

HEROISM AND RESISTANCE  
IN THE HOLOCAUST  
A High School Curriculum

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## RATIONALE

A reflection upon the Holocaust generally leads to anger, rage and a feeling of impotence among Jewish learners. So many human beings died; so few were saved; and so little was done to help them. It is common for the events of the Holocaust to overwhelm people with these negative emotions. However, the Jewish community today needs stories of rescue, self-sacrifice, righteousness and morality to continue a process of healing. These instances of heroism and resistance from the Holocaust can never balance the unrelenting story of evil, yet they exemplify the goodness that often lies within human beings. There is no question that the Holocaust was a tragedy. We are obligated to teach students about it so that the horrors that occurred will never be forgotten. At the same time though, students should have an understanding of the heroism and resistance that occurred alongside the horrors.

*Heroism and Resistance in the Holocaust* is intended for high school age students who already have a background in Holocaust education. It is not intended to be an introductory course. Many of the fundamental details and overarching themes of the Holocaust are referred to but are not the focus of the curriculum. In addition, there are many sophisticated concepts within this curriculum, and high school aged students are best able to grasp these concepts and engage in the higher level thinking that is called for in this curriculum. Students will be encouraged to go deeper into their understanding of the Holocaust and not simply get the facts and basics that are generally included in an introductory Holocaust course. In addition, students need a level of maturity in order to deal with the issues contained in this curriculum, and high school students are better able to engage in abstract concepts such as those discussed in the lessons.

The curriculum is first and foremost designed to teach students about the acts of heroism and resistance that occurred during the Holocaust as a way to educate them about the Jewish

values that existed within these acts. The content of this curriculum focuses on the individuals and stories from the Holocaust that exemplify heroism and resistance. Within the curriculum, students will be taught about individual people as a way to model the qualities of good human character embodied in Jewish values. In addition, students will learn about stories of rescue, resistance and heroism as a way to contextualize the circumstances in which these individuals found themselves. Students will be taught about the spiritual resistance that Jews used in order to combat the horrors of the Holocaust. They will learn how people used their minds as well as engaged in music, art, and theater as a way to embrace culture during the hard times. Acts of physical resistance will be taught such as those people who escaped and joined partisan units and those who engaged in the heroic insurgencies in the camps and ghettos.

In addition, noteworthy acts of resistance from countries, their leaders and many other non-Jews will be used to show how communities along with their leaders defied the Nazis and helped to save Jews. Instead of focusing on the collective guilt of countries like Poland where overwhelmingly people did nothing to save the Jews, the curriculum will emphasize that not everyone was complicit. There were people who chose to help and by doing so were able to save countless individuals.

Jewish values permeate the entire curriculum and are woven into the stories that the students will study. The Jewish values of *Tzedek*, *Chesed* and *Rachamim* are embodied in the acts of heroism and resistance to which the students will be exposed. These Jewish values are central to Judaism, and they embody what being Jewish is all about. The heroes that they learn about had little to gain – and much to lose – by helping the victims of the war. But their dramatic stories will inspire the students to believe in the decency and compassion that lives within the human heart. These stories can touch the students personally and teach them about



dignity, respect, tolerance and the endurance of the human spirit. This curriculum intends to teach students to embrace these Jewish values and use them as a basis for how to live their own lives. At the high school age, the students are developing into young adults and they are beginning to learn to think for themselves and make their own choices. These Jewish values will guide them on their journey to becoming young adults.

When asked why they helped, most rescuers responded that it was the right thing to do. Their acts were the results of upbringing, religious and moral convictions, and opportunity to help others. People became heroes and helped others based on their personal sense of values and without regard to their personal safety. *Pikuach Nefesh* stresses the importance of saving a human life. A person should do anything in his/her power in order to save someone else's life. This includes such acts as stealing food, breaking the law and violating Jewish customs in order to help another person. In short, there was a blurring of morality during the Holocaust, but people did things for each other where the end result was actually something that was morally sound.

Learning about self-sacrifice is important because students should understand that in society today where a "me first" attitude generally prevails there are other options for leading one's life. Too often, people today put their own needs ahead of others. This curriculum will encourage students to engage in self-sacrifice as a way to help others in their lives. Those who put others first at the expense of their comfort and well-being were powerful examples from the Holocaust from which the students can learn. These students are at a point in their lives where everything has generally been provided for them. They must understand that in addition to getting what they need and what they want, they should also be encouraged to engage in some self-sacrifice. This teaches them the values of helping other people.

Spiritual resistance had much significance to the experiences of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. The students need to be exposed to models of spiritual resistance to show the strength of the Jewish people during these hard times. Due to people's strong sense of keeping hope alive, these stories show how these individuals can be models for the students to engage in their own form of spiritual resistance when confronted with bigotry and difficult circumstances.

