

Dapei Kesher

Beit Theresienstadt Theresienstadt Martyrs Remembrance Association

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Social Solidarity in Ghetto Theresienstadt



IN THIS ISSUE

At Beit Theresienstadt	2	Archives	12-13
Yours	3	Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck – Spiritual Leader in	
News from Beit Theresienstadt	4-8	Ghetto Theresienstadt (1943 – 1945) by	
The Education Center	9	Dr. Margalit Shlain	14-15
Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony			
The Torch lighters	10		

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Events Calendar

לוח אירועים

אביב תשע"ז | אפריל-מאי 2017

12.5.2017 Friday - יום שישי - 09:00	24.4.2017 Monday - יום שני - 09:45	20.4.2017 Thursday - יום חמישי - 17:00
International Meeting	Holocaust Memorial Day	"Many Faces of heroism, but one meaning of life"
International Meeting and Annual Assembly of the Theresienstadt Martyrs Remembrance Association.	On the subject of "Social Solidarity". To be held in collaboration with the soldiers from the Combat Fitness School, Police and volunteers of Israel Police Traffic Department.	An evening dedicated to Alisa Ehrmann-Shek. Documenting secretly the last few months of Theresienstadt Ghetto.
Place: Beit Theresienstadt	Place: Beit Theresienstadt	Place: Dan Tel Aviv Hotel
כנס שנתי	טקס יום הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה	"פנים רבות לגבורה, אך משמעות אחת לחיים" - יומן טרזין
אסיפה שנתי של הקרן להנצחת זכר חללי גטו טרזין.	בסימן "סולידריות חברתית" שיערך בשיתוף עם חיילים ומפקדים מבית הספר לכושר קרבי בצה"ל, שוטרים ומתנדבים מזרוע מרכז של אגף התנועה.	ערב מוקדש לעליזה אהרמן-ש"ק, גיבורה המתעדת בסתר את החודשים האחרונים בגטו טרזיינשטאט.
מיקום: בית טרזין	מיקום: בית טרזין	מיקום: מלון דן תל אביב

נשמח לראותכם בין אורחינו!

להרשמה: 04-6369515 info@bterezin.org.il



Details on events will be sent by regular and by electronic mail on your request
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To all members and friends of Beit Theresienstadt

The ceremony of Holocaust Remembrance Day will be dedicated this year to social solidarity in ghetto Theresienstadt. It seems that today social solidarity is not very popular. Israeli society is torn apart; various groups try to segregate themselves instead of getting closer to each other, searching for common values. All over the world segregation is on the rise, isolation grows and with it the trend of burying the head in the sand, simply not to see refugees and emigrants and not to help those in need. All this is on the surface. Below the surface many people try to help, seeing their work as a humane mission and obligation. These days I returned from a journey to the area of Siegen in Germany, in preparation for a meeting of Israeli and German youth led by Beit Theresienstadt. I saw there a lot of encouraging and inspiring things. I was the guest of a German Protestant family.

At the outskirts of town there is a school building that was made into a home for refugees. My host and their neighbors volunteer to help the refugees, the refugees' children study at the local school, which we visited. Among the names of the students there are Muslim and Turkish ones and entering the classroom it is hard to see differences between the students. The children of the refugees and immigrants are an organic part of the class. In Dortmund we visited a school with agenda: "A school without racism, a school with courage". Following a violent incident between Neo-Nazis and immigrants the students decided to do something about it.

At their school, they created an exhibition about the story of a Jewish family who had lived in their neighborhood during the Holocaust. The exhibition depicts the rise of the Nazis to power and the meaning of the anti-Jewish laws. The students prepared various activities and they guide visitors through the exhibition. Among other things they built models of ghetto Theresienstadt and of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, where the family that is the basis of the exhibition, was deported. Other schools take their students for visits to the exhibition and expose them to the subject in the framework of the fight against racism and anti-Semitism.

It is true that this is a small part of the picture, but one has to know that this kind of behavior exists too. And returning to the subject of Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony – social solidarity in ghetto Theresienstadt – we speak there about helping old, weak and needy people. Of course there were also cases of exploiting weakness, theft from old people, contemptuous behavior towards those not belonging to the "correct group" and so forth. But when speaking about the ghetto we chose to tell specifically about those who helped, who forewent their rations for someone who needed it more.



These are the stories we want to use for education because we want to live in a better world, optimistic and giving hope. In this issue we remember Dr. Leo Baeck who was part of the system of aid and support in the ghetto, and the event held, marking the 60th anniversary of his death. Social solidarity can be seen also at the moving meeting on Hanukka between young musicians and the old-timers of Beit Theresienstadt, Holocaust survivors. The words written by two of the participants testify to the strong connection that evolved between the generations.

At the end of February Lisa Gidron (Wurzel) passed away at age 97. Lisa was a councilor at a children's home in the ghetto and after immigrating to Israel she wrote one of the first books of testimony about ghetto Theresienstadt, together with Hanka Fischel (edited by Yehuda Raznicenko). This little book is one of the important sources of knowledge used by councilors of Beit Theresienstadt for their work at the museum. Lisa maintained contact throughout the year. We will not forget her. The book "Theresienstadt" (Hebrew) can be read at the website of Beit Theresienstadt under the tag – Publications/Online Library.

