

# Dapei Keshet

Beit Theresienstadt Theresienstadt Martyrs Remembrance Association



“Hehalutz” at Theresienstadt



## IN THIS ISSUE

At Beit Theresienstadt	2	Fredy Hirsch – New dimensions / Dr. Tereza Maizels	11
Yours	3	The Jewish youth movements in Czechoslovakia /	
Beit Theresienstadt news	4-6	Jitka Radkovichov	12
Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony	7-9	"Hehalutz" at Theresienstadt, its impact and	
News from the Educational Center	10	educational activity/Shlomo Schmidt	13-15

**Editors and photography:** Beit Theresienstadt team    **Design:** Studio Orni Drori, Haifa



We wish you  
A Happy Passover

Drawing from a leaflet of Hebrew scouts

The drawing on the front page – from a pamphlet of "Tchelet Lavan"

## To all members and friends of Beit Theresienstadt



This issue of Dapei Keshet, as well as this year's Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony, are devoted to the "Hehalutz" movement in Ghetto Theresienstadt. The movement, which was in fact the product of a merge between several Zionist movements, had a major impact

on how the ghetto conducted itself and formed the initial group of Jewish leaders who subsequently led the policy of caring for the ghetto prisoners. The values that guided its members are not limited by time or place and remain relevant, but maintaining them in the ghetto and attempting to uphold ethical and just values in those circumstances was almost impossible. On the first anniversary of the establishment of Ghetto Theresienstadt, Jacob Edelstein, chairman of the Jewish council in the ghetto (the "Jewish elder"), wrote: "Being a pioneer ("Halutz" in Hebrew) means being not only a worker but rather also the subject of the "Hagshama" (i.e., fulfillment), generating the positive even from within the negative, and creating for the community new foundations for life..."

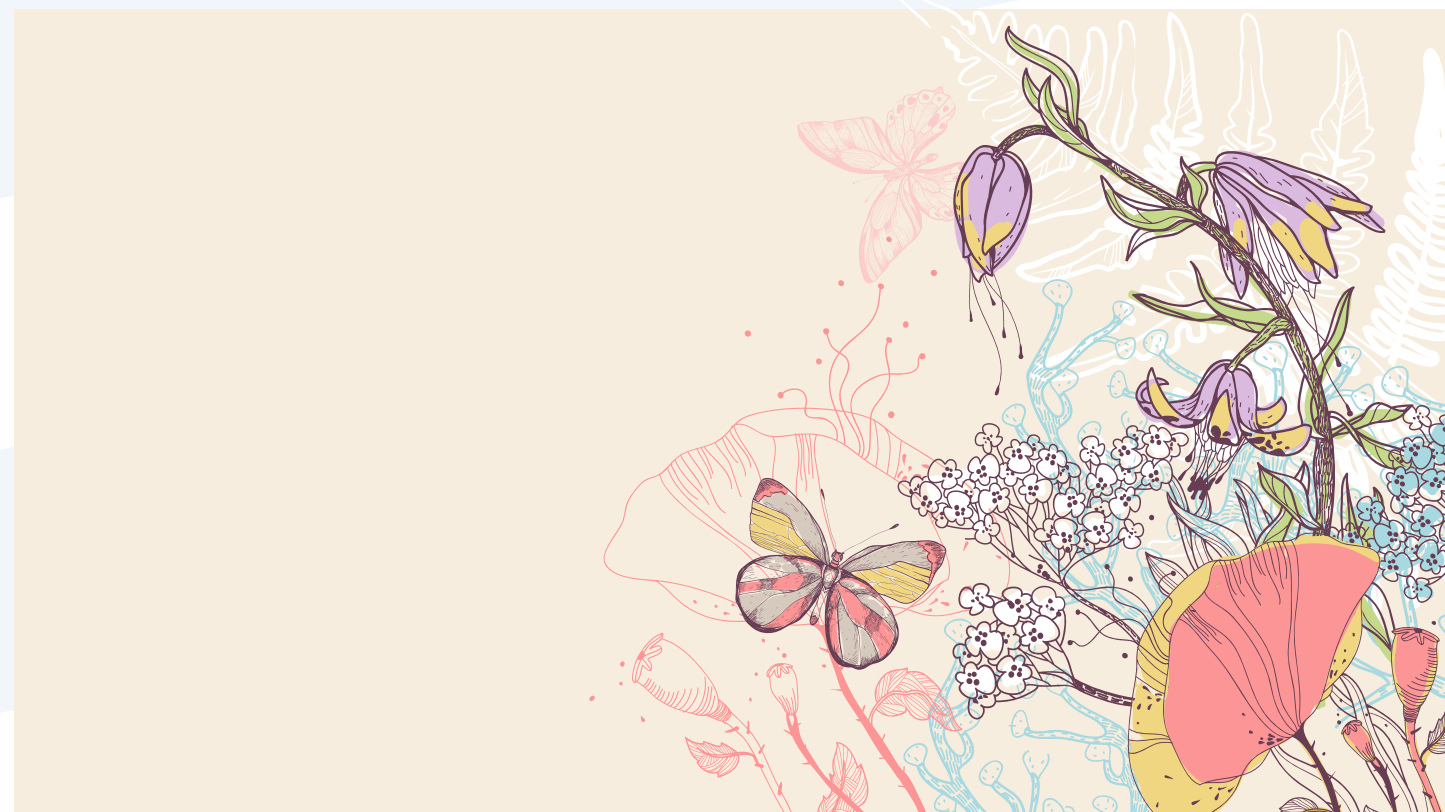
Edelstein and his colleagues are not to be envied. Their responsibility was excruciating, the daily decisions they had to make were tragic and bore harsh consequences, however they did not shirk their role but on the contrary, saw it as a mission. They managed to train people for work so that they could be productive and thus saved their lives, arranged for the education of the children in order to ensure their future

and that of the Jewish people after the war, helped those deported on the transports, the old and the incapacitated. At the same time, looked forward to the future and prepared for the founding of a state for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. Life in the ghetto was a preface for the real thing, for life in Israel. Due to the circumstances, many young people who had not been Zionists before the war were swept along by the ideological fervor, immigrated to Israel, and built their home in the country. The mission of the Hehalutz activists did not end with immigration to Israel. Many members were murdered in Auschwitz and in the various labor camps. Those who survived immigrated to Israel, joined kibbutzim, settled in towns and villages, and contributed to the establishment of the state. Together with the forward gaze, "Hagshama", and creative work, they were also aware of the significance of looking back and remembering those who had not survived. They established Beit Theresienstadt in their memory.

We are living at present in a time of crisis and uncertainty. It is precisely in such a time that the lack of a courageous leadership, one that is committed to its values and true to the public good, as in Ghetto Theresienstadt, is particularly evident...

