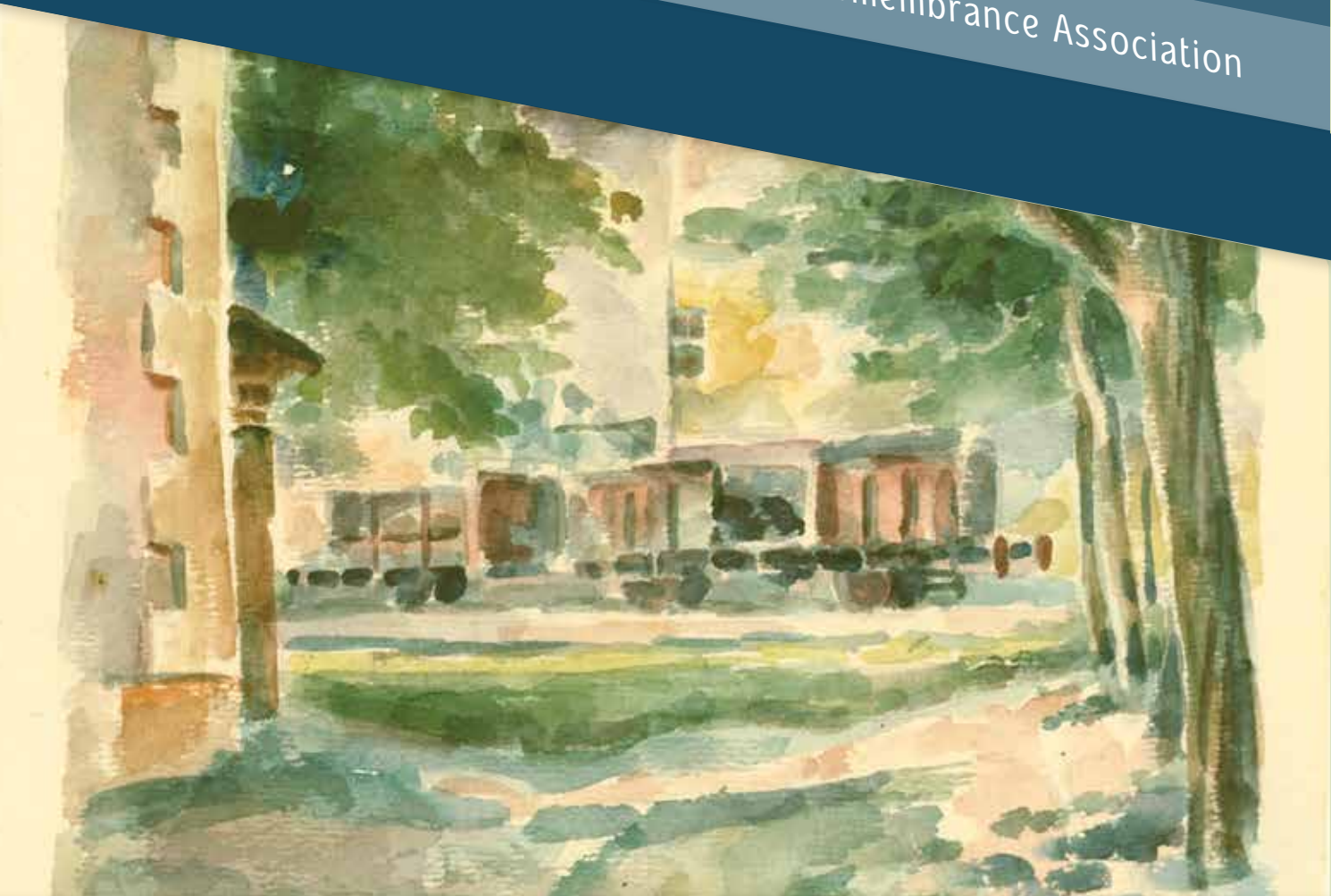


Dapei Kesher

Beit Theresienstadt Theresienstadt Martyrs Remembrance Association

ISSUE No. 95 >>> September 2023



80 years since the deportation of Danish Jews to Ghetto Theresienstadt



THERESIENSTADT MARTYRS REMEMBRANCE ASSOCIATION

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On the cover: Otto Samisch, Railway , Theresienstadt 1941-1945

Upcoming events

3.10.2023	Tuesday	9:00	"Theresienstadt League" memorial tournament	Givat Haim Ichud stadium
8.10.2023	Every 2nd. Sunday	20:00	Beginning of online lecture series in English	Zoom
16.10.2023	Monday	10:00	Hybrid conference marking 80 years since the deportation of the Jews of Denmark to Ghetto Theresienstadt	Beit Theresienstadt
24.11.2023	Friday	10:30	Intergenerational conference	Beit Theresienstadt
22.12.2023	Friday	10:30	Centennial of the birth of the late Ruth Bondy	Beit Theresienstadt

Registration at: 04-6369515, 058-6369515 info@bterezin.org.il You are warmly invited to attend!

