

# Dapei Kesher

Beit Theresienstadt Theresienstadt Martyrs Remembrance Association

## *The shattered illusion*



80 years since the beginning of the deportations  
from Ghetto Theresienstadt to the "East"



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

### Table of scheduled events – Beit Theresienstadt

<b>Tuesday, April 19, 2022, 7 pm</b>	Opening event of the exhibition "Days beyond time – Artist meets testimony"	Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium, Tel Aviv
<b>Wednesday, April 27, 2022, 6 pm</b>	Eve of Holocaust and Bravery Memorial Day – Discussion with survivors and artists "Days beyond time – Artist meets testimony"	Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium, Tel Aviv
<b>Thursday, April 28, 2022, 9:45 am</b>	Ceremony for Holocaust and Bravery Memorial Day	Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium, Tel Aviv
<b>Saturday, May 7, 2022, 10 am</b>	Gallery discussion "Days beyond time – Artist meets testimony"	Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium, Tel Aviv
<b>Friday-Sunday, May 13-15, 2022</b>	March of the living scroll – Prague, Theresienstadt	
<b>Saturday, May 20, 2022</b>	Annual conference Torah Scroll ceremony	Beit Theresienstadt

For registration contact 04-6369515, [info@bterezin.org.il](mailto:info@bterezin.org.il) All guests are welcome.

**Membership Dues for 2022:**  
**70\$ single, 100\$ couples**



### For donations or payments:

1. Bank transfer to the account of the association: Theresienstadt Martyrs Remembrance association, Bank Leumi 10, Branch Hedera 953, account 74803/ 11, IBAN IL35 0109 5600 0000 3799 365, SWIFT: LUMIILITXXX
2. Payment to P.E.F. by Credit card: <https://www.causematch.com/en/bterezin-2/> or by check made out to P.E.F. with explicit order to transfer the money to Beit Theresienstadt – its number at the P.E.F. is 2210  
P.E.F. Israel Endowment Fund, Inc  
120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271
3. <https://www.jgive.com/new/en/ils/charity-organizations/1599>

## To all members and friends of Beit Theresienstadt



The holiday of Passover brings with it a feeling of renewal – the story of the renewal of the people of Israel as well as the renewal of nature in the spring plants and flowers. At Beit Theresienstadt too there are many new occurrences. We began the year with a moving

project – “Days beyond time – Artist meets testimony” that attracted many visitors. We received very good reactions to the exhibition and most impressive was the considerable interest demonstrated by high schoolers who came with their schools to see the exhibition and participated in a program prepared by the educational center of Beit Theresienstadt on the topic of “Holocaust remembrance”.

Another new item is the exhibition “Dancing on the edge of a volcano” opened about a month ago, which presents an important characteristic aspect of the Ghetto Theresienstadt – the cultural and spiritual life at the ghetto, in sharp contrast to the actual reality. The exhibition was supposed to have been displayed about a year ago but it was significantly delayed. The magnificent results are an impressive compensation for the difficulties along the way.

A project now under process is the “March of the living scroll” that was to have taken place two years ago and was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The “March of the living scroll” is built around a Torah scroll on loan to Beit Theresienstadt by the Memorial Scroll Trust (MST) organization. The Torah scroll had belonged to the Olomouc congregation before the Second World War and was plundered by the Nazis. The

MST organization saved the plundered scrolls and some were loaned to Jewish communities around the world. The scroll we will receive is flawed and cannot be used for prayers but it will serve us for educational activities concerning the Jewish congregations that were ruined and life before the war. The program of the journey is fascinating and includes encounters with members of current-day Jewish communities in Prague and the Czech Republic, tours of Jewish Prague and of the town Terezin, and participation in the annual official ceremony held at Terezin to mark the liberation of the ghetto.

Aside from the large projects, the regular activities are continuing at full steam. Schools have resumed their visits to Beit Theresienstadt, new and innovative educational programs have been constructed and are adapted to technological means that speak the language of teenagers. In the archives, work is continuing on cataloging and on the online database that is open to the wide public.

The establishment of the new exhibition and expansion of the activities were made possible thanks to generous donors. For the project “Days beyond time – Artist meets testimony” we held a crowdfunding campaign, for which I would like to thank all those who donated and helped. We also received donations this year from several members of the association who passed away and made a bequest to Beit Theresienstadt, including the late Dorothy Fleming, the late Henry Jackson and the late Renee Lang, and others. In addition to the personal thanks to the families I would like to mention them and express my gratitude to them here as well.

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





## A new exhibition at Beit Theresienstadt: "Dancing on the edge of a volcano" / Poria Lichi, curator of the exhibition

The name of the exhibition, taken from a statement by Karl Loewenstein in reference to the activity of the leisure time department, is a concise description of its essence. The image formed reflects the extreme absurdity of the situation – the contrast between destruction and creation. Is it indeed possible to dance on the edge of a flaming hot volcano? Can culture exist in a place of destructive and annihilating forces? That is the issue addressed by the exhibition.

I deliberated at length about the best way to present these contents. In my investigations and search among the treasures contained in the archives at Beit Theresienstadt, Yad Vashem, Ghetto Fighters' House, Terezin memorial and the Jewish museum in Prague, I discovered a world of diverse contents. But how would it be possible to concurrently display the many musical works written in the ghetto, as well as theatre plays, cabaret shows, plastic art, poetry, and lectures? In addition, how would it be possible to present the impact of western culture on Jewish artists who were raised within it and who gave it expression in different artistic variations? I discovered its effects on the style of music, plastic arts, and theatre, expressing liberal and national perceptions through which they protested contemporary reality. So, what should be chosen from among the abundance? How to reduce this rich world? What would be the correct rationale for the exhibition? Would it be right to arrange the exhibition by the different types of culture? Or maybe around a focusing idea? I was assisted by key statements of cultural figures that I encountered in the course of my investigation, relating to different aspects of culture at Theresienstadt. For example:

Jan Fischer, theatre director: "Culture was the essence of our existence. It offered the highest sense of freedom that we could attain".