And with a view to the future – I wish you a happy Passover and an enjoyable spring, good health, and a quick return to routine and to normal life.

**Yours, Tami Kinberg**  
**Director of Beit Theresienstadt**

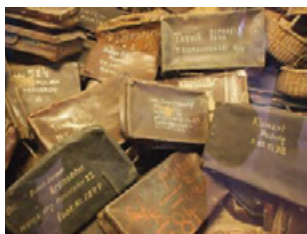




## Online lectures

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Beit Theresienstadt has been holding online lectures every Tuesday for the general public in Israel and abroad. The lectures are on an array of topics related to the story of Ghetto Theresienstadt, the stories of the Jewish communities deported to the ghetto, and more general topics.

The Tuesday lecture series also hosted several survivors who told their touching personal story, including Chana Malka, Zvi Cohen, Poldo, Eva Erben, and Dita Kraus. To date, hundreds of people from all over the world have attended the lectures. Among the lectures held: "Stories told by objects from Auschwitz", "The story of Fredy Hirsch", "Producing theatre in Theresienstadt",



"The Kapo trials in Israel", "The 1945 death marches", and others. Many of the lectures can be viewed on the Beit Theresienstadt website: [www.bterezin.org.il](http://www.bterezin.org.il) ■

## 79 years since establishment of Ghetto Theresienstadt

In November we marked 79 years since establishment of Ghetto Theresienstadt, in a special event on Zoom attended by deputy Czech ambassador to Israel, Ms. Kateřina Moravcová, with music by violin maestro Eyal Shiloach and a launching of the new book by Dr. Anna Hájková, "The last ghetto: An everyday history of Theresienstadt". ■

## Online lectures in English

At present we are continuing with the lecture series in English, in which we are collaborating with various organizations abroad. The English lectures include "In memoriam" – journey following the Lieben family in Prague, "Woman in gold" (Adv. Randy Schoenberg), relating the quest of Maria Altmann to recover the famous painting that had belonged to her aunt and was stolen by the Nazis.

Additional information about the lectures in English can be found on the Beit Theresienstadt website [www.bterezin.org.il](http://www.bterezin.org.il) ■



## Layers of memory – The Kristallnacht pogrom in art, literature, and music – 82 years after the Kristallnacht pogrom

This year, as part of a productive collaboration with the Association of Israelis of Central European Origin, Beit Theresienstadt took a significant part in the series of events marking the Kristallnacht pogrom. The events sponsored by Beit Theresienstadt included a fascinating lecture by Dan Rapoport, "Sounds of fire and hope", a lecture by Dr. Margalit Shlain on "Cultural life in Ghetto Theresienstadt" and a lecture by Ruthie Ofek on the diary of Alisa Ehrmann Shek.

## Conference of the next generations

In October we held a conference of the next generations (second and third generations), presenting the recent activity of Beit Theresienstadt and future projects. This was followed by a discussion between the generations with journalist Tal Bashan and her daughter, actor Carmel Netzer: "What grandma Ruth (Bondy) left us". The conference was held as part of Beit Theresienstadt's goal to draw the next generations closer and to encourage them to be an inseparable part of activities commemorating and remembering the Holocaust. ■

## Intergenerational conference

Despite the COVID-19 year, we decided not to skip the traditional intergenerational conference held annually on Chanukah. This year the conference took place on Zoom. The Chanukah menorah was lit by the descendants of the late Shmuel Bloch, who had accompanied events at Beit Theresienstadt with his accordion and singing. We sang the Chanukah songs together and the menorah lighting was followed by the intimate and moving show “Nevertheless I’m not taking leave” by singer Tal Sondak, in addition to the stories of Marian Miller on the child poet Gábor Erdős, who wrote poems while in hiding from the Nazis. ■



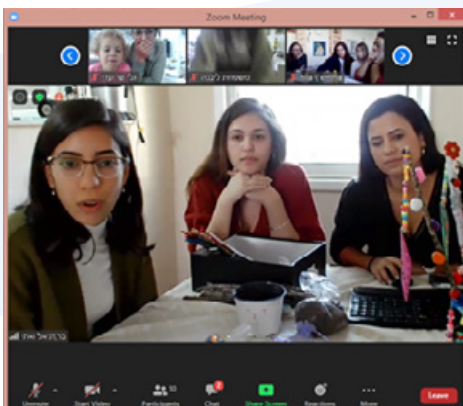
## International Holocaust Memorial Day

To mark International Holocaust Memorial Day, a staged reading of “Opera for Theresienstadt” by Liliane Atlan took place, with actors from Israel, the United States, and France. This was a unique attempt to produce a combined show in three languages, on a virtual stage and forming a simultaneous trans-Atlantic link. The late Liliane Atlan was a French playwright and poetess whose works were devoted to commemorating testimonies of the Holocaust. The play she wrote was produced by the radio station “France culture” in 1989. Atlan wrote about “Opera for Theresienstadt”: “I changed the ceremony on the birth of the Jewish people in order to tell the story of its extermination, so that we can remember and still go on living”.

In a meaningful collaboration with the Emek Hefer Regional Council and the twin district Siegen (Germany), an online testimonial encounter was held with survivor Zvi Cohen, who addressed high school students in Emek Hefer and Siegen. The same evening, a German-Israeli testimonial encounter was held with survivor Chana Malka, who spoke to the Siegen community and residents of Emek Hefer. ■



## Family day: “Growing Roots”



On family day we held an exciting and happy encounter on Zoom between grandparents, parents, grandchildren... first, second, and third generations, with Bar and Danielle, Master’s students in art therapy. The encounter included a bonding creative activity on the topic of family trees, as well as sharing and stories.



## International master classes – “History, Music and Memory”, and the final concert “Violins from the Holocaust”

**Music continues to be played during COVID-19 as well...**

After many efforts and uncertainty that continued until the last moment, the project “International master classes – History, Music and Memory” took place during the Chanukah vacation, in a reduced format and following the instructions of the Ministry of Health. This year, the international master classes were held in collaboration with the Municipal Center for Holocaust Commemoration of the Petach Tikva municipality, headed by Ms. Michal Asher, Mr. Arie Yemini, head of the municipality’s Culture Division and CEO of the Cultural Hall, and with the support of Mifal Hapayis. The moving and special final performance, “Violins from the Holocaust – notes resurrected” was recorded and filmed at the Petach Tikva Cultural Hall and broadcast on social networks.