**Yours,
Tami Kinberg**

75 Years since the Establishment of Ghetto Theresienstadt

Two central events were held in the months November – December 2016 to mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of ghetto Theresienstadt. On November 21, 2016, the event "Tsilim shel Esh veTikva" (Tunes of Fire and Hope) was held, in cooperation with Yad Vashem. The event included a guided tour at the museum: at 6 stations in the museum musical pieces by composers from ghetto Theresienstadt were played, including some by Viktor Ullmann, Gideon Klein, Siegmund Schul and Hans Krasa. The renown violinist Eyal Shiloach and the young, talented cellist Asif Bines performed under the baton of Dan Rapoport, who also played the clarinet. Various works were played, in addition to music written and orchestrated in ghetto Theresienstadt there were also some pieces from before the war, fragments influenced by Chassidic music and Israeli songs. The tour ended in the Hall of Names with the composition "Blow the Big Shofar for our Freedom" by Siegmund Schul. From the top of the huge dome opposite the pictures of the countless faces of victims the ancient verse echoed into the space below. In the beginning of December a concert for survivors of ghetto Theresienstadt took place. Here, too, the violinist Eyal Shiloach and the cellist Asif Bines played, with Dan Rapoport on the clarinet. Through the music, accompanied by pictures,



Dan Rapoport told the exceptional story of the prisoners and artists of Theresienstadt, demonstrated the special beauty of the compositions they created and the power of music that called very many Theresienstadt prisoners to embrace life with all their strength and to believe in the good again. At the conclusion of the concert the survivors received Certificates of Appreciation for their activities throughout many years, perpetuating the story of ghetto Theresienstadt. The opera singer Alexandra Esther Wilson performed the work "Rest my Son" and "Blow the Big Shofar for our Freedom".

Accordion Performance



For many years the late Shmuel Bloch, survivor of ghetto Theresienstadt and one of the founders of Beit Theresienstadt, and his accordion were an indivisible part of Beit Theresienstadt's events. After his death his children decided to erect a memorial for him at

the music center of Zichron Yaakov, where he settled after immigrating to Israel and where he took intense part in cultural activities. In 2008 Shmuel was awarded the title of "Honored citizen" for his work at the culture department of Zichron Yaakov. The mythological accordion, to the tunes of which generations of children in Zichron Yaakov sang and studied music, was displayed in a glass case beside Shmuel's story. Shmuel was born in Plzen, today in the Czech Republic. The dedication of the memorial was held at an evening of variegated music, performed by youngsters and grown-ups. From the children's choir "Kolot Hamaayan" to the Klesmer ensemble "Matok Midvash". It turned out that the musical talent was inherited in the family and the grandchildren

sang and played music as well. Pavel Koren, who did much for the success of this event, excited the audience, playing the accordion he had received from Shmuel. The music was accompanied by stories and pictures from Shmuel's life. The connection of Shmuel to the children's opera "Brundibar" was highlighted, including his efforts to have it performed in Israel, reaching the young generation, as part of their studies about ghetto Theresienstadt and the Holocaust.



Liberal Judaism, Then and Now

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the death of rabbi Leo Baeck, Beit Theresienstadt, together with the Leo Baeck Institute in Jerusalem and with the Association of Israelis of Central European Origin, held a special evening in his memory. The event began with a greeting by Dr. Gabriel Alexander, representing the Association of Israelis of Central European Origin and the Deputy Ambassador of Germany in Israel, Ms. Monika Iwersen.

Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck was the spiritual leader of progressive Jewry in Germany, and it was only natural to relate to his memory in the face of interesting processes taking place today in liberal Jewry, which attempts to adapt itself to the changes of our times. The fascinating panel moderated by prof. Shmuel Feiner from Bar Ilan University (chairman of the Leo Baeck Institute), consisted of prof. Moshe Halbertal from the Hebrew University, Dr. Hillel Ben Sasson from JTS (Jewish Theological School) in New York, Mr. Rani Jaeger from the Hartman Institute, rabbi Gabi Dagan from the Leo Baeck Education Center in Haifa and prof. Ruhama Weiss from the Hebrew Union College. The discussion dealt with the essence of liberalism, separation of religion and state, freedom and religion, liberal commentary of texts like the Talmud, secular seminaries, religious feminism and more.



Dr. Margalit Shlain enlightened the audience with a short but fascinating lecture about rabbi Leo Baeck in ghetto Theresienstadt (see detailed article on page 14). At the event the singers Edan Hadad, Naama Gelbert, Einat Biron and Maya Sapiro-Taien, accompanied by Assaf Markovich, performed cabaret songs and popular music from ghetto Theresienstadt, all of the above had attended the seminar "History, Music and Remembrance" at Beit Theresienstadt in 2015. Daniel Talmor played the piano. The songs were chosen from the repertoire of the concluding event of the seminar.

For those interested to view, the whole event is available at Leo Baeck Institute website:

<http://www.leobaeck.org/2016/12/08>



"Song expels the Darkness"

The seminar "History, Music and Remembrance" was held differently from those in the past, in cooperation with "Mekorock Israel", a national project combining study of Jewish sources in an experiential way, with original musical creation. The textual direction of the seminar was directed by Noga Cohen from kibbutz Mishmar Hasharon, the musical director was the artist Miki Shaviv, guided by the professional team of Beit Theresienstadt and David Aviv, founder and director of Mekorock.

