



Bulletin number 142 – January 2026

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In the Sydney massacre, during the lighting of the Hanukkah candle, **Tibor Weitzen**, born in Uzhgorod, was murdered. Our condolences to his wife, son and daughter, his sister, Ilana Rubinstein [Hadera], and to all his family. May his memory be blessed! [We will tell about him in the next newsletter]



1. The Association's Letter to Commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day

To mark the event, as every year, we send a letter to our Holocaust survivors, some of whom are already nursing, to assure them that we, the members of the following generations, will continue to keep in our hearts the memory of the communities that were destroyed. We wish them health and happiness with their families. Our heroic survivors tell us more than once: "You are our revenge on the Nazi oppressor!"



2. Höcker Album

While searching for information about the "Auschwitz Album", which documents the Holocaust of the Jews of Carpatorus, I came across another album, completely different... To my horror, it describes the **cheerful and relaxed lives of the murderers - during the period when our family members were murdered**. I did not know this album. All life is learning... I will upload the summary of the information from Wikipedia: The Höcker Album is a collection of photographs believed to have been collected by Karl-Friedrich Höcker, an officer in the SS, during the Nazi regime in Germany. It contains over one hundred images of the lives and living conditions of the officers and administrators who ran the

Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp complex. The album is unique and an indispensable document of the Holocaust; it is now in the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, D.C.

According to the museum, the photograph album was found by an unnamed American counterintelligence officer, who was billeted in Frankfurt after Germany's surrender in 1945. This officer discovered the photo album in an apartment there, and when he returned to the United States, he took the album with him. In January 2007, the American officer donated the album to the USHMM, with the request that his identity not be disclosed. The captions of the photographs, and the people featured in the images, quickly confirmed that it depicts life in and around the Auschwitz camps. The very first photograph is a double portrait of Richard Baer, Auschwitz camp commandant between 1944 and 1945, and Baer's adjutant, Karl Höcker.

The album contains 116 photographs, all in black and white, almost all of them featuring German officers. It is believed to have been the property of Höcker because he appears in far more of the images than any other individual. On the title page underneath a picture of Höcker and Baer it is written "With the Commandant SS Stubaf. Baer, Auschwitz 21.6.44", identifying Höcker as the owner of the album. He is also the only person in the album to appear alone in any of the images. Some of the images depict formal events, like military funerals and the dedication of a new hospital. They also include images of the camp officers relaxing at a staff retreat known as the Solahütte, a rustic lodge only around 20 miles away from the camp complex. These images are regarded as the most striking, because they show cheerful staff officers singing, drinking and eating while, in the camp itself, tremendous suffering is taking place.

A number of the photographs show officers relaxing in the company of young women—stenographers and typists, trained at the SS school in Obernai, who were known generally as SS Helferinnen, the German word for (female) "helpers".

Both of the camp's most well-known commanders, Richard Baer and Rudolf Höss, are visible in the photographs. Josef Mengele, known to camp prisoners as the "Angel of Death", was a trained physician, who directed medical experiments on twin children in the camp. He regularly took part in the "selection" on the train arrival platform, judging which prisoners would be immediately executed and which would be permitted to live and perform slave labor[3].

In all, the album contains eight photographs depicting Mengele. Before the donation of the album to the museum, no known images showed him within the camp grounds.

The photographs of Mengele were all taken at the SS resort Solahütte. These photographs appear to have been taken on July 29, 1944, to honour the end of Höss's second tenure as garrison senior. Other officers depicted at these celebrations alongside Mengele and Höss include Josef Kramer, Franz Hoessler, Walter Schmidetzki, Anton Thumann, Otto Moll and Max Sell.

The photographs in the Höcker Album are viewed as especially chilling because of the time during which they were made, **between June and December 1944**. It has been noted by archivists and historians that this period overlaps with the mass extermination of hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews in the spring and summer of 1944—an event known as "the Hungarian Transport". These Jews were gathered and shipped to Auschwitz after the March 1944 invasion of Hungary by the Nazis. So many Hungarian Jews were killed in the Auschwitz camps during that period that the crematoria were incapable of consuming all the bodies, so open pits were dug for that purpose. According to Rebecca Erbelding, the museum archivist who received the album from its donor and first recognized its significance, "the album reminds us that the perpetrators of the Holocaust were human beings, men and women with families, children and pets, who celebrated holidays

and took vacations... These people were human beings... and these photographs remind us what human beings are capable of when they succumb to anti-Semitism, racism and hatred".

Höcker married before the war and had a son and daughter during the war, with whom he was reunited after his release from 18 months in a British POW camp in 1946. Early in the 1960s, he was apprehended by West German authorities in his hometown, where he was a bank official. It is not known why the bank rehired and promoted him after a long absence, during which he had nothing to do with banking.

At his trial in Frankfurt, part of the noted Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, Höcker denied having participated in the selection of victims at Birkenau or having ever personally executed a prisoner. He further denied any knowledge of the fate of the approximately 400,000 Hungarian Jews who were murdered at Auschwitz during his term of service at the camp. Höcker was shown to have knowledge of the genocidal activities at the camp, but could not be proved to have played a direct part in them. In postwar trials, Höcker denied his involvement in the selection process. While accounts from survivors and other SS officers all but placed him there, prosecutors could locate no conclusive evidence to prove the claim.

In August 1965 Höcker was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for aiding and abetting in over 1,000 murders at Auschwitz. He was released in 1970 and was able to return to his bank post as a chief cashier, where he worked until his retirement.

On 3 May 1989 a district court in the German city of Bielefeld sentenced Höcker to four years' imprisonment for his involvement in gassing to death prisoners, primarily Polish Jews, in the Majdanek concentration camp in Poland. Camp records showed that between May 1943 and May 1944 Höcker had acquired at least 3,610 kilograms of Zyklon B poisonous gas for use in Majdanek from the Hamburg firm of Tesch & Stabenow. [

Link to Höcker Album: [מוציאון הזיכרון לשואה בארץות הברית - גלריה מקוונת של חמשנות אלבום הוקר](#)

3. Pilecki Report – Information from Wikipedia and the "Librarians" website

Witold's Report, also known as Pilecki's Report, is a report about the Auschwitz concentration camp, written in 1943 by Witold Pilecki, a Polish military officer and a member of the Polish resistance. Pilecki volunteered in 1940 to be imprisoned in Auschwitz to organize a resistance movement and send out information about the camp. He escaped from Auschwitz in April 1943. He was the first comprehensive record of a Holocaust death camp to be obtained by the Allies.



The report includes details about the gas chambers, "Selektion", and sterilization experiments. It states that there were three crematoria in Auschwitz II capable of cremating 8,000 people daily.

On 9 November 1939, after the Polish Army had been defeated in the invasion of Poland, Cavalry Captain Witold Pilecki, together with his commander, Major Jan Włodarkiewicz, founded the Secret Polish Army (Tajna Armia Polska, TAP). In 1940, Pilecki presented to his superiors a plan to enter Germany's Auschwitz concentration camp, gather intelligence on the camp, and organize inmate resistance. At the time, little was known about how the Germans ran the camp, which appeared to operate as an internment, or large prison, camp. Pilecki's superiors

approved his plan and provided him with a false identity card in the name of "Tomasz Serafiński". On 19 September 1940 he deliberately went out during a Warsaw street roundup (łapanka) and was caught by the Germans, along with some 2,000 innocent civilians. After two days' detention in the Light Horse Guards Barracks, where prisoners suffered beatings with rubber batons, Pilecki was sent to Auschwitz and was assigned inmate number 4859.

ZOW's intelligence network [Związek Organizacji Wojskowych] inside the camp started to send regular reports to the Home Army starting in October 1940. Beginning in November 1940, the first information about genocide occurring in the camp was sent via ZOW to the Home Army headquarters in Warsaw. From March 1941 onwards Witold Pilecki's messages were forwarded to the Polish government in exile in London and, through it, to the British government and other Allied governments. These reports informed the Allies about the unfolding Holocaust and were the principal source of intelligence on Auschwitz-Birkenau for the Western Allies.

