Góra Kalwaria–Ger

גער – גורא קאלוואריא

The Ger - Góra Kalwaria

Memorial Book

The Yizkor Book of Ger - Góra Kalwaria, Mazovia (Poland)



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DEDICATION

To the Memory of the

Beloved & Cherished Wife

of

Jacob Solomon Berger



Carol Lynn Berger

זיה לאה

בת משה ופריידע אסתר ע"ה

אשת זיל

May 26, 1944 ***Dec. 21, 2013***

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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Translator's Foreword

The circumstances leading up to my engagement to translate *Megillat Ger* into English differ somewhat from the usual way my past projects have come to pass, but in that difference there is an interesting story that is worth sharing. It begins about a quarter century ago, and is, not surprisingly, an outgrowth of my more general interest in the Yiddish language.

In pursuing that interest, I came across an endeavor well-known to lovers of Yiddish, that being the monthly Yiddish interest periodical called '*Der Bay*', referencing the San Francisco Bay Area in California. That periodical, written in English – but all about things Yiddish – is the brainchild of Philip 'Fishl' Kutner, who lives in San Mateo, CA. In the fullness of time, I discovered that Fishl is really from New Jersey, having been raised on a Flemington, NJ farm, in the center of the state, but having spent most of his adult life in Fair Lawn, NJ as a teacher. He moved to California on retirement. Between the 'Jersey connection' and our mutual love affair with the Yiddish language, you would think that would be enough, but the story only starts there.

My middle son David, after graduating from Rutgers University, saw fit to pursue graduate study in Computer Science at the University of California in Berkeley. The attractions of a technology career in Silicon Valley inevitably caused him, and his family, to put down roots there, and as luck would have it, they settled in San Mateo. Serendipity struck again, when I discovered my son living about a five-minute drive to Fishl's house. It was inevitable that we would begin a course of visits out to David and his family, and it provided the perfect excuse to develop a personal relationship with Fishl, that heretofore had been limited to communication over a distance.

I soon discovered that Fishl, in his exuberant extroversion, runs an informal '*khaliastreh*' at his house on Wednesday evenings. This *klatsch* is composed of Yiddish lovers who take this opportunity to get together for a couple of hours of 'schmoozing.' I became a periodic attendee, always making an appearance whenever a visit to my son and his family brought me to town.

People come and go in the *khaliastreh*, and about three years ago, an animated young Israeli man named Avner Yonai showed up, who lives in San Francisco, and has been part of the group ever since. We rapidly discovered that Avner had a very special passion. He is a scion of the Ribak family from Góra Kalwaria in Poland, called Ger by the Jews of that country. His grandfather, and great-uncle founded the Ger Mandolin Orchestra, in the 1920's, which functioned up to the onset of the Holocaust, at which time, like all things Jewish, it ceased to exist.

In recent years, Avner developed an itch: he felt a compulsion to revive that orchestra as a tribute not only to his family, but to all the Jews of Ger. That compulsion became a passion to him, and over the course of a decade or more, working with mandolin players from all over the world, he brought his dream to a reality: The Ger Mandolin Orchestra now performs worldwide.

As the orchestra came back to life, he let his imagination run on further, and began to think in terms of other initiatives that he could nurture, in order to further cement the legacy of Ger into the matrix of world Jewish life. So one night, I casually asked whether or not there was a *Yizkor* Book that had been written for Ger.

Avner didn't know for sure, but we looked, and discovered that one, in fact, had been written and published – in Yiddish and Hebrew – but not translated. I then suggested to Avner that I might undertake to do such a translation (having already done ten previously!), and this might be a meaningful addition to the memorialization initiative. Of course he loved the idea.

And lo – here we are! After a year or so of effort, ***The Góra Kalwaria Memorial Book*** makes its appearance in the light of day!

And it was an effort that was worthwhile in all senses. The book tells us of the pivotal role played by the *Hasidic* dynasty of the Rabbinic Alter family, in shaping the world outlook of so large a segment of Eastern European Jewry. Yet while this was going on, we also see the tensions in the Jewish world, as *Hasidism* collides with the *Haskalah*, and the winds of change propagated by Enlightenment, nationalism and advancing technology.

Like all my predecessor efforts, this one too, does not disappoint in adding its own unique perspective to the multi-faceted character of that Eastern European Jewish life that is no more.

It is finally worth taking pride in Avner's accomplishment, in bringing the reborn Ger Mandolin Orchestra to the Skirball Center of NYU in New York City on June 15, 2015.

Here is the program of that event:



It was also a privilege for me, and available members of my family, to be able to attend this very special event, which we commemorated with this photograph:

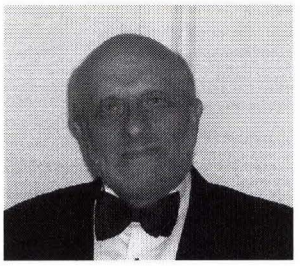


(LtoR): Grandson, Zachary Evan Berger of San Mateo, CA, "Impresario" Avner Yonai, Cousin Donna Fried Calcaterra of Park Ridge, NJ.

Not shown in the picture is daughter, Judyth Ellen Greenbaum, who got stuck in traffic on her way in, but did make the show!

Finally, I want to acknowledge the very fine support that I receive from certain key people who helped me to assure the highest level of integrity and accuracy in my translation work. I am indebted to Tomasz Panczyk in Poland, and Leon Szyfer of Vancouver, Canada, for their assistance in assuring that my rendition of Polish names and places, transliterated from Yiddish into English, were done correctly. Leon deserves an extra vote of thanks for clarifying Russian usage, and for rendering such Russian, in Cyrillic script, on my behalf. A special vote of thanks goes to my classmate, Sam (Shmuel) Blumert of Jerusalem, Israel, for his insight into some esoteric Hebrew usage encountered in the text, and also to Zvi Gildoni, a Ger *landsman*, who also generously participated in the deciphering initiative.

A special vote of thanks goes to Philip 'Fishl' Kutner for providing an editorial interface to me, for purposes of proofreading and overseeing matters of text integrity. It is of equal note to recognize the work of Tomasz Pado, who scanned in all the images, from the original *Yizkor Book*, so we could insert them into this volume. This is now the third time that the text in one of my works has been enriched by pictures.

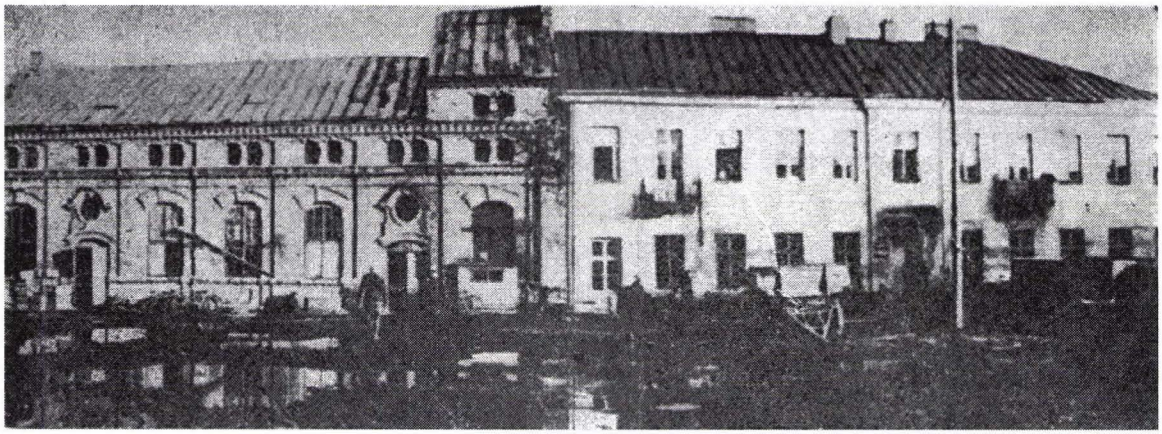


Jacob Solomon Berger

WINTER 2016

א שטאט פון חסידות און קדושה

A City of *Hasidism* and Sanctity



Page 4: *The 'Sfat Emet' House and [residence of] the former Ger* Rebbe **זצ"ל** *(right) and the* Bet HaMedrash *(left)*

From the Book Committee in Argentina

After the horrifying destruction of Eastern European Jewry, which also did not pass over the *shtetl* where we were born, Ger, we began to think about a *Yizkor* Book, that would permanently preserve the memory of the great spiritual center of Polish Jewry, and place a marker on the unknown grave of our nearest and dearest, whose tragic fate lives like an unhealed wound in our hearts.

We placed ourselves in contact with the 'Organization of the Émigrés of Ger in Israel' and with the Ger *landsmanschaften* in other countries, but the extensive exchange of letters and good will, which everyone showed, did not produce any positive results. The small initiative group in Buenos Aires, however, did not give up on the plan. This was the demand of the martyrs, who died in *Sanctification of the Name*, and for The People, and the dignity of all those, who by a miracle, and by chance, remained alive.

On a visit to the Land of Israel, we therefore put ourselves into personal contact with the Ger *landsleit*, and at a general meeting of the Organization in Tel-Aviv, a consensus was achieved to produce the *Yizkor* Book; however, because of substantive hardships and the great costs of trying to carry this out in Israel, it was agreed to edit and print the book in Buenos Aires. For a group of barely ten Ger families in the city, this was not a light undertaking, and also a great responsibility, but despite this, we assumed this burden of honor upon ourselves, to see it through to completion.

It did not come easy to assemble eyewitness material, documents, writings, and to motivate our fellow scions of the city, being sown and spread out over the entire world, to extract their memories and commit them to paper. Nevertheless, works did come in; and we thank the 'Organization of the Émigrés of Ger in Israel,' and especially its secretary, Menachem ben Uri, and also the *landsleit* in the United States, who responded with donations to help realize our objective. Despite this, the lack of financial resources was our constant companion in this undertaking, and for this reason, we were unable to translate a number of worthwhile memoirs, and provide a larger section in Hebrew. It is our hope that in the fullness of time, more of this will be able to be done, so to make it possible to awaken within the younger generation in Israel, a love for the generations of Jews, who struggled for their existence, and who carried forward the candle of *Yiddishkeit* through the darkness of the Polish Diaspora.

We give a special acknowledgment to the editor of the *Yizkor* Book, the native writer Gershon Sapozhnikov, who worked over the material, and who dipped his artful pen into the aches and pains of those who remained among the living, and remaining loyal to the facts, he allows the tragedy of the horrible reality fill the lines. He had to put up with a great deal, in order to make the Ger survivors feel their debt of honor, in putting up this very spiritual monument, as an insignia of the eternal creative spirit of the Jewish people, which shall serve as a wellspring of inspiration for the coming generations, and thereby secure the eternal continuity of Israel.

Yaakov Jurkiewicz, Marcus Gutstadt,
Lipa Helman, Henya Kopper-Jurkiewicz,
Sheva Greifman.

"Megillat Ger" – A Pinkas of Jewish Tragedy and Eternal Israel

By Gershon Sapozhnikov

For a long time, I ruminated over whether or not I should assume the burden of responsibility to edit the *Pinkas* of the greatest *Hasidic* center in Eastern Europe. A city, that radiated its spiritual influence over the Jewish world, where, in the course of the last hundred years, was the seat of the Ger Dynasty, the princes of a spiritual empire, and learned Jews, great Torah Sages, whose reputation was spread throughout the entire Jewish world.

But when a troika of Jews, from the limited *minyan* of Ger *landsleit* that are to be found in Buenos Aires, came to me; Jews raised in the I. L. Peretz Library of the city, in that very center of the revolutionary-socialist movement, I felt in them the spirit of *Hasidic* ardor, and a responsibility to Jewish continuity, and I agreed to become a partner in the sacred work, of erecting a monument to those Jewish lives that were cut down, on that accursèd Polish soil, and to bless Jewish life, which continues on the territory of its own homeland, and in the Diaspora of the Jewish world, because 'the spirit of Ger lives,' as it says in the last chapter of the book, that describes the widely-branched activity of the Ger *Hasidim* in the Land of Israel.

We have a *Pinkas* for ourselves, a *Yizkor* Book, which is something different from other books in the very rich Holocaust literature, which tell of the rise, history, and destruction of hundreds of Jewish communities, which were exterminated in such a bestial fashion by the polluted and unclean hands of the Nazis, may their name and memory be erased.

Ger, in the general panorama of Jewish communities in Poland, shined out with its own luster, which lit – and continues to light – all the dispersed communities of Israel. The Jewish people are the only people with a 'Holocaust Literature,' a holy people that has suffered, and continues to suffer, which mourns its dead, and continues further, to spin the thread of life. The Hamans and Hitlers have not demonstrated the capacity to carry out their satanic plans, and to erase the memory of Jews from the world. A third of our global nation has been exterminated, but from among the martyrs, surviving remnants saved themselves, and hundreds of thousands remained, who, in time, left their ancestral homes, that fell under the axe of those who carried the swastika.

Accordingly, those who remained alive, assumed the sacred burden of preserving for eternity the memory of their home which was annihilated, and the names of their brothers and sisters, and to assure that their memory and martyrdom shall remain for generations to come.

The content of '*Megillat Ger*,' which consists of five parts:

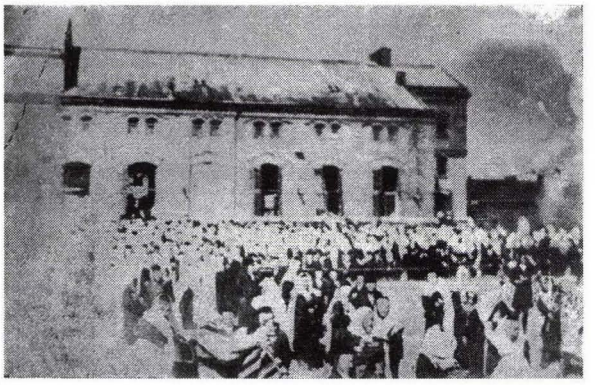
a) A city of holiness and *Hasidism*,
b) The cultural, social and secular life,
c) The condition, types of people and personalities,
d) The horror and extermination,
e) The spirit of Ger lives; justifies the name of the *Pinkas*, of Jewish tragedy and Eternal Israel, which accompanies Jewish existence – as expressed by the Jewish writer – in 'A cloud pillar of extermination and a fire pillar of life.'

A Monument to the Horrifying Destruction of Our Home City, Ger

By Mordechai Halamish
Tel-Aviv

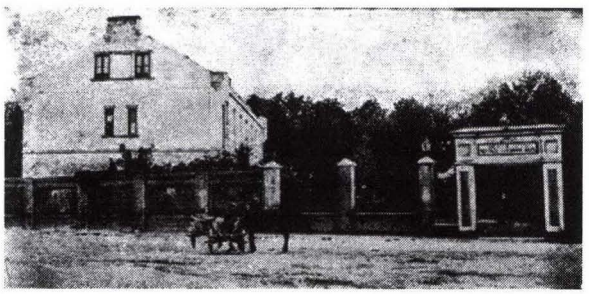
Ger – a small town, in the Grojec *Powiat*[1], about 30 kilometers from Warsaw, in the country of Poland.

Ger – a tiny point on the world map of Jewry, a drop in the large ocean of three and one half million souls of Polish Jewry.



Page 14: *The Ger* Bet HaMedrash *on a Festival Holiday Day*

Ger – the greatest *Hasidic* center during the course of three generations – beginning with R' Itcheh-Meir the [author of] '*Khidushei HaRI"M*' and his grandson Aryeh-Leib the [author of] '*Sfat Emet*,' – to the last *Rebbe* of Ger, R' Abraham-Mordechai – who were the spiritual leaders and the wellspring of nourishment for tens of thousands of Jews in Poland and the world at large.



Page 15: *The Municipal Hospital*

Ger, with its *Rebbe's* courtyard and *Bet HaMedrash*, which drew thousands upon thousands of pilgrims to it, for the High Holy Days, Festival Holidays, and ordinary Sabbaths; which nourished hundreds with spirituality and melodies, and perhaps even thousands of other Ger *Hasidim*, and other *shtiblach* of *Hasidim* in the whole world. With the Yeshiva, where hundreds of youths from faraway places came to swim in the 'ocean of Torah,' and 'warm themselves,' in the great light of the ADMo"R.[2]

Ger – where generations of Jewish children saw the light of day for the first time, where they learned to take their first steps, and to utter the words, '*Mameh*,' '*Tateh*,' '*Bobbeh*,' and '*Zaydeh*,' where a young lad of three was wrapped in a tallit, and carried into the *Heder*, where he could practice the *Aleph-Bet*; and where at the age of six, that precious little one could begin the study of the *Gemara.*

Ger – where my *Zaydeh,* of blessed memory, fell from a piece of German shrapnel in the *Bet HaMedrash* of the *Rebbe*, together with other tens of Jews, back during The First World War.

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1 One of the several counties in the Voievode of Mazovia

2 A Hebrew acronym for the honorific ***Ad**onaynu, **Mo**renu, **R**abbeinu*, (Our Master, Teacher and Rabbi), accorded to a sitting Rabbi, who was normally the spiritual leader of his community.

Ger – where our dearest and nearest lived, where our fathers, mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, going back for who knows how many generations, who were born there, and lived out their lives, and where generations found their final rest under humble gravestones, in the medieval cemetery.

Ger – of the God–fearing Jews, and the simple water-carriers, wagon drivers, craftsmen, and merchants. Ger, of the market fairs, of second-hand clothes dealers, grain merchants. Ger, of the dairy merchants, and fruit sellers. Ger, of the itinerant peddlers to the villages, and tallit makers, Ger of the clothing shops, and innkeepers, of butchers and scholars, of smiths and boiler makers, of shoemakers, tailors and hat makers.

Ger – of the beautiful Jewish people, sharply intelligent *Hasidim*, 'Tyzycera' – the people of pedigree; and the Ger of those ordinary 'folk,' the Ger of modest wealth, and also of substantial – but a dignified penury; of very few wealthy, but quite a large number of paupers.

Ger – with the Jewish *Koleika,*[3] and *Koszaren Gasse*, with the market and the *Koza Gasse,* with the Magistrate Building and its Jewish 'scribes,' and with the Strazacker shed; with the lazaret on the way to the Vistula, and with the green fields and meadows, with orchards and gardens on the surrounding hillocks; Ger with the quiet ambience and modest tranquility, which hovered even over the land area about it.



Page 16: *Góra Kalwaria a 17th century bell tower, whose bells were carted off by the Russians in 1915.*

Ger – of the deeply rooted tradition and sanctified customs, of Jews in prayer shawls over their *kapotes*, tied with a *gartl,* wearing *shtrymels* and white socks, who walked, with breadth and ease, through the streets on the Sabbath, to – and from the *Bet HaMedrash.*

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3 A small, narrow-gauge railroad. The Ger *Koleika* obtained a certain notoriety, because of the heavy volume of traffic it bore, in bringing visiting *Hasidim* to and from Ger, by way of Warsaw.

The youth of Ger, which after the youths in Yeshiva, had entered into the disciplines of the *Haskalah*, that was heaven-sent, and came out of there, 'captured' by Zionism, *Bundism*, and even Communism. And the Ger, of the great and difficult struggle, between the older *Hasidic* generation, who at any price, wanted to guard and retain the legacy of faith and *Hasidism*, and the younger generation, which was preparing itself to break free, to a purpose, to progress, to The Land of Israel, and revolution.

Ger – that served as a theme for novels by Joel Mastbaum and many other Jewish, and perhaps non-Jewish writers and thinkers.

Ger – of the Alters, Blasses, Ravskys, Broders, Polakeviches, Polonieckys, Gelbfishes, Goldhechts, Karps, and other hundreds of substantively branched Jewish families; of Yokl Feldscher, and Chaya the yeast seller, of Itchehs and Bunims, of Chana-Leahs and Chaim-Yankls, of Her-Leibs and Esther-Rachels, of Pinias, and – who can enumerate all the names of the men, women, boys and girls of Ger...

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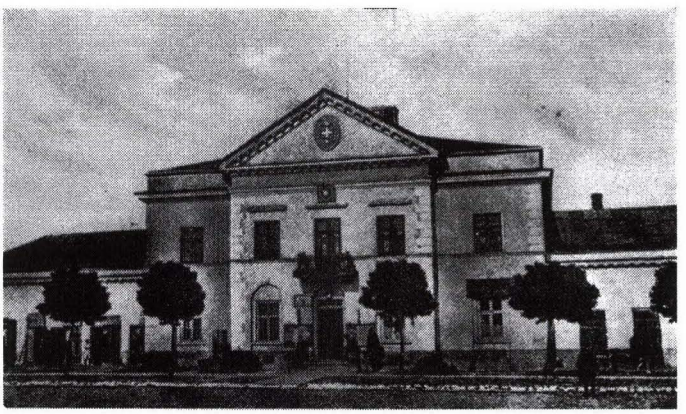

Page 18: The Magistrate Building in Ger. To the right are the abattoirs for kosher meat, and on the left are other Jewish shops.

The entirety of Ger is no longer here; there is no Jewish Ger. It was cut down, erased, exterminated, and torn up by the roots, child and its basis, young and old – everything, the *Asmodeus*[4] exterminated all, burned all, used gas with satanic intent, not to leave so much as a memory, a trace, or a surviving refugee. And how dissembling and paradoxical it reverberates when one says it, that from all of Jewish Ger, the only ones who survived were just the ones who managed to get away from Ger in time.

We here, in The Land of Israel, found our old-new home. And are perhaps the most fortunate residue from Ger, the recollection of which cuts to the heart, and burns within us like an eternal flame would. For this reason, the obligation rests on us, of the surviving soul. It is only our generation that has the wherewithal to place a monument on that terrifying destruction of our native *shtetl.* Every thread, every memory, every

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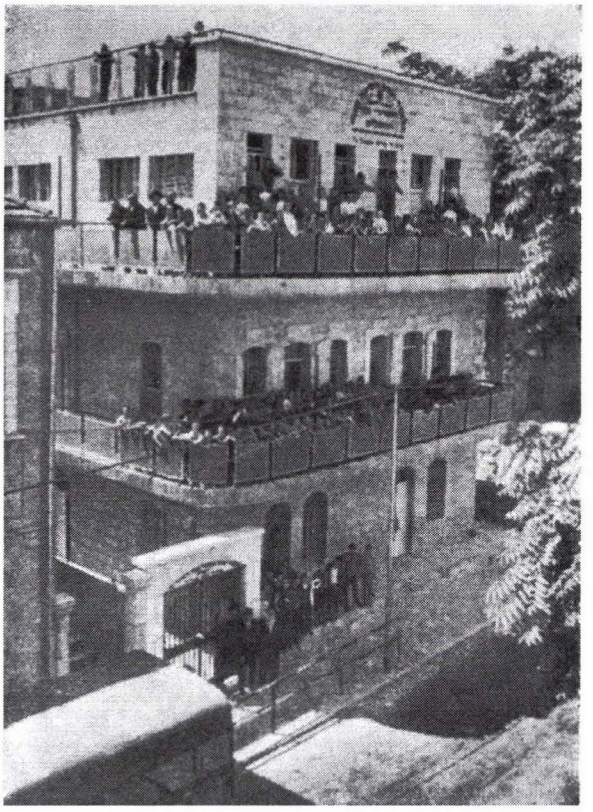
4 The apocryphal underworld demon of Jewish legend, called *Ashmedai* in Hebrew. This is a metaphorical likening to the Nazi scourge.

individual and every part of the community, every event, and every detail, which can be associated with the history of Ger, we are obligated to gather, and to immortalize, in order that our children, and the coming generations will know from whom they come, and should therefore remember their holy grandfathers, and great-grandfathers, their uncles and aunts, and also – to keep separate, a thousand times over – the murderers, the Amalekites, who spilled their blood and murdered them all, using the most heinous means of killing them...

This is how we understood our obligation, and carried out the dictate of the saying, 'Remember what Amalek did to you'...In accordance with our modest means, we gathered all of the details, all possible details of the last period of history, that the sacred community of Ger lived through; about the final months, weeks, days, and hours of our holy, tortured relatives – to the extent that there remained living eye witnesses and documents. With care, we assembled everything that pertains to the martyrology of the sacred Ger victims, and we have immortalized it all with this book, to the end of generations, especially to antagonize the bloody foe [who did this]. This is our symbolic gravestone for our holy and pure, and may the sacred memory of the Ger community be locked into the memory of the Jewish people.



Page 22: The Talmud Torah Building, and the Elementary School Yeshiva, full of Classes and Children

Feeling a Sacred Obligation

By A Ger *Landsman*

With the publication of the *Yizkor* Book, we fulfilled an unwritten last will and testament of the holy and pure, who gave up their lives in *Sanctification of The Name*. Our parents, brothers and sisters, tortured to death by the most heinous means, demanded this, and we carried their behest in our hearts. The city of our birth, Ger, the city of holiness and heroism, which carried forth the spirit of *Yiddishkeit* through all of the fires with which the enemies of Israel surrounded it, demanded a memorial from that small handful of those who survived. That would immortalize their memory, and their names, for generations to come.

We felt an obligation was placed upon us, which for long years gave us no surcease. After the exigencies of daily life, and bearing the yoke of making a living, as we lay in bed, we could see the terrifying images, of that gentile murder, which fell on Jewish heads and we heard the call of the martyrs: Do not forget and do not forgive! This call accompanied us for years on end. And this knowledge demanded that we fulfil an obligation to a city that was a *Mother in Israel*, and to our near and dear ones.

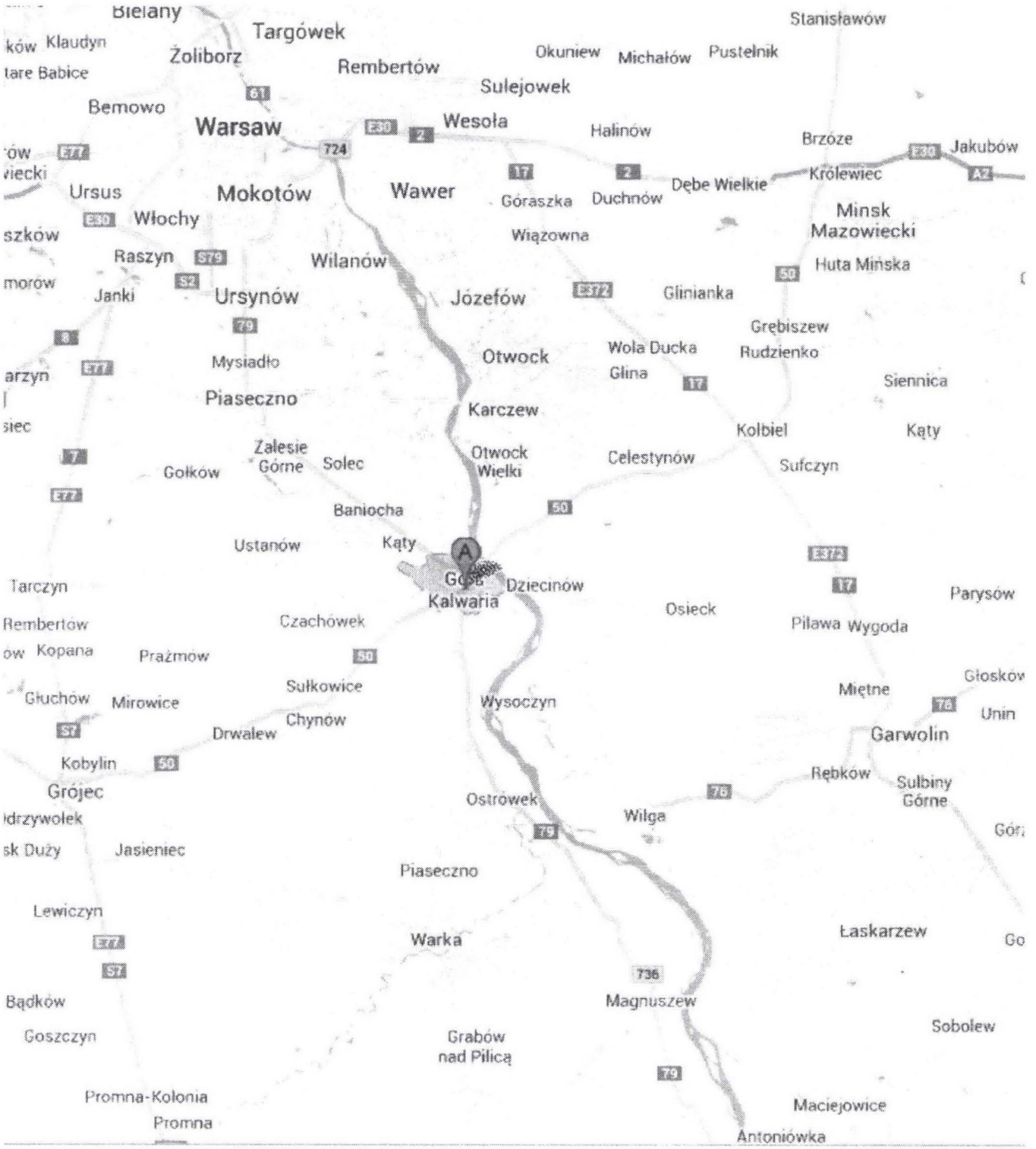
At the annual memorial services and at opportunistic get-togethers with our *landsleit,* we constantly spoke about a *Yizkor* Book, and never gave up that dream. But how could a pitifully small number of families, dispersed and spread out over the larger world turn such a goal into a reality? Where does one get the material, the eye-witness testimony, documents, pictures, and the financial resources, which are all tied up in realizing such an endeavor? How does one connect and centralize this generalized desire, that will lead logically to the desired goal?

These sorts of questions lay like thorns along the way, and it took years, until ***one person*** acted, and girding himself, made the realization of producing a *Yizkor* Book for his home city, an objective to be accomplished in his lifetime. With his stubbornness and enthusiasm, he inspired another couple of Jewish people – not more than a couple! – because Buenos Aires counts barely a couple of families from Ger, and part of them were widows.

A couple of active workers, with time, eventually passed away, and the work fell to a few individual people. But they did not give up, and tens of letters began to flow back and forth, and it was from this paper bridge, a foundation was created over time, and an outlook that the goal could be achieved, in connection with which, the *landsleit* from the Country of Israel carried out their commitment to offer encouragement and support.

From the outset, there was a panoply of new concerns; it was not, God forbid, because they disagreed with the idea; rather, they held that it was beyond our means, and that we could not realize it. So Buenos Aires began to request materials, documents, pictures, and papers began to arrive, a part of which were acquired locally, and a part from outside the country. And in the course of a couple of years, as a small package of writing was accumulated, the ship could not be abandoned in the middle of the sea. It was necessary to find a captain, who would safely bring it into port. The papers told of Jewish suffering, the documents of the Third Destruction, the eyewitness accounts of those who suffered, and those, who by some miracle, were saved, all of this demanded an editor. And we had the good fortune to find the right person, and in time, we also needed money – and it appeared! And I write this very article for the *Yizkor* Book with a feeling of gratitude to the 'Stubborn One' – who doesn't want his name explicitly stated – and with the sure knowledge that the troika of Ger Jews in Buenos Aires has achieved this sacred goal with great success.

Map of Góra Kalwaria – Ger & Vicinity



די מאורי הגולה פון גערער חסידות

The Leading Lights of the Diaspora from the *Hasidism* of Ger

The First *Rebbe* of Ger: The *'Khidushei HaRI"M'*



Page 24: The Rebbe *of Ger, escorted by young* Hasidic *men, upon entering the hall of the last great conclave in Jerusalem.*

The *Hasidism* of Ger had its ancient sprouting root from Kozhnitz[5]. It was the *Maggid* of Kozhnitz, who brokered the marriage between the poor orphan girl Chaya-Sarah, and the Rabbi of Magnuszew, the *Tzaddik* R' Israel Rotenberg, from which union the first *Rebbe* of Ger was born, R' Yitzhak-Meir, known in the world as the [author of] '*Khidushei HaRI"M.*[6]'

The *Hasidim* tell the following regarding this previously mentioned brokered wedding match: The mother of R' Yitzhak-Meir was a sole orphan of a family of distinguished pedigree, being descended from the author of '*Megillah Amukot*,' and whose father claimed a relationship to the family of R' Jonathan Eibeschutz, the author of '*Urim v'Tumim*.' This very orphaned girl was raised in the home of the *Maggid* himself. The *Maggid* of Kozhnitz was personally the marriage broker; the wedding took place in his own home, and the *Maggid* conducted the wedding ceremony as a lively father of the bride. It was the *Maggid* who promised them a boy child that would bestow radiance on the world.

When Itcheh-Meir'l was born, his mother brought him to Kozhnitz often, and the *Maggid* played with him as if he were playing with a grandson. *Hasidim* tell, that when he turned three years of age, the *Maggid* examined him and said: I will pose you a riddle, and ask you where can The Almighty

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5 Known as Kozienice in present-day Poland.

6 Literally, the 'Innovative Findings of the RI"M.' The latter is the acronym in Hebrew of the name **R**abbi **Y**itzhak **M**eir.

be found? Little Itcheh-Meir quickly replied: 'I will pose you two riddles, and ask, where is it that The Almighty *cannot* be found?'

The little boy of the Rabbi of Magnuszew, indeed became known in the courtyard of the *Maggid* as 'The Magnuszew Genius,' and it was there that he personally became a center of attention for all the scholars and sages in Warsaw, who came to hear his innovative thinking about Torah. R' Yitzhak-Meir did not, however, make any big deal out of all this. He prayed in the Kozhnitz *shtibl*, and from time-to-time would travel further with all the other '*Hasidic* youth' to the *Maggid* of Kozhnitz. At the same time, he would also, from time-to-time, travel to visit other *Tzaddikim*, in order to see their approach, and work in *Hasidism*.

In the year 5575 [1815] the *Maggid* of Kozhnitz passed away, and the *'Khidushei HaRI"M'* continued to travel to Kozhnitz to fill the place of the *Maggid*, R' Moshe'leh, to whom he was close from previous years. But it was here that the rupture occurred. One time, R' Yitzhak-Meir expressed a Torah thought to R' Moshe'leh, that was so complex, that he gave Yitzhak-Meir a kiss on the head. R' Yitzhak-Meir then said: 'I do not need a Rabbi to kiss me on the head, I need a Rabbi to be able to *treibor* the veins[7].' Not long afterwards, he went off to Przysucha.

It is redundant to say how R' Itcheh-Meir *Varshever* – as he was called – was received in Przysucha. He quickly became a confidant to the 'lions' of Przysucha, such as R' Mendl of Tomaszow (who later gained fame as the *Rebbe* of Kotzk), R' Yitzhak'l Worker, R' Yaakov of Radzymin, R' Henoch of Alexander, and also indeed, one of the confidants of the Rabbi, R' Bunim of Przysucha proper. But it was not this alone that had drawn him to Przysucha. He was not seeking honor. Rather the opposite, here, he felt himself to be comfortable, because in Przysucha nobody was allocated any honorifics, and one abided by the maxim that 'if you have studied Torah a great deal, don't look for favors for yourself'... it was the genuine and unvarnished demeanor of R' Bunim that drew him to Przysucha, the way of seeking the truth, the act of elevating one's self above petty details, and to seek unity with the work of The Creator: he was drawn by the lofty aims of the Rabbi and his students, all of whom strived to reach a higher plateau, and all in the Name of God.



Page 26: Rabbi Mendl'i Alter הי"ד

The 'Istila Showdown'

R' Itcheh-Meir *Varshever* became one of the pillars of Przysucha, and it came as no news, that when the Rabbi, R' Bunim of Przysucha was invited to the big 'Istila Showdown' where the *Mitnagdim* of Przysucha were preparing to make a judgement about Przysucha, so the Rabbi, R' Bunim selected R' Yitzhak-Meir to be one of his emissaries. It was a primary goal for R' Yitzhak-Meir to interdict the plans of the *Mitnagdim* to impose excommunication on Przysucha. When the Rabbi of

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[7] Refers to the ritual removal of sinews and blood vessels from the hindquarters of a slaughtered animal, to make that meat ritually fit for consumption.

Opatów R' Abraham-Joshua Heschel, who was the recognized senior of the *Hasidic* world, made the acquaintance of R' Yitzhak-Meir, and listened to what he had to say, he said, 'In Przysucha there is someone even greater than I, and all are impotent in the face of our Rabbi.' Then the Rabbi of Opatów no longer wanted to entertain any bad talk about Przysucha. After engaging in a conversation with R' Yitzhak-Meir, the Rabbi of Opatów said of him: 'This young man is the very essence of the Sabbath.' And seeing this honor, which the Rabbi of Opatów bestowed, and a number of other Rabbis had accorded R' Yitzhak-Meir, and the other students from Przysucha, the antagonism to Przysucha was nullified.

R' Yitzhak-Meir was connected to R' Bunim for approximately 15 years. Przysucha became his permanent home, and Warsaw his 'pied-a-terre.' In Warsaw, R' Yitzhak-Meir benefitted from a great deal of honor. When he would barely get to Warsaw, his courtyard would be beleaguered with all the important people and scholars of the city. But R' Yitzhak-Meir set out the rules for that place, where he was not to be treated like a celebrity, and where he was nothing more than a member of the 'group.' It was here that he studied, serving The One Above, and ascending from one plateau to the next. It was here that he wrote most of his profound novel interpretations of the Torah, and at the same time, subordinated himself to his Rabbi, about whom he said: Until Przysucha, *Hasidism* has been an interpretation of the BESH"T; since Przysucha *Hasidism* has become an interpretation of Przysucha'...

Thirty Years in Kotzk



Page 28: Fully thousands of Hasidim *would escort the* Rebbe *of Ger every time he would go off on a trip. Here at a train station, the* Rebbe *is protected by a special detachment of military. Behind the* Rebbe*, you can see the community deputy, R' Leib'l Mintzberg.*

When the *Rebbe*, R' Bunim passed away, R' Yitzhak-Meir was one of those who was considered as a successor to the *Rebbe*. However, R' Yitzhak-Meir himself decided that the seat in Przysucha belonged to R' Mendl of Tomaszow (who later transferred to Kotzk and became famous as the *Rebbe* of Kotzk) and he deferred to his former close friend and new *Rebbe*, with the loyalty of a sage, and a trepidation for his honor that had no like. (To the end of his days he said: 'I saw in him a flaming tongue of the truth, and I bowed before him for more than thirty years.) When R' Yitzhak-Meir once remarked, that among the many who came to Kotzk, the Rabbi of Prysznice was missing, R' Henoch (who later became renown as R' Henoch of Alexander) he wrote him a short note: '*Just as the Torah was given amidst thunder and lightning, so are we, receiving lore every day in Tomaszow amidst thunder and lightning. Travel quickly to us....*'

Also, from Kotzk, he would continuously travel home to Warsaw, and there he met with all of the great luminaries of his time. Among those who came to see him were: R' Israel Salanter, R' Isaac *Harif* of Slonim, R' Shimon Sofer from Cracow, and R' Yoshe-Ber of Brisk. In Warsaw, he would also meet with other prominent people from the world over, and all respected him, and loved him. But in Kotzk, he deferred to the *Rebbe* there, in all matters.

The extent of the scholarly deferment and concession of authority of R' Yitzhak-Meir to the *Rebbe* of Kotzk can be seen from the following incident: When R' Yitzhak-Meir completed a volume about the section *Khoshen Mishpat* of the *Shulkhan Arukh*, he showed it to the *Rebbe*. The *Rebbe* looked through the work, and expressed the concern, that if the book were printed, many scholars would stop exerting themselves in studying the *Shas* itself, and those who had to make rulings, would do so based on this book alone. 'It is not right that a later work should displace the Sh"Kh, who studies the Torah just for the sake of learning, exerting a great deal of energy in the process. I mean that you need to burn this book' – the *Rebbe* of Kotzk said to him. R' Yitzhak-Meir didn't think for very long, took the manuscript on which he had worked for a number of years, and burned it. In looking at the fire that consumed the pages, he quietly, and with great ardor murmured to himself: 'We are commanded to listen to the words of sages.'

R' Yitzhak-Meir Becomes a *Rebbe*

After the passing of the *Rebbe* of Kotzk, a large part of the *Hasidim* of Kotzk thought R' Yitzhak-Meir to be the appropriate successor. He, personally, equivocated, and said: '*HaTzaddik Avad* – The Righteous One has gone away – *V'ayn sham leyv* – and there is no one to bring God's word into Jewish hearts.' Despite his formidable intellect and greatness, some time in the past, at the time of his mother's passing, he said to her at her grave: 'Forgive me, mother! I am not responsible for the fact that people err in holding me to be a Rabbi and a *Gaon*. Now, when you come into The Other World, you will see, that I am nothing more than a simple Jew. Please forgive me, if this causes you any sorrow.'... He literally held that he was simply not qualified to take the seat of the *Rebbe* of Kotzk, whom he held to be an 'Angel of the Lord of Hosts.'

However, many of those close to him from Kotzk, did not let him go, and with force, made him into a *Rebbe*. They went into his house, and simply compelled him into it. Also, other Jews from

Warsaw, even in circles of *Mitnagdim*, when they heard that the *Hasidim* of Kotzk had decided to crown him as their *Rebbe*, began to lay siege to his house. In the end, he had to give in, and said: It is written of King David, that every day, he wanted to go to a 'simple residence,' to a 'simple house,' but his feet directed him to a *Bet HaMedrash*. King David wished to go about in his own personal ambit, but that was not what he was created to do, to go wherever he wanted to, but rather, 'his feet taketh him to the *Bet HaMedrash*' – he was created for the people in general... but in that process, he let it be known that even though his represents a continuation of his Rabbinic forbears, he will go in his own path. He said: 'The *Rebbe*, R' Bunim led with love; The *Rebbe* of Kotzk led with piety; I will lead with Torah'...

A New Era in *Hasidism*



Page 30: *The* Rebbe *in His Young Years*

And this is how a new era began in the *Hasidim* of Przysucha and Kotzk. It was a sort of transition from the law to compassion. R' Yitzhak-Meir carved out a uniquely personal direction. For sure, he observed every jot of the Kotzk tradition, but his way with *Hasidim* was a bit different. He personally, who had fled from Kozhnitz, because he had need of a Rabbi 'who would *treibor* the veins and not kiss him,' found a synthesis of both of these virtues in his own teachings. On the one hand, they represented a defense of general Jewry (this is why his book on Torah is called the 'Book of Purity,') and on the other side, he *treibored* the veins.' The essential point was that he laid emphasis on Torah study. He had said: why is a student of the Torah called a 'son' of the Torah,' because he is zealously attached to the Torah, just as a child is to its mother... the child feels, that it cannot exist without the mother, and this is the way a Jew needs to feel, that he cannot live without Torah...

And at the same time that he became a *Rebbe* for his *Hasidim*, he began to emanate a great influence into the general life of the community of the large Jewish community in Warsaw. At that time, already, the city of Warsaw had the greatest concentration of Jews in Poland, with many needs, and a plethora of Jewish troubles. Apart from his own congregation, his house became the center for community activity, for charity, for the redemption of captured or hostages, for mitigating decrees against Jews, and like things. And it was in these matters that he worked along with R' Yitzhak Worker, and with the Warsaw Rabbis, with whom he had established friendships going back to his previous years there, who respected him for his superior intellect, and righteousness, and through him, they gave up their opposition to *Hasidism*.

In the range of this activity, it is also necessary to recall his fight against the *Maskilim*, and assimilationists, and especially the battle that he undertook against the *Maskilim*, when that group were seen to incite the Russian authorities to promulgate decrees against *Haredim* and against Jewish sartorial conventions. It was precisely for this battle, that the *Khidushei HaRI"M*, for a short time, needed to conceal himself from the Russian police, who wanted to arrest him because of a calumny communicated about him by the *Maskilim*.

And at the same time, the *Khidushei HaRI"M* continued writing his famous innovative interpretations of the Torah, and his Responsa fills close to 10 volumes of innovative thinking about a whole array of tractates from the *Shas* as well as the *Shulkhan Arukh*, *Khoshen Mishpat* and *Evven HaEzer*.

Rabbi and *Rebbe* in Ger

After a few years in Warsaw, a small *shtetl* near Warsaw – Ger – was privileged to obtain the services of the *Khidushei HaRI"M* as their Rabbi. The seat of the Ger Rabbinate came to the *Khidushei HaRI"M* as a legacy from his father, who, in the end of his days, was the Rabbi there, and seeing that the leadership of the congregation in Warsaw, with the growth in *Hasidim* and students, had become increasingly difficult, the *Khidushei HaRI"M* easily persuaded himself to move to Ger, when the *balebatim* there had asked for him in a formal letter proposal for the rabbinate there.

It was in this manner, that this diminutive *shtetl* was privileged to become renown in the entire Jewish world. Warsaw, indeed, was the principal city of Poland, but for thousands upon thousands of Jews in Poland, the importance of Warsaw came from the fact that it was a middle point through which they could travel to Ger, and as one of the *Hasidim* of Ger once wrote in full earnestness:

Warsaw, near Ger....

Ger rapidly became a center for many, many thousands. The stream to Ger became so large, that they put on a special train, that continuously conveyed *Hasidim* to the *Rebbe*, coming not only for a piece of advice or a blessing, but especially for Torah and service, under the aegis of the Great Rabbi, whose lore streamed as if from a fountain bursting forth, and whose glance warmed one with a holy fire.

The *Khidushei HaRI"M* indeed especially encouraged the *Hasidim* to study the Torah. He would say: 'Why do we say, 'My God is my soul?' after the blessing of the Torah? Simple, because without Torah, what is the purpose of having a soul?' On one occasion, on a Sabbath morning, the *Khidushei HaRI"M* came into the *Bet HaMedrash*, and encountered a large gathering in the process of study. The group stopped for a moment, and the *Khidushei HaRI"M* then asked: 'When one studies before prayer, one fulfills the behest 'you circumcise the unclean flesh from your hearts,' and the mitzvah of circumcision supersedes the Sabbath...

This was the beginning of the reign of Ger, which for three generations became the metropolis of Polish *Hasidism*.

The *'Sfat Emet'*

The Solace of the *Khidushei HaRI"M*

The *Khidushei HaRI"M* had thirteen children, and all died during his lifetime. With a wondrous superhuman strength, he accepted this bitter fate handed down from heaven. He said to his *Rebbetzin*: We must receive everything with love. This will be a source of solace to other Jews. When they will find themselves in the throes of misfortune, they will think: R' Itcheh-Meir had thirteen children, and they all died, so what sort of complaint can I bring before The Master of the Universe?

Only one of the thirteen children managed to eke out a somewhat longer existence, and this was his oldest son, R' Abraham-Mordechai, and from this son, the *'Khidushei HaRI"M'* was privileged to have a grandson, a successor, who also bestowed a radiance in the Torah world, and enriched the legacy of his grandfather. This was R' Ari'-Leib, who became renown in the world as the '*Sfat Emet.*'

'It Is Worth It to See a Real Jew'

Leibl'leh was eight years old when his father, R' Abraham-Mordechai died, and in this manner, he became the solace of his grandfather, who raised him, learned with him, and guarded him like the apple of his eye. While yet a child, he took him to see the *Rebbe* of Kotzk. At the time of one such trip, there was an intense, great cold, and one of the *Hasidim* took the *Khidushei HaRI"M* to task, asking, was it possible that he would take such a small child in such severe weather. However, the *Khidushei HaRI"M* said: 'It is all appropriate, in order that he see a real Jew.' Despite having been a small boy, the '*Sfat Emet*' remembered Kotzk very well for his entire life. It was the '*Sfat Emet*,' who subsequently told of the incident that took place in Kotzk, when the *Rebbetzin* complained, that things are being stolen from her house, and when the beadle related this to the *Rebbe*, the *Rebbe* shouted out: 'How could this be possible? It is, after all, written Thou Shalt Not Steal!'

And so, it was in this manner, that the '*Sfat Emet*' grew up in the courtyard of the *Khidushei HARI"M* and under his constant oversight. His dedication was retold with wonder. The *Khidushei HaRI"M* discussed and set three conditions with the tutor that he retained to instruct the boy: He is to awaken him early; daily, he is to learn innovative interpretations of the Torah with him, and they are to learn together not less than 18 hours in each 24-hour day. Not one of these conditions was difficult for the tutor. When the tutor would arrive, Leibl'eh was already awake; Leibl'eh himself, while still quite young, had already begun to be innovative on his own, and in fact wanted to learn for more than 18 hours in a day. At the end of his days, when the *'Sfat Emet*' was in a weakened state of health, he once said: 'I know this comes from not eating and not sleeping when I was young. I would only sleep for two hours in a day. I have no regrets over not having slept; but with regard to not having eaten enough, I do regret this.'

With this sort of dedication, it is no surprise that the grandson of the *Khidushei HaRI"M* went from strength to strength and was a wellspring of *nachas* and solace for his grandfather. The *Khidushei HaRI"M* once brought R' Chaim of Sanz to observe how the '*Sfat Emet*' learns, and thereby said: Not only can he innovate, he personally is an innovation in himself...

A *Rebbe* at Nineteen Years of Age

When the '*Sfat Emet*' was thirteen years old, the *Khidushei HaRI"M* brokered a marriage for him with the daughter of one of his prominent *Hasidim*, R' Yudl Kaminer of Chęciny, who was a grandson of the '*Baruch Ta'am.*' After the wedding, for a short period of time, he spent time with the Rabbi of Sanz זצ"ל, who was the uncle, and then he continued his studying in Ger close to his prominent grandfather.

The '*Sfat Emet*' was barely nineteen years old when the *Khidushei HaRI"M* passed away, and he was taken up as the Rabbi of Ger. But he did not want to become a *Rebbe*. A set time after the death of the *Khidushei HaRI"M* he began, on his own, to travel to the Rabbi R' Henoch of Alexander, whom a portion of the Ger *Hasidim* had taken up as their *Rebbe*. It was first, only after the death of the Rabbi R' Henoch, that the *'Sfat Emet*' was willing to become a *Rebbe*, and this only after considerable negotiations. But even after all of this, he said to one of the older *Hasidim* from Kotzk who came to him: 'I am not any sort of *Rebbe*, but when a Jewish person holds that I am more wise, and wants advice, I give it to him. But it is not easy. One needs to know all four parts of the *Shulkhan Arukh* in order to give correct advice.' And he added: 'It is not necessary to be any sort of *Rebbe*, in order to help someone in trouble... every Jew who can help in the time of someone's sorrow, as if it were his own matter, such a person can help another.'

The *Rebbe* of a Large Cadre of *Hasidim*

But with the same force with which previously resisted the notion of becoming a *Rebbe*, later on, when he indeed became a *Rebbe,* he led his community despite the fact that he was one of the youngest of the *Rebbes* of his time (he was barely 23 years old when he became a *Rebbe*), he quickly grew to become one of the most prominent *Hasidic* leaders of his generation. The Ger community grew with new cadres of *Hasidim*; older *Hasidim* deferred to him, including those who continued to travel to Przysucha and Kotzk, and young people who, first in Ger, began to grow in Torah and the concepts of *Hasidism*.

He, personally, was not only a *Rebbe,* whose profound and original lessons in law elicited wonder among *Hasidim* with the deepest of conceptual frameworks, but also with his righteousness, and sanctified way of life, he served as a role model for all those who sought elevation in Torah, *Hasidism*, and in the Service of The Creator. His lessons were as high as the heavens themselves, as can be seen from his books, but in every such lesson that also was something that could touch the heartstrings of even those who were not able to grasp it all.

The '*Sfat Emet*' was more closeted in his world of Torah and service, and was less interactive with the outside world than his grandfather the author of '*Khidushei HaRI"M*,' who, apart form being a *Gaon* and the *Rebbe*, was also a general activist, with a very broad reach, and was often in contact with many *Gaonim* and *Tzaddikim* of his generation. He concentrated more on educating and raising up the level of those who came to him to draw Torah and *Hasidism* from him. He traveled infrequently out of Ger. However, form time-to-time, he did take a part in the larger gatherings about matters of general [sic: community] interest. However, what best characterizes his approach to reading the minutes of such a meeting, can be seen from the following episode: there was an assembly in Warsaw, at which it was presented that a large sum of money was needed. The participants sat for long hours, and thought through how this sum could be assembled, until the '*Sfat Emet*' said: 'Why is there so much gnashing of teeth going on. We need the money. Let each of us commit to provide a specific sum. I, personally, take on the obligation of raising five hundred Rhenish[8]... 'It is superfluous to say that after a few minutes, the assembly successfully arrived at its decision.

A *Hasid* from Kotzk on the *'Sfat Emet'*

The nature of the holy trepidation and awe of respect with which the *Hasidim* would look up to the *'Sfat Emet,'* can be seen from a 'note' that was written to the prior *Rebbe* of Ger זצ"ל, by one of the *Hasidic* elders, who was still traveling to Kotzk, and later to the *Khidushei HaRI"M*, as well as to R' Henoch of Alexander. Here are his lines regarding the '*Sfat Emet*:'

> 'I would sacredly serve these three holy men (The *Rebbe* of Kotzk, The *Khidushei HaRI"M*, and the Rabbi, R' Henoch of Alexander זצ"ל). All sacred songs, and all the most sacred of sacred songs, he glorified his father the Holy man זי"ע ועכ"י נב"גם[9] amen, ז"ל. He, who with his teaching and sanctity, would illuminate the entire face of the earth from end to end. And of whom it was said ז"ל, there is one among us who is worthy that the Divine Presence hover over him, as it did over Moses our Teacher, ע"ה, but his generation is not worthy of this. He,

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8 Rhenish gold guilders were of central importance to the German monetary system until modern times. It developed into the most common long-distance trading coin in Bohemia, Hungary, Germany, Switzerland, Moravia, the Netherlands, Spain and France. Not only gold, but also silver coins were valued according to their value in Rhenish guilders, and thus their rate (value) was set.

9 The acronym for an extended blessing, נשמתו בגנזי מרומים זכותו יגן עלינו ועל כל ישראל meaning, 'whose soul is in the hidden places on high, and may his sake guard over us, and all of Israel.'

who turned over his soul to all of Israel in general, as did Moses our Teacher ע"ה of whom it was said, 'and he saw their suffering,' and as *Rashi* ז"ל interpreted: he gave his eyes and heart to be the intercessor on behalf of Israel's troubles. – – – I was in Ger more than one hundred times in the past thirty-five years, I learned much Torah from his lips, and by-and-large, most of what I understood, I understood with ease, and that which I did not understand, it is not enough that I did not descend to the end of his reasoning, I didn't even come close to the beginning of his reasoning, because anyone who had eyes with which to see, and a heart with which to understand, could see with his inner eye that it was the Divine Presence that spoke from the throat of this *Tzaddik*.'

The '*Sfat Emet*' led his community with an elevated hand for 35 years. And with time, his community grew into the largest *Hasidic* movement in Congress-Poland with masses consisting of tens of thousands of *Hasidim* and hundreds of *shtiblach* in all the Polish cities and towns, that placed their stamp on Polish Jewry.

'Fullness of Days'

The '*Sfat Emet*,' (who is known by this name for his renown classic books on Torah and a panoply of tractates from the *Shas*) passed away at the young age of 58. However, in returning from the funeral, it is told that his oldest son, the one who took his place, the ADMo"R, R' Abraham-Mordechai זצ"ל, turned to his brother-in-law the Rabbi of Będzin זצ"ל, and said to him: 'Know that my father has a fullness of days.'

The Rabbi of Będzin looked at the *Rebbe* of Ger askance:

– 58 years, this is a fullness of days?

– I mean – the *Rebbe* replied – a *lengthening* of days. He stretched out his days, stretching out every day, and filled them with much Torah, and service [to God].



Page 36: The Community Bet HaMedrash.
Today it is a warehouse for merchandise.

The ADMo"R Rabbi Abraham-Mordechai Alter זצ"ל

Hasidim tell: On the Hanukkah of 5625 [1864] the *Khidushei HARI"M*, in distributing Hanukkah *Gelt* to his grandchildren, asked his 18 year-old grandson Leibl'eh, the future '*Sfat Emet*,' what sort of Hanukkah *Gelt* would he like? So he replied: 'For what purpose do I require money?' His grandfather then said to him: 'Well, you certainly need a first-born son, so I am giving you Hanukkah *Gelt* as a blessing for the arrival of a first-born son.'

On 7 Tevet, 5626 [December 25, 1865], a child was born to the '*Sfat Emet*', whom he named for his great father R' Abraham-Mordechai who had died at a young age. When the child was brought to the grandfather, the *Khidushei HARI"M* peered at him for a lengthy while, and said: I do not know if one could have asked for anything more.

'A Vessel Ready to be Completed'

The *Khidushei HARI"M* passed away a short time afterwards, when R' Abraham-Mordechai was barely six weeks old. The young Abraham-Mordechai was raised in a way, and absorbed the sanctity of his father's house. From his youth onwards, he exhibited that he is following in the footsteps of his great patriarchs, because at the time of his Bar Mitzvah, the '*Sfat Emet*,' who was guarded in his use of extra words, wrote to his relative, the *Tzaddik* R' Pin'cheh of Pilica: I beseech you to pray for him that he should be successful in his studies... because he is 'A Vessel Ready to be Completed in Every Manner.' These very few words bear witness how the great *Sfat Emet*, at that time already, viewed his young, and future successor. After his wedding, the *Sfat Emet* designated a comrade for him, the renown *Hasid* of Kotzk, R' Ben-Zion Ostrower, and this too is an indication of the levels he had already achieved at his young age.

Regarding his greatness in Torah scholarship, while still young, is attested to by the fact that the renown Rabbi of Wieruszów, the *Gaon* R' Shaul-Moshe Zilberman, who said, he knows from having engaged with him in conversation during study, that there was not a book in his library which he hadn't looked through.

Very much like the *Sfat Emet*, R' Abraham-Moshe too did not want to be any sort of *Rebbe*. The *Sfat Emet* passed away in 5665 [1905], but now, only many months later, after many entreaties on the part of the *Hasidim*, in *Shavuot* of 5665 [1905] did the *Rebbe* of Ger begin to lead his community. However, with the moment he became the *Rebbe*, despite his personal modesty, which he had hidden for his entire life, he began to lead with a forceful hand in an original way. He said: 'I am similar to my father ז"ל in only one way. My father did not imitate anyone, and I also will not imitate anyone.'

New Behaviors

Indeed, he began to introduce new behaviors. In the first instance, he instituted prayer at its appointed time. *Shacharit* – every morning at exactly 7:30AM. For many *Hasidim*, this was

something new, which they were not used to in Kotzk, with the *Khidushei HaRI"M* and even not with the *Sfat Emet*. But one of the great luminaries among the *Hasidim*, the *Tzaddik*, R' Abraham Porisover, who still traveled to Kotzk, explained this new ruling to the *Hasidim*, using a parable of someone who habituated to having his wife always present him with a good meal. He would often have to wait at mealtime for his food. And indeed, he waited patiently, because it was worth it. One time, however, after waiting for a long time, his wife presented him with a rather ordinary meal. So he asked: 'I had to wait this long a period of time for such an ordinary meal?' The lesson from this – R' Abraham Porisover said – is that sometimes, when praying was a genuine act of worship, it required extensive preparation. But today, praying is so pedestrian – for what purpose does one make extensive preparations?

Starting from his young years, R' Abraham-Mordechai would not waste a minute of his time, and when he became the *Rebbe*, he attempted to instill this discipline in his *Hasidim*. He would repeat what it was that the *Rebbe* of Kotzk had once said: 'I don't want that you should not sin because it is forbidden, but rather that you simply will not have the time for transgression.'

Not long after he became the *Rebbe*, he issued a call to his *Hasidim* to fortify themselves and to immerse themselves in Torah study; to institute study lessons in the *shtiblach* between the afternoon and evening prayer services, 'in order to fulfil that which is written, 'give honor to your God before it grows dark.'' At the same time, he issued a call to those who study many more hours in the day, to stand fast with the community-at-large. This principle, of staying joint to the general community, and not to separate one's self from the larger Jewish corpus, he personally practiced and inculcated into his *Hasidim* all of his days.



Page 39: The Rebbe *on the ship. When he made* aliyah *to The Land of Israel*

Fealty in Torah

His introduction of a recess on Friday towards evening, between the afternoon and evening prayers, and on the Sabbath between *Shacharit* and the reading of the Torah, was promulgated in the same sense, in order to provide learning time during these recesses. But it is interesting that when on one occasion, he became aware that, in order to follow the practice in Ger, a scheduled lesson period in a certain Ger *shtibl* was canceled, that had been held this way for years, he especially wrote, to the *Hasidim* in that location, not to do this.

Taking Part in the Sorrows of Israel

At the same time as he was the spiritual leader of his community, he was a very big-hearted father to his *Hasidim*, in their daily exigencies in dealing with reality. He knew each of his several thousand *Hasidim*, interested himself in their family needs, and commiserated in their sorrows. If a Jew recalled that there was a sick person in the house, despite the fact that so many came to him, he would take a personal interest in that person's health status. Thousands would come to him with their entreaties, with their various needs. The *Rebbe*, though brief, heard everyone of them out, and gave advice, and when they left, they felt strengthened, and their spirits refreshed.

The extent to which he commiserated with the sorrows of Israel can be seen from a letter of reply to the *Agudah* Sejm-Deputy R' Leib'l Mintzberg ה"יד from Lodz. The following noteworthy lines, filled with concern are found there: most of the troubles that I hear from our brethren, the Children of Israel, which I will hear every hour, have brought me to what is written in the books (*Reysh Khukat*), as said by R' Yochanan ben Zakai, to set him apart a thousand, thousand times from myself, who also saw the sorrows of the Children of Israel at the time of the Temple destruction, and who said that whatever my hands have done, and mine eyes have seen, I have forgotten...



Page 42: The Rebbe *is taken off the ship that brought him to The Land of Israel*

In another letter to one of the Rabbinic Greats, he expresses his doubts about the efficacy of calling for a community-wide fast. He writes: I cannot speak out about this, because these days, so many of our brethren, the Children of Israel hunger on a daily basis, because, pitiably, they have nothing (to eat)...

About listening to Jewish troubles, he once said: It is written that Moses our Teacher had said: 'And should a matter be difficult for you, draw near to me, and I will listen to it.' It does not say that he will reply. It appears that there are instances where it is sufficient to have someone simply relate their problem to the *Rebbe*, even if there is no reply. And I will listen to it...

Just as he personally took an interest in the fate of so many thousands of Jews, he also called on his *Hasidim* to help one another: 'For each to help one's friend, both in body and with money... because everything depends on unity' – he wrote in one of his letters to the *Hasidim*.

A *Hasid* came to him once, and the *Rebbe* inquired as to a certain resident of his city. Oh, he is a friend of mine – the *Hasid* replied. How is his wife: I have heard that she was ill, – the *Rebbe* inquired further. 'I do not know' – the *Hasid* replied. 'If that is the case – the *Rebbe* said – you are no friend. A friend needs to know what is going on in the family of his friend.'

A testament to his personal interest in *Hasidim,* who were in straitened circumstances, can be seen in a short letter, written with great love, to a young man not known to him, who had fallen into a deep depression. He writes to him with friendship: 'My dear friend... I say to you that everything will be good and sweet. The most important thing is, take care of yourself, eat well, and sleep well, and learn a bit, until you return to good health'...

This letter might have been natural for a *Rebbe.* However, one must take into account that the *Rebbe* of Ger received perhaps thousands of such people of bitter spirit... all with their own special burden of woes. But he did not forget anyone, acting like a father that has a place in his heart for all his children.

A young man came into the *Rebbe's* presence and told him that on the way to Ger, his valise was stolen, and he no longer has any *Tallit* or *Tefillin*. The *Rebbe* then said to him: I will give you a pair of *Tefillin*, but be careful with them, since I inherited them from my father, and my father got them as a gift from his grandfather, the *Khidushei HARI"M,* at the time of his Bar Mitzvah. The young man became frightened and said: I am afraid to put on such sacred *Tefillin*. To which the *Rebbe* said: If that is the case, go into my son-in-law, R' Itcheh-Meir Alter, and he will exchange them for you, he will be very happy with these *Tefillin*. As it happens, the *Rebbe's* brother was in the room at that time, the Rabbi of Połaneic, who during the exchange said nothing. However, once the other party had left the room, he asked the *Rebbe*: Does one give away an inheritance from a father to an ordinary young man? The *Rebbe* replied to this quietly: The *Rambam* after all rules, that a gift to a pauper should be taken from that which is select. What can be considered more select that an inheritance from a father?!

The Youth of Ger

The *Rebbe* committed a great deal of himself to work with young people. At no *Hasidic* courtyard was the number of young people as large as it was in Ger. It is no wonder that it was jokingly said, that the *Rebbe* of Ger has thousands of *Hasidim* that do not lay *Tefillin* and who eat on Yom Kippur... this was meant to refer to the thousands of young people under Bar Mitzvah age.

At the outset, older *Hasidim* did not understand this. They were not used to this in Kotzk, and even with the *Khidushei HaRI"M* and the *Sfat Emet.* However, as already said, the *Rebbe* of Ger had his own way. The *Rebbe* often accorded them, the young people, more time than the old *Hasidim*. Youths, and even little boys, would come to the *Rebbe* with questions regarding what they should learn, and the *Rebbe* – as occupied as he was with his own study, with his thousands of grown-up *Hasidim*, and the general community work, which encompassed the entire world – thoroughly heard

out each of them, gave direction, bolstered them in *Yiddishkeit* and armed them against all manner of tribulations.

As a result of this, the *Hasidism* of Ger were privileged to develop an army of many thousands of young people, who gave a new and strengthened force, to the ranks of observant Polish Jewry.

The influence of Ger on the young especially became evident during the terrifying years of the war, when thousands of young Ger youths gave their lives in *Sanctification of the Name*, in the ghettos, through their faithful observance of *Yiddishkeit* with an incomparable commitment of body and soul. Throughout cities and towns all over Poland, thousands of young people continued, under the eyes of the Nazis, to learn and to pray, and even to continue wearing beards and side locks. (The well-known author Moshe Prager wrote an entire book regarding the heroism of these young men, called '*Eyleh SheLo Nikhne'u*' --Those Who Did Not Succumb.

The *Gaon*

The *Rebbe* of Ger was know to be a *Gaon.* But what do we have that enables us to understand this? How can we portray it? However, there were hundreds, who were in Ger, that did grasp this. Among the thousands of Ger *Hasidim*, there were those who were *Gaonim* themselves, literally wonders, when it came to knowledge of the *Shas* and *Poskim*, and apart from their *Hasidim*, they came, among others to Ger, in order to have an occasion to engage in a brief discussion on Torah matters with the *Rebbe.* And when they were privileged to do so, they considered themselves overly fortunate. They said this, because with a rather short indication, the *Rebbe* was frequently able to answer questions about issues that had dogged them for long months, or even years. The renown *Gaon*, R' Meir Dan actually writes in one place in '*Hemdat Yisrael*': 'At the outset, I didn't get down to the conclusion of what His Eminence the *Rebbe* שליט"א was driving at, but after studying it, I realize that he had said a great thing.'

It is also possible to document the popularity of the *Rebbe* in the Lithuanian world, in that they recognized the *Rebbe* as a *Gaon*. And it is interesting in that the *Rebbe* was modest when it came to his own scholarship. At the request of the Torah-Journal '*Degel HaTorah*,' the *Rebbe* of Ger sent in a couple of write-ups regarding a scholarly matter. He wrote additionally: I am providing some guidance in these writings, in the hopes that it will find favor with the editorial board of '*Degel HaTorah.*'

A Lover of Books

As is known, the *Rebbe* of Ger was an ardent lover of books, and one of the greatest experts on books that were handwritten.

While still only a young man, immediately after his wedding, he began to collect books and had gathered a great treasure trove of rare examples of printed and handwritten books. In the year 5664 [1904], there was a great fire in Ger, and half the city, along with the entire Ger courtyard, and *Bet*

HaMedrash were consumed in flames, and along with it, the *Rebbe's* library. In his response to a variety of great sages of his time, the *Rebbe* recalls this very fire. His first *Rebbetzin*, Ruda ע"ה, knowing how deeply this affected him, sold off her jewelry in order to enable him to once again buy up books. The *Rebbe* ז"ל when he eulogized her, in the year 5682 [1922], recollected this privilege that she extended to him.

The Rabbi and *Tzaddik* R' Dudl Broder זצ"ל, a son of the daughter of the *Khidushei HaRI"M*, who himself, later on, became a Rabbi in Warsaw, once told, that while sitting once with the children of the *Sfat Emet* at a daily lesson, he remained halted by a difficulty in the *T"Z*.[10] The *Rebbe* ז"ל, left for a minute, and came back with a *T"Z* from a first printing and showed the *Sfat Emet*, that there was an error in the printing.

The *Rebbe's* fluent familiarity with old editions is also recollected by the famous *Gaon*, R' Meir Dan Plocki in his book, '*Klei Khemdah*,' R' Meir pauses at a turn of phrase from the *Ramban*[11] in the *Parsha* of *Tetzaveh*, which goes contrary to the *Halakhah*. And in order to deal with this, he writes there: Nevertheless, our Master, the Holy *Gaon,* שליט"א, advised on this matter, and in his golden tongue wrote to me: 'and concerning the matter of the *Ramban* of *Tetzaveh,* here, it is revealed that according to the original printed edition the word for 'no' is missing'...

The Leader of General Jewry

The *Hasidism* of Ger had the most extensive following among the *Hasidim* of Poland. During the life of the ADMo"R R' Abraham-Mordechai, the *Hasidism* of Ger grew even more, but the *Rebbe* of Ger was not satisfied with the fact that his influence held so many tens of thousands tied to *Yiddishkeit*. His view was directed at all of general Jewry, to the Jewish masses in all corners of the world, into whose lives new winds were beginning to blow, and across whose skies, dark clouds were beginning to mass, coming from new spiritual and physical dangers.

His broader perspective over Jewry in general is expressed in the various areas of his general (community) work, which ranged far from the ranks of his own community. True, he was the patriarch of his thousands of *Hasidim*, but his mind and heart were large and wide enough to encompass the needs of all Jews. The *Rebbe* of Ger did not take into account that which is 'good for Ger,' but rather what was important for the [world Jewish] community at-large. He constrained his own community with many boundaries and fences, and wanted to lift them up to high levels. But at the same time he knew that there were Jews not capable of attaining the levels of *Hasidism*, and yet,

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10 The *Turei Zahav* (abbreviated *T"Z*) is the title of a significant *halakhic* commentary on the *Shulkhan Arukh*, which was authored by one of the greatest Polish rabbinical authorities, David ha-Levi Segal (c. 1586 – 20 February 1667).

11 Acronym for Rabbi Moses ben Nachman Girondi, also called Nachmanides (not to be confused with the Rambam, or Maimonides).

one must be concerned for them as well. Many *Hasidim* found no need in a newspaper, because they sat continuously in the study of Torah and doing holy work. However, he knew that there are Jews that have a need for such a printed word, and it was therefore necessary to be concerned with providing for orthodox periodicals. His young people in Ger, were dedicated to their study of Torah and their faith, but he knew that there were those who needed to be provided with a trade craft in an atmosphere that was religiously observant. This also was his orientation in other areas of concern. He carried this around in his capacious mind.

It therefore is not a surprise to learn, that he was among the first of the orthodox Rabbis, who took an active part in the creation of a unification of all orthodox Jews, in order to defend *Yiddishkeit* from the dangers inherent in the new times. In this way, the *Rebbe* of Ger went in the footsteps of his great-grandfather, the *Khidushei HaRI"M* and also the *Sfat Emet*, who, in their time, carried on a substantive war against the *Maskilim*.



Page 46: On a Stroll in Krenic.

Agudat Israel

The *Rebbe* of Ger was among the first in Poland to seize the proposals that came from Germany and Lithuania, to create an *Agudat* Israel, and in the year 5669 [1909] together with R' Chaim Brisker[12], R' Eliezer Telzer[13], R' Chaim Ozer[14], and other luminaries, took part in the conference in Hamburg, with Rabbi R' Shlomo Brauer of Frankfurt and R' Yaakov Rosenheim, which led to the establishment of '*Agudat* Israel.' And only thanks to the fact that the *Rebbe* of Ger so enthusiastically embraced the concept of creating a unified organization of orthodox Jews – did '*Agudat* Israel' become a fact, and indeed, a blessed factor for the preservation of *Yiddishkeit* by the broad Jewish masses.

The fact that the *Rebbe* of Ger gave his consent to '*Agudat* Israel' drew in the other *Hasidic* luminaries in Poland, who initially had taken a skeptical attitude towards the thought of a worldwide movement.

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12 Chaim (Halevi) Soloveitchik also known as Reb Chaim Brisker, (1853-July 30, 1918) was a rabbi and Talmudic scholar credited as the founder of the popular Brisker approach to Talmudic study within Judaism.

13 Eliezer Gordon (1841–1910) also known as R' Lejzor Telzer, served as the rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva of Telz, Lithuania.

14 Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky (24 August 1863 – 9 August 1940) was a pre-eminent *Av Bet Din (rabbinical judge), posek (halakhic authority),* and Talmudic scholar in Vilnius, Lithuania in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

But it was not only the *concurrence.* It was the *initiative* of the *Rebbe* of Ger, which led '*Agudat* Israel' into the larger religiously observant Jewish street. And with immediate effect, straightened the backs of Torah-Jews, to work and fight for those dedicated to Israel. For close to 50 years, the *Rebbe* of Ger was in fact the living spirit of the 'Agudah' and all of its undertakings: organized *Torah education, Bais Yaakov, The Orthodox Press, Orthodox Places of Study,* and all the other [initiatives] that helped to strengthen the position of Torah-Jews and quite possibly rescued *Yiddishkeit* from the stormy waves. He was also privileged to see how the '*Agudat* Israel' showed itself to raise the standard of Torah in Jewish life.

The *Rebbe* of Ger, no matter how occupied he was with his tens of thousands of *Hasidim*, and their problems, did not bypass any serious '*Agudah'* gathering and was in the midst of the issues surrounding every initiative that he felt that would strengthen Torah-*Yiddishkeit.*

The Land of Israel

Just as he was among the first to see the eternal need for an '*Agudat* Israel,' so was he also the first to see the new possibility, and the obligation, that religiously observant Jews have to the new *Yishuv* in the Land of Israel. He was the first to call, on religiously observant Jews, to make use of the newly broadened means of facilitating *aliyah* and to put down roots in the new *Yishuv*; to strive to build up B'nai Brak and to construct other religiously observant positions in the new *Yishuv.* The strengthened work on behalf of the Land of Israel, that '*Agudat* Israel,' decided on immediately after their first great conclave, came as a result of the initiative of the *Rebbe* of Ger.

That more freethinking Jews were calling for in the Land of Israel, did not intimidate him. 'The mitzvah of *Yishuv* in the Land of Israel is... dependent upon capacity and possibilities, and therefore we must now make use of the possibilities that have been created, because the more religiously observant Jews will come to the Land of Israel, the greater will become their influence and will lead to the guarding of the sanctity of *The Land.*' – he wrote. And he personally fulfilled this concept by his purchase of a parcel, and began to prepare himself to make *aliyah* to the Land of Israel.

He visited the Land of Israel five times between the two world wars, and each trip lasted longer than its predecessor. During each of his visits, he always did something to strengthen the small Torah *Yishuv*, that he wanted to see grow.

In fact, he thought of himself as actually being a half resident of the Land of Israel. This can be seen from his inquiry made to the *Rebbe* of Sokolow זצ"ל, in which he asked for his knowledgeable opinion, as to how he should conduct himself [ritually] regarding the observance of a second day of holiday observance in the Diaspora, after he had decided to live for a half year in the Land of Israel and a half year in Poland.

His interest regarding the *Yishuv* in the Land of Israel, and with strengthening the influence of the religiously observant Jews, led to the fact that a large number of the *Hasidim* of Ger, and other Jews, under the influence of the '*Agudat* Israel' made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel, so that when the *Rebbe*

of Ger came to the Land of Israel, during the war years, he encountered a large number of orthodox Jews, already rooted in the *Yishuv*. It was the *aliyah* of these Jews that laid the foundation for the currently burgeoning and growing Torah-*Yishuv* in the Holy Land!

How great are the words of Sages!

The Last Years in the Holy Land

He came to the Land of Israel broken and sick. The Job-like news from Europe, made him even sicker. However, to the extent that his energies permitted, he dedicated himself to the general community. He energized those close to him to engage in rescue work, and at his own initiative, his son-in-law, and longtime leader of '*Agudat* Israel,' Rabbi Yitzhak-Meir Levin זצ"ל, undertook the establishment of the '*Vaad Hatzalah,*[1] in the Land of Israel. Even though he was personally broken and sick, he made an effort to strengthen others, and at a massive prayer rally at the ruins of R' Yehuda the *Hasid*, he said: 'It will yet be good for the Jews.'

And with analogous certainty, he comforted the freed Jews, when he wrote to them in the camps.

He was privileged to yet see the downfall of the *Scourges of Israel* and the first attempts of the Jews, after the Holocaust, to start their lives anew in the Land of Israel, and in other lands as well.

He began to lead his congregation on *Shavuot,* and it was on *Shavuot* that he gave up his holy soul, after a spiritually rich life, which animated the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jews and after leaving a legacy to enrich Jewish generations further.

These biographical memoirs are the results of working over material from the books of Rabbi A. Y. Bromberg, from articles in '*Bais Yaakov*' Journal in Jerusalem (Especially A. Surasky), and articles in '*Yiddishe Vort*' of Rabbi Abraham Zemba ז"ל.

Y. P.

[1] Rescue Committee

The Dynastic Leadership of Ger

Note: The alternate name for each Rebbe *(given in italics) is the name by which the* Rebbe *is known after his death. This sobriquet, traditionally bestowed by his successor upon his acceptance of the mantle of leadership, is used as the title for his collected writings, which are published posthumously; by extension, it is also used to refer to the* Rebbe *himself. During his lifetime, the given name of the* Rebbe *is not used; he is simply referred to as "The* Rebbe, שליט"א [may he live long]".

1. Grand Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter (1798 – March 10, 1866), also known as the *Khidushei HaRI"M*. Notable student of the Kotzker *Rebbe* and a prominent contemporary posek. Assumed leadership of the *Hasidim* in 1859.
2. Grand Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (1847–1905), also known as the *Sfat Emet*. Born in Warsaw, Poland. Died in Góra Kalwaria. Wrote Talmudic works and Maharal-style Torah commentaries that are known within and outside *Hasidic* streams. Gerer *Rebbe* from 1870 to 1905.

3. Grand Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter (December 25, 1866 – June 3, 1948), also known as the *Imrei Emes*. Gerer *Rebbe* from 1905 to 1948.

4. Grand Rabbi Yisrael Alter (October 12, 1895 – February 20, 1977), also known as the *Beis Yisroel*. Son of Rabbi Avraham Mordechai. Gerer *Rebbe* from 1948 to 1977.

5. Grand Rabbi Simchah Bunim Alter (April 6, 1898 – August 6, 1992), also known as the *Lev Simcha*. Son of Rabbi Avraham Mordechai. Gerer *Rebbe* from 1977 to 1992.

6. Grand Rabbi Pinchas Menachem Alter (June 9, 1926 – March 7, 1996), also known as the *Pnei Menachem*. Son of Rabbi Avraham Mordechai. Gerer *Rebbe* from 1992 to 1996.

7. Grand Rabbi Yaakov Aryeh Alter (born 1939). Only son of Rabbi Simcha Bunim. Gerer *Rebbe* from 1996 to the present.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ger_(Hasidic_dynasty)

In the Courtyard of the *Rebbe* of Ger

By Chaim-Baruch Szternszus
Tel-Aviv

It is with pride that I recall the town of my birth, Ger. It is with pride and with longing. It was a *shtetl* like all cities and towns in Poland, and yet, it had its own special pedigree, with Torah, sanctity, which entered into the daily life of the community, and into the soul of every Jewish person – even of those who were not scholarly.

There were a variety of groups in the *shtetl*, and there were also youth groups with nationalist and even socialist tendencies, which began to manifest themselves in those times. There were also freethinkers, who were not *Hasidim*, and didn't write notes [to the *Rebbe*], but all had respect for the *Rebbe.* They had respect for his love of all living things, for his staunch love of people, for his simplicity and approachability by anyone, equally to the wealthy man, or the scholar, whether to a pauper or a craftsman, who could not learn.

Many of the gentiles in the *shtetl* held the *Rebbe* in esteem, and would speak of him with guarded, fearing respect. – The *Rebbe* is a holy man, they would say. I remember when a familiar Pole, Woltszynski was his name, had someone in his family that was ill, and so he had a note written by R' Itcheh Meir Zelik's, and went into the *Rebbe* with it. I was told afterwards, that he subsequently became a frequent entrant, and a loyal *Hasid* of the 'Holy *Rebbe.*'

I also saw how a high-ranking Polish military officer came to Ger. He also had a note written by R' Itcheh Meir Zelik's, and entered into the *Rebbe's* presence. They discoursed for a longer while, since this nobleman had come for advice, and as he wanted to pay, the *Rebbe* didn't take anything; so he wanted to make a donation for the '*szkola*' – he most certainly meant the *Rebbe's* Yeshiva – but the *Rebbe* did not want this either. A time later, we again saw this military man in the *shtetl*, and he greeted the Jews in a very friendly manner, and after this, R' Itcheh Meir told that this nobleman had succeeded, and he had come to thank the *Rebbe.*

There was a large *Bet HaMedrash* in the *shtetl*, in which the Rabbi prayed, and also the *balebatim* of the city. There was no shortage of worshipers, both morning and evening, and for the Sabbath and Festivals, it was full. The *Bet HaMedrash* of the *Rebbe* was much larger, there being hundreds of young men who studied there from all over Poland, and also students from Ger. I also had the privilege of learning in the *Rebbe's* Yeshiva. The sound of Torah study carried from that location with sweetness, from four o'clock in the morning until the late hours of the night. Jews would spend time there, and look up to the place with respect, as a holy place, while others would stop by and listen to the learning with pleasure. Young men studied by themselves, sunken into their volumes of the *Gemara*, others – studying in pairs, and in groups, would carry on a discussion over a book. Their dedication shined from their faces, and the melody of their intonation carried up to higher worlds. When the Headmaster conducted the lesson period, you could hear a fly flying through, people held their breath, and all eyes were turned to the *Rebbe*, and his words were literally swallowed, and became etched in memory.

Jewish Parents

The most beautiful memories, of my childhood and youth, are bound up with those years that I studied at the Yeshiva, which stood by me in all of life's tribulations, and most certainly influenced my character and my faith in people. This is that unforgettable image of my dear parents ע"ה, who would get up with me, four o'clock in the morning, and prepare my breakfast. No sooner had I gotten out of bed, than my mother had prepared a warm glass of milk for me, with a couple of small slices of bread, and my father sat beside me, looking into a book. He would pray with the first *minyan* in the synagogue, but two hours later, no matter how much I pleaded, and assured them that I could prepare the glass of milk by myself, it did not help. – Chaim'keh, my mother would say to me, with a smile, let us have the *mitzvah*; to support a person in learning is identical to that person engaging personally in the learning one's self...



Page 51: The Designated Torah Reader of the Rebbe's Bet HaMedrash, *Joseph Tsalki (Groinims) and the Dozor David Kelmanowicz, carrying out a Torah scroll to be hidden.* *(Also see Addendum for full picture).*

I understood very well, that this was not a matter of foregoing a mitzvah, bot a completely different deep fatherly feeling was what got him out of bed, and drove him to escort his son to the Yeshiva. This was a feeling that certainly he could not express in words, and for which I too, do not have the right words to express. However, I knew that father and mother were making a sacrifice for me, and they do it with love, and it was so good and warm for me to be in their presence. And I felt their will with all my heart, and I went to learn at the Yeshiva with serious intent, and with commitment, And it was this very warmth that accompanied me for my entire life, and I proudly recall my ancestral home and with longing, my little *shtetl* Ger.

After learning, the same situation repeated itself. No matter how late I would return home, ten, eleven, and even twelve o'clock at night, I found them on watch for me. A small fire would be burning in the kitchen, and a warm evening repast waited for me, which my mother had prepared. Many times, my father would come to the *Bet HaMedrash*, and bring me 'good things', which my mother had sent. Indeed, he would say thus to me: – Chaim'keh, your mother has sent you a warm *pletzl,* with a piece of cheese... my father wanted to insert himself into the act of performing the mitzvah; that is to say, he is not the only one who looks after me, but rather that 'your mother has sent'... there was a sense of household tranquility that reigned in the home of my parents, and this kept up the spirits and health of the entire family.

Also, it happened, that a moment of trial descended on us quite quickly. The anti-Semitic politics of the Polish government made Jewish life difficult, and a time came when there was a lack of sustenance in the house. An opportunity came along for me to get work and to help out, but my parents opposed this, and did not even permit me to talk about it – you don't worry, Chaim'keh, my father said to me, God will help, I will figure out what to do, you learn!...

My good parents were certainly not an exception among Jews, where the tranquility of the home and love of children is a tradition, that is rooted in generations [of precedent]. The Torah raised the Jew in this spirit, and among the older generations there still was honor for a father and mother, and also household tranquility. Among the more recent generations, things are somewhat weaker in this sense... however I believe, that the spirit of Ger also did much to sustain this, the ambit surrounding it was suffused with respect for the tradition, and a way of life became set up on the foundation of defined moral norms. Not everyone in Ger was among the ardent *Hasidim*, but rather it was a center of *Hasidism* headed by a great personality and a spiritual leader, such that there, more than in other places, there reigned a spirit of *Yiddishkeit*, and because of that, one of humane values.

In Ger, there were instances where in certain individual private homes, there were Torah scrolls, and people prayed there on the Sabbath. In the house of my grandfather ז"ל there was also such a *minyan*. When he passed away, this sacred practice was passed on to his older son, my uncle, Moshe, and for a set time, I was the designated Torah Reader there.

The *Rebbe* Comforted and Gave Advice

I started with the spiritual category – with lofty Ger– and demonstrated in what way Ger was different from similar cities and towns in Poland. Now, I will address myself to its social aspect, and bring myself down to the day-to-day activities of people. In this sense, Ger was very much like other Jewish settlements in Poland. One made a living from the surrounding rural population, and as my grandfather Mendele used to say: – and 'one from the other.' Ger had one further important source of making a living: the *Hasidim* who came to the *Rebbe*, for whom there were inns, hotels, and rooms in private houses for guests. There were also cafeterias on the main street, where it was possible to get a bite to eat, to get a glass of tea to drink, and to meet people. *Hasidim* would come to the *Rebbe* from all over Poland, and also from outside of the country, and in the *shtetl*, there was always a substantial traffic of unfamiliar people, and especially before Festival Holidays, and the week of the High Holy Days. It was reckoned, that in Poland, there were over one hundred thousand *Hasidim* of Ger, apart from the many thousands outside the country. And it was not only *Hasidim* who traveled to the *Rebbe*, but also a variety of people involved in community work, Rabbis, or just plain ordinary Jews; there were those who came with a community dispute, and sought to rely on the mediation of the *Rebbe*; others sought advice, and yet others who opened an aching heart to the *Rebbe.*

And the *Rebbe* heard each one of them out, with intent seriousness, and gave his advice. He would utter a word of comfort, or bestow a blessing. And people would come out from seeing the *Rebbe* with lightened faces, and with a lightened mood. In Ger, this was the address of religiously observant

Jewry. Nothing was done without the *Rebbe's* consent, whether it was in community, or private life. In connection with every important issue, where it was not so easy to arrive at a decision, one went to the *Rebbe* for advice. – What does the *Rebbe* say? This was the question [raised] with each issue. In most cases, the *Rebbe* indeed said that thing which the one asking for advice thought himself, but with the *Rebbe's* concurrence, one was freed of any doubt.

No operation was performed on a sick person without obtaining prior advice from the *Rebbe.* The question of an operation places the person, and his immediate kin, before a difficult choice, which is not easy to make. Nobody wants to go under the knife, but there is no other alternative. And so, one went to the *Rebbe*, he should be well. A note was written out at R' Itcheh Meir Zelik's and in the private room of the *Rebbe*, after a warm welcome greeting, the situation was told to him: – such-and-such a sick person is in mortal danger, *Rebbe*, and the doctor says they must operate... the *Rebbe* listened to all of this with half-lidded eyes, and after a short consideration, replied: – if it is necessary, then this is not relevant... operate, and The Lord, Blessed be He, will help... and the person then had no more doubt, the operation was performed, and God helped...

The *Rebbe* was the true leader of his generation. The most prominent Rabbis in Poland, *Gaonim*, the wealthy, and community activists, all were Ger *Hasidim*.

Ger is a small *shtetl* near Warsaw, and to Warsaw, a '*Koleika*' ran on the small train-line. The Vistula River ran through the *shtetl*, which added a great deal of grace to the vicinity, and provided the Jews with fish for the Sabbath. Around the *shtetl*, green fields and orchards stretched far and wide, belonging to the area nobility and peasantry, who transported their grain and fruit to Warsaw to be sold. There were two Jewish doctors in the city, and also a Jewish *feldscher*, who fancied himself to be a 'genuine' doctor. There were also a pair of Polish medical professionals, and a Polish *feldscher*. To the extent known to me, there was no 'discrimination' in this regard, and many Poles called the Jewish medical professionals, and some of the Jews rather held more of a Polish doctor.

A Place of Torah and *Tzedakah*

Ger was small in size and area, but large in quality and spirituality. Many cities and towns in Poland remained anonymous, [but] Ger entered history, and became renown in the Jewish world as a place for Torah study, and the residence of the ADMo"R Abraham Mordechai Alter, who, for over forty years, stood at the head of religiously observant Jewry in Poland.

It is for this reason, that Ger stood out in respect to its charity, and social institutions, ready to help anyone in need. There was a *Hevra Bikur-Kholim*, who watched over the sick, and spent the night with them. To do this, it was necessary to have a great deal of idealism and love of humanity, and there were men and women who did this with unique commitment. There was a *Gemilut-Khesed* Bank in the city, that helped out small-loan borrowers, a *Hevra Hakhnosas-Kallah* and a public

Jewish kitchen for soldiers, which R' Leib'l Heine and a grandson of the *Rebbe*, who is today in Israel, helped to found and support. And in such a city, there also could not be the absence of a *Hevra Shomrei-Shabbat* who every Friday, at nightfall, would traverse the streets, to remind the storekeepers to close up their businesses.

And at this opportunity, I wish to recollect the names of several community activists, so that they remain memorialized in this book, as well as several clergy, and residents of Ger, whom I knew very well. The Rabbi, R' David Weinbert, a formidable scholar was greatly beloved in the city. The ritual slaughterers, R' Abraham Shokhet, made *aliyah* to the country of Israel and passed away here; and his sons, R' Aryeh and Itcheh-Meir, were ritual slaughterers and also performed ritual circumcisions. The Hazzan, R' Meir, and the community activists R' Mendl Gelbfish, R' David Kelmanowicz, who was a *Dozor*, R' David Teitelbaum, R' Meir Feldman, R' Yoss'l Pinia's, R' Avigdor Zemba, R' Eli Aharon, R' Yehuda Berman, R' Leib'l Kaminer, the son-in-law of R' Moshe Bezalel's, R' Meir Cuker, the *Menaker*, R' Moshe Poznansky, Aharon Poznansky, who worked in the Magistrate's offices, R' Meir Birnbaum, who was a *Lavnik* in the Magistrate's offices, and many others, whose names have simply vanished from my memory, but they stand before me, as if they are alive before my eyes.



Page 57: *Rabbi Moshe Bezalel* ז"ל, *Brother of the* Rebbe *of Ger. Who had the concession from the Polish government for the lottery in Ger. The* Hasidim, *who used to come to see the* Rebbe, *would also visit his brother, who was much loved and regarded by the* Hasidim.

At the *Rebbe's* for a Festival Holiday

Whoever has not been in Ger for *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur* or *Shavuot,* and hasn't seen the hordes of Jews, celebrating a holiday, with their shining faces, who interacted with one another with love, and together, in circles, who stood around, or promenaded together in the courtyard of the *Bet HaMedrash*, and who confidently argued with one another; whoever has not seen this, does not know the essence of the spirit of *fraternity*, that binds the *Hasidim* in the ambit of the *Rebbe*, in *his* city, in the courtyard of *his Bet HaMedrash*. Here, all social boundaries were wiped off, all were comrades, with allegiance to one *Rebbe*, and here is a circle of a pair of Rabbis, an American decked out in finery, with a loud tie, and a couple of other *Hasidim*, and a Jew approached them in a threadbare *kapote*, extends a welcome greeting to them, and they take him into

their coterie, and ask – and from whence does this Jewish man come? And carry on a conversation with him. This is the way of Ger: draw a person close to one's self.

During a Festival Holiday at the *Rebbe's* one forgets one's own troubles, and even of one's self, and you become a part of the larger mass of people, which is tied up in an elevated feeling and good thoughts. And so, hundreds of Jews are standing in the great courtyard, and you hear the happy chatter of talk, and on every face one sees poured out a tranquility, that comes from lightheartedness, and a fire of youth shines in the eyes, one of belief and a sense of security. Anyone who has not seen this, does not know what sort of *Hasidic* emotion is involved, and also the type of *Hasidic* ardor. In a courtyard of good Jews, a person himself becomes better, and as if in a sacred place, he immerses himself in that sanctity.

On the eve of a Festival Holiday, all the trains that go to Ger are full of *Hasidim*. One comes with the train, and from Warsaw, also with taxis. The first of the *Selichot* prayers were begun at twelve o'clock at night, and up to that moment, at intervals of ten and fifteen minutes, trains full of *Hasidim* would continue to arrive. When the *Rebbe* would enter the house of worship for *Selichot*, it became so still, that you could think that the entire world had held its breath. When R' Leib'l Meir's would call out: '*Yisgadal*!' and when the choir would seize on the word, and respond to the call, the heavens themselves split open, and one entered a higher realm of being... Up until '*Zkhor HaBris*' many *Hasidim* would still be arriving, who stayed, some till after Rosh Hashanah and some even until after the ensuing Festival Holidays. '*Zkhor HaBris*' would be recited by R' Yoss'l Khanitzer with his sweet voice, which would move and touch one to tears. He was also the *Baal Musaf*, and when he led the praying, people literally stood head-on-head, in order not to miss hearing him. He would intone the '*Thirteen Attributes [of God]*' with such sweetness, that the congregation would literally weep. I can still savor the quality of his prayer in my memory, as a beautiful memory of my youth, and of the *shtetl* of my birth. It is more than thirty years now since then, and I cannot forget that feeling.

On the night of *Rosh Hashanah* after prayer services, the *Rebbe* would sit on his stool, and all of the *Hasidim* would, in a row, pass by the *Rebbe*, wishing him a Good Year. The greetings from the congregation would last for four hours. Everyone wished each other a Good Year, and everyone was possessed by such a friendly and happy feeling, that it filled the heart with love and security.

When the *Rebbe* would arrange a *Tisch*, he would first say something from the Torah, and after that, there would be singing and dancing, which could be heard all over the *shtetl*. From worship, each individual would go home, wearing their *Tallit*, and one could see rows of white prayer shawls stretching along the way, a veritable sea of prayer shawls.

Hundreds of *Hasidim* would come for the Sabbaths, which the local lodging facilities were able to accommodate; however on the Festival Holidays, thousands would come – and the residents would then make room for the guests in their houses; some would take a fee, but there were others who did not take any money.

The designated Torah Reader was R' Joseph Groinims and the First Leader of prayer – R' Itcheh-Meir Shokhet. On *Shemini Atzeret* R' Israel Subiner from Lodz would lead services, with his sons.

Also, a large congregation would arrive on *Shavuot*, and the entire *shtetl* came to hear how R' Yoss'l Khanitzer sang *Akdamot.* Both small and large sang along with him, the streets literally sang, and the song wafted up to the heavens. Anyone who has not seen this, does not know what it means to be happy in this world, which elevates in love to God, to the *Rebbe*, and to people in general.

Baking Matzo for the *Rebbe*

Over the *Rebbe's Bet HaMedrash*, there was a large hall, an attic, where matzo was baked. In that location, there was a large oven, long tables and other utensils, which were lain out covered, and were watched over waiting there from Passover to Passover. There was a whole ritual associated with the baking of the matzos, in which the students of the Yeshiva took part, the intimates, and all the *Hasidim*, whose objective was solely to perform the *mitzvah* of baking matzos for the *Rebbe.*

A few weeks before Passover, the boys, who were studying in the *Bet HaMedrash*, began to collect the wheat, one batch after the other. They then ground the wheat in a hand-mill. On the evening before the baking, the *Rebbe* took specially set aside water, from his own brook, which was in the courtyard. Many *Hasidim* accompanied the *Rebbe* at this time, engaging him in conversation, or altogether to engage in a melodious song, and while singing in this fashion, they would fill a large container with water for baking purposes. A week before Passover, baking of matzos for the young men commenced, and on the eve of Passover, *Shmura Matzo* was baked for the *Rebbe.*

The *Rebbe*, and many *Hasidim*, would help out in doing this work. Everyone was able to discharge the obligation of doing the *mitzvah* of baking matzo. A measure of flour was shaken into a bowl, it was called a '*mayreh,*' and the *Rebbe* poured in a bit of water. This was mixed, and a large clump of dough was made. During the mixing process, the *Rebbe* would pour a bit of added water, and thereby, engage in conversation with the surrounding *Hasidim*, or help them out with a tune. Pieces were then cut from the large clump of dough, and from the smaller pieces of dough, each individual rolled out a matzo. People stood by the long tables which had been covered with new tin plates, working, rolling dough, and smoothing it out; rays of light came through the small windows, and all faces shone with a happy smile. With a dancing gait, the young boys would run with the matzos, from the tables to the oven, and the *Rebbe* would approach each of them, look upon him with warm eyes, and bless him.

On the eve of Passover, all residents of Ger would go to the *Rebbe* to obtain wine for the ritual four cups [at the Seder].

The Seder

The *Rebbe* conducted the Seder in the *Bet HaMedrash*, and all the *Rebbe's* children, with their families, were at the Seder. Young people from out-of-town locations, who studied in Ger, were sent home by the *Rebbe*, for Passover. Each and every one was to celebrate Passover with his family. Those who did not have the means to make such a trip were given subsidies. Only those remained, who had no one to travel to, and there were such solitary individuals.

The *Rebbe's* children asked the *Four Questions*, and the *Rebbe* recited the *Haggadah*, in a loud voice, word-by-word, and paused frequently to offer interpretations, along with the sayings of our *Ancient Sages*, and his own personal interpretation. When it came to singing, the *Rebbe* gave the melody, and everyone immediately seized on it to follow, and the tune poured out in waves of singing, that carried up to the *Worlds on High*, to the heavenly host. Anyone who had not seen this, or lived with it, does not know the true nature of a joyous *Hasidic* Seder.

Almost all of the *Hasidim* of Ger came to the *Rebbe's* Seder; on the first day – to the first half, and on the second day – to the second half of the Seder. The large room was bathed in light, with the festive Jews arrayed beside long tables, each having matzos, a goblet of wine, and the Passover *Haggadah*. The *Rebbe* at the head of the table, like a king on his reclining bed, and opposite him, at the second end of the table – The Cup of Elijah, with raisin wine, and one could fancy that angels were hovering about in the air, and singing songs with the Jews of Ger.

Do Not Forget!...

Let us not forget those heavenly beauties, that accompanied the Eternal Jew in his four-thousand year existence, his Sabbaths, Festival Holidays, his Prophets and Righteous Men, his spiritual leaders and *Gaonim*, who spread light throughout the world. Let us not forget, that the Divine Presence endowed the Jew with a Torah, which became the Book of Books of humanity, and with a creative spirit that does not depart from the Jewish people, and in every generation, Jewish names ascend like stars into the heaven, who show new ways to pursue in all fields of human knowledge and endeavor.

Let us not forget what *Amalek* did to us! – In the basest fashion possible, he fell upon the old and the weak, as is told in the Pentateuch, these who had stood apart from the encampment, and tortured them to death. The Nazis, may their names be eradicated, fell upon peaceful settlements, unarmed and unprotected people, and tortured women and children to death, young and old. Millions were crammed into the ghettos, and afterward bunked in concentration camps, where they were exterminated by all manner of grotesque forms of killing.

The hand trembles, and I feel tears welling up in the eyes, when I only think about how to express in words, the tragic end of our birthplace, Ger. Human language has no adequate words, to describe the horror and cruelty of the German executioners. Thirty years have passed since those terrifying days, when six million Jews were led to their slaughter, and among them were our parents, sisters and brothers, and relatives from Ger. Every physical trace of Jewish Ger was erased, and that which was started by the Germans, was finished by the Poles; but the Jewish spirit remained for all eternity, the Jewish creativity, the *Hasidic* movement, that preached the service of God through joy, and to love one's fellow man with all your heart, and Ger represented the most beautiful example of this.

We will never forget our most beloved, whom we see with the fear of death in their eyes, on their last way over all of the lands of Europe. Their bones are scattered and spread all over the forests, fields, bunkers and camps, those who were not privileged to be given a proper Jewish burial. Let us

redouble our feeling of love for Israel, and do good for the living and remember the martyrs, and record their names in *Yizkor* Books for the coming generations. What pain we have that from each Jewish city in the Diaspora, all that remains is a book, but in these books, we have embodied an eternal spirit, which assures the Eternity of The Jewish People.