Watch the concert:



Photo: Gidi Livyatan

The show included works written in Ghetto Theresienstadt, as well as an original piece composed and adapted by pianist and composer Dr. Yuri Brenner, winner of the Prime Minister’s Prize for composition, in a world premiere. The notes adapted by Dr. Brenner were found in a small village near Oswiecim, in a chest that contained notes belonging to the violin orchestra of the Auschwitz death camp. They were brought to Israel by Moti Malachi, former head of the youth delegations to Poland. ■

## Telling the story of my family – workshop for the next generations

The ability to tell a story is not limited to artists and professional storytellers. It is rooted in the basic human need of many people to establish their presence, share meaningful life experiences with others, and examine their narrative, which is obviously also related to one’s parents and family history. Beit Theresienstadt, together with Amcha, built a 6-session workshop for second and third generation survivors interested in telling their family story from the Holocaust period and who wish to learn how to do so in an interesting, moving, exciting, and focused way, while acknowledging the time restriction. The first workshop was concluded about two months ago and was very successful. The next workshop will begin during September. Additional details are available at the Beit Theresienstadt offices.

### **Orna Livneh, one of the workshop participants, writes:**

“During November-December, at the height of COVID-19, I had the privilege of becoming acquainted with and participating in a wonderful group of second and third generation participants who wished to receive training on how to tell their family story from the Holocaust in an interesting, moving, touching, and focused way, but also in a set time frame. We met for six evenings on Zoom, for a workshop orchestrated by Ami Emanuel Tzvieli, who is a psychodrama therapist and instructor, a facilitator of improvised theatre, an emotion-focused therapist at Amcha Netanya, and also a second generation Holocaust survivor.

The group was very heterogeneous, we all came from different places. Some of us came well-prepared, knowing exactly what story they would tell. Others, such as myself, had no idea where they were headed. What I knew was that through the workshop I wished to revive my personal memories and explore my experiences from my parents’ home with regard to their experiences in the Holocaust.

The encounters were held both in a full forum and in private “rooms”, in pairs. The open sharing by the participants, the practical exercises, and the wonderful facilitation by Ami who led us all with great sensitivity, created a virtual space where everyone felt safe and open. Ami gave personal feedback to each participant and equipped us with practical tools. In addition, one evening was devoted to Ghetto Theresienstadt through an encounter with Eileen Hermann-Lahat, who passionately shared with us the journey she had made with her mother, and demonstrated how a personal story can be told in a fascinating and moving way.

Personally, through the workshop I found the motivation to convey my personal experiences to the next generations. I started raising life pictures that symbolize the meaning of life, and I sowed the first seeds of a personal story that will be passed on to the next generations.

I thank Ami and all the participants for the opportunity and for the outstanding experience, and I warmly recommend that Beit Theresienstadt continue this praiseworthy enterprise”. ■



## Torches will be lit in memory of:

### Jacob Edelstein

Jacob Edelstein, Yekef to his friends, was born in Galicia in 1903. In 1915 the family moved to Brno, where Jacob completed his studies. In 1930 he married Miriam neè Oliner; their son Arye was born about one year later. Edelstein joined the Zionist youth movement "Tchelet Lavan" and became a central and influential figure in the movement's leadership and in the management of the "Hehalutz" organization. In time, he was appointed head of the "Palestine office" in Prague. With the rise of the Nazi party to power, he prepared the office to care for the thousands of Jewish refugees who had begun to arrive from Germany. As part of his Zionist worldview he planned to immigrate to Palestine and even visited there twice, in 1937 and 1939, when he also submitted an application for membership in Kibbutz Givat Haim for himself, his wife, and his son. The declining situation in Europe caused Edelstein to postpone his plans for immigration. Until summer 1941, when immigration was completely prohibited, Edelstein operated in different ways to allow as many Jews as possible to immigrate from Czechoslovakia to Palestine. After the Germans instructed that Ghetto Theresienstadt be established, Edelstein, together with other members of the leadership, began to prepare for deportation to the ghetto, which he saw as a type of "temporary shelter" until things calmed down.



In early November 1941 the Germans appointed Edelstein in charge of heading the ghetto's intended Jewish Council. Edelstein asked members of the Zionist youth to show an example to the rest of the Jews and take an active part in establishing the "Jewish town" in Theresienstadt. However all hopes were dashed, and upon reaching the ghetto Edelstein and his staff were shocked. The residential conditions, the lack of food, and the many transports that arrived forced the leadership to search for solutions and ways of dealing with the harsh life circumstances in the ghetto. In November 1943, after the daily lists of workers were found deficient, Edelstein and three workers in the ghetto's records office were arrested. Edelstein was deported to Auschwitz and imprisoned in solitary confinement in Block 11 of the main camp. In June 1944 Edelstein was sentenced to death. His wife, son, and mother in law were brought from the family camp in Birkenau and shot before his eyes. Then Edelstein too was shot dead. ■

### Dr. Edith Orenstein

Edith Orenstein was born in 1913 in the Sudetenland. Edith, known to her friends as Dittl, studied in the German Gymnasium and was a member of the Zionist youth movement "Tchelet Lavan". Upon completing her high school studies she moved to Prague where she studied law. From 1937-1939 she served as a judge, one of three women in the country to hold this post.



In Prague Dittl was active in the "Hehalutz" movement and in the socialist Zionist party, where she met Jacob Edelstein. In the late 1930s she received an offer to immigrate to Palestine, but chose to remain with her friends and share the responsibilities.

Dittl was deported to Ghetto Theresienstadt on December 4, 1941, together with the "staff" group. In the ghetto she was appointed head of the women's labor service. A year after the ghetto was established, the workers of the Labor Center prepared a gift for Jacob Edelstein, an album of drawings describing the formation of the Labor Center at the ghetto. The album survived thanks to Dittl's ingenuity; she hid it under her mattress and in 1985 donated it to the Beit Theresienstadt archives. In early 1944 Dittl prepared a document on the state of women's labor in the ghetto, where she expressed her belief that women's work in the ghetto would help change their status and give them more influence on everyday life. Dittl believed that the women should work not only for their family but also for the benefit of society as a whole.

Dittl remained in the ghetto until its liberation in May 1945. After returning to Prague she wrote her memoirs. Subsequently, she was involved in organizing the legal and illegal immigration to Palestine, and in 1946 she too immigrated and started a family. Edith Orenstein Zinger-Roff was a pioneer all her life, always willing to assume responsibility and to take on any challenge. In August 2003, at the age of 90, Dittl passed away in England, where her daughter Daniella still lives. ■

## Torches will be lit in memory of:

### Egon Redlich

**E**gon Redlich, known as Gonda to his friends, was born in October 1916 in the town of Olomouc. In his youth, he joined the Zionist youth movement "Maccabi Hatzair" and rapidly advanced through the ranks: counselor, head of group, and head of region. He served as assistant principal in the Youth Aliya school in Prague and as a teacher of Hebrew and of Jewish history. After the decision was made to establish Ghetto Theresienstadt, Gonda volunteered to leave on the staff transport that reached the ghetto on December 4, 1941. In the ghetto, he was appointed head of the Youth Department. Together with his assistant Fredy Hirsch and the counselors, they opened the children's residences in the ghetto and gave the children a positive educational and life setting filled with content and a relatively safe and protected environment in the ghetto reality.



