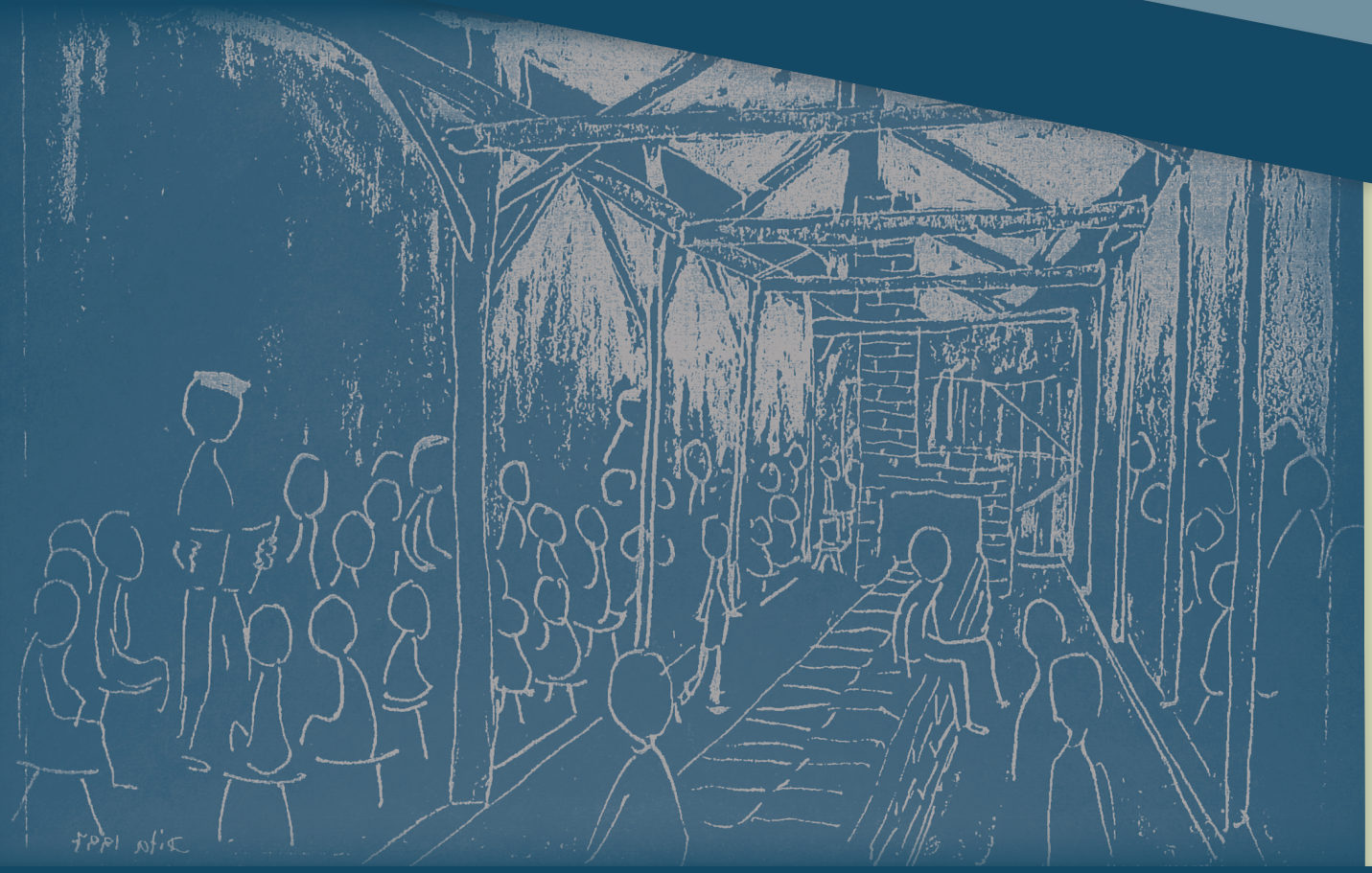


Dapei Kesher

Beit Theresienstadt Theresienstadt Martyrs Remembrance Association



Family camp in Auschwitz Birkenau



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Editors and photography: Beit Theresienstadt team Design: Studio Orni Drori, Haifa Translation: Rachel Kessel

On the cover: The children's barrack in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dita Kraus

Upcoming events

6.5.2024	Monday	9:45	Ceremony for Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day	Beit Vienna Givat Haim Ichud
7.5.2024	Tuesday	15:00	"Liga Terezin" memorial tournament	Givat Haim Ichud stadium
24.5.2024	Friday	10:00	Annual conference	Beit Theresienstadt
2.6.2024	Every 2nd. Sunday	10:30	Various online lectures	ZOOM

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

"From Prague to Prague"

A call to take part in a voyage in the footsteps of a Holocaust survivor.

Beit Theresienstadt, in collaboration with the MEMO association from Germany, is organizing a journey that will begin in Prague and continue through Terezin, Auschwitz, and Dachau, following the story of the survivor Max Mordechai Livni.

The group will consist of 10 Israelis and 10 Europeans, aged 23-35.

Professional and experienced guides will accompany the journey, which will take place July 10-23, 2024.

Participation fee: 300 euros.

For registration and additional details:

Liora Livni Cohen 050-7501172, email: cohenyas@inter.net.il



To all members and friends of Beit Theresienstadt



The last six months were the most terrible ever experienced by Israel. At Beit Theresienstadt we have indeed already returned to a regular schedule, but we are not back to normal. The war, as well as those abducted and murdered, are constantly on our minds.

On October seventh the present events merged horrifyingly with echoes of the past.

At the time of that Saturday's atrocities we were at the height of our activity. Events and encounters were planned, many student groups slated to embark on the journey to Poland had scheduled preliminary visits at our educational center in preparation for the journey, encounters of Israeli youth with German and Czech youth were planned, as well as many other activities that were cancelled following the situation. The staff refused to give up and, in the spirit of the founders, a decision was made to continue the cultural activities notwithstanding. We decided to hold the planned encounter of future generations in person in November, and it was heartwarming to see Beit Theresienstadt once again full of people. Another large event that was postponed was that commemorating 80 years since the deportation of Denmark's Jews to Ghetto Theresienstadt, in collaboration with the embassies of Denmark and Sweden. It was eventually held online on Channukah, and at its opening Shani Shavit, granddaughter of Reuven Fisherman, a survivor of the ghetto from Denmark, lit the Channukah candles. June 2023 marked the centennial of the birth of the late Ruth Bondy. The event planned to commemorate the date was only held in April this year, but as they say - better late than never... The event was a big success and you can read about it in this issue.

