VOICES

Remembering
the past, inspiring
the future.

Autumn 2025

The magazine of
Melbourne Holocaust Museum

MELBOURNE HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

Judy & Leon Goldman Learning Centre

Cover: Children from Adriatica DP Camp, Italy, travelling to Milan, c.1947. From the MHM Collection, Charles German Collection.

The Melbourne Holocaust Museum (MHM) exists to amplify the voices of Holocaust survivors as a catalyst for greater understanding and acceptance of difference, to inspire a better future.

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From the Presidents

> It happened once, and it can happen again. Therefore, education about the Holocaust is essential in our schools and universities, in our communities and institutions.
>
> Yehuda Bauer

The above words were written by Emeritus Professor Yehuda Bauer who passed away in October 2024, aged 98. Professor Bauer was a prominent Holocaust historian who gave hundreds of keynote addresses across the globe, including here in Australia. A true polyglot, his fluency in Czech, Slovak, German, English, Hebrew, Yiddish, French, and Polish enabled him to utilise a range of archives essential for understanding Holocaust history. In addition, he was a much loved and charismatic orator, teacher and academic. In the words of Dani Dayan, Chairman of Yad Vashem:

"Professor Bauer not only enriched our knowledge of the Holocaust but also deepened our understanding of this unprecedented event in Jewish and human history. For decades, and up until his final days, Yad Vashem and the entire world benefited from his knowledge, insights, and research. With his passing, we have lost the foremost Holocaust scholar of our time."

Our first event for 2025 was held on 27 January, where we marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day (IHRD) and commemorated 80 years since the Red Army liberated the Auschwitz Concentration Camp complex. Eight decades after the horrors of the Holocaust, Jewish communities and those survivors who built new lives in Australia after the war, are living through a wave of antisemitism that they never imagined would occur in their lifetime. Our community has been devastated by acts of vandalism, violence and personal targeting. Antisemitism remains a dangerous challenge to social cohesion. MHM's work in educating thousands of students has never been more vital.

We take hope and inspiration from the resilience of our incredible Holocaust survivors and the many individuals who stand with us to call out antisemitism. Our museum remains committed to placing the voices of the Holocaust at the heart of everything we do, and we are committed to making the MHM a centre of excellence in Holocaust education, memorialisation, and research.

On another note, we are delighted to wish **Abram Goldberg OAM** a happy 100th birthday **Andy Factor OAM** a wonderful 101st birthday.

We look forward to seeing you at our museum.

Chag Sameach
Sue and Mike

Sue Hampel OAM & Michael Debinski OAM
MHM Co-Presidents

From the Editor

Lina Leibovich

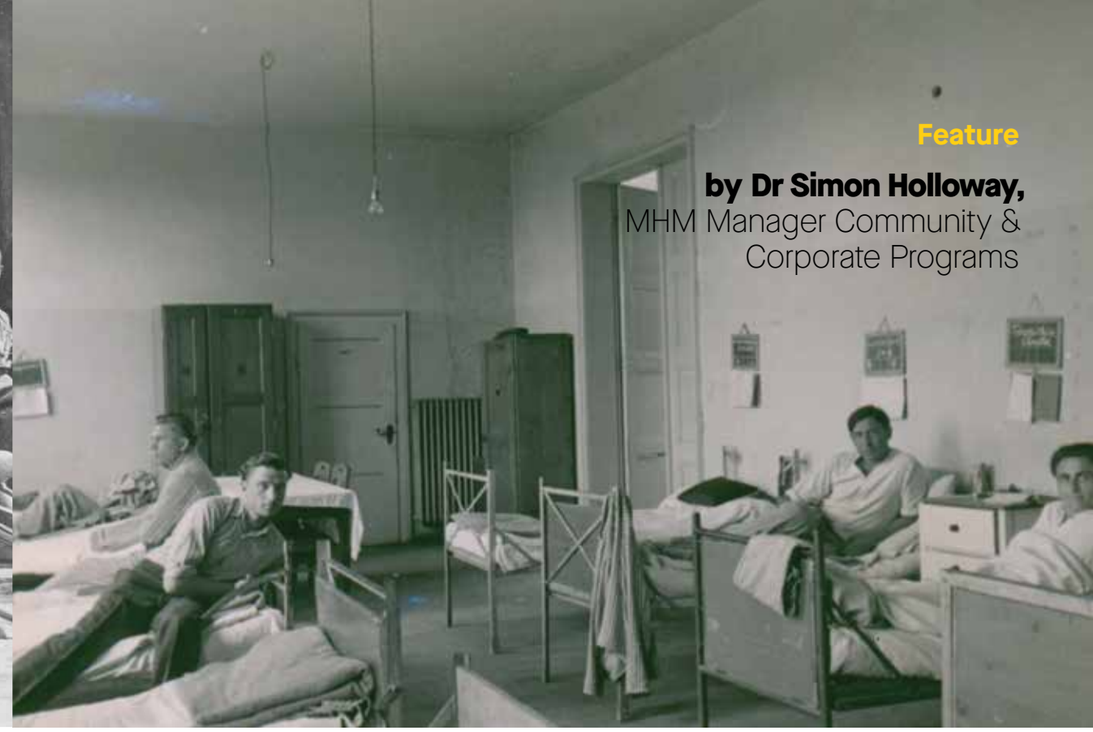
This year we mark the 80th anniversary of liberation and the end of World War Two. This issue of Voices centres on the survivors' experiences of liberation, exploring the diverse and complex meanings of freedom.

For each survivor, liberation was an intensely personal journey. Many had lost their families and homes, some confronted severe health challenges, and all faced the daunting task of rebuilding their lives after the profound devastation of the Holocaust.

In this edition, we are privileged to share the stories of two extraordinary Holocaust survivors, Professor Gilah Leder AM and Joe Szwarcberg.

Our CEO, Dr Steve Cooke, invites readers to reflect on how and why we should commemorate liberation in the 21st century, while Dr Simon Holloway delves into the survivors' immediate postwar experiences, the enduring traumas they carried, and the remarkable resilience of those who eventually made their way to Australia.

As antisemitism continues to rise across Australia, the purpose of the Melbourne Holocaust Museum has never been more vital. Through education and remembrance, we remain dedicated to honouring the past, strengthening our community, and inspiring change.



Feature

by Dr Simon Holloway,
MHM Manager Community & Corporate Programs

Liberation and the End of the Holocaust

In the aftermath of World War Two, Europe was awash with displaced persons. Some 30 million people altogether (including between six and 11 million people in Germany alone) languished without hope of a home to return to[1]. In their midst, there were anywhere from 1 to 1.5 million Jewish people, survivors in camps and in hiding, whose predicament was compounded by the fact that they often did not know the whereabouts of others in their home community, nor of who in their family had even survived.

Top Left: Young survivors in Buchenwald after liberation. Courtesy of USHMM.

Top Right: Male patients in a ward of the UNRRA-run Displaced Persons camp hospital. The DP camp was located near Fulda in the American Zone in Germany. From the MHM Collection.

Much has been written about the Jewish survivors, and much has been learnt in recent years. In the earliest reports, attention was given almost exclusively to those who had been liberated from camps, and those who made their way into camps, looking for medical attention and support. These Displaced Persons Camps (as they came to be known), housed Jewish and non-Jewish people alike, but as the Allies came to learn more about the peculiar circumstances faced by Jewish survivors, camps were established to shelter survivors of the Holocaust in particular.

Their trauma was great, but their resilience was no less profound. These camps served as sites for a rebirth of Jewish culture and community. As Samuel Gringauz said in 1947, "Nothing must permit Hitler a final triumph by the destruction of the Jews through the circumstances of the post-war world or through inner disintegration."[2] Many felt impelled, not only to survive as individuals but to persist as a community: to make sure that their traditions be preserved and their culture be allowed once more to flourish. The activities of Jewish people in DP camps was therefore an act of ongoing resistance.

To that end, Jews established theatres and printing presses, created sculptures and artworks, and built both faith and family. A photo from Fryda Schweitzer's z'l wedding, held in Bergen-Belsen DP camp[3], is used in our education programs, and

Left: The Czestochowa Synagogue model and the entrance gate of Treblinka Death Camp model, created by Holocaust survivor Chaim Sztajer. The gate reads in German "Recreation and work camp for Jews".

students consider the complexity of the situation in which these survivors found themselves: bereft of all they had, they built something, and what they built became everything.

Not all Jewish people found themselves in DP camps after the war, nor was every Jewish person classed as a DP. Some — including some of our survivors at the MHM — were able to return to empty homes, some of which had been kept for them by kindly neighbours. Others had the additional benefit of being reunited with some of their family members, although this too came with complications.

The overwhelming majority of babies and small children who survived the Holocaust did so in hiding — and frequently with people to whom they were not related. When survivors like Professor Gilah Leder AM or Andre Dubrowin were returned to their biological family after the war, that was itself a source of trauma. In Andre's case, he could not even communicate with the uncle who now claimed him, being unable to speak French.

For all that we might speak of a post-war experience, the truth is that people's lives were highly variegated. Not only were people in a great variety of differing circumstances at the end of the war, they also returned to highly varied societies – some in which friends and family were able to greet them, and others in which the local community was openly hostile. While some intended — at least for a time — to remain within the towns and cities to which they had been able to return, others desired nothing so much as to depart. Dr Henry Ekert AM attended school in Poland for some years before his parents realised he had no future there, while Sarah Saaroni OAM left at the first available opportunity. Some, like Peter Gaspar OAM, had family who could make those decisions with him; others had to make their decisions alone.

One thing that all survivors did share in common was the degree to which others – including well-meaning neighbours and former friends – were wholly ignorant as to the nature of their experiences.

Whether they had survived through flight or through hiding, in ghettos or in camps, the true nature of their experiences would remain impenetrable to those who had survived the war as members of the general population. It was this that also impelled survivors to form communities with like-minded people — people who understood, and to whom things did not need to be explained.

Sadly, many survivors would continue to encounter disbelief and incredulity on the part of other survivors whose experiences were unlike their own. Thomas Blatt[4] describes how as late as the 1960s, survivors in Israel would scoff at his descriptions of Sobibor death camp. So unlike their own experiences were his that they could not accept the reality of them at a time when information about Sobibor was still largely unknown. It would not be until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent accessibility of Eastern European archives that information about territories liberated by the Soviets would become more widespread.

Perhaps it was the general lack of information around such camps that inspired Chaim Sztajer z'l to build the model of Treblinka that has served as the centrepiece of our museum for most of its 41-year history. To this day, Chaim's model provides an opportunity for reflection and consideration on the part of visitors, and is something that we unpack with adult groups in particular, who are given opportunity understand why camps like Treblinka are so little known.

If one looks closely at Chaim's model, one will observe the incredible detail – right down to the velvet curtain that was draped over the entrance to the gas chambers. That curtain, as we know from Yitzhak Arad[5], was stolen from a Polish synagogue, where it had graced the cover of the ark, in which the Torah is kept. Adorned with a Hebrew phrase from Psalms, it declared that, "This is the gateway to the Lord; the righteous enter here". That it should have come to adorn so benighted a place is a sign of the moral depravity of the Nazis and of their incredible cruelty, and the nature of Chaim Sztajer's work in the camp is such that he would have known this.

To my mind, one of the highlights of the *Everybody had a Name* exhibition is the first station, which looks at pre-war life — and, in particular, our Częstochowa Room. There, visitors see another model constructed by the same survivor, who sought to preserve a memory of one of the two synagogues in his home town, and one in close proximity to which he lived. That model, inspiring in its detail, likewise prompts reflection on those things that were so important to survivors, but features a detail that many casual viewers may miss.

Like many synagogues around the world (including here in Melbourne), it features above its door a large Hebrew inscription. It is the same inscription as was found on the curtain that once covered an ark in a Polish synagogue and that was so cruelly repurposed in a Nazi death camp. Being a phrase that Chaim Sztajer also saw within Treblinka, one must wonder at what he might have been reflecting on when using it to adorn the synagogue of his youth. One can see it also on the photograph that we have placed next to his magnificent model, but it may have been more than fidelity to the truth that inspired him.

For survivors, nostalgia for the past is sometimes intimately bound up with memories of that world's destruction. One cannot look at that synagogue without also knowing that it was destroyed in 1941, just as one cannot conceive of its destruction without appreciating that a survivor in Melbourne would one day think to recreate it. Just as the end was contained in the beginning, so too did that end lead to new beginnings: the rebirth and re-flourishing of Jewish life, and the establishment of educational centres in which the past can be preserved and communicated to others.