To all members and friends of Beit Theresienstadt



A new year awaits us and most of us seem to be greeting it with concern. The last few years have taught us that reality exceeds all imagination. I assume that for the Holocaust survivors among us this is nothing new. Who would have believed four years ago that there would be a pandemic, followed by such

a difficult political crisis in Israel, as we are experiencing at present. Nonetheless, if there is something that we, members of the next generations, should learn from the founders of Beit Theresienstadt, it is their optimism and the perseverance necessary to forge on, not to remain passive, to act to advance our values. As it says in the founding document of Beit Theresienstadt – "To maintain a foundations of justice and integrity, relationships of friendship and of mutual assistance". Notwithstanding all the above, Beit Theresienstadt is undergoing a process of expansion and revitalization. We are in the midst of adding accessible restrooms, with the generous help of the Claims Conference. This is in fact the first stage of the physical expansion of Beit Theresienstadt, a process that we are promoting together with the management of Kibbutz Givat Haim Ihud and the Emek Hefer Regional Council. Another innovation to be introduced at the beginning of 2024 is the transformation of one of the exhibitions into an immersive exhibition, namely one that is based on advanced technologies, allowing us to expose visiting students to a variety of topics related to Ghetto Theresienstadt and display the archive's treasures without physically putting them on display. The new exhibition involves a very high cost and we are raising funds through donations, beyond the support of the Claims Conference.

We will shortly mark, in an international conference, 80 years since the arrival of the Jews of Denmark at the ghetto, attended by the ambassadors of Denmark and Sweden. The conference will include researchers from abroad as well as a second-generation organization from Denmark. Swedish ambassador Erik Ullenhag is very involved in social issues and has already held several encounters at the ambassador's residence, allowing researchers and historians to present their work on topics related to antisemitism and migration. We expect to meet the newly appointed Danish ambassador shortly. Another ambassador who has been replaced is the Czech ambassador, Martin Stropnický, who was very active in the relationship with Beit Theresienstadt. The entire senior staff of the embassy has been replaced over the past year and this is an opportunity to thank them deeply, Katerina Moravcova, the deputy ambassador, and Clara Baizova, the cultural attaché, with whom we enjoyed excellent cooperation that is continuing even after their return to the Czech Republic. Michal Dvořák replaced Ms. Baizova; and is continuing the close and warm relationship with Beit Theresienstadt. Another diplomat who ended his term recently is Arno Mitterdorfer, cultural attaché of the Austrian embassy, also a good friend of Beit Theresienstadt. Lately, the new German ambassador, Stefan Seibert, also visited Beit Theresienstadt. We are doing our best to cultivate our relations with the countries involved in the story of Ghetto Theresienstadt and to initiate joint activities.

Towards the coming new year, I would like to wish everyone a year of peace, fraternity, and good tidings.

Yours, Tami Kinberg
Director of Beit Theresienstadt

**Happy New Year,
 A year of health and
 friendship**

Beit Theresienstadt staff

Illustration from an essays booklet, Heim L410
 October 18, 1943



Ceremony for Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day

On Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2023, a moving ceremony was held at Beit Theresienstadt, attended by ghetto survivors, Slovak Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Igor Mauk, Austrian Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Nikolaus Lutterotti, Deputy Chief of Mission at the German embassy, Dr. Jörg Walendy, Cultural Attaché at the Czech embassy in Israel, Mr. Michal Dvořák, Mayor of the Emek Hefer Regional Council, Galit Shaul, community chairperson of Givat Haim Ihud, Ms. Liora Roffman, officers and soldiers, members of the Beit El congregation, and many other guests.



This year the ceremony focused on work in Ghetto Theresienstadt. The Jewish leadership thought that efficient work would ensure protection from death, as workers were essential for the Germans. This conception, held in many ghettos and camps, did not prove true. The idea of eliminating the Jews was stronger than the need to use them as forced labor. The great majority of workers in Ghetto Theresienstadt were sent to the death camps and perished, but work did manage to save or at least improve the lives of many in other ways.

The torches were lit by six survivors: Yoel Miller, Avi Bassist, Hanna Greenwald, Rafi and Gabi Elias (in memory of the late Ruth Elias), Prof. Shlomo Breznitz, and Micha Glass. (see pic. above, from right). ■



Rafi and Gabi Elias light the torch in memory of their mother Ruth Elias



"Lev HaPardes" and "Kzat Aheret" choirs



From left: Dr. Jörg Walendy, Mr. Arno Mitterdorfer, Ambassador Nikolaus Lutterotti, Mr. Michal Dvořák, Ambassador Igor Mauk, Ms. Liora Roffman, Mr. Yonni Ari, Ms. Galit Shaul

On Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day, Beit Theresienstadt held a wide range of events in addition to the ceremony. These included lectures, film screenings, and testimonies. This year once again, we displayed mobile exhibitions about Ghetto Theresienstadt at the Logistics Center of Israel Railways in Lod (Lydda), at the Carmel Hospital in Haifa, at the Keter Company, and in different hi-tech companies. ■



Exhibition at Carmel Hospital, Haifa



Exhibition at Cyrebro, TA



Exhibition at Israel Railways



Theresienstadt survivor, Gidon Lev, telling his story to Delta employees

"Return of the orchestra"

In early August, the "History, Music, and Memory" master classes were held at the Ben Yakir youth village. They were attended by some 70 different-aged teens who play bow instruments (violin, cello, and viola) and wind instruments (saxophone and clarinet), as well as a voice class. Renown violinist Haim Taub (who celebrated his 98th birthday) came to teach the exceptional musicians.



