

NILI Yarchei Kallah 5779

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# SPRITUAL HEROISM: WOMEN IN THE HOLOCAUST

4 Av 5779 - August 5, 2019

R' Ephraim Oshry, komo  
זק"ק

Responsa  
Miraamalkim

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שאלות ותשובות מספיקים

קנב

כרתה כל הנבעלת בשדה הרי זו בחזקת אנוסה ודין אותה כדיון אנוסה עד שיעירו העדים שברצונה נבעלה וכן נבעלת כעיר הרי זה בחזקת מנוחה מפני שלא זעקה עד שיעירו העדים שהיא אנוסה כגון ששילך לה חרב ואמר לה אם תזעקי אחריו אחריו, והשגות שם איתא: כתב הראב"ד ד"ל היי ראשי חזקה זו אינו יודע מה תזעקת יש בה אם יש שם עדים יבואו ויעידו אם אין יש עדים קנס אין שם, ואם לענין ג' דברים אם יש טענה ביניהם זה כלל גדול בדיון המציא מתברר עליו הראיה והעיר והשדה שותה הם עכ"ל.

וע"י שם במגדל עח שכתב בא"י וד"ל הוא נמו ממריקנה לה דתיקו חזקה במקום עדים ושניהם מודים בנבעלה או שיש עדים שראיה אנוסה ממקום רחוק אבל לא ידעו ולא ראו אם באונס אם ברצון היא אומרת אנוסה הייתי ריש לי צער והוא אומר מנחתה הייתי אין לך צער כ"י עיי"ש, וע"י גם כן בספר משנה שכתב וד"ל י"ל כמו שכתב בעל מגדל עוז שאם ראו העדים מרחוק ששכב עמה ולא ידע אם באונס אם ברצון אם היה בעיר חזקה שהיא מנוחה אם לא צעקה ולא העירו העדים ששילך וכו', ואם היה בשדה חזקה שהיא אנוסה וע"י ג"כ בב"י ובב"ח מ"י קצ"י שתעלה כן וכן ברמב"ן על התורה מ' כי תצא שם מדבריו משמע כן.

וע"י זה בגידון דיון אין שיהיה בעיר ואם כן וע"י יש לנו להעמידה בחזקת שנבעלה ברצון מאחר שלא זעקה, מכל מקום מכיון שכולם יודעים שלום: והרב הצוררים היתה מתחככת בכל עת ובכל שעת על כל אחד ואחד אשר בשם ישראל יכונה ולא היתה שום תועלת לזעוק ולצעוק כי מי יאמר להם מה תעשו ומכיון שאבד מנוס מכל האמללות האלו שהיו נהנות בידו העדים הארוכים ואין מידם מציל, וראוי שיהיה עדימא עוד כמה שכתב הרמב"ם שגם כעיר אם העדים מעידים ששילך לה חרב הרי היא אנוסה שהרי בגידון ירדו אנו סהוי שהחריב היתה שלופה המיד על ראש האמללות האלו וכל המסורה להם אחת דחה להמית, אם כן בודאי עניה זו מותרת היא לבעלה מי אין לחשוש כלל וכלל עמה נתפתחה להם ברצון, מאחר שגם היא ראתה מה שחם עוללו ליהרדים אנשים נשים וסוף הדין ולא חמלו בטחו ולא רחמו, אם כן בודאי הצוררים האלה היו מאוסים משקצים ומתעבים בעיניהם כבדי להסתוות להם לנבעל ברצון.

**דין נשים שנאנסו לבושת על ידי הרוצחים.**

סימן כ"ז

שאלה: מיד לאחר שהוריו מסכלאת הנישו נשאליה שאלה גדולה וגוראה שהייתה נוגעת לא רק לגידון זה שבא לפני אלא גם למספר רב של בנות ישראל אחרות שזכו להשאיר בחיים אחר המאורעות האיומות שעברו עליהן כשהיו תפשות כידו חצר הצורך שפרש ידו על כל מהמדיון ומסרו לקלון ולבושת כדי שפריצי החיות חזוירי היקר, קלנסי הרמב"ם ימ"ש יתעלצו בגופן ונכבדו.

ור"ן תוכן השאלה: אשה אחת צעירה לימים ובת טובים מאחד המשפחות הנכבדות שבקובנה באה לפני לפני ובנה תכנה סבלי הפונה, והפעמה על לחות, כי היא סר לה ואין לה מנוח וגפשה בשאלתה, היות שגם היא כרבות מאותיות האומללות נתפסה על ידי הרמב"ם האוריים וגמסרה לבושת ומלכד שהודים התעלצו בגופה המסור עוד המקן על זרועת ככתובת קלקע את המלים: "זונה כשביל חזילי היפיר".

והנה לאחר שהוריו הצליחה למצוא גם את בעלה בחיים ושניהם התכוננו לחקים מחדש את ביתם החרום שהייתה בנו על אדני המורה והקדושה כראוי לבית נאמן בישראל, ולהבנות בורע של קיימא מאחר שכל ילדיהם שהיו להם נספר כידו הרמב"ם, אולם כשבבעלה ראה את הכתובת האיומה התקוקה בנוסה נרתע לאחוריו כאמרו כי עליתה לברר מקורם אם מותרת היא לו עדיין כן הדין ואם היא לא אסורה עליו מאחר שהייתה תפוש כידו הצוררים לעשות בה כרצונה, אולי נבעלה להם ברצון, ולואת היא כאה לפני לשאול ביה מה לעשות לשברה הנדול כים ועניה הלויית לרחמים להוציא כאור משפחה.

**השאלה:** הרמב"ם במ"א מולמת נעיה בתולה הלכה ב' כתב: ואי זה הוא מפתח ואי זה הוא אונס, מפתח לרצונה אונס שבא עליה בעל קנא



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January 17, 1988

# PRAISING HIS NAME IN THE FIRE

By ELIE WIESEL; Elie Wiesel received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. His forthcoming novel, "Twilight," will be published in the spring.

**KIDDUSH HASHEM** Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust. By Shimon Huberband. Translated by David E. Fishman. Edited by Jeffrey S. Gurock and Robert S. Hirt. 474 pp. New Jersey/New York: KTAV Publishing House/ Yeshiva University Press. \$35.

IN 1939, during the first month of the war, in a little Polish village called Sierpc, German soldiers ordered the Jews to gather around their burning synagogue. Any Jew who stayed away was punished, anyone who did not watch was beaten. "They" prized this public humiliation; it was part of their program. Suddenly a young student, Moishe, rushed toward the synagogue, crossed through the flames, ran to the holy ark, seized two sacred scrolls and, clutching them to his chest, reappeared outside where "they" were waiting for him, their guns aimed. Moishe crumpled to the ground without dropping the scrolls. Like them, with them, he went up in flames. He had performed the tragic duty of Kiddush Hashem; he had died sanctifying the name of the Lord.

In 1942, during the festival of Purim, at Zdunska Wola, another village, in order to "avenge" the death of Haman in the time of Ahasuerus, "they" decided to hang 10 Polish Jews whose names had been drawn by lot by the Judenrat. Otherwise, the entire ghetto would be wiped out. When the 10 condemned men learned that their deaths would save the Jewish community, they were filled with a strange joy and sang as they stepped up to the gallows. The head of the Judenrat was forced to give a speech justifying the executioners' work. Twice he fainted; twice he was revived. He had to finish the speech.

