

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

Longings for Eretz Israel
during the Holocaust



Illegal immigrants on the deck of the *Pan York* on the day they arrived in Israel, August 14, 1948

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SHOAH The Holocaust

The Holocaust (Shoah) was an unprecedented genocide, total and systematic, perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators with the aim of annihilating the Jewish people, culture and traditions from the face of the Earth. The primary motivation for the Holocaust was the Nazis' antisemitic racist ideology. Between 1933 and 1941, Nazi Germany pursued a policy of increasing persecution that dispossessed the Jews of their rights and property, and later branded and concentrated the Jewish populations under their rule into designated areas. By the end of 1941, the policy had developed into an overall comprehensive, systematic operation that the Nazis called "The Final Solution to the Jewish Question." These policies gained broad support in Germany and across much of the European continent.

Nazi Germany designated the Jews of Europe, and eventually the rest of the world, for total extermination. Alongside the mass extermination of millions by shooting, millions of Jews from all over Europe were rounded up and deported on freight trains to extermination camps—industrial facilities in which they were gassed to death. During the entire process of registration, rounding-up and boarding the trains, the Germans deceived the victims as to the real purpose of their journey.

By the end of WWII in 1945, some six million Jews had been murdered.



A photograph sent from the Eastern front by a German soldier.
Written on the back of the photo: "Jews in an *Aktion*, Ivangorod, Ukraine, 1942".

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Washington DC, USA

Yad Vashem

was established in 1953 as the World Center for Holocaust commemoration, documentation, research and education. As the Jewish people's living memorial to the Shoah, Yad Vashem safeguards the memory of the past and imparts its meanings for future generations.

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For 2,000 years, Jews prayed and dreamed of their return to Zion. The affinity to Eretz Israel was expressed in prayer, philosophy, poem and song, in life-cycle events and on Jewish holidays – not in a political or active manner, but by individuals and groups who immigrated to Eretz Israel, and settled there. Others visited and wrote about the Land, and for hundreds of years, there was a consistent, albeit limited, Jewish presence in Eretz Israel.

This exhibition focuses on the longings for Eretz Israel during the years 1933-1948 – from the rise of the Nazi Party to power to the outbreak of World War II, and from the annihilation of European Jewry until the end of the war and the establishment of the State of Israel.

Beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, and between the two world wars of the twentieth century – and against the background of the growth of different ideologies alongside the intensification of political antisemitism – a fierce struggle in the Jewish world centered on its future. One of the answers was practical political Zionism, which placed as its goal the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Eretz Israel. Although numerically it was a small movement, and notwithstanding the strong resistance of other streams, its influence was noticeable among wide circles of Jews worldwide, and it paved the way to translate dream into reality.

World War II and the Holocaust shook the foundations of the outlooks and worldviews that had developed and existed among the Jewish people, but even during those terrible times, in the midst of the struggle for life, Eretz Israel held a firm place in the hearts and thoughts of the Jews.

The Holocaust determined the argument among the Jewish people regarding its future. The different ideologies once running through the Jewish communities collapsed in its wake. The processes promoted by the Zionist movement even before the Shoah, and that were strengthened afterwards, brought about, after a stubborn struggle, the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel.

This exhibition is an adaptation of the "They Say There Is a Land" exhibition, curated by Vivian Uria and exhibited at Yad Vashem

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The Jay and Barbara Hennick Family Foundation

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

Longings for Eretz Israel
during the Holocaust

1933 - 1939

Eretz Israel: From Dream and Vision to Fulfilment

With the rise of the Nazi Party to power and the deployment of its antisemitic racial ideology in German society, the situation of Jews worsened – beginning with hampering their way in society and economy, then distancing them from life in the country they were born and lived in, to being labeled an inferior race. Jews from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia sought refuge in different countries, as well as in Eretz Israel.

At the time, Eretz Israel was increasingly perceived as a possible solution for the Jewish people, as a place for building a future home, and as the hoped-for protection from the present harsh reality.

Activities of the Zionist movement grew stronger during this period, and Eretz Israel was gradually built up: new settlements were established, agricultural branches and industrial plants were developed, and the population increased significantly despite the limits placed by the British Mandatory authority.

Varied news reaching the Diaspora from Eretz Israel described the nature of the Land and its landscape; "the New Jew"; and especially the next generation growing up there. The Zionist youth groups in Europe grew substantially in both number and influence, and became a driving force for immigration to and settlement in Eretz Israel.



Community singing by young members of the Maccabi Youth Movement at their training farm in Ahrens Dorf, Germany, before WWII (1938/1939).

Yad Vashem Collections



Young members of the Zionist Youth Movement at a summer camp in Warsaw, Poland, 1934