In the ghetto Gonda wrote a diary where he described everyday life in the ghetto and the difficulties and dilemmas encountered by the educators. The diary was written in Hebrew, and on Saturdays in Czech. Learning Hebrew was extremely important for him. Even when imprisoned behind the ghetto walls he continued to dream of immigrating to Palestine and becoming part of the society emerging there. In September 1942 Gonda married Gertrude Beck and in March 1944 their son, Dan Petr, was born. After the birth of his son Egon began to write another diary, which he called "Dan's beginnings". In the diary Gonda expressed his hope that they will manage to survive the war. However in October 1944 Egon, his wife, and Dan the baby were sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, where they were killed. Gonda ends his diary with these words: *"What will happen? Tomorrow we shall leave, my son, we shall leave on the transport like many thousands before us... Tomorrow we too will go, my son, may the time of our redemption be near"*. In 1967 the diary was found in the attic where it was hidden by Gonda. ■

### Sonya Okun

**R**osalie Sonya Okun was born in 1899 in Minsk. When Sonya was 24 years old she moved to Berlin, where she was active in contemporary theatre and cinema circles.



After the rise of the Nazi party, Sonya began to work in the Youth Aliya enterprise, wherein efforts were made to bring Jewish youth from Europe to Palestine in order to realize the pioneer and Zionist vision of building the nation and the land. Until her deportation to Ghetto Theresienstadt, Okun was active in the "Hehalutz" organization and in the Reich Association of German Jews, where she became very friendly with Dr. Paul Epstein, who in time was appointed the second Jewish elder in the ghetto. In January 1943 Sonya was deported to Ghetto Theresienstadt. In the ghetto, she began working in education and welfare. She taught literature and history to high schoolers and saw her mission as preparing the young people for a life of cultural, social, and ethical meaning. Aside from her concern for the young, Sonya also sought to help the elderly in the ghetto. Together with a friend from Vienna, she initiated the "Helping Hand" enterprise, an idea that was promptly embraced by the youth movements in the ghetto.

On Adar 11, 5703, February 16, 1943, Memorial Day for Yosef Trumpeldor, the "Helping Hand" enterprise began its operations. The teens were divided into groups of five, and each group was appointed a group head who worked with the Center, headed by Okun: *"Day and night Sonya made her rounds among the needy elderly and instructed the counselors on where their help was most urgently needed"*. On October 28, 1944, Sonya was sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, where she was killed.

In 2013 a stumbling stone was erected in her memory near her former home in Berlin. Trude Simonsohn, who shared a room with Okun in Theresienstadt, quoted her: *"It does not matter how long you live, what matters is the intensity of your life. I lived very intensely, and for that I am grateful"*. ■



## Torches will be lit in memory of:

### Liza (Elisheva) Gidron (née Komerman)

Liza was born in Vienna in 1920. When she was 6 years old the family moved to Czechoslovakia. During her studies at the Gymnasium Liza was exposed to the ideas of Zionism and the Hebrew language and she joined the "Tchelet Lavan" Zionist youth movement. In the movement she engaged in guidance and education as well as training youth for immigration to Palestine. Liza waited for an immigration permit and studied agriculture as part of her training.



In September 1942 Liza was deported to Ghetto Theresienstadt. At first she worked in maintenance and in caring for the lodgings of the elderly, and then she began to work in the Youth Department. For two years she served as a counselor in the L-414 home. The educational activity was held in a Jewish-Zionist spirit and included, among other things, Jewish literature and history, celebrating the festivals, learning Hebrew, and imparting the movement's values of mutual assistance and helping others.

In early October 1944 she was sent on a transport to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, from where she was transferred to a labor camp in Silesia and liberated on May 8, 1945. Three months after the war ended, Liza married Jackie Wurzel in Prague. When Jackie died of typhus in early 1946 Liza immigrated to Palestine and arrived at Kibbutz Givat Haim. As instructed by Yehuda Reznichenko (Erez), she wrote the first book published in Hebrew about Ghetto Theresienstadt, together with her friend from the movement Hanka Hoffmann (née Fischel). The two wrote in the book:

*"...First of all we wish to describe the environment where we ourselves lived, and to illuminate in particular the work of Hehalutz and the youth education in which we took part... we thought that in the given circumstances we did everything possible that could have had lasting value for the future".*

In 1950 Liza married Reuven Gidron, with whom she lived in Kibbutz Neot Mordechai, where she assumed the role of educator of the first youth group to reach the kibbutz with Youth Aliya from Morocco. In 1963 the family moved to Kibbutz Sde Nechemiah, where she ran the kibbutz gardens, and at the same time she developed and managed the children's library. Liza had three boys and eight grandchildren. In 2017, at the age of 97, Liza passed away after a long life.

### Aron Menczer

Aron Menczer was born in Vienna in 1917, the fourth of six siblings. In his youth he joined the Zionist youth movement "Gordonia", where he found inspiration and an intellectual challenge. In 1932 his family immigrated to Palestine and Aron remained in Vienna and continued his activities as counselor in the youth movement.



In courtesy of GFH

After the annexation of Austria in March 1938, Aron coordinated the activities of the Zionist youth movements and turned the Youth Aliya school into a center for education and social life for those children and youth who had remained in Vienna.

In 1938 he wrote about the Youth Aliya enterprise:

*"The main goal of this organization was to transform the Jewish child before immigration into a young man who works gladly and thinks consciously as a Jew. The mission was to clarify to all youth... that they are the generation that bears on its shoulders the future of an ancient people, and that they are charged by historical destiny with roles that require courage, knowledge, adherence to the goal, and particularly unwavering faith..."*

Aron gave the children and teens the feeling that they are entitled to be young and unconcerned, and strengthened their desire to maintain their dignity as human beings. In February 1939 Aron accompanied a Viennese group of Youth Aliya to Palestine. When in the country, he visited his former protégés on different kibbutzim and met his parents and siblings in Haifa. Aron, who had a permit, refused to remain in the country despite the pleas of his family and said: "So long as there are Jewish children in Vienna, my place is with them". On September 24, 1942, Aron was deported to Ghetto Theresienstadt. A short time after his arrival he began working at the Youth Department. In August 1943 a group of approximately 1,200 children from Bialystok, Poland, arrived in the ghetto. Aron volunteered to take care of the children, who were held in isolation outside the ghetto walls. In October 1943 he was deported with them to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, where he was killed. A memorial monument commemorating his actions and memory was erected in 2011 facing the Youth Aliya home on Marc Aurel Strasse 5 in Vienna. ■

## News from the Educational Center

The COVID-19 pandemic, including the closing of the educational system and the transition to online studies via Zoom from home, required the Educational Center as well to create new educational programs suited for learning on Zoom. Several months of work culminated in the development of the educational program “We lived an imaginary life”.