Schoolchildren too are already visiting Beit Theresienstadt once again, but the guidance provided was at first not the

same as previously. When the visits resumed, some of the instructors were uncertain about the suitable response to questions concerning the events of October seventh. When referring to the massacre in the south, considerable use is made of Holocaust-related terms. This is indeed the closest conceptual world for depicting the indescribable horrors. For many, the Holocaust abruptly became very relevant, attaching a question mark to the phrase "Never again". Israelis who were living amidst a sense of safety and calm are now feeling that the ground has become unstable. What is the role of Beit Theresienstadt in such times?

During the first month after the beginning of the war in Gaza, when Beit Theresienstadt was bereft of visitors, we decided that this is the time to visit the survivors, to ask how they are doing and support them. Such visits are a special experience for us, we are always greeted warmly and lovingly and there is a certain sense of optimism that is common to nearly all the survivors. These visits led to an insight. Hanka Drori summarized the message conveyed by the survivors - "It is bad now, and it will be bad and painful and sad, but it will pass, and then good times will come". In early March, at a conference in Auschwitz to mark 80 years since the liquidation of the first transport to the "family camp", the young students who had come along on the journey asked me whether I see a light at the end of the tunnel regarding the situation in Gaza. Despite my dire personal feelings I replied readily - If the Holocaust survivors we know managed to get through the terrible atrocities, to build their life anew and to look to the future with hope, so must we.

Praying for the rapid return of the abductees and for times of quiet and peace.

Yours, Tami Kinberg
Director of Beit Theresienstadt



Drawing from a Poem notebook by Gertrude Groag

Gathering of survivors

On September 11, an emotional gathering of Ghetto Theresienstadt survivors took place in honor of the new year. The gathering began with breakfast, and then Dr. Tereza Maizels, manager of the archive, presented selected items from the collection and those present shared memories and information regarding the items and life in the ghetto in general. Finally, the duo Orit Orbach (clarinet) and Oded Shuv (guitar) performed joyful rhythmic songs. Students from the Shvilei Haemek school gave the survivors gifts for the holiday. ■



Encounter of future generations

On November 24, a conference for future generations took place at Beit Theresienstadt. Family members of survivors attended an encounter aimed at continuing in the path of the founders. Dr. Tereza Maizels told the young generation, those who are not familiar and also those who do not remember, about the decision to establish Beit Theresienstadt and the various stages along the way. Tereza presented fascinating documents from the archive, letters, photographs, and architectural plans that illuminate the establishment of the house. The intergenerational connection was manifested in a conversation between Tal Bashan and her daughter, actor Carmel Netzer, who spoke about their mother and grandmother, the late Ruth Bondy, and the significance of passing on the remembrance of the Holocaust to the next generations. ■



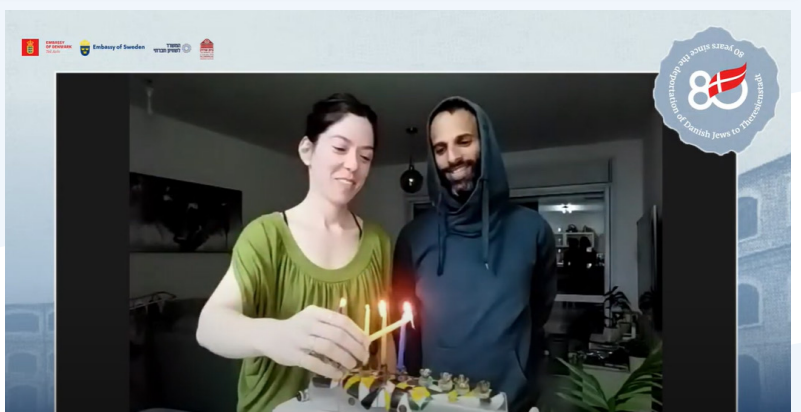
80 years since the deportation of Denmark's Jews to Ghetto Theresienstadt

On December 10, an online conference was held to mark 80 years since the deportation of Denmark's Jews to Ghetto Theresienstadt, attended by the ambassador of Denmark to Israel, Mr. Thomas Winkler, and the ambassador of Sweden to Israel, Mr. Erik Ullenhag.

On April 9, 1940, Nazi Germany invaded Denmark. In August 1943 the Germans declared military rule in Denmark and planned to send the Jews to their death. In early October 1943, in a rescue operation aided by the Danish underground, 7,200 of Denmark's Jews (94%) managed to flee to Sweden by boat. However, 475 Jews were caught by the Germans and deported to Ghetto Theresienstadt.

The event began with the lighting of Chanukkah candles. Shani Shavit, granddaughter of survivor Reuven Fisherman, lit the fourth Chanukkah candle and the audience joined her in singing "Maoz Tzur". The ambassadors presented their greetings, followed by Dr. Orna Keren-Carmel who spoke about the rescue of Denmark's Jews - in Ghetto Theresienstadt as well. Dr. Dov Levitan spoke about the white buses of the Swedish Red Cross that arrived in the ghetto in April 1945 to rescue the Danish Jews.

A recording of the event can be found on Beit Theresienstadt's website. ■



Shani Shavit lights the Hanukkah candles

"The train to freedom"

One of Beit Theresienstadt's special collaborations in recent months, an initiative of Yaakov Ben Ze'ev (Simkovitz), is with the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland, which is leading a project to commemorate the rescue operation involving the train that left Ghetto Theresienstadt for Switzerland in February 1945.

1,200 inmates of Ghetto Theresienstadt volunteered to join the transport, which was the last to leave the ghetto and differed from all previous transports. When the train reached St. Gallen it was greeted by members of the Va'ad Ha-hatzalah Rescue Committee established by Swiss Jews to help Jewish refugees and extract them from the concentration camps. The rescue operation was facilitated by the mediation of former Swiss president, Jean-Marie Musy.