Yad Vashem Collections

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

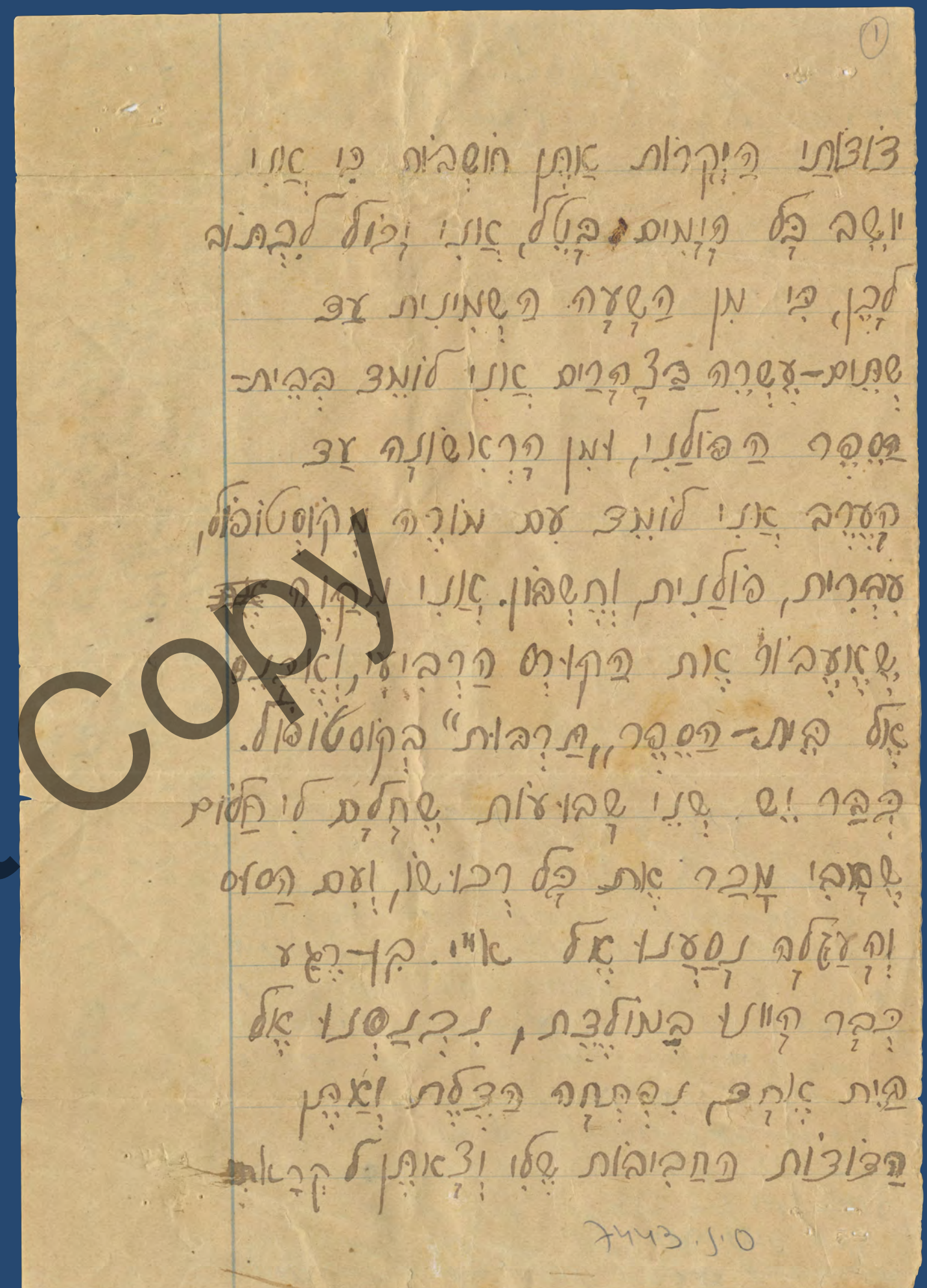
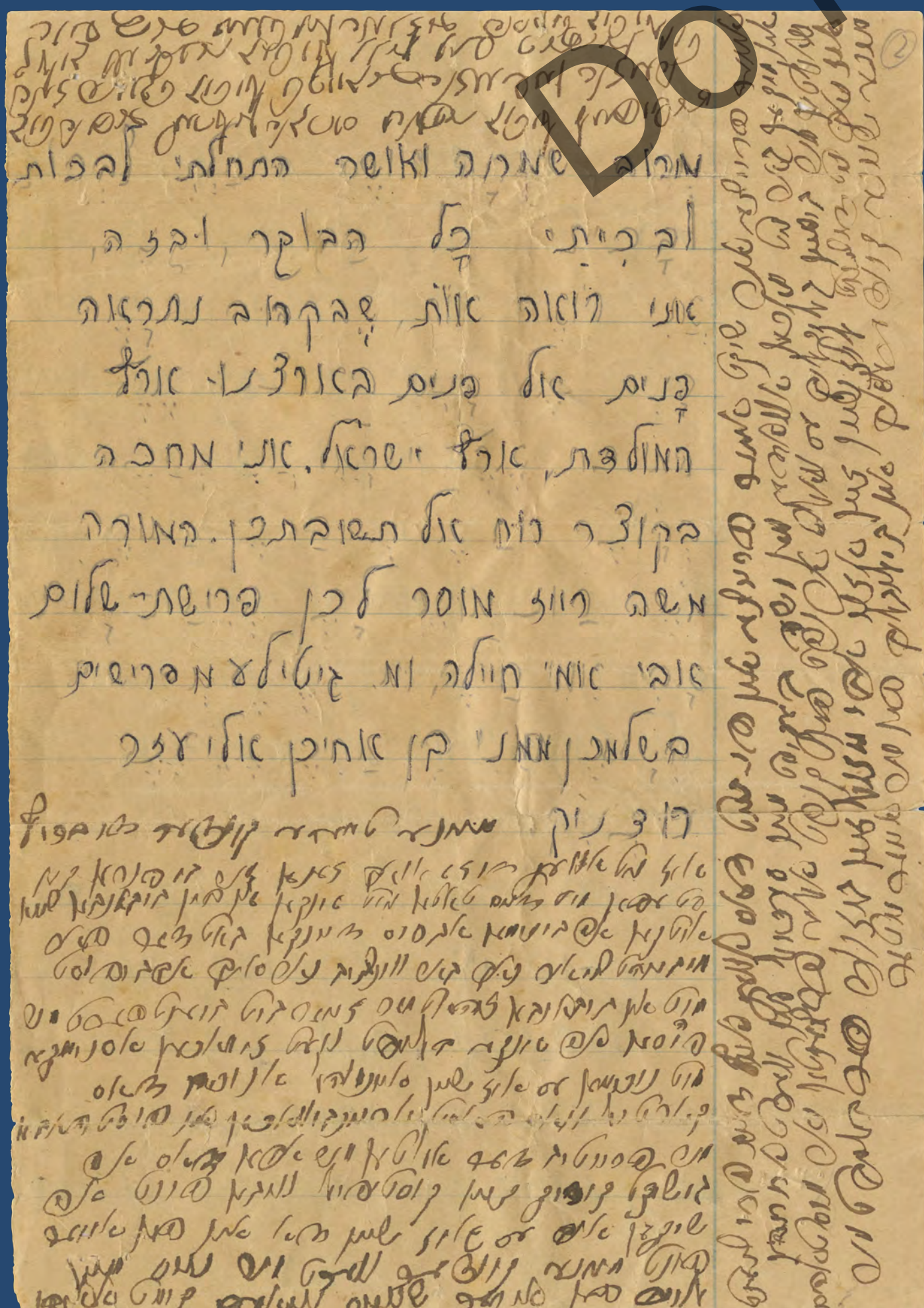
Longings for Eretz Israel
during the Holocaust

1933 - 1939

Eretz Israel: From Dream and Vision to Fulfilment

The Dream

"For some two weeks, I have dreamt the same dream that my father sold his possessions, and with a horse and cart we traveled to Eretz Israel. In a moment, we were in our homeland. We entered a house – the door opened, and you, my dear aunts, came out to greet me."



"I see a sign that we will meet each other face-to-face in our Land, our Homeland, Eretz Israel."

Letter written in 1937 by ten-year-old Eliezer Rudnik to his aunts who had immigrated to Eretz Israel. The letter, written in Hebrew, is surrounded by rows of Yiddish that his parents wrote for lack of pages.

Aryeh and Sarah Rudnik and their son Eliezer, the only Jews living in the Ukrainian village of Kosmaczow, were shot in 1942 at a killing pit after the German occupation.

Yad Vashem Collections

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1933 - 1939

Eretz Israel: From Dream and Vision to Fulfilment

The Dream

The Land of Israel of 1937 and its typical landscapes was drawn by Otto Pines, who had immigrated to Eretz Israel from Höxter, Germany.



The notebook of drawings was sent to Otto's mother and sister, Ilse Kaiser, who looked after it carefully through all the camps in which they were interned in Riga, Latvia. Renee Schwartz met them in a camp in Riga and was so impressed by the splendid drawings that she asked to keep them for a night. In the morning when she went to return the notebook, Renee discovered that Ilse and her mother had been murdered during the night. Renee kept the notebook for the rest of her life.



Jacob Otto Pines (1917-2005)

Acre, 1937

Urban Arab, 1937

Local Arab, 1937

Degania, c.1937

gouache on paper | 11.7X14.7 cm

Yad Vashem Collections. Gift of Renee Gross, New York, USA

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

Longings for Eretz Israel
during the Holocaust

1933 - 1939

Eretz Israel: From Dream and Vision to Fulfilment

The Vision

"Eretz Israel, and again I am on a ship. I'm standing at the end of the ship and looking back at the land of the Jews that has once more become fruitful under Jewish hands. A great thing was achieved there. Just 95 years ago, the Emek [valley] was entirely swampland, and today it is the blooming Jezreel valley. The pioneers gave their lives to achieve this. And if they continue to work like that, soon the Hula valley will also be fertile and blooming. It does indeed require no small effort... However ... In the end we will have a flourishing Eretz Israel."

An essay about Eretz Israel, written by twelve-year-old Hannah Guttsmann, for which she was awarded a trip in 1936 to the Holy Land.