While it is not the goal of the curriculum to encourage students to engage in physical resistance against those who wrong them, this curriculum shows them that Jews can also be warriors. Jews were able to fight with great military prowess in order to help save other Jews and fight against the Nazis. It is important to their Jewish identities for them to challenge the traditional notion that Jews were seen as lambs going to their slaughter. Jews did indeed fight back and waged successful campaigns both in the ghettos and concentration camps to help other Jews and fight against the oppression that they were experiencing.

The overall intention of this curriculum is to allow students to see the Holocaust in a different light than what they have been used to. Normally, we see the Holocaust as filled with horrific and depressing stories. The curriculum in no way means to underplay the important lesson of how horrible the Holocaust is. Rather, students should understand that in light of all that went wrong and all the injustice that was done to Jews, many became heroes and resisted the Holocaust in different ways. By learning about heroism and resistance, students will be able to see how Jewish values were embodied in people's actions. Even the role that non-Jews played can be seen as exemplifying Jewish values. In addition, students will have the opportunity to use the people and the stories they learn about as models for how they should lead their own lives.

*Heroism and Resistance in the Holocaust* is a curriculum that is designed to show students that individuals can make the difference between good and evil. Ordinary people

existed during the Holocaust whose consciences demanded that they not succumb to the falsehood that there is no alternative to passive complicity with evil. In addition, the stories and people within the curriculum show how rays of light penetrated the sinister darkness which enveloped humanity.

The following enduring understandings guide this curriculum and will have a lasting impact beyond the classroom:

1. The dramatic stories of heroism and resistance from the Holocaust highlight the Jewish values of *Tzedek* (righteousness), *Chesed* (Kindness) and *Rachamim* (compassion).
2. The principle of *Pikuach Nefesh* (self-sacrifice) can encourage people to do everything in their power to save people in a society where others are indifferent.
3. In the face of the horrors of the Holocaust and debilitating conditions, the Jews engaged in spiritual resistance which allowed them to keep hope alive.
4. Despite the overwhelming odds against them, Jews engaged in many forms of physical resistance which were motivated by a variety of factors.

## NOTE TO THE TEACHER

Shalom,

I'm delighted that you've chosen to use this curriculum guide in your teaching about the Holocaust. As stated in my rationale, this guide is intended to be used with high school students. The ultimate goal of this curriculum is to give students a broader view of the Holocaust and to allow them to see the noteworthy acts of heroism and resistance in which Jews and non-Jews engaged.

So often, we lament the horrors of the Holocaust as pure tragedy. There is no doubt that awful things happened in the Holocaust, and it is vital that students understand this. The horrible events that happened should never be ignored but what this course is trying to achieve is to look at the Holocaust from a lens of heroism and resistance that occurred despite all the evil that took place. This allows us as Jews to see how much hope people held out and how people tried to resist what was being done to them. The stories that the students will learn about will provide powerful examples of how people choose to act in the face of crisis and the moral choices people made despite the evil that surrounded them.

The Holocaust is a very difficult subject to teach, so explain to the students that it is your intention to create a safe space where students can learn about the events that happened while feeling secure to voice their opinions and express whatever emotions may come to mind. It is not the intention of this curriculum to gloss over the gory details and make the sad events that happened any less important. Students should feel safe to express any difficulties they may have with learning about these events.

This curriculum is full of resources from websites, books and documentaries. Before teaching each lesson, you should review these materials and prepare for the upcoming class. In addition, many of the sources come from books that are readily available in the library. I have scanned copies of a lot of the

readings, but if you prefer, you may obtain these books personally and see if your school has copies as well.

Throughout this curriculum, the students will be utilizing journals to reflect on their learning. Many times, they will have a chance to share their responses with the class and other times the reflections are simply for their own benefit. As part of the assessment process, you should periodically examine their journal entries to ensure that students are learning appropriately and have internalized the material.

Many of the activities involve reading and discussing material. I have tried to vary the learning and make the learning process as interesting as possible, but do not feel tied to the method in which the material is presented. What is important is that the students internalize the information in the stories. How they receive the information can be left up to you. The Core Activities are simply guides and you can adapt them as you wish. In addition, some lessons may not be able to be completed in one day's session. I encourage you to plan out in advance to make sure that you have enough time for one session, and if not, to break up the lesson into parts. Each unit contains a fully scripted lesson in order to give you a sense of how a typical lesson should be constructed.

Finally, if you live in a community that has a lot of Holocaust resources, such as museums or a large population of survivors, I encourage you to take students on field trips or bring in visitors as much as you see fit.