In Radzymin, "they" arrested a certain Reb Itzhok Meir Kaminer and made him put on his shtetrimel (fur hat), prayer shawl and phylacteries before leading him to the marketplace. Here, "they" tried to force him to kiss the cross; he refused. "They" beat him until he lost consciousness. Similar scenes were enacted in Piotrkow and in . . . As one reads and rereads this work by Shimon Huberband, one asks oneself: Was there no end to this? No, there was no end to it. The torturer's imagination was more fertile than the victim's. One must read and have others read "Kiddush Hashem" to be convinced. This said, Shimon Huberband's book proves, on rereading, to be different from the others. As original, as penetrating as any documents from that time, it will henceforth take its place as an indispensable testimony of the Holocaust.

As the most, if not the best documented tragedy in recorded history, the Holocaust has inspired

many of its witnesses and victims to preserve its memory. "The entire ghetto is buzzing with people who have taken up writing," recorded the historian Emanuel Ringelblum in his chronicles of the Warsaw ghetto. Of course, Ringelblum, in his role of professional historian, took the lead. It was he who established the celebrated group "Oneg Shabbat" ("the pleasure of the Sabbath") which comprised 100 members whose task was to gather as much information as possible about the life and death of Polish Jewry. It was Ringelblum who discovered Rabbi Huberband's talents. "Among the rabbis who have perished," says Ringelblum, "a few words must be devoted to the young Warsaw rabbi, Shimon Huberband. His was a gentle soul, something one rarely finds in these times. Huberband was not only a great scholar of religious literature; he had the makings of a good historian."

Trained as a rabbi, Huberband was interested above all in the religious aspects of Jewish agony and martyrdom in the ghettos. In this area, his testimony will remain definitive. It has done for the religious memory what Lucjan Dobroszycki's "Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto" has done for the memory of the Lodz ghetto. Huberband's methodology? To look at small villages, at forsaken communities that lay far away from the centers. Names, names: His aim is to redeem names; names of communities and names of individuals. Who was shot where, who was hanged where.

The Germans seemed to follow the same program, the same pattern of violence and bloodshed in the towns and villages they invaded. The synagogue was their first target. Strange: they allowed, almost to the end, theaters and concerts and even cabarets to attract and possibly divert people, but closed down all the houses of prayer and study. They would transform the synagogue into a stable, a latrine, before burning it. They would ransack books and ritual objects, drag ornaments and sacred scrolls through the dirt and blood, and tear out the beards of pious Jews, bent on ridiculing them before killing them. They forced their victims to lick the executioners' boots, to drink the executioners' spit, to blaspheme, to humiliate themselves: the Germans were waging a veritable war of religion against the Jewish soul. Against Jewish memory.

Autobiographical stories, sociological and psychological studies, portraits of men and women both known and unknown, the statements of survivors however temporary, one dazzling text on the condition of the Jewish woman, vignettes and documents: at the age of 33, Rabbi Shimon Huberband had succeeded in handing down to us writings, though harmed by dampness, without which the history and understanding of this torment would remain incomplete. Written in Yiddish, Huberband's chronicles were hidden in milk cans together with the Ringelblum archives under a four-story building at 68 Nowolipki Street in Warsaw. Some were signed "Band" or "Zamenhoff" (he had lived on Zamenhoff Street) or with his initials. Only one long essay - on the origins of Jewish communal life in Slavic countries - was signed in full. They were discovered in 1946 and 1950, and translated into Hebrew in 1969, and now we have them ably translated into English by David E. Fishman.

To start with, he finds it useful to give an account of his own life, his own survival. Piotrkow before the war, Piotrkow during the war. The uncertainty, the rumors, the false hopes. There will be no

4 war, no war, no war . . . Then: the Polish army will repulse the invader. Then: Poland's allies, Great Britain and France, have annihilated the enemy . . . the pages describing the first days of the war are among the best of their kind. The confusion on the part of the people. Their fear of air attacks. The first bombings. Should they run away? What use is it to go somewhere else? They run away, they come back home: Suddenly the trap closes. No way out. No salvation. Personal tragedy: Rabbi Huberband's wife and son are killed in a bombing raid, along with his father-in-law. Even though he will remarry in Warsaw -for a time that will be all too brief - he will remain inconsolable, unconsolated.

His only source of support: his mission as chronicler, as witness. Abruptly, he is no longer thinking of his own sorrow. He is too busy observing others. He travels from ghetto to ghetto, meets rabbis and beggars, informs himself about the fate of marginal, distant communities, the behavior of the Poles. About this, his reports are depressing. Too many anti-Semites are taking advantage of the German occupation to show their hatred of the Jews. Of course, the Poles themselves are also victims of the Germans; but the Jews are often victims of the victims. Spiteful, selfish, refusing all help to the hunted Jews, the Poles as Huberband describes them would as a general rule have to be forgiven for a great deal. Is Rabbi Huberband too severe? I have no right to say. I do not know Poland, I did not live there when he did. No doubt charitable Christians could also be found; he even mentions some, but not many, he encounters them so rarely.

Huberband is honest to an extreme degree, to the point of hurting himself and hurting us. He shows no mercy toward the ghetto's Jewish police, who, for the most part, did their work all too well, were all too quick to obey German orders. Nor does he show any mercy toward the ghetto's nouveaux riches, who, without a trace of emotion, could pass by emaciated children and continue to laugh, eat, stroll through the streets, as though nothing were wrong. His sense of integrity impels him to describe even the faltering, if not the downfall, of certain young Hasidim who lost all sense of honor. "On Friday, May 19, 1942 [ in the Warsaw ghetto ] . . . a young man was beaten badly by Jewish policemen who dragged him to the station. . . A second youth, about nineteen years old, tall and strong, refused to be taken to the station house. The policeman quarreled with him and ultimately handcuffed him. I saw that even with his hands tied, the young man could have given the policeman a beating. But he didn't do so. He simply pleaded with the officer, his own flesh and blood, to have pity on his sick mother and release him. The policeman refused to listen. I thought to myself: What has become of us?"

TO tell everything, to reveal everything: this was his motto. Evil and the consequences of evil.

The cruelty of the Germans and its effects on its victims. Not all Jews, he says, were able to resist the scourge. Not all of them could, or wanted to, sacrifice their well-being to sanctify the name of the Lord. After all, not all Jews left Spain in 1492, some chose conversion while practicing their Jewish faith clandestinely.

And yet . . . Kiddush Hashem is the book's central theme. To sanctify the name of the Lord - to accept martyrdom to glorify Him - is both a challenge and a duty in the Jewish tradition. Under

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Nazi rule, Huberband says, all Jews were victims, therefore martyrs; all performed the supreme duty of Kiddush Hashem.

Is this why one sometimes has the impression one is reading pages out of ancient martyrology? Everything is concise, dense, inspired. Three sentences describe the end of a family line, the death of community. And in these tales, God is present everywhere, either as a challenge, or as an appeal, sometimes as a source of consolation, sometimes as a source of anguish. One is reminded of the medieval chronicler who broke off his work to cry out: "I am ashamed to tell all that the Cossacks did to us, I am ashamed to tell it for fear of blaspheming the name of man which God created in his image." Because for a pious Jew like Huberband, nothing can be conceived without God. Does this mean God is present in sadness also? Yes, in sadness also. And perhaps even in absence. Translated from the French by Lydia Davis.