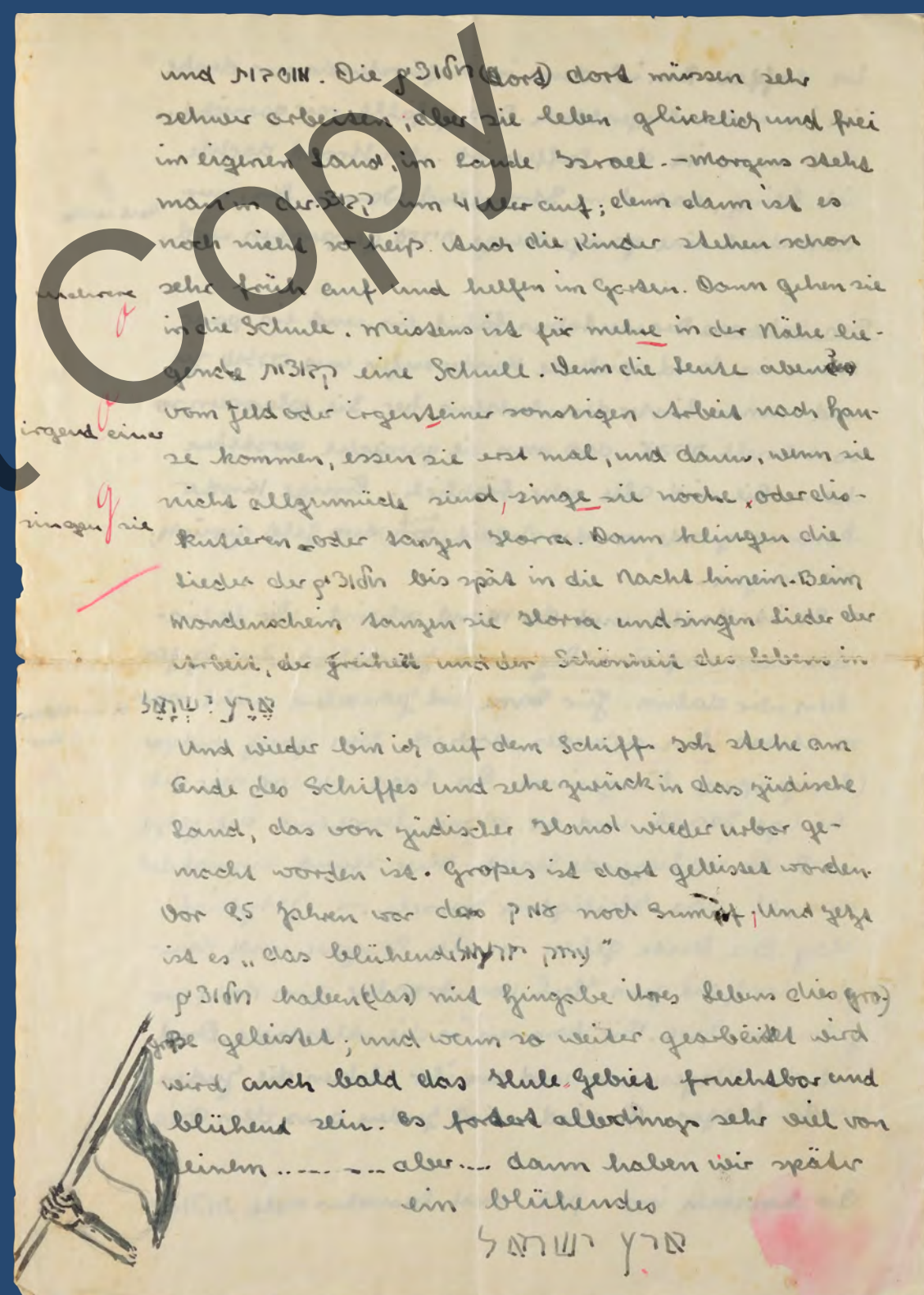
Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Hannah (Guttsmann) Shalem, Kibbutz Ma'abarot, Israel



Journal written by twelve-year-old Hannah Guttsmann containing a description of her trip to Eretz Israel in 1936.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Hannah (Guttsmann) Shalem, Kibbutz Ma'abarot, Israel

When she was awarded a prize for her composition from the Jewish school at which she studied, Hannah persuaded her parents to allow her to take advantage of her prize and join a trip to Eretz Israel. After staying an additional week at a friend in Kibbutz Hatzor, Hannah returned by sea to Trieste and from there by train to Berlin.



Hannah was fifteen years old when she arrived in Eretz Israel through Youth Aliyah in 1939. Her brother was sent with the Kindertransport to England; her parents who remained in Germany, were deported and murdered.



Hannah Guttsmann wearing a Hashomer Hatzair Youth Movement shirt, after her immigration to Eretz Israel.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Hannah (Guttsmann) Shalem, Kibbutz Ma'abarot, Israel

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

Longings for Eretz Israel
during the Holocaust

1933 - 1939

Eretz Israel: From Dream and Vision to Fulfilment

Fulfilling the Dream



"My dream is to get to Eretz Israel"

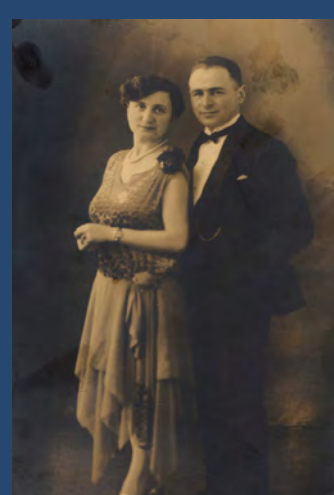
Drawing created by Regina Zimet for her mother's birthday, influenced by the period the family spent in Benghazi, Libya, after they fled Germany on their way to Eretz Israel.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Efraim Levi, Ramat Efal, Israel



Regina Zimet,
Leipzig, 1938.

Yad Vashem Collections.
Courtesy of Efraim Levi,
Ramat Efal, Israel



Fritz and Rosalia
Zimet. Leipzig,
Germany, Early
1930's.

Yad Vashem Collections.
Courtesy of Efraim Levi,
Ramat Efal, Israel

The drawing expresses Regina's longing to arrive in the Holy Land with her family as soon as possible - "like the flight of a bird" - in a plane, where her relatives, who had immigrated during the 1930's, would receive them. She imagines the airport in Tel Aviv with Israeli airline planes and a great crowd among them natives of the land, coming to greet the family. The drawing took form as the family were forced to remain in Benghazi for months of uncertainty as to when they could sail for Eretz Israel. Five years would pass before the family arrived in Eretz Israel.

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

Longings for Eretz Israel
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1940 - 1944

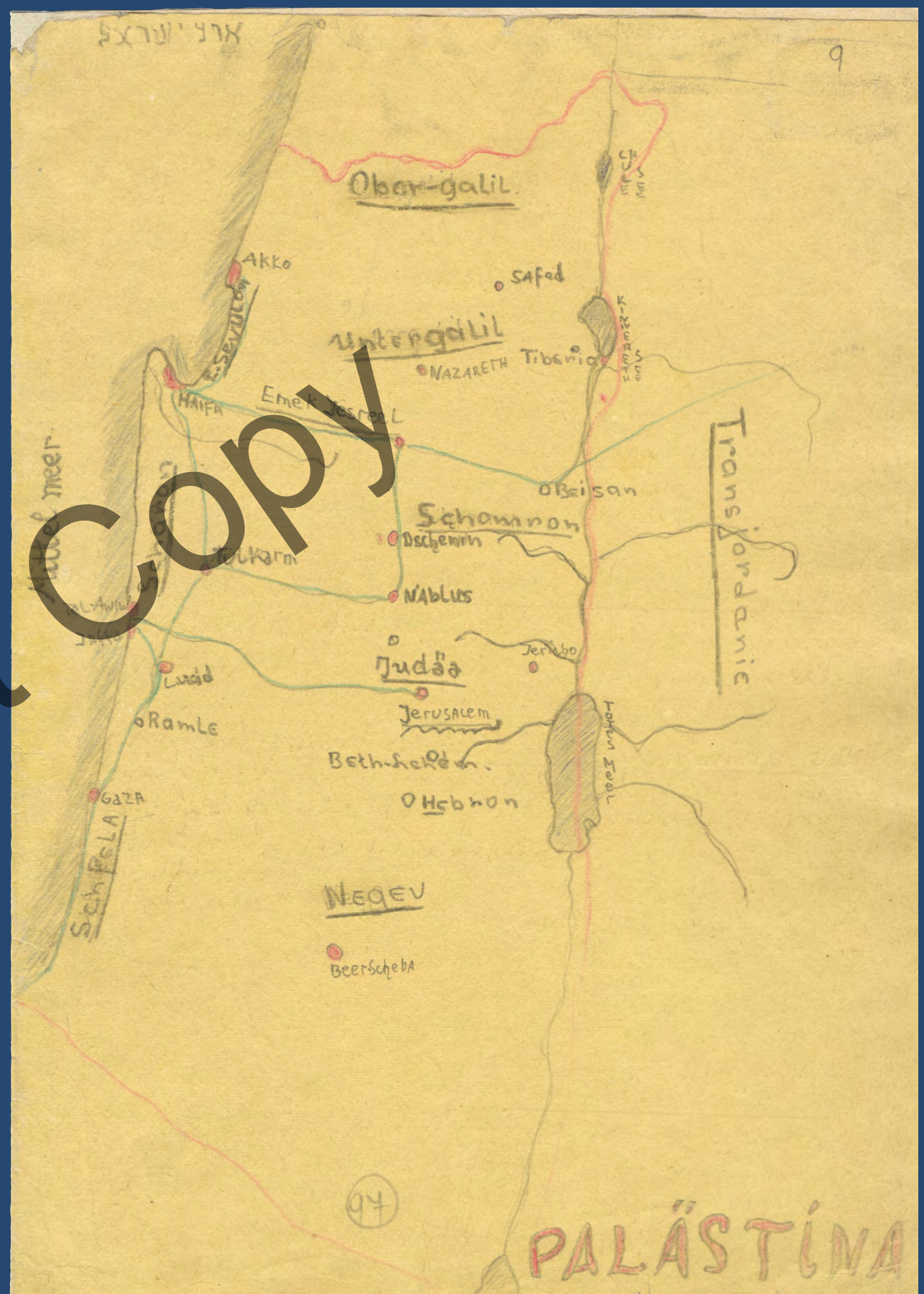
Eretz Israel: Between Crisis and Continuity

