

# Happy (“Ashrei”) is the Man Grandfather Asher Teitelman

## Chapters of His Life

by  
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Translated from the Hebrew by Mlynov Family Descendants  
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## The Last Day of Grandfather Asher

(may his memory be for a blessing)

On Yom Kippur, in the year 5770 [2010], during the night between Sunday and Monday, Grandfather Asher Teitelman went to his Maker in his apartment in the senior home called “Ad 120” \* in Rishon Lezion.

Grandpa Asher had a regular custom. He would telephone every day to each of the family ask about their well-being, and take an interest in what they were doing and were involved in. He would call his sister, his brother, his children and grandchildren. On the eve of a holiday, he would call earlier and reach out to more family members.

On Sunday, the eve of Yom Kippur, he called as usual to members of the family. He wished everyone Happy New Year (Shannah Tova), of course, and “may you be inscribed well [in the book of life]” (gemar hatimah tova). No one thought this would be the last phone call with grandpa.

Grandfather ate the last meal [before fasting] in his home and went down to first floor in the senior home for the prayers “Kol Nidre” (All Vows) and the Gabbai’s face lit up as he greeted him, and he gave him the honor of opening the ark.

When prayers ended, grandpa went up to his home, but not before taking leave of his friends and acquaintances with blessing and hand shaking. He also went to the receptionist counter and also wished her “gemar hatima tovah.”

At 2 am in the morning, he apparently woke up and called the doctor on duty in the senior facility. The doctor came. She saw that he was having difficulty breathing and she called for an ambulance. The ambulance came, but about an hour later, grandpa returned his soul to the Creator.

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Grandpa was 89 years old and one month when he passed away. He was of clear mind, in possession of his thoughts, completely independent almost his entire life, and was meticulous about his dress and his external appearance. He refused with all his power to give in to his injured and painful legs which betrayed him. He honored all creatures, and he was loved, beloved and well-liked by all who knew him, friends and family alike.

Grandpa Asher was blessed with grandchildren and great grandchildren. He loved everyone with his entire being, and they returned him their heartfelt love and much honor. The bar

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\* The name “until 120” is an allusion to the Jewish idiom that a person should live until 120 years.

mitzvah party of the oldest great grandchild, Harael-Rafael, took place one month before his passing and he was fortunate enough to participate.

The funeral took place Tuesday, the 11<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei, Jewish year 5770, in the cemetery of Sideh Yehoshua [Fields of Joshua] in (Kfar Samir) in Haifa, in the part of the cemetery that was purchased for members of the family.

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Several years before his death, grandpa and I used to meet once a week for a few months. During these meetings, he used to spread in front of me chapters of his life and thrilling stories from his childhood until he made aliyah to the Land of Israel. Chapters of his life that include, of course, the story of his survival from the Shoah, and the story of his escape, and his illegal immigration to Palestine. After each meeting, he used to invite me to lunch in the senior home. I sat down and ate with him and his friends in the dining room. This was a special experience.

I recorded the stories and wrote them down. The stories and events are here before you.

Daughter-in-law, Dinah

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## Introduction: Mlynov the Town Where Grandfather Was Born and Grew Up.

Mlynov<sup>1</sup> is a town in the Volyn district, in the area of Dubno. The town is near the Ikva River and on the shores of a big lake.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Count Alexander Chodkiewicz (also spelled Hudkiwicz), a known figure in the Polish culture, came to this place. Chodkiewicz established farms and mansions. Over time, he built two flour mills. The land was worked by Ukrainian and Polish sharecroppers.

In his beautiful mansion, the Count worked and died. Here he amassed a collection of science works and a large and rich library, where he sat and engaged in chemistry experiments.

At the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century, 670 Jews lived there. In the 1930s, 5,000 Jews lived there and constituted the majority of the population.\*

### What is the origin of the names “Ikva” and “Mlynov”?

According to the Jewish folk story, the name of the river Ikva came from Scriptural verse: “Let the waters be gathered (yekavu hamayim)...” (Genesis 1:9). \*\* The following event happened in prior generations. It was a difficult winter. Snow descended in unusual quantities. When spring came, the water in the river rose up, numerous chunks of ice accumulated by the embankment of the bridges; they piled up and prevented the water to flow. The river rose and rose and overflowed. The villages in the surroundings area as well as the Jewish residents got flooded. The Jews came together in prayer and read the section of Genesis, where “God said, ‘Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear...’” [Gen. 1.9]. The sun came out and melted the ice. The water ran with a mighty current and the result was the bridges were destroyed and “land appeared.” This is the source of the name Ikva [an allusion to the Hebrew “Yakavu”]. The name found favor among the gentiles and has remained its name until this day.

The source of the name “Mlynov” – from word “Melin” which means “mill” in Slavic languages. The name Mlynov implies two mills.

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<sup>1</sup> According to *Mlynov-Muravica Memorial Book*. Ed. Yitzhak Siegelman. Haifa, 1970 (5735), pp. 11, 13-15.

\* Editor’s note: The population figure given here may be mistaken. Based on a Russia source quoted in Wikipedia, the population of Mlynov was 1290 people in 1921 and declined in the 1930s. According to the *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettoes* (1933-1945, Vol. 2, p. 1428) there were 615 Jews in Mlynov in 1921 and an estimated 1500 Jews including refugees in 1941. See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mlyniv>.

\*\* Editor’s note: In the Genesis verse in question, God commands the waters to be gathered up so that land may appear. The Hebrew for “be gathered” is yekavu. The Hebrew spelling of Ikva contains the same letter.

Close to Mlynov on the Ikva River, is the town of Mervits (Muravica). In that town were the palaces, which belonged to the Chodkiewicz family. In 1790, the nobleman Krarsitsky used to hold fairs. The Jewish residents of Mlynov were mostly merchants and workers. There were among them 15 grain dealers, shop owners of various kinds, and stores for building material and iron that was sold mostly to farmers in the area. They also included tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, and barbers.

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## Chapter 1: Memories from my Childhood

[Asher Teitelman in the first person]: I was born on the 14th of Elul, 1921. I am the oldest child of my parents: Rachel (family line Gruber) and Nahum Teitelman.

As far as I know, the father of my great grandfather – Mordechai Teitelman – came from the Pale of Settlement to Mervits.<sup>2</sup> [Great-great] grandfather, Mordechai Teitelman, got married in Mervits to a woman from Lutsk. One of his sons, Asher, is my great-grandfather.\*

My great-grandfather, Asher Teitelman, married a woman named Sarah [Sura Alta]. They had six children, four boys and two girls. The children were: Ephraim Fischel, Chaim Meyer, Abraham Aryeh and Mordechai, and the daughters were: Dobe and Sifra. At some point, Ephraim Fishel married Haya Bakowietzky from Lutsk to be his wife. Shifra, his sister, married Joseph Moshe Gruber.

In 1919, first cousins Nahum (Teitelman) and Rachel (Gruber) got married – they were the [first cousins], children of the siblings Ephraim Fischel Teitelman and Shifra (Teitelman) Gruber.

My parents, Rachel and Nahum, brought six children into the world:

I am the oldest: Asher Mordechai (1920)\*

Ephraim Fischel (1922)

Sholomo Ben-Zion (1924)

Shifra (1926)

Yosef (1928)

After Yosef, another sister was born – Sarah Rivkah, but she passed away at the age of nine months from Meningitis

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<sup>2</sup> Between 1791-1914, Jews were forbidden to live in Greater Russia. The Pale of Settlement was defined by small villages and towns where Jews were restricted to living and working.

\* The narrator is also named Asher Teitelman, the subject of this book, and he is referencing his great-grandfather after whom he was named.

\* At the top of the page, Asher's birthdate is given as 1921 but below as 1920.

*Figure 1 The siblings, children of Rachel and Nahum (clockwise from oldest) – Asher, Ephraim, Shlomo, Shifra, Yosef*



*Figure 2 Yosef is now old enough to be standing (to the right of Sifra)*

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My first memory of my childhood is from the age of 3 approximately. At that time, I started to go to Heder [traditional Jewish primary school]. My first teacher was Rav Noteh. He opened a small window for me to the aleph-bet [ABC's], my first prayer and after that Chumash [Five Books of Moses]. At age 6, I already started to study Gemara (Talmud)– the Tractate on Blessings (Masekhet Berachot) with Moshe Melamed. Moshe was a strict teacher, who expected serious study, precision and knowledge from his students. I remember that my father examined me every Shabbat on what I learned during the week.

At a later stage, I studied Torah with Rashi and other commentaries with the teacher Ben-Zion. Alongside it, I continued studying Gemara from Moshe Melamed. At a particular level, I stopped studying Gemara with him and I studied Gemara in private lessons with my uncle, the brother of my father: the rabbi Eliezer Anshel. In addition to being a rabbi, uncle Eliezer was a trader in holy objects.

On Shabbat, my father taught me and examined me: On the Sabbath eve, we studied together “Orech Chayim” related to the weekly reading of the Torah. On Shabbat morning, we studied the Haftorah [the designation portion of the Prophets].

My father was strict about our studying and gaining knowledge, but he did not agree that we should go to Yeshiva and become “idlers” [batlonim]. He spent a great deal of money for teachers and tutors (melamdin).

About the age of 10, I started to study at the Polish governmental school. I studied [there] every morning from 8 am until 12 noon. In the afternoon I continued my studies in Torah and Gemara. In addition to that, my parents hired a teacher – a Jew from Vilna – who would come to our house and taught history and geography to me and my sister Shifra. His name was Mordechai Chizik. I remember on the wall of the house hung a geographic map showing both hemispheres of the globe. I loved to stare at that map and to “travel” there with my eyes and learn about different places in the world.

The two sons of Mordecai Chizik, Moshe and Meir, made aliyah to the Land of Israel in the 1930s and lived in Kibbutz Degania.\* One was bitten by a poisonous snake and died.

During 1932–1935, I studied in the Tarbut Hebrew school. I remember strict teachers and studying different subjects– especially Hebrew studies and Jewish history. Similarly, I remember the great enjoyment of fieldtrips on behalf of the school and the activities of the youth movement– HaNoar HaZioni (The Zionist Youth) – which belonged to the General Zionist party.

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\* Editor’s note: Moshe Chizik married Rosa Berger from Mlynov. He was the one who died from the poisonous snake.

### Holy Mary Came To Visit

I was about 10 years old, and was in one of my lessons with Moshe Melammed, when a rumor spread in town: "Holy Mary appeared in the large church." From all the villages and towns in the area, people started streaming in large numbers to the church, some on foot and some by wagon.

We, kids, were very curious. During the break between classes, we escaped from class and ran to the church to see Holy Mary...

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When we returned, Moshe Melamed was waiting for us, angry with ire. He told our parents of our deed. I was punished: for a few weeks I was forbidden to leave the house and meet with friends.

### Our House in Mlynov

My parents engaged in trade.

In 1924, Father bought a plot of land from a Polish nobleman and built a house on it. About a year later, we went to live there, even though it wasn't yet tiled. The house was very big and included two wings: a living section and a section for the agricultural trade.

In the living section, there was an entrance, a very big living room, two children rooms, a parent's room, a room for the servant, a kitchen, a dining room and a wash room. In the front of the living section, was our shop. In the shop, we sold grocery products, sacks of flour, different kinds of pastes [or ointments], and also barrels of kerosene.

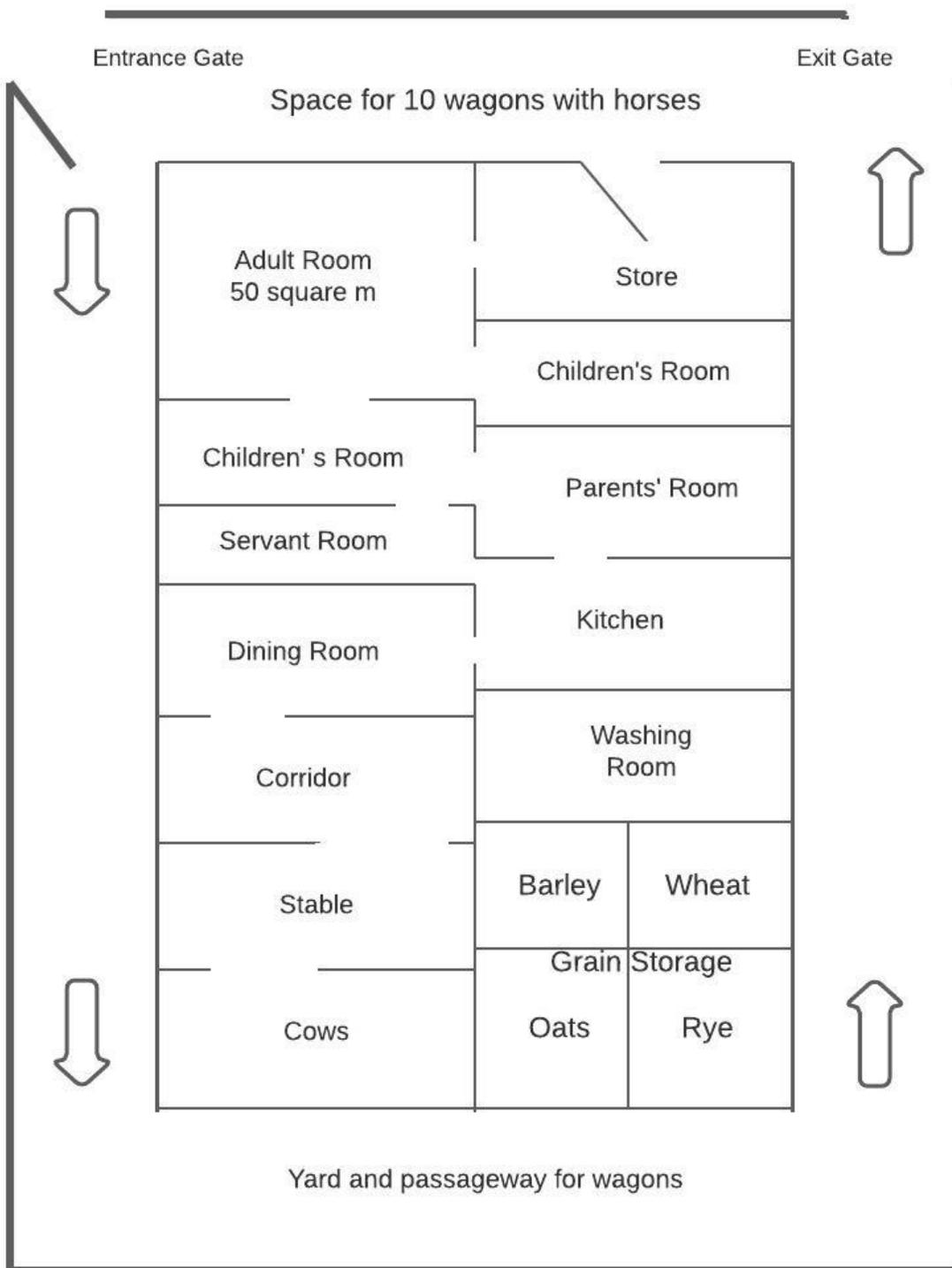
In the second wing, there was grain storage, subdivided in several sections, in which we stored wheat, barley, rye and oats. The capacity of the storage bins reached 200 tons of grain. To the side of the storage area was a stable for horses and a stall for cows.

A big yard surrounded the home. The front of the yard was roofed over. More than once there were ten horses hitched to wagons of grain. The farmers came with their wagon to sell us their goods. At the same time, the farmers generally took the opportunity to buy necessities from our shop.

At the age of 10, I began to help my mother in the store and I helped my father in the storage area with his business. Every day, before dawn, I would organize the store. By the time Mother arrived at the store, everything was already in order.