The educational activity presented an interactive timeline that includes photographs and films and presents major events, beginning from the rise of the Nazi party in Germany and until the establishment of Ghetto Theresienstadt. After presenting the story of the ghetto, the students worked with online worksheets, following the story of the ghetto survivors. In the

final part of the activity the students “visited” a virtual exhibition established and designed for the purpose of the educational activity. The exhibition addresses 4 topics: the children’s buildings, cultural life in the ghetto, documenting life in the ghetto through drawings and diaries, and sports in the ghetto.

Over the last months, the guides at the Educational Center provided instruction to students of varied ages at many schools: 5th-6th grades, junior high schools, and high schools. The activity met with a great deal of success and made it possible to present and teach the story of the ghetto in schools that even in normal times are unable to come and visit Beit Theresienstadt due to the physical distance (Beer Sheva, Nesher, etc.) ■



View from the entrance of the virtual exhibition of Beit Theresienstadt, built by the Educational Centre

## Fredy Hirsch – New dimensions / Dr. Tereza Maizels

We recently marked 105 years since the birth of Alfred Hirsch. He was an athlete, member of the Zionist movement, counselor, and educator who left a significant imprint in his actions before World War II, while at Ghetto Theresienstadt, and at the family camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The Beit Theresienstadt archives contain several sketches for preparing paper marionettes for the puppet theatre, as well as relief prints prepared using a linoleum carving technique, all made by Hirsch. Georg Lauscher, who brought the items to the archives, wrote: "...I taught a course in handiwork to a group of counselors that included Fredy Hirsch, Heinie Klein, Otto Lederer, and others. Fredy was very skilled and his motif was the nicest. I showed them also how to make a shadow theatre and Fredy prepared several good sketches for Erich Kästner's book, "The 35th of May". That was at the end of 1939 - early 1940, so it was before the transports". The shadow theatre accompanied Fredy from Prague to Ghetto Theresienstadt. There, in children's building L218, Fredy engaged in this art and also taught the children, who made the puppets themselves. This activity had not only an aesthetic-artistic dimension but rather also a technical dimension, as the puppets had a motion mechanism.



Drawing for a silhouette of Negro Kaballo, a character from Kästner's book, "The 35th of May".

Thus, in spring 1943, the ghetto prisoners could enjoy a Purim play. The improvised stage, made of a spotlight sheet, portrayed more than only the "big miracle" that had happened to the Jewish people in Persia; the link between the fate of Haman the Wicked and Adolf Hitler was inevitable. In addition, also political plays such as "Pompeius speaks above Caesar's body" were staged, with the text adapted from the Latin by Irma Lauscher. Fredy's protégés shared in their memoirs details about the cultural-artistic dimension of his personality. Hans Gaertner related that, in addition to athletic activities, Hirsch also held "various meetings and gatherings, discussions and balls" at the "Hagibor" playground in Prague. Avi Langer

describes the camp at Bazrabý under Hirsch's leadership: "The best were the evenings. We lit bonfires and learned all kinds of Hebrew songs". Tomash Pantel related that a military car once arrived at the camp by mistake, because the Germans thought that it was a Hitlerjugend camp. That evening "Fredy entertained us with a detective story that he had made up. I still remember that the detective was named Kloten". According to Zuzana Ruzickova, at Ghetto Theresienstadt as well Hirsch devoted some of his time and energy to organizing cultural activities: "Every Friday night he sang songs with the children and played the recorder. He introduced the children to German literature. He read them Rilke's songs to the light of a candle and rehearsed with them parts of "Jeremiah", a drama by Stefan Zweig".



A character from Kästner's book, "The 35th of May".

When pondering Fredy's personality, the word that comes to mind is "Kalokagathia", which reflects an ancient Greek ideal of harmony and balance between body and soul. Since the 19th century, this term was used mainly in the field of sports and physical education, among other things as a major component of the modern concept underlying the Olympic games. Moreover, this ideal can be seen in contemporary Scouting activities, as the link between physical beauty, integrity, and fairness. When remembering a person's deeds, we tend to do so with regard to one dimension. This information on Fredy Hirsch can enhance our desire to investigate the multi-layer complexity of the human soul. ■



Linoleum cutting: "Sitting around the fire"



## The Jewish youth movements in Czechoslovakia

Jitka Radkovichov

“If you ever need a helping hand you can find it at the end of your arm” – with this slogan I began several years ago to explore the activity of different groups that belonged to Jewish Zionist youth movements during the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938). These were groups whose definition included the word “Scouts” – in their founding documents or in the movement’s laws. In time I understood that this was probably the motto of all Zionist youth until their bitter end.



A group of Hashomer Kadima at a camp in Vyhne (1927)

Aside from several exceptions, the unique Zionist youth organizations, which included Tchelet Lavan, Hashomer Kadima, Hashomer Hatzair, Maccabi Hatzair, Bnei Akiva, Brit Trumpeldor, Brit Metzada, the Jewish Junàk – Scouts (Junàk is the Czech Scouts organization established in 1911), Hanoar Hatzioni, El Al, and Hatzofe, joined the two largest organizations, the Czechoslovak Junàk – Scouts Association and the Federation of Czechoslovak Scouts. Tchelet Lavan objected to the military nature of Scouting activities under Baden-Powell, founder of the World Scouting Movement, and in 1924 they joined the more left-wing Federation of Czechoslovak Scouts. Hashomer Kadima and then Hashomer Hatzair, in contrast, joined the Czechoslovak Junàk – Scouts Association in 1926. This association was also joined by Brit Trumpeldor in 1931, Brit Metzada a short while later, and Bnei Akiva in 1932. Hanoar Hatzioni was already a member of the association. Maccabi Hatzair, apparently due to pressures from their surroundings, joined the association only in June 1938.

Inspired by Herzl’s ideology, all the Zionist youth movements gave first priority to the immigration of their members to Palestine, and their agenda was determined accordingly. The Scouting activities were considered a means of realizing their goals, in the belief that the primary duty of Zionists is to immigrate to Palestine and to take part in establishing a state in which Jews would not be considered inferior human beings. For this reason, activities included learning Hebrew, Jewish history, and geography of Palestine, as well as activities in support of various Zionist projects. The external marks of the movements included designated uniforms, badges, as well as slogans, greetings, and anthems.