# **UNIT ONE: Contextualizing the Holocaust**

## **ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:**

1. Looking at the Holocaust through the lens of heroism and resistance can challenge the traditional notion that the Holocaust was simply pure evil and horror.
2. Seeing the Holocaust through a perspective of powerful role models and heroic acts allows Jews to see the positive events and people as ideals of how people can deal with difficult circumstances.

## **GOALS:**

1. To allow students to see that the Holocaust did not contain simply pure evil, but that there were many instances where people engaged in ethical acts despite the horrors that surrounded them.
2. To introduce students to the ideas of heroism and resistance.
3. To encourage students to see Jews as heroes during the Holocaust.
4. To create a safe space in which students can discuss the stories of the Holocaust.

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

1. How is this curriculum guide different from other curriculum guides on the Holocaust?
2. What is heroism and how did it apply during the Holocaust?
3. What is resistance and how did it apply during the Holocaust?

## **UNIT ASSESSMENTS:**

1. Journal Entries
2. Answers to discussion questions

# Lesson 1.1: Relooking at the Holocaust

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. SWBAT (Students will be able to) restate what the objectives of this course are.
2. SWBAT compare/contrast the introductions to several books on the Holocaust and determine how they relate.
3. SWBAT analyze the traditional accounts of evil and horror that pervade our literature.

## **CORE ACTIVITIES:**

### **1. Introduction to the Course:**

- Begin by having a general discussion about the Holocaust. Ask the students:
  - What have you learned about the Holocaust previously?
  - What are your views about the Holocaust?
  - What is your impression of what happened during the Holocaust and how the Jews reacted?
  - What are your opinions about how Jews reacted during the Holocaust?
    - Did they fight back?
    - Did they resign themselves to their fate?

### **2. Compare/Contrast Books on the Holocaust:**

- Find a few books about the Holocaust that focus mainly on the tragedies that occurred and the hardships that Jews went through. These books need to have introductions that are relatively short and where the students can grasp the meanings of the book.
- Break the students up into groups and assign each group a particular book.
- Assign the following questions:
  - What is this book about?
  - How is the Holocaust portrayed in the book?
  - What is the tone of the book?
- Ask students if these books match their conceptions of what the Holocaust is about with regard to the evil that was out there and the horrors of what happened.
- Then have the groups analyze the introductions to the books that are provided in the bibliography for this curriculum guide.
- Ask the students:
  - What was different about these books?
  - What did they emphasize?
  - What was the tone?
  - What were these books trying to teach and in what way?

- Explain to the students that in this curriculum, they will be focusing on the ideas from the latter set of books. These books look at the Holocaust through the lens of bravery, courage, and resistance. So often, we lament the horrors of the Holocaust as pure tragedy. There is no doubt that awful things happened in the Holocaust and it is vital that students understand this. The horrible events that happened should never be ignored but what this course is trying to achieve is to look at the Holocaust from a lens of heroism and resistance that occurred despite all the evil that took place. This allows us as Jews to see how much hope people held out and how people tried to resist what was being done to them. The stories that they will learn about will provide powerful examples of how people choose to act in the face of crisis and the moral choices people made despite the evil that surrounded them. (for more information, see the Teacher's Note)

### **3. Creating a Safe Space:**

- Begin by asking the students big questions such as:
  - Where was God during the Holocaust?
  - Why did the Holocaust happen?
- Once the students have answered the questions, ask them:
  - Were the answers they gave difficult? Why?
  - Were they surprised at the varying responses to the questions? Why or why not?
- Explain to the students that throughout this curriculum, *all* answers to questions are OK and students will not be judged or questioned for the answers that they give.
- The Holocaust is a very difficult subject to teach, so explain to the students that it is your intention to create a safe space where students can learn about the events that happened while feeling secure to voice their opinions and express whatever emotions may come to mind. It is not the intention of this curriculum to gloss over the gory details and make the sad events that happened any less important. Students should feel safe to express any difficulties they may have with learning about these events.



# Lesson 1.2: Heroism

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT define what heroism is in the context of the Holocaust.
2. SWBAT state what types of heroism occurred during the Holocaust.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### 1. What is Heroism?