I express my heartiest thanks to the *landsleit* of Ger, and especially to those from Buenos Aires, who made it possible for this *Yizkor* Book to appear, which commemorates the name of our *shtetl*, because each and every one of us is a mourner, one more, another less. Also, in my case, that Malevolent Beast took a bloody accounting on the altar of the Nazi anti-God, who had so faithfully served a large part of the Christian populace, in the occupied territories. Also killed, by a Nazi beast, were my parents, my relatives, my wife, Feiga, and my two children, Shmuel David and Mendele, the dearest thing in my life. They were dragged off to Majdanek, and there, they were killed along with the six million martyrs...

Therefore, those who remained alive have to stick together, as if part of one family; the memory of those martyrs binds us together, the spiritual connection with Ger, and the faith in an Eternal Israel.

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When the Nazis entered Ger, like incited mad dogs, the first thing they did was take to searching for the *Rebbe.* The *Rebbe* had been hidden, and for a long time, he did not want to leave his community of Jews. But he fell sick, and practically against his will, he was spirited out of the country. He came to Israel in 5700 [1940], by a miracle. I will never forget the picture of the gathering, which the *Rebbe* called for, in the synagogue of the ruins of R' Yehuda the *Hasid*, where several hundred Rabbis came together, and the *Rebbe* went up to the lectern, and recited *Tehillim*, verse after verse, and everyone read with him responsively. After that, he spoke to the assembly, in a weak voice, because he appeared to be very exhausted, and I was so distraught, that I did not even grasp his words. After his speech, everyone took a seat on the ground, which made a terrifying impression, which I will never forget.



Page 62: A Ger Yeshiva Student

For the few years in which he lived in Israel, he dedicated himself to seeking contact with the Jewish settlements in Poland, and would make use of all ways to be able to send letters of comfort to the camps. He passed away in Jerusalem on Shavuot of 57??[16].

[16] There is a misprint here, that does not correlate with other sources, showing that he passed away in 5708 [1948].

Rosh Hashanah in the *Hasidic* Metropolis

By Pinchas ben-Eliezer (Sirkis)
Tel-Aviv

It is midnight, in a little while, [*Selichot* services] will begin with '*Zekhor Brit.*' In the *Bet HaMedrash*, where all the candles are lit, the premises is overflowing with worshipers. They stand literally one on top of another. At half past one, the *Rebbe* enters, and the recitation of *Selichot* starts. Yoss'leh of Chęciny the permanent *Baal Musaf*, begins with '*Ashrei yoshvei beytekha.*' Inside, there is no room to accommodate so much as a pin that would be thrown in; each persons stands pressed up against his neighbor. And should someone think about leaving his place, and look for a more comfortable place – he also drags along a large coterie of other people.

Yoss'leh recites *Selichot* in his sweet voice. He skips many *Selichot* prayers and verses, and it is not possible to know what he recited or what he skips over. Praying is accomplished rapidly, but with great fervor. The recitation of *Selichot* does not last more than an hour's time. The *Bet HaMedrash* is vacated en masse, and the lungs are filled with fresher and cooler air. And these are the days of September, the time of the Polish autumn. Outside, stand fruit vendors, hawking apples, pears and plums. People hurry off to the lodging houses, some to grab a bite, and others to lie down for some sleep.

It is the morning of *Erev Rosh Hashanah*. New waves of *Hasidim* debark from the '*Koleika.*' and the tumult grows inside the lodging house. One drinks a glass of tea, and then goes down to the *mikva* to perform ritual ablutions. From there, one goes to the *Bet HaMedrash*. There, one prays, and nullifies vows [made during the past year][17]. The barber stands in the courtyard, and gives haircuts, from time to time, he calls out: – 'Get a haircut, get a haircut!'

After *Shacharit*, one takes something to eat, and one then makes the rounds of the burial places of the righteous men. One traverses the *shtetl*, and sinks into sand until one comes to the cemetery. Men and women gather charitable contributions. One enters [the cemetery] and reads the inscriptions on the gravestones with curiosity, until one comes to the '*Ohel,*' where one recited a variety of prayers iteratively. It is difficult to get inside. Many gravestones bar the way, and there is only a small path that leads to the '*Ohel.*'

Inside, many candles burn, and *Hasidim* stand, and are praying. At the entrance to the '*Ohel.*' – there are tall gravestones, under which are interred the holy remains of the Rabbi R' Israel, the Rabbi of Ger; of his son, the author of the '*Khidushei HaRI"M*'; the first *Rebbe* of Ger – and of his grandson, the author of '*Sfat Emet,*' may their memories be for a blessing. A sea of notes flood the gravestones. If someone comes into this location, he will leave his note behind.

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[17] This is the act of '*Heter Nedarim,*' culminating in '*Kol Nidre*' on the Eve of Yom Kippur.

The deceased are then left, and one returns to the living. Every day, thousands of *Hasidim* debark from the 'Koleika,' coming from Warsaw and the province. From Lodz, the great industrial city, and one of the fortresses of the *Hasidism* of Ger, large autobuses come directly. The price is not expensive: twelve gulden (approximately a half pound in pre-war currency) for a round-trip. The autobuses remain in Ger until after the holiday, and take the travelers back.

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With a pounding heart, everyone goes to give greetings of peace: is he worthy to touch the *Rebbe's* holy hand?

Hasidim mill about freely outside. Every sign of being European, and 'Germanized' is removed, and one enfolds one's self in a silken or satin *kapote*. Every sign of worry and exile has vanished from their faces. The furrows have been smoothed out, and the earnestness is transformed into cheerfulness, in a joy that emerges from the depths of the heart, happiness mixed with sanctity. All the barriers between the socially higher, and the simple classes are broken down. All the big shots, and the simple Jews, rich and poor, all are equal before the *Rebbe.* And that is also the case among themselves.

And here one can see the prominent people and leaders of Polish *Hasidism*. Here, emerging from the *Rebbe's* chamber is his son-in-law, R' Yitzhak-Meir Levin (a former Minister for Social Welfare in the country of Israel). He is still something of a younger man, but he occupies an important position in community life. He calls together, all of the representatives to the Polish Sejm, for an incisive consultation, regarding an important general issue: R' Leib'l Mintzbergen (the head of the Lodz community), and R' Eliezer Sirkis, to be separated for long life (one of the leaders of the Jerusalem *Agudat Israel*), and the party leaders, among which are: R' Meshullam Kaminer (the editor of the Warsaw '*Jude*') and R' Yaakov Trackenheim. And here comes the well-known manufacturer, R' Abraham Ber Eisner from Lodz, following one of the older Ger *Hasidim*, R' Itcheh Zgerzher, who is engaged in a discussion with his father-in-law, R' Chaim Rotenberg, who is the owner of property in Rubinkowo[18], and is a relative of the *Rebbe.* He, R' Abraham David, have the idea of opening a spinning factory and he had asked the *Rebbe's* advice, which had sent him off to R' Shlomo, because 'everyone – the *Rebbe* said – has a bit of the holy spirit when it comes to his own calling'... And here, R' Bunim Levin encounters one of his old provincial friends, and the happiness among them all is a very great one.

There is no lack of Rabbis and great Torah scholars, among them being: R' Meir Dan, the Rabbi of Warsaw; R' Menachem Zemba, the *Gaon* of Warsaw, and more and more. The bachelors, who are in greater numbers than the married men, serve and pour water on the hands of the older *Hasidim*, such as R' Benzion Ostrower, R' Joseph the Rabbi of Opoczno, R' Asher'l of Opoczno, R' Gabriel Keiler, R' Nahum Wolf from Brisk, and R' Zalman from Lonk, who yet knew the '*Khidushei HaRI"M*,' and others.

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[18] A district of the city of Torún.

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Here, one meets up with four generations of *Hasidim*. Beginning with a grandfather aged seventy, to his great-grandchild, of *Bar-Mitzvah* age. But they don't stay at the lodging house. The young men have a world unto themselves. They arrive with the first of the *Selichot* prayers, and remain until after *Sukkot*. They wish to learn from the *Rebbe's* comportment during the High Holy Days, and talk to him about *Hasidism*, and what it means to be God-fearing. They organize mutual funding pools, where each puts in their fair share of expenses, the wealthy just like the poor, each in accordance with their means; they rent a residence, go to the market on their own, buy their own food, and cook for themselves.

The father, who comes on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, sees his son only at the time of arrival or departure, when the son stops off by him on a visit in order to ask for some money for the collective. In prior times, under the '*Sfat Emet*,' the young men were not so forward as today. The young men would marry early, and a bachelor with a beard was an exception. Young people would take their meals at the table of their father-in-law, and would be engaged in the study of Torah and *Hasidism*. They would spend weeks and months in Ger, and it was here that they accomplished their *Hasidic* preparation. They would learn individually, and often invoke the saying of the '*Sfat Emet*:' 'The way you conduct yourself in the first year after the wedding, that will be the way you will conduct yourself in the last year of life...'

Now, the times are different. Yeshiva students are not snapped up so quickly. Parents were not attentive to the words of their *Rebbe*, and have sent their daughters to the gymnasia or other 'worldly' schools. And the religious schools of '*Bais Yaakov*,' have not yet borne fruit. Eliezer Gershon Friedensohn absorbed an enormous amount of difficulties in the publication of his monthly journal, '*Bais Yaakov*,' and it took years until it became the journal for girls in religiously observant Jewish homes.

The *Rebbe* drew the young men to him by all methods. He was among the very few of the *Rebbes,* who recognized the important role played by the young generation in the future of the people. A good lad, someone who was constant in his study, was able to remain in Ger for as long as he wanted to, sitting and learning. The *Rebbe* helps such a student with all means; often against the wishes of the father, who wants to have the son back at home more quickly. And the young man takes advantage of this opportunity for as long as it lasts.

It is the night of sanctifying the holiday. At the lodging houses, candles are lit, and thousands of *Hasidim*, who have come from all over Poland, stream to the *Bet HaMedrash*. Their faces are serious, but the joy of an inner light shines forth from their eyes. The *Bet HaMedrash*, with its two courtyards, swallows up the entire throng. A sea of *shtrymels* and *kapotes*, and among them, I see the circular velvet hats of the young men. The *Rebbe's* grandsons, Chaim Eliezer and Naphtali (the sons of R' Meir הי"ד) tall and lean, walk about with *Hasidim* along the length and breadth of the courtyard, talking, and listening to the telling about the lives of Jews in a variety of places.

When the *Rebbe* enters, everyone starts to participate in the *Mincha* prayer service. This is still the ordinary *Mincha* service of the middle days of the week, but one senses in it, the sanctity of the Eve of the Festival.

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Yoss'leh leads the *Maariv* service, and an 'Amen' comes to him as a response from thousands of mouths. Prayer is recited with incredibly intense fervor. Each individual recites the prayer in accordance with his own approach. There are those who pray silently, imbuing meaning into each word, and others who pray out loud, as he needs to hear the reverberation of the words; there are those who do not move from their spot, and others oscillating themselves in piety, as if keeping time with the rhythm of the sweet melody.

Praying is done in the Ger style, without excessive lengthening, but with a warmth that streams from the heart. And as the praying ends, one turns and shakes hands in hearty friendship, wishing one another a '*Shana Tova*,' greeting one another with a 'Happy Holiday.'

The *Rebbe* comes into his room, and stands by his table, and thousands of *Hasidim* come by to wish him a 'Good Year.' Everyone strains to catch his eye, which is a case of one who sees, but one who is not seen, and how happy is he who perceives that the *Rebbe* has given a nod of his head in his direction. From time-to-time, the door closes for a couple of minutes, and then opens up again for the throng. It takes about two hours for this walk through past the *Rebbe.*

Older *Hasidim* also go to offer greetings to the *Rebbe's* brothers, the sick, and broken Moshe Bezalel, R' Mendele (the Rabbi of Powianiec), the wisest among the wise, and R' Nehemiah'leh – the God-fearing one. A stop is also made with the *Rebbe's* brother-in-law; with R' Yaakov Meir, the Warsaw Scholar, with R' Hersch Henoch (the Rabbi of Będzin), the 'High Priest' of his brothers, who is full of love for each and every Jew. This concludes with the *Rebbe's* son, and his sons-in-law.

Upon returning to the lodging house one encounters *Hasidim* participating in a [holiday] feast. Those standing about the '*Tisch*' have long since gone. *Kiddush* had been made on wine, the fish tasted, and then they disappeared. Those remaining behind, finish off the repast quickly, and they also leave the '*Tisch.*'

The *Bet HaMedrash* is again packed full. The *Rebbe* is already seated at his place. He doesn't sit up front, but rather in the middle. On his right side and on his left side – his brothers sit, sons, and *Hasidim* of accomplished deeds.

And it is difficult to get close to the *Tisch.* A ring of *Hasidim,* five and six deep, surround it. A silent struggle goes on for the entire time among those who stand in that line, and those who have the intent of breaking into it. Itcheh Meir Balass from Warsaw, a tall and broad-shouldered person, lays his hands on the heads and the *shtrymels* like a swimmer in a river, and he pushes with his substantial body against those who are shorter and weaker than he is. The struggle against him goes on for every square centimeter. But he goes on for a long time with a smile on his broad face, until

he reaches the first inner row. At night, one does not sit up late. The *Hasidim* disperse each to his own lodging facility. Those who 'stand' beside the '*Tisch,*' come back and finish their meals. They talk about their various issues. Until they get tired, and they depart to get some rest.

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At eight thirty in the morning, one arises for *Shacharit. Hasidim* arrive with their prayer shawls already draped about their shoulders. The gentiles take no note of them, and the Jews forget the Diaspora about them. In Ger, they have full autonomy. The gentiles relate quite courteously to the Jews, enveloped in their prayer shawls and wearing *shtrymels*. They are used to this, and it does not occur to them to make fun of them, which their brethren in other Polish cities are wont to do.

There is an autumn coolness outside. Entering the *Bet HaMedrash*, one gets a bit warmed up, and one goes out into the courtyard. There are those, who take themselves up to the attic in the *Bet HaMedrash* to pray. There is much straw cast about up there. That is the place where those young men, who cannot pay the fee at the lodging houses, spend their nights. Here and there, the attic is full of holes. From up there, one can see the *Rebbe*, and one can hear the *Baal Tefilah* leading the service, thereby engendering communal prayer.

The overcrowding is severe in the *Bet HaMedrash*. But the crowding around the *Rebbe* is especially great. Young men form a ring around him in a circle, and listen to each and every uttered word that emanates from his mouth. He prays swiftly, simply, and with the minimum of movement, without any special tune, but with great intensive fervor, as if he is penetrating into each individual word separately.

Shacharit is concluded at half past ten, and a recess is declared. Once again, people go off to the *mikva*, the *Zohar* is studied, the *Mishna*, and other matters pertaining to the day.

After the recess, the Torah is read. The *Rebbe* leaves his place and comes to the *Bimah*. Those who stand in the way, preparing themselves to look, begin to move themselves, and ring the balustrade. The blessings for the Torah emanate clearly from the *Rebbe's* mouth, word by word, and are well-heard throughout the *Bet HaMedrash*, and in both courtyards. Everyone holds his breath, and listens with a tense posture.

The time arrives for R' Moshe-Bezalel, the brother of the ADMo"R. He prepares himself for the sounding of the *Shofar* with awe and trepidation. His hands tremble, which is reminiscent of the *Tzaddik* R' Moshe Leib Sosower, at the time, on the First Day of *Sukkot*, when he would take the *Etrog* in his hand. He recites the blessings, each word coming from his lips with a tremor and a special sweetness. The awe fills all those listening, and moves them to repentance, more so than a long sermon before the blowing of the *Shofar*. The blasts of the *Shofar* do not come easily for him. It is hard for him to begin. His trembling hands do not hold the *Shofar* steadily at his mouth.

His grandson, R' Shimon Naphtali Alter, has told, that one time, his grandfather came down with a very severe illness on the Eve of *Rosh Hashanah*, and the doctors forbade him to blow the *Shofar.*

And so, they went off to his brother, the ADMo"R, and asked him to persuade him [the grandfather] not to blow the *Shofar* this time. The answer given by R' Moshe Bezalel was: 'My entire life force is drawn from the fact that I fulfil the wish of thousands of Jews with my *Shofar* blowing. I believe, with complete faith, that I elevate their prayers to the heavens. If you will forbid me to blow the *Shofar* – you will be cutting me off from the source of my life force.' When the *Rebbe* heard this, he said: 'I am not getting mixed up in this.'

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When the *Torah* scrolls are returned to the ark, one immediately hears Yoss'leh intone '*Yisgadal.*' He is accompanied by the choir, from which one can hear the tall Itcheh Meir from Warsaw. The living spirit of the choir is Yankl Talmud, who lives with us today in Tel-Aviv. He is the master of all the tunes, such as '*Zakhreinu L'Chaim,*' '*KeVakarat,*' '*Eyn Kitzvah*' etc. He leads the choir. The melodies are new, none that anyone has ever heard. In the fullness of the years, they are adopted and sung in all of the *Hasidic shtiblach* of Poland. The melody for '*HaYom TeAmtzeynu*' is heard being sung today, at its appointed time, and it will be preserved in future dances.

Yoss'leh's voice is like the peal of a silver plate, that soars over the voices of the choir. The *Hasidim* lose themselves out of ecstasy; despite this, there are a few who say that one cannot compare Yoss'leh to his predecessor, R' Israel Moshe. It is told, that he was not that outstanding in singing, but in matching a melody to the words, he had no peer.

Before prayers conclude, the *Bet HaMedrash* fills up again. Everyone is coming in to wish the *Rebbe* '*Chag Sameach.*' Everyone is standing pressed together, with hearts pounding, and one waits for the *Rebbe* to open the way for the *Hasidim* who are waiting on him. Finally, one hears the last *Kaddish.* One strains the eyes, and stands on tiptoe, to see on which side the *Rebbe* will show himself. And there, in the distance, a sign of movement is noticed. A clutch of people around him, the *Rebbe* draws nearer. Everyone wants the *Rebbe* to pass him by. And here comes the *Rebbe*, and the ring around him gets broader. He is showered with greetings of *Chag Sameach.* Behind him, follows his son, R' Bunim, or his grandson, R' Leib'l.

One goes up in the lodging house, makes *Kiddush*, and one consumes the feast hastily, in order to go down to the *Tisch.* But there, all the better places are already occupied. Among those standing beside the *Tisch* there are those who had occupied their spaces from the early morning hours on. From time-to-time, those who are exhausted are taken out to the yard, where there is a long row of pale faces and shut eyes. Anyone, with some strength left, goes over to drink a bit of soda water at the location of Mendl the soda-water vendor, who stands there for the entire time, giving out soda water on credit, to anyone who just asks for it. Those who don't have the strength to move, are brought some soda water to drink. They lie there like that, until they revive somewhat. One then drags one's feet back to the lodging house, and then lays down to rest a bit.

Inside, the tasted leavings[19] of the food is dispensed, and one makes pronouncements over wine. And suddenly, it grows quiet. The *Rebbe* begins to speak. The din subsides a bit. It is a cessation in the fire for several minutes. The *Hasidim* close their eyes, and perk up their ears. One hears the soft, mentoring voice of the *Rebbe.* The words that come from his mouth, are as if they are thrown out into the profanity of the outer world. And all of it, in that sorrowful tone of the outpouring of the soul, such that it feels as if the words are coming out of his heart, which are calculated to become transformed into good deeds.

For those that sit further away, only clipped strings of words reach them, sentences and half-sentences. And here, one hears the voice of Simcha Schreibaum, which invites someone to a toast, a sign that the *Rebbe* has finished speaking. The tension bursts, and it becomes more animated at the *Tisch*. At the moment, R' Henekh Wydyslawsky, the manufacturer from Lodz rises from his place, (today he is in Tel-Aviv), and he helps out the servers the speakers to finish up their work.

The *Tisch* comes to an end. The *Rebbe* goes over into his room. People go out for '*Tashlikh*.' Some to the Vistula, which runs out of the city, and some to the brook that flows on the courtyard of the *Bet HaMedrash*. In the lodging houses, gatherings take place around a glass of wine, a glass of beer. Toasts of *L'Chaim* are made, and 'circles' are formed around those that repeat the words of the *Rebbe.* Tales are told of R' Benzion Ostrower, who said, 'today, one's life was in danger beside the *Tisch*,' to which the *Rebbe* replied: 'Don't say a life was in danger, but say rather that souls were repaired...[20]' and indeed that is what happened: there was a 'danger' from the overcrowding; but also a 'repairing,' – an improvement, an elevation of souls.

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And it is, in this fashion, that the two days of *Rosh Hashanah* go by. One half of the day devoted to prayer, and the second half of the day in a joyous *Hasidic* feast, in friendly discourse, and with sitting at the *Rebbe's Tisch*, within his holy ambit.

After the *Tisch* of the second day, the traditional dance begins. Dancing takes place in the *Bet HaMedrash* and in both courtyards. There is a circle of young people and bachelors. And this is the way the dance proceeds, singing out the *Hasidic* songs, and foremost, the new tune is sung, which was created in honor of that particular Holiday.

Mendl the soda-water vendor doesn't have the time to wait for the young men to finish their dances. He comes near, standing at his table in the courtyard of the *Bet HaMedrash*. Next to him stands an oil lamp. And he shouts out: 'For soda-water! Jews, pay for soda-water!'

Jews come by, and pay up. He believes everybody, and takes whatever they give.

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19 Called '*shirayim*,' literally 'left-overs' but really representing the food ceremonially tasted by the *Rebbe,* and considered especially sacred by his followers.

20 This is a play on words in Hebrew, where the original word '*sakanat*' meaning 'danger,' is swapped for '*takanat*' meaning 'repair.'

In the lodging houses, the proprietors sit, totaling their accounts with the *Hasidim*. The charges are often times a bit 'over-salted' and 'over-peppered.' The *Hasidim* haggle, and in the end, the matter is straightened out. The expansiveness of the holiday vanishes, and at *Melaveh Malkeh* time, *Challah* and herring are distributed, leftovers from the holiday feast.

One goes to take leave of the *Rebbe*. R' Itcheh, the *Rebbe's*' son, is not pleased with the pressure and crowding, that reigns inside the *Bet HaMedrash*, and thinks about improvements that will be implemented in the coming years. *Hasidim* from Warsaw are already seated on the '*Koleika*' or in the autobus. They take their leave of the *Rebbe* just as the stars come out. The *Hasidim* from the provinces travel home after *Shacharit*.

One leaves Ger in a heavy-hearted state of mind. One feels a transition from sanctity to a secular state. There is envy of those young men who are remaining behind. They will remain here for the *Ten Days of Repentance*, and will enter into discourse with the *Rebbe* about repentance and *Hasidism*. The '*Koleika*' is overflowing with *Hasidim*, who are engaged in the *Shacharit* prayers with a *minyan,* or are humming the new melody. And as the '*Koleika'* leaves Ger, one looks back with longing eyes, until the *shtetl* vanishes from sight.

***Shavuot* in Ger**

By Rabbi Abraham Zemba

***Hasidim* Stream into Ger**

For many generations already, there seldom was such a large, fiery gathering, where thousands upon thousands of Jews came together in order that they be together 'as one man with one heart, to shout out their renewed '*We will do, and we will hear.*'

They came from hundreds of places.[They came] from Warsaw and from Lodz, from Cracow and Bialystok, from Lomza and Kalisz, and from hundreds of other Jewish cities and towns. There were towns that stood half emptied out of their day-to-day *Hasidic* population, because almost all of them made a pilgrimage to Ger. In trains, autobuses, cars, and even pedestrians, streamed towards Ger, even many days before the Festival Holiday.

And who didn't come to Ger for the *Shavuot*[21] holiday? Renown *Gaonim* who had a world reputation, great rabbinic leaders, political leaders and leaders of their communities, from the largest cities in Poland, great industrialists and bankers, and lastly, the crown of Ger *Hasidism* – the thousands of enthusiastic young boys and men, full of Torah and the *Fear of God*, of a kind that has not existed for generations.

It is the day before *Shavuot* in the morning. Hundreds of young men and boys are already here, having arrived weeks before, and with great ardor, are preparing themselves for the Receiving of the

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[21] Author's footnote: It was on *Shavuot* that the *Yahrzeit* of the prior Ger *Rebbe* fell.

Torah. Now, on *Erev Shavuot*, they are standing in the first courtyard to receive the great men of Torah, who are coming here for *Shavuot*. After all, on what other occasion can one expect to see so many *Gaonim*, and distinguished people come together?

And here comes the Rabbi of Będzin, R' Hersch Henekh, often being escorted by his nine sons. Merely the appearance of this resplendent family, projects an honest picture that makes an impression. The gathering comes forward to shake hands with the Rabbi of Będzin, who, as is his custom, shakes hands with both hands, and hugs each person as if they were his own child or a brother.

The Będzin Rabbi, R' Hersch Henekh, bears two names from two distinguished grandfathers. He is a grandson of R' Henekh the Kohen, from Alexander, and R' Hersch of Tomaszow. The renown loyal member of the household of the elder *Rebbe* of Kotzk. He, himself is a son-in-law of the *'Sfat Emet*,' a Torah Great, stemming from the most renown of the Rabbis of Poland, and a man of premier cut. He is a brother-in-law of the *Rebbe*, and his *mekhutan*. But here in Ger, for Shavuot, he comes like a[n ordinary] *Hasid*, and he is preparing to offer his greetings to the *Rebbe* with the same deference and submission as an ordinary young man. And here, into the courtyard, comes the Rabbi of Fabianiec-Kalisz, often escorted by a number of Rabbis. They have just arrived from a rabbinical assembly, which had taken place on the prior evening in Warsaw. Most of the Rabbinical assemblies in Poland, indeed took place a day before *Shavuot*, because that was the opportunity to gather in the greatest number of Rabbis, who were indeed traveling each to his *Rebbe*, most of whom were traveling to Ger for this purpose.

A Gathering of Leading Torah Scholars

R' Mendele, the youngest son of the '*Sfat Emet*,' President of the Rabbinical Assembly in Poland, was of exceptionally impressive ancestry himself. He was a *Gaon* in matters evident, and esoteric, and wise in the ways of the world. But here, he was simply a *Hasid*, who for decades had never missed coming to Ger for *Shavuot*. Here, he would enjoy passing his time in the company of old-time *Hasidim* from Kotzk, such as R' Ben-Zion Ostrower, R' Moshe Wallier, and others, who were yet close associates of the '*Khidushei HaRI"M*, and the '*Sfat Emet*.'



Page 75: Rabbi Abraham Zemba, שליט"א

Who today has the energy to enumerate the large number of Rabbis, *Gaonim*, and authors, that you could see arriving on the eve of *Shavuot* into the Ger courtyard. Here, you could see such world-famous *Gaonim* as R' Meir Dan Plocki, the author of '*Klay Khemda*'; R' Shlomo Rzszechta, the author of the Responsa, '*Bikurei Shlomo*,' who wrote it out and studied with R' Yoshe Ber and the Ntz"IV; R' Simcha Yair, the *Gaon* of Pietrokow, the author of '*Orah veSimcha*,' who made such pilgrimages yet back in the time of the '*Khidushei HaRI"M*'; the Elder of all the Rabbis, R' Zvi Arye' Yaakov Meiseles, the well-known *Posek* and *Yashiv*, the author of '*Khidot Yaakov*'; The Rabbi of Dorow, author of '*Imray Zvi,*'; The Rabbi of Biala, author of '*Tiferet Menachem*'; The

Rabbi of Kaolya, R' Shaul Zilberman; and from a slightly younger generation: R' Menachem Zemba; the Orthodox Rabbi, R' David-Ber, the Vice-President of the Rabbinical Assembly; The Rabbi of Mankatow, author of the '*Imray Kohen*'; R' Shlomo Merker, the Rabbi of Kazhminka[22] – and more, and more.

New Torah Stars Are Revealed...

The ones previously enumerated, were more-or-less world famous, or well-known because of their publications, and prominent pulpit positions. However, there was also a large number of younger and older outstanding scholars, and Torah *Gaonim*, would had not [yet] occupied Rabbinical positions, anonymous, as it were, who spent days and nights immersed in Torah study and religious work, and whose greatness was only recognized in their own immediate circle, or to the prominent Torah sages, who, by circumstance, were able to 'bring them to public attention' in Ger.

There, you see, standing in a corner of the courtyard, is R' Menachem Zemba with the Rabbi of Ozarkow, who are conversing and learning, and the exceptional student from Acht, . A small group of young folks sidle up to them, in a non-aggressive way. Suddenly, one of the young people tosses in a word, or a question, not aggressively. R' Menachem, or the Rabbi of Ozarkow raises his eyes, and responds.

The young man becomes emboldened, and ripostes with a question. The discussion immediately becomes more enlivened, and soon, another young man enters the discussion. The discussion becomes peppered with *Tosafot*, and references to the Jerusalem Talmud, with *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*, and – a new Torah luminary becomes revealed, whom nobody knew before; about whom even those from the same area didn't know, other that he was a 'talented young man'...

Let us, at this opportunity recollect a couple of names of such young people, who today, would have illuminated the world of Torah: R' Yaakov Wolf Joskowicz[23] from Fabianiec, a short young man with an ordinary small Polish cap, and a small blond beard. A man 'without pretensions.' Who, at that time, knew who he was? It was only first, in the last years of The Second World War, that he became famous through the monthly '*Kol HaTorah*,' and especially as a result of his book, *'Ambuha D'Sifre*,' on *Sifre Zutta*.[24]

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22 Likely a diminutive form of Kazimierz Dolny, where 'Dolny' is Polish for 'lesser,' or 'minor.'

23 Also possibly Yaakov Ze'ev Joskovitts

24 *Sifre Zutta* (Hebrew: אטוז ירפס) is a *midrash* on the Book of Numbers. (*Zur Gesch. der Jüdischen Tradition,* ii. 238). Medieval authors mention it under the titles "*Sifre shel Panim Akherim*" and "*Wi-Yeshallekhu Zuta*"; and to distinguish it from it the *Sifre*, Or Zarua (ii. 22) calls the latter *"Sifre Rabbati."* The *Sifre Zutta* has not been preserved; and, as appears from a remark of Abraham Bakrat, it was no longer extant at the time in which he wrote his commentary on *Rashi* (comp. Brüll, *Der Kleine Sifre*, in *Grätz Jubelschrift,* p. 184).

R' Yitzhak Flatoy from Lodz – a young man, who was not very visible, and apart from his very close circle, nobody could recognize who he was. When the *Rebbe* of Ger once wanted to honor him with a *Tisch*, he was searched for, and nobody knew whom the *Rebbe* was referring to. And this young man was as full of as a pomegranate [is with seeds] with Torah. Great scholars would be struck with wonder by his every word and innovative idea, and said of him that he is developing into a world-class *Gaon*.

And here, near them, you see yet another rather young man, who is literally bubbling, and quotes from the Jerusalem Talmud, and *Rishonim* are pouring out of him as if he were an elderly *Gaon*. This is Moshe Pinchas Hertz, who became the son-in-law of the renown Rabbi of Krzefiec. And what is the wonder that he is so bubbly, and speaks so rapidly, that you can barely understand him? He has accumulated so much Torah knowledge. One thought chases after another, one question after another, and he is one burning ember of Torah.

With this, the list is not far from being exhausted. When hundreds, whom no one knew, and who are so filled and accomplished, thoroughly versed in *Shas* and *Poskim*, and all this without epaulettes and titles, without any decorations – only a burning love of the Torah for its own sake.

Among Old *Hasidim* and Young Activists

Spending a *Shavuot* in Ger also always meant there would be sittings of the most important political, community, and education activists in Poland, among whom were born new ideas and plans as to how Jewish community life could be built on a Torah foundation.

Here we see standing, in a corner of the courtyard, R' Leib'l Mintzberg, and R' Yaakov Trackenheim, the representatives of *Agudat Israel* in the Polish parliament, R' Meshullam Kaminer of the Warsaw community, and R' Fishl Lieberman of the Lodz community. And standing around them, is a whole array of community leaders from various communities. Here is where Jewish troubles and decrees are handled, that are so expensive.

In another corner, stand a number of familiar education activists. Here you see R' Alexander Zisha Friedman, R' Yehuda-Leib Arleon, R' Eliezer-Gershon Friedensohn, R' Abraham Zaken Feldfebel and around them, you see additional education activists from the entire country, who are taking counsel about problems besetting Torah institutions. You see here members of *Agudah*, *Tze'irei*, and *Poalim* leaders, all of whom are of one mind, in devising ways to strengthen the existing educational institutions, and how to create new ones. And not only once, did creative ideas emerge from such a corner that led to grandiose plans.

Just as Ger was blessed with renown *Gaonim* in Torah study, so was Ger certainly replete with great and renown practitioners of *Hasidism*, who occupied a prominent place under the aegis of the old *Rebbe* of Kotzk, the '*Khidushei HaRI"M*," and in Alexander.

Here you see the Senior of *Hasidism* from Congress-Poland, R' Ben-Zion Ostrower, a remnant of the coterie around the old *Rebbe* of Kotzk; R' Shmuel'eh Alter, a brother of the '*Sfat Emet*'; R' Israel Leib'leh Morgenstern, as son of R' Mendele Kotzer's son, R' Benjamin; R' Yekhiel Kletzer, a

brother-in-law of the '*Sfat Emet*'; R' Dan, the director of the faith in Warsaw; R' Moshe Moses, or as he was called – 'Big Moshe', any one of whom, notwithstanding their pedigree, was a leading light in *Hasidism* and knowledge, and in the *Hasidic* tradition of Przysucha-Kotzk.

And here you see hoary-gray *Hasidic* Rabbis from prominent communities. And, here in Ger, you find them only in the vicinity of young *Hasidic* people and youths, engaging with their *Hasidism* like equals among equals. Here, coming to Ger, these Rabbis have completely forgotten that they are the leaders of prominent communities; here, they press themselves forward in an effacing manner, together with all, whether to fraternize, or sit together and take something from the *Tisch*. Here they wish to be *Hasidim* only, and *Hasidism* means – deference and submission. And as the *Rebbe* of Ger cited, in an as of yet unpublished letter, a wondrous aphorism of R' Khananel[25]: 'It is arrogance that is the drunkenness of man', and the *Rebbe* of Ger would add: 'And the first of the *Hasidim* tired themselves out considerably with *Hasidism*, according to what is said in the *Tosafot* there.'

An error is therefore made by those who thought that in Ger, there was insufficient regard for the honor of the Torah. Those who thought this way, did not understand the inner workings of Ger. It is told, that a prominent *Mitnaged* once asked the Rabbi, *Baal HaTanya*[26] about the book, *'Noam Elimelech.'* The *Mitnaged* Rabbi had just obtained the book, and not knowing the quality of the author, he held the book in the closet. The Rabbi, *Baal HaTanya* gave him a short reply: 'If you want to know the quality of the author, I can only say to you that if you took the author and laid him, as well, underneath, at the bottom of the closet, he would receive this act as well with great love.'



Page 79: R' Abraham-Yitzhak Laftman (Mintz'keh) Departs the Bet HaMedrash *of the* Rebbe

It was this, that Ger taught. The Rabbis and scholars, who in their home cities were naturally the Rabbis and the respected members of the community, enjoying the fruits of the most elevated visibility, here, working on *Hasidism*, went out of their way to set aside and nullify their entire status. Because of this, you could see under the *Tisch*, not at the table, but under the table, and literally under the bench, middle-aged sages, totally fluent in *Shas* and *Poskim*, together with young people, implementing of the statement, 'and envelop yourselves in the dust of their feet...'

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25 Khananel ben Khushiel (Hebrew: לאנגח רב לאישוח), an eleventh-century Tunisian Rabbi and Talmudist, was a student of one of the last *Gaonim*. He is best known for his commentary on the Talmud. Khananel is often referred to as *Rabbeinu* Khananel - Hebrew for "our teacher, Khananel" (Hebrew abbreviation: ר"ח).

26 This would be the Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (September 4, 1745 - December 15, 1812 O.S.)

A Moment That is an Eternity...

Thousands of *Hasidim* stand in the row – hoary-gray elders, young adults and youths. And hundreds, hundreds of young people, [also stood] with hearts pounding from joy and fear, happiness and trepidation. It is weeks now that these young people are joking less. After all, they are traveling to Ger! So, how could that be appropriate? So they nervously twirl their long locked side curls, and are always adjusting their *gartls,* that they are not yet used to wearing. But it is not only with these young boys, for whom some are making their first trip to Ger, that hearts are beating so intensely. It is also true of their fathers, and grandfathers, whose hearts are beating no less furiously. One does not need a trained eye to see, what is happening among these thousands of 'well-wishers.' You can see how handsome each one is, or wishes to purify himself from his 'self-awareness,' in order to be ready and worthy to receive the holy influence of the Eternal, which tarries here for not more than a moment, and to make use of that – very minute, of 'there is one who earns his world in a single hour...'

And internally – who has the wherewithal, and who has the presence of mind, to elicit even a blink from that very sacred moment, in silently articulating and tremulously say those two words, in nine letters: *Sholom Aleichem* (because who can have the time for more than that among so many thousands?).

And it is in these very nine letters, that lay the purest confession of what has gone in the past, together with an aroused heart, in which one's entire being shouts out – 'I do not have to say it in words": See where I stand! And at the same time, an openness to what lies ahead, with love, from the depths of the soul, accompanied by beseeching eyes, that entreat the *Rebbe* to have an influence on him, and bless him, that he be privileged to serve the *Holy one Blessed be He*, with an unblemished and honest heart, and should a person by chance be accosted by an 'alien thought,' regarding secular matters, that exhaust him all year long, at home, such as making a living, and other necessities of life, it is still done, in order to have some surcease for service to God.

The *Rebbe* זצ"ל responds to each individual with a glance, and a very short word. Thousands of *Hasidim*, with thousands of thoughts and perceptions – and the *Rebbe* זצ"ל answers each of them with a saying 'each according to his individual spirit, and mood.' It is a fact, and one of the wonders of Ger, that the *Rebbe* of Ger knew each of his tens of thousands of *Hasidim*, from the greatest among the great, to the youngest little boy. And each one received his own personal response.

The Dictates of the Law and the Dictates of Compassion

There, in the *Rebbe's* house of peace, the dictates of law resided along with the dictates of compassion, and good will. The dictates of the law are for those who are asking for something, and haughty, it is those very haughty whom he addresses sharply and cuttingly. He does not let them delude themselves – in the style of Kotzk. And when a young man, may have at a time taken advantage of alien ideas, the *Rebbe*, זצ"ל answers him sharply: There are alien ideas? They are, after all your own! The young man begins to tremble, and understands what he is being told, realizing that he has to start fresh, all over again.

To someone weaker, the *Rebbe* speaks with compassion, and to someone truly weakened, and downtrodden – even with entreaty. Yes, this very great leader, who barely had a few minutes for the most important personalities with the most serious problems, always had time for the simple folk, and often times even used entreaties in engaging a simple young shoemaker's apprentice about *Yiddishkeit.*

Historical *Hasidism* underwent a variety of transformations, There is *Hasidism* for the broad world, and deep, a more rigorous *Hasidism* for those who are privileged, having its foundation in the sacred Jewish persona, which came to a climax in Kotzk. Ger represented a synthesis of both. In Ger, there was a place for those who came to ask for things, to have themselves be elevated to higher levels of *Hasidism*, and in Ger, there was also a place for those in the middle, and even just ordinary Jews of some means, and as the need demanded, the *Rebbe* זצ"ל, with his far-seeing eye, also created space to accommodate those who had been exhausted, and served to strengthen those who were in a wobbly state.

And so, the Festival arrives. If all the traveling to Ger was accompanied by an elevation of the soul, then on the eve, when the Holiday of the Giving of the Torah was sanctified, it became palpable to the hand. The Great *Bet HaMedrash*, which could accommodate close to two thousand Jewish people, became filled to overflowing from one end to the other, as well as both of the large courtyards, which could accommodate many more, and were virtually all full. There was a forest of *shtrymels*, among which there were young men and boys, which create a panorama of a crown with precious stones affixed to it.

Everything stands in abeyance, awaiting the arrival of the *Rebbe.* And, as usual, the *Rebbe* arrives punctually on the second. The Festival Holiday begins. This is the first prayer being recited with the *Rebbe*, and when one hears the thin, sweet voice of the renown *Baal Tefilah* of Ger, R' Yoss'leh of Chenczin, utter '*Barchu,*' everyone abandons his own persona, and amalgamates with the entire surrounding congregation, which becomes blessed, and blesses the Holy Holiday. *'Mekadesh Yisrael vel'HaZmanim..*'

The *Tisch* – 'This is the Table Before The Lord'

Approximately an hour after prayers, the first *Tisch* of the Festival commences. It is understood, that only the very privileged, and only the very closest and important people, could have the privilege of sitting at the *Rebbe's Tisch.* Despite this, all the thousands, whether they could get inside, or those who had to remain outside; those who had the privilege of being able to see or hear something, or those who did not – all felt that they were at the *Tisch*...

It already started days before, when young people took up spots, around the *Tisch,* and guarded them day and night, in order that on *Yom Tov*, that they could be certain of a possibility of deriving pleasure from the ambience of the table set before The Lord. Today, it is literally impossible to describe, the press of people in the *Great Bet HaMedrash,* at the time that the *Rebbe* presided over the *Tisch*. The simple act of trying to enter the *Bet HaMedrash* carried with it the aura of danger, or as the *Hasidim* would say, '*Takanat Nefashot.*' And you can imagine what it was like once the *Rebbe* began a discourse on Torah.

And who has the capacity to describe the state of ecstasy and ardor, that endlessly streamed out of the hearts during this sacred feast. There was an unbounded feeling of holiness of the highest extreme. It gathered up and concentrated itself, in this very hour, and came to a climax at the end of the *Tisch*, when the gathering broke out into an inflamed and fiery dance. Thousands of grandfathers, children and grandchildren – all danced. You see someone dancing with the will and the intent of 'lifting one's self off the ground, for even a minute.' This is what a great scholar once wrote, in explaining a *Hasidic* dance. And it is found in the answer given by the *Rebbe* of Ger to a Rabbi who was a *Mitnaged,* who wondered why it is that *Hasidim* dance on the Sabbath, which according to his point of view, was not really appropriate. To which the *Rebbe* replied, that overall, where King Solomon enumerates the 'times' there is a '*lamed*,' but when it comes to dance, it says '*Eyt R'kod*,' without a *lamed*. 'If one is moved to dance, then it is permissible to dance even on the Sabbath.'

'And May Your Eyes Behold Your Teachers'

How does one take up so much space to describe the night of *Shavuot* in Ger. The learning and sense of adherence derived from such a large body of Jewish people, or the morning of *Shavuot*, with the sea of bobbing and weaving prayer shawls. But one moment remains forever in the memory of those who had spent a *Shavuot* in Ger, and that is when the *Rebbe* זצ"ל, appeared, before the assembled host after the *Tisch,* on his balcony. This was the only possible opportunity, for the entire assembly of people to greet the *Rebbe* literally 'face to face.'

And so, thousands of Jews stand with their eyes turned to the balcony. Little boys, and young people cover all of the roofs and walls around, in order not to allow the opportunity to be lost, that they fulfil the dictum, 'And may your eyes behold your teachers.' and when the *Rebbe* appears, with the holiday grace emanating from his visage, a shudder of ecstasy runs through the crowd. In the case of many elderly *Hasidim*, one sees tears of joy streaming from their eyes. Before my eyes, I see the image of my old grandfather, who was holding his two grandchildren on his shoulders, effusive with joy, and you can feel what he must be thinking: How good it is for us, and how good it is for you, that we have been privileged to be with such a sacred congregation and to have such a leader. Even if you don't understand this today, it will follow you for the rest of your life.

Remaining for the Entire Life

And, indeed, it really did remain for the entirety of one's life.

Because it was the fortitude of those young men and boys, who later on, in the dark days of life in the concentration camps, exhausted from hunger and frost, bodies beaten by blows, half naked and barefoot – still possessed the strength to sustain the fire of faith, and the commitment of their souls to *Yiddishkeit*, which, even among those who were far away, elicited a reverence for their decency.

And let this minor episode be told here, of a fifth of Shevat party in the year 5703 [January 11, 1943] conducted by a group of young *Hasidim* from Ger, in the Budzyn Camp at Majdanek, who after a

hard day's work, accompanied by beatings and torture, gathered together in a corner of a barracks, to observe the *Yahrzeit* of the '*Sfat Emet.*' I recall what an impression this made on the worldly intellectual group, that was [interred] there with us. The impact went so far, that the great Zionist leader, Dr. Eliezer-Lipa Bloch הי"ד, the former director of '*Keren HaYesod*' in Poland, starting on the following morning, began to lay *Tefillin*...

A Mountain of Holiness

Yes, Ger stood on a mountain, Ger stood on a fortress-mountain. One only needed a bit of will and common sense, and you could attain it, and draw full vessels worth, each according to his own capacity to apprehend. And this indeed was what one of the beloved *Hasidim* of Ger said, half-jokingly.

A *Shavuot* spent at the *Rebbe's* has with it a veritable fountain of Torah. Also, at this holiday of the giving of the Torah, there were various levels. After the Giving of the Torah, a number of different small groups were formed, who conversed among themselves about the wonder of the Standing at Mount Sinai, each according to his own perception. There were those who speculated about the thunder and lightning. There were those who stood under the impression that the Mountain of the Festival hovered over them[27], and others in whose ears the sound of the *Shofar* reverberated. These people of higher levels, however, did not cease to constantly repeat to themselves and think about *'I am [the Lord your God], and Thou Shalt not [have any other Gods...]'* But all together they shouted out '*Na'aseh,veNishma!*[28]'

Also, after a trip to the *Rebbe* there are various levels. There are those who travel home, in wonder at the large gathering of people, and the prominent among the Jewish people whom they saw there. Part of the group takes back newly composed Ger-originated prayer melodies, and it is only the more elevated of the people, who have heard, and overheard, learned, and absorbed, the deeper sense of the word '*Anochi.*' But everyone traveled home renewed and refreshed from the simple contact with the mountain of holiness, because everyone had come, bringing with them that sacred intent to once again, shout out together with everyone: '*Na'aseh,veNishma!*'

Góra Kalwaria –The Small *Shtetl* of Ger

By Y. Lan

This specific *shtetl,* that *Hasidim* and just plain ordinary Jewish people would call Ger, or Gur, is to be found in the Warsaw vicinity, of the Grójec District. The *shtetl* sits at the edge of the Vistula River, about 38 kilometers from the Polish capitol city. In 1918, it was incorporated

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27 An allusion to the legend of Mount Sinai rising from its foundation during the time of the giving of The Law.

28 The faithful acceptance of The Law, in which the Israelites first said 'We will do,' and only then, 'We Will Hear.'

within the boundaries of the Polish Republic. The Nazis captured it immediately at the beginning of their invasion of Poland, in September 1939. In this day, Ger is found in the territory of the Polish Democratic Republic. Ger was built up in the 14th century by the archbishop of Poznań, [Stefan] Wierzbowski.[29]

The influx of Jewish people into Ger began in the first years of the 19th century; it did so, since we find in the ledger of the community, an entry for the year 1808 that there were 60 Jewish souls in the *shtetl*, who constituted about 10% of the general population. At the end of that century, there were nearly 3,000 Jews in Ger, who constituted about half the general population. In 1941, 3,800 Jews lived there, and of these, only 500 survived the war.

To the End of The First World War

At the beginning of the 19th century, the prohibition against Jews, to take up residence in Ger, was nullified. From that time on, as previously mentioned, a rapid and continuous influx of Jews begins, which reaches its peak in the middle of the 19th century, where as a result of this inward immigration process, the Jewish population in Ger achieved an absolute majority approximately in 1835. From approximately 1860 onward, the growth of the population, of the Ger Jewish settlement, is largely due to natural growth.

It would not be an exaggeration to refer to Ger as the 'capitol city of *Hasidism*.' From all the ends of Poland, and from neighboring countries, every Friday, thousands of *Hasidim* would stream there, as well as ordinary Jews, who came in order to observe the Sabbath in the ambit of the ADMo"R. During festival holidays, their numbers would reach ten thousand men.

The *Rebbes* of Ger were renown not only for being great *Tzaddikim,* but also for scholars who were out of the ordinary, and also men of wisdom, and genuine authorities on the Torah. For the development of the Ger community, and its central role in Polish *Hasidism*, one has to thank the *Alter* rabbinical family, and especially the founder of this dynasty, R' Yitzhak-Meir Alter Rothenberg ben Israel (5559/1799 - 5626/1866).

The *Rebbe*, Yitzhak Meir Alter, was one of the pillars of Polish *Hasidism* in the 19th century. He was born in Ger, and when he passed away, and was brought to his final rest, in Warsaw. He was a student of the *Gaon*, R' Aryeh Leib Tzintz of Plock. R' Yitzhak Meir is counted among those who continued the tradition that was developed in Przysucha, and had an influence in Warsaw for many years, to which he brought *Hasidism*, at the time that Polish *Hasidism* was coalescing around the central figure of R' Mendele of Kotzk. Among R' Yitzhak Meir's decisions, during his Warsaw period, one finds the permission for observant Jews to wear European-style clothing.

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29 Historical records suggest this to have been in the 17th century.

The village of Góra already existed in the 13th century. Completely destroyed during a Swedish occupation known as the Deluge, in 1666, it became the property of Stefan Wierzbowski, Bishop of Poznań, who decided to found a new town on the ruins. His plan was to build a so-called calvary—a religious center dedicated to passion plays and services which was quite popular in the early modern Poland. He was encouraged by the fact that the local landscape closely resembled that of the Holy Land.

After the passing of the *Rebbe* of Kotzk in 1859, the larger part of the *Hasidim* of Kotzk declared R' Yizhak-Meir as their *Rebbe*, who by that time, had taken up residence in Ger. He opposed the participation of Jewish youth in the Polish uprising of 1863 (The 'January Uprising'). From among his many books, most of which appeared after his death, the '*Khidushei HaRI"M* outlines (Responsa regarding the tractate of *Kidushin*), what was the case, and continues to remain popular in the scholarly world. Also in the '*Evven HaEzer leShulkhan Arukh Kho"V*' 'The Responsa of the *Khidushei HaRI"M* to *Khulin*,' 'Responses to *Gittin*' (1877), 'Responses to *Baba Kama* and *Baba Metzia*' (1886), 'Responses to *Ketubot* and *Kidushin,*' (1875). He stepped out against Enlightenment with his renown composition, '*Derekh Tzaddikim*,' which first received literary recognition in 1912. The loyal successor to R' Itcheh Meir, was his grandson, R' Aryeh Leib Alter, 'The Second *Rebbe* of Ger.' Itcheh Meir's son, R' Abraham-Mordechai , died during his father's lifetime). R' Aryeh Leib, who is also known as the '*Sfat Emet*,' after the book that he wrote, was born in Ger in 5607/1847, and died in 5665/1905. He took over the rabbinical seat in Ger in 1870. He had an enormous influence in Poland. He was outstanding in his breadth of knowledge and modesty, as well as his acuity. Because of his influence, Polish *Hasidim* did not affiliate with Herzl's political Zionism. His major interest was in the dissemination of Torah. Apart from the previously mentioned book, *'Sfat Emet*,' which appeared a year after he died, he also wrote a commentary 'On the Tractates *Mo'ed* and *Kidushin*.' (Published in 1925).

The Jews of Ger made their living from trade and crafts. Running lodging facilities was a vocation that occupied an important role in making a livelihood, where thousands of Jews would stay when they traveled to the *shtetl* for the Sabbath and Festival holidays.

Between the World Wars

The son of the '*Sfat Emet*,' R' Abraham Mordechai ben R' Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter (5624/1864 - 5708/1948), put forth the great *Hasidic* tradition of Ger. As the successor to his distinguished father, he excelled in his commitment to Torah study, and in the introduction of order [and discipline] into the organization of Ger *Hasidism*. He affiliated himself with '*Agudat Israel*,' and was one of its principal leaders. He was a *Lover of Zion*, and up to the Second World War, he visited the Land of Israel several times. Thanks to him, a number of improvements were carried out in the education of Orthodox [Jewish] children in Poland. With his consent, the girls' school *Bais Yaakov* was founded, as well as the middle school for [Jewish] daughters, '*Khavatzelet*' in Warsaw. After the Nazi invasion, R' Abraham Mordechai was fortunate, together with a part of his family, to flee into the Soviet-occupied eastern territory of the country. After this, he made *aliyah* to The Land of Israel, and took up residence there, in Jerusalem, near his Yeshiva, '*Sfat Emet*.' He passed away during the siege of Jerusalem in 1948. His son, Israel, took his place. A second son, Menachem Mendl, who up till the war, was the Headmaster of the Yeshiva of Ger, and Chair of the Rabbinical Assembly of Poland, was murdered by the Nazis in a death camp.

As previously noted, a large part of the Jews of Ger, before the war, made a living from running lodging houses, which week-in and week-out become filled with thousands of *Hasidim*, and ordinary Jews, poor and rich, simple people and people of stature, including even members of the Polish Sejm and Senate.

The larger portion of these facilities in Ger was in Jewish hands, Among the Jewish merchants, it is necessary to mention the ones who dealt in fowl, and cattle merchants. Also, the wagon drivers made a good living, especially, as you can imagine, on Fridays, and before the Festival Holidays. Among the tens of different ways Jewish craftsmen made a living, it is especially of note to mention the *shtrymel* makers. Also, there was no lack of shoemakers and tailors.

The Ger synagogue was new. It was erected a few years before the First World War (1909/10), and it was exceptionally beautiful and richly appointed. There were about 2000 seats there, and thousands of places for standing room. Near the synagogue there was a *Bet HaMedrash* and a Yeshiva, where students came to study from all the ends of Poland. There was a substantial library in the synagogue of the *Rebbe* of Ger, being one of the largest Yiddish libraries in the world.

The most important political conflict in Ger was carried out between the Zionists and *'Agudat Israel.'* In the elections to the community council, in the year 1936, the National Bloc, under the leadership of the Zionists, won 4 mandates. Also, '*Agudat Israel*' obtained 4 mandates. The internal negotiations within the Zionist bloc can be seen from the elections for the 16th Zionist Congress, in 1929. The largest number of ballots, that were drawn at that time, was done so by the left-wing *Poalei Tzion* party, which received 31 ballots. After them came *Al HaMishmar* with 29, '*Mizrahi*' and '*Eyt Livnot.*' At the elections to the 17th Zionist Congress in 1931, the largest number of ballots were cast for the '*Front For Israeli Labor,*' (68) and after them – '*Al HaMishmar*' (55), '*Mizrahi,*' '*HeHalutz HaMercazi,*' and '*Eyt Livnot,*' with a minimal number of ballots. In Ger, the '*Bund*' did cultural and professional work, and in the 1934 elections for the municipal leadership, they received two mandates.

The Holocaust

When the war broke out, a large part of the Jews of Ger fled to Warsaw and to the eastern provinces of Poland. Those Jews who remained in Ger, suffered from German decrees in a terrifying way, and were subject to cruel harassment. The *Rebbe's* great *Bet HaMedrash* was transformed into a stable for horses. It was forbidden to Jews to walk on the sidewalks; they were seized for forced labor. A ghetto was not established in Ger. In October 1939, a *Judenrat* was set up there, and during 1940, many refugees and homeless people came to the *shtetl.* On April 1, 195 fleeing people came from Lodz, Alexander, Fabianiec, Suwalk and Kalisz. On June 1, the *shtetl* took in an added 200 refugees, and those who were driven out of various places. And in January 1941, when additional fleeing people streamed into Ger, they added about 300 more souls from the surrounding villages.

The Nazi ripped out the gravestones from the large Jewish cemetery, and used them to pave the entry way of the German command, in the camp of the Russian prisoners, near Ger. To this day, the Jewish cemetery has entirely vanished, and does not exist. In its place, there is a wide, neglected parcel of ground.

In February 1941, the Jews were driven out of Ger. They were not permitted to take along any necessities, or belongings for their use. The Nazis herded the Jews together in the area opposite the

church, and fell upon them like a storm. Many women and children were shot right there at that assembly point. Many children were stamped to death by the murderers with their boots. The Jews were then led off to the Warsaw Ghetto, and immediately took to massive plundering of their abandoned homes. The Jewish lodging houses had already been robbed, during the first months after the Nazis marched in. The assault on the Jewish houses lasted for several days.

On February 25, 1600 Jews from Ger arrived at the Warsaw Ghetto. An additional 1943 arrived several days later. There, the fate of the Jews from Ger was the same as that for the other ghetto inhabitants.

Unforgettable

By Menachem Ben-Uri
Tel-Aviv

From a geographical standpoint, and also in regard to the number of its population, Ger needed to be counted as a small *shtetl*; however, from the standpoint of its spiritual importance and influence – especially because of its rabbinic dynasty – Ger had much more visibility than certain of the large cities in Poland. And like those, Ger occupied a very prominent and important place in Polish Jewry – and also in the Jewish literature and community life.

For me, however, as one of the people from Ger, a person who was born and raised there – and who had the good fortune to save himself from that terrifying conflagration, that enveloped the *shtetl*, as it did all the other Jewish settlements of the Poland and Eastern Europe of yesteryear; for me, Ger has remained in my memory as the home of my childhood years, of my youth, where every place and every corner is loved and precious, and baked deeply into my heart.

In no way am I seeking to write a definitive treatment about the extermination and the fire and smoke-ruined Jewish *shtetl.* This is far beyond my capacity and possibility. What I do wish to convey here, are merely single impressions, which have remained etched in me, from my childhood years, and which will remain with me as long as, and for all the time that, my eyes will still remain open.


קופה לעזרה הדדית
של עולי גורה־קלבריה

Page 91: The Mutual Aid Society of the Émigrés of Góra Kalwaria

I will also not tell this in any chronological order, because the order is not as important as the experience itself, and [as the *Haggadah* says] everyone who tells more of it, he is praiseworthy. Who could have anticipated, that when such a terrible storm would come, that it would be comparable to the legendary [sic: Biblical] Deluge; but this was a deluge of fire, that destroyed Jewish life.

If each one, of those very few, who managed to save themselves from that fiery deluge and extermination, would tell – yes, not much more than 'a bit' of what they went through, it would be possible then to create an eternal monument, a permanent memorial to what had transpired, which would characterize the role of the little *shtetl* of Ger in the Jewish life of the Poland of yesteryear.

A number of episodes come to mind from the year 1914, when I was still a *Heder* student. The First World War broke out, and before the High Holy Days, a large number of Russian recruits entered Ger. The front stabilized itself not far from our *shtetl.* Many Jews, especially those from the wealthier classes, were particularly fearful of anti-Semitic incidents, which the soldiers would instigate, and so traveled off to Warsaw. My mother, with the children, who did not have the wherewithal to make such a trip, traveled to a nearby village, Piaseczno. This was during *Hol HaMoed Sukkot*, on a Friday nightfall. When we traveled through the Boniew Forest, we heard the report of cannon fire, and we saw the fires that broke out. These were the Germans, who were shelling the area, and every minute, a fire flashed in the darkness, and lit up the entire vicinity. And in this manner, the shooting kept up for the entire time, until we arrived in Piaseczno.

In the morning, early on the Sabbath, a cannonade of fire thundered again, and this time, the Germans fired mercilessly on the village of Piaseczno, despite the fact that this village had no military significance, and there were no soldiers there. And in that time, the Germans were still thought of as being 'good and cultured' people. However that inborn military spark already burned in their unclean blood, and in this First War, already practiced a 'total' war, since *'Krieg heute – is als Krieg*[30]*,*' and for this reason, they also shot at totally innocent residents, in order to instill terror and demoralization among the civilian population.

We fled down into a cellar, in order to shield ourselves. I was eleven years old at that time, and I wanted to see what was going on in the street, and how one 'wages war.' Accordingly, I stole out of the cellar stealthily, and went out into the street, and I saw how the wounded people were being carried into the *Bet HaMedrash*, which had been turned into a hospital.

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30 War today – is still war



Page 93: *A Reception for Peretz Torman in Tel-Aviv*

In the last years of the war, the young people abandoned the *shtetl en masse*. Many went off to Warsaw, or other large cities, where it was easier to get work. Those that had the means, emigrated to North America, to the Land of Israel (or as it was called in those days, 'Palestine'), to Argentina, or other countries – and would it have been, that more Jews had done so, in that time, then they would not have had to be accounted for on that sorrowful and bloody list of the six million martyrs. Ger was left – as was the case with other small Jewish towns – because there were no larger industries there, where one could arrange for some sort of stable employment. And those that could indeed 'arrange' for a specific undertaking, and learn a trade, led a very poor and debilitating life. One needed to start as an apprentice-boy, as was the case in the 'good old days,' who were portrayed so vividly in the writings of the 'grandfather,' *Mendele Mokher Sforim*; It was necessary to work for a year, or several years, without pay and in that manner, 'go with the flow' by helping out the lady of the house with her housework.

After this 'training,' one obtained an entirely meager salary, and for this, one had to work from the early morning hours until late at night, by the light of an oil lamp. Electricity did not hurry in coming to Ger. It was not only once that the glass container of the lamp burst, and it was glued together with paper, which impaired the light emanating from the lamp, making it dimmer, and one continued working... and this is how the 'industrialists' and the 'proletarians' lived in Ger. The social and economic difference between the classes, was in actuality quite minimal, and in the factories, a family-like atmosphere reigned, which united the worker with his several social peers.

When the worker received a bonus of a couple of rubles, or by some other way managed to get a little money, he then went out on his own and became a boss. The most intense yearning for a worker was to become 'independent,' to work 'for himself,' to free himself from being obligated to the good will of another. This is characteristic of the nature of the Jewish person. It is told that a Jewish soldier, after a hard day's work attending a cannon, under the command of his seniors, who rode him

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hard, came into the barracks and said: – If God will help me, and I will come home, I will buy myself a small cannon, and start working for myself...

By character, a Jewish person is not a slave. The truth is, that Jews were slaves back in the *Haggadah* of Passover. In the worst years of living in the Diaspora, even in the ghettos of the Middle Ages, the Jews were internally free, and led a life of spiritual independence. Jews did not know of a spiritual anxiety from which many nations have recently liberated themselves...

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Page 95: *The Zlotagorsky (Har-Zahav) Family from Ger, in Tel-Aviv 1955*

It is because of this, that Jewish workers, perhaps – motivated by Jewish poverty in general – excel with a sort of rebellious spirit, with a striving towards new horizons, with ideals of national, social and individual freedom. It was in this way that new ideas of Zionist redemption arose, and also ideals of general human realization, and in Ger, political parties of all kinds came into being; unions that fought for better living conditions, and cultural institutions, where spiritual satisfaction was sought, which thirsted for education and knowledge.

Young people entered into these movements with the full fire of their souls, and when the older generation proposed *Hasidism*, the younger people, in their way, fought a battle for its own sake, and there was the Ger of the heights, where a spiritual life pulsed, and the ideals of national and socialist justice held sway. All of the political persuasions were joined into the Zionist movement, from *Mizrahi* to the leftist *Poalei-Tzion*, and *HaShomer HaTza'ir,* and also the *Bund* and the leftists.



Page 97: *Family of Shmuel Zeinvill Zlotagorsky, 80th Birthday Party, Tel-Aviv 1967*

All of this was torn out of the earth of Ger, by the roots. The chain that connected generations was torn out, that which had continued on for hundreds of years, and put is characteristic stamp on the face of Ger, and on the entirety of Jewish life in Poland. But this 'golden chain' was sundered only for a specific point of the Diaspora. 'Flowering Letters'; You can burn the parchment, but not the letters, the spirit, that is concealed within them. That spirit flies about, and lives forever. The spirit of Ger was not exterminated; it lives and will continue to live, in the broad, wide Jewish world.

The Ger below, on the map of Poland, or as it was called by the gentiles – Góra Kalwaria, was a small, poor Jewish *shtetl*; but the Ger of above, was an important spiritual center for Polish *Hasidism*, where thousands of Jews would come together on the Sabbaths and Festival Holidays, coming from all corners of the country, and from outside countries as well. The '*Shalom* House,' the room where one would greet the *Rebbe*, was a sort of 'Holy of Holies' where the Jew, in the presence of the *Tzaddik*, would renew his bond with God.

At the time of *Selichot*, the *Shammes* of the synagogue would, before dawn, go through the streets of the city, and bang on the shutters, with the behest: 'Arise, to perform service before The Creator, for *Selichot!*' And the Jews would go to the community *Bet HaMedrash*, or to the *Rebbe's* synagogue, and with great seriousness of intent, beseech God to forgive them for all sins, that they had committed, wittingly, or unwittingly.

Before *Rosh Hashanah*, *Hasidim* would begin arriving from all corners of the Jewish Diaspora. The innkeepers of the lodging houses in Ger would await the arrival of the *Hasidim* at the '*Koleika*' and take their luggage from them. The better off would go to the hotels, and the ordinary folk would arrange quarters for themselves with town residents, who would give up their own beds for guests, and along with the members of their families, 'make do, one way or another.' This was a collateral

source of income for the *balebatim* of Ger. There were no set prices for such improvised accommodations at lodging houses, with everyone paying in accordance with his means.

The voice of the well-known *Baal-Tefilah*, of the Ger *Bet HaMedrash*, R' Leib Meir ז"ל, still rings in my ears. When, during Shacharit on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, he would call out *'LeYodeah Makhashavot b'Yom Din... leLoveysh Tzedakot BaDin*[31]*,'* the Heavenly Gates of Compassion most certainly opened. The pale faces of the young men, among them my brother Leib'l ז"ל, swim up before my eyes, who would sit in the Ger *Bet HaMedrash*, on those long wintry nights, hunched deeply, over volumes of the *Gemara,* and a sweet melody of Torah [study] spread itself over the streets of the city, in the stillness of the night.

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Page 99: A Group of Girls; Students of the 'Bais Yaakov' *School*

Tens of years have gone by, since that terrifying day, in which the fate of Polish Jewry was sealed, and the history in which our *shtetl* Ger wrote one of the most beautiful pages.

This took place on the eve of *Rosh Hodesh* of Nissan. All the Jews in Ger were gathered together in front of the Magistrate building in Ger, and it was explained to them that they were going to be taken to the Ghetto in Warsaw. This was their last journey: the journey to Auschwitz.

From that day, when they were driven out of their occupied homes, until their annihilation, they went through all forms of suffering, which transcend any attempt to find forms of human expression that can describe them.

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31 The quote in the text is misprinted and omits an elision in this prayer

Swollen with hunger, and tortured by the cold, until they drew their last breath, they believed that a day of vengeance would come for all their tribulations. They drew solace from the hope that the Eternal People will outlive their uncouth murderers, and be privileged to have a bright future. They lived with the thought that a day would come when Jews, carrying arms and ammunition in their hands, would defend the honor of their people, knowing at the outset, that they will not emerge alive from this turmoil of war. Many of them found such an honorable death between the falling walls of the burning ghetto.

Year-in and year-out, on the *Yahrzeit* day, the eve of Nissan, we all gather, those who are from Ger, in Israel and are the *Remnants of those who Fled*, on Mount Zion, to honor the sacred memory of the martyrs of Ger. With broken hearts, enveloped in deep sorrow, year-in and year-out, we come together to offer our respect to our fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, who were cut down in such a merciless way by the Nazi murderers. They were not privileged to be given a proper Jewish burial; not privileged to see how those, who remained alive, would gather together around their memorials on the day of the *Yahrzeit*, and unite in their memory.



Page 100: Uri and Yaser'keh Mordowicz

And so, we come together, at the symbolic gravestone that memorializes the martyrs of Ger on Mount Zion, on this sacred location of the country, which, thanks to the blood of millions of men, women and children, who were put to death in *Sanctification of the Name*, where we are privileged to be. We are not allowed to forget their sacred memory – not us, our children, nor children's children.

Memories of Ger

By Menachem Gildoni (Goldhecht)
Israel

It is possible to tell – and still tell about Ger – without end. Books have been written, and undoubtedly will continue to be written, about this little, poor *shtetl*, but which documented a very important page in the history of Jews in Poland, and especially into the history of *Hasidism*.

However, when we, those born in Ger, and Ger scions, come together to commemorate our dear relatives and friends, whose lives were snuffed out in such a terrifying manner, in the *Great Conflagration*, that the Hitlerian Asmodeus ignited, and in which a third of our tortured people were incinerated, it is appropriate that we tell from our memories. Let us remember and not forget our past, our patriarchs and martyrs, whose memory is so dear to us, and is deeply rooted in our hearts.



Page 103: *Mott'l Karpman, a Bookkeeper at the Jewish Bank, With a Group of Friends*

Who among us from Ger, or from among those who were in Ger even once, on a Yom Kippur, doesn't remember the specific atmosphere, the trembling and God-fearing tension, that one felt in one's self on that day in Ger.

After the *Final Meal*, a sacred silence descended on the *shtetl* as if shot from a sling. The places of business have long since been closed down, and one does not see a living thing in the streets. The sun sits in the west, and colors the sky with a deep red hue, sitting over the Kalabriske *Gasse*. At the other end of the Gasse, there, where past generations lie in their final resting places, it looks like a huge hellish fire has been lit, and in the hearts of the Jewish children of Ger, thoughts and images of Hell arise... From the side of the cemetery, an autumn wind comes, and shakes loose the last of the golden leaves from the trees, and spreads them all over the streets. On one's lips, as if by themselves, come the words of the sentence, 'I am dust in life, and how much more....'

And suddenly, as if by an order from on high, or just so, as if assisted by a magician's wand, the oppressive silence is broken. Like whispering streams and streamlets, Jews course by, quickening their pace, wrapped in their prayer shawls, who are on their way to *Kol Nidre*; and these little streams all coalesce into a great river of people – men, women, and small children. From all streets and byways, from each house and yard, a stream of Jews courses to one and only one destination.

On the main street, opposite each other, stand the two large *Batei Medrash*. In the *Rebbe*'s *Bet HaMedrash*, which together with its two courtyards is packed full with thousands upon thousands of Jews, to the point that you couldn't insert a pin between them, you can hear the powerful tenor voice of Yoss'leh of Khenczyn, accompanied by a choir under the direction of Yankl Talmud. On the morning of Yom Kippur, services will be led by the renown *Baal Tefilah* Joseph Groinims ('Tzal'keh) with his singers, under the direction of Shakhna Waxman and Yehoshua Meshullam's.

On the other side of the street, in the municipal *Bet HaMedrash*, the *balebatim,* working people, orchard leasers, craftsmen, storekeepers, merchants, and just plain ordinary *balebatim*, all worship

together. It is here that Eliezer Motzidlober, and after his death, his son, Moshe'l Szimkhowicz, would instill a trembling in the hearts of the congregation with his '*Psukei d'Zimra*[32].' Herschel Becker and Yankl Szeps would lead the *Shacharit* service, and especially – Meir Hazzan with his choir, which consisted of his own sons, my dear friends: Beinusz, Moshe-'Lozer, Shlomo-Reuben ז"ל. I recall that in this very *Bet HaMedrash*, Meir-Hazzan once introduced an innovation in ending the *Kaddish*, '*Da'amiran beOlma veImru Amen*' using a melody, and the Rabbi objected to it, with the complaint that the congregation enjoys the melody, and forgets to respond with an '*Amen*.'



Page 106: *A Group of Members of* 'HaShomer HaLeumi' *escort their comrade, Mendl Goldhecht to his* aliyah *to Israel*

Heaven forbid, but our *shtetl* did not stand out in having and large factories or manufacturing facilities, but there were also no unemployed people in Ger either. The Jews of Ger, in every instance the largest part of them, worked and toiled from the beginning of the day until late into the night, in order to make a living. The shoemakers and tailors of Ger – and who didn't know Skinny Mendl, David Kiya, Velvel'eh the Tailor, Israel'keh the Tailor, and others – who would clothe the naked bodies of the peasantry in the area. In a similar diligent manner, Mendl Muliazh, Chaim-Mordechai Koval, my relative, and Yeshayahu Bender, Mott'l Stoliazh, Tuvia Watszazh, Israel Zayfnzieder, Israel-Moshe the Dyer, and more and more others, a long list of bakers and butchers, fishmongers, wagon drivers, water carriers, storekeepers, market merchants – all worked and toiled diligently, none of whom was in any way wealthy, but all of whom worked very hard to earn their livelihood under duress. In thinking about it, I believe that one could count the wealthy people in Ger on the fingers of one hand; and one would have had fingers left over...

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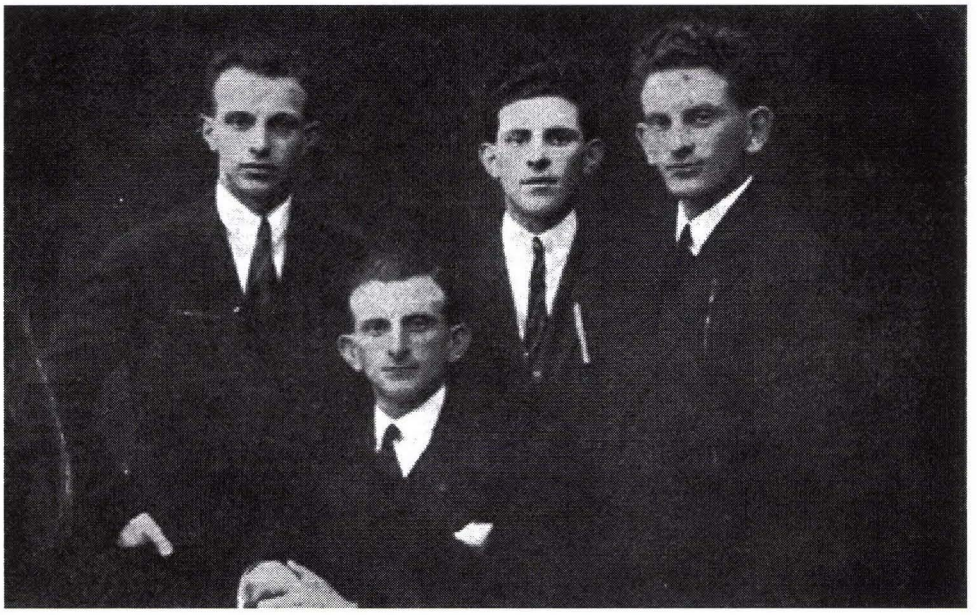
32 The preliminary morning Psalms recited as a prelude to the main *Shacharit* service.

Every child in a cradle knew that Ger was a nest of poisonous anti-Semitism and Jew-hatred. The essential fact was, that in such a small *shtetl*, in which there resided altogether three thousand Christians, which incidentally most of whom made their living from the Jews, in which there were literally seven churches (or 'places of uncleanliness' as the Ger Jews called them), is enough to indicate in hindsight what the sort of relationship existed between Jews and Christians. The leader of the Christian intelligentsia, such as the teacher Piekarniak, such as Wachhausen, Stanczyk, and their friends, sedulously attended to the fact that the poison of anti-Semitism be deeply injected into gentile hearts in Ger itself, and the surrounding villages. And what Jewish child would dare to show himself in Czersk out of fear, that the gentiles there would assault him or at the very least, sic their feral dogs on him. And who does not recall the widely-branched Christian German families in Ger (in addition, they were *Volksdeutsche*), owners of houses and land parcels: the Hoffmanns, the Lents, Bellsteins, and others, who, in hindsight regarding anti-Semitism, had nothing to be ashamed of in comparison to the Poles themselves...



Page 108: The Brothers Abraham, Yaakov and Menachem-Mendl Goldhecht[33]

After this, came the time of the Polish youth organizations, such as '*Szczelec*' the '*Sokol*' etc., which practically had an official anti-Semitic program. And there was practically not a single day where there wasn't some sort of clash between Jews and gentiles. Here, we must also recall the local police, all of whom grazed, and waxed fat from Jewish 'donations,' which did not deter them from causing the Jews trouble, and to heap insults on them at every possible turn. And the head of all 'Guardians of the Law,' there always was – under the Russians, under the Germans, and also later on under the Poles – the old Jew-hater Zhabert, who began [his career] as a simple guardsman, and ended as the commandant of the Ger police – but to him, the only think he called a Jew was Жидовская Морда...[34]

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[33] A fourth, unidentified man is in the picture

[34] Jewish nose.

There was a time when the Jews made something of a living from the military garrison stationed in Ger. But, for a long time, this too came to an end. The First Heavy Artillery Division of the PA"C[35] arrived, which considered itself to be a strictly enforced military secret, and after them, the Ger garrison was transformed into a central school for the border guards, and at that time, all of the Jewish services were shunted to the side, and their place was taken by 'pure' Poles.

But it was not only the meager piece of bread that was taken away from the Jew, he was demeaned and hounded as much as could be. In hindsight, the district doctor, the anti-Semite, Dr. Binder, excelled in this respect. Nothing was out of bounds to him, so long as it could cause Jews trouble. At the end of 1936, when the orgies between the locally stationed soldiers, and the gentile girls from the surrounding villages, brought on a variety of diseases to the local garrison, this unrepentant devourer of Jews demanded that chaste Jewish daughters be ordered to undergo medical examinations...

It would be possible to go on telling and retelling about the Jew-hatred in Ger, which, as a matter of course, made the frightening fate that was brought upon the Jews of Ger by the hands of the Nazis, even more bitter. But here, I wish to recollect one thing, which remains in my memory from my childhood years, like a serious nightmare. Not far from the *shtetl*, was a small woods, into which no Jewish foot had ever trodden. In this wood, a solitary house stood, ringed by a small garden, cows, pigs, and horse stables, barns, and chicken coops. And roaming all over this profuse estate, large fierce dogs, without end, roamed about as guards.

A distinguished family lived in this solitary house – the Koczanskys. Their mission was – to clean off all the dead bodies and corpses in the area – horses or cows that had died, mad dogs, etc. The father of this family was a hale and hearty, tall gentile, a drunkard, whose face was heavily stippled and who grew a large moustache on his upper lip, the mother being a thickset, healthy gentile woman, and a witch of the worst kind. And two Haman-like sons were there as well, tall, strong, and dissolute thugs, who instilled fear in the entire area, especially when they got drunk. But then again, when were they not drunk? When these two gems would sometimes arrive in the *shtetl* early in the morning, they would not return home until evening, when they were good and liquored up, and had already fought with and drawn blood in altercations with other thugs, also landing a blow here and there, on a Jew they might encounter along their way.

One time, on a wintery, snowy Friday at dusk, Shye'leh the Shoemaker was walking in the street, a small scrawny Jewish man, with barely a few strands of hair on his pate. He is casually walking along, on his way home from *Kabbalat Shabbat* services, in the *Bet HaMedrash*, and the cold cuts into him, down to his scrawny bones. However, it is the Holy Sabbath, and that extra bit of spirituality warms Shyeh'leh the Shoemaker so strongly, that he doesn't feel the biting cold. He floats as if in the air, and leaps over the deep snow, humming a Sabbath melody to himself. And here, a sleigh, full of drunken Koczanskys comes along, looking for some sort of a victim, with whom they can end the carousing, that they have been carrying on all day. And not having anything better at hand, the diminutive, scrawny, and pitiable Shyeh'leh the Shoemaker also is a suitable 'morsel.' And the large strong fists of the drunkards, descend on the weak, childlike body, until he

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35 Polska Armia Czołgistów

falls to the snow and lies there, more dead than alive. And the sleigh bells of the gentile sleigh recede in the distance, mixing in with the wild shouts of the drunken father and his drunken, murderous sons. With great effort, and exhaustion, I and the other Jews who found the unconscious Shykeh'leh lying bloodied in the snow, revived him, and brought him home.

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Page 109: A Grandmother and Her Two Grandchildren

Yes, Jewish blood in Ger was always cheap, until that Dark End came, and created the current state where Ger is *'Judenrein'*....

How the *Rebbe* of Ger Was Saved From Hitler's Gehenna

By Moshe Yekhezkieli
Jerusalem

A Rescue-Committee in New York and an Intervention by the American and Italian Governments[36]

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36 Author's footnote: A Summary of 'The Miracle of Delivery of the *Rebbe* of Ger' by Moshe Yekhezkiel, Published by 'Jeshurun' – Jerusalem.

The *Rebbe* Visited the Land of Israel Five Times

On that frightful and dark day, Friday, the *parsha* of *Ki Tavo*, 5699 – September 1, 1939 – the Second World War broke out, and the Nazis began to penetrate into Polish territory. A dark cloud enveloped the world, and a fright seized all Jewish settlements. It was well-known, that those beasts in human form, Hitler, may his name be erased, the leader of Teutonic Germany, the Führer of the Nazi murder-legions, had always threatened the Jews in all of his public appearances. He did not hide his bloodthirsty intentions, and in order to win friends and attract accomplices among all the Jew-haters of the world, he shamelessly promised that if a war were to break out, he will exact a bitter vengeance from Jews, and would exterminate them in all of Europe.

And in the general fear for the fate of Polish Jewry, which consisted of a significant part of the Jewish people, and which led such an active and spiritually rich Jewish life; and among the faithful of the Jewish people, there was also great concern over the fate of the leading lights of Jewry, for the religious leaders of the people, at the head of whom, the shining persona of the senior *Tzaddik* of his generation shone, the *Rebbe* of Ger and the members of his family, and others, who resided in the Jewish communities of various towns in Poland.

Jews did not fashion any illusions for themselves, the goals of the Nazi Satan were confronted, and the Jews knew that this enemy sought to weaken the underlying religious leadership of Jewry, and of first priority, to kill the spiritual leaders, wipe out all cultural activity, and destroy all the social institutions of the Jewish people, in order to put an end to any trace of Jewish life. If the spirit can be asphyxiated, it will then be easier to impose control on the body. It was known that the poisonous arrows of Hitlerism, as was the case for all Jew-haters, were aimed first and foremost at the heads of the Jewish élite, that direct and influence Jewish life.

It is therefore not a surprise, that a large number of *Hasidim* were concerned and were querulous over the fate of the *Rebbe*, more than they cared about their own lives. The *Rebbe* felt sick and weak even before the war, and for a long time already, wanted to leave Poland, and make *aliyah* to Israel, but his loyal *Hasidim* didn't permit this. The impending fear was therefore mixed with pain and sorrow, seeing that the *Rebbe* remained in the *Vale of Tears*, that conquered Poland had become.

The *Rebbe* had always thought, and he would quite often say so, that he wishes to take up residence in the Holy Land. To this end, he had visited *The Land* five times, and on each succeeding visit, he wished to remain that much longer. Three years prior to the outbreak of the war, with all his problems, the *Rebbe* had definitively made the decision to move his residence from Ger to Jerusalem. However, the emotions of his thousands of *Hasidim* and followers tied him down; a mutual feeling of loyalty and responsibility, that restrained him from carrying out his desire, and abandon his flock, with whom he was so intimately bound up for all the years of his life.

This was in the year 5696, 1936, during the fifth visit of the *Rebbe* to the Land of Israel, in which he declared to those close to him, that he had decided to take up residence in *The Land*. At that time, he already felt himself to be like a citizen there. Immediately upon his return to Poland, he began to prepare himself for *aliyah*, and when this news became known in wider circles, attempts were made to 'influence' the *Rebbe* from all sides, and in this manner, people from town, as well as strangers all came out with arguments: – how are we to remain here without a leader, and is the *Rebbe* leaving

us to be like a flock without a shepherd? Others half-pleaded, and half-lectured: a Teacher who shows the way, who carries on a battle to advance Torah, has to remain with his congregation... the community leaders pleaded with the *Rebbe*, the activists, and all of the representatives and leaders of religious Polish Jewry.

– Where are we to find someone to lean on for advice? To whom shall we come to in times of distress, whether it be general, or something specific? – This was the discourse held among the thousands of people of our persuasion, old and young, who had gathered themselves around the Great *Tzaddik* of Ger.

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So the elderly *Rebbe* could not simply ignore so many expressions of general recognition, and he also could not control his personal feelings, those that tied him to his community, and he also did not want to give up his plan to make *aliyah* to *The Land*, a goal towards which he had strived for his entire life. So, in dealing with this inner struggle of two such deeply rooted sentiments, i.e.: his loyalty to the community, and his longing for Israel, did not want to make the decision, and he therefore turned over the issue of his *aliyah* to a Rabbinical Court of three Rabbis, asking them to make the decision, and that he would carry out their behest.

The Rabbinical Court was comprised of the Rabbi, R' Yaakov Meir Biederman, the Rabbi, R' Bunim Levin, and the Rabbi R' Abraham David Eisner, all holy and pure men, who subsequently were murdered in *Sanctification of the Name*, among the sacred communities of Poland.

After a longer deliberation, and in hearing out the views of authorities from the religious sector of Jewry, the Rabbinical Court decided, that for the time being, the *Rebbe* should not leave Poland. And the elderly *Rebbe* acceded to this judgment, and he remained with his community, until the murderous Holocaust befell them.

Saved from Death as if by a Miracle

When the accursèd Nazis assaulted Polish soil, a consultation took place among the members of the *Rebbe's* family, in which the deputies of the Sejm, R' Yaakov Truckenheim from Warsaw and R' Leib'l Mintzberg from Lodz, took part, both highly ardent *Hasidim* of Ger. The question that stood before them was, whether the *Rebbe* should remain in this small *shtetl* where the Nazis, may their name be eradicated, would find him immediately; or should he travel to Warsaw, where being in a larger city, it would prove easier for him to hide from these wicked Germans. The Polish capitol city had already been bombed by German aviation, but despite this, it was decided that the *Rebbe*, and his entire family, should immediately leave Ger. When the *Rebbe* was told of this decision, he said: 'It would make better sense to travel down the Vistula to Ludomir, and not to Warsaw, having a sound mind confined to a sick body. However, since this is what was decided, let us then go...'

The entire Rabbinical family traveled out of Ger to Warsaw on the *Koleika*, not taking any possessions. When they arrived at the Warsaw station, a taxi was already waiting for them, which had been obtained with great difficulty, because it was no longer possible to get gasoline in the city. In passing by *Ulica* Marshalkowska, a Polish officer stopped them, and demanded the use of the

coach, because he needed to transport wounded from a bombing explosion. The *Rebbe*, along with those who accompanied him, exited the wagon, and stationed themselves by a gate entrance, under a hail of bullets and the noise of bomb explosions. However, they had the good fortune of being able to grab a second taxi, and the *Rebbe* was brought to the house of R' Yoss'l Ka"Tz[37].

In the last day of the German assault, the house was struck by a Nazi bomb. In that tragic moment of shuddering from cannon fire, shooting, and bomb explosions, all the residents of the house gathered together in a corridor as far as possible from windows, and from the street. However, in that minute, the frightened *Rebbetzin* screamed out: 'Let us go inside!' The *Rebbe*, along with the *Rebbetzin* went inside, and they had no sooner stepped across the threshold, when a bomb fell onto the corridor, and two of the *Rebbe's* close confidantes fell dead on the spot. As if by a miracle, the *Rebbe* was spared, but he lost his hearing from the very powerful explosion, and the painful impact this caused, left traces with him until the last days of his life.

The two unfortunates, who fell before the *Rebbe*'s eyes, were brought to their final rest in a timely manner in the yard. It was the Eve of *Sukkot*, and on that very same yard, a *Sukkah* was erected, in accordance with ritual requirements. And it was in these Festival times, that the Germans staged a victory parade upon entering Warsaw, which cast fear over the entire populace, and especially on the Jews, because the march was accompanied by abusing and mocking the Jews. An armed group of hooligans threw a grenade into the yard, and destroyed the *Sukkah*, and also damaged the building.

That evening, the *Rebbe* left that residence, and moved to Twarda 29, where his brother-in-law lived, R' Yitzhak David Biederman, there, there was a prefabricated *Sukkah* on the first floor, and in the second floor, was the place where people assembled for group prayer. During such worship, a group of armed hooligans broke into the house, and seized Jews to do the dirty work of cleaning up the streets. They took along the Rabbi and *Tzaddik* Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Moshe Bezalel, and others. They passed the *Rebbe* up, as if they hadn't noticed him...

After this, the *Rebbe* changes his residence several times. In one of these, an armed band broke in, and murderously beat someone close to the *Rebbe*, robbed him, and then went away. In a second residence, the murderers – who apparently were Polish hooligans, who ran rampant among the Jews, with the permission of the Nazis – broke into the *Rebbe's* house, plundered the first room, where there were valuable objects, and carried them off. In an upstairs room, the *Rebbe* sat, studying from a book...

Searches, Interrogations and Pursuit

When the Nazis had barely taken over Warsaw, and their dark hegemony spread itself over the largest Jewish assembly in Diaspora Europe, the first demand was to register all the Jewish residents of the city. The order said that everyone, without exception, from a newborn suckling, to a person of old age, have to present themselves to the registration points, at a specified time; men, women, and children.

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37 A common acronym in Hebrew for **K**ohen **Tz**edek, signifying descent from the priestly caste.

Many Jews in Warsaw were afraid to have themselves listed, giving their names and addresses. They had very substantial concerns. Among them were activists, who took an active part in the economic boycott against Nazi Germany, and they were well known to the staff of the German consulate, who placed their names on a black list. Others were active in various labor parties, and knew that the Nazis would pursue them without mercy, and that they could be the first martyrs.

After the registration, the arrests began, with searches, and a pursuit of people. We quickly learned that the *Rebbe* of Ger was also being sought. They began to look for him in Ger, immediately after they entered the city, asking for the '*Wunder-Rebbe* Alter.' As is known, the *Rebbe* זצ"ל did not occupy a rabbinical seat in Ger, the *Hasidic* metropolis. R' David Weinberg was the Rabbi of the *shtetl*, who was an octogenarian *Torah* scholar, and they arrested the Rabbi, smacked him around, asked him what he called himself, and who he is, and when they concluded that he was not the *'Wunder-Rebbe*,' he was released, and immediately began their searches in Warsaw.

In the middle of the process of registration, the *Rebbe* was saved, literally by a miracle. His relatives did indeed register him, because it was a great danger not to do so, but in the column designated for 'occupation,' they did not enter the fact that he was a 'Rabbi,' but entered only that he was 'being hidden by his family.' As to the question of where the *Rebbe* came from, 'Ger' was not mentioned, but rather the city of Otwock was entered, where the *Rebbe* had lived for a period of time, during the years of The First World War.

When the detailed lists of the Jews in Warsaw were obtained by the *Gestapo*, they used these lists when they looked for its victims. Among others, there were two addresses: one, Grzybowska 24, where a Mordechai Alter lived, age 70 years, who came to Warsaw from Otwock. The address did not elicit any suspicion, and no inspections were made there. The second address was that of the son of the *Rebbe* of Ger, the Holy Rabbi R' Meir, who had come to Warsaw from Ger. The chief officer of the *Gestapo* in charge of Jewish Affairs, Mundi, may his name be erased, a cunning evil man, seized upon this, who immediately ordered a search in that house, certain that he had captured the *Rebbe* of Ger, but very quickly, he was disappointed.

The *Gestapo*, however, did not give up. On the second day after the search, a threatening demand was sent to Nowolipia 17, where R' Meir lived, that 'The Rabbi Alter must present himself personally for a special investigation.' In that time, it was already known what such a request foreboded, and so R' Meir took a couple of books with him, and went off to his son, and the entire family abandoned the house on Nowolipia, out of fear that there would be a search and torture, which was inseparably linked to this.

On the following morning, armed *Gestapo* members came to R' Meir's home. They found the door was locked, and when nobody answered, they sealed the residence, and affixed a note to the door, that the residence has been requisitioned, and anyone who enters it, will be sentenced to death. Being very profoundly worried about this situation that had been created, *Rebbe* Meir beseeched the leader

of the Jewish community, Czerniaków,[38] asking that he intercede on their behalf. Czerniaków immediately turned over a personal declaration to the *Gestapo*, in which he provided an assurance, that he knows R' Meir very well, and that he takes personal responsibility for him, and that he is not the '*Wunder-Rebbe*' for whom they are searching. The staff of the Gestapo, however, were not satisfied with this, and decided to conduct an investigation. Out of fear that the Rabbi not be molested, Czerniaków requested that a representative of the *Judenrat* be present at the search. This was granted to him, and Dr. Hillel Zeidman attended the search.

Also, as if by a miracle, the Rabbi emerged intact from the search, which could have ended very badly. He made a representation that he does not understand German, and that he is not in complete possession of his faculties. And as it emerged, he played this role very well. Dr. Zeidman, who served as the translator, declared to the inspector, that the Rabbi was suffering a nervous breakdown, as a result of recent events, and under these circumstances, one could not await any clear response from him.

The inspector became angry, and screamed like someone possessed: – What do you know about the '*Wunder Rebbe*?' How are you connected to him? Rabbi Meir continued with his 'act,' until the inspector lost patience, and drove both of them out...

Intervention by an Italian Diplomat

The remaining incidents of the *Rebbe's* rescue are no less unexpected and overwhelming, literally miraculous. On one fine day, the Italian Consul in Warsaw received a letter from the Italian Legate in Berlin, Baron Amolika, that said: 'I request that you give a visa for travel to Italy for Rabbi Abraham Mordechai Alter, his wife and children...' The letter was sent by a special emissary and according to the tone, it was possible to deduce that this was more of an order than a request. As it subsequently appeared, this was as a result of the Rescue-Committee, which was created for this purpose in the United States. The initiator of this committee was the Rabbi, R' Menachem Mendl Kosher. When the gruesome deeds of the Nazis towards the Jews became known in North America, the Jewish periodicals published a short notice about the Rescue Committee for extracting the *Rebbe* from the *Vale of Tears*. Prominent personalities from the Rabbinical world joined this committee, as well as people from the Jewish community and political life. Connections were established with government circles, and with diplomatic representatives of the Polish government.

Rabbi Kosher succeeded in interesting the president of the foreign relations committee of the Senate in this case, Sala Bloom, who had personally intervened with the State Department, which then took on the necessary diplomatic measures to rescue the *Rebbe*. The State Department made contact with the Mussolini government in Rome, through a neutral party.

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38 Adam Czerniaków (30 November 1880 – 23 July 1942) was a Polish-Jewish engineer and senator, and head of the Warsaw Ghetto *Judenrat*. He committed suicide in the Warsaw Ghetto on 23 July 1942 by swallowing a cyanide pill, a day after the commencement of mass extermination of Jews known as the *Grossaktion Warsaw*.

As Rabbi Kosher relates, thousands of Ger *Hasidim* promised their cooperation and to offer help in partnership. It was not easy to win the Senator over, Rabbi Kosher tells. An assimilated Jew, whose grasp of *Yiddishkeit* was sufficiently weak, but his influence in government circles was great, and deciding. As a prudent politician, he did not want to impute such an exceptional action with Jewish sentiments, and he spent a great deal of time researching who the *Rebbe* was, and why this committee was created. Through this, he was able to convince himself that the *Rebbe* of Ger was a great man in the religious circles of Jewry, a spiritual leader of considerable reach in our generation.

The request of Louis Brandeis, the president of the Supreme Court in America[39], a man with deep roots in his Jewishness, also had an influence; he also achieve solidarity with the Rescue Committee, and asked the Senator to intervene with the White House.

The Senator promised that he has this matter well seated in his mind, and at the first opportunity, he would do all that is possible within his capacity. In that time, a direct emissary from the Warsaw Ghetto came to America, Dr. Chaim Shoshkes, a well-known journalist and activist. The Nazis had designated him as a representative seated in the *Judenrat*, but he revealed himself to be smuggled out of the country on false documents, and as a credible eyewitness, brought the sorrowful news, of how the Nazis are treating the Jews in conquered Poland. His testimony aroused American awareness, and deeply distressed the Jewish community.

The American press published, and extensively commented on his portrayals of the deeds of Nazi atrocity, and no doubt further remained as to the real nature of the Nazi intent towards the Jews. Dr. Shoshkes carried out one other secret mission: he brought a short letter from the son-in-law of the *Rebbe* of Ger, Rabbi Yitzhak Meir Levin, that said: 'The life of the *Rebbe* is in danger, and literally as a matter of saving a life, do everything that you can as quickly as possible to save him.' The address of Goldman's book publishing business was given, where the *Rebbe* could be found.

This letter shook up the Rescue Committee, and though it was the Sabbath, Rabbi Kosher, who lived in New York, immediately left to travel to Washington to see the Senator, Bloom, and on the same day, the Senator was in the White House, and an enciphered order was sent to the American ambassador in Rome, who did what he had to do. And as a result of this, the Italian Legate in Berlin sent a special emissary with an energetic note to the Italian Consul in Warsaw.

A Polish Aristocrat Voluntarily Joins the Rescue Effort

The news, that there was hope of rescuing the *Rebbe*, spread throughout the city, and reached the ears of a *Gestapo* agent. This became clear much later. Also, the Italian Consul was not certain... and unexpectedly, as if by a miracle, a Polish nobleman appeared by the name of Stefan Furayski, a nephew of the Polish president [Ignacy] Mościcki, who voluntarily committed

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39 The title 'president' in relation to the U.S. Supreme Court is anomalous, and perhaps inappropriate. Justice Louis Brandeis certainly sat on the Supreme Court, and was the first member of the Jewish faith to do so.

himself to cooperate in rescuing the *Rebbe.* Stefan Furayski was a Director of an Italian shipping society. As it appears, he learned of the order to give the *Rebbe* a visa, from the Italian Consul, and through an employee of the 'Joint,' he placed himself in contact with Jewish circles.

What was it that moved this Polish aristocrat to assume this mission that placed his own life in danger? It was a time when the Nazis dealt mercilessly with the Polish intelligentsia, and with special zeal, continued to 'liquidate' all those who had any connection to the circles of the former Polish government...

As Stefan Furayski told, in the year 1935, he had given the *Rebbe* a special stateroom on an Italian ship, that was going to the Land of Israel. The *Rebbe* made a strong impression on him, and in parting from one another, the *Rebbe* took out two cigars from a small container, and gave them to him as a gift. The Pole hid the cigars, as if they were an amulet, and kept them together with his jewelry. Shortly before the war, he visited his uncle, the Polish president at that time, and gave him one cigar. When the Nazis bombed Warsaw, several pieced of shrapnel destroyed his residence on the Fuksal *Gasse* in the aristocratic neighborhood. Not a single person in his family suffered from this, and from the wreckage that was created out of the furniture, only the small container with the *Rebbe's* 'cigar' emerged intact...

Stefan Furayski was an ardent 'Follower' of the 'Holy *Rebbe*,' and was not deterred by any sort of danger, and paid with his life for wanting to rescue him from the Nazi *Gehenna*...

The first thing that he did, was to get in contact with the Secretary of the Italian Consul – a Pole whom he knew. They went into a locked room in the consulate, and made a copy of the letter from the Italian ambassador in Berlin. Furayski then knew from whom the order came, and who was interested in rescuing the *Rebbe.* Through a trusted intermediary, he approached the Legate, and in a short time thereafter, the Warsaw Consulate issued the visas.

During that time, a special emissary came to Warsaw from the Rescue Committee in New York, Engineer Valery. He presented himself as a high-level functionary of the Fascist Party, and he was able to extract an 'identity card' from the *Gestapo* for the *Rebbe* and his coterie, and for a set sum of dollars, the gendarmerie placed two escorts at his disposal, and a letter of protection, and they took the *Rebbe* and his suite of followers to the Austrian-Italian border.

When they arrived in Trieste, ten o'clock at night, they were overwhelmed by a group of *Hasidim* in large number, with R' Yekhiel Meir Pick of Lodz at their head, who were waiting for the *Rebbe.* Unmindful of the fact that the *Rebbe's* travel had been shrouded in deep, dark secrecy, nevertheless, his loyal *Hasidim* knew of the last stations along his march route, and the time of his arrival. The joy was boundless, and on the second day telegrams of greeting began to arrive from Jerusalem, but then a new difficulty arose. The English Consul did not want to issue any visas to the Land of Israel. The Mandate authorities did not want to admit any refugees from occupied territories out of fear of espionage. The High Commissioner at that time was [Harold] MacMichael, and after extensive efforts, he advised that he certainly did not suspect the *Rebbe* of being involved in espionage, and

would issue a visa – but not to those who accompanied him. It was before Passover, and the *Rebbe* remained in Trieste and conducted the Seders in a small circle of his intimates.

In that time, news arrived from Poland, that the Gestapo had learned that the *Rebbe* of Ger, whom they had sought for so long, seems to have left the country. They began an investigation, and among others, they arrested the nobleman and friend of the Jews, Stefan Furayski...

After more lengthy efforts by the Rescue Committee in New York, it became possible to obtain visas for the *Rebbe* and his followers, and after much more tribulation, they arrived in Jerusalem, the Holy City. And so, the chain of the *Hasidism* of Ger was renewed, which is suckled by the traditions of Przysucha and Kotzk – and that golden chain was not sundered.