Also collaborating in the commemoration project are the Czech Charles University and the Dutch Leiden University, and its aim is to gather information on each of the train's passengers and to erect memorials at every place they reached. On the anniversary of the train's departure we held an online encounter, where the researchers presented the project. The encounter was attended by Achim Bagainski and Zvi Cohen, who had been on the train and who spoke about their experiences. The research team has issued a call to anyone with information about the train's passengers. If you are family members, acquaintances, or have any information on the train that left Theresienstadt for Switzerland on February 5, please contact Yaakov Ben Ze'ev (Simkovitz) at yaakov@bterezin.org.il. ■



Achim Bagainski at the clinic in Switzerland

The centennial of the birth of Ruth Bondy

Over the past six months the Dan Accadia hotel has been hosting evacuees from southern Israel. Nevertheless, Mr. Ami Federmann, one of the owners of the Dan Hotels and the son of Ruth Federmann, a survivor of Ghetto Theresienstadt, granted us use of the beautiful hall overlooking the beach for the conference, which he hosted most generously. Three wonderful lecturers held the full attention of the audience, where each referred to another aspect of Ruth's multifaceted figure. The first was Prof. Hanna Yablonka, who spoke about the absorption of Holocaust survivors in Israel and their contribution to the country, as well as about the Czechoslovakian character, confirmed by the many nods in the audience. Prof. Nili Cohen combined literature and law in her fascinating lecture "100 years since the birth of Ruth Bondy, 100 years since the death of Franz Kafka" and also spoke of her personal acquaintance with Ruth Bondy. The second part of the conference was cheerful and amusing, as Danny Kerman spoke of his work alongside Ruth in the editorial office of "Dvar HaShavua" and their friendship of many years. Finally, Tal Bashan and Carmel Netzer, Ruth's daughter and granddaughter, chose to bring some of her amusing stories and sentences, under the title "You remind me of myself, and that is no compliment". The audience departed with a smile on their faces and a small bit of optimism in these frenzied times.

A video of the conference can be viewed on the Beit Theresienstadt's website. ■



Carmel Netzer and Tal Bashan



Ami Federmann and Prof. Nili Cohen



Tal Bashan with Danny Kerman



Colette Avital, Tal Bashan, Prof. Hanna Yablonka, Tami Kinberg, Eva Erben, Dr. Margalit Shlain

80 years since liquidation of the first transport to the “family camp” in Birkenau

On the eve of March 8, 1944, a mighty sound of singing was heard, produced by thousands of prisoners - men, women, and children - on their way to the gas chambers. These were inmates who had arrived at the Bllb family camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau on the first transport from Ghetto Theresienstadt. They sang Hatikva, the Czech anthem, and the Internationale, marching towards a clear and known fate. Unlike those victims who were sent to the gas chambers immediately upon their arrival, with no idea of their destination, the prisoners from Ghetto Theresienstadt who arrived on the September 1943 transport had been given an extension in the form of 6 more months of life. Upon arrival at Auschwitz, the letters SB6 were noted on their record, meaning “special treatment” (i.e., death by gas) in 6 months. Among those deported on this transport was Fredy Hirsch, the revered counselor.

80 years later, on Friday, March 8, 2024, we left Prague in a group organized by Tomáš Kraus, one of the senior leaders of the Czech Jewish community and currently the director of the Terezin Initiative Institute (ITI), for a two-day conference in Auschwitz. Among the participants were Dr. Roubinek, director of the Terezin Memorial, two historians researching Ghetto Theresienstadt, Dr. Rutová and Dr. Šplíchalová, as well as Czech teachers and students.

Beside the remnants of the “family camp” blocks an emotional memorial ceremony was held, followed by a tour. The next morning, a discussion was conducted with the participants, where many questions arose, primarily concerning Holocaust remembrance and its meaning. Questions were asked about Israel as well, for example about the survivors’ integration in Israeli society and how they were treated, how does the young generation relate to the Holocaust, and others.

Before returning to Prague, we still had time to visit the old synagogue in the town of Oświęcim, which is now a museum dedicated to the Jewish community that once lived there.

Beit Theresienstadt’s connection with the Terezin Memorial and ITI began at a time when the ghetto survivors themselves were those running Beit Theresienstadt and volunteering



Panel discussion: JUDr. Tomáš Kraus, Michaela Rozov, Tami Kinberg, Dr. Jan Roubinek, Dr. Jana Šplíchalová, Dr. Radana Rutová

there. This relationship of many years is continuing at present as well, manifested in collaborations aimed at commemorating the special story of Ghetto Theresienstadt.

Besides the conference in Auschwitz, other commemorative



Lighting candles near the ruins of the crematorium in Birkenau

events were held in Prague. The organization Památník ticha (Memorial of Silence), which is about to establish a new museum at the Bubny railway station, the place from which the Jews were deported from Prague to Theresienstadt, held a commemorative concert. The concert took place in the Trade Fair Palace (Veletržní palác). Another event took place in the Pinkas Synagogue, where the names of the Holocaust victims are written on the walls. ■

Kaddish Oriya Terezin

Oriya Ricardo, daughter of Hannie Ricardo, was murdered at the Nova party on October seventh. Hannie is a musician and historian who for many years has been researching musicians who operated in Ghetto Theresienstadt. Hannie was a protégé of Prof. David Bloch, musicologist, music lecturer, and pianist, among the top researchers of music written in Ghetto Theresienstadt. She is completing her Master's degree in musicology in New York. As her final project, she composed music to the ancient Jewish memorial prayer, the "Kadish", integrating quotations of composers from Ghetto Theresienstadt. Under the impact of the terrible pain following Oriya's murder, Hannie expanded her work and added an entire part devoted to Oriya, citing Oriya's favorite song, "Spinning around" ("Besivuv") by Israeli rapper Tuna. The work Kaddish Oriya Terezin will be performed in a concert that will include music composed in Ghetto Theresienstadt. Beit Theresienstadt is producing this special emotional project and is dedicated to its success. A 60-singer choir will perform the work on the anniversary of the massacre - October 7, 2024, at the Opera House in Tel Aviv (use of the hall has been granted on a non-profit basis). The heartrending concert painfully links past and present. Hannie's great-grandfather was a cantor at the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam. Hannie's grandparents perished in Ghetto Theresienstadt, and fate has once again caught up with the family. The concert will be performed in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, followed by US performances planned as part of a journey to battle antisemitism. ■



Join us to help support this important project. Donations can be made through the Beit Theresienstadt website or by bank transfer: Theresienstadt Martyrs' Remembrance Association, Bank Leumi, Branch 907 Hadera, account no. 12106/92.