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### The House in Mlynov on 65 Rikova Street



### The Visit Of Grandfather Yosef Moshe

I was not fortunate to know my grandfathers and grandmothers. On only one occasion did I see my grandfather Yosef Moshe – my mother's father.

Grandfather Yosef Moshe lived in Mervits. One day not long after we moved into our new house, he came to us. This was in the summer of 1926. I was about 6. I remember a tall man impressive with a gingy [red] beard. He entered the house and sat down heavily in the big living room. He suffered from asthma and his breathing was labored... After a few months in the winter, Sonia (the sister of Mother) came to us and announced that grandfather Joseph had passed away in his house. Mother prepared to leave and go to the funeral, but I broke out in bitter crying. I grabbed her and begged her not to go. She sat me down on her lap, tried to calm me down and gave me a vial of perfume as a present. She left the house and I continued crying for a long time.

Sometime after his father passed, uncle Yitzhak, the youngest brother of my mother, came to live with us. He was about 19, an orphan from both parents. His other sisters were married.

Family members succeeded in arranging an exemption from being mobilized with the army. He went to Zionist training [hachshara] and in 1936 he made aliyah to the Land of Israel.

### Story of a Jewish Thief

In our town, there lived a young man who married one of the women of the family. They lived in the house of the wife's parents, at the edge of the town. From time to time, that guy would buy grain from the farmers, sell it to us, and earn a few Zlotys. During that time, he was like a member of our household, but then we started to feel that we were missing wheat in our storage units. Because we kept precise records of buying and selling, we were able to determine that something was not right. Also, his behavior was suspicious.

We set an ambush. We left the door to the storage room open. I stood from a distance along the railing and waited on the other side of the storage area. Suddenly, I saw him slinking along the wall and going into the open door. When he was already in the storage room, I sprung up and ran toward the side. I caught him sitting by the wheat section and putting wheat into a sack. I yelled for Father to come. He arrived quickly. We did not report the incident to the police, because a Jew does not turn over another Jew to the authorities. We went to a Torah court presided over by a rabbi. The rabbi meted out a punishment.

On June 6, 1941, (I will speak about this later), the war broke out in our area. The Germans bombed the area. In the third wave of bombardment, a bomb fell on his house and killed him and all his family.

## The Synagogues in our Town

In the town of Mlynov there were several synagogues. The main synagogue was for the Trisk Hasidim on Skolna street. About 250 people prayed there. Adjacent to it was the synagogue of the Karlin Stolin Hasidim. An additional synagogue was “The Workers and Trade People” synagogue.- Once a year, the Rebbe [Admur]\* from Oleyka would visit.

We prayed in the big synagogue of the Trisk Hasidim.

I remember the prayers of Shabbat and holidays in the synagogue and the activities that took place there almost every day. In the shul, there were study groups: members of the groups studied and taught Mishnah and Gemara after the work day and on Shabbat in the afternoon. My father was the chairman of the associations.

The walls of the synagogue were loaded with books and there was there a library from which you could borrow books. During the year there were special holiday Sabbaths, for instance: the Sabbath they read the 10 commandments, the portion on Yitro (Parashat Yitro, Exodus 18:1–20:23), and portion on Va'etchanan (3:23–7:11).\* After the prayers in the synagogue, there was a large reception, (a holiday kiddush). Many women exerted themselves and prepared refreshments for this reception (kiddush). My mother and her friends used to prepare cakes for all those participating in prayers.

In our synagogue, there was a welcome room for guests: it was a big room that could sleep more than ten people. Every Shabbat, visitors came to the town, guests passing through who were in essence beggars. Almost every Friday evening we used to go home from the synagogue with a guest. The guest used to stay with us Shabbat eve and Shabbat meals.

The synagogue had a podium for speakers, interpreters of Torah, leaders of prayer, famous cantors, among others, the famous cantor Mosze Koussevitzky.\*\*\*

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\* Editor's note: A Rebbe or Admor is the spiritual leader in the Hasidic movement, and the personalities of its dynasties. Admor is a Hebrew acronym that stands for “our lord, our teacher, our rabbi”

\*\* Editor's note: The 10 commandments are read in the synagogue on the first day of holiday Shavuot and on two Sabbaths during the year. The first Sabbath is when the cycle of Torah readings reaches Parashat Yitro (Exodus 18:1–20:23), which is the seventeenth Sabbath after Simhat Torah, when the cycle starts over. It usually falls in January or February. This Torah portion includes the 10 commandments and Jethro's organizational counsel to Moses. The other Sabbath in which the 10 commandments are read is Parashat Va'etchanan (Deuteronomy 3:23–7:11) which is the 45th portion of Torah read in the liturgical calendar.

\*\*\* Editor's note: On Koussevitzky see, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe\\_Koussevitzky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe_Koussevitzky)

The shul was also a gathering place for the political parties and Zionist organizations that operated in Eastern Europe. Here, Hashomer Hazair, and General Zionists organized gatherings that hosted, among others, Moshe Kleinbaum, who later was called Moshe Sneh.\*

One event that was organized in the synagogue was especially impressed on my memory. It was a gathering to protest Hitler's coming to power, and took place in 1935. The synagogue was packed full of people (peh le peh): the women's section was full and even representatives from the Church participated in the gathering. The leaders of the community (Kehilla) warned us and told us of the danger knocking at the door. A few years later in 1938, Kristallnacht took place, and in 1941 the war arrived to us.

The Trisk synagogue was named for "Rebbe Aharon the Great" of Karlin. I used to go with my father to visit his grave on memorial days. The grave was big and impressive like a mausoleum. Above it, was spread a large tent. Many people would go to grave to visit the grave of the Karlin Rebe.

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*"I have Seen That All Things Have A Limit" [Psalms 119:96]*

The rebe - Rav Velvele – he was the rabbi of the Trisk Hasidim. He would come to town once a year and stay about a week, from one Thursday until the next. During his visit to the town, he used to stay with families without kids. During the week, the Hasidim would visit him, present their problems, and request a blessing and advice. During one of those days of the week, he would be guest in our home. In that day, all our family from Mlynov and Mervits would come to us. We would have a meal together. Each person explained his troubles and asked for advice and a blessing from the rebe.

My brother Shlomo used to lose consciousness time to time. During one of the visits from the Trisk rabbi, he fell in the room and lost consciousness. Father and Mother ran to the Rebbe. The Rebbe came immediately; he circled the room seven times, stood in the middle of the room, raised his hands and called out loud, "I have seen that all things have a limit" (Ps 119:96). That was the last time my brother Shlomo lost consciousness.

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\* Editor's note: A founder of the General Zionists and later a member of the Knesset. See <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/sneh-kleinbaum-moshe>

How did we celebrate the Jewish holidays?

### **The Passover Festival**

The preparation for Passover started immediately after Purim. There were two devices and two stoves for baking matzo in town. A device and oven of Mr Kolton who baked matzah in his house, and another device and stove that was purchased with help of Mlynov and Mervits immigrants to the US.

Before Pesach, the family of the sexton (shamash) vacated the synagogue where they lived, and they baked the matzah there. Also the guest room of the synagogue was used for this purpose.

At home, the preparation for Passover included preparing wine from the dried grapes we had already bought around the time of Purim. Similarly, we prepared the pickling: we bought a respectful amount of beets, peeled and cut them and soaked them in vinegar. The menu of the holiday also included a tremendous amount of potatoes, and special pancakes– kugelach. Before every Passover, we used to paint the house.

At the Passover Seder, it was not customary for the members of the extended family to get together. Each family celebrated the Passover Seder in the intimacy of their smaller family. Only on the day after the festival (“Isru Chag”) -in the eighth day-did we visit one another.

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### **The Festival of Shavuot (“Weeks”)**

During eve Shavuot, we used to go to the river to pick greens to honor the holiday. When we arrived home, we spread the greens on the floors of the rooms.

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### **The Festival of Sukkot (“Tents”)**

In the first few years in our new home, Father used to build a Sukkah in the courtyard-adjacent to the wall of the kitchen. That way we could transfer the food from the kitchen through the window into the Sukkah. A few years later, it was decided to expand the house, and the location of the Sukkah changed. In the ceiling of the hallway underneath the tiled roof, they created an opening like a window [“skylight”]. The window was comprised of two wings that would open upwards. For the festival of Sukkot, we would open “the skylight” and lay thatch over it [to fulfill the religious duty of eating in a temporary structure].

During Sukkot the weather was already cold, usually it rained and sometimes snowed. During those conditions, with no other option, we pulled the ropes to the shutters of the skylight and closed them.

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**Hanukah**

I loved Hanukah very much. We organized fun parties at school. We received Hanukah , played with cards, tops, and other games, all this during the cold winter, when we needed to be inside the house most of the time.

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**Tu BiShvat**

My father's birthday– [i.e.] Grandfather Nahum– took place on Tu BiShvat. My aunt and uncle, Mendel and Sonia, didn't have children and they would always come to us from Mervits on Tu BiShvat to honor the birthday of Father and to celebrate the holiday.

On Tu BiShvat , we would eat each fruit from the Land of Israel: carobs, figs and oranges and would drink wine. Also years later, when we immigrated to the Land of Israel, the family continued to get together on Tu BiShvat and celebrate grandfather Nahum's birthday. These gatherings became a family tradition. Even today many years after the passing of grandfather Nahum, the family gets together every now and then on Tu BiShvat.

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**Purim:**

During Purim we used to disguise ourselves and enact the stories of the Torah, for example, the selling of Joseph (Genesis 37:18-26).

[original page 18] blank

## Chapter 2:

### The Nazi Rise to Power and the Outbreak of World War

During the years 1929 – 1930 there was a worldwide economic crisis. The crisis began in reality in the United States, but it spread and harmed the European economies, and in particular the economy of Germany. The stock exchange crashed. Many were thrown into crisis and lost their wealth. In our case – in order to improve our economic situation – we organized the grain merchants of Mlynov into collaborative associations. Father was among the leaders. After about two years the situation improved, and the association broke up.

In parallel, a large migration to the Land of Israel began during this period.

In 1933, Hitler came to power and in 1936 pogroms came to our area. The Endeks – members of the rightwing national party, [like] the Nazis – began to cause trouble. They closed down the roads that ran between Mlynov and Mervits, and began to build fortifications and to set up barriers in the roads. During market days Jews were struck more than once. Fear spread. Movement on the roads ceased. The farmers were not able to sell their wares, and their business ceased. For us, as with many other people, there was no means of a livelihood.

In 1939, we realized that war couldn't be prevented. And therefore, on Friday the first of September 1, we got up in the morning and heard that war had broken out. The Germans were approaching. The Polish government ceased to function. We were very frightened about the future.

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah – on Shabbat the head Rabbi, Rav Gordon, went up to the podium of the synagogue, pounded on the table and called out in an emotional voice: "Jews save your souls." Hundreds of people got up and left the synagogue in the middle of prayers. Many of them fled eastward in the direction of the Soviet border, which was approximately 70 kilometers.

We went home, bundled up our clothes and essential belongings and we loaded them on a wagon. We left the town and headed East towards the Russian border...

We traveled 8 kilometers. Evening came. We stopped and entered the house of a Czech family, who lived alongside the forest, in a house outside the town of Chetka-Novina.\* The family members were friends of ours, and we had business relationships with them. They invited us to stay the night with them.

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\* Editor's note: Perhaps the town that currently is called Dolyna 9 km from Mlynov.

In the morning, on Sunday, we got up early. Father and I returned to town in order to retrieve the treasure from the ground which uncle Mendel gave to Father and asked him to hide. Father had buried them in the courtyard behind the house and recovered a tin that included gold coins. We took the treasure and started our return trip. Along the way we were attacked by two German airplanes.

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On the body of the planes we were able to see were swastikas. Firing came from all sides and we – our hearts in our throats – grabbed a hiding place in the ditch covered with grass that was alongside the road. We stayed there until the firing ceased. When the planes left and the danger passed, we got up and continued.

We returned again to the house of the Czech family, and found Mother upset and worried. “Where were you?” she asked, choked up with tears. We told her what happened.

That same day, at 3 o’clock in the afternoon, we heard on the radio the speech of the Soviet Foreign Secretary Molotov on “the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact”.

“The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact” was an agreement that was concluded between the German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and Soviet Foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1939. The public part of the agreement was a non-aggression agreement between the Soviet Union and Germany. In the secret part, the division of Poland was established between these two nations. According to the agreement, Germany would receive western Poland up to the Bug river, and the Soviet Union would receive Eastern Poland and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The duration of the agreement was supposed to be for ten years, but in reality it lasted only two. Germany broke it in 1941.

After learning of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, we left the house of the Czech family on Tuesday – between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – and we returned home.\* In the town, the Soviets had settled in the fields of Count Chodkiewicz. Private commerce ceased, and likewise our business ceased to operate.

The Soviet Communist government that ruled in the first years of the war in Ukraine collected taxes from the farmers. Each farmer had to supply a specific percentage of their grain to the authorities. The Soviets set up for this purpose an association called “Zakot Zernah”, the role of which was to raise taxes. Father was responsible for collecting and storing the grain. He began to work for the Soviet government.

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\* Editor’s note: The family returned home because the announcement of the pact gave them confidence that the Nazis would not be attacking the area in which Mlynov was located.

In 1941, when the Germans invaded, they continued to collect a tax on grain from the farmers. They appointed a Ukrainian for this role. Father was his helper, because he was an expert in how to store grain and protect it. He worked there about a year between 1941–1942

Immediately after we left the Czech family and returned home, the Soviets enlisted me in forced labor. Near our town an airfield was built, and I worked there digging and on infrastructure work. Every morning I used to come out to the center of the town. There military vehicles were waiting and took workers to the building location. In that period, I learned Russian.

Military personnel were billeted in town, especially pilot and their families. After a while, large cargo planes used to land and take off in this new airport. The work of building the airfield continued until middle of 1941. The Russians treated us more or less okay, and life continue more or less routinely.

[original page 21]

On June 21, 1941, before dawn there was a bombing. The German airforce attacked the town. The airfield was bombed, as were the roads and bridges, and the house of the Jew who stole from our grain storage. His house was at the main entrance to the town.

A large wooden bridge, that connected the airfield to the town, broke apart. The middle part of the bridge caught fire and fell into the river. Many people were killed in the shelling in the town and outside of it.

That very moment I was at the airfield. Fortunately, I was only lightly wounded.

In that place total confusion broke out. People screamed, cried, and fled with fear in all directions. I also fled...I reached the river and I saw the bridge destroyed. I climbed on the parts of the bridge that remained hanging. With a great effort and all my remaining strength, I managed to cross the river. I reached the town, turned and walked towards my house. Along the way, I realized that most of the houses were empty of people. I entered my home. To my joy, I saw that Mother, Father and all my siblings had not fled. They waited for me. The emotion was palpable. Mother sobbed.

We fled to Mervits. We approached the home of our aunt and uncle, Sonia and Mendel. They were not in the house. We were told that they had hidden in the yard of a Ukrainian farmer. We found them there, and all of us sat under the trees in the yard. The aerial warfare had begun. The bullets whistled around us, and some fell close to us. We fled with Sonia and Mendel from Mervits!

As we continued walking, we saw from a distance, the town of Lutsk, which was north of us, was burning. We walked all night, and on the following morning, Sunday, June 22, 1941, after

walking about 8 kilometers, we got to the village of Stomorgi.\* There were already Jewish refugees there, mostly from Poland. Previously, Polish farmers had lived in this village who were soldiers in the Legion of Pilsudki—the commander of the Polish army in WWI. We didn't find a place to stay there.