These reports provided the Allies with information about the Holocaust and provided intelligence on what was happening in the Auschwitz area. The report includes details about the gas chambers, selection, and human experiments, conducted by the Nazis. **It reports that there were three crematoriums at Birkenau, capable of burning 8,000 bodies a day.** Raoul Hilberg wrote that the Office for Strategic Services in London, which received the report, added a note that there was no indication of its reliability. The report is a condensation and explanation of the "Polish Major's Report" written by Jerzy Tabau, which is the earliest of three eyewitness reports known collectively as the "Auschwitz Protocols" and which warned of the mass murder and other crimes being committed within the Auschwitz camp.

On June 20, 1942, four Poles, Eugeniusz Bendera [pl], Kazimierz Piechowski, Stanisław Gustaw Jaster and Józef Lempart, made a daring escape from Auschwitz. Dressed as members of the SS-Totenkopfverbände, fully armed and in an SS staff car, they drove out the main gate in a stolen automobile, a Steyr 220, belonging to Rudolf Höss. Jaster, a member of ZOW, carried with him a detailed report about conditions in the camp, written by Pilecki. The Germans never recaptured any of them.

After his own daring escape from Auschwitz on April 27, 1943, Pilecki wrote Raport W. The report was signed by other members of the Polish underground, who worked with ZOW.

Later, after his release from the German prisoner-of-war camp at Murnau in 1945, Pilecki compiled a version of the report that was over 100 pages long. The first publication of Witold's Report took place in 2000, 55 years after the war. Additional documents were discovered in 2009. An English translation was published in 2012 under the title "The Auschwitz Volunteer: Beyond Bravery".

Supplement from the "Librarians" website <https://blog.nli.org.il/witold-pilecki/>

Prisoner 4859: The Hero Who Volunteered to Be Imprisoned in Auschwitz - Noa Reichman, 18.01.2022

Witold was born on May 13, 1901 in Karelia, Russia, where his family was exiled after the suppression of the Polish uprising in 1863-1864. His grandfather, Józef Pilecki, spent 7 years in exile in Siberia for his part in this uprising. Witold himself would also rebel against the Russians, this time against the Soviets, who occupied Poland, but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

...After the war, Witold was discharged from the army, married Maria, and worked on the family farm. The couple had two children, Andrey and Sophia, and life seemed to be returning to a routine course. But then World War II broke out.

In November 1939, Pilecki and his commander established the "Secret Polish Army" (Tajna Armia Polska) in Warsaw, one of the first underground groups against the Nazis in the country. They recruited people, stockpiled weapons, and expanded their activities to other cities in Poland. By 1940, the underground already numbered more than 8,000 fighters.

"...Tomasz Sierpiński" arrived at the camp and immediately began organizing the prisoners into an underground group that promoted mutual aid among the prisoners and sent reports "outside." At first, its members only passed notes with the names of prisoners, who had died, or been murdered, and later they provided increasingly detailed reports about what was happening and the abuse of the prisoners by the camp staff. The underground group smuggled food, clothing, and medicine into the camp, and tried to plan a prisoner uprising, while receiving support from members of the Polish underground army - who were supposed to "conquer" the camp from the Nazis and free the prisoners. In August 1941, "Serpinski" reported on the gassing of Soviet prisoners of war, probably one of the first experiments by the Nazis with this method of murder. 'The first Bolshevik prisoners, at this stage only officers, were brought to a room in Block 13 (Block 11 according to the new count). After about 700 of them had been crammed into the room, so crowded that none of them could sit, the room was locked and sealed. That evening a group of German soldiers arrived, led by an officer. They put on gas masks, and threw several gas canisters into the room. Then they stood and calmly watched the effects of the operation... This was the first experiment in murder by means of prussic acid.' Prussic acid is a name for hydrogen cyanide.

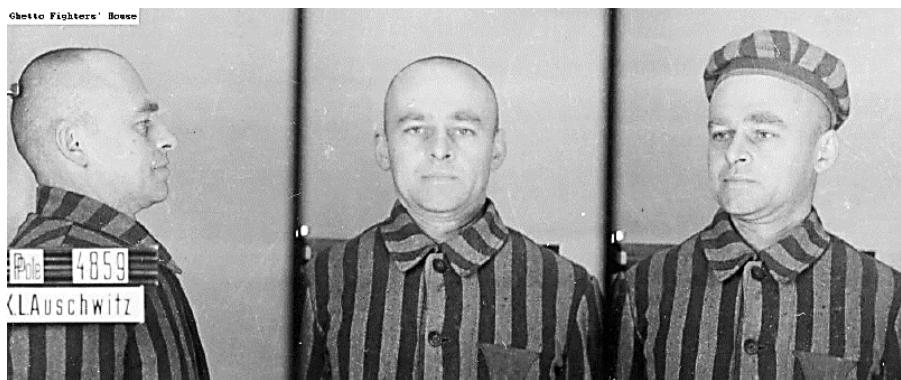
...Pilecki then reported on the construction of the gas chambers and crematoria, and on the increasing shipments of extermination victims.

The reports were passed to England with the help of the Polish underground – but they were not believed there. The English claimed that Pilecki was fabricating events and "inflating" the data in order to convince the English to act. When Witold realized that no help would come from outside, and that the plan for the uprising would not be carried out, he decided to escape. On the night of April 26-27, 1943, after 945 days as a prisoner in Auschwitz, Pilecki and two other friends escaped. They took advantage of the fact that they were on night duty at a bakery outside the camp, overpowered the guard who was watching over them, and escaped – with documents they had stolen from the Germans. They also had cyanide in their possession, which they intended to swallow in case they were caught. With the help of local residents, they managed to get away from the camp, and eventually managed to reach Warsaw.

Pilecki joined the Armia Krajowa (the main Polish underground during the war) and took part in the Warsaw Uprising. The unit under his command inflicted heavy losses on the Germans. When the uprising was suppressed, Pilecki was captured by the Nazis and remained in prisoner-of-war camps until the end of the war.

...On March 3, 1948, a show trial began, in which Pilecki and three of his comrades were accused of spying for Western countries and the Polish government-in-exile. In mid-May, he was sentenced to death, and on the 25th of that month, 1948, he was executed in Mokotów Prison in Warsaw. His body was apparently thrown into a mass grave in the Powązkowski Military Cemetery in Warsaw. The communist authorities forbade mentioning his name and his actions. Only on October 1, 1990, after the fall of the communist regime in Poland, were Witold Pilecki and his comrades cleared of the charges, and books about him and his heroic deeds began to be published".

The photo is from the archives of the Ghetto Fighters' House, which received the photo from the Auschwitz Museum



4. Children in the Holocaust:

A. silver spoon engraved with the name of the girl Susie Strauss, who was murdered in Auschwitz (Munkács)

There is a group on Facebook called "Children in the Holocaust - Documentation Project, Interest Group. At the end of July 2025, I found the moving and tragic documentation of the girl Susie Strauss, who lived in Munkács, and perished in the Holocaust. This is what the website said:

"Menachem-Max Strauss and his wife, Elisabeth, née Boehm, both descendants of established secular families, lived in Munkács. Menachem-Max was a senior employee of the Swiss company Laturitza [name of the river, that runs through the city] for growing and processing wood, which had a branch in Munkács. During the deportation of Hungarian Jewry in 1944, Elisabeth and her daughter, Suzy, were deported to Auschwitz, where they were murdered, along with Elisabeth's mother [Antonia]. Max was, apparently, taken to the labor camps and there he perished [his sister-in-law, Georgina, wrote in her testimony that Max, also, perished in Auschwitz]. Suzy's belongings were kept by Georgina Meyer, née Boehm, Elisabeth's sister. She managed to escape to Budapest, where she found refuge in one of the protected houses. It is unclear how the belongings came into Georgina's hands, since she was

not returned to Munkács and after the war immigrated to Israel, via Yugoslavia. It is possible that the family belongings were kept by neighbors and they contacted her. Georgina died in 2006. The belongings were given to Yad Vashem by her late husband's nephew.

Photographs of the Strauss family before the war. The girl Susie Strauss appears in many of the photographs.

Which of you belongs to this family? Update Ruthi Fixler





YAD VASHEM
The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority
Hall of Names

יד ושם
שות הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה
היכל השמות

Page of Testimony דף עד

דב' דע לשות הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה בפה, כהונת ברור ואובייקט דוד.

The Man and His Wishes Letter Form is used for the commemoration of the Jews who perished during the Holocaust; please fill in a separate form for each victim, in block capitals.

