

# Out of the Depths: The Anguish of Liberation and Rebirth

Marking 80 Years since the  
Defeat of Nazi Germany

יד ושם  
YAD VASHEM  
THE WORLD HOLOCAUST  
REMEMBRANCE CENTER

“UNTO EVERY PERSON THERE IS A NAME”

HOLOCAUST MARTYRS' AND HEROES' REMEMBRANCE DAY 2025





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Cover:

Paul Kor (1926– 2001)

"...but for me Spring came too late", 1997

Mixed media on canvas

Yad Vashem Art Collection, Moshal Repository

Gift of the artist in memory of his father,

Yitzhak Kornowski who was murdered in Auschwitz



Zinovii Tolkathev (1903-1977)

**Taleskoten, 1944**

Gouache, charcoal and crayon on paper

Yad Vashem Art Collection, Moshal Repository

Gift of Sigmund A. Rolat of New York in loving memory of his  
parents Henryk and Mania who perished in the Holocaust



נשיא המדינה  
رئيس الدولة  
THE PRESIDENT

Jerusalem, January 20, 2025

Dear Friends,

Like every year, as Yom HaShoah approaches, it brings with it the calling of the solemn duties of memory and the practice of “Upon Every Person a Name” ceremonies in communities throughout the world.

Gathering to publicly speak out the names of those individuals – those whole worlds – that the Nazi monster brutally sought to erase, offers a symbolic recovery of the dignity of its victims, but it is a recovery, also, of humanity, for the victims, for the perpetrators and for the human race.

Friends, at this painful moment of crisis for our people, the memory of our greatest national tragedy seems to be so much more than monument, so much more than a testament to realities belonging to an elsewhere, but a direct and living injunction in the present. A roadmap to the labor of making meaning of our collective pain in the present.

This year’s ceremonies center on the theme of the aftermath of the Holocaust, on that arduous task of recovering and rebuilding after utter and complete devastation. There is no parallel or equivalent to the scope of destruction that the Holocaust wrought upon European Jewry, and hence no greater symbol of resilience than the rebuilding that came in its wake. The State of Israel, that rose like a phoenix on the ashes of destruction, will always be inflected by the tragedy of the genocide of our people, but likewise by the remarkable spirit of resilience that enabled our people to stand back on our feet, keep believing and keep actively building.

In this season of rupture for our people, as our nation reckons not only with recovering the physical safety of all of our people, but with recovering the integrity and wholeness of our society as well, our collective formative memory is a source of wisdom and inspiration.

I am grateful to every community and every person who steps forward to help and to actively safeguard the memory that is a key to understanding our present and to shaping the kinder, gentler world we wish to see.

sincerely, *and Shalom!*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Isaac Herzog'.

Isaac Herzog  
President of the State of Israel

**Unto Every Person There Is A Name**  
**Public Recitation of Names of Holocaust Victims in Israel and Abroad**  
**on Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2025**

"Unto every person there is a name, given to him by God and by his parents", wrote the Israeli poet Zelda.

Every single victim of the Holocaust—men, women and children—had a name. A first name, given by their parents, and a surname, carrying on their familial heritage. The vast number of those who were murdered in the Shoah—some six million Jews—is beyond human comprehension, which may cause us to lose sight of the fact that each and every victim was an entire world. Each individual who was murdered carried within them a piece of a larger picture, one of a family and a community that disintegrated with the loss of the individuals who composed them.

The recitation of names of victims on Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day is intended to posthumously restore the victims' names, to commemorate them as individuals, human beings with identities, and members of families and communities. By reciting their names, we aim to pay tribute to their memory, and to commemorate those who were murdered, who have no living relatives.

The "Unto Every Person There Is A Name" memorial initiative, is held annually under the auspices of the President Yitzhak Herzog. Its main events are held in the Knesset, with the participation of heads of state, government ministers and Members of Knesset, and in Yad Vashem's Hall of Remembrance, with the participation of Holocaust survivors, students and youth movements. The recitation of names is also held in local authorities, schools, and institutions of higher education both in Israel and around the world. The public recitation of names is performed in cooperation with Yad Vashem, the Jewish Agency, the World Jewish Congress, Nativ - the Liaison Office of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the B'nai Brith organization.

Name recitation ceremonies form part of a larger network of educational and commemorative programs carried out on Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day.

The theme of this year's observances is:

**Out of the Depths: The Anguish of Liberation and Rebirth**  
**Marking 80 Years since the Defeat of Nazi Germany**

In May 1945, at the end of the war in Europe, when Nazi Germany was defeated and unconditionally surrendered to Allied Forces, jubilation spread throughout the world. Yet for the Jewish people it was a time for painful introspection as they grasped the sheer scale of the destruction. 6 million Jews had been murdered – approximately one-third of world Jewry. Those who had survived were in a state of severe physical and mental deterioration.

The survivors set out on an arduous journey of rebuilding. In searching for their families and members of their communities, they were forced to confront and internalize their immense pain and loss.

Many returned to their prewar cities and towns in the hopes of locating surviving friends and neighbors. In addition to the anguish of discovering the bitter fate of their families, and the feelings of isolation and loneliness, they were often met with hostility from the locals in their hometowns, and sometimes with violence and brutality. Under the *Bricha* movement, a flow of survivors headed towards Central Europe, where the *She'erit Hapleita* (surviving remnant) population remained in Displaced Person (DP) camps.

In these camps, many survivors established new families and began fostering new communal life. They spearheaded educational and cultural institutions: schools, newspapers, magazines and theaters. They channeled their energies into writing and creativity, and even began documenting and gathering testimonies of the Jewish destruction that took place during the Shoah.

In the DP camps, many survivors embraced Zionism. About two-thirds chose to immigrate to *Eretz Israel*, while others headed towards Western Europe, the United States, Canada, Latin America and Australia.

Despite the complex struggle of returning to everyday life and integrating in their new surroundings, where those around them often could not comprehend what the survivors had endured, many succeeded in building valuable and meaningful lives. They started families and opened businesses, pursued education and made major contributions to the newly-formed State of Israel and to the communities around the world where they now called home. Many survivors were also active in forming the organizational frameworks designed to research the Shoah and draw lessons from it so that its crimes would never be repeated.

In the attached materials, you will find texts and readings that reflect the complexity of liberation through the lens of survivors.

From its inception, Yad Vashem has been dedicated to the sacred mission of collecting the names of the victims of the Shoah. To date nearly 5,000,000 names have been recorded in Yad Vashem's online Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, with over 2,820,000 names registered on Pages of Testimony. These pages serve as symbolic tombstones in memory of those who were murdered.

This year, Yad Vashem marks 70 years since the establishment of the Pages of Testimony campaign. This vast and unique collection gained universal recognition in 2013, when it was included in UNESCO's "Memory of the World" programme.

You too can take part in our ongoing names collection campaign by downloading Pages of Testimony, or by submitting them online through our website: [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org).

As the bearers of their legacy, we must do everything in our power to perpetuate the memory of the victims of the Shoah. By reciting their names, ages and places they were murdered, we preserve their memory, and remind ourselves that each man, woman and child was, and is, an entire world.

Sincerely,



Dani Dayan  
Yad Vashem Chairman

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## YOM HASHOAH | HOLOCAUST MARTYRS' AND HEROES' REMEMBRANCE DAY 24 APRIL 2025 | 26 NISSAN 5785

### Letter from the International Committee "Unto Every Person There Is A Name"

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#### Introduction

The worldwide Holocaust memorial project "Unto Every Person There is a Name", now in its 36th consecutive year, is a unique project designed to perpetuate the memory of the Six Million, among them one-and-a-half million Jewish children, murdered while the world remained silent. The project offers the opportunity to memorialize them not only as a collective, but as individuals, one at a time, through the recitation of their names on Yom Hashoah – Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day. You can help to restore the identity and dignity of the victims of the Holocaust by organizing a name-recitation ceremony on Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day – 24 April 2025 – 26 Nissan. Links to lists of names taken from Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, and planning recommendations are included below.

The Unto Every Person There Is A Name project focuses attention on the urgent need to retrieve additional names of Holocaust victims, before they recede into oblivion.

The "Unto Every Person There Is A Name" project is conducted around the world through the efforts of four major Jewish organizations: B'nai B'rith International, Nativ, the World Jewish Congress and the World Zionist Organization.

The project is coordinated by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, in consultation with the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs and enjoys the official auspices of President of the State of Israel, the Hon. Isaac Herzog.