The following morning, which was a Monday, we decided to go to a Polish town that was surrounded by forests. The name of the town was Panska-Dolina.\*\*

We arrived at Pańska-Dolina on Tuesday, June 24, 1941. But then the rumor reached us that the Germans had retreated, and the Soviets were again in control of our village. We made the decision to return to our home in Mlynov. We returned and entered the house. The house was intact and in order, as we had left it, but...towards evening we saw on the other side of the road, men riding motorcycles. They were German soldiers who entered the town in disguise of civilians. We decided to flee again. We gathered up a few things and fled again by foot to Pańska-Dolina. We reached the home of farmers we knew, and we asked for food. They did indeed give us some, but we sensed that they were worried and afraid of the Germans.

We went into the forest. There we met Mother's siblings: Haika, and Nuta who had three children.\*\*\* We stayed there until Friday.

[original page 22] left blank

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\* Editor's note: Perhaps what is now known as Stomorhy which is between Mlynov and Lutsk.

\*\*Editor's note: Pańska-Dolina no longer exists after the region was incorporated into the Soviet Union after WWII. The village was one of several points of Polish defense against the Ukrainian army during the wave of Polish massacres between 1942–1945. The village offered protection to Polish and Jewish escapees during the period. An online map shows the village between Mlynov and Lutsk. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pa%C5%84ska\\_Dolina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pa%C5%84ska_Dolina)

\*\*\* Editor's note: Chaika refers to Chaya (Gruber) Schichman, the sister of Asher's mother Rachel. Chaika is the one who had three children. Nuta, the other sibling, had only one child.

## Chapter 3: Fleeing the Germans

Now in fact begins “the story” with the Germans.

On Friday, we all decided to return home, us to Mlynov and our aunts and uncles – to Mervits.

We started walking. After a short time, German soldiers stopped us. They stood us alongside a concrete wall and commanded us to raise our hands and turn to face towards the wall. They said to us: “We are going to kill you. You are our enemies.” We were about 15 people– three families. With no choice we obeyed the order. We stood with raised hands and they patrolled back and forth by us. Apparently, they were waiting for instructions. Two of the officers spoke Czech. Aunt Chaika, who knew how to speak Czech, turned to them and began to speak to them. She told them that we just want to go home and ... that’s all! They left us a short time later, and they walked away to deliberate. When they came back, they instructed us to be on our way.

We went!

We drew near to our home and to our dismay it became apparent that our house had been broken into...\*\*\*

Father and I entered first. In the living room, I recognized familiar faces: A farmer and his wife stood beside full sacks of clothes and other belongings of ours. Father exploded in a loud voice, “Joachim, “Even you are among the thieves!” They left all of it and fled.

Joachim was “one who did our bidding,” kind of like a servant. We nicknamed him “Kaporeh”.\* Father took care of him, and he introduced him to his wife. We had business dealings with him. When Joachim saw us arrive at the house, apparently he was ashamed or frightened and fled.

We entered the house and tried to close up and lock up... [but] everything was broken. It was not evident who had done this. We stayed in our home Friday and Shabbat, and we didn’t even go to the synagogue. We were frightened to death.

On Sunday morning, Ukrainian police passed by on the road and called everyone out of their home to the town square. Hundreds of Jews obeyed and came out. That same morning some Jews were killed. Many Jews, mostly the younger ones, were taken for labor by the Germans. All the Jews were required to tie on a yellow patch.

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\*Editor’s note: No explanation is given of why they called him this nickname.

Rav Gordon was killed that day. They cut off Father's beard. I was taken to the area of the Count's mansion. There were two mansions. One was destroyed by the bombing. The second remained still standing. They demanded that we clean up the area.

[original page 24]

That very day we left the house towards morning, at dawn, for the town square. We were organized and immediately afterwards – taken out for various kinds of work.

At first, I worked in removing the destroyed mansion of the Chodkiewicz.\* After several days they took me and a few young men to work in horse stalls that were part of the Sovhoz [Soviet State farms].\*\* The Sovhoz was a cooperative farm that the Soviets established in 1939. In the morning, I would out from the house and join the group. We walked towards the farm that was on the other side of the river, approximately a distance of one and a half kilometer. We were expected to clean the horse stalls and prepare food for the horses. The work continued for two weeks. After that, they brought me to work in plowing in the same area. The German officer who was responsible for us was pleased with my work. One day, he followed me as I ploughed, he took off his hat and said [in German], "Fine, Fine" ("Well done, Well done.")

It is relevant to point out that we received food every day: there was a large pot there and in it they boiled soup and meat.

The month of October arrived, winter began and with it the cold. It was not possible to work in the field. The sheaves of grain got wet from the rain and froze. One day I was threshing. There was a large threshing machine that was similar to a truck. I was given the instruction to get up on the machine, and put the sheaves in the machine that looked like a giant mincing machine. The frozen sheaves froze my hands, the skin peeled off and I was not able to function. I did this work for one day. Someone else replaced me.

I continued to work in the agricultural farm for some time.

One night at the end of the 1941, I heard a knock at the door. At the opening stood a representative of the Judenrat (the organization of Jews that was established by the Nazis in order to mediate between them and the Jews), accompanied by a Ukrainian policeman. They took me out of the house in middle of the night [literally pupil of the night] and they brought me to the apartment of the Judenrat. There I met the sister of my Uncle Mendel, my aunt Mamtsi, my uncle's son, namely the son of Chaika– Abraham, and other young men and women.\* From there they took us away but we didn't know where we were going. Ultimately, after traveling approximately two days, we arrived to northern Ukraine to the district of Polesia,

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\* There are many spellings of this Count's name. The Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, Vol. 2, p. 1429, uses the alternative "Hudkiwicz".

\*\* Soviet farms See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovkhoz>

\* Mendel was married to Sonia, the sister of Asher's mother. He was also a first cousin to Asher's father. Chaika was also a sister of Asher's mother. She had married Yaakov Schichman and they had a son Avraham Mordechai.

an area they called Studyanka. In that place there were many swamps, from which they would produce peat which served as fuel and as fertilizer for the ground.

I worked there about three months. Once a week, the representative of the Judenrat came and would bring us supplies of bread and clothes. During this period, I succeeded in keeping in some touch with my parents by means of the Judenrat representative.

Towards the end of winter, the intensity of security weakened there. I took advantage of the opportunity and escaped. I reached Mlynov and I returned to my agricultural work. No one asked me to explain my disappearance. The wages for working were kerosene for light, wood for warmth, potatoes, etc. I was involved in this work for several months.

[original page 25]

### Ghetto Rovno

In the spring of 1942, a few weeks before Pesach, they again took me away from home. They brought me with three other men to a town in the district of Rovno, that was about 50 km from Mlynov. In Rovno, we had to work in a German-Austrian construction business which engaged in building renovation which in the past had been a "Tarbut" high school. The buildings were being converted into living quarters for Gauleiter\* governor, in other words: the German who ruled Ukraine, Erich Koch, may his name be blotted out.

It is relevant to note that our treatment by the Austrian workers was decent and humane. Every evening after work we were taken to the Rovno ghetto. On the following day in the morning at 6:00 am, we assembled at the gate to the ghetto and the Ukrainian policeman took us to the place of work.

Every day during food breaks, I would sit together and eat with the Austrian workers. One day the Gauleiter came there and found us sitting and eating together. I, the Jew with the yellow patch, sitting with the Austrians. All of them froze in their places. Silence prevailed. He approached me and kicked me. He wore sharply tipped boots...I rolled on the cement three times. "Raus [in German]" [go outside]," he yelled. I got up with my remained strength and fled for my life, and I hid in the building. After the German company left, I came out of my hiding place and continued to work.

### From the Rovno Ghetto to the Ghetto of Mlynov

While I was still in the Rovno ghetto – in 1942 after Pesach, they set up the ghetto of Mlynov. The ghetto was put up on the edge of town. They took the Jews out of Mlynov and the Jews of Mervits from their houses and they put them in the ghetto. Ten to twelve people lived in each

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\* See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauleiter>

room. I learned about the erection of the ghetto from the Judenrat representative who would come to the Rovno ghetto.

I looked for a way to leave the Rovno ghetto. I wanted to join my family, but even more importantly – during this time the rumour spread that they were getting ready to liquidate the ghetto of Rovno.

It became apparent to me: this was the time to get freed from the work of construction and go to the Mlynov ghetto. For that purpose, it was necessary for me to secure a certificate of release from the German work bureau with the pretext that I was not capable of doing physical labor. How could one get out of work? – I would have to pay a 5,000 ruble bribe to the female Jewish clerk who worked in the German bureau of work, who was whoring with the officers. That same clerk would have to bribe the Jewish doctor who was about 85 years old. The doctor would grant the medical certificate. The Jewish clerk would get it to me via a messenger, and then I would be excused from the work.

[original page 26]

When I learned about this process of liberation, I told three of my close friends about it. I wrote a letter to my parents and I sent it by the Judenrat representative.

Mother turned to a Ukrainian neighbor–Joachim (the one who plundered our house) and said to him, “I must rescue Asher. Please take me to Rovno.” He agreed. Mother dressed in the clothing of an old woman farmer and sat the whole way bent over [to hide her face or age] on the wagon. She reached the ghetto and in her possession was the money that was set aside to free me and my three friends. Joachim also received a payment for his work.

Mother and Joacim waited the whole time in the ghetto.

I paid the money to the Jewish woman clerk. After several weeks, I was called to the doctor, and he gave me an illness waiver. My friends also received the waiver for illness. I took the medical waiver and I went to the German work bureau which was in the main street of Rovno, “Chetzgo Maya” street, in other words, the street called the “3<sup>rd</sup> of May”. I entered the work bureau with my yellow patch, of course. Around me were only Germans, and I was fortunate that no one turned my way. I handed the certificate to the clerk and she instructed me to wait outside. I went out, and sat on a bench and waited. After about a half hour, the clerk came out and handed me the approvals for me and my friends. I returned to the ghetto of Rovno.

When I got to Rovno, my friends and Mother were already waiting for me. I took out the certificates from the inner pocket of the jacket and I gave them out. My own certificate apparently slipped out and fell, and I had not noticed. I went into the apartment where I slept. Mother and Joachim were waiting for me. I wanted to show them the document, but...it could not be found. I ran outside; I asked the guards; I queried everyone. But no one had seen it or heard about it.

I turned again to the broker: late in the evening I went to her house. I emotionally recounted what had happened and she said, "Come tomorrow. I will take care of getting another certificate." The following day, I made my way to the bureau. She secretly passed me the document. When I returned to the ghetto I was informed the lost one had been found.

I came to the ghetto of Rovno and said to myself, "Now, it is time to flee." The three others had already fled. This was a Tuesday August 1942.\* On Wednesday, the ghetto was liquidated.

We returned [to Mlynov] and joined the family between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, 1942. On Yom Kippur, we organized a quorum (minyan) and prayed together at the home of a certain Jewish man. Suddenly, policemen arrived with the Judenrat. They took us out to work in the afternoon, in the middle of Yom Kippur.

Father continued to work in his expertise: storage of grain.

[original page 27]

### Escape from the Mlynov Ghetto

Wednesday, the 20th of Tishre, 5703 [Oct 1, 1942] during the intermediate days of Sukkot. Father went out from the ghetto to his work, and we remained in the house. That same morning, the Ukrainian work supervisor said to him, "Go home! Save yourself and your family. They are digging ditches..."

Father came back immediately to the ghetto, entered the house and said to Mother and to the members of the family Kritzur (who were living with us in the same apartment), that "they are digging ditches."

We had an agreement with the Zarembah family, that if they were going to liquidate the ghetto, they would hide us. The Zarembah family were Poles who lived in Pańska-Dolina\* about 8 kilometers distance. The family had five people: the parents, two sons and a daughter. There was a business relationship between us and we were friendly with them.

When my two brothers, Ephraim-Fischel and Shlomo Ben-Zion heard they were digging pits they jumped up and said, "We are going to the Zarembah family." Without thinking much, they snuck out through a crack in the fence that we didn't know about. They left the town. They decided apparently to take a short cut along the way and go through the fields and not the main road. In those fields at that time, the Ukrainians were already digging the pits – the graves for the Jews. When the Ukrainians saw them, they killed the two of them.

About 11:00 am, the policeman Nikolai came into us. We knew him. He used to do chores for us and was frequently in our home. Nikolai turned to Mother with a question: Ruchel, where did your children go?" When he asked, we assumed the worst. This was almost a rhetorical question. "What happened," we asked fearfully. "I don't know," he answered. Father insisted,

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\* The Rovno ghetto was liquidated on July 13, 1942.

\* [Editor]: see note on page 22.

“Nikolai, find out.” We sat in the house shocked. He eventually came out with the bitter news: “They killed the two boys of yours.”

I got up. I had a certificate that permitted leaving the ghetto. I left the ghetto. I passed the area where the killing occurred. I tried to observe from a distance. No one saw me and I saw no one. I continued along the way. Near Mervits, a patrol of Ukrainian police stopped me. “I am doing an errand,” I said. “By night you must be back in the ghetto,” they informed me. I reached the Zarembah family alone that night. I stayed with them all night in their threshing floor barn.\*

Before I had left the house, we had decided that Mother, Shifra, and Yosef would go in the morning to the Zarembah family. In the morning, Joachim arrived to the gate of the ghetto as Father instructed. He took Mother, Sifra and Yoseleh to the Zarembah’s and then took off. Towards evening, Father also arrived to the Zarembah family. We huddled in the threshing barn, mourning, and were bitterly crying. Father wanted to return to the ghetto. He said “I can’t stand this...I am going back...I have brothers in the ghetto...the fate of all the Jews shall be my fate as well. I will not be able to bear it. You are young, you can take it.”

[original page 28]

We stood up to him and said decisively, “If you go back, we will go with you.” In the end, we convinced him to remain with us. He had no choice.

In the meantime, many Jews heard about the digging of the pits and fled the ghetto. The Ukrainian police grasped the situation and didn’t liquidate the ghetto immediately. People saw that the ghetto was still standing and started to return to the ghetto. The liquidation of the ghetto was postponed only a week. Thursday, the 28 of Tishrei 5703 (1942) the ghetto was liquidated.

The day of the liquidation we were still with the family Zarembah. We were still there an entire week. That same day, Mr. Zarembah and his wife came to us and said “We are very sorry, you must leave. The children are very afraid. They gave us back the payment we gave them.”

That same night we left the threshing floor barn, crossed the road, and went to the forest that was close to the settlement. During all of the month Cheshvan 5703 [Oct. 1942], we wandered about the forest. We ran into some of the family of my Aunt Chaika (Chaya) and my uncle Nuta. That year, during the month of Cheshvan, not even a single drop of rain fell. Every night there was frost. Every morning we woke up covered with a layer of frost. Father who in the past had been sensitive and caught colds easily and flu often in the winter, did not get sick even once that same winter and did not even cough...

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\* A threshing floor could be outside or inside a barn like structure with a smooth floor where a farmer would thresh the grain.

Before the war, a “peltesar” (a healer) lived with us. Every morning he would come into our house and inquire about the well-being of Father. He dispensed syrup to him or other medicines, according to the need.

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At that time, during the month of Heshvan when we were hiding in the woods, we came across a young boy of 10. He saw us. He didn't say a word and he ran back home. This was a boy they called Zigmund. Zigmund went home and told his father that he saw a group of Jews in the woods. The father was the forester - responsible for the forest. His name was Bogdan. He was known in the area. The boy's father sent him again to find out who those Jews were.

Following that, Bogdan came to the forest and met us. He told us that he was hiding Sonia and Mendel in a hole that they dug in the cowshed, 2 x 2 meters and approximately the height of a person.

Bogdan told Mendel and Sonia that he saw Nachum (my father).