Understanding something of what might motivate a survivor to engage so deeply with their traumatic memories might also assist us in understanding why survivors built this museum in the first place. This is not only a monument to a past that should never be forgotten, it is also a bulwark against a future in which it should never be relived. Even as we express concern over a rise in antisemitism we remain deeply committed to the legacy of our survivors and continue to echo their belief today: that engagement with a difficult past is necessary for establishing the empathy that will prevent the Holocaust from ever recurring, and for building a harmonious future in which discrimination should not be visited upon anybody.

[1] Simone Gigliotti, Restless Archive. Chapter 2: https://doi.org/10.2979/RestlessArchive.
[2] Ze'ev Mankowitz, "The Spiritual Heritage of *She'erith Hapletah* and Jewish Historiography". Pages 749-758 of Yisrael Gutman and Gideon Greif (eds), *The Historiography of the Holocaust Period* (1988).
[3] The wedding of Holocaust survivors Fryda and Nachum at Bergen-Belsen DP camp, 1946. From the MHM Collection. More information about Fryda's story can be found on PG.18 of this magazine.
[4] Thomas Blatt, *From the Ashes of Sobibor* (1997).
[5] Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (1987).

by
Melanie Attar,
MHM Senior Education Officer

In 2024 we welcomed three new Holocaust survivor speakers to our Education team. Our incredible group of survivor speakers volunteer their time at the museum on a weekly basis, to educate younger generations on the lessons of the Holocaust. Judy Kolt, Fay Weiner and Andre Dubrowin joined our team in 2024 and have since been sharing their firsthand Holocaust experiences powerfully with students and visitors.

Welcoming New Survivor Speakers to MHM

In 2024, almost 27,000 students participated in our onsite education programs. For most students, meeting a Holocaust survivor is an experience that they will remember for the rest of their lives. We are so grateful to Judy, Fay and Andre for joining the MHM team and sharing their stories bravely to educate students and visitors on the lessons of the Holocaust.

Holocaust survivor Judy Kolt. Photographed by Simon Shiff.

JUDY KOLT

Judy was born Iska Jablonska, in Lodz, Poland in 1936, to parents Fela and Stefan.

Judy was three years old when the German army invaded Lodz. When German officers came to the family home to arrest her father shortly after, he was, thankfully, not home. Following this, the family decided it was time to flee to Warsaw with the hope of getting "lost in a big city", but they were instead forced into the Warsaw Ghetto, before eventually being moved to the Otwock Ghetto, 20 kilometres south of Warsaw.

Judy's father managed to smuggle Judy and her sister, Tosia out of the ghetto and the pair spent the remainder of the war in hiding. At the end of the war, Judy and Tosia were reunited with their mother, but their father never returned. Judy, her mother and sister arrived in Australia in 1952, one day before Judy's 16th birthday.

FAY WIENER

Fay was born in Brussels, Belgium in 1932.

After the German invasion of Belgium in May 1940, Fay's parents, Ida and Jack, decided the family should flee to France. They spent three months in the north of France, but when France was invaded in June 1940, Fay's parents understood the implication for Jews. After the introduction of discriminatory laws, as well as various round ups, Fay's parents began to look for hiding places for the family. Fay was sent to live at a Catholic boarding school and convent while her parents went to hide on a farm in the countryside. After spending over a year at the convent, Fay was able to join her parents in hiding on the farm. The family was liberated in August/ September 1944. Fay, her parents and her younger sister Monique arrived in Australia in January 1949.

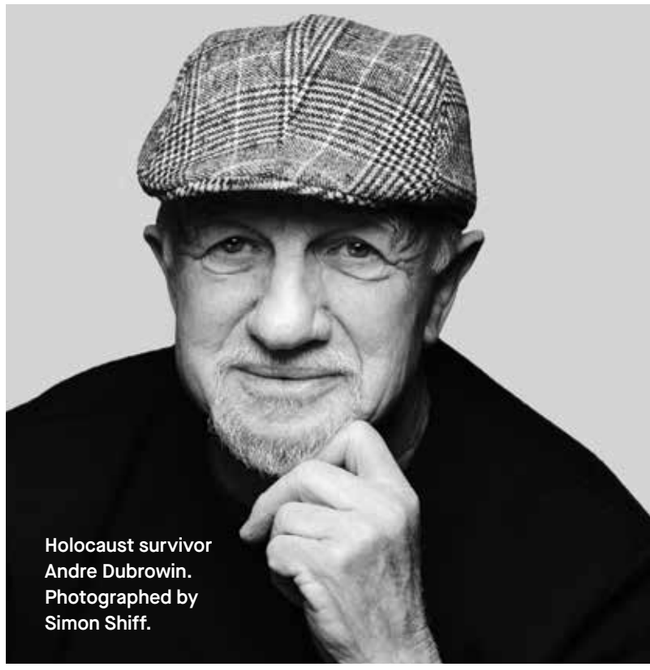
ANDRE DUBROWIN

Andre was born in 1939 in Brussels, Belgium.

When the German army invaded Belgium in 1940, Andre's parents decided to flee to France. After one failed attempt, the family tried to flee again and were arrested and sent to Drancy internment camp. With the help of a family friend and a French police officer who had been bribed, Andre was released to the Red Cross. He spent the following war years living in multiple places including a Catholic orphanage, with a business associate of his father, an elderly couple in Brussels and on a farm in the countryside. After liberation, Andre's uncle came to pick him up from the farm. He recalls his uncle as "a person I did not remember speaking a language I no longer spoke".

Andre migrated to Australia in 1948 with his uncle and aunt.

Holocaust survivor Fay Wiener. Photographed by Simon Shiff.



Holocaust survivor Andre Dubrowin. Photographed by Simon Shiff.

Survivor Story

by
Lina Leibovich,
MHM Voices Editor

Personal Perspective of Liberation:
Professor Gilah Leder AM

Holocaust survivor Gilah Leder.
Photographed by Simon Shiff.

The war finishes. My parents come, and I'm supposed to go home with them. Home? I'm at home with my foster family.

Gilah Leder AM

For Holocaust survivor Professor Gilah Leder AM, liberation was one of the most difficult aspects of her Holocaust experiences. Though liberation meant freedom for Gilah, it also meant returning to her biological parents, whom she did not remember, and saying goodbye to her foster family, who had raised her for two and a half years.

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

When Gilah was born in 1941, the German army had already invaded the Netherlands. The conditions for Jews in the Netherlands continued to deteriorate and life became increasingly unsafe. When Gilah's paternal aunt and her family were sent to a transit camp they managed to smuggle a note back to Gilah's parents, Aaron and Fourkeline (Lisa), which read: "Do whatever you can, but make sure your daughter is not sent here. She won't last more than a couple of weeks."

With this information, Gilah's parents made the difficult decision to send her to live under an assumed identity with a non-Jewish family. With the assistance of the underground resistance, Gilah was sent to live with Cornelius and Bertha Zwanikken and their seven children, when she was just 16 months old. Gilah's father was able to find work with the Bakers Union under false papers, while her mother was forced into hiding with various families. Gilah lived with the devout Catholic family for two and a half years, until the Netherlands was liberated in May 1945.

LIBERATION

Having remained mostly indoors to avoid suspicion throughout the war, liberation was a memorable day. *"There were what looked like noisy birds flying around, afterwards of course I heard they were planes and they were dropping parcels from the planes. And I was allowed to run too, with all of the other children, and pick up the parcels. It was an amazing."*

Though liberation provided Gilah with a sense of freedom, it was also a very difficult and confusing time. The day after liberation, Gilah's biological parents came to pick her up from the Zwanniken residence.

Three-and-a-half-year-old Gilah, who had felt at home with the Zwanikken's for the years she had lived with them, was told that she must now go home with her biological parents, whom she did not remember. For Gilah this was extremely challenging as she had experienced the war years as a baby in a "cocoon", being sheltered from the war on their doorstep by her foster family. So, being separated from her foster family whom she had grown to love as her own and returning to her parents, who were deeply affected by their wartime experiences, made the transition to her post-war life extremely difficult.

"For me, liberation day really started a completely new journey for me. A journey where my parents and I had to be reacquainted. And a journey where I forever mourned not being able to live with the Zwanikken family the whole time... for me, that was probably the most difficult part of the war."

"My early memory of going back to my parents, was being in a house of sadness. I felt a sense of sadness which lasted a very long time".

Gilah was desperate to remain close to her foster family whom she clung to, and the name they gave to protect her.

"I found out much later, but if my parents answered me with the name they had given me, 'Gilah', I wouldn't do anything. If they used the name that I had been given during the war by my foster family, yes I would answer. I decided as a small child I was not Gilah, I was Zusje".

Following liberation, Gilah and her parents remained in the Netherlands in a town called Zeist. Gilah commenced school in September 1945 where the discipline and routine became an important part of her healing process.

Gilah's bond with her foster family remained strong, and her parents allowed her to visit them. *"It really wasn't until my brothers were born in November 1946 that I sort of reconciled myself to staying there [with my parents]."*

Gilah's parents decided to leave war-torn Europe, and in 1953 the family migrated to Australia. They wished to leave behind the horrors of the war and at the time Australia was considered to be "the end of the earth" and the furthest away the family could get from their past. Gilah recommenced her schooling and thrived in the new opportunities Australia offered.

Now, in 2025, I am still in contact with three living children of that family. Having to say goodbye on a semi-permanent basis was a huge, huge event for me.

For Holocaust survivor Professor Gilah Leder AM, liberation was one of the hardest aspects of her Holocaust experiences.

Above: Gilah Leder as an infant. Courtesy of Gilah Leder.

Survivor Story

by
Lina Leibovich,
MHM Voices Editor

Personal Perspective of Liberation:

Joe Szwarcberg

Above: Joe Szwarcberg post-war. Courtesy of Joe Szwarcberg.

Above: Buchenwald Boys Joe Szwarcberg, Henry Salter, John Chaskiel and Szymon Michalowicz.

Holocaust survivor Joe Szwarcberg. Photographed by Simon Shiff.

> **We were like family. Because we did not have families, we became a family. A great bond between us.**
>
> Joe Szwarcberg

Holocaust survivor Joe Szwarcberg was only eight years old when the war broke out. By the time of his liberation from Buchenwald concentration camp in April 1945, Joe had formed a lifelong bond with other surviving 'Buchenwald Boys' that would shape his post-war experience.

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

Joe was born in Kozienice, Poland in 1930 and was the youngest of six children. Joe was a young boy when the German army invaded Poland, and, soon after, imprisoned him and his family in the Kozienice Ghetto.

Learning of the impending liquidation of the ghetto in September 1942, Joe escaped to Wilka labour camp and was eventually deported to Skarzysko labour camp, where he narrowly escaped execution and endured brutal conditions. On 2 August 1944, Joe arrived in Buchenwald Concentration Camp.

Joe was sent to Block 66, dubbed the "children's block". As a result of the harsh conditions prisoners were subjected to within the camp, approximately 10 – 20 inmates died each day. Joe recalled:

"I used to lie on the bunk with my friends and talk to them during the night and then in the morning when I woke up, they were cold bodies."

LIBERATION

Buchenwald was liberated by the American army on 11 April 1945. Joe was 149 cm tall and weighed only 32kg.

Joe remembers the day of liberation as the *"Happiest day of my life. The joy was indescribable and so overwhelming you forgot you were hungry".*

Through this incredible hardship, the children within Block 66 formed an unbreakable bond. They became known as the Buchenwald Boys: a group of boys who remained connected long after liberation, bonded by their Holocaust experiences.

In the months following liberation, Joe was sent to various orphanages including Vesinet near Paris, where he bonded with others who survived the atrocities of the camps.

A few months after being liberated, Joe arrived at a Jewish orphanage in Ecouis, in the Normandy region. At the time, the population of Ecouis was 350 people, and Joe found himself in the house with 435 boys. They were taken care of and fed well in the orphanage, yet the survival habits they had become accustomed to in the war years were difficult to shake and Joe remembers "some boys used to take bread to hide. They hid it underneath their blanket".

He eventually reunited with his three sisters and was finally able to start imagining "the prospect of building a new life out of the wreckage of the Holocaust".

With the threat of the Cold War looming in Europe, the time had come for Joe to leave. Joe was given a choice between Australia and Canada, a decision he says was made with the knowledge that Australia was "the farthest away from Europe".