The seminar was held during the Hanukka vacation and was attended by young musicians from all over Israel – Upper Nazareth in the North to Beer Sheva in the South, with a

significant representation of youth from Emek Hefer. Boys and girls, religiously observant and secular, singing and playing multiple instruments. The title chosen, "Song expels the Darkness", connected the Hanukka holiday – feast of lights – to sources of inspiration from the history of the Jewish people – Joseph in the pit, slavery in Egypt, the destruction of the Temple as described in the Book of Lamentations up to the impossible reality of the Jews in ghetto Theresienstadt during the Holocaust, documented through pictures, texts and rich creation. From this heavy load the young people blended through present-day writing 12 songs, touching their personal lives, with their young view of the past. In the framework of the seminar the participants met Dita Kraus, a ghetto survivor,

Ori-David Wrote:

The seminar, in addition to studying, was an emotionally and spiritually exciting experience jolting my routine. I got to know new people of my age from all over the country, I got connected with them and we worked together for a week, we slept, showered, ate, laughed and we also... cried and all of this together. We learned about life in ghetto Theresienstadt, we heard the terrible story and, on the other hand, we were exposed to spiritual and creative fortitude in the ghetto. I felt there was plenty of light thanks to this "togetherness".

On the second evening of the seminar we met Dita who had survived ghetto Theresienstadt. She told us her fascinating story. Throughout her testimony she had that radiant smile that inspired me very much when writing my song. Dita helped me to reach the conclusion that there is light in all of us, in all of us is the strength to smile, even after living through horror. I looked inside, into myself, and I looked at her smile. I understood that we are similar. I put myself in her place, locked inside the ghetto fences, wondering what my place is among the millions of Jews who went through the Holocaust.



And through them out of an inner smile I remembered the name I was given by my parents, the meaning of me in their life – I am light!

In addition to learning about the ghetto, we dealt with stories of national catastrophes from the bible, starting with the selling of Joseph as a slave, slavery in Egypt up to the destruction of the Temple. We were asked to gain inspiration from these sources as well. I not only wrote the text but also composed the melody of the song and that excited me very much. All the participants of the seminar helped one another. At the conclusion of the seminar we appeared in front of Holocaust survivors, among them Dita, who was sitting in the audience. For me it was a very meaningful closing of a circle.

The whole week was held in the light of the Hanukka candles, every day we lit one more, more light empowering the experience.

Night Sun

Text and music: Ori-David Mussai

As I got up, darkness hit me,
I drowned in my own Nile
And in my room, shackled within
the ghetto bars
What is my name among a million
of names?

I am light, the sun of night
Burning in my heart of hope
I am a song
My voice will save me from the fall

While lying down I opened my eyes
I pulled myself out of the water
And in my dream there stands a
wall
I climb on it, I won the war

I am light, the sun of night
Hope burns in the heart
I am a song
My voice will save me from the fall

Even walking in the valley of death
I will not fear evil
Light ...



and listened to her story.

Naftali Harpaz, the coordinator of the project, wrote: It was fascinating to feel how the words crystallized, were painted with tunes and beats and became songs. Strong songs, beating, exciting and full of depth and content.

This was a wonderful process, culminating in an event in front of survivors of ghetto Theresienstadt. I looked at the eyes of the survivors during the performance of the songs – there were tears of excitement. The young people succeeded to collect pieces of life and excitement from a ghetto they never were in and this way they touched raw nerves of the ghetto survivors. They told them in fact: we are here, boys and girls in Israel of 70 years, we feel with you and do not turn away. "The generation after... with much pride, with broad shoulders ... with spread wings." (From the song by Gal Nahmani). The songs created by the participants of the seminar were recorded and made into a CD. Those interested to order it should contact Beit Theresienstadt. In the following are two of the songs and remarks by the young musicians.



Let Me Fall Quietly

Text: Malchut Yam Keshet

Tune: Malchut Yam and Naftali Harpaz

I know you
I know what you want to hear
I do not want to give you
That sigh of admiration
Because
There is art in the ghetto
Love in Egypt
Life after a terror attack
I can't stand crisis as growth
First let me break down
Into shards
To discover the abyss that opened up
And remained

Instead of going on to try
To fill the pit with artificial hope
Cry over the destruction
Over the shards that are we
Because not always there is

Art in the ghetto
Love in Egypt
Life after an attack

Malchut Yam wrote:

While writing the song I felt that I am unable to write from the viewpoint of people in the stories we had learned.

I understood that, when I want to write something that I can identify with, it has to be something relevant for me today.

In the song I tried to bring out the voice of people who are not able to get out rapidly from the hardships, from the trauma. Though they feel an obligation to grow (like for instance a family that lost their son in an attack and the whole country looks at them), but first of all they have to feel the pain.

I feel that often people take the "growth out of a crisis" too far and make it into "a crisis as growth", like I wrote in the song. Not enough space is given to the "Holocaust" but rather it is made instantly into "resurrection".