In the voice class, the singers worked on a monodrama written by teacher Orit Shiloach, inspired by testimonies from Ghetto Theresienstadt. The monodrama tells the story of cultural life in the ghetto and it includes arias and vocal pieces from known operas staged in the ghetto. The final concert of the master classes "Return of the orchestra" was held at the Petah Tikva cultural hall in the presence of a large audience. The program

featured the monodrama as well as the works practiced by the students during the week. In addition, a moving piece of music written by Hagit Kfir, a creative singer and cantor, was also played. Kfir composed music to a text written by a young girl from Hungary, Toby Terkeltaub, in a Passover Haggadah she prepared under extreme conditions at the Lenzing Camp (a subcamp of Mauthausen) in Austria, for Passover 1945.

Together with her good friend Aliza Klein she was taken on the Death March. A moment before her death, Toby gave her friend a tiny booklet with a blue cloth cover, the inner pages made of folded toilet paper. Toby had embroidered on the cover letters with threads unraveled from her prisoner's uniform. She encircled them with a frame, on the top right embroidered the word "Zion", and in the middle the map of Israel. The booklet is now kept at the Chedva Iveshitz Institute for Shoah Studies in Haifa.



The "History, music, and memory" international master classes took place this year once again under the musical management of violinist, maestro Eyal Shiloach. ■

Annual conference

"On Holocaust Remembrance Day the teacher asked the students in my class in Tel Aviv to bring stories of families that had been through the Holocaust. Our family album contained a photograph of my grandfather wearing the uniform of the German Wehrmacht", related actress and director Sara von



Sara von Schwarze

Schwarze in a fascinating lecture on her life, at Beit Theresienstadt's annual conference.

Von Schwarze was born in Munich to Protestant German parents who converted to Judaism after the Second World War, and immigrated to Israel. Her father is a painter and architect who taught at the Technion and in the Academy of the Arts. Von Schwarze's mother translated into German several well known Hebrew books. Von Schwarze grew up in Tel Aviv and attended the Ironi Hey high school. She went on to study at the Beit Zvi School of the Performing Arts. She has performed in Israel's top theatres and won many prizes. Her life as an Israeli/German/Jew contained many ups and downs and in her lecture she speaks about her deliberations, psychological distress, and exceptional coping. As one who alternated between many

identities she has very interesting insights on the human soul and the considerable audience, that attended her lecture was amazed at her story and strengthened by it. The well-known Efroni choir from Emek Hefer appeared at the conference with traditional Israeli songs. Czech Ambassador to Israel who recently concluded his term of office, Mr. Martin Stropnick participated for the last time in the event at Beit Theresienstadt and it was an opportunity to thank him for the embassy's excellent cooperation and support of Beit Theresienstadt. This year too the encounter with members of the association, survivors, and their family members, was moving and uplifting and generated anticipation of the next encounter. ■



Ambassador Stropnick and Tami Kinberg



Chairperson Daniel Shek

“Days Beyond Time” at Siegen Wittgenstein, Germany

This year, Emek Hefer and Siegen-Wittgenstein are celebrating 50 years of joint activity as “twin cities”. As part of the celebrations, the exhibition “Artist Meets Testimony – Days Beyond Time” is on display at the **Aktives Südwestfalen museum**. The museum was established on the former site of the synagogue that was completely burned down during the events of Kristallnacht on November 10, 1938. The synagogue, designed by architect Eduard Fürstenau from Berlin, was built in 1902. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries Siegen had a small Jewish community, slightly more than 100 people, most of whom were merchants. Only few community members survived the Holocaust and at present there is no Jewish community in Siegen.

In 1940 a thick concrete-walled shelter against air raids was built on the ruins of the synagogue, to protect local residents against aircraft bombing. In 1996 the Aktives Südwestfalen museum was opened on site, intended as a place of memory, learning, and documentation of the Jewish community and Nazi history.



Siegen synagogue

Several days before the opening we arrived in Siegen to erect the exhibition. We were welcomed by Jens Aspelmeier, director of the museum, and his deputy Thomas Wolf. Melanie Ballarini, in charge of human resources at the municipality of Siegen-Wittgenstein, and Mara Hees her assistant, hosted us warmly. Despite all the concerns (how to hang pictures on concrete walls, for instance), erecting the exhibition was carried out without mishap and we even had time left over to visit Siegen’s special sites – the castle with the beautiful surrounding gardens, the impressive local museum, and the museum of modern art.



From right: Melanie Ballarini, Tami Kinberg, Yossi Veissid, Mayor Andreas Müller, Maya Rave, Gal Rave, Jens Aspelmeier, Mara Hees



Art students at the exhibition



The shelter that became a museum with the picture of the synagogue

The opening event, attended by Mayor Andreas Müller and other notables, was moving. The Emek Hefer Regional Council was represented by Efrat Simenhaus-Shafran. The museum is located near the local university and a group of art students came to the opening and showed much interest in the exhibition. The exhibition will be on display until the end of September and many school students from the area, among others, are expected to visit it. ■

Visit by the German Ambassador to Israel

The website of the German embassy in Israel quotes Ambassador Steffen Seibert who says, among other things: "In awareness of our history, it is my honor and pleasure to take action here to enhance German-Israeli friendship." During the ambassador's visit to Beit Theresienstadt about a month ago, it was possible to sense the importance he attributes to German-Jewish history and the wish to enhance friendship and act in favor of peaceful values.