The Holocaust undermined all the ideologies that presented a solution for the future of the Jewish people. The world where these outlooks were born had collapsed, and the unremitting deterioration of Jewish life in the Diaspora began. The British Mandate authorities took steps to limit immigration to Eretz Israel, and with the further phases of its "Final Solution," Germany forbade emigration of Jews abroad; and so, in actuality, immigration to Eretz Israel became almost impossible.

During the years of German occupation, the Zionist youth movements constituted frameworks that created Jewish public activity, both open and clandestine. Later on, together with other movements, they formed the nucleus for the Jewish resistance movement. During 1940-1941, their members clandestinely held cultural meetings with a religious and national character; published underground newspapers; and formed educational frameworks as a substitute for regular schools.

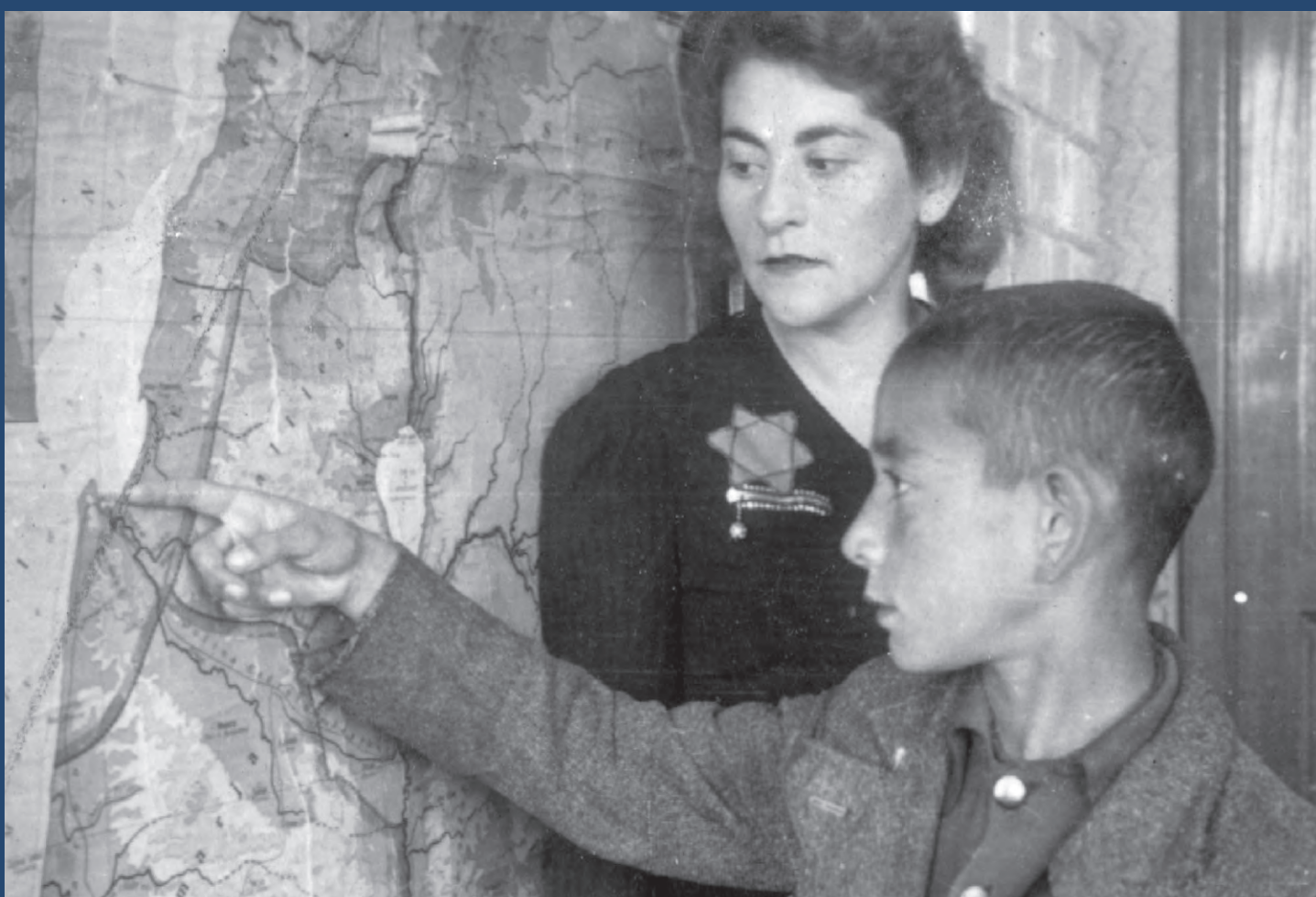
In March 1942, the gates of hell opened in Auschwitz. Jewish communities dwindled, and countries were emptied of their Jewish inhabitants, and at the same time deep disappointment was felt towards the *Yishuv* [Jewish Community in Eretz Israel], who could not provide sufficient aid in face of this great disaster.

The struggle for survival led to a certain distancing and even disconnection from the Land, but even during these hard years of destruction and extermination, there were Jews who dreamed of Eretz Israel, and left their dreams behind in their writings. Eretz Israel was never so far away from the Jews as it was during this period of destruction, although their hearts' desires for the Land only strengthened.



A page from a geography notebook belonging to a member of a youth group in the Terezin ghetto, 1943-1944.

Yad Vashem Collections



A teacher and a student near a map of Eretz Israel in the Lodz ghetto, Poland.

Yad Vashem Collections

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

Longings for Eretz Israel
during the Holocaust

1940 - 1944

Eretz Israel: Between Crisis and Continuity

Ghettos



Courtesy of Amnon Porat, Shlomit Kraus, Ilana Adar and Roni Porat, grandchildren of Filip Hermann

While he was imprisoned in the Terezin ghetto, Dr. Filip Hermann received news from his daughter Esther who had immigrated to Eretz Israel. She had given birth to her first child, a son, and named him Yoram. Upon hearing the news, Dr. Hermann wanted to prepare a present for his first grandson, and asked an artist in the ghetto to make an engraving that would express his dream to visit his daughter and grandson in Eretz Israel. His yearning to meet his loved ones was intensified both because of the great distance and due to his understanding that most probably he would never leave the ghetto. The wood engraving shows a man sleeping upon a bench and dreaming: a ship makes its way from Terezin to Haifa, and Eretz Israel is represented through palms, camels and Bedouin figures. Under the palm tree is a baby in a cradle, and over it is the name of his grandson, Yoram.

