

# The World That Once Was



**Rav Menachem Ziemba**

BOCA RATON SYNAGOGUE

RABBI PHILIP MOSKOWITZ



# Rav Menachem Ziemba

- ✦ 1883-1943
- ✦ *Raised by his grandfather, who was a chassid of the Kotzker Rebbe and a student of the Chiddushei Harim*
- ✦ *At 18, marries a wealthy merchant and learns for 20 years*





# Working and Learning

- ✿ *Takes over the business in 1917*
- ✿ *In 1935, he became a representative of Praga to Warsaw's Rabbinical council.*
- ✿ *Was active in Agudas Yisrael and was secretary of the Mo'etzes Gedolei ha-Torah.*
- ✿ *He was offered positions as Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim and Rav of Lublin (after Rav Meir Shapiro), but turned both down.*



# Rabbi in the Warsaw Ghetto

- ✦ *He was one of the three last remaining rabbis of the Warsaw Ghetto (Rabbi Shimshon Sztokhamer and Rabbi David Shapiro).*
- ✦ *Right before the uprising, he was given the opportunity to escape by the Catholic Church, but declined.*





# His Torah

- ✦ *Zera Avraham, a response dialogue with R. Avraham Luftbehr (son in law of the Meshech Chachma)*

- ✦ *Otzar Hasifra*





# Lost Torah

10,000 pages!!

- ✦ *Machaze L'Melech on the Rambam*
- ✦ *Menachem Yerushalayim on the Yerushalmi*
- ✦ *Four volumes of responsa*
- ✦ *A volume of sermons*





# Warsaw Ghetto

- ✿ *On October 12, 1940, the Germans decreed the establishment of a ghetto in Warsaw.*
- ✿ *Ghetto residents (approx. 400k) were forced to live in an area of 1.3 square miles, with an average of 7.2 persons per room.*
- ✿ *In 1941 the average Jew in the ghetto subsisted on 1,125 calories a day.*
- ✿ *Between July 22 and September 12, 1942, the German authorities deported or murdered around 300,000 Jews in the Warsaw ghetto*



# The Will to Resist

*The will to resist has been sparked among thousands of men and women, elderly people and children, a will which conquers the natural anxiety and the fear of death and hardship. The masses have understood that by resisting surrender they are fighting the enemy in a unique way, hindering his deeds of destruction... The Germans were forced to conquer every single shelter and bunker with full force of arms.*

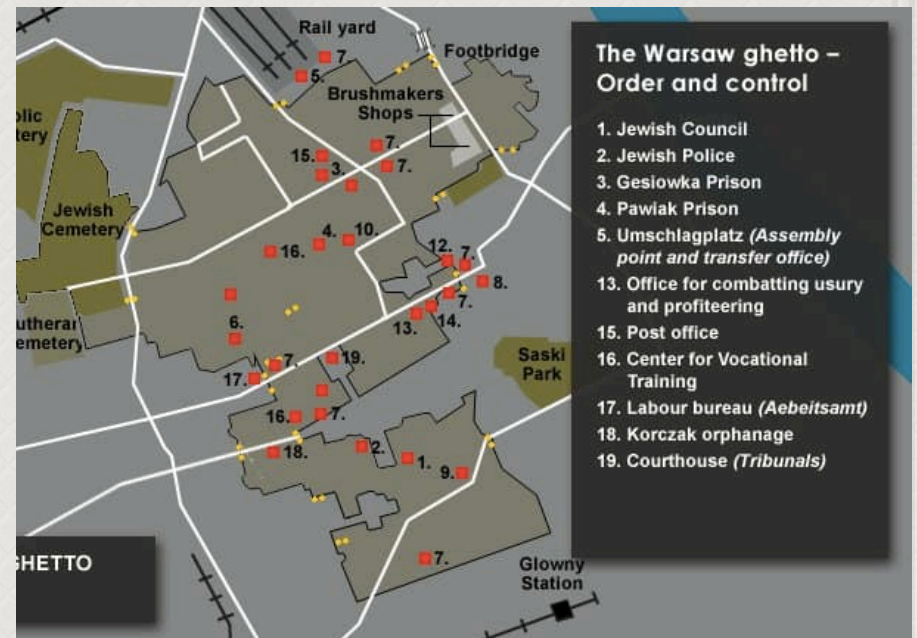
Hersh Wasser, in *Melech Nischt: the Destruction and Rebellion of the Jews of Warsaw*, p. 190.





# Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

- ✦ *In response to the deportations, on July 28, 1942, several Jewish underground organizations created an armed self-defense unit known as the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa; ŻOB.*
- ✦ *On January 18, 1943, a group of Jewish fighters, armed with pistols, infiltrated a column of Jews being forced to the Umschlagplatz, and, at a prearranged signal, broke ranks and fought their German escorts.*



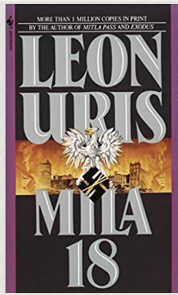


# Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

- ✿ *ZOB commander Mordecai Anielewicz commanded the Jewish fighters in the Warsaw ghetto uprising*
- ✿ *April 19, 1943, the eve of Pesach -the liquidation begins*
- ✿ *On the third day of the uprising, SS and police forces began razing the ghetto to the ground, building by building, to force the remaining Jews out of hiding.*







# Mila 18

*What happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans fled twice from the ghetto. One of our companies held its position for forty minutes, while the other one lasted – upwards of six hours... I cannot describe to you the conditions in which the Jews are living. Only a handful will survive. All the rest will succumb, sooner or later. Their fate has been sealed. In almost all of the bunkers in which our friends are hiding one cannot even light a candle at night, for lack of air. Goodbye my friend. Perhaps we will see each other again. The main thing is this: My life's dream has become a reality. I have seen the Jewish defense of the ghetto in all its strength and glory.*

*23 [21] April 1943 - Mordechai Anielewicz*



The German forces killed Anielewicz and those with him in an attack on the ZOB command bunker on 18 Mila Street, which they captured on May 8.



# Why Didn't Rav Ziemba Escape?

Two years later, amidst rampant starvation, deadly disease, and daily mass deportations to death camps, the Archbishop of Warsaw offered Rabbi Menachem Ziemba, Rabbi Samson Stockhammer, and Rabbi David Shapiro, the three leading rabbis in the Warsaw ghetto, refuge in his palace.

The rabbis discussed the dilemma they suddenly confronted. What, asked Rav Shapiro, would this do to the morale of the Jews in the ghetto?

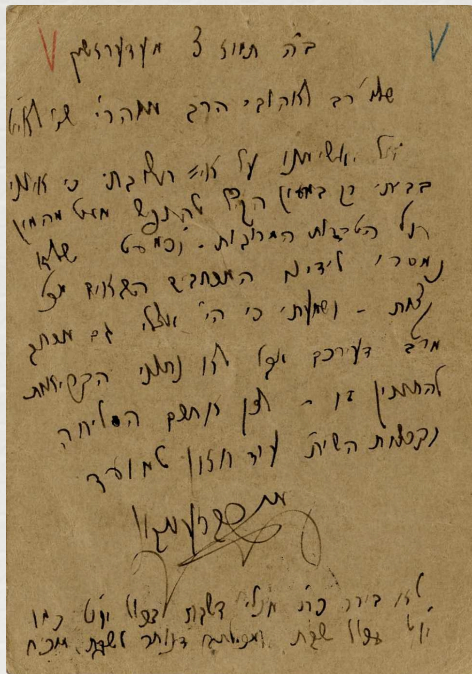
“I am the youngest among you, and therefore my words are not binding on you. We already know that we cannot help our people, but by staying with them and by not abandoning them, we encourage them and strengthen their hopes, and this is the only encouragement we are able to give the last Jews. I simply do not have the strength to abandon these wretched people. Will we hide from the Almighty? The same G-d who is found there is found here...”<sup>58</sup>

Rav Shapiro's two colleagues agreed. Rav Ziemba declared that there be no more discussion on this issue.<sup>59</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Rav Ziemba was machine-gunned to death. Rav Stockhammer died in a bomb attack just three days before liberation. Rav Shapiro survived and entered Jewish history as the “last Warsaw rabbi [of World War II].”



# Why Didn't Rav Ziemba Escape?



*“When Rav Menachem Ziemba received his passport, he began to consider his options carefully. What, he pondered, would be the fate of his manuscripts?...As a consequence, we lost one of the preeminent minds of Polish Jewry. The overwhelming pain still hurts...”*

*~Warsaw Ghetto Diaries*



# The Complexity of the Uprising

Pages 1-2

*Rav Yehoshua Moshe Aharonson*

*Rabbi of the Sanniki congregation.*

*Rabbi Aharonson and his congregation  
were sent to the Konin labor camp. He  
kept a journal of the slow annihilation  
of the Jews in that camp.*

## עלי מרורות

יומנים, שו"ת, הגות

בשואה

כתבי רבי יהושע משה אהרונסון זצ"ל

בעל ה"ישועת משה"

רבה של סאניק – מרבני פתח תקוה

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פרקי חיים מרתקים של רב בישראל  
בשנים הרות גורל