Joe arrived in Australia in 1948. The other Buchenwald Boys immigrated to various countries including America, Canada and France, while 65 ended up in Australia. Arriving without an education, money or family, Joe's new life was not easy, but the Buchenwald Boys created a community of support for each other, celebrating life's joys and grieving in the pain and loss together. They were forever bonded by their shared trauma and the challenges of rebuilding their lives. *"We had all lost most of our families to the Nazi regime. So we formed a new family, together. We created a bond like brothers which still exists today."*

Joe worked hard, and eventually started a new family, which continues to grow to this day.

The Buchenwald Ball, held annually since the 1950s, became a significant and well-known event, where the Buchenwald Boys and their families would come together to acknowledge their bond, their experiences, and to celebrate the continuation of Jewish life: *"Every year we'd go to the cemetery to visit a monument we built to remember our families and the boys who died. We'd say a prayer and then go to a hall where we'd celebrate our liberation with music and dancing. We'd call it our birthday. On 11 April we were born again."*

Thought Piece

by
Dr Steven Cooke,
MHM CEO

How Should we Commemorate Liberation?

We are now 80 years on from the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and many events at MHM, as at Holocaust museums and memorial sites around the world, are commemorating this key anniversary.

Such commemorations remain deeply resonant, especially in light of the rising antisemitism in many parts of the world, including Australia.

This focus brings to the forefront the ongoing question of liberation and its significance in the experiences of Holocaust survivors. Only by fully grasping its meaning can we continue to honour and commemorate the anniversary of liberation in a meaningful way, ensuring its lessons remain relevant and impactful for years to come.

So, what does liberation really mean and how should it be commemorated? The answer is complex, as it is an event that carries different significance for each individual.

Above: Jewish DPs are gathered in an open field in the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp, which was previously a concentration camp. Courtesy United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Hilde Jacobsthal Goldberg.

Holocaust survivor Phillip Maisel and his sister Bella post liberation. From the MHM Collection.

Writing in 2015, Dan Stone noted that:

"In the popular imagination, the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps was a joyous affair, bringing an end to the inmates' torments. From the Red Army's films of the liberation of Majdanek and Auschwitz to the final scenes of Life is Beautiful, Schindler's List and many other films, documentaries, museum displays and books, liberation has been portrayed as a single, rapturous moment in time." (Stone 2015, 2).

Stone reminds us that liberation was not an end physically, nor emotionally. Many survivors were forced to return to camps, this time Displaced Persons (DP) camps, often located in former concentration camps, labour camps, or barracks that were re-used by the Allies to house the millions of people displaced by the war.

The ongoing search for loved ones, decisions about where to create a new life, as well as the ongoing trauma of their experiences means that emotionally, liberation is a complex and contested concept. For some survivors, such as Phillip Maisel OAM z'l , DP camps were a place in some instances of joyous reunion. In his book *The Keeper of Miracles*, Phillip writes about hearing that someone with a similar distinctive Yiddish accent to his was in the Landsberg DP camp. Convinced that this was his sister Bella, who he had last seen in the Vilna Ghetto, Philip rode 400 kilometres on a motorbike to Landsberg DP camp where they were reunited.

> **There she was:**
> **Bella.**
> **A miracle.**
> **We could not believe**
> **we had both survived.**
> **For some time**
> **we just held each other**
> **in the middle of the camp,**
> **and wept for joy.**

At the same time, the ultimately futile search for their father, who they found out had been murdered in the Klooga camp in Estonia just before the camp was liberated by Soviet forces, meant that their experiences were also of dislocation and despair.

This complexity continued after the war. Some survivors did not speak about their experiences to anyone. Others spoke, wrote, collected, or created exhibitions, memorials, and museums, both in Europe and in their new homes, far away from the places of atrocity. For example, in Melbourne, the first collection of written testimonies was published in Yiddish in 1948, with the title *The Annihilation of Bialystoker Jewry* by Raphael Rajzner. A copy is on display in the Finding a New Home in Australia display in in our permanent exhibition at MHM, *Everyone had a Name* (EhaN)[1].

Holocaust testimony in its different forms also demonstrates the complexities of liberation. Another survivor with a connection to Auschwitz, Nathan Gelbart, provided his testimony to the Shoah Foundation in 1997. Born in Kłobuck (Kielce) in Poland in 1925, Nathan survived forced labour in Markstadt and incarceration in Flossberg and Gross-Rosen. Although Nathan migrated to Israel after the war, letters from his brother, also a survivor but who had migrated to Melbourne, entreated him to come and be reunited with some of his remaining family. He arrived in 1956,

Holocaust survivors Peter Gaspar, Gilah Leder and Eve Graham shared their diverse liberation experiences at the 2025 International Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration at MHM.

The Liberation and New Life section of the *EhaN* exhibition, exploring the complexity of liberation and the mark survivors left on Melbourne after the war. Photographed by Simon Shiff.

initially working with his brother in a fruit shop, which he hated. He then drove a taxi at night, while attending technical school in the day to allow him to work as a builder, something he achieved in the early 1960s.

He went to Poland later in life, both to find the place where his father was buried and also to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau where his mother was murdered. Although in his testimony he expresses a sense of closure about finding his father's burial site, this is not the case at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

> **I went to Auschwitz, and I know they were there, but I couldn't stay. I, I… you feel the earth moving [crying – and making churning movements with his hands]. I cannot really explain how it feels to be there…. I know exactly… I found in Auschwitz, where my mother had to go… the train came in and they put them in barracks, and she was in barrack 17. Not very far from there was already gas chambers. I've seen all that. I only stayed for a few hours… I had to get out, I just felt everything was moving… from that excitement I came home with an illness, I got asthma and the doctor reckons it was from stress".**
>
> (Nathan 1997 in Cooke and Frieze 2014 p186)[2]

There is no closure for Nathan at Birkenau and he continues to re-live his experiences:

I still dream about it. You can't get rid of it, it's there. It's still in your body.

Nathan 1997

As noted earlier, although Stone could argue in 2015 that liberation was represented as a "joyous single moment in time" since then representations of liberation in museums have become more nuanced, acknowledging its complexities. In previous permanent and temporary exhibitions at the then Jewish Holocaust Centre for example, liberation and the journey to Australia was seen as a process of travel "To New Life" (Cooke and Frieze 2019). However, in *EhaN*, this linear narrative is disrupted. After the Liberation displays, visitors cross a threshold – a projection on the floor where survivors' names are reinstated. We can then read about the aftermath of the Holocaust, including information about DP camps. We also learn about the contributions that survivors who came to Australia made in all areas of life, such as business, arts and culture, medicine, academia, politics and so on. We learn for example about the contribution of Dr Henry Ekert AM to childhood cancer survival rates, or the art of Mirka Mora. But in the final part of the exhibition, we also learn about ongoing trauma of survival. Echoing Nathan's comments about his ongoing trauma, a quote from Rosa Goldblum reads: "Now my life is broken. It's always with me, it's always with me".[3]

One of the ways in which this is represented in the exhibition to visitors is through art. This provides a way to think about trauma that allows both the processing of that trauma by the artist and the communication of the trauma to the viewer. Through Anita Lester's visceral animation of her great aunt's post-war experiences, *Noch Am Leben* ('I'm still alive'), as well as Sarah Saaroni OAM's sculptures, we gain some understanding of the aftermath of the Holocaust for survivors and that its physical and emotional impacts did not end at liberation.

What are the implications of this for our approaches to commemoration? Our work at MHM amplifies the voices of our survivors. This means making those voices more accessible in all their richness and diversity. We do this in many ways. Through access to our testimonies, the display of artefacts, including historic and contemporary art, new approaches to museum exhibitions, or making sure that survivor testimony plays a prominent part in all our major commemorations, such as during the recent International Holocaust Remembrance Day service. Through these and other ways, we continue to honour our survivors by trying to understand the complexities of their experiences, and to provide our audiences with means to understand liberation, its aftermath, and the lessons for today.

[1] It was translated into English with the title 'The Stories Our Parents Found Too Painful to Tell' in 2008 under the direction of Henry Lew. A copy is available in the MHM library. Thanks to Julia Reichstein for her help.

[2] Nathan did not give his testimony to the JHC/ MHM but his testimony, along with 2500 others of Australian survivors, is accessible via the Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive. These are available online through the MHM library and Resource Centre. Thanks to Julia Reichstein again!

[3] Rosa's testimony that she gave for the museum's Eyewitness Project can be found at https://ww.youtube.com/watch?v=vfCftlSTgAU <accessed 11/03/2025> Rosa's testimony that she gave for the museum's Eyewitness Project can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfCftlSTgAU <accessed 11/03/2025>

[4] Quotes from this article are from Cooke, S. and Frieze, D. 2014. 'It's Still in Your Body': Identity, Place and Performance in Holocaust Testimonies, in Lean, G., Staiff, R., & Waterton, E. (Eds.). *Travel and Imagination* (1st ed.), Routledge. Cooke, S. and Frieze, D. (2019). 'Shifting responses to antisemitism and racism: temporary exhibitions at the Jewish Holocaust Centre', in Gelbert, S. and Alba, A. (Eds.) *Holocaust Memory and Racism in the postwar world*, Wayne State University Press, pp327-349 Maisel, P. (2021) *The Keeper of Memories*, Macmillan Australia Stone, D. 2015. *The Liberation of the Camps*. The End of the Holocaust and its Aftermath, Yale University Press. Nathan Gelbart 1997. USC Shoah Foundation Institute, code 32951

Education

by **Patrick Smithers,** MHM Education Officer

Return to Life

Educating Students on Liberation Themes

Below: The wedding of Fryda and Nachum Schweitzer. From the MHM Collection.

Smiling faces, full of optimism. Youthful camaraderie. Arms draped around one another in relaxed intimacy. Neatly dressed women in dresses; two men in ties. The woman third from the left holding a bouquet of flowers.

These are among student responses when asked what they *see* in this artefact. Asked what they *think* it is portraying, many accurately suggest a celebration of some sort. Students are then asked a more challenging question: was this picture taken before or after the Holocaust?

Many are eager to jump in: "Before. Definitely before. Look how happy and healthy they are!"

They thought their table group had the easy job.

In fact, this photograph is one of the more demanding artefacts students explore as part of the In Touch with Memory school program at MHM.

Students need to listen carefully to other table groups as the class dissects a range of artefacts relating to the program's themes of Propaganda, Discrimination, Dehumanisation, Resistance and Loss.

Importantly, they need to understand the process of selection, how those too young or too old or too sick were deemed "useless mouths" and murdered. How those deemed strong enough to work had a greater chance of survival.

Students are given a hint: What age groups are represented in the image? What age groups are missing?

They tend to get there in the end.

The photograph, it is explained, was taken at the wedding of Holocaust survivors Fryda and Nachum Schweitzer in 1946. Fryda is holding the flowers; Nachum is standing in a suit and tie, third from the right. The picture illustrates the program's sixth and final theme: Return to Life.

Fryda Schweitzer's z'l return to life story, while unique, includes many familiar elements: grief, prejudice, displacement, joy, migration, regeneration.

Having survived Parschnitz labour camp in Czechoslovakia, she returned to her hometown of Sosnowiec in Poland. Her family's flat had been appropriated by a non-Jewish family, who were hostile and sent her away. She learnt that her mother Ita and little sister Mila had been murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and that her brother Aaron had been killed in Germany by an Allied bombing raid.

Fryda finally received some good news: her father Nechemia and brother Max had survived and were living in Bergen-Belsen Displaced Persons camp in Germany. Fryda smuggled herself across the border and into the camp, where they had an emotional reunion.

There she met Nachum Schweitzer z'l, an Auschwitz survivor. They fell in love and married.

For the wedding, Fryda wore a blue dress made by her father, a tailor. Fortunately, her hair, crudely removed as punishment in Parschnitz, had grown back. She recalled a simple affair with a band, sandwiches, and cups for wine because there were not enough glasses. "This friend did this, and this friend did that. But it was a beautiful wedding."

Fryda considered herself lucky to have had her father there; Nachum, on the other hand, was the only member of his immediate family to survive Auschwitz. They were 21 and 20 respectively.

Their wedding was one of 1,070 in Bergen-Belsen in 1946. Students are invited to consider the reasons for this. They do not need specialist knowledge to understand the yearning for human intimacy, security and a desire to start afresh.

Mostly, as in the photograph, DP camps were populated by those in their 20s and 30s. There was barely anyone left under five, and only 3% of survivors were aged 6-17, so flower girls were largely missing. So, too, were older people.

For obvious reasons, regeneration was vitally important. 555 babies were born in Bergen-Belsen in 1946 alone.