Cultural, Community and Secular Life

דאס קולטורעל, געזעלשאפטלעך און וועלטלעך לעבן

Parties in Ger

By Moshe Ravsky

In order to write about the parties in Ger, I must begin with that which I remember from my childhood years. Ger is known as a *Hasidic shtetl*, with the *Rebbe's* courtyard at its head. There were also *Hasidim* who followed other *Rebbes*: Skierniewice, Otwock, Work, Alexander, Gorodziska[40], and ordinary Jews who were not *Hasidim*, simple folk, and professional people, merchants on a greater and lesser scale, and an endless number of craftsmen, storekeepers and village itinerants. Among the non-Ger *Hasidim*, the most significant were the Skernowiec, where two important and large families came together: the Taumans and the Rivkys, who had a separate *shtibl*. Until The First World War, there was no knowledge of political parties in Ger. The thought, to create a Zionist party in Ger, came from an entirely intelligent and well-read young man, named Glauberman. He was not born in Ger, but rather came to the *shtetl* with a family, along with several hundred other Jews, driven out of the city of Pinsk.



Page 126: Members & Sympathizers of the Poalei-Tzion *Party in Ger*

This happened during The War, in 1916. They were immediately taken into the community's synagogue (there was also a second synagogue, the *Rebbe's*) and immediately began collecting clothing for their own use, food and money. Among those who came wandering in this way, were craftsmen and people of worth. The Glaubermans were among those of better status, and in time, they all took up residence in the *shtetl*. As previously said, the young Glauberman was the initiator and founder of the local Zionist organization, named '*Kadima*.'

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40 Likely Gorodzisk Mazowiecki outside of Warsaw.

That time, a frightening typhus epidemic raged in town: stomach-typhus and spotted-typhus. A misfortune then ensued: the young man fell sick and died. In a eulogy given at his graveside, someone likened him to the biblical Moses, who died before he could be privileged to enter into the Promised Land. This eulogy stormily aroused the *Hasidim*: How can one equate such a 'sinner' with Moses our Teacher? This drove the *Hasidim* to undertake a community-wide initiative, to win greater influence in the city.



Page 128: *The Scout Organization Honors its Comrade, Moshe Ravsky, Who Is Making* Aliyah *to the Land of Israel*

At that time, *Agudat Israel* did not yet exist, and there was no other party from the government. After the Russian-Polish War, the situation changed: Immediately after the war, *Agudat Israel, Tze'irei Agudat Israel*, and *Poalei Agudat Israel* came into being, but they had no common center: all of their activities were carried out in the *Rebbe's* courtyard, and the leader was Pinia Levin, a brother of the synagogue member, R' Yitzhak-Meir Levin.

At the same time, the Folks' House of the People's Party was set up, whose leader was Noah Prilutzky. The following were very active in this House: Yaakov Lichtenstein, Yaakov Schreibaum, Aharon Poznansky, Nachman Zlotagorsky (Har-Zahav)[41]. As a matter of fact, the entire community of young people concentrated themselves in this house, coming from all streams of thought. Later on, this became transformed into a library, under the direction of Nachman Zlotagorsky. It also was a buffet. The '*Bund*' and the 'Reds' were especially active there.

In 1923, a Jewish man named Stein was to be found in Ger, who was an overseer of workers in the brick works. He did not rest, and demanded that the young people found a Zionist organization. This

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41 This name would have been changed to 'Goldberg' in the English-speaking world.

was tied up in considerable expenditures: renting a place to meet, sustaining the operation, and like things of this sort. In order to give this matter an initial push, he donated a larger sum of money, and asked a youth group of '*HaShomer*' to come to Ger in their uniform and a trumpet, which inspired the young people, with a Zionist bent, to action.

In this instance, all persuasions took part: general Zionists – adherents of Greenbaum, *Poalei Tzion* – Zionist-Socialists, and also several from *Mizrahi* and Revisionists. None of these had the means to open a center on their own. So, to begin with, we decided to exert ourselves in establishing a center, and later on, we would decide whom to incorporate. In the meantime, at the KK"L campaigns, we were all together. We undertook the collection of funds for the KK"L with fire and ardor.

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Page 130: A Group of Activists from the Progressive Movement in Ger: Ozhekh[42]*, Grossman, M. Y. Bielowsky, Kelmanowicz and Y. Peltz*

It was here that the dispute between the *Hasidim* and Zionist youth began. In a number of families, part of the children belonged to *Agudat Israel*, and the others – Zionists. There were instances, where the blue [KK"L] boxes were taken down and smashed. The Zionist youth began a counter-campaign: breaking the collection boxes of R' Meir *Baal HaNess*. It developed into the exchange of blows, and lasted a long time before the situation quieted down.

On one occasion, a peculiar incident took place, in connection with KK"L collections. By the intervention of the member of the community council, R' Israel Ber Goldberg, a permission was

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42 Shown also as Orzhekh

obtained from the police, to permit a lecturer from the KK"L, named Cohen, to give a talk, on Saturday after the noon hour, in the community synagogue, When the *Hasidim* found out about this, Simcha Warshawsky, one of those close to the *Rebbe*, gathered a group of *Hasidic* youths, with *Gemaras* in hand, at the same hour. They began to study out loud, and created a strong tumult; you could hear the '*Amar Abaye*' and '*Tanu Rabanan*' at quite a distance. Their intent was clear: Not allowing the lecturer to speak. This approach strongly hurt the ordinary Jews who had come, as was their custom on every Sabbath afternoon, with their '*Korban Mincha*' *Siddur* into the synagogue. They had never encountered the young men studying like this before, with such fervor. Let us here take note of the fact that, most of the Zionist youth were also *Hasidic* children. It was at this time that the porters and wagon drivers would arrive, with Sholom-David at their head, and with fisticuffs, ejected the ones causing a disturbance from the synagogue. Police arrived, and seeing that the lecture had both police and community approvals, it became quiet, and the speaker began his talk.



Page 132: Members of the 'Bund' *at the Opening of a Branch of the 'Culture-League' in Ger, named for B. Mikhalowicz*

He gave a causerie on the building and development of the Land of Israel, naturally having sayings from the Torah interwoven, to the extent that Jews began to ask one another afterwards, as to why anyone would want to stop him, considering his words were so well-flavored with pieties. The opposing side, however, called for a gathering at the home of R' Moshe Bezalel, where a conversation ensued, with allegations that Torah scholars were beaten, holy books were torn, and desecrated. Naturally they made no reference to who was responsible for all of this. The decision was taken to make an approach to the *Starosta* in writing, with a request that in the future, no permissions would be granted for any political gathering in the synagogue. They also called for a Community Fast to last for twelve hours. It is understood that the police were only too happy to be able to stand in the way of the will of the *Agudat Israel.*

Also, within the body of the Zionist center itself, there were differences of opinion. A greater part of the members had a tendency toward the Poalei-Tzion Zionism, and a smaller number – to general Zionism. There were friends in Ger who were among the Zionist-Socialists in Warsaw, such as Pin'cheh Broder, Hanokh Segal, and Noah Schreibaum. Pin'cheh Broder had recommended not to make any 'revolutions,' and to continue to work with the general Zionists. By contrast, Leib'l Friedman held the view that if we only remained under the influence of the Zionism of Poalei-Tzion, we will be able to function with a larger draw, and be able to attract more members. After a period of time, at a general meeting, it became apparent that more than 70% of the attendees were in favor of cooperating with the Poalei-Tzion Zionism, and as a result a total 'revolution' did occur. We approached the central committee, which at that time was to be found on the Dzhika *Gasse* in Warsaw, that it should endorse our decision. At that point, part of the membership of the general Zionists left the center. In their place, new people joined. We also created a group of Free Scouts (*Dror*), with members between 12 and 15 years of age. Also created was a League for Labor in the Land of Israel, at the initiative of the writer of these likes. The leaders of the Zionist Youth were Meir Amzler and Aharon Nussbaum. The chair of the Labor League was – Moshe Ravsky.

At the same time, there were additional parties in Ger, such as the '*Bund*' and, as they were then called, the 'Reds.' Seeing that the communist party was illegal, the 'Reds' associated themselves with the *Bundists*, in the I. L. Peretz Library, which at one time was the Folks House. The 'Reds' were in the majority, especially through gatherings that took place outside the city, in fields and forests. They would hang red banners in their venues, and in a variety of places: on telephone wires, and like places, and through this, they created a great deal of work for the police, who had to take them down.

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Page 134: A Group of Members of the 'Bund' *in Ger*

The economic situation of Jewish youth from all the movements was an unstable one, lacking any foundation. People literally went hungry, despite the fact that food products were not expensive, nevertheless, there was no money for a cigarette, for an item of clothing, and the like.

In that time, we created '*HeHalutz*,' and the first one that was sent for training in Kielce was Abraham Mardicks. This was work with some future to it: Abraham Mardicks completed his training, received a certificate, and made *aliyah*, and to this day, continues to live in the Land of Israel, to a hundred and twenty years.

In 1930, an emissary from the Land of Israel came to the center, to recruit *olim*, even without training. We put up about ten candidates, and two of them were actually taken: Aharon Nussbaum and Moshe Ravsky. But the *aliyah* was stopped immediately, and the two previously mentioned colleagues could not make the trip. It seems that something occurred in that time that aroused the local youth. It was decided to carry out a campaign for the benefit of Israeli Labor. The collection boxes were – according to the written regulations – were given to the police to lock up and seal. By the end of the campaign, it was necessary to open them, and count the money, run up an accounting, and send off the funds to the center. For the first time, we did not take advantage of doing door-to-door solicitations, rather, we set up pairs of us with tables at the intersections of streets, and approaches were made to passers-by to make contributions. The public responded generously, not only the Jews, but gentiles as well.

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Getting a certificate was as difficult as the parting of the Red Sea. The center of *Poalei-Tzion* Tz.S. got one certificate when many of its associates wanted to make *aliyah*. Hundreds and thousands of *Halutzim* waited all year long in the training camps for a certificate (at that time, the central offices of the parties did not sell the certificates). In the referenced instance, thee decision was taken to allocate the certificate to someone designated by the campaign, who was in danger. This was the reason I received a certificate. On the 16th of March 1931, I made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel.

Contact with the colleagues back home was not broken. On the eve of the Congress elections in 1933, I, along with them, were in intimate contact. (This was after the murder of Chaim Arlozorov ז"ל). I made a special effort to influence and strengthen the Zionist elements for the benefit of our slate.

When I visited Ger in 1934, I found many young people in all of the Zionist streams. This stood out distinctly in the training camps, where many colleagues, male and female, had spent years and looked for the certificate that would resolve their status. There remained no doubt that, had the immigration into the Land of Israel been unrestricted, the ranks of Zionist youth would have been two to three times more dense, because the number of young people was very large, that sought some way out, but did not know where to turn. In the Land of Israel, in that time, there was a period of relative prosperity, and by contrast to what was happening in Poland, in light of the political and economic politics of the regime of that time, there was not any sort of hopeful outlook for Jewish youth regarding their future. Many forms of work and means to make a living had become forbidden to Jews.

I want to also recall, that at the same time, when the 'Free Scout' was established, the *'HaShomer HaLeumi'* movement was established, derived from the general Zionists. The founder and leader was Menachem Goldhecht (Gildoni) ז"ל. After my departure, his group and the Ger chapter of *Agudat Zion*, demanded of the central office of their movement – and they worked it out – a certificate for Goldhecht. He made *aliyah* immediately after Passover of 1931, using the second certificate from Ger.

In 1934, Yekhezkiel Goldberg, and Leib'l Friedman and his wife Royza Bleiman made *aliyah*. They came with the illegal *aliyah*, expending a great deal of effort, losing all their belongings on the way. There were also other *olim* from Ger, using a variety of means, but not through the local Zionist parties.

The Progressive Movement in Ger

By Menashe Orzekh
Brooklyn

The Harbingers of the Year 1905

Ger was renown in the Jewish world as a center of *Hasidism*, that had a tradition going back tens of years. But the fresh winds of the freedom movement, which began to blow in Russia, in the beginning of our [sic: 20th] century, also penetrated into this *Hasidic* fortress. Jewish youth did not remain deaf and dumb to these new sounds, that shook up the land against the Czarist regime, and they were the first in the city who, with full commitment of soul and idealism, laid the foundation for what we today call the progressive movement.

The children of working people and of *balebatim*, with the ardor of youth, identified with these new ideals of a global resolution and Jewish national liberation, and with the same ardor exhibited by their fathers, the *Hasidim*, strove to correct the ills of the world, but not with the grace derived from the *Rebbe*, but rather relying on their own personal capabilities.

I remember the town where I was born from my earliest childhood years, from the year 1908, and it stands before my eyes with all those personalities and types of the time. The wealthy and the poor – who were the majority in the settlement – the children of the *balebatim*, and 'toughs' as they were called, out of which sprang the progressive part of Ger, which became a center of influence over the entire Grojec *powiat* and Warsaw vicinity.

The beginning of the movement in Ger begins with the turbulent events of the year 1905, when the revolutionary sentiments of that time held sway over a large part of Jewish youth, and like a fresh stream, revitalized the atmosphere of the *Hasidic shtetl*. I was still too young, in those years, but I recall very well the fathers and mothers of Ger, who would tell of the strikers, and the 'toughs' who did not want anything except to depose the Czar. They were fought strenuously, and observant people helped do this, and it actually came to exchanging blows, and harassment, and the leaders were forced to flee.

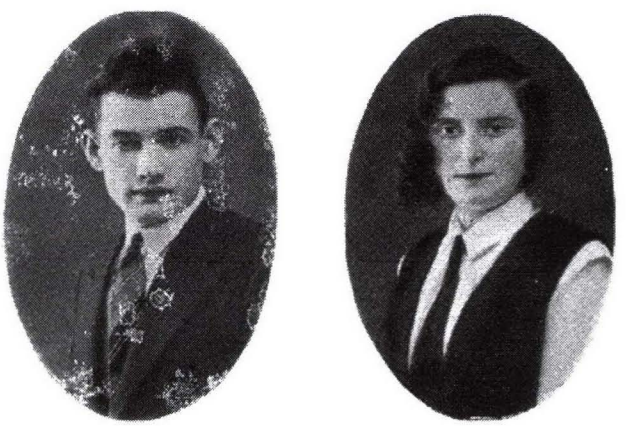
Sadly, all the events of those days of unrest are not known to me, but I know, that it was very 'animated' in the *shtetl*. In that year, Jewish young people, under the leadership of Big Moshe, as he was called in the *shtetl*, took an active part in these battles, and participated in demonstrations and strikes.

Big Moshe, was the father of Henya, who was called by his father's name: Heni, [belonging to] Big Moshe. I remember the attic-*shtibl* in which tall Heni lived, the small passage from the yard where the residence of my parents was, and which led to the principal marketplace of the *shtetl*.

Downstairs was the bakery of Israel Ber the Baker, who was a *Dozor*, a member of the Council, and the wealthiest man in Ger. Upstairs, on the first and second stories, there were inexpensive residences, in which common people lived. Yaakov Meir the Shoemaker, with his wife and two children, along with his shoemaking works, all in one room. In a second room, which was a little larger, was the works of Velvel the Tailor, where he lived with his entire family. There was another neighbor, and over them all, Heni Big Moshe's had her residence. I do not know whether she was, or was not active in the movement.

It was enough that she was Big Moshe's daughter, in order to be closeted and separated from the surrounding vicinity. And she was the best *prosiczenie* writer in the community, with fine penmanship in Polish, Russian and Yiddish. In the year 1922 or 23, Big Moshe came to his daughter from a faraway place. He came to her broken and sick, from his wandering over the land, fell onto the bed and gave up the ghost. I think that nobody from our progressive cultural-people of that time, ever had the idea of according last honors to a pioneer in the progressive movement on the Jewish street.

The 'Other' Ger



Page 138: Shlomo Nissenholtz and his wife Leah Friedman, active workers in the I. L. Peretz Library

With the outbreak of The First World War, our *shtetl* was transformed into a city. Hundreds of refugees arrived from Pinsk, Kobrin, and other cities, principally from Lithuania, which introduced a bit of Lithuanian apostasy, and much spiritual unrest. They shook up the

established traditional *Bet-HaMedrash*-centered life, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that the war-refugees helped to create, and give form to the 'other' Ger, that was cultural and progressive, out of which, a variety of political directions and Jewish tendencies arose.

A new spirit came in with the refugees that penetrated into the *Bet HaMedrash* of the *Rebbe*, and opened a window to another life. The refugees did not want to send their children to the old-fashioned *Heders*, and several secular Jewish schools were opened, but these did not last very long. A library was created, and a 'Folks House' in which the youth would gather, and come to borrow and exchange books. Surrounding this, a struggle spread out among parents and their children; the fathers would either burn or tear up the books they considered 'unclean/unworthy,' as they were called, and the children responded in a like manner by tearing up *shtrymels* or other items considered sacred.

The young people won out. The library acquired more and more patrons, and one would try to proudly outdo the other in taking out books. With time, the parents gave up the fight, and the young people decided to take their own measure, to go public with a theater presentation. They put on the play, '*Bar Kochba*,' which had a great success, afterwards, '*Shulamis*,' and also other pieces, whose names I do not remember. Between one presentation and the next, the *shtetl* had the means to discuss and comment on the plays. Acting was done with our own resources, and several of the amateurs displayed rather fine dramatic talents, and were well-received by the public. Dina Messing often played lead roles, and also the two Gediger sisters, Tall Abraham's daughters, Chana and But'cheh.

Chana survived the *Gehenna* in Auschwitz, and today lives in Montreal, Canada. Her husband was murdered. Her family [name] is Perlmutter, and she has two dear and talented children, a son and a daughter, that the French hid until she was able to return to Paris. But'cheh lives in Pennsylvania in the United States.

Among the men who participated in these presentations were Lejzor Kroll and Baruch Pilberg, who, in the *shtetl* was called Baruch Vova's. He was a very fine singer. Incidentally, it needs to be noted that any play didn't simply go through. Fathers attempted to make a tumult and stop them; they came to the theater, took up the front seats, and made a disturbance; but the daughters intervened, and to help them, their mothers came along, and the older folks left the hall, and the curtain was then raised. The second performance took place already without any disturbance, and to a larger audience. The young had 'captured' Ger...

I do not remember the address of the 'Folks House' exactly, being too young at the time, but the image of the library, with the big sign, in Yiddish lettering under the window, has remained in my memory, which proudly communicated to the passers-by that here there is a house of Yiddish culture.

This was in the year of 1924. With a strongly palpitating heart, and with fear of the onlookers from the surrounding doors and windows, I drew near to the forbidden house. In front of me, I see, looking around himself in fright, sliding along the walls to the door of the library, none other than the son

of Moshe of Magnuszew, who also succumbs to the 'uncleanliness'... this made me a bit more sure of myself, and with a confident stride, I enter the library, and signed a declaration to become a reader. A 'reader' I say, because to become a member, requires that the candidate undergo a substantial investigation, that takes into account both social and economic standing, and not everyone, in that time, was automatically accepted.

Aharon Poznansky was among the first leaders of the library, the only Jewish employee in the magistrate administration of Ger. He was an intelligent man, who did his work in the library with great interest and dedication. A time later, he ran into the library, asked for the membership book, tore out the page with his name on it, and left, slamming the door behind him...

This took place after a general meeting, which had elected a new leadership, who were not compatible with the local organizations in authority. There were a number of left-leaning elements, which could have compromised the institutions and its members. In the eyes of the reactionary regime, which was in power in Poland at that time, this endangered the employment of someone employed by the magistrate administration, all the more so, being a Jew.

With the tearing out of his name from the membership book, Poznansky also sundered his relationship with the library, but despite this, he did not lose the loyalty and respect of the new management, who understood his situation. He would yet often come into the library, but he no longer was active in the same way as he was before.

Mendl Messing and David Gottfried were also active workers on behalf of the library, who with genuine fraternal warmth would welcome me, when I would come to borrow a book, and this was the way they handled each reader and member. They were *Bundists*, decent and loving people, who stood in the leadership position of the library for a longer period of time, and during their period, the number of members grew vigorously. The later party conflicts made this work more difficult, and they withdrew from the leadership.

Idealists...

And this is how I made my first steps into Jewish community life, beginning first as a reader, and later also as an active worker. With a tremble in my heart, and with a respectful reverence, I recall all my dear comrades, male and female, who inspired me to become someone who took part as an active co-worker in the I. L. Peretz library in Ger. That was my first school, which also led me to become an active worker in the progressive movement.

With a feeling of my deepest reverence and respect, I want to recall my friend Sarah Hamburg, or as she was called by her father's name: Itch Meir the *Shokhet's* daughter, a bright personality, with great knowledge and an unbounded sense of belief, that a better tomorrow waits behind the door, and just in a while, here will come that long awaited resolution to the world's problems, so longed for. Sarah Hamburg sacrificed her private life, and as a *Hasidic* daughter, served her idealism with ardor. Everything that was outside of the movement, including her own private life, she would refer to as

'things that were empty of value,' on which an 'enlightened' person may not squander any time. All the members of the library related to her with love, for her sense of right and utter decency, and she was called the Clara Zetkin[43] of Ger. She did not await the realization of her ideal, and went off along with the six million martyrs.

Another dedicated worker in the progressive movement was David Shlomo Mann, slightly hunchbacked, ashen pale, who looked ten years older than he really was; for that reason, he was called 'the old one' which was his pseudonym in the movement, and which suited him better than his correct name, David Shlomo. He was among the permanently unemployed and came from one of the poorest families in Ger. He was active in the labor movement, and took an active part in the professional organization of the shoemakers, tailors and quilting stitchers, and also of the bakery workers.

At the end of 1928, almost the entire active cadre in Ger was arrested. Caught in this dragnet were: Shlomo Nissenholtz, Moshe Heilikman, Abraham Grossman, Raphael Zurek, the Deaf Bichek, the writer of these lines, and additional others, the names of whom have already left my memory. Raphael Zurek and I today, in the *True World*, were among the last, who were let free on bail.

There was a bitter winter that year, and the cold and the freezing were so intense, that burning coal braziers were set out in Warsaw, for passers-by to warm themselves. I will never forget how my mother ע"ה, tall Mindl, and Rivka Zurek, Yaakov Nathan's wife, dragged packs of food in the frost so cold that it was burning, for their arrested children in the Polish prisons from Grojec, and later from Warsaw. May the memory of our devoted Jewish mothers remain ever sacrosanct.

By a miracle, David Shlomo avoided this arrest, and he quickly left Ger, and he was even able to get out of Poland, and in the year 1930, was already in Paris, but was murdered during the Nazi occupation. Moshe Heilikman, one of the most active of the workers in the library, and was also for a specific time in the progressive movement, who was outstanding in his commitment and intelligence, also did not avert the bitter fate that befell our people. It became possible for Moshe to leave Ger when the Nazis were already there, and he was murdered with his wife, Dvorah Helman, and two children, in the year 1941, when Hitler, may his name be erased, initiated his invasion of the Soviet Union.

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[43] Clara Zetkin (*née* **Eissner**; 5 July 1857 – 20 June 1933) was a German Marxist theorist, activist, and advocate for women's rights. In 1911, she organized the first International Women's Day.

Until 1917, she was active in the Social Democratic Party of Germany, then she joined the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) and its far-left wing, the Spartacist League; this later became the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), which she represented in the Reichstag during the Weimar Republic from 1920 to 1933.



Page 142: A Monument to the Ghetto-Fighters in Warsaw

Shlomo Nissenholtz, an active worker in the library and in the progressive movement, and a personal friend of mine, with whom I worked for a longer time in a factory, was forced to leave Ger because of his activity, and in the year 1929 went off to Belgium. A short number of months before the liberation from the Nazi occupation, he was arrested along with his wife, Leah Friedman, and both were murdered. For a specific period of time, Leah Friedman was the secretary of the I. L. Peretz library, and was in sympathy with the progressive movement. They left two sons behind, both professionals, who live today in Belgium.

Raphael Zurek, a very accomplished and active comrade, was active on a variety of fronts, in the library, in professional unions, in the drama circle. During wartime, he was in the Soviet Union, and today his home is in Israel. Raphael Zurek and Menashe Orzekh together completed a political course in one of the most distinguished Polish 'Universities' under the name of '*Powiak*...'

A Romantic Epoch

Sima Mardicks and Leah Till, two of our sympathizing lady friends in the movement, who for a time were the secretaries in the library, and especially were outstanding in applying their skills in the drama circle. In connection with Leah, I recollect an incident, which at the time, caused me great concern, and which Raphael Zurek must also remember, and which was very characteristic of the romantic epoch of our youth in the little *shtetl* of Ger.

I no longer remember the year, but it was a cold winter, with snows and storms, as sometimes happens in Poland. The drama circle was preparing for a major performance of 'The Seven Who Were Hanged,' with Raphael Zurek in the leading role of Mish'ka Tziganiok, with the participation of David-Shlomo Mann, Azriel Werziser, Moshe-Luzer Messing, and others. Leah Till also had an important part in the play, and a few days before the performance, she caught cold and fell sick. There was no one who could take her place, and we had to go ahead in the hope that she will get better, and be able to perform. At the general rehearsal, she lay in fever, and did not come. However one didn't want to, nor could they put off the performance.

On the evening of the premier, everything was ready, the artists were already grooming themselves, others – walking about nervously, behind the coulisses; the public will shortly begin to arrive, and Leah Till had not yet shown up... what to do? A couple of members of the troupe approached me: -- Menashe, go run! You must bring her!... And I went. Did I really have a choice? And when I took a look at the sick person, a darkness descended over my eyes; she is lying in a fever, imagine taking her up and carrying her in my hands. However, she understood my plight, and began to get dressed. But her mother mixed in, and began to plead with us, as if with robbers. But it didn't help, and I came to the theater with Leah...the joy of the group was boundless, and she performed like never before.

After this, I lived through a number of difficult days and nights. I trembled for her health, and it taxed my conscience. I would send over lady friends to visit her, because I was afraid to go by myself, out of fear of showing myself to her parents. And God helped, and our Leah'cheh returned

to good health, and when I saw her for the first time in the library, a stone fell off my heart. That was the level of enthusiasm of the young people, who, with the commitment of their souls fought in Ger for a new life.

It was from this band of young people that the active cadre of the progressive movement eventually emerged. We implored the leadership of the institution to open the doors of the Ger 'culture-palace' widely, for the tailors, shoemakers, and all the common people, with whom the children of the *balebatim* previously did not want to mix. The number of members grew quickly, and it was out of the library circles that the initiative grew to organize the young people in the needle trades and shoemaking, so that they could have more free time to come to the library, to read a book or a Yiddish newspaper.

The First Strike

In that era, work time was not measured by the use of a clock. The *shtetl* had not progressed that far. One worked from the break of day, until the boss – who himself sat largely alone at the workplace – became personally tired, and told his 'people' to go home. We started with the leather workers, and 95% of the shoemakers and bootmakers came to our beck and call, and became members of professional unions, which shortly thereafter undertook an action for a ten-hour workday, and higher pay.

The first ones to go out on strike were the bootmakers. By comparison to shoemaking, it was a 'genteel' trade, in which the children of the 'better' homes were employed, who will demonstrate – as we reckoned – more persistence in the struggle. This undertaking did not come to us lightly. It evolved that we had to carry out a three-pronged assault: with the workers themselves – mostly young people – who were rather frightened by the word 'strike', with the fathers of these genteel young people, who held that it was 'not nice,' and that there was 'something inappropriate' for a Jew who considered himself among the *balebatim* to strike, and with the *balebatim* who were the owners of the works themselves, who put up a stiff-necked resistance.

The strike lasted several weeks. A few of the genteel children could not be won over with words, so they were won over with fists, when they went to work escorted by their father. And the strike was won for the entire 100%, and this was the first time ever that Ger savored a 'taste' of the youth labor movement, and from this a good dose of health accrued to the *Hasidic shtetl.*

Entirely unanticipated by us, was the fact that the process with the shoemakers went much more easily. Firstly, they now had a good model, and secondly, this was entirely a better element for such an action. Here one found the children from the greatest impoverishment that Ger possessed, and they instinctively grasped what a strike meant for them. Apart from this, these very children from the greatest of the *shtetl's* poverty were physically healthier, of better spirit, and experienced in combat, and these are the attributes that came into great use in subsequent actions.

One of them was outstanding in responsibility and innate intelligence. This was Abraham Bielowsky, who helped to organize this trade, and he became one of the most active workers on all fronts. Such

a precious jewel from the impoverished ranks in Ger was worth polishing, and we taught him to read and write, and in this area, he demonstrated strong will, and great skills. In time, he became a leader among the members, in the library. Abraham Bielowsky left Ger shortly before the outbreak of the war, and went off to Paris. There, he found work, and was active in the movement. During an *aktion* against the Jews, a Nazi patrol shot him on one of the Parisian streets...

Yet another, who emerged from the impoverished street of the shoemakers, and became an important and visible activist in the progressive movement, was Abraham Grossman. The Grossmans lived in an overcrowded, muddy little side street, which on a rainy day was impassable. However, when settlement was normalized there, and the street could be negotiated, it was not necessary to clean off one's boots on passing over the threshold of the Grossman house, because the floor there was full of the same material as the outside street...

Avrem'eleh Grossman was a great idealist, and an even greater man of confidence. Just as a loyal Ger *Hasid* believes that the Messiah will come, so did he believe, with a complete faith, we were on the very verge of the arrival, of that great hour of resolution, when the world of that long-awaited Garden of Eden would arrive. He was an idealist in character; good by nature, and was prepared to share his last bite with another. Together with Bielowsky, they had good fortune in organizing the leather-business and to attain substantially meaningful achievements.

As I previously mentioned, at the beginning of the thirties, there were no timepieces in Ger, and time was not measured. It was usual to begin work on Saturday night after *Havdalah*, and ended work on Friday prior to lighting of the [Sabbath] candles. It was usual to work for no less than 12 hours a day, and often more. It was not only the workers who slaved away, but also the *balebatim*, who were not very wealthy people, there was a contest between miserliness and poverty, and the contest was therefore intense and embittered. Small-scale operators, who largely worked with several young people and a couple of masters, put up a stiff-necked resistance. The first battles were for a ten-hour day, and a small raise, which were achieved by means of a strike of several weeks, which disrupted the tranquility of the *shtetl*. For a couple of years, it was 'quiet,' and in the poor workplaces, clocks appeared on the walls, and the workers – as the *balebatim* complained – obtained 'more temerity,' and on one fine day, they put forward a previously unheard of demand for an 8-hour working day.

The Living Standard of Workers & *Balebatim* is Raised

And as exceptional as it might not be seen, the second strike turned out to be shorter and lighter than the first. The *balebatim* saw themselves confronted by a well-organized mass, and knew that no resistance would help. In passing, they must have made the calculation that the passing of the one-time 'sweat-shop' in favor of a ten-hour workday, did not cost them any loss. On the contrary, they were able to increase their prices a little, without adding any cost to the business. At their gathering, they therefore spoke more of not carrying out any competition among themselves, and about raising prices for the *hurtovnikehs* and clients. The struggle against the 'toughs' – as they called the workers – dropped to a second level consideration, and they acceded to the demands.

This turned out to be the same case for the young people working as tailors and shoemakers, with their own *balebatim* giving them energy, and awakening the feeling to anticipate an enhanced standard, for a better life, and less work. And not all of this would be for the account of the worker. They had an overriding motive for their clients: -- what do you mean that a worker works 12 hours a day as was done before? Those times are gone, and he also wants to be paid well!... And the example set by the shoemakers was imitated by the other trades, and, in time, it raised the standard of living of people, and it became more lively in the *shtetl*. A continuously working tailor or shoemaker, would allow himself between afternoon and evening prayers to listen in on a conversation in the synagogue, drop into a tavern, or even enter a café on the *Rebbe's* street. On the contrary, this was a boon to making a living, which added a sense of worth to the people affected.

As for the young people, the 10-hour day pushed open a wide portal to a new life. They got the time to learn, and to go out 'among people.' We immediately took advantage of this to teach them reading and writing, and a large number of young girls was mobilized who went to attend the '*powszecnie*' school, and along with the young people who worked as tailors and shoemakers; they began to drill in learning the Latin alphabet, and also learning arithmetic. It was in this way that we brought progress into Ger, and with these sorts of initiatives, we justified the name of the progressive movement.

At this opportunity, we must recall the names of the volunteer teachers of the common people, who, with love and commitment, dedicated themselves to the education of young workers. One of the most active among them was Chana Kupperholtz, who was murdered somewhere or other, in the Nazi *Gehenna*; also Baylah Garfinkel, the wife of Lipa Helman; both managed to get through the war, and find themselves in Buenos Aires, they have two dear children, one of them is a medical doctor; Sima Mardicks, Leah Till, Baylah Sarah Messing, live in Brooklyn; Pearl Schreibaum, the wife of Menashe Orzekh, and a few of the others, the names of whom I no longer remember.

The progress in question manifested itself in all walks of life, and especially in the area of activity surrounding the library, which was the center about which the youth gathered itself, and was the chief seat of the progressive movement. The number of members of the library grew day by day, and the number of its programs multiplied along various lines. It was in this fashion that a mandolin orchestra was created, led by Ber'l Ribak, the drama circle was reorganized, under the direction of Yankl Schreibaum. I recall the roles of Motke Ganev and Hotzmakh, which Schreibaum played with real talent, and died very young in Israel. Raphael Zurek also excelled in his various roles.

Cultural Activities

In that time a Culture Commission was also created, at the head of which stood Pin'cheh Broder, who passed away not long ago in Brussels, Belgium. The Culture Commission carried out a very important and a good planning process, which extended beyond the narrow confines of its circle of members, and embraced the entire *shtetl*. It was in this manner that 'box evenings' would be arranged, where the visible, important members of the community would entertain various questions of a literary and social character. These 'evenings' were conducted with our own local resources,

and were characterized by a free expression of opinions, in which one person would pose the question, and whoever wanted to, could then offer a word as part of the debate.

Literary evenings would also be arranged, with lecturers from the Warsaw Literature Union. It was in this fashion that Leo Finkelstein, and Alter Kacizne, who was especially beloved by the young people, appeared on the stage; Melech Ravich, Dr. Joseph Kruk, Yaakov Pat, and if I am not mistaken, also Peretz Markish. They spoke on a variety of literary and social themes, and, as you can surmise, these presentations attracted a large audience.

Leib'l Benzelewicz was an active worker in the Culture Commission, as in the general work of the library, who passed away in his early fifties in Buenos Aires. Benzelewicz also participated in the drama circle, and afterwards left the library with the *Bundist* group. He was my comrade and friend, and during the time I was in Buenos Aires, we found *landsleit* from Ger and Grojec, and got ourselves in contact with the survivors from these two towns, all over the world, and provided assistance to those that required help. I am pained that it was not given for him to participate in creating this *Yizkor* Book, and that I must mention him among those who have already departed to their Eternity.

A sport-team was also founded by the club; out of that small cluster of survivors, who today are spread and scattered all over the larger world. Shlomo Meir Smoliazh, the most enthusiastic sportsman, is today in Canada; Eli Meir Gutstadt, Lipa Helman, and Hersch-Chaim and Lejzor Messing in North America, a few others in Canada, and it is for all of these, that I leave space for them to write a little more about our heroes from Ger.

Two Important Institutions: The *Rebbe's Bet HaMedrash* & The I. L. Peretz Library

In the end, it is necessary to say that, Ger progressive youth had to put up with a great deal of harassment from the ruling authorities, permanent pursuit by the police, and often arrests. This did not halt the work, the activity continued without interruption on all fronts, as good on the cultural front as on the professional [unionization] front. It was not more than in a few years that we could operate in the open, and in the others – more camouflaged and clandestinely. In this regard, the youth of Ger had a reputation in the Grojec region and also in the Warsaw Province. Ger was renowned for its *Rebbe* and its progressive movement, and the two institutions around which the residents congregated, as the guests who would come to visit the *shtetl*, were: the *Rebbe's Bet HaMedrash*, and the I. L. Peretz Library.

I had to leave Ger at the end of 1930. In that year, the reaction against the Jewish populace became especially more intense, and also against the progressive movement. The harassment by the police made life continuously more difficult, and an order came to close the library. Arrests began, and rather than fall into a Polish prison, I decided it would be better to go out into the world...

Let my modest words sanctify the memory of my brother Jews in Ger, who were murdered in such a barbarically cruel manner by the Nazi murderers, as the memory of my dear comrades, with whom I fought for a better and more attractive world.

Ger and Góra-Kalwaria, One City & Two Worlds

By Yankl Jurkiewicz

In Yiddish, the *shtetl* was known as Ger – and it was by this name that it was known – and even renowned – in the entire Jewish world. Ger was the Crown City of Polish *Hasidism*, which placed its recognizable stamp on Jewish life, and it was by this name, that the *shtetl* entered Jewish history. In Polish, the *shtetl* was called – Góra-Kalwaria. The Poles did not know it by any other name, because Ger and Góra-Kalwaria were two separate towns, and two entirely separate worlds. One was on the map of Polish territory, and the second on the map of Jewish worlds on high. The two names of the one and the same city, symbolized Jewish life in Poland – and partly also in all of Eastern Europe – 'as a kingdom within a kingdom, -- a Jewish spiritual kingdom – in the ranks of the Polish republic. Two national streams, that only touched each other partly, but never intermingled. In the modern terminology, it is possible to express this as a sort of 'national-cultural autonomy,' formerly in the ranks of the Czarist Empire, and later – within the borders of the Polish Republic. Jews lived within their own spiritual atmosphere, which manifested itself in language, culture and way of life, which they had transplanted into Polish soil. And in Ger, one felt the sanctity of that 'atmosphere' more strongly than in all the other cities and towns of Poland.

Also the geographic position of Ger, lent the city much importance. It was a city on a hill, which, by foot, brought you to the clear waters of the longest river in Poland – the Vistula – which meanders over the entire length of the land, falling into the Baltic Sea. It is near the capitol city, not more than 36 kilometers, which could be negotiated by train and also by the river, was also one of the special features of the city, which, in the last years, was also serviced by modern and elegant autobuses. From the nearly eight thousand souls, that lived in Ger, about half were Jewish, the largest part of which were engaged in all of the traditional Jewish occupations. One worked by one's self, or with a pair of assistants, and there were also bigger undertakings, which took on work for the government, and provided uniforms for the military, for the police, tramway-workers, and other government employees. Every day, raw material would be brought from Warsaw, and the finished product would be taken away. The same was true in the shoe industry, which did not provide shoes to the city itself, but worked on orders received from the capitol city. Work was also done for the weekly market days, where hundreds of peasants would bring their products for sale, and to buy all their needs from the Jewish hand workers, and merchants, for their own use, and for their village works.

Ger was a city of work and *Hasidism*. There was no lack of Jews, from the older generation, to attend a *Melave Malka* at the *Rebbe's*, and those from the younger generation, without fail, would spend their Saturday nights either in their society location or in the library. These two streams, however, never joined, but rather they complemented each other as two phases from the same, single Jewish life. It is true that, at the beginning, the *Hasidic* world accepted the new winds, that began to blow through the *shtetl*, with unrest, and fanatical fathers warned their children about 'impurity' but in the end, an accommodation was achieved, and they made peace.

The library and the progressive movement in Ger developed a reach that had very few peers in other similar Jewish towns in Poland. This was the spirit of Ger, that put its stamp on the older generation, and in a different way, also had an effect on the younger one. All the Jewish workers in Ger were organized; each trade had its own trade-commission that regulated the relationship between the workers and the *balebatim*, and intervened in all conflicts. Also the business owners were organized in a Handworkers' Union, which represented the *balebatim* in their dealings with the workers.

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Page 155: A Group of Members of the Peretz-Library

The business owners in Ger were not any sort of independent industrialists, but rather salaried individuals who worked for the big manufacturers in Warsaw. Conflicts would often break out among them, and even strikes. In cases of this nature, the Handworkers' Union would intervene, serving as a mediator, and also utilizing its credit bank, which would make loans while charging very little interest. They would also provide credit to non-members of the Union, and do so on very good terms.

At this opportunity, I wish to recall a number of the leaders of the Handworkers' Union, those names that have remained in my memory. These are David Kelmanowicz, Zhimonowsky, and the blind David Teitelbaum.

All manner of parties were active in the *shtetl*, from the 'right' and from the 'left,' as would be the case in a large city. There were barely ten Zionist parties, such as the '*Bund*,' '*Mizrahi*,' '*Agudah*,' '*Poalei Agudat-Israel*' and others. Each party had its local [headquarters], and carried out its battle against all other parties, but all of them together brought in much of a lively impetus and a lot of life into the settlement, which had its spiritual center in the library. The library superseded parties, despite the fact that each party wanted to have an influence, and be represented in the management of the institution.

The library gave the *shtetl* an 'Enlightened' cast. As soon as it opened, young boys and girls would be seen in the evenings carrying books under their arms. It became fashionable to take a stroll with a book in hand, and to talk about books. And this 'fashion' brought not only one person to a newspaper accustomed him to a Yiddish book. Inside the library, one snatched a conversation with the librarian about a book that had just been read, seeking interpretations with the friends that were about, and dropped into the reading room, where all of the daily newspapers were laid out on the tables, the '*Heint*,' the '*Moment*,' the '*Volks-Zeitung*,' as well as the 'Literary Pages,' and other periodicals, which announced the works of Jewish writers and brought reviews of books that had already appeared.

A silence reigned in the reading room, such that you could hear a fly buzzing through. One walked on tip-toe and held one's breath. Such a reverential and fearful silence only reigned in the synagogue when the *Rebbe* showed himself, and the *Hasidim*, with bated breath listened for his tiniest movement.

During the week, preparations for cultural activities took place in the library, and rehearsals for acting and chorus. The directors would come from Warsaw, once or twice a week, conduct the rehearsal and give pointers and work to be done by the players during the time of their appearance. Plays were put on in Ger from the Yiddish repertoire.

Almost on every Saturday night, literary evenings were held in the library, with the participation of lecturers from Warsaw. Apart from this, the leaders and activists from a variety of political parties would visit the *shtetl*. The conflict between the parties did not permit the community interest of the *shtetl* nod off to sleep, and when Yaakov Pat came at the initiative of the '*Bund*', then Dr. Kruk came on the second week, or Yitzhak Greenbaum, at the initiative of one or another political party. After such political appearances, naturally discussions would ensue, which would provoke opponents, and questions would also arise from ordinary Jews. I remember a heated discussion in which Moshe Heilikman intervened, Menashe Orzekh, Raphael Zurek and Mordechai Birnbaum.

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Remaining in my memory is, how beautiful and unforgettable were the experiences of my youth participating in the 'box evenings' in the library, which were usually held on Friday evenings. In the evenings, the members of the institution would participate, who would write out the questions, and put them in the box. Responses came from those who wanted to do so, and who had something to say. Also, the questioners would not be silent, but also take part in the debate, the mood would heat up, and it would become animated in the *shtetl*.

During these 'box-evenings,' questions regarding local politics, international issues and Jewish problems were entertained; opinions were shared regarding books that had been read, and just about anything that a person might think of. Many times, hangers-on from all sorts of political persuasions would mix in, and they were even encouraged; but no one wanted to be liable, and the debates took on a rather tolerant character, and would stretch way into the night. The discussion then would be presented in smaller groups, in the streets, and disturb the sleep of the Jewish *balebatim*. It was not

only once that it would happen for people to get so deeply engrossed in their talking, that when it came time to escort the girls home, we would encounter Jewish men with their prayer shawls and phylacteries under their arm, hurrying to the *Bet HaMedrash* to catch the first morning *minyan*. A Jewish man doing this, would occasionally stop, go over to such a discussion group and say to them: -- '*Nu*, my world-worriers, you really intend to make over the world order?'...

In the small impoverished Jewish towns, with their muddy streets, and as they appeared from the outside – people leading an 'ossified life' – there was a great deal of romantic grace hidden away. And it is possible, that in Ger, this was more so than in other small Jewish settlements in Poland...

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In the early thirties, Poland descended into a period of economic crisis, which continued to deepen. There was insufficient work, and commerce declined, and as was usually the case under these circumstances, it was the Jew who became the scapegoat. The regime sought to ameliorate the situation by imposing a series of ruinous taxes, especially levied on small businesses, and on light industry, which largely lay in Jewish hands. It was intent on capturing two rabbits with one shot: driving out the Jews from branches of industry and making room for Poles to take their place. The tax officials especially discriminated against the Jews, and a wave of Jewish bankruptcies ensued. The anti-Semitic incitement engulfed the entire country like a fire, under the motto of: -- Do not buy from the Jews!'

The fascist regime curried favor with the German Nazis, and the leaders of both countries would exchange friendly mutual visits, which only served to heat up the anti-Semitic atmosphere even further. At the market days, the Jewish populace would be provoked, and single passers-by would be assaulted, especially in the evenings on side streets. In the middle of a bright day, they feared encountering resistance. I personally, was a victim of such an assault. Two hooligans stopped me on a side street, and began to beat me, and when I hit one of them in the teeth, he pulled out a knife and stabbed me in the side. To my shouts for help, Jews came running out of the houses, but by then, the hooligans had run off. I was carried away in the arms of the people to a nearby doctor, who bandaged me up, and ordered that I immediately be taken to a hospital in Warsaw, because I had lost blood, and my condition was entirely a serious one. I lay in the hospital for several weeks, and afterwards, I had to watch myself for a long time at home, until I regained my strength.

I knew who had attacked and wounded me. In a small *shtetl*, everyone knows one another. I did not exactly know their names, but I gave descriptions, and the members of our 'self-defense group' such as Lejzor Messing, Leib'l Korenwasser, Moshe Meidman, and others, searched for them and brought them to justice. However, the Polish court freed them 'for lack of evidence'...

A black cloud spread itself over the Jewish *shtetl*, and over the entirety of Jewish life in Poland. The news coming from the Land of Hitler became continuously more ominous, and the Polish press, from its end, mixed in anti-Semitic poison. An uneasiness reigned throughout the Jewish populace, and especially among the young people, a sense began to take hold of an impending catastrophe. At the 'box-evenings' and in discussions at the library, this came to explicit expression. But, to where can

one flee? With what? And how? To these questions, nobody could provide a clear answer. Jews, however, live with a sense of security, and the *balebatim* of the city languidly argued: -- it is not so bad, the world isn't going under yet, the democratic world will not permit Hitler to rule Europe... he is just posturing. He will have the same end as Haman!... Another gave a reason for this: --Do you understand? He will not risk a war against the entire world, and the League of Nations will also not remain silent! What do you mean? Do you think there are children sitting there?...

And the Polish neighbors did not lose an opportunity to throw in a stabbing word: -- Hitler is coming for you, if you don't go off to Palestine – but even there you will not be wanted...

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Page 159: At the Ger Train Station. A Young Lady Comrade is Escorted to Make Aliyah *to the Land of Israel*

It was in this kind of atmosphere that we lived in Poland shortly before the war. Jews went around 'without a head,' beaten down, burdened with worry. The previous war was recalled, along with the difficulties that were lived through, but we ended with that constant Jewish hope, that God is a Father, and he will not abandon us.

The young people were not so optimistic. The newspapers, on a daily basis, brought news of German acts of murder perpetrated against the Jewish populace of various cities. Jews were robbed, and everything they had was taken away from them, and they were driven to the Polish borders: men and women, children and the elderly. It began to be grasped that Hitlerism was far worse even than the Germans of The First World War, and a terror gripped the Jews, and the world was closed, and there was no way out...

On one Saturday night, all the municipal organizations, from all persuasions, arranged a protest-gathering against the Nazi murders. At this protest event, speakers from all parties came forward, starting with the Communists, all the way to Agudat Israel. No one was missing, each person with his own approach, and assessment. At this action, the well-known religious leader of

Polish Jewry, and later a Speaker in the first Israeli Knesset, A. M. Levin ז"ל, participated, who was a close relative of the *Rebbe* of Ger. The *Bundist* leader Victor Alter ז"ל, also appeared and spoke. The words of the speakers made a deep impression on all those who came to listen. Everyone was deeply moved, and went away from the gathering beaten down, and very disturbed. What does one do, to where can one flee? And again discussed, in which everyone thought to themselves, the world, after all, is not in chaos, there are, after all, millions of Jews in North America, their influence also counts for something; there are democrats and socialists in Germany as well, and the so-called friends of Jews in the larger world ?...

And so, Jewish life in Ger continued. The periodicals brought daily news of Jewish settlements that had suffered pogroms; daily, the *Koleika* would bring *Hasidim* to the *Rebbe,* who came to ask for advice from the *Tzaddik*, what to do? Young people began to look for ways to escape from the fire. To accomplish this, one wrote to relatives out of the country, a second to friends, and asked for help in leaving the country. For a few, this worked, but the absolute largest majority had to make peace with its fate.



Page 161: The 'Bais Yaakov' *School in Ger*

In their quandary, there were those who fled to the eastern Polish borders, and spent many a dark night attempting to smuggle themselves across the border, and get into the Soviet Garden of Eden. Those who showed themselves, gladly gave themselves up to the Soviet border guard, but the 'comrades' received them coldly, they were criticized for not having caused a socialist revolution back home, and want to 'come to something ready-made' and in the end, were accused of espionage. They spent weeks on end in temporary border jails, under literally inhuman conditions, until finally an order arrived from the central authority in Moscow, that they are to be sent back to wherever they came from... Among them were individuals who had spent many years in Polish prisons for communist activity.

But an order is an order. And on one fine day, they were formed into groups, and driven to the border, back into Poland. Men, women and children were driven back in this fashion. A few soldiers went ahead, and a detachment of Reds, with guns, brought up the rear. At the outset, they thought

that they were being the butt of a bitter joke, but they quickly realized what was happening, that this is the sad reality. They then fell to the feet of the guardsmen, and pleaded that they be sent to the border at night, hoping thereby to elude the Polish guards. Women and children wept, fainted, but this did not help. They were led to border points where, on the other side, Polish border guards stood, and were told to go – ahead! The soldiers who had gone ahead turned back, and the Reds took their guns in their hands…

The Polish guards handled them no worse than their Soviet 'comrades'; during the investigation, they were ridiculed, asked how life was like over there in the communist Garden of Eden, but they were not beaten, and in a short while later, let go. I spoke with a number of these individuals. These were Moshe Meidman, Sarah Sandomierz from Warka, Moshe Flint from Grojec, and others. They were disappointed and downtrodden. Tired, unkempt, hungry and dirty, they made a painful impression. Seeing them and listening to their experiences in the Soviet Union, for which they had given away the best young years of their life, I simply could not believe my eyes and ears. I looked for some sort of an answer to all these events, attempted to find reasons for these common deeds, find a justification for them; but the facts were too stark, and the pain too great, to be able to make any peace with it.

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Page 164: (Top): The Rebbe זצ"ל, accompanied by His two sons, separated for long life, the present day Rebbe, and R' Bunim שליט"א



Page 164: (Bottom): Leib'l Heilikman, His Wife and Children

And so the *shtetl* continued to live in a state of unrest and anxiety. The youths, with all of their unanswered questions, again gathered around the library, and the professional unions, helping out those arrested and in prison, and distributed handbills opposing the native fascists and German Nazism. The more mature had their own set of good deeds to perform. There was an large number of men and women who spent nights with the poor people who were sick, providing them with food

and medicine, and also with a word of comfort in difficult moments of life[44]. Poor people of all kinds came to Ger, more than to other small towns, and they also had to be provided with night lodging, a meal, and also a grander repast at a table set for the Sabbath. And not a single poor person had to spend a night out in the street.

In this connection, it was the Dark Freida Beneh and Tall Mindl Orzekh who occupied themselves with this work, Meir Feldman, and others. At this opportunity, it is necessary to recall the group of women, at the head of which stood Gitt'l Beinusz's Messing. After noon on each Sabbath, they would gather together, and Mrs. Messing would study the Portion of the Week with them. No living trace remained from the family of the town Hazzan, Meir Messing, as was the case with many families from Ger. The *Hazzan* was a pious and decent Jew, and he had four sons and two daughters. He ran a *Heder* in his home, where he taught older boys. He was a very good and dedicated teacher: while it is true that occasionally one might catch a slap from him, when one got to day-dreaming, but it was to a good end. That which he taught continues to accompany his students to this day, and they will always recall him in a good light. And the Torah, that he taught, gave us the strength and endurance in the most difficult times of life.

Every Sabbath, R' Meir Messing would teach the Parsha of the Week in the town *Bet HaMedrash*, or read out loud a chapter from a book that documented tradition to the simple, unlettered people. His four sons: Beinusz, Moshe-Lejzor, Shlomo and Reuben, comprised the choir, which accompanied him during prayer in the synagogue. All of his children also participated in the municipal choir, at the Peretz library, as well as in the Dramatic circle of that institution. The two daughters, Dina and Chava, were among the best of the amateurs. Their names were very popular and beloved, even in the surrounding towns. Every one of their appearances was a success, which left an unforgettable impression. The directors in Warsaw would say that they had talent, and have to commit themselves to theater art. The youngest son, Reuben, was a good singer, and he appeared on the most prominent stages in Warsaw. The cognoscenti said of him, that he was a budding Jan Kapuro. From them, as was the case of many such families, not so much as a trace remained. Many of the tunes and songs, that the young Messings sang, remain in my memory, and especially the High Holy Day prayers from the *Hazzan* in the community *Bet HaMedrash* for the common people, because the more prominent people in the city worshiped in the *Bet HaMedrash* of the *Rebbe.*

This was the way the Jews lived, worked, built, and created for themselves and for others, looked after the poor, fought for world-ideals, hoped for the Messiah [to come], or wanted to bring the Messiah with their own personal powers. [So it continued] until the accursèd year of 1939 arrived.

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At this opportunity, I wish to recollect a personal experience that I lived through in that time, which exceptionally characterizes the anti-Semitic mood that held sway among the Polish people shortly before the war. My father Zvi-Dov ben Shmuel ע"ה fell sick, and the doctor, who treated him,

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[44] This service was rendered under the umbrella of an organization usually called '*Linat Tzedek.*' See the exhibit item in the 'Memorabilia' section at the end of this book.

advised that he be taken to Warsaw, to the hospital '*Swięty Duch*,' because this is the one and only hospital in the country that has the equipment that the sick patient has need of. I immediately took him to the hospital, 'The Holy Ghost;' but when they first laid eyes upon us, we were coldly answered: We do not take in Jews here... At that time, I worked at a convalescent institution in Otwock, and therefore was acquainted with doctors, and I sought their counsel, and they declared to me, that all of the Jewish medical staff that had worked for many long years at the '*Swięty Duch*,' Hospital were, in recent times, let go of their employment. Only a couple of specialists remained, because there were no Poles who could take their place.

My father was seriously ill, and they wanted to help me. So, one of the Jewish medical staff got in telephone contact with a Polish friend of his, with whom he had studied together on the [medical] faculty. He told him what had happened, and conveyed the situation of the sick patient. The Polish doctor, who worked at the previously mentioned hospital, told me to come to the hospital with the sick patient on a specific day and hour, when he is on duty, and he will then take him in and treat him. I came at the appointed hour, but the doctor saw my father, with a beard, and so he pulled me aside and said, that if he does not cut off his beard, he will not attend him, because he will immediately be recognized as a Jew, and he will not be able to speak for him; I wanted to convince my father that he should allow his beard to be cut off, since it was a matter of life and death, an imminent life-threatening danger, but he opposed this and refused.

I got an opportunity to bribe an employee, and I literally, 'sneaked' him into the hospital, and in a short while thereafter, he emerged cured.

In that time, the *Great Storm* drew nearer. A short time before the outbreak of the war, I went off to Ger, to take counsel with my parents as to what to do, because a great fear had fallen on everyone, and it was felt that the war could not be avoided, and the misfortune could break out any day. My parents decided to leave Ger, and to travel with me to Otwock, where I lived and worked.

Before our departure, I went to take leave of friends and relatives, talked to neighbors and acquaintances. Everyone felt downtrodden and deeply worried. The seriousness of the situation was anticipated in advance, but there was a sense of helplessness. And nobody was in a position to help another. One saw many weeping women; several days earlier, a number of young men were recruited to defend against "The Fatherland,' and the rest of the men of military age stood by, on a daily basis, waiting to be called up. Small children cried, looking at their worried and shaken parents, and from all eyes, an anxious question emanated: Oh, God, what should we do?...

The process of accumulating and storing foodstuffs began, which were already in short supply, and for every item, peasants demanded double the price. In the stores already, very little was available, the surrounding neighbors snatched up everything that was in stock, and no new merchandise came in. Nothing came in from the villages. The '*Koleika*' brought in an ever-decreasing number of *Hasidim*, and those who did come, would beseech the *Rebbe* with the question: '' Holy *Rebbe*, what shall we do?... and to this the *Rebbe* had one answer" – one must have faith...

I visited my family members, my uncles, Moshe, Yankl, and Shmuel Zeinvill; they were called the 'Mintzkehs.' Their family name was Laftman. I spoke with their sons and daughters, Chana, Hind'l, Shmuel Zim'l, with their children and with the entire branched-out family, of which not even a memory has remained. The men were disoriented, deeply worried, and one felt the onset of bitter times, but did not know what one even begins to do, or what can be done. In the last days before the outbreak of the war, a few solitary families, those that had relatives in Warsaw, went off there. Also, the *Rebbe* and his family went off to Warsaw. A few days before the Hitlerist invasion the radios started to call the populace to remain calm, and to prepare to defend the fatherland. These calls for calm cast a terror onto the people, the streets were half emptied out, and the people sat in the houses, and huddled with one another. This is how the last hours were passed in Ger before the Holocaust.

The Ger of My Childhood and Youth

By Yaakov Poloniecky
Tel-Aviv, Israel

When I was 'rented out to *Heder,*' – which is how it was described by us – I was so young, that I cannot 'reckon' how old I was. It is entirely possible that, at the time, I was not more than three or four years old. However, I remember leaving the *Heder* very well. I was then eleven years old. A few years later, my family moved to Warsaw, but I had tasted the 'flavor' of Ger; I was already a frequenter of the library, I proudly walked about in the *Rebbe's* street with a couple of small books under my arm, and I would stroll about with a *klatsch* of young boys and girls, had a virtual camp of friends, and – and I longed for Ger, where I had family.



Page 170: Aharon Poznansky & Moshe Zeifman, Escorted by their Friends, at the time of Departure for Military Service

I didn't find a place for myself in the big city, and also no friends or companions. In my house, they would joke that I longed for the *Rebbe*, and I was referred to as the 'little *Hasid*.' And I got my way,

and was permitted to go to Ger. Here, I was 'at home,' and felt like a fish in the water. Every evening at the library, it hummed like a beehive: girls and boys, happy and singing, who snatched me up like a precious stone. How about that! I was already a big shot: a big city guy, from Warsaw! I felt like I was born anew, and threw myself, with my entire might, into the enjoyment of all the good things that my little town afforded to me with such generosity: I borrowed books, and also read them (because, were someone to direct a question to me, or if a book was being discussed, I should know what to say). I signed up for the choir, and in the evenings, a whole band of girls and boys would go out and sing while going through the Ger streets and byways, in the parks, or at the banks of the Vistula.



Page 172: The Ger Mandolin Orchestra in front of The I. L. Peretz Library

The mandolin orchestra occupied a very important part in the activities of the club, under the direction of Ber'l Ribak. This musical branch of the institution captured the interest of many young people, who with a tireless diligence, would practice the difficult techniques of this fine instrument. The orchestra had to fulfil an important mission at all celebrations and on Festival Holidays, which were arranged by the library on a quite frequent basis.

At this point, with respectful reverence, I will recall the names of those who worked in Ger for the development of Jewish culture. In the first rank were: Sarah Geidiger, Chava Messing, Bluma Goldhecht, Poloniecky, Rachel Auerbach, Chava Kaufman, Mendl Goldhecht, Yankl Poloniecky, Ber'l Ribak, Moshe Lejzor Messing, Azriel Werzheiser, Moshe Berman, Yankl Goldberg, Melech Kaufman, and many others.

We brought a great deal of joy into the *shtetl*, with our evening promenades. We would *move en masse*, singing, with the happy laughter, and the sounds of young people, which consistently was

redolent with spring, even in the midst of autumn rains, and wintry cold. With an even deeper longing, I recall those beautiful evenings, our Sabbath promenades, and our 'weekly' races on the Vistula with small boats (we would very rarely do this on the Sabbath, and only yes – when it was far away from the *shtetl*). The little boats on the river looked like a singing choir, and the song reverberated from one side to the other, to the depths of the river, and to the heights of the heavens.

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Page 174: *Moshe Zeifman, who fell in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, with a group of friends from* Poalei Tzion

A while later, I was compelled to travel to Warsaw. However, the big city, with its constant movement of unfamiliar and unrecognizable people, even with its youth clubs and institutions, which I visited, could not quell the yearning I had for the friends of my youth, to the small-town gardens and byways, where I had spent my time so well. I missed the love and the homey intimacy, the warmth that comes from your own people, and I would travel to Ger twice a week.

As a member of the Warsaw 'Maccabi,' I got interested in a variety of sports, and I especially liked soccer. Once, during a visit I had made to Ger, I told my friends about this sport, which in that time, had already become very popular in Warsaw. The group listened to me with great interest, and right on the spot, decided to form a soccer club in the *shtetl*. The Peretz Library was quick to give its endorsement, and promised to take this 'youngest child' under its aegis. We bought ourselves a ball, and sat down to hash out all of the details and principles of this new agreement. After this, we worked intensively with our feet for a couple of weeks, until we got used to the process, and we then called on the players from Piaseczno for a match.

On that Sunday, when the contest took place, the entirety of Ger was in a state of excitement: Jews and Christians, young and old, came to see the new game played with a ball, which is moved around with the feet and with the head, by grown people. This was not child's play, and one came to watch by having purchased tickets, and in Warsaw, soccer matches are written up in the gazettes. And so, the entire *shtetl* came to see the match, and watched how two contesting groups played against one another, with great curiosity, and they were enveloped by this, even if they didn't completely understand the purpose of the sport. We won the match, the Ger Heroes... After the match, we called the members of the Piaseczno club, headed by Glauberman, to come to Poloniecky's shop to drink a toast, *L'Chaim*.

A while later, conflicts arose in the Peretz Library, in which a variety of political factions such as the Zionists, *Bundists*, and Communists, struggled to take control of the management of the institution, which had a great influence in the city. The end result is that the Zionists withdrew, and formed their own club. The leader of the general Zionists in that time was Yitzhak Goldhecht, from *Poalei Tzion* – Moshe Szczupak of *HaShomer HaOlami* – Mendl Goldhecht. Yitzhak Goldhecht was one of the most important personalities in Ger. He represented the community in the Municipal Council, and in general, the Zionist party had developed a very broadly-branched activity, and enjoyed the sympathy of the largest part of the populace.

I am reminded of the first of the *Halutzim*, who made *aliyah* to The Land of Israel. The entire *shtetl* escorted them to the train station, and the President of the Zionist Organization heartily offered them farewell greetings, and expressed the wish that they all see each other in Israel! This demonstration remains etched in my memory.

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Representatives of all the Zionist movements would send visiting emissaries to come to Ger on a frequent basis. Yitzhak Greenbaum would be a frequent guest also, who was especially very popular and beloved. The Zionist speakers would deal with issues relating to Jewish self-actualization, which have a connection to Jewish life and to Zionist activity, and debates would draw large numbers of people from all walks of life in the population. Moshe Flint was an active worker from the party, the brother-in-law of Moshe Goldman. They were both members of the leadership committee of the Zionist organization. Apart from the debates on political and also literary themes, many concerts were also performed in Ger, and also theater presentations with artists from Warsaw, who would appear in the hall of the firefighters.

When I write these lines, the streets and byways of Ger pass before my eyes, and all the people, who are so close to my heart. Lo, I pass by a house and I hear how Velf'keh Skrzypek is playing with his ensemble at a Jewish wedding. As a boy, I would stand for a long time by such a house, where Velf'keh would be playing, and look at how the Jews would be dancing the *Scher*. Jewish life was so cruelly chopped down on Polish soil, but nevertheless, I cherish all the corners of the *shtetl* where I spent my youth, and the Jews of Ger are deeply baked into my heart. I see them all, the *balebatim*, the *horopashnikehs*, the Moshe-Lejzors, the Rachel-Leahs, the Vovas and Shepsls, who worked oh so hard to make a living. And despite this, all, rich and poor, were taken over along with their *shtetl* Ger...

I was acquainted with the 'outer-city' as well as with the city proper. Two kilometers from Ger was the village of Czersk, an historic place in Polish history[45]. Masses of excursions would come there, consisting of students, together with their teachers, who would explain all of the details of the historical events, that took place there, to the children.

And beyond Czersk, the village of Szpruch lay enfolded in the stillness of a budding forest, where at one time, the Hoitsil family dwelt, ancestors of the first *Rebbe* of Ger, the founder of the *Hasidic* dynasty which brought fame to the *shtetl* of Ger in the entire Jewish world.

The Sport Club of the Peretz Library

By Marcos Gutstadt
Buenos Aires

Ger had two spiritual centers: the *Bet HaMedrash* of the *Rebbe*, where religious Jewry concentrated themselves and – a pious Jew would say, *leHavdil* – the library named for the great Yiddish classical writer, Yitzhak Leibusz Peretz, where the youth of Ger concentrated themselves. It is true that the first of these centers shone its spirit over all of Poland, and reached all the ends of the Jewish Diaspora; the second, did not emerge from the local range of the *shtetl*, and was not more than a local institution, but, however, it expressed the spirit of the new era, the striving for an education, the tendency to critically re-assess old values, which were so characteristic of the first decades of our century.

The library was no mere collection of bookshelves stacked with books, that dumbly sat for readers to come, but rather, it was a dynamic cultural institution, that looked to and strove to awaken among the young, an interest in social and community life. The founders of the library, a pair of Enlightened people, had no more of a motive than to bring in a bit of 'light and knowledge' into the *Hasidic shtetl*, but very quickly, the leadership of the institution co-opted the younger elements, and as a result, they set out broader objectives for themselves.

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45 Czersk is a settlement in the administrative district of Gmina Góra Kalwaria, within Piaseczno County, Mazovian Voivodeship, in east-central Poland. It lies approximately 2 kilometers south-east of Góra Kalwaria, 19 km south-east of Piaseczno, and 33 km south-east of Warsaw. The village also lies on the Czersk Lake (size: 9 hectares), which is an oxbow lake of the Vistula.

Czersk was an important settlement in the past and is one of the oldest Mazovian cities, famous for ruins of a medieval castle constructed in the late 14th century. The village currently has a population of about 590, but in the past, it was a royal town of the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland. In 1247-1526, it was the capital of the Duchy of Czersk, one of medieval Polish duchies. After incorporation of Mazovia into Poland (1526), the duchy was turned into the Czersk Land (see ziemia), part of Mazovian Voivodeship (1526–1795). The Land of Czersk was divided into four counties - those of Czersk, Grojec, Garwolin (since 1539), and Warka. Czersk itself was the seat of castellans, who also were senators of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The young people, primarily the young *Hasidic* element, threw itself thirstily on the books, and hid this from their parents, literally ingesting the '*treyf-possul*' books. There were reading circles, in which box evenings were held, and interest in the written word was stimulated by all means available. Talks by lecturers from Warsaw were also arranged. Apart from this, there was an active Drama Circle, and plays were put on, which steadily drew an increasing audience, such that the 'outside world' violently invaded the *Hasidic* atmosphere of the *shtetl*, and brought in an entirely new spirit.

In the official program of the library, there, of course, never entered the question of a professional movement. However [this initiative] as well grew out of the circles in the library, and with less publicity, one trade after another was quietly organized, and it was from there that the first strike was directed, for the ten-hour day, and afterwards for the eight-hour day, which created an entirely new social and community influence in the *shtetl.*

As a youth center that strove to encompass all branches of activity, that could interest and be useful for the young people, in the beginning of the twenties, the library also created a sports section, to which the sports enthusiasts gave importance, and which they called Sport-Club; despite the fact that the club did not have an independent existence, and was a division of the mother-institution.

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Page 179: A Farewell Evening for David Ribak, on His Aliyah *to Israel*

The founders of the Sport-Club were: M. L. Messing, B. Ribak, Yankl Poloniecky, L. Friedman, Y. Berman, M. Berman and others. Every day, after work, we would meet at the municipal sports plaza, and go through practice. We started with lighter athletics, and also created a soccer team. Every group had its trainers and a leader, who stood in contact with the leadership of the Club.

The soccer team had very good players, and in a short time, we perfected our skills, and issued a challenge to a competition to the soccer team of a neighboring *shtetl*. This was our first debut in public. We prepared ourselves day and night, and felt like a groom before his wedding. There was a double motive in our unease: first, there was professional fever, which is connected to the first-time appearance in public, and secondly, the violation of the Sabbath. The match had to take place on a Saturday, because the larger portion of the players worked or studied, and this was the only day in which it was possible to come to the match, and also attract an audience, and that was on Saturday. How will our *Hasidic shtetl* react to such a public desecration? This was the question. Will we not be subject to a hail of stones? The management of the library addressed this question, and there were a variety of opinions. However, there was an absolute majority that it was decided to play, and that is what we did...

And the victory was a double one: first, we won the match with five goals to four, and secondly, we were morally victorious in our first contest with the *Shomrei-Shabbos* contingent. Against all of our expectations, a large crowd came to the match; there were grownups, even women, and many young people, who tensely followed the players, and greeted each of our goals with a happy outburst. Several tens of *Hasidim*, who came 'to teach the *shkotzim* a thing or two,' had to content themselves with lecturing us from a distance.

The religious element made a variety of efforts to interdict our Saturday soccer games, but to no avail. We did not do this in order to incite anger, but because, very simply, we could not arrange for a match with a neighboring *shtetl* on an ordinary weekday. We played with the clubs of the neighboring towns such as Grojec, Piaseczno, Warka, Otwock, Karczew, Połaniec, Sabin, and others.

Years later, when the Zionist movement gained strength in Ger, and *aliyah* began to take place to The Land of Israel, our sportsmen were the ones who provided the largest part of the *Halutzim*. And this says something! A few also emigrated to the American countries, and the leadership of the Sport-Club passed into the hands of younger members, who carried on the work with even greater enthusiasm than their forebears. There were in the first rank: M. Gutstadt, L. Helman, Sh. Rubin, A. Bilowsky, M. Mardicks, A. Mardicks, L. Messing, Sh. Zinger, L. Fliegelman, Sh. Smoliazh, H. Messing, Y. Karpman, Y. Szternszus, Yoss'l Citrin, and many others.

It was a big holiday whenever we made an outbound trip to the surrounding towns, and we would make such trips often in the spring and the summer. These trips, out of town, brought us in contact with new people, and for us, it created a new world. In the towns by the Vistula, we would go out on small boats, and hold contests in swimming. Ger had very good swimmers, who were well-known in the entire vicinity. The swimming section was led by M. Gutstadt, L. Helman, L. Schreibaum, Sh. Ribak, the Mardicks brothers and others.

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Sport, in this way, developed not only the muscles, but also opened up new horizons, and awakened an impulse to take on new challenges and new worlds. And so, the confines of the hometown *shtetl* became too confining, and it awakened a yearning that activated the energy of the young people, and gave wings to the fantasy, which led individuals to Zionist training and *aliyah,* and others – to emigration to various countries.

The library was not a political organization, but all the political persuasions grew out of it. It awakened an interest in the new ideals of the time, and put a stamp of collective responsibility and national consciousness on its endeavors, on its sections, and on its members. So, for example, when the Endekists in the city initiated anti-Semitic propaganda in the area, and began to assault Jews, the management of the library examined the situation, and decided to 'mobilize' its sportsmen, and put up resistance. And that's how it happened, when the Hooligans just began to collect themselves in the evenings in the Jewish streets, we would show ourselves. A couple of time, we went into battle – when they began to touch Jews – and we drove them off. After that, these anti-Semites no longer tried to provoke a Jew on the streets of Ger.

When, a while later, a campaign was started against Jewish commercial activity, with the motto of '*swoi do swoiego*' – Poles should not buy from Jews – the anti-Semites stationed picketers in front of Jewish places of business, and every Pole that wanted to go in, was driven off with staves. At that time, our sportsmen went into an open battle, and we would attack the picketers, until these noble malefactors got a little respect for the young Jewish boys, and no longer showed themselves in Jewish areas.

We defended Jewish honor, to the point that even the *Shomrei-Shabbos*, who previous to this called us nothing less than '*apikorsim*,' and '*shkotzim*,' changed their tune, and began to refer to us as Giborei Israel...

The Drama Circle of the Peretz Library

By Baylah Garfinkel-Helman
Buenos Aires

In Ger, there was a library named for Yitzhak Leibusz Peretz. However, it was also called '*Volkshaus*' and '*Bet Am.*[46]' It meant something different to each and every individual; for those to whom it was a *Volkshaus* – a gathering place for Jewish youth – and those who respectfully referred to it as a *Bet Am*, as a mode of expression that was for that person, closer to his heart. Because, in its impact, the library was more than just a bookcase with books, but rather a broadly-branched cultural institution, which took in all of the characteristics of a *Volkshaus*, a *Bet Am*, and also that of a political organization. In the area of the library, and under its roof, all political persuasions were nurtured and grew up, and also the professional unions.

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46 These are Yiddish and Hebrew variants for 'House of the People.'

The library patronized and protected all these institutions of the young people, which found their expression in a variety of outlets, and which was impelled to achieve a new way of life. The library provided such an aegis through its non-partisan banner of culture and so the progressive elements, who were very active in community life, as well as the purely cultural sections, which needed to withstand a rather strong struggle with internal opponents.



Page 184: *A Group of Amateur Players from the Drama Circle of the I. L. Peretz Library*

In so observant a *Hasidic shtetl* such as Ger, the drama circle of the library had very difficult birth pangs. In the city, where the *Rebbe* of Ger resided, it was not so easy to extract the consent of fathers and mothers, to allow their children to try out for the theater, and to perform on the Sabbath. It was the fathers and mothers, who indeed were the greatest opponents of the drama circle, and there was no lack of family tragedies that were played out, until the children got their way. The 'tragedies' were played out under the family roof, without a public to see; however, by contrast, the performances that the children gave, drew a rather fine crowd, initially – mostly the young, and later on, also the older Jewish people, from the ranks of the *balebatim*. The name of the library 'legitimized' a number of activities of its members in the eyes of the police, and also lent a specific measure of 'legality' to the drama circle in the *Hasidic* circles.

The workers of the library at that time were: the Goldhechts, Yaakov Nathan, Rivka Zurek, Shayndl Mann, Mendl Messing, Mott'l Karpman, Goldberg, Lipa Goldberg, Toyba Weinberg, Pin'cheh Broder, Shlomo Nissenholtz, Leah Friedman, Menashe Orzekh, Moshe Heilikman, and others.

The first of the members of the drama circle were composed from the working young. These were boys and girls who put in a hard day's work at a factory, after dropping by at home to grab a bite, and

sometimes, indeed, straight from the workplace, got to the rehearsal of the drama circle. The roles were rehearsed through the night, and also at the side of the machine [at work], and in time, a very fine amateur theater group was developed out of this.

The pioneers of the drama circle were: Yitzhak Ribak, Dina Messing, Yitzhak Goldhecht, Baruch Pilberg, Feiga-Leah Pilberg, Chana Fliegelman, Lejzor Kroll, Abraham-Joseph Till, Meir Farber, and years later, when the 'pioneers' became older, a youth drama circle was created, which also consisted, in the larger part, of young working people, among which were: Moshe Friedman, Leah Till, Pearl Ribak, Monish Grossman, Noah Farber, Dvorah Helman, Malka Helman, Lipa Helman, Yitzhak Till, Ephraim Birnbaum, Chana Weinberg, Liebeh Birnbaum, Abraham Kirschenbaum, Chava Messing, Moshe-Lejzor Messing, Mendl Goldhecht, Herbowiss, Moshe-Aharon Herszkovicz, Menashe Orzekh, Pearl Schreibaum, and Raphael Zurek.

The drama circle of the young people was directed by Moshe Heilikman. He committed himself to this work with a truly rare love and dedication. He worried about each and every one, like a father, and would call them nothing else but – children. He was a developer of character, who taught them not only how to perform in the theater, but also taught individuals how to write, and helped with role rehearsals. Moshe Heilikman came from a strictly religious home. His father, Leib Moshe Henoch's ע"ה was an ardent *Hasid* and knowledgeable in book-learning, who supported himself from working the land. He was an accomplished gardener, and his greens had a reputation in the *shtetl*. He permitted his son to be taught by the best teachers and afterwards sent him to the Yeshiva.

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The young Yeshiva student, however, read a great deal, and using his own personal resources, developed a totally meaningful body of worldly knowledge. It was said of him, that he is a 'walking encyclopedia,' and in fact, during the box evenings, he would demonstrate knowledge in various areas. Moshe Heilikman and Menashe Orzekh were the recognized authorities, who directed the cultural work of the institution. Moshe was also a participant in the management, and it was he, who maintained the relationship with the Literary Union in Warsaw, and would bring down speakers to the *shtetl*.

Moshe Heilikman helped out his father in the garden, loving the work there, and read a great deal about gardening. Leib-Moshe Henoch's would say with pride, that his son was a 'complete agronomist.' But the 'agronomist' worked quite hard as a peasant, on the field for the entire day, and in the evening, he was already at the library, where his 'artists' were waiting for him.

Theater was his 'weakness' or, his true calling. In the atmosphere of theater, he felt like a fish in water, and loved to talk about theater and artists. He would select the plays to be performed, he would design the scenes, direct, act as a prompter, and even re-write the roles and allocate them to the actors. Nothing was too hard for him to do for the drama circle. It was not only once that he had to remain at rehearsals until late hours of the night, and if a glint of daylight showed, he would already be at his work in the garden. He would have very little time for his family, for his wife, Dvorah Helman, and for the little girl, Maril'keh whom he loved. However, this did not disrupt the

harmony of the house, and Dvorah was proud of her husband, and his activity on behalf of the library. She would attend all of the box evenings. In which Moshe took part, and did not miss a single performance of the drama circle.

Moshe Heilikman foresaw, and with months yet to go before the library was closed, he took a document from the management that the library owed him money for the books, which he had bought for them in Warsaw. And when the seal of the police already had been placed on the doors of the institution, Moshe came with a lawyer, and with an order from the judge, and took out all of the books, and transferred them to the local office of the *Bund*, and the work continued, as if nothing had happened. The library had merely changed its address, and after a short hiatus, activity was resumed on all fronts.

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As I had previously mentioned, Moshe Heilikman was a gardener. He began to work with his father, but he had also created an entire library about gardening. Every trip that he took to Warsaw, he would bring back pamphlets and journals about gardening and tending orchards, and he learned the trade for himself. He did so to the extent that he gained a reputation in Ger and its vicinity as an educated gardener. The peasants in the area, and the nobles, would come to him to buy young saplings, and seeds for a variety of flowers and fruits. He had hotbeds and created for himself a true masterwork.

This apparently elicited envy in the pious Christian hearts, that a *Żyd* should be able to work himself up that way! And on one snowy night, they came and set fire to his works on all sides, and the fire engulfed the house and the garden, such that Moshe, his wife and child could barely escape with their lives. Everything was burned up. Two cattle in the barn were burned, and even two horses, whom they had no chance to save, because the fire engulfed them with such force, that everything went up in smoke in a matter of minutes. As it seems, the arsonists used an inflammable substance, and also wanted to incinerate the *Żyds*.

This was close to the [beginning of the] war, where anti-Semitic propaganda in Poland was rife with a special intensity. In the year 1939, when Hitler attacked his Polish neighbor, Moshe and his wife went off to Haradzieja[47], a *shtetl* near Baranovich on Soviet territory, not far from the Polish border. There he had another baby boy, and he got work in a school. In 1942, the Germans entered the *shtetl*, and their first act was to inflict a mass-murder on the Jewish populace. They drove all of the Jews of the city together, young and old, women and men, and shot them down with machine guns... Heilikman was his family name, and this is what he was in actuality: a man who dedicated his life to the benefit of the general public, and who died like a martyr, together with the six million martyrs.

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47 Possibly Haradzišča, which is also near Baranovich

Ger, As Seen by a Scion of Grojec

By Henya Kopper-Jurkiewicz
Buenos Aires

Our *shtetl* Grojec, was found not far from Ger. However, without a doubt, there was a great difference between these two cities, or towns. Grojec was a *shtetl* like hundreds of other such throughout Poland. By contrast, Ger was something else. Ger was a spiritual center in the Jewish world, the city of residence for an important Rabbinic dynasty, that shed its influence onto Jewish life in Poland, and also beyond the boundaries of that country.

We, the young people of Grojec, and especially those who called themselves 'progressive,' and belonged to the left-wing Jewish labor parties, looked upon Ger as a 'fortress of reaction and clericalism,' and were certain that in this *shtetl*, Ger, there was not any other movement, or party, to be found, that had no connection to *Hasidism*, and therefore, it was for us – and especially for me – truly emotionally overwhelming, when I found out that, also in Ger, just as was the case in the largest part of the Jewish towns of Poland, in that time, there were people who thought differently, and other organizations and parties, and a variety of other institutions of a cultural and political character.



Page 189: The Bundist *Youth with its Leaders, Mendl Messing & Leib'l Benzelewicz*

I had the opportunity to become familiar with the 'Culture-League' of Ger, which was located there, under the direct influence of the local *Bundist* organization. In that time, I took part in the drama circle of the Culture League in Grojec, which made frequent visits to neighboring Ger, as a part of the cultural exchanges, that our drama circle participated in, with the cities and towns in the vicinity. But we were especially interested in visiting Ger, which for a time, I long held that they alone would be something different from the remaining towns, and in the end, I concluded that the 'fortress of clericalism' was a lovely Jewish city, in which a multi-hued spiritual life pulsed, with all nuances and directions, which in that time, were represented in Polish Jewry. There was a 'Ger of the Above,' with all the colors of the rainbow, from extreme right to extreme left.

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Not everything that I saw in Ger, at that time, remains in my memory, after an hiatus of thirty years' time. (And these were terrifying and gruesome years for me and for everyone), but many things don't let themselves be forgotten, and remain etched in memory. And it is these things that are worth underscoring, in this special *Yizkor* Book, in which the martyrs of Ger are sanctified, and the memory of this city that was cut down.

The Culture-League of Ger had a large library named for the *Bundist* and labor leader Beinusz Michalewicz[48], and it was this library that was the gathering place for the workers in that location, and also for large parts of the youth. In the evenings, workers and *horopashnikehs* would also come, bringing the books they had read, and exchanging them for others, and in the process, carrying on conversations and discussions about what they had read, and what they understood from the books they had read. Many of them would drop into the reading room, where a variety of journals were to be found, daily newspapers, and party publications from the *Bund*, and the youth organization, '*Zukunft*' and others. The reading room was always full, especially in the evening hours, and it was simply a delight to observe this, how young people were sitting – and also older folks – deeply immersed in their reading.



Page 191: A Group of Amateurs from the Drama Circle of the Peretz Library that Performed 'Uriel Acosta.'

The walls of the local were decorated with pictures of the party leaders, and Jewish writers, and in the lending room, there were always people to be found, who would always be discussing issues of

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48 Beinusz Michalewicz (1876-1928), pseudonym of Iosif Izbitsky, a leading figure in the *Bund.*

the day, and also of the position of the *Bundist* party, on a variety of events. After the official hours of the activity in the library and reading room, the unofficial part would commence, that the gathering would improvise with youthful exuberance: there was singing, discussions of various issues, professional interests were discussed, conflicts, contracts consummated, romances were pursued, which by and large, ended in a nice Jewish manner with legitimate Jewish weddings, in accordance with the laws of Moses and Israel...

In Ger, just as it was the case in the largest part of the cities and towns in Poland, there were also circles dedicated to self-education, especially among the young, and there, an older leader would give lectures about political questions, and cultural issues, which were taken up with great interest by the participants, who thirsted for knowledge and using their own resources, sought to find a way to obtain an education. We would gather in the locals of the institutions and also in private houses.

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The members of the Culture-League, of the library, and of the *Bundist* organization, demonstrated great interest and understanding – and even great love – for the presentations made by our Grojec drama circle that we performed there. They looked upon these performances as something of their own making, and with commitment, participated in helping to assure the success of these performances, and they also participated by taking specific roles in them. In this connection, I recall that, among the pieces performed there, was the piece about the life and death of the Jewish labor pioneer and martyr, Hirsch Lekert[49], which had a great success there, and made a big impression in Ger, and also in the vicinity, because the Jewish residents in the Ger vicinity would also attend such performances.



Page 193: *A Group of the* Bundist *Youth in* 'Zukunft'

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[49] Hirsch Lekert (1879-1902), was a shoemaker and militant Jewish Labor *Bund* member, who attempted to assassinate the Vilna governor in 1902 to avenge the flogging of workers who participated in a May Day rally. The governor was only injured and Lekert was caught and hanged.

Among the active workers in the *Bund* in Ger, that I can recollect, were found: The Kupperholtz brothers, Leib'l Dankheh; the prestigious community culture worker, and activist of the *Bundist* party, Mendl Messing, David Gottfried, and others, may their memory be for a blessing, because they were all exterminated, together with the largest part of the Jewish population of Ger, ה"י.

The central leadership of the *Bund* in Poland, placed a great deal of value on the activities of the *Bundist* organization in Ger, taking into consideration the surrounding atmosphere in which it emerged to operate, and Ger would be very frequently visited by *Bundist* party functionaries, with special directives, on how to comport themselves, and to develop their work. But apart from the party functionaries, renown personalities and well-known Jewish writers would visit Ger, and give lectures on literary themes, and these lectures would be attended by a large part of the local Jewish populace, and this contributed great prestige and visibility to the *Bund* in Ger.

And this budding life of the *Bund* in Ger, suffered the same fate as all of the Jews in that city, and of the largest part of the Jews of the Poland of yesteryear.

We repeat, ה"י, that may God avenge their blood, and let us offer respect for everyone's memory!

Memories of the First *'Halutz'* from Ger

By Abraham Mardicks
The Land of Israel

Many memories of my childhood years are tied to me with the name, Ger; years , that have long, long since passed, and yet they have remained with me. Childhood years do not go away, they accompany us for our entire lives. It is during the childhood years that the character of the adult is formed, and his/her destiny in life is cast. So it is with each and every one; and I am, understandably, not an exception. A person who was born in Ger, remains a Ger scion for his/her entire life. The experiences of the past youth leave an unforgettable stamp on a person...

I began to learn how to comport myself in Ger – and in general the way Jews of the time behaved – at the age of five years. My first teacher was the elementary school teacher Mendl Worker. Under his tutelage, I began to learn the *Aleph-Bet*, and by seven years of age, was learning Pentateuch with *Rashi* commentaries. My father ע"ה wanted me to also learn secular subjects, and he sent me to Yankl the soda-maker's daughter Feiga, on the Koszaren *Gasse*, who taught me arithmetic, writing, and also Russian. Regrettably, this instruction only lasted a short while, and The First World War broke out, that deeply disrupted the entire world, and for a time, caused my education to be disrupted.

Added to all these woes, which the war brought to each and everyone, we suffered yet another misfortune. My father ע"ה was, by nature, a good man. Shortly before the outbreak of the war, he lent a good friend of his a sum of four hundred rubles. In those days, this was considered a substantial sum of money. The war, however, ruined the settlement, commerce broke down, and

many merchants lost their standing, among them also the debtor, such that father no longer saw any money, and, like many others of that time, he also went down...

From that time on, we began to feel want in the home, and for me, this signaled the end of my 'childhood years,' and long years ensued of straitened circumstances, the taste of which is not so soon forgotten. My father suffered from the fact that I was not receiving an education, and very often, out of a sense of concern, would speak from his heart: – what is to be the outcome, a boy wanders around idle, with nothing to do... and when I became a Bar-Mitzvah, he sent me to Khatzkl the *Gemara Melamed*. I also studied with Hersh Leib and Ber'l the Pincher. But there was no way to make a living, and on one fine evening, my father ע"ה called me over and said to me as follows: Listen, Avrem'eleh, you know though, that times are bad, and I cannot pay tuition, but if you want to study in the *Bet HaMedrash*, I will provide you with everything that a young man needs to have while he studies Torah. But if you do not wish to do this, you can go learn a trade, and I will assure that you are not short of anything, but with the condition, that in the evenings, you are to study with a group of young men.



Page 197: *The Organization of* Halutzim *in Ger*

I understood the good wishes of my father, and knew that he will not be able to keep all of his promises, and therefore, I decided to learn a trade. And if it is to be a trade, which one? I came to the immediate conclusion – carpentry – not, God forbid, because this trade was particularly attractive to me, but simply, because we had a carpenter for a neighbor. In our courtyard, the son-in-law of Chaya, who sold yeast, had a carpenter shop, so I thought, that I will learn a trade from a person that I knew. However, this did not find favor with my father. – You know, my son – he said with a trembling voice – we have never had working men in our family, and if it is ordained that you be the exception, pick out something better to learn as a trade...

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And we began to enumerate all of the tradespeople in the *shtetl*, and it was determined that I would learn to be a maker of soles, working for Shmel'keh the bootmaker, this being a more genteel trade, and the bootmaker also lives in our courtyard. And so I worked for him, for two years, together with Moshe Ravsky, and for this time, we received not one cent. That is the way it was in those years. But, as it appears, that along with the misfortune, it is necessary to have a little bit of luck, and in my case, I didn't even have this 'little bit,' this work did not appeal to me very much, and I didn't see any meaningful future in it.

In that time, I was attracted by the professional movement. I recall, that in the gatherings of my union, one talked of defending wages, but I did not yet have a salary. The union local was very small, and the leader was Vova the Porter's son, a sole maker. On Saturdays, we would gather in the small room of the union, and I would come to these gatherings wearing a velvet cap, which I would don in honor of the Sabbath. And my thoughts went off in an entirely different direction, than that of those who would sermonize in the union. There, a great deal was said about Soviet Russia, and, at that time, I was already thinking in terms of The Land of Israel.

When I became a reader at the library, I, indeed, found a couple of like-minded friends there, who spoke of 'Palestine,' but in that time – in the first years of the twenties – the Zionist movement had not yet reached the small town of Ger. It is certain that there were many people in the *shtetl* that were Zionist sympathizers, but there was no party or local [headquarters] that could gather the first of the Lovers of Zion under its roof.

In that time, it was 1922 or 1923, a young man named Stein, came to Ger from Warsaw, who was an overseer in the brick works of the village of Moczydłów, and this fellow Stein, who was a Zionist, called for the first Zionist gathering, which took place clandestinely, in a pit somewhere near the *Koleika*. It was in this fashion that the Zionist organization in Ger was born.

I learned of this clandestine meeting from my uncle Pinia's daughter Rachel'eh. She knew of my Zionist sympathies, and on one occasion entered our home, called me to a side, and whispered a secret in my ear: – Avrem'eleh, you will now be able to travel to *The Land*... from that time on, I became a Zionist with my flesh and life. Nothing was too difficult for me: I would call my friends to meetings, wear a flower insignia, collect funds for *Keren-Kayemet*, and work for *Keren HaYesod*.

The first Zionist gathering in the city, took place at the [home of] the Zinger family. Abraham Friedman, the son of Moshe Goldhaus lived in the same house. At that meeting, also conducted by the previously mentioned Stein, it was decided to rent [premises for] a local for the organization, and to this end, each of the members was assessed two zlotys. And, at the meetings and gatherings of the local, a variety of opinions began to crystallize regarding ways to realize the ideal of Zionism. Some

exhibited sympathy for Labor-Zionism, and for others, followers of Borokhov[50] line in Zionism, this did not have good appeal. In the end, the organization divided itself between *Poalei-Tzion* and the general Zionists. But this did not diminish the influence of Zionism in the city; on the contrary, each direction, in its own way, proposed activities, and attracted adherents.

At the first meetings, the desire to make *aliyah* had already been expressed by many of the members. I remember that we especially sent a delegate to Warsaw, our comrade, Aharon Nussbaum, to request the organization of a branch of '*HeHalutz*' in Ger, to create a training [program] and to prepare the members for *aliyah.* The decision he returned with was not very satisfying, and we had to wait yet a long time to establish a branch of *HeHalutz* in the *shtetl*, and I was the first candidate for training.

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However, to my great disappointment, the party actually created a great deal of difficulty for me. To this day I do not know why, whether there was opposition to my candidacy, or perhaps there were other reasons, or whether it was intentional or unintentional; but regardless of the reason, my traveling to be trained was delayed for two years time, and in the course of the two years, nobody came [to town], to take away this 'birthright,' there being no one in Ger to assume this kind of 'pleasure,' or perhaps there were such people, but there may have been other obstacles...

I believe there are members somewhere, who remember this incident, and know the reason for why my candidacy was canceled in the first place. I recall that a gathering once took place of *Halutzim* in the yard of the Poznansky family. At that gathering, the list of candidates for *aliyah* was discussed, and it was accepted that I would be sent for training in Kielce. At that same gathering, our lady comrade Friedman was present, who joined the movement against the will of her parents. Her grandmother lived as a neighbor to the Poznanskys, and when she saw her beloved grandchild among the 'band of thugs that want to travel to Palestine,' she immediately communicated it to her children, and it became a veritable scandal. Someone had libeled me, or I was suspected of being the informer. But the grandmother herself testified later that she was the one who saw her grandchild among the group of *Halutzim*, and told the girl's parents, and the lady comrade Friedman established that her grandmother had been motivated 'to protect her from a misfortune' and that I was, in this instance, completely innocent.

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The party members also did me a great disservice by not giving me material help to cover the expenses of the trip. In this regard, my parents could not help me, and as I indicated above, I was not a meaningful earner at my trade. A number of the members, my personal friends, managed to get together a little bit of money, I had to give something, and also my impoverished father-in-law had to add to it as well. This is a sin on the part of some of the members, that I cannot forget to this day...

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50 Dov Ber Borokhov (July 4, 1881 – December 17, 1917) was a Marxist Zionist and one of the founders of the Labor Zionist movement as well as a pioneer in the study of Yiddish as a language.

Despite this, I am fortunate and proud of the fact that I was the first *Halutz* from Ger; I showed the way, and many others followed my example and not only saved their lives, but also, each in his/her own way, in accordance with their means, participated in the rebuilding of the country of Israel.

And in the end, I want to express my heartfelt recognition of the group that took the initiative in Buenos Aires, *landsleit*, who are helping to produce the *Yizkor* Book, to eternalize the memory of the martyrs from our hometown of Ger.

Jews Mounted Resistance!

By Lejzor Messing

I wish to recall an event that took place, which many of those who survived the destruction of Ger remember, a number of whom were even heroes of the drama, which foretold the tragic events that played out shortly afterwards. As is known, *Hasidim* would come to Ger from all the cities and towns of Poland. They were seen in all the streets, and especially in the vicinity where the *Rebbe's* synagogue was located. They wore silk *kapotes*, fur *shtrymels,* long curled side locks, and beards, and a few of them also with white socks. This was the way the ardent *Hasidim* would present themselves to the *Rebbe* to offer him '*Sholom Aleichem*,' and also when worshiping in the synagogue. On the Sabbath, one would exit the *Bet HaMedrash* wearing a prayer shawl, and massed in a group this way, traverse the streets while humming a melody. On Simchat Torah, they would dance through the streets, and the entire *shtetl* engaged in this holiday spirit.

When 'leaving the *Rebbe*' one was already clothed in weekday dress. After the holiday, one would take off the *shtrymels* and the silk *kapotes*, and put on weekly garb. Some would put on a long coat with a small Polish-style cap, another, a simple *kapote*. The first *Rebbe* of Ger, the renown '*Khidushei HaRI"M,*' R' Yitzhak-Meir, sanctioned the use of European dress for observant Jews. However, in the ambit of the ADMo"R, one had to wear *Hasidic* clothing. In Ger, there was actually an entire industry of making *shtrymels*, in which many families were engaged and provided all of Poland with this article.

On the Sabbaths, and Festival Holidays, Ger therefore acquired a *Hasidic* cast to its appearance, which was a distinct anathema to Polish patriots, the snobbish sinners, who would mock and insult the Jews. In Ger, there was a military camp and a school for border guards. For this service, recruits were taken that were trusted, nobles and functionaries. With dressed precision, they would perform their drills on a sports field of theirs, outside the city, and in the evenings they would come to amuse themselves by molesting Jews. The hooligans from Poznan in Silesia, who were redolent with their patriotism, were especially good at doing this.

In the evenings, packing themselves together, they would beleaguer the Jewish streets, and provoke the *Hasidim* passing by: snatching off a hat, grabbing them by the beard, or side locks, imitating the way the Jews spoke, and shouting '*Żydy do Palestiny!*' The police, as usual, would pay no attention, and not intervene; others would leave the place, and pretend not to notice. As time went on, the assaults became more frequent and exhibited increased temerity, and there were also instances when Jews were beaten.

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The organized Jewish youth therefore decided that it would not tolerate such behavior going forward. A serious clash was foreseen, and also understood the possible consequences, but it was decided to be ready. On a specific Saturday night, when the young Jewish people were gathered in a variety of institutions, and the *Rebbe* had finished his Sabbath Feast, the Jews began to exit the *Bet HaMedrash*, and ran into a band of soldiers, who assaulted them with fists and staves, and began to beat them. A few of the younger *Hasidim* mounted resistance, at which point, the hooligans unsheathed their bayonets and advanced their assault on unarmed people.

With lightning speed, the news of this spread through the city, and crowds of people began to stream from all quarters, to the place where the incident was taking place. Wagon drivers and porters appeared. Of them, I recall Shim'eleh Pilberg, Dark Yankl, Garfinkel, Shlomo, and many others. I came out of the library with an organized group, at the head with Leib'l Fliegelman and Herschel Poloniecky. On the 'battlefield' we encountered beaten and bloodied Jews. And the 'heroes' stood off at a distance, with the bayonets in hand, and jeered. One of us gave a shout: '*Chevre*, let 'em have it!' And we threw ourselves at them with such a storm, that they immediately began to withdraw. Those who defended themselves with bayonets had their hands twisted, and beaten over the head with fists and stones, that we had found in the street. A few of these 'heroes' remained down in the mud right on the spot, and the rest appear to have fled. It was in this fashion that we gave the Polish 'patriots' a lecture that Jewish blood is not a worthless commodity.

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This incident made a strong impression in the city, and in the entire surrounding vicinity. It was talked about for many weeks, and even feared retribution from the side of the anti-Semitic elements. Accordingly, we prepared ourselves to mount a resistance, but these assaults were not repeated, and no mass-attacks took place anymore. Yes, there were isolated incidents in which Jews were mocked, and anti-Semitic catcalls, but in general, it became more peaceful in the *shtetl.*

In my memory, there remain the names of several of my comrades, who took place in the battle with the soldiers, which are: A. Bielowsky, M. Greifman, Sh. Perlman, A. Stein, A. Gotstadt, Itcheh Smoliarczyk, and my brothers: Israel, Chaim, Yankl and Yoss'l. I remember, when we came home after the battle, my mother was in tears, and frightened, and my father rubbed his hands with satisfaction, and with a smile, said to us: – You gave it to them good, children...Satisfied, my mother wiped away her tears, and begged of us: – But you will not do this again, children, I beg of you... One of us calmed her down: – We won't get mixed up anymore, Mother, you can be sure of that...

A Monument That Will Live Forever

By Abraham Mardicks
New York

I have received a letter from my *landsleit* in Buenos Aires, asking me to participate in [the creation of] the *Yizkor* Book, that will eternalize the memory of our small *shtetl* of Ger. I was simultaneously overtaken by a feeling of happiness and sadness. I was gratified that I was fated with the opportunity to remain among the living. I say 'fated,' because it was a chance occurrence, that I had left Poland before the war, and my family remained behind. I often have guilt feelings, not having even any minimal guilt: why was it fated for me, but not them? But who could then foresee that dark, terrible destruction?

And a sense of sadness also reigns within me, because it reminded me of what that small, Jewish *shtetl* of Ger was, full of a beautiful Jewish life; true, with its material difficulties, but with a great deal of joy, and also spiritual interests. And what has become of Ger!.. A mountain of ash and thousands of tortured Jews, about whom we do not know how and where they died.



Page 207: At a Commemoration Event of Ger Landsleit *in Buenos Aires*

It is therefore a sacred obligation on the part of that small remnant of survivors, to erect a monument, on their unknown gravesite, and to sanctify the memory of our martyrs, and of our *shtetl*, in a *Yizkor* Book. I therefore send greetings to my *landsleit* in Buenos Aires, recognizing their initiative, and wish them *Yasher Koach* to all those who are helping them out in this sacred mission. It is an obligation that every one has to feel as a demand being made against their personal and Jewish identity.

We were a family of nine people: My father, Herschel-Lejzor; my mother Royza, and their six sons and one daughter. Out of this family, which was deeply rooted in the Polish soil, for many centuries, only three people survived: I and my two brothers, two in Israel, and one in New York. The Nazi Storm, and Polish anti-Semitism, tore out the ancient Jewish presence by the roots, leaving a couple of minuscule twigs, by a sheer miracle, against their will...

I know very well that the Mardicks family is not any exception. This was the fate of many Jewish families in Ger, and in all of Poland. From a number, there was not even so much as a trace left. Entire Jewish Settlements were eradicated from the face of that accursèd soil, and it is therefore a doubled obligation on the part of those who survived, to eternalize the names of the martyrs, and also of the settlements themselves, where Jews not only developed a variety of crafts and industries, but were also a factor of general progress with their participation in all avant-garde movements, and with their inner spiritual life.

And of all the cities and towns, Ger was a Crown City of Jewish spirituality, which spread around itself a faith in, and a love of, people. The older generation did it in its fashion, and the children went in entirely different directions, but with the same goal in mind: to create a more beautiful and just world for humanity. The elders – wanted to improve the world using God's grace, and the younger people – with their own powers.