The Exhibition "The Brown Cardboard File"

Marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27), on January 25, 2017 the exhibition "The Brown Cardboard File" was opened at the Municipal Gallery in Hadera. At the opening event the deputy mayor, Ms Hedva Yehezkeili, the curator of the exhibition, Ruth Lubin and the director of the archives of Beit Theresienstadt Ms. Sima Shachar attended. The exhibition displays creations by various artists from Israel and abroad, made on brown cardboard files, as a tribute to the work by Felix (Ferdinand) Bloch, who in 1943 in Theresienstadt, described in his drawings – on a brown cardboard file – life in the ghetto.

During the days the exhibition was shown at the gallery, there were educational activities for students from schools from Hadera and Emek Hefer. In that framework they dealt with the subject of documentation in ghetto Theresienstadt, and the importance and meaning of drawing in the ghetto.

Among the events marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day some of the creations from the exhibition were also shown at the "Gallery on the Fence" of the Czech embassy, Zeitlin Str. in Tel Aviv. Passersby in the street could view the drawings and read about the exhibition. At the opening of the exhibition, its curator Ruth Lubin, the director



of the Education Center of Beit Theresienstadt Noa David and many representatives of the Czech embassy in Israel attended – including the Deputy Ambassador Karel Pažourek, the culture attaché Arthur Polzer, the director of the Czech center Lukač Přebyl and the photographer of the exhibition Pavlina Schulz.

Tub'Shvat Plantings

Marking the Hebrew date of Shvat the 15th, 5777, Beit Theresienstadt – in cooperation with the Pensioners Department of the District Council Emek Hefer and the "Shafririm Bet" school held a Nature and Music Day to which the members of "Café Europe" of Emek Hefer were invited. In the first part of the event there was a reception at Beit Theresienstadt. This included songs performed by students of the "Shafririm Bet" school, a story about Tub'Shvat in ghetto Theresienstadt, a meeting of the students with members of "Café Europe" and



a sing-along led by Pavel Koren. Together with Pavel played and sang his daughter Sophie and his granddaughter Elah. Shraga Buchsbaum joined them on the clarinet. Members of the "Beit El" community from Zichron Yaakov also arrived to participate in the event and brought with them presents for the Holocaust survivors. The hall was full of plants – miniature olive saplings donated by "Bet El" and potted flowers from the students of the "Shafririm Bet" school. The participants received beautiful hand-knitted woolen blankets, donated by the volunteers from Germany. Then the participants went to the hall at Eyn Hahoresh for a performance by members of the Israeli opera who had received the "Josef Zambuki" International Master Class prizes. The concert was held through the donation of Josef Zambuki, a Holocaust survivor from Yugoslavia who had survived thanks to his musical talent. Zambuki's wife, Ruth, is a singer, she joined the event and ascended the podium to sing. It was a wonderful way to celebrate the birthday of the trees, the festival of flowering and renewal.

"Minorities, Democracy and Holocaust Remembrance in Israel and in Berlin" Teacher's Seminar

Beit Theresienstadt, in cooperation with the Education Department of the Wannsee Conference House and the Institute "Mul Nevo", held a seminar for teachers from Israel and Germany on the subject "Minorities, Democracy and Holocaust Remembrance in Israel and in Berlin".

The seminar was conceived from the common educational perception according to which, coping with Holocaust remembrance and with the era of the National Socialist regime in Germany is relevant and important at a meeting between educators from Israel and Germany. Educators fulfill an decisive and central role in the study of and dealing with the subject confronting young people in both countries. The aim

of the seminar is to bring about a meeting of the two groups of teachers and to deepen knowledge and understanding of the topic.

In the framework of the seminar, during the Sukkot holidays, 15 teachers from Berlin visited Israel. The seminar at Beit Theresienstadt was held on this occasion.

The seminar continued at the beginning of April 2017, when the Israeli teachers, accompanied by Noa David - director of the Educational Center of Beit Theresienstadt and representatives of the "Mul Nevo" association traveled to Berlin and visited various memorial sites in the city and dealt with various aspects connected to the subject of the seminar.

Visit by Soccer Players of "Borussia Dortmund" and "Makkabi Haifa"

For a number of years now there is a very special relationship between Beit Theresienstadt and various representatives of soccer in Germany, for instance the German Soccer Association and fan organization. The fan organizations of Borussia Dortmund sees great importance in the fight against anti-Semitism and racism on soccer fields. Therefore, in the Borussia Dortmund youth team, short time in Israel they included a visit to Beit Theresienstadt. During the visit of Beit Theresienstadt, joined also by soccer players of the youth team of Makkabi Haifa, the players toured the museum, met Holocaust

survivors and learned about the importance of soccer for the ghetto prisoners.



Event at European Parliament

On February 7, 2017, there was an event at the European Parliament against racism and Anti-Semitism in which the film "Liga Terezin", produced by Beit Theresienstadt with the directors Mike Schwarz and Avi Kaner, was screened. After the screening there was a panel dealing with the subject of violence and racism in soccer and with the education of youngsters against these phenomena. The panel included

Oded Breda, the former director of Beit Theresienstadt, the chairman of Makkabi Germany Mr. Alon Mayer, Mr. Roy Reiber, spokesman of the U21 of the Soccer Association of Germany and Ms Rozine Wood, director of the project "Kick it out" that dealt with prevention of discrimination and the fostering of quality among soccer clubs, fan clubs and various soccer authorities.

Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony

Eva Adorian

Eva was born in 1926 in Prague, her late parents were Ferdinand and Geronia Ehrlich. At a young age she became member of the youth movement "El Al", together with her sister Rosa. In 1942 she was deported with her parents to ghetto Theresienstadt and in 1944 her father was sent to Auschwitz, about a fortnight later



Eva and her mother were also deported there. They survived the selection and were taken for forced labor to a factory working for the German Air Force. As the Red Army neared, the prisoners were led on a death march lasting some 3 weeks and arrived at Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. There they were liberated in May 1945 by the US army.

After recuperating, Eva and her mother, the only survivors of the family (besides her sister Rosa, who has succeeded to immigrate to Israel before the war) returned to Prague.

Eva began to study at the faculty for social work and in 1949 she and her mother immigrated to Israel, settling in kibbutz Neot Mordehai, where her sister Rosa lived. Eva finished her studies, receiving her BA and worked in her profession for 18 years. Today Eva lives at kibbutz MaayanTsvi, she had 3 children – Eli who was killed in a terror attack, Gila and Ron, 10 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

Benny Davidovitz

Benny Davidovitz was born in 1930 in Germany, his parents were Desider and Mathilde. At age 5 he moved with his father to Prague. Since his father worked as a travelling businessman, Benny, aged 6, was put into an orphanage that included a school. In October 1942 some of the children of the orphanage



– including Benny – were deported to ghetto Theresienstadt. There Benny studied in the educational framework that had been established in the ghetto, he also watched soccer games played in the ghetto.

After getting infected by typhoid and other diseases, Benny was hospitalized at a ghetto hospital where he remained for a long time. In May 1944 he was deported to Auschwitz where he was made to move dead bodies out of the camp. He succeeded to evade selections carried out in the camp. On a winter night he was ordered to join a "death march" – together with other prisoners, they arrived at Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria and there he was liberated.

In 1947 Benny came to pre-state Israel on board of the "illegal" immigration ship "Hamaapil haalmoni" (the anonymous immigrant). The ship was caught by the British and Benny was transferred to a camp in Cyprus. In October 1947 he returned to the Land of Israel and lived at kibbutz Ashdot Yaakov. He enlisted in the Palmach (pre-state Jewish fighting unit) and after the Israeli Defense Forces were established he served in the Golani battalion. For 30 years he was in the Israeli police, he married and founded a family.

The Torch-lighters

Chana Malka

Chana was born in Czechoslovakia to Irma and Karel Fiala. In 1942 the family was deported to ghetto Theresienstadt where Chana worked with children and youth. In 1944 her mother was sent to Auschwitz and since then she never saw her again. Two weeks later Chana was also sent there. 1500 persons from that transport were taken that same night to the gas chambers, but Chana, with 200 girls were sent to Germany to a weapons factory where she worked until April 1945. When the Red Army approached the plant, the prisoners, under heavy shelling, went in the direction of ghetto Theresienstadt and there, after a short time, they were liberated by the Red Army. After the war Chana returned to Prague, studied at university and in 1946 she arrived in the Land of Israel. She married and had two children, 5 grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

For the last ten years Chana deals with the subject of the Holocaust in Germany, she lectures in schools, is interviewed in Television and the press and organizes meetings with many people concerned with the topic.



Aviva Bar On

Aviva was born in Miroslav, Bohemia, her parents were Josef and Adele Winkler. After the town was annexed by Germany, her family had to leave their house overnight and they became needy refugees. The family went to Brno where they lived together with other relatives in difficult conditions. Aviva's father and brother worked as forced laborers at the construction of a railway line.

In January 1942 the family was deported to ghetto Theresienstadt where they were imprisoned for three years. In February 1945 Aviva and her family, with about 1000 others were taken by train to Switzerland. In 1949 Aviva immigrated to Israel with the Youth Alyia and came to kibbutz Cabri. Aviva studied at the nursing school of the Rambam hospital in Haifa and worked as an operating room nurse until retirement. Her greatest achievement, as she says, is the establishment of her family that gives her much pride and happiness. Aviva has three sons, three daughters-in-law and eleven grandchildren.



Staff-Sergeant Barbara Bar Gvaram

was born in 1994, studied at Hadassim boarding school, where she participated in major social projects. Four years ago she enlisted in the IDF and served in a meaningful and challenging position. For two years she was an instructor in a combat engineering unit, a non-com instructor at an armor battalion for advanced training, administrative non-com of training infrastructure at Training base 1 and today she is the Vehicle and Weapon Officer at Training base 8.

Her grandmother on father's side was born in a ghetto in Poland and came to Israel at age 4, her great-grandfather on mother's side worked in Tunis in labor camps after his house had been destroyed by aerial bombing.

Barbara is second generation in Israel, she grew up with love to her homeland, imbued with the importance of safeguarding the state. She is proud of her military service and intends to study behavioral sciences and to take part in rehabilitation and work with weak populations in Israel.