Dr. Hermann never saw his grandson. He was sent with the last deportation from Terezin ghetto to Auschwitz, where he was murdered.



Filip and Bozena Hermann (center), Ester (Zdenka) Hermann (left) and Pavel Frankel (Bozena's son, right), Czechoslovakia, January 1939.

Courtesy of Amnon Porat, Shlomit Kraus, Ilana Adar and Roni Porat, grandchildren of Filip Hermann

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

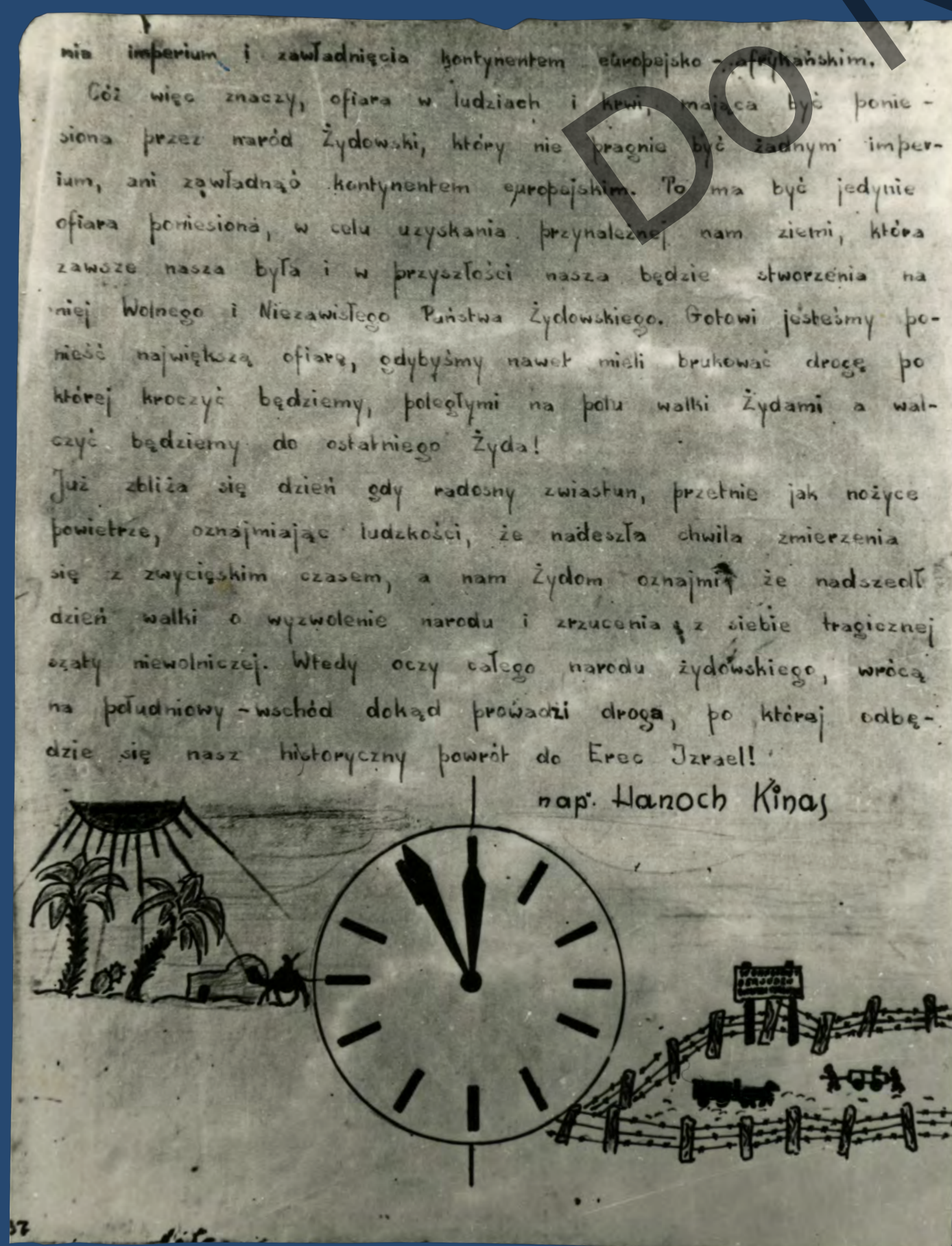
Longings for Eretz Israel
during the Holocaust

1940 - 1944

Eretz Israel: Between Crisis and Continuity

Ghettos

After the deportation of the Jews to the Lodz ghetto, the youth movements continued to be active there, providing support to the younger population. With the support of the head of the *Judenrat*, the various youth movements created types of communal training farms, similar to those that existed before the war. In this manner, the instructors hoped to detach the youth as much as possible from the distressful conditions and inaction prevailing in the ghetto. Each youth movement received a house and land to work. By the end of summer 1940, there were some 1,000 members in Marysin – a bordering agricultural area included in the ghetto – divided into 25 Zionist groups. In August 1940, The Front of Wilderness Generation was established, which united various youth movements. In September 1943, the Front of Wilderness Generation united with the Zionist youth movement and its name was changed to the Zionist Youth Front.



Page from a wall newspaper of the Front of Wilderness Generation youth movement in the Lodz ghetto.

Ghetto Fighters' House Museum \ Photo Archive

"Close is the day when the happy harbinger will cut the air like scissors with his message to humanity that the moment of victory has arrived, and we, the Jews, will announce the day of the liberation of the people and the shedding of the garments of slavery. Then the eyes of the entire Jewish people will turn to the southeast, where the path of our historic return to the Land of Israel will lead."

Chanoch Kaniag



Memorial gathering in memory of Hayim Nahman Bialik and Theodor Herzl that took place in the Lodz ghetto, 1943.

Yad Vashem Collections

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

Longings for Eretz Israel
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1940 - 1944

Eretz Israel: Between Crisis and Continuity

Concentration Camps

"Fajgi Spiegel signed her name on her drawing in 1944, which shows a beautiful woman with flowers in her hand and a chain with a Star of David around her neck. She appears dressed in a silk dress and appropriately matching shoes. In reality, she dressed in torn and hideous clothing."

From Lili Kaschticher-Hirt, *What I kept for My Sons* (Heb.), December 7, 1950

Fajgi Spiegel, a prisoner in the Oberhohenelbe concentration camp, created the drawing in 1944 to show her girlfriends how she and her friends would dress when the hoped-for time came with the end of the war and they would go to Eretz Israel. At the foot of the drawing, she added an inscription, "This is how we shall stroll about in (Mandatory) Palestine."



Fajgi Spiegel, *This is how we shall stroll about in Palestine*,
Oberhohenelbe camp, 1944
Pencil on paper, 16.2X9.11 cm

Yad Vashem Collections. Gift of Alexander Hirt and Daniela Sela, Israel

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1940 - 1944

Eretz Israel: Between Crisis and Continuity

Concentration Camps

Pesach Stephen (Istvan) Irsai studied architecture in the Budapest Technion, and music at the city's Royal Academy. In addition to his work as a self-employed graphic designer, he was active in local Zionist organizations, and managed the publicity division of the Keren Kayemet LeYyisrael (JNF) and Keren Hayesod. In the mid-1920s, Pesach married and immigrated to Eretz Israel, where he continued his graphic work. In 1929, he returned with his family to Hungary. He resumed his jobs at the Zionist institutions, and was employed by the civil service, working in the Hungarian Prime Minister's office. In July 1944, Pesach, his wife and two children were deported to the "Hungarian Camp" in Bergen-Belsen on the "Kastner Train." In December 1944, the group was liberated from Bergen-Belsen to Switzerland, and in September 1945, the artist's family arrived in Eretz Israel. They settled in Tel Aviv.