Visiting the Ghetto children's exhibition



From left: Ambassador Seibert, Ms. Tami Kinberg, Ms Sofia Gundelach Seibert, Mr. Daniel Shek

Ambassador Seibert was accompanied by journalist Juliane Helmhold. The ambassador's wife, Sofia Gundelach Seibert, was also present and demonstrated much interest in the artwork portrayed in the museum. We learned that she herself is an artist, and she was strongly affected by the ghetto prisoners who had documented reality in the ghetto through their art. Daniel Shek, chairperson of Beit Theresienstadt's board, and Tami Kinberg, CEO, accompanied them during the visit and showed them the museum. The good relations between Beit Theresienstadt and the German embassy will undoubtedly continue in the future as well, and we anticipate significant joint activities. ■

Survivors' encounter for the new year

Beit Theresienstadt is continuing the tradition of holding a survivors' encounter and this time the encounter took place on September 11, several days before Rosh Hashana 5784. The encounter included a lavish breakfast, a meeting of friends, music, and presenting interesting items from the Beit Theresienstadt archives. For the Beit Theresienstadt staff it is a wonderful opportunity to hear stories and receive more information on the experiences of our friends in Ghetto Theresienstadt. ■



A Hebrew calendar drawn in the ghetto by Hilda Zadikow

We need your help!

We are currently working on an innovative and interactive exhibition that will allow us to expand our audience and connect the younger generation to the unique story of Ghetto Theresienstadt.

The cost of the project is very high, and we are making great efforts to raise the necessary funds.

Please help us bring this about. Any donation will be greatly appreciated!

For donation details see the back page.



News from the Educational Center

Rich and varied educational activities were held at the Beit Theresienstadt Educational Center until the beginning of the school summer vacation. Towards Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day and the following days, different groups of schoolchildren, soldiers, security officers, and others visited Beit Theresienstadt. In early July, the second part of an Israeli-German youth encounter took place, part of a continuous collaboration between Beit Theresienstadt and the Wannsee Conference House in Berlin. The project participants were students from the Golda Meir high school in Ness Ziona and the Schiller Gymnasium in Berlin. The topic of the project was defined as "Implications of Nazism and the Holocaust for German, Israeli, and Jewish identity (after 1945/1948)". Before the visit of the German students to Israel, the Israeli



Visit at Kibutz Givat Haim Ihud



Workshop at Beit Ha'Gefen



Sabbath prayer at a synagogue in Berlin



At the Ben Gurion House



At Beit Theresienstadt

students visited Berlin in late March 2023, when they became acquainted with the urban memorial space in Berlin, visited the Wannsee Conference House and the Neukölln Borough in Berlin, and participated in workshops on identity, prejudice, and diversity. As stated, in early July the German youth reciprocated and visited Israel. During the visit, the students from Berlin toured Jerusalem and visited Yad Vashem. The two

groups visited the Jewish-Arab Cultural Center Beit Ha'Gefen in Haifa, the Ben Gurion House in Tel Aviv, experienced a memory workshop in the Tel Aviv urban space, and of course visited Beit Theresienstadt. Beyond the project's structured activities, the students were hosted by their counterparts, became familiar with the families and life style in Israel and Berlin, had a good time and enjoyed themselves. ■

"The Joe Alon Connection program"

This year the Joe Alon Connection program began operating, under the auspices of Beit Theresienstadt. The program was established in 2019 at the initiative of Rachel Alon-Margalit, daughter of the late Colonel Joe Alon, to commemorate her father.

Alon, the descendant of a Czech father, was trained as a pilot in Czechoslovakia before Israel was founded. He was among the founders of the Israeli Air Force, and served as a combat pilot and military attaché to the US. The program is intended for Israeli and Czech students. It encompasses mutual delegations, preparatory sessions in the students' classrooms, and online encounters. During the program the students learn about the joint history of the two nations, the elimination of the Jewish community in the Holocaust, the current life style, geography, culture, sports, art, etc.

The main aim of the program is to enhance Israeli acquaintance with Czech culture, society, and history, and vice versa; to form a direct and personal encounter between the teens through joint studying; to impart humanist values that will lead the world to a better future, while portraying Israel as a positive, innovative, advanced, and ethical country. ■



Colonel Joe Alon
(picture from the program's website)

"The way out" – Innovative interpretation of the "Brundibar" children's opera

As part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the twin city alliance between the Emek Hefer Regional Council and the municipality of Siegen-Wittgenstein, Israeli and German teens connected through a special musical project inspired by the "Brundibar" children's opera from Ghetto Theresienstadt. Delegations from Emek Hefer and Siegen met in Israel and Germany and even visited Theresienstadt in the Czech Republic in a guided tour of the commemoration site there.