#### Personalizing the Holocaust

The most fundamental feature of the Shoah is the systematic murder of six million innocent Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators for the sole reason that they were Jewish. Each of their deaths was a separate, distinct tragedy that together has caused indelible lasting trauma to the Jewish people. As time passes and fewer witnesses remain, it is imperative to create a personal link between the Jewish people today and those who were murdered under the Nazi genocidal regime. Recitation of names of Holocaust victims - together with such information as their age, place of birth and place of murder - personalizes the tragedy of the Holocaust.

Emphasis is thus put on the millions of individuals – men, women and children - who were lost to the Jewish people, and not solely on the cold intangibility embodied in the term "The Six Million".

"Unto Every Person There is a Name" rests on the success of Yad Vashem's Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project that to date has identified close to five million names of Shoah victims and that continues its [quest to recover all the six million names](#).

## The Central Theme for Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2025: OUT OF THE DEPTHS: THE ANGUISH OF LIBERATION AND REBIRTH - MARKING 80 YEARS SINCE THE DEFEAT OF NAZI GERMANY

In early May 1945, when Nazi Germany unconditionally surrendered to Allied Forces, jubilation spread throughout the world. World War II in Europe had come to an end, although fighting still continued for several months in the Far East. This was a war that had wreaked destruction on a scale unprecedented in history: roughly 80 million dead; millions of refugees of many nationalities spread throughout Europe and beyond; cities destroyed and infrastructures shattered. Allied soldiers banded together on the smoldering ruins of Berlin, and military parades and public celebrations took place the world over, as well as on the European continent just freed from the clutches of the Nazi regime.

Yet one nation did not take part in the general euphoria – the Jewish people. For them, victory had come too late. The day of liberation, the one for which Jews had longed throughout the years of the Holocaust, was for the most part a day of crisis and emptiness, a feeling of overwhelming loneliness as the sheer scale of the destruction was grasped, on both a personal and communal level.

**Scroll down to see the complete rationale and a collection of texts and readings for your use.**

In addition to this collection of texts and readings, Yad Vashem has created several Ready2Print exhibitions on a range of subjects that can be printed locally, free of charge.

For more information about the different exhibitions available, and to order the exhibition files, [click here](#).

Yad Vashem's extensive collection of [video testimonies by Holocaust survivors](#) is also available for your use.

## Recover Names of Shoah Victims

"Unto Every Person There is a Name" events provide a unique opportunity to gather heretofore unknown names of all the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Since its inception, one of Yad Vashem's central missions has been the recovery of the names and personal stories of all victims of the Shoah. While the Nazis sought not only to physically destroy the Jews but also to obliterate any memory of them, The Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project realizes our moral imperative to memorialize each victim as a human being, and not merely a single collective number. (To learn more about the project [click here](#))

The relentless endeavor has to date identified close to five million names of Shoah victims, documented in the Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names online at: [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org) with over 2,820,000 names registered on "Pages of Testimony" submitted by relatives and others who knew of the victims. The remainder of the victims' names in the database were derived from various archival sources and postwar commemoration projects. The outstanding universal value of the Pages of Testimony Memorial Collection has been recognized by UNESCO, which in 2013 inscribed it in its prestigious Memory of the World Register.

The Names Database, uploaded to the Internet in 2004, marked a pioneering use of technology in the service of memory, documenting and commemorating nearly three million names of Holocaust victims. To continue to meet the needs of an expanding worldwide community of users, Yad Vashem has upgraded and re-designed the database, making use of an innovative platform that allows the accessibility of online information in a fast and user-friendly format.

Names recitations may be utilized to call upon members of your community to complete a "Page of Testimony" for each unregistered victim, or to volunteer to assist others with this urgent task.

## Important links



Lists of names



Pages of Testimony



Video testimonies

The official opening ceremony at Yad Vashem marking the commencement of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2025 will take place on Wednesday, 23 April at 20:00 (8 PM) Israel time.

The ceremony will be broadcast on Israel's television and radio channels, on Yad Vashem's website and Yad Vashem's youtube channels.

We are available to answer any questions that might arise and provide additional material as necessary.

Sincerely,

Members of the "Unto Every Person There Is A Name" International Committee: **Inbal Kivity-Ben Dov**, **Dr. Alexander Avram** (Yad Vashem); **Alan Schneider** (B'nai B'rith International); World Jewish Congress; **Sarit Handknopf** (World Zionist Organization); **Ms. Ruth Cohen-Dar** (Israel Foreign Ministry); **Masha Novikov** (Nativ).

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**The Central Theme for Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2025**

# **OUT OF THE DEPTHS: The Anguish of Liberation and Rebirth**

## **Marking 80 Years since the Defeat of Nazi Germany**

In early May 1945, when Nazi Germany unconditionally surrendered to Allied Forces, jubilation spread throughout the world. World War II in Europe had come to an end, although fighting still continued for several months in the Far East. This was a war that had wreaked destruction on a scale unprecedented in history: roughly 80 million dead; millions of refugees of many nationalities spread throughout Europe and beyond; cities destroyed and infrastructures shattered. Allied soldiers banded together on the smoldering ruins of Berlin, and military parades and public celebrations took place the world over, as well as on the European continent just freed from the clutches of the Nazi regime.

Yet one nation did not take part in the general euphoria – the Jewish people. For them, victory had come too late. The day of liberation, the one for which Jews had longed throughout the years of the Holocaust, was for the most part a day of crisis and emptiness, a feeling of overwhelming loneliness as the sheer scale of the destruction was grasped, on both a personal and communal level.

At war's end, it became apparent that some 6 million Jews had been murdered – more than one-third of world Jewry. Those who had survived were scattered throughout Europe: tens of thousands of survivors of the camps and death marches, liberated by the Allied armies on German soil and in other countries, were in severely deteriorated physical and emotional condition. Others emerged for the first time from various places of hiding and shed false identities they had assumed, returned from the countries to which they had fled, or surfaced from the partisan units and Allied armies they had joined and in whose ranks they had fought for the liberation of Europe. In the wake of international agreements signed at the end of the war, over 200,000 Polish Jews began to make their way back west from the Soviet Union, where they had survived the war years.

With the advent of liberation, probing questions arose for the survivors: Where could they feel secure? Who had survived somehow from their families and communities? How would they be able to go back to living a "normal" life, to build homes and families – and where? On European soil or elsewhere? How should the legacy of the murdered be preserved and commemorated? How would the perpetrators of the heinous crime be brought to justice?

Were the survivors to seek vengeance, or to channel the intensity of their feelings into life-affirming endeavors?

Prior to liberation, many Jews had lived with the sense that they were the last Jews left. Nevertheless, after liberation survivors searched far and wide for their family members, friends and loved ones who might have also survived against all odds. Many decided to go back to their prewar homes but found that they could not cope with the loss and devastation they encountered there. In many places, survivors were met with revulsion and continued persecution, and even in Denmark survivors encountered antisemitism, despite the fact that most of Danish Jewry had been rescued by non-Jews. In Eastern Europe many Jews were attacked, and in Poland more than 1,500 Jews were murdered by locals in the initial postwar years. The most appalling episode was the Kielce pogrom – a violent massacre in July 1946 in which 42 Jews were murdered, some of them the sole survivors of entire families, and many others were wounded.

The Kielce pogrom was a turning point in the history of the *She'erit Hapleta* (surviving remnant) in Poland, and in the eyes of many, it illustrated the hopelessness of rebuilding Jewish life there. During the months following that pogrom, the flow of Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe multiplied: In any way they could, Jews tried to make their way westward and southward. Young Jews joined in assisting this exodus that came to be known as the *Bricha* (escape), focusing mainly on moving as many Jews as possible to territories controlled by British and US troops in Germany, with the goal of their immigration to *Eretz Israel* (Mandatory Palestine). Upon arrival in these areas, the refugees joined the tens of thousands of Jewish survivors already liberated in Central Europe, and together they amassed in the DP camps across Germany, Austria and Italy. Often, these camps were established at the sites of former Nazi concentration camps, among them Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald.

The activities of the *She'erit Hapleta* in the DP camps were a powerful expression of the survivors' efforts to return to life after the war. As early as the first days and weeks after liberation, survivors began to recover and organize themselves, despite the grief, physical weakness and extensive hardships. They formed new families and an independent leadership, set up educational and foster-care facilities for children and youth, published dozens of newspapers and magazines, collected testimonies on the fate of Jews during the Holocaust, and became a significant factor in the Zionist movement's activities. Other survivors returned to their countries of origin, despite everything, and commenced the struggle for property restitution and to locate Jewish children who had been hidden and orphaned during the war.