Ze'ev Shek: "It is possible to create an inner reality with no consideration for external circumstances. Not to become mired in despair, the loss of the past, or anxiety about the future, rather to give content to life".

Fred Terna: "We taught each other. It was a survival mechanism. Tell me what you know and I will tell you what I know".

Since Beit Theresienstadt is also an educational center, it was important for me to understand in depth what I wished to convey to the visitors – primarily the young visitors. To make them understand the force and impact of culture and of the spiritual world in torturous situations. How can a person maintain his identity and humaneness in an impossible situation, survive, and remain human.

That is what guided my choices. Since it was impossible to include the entire cultural wealth, I chose representations that had been essential for enlisting culture in efforts to maintain the prisoners' "self". The exhibition is divided into topics that were key factors for preserving one's identity and respect, such as "being humane", "art as a manifestation of protest", and others.



But these topics cannot be addressed without relating to the prisoners' everyday reality. So I chose to present both worlds – life circumstances in the ghetto and the spiritual world.

The exhibition is based on drawings by artists who documented life in the ghetto.

The design of the exhibition took into account three elements – the space, the colors, and the line of development.

The space in the exhibition constructs two worlds, the realistic world and the spiritual world. The everyday realistic world of the prisoners is reflected through the windows in the exhibition and shows the suffering, illness, hunger, crowding, and transports, while the inner, spiritual world takes place within the inner space of the exhibition and presents aspects of the prisoners' cultural and spiritual survival mechanisms that allowed them to retain their identity as human beings. This is the reason for the exhibition's name: "Dancing on the edge of a volcano".

The colors in the exhibition were selected to create an atmosphere that simulates an attic, and the space attempts to emulate the spaces utilized for cultural purposes.

The exhibition opens with the poem "Prayer" by Karl Fleischmann, who prays for the end of the nightmare and asks for love, on a background of the sights and lists of the transports. Throughout the exhibition it is possible to see the different cultural dimensions that gave people the strength to deal with reality and it ends with the sounds of Verdi's Requiem, played in the last days of the ghetto.

In summary, a personal observation – It was a privilege for me, as one who comes from the fields of music, art, and literature. The encounter with the cultural world in the ghetto captivated me and granted me a deep and wondrous experience.

I thank the designers, the staff at the "Design Mill", for their ability to maintain a dialogue, listen, be flexible, produce original ideas, and carry out our plans to the letter. To the people at Beit Theresienstadt, Tereza and Nitsan, who met all my requests, searched, translated, scanned. To Tami, the director of the museum, who cooperated with every request and was my constant aide. And to all the Beit Theresienstadt staff who helped out, as well as of course the archives who contributed their treasures – Ghetto Fighters' House, Yad Vashem, Terezin memorial and the Jewish museum in Prague. ■

## The Artists' Affair in the new exhibition "Dancing on the edge of a volcano" / Nitsan Ravid Elias

In December 2020, Beit Theresienstadt issued a call for students of animation, with the purpose of finding an animator who would animate the story of the Artists' Affair. The thought was that animation as a medium has a great deal of power to preserve memory in the modern era, as a visual and educational tool that can be used to impart the story of the ghetto to the next generations. Animator Nitsan Weiner produced a short film on the topic – the film can be seen in the new exhibition at Beit Theresienstadt "Dancing on the edge of a volcano", an exhibition that deals with the cultural life that existed in the ghetto side by side with the strenuous daily life. Many artists who were deported to Ghetto Theresienstadt worked in the technical department, where the prisoners produced graphic works according to the demands of the ghetto and the SS headquarters – for instance for purposes of propaganda, construction plans, copying masterpieces, and others. Due to their access to art materials, many drew in secret. **"...The horrifying experiences within the ghetto urged me to constantly seek opportunities to document in my sketch pad"** (from the testimony of Leo Haas). The artists hid their drawings in the walls or floors of houses, in attics, or in the walls encircling the city, and even smuggled the drawings out



affair were:

Otto Ungar (1901–1945), an artist born in Brno. After several months of imprisonment in the "Small Fortress" he was deported to Auschwitz. In January 1945 Ungar was sent on the death march to Buchenwald and died in the Blankenheim hospital.

Ferdinand (Felix) Bloch (1889–1944), a graphic artist born in Vienna. Bloch was imprisoned in the "Small Fortress" where he was tortured and where he died on October 31, 1944.

Norbert Troller (1896–1981), an architect and designer born in Brno. Troller was imprisoned in the "Small Fortress" and then deported to Auschwitz, where he was liberated at the end of the war. After the war he immigrated to the US and worked as an architect.

Bedřich Fritta (Fritz Taussig) (1906–1944), an illustrator and graphic artist born in Višňová (Liberec District). He led the team of artists in the technical department. Fritta was deported to Auschwitz, where he perished.

Leo Haas (1901–1983), artist and lithographer born in Opava. He was imprisoned in the "Small Fortress" and deported to Auschwitz. From there he was sent to the camps of Sachsenhausen, Mauthausen, and Ebensee. Haas survived the war and managed to regain ownership of hundreds of his drawings



of the ghetto.

In June 1944 some of the artists who were working in the technical department were summoned to the SS headquarters where they were accused of drawing in secret and "spreading propaganda against the Nazis". After interrogations and torture, the artists and their families were imprisoned in the "Small Fortress", which served as a political prison, and were then sent on transports to the east. Among those arrested in this

from Theresienstadt. Haas and his wife adopted the son of his good friend, Bedřich Fritta. After the war he worked as a caricaturist in Prague and as a professor in the academia in Berlin. Haas' drawings served as documentary material utilized for the Eichmann Trial in 1961.

Mr. Strauss, a businessman and art collector. His "Aryan" family kept in contact with him by illegal means. He transferred the drawings out of the ghetto. ■



## Opening of the exhibition "Days beyond time – Artist meets testimony"

We have always been taught to "remember and not to forget", but how much do we truly remember? And how? And what should be remembered?