A professional Israeli-German team of musicians and producers instructed the students. Musician Dan Rapoport, an expert on the music of Ghetto Theresienstadt, told the participating students about Brundibar and about music in the ghetto, as well as its considerable meaning for the inmates. The students who participated in the show related that following the conversation with Dan they understood that they would never be able to truly feel what the children in the ghetto had gone through, so they decided to readapt the opera.

Iris Shavit, a drama teacher and member of the staff said that the intention was to open the teens to another world, to let them bring their world to us. The idea was to let the children feel the anxiety sensed when you are under someone else's control, helpless to do anything.

At the end of the show the participants spoke about how music connects people and how the process of learning the texts and rehearsing the music connected them. Nearly all the music in the show was composed by the students themselves, aside from the original songs from Brundibar. During the year they learned, among other things, how to fit the music to the scene and to the situation and compose accordingly.

The message concerning the power of unity, which is the heart of the story in Brundibar, was conveyed in an innovative and original way, and this was also the purpose of the delegation

– to form connections between the teens, to open a wide perspective, to open up to new cultures.

Efrat Simenhaus-Shafran from the Regional Council Emek Hefer says: I can attest that our youth from Emek Hefer are socially involved, socially active, politically involved, and I think that the German youth are the same. Many things are happening at present in the world around us and the messages of the opera are messages that can be validated in the present time, learning from it how we can act and do things differently. The young are those who are capable of leading change. ■



Members of the Israeli and German delegation visiting the Theresienstadt memorial

Rabbi Dr. Max Moses Friediger in Ghetto Theresienstadt (1943-1945)

Dr. Margalit Shlain

Rabbi Max Moses Friediger was born in 1884 in Budapest, Austro-Hungary, and died in 1947 in Copenhagen. He studied at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Budapest, where he earned a PhD. in philosophy, and at the same time also at the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, where he was ordained. During the First World War he served as a military chaplain in the Austro-Hungarian army and was decorated with a Merit Cross for Civil Servants, a Red Cross medal, and a Franz Josef Cross.

He served as head of the Talmud Torah school and lecturer at the Teachers College in Prague and then as rabbi in Prolitz and Odersberg. In 1920 he was appointed Royal Danish Chief Rabbi in Copenhagen.

In 1943, after the occupation of Denmark by Nazi Germany, Rabbi Friediger was incarcerated together with Jewish notables in the Horserød Camp and then in Swinemünde, and on October 6, 1943, he was deported from there to Ghetto Theresienstadt. In the ghetto he was included in the Council of Elders as the representative of Denmark's Jews and he occupied rabbinical positions. He ran prayer quorums at the synagogue in the Magdeburg barracks and gave sermons, as well as caring for members of his community. Due to the shortage of food and the hunger he permitted Orthodox Jews to eat non-kosher food, as it was a matter of life or death. After the large fall deportations from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz in September-October 1944, which included most of the rabbis, all care of religious matters in the camp was managed in practice by Rabbis Neuhaus and Friediger, who on Passover 1945 held a public Seder for hundreds of people in the Sokol Hall.

Rabbi Friediger, together with other notables, was forced to take part in the Nazi propaganda film produced in fall 1944, "A documentary film from a Jewish settlement area", under close supervision of SS officers.



Rabbi Friediger in the Nazi propaganda film from 1944

Rabbi Friediger was reelected to the Council of Elders, established on December 13, 1944, a position he held until April 15, 1945, when he was liberated and left the camp with the assistance of the Red Cross to Sweden, together with the Danish Jews who had survived in Theresienstadt. At the end of the war he returned to Denmark and resumed his position as Chief Rabbi, which he retained until his death.

As the most senior representative of the Jews of Denmark at the camp, Rabbi Friediger met with the representative of the Danish Foreign Office and the representative of the Danish Red Cross during their visit to Theresienstadt on June 23, 1944, but he was unable to inform them of the true living conditions at the camp. After the visit, a conflict emerged between Rabbi Friediger and the other members of the Council of Elders, due to his demand to improve the residential conditions of all Danish Jews, as had been done for a small group of them favored by the Germans. The request was untenable, however, as it would have come at the expense of other inmates, forcing them to live in even more crowded conditions.

In contrast, in January 1945, Rabbi Friediger collaborated with the Jewish Elder, Dr. Benjamin Murrelstein and the Council of Elders, when SS Officer Haindl found cigarettes in the glaziers' workshop (perceived as an extremely grave offense) and arrested the craftsman Taussig, who was brutally interrogated and revealed the names of 15 collaborators in the smuggling. These were promptly incarcerated and a harsh collective punishment was enforced on the entire camp. Murrelstein managed to convince camp commandant Rahm to reduce the penalty and release most of the suspects, aside from Herbert Kane and Busch who were suspected of smuggling from outside the camp, in return for Kane's full confession of how the cigarettes had reached him and a promise that he would not be punished. He also convened the Council of Elders and instructed Rabbi Friediger to talk to Kane, who was a Danish subject, and clarify the conditions to him. Rabbi Friediger managed to persuade Kane to confess his deeds before he would break down in a violent interrogation, and thus minimize the damage to himself and to everyone else. He and his Czech partner indeed remained incarcerated in the Small Fortress, but he was liberated together with all the Danish Jews in April 1945.