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"Memory in the living room" - Testimony narrators from Emeq Hefer

Another course for Holocaust testimony narrators has begun at Beit Theresienstadt. The course is attended by 20 participants from towns in Emeq Hefer who are researching their family story and will be relating it in "Memory in the living room" encounters on Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day. The stories are varied and interesting and from different places: Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Russia. Among the participants are two Holocaust survivors who

were young girls during the war, as well as a mother and daughter, second and third generation, who will be relating the grandmother's story together. The process includes historical and geographical research, on one hand, and guidance on how to tell an interesting story while providing the necessary emphases, on the other. Some of the course's graduates will already be participating in "Memory in the living room" encounters on the coming Holocaust Remembrance Day. ■

“Liga Terezin” memorial tournament

In early October the “Liga Terezin” traditional memorial tournament was held once again. Young soccer players from the Maccabi Emek Hefer soccer club run by Vicky Glam visited Beit Theresienstadt and heard the unique story of the league that played at Ghetto Theresienstadt in the years 1943 and 1944.

After the instructional session, the players left for the soccer tournament at the Givat Haim Ichud stadium.

The medal awarding ceremony took place in the presence of Galit Shaul, mayor of the Emek Hefer regional council, who praised the players and stressed the importance of sports in general and soccer in particular for upholding the human spirit, social cohesion, persistence, and perseverance. ■



The medal winners of the tournament

News of the educational center

During the summer months many preparations were held at the Educational Center for activities that were to have commenced after the holidays, in October 2023. In September we held a professional development course for instructors at the Educational Center and for the Beit Theresienstadt team at the Basic Training City branch established by the Yad Vashem museum. The course included a discussion with Shani Luria-Farhi and Dafna Amidror on various topics related to erecting historical exhibitions and providing guidance in them, as well as to the age of those in the groups guided.

Regretfully, the Iron Swords war that erupted on October 7, 2023 changed the circumstances and naturally also the plans of the Educational Center. As we know, the horrendous events perpetrated on October seventh led to the utilization of many images from the time of the Second World War and the Holocaust, and historical terms and events received at times

updated relevant meaning. Consequently, we understood that we must start addressing the issue of how to provide instruction on the topic of the Holocaust after October seventh. For this purpose, we first initiated an internal discourse among the staff of the Educational Center and of the museum, followed by a discourse with the instructors, and finally also with the teachers and educational staff at the schools. Ultimately, various accommodations were made, for instance concerning the topics of the instruction and educational discussions with the students. In the months since the war began, we have hosted groups that quite often included students evacuated from southern or northern Israel, and our instructors displayed sensitivity and tailored their guidance in the museum in consideration of the new circumstances. In the next few months we shall begin to prepare for educational activities in the coming school year. ■

In a different way

An exceptional story of love that endured across borders and continents, while in flight, with one event following another and the war at full force. Franz Karl Wolf and Margit née Lichtenstern, two young Jews from Vienna, activists in the "Haboneh" Zionist movement. Franz Karl was a good friend of Leo, Margit's brother, and she was particularly fond of him. Franz Karl studied at the Realgymnasium in Vienna and then proceeded to study chemistry, with the aim of eventually joining the plant owned by his grandfather and father. When Austria was annexed to Germany in the Anschluss in March 1938 and Franz Karl was persecuted by the Nazis as an activist in the Zionist movement, he managed to reach Palestine. Margit too was determined to leave Vienna. Her brother Leo, who had been living in the Netherlands for several years and had developed work and friendship ties, managed in spring 1938 to arrange an entrance visa for her to the Netherlands, as well as a work permit.

Margit had already been in love with Franz Karl in Vienna, but she had waited for him to approach her. When fate separated them with no real farewell, she was left bereft of hope; he was in distant Palestine and she in the Netherlands, a refugee living a temporary existence. Once Franz Karl had established himself a little in Palestine (where he leased and ran a bakery) he began to correspond with his friend Leo and through him contacted Margit as well.

The exchange of letters between the couple appears in the book.

The letters describe Franz Karl's desperate attempts to obtain an entry visa to Palestine for Margit. They managed to marry despite the groom's physical absence from the ceremony, but then Germany invaded the Netherlands and the couple's much awaited unification was postponed once again.

The book describes an exceptional story of love in time of war, as well as unknown diplomatic activity. Through the letters we learn of grave and emotional historical facts, not only during the Second World War but rather also concerning the great injustices that the British government visited upon the Jews during the British mandate by preventing their entrance and rescue from the inferno in Europe.

The letters were published and the story edited by the daughters of Margit and Franz Karl, Miriam Prager and Ruth Elkabetz. The book can be purchased at Beit Theresienstadt. ■



The voice of memories

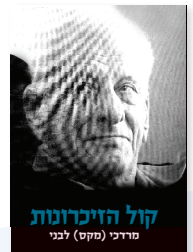
The life story of Max Livni, his childhood and teenage years in Prague, the war years, immigration to Israel, and the revival. Max writes in the preface to the book:

A few years ago I celebrated my 97th birthday. Throughout the nearly one hundred years of my life I stored many events in my memory, unremembered by anyone but myself. Since many of them are not mentioned anywhere else, I decided to write them down. The need to document the stories may have arisen after I lost my sight. The dates in my text are not always accurate. In addition, because I am blind I was unable to type the words, so my daughters Nurit and Liora and my grandson Yuval did it for me... I formulated the words and dictated, and whoever was listening typed... One story led to another, some are very short and others longer. As in life itself, my memories combine moments of hardship and sadness with those of happiness and laughter. I was asked for whom the book is intended, and why only now. I assume that due to my old age I wanted to preserve the events and memories that are in my mind. Something I will leave mainly for my family, but perhaps also for others. I am indeed sorry that I did not write my memories earlier, when I could still have done so myself. But this way we also enjoyed a lot of time together, and that is irreplaceable.

Max's daughters, Nurit and Liora, conclude the book as follows:

Our father Max envisioned this book in his mind after losing his sight. As he said, he formulated the words and dictated them to us. We knew that it would not be an easy challenge - on one hand an extremely old man who cannot read the text, change anything, or make corrections on his own, and on the other us, who had to reread the words to him for approval or rejection. We were constantly aware of the frustration caused by the inability to see. If he had not been so persistent, opinionated, and perceptive, it would not have happened. Many of the stories were part of our childhood and were familiar to us, but time and again something new would crop up that surprised even us... Sometimes we were overwhelmed by tears of identification and sorrow; he couldn't see them and we quietly wiped them away. Other times, we laughed wholeheartedly at mischievous acts of the boy he had been... For his family and acquaintances he is a symbol and role model of how life, even when far from perfect, can be imbued with meaning.