The project "Days beyond time – artist meets testimony", initiated by Maya and Gal Raveh, was launched in January at the **Art & About gallery** in Emek Hefer, and will be further displayed throughout the country and the world.

From April 19, 2022, the exhibition will be displayed for one month in Tel Aviv at the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium. Then it will continue to Jerusalem, the Czech Republic, Germany, and the US. Yossi Veissid, curator of the exhibition: "The artists participating in this exhibition belong to a generation of people who feel that they are allowed to talk, allowed to cry. Their works correspond with the testimonies, react to them, cry out and are shocked with them. Their transformation of the story gives it more presence, makes it real. The art does not expropriate the words of those speaking, rather it serves as their sound box, as documentation". The project was officially launched at an impressive and moving event held at the **Art & About gallery** in Emek Hefer in early



Rona Kenan

February. Hundreds of people came to the opening event, including survivors and artists who had participated in the project, the Czech ambassador to Israel, the Slovakian cultural attachè, the Austrian cultural attachè, the chairman of Yad Vashem, the head of the Emek Hefer Regional Council, and many others. Rona Kenan came and sang in tribute, giving a touching rendition of Tchernichovsky's "Laugh laugh at the dreams", leaving no eyes dry.

The most moving part of the event was a speech by 91-year-old Zvi Cohen, a survivor of Ghetto Theresienstadt, who related



Zvi Cohen playing his harmonica



Maya and Gal Raveh

how he had been saved as a child only because the Nazis liked his harmonica music. He ended his story by taking out a harmonica and playing to the audience the same tune that had saved his life.

During the month of the exhibition various events were held, including gallery discussions with artists who had participated in the project, a "Cafè Europa" event for Emek Hefer old timers, guided tours for visitors from all over the country, and educational activities for students from different places.

The artists who participated in the project are: Iddo Markus, Amit Kabesa, Geva Alon, Milli Barzilai, Shahar Sivan, Amir Shefet, Izabella Volovnik, Eran Webber, Anat Or Magal, Aya Steigman, Moran Zilberberg, Noa Zamir, and Rotem Amizur. ■



Danny Danon, Chairman of Yad Vashem, and Tami Kinberg, Director of BT in the exhibition

The exhibition will be displayed in Tel Aviv at the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium from April 19, 2022 to May 19, 2022. The opening event will take place on Tuesday, April 19, 2022. Further information and details can be found on the Beit Theresienstadt website [www.bterezin.org.il](http://www.bterezin.org.il)

## The educational center

After a lengthy period in which schools were prevented from coming for study days at the museum due to the restrictions of Covid-19, when most of the educational activities were performed online, in recent months schools have resumed their visits to the museum. Many school children came to study days at Beit Theresienstadt and participated in new and varied educational programs. In addition, the new exhibition "Dancing on the edge of a volcano" allowed the guides to address the topic of culture and its meaning for prisoners of the ghetto. For the new exhibition a new educational activity was developed, with the purpose of introducing the students to the variety of cultural activities at the ghetto, their contents and meaning for prisoners of the ghetto.

Instead of preparing for journeys to Poland, journeys took place within Israel, and in this framework twelfth graders from different schools throughout the country came for visits and guidance at the museum. After the Passover vacation and towards Holocaust and Bravery Memorial Day, study days and many visits will be held at the museum by students, soldiers and officers, groups of adults, and others.

Educational activity at the exhibition "Days beyond time - Artist meets testimony".

This last February hundreds of junior high school and high school students from all over the country visited the exhibition. The educational activity designed by the educational center

granted the students an extraordinary, moving, and empowering experience that included visits to the exhibition combined with in-depth discussion circles, a personal and group process of conversing with the various testimonies, and creation of a personal memorial display.

The activities included a discussion that focused mainly on the issue of shaping remembrance of the Holocaust and the role of the young generation in undertaking responsibility for remembering and for preserving the memory of the Holocaust. All this in the understanding that we are living in a period of transition, where the responsibility is gradually passing from those who were 'there' and who have personal memories to us, members of the young generation. In this understanding the students were asked to actively watch the testimonies and choose from each a sentence or two to which they had felt particularly connected.

In the gathering stage we spoke about the students' choices and through the discussion circle we created a memory discourse that joins the generations (the first generation with the third and fourth generation). In this way, a joint collective memory discourse was formed. While watching the testimonies, the students used whiteboards to write down key sentences to which they had felt connected. These sentences became an additional work of art, adding to those presented in the exhibition. ■





## Torches will be lit by :

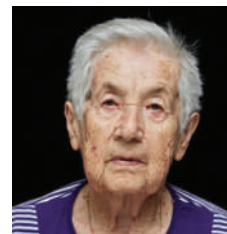
### Tomy Shacham

**T**omy Shacham was born in Czechoslovakia in 1933. The family lived in the village Preselanu, which had about 200 Jewish residents. In 1942 many of Slovakia's Jews were deported to camps in the east. Tomy's family tried at first several times to escape to Hungary, but were caught and returned to Slovakia. In late October 1944 the family was taken to the synagogue, from where they were transferred to the Sered' camp. After about a week, they were put on a train car and deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, a trip that took 3 days and nights. Tomy was separated from his family, his arm was tattooed and he was sent, together with children aged 1-10, to a barrack intended for children, where he cared for ten toddlers aged 1-5. About three months after liberation, Tomy returned to Budapest where he found his uncle. In July 1945, on his 11th birthday, Tomy's mother returned. The two were the only ones of their family to survive. In 1949 Tomy immigrated to Israel to Kibbutz Kfar Masaryk. He served in the army, studied at a physical education college, and began working at the Hadasim youth village, where he served as vice principal of the school for twenty years. Tomy and his wife Ruth, who passed away about two years ago, have two sons and a daughter and nine grandchildren. 88-year-old Tomy is involved in tourism and brings his testimony to youth and adults. He also had a second relationship with Alona, whom he met at a "Memory in the Living Room" encounter. "All this proves that he chose life!!!" (Tomy's words) ■