Photo of Rabbi Shimon Huberband

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6) Heberbard

קאפייע, רינג. 1. נר. 150.

דאס רעליגיעזע לעבן בעת דער מלחמה.

העפט 3.

א י נ ה א ל ש :

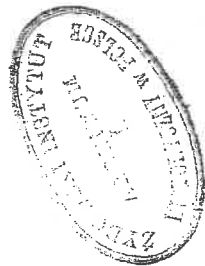
שמירות שבת און חילול שבת.

יידישע הלבשה

ספרים.

תשמישי קדושה.

שמירת שבת און חילול שבת.



דער אריינמארש פון דער דייטשער ארמיי קיין פוילן איז איך רוב שט

און שטעטלעך אויסגעפאלן ערב די ימים נוראים פון יאר חש".

ווי נאר זיי זיינען אריין אין א שטאט, האבן זיי פארארדנט, אז די

געוועלבער פוזן זיין אפן שבת און ימים טובים. אין דער גרעסטער צאל

שטעט זיינען די געוועלבער געווען אפן און ראש השנה און יום כפור. ש

זיינען די געוועלבער געווען אפן אומעטום.

תיכף נאך זייער אריינקומען אין א שטאט האט זיך אנגעהויבן דאס כא

צו דער ארבעט, דערונטער אויך שבתים און יום טובים. אזוי ארום איז ד

יידישע באפעלקערונג אויף נאך אן אופן געשוונגען געווארן מחלל שבת

צו זיין.

עס האבן זיך געשאטן אין אלע שטעט און שטעטלעך די יידן-ראטן. די

דערמאנטע ראטן האבן רעגולירט דאס צושטעלן יידן צו צוואנגס-ארבעט פא

די דייטשן. עס האט זיך אויך אנגעהויבן דער ענין מיט די קאנטריבוציע

אויף דער יידישער באפעלקערונג. די יידן-ראטן האבן געמוזט ארבעטן אי

שבתים און יום טובים, געמוזט שיקן יידן צו דער ארבעט אין שבתים און

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W. J. Asher



Rabbi Shimon Huberband HY”d

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## Mikvehs and Jewish Family Purity

Before the war, there were nine functioning *mikvehs* in Warsaw. Two societies named The Purity of the Daughters of Israel paid for those indigent women who went to bathe themselves in the *mikvehs*. The societies issued special slips, without charge, to all women who turned to them for help. These slips were accepted by the *mikveh* owners as admission tickets. Women bearing slips from The Purity of the Daughters of Israel were treated no worse than those who purchased their admission tickets from the owners.

In addition, to the *mikvehs* in Warsaw, which were under private ownership, there was also a communal *mikveh* in the suburb of Praga, luxuriously built and exquisitely maintained. Almost all the wealthy women of Warsaw who went to the *mikveh* would travel to Praga.

During the bombing of Warsaw none of the *mikvehs* were operational, since they served at that time as bomb-shelters. When the bombing ended and Warsaw's water supply was restored, the *mikvehs* immediately resumed service. Attendance was very high, and it was a time of great prosperity for *mikveh* owners. During the days of the bombing, people had become covered with dust, mud, and filth. When the *mikvehs* reopened, the attendance was enormous, both by men in the daytime and women at night.

The happy days for *mikveh* owners, and perhaps also for the Jewish population at large, lasted until December 1939. The direc-





tor of the Warsaw Department of Health, the well-known anti-Semite, Dr. Schrempf, then began to take an active interest in the *mikvehs*. He and his cronies inspected all the *mikvehs*, and on the day immediately after his inspection, Dr. Schrempf published an article in the German-language *Krakauer Zeitung* about the Jewish ritual baths in Warsaw. In this article, he wrote that the *mikvehs* were breeding grounds for epidemic diseases, because the pools could be replenished only once every three months according to the Jewish religion. He claimed that the Jews bathed in these pools while clothed. He depicted the filthiness and uncleanness of the *mikvehs* in horrifying terms.

All the *mikveh* pools were subsequently closed. In certain *mikvehs*, the baths and showers were allowed to remain open. Dr. Schrempf demanded that in return for keeping the baths and showers open, these institutions destroy their ritual *mikveh* pools, by filling them with sand, demolishing their steps, and so forth. Since the *mikveh* owners refused to meet this demand, the entire institutions, including the baths and showers, were locked up.

The owner of the *mikveh* at 22 Dzieleha Street, Mr. Leybl Rozenfarb, was the person who spoke out most forcefully against destroying the ritual pools. Schrempf was infuriated by Rozenfarb's statements and once turned to him with the following question: "Does this mean that you believe the political situation will change and that there will be a different regime in this land? Are you holding on to your slinking pools for such a time?" Rozenfarb replied that he knew the current regime would remain forever. He refused to destroy the ritual pools because he intended to intercede with the central authorities and request permission for the pools to resume their activity. He hoped the authorities would accede to his request. Schrempf answered with the words: "That will never be!"

All the institutions whose ritual pools had been ordered destroyed were sealed, including their baths and showers. Notices were posted on the entrances, stamped with the swastika, declaring that the use of the *mikveh* would be treated as an act of sabotage and would be punished by anywhere between ten years in prison and death. Two weeks later, the baths and showers of these *mikvehs* whose ritual pools alone had been sealed beforehand were locked up.

During the closing of the *mikveh* at 22 Smocza Street, Dr.

Schrempf took his revolver out of his holster and said to the owner, Mr. Goldman: "Whoever bathes in this *mikveh* will be shot immediately, and the *mikveh* owner will be shot as well."

Jewish Warsaw was left without any *mikvehs*, and the problem of the purity of the daughters of Israel became as serious as it was in the days of the ancient Roman edicts against Judaism. Well-to-do women and pious men began to travel to the towns near Warsaw, such as Otwock, Falenica, Rembertow, Grodzisk, and Pruszkow. They would immerse themselves in the local *mikvehs* and return to Warsaw. The evil decree fell most heavily upon the truly needy women.

In the beginning of the winter of 1940, a law was issued forbidding Jews to travel by train without special "ice passes."\* Soon afterwards, Jews were forbidden to travel by train altogether, even with such passes. Following the pronouncement of the travel ban, a whole series of cities could no longer be reached by Jewish women. The latter began to concentrate their journeys on three cities: Rembertow, Pruszkow, Piaseczno.

Primarily poor women traveled to Rembertow. A group of women would get together, hire a coachman, and travel there by wagon. They would leave Warsaw in the middle of the day in order to return before the nighttime curfew. The cost of such a group excursion was relatively low.

The greatest number of women traveled to Pruszkow, which was the most convenient town for women to reach. The trolley ran regularly to Pruszkow, and one did not need to present "ice passes" to travel by trolley. Each and every day one could witness the identical scene—Jewish women filling the trolleys to Pruszkow in the afternoon hours. The scene attracted particular attention because each woman carried a little bag underneath her arm.