At the same time, while some Jews remained in Europe, many survivors sought to leave the continent and move to places where they could safely rebuild their lives and their homes. About two-thirds of the survivors who chose not to stay in Europe after the war set their sights on *Eretz Israel*. Yet going to *Eretz Israel* was a formidable struggle, due to the policies imposed by the British Mandate, barring Jewish refugees from entering the country. As part of the effort to circumvent these obstacles, the *Bricha* joined forces with the *Ha'apala* illegal immigration movement that had been established before the war, in order to facilitate the passage of survivors to *Eretz Israel* via Mediterranean ports. Approximately one third of the survivors who chose to leave Europe immigrated to the US, Latin America, Canada, Australia and other destinations.

The *Ha'apala*, as well as immigration to other countries, was a pivotal stage in the survivors' rehabilitation. However, not all the survivors succeeded in rising from the ashes and building their lives and futures anew. Some were too sick, or could not muster the emotional strength to reenter a society and humanity that had betrayed them. Their voices were not always heard, and they remained isolated, prisoners of their own anguish.

In numerous ways, Holocaust survivors contributed to building a better world for themselves, for their children and for future generations, so that others would never experience the horrors of the Holocaust. They raised families, established communities, and were active in a variety of fields and professions. Among their numerous endeavors, they established organizational and legal frameworks designed to prevent the recurrence of crimes such as the Holocaust.

***"Although the memory of the Holocaust is replete with devastation, evil and dehumanization that threaten to inundate all human values, we, the survivors who marched through the valley of death and saw our families, communities and people being annihilated, did not wallow in despair and did not lose faith in humankind. We wish to extract from the horror engraved in our flesh, a positive message for our people and the world - a message of humanity, of human decency and of human dignity."***

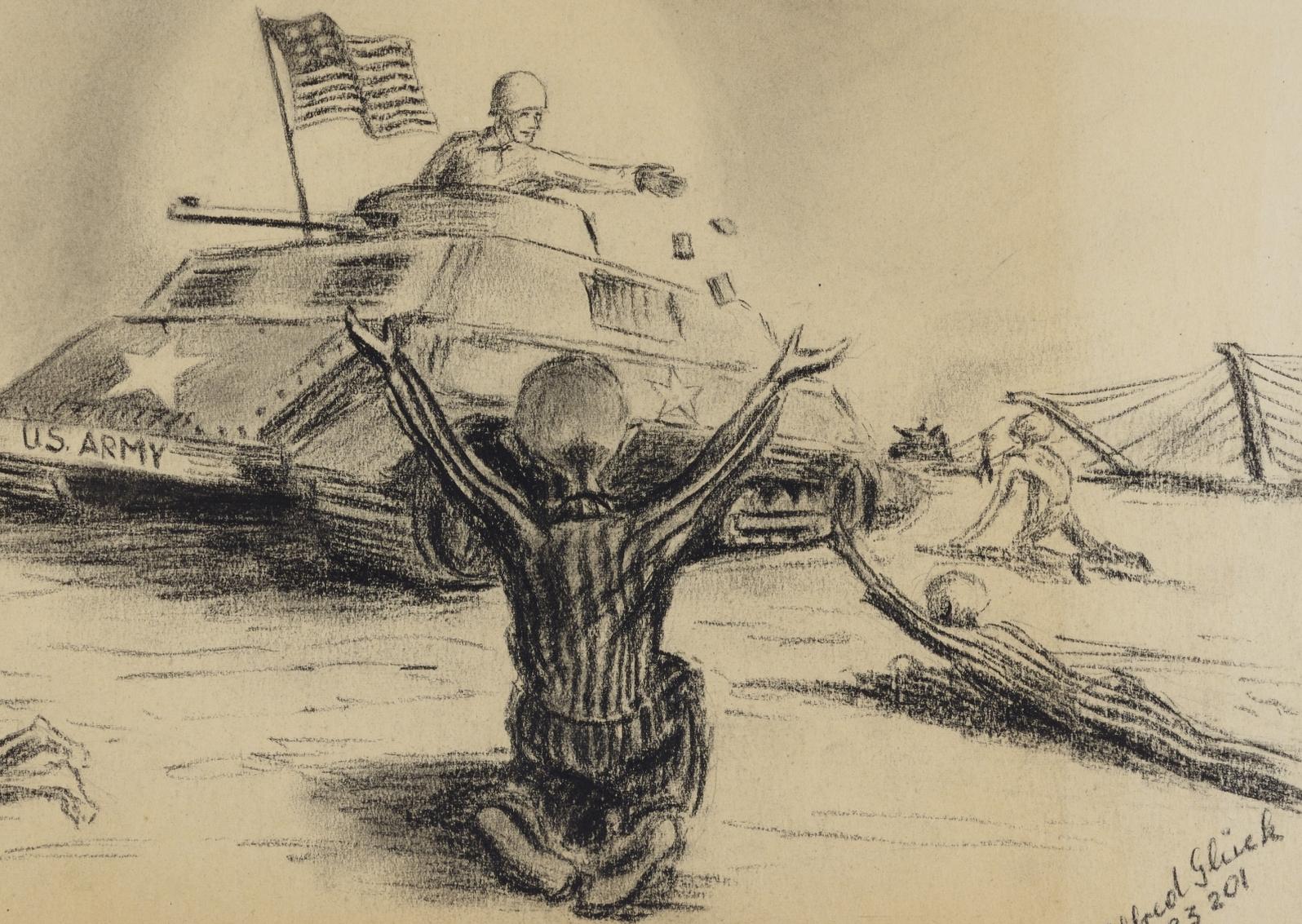
(Excerpt from the Survivors' Manifesto, read out for the first time by Holocaust survivor Zvi Gil in April 2002 at a ceremony concluding an international seminar held at Yad Vashem on the topic, "The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors: The Moral and Ethical Implications for Humanity")

Indeed, many survivors left an indelible mark on the communities they joined or those they established, and their imprint is still apparent in multiple fields, in Jewish and general contexts: Holocaust research and commemoration, academia and science, security and defense, health and welfare, communications and journalism, social and educational frameworks, culture, literature, art, the judicial system, industry and economy, as well as the restoration of the Torah world and Jewish religious life in its many forms.



The official poster marking Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2025

Design: Avraham Yadan



*"You are free and you can leave..."*  
The Moment of Liberation



... The camp guard who came to open the gate said:  
“You are free and you can leave.”

*All the guards with the dogs that used to stand in every corner had disappeared. It was all gone, as though it had never been. It was one of the miracles!*

*The Russians entered, and we were in such a condition that no one moved, no one went out.*

*We did not laugh, we were not happy, we were apathetic – and the Russians came. A general came in, he was Jewish.*

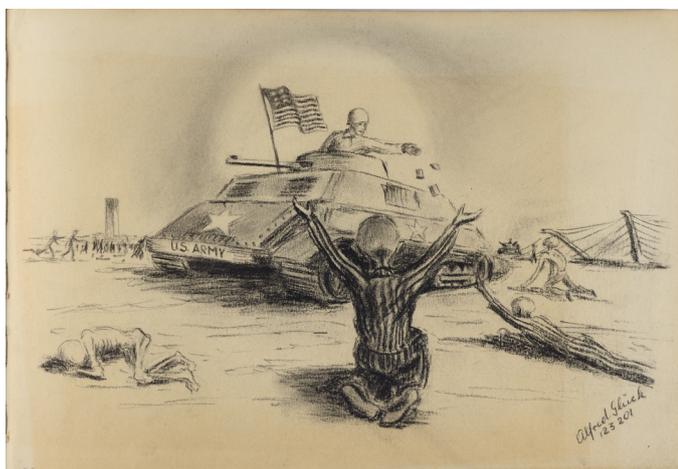
*He told us that he was delighted, as this was the first camp in which he had found people still alive.*

*He started to cry, but we didn't.*

*He wept and we didn't.”*



Bela Braver, deported to Auschwitz, liberated at Lichtewerden, Czechoslovakia, by the Red Army  
*The Anguish of Liberation: Testimonies from 1945*  
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1995



Israel Alfred Glück (1921-2007)

**Liberation**, from the album *My Holocaust*,  
Bergen-Belsen DP Camp, 1945

Charcoal on paper

Yad Vashem Art Collection, Moshal  
Repository

Gift of Dr. Bohuslav Kratochvíl, courtesy of  
Dr. Kurt Passer, London



*In the morning we woke up and there was unbelievable quiet. The watchtower was empty. There were no SS men inside. All of a sudden we heard a sound like rumbling coming along the road. By the way, I have to say we were too weak. We were just sitting around the block. We couldn't move anymore. But some girls ventured outside. There were cars and tanks coming. We heard it. We were very frightened. Maybe the Germans had recaptured something and they were coming back. But then somebody screamed and said these were Americans. The Americans came in and liberated us.*

*...It was freedom. We were elated. We personally, my group, were too weak to jump up and greet the soldiers because we were already beyond anything. We were drained, exhausted. We just couldn't move. But everybody was running to them. They were giving out their ration packages. They warned us right then and there that we shouldn't gorge ourselves on food because such gorging could cause sudden death. We slowly went up and got some food."*



Eva Braun, deported to the Auschwitz and Reichenbach camps, liberated at Salzwedel by the US Army  
*The Anguish of Liberation: Testimonies from 1945*  
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1995

Women inside a barracks in the Bergen-Belsen camp, Germany, April 1945

Seated right, facing the camera: Rozi Abeles from Vacs, Hungary, born in 1924. Rozi survived a death march from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen, was liberated in 1945 and moved to Sweden.