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At the end of Cheshvan, it began to rain. We didn't have shoes or appropriate clothing. Everything was worn out and torn. Wet, frozen by cold, we had no choice but to sleep on the ground. At night, I and my first cousin picked apples, obtained bread, and brought it to our families.

The families (ours, Chaika's, my uncle Nuta's), decided to enter the threshing floor and barn of Totzkah, the farmer, in order to escape the rain. We all knew him.

One night we entered his property. We were 17 people. Very quickly his family members discovered us. They brought us into their house, to dry out, and gave us food to eat. The woman of the house cooked warm food for us. We ate and thanked them.

[original page 29]

They asked us to stay the night in the area of the threshing floor, and with first light to go to the forest and that's what we did: We spent the night in the threshing structure, and we left towards morning. During the day we moved about the forest, and at night we returned to the threshing floor. We entered and slept on piles of hay in the back part of the threshing floor, that bordered on the plowed fields. This was on Friday night. On Shabbat, the new month of Kislev began.

The moment we lay down—Yosef who was 12 years old was separated from us. He left us, went to an old wagon and lay down in it. Mother was not relaxed. She said to me, “Go and speak to Yoseleh; tell him he should come back.” I went and told that to him. He said to me, “I'll return at once.” I returned and lay down. Not much time passed, when suddenly a Ukrainian policeman appeared before us. He held a gun in one hand and a flashlight in the other. He

shined light on us. He was alone. He turned and began to retrace his steps. The moment he turned around, we got up spontaneously, ran to the plowed, muddy field. We crawled and lay between the furrows of the ploughing, where it was lower. It was the pitch black [lit. "the darkness [of the plague] in Egypt"]. As already noted, this was the beginning of the month [and a new moon]. While we were running, we got separated. I was with Father, Mother and Shifra. Yosef escaped with Chaika.

It is relevant to point out, that we had already planned these future steps. We had agreed ahead of time that if something happened, we would, first of all, flee to the fields.

The policeman summoned his colleagues. The police force arrived. They light up the area and searched for us, but they didn't find our tracks. They apparently didn't think to search in the field.

We continued to lay in the field. When the police officers left, and quiet was restored, we got up and began to walk. We were familiar with the surroundings. Across the way we spotted another forest. We entered the forest because we thought that Yosef and Chaika had also gone in there. Father, Mother, and Shifra and I searched for them all night. We tried calling to them, but to no avail. When morning broke, we went into depth of the forest. We stayed near small pine trees that had been planted not long before. This was Shabbat about 2:00 pm. We were sitting when suddenly a gentile passed by. In his hand, he was holding an axe and a rope was tied to his waist. He looked at us but said not a word. We were very suspicious. We didn't find Yosef or Chaika the entire day, and they didn't find us.

Towards evening, a decision was reached. Father, Mother, and Shifra, and I would go to the forest of Smordva (Smordova in Polish). That forest was a distance of approximately 30 km [18 miles].

We decided to head to this forest, because in previous weeks we knew that in Smordva about 100 Jews had concentrated. And they had firearms. At the end of Shabbat, the 28 of Kislev 5703 (December 1, 1942), we walked 30 km during the night. It was very difficult for Mother to walk, but she managed it. On the way we passed two bridges that were manned by German soldiers. The soldiers, who were freezing at their stations, did not notice or pay attention to us. We approached the forest. Near the entrance to the forest lived a family whose two daughters had formerly been helpers in our house. They alternated taking turns at different times. One time the older girl would work and another time the younger, Felkeh.

[original page 30]

Their father was a forester, a wood cutter, and he worked for us in winter.

We entered the family's cowshed. It was 5:00 am in the morning of a Sunday, and we didn't want to wake them. No much time passed when the farmer's wife entered the cowshed with a lantern in her hand in order to milk the cows. She spotted us and began to scream from fear

and panic. She didn't realize that we were still alive. She crossed herself and ran to tell her husband.

The couple brought us into their house, warmed up the house, and prepared food. Outside the ground was frozen. The man of the house, the forester, told us that he had met Jews in the forest. "They have bunkers. Stay here. I will go to the forest. I will find out all the details, and I will take you there," he said. In the afternoon, he returned and he told us that he had in fact seen several Jews. He said he had met a man by the family name of Nekonyechnik. I knew him. He was a rich Jew, a man of wealth. I had met his sister in the ghetto of Rovno. The name of his father was Chaim.

The forester took us, and brought us to the forest, among short trees. He said, "Stay here and wait. You will see them. They pass by here. I will follow up, and check what time they will pass by and get you. If any mishap happens, you come back to us."

After about an hour, we saw two men walking and conversing in Yiddish. I recognized the voice of Shelomekeh Nekonyechnik. We got up and came out of the shrubs. They saw us and took us to their bunkers. The bunker was in essence a pit in the ground, one big room, quite large. There was an entrance with steps. The ceiling of the bunker was covered with beams. There were beds and a wood burning stove. In every bunker there were ten people. In all, there were five bunkers that included about 50 people. Most of the people were single men. We entered the bunker in the beginning of December 1942. We were very worried, because we didn't know where Yoseleh and Chaika were. What should we do? – We decided to send an emissary. Mother and I walked to the forester—the father of Felkeh. We asked him to go to Totchkah the farmer, since Totchkah knew who was with us, and he had enough time to get to know us. We asked him to verify what happened to Chaika. We paid him 20 rubles for the emissary with two coins of gold. The man went and came back with a definitive answer:

After we fled from Tochkah's threshing floor at the beginning of the month of Kislev, Chaika and Nuta moved about the forest of Zadah. After searching for and not finding us, they turned and went to another village, to a farmer that Chaika knew. The farmer promised to fix them a hiding place. He fixed Chaika, Nuta and their families a hiding place from straw in his threshing shed. They stayed there about a week, their food was taken care of, and they paid him for all this.

On Sunday of that same week, it was cold and snow fell. The woman farmer, head of the place, came and said "Give me your boots. We need to go to Church to pray. They took off their shoes..."

[original page 31]

Within about an hour, the farmer returned with his family with Ukrainian police. They entered the house, they ate greedily and drinking. Afterwards, the police went out and shot all of them.

Only my first cousin Sarah remained alive – the mother of Chaika.\* She was able to hide between piles of hay, and this is the way she was saved. Sarah remained alone, barefoot, almost with no clothing. They liquidated the rest. The police left and the family of the farmer didn't even approach to see what had happened, who remained alive and whether anyone needed help.

This was the 13 day of Kislev. We found out after about a week.

Sarah got up and fled. She ran barefoot and nearly naked through the snow-covered field in the direction of Pańska-Dolina, in the direction of the village where Totchkah lived. She was about 23 years old. She found Yoseleh there. This situation was recounted to us by the messenger we sent to Totchkah.

Yoseleh didn't know what had happened to us. He didn't flee with Chaikia and Nuta that same night of the new month of Kislev, and he thus survived. He turned and went to another hiding place (in the house of Bogdan), where Sonia, Mendel and Mamtzi, the sister of Mendel, were hiding. Every so often, Yoseleh would go to Totchkah to find out if he had learned our fate.

Everything that happened to Chaika, Nuta and their families, and to Sarah, daughter of my aunt, and to Yosef, we learned from the messenger that we sent to Totchkah.

The messenger also told Totchkah what happened to us. And by means of Tochkah, Yoseleh also heard about us.

\* \* \*

We stayed in the bunker in the forest with a group of Jews until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December. During this time, Soviet partisans discovered us: two of them were standing above and looked down into the bunker. We were terrified when we saw them. But it immediately became clear to us that a pretty big group of partisans were in our area. These men deserted the Soviet army that had retreated and they had found refuge in the forest. They were organized and equipped with weapons. The matter found favor with me and I joined them. I moved to another part of the forest. There the partisans had a large bunker, from which they launched operations. I was equipped with rifles and grenades.

One time, I joined them in their operation. At the instruction of the captain, Nikolai, we went to blow up a sawmill near Kremenets.\* The mill supplied trees for building. I returned the same night.

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\* Editor's note: The Sarah referred to here is also the daughter of Chaika, the sister of Asher's mother, Rachel. In narrating the story, Asher is here describing which Sarah he is referring to, by describing her as "the mother of Chaika," referring to Sarah's future daughter, who was named Chaika.

\* Kremenets is 36 km (22 miles) northwest of Mlynov and one would pass through Lutsk on the way there.

I tried to stay in touch with my parents the entire time. I visited them and brought them food. We pilfered potatoes from the property of the Count. The potatoes were covered with dirt and straw.

[original page 32]

### The reunion with Yoseleh in the pit by Bogdan

On the 31 of December—on a Friday, I was in the bunker of my parents. At 9:00 o'clock, the head forester came (whom we made sure to bribe) and let us know that the Germans and Ukrianians were making plans to liquidate us. They were planning to attack the Jews and the partisans. He warned us about the Ukrainian police who were present around the forest. He advised us to scatter and flee.

This was New Year's Eve. I said to my parents, "Let's return to Yoseleh." That night we left the forest of Smordav. We went the same way by which we came to the forest back towards the house of Bogdan. We again passed two bridges. We walked in snow. That night we did not succeed in reaching the place where Yoseleh, Sarah, Mendel, Sonia and Mamtsi were. After we crossed the bridges, we had passed two-thirds of the way, we took a break. We camped in a grove. The following night, about 9:00 pm, we again continued on our way. The only food we had in our possession was some garlic cloves. The garlic saved our lives. In the end, we came to the hiding place of Sonia and Mendel. We found them.

When we got to Bogdan, we heard from Sarah how she survived. After the slaughter, she came to Totchkah and immediately when he saw her, he took her and put her above his stove. Above the stove there was a "pekalich"—like a square storage place above the stove. The stove was about a meter and a half high. The pekalich was above it. Sarah stayed there. Yoseleh had remained alone in the field. He knew the way to Totchkah's, he went to him and he told Yoseleh that Sonia, my mother's sister, and her husband Mendel were hiding at Bogdan's.

One day, Yoseleh, who was then about 12 years old, saw Sarah at Totchkah's. He decided to move her to Bogdan's. Sarah was not able to walk and he carried her on his back a distance of 2-3 km. During the day (at Bogdan's), Sonia, Mendel, Yoseleh, Mamtsi and Sarah stood in the pit. At night, Sonia and Mendel would leave the pit and sleep in the pekalich. The others stayed hidden in the pit.

We arrived to Bogdan's from the forest of Smordva on 1/1/1943.

At Bogdan's we also hid in the pit. Nine people in a pit that was 2x2. The situation was terrible. We were pressing against each other... Mother had St. Anthony's fire (erysipelas or "rose") on her feet. We didn't know what to do, or how it was possible to help her. We thought perhaps spreading the area with iodine would help. I went to a farmer who lived 3 km away, because I was told that it was possible to obtain iodine from him. I arrived there. This was a rich family, that lived in a large, well kept house. Around the house were "patrol" dogs. The farmer promised to bring iodine. After several days he brought the iodine. Mother spread it over her

feet. The iodine was used up, but the St. Anthony's fire didn't go away. Bogdan's wife gave her "medical advice": compresses of human urine on the feet. This helped!

The snow began to melt in the middle of February. The earth turned to mud. The weather warmed up. I said to them all: "That's it. It is impossible to stay like this for a long time on our feet."

[original page 33]

We left the pit.

In the meantime, Bogdan brought us information. He informed us that in the forest of Smordva there were Jews again. The end of Shabbat, February 17, 1943, after about a month and a half, we left—I, Father, Mother, Shifra, Yosef—for the forest of Smordva.

We began to walk, but Mother was not able to walk. Father and I intertwined our hands and made her a "chair." Mother sat and wrapped her hands on our necks. We arrived at the forest of Smordov via the village of Smordov, because the fields were full of water and mud. On Sunday, February 18, in the afternoon, we passed the town of Smordov. We walked on the main street of the village, we put ourselves into danger and passed by the Gestapo headquarters that was located in the middle of the village....we arrived at the forest, to the 13<sup>th</sup> section.

That same Sunday, we returned to the bunker. Partisans were no longer there. They were just Jews. In the bunker, there was a boy who disappeared later on. There were also two girls and a boy named Duvid who sat and swayed back and forth. Duvid ended up marrying one of the girls that were in the bunker. They apparently live still today in Givatayim. In the area there were a few other bunkers. We stayed in the bunker for half a year: from February 1943 until 18 of Tamuz 5703.

During that time, I remember several incidents in which I searched for food and escaped alive. In general, someone would join me to search for food, because I knew my way around the paths very well. I knew the areas surrounding the forest, the villages, etc.

One time, Duvid and I went to look for food. We left the bunker, walked and reached the house of some farmers. A farmer answered the door. He had in one hand a pistol, and the second hand he extended it to me in greeting. He responded to our request and gave us bread and potatoes. We left the house, and he accompanied us. We thanked him and started to go. We had just gotten out of the door of the house – when we heard two shots. He missed...we succeeded in getting back safely to the bunker.

That same year before Passover, Father requested that I will not bring back bread [which is forbidden on Passover]. We found potatoes and eggs. I went with Mendel – an older Jewish man from approximately the age of my father. Suddenly in the middle of the forest we were attacked by wild boars. I threw down the sack of food. Mendel fled. The boars disappeared and

with them the food. I returned empty handed. After several days, I went out again and stole food from the Count – during Passover that year, we ate potatoes.

One day before the Lag BaOmer holiday, I went looking for food with Natan Shiper. In the past, the father of Natan had a storehouse of basic food items: oil, sugar, rice, salt, and so forth. Natan lived near us and had a small grocery. He had no children. Natan succeeded in escaping from the ghetto and joined me. One Sunday we walked up a road a distance of about 15 km. He was about 40 years old and was walking behind me. We got to one house. In the house were young Ukrainians. The situation did not appear optimal to us but they gave us food. When we left the house, they shot at us. Natan was wounded and died. I escaped to the forest. They pursued me. I hid in a pile of branches. I waited there until night fell. Then I got up and went to the bunker. I got there late at night.

[original page 34]

One time when I moved about the forest with a relative of the family, he said to me, “I see someone smoking. I’m going to ask him for a cigarette.” The man was German. He gave him a cigarette. A moment later he shot and killed him.

Every now and then the Ukrainians and Germans would carry out random shooting in the forest and they would hit Jews who were hiding. This is how the number of Jews in the forest continued to diminish.

How did I find my way in the forest? – I learned from the partisans to identify specific stars and the Milky Way and navigate myself by them. In addition, I made marks on the trees and learned the shape of the trees that were along the way.

#### With the Holatko Family

On the 16<sup>th</sup> day of Tammuz, the day before the fast day, the “Seventeenth of Tammuz”, there were about ten people remaining in the forest. The Ukrainians were shooting at us. We hid in a small and narrow pit in a nursery. The Ukrainians were shooting and we heard and saw the bullets pass by us. Three died. When the shooting stopped, we came out and buried the three who were killed. One of them was Shelomekeh Nekonychnik

Father said that he didn’t want to leave on the fast day, the Seventeenth of Tammuz.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, we left the forest. We were completely helpless and didn’t know where to go.

We wanted to go to the Holatko family. The Holatko family was a family of farmers of Czech origin. The family came to Ukraine in the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They settled on empty state land that were without Ukrainian landowners. In that place German and Jewish families also resided. The family lived outside the village. They had business relations with us. They sold to us grain and shopped in our store. On more than one occasion we sold them on credit – against the account of their agricultural produce.