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Of all the Hasidic sects, Ger promoted, to the greatest degree, friendship and love from one person to the other, and that one needs to help the other. This penetrated the way of life of the settlement, and in Ger, one felt the spirit of fraternity and friendship, as strong in the *Hasidic* as in the non-*Hasidic* circles. I know of many *Hasidic* families in Ger – and pointedly, not prosperous ones – that would take in poor people as guests, who would come to [visit] the *Rebbe*, and not take a cent from them, and this was not out of *Hasidic* piety, but out of Jewish goodness.

And this goes without saying for the so-called 'progressive' elements. They literally sacrificed themselves for 'humanity,' and it was known that in this area of endeavor, Jews sacrificed themselves more that [non-Jewish] Poles. The children, like their fathers before them, with Hasidic ardor, fought for a better world, and also for the freedom of Poland, and lo, this 'world' – and especially the Soviet world – quickly disappointed them, and stood in their way.

The progressives organized the workers in Ger, and successfully battled out an eight-hour workday for them. It is necessary to recognize that this was a very substantial accomplishment. And even people who did not belong to their camp, thought of this as a positive development. In the small towns of Poland, there was, in general, a rather large standoff on the matter of social legislation. In the smaller workshops, the *balebatim* slaved together with their 'people,' from the break of day to the late hours of the night. So Ger set an example. And it was not only Jewish workers who benefitted from this, but also the non-Jewish ones, going so far, at to having the Jewish 'activists' organizing the Christian workers of my father's factory, who never worked for more than eight hours, and under better conditions than in non-Jewish enterprises, and certainly better than that under the nobility.

As a young man, my father ע"ה was a tinsmith, and always worked for himself. He was a tireless worker, with an entrepreneurial spirit. After this, he put together a small works, for making a variety of non-alcoholic beverages. It was not easy to get such an enterprise together, and we, the children, helped out a great deal in this. The entire family was employed in this factory, which provided the entire city with this article, as well as the entire surrounding vicinity. After this, he became a contractor for building houses for sale, and built a salon to be rented out for weddings and theater performances, and his final undertaking as a factory, which employed about forty workers on a permanent basis. This was the first factory of its kind in the area, and provided all manner of wood products for the construction industry.

The anti-Semitic politics of the régime was, however, especially aimed against Jewish industrial enterprise, and instead of helping it to develop, it laid obstacles in its path. Inspections, taxes, and fines, especially levied against Jewish businesses, took the incentive away from work, and I, along with my brother, decided we would leave Poland. We immigrated to Africa, to the land of the gold. This was in the year 1937, and we settled ourselves quite nicely there, seeing that it was possible to make a living there. However, I longed for home; I longed not only for my parents and brothers, but also for my homey *shtetl*, my friends, the library, to the totality of this small-*shtetl* life, which seemed to have more purpose and meaning than life in a big city, where a person – and specifically a newcomer – feels coldness and being abandoned.

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I came back to Ger in 1939, and immediately felt that 'I was at home.' The entire *shtetl* was joyous at my return, and there were celebrations. I was enveloped with so much warmth and love, just as much by the older generation as the young people, to the point that I felt more than fortunate, and despite the fact that the scent of war was in the air in Poland, I did not regret my decision to come home. I thought to myself that a scion of Ger should not live anywhere else but in Ger, and that he would never feel as good anywhere as in Ger, and what will happen to Jews in general, will also happen to the Jews in large...

But something entirely different was fated; a thing that only the fantasy of the devil himself could conceive. A cataclysm came, a descent of the entire world. The Nazi legions invaded the democratic world, and began their march on Poland. The country was shaken by the flying bombers bearing the Nazi Swastika. And a panic seized the civilian population, especially the Jews. Nobody, naturally, could imagine that the accursèd Nazi would do what he did to the Jews. But it was known that, the Jews will suffer more than others in this war, and people began to flee the *shtetl*: some to Warsaw, and others to other big cities, and yet others, to Russia. I joined those who set out on the way to the Land of Socialism, and we lived to regret it. It is true that we got out of there with our lives – also because of a miracle – but we went through seven levels of Hell. We chopped wood in the Siberian forests, froze in a cold of sixty degrees below zero, tossed about in cold barracks, tasted the poison of typhus, and went hungry, hungry...

This is all a dark chapter in life, about which this is not the place to retell. The sorrowful end of the story is, that Jewish Ger, during the war years, was erased from the face of the earth. The Jews were

exterminated by the German murderers, and their houses and belongings were plundered by their accomplices – the Polish anti-Semites, and those small traces of those that survived were dispersed and spread over the entirety of the larger world. It is therefore a sacred duty incumbent on those survivors to eternalize the memory of Ger in this very *Yizkor* Book, and at this opportunity, I express this, in my name, and the name of my wife, Hinde Sperling, and our entire family, our gratitude and recognition, to all of those who take part in erecting this spiritual monument, which will live in all eternity.

It is painful to write that there 'was' a Ger... yes, it was, and is no more. That little Jewish *shtetl* is no more, with its *Hasidic* sanctity, and the idealism of its youth. A city that was a 'Mother in Israel' was cut down, whose reputation was known throughout the entire Jewish world, and it is good that we commemorate its name in the pages of a Jewish book, that will transmit the spirit of Ger as a legacy for coming generations, and a behest that such an occurrence never be allowed to take place in the world...

The Way of Life, Types, and Personalities

שטייגער, טיפן און נעשטאלטן

Types of People and Personalities of Onetime Jewish Ger

By Pearl Schreibaum-Orzekh
New York

About forty years ago, I left my home town of Ger. [However] the passing of four decades, or so, has not erased the appearance of this small town ambiance from my memory, with its paved and muddy streets, wooden, and half-collapsed houses, and the few somewhat more attractive brick houses. The poverty of the *shtetl* passes before my eyes, with all of its Jewish food stores, bakeries, soda kiosks, restaurants, or as they were called in Ger: saloons. I am reminded of the Goat Alley, with its crooked houses, and in contrast to them – the clothing stores, where the better off Jewish people of Ger were concentrated. In my mind's eye, there rise the shoemakers, and the tailoring businesses, the itinerant village peddlers, market jobbers, and water-carriers – the most abject of the Jewish ways of making a living in the *shtetl*.

One of those water-carriers was named Hersh-Chaim. This decent Jewish man would go about for an entire day, with pails full of water, all over the city. He had affixed two extensions to his two tubs, such that not even a drop of water would spill on the ground and be lost. The bitterest season of this job was the winter, when the brooks and pumps were frozen, and in the streets, the footpaths were slippery. It was not only one time, that the tragic event took place, of slipping with the pails, on a freezing early morning and biting cold, which pierced every extremity.

Here, I see Hersh-Chaim on such a cold winter day, bound around with a rope, with rags on his feet, and hands swollen from the frost. He assumed the burden of his calling with resignation, which barely provided him with bread, and not paying heed to the difficulties, he didn't complain to anyone, and did not demand any help. I remember his three sons: Avigdor, Yankl and David Gottfried, that selected better occupations than that of their father, and another way of life. Especially David Gottfried, who for a period of time worked in the union movement in Ger. David Gottfried was a serious and highly responsible workingman, and I recall his name with respect.

The second water-carrier, Yankl Fogel, was indeed as spry as a bird. Yankl would sprint through the streets with the two pails of water, humming a song *sotto voce* – it was this way in which he expressed his feelings and mood. There was no water-carrier in Ger that was as spry as Yankl, and for this reason, he did not fear competition. Yankl's situation was a little better than that of other water-carriers, because he belonged to the music company, and at every Jewish wedding, he came with his drum. Smiling and satisfied, he would get himself ready with a special diligence, to participate in every happy occasion in Ger, which meant: a few extra zlotys, and, indeed, a good meal...

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The Greenberg brothers, who were also called: sitters, after a period of time in providing the *shtetl* with water, changed their trade to shoemaking, which eased and improved their 'lot.' In time, the lot

of the water-carriers became lighter and more important: they got to a point where they could buy themselves a small horse, with a barrel on wheels, and a water-carrier was transformed into a water-conveyor, and this was a piece of extraordinary progress for Ger, and... even more so for the water-carriers themselves.

Moshe-David Schuster (Peltz) lived in a room, which was as large as a current style vestibule, in a modern house. Despite this, there was room there for his shoemaking workplace, for a kitchen, and lodging for a healthy 'cohort of six'... a pair of shoes, or boots that were made by Moshe-David never got torn. He was a man of profound belief, who lived with a sense of security, and hoped that better times must come. He also had a very strong sympathy for the way of his 'progressive' sons, and he believed that the 'better tomorrow' would come in this way, that his children had chosen. His two sons: Yom-Tov and Sholom Peltz, experienced and survived the whole suffering of the Nazi *Gehenna*, and today live in Canada.

Zalman Smoliazh was a shoemaking worker. From his shoemaking workplace – that took up a corner of his small room – he did not earn enough to support himself. During the severe days of winter, he hoped for summer, when the season would start for those once well-known '*bosakehs*[51]' (sandals).

Zalman was a freethinking man. Under the circumstances of the economic activity in Ger, it was quite hard for him to live, and make a living, in his hometown, and he moved to Warsaw, where he hoped to situate himself in better circumstances, and also to give his children a better upbringing. Zalman's residence in Warsaw was even smaller than his dwelling, that he had in Ger, but there was room there, and hominess for everyone from Ger that came to Zalman, because a friendship and good humor reigned in the hearts of the people, who lived in this crowded *shtibl*. Ger could justifiably take pride in such a loving man as Zalman was.

Shlomo the Tailor (Garfinkel) trod his sewing machine from 12 to 14 hours a day in order to extract his meager existence, but one always encountered him with a smile on his face. He loved to tell a joke, and he would accompany the monotonous rhythm of the sewing machine with a 'bit' of cantorial flourish, or a song. A tried-and-true man of the people!

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Driving a wagon was also among the ways Jews made a living. The situation of the wagon drivers in Ger was better in the summertime, because of the transport of fruits to Warsaw. In the winter, because of the severe frosts and snows, transportation was half paralyzed and the wagon drivers had to – as they would say – 'pull in the reins.' The concentration point of the wagon drivers was at Sarah's Tavern, where the day would be yawned away over a glass of tea, and occasionally a snort of whiskey, while waiting for better weather... Despite this, heroism sprouted from the wagon drivers, and there was not any reason to make use of their strength.

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51 A Slavism from a cognate for being barefoot.

Of all the wagon drivers, Little Yoss'leh (Stein) stood apart. It is true that he was short in stature, and even more self-effacing, but he was great in his hopeful expectations – a man truly contented with his lot. Who was satisfied with what he did. I remember his three children: Chaim, Moshe and Yankl. Moshe was my personal friend for a long time.

Yaakov-Nathan and Rivka Zhurek (Black-Haired Rivka) had a bakery. They were good-hearted people. If there ever was a man with a good soul and a good heart, that was Yaakov-Nathan Zhurek. He was a very sentimental man. He would burst into tears at every instance of wrongdoing, that he saw happen to anyone. He had a relationship with the so-called progressive movement of Ger, and he even gave his modest financial support.

Shmuel Royza's was a bakery worker. The entire *shtetl* ate the bread he baked with great pleasure. But Shmuel's life was not as savory as his bread. Hunchbacked and scrawny from the long nights of standing bent over the vat, mixing and kneading the dough for bread, his meager salary did not permit Shmuel to support his family in a generous fashion, and he would have to go out before dawn to the marketplace to buy a small chicken, and then resell it to a more well-to-do woman of the house. This was a 'side job' alongside his night work. Shmuel was able to breathe a little more easily, when the bakery workers in Ger organized themselves in a professional union, and in this way manifested a capacity to shorten their workday, and get better pay.

And it was under these difficult circumstances that a generation grew up and matured, which strived and fought for a better life, and all of these shoemakers, tailors, bakers and wagon drivers, had loyalty and faith, and it was in this way that *Hasidic* Ger came into being – in the time between the two world wars – a totally new movement – that strove to build a better world using its own capabilities...

Royza'leh the Seamstress

By Lipa Helman
Buenos Aires

Royza'leh the Seamstress – this is what she was called in the *shtetl*, not anything else. And anyone who spoke this name did so with tenderness and feeling, as if one was talking about a relative and beloved person. Royza'leh was a seamstress, like many others in the *shtetl*, and a little at a time, helped out her husband with making a living. But when children arrived, one after another, she dedicated less and less time to her work and more to her household duties. But she didn't lack for anything, and they lived well, and satisfied. However, her husband suddenly fell ill, and suddenly died in the prime of life.

And Royza'leh was left with six small children on her hands. The oldest was ten years old, and the youngest – three months. This occurrence made a severe impression on the city, and at the funeral, hundreds of people came to pay respects. – Pitiably, a young widow, with tiny children, – people groaned. And women had already thought over what kind of work they could bring to her. Her neighbors did not leave her for so much as a minute, and took in the younger children into their own

homes, and when Royza'leh got up from siting *Shiva*, she had a full house of work waiting for her. – I'm not rushing you Royza'leh – the women said – do the work when you can...

Royza'leh worked hard to support her children, but the city – and especially the women's side of the city – felt a responsibility incumbent upon themselves for the orphans, and wherever there was a need for an outfit or for a celebration, they came with the requirements to Royza'leh. There was no lack of work, but a family of 'a cohort of seven' needs a great deal, and Royza'leh worked from the break of dawn until the late hours of the night.

When the children got a little older, they began to help their mother with making a living, and it became somewhat happier in the house. On one fine day, a familiar marriage broker came into the house, called Royza'leh over to the side, and he said: – Royza'leh, your children have grown up a bit, and you may begin to think about your own future... I have for you a very suitable match, and you won't have to work so hard... the widow did not let him finish what he had to say: – I do not want to bring a stepfather into my house for my children, – she said – and until such time that I set them on a course, don't go looking for any other opportunities for me...

And, on her own, Royza'leh set her children 'on a course,' as she had said. No sooner had the I. L. Peretz Library opened in Ger, then she said: – Little children, I could not teach you. Were your father ע"ה alive, he most certainly would have taught you. Go to the library, and sojourn among people, take out books and read, teach yourselves, and God will help you... and the older children went. They did not miss a single event, or any of the box evenings. The library became their second home. They put their heart and soul into the work of the institution, and Malka, Dvorah, Reizl and Rivka Helman, earned a reputation in the city.

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When the Drama Circle was created at the library, the Helmans became the principal workers and Malka, along with Dvorah especially excelled as skillful actresses. They took part in important roles in '*Shulamis*,' '*Tevye the Milkman*,' '*The Hero and the Bound Man*,' '*Die Kishuf-Makherin*,' and many other pieces. They performed well in all their roles with their youthful grace and talent, and became the darlings of the public, not only in Ger, but also in Grojec, Warka, Piaseczno, Otwock, Sabin and the entire vicinity.

In this manner, Royza'leh the widow lived to reap a great deal of *nachas* from her orphaned children, and also, her economic circumstances improved considerably. It was a pleasure to enter her home. And the finest sons and daughters of the *shtetl* would come to her children. To the children, their mother's word was sacrosanct, and they did not know how to properly offer her their respect. – Such honor for a mother one does not see in today's time, – other women would enviously say. And the most prominent families in the city wanted to arrange marriages with her children. And, a very fine set of matches eventually materialized for Royza'leh the Seamstress: her older daughter married Moshe Jakubowicz, Dvorah – with Moshe Heilikman, and Malka was the bride of Abraham Nakhowicz.

Her *nachas* was ruined only by a great misfortune that, once again, was fated for her in an unanticipated fashion. Not everything goes so light and easy in human life. In the year 1914, shortly after the outbreak of The First World War, her older son, Godl, fell sick with Typhus, and died, and in the year 1928, ten years after the war, Malka was taken ill. Her sickness shook up the *shtetl*. Malka'leh Helman is sick – the news went, with concern, from mouth-to-mouth, and it became a matter that involved all the institutions. The local doctors had no cure, and the sick patient continued to deteriorate continuously. Accordingly, the management of the library unanimously decided to call in a professor from Warsaw, at its own expense – we have to save our songbird, our darling – the group said. In that management, all manner of party directions were represented: the Zionists, *Bund*, Communists, and just plain non-partisan people, but when it came to Malka'leh, there was not just an ordinary relationship...



Page 219: *Moshe Heilikman with the Family of His Wife Dvorah Helman. All were exterminated, apart from Lipa Helman, and his wife, Baylah Garfinkel*

In that period, the following were in the management of the library: Mendl Messing, Abraham Goldberg, Moshe Heilikman, Pin'cheh Broder, Menashe Orzekh, Raphael Zhurek, Abraham and Yitzhak Goldhecht, Leah Till, Yitzhak Rosenblum and Yaakov-Nathan Zhurek. They decided to arrange an undertaking to create a special fund to save Malka. The greatest specialists were called out of Warsaw, but none of this helped. It was fated that, Royza'leh the widow, who had sacrificed herself for her children, had to give the Angel of Death yet another sacrifice. Malka'leh died on the first Friday of the month of November 1928.

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This sad news spread with lightning speed through the entire city, and the house immediately became full of people. The management of the Peretz Library immediately called for a mourning assembly, and it was decided to send an honor watch to the coffin of the deceased, which would be changed every two hours, and it also set up a special committee to carry out the funeral ceremony.

The funeral was held on Sunday morning. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the entire *shtetl* was assembled, young and old. Everyone took part in the grieving of the widow, and came to pay their last respects to their friend, Malka. The members of the Peretz Library, and of other institutions, came wearing black armbands, and set themselves out in rows, men and women, and escorted the coffin in this manner. But when the people of the *Hevra Kadisha* saw this, they became frightened: – it looks like a military march – they said – and we will be taken to the police!... They demanded that the armbands be removed, and not march in rows; if not, they will not perform the burial. –Then we will bury her ourselves! – the gathering replied... seeing that they would not get anywhere with the young people of Ger, the Jews relented, and the funeral began.

And hundreds of young people, in closed ranks, escorted the coffin to the *Sacred Ground*. At the cemetery, Pin'cheh Broder offered a eulogy in the name of the friends of the Peretz Library – We stand here with bowed heads, and with tears in our eyes, dearest Malka'leh – he said – you will always be missed, and we will never forget you. May you rest easy in the earth...

The gathering dispersed in broken spirit, and Malka'leh was talked of for a long time afterwards in the city. Royza'leh, however, was left with a wound in her heart for the rest of her entire life, and nothing could offer her solace. She, again, took to her work, but without the gladness of the prior years.

When Hitler, may his name be erased, entered Ger, together with all the rest of the Jews, he dragged Royza'leh's family off to the Ghetto in Warsaw. They were all killed there, along with the six million martyrs. By a miracle, one son was saved, and that is the author of these sorrowful lines, who lives with his wife Bella [sic: Baylah] and their two sons in Buenos Aires, and writes these words with the blood of his own heart....

The *Shtetl* Ger, and its Community Activists

By Yankl Jurkiewicz
Buenos Aires

There are things and events in the life of a person, that remain etched forever in memory, and those are the experiences of childhood and the young years, that leave their imprint on the character of the individual, and also have an impact on that person's later life. Who can forget the home town where one was born and raised, the joys and sorrows, of those distant years, which have long since passed, but that we continue to carry in our blood and in our memory. The further that we grow from those times that once were, the clearer and more distinct do they arise in the memory of the individual.



Page 223: Moshe Heilikman ע"ה
One of the most active workers of the 'Progressive' Movement, murdered by the Nazis, with his wife, and two children in Haradzieja near Baranovich.

This applies also with the recollection of my small, hearty and dear small *shtetl,* Ger, which had a prominent name in the Jewish world. And not for nothing! Ger was small in size, but great in spirit, as much in the religious sense as also in worldly culture. In our mind's eye then, Ger lives as we left it, decades ago, despite the fact that we know only too well, that an angry and frightening windstorm descended, on the *shtetl* and its Jews, and destroyed everything, devastating it, and tearing out the Jewish life there by its roots.

The *shtetl* and its people, however, continued to live in the hearts of those, who by a sheer miracle saved themselves from the Holocaust. I am one of those, and I will fulfil the behest of the line [sic: from the Passover Haggadah]: 'All who elaborate in the telling, lo, that person is worthy of praise' – The one who tells of Jewish beauty shall be praised, and there was much spiritual beauty in that Jewish *shtetl.* We will continue to remember this as long as we live, and as long as we remember this, we will live as Jews and as worthy people.

I will attempt, with my modest abilities, to convey a part of what it is that I remember of my home city Ger, as it has remained etched into my memory. First, I will describe the worldly Ger, about Jews and how they made their living, and later on, about the spiritual Ger. About the community activists, especially those in the secular dimension, who created a spiritual atmosphere and a national movement.

The principal thoroughfare of the *shtetl* of Ger began at the '*Koleika*' (a small conveyance that shuttled from Warsaw to Ger, and for the most part, was used by the thousands of *Hasidim* who traveled to the *Rebbe* from all the cities and towns of Poland). This street was called Pijarska and ran up to the *Rebbe's* courtyard. However, the atmosphere of Ger could be felt, and literally seen in the Polish capitol city of Warsaw, at the Oni Lubelska Platz, in Mokotów, from where the *Koleika* that led to Ger departed. There, a large number of Jews would constantly assemble, mostly, Ger *Hasidim*, waiting for the train that would take them to Ger.

It was not necessary to ask them to where they were traveling. The nature of their *Hasidic* dress showed that they were traveling to Ger, to the *Rebbe*, notwithstanding the fact that quite ordinary Jews were also traveling on that same *Koleika*, such as storekeepers that would be buying up their needed merchandise in Warsaw; Jewish manual laborers who were transporting raw materials from Warsaw to be worked into their final products, which in the largest measure consisted of clothing and shoes for the use of the peasant population of the surrounding villages, because the Jews were the producers and the providers of precisely all of these things for the use of the entire populace of the surrounding vicinity.

The largest part of the passengers on the *Koleika* were Jewish, and while traveling on this mini-rail service, most were occupied in reading a book, while others would don a prayer shawl and

phylacteries, and take advantages of being able to pray with a quorum. And for the few non-Jewish travelers, who were from the area, the conduct of prayer in a prayer shawl and phylacteries was a normal occurrence. However, for non-Jews, not from the area, they observed this with astonishment. The anti-Semites among them – which were numerous among the Poles – would observe this with derisive smiles, grinding their teeth, and often interject something.

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On the eve before a Sabbath or Festival Holiday, when the influx of *Hasidim* was larger, their number often reaching into the thousands, the administration of the *Koleika* would add extra cars to the trains, and special runs. The principal movement really began when the *Hasidim* would enter the *shtetl* itself.



Page 225: A kitchen that provided kosher meals for Jewish soldiers, who served their tour of duty in the Ger barracks. In the picture, we also see the Dozor David Kelmanowicz, Meir Birnbaum and others.

When the *Hasidim* entered Ger, the local wagon drivers were already waiting for them, among whom I recall the bothers Sholom and David, who were called by their names, just as if they had no family names, and also other wagon drivers, who waited with their hansom cabs, to take on and convey passengers, and to earn a few zlotys. Representatives of the '*kradnikehs*' houses that took on guests, whose names I remember, such as Mott'l Groinims, *Die Kukuruzeh*, Yaakov-Benjamin, Simcha, [son of the] religious director, and Rachel from Minsk, called out the names of their *balebatim*, and would allocate who would be riding to Itcheh Groinims, who to Mendl Groinims, and who to Israel Yoss'l's, whom to Chaim Meir's and who to others. Luggage was taken from the *Hasidim*, and they were taken to appointed places. However, it is necessary to add, that the largest portion of the

Hasidim would walk from the *Koleika* on foot, to earn the good deed of the cost of walking and save a zloty, of which they certainly did not have in excess. By Thursday, one could see in the streets, and start to sense, the aura of the Eve of the Sabbath.

Following the same street, from the Koleika to the *Rebbe's* courtyard, they found the institutions of the right-wing Poalei-Tzion, and also the Peretz Library, where the youth would gather and where the custom of the young people was to let people hear their singing on nationalist and socialist themes. They were also preparing themselves to receive the Sabbath, but in their own style, with special programs, such as partisan assemblies, box evenings, debates, and performances of drama circles, choirs, and mandolin orchestras, and they would plan promenades to go out into the surrounding areas.

And not far from these institutions, on that same street, the *Rebbe's* courtyard could be found, with the *Bet HaMedrash*, where hundreds of *Hasidim* stood, in a row, to offer a *Sholom Aleichem* greeting to the *Rebbe.* Inside, in the *Bet HaMedrash*, many *Hasidim* sat, deeply immersed in their books, and were learning while humming a melody, transported with their thoughts to another non-earthly world. There were also those who learned together in a group, and held a dialogue among themselves on the issues they were studying. And there were also those *Hasidim*, who gathered in small circles, and in the *Hasidic* manner, with ardor, discussed politics, the appearance of Jewish deputies in the Polish Sejm, about Zionism and the anti-Semitic excesses, that were an entirely too frequent appearance in that time, and very certainly in the Poland of today.

Apart from the *Rebbe's Bet HaMedrash*, which was always full of *Hasidim*, the owners of the guest lodging houses and hotels were also very active, who had to make ready the Sabbath comestibles for their guests. But apart from the *Bet HaMedrash* of the *Rebbe*, there were other study houses to be found in Ger, and opposite the *Rebbe's Bet HaMedrash*, stood the *Bet HaMedrash* of the common Jewish people and of the city *balebatim*, and the interior was always full of worshipers, people reciting Psalms, and elderly folk, who would converse about 'the good old days.' Who, in that day and time, could conceive that a day would come, when Ger – just like the largest part of the Jewish cities and towns of Poland and Eastern Europe – will be rendered *Judenrein*, because an infuriated assailant would exterminate them all.

The Jewish working class lived on that same main street: shoemakers, tailors, tinsmiths, and others, who sat in their homes and worked both hard and bitterly, until late into the night, together with their families. From there, one heard the thrumming of machinery, and the clacking of the looms in the workplaces making prayer shawls, that echoed far into the distance.

The холопникий (small scale factory operators) had their operations in their own dwellings, where the place of work was co-located with the kitchen, and also the bedroom, and one worked there from very early on until the late night hours. But on Friday, that place was made spotlessly clean and the burden of the midday week was forgotten. The first process to do this was to 'freshen up' one's own self, on the highest bench of the hot bath, have one's self well stroked with a small brush, and after that, going to the *Bet HaMedrash*, or to the library, or into the union hall.

On that same street, the Jewish porters could always be found, with their ropes hanging off their shoulders; they would gather near the tavern of Sarah the Tavern Keeper, and there, they would wait for the wagon drivers, who brought their merchandise from Warsaw for the storekeepers, and they would then lade and carry the packages to the merchants. Not only once, were these porters the ones to defend Jewish honor, and any number of times they would 'pay back' the Polish hooligans who waited to assault the Jews.

This was the type of life Jews had in Ger: it was a life of hard, but honest toil and commitment, which transformed the reputation of Ger into a symbol of Jewish spirituality, and from all of these, there remains not more than a memory among those who lived there, and saw by some miracle, an opportunity to save themselves. According to certain information received, only two Jews remained in Ger proper – and likely they are no longer there as well. Accordingly, it is incumbent on those who remember Ger of the past, to eternalize the memory of that Jewish *shtetl* that was cut down, so that it lives in the memory of coming generations.

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Page 228: *A Group of Young People Escorting Chana Kopperholtz to the Ger Train Station*

The Community Activists

By Yankl Jurkiewicz
Buenos Aires

And, apparently more than all the Jewish cities and towns in Poland, Ger had community activists of a kind that involved themselves without expecting monetary compensation. The largest portion of them was – as was appropriate for a pious-*Hasidic* city like Ger – from the religious camp. Regrettably, I do not remember them all, and will therefore only relate brief words, about these community workers, who actuated themselves among the youth, and in the circle of the library. And it is superfluous to add, that they all shared in the fate of the entire Jewish populace of Ger, and were exterminated by the Nazi Asmodeus, and actually demonstrated very little initiative to save themselves from that terrifying conflagration.

May their names be sanctified for all time, and preserved for all eternity in this *Yizkor* Book.

Moshe Heilikman

Moshe Heilikman was born into, and raised in a genuinely traditional Jewish home, and obtained a good, general and traditional Jewish upbringing. He was an agronomist by trade, and was one of the most dedicated and active workers for the 'I. L. Peretz' Library, where he was a permanent member of the management, and almost always the librarian. He would commit his entire free time to community work, despite being perpetually tired from his daily work in the field. He would say that he rests while doing community work.

Every Friday towards evening, so-called 'box evenings' would be carried out at the I. L. Peretz Library and he was among the first, who would respond to the questions posed, and always defended his principles and partisan positions, thematically of a universal and national nature, for a man of culture.

He would often be the opponent of writers and speakers that visited Ger, and gave speeches on a variety of themes, and he was very much respected, even by his political and ideological opponents.

The management of the I. L. Peretz Library extended its trust to him for the entirely responsible work of the Drama Circle, where he was the permanent prompter for all pieces performed. After the German hordes occupied Ger, he fled, together with his wife Dvorah Helman, and their two children, to the vicinity of Baranovich, in the *shtetl* of Haradzieja , and there he was killed by the Nazi bandits.

Israel Friedman

Israel Friedman was raised in a Jewish-religious spirit and later read extensively in the Jewish and universal literature. He was a very talented man, and elicited respect for himself among those who sympathized with him, and who opposed him.

With great intensity, he would always defend his progressive ideals, and with the entire fire of his youthful ardor, dedicated himself to the activity associated with the self-education circles of the youth in Ger, at the I. L. Peretz Library.

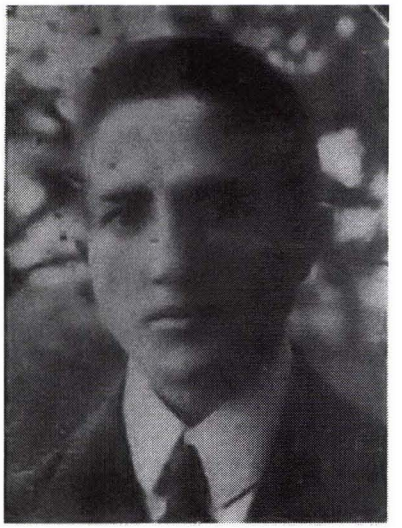
He, personally, had a great push to education. But he did not have an opportunity to realize his wish. As was the case for the larger part of the Jews of the city, he was exterminated by the Nazi executioners.

David Teitelbaum

He was an active community worker in the Manual Workers Union in Ger, and also with the Loan Bank of that institution. I n all the conflicts between the workers and the '*khalupnikehs*' (small-scale manufacturers), he was the permanent representative and the defender of the '*khalupnikehs*.'

Being something of a man of means, he dedicated his entire time to community work and the public interest.

Aharon Poznansky



Page 230: Aharon Poznansky

Aharon Poznansky was the only Jewish member of the Ger city council, and was respected and held in high esteem by all the residents of the city, as well as all the personnel of the city council.

He came from a very prominent family, and possessed a meaningful culture, both Jewish and secular; he was very knowledgeable in Jewish literature, and was among the first founders of an array of community institutions in Ger – and an active participant in all community initiatives, and was respected by everyone as a highly visible personality.

Itcheh Smoliarczyk

Itcheh Smoliarczyk came from the home of a pious *Hasidic* family of *balebatim*. In his childhood, he studied at the yeshiva, and later on became an active worker for the right-wing '*Poalei-Tzion*' and also with *Keren-Kayemet*.

By trade, he was a stitcher, and had a stitching works, in which he employed a number of workers. The relationship between him and the workers was very good, and they all respected him, and he demonstrated his good will by often helping out those who were among his Jewish opponents.

He was a man with very substantial inborn skills. It was said of him that, 'everything that his eyes saw, his hands could create.' The Nazis, may their names be erased, used his skills to the last day, when they had to retreat from Ger, and at the last moment, they shot him.

Meir Birnbaum

Meir Birnbaum was the banker of Ger, who had the reputation of being a rich man, and he was very visible in the city.

He took the Jewish kitchen under his purview, which provisioned Jewish soldiers, who were serving in the Polish military, and were stationed in Ger; he provided them with kosher food every Sabbath and on Festival Holidays.

Meir Feldman

Meir Feldman himself was not born in Ger, but had married in Ger, and became very active in community affairs.

He was a Dozor of the common people in the municipal council, and worked along with all of the institutions that provided support and would make sure to provide for the ill among the poor, seeing that there was night supervision – and also rendering first aid. He would care for guests, who came to the city, providing them with lodging and a meal, and never forgot the poor Jewish homes, especially those where there were sick children; he brought help to everyone, and human warmth.

He was not a wealthy man by far, but nevertheless, took the first support from his own pocket.

Shlomo Gurfinkel

A hardworking man of the common people, being someone who worked for others for his entire life. He was an active worker in his professional union, where he organized his section in the union, which was the trade of contracting, and he was the representative in all the conflicts that arose.

He constantly would recollect the heroic fighters of the year 1905, and was himself a participant in the battles of those times, and remained loyal to those – and his own – ideals for his entire life.

Shlomo Nissenholtz & His Wife Leah Friedman

Shlomo Nissenholtz was an active worker in the revolutionary movement, and took an active part in the cultural work of the 'I. L. Peretz' Library.

His wife, Leah, who accompanied him in all his community endeavors, was a committee member of the secretariat of the library. She gave her free time to the self-education circles and taught the lady workers reading and writing.

Because of political harassment, they were compelled to leave their hometown of Ger, and they took up residence in Brussels, Belgium. There, they presented their community work, until the year 1940, when they were taken out to an extermination camp.

Pin'cheh Broder

Pin'cheh Broder came from a *Hasidic* home, and learned at a yeshiva for many years, but later, he 'broke through the fence' and went off to the worldly movement. He was well-versed in Jewish literature, and was one of the first founders of an array of cultural institutions in the city, as well as one of the founders, of the general Zionist organization in Ger.

Everywhere, he was the real 'nerve of the movement,' and a committed worker for Zionism and a strong believer in the solution to the Jewish question by means of a national homeland.

In the Thirties, along with his wife, Toba Weinberg, he went off to Belgium, where he continued to be engaged in his community work.

Menashe Orzekh

He was a very active worker in the 'I. L. Peretz' Library, and a continuing member of the management committee of that institution. He organized culture circles, and would hold lectures there, about literary and political issues, and for a long period, was the librarian.

Apart form this, he was active in the professional movement, where he was respected by everyone, even those Jewish people who opposed him, and always knew the arguments to make in order to defend his political views.

From Poland, he went to Argentina, together with his wife, Pearl Schreibaum, and coming to Buenos Aires, he again continued with his community activity, and in the first case, he helped to organize and create *landsleit* from Ger and Grojec.

After the Holocaust, he took part in the work of providing help for those of the city that remained alive, and had managed to save themselves from that terrifying Holocaust. His private home became a home for all *landsleit* from Ger. Here, in Buenos Aires, he survived the difficult experience of being a 'greenhorn,' but he always shared whatever he had with those who were in need.

In the last years, along with members of his family, he went off to New York, where his brother was found, and he lives there to this day, and once, again, is active among the Ger *landsleit* to the extent that he can manage in the context of his capacity.

Moshe Zeifman

Moshe Zeifman was not born in Ger, but rather 'settled into our town,' and was thought of by everyone as one of our own, thanks to his community work. He was loved by all, as a good and loyal friend.

By trade, he was a bookkeeper, and also a Hebrew language teacher. He arranged for himself to become a participant in community work, immediately after his arrival, with the right-wing *Poalei-Tzion*, where he began to give lectures on a variety of political and cultural themes, and he organized circles, where the Hebrew language was studied.

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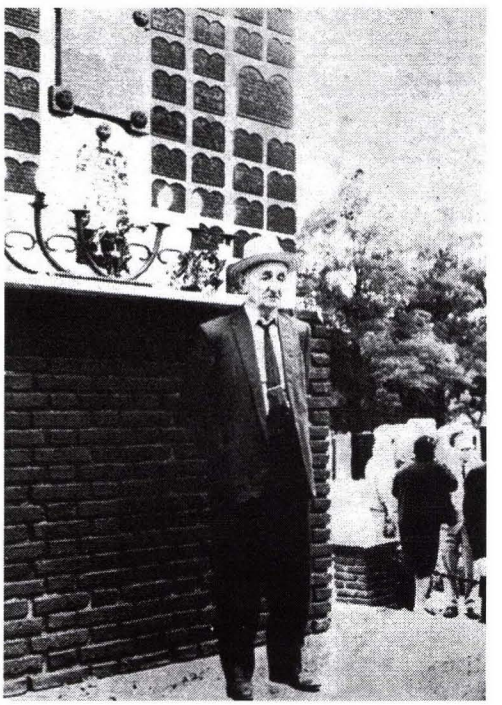
The same thing happened to these community activists, which we have certainly not enumerated in their entirety, as happened to the largest part of the Jews of Ger: they were exterminated by the Nazi Devil, and merely a small number of individuals, as we have mentioned them, found the means to save themselves.

May their memory remain for all generations to come.

A Nostalgia about Life at Age 91

By Yitzhak Greifman
Buenos Aires

My *landsleit*, you are writing to me that you have settled on publishing a *Yizkor* Book to commemorate the names of our martyrs, and of the Jewish *shtetl* Ger, which was cut down. Therefore, I send you greetings with a full heart. You have beseeched me to write something about Ger, but from where am I to write? In my day, one did not do such things. I believe that in those times, the greater part of the Jews in Ger could not write. I learned how to write in Warsaw, when I was already a grown up person. I have, however, no complaint, God-forbid, to lodge against the *shtetl* where I was born. In many other small Jewish towns in Poland, in that time – at the end of the prior century – it wasn't any better. And I come from that century.



Page 237: Yitzhak Greifman, the Elder of the Ger landsleit, *recites the* Kaddish *at the annual Memorial Event*

My father took me off to Warsaw at the age of 16. I got work there, and that city became my second home. But the first – I did not forget. We were not rich, as was the case of the larger portion of the Jews in the *shtetl,* but many good memories of my childhood remain in my memory. My friends, our neighbors, and all the Jews of the *shtetl*, were like my own, and beloved people. There is not any such 'homey' feeling in the big city, that feeling of being with family, that ties together the Jews of a small *shtetl*. In Warsaw, I would long for 'home;' true it was an impoverished home, but it was a warm, Jewish home, and when I only had the opportunity to do so, I would run off to the *shtetl.*

The Polish governments carried out anti-Semitic policies, as is known by all. But the relationship between the Jews and the Poles in the *shtetl* itself were good. Jews would travel through the villages, working and trading with the area peasants and nobles, and there were no anti-Semitic incidents. In

a like manner, Poles would come into the *shtetl* and transact with Jews, and would offer themselves to work for Jewish shoemakers and tailors. One lived in poor circumstances, but needs were also minimal. In the big city, no matter how much you earn, it is insufficient; pursuit of a living is substantial, because the needs are great. The small-town individual had lesser needs, and lived in a more tranquil fashion. If one had adequate resources for the Sabbath – and this was not always the case – then one was satisfied. One lived joyfully during the Sabbath, and with similarly inclined friends. Which later on, I did not see in the harried and preoccupied Jews of Warsaw.

Apart from the Jewish occupations of trade and work, Ger had its own special sources of making a living, which were connected to the *Rebbe's* courtyard, and with the thousands of *Hasidim* that would stream to come to the *Rebbe.* The *shtetl* had to receive them, transport them, and feed them. So there were many inns in Ger, of all kinds, and wagon drivers, who would transport the guests from the train, and back to the train. Half the city made a living from this *Hasidic* 'traffic.' the *balebatim* of these '*kradnikehs*' as these lodging houses were called, understandably lived much better, and the wagon drivers – a bit worse. I belonged to the latter. My father was a wagon driver, and I would help him out at his work. When I grew up a little, I came to understand that there was no future in this, and the prospect of starting to learn carpentry did not hold out any satisfaction to me, and so I went off to Warsaw, despite the fact that I lacked nothing in Ger at my father and mother's. I also had nothing; but the truth is, that I also didn't need anything.

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I worked hard in Warsaw, sleeping in the place of work, ate – only when the landlady gave food, and whatever she provided, but I was very stubborn, and I withstood it all. After two years of my apprenticeship, when I came to Ger, I looked on my *shtetl* with entirely different eyes. I saw people there with great potential, and my friends, young people with talent, who in the *shtetl*, seemed ossified. For these two years, they didn't grow, didn't develop, and their understanding did not become enlarged. Once again, the same thing: they had nothing, and needed nothing.

The Jews of Ger were pious, especially the older generation, and also a part of the younger one as well. Three times daily, one went to the *Bet HaMedrash* to pray. There was enough time, and between afternoon and evening prayers one got in a conversation on politics, making a living, and told stories of the Thousand-and-One Nights. Essentially, there was nothing one had to do with one's self. And this is the way we lived for generations, and if one wants to, it can be said that they were fortunate and rich, as it says in the *Ethics [of the Fathers]*, 'Who is the wealthy man, he who is contented with his lot.' By nature, a Jew from Ger was an individual who got along with what was minimal, satisfying himself with less. True, he didn't have more, but he was content with the little he had, or what it is that fate had dealt him.

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Page 240: Israel-Moshe Messing and His Wife

There was one more important Jewish occupation in Ger, which, at this opportunity needs to be mentioned: the Jewish fisherman. For the entire week, they rode around on the Vistula, catching by themselves, or buying fish from gentiles, and in this manner, they provided the *shtetl* with gefilte fish for the Sabbath and Festival Holidays. This delicacy was rarely absent on the Sabbath, even in the poorest home. A few of the fisherman would take their fish to Warsaw. The Ger fisherman could not be compared to the Ger tailors. The Ger fishermen, for the most part were hale and hearty young men, full of energy, and mobile, with faces tanned by the sun, and with strong fists, and who feared no one.

A couple of personalities come to mind, that are worth mentioning: Abraham Lehrer and Joseph Lehrer. They taught boys and girls how to write. I was, at that time 12 years old, and my father sent me to Abraham Lehrer. I went to him for a couple of months, learned very little, until one fine day, I categorically declared that I am no longer going! I preferred playing with my friends in the street. My mother would say to me: – remember, you will regret this! And my mother was right, and I, indeed, did regret it.

R' Joseph Leher undertook much more. He would teach writing, and also would write and read letters for the entire *shtetl*. He had a large clientele of Jewish women, whose husbands were in America, and also Polish women, who had their children, sons-in-law and husbands in military service.

There were also Jewish orchard merchants in Ger; this means that they did not buy or sell orchards themselves, but rather they would transact in the fruits of the trees, doing so while the trees were still snow-covered, or at the beginning of spring, when the first of the blooms began to appear. These 'merchants' would look skyward in the following months, and beseeched God for timely rain, and that there should not be any stormy winds, and most importantly – that winter should not extend into

the spring. And when the fruit would finally appear, they would have to sleep in the orchard, and through the long days and nights, to guard them, and assure that thieves would not break in, and the little gentile children not pick the fruit apart. God did not always show compassion for these 'merchants,' of this somewhat flighty form of Jews making a living. And not always did they see their way clear to guard against thieves. But if it happened that God did help out, and everything went according to plan, the Jews had a living from this over the summer and for the winter. No new Rothschild emerged from these business people.

In Ger, there were also Jews who dealt in grain. If a Jew in the marketplace would handle a sack of wheat or barley, he could sell it to a workingman. It was not always that he could earn his bread for the week by doing this. A couple of these working people had an extensive amount of this work, and also bought grain from the nobility. But everyone fancied himself as a grain merchant, and if God helped, and one managed to overcome the challenges of the week, the Jews would meet at the *Rebbe's shaleh shudes*, and one became suffuse with happiness and some faith about the coming week.

In short: Jews in Ger derived their sustenance through various ways of making a living– and from faith. One lived contented and satisfied, and if the challenges of the week were not overcome, when the Holy Sabbath arrived, the Divine Presence rested over the *shtetl*, and shone from all the faces. The older people lived out their time in the *Bet HaMedrash*, and the younger people – in the library.

I am in Buenos Aires for many years already, and thank God, I live very well. And when the children got a bit older, and grandchildren and great-grandchildren arrived, they had no idea what to do with their father and grandfather. When my birthday arrives – they discovered my birthday here! – they bring me gifts, that were a merchant in Ger to have accumulated that much, he would be considered a wealthy man. As to the old age that God has bestowed upon me to the occasion of my 91 years, I wish no worse on all Jews. However, despite this, when I remind myself of *der alter haym*, I long very much for Ger...

Horror and Destruction

גרויל און חורבן

Ger, Before Destruction and After Destruction

By Yitzhak Weintraub
Bet-Alfa, Israel

I truly regret that I do not have any literary skills; if I had such a skill, I could write a book of a thousand pages about the *shtetl* of Ger. I will try, to the extent that I can, to contribute something to the *Yizkor* project for that sacred congregation – Ger. I am not here going to write my autobiography, because this has no bearing on the theme. I merely wish to describe the *shtetl*, as I saw it before the destruction, and afterwards, and to tell of the horrors that people had to endure – and I among them – in the time before and after the catastrophe that befell our people. During the actual time of the Holocaust, I was not in Ger; and I also do not have any exact details, because I did not maintain a diary. I will just recall incidents, that had deeply etched themselves into my memory.



Page 245: Elkeh Zlotagorsky and Her Family in Ger

The Month of Elul 5699 (August 1939)

The summer had already ended, but the weather was beautiful and warm, nothing like it should have been for the season. The tension between Poland and Germany had reached its apex, and the intimation of the oncoming war could be seen across the entire face of Europe, and most of all in Poland. However, in the *shtetl* of Ger, no particular attention was given to matters that were political. The *Rebbe* calmed the *Hasidim*, saying: – one cannot give up, God will help; and in the courtyard of the ADMo"R, preparations were being made, as they were every year, to receive the thousands of *Hasidim* as guests, whose custom it was to visit the *Rebbe* for the Three-Festival cycle and the High Holy Days.

But it was not only the ADMo"R, but the entire *shtetl,* that began to prepare itself for the arrival of the guests, because a large part of their livelihood depended on it. The guesthouses, by and large, could not take in the large wave of guests, and because of this, many residents rented out rooms to the guests. The mass of humanity was dense, and the activity in the streets did not stop for the entire night. The restaurants and coffee houses on the main street, called 'The *Rebbe's* Street,' were open all night long. Even the peasants in the vicinity, knew all of the details about the Jewish Festival Holidays, and knew what to bring to the market for each of those holidays. They knew, for example, that for Yom Kippur, there was a demand for white hens, and for Passover, there was a need for potatoes, eggs and vegetable greens.

But in that year, everything was different; the stream of people that would arrive during Elul to pay respects at the cemetery was a weak one. One waited for a miracle from heaven, that the words of the ADMo"R should come to pass, and that no war would break out. But the miracle did not occur, and on the first of September, the war indeed broke out. A fright enveloped the *shtetl.* Large signs with letters fit to announce the blessing of the new moon appeared, calling everyone to a general mobilization. In looking around, one saw that all of the strenuous efforts to make preparations for the holidays, were going to have been wasted. The first day of the war went by in Ger under a state of tense calm. But even thought the *shtetl* itself was not bombed, everyone trembled at considering of the fate of Warsaw, because the bombing of the capitol city echoed day and night as far as Ger. Newspapers stopped appearing, and only very few residents in the city had radio sets. According to the news that was snatched up from refugees, it became clear that the front was moving towards us with extraordinary speed. Thousands of refugees fled through our *shtetl*, in their hysterical flight to the east. On the other side of the Vistula, people brought terrifying images about horrible acts performed against Jews.

The Jews of Ger began to pack, and to look for people who could take things from them, that could not be taken with them. The panic was great; it was already clear that the Germans were going to take over all of Poland, but nobody knew for how long they would rule. Part of the people fled to Warsaw, because they reckoned that a settlement of a half million Jews, is nevertheless a force, and the Nazi hordes will not be able to do with it what they lusted to do. Another part, principally older people, having no alternative, elected to remain in Ger, and hope for a miracle; there were also young men who remained behind, who needed to guard the courtyard and the possessions of the ADMo"R. A third part, mostly of men of military age, spread throughout the villages, or fled to wherever their eyes took them.

On the third day of the Way, all the men were recruited, between 16 and 50 years of age, of the purpose of building barricades at the edge of the Vistula, approximately five kilometers south of the city, in the vicinity of the village of Bezhmyn. A wooden bridge was laid across the river, and the army forces used it to draw back to the east bank of the river.

We had not even done so much as an hour's worth of work, when German planes appeared and bombed us; a bomb fell near me, and tossed me into the canal. After coming to, and freed myself from the debris, I saw Avigdor Zemba's son beside me, who said: 'On Sabbath, we must recite the *Gomel*

blessing[52].' Then, I noticed that he was dripping blood, and I said to him: 'I think you are wounded!' He immediately lost consciousness; a military medical attendant came at my call, who took him into the city on a wagon.

The bombing was repeated every hour, and a furious confusion reigned, which I used to flee back to my home through fields and meadows. I arrived home dead-tired, and terrified, to the extent that I fell on my bed and slept from noon that day to the following morning. Who knows how much longer I might have slept but I was awakened, and I was told that an order had just been received, that all men between ages 16 and 45 have to flee to the Lublin vicinity, and there, they will be mobilized; all those who will remain behind will be murdered by the Germans, or sent away to concentration camps.



Page 248: *A Group of Friends Escort Yekhezkiel Goldberg to His* Aliyah *to Israel*

With the Stream of Refugees

There was chaos throughout the entire country. There were no trains, no omnibuses; there was no fuel, and no newspapers, and the number of radio sets in Ger was minimal. The stream of refugees became ever greater, and according to what they had to tell, it was possible to infer that the Germans were very close. My brother, Moshe Weintraub and myself, packed a little bit of clothing to wear, and ran to the bank of the river. As is known, there were no bridges in the vicinity, and tens of thousands of refugees waited in a row to be ferried in boats, and whose owners took significant advantage by charging inflated prices for being ferried across. Also, the Germans took advantage of this congestion, and from time-to-time, sent over airplanes to bomb the refugees. After

[52]The blessing that thanks God for saving a person from a disaster.

a long and difficult trial, bound up with great danger, we went over to the east shore of the Vistula, near the village of Ostrówek, and during the time when we were trying to determine where to go, three other young men showed up from Ger: Yom-Tov Peltz, Sholom Peltz, and Nahum Ravsky (a son of Mendl Ravsky). After a short conference, we decided to go together to Lublin.

First, we needed to use back roadways to reach the city of Garwolin which was on the Warsaw-Lublin Road. After a ride of about forty kilometers, we arrived at Garwolin; it was not possible to get on the road, because of the enormous mass of humanity. A terrifying panic reigned. The return direction hummed constantly with military transports, that were retreating, and refugees who streamed from all sides. A great number of transport vehicles were left abandoned because of a shortage of fuel. The bombing continued all day, and for that reason, we had to hide during the day, in something of a small wooded area, and rest there, and at night, we plodded on further.

This is how we traversed about three hundred kilometers on foot, and after difficult experiences, we arrived on the Eve of Rosh Hashanah 5700, to a village neighboring on the city of Lubartów, and we celebrated the Holy Day with a Jewish agricultural worker there. We would have stayed there until after the war, but news reached us that the Germans were getting close, and that all of Poland had been taken – from the west by the Germans, and from the east – by the Russians. In order to save ourselves, we had only one alternative: to flee into Russia. But we decided first, that we would return to Ger, in order to be with our families.



Page 250: The Son of Israel Becker With a Group of His Friends

Back to Ger

The way back was even more difficult that the way from there, because we needed to avoid those settlements where the Germans were already in control, in order not to fall into their talons. And so this was the way we dragged ourselves on the ways, and paths, for yet another couple of hundred kilometers, and on Yom Kippur of 5700, we reached the *shtetl* of Magnuszew, found about 18 kilometers from Ger.

On the following day, we turned to go home; Warsaw had not yet been taken over, but it was besieged, and the Germans had concentrated a large amount of military forces to capture it. In the curse of two days, the capitol city fell to the Germans; the Germans completed their conquest, and began to enforce their own new order. They also captured Ger, plundered and wiped out the courtyard of the ADMo"R, tore up Torah scrolls, and brought horses into the synagogue. They made a mockery of the young people who had remained to guard the assets, murdering and arresting people, cutting off the side locks and beards of religious Jews, and forced the respectable Jews of the city to do inappropriate types of work. Each day, they issued new decrees and levied enormous sums of tribute on the community as contributions, threatening to kill hostages, if the money was not paid.



Page 252: Chaya Rubin ע"ה, the Wife of Yaakov Lichtenstein, who was Killed in Ger

Every morning, the men had to report to the plaza that was opposite the magistrate building. The representative of the community was Yankl Czornoczapka, who carried on the discussions with the office of the commandant. On one day, he wanted to please the commandant, and so he stretched out his hand to greet him in the Nazi salute, 'Heil Hitler.' For this sort of gesture, he received a number of rather healthy blows, and the commandant warned all of the Jews afterwards, that they should not dare to use the 'Heil Hitler' salute, because it is forbidden to Jews.

All Jews were taken for forced labor, from children on up to seventy year-old elders. We received no pay for this work, and also no food. The one compensation was: brutal beatings and unspeakable curses. If not enough people were provided on a daily basis, to do the work, then raids were made over the streets and into houses, and whoever was seized was murderously beaten.

During the time that the Nazis were treating the Jews in such a gruesome fashion, the traitorous Poles gathered around us, and made sport of us, and to add insult to injury, they also threw stones at us, calling out all the while: 'Dirty Jews, the time has come for you to work! The Germans will teach you how to work!' Among the Polish throng, there was one individual with whom I had been a student in school; I attempted to appeal to his conscience, to indicate how unjust his *schadenfreude* was, because the Poles were no less unfortunate, seeing that the Germans had robbed them of their fatherland. One of the Poles, who spoke German, told this to an officer, indicating that I was inciting the Poles to rebellion. It is superfluous to retell what this caused to happen to me.

One time, it was Sukkot, Pin'ieh Ravsky went to worship in the synagogue, wrapped in his prayer shawl; a Nazi soldier then began to laugh at him, and without seeing even the slightest reaction, he aimed his rifle at him, and shot him. One time, one of us was seized while smoking a cigarette while at work; for this the Nazi soldier shot him five times. This victim was Moshe Cibula. I saw that our lives meant nothing, and each and every soldier was free to do to us whatever pleased him. At the

same time, news arrived that the Russians had already reached the Bug River. The distance to Warsaw was on the order of hundreds of kilometers, but it was possible to get there on foot, because Jews were not permitted to travel by train. I therefore decided, that whatever will be, will be, but I must run away from this place; I attempted to persuade friends of my age, that they should join the escape plan, but they were not ready. A few hoped that this horror would pass quickly; others were too tightly tied to their families, and did not want to abandon them. Later on, when I was in Russia, I received letters from them, expressing their regret at not having done as I did.

We left in groups of three: my sister Chava, my brother Moshe and I. After a great deal of exhaustion, following a direction where there were no roads, in the end, we arrived at the border. Among the camps of Jews, we found a significant number of those from Ger. The border was closed, and we waited outside in autumnal rainy weather, until the Russians took pity on us and let us into their 'Garden of Eden.' Part of the Ger *landsleit* did not want to wait under the rain, and turned back to their *shtetl*.

In Bialystok, we met up with our uncle, Yaakov-Nathan Zhurek and his son, Ber'l, but they returned to Ger, because they had left their entire family there; we took leave of each other in Bialystok, my brother and sister went off to Lithuania, and me – deep into the Russian heartland. Periodically, we lost contact among us, but thanks to the city of Ger, we once again got in contact, and I learned of addresses from friends with whom I had remained in contact, until the year 1941. I received letters from Aharon Smoliarczyk, from Ural, and from Mott'l Maness from Rawa-Ruska. I received a few letters from Ger, and from the indications, I could understand that the plight of the *landsleit* was a bitter one, but I could not help them with anything.

Here is a list of my friends that wrote to me: Eleazar Messing, Hersh Zhurek, Velvel Messing, Mendl Poznansky, Chaya-Dvorah Friedman, Henya Rappaport, and my younger sister, Leah Weintraub. One time I got a letter, in which it was written to me that they were being taken away to a camp in Lublin, and from that time on, I no longer heard from them. At the same time, my sister also wrote to me, that they were being driven away to the Warsaw Ghetto; I yet received a couple of letters from the ghetto, and in 1941, the contact was completely broken off. I do not consider it important for me to elaborate on the portion of my wanderings, as part of the Russian Army, and in the Polish military; rather, I will return and once more describe those moments that have a bearing on the *shtetl* of Ger.

Ger After the Holocaust

I returned to Poland as a soldier in the Polish Army in the year 1944. Cities and towns, that before the war were fully populated by Jews, were now totally emptied of Jews, and I was seized by a shudder. I was already anxious about whether I would find anyone in Ger, but in order that my conscience not plague me, I decided to visit my home town, When the war ended in 1945, I took the train at the Mokotów train station, on the south side of Warsaw, and set out on the way. This train, which was always packed with *Hasidim*, who had traveled to the ADMo"R in Ger, this time ran empty. I traveled through the *shtetl* of Piaseczno, and there too, I found no Jews.

I arrived in Ger. The city itself had not changed, but what was missing was the undercurrent of an ongoing life. Everything was still, dead, and the city looked like a cemetery. All the businesses and coffee-houses stood on the same place, but the owners were now – Poles. I encountered a Polish friend of mine, and greeted her. She opened her eyes widely at me and called out: 'You are still alive?' So I asked her whether there were other Jews still to be found in the city, and she replied: –'Of course! Many have remained. They are all gathered at the home of Yeshayahu-Jonah Wiszniewsky.' I was made very happy by this and ran there. Later, it became clear to me, that in all, all that remained was – enough Jews for a *minyan*. On the way, I encountered a Jewish woman of my age, a former fellow student of mine, this being the daughter of Yeshayahu Rosensweig.. I took note of the crucifix around her neck. She told me that she was preparing to marry a Pole, who had hidden her during the entire period of the war, and saved her life. Of the remaining *minyan* of Jews, the largest part of them were sitting on their luggage, getting themselves ready to emigrate, and a smaller number decided to remain on Polish soil, which was soaked through with Jewish blood.

I wandered around in the streets, and the city looked like a cemetery. With anger, I gazed upon the businesses and stores, that the Poles had robbed from the Jews, or that they had received as compensation for their cooperation in exterminating the Jewish communities. I visited Ger another couple of times, and got the addresses for my brother Moshe Weintraub, who was in Italy, and of my sister Chava, who was already on her way to the Land of Israel by the illegal underground.

I already had lost hope of finding additional relatives, and decided to leave the accursèd Polish soil; I deserted from the army one month prior to my discharge, and after a dramatic pursuit, I met up with my sister at the Czech border. She was traveling with a '*Ma'apilim*' ship and fell into captivity in Cyprus, and I – after a panoply of wanderings through refugee camps in Germany – I entered *Gahal*[53] in January 1948, and on the day that Israeli Independence was proclaimed, May 15, 1948, I presented myself as a volunteer for the Israeli Army.

Góra-Kalwaria (Ger) in the First Two Years of the Nazi Occupation

From the Ringelblum Archive
(Author Unknown)

Shortly before the war, Ger contained 7,000 souls, of which 3,300 were Jews. As a consequence, the Jews participated in the municipal communal institutions in a minority. In previous times, when there were democratic elections, Jews were in fact a majority in Ger. However, the Christians, wanted to be the majority over the Jews, for this purpose, they especially added several

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53 Gahal (Hebrew: גח"ל, an acronym for *Gush Herut-Liberalim* was the major right-wing political faction in Israel led by Menachem Begin from its founding in 1965 until it merged into Likud in 1973.
[Translator's Note: Given the dates, the writer may have been referring to the *Irgun* of that day]

Christian settlements from other jurisdictions, and also added in the sick people in the Christian hospital, among whom were found several hundred patients from other cities. In this fashion, the Christians manufactured a fictitious majority.



Page 257: *A Group of Members of the* Poalei-Tzion *Party with Aharon Poznansky*

Economically, Ger differentiated itself from all cities with its special character, because this was where the *Rebbe* of Ger resided. *Hasidim* constantly traveled there, especially on Festival Holidays and for the Sabbath, at which time their numbers reached to 6,000 people. Most of the Jewish populace lived off of this: owners of hotels (they were called *kradnikehs,* but it is not known why), food stores, butchers, fishmongers, fruit merchants, etc. Especially for the High Holy Days and Shavuot, all private dwellings, even up to 90 percent, were rented out as lodging places for the [visiting] *Hasidim*. Jews lived for a number of months from the income so derived, paid their rent, promissory notes, debts, etc. Jews were represented in the food business at the 90% level, and Christians at the 10% level. Apart from this, Jews controlled the entire enterprise of manufacture of ready-made clothing. Jews were represented in the shoemaking business at the 80% level. Separately, Jews constituted 35% of the manual trades, such as: shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, glaziers, wagon drivers, bakers, butchers, boot makers, etc. The tailors and shoemakers also were involved with used clothing items, with custom-made clothing: their work prospered. There was a special branch of Jewish economic activity, involving the provisions for military personnel. Because there were always military personnel permanently stationed in Ger, such as the artillery, and part of the time, also a number of military people from the border patrol.

Despite the fact that the *Rebbe* of Ger lived in the *shtetl,* and created a branch of livelihood for the Jews that lived there, it had a negative impact on economic life there, evidenced by: a large number of the Jews looked for a livelihood from the arrival of *Hasidim*, and therefore did not try to develop

other sources of income generation, such as engaging in commerce with the surrounding cities, learning a trade, and this is the reason that Ger was underdeveloped, and also poorer, when compared with the surrounding cities. Ger did not have any manufacturing facilities apart from two mills, one run on steam, and another on electricity, which were owned by Christians, and in part, leased out to Jews. It is worth mentioning that, thanks to a Jewish man, Mr. Weinstock, who had taken up residence in Ger ten years previously, the *shtetl* at last created a factory, understandably, a Jewish one, which prospered well, and was requisitioned during the war. Ger did not operate on any substantial amount of capital: the factory operated on 100 thousand zlotys; the flour business – up to 50 thousand zlotys, the same as the manufacturing volume on shoes and in clothing manufacture. Other branches of industry operated on the scale of 150 thousand zlotys: in total – there was up to 500 thousand zlotys of Jewish capital, understandably, with externally acquired credit and money, merchandise and promissory notes.

A. The Outbreak of the War

Many years before the war, relationships with the local Christians were not bad, and the same can also be said for the peasant population. This also resulted in better treatment by the communal employees; there were even Jewish employees in the magistrate's administration. One participated in the elections under this basis, but this trajectory worsened over time, when anti-Semitism in Poland began to grow. By that time, the number of Christian businesses was already large in the area, posing significant competition, but in comparison with other cities, the situation in Ger, in hindsight, was tolerable.

Regrettably, one cannot give a good assessment of the community in Ger, because the leaders of the community, which was in the hands of the *Agudah*, never carried out any constructive agenda, not even paying the Rabbi a pension, as it has to be, and instead, fell back on an old French system of collecting contributions. The constructive help of the Jews of Ger came from the Jewish cooperative bank, thanks to the fact that its management consisted of progressive elements. The bank was considered to be of the first category, and operated up until the outbreak of the war, thanks to the energetic and disciplined oversight of the inspector Dr. Y. Shulman, who enabled the bank to access credit, and in this manner, helped to save many Jewish businesses from failure. Other financial institutions, where the *Agudah*-elements provided the management, failed.

The Outbreak of the War: It must be said that, with the outbreak of the war, that the economic life of the Jews of Ger was ruined. The branch that consisted of 'a livelihood from the *Hasidim*,' was immediately liquidated. On the sixth day after the war broke out, the *Rebbe* left Ger, and immediately on the following morning, meaning September 7, when the front drew nearer to the *shtetl*, almost all of the Jews of Ger fled: many to Warsaw, and other to the second [sic: eastern] side of the Vistula. A small number of Jews remained, about 10%. Those who fled, left their assets in God's care, because they fled in a panic. Ger, however, did not suffer a bombardment. Only one house, the Regent's was hit by a bomb, and six people there were killed along with the Regent. Jews did not suffer.

On Friday, September 8, the German military took over Ger. Immediately afterwards, the young, from among those remaining Jews, were rounded up and sent to a prison camp, where they remained for several months, and then returned. Those Jews who returned, discovered that the largest part of merchandise in the economy had been plundered, because in their absence, the darker elements opened up the houses and warehouses, and took whatever they wanted. The *Rebbe's* house was opened, and the first things taken were the most valuable, clothing, furniture, etc. When the Jews returned and encountered this situation, you can imagine how they felt. Added to this, they lived in a state of fear. On a daily basis, Jews were compelled to present themselves, up to several hundred in number, to be put to work, which consisted of working in the barracks, on roads, and part of the time in the city. The Jews had no one to represent them in Ger, and as a result, a persona presented himself, a tailor by trade, Yankl Czornoczapka, and he represented the Jewish populace. It is self-evident that the Jews didn't have any great joy from him. He, seemingly, defended them, but in reality, he was looking out only for himself. This condition persisted for several months, until the Judenrat was created, meaning, until January. Jews lived in chaos, going to work. They absolutely did not carry on any commercial business, and received no help from anyone. The help banks ceased to exist. There were not any shortages in housing, because as I have already mentioned, Ger did not suffer from a bombardment.

B. The Role of the *Judenrat*

The *Judenrat*: With the creation of the *Judenrat*, the circumstances in Ger gradually changed. The chaos engendered by Czornoczapka ceased. He also wanted to be in the *Judenrat,* but the city opposed this. Most significantly, it was the local commandant who stood against him, who ultimately came to understand that Czornoczapka cannot represent the Jews in Ger. It is characteristic, that in specific instances, the local commandant assessed Czornoczapka correctly, seeing that he did not deal well with the Jews, meaning that he needed to handle the Jews in a better fashion.

The Judenrat was created at the order of the regional senior official, of the General Administration of the General-Government[54]. This took place on January 15, 1940. Compromise elections took place. There were 6 persons from the old community and 6 new people: together 12 people. The President, Mr. M. Skrzypek, was one of the new people.

The *Judenrat* had a very difficult and responsible task: to respond to the various demands of the authorities, and to regulate the matter of work. Responding to demands was tied up with requirements, that for such a *shtetl* had colossal impact. To this end, it was necessary to create monthly budgets. The budget reached for part of the months to 5,000 zlotys. In order to bank these monthly sums, it was necessary for some of the time, to impose sanctions, such as taking funds, even to collect them with the help of the police, later on – the Jewish police.

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54 The General Government, sometimes also General Governorate (German: *Generalgouvernement*), was an occupied area of the Second Republic of Poland that was under colonial administration of Nazi Germany during World War II, from 1939 to early 1945. The Nazi government designated the territory as a separate administrative region of the Third Reich.

The material circumstances of the Jews of Ger, at that time, presented itself as being very bad. Their merchandise had been confiscated; their trade had become underground. It was characteristic, that in the nearby *shtetl* of Piaseczno, the Jews were able to do business open and freely, and in Ger everything was forbidden. True, a new form of making a living came into being: smuggling the necessities of life to Warsaw, and bringing back sugar and other foods.

At that time, there were a couple of hundred refugees. They lived better than the poor people in Ger, and they were supported to the extent that was possible. The need among the Jews of Ger was great. Contact was immediately initiated with the 'Joint' in Warsaw. When the Jews received the first 3,000 zlotys in February 1940, they moved immediately to open a kitchen. You can understand that the *Judenrat* took over this work, and in a short time, the kitchen became a reality, and approximately 1,200 lunches were given out daily – at 10 *groschen* a meal; for the poor – at no charge. The kitchen continued to function until June, and when the 'Joint' ceased providing support, the kitchen ceased to exist.

It is worth recollecting that the *Judenrat* added up to 10,000 zlotys to the kitchen. There were no special help-committees. All of the help came from the *Judenrat*: medical help – 1 zloty for a visit by a doctor (Rosenberg); partly free of charge, and also prescriptions for medicine at no charge. The *Judenrat* distributed assistance to poor people up to 1,500 zlotys a month. It is worth mentioning that the *Judenrat* distributed assistance for the Passover of 1940, in the amount of 15,000 zlotys with matzos. This was naturally, with support from the 'Joint.'

C. Forced Labor Under Nazi Occupation

The Work Program: As I have already mentioned, several hundred people had to present themselves for work on a daily basis. The *Judenrat* provided control of this situation with a system of the following nature (thereby, I also mention that in Ger, this was an exception with the work-system): Immediately at the start, in the month of January, they knew that on Sunday, they had to call all the Jews together to the magistrate building and everyone was numbered. Each Jew had to have a number, by which he was identified in a list. This number was sewn into a patch, that he was required to wear without exception. If not, he was punished. The *Judenrat* controlled the work issue using these numbers. These numbers were, naturally, not the creation of the *Judenrat*, but were in place before Czornoczapka's time. However, this system became rationalized by the *Judenrat*, in that every Jew was encumbered with the obligation to work, except for the sick. Each Jew was therefore made to work two or three times a week.

Work on the outposts: In the middle of the summer of 1940, work began on the outposts, apart from the municipal work in the barracks, roads and field work, for which the demand was for 500 men on a daily basis. To this end, Ger had to send 170 workers to Lublin. Then hard work began for the Judenrat, because the situation presented was catastrophic: where does one get that many people? However, through great exertion, a way out was found: the workers for the authorities – barracks, roads, municipal labor – was carried out promptly, but the work on the two outposts, where it was anticipated that the work would be paid for by the tax revenues and reclamation [funds]– that is where

negotiations began. The contractors, engineers, directors, all wanted to make use of the Jews at no cost to the extent possible, and the *Judenrat*, on the opposite side, fought for the Jews to be paid a salary. In this way, a few of the outposts fell by the wayside, and in those places where the work was paid for, the Jews did go, and the contractors were satisfied to the highest degree with the Jewish work product. Now, a separate chapter comes: The bathing institution, hospital and isolation house.



Page 261: Yaakov-Yoss'l Zlotagorsky and His Son

The institutions of authority, this meaning the health authorities of the district, ordered that, with all deliberate speed, in the course of a few weeks, that a modern bathing facility be erected, with showers and disinfectant autoclaves. This was tied up with large expenses. The construction was initiated, and the Jews of Ger were taxed for an additional 35 thousand zlotys. In the course of 6 weeks, with a great deal of strenuous effort, the bathing facility was built, which was a model for the entire area, and when this work was complete, it was necessary to go to the construction of an isolation ward, which was derived from converting the *Bet HaMedrash*. Walls were installed and separate rooms were constructed. It is for this work that the Jews were sent out, it was not completed, but was 90% completed, and this cost many thousands of zlotys. The municipal general hospital was used for the sick. There were only several instances of those who contracted typhus, equally among Christians and Jews. – Christians – proportionally more.

The municipal doctor, with the sanitary inspector – [gentile] Poles – did not assist the Jews in a single incident of this sort. Quite the opposite, they made the work marginally more difficult, looking for ways to make it more expensive. And in many cases – hounded the people intensely. With the beginning of the winter of 1940, the plague of 'resettling' the Jews begins, moving them to separate streets, designated only for them. And with this, comes the difficult issue of dwellings. Separately, the Jewish populace of the nearby villages and settlements were also 'resettled:' up to 30 families. The *Judenrat* had to use its full force, and expertise, to provide all the Jews with a place to live. It is necessary to say that this worked out to a full one hundred percent. It is self-understood, that this was hardly comfortable, but at that time, nobody sought comfort. In this hour of need, it was necessary to make do with crowded residences. With the creation of the ghetto, Jews lost the last of their livelihoods, this being smuggling, and transacting a bit of merchandise. The peasant was not permitted to enter the Jewish Quarter, and therefore there was no trade, and no business was done. Now comes the last phase: the expulsion of the Jews from Ger.

D. The Final Solution

Here, the Jews are entirely destroyed. Jews sell all of their possessions, that they had accumulated over centuries of hard labor – for a few *groschen*, because nothing is permitted to be taken out, so it is sold for a pittance. To attempt to send packages out is fraught with mortal danger. Belongings are taken away, confiscated. Finally, the sorrowful day arrives when the *shtetl* must be left behind, [the *shtetl*] of the centuries-old Ger Jewish settlement.



Page 264: Moshe Heilikman

That dark day, February 25-26... that the Jews who lived that long and saw, when all of the Jews gathered themselves on the marketplace with their backpacks on their shoulders, with their children, old folks, and began to march to the *Koleika*. The way the authorities handled this was not bad. Special small wagons were provided to handle the luggage. About 80% of the Jews were sent to Warsaw. The rest traveled on their own to surrounding small villages.

Those sent to Warsaw had a trip like all others sent out – a bath, disinfection, etc. Temporarily for eight days, the *Judenrat* remained in Ger with the objective of reclaiming those requisitioned items held by the gendarmerie, and also to transport provisions out, such as potatoes, flour, etc. This residue was party facilitated; the requisitioned items were in part a bit retrieved. Of the potatoes that were owned, it was possible to send over about 50 meters out of 400 meters, and for this, it is necessary to thank the Poles, and the Red Cross; they made a mound for us of the items that were left behind.

When we arrived in Warsaw, we encountered a true disaster and lament. Despite the fact that the '*ziomkostwow*[55]' was immediately established, it was nevertheless noted that the situation was not under control. These possessions were robbed from us in Warsaw, and no midday meals were provided, there was no support, nothing. The refugees were left on their own. It is superfluous to describe the plight of the Ger refugees at the time: need, hunger, suffering and much death. Of the number of 2,700 refugees, there were already several hundred dead, from the course of these few months. To our great regret, this number cannot be verified, because it grows from minute to minute.

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[55] Polish, for a '*landsmanschaft* society.'

The First Days of the War

By Leah Schreibaum-Guberman

Ger Before the War

My home *shtetl* of Ger, the cradle of my childhood, and the garden in which my youth grew and blossomed, until the year 1939 – when the Hitlerist hordes flooded Poland, and tore out the base of the Jewish settlement there, by the roots – looked like all of the small Jewish towns on the territory of former Poland. Jews engaged in labor and trade; life was not easy, but nevertheless, life did have its rewards; children were raised and brought up, married them off, and lived long enough to reap the joys of seeing grandchildren. In the last of the years, young people committed themselves intensely to cultural activities: one grouped one's self around the library, engaged in community work, organized a variety of get-togethers and parties, and actually read as well. The older generation, was loyal to the old Jewish tradition, and very strictly followed the way of their fathers.



Page 267: A Group of Halutzim *with Dr. Ferster from Warsaw*

Nevertheless, the barrier between the generations was not that great. Today, it is possible, that it is greater, and especially in those countries where the two generations speak different languages. In the beginning, the fathers looks askance at the '*treyf-possul*' things, that the children would bring from the library, but they got accustomed to it, and the children, by and large, did not stop going to synagogue on Sabbath and Festival Holidays with their parents.

Ger was the capitol city of a great *Hasidic* dynasty, and this gave the city a special grace and a great deal of life. One constantly saw strange people in the streets, guests from every corner of the country,

and even from out of the country, that contributed a holiday air to the *shtetl*. *Hasidim* would come to the *Rebbe*, some for advice, others for a blessing. [There would be those] for whom business was going badly, another with a daughter to be married off, and yet others who simply missed the *Rebbe*, and wanted to spend a Festival Holiday at the side of the *Rebbe's Tisch*, praying in one synagogue with the *Tzaddik*. During Festival Holidays, and especially during the *Ten Days of Repentance*, the *shtetl* was overflowing with guests, and a large part of the Ger residents, at a time like this, would transform their homes into lodging quarters and derive income from this.

The Polish administration of the *Koleika*, that transported the *Hasidim* to the train station, sustained itself almost entirely from this *Hasidic* flow, and owed its existence thanks to the *Rebbe.* The Jews related to the *Rebbe* with great awe-filled respect and love, and even the Poles showed a great deal of respect for this great spiritual leader.

Ger is situated in an artistically attractive location, surrounded by forests and hills, close to the Vistula, that famous river that flows out of the Carpathian Mountains, and flows into the Baltic Sea. In the city proper, there were many fruit orchards, the largest part of which belonged to the Poles, but the Jews would lease them, and then work them.

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This is the way the natural and community panorama of Ger looked like over the course of many generations. Ger only first acquired a different appearance in the years between the two World Wars, with the establishment of the youth movement, that grouped itself around the library. The traditional appearance of the city began to change. Young people began to appear dressed in short clothing, young boys and girls with books in their hands, placards in Yiddish appearing on walls, that announce a theater performance, or a lecture by a Jewish writer. And the library hummed with the constant movement of people, as well as a quiet, and also an open struggle between a variety of groups and their tendencies. The proletarian young people, at one point, separated itself out, and formed a *Volksklub*. But the library does not lose its influence on the city's youth. At this opportunity, we must recollect its founders. Before my eyes, as if they are still alive, stand the brothers Monusz and Shloken's, my brothers Yankl and Yoss'l Schreibaum, the brothers Yaakov-Nathan and David-Shlomo Zhurek, the sisters Sarah and Freida Hamburg, Mendl and his sister Shayndl and her husband, Yoss'l Friedman and his wife Chana'cheh, my sister-in-law, Chana'cheh Mardicks, and many others, that I no longer remember; but it would be very good if their names will also be recorded in the *Yizkor* Book. I believe that likely there were others who were active in the institution.

The library was founded under the name of the '*Volks-Bibliothek*,' and later carried the name of the great Yiddish writer I. L. Peretz. This, however, did not alter the character of the institution, despite the fact that there was a change in its leadership. Younger elements took over the library, and they gave a fresh impulse to the institution. It opened the doors of the institution widely for the arrival of new members, and bought up new books in Warsaw by Yiddish and non-Yiddish writers. We also carried out many cultural activities, with speakers from Warsaw, and created a drama circle, that put on theater performances in the city, and in surrounding towns. The revenues generated by these

presentations were given over to the needs of the institution, primarily to increase the number of books in the library.

This is how the blossoming cultural activity was conducted, which was a sprig emerging from the vibrant Jewish life in Poland. This went on until the arrival of the terrifying warlike assault of the Hitlerist bands who, with a wild bestial murderousness, obliterated and trampled out Jewish life. Out of the entire Jewish population, no more remained than a small groups of orphans – today, already grown up people – that are far-flung and spread out all over the world.

When the Hitler-Hordes Fell Upon Warsaw

When the Nazi-bands fell upon Warsaw, I was in that city, where I worked. The assault began with an attack from the air, and the city burned on all sides. A terrifying panic befell the populace, and people did not know where to hide, and how to save themselves from death. Along with my four year-old child, I hid myself in a cellar, in which there were other people. We thought that the cellar would protect us from being killed, and protect us from death. When, for a short while, it became more still, we made the assessment that the cellar was not an adequate protection against death, because the walls of the burning houses could fall and bury us alive. The child previously had cried out of fear, and with every explosion of a bomb, would hide his head in my lap; now he cried out of hunger, having not eaten for a long time, and he begged for a piece of bread. All the other families and their children were in the same situation. It tore at the heart to see the suffering of these babies, and we went out from the cellar. Around us, houses burned, the air was full of foul-smelling smoke, people ran around aimlessly, from one quarter to the next, mothers searched for children, children with widened eyes looked for their parents...

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Several of us families stood at a street corner, frightened, hungry and disoriented, not knowing what we were doing, or where to go. At that moment, a Jewish person went by, and called out the name of a street to us, where bread was being sold. It was not far, so I left my child with the children of a woman who was known to me, with whom I was in the cellar, and ran to the bakery to buy bread for the hungry children. But I hadn't managed to get across half of one quarter, when a bomb fell on the house, where the children were standing. A terrifying crash of the walls was heard, that covered everything else with debris, smoke and brick fragments, without a sign of life. I was frozen with fear. My hands and feet gave out on me, I crawled on all fours to the place where my child had been standing, and without a voice, I called his name, but nobody replied. The place where the people had been standing, stood a tall smoking pile of brick, and under it, several tens of people were buried alive, among them also, my dear child...

I stood by that grave of the living for a long time and wept. I clawed through the brick ruins with my hands, tearing out my nails, ripping my clothes, and calling for my child, screamed into the ruptured walls, but nobody answered. I felt my strength ebbing out of me, and with the last of my strength, I set out to go to my brother. Screams, shouts, weeping, and confused cries for help, reverberated

from all around, but nobody stopped to pay attention to them. People ran as if driven from a nightmare, without any goal, and having no way out.

I was barely able to drag myself to the house where my brother lived. Soaked in tears, bloodied, and besmirched with soot, I related how my child had been killed. My brother remained stunned by this frightening news. He lowered his head and quietly said: 'Sister, the streets are sown with the dead, you are not the only one...'

Exhausted, I fell onto a bed and fell into a sort of nightmare. As it appears, I lay like this for a long time. My brother Yoss'l woke me up, and said to me: 'Leah, get up, we are going to leave Warsaw, the pursuit of the Jewish population has begun.'

– Where to? – I asked, beaten down.

– To Ger – I answered – our parents are there, let us not leave them alone.

We left at the beginning of the night, in order to make easier our ability to avoid the Nazi beasts, who lay in ambush along the roads. Hungry and broken, this was the way we stumbled through the fields at night, staying close to wooded areas, hiding ourselves behind trees, because along the roads, German tanks and autos were whizzing by. I do not know for how long we proceeded, and in the end we finally reached Ger. In our home, we encountered our mother sick in bed, and our father stood, a beaten man, by the window. We did not recognize him, half of his beard had been torn out of his face – one bloody wound. He told us that the Germans are forcing the Jews to do the hardest and dirtiest work, and a couple of Jewish '*Kapos*' are helping them out.

I did not tell my parents what had happened to my child, in order not to aggravate their sorrow, and in approaching my father I said: – Father, permit me to, and I will trim the second half of the beard, so you will not look so abused...

– No, daughter – he answered me to the contrary – when the world will get better, I will then try to pretty up my face...

It was not ordained for him to see such a better world. The German executioners took him away rather quickly, and my father R' Naphtali k"z, went off with the six million martyrs, and my mother together with him, Jocheved, my brothers Yankl and Yoss'l, my sisters Nechama, Taleh and Golda...

Let the memory of these martyrs not be forgotten, as a warning and a reminder, that 'the voice of the spilled blood of the innocents cries out to us from the earth,' as God said to Cain, when the latter killed his brother Abel.

The Bloody Beginning and Tragic End of the War

By Lipa Helman
Buenos Aires

Under a Hail of Bombs

The war descended on Poland, like a thunderclap, on a bright summer day. We awaited the misfortune, which had been hanging over our head like a dark cloud; but nobody had contemplated that it would happen today, or so soon. And it happened. Suddenly, and without warning, Nazi aircraft flew in, and began to bombard the *shtetl,* and the first victim that fell was the city Regent. A severe pandemonium ensued, and a panic seized everyone, and each person sought a place to hide.



Page 273: The end of the Jewish tragedy in Ger. The remaining Jews of the city, go on their last way to their death.

The Jews knew what awaited them at the hands of the Germans, and thought of fleeing this small settlement as fast as they could, and as far as they could get from the front. Mostly they fled to the larger city, to Warsaw, once the panic enveloped wide cohorts of the populace. I packed up everything that was possible to take along, my wife and child, aged two months, and we went off to Warsaw. The very same day that we left Ger, Hitler's bands entered the *shtetl,* and on the second day after the outbreak of the war, the Germans had occupied Ger and the entire surrounding vicinity.

In Warsaw, we traveled to my wife's relatives, on *Ulica* Krochmalna 31[56]. Other Jews from Ger came to Warsaw with us, and Jewish refugees from the surrounding settlements also streamed in. My wife's uncle, Ziskind, and his wife Chaya, lived in a single solitary room. Several other relatives came to them from Ger, with their families, and everyone squeezed themselves into this single room. Today, it is difficult to conceive how it was even possible to hold out in such overcrowding, but the need creates the fortitude, even to break iron. Twenty-four souls were domiciled in that one room, like herring in a cask.

We did not leave the house the entire day, because it was forbidden to go out into the street. From the first day on of the war, the electrical service in Warsaw was disrupted, and there was no water in the water system. It was also not possible to buy anything, and there was nothing to buy, and the crying of hungry children tore at the heart. But each could help the other even without anything. Part of the people girded themselves, and burst out into the flaming streets, in order to look for something to eat for the hungry children. But no small number of them met their death from bombs and shells, which fell without surcease on all sides.

In those days, life meant nothing in Warsaw. Dead bodies lolled about in the streets, along with dead horses, killed by the bombardment. The hunger was unbearable. People cut slabs of flesh from the dead horses; water was taken from the sewer discharges – and this is how life went on under execrable conditions, until the Polish capitol surrendered, and the Germans took over the city.

The Eve of *Rosh Hashana* of 1939 has been etched into my memory. Opposite us, on Krochmalna 28, several Jewish families lived, who had fled from Ger. One of these families was that of David Teitelbaum, a Jewish laborer, an upholsterer by trade. He was a *Dozor* of the community in Ger, and also a *Lavnik* to the Municipal Council[57] in Ger. He was beloved in the *shtetl*; all those who thought they were wronged, came to this Jewish man with their complaints, and he ran to the council, and he did everything that he could to help these people. Abraham Ribak also lived there, whom we called Abraham *Kusya* at home, he was there with his family, which had come down from Ger. Nota Goldstein was also there, who had lost a hand in The First World War.

On the Eve of *Rosh Hashana*, at four o'clock in the afternoon, an armada of Nazi airplanes appeared over the Warsaw skies, and hailed down a heavy bombardment on the Jewish neighborhood. It only lasted for a few minutes, and it left the entire area in flames. On that day, over two thousand Jews fell from the bombardment. People were buried alive from falling walls. The airplanes flew low, and shot up the people with machine gun fire.

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56 Isaac Bashevis Singer grew up on Krochmalna 10, as documented in his book, *'In My Father's Court.'*

57 A member of the executive committee of the city council.



Page 275: Jews in the Ghetto of Ger. In the middle is Joseph Shapiro, the Shammes *to the* Rebbe *of Ger.*

When it became still, and the bombardment ceased, we went out into the streets and witnessed the massive destruction. People ran around in the streets like they were crazy. Nobody knew if it was better to remain in the house, or be outside in the street.

Night fell, and the Jews gathered themselves in the synagogue for High Holy Day prayers. Suddenly, Neta Goldstein came bursting into us, our neighbor from across the street, crying, and frightened, and with a wail said: 'My fellow Jews, help me, have pity, you Jews from Ger, help me to save my family from under the wreckage, all of them were buried by rubble! I, with only one hand, cannot deal with this... why was I not covered along with them together?'...

With Yankl Gurfinkel at their head, we took off to rescue the people. We worked the entire night, and many other Jews joined us. German cannons continued to fire for the entire night on Warsaw. After working for an entire night, we extracted all those who had been killed, and among them were the following people from Ger: David Teitelbaum, his wife and two children; Abraham Ribak, his wife and one son, and Guta, Goldstein's wife. The three women were sisters. We gathered these eight victims together, and the *Hevra Kadisha* buried them in the Gensch cemetery, in a common grave. These were the first Ger victims of the Hitler invasion of Poland.

Under the Rule of the Nazis

When Hitler's armies took Warsaw, we did not have anywhere to go, and we decided to return to Ger. But there was no communications, and the return train had been halted, and for civilians, there were no other means of transportation. For us, the only alternative that remained was to go on foot. From Warsaw to Ger is a walk of not more than thirty kilometers. So my wife took the child, and I the few packages of my belongings, and we set out on the way.



Page 277: A group of returning Ger residents: Lipa Helman with his wife and children, A. Prajs, Y. Peltz, Y. Prajs and his wife, Sh. Rosensweig – standing by the shattered gate of the Ger Cemetery.

We were frightfully exhausted and broken, not having eaten nor slept, we dragged ourselves along with the last of our strength. The way was literally sown with the dead and the wounded, who dazedly whined and begged for help. But who could help them when the horde of refugees, which streamed along the way, was itself half-dead? No sooner did military divisions appear, than it was compulsory to get out of their way [and cede them the road]. Captured Polish soldiers were also being transported.

In the course of that difficult day, we barely dragged ourselves as far as the *shtetl* of Piaseczno, which is exactly half-way between Warsaw and Ger. We were spent, and could no longer continue. We decided to spend the night in that *shtetl,* in order to rest. We spent the night with a relative, and on the second day, resumed our journey on the road to Ger.

In Ger, they had given up on our lives, and relatives were mourning us, since Warsaw had sustained a very strong bombardment from land and from the air, and a large part of the city was consumed in flames. Because of this, they thought that we were dead. Ger, thankfully, had remained intact. The Germans took over the *shtetl* without encountering resistance, and no battles took place there.

The war against the Jews, however, began without delay. Immediately, on the second day after the city was occupied, Jews began to be seized to be sent to work; they were seized in the streets and dragged from the houses, No Poles were taken to work, and they immediately sensed themselves to be in a privileged position in the city, and a few of them began to work alongside the Germans.

For the Jews, all sources of income were immediately cut off, and all human rights were taken away from them. For them, it was strictly forbidden to move about Christian quarters, and every day, they were obligated to present themselves for work at the Magistrate. There, the staff of the *Gestapo*, and the *Volksdeutsche* sent every one out to work. But this was no sort of work, only suffering and torture.

It was in this manner, for example, that Jews were ordered to load damaged tanks onto freight trucks. We were given no orders, and no sort of direction, how it was that they wanted us to pick up a tank with our bare hands, that weighs hundreds of kilos, and if it was not done, they beat the unfortunates with staves, knocking out teeth, and splitting heads. In this group, together with me, were Mendl Messing, Monusz Grossman, Herschel Kupperholtz, Shlomo Ribak, Yitzhak Till, Dov'cheh Garfinkel, Dan'cheh Garfinkel, and others. They beat us to the point that we could not recognize one another. I will never forget that bloody day in the Nazi-Hell.

When the torture ended, we were sent home with a strict behest, that on the next day, we would be put to do the same 'work.' I knew that I could not hold out, being subjected to one additional day of this kind – so I hid myself, and I did not go to work.

My Seven Furnaces of Hell in the Time of War

By Israel Rosenbloom (Eye Witness)
The Country of Israel

The Outbreak of the War

When the war broke out, I was living in Ger. I was 13 years old. Jews knew that the Nazi invasion was not going to create anything good for them, even if no one could conceive that it would take on the barbarous reach of mass extermination. Some fled to the other side of the Vistula, others transferred themselves to Warsaw, and into other larger cities. But the majority could not decide, and did not know to where they should flee, and remained in place.

As soon as the Germans came into the city, on the second day, they issued an order, that all men between the ages of 18 and 40 years of age, are to present themselves to the Command. From there, everyone was sent out, whether Jews or Poles, to a camp to do work. They were detained there for a couple of months, and then sent home.

But those residents that remained behind were also not given any surcease. Every morning, the Germans would go from house to house, dragging out the men, children and the elderly, and send them off to do a variety of work. The Jews especially suffered from this. Poles were not seized and sent to work this way. On one occasion, the Germans came into the Rabbi, beat him up, and plundered all the valuables that were in his house. Poles also participated in this pogrom, who from day one, actively participated along with the German soldiers in assaulting Jews. Shortly after this, they fell upon the *Rebbe's* house. The Poles dragged everything outside, including the furniture; the *Rebbe's Bet HaMedrash* was used to house Polish prisoners of war, and a hospital was set up in there, a granary, and they transferred the Polish court there.

Jews were seized in the streets and forced to do the filthiest work. The Elder Ravsky, an aged Jew, did not hear the order from a German, and remained standing in place, accordingly, he shot him on the spot. This was near the *Bet HaMedrash* of the *Rebbe.* Two little boys, who were walking from a village, were also shot in the outskirts of the city. The ghetto was created at the beginning of 1940. All the streets where Jews lived, were allocated, along with the main street, and warned the Jews that they could not go out from this area. No bordering fence was installed, no write-ups were done, and if a Jew was caught outside of the ghetto, he would be beaten murderously.

The Germans ran through and robbed all the Jewish houses, requisitioning all brass and copper vessels, took away all the finished goods from shoemakers and tailors, taking everything that they desired. A *Judenrat* was created, that provided workers for the Germans. For the Jews, a food-rationing system was implemented based on food ration cards; Jews were not allowed to eat more than 250 grams of bread. Because of this smuggling began, for a variety of products, and the price for smuggled products was a very high one. A Jewish Police Force was also organized.

This condition persisted until the beginning of the year 1941, when the Jews were transported to the Warsaw Ghetto. A day before this, the Jewish Police went from house-to-house and informed everyone, that on the following morning, everyone must assemble on the municipal plaza, and take along packages that they can carry with themselves. There were also written communications about this. About three thousand people presented themselves. A few fled to the other side of the Vistula, and others went off to Otwock.

On the municipal plaza, everyone was arrayed into rows, and driven to the small train. The new Polish police-commandant, who managed the transport, tortured the Jews on their way, without mercy; he beat the old people and the women, who could not keep up with the quick pace. At the evacuation-point, the representatives of the Judenrat waited, and the Jewish Police, and we were led into the large synagogue building, and given meager rations to eat. After the quarantine, we were transferred to the Warsaw Ghetto; some were settled into a cinema-hall, and the others on *Ulica* Stavka or Zamenhof, at refugee points. There was no work, and also no bread; those that had money, found a way to buy something, and all the others simply hungered.

In the Warsaw Ghetto

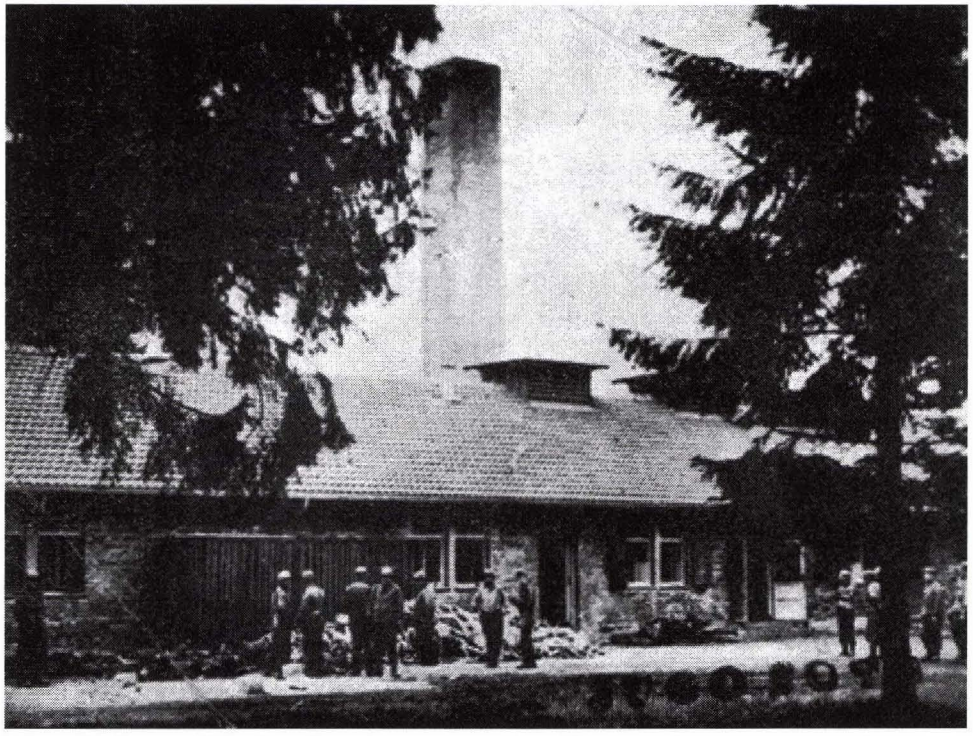
My father fell ill; he was taken to a hospital and there he expired from hunger. In the short time of several months, my three brothers and mother died. I remained, with my little brother age 10, who came down with typhus, and when he got a bit better, I fell into my straw sack bed with the same illness. My brother then had an opportunity to smuggle in something from the Aryan side, and in this way, he kept me alive; and when I was able to get up and stand on my feet, we both engaged in thievery at the border of the ghetto, going over to the Polish side, buy whatever products we could, and then re-sell it.

On one occasion we were caught, and beaten frightfully, but in a short while, hunger drove us yet again to risk our lives. We knew, that if a bad German would catch us, he will not hesitate to shoot

us. But we had no other choice – to remain lying in the ghetto meant expiring from hunger. So, in a variety of ways, we illegally went through the boundary, and in this fashion managed to earn something, and were able to sustain others among the living. This was the 'privilege' of the Jewish children, who would crawl through the holes; a grown person would not be able to accomplish such a feat...

On the Road, Wandering

At the end of 1941, we decided to leave the ghetto. As we proceeded with smuggling, it became that much more difficult, every 'operation' was connected with mortal danger, and to remain alive inside the ghetto was not certain either. So, for the last time, we stole across the boundary, never to return. We set out in the direction of Ger, and there, we met up with a Polish lawyer of our acquaintance, Midowski, who received us very well, permitting us to lodge with him, and gave us food for the journey, and we went off to Sobin. There, we paused for a short time, and after that, wandered through the towns of Maciejowice, Magnuszew, and others, At the *shtetl* of Pinczew, my little brother fell ill. His weak child's body could no longer withstand the difficulties of this terrible wandering around, over fields and through forests, in the dampness and cold. We would often sleep out in the open, and hunger for not only one day. He died along the way, and I remained along in God's world, the only one from my entire family...



Page 282: *The Dachau Concentration Camp, where, among others, many Jews from Ger were exterminated*

I went on further. I was already capable of being useful in a peasant's line of work, and I would often get work. In the vicinity of Wisznica, in Weliczka, I got work with a peasant woman. This was in the summer of 1942, when the Jews of the surrounding small towns were being taken off to Bochnia. A *Gestapo* agent lived with the peasant woman for whom I worked, who was the superior placed over the Polish police. I do not know if he did not see me, or deliberately ignored my presence; either that, or perhaps it never occurred to him that the 'little *shaygetz*' that is herding the cattle could possibly be a Jewish child.

On one occasion, a group of Jews was uncovered hiding with a peasant in a neighboring village. The peasant took money from them, and promised to protect them. However, he informed on them. So the Polish police came, and fell upon the hiding place, and the Jews were taken off to the commandant. Several days later, as I was pasturing the cattle, I heard reports of shooting, and so I crawled up a tree, to see what was happening there, and I recognized the *Gestapo* agent, who, with his revolver, had shot the captured Jews.

I decided to leave that location. Also, the peasant woman became frightened, and encouraged me to go. She gave me a few things, and I went off to the Tatra Mountains to the *Guralias*.[58]

There were instances when the *Guralias*, whom I beseeched to allow me to spend the night, wanted to turn me over to the police. One of them wanted to drag me off forcibly to the Germans. However, others intervened, and permitted me to flee. There were among them those who helped, despite the fact that they knew I was a Jew. It was not only once that I heard from a Pole: 'A Jew is also a human being'...

In this way, I wandered over the Tatra Mountains until the coming of the autumn rains. One time, a German guard patrol stopped me at the border. I told them I was headed to dig up potatoes at a nearby village. They conferred among themselves as to what to do with me; according to the arguments, I gathered that one wanted to put a bullet in my head, but the second was against this. So I approached one and asked him, what time is it? – Seven – he replied. So I said to him: my boss will be angry that I have come to work late. – Well, then get lost! – he said to me. I set off running, believing they would shoot after me. However, they did not shoot, and I hid myself in the forest. There I encountered a shepherd, who told me, that in the nearest *shtetl* on the Slovakian side [of the border] there are Jews to be found.

In Slovakia

In a Slovakian village, I asked a local peasant about Jews. A peasant woman gave me the address of a Jew, an owner of a small soda water factory, whose parents had already been deported to Poland. Later on, he was called out, and I told him who I was. The Jewish man took me in, and hid me for the course of nine weeks time. There were other Jews in this hiding place, who managed

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58 It is not evident what the reference is here. It may be a declension of the Polish word Gór, meaning mountain, and descriptive of 'mountain people.'

to avoid the fate of being deported to Poland. After this, I went off to Kezmarak, where I also hid out with a Jew, and a while later, went off to work for a gentile.

From Slovakia, many Jews wandered out and off to Hungary. It was said that the plight of the Jews there was much better, and also more secure. The local Jews put me in contact with Slovakian smugglers, who took me over to Hungary. Along the way, I encountered other Jewish refugees from Poland.

An unfortunate incident occurred before we reached the Hungarian border. The Polish border patrol seized us, and took us off to the *shtetl* of Prešow. There, they went into the coffee house, but the leaders of the escape action immediately came in, who invited the border police to a glass of wine. They began to drink, and when the soldiers were already 'under the glass,' I extracted myself, and fled. The police were then well paid off, and later on, they set all the other Jewish refugees free.

Several days later, we again made an attempt to steal across the border. I was attached to two other Jews, older men, and under the leadership of a Slovak, on a dark night, we smuggled ourselves over to the Hungarian side. The one who accompanied us said his farewells, and with his finger, pointed out the train station, where we were too take the train, but in waiting for the train, we were seized. At the investigation by the Hungarian police, we were beaten, demanding that I reveal the names of the leaders of the border smuggling operation. I, however, had one alibi: I am a stranger here, and I don't know anyone, and I do not know who they are. When they concluded that they were not going to make me 'sing,' they stopped beating me. After this, we were sent over to a Jewish concentration camp in Nováky[59].