*...The gates were opened and we went out toward the town of Salzwedel... I was with my relative, Miriam, and hand in hand we walked to town, like everyone else... I will never forget that as we were walking along an avenue with trees, on the sidewalk, with American jeeps on both sides of the road, a German woman came toward us carrying stockings. These were stockings of a kind that I certainly was not wearing then, nylons.*

*I stopped her. My cousin pinched me and said:*

*“They will kill us, what do you want, we have been liberated, they will kill us.”*

*The German woman told me that she had daughters at home and that she had to bring them the stockings because during the war they didn't have any.*

*I told her: “Before the war I had a father and a mother, and now I don't.*

*Now you will drop all those stockings and tear them to ribbons with your teeth and your hands.”*

*I stood beside her until she had torn the stockings. My cousin kept pinching me until I was almost blue. Then I said to the German woman:*

*“Now pick up the bits of stockings and take them to your girls.”*

*That was how I let off steam...*

*Suddenly, just as we finished with that, one of the American soldiers said:*

*“Maidele, maidele, do you speak Yiddish?”*

*“Yo,” [Yes] I replied.*

*“Come here, come here,” he said in Yiddish. He asked me why I had done that to the German woman. I said:*

*“What I did was for my mother, for my father, for my brother.”*

*I started to cry. There was a huge black soldier there and he cried, too.*

*The black soldier took a necklace from around his neck and put it around my neck.*

*We were all crying.”*



Eva Goldberg, deported to Auschwitz and Horneburg camps, liberated at Salzwedel, Germany by the US Army

*The Anguish of Liberation: Testimonies from 1945*

Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1995



Survivors welcome US soldiers as the first Allied tank enters the Mauthausen concentration camp, Austria, 6.5.1945



*...I fell asleep, I wasn't aware of anything, I was tired and frail. I only know that in the morning I was awakened by loud shouting, the inmates were shouting because they had seen American tanks from the village on the side of the road. When I woke up, they said: Tanks, tanks! Even though we were tired, battered and broken we began to run the 1.5 km to the road, where long convoys of trucks and jeeps were passing. For the first time in my life I saw a jeep, command cars, tanks, American soldiers..."*



Yehoshua Büchler, deported to the Auschwitz and Buchenwald camps, escaped from a death march and liberated in Eisenberg, Germany.

*The Anguish of Liberation: Testimonies from 1945*  
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1995



*And then Mother hugged me, sobbing too: Tzelinka! I think that we are really free! You don't need to work anymore! Remember, you are 13 years old, yes, 13 and two months. You don't need to lie anymore, you don't need to be afraid and to hide. You are free! We are free!*

*'I am free,' I tried to repeat to myself over and over, as if a heavy weight had been lifted from me all at once. I was tired. All I wanted was to close my eyes and sleep, sleep."*



Zila Lieberman

*Zelinka, Yalda Shesarda et Oshvitz*

Yad Vashem, 2002, translated from the Hebrew



Children liberated at  
Auschwitz, Poland, 1945



*All of a sudden out of the blue sky we saw tanks rolling into the camp... We had no idea what kind of tanks they were.*

*Is it the Americans? Is it the Germans? Is it... We just didn't know. We just suddenly panicked...*

*And loudspeakers started speaking loudly in German and in English: 'You are liberated.' 'We are the English Army - You are liberated.' 'Stay away from danger and stay inside and we'll help you.' 'Stay alive. Try to hang in there. We're here to help you.' And we knew we were liberated.*

*Needless to say, our feelings were very mixed. So we were liberated. So thank God we are alive. But are we really thankful? Who are we? Where are we going to go? What are we? Nothing. That's okay, we're alive."*



From the testimony of Judy Rosenzweig on the liberation of Bergen-Belsen  
Yad Vashem Archives

Survivors after the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, Germany, April 1945





*"It was euphoria, but it was a very  
ambivalent feeling"*  
The Joy and the Anguish



*You were praying all those months to be liberated and then it hits you all of a sudden – here you are free. But after it sank in, the freedom – I am speaking for myself – I realized that I was hoping the whole time that I would see my father and maybe, hope beyond hope, my mother, although I knew that this was not a realistic hope. But my father, I was sure I would meet him. I was positive. But still there were doubts and I realized that I had to start thinking about the fact of what would happen if I would not [find him].*

*While I was elated by the freedom, there was tremendous fear. Who would I find? We had survived this but we now have to go back to civilization. How would we react in a normal world again? We are two young girls without anything. Who will take care of us? What will we do? It was euphoria, but it was a very ambivalent feeling. We were frightened.*

*It's hard to imagine that you have these feelings, but that was the next step, because once we are liberated what are we going to do? We had nothing. We were afraid that we would have nobody. We need someone who would spoil us, that would take care of us. Mostly I wanted somebody very badly; I was sort of in charge of my sister and this other girl. I wanted someone to take care of me and relieve me of this burden. It shouldn't be my problem anymore. I wanted to be somebody else's problem. I cannot explain it.*

*...Freedom is relative. Very much so. The thought of the future weighed very heavily on me. Obviously we knew that it was no longer our problem but still we have to make a future for ourselves and how would we make that future?"*



Eva Braun, deported to the Auschwitz and Reichenbach camps, liberated at Salzwedel by the US Army  
*The Anguish of Liberation: Testimonies from 1945*  
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1995



*...In the children's house in Sweden I was the only girl who had no one. People came from the Red Cross and called out names, maybe someone was still alive. Of course I gave the name of my brother, because father had surely not [survived]. A month later they called my name over the loudspeaker. But I didn't hear because I was busy with the children. Someone said:*

*"Evika, someone is looking for you."*

*I went to the office and they handed me a telegram. It was from my brother! The Red Cross had found my brother at Cluj! I left the office holding the cable like a flag, and shouting:*

*"I'm not alone anymore, I have a brother, I'm not alone anymore."  
Everyone cried, really...."*



Eva Goldberg, deported to Auschwitz and Horneburg camps, liberated at Salzwedel, Germany by the US Army

*The Anguish of Liberation: Testimonies from 1945*  
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1995



Zinovii Tolkatchev (1903-1977)  
**The Liberators Have Arrived**  
Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1945  
Pencil on paper  
Yad Vashem Art Collection, Moshal  
Repository  
Gift of Anel Tolkatcheva and Ilya  
Tolkatchev, Kiev



*I don't remember who was the first that morning to look out of the window. I well remember his cry of joy: "Boys, the Russians are here." Thus, we were liberated... As I walked along the road two uniformed men on bicycles came up to me... The two men introduced themselves. They were Jews, officers of the Polish Armored Corps. Suddenly one of the women asked the officers to tell their story... And then, almost immediately the mood of all of us changed. The joyful atmosphere disappeared, giving way to grief and sorrow. The lieutenant told his story... To their great sorrow, in all the liberated places they found no Jews. The Germans had murdered an entire nation – our nation. After entering Poland, the lieutenant asked for a few days leave to visit his native Vilna. "There I found only stones, the familiar buildings and streets with none of the people who used to live there before," the officer told us. On the long march through Poland, in the hundreds of towns and villages through which they passed, there were no more Jews. Everywhere there were only extermination sites and mass graves. Theresienstadt was the first place they had met so many Jews, thousands of Jews who had survived the Nazi rule. Thus, we learned that our fate was much worse than we had expected. Although we had seen a lot and experienced the worst, we still had hoped, still had dreamed. All those days we had struggled to survive, hour after hour, day after day, there had been no time to grasp the enormity of our tragedy. Now everything became clear. No longer were our families waiting for us; no homes to go back to. For us, the victory had come too late, much too late."*