- In a large group discussion, introduce the concept of “hero” to the class. Inform students that there are many heroes in our everyday lives, as well as in the stories we read and the movies we watch.
  - Ask students to participate in the discussion by identifying people from their lives, books, current events, or movies that they feel can be classified as “heroes.”
- Ask students if heroes must be famous people, or if an “ordinary person” would qualify.
- Ask students to identify, in their minds, a person they consider to be a hero. Using the following questions, ask students to respond by demonstrating a “thumbs up” response if the answer to the question is yes, and a “thumbs down” response if the answer to the question is no.
  - Is the hero you identified someone who shows courage when facing dangerous or difficult tasks?
  - Is the hero you identified someone who demonstrates responsibility for doing the right thing and for helping others?
  - Is the hero someone who demonstrates respect for other people and their cultures?
  - Is the hero someone who stands up for the freedom of others?
  - Is the hero someone who promotes justice and fairness?
  - Does the hero continue to advocate and help others even when the task is difficult?
- Briefly discuss the responses of the students and ask them to identify three adjectives that describe their hero’s character. As students share these adjectives with the class, quickly write these adjectives on the board.
- Ask the class the following questions:
  - Is a person a hero because of the things he or she does or because of who he or she is?
  - Can anyone be a hero?
  - Can each of us be a hero?
- Before moving on, explain to the class that, through a series of engaging activities focusing on heroic stories and events from the Holocaust, they will explore the characteristics of *Tzedek* (Righteousness), *Chesed* (Kindness), *Rachamim* (Compassion), and *Pikuah Nefesh* (Saving a Life). Each of these Jewish values represents aspects of what it means to be a hero. They will be learning about each of these Jewish values in subsequent lessons.

## **2. Heroism in the Holocaust:**

- Begin a discussion by asking how people could have been heroes during the Holocaust.
  - In what ways were heroes different during the Holocaust?
  - What constituted being a hero during this time?
  - What acts did the heroes engage in that you have learned about previously?

## **3. Reflection:**

- Explain to the students that throughout this curriculum, they will be utilizing journals to reflect on their learning. Many times, they will have a chance to share their responses with the class and other times the reflections are simply for their own benefit. As part of the assessment process, the teacher will periodically examine the journal entries to ensure that students are learning appropriately and have internalized the material.
- For this lesson, have students reflect on the following:
  - What are some times that they have demonstrated heroism in your own lives?
  - How does this compare to the discussion that we had at the beginning of the class?

# **Lesson 1.3: Resistance**

*(fully scripted lesson)*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. SWBAT define what resistance is in the context of the Holocaust.
2. SWBAT state what types of resistance occurred during the Holocaust.

## **MATERIALS:**

Handouts for students to answer questions on  
Computers  
Post-it notes  
Poster board  
Journals  
Pencils

## **TIME TABLE:**

Moral Dilemmas (20 min.)  
Types of Resistance (30 min.)  
Reflection Exercise (15 min.)

## **ASSESSMENT:**

Answers to group questions  
Categories of Resistance  
Journal Entries

## **PROCEDURE:**

### **1. Moral Dilemmas: Resistance (20 min.)**

- In this activity students will begin to explore the moral dilemmas implicit in resistance to the Holocaust through a class debate. Divide the class into three groups, and then assign one set of questions to each group. Students in each group should discuss the following questions:

#### **Group 1**

- In a society where all the forces of law and order are directed against one, what can be accomplished by armed resistance? What are the likely outcomes of armed resistance, for the fighter and for those whom he or she intends to protect?

### **Group 2**

- It was common during the Holocaust for a group, even a whole community, to be punished for a single individual's violation of the rules. Is it right to risk bringing such retribution down on one's relatives and friends by challenging the forces of law and order? And what hope would one have of significantly weakening those forces in any case?

### **Group 3**

- How was the situation desperate for the Jews during the Holocaust? Despite living in such desperation, why do you think the Jews chose to resist? Guide discussion on these questions toward a recognition of the absolute desperation faced by those persecuted in the Holocaust and a realization within the students that the impulse to resist is not extinguished even in such desperate conditions.
- Each group should present the questions they were assigned and the findings of their discussions to the rest of the class. Students should be careful to weigh all sides of the issues in their discussions.

## **2. Types of Resistance: (30 min.)**

- The authors of the “Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust” <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/> point out that resistance took many forms during the years of Nazi genocide:
  - "Resistance...usually refers to a physical act of armed revolt. During the Holocaust, it also meant partisan activism that ranged from smuggling messages, food, and weapons to actual military engagement. But resistance also embraced willful disobedience: continuing to practice religious and cultural traditions in defiance of the rules; creating fine art, music, and poetry inside ghettos and concentration camps. For many, simply maintaining the will to remain alive in the face of abject brutality was the surest act of spiritual resistance."
- Have students search the archives of the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website, [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) for examples of different types of resistance.
  - Have them write the different types of resistance on post-it notes and categorize the post-its on a poster board.
  - Ask them what categories they came up with and why they chose these certain categories.
- Tell the students that they will be learning about different types of resistance in future units. Explain that they are categorized into Physical Resistance and Spiritual Resistance.
  - Do these categories match what they have come up with?
  - Why do you think they are categorized like this in the curriculum guide?