Mendel (the older Jew that hid with us) joined us. A young woman named Yenta also joined us. We needed to cross the Ikva River on a bridge. But the Germans were guarding there. We looked for a place to cross the river on a boat. On the side of the woods, close to Mervits, we found an overturned boat that was resting against the bank. There was a hole in the boat. Mendel and I inserted a peg in the hole and we carried the boat down to the river. In spite of this, some water got in the boat. We had no choice. We rowed slowly and brought everyone across the river, the width of which was 20–30 meters. We got out and walked about ten kilometers towards the Holatko family who lived near the village of Czetki Novina. We came to the forest that was next to their farm. Mendel dug a pit in the ground for himself. He covered and camouflaged himself and lay down in it. Periodically he would go out to look for food. He lived in this way for a long time, until one day all traces of him disappeared. We searched for him but in vain.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz 5703 [July 20, 1943], we arrived at the woods that were close to the house and farm of the Holatko family. When the family members saw us, they were shocked to see we had survived. and they crossed themselves.

[original page 35]

Father entered by himself to the Holatko home in order to request help from them. He turned to them and said, “Until now we have done everything we can to survive. But now we have exhausted all our means...I beg you, help us. Do everything you can to save us.” On the spot, a poignant and difficult family conversation started between Anton Holatko, the elder, and his wife, and between the son Joseph and his bride. In the house there were three small children/grandchildren, and they were afraid and worried for their lives. A full hour Father sat on the side and was present for the discussion. He sat silently. In the end, he stood up and said, “You decide among yourselves what you want to do. I will return in two to three days. I beg of you...” and he walked away.

Much later, the son Joseph told [my brother] Yosef that on the third day, his father Anton came to him (they lived in different houses close to one another) and tried to convince him to help us. He said to him, “Joseph, in two or three hours, *Pani* (i.e., Mr) Nahum will arrive, and I will need to give him an answer. There is no one else who is ready or able to save them.” In that moment, a decision was reached. Joseph said, “Indeed, there is no choice, we have to save them.”

When Father returned to get the answer, he was told that they would do everything to save them. They requested a period of two to three weeks to prepare the hiding place. They prepared for us a hiding place in a hayloft that was next to the threshing floor. The hayloft looked like houses with sloping roofs. Mother, Father, Shifra, Yosef and I—entered the hayloft of the Holatko family during Elul 5703 [September 1943]. We hid there about half a year, until the end of January 1944 –until the Soviets liberated the area. The Soviets entered, retreated, then entered again and in the end, they established themselves on the Ikva River.

During this period, people were apparently being snitched on. There were shootings, and searches were organized. Soldiers came by and stabbed the straw. Luckily for us and the Holatko family, we were not discovered.

The whole time we were in the hiding place, Mrs. Holatko took care of our food: She would place a pot of food next to the wall, knock on the wall three times and leave. I would go out and get the pot and bring it to the hiding place. We paid them for the shelter and food.

We took care of our needs in a bucket. At midnight, I would slip outside and go to the forest and empty the bucket. During this period of time, a refugee couple from Czechia came to the Holatko family. They worked for them. Mr Holatko suspected that they were Jews, but they spoke Czech fluently, and they had documents certifying that they were from Sudetes (in north Czechia). We didn't meet them and didn't see them. To prevent discovery, Mrs. Holatko tried to bring us food when they were not in the house.

One day, after two months, I bumped into the Czech refugee when I was coming out of the hiding place to retrieve the pot of food. He saw me and said, "Don't be afraid. Come sit and let's talk." We crawled up the stack of hay in the threshing floor and we began to chat. Suddenly he said to me, "Am I correct, it is time for our holiday, the holiday when we light candles. When is this set to start?" I said to him, "Correct, in another two weeks, it will be holiday of Hanukah..."

[original page 36]

We continued to speak about the war.

After this meeting, we were avoided meeting again. We didn't want the Holatko family to know about our meeting each other. Only after we left that place at the end of January 1944 did we see each other again.

After the conversation, I entered the hiding place and I told my parents that our suspicions were correct, that they were indeed Jewish refugees.

After some time, on Yom Kippur, after the liberation, Father, Mother, and my siblings prayed with Jewish refugees in the synagogue of the MaHaRal [Rabbi Yehuda Loew] in Prague. In the synagogue were senior officers from the Czech army. Among them was the same Czech refugee from the Holatko family home. He recognized Father.

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At the end of January 1944, as previously mentioned, the front was established and calmed down and we came out of our hiding place.

We sat in the kitchen of the Holatko family and conversed with them. Our appearance was frightful. We were filthy and full of lice. We hadn't bathed in months. During the entire period, they were afraid to make washing possible, lest we be discovered.

The family members asked us what we were planning to do now. We said we were getting ready to go to Pańska-Dolina to join to our relatives, Mendel and Sonia. The son of the Holatko family took us and brought us to Pańska-Dolina. We parted from him and all went on their own way.

In Pańska-Dolina, we met up with Sonia and Mendel. They had hidden with the Bogdan family. Mr. Bogdan was a forester. He was a man with a good heart. He had been a customer of Sonia and Mendel, who were owners of a general store. In the store they had sugar, salt, oil, kerosene, iron chains, and more.

In Pańska-Dolina, we decided to continue to Rovno, because Jews had gathered there. Sonia and Mendel joined us. We hired a farmer to take us to Rovno. We arrived in Rovno to Skolna street at the end of January.

## Chapter 4: In the Red Army

When we arrived to the town of Rovno, we met people we knew who had left Mlynov. In Rovno, placards were hung that recruited for men to enlist in the Red Army. After several days, we went to the recruitment office: myself, Mendel, Menasheh Goldseker, and Berel Rabinovitz (an older bachelor). We arrived there and we declared that we want to volunteer for the Red Army. Our request was accepted of course. The following morning, only Menasheh and myself returned. Berel did not go. Mendel also did not go. Sonia, apparently, forbade him to enlist...

We both were enlisted. After several days passed, they brought us to Brańsk, a town in a Russian region, not far from Moscow. This was the beginning of February 1944. We were absorbed into an army base in Brańsk. We had no identification documents or certifications. I was born in 1920 and he was born in 1924–25.

It came to my attention that there was an opportunity to go to the officer's training, but I was too old. I announced that I was born in 1922. And I was sent to officer training. Menasheh went to a different training.

Two weeks after finishing the training, I was sent as a soldier to an infantry division in Byelorussia [now Belarus] to liberate the city of Smolensk.

We traveled in trains. On the way there, we were bombed. Many were killed and wounded. I survived and I reached the enemy lines. A week after I arrived at the front, I was wounded during the battle. A bullet wounded me in the neck near the carotid artery. The bullet came out through my mouth and shattered my teeth. By a miracle, the main artery was not hit. This was the first injury I sustained. I was hospitalized for about a week and there again met Menasheh. After some time, Menasheh was killed during the war.

After I was released from the hospital, I was attached to an intelligence battle cruiser in Latvia because I knew how to speak and read German. It fell upon us to get the prisoners to talk, in other words, get captured Germans to snitch and reveal military secrets. We would have to attack a targeted German bunker. We passed through forests and attacked the German bunker. It was the dead of winter. Cold and frost prevailed. We attacked the bunker shooting and threw grenades towards them. They returned fire. In the end, we succeeded in penetrating the bunker. We found there wounded and dead soldiers. We collected military documents and tied up the injured. We also gathered much money: luggage filled with rubles. I quickly stuffed

my boots with money that were “Cherbonses” – silver, which much later during the war saved me. We carried the injured ones on our shoulders and brought them to the base.

On account of this operation, I received my first medal, the Crown of Valor (“Utvavgu”).

[original page 38]

I served a month as an investigator in an intelligence unit. From there I was transferred to an artillery unit – still in Latvia – as a commander of a unit of 120 millimeters mortar. The mission was the liberation of the city Rēzekne.

The Germans attacked and bombed us. They pushed in the direction of the Baltic sea. There were days that we walked about 50 km.

During the battles for the liberation of Rēzekne, I was injured again. A bullet injured me under the armpit. A fracture occurred, and my hand was put in a cast. I was admitted to a sambat—a field hospital. After twelve days, I was released from the hospital. The doctors removed the shrapnel, the functioning of the hand was restored, and I was returned to the front.

We advanced and drew close to the East Prussian border. There were several battles, but the largest that we prepared was for the conquest of the city Königsberg [now Kaliningrad, Russia].

In this attack, I was injured in a serious way.

I was commander of a post, in which there were five soldiers. I was sitting in the trench. Above the ditch stood a mortar that we were firing. We were firing at the suburbs of the city. Behind us, Soviet forces were dispatched with rockets (Katyushas) that passed over us and they also bombarded Königsberg.

Suddenly, a shell reached us that was shot from the direction of the besieged city. The shell fell in my post; in my post was a stash of shells. They all exploded. Three soldiers were killed. I was severely injured in my left hand– in the muscle, and in both legs. The shrapnel remained in my legs all my life...

This was the winter in the beginning of 1945, snow fell, and the surroundings were dominated by frost. They took me out of the post on a sleigh harnessed to dogs. They lay me on the sleigh, and brought me to the field hospital – “Sambat”. I received first aid and then I was brought to the hospital in the city of Kalinin which was close to the border of Russia. After not much time, they brought me to a hospital in Moscow. In the hospital in Moscow, I was hospitalized three months at the beginning of winter 1945.

The big toe on my left foot generated gangrene. The doctors cared for me with penicillin (which had arrived from the United States) and with this they began considering amputating my leg....

In the department, there was a Jewish nurse. She cared for me with great devotion and professionalism. This nurse advised me not to agree to the amputation surgery and not to sign

the agreement to surgery. She told me to request a consultation-professional advice from medical experts.

The next day during the visit of the doctors, I told the doctors that I wanted a consult, because perhaps it was possible to save my leg. The doctors responded to my request. One day after that, the consult was arranged, in which three professors participated – one of them the department supervisor. Two of the doctors said not to cut off the foot and to continue with the penicillin treatment. One of them – the head of the department – was in favor of amputation. I received penicillin in a very large dose, and I developed allergic rash.

It was decided to transfer me to a hospital behind the front. The first thought was to bring me to a hospital in the city of Omsk in Siberia.

[original page 39]

But the Jewish nurse – my saving angel, again acted on my behalf and changed the decision. She requested that I be transferred to Astrakhan: a place located on the Caspian Sea. And there is a pleasant climate.

I was put on a hospital ship embarking on the river Volga from Moscow to Astrakhan. Along the way, they transferred me from boat to boat, and this was a very interesting experience.

I receive a bed on the boat. We sailed for eleven days until we reached Astrakhan (there the Volga spills into the Caspian Sea). While sailing, fever overcame me. The doctors had to perform surgery on the hand during the trip. They took shrapnel out of my hand. Luckily for me the fever subsided.

In March 1945, I arrived at the hospital in Astrakhan. There were other wounded there. All day we lay in bed or slept, and at night we played cards – a game called 21.

The food was poor and not tasty. They cooked mostly “Peshonkeh” – yellow seeds. Because I had coins – “Cherbonses”, I requested that one of the nurses bring me and my friends (four soldiers) better food. She went to the local market, bought fish and cooked for us. Almost every day, we sat all of us, including the nurses, and ate a good meal.

Russian military law establishes that if a person injured in war is hospitalized six months, and the wounds do not heal– he’s entitled to a vacation. My friends said to me. “Don’t be stupid. Request to go before a medical committee in order to receive your holiday.” They also advised me to set my wounded hand in motion and move it so that the wound would open and “impress” the doctors. I listened to them and requested a medical committee. I presented myself before the committee. The wound was open, full of pus and blood. The members of the committee saw the situation, and made their judgment immediately: “Go home–six months of vacation.”

How could I get home???

First, I had some money and I decided to buy appropriate clothing. I gave the nurse some money, and she got me necessary clothing. She brought me boots made of a toughened and thickened wool – “Valynkes”, a military jacket – “Chanel”, a regular jacket – “Kopyyka”, and a pair of pants.

Another nurse was assigned to accompany me along the way to my home. She was supposed to take me by train to the station that was near the city where I lived. The trip lasted six days. We traveled in a train from Astrakhan to Kiev, and from Kiev to Rovno. From there I was supposed to go on my own to Mlynov—the town where I lived.

We got to the station in Rovno. The nurse went back, and I took a carriage which brought me to Mlynov.

How did I know I needed to go to Mlynov? From where did I learn that my parents would be found there? How did I even know they were alive?

[original page 40]

As I already pointed out, I had enlisted in the Red army in the city of Rovno. When I left Rovno as a soldier, my parents had remained there. When I was hospitalized in Moscow, I decided one day to write a letter to a general address. And this is what I wrote:

To the honorable Mr Svitzki  
 Mayor of Mlynov  
 This letter is written to you by a soldier of the Red Army, who was born and grew up in Mlynov. My name is Asher Teitelman.  
 Now, I am wounded and hospitalized in Moscow.  
 I have a request of you. Can you illuminate the fate of my parents?  
 Do they remain alive?  
 The names of my parents are Nahum and Rachel Teitelman, and they live at 65 Rinecova Street.  
 I thank you for attending to my request.  
 With much respect,  
 Asher Teitelman.

I sent the letter... and he answered me!

Writing to you is Savitski.  
 I am glad to inform you that your parents are alive. They live in your home at 65 Rinecova street together with their daughter and son. I also live in the house with them....

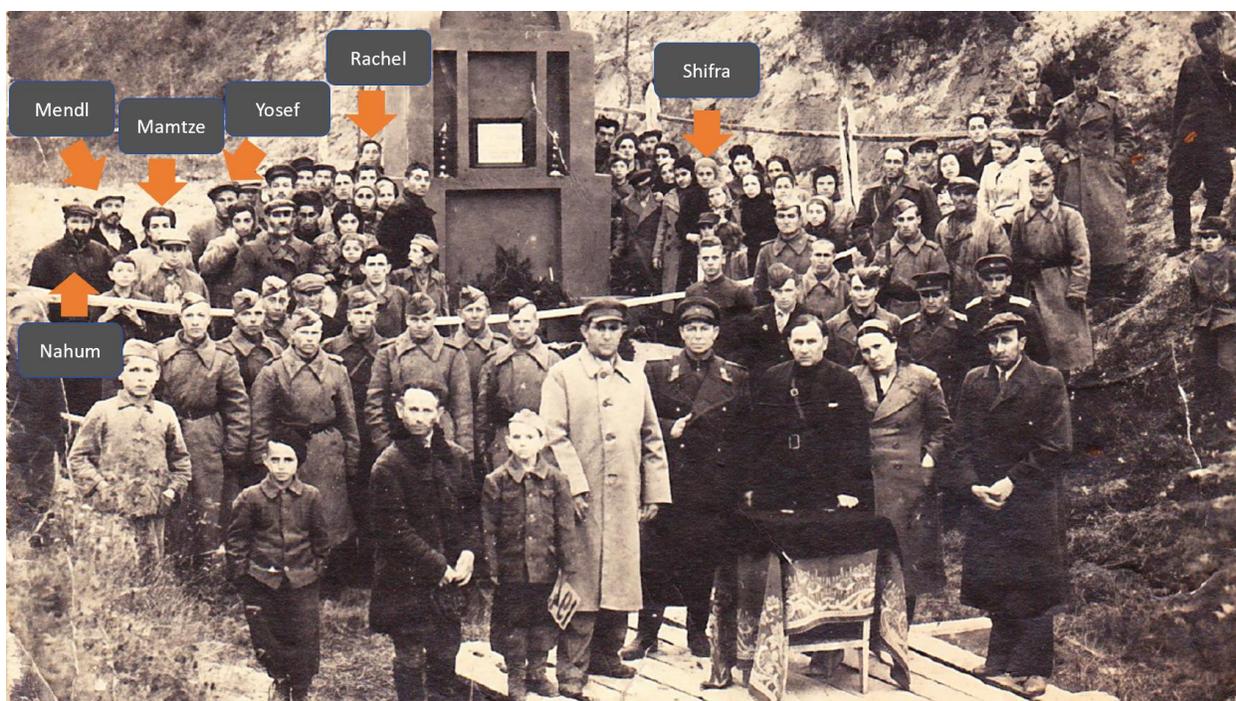
The surprise was great as was the joy.