The book can be purchased at Beit Theresienstadt. ■



Torch lighters

Annetta Able



Annetta Heilbrunn Able and her twin sister Stephanie were born in Subotica, Yugoslavia, in 1924, to their mother Teresa Heller and their biological father Vladimir. At age 6 the family moved to Prague. In 1930, after their mother married Arthur Heilbrunn, their sister Elizabeth was born. The sisters were supposed to have been sent on the Kindertransport to England, but understanding that no assurance could be made that they would remain together a decision was reached to leave them in Czechoslovakia. In October 1942 their parents and younger sister were deported to the Lodz Ghetto, never to return. Annetta was deported alone to Ghetto Theresienstadt in July 1942 and Stephanie followed her in December 1942. In the ghetto the sisters worked at the hospital for infectious diseases. In December 1943 Annetta and Stephanie were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The sisters were selected to work at the camp hospital and were among those subjected to the experiments conducted by Dr. Josef Mengele on twins. In January 1945 they were sent on the death march to Germany and were liberated in the Malchov camp. In 1949 Annetta and her husband Jirka immigrated to Israel and settled in Givat Haim. In 1964 the family moved to Australia, where Stephanie and her family were living as well. Annetta lives in Melbourne, Australia, to this day. Stephanie passed away in 2019. ■

Shmuel Winkler



Shmuel (Jirka) Winkler was born in 1936 in Miroslav, Czechoslovakia, to Edit and Fritz, the younger brother of Eva. After the German invasion the family was deported to Brno, from where they were sent in April 1942 to Ghetto Theresienstadt. In the ghetto his father worked as a carpenter and his mother in the mica separation facility. Shmuel spent time in the carpentry, helping his father. In February 1945 the family left on a transport from Ghetto Theresienstadt to Switzerland, known as the "train to freedom". Several months later they returned to Czechoslovakia. In 1949 Shmuel immigrated to Israel with his sister, through Aliyat Hanoar. He lived in Kfar Szold and then in Givat Brener. In the army he served in the navy and after his discharge he worked in the Israeli merchant fleet. Shmuel and his wife Ze'eva live in Haifa. ■

Naftali Fürst



Naftali (Juraj) Fürst was born in 1932 in Petržalka, Czechoslovakia, to Margit and Artur, the younger brother of Shmuel. In March 1942 his father volunteered to take the family to the Sereď labor and concentration camp, where they remained until August 1944, at which time they managed to escape but were caught and reinterred in the camp. In November 1944 the family was deported by train to Birkenau. Naftali and his

brother were taken to Block 29, the children's block, from where they were sent to perform forced labor at a nearby agricultural farm. After the camp was evacuated Naftali survived the death march to Buchenwald, where he was liberated in April 1945. At the conclusion of the war, the four family members were reunited in Bratislava. In 1949 Naftali immigrated to Israel through Aliyat Hanoar and reached Kibbutz Ma'anit. His military service was in the Nahal. In 1954 he married Ruti and the two had a daughter. At present, Naftali lives in Haifa with his partner Tova. ■

Torch lighters

Raphael Yedidya



Raphael Yedidya was born in Berlin in 1938 to his parents, Georg and Lisi Freund. In October 1942 the family was deported to Ghetto Theresienstadt, where they remained interred until the liberation of the ghetto in May 1945. After the war the family arrived at the Deggendorf displaced persons' camp.

Seven-year-old Rafi joined a group of orphans who were preparing for immigration to Israel through Aliyat Hanoar, with whom he eventually reached Israel on the "Kedma" ship with other illegal immigrants in spring 1948. After residing in various educational institutions he reached Kibbutz Mesilot, where he lived for several years, and then enlisted in the Nahal. About two years after his discharge he moved to Tel Aviv and worked as a truck driver. In 1964 he married Frieda; the two are currently living in Rishon Lezion. ■

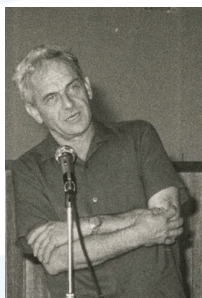
The late Hugo Marom



Hugo Marom (Meisl) was born in 1928 in Brno, Czechoslovakia, the son of Pavel and Erna and the brother of Hans and Rudolph. In August 1939 Hugo and Rudy were sent to England with some 230 other children, on the Kindertransport organized by Sir Nicholas Winton. The two arrived at first in North London, and following the German bombings they were transferred to Bedford. All their family members who had remained in Czechoslovakia, aside from one cousin, perished in the Holocaust. In England Hugo participated in the aerial youth battalion under the Royal Air Force training corps and at the end of the war he returned to Czechoslovakia with Rudy.

In early 1948 he participated in a flight course of the Czech Air Force in Olomouc and in 1949 he arrived in Israel and was placed in Squadron 100 of the IDF Air Force. Hugo was among the founders of the Air Force flight school at the Sirkin base and after his discharge from the IDF was appointed a test pilot by the Ministry of Defense. Hugo passed away in 2018. The torch in memory of Hugo Marom will be lit by his daughter Evie Polig. ■

The late Willi Groag



Willi (Wilhelm) Groag was born in August 1914 in Olomouc to his parents Emanuel (Emo) and Gertruda (Truda), brother to Jan and Gustav Lev.

Prior to the German occupation he had studied chemistry in Prague and earned a PhD. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia and the establishment of the protectorate, he joined the Maccabi Hatzair youth movement and worked as a teacher at the Aliyat Hanoar school in Prague. In the movement he also met Miriam (Marie), whom he married in October 1941. In July 1942 the two were deported, together with Willi's parents, to Ghetto Theresienstadt, where they remained until the liberation of the ghetto. In the ghetto he worked at first as a wagon-driver and about a year later, in summer 1943, he was appointed

counselor and housefather of the L410 Czech speaking girls' home. When the war ended, Willi was occupied with finding settings for Jewish children who had remained alone and transferring them to orphanages, to England, and to Israel.

In spring 1946 Willi immigrated to Israel and settled in Kibbutz Ma'anit with his wife Miriam and their daughter Hava, born in the ghetto. Miriam died of polio in September 1946 and Willi remarried Tamar.