## **3. Reflection: (15 min.)**

- Ask students to imagine that they are Jewish victims during the Holocaust.
  - What types of resistance might you have engaged in?
  - What types of resistance do you think is most effective?
  - Are there particular times when one type of more effective than others?
- Invite students to share their responses with the class.

# **UNIT TWO: *Tzedek, Chesed and Rachamim***

## **ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:**

1. Despite the overwhelming evil surrounding them, people made ethical choices and acted in ways that helped others.
2. The dramatic stories of heroism and resistance from the Holocaust highlight the Jewish values of *Tzedek* (righteousness), *Chesed* (Caring) and *Rachamim* (compassion).
3. The values of *Tzedek*, *Chesed* and *Rachamim* can guide the lives of all Jews.

## **GOALS:**

1. To allow students to see that the Holocaust did not contain simply pure evil, but that there were many instances where people engaged in ethical acts despite the horrors that surrounded them.
2. To introduce students to the Jewish values of *Tzedek*, *Chesed* and *Rachamim*.
3. To encourage students to engage in these Jewish values in their own lives.
4. To show how people's inhumanity towards others can be combated by individuals' humanity towards their neighbor.
5. To show students that during the Holocaust, there were many, who, despite their own hardships, continued to maintain their dignity in order to help others.
6. To encourage students to see Jews as heroes during the Holocaust.

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

1. How did Jews act towards one another in the face of the circumstances of the Holocaust?
2. In what ways did people help others and save lives during the Holocaust?
3. How can students engage in these Jewish values in their own lives?

## **UNIT ASSESSMENTS:**

1. Class Presentations
2. Answers to Discussion Questions
3. Journal Entries

# Lesson 2.1: Rays of Light within the Evil

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. SWBAT contrast the great evil that occurred during the Holocaust with the notion that there were many examples of good that occurred.
2. SWBAT explain the difference between choosing to act righteously in the face of evil or choosing to stay on the sidelines.

## **CORE ACTIVITIES:**

### **1. Rays of Light:**

- Begin by asking the students to define what a ray of light is.
  - Can a person become a ray of light? In what ways?
  - How can a person be a ray of light?
- Use the metaphor of light vs. dark to draw examples from the class of light vs. dark during the Holocaust.
- Indicate that despite all of the evil that existed during the Holocaust, there were many rays of light that emerged out of the darkness.
  - By rays of light, we mean people who sought to act in morally upright ways despite the evil that surrounded them.

### **2. Concept Attainment:**

- Write the following two lists on the board without category names: (you may add to the list if you wish)

Ensuring that you have enough food to survive	Sharing your food with others despite going hungry yourself
Focusing on your own health	Taking care of the sick around you
Worrying about your own safety	Ensuring the safety of others despite the risks involved
Exposing Jews to the Nazis	Hiding Jews from the Nazis
Using your authority to protect yourself	Using your authority to protect others
Quietly letting injustice happen	Speaking out against injustice

- Have students work in pairs to come up with the names for the categories. Some examples include: Selfish Acts/Unselfish Acts, worrying about your own needs/Ensuring the needs of others are taken care of, etc.
  - Ask the students why they chose the categories they did?
  - What values are inherent in the two lists?
- Explain to the students that in the following lessons, they will be learning about the Jewish values that are embodied in the list on the right. However, items on both sides of the list occurred during the Holocaust and it's important to know that people did not always act ethically.

## Lesson 2.2: Tzedek, Chesed and Rachamim

### OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT define the Jewish values of *Tzedek*, *Chesed* and *Rachamim* are.
2. SWBAT compare/contrast the Jewish values of *Tzedek*, *Chesed*, and *Rachamim*.

### CORE ACTIVITIES:

#### 1. Text Study:

1. Explain to the students that *Tzedek* means righteousness or justice, *Rachamim* means compassion or mercy, and *Chesed* means kindness.
2. Have the students read the text (Resource 2-2.1 *Tzedek, Chesed and Rachamim*)
3. Ask the following questions:
  - What do you understand by the concept “covenant?”
  - Why do you think it is important here?
4. Rabbi Sacks argues that *Tzedek* is a universal moral principle. This concept is for all humanity, and it can be applied to strangers and friends alike. Underlying this principle is the idea that we are all human beings created by God. In contrast, *Chesed* and *Rachamim* are concepts that apply to those with whom we have an emotional connection, those we care for out of a more particular sense of obligation or connection.
  - Do you agree with the distinction between morality and ethics that is described here?
  - Do you agree with Rabbi Sacks’ assertion that *Tzedek* can only be administered without emotion and *Chesed* and *Rachamim* only with emotion?
    - Are there any instances when this might not be true?
  - Do you feel that you have a covenantal connection to other Jews that is different from the connection you have to non-Jews? Why/Why not?
  - Do you feel a greater responsibility to Jews than non-Jews?
    - If so, when and how does this reflect itself in your life?
    - If not, what would you say to Rabbi Sacks?