Shmuel Krakowski, liberated at Theresienstadt  
*The Anguish of Liberation: Testimonies from 1945*  
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1995



*...In fact, we were supposed to begin the normalization, the great crisis had not yet hit us. It began when my cousin came home a few days later. I barely recognized him, because that kid, that big slob had two big ears, a big nose and two cavities for eyes. He began to recover from his muselmann condition. For the first time I cried, I fell on him and cried at how he looked, because then I suddenly woke up. He was the start of my crisis, the crisis of ours as a whole... He embraced me and said only this: "You should know one thing, don't wait for your father and your brother." He repeated that many times... My mother and I received a small flat, a one-room flat in grandmother's house, and mentally speaking things began to get worse and worse because people started to come back with all kinds of stories, and we knew that only we two were left....*

*...Now we began to realize the enormity of the loss, we began to understand that grandfather and grandmother and hardly any of our relatives had returned, only that one cousin, and his father also returned later on. People said we shouldn't wait for them, but the truth is that we waited all the time for Dad, and I only want to say that I often look around, as though I am still searching... Not for Father, it is my brother for whom I am still looking all the time. I know it is completely unrealistic, because formally I am not searching. I, I cast about with my eyes..."*



Miriam Steiner, deported to Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, liberated by the Red Army during the death march to Germany

*The Anguish of Liberation: Testimonies from 1945*  
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1995



A former camp inmate lies on the ground after liberation, Bergen-Belsen, Germany



*...I remember only that I awoke to terrible shouts. I saw all the inmates standing by the fence and shouting. Outside the fence were American soldiers. I understood that this was the liberation, this was the end! The Americans of course entered the camp, took it over. It seems there was no one to advise them on how to feed us. They cooked soup in pots, and then the terrible tragedy happened. People fell like flies. It was an indescribable spectacle. People who had gone through that whole hell died just like that, unnecessarily. I did not have the strength to leave the hut to eat. Afterward they started to clean the huts, they went from hut to hut, and they found us. They moved us to the clinic and American doctors arrived and treated us well. And again the body, the marvel of the body. It heals with unbelievable speed. I weighed 28 kg. I couldn't stand on my feet, I crawled. A month later I was home on my own! It is beyond words to describe what the human body is, what a human being is.*

*I was liberated on 28 April 1945. Here my second tragedy began. I didn't know who was alive and who was not. I spoke with people from my town, they told me they were going to America, I said that I was going to Eretz Israel but that first I was going to my home town. In the registry office I said I was from Carpatho-Russia. The Russians didn't want me, the Hungarians didn't want me: "Ibrei, zhid [kike]."*

*I went to the Czechs and I said I was Czech, not Jewish. Here I saw something that is engraved in my memory to this day. Every nation had a flag. I had no flag. Everyone had one except me. Everyone walked with his beautiful flag, but I had no flag..."*



Haim Rosenfeld, deported to Auschwitz, liberated at Dachau by the US Army

*The Anguish of Liberation: Testimonies from 1945*  
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1995

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Boy in prisoner garb after liberation, Auschwitz, Poland, 1945



*Miško's sons Miško and Yožko helped us carry our belongings to Pišta's house. His wife took us into a messy bedroom, just as it had been left by the Russian officers who had slept there. But who cared! A normal room, a normal bed, not to be exposed to the afflictions of cold and wind! We straightened the bedclothes and lay down to sleep.*

*The next morning Pišta's wife called us to eat breakfast in the kitchen. On the threshold of the bedroom I stopped, as though stricken with blindness. But it was forbidden, absolutely forbidden, to leave the room! This threshold syndrome and other conditioned reflexes of one who has lived a long time in hiding and in fear came back again and again and it took a long time until I became accustomed to my freedom."*



Hani Kedar-Kehat  
*MY NITRA: A Family's Struggle to Survive in Slovakia*  
Yad Vashem, 2015  
Translated from the Hebrew by Eve Hecht



*"I am alive and I am free"*  
Letters Written After Liberation

CHAPTER 3

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Samuel Bak (b. 1933)  
**Children Alone**, Landsberg  
DP camp, 1946  
Gouache on paper  
Yad Vashem Art Collection,  
Moshal Repository  
Gift of the artist



“  
“  
Lublin 12.2.44

*Dear Uncle!*

*I am the son of your brother Samuel, my name is David. You do not know me. Since 1940 I am in S.R.R. [sic] My Father, my mother + my brother, Israel remained in Borysław. When the Germans arrived in 1941 they killed the whole family as well as your second brother Arie.*

*Arie's son Jichiel is alive, we were together in Russia. At present he is in the field with the Polish army and up to now has been well. I was wounded twice, once in Red Army, once in the Polish army, and spent 3 mths in a Field hospital. I am now on a 6-mths-leave, and have visited our Hometown.*

*120 persons are left out of the former Jewish population of 15 thousand.*

*Please answer immediately and give me your exact addr. I also sent a letter to Chana Polak via the "Joint" since I don't know her addr.*

*Keep well, regards to your family*

*Your nephew  
David Ingber*



*After So Much Pain and Anguish: First Letters after Liberation*  
ed. Robert Rozett, Iael Nidam-Orvieto, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem  
2016



Moscow, 28.8.44

*My dear and beloved Yitzhak, Manya, Noah and Yigalke,*

*It has been almost 4 years since we heard from each other, and today I finally have the opportunity to write to you, my dearest and loved ones. I am writing you this letter after a long period of suffering pain, and horrific experiences that history has never known before. Today I am finally writing you, my dearest, a letter. I am warning you ahead of time that I struggled with myself how to word my letter. I have decided to write you the harsh truth no matter how horrific and horrible it has been. I trust you have heard and read enough about all we went through. It all pales in comparison to what we actually experienced. I am incapable at the moment of fully describing everything. Maybe I'll be capable to do so at a later date.*

*The only members of our dear, beautiful and pure family to have survived are myself, your brother Azriel, and our dear sister Hava. It is very sad, but this is a fact. Out of 3,000-plus Jews who lived in Stołpce only a few hundred survived. In fact, some families perished entirely. Just picture, my dearests, that from our big Tunik family in Stołpce, the only survivors we are sure about are Hava and me. The fate of our brother, Pesah, is still in question. All we know is that at the beginning of the war he was captured by the Germans and forced to serve as an interpreter. The last time we heard from him was in June 1942.*

*My dearests, I beg of you to write back to me soon. I am sending this letter to Manya's old address, which I still remember by heart. The last few days I have been visiting Moscow. I'll try to send you a telegram.*

*Today, I will tell you a little about Hava and me. Hava was a partisan for almost two years and all that time I had no information about her. I myself also went through an extraordinary tragedy. I myself tried to save our dearest and beloved, but failed. Hava left on exactly the day of the pogrom with a second group and we parted and met again after the invincible Red Army liberated us. We settled down in Stołpce. Nothing is left here, neither people nor houses. Our one and only goal right now is: Revenge! Nothing else interests us. Our lives*

*are broken forever. We are no longer normal human beings. It is impossible to remain a human being after experiencing hell. I am asking you, my dearests, to do me one favor. Be strong and don't lose your might. You are all we dream about and all we hope for. We have each other and nobody else. Write us about yourselves. Where do you live and how are you managing? I think that next time I'll be able to write a more detailed letter.*

*My dear Manya! I am more than certain that you can't wait to hear about our dear common relatives. Here again I have struggled with myself, and have decided to write the truth. Nobody survived. Be strong, my dear. I can imagine the impression my letter will have upon you, but we had it much worse. We saw it all with our own two eyes.*

*My dearests, I would like to ask you a favor. If you have any pictures of my dear Zipale and Yankale, please safeguard them and when the opportunity is right, you may send them to me. Another thing I would like you to do is to send us the addresses of our friends in America, Africa and Argentina.*

*I need to stop now as I am unable to continue writing today. Stay healthy and strong and remember us.*