When the trolley reached Pruszkow, a great panic would erupt among the women. Each one sought to leave the trolley first, so as to reach the *mikveh* earlier, catch a spot on line, complete the ritual procedure, and return to Warsaw before the curfew. When the afternoon trolley arrived in Pruszkow, the town was thrown into a tumult by the hundreds of Jewish women running in the direction of the local *mikveh*. The Gentiles, who learned from their Jewish

\*Passes issued by the local German authorities permitting Jews to travel by train. They certified that its holder had been vaccinated against lice. Such passes were an additional means of humiliating the Jewish population. (IV)

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neighbors the meaning of the daily arrival of the Jewish women from Warsaw, would burst into laughter as they watched the women race through the streets of the town. The conductors of the trolleys would smile broadly as the Jewish women emptied out into the Pruszkow station.

The trip to Piaseczno by commuter railway was also very convenient for women. But the local *mikveh* was heated only once a week. Under the initiative of the Piaseczno Rebbe, Rabbi Yitskhok Shapiro, and Mr. Meshulam Kaminer, funds were raised among the pious Jews of Warsaw and given to the Piaseczno *Hevriah* to enable it to heat the local *mikveh* daily.

The Jewish community then published a railroad schedule in Yiddish and Polish, listing the departure times of commuter trains leaving for Piaseczno and returning to Warsaw. Since "lice passes" were required for travel by commuter railroad, the community purchased a large number of passes from the various offices which issued them. The passes were given over to a group of Warsaw rabbis: Any women who desired such a pass in order to travel to the *mikveh* could acquire one, free of charge, from any of the designated rabbis. The pass was issued in her name.

It thus happened that Piaseczno drew many women away from the Pruszkow *mikveh*. This trend increased after an incident in which two policemen patrolling the streets of Pruszkow noticed a large crowd of women from Warsaw running in a certain direction with packages under their arms. The policemen followed the women, suspecting that they were smuggling illegal merchandise, and barged into the *mikveh*.

During the summer of 1940, Rabbi Yitskhok Shapiro along with one Meshulam Kaminer rented a number of bathing areas along the Vistula River and hired two *mikveh* ladies to supervise the women's immersions in the Vistula. They also rented the bathhouse at 14 Muranowska Street, where the women cleansed themselves in preparation for the immersion. They would then proceed to one of the bathing areas along the river, and immerse themselves under the supervision of the *mikveh* ladies. All this without charge. Men would simply immerse themselves in the open river. This arrangement, however, did not go on for very long because many women, unaccustomed to the cold waters of the Vistula, caught cold, contracted inflammation of the lungs, or otherwise fell ill. There also occurred a mishap in which a student of the Gerer

*shtetl* at 9 Mila Street, Berish Flegler of 36 Nowolipie Street, drowned while immersing himself in the Vistula. The popularity of the *mikvehs* in Piaseczno, Rembertow, and Pruszkow grew once more.

In the beginning of October 1940, an ordinance was issued banning Jews from riding the public trolley cars and instituting separate trolleys for Jews. The ordinance made it more difficult to travel to Rembertow and Piaseczno. Traveling to Pruszkow was now out of the question, because Jewish trolleys left from Pruszkow only once every four or five hours, making it simply impossible to leave Warsaw and return on the same day before curfew.

The season of the High Holidays arrived. It was by then impossible to immerse oneself in the Vistula. It was no longer possible to travel to the above-mentioned towns. The problems of the *mikvehs* became a pressing one for men as well.

The owner of the *mikveh* at 14 Grzybowska Street then had a clever idea. He contacted the local police precinct and negotiated a monthly payment for which the police agreed "not to see or hear anything." He also reached an agreement with the Polish police, and proceeded to open a hole in the wall of a nearby basement which led into the *mikveh*. The owner heated the *mikveh* and let men enter through the basement hole in the daytime and women in the evening. Due to the fear of detection, they heated the *mikveh* only once a week. At night, the hole in the basement wall was sealed. "Business" was conducted this way for endless weeks. The official entrance to the *mikveh* was pasted over with a notice stating that bathing in the *mikveh* would be punished by anywhere between ten years in prison and death. Meanwhile, Jews bathed and immersed themselves in the *mikveh* undisturbed, scoffing at the notice.

The system employed by the *mikveh* at 14 Grzybowska was soon learned by other *mikveh* owners. Before long there were four clandestine *mikvehs* functioning in Warsaw—14 Grzybowska Street, 1 Grzybowska Street, 38 Dzieina Street, and 22 Smocza Street.

Needless to say, the bathing was conducted in total secrecy. The *mikvehs* were heated once a week or once in two weeks, due to fear of detection by Christian neighbors, who lived alongside Jews until the institution of the ghetto.

In late November 1940, the ghetto was sealed off. There were no

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longer any Christian residents in the area of the ghetto, and there was, hence, no longer any danger of Christian neighbors detecting the *mikveh*s. The *mikveh* owners then began to heat the pools three times a week and later on a full six days a week. There were specified hours for men and for women. The attendance at the *mikveh*s was very high. The *mikveh*s were thus able to function secretly in this fashion the entire winter of 1940-41 and the early summer of 1941.

In the meantime, Schrempf left his position. He was succeeded by Hagen and Koblenski. For a certain sum of money, it appeared that it would be possible to obtain the legalized opening of the *mikveh*s. The *mikveh* owners began to negotiate with various ghetto officials in this regard. A fund of over ten thousand zlotys was created. Dr. Sukhain demanded twenty-five thousand zlotys for arranging the legalization of the *mikveh*s; Gantsvaykh demanded forty-eight hundred zlotys.\* In the end it became clear that both these officials were bluffing. The *mikveh* owners interceded directly with the authorities for the legalized opening of the *mikveh*s. Finally, in August 1941, they were granted permission to open the four above-mentioned *mikveh*s, as well as the *mikveh* at 26 Franciszkańska Street.

In the beginning of the winter of 1941, the attendance at the *mikveh*s fell sharply. The reasons for this were the raging typhus epidemic, and the shortage of fuel, which caused the price of a visit to the *mikveh* to reach more than ten zlotys. Under current conditions, in the closed ghetto, this is considered to be an enormously high price. Three of the five *mikveh*s have therefore closed. Currently functioning are the two *mikveh*s at 26 Franciszkańska Street and 38 Dzielna Street.

\*Avrom Gantsvaykh headed the ghetto's Office of Price Supervision, which was ostensibly empowered to control and combat high prices, usury, and smuggling. In fact, this office was an arm of the Gestapo. (VV)



## Eichmann Trial -- Sessions 27 and 28 -- Testimonies of F. Masia, M. Dworzecki, A. Kovner, A. Peretz

Film | Accession Number: 1999.A.0087 | RG Number: RG-60.2100\*040 | Film ID: 2039



ד"ר מ. דבורזצקי

### החיים הדתיים בניטו וילנה

רוצה אני לספר כאן על החיים הדתיים בניטו וילנה. על קיום המסורת, המנהגים והתמילות, ועל כמה מבעיות המצפון שנתעוררו בניטו — במידה שראיתי את הדברים כמו עיני, או שמעתיים מפי אחרים. רצח אני חשיבות היסטורית בכך, שעם רישום דברי ימי-השואה לא ייעדר בהם תיעוד החיים הדתיים בימי האימים; ולשם הדיוק ההיסטורי אבקש מניצולי גיטו ירושלים דליטא, אשר אליהם תגיע רשימה זו, שיוצילו לכתוב לי ולהראות על חסר או אי-דיוק בשמות שאביא, או בתאריכים, או בעצם העובדות.