Chana was born to Peretz and Lily Wertheimer in Czechoslovakia, in the small town Znojmo, near the Austrian border. A few hours before the Germans arrived there, her family succeeded to escape, with only one suitcase. They became refugees and never returned to their town moving from one place to another until they arrived in Prague. Chana's

father was sent to the camps of Neuengamme and Dachau, where he was murdered. In 1943 Chana, her mother and her grandmother were deported to ghetto Theresienstadt. Later they were sent on, in a freights train to Auschwitz, where the grandmother was murdered. Chana and her mother were sent to a labor camp and towards the end of the war they were transferred to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, both were ill and exhausted; her mother died there. Aged 15, Chana remained a refugee and an orphan with no father and no mother and without many members of her family. Throughout the war Chana waited for the day of liberation, but when the British entered Begen-Belsen she was so weak, emaciated and sick that she did not understand that the day had arrived. In 1949 she immigrated to Israel. She married, studied to become a dietician and completed her academic studies. She has three children and six grandchildren.



Chana Weingarten

Zoltan Meisel's Camera

Vera Meisels donated to our archives a very special item that she got after WWII. Vera was born 1936 in Slovakia. She was deported to ghetto Theresienstadt on December 23, 1944, lived at the children's home L410 and remained there until liberation.

After that she was reunited with her father Zoltan Meisels, who had been imprisoned in Sachsenhausen. In this concentration camp Zoltan found beside the body of a German soldier a camera, which he brought as a present to his daughter Vera after the war.

The camera was made by Dr. August Nagel in 1932. This model used a photographic film "Vollenda 68". The rectangular body of the camera is made of metal, covered with brown leather. At the front there is a little metal label bearing the name of the "Nagel" factory. The name of the model "Vollenda" is embossed on the leather covering at the top rear of the camera. At the handle appears the model number "68".

To operate the camera there is a little button that opens the label, from there unfolds the harmonica-like bellows with the lens, which makes it possible to focus on the object. Around the lens are the numerical data of the shutter and the focusing aperture, together with a little handle and a gear wheel. After operating the camera the bellows are put back inside.

To insert the film into the camera is done the same way we

used to do it before digital cameras became available. A little button marked with an arrow opens the film compartment. The interesting thing about the internal construction of the camera is that the folded bellows seem to contain the shutter, which is close to the film.



Dr. August Nagel began to design his camera under the name "Drexler & Nagel" in 1908. He went on to acquire camera companies specializing in making foldable plates in the body of the camera, with a shutter and the ability for focusing, to make pictures. This way he developed and founded his "Nagel" company in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1928. A number of years afterwards, the "Kodak" company acquired the "Nagel" company which became the German branch of "Kodak", led by Nagel, who continued to design cameras.

The historical connection of the camera as such with the Holocaust is both difficult and disturbing. But it is also the personal victory of Zoltan Meisels, Vera Meisels' father.

And this is how Vera tells it:

We returned to my hometown Prešov in Slovakia. Mother never gave up hope to find father's name on the bulletin board at the synagogue wall, headlined: "Search for Relatives" with pieces of paper written by returning survivors, searching for their loved ones and asking if maybe somebody heard or knows something about them. Day after day mother went to check if there is any mention about my father and returned disappointed. Rumors made the round, originating from survivors who had seen father in Sachsenhausen. That went on for a number of months and hope diminished. In the meantime we did not know what to do, we knew that if father lives, he would return to Prešov. We stayed some more, another day and still one more in nerve-wracking anticipation.

At the end of August my sister encountered a man coming towards her – and suddenly they recognized one another!!! Father met my sister Aliska on the sidewalk near the hotel. The miracle and the happiness were indescribable to see father and Aliska entering our room. The family was reunited! Father sat me on his knees (as if I still were a little girl) and gave me the present from his journey – the Vollenda camera. It looks like a little black brick and when you press the button on the side, some kind of bellows opens with a number of

lenses, shutters and all kinds of gadgetry. Then I could not ask where he got the present and later, too, I had no chance to talk with him about those times. Nobody can imagine the pride and the happiness I had, getting a present from father only for me – his darling.

Father recuperated and found in himself the strength to begin his life anew and that was admirable. It seems to me that father returned to his former self, enjoying life and his achievements again. Mother, on the other hand, was not able to overcome the loss of her parents and sister, she was chronically depressed but functioned well in day-to-day life. My camera is flawless even today. I used it to shoot pictures on many occasions. It immigrated to Israel with me on board of the "Galila" in 1949. The kibbutz did not confiscate it from me or maybe they did not know about it, because the remainder of the items in my "lift" became the possession of the commune. Among the bunch of my comrades at the Youth Aliyah I became "the photographer" of the group. Moreover, Vollenda served me at all kinds of events, including my time in the "Nahal" unit. When somebody asked me where I got the camera from, I answered proudly: "Father brought it to me from the concentration camps".

Zuzana Růžičková Celebrates her 90th Birthday

Zuzana Růžičková, a survivor of ghetto Theresienstadt, who became a famous cembalo player, was born on January 14, 1927 in Plzeň, then Czechoslovakia. She started playing the piano at age 9 and her teacher, who realized her musical talent, encouraged her to study playing the cembalo. Růžičková intended to continue her studies at a well-established music school in Paris but the German occupation of Czechoslovakia prevented this. In January 1942, she was deported, together with her family to ghetto Theresienstadt. There Růžičková did not abandon her love for music. She received lessons in harmony by the pianist and composer Gideon Klein, who was a ghetto prisoner too.