Fryda, too, became pregnant, in 1949, against the advice of a friend who had managed to get to Australia and organised visas for Fryda and Nachum.

The pregnancy added urgency because Fryda wanted her child born "in a free country like Australia". She was heavily pregnant on the voyage and in such discomfort that authorities flew her to Melbourne after the boat docked in Fremantle.

Isaac was born two months later. Fryda and Nachum had a second son, Ronald. Then came grandchildren and great grandchildren. The cycle of Jewish life continues.

The experiences of Fryda and Nachum are an effective way of teaching students the complexity and richness of the theme of Return to Life. Exploring the photograph of their wedding is an ideal entrée into that story.

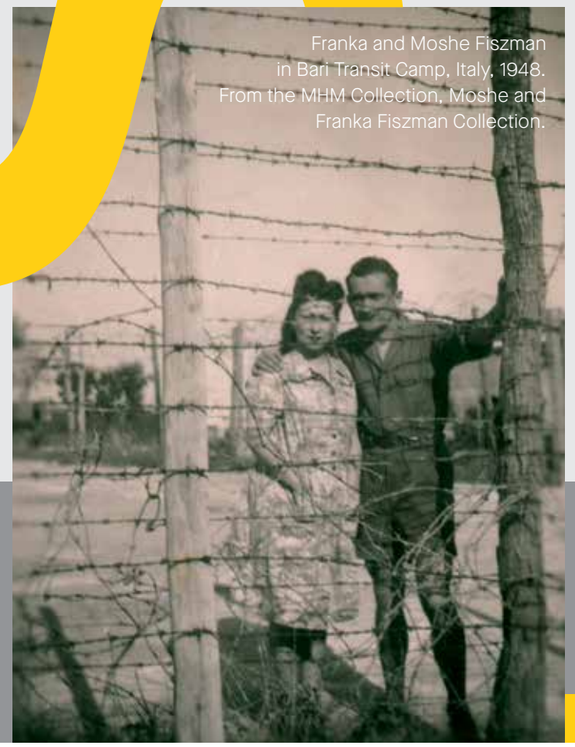
Below: Students exploring the Return to Life section of the *Everybody had a Name* exhibition. Photographed by Simon Shiff.

Stories of Liberation in the MHM Collection

Collections

by **Alice McInnes,** MHM Collections Assistant

This photograph of Holocaust survivor Franka Fiszman z'l was taken in 1947 in Santa Maria di Leuca Displaced Persons (DP) Camp. Twenty-seven-year-old Franka stretches in the sun, the Italian hills rising up behind her, the quintessential image of freedom.



Franka and Moshe Fiszman in Bari Transit Camp, Italy, 1948. From the MHM Collection, Moshe and Franka Fiszman Collection.

Another photograph stands out among the family collection. Franka and Moshe stand side-by-side, staring unsmiling at the camera from behind barbed wire.

But freedom was a complicated notion for Franka. She was just 20 years old and newly married when she was incarcerated in Krakow Ghetto in 1941. She spent much of the war in Plaszow Concentration Camp, forced to use her skills as a seamstress to sew clothing for the wives and girlfriends of German officers. In 1945 she was liberated from Mauthausen Concentration Camp by US troops. By the time of her liberation, Franka was the only surviving member of her immediate family. Her husband, father, and brothers had all been murdered. Years later, she recalled the moment of liberation as one not of joy, but of realisation:

> **I think I was crying. Yes, I was crying because I thought, well, it's the end of the war ... [but] my near ones ... they are not here. Nowhere. Not at all.**

Liberation did not mean a return home, either. Franka was one of some 250,000 Jews who found themselves in DP camps, unable or unwilling to return to their pre-war homes. For Franka, this meant Santa Maria di Leuca DP Camp in southern Italy, where over 2000 refugees – Jewish and non-Jewish alike – were housed in the seaside holiday villas of wealthy Italians.

In Leuca, Franka met Moshe Fiszman z'l, a fellow Holocaust survivor who would become her husband. Moshe's story mirrored Franka's: at 23, after five years of incarceration in camps and ghettos, he was liberated by the US Army in Mittenwald, Germany. Of his immediate family, only one brother survived.

The DP camps were a place of new life – young couples like Franka and Moshe met, fell in love and married; children were born and communities were rebuilt. Photographs of the Fiszmans chronicle that experience, capturing friendships, soccer matches, and days spent by the beach. Moshe recalled their time in Leuca fondly, in words that match the photos:

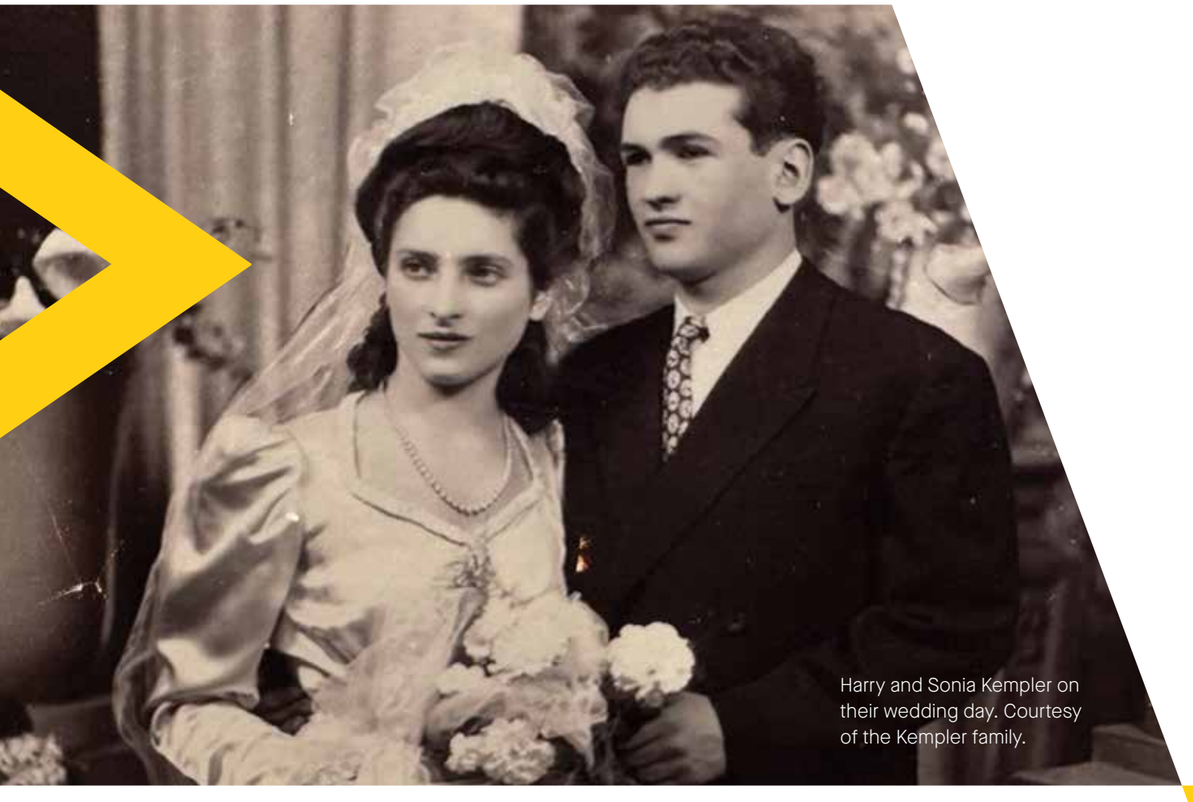
> **We were young and free in one of the prettiest places in the world, with a beautiful blue sea and a sun that shone all the time."**

When asked later how she filled her time in the DP camp, Franka remembered dancing, sewing new clothes for herself and her friends, and a trip with her husband to Rome. But then she added: "We accepted what it was." A small acknowledgement that despite appearances, this was not ordinary life.

It would be tempting to create a narrative with these two photos, placing the couple behind barbed wire at the beginning, and the liberated Franka, stretching in the sun, at the end. But that wasn't the reality for the Fiszmans. Despite the fencing, Moshe and Franka had been liberated for three years when they posed for the second picture. During that time, Santa Maria di Leuca DP Camp had closed; the Fiszmans were separated from the friends and community they'd established and moved to Bari Transit Camp. They lived in barracks, and waited on the arrival of the paperwork that would allow them to start a new life. Desperate to get away from Europe, they applied for visas for the USA, Paraguay, and Australia, but bureaucracy and migration quotas meant years of waiting to find a country that would take them in.

Moshe would later write that by the time he and Franka received landing permits for Australia in 1948 "it felt as if I had been imprisoned for a decade", the ghettos, concentration camps and DP camps becoming one long sequence of a life that was not their own.

Franka and Moshe arrived in Australia in January 1949, had two daughters, and built a life here. Their daughters Lena and Anna have generously donated her family's collection, including these photographs, to MHM. Each photograph provides a window into a different part of Franka and Moshe's experiences, capturing the joy, the freedom, the frustration and the sorrow of life after the war.



Harry and Sonia Kempler on their wedding day. Courtesy of the Kempler family.

Holding Hands

On 20 December 2024, Geoffrey Kempler took his family to MHM for a unique and profound ceremony. Standing in the darkness of the atmospheric Memorial Room, Geoffrey gathered his twin sons, Raphael and Jacob, his wife, Monica, and their close family.

"Boys, today you turn 16 years, 5 months, and 16 days old," Geoffrey began, before gently asking his sons to take their mother's hand.

"Your grandfather, my father, was also holding his mum's hand when he was 16 years, five months and 16 days old, at the gates of Auschwitz. Your grandfather was one of 1200 people—Jewish men, women and children—who boarded a train to Auschwitz in August 1942; Yad Vashem records indicate that only eight people survived [the transport]."

Geoffrey's parents, Sonia and Harry Kempler z'l, were both Holocaust survivors. Sonia is featured in the museum's permanent *Hidden* exhibition, and her memoir, *Growing up with the World on my Shoulders* (2015), has been published widely.

Recently, Geoffrey learnt of an unpublished excerpt from his mother's memoir which moved him deeply. It detailed Harry's deportation to Auschwitz with his mother, Rosalia, after their arrest on 18 August 1942. They arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau on 25 August, when Harry was exactly 16 years, five months and 16 days old. The excerpt read:

"They sat in the cattle trains holding hands and embracing, clinging to each other as if both mother and son knew they were travelling toward their horrible fate, that these were indeed their last hours together."

by
Monica and
Geoffrey Kempler

Geoffrey concluded by sharing the follow message to his sons:

"I hope that over the years to come, you will recall our time together today and perhaps, one day, you can share it with your own children. You don't need to carry the pain of my generation; it was my mum and dad that suffered so terribly. But as the next generation, you should aim to remember your family's history and ensure that your children honour the memory of your grandparents."

At this poignant ceremony, Raphael and Jacob read aloud their grandmother's unpublished excerpts, forging a deeper connection with their grandparents' experiences, and profoundly strengthening their commitment as custodians of Holocaust memory.

Below: Geoffrey's sons Raphael and Jacob stand in the Memorial Room reading their grandmother's testimony aloud. Courtesy of the Kempler Family.

Sonia Kempler (nee Rosenblum) was born in Leipzig, Germany in 1929. A young child when the war broke out, Sonia grew up quickly, as she was forced to separate from her parents and go into hiding with her younger brother, Max. Sonia was only 15 years old when the war ended.

Harry Kempler was born in Krakow, Poland in 1926, but moved to Antwerp, Belgium with his family when he was only a few months old. When the Germans invaded, Harry was eventually expelled from school, and in June 1942, was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau with his mother. After surviving several camps, Harry escaped from a train transport and was liberated in 1945.

Harry and Sonia met in Belgium in 1939. When they were reunited after the war, Sonia knew immediately that she would marry Harry. In 1948, they were married in the Great Synagogue in Brussels.

by
Dr Simon Holloway,
MHM Manager Community & Corporate Programs

The Rav Oshry Responsa

As we all appreciate, resistance during the Holocaust took many forms. One of the forms of spiritual resistance that deserves to be better known comes in the form of a series of questions asked by people languishing in the Kovno Ghetto.

Above: Rabbi Ephraim Oshry conducts a memorial service at Fort IX ten months after the liberation. With him are four participants in the Christmas 1943 escape from the fortress. Pictured from left to right are: Pinia Krakinovski, Israel Gitlin, Berl Gempel, Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, and Wladyslaw Blum. Courtesy of USHMM.