יום הרבנים

מה לי בשעתו הרב גוסטמאן, שהיה גר בשניפישוק שבווילנה: המעשה היה ב־13 ביולי 1941, במוצאי שבת, ערב שבעה עשר בתמוז, שחל כנודח בראשון בשבוע, בשתיים עשרה בלילה התקרבה מכונית לחצר; מתוכה יצאו 3 גרמנים וליטאי אחד. התחילו הגרמנים מכים אותו על ראשו, למח תכוני — שאל — יען כי רב הנך; בבית קם שאן; עלה בידו להיחלץ מידיהם, לברוח לחצר ולהסתתר שם בין שיחי תפוחי-האדמה הצפופים. למחרת נודע לו, כי בו ביום עברו הגרמנים ורשימה בידם, על פני דירותיהם של כל הרבנים בעיר, מדירה לדירה, וכל מי שנמצא בביתו נלקח אתם. יום הרבנים — כך נקרא היום הוא אחר-כך.

(12) Dr. Meir Mark  
Dvoretzki

מזמן לזמן היו בתי הספר הדתיים עורכים "בחינות" פומביות. היו מושיבים את הילדים מסביב לשולחנות, והרבי ישב באמצע. הוא היה בוחנם מן החומר שלמדו, וגם האורחים המוזמנים היו רשאים לשאול שאלות. כתום הבחינות היתה נערכת "סעודת מצווה".

נוכחתי בשעת בחינה שכזו, בסוגיא של "יאוש שלא מדעת". הילדים התפללו והתווכחו בעניין "יע"ל קג"ם". במרחק שלושים מטרים מבחינת-גמר זו בגיטו — עמד בשער על משמרתו, איש ה"ס.ס.ס. . . .

#### שרידי הממלגות הדתיות בגיטו

מעסקני "מזרחי" לשעבר, היו פעילים בגיטו: עזריאל שסקין (מראשוני הציונים בוילנה), פליכס דסלר (פנקסן הקהילה כמה שנים) וכן יצחק אושפיץ - שסקין (משאול). שני הראשונים היו עוסקים בעיקר בענייני בתי-המדרש וענייני-מצה, וכו'. אושפיץ-שסקין בא מספר פעמים בתור נציג חוגי מזרחי לשיבות ה"גב" (הועד הקואורדינאציוני המחתרתי של התנועה הציונית בוילנה, וועד השבעה); בישיבות הללו הכרתיו.

המורה אליעזר גולדברג (ניספה במחנות-הריכוז שבאסטוניה), אירגן סמינר לבעיות היהדות, והיה מרצה מדי שבוע בשבוע בבית המדרש על נושאים מדברי ימי ישראל.

קבוצת הנוער של "מזרחי" היתה מתכנסת מדי פעם בפעם בבית המדרש לשיחות.

משרידי העסקנים של האגודה זכורים לי שמותיהם של צבי ניסן יפה ושל ויגדורטשיק, שהיה פעיל בשם החוגים הדתיים ב"ועד לעזרה ציבורית", כלומר, במוסד שבו השתתפו באי כוח כל הזרמים הקיימים בגיטו; ועד זה היווה את נציגות דעת הקהל של הגיטו. בישיבות ה"ג"ל פגשתי תכופות; שם מילא את מקומו של הרב א. באריק, שלא השתתף בישיבות מחמת מחלת השחפת.

#### תנועה דתית של נשים (פייגלע דעם רביס)<sup>6</sup>

בגיטו קמה מעין תנועה מיוחדת של נשים לשם שמירת השבת ושמירת ערכי היהדות. בראשה התבלטה הדמות של בחורה בת עשרים, "פייגל דעם רביס". היא היתה בתו של הרב בייגל מטראכימברוד שבזוהלין. היא גרה יחד עם עוד נשים צעירות, מורות ותלמידות, בנות "יעקב" לשעבר, ברחוב ההקדש (רח' בית-החולים) 9, בביתו של השוחט החסיד, הרב ר' אהרן ידידוביטש.

כפי שמוסר יוסף פוקסמאן השתייכו לקבוצתה: רייזל אורליאנסקי (בריסק), שושנה סטארובינאץ (מיר), לאה רייז ואחותה (לוצק), בריינדל (פינסק), רישל (דאראונא), ברכה ואחותה (ביאליסטוק), מלכה'לע (פולאנקה), ברקוביץ (לוצק), רוט (פראנקפורט אס-מיין). אחר כך נצטרפו אליהן: הרבנית שוב (שבעלה ניספה בשנת 1941, כמסופר לעיל) ובתה, הרבנית באריק (על בעלה סופר לעיל) ובתה, הרבנית ברקוביץ, הרבנית קופלוביץ, הרבנית אפשטיין, הרבנית פרלוב' (בעלה תזכר למעלה), הרבנית דאראצין, הרבנית לויטן מראקישקי, ועוד.

6 ראה, "פייגלע פון חילנער געטא" פון יוסף פוקסמאן, ב"דער אמעריקאנער" 8.9.1957

עמ' 12. וכן פרטים טפי הנ"ל עליידי מ. אונגר, ב"סאגמארגן-זשורנאל" מיום 4.3.1946.

7 לפני ימי הגיטו גרתי בוילנה בשכנותם של הרבי ר' אלתר פרלוב ואשתו פאראלא, והינן

רוב המשתייכות לחוג היו מתכנסות ברחוב ההקדש 9 והיו מתפללות בצוותא ואמרות פרקי תהלים. את התפילות ואמירת התהלים ניהלה "פייגעלע דעם רבי'ס". בשבתות היו נשי חוג זה לומדות פרשת השבוע עם רש"י ומפרשים אחרים, פרקי אבות, דיני שולחן ערוך וספרי-מוסר. במשך הזמן גדל חוג הווייבערשער בית-מדרש" (בית המדרש לנשים) והוא עבר ל"מטבת הכשר", רחוב האשכנזים 31. התפילות, אמירת התהלים, הדרשות על ענייני-מוסר שפייגעלע בת הרב היתה משמיעה, כל זה היה מיועד אך ורק לנשים. פעמים מספר הוזמנו גם גברים להרצות, ביניהם: ר' יעקב זאלדין (זאלוין?), יוסל ביאליסטוקר, שלום שוב (בנו של הרב שוב) והמשורר הדתי חיים סאמאיטיצקי, על הנושא: "שבת דער ווינקלשטיין און פונדאמענט פון יידישקייט" (שבת אבן-הפינה והבסיס של היהדות). יוסף פוקסמאן מוסר, שביריו היו כמה כתבי יד של "פייגעלע דעם רבי'ס" ועליהם היתה הסכמה מאת ר' יעקב זעלווין (לוצקער); שני כתבי היד נמצאים כעת במכון ההיסטורי היהודי בפולין, וכתב-יד אחר ממנה נמסר על ידו אחרי המלחמה לרב היחידי בוויילנה.

לא רבים הכירוה בגיטו בשמה וזכור לי שקראוה בשם: "די דרשנטע" (הדרשנית) "די שבת רביצין" (רבנית השבת), כי היא היתה ידועה בדרשותיה ובקריאתה לשמירת השבת.

יוסף פוקסמאן מספר: רבות מבחורותיה של פייגל היו נושאות אתן סידורים מטנים ועל הצד הפנימי של העטיפה היה כתוב: "השמים ושמי השמים, הארץ וכל אשר עליה, נבראו אלא למען ולצורך האדם"; אחר כך: אליך ה' נפשי אשא' ולבסוף: "ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וציוונו לקדש שמו ושם ישראל ברבים".

