we are here today, free and united in a state of our own.

Asher, we want to thank you for taking the time to be with us and especially for the joy of living that you provided. "God forbid you forget, God forbid you forgive", we vow before all those present in this hall, to ensure that future generations will not forget.





*Yad Vashem*



## The words of Dorit Novak, CEO of Yad Vashem, Lifetime Achievement Award Ceremony, June, 2015



Stand up and tell the story firsthand...

Chava Bar Yesha, one of the women who, for many years, was a partner for educational programs at the school, said one day, when asked why she tells her story, "If one day someone will come and say it didn't happen, you will be able to say, 'She was there and she told me...'"

I think that Asher, by his actions and his behavior these many years, does sacred and important work by telling his story, like many of his friends.

It's not easy. It is not taken for granted. It is a process that exacts a huge mental and emotional price, but its importance is indescribable. The importance of the decision of some survivors to tell their story - despite the difficulty and pain - and the very fact that they survived to tell the story, transmits the important message of how powerful the life force is, the force of action, the power of humanity to carry on and uplift, from the most horrible places known to man to places where there is hope and optimism, action and dialogue, connection and joy.

For this we want to thank Asher, as well as the many tens and hundreds like him who bear this burden, not an easy one and one that does not ease with the years. Asher and others like him pave the way for many like us, educators, who in some ways see ourselves as responsible for carrying the torch and continuing to spread the light of their story to future generations, younger generations, etc.

I want to finish with a short poem, written by Polish poet and Nobel Prize winner, Wislawa Szymborska. For me, this poem communicates exactly what I just said.



**Twenty-seven bones, thirty-five muscles, almost two thousand nerve cells,  
We have in the tip of each of our five fingers.  
They are enough to write Mein Kampf or Winnie the Pooh.**

And if I ask myself what is education, it is a tower of people with the same fingertips.  
And there will be more and more people who will write Winnie the Pooh or  
contribute greatly to humanity and, God forbid, no more will write Mein Kampf.



## My speech at the ceremony



Hello and welcome.

**I am Asher Aud, an ember plucked from the fire; Anshel Sheratzki, son of Samuel Hirsch and Yocheved, may the Lord avenge their blood. I am a survivor of the Zdunska Wola and Lodz ghettos, a survivor of the camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Mauthausen and Gunskirchen. I was saved from the Nazi inferno.**

I had the privilege to immigrate to Israel in 1945, to serve as a watchman in the Yishuv's Jewish Police Force. I fought in the wars of Israel for the establishment of the state.

I had the privilege to reach Jerusalem. I had the privilege to work in the military industry for almost forty years. I had the great privilege, as a single person without a relative in the entire world, to marry my wife, Chaya. We have three children and ten grandchildren.

I have the privilege of being an honored Jerusalemite.

For twenty years I have accompanied groups of school children, military officers and security personnel on trips to Poland. I returned from Poland last Friday, after accompanying a delegation of a company commanders' course, as a witness.

I am going again this Saturday night.

I meet delegations from places of employment, hear statements about how this trip changes the way they think about life, their families, and the state. I think every person should pass through the shadow of death there in order to understand what life is. These journeys are of great importance. I travel four or five times a year. It is not easy mentally and physically. I do not get paid for it but I know what they contribute.



The journey to Poland is not a fun field trip. It has a role. There, students learn what the State of Israel means for us, why what happened happened, and how bitter the hatred of the Jewish people was.

It happened, first of all, because the Jewish people had no homeland.

My generation of Holocaust survivors came to Israel broken, hurt and depressed. But we had the power to build the State of Israel in all its glory. We knew what it was not to have a country, and learned how important it is for us to have one.

I had the privilege to light the torch together with IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz at Birkenau, where I was put as a child, scared and depressed, being led into the unknown.

I had the privilege of lighting a torch here at Yad Vashem on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Today, I have the privilege to receive the Yad Vashem award, and for that, I again thank my wife, Chaya, the Yad Vashem administration, donors, and all of you, for coming.

I stand here as a representative on earth of the Six Million who did not have the privilege.

It is my private victory;

It is the victory of Israel.

The people of Israel live!

Am Yisrael Chai!



**An excerpt from the book, "Yitzhak - the story that wasn't told", by Dvir Kariv, dealing with the murder of Yitzhak Rabin against the backdrop of events preceding the murder, and its consequences on Israeli society**



Dvir Kariv, who works for the *Shabak* (General Security Forces) in the intelligence unit of the defense of democracy branch, was the first person to converse with the murderer of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Shabak headquarters on the night of the assassination. Kariv met Asher Aud on a service mission to Poland. Afterwards, he wrote about his experiences in his book:

...During this period I was chosen to represent the unit on a mission to Poland, a powerful emotional experience for any Jew who sets foot in Poland on a journey of remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust, and especially for employees of the General Security Services, an organization responsible for defending our country. My grandparents lost most of their families in this accursed land. In many aspects, I marched on the freezing trail of hell in my family's footsteps. These are seven days of tearing down one's highest walls of toughness and resilience. You find yourself facing evil. With your compatriots at your side, you begin a journey that is very personal and emotional, that sharpens the awareness of your place and your professional role. It seemed to me that in my current emotional state, I was ripe for such an experience.