Pesach Irsai (1896-1968), *Towers, Bergen-Belsen*, July 9, 1944
Etching, 14.8X10.3 cm

Yad Vashem's Collections. Gift of Dr. Paul Bendek

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

Longings for Eretz Israel
during the Holocaust

1940 - 1944

Eretz Israel: Between Crisis and Continuity

Concentration Camps

"April 8, 1943

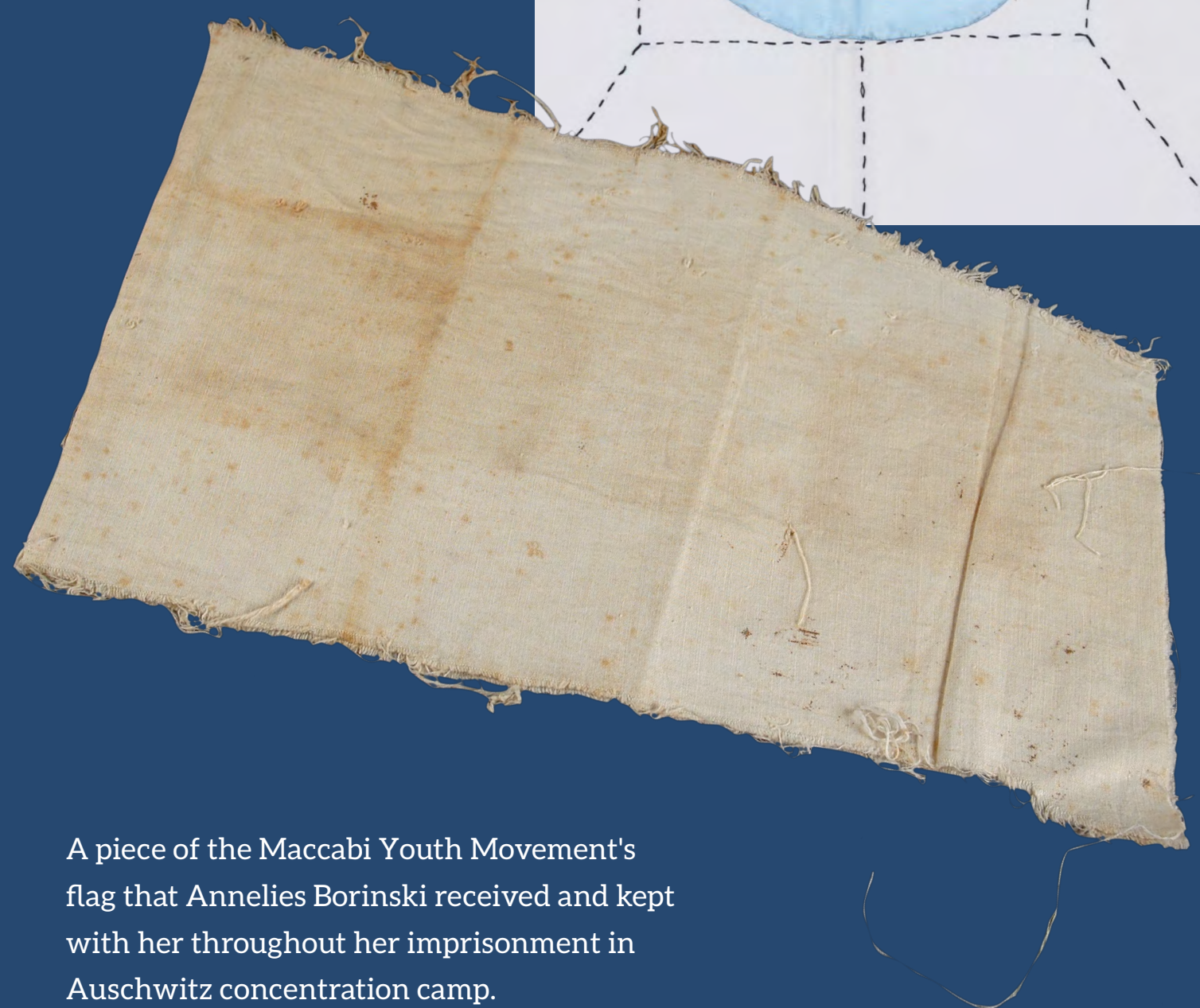
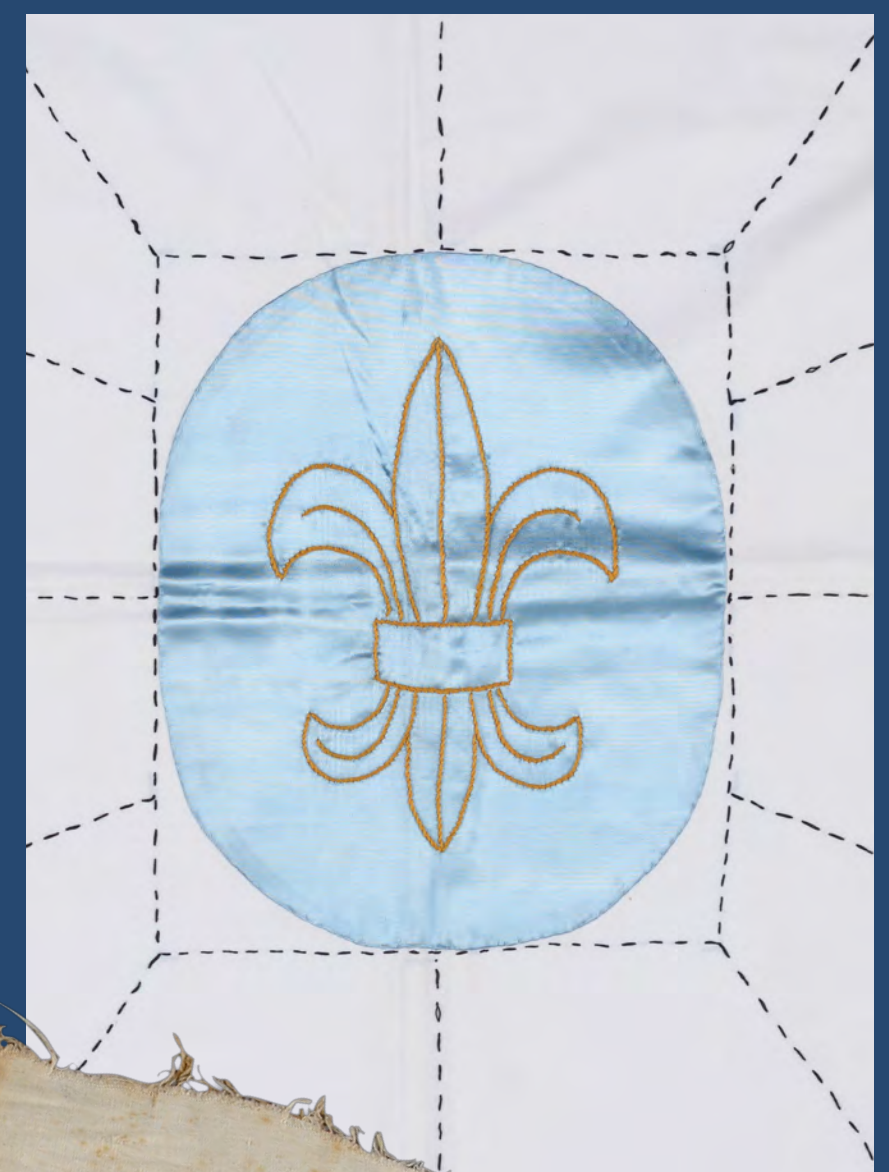
This evening is the last one, where the company is gathering together in a hut in Neuendorf. Outside are the Gestapo guards... we commence with our final assembly... Flags are brought. One flag is missing its center. 'A' takes this 'broken-hearted flag' and tears it into 12 pieces. These he distributes to three female members, four male members, four leaders and the one who will be responsible for those remaining. This torn piece of flag that was given to me, I carry it with me until today. It remained with me through all the body searches and all the selections in Auschwitz. I must continue to carry it with me because I promised, and that promise is what drives me..."