For example, members of Maccabi Hatzair would greet each other with the salute “Hazak Vehagshem” (i.e., be strong and fulfill) and their anthem was “Kadima Maccabi” (forward Maccabi). Other movements used the phrase “Hazak Ve’ematz” (be strong and brave). Members of Brit Trumpeldor greeted each other with “Tel Hai”, to remind themselves of the movement’s role model and ideological leader, Joseph Trumpeldor. Their anthem was the “Beitar song”. Most Zionist youth also recognized the song “Techezakna” (i.e., be strong, also known as “Birkat Ha’am”,

greeting of the people, by Bialik) as their anthem. The different movements often sung “Hatikva”, which subsequently became the anthem of the State of Israel. The salute that accompanied the greeting by movement members consisted of raising the right hand with the thumb supporting the pinky, symbolizing support for the weak. The pinky represented the weak. The three

middle fingers pointing upwards meant the three pillars of Judaism: people, state, and language. This differed from the Scouts salute, where the thumb does not support the pinky rather hides it, meaning protecting the weak rather than supporting them. The three lifted fingers represent the three elements in the Scouts vow and the three principles of the Scouts (duty to God, duty to others, and duty to self). The color of the Scouts uniform was usually blue; each group chose a different shade. Members of Maccabi Hatzair and Brit Trumpeldor wore dark brown shirts symbolizing the earth of Israel. After World War II this changed, as the color resembled Mussolini’s brown shirts.

Due to the condition of Czechoslovakia’s Jews in the late 1930s following the German occupation, the Zionist idea acquired a central place in the youth movements. After World War II the movements attempted to renew their activities following a period in which they had been almost completely obliterated, but not all of them managed to do so. Hashomer Hatzair gathered its forces and opened a branch under the Jewish Scouts in Bratislava, and Maccabi Hatzair, Tchelet Lavan, Brit Trumpeldor, and Bnei Akiva also managed to renew their activities. Jewish youth sought once again to join the Scouts association. In fall 1945 a meeting was held in the presence of President Edvard Beneš, which included discussions on the future of the Scouts movements. The meeting was also attended by a delegation from Hashomer Hatzair. Their question concerning the renewal of the Jewish Scouts movement received a surprising answer – renewal of the religious Scouts associations, including Jewish organizations, was not anticipated. All Scouts organizations were to operate under the Junàk association. Representatives of Hashomer Hatzair considered this decision discriminatory and this put an end to their attempts to unite with the Czech Junàk organization.

From 1945–1949 most members realized their vision and immigrated to Palestine/Israel, with a consequent decrease in the activity of Jewish organizations in Czechoslovakia. After the rise of the communists the activities of the youth movements were further reduced until they were forbidden completely. In the ideology of the communist regime, Scouting was a bourgeois tradition. Jewish Scouting was considered “Zionist”, which made it even more problematic, and as a result Jewish youth movements terminated their official activities completely until 2016. ■

## "Hehalutz" at Theresienstadt, its impact and educational activity/Shlomo Schmidt

(Based on an article published by Yad VaShem, 1967)

On the overcast day when Hitler's forces occupied Czechoslovakia, on March 15, 1939, a meeting of several local Zionist leaders took place in Prague, at the home of Dr. Franz Kahn, old-time secretary of the Czechoslovak Zionist Federation, in order to discuss how the movement should proceed in the new circumstances. They saw before them two main options. Some thought that it was necessary to try and save as many of the movement's leaders and members as possible by their immigration to Palestine or even to other countries so long as this is possible - while others, including the head of the Palestine office in Prague, Jacob Edelstein, objected to this act of "flight" and demanded that they remain and partake in the same fate as the rest of the Jews. "For years we claimed", they said, "that we are the responsible and true leaders of the Jewish people - now, at the critical moment when they need us, we must not abandon Czech Jews. We should stand at the forefront". To a large extent by virtue of Edelstein's personality, this second opinion was accepted. He himself expressed his views in a letter to his closest friends on the first anniversary of establishing the ghetto in Theresienstadt: "Was it right of me to take my best friends and draw them into the chaos and calamity?... Our pioneering worldview taught us to always be where the fate of the Jewish people becomes tragic but at the same time takes on a new form. Who but us will stand firm in the time of the hardest torments and of the gravest fateful decisions?... Being a pioneer means being not only an actor but rather also the subject of the "Hagshama" (i.e., fulfillment), generating the positive even from within the negative, and creating for the community new foundations for life..."

At first the Germans encouraged the Jews to emigrate, and nearly 26,000 people managed to leave the protectorate in time. In summer 1940 the Gestapo forbade all activity of the Zionist institutions and organizations in the Czech Republic and Moravia, and from then on the Prague community was only authorized to manage the matters of the Jews in the protectorate. The work was carried out mainly by Zionist activists. These saw themselves committed to the decision of their leadership and did not take advantage of the immigration options at their disposal. Nevertheless, many efforts were made to enable the immigration of as many Jews as possible, and several hundred teens and children in particular were sent to Palestine through Youth Aliya. But most of the protectorate's Jews did not manage to flee in time and they did their best to adjust to life in the new circumstances and to hold on in the conditions formed. Edelstein and his friends hoped that if they managed to place as many Jews as possible in productive jobs they could halt and delay their deportation to the camps in Poland; they hoped that Czech Jewry, or at least a large part of it, would be released at the end of the war and saved from annihilation. This belief and this premise were the foundation of the Zionist policy. As early as fall 1939, Edelstein had the opportunity to become familiar with the camp in Nisko, to which nearly 1,300 Jewish men from northern Moravia

were deported, as well as with the Lodz Ghetto, and he reached the conclusion that the deportation of Jews to Eastern Europe meant certain death. The Jewish community in Prague opened courses for vocational training and these



were attended by many young Jews. Due to the separation of Slovakia in March 1939, the Czech Republic and Moravia suffered a grave shortage of agricultural workers, which made it possible to organize groups of pioneers in Czech farms who underwent a type of "training" (Hachshara). The pioneers worked on these farms in small groups for 10 to 12 hours a day, in tough conditions. In order to stimulate them to work even harder, some of the farmers threatened to hand the workers over to the Gestapo. A short time after the Germans decided to completely forbid all Jewish immigration, they began to deport the Jews from the protectorate as well, and in October-November 1941, 6,000 Jews from Prague and Brno were deported to the Lodz Ghetto and the Minsk Ghetto. The Jews were terrified. This was the pervasive atmosphere when the idea of establishing a ghetto for the Jews of the Czech Republic and Moravia in the north-western town of Theresienstadt, about 60 km from Prague, was first raised. Jacob Edelstein and his colleagues knew that the possibility of an outright revolt or even an organized escape to beyond the borders of the Reich was untenable. He demanded that the young Zionists and pioneers show an example to the rest of the Jews and take an active part in establishing the "Jewish town" in Theresienstadt, which he saw as a type of "temporary shelter" until things calmed down. In his conversations with the heads of the Gestapo, Edelstein stressed once again the labor that could be provided by Jews from the protectorate, from whom the Germans could reap benefit only if they were concentrated in Czech territory, near the lines of supply and the center of the Reich. The Zionist leaders thought that by leaving the Jews of the protectorate within the boundaries of their homeland they would also be closer to the neutral countries and institutions such as the international Red Cross, than in distant and isolated Poland. The first work group intended to build the camp was comprised mostly of members of pioneer movements; it left for Theresienstadt on November 24, 1941. Several days later it was joined by Jacob Edelstein and some of his close assistants.