Willi was among the founders of Beit Theresienstadt and was active in the association's activities for many years. He died in 2001. Willy's grandson Itay Groag will light the torch in his memory. ■

Games in the Shadow of the Crematoria

The children's barracks in the Birkenau family camp (September 1943 - July 1944)

From: Ruth Bondy, "Trapped"

The first transport from the Terezin ghetto to Auschwitz left the ghetto on 26 October 1942. The arrivals underwent a selection on the train platform, and very few of them - men and women who looked fit for physical work - survived. Children and the elderly were sent straight to the gas chambers. The inmates of the Terezin ghetto knew only that the destination of the transports was a nebulous place known as the "East".

However, in September 1943, the situation changed. On 6 September, 5,007 men, women and children left the ghetto in two transports. They were told they were going to set up a new work camp in the East, and hence two key members of the ghetto leadership were placed at the head of the group: Dr. Leo Janowitz, until then secretary of the Council of Elders, and Fredy Hirsch, deputy head of the youth department. This time, too, the real destination was Auschwitz, but for the first time in the history of the Jewish transports, none of the arrivals underwent a selection: no one was sent to the gas chambers. All of them, from infants to the old, remained alive, their heads were not shaved, which was customary at Auschwitz, and they were not forced to wear the blue and grey striped clothing of inmates but were allowed to keep the clothes they were wearing on the transport or were given "civilian" clothing left behind by earlier arrivals who had been exterminated. They were all transferred to an empty camp not yet completely constructed, bearing the designation B/2/b, that everyone called the Familienlager, the family camp.

There was only one other family camp in the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex, and that was the gypsy camp. Although the two camps had different histories, they both ended in the same way - extermination. The establishment of the gypsy camp is documented in a December 1942 letter by Himmler and in a February 1943 implementation order. Until today, no German document relating to the family camp of the Terezin inmates has been found that explains why it was established or what purpose it was meant to serve in the plans of the SS.

One supposition is that the camp's establishment was connected with a planned visit by an International Red Cross delegation to the Terezin ghetto: what if members of the delegation should ask about the Terezin inmates sent to "work in the East"? most of them had already been exterminated, and if the Red Cross delegation should insist on visiting a camp of Terezin inmates in the East, then it had to exist.

This supposition seems illogical. Why set up a camp for show in the very heart of the foul-smelling extermination complex, in the shadow of the crematoria chimneys that spout fire and smoke day and night? It would have been possible, of

course, to halt the death industry for some time prior to the delegation's arrival; it would have been possible to explain that the crematoria chimneys belong to factories that employ the prisoners. But the harsh conditions, the hunger and the disease in the camp would not have supported this theory. Within six months, nearly a quarter of the prisoners who arrived in September 1943 had died of "natural causes", from weakness and disease, and the appearance of those who remained spoke for itself.

The second supposition is linked to rumors that began to reach the Terezin ghetto about mass killings in the East. The family camp was perhaps established to reassure future victims and to refute the news of mass extermination that had begun to trickle into the free world as well, especially by way of Switzerland. A few days after their arrival, the prisoners of the family camp were permitted to send thirty-word postcards from "Birkenau labor camp near Neuberun" to their families and friends in the Terezin ghetto, and to the few Jews who still remained outside the camps and the ghettos (mainly because they were married to non-Jews).

The family camp may have been established for both of these reasons. Thus far, we can see some logic. But how can one explain the fact that in the card index of prisoners in the main camp at Auschwitz, next to the names of the people

from the September transport there was the notation "SB (the initials of Sonderbehandlung, special handling, the code name for killing without a trial) after six months". The length of time they would remain alive was determined in advance, unrelated to the date of the planned visit of the International Red Cross delegation to the Terezin ghetto, which had not yet been finally fixed. Until the end of February 1944, the prisoners of the family camp knew nothing about the notation of "special handling". They assumed the Germans needed them for purposes of show and hoped to hang on until the end of the war, which always seemed so close.

However, on 8 March 1944, exactly six months after their arrival at Auschwitz, in one night the 3,792 survivors of the September transport were taken to the gas chambers and killed.

In the family camp, 5,007 prisoners from the two transports of December 1943 remained. They were joined in May 1944 by another 7,500 prisoners from the Terezin ghetto. Their arrival can also be explained logically. At the time, 46,000 people in the Terezin ghetto were crowded into an area of less than 800 square meters. In anticipation of the impending visit of the International Red Cross delegation, it was essential to thin



out the population. Indeed, in May 1944 Himmler permitted representatives of the International Red Cross to visit the Terezin ghetto and one of the labor camps, without noting its name.

The family camp no longer served a useful purpose after the visit of the Red Cross delegation to the Terezin ghetto on 23 June 1944, a visit that from the standpoint of the SS apparatus was a great success.

The members of the delegation did not express a wish to see a labor camp in the East, nor did they ask about the tens of thousands of inmates (52,000) removed by then from the ghetto.

In the last days of June 1944, a series of selections were carried out in the family camp. About 3,500 young men and women were sent to work in camps in Germany (only a third of them survived the war). The remaining inmates, some 6,500 men, women and children, were exterminated by gas between 10-12 July 1944.

There is no direct testimony about the establishment of the children's block in Birkenau. The counselors from the two transports that left the Terezin ghetto on 6 September 1943 and were the first to arrive at the family camp told their friends about it, friends who came to the camp in December of that year (and only some of those, including myself, survived). They said that Fredy and Leo Janowitz, the general secretary of the Council of Jews in the Terezin ghetto and the first on the list of the September transport, who were supposed to head what was called the "new labor camp in the East", applied to the camp commandant a few days after their arrival. They stated that the presence of children in the barracks interfered with the work of the adults and the maintenance of discipline in the camp, especially during roll call, and suggested that during the daytime hours, the children, most of whom spoke only Czech, be gathered separately in a barrack (a "block" in camp language) where they'd be taught first of all to understand the German commands that were necessary for life in the camp. It is not clear at what level of the SS command the establishment of the barracks was approved or to what extent that approval was part of the preparations for the planned visit of a delegation of the International Red Cross to the Terezin ghetto in 1944.

With the 5,007 inmates of Terezin who left for Birkenau in two transports (designated DI-Dm) on 6 September 1943, there were 274 children under the age of fourteen, most of whom, with the exception of infants and sick children, were taken into the children's barracks.