*Your brother Azriel*



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2016



Jews who returned home after the war stand in Reichenbach Street, Germany



*Kaunas, 1.9.44*

*Sender: Hirsch Brik, Kaunas, Post Restante, Lessar*

*To: Leshem, Tel Aviv, Ahad Haam 120*

*My dear friends Leshem,*

*I am alive and I am free. After three torturous years, I am back to being a man like all other men. The German bastards have murdered my entire family. Lyuba and Arik are no longer with me. I still hope to find them. Even if I wanted to make a list of all the names of our mutual friends who have been savagely murdered, no paper could absorb the ink needed for it. I am still too exhausted for such a task. I'll write you all about it in due time. I am working now and have sufficient food to eat. I am earning money and able to get just about everything here.*

*Please send me some clothes urgently (if it is not too complicated for you).*

*Send my regards to Haim Barlas, David Shor, Eliyahu Dobkin, Moshe Kleinbaum, Shafer Bilovolskes and all the rest of my friends. I am eager to hug them all and just cry our hearts out.*

*I kiss you and your children.*

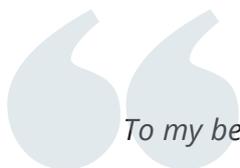
*Yours,*

*Hirsch*

---

Children and adult former prisoners behind barbed wire after liberation, Buchenwald, Germany





*To my best friends!*

*Hirsch has already written to you about everything. All that's left for me to do is to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your true friendship. Yes, my dearest, many dreadful years of horrific nightmares have passed since we saw you depart to Eretz-Israel. It is impossible to relate in a letter all we have endured. Nobody will ever give us back what we have lost. An entire beautiful Jewish world has ceased to exist. You can no longer see in Lithuania a bearded Jew. Gone are our fathers and our mothers who sustained the fine and pure Jewish life upon their shoulders! A Jewish world is forever gone! And nobody in the surrounding world feels any shame! On the contrary: They still hate us, the survivors, for who we are! But enough about us, we are tragedy personified, albeit we are the lucky ones. Our single hope is Eretz with its new life, its strength and its enthusiasm. How are your children? Did Miriam get married? And how is the handsome Dodik who resembles the Roman Caesar? Please let us know how they are doing. And you, how is your life coming along?*

*Be well. I hope to properly repay you for your friendship. Your beloved Arik will soon turn 9.*

*He is a fine big boy, but our constant wanderings have had a very negative effect on him. This is another reason why Eretz is my only hope.*

*Stay well and send my regards to Miriam, Dodik and the rest of the acquaintances.*

*Yours,  
Lyuba*



*After So Much Pain and Anguish: First Letters after Liberation*  
ed. Robert Rozett, Iael Nidam-Orvieto, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 2016

Lyuba and Hirsch Brik (Barak) are the parents of Former President of the Israeli Supreme Court, Prof. Aharon Barak

“  
Vilna 15.10.44

*My dear ones!*

*I hope you received my response by telegram.*

*From it you should now know who remains alive and has survived all the terrors of the last three years.*

*I don't know how I should begin, from where. I do not have the words to describe the whole horror of what we have endured.*

*I have been intending to write to you for a long time but, believe me, my strength did not suffice.*

*Every time I took a pen in hand the dear beloved faces of those who senselessly perished at the hands of these butchers, beasts in human shape, appeared before me. So I lost heart and could not write to you.*

*But, after all, I do owe you a report, the last souls who are close and dear to me in the whole world. So I am making an effort to describe it all to you.*

*Yes, only Sonya and I have survived, none of our other relatives remain.*

*Do you understand the whole horror of the situation when you walk down the streets of your native city and recall how in this very place, in such and such circumstances, you used to meet your daughter, and there – your father, mother, sisters, in-laws, friends and acquaintances – none of whom is any longer in this world.*

*It would be enough to tell you that of the 75,000 people who comprised the Jewish population of Vilna there are only about 1,500 alive today, and even so, half of them are not [originally] from Vilna.*

*The best people perished.*

*All those who were the pride of Vilna and who were well known around the whole world are gone. Most of them were shot at Ponary, 10 kilometers from Vilna, which is now an enormous graveyard covered with sand, where here and there a skull sticks out, a hand, a leg, a scrap of clothing, [?] an old fragment of a plate. [Ponary is] a place which is now part of the lamentable history of the Jewish people.*



*After So Much Pain and Anguish: First Letters after Liberation*  
ed. Robert Rozett, Iael Nidam-Orvieto, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 2016



Alexander Bogen (Katzenbogen) (1916- 2010)  
**Ruins of Vilna Ghetto, Vilna, 1944**  
Pencil and charcoal on paper  
Yad Vashem Art Collection, Moshal Repository  
Gift of the Artist



Young woman after the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen camp, Germany, April 1945

“  
Kaunas, 5.2.45

*My dear and beloved friends! Jehudith and Motl Leshem!!*

*This letter is written by your old friend Jaswen Benjamin, from Kybart, who, by chance and without any help, has rescued himself after having been three years in the Kovno concentration camp. I have lost everyone and everything.*

*On Sept. 12 1941 in Kybart, Hitler's assassins shot my dear children, Rivale and Minale, as well as Perl and Gutmann. They perished along with the entire town. The same has happened to all our good friends and not one has survived. Of the 40,000 Jews at the inception of the Kovno ghetto, about 300 to 400 rescued themselves. I would like to tell you a bit about our murdered friends. Grazen and Sher and family, Becker and family, Bernard Lewin, Eric Kohn, Woller. Mrs. Amph Milner, Heimann and Fast. I don't recall the rest. Until July 10 1944, the Burak family – Nathan, Betty and Harry – were together with me in the ghetto. They had a tough life, worked very hard and suffered from hunger. In the end, on July 18, they were burnt alive when the camp was set afire by the Germans.*

*My dear friends, it is impossible for me to write to you about everything because I am already tired and weak, ill from all I have been put through by Hitler's thugs during those three dark years locked up in the concentration camp. There is nothing to write about. The entire Jewish population of all the Lithuanian towns has been brutally killed by Hitler's murderers.*

*My dearests, a ray of light has been added to my life. I found my child Roza, who rescued herself. She was in the Soviet Union, and endured plenty. I would like to thank the Barbanels for their kind support of my only child. Obviously, I will never forget them as long as I live. I would also like to thank you for the packages you have sent. I hope we'll meet again. Since I have been left alone and lonely, and in the absence of any relatives, you are the only ones to whom I can turn.  
[Text is blacked out.]*

*I have got nothing to tell you about my life. You must understand me pretty well. I must hang on for the sake of my only child and be a father to her. I have been able to hang on all this time and managed to survive Hitler's gang of criminals thanks to the hope of some day finding and reuniting with my daughter, and indeed the happy moment has arrived.*

*My dear child, Roza, came to Kovno on the 31st of December 1944, and stayed with me for eight days. My dearests, it is impossible to describe our meeting. Two people, neither of whom imagined the other was still alive, suddenly found each other. It was joyous as well as a painful experience. But, I am unable to bring the rest of my children back to life. During the eight days Roza spent with me she told me exactly everything about you. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support.*

*We both should always be in a position to reciprocate with good things. Roza looks pretty well. She is well fed and warmly dressed.*

*She is fighting and avenging the blood that was shed and the life that has been ruined. With such help we shall obliterate Hitler's gang of murderers. She will write to you about everything and about me in general terms. [Text is missing.]*

*You are ill. Try to get stronger. We still need you. You are a mother to my only child. How is Motel and how are the children? Please write to me exactly and keep thinking of us, because I have no one closer than you. All have perished. I myself am a broken man, my health is not too good and my whole life is full of hardships. It seems to be my destiny, to be lonely and alone in my old age. I believe I have written everything to you.*

*Best wishes from your true friend, B. Jaswen.*



*After So Much Pain and Anguish: First Letters after Liberation*  
ed. Robert Rozett, Iael Nidam-Orvieto, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 2016



Člověku, který mi vrátil víru.