### Zippora Hochman

**Z**ippora (Olga) Taub was born in 1925 in the town of Bački Petrovac in northeast Yugoslavia to her parents, Viktor and Clara. In 1941, when the Germans occupied Yugoslavia, her father was recruited to the army as a veterinary for the cavalry battalion. Several weeks later, he was captured by the Germans and sent to a prisoner of war camp in Germany. In March 1944, with the German occupation, the Jews were ordered to wear a yellow star. About three weeks later Zippora, her mother and brother Michael, 8 years younger than her, were sent to the ghetto in the city of Baja, Hungary. About one month later, in May 1944, the family was deported to Auschwitz. Upon arriving at the camp they were separated. Zippora became an inmate of the camp and her mother and brother were sent to the gas chambers. After a few weeks in Auschwitz Zippora was sent, together with another 200 women, to the town of Reichenbach in Germany, where she was placed at a factory that manufactured submarine parts. In March 1945, after the factory was bombed, Zippora was transferred to the town of Parschnitz, where she was put to work digging anti-tank ditches. In early May 1945 the Russians liberated the camp. After liberation, Zippora travelled to Bratislava, where she recovered in a building belonging to the Jewish community. She then learned that in March 1945 her father had returned from the prisoner of war camp. Zippora returned to her town and met her father. Of the approximately one hundred Jews who had been living in Bački Petrovac before the war, only eleven survived. The next year, Zippora completed her high school studies and studied agriculture at a university in Belgrade. In December 1948 Zippora immigrated to Israel and in January 1949 she arrived at Kibbutz Givat Haim. Later on she married a member of the kibbutz, Ephraim Broder. Zippora has remained in the kibbutz to this day. Zippora has one daughter, three grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. ■



### Gidon Lev

**G**idon was born in 1935 in Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia. In 1938 Gidon, his parents, and his grandparents were forced to flee to Prague, where they lived as refugees until 1941. In November 1941 his father and grandfather were deported to Ghetto Theresienstadt and two weeks later Gidon and his mother were deported too.



In the ghetto Gidon's mother worked in a mica splitting workshop and Gidon, who was too young to join the children's homes, roamed the ghetto in search of food.

In early 1944 his father was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he was subjected to medical experiments. In January 1945 he was deported by train to Buchenwald but died on the way there.

Gidon and his mother remained in the ghetto and upon liberation it became apparent that they were the only ones of their family

to survive. The two returned to Karlsbad.

In 1948 Gidon and his mother migrated to Brooklyn, New York, and from there to Toronto, Canada.

Gidon, who was active in the "Hashomer Hatzair" movement, immigrated to Israel in 1959, served in the IDF, taught folk dancing, worked in the dairy industry, and lived at first in Kibbutz Hazorea and then in Kibbutz Zikim.

Gidon wrote the book "The true adventures of Gidon Lev" together with his partner, Julie Gray.

Gidon Lev is now in his second marriage. He has six children, 15 grandchildren, and two great-granddaughters. ■



## Torches will be lit by :

### Hana Sternlicht

**H**ana was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1930, an only daughter of Arnold Neumann and Irenna née Katzir. Until age 9 Hana enjoyed a happy childhood in a small and loving family. When the Germans occupied Czechoslovakia in 1939 and the anti-Jewish laws were publicized, her childhood came to an end. Hana was expelled from school and for about three years she remained at home. In December 1942 the family was deported to Ghetto Theresienstadt. Upon arrival they were separated, and at first Hana lived with her mother in the women's quarters. Later, Hana was transferred to the L-410 children's quarters, where she was housed with girls her age. In October 1944, a week after her father was sent to the East, Hana and her mother were deported too. Undergoing selection at the camp, the two were separated and Hana's mother was killed. After about two weeks at the camp, Hana was transferred to the Freiberg labor camp in Germany, where she worked in a factory that manufactured aircraft components. Six months later she was sent to Mauthausen camp in Austria. On May 5, 1945, she was liberated at the camp by the American army. At the conclusion of the war, Hana returned to Prague but found none of her family.

In March 1949 she immigrated to Kibbutz Hahotrim with the Dror movement and subsequently married Dov Sternlicht. Hana and Dov have two children and six grandchildren. ■



### Eva Hefer

**E**va was born in Třinec, Czechoslovakia in 1928, to her parents Jan and Růžena Měkyn, the younger sister of Hanna and Zadenk. In 1939, when the area where the family lived was occupied, the children were transferred to central Czechoslovakia and later the entire family moved to Ostrava and Frýdek-Místek. In September 1942, Eva was the only one of the entire family to receive a summons to report for a transport to Theresienstadt. Accompanied by her father and brother, she came to the gathering point with her belongings. The day after arriving at Theresienstadt, Eva received a summons to a transport Eastwards, however a woman at the ghetto who heard her story suggested that she appeal the summons to the Altestenrat - which Eva did and her name was erased from the transport. Years later she learned that the transport had been destined for the Treblinka extermination camp. In the ghetto Eva was housed in the L-410 children's block, where she remained until the end of the war. Eva's sister Hanna was deported to the ghetto in December 1944 and her mother in February 1945. At the end of the war the three returned to the family home in Frýdek-Místek, where her father, brother, and brother-in-law were waiting for them. In 1948 Eva married and moved to Prague. In January 1949 Eva and her husband immigrated to Israel and arrived at Kibbutz Givat Haim. Years later Eva left the kibbutz, worked as a nurse at a hospital, and lived in Magdiel. Eva remarried Arie Hefer, among the founders of Kibbutz Givat Haim, and returned to the kibbutz. In 1973 the couple moved to Beer Sheva and later to Tel Aviv. Eva and Arie, who passed away in 1996, have a son, Yiftach, three grandchildren, one great-grandchild. ■



in the direction of death but he asked to go with his friend who had been sent to do hard labor.