Victim's photo:  Victim's family name on back: STRAUS
Do not glue.

Victim's date of birth: 1881 Gender: M/F: M
Age at death: 13 Place of birth: MUNKACS

Nationality: HUNGARY Father: STRAUS
Mother: BÖHM

Victim's wife: HUNGARY Husband: MUNKACS

Address: HUNGARY Place of work: MUNKACS

Date of death: 1944 Country: HUNGARY Region: MUNKACS Place of death: AUSCHWITZ

Circumstances of death: *למי עזבתי* (I left alone)

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this testimony is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Persecution name: BÖHM Family name: MAYER Pat name: GEORGINA
Street/Zip code: 006 City: 46 Postcode: 04-883460
Relationship to victim: Sister
I am not a survivor: No

Places, events and activities during the war (prison, deportation, ghetto, camp, death march, hiding, escape, resistance, contact):
Holocaust survivors may order a special form in which to fill in their details. During the war I was in a camp / ghetto / I found the survivors in hiding / I was like a page (like witness optional).

Signature: Georgina Meir

Number: 08-4-392



Information about Georgina Meir, Susie's aunt: Born in Hungary on 18/05/1907, immigrated to Israel in 1949, Died on 29/01/2006, Aged 99 at the time of her death; buried in Haifa.

Testified that Susie's mother, Elizabeth, was 41 years old and her father, Max, was 46 years old.

B. Hanna Adler from Munkács

The same site published a photo from the Auschwitz Museum of the girl Hanna Adler from Munkács, born on 13 May 1940, who was murdered in Auschwitz in 1944.

On the "Yad Vashem" site I found a testimony sheet, which was filled out in 2009 by her half-sister, named Preeva Tramiel Adler.

The girl's full name was Hana Hajmalka; Her parents were Charlotte and Samuel and they lived at 48 Jasinska street

Do any of you recognize her as a relative?

Any information – please forward to Ruthi Fixler



5. From the press: Argentina turned a blind eye and helped Mengele hide - Ynet 1.12.2025

/ Itamar Eichner

"Dr. Josef Mengele, the notorious Nazi doctor who carried out barbaric experiments on prisoners and Jews and sent Jews to their deaths in gas chambers, fled after the war to Argentina, where he lived quietly even though authorities knew his true identity. That is according to documents that were hidden for decades. The papers were released Sunday on orders from President Javier Milei. Mengele, dubbed the "angel of death of Auschwitz," oversaw the torture of prisoners at the extermination camp under the guise of medical research. He escaped from Germany to Argentina in 1949 and went into hiding there. Milei has now ordered the disclosure of how Argentine authorities tracked Mengele's life across South America during the 1950s, yet never arrested him. After World War II, Argentina gave refuge to senior Nazis, such as Mengele and Adolf Eichmann, who worked to annihilate the Jewish people and arrived in the country after Hitler's regime fell. Eichmann was captured in Argentina by Israel's Mossad in 1960, tried in Israel and executed. Mengele lived in Argentina, the documents indicate, but ultimately died in Brazil.

Mengele studied philosophy in Munich in the 1920s, where he came under the influence of Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi Party ideologue, and became an ardent Nazi. He later studied medicine in Frankfurt. In 1933 he joined the SA [Sturmabteilung, the Nazi storm troopers were made up of thousands of thugs and unemployed people. They encouraged violence, broke up assemblies, and increased public insecurity. They were also known as the "Brownshirts," after the color of their uniforms, as opposed to the "Blackshirts" of the SS.] and began working at the research institute the Nazi Party established to study heredity and so-called racial purity. At the start of the war he served as a medical officer in the Waffen SS.

From 1943 to 1945, he was chief physician at Birkenau, the extermination camp adjacent to Auschwitz. His main task was selecting detainees arriving by train either for forced labor or for the gas chambers. His victims called him the "angel of death." He also conducted cruel medical experiments on prisoners. Mengele focused his monstrous research on twins as a means of studying heredity. Whatever scientific value his findings may or may not have had, his inhumane methods meant that no self-respecting researcher relied on them afterward.

After Auschwitz was evacuated, Mengele was transferred to the Mauthausen concentration camp, and when Mauthausen was liberated he vanished. After several years in Bavaria, he reached South America in 1949. According to the documents, Mengele entered Argentina in 1949 with an Italian passport under the name **Helmut Gregor**. He began a new life there.

By the mid-1950s, the files show, Argentine authorities knew that the man responsible for the deaths of masses of people was in their country. The New York Post reported that newspaper clippings in the newly opened dossier include an undated, chilling interview with one of Mengele's victims, Jose Formanski. 'He gathered twins of all ages in the camp and performed experiments on them that always ended in death. Children, elderly people and women, what horrors,' Formanski said.

In 1956, Mengele asked the West German Embassy in Buenos Aires for his original birth certificate and, remarkably, began using his real name. He requested that his identity papers be reissued.

A document written by officials a year later recorded Mengele's explanation for entering Argentina under an alias. 'He said that during the war he served as a doctor in the German SS in Czechoslovakia, where the Red Cross called him a war criminal,' the document said.

The papers show that Argentine law enforcement agencies knew Mengele was living in Carapachay, a town on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, and that he had married his brother's widow during that period. They also indicate authorities were aware that his father visited him, possibly to invest in Mengele's new medical business.

In 1959, West Germany issued an arrest warrant for Mengele and sought his extradition, but a local judge rejected the request, claiming it was based on "political persecution." The failed extradition attempt led to international pressure on Argentina, and Mengele fled to Paraguay, where he obtained citizenship. When Argentine authorities finally raided his medical laboratory in Buenos Aires, he was already gone. After his escape, Argentine authorities relied heavily on foreign news reports to track him. Around 1960, the murderous doctor reached Brazil, where he was sheltered by farmers of German descent.

Mengele died after suffering a stroke while swimming near the coastal town of Bertioga in 1979. He was 67. He was buried under a false name, but an investigation led to his exhumation in 1985. Today his bones are used for forensic medicine training at the University of São Paulo's medical school."

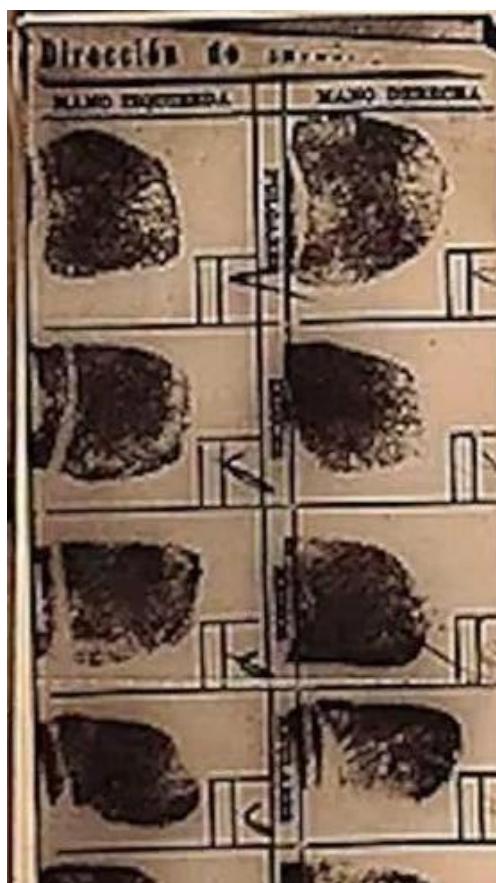
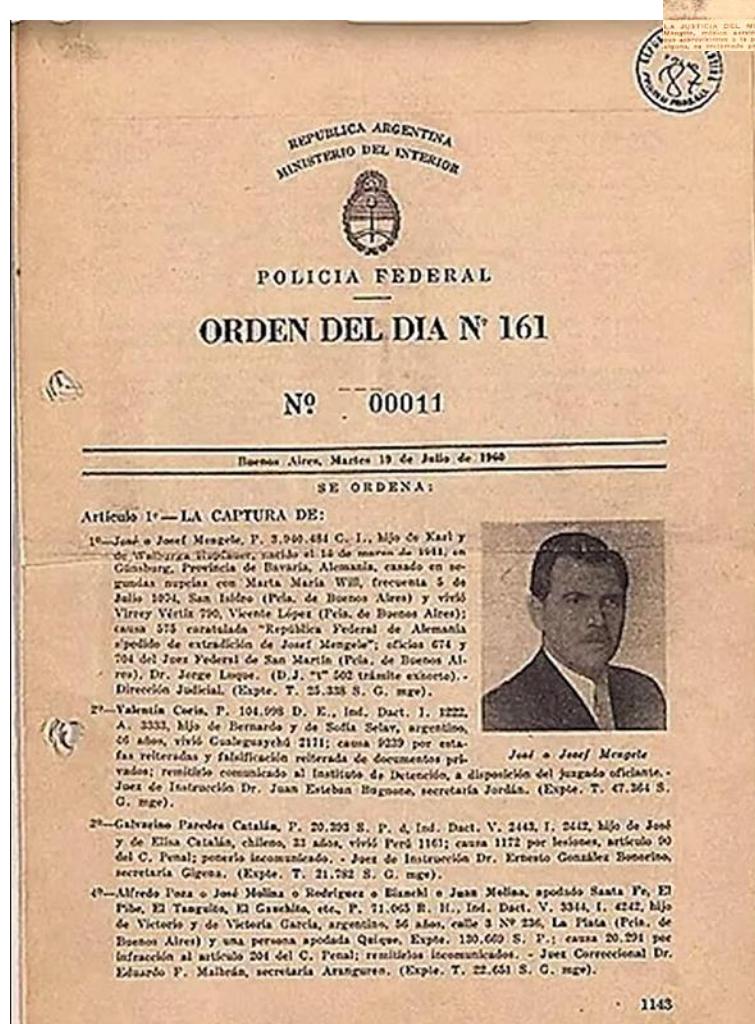
[For the documents released by Argentine authorities.](#)