# The Complexity of the Uprising

Page 3

*Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg*

*Author of the Seridei Eish*

*“In the ghetto, we witnessed the lowliness and degradation of man devoid of divine ethics and lacking human conscience. His cruelty far outstrips those of preying animals.”*

יד שאול

ספר זכרון

ע"ש

הרב ד"ר שאול ווינגורט זצ"ל

בשנת

המאה הרכ ד"ר י. ווינגורט והרב פנחס ביכרסלד



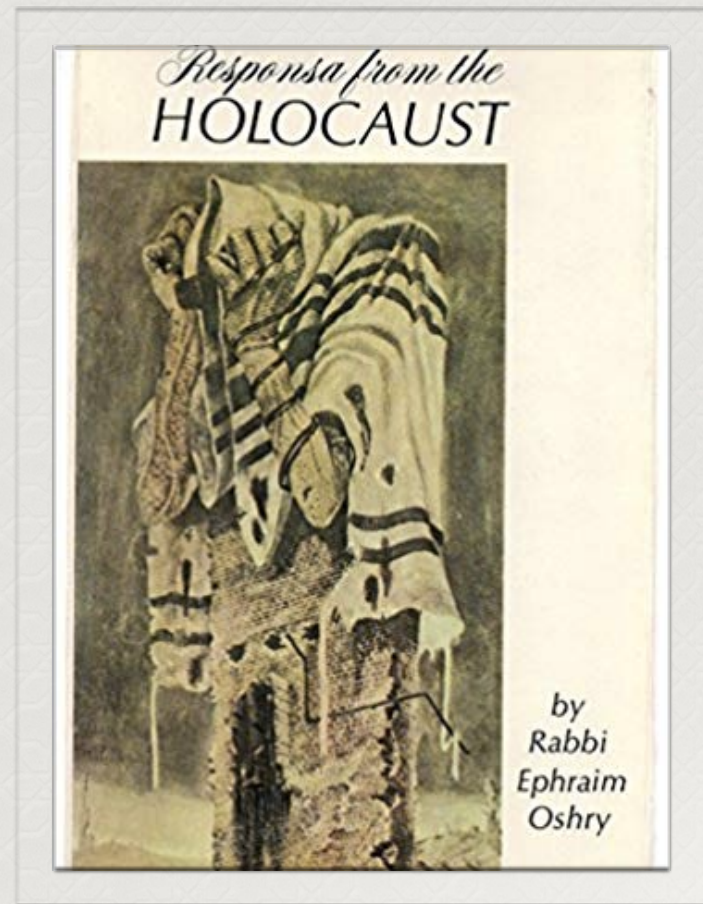


# The Complexity of the Uprising

Page 4

*Rav Epharim Oshry*

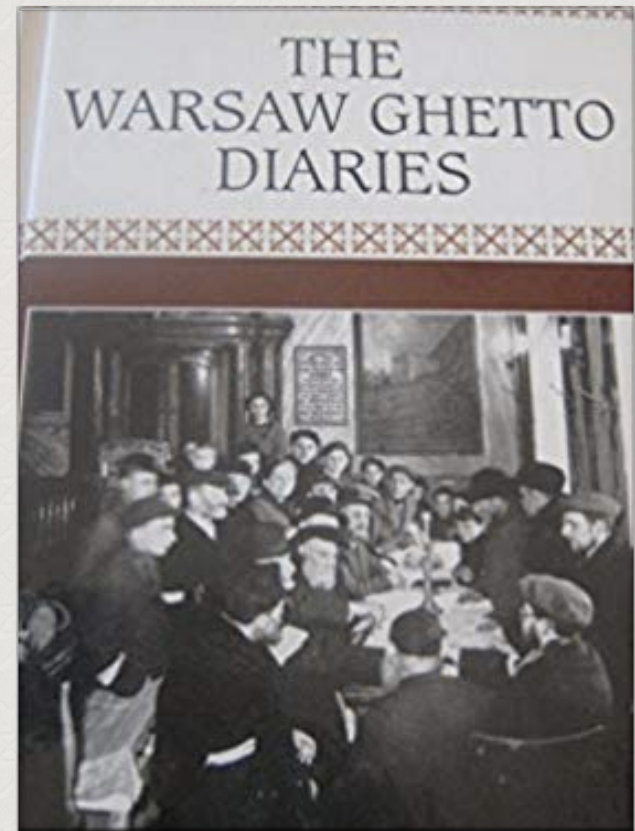
*Author of the She'elot u-  
teshuvot mi-ma'amakim*





# Dr. Hillel Seidman

*Hidden beneath the ruined, scorched earth of what had once been Warsaw's Jewish community headquarters lay a treasure buried deep- the diary of Dr. Hillel Seidman, chief archivist of the Warsaw Kehillah. A researcher, author, and, above all, a devoted observant Jew, Dr. Seidman kept a faithful account of Warsaw's last days, from the deportations to the final Uprising.*