In January 1945 he was part of the death march and arrived at the Buchenwald camp, where he identified himself as Czech and joined the Czech underground. One day Eli saw a hand sticking out from a pile of bodies, carrying his father's number. He pulled it out from the bottom of the pile and saved his father's life. On Passover eve, 1945, Bachner and two of his friends broke through the camp fence, set free several other prisoners, and escaped to the forest, where they later met American soldiers. At the end of the war, Eli and his father were the only ones from their family to survive. They returned to Ostrava, where Eli joined a Zionist youth movement and in April 1947 he arrived in Israel and joined the Palmach.

In 1949 he settled in Moshav Moledet, where he met his wife Tova.

The Bachner's have 4 children, 13 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren.

Eli passed away about 3 months ago aged 91, surrounded by a big and loving family. ■

### Eli Bachner

**E**li Bachner was born in 1931 in Ostrava, Czechoslovakia, the son of Rosa and Morris and the younger brother of Kurt. In 1942, when he was 11, Bachner's family was deported to Ghetto Theresienstadt. Upon arrival the family was separated and Eli and his mother were sent to the women's quarters. Later, Eli moved to the Children's home, L-417. In language classes held there, Bachner and his friends wrote poems. Some of these poems were later found hidden in the sewage system and were published in the book "There are no butterflies here", which appeared in Czech and was translated into Hebrew by Leah Goldberg.

In May 1944, right before Eli was to have his bar mitzva aliya, the family was deported to the family camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Upon arrival at the camp, they were once again separated into men and women and a number was tattooed on their arm. Bachner's number was 1983A. Young Eli memorized the numbers given to his father, mother, and brother, so that he would remember and be able to find them. Several months later, when the family camp was liquidated, Dr. Mengele pointed him



## Two short stories involving the Sered' concentration camp in Slovakia during the Second World War / Uri Jacobowitz

**S**hmuel Givoni, born in 1923 in Bratislava, lived on Kibbutz Shomrat. The story of his adversities in Slovakia during the Second World War could easily become a fascinating movie, and certainly an interesting book. His life course illuminates both the tragedy and the bravery of the Jews of Slovakia, which have received little public attention.

I held several telephone conversations and an e-mail correspondence with Shmuel Givoni from 2005-2021. The context of our connection was that my father, Yakov (Eugen) Jakubovič, had crossed paths several times with Givoni. Based on my communication with Givoni, together with slight supplements from other sources (shown in square parentheses), I have chosen to share two interesting stories that included Givoni (in the first he was only a partial witness). These are probably stories that are not entirely familiar to the public, and they of course constitute only a small part of the many activities experienced by Givoni during the Second World War.



Jewish labor camp at Sered'  
Shmuel Givoni (far right)

### Preface:

Shmuel Givoni (originally Tibor Salomon) reached the Sered' concentration camp in Slovakia three times. The first time he was sent there willingly in December 1941, having received an

offer from the Jewish center in Bratislava to carry out plumbing work, including installing a water and sewage system. This was part of the preparations for establishing a labor camp [which had in fact already opened in September]. At this stage the workers were paid by the number of cubic meters dug and even received approval to take Sundays off; this situation changed completely after the beginning of the deportations in spring 1942. Then construction of the concentration camp began [in fact, Sered' became a concentration camp only two years later, in September 1944, using the infrastructure laid previously for the labor camp]. The plumbing profession was considered vital, and those employed in it were protected from deportation to Poland. The second time was in the summer of 1944, though at that time Givoni didn't actually enter the camp but rather waited outside for his friend Akiva Nir (Carol Neufeld), who negotiated with the Jewish committee and with the Slovakian gendarmes who were guarding the camp at the time about organizing a defense or alternately opening the gates and releasing the prisoners. After the commander of the garrison in Sered' refused to join the national Slovakian revolt (that began on August 29, 1944 and was aimed at ousting the fascist Slovakian regime and liberating the country from dependence on the Germans), the commander of the camp, Josef Matuščin, a gendarme of the Slovakian border patrol, decided to open the gates, whereupon almost all the prisoners left and a large part of them joined the partisans. The third time, Givoni arrived at Sered' on January 21, 1945 after he was captured in Bratislava. In the first and third periods he was head of a team of plumbers at the camp's metalwork workshop, as well as a welder (he had learned to weld at the camp from an older Jew. Givoni tried to add all members of the Hashomer Hatzair movement to the group of plumbers, to protect them from deportation to Poland, and a large part of these young people indeed became plumbers...).

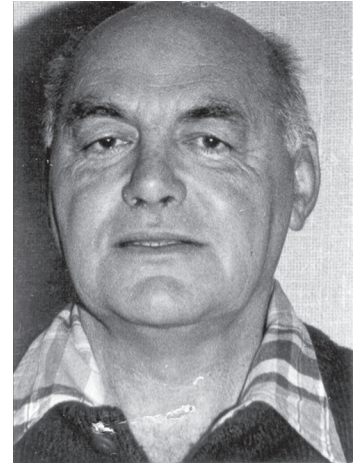
1. "In the first period, in the spring of 1942, when the camp commander was the Slovakian Josef Vozàr, a member of the Hlinkova Garda, my friend Gabi Oren (Gavriel Eichler) was with me. The deportations to the camps in Poland had already begun in the spring of 1942. One day Vozàr saw Gabi wave to a friend headed for the transport (one of the first transports). Vozàr called Gabi and said to him: 'Why did you greet him with a communist greeting?' Then Vozàr called one of the Hlinkova Garda men named Straka, who would roam the camp with a stick and was in charge of its prison. Vozàr instructed him: 'Take care of him!' and Straka promised to do so. Gabi told me the rest of the story later: This Straka, who had previously been a boxer, started beating Gabi with his fists. At this stage many would have given in and cried but Gabi didn't move! He was a very strong guy. Then, suddenly, Gabi caught Straka's two hands, pressed the veins under his hands, and Straka went into shock, his eyes protruding. Then Gabi let go and said to Straka: 'Staci!' meaning 'Enough!', that there was no need to continue fighting. Straka vanished and never touched Gabi again". Givoni



adds: "Gabi bore several marks as a result of this boxing match. I don't think the match was witnessed by anyone but the two of them". This is a description of a fight between a Jew and a Nazi, however unlike well-known incidents where the Nazis made sure to humiliate their Jewish rivals in public, it took place with no audience!