#### 2. Reflection:

- Have students come up with what they think are the ways in which people engaged in these Jewish values during the Holocaust.
- How were these values applied differently during the Holocaust than at other times?
- In what ways do you apply these values to your own life?

## Tzedek: (2 lessons)

### Lesson 2.3: Tzedek

#### OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT define the Jewish value of *Tzedek*.
2. SWBAT recognize the courage exhibited by ordinary people through their acts of *Tzedek*.
3. SWBAT present to the class their findings on various rabbis who embodied *Tzedek*.

#### CORE ACTIVITIES:

##### 1. More on *Tzedek*:

- This activity is intended to be a frontal lesson. Feel free to add discussion points where necessary.
- Explain to the students that the Jewish concept of justice, *Tzedek*, stresses that we should follow God's example and work toward creating a fair and just world. In Deuteronomy, the Torah commands us to pursue justice and instructs us to create a just legal system:
  - "Justice, justice you shall pursue" צְדָקָה צְדָקָה תִּרְדְּדוּ (Deuteronomy 16:20)<sup>1</sup>.
- Our tradition is full of teachings about how we can create a just society.
- During the Holocaust, a just society simply did not exist for the Jews. Many people went out of their way to do what they could do in order to bring about a more just society.
- *Tzedek* can be seen in how we treat others. If a person acts in an upright manner and does no wrong to others through action or speech, then that person is acting in a just manner according to this verse cited from *Psalms*:
  - God, who may sojourn in Your tent, who may dwell on Your holy mountain? One who is without blame, who does what is right (*Tzedek*), and in one's heart acknowledges the truth; whose tongue is not given to evil; who has never done harm to one's fellow, or borne reproach for one's acts toward one's neighbor" (Psalms 15:1-3)<sup>2</sup>.
- *Tzedek* is essential to a society. It is more easily pursued after the basic needs of the people in that society are first met. The Torah teaches us to pursue justice even under difficult circumstances, such as the Holocaust; this is our responsibility as human beings.
- The following lessons will examine the people who fit the model of what both the texts in Deuteronomy and Psalms are speaking towards.

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<sup>1</sup> JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh. The Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia. 2003, p. 411.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 1,425



## 2. Rabbi Leaders:

- Divide the class into 3 groups. Have them research the following people using the internet: (See Resource 2-3.1<sup>3</sup> for more info. on these leaders)
  - Rabbi Leo Baeck - Germany
  - Rabbi Marcus Melchior – Chief Rabbi of Denmark
  - Rabbi Isaie Schwartz – Chief Rabbi of France
- The students will present to the class their findings of the following questions:
  - What was this rabbi's role during the Holocaust?
  - How did he help Jews?
  - In what way did his role/status contribute to his ability to help?
  - Was he successful?
- Invite students to discuss the special role given to rabbis and how their position was utilized in order to help people.
- In what ways were the actions of these rabbis acts of *Tzedek*?

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<sup>3</sup> Stadler, Bea. The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance. Behrman House, 1995. P. 47-51

# **Lesson 2.4: Righteous Gentiles**

*(fully scripted lesson)*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. SWBAT analyze the motivations behind non-Jews' acts of *Tzedek*.
2. SWBAT compare/contrast the effects of acting with *Tzedek* vs. inaction.
3. SWBAT apply what they have learned about *Tzedek* towards a research project on articles from Yad Vashem.

## **MATERIALS:**

Computers  
Journals  
Pencils  
Resources 2-4.1 and 2-4.2

## **TIMETABLE:**

Set Induction – 10 minutes  
Righteous Gentiles (20 minutes)  
Yad Vashem Righteous among the Nations (30 minutes)  
Reflection (10 minutes)

## **ASSESSMENT:**

Poem question answers  
Answers from Righteous Gentiles activity  
Reports on the articles  
Journal Entries

## **PROCEDURE:**

### **1. Set Induction (10 min.)**

- Pass out the poem “First They Came” (Resource 2-4.1) by Pastor Martin Niemöller.
- Invite students to read the poem out loud or to themselves.
- Reflect on the following questions:
  - What were Pastor Niemöller’s motivations for not speaking out/remaining silent?
  - What happened to him when there was no one left to speak out for him?
  - Is there danger in not speaking out just because something does not affect us?
  - Is there any time that we shouldn’t speak out?
- Explain that there were countless non-Jews during the Holocaust who did in fact speak out or chose to help Jews despite not facing any direct danger themselves. We will learn about several of these people and how their actions of *Tzedek* helped save countless lives.