There were about three thousand men in the camp. I was told that 'relocations' to Poland had been made already twice from this camp. In the camp, there were work facilities for tailoring, locksmith work, tinsmith work and also a textile factory. It looked like a small industrial town, in which everyone was employed, and were working under rather entirely normal conditions. We worked a normal workday, eating normally, and also had good hygienic conditions. There were even schools for children, theater presentations, and soccer matches. Workers could receive up to one month's furlough. There was also almost free contact with the outside world. In practical terms, it was a labor camp, under the watch of a small detachment of police, and not a ghetto in the sense of Poland. The camp had a standalone Jewish leadership, and also a medical service under the direction of a Jewish health professional. Also, in the workplaces, the directors and overseers were Jews, and the workers received a salary, and a rather complete treatment. There were instances of escape, but those who came back, or were brought back, were not punished, only warned, that if they did it again – they would then be punished. I was there for a period of eighteen months until the year 1944; I worked as an upholsterer, and regained a bit of my strength, after the horrifying experiences of the last three

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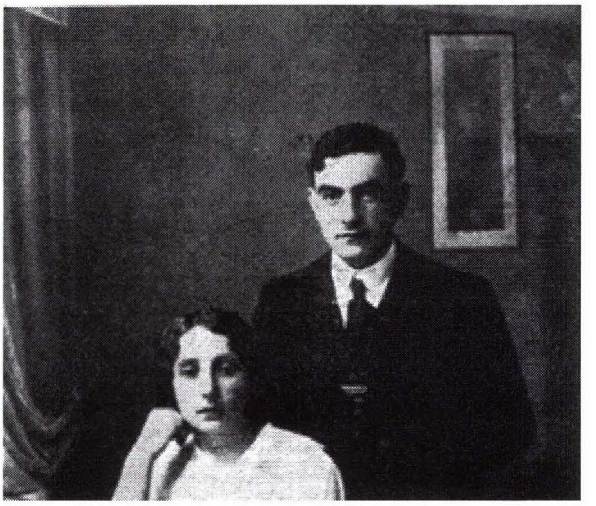
59 The town is located in the upper Nitra River valley, between the Vtáčnik and Strážovské vrchy ranges, about 10 km (6.21 mi) from Prievidza. In 1942, during the reign of the Nazi puppet government of "Independent" Slovakia, nearby barracks were used for the assembly and detention of Slovak Jews from all over the country, pending their deportation to Nazi death camps in German occupied Poland. The camp was guarded by the Slovak Hlinka Guard militia.

years, during which time, I lost my entire family, suffered hunger and pain, in the hands of the murderers, and thousands of times stared at death before my eyes.

With the Partisans



Page 287: Moshe-Nathan Zlotagorsky and His Wife

When the Russians drew near the Polish and Rumanian borders. Partisan groups were created in Slovakia, and also in the vicinity around our labor camp. When the revolution broke out in Slovakia, our police went over to the side of the rebels, and on one fine early morning, the alarm bell went off, summoning all the camp residents, and we were told that we were free. A tribunal was immediately improvised, and one speaker after another called the young, and battle-ready to take up arms, and join the ranks of the partisans.

The older people, women and children, went off to the surrounding small towns, or returned to their homes; but the younger people, with song and joyous expression, marched willfully to the military camp, where they received arms. Part of the newly armed immediately went off to the front, and all the others, who could not go about without a gun, returned to the camp to go through military exercises. The camp also received new residents: *Volksdeutsche* and captured German soldiers, which a special guard of partisans watched.

In a matter of a short while, the German counter-attacks broke through the Slovakian line, and we had to retreat. In the process of drawing back, were conveyed the prisoners to Banská-Bystrica, where we turned them over into the hands of the military commander. In Bystrica, our division was reorganized, and sent for intensive military preparation. A short while thereafter, a group of five hundred Slovaks and Russians were sent to the front. All the others, me among them, were added to a partisan division, which stood under the command of the Red Army. I went through the entire campaign from the Slovakian uprising, with all of its setbacks. After the final liquidation of the uprising by the Germans, all involved fled. I joined up with a group of partisans, which went off into the forest. There we spent the entire winter, carrying out various partisan sorties, in which I participate in many of them. The *Bar Mitzvah* boy from Ger now was a seasoned warrior, who sent not only one Nazi 'hero' to Hell, and at many opportunities, earned the recognition of the commander of the partisan division.

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At the end of 1945, the Russians tore through the front and liberated us from the forest, where we had remained for the entire winter in a state of being permanently surrounded. I came back to

Slovakia through Hungary, and there, I encountered a large number of Polish Jews, who emerged from a variety of hiding places. The news about the Holocaust that befell the Jewish communities of Poland, severely dissembled me. For a long time, I could not get a grip on myself, and did not know where to go, without a home, without a family, and in the end, I went off to Bucharest, and from there to Austria, where I joined the Jewish Brigade and came to Italy. From Italy, I made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel, but the English seized us at the border, and sent us to Cyprus. I was detained for six months on that island, under English guard, and came to The Land in the year 1947, taking part in the War of Independence in 1948, from the Galilee to the Negev.

The Righteous Among the Nations of the World

By Rivka Helfgott-Mudzewsky
Kfar Saba, The Land of Israel

In 1939, when The Second World War broke out, I was 8 years old. My parents were: Joseph and Tema Helfgott. I was a grandchild of David and Sarah-Liebeh Kelmanowicz. Our family consisted of 6 people: my parents and four children.

As soon as the gruesome Nazi attack began, the unrest escalated from hour to hour. My beloved father wept day and night. He would quietly embrace each of us, and kiss us, and mumble something under his breath. His words filled me with worry and fear. Two months later, when the *Gestapo* ordered the creation of a ghetto, and indicated where the ghetto was to be, my father switched with a Christian he knew: he [the Christian] moved into our house, and we went into his. A short time after this, circumstances became worse.

On a certain day, an order appeared from the *Gestapo*, that all the Jews of Ger have to be gathered and relocated to the Warsaw Ghetto. We knew about the terrifying conditions in the Warsaw Ghetto, from news that reached us from a variety of sources. Burdened by the children, my parents took to setting out for Otwock. We knew that in the Otwock Ghetto, the situation was not so bitter as in Warsaw; to our good fortune, we arrived there peacefully, but we were threatened by dangers from all sides.

In the Otwock Ghetto, we got a room in a house, among other families. Life grew more difficult from day-to-day, and more bitter. My father was no longer able to look for ways to make a living in the village, so I, an eight year-old girl, had to substitute for him: I would bring shoes for repair, and from this, we derived sustenance. My Aryan appearance was the 'good fortune,' that made it possible for me, without difficulty, deal in the variety of products going through the [surrounding] villages; my father, as a Jew, was not able to earn anything. Our situation became terrifying: we suffered from hunger. My twin brother went to work for a priest whom we knew, under a Christian name.

When I got a year older, I was then able to travel to Warsaw. I would transport packages of meat, butter and other foodstuffs. Passing the barbed wire fence around the ghetto, as I used thee tramway to go past it, I would clandestinely get off, and turned over the packages to a few Jews, who waited

there, for which they paid me. It was in this way that I was able to earn something each day, in order to provide food for our family. Every time, when I had to travel to Warsaw with secret packages of food, my beloved mother would kiss me and drench me in tears, and wish me, in return for being able to provide for the hungry children, that I should succeed. Yes, I was the principal breadwinner... it is not hard to understand our then painful situation: hunger was rampant, and from the bad and reduced nourishment, the remaining children fell sick. From hour-to-hour, our fear grew, as did our need and uncertainty. At every turn, the *Gestapo* staff tortured and seized Jews, sending them to forced labor. Many of those seized this way never returned.

A day arrived, when an order from the *Gestapo* appeared that all those with machinery equipment, or just plain work tools, are required to bring them to the shop. My mother gave up the last of what she had: a sharpening machine, and when the shop was over-filled with machines and equipment, a new representation appeared, a day later, that ordered all of the men, women and children, to come to the place located near the shop, and from there, each of the craftsmen will be sent to work. The apparent pay did not seem to be bad, an a hope appeared, that we will be able to begin work and earn something. 'It seems – the conversation between us went – that the situation is getting better.'

The end was a very sorry one!

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At the same time, tens of wagons were requisitioned, that stood ready, and as soon as the unfortunate and deceived Jews arrived, The Nazi gendarmes, armed with machine guns, and aroused dogs, forced them to climb up onto the wagons, which took them to the train station, and there, they were loaded into freight cars, and taken to Treblinka, where they were all subjected to a frightening death.

My parents, as was the case with a number of other Jews, sensed the danger, and instead of going to the assembly place, near the shop, a number of families hid themselves in a cellar, where there was at one time, an oil factory, whose entrance was blocked up with sand and stones. We were in this living grave for three days. There was no air. A child of one of the families was sick with whooping cough, and this threatened our hiding place, because the gendarmes, like the dogs, sniffed and searched. Apart from this, other children cried – they wanted to eat, and this led to the fact that my little brother had to leave the house of the priest. He searched for our hiding place, and begged, cried that he be taken in. The cry and of my little brother, and the bitter heartrending wail of my mother, reached the heart of the heavens. My parents were ready to sacrifice their lives, in order to save the child, but the remaining Jews did not permit it: they argued that if the entrance were opened, the hiding place could then be discovered. In my life, I have seen and endured many travails, but I will never forget this tragedy. In that moment, when my little brother sat near the cellar and cried, the gendarmes arrived, and they recognized that this was a little Jewish boy... to this day, the echo of the gunshot reverberates in my ears, that tore that young life short...

On that same day, a German came over to the cellar, and he tore open the closed door, which was the entrance to our hiding place, and entered. When we saw him, we thought that in just a few minutes, he will shoot us all, but how stunned we were, when he began to talk to us like a human

being, like a friend. 'Listen, Jews – he said – I will do you no harm, I have come to warn you that you should flee this place, because the Command is already aware of your hiding place, and any minute now, the gendarmes can come and shoot all of you up.'

After three days without food and without a drop of water, at night, we went out of the hiding place, and went off on the road leading to Gliniecka-Kępa[60]. This particular march route was sown with very difficult suffering. As we proceeded, exhausted and broken, we had to withstand the assault of peasants, who beat us over the head with staves. My sister Elkeh, who was sick, later died from this beating, in a sealed [train]-car.

Beaten and bloodied, we nevertheless tore ourselves loose from those who fell upon us, and we went into the village, and hid ourselves in the holes, where one only could. Three days later, the peasants began to inform on us, and gave out information as to where we could be found, and so we were compelled to flee, but where to?

The question 'where to?' could not be answered by anyone. One thing was clear, that we must flee from the place where we were. We went, and ran through fields, bypassed dangerous roads, until finally, we arrived in Sabin. We entered the ghetto, and looked for a roof over our heads. The dwelling consisted of a room that was 3 meters by 3 meters, and here, 20 people needed to live. Among others from Ger, Yaakov-Joseph was with us, along with his wife and three children. In a nearby room, Sarah Groinims lived with her son and daughter-in-law.

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It was quiet in the Sabin Ghetto. I was able to go into and out of the ghetto without difficulty. I would go to Christians, who were acquaintances of my father, they would give me work, and for a few *groschen*, we were able to buy food, and in this way we slaved on. However, each day, we lived in fear of the possibility that the Nazis would assault the ghetto and kill us out, or send the Jewish populace to its death. The danger that each day augured, finally came much earlier than we had expected:

On the midday of a Saturday, my father took me along to a village, in order to look for food at peasants he knew. This was in the Spring of 1942. When we went into Tatan's house, a peasant whom we knew, we heard that he had received an order to present his horse and wagon at the Sabin Ghetto. This was the signal of dark news, meaning that after today, the ghetto would be assaulted. Then, we no longer returned to 'our home.' as we had thought to do, rather, a day later, with the hope, that perhaps someone from our family had hidden himself and was thus saved. To our great sorrow, we found no one at this point. This was the last day of our beloved mother, sister, of our grandpa David, and grandma Sarah-Liebeh, and many more people from Ger. As we later heard, my sister Elkeh died on the train car, immediately after she was tossed into it.

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60 This appears to be on the east bank of the Vistula, connecting Glinki and Kępa Nadbrzeska

For us, the ones who remained alive, it was very bitter, we envied the dead. There was no place to hide. We wandered around like people who had fainted, and we were chased and hounded from one place to another. The gendarmes circulated on all the roads, and wherever they encountered a Jew, they shot him on the spot. With us, at the time, was also my uncle, Moshe-Joseph Kelmanowicz. One time, when we were being pursued, we scattered in different directions. A gendarme shot at me, and out of fright, I fell onto the snow, and the murderer thought I was dead already. This occurred on the left side of the Vistula, near Kazimierz[61]. I no longer saw my father and uncle, and I was certain that the Nazi bandits had shot them. But it happened this way: in the tumult, my father ran into a Christian, who hid him. Later on, he worked there. He was certain that the Nazis had shot me, and he mourned me.

I picked myself up from the snow, where I lay, looked around, [and saw that] the gendarmes were no longer there, and I saw no one, and so I ran and went this way for an entire day, hungry and thirsty, frozen and all alone. Night began to fall. I did not know where I was going, or where I was. Night covered my head like a black kerchief. I was very tired, and spent from hunger.

Suddenly, I saw small flames in small windows, a sign that there is a village. However, I was afraid of going towards it, and even more – to enter a hut, because in most of these small dwellings, the *Gestapo* staff lived, and they knew that every straying child was Jewish, and without compunction, shot them.

A dark night, a sky covered in fog. The snow whips the face, and the wind cuts through to the bone. I leave the village, and go back out onto the fields... I feel that it is no longer possible for me to keep going this way, and am totally spent, and so I sat down on a stone, and immediately fell asleep. When I awoke from my sleep, it was daylight already, I turned around and saw that I was in a cemetery, and the place I lay down, was a small depression between two graves.

Stunned, I looked around: where am I? I don't even see a living bird. What am I then to do now? I look around and want to see if I can recognize this village as a place familiar to me – this was the village of Ostrowiec[62], and I have never been there. What should I do?

Suddenly, a peasant came into view. He looks at me with wonder, and asks me: 'What are you doing here among tombstones?' I remained frozen like a stone, and could not answer, out of fear, for concern that he would turn me over to the gendarmes. But suddenly, I cry out: '*Ja jestet Żydowska*!' and I burst into tears...

The peasant opened his mild eyes, and he said: 'Don't be frightened child, there is a Jew in our village, whom we are hiding, and I will lead you to him.'

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61 Possibly Kazimierz Dolny (meaning Lower Kazimierz) on today's map of Poland, which itself is on the RIGHT side of the Vistula, about 55 miles from Ger.

62 There are two distinct places, abut a mile apart, one called Ostrówik, and the other Ostrówek. It is unclear which is being referred to here.

I stand between the two tombstones where my bed for the night was, and I think: shall I go, or flee? But I have no other way out, so I go together with the peasant, and soon, I espy the Jew from a distance, and the face is familiar to me, and after a few numbered minutes – it appears that I have come to someone I know – and a wild shriek comes out of my mouth: – Uncle Moshe-Joseph, you are alive?!

–You are alive, Rivk'eleh?! – and with weeping, he embraced me.

The peasant stood at a distance, and using his sleeve, he wiped his eyes...

The Liquidation of the Otwock Ghetto

Joseph Helfgott
The United States

When the war broke out – on the eve of the High Holy Days of the year 1939 – the mood of the Jewish populace of Ger darkened. A stormy night shut us in, and from every corner, death lay in ambush for us, with piercing eyes. All the Jews hid themselves behind fastened doors and gates. But for how many days is it possible to lie in cellars and up in attics?

When the Swastika descended upon Ger, and the Nazis began seizing, beating and shooting Jews, we immediately saw that our severest forecasts were being realized, and even that which was thought to be unbelievable, becomes a terrifying reality. Jewish life became worthless, and that which happened today in our hometown, and happened yesterday in Warsaw, tomorrow will be repeated over again in other cities and towns. Polish Jewry was in danger.

Right from the first moment on, the Nazi showed the Pole that he does not mean him – just the Jew. Accordingly, the devout Catholic Poles held it to be a great good deed to show the *Gestapo* murderers, where the Jews were hiding themselves. They are responsible for the death of many Jews, for many assaults, pursuit and plunder. A couple of weeks later, the Nazi vandals selected out a group of Jews, and under the threat, to remind their families, they were ordered to create a '*Judenrat*' which will carry out the collection of 'contributions' and to provide Jews to do labor.

Hundreds of Jewish men were daily provided for labor, because those who hid themselves could not be certain for their lives. Under the watch of Nazi gendarmes, and under a hail of beating and jeering, they were forced to carry out the most difficult and filthiest tasks. On one occasion, I was murderously beaten, in a moment when I, along with others, loaded plundered goods in freight trucks, which were destined to take this plunder to Germany. The staves that fell on my head and back were administered because I could not lift up the heavily loaded box with iron-made railroad material in them.

Jewish life and Jewish possessions became worthless from the first moment as soon as the Germans entered the city. At first – they did not touch the private assets of the Poles. By contrast, the assets

of the government institutions, as from the railroads, and a variety of ministries, they immediately began to send back to Germany.

On one occasion, a Nazi officer approached me and asked:

– Where does the *Rebbe* of Ger live, the 'Wonder Man?'

– I do not know – I answered.

He looked at me angrily, and warning me with his finger he said: 'I will make you talk.' He ordered that I be taken into a nearby room, and locked the door behind me. In a short time, a pair of Gestapo men entered the room, and began to assault me with the question: 'Where can the *Rebbe* be found?' Each time the question was asked, it was accompanied by a blow from a leather truncheon to the head, face, and the entire body. And when I stubbornly continued to say, that I do not know, I was injected with an anesthetic, and when I sunk into a deep sleep, the Nazi woke me up with blows to the head, to say where is the *Rebbe*? – I do not know! – I screamed half awake, and I would again sink into sleep. But as soon as I was fast asleep, he would again wake me up with beating. My torturers switched with each other, and I was abused this way for several days. I did not know when it was day or night, but I do know that it lasted an unendingly long time, day and nights...

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I knew quite well, as did many Jews in Ger, that the *Rebbe* and his entire family had gone away to Warsaw. Before the outbreak of the war, nobody made a secret of this – but in front of the Nazis, this has to remain a secret, I thought to myself, they could even kill me. And I had one answer for all questions: –I do not know... and when they finally came to the conclusion, that they were not going to get any other answer from me, beaten and wounded, I was let free. On the street, I stood like one who was disoriented, and did not know where to go. A longer time went by, until I oriented myself as to where I was. I got myself together, with the thought of setting out on the way home.

The first transports to Germany carried away the assets of the Polish rail system. Various parts of accessories, furnishings and even rail segments went off in the first days. As it appears, the war machine demanded this kind of materiel. After this, the mass-plunder of the Jewish populace began. Individual assaults on the life and wealth of the Jewish community began from the first moment; but the mass-plunder came later. The Nazis went from one storehouse to the next, from one work place to the next, and took away everything that they encountered. They left behind empty shelves, and bare walls. In this 'endeavor,' they had the help of the Polish underworld, which oriented them, and accompanied them.

Jews were forced to carry these plundered goods on their backs, taking them to the barracks and warehouses, where the plunder was sorted, packed into boxes, and carried to the train station. The boxes were carried by the Jews who were provided to do so, or those who were seized to do this work. At the station, everything was loaded on the train cars, which went to Germany.

But it was not only the Nazis who mockingly abused the Jewish populace, but also the Poles, and especially those from the lower classes, like parasites, or those who simply knew the texture of Jewish life from the inside. They joined in solidarity with the Nazis in the war against the Jews, and for a small bit of plunder, that was thrown to them, they informed and hounded, and not once led to even the greatest of calamities.

Under Nazi rule in Ger, the Jewish populace suffered from hunger, lived in permanent fear, burdened with hard labor, along with bad nutrition, and a dearth of medical help, such that the death rate was exceptionally high among the Jews. This was in the year 1940, and I thought that perhaps it might be better elsewhere. I confided my plan to a Pole that I knew, and whom I trusted. I paid him whatever he demanded, and he took me over to the Ghetto in Otwock. Arriving there, I immediately sensed that I left one Hell and entered a second one.

Before I came to the Otwock Ghetto, I experienced something that I will never forget. When we – I and my family members – rode into the city, the Pole was frightened by the Nazi gendarmerie – because if he was caught, he would be sentenced to death – and he forced us to get down from the wagon, and he fled. We were left standing on the marketplace [square] in the middle of the night. The freezing literally burned, and only the faraway stars saw our pain. What should we do? We needed to get away from the marketplace as quickly as possible. The night watch could arrive. But where should we go? Who is to know whether an enemy or a friend goes there? There is no time to think leisurely about this. I went over to a window, and knocked on it, and asked to be admitted... To our great good fortune, this was a Jewish house, in which good Jewish people lived. They opened up and admitted us, let us get warm, and exhibited a deep friendship to us, as if to their own brethren.

We entered the Otwock Ghetto. But where does one get food? How is it possible to watch the suffering of hungry children? I decided to risk my life, and go to a neighboring village, to see if I could procure at least a few potatoes. I went through side roads, sticking close to the small wooded areas, and in a small village, I managed to bargain for several scrawny potatoes from a peasant. The way back proved more difficult for me. In the distance, a couple of times, I espied Nazis riding past, and so I went down off the road, and hid myself under a small tree. However when I brought these few potatoes back home, the joy was extraordinary. We set about to cook the potatoes in a large pot with water, and threw some grass in, to make the 'soup' somewhat thicker. We ate this delicacy with great appetite, as if it were not possible to have anything better.

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On one occasion, I took my older daughter along with me on my 'potato-run.' Together – I thought – we will be able to bring back more stuff, and from this, also be able to give something to our friends, those dear Jews, who gave us shelter in their home, and thereby placed themselves in great danger. On the way, we were encountered by a Pole, who collaborated with the Nazis, and he would turn over every Jew [he encountered] into their hands. He wanted to arrest us, and take us to the nearest police station, but when I offered resistance, he began to shout: '*żydzy! żydzy!* 'My daughter burst into tears. I lost no time, it was a terrifying moment of either death or fleeing, and so I gave him

a blow to the head with all my strength and we fled. Having run a distance, I looked back, and the peasant was still lying on the ground...

Several days later, I, once again, left the village in search of food. I would not have done this just for myself, I would have quietly expired in my corner, death not being so frightening as the dangers that presented themselves to me on the road. However, how can one watch the sorrow of hungering children? So I went off to the village. Along the way, I encountered Jewish police, who had received an order with a Warning, to procure and provide three hundred Jews for the concentration camp at Treblinka. No matter how much I begged them to let me go, it did not help. They argued that they could not do this, they must provide three hundred Jews 'for labor' in Treblinka, and they are responsible to do so, on the condition of their own lives. So I begged them to let me go home, to take leave of my wife and children. They did not refuse this plea, and wrote down my address and let me go.

When I told my wife, she became more dead than alive. We had already heard [what went on] from Treblinka, and she understood the danger that awaited me. So we decided, she should immediately vacate the house, and to instruct the children to say that they had no mother, and if they should take away their father, they re being left without oversight. My wife went out, and shortly thereafter, the commandant of the Jewish police arrived. He listened to the plaints of the weeping children, and let me go. In this way, I was saved from Treblinka, and can now freely write about all of these terrifying experiences.

And this is the way we suffered until the year 1942. During this time, thousands of Jews died from hunger in the Otwock Ghetto. I saw this with my own eyes. The corpses would be loaded on small wagons: fathers, mothers and children, and bury them in mass graves.

The situation became all the more difficult and unbearable. Every day brought new decrees, and demands, and the hunger did not let up in taking its victims, and those who could manage to stay on their feet, looked like the living dead. Until one accursèd early morning, the ghetto was surrounded by bands of S.S., together with Lithuanian and Ukrainian Fascists, who forced all Jews to leave their houses, and when they were all out, they were driven from street-to-street, and in this manner brought to the train station, where prepared freight cars stood waiting for them, with open doors, like the mouths of serpents, into which they were crammed, forced with sticks, knives and guns.

We were driven hungry, beaten, downtrodden, exhausted, this way with staves, being cursed, also with bullets, shoved into the open cars, immediately shut, and the doors sealed. Many fell in the death march through the streets, and beside the station. Behind us, we heard gunfire in the city, indicating that they were shooting those who had managed to hide themselves.

Those very few, who by a miracle remained alive, will never forget that bloody Wednesday of Otwock.

The Death March to the Gas Chambers

By Rivka Koenigstein
Buenos Aires

A. The Expulsion from Ger to Warsaw

Our death march began on one accursèd morning when the Germans issued an order, that all the Jews of Ger should leave their houses, and gather on the plaza in front of the Magistrate. Each person is permitted to take along a small package for necessities. And even before the designated hour, German soldiers, with arms in their hands, went from house to house, and used the butts of their rifles, and *nagaikas*[63], to drive the Jews to the gathering place – '*Juden, marsch!*' – they screamed, beating women, children and the elderly.

At the Magistrate, soldiers were waiting for us with dogs, and we were driven on further. Women with weeping children in their arms, men loaded down with packages, while helping the elderly and the sick, marched along the muddy road, under the threatening shouts of the soldiers: – *Marsch! Marsch!* And under the baying of the dogs: – *Rowf! Rowf!*

We bathed the road to the *koleika* in Jewish blood, and Jewish tears. Several times I heard a scream, and someone fell. At the station, a long row of small train cars waited for us, and they began to drive us into them. Once again we were driven with rifle butts and *nagaikas*, and into each car, a dense mass of people were packed, who were forced to stand, because there was no place to sit, not even on the ground. And this was the way we rode for two days and two nights, without food or drink. We were not allowed out of the cages to look for water, and the ride, which under normal circumstances would have taken two hours, lasted over the course of two days, because we were halted for more time than we moved.

Not everyone arrived in Warsaw alive. We also had our first victims from our death march. I heard weeping and heartrending cries, and the dead were taken away to somewhere. The living were driven into a large bathing area, and everyone was ordered to strip naked. It was a cold and wet day, and whoever kept on something of a garment to protect themselves from the cold, or cover their nakedness, had such a garment torn off by the soldiers, the same with men as with women. Everyone was also ordered to leave behind their packages. But when we came out of the bath, we no longer found our packages...

The following episode of the death-march took place on unfamiliar Warsaw streets. Exhausted, we were going along, frozen and hungry, under the watch of two-legged and four-legged beasts. Death stalked us on all sides, and the further we went, the weaker became the hope of rescue. We were brought to an old, run-down synagogue and to a *Bet HaMedrash*, and were told that tomorrow we would be given food ration cards. Half dead, we fell down on the benches and the floor, some falling

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63 Riding crops usually favored by mounted Cossack cavalry.

into a restless sleep, others who looked out for themselves with frozen stares, and yet others who cried helplessly.

On the morrow, food ration cards were distributed, but no food. And the portions that we later received, were not enough to sustain life, only to die. And death took up residence among us, that severe death that comes from hunger, which, every day, took away people. First the elderly and children died, and after that people of middle age began to die. Death was terrifying, but the death of a child is doubly terrifying, who is expiring with the wail: – Mama, food!...

B. In Limbo Awaiting Fate

We were a family of nine people. My father, the Jewish barber, had died before the war. '*Yiddisher Sherer*,' he was called, because he was the barber of the *Hasidim* and observant Jews, who wore beards and side locks. He, personally, was an observant Jew, and a Ger *Hasid*. He was the *Rebbe's* barber for twenty years. My father ע"ה, died shortly before the war. My mother, three sisters, and three brothers died of hunger, or had been tortured somewhere on the death marches. I am the only one of my family to have remained alive.

In our home, we had a blade-sharpening machine, and when a great deal of work would come in, I would help out my mother and sisters. When I was asked, in Warsaw, as to whether I was skilled at a craft, I indicated that I knew how to operate a blade-sharpening machine. On a certain day, I, along with another couple of girls from our group, were called to work. A couple of quarters over from our camp in the old synagogue, there was a long working table, which was once a storage facility for merchandise; there, the Germans made a fabrication works for military clothing, in which hundreds of workers were employed, men and women. The works were run by *Volksdeutsche*, who were also employed in a variety of the sections of the undertaking, but the oversight for maintaining order was held by S.S. troops, who, with revolvers at their side, and straps in their hands, walk about among the machines, and keep an eye on all of the workers.

The *Volksdeutsche* worked in one shift, eight hours, and the largest part of them, only during the day; we worked two shifts, [one] by day, [and another] by night, sixteen hours daily, with small breaks to eat from filthy plates of soup, with a bit of bread, or a couple of potatoes. I often had to struggle a great deal not to fall asleep at the machine, and I would keep my eyes open with the last of my strength. This didn't always work for me. Often, sleep would simply overcome me, and with a start, I would pry open my eyes, out of fright of being whipped by a Nazi with a strap, who walked around, in a sprightly fashion, among these human ghosts, who had deathly-white complexions and red eyes. When I would return from work to my straw sack bed on the floor, I would fall down on the sleeping space, and immediately sink into sleep. I didn't even have the strength to eat the small piece of bread I had saved up. But being eighteen, nineteen years old, I could withstand everything. Other, older people than I did not hold out, and people dropped like flies...

One time, while going to work, I saw Germans with rifles and revolvers in their hands, driving a host of Jews. A few elderly people, women and children, were being conveyed in small coaches. I looked

on at this, frozen in place out of fear. The thought burned me like a lightning bolt: they are being taken to the rendezvous point, from which they go to Treblinka...suddenly, among the host of people, I espied my younger sister. Somehow, without my voice, I gave a scream: – Chana-Leah! – and set off running toward her. She raised her hand, as if to stop me, and called out: – Flee, Rivka! Save Yourself! Run away!... Her words and her voice still reverberate in my ears to this day.

By that time we know, that the rendezvous point is the last station of the death march, that leads to Treblinka. Either that, or one is sent by freight cars even before one comes to the gas chambers. I remained standing, broken with pain, and something of an older man gave me a tug by the hand, and led me up onto the sidewalk where people were standing. – My sister, her deathly pale face and confused cry: 'Rivka, Run Away!' I will never forget...

C. Condemned to Poniatowa, then Biala-Podliask

A short time afterwards, soldiers surrounded the factory, and advised that the personnel, together with all of the facilities and machines, was being transferred to Poniatowa. We were not permitted to go and say farewell to our families, and began to pack and lay things out onto freight trucks, which came immediately. They came back empty, and took along the workers, and thus began a new and more difficult chapter in the death-march to Treblinka, from which I was saved by a miracle.

Torn away from the family, I longed for them intensely, and was greatly concerned about their fate. I would cry often, even in my sleep, the tears flowing from my eyes like a pool. Not only once did I wish death on myself, but I would immediately drive the thought out with these words which I heard from an elderly tailor in the factory. He would always say: 'I shall not die, but live' – it is necessary to live in order to spite the Germans....

I was in Poniatowa for barely a year. There was a concentration camp there, in which there were thirteen thousand Jews[64]. On one morning, an alarm was sounded to get up earlier than usual, and

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[64]The forced labor camp in Poniatowa was located 30 km west of Lublin.

Shortly before 1939 the Polish authorities started to build an equipment factory in Poniatowa for the Polish army signal service. The settlement for the factory staff (21 blocks) and the first industrial buildings were built in the forest close to the village of Poniatowa. A narrow-gauge railway was also built which connected Poniatowa with Opole Lubelskie and the main railway station in Naleczow. The outbreak of the war prevented the factory from being opened. The German *Wehrmacht* used the buildings as an army base up until 1941.

In September 1941 the Nazis decided to use these buildings as a camp for 25,000 Soviet POWs. The factory was surrounded by barbed wire and 16 watch towers. It became Stalag 359 (Stalag = *Stammlager*). The transports of Soviet POWs arrived at Naleczow railway station from where the Soviet soldiers had to walk to Poniatowa. They were maltreated on the way to the camp and many died. Between September and December 1941 almost 24,000 Soviet POWs were deported to Poniatowa.

everyone was driven out into the yard. This aroused a suspicion, as to why soldiers, afterwards, went into the barracks, searched under the bunks, and searched to make sure that no one remained behind.[65] Trembling, the people looked on dumbly, and suspected that something was being planned against us. They began to count the gathered mass, and making a selection sending some to the right, some to the left. A small group was set apart, among them the younger workers from the tailoring factory, and they were driven to the train station, and from there, we were led off to Biala-Podliask. All the other inmates remained behind, and what became of them remained unknown to us for a longer time. One time, a group of *Volksdeutsche* came from the Biala-Podliask camp, and they confided in us, that the thirteen thousand Jews from Poniatowa, were shot on that accursèd day with fire from mortars, and afterwards, the dead bodies were thrown into pits, doused in gasoline, and burned. Among them were many who were just wounded, who were still alive, and living people, who had not been wounded, and their screams, said the *Volksdeutsche*, 'cast a terror over them ...' in every terrifying execution of those people who had been starved into a skeletal state to hear death, from hunger and the torture of people, there were Jews from Ger, one of them – Mendl.

I was in Biala-Podliask for about a month's time, and from there, we were transported to Kahel[66], a death-camp near Lublin. It was there that I saw the highest form of creativity from the German spirit and modern culture, the *Gehenna*-apparatus of mass-murder: the gas ovens, that worked day and night, filling the air with a stinking odor of burning flesh...

In October 1942 Amon Göth, (later the commandant of the Plaszow forced labor camp in Krakow came to Poniatowa and started to organize a work camp for Jewish prisoners. The establishment of the Jewish work camp was a part of *Aktion Reinhard* and in correspondence with Heinrich Himmler's special order about using able-bodied Jews for war production. Göth decided that the Poniatowa camp should be able to absorb around 9,000 Jewish prisoners.

65 The camp in Poniatowa was liquidated on 4 November 1943, during the *Aktion Erntefest* ("Action Harvest Festival").

Several days before their mass execution the prisoners had to dig their own mass graves. Some ditches were dug inside the camp, in front of the camp administration building, others outside the camp, three miles from Wronow Street. The prisoners were informed that they had to build air-raid shelters (*Splittergräben*). At 5 a.m. on 4 November 1943, all prisoners were assembled in a roll call. They were ordered to a large shop. All of them were crammed into that building. From time to time the SS got groups of 50 Jews out of the shop. In the open air they had to take off their shoes and put their valuables into baskets. In a nearby barrack they were ordered to undress, then led to the ditches. The victims had to lie down on the bottom of the ditch, faces downwards. Then they were shot. During the executions music was played from loudspeaker vehicles to cover the screams and shots.

66 Possibly a shorthand for the village of Kalinowka *beside* Lublin, used along with others to create the infamous Majdanek death camp.

D. From Kahel to Oswiecim

I was in Kahel for two months time, and from there, began a new episode of the death march: to Oswiecim. We went for six weeks, day and night, a host of the living dead, starved out, skin and bones, with wildly staring red eyes. Dressed in rags, sacks, and striped clothing, it looked like a procession of wraiths. The peasants, in the settlements that we passed by, would close themselves up in their houses and keep themselves closeted behind closed doors. A few among them would mock us, and hurl verbal barbs at us, others would make the sign of the cross on themselves and retreat. Ahead of, and behind the procession, armed soldiers went, and along the sides were S.S. troops with dogs. Whoever stopped, would be assaulted by a dog sicced on them, and if he did not immediately go forward, he was shot. Whoever began to waver from exhaustion, and could not maintain the cadence – met the same fate. The two-legged dogs would observe the movement, and when someone was covered in a death-anxiety, and would break out in a cold sweat, a German would go over to him and say: 'You are tired, I will help you!' .. And shoot a bullet into him...

The closer we got to our 'goal,' the thinner our ranks became. Many fell along the way to the death camp. And thereby avoided the painful journey associated with this superhuman suffering, which, in the end, led to the gas ovens. I was in Oswiecim for eight months. – How did I manage to survive? – I do not ask this question only once. – I managed to survive by drawing strength from two things: with the strength that comes from being young, and with the saying of the old tailor in Warsaw, who always intoned: 'I shall not die, but live' – it is necessary to live in order to spite the Germans.

We 'worked' in Oswiecim. We were ordered to work, not to accomplish anything, but just to torture us, in order to drive us to the gas ovens, which waited for us with open fiery maws. We were ordered to carry rocks from one place to another, and then back again, back and forth; either that, or to dig pits and fill them, digging and filling.

Every Sunday; that means in honor of the holiday of the Christian God, who preached love of all mankind, there was a '*selektion*.' They would pick out those whom they would grant the privilege of going on living, and those who would already be sent to the gas ovens. Everyone had to strip down bare naked, men and women, and if anyone had so much as a mark on their skin, went to the crematoria. The twelve ovens, with high smokestacks, that belched smoke day and night, waited for them, with open mouths.

I was already standing with a towel in hand, and with anxiety, looked at the people who were driven with truncheons and straps, into the further rooms, where the stews were to be found. At the door, an S.S. man stood with a rifle. Like a lightning bolt, the thought ran through my mind: it is necessary to flee! I fell by the soldier and begged: Let me flee! He looked at me with sympathy, and quietly said: – Little girl, if I let you escape, they will shoot me. I covered myself in tears, and wringing my hands, I did not stop begging: – Let me, let me, I don't want to die!... Unexpectedly, the German moved away at a little distance, and, like a cat, I leapt and set out running. – He will shoot, I thought, but he did not shoot. I ran, ran even further, from the gas chamber.

E. Fleeing Oswiecim into the Night

It was a dark night, and I wrapped the towel around my naked body, and ran. – I have nothing to lose, I thought, back there, I would already be dead. Somewhere, I heard the echo of shots in the distance, which brought me back to my senses. I lay down on the ground, and began to look around. I was behind the gas ovens, and in the distance, I saw a lazaret, to which the inmates had no access. I will head there, I decided, but I need to be careful. And crawling on all fours, I headed in the direction of the hospital, where there were Russians, Poles, and people of other nationalities, just no Jews. In the first place, Jews were not given any medical attention;a Jew that fell ill, was sent to the gas ovens.

Crawling, I entered something of a room in the hospital, and pushed myself into a corner. I lay like this for a longer time, until an older woman, with gray hair, went by, at which point I stood, and in a crying voice said: – save me, say... the woman became frightened, pulled herself back, and began to look around. There was nobody about, and so she came up to me and asked: 'Ты евейка?' – Yes, I am Jewish, I said, and I stretched out my hands to her in tense anticipation and hope.

She put a finger to her mouth. Indicating that I should be silent, and made a sign for me to follow her. I followed between a row of beds on which people were sleeping, and she pointed out to me, that I should lie underneath her bed, which stood in a corner of the room. She brought me a piece of bread, and a couple of rags to cover myself. In the morning, she bent down and said to me: – when you leave the block, turn to the left. And follow the path that is covered with gravel. A hundred steps from here there is a bureau, and a red-headed woman is sitting there. Go up to her, and tell her to send you to work. I will follow you at a distance, so that nothing bad will happen to you... and I did so. The woman looked at me dumbly, and after a moment's thought, said: Go there, she pointed out of the window with her finger: there is the laundry, and tell them I have sent you to do work.

I worked there for not more than a couple of weeks. On one morning, the bell rang, and everyone was ordered to fall out into rows. The people were counted, and something was written down, and afterwards, were asked to pass by a table, that stood outside, at which an S.S. man was sitting, and who stamped everyone on their arm with a number, which I still bear today as a mark of those bitter times. Each person received a small packet of clothing, and a – loaf of bread... I hadn't seen such in a long time, and I simply did not believe my eyes. A loaf of bread; a real loaf of bread! The majority of those there were not Jews; but as it appears, they also suffered from hunger. I saw how a woman pressed the bread loaf to her heart. And how another, with trembling hands, wrapped it in a kerchief.

We were again stood in rows, and led to the train, but without the escort of the four-footed dogs, and also without being beaten, and shouts. – We are being led – a soldier called out, to a factory for work. Despite this, an uneasiness dominated my feelings, and with a tightening in my heart, I thought, this could be a new death factory. But the bread proved to be comforting, as a sign of good things, and I began to pick off pieces to quiet my hunger. Who knows whether I will still be alive in an hour? At least let me die sated...

F. From Magdeburg into the Forest

This time, we were not lead to death, but really to work in an ammunition factory in Magdeburg. I worked for eight months, until that great day arrived, when allied aircraft appeared over German skies. They began to bombard the factory and also the city, and I watched with great glee how frightened and confused yesterday's arrogant heroes were.
On one morning, the alarm bell began to sound stormily, and everyone leaped up from sleep and went running out into the yard. The inmates quickly arrayed themselves into rows, and soldiers, with rifles in their hands already stood waiting for them, with grenades stuck in their belts. I gathered, from the nervous behavior of the people, that they were getting ready to violate something, and I put my life in danger, by running over to a row where Felia was standing, a Jewish girl, with whom I had become friends. A German had already grabbed his revolver, and looked at me sharply with his eyes. But at that exact moment, a command was heard: *Marsch!* And the rows moved. We were taken out to a free field, far behind the city, and told to sit. – *Sich zetzen!*' – the soldiers thundered. And when everyone had sat themselves on the ground, they began to toss grenades like hail, onto the seated people... – Felia, let us flee! – I gave a shout, not even with my voice, and we both set off running with the last of our strength. They shot after us, and bullets fell near us. But did not hit us...

A nascent forest which was not far away, gave us cover. But we still ran, until our strength gave out, and we hid ourselves in a ditch. When he had just begun to recover slightly, we threw off the striped clothing, and Felia, who was wrapped in a thin blanket over her back, and was a seamstress by trade, who always had a small purse with needle thread around her neck, fashioned two pieces of clothing for us out of the blanket. We obtained a human appearance from this. But with our shaven heads, we could not long remain free in this Nazi-land, and we were not able to remain in this small forest for long.

G. From a Labor Camp to Bergen-Belsen

I went off to seek work in a labor camp, or a factory, which became visible in the distance. I slid along the walls, and in this way, got close to the kitchen, where a woman of pure 'Aryan' appearance was occupying herself beside an oven. I wanted to draw back already, but it was too late. She saw me, and motioned with her finger that I should enter. I entered. At that moment, a soldier went by, and she quickly stood herself in front of me, and I sensed that the woman was not going to do me any harm. – What do you want? – she asked me. – Work – I said, in a hushed voice. – good. – she replied – You will work with me in the kitchen.

This was a labor camp by a factory, and the woman was German, Only 'Aryans' of various nationalities worked there, and on one occasion, a Ukrainian woman, who sensed my ethnicity, said to the cook, pointing at me with her finger: – Frau Lena, she is Jewish!... Lena became upset, and pointing a warning finger at her she said: – Shut up, you bitch, hold your mouth!...

I would dole out the portions of food to the workers at the small window of the kitchen. Each one received a ladle of soup. One of the workers appeared to me to be a Jew, so I poured a ladle and a

little more into his tin container, and added a small bone. In gratitude, he looked at me with a smile, and we became friends. And I was not fooled, he was, indeed a Jew, and after the liberation, we were married in accordance with the Laws of Moses and Israel.

But the liberation was still far distant, and my wanderings through the death factories of Nazism was not yet ended. It was my fate to yet taste the poison of death of Bergen-Belsen. The name alone: Bergen-Belsen! Instilled a terror in people. The inmates of the camps knew the names of many death factories, because not only one of them had survived the long journey of transfer from one camp to the next, while awaiting the Final Solution...

And so it was, that early on one cold wintry morning, the alarm bell rang, and in a few short minutes afterwards, the wraiths clothed in striped clothing stood outside in rows, with faces marked by exhaustion, and vacantly staring eyes. Freight trucks were already arrayed in a long row, and without eating, without drinking, we were ordered: '*Einsteigen!*'

The caravan of freight trucks escorted by armed military troops, in front and in back, set out along the muddy road, in an unfamiliar direction. We rode this way for the entire morning, going through unfamiliar villages and towns, and in the end, we rode into a forest, seeing the characteristic barbed-wire fence of a concentration camp, behind which were long barracks, and in the distance, a tall smokestack from which plumes of black smoke curled upwards.

Bergen-Belsen! – someone called out, and everyone was seized by a shudder. – '*Aussteigen!*' – we heard the command, and immediately everyone descended from the freight trucks, and arrayed themselves in rows on the yard, and one person closed the iron gate behind us...

But Bergen-Belsen got an undeserved bad name. This was, after all, the tip of the Jewish 'propaganda of suffering.' In Bergen-Belsen, no Jews were beaten, not burned alive, not even poisoned with gases. There were not even any gas chambers there! Bergen-Belsen was a model of Christian love of humanity. Nobody did anything bad to anyone. The only thing is that they were not given anything to eat. Perhaps one out of two, three days, a bit of filthy soup was given, occasionally a bit of bread, but this was not enough, and people slowly, and over a long period of time went through the process of dying...

The rest was done by the crematoria, which sooner or later, did not pass up anyone. The plumes of smoke bore witness that they were working, at full blast, day and night.

I do not know how long I was there. I lost track of time, but I do know, that it was a short while before the German downfall. We sensed that something was happening, and the heart told that the Stewards of Hell were in trouble. One day, they were especially nervous, and ran around like mice. We were driven into the barracks early, and in the morning, a quite pleasant surprise awaited us.

H. Liberated by the Russians

Made to fall out into rows, as usual, and after being counted, the *Gruppenführer* declared, that for 'good performance,' each person would receive a fresh loaf of bread... and immediately, everyone was given a round, fresh small loaf of bread. At that moment, the tall silhouette of the camp doctor appeared, whom we very rarely saw, because he only serviced the military personnel, but not their victims. In an S.S. uniform, with an insignia of his high rank, he made an imposing impression. With a finger, he called an inmate over. And looking him in the eye severely, he said: – You should not eat the bread! The bread is poisoned! Tell this to your comrades!' ... This traveled from mouth to mouth like a bolt of lightning: –'The bread is poisoned, don't eat it!...'

It was in this fashion, that the Germans wanted to liquidate us all at once, before the entry of the Russians. Suddenly, they appeared in the city, as if they had fallen from heaven. And when a detachment of Russian soldiers entered the camp, the Nazis had already vanished, leaving behind no trace of themselves. They hid in the houses of the surrounding Germans, took off their riding trousers, their shiny boots, hid their arms, and became 'peaceful' civilians...

After the liberation, as I previously mentioned, we got married, but we had no home. And it was therefore natural that at first, we thought to return to our '*alte haym*,' in Ger, where we had left our families and our modest possessions. Perhaps we will yet find someone? And perhaps we will be able to salvage something? – That is what we thought.

On our way, on Polish soil, we saw how Polish soldiers were throwing Jewish people off the trains, cut off their beards, and deeply regretted that the Nazis had left Jews behind who were still alive. We decided to leave this accursèd country, and with the help of Jewish institutions, which at that time were helping out refugees, and also the *landsleit*, we emigrated to Argentina.

The Beginning of the End of The Jewish *Shtetl*

By Henryk Prajs
Ger, Poland

The *shtetl* of Ger, or as it is called in Polish – Góra-Kalwaria, was founded exactly two hundred years ago, in the year 1773. The founder of that settlement was the Bishop of Poznan, Stefan Wierzbowski. He laid the foundation stone, and settles a small group of peasants there. In that time, there were a variety of religious orders in the Catholic Church, among which were the Dominicans from Marianow, which developed a very active program; they built cloisters and monasteries, and around them, they created small-scale peasant works, which they populated with the local poor populace.

The land was the property of the cloisters, and also, the peasants became the property of the landed gentry, as was the way it was instituted in the Poland and Russia of that time. Under this system of serfdom, the peasant turned over a large part of his harvest to the landed gentry, and also had to work

for a specific period of time for the noble, or the cloister. However, the activity of the Catholic orders caused the vicinity to become populated with settlements, and those areas that were closer to the capitol city became especially densely populated.

According to the old chronicles, which were archived in the municipal offices, Jews began to take up residence in Ger in the year 1800. In largest measure, these were craftsmen, and a certain amount of merchants, who serviced the local populace through their work, and also served to connect these newly-founded settlements with the larger [city] centers.

Between the two World Wars, the Jewish settlement reached its full flowering, most significantly as a spiritual center, which radiated its influence and impacted broad circles in Jewish life. The ADMo"R of Ger was the highest authority of religious Jewry in Poland, and during Festival Holidays, thousands of Jews would come together, from the farthest areas of the land, and outside the country, the *Hasidim* of the *Rebbe.* An entire industry was created in the *shtetl,* just to provide quarters for the masses of guests. The richer *Hasidim* would stay in the hotels, and the poorer created a wellspring of revenue for the less well-to-do families, who would rent out rooms and 'beds' for the guests, and for themselves would do what they could to 'get by.' Even the 'gentile' municipal administration derived income from the *Hasidim*, and would levy and collect a fee 'per capita' from every guest in the *shtetl.*



Page 313: *Moshe Skrzypek with a Group of Friends*

According to the official municipal figures, Ger had a population of seven thousand [7,000] people in the year 1939. Of them – a little less than half were Jewish, or more precisely, 3,300 souls. But seeing as there were always many Jews in Ger from other places, one encountered more Jews than non-Jews, and the Sabbath of the Jews was more manifestly felt than the non-Jewish Sunday.

Theoretically, the Jews were equivalent citizens of the city, as of the entire county, and they had the same rights to participate in the political life of the régime. However, everyone knows only too well, how this 'equality' looked in the real world. Accordingly, the Jews developed an intensive level of activity in the annals of their own Jewish life. There were a variety of groups among the Jews, and *Hasidim* formed congregations, served God, and carried out Commandments, and a few among them not only prayed three times daily, they also learned. And the young people didn't just loiter about empty-handed, but also partook in community-related endeavors. Early on they founded a *Volkshaus*, and afterwards transformed it into a library, and alongside the library, established a whole array of sections, which engaged in both spiritual and physical culture development, all of which brought in a new spirit into the *shtetl*.

The Drama Circle of Ger, the Sport Club, and together with them, and under them, the various political directions and tendencies, from the progressive [sic: left] to the '*Bund*' [sic: right] and Zionists, spread themselves over the entire surrounding vicinity.

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Page 315: Scions of Ger, returning from the forests and hiding places, brought their comrade, Itcheh Smoliaszh ע"ה *to his final resting place in the Jewish cemetery.*

And the black day arrived – or rather days and years – of that Great Calamity, when Poland was occupied by the Hitlerist Devil, that transformed the land into a Hell. Our home *shtetl* too, suffered

from this same fate which, with a special fury, unleashed itself on the Jewish populace. It overlooked no one. Regardless of who came first, or who was tortured later on, and it was only a pitiable few – literally to be counted on the fingers – who were fated to be saved in some miraculous fashion.

The first Jewish martyr was Pinia Ravsky – a prominent member of the *balebatim* of the city – whose sole 'sin' consisted in that he was a Jew. The second martyr was the young Jewish boy, Moshe Cebola, who was tortured at forced labor, and later shot.

But this was merely the beginning of the tragedy, and afterwards came orders and decrees of all sort, until the full-scale extermination and excision came. Among the first of the orders from the Hitlerian murderers that we noted, was that, all Jews of the city, between the ages of 15 and 60 years, have to 'voluntarily' present themselves for work. After that, came the decree, that no Jew may leave the city – and for not following these orders, a person was immediately shot. And right along with these orders – and often without any such order – everything that had any worth was taken away from Jews, in order that Jews not have any means from which to derive sustenance.

In the month of August 1940, the Jewish section was divided off and a ghetto was created. Jews were forbidden to cross over the boundary of the ghetto. In this way, the Jewish populace was isolated from the surrounding world, and the circumstances became much worse. Crammed in, as if in a prison, in the crowded confines of the ghetto, sundered from everything and everybody, it became impossible to arrange for the necessities of life. It was not possible to get a piece of bread, no potatoes, not a bit of milk for the children. Even those who had money, had no place where they could buy foodstuffs. As for those who risked their lives, and stole out to the gentile side, in order to trade for something to eat, not all returned. Every day, Jews were shot, who had been seized outside of the ghetto walls.

It was clear, that the Germans had sentenced to Jewish populace to death by starvation. And a variety of illnesses began to manifest themselves. Typhus spread mercilessly, and took victims every day. The first to succumb were the small children, old people, and others who were simply in weak condition. The diseases became more numerous, and the Angel of Death did not overlook any of the houses, because there was no medical help, because of the dearth of medicines. Also, the needed hygienic facilities were missing, and those that still managed to stay on their feet, became progressively weaker, because of the bad diet, the system of terror, and the hard labor, which they were compelled to do.



Page 317: *At a Jewish cemetery, survivors from Ger inter the remains, of Sh. Filberg ע"ה, who was shot by the German murderers on the second side of the Vistula.*

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Later, an order came from the Germans to throw together all the contents of the *Bet HaMedrash* of the city, and in its place to construct a municipal bath, using our own resources. Apart from this, the domicile situation worsened, and ten people were pressed together [to live] in one room, without the least hygienic conditions. A variety of contagious diseases spread, for which no medication was received, and in order to get something to eat, it was necessary to risk one's life, and to pay tenfold prices. People sold off their clothing, shirts, in order to obtain a piece of bread.

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And this is the way we 'lived' until the month of February 1941. In the first days of that month, an ukase came from the leader of the Ger municipal council, named Janek, to the effect that all of the Jews who find themselves in the city of Ger, large and small, women and men, old and young, without exception, have on the morrow, to concentrate themselves on the plaza by the municipal building. Every individual has the right to take along a small package in his hand, with everything else to be confiscated by the 'Third Reich.'

The frightening image of the expulsion from Ger still stands before my eyes, the wailing from small and large alike, the carrying of the old and the sick in one's hands, who could not move on their own power – it is a terrifying nightmare, which I will never be able to forget for my entire life.

As soon as the Jews had gathered themselves together at the designated hour on the spot by the municipal council building, the Germans fell upon them like a pack of crazed dogs, who tore at them, and abused them out of sheer pleasure. A circle was made around them, and by beating them, they were driven to the '*koleika*' where freight cars were already waiting – there, everyone was driven into them, and sealed the iron doors behind them.

These were the last two thousand Jews who were 'relocated' out of Ger, and were later tortured by all manner of bizarre methods. A limited number of them, perhaps several tens of young people were able to flee into the surrounding villages, and hide themselves there, to the extent that anyone could. But also, from among them, not all remained alive. Death stalked them along all ways, in an unfamiliar world of enmity, they were looked on with *schadenfreude*, and if they were not immediately informed upon, and turned over to the Germans, they were driven off with no care. There were exceptions to this, but very few.

The writer of these lines, is one of those very few in number, who by chance remained alive... there were a couple of fortunate incidents and a couple of good Poles, who did not have such antipathy to Jews, but rather out of hatred for the Germans, threw me a bit of bread, or allowed me to lodge for a night in a corner. I find it necessary to relate a small part of my terrifying experiences in the pages of this *Yizkor* Book.

A Jewish Child in the Nazi Hell

By Rivka Helfgott
Tel-Aviv

That which happened to me, certainly happened to many other Jewish children, whether from our city of Ger, or whether from hundred and thousands of Jewish cities and towns of other locations in onetime Poland and Eastern Europe, everywhere that the bloody Nazi boot set foot – where Jewish life was rendered worthless, and where every Jewish life was chased down and harassed, seeking not only to put it to death, but to torture it in the bloodiest and most brutal fashion.



Page 322: The Ger Butcher, Zlotagorsky, with the Star of David on His Arm in the Ger Ghetto

And it is precisely for this reason, that the matter was not only my own personal one, but something more general, that engulfed all Jewish children – and also elderly Jews without exception – despite that it is a fact that the Nazi murderers pursued Jewish children with a special sadistic lust, whom they could not utilize to do any sort of work, and therefore thought of them as being 'surplus,' who need to be exterminated. I was fortunate to be among those very few

Jewish children, that found a way to be saved, and I therefore hold it to be my responsibility to convey at least a part of that which occurred, that enabled me to remain alive.

I emphasize the word part, because to try and describe everything that I – a Jewish child of eleven years of age – lived through in my hiding place, and how I managed to live under the rule of the Germans, one needs to be a formidable writer, an artist – that which is not within my capability, and to which I do not pretend any sort of skill. I simply wish to convey, in a short and modest (and possibly in a childish) manner, how, in those terrifying times of Jewish need, under the cruel rule of the Nazis, was able to save myself – and perhaps by doing so, it was in order that I now be able to tell something about it, how it came to happen for me, that as if my a miracle, I got through this, which was not possible for millions of [other] Jewish children.

I wish to begin with the fact, as to how my uncle Moshe-Yoss'l and two other Jews worked at a location in the small village of Pietrowicz, near Otwock, and they were assaulted by a band of Poles – as it turns out, that knew them – who searched them, and took away every possession that they had, and later shot them.

Seeing this situation, and knowing where my father could presently be found, I tore out of the house, and began to flee, as far as I could, from the murderers. One of them shot at me as I ran, but because of the heavy snow that was falling, he didn't hit his mark, and I was able to get away.

I ran on further, and entered to where my father was with a wail, that he should flee as fast as he could. In five minutes after we fled, the band arrived to shoot him as well, but because of the good fortune, they didn't find him any longer. In this manner, I saved my father from a certain death.

After this, my father did not let go of me, and we proceeded further together; wherever we spent the day, we did not spend the night, but we held together, and together we shared that bitter fate, which had befallen us. The situation, however, worsened, after the death of uncle Moshe-Yoss'l. The Christians no longer let us into their houses, and life became exceedingly bad for me. Also, my father suffered a great deal, and I often heard him groaning, and even though he would hide it from me, so that I should not see, it was not only one time that I saw him weeping.

1. Out of Hiding and Sheltered by Sympathetic Christians

Being forced to go beg for something to eat, I approached the house of a Christian, and saw the tip of a rifle through the window. Gendarmes were sitting inside, consuming whiskey. Had I not seen the tip of the rifle through the window, I would have fallen into the maw of these animals.

In that terrifying time, after having lived through such fear and suffering, wandering hungry through villages, thirsty and frozen from the wintery cold, I was not more that eleven years of 'age.' On one occasion, a peasant came to me from the opposite direction, and asked, where I was going, and whom I was? I was then by myself, without my father. And so I answered him that I was Christian,

and my name is Regina Kucziszeska, and that I was born in Gorna-Szlonsk (there Christians were also being harassed, and their orphans 'blundered about' as I was doing). This Christian did not think to not believe me, and he asked if I wanted to go to a sister of his, who has need of a young girl like me to work in the field, to shepherd cattle, and to help in the '*Gorpodarska.*' I consented regarding that work, at least to be able to get a bit of bread and a place to lay down my head. I was not certain, however, if the peasant was telling the truth, and I did not believe him entirely.

I was afraid, that the peasant would turn me over to the gendarmes – and the latter would shoot me, because the gentiles would 'inform' in this way, on straying Jewish children along the roads. But I had no other choice, and I went with the gentile. And it was with the impression, that I am going into the arms of death, that I followed him. I did not know, that this was a decent peasant, who, as it turned out later, knew my father very well.

As said previously, I had no other choice, and I had no possibility of letting my father know. So I went along and the peasant brought me to the Many family, in the village of Czaplinek, not far from Ger. The woman received me in a friendly manner, and the fear of death rapidly vanished. She asked me, whether I could do some work, and my answer was that I can, and will do any sort of work, no matter what it might be. The Christian woman said to me, that I will have to work hard, being with her, because she has no servant, and also no daughter – and 'if you will be a good girl, you will be able to stay with me permanently...'

I was fortunate to have found such a good home. However, a deep pain cut deeply in my heart, because of this whole bizarre set of circumstances, and most of all because my father knew nothing of this, and would certainly conclude that I had been shot somewhere. I also had no possibility or outlook for how to let my father know where I could be found; I was also not sure that my father was still alive, because every hour, during which we didn't see one another, some misfortune could happen.

The Christian family was a small one, and consisted of parents, and their only son, who studied in Warsaw and from time-to-time – especially during vacations – came home.

2. Assuming a Christian Identity

I began to work, and to receive enough food to eat. The Christian woman related to me like a mother, and dressed me nicely, and for the first time after long months, I had the pleasure of putting on a pair of shoes on my bare and frozen feet. I came to quickly, and began to develop well, and very quickly obtained a quite different appearance. I was literally fortunate, that I had encountered such a warm and happy household. This house became a good home to me; the only thing that tortured me was the thought about my father.

But cold winds blew also time-to-time, in this warm gentile; winds that stabbed me as if with sharp knives; stabbed me in my Jewish heart with their anti-Semitic expressions. Especially in those days when their young son would come home from the gymnasium in Warsaw, and with glee would retell

about the extermination of Jews. In telling about what ways were used to kill the Jews, they would quake with pleasure, laugh, and derive much pleasure. – 'That is because – the woman would say – they do not recognize Jesus, our God.' With in me, my heart would become congealed from pain, and I needed to force myself not to burst out crying.

And in order that no suspicion fall on me, I had to sit and keep silent, 'showing sympathy,' and even 'laugh along.' Did I then have any other choice? I saw the end of many other Jewish children, and I had to play the role of a good little gentile girl, and I did so, with a concealed pain in my heart. I would see that immediately after a 'blundering Jewish soul' would come into the village, there was always to be found those, who were prepared to let the murderers know about it, and immediately and end was made of such a person, boy or girl.

My 'Aryan' appearance saved me many times from death. But I had severe difficulties with the fact that I was not acquainted with Christian customs and laws. And so it was, in the first of the time, when I found myself in my new Christian 'home,' I was directed in the mornings to kneel before their God, and recite the '*Pacierz*[67],' and with a great trembling in the heart, I had to tell them that I cannot recite this prayer by myself, and so the Polish woman wondered strongly: 'How is it that a little Christian girl does not know how to recite the '*Pacierz*?' And I would stand there, with tears in my eyes, thinking that I was already done for...

However, a thought occurred to me, that I should tell them that my mother was a religious Christian, but my father was a communist – and he did not want his children to recite any sort of prayer – and this was the way I was raised in my home. At the same time, I asked my current 'mother' to teach me all of the blessings and that I would be observant, in the same way my mother was.

Later on, I went to church with them, and later on, I was even in the priest's choir, and I was dressed in white like a bride – and once again, everything became 'good.'

3. Góra Kalwaria Becomes *Judenrein*

But not taking account of the 'goodness,' I suffered considerably within, because I did not know what had happened to my father, and with my family. Apart from this, I suffered when there were anti-Semitic outbreaks in the house – and outside the house. In this connection, I remember, when under the name of '*Góra Czysto*' (Purified Ger), a great ball took place, where all the surrounding 'parishes' came together, and a large bonfire was lit, in which a variety of dilapidated Jewish furniture and worn out clothing was tossed to be burned (the valuable items, understand, had been taken away). One time, they screamed out that here the *Rebbe's* stool was being burned, and his armoire full of books, etc.

As previously mentioned, the better items were divided up – because it was considered a '*mitzvah*' to take home something that belonged to the *Żyds*. The gentile of my house also brought home a pair

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67 Polish, for 'prayer.'

of elegant slip-on sandals which fit me perfectly. However, as he went to have me try them on, I got such a sharp stab in my heart, that I said that under no circumstances would I put on these shoes! And when he cast a pair of frightened eyes on me, I immediately sensed that I was a goner, and I said: – I do not want to put them on, because they are soaked with 'Jewish sweat.' The peasant immediately changed his demeanor and smiled, and said: – Now I see that you are a true Christian girl, because I had inferred something else...'

The holiday in Góra Kalwaria (which was the official Polish name of the city of Ger), when it became '*Judenrein*' was celebrated with great joy and a parade. There was dancing, singing and heavy drinking. I went along with all the others, and did not elicit any suspicion from anyone – and I continued to live with longing, with suffering, and choked off the suffering and tears within me. However, I did not stop hoping, that a resolution will come, and that the murderers will be punished, and I begged God, that I should more quickly be rid of this accursèd life.

4. I Reunite With My Father

A year goes by, and then another year. I am already 15 years old, and my gentiles are beginning to throw in words that Regina is going to remain their child (meaning their daughter-in-law). When I once asked that a newborn calf be given to me, my Christian mother answered me: – 'For what reason do you specifically want this calf, when all that we have will be left for you?'...

My heart answered for me within: – No, this can never be, for certain, not!

Over time, my father bounced around aimlessly through a variety of villages in the area. His experiences are a separate sorry chapter in themselves, that only he alone can relate. He was acquainted with a number of peasants, who helped him out; wherever he encountered a Christian that he knew, he would constantly ask, if that person had any idea of where his little girl Regina might be.

One time, my father encountered that very Christian who had brought me to his sister – and he told that he had once led off a little girl to his sister, but she had told him that she was a Christian. Was this perhaps his child? According to the descriptions, my father understood, that sometimes a miracle can occur, and he sent some Christians, to see what sort of a child this was, that can be matched with the descriptions. They communicated details to him, and my father understood, that this was me...

But to come into the village meant putting both of our lives in danger. He lived with the hope, and waited for a fortunate opportunity, that might bring him to his child. At that time, I was possessed by an overwhelming unease, and a longing for my father, and I decided to do something about it. I recalled that, several years previously, a Polish woman, on the other side of the Vistula, hid me for several days. My father had also hidden himself with this woman for a short period of time. Perhaps she knew something of my father? I thought about this, and decided to visit her.

I told my lady of the house that I wanted to visit this woman, and she was very supportive of my desire to make the trip. And on one fine day, I dressed myself, obtained money for trip expenses, and traveled to this good elderly lady, who had demonstrated so much humanity, and even in endangering her own life, helped Jews in their time of need.

When I came to this woman, she was intensely happy to see me. But my joy was even greater, when she told me that my father was alive, and presently is to be found in Lublin, and that he does not stop worrying about his daughter...

In the first moment, I wanted to travel back to the village, and tell about everything. But the elderly lady would not let me go, and escorted me to Lublin to my father. And the miracle happened... our joy was indescribable, when we both saw each other alive, after that great deluge of blood and tears, that had inundated millions of Jewish lives. In my short life, I have cried many times, and even more – choked off the tears inside of me; this time, for the first time, I wept out of joy...

The Destruction of Ger

By Ezra Zwillich
Potycz, near Ger

1. War Comes to the Ger *Powiat*

It is difficult, very difficult to write about the massive destruction of the Jewish city – that *City and Mother in Israel,* Ger, along with its surrounding vicinity. Ger was renown throughout the Diaspora of Israel because of its Rabbinical courtyard, which drew its dynastic origins from Przysucha and Kotzk; this very authentic Jewish city, had the official name of Góra Kalwaria; But Jews did not take into account the official Polish name, and they Judaized the name, 'Calling its name among the Jews – Ger.' Now, Jewish Ger no longer exists. Its Jews went off to the crematoria, where they were martyred in *Sanctification of the Name.*

As an eye witness, whose eyes saw the terror, and who felt the torture on his own body, I hold it as an obligation to control my nerves, don strength, and to describe at least a small part of the nightmare, that I lived through. During the course of writing, I will again feel the horror in my soul, that held me in its thrall for not quite the six years that the war lasted. Let this stand as a memorial for coming generations, and a mark of shame on the murderous stars, like the Mark of Cain, on those blond beasts in human form, for what they did with their blood-soaked paws, before the eyes of the entire civilized world, that stood by dumbly, and watched.

A news item penetrated one day, into my little *shtetl* of Potycz, in the Ger *powiat*, that a war had broken out between Germany and Poland. And immediately, on the same day, it became known that the Germans had crossed the border, and are marching with lightning speed over Polish cities and towns. And, in short order, they were to be found close to our *shtetl.*

In apprehending the danger, I and my family, my wife and nine children, went off to the larger settlement in Ger. This was on a Tuesday morning. When we arrived in Ger, we found the city in a state of real panic. All the Jews, young and old, streamed towards the Vistula, with the objective of going over to the other [sic: eastern] side of the river, before the bridge was destroyed. The road to the bridge was congested with large masses of Polish military personnel, that streamed endlessly along the road, leading to the bridge – with the objective of fortifying themselves on the other side of the Vistula.

The soldiers drove the Jewish refugees off the road, hitting them with murderous blows. The Jews ran across the sandy fields, over bushes, over mudholes, falling, crawling on all fours, and ran on further, because behind them, the cannons thunder, and the explosions can be heard to draw nearer and stronger.

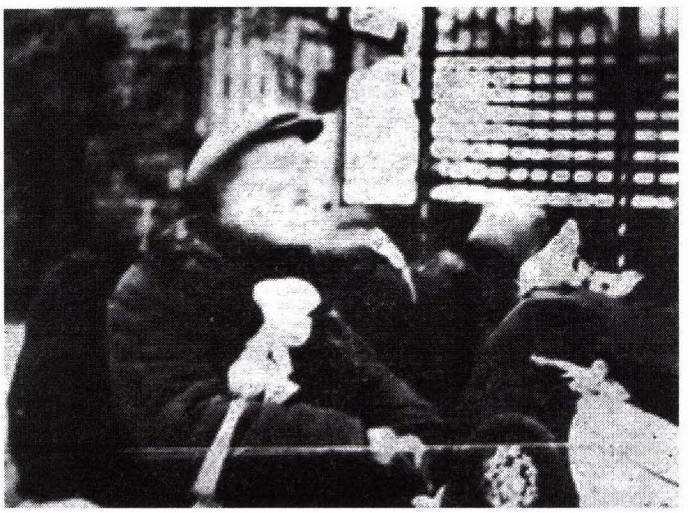
Towards evening, shrapnel began to fly over our heads, and a tumult reigned, a panic, and one could hear the crying among the women and children; dead and wounded fell from among the military, and also among civilian people.

For the entire night, explosions lit up the sky, and one could see fires in the distance.

By daytime, whole cloud-like formations of German airplanes arrived, and hundreds of bombs began to fall, the Bzhomina bridge had already been destroyed, and there was no where left to flee.

2. The Nazi Germans Seize and Terrorize Ger

On Friday morning, it became still. It was thought that the Germans had been driven out. No accurate news was available, there were no newspapers, and no radio; the Polish radio stations were mute.



Page 331: Yaakov Smoliazh ('Feka') is led out of the ghetto.

At about eleven o'clock, a German scout appeared, riding on a motorcycle, shooting left and right with an automatic weapon. After that, it became still but at around one o'clock, a loud disturbance was heard on the Grojec road. It became immediately evident, that the noise was coming from an endless column of German tanks. The children, just then, sensed the danger, that had foisted itself on them with such a terrifying rumble, and they suddenly burst out crying with a wail and threw themselves at their parents.

And lo, the German artillery is now set up in the city, and they can reach the other side of the Vistula with their fire. The houses tremble, some of them are engulfed in flames; I, my wife and children, all together crowded into a corner. Our dog tore himself off of his chain.

At about four o'clock in the day, the city is flooded with German military personnel. They plunder Jewish storage facilities, breaking out the doors and windows, and seizing whatever comes to hand. We began to grasp the full extent of the misfortune that had descended upon the *shtetl.* On Saturday morning, yet another misfortune befell the town; the Germans were seizing people – Jews and Christians; they employ the most wild methods of harassment, shooting to the right and left, in order to instill fear. Those who were captured are driven like cattle to the Grojec road. Women and children run after those who were captured, and offer encouragement, to their husbands and fathers, small bottles of water, and pieces of bread, and they take leave of them, in tears. The German guards indulge themselves in a satanic laugh. They aim their arms into the mass of people, who are driven like sheep to the slaughter; among those who were shot to death, is a relative of mine, a son of Chaim-Lejzor. The murderer who shot him is rewarded by the *Sturmführer* with a cigar.

They were driven to Germany as if they were driving animals, they were held there in a forced-labor camp under inhuman conditions; in hunger and in filth. About two months later, they were released. Those that came back, with Abraham Rosenbloom at their head, told horrifying details of the torture they endured, and the cruelty of the Germans.

In Ger, the Germans continue their harassment; they seize Jews to do work. No gentiles are seized, and the Poles now already sense that they are privileged. Many Jews hide themselves in attics and in cellars. The German murderers search through and sniff out the houses. A group of Germans let themselves into the *Bet HaMedrash*, and there, they encountered the young Yitzhak'l praying in his prayer shawl and phylacteries, and they shot him on the spot.

On one day, the Germans called Yankl Szczupak to the office of the *Gestapo* command, and the Chief of the *Gestapo* ordered him to provide seventy Jews each day for work; So Yankl *Czapkeh* agreed, under the condition that the Germans cease their harassment, and they should stop seizing Jews as if they were dogs.

Yankl'eh carried out his function, and as compensation, received a pack of cigarettes and a bottle of vodka, and in time, he began to feel quite good about his position...

In approximately eight days later, the Germans issue an order that all Jews, – men, women and children – aged ten years and up, have to put on white armbands. For not obeying this order, they will be shot on the spot. Two weeks later, a fresh order arrives: it is strictly forbidden for Jews to walk on the sidewalk, they may only circulate in the middle of the street. Every day – new decrees...

3. The Nazis Create a Jewish Police, *Judenrat*, and Impose Decrees

Approximately three weeks afterwards, the Germans advised that a Jewish administration would be created, with Jewish police. The administration is to be installed in the house of the *Rebbe*. They designated Moshe Szczupak as the president. As Jewish police, the following were designated: Fat Mendl, Yankl Torman, David Kelmanowicz, and Aharon Poznansky. Yankl Szczupak was given the title of 'Police Commander.' The administration punctiliously carries out all the orders and demands of the German leadership of the city; they offer up money, furniture, etc. As compensation for their work, they receive, from the Germans, a kilo of bread, one hundred cigarettes, and a bottle of vodka. The leadership, this means, are already provided with sustenance... but, 'The city of Ger is at a loss,' it is as bitter for the Jews of Ger as is death.

In that same week, an order comes, that every Jew who encounters a German, must take off his hat, and bow. Whoever will not carry out this order will be shot without any consideration. But this matter is not so simple. Because often times, when a Jew pulls on his hat for a booted German, that *Jaecke* falls into a murderous rage, and he begins to beat the Jew, and he gnashes his teeth: – *Zu bist du, Jude, mein kamerad?* And should someone not raise his cap, it is yet again bad, then the German pig begins to slap and beat the hapless Jew and he raves: '*Warum hast du, verfluchtener Jude, die mitze nicht getzogen?*' – well, it is bad when one takes the cap off, and it is bitter if the cap is not taken off. But no matter how bad it is, we are still alive; we see one another.

At the time of Purim, an order comes, that children are being taken for work at Hrubieszow. At night, a group of Jewish police came along, led by Moshe'leh Szczupak and escorted by German gendarmes. They knocked on the door. Frightened to death, I ask: –who is it? The answer came: – The president with gendarmes. I immediately opened the door, and the 'guests' entered. – Where is your son? – they asked. I remain silent. The German begins to search, but Szczupak makes it better

than the gendarme: he drags my little boy out from under the bed, and they take him off to the municipal building. There, already, there are many children. Their parents had given them some pieces of bread, and whatever one could. They were taken off to the vicinity of Hrubieszow.

We received news that they were being tortured there. They are forced to do hard labor, and they are not given any food. And the Germans shoot the weak, and those that collapse from hunger and exhaustion, and only very few of the children who were dying, were let free. My wife and I were among the privileged, to be able to see our son [return] alive. He came home sick, mangy and broken. Many children died off, or were shot. My wife, the faithful mother, exerted superhuman effort to save her child. She healed him using a variety of methods: she bathed him, nourished him, and we managed to save him. This is the way we dragged along from the year 1939 to the beginning of 1940.

A new chapter... word is going around that a ghetto is going to be created. An order comes, that all Jews must abandon the *Rebbe's* street, and have to move themselves into *Ulica* Czorny-Dwor; No Pole may continue to reside there... rumors abound that it may be possible to buy one's self out of this decree with money. Jews therefore began to gather money, and maybe He will have pity? The Germans assure that nobody will have anything bad done to them...

Jewish intermediators flit about, such as Yekhezkiel Mintz's Moshe-Shmuel Po'er and others. They occupy themselves with the gathering of money. They offer assurances, that in the event, God forbid, the payoff doesn't work, they will return the money; but tragically, this did not happen. Having no choice, we begin to pack up...

On a certain Thursday, we receive an order – I and one of my neighbors, a son of Abraham Mandersky – that tomorrow, at 9 o'clock in the morning, we are to leave our homes. It is superfluous to add that on that Thursday night, we did not sleep. With weeping, and deep sorrow, we packed the most necessary of our belongings, and we bade our home farewell. Very early on Friday, I hired a wagon driver, and we transferred ourselves over into the ghetto... In the end, we wind up living in the ghetto, along with all the Jews. We have no means of livelihood; there is no work, there is no commerce, and there is no work to be had, all there is, is to live in fear. People loiter about like sheep without a shepherd.

4. The Jews of Ger Are Rounded Up

We await new decrees. When we see a German, we tremble. We obtained news that in Warsaw, there already is also a ghetto, surrounded by barbed wire. Conversation is also had that we will be transferred into the Warsaw Ghetto.

The larger part of the Jews, that were crammed into the ghetto, had already consumed their reserves. I still had enough for my family for a set period of time, and was still able to offer a bit of help to my neighbors.

Sunday, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, the Jewish police come out and say that tomorrow, as six o'clock in the morning, all Jews, young and old, must gather near the municipal building, and that everyone is to take along small packages, that should not weigh more than thirty kilo a family. That night, nobody slept. Everyone felt beaten and pained, and so helpless in the face of armed murderers. People put on three and sometimes four pairs of underwear, two suits of clothing. At five o'clock in the morning, the small children are awakened, and a small packages is hung on the back of each child, and we leave these impoverished homes in tears; no one knows where we will be driven to, nor what awaits us.

I am the first one out of the house, and my wife and children follow me. We come to the designated gathering place – near the municipal building. There we already encountered thousands of Jews, men, women and children, mothers with nursing babies in their arms. Around us, *Gestapo* staff stand, with machine guns in their hands, and with murderous faces. They stand us into arrays of four in a row. We stand like that for about an hour. After that, a German officer came out, and he gave an order to march.

We begin to go. On both sidewalks, our neighbors stand – the Poles – with satisfied looks on their faces, and they laugh, make witty remarks, and jeer at our expense. We are oppressed and embittered, and tears pour from our eyes. One Pole shouts out that he is going to take someone's storage facility, a second takes pride in saying that he is going to 'inherit' so-and-so's yard, a third shouts: – when the *Żydkehs* will no longer be here, eggs and butter will become cheap... we go with lowered heads, until we arrive at the station of the *Koleika*.

Gestapo staff was waiting for us there, armed to the teeth. They give a command: – *'Errunter das gepeck!'* Having no alternative, we shed the packages. After this, they stuffed us into the cars; we stand there in great overcrowding – to the point of being suffocated – and we await our fate. The locomotive gives out a hoarse belch, and we are moving.

5. On the *Koleika* to the Warsaw Ghetto

The *Koleika* stopped at Piaseczno. Then an order came: '*Errunter!*' We cast ourselves out of the cars, and a while later we hear a whistle from the big train, which remains standing near us. The German murderers stuff us into the big cars. It gets crowded. They stuff us in with blows and with imprecations. In the end, the train began to move, and we traveled on further. We do not know to where they are taking us. Later, after traveling for a while, we took a reckoning, that we were somewhere close to Warsaw. The train stops often times, here it is traveling forward, and then it is traveling backwards. This hauling ourselves to and fro takes quite a long time, going on until late into the night. In the end, it finally came to a halt. The German murderers sound an alarm, they order: '*Errunter, aus die wagoner!*' It is S.S. troops that are screaming and driving us. Mothers, with small children in their arms, fall down, the murderers driving them with *nagaikas* in their paws. In this manner, we are driven into a large yard, where a bath is located. Jewish police also are standing there, and they say, that we have to bathe, and our effects will be steamed.

We are in the Warsaw Ghetto. The Germans departed. We remain sitting on our bundles. In a while, the Jewish ghetto police appear. They tell us to go into the bath. I had agreed with my wife, that first, I will go into the bath with the boys. We will bathe ourselves, and she, in the meantime, should stand guard over our packages, and later, when we come out, she and the girls can go in and bathe.

But when we went away, the police forced my wife and the girls to immediately go into the bath, and to leave the packages behind.

When my children and I emerged from the bath, I did not find my wife and the girls, nor our belongings. I began to look and inquire; in the end, they came out, and with tears in their eyes, they told me what had happened. We slept that night in the yard, under the open sky, on the bare ground. Our packages had vanished...

6. Suffering and Disease in the Warsaw Ghetto

In the morning, Jewish employees came – escorted by Jewish policemen – and they led us into the ghetto. The Jews from Ger are divided up into parts: one part is quartered in a synagogue, a second part in an abandoned hospital, and my part is taken off to *Ulica* Gensza Number 4, where, up until the German occupation, large-scale Jewish wholesale businesses were located. I was allocated a small room for the entire family. Now we find ourselves in a new 'home.'

And so a fresh chapter began: we are registered for food-ration cards; with these cards, we obtain a small amount of foodstuffs, which are maybe suitable to look at, but not to still the bitter hunger. But the Warsaw Jews came through with help. In the circumstances in which they found themselves, it is inappropriate to try and evaluate what they did. They organized a community kitchen in the ghetto, and they provided a half-liter of soup per person, each day. They granted me a special consideration, because I was a father of nine children.

Several days later, an order arrives for us to go to *Ulica* Tlomackie, into the Great Synagogue, where they will return the packages to us, that were taken away from us. First, it is necessary to register, and in a few days, each person will get back his things. I, like all the Jews from Ger, registered, and in the course of two weeks, I went to collect my belongings each day, until, in the end, six packages were returned to me, out of ten that had been taken away. Four of them had disappeared; it was in these four vanished packages that our valuable possessions were to be found, such as for example, winter underwear, and canned goods.

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In the ghetto, circumstances get worse: one suffers hunger. The need is great. It is a bitter pity to have for the children. A few, limited number of individuals, find some sort of solution: they trade, speculate with the food-ration cards, but I am no good at these things. I had always lived in a village, and I made my living in an honest and straightforward manner.

There was no lack of swindlers. On one day, such an individual tricked one of my little daughters out into the street, and he pulled off her small sweater, that she was wearing. I also saw something that I will never forget: a Jew was walking in the street, and he was carrying a loaf of bread for his family, and so a second Jewish man ran by him, and tore the loaf of bread out of his hands, and ran away. I remained paralyzed by that scene, and I could not conceive that such a thing could be possible. Either that, or hunger transforms some people into non-humans...

The typhus epidemic, that cut down lives in the ghetto like a scythe, did not pass me by; on a certain day, I felt a severe headache, accompanied by nausea with a stomach ache. My wife managed to procure a thermometer from somewhere, and it showed that I had a high fever. My family, like many of the Jews in the ghetto, was careful in not revealing anything about my illness, because if the German authorities discovered Typhus anywhere, they would isolate the entire courtyard for a month's time, under quarantine. But when my wife saw that I was getting worse, that I had lost consciousness, not having an alternative – she went to the hospital. A hygiene official arrived, and took me off. *Landsleit* from Ger escorted me, in tears, just as if they were mourning someone who was already dead.

7. Hanging Onto Life in the Typhus Epidemic

In the hospital, before anything else, I had my hair cut off, after that – at the doctor's orders, I was bathed in a hot bath. Up to that point, I was in an unconscious state. But as soon as they put me into the hot bath, I opened my eyes. After that, I was taken to the general ward, where I was given all of the medicines, which they had in their possession at that time. The highest humanitarian and – most essential – the Jewish attitude, that the Jewish doctors and the personnel of the hospital showed me, was perhaps as a result of the intervention of my townsman, Aharon Poznansky. He told the management, that I was someone who had taken in guests, and that my door was always open for every Jew that came to Potycz. The management of the hospital, and the Jewish doctors, did not stint in trying to save the sick. After being in the hospital for five weeks, I was discharged.

When I managed to drag myself back to my residence in the ghetto, I found my room to be locked. I went on to ask about the fate of my wife and children, and I was told, that they were taken to an isolation camp, and that the internees in that camp suffer from hunger. I went off to the indicated address, and found the gate locked. The Jewish policeman, who stood guard, told me, that this house is under quarantine. Despite this, I haggled with the police, to get them to let me in. To my great astonishment, I did not find my wife there, nor my children. My fright was boundless. However, after about two hours of searching, I found my family in the end; our joy was indescribable; this despite the fact that I found them degraded. But, we were together.

At the behest of my doctor, who was a person with a gentle Jewish heart, I had to submit myself to periodic examinations. In the hospital, I learned that the situation had gotten worse. The dearth of food for the sick was catastrophic; the same was true in the ghetto at large. The Chief doctor represented that it had become necessary to cut back on the size of the food portions. From this day forward, each person will be given only one portion of a little bit of soup.

I received bad news from my Ger *landsleit:* this one is sick, the other has already gone to the Other World; all are expiring from hunger. Death from hunger did not pass over those who had formerly been wealthy, who became impoverished and robbed of their assets. Apart from this, it was simply not possible to procure food, no matter how much money one had.

8. Fleeing the Warsaw Ghetto

I took stock of the situation, and concluded that the situation in the ghetto was untenable. So I consulted with my wife, and we decided to send the older children back to the village. It was the Eve of Passover, when we led our oldest son out of the ghetto. On the Second Day, we sent off our second son, and proceeded in that manner with the others. At the end, I took two children, one aged ten, and the second aged twelve years, and we headed for the ghetto gate, which was on the Grzibow Place. It did not prove difficult to pass through the gate, because we did not have any specific Jewish appearance. We set off for the Vistula, and we boarded a small steamship, and were on our way.

I have to exert myself to remain calm. To tell the truth, my heart pounded like being hit with hammers. My fear was great, because if, God forbid, the Germans should sense who we are, we are lost. I had a conversation with my children, that regardless of what happens, we will travel separately. We cannot... we should not even look one to another.

In this manner, we came to the *shtetl* of Mniszew... apart from my fear, I was not yet fully recovered from Typhus. Nevertheless, we have to save ourselves. A sister of mine lived in Mniszew, who was very rich. However, to our sorrow, she cannot help me, because the Germans robbed her, and she was sent away. I also received news, that my father in-law, and mother in-law with their children, were sent off to Garwolin. I managed to get to them, and found them in a condition of great need. At this point, they were as impoverished as I was. Those one-time rich people were left without a loaf of bread.

We spent the night with them. In the morning, my gentle mother in-law gave away their meager portions of bread to us, which they had put away. I was compelled to take some of this for the children. We took our leave of them, crying bitter tears, as if we felt that we would never see them again. We took our leave for all eternity. I never saw them ever again...

I left Garwolin on a rainy day, and I was under a downpour of rain, and also, it poured from my eyes. As I proceeded in this beaten state, with my head down, I noticed a small purse lying beside the road. I pick it up, and go off to a side road; I look around suspiciously, to see if someone is following me, and I see no one. With care then, I opened the purse, and there is a bit of money inside it. I counted it – six hundred zlotys...

I started to go about, among my gentile friends, in order to ask for a bit of work. I ask about my children. On one Saturday, I went off to the village of Grabów, and there I found my twelve year-old son, in the field, where he worked as a shepherd. When he saw me, he ran towards me. We fell into each other's arms, and could not tear ourselves away from one another for a long time...

After this, we sat ourselves down on the ground, near the cows. My son opened his vase, and took out a hunk of bread, which was the pay he received for his work. He broke the small loaf into two halves, and shared it with me. We ate with appetite. I remind myself of how we ate at the table, with my wife and children, and tears began to choke me. My young boy took note of this, and said to me:

– Papa, as you know, we are already four children that have fled the ghetto, and we are able to earn this bit of bread for ourselves; so I beg you that you should bring our mother and the small children; here in the village, we will be more safe than in Warsaw. Papa, I cannot stay here by myself, I think constantly about them, and I can't take it any longer... and he burst into bitter tears.

This caused my heart to clutch up, and I summoned all of my strength not to weep over my bitter fate. Some task! [I have] to extract my family from that *Gehenna*. How does one do this? I embraced my unfortunate child, who had already gone through so much in his young life, who already thought like a grownup; I pressed him to my breast, and gave him a kiss. I could not utter a word, and choked back the tears. When I got a little better control of myself, I said to him:

– On this evening, I will spend the night with you in the barn, to rest a little, and tomorrow morning, if God wills it, very early, I well set out for Mniszew, and from there, I will go to Warsaw, and I will make an effort to bring out your mother and the children, while it is still this week... or in the following week. God will help, my child, don't you worry...

My answer so thrilled him, that he began to kiss me. – Oh, *Tatelyu, Tatelyu* – he muttered, and bright tears ran from his eyes.

9. Hanging on for Life in Mniszew

On the following morning, I went off to Mniszew, where my brother's son-in-law lived. As soon as I entered his house, I told him of my bitter situation: My wife and five small children in the ghetto, where they can lose their lives any day; three children have gone off, who knows where in the world, and God knows if they are still alive; one is in a nearby village, a shepherd serving the gentiles... my brother's son-in-law spoke a good Polish. He had studied in a *powszechny* school,[68] and from living for many years among the peasants, he looked like – or could make himself look like – a real peasant. And I ended: – my dear one, – I said to him – I want you to travel to Warsaw. You will be able to rescue my family; you, for I will not be able to carry off such a thing... – and I burst out crying.

– Uncle, it is necessary to be strong, – he attempted to offer me encouragement. – That which I have lived through and seen, my child, breaks even the strongest – I replied.

Restlessly, he paced about the house, and afterwards he said to me: – Uncle, this sort of a trip has to cost at least two hundred zlotys. It is necessary to hire a wagon, and one has to have a bit of money ready in order to 'smear' when one has to. I do not have a spare cent.

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[68] A public school, in Poland.

– I will come up with the money – I immediately answered him. I knew that a trip of this nature was redolent with mortal danger, and that I must rescue my wife and children.

I immediately want off to those Jews and non-Jews that I knew. At that time, they had not yet driven the Jews out of all the villages, and with tears in my eyes, I begged them to help me. And with a sense of satisfaction, I recall that also a couple of peasants untied their purses, gave me money, and wished me success. And it was this way, that I managed to pull together the two hundred zlotys. I gave the money to my relative, and he immediately traveled off to Warsaw, and four days later, he brought me my wife and my five children. Our joy was boundless: the joy of being together, of being alive, and hoping for life.

My older children, who worked in the field, at shepherding cattle, found out that their mother had arrived, together with their younger sisters and brothers, came running from Mniszew. The joy among the youngsters was indescribable, and mother and father were both fortunate. We thought that we had overcome all misfortunes, and that normal times are coming, and that people would treat each other humanely. My wife kissed the children and cried, but these were tears of joy. I got together a bit of food, rented a domicile, and became a resident of Mniszew. (At that time, things were still peaceful in Mniszew). Oft times, I would ride off to Potycz, in order to solicit a bit of food from my former Christian neighbors, in order to provide my family with nourishment. It was rare that anyone turned me away, and there were those who showed sympathy, and enmity to the Germans.

10. Playing Hide-and-Seek with Death

At the end of the summer, my older children ended their work in the field, because during winter, the cattle are kept in the stalls. My children returned without so much as a *groschen* of money. We did not dare, and it didn't even come to mind, to ask for compensation for their work, because the peasants knew, that these were Jewish children, and if they didn't turn them over to the Germans, and additionally gave them something to eat, they thought that in doing so, they had discharged their obligation before God and humanity...

In short, we were, again, left without any means of sustenance. And as if to aggravate matters, a severe winter descended on us, with intense cold, and snowstorms. Our clothing was in a deteriorated condition. They were badly torn and falling apart, and my wife did not cease putting one patch on top of another. We also had no wood with which to generate heat, no food, and we literally lacked all of the necessities required to sustain life; accordingly, we had no other way out, other that to go and beg, or expire from hunger. My children set out to beg, and I along with my oldest son, would go off to the nearest forest, which was a couple of kilometers from the city, where we would gather up a little bit of branches. Without this, we would have ended up dying from the cold.

The situation became even more dangerous because of a representation made by the Germans: ''that every Jew that they encountered in this area, from the Warsaw Guberniya, will be shot on the spot, and a Pole that would hide a Jew, will also be shot, and they will be buried in the same grave as the Jew'...

There were instances, when the Germans faithfully carried out this 'order.' In short, death lay in ambush for us on all sides, and on all roads.

But having no alternative, and way out of this conflicted situation, we – me and my older children – continued to scour the fields, to look for potatoes that had been left behind, and in the forest – for a bunch of dried out branches. If we saw, in the distance, a peasant, or Germans, we would hide under a tree, lie down in a pit, or stretch out on the ground between the grasses.

One time, I went with my son in the outskirts of the village, and a German agent came upon us, who recognized us as Jews. He gave us an order to stand still, and brought out his revolver. We assaulted him, and took away his Mauser, let him lay unconscious, and fled into the forest. On a second occasion, I had to undertake a struggle with such an individual by myself, and I hit him in the head with his own revolver, so that he fell like someone cut down, and I fled. Also, a couple of times we encountered Germans, but they did not suspect that we were Jews. They thought that we were Poles, and one of them even generously offered me a cigarette.

This is the way we 'lived' as hounded and harassed animals, in hunger and cold, and in a state of constant fear of the glance of a satanic German, and their civilian agents, who lay in ambush for Jews on every road and byway.

On one occasion, such an agent seized my twelve year-old little boy in the village of Szpruch, and he took him off to the village administrative building. From there, he telephoned the gendarmerie and demanded that they send a gendarme to take away the '*żydek*.' As was usual in such cases, the hapless child would be shot on the spot immediately. In that moment, there was a gathering of the representatives of the neighborhood villages. The recorder of the township, as well as many of the prominent delegates, knew me, and also – my little son. Among them, fortunately, there were a few good people, who demanded that the child be permitted to run away. Accordingly, the recorder of the township administration came to my son to interrogate him: – [to determine] who he is, and from where does he come, etc. My son answered his questions directly on all aspects, and that he has younger brothers and sisters who are suffering from hunger, and he had gone to beg from good people, a bit of potatoes on their behalf. – And what do you have in the small sack? – the recorder asked him. – several small potatoes and a couple of pieces of bread, – my child showed to him. The recorder grabbed a whip, and feigned hitting him, while shouting: – Out, you *żyd*! You so-and-so! And the other Christians also took to shouting, that they did not want that such a decrepit Jew be buried in their township. The agent remained dumb, and my child used the opportunity and fled to the village of Ostrowiec.

A group of Christians seeing how he ran with the last of his strength, said to him, – Little boy, hide yourself, because there are Germans in the village! And so my child didn't think a great deal, and he threw himself into the Pilica River, and swam to the opposite side. Exhausted and frightened, he dragged himself back to our house, with his wet little sack, and the soaked pieces of bread, and several small potatoes. He fell into the house half dead. When he calmed down a bit, he told us of his odyssey. We wept with bitter tears, over our unfortunate circumstances, and simultaneously were glad that he was saved, and that there still were good people...

Later on, local Christians arrived, who were bystanders at the scene that took place in the township. They told about the miracle that happened to my child, who had been able to save himself from certain death. One of them crossed himself and said that there were angels that had conveyed him across the wide and stormy river, which even grown people were afraid to swim across.

11. From Mniszew to Kozienice

But hunger, and the instinct for survival, especially of the wife and children, compelled me, as well as other Jews, to use boats to ford the river and get to the other side, and to search through the fields in the hopes of finding a few potatoes, that the peasants had overlooked in the ground, at the time they were harvested.

But not all Jews return home; every day, someone or another is shot by the Germans, or by Polish agents. Every day, one of two Jews are shot. On one certain day, the list of those shot reached a record: eight Jews were murdered; among those who mourned their husbands and fathers were also my wife and children, because the word had it that I too, had been shot on that dark day. After I was mourned, and my children had recited *Kaddish* for me, I returned home late at night, because I had made a long detour, and used side roads, in order to avoid an encounter with Germans, or their agents. The children felt me, in order to determine that I was alive, or that perhaps this was a dream?

In the end, the fateful hour rang out for Mniszew as well. The Germans began to construct a ghetto. Eizik was designated as the Ghetto Elder; his brothers were nominated to be commandants. Two military engineers arrived, and they began to register people for work – to dig a canal near the Vistula. They mobilized approximately two hundred men for this work, and I was among them.

In the course of the first month, we obtained foodstuffs a little at a time and even a few zlotys, but after that, they stopped providing food. They installed Polish overseers, who drove us to work with truncheons and whips, but gave no food. Spent and hungry, we – under the constant threat of death, worked for three months. On the third month, it became possible for a few of the slave-laborers to get themselves out of the camp, and they fled to the nearest villages, with the hope of obtaining some nourishment by some means, because at work, in any case, they faced death by starvation. We slaved this way for three months, and many died of hunger.

On one nightfall, the Ghetto Elder came to us in the camp, accompanied by a group of policemen, and he told us that tomorrow, we will be free from work, and the day after tomorrow, we will leave Mniszew and transfer to Kozienice, where a ghetto had been erected for the Jews of the vicinity. This decree totally beat us down. We knew what life in a ghetto held for us: pressed together in overcrowding, in hunger, locked away from the world, as if we were in prison, under the constant watch of the murderers. But what could we do with bare hands and empty stomachs? And [added to this] having enemies on all sides. So, once again, we had to make up packages, *Go forth, Jacob*, despite the fact that we had nothing to pack up.

Three days later, a detachment of German soldiers came down to the *shtetl,* with a whole caravan of wagons, driven by Poles. An order was given '*sofort*,[69]' to leave the houses, and whoever will hide themselves will be shot immediately. Those who are digging the canal, have a right to remain, because they will do the work.

My two older sons worked at the canal site, and I along with my wife and children, traveled to Kozienice. The trip was a horror. We sat in wagons, beaten down, mute, frightened. Ahead of us, on the sides, and behind us, armed soldiers rode. Nobody dared to utter a word, and even the tiny children were afraid to cry, and only the women quietly choked back tears. We felt like we were being taken to our death, and this is how we were brought to the Ghetto at Kozienice. We encounter listless and beaten down Jews there: men, women and children. We looked all of this over without having a word to say.

12. Seeking Succor in Chmielew

My wife was the first one to come out with the following thing to say: – Ezra – she said to me – Do you see? The Jews here are expiring from hunger, they are barely alive; they look like the living dead... we are all going to die. Listen to me, and run back to Chmielew, to our two boys, and put yourself to work at the canal, then you will be able to be helpful to me in some way, as you helped me when you fled the Warsaw Ghetto.

I listened to my wife, and her advice struck me as being entirely logical. I have nothing to lose. The picture that I saw around me augured no good. The Jews did not look like they were from [this] world; the women wept, the children did not play, but rather laid there as if they were poisoned, and stared at only a single point.

So I rested myself a bit, because I was tired out from the day, and as soon as night fell on the *shtetl,* I took leave of my wife and children, for the last time... I stole out of the ghetto, and set off on the road to Chmielew. In taking my leave, I bolstered my heart and did not cry, but on that muddy way in the night, on the field, and with a heavy premonition in my heart. I let my tears flow freely. – God alone only knows when I will see them again? – I thought; Where have I left them" Where am I going?...

When my children saw me, they became intensely happy to see me. – Papa, are you going to stay with us? – they asked me – Yes, – I replied – your mother wanted me to be with you, and she will be with the younger children in Kozienice. Perhaps, from here, we will be able to help them with something. I set to work at the canal, and after work, I would set out into the surrounding villages, in order to get some food together. It was a risk, possibly running into a German or an informer on the road, but we lucked out. Many peasants knew me, and very rarely did they refuse me.

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[69] German for 'immediately.'

On a certain day, my twelve year-old son, and 14 year-old daughter came to Chmielew. With tears in their eyes, they told me that their mother and the younger children were suffering from hunger. – Do something, Papa, – they said – help! Because, God forbid, it can be too late. So I replied: –Little children, I have gotten together about five kilos of kasha and a couple of kilos of millet, and I also have 20 zlotys. Take this all along, and go as quickly as you can, to your mother. But it was already late at night, and they spent the night with us, and in the following morning, very early, I hung two bags on them, and escorted them out onto the road to Kozienice, which was a distance on foot of 40 kilometers through forests and fields. Three times, did my children undertake this painful march route, and each time, I sent them back with small packages of food and a few zlotys. I worked this way for several weeks, with superhuman strength. During the day – at the more heavy work, and often receiving lashes from a leather strap from the German, and in the evening – I would go beg from house-to-house among the peasants of the neighboring villages, and in this way managed to prop up the lives of my wife and children.

When my children came for the fourth time, I already had packages ready for them, with food, and the following morning, I escorted them out of the city, and took my leave of them, when a Jew whom we knew came to us from the opposite direction, and gave us the frightening news that the Germans had driven all the Jews out of the Kozienice Ghetto, crammed them into freight cars, and sent them off to Treblinka...

13. The Nazi Grim Reaper Hovers...

This news struck us like a knife in the heart. The children broke out into tears, and I was ready to take my own life. I had no doubt, that I had lost my wife and my five young children. I remained in this gruesome world a broken heap of ruins, with my four little orphans, who did not stop crying and wailing. My tragedy was great, if we had temporarily saved our exhausted lives in Chmielew, what then awaits us in the future? How am I going to continue to go on living, knowing that I have lost my beloved who were, who were brought to their death in such a gruesome fashion. We already knew of what the Germans did at Treblinka...