Newspaper clippings collected in Argentina
(Photo: Argentina's National Archive)

One of the documents that was released (Photo: Argentina's National Archive)



Even fingerprints were collected
(Photo: Argentina's National Archive)



6. Testimonies of natives of Carpatorus at Yad Vashem

Ahead of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, I have begun collecting the thousands of testimonies of natives of Carpatorus on the Yad Vashem website.

The testimonies will be soon uploaded to the organization's website. Two very moving findings will be presented in this newsletter:

Sarah Bickel, born in Svalyava, escaped from Auschwitz with her daughter, Hanna, aged 7.5... I have never heard this rare story!

Testimony of Bickel Rosenstein Hanna, born in 1936, Svalyava, about her experiences in Svalyava and her escape with her mother from the crematoria in Auschwitz:

<https://collections.yadvashem.org/he/documents/6398582>

Memoirs of Sarah Bickel and Hanna: <https://collections.yadvashem.org/he/documents/9383696>

When I searched for information about this on Google, I found an article on Ynet from May 2019, by Anat Sheinkman; I will provide its summary.

Link to the full article: <https://xnet.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5502264,00.html>

"A miracle happened to her in the fact that in Auschwitz, the factory of death so efficient, they had not yet built a fence around crematorium number 4 while she was there, which allowed her to escape from the place. A miracle also happened to her when she escaped with her daughter, Hanna, from the line for the gas chambers, as the Nazis were busy at the time calming the terrified women who were being asked to undress, and did not notice that the two were escaping. A miracle also happened to her in that every now and then she met good people who helped her. But beyond these miracles, she was especially resourceful at that moment, in the line for the gas chambers, when she realized that everyone was entering, but no one was leaving, and she looked up, at the smoke rising from the crematoriums.

When she grabbed her daughter, Hanna, who was 7.5 years old, and took her aside, she did not even believe that they could escape. She only wanted them to die by gunshot and not by fire. But against all logic, she managed to escape from hell.

For a year she wandered the roads with her daughter, whom she had turned into a mute child, so that her cropped hair and the Yiddish in her mouth would not give them away. They moved from village to village, from barn to basement, from train station to labor camp, until the war came to an end.



left: Sarah Bickel



Her daughter Hanna Bickel [later: Rosenstein] after coming to Israel

"We were just a few meters from the crematorium," she said. "There was a God-awful commotion all around, screaming and barking dogs. The Nazis shouted: 'Get undressed,' but the women, who were religious, refused, and they beat them. The Nazis claimed that they were putting us in the shower and then we would get bread with jam, but

my mother saw people coming in, and no one coming out. Everyone there began to realize that this was the end, and they prayed. My mother said to her sister Malka: 'I'm taking the girl to pee on the side.' It was towards evening, and it was getting dark, so she continued walking into the trees. Her goal was not to escape. Because of the smoke, she thought that people were being burned alive, so she preferred to be shot in the back. That was her goal. She did not believe that she would be able to escape.

The route of the mother and daughter's escape is difficult to reconstruct accurately. One can only try to piece it together from the testimonies, given by the mother in Slovakia, when they were at the beginning of their escape, and from fragments, preserved in her daughter's memory. But you don't have to know all the details to understand **how brave and daring Sarah Bickel was**. "The mother and daughter traveled several hundred kilometers on foot and by train in their escape through an area guarded by Nazi guards," Bickel's summary of her testimony reads. "The population in this mountainous and difficult-to-reach region was both anti-Semitic and fearful, but all these difficulties could not dampen the courage of the Jewish mother fighting for her life and the life of her daughter." Bickel recounted the moments of the escape in the same testimony: "It was evening. I kept walking straight. It was already late when I got stuck in a swampy area. I couldn't continue." Her daughter, Hanna, added years later: "She walked like that all evening, until she simply couldn't walk anymore. She was carrying me in her arms. I didn't have the strength to walk, after we hadn't eaten or drunk for four days. **She had some kind of special, supernatural strength**. Apparently, in such cases there is strength".

The wonderful story of Sarah Bickel and her daughter, Hanna Rosenstein, appears in the book "**The Choice in Life**," published by the family.

Hanna, who was born in 1936, died in 2017, when the book was already in print. She is buried in Afula.

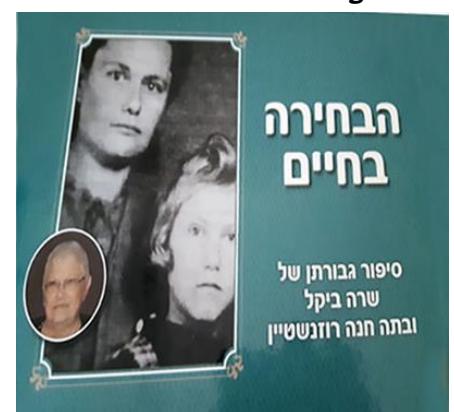
I managed to locate Mickey Rosenstein, Hanna's son, Sarah's grandson. His daughter, Noa, [Sarah's great-granddaughter] lives in Kiryat Ono, so I got the book for reading in its entirety. **Thank you for your sharing with us!**

Mickey in the forest clearing, where the escape began, reads the testimony of his mother and grandmother, June 2017



Hanna Rosenstein (Bickel) with her grandchildren

There is no doubt that Sarah's escape is unique in its audacity and courage - we will find the right time to pay her respects in the best way!



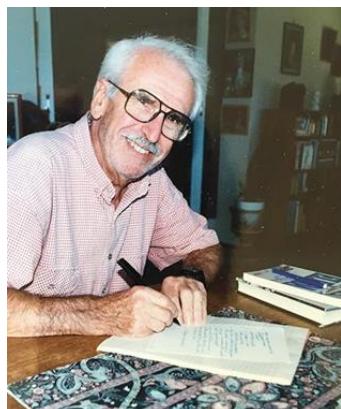
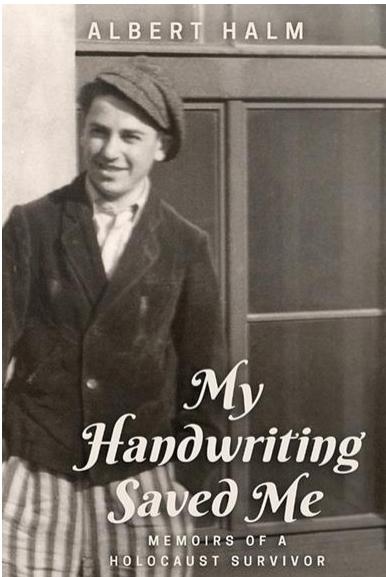
An interesting find at the site is a card of Jews who perished in the hospital at the Ebensee camp [where many from Carpatorus were imprisoned] and two notebooks containing the names of those who perished in the camp between 1944 and 1945. The card includes cards with names, several dates (probably the dates of admission to the hospital and death, and sometimes dates of treatment) and the cause of hospitalization or death. The card was brought to Yad Vashem by Albert Halm, who was deported from the Carpatorus region to the Auschwitz and Ebensee camps when he was 18 years old. At the Ebensee camp, he worked cleaning the Revier [In German: area] next to the crematorium. In the Revier, at the foot of each bunk there was a note on which the patient's personal details were recorded.