"פייגעלע דעם רבי'ס" ניספתה במחנה-הריכוז שטוטהוף בשנת 1944 ממחלת טיפוס הבהרות<sup>8</sup>; גם רוב חברותיה ניספו מרעב וממחלות; לפי דבריו של פוקסמאן נשארו מהן בחיים שתיים בלבד: הרבנית ברקוביץ ובתה, הנמצאות כעת בארץ.

שבת

קשה היה לקיים את שמירת השבת בגיטו, אפילו ליהודי אדוק שהוטל עליו לצאת לעבודה בפלוגה גרמנית אל מחוץ-לגיטו. נשים אדוקות היו מעמידות "חמין" בתנורי המאפיות של הגיטו, לבל תצטרכנה לבשל בשבת.

נכנסים תכופות אחר אל השני. בגיטו וילנה סבורים היו, שפתח-הצלה יש בבריחה מגיטו ארוך ורביאימים זה אל גיטו אחר; תיכננו בריחה משוחפת לגיטו באראנוביץ, שהיו לנו שם בני משפחה. עגלת איכר עמדה להסיענו לשם. כליל הכריחה הודיעה הרבנית שאין באפשרותה לעזוב את הגיטו, כי הטמינה במקום סתר את הגביע של הבעל-שם טוב, ואין לה הכוח הנפשי לעזוב את הגביע הזה הסקר. למחרת כבוקר פרצה "אקציה" בגיטו, ומאו לא ראיתי עוד את הרב והרבנית פרלוב. יתא זכרם ברוך.

8 אשה מופלאה זו, דרשותיה והתנועה לשמירת השבת, הוזכרו בספרי "ירושלים וליסא" (יידיש, עמ' 292; עברית, עמ' 281); אולם שמה ומספר פרטים אודותיה נעלמו אז מוכרזי והכאתים כאן בשמו של יוסף פוקסמאן הנמצא כעת בארצות הברית ובזכור לי כאיש ישר יחזימן, מפגישותי אתו בישיבות המתתרת בגיטו.

From the Pages of Tradition

Shmeyer Z. Leiman

FAIGEL DEM KOV'S  
By JOSEPH FOXMAN

Joseph Foxman's eyewitness account of Faigel dem Kov's (Yiddish for: Faigel, the Rabbi's daughter) is a moving testimonial to a Holocaust victim who sanctified God's Name in life and death. Originally published in Yiddish, it is presented here - as best we can tell, for the first time - in English translation.<sup>1</sup>

A Holocaust survivor, Joseph Foxman (1905-1977) was born in Baranovich (today in Belarus) and died in New York. A writer of note, he published widely in the European Yiddish press prior to World War II, and contributed significantly to the Jewish community memorial volumes (*yiskor-bioker*) published after the Holocaust. With the outbreak of World War II, he escaped to Vilna and ultimately was imprisoned in the Vilna Ghetto. An ardent Zionist Revisionist, he was a founding member of the United Partisan Organization (PPO), the Jewish resistance movement in the Vilna Ghetto. Escaping from the Ghetto, he made his way to Poland in 1945, then to New York in 1949.<sup>2</sup> Abraham

<sup>1</sup> At least three different early accounts of Faigel dem Kov's have appeared in print. See J. Foxman, "רעבן זעלבן פון פאגלע" in "פאגלע" in "פאגלע" *פאגלע*, 9, 1957, 12. Cf. M. Ungel, "פאגלע דעם קוב" *פאגלע* (New York: Baranowicher Forband of America, 1964), 22-25. See also M. Ungel, "פאגלע דעם קוב" in his "פאגלע דעם קוב" in "פאגלע דעם קוב" (Tel-Aviv: Hamenora Publishing House, 1970), 89-91. This last account claims that it is drawn from Joseph Foxman's essay in "פאגלע דעם קוב", August 9, 1945. This is surely a mistake in reference to the 1957 version listed above. We have translated the 1957 version, correcting only obvious errors. For the later accounts (often abridged), see, e.g., M. Dwozozcki, "פאגלע דעם קוב" *פאגלע* 47(1960), 112-123; Y. Eliezburtz, "פאגלע דעם קוב" *פאגלע* 1978), 277-278; and Y. Granatstein, "פאגלע דעם קוב" (Jerusalem: Makhon Zekher Nafali, 1988), 102-104.  
<sup>2</sup> See the entries on Joseph Foxman in "פאגלע דעם קוב" *פאגלע*, vol. 7 (New York: Congress for Jewish Culture, 1968), column 329, and in "פאגלע דעם קוב" (New York: Kayah Diman-Kagan, 1986), column 439.

TRADITION

Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, is Joseph's son.<sup>3</sup>

I had the tragic privilege and the great misfortune of participating in the fate of Vilna Jewry during the insufferable and dreadful years of the Hitler regime.

Whenever I relive my memories of the past, I stand in awe when confronted by the holy name "Faigel dem Kov's."

Faigel dem Kov's was a young woman, perhaps twenty-one years old at the time, the daughter of Rabbi Beigel of Trokinbrod in Volynia.<sup>4</sup> In September 1941, following the Nazi provocations in Vilna, she was imprisoned - together with all of Vilna Jewry - within the walls of the narrow ghetto. Faigel dem Kov's, together with a group of other young women - all of them Beth Jacob students and teachers from a variety of towns and villages - were housed in Hekdesh Gass 9.<sup>5</sup> This was the home of the hasidic ritual slaughterer, R. Aharon Yedidovich, may God avenge the shedding of his blood.

From the very first day of her entry into the ghetto, Faigel dem Kov's took upon herself the task of organizing into a separate group all the religious girls in the ghetto. The first girls to join the group were: Raizel Orleaniski from Brisk, Shoshana Starovizner from Mir, Lein Reiss and her sister from Lutsik, Braindel from Pinsk, Ritschel from Dereva, Bracha and her sister from Bialystok, Malkela from Polanka, Berkovitch from Lutsik, and Roth from Frankfurt am Main. The group was later joined by Rebbetzin Shub<sup>6</sup> and her daughter from Vilna, Rebbetzin

<sup>3</sup> See Abraham Foxman's foreword to Joseph Foxman, *In the Shadow of Death* (New York-Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2011), 9-13. This recently published memoir contains important new material about Faigel dem Kov's on pp. 45-46 and 102-104.  
<sup>4</sup> Faigel was the daughter of R. Barukh Ze'ev and Ruhama Beigel. R. Barukh Ze'ev served as rabbi of Trokinbrod from 1910 until 1942, when he was killed, together with seven of his children, by the Nazis. Trokinbrod, also called Zofyivka, was a small town populated almost entirely by Jews (approximately 1500 Jews lived there at the outbreak of World War II), some 50 kilometers northwest of Rovno in Ukraine. See Y. Vainur, et al., eds., "פאגלע דעם קוב" *פאגלע* (Givatayim: Agudath Bet Tel, 1988).  
<sup>5</sup> Foxman here gives the Yiddish name of the street. Under Polish rule it was called *Saphtana* (see below); today it is called *Ligonines*.  
<sup>6</sup> Rebbetzin Shub, daughter of the rabbi of Minsk, R. Eliezer Rabinowitz, was married to R. Yosef Shub, close associate and confidant of R. Hayyim Ozer Grodzonski. R. Shub served as the first head of the Va ad Ha-Yeshiva. See

Berek' and her daughter, and Rebbetzins Berkovitch, Kopelovitch, Epstein, Perlow,<sup>5</sup> Deretzin, and Rebbetzin Levitan from Rokishkis, and many others.