## 2. Righteous Gentiles: (20 min.)

- Read the chapter entitled “Righteous Gentiles” (Resource 2-4.2) <sup>4</sup>.
- Ask students to reflect on what they’ve learned from this reading.
  - What motivated these non-Jews to help Jews?
  - What risks did they face?
  - How were their acts helpful to the Jews?
  - What aspects of *Tzedek* that you have learned about were embodied in their acts?

## 3. Yad Vashem Righteous Among the Nations: (30 min.)

- Have the students choose one of the articles from the following website:  
[http://www1.yadvashem.org/righteous\\_new/resources.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/righteous_new/resources.html)
- Each student will engage in role-play about the person that they have researched.
  - Have them act out the scenarios that are described in the article.
  - Encourage them to focus on how *Tzedek* plays a role in the person’s actions.
  - If the students prefer to work in teams of two, that’s fine. Some students might not be comfortable acting out a presentation alone in front of the class.
- Engage the students in a discussion about the following questions after the presentations:
  - What new insights did you learn about the person or events in your article?
  - What aspects of the article touch on the theme of *Tzedek* that we have been learning about?

## 4. Reflection: (10 min.)

- Students will write in their journals with the following questions in mind.
  - What does *Tzedek* mean to you after learning about these righteous gentiles?
  - Is it possible for a non-Jew to engage in acts of *Tzedek*?
  - What is specifically Jewish about this value?
  - How can you imitate their actions in your own lives?

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<sup>4</sup> Stadler, Bea. The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance. Behrman House: 1995. P. 141-146

# Lesson 2.5: Rachamim

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT restate the Jewish value of *Rachamim*.
2. SWBAT analyze the role of *Rachamim* as shown in the DVD “Angel of Bergen-Belsen.”

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### 1. Reviewing *Rachamim*:

- In the Torah, we are commanded to engage in *Rachamim*, or Compassion:
  - “Perform kindness and mercy (*Rachamim*) towards one another”  
מְשַׁבֵּט אֶמֶת שְׂפִטוֹ וְחֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים עָשׂוּ אִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיו (Zechariah 7:9)<sup>5</sup>.
- Ask the students, what does it mean to be compassionate?
  - Have the class brainstorm a list of do's and don'ts for being compassionate.
  - Ask for specific examples of each behavior they identify. Compare their list with this one. Hang the list up on the wall as a reminder.
    - Treat people with kindness and generosity.
    - Help people in need.
    - Be sensitive to people's feelings.
    - Never be mean or hurtful.
    - Think about how your actions will affect others.

### 2. Angel of Bergen-Belsen

- Watch the DVD “Angel of Bergen-Belsen”<sup>6</sup> from the History Channel’s DVD “Heroes of the Holocaust.” The clip is around 45 minutes long so you may cut scenes as needed if there is limited time. (The DVD will need to be purchased by the school if no copy is available.)
- After watching the movie, ask the students the following questions:
  - How did Luba endanger her own life in order to help others?
  - In what ways were the actions of other people essential to Luba being able to stay alive in the camps?
  - How did the actions of others help her save the children? Could she have done it alone?
  - How did others help Luba in her efforts to stay alive and to help the children?
  - Luba lost her own child. What effect did this have on her desire to help other children?
  - Luba is considered the “Angel of Bergen-Belsen.” How were her acts representative of the Jewish value of *Rachamim*?

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<sup>5</sup> JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh. The Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia. 2003, p. 1,391

<sup>6</sup> “Angels of Bergen Belsen.” *Heroes of the Holocaust: Tales of Resistance and Survival*. Loxly Hall Productions, Inc.: History Channel, 2008

## Lesson 2.6: Chesed

### OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT define the Jewish value of *Chesed*.
2. SWBAT analyze the various programs that were established by Jews imprisoned in the Warsaw ghetto in order to help other Jews in the ghetto.

### CORE ACTIVITIES:

#### 1. Reviewing *Chesed*:

- Review the same Bible quote from above and indicate that we are also commanded to engage in acts of *Chesed*:
  - “Perform kindness (*Chesed*) and mercy towards one another”  
מְשַׁפֵּט אֶמֶת שְׂפִטוֹ וְחֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים עָשׂוּ אִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו (Zechariah 7:9)<sup>7</sup>

#### Text Study: *Mishnah Avot 1:13*:

- “Hillel taught: If I am not for myself, who is for me? And when I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?” (Pirkei Avot 1:14)<sup>8</sup>  
אִם אֵין אֲנִי לִי, מִי לִי. וְכִשְׁאֲנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אֲנִי. וְאִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו, אֵימָתָּה
- In *Chevrutah*, or pairs, ask the following questions:
  - Answer each of Hillel’s questions that he poses in this text.
  - What are some ways to resolve the contradiction between the first two comments/questions?
- Following this, ask students to pair up in different *Chevrutah* to share answers and come to a consensus.
- Finally, call on a few students to share their comments.
- Explain that the class will now move from a discussion of a personal nature and look at a Biblical example of how Abraham makes huge efforts to help others.