Link to the Yad Vashem website: <https://collections.yadvashem.org/he/documents/4434738>

I searched for information on the Internet about Albert Halm and this is the summary of the information from the Amazon website: "Albert Halm, Holocaust survivor, tells the fascinating story of his family carving out a meager life on the farm in the Carpathian Mountains, in what was then Czechoslovakia, taken away and being interned in three Nazi camps, and ultimately being saved from imminent death by his beautiful handwriting and design skills. He describes how he was able to secret away the true records of Jewish inmate deaths in the Ebensee Camp Hospital. Leaving the horrors of Europe, he settles in Australia and commences to catch up on the education, he missed out on, eventually entering the field of Diagnostic Radiography. As both a practitioner and a teacher he became renown, and dozens of his research papers are published around the world. He received the Order of Australia Medal for services to medicine in 1983. Using the mantra "We must never forget" he goes on to be the Founding President of the Australian Association of Jewish Holocaust Survivors.

"This is a touching account of the author's own life, that of his family and community, and the shattering impact of the Holocaust on everything that existed before the war. He provides a very detailed and personal view of life in a small mountain village, in what is now the Ukraine, including how anti-Semitism gradually crept up on them and continued to live on, many years after the war. You, really, get to know this kind hearted man, through his writing. His account of survival through the concentration camp life is moving and truthful, without being the focus of the whole book. He does not spare the truth of what happened during the Holocaust, but like many who write of those times, urges us to never forget. Albert Halm was a sensitive, observant, loving person, a man of faith and a survivor."

It also said that Albert was born in Bratislava, so it was important for me to clarify his connection to Carpatorus. I managed to contact Peter, Albert's son, and from him I received the following moving reply: "Thank you for your message. To clarify, my father, Albert, was indeed born in a hospital in Bratislava, but he grew up on our family farm in Czerna Tisa [today Chernotisov; in Hungarian: Feketeardo, Vinogradov district], near Jasina, in Carpatorus. That is where his roots and early life were centered. We know that the Halm family had lived there since about 1860. The original name dates back to 1860, when David Halm first settled in the area. You can learn more in my father's book "My Handwriting Saved Me: Memoirs of a Holocaust Survivor" - available as an e-book or print book on Amazon". [The book is free].



7. Righteous Among the Nations in Carpatorus: Weinberger Gabriel – Khust

Dovganich Vasily and his wife, Maria, owned a khutor [a type of rural settlement in some Eastern European countries; in the past the term referred mainly to a settlement with a single farm] not far from Khust in the Ruthenian Carpathians.

In the first half of October 1944, two young men, who had escaped from a Hungarian forced labor camp, moved into the Dovganich family home. One of the men was Gabriel Weinberger, whose family had been neighbors of the Dovganichs before the war, and the other was Andras Grinstein, born in Cluj, Romania. The two men arrived at the Dovganichs' home, malnourished, and were given shelter there until the Red Army liberated the area on October 24, 1944.

The Dovganichs' khutor was large, with several buildings, including stables and a barn, and Vasily prepared a hiding place for the two in the loft of the barn. During this time, the area was bustling with Hungarian soldiers and police, who were searching for Jews who had escaped from the labor camp. They searched the Dovganichs' property several times, but fortunately they did not find the two Jews. After the liberation, Gabriel Weinberger settled in Ukraine and Greenstein returned to Cluj. Both maintained contact with their rescuers. On January 12, 1997, Yad Vashem recognized Dovganich Mariya and Vasiliy Dovganich as Righteous Among the Nations.

In the memorial book "The Community of Khust and the Surroundings" by Zvi Menchel, there is a list of one family named Weinberger, parents and four children. There is also documentation of this family in the testimonial pages at Yad Vashem.

The parents are Avraham-Leib, born in 1915, killed in Buchenwald;

His wife, Zlati, née Klein, aged 28; killed in Auschwitz with the children;

The children: Dvora (aged 6), Metil-Rachel (aged 4.5), Yaakov (aged 2) and Shmuel-David (aged 8 months).



There is no documentation of any member of the Weinberger family who survived in Khust.

Gabriel's connection to the names mentioned is unclear. Perhaps he was a brother of Avraham-Leib, whose father was named Yaakov and whose mother's name is unknown.

The photo is of Yaakov Weinberger from Khust, whose father was named Gabor Gabriel, born in 1883, a bank manager, murdered in Auschwitz. Maybe Yaakov is Gabriel's father?



If this is the family... Jacob's wife, Olga-Miryam, born in 1895, a pharmacist, was murdered in Auschwitz. The witness pages were documented by the daughter, in 1991, from Budapest, Johanna Bergmann Weinberger

What is still unclear is the exact family name. The list of survivors says Gavriel Wainberg. On the other hand, in the text telling the story of his rescue, it is listed as Gavriel Weinberger

There is documentation about the Weinberg family in the witness pages.

Who, among you, has more information?

8. Israelis natives of Carpatorus: Hanna-Leah Hershkowitz (Solotvino)

In the WhatsApp group of Solotvino descendants, a message appeared in August 2025, written by Ruthi Fogel, our friend from Givat Shmuel – following the celebration of the birthday of Raoul Wallenberg (pictured), Righteous Among the Nations, who was born in August 1912.



Ruthie Vogel wrote: "My mother, Hanna-Leah Hershkowitz (Goldstein), was one of 6 people who met him, secretly, at the Swiss embassy in Budapest in a secret room. And there, under his auspices, at night, fake visas were issued to save Jews, and during the day she went out to distribute the visas. One day, about 2,000 Jews were captured and taken from the embassy to the nearby forest - the story is long... But my father, as a partisan, arrived in an SS uniform and saved the 2,000 Jews".

Following the conversation with Ruthi, I found Hanna-Leah's testimony on the "Yad Vashem" website. The summary of the testimony is: "Testimony of Hershkowitz (Shlomowicz) Hanna-Lea, born in 1925, Selo Slatina, Czechoslovakia, about her experiences in Budapest at the "Marked House" and at the Swiss Consulate. Daughter of a religious family; studies in a public school; activity in the Bnei Akiva movement; annexation to Hungary; moving to Budapest in 1941; death of father; work as a seamstress in a clothing salon; responsibility for the nine-year-old sister; activity in Bnei Akiva; German occupation in 1944; life in the "Marked House"; restrictions on Jews; transfer by Bnei Akiva operatives dressed in Hungarian army uniforms to the Swiss Consulate; work in the reception area at the consulate; forgery of documents; arrest while distributing forged documents; release from arrest; return to the consulate with the sister; transfer of the sister to a children's home; release by the Red Army; Training". The link to the three-part testimony, recorded on May 8, 2006 [Hannah-Leah was 81 years old] is:

<https://collections.yadvashem.org/he/documents/5727347>

The parents were Shabtai Shlomowitz and Sarah, née Goldstein. They had 5 children. The eldest was Etta, Hanna-Leah/Lili – the second, Avraham, and the twins: Chaya and Yaakov. Three returned from the Holocaust. She talks about the underground salt mines that were in Selo Slatina, [which is the origin of its name – salt]. The family had a bakery. The house had electricity and running water – because of the bakery; in other houses they drew water from the well. Hanna-Leah describes a modern town: a gymnasium, an elementary school, a train station, a small airport, where pipers landed, restaurants, theaters, hotels, halls for celebrations, modern shops and beautiful synagogues. Hanna-Leah – In the Yad Vashem documentation [including a synagogue in the family home]. There was a large yeshiva and several Hasidisms. There were also many youth movements in the town. At home they spoke Yiddish, with friends – Czech, but the mother also knew Hungarian, Romanian and German.