On April 14, 1945, Rabbi Friediger was summoned to the German command where he was informed, to his surprise, that all Danish Jews must pack their belongings immediately in preparation for liberation. Murrelstein promptly helped organize the transport and in a last conversation with Friediger disclosed confidential information about the camp and asked him to act through the Swedish Red Cross to have the international Red Cross protect Theresienstadt until the end of the war. ■

History of the Jews of Denmark at Ghetto Theresienstadt

Dr. Margalit Shlain

On April 9, 1940, Nazi Germany invaded Denmark, whose government decided to capitulate in order to maintain its ruling institutions, and with the promise that no harm would befall the Jews of Denmark. In August 1943 the Germans also declared military rule in Denmark and planned to deport the Jews for extermination on October 1 and 2, 1943. In a rescue operation assisted by the Danish underground, 7,200 Danish Jews (94%) managed to escape to Sweden by boat. 475 Jews were caught by the Germans and sent to Ghetto Theresienstadt. Despite the failure of the operation to deport the Jews, Adolf Eichmann, chief of the Gestapo IVB4 Department for Jewish Affairs, agreed on November 2, 1943, in a conversation with Werner Best, the Reich's plenipotentiary in Denmark, that the Jews deported to Theresienstadt would remain there and not be transported to the death camps, be allowed to receive packages of food and clothing, and that the Germans would allow official representatives from Denmark to visit them.

The request of the Danes joined the recurring requests of Dr. Roland Marti, Chief Medical Officer of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Berlin, to visit Theresienstadt – with the aim of assessing the living conditions of the Jews who had been deported there, and in late May 1944 approval was given for representatives of the International Red Cross and representatives of Denmark and Sweden to tour the camp, on behalf of Reichsführer SS (Himmler). The visit of the International Red Cross delegation to Ghetto Theresienstadt and its success were very important for Himmler, on the assumption that portraying the "good" condition of the deported Jews and refuting the news of their extermination would serve as his alibi and as preparation for talks with the statesmen of the western allied powers against the Soviet Union and communism, with the purpose of saving Germany.

On June 23, 1944, a large delegation came for a tour of Theresienstadt, including representatives of the German authorities, two representatives from Denmark: Frants Hvass, head of the political-legal department in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Dr. Juel Henningsen, an inspector from the Ministry of Health in Copenhagen, representatives of the Danish Red Cross, and Dr. Maurice Rossel, representative of the International Red Cross in Geneva. The three were accompanied by SS officers who were in charge of keeping guard and preventing the inmates from speaking to them.

Before the visit, Theresienstadt underwent beautification of the external areas and of the residential quarters to be visited, particularly those of the Danish Jews. On the eve of the visit, June 22, all the Danish men were assembled. In the presence of Moehs, Eichmann's representative, and the camp's commandant, Jewish Elder Dr. Paul Eppstein instructed them, as ordered by the German, how to conduct themselves and how to respond during the visit. This included a complete prohibition against voicing any criticism or noting a lack of food or illness in the camp (such as typhus, dysentery, etc.)



Buses of the Swedish Red Cross towards their liberation

and a threat that disobeying the orders would result in an end to the food packages and deportation of all Danish Jews in the next transport. The attention of the Danish representatives was drawn first of all to the Danish Jews' health condition, their clothing and residential conditions. They spoke with twenty or thirty Danish Jews, headed by Rabbi Friediger who confirmed their positive impression of the camp. They were told that Theresienstadt is not a transit camp but rather a final destination, and the Germans further added explicitly that no Dane had been deported from there. As a result of the positive report, the Germans officially reaffirmed the immunity of the Danish Jews from deportation and the delivery of packages from Denmark, an immunity that served them well during the large deportations to Auschwitz in the fall of 1944.

In February 1945, Count Folke Bernadotte, Vice Chairman of the Swedish Red Cross, met with Himmler and managed to receive his consent to extract immediately all Scandinavian prisoners who were in concentration camps, transfer them to the Neuengamme camp near Hamburg, and later to Denmark and Sweden, however the Germans did not agree to include in this deal the Danish Jews from Theresienstadt and Bernadotte, concerned that his right to the operation would be undermined, backed down from their rescue. The desperate Danes decided to extract their compatriots on their own, in a prompt operation. Dr. Johannes Holm, head of the Danish health services in the combined Danish and Swedish Red Cross headquarters in Germany, utilized the assistance of SS-Obersturmbanführer Dr. Rennau, Himmler's contact with Bernadotte. They left for Berlin and managed to receive from the Gestapo the necessary documents to release Denmark's Jews. From there they travelled immediately to the German command center at Theresienstadt, and on April 13 they brought the Danish Jews the news of their liberation.

The morning of April 15, 1945 was an exciting day for all inmates at Theresienstadt. The 425 Danish Jews boarded 35 buses of the Swedish Red Cross towards their liberty. ■

The rescue of Denmark's Jews in Israel's memory culture – Research innovations

Dr. Orna Keren-Carmel

Over the years, positive aspects of Denmark's conduct during the Second World War received precedence within Israel's memory culture: Denmark became a beacon in the darkness of the Holocaust, an example of how other European countries could have saved their Jewish communities from the claws of the Nazis if they had only wished to do so.