A majority of the group used to gather together every day at Shpitaha 9,<sup>6</sup> where they engaged in communal prayer and the recitation of Psalms. The services and the recitation of Psalms were led by Faigel dem Rov's. Every Shabbat, the group used to study the weekly Torah portion together with Rashi's commentary and other commentaries as well, *Pirkei Avot* (in Yiddish), laws from the *Shulhan Arukh*, and various excerpts from *Musar* literature were also studied.

Faigel dem Rov's popularity, and that of her circle, grew from day to day, so that the number of listeners to her Torah and Musar lectures increased considerably. Rabbi Yedidovitch's apartment was too small and could no longer house such a large group of women. And so the "Women's House of Study" moved into the home of Rebbetzin Reiss of Lutsk on Yatkover Gass.<sup>10</sup> It was not long before the "Women's House of Study" outgrew this venue as well. Then – thanks to the intervention of Rabbis Landau and Jacobson – the public kitchen on Deitsche Gass 31<sup>11</sup> was placed at the disposal of Faigel dem Rov's.

The prayer services, the study sessions, the Torah and Musar lectures, and the recitation of Psalms were for women only. We are aware of several instances when Faigel dem Rov's invited men to teach and deliver sermons. One such invited guest was R. Yaakov Zeldin, one of the great Musar exponents in pre-war Poland.<sup>12</sup>

1. Lewin, ed., *תפילת היום*, vol. 1 (New York: Research Institute for Religious Jewry, 1956), 247-254.

2. Rebbetzin Sheyna Berek was married to R. Aharon Berek, a close associate of R. Hayyim Ozer Grodzanski who succeeded R. Yosef Shub as head of the Va'ad Ha-Yeshiva. See I. Lewin, *op. cit.*, vol. 3 (New York, 1959), 73-77.

3. Rebbetzin Perle Perlow, wife of R. Shalom Alter Perlow, the Koidanover Rebbe in Baranovitch, fled together with her husband from Baranovitch to Vilna. See I. Lewin, *op. cit.*, vol. 5 (New York, 1963), 187-191; cf. M. Unger, *תולדות ישיבת בר"ר חיים* (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kook, 2007), 265-267.

4. Same as Hekadesh Gass, above.

5. The equivalent of "Butcher Shops Street" in Yiddish. Under Polish rule the street was called *Jatkowa*, today it is called *Ahnickojskie*.

6. The equivalent of "German Street" in Yiddish. Under Polish rule the street was called *Niemiecka*, today it is called *Volkievicz*.

7. A distinguished graduate of the Musar Yeshiva "Bet Yosef" in Bialystok, he served as Dean of the "Bet Yosef" Yeshiva of Lutsk in Volhynia. In later 1939 he escaped together with the Yeshiva, to Vilna. See Y. Granatstein, *עשר שנים* (Bnei Brak: Ganuzki Kiddush Ha-Shem, 2006), vol. 2, 339-340. For his photograph, and for additional information about him, see K. Barber, *שנת ה'תש"ו* (Jerusalem: Bnei Ha-Yeshiva, 2007), 23 and 194-196.

A lecture on the topic "Shabbat, the Cornerstone and Foundation of Yiddishkeit" was delivered to the women's group by the young religious poet Chaim Semiatzki,<sup>13</sup> may God avenge the shedding of his blood. A short Musar homily was presented by Yosef Bialystoker. Shalom Shub lectured on "Kiddush Ha-Shem." The male presenters were always introduced by Faigel dem Rov's.

At the gatherings held in the public kitchen on Deitsche Gass 31, the walls would be decorated with slogans and large posters prepared by a scribe. Some of them read as follows:

1. Redemption for any particular generation comes about only by means of the merit of its righteous women.<sup>14</sup>
2. Israel was redeemed [from Egypt] through the merit of its righteous women.<sup>15</sup>
3. Jerusalem was destroyed only because of the profanation of the Sabbath.<sup>16</sup>
4. Be holy!<sup>17</sup>
5. Watch over the Sabbath, and the Sabbath will watch over you.<sup>18</sup>

I had in my possession two handwritten Torah discourses by Faigel dem Rov's, appended to which was a note of approval with the signature of R. Yaakov Lurker (Zeldin), may God avenge the shedding of his blood. One manuscript, on Parshat Hayvei Sarah, was entitled "And Abraham Came to Eulogize Sarah and Bewail Her." The other manuscript, on Parshat Va-Yishlah, was entitled "And Jacob Erected a Monument Over Her Grave." Both manuscripts are presently in the Historical Institute in Warsaw. A manuscript on Parshat Va-Yera, entitled "Whatev-

13. On Semiatzki, see *תולדות ישיבת בר"ר חיים* (New York, 1965), column 494-5.

14. *עשר שנים* to Ruth 4:11 (8606, end). Cf. R. Isaiah Ha-Levi Horowitz, *תורת משה*, ed. M. Katz (Haitz: Yad Ramah, 2010), vol. 2, 350 and 361, and ed. Y. Vidovicki (Jerusalem: Makhon Even Yisrael, 2010), vol. 3, 423-4 and 442.

15. *Sotah* 11b.

16. *B. Shabbat* 119b.

17. *Lev* 19:2.

18. Popular adage in modern Jewish literature, based perhaps on the formulation of R. David b. Samuel Halevi (d. 1667), who wrote regarding the Jews: *אמרו אתה נאשר, נאשר את ישראל*. See his *אמרו אתה נאשר* to *Shulhan Arukh: Orach Hayyim* 267:3. For a variation of this theme, see the famous formulation *אמר רבינו ר' יוחנן*, *שעור דרכי רבינו* (1905), 79. For a comprehensive discussion of this adage and its possible sources, see R. Shmuel Ashkenazi, *אמרו אתה נאשר* (Jerusalem: n.p., 2011), vol. 1, pp. 377-380.



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**Tova E. Dror**

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**My Mother's Holocaust Makeshift Prayer book History**

Name: Haya Iren Stein, Maiden name Weiss  
Born on: August 6, 1920  
Father: Yehuda-Yechezkel Weiss  
Mother: Tobe Weiss  
Brother: Mordechai Weiss

Deported: To Birkenau-Aushwitch on April 1944 from Sinervaroya-Szatmar Megye, Hungary. All her family except her were terminated in the gas chamber immediately upon arrival to Aushwitch. Stayed for 6 weeks in Birkenau-Aushwitch and was transferred.

Transferred: to Reinholtzheim, Germany. There she cleaned the ruins of a large demolished (bombed) Petrol (fuel) factory.

Then she was transferred to work in an ammunition factory in Turingia-Glachao where she filled bullets with gun powder and packaged the bullets with blue "parchment" made from painted cardboard.

Prayer Book: to enable her to pray without a Siddur, she wrote the prayers from memory and bounded her makeshift Siddur with the blue packaging material that was used to package the German ammunition in the factory.

My mother was freed by the allies in April 1945 and married my father, Yaakov Stein in December 1945, my father past away in 1993.