After *Sukkot*, the Polish autumn drew near, with its rain and cold. On a certain day, when we were standing by our work of digging the canal, a band of Germans came riding up, encircled the Jewish laborers, and drove them off to Kozienice. In the *shtetl* ghetto, the Jewish police remained, with a few employees. Two days later, we were taken out of the ghetto, and crammed into a prison. The prison guards were young Germans, with dog-like faces, which were mocking and persecuting us. On the second day, they march us out. We do not know where they will drive us to. At nightfall, we came to Szydłowiec, where we halted. A short while later, a group of Jewish policemen arrived, and let us know that it is an order to leave the sick people and the children behind in Szydłowiec and the grown up and healthy men will travel on further...

Now, even so many years later after that terrifying moment, my hands shake writing the words: 'the sick and small children remain...' I knew well that this implied a death sentence, that the sick and the small children will be immediately liquidated by the German murderers, and the 'grown ups, and

the healthy' will still be utilized for one sort of work or another, and afterwards, they have the same end... I broke out into a cold sweat. But one could not think for very long, every minute was precious, and after a short reckoning, I said to my twelve year-old boy and my fourteen year-old daughter: – my children, jump down off of the freight truck and flee! Flee to wherever you can!... I gave away my little bit of food that I had, and the few zlotys, and kissed their hands, so that they should not see my tears...

My older son, Moshe, was not pleased with this. – Papa – he noted – how can you let two small children go off alone? I was blind-sided by this question, and in the first minute didn't know what to answer. But I made an effort to calm myself, and replied to him: – my son. We can't take them along, and here, they are not left alone. There are Jews here, and Jewish police, and they will not do anything bad to them, and from here, they must run away. It is possible that they may be able to save themselves in the surrounding villages...

14. Our Lives Hang in the Balance

So my two little fledglings descended from the wagon, stood themselves on the ground, and their deathly pale faces and frightened stares turned to me. I felt as if my heart had stopped, and I do not know from whence I derived the strength to remain calm, in order not to instill any fear in the children, and thereby, God forbid, not expose them to any attention from the murderers because of their weeping. – Run away from here, children, run from this place! – I repeated...

The German destroyers were carousing at this moment, boozing and gorging beside a freight truck, which had brought them provisions. After their feast, one of them issued a command: '*Abfahren!*' The freight trucks honked their horns, and started up their motors, and in a number of minutes I no longer saw my children... to this day!...

The freight trucks are moving at great speed. Before my eyes, the sorrowful image of my abandoned children swims by, of their frightened eyes, which have been cut into my heart. After a ride of several hours, we arrived at Kzyz and rode into a munitions factory. A heavy gate was opened for us, and we rode into a large yard. After this, we were led into something of a bare building, and the massive door was closed behind us, at which an armed soldier was stationed, whom we were able to see through a crack in the wall. Exhausted and starving, we fell onto the bare ground as if we had been cut down; a few managed to doze off, but not for long, the hunger and painful thoughts did not permit sleep.

On the following day, in the morning, a group of armed Nazis came into the shop, who gave a rap with the locks of their automatic weapons, readying them to fire, and gave an order: – '*Juden, abgeben das bröt gelt und gold!* Anyone who withholds anything, hiding it with themselves, will be shot immediately.' We emptied our pockets, and gave over everything we had with us. There were a few who appeared to have hidden something. After this, a second order came: – 'take off your clothing and underwear, you should remain naked!' This too, had to be done. The German beasts

threw all of the plunder into a big box, which stood nearby, and began to search and frisk everyone. If something was found on a person, he was beaten murderously – until blood flowed, and oft times, the victim fell unconscious. After this, we were driven into the bathhouse. And after that, into a large, bare barracks.

In the barracks, it was dark and cold. We laid down on the bare ground. Both my little boys accosted me, and in this way we, hurt and beaten, managed to doze off for short intervals throughout the long night. Hunger and cold did not allow us to sleep. And from all sides we heard groaning and stifled weeping.

In the morning, an order came: '*Aufstehen!*' and we were driven out into the yard, and ordered us to fall out into rows. After this, a group of Germans arrived on motorcycles, and they began to make a '*selektion.*' Several men were sent to the '*Werktse*' which is where they sent those sentenced to death. Among those unfortunates, were found two Jews from Ger: Wzaria's son-in-law with his child; the rest were sent to the factory. Meanwhile, they drove us into a barracks, which was cordoned off with barbed wire. Death hovered over our heads. Concurrently, we did not know if 'in the factory' meant to do work, or the factory of death.

15. We Are Condemned to Forced Labor

This time it was a factory with work going on – a munitions factory. But the work there was not better than death itself. In the factory about ten thousand Jews slave-laborers were employed, men and women; work was carried out twenty-four hours a day, from one day to the next, set up in two shifts, each of twelve hours duration. Food was given in order to prevent dying, some sort of filthy soup, made from potato peelings, more skin than potatoes. The exhaustion was so great, that one would often fall asleep for a minute while standing, for a minute, and not longer, and wake startled with fear, because if a German saw this, one was not certain as to keeping one's life.

Ten days later – they transferred my two sons – together with a larger group of men and women, into the city – to other work. At night, after work, my children came into the barracks. In the moment when we lay down to sleep on the bare bunks, my children said to me: – Papa, tomorrow, we are going away from the workplace, and we are going to flee to wherever our eyes take us: what do you say to that? I didn't think very much, and I answered: – do as you want to, my dear little children. Up until now I have been your father, and went over and above my powers to help you with what it is I only could, in order to save you; however, I am now powerless and without hope, as would be a three year-old child. Accordingly, I have no right to give you ideas, and I cannot offer you any advice. May God help you, in everything that you undertake.

We ate the bread that had been allocated (10 decagrams per person) and we laid down to sleep on the bare boards. Both children snuggled up to me, as if they were nursing infants to their mother, and fell asleep. They slept well, out of exhaustion and possibly out of hope and belief in their youthful energy. I, by contrast, didn't close an eye. As tired as I was, sleep did not take me. I looked at my two young boys and choked back the tears.

In the morning, the guards gave an order: '*Aufstehen!*' My children embraced me, and in their haste, they exchanged kisses with me: – Be well, Papa, – they said to me – perhaps we will yet see each other...

I remained unable to move, and could not utter a word. My children went off, and I never saw them again, even to this day...

The same fate awaited me, but I don't know by what privilege, or for what transgression, I remained alive, because without the children, being alive was no life at all. Like all the others, I was sentenced to be shot or killed in a gas chamber, along with thousands and millions of Jews. But an 'accident' happened, which I cannot explain, and it was decreed that I should remain alive with that horrifying memory of the lives of by beloved and close ones, that were cut down, who remain always before my eyes, and whom I carry in my heart, so long as my heart will continue to beat with life.

16. The Hell of Skarżysko

The camp in Skarżysko[70] consisted of three divisions: *Werke* 'A,' 'B,' and 'C.' I was allocated to *Werke* 'A' where ten thousand workers slaved – under the oversight of 30 police. The overseers drove out lives. Food consisted of a small pot of black coffee for breakfast, with a pronounced odor of iodoform, with a small bowl of some sort of muck, which nobody knew from what it was made, and it had a smell that could make you faint... lunch consisted of a half liter of watery soup with kraut, beats or potatoes; That was our midday meal. This 'nourishment' was supposed to give us the strength to carry out punitive hard labor. The evening meal consisted of ten 'deca'[grams] of bread with a bit of watery soup, with a musty odor. Lodging for the night was – on the consistently hard boards, without blankets, with which to cover ourselves. And every night, I dream of the children, and I see how they stare at me dumbly, with their sorrowful little eyes, and how I do not fail to ask question of God, the question hammers away in my mind: – Why, *Gottenyu*, why?...

In the morning, if you are a few minutes late in presenting yourself for work, the police beat you murderously. And during work, the Polish overseers hasten to demonstrate that they are not subordinate in their cruelty to the unfortunate slave-laborers and they flay the skin, for no reason. One dare not speak: whether to bemoan one's self, or have complaints, no talking is permitted – for that sort of an infraction, you can be whipped to the point of drawing blood, or get a bullet in the head.

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70 On 6 September 1939, Nazis seized control of a major munitions factory located in the south-eastern Polish town of Skarżysko-Kamienna. Originally, ethnic Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles were employed to provide much-needed ammunition for the German army. By 1941, however, major labor shortages in the Reich led those running the camp increasingly to integrate Jewish slave labor. The number of Jewish workers grew rapidly, and in August 1942 the factory officially became a labor camp in order to cope with the influx. Assignment to Skarżysko-Kamienna was almost always a slow path to death, as laborers worked in extremely harsh conditions.

Every second day, a certain S.S. man comes, whose unclean name is Bartel Schläger: Each time, he takes a young girl out into the forest, where he tortured her; she comes back into the camp broken and dishonored. Often times, after torturing a young girl this way, when he would lead her back into the camp, in the presence of all the inmates – he would shoot her.

Hunger was so great, that people would sell off their last shirt off their skin, for a bit of bread, or for a few potatoes.

In the camp, there was also a 'hospital.' The lady head of the hospital was a *Feldscher* – Lola Jakubowicz from Piaseczno, and with the help of a certain sanitary assistant, named Finger, from Warsaw. However, even with their best will to one way or another mollify the needs of the unfortunate, they were powerless, because there were no medicines in the hospital. The sick received the same food as in the camp – a bit of soup without any fat, and boiled water instead of tea. Apart from this, no sick person was kept for more than six days, on the seventh day the official overseer would arrive – the Nazi Kellerman, a hateful executioner. And drive the sick person out, even if that sick person was dangerously ill, and no sort of begging had any effect. Many times, he would order the sick person to lie down on the floor face down, in order to 'examine' him, and to see what was the matter; then he would take out his Browning [pistol][71] from its holster and shoot three bullets into his back, and say: 'He is now cured.'

17. Who Shall Live, and Who Shall Die?

Every ten or fifteen days, a '*selektion*' takes place. We know too well what a *selektion* implies: a gathering of those to die. During the *selektion*, the executioners stand by: Kellerman, Lintzte, and Wanderli, and they point with their *nagaikas* to the right and left; one of us is seized by and attacked, and a second loses his ability to speak, out of fright. Those that are not sentenced to death, get serious defects. During one such *selektion*, I got a blood clot in my throat. I was made fortunate by the fact that the S.S. man Wanderli considered me to be a good worker. I was also saved by the Jewish camp overseer, Albert, who also lived through and survived this *Gehenna*; he was a very refined person, with a Jewish heart, and he saved many Jews from death. The Germans with the Polish overseers would beat the Jewish workers without reason; to them, it was a sort of sport, which they would indulge in lashing with sadistic pleasure; this suffering did not skip over me, and not once only did it come out for me to receive that portion of horrifying blows; one time, after such an execution, I became swollen. And thanks to an unknown reason, I was not shot. A second time, the Polish policeman Sefitski beat me, and from these horrifying blows, I barely emerged alive. This torturing would be repeated very often. On one time at dusk, for no reason, they hung Moshe Katz.

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71 Browning Hi-Power pistols were used during World War II by both Allied and Axis forces. After occupying Belgium in 1940, German forces took over the FN plant. German troops subsequently used the Hi-Power, having assigned it the designation *Pistole* 640(b) ("b" for *belgisch*, "Belgian").[3] Examples produced by FN in Belgium under German occupation bear German inspection and acceptance marks, or *Waffenamts, such as WaA613*. In German service, it was used mainly by Waffen-SS and Fallschirmjäger personnel.

In Skarżysko there was a camp of ten thousand Jews, and oft times, they brought in fresh groups of Jews from various cities. In *Werke* 'C' of the previously mentioned camp, dug out pits were always prepared in advance, which the Germans would fill with Jews that were shot. The end of the Skarżysko camp was a terrifying one; only a small remnant of the more than ten thousand interned Jews lived through the horror. Among the Ger Jews who remained alive were: Aharon Sziniaveh, myself, a son of Falik *Katzav*[72], and a son of *Cibaleh Makher*[73] , and another small group of Jews from various cities, that the murderers had driven together in the Skarżysko camp. We were tortured there for two years, with hunger and having to perform hard labor. At the end, when we were getting ready to eat our poor oven bread, an order came: – '*Pakken sich!*' Starved out and dead-tired, we were driven onto train cars, from which the train took us to Częstochowa (?). Arriving in Częstochowa, we were driven into wet stalls surrounded by metal wire fences. Murderous members of the S.S. mocked us with sadistic pleasure. For two months we worked at digging trenches.

We were buried alive in the concentration camp, and knew nothing of what was going on in the outside world. Nevertheless, we felt that the Russian troops were getting closer, and that the Germans were suffering setbacks. We derived this from the nervousness of the Germans, and shortly afterwards, we began to hear the report of cannon fire. On one of the mornings, we stood ourselves out in rows – near the gate, as was usual, and we were waiting to be sent to work. We are standing still, in great tension, when suddenly overhead, Russian planes appear, that are flying over Częstochowa and are circling the city; the S.S. members are holding secrets among themselves, and their secrets instill fear in us; at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, an order arrives: *'Abmarschen zu dem bahn!'* When we marched by the city, we encountered a huge panic, people running around as if possessed, the Russians had arrived in an outlying area of the city, and we find ourselves in a second end of the city; the Russian soldiers shoot up the city, with bullets hailing around over our heads. The German murderers are running about like poisoned mice, they leave hundreds of horses, cattle and pigs at the train station, but they didn't forget us... they drive us into the train cars with the goal of taking us back to Germany. Or who knows where else the murderers had in mind.

18. Facing Death in Buchenwald

We dragged ourselves along for five days in cold freight cars, and almost entirely without food. Only a couple of times, were we given small pieces of bread, which we wolfed down immediately. We were brought to Buchenwald, in the biggest death camp of the 'detainees.' A host of S.S. troops received us, who had surly dogs; they surrounded the train, tore open the doors, and shouted out: '*Arrunter!*' The dogs started to bark and tore at their chains. In this manner, we were driven into the large camp, which was cordoned off with electrified wire, apart from iron picket fences, as if it were a formidable cage for wild animals. A terror seized us because of the unknown fate that awaited us. We heard some things about Buchenwald, and what these

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72 Because this is the word for a 'butcher,' it may be a trade-designated name, rather than a family name.

73 In Yiddish this could mean someone who 'prepares onions.' The intent is not clear.

human beasts were skilled at, and accordingly, we well-appreciated our own perils. An order came: 'Undress and voluntarily turn over any valuables and also documents.' Those who had solitary valuables, such as a watch, a ring, or a coin, immediately threw it into the surrounding mud, and stepped on it, so it not fall into the hands of the hated Germans. Everyone had to put the clothes into a sack that he received, with the promise that it will be returned.

We were admitted to the bath one at a time, and everyone received an oral examination, and also of the private parts, to see that no precious stones were hidden there. Upon leaving the bath, we did not see our clothing anymore, instead we were given linen suits and wooden shoes, and we obtained the appearance of true concentration camp inmates. When I looked around the large block to where I had been driven, I no longer saw any *landsman* from Ger.

In Buchenwald, at that time, we were told that there were about 100,000 slave- [laborers]. The largest part were Jews, but there were also Poles, and some Germans. I was in the Hell of Buchenwald for four weeks, and after that, also had a taste of the most horrifying work-camp Remsidor-Neumark, where there were two factories, of margarine and the second – a benzine distillery, which was being extracted from coal. If it was bitter in Buchenwald, then here – it was like death... we get no food, and even no water to drink; the workplace is located five kilometers from the camp – to where we must go on foot, and work 18 hours a day, always on our feet, hungry and thirsty, so how long will we be able to last? It does not seem credible that I will live through this. Every day it is necessary to appear for a roll call. Every day, here in Remsdorf, many people die of hunger, apart from those who are killed in the daily bombardment. The margarine factory was blown up and totally destroyed, and also the distillery was damaged. Every bomb that would explode, would elicit great joy among us, even though the explosion endangered our lives. 'Let my soul perish with the Philistines,' ever one of us whispered: I may die, but along with the Germans...

On a certain early morning, a detachment of S.S. troops appeared again, with dogs, and we were driven to the train, and there, loaded onto freight cars. For four days and nights, the train slogged back and forth. We remained standing at a small train station, surrounded by forest. There, we were ordered to disembark, and under a heavy guard of S.S. troops and Ukrainians, we were led into the forest. We understood that this was the end. And no matter how peculiar this might seem, it didn't frighten us; from each face, the thought shone: – we will die, but you too are going to have a bitter end...

19. Свобода Братя **– You are Free, Brothers!**

At that moment, the radio-telephonist of the station ran over, and whispered something in the ear of the senior officer, and we were ordered to run back to the train. As hard as it was to run back, we derived extreme pleasure from watching the fear that had fallen upon the low-life Germans, who merely twenty minutes ago acted so haughtily towards starved out and unarmed slaves. A squadron of Allied airplanes then flew over us, and it began to hail bombs and shells. Many Jews fell, but many more saw themselves an opportunity to flee.

I fled, but the Germans yet organized a hunt with autos and tracking dogs, and were able to take back several hundred people, among which I also was captured. We were brought to Czechoslovakia, and here we were overwhelmed by the sympathy shown to us by the Czech populace. From all sides, they threw bread to us, and a variety of foodstuffs, paying no heed to the threats of the S.S. personnel, who were well armed.

Still, we were further brought to Theresienstadt, and when I looked around at the several hundred slaves in the large block, I was struck with a fright: they did not look human, but like the living dead, skeletons, wraiths, that had emerged from the grave, and look out at the world with wild, frightened and bloodshot eyes...

In Theresienstadt, we were thirty thousand Jews, and ten thousand non-Jews. We knew that not far away, large crematoria could be found, and the Germans were preparing to put an end to us. But they were not able to implement their plan. On one morning a host of planes appeared in the sky and there ensued an explosion of the bombs, and cannon fire, which went on for an hour's time. Suddenly it fell silent, and when we ran to the windows and doors, from which the Germans had disappeared, we saw a huge Russian tank, and in the open hatch a soldier was standing with an automatic weapon, and shouted out: – Свобода Братя – You are free, brothers!

In the first moment, I did not believe my eyes, and it took a long time for me to adjust to being overwhelmed. I am free! Free!... and the first thing I thought of was my family. In my heart, a spark flickered, that I will yet find one of them. If this sort of a miracle had occurred, and I remained alive, maybe God helped them as well – so I thought – and my first thought was to travel to Poland. I was issued a travel ticket, and I received a small package of food, and I traveled to Warsaw and from there, on the *Koleika* to my birthplace, Ger. On my arrival in Ger, Gabriel came to me from the opposite direction – the son of Shimon Pilberg. We embraced each other and kissed one another. After all, we had returned from the 'other world,' and the first thing that I asked was, if he knows anything about my family. He knew nothing, and he advised me that I should go to the Jewish administration, and they will give me some help in the form of a specific sum, and I will be able to make an inquiry with the Jewish Central Committee, to determine if there is anyone left alive from my family. I did so. The administration made an inquiry withe the Central Committee. It took several weeks, and all the research and questioning of survivors produced no result. I then decided to sell my house, for a pittance, and I traveled to Bytom (?), to see if possibly I might find my child there, or at least whatever it might be news about my family. I found no one from my family, and not even any information about them. Nobody had seen them, or heard from them, and my hopes began to run out. To my great misfortune, I remained the only one, orphaned from my entire family. But a living Jew has to continue living, in order to anger our enemies, and this is what kept me alive. I lived with the thought that I have to live despite them, and to frustrate them. I signed up for training and decided to make *aliyah* to the Land of Israel.

Not only once did I contemplate taking my own life. What am I? – a branch broken off of a tree... but I decided: a Jew must not do this, he has to go on living to cause the Germans anger...

20. To the Land of Our Forefathers

At that time, this was not among the easier things to do. The English ruled the land, and in order to satisfy the Arabs, they did not let any Jews in. It was necessary to make *aliyah* illegally, and steal across the border. But after what I had lived through under the Germans, this didn't frighten me.

After several weeks of training, where we cultivated a bit of land, and raised chickens, a leader came to us, and we set out on our journey. Without passports and visas, we had to 'clandestinely cross' the border of Poland into Czechoslovakia, from there to Austria, from Austria to Italy we had to go through a very difficult and long way, and had to climb the Tyrol Mountains. But we had no choice, and finally, we arrived in Milan.

In Milan, we were launched on a small ship – a party of eight hundred Jews – which had to avoid the English cruisers that guarded the shores of Israel, and smuggle ourselves into Jaffa. We sailed at night, and also in a totally dark night, we attempted to smuggle ourselves in, with half shuttered lights, in the Jaffa port, but before we attempted to turn in, an English warship uncovered our presence. English sailors immediately boarded our ship, took over the rudder and sailed the ship to Cyprus.

It was destined for me, after having tasted all of the German camps, to have to taste the taste of an English camp on the island of Cyprus. I was interned there for 13 months, and on the Eve of Passover of 1948, I was set free, and along with a group of internees, we came to the Land of Israel. This was shortly before the proclamation of the State. After this, I was a witness that looked on with pride, and also assisted with all my might, in the heroic war of the '*Haganah*' against the Arab countries that attacked the fledgling nation.

I found very few *landsleit* in Israel, who had survived the Nazi Holocaust, excepting a small number of fellow townspeople, who by a miracle saved themselves from extermination: some in cellars, and others – with the partisan brigades, and few, very few, such as myself, whom Hitler ימ"ש found himself unable to incinerate. I received no news about my children and large family.

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I have written down only a small part of the torture and terror that I lived through. Let this writing remain as a '*Kaddish*' for my name, after my time comes to be gathered in with my parents and with my tortured and incinerated family, who were exterminated in *Sanctification of the Name* – together with our six million martyrs and innocents, may their blood be avenged!

When the law was passed in Germany to create compensation for those who had suffered under Nazi occupation, I categorically refused to take compensation, and in a Yiddish periodical in Tel-Aviv, I openly made a declaration that said:

" I ask that you print the following letter in your newspaper:

I am a former concentration camp inmate, who languished in the camps of Buchenwald, Skarżysko *Werke* 'A,' Częstochowa, Remsdorf, Neumark, etc. I was liberated in Theresienstadt on the 18th of May 1945. From Rembertów-Neumark to Theresienstadt, 7,000 Jewish concentration camp inmates were transferred, and after arriving in Theresienstadt, not more than 500 were left, with the rest having been shot along the way.

Before the war, I and my family, which consisted of a wife and 9 children. Lived in Ger. I was a glazier.

After the liberation, I was in Ger, and there I encountered my destroyed home. All my nine children and my wife were cremated in Treblinka and Auschwitz.

It is hard for a person who had not gone through the Nazi terror, to imagine what it is that I suffered in the German concentration camps. But I would forgive them for what it was that I underwent, that I had to nourish myself with offal and feces, that I had to go in wintertime barefoot and naked, and at the same time work 16 hours a day continuously, and very often be the recipient of beatings.

I cannot, however, forgive the Germans for the murder of my nine children and my wife. And I cannot stand the thought of taking reparations money for the blood of my family.

It occurs to me, that when I will come, in some time in the future to the Other World, and met with my children, they will ask: Papa. Did you take money for us?... No! I will take no money from the Germans! I am forbidden to forgive!

I would be agreeable to taking the reparations money from the Germans, in order to construct a large museum in Israel, and to display the pictures of the horror of the German world-murderers, and what they did to us Jews.

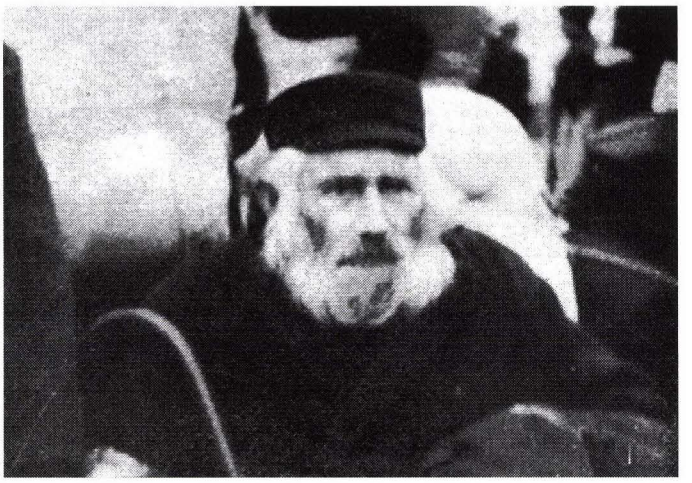
Let the name of *Amalek* be forever erased, that had eradicated our people! I don't want any reparations, and I will not take it."

Azriel Zwillich

Three Jews Were Left in Ger...

By Heniek[74] Prajs

Rescued by Christians Under Mortal Danger



Page 364: *Getzl the Porter with an Armband, in the Ger Ghetto*

The *shtetl* of Góra Kalwaria is thirty kilometers to the south of Warsaw; Jews called it Ger. What Polish Jew hadn't heard of the *shtetl* of Ger? This, after all, was where the residence was found of R' Abraham-Mordechai Alter – the *Rebbe* of Ger. By the side of the road, beginning at *Ulica* Pulaska in Warsaw, where the small building of the south-side rail station was located, a small train line extends, and on it, runs a '*Czuchcza'* – a small locomotive with three cars, that makes the Warsaw-Ger trip with 'lightning speed' – taking less than – 2 hours. Most people avoid this method of transport: there are more comfortable and faster ways of travel available: autobuses. This time, I passed over such comforts, and ascended into the onetime '*Koleika*,' which today is called '*Czuchcza*.' And so I sit in the half-empty car, and I recall a Friday, or the eve of a Festival, when these cars were overfilled and packed from all sides with *Hasidim*, who were traveling to their *Rebbe* in Ger.

In every little town that we go through, the '*Czuchcza*' stops, and from it, peasant women debark with empty milk cans and baskets. And here, I am in Góra Kalwaria – Ger.

Apart from the people in the street, everything recalls the pre-war *shtetl*: the diminutive wooden houses, the market with the peasant-style wagons, the rivulets running in the streets, from which the women draw water. .

Outside the *shtetl*, two large factories have been built: the chemical factory of 'Inka,' and the fruit and vegetable conserve factory 'Harteks.' the sports equipment factory 'Szermierz' has ben enlarged and mechanized from its pre-war condition. In these factories, the largest part of the people employed came from the local populace.

In the year 1940, the Jews from Ger were sent out by the Hitlerists to the Warsaw Ghetto, and shared in the fate of the Warsaw Jews.

There were four thousand of them, out of which only three survived...

Who are these three Jews who now live in Ger? All of them are occupied with gardening. I sit in their domiciles and I hear out what they have to tell. Every telling is the story of a Jew, over which

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[74] A likely elision of Henryk

the bloody occupier had carried out a death sentence – and in accordance with the satanic plan of 'The Final Solution to the Jewish Problem,' – a death sentence decreed for an entire people, to which that Jew belonged.

Three remained alive thanks to refined Polish people. Recollections from 27 years come back, and it seems as if this was first yesterday, the day before yesterday...

– 'We cannot forget this, we must not forget this!' – David Weissbord cries out, today Henryk Mayewsky, with whom I am now speaking.

Chaim-David Weissbord – then still a 16 year-old youth – lived together with his parents in the *shtetl* of Warka – Jews called it Vurkeh. In the year 1941, the Jews are 're-settled' into the Warsaw Ghetto. His parents are murdered there. Chaim is induced to flee. Half naked and hungry, he comes to Mniszew (Miszew) near Ger. It is the winter of 1942. He skips over the village, and cannot decide, on the door of which hut to knock. He does not know anyone here, nor does anyone know him. He takes stock of the danger, that threatens everyone, who might want to offer him even minimal help. For this guilt, the punishment is – death! With fear, he knocks at a wooden, dilapidated hut, sunk in the snow. An elderly woman opens the door. Not uttering a word, he enters the house, closing the door behind him. For the first time in a long time – he is in a warm house. The weak light from the oil lamp falls on the frightened face of the woman. Not waiting for whatever she might say to him, he calls out to her: 'I am a Jew, who has fled from the Warsaw Ghetto, I beg you – save me'...

Chaim looks at her with a strained, anticipating look: what will the woman reply to him? How will she react to his plea? But the woman remains silent, and utters not a word... she locks the door, drapes the windows, and pours warm water into a bowl. Chaim washes himself over. On the table, food is already waiting for him.

Sofia Mayewska – that is the woman's name, and she was a widow, and lived together with her brother Stanislaw. They owned a small parcel of land, tiring themselves out, in the process of trying to make a living. They said to Chaim, that he could remain with them for three days. When the three days passed, the brother dug out a pit near the stable, and camouflaged it very well. In the pit, it was only possible to stand up. Chaim hid himself there. Sofia and her brother, Stanislaw, watched, to assure that no eye would fall on that spot. At night, they took him into the house.

In that same village, the Hitlerists uncovered a bunker with hidden Jews. The village was then surrounded by gendarmes, and police armed with grenades. They also searched the house of the Mayewska woman, but they didn't come near the pit. After this incident, Mrs. Mayewska worked up a document for Chaim Weissbord under the name of Henryk Mayewsky. And Chaim passed himself off as a son of hers. Nevertheless, he did not abandon the pit. He spent 711 days there. Yes, he exactly counted the days, seven hundred and eleven...

The longed-for hour of liberation arrived. Henryk Mayewsky settled himself in a new domicile in Ger, with his mother – his savior – with the genteel lady, Sofia Mayewska.

Sofia Mayewska died a year earlier. Her son, Henryk Mayewsky, the daughter in-law, and two grandchildren – students – put flowers on her grave.

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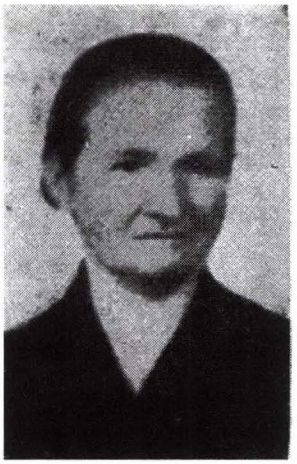
Page 367: (Top) Henryk Prajs

The second Jew from Ger, who was hidden and saved by Polish people, is Henryk Prajs. He was born and raised in Ger. He was a tailor by trade. During the outbreak of The Second World War, he found himself as a junior officer in the Polish military, where he took part in the September [sic: 1939] campaign. He fell into German captivity, from which he escaped, and returned back to Ger. '... and together with the remaining Jews, I was relocated to the Warsaw Ghetto.'

Prajs manages to wriggle his way out of there, and sets out for Magnuszew on the Pilica [River]. He wanders from village to village, sewing peasant's clothing for himself. At every minute, the danger lies waiting in ambush for him that he might fall into the paws of the Hitlerists. He turns back to Magnuszew. In the year 1942, the ghetto is liquidated, and the Jews are sent to nearby Kozienice, Prajs is sent for work in Chmielew, a village near Mniszew. When the work is ended, the group of Jews, together with Prajs, are sent out to Radom. The way there, goes through Magnuszew. Marching in the ranks, he espied a peasant that he knew – Jan Zwill. Prajs get a chance to tear away from the rank, and he takes him to his house in the nearby village of Ostrów. Prajs can remain in the house of the peasant Jan Zwill for a few days. But the latter does not leave him in God's care. He takes him over to a neighbor in the same village – to Jozef Dawiak. Six months, that means to the summer of 1943, he was hidden in his stable. However, even this location is under threat. Dawiak leads him over to his brother Isidor, in the village of Rozniszew. Because of someone informing on him he must leave the village after three months time. He takes leave of these gentle and good-tempered people with gratitude, who for nothing of any material value, demonstrated so much human goodness to him.



Page 367: (Bottom) (Left): Mrs. Katarzina

Where to go? In the surrounding towns, there no longer are any Jews – all have been 're-settled.' Jozef Wdawiak feels that he is not completely in his right mind; he makes an assessment of the hopeless plight of Henryk Prajs. He chases after him, and secretly leads him over to the second side of the Vistula River – in the direction of Garwolin.



Page 367: (Bottom) (Right) Zofia Mayewska

It is autumn – the golden Polish autumn. The clear rays of the sun irritate the eyes, which cannot tolerate the light. For him, it is like a powerful reflector, that is searching for its victim in the darkness. Prajs conceals himself in the thick growth at the shoreline of the Vistula, far from any [human] settlement. He lies hidden there for six days and nights. On the seventh day, by chance, a woman passed by who notices him. He does not flee. He recalls Jan Zwill, Jozef Wdawiak, and his brother Isidor – and this gives him courage. After all is said and done, he still believes in people. The woman is frightened. However, she immediately orients herself, and realizes that this is a Jew hiding himself. Prajs calms her, and carries on a conversation with the woman. Externally, she manifests a great deal of sympathy to him, but Prajs is not certain, whether or not this is genuine... the woman promised him that when it will get dark, she will come to him.

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Page 369: *H. Prajs at a gathering of Ger scions in the Land of Israel, conveying regards from Ger*

During all this time, the thought nagged him: shall he wait for her, or flee? Will this woman come back alone? Many thoughts insinuated themselves into his mind.

Towards evening, the sinking sun takes on the appearance of a golden orb, that wanted to dip itself into the waters of the Vistula. He hears the croaking of the frogs – the only sound that reminds him of there being life.

Now it is dark already. Despite this, he hears footfall. Prajs pays special attention. The sound of the steps becomes more and more pronounced. In the darkness, he makes out the contours of a feminine form.

Yes, it is her. She has come alone. The woman leads him to her home, in the village of Przewóz. Katalina Pokorska – that is her name – lived in this village with her husband and four children: three

daughters and a 24 year-old son. They were very poor people. She presented Prajs to the children as a relative of hers, who came for a visit. She also, later, presented him this way to the neighbors.

Two Jews fled from the transport to the death camp at Treblinka. The Hitlerists are carrying out assaults in the surrounding villages. They also come to the village of Przewóz. The German gendarmes also fall into the house of the Poko[r]ska woman, and find Prajs there. The woman does not lose control of herself. She presents him as a son of her own, and shows the birth certificate of her [real] son who was not present. The Germans believed her, and went away.

A while later, the Germans return. This time – S.S. and *Gestapo*. It is rumored that there is a Jew hiding here. Pokorska tells Prajs to lie down in bed. She covers him with a lot of straw, and then covers him with a sheet, and on top of this, she lays down the children, and covers them with a heavy blanket. The Germans search and snoop around, but they find nothing.

–Tell us where is the Jew? – the Germans ask.

– There is no Jew in my house – Mrs. Pokorska answers, in a confident tone. The murderers don't believe her, and they threaten her that if she doesn't tell them where he is, they will shoot her. They order her to take a shovel, and lead her out into the yard, so that she can dig out a pit. When the pit was already dug, the Hitlerists left the yard. Seeing her certainty, in the end, they believed her.

Prajs leaves the dwelling of the gentle and heroic woman, Katalina Pokorska. He wanders about for several months, from place to place, and in this way, he waits out the time, anticipating the long dreamed for liberation.

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The third Jew – Feliks Karpman – does not want to talk about that gruesome time: He even becomes upset, when he learns about the purpose of my visit to him. 'So many years have already gone by, and for what purpose do we have to return to them?' – he argues. Beside him sits an elderly graying woman, and hearing what the subject is, she presents herself to me with a good-humored smile: 'I am Helena Konarzewska. Feliks Karpman is my son[75]'...

The Konarzewska woman remembered everything perfectly – the dates and details of what took place at that time, were related by her in a very precise manner. Karpman sits and is silent; he nods his head as a form of concurrence that this was indeed what had happened.

'... and from the work camp in Korczow, he fled in April 1943. Karpman returns to Ger and goes to a peasant he knows – Julian Szymanski who lives with his parents. They agree to hide Karpman.

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[75] Despite the reference to being 'my son,' Feliks Karpan was actually Helena Konarzewska's son-in-law, being married to her daughter, Marianna. It is possible she used this reference because he was an orphan.

... and when the front drew nearer, the Germans 're-settled' the local Polish populace that lived there, among them also Julian Szymanski and his parents. Feliks then came to me. I knew him very well before the war, because he studied in school with my sons. He hid himself with me until the liberation."

Once There Was a City and Mother in Israel. . .

By Menashe Orzekh
New York



Page 373: At the unveiling of the memorial stone on the grave of our landsman, *Abraham Greifman in Buenos-Aires, a former active participant of the Book Committee.*

On a beautiful and quiet Saturday morning, our little *shtetl* Ger was shaken up by an earthquake. The houses all trembled, and the people began to look around in fright. This is the way we sensed the explosion at the famous Citadel[76] in Warsaw. It was a further reverberation of the attempts being made by a group of so-called extremists. This explosion, however, touched the Jewish residents closely, and unsettled them, and especially the young people

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76 Cytadela (Polish for Citadel) is a 19th-century fortress in Warsaw, Poland. It was built by order of Czar Nicholas I after the suppression of the 1830 November Uprising in order to bolster imperial Russian control of the city. It served as a prison into the late 1930s.

After Poland regained her independence in 1918, the Citadel was taken over by the Polish Army. It was used as a garrison, infantry training center, and depot for materiel. During the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, its German garrison prevented *Armia Krajowa* units from the city center from linking up with units from northern Warsaw's Żoliborz district. The fortress survived the German occupation and in 1945 became again Polish Army property.

of the *shtetl.* And [it was] not for nothing. The Ger police immediately undertook a mass-roundup of the Jewish cultural activists, and took out of their peaceful Sabbath sleep, the members of the leadership of the library, and the active doers of the professional [union] movement. It was on them that suspicion fell that they had taken part in this conspiracy.

I remember when they took out Mendl Kammer, who died young, out of his house, one of the founders of a professional union in Ger. Freida Hamburg was also arrested, the daughter of Itcheh-Meir the *Shokhet*, one of the most active builders and workers of the people's library, who later drew herself back from the activity, and became a good observant Jewish daughter.



Page 374: At an annual memorial assembly in Tel-Aviv, in which Menashe Orzekh from New York participated, and Abraham Prajs, who lives in Ger. The proceedings are being conducted by the Secretary of the organization, Menachem Ben-Uri.

The tremor from the Citadel also shook up my own thoughts quite a bit. I began to think further about the situation, and became a member in a professional union, and after that, also in the Yiddish people's library, or as our father called it: 'The Unclean Place." And the further I invested my time in this work, the more beloved our famous little *shtetl* became to me, with its beautiful blossoming youth, and with all of its political and partisan conflicts, which brought so much life and elevation into the settlement.

It was not possible to be comparable to Ger. This was a *shtetl* of genuine Jewish spirituality, on the one side, a mighty stream of *Hasidim*, which on its own level, strove for a Kingdom of Heaven, and from the other side – an imposing movement of the youth, who wanted to bring that heaven down here on earth, in its way. Peretz Markish, who gave a number of talks at the library, was beloved in our *shtetl.* Yaakov Pat, who was among the first of the speakers to be with us, would say, that he is not a *Hasid* of the *Rebbe* of Ger, but he is a '*Hasid* of Ger.' I recall one theme in one of his speeches:

'Parents and Children in the Yiddish Literature.' Leo Finkelstein was a quite often and highly beloved guest who came to us. The same can be said for Dr. Joseph Kruk. Melech Ravitch had a special pleasure in spending time with out young people, on Friday nights, over a glass of tea. And for weeks later, we would be commenting on the spiritually rich conversations.

It is especially necessary to recollect Alter Kaczisne, who died tragically, and was intensely loved by the youth, and was a frequent guest in Ger. It is also necessary to stress as a characteristic curiosity for Ger, the visit of the world-famous writer, Ilya Ehrenburg, who, together with Juliusz Tuvim, came to visit the *Rebbe* of Ger, on a beautiful Saturday morning, and rode in a coach, up to the *Rebbe's Bet HaMedrash*, to participate in *Shacharit* services...

If they weren't upbraided right on the spot, it is only thanks to the intervention of Aharon Poznansky, who saved the guests from *Hasidic* ire. There already had been an incident of this sort with a Jewish writer, who cut himself off rather badly. '*The Swarthy One*" on the Eve of Yom Kippur marched into the *Rebbe's* synagogue with his walking stick in hand, to *Kol Nidre*, at which the *Hasidim* administered a lashing to him with his own walking stick...

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Page 376: *Yaakov Jurkiewicz and his wife, Lipa Helman and his wife, Alta Gelmanowicz and Sheva Greifman, at the monument to the Six Million Martyrs in Buenos-Aires.*

Aharon Poznansky was the sole Jewish employee in the Ger Magistrate, a very intelligent young man, who was highly considered and beloved in the settlement. He was the founder of the people's library, which later on bore the name of the great Yiddish classical writer Yitzhak-Leibusz Peretz. The library had over two thousand volumes, and developed a very broad-branched cultural activity. For us, the young people, the library was a school and a loving home, that we will never forget.

And how can one forget so radiant a personality as that of Sarah Hamburg? A loyal friend, and a committed activist in the progressive movement, whom we would lovingly called 'Nuskeh.' And such decent and loving people, as Moshe Heilikman, are so difficult to find. He died such a tragic death in the Soviet Union after the invasion of the Nazis. The youth welded Ger and Grojec together in one friendly family, and transformed these two neighboring towns into a center of a societal Jewish life, that spread its influence over the entire surrounding vicinity.

For thousands of *Hasidim*, Ger was a Holy Place, the residence of the Holy *Rebbe*, whose name need not even be brought out here. It is told that *Hasidim*, who followed a variety of *Rebbes*, would meet while on the way, one asking the other, to which *Tzaddik* are you traveling? So a Ger *Hasid* would answer the question by pointing a finger heavenwards... In actuality, the *Rebbe* of Ger was a great personality, and he died at the age of 92, and one of the members of the Ger dynasty, Itcheh-Meir Levin, took on the portfolio of a ministry in the Cabinet of Ministers of Israel. There were many interesting personalities in Ger, who gave importance and visibility to the settlement.

The destruction of Ger began in the month of September 1939, when the Nazis, may their names be erased, occupied the *shtetl*, and established a ghetto, that began on *Ulica* Czorny-Dwor, and ran till it reached the *Rebbe's* house on Ulica *Kalwaryjska.* The ghetto-*Gehenna* lasted until the year 1941. Four weeks after *Sukkot*, the Nazis gave a laconic order: 'Leave your houses and take no more than fifteen kilos of baggage.' And so, our fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, small children and old people, arose to prepare themselves for their last journey. People left their home with tears in their eyes, and left all of their possessions in God's hands – to become plunder but their surrounding gentile neighbors. Others gave away their possessions, to whatever '*Pan* Enemy,' under an oath on all the members of the Trinity, that he will guard it, and return it.

All the Jews were driven together by the mill, and afterward, packed into freight cars... what came afterwards is hard to describe, and even painful to think about, because I feel tears welling up in my eyes, and that there are no words in human expression, that have yet been created, to convey the inhuman deeds of the Germans and the super-human suffering of the Jews.

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The *shtetl* of Ger stands today whole, and untouched, with its houses and streets, with its two churches, with its marketplace, and with its [water] pump in the middle; with the gorgeous Vistula and with the same mountain. But there no longer is a Ger, only a Góra Kalwaria, as it is called by the Poles. The Jewish spirit, and Jewish life has vacated that place. There no longer are any *Hasidim*, and there is no more [Jewish] youth, no Peretz Library, and no Houses of Study, no secular schools, and no Yeshivas. Out of the more than four thousand Jewish residents, a few numbered Jews remain in the *shtetl*. One of them is Yom-Tov Peltz, a man who went through and survived all of the suffering of Treblinka and Majdanek, and who most certainly has a lot to tell about the destruction of the Jews in the Nazi gas-ovens.

At one time, there was a City and a *Mother in Israel*, and Ger was its name. May my modest words offer a sanctification of its memory.

The Survivors

By Lipa Helman

Before The Second World War, our little *shtetl* of Ger numbered more than six hundred Jewish families. After the war, in the year 1945, after Hitler's extermination campaign, the sum total of... only twenty Jews returned from the concentration camps, from the partisan brigades, and a variety of hiding places. Twenty Jewish souls out of a mere four thousand! This is the sorrowful total outcome of The Second World War. These were the survivors of the Jewish *shtetl*, Ger.



Page 381: Jews in the Ger Ghetto (On the Right: Zalman Friedman)

These, who 'survived by a miracle' returned as if coming from the Other World: skin and bones, starved out and tortured, in which the soul barely was able to sustain itself, living, wild-eyed skeletons. Not one of them weighed more than 42 kilos. They came 'home' with the hope of finding their families, their parents, sisters and brothers, wives and children. This was the hope that helped them to withstand all the suffering of the Hitlerist *Gehenna*.

However, they found no one. There no longer was a little Jewish *shtetl* of Ger. The streets were '*Judenrein*.' The Jewish houses were occupied by Poles. No living soul of the family remained, no comrade or friend. There is no more a library, the temple of Jewish culture, with which the young people so prided them themselves. No more houses of study, where the Jews came with their prayers to God. No more 'Culture-League,' the Zionist organization, the professional unions. The murderers eradicated all of it. They tore out every aspect of Jewish life by the roots.

The Mardicks brothers returned to Ger after the war, Shlomo, Abraham and Mott'l; Yankl Ravsky, Yankl Prajs, Abraham Prajs, Chava Goldhecht, Pinia Weinberg, Yom-Tov Peltz, Gabriel Pilberg, Sarah Rosensweig, Hinde Szperling, Mordechai Szperling, Lejzor Messing, Joseph Messing. Herschel Poloniecky, Lipa and Baylah Helman with two children, Israel Gottleib, Feiga Taman, Yankl Finkelstein, Yitzhak Czerenszoss, Mendl Czerenszoss and Rachel Garfinkel. These are the survivors, who came back to Ger after Hitler's butchery.

I entered my home, in which a Pole whom I knew occupied, with his family. To my greeting, he did not respond. – What do you want? – he asked me coldly. I told him that I did not want more than one room, because I had nowhere to turn to with my wife and two children. – In great sadness – he answered me cynically – but I have all of the rooms occupied, and I need them for my family... In that time, I knew I could take a room using the police; but I was afraid to live in such a house with the children, such a gentile would not have stopped short of any sort of crime, in order to get rid of the Jews...

The Magistrate's office settled us into an old synagogue building, but I came to the conclusion that the lives of my children were in danger. An adult Jew was not accosted in the street, much less so in the light of day. In the main, the Jews were looked upon coldly, as if in disappointment that they remained alive. But the young gentile children harassed the Jewish children mercilessly, running after them and hurling imprecations, throwing stones at them, and beating them.

Because of this, I made my way to the 'Jewish Committee' in Warsaw, and requested a place for my children in a more secure Jewish home. As it appeared, I was not the only one in this situation, and the Committee immediately took away the children, and sent them off to one of the child colonies outside of Otwóck. There, they were treated well, and were taught, and they were in the colony for the entire time until we left Poland.

The twenty some-odd orphaned Jews felt in their old 'home' like they were in a cemetery. No thought was given as to how one could settle in locally, but rather how one could, and where to flee. How can one live on the soil that was precisely where our most beloved were tortured and murdered? And here, before our very eyes, stood the torturers and murderers, who are living in our houses, sleeping in our beds, wearing our clothing... Singly and in pairs, we began to flee, to whatever corner of the world. One might have a relative in Canada; a second – in Brazil; a third – in Africa; so with the help of the 'Jewish Committee' in Warsaw, we set out to travel to our own, and people from home.

The minority, that stayed behind, would come together daily, in sorrow, broken and beaten, having no place to find for themselves. [In the past] candlelight would shine out of every window on the Sabbaths, which told that it was a festive time among the Jews; today, the Jewish candle is extinguished; what flickers from only a few windows is the glow of small lamps beside icons.

The Jewish Cemetery is Desecrated

In Ger there were two synagogues: a community *Bet HaMedrash* and the *Rebbe's* synagogue. The Poles then transformed the *Bet HaMedrash* into a municipal bathhouse, and the *Rebbe's* synagogue into a storage facility for a variety of merchandise. The *Rebbe's* house was made over into a school. The Jewish cemetery was located four kilometers from the city, and immediately nearby – the Polish-German cemetery. Only the Jewish *Sacred Place* had been trampled and desecrated, the gravestones torn out, and the fence vandalized, and everything smoothed over with earth. There was the location of the 'Mausoleum' of, the father of the *Rebbe* of Ger, the '*Sfat Emet*,' of which also no trace remained. Everything eradicated, torn out by the roots, the graves desecrated, and the sole remaining item were the bones strewn around all over the field.

Those few of us Jews who remained, decided not to lose any time, and immediately buried the bones, and also to erect a fence. Every morning, we went to the cemetery, gathered the bones, and remnants, and buried them. We made a bounding fence, and a Ger *Hasid* from a nearby *shtetl* came to help us, and he erected a memorial stone on the place where the Mausoleum of the *'Sfat Emet*,' had stood.

In time, new graves were added. Itcheh Smoliaszh returned from a concentration camp, but he returned both sick and beaten down, a living corpse. We looked after him and helped him. We took him to a doctor, and provisioned him with medicines, but it did not help – the long years of torture he endured from the concentration camp broke him, and when he died, we buried him in the cemetery. We also gave a Jewish burial to Shimon Pilberg ע"ה, whom the Nazis shot on the other side of the Vistula. His son, Gabriel, who was – along with all of us – remained alive out of a sheer miracle, knew where the dead body of his father lay; and so together with him, we exhumed the remains, and buried him [properly] in the *Sacred Place.*

The Nazi sympathizers and followers in Ger, the Polish anti-Semites, did not, however, give up their battle against the Jews, both the living and the dead. On one morning, when we came to the cemetery, we found the fence had been broken down in many places, and a grave desecrated. We immediately formed a delegation, and went off to the priest of the *shtetl.* With tears in his eyes, one of us asked him, whether the Catholic Church can permit such desecration of the dead, starting with disinterring the dead from their graves, and then desecrating a *Sacred Place*, that should be respected by every human being.

The living Jews here have been tortured and murdered, why are the dead not allowed to rest in their graves? We, a small remnant of survivors, who are beaten down, have, with the last of our energies, put a fence around the cemetery, gathered together the bones of our nearest, that were strewn about, left for the beasts of the field, and have buried them, and Poles have come and again desecrated the place of 'eternal rest,' as you call it...

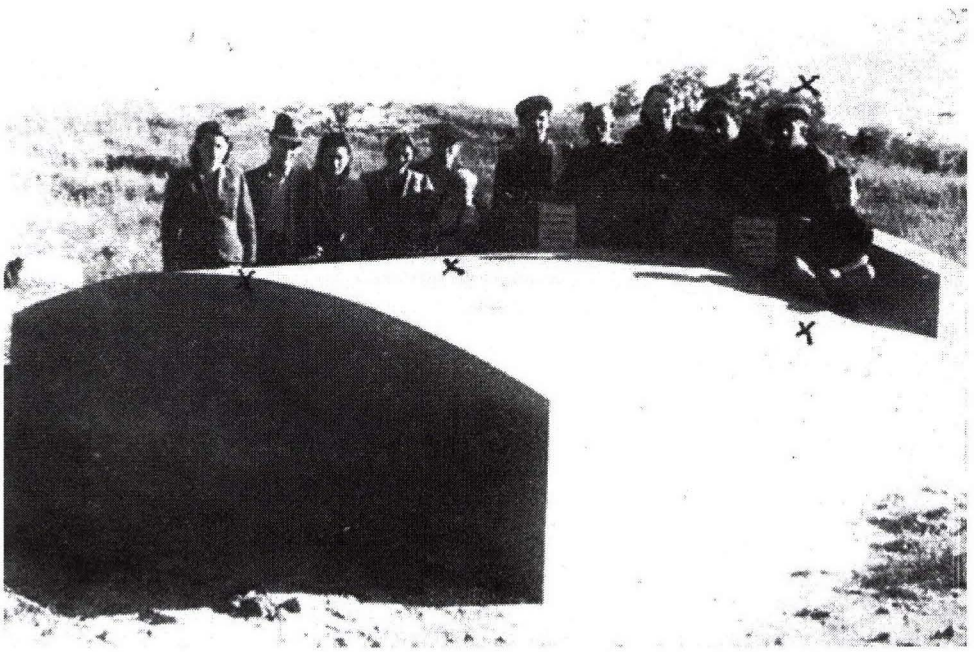
With a lowered head, the priest heard us out, and afterwards said:

– I will do everything, so that such a disgraceful misdeed will never happen again. In church, this coming Sunday, I will speak about this in my '*Missa*,'and I will tell them that they should let live, and help those who, with God's help, were saved out of the six hundred Jewish families, that used to live among us, and they should let the remains of these '*starozakoniekas*[77]' rest in their graves. It is a great sin to desecrate the honor of the dead, and a good Catholic should be ashamed of such deeds...

[After this] the cemetery was no longer desecrated, but a short time thereafter, the Kielce Pogrom erupted, where the Poles followed the example of the Nazis, and murdered tens of living Jews, men, women and children. We decided not to remain any longer on this accursèd soil. I took my children out of the colony, and went off to Argentina. The others set out for other countries. Only two Jews remained in Ger, as a memory, that in this settlement not very long ago, six hundred Jewish families lived, whom the Nazis exterminated, and the small remnant driven away, with the help of their Polish partners...

The Shtetl of Ger After the War

Ger starts at the '*Koleika*,' which runs from Warsaw, the first street by the tracks is called Pijarska. This street and all of the nearby side streets were inhabited by Jews. Now one does not see a single living Jew. A couple of hundred meters from that street is the Polish Old Age Home and Orphanage. There were never any Jews there. The building is whole, and appears to be occupied, as it was before the war.



Page 385: Ger survivors who erected the destroyed mausoleum of the 'Sfat Emet' *in the Ger Cemetery*

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77 From the Polish, for 'venerable religious people.'

A bit further away from the Old Age Home, was a densely populated Jewish area. All the houses were Jewish, but all of these houses are damaged, without windows, doors, and also roofs, as would be expected after a destruction. Others have remained more-or-less intact, but this is a rather small number, – in which Poles [now] reside.

I pass the home of Mendl *Shammes*, of which only walls remain standing; the same, a bit further on, are the houses of Israel and Yoss'l Broder, and Herschel Mardicks, where on the hot summer day, we would cool off with a portion of ice cream. Also, the house of the Jewish baker, Yaakov-Nathan Zurek, is destroyed. Diagonally across the way is the *Rebbe's* courtyard, and the Great Synagogue, where thousands of *Hasidim* would pray. There, I encountered a Christian, who showed me the place where the Germans shot Pinia Ravsky, when he came out of the *Bet HaMedrash.*

Not far from the *Rebbe's* courtyard was a cafeteria, the lady owner of which was known as 'Talented Breindl.' There, one could get a good glass of tea with a cheese roll, or with something else to eat. Nearby is the community synagogue, of which only the walls remain. The Germans made a bath house out of the synagogue, and shortly before their downfall they destroyed the bath house.

A step away from there was the house of Sarah the lady Saloon Keeper, which her children ran: Moshe, Israel and Matt'l Goldstein. The house, however, bore the name of the Lady of the House, and that was the way it was said: – I am going to Sarah the Lady Saloon Keeper,' or 'I am coming from Sarah the Lady Saloon Keeper.' There one could get a good piece of something healthy to eat, a portion of gefilte fish, or a piece of Warsaw Wurst. And in addition to this, you understand, an incomparable glass of Jewish tea, and in rare instances, even a small snort of whiskey, or a glass of beer on the hot summer days. There, the common folk of the *shtetl* would gather, mostly the Jewish wagon drivers, and porters, when they managed to have some spare time. In the restaurant was the place they conducted their business, and whoever needed a wagon driver, or a porter, had to go into the restaurant of Sarah the Lady Saloon Keeper.

Near Sarah the Lady Saloon Keeper, were the houses of the '*kradnikehs*'– as the innkeepers were called in Ger[78] – Mattes *Kradnik*, Mott'l Nahum's, Meir Birnbaum, the Dozor David Kelmanowicz, the contractor. A little further on, there are a variety of Jewish stores, and the hair dressers, Samek and Naphtali Becker. Not a living trace has remained from all of them; the houses are half disassembled, and those that have a remaining door and gate, gentiles reside.

Starting at *Ulica* Pijarska, which leads to *Ulica* Koszara, one can see cannons put out, and on *Ulica* Kalwaryjska, which today carries the name of Pilsudski, the cross of a Catholic church pierces the

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78 Seemingly from the Russian word красть, meaning 'to steal, to pilfer from.' Think of the lyric from the song 'Master of the House' in 'Les Misérables:'

'Here a little cut,
There a little slice,
Charge 'em for looking
In the mirror twice...'

sky. The city quarter has remained intact, because during the war, Ger practically was unscathed by bombardment, and the Jewish houses were abandoned, and pulled apart piecewise by the surrounding neighbors.

The city marketplace is not far from the church. And diagonally across are the Magistrate and the police circle. Every Tuesday, Jewish merchants would put out their merchandise on display, in booths, and on tables, and the peasants from the surrounding villages would bring their produce here. Also, Jewish merchants would come here from the surrounding towns, such as Grojec, Warka, Piaseczno and others. On Friday, there would be a fish market. Jewish fishermen that were especially known were the Sperlings, Lipa and Blima; El'yeh Fisher, Benzia Frug and Vehveh Kzipak, – such market events no longer take place – a Pole said to me.

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The Jewish butcher shops were near the Magistrate. From among the butchers, I remember: Lipa Sperling, Zlotagurska, Goldhecht, Herschel Jakubowicz, Israel Friedman, Moshe Jakubowicz, Yankl Szkuler, and Israel'keh Friedman. The butcher shops stand stripped bare, orphaned, with Jewish names written on the doors, and the *balebatim* have somewhere been killed in gas ovens...

Diagonally across the butcher shops were the ironmongeries of Meir Zucker, Moshe *Eizenkremer*[79], Moshe Zilberberg and others. Among these businesses was the finest hairdressing salon in the city, that of Yitzhak Ribak. It was a mark of status to have your hair cut by him. The better-off young people of the city would have their hair cut by him. Off on the side, was a bicycle business of Yankl Lichtenstein, and also a wine store of El'yeh Arin. He had kosher wine for the Sabbath, and all the Jews were his clients.

This was all in the past. Now, several months after the war, I see only half-torn off doors, chopped up shutters, and dark holes, that instill fear in the passers-by. On the other side of the street, an important Jewish homeowner lived, Yankl Rappaport and his family, and nearby, was the bakery of Dob'eh Greifman. Behind the butcher shops, were the clothing stores. There, everything has been destroyed. As it seems, the stores were victimized in pogroms, and everything was carried away, even the police...

In that vicinity was a big business that manufactured drink, belonging to Binem Ravsky. He had a great output of alcoholic drinks, and also of markets outside the country. Near the Ravsky plant was the house of the *Bundist* organization, and the 'Culture-League.' Not far from there was the confection business of Mendl Messing. Tailors worked near this business: Yom-Tov Peltz, Beniek Prajs, and Lipa Helman. A little further on was the market of the Jewish cobblers and the municipal post office. Behind the post office, the mountains stretched to the Vistula, from which the Jewish water carriers would derive their meager sustenance with their pair of pails.

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79 The Yiddish word for an ironmonger, and may be an instance of a 'trade name.'

Not far from the Vistula, there was a Jewish soda factory, and not far from the municipal hall, where Jewish presentations and readings often took place. All of this stands intact and untouched, only the Jewish populace is missing, there being no more Jews, no more Jewish youth, no more Jewish life. Following the Szumanski Road behind the city, I encountered a Christian who told me that here, beside the Vistula, Mendl Goldberg hid himself for the entire period of the war, this being a son of Sholom-David. Many Poles knew about this, and a few even helped him out, some with a potato, others with a piece of bread. And he lived this way up till two days before the liberation. Two days before they left Ger, the Germans affixed a placard and through loudspeakers, announced that anyone who brings them a live Jew, will receive a half a *kertz*[80] of corn. There were several Polish hooligans to be found, who sold out the Jewish boy for the half *kertz* of corn. At that time, he was eighteen years old, but he was healthy and he put up a substantial fight, such that his attackers tied him up with barbed wire, brought him to the Magistrate and turned him over to the *Gestapo*. The hapless wretch pleaded and cried asking to be let to live, his entire family had been killed out, and he was the only one left... The Germans ordered that he be unbound, and he was ordered to run; but he no sooner had begun to run, when they shot at him with automatic weapons, and he fell under that barrage of bullets...

This was the tragic epilogue to Jewish life in Ger. This last drama of betrayal and murder played itself out two days before the liberation from the Nazi occupation, and now Ger is *Judenrein*. I went through all of the streets of the city, along their length and breadth, and did not encounter a single Jew...

A Cemetery Without Graves

By Leib'l Schreibaum
Chicago, United States

First of all, I will introduce myself. So many years have gone by, during which we have neither seen nor heard from one another, is it possible that we have forgotten? All of those who remained alive, who saved themselves from this global conflagration, undoubtedly went through a lot in their lives, and when one is preoccupied with one's own self, one forgets about the others. But how is it possible to forget one's friends from childhood and youth, and that homey town, where one was born and raised? Ger is deeply baked into my heart, and in my wanderings all over Russia, I never forgot my hometown. We didn't live in ease there, but there are many good memories and experiences that are bound up in me with Ger, which I will never forget.



Page 390: Naphtali Schreibaum and wife, son Yoss'l daughters and grandchildren.

[80] A local measure of dry volume. According the 1960 M. Tsanin *Dictionary*, one *kertz* is equivalent to 120 *litra* (around half a kg. each) Elderly survivors, who still remember daily life in Poland, recall '*kertz*' as being used to define a rather large amount of potatoes, wheat or barley.

I, little Leib'l Schreibaum, was the youngest son of R' Naphtali the Religious Leader. My grandfather was the Rabbi of the *shtetl,* who was also accorded the title of Religious Director, and he was renown in the area as a formidable scholar. And as was the case with many Rabbis and scholars in the small towns of Poland, he was far from being wealthy. And so, my father k"z lived, not to say, in penury, in what can be called 'genteel' poverty, and it did not come easy to him to maintain a 'stable bunch of eight.' We were eight children in the house, and I recollect a feeling of pride, with the type of deferential respect shown by the Jews of Ger to my father. He was a deeply religious man, but not any sort of fanatic, to the extent that he was very tolerant of our activity in the library, and the children did not have to conceal *'treyf-possul'* books from him – as the fanatics would call the Yiddish books – which they would bring from there.

When we grew up and became independent and able to support ourselves, we committed ourselves to community work with body and soul. This was the case with me, and all my brothers and sisters. The library was our second home. My older brother Yankl, was a member of the management of the institution, and at the same time, a leader in the Drama Circle. He had artistic talent, and not only once, he played the lead role, as in *Tevye the Milkman*, and others. Almost all of my brothers and sisters took part in the Circle, and in this area, they distinguished themselves with their abilities.

It is not entirely appropriate for me to write about my family and its contributions to the community. This would be best left to others. But the Hitlerist barbarians annihilated practically the entire Jewish population of the *shtetl,* and so who knows out of the few that do remain, how many remember the Schreibaums, and what they did in the Ger 'Culture-Palace,' as a few would call our library.

I was a sportsman, and I was active in organizing all of the sports sections at the library. My 'culture' was essentially physical, especially in my younger years, and I loved to use my body. For this reason, I was intensely enthusiastic about soccer. I played in the soccer league, and took part in almost all the matches. But my 'principal enthusiasm' was swimming. In the swimming section, I was the recognized chief, who taught everyone else swimming, and I was one of the best swimmers in the *shtetl.*

It is good to recollect those younger years, since they left happy experiences in my memory. I recollect many moments of my childhood and youth in Ger, with great pleasure. The calamity of the war descended on us suddenly, like a thunderclap on a beautiful summer day. It suddenly went dark, and together with the entire *shtetl*, that past life was truncated and chopped off. A desolating storm quickened along, and forever, it wiped out the Jewish *shtetl* of Ger.

When the war broke out, I was torn along with the stream that coursed along its way to Soviet Russia. The young, like myself, headed in that direction. Nobody knew where to flee or what to do. One knew that the danger was great, and that for Jews, that danger lay in ambush on all sides. It was necessary to flee from the Germans, but there was also a desire to flee from the Poles. Before



Page 392: Yankl Schreibaum, and His Wife and Children

the Nazis invaded Poland, they even more, poisoned the anti-Semitic atmosphere in the country, to the point where a Jew could no longer even breathe.

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I suffered for six long years in Soviet Russia, which is a chapter unto itself, and will now not get into. Every day, I thought about my family, and about Ger. I heard about the terrifying murders that the Germans were perpetrating against the Jewish populace, but I did not entirely believe it; I comforted myself by telling myself it was being exaggerated... propaganda... there is a need to present the enemy in the worst possible light... that is a natural manifestation. After all, you can't; kill off an entire people, or so I thought. And other Jews thought this way as well, whom I met in those places, far from the front line.

At the beginning of 1946, I set out on the road to my 'home,' back to Poland. I will find someone from my large family – I thought. Who could have imagined, that the tragedy would be so enormous? That out of thousands of Jewish families, only several far-flung and broken people would remain, who were afraid of their own shadow?...

I went through the Jewish streets of Ger, that looked like they had died, and did not see a single Jew. It was a cemetery without gravestones – I thought – a Jewish cemetery... a few Jewish houses were occupied, and there were Poles living in them. I could recognize this from the flower pots on the windows. In others – I saw Christian children playing in the doorways. I detained a bent over woman, and asked her, whether there might not be some Jews around here? She looked at me with frightened eyes and said to me:

– No, not here, they traveled off – and she waved her hand in an unspecified direction, and quickly walked away...

I was not far from the place where our team used to practice soccer, and I went through a short stretch, and remained standing at a distance. Here the following used to play: Sh. Ribak, Gutstadt, the Messings, the Mardicks brothers, the Peltz brothers, L. Helman, and many others. Where are you now, my dear friends?... The area was cordoned off with barbed wire, and a few pigs were grazing there...

I decided not to ask anyone anything anymore, not to search anymore, but rather however more quickly, to leave this accursèd land...

The Last Notes of Yaakov Prajs [81]

I was one of the few Jews who did not manifest a desire to flee from the Nazi invasion, and I remained in Ger when the Nazi destroyers entered there. The largest part of the Jewish populace from there fled – despite there being practically nowhere they could flee; one fled to 'wherever one's eyes pointed,' at least to avoid falling into the hands of the German murderers. I could not leave there, in a large measure because in that time, I had a wife and seven children – and with a large family, fleeing was not such a light undertaking.

And immediately as the German *Angels of Death* entered the city, the few Jews who remained there, immediately felt what brutal and bloody Nazi rule entailed. Each one felt it in his own way. They began to take Jews to do the filthiest and most dangerous type of work, where the unprotected people were frightfully abused. By fortune, I was not taken to work, because I was able to procure a document under a Polish name, Leopold Tomaszewski, and I also had a 'good appearance' and could pass for a 'racially-pure' Pole. In addition to this, I also had a *Volksdeutsche* as a partner, and together, we dealt in fruit, and I could have stayed for a long time doing this work.

However a day came, when all the Jews were gathered together and taken off to the Warsaw Ghetto – and under no circumstances did I want to remain as the only Jew in the formerly Jewish *shtetl* of Ger, where even the air was Jewish, and I also went off to Warsaw, together with my family, and the remnants of Jews, who, at that time, were still to be found in Ger. So long as Nazi troops remained in Ger, I no longer traveled there.

I remained in the Warsaw Ghetto and lived at Mila19, together with my wife and seven children, five boys, and two girls. For a period of time, I worked for the Germans outside the ghetto, together with a group of Jews. Our 'work' consisted of taking out the furniture from [the homes of] the Jews murdered or driven out from around Warsaw, and the furniture was transported over to *Ulica* Tlomackie, where the renown synagogue was located, and the furniture was thrown into the cellar and later sold off to Poles for a not cheap price.

And just as every person has their illusions, even in the worst of times, I hoped that I would get the opportunity to live through this, with my entire family, this terrifying and difficult time, until the Nazis experience a downfall. Sorrowfully, however, these anticipated better times did not come for me – because on a certain accursèd day, when I came home from work, I did not find my family, not my wife, not my children, הי"ד, and according to what my neighbors told me, what happened to my family was the same as happened to the six million martyrs, meaning that they were gathered up and sent off somewhere, to a death camp, gassed, and later incinerated in a crematorium. I better wished death upon myself, rather than remain alive under such circumstances. However, I did not want to

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[81] Our landsman Yaakov Prajs ע"ה, who was among the few, who for a longer time, lived in Ger during the Nazi occupation, and saved himself by miraculous means; afterwards, he made *aliyah* to Israel, where he passed away. He certainly had a lot to tell about what he lived through, but to our sorrow, he only left behind abbreviated notes, from which we are now composing this article for our *Yizkor* Book, '*Megillat Ger*.' – Ed.

commit suicide, in order that I be in a position to anger the Germans; but they simply did not let the Jews live, but also didn't let them die, those that they had a need for.

I 'lived' this way and had to work for the bloody Nazis, may their names be erased, until the month of April 1943, when the heroic uprising took place in the Warsaw Ghetto. It was 19 April 1943. On the first night of Passover, the Nazis initiated a 'total assault' against what still remained of the once large Jewish [populace] of Warsaw, and which was now crammed into and locked up in the crowded confines of the ghetto walls.

It is, self-evident, that it is not within my capabilities to convey much else but a pale portrait about this, and how this unbalanced battle looked, between the exhausted and starved Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto, against the Nazi thugs, who were armed with the most modern weapons, despite that much has already been written about it – and certainly not having conveyed it all. It is merely sufficient to say that the German murderers, apart from 'standard' weapons, of which they had a limitless number, also sent out airplanes against the unarmed (or poorly armed) Jews, and the airplanes dropped incendiary bombs, and a fire engulfed the entire ghetto.

I made an attempt to flee, and it happened to have worked for me, even though I really had no idea where to run to. My appearance and command of the Polish language, and my Polish name, Leopold Tomaszewski, helped me a lot. I went to wherever my eyes took me, and despite the fact that I knew that every failed attempt to escape meant a certain death, this did not deter me.

I myself had no idea where I was going, but I did know that, wherever I did choose to go, death would be standing before my eyes. And this death itself did not frighten me, but rather, I was frightened of the frightful torture that would come before death, which only the cruel Nazis were so expert at inflicting.

But fate led me, not knowing myself where I was going, until I came to a *shtetl* called Koloszka [82], which is found not far from Tłuszcz, but even there, I saw that my life was in danger. I then went off to a village near Koloszka, because I had no place where to hide from the Nazi beasts in human form.

From the distance, I saw a saloon-restaurant, where the Nazis were sitting and carousing, and I did not know what to do: should I put my life on the line and go in, because under a serious cross-examination, I am lost. I was hungry and thirsty, because I had gone for several days without eating or drinking, but as regards such 'ordinary' things, I was used to them, and was strong enough, and I hid myself, so that none of the Nazi cannibals would detect me, because if they did, my fate would then be sealed.

As I related at the beginning, I had a 'good appearance.' I looked like a genuine Pole, with blond hair, and blue eyes. In addition to this, in the most recent time, I let grow a long pair of moustaches,

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82 Possibly Wólka Kozłowska

and nobody, under any circumstances would suspect that I was a Jew, everyone accepting me as a genuine Christian on the basis of my appearance. But what would happen to me, if I fell into the hands of the *Gestapo*, I knew only too well. So I waited until late at night, and when the Germans left the saloon, I went in – thinking that by doing this, that whatever will happen to me, will happen, because I was tired of such a life.

When I went into the saloon, I did not run into the owner, but rather there was a woman, who served me, and brought me food at the table. While eating, she told me that her husband – a native-born Pole – was sent to a camp. I told her I was a Pole who had fled from a nearby *shtetl*, because the Germans were looking for me, and I asked her, whether I could stay with her, and she agreed, but only under the condition that I should help her with her work in the saloon – something I agreed to immediately.

She called me Mendzhu and treated me like one of her own, as a member of the family, and also all of the guests that would come to the saloon, thought of me in this way. At night, the Nazis would come into the saloon, drank to excess and let themselves go.

Once, when they were very drunk, I heard them talking amongst themselves, saying that, not far from the saloon, there are several Jews who were in hiding, and they said that they will go there, and throw the Jews into the stream. When I heard this, I gave them a lot of whiskey to drink, more than they had asked for, in order that they get really badly drunk, and when they were good and drunk, and could barely move from where they were, I went off to that place, where the Jews had hidden themselves, and let them know that they had to flee as quickly as possible, because the Nazis had uncovered their hiding place, and were thinking of falling upon them. The Jews were able to flee from that place, and when the German murderers came there, they no longer found any Jews, who managed, in this way, to save themselves from a certain and terrifying death.

One of the means that I used, in order that no suspicion fall on me that I was a Jew, was the fact that very often – almost every day – I went to church, and in this way, I was able to live through this terrifying time, until the bloody war ended.

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When the war had ended, and the German destroyers fled like mice, and Poland was taken over by the Red Army, I felt a longing for my home town, because I thought that I might possibly yet run into someone of my relatives. At that time, I told the mistress of the house, that I would be traveling to Ger to look for my family. But to my sorrow, I did not encounter anyone from my family, and not ever a single person from those whom I knew intimately, because all of them had been killed, by the Nazi Devil, in a bestial fashion.

On the way from Koloszka, I made the acquaintance of a Jewish woman, who was as alone and left with no one, like myself, and I married her, and for a period of time lived with her in Ger, where we were practically the only living Jews. Later on, several 'miracle-Jews' arrived in Ger. Saved from the camps, and also those who fought together with the partisans in the forests, and also a few who

came back from Russia, because things were going bad there as well. But all together, we were a small collection of Jews, who had no secure means of making a living, and an even less certain future. For a period of time, I was involved with handling orchards.

A bit of time went by, and the Christian lady from the saloon came to look for me in Ger. She found me – and I told her the whole truth, that I was a Jew – and what I had said, that I was a Christian, was because I had no other alternative. I told her that she is owed considerable gratitude, because she helped me to save myself, and I am prepared to pay her for this. I also told her that I am now married to a Jewish woman.

I invited her into my home, and presented my wife to her, and asked what it is that she wanted of me, and I am prepared to give it to her. I gave her a little money, and she went off satisfied, and I remained living in Ger a while longer.

It remained this way, until the State of Israel was established, and after the establishment of the State, I no longer wanted to live in a country, that is saturated through-and-through with Jewish blood; a country that has millions of fresh Jewish graves, and where there is no guarantee, that, what had taken place in the terrifying years, would not be repeated yet again.

I went off to Israel, and settled with my wife in Netanya, and established myself well in my new home among Jews...

The Spirit of Ger Lives

דער גייסט פון גער לעבט

The Continuation of Ger *Hasidism* in The State of Israel

Ger, as is known, was a small Jewish *shtetl*, one of the hundreds or thousands of the *shtetlach* of this type, which were to be found in one-time Jewish Poland. An approximate number of residents of the city was known, but not an exact figure. Jews held by the general principle that it is forbidden to count people, and certainly not Jewish people – because it could God Forbid, invite the attention of the *Evil Eye*...even if this 'caution' never resulted in any instance of anything happening, that resulted in people being killed by all manner of bizarre deaths, as was the case for thousands of Jews from Ger, exactly as they were killed – during the years of the Holocaust – in a terrifying and bloody manner, in other cities and towns of one-time Poland, as in Eastern Europe in general, wherever the brutal and bloody Nazi boot trod.

There is, however, a bloody number referencing the number of Jews killed in Ger, and its vicinity – and their number reaches to the entirely terrifying number of five thousand martyrs.

In all cases we are talking about a number that appears on the memorial stone, that was placed in the year 1963. And it is also appropriate to remark, that in that time, new winds were blowing in the Poland of today, which were much more favorable for Jews, and memorial stones were being erected. That is not the situation today, when one sees the destruction and uprooting of every trace of what was once Jewish life in Poland. And on the 1st of September 1963, we read in the local Yiddish paper there, "*Volksstimme,*' – that also no longer exists – in number 2487 of that periodical, where it reported that "On the 1st of September 1963, at the 24th anniversary of the outbreak of The Second World War, a major ceremony took place in Ger, in connection with the placement of a memorial for the five thousand Jews and Poles of that city and its surrounding vicinity – Martyrs of Hitlerism.'

There is no doubt that among the martyrs of Hitlerism, that a certain number of Poles were to be found. But it is more certain, that their number was rather small, and even the representative of the provincial-national council, Ing. Tadeusz Sudar, in his speech, placed the massacred Jews first, and only later, the Poles, and also the writing on the memorial itself it says:

> 'On this place, five thousand citizens of Poland were massacred – Jews and Poles, murdered by the Hitlerist nation-murderers.'

Even more categorical in this connection, was the representative of the 'Culture-Community Union of Polish Jews in Poland,' Salo Fiszgrund, who had a *Bundist* past behind him – and certainly no self-deprecating person in relationship to Jews – and, in his talk, he especially emphasized that 'This ceremony has consecrated the more than five thousand Jews, former residents of Ger, who, were often bestially murdered by the Hitlerist murderers.'

As to the extent that it existed in that time – that is, eleven years ago – an illusion held by many Jewish activists, on being able to reconstitute, or at least maintain a certain sort of Jewish life on the ruins of the former Poland, and on the ruins of what once was Ger, is attested to by the fact, that in

the same newspaper article in the '*Volksstimme*,' in which it discusses the memorial for the massacred five thousand Jews of this *shtetl* and its vicinity, it also says that 'the delegation of the Culture-Community Union of the Jews in Poland, at this opportunity, visited the former courtyard of the *Rebbe* of Ger. Adding that the severely damaged building was reconstructed, by the local authorities, and the entire expanse of the former courtyard had been brought back to order.'

How distant this is from the situation today, in this matter, when no more memorials are erected to memorialize massacred Jews, but rather they are vandalized or the existing cemeteries are 'wiped away,' which certainly numbered in the thousands, and as related now by a credible witness, which had not very long ago visited Poland, and who had dealings about this with the Polish government – the familiar '*Agudah*'-activist, and former councilman in Poland, Dr. Yitzhak Levin, who was also our guest in Argentina – there are only eighteen 'Holy Places' remaining in all of Poland, which are still open to receive burials, but many of them operate waiting under a decree, that they are to be closed, and for the meantime, the decree is being postponed for five years.

And turning back now to Ger, we have before us a document, that speaks of five thousand murdered Jews from Ger and its vicinity, despite the fact that it does not state exactly how large the number of martyrs was from the vicinity, in this bloody and frightening calculation.

– Because who had documented and counted exactly what the number was of those murdered and exterminated in those days, or in the Years of Ire?

Physical Ger and Spiritual Ger

But apart from the five thousand Jews that were to be found in Ger and its vicinity, and who were killed by the Nazi executioners; those who presented, what we could characterize as 'Ger of the World Below,' or the so-called physical Ger, also found for itself a 'Ger on High,' or a spiritual Ger, whose ambit, in fact, had no specified boundaries, and in the first instance, embraced the largest part of cities and towns of one-time Jewish Poland, where there was not a single place where a Ger '*shtibl*' could not be found, which was a piece of 'territory' of spiritual Ger – and this very spiritual Ger, also spread to all locations of the Jewish world.

And this very 'Spiritual Ger' – just like the entire spiritual dimension of the Jewish people – the Nazi destroyers could never exterminate, no matter what means they employed. In this case, there was a repetition of that which had already taken place many times in the course of Jewish history, and had obtained the rubric in the familiar sobriquet: 'the parchment is burned, but the letters blossom,' and what this intends to say, is that the parchment, or the material part has been exterminated, but the spiritual part has again become spread over the entire world, or that which used to be said and sung, in the familiar folk song, as:

'All you can do is put our bodies to death,
But not our holy spirit.'

And the spirit – the holy spirit of the 'Ger on High,' could be exterminated under any assault by the Nazi Asmodeus, and remained living, in many lands in the Jewish world, where Jews live and create, and also remained alive and continued to develop in the place where today, the heart of world Jewry is found – in the State of Israel.

We do not have everything for ourselves, that which was created in the Land of Israel, and that bears the stamp of the original Ger. But a part of what was created there, and we know about it, is worth underscoring – and alongside it, it is necessary to note, that from the little bit that we do know, of what was created in the Land of Israel, with the stamp of Ger on it, is conducted with 'horns of steel [83],' or as it is said in Yiddish, '*mit aizerneh fondn*,' from which one can anticipate that other institutions will develop, which will eternalize the name and the spiritual values of 'Ger on High.'

B'nai Brak, the Great Daughter-City of Ger

On the eve of The Second World War, and the third, and possibly the most terrifying destruction of our people, Ger occupied the most prominent place among the rabbinic dynasties. It was in the first rank because, Ger counted the largest number of *Hasidim* and followers in its ranks, and as we have already previously noted, there was not a single Jewish *shtetl* in which a Ger '*shtibl*' could not be found, which often numbered hundreds of adherents – and the influence of the Ger *Hasidim* and their '*shtibl*' went far beyond the limits defined by those who worshiped or studied in that *shtibl*, or counted themselves as adherents of the Ger 'dynasty,' but rather, it took on the character of a genuine peoples' movement, that embraced the largest portion of the simple Jews, '*volksmenschen*,' who did not belong to any specific *Hasidic* movement.

And the most significant of all, is certainly that Ger *Hasidism* did not content itself only with the concerns of the individual, but the *Rebbes* of Ger had the opportunity to create a community movement out of their *Hasidism*, which placed, and attempted to place, their imprint on the Jewish community, regarding responsibility for the collective, and principally on that which is understood under the rubric of *Yiddishkeit.*

The truly greatest and most important of the *Rebbes* that Ger produced – and the creator of the 'Ger Dynasty,' was the *Rebbe* R' Itcheh-Meir of Warsaw (*Varshaver)*, or R' Itcheh-Meir Alter זצ"ל, known by the name '*Khidushei HaRI"M*' because of his book, that he published under that same name, and was meant to convey that it contained innovative interpretations of Yitzhak-Meir. In the Ger courtyard, no indulgences were taken, nor any financial support for the *Rebbe*, because in Ger, the principle of remaining independent of material dependency on the *Hasidim* was strictly observed – and R' Itcheh-Meir *Varshaver* was a merchant. Also his grandson, the '*Sfat Emet*,' had a food store in Ger, and also the *Rebbetzin* ran the businesses in the larger scale. R' Itcheh-Meir Varshaver also had a book business in Ger, with branches in Warsaw, and in New York – and this economic independence lent a great deal of importance to the Ger courtyard, and freedom in his activity and the influence of the Ger courtyard, on Jewish life, grew from year to year.

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[83] See, for example Micah 4:13, in which the metaphor is used to describe activity carried on with vigor.

After the passing of the first *Rebbe* of Ger, thousands of *Hasidim* gave their children the name Itcheh-Meir, and it was said, half-jokingly, that when the name Itcheh-Meir would be called out in Warsaw on the Nalewski [Street], half the street full of people would stop... after his passing, it also became clear for everyone, that his heir would be his beloved grandson, who was known by the name, '*Sfat Emet*,' because of his great work that he published, and was an interpretation of the Torah and *Shas*, and was studied in all Yeshivas and Torah institutions. To our sorrow, the '*Sfat Emet*' left us at a very young age, and the Rabbinate of Ger passed to the great Jewish leader, R' Abraham-Mordechai Alter זצ"ל, who by his work, wrote in an important chapter in the life of the Jews in Poland, and also of the Land of Israel.

One of the most important activities of R' Abraham-Mordechai Alter; one of the most important activities on behalf of the Jewish people, was his relationship to – and love for – the Land of Israel, in which he was seen to ignite Jewish hearts with love for the Land of Israel, even back in the time when the number of Jews in The Land was a very small one – and the largest portion of those who did make *aliyah* to Israel, were rather entirely far from being religiously observant – not counting those Jews who were residents of The Land, from previous times, and lived off donor money, and also paid no mind to the fact that observant Jews, in their party '*Agudat Israel*,' looked askance at the one-time Zionist *aliyah* to The Land of Israel.

The *Rebbe* of Ger, R' Abraham-Mordechai זצ"ל, traveled to The Land of Israel for the first time in the year 5681 [1921], and among other places that he visited, he stopped in the biblical city of B'nai Brak which is mentioned a few times in the tanakh, in Talmud, and also in the Passover *Haggadah*, in which the story of the five *Tana'im*[84] is told, who organized their *Seder* in B'nai Brak, and kept on telling of the miracles of the Exodus from Egypt, in the course of the entire night. However, this once famous city, in the year 1921, was a rundown Arab village, that the Arabs called Ibn Abruk.

In the year 5681, on a night of Purim, a Ger *Hasid* from Warsaw, R' Yitzhak Gersztenkorn ז"ל, proposed to his comrades from the Ger *shtibl* in Warsaw, that they should together purchase a larger piece of property in the one-time B'nai Brak, and to work in attempting to breathe new life into the one-time religious *Yiddishkeit*. 150 *Hasidim* responded to the proposal of R' Yitzhak Gersztenkorn, who carried out an assembly, and decided to make this purchase, but in the establishment points, they put in, as a condition, that the *Rebbe* of Ger should give his consent and blessing to this very plan.

As previously mentioned, it happened that in that very year, the *Rebbe* of Ger for the first time, made a trip to The Land of Israel, and in a fundamental way, familiarized himself with the settlement and all the prominent Jews who were to be found there. The *Rebbe* of Ger, even from his youngest years, exhibited an intense longing for Zion, and in one of his famous letters, which he wrote on 7 Adar 5681, he says expressively that, 'whosoever God has blessed with wealth, he can, undoubtedly find a means to make a living there, in complete tranquility, and thereby also observe *Yiddishkeit* without any interference.' And in this same letter, he makes an approach to his wealthy *Hasidim*, that they

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84 Jewish scholars of the Mishnaic Period, as distinct from *Amora'im*, the scholars of the period when the *Gemara* was created.

should buy parcels of land in Israel, because 'monies offer no security except that they are invested in land,' – and you can understand, that in this instance, the *Rebbe* of Ger was referring to land property in Israel – and it is a shame that many *Hasidim* did not follow the advice of their spiritual leader, and did not settle on property in The Land of Israel, because had they done so, they would have avoided the catastrophe, and would not have had to be counted into the bloody summation of the 5 thousand Jews of Ger, and its vicinity, that were killed, and of the 6 million martyrs of the entirety of Eastern Europe.

However, despite his great love for The Land of Israel, the *Rebbe* of Ger did not directly join into the plan to be a partner to the reconstruction of the one-time B'nai Brak, because he was tied up in other reconstruction projects in The Land of Israel, and in the letter in which the *Rebbe* of Ger replied to his *Hasid* R' Yitzhak Gersztenkorn, and his comrades, he writes clearly, and with meaning: 'In everything that Jews do for The Land of Israel, they must be helped. I, myself, would also join in the community and give you practical help in your work, but I am now tied up in an initiative about an undertaking in Jaffa, and I must allocate monies for that purpose, and therefore I cannot provide you with help directly, but you must strengthen yourself, and don't permit yourself to fail for lack of energy, and the Lord, Blessed Be He, will provide you with success.'

In the year 1923 [5683], a delegation of *Hasidim* from Ger traveled to The Land of Israel – led by R' Yitzhak Gersztenkorn – and with the blessing of the *Rebbe* of Ger – and there, purchased a large tract of land in B'nai Brak. At that time, the *Rebbe* of Ger was in The Land of Israel, along with the *Rebbe* of Sokolov, R' Yitzhak-Zelig Morgenstern זצ"ל, and his brother-in-law, the *Rebbe* of Będzin, and also a substantial number of *Hasidim*, who had escorted these three Great Men of Israel and everyone traveled to lay the cornerstone of the new B'nai Brak, and the *Rebbe* of Ger blessed the New B'nai Brak. Which had been an ancient city of Torah, that it should once again become that – and this blessed came to reality rather quickly.

The first 150 families that settled in B'nai Brak, worked very hard, and exhausted themselves just making a living, and tested themselves against all forms of hard work: they planted orchards, smashed rock in the mountains – and in the course of this, also recited verses from the Torah, or recited chapters of the Psalms. And they worked hard for the building of the [Jewish] settlement of The Land of Israel. But in today's time, B'nai Brak is known as a large industrial center, and is known as the largest center of the textile industry. But above all, B'nai Brak, which finds itself only seven kilometers from Tel-Aviv, is known as a Torah Center; there lived, and to this day still live, great Torah personalities, which you understand, we cannot enumerate all of them here, but the observance of the Sabbath, and other Jewish Festival Holidays in B'nai Brak, became a matter of some conversation – and in the city of B'nai Brak, where today, there live approximately eighty thousand Jews, may they increase, there is a special atmosphere that is felt on the Sabbath and Festival Holidays, which recalls the spirit of one-time Ger.

The thanks for the development and advancement of B'nai Brak is owed, in large measure, to the talents of its creator – the Ger *Hasid* R' Yitzhak Gersztenkorn ז"ל, who was the head of the city (Burgomaster) for the course of over 30 years, till his death, and he exerted himself to transform

B'nai Brak into a daughter-city of Ger, and in a large measure, the spirit of one-time Ger, that was exterminated, was indeed transferred over into B'nai Brak; these would be the 'Blossoming Letters' that the Nazi destroyer, may his name be erased, could not, by any means bring down, and not any enemy of the Jewish people will ever find a way to do so – and which in this instance was transferred over to B'nai Brak, and also to other places in the country.

Ger Yeshivas in Israel, and the Most Modern Yeshiva in Tel-Aviv

When setting out to build yeshivas and higher schools of religious study, and even a religious university in Israel, it is not happenstance, but rather a self-evident fact, and it is no happenstance, that among the builders of these yeshivas, Ger *Hasidim* should be found in the very top ranks – and it is certainly no happenstance, that Ger *Hasidim* have built one of the greatest and most modern yeshivas in all of Israel.

In this connection, let us add that until not too long a time ago, there were [only] eight yeshivas in all of Israel, founded and supported by Ger *Hasidim*. We cannot pause here for very long, because it would consume a great deal of space, and entail a great deal more that we can convey in our *Yizkor* Book. Accordingly, we will provide a short summary of what is related in *'The Pages Concerning Torah Institutions of the Ger Hasidim in The Land of Israel.'*

The '*Sfat Emet*' Yeshiva is the mother of the Ger yeshivas in Israel, and it was founded barely fifty years ago, in the year 5686 [1926], at the initiative of the *Rebbe* of Ger, R' Abraham-Mordechai ז"ל, in Jerusalem, the Holy City. And when the *Rebbe* of Ger visited Jerusalem in 5687, he carried away a very elevated opinion of this yeshiva, which was still very small. It is understandable that from that time until the present, the yeshiva progressed a great deal. From the narrow small tiny rooms, on the Trager Street in Jerusalem, today, this yeshiva commands a building of five stories, in which up to two hundred students learn, and also has a '*Kollel*,' in which about thirty scholars study, and who occupy themselves with Torah, and in the course of this time, since the yeshiva came into existence, it produced hundreds of Jewish-educated people, who occupy important Torah posts in Israel itself, and also all over the entire Jewish world.

This yeshiva has a large library named '*Genizei Eliezer*,[85]' of over seventeen thousand books, among which can be found important treasures and unique documents from the Jewish religious literature.

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The '*Beyt Talmud v'Torah v'Hora'ah*' of the Ger *Hasidim* is located in B'nai Brak, which was founded in 5716 [1956] as a 'Kollel' of thirteen outstanding scholars, who later became leading scholars in Torah and promulgating law, and in the course of 18 years since the '*Kollel*' was founded, more than two hundred outstanding scholars have gone through there, who on their own, filled out their Torah studies, and contributed a great deal to the study of Torah all over the world. This '*Kollel*' has a building which is a real jewel among the Torah edifices and, in fact, has no peer, among the Torah institutions in Israel.

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[85] The Archives of Eliezer

Apart from the '*Beyt Talmud v'Torah v'Hora'ah*' of B'nai Brak, the *'Yeshivat Hasidei Gur biVn'ai Brak*,' which was founded approximately fifteen years ago, in a small tight building, with a small number of young students, but with time, both the yeshiva and the number of students expanded vigorously, and in recent times, the yeshiva had over one hundred fifty students, divided into four classes, and has a nice beautiful building of seven stories, of which six are dedicated to Torah and *Hasidism*, and there is also a 'Hall of the Martyrs' to commemorate the yeshivas that were destroyed during the Holocaust.

And if we are already talking about yeshivas in B'nai Brak – which we had previously designated as the daughter-city of the Ger that was destroyed – it is necessary to recollect the Talmud Torah '*Masoret Avot*' (The Tradition of our Parents), which is found there, and was founded in the year 5725 [1965], with 33 students, and in recent times, three hundred students are learning there, in ten classes. This Talmud Torah, as well, started out in a small building, which expands and widens, in measure with the influx of new students. And thereby, one should take note, that in this same B'nai Brak, there are also Torah institutions of other *Hasidic* movements, such as the Satmar, Vizhnitz, Karlin, and other *Hasidim*.

Apart from the yeshivas that have already been enumerated, Talmud Torahs, and *Kollel* institutions, there is also to be found a Talmud Torah, and an elementary level yeshiva of the Ger *Hasidim* in Jerusalem, which was founded in 5712 [1952], which today has a formidable building, which cost over 2 million Israeli Pounds. There are ten classes there, from kindergarten to the first level of an elementary yeshiva and – the Yiddish language had been instituted there as the obligatory language of instruction.

In Jerusalem, the '*Yeshiva LeTze'irim shel Hasidei Gur*' which was founded six years ago, and had sixteen young boys between the ages of 13 and 17, is where today, close to one hundred students are learning, following the newest and most modern methods of Torah study.

In addition to this number of Torah institutions of the Ger *Hasidim* in Israel, must be added the '*Beyt Medrash LeHora'ah Mi'Yesodam shel Hasidei Gur b'Tel-Aviv,*' which is located on Nahalat Benjamin Street 23, where approximately fifty scholars and sages study. Today, in these enumerated Torah institutions, over one thousand students are studying, from Israel and the Diaspora, and the *Rebbe* of Ger strongly helps out, urging his *Hasidim*, outside of the country, to send their sons to study in Israel, and part of them got married in Israel, and another portion of them study in the Diaspora, and spread the spirit of Israel there.

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Now we come to the most important, largest, and most modern yeshiva, that the Ger *Hasidim* built in Israel, and is among the largest of all those in Israel. The name of this yeshiva is *'Khidushei HaRI"M*' which has an entire 'quarter' around it, meaning an entire quarter of a city.

This yeshiva is found in Tel-Aviv, and was founded in the year 5696 [1936], during the time of the visit of the *Rebbe* of Ger, R' Abraham-Mordechai זצ"ל. From the outset, the yeshiva found itself on

Gruzenberg Street, at the way into Jaffa, in a small *shtibl* for *Hasidim* from Ger. From there, the yeshiva was moved over to Peretz Street, in the very center of the city, near the 'central station,' of the bus lines, and the 150 young yeshiva men learned under the worst conditions, because of the great noise and movement that takes place in those streets – and all of a sudden, the thought came up among a group of Ger *Hasidim*, to move the yeshiva to a different vicinity, without the noise and tumult, not far from the place where the Tel-Aviv University can be found.

Building of the new yeshiva lasted an entire six years – and it is necessary to take into consideration, that building takes place in Israel rather quickly, and especially buildings themselves, when what is involved is a community structure. The building costs about two million Israeli Pounds, and one needs to take into consideration, that the land itself costs nothing, because the place was donated by the municipal leadership of Tel-Aviv. In the outlays for the building, the interior appointments are not being accounted for, such as furniture, and other such things, that are necessary for a yeshiva, which is one of the most modern that there are in Israel, and apart form this, an elite neighborhood was created around the yeshiva, that is called '*Kiryat Yeshiva.*'

The plan of the yeshiva was made following the old model of the yeshiva of '*Khakhmei Lublin,*' in one-time Poland, but do understand, that it was modernized. In the yeshiva building there are 150 rooms for six hundred yeshiva students. There is also a medical clinic there. At the dedication ceremony of that yeshiva, over ten thousand *Hasidim* came from all over Israel, and a large number of guests and those invited from outside the country.

The Vice-Burgomaster of Tel-Aviv, Y. M. Abramowicz, who stood at the head of the building committee for the new yeshiva, declared that six years beforehand, when the plan to build the yeshiva was brought to them, many looked upon us as purveyors of a fantasy, and literally did not want to believe that, with God's help, we would be privileged to be at the dedication ceremony. But the *Rebbe* of Ger, R' Israel Alter נ"י, gave us encouragement and helped in this initiative, and in that light and faith, we are now celebrating this great *simcha* of the yeshiva, which bears the name of Rabbi Yitzhak-Meir Alter זצ"ל, the founder of the dynasty of the *Hasidism* of Ger.

– This is the brief summary of that which we can tell about the Ger yeshivas in Israel, in general, and something about the new modern yeshiva.

Hasidim **of Ger During the Yom Kippur War**

Just as it applies to all of our work, that the *Hasidim* of Ger have created in Israel, out sharing of what the Ger *Hasidim* did during the Yom Kippur War will also be far from comprehensive, but only partial, taking into account only a limited number of fragments, which have been conveyed through newspaper articles. But these abbreviated fragments convey a great deal about the participation of the Ger *Hasidim* in The Yom Kippur War – something which is certainly analogous in form to [their participation in] the other wars.

And so it is reported that, when awareness came about what had happened, in the courtyard of the *Rebbe* of Ger in Jerusalem, that the war had broken out, in that moment, the *Hazzan* Abraham-Hirsch

Ruta, with the choir, led by the composer from the Ger courtyard, Aryeh Goldenkopf, were singing '*uNesaneh Tokef*' from the *Musaf* Yom Kippur service. In that moment, a messenger arrived from *TzaHa"L* and notified a young *Hasid*, a tank soldier. The congregation of worshipers continued its praying, and the young tank soldier and other *Hasidim* asked the *Rebbe*, how to behave: To go now, on Yom Kippur, into the military, or wait until sundown of Yom Kippur? The *Rebbe* didn't think about this for very long, and quickly replied: Go! Run!...

And these two words from the *Rebbe* were much more than an order from an army commander. The words of the *Rebbe* spread with lightning speed among the *Hasidim* in all of Jerusalem. One could see there, how *Hasidic* young people from Mea Shearim, and other places, were running home, still in their prayer shawls, and white *kittls*, and their *shtrymels*, quickly grabbing their military equipment, and concentrating themselves at the gathering places of their formations.

The *Rebbe* of Ger was strongly optimistic about the outcome of the war, from the first moment. He explained that since the war had broken out on Yom Kippur, in the day when all of Jewry is cleansed of its sins, a victory will indeed come, even though the *Rebbe* foresaw that the war will be difficult and hard, and it is told that in that night after Yom Kippur, the *Rebbe* of Ger presided over his *Tisch* in the usual manner, but his words, regarding the issues of the day, were dedicated to the war that had just broken out, and the *Rebbe* told a parable to his *Hasidim*: 'You shall be like nuts, hard to bite into – and you shall pulverize the enemy like a nut," and these words from the *Rebbe* had an overwhelming impact on the *Hasidim*.

The blessings of the *Rebbe* accompanied his *Hasidim* to the fronts, and it is told, that a young man from the Ger community, a TzaHa"L soldier, Aryeh Szeps, was in a detachment, which had to take back the summit of Mount Hermon and his comrades in the army – not religious – would come to him in all seriousness, during the bloody battle: 'Aryeh, connect yourself to The Master of the Universe, and beg for help.' And during the ensuing shooting, Aryeh would undertake to recite a chapter of Psalms... at the time that his detachment would be climbing up high Mount Hermon, and the Syrians bombed them heavily, the soldiers of TzaHa"L shouted to Aryeh: 'Get connected to The Master of the Universe more quickly, so that He can help us, and let us arrive at the top in one piece!' Aryeh then issued an 'order' to all the fighters: 'Say, *Hana Hashem, Hosha Nah*,' and everyone recited the verse, and in a couple of minutes more, the enemy's bombardment fell silent, and only one member of the detachment was lightly wounded. And it is told that on the spot, the soldiers decided that from this time on, they will carry with them, 'secret Jewish weaponry'-- a miniature Book of Psalms...

And it is also related by an array of Jewish war correspondents, who visited various fronts, and listened to what the *TzaHa"L* fighters were talking about, among which could be found many non-religious soldiers, who said: 'There really is a God in heaven!'...

And on that day, a great part of the Ger spirit, those 'flowering letters,' – of one-time Ger, which can never be incinerated, had transferred themselves over the entire Jewish world, and in a great measure to Israel.

The Activities of the "Organization of Ger Émigrés in Israel'

By Menachem Ben-Uri
Tel-Aviv

It is already more than thirty years or so that have gone by, since Jewish Poland – along with the other Jewish settlements in Eastern Europe – went through the most frightening and terrifying tragedies of our wanderings, which has no peer in the annals of human history. All that remains for us is the solace, that on the detritus of six million martyrs, the State of Israel came into being for all time and eternity.