# Rav Ziemba on the Uprising

Page 5-6

*But, today, the  
only way to sanity  
His name is armed  
resistance*





# Spiritual Resistance

- ✿ *Learning Torah (p. 7 - 8)*
- ✿ *Giving people hope (p. 9)*
- ✿ *Sukkos (p. 10)*
- ✿ *Preserving Torah (p. 11)*
- ✿ *Giving a Get (p. 12)*
- ✿ *Baptism (p. 12)*
- ✿ *Fasting (p. 12)*



# The Last Pesach of Rav Ziemba

(p. 13-16)





# Torah from Rav Ziemba

אמר רבי שמעון הלכה היא בידוע שעשו שונא ליעקב.  
(רש"י)

מה ענין המושג „הלכה“ לכאן?  
ברם, ישנם אנשים שמבקשים למצוא את הנימוקים והסיבות לשנאתם של הגויים כלפי היהודים. אולם המציאות הוכיחה, כי אין אף סיבה אחת נכונה. שנאה זו היא חסרת כל סיבה וכל נימוק, אלא רק „הפך לבם לשנוא עמו“.

כאן שונאים את היהודים על-שום שהם קפיטליסטים, ושם—על-שום שהם סוציאליסטים; כאן — על-שום שהם זריזים ופקחים יתר על המידה, ושם — על-שום שהם מהווים מעמסה מבלי להביא כל תועלת; כאן—על-שום שהם חרדים וקנאים יתר על המידה, ושם — על-שום שהם מתקדמים ומפיצים דעות חילוניות. כך תמיד סותרים הם הנימוקים זה את זה, ללא קורטוב של הגיון ושיקול-דעת.

והנה, הלא רבי שמעון דורש בכל מקום „טעמא דקרא“ — לפיכך אמר רבי שמעון: „הלכה היא בידוע שעשו שונא ליעקב“ — שנאתו של עשו ליעקב היא בבחינת הלכה פסוקה, ללא כל טעם ונימוק...

(הגאון ר' מנחם זמבה הי"ד)



Never say that you have reached the very end,  
When leaden skies a bitter future may portend;  
For sure the hour for which we yearn will yet arrive,  
And our marching step will thunder: we survive!

From green palm trees to the land of distant snow,  
We are here with our sorrow, our woe,  
And wherever our blood was shed in pain,  
Our fighting spirits now will resurrect again.

The golden rays of morning sun will dry our tears,  
Dispelling bitter agony of yesteryears,  
But if the sun and dawn with us will be delayed,  
Then let this song ring out to you the call, instead.

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

So never say that you have reached the very end  
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend  
Because the hour which we yearn for will arrive  
And our marching step will thunder: We survive!

זאָג ניט קיין מאָל, אַז דו גייסט דעם לעצטן וועג,  
כאַטש הימלען בלייענע פֿאַרשטעלן בלויע טעג.  
קומען וועט נאָך אונדזער אויסגעבענקטע שעה –  
ס'וועט אַ פּוּיק טאָן אונדזער טראַט: מיר זיינען דאָ!

פֿון גרינעם פֿאַלמענלאַנד ביז ווייסן לאַנד פֿון שניי,  
מיר קומען אָן מיט אונדזער פּיין, מיט אונדזער וויי,  
און וווּ געפֿאַלן ס'איז אַ שפּריץ פֿון אונדזער בלוט,  
שפּראַצן וועט דאָרט אונדזער גבֿורה, אונדזער מוט!

ס'וועט די מאַרגנזון באַגילדן אונדז דעם היינט,  
און דער נעכטן וועט פֿאַרשווינדן מיט דעם פֿיינט,  
נאָר אויב פֿאַרזאַמען וועט די זון אין דעם קאַיאָר –  
ווי אַ פֿאַראַל זאָל גיין דאָס ליד פֿון דור צו דור.

דאָס ליד געשריבן איז מיט בלוט, און ניט מיט בליי,  
ס'איז ניט קיין לידל פֿון אַ פֿויגל אויף דער פֿריי,  
דאָס האָט אַ פֿאַלק צווישן פֿאַלנדיקע ווענט  
דאָס ליד געזונגען מיט נאַגאַנעס אין די הענט.<sup>[1]</sup>

טאָ זאָג ניט קיין מאָל, אַז דו גייסט דעם לעצטן וועג,  
כאַטש הימלען בלייענע פֿאַרשטעלן בלויע טעג.  
קומען וועט נאָך אונדזער אויסגעבענקטע שעה –  
ס'וועט אַ פּוּיק טאָן אונדזער טראַט: מיר זיינען דאָ!



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