Penned in by those walls and subjected to cruel and punishing labour, the population dwindled as a result of starvation and occasional acts of violence.

From the Kovno Ghetto, quotas of people would be periodically brought to one of the nearby forts, established previously by the Soviets during their occupation of Lithuania, and shot.

It is difficult to imagine the terrible toll that this must have taken on the local population. Hunted and afraid, they had little space or time in which to measure out their lives, and in circumstances such as those, family dynamics break down and there is often a rapid cultural descent.

Under these conditions (and we see this in all the ghettos), attempts made to preserve some shred of dignity and humanity are examples of resistance to the highest degree. In Kovno, some of those examples were written down.

The man who wrote them down was a young rabbi named Ephraim Oshry. To the best of his ability, being constrained by the same forces that so assailed his fellow Jews, Rav Oshry answered people's questions, and he did so both forthrightly and with compassion.

Possessed of the understanding that these questions may be of future value, he committed them (and the substance of his answers) to writing, and he buried them within the ghetto. Prior to the final deportation from what later became Kovno concentration camp, Rav Oshry went into hiding. Together with several others, and behind a false wall in a building that they had used to secretly learn Torah, he waited for liberation, and when liberation came he was able to provide spiritual assistance to other surviving Jews.

As soon as time permitted him to do so, Rav Oshry dug up the questions and answers he had buried in the ghetto and he set about editing them. Over some 20 years, he published these in five separate volumes, titled *Questions and Answers From the Depths*. These have since be translated into English (*Responsa From the Holocaust*), and those who are interested may wish to see the types of things that people were asking.

During *Pesach* one year, for example, a petitioner wanted to know if the rabbinic ban on legumes (*kitniyot*) should still be considered in effect? There was precious little food within the ghetto, but the Germans were bringing in a kind of paste, made from black beans. Ordinarily, this would be forbidden for *Pesach* consumption by an Ashkenazi Jew – should the petitioner avoid them?

In another instance, somebody asked Rav Oshry about putting on tefillin in the nighttime. Ordinarily, the leather boxes that religious men place upon their arms and forehead when praying in the morning are items that can only be worn once the sun has risen. In the Kovno Ghetto, where the petitioner was amongst those marched from the ghetto before dawn to work in a local airfield and only brought back after nightfall, such a thing would be impossible. Is he allowed – under these circumstances – to wake up earlier and put them on while it is still night?

Questions like these (and there were over a hundred of them altogether), evidence a profound resistance. A resistance against dehumanisation, and a desire – even at tremendous cost to the person in question – to preserve their own identity. Such questions are of vastly greater significance to us than were the answers. They demonstrate the degree to which people sought to hold onto something important in spite of all they endured.

A small selection of these questions and answers are available in our exhibit for people to peruse. Placed in a flipbook, positioned in the Ghetto section of *Everybody had a Name*, we hope that visitors will take the time to consider not only the subjugation to which people were subjected but the degree to which so many struggled to rise above it. Ultimately, our museum as a whole speaks to precisely that phenomenon. The Holocaust was not just what happened to Jewish people, but the story of their resistance in the face of those crimes and the ongoing endurance of the survivors.

School Visits & Virtual Workshops 2024

Over the last year, more than 27,000 students from schools and other education institutions visited the MHM. We are very excited to see this number continue to grow as we plan to welcome more students than ever before.

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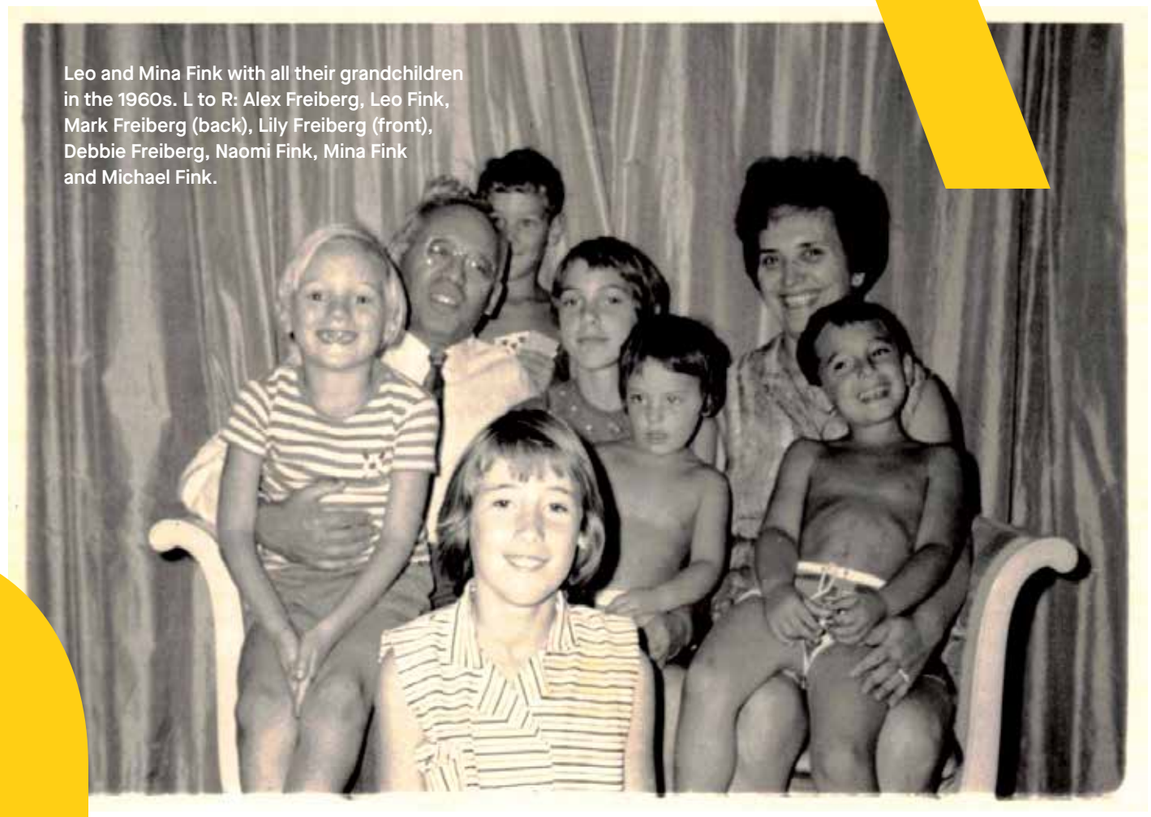


Leo and Mina Fink with all their grandchildren in the 1960s. L to R: Alex Freiberg, Leo Fink, Mark Freiberg (back), Lily Freiberg (front), Debbie Freiberg, Naomi Fink, Mina Fink and Michael Fink.

From Bialystok to Melbourne

My grandparents, Leo and Mina Fink z'l, were born in Bialystok, Poland in 1901 and 1913 respectively. Since I was very young, I have known that both my grandparents were stalwarts of the Melbourne Jewish community and that despite being born in Melbourne and my father being born in Magdeburg, Germany, I am a Bialystoker at heart.

Both Leo and Mina matriculated from high schools in Bialystok.

Leo immigrated to Melbourne in 1928 and was assisted by other members of the Jewish community on arrival: people who had immigrated from Poland before him. He eventually launched a successful textiles business with his brothers Sid, Wolf, and Jack.

In 1932, Leo travelled from Melbourne to Bialystok to buy machinery and visit family. While there, he met Mina. The couple married in the same year, when Mina had just graduated at the age of 19. Mina immigrated to Melbourne with Leo that year.

Leo's appreciation of the help he received as a new arrival in Melbourne inspired him to assist others. Both he and Mina were instrumental in setting up the organisation that later became Jewish Care, in order to assist survivors of the Holocaust.

After being involved in the National Council of Jewish Women for many years, later in life, together with two Holocaust survivors Bono Wiener z'l and Aron Sokolowicz z'l (another Bialystoker), Mina co-founded MHM.

Mina was not a Holocaust survivor. So, *why* was she interested in setting up a Holocaust museum in Melbourne and fostering an education program for school children?

Mina visited Bialystok in September 1938 and told me the story on several occasions of how mothers came up to her in the street, asking if she could take their teenage daughters back with her to Australia. They knew things were not safe for them as Jews in Poland. Before the war broke out, she and Leo were able to bring some family members and friends to Australia, however Mina felt guilty that she wasn't able to save more people.

In the aftermath of the war, Leo and Mina were on a mission to assist survivors of the Holocaust to find a safe place to live, anywhere, but particularly here in Australia; and to make their adjustment to life in Australia as smooth as possible. In the 1980s, with Holocaust denial on the rise, Mina had a mission to educate people about the Holocaust. When the museum was established, Mina initiated the program of training survivors to become tour guides. This was a revolutionary idea at the time. It is wonderful that people like Vivienne Spiegel, my mother's first cousin, are still presently sharing their Holocaust experiences with visitors at the museum.

I grew up in an environment of Zionist and traditional Jewish values, discussions about ideas, often to do with Jewish life and history, books and reading, feminism and film. Our mother, Freda Freiberg (nee Fink) was a scholar of film and feminism. She perhaps needed to distinguish herself in an area unrelated to Jewish issues to feel independent. That said, she did write about Holocaust and other Jewish-themed film and was a film critic for the Australian Jewish News for a period.

After Grandma's death in 1990, our uncle Nathan, with my dad Martin Frieberg's assistance, ran the Leo and Mina Fink Fund. Mina had run the fund after Leo's death in 1972. Money was set aside in both of their wills for donations to welfare and education in the State of Victoria. As Nathan grew older he involved his remaining son, Michael (our cousin Naomi sadly died of preeclampsia when expecting her first child at the age of 24), my siblings, Lily and Alex, and me in the fund. We became Trustees. Now both Freda and Nathan are no longer alive, we make donations in their and our grandparents' memory, to the causes that were close to their hearts.

It matters to us that MHM is a well-run organisation with a wonderful group of people who have established a foundation to make sure it is funded well into the future.

by **Debbie Golvan**

We agree with Mina's view that the main purpose of the museum is education. And how important that education is today, with Holocaust distortion, antisemitism and anti-Zionism so prevalent and concerning.

I applaud the many volunteers and staff involved in running the museum and encourage all readers of this magazine to donate what you can. Amounts over $2 are tax-deductible!

Above: Volunteers at the then Jewish Holocaust Centre, 1984. Mina Fink is standing on the far right. L-R sitting: Francis Wood, H. Liebman, Maly Kohn, Renee Einhorn, Cesia Goldberg, Rosa Konigstein, Zosia Gettler, Rachel Bekker. Standing in the back: Chaim Nisenbaum, Hershel Bachrach, Pearl Recht, Abram Goldberg, Aron Sokolowicz and Mina Fink.

Supporting Holocaust Education for a Stronger Future

by
Nicole Brittain,
Senior Grant Manager,
Gandel Foundation

Left: John Gandel AC and Pauline Gandel AC with the Gandel Holocaust Studies Program Graduates, 2022.

John and Pauline Gandel are not Holocaust survivors, yet their unwavering support for MHM and Holocaust education stems from a profound sense of responsibility and compassion, and a deep connection to the heritage of the Jewish people. Their dedication highlights a vital truth: the lessons of the Holocaust belong to everyone, and remembering the past is essential for building a just and inclusive future.

For the Gandels, supporting MHM is about more than honouring history—it's about safeguarding it. They firmly believe that the Holocaust was not only a tragedy for the Jewish people but a warning for all of humanity about the consequences of hatred, prejudice and indifference. The museum stands as a beacon of remembrance, education and hope, ensuring that the stories of those who suffered and perished are never forgotten.

While John and Pauline do not have direct familial ties to Holocaust survivors, they hold the utmost respect for those who endured unimaginable horrors and then rebuilt their lives in Australia. These survivors didn't just find refuge—they became an integral part of the fabric of Australian society, contributing enormously to fields such as the arts, business, medicine, and academia. The Gandels recognise that the strength and resilience of these individuals have enriched the nation, adding depth, creativity, and innovation to its cultural landscape.

But memory alone is not enough. The Gandels are passionate about the museum's mission to educate the wider community about the Holocaust. They understand that true remembrance goes hand in hand with education. By sharing the history of the Holocaust—its causes, its atrocities, and its aftermath—the museum fosters empathy and understanding. This is crucial, especially for younger generations, to ensure that history does not repeat itself. As the survivors age, the responsibility of carrying their stories forward rests with the community, and institutions like MHM play an essential role in this ongoing effort.