Růžičková's father died in the ghetto and in December 1943, she was sent with her mother to Auschwitz. She had volunteered to join a transport because she did not want to be separated from her mother. Before her deportation to Auschwitz she copied one of Bach's compositions and took the copy with her. From Auschwitz Růžičková and her mother were deported to Hamburg in Germany. Towards the end of the war they

were brought to Bergen-Belsen. After the war she was accepted at the Academy for Stage Art in Prague, concentrated on playing the cembalo and ancient music. In 1952 she married the composer Viktor Kalabis. She appeared at concerts all over Europe, played with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and recorded works until 2004, when her husband fell ill and she suspended her work to care for him. Today she is active in music organizations dedicated to interpretation and preservation of old music, the discovery of musical talents and she manages the Viktor Kalabis and Zuzana Růžičková Foundation.

We wish her a heartfelt mazal tov, health and happiness.



Zuzana Růžičková – picture from the Internet site: <http://www.jsebestyen.org>



Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck – Spiritual Leader in Ghetto Theresienstadt (1943 – 1945) Dr. Margalit Shlain



On January 28, 1943, rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck, spiritual leader of German Jewry and its official representative to the authorities, was deported from Berlin to ghetto Theresienstadt by order of Adolf Eichmann, together with the heads of the Jewish community that had remained in Germany, Austria and Bohemia-Moravia and also personalities who held key positions in those communities.

Immediately after his arrival, Leo Baeck was added as honorary member to the Council of Elders in the ghetto, as a guest of the council, a position without any competence, representative only. Thanks to his personality and the positions he had filled in the past: chairman of the "National Association of the Jews of Germany", and earlier as president of the "National Representation of the Jews of Germany" and thanks to his central position in organizations in Germany and in the Jewish world, Rabbi Baeck had a special standing in ghetto Theresienstadt where he became a spiritual authority for many.

He demonstrated solidarity with the ghetto prisoners and in spite of his age and position he insisted, at first to be included in the general work roster and for about four months, until his 70th birthday he worked, pushing garbage vehicles.

After that Baeck dedicated himself to social work, mainly for the neglected old people from Germany. At that time he did not hold any official position but he contributed to the camp by his prestige, he strengthened and consoled and gave the prisoners hope at times of crisis.

Spiritual Shepherd

Baeck's most important contribution to life in the ghetto were his sermons and lectures, on topics about the essence of Jewishness and philosophy in general. These encouraged the prisoners and broadened their worldview and brought many assimilated Jews closer to Jewish tradition. "This rabbi brought us our tradition like a present. The bible in the spirit of the Enlightenment". Baeck strengthened their spirit and brought consolation and hope to many in general and in addition to that, he held private meetings with people who approached him, asking for his advice.

As a rabbi, Leo Baeck served as spiritual shepherd of the Jewish prisoners. "When he walked on Saturdays to synagogue, he strode upright, wearing festive clothes, in the Magdeburg barracks, the atmosphere of Shabbat was felt", he participated in communal prayer being held in many places and at all hours.

He treated everyone with respect and tolerance, like for instance the Catholics in the camp who had been deported to Theresienstadt because they were "Jews according to the racial laws". These especially respected him and he was often a guest at their meetings.

Even while having no official position Baeck was an influential partner for many personalities among the Jewish leadership in the ghetto and especially for the Jewish elders Dr. Paul Epstein and rabbi Dr. Benjamin Murelstein.

Baeck's Relationship with Epstein

Baeck knew Epstein well. They had come from Berlin at the same time, the latter to serve as second Jewish Elder in the ghetto. They had worked together between 1933 and 1941 in the "National Representation of the German Jews", and also at the leadership of the "National Association of the Jews in Germany".

Baeck's relationship with Epstein in Theresienstadt was tense. Baeck disagreed on several occasions with Epstein's behavior as Jewish Elder. For example, the long-lasting conflict between him and Dr. Karl Loewenstein, commander of the (Jewish) police and head of the ghetto security services, in the matter of discrimination regarding nutrition of old people in the ghetto. According to Loewenstein, Baeck tended toward his position and disputed Epstein's view on this subject. Preference of food distribution to young people was given by the Council of Elders in ghetto Theresienstadt in the attempt to save the young generation – the nation's future, whereas Epstein supported them because their important work was the basis of the continuing existence of the ghetto. As rabbi and old person, the distress of the miserable old people from Germany was near to Baeck's heart, he found it hard to accept the preferential food rations of the young people at the expense of the old ones, decided on by the ghetto Elders, who were younger than he by a generation. In spite of that, Baeck did not openly criticize Epstein during his stay in the ghetto and also in his conversations after the war.

Facing the German Deceptions

In spring of 1944 Theresienstadt went through an intensive "beautification", coupled with mass transports, in preparation for a visit by a delegation of the International Red Cross, on June 23, 1944.

Leo Baeck marked the day of the visit of the international delegation as one of the most difficult of all during the existence of the ghetto; the bitter disappointment of the Jewish leadership and the Jews in the ghetto caused them by the representatives from abroad, who did not demonstrate even a small effort to find out the truth about Theresienstadt, "this undermined our morale. We felt abandoned and forgotten".