From Memoirs, May 1955, AB (Annelies Borinski)

On the eve of the deportation to the extermination camps, a ceremony was held at the training farm for the Jewish youth of Ahrensdorf, Germany, with the participation of the youth and their counselors. During the ceremony, the training farm's Maccabi Youth Movement flag was cut into twelve pieces that were distributed among the counselors. They undertook to meet again in Eretz Israel, and patch the pieces together into one flag. Only three of the original twelve counselors survived the Holocaust. Of them, only one, Annelies Borinski, succeeded in bringing her piece of the flag with her to Eretz Israel.

Reconstruction of the flag
of the pioneering training
group from Ahrensdorf,
Germany.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of
Hilde (Grünbaum) Zimche, Kibbutz
Netzer Sereni, Israel



A piece of the Maccabi Youth Movement's
flag that Annelies Borinski received and kept
with her throughout her imprisonment in
Auschwitz concentration camp.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Hilde (Grünbaum) Zimche,
Kibbutz Netzer Sereni, Israel

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

Longings for Eretz Israel
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1940 - 1944

Eretz Israel: Between Crisis and Continuity

Attempts to Immigrate to Eretz Israel

The Struma

In December 1941, an old ship, the Struma, left the port of Constanta in Romania, carrying 769 Jews to Eretz Israel. The dilapidated ship barely made it to Istanbul. The Turkish authorities, however, did not allow the refugees to disembark, fearing that the British would not give them entry permits to Eretz Israel and Turkey would become their country of refuge. When the Jewish organizations asked the British to issue permits to the refugees against the emigration quota, they refused, claiming that the Nazis might have infiltrated enemy agents among the passengers. For ten weeks, the refugees were imprisoned on the ship as their situation deteriorated. On February 23, 1942, the Turks towed the Struma out to sea, leaving it without water, food or fuel. A few hours later, it was mistakenly hit by a Soviet torpedo and sank. Only one of the passengers survived.

The account of the Struma became a symbol of the British Mandate Authority's hard-heartedness, and the cruelty of the Turkish authorities, who towed hundreds of people to their death.



Items of the Zait household from Bucharest sent by Benzion and Sara Zait to their family in Eretz Israel. Benzion and Sara Zait and their only daughter Riva, perished in the Struma sinking on the way to Eretz Israel.

Yad Vashem Collections. Gift of Ettia Zait, Pardes Hanna and Netta Porat, Kibbutz Tzora, Israel



Obituary issued by the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality following the tragic sinking of the Struma, February 25, 1942.

Yad Vashem Archive / Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipal Archives

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

Longings for Eretz Israel
during the Holocaust

1945 - 1948

Eretz Israel: From Destruction to Rejuvenation

With the end of the war and liberation, Displaced Persons (DP) camps were set up in Europe for some quarter of a million Jewish refugees, Holocaust survivors torn from their homes during the war. Many more moved southward along the "Bricha" escape routes. Together with them, the *Yishuv's* institutions organized their immigration to Eretz Israel on ships belonging to the Aliya Bet organization, despite British efforts to block the illegal immigration project. From mid-1946, thousands of illegal immigrants were caught and deported to Cyprus or returned to Europe.

During these years, the Zionist Movement returned to its activities in earnest, viewing Eretz Israel as a practical solution and the chance for the Jewish people to be rehabilitated after the Holocaust. In the DP camps in Europe and the detention camps in Cyprus, a new post-catastrophe national identity was created. The survivors returned to life, raised families, published newspapers and literature, created community and political institutions, and alongside all this immersed themselves in Holocaust remembrance. In order to realize the national aspiration, they were prepared for a long struggle, to live a life of wanderings, to be imprisoned in detention camps, and to come to a land mired in war.

The *Sh'erit Hapleitah* withstood all of these challenges in an astonishing manner. Some two-thirds of them came to Eretz Israel and joined in the struggle for the establishment and building of the State.



Rosh HaShana (New Year's) greeting card, "Next year in Jerusalem!" from the Linz Displaced Persons Camp, Austria.

Yad Vashem Collections



Demonstration against the arrest of 1,100 refugees who attempted to immigrate to Eretz Israel, Marina di Leuca displaced persons camp, Italy.

Yad Vashem Collections

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1945 - 1948

Eretz Israel: From Destruction to Rejuvenation

Displaced Persons Camps

In 1946, Rabbis Samuel Abba Snieg and Samuel Jakob Rose worked to publish two tractates of the Talmud for use by displaced persons.

The title page was illustrated with a landscape of Eretz Israel, with the background of a shining sun framed by two palm trees. The title in the illustration reads:

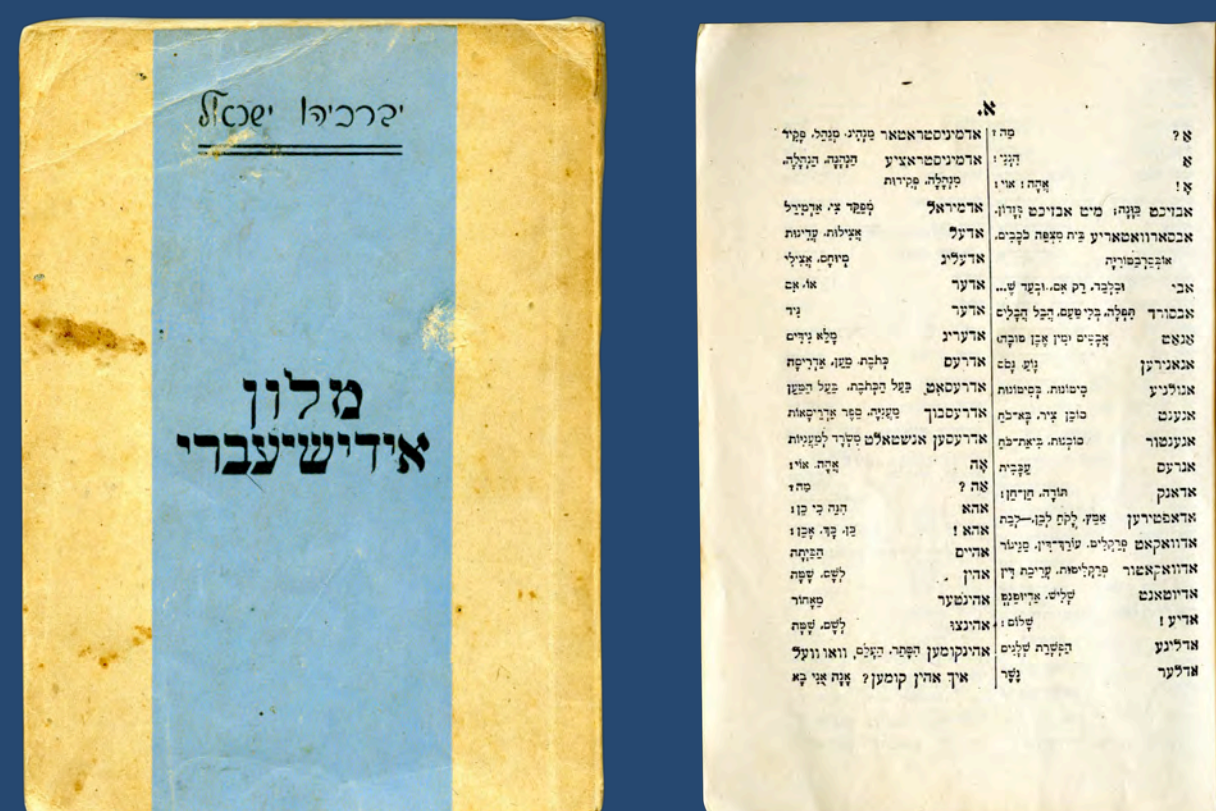
"From slavery to redemption,
from darkness to great light."