One of the most exciting chapters in Hanna-Leah's life story was **her underground activity at the Swiss Embassy in Budapest, where she was involved in rescuing many Jews**. What is surprising is that Hanna-Leah's name does not appear as an underground member on the website of the "Zionist Youth Underground in Budapest" [and she is not the only one, whose name is absent from this list...]. Hanna-Leah was taken from a "marked house" in Budapest by two activists, from "Bnei Akiva" and "Hashomer Hatzair", who were dressed in camouflage as members of the "Arrow Cross" ["Niloshim" Nyilaskeresztes]. There, among other things, she meets her friends from "Bnei Akiva", the Oslander brothers Oszi Nagy (Nagy Oszi) and David (Kis Oszi), later Asael, born in Uzhgorod, who are known on the website of the "Zionist Youth Underground in Budapest". During the days Hanna-Leah worked as an official employee at the consulate – for Jews who applied for protection passes [schutzpass] and at night, in the basement, she worked in the underground "Bnei Akiva" forging documents.

During the process of delivering these forged documents, she was arrested by the police for 24 hours, together with her cousin. Through cunning and trickery, she escaped imprisonment and deportation to Germany.

When she returned from detention, Hanna-Leah collected her little sister from the "marked house" in order to bring her to the consulate building. However, her entry was not possible and with the help of people from the place, her sister was brought in through a side entrance at the back.

One day, a dramatic event occurred: Nazis, dressed as chimney sweeps, hung from the chimneys, since they could not, legally, enter the Swiss embassy building. They took off their camouflage clothes and were dressed in the clothes of the local Nazis. All Jews staying in the consulate were required to raise their hands, including Hanna-Leah, because they were destined to be thrown into the Danube. But then, the man who would later become her husband, Moshe Hershkowitz, arrived and shouted "Stop! The Nazis, who thought that an official had arrived, fled for their lives, leaving behind weapons and hats. Thus, according to her testimony, 2,000 Jews were saved!

Hanna-Leah added that the house next to the Swiss consulate belonged to a gentile; the house was empty and he agreed to rent it to the underground service. It was a two-story house and the young men of "Bnei Akiva" lived in bunk beds.

During this period, activity outside the consulate was reduced - because of the Allied bombings. The houses in the vicinity were bombed, but the consulate building was not bombed.

While working at the consulate, Hanna-Leah met Raoul Wallenberg in this building. She remembered an impressive man, tall, blond, with blue eyes. Wallenberg would come to this building very often. She asked him, in Hungarian or German, to take her little sister, Chaya, to Sweden. But Wallenberg refused because of her young age [9 years old]. Eventually, Chaya was sent to an institution outside Budapest, where Jewish children were evacuated – to keep them away from missiles and diseases.

Eta, Hanna-Leah's eldest sister



Hanna-Leah and her husband, Moshe, on their wedding day, March 1946



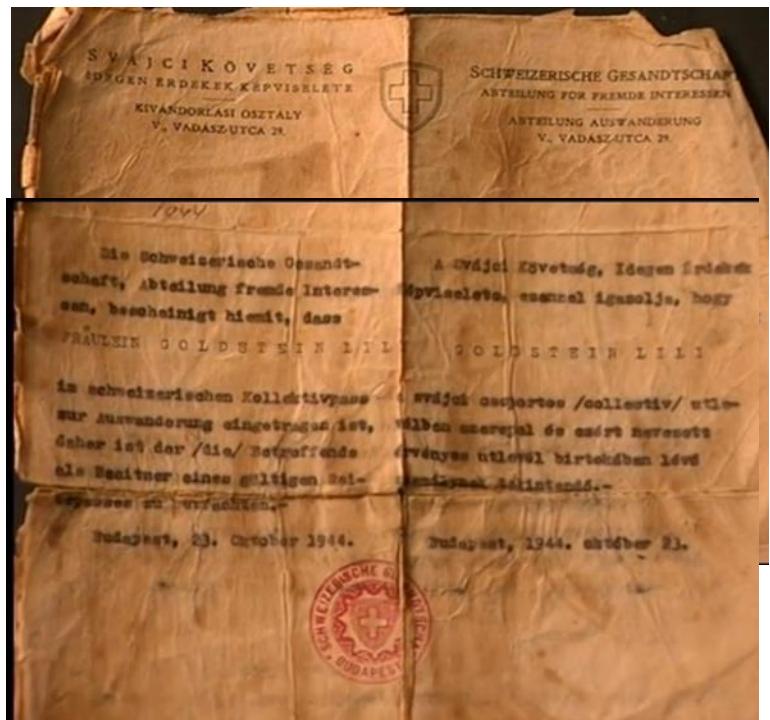


Seated: Hanna-Leah with her sister, Chaya, whom she saved [with her 2 daughters]



Hanna-Leah with Chaya's twin brother, and his wife, Rina

Hanna-Leah and Moshe gave a warm home to the twins, who were saved and raised Chaya and Yaakov as if they were their own children.



Hanna-Leah's sponsorship certificate, last name, Goldstein, same as mother's name



Hannah-Leah with her family. [Ruthi Fogel is the youngest daughter], Sarah Friedman and Esther Zilberberg, the eldest, were born in Germany. The son is Shabtai [named after her father].



Grandson Moshe Zilberberg's wedding

And few words about **Moshe Hershkowitz**, who was also a native of Carpatorus, from the town of Ganichi, Tyachevo District.

During the war he was a **partisan** and Hanna-Leah remembered him as someone who **saved 2000 Jews in the Swiss Consulate from certain death in the Danube**.

At the end of the war, Hanna-Leah and Moshe married in Bamberg, Germany, where they lived for 5 years, and where their first two daughters were born. It was during this period that This is the period when Moshe was appointed vice president of the Jewish Committee and responsible for the Jews, who were concentrated before immigration to the Land.

The family immigrated to Israel in 1948. Moshe was a very political man and active in religious Zionism, of which he was one of the founders, along with Dr. Joseph Burg.

Moshe decided that he wants to settle the land and bought a house in Moshav Zarnuga, near Rehovot, including cows and horses. He continued his political activity and Hanna-Leah stayed on the farm with the workers. Therefore, she decided that it was not right for her and Moshe was forced to stop his political activities.

Shabtai and Ruthi were born in the moshav. In 1960, the family moved to Netanya, an urban place, which was more suitable for Hanna-Leah.

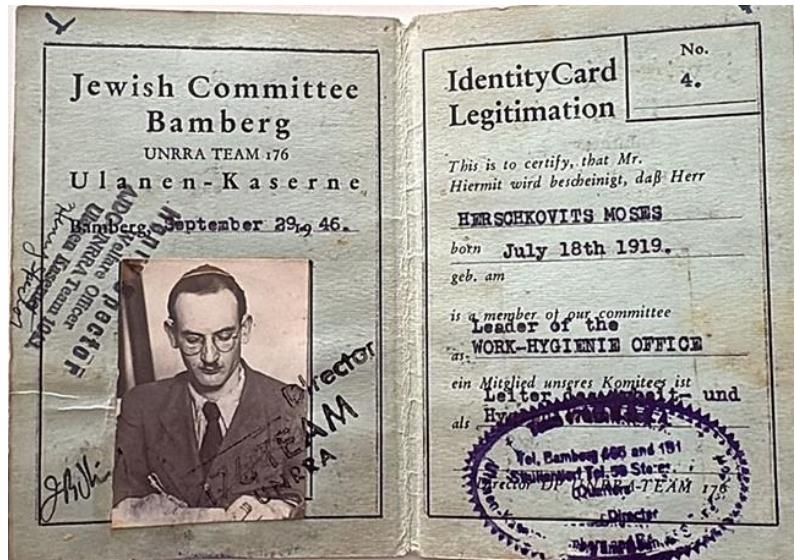
Moshe was a businessman. Later, he opened the first supermarket in Netanya and a restaurant. Moshe lived between 1919-1980 and died at the age of only 61. Hanna-Leah lived between 1925-2007 and was blessed to see great-grandchildren.



First from the right: Moshe Hershkowitz at one of the religious Zionist conferences

Our first generation – brave people, who experienced loss, but their spirit did not fall. With courage and heroism, they saved themselves, fought the underground and the partisans and built a Zionist home in the State of Israel!

May their memory be blessed!