A witness joined us on our mission, an 85-year-old survivor named Asher Aud. A dear Jew from Zdunska Wola, he turned this journey into a peak point for me in my understanding of my declining situation, mostly by showing me that the passage of time doesn't necessarily dull the symptoms, in fact, exactly the opposite. On the third day, he described to us the selection that fated him to live, a child of 13, and his mother and brother Gabriel, to die. A 13-year-old child who suddenly found himself alone in the Lodz ghetto, trying to survive. Asher told us that to this day, he still sees



the images of his mother and brother before him at the moment of their separation. He said that their expressions have never left him, even after all these years. For all these years he remains the same "little Anshel" that fought for his life in the ghetto. The way he described his experiences clarified to me the way images from his past are the nightmares of his thoughts, until this day.

Asher is one of those people whom you feel affection for immediately. I had long conversations with him, and we discovered that after coming to Israel, when he was in Magdiel, he worked on my grandparents' poultry farm. I really felt that our meeting was not by accident. He appeared in my life at a point when I needed someone like him more than anything, with his life story. During one day on the mission we marched in Auschwitz-Birkenau, a hundred Shabak employees in row after row, behind the security services banner and the Israeli flag. Numerous Israelis stood on the sidelines, watching the powerful display, on the Polish soil soaked with Jewish blood. At some point they realized who we were. We could feel their pride swell. The head of the service branch marched in front, together with Asher Aud, and we behind them, flags waving.

Suddenly, in the midst of the powerful emotions that gripped me, images began racing through my mind. I was a prisoner, marching through a concentration camp on a death march. Those on the sidelines began to shout, "Nazis! Nazis!" Among them stood the "hero" of my nightmares. The laughing assassin in the blue shirt stood there shouting at me, "Nazi! Nazi!" loudly and laughingly. Again he had caught me unprepared. I wasn't prepared for his laughter. On one hand, here I was, marching as a proud Israeli, employed in this service because we have a country and a general security organization that operates against radicals like him, and on the other hand, I was experiencing jolts of trauma from the events of the murder of Yitzhak Rabin. In the past, during patrols in my territory where fanatics reside, I'd been cursed at and called a "Nazi", but in those situations, I was wrapped in my defense role. This time, I was here as myself, with only my thoughts, with no defense.

At the end of the day we parted from our head of service. He hugged Asher warmly. The journey continued without him. The next day I noticed that Asher looked very

tired. We marched through Majdanek and prepared for a ceremony while Asher sat on the sidelines, alone. I sat down next to him and asked how he was doing. Asher looked at me with tears in his eyes. He said he had slept very little the night before; that saying farewell to the head of the service brought him back to his farewell to his mother and brother, and that image ran through his mind all night, preventing him from falling asleep. He told me about the difficult nights, the flashes of memory, the heartaches and headaches that never go away.

Suddenly, during my conversation with an 85-year-old man whose childhood years were a nightmare, I understood that I, too, had been sentenced, and that even after another 40 years, I wouldn't be able to sleep at night. Time had not and would not heal me, unless I stopped fighting alone and asked for help. After Asher told me his story on that freezing cold morning in Majdanek, for the remainder of the journey, during long hours on the bus, I found myself thinking, "How much longer?" It began to dawn on me that I needed help. That I needed to reach the obvious conclusion and stop behaving as if everything was alright, pretending so others wouldn't say anything, wouldn't gossip about me or feel sorry for me. I needed help, and it was clear to me there. On that terrible ground of Poland, it began to seep through my being, the insight that my life was becoming empty; that because of my ego and other considerations I was allowing myself to be extinguished in a chasm of loss.



**Am Israel Chai!**  
**The people of Israel live!**



*To my right Yuval Diskin, former head of the Shin-Bet. To my left: Dvir Kariv*







**“Mother, this is where we part ways”, I said.**

We were at the cemetery, my mother, my little brother Gabriel, and myself. Of all the graves, we found ourselves near the grave of my grandmother...how symbolic. In one moment, I realized it was time to say goodbye. Mother looked at me, her eyes gazing deep into my thin bones, stabbing my heart. I was shaken. I do not know where my insight came from. I cannot reproduce what led me to say these sharp words as I stood next to my grandmother's grave, words that were the last I said to her...ever. I see her face, remember every detail and expression, and hear the screams around us. Until today. Every day. As if over seventy-five years have not passed.

**Asher Aud**

An ember plucked from the fire.

The story of a boy was left alone against the cruel powers of evil and didn't break.

The story of a youth who fought his way back to life, and was able to smile again.

The story of the man who didn't look back, who built a family despite the ruins of his past.

The story of a man who dedicated his life to passing on and immortalizing a message for all.