Some of the young people in Theresienstadt belonged to Zionist youth movements and some ("those from the periphery") became attracted to Zionism; others tended towards different ideas and particularly the left-wing parties and Communism. But most of the young Czechs in the ghetto were from assimilated Jewish families (and many also from mixed marriages) and their attitude towards Zionism and Judaism was one of apathy and even resistance. To the young Zionists in the ghetto Jacob Edelstein, who was friendly and well-liked, pleasant and smart, a strong narrator

and a brave fighter for the public good, was someone to be admired. After his first period as the “Jewish elder” (Judenälteste) he won almost general acclaim – even by those who had at first treated him and his colleagues in the ghetto’s “Jewish Council” with suspicion.

The “Jewish Council” saw its main role as preventing panic and maintaining a certain moral level and integrity in the ghetto, as well as ensuring minimal living conditions for all prisoners. Among Jacob Edelstein’s main assistants were Otto Zucker, Franz Kahn, Heinz Schuster, Leo Yanowitz, Walter Wiener, and other Zionist activists and heads of “Hehalutz”, and they recruited members of the movement, first and foremost young pioneers, to fulfill essential roles in the ghetto. In their efforts to save the youth, the nation’s most precious asset, they did their utmost to prevent their deportation to the east. This was done by employing them in services that were vital for the ghetto, which constituted relative protection from inclusion in the transports.

The grave problems and great challenges required a strong movement. The pioneer movement at Theresienstadt, with all the groups it encompassed, united and established underground work and study cells. From this point on the ideological goal and also the purpose of Zionist education in the ghetto was the kibbutz form of working settlements. Members of “Hehalutz” who occupied key positions in the ghetto, including those who had engaged in youth education as civilians previously as well, now organized youth activities and set the framework and form of studies at Theresienstadt. In November 1942 the first convention of the united “Hehalutz” was held in the ghetto, attended by about 500 members. The convention approved the unification of the groups and elected a Council and a Center; according to the movement’s principles only members who performed physical work were elected to its institutions – and not those who managed the various departments of the “Jewish Council” in practice. Committees were chosen as well: Hebrew culture, education, “storeroom” (assistance, mainly food, for sick members), and self-defense. All the members agreed to subject themselves to the authority of the movement and could change their place of work or residence only after a discussion in the Center and once its approval had been received.

In Spring 1943 “Hehalutz” held a “Census day” (instead of a shekel coin, each paid 40 grams of sugar to the storeroom), in which 1,000 members were counted, including many who originated from the protectorate and also from Germany and Austria. As early as fall 1942, large residences for pioneers were established (in halls no. 53 and 75 of the “Sudeten” barracks), as well as smaller residences in several apartment blocks. The pioneers lived there in small food cooperatives (“communes”) of 10 to 20 boys or girls of similar social or religious outlooks. The second convention of “Hehalutz” at Theresienstadt was held in August 1944 and it confirmed, not without stormy



Children in the Ghetto at the “Brundibar” performance

arguments, the main goals of the Zionist-pioneer movement in the ghetto: education aimed at a collective life, general-humane and Jewish-national values, and socialist Zionism; studies in the spirit of “a block in support of the laborers in the Land of Israel”. A strong argument was also waged on the current question of whether to allow members of “Hehalutz” to volunteer for the transports and join their parents headed for Auschwitz (at the time we didn’t yet know the full meaning of these

transports!) or insist that they continue their work at the ghetto for the public good. Finally, a decision was reached to leave it to the discretion of each member. The convention chose a new Center (Grete Karval, Yenda Kaufman, Heinz Schuster, and Anti Foyer) and a 28-member council.

The special treatment of children was instituted by the “Jewish Council” upon the arrival of the first inmates of the ghetto in December 1941, however the youth buildings were only erected in summer 1942 (when the last Czech residents were evacuated from Theresienstadt). Their placement in these buildings granted the children better housing and food conditions, which made it easier to protect them from the negative impact of life in the ghetto. Three nursery schools were founded: Czech, German, and Hebrew. These and the youth buildings were attended on a daytime basis also by children who lived with their parents.

The first youth building was opened in the former school building of Theresienstadt, and it contained 350 children. Many other children who lived with their parents also attended school there, and the total number of children reached 700 at times. They were divided into rooms of 15 to 40 boys or girls, and each group had a counselor and one or two aides.

The Czech girls’ building, founded a short while later, served mainly girls from assimilated families and mixed marriages, and the duties of the Zionist counselors in this building were challenging. A third large building was intended for apprentices and it housed, in three “blocks”, boys over 14 who were required to work. This building contained about 600 boys; their leaders and counselors were members of “Hehalutz”. Although the boys only returned to the building in the evening after a long day at work, it became the site of a lively cultural scene. The rooms housed seminars and classes, lectures and artistic and athletic competitions, exhibitions that revealed special skills, and so on. Aside from these, there were also smaller youth buildings.

With the arrival of transports from Austria and Germany, a building for German speaking children was also established, managed solely by “Hehalutz”. These children were mostly the children of those disabled in the wars or other “prominents”, who had been sent to the imaginary recuperation site “Theresienbad”. Over time the number of children in this building reached 500 (aged 10 to 16) – a living space of about one square meter for each child! The adult pioneers too maintained a lively cultural life through study classes, ideological classes, and others, as well as Friday



nights, balls, parties, Seder night and Chanukah celebrations, and so on. Activities for "spending leisure time" (Freizeitgestaltung), in which Franz Kahn was active, included the establishment of a choir of pioneers, and they also put on several amateur plays: "The Golden Chain" by I.L. Peretz, "On the Way", and also "Tevye the milkman in Theresienstadt and his immigration to Israel".