2. Shmuel Givoni relates: "Alois Brunner (one of the most wanted Nazi war criminals who helped manage the deportation of Jews from Austria, Greece, France, and Slovakia) knew me as a welder in the metalwork workshop at the Sered' camp. On March 31, 1945, the preparations for the last transport from the Sered' camp were at their height. Brunner gathered everyone and said: 'Welders, I hope we'll continue our good work in the new place, and I'll come there'. Brunner still believed in his project, that we would continue to produce carts at Theresienstadt and that Germany would win the war [Oscar Newman notes that the manufacture of the carts was probably intended, on the contrary, to expedite the retreat]. These were wooden farmer's carts that were supposed to be harnessed to horses. We manufactured them in the metalwork and carpentry workshops for the German army or the SS and I welded the hoops that encircled the wooden wheels of the carts (which was why I continued to work as a welder). Others heated the hoops while working on them with heavy hammers, and the carpentry participated by manufacturing the wooden parts of the carts. Brunner travelled between Sered's train station and the camp at Sered' in his civilian car. He was nervous, because Russian planes were circling above us. He crashed into one of the carts with his car and the car's radiator was punctured in the accident. It was a critical moment because the Russians were close and Brunner wanted to get away. He called me and ordered: 'Fix it and I'll give you something'. I said that all the equipment was on the train (the metalworkers were the last to board the transport because they had packed all the workshop's equipment). So Brunner instructed that the equipment be unloaded and I went to work fixing his car. At that time the train was waiting at a station very close by, a short walk away. It was clear that the SS men were under pressure, including the mechanics who wanted the radiator to be connected hurriedly. I said to them: 'Wait, wait, putting water on the welded part when it is still hot will cause it to explode!'. When I finished the job at least an hour later and the car was ready, Brunner looked at me. I thought at that moment - either he would kill me, because the entire train had been held up because of me, or he would tell me to get lost (because in the meantime I had seen Brunner free a group of non-Jewish partisans who had been imprisoned in the camp in a separate barrack). But he said to me: 'Choose which train car to board'. And I started running alongside the train and calling out the name of my friend Berco Klug (born 1922 in the town of Sered') and when I found him I could still hear Brunner say to Hahn (a member of the SD - the German security service in Bratislava): 'Guard them well, those are escapers' (in German "Ausreißer"). Hahn knocked on the gun on his belt and said:

'No one escapes from me!' He wanted to say - 'That's my capacity; trust me. They won't escape'. So I understood that Hahn was in charge of this transport, which was the last from Sered' to Theresienstadt. Hahn opened the door of the car for me to get in. The train moved off. It was sometime in the afternoon or evening". Shmuel Givoni was in fact the last Jew to be deported from the Sered' camp! What an irony that Givoni, Klug, and another friend - Edward (Edo) Salzer (born 1925 in the town of Sered') escaped precisely from this train.



Shmuel Givoni  
Courtesy of GFH archives

Shmuel Givoni further relates: "The train left Sered' amidst bombings that forced it to stop many times along the way. The places along its route, of which it stopped in at least three, sometimes for more than a day, were Sered'-Trnava, Nové Město nad Váhom, Trenčín, and Puchov - all these in Slovakian territory. The Soviet army pursued the Germans. While still in Slovakia a train station was bombed and quite a few people took advantage of the tumult and managed to escape while the Germans were hiding in the trenches. After three days of traveling, at a train station in Moravia in the town of Valašské Meziříčí, the train slowed, and then Berco Klug, Edward Salzer and I jumped off the train [whose cars were open]. At that very time dozens of laborers were waiting for the morning train. A young Czech worker who saw us escape approached us, gave us a bill of 100 German marks, and told us how to leave the train station through a narrow gate without encountering hostile elements. We reached a small river and crossed it and then came to a forest. We saw some Germans leaving the train and shooting, pursuing us with dogs, and then running to the bridge, but they did not feel like entering the water. So we got away from them and the Germans returned to the train, which continued to Theresienstadt". [Shmuel Givoni and his two friends remained in the forest for another 4 days in the freezing cold. They knocked on the door of a family, but these were concerned for their life and said that the three were wanted and that there was a prize on their head. Nevertheless, they agreed to explain to them the location of the Slovakian border and the guard towers]. The three managed to cross the border to Slovakia. [After crossing the border they understood that they would have no use for the German money]. They cut the bill in three. Each part was signed by the three, who added the date on which they had left Sered' (March 31, 1945) and the date on which they were liberated by the Russians in Trenčín (April 10, 1945), and each of them took one piece.

The end of the story:

Shmuel Givoni relates: “Years later [before 1995] someone knocked on my door in the kibbutz, a man my age whom I did not recognize. He said to me: ‘You don’t recognize me’ and he took out a third of the 100 mark bill we had received from the young worker in Moravia. It was Edward Salzer, who was living in Canada. Berco Klug, who lived in Australia, kept his third of the bill in his wallet as a good luck charm. Once, on a London

subway, someone picked his pocket and his part of the bill was lost. During one of Klug’s visits to Kibbutz Shomrat I cut my third in two so that each of us had half ...”