Susan Pittman

*"Everything reminded me of those  
who had left and would never return"*  
Going Home



*The first time I returned to my real home, I went alone, taking the whole way on foot, crossing Mostowa Bridge and turning onto Podolna Street under the railroad bridge. The bridge had blocked the great fire that swept the city.*

*Thus, the southern part of the street, including our home, had survived. Nothing had changed. All the houses were intact. So were the signposts, the fruit trees, the vegetable gardens, the curtains in the windows, the smoke from the chimneys, the voices of children and the flowing Niemen River. Only we weren't there. The parents, siblings, uncles and aunts, the Chasid family, the seamstress and her daughters, Cebulski the shoemaker, the Littman family — the bakers — the Karons, who had lived farther up the street, and the Sokolowskis.*

*Podolna Street was Judenrein.*

*I stepped into the courtyard and passed the gate and the picket fence. The threshold, the garden, the woodshed, the workshop — all were intact. I knocked on the door. I had never done that before. A Polish woman who had lived down the street before the war opened the door a crack: suspicious, fearful, aggressive. All I wanted was to see the house, I said, but she slammed the door shut.*



Neomi Izhar

*Chasia Bornstein-Bielicka: One of the Few, A Resistance Fighter and Educator, 1939–1947*

Translated from the Hebrew by Naftali Greenwood  
Yad Vashem, 2009

Yehuda Bacon (b. 1929)

**To the Man who Restored my  
Belief in Humanity, Prague,  
1945**

Gouache, charcoal and pencil  
on paper

Yad Vashem Art Collection,  
Moshal Repository





*"New people, new furniture. In the kitchen – a cobbler's workshop, the smell of leather, tar, fried pork fat. The cobbler asked me what I wanted. She didn't know that I was the owner of this home. I told her hesitantly, embarrassed. Without missing a beat, with a sly smile she explained that I would surely receive another apartment in keeping with my needs, my income and with a permit from the Housing Ministry. She didn't even invite me to sit down..."*



Chaya Albaum-Durembus

*"Yamim Bli Shem, Yehudiah Amitzat Lev Betzad Ha'ari Shel Varsha"*

Yad Vashem 2023 (translated from the Hebrew)



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A refugee couple in the street after the war, Vienna, Austria



*I wandered around the city and looked at the destruction, the blackened walls, the black, ugly houses with gaping mouths where there had once been windows and doors. Strewn everywhere were piles of stones, glass shards, pieces of iron and wood, rags, smashed houseware, torn shoes and lots of feathers, that flew in the air like white butterflies with each gust of wind... I entered the house next to my family home. The floor tiles had been displaced, the walls were blackened, the rooms were empty, papers and torn books were strewn on the floor. My foot encountered something: I knelt down and picked up a small child's shoe..."*



Baruch Miller  
"Ve'ulai Hashamayim Reikim"  
Yad Vashem, 1999 (translated from the Hebrew)

A destroyed street in the ghetto after World War II, Warsaw, Poland



The "Bericha" -  
Survivors go on  
board a truck  
on their way to  
Western Europe



*"Of the 6,000 Jews who had lived in Nitra and the surrounding villages on the eve of World War II, only 600 survived the Holocaust. Only pale shadows remained of their way of life and customs, and I felt a terrible emptiness in the city, even though it teemed with Russian soldiers.*

*Although I had already learned while we were in Cabaj that Nitra was almost empty of Jews, I had not been prepared for the sharp pain I felt when I walked the streets that had once bustled with Jewish life and when I passed by houses where our friends and acquaintances had lived. Everything reminded me of those who had left and would never return. I tried to avoid passing through the "Jews' Street," Párovská, and the other streets on which my loved ones had lived, Aunt Aranka and Izzy, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Schweiger, and all the others. Sometimes I heard comments from insolent Christians, such as, "Look, more Jews have returned than went away," and I felt as though boiling oil was poured over my head.*



Hani Kedar-Kehat

*MY NITRA: A Family's Struggle to Survive in Slovakia*

Yad Vashem, 2015 | Translated from the Hebrew by Eve Hecht



*Dr. Winter tried to persuade me to go with the rest of the children to a convalescent home in Sweden. I also had consumption. But I wanted only to return home, I was positive that someone of my family was alive, that my father was alive, because he was a strong man.*

*...I took my things, I started to make my way home in packed trains, via unmarked roads. My house is about 600 km from Prague. I set out, somehow we kept going, it took days, we were given food at every train station.*

*...When I arrived in my town, I met a few relatives and there was great excitement. I asked: "Where is Father?" I was certain he was at home. "We do not know where your father is." "What, isn't Father at home?" They didn't know whether I was dreaming or maybe there was something wrong with me. I was in shock. "Father isn't at home?" They said: "No." Then I learned that no one had come back, that I was alone, that I alone had returned.*



Yehoshua Büchler, deported to Auschwitz and Buchenwald, escaped from death march and liberated in Eisenberg, Germany.  
*The Anguish of Liberation: Testimonies from 1945*  
 Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1995



Jewish refugees at a railway station on their way to Italy. Budapest, Hungary, 1945



*"Where would I go when I got up  
in the morning?"*

What Now?

CHAPTER 5

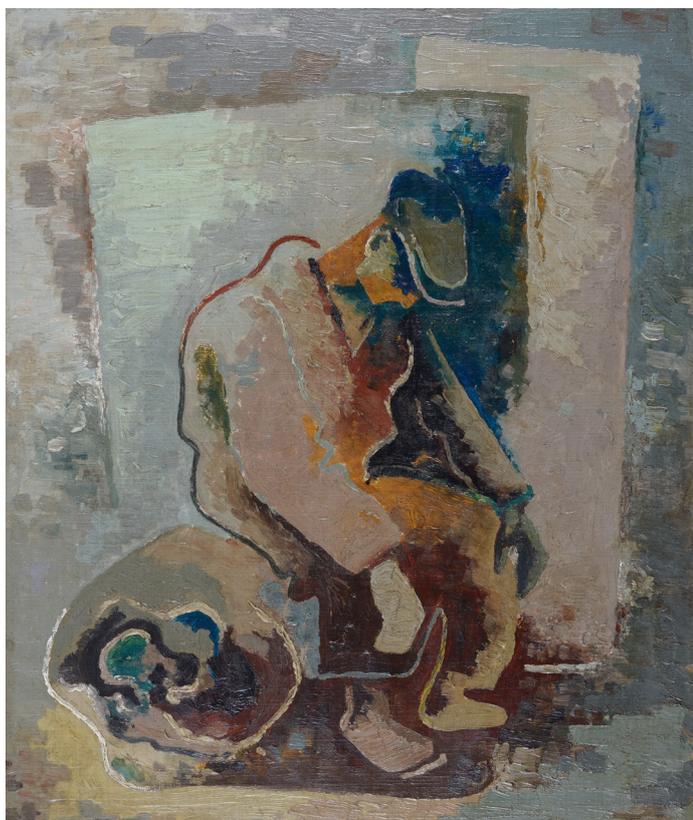


*We... celebrate our liberation, but at the same time, it is a time for mourning for us. For every bright and joyful day at present and in the future is shadowed by tragic events of the past years... We are free now, but we don't know how to begin our free but unfortunate lives... We have forgotten how to laugh, we cannot cry anymore. We do not comprehend our freedom."*



Dr. Zalman Grinberg, Yad Vashem Archives

Dr. Grinberg, survivor of Dachau, spoke these words at the first ceremony marking liberation from Nazism, in the summer of 1945.



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Pinchas Shaar (Szwarc) (1917-1996)

***Where To?***, 1945

Oil on wood-panel

Yad Vashem Art Collection, Moshal Repository

Acquisition, courtesy of Barbara and Lewis Shrensky, Washington D.C.

A survivor sits on a bundle of possessions after liberation, Dachau, Germany

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*When I lay down to sleep, my thoughts centered on one single question – Where would I go when I got up in the morning? I already didn't have a place I could call home, and I had no desire to return to my birthplace, where I was unwanted due to my being Jewish. Being a Jew was a crime carrying the death penalty. For me, the war was not over yet. My struggle to adjust to a life without my family had only just begun. I stood alone, facing an unpredictable path."*



Yoel Alpern

*"Ish Lo Mechake Li"*

Yad Vashem, 2005 | Translated from the Hebrew



*In the winter of 1944 we were liberated by the Red Army. From the Polish partisan base at Panska Dolina I hurried to my hometown of Luck. I wore myself out walking through the streets, hoping to find a Jew. Luck had become a Jewish town devoid of Jews.*

*Why had I stayed alive? I recall a particularly hard moment, when, crossing the bridge over the River Styr, I started running amok in an attempt to overcome the death wish that gripped me.*

*I found my sister hiding in a Polish family's attic, wearing a cross around her neck. The first thing she whispered to me was: "Shmilik!" – I was 14 – "I have remained Jewish", as she pulled out a page from the Rosh Hashanah (Jewish new year) prayers:*

*"Hear our voice, oh Lord our G-d, have mercy upon us!"*

*"We must flee from this country", she whispered, "There is nothing for us here. We will go to Eretz Israel."*



Excerpt from Shmuel (Shmulik) Shilo's address on behalf of the survivors, at the Opening Ceremony of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2008

Shmulik Shilo was one of the founders of Kibbutz Ze'elim. He was a theater and cinema actor, an early member of the Hakibbutz and Be'er Sheva theater groups and one of the founders of the Hanegev theater group.