One important activity unique to "Hehalutz" in Theresienstadt was teaching Hebrew; it was the center of the Zionist educational enterprise in the ghetto and it also constituted one important means of Jewish education. Activities for the dissemination of Hebrew were run by Jackie Wurzel, together with older Hebrew intellectuals – Professors Kestenbaum (of Vienna) and Vaskin-Naharatavi, as well as others. A "language committee" was established, with many classes for beginners and for the more advanced. Hebrew plays and celebrations were held and a Hebrew library was opened, which in time grew to large dimensions with the German decision to transfer to Theresienstadt Jewish libraries from the entire Reich.

The Hebrew nursery school was one of the best schools in the ghetto. It was run by a teacher who had acquired much experience in this field in Palestine, and attended by up to 70 children. It did not take long for the children to begin speaking Hebrew with each other, and Hebrew songs could be heard in the streets of the ghetto!

School-aged children studied Hebrew in special classrooms; this arrangement was customary in all the youth buildings, despite the objection of several assimilated teachers.

In the summer of 1943 a "Hebrew Gar'in (group)" of "Hehalutz" members was established for those with advanced knowledge of the language who expressed willingness to teach others. The Gar'in numbered some 35 members and it subsequently merged with the "Hebrew circle" for the elderly. Hebrew activities reached their pinnacle in Chanukah 1943, in the "Hebrew week". Each evening that Chanukah, large public programs were held in the ghetto in Hebrew, as well as competitions for the best Hebrew wall newspaper. On the last night of Chanukah a large ball was held, where the most advanced members were awarded a special certificate and the badge "Ayin". Those bearing the badge made a commitment to speak only Hebrew to each other! Occasionally intermediate exams were held and those who passed them attained a higher rank until receiving the longed-for "Ayin".

With the aim of easing the suffering of old and sick prisoners, as well as for the purpose of teaching values of mutual assistance and giving content and meaning to the Scouting slogans, the "Hehalutz" management in the ghetto organized aid enterprises carried out by the youth. In the "Helping Hand" enterprise the children operated in groups called Edot, each consisting of five boys and girls and a leader. The Edot joined to form departments, and the head of the department was the building counselor. This entire enterprise was orchestrated by a member of "Hehalutz" from Germany, Sonja Okun, and supported by the ghetto management's departments for social aid and aid for the elderly. The enterprise began with a large census in March 1943. The more difficult roles, such as thorough cleaning of an entire block

of buildings that contained housing for the elderly and disabled, was performed by the departments, and the small ones by the Edah groups and individuals.

These "small" roles included: standing in line for food or "buying" products at the ghetto's fictitious shops; collecting remains of soup at the youth buildings and kitchens, for distribution to the elderly who were always hungry; laundering their dirty underwear; mending by knitting and sewing; preparing

small bookcases in their rooms, and more. At first, the elderly treated these young people suspiciously and even threw them out because they could not imagine that they truly wished to help. But then, when they understood that the children had not cheated them in the distribution of food products or come to steal their possessions, they accepted their help gratefully.

The "Hehalutz" self-defense organization at Theresienstadt was established in the fall of 1942. Its members, who had a military background, were placed in key jobs: in the electricity and water enterprises, in transport and in the storehouses; in these places they prepared themselves and made plans to prevent the German guards from entering the ghetto in times of danger. "Hehalutz" had about 200 members in this organization and they formed contact with a similar group from the ghetto's communist underground, which numbered some 100 people. Contact was also formed with a group of Czech partisans on the outside. Attempts to provide members of the "defense" with weapons as well did not succeed. A "central station" was arranged in the basement of building 303, where a clandestine radio was also installed; they listened to the news regularly and passed items on to the ghetto. When the SS became suspicious the "station" had to be eliminated. In 1944, when it was already clear that the war was nearing its end and there was a concern that all the remaining prisoners in the ghetto might be exterminated, a plan was formed together with Czech policemen to storm the German headquarters at Theresienstadt. Important documents were also stolen from the archives that the Germans had transferred at that time from Berlin to protect them from air raids. However the plan to storm the headquarters was not carried out, since most of the young people were deported in the fall of 1944.

In the last transports from Theresienstadt many thousands of young people were deported to Auschwitz, in late September and October 1944. Following Himmler's order, the gas chambers at Auschwitz stopped operating in early November – if this order had been given earlier or if the last transports from Theresienstadt had been delayed for several weeks, a prime group of Jewish youth would have been spared, and the "dreamers of the ghetto" would have revealed themselves as true politicians, wise people who had foreseen the future. ■



# Events for Holocaust Memorial Day

Beit Theresienstadt invites you  
to participate in a series of events ( in Hebrew):

Thursday, April 8, 2021, 10 am

Online ceremony to mark  
Holocaust Memorial Day

## "HEHALUTZ" IN THERESIENSTADT

Attended by:  
Ambassador of Germany, Ambassador of the Czech  
Republic, and Ambassador of Slovakia

The ceremony will be broadcast live on Beit  
Theresienstadt's Facebook page



Fritz Pereles' membership card in the Hehalutz organization. From the Beit Theresienstadt archives

Sunday, April 4, 2021, 8 pm

Children on the escape trails. Lecturer: Dr. Miri Nahari  
The lecture deals with an enterprise established to locate and gather Jewish children who had been placed during the war in convents and with Christian families, to care for the children in children's homes, and to transport them between countries and finally to ships that brought them to Palestine.

■ Link to lecture: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89463955611>

Tuesday, April 6, 2021, 8 pm

"From generation to generation - my father's memories from the Holocaust", Nurit Givoni

"The true bravery during the Holocaust was not only to rebel against the Germans, as in the Warsaw Ghetto, but primarily to maintain a humane attitude in inhumane conditions. In short, to remain human". Nurit Givoni, second generation Holocaust survivor, will tell the story of her father, Hanan Bachrich.

■ Link to lecture: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84882685713>

Wednesday, April 7, 2021, 6 pm

"They called it Friend" Online play on the children's homes at Ghetto Theresienstadt.

Produced by students in the drama track of "Hamoshava" high school in Zichron Yaakov, and conversation with Eva Erben, survivor of Ghetto Theresienstadt.

■ Link to lecture: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81067763283>

Thursday, April 8, 2021, 11 am

## Building a homeland in the Land of Israel

Panel discussion with:

Prof. Hanna Yablonka, Dr. Yochanan ben Yaakov, and Muki Tzur

On: The actions and contribution of members of the Zionist-pioneering youth movements to building the land

■ Link to discussion: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85826419869>



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Givat Haim Ihud, M.P. Emek Hefer, 3893500, Israel

phone +972-4-6369515, fax +972-4-6369793

e-mail: [info@btterezin.org.il](mailto:info@btterezin.org.il) web: [www.btterezin.org.il](http://www.btterezin.org.il)