An addition is that all kinds of tools were manufactured at the metalwork workshop in Sered', including hacksaws, knives, files, screwdrivers, screws, drills, and more. We know that Avraham (Doli) Gottehrer smuggled such tools to people who were to be deported to Poland and for this purpose asked for all kinds of items. Shmuel Givoni, who took part in manufacturing these items although he did not participate personally in the smuggling, knew of this activity. By the way, Gottehrer himself was in the same last transport as Givoni from Sered' to Theresienstadt and he too managed to escape the train at Puchov. ■



Labor and concentration camp in Sered'  
SNM-MŽK, National Archives of Slovakia

**Dedicated with love, respect, and praise to Slovakian  
Jewry in their holocaust and bravery!**



## The transports eastwards from Theresienstadt / Ya'akov Tzur

The eastbound transports were a major issue in Ghetto Theresienstadt, both as experienced and statistically. The main content of life at Theresienstadt were the transports; there was an atmosphere of constant insecurity – when would the next transport leave. The inhabitants trembled with fear at the possibility of being transported; everyone made efforts to save themselves. The transports are mentioned throughout the journal of Egon (Gonda) Redlich:

**January 4, 1942** “From Theresienstadt it will travel beyond Riga. We argued for a long time whether it was not time to say enough”

**April 24, 1942** “This month another 4 transports will leave for the east. There is an argument whether there will be a ghetto here or a settlement under German supervision, or whether it will only be a place for selecting people who will travel on eastwards. I was very sad because many children will go...”

**October 23, 1942** “Confusion, bedlam, big fights. Thousands of upset people live with fear in their hearts, scared, fighting to remain here. Running, restlessly running to and fro day and night.”

Putting together the list for the eastbound transport at the Theresienstadt Ghetto was done differently than elsewhere. In Theresienstadt this responsibility was given to the Jewish council – the Altestenrat. The commander of the ghetto would summon the Jewish elder and instruct him to prepare transports for certain dates with the number of deportees, orders to include certain Jews, and also exclusions – who should not be transported. The head of the council (Edelstein from December 4, 1941 – January 29, 1943, and then Epstein until September 1944) would return from the headquarters to his office and convene the members of the council, and they would discuss the composition of the transport in general and instruct the registry office to prepare the detailed transport list.

Those who worked in the ghetto registry office had bitter memories of the events surrounding the summons for the first transport from Prague in 1941. At that time, the Zentralstelle sent the community registry department a list of some 1,300 names taken from their general records. They ordered that one thousand be selected from among them, who were to report for deportation to the Lodz Ghetto (Litzmannstadt). Only about half of these reported to the head of the registry office and his deputy. The two registry officials were imprisoned immediately, sent to a concentration camp, and two weeks later their families received notice that they had died “while attempting escape”. So the members of the registry office knew that they would be subjected to severe punishment if the Germans were to discover any inaccuracies, as indeed happened in 1943. At Theresienstadt the Germans took a different approach than in Prague, which was also unlike that practiced in most of Poland's ghettos. In the latter a curfew was imposed in the ghetto and all residents of a certain quarter were to leave and come to the train station,

while in Theresienstadt the Germans demanded a certain number of deportees for a certain date and let the Jews determine who would be deported, aside from those sought by the Germans and aside from certain people whom the Germans were not willing to deport, such as former German military officers, bearers of badges of honor, and World War I disabled from among the central states, world renown Jews, and the families of those sent to perform forced labor. The Jewish council itself had a list of people who were protected from the transport and these included the council members (each was entitled to protect 30 others), the people in the company that had been the first to come to the ghetto and their families, people working in key jobs, and others. Taking all these into consideration, the registry office prepared an initial list. This was presented to the transports committee, comprised of representatives of all departments in the ghetto council, who brought their objections. If the quota set by the Germans was not met, a struggle began between the representatives of the different departments. They would convene for days and nights on end until reaching a detailed list with the required number and a reserve of at least another one hundred people. Gonda's journal has many descriptions of this process:

**January 5-6, 1942** ...We planned a transport. We worked almost all night long. We used favoritism to remove the children from the transport list...

**January 7, 1942** We couldn't work because we were closed up at home. I asked that the children be removed from the transport and I succeeded, the children will not go... Trying to save the children from death.

**March 7, 1942** ...The transports to Poland and the appeals are a terrible, responsible job. Who should be released from the transport by means of an appeal? The young? The old? There is no answer...

**March 13, 1942** All day long they worked on the appeals. It is hard to decide, because there are many reasons for appealing.

The transports committee operated under time restrictions and under pressure of the appeals. The committee was usually guided by the method whereby recent arrivals at the ghetto would be the first included in the transport. The newcomers had no connections with the management and were not familiar with happenings in the ghetto. To understand the pressure on the management we shall note that from the establishment of the ghetto in December 1941 until June 13, 1942 some 31,000 Jews arrived, of whom 16 thousand, 52%, were sent to the east. Members of the Jewish council in the ghetto followed several

\* From an article by the late Ya'akov Tzur, *The transports eastwards from Theresienstadt* (January 9, 1942 – October 28, 1944)

premises: The war would end with the downfall of Nazi Germany, it is necessary to hold on until then; the conditions in the “east” are harsh, deportation means hardships and death, and the elderly and children have little chances of survival. Therefore, maximal efforts must be made to prevent or at least delay deportation to the “east” as much as possible.

### What was known in Theresienstadt and Prague about the “east”?

The question is when did they know, who knew, how did the news arrive, and how was it accepted. The fact that there was no precedent to what was happening made it harder to make the transition from receiving the information to it becoming news and to reaching conclusions. The chief of the German intelligence services, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, said even before the war began that the Third Reich is so illogical that when it ended no one would believe what had happened. The Jews in the protectorate had several sources of information: ❶. A few people who had been deported or had fled to Eastern Galicia, occupied immediately upon the German invasion of the USSR, returned in the fall of 1941. They had witnessed the first wave of killings. These people did not speak about what they had seen in public, but even the little they did say undoubtedly reached the knowledge of the Jewish leaders in the protectorate.