Fredy selected the workers for the children's barracks - about twenty - on the basis of his personal acquaintance with teachers from the Jewish schools in Prague and Brno, and counselors and women who took care of children from Prague and Terezin ghetto. As housemother he appointed Hanka Epstein, formerly head of the Jewish infants' home in the Vinohrady quarter of Prague. In Birkenau, 38 year old Hanka, who never married and whose whole life centered on the homeless children in her care, retained her agility, energy and resourcefulness. She

taught the counselors to make knitting needles from chips of wood and to repair articles of clothing using threads removed from the prisoners' coarse blankets.

Fredy probably decided on the procedures for the barracks in the first days of its existence, and they did not change much after his death. While in Prague and in the Terezin ghetto, the maintenance of physical health was an important part of the education of Jewish youth, here it was the main existential objective. Fredy forced the children to wash with the murky water of Birkenau, even on cold winter days, when six or eight of them had only one rag between them as a towel, and the counselors had to check to see if their hands, neck and crotch were clean to prevent the spread of lice and infectious diseases, as well as to check the cleanliness of their bunks and eating utensils.

The girls and small boys slept in barracks with their mothers and the older boys in barracks with their fathers or their counselors. After the morning wakeup, the counselors and their helpers brought the children to the latrines - rows and rows of round holes in long concrete benches - and to the washing barracks that contained rows of faucets under which there was a wooden trough and a filthy, slippery floor.

Just before 8 a.m., they all went into the children's barracks, for roll call held by the SS men twice a day, in the morning and the early afternoon, the children reported in the children's barracks. That was a huge relief, particularly in the cold winter months of Poland, when the temperature fell to 20 degrees below zero and standing outside in thin clothing without moving was for many prisoners a greater torment than the hunger. In the children's barracks, the SS men did not abuse the children or their counselors, and the few slaps they handed out were usually related to the counting, in fives, that did not match their records. If human life was of no value in itself, it had a value as a number - dead or alive, the number had to be accurate. The children knew how important it was for the roll call to be correct and quick, especially as far as Fredy was concerned, and they were disciplined, first and foremost for his sake.

The children's barracks was in an ordinary camp block, without windows except for air openings under the ceiling. A concrete covered heating pipe one meter high and 60 centimeters wide that passed through the middle of the block from one end to the other, and served as a platform or a stage. The children were divided into groups by age, between ten and fifteen in a group, and sat in circles on low wooden stools (no one knows who ordered these stools or where they were made). The groups sat very close to one another, and the pupils could hear the lessons in at least the two adjacent groups.

The parents and the other camp inhabitants were forbidden to enter the children's barracks, because there was no room and also to maintain cleanliness and preserve the meager possessions of the barracks. The children's barracks attracted artisans from the men's camp who, as part of their job, were allowed to move between the camps. Although the survival

instinct of the prisoners in the extermination camp prohibited any longings for the past, here they seemed to get a whiff of distant days, when they too had a home and family, and sometimes they brought a gift for the children: paper, a pencil, and article of clothing, a toy. SS men also visited the barracks, perhaps out of a spark of humanity, brief and fleeting.

Fredy made the rules: the children ate the daily soup in the barracks. The soup was brought in casks from the kitchen at the front of the camp and was thicker and hotter than the soup the ordinary prisoners got, as well as the food supplements Fredy obtained for them - ersatz coffee with a little milk, noodles cooked in milk, white bread, a slice of cake, soup cooked from the contents of packages whose addressees had died in the meantime and which were brought to the barracks in a wagon from the main camp in Auschwitz. These supplements came in tiny portions, and not every day, but that little bit added strength and joy. The children's health was in fact much better than that of the other inhabitants of the camp. During the six-month stay of the September transport prisoners in the family camp, the general mortality rate from "natural causes" stemming from the camp conditions was as high as 22 percent, and among the December people even higher.

Their studies were not studies in the usual sense of the word, nor were they the same as those held in the underground in the Terezin ghetto. Everything depended on the counselor and his ability to improvise, his skill at keeping his charges busy, interesting them and holding their attention, teaching them without any teaching aids except his own memory. There was a "library" in the barracks, containing about a dozen books collected randomly. There was also a librarian, or to be more exact, a guard over the books, a girl, one of the youngsters too old to be entitled to be in the children's barracks. To enable these boys and girls to be there, Fredy and his successors employed them in odd jobs such as keeping the stove lit, bringing food from the kitchen, or cleaning the barracks. The counselors themselves served as a kind of lending library: at length, and in installments, they told the children the contents of books they had read in the past, and would move from group to group in order to expand the inventory of oral books. On Friday evening and Saturday, the entire children's barracks had a joint party, and each group was entitled to prepare a five-minute show. Learning the text and songs, preparing the token costumes from the little available in the block - all of this occupied the groups for many hours.

From the edge of the camp, where Block 31 was located, the railway platform was visible not far away, and you could see the daily arrival of transports, and the people lining up for the selection. And on the right, somewhat further away, were the chimneys of the crematoria emitting flames and thick, foul-smelling smoke day and night. So what did the children know about the mass extermination? Fredy forbade the counselors to talk to the children about death, about gas chambers and crematoria. And in fact, until the extermination of the September transport on the night of 8 March 1944, it was still

possible to maintain that pretense. There was still hope that the family camp, with its special conditions, was meant for show and would survive until the end of the war. The gas chamber murder of the September transport, including the children of the barracks and their counselors, made it impossible to hide from the children that certain death was awaiting them all. Even the little ones would say: "We'll go out through the chimney", without understanding how that was practically feasible. When the smoke from the chimneys was thick and black, the older ones would joke: "Today they're burning the fat ones". They spoke openly about the expected death, although they were unable to completely grasp its meaning.

On the night of 8 March, a strict curfew was imposed on the family camp. Those remaining heard shouts and the din of trucks coming and going - and in the morning the neighboring camp was empty. Thick smoke poured out of the crematoria chimneys.

The first day or two after that dreadful night, when news began to arrive about the death of the people from the September transport, the children's barracks was like a house of mourning. They were all stunned, spoke in whispers; no songs or laughter were heard. But very quickly, the hunger for life took over. The children barracks went back to its old routine.

The children loved to be in their barracks, and that was enough. The counselors did not ask themselves why, when death was lurking at the door they were teaching them the alphabet or geometry, why they had them memorize the Czech rules of grammar or learn about the force of gravity of the earth. They needed their counseling work no less than the children did. For them too, driven by the compulsion to live each day that remained, this was a way of forgetting.