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Paul Newman, Pennsylvania, USA



Yiddish-Hebrew dictionary published in Kassell, Germany, in 1947, for use by refugees in Displaced Persons camps. The author is Yevarachyahu Israel. The dictionary was first published in Israel in 1927.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Moshe Geizler, Ramat Gan, Israel



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Eretz Israel: From Destruction to Rejuvenation

Displaced Persons Camps

Kibbutz Buchenwald

The idea of establishing a training kibbutz, prevalent among survivors, was raised by a group of Jewish prisoners, religious and secular, mainly Polish and German, in the Buchenwald concentration camp. "Kibbutz Buchenwald" was founded after the liberation of Germany, in 1945, by former prisoners of the camp, and it existed in Bavaria until the establishment of the State of Israel. The kibbutz was designed to prepare its members for a life of cooperation and agricultural work in Israel. The second stage of the kibbutz took place in Kibbutz Afikim in Israel, where they developed a cultural and religious life, at the center of which was the memory of the Holocaust and attempts to impart it to local kibbutz members. In June 1948, with the arrival of kibbutz members from Germany, they co-established Kibbutz Nerzer Sereni, named after the paratrooper Enzo Sereni, who was murdered in Dachau.



Three young Jewish girls look out of the window of the train, holding a makeshift flag as they depart from Buchenwald on the first leg of their journey to Eretz Israel, June 5, 1945

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park



Kibbutz Buchenwald at the DP camp, Germany

Yad Vashem Collections

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1945 - 1948

Eretz Israel: From Destruction to Rejuvenation

Illegal Immigration to Eretz Israel

"...I drew the ship breaking through the blockade to Eretz Israel... and wrote 'Yetziat Europa [Exodus from Europe] 1947,' which is the name of Exodus in Hebrew."

From the testimony of Haggay Geri

The *Exodus* immigration ship became a symbol of the period of illegal immigration and the aspiration to reach Eretz Israel, even at a heavy price. Its name was given as a symbol of the Exodus of Egypt of our generation, the "Exodus from Europe."

The ship left for Eretz Israel from the Port of Sete in France on July 11, 1947, with 4,554 Holocaust survivors on board. On July 18, when the ship reached the shores of Eretz Israel, two British destroyers raided the ship. A fierce battle ensued, resulting in three dead and dozens wounded. The ship's commanders declared surrender, and it sailed to the port of Haifa accompanied by a British squadron. At the port of Haifa the thousands of immigrants aboard the ship broke out singing "Hatikva." They were forcibly removed from the ship and loaded onto three deportation ships, surrounded by barbed wire. The sight of the survivors of the concentration camps behind barbed wire provoked anger in Mandatory Palestine and abroad. At the end of an exhausting journey via France, the ships arrived at the Port of Hamburg in Germany, where the passengers were forcibly removed to detention facilities. A year later, they had all arrived in Eretz Israel.

The astonishment and shock of the world led the British government to conclude that its handling of the immigrant survivors had failed, and it passed the matter on to the UN.



Shmuel and Bilha Gergas with their children Pesach and Esther at the Pürten displaced persons camp, Germany, 1947.

Yad Vashem Collections



Painting by the youth Pesach Gergas (Haggay Geri) in a diary he kept in Poppendorf camp after the return of the *Exodus* to Germany.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Michal Dunskey, Ganei Tikvah; Dalit Bar David, Rosh Ha'ayin, Israel



Zionist Youth Movement shirt worn by Pesach Gergas (Haggay Geri) at the Pürten displaced persons camp in Germany before leaving with his sister and father for Eretz Israel on the *Exodus* illegal immigration ship.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Michal Dunskey, Ganei Tikvah; Dalit Bar David, Rosh Ha'ayin, Israel

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Eretz Israel: From Destruction to Rejuvenation

Illegal Immigration to Eretz Israel

Shraga Weil was born in Hungary in 1918. Before the war, he studied Art in Prague. In 1939 he fled to Bratislava, joined the Hashomer Hatzair youth group, and forged documents for the Jewish underground. Two years later, he married Sara (née Taub) and fled with her in 1942 to Hungary. In 1943, the couple was arrested and imprisoned in Miskolc until 1944. After liberation, Shraga worked as an illustrator for the Hechalutz and Hashomer Hatzair youth groups. In 1947, the couple sailed on the *Theodor Herzl*, which was caught and deported to Cyprus. In December 1947, the couple immigrated to Eretz Israel and settled in Kibbutz Haogen.



Shraga Weil (1918-2009), *Studying Eretz Israel*, 1945

Ink on paper, 10X10 cm

Collection of the artist's family

The Theodor Herzl

The *Theodor Herzl* was an illegal immigration ship that sailed from the port of Sete in France in April 1947, carrying 2,620 Holocaust survivors, mostly youth and children. When it approached the shores of Eretz Israel, it was raided by British destroyers, and a fierce battle broke out between the British forces and the illegal immigrants. Three immigrants were killed and many others were injured. The immigrants were deported to Cyprus; the wounded were transferred to the Atlit detention camp.



Refugees on the deck of the *Theodor Herzl* in Haifa Bay, April 13, 1947.

Yad Vashem Collections



"Lakarov ve Larachok" (Near and Far) bimonthly newspaper of the Department to Find Relatives from May 7, 1947.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Batia (Klig) Golan. Kibbutz Gan Shmuel, Israel

THEY SAY THERE IS A LAND

Longings for Eretz Israel
during the Holocaust

1945 - 1948

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Detention Camps in Cyprus

Menachem Katz was born in the town of Brzezany, Poland, in 1925. He and his family were deported to the ghetto in the town. When the ghetto was liquidated, Menachem was injured, but managed to escape to the forests. Afterwards he was hidden in a nearby town by a Polish family that was later recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. After liberation, Menachem made his way across Europe until he joined a group of illegal immigrants to Eretz Israel. The group was deported in 1946 to the detention camps in Cyprus, where Menachem was imprisoned in Camp 62 for eight months.



Immigration certificate for Menachem Katz produced by the Aliya and Immigration department in Mandatory Palestine.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Menachem Katz, Haifa, Israel



Stone tablet carved by Menachem Katz in the Cyprus detention camp. The tablet created in the Youth Manufacture workshops of Hashomer Hatzair in Cyprus, expresses a belief that guided the movement: placing their past behind them out of a desire to build the future. Many items created in Cyprus were sent to Eretz Israel for an exhibition that was held in Tel Aviv in Nisan 5708 (April-May 1948), during the war of Independence.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Menachem Katz, Haifa, Israel



Inkwell made from limestone in the shape of an open book in the middle of which is a ship sailing from Cyprus to Eretz Israel. The inkwell was carved in Cyprus by an unknown illegal immigrant.

Yad Vashem Collections. Courtesy of Menachem Katz, Haifa, Israel

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In March 1948, celebrated Israeli musicians Shoshana Damari and Moshe Wilensky made several appearances at the detention camps in Cyprus. Damari's appearance excited the camps' inmates. At the end of one of the appearances, a little girl approached Damari and handed her a bundle of weeds.

"Please don't be angry with me," the girl explained, "We don't have any flowers in the camp. When I come to Eretz Israel, I will give you flowers in the name of all the children in Cyprus."



Announcement by the Committee for Exiles in Cyprus for a popular concert to be held with Shoshana Damari and Moshe Wilensky, Passover 5708 (1948), in the detention camps in Cyprus.

The National Library of Israel, The Music Collection and Sound Archive, Wilensky Moshe Archive

Damari sang a number of songs in Yiddish, among them a lullaby called "Raisins and Almonds" and "Going Home."

The appearances of Shoshana Damari and Moshe Wilensky expressed those values upon which the State of Israel was established: the ingathering of the exiles and mutual responsibility.



Shoshana Damari and Moshe Wilensky in an appearance before the Jewish refugees in a detention camp in Cyprus.

Ghetto Fighters House Museum / Photo Archive, Joshua (Josh) Leibner Collection. Courtesy of Ruthie Reshef-Leibner, Kibbutz Ein Hashofet, Israel