John and Pauline also emphasise the importance of teaching the broader public—not just the Jewish community—about the Holocaust. In their view, the lessons extend beyond Jewish history; they are universal lessons about human rights, social justice, and the dangers of discrimination. The museum provides a space for reflection and dialogue, challenging visitors to confront the past and commit to the powerful pledge of "Never Again".

Furthermore, the Gandels are deeply committed to preserving the memories and heritage of the Jewish community. They understand that the rich tapestry of Jewish life before, during and after the Holocaust must be cherished and passed down through generations. It is not only about the tragedy but also about the vibrant culture, traditions, and spirit of a people who, despite immense suffering, have continued to thrive.

Through their support of MHM, John and Pauline Gandel hope to inspire others to stand against injustice and embrace the power of education and empathy. They believe that by remembering the past, we strengthen our resolve to create a future rooted in acceptance and unity. This can be further seen when the educators from Catholic, Independent, Christian, Jewish and government schools who are educated on the Holocaust through the Gandel Holocaust Studies Program for Australian teachers, participate in educational sessions at the museum and they then take these lessons back to their classrooms across Australia.

Their message is clear: remembrance is a shared responsibility. It transcends religion, ethnicity, and nationality.

The Gandels' ongoing support is a testament to the belief that the Holocaust's lessons must be a guiding force for all humanity—because only by understanding the past can we hope to build a better tomorrow.

SYDNEY JEWISH MUSEUM
WHERE HISTORY HAS A VOICE

After shocks

Nolan and the Holocaust

Feature

by
Dr Breann Fallon,
MHM Head of Experience & Learning

Less than three weeks after painting this series, Nolan visited Auschwitz, expecting to illustrate an article about the concentration camp for *The Observer* newspaper. While his artistic exploration of concentration camps began earlier, nothing could prepare him for the emotional impact of standing on the ground where so many had been murdered.

Nolan's visit to Auschwitz was a turning point. The sight of piles of belongings—shoes, glasses, hair—left him shaken, and the camp's orderly layout, reflecting the chilling efficiency of the Nazi system, disturbed him deeply.

The aftershocks of Nolan's Auschwitz visit continued to place an emotional toll on his psyche. Whilst travelling and witnessing world events after Auschwitz, the Holocaust was never far from his thoughts and ultimately his art practice. His experiences shaped his work, turning it into a personal reflection on human cruelty and the fragility of life, ultimately making his art a testament to confronting darkness.

2025 marks 80 years since the liberation of the camps, and Nolan's powerful, emotional art provides a unique, visual language that deepens the impact of historical understanding, fostering empathy and reflection.

From 1 May 2025, 56 of these works will be on display at MHM in the Alter Family Special Exhibitions Gallery in a new touring exhibition entitled *Aftershocks: Nolan and the Holocaust.*

This exhibition will not only educate visitors about this tragic chapter in history but also encourage discussions on responsibility, justice, and the fight against hate.

It connects Australian audiences to a global history, ensuring the lessons of the Holocaust are passed on to future generations.

Aftershocks: Sidney Nolan and the Holocaust is an exhibition of the Sydney Jewish Museum. The project is generously supported by Richard and Jacqui Scheinberg and Education Heritage Foundation Ltd.

Art serves as a powerful means of bearing witness to the Holocaust, preserving the harrowing stories of suffering, loss, and resilience through visual expression and narrative.

Melbourne-born artist Sidney Nolan, widely recognised for his daring modernist style and works bringing to life the Australian bush, also turned his practice to paint numerous works on the Holocaust.

In 1961, the televised trial of Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi officer responsible for managing the logistics of the mass deportation of millions of Jews to death camps, sparked worldwide debate about the nature of evil. For Nolan, this trial intensified his reflection on humanity's capacity for cruelty, leading him to create more unsettling depictions of the Holocaust—faces contorted in pain, skeletal bodies, and the overwhelming scale of death.

Above left: Untitled [Victim Head], 1961. Sidney Nolan.Sydney Jewish Museum Collection / © The Sidney Nolan Trust/ DACS. 2025.

Left: Photograph of Australian artist Sidney Nolan, taken by Albert Tucker. Image courtesy; State Library of Victoria.

Volunteer Story

by
Jessica Mansfield,
MHM Volunteer Coordinator

Making a Difference

In 2023, Jenny Sach was exploring courses to deepen her understanding of the Holocaust when her son introduced her to MHM's Holocaust Education Course. This course became the catalyst for her volunteer work at the museum.

Jenny has always been captivated by 20th-century history, particularly the interwar years and the events that led to World War Two. Her reasons for volunteering were clear from the start. *"I had this burning desire to find out from different perspectives. Because I've done the reading, I've watched movies. I've visited Holocaust centres; I've been to concentration camps. But there's always that perspective that you don't get. So, I think coming here was like seeing it from a more localised Jewish perspective."*

At MHM, Jenny volunteers in the Visitor Experience Department, guiding tours for the virtual reality experience *Walk With Me* and greeting visitors in the exhibition spaces. Her favourite part? The people. *"You get to meet a wide variety of people. And sometimes you learn what brings them here. And then you can also learn how they felt after they had been through."*

Among the many survivor testimonies, Jenny feels a strong connection to Szaja (John) Chaskiel OAM z'l, who features in *Walk With Me*. *"Knowing what he went through and how he then had the courage to go back [to Poland], letting everybody know what had happened. Courage is the only word I can think of."*

One of Jenny's most memorable moments wasn't a specific event, but a realisation. As a non-Jewish volunteer, she quickly grasped the significance of her role in Holocaust education. *"When I was doing the course, the number of people that were taken aback because I wasn't Jewish. And it wasn't a bad way, they were saying thank you. I had a woman last week say thank you to me because I was not Jewish and I was doing this. It made me feel the impact of being here."*

Jenny's dedication to Holocaust education and her passion for learning is truly inspiring. You can find her every Thursday in our Visitor Experience spaces, continuing to make a difference.

Above: MHM Volunteer Jenny Sach working in the Visitor Experience Department at MHM.

Simcha Story

by
Abigail Gilroy-Smith,
MHM Memberships & Individual Giving Specialist

Celebrating with Purpose

For Izzy, his Bar Mitzvah was more than just a milestone—it was an opportunity to honour the past and make a difference for the future.

In May 2024, Izzy celebrated his Bar Mitzvah at Blake Street Shule, followed by a joyous party with family and friends at Caulfield Town Hall. Instead of just receiving gifts, Izzy chose to give back. In honour of his Bar Mitzvah, he asked for donations to MHM, a cause deeply personal to him.

"Many of my close family members were impacted by the Holocaust—some survived, and others were murdered. I wanted to do something meaningful to remember them," Izzy explains.

Izzy's fundraising efforts were dedicated to the memory of his great-grand-uncle, Zeeshe Michalowicz. Through the museum's Twinning Project, Bar and Bat Mitzvah children can learn about and honour young family members who perished in the Holocaust before reaching their own Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

In 1942, Zeeshe was just 10 years old when he arrived at the selection lineup in Blechhammer alongside his older brother, Izzy's great-grandfather, Shimon (Zaida Sam). A Kapo advised Sam to say he was 13 years old, so he did—and was sent to the right. Zeeshe, only 10, was sent to the left. That was the last time Zaida Sam saw his little brother.

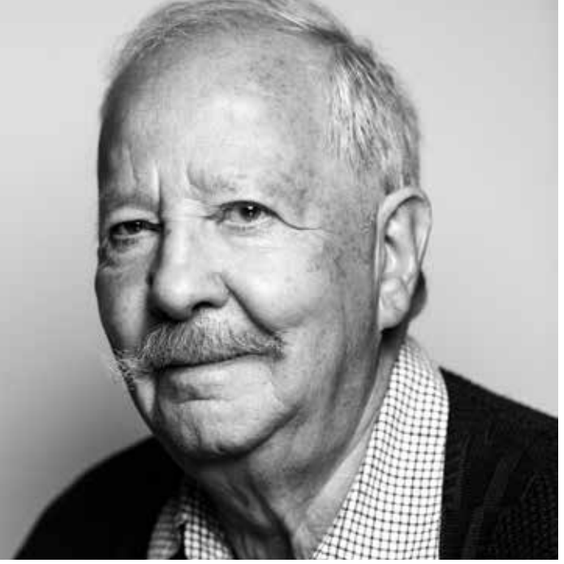
The only possession they had was a small towel, which they tore in half, each taking one piece as a keepsake. While Zaida Sam survived and was later liberated from Buchenwald on 11 April 1945, he never stopped mourning Zeeshe. Sam's eyes would fill with tears whenever he spoke of him.

Through Izzy's generosity—and the kindness of his friends and family—his Bar Mitzvah became a powerful act of remembrance. The funds raised will help preserve Holocaust memory and educate future generations, ensuring that history is never forgotten.

Ready to make your celebration count?

You too can dedicate your simcha to MHM. Visit our website or call us on 03 9528 1985 to learn more.

Above: Izzy Weinberg at his Bar Mitzvah ceremony. Courtesy of the Weinberg Family.



Henri Korn.
Photographed by Simon Shiff.

In Memorial

by Tanya Serry (nee Korn)

In Memory of HENRI KORN

Henri was born in Wuppertal, Germany in 1929 to a secular Jewish family. Life was turned upside down under the Nazi regime when at age eight, Henri was thrown out of school and shortly after, witnessed the fire and destruction of *Kristallnacht*. Ultimately, his nuclear family fled Germany for the relative safety of Belgium where Henri was hidden with Sonia, his sister, and separated from his parents. Henri managed to survive the war, along with Sonia, his parents and two cousins.

After time in a Displaced Persons' camp in France, he arrived in Australia, and although initially he was a reluctant refugee, he eventually embraced his life here, finding deep friendships, and contributed in meaningful ways to many communities.

Henri met Sandra in 1959. They married soon after, and stayed loyal to each as partners, colleagues and concert-goers until her death in 2021. I was born a few years after they wed, followed by my brother Gary, who arrived after much turmoil, but ultimately, Henri had his own nuclear family.

When we were children, Henri worked hard to shield us from his traumatic Holocaust past – the loss of virtually his entire extended family, his opportunity for education and most of all, his loss of a childhood. He loved us but was not always an easy or communicative father to have. It was not until my mid-20s, so his late 50s, that I asked him to draw a family tree and tell me what had happened to him, my grandparents and our extended family. Virtually everyone perished. After some cajoling, I took Dad to what was then the Child Survivors of the Holocaust group, staying with him for the first few visits and slowly leaving him to navigate this new, but ultimately familiar place. He reconnected with many of his French-speaking childhood friends and ended up becoming the president of this group.

He became deeply connected with Jewish Care and MHM as a guide and mentor, and ultimately, his story was curated in the exhibition *Hidden: Seven Children Saved*.

Dad's dementia was creeping up on him but he had Sandra to keep him on track. When she became too unwell and died in 2021, he was at a loss. Before his dementia advanced, he talked more freely with me, answered burning questions that I had, and reminisced about his Polish and German family members. Progressively, he became increasingly disabled by his failing cognition and we knew the end was coming when he could not get pleasure from the things he loved – food, music, the news, reading and telling people his story.

Above all, his greatest win over his childhood trauma and loss was his family – the family that he had created. He would sit proudly at the head of the Shabbat table and look at his two children and children-in-law, but more so, his six grandchildren, Adam, Brad, Nick, Aaron, Emily and Sasha, and more recently partners, Jess, Shai and Romy. That was his success.

Ursula Flicker

In Memorial

by Helen Forgasz

In Memory of URSULA FLICKER

Ursula Flicker was raised in Bialystok, Poland. Life prior to 1939 was carefree. Her parents were among Bialystok's wealthy Jewish elite. Ursula and her younger sister, Jareczka, attended the private Jewish school – the Druskin Gymnasium. Ursula was academically bright and very athletic.

Life changed in 1939. Under Soviet occupation until 1941, Bialystok was "sovietised". On 20 June 1941 — two days before Operation Barbarossa — Ursula's parents and grandparents were arrested by the NKVD as "enemies of the people". At the time, Ursula's sister was at a school camp, and was thus not with them as they boarded the train for Siberia. Ursula was never to see Jareczka again.

Life in Siberia was difficult. When the Soviets changed sides in the war, all Polish citizens were "liberated" from slave labour. Ursula's family moved to Biysk where Ursula resumed her schooling, completed matriculation, and qualified as a teacher.