Apparently, my parents returned from Rovno to Mlynov after I enlisted in the army. Upon arriving home, they saw that their house indeed was still standing, but the family of the Mayor, Svitsky, had settled into the front of the house.

My parents and my siblings settled themselves in the two back rooms in the rear and the kitchen.

Mr Savitsky was a country boy. He continued to live in our house even after we left it. Today the house no longer stands.

[original page 41]



*Figure 3 The dedication of the monument in Mlynov with the participation of some of the survivors and Russian soldiers –1944*



*Figure 4 Shifra and Yosef in Mlynov a year after the liberation (end of 1945)*



*Figure 5 [seated, left to right]: Father (grandfather) Nahum, Mother, (grandmother) Rahel, Sonia, Mendel, [standing, right to left]: Yosef, Liba Schwartz (sister of Mutel-Max),\* and Shifra, in their arrival to Bad Gastein [displacement camp].*

[original page 43]

When the members of my family received my letter, there was no limit to their joy. Yosef began to work on getting permission to travel to Moscow, but he was not successful. He was only a boy of 14 years old.

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\* Editor's note: Liba and Max Schwartz were the children of Abraham Schwartz and Mirel (Teitelman) Schwartz. Mirel Teitelman was a sister of Mendl and Mamtze Teitelman.

In the meantime, I was transferred , as described before, to the hospital in Astrakhan. No letters came to Astrakhan, nor could we send letters from there. During my hospitalization there, about three months, I had no **connection** at all to my family.

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This was April 1945.

I took, of course, the coach from Rovno to my home in Mlynov. The joy was great...

I arrived home with two bandaged legs, and I was helped with my crutches along the way.

In Mlynov, I went every couple days to the field hospital to change the bandages. When I got there the first time, the nurse removed the bandage on my hand. She was shocked. She saw a giant wound. From the wound protruded shrapnel with a point in the shape of a triangle. She cried out "Artz"- Doctor! Without hesitation, I took the tweezers that were lying on the table and pulled out the shrapnel. I put the shrapnel on the table.

The flesh around the wound was rotten which is why I didn't feel any pain. The female doctor arrived, and I showed her the shrapnel on table. They bandaged my wound which scabbed over in about a month.

The doctors told me that I need to eat good nutritious food. That way I would recover more quickly.

It was not possible to get beef or poultry. And there was no shochet (kosher slaughterer) in the place. With the permission of Father, I ate pork. Little by little, the wounds started to heal.

I had served in the army from the end of January 1944 until April 1945.

[original page 44 blank]

## Chapter 5: On the Way to the Land of Israel

On May 9, 1945, the end of WWII was announced. In that same period, an agreement was ratified between the emancipated Polish government and the government of the Soviet Union. According to the agreement, all the citizens of Poland who had lived in Ukraine and in Belarus until the outbreak of the War were entitled to leave the areas that had become part of the Soviet Union and to live in emancipated Poland.

I said to my parents, "Let us get documents and flee from here." Mendel and Sonia and also Sarah (the daughter of Chaika) who had married Labish Vinuker, joined in this effort to escape.

The documents reached us in June 1945. We left Mlynov. I was still in an enlisted military man. I accompanied them as I hobbled on crutches. We traveled by train to Bytom (*Beuthen* in German) – a German city in the region of Silesia, which was attached to Poland after the War. We arrived in Bytom with nothing, and I sought a place to live. I turned to the officer of the Soviet city and I requested living quarters for my family. He said to me, "There are no empty houses. All the houses had been taken by Jewish refugees." I got very upset. I raised one of my crutches and banged on the table. "Are you saying that there is no living quarters for us? I, who gave my life for the State?" He said to me, "Go and look! If you can find one, take it." I left him in anger. After a short time, we indeed found an intact building that was not occupied. Mendel, Sonia and Mamtsi – sister of Mendel, Motel and his sister Loba, Labish and Sarah – all of them came to live in this house. We found there clothing, pillows, quilts, utensils and more.

The idea that in another three months I would have to return to military service tormented me, even though I didn't know exactly where my base would be located and where exactly I was expected to report. I knew only that I belonged to the Second Army of the Baltic lands [2<sup>nd</sup> Baltic Front].

I began to go about the streets leaning on my crutches. Along the way, I bumped into other Jews, some of whom were also in the military. These men told me that in Katowice there was commander of the Warsaw ghetto with a woman fighter. Both were helping people escape. I traveled to Katowice by coach, and indeed I met the commander of the Warsaw ghetto – Antek (Yitzhak) Zuckerman and Sivia Lubetkin – from the ghetto fighters. I told them my story and I said, "I want to go to the Land of Israel." Antek said, "Come again in another couple of weeks. There is a chance...."

I returned to Bytom. After two weeks, I traveled again to Katowice. While waiting for my turn, I met two other Jewish soldiers who were trying to find a way to dodge and to flee. Everyone entered in turn.



Figure 6 A Hebrew school and B'nei Akiva in Bad Gastein



Figure 7 Tovah (raising the flag) and a group of friends in Bad Gastein from Budapest

[original page 47]

*Figure 8 Shifra, Tovah, and her friend Piri in Bad Gastein*



*Figure 9 [Asher at top] with Tovah and friend*

[original page 48]

I told Antek my story: "My parents and my family are with me. All of us want very much to make aliyah to the Land of Israel. It is imperative for me to go to the Land of Israel." Antek listened with full attention, and in the end, he said, "Travel to Kraków, to the old city, to the synagogue of the Remah [Rabbi Moses Isserles]." He gave me a sealed envelope that had a password inside and guided me to take it to someone who would meet me in the synagogue.

I traveled to Bytom. I took leave of my parents and the family and traveled to Kraków [~123 km].

When I arrived in Kraków I wanted to go immediately to the synagogue. I noticed some Jews and asked them where the synagogue was. When I approached the synagogue, one of them approached me and asked me, "Who are you?" – I said to him. "I am a Jewish Russian soldier. I am seeking the person in charge."

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I stayed there about three days and I learned basic Greek in order "to become" a Greek refugee. In Kraków, I received another sealed envelope with a password inside. They instructed me to go to Prague to the "Altneuschul" [the "Old-New"] synagogue (the MAHARAL's synagogue).

I traveled by train and arrived at Altneuschul. I strolled around the synagogue. I hoped that someone would approach me. After some time, indeed, someone approached me and began to speak to me. Quickly I realized that this was the man I was seeking. He gave me an envelope with a password inside and said, "Travel to Vienna to Tzirik (sector) 3." Vienna was divided into four quadrants: Soviet, American, British and French.

I traveled to Vienna and I arrived at the Danube river that divides the city. I went up on the bridge that cut across the river assisted by my crutches. In fact, I already was able to walk without my crutches and to lean only on a walking cane, but I still didn't feel sure enough doing that. I stood on the bridge and threw everything into the river. I threw the military documents, the pistol and even the medal...

I arrived at the specified place. I entered the office. There I was greeted by young Jews. They asked, "Do you have a letter?" I gave them the envelope. They took me into a side room. I stripped off my uniform and received a suit and shoes. One of them accompanied me to the exit. I left the building from another exit – into the American sector. There a vehicle was waiting that took me to the city of Salzburg. I left the sector of the Soviet Union. They brought me to a hotel in Salzburg [Vienna, 295 km away]. The hotel was populated with Jewish refugees from various areas of Europe. In the hotel, I recognized a dentist, a refugee from Rovno, where I had been in the ghetto in 1942. We sat and talked many long hours. This was the summer of 1945 (during the months of July and August).

One day the doctor told me that he was active in the "Bricha movement" that worked to send survivors of the Shoah to the Land of Israel.<sup>3</sup> He advised me to take part in some of the activities and bring groups of refugees from Austria to German, to a camp for survivors, Föhrenwald, which was southwest of Munich (see Appendix 1). The camp was under the supervision of the Americans. I agreed.

I traveled to the displaced person camp Linz in Salzburg.\* I was given a group of approximately 200 men and I moved them by trains to the border of Austria and Germany.

[original page 49]

There waiting for us were smugglers who would bring us through the forest. I brought them to Föhrenwald. I carried out such activities approximately four times. Each of these activities lasted for two days. The train ride was free. The groups were composed of married couples, young men and women, and a few children. Most of these refugees were survivors from the Romanian camps, from Hungary and Poland.

During the War years, the camp of Föhrenwald was a German forced labor camp where people from many nations lived. The Germans had employed them in weapon creation.

After this, in the month of September, I remained in Föhrenwald. I was chosen for the committee of Jewish refugees. In the camp there were refugees of different nationalities, from the Balkans, Poland, Ukraine and others. Each of them had an operating committee. The relationship between the Jewish and other committees was very poor. They caused us trouble. At the head of the Jewish council was a 65-year-old Jew from Lithuania. His name was Bekstanski. Bekstanski advised declaring a hunger strike.

We declared a hunger strike on the eve of Yom Kippur....we notified the Americans about this. During Yom Kippur at 3.00 o'clock, the commander of the American army appeared in camp—Eisenhower—in the flesh. Immediately we were rushed into an urgent meeting with him. He asked, "What are you demanding? What is bad for you here? – You are under the supervision of the American army. We take care of you with food and your daily needs." As he was speaking, he brought out a box of cigars and politely offered us a cigar. What could I do? It was Yom Kippur and I politely refused. Bekstanski accepted the invitation to smoke....

We thanked Eisenhower for the American support. Nevertheless, we asked to separate ourselves from the other nationalities and to set up a camp of Jewish refugees. Our request was answered. After several days, we began to move them to other camps.

Eventually, acquaintances and their family arrived at the camp. For example, the Kozak family – the parents, Ruben, Moshe and Gendel [Genya] with their three kids. Also Mamtzi, the sister of

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<sup>3</sup>Bricha, "escape" or "flight", also called the Bericha Movement, was the underground organized effort that helped Jewish Holocaust survivors escape post-World War II Europe to the British Mandate for Palestine in violation of the White Paper of 1939. Wikipedia.

\* Linz appears to be a city that is northeast of Salzburg

my uncle Mendel, arrived at Föhrenwald with her friend – Israel Genut – whom she got to know in the Salzburg hotel, the same hotel in which I also had been in.

While I was in the camp in Germany, I traveled one day with friends to Munich. We toured the city and sat down for rest and to hang out in a pub. Several non-Jewish refugees joined us – principally deserters from the Russian army. Each shared experiences and memories from their military service – truly miraculous and amazing stories followed quickly one after the other. Among these men, apparently, there was an agent of the NKVD [People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs] – the secret police of the Soviet regime in the Soviet Union between the years 1934–1954. This agent had me in his sights, but I hadn't realized it.

We decided to meet again. In the second meeting, I saw that one of the men “made” me. I succeeded in escaping from the place via a superhuman effort. I went to the restroom, and from there I slipped away from the pub and fled to the street.

[original page 50]

I began to flee via alleyways and succeeded in slipping away from the city and, with God's help, reached Föhrenwald. I remained in Föhrenwald until 12/16/1945. I left the place because I had learned via the organization "Bricha" [The Escape] that my parents had arrived in Austria. I had not seen my parents or siblings in almost half a year, and I wanted very much to meet them.

I returned to Austria, to the city of Bad Gastein, that is located south of Salzburg. There, indeed, my parents, who had been brought from the refugee camp in Linz, were waiting for me. There I also met my siblings, Shifra and Yosef.

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In Bad Gastein, there were five hotels populated with Jewish refugees. We stayed in hotel Zentegain next to the train station. The other hotels were below in the center of the city.

Each day I would go down to the center of the city, to the hotel area. There I met different people and chatted with them. I began to get involved in cultural matters. In that location there were entertainers, among them Shamai Rosenblum who was an announcer and actor. He established a connection with the representative of the “Jewish World Congress” – the American Jewish Congress which was located in Vienna. We traveled to Vienna to the American sector in order to meet with representatives of the Jewish World Congress. During the meeting, the suggestion was made to establish a community college in Bad Gastein and teach Hebrew, geography, nature, etc. Religious subjects were taught by members of “Mizrachi” – the religious, national party. As a result of the meeting, we established classes to teach Hebrew. I taught Hebrew speaking, writing and reading there. We were a team of ten men and ten women. Most of the cultural activities were those of the “Hashomer Hazair” [The Young Guard] and “Mizrachi” parties.

[original page 51]



*Figure 10 Yosef in Bad Gastein*



*Figure 11 With friends in Bad Gastein*

[original page 52]



*Figure 12 With Tovah and friends in Bad Gastein*

*Figure 13 Tova and her "soul mate"– Freida*



[original page 53]

In Bad Gastein in the hotel – in the room across from me, I met Tova Genut, eventually my wife and the mother of my children. In the opposite room, my uncle and aunt Mendel and Sonia were staying with another couple the members of the Koenig family. The husband was the supervisor of a group of girls of Mizrachi. One day, I entered the room across from me and I met Tova and Freida. The two young women, both friends, were sitting and chatting. I joined them and the conversation flowed. Tova (who was born and grew up in Transylvania) invited me to see and become acquainted with their “kibbutz.” Through the mediation of Koenig, I began to teach them Hebrew. Tova and I connected with each other and became friends.

One day while in Vienna a second time, I met with the representative of “EVOK” – Jewish World Congress – I was notified by a telephone call that I had to return urgently to Bad Gastein. It was very possible I would be able to make aliyah to the Land of Israel.

I returned at once to Bad Gastein (in June 1946). Upon arrival I perceived a big problem. I had a certificate to make aliyah. Shifra wanted to join me, and I, of course, also wanted to make aliyah to the Land with Tova. We figured it out and, in the end, all three of us left: Shifra, Tova and myself towards Belgium. On our way, we passed through Western Germany. They detained us there for a week in the city of Koblenz. When we finally got to Belgium, the ship had already departed and on the deck there were soldiers of the Jewish brigade. It became apparent to us that they had wanted us to join the soldiers of the brigade but we missed the appointed departure. There were other groups that missed the boat.

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Before Rosh Hashanah we arrived to a Belgium castle – Chateau de Ry (see appendix 2). This place had a concentration of brigade soldiers. We stayed there several months. In the meantime, my parents left Bad Gastein in the direction of Paris, and along the way were delayed in Germany – in Koblenz. Thanks to their delay there, they received compensation and a pension from Germany in the 1950s.

After the brigade soldiers left the Chateau de Ry, the place began to be populated with Jewish survivors, mainly from Czechia and Slovakia. We were there for the period of the holidays: Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur of 1946 and through the winter.

One day, during the dead of winter, Tova began to suffer from intense stomach pains. It began apparent that she had come down with appendicitis (an inflammation of the appendix). She was admitted and operated on in the hospital “Sinai” – the hospital of the Catholic monastery. She was hospitalized about ten days, and I walked about 8 km in order to visit her. Extreme cold prevailed outside and the snow accumulated to a height of approximately a ½ meter.

In Belgium, a serious organization of the youth movement “Mizrachi” was operating. Its name was BaCHaD, [an acronym for] Covenant (Berit) of Pioneers (Ch), [who are] Religious [Dati]. I was active in BaCHaD. I taught Hebrew and Tanach [the Hebrew Bible]. Thanks to these activities I became aware that my parents had arrived at the Chateau du Ville in France.