In August 1944 Baeck was forced to take part in a further deception by the German propaganda apparatus, in the "documentary" propaganda film that presents – seemingly authentic and objectively – Theresienstadt as "Jewish Settlement Area". The camp commander Karl Rahm made sure personally that internationally renowned prisoner took part in the film, among them Leo Baeck is seen clearly.

Baek's Relationship with Murrelstein

Toward the end of October 1944 Murrelstein, the acting Jewish Elder, was tasked to reorganize the disarranged ghetto that had lost within one month about two thirds of its population. The Jewish self-administration in ghetto Theresienstadt was reorganized and on December 13, 1944, the German command post appointed a new Council of Elders, headed by Murrelstein, who was now made officially the third Elder of the Jews, representing the Jews of Germany and also head of the Council of Elders and of the Social Department of the Jewish self-administration in the ghetto.

Baek, who in fact managed the Social Department already since autumn 1944, attempted to enlarge the social institutions, to upgrade the food rations and living conditions of old people, most of which hailed from Germany and Austria. This subject Murrelstein and Baek saw eye to eye and cooperated fully to better the situation. On April 16, 1945, a delegation sent by Kurt Becher arrived in the ghetto: Dr. Rudolf Kastner – representative of the JOINT, and Eichmann's men: Hermann Krumei and Otto Hunsche to ensure the safety of the Jewish prisoners in the ghetto. During this visit, Kastner met Leo Baek and asked him to pass on to the ghetto prisoners "that all will be liberated in the near future and that there is no apprehension of the last hours".

Baek Dealing with Information on Annihilation of Jews in the "East" and with Critique of Him

In an interview after the war Baek admitted that already in August 1943, when he was in Theresienstadt, he heard from a Czech engineer named Gruenberg about the existence of gas chambers in Auschwitz. These news supported information received by Baek while he was still in Berlin, about killings of Jews by gas, in the summer of 1941. Baek already then concluded "that the fate of Jews deported to the East was either forced labor or death". Baek hesitated if he should convince Gruenberg to repeat his information to the Council of Elders. He decided to keep the secret for himself and not reveal it to anyone, so it would not become known in the ghetto, quashing the prisoners hope to live.

In May 1945, immediately after liberation, Baek admitted to his acquaintance Heinrich Liebrecht who had been deported to Auschwitz and returned to Theresienstadt – that he knew that those deported from the camp had been sentenced to death, and that he had hesitated if a Jewish resistance should have been organized, which would have brought immediate annihilation or not to do it: "because it could be supposed that they will kill those unfit for heavy labor and those able to work, will be sent to the war industry until they would die from hunger – I knew of this plan of the Gestapo.

At the time I had pangs of conscience if to shorten the torture of those destined for deportation by murder caused by ourselves – or to take the chance that some will survive, even if only a few. In the end I told myself: Even if only one remains alive, it would be

forbidden to sacrifice him".

When Baek learned that some of the deported prisoners had survived, this strengthened his conviction that he had been right in his difficult decision not to tell in the ghetto the truth about annihilation.

Among the prisoners who remained in ghetto Theresienstadt there were some who did not agree with Baek's fateful decision to hide the truth from the prisoners and there were others who agreed with it. But there is no doubt that the decision to hide the information about the fate of the prisoners deported to the "East" from the endangered masses cost Baek a heavy personal price.

Baek's Commitment and Devotion to the Prisoners Liberated from Concentration Camps

From April 20, until May 6, transports arrived in Theresienstadt that included some 13,000 prisoners evacuated from concentration camps, "muselmanns" afflicted with tuberculosis and typhoid fever, whose integration in the ghetto was accompanied by enormous difficulties. The impossibility to separate the great number of arriving prisoners from the old-timers in the ghetto, the lack of medication, medical staff and minimal hygienic conditions caused the spread of typhoid fever among them, which became an epidemic during the last days before liberation and afterwards. With no choice, the newcomers were put up in exceedingly crowded conditions and were actually sentenced to a cruel death.

On May 5, 1945, the Germans left Theresienstadt and Murrelstein resigned from his position as Jewish Elder – Leo Baek replaced him. After liberation the prisoners with typhoid fever demanded to lift the quarantine and to let them join the other prisoners of the camp. Leo Baek entered the hospital barracks and told them that lifting the quarantine would cause mortality among the liberated prisoners and that he had come to stay with them. He was not able to help most of them to return to life, but he came to give them love. In the end they insisted that he leave so as not to be infected.

A special messenger came to the camp and informed Baek that he had permission to immediately leave for England but he refused the offer. He believed that he had to remain with the sick in the camp, who were in need of his consolation, which eased their life; and also to bury the dead honorably.

On June 21, 1945, Baek was driven by the Russians to Prague and then flew to Paris, on July 3, he landed in London, to meet his daughter there.

Rabbi Leo Baek was the spiritual leader and model for the prisoners in Theresienstadt, in the struggle to keep their identity and their Jewishness, he symbolized the victory of cultured men over the German endeavors to deny their humanity – to make them into numbers – into nothing.

Membership Dues for 2017

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