Shmulik was born in December 1929 in Luck, Poland (today Ukraine). In August 1942, most of the city's Jews were murdered. Shmulik escaped, was given shelter by a Polish family, and returned to Luck several months later. There he was reunited with his older brother, Micky, and together they were sent to a Nazi forced labor camp. In December 1942, an uprising broke out as the Germans prepared to liquidate the camp. Shmulik's brother was killed in the revolt, and Shmulik escaped, hiding in villages, forests and with Polish partisans. The area was liberated by the Red Army in February 1944. Shmulik found his older sister, Necha, and together they reached Italy, where they met Jewish Brigade soldiers. In July 1946, Shmulik boarded the *Ma'apilim* ship *Katriel Yaffe*. The ship was intercepted by the British, and he was sent to detention camps in Cyprus. Shmulik was released in December 1946 and finally reached *Eretz Israel* (Mandatory Palestine).





*I went home. I didn't have anywhere I could stay... The gatekeeper was living in the house and wouldn't let me go in... I also had aunts and family. I went to see all their apartments. There were goyim [gentiles] living in every one. They wouldn't let me in. In one place, one of them said, 'What did you come back for? They took you away to kill you, so why did you have to come back?' I decided: I'm not staying here, I'm going".*



Testimony of Shoshana Stark, Yad Vashem Archives  
Shoshana Stark joined the *Bericha* organization, immigrated to *Eretz Israel* (Mandatory Palestine) at the end of 1947, was deported by the British to Cyprus, and later returned to Israel.

The "Bericha"  
- survivors on  
their way to the  
train station,  
headed towards  
Western Europe,  
Czechoslovakia,  
1946





*"We who staggered through the  
valley of death"*  
Rebirth

CHAPTER 6

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Eliazer (Elie) Neuberger (1891–1972)  
**The Wandering Jew (Ahasver),**  
Amsterdam, 1945  
Oil on canvas  
Yad Vashem Art Collection, Moshal  
Repository  
Gift of Yehezkel Kelman Weissblum  
Robin, Amsterdam



*In Jewish tradition, the command to remember is absolute. But its obligation does not end with the cognitive act of memory – it must be connected to both meaning and action. Today, we for whom the memory is burned in our hearts and on our flesh, gather to pass the torch of memory to the next generation. We pass to you as well the fundamental lesson of Judaism, that memory must be accompanied by action of ethical and moral intent. This must be the foundation and the focus of your energies toward the creation of a better world.*

*We who staggered through the valley of death, only to see how our families, our communities and our people were destroyed, did not descend into despondency and despair. Rather, we struggled to extract a message of meaning and renewed purpose for our people, and for all people, namely: a message of humanity, of human decency and of human dignity.*

*The Holocaust, which established the standard for absolute evil, is the universal heritage of all civilized people. The lessons of the Holocaust must form the cultural code for education toward humane values, democracy, human rights, tolerance and patience and opposition to racism and totalitarian ideologies.*



Excerpt from "Our Living Legacy", a message from Holocaust survivors for all generations, delivered by journalist Zvi Gill, Holocaust survivor, at the closing ceremony of the Legacy of Holocaust Survivors' Conference, Yad Vashem, 2002.



*I feel obligated to tell my personal story, and through it the story of the community of Thessaloniki, so that the younger generation will know what happened... As long as we Holocaust survivors are alive, we have to tell our story... I hope that the young people will read and learn, know and remember... I also hope that love for others will transcend hatred and (evil) inclinations, and that this will be learned the world over. I, the sole survivor of my entire family, have not lost hope and optimism, and I hope that faith in mankind will continue to exist."*



Excerpt from the testimony of Yitzhak Cohen  
Yad Vashem Archives

Monument in memory of the Jews of Thessaloniki who were murdered in the Holocaust  
May 1962, Thessaloniki, Greece



The "Tarbut" school  
in the Jaeger  
Kaserne DP camp.  
Kassel, Germany,  
1948



*The phenomenon of the rehabilitation of the She'erit Hapleita (surviving remnant), the Jews' will to live, is unbelievable. People got married! They would take a barracks and divide it into ten small rooms for ten couples. The will to live transcended everything else – despite everything, I am alive and I even lived an active life.*

*When I look back on those three years in Germany, I am amazed. We took children and made people out of them. We published a newspaper, we blew breath into those bones. The great reckoning with the Holocaust? Who had the headspace for it... You knew the reality, you knew that you didn't have a family, that you were alone, that you have to act. You were busy doing things; I remember saying to the youngsters: forgetfulness is a great thing. We can forget, because if we couldn't forget, we wouldn't be able to build new lives. After such devastation – to build a new life, to get married, bring children into the world? In the midst of forgetting, we were able to create new life... somehow the will to live was so strong that it kept us alive."*



Excerpt from the testimony of Eliezer Adler, who lived in a DP camp for three years after the war, Yad Vashem Archives



*In school, Sister Laboure asked us to write a composition about "the most frightening experience of my life." I wrote about a Bnei Akiva expedition to the peak of Mount Zobor, where I had volunteered, along with a friend from the group, to bring water from the spring at the foot of the mountain, and we had both gotten lost. The nun perhaps expected that I would write about the Holocaust period, but it was important to me to portray myself in my proud new image — the image of a member of a Zionist youth movement."*



Hani Kedar-Kehat

*MY NITRA: A Family's Struggle to Survive in Slovakia*

Yad Vashem, 2015 | Translated from the Hebrew by Eve Hecht

Rabbi Israel Meir Lau (Lolek) (holding the flag) and his brother Naftali (behind the flag) with other survivors after their transfer to the Atlit camp in Haifa, *Eretz Israel* (Mandatory Palestine)





*In the small synagogue that my parents founded in Kfar Netter, I once heard an explanation that moved me to the depths of my soul, and from which I seek consolation whenever my longing returns.*

*Each time I think of this interpretation, my eyes fill with tears. It was on the Shabbat before the wedding of Icki Berkowitz, of blessed memory, the son of our neighbor Ida. When we had finished singing Psalm 126, Mr. Tkatch, a member of the moshav, rose from his seat and explained the words "Then shall our mouth be filled with laughter":*

*"Then shall our mouth be filled with laughter," Mr. Tkatch repeated the words and then asked, "What is the meaning of the word 'then' and what is meant by 'laughter'?" And he explained: "Then — in the future, when the resurrection of the dead will take place — the older brothers will rise up as young as on the day they died, in the prime of their lives, and the youngest brother, the baby of the family, will rise up old and bent, withered, diminished, white-haired — as on the day of his death — and at this strange sight, our mouth will be filled with laughter."*

*I see in my mind's eye my Father's brothers and sisters and my mother's two sisters, and they rise up as young as on the day they were murdered, and Father, the youngest child, and Mother with him, rise shriveled, downcast, and supported by walkers... I also see battalions of children who never grew up and of grown-ups who died before their time: my friends Magdi-Čičoka Melyon and Aninka Deutelbaum, almost all the children in my class, my cousin Karli and all my other cousins — all of them will rise from the pillars of smoke and blood as children and youths. At their side, I see, too, my teachers from the Jewish school, who were even younger than I am today....*

*I dream that a vast army of boys and girls, of young men and women and of young mothers and fathers who did not grow old and who did not live to raise their own children — all of them will rise up as they were in their prime, before they were reduced by the height of barbarity to walking, shivering skeletons and to corpses twisted by the tortures of the suffocating gas. All will rise, the young and the old, and their faces will be suffused with an expression of sorrow that takes in the entire world, together with a trace of pride, and in their mouths a sacred message: The chain must continue and grow forever!*



Hani Kedar-Kehat

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# Each of Us Has a Name

*Each of us has a name  
given by God  
and given by our parents*

*Each of us has a name  
given by our stature and our smile  
and given by what we wear*

*Each of us has a name  
given by the mountains  
and given by our walls*

*Each of us has a name  
given by the stars  
and given by our neighbors*

*Each of us has a name  
given by our sins  
and given by our longing*

*Each of us has a name  
given by our enemies  
and given by our love*

*Each of us has a name  
given by our celebrations  
and given by our work*

*Each of us has a name  
given by the seasons  
and given by our blindness*

*Each of us has a name  
given by the sea  
and given by  
our death.*



Zelda



The Spectacular Difference: Selected Poems of Zelda, translated, edited and introduced by Marcia Falk, (Hebrew Union College Press, 2004).

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