Moshe Hershkowitz – marked



9. Our Rabbi Zvi Spiegel (Tiszaujlak)

I met Yehuda Spiegel, Zvi's father, many years ago through a family connection. When I began documenting members of the Zionist youth underground in Budapest, the name of Moshe Vattenstein, born in Munkács, came up, and it turned out, to my surprise, that he and Yehuda Spiegel were cousins. Thus, the childhood memory surfaced again, and from there to the establishment of the connection – the path was clear.



I also knew that Yehuda lost his youngest son, Hanan (Nani), a liaison officer in a paratrooper unit, who fell in battle in Lebanon on the first day of Operation Shalom Galilee, on 6.6.1982. The memory of Hanan, who was very involved in sports, is commemorated at the National Sports Center [Wingate Institute] near Netanya, where the family lived, and where his father worked. One of the grandchildren of another cousin, who bears his full name, Hanan Spiegel, is also named after him. Yehuda was born in 1929 in Tiszaujlak [Vylok]/ [Vynogradov district, in the 1941 census there were 922 Jews], and was 15 when he arrived in Auschwitz. He went through Auschwitz, the death march and Bergen-Belsen, then joined the illegal immigrants and fought in the Israeli wars; he was one of the founders of Lehavot Haviva. Of his extended family, which numbered 140 people, 10 survived; of his **nuclear family**, only Yehuda and his father, Yaakov survived. When they met after the war in his native village, Yaakov hugged his son, Yehuda, and said: "**We must continue! Only for you should I live!**" This was Yehuda's motto for the rest of his life, and especially after his son's fall. **Yehuda said that he held on to his father's mental strength, courage and will to live - and this is what gave him strength. He also wrote a book with this name: "We must continue."**

Yehuda went out with the IDF delegation "Witnesses in Uniform" and said Kaddish for his family members and all those who perished on the land of Auschwitz.

There was some symbolism in the fact that he died on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, on January 27, 2019 [at the age of 90].



Yehuda Spiegel in a meeting with IDF soldiers

Link: Yehuda Spiegel, a Holocaust survivor and bereaved father, speaks about the hardships of his life and closes the circle. A 6.5-minute video that I highly recommend listening to...

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2846936562043489>

Link to Yehuda Spiegel's testimony on the "Yad Vashem" website:

<https://collections.yadvashem.org/he/documents/3563494>

Let's return to the eldest son, the story of Rabbi Zvi Spiegel: a **fighter pilot, Baal Teshuvah**, who became an **educator**. The interview was conducted in March 2015 by "Ma'aneh", which I will quote briefly, and was uploaded to YouTube on 31.7.2024. I highly recommend seeing and hearing the esteemed Rabbi in his own voice! Here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lvcll8pHLo>

From the Ma'aneh team – (20.03.2015):

"I was born in Netanya [1958] and studied at a state school and at the "Sharet" high school. My approach to the world of Torah and mitzvot began, in fact, in the house of my grandparents [on my mother's side]. My grandparents were observant people. My father, following the Holocaust, left, more or less, the world of mitzvot, not completely, he has a connection and dialogue with the Creator of the world, but in his soul, he is very, very connected to the world of Judaism, but observance of mitzvot was not. So, the experience, the encounter with the world of Torah and mitzvot was very pleasant, in the world of my grandparents.

Over the years, I became very interested in the subject of science. There were many things in the education system that did not interest me in the usual things, but it interested me very much, it really excited me. I would go to science-loving youth clubs, at university, I studied **Astrophysics and quantum theory** with the best lecturers, and the more I understood what was happening there - then this great wonder of the forces, the exemplary order, the amazing lawfulness, greatly strengthened my understanding that there is order in creation, there is wisdom in creation. In fact, it is something that has been with me all the time.

I joined the army, went to the Air Force, completed a **pilot course**. I served in the Air Force for **seven years**. During the seven years, there were also people who began to approach Judaism, to repent, in the "Or Sameakh". I had a very good friend, Uri Eliad, and he would always tell me: Come, listen to lectures and so on along the way.

I had, like every Baal Teshuvah, several milestones that made him 'stop for a moment and start thinking about life'. One of them was, for me, on some kind of visit, a **trip to the camp**, [because] **my father is a Holocaust survivor**; he went through the whole process, they didn't give him a single step on the process. It was, In Auschwitz, in Bergen-Belsen, he made the death march. He lost his entire family, his father the only survivor. **The subject of the Holocaust in our house is a subject that had a presence**. Dad was always careful, he always spoke from the outside, but it was present. I mean, it's not that he ignored it and didn't talk about it. I went to Germany, and I felt some kind of need to go to Dachau, to the extermination camp. I'm talking about thirty years ago, there weren't these organized trips yet. I was there alone, completely alone in the camp, in the morning. Everything is arranged like this, the German order, grass, at the end of the camp there are flower beds. The structure of the crematorium, and there's a museum. I walk through the museum, and I went through the pictures. While I'm looking at the pictures, and the people, I remember the story my father told about my grandfather, that when they were in the labor camp, he was careful not to touch anything that he had any doubt about whether there was non-kosher meat, or something like that. This story suddenly comes to mind and I, in some inner feeling; I say, I am obligated to these people that I see here, that I understand that they ascended to heaven through the crematoriums, my grandfather, people who believed in values. Right now, from a national perspective, I decided to **keep kosher**.

On that trip, I went to the Mediterranean Club, where food is something very, very central, and I had to stop myself from touching what I knew was permissible meat and forbidden meat. But I said, I don't touch these things. Let's call it a return to repentance on a national basis. National affinity.

Later on, there were a few more milestones, more and less significant things, less, conversations with Uri Eliad, classes, slowly I started to read more and try to understand exactly the breadth and depth of Judaism.

Another significant milestone that told me to wait a minute, stop, think about life, was the Galilee Peace War. I am already a relatively veteran pilot, and my brother, at that time, a battalion liaison officer in the paratroopers. On the first day of the war, we enter Tyre, I am in the squadron, and one of the squadron members, who was on duty, at headquarters, arrives. He was in the body, that links between the air forces and the ground forces; he tells us the ground picture. In the course of the story, he tells about an armored personnel carrier from Battalion 450, which has just lost contact with, and we don't know what's happening with it. I know that my brother is in Battalion 450, a battalion liaison officer, who is in the command armored personnel carrier. It turned out that contact with the battalion commander had been lost. A few days pass, and we continue our routine flights in Lebanon. One morning I return from some very early flight. The squadron commander calls me to his office and says, "There was a call just now from some IDF unit announcing that **your brother is missing.**" Boom! And interestingly, at that moment, the thing I feel is, I approach another pilot, a friend of mine, who was a religious man, and asks for tefillin, I want to pray. I take the tefillin and pray, [and ask]: Come show me how to put on tefillin. I haven't put on tefillin since the bar mitzvah. I put on the tefillin and I say, "What do we do?" He gives me the Shema, pray, say whatever you want; I pray. Then, there are very, very difficult days of a period, when we don't know what's actually happening. My father was abroad at the time, on some kind of mission, returning. Until about a week passes and then the city officer's people come to us and announce that they found the body. **My brother is a casualty, a dead man.** This jolt of the transition between life and death does another thing to me. I begin to think, much more deeply, about the discipline of life. I turn to all kinds of people and ask them: What happens to the soul? I am a believer inside, faith is something that is rooted, I do not belong to the world of Torah and mitzvot, but faith is there. I am more interested in the concept of the soul and the transition of the soul. I take Rabbi Tikoczinsky's book 'The Bridge of Life' and begin to be interested in the subject of the soul.

But again, life goes on, I return to the squadron, I return to the army, the lifestyle does not change. Another milestone: One day I arrive to visit Uri Eliad, in Tifrakh [an ultra-Orthodox moshav in the northwestern Negev]. At the entrance to the village I meet Rabbi Amir Yahel (the late). Yahel was a squadron commander, we know each other, and he says: 'Hello, how are you? What are you doing here?' I said: 'I came to visit Eliad.' He looks at me like this, and says to me, do you know what day it is today? I tell him no, what's special about this day, it's not Shabbat, what's special? He tells me, it's the eve of Tisha B'Av. And then he has this kind of cynical humor. And he says to me: 'Next time you come on the eve of Yom Kippur...' That made me go crazy! I said to my girlfriend, my wife today, 'I think that next year, Tisha B'Av will be significant for us.' This thing shook me. I don't know what Tisha B'Av is. And really, in the summer we went to some kind of seminar, and from there things started to unfold. I really decided, this is it. This is the time to make the transition. It was very convenient because it was in the transition between my release from army and the beginning of life. A good time to make a transition.