The many commemoration patterns of the rescue event attest to its important status, in the present as well, as a means of interpretation connecting the past to the present and future. Beginning from the 1950s, Israel was the main factor acting to commemorate the rescue. At that time, the character and content of memorial ceremonies held to mark the rescue was set, integrating the Jewish "Yizkor" and "Kaddish" prayers as well as contemporary Hebrew poetry. In the 1960s, when efforts to shape the memory surrounding the rescue were at a height, the commemoration patterns were accelerated and expanded: squares and monuments were established (the "Denmark Square" in Beit Hakerem), festive assemblies produced, various institutions marking the rescue were inaugurated (the "Eitanim" hospital and the "Denmark" high school – both in Jerusalem), children from a Danish fishermen's village were invited to Ashkelon, and in schools throughout the country classes were taught with explanations about Denmark, its culture, and mainly its rallying in support of the Jews during the war. In 1963 three trees were even planted in the Avenue of the Righteous at Yad Vashem in memory of the rescue: for Danish King Christian X. for the Danish underground, and for the Danish people. The request of the Danes at that time to recognize the entire nation, rather than individuals, as "righteous gentiles", which stemmed from their desire to emphasize that the entire nation was united in its resistance of Nazism, fit in wonderfully with Israel's inclination to portray the Danish case as an exceptional example.

This positive representation of Denmark during the war, which became firmly established in Israel both among the researchers and among the general public several years after the war ended, was affected by the constructive relations that began to develop between Israel and the Scandinavian countries in general and Denmark in particular a short while after the founding of the state. The sweeping Danish support of the young state, was often interpreted as a natural continuation of the support that Denmark displayed towards the persecuted Jews during the Second World War. Hence, efforts to shape the memory of the Holocaust in Israel in those years merged with the strong relationship formed between Israel and the Scandinavian countries, and led to the formation of the exclusively positive interpretation of the conduct of the Danish population towards the Jewish minority during the Holocaust.

In recent decades, however, the beginning of a new trend is



Inauguration ceremony of Denmark Square in Jerusalem, 1962. Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Danish Prime Minister Viggo Kampmann

evident in Israel, with the effect of at least partially affecting prevalent patterns of commemoration. One of the main reasons is the shift that occurred within Israeli society in the status of the survivors during the country's years of existence. Until the 1990s, the bravery ethos was applied to the Danish people as a model of collective bravery, while since then more emphasis has been given to the image of the survivors, the story of simple Jews in occupied Denmark. This process has led to a focus on individuals rather than seeing them as part of a community, and to a reduced inclination to generalize and form a united view of the experience of all Danish Jews. The shift in the status of the survivors also changed the structure of memorial events and their content: In contrast to the first decades after the rescue, when the main aim of the events' organizers was to express gratitude to the rescuers and their families, whether by inviting them to Israel or by holding an array of events which they attended, in recent years the survivors and their families have become the main participants in the commemoration events, and in many cases they themselves are also the organizers.

Through their personal story, some of the survivors are loosening the previously customary representation of the rescue and attempting to return it to its natural dimensions. This trend is gradually undermining the premises underlying the rescue story in the memory culture, although it has not yet trickled into the textbooks, the public monumental landscape, or official representations of the rescue event in Israel. Thus, the mundane, complex, and fascinating truth concerning the rescue of the Jews of Denmark in the Holocaust has yet to be fully revealed to the Israeli public. ■

"Be good and smart, like we always wanted you to be..." The story of Eva (Lederer) Kermish / Noa David

The Beit Theresienstadt archives contain more than 100 letters and postcards sent by relatives of my grandmother, Eva Kermish née Lederer, from 1939 to early 1943.

Eva was born in 1922 to her parents Ernst and Wilma in Volyne, Czechoslovakia, the older sister of Vera (born 1923) and Martha (born 1928). Eva studied at the Gymnasium and was a member of the Zionist youth movement "El Al", through which she left for a training course (hachshara) of the "Hehalutz" movement.

After Nazi Germany invaded Czechoslovakia in March 1939, Ernst, Eva's father, began looking for migration options for the entire family, to allow them to leave Czechoslovakia, but his attempts to get the entire family out did not succeed. Eva and her sister Vera were able, thanks to their membership in a Zionist youth movement, to leave for a training course of "Hehalutz" in Denmark. The departure date was set for September 1, 1939. As a result of the outbreak of the Second World War, the date of departure for Denmark was postponed and eventually, in early November 1939, she left the house for Denmark.



Sisters Eva and Vera with their mother Wilma

In a testimony given by Eva in 1998, she related that she arrived in Copenhagen and from there continued to Roskilde, the headquarters of the "Hehalutz" movement. Eva was placed at a farm in Hedehusene, where she worked for about one year.

During her entire time in Denmark (and then in Sweden) Eva received letters and postcards from her relatives in the Czech lands. Nearly all the letters were written by all three family members; at first her father, then her mother, and finally Martha, the younger sister, added several lines. In her testimony, she spoke about the content of the letters received from home: "My parents wrote to me about the yellow star of David, that they had received a yellow star of David. That they were no longer allowed to travel between the cities... in the fall of 1941 some of the family... were already deported...". Her parents and her sister Martha were deported to Ghetto



Wilma and Ernst Lederer on their wedding day

Theresienstadt in late November 1942. About two months later, on February 1, 1943, the family was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they were murdered. In one of the last letters sent, before their deportation to the ghetto, Eva's father wrote:

Dear Eva!