And in that frightening and terrifying Holocaust, our beloved and dear little *shtetl* of Ger was also destroyed, from which only memories remain, which will never be erased from our memory, and we will forever remember our *shtetl*, where we were born and raised. Jewish life in Ger was a genuine and faithful reflection of the general Jewish life of common people in Poland. There, by us, as was the case all over, was the full struggle and all the varied forms of tension between progress and tradition, between Zionism and all of its shades on one side, and the *'Bund'* and left wing movements on the other side.

Until the terrifying Hitlerian *Destroyer* arrived, and destroyed and tore apart the chain of generations, which had stretched on for generations. The *Murderer* destroyed and eradicated everything from the [face of the] earth, so that there should not remain any trace of Jewish life; [that is] of that deeply rooted Jewish life in Ger, where no one could conceive, that all at once it would be cut down, and that we would nevermore be able to see out nearest and dearest, who were exterminated during that *Time of Ire* and annihilation.

It has remained for us, that sacred duty, of not permitting ourselves to forget, and to not permit those that come after us to forget; that we and they, shall remember and honor the eternal memory, of our exterminated fathers and mothers, the murdered sisters and brothers, and those innocent young children that were cut down, who became a part of the six million martyrs, who were exterminated in the flames of those terrifying crematoria.



Page 418: The Symbolic Memorial Stone on Mount Zion



Page 419: An Act of Commemoration on Mount Zion (From Right to Left): Mendl Mordkowicz, Yaakov Golhecht, Moshe Ravsky, Chana-Shayndl Zlotagorsky, Nachman Zlotagorsky (Har-Zahav), Menachem Ben-Uri, conduct the memorial event.

Yes! The smoke from the crematoria darkened the skies and that terrifying flame did not reach the nations of the world, who supposedly were fighting for justice and righteousness. In the face of that frightening death-rattle of the Jewish people, the ears of the rulers of the 'cultured' world remained stopped up, and did nothing for them. We did not have our own land, and therefore were not thought of as a nation by them, but rather as a people cursed by history, tolerated guests in foreign lands, dispersed and spread out among foreign peoples.

We hope that the country of Israel will have the authority and the power, in the future, to guard our brothers and sisters, in all the lands of the Diaspora, that no such decrees and murders will ever be repeated. And we will do this, not with the power of those foreign to us, to whom we will have to bow and plead, but with our own troops, which will be brought up in the spirit of heroism, and of guarding one's own honor, and with the authority that comes from an independent nation, which will demand its rights on the international stage.

Our struggle for the State of Israel is a struggle for the existence of the entirety of the Jewish people, so that there never again can be a Majdanek, or Oswiecim. In the battle we are waging today against the Arab predators, the future of the entire Jewish people is being hammered out, and this struggle must end with our victory.

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Until the Second World War, there were about sixty families in Israel who came from Ger, and after The Second World War, a small number came from Russia, and the largest part from Ger survivors.



Page 421: Ger Scions at an Annual Commemoration in Tel-Aviv

Today, in Israel, there are found approximately over one hundred Jewish families with roots in Ger. Part of them are employed in various governmental institutions, small part can be found in kibbutzim, and a part are independent craftsmen. A few years after The Second World War, the Society of Ger *Landsleit* was founded, or as it is called in Hebrew '*Irgun Yotz'ei Gur b'Yisrael.*' This society, or 'Irgun,' was established at the initiative of the following *landsleit*: Mrs. Yaffa Har-Zahav[86] and her brother Nachman Har-Zahav, and by Pinchas Gildoni ז"ל and others. This society maintains the connection between the Ger *landsleit* in Israel, in order that they not forget our *shtetl* of Ger that was destroyed, and every year, the society conducts a memorial meeting in honor of the martyrs of Ger, and after the commemoration, the annual meeting takes place, at which time an annual report is given and also a financial report and a variety of issues are entertained.

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[86] Formerly Zlotagorsky, the Polish equivalent of Gold Mountain (or Goldberg in English)



Page 422: Kaddish *recited at the site of the symbolic memorial on Mount Zion*

In the year 1964, a symbolic stone was put in place, as a memorial to the Ger martyrs, on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. The installation of this memorial stone was conducted on the Eve of *Rosh Hodesh* of Nissan, on the 11th of March 1964.

Even more than 20 years ago, the idea had arisen to permanently preserve the memory of the Ger martyrs, in the form of a *Yizkor* Book, and we began to gather material for this book, and also financial resources, and we understood, that the Ger *landsleit* that are to be found in other countries, apart from *The Land*, also have an interest in this, that such a *Yizkor* Book should be published, and will help out with all the means required.

There were many difficulties to overcome, in order that the *Yizkor* Book get published, but that strong will to erect a symbolic memorial to our Ger martyrs, overpowered all difficulties, and in the month of February 1967, the committee from the Society sent out a circular to the Ger *landsleit* in Israel, and also those in other lands, in which a call was made to those who remained among the living from Ger, that they carry a responsible obligation to the sacred memory of the martyrs of the Ger community, which in the course of generations, earned for itself a reputation in the Jewish world, and that this commemoration can only be realized through a *Yizkor* Book.

On the 18th of May 1968, the '*Irgun Yotz'ei Gur b'Yisrael*,' organized a reception for the *landsleit* from Argentina, for our friends: Yaakov Jurkiewiczwicz, Eli'-Meir Gutstadt, Kelmanowicz, and Abraham Greifman ע"ה. Over sixty Ger *landsleit* took part in this reception, and the decision was once again confirmed, to prepare materials for the *Yizkor* Book, and also to acquire financial resources.



Page 424: *M. Gutstadt and Y. Rubin, on a visit in the Country of Israel, taking part in a Commemoration service in Tel-Aviv.*

The '*Irgun*' immediately disseminated letters to the Ger *landsleit* in Israel, and outside the country, about financial help and the first who responded were the *landsleit* in Argentina, North America, and Belgium.



Page 425: *At a Commemoration Ceremony in Tel-Aviv*
In the picture: Menachem Ben-Uri, Secretary of the 'Irgun Yotz'ei Gur,' Eli Smalawczuk recites the Kaddish in memory of the Martyrs.

Mr. Gutstadt, who was on a visit to Israel, together with Israel Rubin, took part in a commemorative function in honor of the Ger martyrs.

I consider it my responsibility at this opportunity to recall, that the most active person and founder of the 'Irgun,' was the lady, Yaffa Chana-Shayndl Har-Zahav (Redelheim) ז"ל, who passed away on the 4th of April 1972, 20 Iyyar, 5732. She settled in *The Land* in the year 1924, and was always a liaison among the *landsleit*, the 'Mother' of those from Ger. When, after the war those, who were miraculously saved from annihilation, began to come in, she concerned herself with them, indeed, just like a good Jewish mother; she created help, looked to find them work, and helped to create the '*Irgun*.'

Apart from the areas of activity that she carried out on behalf of the '*Irgun*,' even while she was sick, until she had to leave Tel-Aviv and enter a sanatorium in Netanya, she provided a great deal of help to new *olim* from Ger; she had a good Jewish heart, and kept an open door for everyone, and especially for those that were in need of help.



Page 426: Yaakov Jurkiewicz and his wife, by the stone memorializing the Ger martyrs on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

Her death was a great loss for '*Irgun Yotz'ei Gur b'Yisrael*,' and for all of those who knew her – and all of us will never forget her. May her memory be for a blessing.

The '*Irgun*' stands in contact with the *landsleit* of Ger, who are spread out over a variety of countries. The address of the Society is: Menachem Ben-Uri, Arlozorov Street 20. Tel-Aviv.

The Activity of Ger *Landsleit* in Buenos Aires

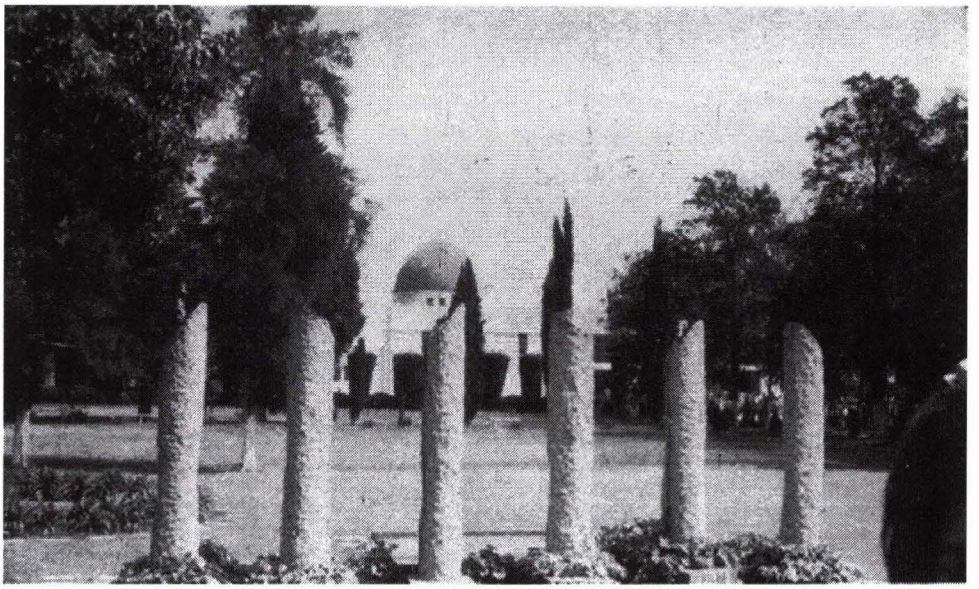
By a Ger Landsman

The larger portion of us, the scions of Ger, who left our small, hearty *shtetl*, to go to the new country of Argentina, in its large capitol city, Buenos-Aires, to along with us an attachment to it – and very few of us thought that we would never again return to our *alte haym*, and solitary individuals among us, born in Ger or its vicinity, indeed did return to go 'home' and sorrowfully, became part of that same fate, that befell all of the Jews there, which means, also the fate that overtook all of the Jews of Poland and Eastern Europe.



Page 429: *A Group of Ger* Landsleit *in Buenos Aires*

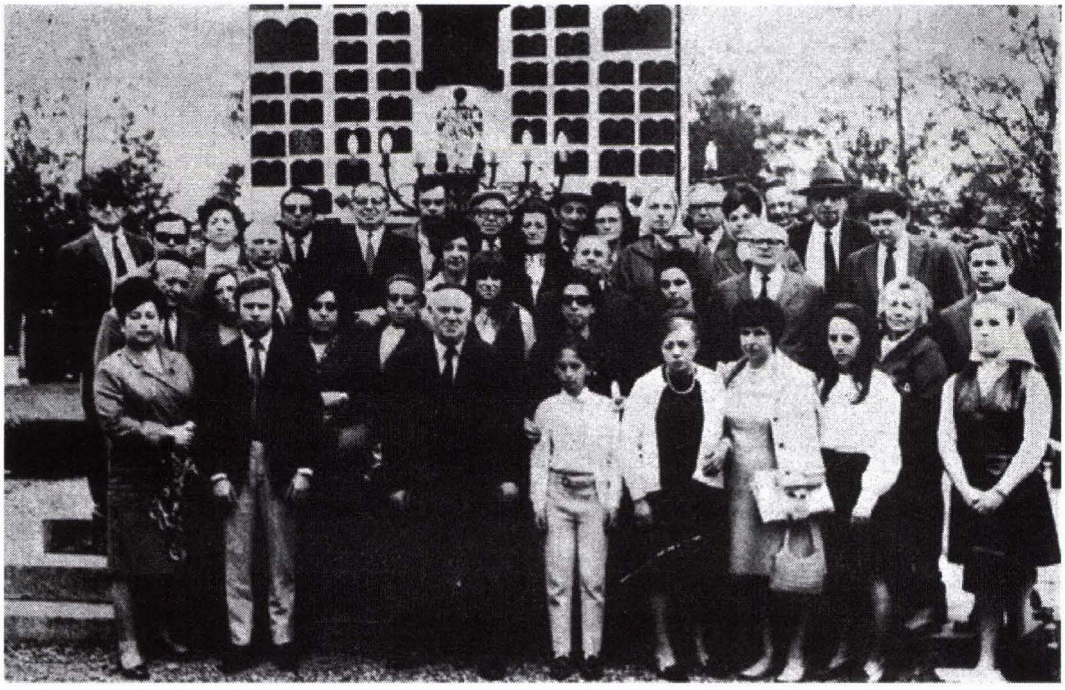
Understandably, that for as long as we thought of ourselves as a part of that one-time Ger, with us, in those first years, the question could not stand – and there really was no need – *landsleit* society of the scions of Ger and its vicinity, and like those, we would rejoice when an additional *landsman* would add himself to the Ger family in Buenos-Aires, and if one scion of Ger met with another, this became a meeting and recreation of what our former home life was about. And every time when Ger *landsleit* would come together, memories would float up about our young years, or about a variety of incidents and experiences that tied them to their home city.



Page 431: *A Symbolic Memorial to the Six Million Martyrs on the Buenos-Aires Cemetery*

But we were too few in numbers, to be able to create our own *landsmanschaft,* as did the larger part *landsleit* from other larger cities. Additionally, we expressed our feelings about a *landsmanschaft*

in that time, in that was tied up with our family, or with friends that he had left behind in our former home – and to the extent that there was support for newcomers, such support was rendered on an individual basis, and not a collective one, or through the community as a whole.



Page 433: *The Ger* Landsleit *and their Families at the Annual Commemoration Event in Buenos-Aires*

As is understood, this could sustain itself so long as there was still a *shtetl* Ger, which in this instance means Jewish Ger. The situation, however, changes – and to our sorrow for the worse – when The Second World War broke out, what it implied for us, the Jews of Eastern Europe, was the third and possibly the most frightful destruction of our global nation, during which six million Jews were annihilated and murdered – by all manner of grotesque deaths – among which were to be found the hundreds, or possibly thousands of Jews from our former home city of Ger and its vicinity.

Those of us here, in the free country of Argentina, just like those saved Jews from other free countries, hear that terrifying scream of pain from afar, of our murdered and innocent annihilated families; we were, however, helpless and could not find means with which to change the frightful circumstances of those local Jews. Who fell into the bloody talons of the Nazi devourers, which practically implied the talons of death, despite the fact that no one could imagine that the situation over there would be so frightful, as it really turned out to be.

And as a measure of how our concern grew for those Jews who remained in Ger, our yearning for them grew stronger, and in memory of them, these strong illustrative words came about, from that

great Polish writer and friend of the Jews (one of the few friends of Jews, to be found among Polish writers) Adam Mickiewicz[87], who in his poem '*Pan Tadeusz*[88]' intoned:

Lithuania, my fatherland! You are like health;
How much you must be valued, will only discover
The one who has lost you.

Also we, were able to assess what it was that our one-time Jewish Poland meant to us. First now, after we had lost everything – and would never again be able to find.

And since that time, the thought began to come up among us, of creating a Ger *landsmanschaft* among us, here in Buenos-Aires. [It was to] bring over the home city to a new location, and under a different sky, which would be more friendly to Jews.

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Page 436: *Ger* Landsleit *in the Land of Israel at a Commemoration Event on Mount Zion*

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87 Adam Bernard Mickiewicz (24 December 1798 – 26 November 1855) was a Polish poet, dramatist, essayist, publicist, translator, professor of Slavic literature, and political activist. He is regarded as national poet in Poland, Lithuania and Belarus. It is written that his mother was descended from converted Frankist Jews.

88 These are the opening lines in the original Polish:
Litwo! Ojczyzno moja! ty jesteś jak zdrowie;
Ile cię trzeba cenić, ten tylko się dowie, Kto cię stracił.

This came to be implemented in the summer of 1945, when the news of the terrifying slaughtering began to arrive and be confirmed, that had befallen the Jews of Poland, which have no peer in the history of any people, and not even in the history of our own bloodily and heavily tortured, and suffering Jewish people, and also, specific information began to get through about a small number of those, who by a miracle, survived, or how they were later called [in Hebrew], '*She'eyrit haPleyta*' – and we, the small group of Ger scions, who found ourselves in Buenos-Aires, wanted to find out, and get in touch with those who had remained alive from our *shtetl*.



Page 437: At a Yahrzeit *at the Grave of Abraham Greifman* ע"ה *in Buenos-Aires*

For the sake of the truth, we wish to add that, the first movement in this connection, *landsleit* from Grojec, a *shtetl* that was located in the Ger neighborhood, *landsleit* of Grojec, made a call through the Jewish new *landsleit* from Grojec and Ger, that found themselves in Buenos-Aires, that everyone should come to the Central Union of Polish Jews, to obtain information *landsleit* who were still alive, and I, along with the deceased *landsman*, Leib'l Benzelewicz, were among the first from Ger, that went there to obtain this, and from the *landsleit* of Grojec, the following came: Raphael Bran ע"ה – and to be blessed with long years – Leib'l Kulya, and one other person from Grojec, whose name I do not now recall.



Page 438: At An Annual Commemoration Event of Ger Landsleit *at the Cemetery in Buenos-Aires - I*

The information that we received from the Central union of Polish Jews was, that they had no precise information. And the notice that they had printed, was done with the intent that all scions of Grojec and Ger, and its vicinity, should respond; [they] should gather and create a *landsleit* society, which will assume the responsibility of helping those who remained alive, to the extent that as ma ny would hopefully come.

As I have previously indicated, the people of Ger were a small group, and out activists were: Leib'l Benzelewicz, ע"ה, Shlomo Kelmanowicz ע"ה and – to long life – his wife Alta Kelmanowicz; the tragically killed Abraham Greifman ע"ה, and his wife Sheva, Eli–Meir Gutstadt, Menashe Orzekh and his wife Pearl ע"ה, and later one a number of other people from Ger. And in order to assure that our work would be well coordinated, and positive, we decided to work together with the Grojec scions, who thought of themselves as our neighbors, yet from the *alte haym*, and later, on in the integrated work, another neighbor joined us: Tarczyn – and it is disappointing that Leib'l Kulya, the former secretary of the *landsleit* society, in his article about 'The activities of the Grojec *Landsleit*-Society,' that appeared in the Grojec *Yizkor* Book, did not mention the cooperative endeavors, not of Ger nor of Tarczyn.

All of us, from the three previously mentioned towns, were few in number, but we had a great deal of initiative, and a large number of active participants, and regarding this, it is worth taking a glimpse in the bulletin that we published in the month of November 1948, to make visible the activity of the Ger people, and it is also a fact that, that all of the technical work in printing and distributing the bulletin, was carried out by Leib'l Benzelewicz, and the writer of these lines. What is to be attributed to Alta Kelmanowicz, is that she was very active in selling admission tickets to the underlying event, and her husband Shlomo, was among the leading activists in the society. Also Leib'l Benzelewicz gave a great deal of his time to activity on behalf of the society. For an extended period of time, Abraham Greifman was the Treasurer, and his wife Sheva, worked alongside him in the activities *landsleit* society.

Our objective, at that time, was to find out as much as we could about our surviving *landsleit*, and to provide them with help, and our help was of a variegated nature, and encompassed all forms such as: work, domicile, and financial support. We also made efforts to bring selected individuals to Buenos-Aires, despite the fact that this was a very difficult thing to do at that time, and I still remember the experience very well, of when we waited for an entire night at the train station, waiting for our *landsman*, Lipa Helman, who came by train from Bolivia to Buenos Aires, and he was the first living witness from the tragedy, from extermination – and from death – of the Jews of our former home city.

My activity in the Ger *Landsleit*-Society ended in March 1952, when I left Buenos-Aires. It was difficult for me to part from my *landsleit*, who were my dear and devoted friends. This was nearly like a second leaving of one-time Ger... but I continued to remain in contact with these hearty friends *landsleit* of Buenos-Aires.



Page 445: *At an Annual Commemoration Event of Ger* Landsleit *at the Cemetery in Buenos-Aires - II*

I also remember when after our *landsman,* Menashe Orzekh and his wife Pearl, left Buenos-Aires, they left a great void in the community activity of the few Ger families in Buenos-Aires, but the leadership of the activity of the Ger *Landsleit* Society was further taken up by active workers such as the writer of these lines; there were also: Shlomo Kelmanowicz, and his wife Adela, Abraham Greifman and his wife Sheva, and an array of others.

Yearly the Ger families meet, at the traditional commemoration events, which are held in order to recollect the annihilation of our near and dear families, as also the entirety of Jewish life in our hometown.

The Buenos-Aires community has erected a monument as a memorial to the six million martyrs (and among these martyrs, the murdered members of Jewish Ger are also to be counted). In this monument, can be found a part of the sacred ash from the crematoria, which was especially brought over here, and at this symbolic monument to the martyrs, there are bronze tablets affixed, in which many small towns recall their destroyed home towns, and among those bronze tablets, is also a tablet from the *Landsleit* Society of our town of Ger, and at the annual commemoration events, we also recall the Jewish life of Ger that was prematurely cut down.

At the request of 'Yad VaShem' in Jerusalem, about permanently preserving the memory of the annihilated Jews, we filled out hundreds of questionnaires, first for our *shtetl*, but also for an array of neighboring cities and towns. For this work, the following *landsleit* gave much energy and dedication: Yankl Jurkiewicz, Shlomo Kelmanowicz, Lipa Helman, Marcos Gutstadt, and an array of others. Also, the *Yizkor* Book, '*Megillat* Ger,' is the product of the work of a small group, representing our spiritual monument to the Jewish life of Ger that was cut down.

Our Son, Eli' Friend and Soldier – A Portrait

By the Goldhecht Family
Hertzeliya, Israel

Fell, in Defense of The Homeland,
In the Yom Kippur War, in the battle to halt the
forward momentum of the enemy,
at the [Suez] Canal
9. 10. 1974

First Sergeant in the military, Eliyahu Goldhecht ל"ז, a son of Leib'l Goldhecht from Ger.



Page 444: *A Son of Leib'l Goldhecht, who fell in a defensive battle during the Yom Kippur War.*

It is the night of *Kol Nidre*. The *klatsch* is sitting on the grass in front of their home in Ramat-Yosef carrying on a conversation about the issues of the day. People are cheerful, joking, and Eli' is in the center of the group. The air is suffused with a sense of alert. Someone touches on the subject of war, and Eli' says: 'since I haven't been called up – there is no war' – this was his reaction to me on the eve of the Yom Kippur War.

On Yom Kippur, Saturday morning – Eli' is hurrying to the gathering point. He is not about to be late to his fellow crew members in responding to the order. His parents ask him to provision himself with personal items. Eli' refuses: 'I don't need them' – he answers his parents, who escort their beloved son, at the time he is called up – 'within 3 days, we will overpower them, and I will return home, not to worry.' He took leave of his brothers, parents and friends, –'There is no force that can stand opposite *TzaHa"L*, I will return quickly, there is no reason to worry about me.'

But Eli' did not return. He remained there, beside the fence at the '*Televisia'* hilltop[89], as his tank comrades related.

As the commandant of the unit wrote to the bereaved parents:

'Eli' revealed to us a strength of spirit, resourcefulness, and stoutness of heart that was unusual.'

The command staff and its officers knew enough to tell that Eli' had been wounded in his legs, in the first battle, yet continued to fight, amid voicing his refusal to be evacuated. He would not leave his comrades behind. With his characteristic self-confidence, he continued to fire, and hit the enemy tanks, in a battle against a superior force of Egyptian armor, that were cutting their way eastward. With his body, he interdicted and halted their advance.

He was 24 years old when he fell.

'Our Eli' had – as related the parents were Holocaust survivors – a difficult childhood. With him we reached The Land in 1957, when he was only 8. To our joy, he took beautifully to the elementary school, despite the new language and a land that was not known to him. When he finished his elementary education, he asked to help us' – the parents continue – 'in the establishment of our family, and went out to work, in order to be able to continue his studies. We watched him grow, blossom and integrate himself into the life of the society of his new Homeland. Eli' was a ray of light in our house, with his cheer, the goodness of his heart, and the joy of his life.'

It was with great love that he wanted to be a military man, and there was no bound to his pride when he completed the course for a tank officer. He returned to the 'daily grind' of work, and excelled in his craft, in presenting an efficiency proposal at his new place of work in the aircraft factory. His decision was a determined one, to continue and complete [his training] in order to take advantage of his best young years.

Could we conceive that Eli' would not fulfil his plans?

He loved life, his friends tell. He loved The Land and everything in it. He knew all of its highways and byways – his friends wondered about when was it that he found enough time to cover The Land entirely in its breadth and length. He had agreed with his parents, that Saturdays would be dedicated

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89 A stronghold, at the north end of The Great Bitter Lake, on the Sinai side of the Suez Canal.

to touring expeditions for the purpose of becoming acquainted with the landscape of the country. On occasion he would do this with his friends, and sometimes with[out] them. And he did this with an ardor, and a hurried approach as if he was attempting to complete, in a short period of time, the absorption of the joy of life over the span of years that are bounded by the hands of fate.

Eli' was a good friend and neighbor – young Chaim emphasizes, his childhood friend yet from Russia(Poland). – We loved him a great deal – his friend the, tank soldier Shmuel from Petakh-Tikva underscores. 'Goldie' was the nickname given to him by the command staff. He concerned himself about all of us. It was as if he was the father of the group. All tasks that were assigned to him were carried out thoroughly, with precision and dedication.

'Goldie,' – one of the surviving tank soldiers from his unit emphasizes – will certainly be nominated for a *Tzion LaShevakh* Medal. It should be known to you – one of his comrades in-arms adds – Eli' carried out his responsibilities, as the communications operative, in a manner that goes beyond normal bounds. He was a courageous fighter, an outstanding soldier, and a comrade who was an exemplar, as I saw him jump out of the third tank that was hit. It is hard to believe that our 'Goldie' fell, and is no longer among us.

'It is possible to write a lot about Eli' – the next-door neighbor to his house says – 'however, it is not possible to describe all of his facets and qualities.'

Eliyahu had a noble spirit – a good heart, and a unique sense of an inner impulse to provide help for the common welfare. He had a desire to help those who needed it, in various areas, not for the purpose of receiving any reward – just for its own sake – to engender a good personal feeling. He was pleasant in his demeanor, and in his behavior, despite the very dynamic inner drive that he possessed.

Eliyahu knew the secret and taste of life, and he gave of this wisdom to those around him, to his friends, his parents, and his family.

And here, he was bound on the altar of the preservation of the State of Israel.

–Will we be able to carry on without him? – ask his comrades.

–How will we live without him? – the family asks, the parents, the brother. – Will they find a source of comfort in knowing that he gave his life for the preservation of Jewish life in a country of the Jewish people.

It is with grief, and pride, that we will carry the memory of our Eli' from generation to generation. The example of his life, and his sacrifice, will act as a symbol and model for coming generations, in a State of Israel that will be secure, and at peace.

[Page 443-446, is a free-translation of the above into Yiddish, and is not repeated in the translated text]

My Musings About the History of Ger

By Menachem Gildoni ז"ל (Menachem Mendl Goldhecht)
Passed away in the year 5715 [1955]

Within the framework of musings about plundered Ger, the beauty of the surrounding towns, its Jews, our parents, sisters and brothers, that were exterminated, and brought down by all manner of deaths and torture in this town, let us stand silently in their memory, bite lips, gnash our teeth out of pain, anger and rage. Let us swear an oath this day – our oath, to etch out for our progeny, that they remember!



Page 450: At an annual commemoration event in Tel-Aviv, where M. Orzekh from New York, and H. Prajs from New York, took part.

Remember, and do not forget what was done to us by these beasts in the form of wild-asses of men, the sons of the German people and their adherents – remember! And let our oath be like a burning lump of coal, whispering and burning in your hearts that calls for vengeance against our enemies, mercilessly – to the end of generations.

Jews of Ger, brothers and sisters!

We saw it in your eyes – deprived of everything. Frozen from the cold, hungering for bread, with death hovering over your heads.

And our hands – fell short of being able to save you.

We saw you shamed at the hands of our neighbors, 'the good and venerable ones,' with death riding on your shoulders.

Every news item that reached us caused our hearts to tremble, it shook us up, and caused our hair to stand on end. We stood hapless, with our hands open wide, but being able to dispense nothing, and being powerless... a spasm passes through the body on recollecting what it is that was done to you. We will not rest, nor will rest return forever into our hearts – only the liberation of the soul from the body, a liberation that will release the barrier that restrains our souls.

Ger – A magical word, that is known by every Jew for what is there.

Ger – That has a reputation, a praiseworthy name, both near and far. It didn't come because of its dominance or the artists there. It did not earn this reverence for nothing – even if all this was earned by it. It grew out of a different corner.

All of its glory came from one 'courtyard.'

Ger – the city among cities. Ger – the city of virtues. Ger – the dynamic symphony in the entire province, and her first violin was the 'courtyard.'

Let this be an ignorance of the facts, a flight from it – and let it be in a man's mind, no matter who he is – if he does not see in the opening of his words the 'courtyard' as a spiritual and physical center, that impresses its seal and character, its way of thinking and the realization of day-to-day activities, beginning with those sworn to it, all the way to the most fervent opponent to it in the town.

The courtyard – the spiritual point of the *Hasidic* broadcast, that was revealed, and hit in every corner [of the country], and became the source of great worth and a formidable potential for the forging of national presence – even on the shaky ground that it stood on in its time (?) The apple of the eye of the majority of general Jewry, and to the resuscitation of the nation on the soil of the Land of Israel. It was the fundamental glue to the unity of the people, and a force of great opposition to assimilation and dissolution, that the circumstances of life caused and intimated it almost over all of Europe in its entirety.

The courtyard – It drew to itself scholarly Jews, *Hasidim* and God-fearing people in the millions, that learned from it, and repaid what they received doubly. The town, intrinsically, was the refuge of the courtyard, that collected light within it, understanding and knowledge for its Jews, and especially for the youth within it, that suckled and absorbed Torah and understanding, whether from the courtyard – its books and its *Hasidim*, or from the curious, writers, poets, painters and artisans – not necessarily Jewish – who came to find inspiration for their creations in all avenues.

He who has not seen Ger during its festival seasons – On *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* – cannot expect to see again an image of such grandeur in this area. He who has not seen a throng of tens of thousands of Jews spreading out after prayers, or during recesses, and with their prayer shawls whiten the entire expanse of the town, to its furthest reaching corner, will never again ever see this glorious and lofty image.

The mood of the town, as the High Holy Days approached, took on its unique character with the advent of the month of Elul. The innkeepers began their preparations to receive "the people" (the community of *Hasidim*) that were to come and celebrate the holidays under the aegis of the *Rebbe.*

Negotiations ensued between the innkeepers and the remaining residents of the town, that were not particularly adept at being innkeepers, in regards to the question of arranging for extra places of accommodation in their homes, that were more expansive, and at the end of the matter, 90% or more of the personal places, in the entire Jewish part of town had been arranged for, and facilitate for the *Hasidim* that came for the holidays.

If you stood by the estimate of the number of those coming, meaning the expertise of the 'knowledgeable ones' in the town, in these deliberations, almost always, you would be surprised either positively or negatively. In a lean year of economic distress, or the passage of some hateful anti-Semitic regulation, on the part of the head of government, when a Jew was at a distance from his residence, because of the many perils that stalked him at every step and turn; it was – as is natural – a very small and limited estimate was given. And especially in a year of that sort, the 'people' would grow without limit, that spilled over all of the boundaries of the town, and lodging became tightened up to a personal lodging of one bed in a house, and reached the point of all other possibilities.

It is difficult to establish the reason, or reasons, that moved the *Hasidic* Jew, to put himself in danger, in order to reach Ger on the High Holy Days, in years such as these. However, it is possible to add into the calculation, the sense of oppression and bitter heart, that was the lot that fell to him in the wake of the exile in which he lived his life, and then he found it to be a spiritual need, to pour out his soul, specifically in the ambit of the *Rebbe,* among thousands of the *Hasidim* in silent or vocal prayer, or in the desperate cry of 'Shema Koleynu, khus v'rakheym aleynu.[90]'

The *Hasidim* of Ger were not, in general, overly emotional towards The Most High; they felt secure in their approach to Him, because in the time of giving an 'accounting,' they will give him chapter-and-verse precisely, take advantage of this – and He will forgive them. They will argue on behalf of themselves – and they will be answered. Because of this, prayer was more 'recitation,' 'a dialogue' of the sort 'between I and Thou.' Melody was beautiful, melody that was cheerful, without a forced fervor, would spread to the outdoors, always from the standpoint of 'what will be spoken, and God will answer me out loud.'

Nevertheless, a unique sense of seething could be felt on the eve of the Day of Judgment, before '*Kol Nidrei*.'

With the conclusion of the *Final Meal* – a silence pervaded the *shtetl.* The stores had already been closed in anticipation of the holiday, and one cannot see a living thing in the streets. The sun turns

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90 The highly emotional entreaty of Yom Kippur: 'Hear us, ...take pity on us and show us compassion...'

to set, and reddens the strip of sky of the entirety of *Ulica* Kalwarijska, as if someone had lit a vigorous fire specifically there, and at the second end of the street, near the neighborhood of the sand; and visions and associations are created in the heart of a Jewish child: – *Gehenna*... and a fact – above the cemetery, an autumnal wind rustles among the trees, and the gold and copper of fallen leaves are spread on the sides of the road, completing the characterization of 'I am but dust' – in my life, and all the more so... and suddenly, like an order from on high, as if by a magic rod, the silence ceases, and like a raging river, a stormy sea, rivers in an angry and vigorous flow, Jews, wrapped in their prayer shawls, are off to the house of worship; the river sweeps, sweeps off men, women and children. [They come from] Every street and yard, from every corner and house, from every side way, crooked alley, [the stream] straightens itself and melds together, heading in the one and only direction – to the house of prayer.

On the principal street, opposite one another, the *Bet HaMedrash* of the *Rebbe*, on its two large courtyards, adorning it like precious stones, stand tens of thousands of Jews crowded against one another and praying, where it is impossible to pass easily between them. The sweet voice of the *Baal Shacharit* – Joseph Groinims ('Tzal'keh) and his choir of 'choristers' under the direction of Shakhna Waxman, and Yehoshua Meshullam's – resonates from one end to the other; and the *Baal Musaf* is remembered favorably – Yoss'leh Khaciner, a master of his craft in being a *Baal-Tefilah*, and who offers pleasant songs, with his choir under the direction of Yankl Khalmod – separated for long life, who is today to be found in *The Land*.

On the other side of the road, facing one another, stood the *Bet HaMedrash* of the sacred congregation, serving its Jews. It consisted of a variegated array of small-scale craftsmen of all types. [There were] sellers of orchards and fields, storekeepers, merchants, and ordinary *balebatim*. Her order reigns, with its own heartbeat. Eliezer Mocidlober – and after his passing – his son, Moshe'l Simkhowicz. They arouse the hearers with the verses of song. Herschel Becker and Yaakov Shabbos lead the Shacharit service, and the Baal Tefilah of first rank, lo, this is Meir Hazzan (Messing) with his choir – his sons. There are good friends of my youth, and loyal comrades caring for my well-being, who will be remembered to my last day, this being Beinusz, Moshe Luzer, Shlomo and Reuben ז"ל.

In this *Bet HaMedrash*, there was a tendency to introduce innovations in the prayer. To add a tune, to stretch out a tune, etc. However, the Rabbi of this sacred congregation was the guardian of the old, constantly restoring the old way. I remember a novel innovation of Meir Hazzan, with which to finish off the usual Kaddish, '*Da'Amiran BeAlma, ve'Imru Amen,*' using a melody: The Rabbi reacted, and forbade him to use it, arguing that the congregation gets emotionally worked up from this beautiful tune, and forgets to answer, 'Amen.'

Meir *Hazzan* resists, arguing and demanding the right to conduct the service before the Ark in accordance with his own understanding and spirit, but in the end – he responds to the Rabbi's will...

The *shtetl* was not noteworthy for its works nor for large manufacturing facilities, and consequently – the unemployed did not increase in number, for there were none to begin with. People worked hard and intensely from the early hours of the morning, until late at night. Because its Jews made up tens

upon tens of shoemakers, and tailors – Mendl Darr, David Kiya, Velvel the Tailor, Israel'keh the tailor, who worked hard and covered the nakedness of the gentiles, residents of the nearby villages. Mendl Molo' – the Builder; Chaim Mordechai – the Smith. A relative of mine; Yehsaya'leh Bender; Mott'l Stluzh the Carpenter; Tuvia *Watszasz*[91] – the maker of absorbent cotton; Israel *Zayfnzieder*[92] – Soap; Israel Moshe – a Dyer; all of them gave of their labor to sustain the *shtetl*. And there is yet another list of personalities, butchers, fishmongers, wagon drivers, water drawers, storekeepers and merchants – all of them, all of them like busy insects, not resting from the break of dawn until its subsequent rise. Despite all this, there were no 'rich' people in the *shtetl*, and those with means – that could be counted on the fingers of one hand – their number reflected the smallness of the town.

The saying – a guest for a minute will spy every shortcoming – had no purchase in Ger. An arrival in Ger for the Sabbath or a Festival Holiday, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, not only one obtained the impression that it was as if he had reached his allotted one hundred twenty [years] and had come to Jerusalem. Jews, by the hundreds and thousands, were walking about at the head of its outdoor venues, in a state of pleasure, conversing out loud, or humming and practicing a new tune for *'Haya Pipiyot;' 'Ayn Kitzva,'* or '*Slakh Na.'* In order to bring it as an offering to the *shtibl* in the place where they lived. Others were attempting to discourse over the literal meaning on the Torah, with utterances of 'may he live' [sic: referring to the *Rebbe*], heard at the side of the *Tisch* during a feast, one man calling out to his friend in a loud voice, in short – a deafening noise derived from a large throng of Jews, of all types, as if there were only Jews, and no other residents of the *shtetl*. Nevertheless, the impression is a frustrating one, bitterly frustrating.

To the residents of Ger, who had open eyes, it was both transparent and known that Ger was a hotbed of virulent anti-Semitism. This was true despite the fact that their lives and earnings were based on Jewish custom. The core of the reality was, that in such a small town, having three thousand Christian residents, there were at least seven churches, which bears witness to the cause of this hotbed.

The heads of the intelligentsia of this group – the teacher Piekarniak, and Kahazon, Stanczyk and their comrades – may their memory be derided – were a reliable cadre for the nurture and dispensation of a plentiful anti-Semitic poison, among the Christian residents of the town, and in the villages adjacent in its surroundings. Which person, who was a born Jew, had the temerity to traverse the village of Czersk, and not have his soul fold up inside of him out of fear of physical assault or attack, or being torn at by wild dogs and being the target of thrown stones. The substantially proliferated German families (afterwards called '*Volksdeutsche'*), born in the town, and being *balebatim*, and possessors of assets: the Hofmanns, Dilnats, Balesteins, all part of this group, partnered together vigorously in this important initiative. Programmatic youth groups were created,

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91 A name containing the cognate 'wata' which is Polish for cotton wool.

92 A name meaning one who renders ingredients to make soap

with virulent antipathy towards Jews, such as: '*Strzelec*[93],' '*Sokół*[94],' etc., etc. Day-in and day-out there were clashes, disputes and an exchange of blows; [and] here it is proper to recollect the local police, all of whom grew and prospered and enriched themselves from the 'revenues' and 'gifts,' that they received at every opportunity, from Jews who resided in the town; with the precedent that they set – in all matters – with which a Jew would turn to them.

And that cunning Old Terakh – a buddy, [a person] who was young and arrogant for his whole life. Whom I remember yet from my youth, in his capacity as a *stójkowy*[95] – a regular policeman from the days of Czarist Russia until he became the supervisor of the Polish police in the town; and until he retired on his pension, not Moshe 'The Jewish face" – a master of administering punishment (here his nickname stood him in good stead)... and in no small measure, the local army barracks also contributed in this regard; and it also had its degrees, levels and means until they reached their sought after goal. At first, it was an ordinary army camp, that is to say – soldiers. [Made up of] a better class of gentiles, and less anti-Semitic that entered it. Among them were also Jewish soldiers. Slowly, slowly, the camp changed, and became more alien, until it became '*Judenrein*.'

With the billeting of the I.P.A.C. – the first heavy artillery brigade, which, in its time, was a military secret in Poland, the army camp proceeded to change. But, even here, only soldiers, that is to say – composed of various ethnic backgrounds – but gentiles; until the barracks were transformed into the central school of the [student] ranks in the country, to which only 'good' Christians, 'the right kind' of people, 'lovers of the country,' on whom it is possible to rely, were sent from these designated ranks.

Slowly, but surely, however, by indirect means, contact with the Jews of the town was ceased. Those Jews, who provided foodstuffs for the soldiers for years, were distanced, and replaced with Christians. The principals of the schools began to concern themselves with pressuring the Jews of the town. A criticism was levied that the Jews do not look after the cleanliness of the town in a sufficient manner, and this endangers the health of the soldiers in their camp. The houses of the Jews, especially those fronting on the street had to undergo renovation from time to time, lest they

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93 Związek Strzelecki 'Strzelec' (Riflemen's Association 'Rifleman') was a Polish paramilitary cultural and educational organization created in 1910 in Lvov as a legal front of Związek Walki Czynnej, and revived in Poland in 1991.

94 Sokół (Polish: Polskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne 'Sokół', *Polish Gymnastic Society 'Falcon'*) is the Polish offshoot of the Czech (pan-Slavic oriented) Sokol movement, and the oldest youth movement organization Poland. Created in Lvov in 1867, by the end of World War I the movement had its units – *gniazda* ('Nests') – in all parts of Poland, as well as among the Polish communities abroad. The group's goal was to develop fitness, both physically and mentally, with a motto *mens sana in corpore sano* ('a fit spirit in a fit body').

95 '*Stójkowy*' is a term used in Poland, in the time of Czarist Russian rule, before the First World War, as a designation for a simple policeman. Even today, in Polish, the term '*stójkowy*' is used in describing a policeman with minimum experience and police rank, i.e. a 'rookie.'

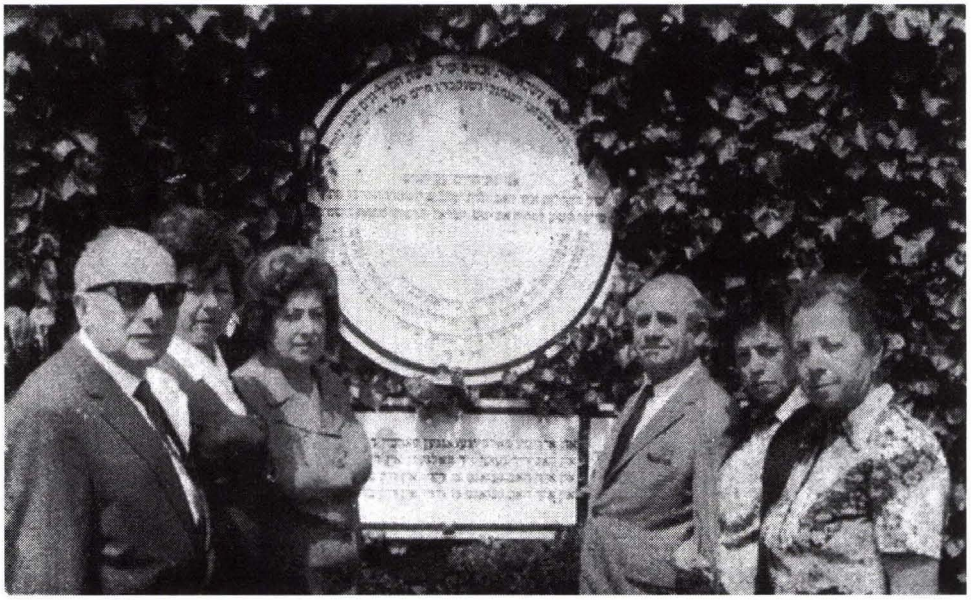
be found at fault in connection with the town's aesthetics. These things continued, got more prominent, broadened, until they obtained the appearance of outright clashes, harassment – until the Jew became something lacking any worth at all.

I recall, also for condemnation, the behavior of the provincial doctor – Dr. Binder, the anti-Semite, that was sent to assume the position of the head of the local health agency. This Satan did not cease from his search for all manner of means to irritate and maim the dove-like soul of the Ger Jewry. At the end of 1936 the incident occurred – that instead of incinerating the 'contamination' that the soldiers of the school had brought upon themselves – girls, from the ranks of the girls of their faith, from the nearby villages, who served them as 'lovers,' – the most chaste and respected Jewish girls of the town were ordered, by formal invitation, according to the statute, to present themselves for a medical examination, and if there were none among them with any sexual disease, and because of this they might infect the soldiers...

The anti-Semitic poison continued to grow in the town and its surroundings. On the judgment day, on that bitter day for its Jews – the satisfaction sown by this anti-Semitism, would it be difficult to describe?...

And [here is] yet another precious, delightful pearl, from among the thousand.

[The text following at this point is a repetition of the story documented in the memoir of the same author, beginning on page 60 . It details the predation of the gentile Koczansky family against Shy'eh the Shoemaker. In this Hebrew version, the name of the gentile family is given as Kotinsky.]



Page 455: *At the Monument of the Six Million Martyrs at the Cemetery in Buenos-Aires*

After The First World War, the first library in the town was created, called '*Kadima*,' that found a place in the yard of Zakhorowicz in Czorny Dwor next to the fire house.

The few books that were there at that time, were acquired and by their presence, made an impact and was helpful to the youth, within which the thirst raged greatly, and who could find no satisfaction from their quality and quantity. A fund was set up in the town for the purchase of additional books. The ones who stood at the head of the library at that time decided to help themselves by organizing and staging a theatrical event, in order to use the revenues so derived to enlarge the library [collection.]. A foundation would be laid for a Drama Group, which incidentally, after a couple of weeks fell apart, but was then reconstituted anew and was both a source and a basis for the economic need and the cultural life of the town.

I still remember – and I was a lad aged 10. The winter was at its peak intensity. After a conversation, in this part of the season, between the rain wind and cold – the snow decided to dominate the situation in full force. It is days that it hasn't stopped in stubbornly fulfilling its mission, coming down and falling, as if it intended to drown and swallow the town.

It is the early hours of the evening. Here and there, the pale light of an oil lamp breaks through a window, the angry bark of an abandoned dog, and the solitary *'kra,' 'kra,'* of a startled raven, provide a sad refrain in the silence of the night, and the town lays dormant, and buried in its snow, and it is warm.

In one hand, I hold the tractate of *Kidushin*, with the not-comprehended portion of the *'Isha Nakanit*,' and in the second hand, a small lantern made of tinware, also having four wicks, and the remnants of a flickering candle inside – here I am returning home from *Heder*.

A warm house, pleasant, is lit with large carbide lamps, and a pale light floats over, and encompasses the entire room. My oldest sister stands with a book beside the oven, that has been dedicated to warming the house, and is reading from it out loud. From time-to-time, she puts down the book, and runs back and forth in the room, back and forth, back and forth, grimacing in a variety of ways, strange movements, and speaks, she storms and jumps, and in so doing – I am seized with fear. There was no other member of the household present, and I am stuck to my seat, and all my senses directed to – the door – hoping that someone would come in and take me out of the nightmare...

The time passed, creeping slowly, like a snail on the wall, until a cry burst forth from my throat:

'Yetta Feiga! What are you talking about so much? To whom are you talking? To whom are you talking?" And why are you getting so angry and screaming-g-g?...

I could no longer control myself, and a bitter weeping overwhelmed my face.

After a proper act of calming me down, and getting me quiet, she said to me by way of explanation, this was a piece of theater! – What will it be" – I ask, and my crying continues and intensifies. – This is going to be theater! She repeats the attempt to quiet me: Theater! – Theater?!!! This, after all costs

money! And why, in the end, the *Rebbe* in the *Heder* indicated to his son, when he came for Hanukkah vacation back home, he came from Warsaw, because he is studying there to become a baker, the wagon driver hit him with a big stick – he hit him until blood flowed, and during this, he shouted in a wild voice that seemed not to be his – 'You are going to go to the theater and squander money?!'

On Purim of the same year, after the evening meal, my mother took me by one hand, and our neighbor, Rivka'leh Cohen by the second hand, and led us off to the theater.

The first performance in the history of the town took place in the hall of the Zakhorowiczes in Czorny Dwor, called '*Sarah Shayndl from Yahupetz*[96],' with my sister in the leading role. Those who took part were: the brothers David and Monusz Szluker (David died after a short period of Typhus in the stomach, on the Festival of Sukkot), Yoss'l Friedman, Hadass Rivka's (in anonymity in Argentina) – both died in the spring of life, and they earned an honorable portion in the establishment of the cultural life of the town. [These were] Aharon Poznansky, Abraham Kirschenbaum, and others.

After the performance, the 'godless' were all revealed for everyone to see, and the town was as if drugged... my father was called to present himself before the *Rebbe*, and because of what he received there, afterwards, he heaped a scornful anger on all members of the family, mostly our mother, who went to see the performance. The *Rebbe* unleashed the same remonstrance against the remaining parents of the 'apostates.'

An excommunication was organized – pressure and movement – and in its wake, the drying up and wiping out of most of the library.

To recover, and to start anew, was accompanied by literally mortal danger, and difficulties without end. Nevertheless, time healed the wounds. The dispirited youth recuperated. Two large rooms were rented anew – and a library called "*Volkshaus*" came into being. The walls were decorated with pictures of Peretz, Mendele, Sholom Aleichem, Zeitlin and others. Once again, for the establishment and the expansion of the library, a second play was staged, called "*Der Tzvayter Haman*." The test this time, was of a professional force from Warsaw, and it distinguished itself in this manner, with much in the way of sparkling costumes, swords, and an abundance of royal scepters, and this 'grandiose' play went over with great success, and left a deep impression. Added to the participants that were in the first play, were newcomers, among them – Yekhiel Zakhorowicz, and Chaim Jakubowicz, who today are found here in Tel-Aviv.

In its wake, the war brought many social and progressive changes even in our town. Even without the wandering, the tribulations, the expulsions, and the removal of the populace from the front lines – especially the Jewish one – because of the lack of confidence in their loyalty as citizens, most of the Jews of Pinsk came to our town, in the form of expelled refugees.

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96 A Yiddish play named 'Sarah Shayndl' is attributed to the playwright Joseph Lateiner. The name 'Yahupetz' seems to have been an alias used by Sholom Aleichem in talking about the city of Kiev.

The warm reception extended by the youth of the town was a wonder to behold. Committees were created. The refugees were immediately settled very beautifully in ordinary houses, in the halls of the 'yeshiva' that had been abandoned because of the circumstances of the war, the home of the *Rebbe*, etc., etc.

There was a fraternal concern to provide clothing, and food for the use of the refugees. An inexpensive kitchen was opened. I can recall that twice and three times, we went to see with our own eyes, this most wonderful thing in nature. A Jew working in a smithy, and with locks, doing work – that according to the standard of the time – was only appropriate for a gentile to do. The second positive attribute of the Jewish cohort– the Pinsk one, was the youth. All were students and graduates of a Hebrew gymnasium. Among them were teachers and educators, that we had never seen such a thing, and was unheard of in our milieu. We heard a 'new song' in the streets of Ger, they were singing, 'Let us go forth to Zion, carrying the banner and flag of the camp of Judah.'

Among the remaining concerns for the Pinsk refugees, the task of the young people in the town was to befriend them, and to make their temporary residence in this location pleasant; it was to create a friendly touch, so they not feel themselves to be strangers. This sort of connection was created, and it bore fruit. The connections were strengthened, the lines became serious, and in this way, the pace of the young people was strengthened and became more certain, and they were freed from the constraints of the small town. The youth studied, acquired enlightenment, and enriched itself with knowledge of languages, reading, and study. Male and female teachers sprouted, progressed, and supported themselves honorably. Until then, if I recall, there were two teachers: Israel Zelig's (?) And Yehudis die *Schreiberin*.[97] Their studies were circumscribed by their knowledge of how to copy letter [forms] from the '*brievensteller*,' that is to say, – a book containing different styles to be used in letter correspondence. With progress, more male and female teachers were added, and it went so far as to cause a shortage to be felt. At the head of the teachers stood: Yehoshua Glauberman ז"ל, Bialko, and Manya Finkelstein from Pinsk, and afterwards, the sisters Tova and Leah Simkhowicz, Mott'l Karbman, Tova Weinberg – who today lives in Belgium, Moshe'l Zifman, Leah Till, others, and others.

Like that very same bee that transports the pollen from flower to flower, so did the youth from Pinks bring with them the baggage of Zionism as part of its responsibility, a baggage of song, and a Zionist spirit in work that put down roots among many of the cohorts of the young in the town. The first activity for the benefit of *Keren HaKayemet L'Israel*, in which Shlomo'keh Glauberman and his sister appeared as singers of a Hebrew song in duet, accompanied by a chorus, that was subsequently received with great praise by all the young people."

"Pray tell me Riva,
Pray tell beloved,
What will you do there
There in the Land of Israel.

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97 A trade-related appellation, in this case, designating this woman as a writer, or one literate enough to write.

I will cut grain in fields there,
I will pick the fruit of vineyards there –
Only in the Land of Israel."

The period of Zionism became a reality, and went up on the pillars of the town stage. The pictures of Herzl, *Ahad HaAm*[98] and others were added, and adorned the walls of the library. A '*Yizkor*' Book of the heroes of The Land was put out as an album, and placed on a table, where it was paged through with the awe of respect. The years, during which Zionism flowered, continued, the study of Hebrew was the forging nail, and the dissemination of the concept behind the collection boxes of the *KK"L*. Large placards were on display throughout the streets of the town, with the headline: "*Lomir Oysleyzn dem Eymek*,[99]" which captured the hearts of the youth.

This period lasted for a number of years, but encountered a crisis. A wind of misfortune blew through our camp, and the Pinsk natives returned to the city of their birth. The town grew still, and waned in substance and spirit.

The period of the '*Bund*' flowered and ascended in the Jewish street of Poland, and also reached Ger, and in its wake – the first buds of the illegal communist party, and the battle over the hegemony and control of cultural life in the city.

These contending forces, circled each other and clashed from time-to-time, in the very same 'center' whose name, after, '*Volkshaus*,' '*Volks-Bibliothek*' named for I. L. Peretz, and the center began to disassemble.

At first the Zionist camp abandoned it, with all of its shades of inclination and its cadres, who went over to a different locale, which later on split – as it happens, into two Zionist institutions: General Zionists, and the left-leaning '*Poalei Tzion*.'

The library, with a rich collection of books, a renown Drama Circle, to begin with, having a repertoire of tens of plays in its cycle; an orchestra for stringed instruments, under the direction of Ber'l Ribak – a relative of mine, who with his primitive talent for music, without any musical enlightenment, knew how to create, from every song and melody, pieces for a whole orchestral ensemble, who appeared in concerts with great success. And Ber'l [himself] played on all stringed instruments with great talent, and more than that, he conducts his orchestra with great attentiveness using a makeshift wooden baton in his hand, going from one great performance to the next. It is possible, who is to know? In a different area, under other circumstances, and under different

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98 Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg (18 August 1856 – 2 January 1927), primarily known by his Hebrew name and pen name, *Ahad Ha'Am*, lit. *one of the people*, (Genesis 26:10), was a Hebrew essayist, and one of the foremost pre-state Zionist thinkers. He is known as the founder of cultural Zionism. With his secular vision of a Jewish "spiritual center" in Israel, he confronted Theodor Herzl. Unlike Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, *Ahad Ha'Am* strived for "a Jewish state and not merely a state of Jews".

99 Let us resolve the matter of the Valley

conditions, Ber'l could have certainly developed, into a renown conductor. All of this went on to degenerate, all this went and was buried among the waves of dispersion, and went down into the abyss.

In this environment, and out of the internal dissension that came from the differences of opinion and opposition, desires and searches for that which was beautiful and useful, the youth of Ger grew, possessed of a blossoming enlightenment, aggressive and dreamy. From them came out writers who matured, teachers, workers and artisans in the factory, and the workshop, small scale craftsmen and farmers. Leib'l, Moshe Khanikh's, Moshe Mondrowsky (?), barbers and storekeepers, etc., etc. Some went off onto the Zionist thorn, and others onto the revolution that was supposed to be accomplished by the force of the arm, and others with a spiritual and economic foundation from before, and a recognition of the Yiddish language as a fundamental language in the offices of the country of Poland.

All of this still lives in the memory of the few who remain from the Jews who emigrated from Ger, in all the countries to which they were dispersed, and from time-to-time, engender a desirous longing for that beautiful and romantic past, all that has been recollected above, belongs to a past that has been transformed, and cut off... the Jews of Ger died the death of martyrs, at the unclean hands of the Nazi murderers, and may God avenge their blood!

Ger Lives in the Jewish World

By Menachem Ben-Uri
Secretary of the Book Committee in Israel

Jewish Ger was wiped off of Polish soil, but Ger lives in the Jewish world; in the hearts of millions of Jews in the country of Israel, and in the Jewish Diaspora spread over the larger world. The eternity of Israel is no falsehood, to which the eternally vibrant spirit of the Jewish people attests; from the *Book of Books* that proclaimed the sanctity of human life, to the *Yizkor* Books, that eternalize the memory of the martyrs, as a warning against the wickedness of the nations, and as a solace and hope for the coming generations.



Page 462: (Top): The top floor is occupied by Yeshiva LeTzi'irim *of the Ger* Hasidim

The city that was our birthplace, which in the course of hundreds of years, earned the reputation as a symbol of faith and sanctity, lives in the hearts of Jews, as the tens of institutions of Torah and education bear witness, which the scions of Ger have put up on the land of the country; as does '*Megillat Ger*' bear witness, which is a collective creation on the part of simple Jews of the

people, employing a simple language, with a language that comes from the heart, portrayed the spiritual pedigree of their home city, and their own personal suffering, when *Amalek* took it upon himself to cut down and tear out Jewish life by the roots.

For four long years, we, the former *landsleit* of Ger, dreamed of fulfilling the historical mission to eternalize the sacred memory of the Sacred Congregation of Ger. We have been privileged to fulfil our obligation, and on the hundreds of pages of '*Megillat Ger*,' we have placed, for all eternity, the life of a Jewish settlement, encompassing the holiness of Jewish Sabbath observance, and Festival Holidays, with the courtyard of the ADMo"R, with the idealism of Jewish working men, who dreamt of a better and more beautiful world, in the spirit of the Jewish Prophets.



Page 462: (Bottom): First Grade in the Elementary School Yeshiva and Talmud Torah *of the Ger* Hasidim *in Jerusalem*

For long years, we spoke of a *Yizkor* Book at our annual commemoration gatherings in Tel-Aviv, but the financial difficulties and the lack of material lay like a thorn along our *landsleit* in Argentina, took the sacred task upon themselves, and with the help of the talented quill of a Jewish writer, they demonstrated the capacity to overcome all the difficulties, and to bring to realization that long-standing wish of their fellow scions, who are sown and spread in all corners of the world.

In the name of the 'Organization of the Émigrés of Ger in Israel,' I therefore express, first and foremost, our heartfelt recognition to our dear comrade Yaakov Jurkiewicz from Buenos Aires, who with an unusual dedication and stubbornness, devoted himself to this sacred task. In the course of several years, he stood as the permanent communication liaison in writing, with all *landsleit* from Ger all over the world, ceaselessly encouraged, demanded and gathered materials, and documents for the book. Thanks to his tireless work and concern, which cost a great deal of time and energy, this symbolic gravestone was erected, the *Yizkor* Book, as an addition to the Holocaust literature, and as a testament, that the spirit of Ger lives, and will continue to live to the end of all the generations. Our friend, Jurkiewicz, was also accompanied and assisted in this work, with all needs required, by the comrades, Melech Gutstadt and Lipa Helman, from Buenos Aires.

At the end of this book, we also express our general recognition to the writer, Gershon Sapozhnikov, who with understanding and reverence edited the *Yizkor* Book, called '*Megillat Ger*,' as a vehicle of expression in the traditional Yiddish style, that characterized this *City and Mother in Israel*, our birthplace, Ger.

Yizkor

and

Necrology



YIZKOR

A shining memorial to
Our MARTYRS
Who fell through
The Nazi murderers
In our home shtetl
G E R

HONOR THEIR MEMORY

לזכרון נצח !

To Eternal Memory !

We, the *landsleit* of Ger in Argentina, weep with sorrow and deep grief for all the dear Jews of Ger, among which were found our own dearest and nearest: parents, sisters, brothers, family and friends, who were exterminated in *Sanctification of the Name and the Nation* – tortured, gassed, and put to death by all manner of gruesome methods by the murderous Nazis and their accomplices.

May this *Yizkor Book* be a memorial gravestone for all who were not privileged to be given a proper Jewish burial.

Honor their Sacred Memory – May *HaShem* Avenge Their Blood

The Committee of the *Landsleit* of Ger
In Buenos-Aires, Argentina

נזכר ולא נשכח !

We Will Remember & Not Forget !

With love and in grief, let us remember the martyrs of the Jewish community of Ger. Men and women, infants and small children, that were cut out from the land of the living, and exterminated at the hands of *The Unclean*.

Tens of thousands of lives, the entire Jewish population of this city – all pure and innocent, having been subjected to egregious tortures, and put to death severely, by all manner of gruesome methods, in ghettos and concentration camps.

Their blood cries out to us from the earth and will not fall silent. Their sacred memory will never depart from our hearts, forever.

The Organization of Ger Émigrés in Israel

לזכרון נצח !

To Eternal Memory !

We, the *landsleit* of Ger, bow our heads in deep sorrow for all of the exterminated Jews of Ger, our parents, brothers and sisters, who, in a terrifying fashion, were exterminated in the ghettos and concentration camps.

May this Book be an Eternal Grave Stone placed over their unknown graves.

The Ger Committee
In North America

The Bloodied List of the Jews of Ger Who Were Exterminated

To the extent that it was possible within our means, and to the extent that we were served by our [collective] memories, we present here the sad and bloodied list of the former residents of Ger, who were overtaken by the terrifying fate that transformed them into martyrs. We exerted ourselves to remember all of them, because their sacred memory will forever remain dear and precious to us.

We have marked all of them for eternal commemoration, organized by the *Aleph-Bet*. It is, however, possible, that specific people's names have been omitted, because they had no one to recollect them, or dropped from our memory, and are not to be found in the list, which are the tiny gravestones to honor their sacred memory. For those nameless martyrs, we have set aside a blank page, and every landsman of Ger can fill in the missing name.

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The Memorial Candles to the Ger Martyrs

Translator's Note:

The order in which these names appear has been made to conform to English alphabetization, and therefore does not follow the same order as they appear in the original Yiddish text. To assist the interested reader, each entry has been given a serial number that corresponds to its place in the original Necrology in Yiddish, found on pp. 470-480.

This Necrology contains many instances of names that appear to be duplicates. However, without the intimate knowledge of this community, it would be presumptuous for an uninformed third party to suggest that such duplications constitute errors (see also the foreword of the Editors as a preface to this Necrology). Accordingly, special care has been taken to assure that all of the entries in the original document were carried over into the translated version. Additionally, special care was taken to preserve 'nicknames' or 'names of endearment,' that were used to help better identify individuals in that community. While such nomenclature may not serve future generations quite in the same way, it is undoubtedly a sacred obligation to assure that they are brought forward for posterity, as they were used during their lifetimes.

"God's Candle is The Soul of Man "

Serial No.	Col	Al Ser.	Page	Family name	First Name	Family	Tag
9	א	9	470	Altschuler	Chaim-Lejzor	x	
8	א	8	470	Altschuler	Chana	x	
7	א	7	470	Altschuler	Leib'l	x	
5	א	5	470	Altschuler	Mendl	x	1
6	א	6	470	Altschuler	Mendl	x	1
10	א	10	470	Altschuler	Szifra	x	
4	א	4	470	Amzler	Dvora		
1	א	1	470	Amzler	Ephraim		
3	א	3	470	Amzler	Leib'l	x	
2	א	2	470	Amzler	Schaja	x	
11	א	11	470	Antczyslawsky	Zelda	x	
48	ב	37	471	Bagman	Avigdor	x	2
49	ב	38	471	Bagman	El'keh	x	
24	ב	13	470	Bagman	Leib'l		
47	ב	36	470	Bagman	Leib'l	x	
44	ב	33	470	Bagman	Shlomo-Meir	x	
29	ב	18	470	Bagman	Vigdor	x	2
12	ב	1	470	Banatay	Leib'l		

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54	ב	43	471	Bennett	Chaim-Meir & Freida		
26	ב	15	470	Bennett	Hinde		
28	ב	17	470	Bennett	Itcheh		
45	ב	34	470	Bennett	Lejzor & Wife		
46	ב	35	470	Bennett	Meir & Wife		
25	ב	14	470	Bennett	Rachel		
21	ב	10	470	Berman	Mattess		
15	ב	4	470	Bernstein	Aharon		
17	ב	6	470	Bernstein	Breindl		
14	ב	3	470	Bernstein	Herschel		
16	ב	5	470	Bernstein	Yekhezkiel		
38	ב	27	470	Bielafsky	Azriel	x	
30	ב	19	470	Birnbaum	Abraham-Chaim	x	
40	ב	29	470	Birnbaum	Asni		
18	ב	7	470	Birnbaum	Chaya-Yenta		
42	ב	31	470	Birnbaum	Herschel	x	
20	ב	9	470	Birnbaum	Hersch-Leib		
13	ב	2	470	Birnbaum	Israel	x	
32	ב	21	470	Birnbaum	Jerucham		
19	ב	8	470	Birnbaum	Liebeh		
43	ב	32	470	Birnbaum	Meir	x	
41	ב	30	470	Birnbaum	Mordechai	x	
39	ב	28	470	Birnbaum	Sarah		
31	ב	20	470	Birnbaum	Zelik		
37	ב	26	470	Blass		x	
36	ב	25	470	Bornstein	Aryeh		
53	ב	42	471	Bornstein	Bunim	x	
34	ב	23	470	Bornstein	Chana	x	
33	ב	22	470	Bornstein	Daniel		
35	ב	24	470	Bornstein	Itcheh		
23	ב	12	470	Boruchowicz	Abraham		
22	ב	11	470	Boruchowicz	Jospeh		
51	ב	40	471	Brand	Leib'l	x	
55	ב	44	471	Brand	Moshe	x	
50	ב	39	471	Brand	Moshe-Ber	x	
52	ב	41	471	Brand	Shia		
56	ב	45	471	Brand	Yoss'l		
394	צ	11	477	Cebula	Chaim		
391	צ	8	477	Cebula	Israel		

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403	צ	20	477	Citrin	Mendl	x	
404	צ	21	477	Citrin	Yehudit	x	
405	צ	22	477	Citrin	Yeshayau	x	
110	ד	3	472	Dakhne	Shmuel	x	
113	ד	6	472	Dalman	Abraham	x	
112	ד	5	472	Dalman	Moshe	x	
116	ד	9	472	Dalman	Sarah		
115	ד	8	472	Dalman	Shia		
114	ד	7	472	Dalman	Szyma		
111	ד	4	472	Danke	Leib'l	x	
117	ד	10	472	Dolinsky	Yankl	x	
109	ד	2	472	Dreszman	Gedalia		
108	ד	1	472	Dreszman	Shia	x	
295	ע	1	475	Ehrenburg	Benjamin	x	
297	ע	3	475	Ehrenburg	Chana	x	
303	ע	9	475	Ehrenburg	Chaya		
300	ע	6	475	Ehrenburg	David		
302	ע	8	475	Ehrenburg	Itcheh		
299	ע	5	475	Ehrenburg	Matess	x	
298	ע	4	475	Ehrenburg	Mindl	x	
301	ע	7	475	Ehrenburg	Moshe		
296	ע	2	475	Ehrenburg	Yoss'l	x	
322	פ	19	476	Farber	Meir	x	
323	פ	20	476	Farber	Noah	x	
324	פ	21	476	Farber	Szifra	x	
349	פ	46	476	Finkelstein	Moshe	x	
348	פ	45	476	Finkelstein	Nahum-Isaac	x	
344	פ	41	476	Fleischer	Chana	x	
339	פ	36	476	Fleischer	Chava	x	
342	פ	39	476	Fleischer	David	x	
343	פ	40	476	Fleischer	Golda	x	
340	פ	37	476	Fleischer	Hend'l	x	
345	פ	42	476	Fleischer	Sima	x	
341	פ	38	476	Fleischer	Yoss'l	x	10
346	פ	43	476	Fleischer	Yoss'l	x	10
311	פ	8	476	Fliegelman	Abraham		
307	פ	4	476	Fliegelman	Aharon		
310	פ	7	476	Fliegelman	Chaya		
304	פ	1	476	Fliegelman	Henokh	x	

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308	ג	5	476	Fliegelman	Itcheh-Meir		
309	ג	6	476	Fliegelman	Leib'l		
305	ג	2	476	Fliegelman	Shlomo	x	
353	ג	50	476	Flint	Baylah	x	
351	ג	48	476	Flint	Dvora	x	
354	ג	51	476	Flint	Herschel	x	
350	ג	47	476	Flint	Koppel	x	
317	ג	14	476	Flint	Leib'l	x	
316	ג	13	476	Flint	Moshe	x	
352	ג	49	476	Flint	Sholom	x	
318	ג	15	476	Friedman	Abraham	x	
330	ג	27	476	Friedman	Aharon-David	x	
328	ג	25	476	Friedman	Chana	x	
327	ג	24	476	Friedman	Chava	x	
338	ג	35	476	Friedman	Feiga-Rachel	x	
333	ג	30	476	Friedman	Fishl	x	
313	ג	10	476	Friedman	Henokh	x	
315	ג	12	476	Friedman	Hersch		
332	ג	29	476	Friedman	Hersch-Ber	x	9
334	ג	31	476	Friedman	Hersch-Ber	x	9
314	ג	11	476	Friedman	Herschel	x	
336	ג	33	476	Friedman	Israel		
325	ג	22	476	Friedman	Israel'keh	x	
326	ג	23	476	Friedman	Malka	x	
337	ג	34	476	Friedman	Moshe	x	
329	ג	26	476	Friedman	Pessia	x	
319	ג	16	476	Friedman	Rachel	x	
320	ג	17	476	Friedman	Reizl	x	
321	ג	18	476	Friedman	Rivka	x	
335	ג	32	476	Friedman	Shmuel		
347	ג	44	476	Friedman	Shmuel	x	
312	ג	9	476	Friedman	Yaakov	x	
331	ג	28	476	Friedman	Yoss'l		
94	ב	38	471	Gansker	Hersh-Leib	x	
101	ב	45	471	Gerszt	Abraham	x	
102	ב	46	471	Gerszt	Bin'cheh	x	
88	ב	32	471	Goldberg	Abraham		
82	ב	26	471	Goldberg	Eliyahu		
81	ב	25	471	Goldberg	Mendl	x	

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83	ג	27	471	Goldberg	Shlomo-Meir		
75	ג	19	471	Goldberg	Sholom-David	x	
103	ג	47	471	Goldhecht	Abraham	x	
71	ג	15	471	Goldhecht	Esther		
87	ג	31	471	Goldhecht	Leib'l	x	
84	ג	28	471	Goldhecht	Lipa	x	
86	ג	30	471	Goldhecht	Moshe	x	
104	ג	48	471	Goldhecht	Riva	x	
85	ג	29	471	Goldhecht	Yankl	x	
73	ג	17	471	Goldman	Leah	x	
74	ג	18	471	Goldman	Sarah	x	
58	ג	2	471	Goldman	Shmuel	x	3
72	ג	16	471	Goldman	Shmuel	x	3
69	ג	13	471	Goldstein	Bash'keh	x	
65	ג	9	471	Goldstein	David	x	
99	ג	43	471	Goldstein	David	x	
67	ג	11	471	Goldstein	Moshe		
68	ג	12	471	Goldstein	Netta		
66	ג	10	471	Goldstein	Sarah		
100	ג	44	471	Goldstein	Yekhezkiel	x	
92	ג	36	471	Gorinrel	Israel		
91	ג	35	471	Gorinrel	Leib'l		
90	ג	34	471	Gorinrel	Moshe		
93	ג	37	471	Gorinrel	Shlomo		
107	ג	51	471	Gottfried	Chaim		
106	ג	50	471	Gottfried	Leib'l		
98	ג	42	471	Gottlieb	Chaim	x	
96	ג	40	471	Gottlieb	Itcheh-Meir	x	
97	ג	41	471	Gottlieb	Leib'l	x	
60	ג	4	471	Greenberg	Eliyahu		
59	ג	3	471	Greenberg	Joseph		
70	ג	14	471	Greenberg	Lipa		
77	ג	21	471	Groinims	Breindl	x	
78	ג	22	471	Groinims	Moshe	x	
76	ג	20	471	Groinims	Sarah	x	
80	ג	24	471	Grossman	Abraham	x	
79	ג	23	471	Grossman	Leib'l	x	
57	ג	1	471	Grossman	Monish	x	
61	ג	5	471	Gurfinkel	Alta		

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105	ג	49	471	Gurfinkel	Moshe	x	
95	ג	39	471	Gurfinkel	Mott'l	x	
64	ג	8	471	Gurfinkel	Rivka		
63	ג	7	471	Gurfinkel	Sheva		
127	ה	10	472	Hamburg	Freida	x	
128	ה	11	472	Hamburg	Itcheh-Meir	x	
129	ה	12	472	Hamburg	Moshe-Leib		
126	ה	9	472	Hamburg	Sarah		
130	ה	13	472	Hamburg	Shia		
118	ה	1	472	Heilikman	Leah		
123	ה	6	472	Helfgott	Abraham-Yaakov	x	
132	ה	15	472	Helfgott	Chaim-Boruch	x	
119	ה	2	472	Helfgott	Itcheh	x	
120	ה	3	472	Helfgott	Kalman	x	
125	ה	8	472	Helfgott	Leib'l	x	
121	ה	4	472	Helfgott	Mendl	x	
133	ה	16	472	Helfgott	Moshe		
122	ה	5	472	Helfgott	Shlomo	x	
134	ה	17	472	Helfgott	Shlomo		
131	ה	14	472	Helfgott	Wolf	x	
143	ה	26	472	Helfgut	Sarah		
141	ה	24	472	Helman	Abraham	x	
140	ה	23	472	Helman	Aharon	x	
135	ה	18	472	Herszkowicz	Moshe-aharon	x	
136	ה	19	472	Herszkowicz	Yoss'l	x	
142	ה	25	472	Hodrick	Hinde	x	
124	ה	7	472	Hoffman	Abraham	x	
137	ה	20	472	Hoffman	Khatzkel	x	
139	ה	22	472	Hoffman	Meir-Sholom	x	
138	ה	21	472	Hoffman	Simcha	x	
209	י	2	474	Jakubowicz	Herschel		
208	י	1	474	Jakubowicz	Sarah	x	
424	ק	19	478	Kammer	Eliyahu		
423	ק	18	478	Kammer	Yankl	x	
425	ק	20	478	Kammer	Zechariah		
461	ק	56	478	Kapusta	Feiga-Itta	x	
458	ק	53	478	Kapusta	Itcheh	x	
457	ק	52	478	Karpman	Chay-Yehudit	x	
446	ק	41	478	Karpman	Mash'keh		

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445	ק	40	478	Karpman	Yankl		
456	ק	51	478	Karpman	Zelik	x	
444	ק	39	478	Kaufman	Binem		
442	ק	37	478	Kaufman	Shia	x	
443	ק	38	478	Kaufman	Shmuel		
406	ק	1	477	Kelmanowicz	Chaim-Boruch	x	
413	ק	8	477	Kelmanowicz	Czarna		
410	ק	5	477	Kelmanowicz	David	x	
412	ק	7	477	Kelmanowicz	Dvora		
453	ק	48	478	Kelmanowicz	Isser	x	
452	ק	47	478	Kelmanowicz	Itcheh-Meir	x	
455	ק	50	478	Kelmanowicz	Leib'l	x	
420	ק	15	478	Kelmanowicz	Luzer		
408	ק	3	477	Kelmanowicz	Moshe		12
416	ק	11	477	Kelmanowicz	Moshe	x	15
418	ק	13	477	Kelmanowicz	Moshe		12
454	ק	49	478	Kelmanowicz	Moshe	x	15
414	ק	9	477	Kelmanowicz	Moshe-Yoss'l		
415	ק	10	477	Kelmanowicz	Rivka		
407	ק	2	477	Kelmanowicz	Sarah		
409	ק	4	477	Kelmanowicz	Shlomo		
419	ק	14	478	Kelmanowicz	Shmuel		
411	ק	6	477	Kelmanowicz	Tema		
417	ק	12	477	Kelmanowicz	Yankl	x	
429	ק	24	478	Kerschenbaum	Abraham-Lejzor	x	
426	ק	21	478	Kerschenbaum	Asher	x	13
427	ק	22	478	Kerschenbaum	Asher	x	13
428	ק	23	478	Kerschenbaum	David	x	
430	ק	25	478	Kerschenbaum	Moshe-Yoss'l	x	
441	ק	36	478	Korenwasser	David	x	
436	ק	31	478	Korenwasser	Gadol	x	
439	ק	34	478	Korenwasser	Hinde		
435	ק	30	478	Korenwasser	Leib'l	x	14
440	ק	35	478	Korenwasser	Leib'l	x	14
459	ק	54	478	Korenwasser	Leib'l-Abass	x	
434	ק	29	478	Korenwasser	Luzer	x	
438	ק	33	478	Korenwasser	Yaakov	x	
437	ק	32	478	Korenwasser	Yaakov-Leib'l	x	
460	ק	55	478	Krol	Lejzor	x	

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431	ק	26	478	Kupperholtz	Herschel	x	
432	ק	27	478	Kupperholtz	Shlomo	x	
422	ק	17	478	Kupperschmidt	Yaakov		
450	ק	45	478	Kupperschmidt	Yakhvet		
451	ק	46	478	Kupperschmidt	Yankl		
462	ק	57	478	Kurtzberg	Monisz	x	
447	ק	42	478	Kurtzberg	Moshe		
448	ק	43	478	Kurtzberg	Mott'l		
449	ק	44	478	Kurtzberg	Yankl		
211	ל	2	474	Langleben	Dudya	x	
215	ל	6	474	Langleben	Dvora		
210	ל	1	474	Langleben	Leib'l	x	
217	ל	8	474	Langleben	Sholom		
216	ל	7	474	Langleben	Velvel		
220	מ	1	474	Lichtenstein	Chaya	x	
218	ל	9	474	Lichtenstein	Moshe	x	
219	ל	10	474	Lichtenstein	Yankl	x	
212	ל	3	474	Lubliner	David	x	
213	ל	4	474	Lubliner	Israel-Itchi	x	
214	ל	5	474	Lubliner	Shia	x	
267	מ	48	475	Maidan	Yankl	x	8
268	מ	49	475	Maidan	Yankl	x	9
253	מ	34	474	Maness	Abraham	x	
255	מ	36	474	Maness	Hodess		
254	מ	35	474	Maness	Sarah		
256	מ	37	474	Maness	Wolf		
259	מ	40	474	Mann	David-Shlomo	x	
263	מ	44	475	Mann	Leah		
260	מ	41	475	Mann	Leib'l	x	
261	מ	42	475	Mann	Mendl		
262	מ	43	475	Mann	Shayndl		
270	מ	51	475	Mann	Shmuel	x	
264	מ	45	475	Mann	Yitzhak		
258	מ	39	474	Mar	Benjamin	x	
257	מ	38	474	Mar	Israel	x	
265	מ	46	475	Melamed	Khatzkl	x	
222	מ	3	474	Messing	Aharon	x	
224	מ	5	474	Messing	Beinisz	x	
233	מ	14	474	Messing	Bina		

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269	מ	50	475	Messing	Chaim	x	
240	מ	21	474	Messing	Chana-Henneh		
235	מ	16	474	Messing	Gittl		
228	מ	9	474	Messing	Herschel	x	
221	מ	2	474	Messing	Israel-Moshe	x	
229	מ	10	474	Messing	Joseph	x	6
243	מ	24	474	Messing	Joseph	x	6
246	מ	27	474	Messing	Leib'l		
237	מ	18	474	Messing	Luzer		
223	מ	4	474	Messing	Meir	x	
230	מ	11	474	Messing	Mendl & Wife		
250	מ	31	474	Messing	Mordechai		
225	מ	6	474	Messing	Moshe-Lejzor	x	
247	מ	28	474	Messing	Netta		
227	מ	8	474	Messing	Reuven	x	5
242	מ	23	474	Messing	Reuven	x	5
249	מ	30	474	Messing	Sarah	x	
226	מ	7	474	Messing	Shlomo	x	
245	מ	26	474	Messing	Shlomo		7
251	מ	32	474	Messing	Shlomo		7
236	מ	17	474	Messing	Shlomo & Wife		
232	מ	13	474	Messing	Velvel		4
234	מ	15	474	Messing	Velvel		4
238	מ	19	474	Messing	Velvel & Wife		
231	מ	12	474	Messing	Yankl & Wife		
239	מ	20	474	Messing	Yidl	x	
248	מ	29	474	Messing	Yidl		
244	מ	25	474	Messing	Yoshkeh & Wife		
241	מ	22	474	Messing	Yoss'l	x	
266	מ	47	475	Metka	Mendl	x	
271	נ	1	475	Naiman	Yankl		
280	נ	10	475	Noyehowicz	Abraham		
281	נ	11	475	Noyehowicz	David		
279	נ	9	475	Noyehowicz	Israel	x	
282	נ	12	475	Noyehowicz	Leib'l		
283	נ	13	475	Noyehowicz	Sarah		
278	נ	8	475	Noyeowicz	Lipa	x	
273	נ	3	475	Nussbaum	Aharon	x	
276	נ	6	475	Nussbaum	Breindl	x	

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272	נ	2	475	Nussbaum	Joseph & Wife		
274	נ	4	475	Nussbaum	Leib'l	x	
277	נ	7	475	Nussbaum	Yitzhak		
378	פ	24	477	Paier	Moshe	x	*
381	פ	27	477	Papier	Dvora	x	*
356	פ	2	476	Papier	Lejzor	x	*
379	פ	25	477	Papier	Moshe	x	*
380	פ	26	477	Papier	Netta	x	*
369	פ	15	477	Pasternak	Leib'l	x	*
368	פ	14	477	Pasternak	Mendl	x	*
370	פ	16	477	Pasternak	Yoss'l	x	*
367	פ	13	477	Peltz	Boruch	x	*
359	פ	5	476	Peltz	Bracha	x	*
358	פ	4	476	Peltz	Chaya	x	*
362	פ	8	477	Peltz	Feiga-Itta	x	*
361	פ	7	476	Peltz	Golda	x	*
363	פ	9	477	Peltz	Hend'l		*
364	פ	10	477	Peltz	Israel-Meir	x	*
360	פ	6	476	Peltz	Leib'l	x	*
366	פ	12	477	Peltz	Rivka-Leah	x	*
365	פ	11	477	Peltz	Yerakhmiel	x	*
373	פ	19	477	Poloniecky	Chaim	x	*
372	פ	18	477	Poloniecky	David	x	*
374	פ	20	477	Poloniecky	Moshe-Meir	x	*
371	פ	17	477	Poloniecky	Netta	x	*
375	פ	21	477	Poloniecky	Shmuel	x	*
382	פ	28	477	Popowicz		x	*
376	פ	22	477	Poznansky	Aharon	x	*
357	פ	3	476	Poznansky	Herschel	x	*
377	פ	23	477	Poznansky	Mott'l	x	*
383	פ	29	477	Puker	Dvora	x	*
355	פ	1	476	Puker	Yitzhak	x	*
499	ר	37	479	Ravsky	Bina	x	
497	ר	35	479	Ravsky	Golda	x	
463	ר	1	478	Ravsky	Mendl	x	
498	ר	36	479	Ravsky	Nahum	x	
464	ר	2	478	Ravsky	Pinia & Children		
500	ר	38	479	Ravsky	Rachel	x	
501	ר	39	479	Ravsky	Reizl	x	

Serial No.	Col	Al Ser.	Page	Family name	First Name	Family	Tag
492	ר	30	479	Rapaport	Abraham	x	
494	ר	32	479	Rapaport	Chaim	x	
491	ר	29	479	Rapaport	Feiga	x	
493	ר	31	479	Rapaport	Luzer	x	
503	ר	41	479	Rapaport	Manya	x	
495	ר	33	479	Rapaport	Mekhl	x	
490	ר	28	479	Rapaport	Yankl	x	
485	ר	23	479	Ribak	Abraham	x	
478	ר	16	478	Ribak	Ber'l	x	16
483	ר	21	479	Ribak	Ber'l	x	16
489	ר	27	479	Ribak	Ber'l	x	16
481	ר	19	478	Ribak	Freindl		
482	ר	20	479	Ribak	Henekh	x	
484	ר	22	479	Ribak	Mendl	x	
487	ר	25	479	Ribak	Netta	x	
480	ר	18	478	Ribak	Pearl	x	
488	ר	26	479	Ribak	Reizl	x	
479	ר	17	478	Ribak	Shlomo	x	17
486	ר	24	479	Ribak	Shlomo	x	17
477	ר	15	478	Ribak	Yitzhak & Leah		
475	ר	13	478	Ring	Hod'l-Rudis	x	
473	ר	11	478	Ring	Israel	x	
474	ר	12	478	Ring	Meir-Velvel	x	
476	ר	14	478	Ring	Sima	x	
496	ר	34	479	Rosenberg	Dr.	x	
465	ר	3	478	Rosenberg	Feiga	x	
468	ר	6	478	Rosenberg	Shmuel	x	
466	ר	4	478	Rosenberg	Sima	x	
467	ר	5	478	Rosenberg	Yoss'l	x	
469	ר	7	478	Rosenbloom	Feiga	x	
470	ר	8	478	Rosenbloom	Shmuel	x	
472	ר	10	478	Rosenbloom	Simcha	x	
471	ר	9	478	Rosenbloom	Yoss'l	x	
507	ר	45	479	Rosenthal	Moshe	x	
502	ר	40	479	Rosenthal	Photographer	x	
508	ר	46	479	Rosenthal	Yaakov-Leib	x	
506	ר	44	479	Rubin	Chaya	x	
505	ר	43	479	Rubin	Moshe	x	
504	ר	42	479	Rubin	Yoss'l	x	
514	ש	6	479	Schwartz	Malka	x	

Serial No.	Col	Al Ser.	Page	Family name	First Name	Family	Tag
513	ש	5	479	Schwartz	Yankl	x	
542	ש	34	479	Shapiro	Issac	x	
536	ש	28	479	Shapiro	Itcheh-Meir	x	
532	ש	24	479	Shapiro	Jocheved	x	
533	ש	25	479	Shapiro	Joseph	x	
535	ש	27	479	Shapiro	Leib'l		
534	ש	26	479	Shapiro	Pinchas	x	
531	ש	23	479	Shapiro	Yaakov-Benjamin	x	
292	ס	9	475	Simkhowicz	Mendl	x	
293	ס	10	475	Skurnik	Abraham	x	
294	ס	11	475	Skurnik	Chaya	x	
291	ס	8	475	Skzypak	Ber'l	x	
288	ס	5	475	Smoliarczyik	David	x	
289	ס	6	475	Smoliarczyk	Freindl		
284	ס	1	475	Smoliarczyk	Herschel	x	
287	ס	4	475	Smoliarczyk	Itcheh	x	
290	ס	7	475	Smoliarczyk	Moshe		
285	ס	2	475	Smoliarczyk	Noah	x	
286	ס	3	475	Smoliarczyk	Yankl	x	
515	ש	7	479	Stein	Abraham	x	20
530	ש	22	479	Stein	Abraham	x	20
519	ש	11	479	Stein	Dina	x	
526	ש	18	479	Stein	Eliyahu	x	
528	ש	20	479	Stein	Gittl	x	
516	ש	8	479	Stein	Joseph	x	19
529	ש	21	479	Stein	Joseph	x	19
518	ש	10	479	Stein	Moshe	x	18
525	ש	17	479	Stein	Moshe	x	18
527	ש	19	479	Stein	Tema	x	
517	ש	9	479	Stein	Yaakov	x	
541	ש	33	479	Stern	Chan'cheh	x	
540	ש	32	479	Stern	Leib'l	x	
539	ש	31	479	Stern	Shlomo	x	
512	ש	4	479	Sziniawer	Aharon		
511	ש	3	479	Sziniawer	David	x	
523	ש	15	479	Szluker	Chaya	x	
520	ש	12	479	Szluker	Dobeh	x	
521	ש	13	479	Szluker	Mendl	x	
524	ש	16	479	Szluker	Reizl	x	
522	ש	14	479	Szluker	Shlomo	x	

Serial No.	Col	Al Ser.	Page	Family name	First Name	Family	Tag
510	ש	2	479	Szternszus	Feiga-Rachel	x	
509	ש	1	479	Szternszus	Israel		
538	ש	30	479	Szyman	Mendl	x	
537	ש	29	479	Szyman	Shmuel	x	
543	ש	35	479	Szyman	Velvel	x	
204	ט	20	473	Tarman	Hinde	x	
198	ט	14	473	Tarman	Malka		
201	ט	17	473	Tarman	Mendl	x	
202	ט	18	473	Tarman	Shmeryl	x	
200	ט	16	473	Tarman	Yankl	x	
207	ט	23	473	Tenenbaum	Velvel	x	
206	ט	22	473	Tenenbaum	Zalman	x	
189	ט	5	473	Till	Abraham	x	
199	ט	15	473	Till	Abraham-Joseph	x	
197	ט	13	473	Till	Abraham-Lejzor		
194	ט	10	473	Till	Ber'l	x	
185	ט	1	473	Till	Joseph		
190	ט	6	473	Till	Joseph	x	
196	ט	12	473	Till	Leah		
193	ט	9	473	Till	Leib'l	x	
195	ט	11	473	Till	Meir	x	
186	ט	2	473	Till	Mendl	x	
187	ט	3	473	Till	Mott'l	x	
188	ט	4	473	Till	Shlomo	x	
205	ט	21	473	Till	Shlomo-Leib	x	
191	ט	7	473	Till	Tova		
192	ט	8	473	Till	Yitzhak	x	
203	ט	19	473	Turek	Rivka		
390	צ	7	477	Tzalky	Abraham	x	
400	צ	17	477	Tzalky	Chava		
393	צ	10	477	Tzalky	Ephraim		
384	צ	1	477	Tzalky	Henekh	x	
392	צ	9	477	Tzalky	Itcheh		
396	צ	13	477	Tzalky	Joseph		
388	צ	5	477	Tzalky	Leib'l	x	
385	צ	2	477	Tzalky	Lipa	x	
386	צ	3	477	Tzalky	Rivka	x	
387	צ	4	477	Tzalky	Shmuel	x	11
389	צ	6	477	Tzalky	Shmuel	x	11
160	ז	17	473	Waxman	Shakhna	x	

Serial No.	Col	Al Ser.	Page	Family name	First Name	Family	Tag
161	ז	18	473	Weinberg	David	x	
157	ז	14	473	Weiss	Abraham	x	
153	ז	10	472	Weiss	Israel-Abraham	x	
159	ז	16	473	Weiss	Itcheh-Chaim		
154	ז	11	472	Weiss	Itcheh-Meir	x	
158	ז	15	473	Weiss	Malka	x	
155	ז	12	472	Weiss	Moshe	x	
156	ז	13	472	Weiss	Tzipa	x	
152	ז	9	472	Weiss	Welka	x	
150	ז	7	472	Wiszniewsky	Moshe		
149	ז	6	472	Wiszniewsky	Shlomo		
151	ז	8	472	Wiszniewsky	Yehudit		
148	ז	5	472	Wiszniewsky	Yeshayau-Jonah	x	
146	ז	3	472	Wurker	Leib'l	x	
144	ז	1	472	Wurker	Mendl	x	
145	ז	2	472	Wurker	Moshe	x	
147	ז	4	472	Wurker	Netta	x	
163	ח	2	473	Zaborowicz	Abraham-Moshe	x	
176	ח	15	473	Zaborowicz	Aharon	x	
179	ח	18	473	Zaborowicz	Israel		
177	ח	16	473	Zaborowicz	Itcheh	x	
175	ח	14	473	Zaborowicz	Netta		
162	ח	1	473	Zaborowicz	Nott'l	x	
178	ח	17	473	Zaborowicz	Sarah		
182	ח	21	473	Zeifenzieder	Hirsch'l		
168	ח	7	473	Zeifenzieder	Israel	x	
169	ח	8	473	Zeifenzieder	Noma		
183	ח	22	473	Zeifenzieder	Yankl		
167	ח	6	473	Zeifman	Moshe	x	
174	ח	13	473	Zeifman	Pesach	x	
184	ח	23	473	Zemba	Avigdor & Family		
173	ח	12	473	Zhurek	David-Shlomo		
172	ח	11	473	Zhurek	Rivka		
171	ח	10	473	Zhurek	Yaakov-Nissan		
164	ח	3	473	Zhymanowecky	Hetz'keh	x	
166	ח	5	473	Zhymanowecky	Malka		
165	ח	4	473	Zhymanowecky	Melech	x	
181	ח	20	473	Zieman	Leib'l	x	
180	ח	19	473	Zieman	Mordechai	x	
402	צ	19	477	Zimbalist	Sarah		

Serial No.	Col	Al Ser.	Page	Family name	First Name	Family	Tag
401	צ	18	477	Zimbalist	Toba	x	
170	ז	9	473	Zlotagursky	Gittl	x	
397	צ	14	477	Zucker	Meir & Wife		
399	צ	16	477	Zucker	Reizl		
398	צ	15	477	Zucker	Yankl		

The

Book Committee of "*Megillat Ger*"

Expresses Its Deepest Sympathy
To Our Fellow Townsman

L. Goldhecht

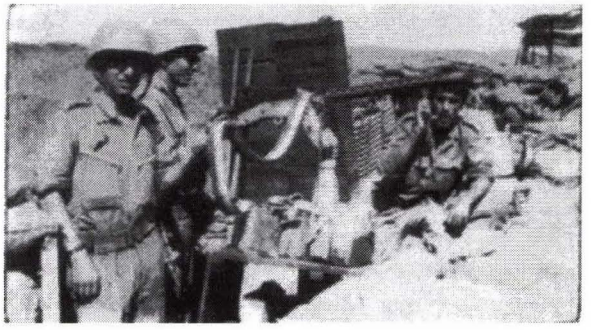
On the Loss of his Son

Eliyahu

אליהו

A Hero of the Yom Kippur War

Who Fell In Defense
Of Our Fatherland, The Country of Israel



יזכור !

Remember !

I will forever remember our martyrs who were
tragically killed by the Hiterist murderers.

May Their Memories Be Blessed

My Father: ***Aharon Mordowicz***
Mother : ***Yaser'keh***
Sisters : ***Rachel, Toba & Reizl;***
Brother-in-law: ***Shmuel***, and His Children

Menachem Ben-Uri – Tel-Aviv



Page 481 (Top): Rachel & Toba Mordowicz & Her Daughter



Page 481 (Bottom): Toba Mordowicz with her Mother and Sister-in-Law

With Deep Sorrow and Pain, I recall My Family
Murdered by the Nazis



My Father:

Yoss'l Gutstadt

Mother:

Tauba

And Family

Page 482: *The Gutstadt Family*

May these lines in our *Pinkas* serve as a symbolic gravestone over your graves whose whereabouts are unknown.

E. M. Gutstadt
Buenos-Aires, Argentina

When the survivors from Ger, that tiny remnant of those Jews who miraculously remained alive, erect a symbolic gravestone for or sacred congregation, which was so mercilessly cut down, together with the six million Jews, ,ay we be permitted to shed a tear on here, these very sacred pages, and recall my dear parents, my sister, and brother-in-law, and my entire family.



My father **Zvi-Dov** ז"ל, was a decent, hard-working man, a deeply religious man, and a dear *Hasid*. He was never missing from the *Tisch* of the *Rebbe*, when the *Rebbe* spoke on Torah. Exhausted from work, he would run each day to the *Bet HaMedrash* in order to take advantage of communal prayer. He stands before my eyes, insulted and broken on a Sabbath morning beside the synagogue, where the murderers had cut off half his beard, on the first day that they entered the city, and fell upon the Jews in the streets. My mother **Baylah** ע"ה, was model of a Jewish mother, who with trembling love looked after her children, giving away that bite of bread to the family.

According to eye-witness accounts, she was killed beside the barbed-wire fencing of the Ghetto of Otwock, when she attempted to bring in something from the

Page 483: Reizl Jurkiewicz

Aryan side for purposes of sustaining the life of her family. My sister was also killed in this way, along with her husband, **Moshe Drazdazh**, may God Avenge Their Blood.

May my modest words be a memorial for my murdered family, who died in Sanctification of The Name, a gravestone placed in the *Yizkor* Book 'Megillat Ger," a memory and a warning to future generations.

Your memory will always live in our hearts.

Your Children, Grandchildren, and Great-Grandchildren,
Yaakov & Wife ***Henya, Ber'l*** & ***Itta Jurkiewicz***

With deep feelings of sorrow and pain, we mourn
the tragic death of our entire family
by the Nazi-murderers in the terrifying years of
The Second World War.

My Mother: **Rosa**

Sisters: **Reizl, Malka, Dvora,**
Rivka, Rachel
and their families

Brother: **Godl**

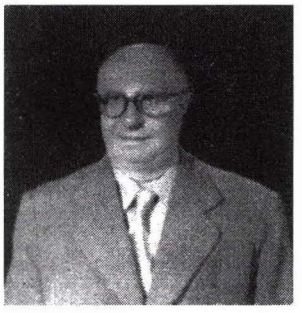
Brothers-in-law: **Moshe Jakubowicz**
Moshe Heilikman
Zalman Lerner
and their families

We Will Never Forget You !

Lipa & Baylah Helman
Buenos-Aires, Argentina

To the Eternal Memory
of our
Husband, Father & Grandfather

Who was prematurely torn away from us.
He will live in our memory.



Page 484: Shlomo Kelmanowicz

Alta Kelmanowicz
Children & Grandchildren

In Deep Sorrow
We Mourn
Our Husband, Father & Grandfather

Abraham Greifman



Page 485:Abraham Greifman
You Will Live Forever in Our Hearts!

Sheva Greifman,
Children & Grandchildren

Buenos-Aires, Argentina

To the Sacred Memory
of
My Dear Family

Moshe, Yankl, Netta & Chaya

and their Families
Who were murderously killed
by the Nazis

Baylah Gurfinkel
Argentina

We will never forget our Family
Murdered in those dark years of the Holocaust –
Uncles, Aunts and Children.

Israel Friedman & Family;

Peretz Schwartz & Family;

Shmuel Mohr & Family;

Esther Messing & Family;

Moshe-Meir Mohr & Family.

Let these lines serve as a symbolic gravestone
Standing over your unknown graves.

Lipa Helman
Argentina

To the Eternal Memory
of our Family murdered by the Nazis ימ"ש



Father: **Shlomo Garfinkel**

Mother: **Rachel**

Brothers & Sisters:

Doba, Dan'cheh, Mendl,
Sheva & Rivka

Your sacred memory will always live with me.

Baylah Gurfinkel
Argentina

Page 486: *Mendl Gurfinkel*

To the Eternal Memory of Our Dear Mother

Mindl

Sisters: **Baylah, Chana,**

Rivka, Reizl,

And their beloved children, murdered by the Hitler Killers



Michael, Gabriel & Menashe Orzekh

North America

Page 487: (Top)
Yekhiel Bleifeder, Tall Mindl's Grandson



Page 487: (*Bottom) A Family Portrait*

To the Eternal Memory
of
My Father-in-Law & Mother-in-Law

David & Hesheh Kelmanowicz

Brothers-in Law, Sisters-in Law, and their families,
killed by the German murderers in the years 1941-1943



Page 488: *Kelmanowicz*

You Will Always Live in My Memory

Alta Kelmanowicz

Argentina

With Deep Sorrow and In Pain, We Recall
Our Parents

Herschel & Rosa Mardicks

Sister: **Zlat'keh**

Brothers: **Yelvel & Chaim**

May these lines in our *Pinkas* serves as a symbolic
gravestone over your unknown graves.

Abraham, Yankl & Mott'l Mardicks

To Eternal Memory!
our Mother:

Rachel Weinberg

Sisters

Jur'eh & Chana

And their Families
Brother

Abraham

And Family

Your Sacred Memory
Will Always Live in Our Hearts

Pinia Weinberg

Belgium

To Eternal Memory
of
My Sister and Brother-in Law

Tauba & Pin'cheh Broder

Pinia Weinberg

Belgium

With deep sorrow and pain, I mourn my widely-branched Family, which was so tragically killed by the Nazis.

My Father: **Moshe Loptman**

Brother: **Shmuel Ziml** With His Wife and Children

Sister: **Hendl** With Her Husband **Yekhezkiel** and

Sons:

Shlomo-Joseph, Meir-Sholom & Abraham-Yitzhak.

Sisters:

Chana-Hinde With Her Husband & Children

Miriam With Her Husband & Children



Page 490: Simcha Iosif

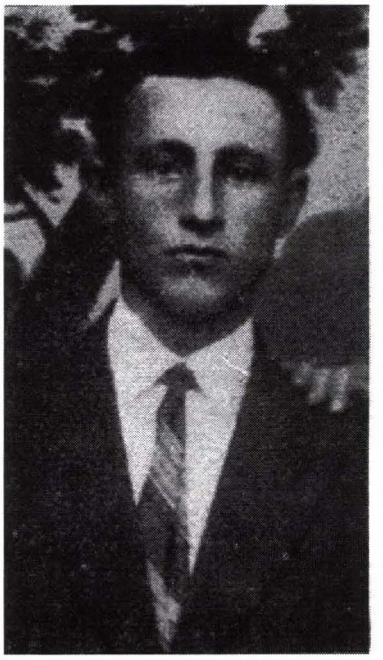
You will always live in my memory.