❷. In the bulletin of the underground Czech communist party, which was read by some members of Hehalutz (as well as by the current author), news of the killings were published consistently as early as the end of 1941. Beginning from June 26, 1942, broadcasts from England which reached the Czech Republic included news of mass killings of Jews in Poland. These news and the accompanying rumors contradicted the letters that continued to arrive from Jews deported to Poland until May 1942 but not subsequently. Handwritten postcards and confirmations were regularly received from the 5,000 Prague Jews deported in October 1942 to the Lodz Ghetto, for the money sent to them with the approval of the German authorities. Letters also arrived from Riga, to which Jews were deported from Theresienstadt in January 1942, as well as from some of the 9,000 Jews deported during March–April of that year to the district of Lublin, particularly a town named Izbica. All this led to the conclusion in Prague and Theresienstadt that the conditions in the “east” are indeed harsh but young people capable of working have a good chance of survival, and some hoped that work would save their family as well. Only few may have thought of fleeing and going into hiding with fake papers.

Immediately after the transports left, the friends of the deportees organized an aid project in Prague, consisting of money and food packages sent to the ghettos and concentration camps. This enterprise, which included the hundreds of members of the Zionist youth movement and others, diminished as the deportations advanced, until by August 1943 only two remained – Heinz Prosnitz until October 1944 and Naomi Bezhezhina, who was not deported until the end of the war and kept the letters that arrived from the deportees.



Marie Klanova - Leaving for Transport, 1943  
BT archives

The numbers given above show that some 45 thousand, namely more than half of those deported to the east, were taken to Auschwitz–Birkenau. The first transport to Birkenau left Theresienstadt on October 26, 1942, and those who were not murdered immediately were allowed to write postcards asking that they be sent food packages addressed to: The Birkenau labor camp next to Neu-Biron.

From early 1944 there are testimonies of detailed information received from Auschwitz. Rudolf Gibian, deported from Theresienstadt, managed to send letters, two of which were preserved and publicized after the war. They reached a member of his family in Theresienstadt. The letters were from February 25, 1944 and August 18, 1944.

### In summary

For three years, from October 16, 1941 to October 28, 1944, nearly 94,000 Jews were deported from Theresienstadt in particular and from the protectorate in general, in 65 large transports of a thousand people or more as well as several small transports. Of these, nearly 4,000 Jews (some 4.25%) remained alive at the end of the war. Fear of being deported was a major widespread concern. This is also the point of departure for understanding all occurrences in Ghetto Theresienstadt. Almost all those imprisoned in the ghetto had no idea of what was happening in the “east”, and the deportees felt helpless and longed for a miracle. ■



## Archive for the names of Holocaust victims

### Conference on digitization and archive systems/ Dr. Tereza Maizels

In late March Tami Kinberg and I participated in a digitization conference at the Kazerne Dossin research center and museum in the city of Mechelen, Belgium. This is an annual conference, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was put off for two years. Beit Theresienstadt participated in this conference for the first time three years ago at Yad Vashem, where we presented a system for recording the names of victims from Ghetto Theresienstadt based on the card index of the ghetto's prisoners, which was digitized under the guidance of the late Aliza Schiller.

The program was interesting and included many lectures and tours. Representatives of different archives and museums participated, including Bad Arolsen, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau, Flossenbürg, Yad Vashem, the Polish Museum, and others. Colleagues researching various chapters in the history of the Holocaust shared their experience with systems for collecting and processing materials, collecting testimonies and their transcription, mapping Jewish populations and their fate after the beginning of the Second World War, and planning and executing various exhibitions on the topic. We presented the link between the Beit Theresienstadt archives and the educational center and how the educational activities utilize and are based on the archives.

The conference also included a tour of Kazerne Dossin. This historical building was built in 1756 and is very similar to other barracks in the city of Theresienstadt built by the Habsburgs. It is located in the northern part of the city, near the railway freight platform, and is named for Lieutenant-general Émile Dossin de Saint-Georges, a hero of the First World War Battle of the Yser. The camp was established in March 1942 and was the only transit camp in Belgium. Jews and gypsies were gathered there towards their deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau as well as to other camps. From August 4, 1942 to July 31, 1944, 28 trains departed from the camp. Of the 25,800 prisoners deported, only 1,240 survived. At present, part of the barracks serves as a commemoration site and luxury apartments were built in the other part. Facing the barracks, across the street, a museum was built that tells the story of the camp. A huge project involving collecting photographs of the victims is staged on a wall that covers the entire height of the building, from the basement to the third floor. Each year more photographs are discovered by the museum's researchers and added to the wall. The display is accompanied by a touch screen with concise information about the victims and the location of their photograph on the wall. The exhibitions in the basement and ground floor are devoted to human rights and a historical exhibition, while the three upper floors have a historical exhibition that follows the fate of the victims chronologically using photographs, documents, multimedia, and interviews with survivors.

The conference was an excellent opportunity to get to know colleagues from other archives and museums and become familiar with their work. ■



Kazerne Dossin



Memorial plaque for the victims of Dossin camp



Pictures wall of Dossin camp inmates

Beit Theresienstadt:

# DAYS BEYOND TIME

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Creators: Maya and Gal Rave  
Curator: Yossi Veissid

Opening event: April 19th, 2022 at 7 pm  
Closing: May 19th

**Participants:**

- Amit Kabesa :: Peter Lang, of blessed memory
- Eran Webber :: Vera Idan
- Geva Alon :: Zvi Cohen
- Ido Markus :: Maxi Livni
- Izabella Volovnik :: Talma Segal
- Rotem Amizur :: Alisa Tennenbaum
- Amir Shefet :: Vera Meisels
- Milli Barzilai :: Ruth Meissner
- Shahar Sivan :: Eva Erben
- Anat Or Magal :: Hanka Drori
- Noa Zamir and Aya Steigman :: Dita Kraus
- Moran Zilberberg :: Hana Malka

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\* Booking flights and hotels will be made by the participants  
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## March of the Living Scroll

**A Journey of Remembrance and Renewal**

**מסע  
עש היים**

**And who will remember? And in what do we preserve memory?**

Yehuda Amichai - "Hatzharat Kabanot"

(Statement of Intent)



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