We were glad to receive your postcard from Copenhagen two days ago... This will probably be the last letter from you for a while because we received notice of a transport intended for our region, scheduled for November 23 and November 27. We have been allocated three weeks and then we will begin our travels. Until now we had hopes, but that is over and we shall leave like so many others before us. It is extremely aggravating that we will probably not be able to correspond with you, the children, for quite a long time... There is still time for farewells, I have so much I would like to say to you. I hope I will have another opportunity... Our thoughts will be with you a lot, you know, and the hope that we will meet again will have to keep our heads up.



The original letter

Warm regards and kisses,
Father

Eva's mother added:

My dear girl!

...Take care of yourself, my beloved daughter, be good and smart, like we always wanted you to be... Keep in touch with Vera, Anna, and Ella, stay together, you are all each other has... Thank fate for what you will be spared. I hug you in my mind and kiss you warmly...

Your mother

At the end of the letter Martha, her younger sister, added:

Dear Eva! So we will still be spared this, we still had hopes, but we are losing them. But we shall leave home, which we will miss very much, with our heads held high and with hopes for better times. Lots of blessings, yours, Martha

Eva remained in Denmark until Rosh Hashana 1943, when she



The original letter

received notice from "Hehalutz" that it is necessary to flee. On the escape and rescue by the Danish underground she said in her testimony: "On Rosh Hashana Eve I received a telephone call... run... We fled north of Copenhagen to Danish friends... They had a small house north of Copenhagen... not far from the coast. Because it was near the coast we planned to look for some fisherman to take us to Sweden... We reached Gilleleje... We had to get to the ship... We were notified that the Germans were coming. The ship left and we were only a few meters (away)... We stood in the harbor and didn't know what to do. We entered a fishermen's warehouse and laid on

wet fishermen's nets and there were small windows. We saw the Germans outside, walking to and fro. We were there for some time, I don't remember whether it was a few hours or a day... Finally people came and took us to an area of summer houses and left us there for several days... The people who remained in Gilleleje, some of them fled into a church. It was a bad move because the Germans took all those who were there... Several days later, when the city was clean... There was a notice in the middle of the night. We went to the harbor. There was a fishermen's boat. We were under deck. It took a few hours. We remained down there until we received notice that we could go up on deck... and that's how we reached Sweden, on Yom Kippur..."

My grandfather and grandmother, Eva and Fritz, reached Sweden on Yom Kippur 1943, and were sent to work on a farm in southern Sweden. They immigrated to Israel in 1946 ,on the "Ba'al Bek" ship transporting illegal immigrants. Fritz (Efraim) David died in May 2010, and Eva died in July 2010. At present we, the family, are making efforts to translate all the letters from Czech and German to Hebrew. ■



The headstone erected in Volyne in memory of the family members murdered in the Holocaust

From the archives

Recently, Dita Kraus brought a landscape drawing by a young boy, Štěpán Pollak, portraying an avenue of trees flanked by houses. Dita related: "It was in the summer of 1942, six months before our deportation. The Jewish children went in small groups every morning to "Hagibor" (the Jewish sports society center), an hour's walk from the old quarter of Josefov, to which more and more Jewish families were being transferred. One of the boys in the group was Petr Pollak and I fell in love with him but I didn't dare show it. To be closer to him, I would hang out with his younger brother, Štěpán. Our mothers were friends and I once heard them wondering why a 13-year-old girl is spending time with an 11-year-old boy...



Štěpán Pollak

Štěpán was an intelligent, talented boy, and we became friends. When his

family received the summons for deportation he gave me his photograph and a drawing as a present. On the back of the drawing he added his signature, together with a dedication. Štěpán and his family were sent to Auschwitz and none of them survived".

The drawing was kept together with various mementos and with Dita's diary by a half-Jewish friend who remained in Prague, and it was returned to Dita after the war. This is the only remaining memory of the young boy. ■



Drawing of a transport

Einat Even brought to the archives a drawing that she had found in her mother's estate. Einat is the daughter of Eva Even and the granddaughter of Stella Herman, the famed gym teacher. The watercolor, from 1945, seems to depict a transport entering the ghetto. The drawing was kept by the family and it originates from the ghetto, but there is no other information. The signature on the drawing, in red, is a little blurred and hard to decipher. However Tereza Maizels, the manager of the archive, managed to identify the signature of artist Otto Ungar and the inscription – "A memento, Terezin 42".

Otto Ungar was one of the artists who worked in the design office at the ghetto's technical department. He was one of the group of artists who tried to smuggle out of the ghetto drawings documenting what was happening in there. The

group was caught and imprisoned in the "Small Fortress" prison. Ungar was the first of the imprisoned artists to be sent to Auschwitz, from where he was sent to Buchenwald on the "Death March" and liberated. Shortly after his liberation, he was hospitalized with severe tuberculosis in a hospital in a town near Weimar and died there in July 1945. ■



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