Alta Kelmanowicz

Buenos-Aires – Argentina

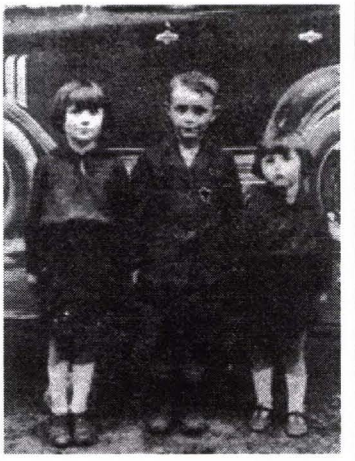
Page 491 Pictures





Top Left: Chana-Hinde Loptman
Top Right: Sh. Ziml Loptman





Bottom Left: Hendl & Miriam with Their Children
Bottom Right: The Children of Chana-Hinde & Hendl

To the Eternal Memory
of
Our Dearly Beloved Wife
And Mother



Toba

Who Left Us Prematurely

We Will Carry You
Forever in Our Hearts!

Page 492 (Top): Toba

Your Husband ***Moshe Margel***

Your Son ***Chaim***

Toronto-Canada

The Landsleit of Ger in Buenos-Aires

Recall With Reverence, the Many Years of
Active and Dedicated Service of



Pearl Schreibaum-Orzekh

Who was torn away from us
so soon.

Page 492 (Bottom):
Pearl Schreibaum-Orzekh

We will always remember you.
Your Good Name Will Be Our Eternal Escort.



It Is With Deep Sorrow and Pain
That We Recall Our Family, killed
by the Nazis.
Our Uncle:

Yankl Laptman

His Wife

Rivka

Daughters

Page 493 (Top) Yekl Jurkewwicz & Alta Kelmanowicz

Miriam, Rachel, Esther & Hendl

With Their Families

May these lines in our *Pinkas Ger* serve as a symbolic memorial on your unknown graves!

Yekl Jurkiewicz
Alta Kelmanowicz

Argentina

To the Eternal Memory of My Dear Family,
Who Were Murdered in Sanctification of The Name –
My Father in-Law & Mother in-Law

Zechariah Greifman & Wife

Brothers in-Law:

Chaim-Asher & Wife and Children

Mendl and Family

Dob'cheh and Family

Sisters in-Law:

Gittl and Family

Chana-Leah and Family

Chaya-Sarah and Family

Honor Their Memory!
I will always remember you.

Sheva Greifman

Argentina



We, the sorrowing surviving children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, memorialize, in this Yizkor Book, 'Megillat Ger,' the memory of our father

Yitzhak Greifman,

Page 494: Yitzhak Greifman

Who was so tragically killed
As was our mother
Who died before her time.
There good name will always accompany us.

Revere Their Memory!

The Greifman Family
Buenos-Aires

Together with the Six Million Jews, whom the Hitler-Murderers exterminated, our unforgettable uncle was also killed:

Shmuel-Zeinvill Loptman & Wife

With their sons: **Aharon, Yoss'l, Luzer, David, Binem & Daughter** with all of their families – killed by the Hitler-Murderers. Honor their memory.

We will always remember you!

Yaakov Jurkiewicz
and
Alta Kelmanowicz

To the Eternal Memory our Family, murdered by the Nazis, may their name be erased

Parents:

Yoss'l & Feiga Goldhecht

Brothers & Sisters With Their Families

May this Memorial in Our *Pinkas* "*Megillat Ger*" be a Symbolic Gravestone Over your Unknown Grave Sites.

Chava Goldhecht

Belgium



We will forever remember our martyrs, murdered by the Nazis, may their names be erased.

Parents:

Moshe & Tzivia

Sisters:

Hendl & Sheva

May Their Memory Be For a Blessing!

Yitzhak & Mendl Szternszus

–Canada

Chaim-Baruch Szternszus

– The Land of Israel

To the Sacred Memory of those of us who were murdered

Father:

Mott'l Tzalky

Sisters, Brothers & Their Families

Who were put to death together with all the other Ger residents in the years of the Third Great Destruction

We will always remember you!

Moshe Tzalky

North America

We will forever guard the memory of our parents, brothers, and sisters, killed by the German murderers.

Ber'l & Yoss'l Maidan

North America & Israel

With the deepest feelings of sorrow we recall our Unforgettable Parents

Lipa & Bluma Szperling

Sisters: **Chaya-Sarah, Feiga, Mekhla;**

Brothers: **Itcheh, Reuben, Netta**

And Their Families

Who were bestially murdered in the Nazi *Gehenna*

Mordechai, Hinde, Toba & Pearl Szperling

North America



Page 497: The Szperling Family

I will forever remember our martyrs who were murdered by the Nazis, may their names be erased
Our Parents:

Israel-Leib & Frumet Fisher

Brothers & Sisters:

Abraham-Sholom, Shia-Eliezer & Esther

Aunt:

Mal'eh, her Husband and Children

Uncle:

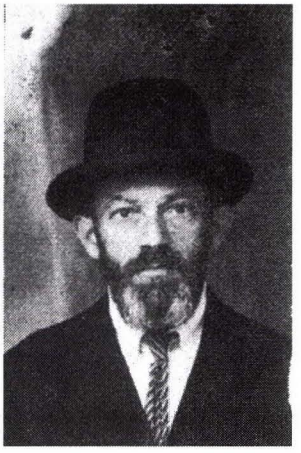
Yankl Kurtzberg, and Family

Necha Tischler

North America



Page 498: *Frima Tischler with Her Sons & Daughter*





(Left): *The Father, Israel-Leib ben R' Ozer Tischler*
(Right): *Abraham-Sholom ben R' Israel-Leib Tischler*

In deep sorrow, we mourn our family that was killed out by the Hitlerist murderers

Parents:

David & Mal'eh Goldhecht

Brothers: **Elyeh-Moshe** with his Wife & Children
Ozev with his Wife & Children

Sisters: **Itta, Chana, Rivka** with her husband
Yekhiel Stein and Children
Malka & Golda
Dina with her husband **Yankl** and Children;

Our Uncle **Ber'l** and wife **Dina Feinsohn** with their Family

Leib'l & Velvel Goldhecht

North America



יזכור!

Remember !

We Honor the Memory of the murdered Family

Yaakov-Joseph Zlotagorsky

Page 500 (Top):
Zlotagorsky Family
With His Wife & Children.

May this serve as a Memorial Over your Unknown Grave Sites.
The Organization of Ger Émigrés in Israel

To Eternal Memory



Page 500: The Mardicks Family

I will never forget our precious Family, Father, Mother, sisters, Brothers, & Children

May this Memorial in our Pinkas serve as a Symbolic Grave Stone Over your Unknown Grave Sites.

Abraham Mardicks, Israel

We Will Forever Remember

Our Brother

Itcheh Rubin

And His Family

Our Sister

Rachel Helfgott

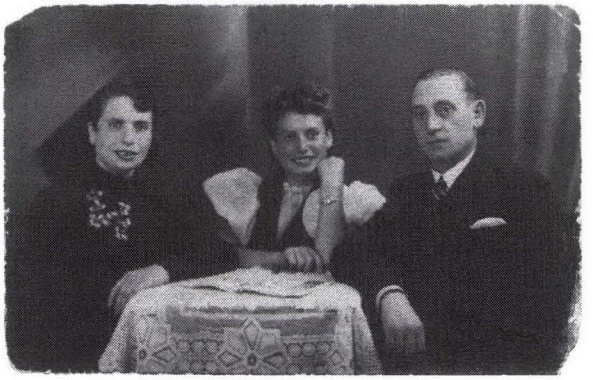
And Her Family

All murdered by the Hitler Beasts

Honor Their Memory !

Binem & Israel Rubin

Argentina



Page 501: To the Eternal Memory of my brother

Boruch Pilberg

And his Wife and Daughter,
who were tortured by the Nazi murderers.

Feiga-Leah Rubin – Argentina



In Grief and Sorrow, I recall the bright memory of Our Martyrs

Our pain will never be silenced, because you were so mercilessly cut down at a young age, by the murderous Nazis י"ש

Page 502 (Top): Picture

My Mother – **Jocheved**

My Father – **Shlomo Koenigstein**

Brothers: **Mendl, Moshe, Yankl & Shmuel**

Sisters: **Chana-Ella, Esther, & Pearl**

Rivka Koenigstein-Hubel

Buenos-Aires Argentina



To the Memory of my Wife

Feiga

And my children

Dudl

and

Mendl'eh

Page 502: Feiga Szternszus

Murdered by the Nazis. הי"ד.

Kh. V. Szternszus

Tel-Aviv

To the Sacred Memory of My Martyred Family --
Parents:

Yoss'l & Esther Wertman



Page 503: Wertman Family

My sisters – gruesomely murdered by the Hitlerist murderers, ימ"ש

Your sacred memory will always live with me.

Abraham Wertman
Canada

To the Eternal Memory of Our Murdered Family

Parents: **Moshe-David & Reizl Peltz**

Brother: **Boruch & Sister**

Killed by the Nazis, ימ"ש.

Yom-Tov & Sholom Peltz
Canada

To the Memory of
Our Dear Parents

David & Itta Rosenbloom

Brothers: Boruch, Yankl, Lejzor

Sisters: Leah, Liebeh, Miriam

With their Families

Who were killed in Sanctification of The Name, and the Nation, by the murderous Nazis, may their names be erased.

Moshe, Joseph & Pinchas Rosenbloom
New York

With heads bowed, and hearts full of pain, we recall our beloved and dear Mother

Sarah Messing

Brothers & Sisters:

Israel-Chaim

Yelvel

Yankl

Dvora-Leah

Bina

Gittl and their Families

Lejzor & Yoss'l Messing
Israel & New York



To the Eternal Memory of
My Tragically Murdered

Mother, Brothers *and*

Sisters, *grandmother*

Chaya *and Aunt* **Esther,**

with their Families, executed by the Nazi murderers.

Page 505 (Top): *Esther Kurtzberg*

Your Sacred Memory will always live with us.

Chana & Abraham Kurtzberg

North America



With deep sorrow and pain, we recall our parents:

Naphtali & Jocheved

Page 505 (Bottom)
Tila Schreibaum-Gottfried with her two children

Schreibaum

Brothers: **Yankl** *& Wife* **Chana**

Mardicks, *& their little Daughters*

and **Yoss'l**

Sisters: **Chama, Tila, Golda** and their Families

Let these lines serve as a Symbolic Gravestone Over your Unknown Grave Sites.

Leah & Leib'l Schreibaum

North America

We will forever mourn our beloved parents, sisters & brothers, who were killed by the Hitler-Murderers.

Joseph-Leib & Hendl-Leah
Shlomo & wife Leah
Israel & his wife Esther
Chava & Husband

Abraham Nissenholtz

North America





Page 506: *Shlomo Nissenholtz & His Wife, Leah Friedman*

To the Eternal Memory of our Aunt

Rachel Loptman



Who was killed together with the six million Jews by the Hitler-murderers together with her entire family.

Page 507 (Top): From the Right: Shmuel Rosenberg, Rachel Loptman, and her daughter Sarah

Her Son: **Yaakov,** and Family

Daughters:

Hendl, ***with her Husband & Children***

Sarah, ***with her Husband & Children***

We Will Never Forget You!

Yaakov Jurkiewicz &
Alta Kelmanowicz

Argentina

With the deepest feeling of sorrow, and unbearable pain and grief, I recall with love, my unforgettable brother



Moshe Reisman
and His Wife
Hendl

With their Children, who were killed in a bestial manner in the Nazi *Gehenna*

Page 507: Moshe & Hendl Reisman

I Will Always Remember You!

Bronya Reisman



To the Eternal Memory of my dear Sister & Brother

Killed by the Nazis , may their names be erased

Let this designation in our Pinkas serve as a Symbolic Memorial to their Memory

Page 508: *F. Zinger*

.

Sima Zinger

Tel-Aviv

We mourn the killing, at the hands of the Nazi murderers, may their names be erased, of our Father, Brothers & Sisters

We Will Remember You Forever.

Chaya-Bracha & Yoss'l Citrin

To the Eternal Memory of Our Beloved and Dear Parents, Brothers & Sisters, Who Were Killed by the Nazis.

Sh. M. Smoliazh

Canada

To the Memory of the

Czapkis Family

And his Son in-Law

Abraham Friedman

And His Wife

Rachel

With their Children & Grandchildren, who were killed by the German murderers.

Honor Their Memory !

Feiga, Mashi's Daughter
Argentina

I Sanctify the Memory of My

Entire Family Which was

Destroyed by the Nazi Murderers

Yerakhmiel Pasternak
New York

The
Survivors from Ger

Eternalize the names of their deceased, who participated in the tribulation of all those who, by a miracle, were saved.

You will always be in our hearts.

Raphael Zhurek

Itcheh Smoliazh

Herschel Poloniecky

Ephraim Birnbaum

Moshe Maidan

Yaakov Prajs

Tauba Margel

Her Brother

Meir

Yelvel Loptman

Shlomo Mardicks

Ger Decedents at Rest In
The Cemetery in Argentina:

Leib'l Benzelewicz
Shlomo Kelmanowicz
Herschel Poloniecky
Abraham Greifman
Yitzhak Greifman
Melech Rubin
Moshe Szluker
Lejzor Friedman

Supplementary Picture Album

In the process of preparing this translated volume, a search was made of the archives containing the raw material from which the original *Megillat Ger* was prepared. A small trove of photographs was uncovered that were not included in the original publication. They are presented here in the interest of preserving as complete a record for posterity as possible. We have also added a small sample of more contemporary photographs that, in our judgement, were worth including in a publication of this type.

Scenes from Góra Kalwaria (Ger) of Times Gone By...



Page 801: The Ironmongery of Meir Cykiert, in pre-war Góra Kalwaria (Ger)



Page 802: A Street Scene in Góra Kalwaria (Ger)



Page 803: **A Butcher Shop (*Jatke*) at the *Hale Targowa***
Zvika Gildoni identifies his grandparents, Rachel Leah and Moshe Zvi Goldhecht, at the far left, seated in front of their *Jatke* No. 16. Feliks Karpman suggests his father's shop was right next door.



Page 804: **The *Hale Targowa*, or Marketing Halls of the 'Trade Center'**
Done in the style of '*podcienie*' (Yiddish '*potchineh*'), or overhangs for connected row stores, which here may have been multiple butcher shops, accounting for the Yiddish rubric, '*Die Jatke Gessel*' or 'Butcher's Row.' It was located at the town center, near the Town Hall.



Page 805: **The Jewish Cemetery at Góra Kalwaria (Ger) in 1923**



Page 806: **The Jewish Cemetery at Góra Kalwaria (Ger) in 1938**

The Polish soldiers are from a unit called Centralna Skoła Straży Granicznej w Góze Kalwarii (Central School of Border Guards in Góra Kalwaria.



Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, sygn. 1-R-1037-2

Page 807: A picture, dated October 1930, of prayer being conducted in what appears to be the *Rebbe's* courtyard, in Góra Kalwaria (Ger). The exact occasion is uncertain, but is thought to be during the High Holy Day season.



Page 808: A cropped version of this picture, using only the far left third, appears in the original book on Page 51. It has been suggested that this picture was taken during the visit of a senior Christian cleric (perhaps Bishop Aleksander Kakowski), in which the local Jews participated. The reason for the cropping, and the disparity in captions is not known.



Page 809: Photo from the collection **'And I still See Their Faces'**. Courtesy of Ms. Golda Tencer-Szurmiej of the Shalom Foundation (Poland) www.shalom.org.pl, captioned as follows:

"From April 30, 1939, I served as a warrant officer with an artillery regiment in Góra Kalwaria. I saw these kinds of faces for the first time, so I took the photos."

– Tadeusz Ordyński, Łódź

On the Banks of the Vistula

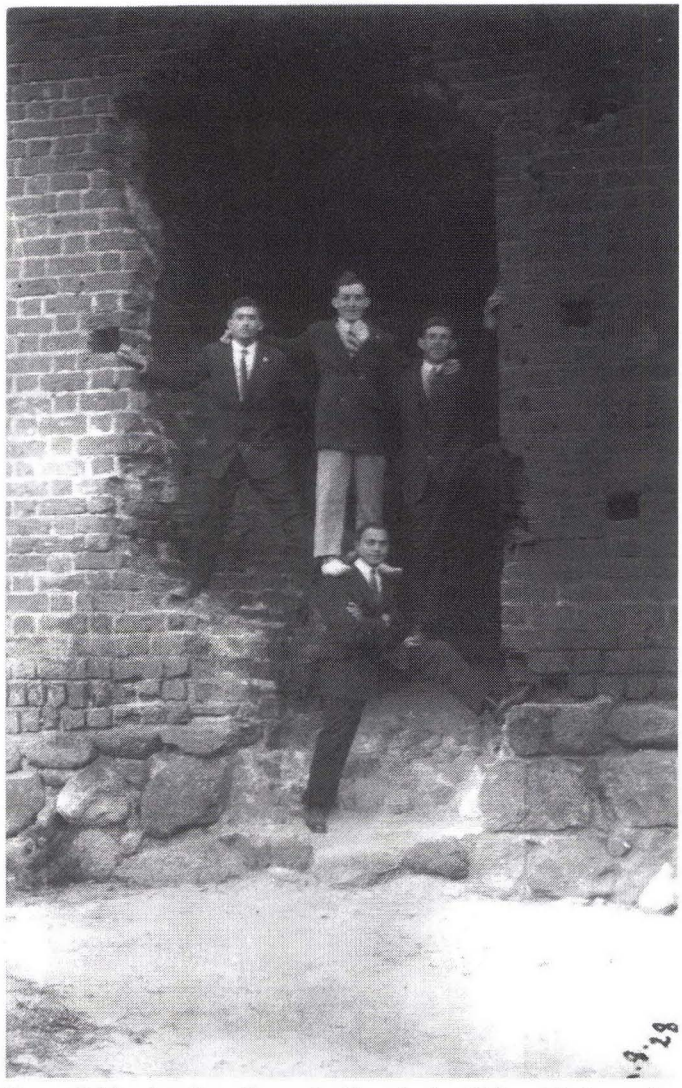
The banks of the river, and the nearby Czersk castle, were places favored by the young people of the town to visit during their leisure.



Page 810: Young men from Góra Kalwaria (Ger), enjoying some fishing and leisure by the banks of the Vistula.



Page 812: A young couple enjoying a ride in a rowboat on the Vistula.



Page 811: **At the Czersk Castle in Góra Kalwaria August 1928**

Identified people below were members of the Ger Mandolin Orchestra

Front: Raphael Szureck

Rear (LtoR): Berl Ribak, Yaakov Poloniecky, Menachem Mendl Goldhecht (Gildoni)



Page 813: The Memorial Stone for Moshe, Tzvia, Hendl, Shava Szternszus (parents & sisters)



Page 814: Chaim Boruch Szternszus, who left Ger for Palestine in 1938, but was unable to save his wife and two children. He is shown pictured in Israel (c. 1960's), with his wife Miriam.



Page 815: The *Rebbe*, R' Abraham Alter in a Cab



Page 816: **The Three Szternszus Brothers** (LtoR): Menachem Mendl, Chaim Boruch, Isaac



Page 817: (LtoR): Menachem Mendl Szternszus, Riva Gurfinkel Szternszus, Izak Szternszus



Page 818: (LtoR): Munia Gurfinkel, Chaim Boruch Gurfinkel, Riva Gurfinkel Szternszus



Page 819: **Goldhecht Family Portrait in Ger c. 1938-9**

Standing (LtoR): Itta-Faiga Goldberg (née Goldhecht), her son Chaim Goldberg, Sarah (Sore)-Rivka Weinberg (Goldhecht)
Seated (LtoR): Mendel Goldhecht, Abraham Goldhecht, Bluma (Ribak) Goldhecht and her husband Berl Ribak, with their little child (name unknown).



Page 820: **Berl Ribak & his wife, Bluma Goldhecht-Ribak**

Berl was active in the cultural life of the *shtetl* . He was the conductor and the manager of the Ger Mandolin Orchestra. Berl worked as a barber in the family's barber shop, Bluma was a housewife . They had a child, two years of age, when they all perished in Treblinka. ה"יד



Page 821: **David Ribak with Family in Ger in 1935**

A farewell picture on the eve of his *aliyah* to The Land of Israel (then Palestine).

Sitting: David Ribak, center, wearing a white shirt, flanked by his father, Yitzhak Ribak (THE barber) and mother Leah Ribak.

Standing: (LtoR): Freindl, Berl, Pearl and Shlomo Ribak הו"ד



Page 822: **A farewell party for David Ribak in Ger 1935, prior to his *aliyah***

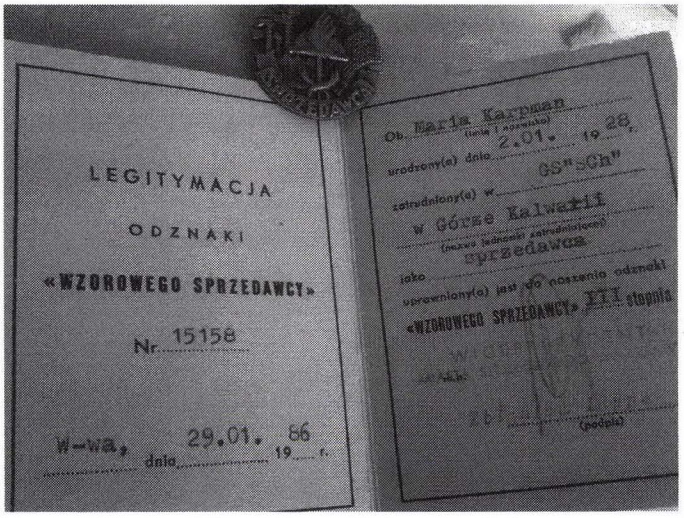
David is in the center flanked by his parents. Note that David wears his trousers in the traditional Ger *Hasidic* style...trousers are tucked into the socks...



Page 823: **The Ribak-Yonai Family on a visit to Ger in 2009**
Rear: (LtoR): Margarita Prajs Bilcharz, Mateusz Bilcharz-Prajs, Eli Yonai
Front: (LtoR): Henryk Avrum Prajs, Lea Ribak Yonai



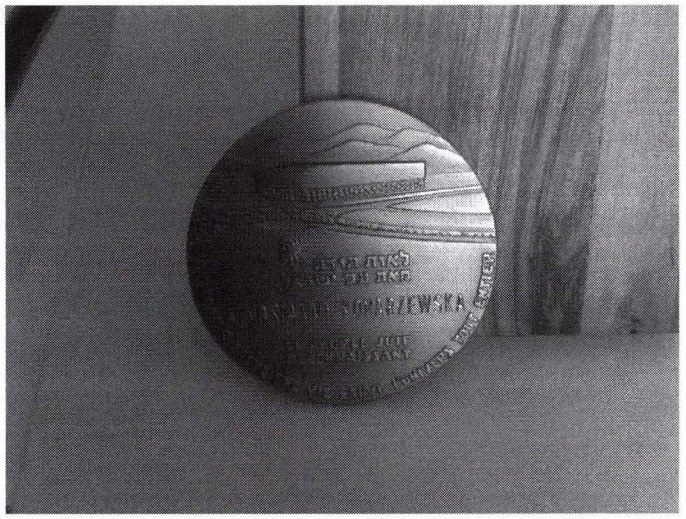
Page 824: Memorials: Helman, Gorfinkiel, Mor and Peltz families, erected in the Jewish Cemetery in Ger,by Dr. Moises Helman



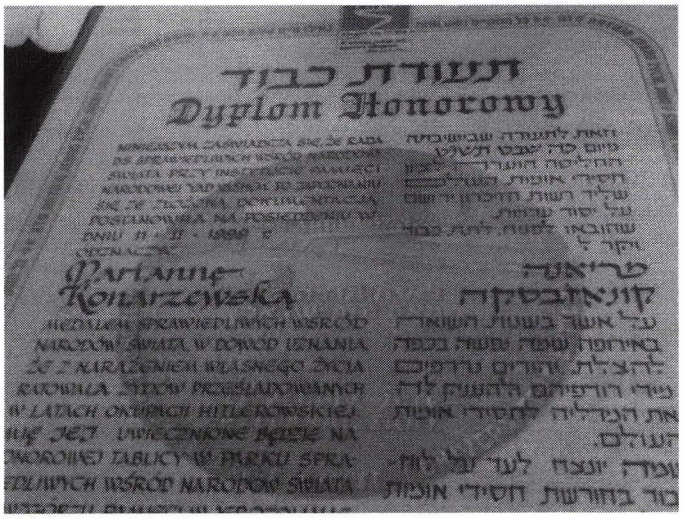
Page 825: Certificate identifying Maria(nna) Karpman as an "Outstanding Salesperson, Grade III" entitled to wear the badge of that rank.



Page 826: Maria(nne) Konarzewska Karpman, wife of Feliks Karpman, beside her *Yad VaShem* Awards



Page 827: Medallion of Honor Identifying Marianna Konarzewska as a Righteous Gentile Among the Nations



Page 828: Diploma of Honor Certifying Marianne Konarzewska as a Righteous Gentile Among the Nations



Page 829: Mordechai (Marty) Karpman



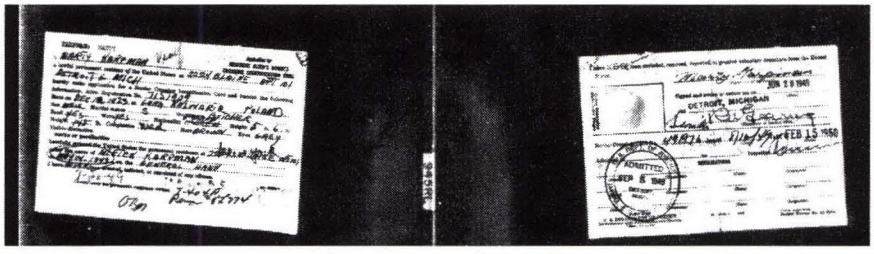
Page 830: Feliks Karpman, Holocaust survivor and lifelong resident of Góra Kalwaria (Ger) (1926 - 2014). Shown beside the memorial marker for his family.

הֲלוֹא זֶה אוּד מֻצָּל מֵאֵשׁ׃

This man is a burning brand plucked from the fire, is he not?"

– Zechariah 3:2

Mordechai (Marty) Karpman



Page 831: Immigration Certificate of Mordechai (Marty) Karpman



Page 832: Avner Yonai beside the grave marker for Mordechai (Marty) Karpman

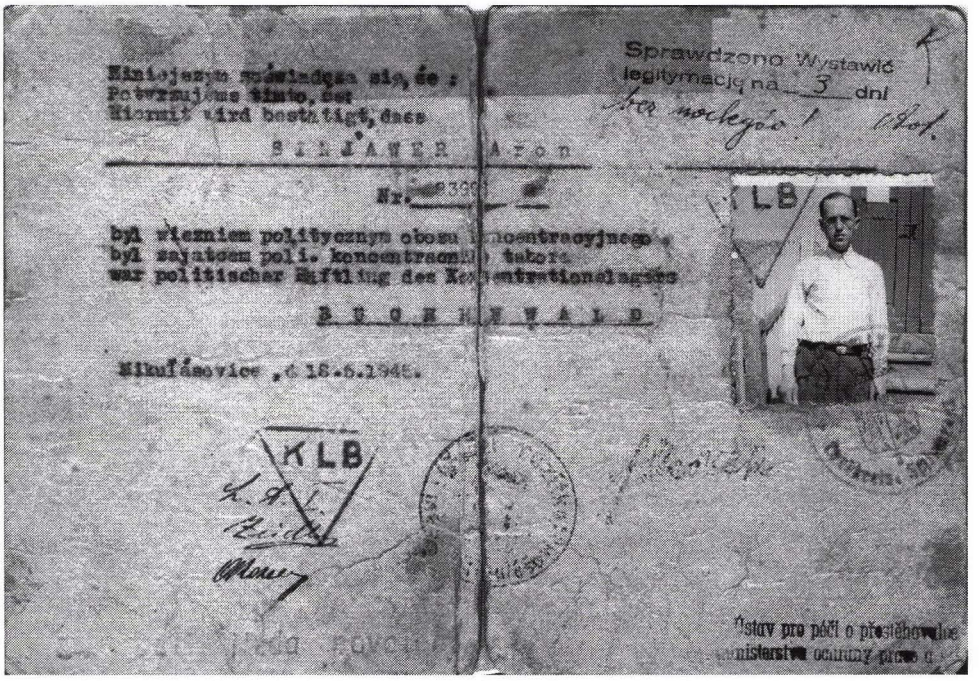
Avner Yonai Writes:

Feliks, and his older brother Mordechai (Marty), were the only survivors from the Karpman family, both having been saved by Helena Konarzewska, the mother of Marianna, who later married Feliks.

When the war ended, Feliks stayed in Góra Kalwaria (Ger) for the rest of his life. Marty emigrated to Detroit, but died 15 years later from a lung disease.

In the ensuing years, Feliks Karpman unconditionally agreed to oversee the building of the Ribak family's *matzeva* in Ger. After we worked out the details, he invited me to his home, and showed me a black-and-white photo of his bother Marty's *matseva* in Detroit. He gave me a *kipa*, and to paraphrase his Yiddish sentiment, he said: "Your family (in the Ger cemetery), is my obligation... and you take care of my brother in America..." Three weeks after my visit to Poland, in 2009, I succeeded in finding Marty's gravestone, and lit a *Yahrzeit* candle at the location (see photo). We started to build the Ribak memorial in Ger immediately afterward, and I am happy to report that we both fulfilled our commitments to each other.

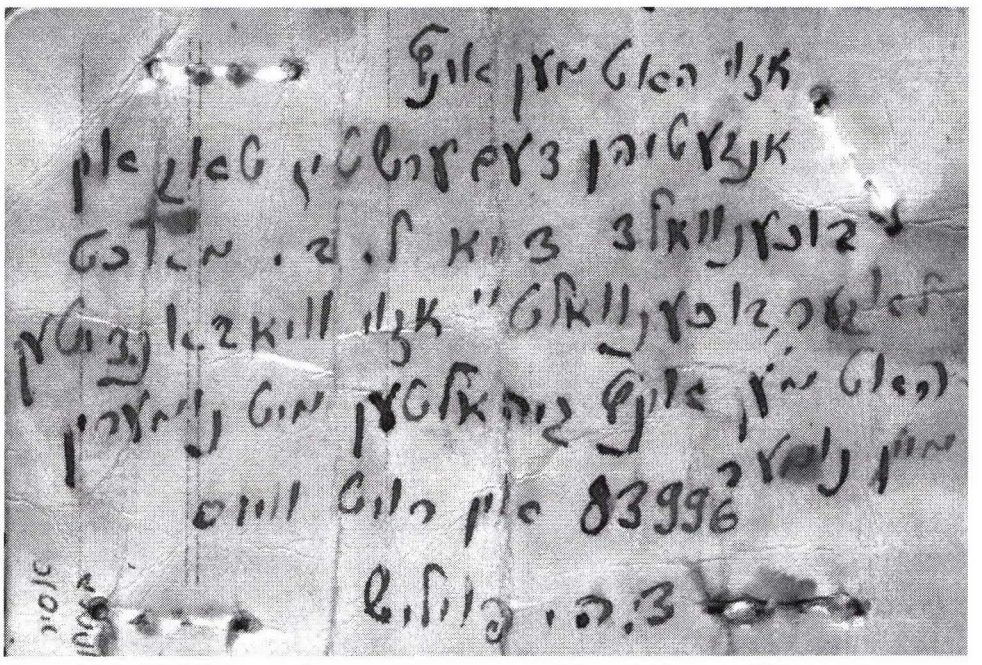
Mordechai (Marty)Karpman was never married....he worked in Detroit in a grocery store as a butcher, which was the same trade that he practiced at his father's butcher store in Ger. With no progeny, to whom he might have been able to pass on the legacy of his life's experience, it is incumbent upon us to use this "last chance," to commemorate another Jewish person from Ger, that survived the Holocaust.



Page 833: The Release Certificate for Aharon Shinover from the Buchenwald Concentration Camp



Page 834: Aharon Shinover in His Buchenwald Uniform

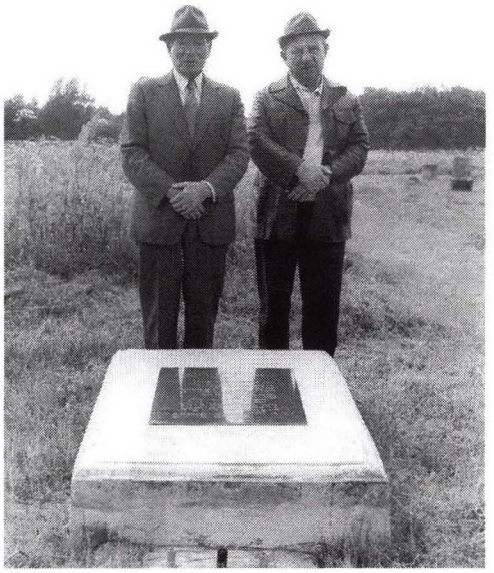


Page 835: Yiddish caption, on the reverse side of Aharon Shinover's picture, in which he explains:

This is how we were dressed on the first day in Buchenwald. The Buchenwald Camp authorities acting like bandits catalogued us with numbers. My number was 83996 in Red and White to designate Polish.

Henryk Prajs and his friend Feliks Karpman at the Jewish cemetery in Góra Kalwaria

This is a photo of me and my friend Feliks Karpman at the Jewish cemetery in Góra Kalwaria. It shows a symbolic grave of my family. I took a handful of earth from a few places: Treblinka, Majdanek, Auschwitz and the Warsaw Ghetto and buried it in Góra Kalwaria. It was maybe 20 years ago.



Page 836: Henryk Prajs and his friend Feliks Karpman at the Jewish Cemetery in Góra Kalwaria

My calculations show I've lost 36 members of my immediate family, including the aunts and their children. On the 25th of February 1941, the Germans deported the Jews from Góra Kalwaria to the Ghetto in Warsaw. I don't know what happened to my family. I lost contact with them on that day. They were gone without a trace.

I'm proud I was the first one to commemorate the fallen. I took out the wicket from the synagogue fence and put it in the Jewish cemetery. It still has the bullet marks made when the Germans shot Pinia Ravsky. I hired a guy I knew named Cieplak to put a fence around the cemetery. There were four or five *matzevot* left. The Germans and the Poles took the rest.

It was a total mess. I started to put things in order at the cemetery. People reported some tombstones to me, so I collected and transported them to the cemetery and put them upright. These are pre-war *matzevot*, but they're not standing on their previous spots. Many of these people I knew personally, could be 80 per cent: Szternfeld, Rosenblum, Skrzypek, Messing, I just didn't recall their burial places exactly, I hadn't attended every funeral.

The *Tzaddik's* tomb is authentic, original and undisturbed. Two of them are buried there, the founder of the dynasty, the *Khidushei HaRI"M*, and his grandson Aryeh Leib the *Sfat Emet*. The *Ohel* was demolished during the war, but they didn't get inside, so it's the actual burial place. The new *Ohel* was put up a few years ago by the [Ger] *Hasidim* from Israel or America, [and] from the Góra Kalwaria communities. They visit the *Tzaddik's* tomb very often.

http://www.centropa.org/photo/henryk-prajs-and-his-friend-feliks-karpman-jewish-cemetery-gora-kalwaria

[Translator's Note: spelling modified to achieve orthographic consistency with the main text]



Page 837: A General View of the Jewish Cemetery at Góra Kalwaria (Ger) in 1998

Shoshana, daughter of Yitzhak and Sima Goldhecht passed away in Warsaw on July 7, 1933, being almost three years old. Her tombstone is one of the very few that remain standing in the Jewish Cemetery of Góra Kalwaria.



Page 838: Shoshana, being held by her parents, Yitzhak & Sima Goldhecht



Page 839: **Obituary of 1933 in the Local Jewish Press by the Grandparents, reading**:
In mourning the premature death of our ardently beloved
SHOSHANA'leh
In which we express the deepest grief we share with our children
YITZHAK and SIMA GOLDHECHT
The Poloniecky Family
Góra Kalwaria



Page 840: Shoshana's Tombstone



Page 841: Hela (née Goldhecht) & Mietek Schwartzman, who survived in Russia, at their June 18, 1946 visit to Góra Kalwaria



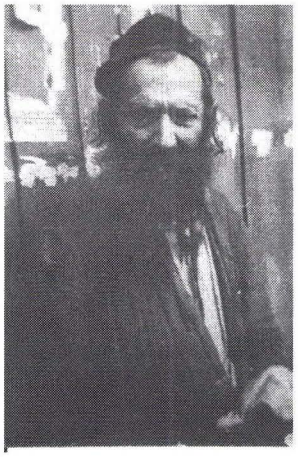
Page 842: Dalia & Zvi)ka) Gildoni, from Israel, at their 2010 visit to Góra Kalwaria



Page 843: **In the Field Outside Ger**
(LtoR): Menachem Mendl, Yitzhak, Moshe Hirsch Goldhecht, & Yaakov Poloniecky



Page 844: Yaakov Poloniecky in the uniform of the Polish Army.



Page 845:

The Ger "Eccentric," Black-haired Shimon, last name possibly Schwartz

Engaged in the (possibly unreliable) delivery of *tcholent* for the Sabbath meal.



Page 846: **A Closeup of the Karpman Family Memorial Plaque**

Translation of the Yiddish

In Memory of My Family, exterminated in the Treblinka camp in 1942
My Father Yeshaya Karpman
My Mother Chaydis Karpman
My Brother Joseph Karpman
My Brother Mordechai Karpman,
who died in Detroit
By the surviving son, Velvel (Wolf) Karpman



Page 847: **The Goldhecht Family, February 24, 1931**

Most likely taken at in the back yard of the family house 28 Ulica Dominikanska

Standing (LtoR):	Yaakov Goldhecht, Joseph (Yossi) Goldhecht, Menachem Mendl Goldhecht, Avra(ha)m Goldhecht
Seated Middle (LtoR):	Lipa Goldberg, Itta Feiga Goldhecht Goldberg, Rachel Leah Goldhecht, Moshe Zvi (Hirsch) Goldhecht, Sima Poloniecky Goldhecht, Yitzhak Goldhecht
Seated Lower (LtoR):	Bluma Goldhecht Ribak, Chaya (Hella) Goldhecht
Reclining:(LtoR):	Shoshana Goldhecht, Chaim Goldhecht
Bottom:	Rivka Goldhecht



Page 848: **The Mardicks Family**

Father Mott'l, Ber'l Tzirl, Esther, Mother Mikhla, Abraham & his wife, Rosa

(Positions unspecified)



Page 849: Max (Menachem Mendl) Szternszus, Father of Michael Stern.

Picture probably taken in Germany after the War.

Zvi(ka) Gildoni Writes:

The following photos are from the legacy of my cousin EVA (Chava) Goldhecht - Wajnberg. The special significance of these pictures lies in their burned edges.

Carrying these only memories of her family, escaping from the Germans, during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, Chava jumped into a burning house and grabbed her clothes, and these few pictures that were with them.



Page 901: Chava & Leon with their Father, Joseph Goldhecht on a balcony in Góra Kalwaria c. 1925



Page 902: On a carriage in Góra Kalwaria, Chava Goldhecht in the front "driving" her aunt Sara Rivka Goldhecht Wajnberg and her husband Pinkus Wajnberg (probably around 1929). Being almost the only survivors of the big Goldhecht family, Chava and Pinkus married after the war and established a new family in Brussels.



Page 903: Goldhecht Family & Friends Feast in Góra Kalwaria
Standing (LtoR): Bluma Goldhecht; Chaim Goldberg; Feiga-Zippora Zelda Goldhecht (Goldman; Rivka Goldhecht; Yaakov Goldhecht; Unknown
Seated (LtoR): Joseph Goldhecht; Itta Feiga Goldberg (Goldhecht); Lippe Goldberg; Unknown; Avraham Goldhecht; His wife-to-be, Chava



Page 904: Members of the Goldhecht Family
(LtoR): Feiga Zippora Zelda Goldhecht (Goldman); Chava Goldhecht; Yaakov Goldhecht; Joseph Goldhecht; Chaim Goldberg; Itta Feiga Goldhecht



Page 905: **Goldman Family Children**
Taken c. 1915, 8 of the 11 Goldman children appear here:
Standing (LtoR): Sarah (Sura) Goldman; The twins: Rachel (Ruchel'eh) & Leah Goldman.
Sitting (LtoR): Malka Goldman; Maleh Goldman; Feiga Zippora Zelda (future wife of Joseph Goldhecht), Unknown, Child's name Unknown

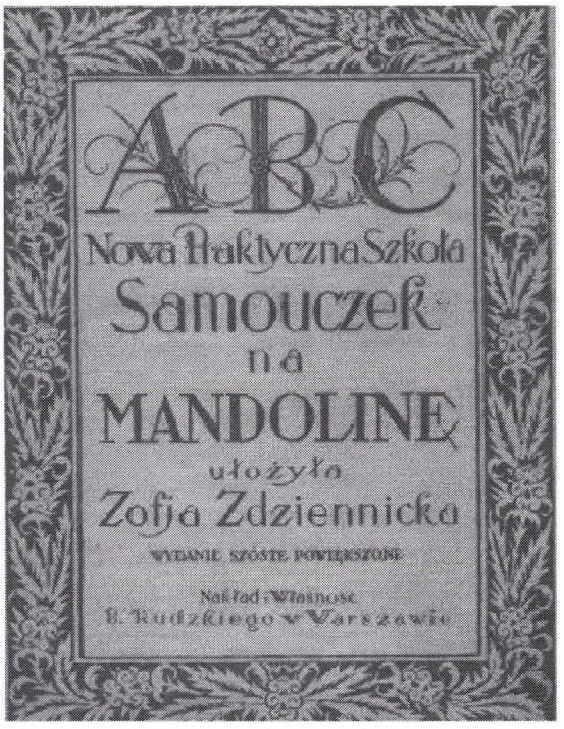


Page 907: Boys in Ger Playing Chess, with Yaakov Goldhecht in the Middle



Page 906: The Goldman Twins flanking either their Mother or an Older Sister

The Fine Arts



Page 908: The Mandolin Self-Tutorial Used by Members of the 'Ger Mandolin Orchestra.'

From a Performance of "Tevye the Dairyman" by Sholom Aleichem



Page 909: Mendl Goldhecht as 'Starshina' The Officer

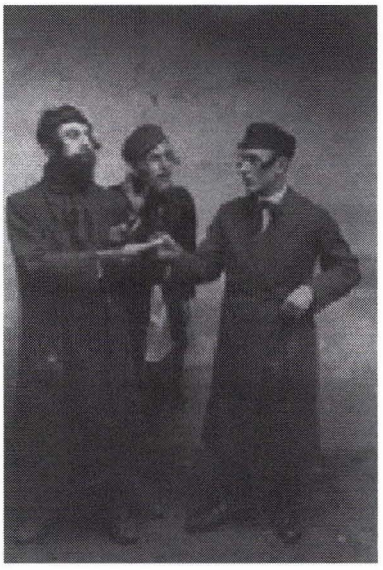


Page 910: Berl Ribak as the *Starosta*

Other Theater Scenes from Performances at the I. L. Peretz Library











Memorabilia from the Aliyah of Mendl Goldhecht

Banners Given as Mementos



Page 912: The Banner Proclaiming "From Ideology to Fulfillment"
The Góra Kalwaria Branch, Nissan 5691 (March 1931)



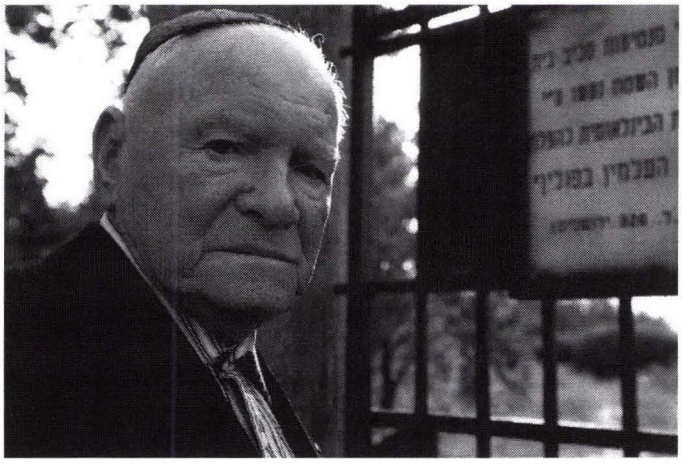
Page 913: To Our Dear Brother and Branch Head, Mendl Goldhecht, as a Gift on the Day of His *Aliyah*



Page 914: The Official Rubber Stamp of the Góra Kalwaria Branch of the 'National Guard' of Poland



Page 915: A 'National Guard' Certificate attesting to the fact that Mendl Goldhecht of Góra Kalwaria is a Musician.



Page 916: Henryk Prajs, present day caretaker of the Jewish cemetery in Góra Kalwaria (Ger).



Page 917: A young Henryk Prajs in the uniform of a Polish Army soldier.



Page 918: Golda Prajs, sister of Henryk Prajs, presumed to have been taken to Treblinka where she perished.



Page 919: Menachem Mendl Goldhecht (Gildoni), left, and Yaakov Poloniecky



Page 920: **The Gate to the Ger Jewish Cemetery**
The picture above, of Henryk Prajs, shows him standing beside this gate, but does not display the bullet-riddled base, that came about as a result of the Nazis shooting and killing some of the Jews of the community at this site.



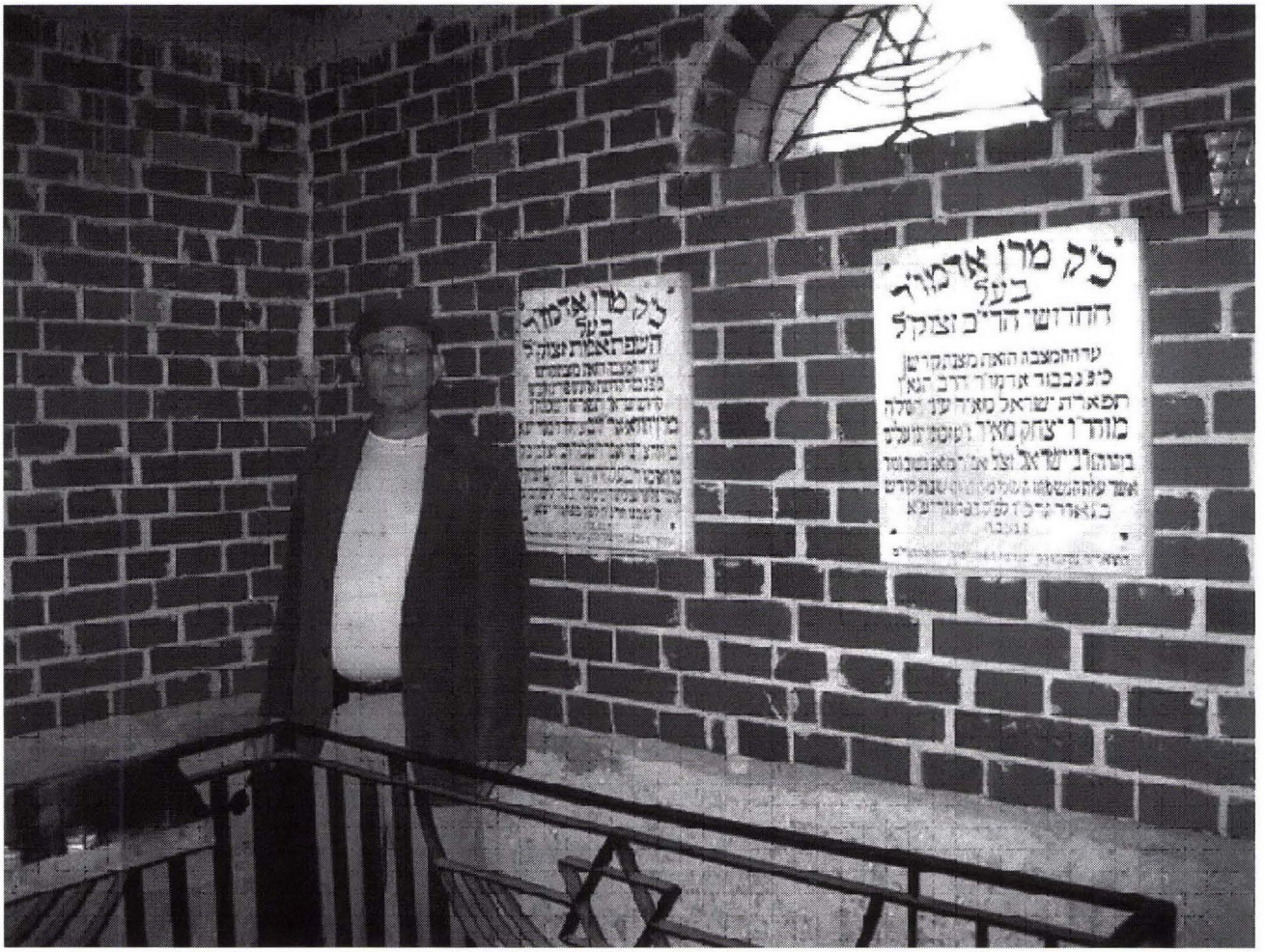
Page 921:Yaakov Prajs & Friends Visit the Monument Stone ('*Tziun*') of the *Sfat Emet* after their Liberation



Page 922: Tombstones of the two venerable Ger Matriarchs, Feiga and Chaya Sarah Alter



Page 923: The Monument Stone ('*Tziun*') of the progenitor of the Ger Dynasty, the *Kidushei HaRI"M*, and his grandson who succeeded him, called the *Sfat Emet*.



Page 924: Zvi(ka) Gildoni, during his 2010 visit, inside the newly restored 'OHEL' (literally a 'tent') constructed to cover the resting place of the two prominent *Rebbes* of Ger referenced immediately above.

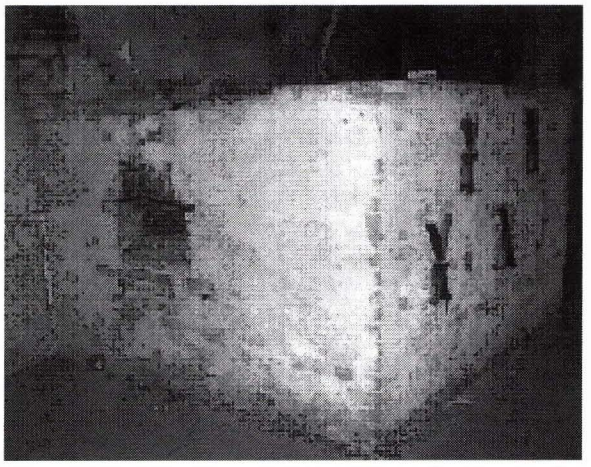


Page 925: **The *Bet HaMedrash* of the *Rebbe* of Góra Kalwaria (Ger) Today**

Built in 1859, in addition to being a House of Prayer, it served as the seat of the *Tzaddik's* court. The library of the Alter family was kept here until WW II. The House of Prayer was attached in 1903.



Page 926: The Modern-Day reconstituted Ger Mandolin Orchestra, shown in front of the Ger *Rebbe's Bet HaMedrash* in Góra Kalwaria (Ger), September 2011



Page 927: The Rare Matza Oven in the Attic of the Ger *Bet HaMedrash*



Page 928: The Residence of the *Rebbe* of Ger, which stands just next to the *Bet HaMedrash*



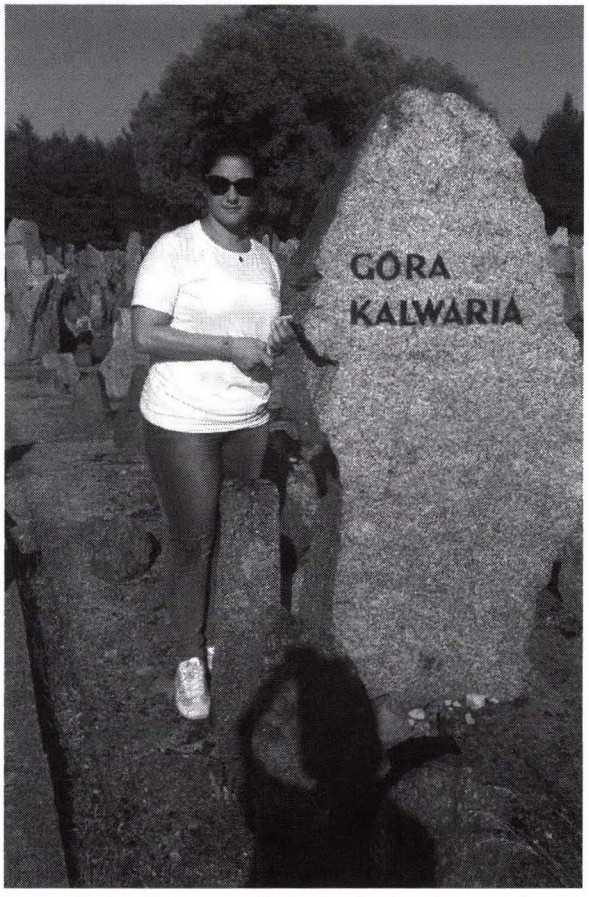
Page 929: Dalia and Zvi(ka) Gildoni (grandson of Moshe Hersh) Gildoni in front of *Jatke* No. 16 after the renovation of the 'Trade Center.'



Page 930: The Main Holocaust Monument at Treblinka



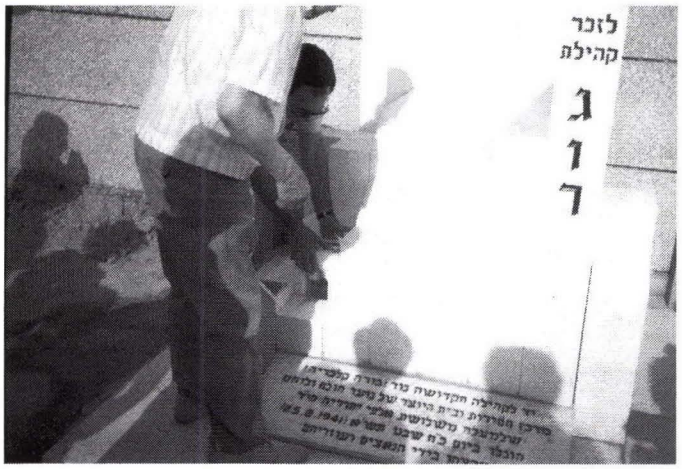
Page 931: The Ribak Family Memorial Headstone at the Jewish Cemetery in Góra Kalwaria (Ger)



Page 932: On a students' missions to Poland, leader and *Shoah* educator Yael Danai Gildoni, granddaughter of Menachem M. Gildoni, is shown beside the Góra Kalwaria (Ger) monument in Treblinka in 2014.



Page 933: **Ribak-Yonai Family shown beside the Góra Kalwaria (Ger) monument in Treblinka.**
2009
From (LtoR): Yitzhak Ribak, Eli Yonai,Eitan Ribak, Avner Yonai, Lea Ribak Yonai



Page 934: At the dedication of the Monument to the memory of the martyrs of Ger, at the cemetery in Holon, Israel. Ashes from Treblinka were brought to be buried in the base of the monument as seen in the photo. The memorial monument was planned and implemented by Yaakov Goldhecht .

Text says (vertically, on top):

In memory of the community of Ger.

On the grave stone (matzeva):

A monument to the sacred community of
Ger (Góra Kalwaria),
a center for *Hasidism* and for a youth that had imagination and a fighting spirit. Where over three thousand Jews ה"י, were expelled on 28 Shvat/ 25th February 1941, and then were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators .



Page 935: At the site of the Ger Monument in the cemetery in Holon, Israel.
(LtoR): Zvi (Zvika) Gildoni; Yaakov Goldhecht, Mina Goldhecht, Giora Goldhecht, Chana Gildoni, Yehudit Poloniecky



Page 936: **Memorial Plaque in Bet HaEydut**
As an Eternal Memorial to the victims of the Holocaust from the town of Góra Kalwaria (Ger) in Poland.

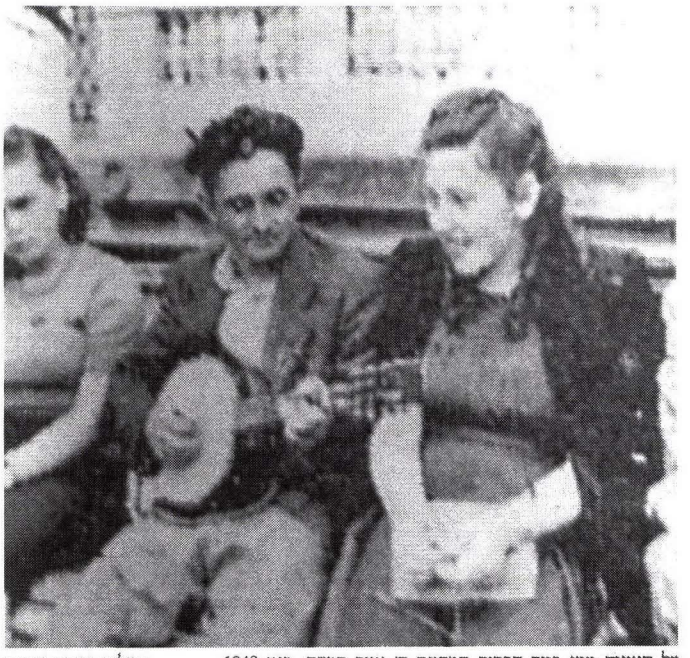
Men, women and children, that were murdered by the Nazis, may their names be erased.

And to the memory of the family of my grandfather **David Ribak** ז"ל, the memory of his parents **Yitzhak & Lea** ז"ל, and the brothers, **Shlomo, Ber'l, Pearl & Fraydl Ribak**.

May the Lord Avenge their Spilled Blood.
A commemoration by Avner Yonai
Founder of the [sic: Reconstituted]
Ger Mandolin Orchestra



Page 937: Avner Yonai with Aida Ender-Jurkiewicz, during his visit to Buenos Aires in 2010



על האוניה טטי ביום הכרזת המדינה ה' אייר תשי"ח, מאי 1948. תצלום מעתון "דבר"

Page 938: Yitzhak Weintraub, from Ger, on the immigrant ship, '*Tatti*' on the day of the proclamation of Israeli Independence 5 Iyyar 5708, May 14, 1948. The boat was already on its way to Israel when Israel became a State, and as such, their boat was the first boat to enter Israel legally, after the end of the British mandate.

Photo from the Newspaper' '*Davar*



Page 939: Library ID and Membership Card of Mendl Goldhecht for the I. L. Peretz Library in Góra Kalwaria



Page 940: **A Picture of The *HaShomer HaLeumi* Members**

Election Circulars

(Election of 1936)

&

Memorabilia

37.

Odezwa wyboroza Rzemieślników Żydów w GÓRZE KALWARJI.

1 1

אויפרוף!

צו אלע יודישע בעלי-מלאכות אין אָרימע בעפעלקערונג פון דער שטאט גער.

נאר אכט יאָר קומען ענדליך פאָר וואלעז צום גערער שטאט-ראט.

דעם 26 יוני וועט איהר דארפען אָבגעבען אייער שטימע פאָר דער ליסטע פון יודישען בעל-מלאכה

ליסטע № 1

די קאמפעטענץ פון דער קאָמונאלער זעלבסט-פערוואלטונג נעמט אָרים א גרויסען געביט פון אונזער קולטורעלען און וירטשאפטלעכען לעבען אין וועלכען מיר בעלי-מלאכות זענען בלויטיק פעראינטערעסירט.

ענדליך איז געקומען די צייט אז דער יודישער בעל-מלאכה זאָל קענען האָבען די מעגליכקייטען צו פערטיידיגען זיינע אינטערעסין דערום

רופט אייך די ליסטע № 1

פון וועלכע די פאָרשטעהער וועלען קעמפען פאר א געזינטער וירטשאפט פון דער שטאט.

די שטעהן נור פאר דער ליסטע № 1

שטימט אלע ווי אייגער פאָר די ליסטע

№ 1

1 1

Druk. „EXPRESS", Warszawa, Nowolipki 17.

1 1

A Summons !

1 1

To all Jewish craftsmen and poor people of the town Ger

After eight years the election to Ger town Council is finally coming.

On the 26th of June you will have to give your vote for the list of the Jewish Craftsman

List No. 1

The competence (authority) of communal self-government encompasses a large area of our cultural and economic life in which we, the craftsmen, are fiercely [lit. 'bloodily'] interested.

The time has finally arrived when Jewish craftsmen shall have a possibility to defend their interests in these areas.

List No. 1 Calls You

From which the representatives will fight for the health of the economy of the town. These stand only on behalf of List No. 1

Vote all as one for the List

No. 1

1 1

Print.(er) "Express", Warsaw, Nowolipki st. 17.

3 גערער ווייל‌ער שטימע 3

אַרויסגעגעבן דורך דער ליסטע נר. 3 פון דעם יידישן דעמאָקראַטישן וואַל־קאָמיטעק אין גער

אויפרוף!

עס איז געקומען די שעה, ווען מיר מוזן נעמען דעם גורל אין די אייגענע הענט!

מיט אונזערע שטימען דעם 26-טן יוני וועלן מיר דאַרפן דעצידירן ווער עס זאָל זיין אונזערע פאַרזאָרגער אין שטאָטישע טאַטעס! זיל זייער פיל פון די ברייטע ווייל‌ער מאַסע שטעלן זיך דעריבער די פראַגע פאַר וועמען?

פאַר וועלכע ליסטע דאַרף מען אָפּגעבן די שטים?

דער יידישער דעמאָקראַטישער וואַל־קאָמיטעק ליסטע נר. 3 וויל אויפקלערן די ברייטע אָרימע יידישע פאָלקס־מאַסן אין אַנדערע שטעט, אין וועמענס הענט זיי דאַרפן אָנטרויען זייער גורל!

צי זאָל דער אָרעמער יידישער פאָלקס־מענטש שטימען פאַר די וועלכע באַלאַבאַטעווען צענדליקער יאָרן אויף דער יידישער גאַס אָן שום געזעלשאַפטלעכע קאָנטראָל, אָן שום פאַראַנטוואָרטליכ־קייט פאַר די וועלכע האָבן זיי אָנגעטרייט צו פאַרטיידיקן זייערע אינטערעסן?

צי קאָן מען זיך ווייטער פאַרלאָזן אויף דעם יושר פון די חסידים און מרחסדים וועלכע טאַנצן מה יפות פאַר דעם פוילישן פריץ באַקומענדיק רערפאַר מיטחילף צו דערדריקן יעדן אויפלע־בונגס געדאַנק אויף דער יידישער גאַס!

צי מעג מען שטימען פאַר די וועלכע פירן זייער געמיינע העצע, זייער פינסטערן קאַמף מיט אַלע מיטלען כשרע און נישט כשרע ווי חרמות, מסירות און רדיפות. ברענענדיק און ראַבירנדיק אינסטיטוציעס געשאַפענע דורך אָרעמע אויסגעהאָרעוועטע אַרבעטער גראָשנס!

די ברייטע אָרעמע יידישע פאָלקס־מאַסן וועלן געוויס זוגטיק דעם 26-טן געבן דעם געהעריקן ענטפער די אַלע אָנגעוואָרפענע בעל טובות. די שיינע „מזרח וואַנט יידן";

מיר שטימען נישט פאַר די מוסרים!

מיר שטימען נישט פאַר די פאַרעטער פון די יידישע פאָלקס־אינטערעסן!

מיר שטימען נישט פאַר די צושטערער פון די יידישע קולטור!

די יידישע פרוי וועלכע ווייטיקט מיט אַלע ווייטיקן און ליידן פון גאַנצן כלל האָט דאָך נישט קיין רעכט אויסצודריקן איר ווילן אין דער איינציקער יידישער עפנטלעכע אינסטיטוציע, אין דער יידישע גמינע, ווייל אַזוי ווילט זיך זיי די פינצטערע גאָט סטראַפצשעס.

קיין איין פרויען שטימע פאַר די קעמפער קעגן פרויען רעכט.

קיין איין פרויען שטימע פאַר די וועלכע וואָלטן גע־וואָלט זען די פרוי פאַרשקלאַפט ווי אין מיטלאַלטער!

צי קאָן דער אָרעמער יידישער האַנטווערקער און כאַלופניק אָפּגעבן זיין שטימע פאַר די וואָס פיגורירן אויף דער אַזוי גערו־פענער „האַנטווערקער ליסטע" וועלכע נישט האָבנדיק קיין שום געמיינזאַמעס מיט דעם אָרעמען יידישן בעל מלאכה, ניפט מען אויס דיין שטימע צו פאַרכאַפן דעם עמוד, בעלעמער, בית מדרש און בענקלעך ווי עס לאָזט זיך.

דער אָרעמער יידישער האַנטווערקער וועט זיך נישט לאָזן פאַרפירן פון כל־ערליי קאַריעריסטן און מאַנדאַטן כאַפּער וועלכע ווילן מאַכן קאַריערע אויפן חשבון פון זיינע בלוטיקע אינטערעסן.

קיין איין שטימע פאַר די וועלכע מאַכן פאָליטיק מיט אָרעמע האַנטווערקער אינטערעסן!

קיין איין שטימע פאַר דער „זור דפלגה ליסטע" ווי איינער ווייסט נישט וואָס דער צווייטער וויל!

אַלע שטימען פאַר דער יידישער דעמאָקראַטישער ליסטע, פאַר דער ליסטע נר. 3.

די פאַרטרעטער פון ליסטע נר. 3

וועלן שטאָלץ און מוטיק פאַרטיידיקן די אינטערעסן פון די אָרע־מע מאַסן.

די פאַרטרעטער פון די ליסטע נר. 3 וועלן פאָדערן:

עפענטלעכע שטאָט־ראַט זיצונגען.

אַגערעכטע פאַרטיילונג פון די שטאָטישע שטייערן, דער אָרעמער זאָל נישט צאָלן פאַרן רייכן.

אַנאַהעריקע צאָל יידישע באַאַמטע אין די שטאָטישע אינסטי־טוציעס.

אומזיסטע שולן פאַר דער יידישער אָרעמער באַפעלקערונג מיק יידיש אַלס אינטענאַט שפּראַך.

אָוונט־קורסן פאַר די ברייטע מאַסן.

סובסידיעס פאַר די קולטורעלע אינסטיטוציעס.

די יידישע באַפעלקערונג האָט גלייכע רעכט צו באַנוצן די שטאָטישע פּלעצער אין זאַלן פאַר זיירע קולטורעלע אונטערנע־מונגען.

רעכט אויף אַרבעט פאַר יידישע אַרבעטסלאָזע ביי שטאָטישע עפענטלעכע אַרבעטן.

סועסידיעס פאַר יידישע אַרבעטסלאָזע.

שטימט פאַר דער ליסטע נר. 3

שטימט פאַר די אמתע פאַרטיידיקער פון די יידישע אַרבע־טער און פאָלקס־מאַסן, גייט מאַכענווייז זונטיק דעם 26-טן יוני צו די וואַלן און

שטימט פאַר דער ליסטע נר. 3.

Redaktor Wydawca Pynkus Broder Góra Kalwarja Drukarnia „Rekord" Warszawa. Dzika N-18.

3 Voice of the Ger Voter 3

Issued by the List No.3 of Jewish Democratic Electoral Committee in Ger

A Summons !

The hour has come, when we have to take fate in our own hands!

In casting our votes, on 26th of June, we will have to decide who shall be our caretakers in the conduct of municipal affairs Many, very many of the voting masses therefore pose themselves the question - **for whom?**

For which list shall one cast a vote?

The Jewish Democratic Electoral Committee List No. 3 wishes clarify for the broad masses of poor Jewish people in other towns, into whose hands they should entrust their fate!

Should a poor Jewish common man vote for people, who for decades, ineffectively carry on in the Jewish street without any societal supervision, without any responsibility to those [people] who entrusted to them the (task of) defending of their interests?

Can one further rely on receiving justice from *Hasidim* and [word not clear, probably ~*marhasdim* i.e.zealots?] who prance in a fawning manner before Polish noble landowner, and in return get support in smothering every refreshing thought in the Jewish street!

Or, can one vote for the people who commit their vile baiting , their dark battle using all means, legitimate and not-legitimate, like confiscations, denunciations and persecutions. Devastating [lit. burning down] and robbing institutions built up by the hard-won *groschens* of the poor, exhausted workers!

Sunday, 26th of June, the broad, poor Jewish masses will surely give a proper answer to all the imposed benefactors. These fine, so-called "Eastern Wall Jews";

We do not vote for these informers!

We do not vote for the traitors to the interests of Jewish people!

We do not vote for the devastators of Jewish culture!

The Jewish woman who suffers from all the pain and suffering of the whole community [*klal*] indeed has no right to express her will in the only transparent Jewish institution, in the Jewish community, because so is the will of the dark, fanatic wardens of religious purity.

Not a single woman should vote for the fighters against the rights of women!

Not a single woman should vote for those, who would like to see a woman enslaved like in the Middle-Ages!

Or can the poor Jewish manual laborer, or hapless pauper, cast his vote for these, who appear on the so-called "Handworkers List", who not having anything in common with the poor Jewish craftsmen, pervert your votes to seize the pulpit, lectern, *Bet-HaMedrash* and [privileged] benches to the greatest extent possible.

The poor Jewish craftsman will not permit himself to be deceived by various people seeking to advance their careers, or secure positions of importance, in order to make a career for the sake of advancing their personal, bloody interests.

Not a single vote for those, who play politics with the interests of poor handworkers!

Not a single vote for the list of the "Generation of Dissension," where one member does not know what the other wants!

Everybody vote [is supposed to vote] for the Jewish Democratic List, for List No. 3.

The representatives of List No. 3 will proudly and energetically defend the interests of the poor masses.

The representatives of List No. 3 will challenge/demand for :

Open town council's sessions

A just distribution of municipal taxes, the poor shall not pay for the rich.

An appropriate number of Jewish officials in municipal institutions

Tuition-free schools for poor Jewish people with Yiddish as a language of instruction.

Evening courses for the broad masses

Subsidies for cultural institutions

The resident Jewish populace has the equal right to use public spaces and halls for their cultural undertakings.

Permission for the Jewish unemployed (people) to work at municipal public works

Subsidies for the Jewish unemployed (people)

Vote for the List No. 3.

Vote for the true defenders of Jewish workers and masses of the common people, go *en masse*, on Sunday, 26th of June to the elections and

Vote for the list No. 3.

Editor, Publisher Pynkus Broder Góra Kalwaria Printer "Rekord", Warsaw, Dzika st. 18

39.

7 יודישע מענער, פרויען! 7
7 שטימט נאר פאר די ליסטע 7
7 №7

וועלכע די קאנדידאטען זענען די אייניגע פערזאנען פון אונזער שטאדט, וועלכע זענען אמת פעהיג צו פערטיידיגען די אינטערעסען פון דער גאנצער יודישער בעפעלקערונג, ווי אויך דעם כבוד פון יודישען פאלק.

די אויפגאבע פון די קאנדידאטען אין שטאדט-ראט ווערט זיין:

1) צו שטעהן אויף די וואך פון די רעליגיעזע און נאציאנאלע אינטערעסען פון גאנצען יודענטהום אין אונזער שטאדט.

2) אויסצוקעמפען געהעריגע סובסידיעס פאר יודישע תלמוד-תורה'ס, בית יעקב שולען, נאציאנא-לע יודישע וועלטליכע שולען און ערציהונגס-אנשטאלטען.

3) אויסצוקעמפען א יושר'דיגען פראפארציאנעלען שטייער-סיסטעם, וועלכער זאל זיך רעכענען מיט'ן שטאנד פון יעדען יודישען שטייער-צאהלער אהן אונטערשיד פון זיין בעשעפטיגונג.

4) פערלייכטערען וויי-וויים מעגליך דעם שטייער-צאהל-סיסטעם. וועלכער זאל זיין צוגעפאסט צום יעצטיגען קריטישען צושטאנד פון גאנצען יודענטהום פון אונזער שטאדט.

5) נישט צו דערלאזען ארויסצושטיפען די יודען פון די לאנג-עראבערטע עקאנאמישע פאזיציעס.

6) אויסצוקעמפען ספעציעלע פאויציעס אין בורזשעט פון שטאדט-ראט פאר ספעציפישע יודישע אינטערעסען.

7) אויסצוקעמפען דאס דער שטאדט-ראט זאל זארגען פאר אריימע יודישע זויג-קינדער און טו-טער'ס פאר שיקען — יודישע קראנקע אין אומויסטע און געהעריגע שפיטעלער.

8) אויסצוקעמפען דאס אונזער שטאדט-ראט זאל האבען יודישע לאיניקעס אין געריכט (סאנד) וי אויך יודישע פערטרעטער אין סיימיק פאויאטאוי. צוליב דעם טוט איהר שטימען נאר פאר די ליסטע 7 №

לאזט אייד נישט אייגרעדען אוז פערפיהרעז דורך די ניי-געבאקענע פערזארגער'ס, וועלכע האבען אבגעריסען אונזערע קינדער פון דעם גייסט פון די עלטערעז; וועלכע פערשמוצען דעם גלאנץ פון רעליגיעזען נאציאנאלעז יודענטהום; וועלכע פעראורטיילען יעדע יודישע זאך צום שאנד-סלוף.

לאזט אייד נישט פערטושען אוז פערפיהרעז דורך די פארטיי-פערזארגער, וועלכע גלויבען זעלבסט נישט אין זייערע שקר'דיגע הבטחות;

יודעז גירגער פון אונזער שטאדט! געדענקט אז די אלע פערזארגער מענען נאר שאדען ברענגען אונזער שטאדט, אבער נישט קיין נוצען—קענען נאר ארויסרופען מחלוקת חו"ש מיט אונזערע קריסטליכע שכנים, מיט וועלכע מיר לעבען ביז איצט מיט זיי בשלום. אל-זא, געדענקט, זונטאג דעם 26 טשערוויץ יום א' לפרשת חקת, געהט אלע צו די וואהל-אורנעס אוז שטימט נאר פאר די ליסטע 7 №; דערמיט וועט איהר שוינען דעם כבוד פון יודישען פאלק.

7 דער יודישער סוחר'ישער 7
7 וואהל-קאמיטעט אין גור-קאלוואריע 7

Odezwa wyborcza kupców żydowskich w Górze Kalwarji.
Drukarnia I. M. ALTERA Warszawa, Nalewki 17.

7 7

Jewish men, women!
Vote only for the List

No. 7

Whose candidates are the only persons from our town, who are truly competent to defend the interests of entire Jewish population [of the town] and also the honor of the Jewish people.
The objectives of the candidates in town council will be:
1) To stand guard on behalf of the religious and national interests of all Jewry in our town.
2) To fight for proper subsidies for Jewish elementary religious schools [*Talmud-Torahs]*, *Bais-Yaakov* schools, national Jewish secular schools, and educational institutions.
3) To fight for and implement a just, proportional tax system, which should take into consideration the [financial] condition of every Jewish tax-payer regardless of employment.
4) To lighten, as far as possible the tax payment system, which should be adjusted to reflect the current critical situation/condition of our town's Jewry.
5) To forbid the expulsion of Jews, from economic positions of livelihood, they have long occupied.
6) To fight for and obtain special allocations in the municipal budget for specific Jewish interests.
7) To fight for and cause the town council to provide for care of the poor Jewish infants and mothers, (and) of the (task of) sending the ill to the free-of-charge and appropriate hospitals.
8) To fight for and obtain, for our town, Jewish lay judges in court, and also Jewish representatives in the *Sejmik Powiatowy* [Polish local district self-government legislative assembly].
Because of that you have to vote for the list No. 7.

Do not allow yourselves to be persuaded and deceived by the newly-born [lit. newly baked] caretakers, who tore our children away from the spirit [sic: values] of their parents; who soil (contaminate, pollute) the shine of religious national Jewishness, who condemn every Jewish thing to the Pole of Shame.

Do not allow yourselves to be led astray and deceived by the party-caretakers, who themselves do not believe in their own false pledges:

Jewish citizens of our town! Remember that all of these caretakers can only bring harm to our town, and no benefit — [they] can only cause conflict, God forbid, with our Christian neighbors, with whom, until now, we live with them [repetition] in peace. So, remember, Sunday, 26th of July [Polish word *czerwiec* used, written in Yiddish script] , first day of *Parshat Hukat*, everyone should go to the ballot boxes and vote only for List **No. 7**. With such an act you will uphold the honor of the Jewish people.

7 7

The Jewish Merchant[s] Electoral Committee in Góra-Kalwaria

Election appeal of the Jewish Merchants in Góra-Kalwaria.
Printer of I.M. Alter, Warsaw, Nalewki st. 17.

This Protokół contains the minutes of a meeting that took place in Góra Kalwaria on January 17, 1947. The purpose of the meeting was to establish a Jewish Religious Congregation for the County of Grójec in Góra Kalwaria according to the Regulations of the Ministry of Public Administration, Department of Religions, #911/45 dated February 10, 1945.

Protokół

zebrania organizacyjnego odbyłego się w dniu 17 stycznia 1947 roku w sprawie utworzenia zrzeszenia p.n."Żydowskiej Kongregacji Wyznaniowej"na powiat grójecki z siedziby w Górze Kalwarii przy ul.Piłsudskiego Nr.31.

Obecni na zebraniu założyciele:

1.Prejs Jakub,2.Prajs Henryk,3.Polańska Gitla,4.Pelc Bencjan,5.Pilberg Gabryel,6.Salicka Sabina,7.Karpman Feliks,8.Messing Józef,9.Messing Leizer,10.Rozencweig Sabina,11.Grinstein Arnold,12.Grinstein Barbara,13.Kohan Szymon,14.Kohan Róża,15.Wilczyński Józef.

Zebrani mając na względzie przeprowadzenie różnych zasad i praktyk religijnych,opierając się na Okólniku Ministerstwa Administracji Publicznej- Departament Wyznaniowy L.dz.911/45 z dn.10 lutego 1945 r.postanawiają założyć stowarzyszenie p.n.Żydowskiej Kongregacji Wyznaniowej"i w tym celu niniejsze zebranie upoważnia Ob.Prajsa Henryka i Ob.Pelca Bencjana do przeprowadzenia wszelkich formalności związanych z zalegalizowaniem niniejszego stowarzyszenia.

Założyciele podają równocześnie,że Stowarzyszenie będzie nosiłom nazwę "Żydowska Kongregacja Wyznaniowa"

Celem stowarzyszenia jest przeprowadzanie różnych zasad i praktyk religijnych.

Środki działania stowarzyszenia będą opierały się na przeprowadzeniu ekshumacji zwłok,odprawiania praktyk religijnych wraz z obrzędami.

Teren działalności stowarzyszenie obiera w zakresie powiatu grójeckiego z siedzibą w Górze Kalwarii.

Sposób wstępowania,oraz ustępowania członków określa się następującoś członkiem"Żydowskiej Kongrenacji Wyznaniowej"może być każdy obywatel wyznania mojżeszowego,który dobrowolnie zgłosi się do przyjęcia do stowarzyszenia.Wystąpienie członka może nastąpić na własne żądanie.

Sposób rozwiązania stowarzyszenia może nastąpić na skutek Walnego Zebrania,które postanowi o rozwiązaniu stowarzyszenia i podaniu do wiadomości Władzy Administracji-Ogólnej.

Na pokrycie potrzeb finansowych będą stosownie do Okólnika M. Administracji Publicznej-Departament Wyznaniowy L.dz.911/45 z dnia 10 lutego 1945 roku pobierane następujące opłaty:

a/za obrzędy urodzin
b/za udzielanie ślubów
c/za pogrzeby i formalności związane z postawieniem pomników /wyłączając pobieranie opłat za miejsca na cmentarzu/.

Nazwiska założycieli i ich adresy:

1/Prajs Jakub zam.w Górze Kalwarii przy ul.Dominikańska 28
2/Prajs Henryk " " " " ul.Piłsudskiego 31
3/Polańska Gitla" " " " ul.Dominikańska 28
4/Pelc Bencjan " " " "ul.Piłsudskiego 31
5/Pilberg Gabryel " " " ul.Strażacka 4
6/Salicka Sabina " " " ul.Strażacka 4
7/Karpman Feliks " " " ul.Kalwaryjska 8
8/Messing Józef " " " ul.Piłsudskiego 33
9/Massing Leizer " " " ul.Piłsudskiego 33
10/Rozencweig Sabina " " " ul.Pijarska 51
11/Grinstein Arnold " " " ul.Koszary K.B.W.
12/Grinstein Barbara " " " ul.Koszary K.B.W.
13/Kohan Szymon " " " ul.Dominikańska 7
14/Kohan Róża " " " ul.Dominikańska 7
15/Wilczyński Józef " " " ul.Koszary K.B.W.

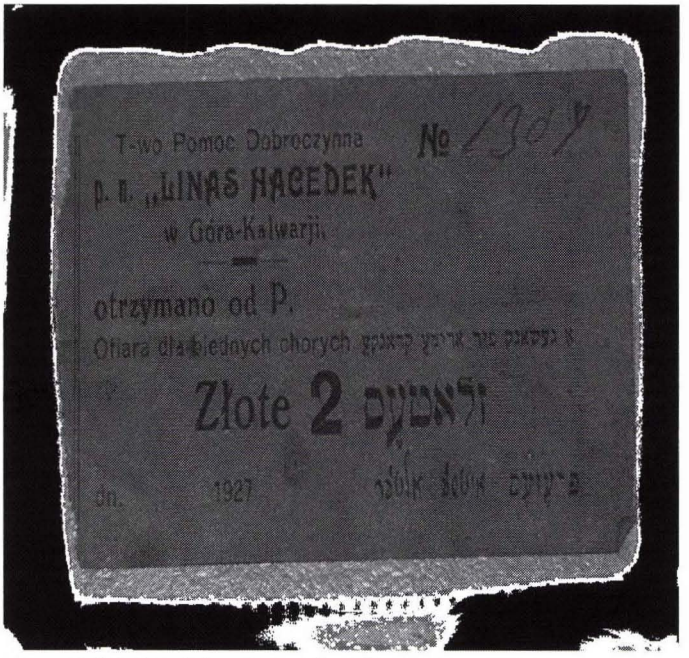
Góra Kalwaria,dnia 17 stycznia 1947r.



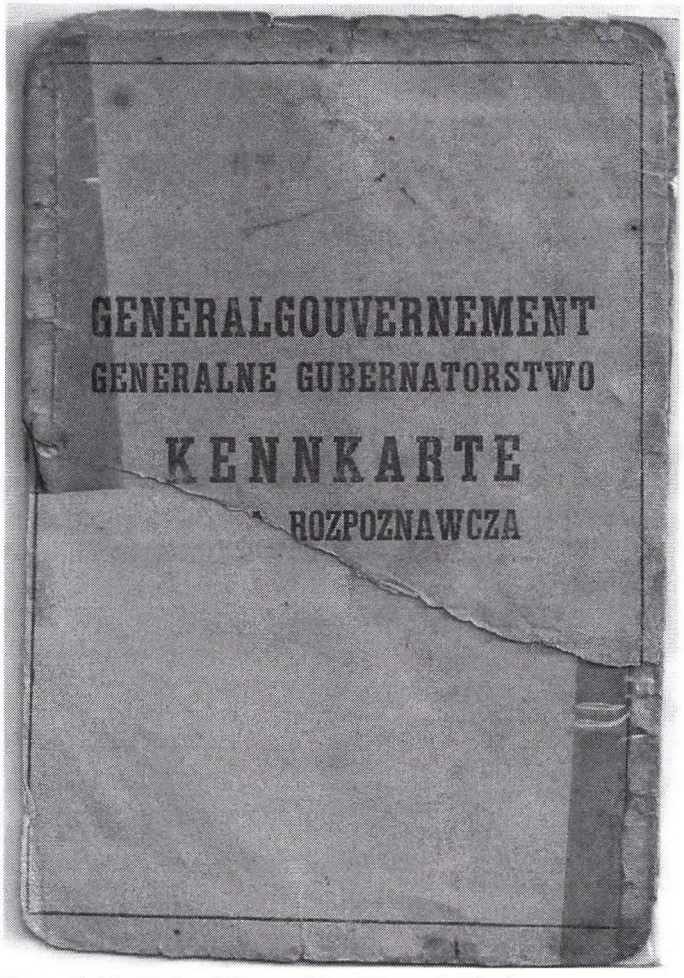
Page 943: A Ticket/Receipt for a One Zloty donation towards the support of the Talmud Torah in Ger



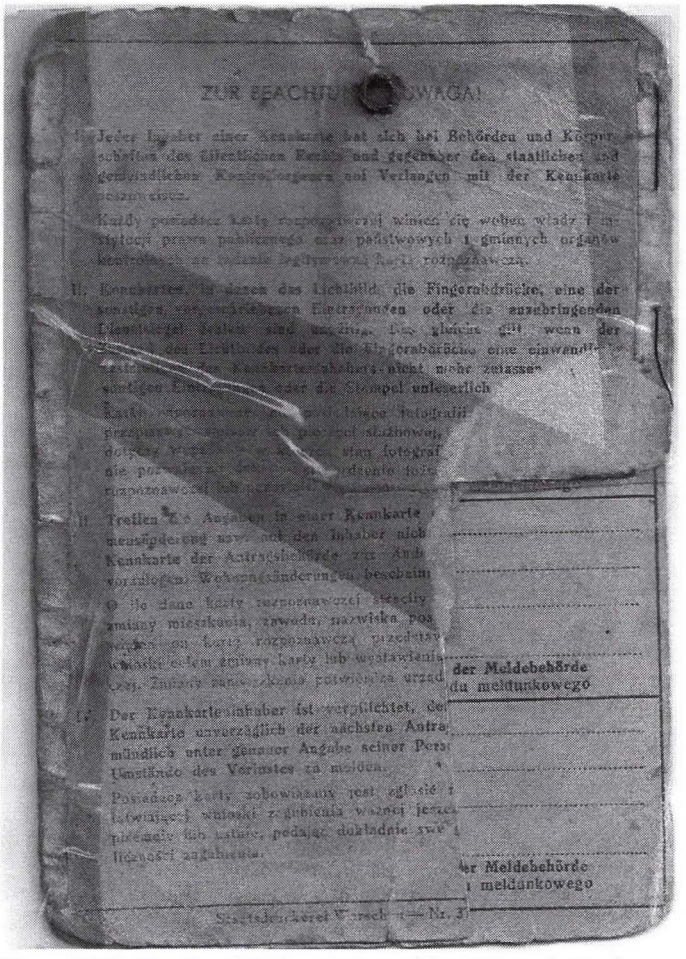
Page 945: A Góra Kalwaria-to-Warsaw Ticket



Page 944:A Ticket/Receipt for a Two Zloty donation to *Linat HaTzedek* in support of medical care for sick poor people in Góra Kalwaria (Ger) .



Page 946: False ID used by Henryk Prajs



Page 947: Back of False ID used by Henryk Prajs



Page 948: Inside details of the False ID used by Henryk Prajs to elude discovery by the Nazis



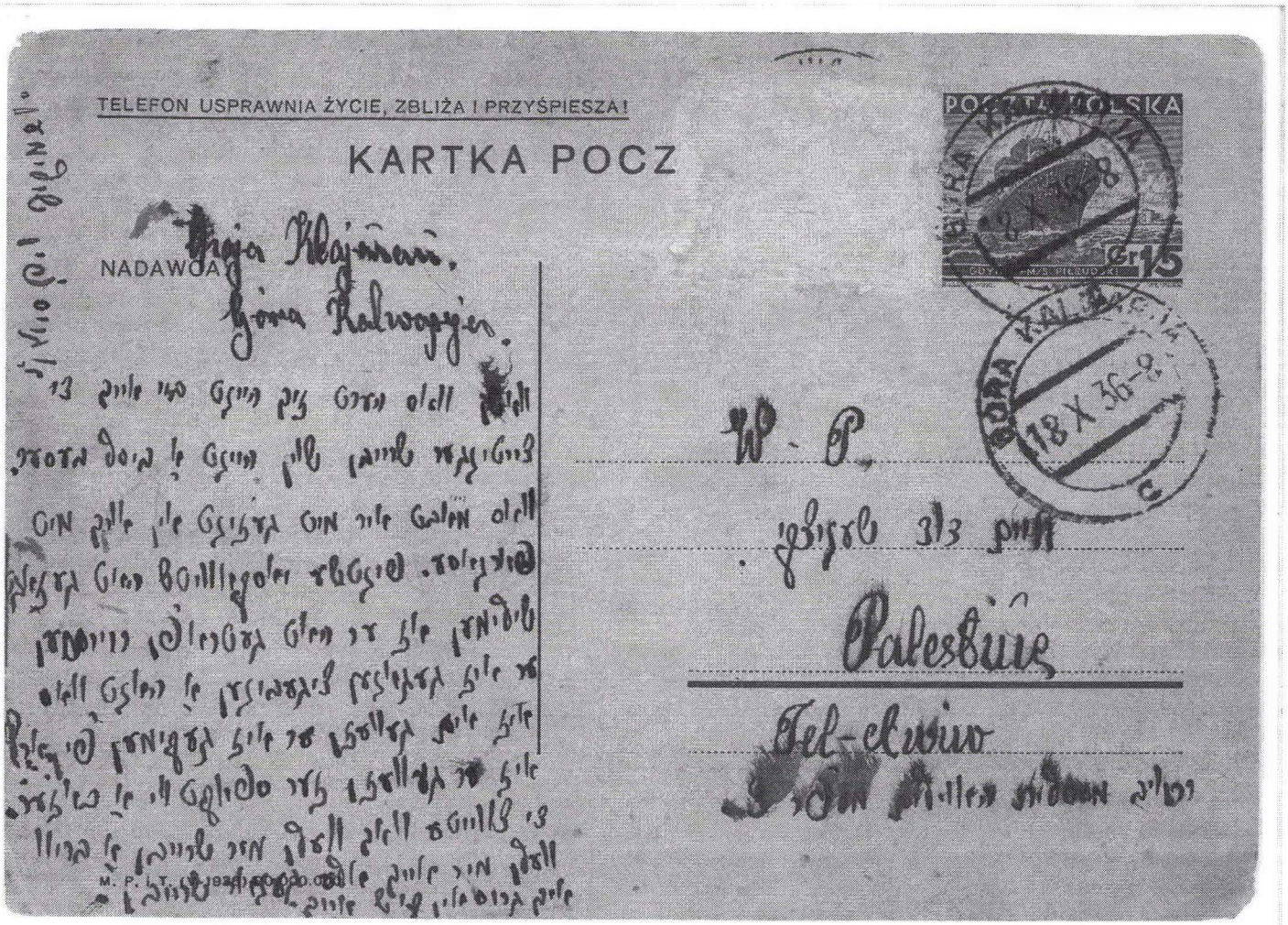
Page 949: Frontispiece of a book of '*Khidushim*' by David Shlomo ben Yitzhak Margaliot the *Bet Din* Senior of Kalwaria.

Printed in Warsaw in 5642 [1881] from the collection of Menachem Yitzhak Hochberg of Góra Kalwaria.

The Face of Evil



Page 950: Envelope and original text of a letter sent by Nazi German soldier from Góra Kalwaria (Ger) to his home in Zittau, Saxony, in Germany.



Page 951: A Typical Post Card Mailed from Góra Kalwaria to Palestine c. 1936



Page 952: A Score for Mandolin and Violin for two Hebrew Melodies



Page 953: A Program of Music for a Mandolin Orchestra with Violin Accompaniment

GÓRA KALWARJA.

Miasto nad Wisłą, pow. Grójec, siedziba sądu pok., sąd okr. Warszawa, 5486 mieszk. 🚌 linja kol. wąskotor. Warszawa-Góra Kalwarja. Przystań żeglugi parowej na Wiśle. 🐎 ⛪ 🐪 Magistrat, 4 ⛪ kat., 1 synag. Szkoła zawod. dokształcająca. Przytułek dla starców i kalek. Elektrownia miejska. Cech szewcki. Targi: co wtorek.

Ville sur la Vistule, distr. de Grójec, siège de la just. de paix, trib. d'arr. Warszawa, 5496 habit. 🚌 ligne à voie étroite de Warszawa-Góra Kalwarja. Débarcadère sur la Vistule 🐎 ⛪ 🐪 Municipalité. 4 ⛪ cath., 1 synag. Ecole profess. complémentaire. Asile de vieillards et d'infirmes. Usine électr. municipale Corpor. des cordonniers. Marchés: le mardi.

Burmistrz (*Maire*): Wład. Szymański.

Straż ogniowa ochotn. Komendant (*Corps des pompiers volont. Commandant*): Józ. Kuźniar.

Lekarze (*médecins*): Gorazdowski St. dr. — Rozenberg P. dr. — Brzeżotarski Ant. dr. (wewn).

Lekarze dentyści (*médecins dentistes*): Tumarkon Hel. — Wygodzki H.

Lekarze weterynarji (*médecins vétérinaires*): Bocianowski E. — Grudziński Włodz. — Rudzki Fr.

Adwokaci (*avocats*): Miedluski Alb.

Notarjusze (*notaires*): Żeńczykowski Tad.

Akuszerki (*sages-femmes*): Suwińska — Zakrzewska J.

Apteczne składy (*droguéries*): Rypiński A.

Apteki (*pharmacies*): Rypiński A.

Bednarze (*tonneliers*): Szymański A. — Zdrojek J.

Blacharze (*ferblantiers*): Gotfryd M. — Gotfryd P. — Müller T.

Blawaty (*tissus*): Latoszek C. — Lichtensztejn Ł. — Lichtensztejn M. — Lipski S. — Sztern S. — Szenkier Ch. — Tauman M. — Urbach S. — Ziemba W.

Budowlane materjały (*matériaux de construction*): Mańkowski C. — ×Tauman J.

Bydło — handel (*march. de bestiaux*): Traczyk J.

Cieśle (*charpentiers*): Krasnodębski A. — Piec L. — Skoryczewski J.

Cukiernie (*confiseurs*): Kenigsztejn S. — Orłowski K.

Czapki (*casquettes*): Frajerman F.

Drób (*volailles*): Lobtman J.

Felczerzy (*barbiers - chirurgiens*): Iżycki B. — Nejman J. — Nowakowski A. — Włoczkowski M.

Fotograficzne zakłady (*photographes*): Rozenthal N.

Fryzjerzy (*coiffeurs*): Czapliga W. — Czarnaczapka S. — Kucberg F. — Rybak B. — Siniarski G. — Zych W.

Galanterja (*merceries*): Cykiert Ch. — Rawski I. — Rozenberg I. — Warm N. — Zacharowicz B.

Garncarze (*potiers*): Piętaszewski F.

Herbaciarnie (*débits de thé*): Buziński W. — Gelbfisz M. — Gutensztejn L. — Hajfikman H. — Kaufman S. — Langleben W. — Lobtman R. — Mularz S. — Weinsztok Sz. — Włodarczyk A. — Wojciechowski J. — Wysocka M.

Introligatorzy (*relieurs*): Tenenbaum D.

Jadłodajnie (*restaurants*): Broder J. — Dłutek I. — Gadzińska H. — Goldsztejn S. — Kaufman B. — Kirszberg G. — Klepczyński I. — Michalska S. — Rawski A. — Szulc Ch. — Wajnsztok S. — Warm M. — Zakrzewski S.

Kamasznicy (*Tiges p. chaussures*): Frydman A. — Frydman J. — Smolarczyk N. — Zacharowicz M.

Kasy pożyczk.-oszczędn. (*caisses d'empr. et d'épargne*): ×Kasa Kredytowa, Spółdz. z o. o.

Kolektury loterji (*bureaux de loterie*): Szymchowicz M.

Kolonjalne artykuły (*épiciers*): Skoraszewska J. — Wajnberg M.

Kołodzieje (*charrons*): Zielonowicz M.

Kooperatywy (*coopératives*): ×„Spójnia", Spółdz. Spoż. — ×Spółdzielcze Stowarzyszenie Spożywców, Sp. z o. o.

Koszykarze (*vanniers*): Łozowski J. — Michalak W. — Michalski B.

Kowale (*forgerons*): Dylemt A. — Klepczyński I. — Marke J. — Prujczyk M. — Szymański J. — Wysocki F. — Zdrojek J.

Krawcy (*tailleurs*): Blumfarb G. — Czarnoczapka P. — Jaszczyński C. — Kielmanowicz D. — Messyng M.

Księgarnie (*librairies*): „Janina", wł. Skoraszewska J. — Rypiński A.

Kuchenne naczynia (*art. de cuisine*): Całka J.

Malarze (*peintres*): Borensztejn H.

Młyny (*moulins*): Mańkowski C.

Murarze (*maçons*): Chęciński J. — Łozowski H. — Miller J. — Rac J. — Stępień M. — Stępień P. — Szymański S. — Wojtowicz J.

Mydlarnie (*marchands de savons*): Sztajnblat I.

Olejarnie (*huileries*): Feldman M.

Oleje i smary (*huiles et graisses*): Gytryn M.

Opał (*comestibles*): Ajzenszladt D. — Blass B. — Rypiński A. — Zacharowicz N.

Owoce (*fruits*): Anczalewski M. — Goldsztejn J.

Piekarze (*boulangers*): Herman M. — Herman N. — Binkiewicz M. — Borensztajn H. — Cieśliński J. — Goldberg J. — Goldman D. — Goldman R. — Graifman G. — Hoffman P. — Majerowicz I. — Mańkowski C. — Obermiller A. — Rajchman B. — Zimnowodzki M. — Żurek J.

Piwo (*bière*): Haberbusch i Schiele — Kirszenbaum M.

Powroźnicy (*cordiers*): Szmaj H.

Restauracje (*restaurants*): Joss W. — Kowalski S. — Rawski A. — Szymańska Z. — Włoczkowski M.

An Excerpt from a 1929 Business Directory, listing various enterprises and their owners/operators in Góra Kalwaria (Ger)

Góra Kalwarja

Rolnicze artykuły (*prod. agricoles*): Rypiński A. — ×Syndykat Rolniczy Warszawski.

Rzeźnicy (*bouchers*): Amzler B. — Amzler M. — Frydman S. — Goldhecht M. — Gorkiewicz J. — Jakubowicz Ch. — Jakubowicz H. — Karpman J. — Karpman M. — Karpman S. — Kowalski J. — Pelc I. — Złotogórski J. — Żyro S.

Samochodowa komunikacja (*transports automobiles*): Dyniewski J. — Papier A. — Pyszyński J. i Paprocki M. — Werchajzer M. i Weisbrot Sz.

Siodlarze i rymarze (*selliers et bourreliers*): Altszuler P. — Lifek J.

Skóry (*cuirs*): Frydman F. — Szpiro A. — Szymchowicz S.

Spirytualja (*spiritueux*): Kirszenbaum M. — Olszewski K. — Wajnberg M. — Wróbel E.

Spożywcze artykuły (*comestibles*): Bieńkiewicz M. — Bogman H. — Borensztejn Ł. — Brandt A. — Broder Ch. — Cymbalista J. — Danevger F. — Emirsajłow M. — Fajn M. — Frajerman J. — Frydman N. — Gerszt A. — Gisser M. — Goldsztejn D. — Gotlib A. — Herszberg Ch. — Karfinkiel S. — Kaufman N. — Kaufman T. — Kerszberg J. — Kerszberg M. — Kierszenbaum A. — Kucberg I. — Loptman M. — Loptman S. — Messyng Ch. — Messyng J. — Papier J. — Pasternak Ch. — Połoniecka F. — Połoniecki S. — Rajs S. — Rapoport J. — Rozenbaum P. — Rozenblum M. — Segalik N. — Smolarczyk Ch. — Smolarczyk D. — Smolarczyk N. — Symchowicz R. — Szenkier J. — Szwarcwort Ch. — Szymański W. — Szymchowicz M. — Tauman S. — Waksman S. — Warm I. — Zacharowicz I. — Zacharowicz M. — Zacharowicz N. — Zajdeman M. — Zyngier I. — Zyngier M.

Stolarze (*menuisiers*): Farber M. — Rozenbhun M. — Tyszler I. — Wiśniewski I. — Witkowski P.

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Woda sodowa — fabr. (*fabr. d'eaux gazeuses*): Rubin I.

Zajazdy (*auberges*): Całka I. — Całka M. — Lewkowicz M. — Riedelman I. — Szrajbaum.

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Żelazo (*fers*): Cykiert M. — Kameliński M. — Kameliński S. — Lichtensztejn H. — Modrowski P. — Zylberszporn M.

These I shall remember...

אֵלֶּה אֶזְכְּרָה...

In the fullness of time, many pictures have come to light, in the possession of *landsleit*, which – sadly – carry no identification, and there is no living memory to consult in order that identity may be established. We provide this place for those images, as a minimal form of memorialization for these victims of the Holocaust, who remain unnamed.















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