Polish citizens were repatriated after the war. Only Ursula and her mother had survived Siberia. When they returned to Bialystok, they found that no members of the Bialystok Biszkowicz family had survived the Nazis. They learnt that Jareczka had returned from the school camp and stayed with relatives until they were all herded into the Bialystok Ghetto. It was assumed that Jareczka had perished at Treblinka following the ghetto's liquidation.

After a short stint in Sweden, Ursula and her mother arrived in Melbourne in 1948. Ursula soon met Felix Flicker (also from Bialystok) and they married at the Elwood synagogue in 1949.

Over the years, Ursula was involved in many voluntary activities for the Melbourne Jewish community and beyond. Tormented by the unknown fate of her sister, she was obsessed with finding out the exact details of where, when, and how Jareczka had perished. The establishment of the Jewish Holocaust Centre provided that opportunity.

Ursula began volunteering at the Jewish Holocaust Centre, in its archives department, shortly after it opened. She took it upon herself to learn everything there was to learn and soon became its head. Ursula believed, *"Our mandate is to preserve the history of the suffering of our martyred people forever and we can do it only with documents."*

According to Professor Robyn Sloggett, one of Australia's leading conservation experts, *"Ursula Flicker rang me up and said,* 'Can you provide some advice on conservation?' *...She wanted to set up a catalogue system and get proper boxing and housing for them so that these things would be preserved, so that...it would be appropriately managed to museum standards. This is really her legacy, I think..."*

Ursula oversaw a team of dedicated volunteers, running a tight ship in the archives office, with signs everywhere informing volunteers of what they could and couldn't do.

When she retired after over 20 years, she left a significant collection, mostly collected from the survivors who, like her, had direct experience of the Holocaust. Sadly, until the day she died, Ursula never found out the exact circumstances of her sister's death.

„חורבן־ייִדיש" — אַ לשון, וואָס טראָגט אין זיך די טראָומע פֿון ייִדישע יסורים

פֿון מיכאל קרוטיקאָוו, פֿאָרווערטס,
12.12.2024

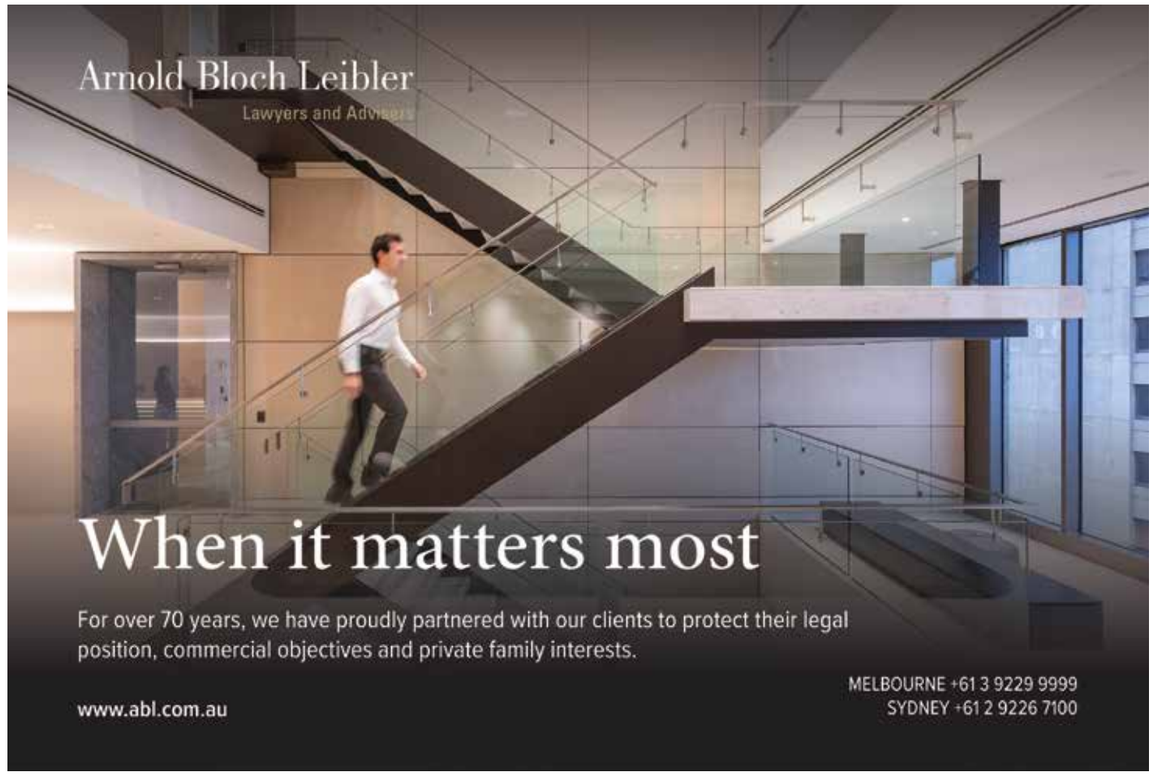
בערך פֿינף מיליאָן ייִדיש־רעדנדיקע ייִדן זײַנען אומגעקומען אינעם חורבן. ייִדיש האָט ניט נאָר פֿאַרלוירן די סאַמע שפּעריקע קהילות זײַנע, נאָר די שפּראַך גופֿא איז שטאַרק באַווירקט געווארן דורך דער טראָומע פֿונעם חורבן. דאָס איז די טעמע פֿונעם ניַיעם בוך „אָקופּירטע וועלט": וואָס דער חורבן האָט געטאָן צו ייִדיש" פֿון חנה פּאָליַן־גלאַי, דער פּראָפֿעסאָרין פֿון ייִדיש און ייִדיש־קולטור אינעם תּל־אָבֿיבֿער אוניווערסיטעט. נאָך אין די געטאָס פֿון וואַרשע און לאָדזש האָט מען שוין געזומען זאַמלען און שטודירן אָט דעם „חורבן־ייִדיש". דאָס איז אַ סימן, האַלט פּאָליַן־גלאַי, אַז אַפֿילו אין די סאַמע ביטערסטע באַדינגונגען האָבן ייִדן דאָס געהאַלטן פֿאַר אַ וויכטיקן ענין. אינעם לאָדזשער געטאָ האָט אָסקאַר ראָזענפֿעלד אָנגעשריבן a רעפֿעראַט וועגן די ענדערונגען, וואָס עס האָט באַמערקט אין דער גערעדטער שפּראַך. ראָזענפֿעלד איז געווען אַ דייַטשיש־רעדנדיקער ייִד און האָט שטודירט פֿילאָלאָגיע אין ווין. ער האָט באַמערקט, אַז אין פֿאַרגליַך מיט פּויליש און דייַטשיש איז ייִדיש געווען מער בייגעוודיק און האָט בעסער אָפּגעשפּיגלט דאָס רעאַלע לעבן אינעם געטאָ. ייִדיש האָט אַרייַנגעזאָפּט נייַע ווערטער פֿון פּויליש און דייַטשיש און אַ היפּשע צאָל ייִדישע ווערטער האָבן באַקומען נייַע באַטײַטן. בײַ יעדן ווארט האָט ראָזענפֿעלד געמאַכט אַ קאַרטל ווו ער האָט דערקלערט דעם ווארטס אָפּשטאַם און באַטײַט. למשל, דאָס ווארט „כלאָפּוס"—אַ מין וואַסערדיקער זופּ —„נעמט זיך, מסתּמא, פֿון פּוילישן ווארט 'כליאָפּאַטש' וואָס מיינט גיסן, אַוועקגיסן, אויסגיסן אָן אַ מאָס." ראָזענפֿעלדס שטודיע איז אַרײַן אין דער „ענציקלאָפּעדיע פֿונעם לאָדזשער געטאָ", וואָס מען האָט געשאַפֿן אינעם געטאָ גופֿא. דער אַרכיוו פֿון דער ענציקלאָפּעדיע מיט 370 איינסן האָט זיך אָפּגעהיט, כאָטש אַלע מיטאַרבעטער זײַנען אומגעקומען. צווישן אַנדערע העלדן אינעם בוך „אָקופּירטע וועלט" זײַנען דרײַ פֿאָרשער, וואָס האָבן געזאַמלט און שטודירט די ענדערונגען אין דעם וואָקאַבולאַר, דער סעמאַנטיק און דער פֿונקציע פֿון דער ייִדישער שפּראַך בשעתן חורבן און דער צווייטער וועלט־מלחמה. נחמן בלומענטאַל איז געווען אַ פּוילישער ייִדישער שפּראַכפֿאָרשער, וואָס האָט זיך גערעטעוועט פֿונעם חורבן אינעם סאָוועטן־פֿאַרבאַנד. נאָך זײַן אומקערן זיך קיין פּוילן אין 1944 האָט ער אָנגעדאָקט דאָקומענטאַלע מאַטעריאַלן, אַזעלכע ווי די לאָדזשער געטאָ ענציקלאָפּעדיע און טיילן פֿונעם „ענג־שבת"־אַרכיוו פֿונעם וואַרשעווער געטאָ. ער האָט געטרײַפֿן אייניקע לעבן־געבליבענע ייִדן, וואָס האָבן געריעדט דעם „חורבן־ייִדיש". זײַן ציל איז געווען צו זאַמלען און פֿאָרשן נייַע שפּראַך־עלעמענטן. בלומענטאַל האָט געהאַלטן, אַז ווערטער זײַנען ניט סתּם אָבסטראַקטע באַגריפֿן, נאָר זיי זײַנען דער עיקר־עלעמענט פֿון דער מענטשלעכער עקזיסטענץ, דעם „איך" און דעם „הײַנט". דער חורבן־ייִדיש האָט אָפּגעשפּיגלט די טראָומאַטישע פּסיכאָלאָגישע ענדערונגען אי בײַ דעם ייִדישן יחיד אי בײַ דעם ייִדישן כלל. מאַקס ווײַנרײַך אין ייִוואָ האָט הויך אָפּגעשאַצט בלומענטאַלס פֿאָרשונג, אָבער וועג יענער האָט עולה געווען קיין מדינת־ישׂראל, האָבן די אָנפֿירערס פֿונעם „ייִדושם" ניט געהאַט קיין אינטערעס צו ייִדיש־פֿאָרשונגען. בלומענטאַלס הויפּטווערק, „ווערטער און ווערטלעך פֿון דער חורבן־תּקופֿה" איז אַרויס אין 1981 אינעם תּ־אָבֿיבֿער י. ל. פּרץ־פֿאַרלאָג מיט דער הילף פֿון פֿריוואָטע שטיצער. דער סאָוועטישער לינגוויסט עליע ספּיוואַק, דער ראָש פֿונעם קאָבינעט פֿאַר ייִדישער קולטור בײַ דער אוקראַינער וויסנשאַפֿט־אַקאַדעמיע, האָט געהאַט גאָר אַן אַנדער צוגאַנג צו דער טעמע. ער האָט געשעפּט מאַטעריאַל פֿאַר זײַן בוך „די שפּראַך אין די טעג פֿון דער פֿאַטערלאַנדישער מלחמה" (1946) פֿון דער סאָוועטישער ליטעראַטור און פּרעסע, ווי אויך פֿון סאָוועטישע ייִדישע סאָלדאַטן. ישׂראל קאַפּלאַן, דער דריטער העלד פֿונעם בוך, האָט אַליין דורכגעמאַכט אַלע זיבן מדורי גיהנום פֿון דייַטשישע לאַגערן. דאָרט האָט ער זיך גוט אויסגעלערנט דעם חורבן־ייִדיש, און נאָך דער באַפֿרייַונג האָט ער זיך אָפּגעגעבן מיט אויסטײַטשן און סיסטעמאַטיזירן דעם דאָזיקן לשון. קיינער פֿון די דאָזיקע דרײַ פֿאָרשער האָט ניט באַקומען קיין געהעריקע אָנערקענונג פֿאַר זײַער אויפֿטו. פֿאַר די אָנפֿירער פֿון „ייִדושם" אין די 1950ער־1960ער יאָרן איז דער חורבן־ייִדיש געווען די שפּראַך פֿון ייִדישער הילפֿלאָזיקייט. ספּיוואַק איז אַרעסטירט געווארן בשעת סטאַלינס רדיפֿות פֿון דער סאָוועטישער ייִדישער קולטור און געשטאָרבן אין תּפֿיסה אין 1950. פּאָליַן־גלאַי איז ממשיך די אַרבעט פֿון אָט די דרײַ פֿאָרגעסענע יידישע שפּראַכפֿאָרשער. זי מאַכט אַ גרונטיקן אַנאַליז פֿון אייניקע וויכטיקע ווערטער און באַגריפֿן פֿונעם חורבן־ייִדיש. זי פֿאָרשט זייער אָפּשטאַם און קולטורעל־היסטאָרישע קאָנטעקסטן. זי דערקלערט, למשל, ווי אַזוי דאָס ווארט „אַרגאַניזירן" האָט באַקומען אַ ניַיעם באַטײַט אין די 1930ער יאָרן: לקחנענען אָדער אַוועקנעמען. דאָס קומט, ווײַזט אויס, פֿונעם נאַציסטישן באַגרון פֿון יענעם דייַטשישן ווערב. בײַ זיי האָט דאָס ווארט געמיינט ניט אַרגאַניזירן אין אַ געווײַנטלעכן זין, נאָר צו קאָנפֿיסקירן דעם האָב־און־גוטס אין די אָקופּירטע שטחים. אַזוי אַרום האָבן ייִדישע אַסירים „פֿאַרייִדישט" דאָס דאָזיקע דייַטשישע ווארט אין זײַן ניַיעם באַטײַט. הײַנט איז דער ייִדישער חורבן אַ פּאָפּולערע טעמע בײַ פֿאַרשיידענע מינים פֿאָרשער אין דער גאָרער וועלט. אָבער עד־היום איז ייִדיש פֿאַרבליבן אויף די ראַנדן פֿון דער חורבן־פֿאָרשונג. דאָס בוך „אָקופּירטע ווערטער" מאַכט צוערכט דעם דאָזיקן אומיושר. דאָס בוך איז אַ וויכטיקער וויסנשאַפֿטלעכער אויפֿטו, אָבער ניט וויניקער וויכטיק איז דער עטישער אַספּעקט. די פֿאָרשונג פֿונעם חורבן־ייִדיש איז געפֿאַלן אַ קרבן פֿון די ראַדיקאַלע אידעאָלגישע איינשטעלונגען, וואָס זײַנען געווען פֿײַנטלעך צו ייִדיש: דעם סאָוועטישן קאָמוניזם און דעם ישׂראלדיקן ציוניזם. פֿראָפֿעסאָר פּאָליַן־גלאַיס שטודיע איז אַ ווירדיקער אויסגלײַך פֿון דער דאָזיקער וויכטיקער אָבער איבערגעריסענער שיטה אין דער ייִדיש־פֿאָרשונג.