I didn't know the religious world, and for me, all religious people are the same, there's no distinction. Following the seminar, I went to the "Netivot Olam" yeshiva And I studied in Bnei Brak.

My father was very troubled. At that time, there were quite a few stories about Baalei Teshuvah, who severed ties with their parents. My father said it in a very painful way: 'I lost one son, I don't want to lose another son.' It never crossed my mind, the guidance there was not about severing

ties, but I told him, Dad, wherever you want me to study, just say so, you will find me the place, where you want me to study. My father worked at the time at Midrashit Noam, and knew Yisrael Sadan, who told him that there was a place in Mevaseret Zion. I said: 'If it's good for you, I'll go to Mevaseret.' It's a national religious place, a place where you can both get a rabbinical certificate and a profession: a teaching certificate. My father said, a profession, a national religious place - that's fine. We got here. At that time, the concepts of outlook and path are not something I'm aware of, I'm not interested, I want to study Torah. Give me somewhere to study Torah, I don't make distinctions there.

Thanks God, I was privileged to study here, in Mevaseret Zion. At some point, I realized that I had skipped to the sixth grade when, in fact, I should have started from the first grade. So, I went and studied the basics at the Meir Institute, and I came back here again, and studied at the Merkaz HaRav for a few years. During that time, I also became involved with Chabad and studied at the Tzemach Tzedek Chabad Kollel in the Old City. I also had a Breslov **Khevruta**. Later in the process, I studied at the Kollel "Eretz Hemda" including **Dayanut**, **rabbinical judge**. I studied there for five years. I saw that this was not exactly the field I wanted to pursue and I wanted to pursue **education**. I worked with schools for three years in some kind of program of values education, faith education, and then they offered me the position of head of the "Kol Mevaser" high school yeshiva in Mevaseret Zion. There was an idea that it would focus on communication subjects. I came here 14 years ago, and since then, we have been involved in education. The guys who come to us are a very, very diverse group. Our educational concept, to put it briefly: **Even the complex guys, with emotional and academic difficulties, should be in a normative framework. They should not be isolated. Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses.** And at God, we see a blessing in our labor. **The key is working with the heart, and we really try to work with the heart.**

We are an educational school - and this is also what we drew from Hasidism. **School is a complex of events in the dimension of time, of place and of the soul. We need to respond to these three dimensions.** School is not a system of lessons that you enter, learn and transmit knowledge. **School is a place of events, a complete educational mental experience.** The boy, in his healthy development, must have his emotional place, a place where there is growth. If he is stuck in the emotional place because he is frustrated, because he has difficulties with his parents, because he has difficulties with the Creator of the world, because he is overwhelmed, he cannot progress. Therefore, we established a principle called "**gathering**". We drew it, again from the world of Hasidism. Gathering is the place where I truly meet the person. Not in the external place, a place that creates openness, where I can talk to him about anything; where I expect him to reflect emotions. Many times, boys do not have the tools to share their emotional world and then they are stuck there. The key to all development is the emotional world, and we create a kind of discourse, that deals a lot with his emotional world, his experiences, his relationship with his friends, with the Creator of the world and with his learning.

We also felt that many times when our guys reach marriageable age, the girls are very developed, and they are, in some way, stuck in their emotional world. We said this is something that needs to be worked on. It is not something that happens by itself.

We also have a lot to expand on **on** the subject of preparation for family life, a subject that I start with from the ninth to tenth grade. They come to the Hesder yeshiva, where they study Torah. They join the army and then they get married. When did they study? When do they prepare? They instruct brides and grooms, learn the laws. They get married and suddenly there is no preparation and then the problems begin. It is not something that we have to wait for there to be problems

and then we start; we have to gradually learn how to deal with the world of emotions, in the most open way. I always tell them, it is a gift from the Creator of the world.

The issue of youth dropping out has been preoccupying me for a long time. It doesn't matter if they are religious, national, or Haredi. My wife and I have been in a parent patrol for two years, walking around the city, seeing the reality. A year and a half ago, a Jew came to me who also did, gathered guys who had dropped out of Haredi frameworks. He built a leadership seminary in Hadera. There were problems and they closed the place. 'I'm moving from the south of the country to the north, I can't find a place and I can't find an institution that is willing to accept them. I have about twenty students, children from Haredi homes. I told him: I don't have a place in a boarding school right now, nor is it a financial option, but if the Ministry of Education is ready for it, I'm ready. That day he had some kind of conversation with the director of the Ministry of Education; that same day I get a phone call from her: 'You agree to accept them. May God bless you, they are with you.' It took a few months for the resources to arrive... But these guys are here. Nice guys, amazing, high-quality guys, who naturally wear Haredi clothing, but they fit in. They have their own class, with a program, these are guys who have a lot of gaps in terms of education. They have their own framework; in the morning they study in a villa they rented, and then they come here, for their high school studies. We also give them a gym here and everything we can help with. These guys are, already, in their second year, starting to take the matriculation exams. I had a meeting with their parents a year ago. I was worried, because I didn't know what their position was on the fact that their children are studying within a framework, which is true that it is a separate framework, but within a national religious framework. The parents simply approached excitedly and said, **you don't know what a kindness you are doing. Our child was Completely broken down. Sad, depressed, and now our child is coming home happy! The child feels like he is making progress. He aspires, he has desires.** Some are unable to make the transition, this mental change. But the majority are making progress. We are now in a period of matriculation exams. Studying, passing successfully. They will take a technological matriculation, they study computers, and they will graduate with a technological matriculation. And then, each to his own way.

I'll tell you a story. I interviewed the actor **Haim Topol** two days ago. The man is about to finish his Shas! He studies Gemara every Thursday. I asked him why do you study Gemara? He said, I love Gemara. I asked him, why do you love Gemara? He says when I studied in Tel Aviv, in the religious state school, I loved my teacher. So, I love studying Gemara. I think that's a big key. Next year, B.H he will be eighty years old. **He studies Gemara because he loved his teacher.** It's amazing.

I entered the national religious sector, I was involved in education, there's a lot to do here too. But in recent years I've felt a need to go back again, to work on **bringing the general public closer**, and I reconnected with something I was involved in in the past. At the beginning of my journey, when I was discharged from the army, I went to study acting at Tel Aviv University. I always looked for **the connections between the world of creation, the world of acting and the world of media.** I also made quite a few films in the army, more in the direction of humor. At the time, I also talked to Rabbi Zamir Cohen to make some kind of connections with him, and when they founded the "Orot" channel, I said I needed to connect with this thing. I was in some kind of collaboration with them, their director left in favor of the "Moreshet" channel, and then they asked me to run this channel. **For the past six months, I have been running the "Orot" channel.** And again, our goal is to meet with the public, to bring them together with Judaism, in the right, true, positive place. To touch every Jew, in his Judaism, to awaken it".

Rabbi Zvi Spiegel, "One on One" section on the "Giluy Daat" website, issue 412 of September 16, 2018, by Ayelet Shlissel:

"I am 60 years old, married, a **father of ten and a grandfather of grandchildren**, without the **evil eye**. We live on the campus of the Kiryat Ha'khinukh in Mevaseret.

Five or six years ago, many institutions opened in cities, and these institutions also had small and growing classes. We asked ourselves what our next mission was, and we discovered that many young people were looking for a Torah framework, but were not accepted, because Torah institutions do not accept those, who are not suited to a long school day and intensive studies. We made a turn and turned to young people who are passionate about Torah, who are interested in studying Torah seriously, in parallel with **agricultural and vocational studies**. We were looking for an occupation that would grow. A person needs something that will make them get up in the morning, something they look forward to, a healthy growth space. The agricultural path is very demanding. Both the staff members study Torah and the work **is** done out of study. During breaks, they study Halacha and connect agricultural activities to the mitzvot that depend on the land. From our perspective, there is a Beit Midrash, which is located in a yeshiva, and there is a Beit Midrash located in the vastness of the Land of Israel.

There was a visit from the supervisor who asked one of the young people: What do you have in this place that you don't have in other places? And he answered: "**Life**".

May you be blessed, Your Honor, for your challenging, exciting, and important educational work!

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