My mother is 91 year old and is now living in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

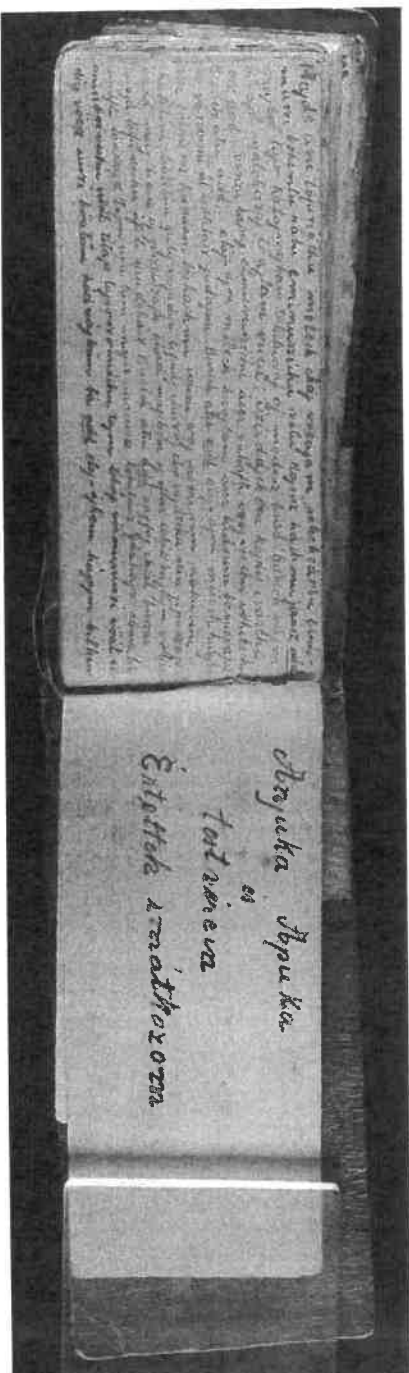
I am enclosing the makeshift Siddur that my mother made for display at Yad-Vashem museum.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Tova Dror

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Чрънѣнѣ Шрѣнѣ  
Татариѣ  
Чрънѣнѣ Шрѣнѣ

Siddur of  
Chay (Wars) Stern



# Marking Jewish Time in Auschwitz

Dr. Alan Rosen

■ Holocaust research is usually focused on the overwhelming destruction and dramatic rupture with the past. However, two examples of handwritten calendars that emerged from Auschwitz reveal the wartime quest for historical continuity and envisioning a future; they demonstrate that such continuity in the very midst of the Holocaust also demands acknowledgment and consideration.

In the latest issue of *Yad Vashem Studies* (42:2), I examine the special nature of the Jewish calendar and its role in prewar Europe,

While Sohlberg perseveres in tracking the day-to-day movement of Jewish life, Borinski's calendar looks beyond the tormented present to the vision of a redeemed future

summarizing what is known of eight surviving concentration camp calendars. I then detail the biographies of the Auschwitz calendar authors, Sophie Sohlberg and Anneliese Borinski (aka Ora Aloni), focusing on what in their past lives and wartime circumstances prepared them to compose the calendars under such difficult conditions.

Sophie Sohlberg (b. 1923) came from an Orthodox Jewish home in Munich and attended a religious school staffed by graduates from the prestigious Jewish Teachers Seminary in Würzburg. One of these teachers, Julius Kissinger, rigorously taught his young charges the rules for composing Jewish calendars. Ten years later, Sohlberg, hoping to provide a guide for the women in her section of Auschwitz to observe the holidays, was able to translate those rules into two calendars, one for 5704 (1943-44) and the second for 5705 (1944-45). She took the latter with her on a death march into Germany, used it to track time once the war ended, and subsequently brought it with her to Israel. Sadly, her teacher had been deported and murdered at the end of 1941. The calendars composed by Sohlberg

Yad Vashem Studies

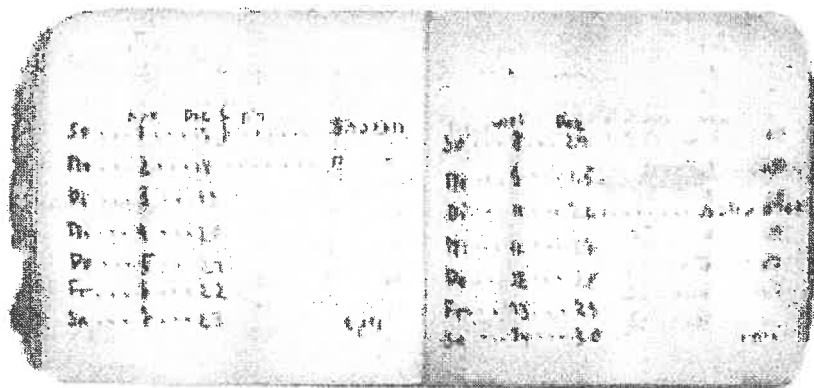


were nevertheless the vehicle through which Julius Kissinger continued to live and by which he gave others the possibility, even in Auschwitz, of reclaiming Jewish sacred time.

Anneliese Borinski (1914-1997), for her part, came from an assimilated German-Jewish background, turned to Zionism in the 1930s, and, like Sohlberg, made her way to Israel at the war's end. But her non-religious upbringing makes it more difficult to understand how she could have accomplished a task that generally demands years of religious study – a task, moreover, that in her memoirs and conversations she never seems to have mentioned.

page. Jewish time is thus presented in the sacred language of the Jews. As with almost all wartime Jewish calendars, both of these set alongside it the Gregorian calendar year, maintaining parallel time-keeping tracks even during a period of immense upheaval.

Composed by hand on small writing tablets in nefarious conditions, both calendars are understandably distinguished by mistakes – Sohlberg's nuanced, Borinski's more glaring. Yet these mistakes also testify to what was remarkably achieved. Strikingly, Borinski stops the Jewish dating after some three months, as if the disappearance of Europe's Jews found in the calendar's abrupt failure its evil correlaté. Meanwhile, the Gregorian dating blithely continues through the year. No longer tracking Jewish time *per se*, Borinski's calendar nonetheless intersperses ancient scriptural and rabbinic passages that point to the future redemption of the Jewish nation in the Land of Israel. While Sohlberg perseveres in tracking the day-to-day



■ Pages from the Jewish calendar of Sophie Sohlberg for the year 5705 (1944-1945), written in Auschwitz-Birkenau

Despite their authors' disparate upbringings, both calendars show, each in its own way, the determination to live according to Jewish time. They begin with Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year (in Borinski's calendar, actually the day before), designate the multiplicity of holidays that follow and, in Sohlberg's case, indicate the specific Torah portion for the week. Each calendar page presents a week, the onset of which is Sunday and the end or culmination, the Sabbath. The Jewish months – Tishrei, Cheshvan, Kislev, etc. – and the year 5705 are written out in Hebrew at the top of the relevant

movement of Jewish life, Borinski's calendar looks beyond the tormented present to the vision of a redeemed future. Thus both calendars, templates of continuity in a shattered world, demonstrate that Jewish time had an enduring wartime presence, even in Auschwitz.

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*The author, a scholar of Holocaust literature and testimony, lectures regularly at the International School for Holocaust Studies. He is currently working on a new book entitled, Killing Time, Saving Time: Calendars and the Holocaust.*