In May 1944, another 7,500 prisoners arrived from the Terezin ghetto, and the overcrowded conditions in the camp became terrible again. Although many of the May children were taken into the children's barracks and new counselors were accepted, also for activity with the teenagers who remained in the blocks, the time between the arrival of the newcomers and the expected extermination of the December arrivals was too short to enable them to become a cohesive group.

18 and 19 June marked the end of the six-month grace period for the December transportees before the anticipated "special treatment", but nothing happened.

Towards the end of June, typists from the woman's camp began to appear in the camp to prepare the prisoners' records, and Dr. Mengele paid frequent visits to the children's barracks. Selection were announced, for men and women separately.

A selection was conducted in the children's barracks in the presence of Dr. Mengele and other SS men. On 6 July 1944, after the men and women fit for work left the family camp, The children, the mothers, the elderly, the sick, and those unfit for work who remained in the family camp were killed in the gas chambers on 10 and 11 July 1944. Only the Indians, Eskimos, Snow White and the seven dwarfs on the walls of the children's barracks remained. ■

The sculpture "Terezin Man"

Architect and sculptor Shlomo Diamant passed away in October 2023. After his death, the family presented one of his works, a bronze sculpture called "Terezin Man", to Beit Theresienstadt.

Shlomo was born Žigmund. Diamant in 1928 in Bratislava (current day Slovakia). His family lived in Pezinok, a small town near Bratislava. Shlomo had two sisters, Greta and Lia. On March 14, 1939, Slovakia was declared an independent state. Four days later, the German army occupied Pezinok and all the town's Jews were gathered next to the synagogue, where they were beaten and humiliated. Shlomo's father nearly lost his hearing following the abuse to which he was subjected. In summer 1942 almost all the Jews of Pezinok were sent to the east, aside from those designated "essential to the economy", who included the Diamant family. For about two years the situation remained calm until two prisoners, Rudolf Vrba and Alfréd Wetzler, managed to escape the Auschwitz death camp in April 1944. They arrived in Pezinok and stayed with the Diamants, who heard from them about the atrocities being committed in Poland. In summer 1944 the Slovakian National Council decided to rebel against Hitler, but the German army rapidly overcame the rebellion and an order was issued to exile all men aged 16-60 from Slovakia. The Slovakian government tried to prevent this action and ultimately agreed to Himmler's demand to supply 15,000 men for forced labor, including many Jews. Daily chases and arrests began, with the aim of gathering the men.

The Diamants found a hiding place with a family named Záruba for several months. When a German neighbor informed on them, the family was seized by the Gestapo (aside from Lia, who was in the bathroom at the time of the arrest). They were sent to the Sered camp and from there to Ghetto Theresienstadt. In the ghetto, Shlomo worked as a metal worker:

"...We manufactured axes and hammers. The overseer, a Sudeten German, would give us a burnt potato in reward for good work. It was also a medicine against dysentery. We were given half a loaf of bread for three days. Once my bread disappeared, it was stolen. It was terrible. I climbed a hill and tried to eat yellow flowers (...) Later I vomited them".

After liberation of the ghetto, in early May 1945, the family returned to Pezinok and Shlomo resumed his high school studies in the art track. Immediately after the matriculation exams, in May 1949, he immigrated to Israel, joined the fighters in the War of Independence, and was wounded in battle.

Shlomo studied architecture in the Technion; upon graduating, he opened an architects office that was very successful. Over the years, Shlomo barely spoke about the trauma of the Holocaust, rather he expressed it in his artwork. About the sculpture "Terezin Man" he said:

"Look at me, my stomach is shriveled, constantly hungry, one bowl of Tonka's soup a day. My clothes are torn, creased, and dirty after the hardships endured on the transport. I have no hopes and no desires. I'm like a rooster used for the Kapparot ceremony, stretching my neck, always in search of food, destined to be slaughtered". ■



The sculpture, donated by the family, is currently stationed by the front wall, at the entrance to Beit Theresienstadt.



Beit Theresienstadt is honored to invite you to the

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY CREREMONY 2024

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85 Years Since the "Kindertransport"

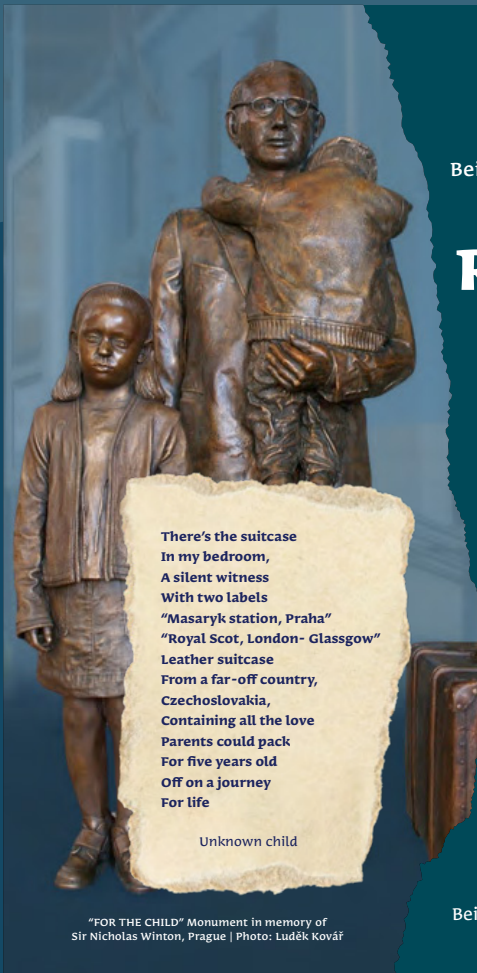
06.05.2024

Monday 28 Nissan 5784

09:45 Gathering

10:00 Siren and memorial ceremony

Beit Theresienstadt, Kibbutz Givat Haim Ihud, Emek Hefer



There's the suitcase
In my bedroom,
A silent witness
With two labels
"Masaryk station, Praha"
"Royal Scot, London - Glasgow"
Leather suitcase
From a far-off country,
Czechoslovakia,
Containing all the love
Parents could pack
For five years old
Off on a journey
For life

Unknown child

"FOR THE CHILD" Monument in memory of
Sir Nicholas Winton, Prague | Photo: Luděk Kovář

Membership Dues for 2024: 70\$ single, 100\$ couples



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