בינעם העלערס באַרימט ליד „מײַן שוועסטער חיה"

פֿון בני מער, פֿאָרווערטס, אַן אויסצוג
16.01.2025

אין זײַן ליד „קערנדלעך ווייַך", וואָס אַבֿרהם סוצקעווער האָט געשריבן אין ווילנער געטאָ אין מערץ 1943, שריבט ער וועגן די באַרימטע „פֿאַפּירענע בריגאַדע" — אַ גרופּע אינטעלעקטואַלן אין געטאָ וואָס האָבן באַהאַלטן פּתּב-ידן און ביכער פֿון די דיטשן. די באַהאַלטענע פּתּבים זײַנען, אין די ווערטער פֿון סוצקעווערן, ווי אַלטע קערנדלעך ווייַן, וואָס ווערן זיך צעבלײַנען אַפֿילו נאָך טויזנטער יאָרן: "אפֿשר אויך וועלן די ווערטער דערוואַרטן זיך וועט אויף דעם ליכט — וועלן אין שעה אין באַשערטער צעבלײַנען זיך אויך אומגעריכט?" אַזאַ געפֿיל האָב איך לגבי די גיסטיקע אוצרות וואָס זײַנען פֿאַרבאָרגן אין די אַלטע ייִדישע צייטונגען. איצט, ווען אַ סך פֿון זיי זײַנען שוין סקאַנירט און געפֿינען זיך אויף דער וועבזײַט „עיתונות יהודית היסטורית" פֿון דער נאַציאָנאַלער ביבליאָטעק אין ירושלים, קאָנען מיר געפֿינען יענע אַלטע קערנדלעך וויייַן, ד"ה די אַלטע ווערטער אין די צייטונגען, און זען ווי זיי צעבלײַנען זיך פֿון דאָס ניי. אָט למשל האָב איך לעצטנס געהאַט אַ טשיקאַווע אַנטדעקונג, לייענענדיק די צייטונג „דער פֿרײַנד". די צייטונג איז דערשינען אין וואַרשע במשך פֿון אַ קורצער צײַט, צווישן אַפּריל 1934 און מערץ 1935. עס איז געווען דער אָרגאַן פֿון די ייִדישע קאָמוניסטן, אין אַ צייט וועו די קאָמוניסטישע פּאַרטיי אין פּוילן איז געווען אומלעגאַל. „דער פֿרײַנד" איז אָבער געווען גאָר אַ וויכטיקע צייטשריפֿט, און אַ סך אינטערעסאַנטע שרײַבערס האָבן דאָרטן געשריבן, צווישן זיי אַלטער קאָצאַינע און קאַדיע מאָלאָדאָווסקי. אין דער ליטעראַרישער בײַלאָגע פֿונעם 1טן יוני 1934 האָב איך געפֿונען אַ ליד פֿון ב. העלין. וואָר איז אָט דער העלין? האָב איך אַ טראַכט געטאָן, און אָנגעהויבן לייענען דאָס לידל: "מאַכט זיך אַמאָל אין אַ שעה אַ פֿאַרנאַכטיקער, אַ פֿאַרלאָשענער זײַ איך אין אייגענעם שאָטן. און שטיל איז אַרום מיר, נאָר מײַן דמיון איז וואַכעדיק, דערמאָנט מיך געשטאַלטן, פֿון עבֿר פֿאַרבלאָטע. דערמאָנט מיך אין סמאָטשע, דער גאָס פֿון געבוירן פֿאַרלוירענע יאָרן אויף הילצערנע טרעפּ; מײַן שוועסטערל חיה, דעם קאָפּ נישט געשוירן, מײַן שוועסטערל חיה מיט די טונקעלע צעפּ. איך הער אין דער שטילקייט, ווי ס'לויפֿן פֿאַרבײַ מיר גרינגע צעשאָטענע, קינדעריישע טריט. און ס'וויזט זיך גאָר אויס מיר, אַז כ'לויף איצט אַליין אום מיט קינדישע פֿיסלעך אין שטילן געמיט." שוין אין דער צווייטער סטראָפֿע האָב איך באַקומען אַן ענטפֿער, און איך מײַן אַז אַ סך פֿון די לייענערס וועלן עס אויך טרעפֿן: ב. העלין איז נישט קיין אַנדערער ווי דער גרויסער פּאָעט בינעם העלער, און דאָס ליד איז אַ פֿריערדיקער גלגול פֿון זײַן באַרימטן ליד „מײַן שוועסטער חיה", וואָס העלער האָט געשריבן כּמעט מיט פֿופֿציק יאָר שפּעטער. נישט נאָר די טעמע פֿון דער צווייטער סטראָפֿע איז די זעלבע, נאָר אויך די גראַמען — צעפּ / טרעפּ — און אַנדערע מאָטיוון: "מײַן שוועסטער חיה מיט די גרינע אויגן, מײַן שוועסטער חיה מיט די שוואַרצע צעפּ. די שוועסטער חיה, וואָס האָט מיך דערצויגן, אויף סמאָטשע-גאַס, אין הויז מיט קרומע טרעפּ. אָבער פֿאַר וואָס העלין און נישט העלער? אין די דרײַסיקער יאָרן איז דער נאָמען „בינעם העלער" שוין געווען באַקאַנט אין די ייִדישע לינקע קרײַזן. אָט למשל, אין דער קאָמוניסטישער צײַטשריפֿט „ליטעראַרישע טריבונע", וואָס איז דערשינען אין לאָדזש עטלעכע יאָר פֿריער, האָט מען דעם 1טן סעפּטעמבער 1931 פּובליקירט אַ ליד פֿונעם 22-יעריקן בינעם העלער. די רעדאַקציע האָט צוגעגעבן אַ באַמערקונג, אַז דער פּאָעט האָט זיך „איבערגעריסן מיט דער בונדישער פֿרעסע, און צוגעטראָטן צו דער ייִטעראַרישער טריבונע'. די לידער, וואָס מיר דרוקן דאָ, זײַנען כאַראַקטעריסטיש פֿאַר דעם איבערגאַנג... צום פֿראָלעטאַרישן לאַגער". דערפֿאַר גלויבט איך אַז בינעם העלער אַליין האָט פֿאַרביטן די יוצרות און געוואָלט מע זאָל שריבן „העלין" אַנשטאָט „העלער". לויט מײַן סבֿרא האָט ער אויסגעקליבן דעם נאָמען „העלין" וויבל אין 1934 איז די קאָמוניסטישער פֿאַרטיי אין פּוילן געווארן אומלעגאַל. דער פּוילישער מאַכט האָט פֿאַרפֿאָלגט די קאָמוניסטן, און די ייִדישע קאָמוניסטן בתּוכם. העלער האָט מסתּמא מורא געהאַט צו פּובליקירן אין אַ "רויטע" צייטונג, און צוגעטראַכט אַ פּסעוודאָנים (שפּעטער איז ער טאַקע אַנטלאָפֿן פֿון פּוילן און עטלעכע יאָר געבליבן אין בעלגיע און פֿראַנקרייך). סײ ווי סײ זענען מיר אַז „מײַן שוועסטער חיה", וואָס איז אין די לעצטע יאָרן געווארן איינס פֿון די באַקאַנטסטע לידער וועגן חורבן, איז לכתּחילה געשריבן געווארן וויַ אַ נאָסטאַלגיש ליד. העלער, דער יונגער קאָמוניסט, זעט זײַן עבֿר אין דער חסידישער היים ווי אין אַ פֿינצטערניש, אָבער פֿון דעסט וועגן איז דאָס אַ זיסער זכרון. עס איז קלאָר אַז אויך דעמאָלט, אין 1934, איז די שוועסטער חיה געווען פֿאַר בינעם אַ וויכטיקע פֿיגור, וויבל ווי די עלטסטע שוועסטער האָט זי דערצויגן די ברידער וועג „די מאַמע איז אַוועק פֿון שטוב באַגינען, / וועג אויפֿן הימל האָט ערשט קוים געהעלט". וואָס איז געשען נאָך דעם מיט חיהן? עטלעכע פּרטים וועגן איר האָב איך זיך דערווויסט פֿון בינעם העלערס אַרכיוו (וועגן דעם האָב איך געשריבן אין 2019). צווישן די אַלע מאַנוסקריפּטן האָב איך אַנטדעקט אַן אומבאַקאַנטן כּתּב-יד אונטערן טיטל „טאָגבוך אויף צוריק", וואָס העלער האָט אָנגעשריבן אין יאָר 1984 ווי אַן אויטאָביאָגראַפֿיע (עס וואַרט נאָך אַלץ צו דערשינען; די איבערזעצונג אויף עבֿרית קאָן מען לייענען אין „פּרויקט בן יהודה"). אין זײַן אויטאָביאָגראַפֿיע דערציילט העלער אַז חיה, וואָס איז געבוירן געווארן אין יאָר 1902, האָט חתונה געהאַט און געהאַט אַ טאָכטער: מאַשעלע. חיה, איר מאַן שעיה און מאַשעלע זײַנען געווען אין וואַרשעווער געטאָ און אומגעקומען, מסתּמא אין טרעבלינקע. איך זאָג „מסתּמא" וויבל אין וואַרשעווער געטאָ האָט מען נישט דאָקומענטירט די פֿאַרשטאָרבענע און די דעפּאָרטירטע. בינעם העלער האָט אַליין נישט געווווסט קיין סך פּרטים וועגן חיהס גורל, אָבער ער האָט געזאָגט אַז ער האָט אויפֿן גאַנצן לעבן איר תּמיד געהאַט אין זינען, ווי אויך די שורות וואָס ער האָט געשריבן וועגן איר אין יאָר 1934. „אין אַ שעה אַ פֿאַרנאַכטיקער" איז נישט געדרוקט געווארן אין קיינעם פֿון זײַנע ביכער, אָבער עס איז געווען ווי אַ קערנדל וויייַן וואָס האָט זיך צעבליט נאָך צענדליקער יאָרן. העלער האָט געקענט די ווערט פֿון „מײַן שוועסטער חיה", און אין זײַן אויטאָביאָגראַפֿיע שריבט ער: „איך אַליין האַלט דאָס אויך פֿאַרן שטאַרקסטן ליד אין דעם בוך".

(צוזאַמענגעשטעלט פֿון: אַלעקס דאַפֿנער)



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