[original page 54]

Since we wanted to marry, it was important to us to reunite with my parents, and I requested to go to France. My request was accepted. One day I received a directive to go to border of Belgium and France. This was a Friday in January 1947. We entered a café, drank a cup of tea, sat and chatted. A woman arrived there looking for us. She took us out to the French side. We were brought to the French city of Lille. Following her guidance, we waked to the train station. She put us on a train that was traveling to Paris and she said to us, “In Paris, in Garde du Nord [train station] you will meet them.” And so it was. From the train station in Paris, they took us to the hotel.

As previously stated, we arrived in Paris in January 1947. It was a cold winter. There was no heat nor hot water. Our escort took us to eat in “Pletzl,” the famous Jewish restaurant in Paris. There we ate soup with “Lokshen” (noodles), “gehakte leber”(chopped liver), and other tasty Jewish delicacies. We were in the hotel until Sunday. On Sunday, we went to the office of BaCHaD in Paris. There we received a financial allowance for all of us. We traveled to Anville – a distance of about 16 km from Paris.

We arrived there and settled in. Nearly every day we went to Paris. We toured and passed the time. We went to the Eiffel Tower, toured Champs-Élysées, and went to see the play, “The Dybuk.” We also learned a bit of French. We decided not to wait any longer and to arrange the wedding in France, in Chateau du Ville. We took Mother and traveled to Paris. Mother and Tova bought dresses for themselves, and we also bought sugar and flour to make cakes for the wedding. We planned the wedding. During this time, Yosef left us and made aliyah to the Land of Israel with a group called “Aliyat Hanoar” (Youth Aliyah). After two to three weeks, a black taxi suddenly showed up there. Two men got out of the taxi and asked, “Which of you is the Teitelman family?” After a short hesitation, we answered them. “How many people are you?” they continued to ask. “Five people,” we answered. “Come with us”...

We left everything and didn’t even finish our meal. We took our things, got in the car, and went. We arrived in Grenoble on Thursday. We were there for two days and on Shabbat in the morning we were told to prepare for the road. After some time, we arrived at the harbor of Marseille. In the harbor, a ship of illegal immigrants was docked from IZL (Irgun Zva'i Leumi - Etzel). “Ben Hecht” (see appendix 3). On the ship were 495 members of Beitar and there were another five places that were reserved for us.

### Camp Cyprus

This was March 1, 1947 about two years from the end of the war. We sailed to the Land of Israel under the sponsorship of Etzel. After a week, on March 8, on Shabbat towards morning,

three planes flew over us. After a number of hours, two boats arrived that sailed in parallel and blocked us. We were in the middle. We sailed in the direction of Haifa. After Shabbat, we arrived at the port of Haifa. On the following day, on Sunday, they took us off the ship and put us on two ships of war. They took us to Cyprus. We had gotten close enough to see Carmel from a distance. We arrived in Cyprus. We were there a year and a month, until April 15, 1948. We lived in Camp 66.

[original page 55]



*Figure 14 With Tova and friend in Chateau du Ry*



*Figure 15 Friends in Chateau du Ry*

[original page 56]



*Figure 16 Wedding in Cyprus with Tova (Genut), in the background Yosef and Shifra*



*Figure 17 Tova – 1950*



*Figure 18 Yosef on basic training*



*Figure 19 With Father, Mother, Tovah and a daughter of their town who visited from the US. [Editor's note: The visitor from the US is identified as Clara (Shulman) Fishman, the sister of translator Howard Schwartz's grandmother]*



*Figure 20 Shifra and Shraga*



*Figure 21 Naomi and Yosef – 1958*

[original page 59]

When we arrived at Camp 66, Yosef suddenly popped up in front of us. We barely recognized him. We had been separated in 1946 in Bad Gastein.\* A year and a half had passed. He had gotten bigger and taller and appeared different.

In the beginning, we all lived in a tin shack of the British army. In the summer, it was terribly hot.

The British took care of food, drinks and showers. We ate three arranged meals a day in the shared dining room. The social and cultural activities were managed by the people of the Jewish Sochnut [The Jewish Agency] and activists of the Jewish political parties [see appendix 4].

In Cyprus, there were many educational and cultural activities. Courses on many subjects were started; there were lectures on many subjects, they taught Hebrew, screened films, also there were deliveries of newspapers and books in different languages.

The “older [i.e., earlier] residents” of the camps in Cyprus tried to absorb the immigrants who continued to arrive to the island. Thus, for example, when two boats arrived, the “Pan York”

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\* Editor’s note: the narrative earlier indicates Yosef had left them while they were in Paris.

and “Pan Crescent,” on which were immigrants from Romania, I was among those who welcomed and helped them.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1947, when the UN decided on the partition of the Land of Israel, we celebrated – we sang and danced many hours.

Tova and I married finally on Lag B’Omer 1947. We were given a small room in the shack. After some time, Tova became pregnant, but lost the fetus. The British admitted her to the hospital, and she was released after a few days. I was not able to visit her, but the representatives of the Sochnut visited her.

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Tova stayed connected to her siblings with letters.



*Figure 22 Sister Chaya and her family in Argentina. They left Romania in 1933*

*Figure 23 Brother Wolf-Lev (returned from Auschwitz), Aunt Eidas and her children – Israel and Yehudit Genut in Romania*



*Figure 24 Brother Victor and his daughters Rayiah and Raisah in Russia*



## Chapter 6: Making Aliyah to Israel

On April 15, 1948, we received certificates (permission for aliyah). After several days, on April 20<sup>th</sup>, we arrived at the harbor of Haifa. In the port of Haifa, they put us on "Eged" buses. The windows of the buses had bars and nets, including the driver's window [due to the War of Independence]. The front window had a very narrow opening and the driver had trouble seeing the road. The bus stood alongside the harbor manager's station. The driver was ready to go. I stood behind the driver and I peeked outside through the small front window. I saw someone walking outside with his back towards me. I couldn't believe my eyes. I called out, "Yitzhak!". Yitzhak was the younger brother of Mother who had made aliyah in the beginning of the 1930s. Years passed since I had seen him the last time...it is difficult to believe but I recognized him. He turned around and immediately came on the bus. The reunion was emotional. We were choked up with tears. For many moments, we couldn't speak... He rode with us to Kiryat Shmuel, to the immigrant center. He had known we were supposed to arrive, and he had come to meet us. On the way, we passed the Rushmia bridge. There Arabs threw rocks on us.

We arrived at Kiryat Shmuel several days before Passover. Yitzhak took us to his house in Neve Sha'anani. This was a single room rented apartment. They were already a family of three persons: Yitzhak, Sarah and the firstborn son – Micah. We met Sara his wife. She went out of her way to prepare refreshments. I realized that she prepared the food in the bathroom. They had no kitchen...She cooked there on top of a kerosene stove.

We spent the Seder in Kiryat Shmuel.

After Passover, Yitzhak suggested that we go to live in Neve Sha'anani. He looked for an apartment for us. To our good luck, he found a private house that was one story. The (Jewish) owner had left the Land of Israel with the outbreak of riots in 1947. The house transferred to the supervision of the community committee, which decided to rent it to a needy immigrant family. Yitzhak spoke with the chairman of the committee, a dear Jewish man – Mr. Ben Zvi. The chairman transferred the apartment to us in exchange for two Lira a month. We began to live in the apartment: Father, Mother, myself, Tova and Shifra. The parents settled in the bedroom, we in the closed balcony and Shifra in the kitchen.

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From 1948 until 1988, I worked in the telephone department of the post office which became Bezeq after some years.

Sholomo, our first born was born in March 1949 (the 10<sup>th</sup> of Adar 5709). He was named for the father of Tova. Several months passed. After the second armistice, the owner of the apartment returned to the Land of Israel. He wanted the apartment back but was willing to sell it for 1,000 Lira. We didn't have money.

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With the money I earned from periodic work I managed to buy a closet of four doors, a table, chairs, and that's all.

In the end, we reached a settlement with him. He gave us compensation in the form of 250 Lira and we vacated the apartment. At that time, three buildings were completed in the neighborhood of Romema at the initiative of the committee of Hadar HaCarmel. We were given there, on 25 Palmach Street, a one room apartment, a kitchenette, and bathroom. We lived in this apartment until the end of 1957. My parents received an apartment from "abandoned property" on Ha'atzmaut [Independence] Street opposite the harbor. They lived there with Shifra and Josef.

During Passover 1950, we were guests at our parents' place on Ha'atzmaut Street. Shlomo the little one [Asher and Tova's oldest son] started walking around the table.

On November 14, 1950 (the 5<sup>th</sup> of Kislev 5711) a second son was born to us, Ephraim-Moshe.

After several years on Oct 6, 1956 (29<sup>th</sup> day of Tishre 5717) a tragedy overtook me: Tova my wife died because of preeclampsia. I didn't want to take the children out of the house. My parents were not able to help much. Mother suffered greatly from her legs. They were constantly swollen and painful, with difficulty she was able to bring the children food. In the morning, I brought the children to school, and after their studies, Mother would come pick them up. My parents moved to Romema, close to me in order to help. I would get up every day at 3:00 am. I washed, ironed, cooked and cleaned, so that the children would be well cared for and lack nothing.

After time passed, I was introduced to Raayah: a widow who made aliyah to Israel from Poland, with two children: Yosef (Yosi) and Tamar. In 1958, we married and we built a new family.

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In 1970, the children began to marry.

The youngest son, Ephraim, went to the work camp of the religious scouts in Kibbutz Sa'ad in 1967, about a month after the Six Day War. There he met Dina, his future wife. After his studies, he enlisted and served in the army camp in Tel Aviv. During his service, they married on September 6, 1970, [and changed their last name from Teitelman, which means "date" fruit to Tomer, the Hebrew equivalent]. Ephraim is an electrical engineer and Dina is a teacher of Hebrew. They had four children: Elad, Yaniv, Nahom-Amiti and Neta.

Shlomo met his wife Sara in our house. Sara is the friend of Tamar. Shlomo and Sara got married on September 5, 1971. Shlomo is a chemical engineer and Sarah is a nurse in the hospital. They have three children: Anat, Uri and Matan.

Praise the Lord, I am fortunate to have grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

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I retired at the end of 1989. After about half a year, on May 21, 1991, the day after the holiday of Shavuot, my wife and I went for a short vacation in Acre. Usually after the midday meal, my wife goes to the restroom. She tripped and fell and broke her hip. She in fact recovered. But on December 22, 1991 she had a stroke and was hospitalized. After some time, she was brought to rehab in the Rothchild hospital. There she had an additional stroke. Following that, she was paralyzed and hospitalized in a geriatric hospital. After three years, she passed away.

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### In Conclusion,

About a year later, grandfather Asher went to live in assisted living in Rishon LeTzion – “Ad Meah VeEsrin”<sup>\*</sup> and he lived in his apartment about 12 years.

Almost every Shabbat, after morning prayers, he was able to entertain his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren in the spacious lobby of the building. He received them with love and affection, and they loved him very much and enjoyed visiting him.

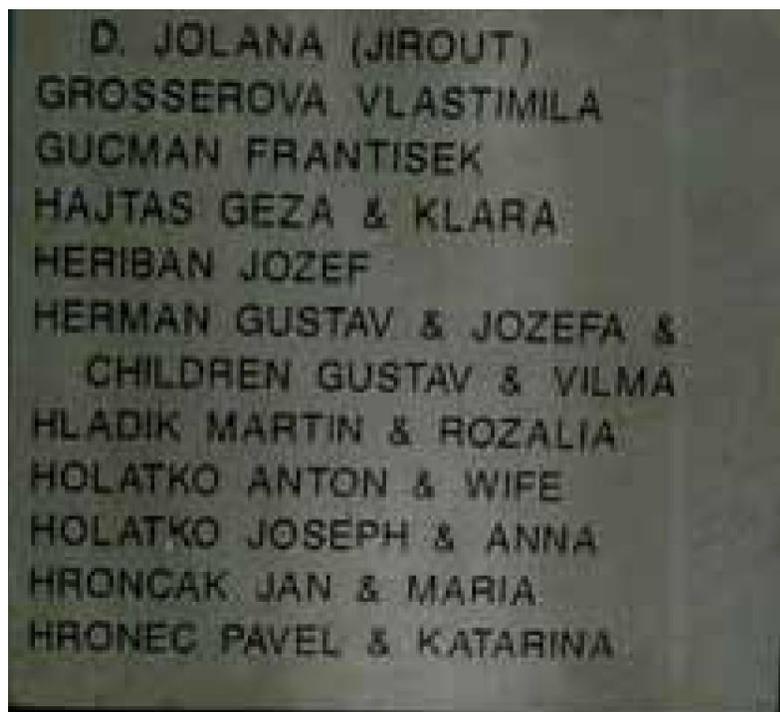
When grandfather Asher was asked one time, what is the message that he wanted to pass on to his descendants, he said, “I want them to follow in the ways of their forebears; they should guard the “embers” of the traditions of Israel and the traditions of the family. This ember guarded us through the darkest of days which have passed. It is very important to increase Torah and knowledge. Study is the highest value. They should go humbly in the straight path. Always love the homeland and never abandon her.”

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<sup>\*</sup> The name of the residence means “may one live until 120.”



*Figure 25 The couple Joseph and Anna Holatko during a visit with Yosef and a commemoration at Yad Vashem as among the righteous of the world's nations.*



*Figure 26 Josef and Anna Holatko were honored with a plaque*





*Figure 27 With Ephraim (Fuki) and Shlomo*



*Figure 28 On a trip with Raya*

*Figure 29 At the wedding of Fuki and Dina*



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Celebrating the birthday of grandfather Nahum at home with the family on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Shevat (from the right – Yaakov Kopit, Yitzhak Hofri and Sara, his wife, Mendel and Sonia Teitelman, grandfather Nahum and grandmother Rachel, Raya and Asher



Figure 30 At work, engineering supervisor for the district of Haifa for Bezeq [telecom]

[original page 70]



*Figure 31 With firstborn grandson Elad*



*Figure 32 Grandfather Asher playing with Neta, his granddaughter*

[original page 71]



*Figure 33 The last photo with Shifra and Yosef*

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## Appendix 1 – Föhrenwald

After the war, many refugees gathered in displaced-person camps that were established by the parties to the treaty, which were located on the soil of Germany, Austria and Italy.

In the first stage, the conquering nations did not recognize the common plight and problems of the Jewish refugees, but only in the passage of time set up their own separate camps for them in which there were a wide range of activities and programs despite the limitations of the time and place. The camps were scattered between the American and British sectors and a few were in the French sector. After a large contingent of Jews arrived at the displaced-person camps of Feldafing (close to Munich) and it became evident there was a group of a particularly religious character, the governing forces in the region of the American occupation were forced to plan for an additional displaced person camp. For this reason, they set aside the military fortress in Föhrenwald. There in an extremely wide area, refugees were able to live in relatively spacious conditions.

Issues of the remaining refugees were handled in an official way by public committees that were established to care for the challenges and needs of the refugees. These committees were centralized in Munich, in camp Bergen Belsen and in Berlin.

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## Appendix 2 – Chateau de Ry

The chateau is situated, , in a green valley where many springs feed the Ry river. The chateau is surrounded by three corner towers built from limestone.

The tower was built in harmony with the surrounding square courtyard, which is comprised of three central buildings of different heights. During WWII, in the years 1940 – 1945, the family treasures that were hidden in the cellar of the chateau, were plundered by the German invaders.

The chateau and the areas around it in the region of Walloon of Belgium were a monumental inheritance.



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## Appendix 3 – The Ship of Illegal Immigrants – “Ben Hecht”

The ship was built as a private yacht by the Krupp company in the shipyards of Germany. It changed hands several times (among other things, gold of the Republican Spanish government was smuggled to Mexico in the wake of its fall in the Civil War), until the American fleet purchased it in 1942 and used it as a coastal patrol vessel. In 1946, it was purchased by a company called Tyre Shipping of New York. After its purchase and transformation for use in illegal immigration, it served as a facade for the “American League for a Free Palestine,” an organization that was connected to the Revisionist Movement. The ship was named for the author and screenwriter Ben Hecht: a Jewish American who was active in Revisionist circles. The proceeds of his successful play, “A Flag is Born” (which dealt with the struggle of the illegal refugees against the British blockage) were used to help purchase the vessel.

Ben Hecht sailed on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1948 from Port de Bouc (France) carrying 626 illegal immigrants. Two men accompanied them, Moshe Schwartz and Simcha Berlin. The crew included 18 American volunteers.

Two American journalists were also on board.

On March 9th, when the vessel was close to the coast of the Land of Israel, it was intercepted by two British destroyers. A British force took the vessel under its control, facing no significant resistance. The vessel was towed to the port of Haifa. From there, the illegal immigrants were expelled to Cyprus. The American crew was arrested but, following diplomatic interference, the men were freed and deported back to the USA.

“Ben Hecht” was the only illegal vessel after the War that was organized by members of the Revisionist movement and not by the organization “Mossad LeAliyah Bet.” Since the “Haapala” was regarded as something that was of common interest to all the political movements in the Yishuv, the representatives of the Hagana aided those renovating the vessel in New York and in the launch of the illegal immigrants in France.

In the summer of 1948, the ship was taken out of “the Shadow Fleet,” renovated and remade into a navy vessel which was called “Ahi Maoz” [Stronghold] K-24. It participated in the War of Independence and served as mother-ship for the smaller strike ships which sank the Egyptian flagship “Emir Farouk”, the flag ship of the Egyptian navy. During the 1950s, it was sold in Italy and served as a ferry in the gulf of Naples. In September 2008, it had the name Santa Maria Del Mar and was once again refitted completely and used as a private yacht.



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[original page 79]

## Appendix 4 – Cyprus Detention Camps

Most of those in the displaced person camps expressed their desire to go to the Land of Israel, but the government of the British Mandate placed restrictions on the extent of the Jewish immigration to the Land and tried to stop boats of illegal immigrants that tried to bring Jewish refugees to the land in spite of the prohibition. The British tried to prevent the illegal immigration through different methods: they forbid the Jewish refugees to enter the British occupied region in Germany, put political pressure on different nations so they would prevent the departure ships from their territory, and used different means to prevent the boats of illegal immigrants from arriving at the Land of Israel.

From August 1946, the British government decided to bring the illegal immigration arriving in the Land to the Island of Cyprus, which was also under British Mandate, and they settled them in detention camps. Even though this idea had been articulated already a year before the beginning of the expulsion, not enough had been done to prepare to receive the illegal immigrants. The British military built twelve camps in four places – They were Caraolos, Fidulos, Ksilutymvo, and Kakalia.\* Camps that had tents were called by most “summer camp,” and similarly camps made from tin barracks were called “winter camp.” The emissaries who were living in Land of Israel and came principally from the Kibbutzim were directed to the winter camps. The emissaries ran the camps like a Kibbutz and established in them a house for children and youth villages. The volunteers taught Hebrew, music, art, Judaism and studies of

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\* Editor’s note: I was unable to find the English spelling of these camps in articles about the Cyprus detention center. English articles refers to “Five summer camps (nos. 55, 60, 61, 62, 63) located at Kraolos, near Famagusta. The detainees were housed in tents. Seven winter camps (nos. 64-70) were located at Dekalia.

the Land of Israel, and they familiarized the prisoners with the way of life in the Land of Israel. They ran elementary schools, established youth groups, and also established a seminar for adults.

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Men from the Haganah and Palmach were also sent to Cyprus who directed young men in military training and the use of weapons to prepare them to be fighters when they arrived in the Land (this secret organization was called "Shurot Hameginim" [Lines of Defense]). In addition, they secretly dug eight tunnels under the fence of the camp, their way of successfully enabling dozens of youth to escape. During the three years of camp operation, there were 52,000 deportees. About 2,000 children were born in this place.

With the announcement declaring the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948, the illegal immigrants were sure that in a matter of days ships would come and take them to the State of Israel, but the emptying of the camps was conducted slowly. The British preferred to prioritize the sick, those who were oldest, and the children in the first wave. In contrast, the State of Israel and the leadership of the Sochnut (The Jewish Agency) were interested first in bringing out young people prepared to fight, who had undergone minimum military training in the camps and whom the leadership believed were fit to join the fighting forces. They were less interested in the sick, women and children since at that stage they had nowhere to settle them or food to feed them. All of those at a fitting age and good health,

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would be enlisted when they arrived in Israel. Some of them fell in battles during War of Independence.

In February 1949, the emptying of the Cyprus camps officially ended, and this was the date when the last of the emissaries from the State of Israel left. There were families and individuals who were left behind until November 1949, mostly for reasons of health or because they had very young babies.



*Figure 34 Routine in detention camps in Cyprus, April 1948*

## Eulogy – Words to His Memory

Words of eulogy for grandfather that were said at the funeral on behalf of all the grandchildren.

Grandfather,

You always cared for us, grandfather. Always you were in touch, asked what was going on and made sure that we were all right, gave good advice and would update us on the wellbeing of everyone. Already more than 24 hours have passed, and you have not been in touch. I so much want like to speak to you again. Just one more time. To see that everything is okay, that you have arrived in heaven, a place where everything is indeed good. To make sure that you are well, and your leg doesn't hurt you any longer.

Your concern for the family is no longer. Daily telephone conversations, the need to receive all the information. Perhaps this is the war that gave you the intuition that all is fluid. Every moment is a gift, and everything can be turned upside down in a moment.

And so it happened on Yom Kippur. You went to pray Kol Nidre and opened the holy ark. Friends indicated you felt fine and were happy. You explained to them that they were praying facing south and not east [the correct way].

At night, you didn't feel good. You called the female doctor and in less than an hour you already were no longer with us.

Perhaps we didn't say to you – but you definitely knew. You were an example and model for all of us. An example of strength, of care for family, and the realization of the sobering nature of reality.

You were a hero, the biggest hero I know. You were a hero during the Shoah, in the forest and in hiding. You were a hero in the World War, when you fought face to face with the Nazis and the collaborators in their activities. Although wounded twice, you returned every time in order to fight and to remove the Nazi evil from the world, until you were gravely wounded a third time.

When your wife, our grandmother Tova, passed away in childbirth, and left you with two orphans, you gathered your strength, married again to grandmother Raya, and raised a model family. A family that we are proud to be members of. But all of this happened many years ago, before we, the grandchildren, had come into the world. We saw your heroism from another perspective. We saw your strength coping with the problems and pains of daily life. In the later years, your legs caused great pain. The joints of your leg were destroyed. And every step required great effort. Additionally, the bacteria that infected your wounded legs during the war flared up and attacked from time to time, and became resistant almost to every antibiotic. You

had to lie down for full days with your feet raised. We talked to you almost every day and you told us everything. And every day I would be impressed all over again, how despite everything you didn't dwell on your situation. Never did I hear the words, "it is hard" or "it is not easy."

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Instead, you would enumerate the facts, describe what was happening now, what else needed to be done. You would say "there is no other choice, and it is necessary to carry on." And always you would carry on. In spite of the difficulties and in spite of the pain – always carrying on.

Sometimes the inflammation wouldn't pass even with care and would recur from time to time. You never complained or gave up. Always you carried on.

This is true bravery, grandfather, bravery – continual and consistent. To carry on and not give up, forever. It is difficult for me to believe that there are other people who can cope like you, every day, and to fight for every step. This was a continual struggle without any let up, a real and sobering battle against which you stubbornly fought with each step – from the bed to the kitchen, to the shower, to the living room, to the washing machine. Every step was considered and required persistence. And there were days that the struggle was exceedingly difficult, and never did you give up.

Every conversation and meeting with you we experienced your fighting spirit, the coping with all the difficulties with no sign of giving up. You provided an example and model to us all. We all absorbed inspiration from you. There are no people in the world like you, grandfather.

At work, they chose you as a supervisor and leader. Indeed, in your youth, in the forced labor in the ghetto, they made you a supervisor of the work. You were among those who established the Israeli communication office – Your serial number as an employee was 7.

You advanced from a general worker to a supervisor of the work, to a senior manager, to the role second in command of the network in the region of northern Haifa. When you retired, they pressured you to lead a committee of pensioners of Bezek in the north. Even in the retirement home they "pressured" you to be in the committee several times.

Not long ago, when I received a new role, I took council with you, grandfather, and asked you a question that was seriously troubling me: When you had to fire a person – How did you do this? Your answer was very straightforward: "I never fired a person," you said. "On the contrary, when there was a problematic worker, they would bring him to me and I worked it out with all of them." In our world today, this is an example and model that you provide. You were a good grandfather. The best in the world.

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When I was a boy, I remember my summer visits to you. Your driver would come get us at the house in the morning. We would go together to tour work in the north, and then go with you to

the office and draw. Afterwards, the driver returned us for the noon meal that grandmother, Raya, made. When we returned from work, we went down and played together in the garden.

When you came to visit us, as a young lad I would wake up early in the morning and come to you in your bed. Then you would awaken and tell me stories most of which you have forgotten – but I still remember them to this day. You were also a good husband, devoted to all the family. When grandmother Raya got ill and required a nursing home, you were with her almost every day.

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You cared for, helped, fed, and spoke to her.

Always you watched over the family. I am so happy that you were able to celebrate with all of us the bar mitzvah of Harel, your oldest great-grandchild. You were very much looking forward to the wedding of Anat, Shifra's grand-daughter, in November, and you especially wanted to again meet Shifra and Yosef. I am so happy that you were able to be at “the ultimate gathering” of our family at the circumcision of Rachel’s son - Shifra's great-grandchild. You wanted this very much.

We love you, grandfather, we love you so much.

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You had a full life: full of meaning, full of love, full of kindness, and full of giving. You left your mark on this world, on us, and the many people who knew you over the years. You provided a personal example to all of us.

You left during Yom Kippur, and now you reunite with the rest of the family in the Garden of Eden: with grandfather Nahum, with grandmother, Rachel, with grandmother Raya, with your brothers, Ephraim and Shlomo, whom you have not seen many years, and with grandmother Tova, mother of your children.

We shall never forget you, our grandfather.

On behalf of all the grandchildren, Elad.

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How do we remember Grandfather Asher?

With a wide smile and loving eyes, he would receive you, even before he knew your name. Relaxed and peaceful, his face radiates wisdom.

There is no way to make a mistake and there is no situation where you get confused, he was loved from the very first moment and immediately he penetrates your heart.

Grandfather who lived world history, fought and did backbreaking work, injured multiple times and until his last days, carried a great deal of varied shrapnel, both metallic and spiritual. He survived the Great War and survived the pursuit of our people at the hands of the Nazi oppressor.

He is the true survivor, Zionist in his heart, a builder of an entire life beginning from nothing, only with his incisive mind and ability to lead, to build and to initiate, to fall down and to get up...and to begin again. Without fanfare and with love, he leads everyone.

Everyplace that he arrived, in any position he fulfilled, his love for others guided him.

All of this I learned from you Grandfather!

And in this way you will be remembered forever!

May your memory be a blessing.

Udi Nativ

## A Memory and a Keepsake

(Editor's note: the following is written as an acrostic spelling out Asher's full name in Hebrew)

- [Aleph]: Asher Mordechai, son of Menachem Nahum,  
 [Shin]: Whose rest is already under the wings of the Merciful one (raham).  
 [Raysh]: A strong impression you left and we the friends (yedidim)  
 [Mem]: those who pay tribute to your name, from day to day we miss you (mitgahgaim),  
 [Resh]: wanting to forget and for some reason we cannot (low yecholim),  
 [Dalet]: his image, with his laugh and the impression of his smile, do not disappear (low nealamim),  
 [Kaf]: we all in the senior residence, "Ad Meah VeEsrim,"  
 [Yud]: know to remember and long together for happy days (semahim).  
 [Bet]: son of man – how much your absence is felt here (cahn)  
 [Nun]: Your pleasant way of being - disappeared to where (le-an)?  
 [Mem]: The legacy of the ancestors and the tradition nearly every evening and morning (bokair),  
 [Nun]: Your friends who are precious and present , we are missing a player for poker (fokair).  
 [Chet]: A good life = family, children and grandchildren (nechdim)  
 [Mem]: from far and nearby, memories of you we long for (orgim).  
 [Nun]: We remember you as a colleague and friend (viyadeed),  
 [Chet]: Almost a year has passed and to your spirit we look (nabeet),  
 [Vov]: And from all of us here, the leadership, all those who pray with yearning (begaguim)  
 [Mem]: from Smilansky street in Rishon LeZion, about you we are thinking (hoshvim).

Menahem Av 5770 / July 2010

Yosi Mehasari and friends, Rishon LeZion, "Ad Meah VeEsrim."

## Reference – Asher Teitelman Family Tree

Asher Teitelman (1921–2010)

| Relationship   | Names  |
|--|--|
| Asher's parents  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nahum Teitelman (1890–1976) m. Rachel Gruber (1894–1980)</li> </ul>   |
| Asher's Siblings   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efraim Fishel Teitelman (1922–1942)</li> <li>• Shlomo Teitelman (1924–1942)</li> <li>• Shifra (Teitelman) Grossman (1926–)</li> <li>• Yosef /Yoseleh (Teitelman) Tomer (1928–2015)</li> <li>• Sara Rivkah (died at the age of 9 months)</li> </ul>  |
| Asher's maternal grandparents  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yosef Moshe Gruber married Shifra Teitelman</li> </ul>  |
| Asher's paternal grandparents  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ephraim Fischel Teitelman married Chaya Bakowietzky</li> </ul>  |
| Asher's Maternal Aunts and Uncles (i.e., his mother Rachel's siblings)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sonia Gruber married Mendel Teitelman (Mendel was also first cousin of Asher's father Nahum). no children.</li> <li>• Chaya (Chaika Gruber) Schichman m. Yaakov Schichman children: Sarah Vinokur (married Labish Vinokur), Penina, Avraham Mordechai, Asher</li> <li>• Nuta Gruber m. Miriam Sherman. child: Yechiel Gruber (–1942)</li> <li>• Ben Zion Gruber m. Gitel Gruber Margulis. child: Yudit (–1942)</li> <li>• Yitzhak (Isaac Gruber) Hofri (1910–2008) m. Sara Hornshtein (1915–2008). Children: Micha, Devora, Ruti</li> </ul> |
| Asher's Paternal aunts and uncles (father Nahum's siblings)                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anshel Eliezer Teitelman (1880–1942)</li> <li>• Yentel (Teitelman) Schichman (–1942)</li> <li>• Malka (Teitelman) (–1942)</li> </ul>  |
| Uncle Mendel's siblings*<br><br>(note Mendel married Sonia, Asher's mother's | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mamtsi (1917–1985) m. Israel Genut (–2016)</li> <li>• Yitzchak (–1942)</li> <li>• Yehoshua (–1942)</li> <li>• Nachman (–1942)</li> </ul>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| sister. He was also a first cousin to Asher's father) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mirel Teitelman m. Yehuda Zev Schwartz (children: Libby and Max Schwartz)</li><li>• Ester (Teitelman) Gruber (-1942)</li></ul>    |
| Asher's wife and children                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tova Genut (1922-1956). children: Shlomo and Ephraim.</li><li>• After Tova passed away, married Raya Broida (1918-1995)</li></ul> |