#### Text Study: *Bereishit 18:1-8*<sup>9</sup>: (See JPS Translation for text)

- This passage is chosen to further the students’ conceptualization of what it means to reach out to help another person. Abraham is our historical, religious pioneer especially when it comes to faith and deeds of *Chesed*. Students could answer the questions in *Chevrutah* to see the tensions he faced and what the text says about a person who is willing to reach beyond their own personal interests.
- Questions for *Chevrutah*:
  - What causes Abraham to interrupt his prayer with God?
  - What does Abraham do to satisfy the needs of his guests?
  - What can we learn from his example?
- We will now learn about acts of *Chesed* within the ghetto walls during the Holocaust.

<sup>7</sup> JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh. The Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia. 2003, p. 1,391

<sup>8</sup> Neusner, Jacob. *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1988. P. 674

<sup>9</sup> JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh. The Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia. 2003, p. 30-31

## 2. *Chesed* in the Ghettos:

- In the dark period of the ghettos, when dehumanization was rampant in the streets of Poland, there were Jews who, despite the fact that they themselves lived in constant fear of deportation, and were starving for food, were able to rise above the daily, even hourly, struggle to survive and help others. These individuals, and groups of people, are an example of those who were able to maintain their humanity in the face of unprecedented inhumanity.
- Knowing what they do about ghettos, ask students for some examples of ways that Jews could help other Jews in the ghettos. Write their answers on the board.
- The students will now learn about one form of *Chesed* that existed within the ghettos, mainly relating to self-help and soup kitchens.
- Pass out Resource 2-6.1 and ask the students:
  - What have you learned from this material.
- Specifically as it relates to Emanuel Ringelblum's final statement in the handout, ask the following questions:
  - In this diary entry, Emanuel Ringelblum comes to a painful realization about all of the relief work that he and his comrades are doing. Describe this realization.
  - In the quote, Emanuel Ringelblum is left with a terrible dilemma regarding food distribution. He asks, "What shall one do?" Describe the dilemmas he faced.
- Mention to the students that it is hard enough to be merciful, righteous, and kind in the best of times, but it is truly heroic to have these traits when you are surrounded by evil.

**TZEDEK, CHESED AND RACHAMIM<sup>1</sup>**

Judaism has a unique dual structure of ethics. On the one hand there is the covenant of Noah, which binds all humanity on the basis of seven fundamental commands... On the other is the Abrahamic and later Sinai covenant that binds Jews by a more detailed and demanding system of commands. Judaism is constituted by this basic tension between the universal and the particular. Its way of life is intensely particular, yet its God and ultimate gaze are universal, concerned with all humankind, indeed all creation. How are we to understand the significance of this duality? Helpful in this context is the distinction suggested by the Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit between *morality* and *ethics*. Morality refers to the universal principles we use in dealings with humanity in general: our relationships with strangers. Ethics, by contrast, refers to our relationships with those with whom we share a special bond of shared memory and belonging: family, friends, fellow countrymen, or people with whom we share a faith. ...

This is the best way of understanding the difference between *tzedek* and *mishpat* on the one hand, *chesed* and *rahamim* on the other. *Tzedek* (justice) and *mishpat* (judgment) belong to morality. *Chesed* (loving-kindness) and *rahamim* (compassion) belong to ethics. The former are about justice, the latter about loving attention, for which the simplest English term is care. Justice is and must be impersonal ... The beauty of justice is that it belongs to a world of order constructed out of universal rules through which each of us stands equally before the law. *Chesed*, by contrast, is intrinsically personal. We cannot care for the sick, bring comfort to the distressed or welcome a visitor impersonally. If we do so, it merely shows that we have not understood what these activities are. Justice demands disengagement ... *Chesed* is an act of engagement. Justice is best administered without emotion. *Chesed* exists only in virtue of emotion, empathy and sympathy, feeling-with and feeling-for. We act with kindness because we know what it feels like to be in need of kindness. We comfort the mourners because we know what it is to mourn. *Chesed* requires not detached rationality but emotional intelligence.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility* (2005)

<sup>1</sup> Sacks, Rabbi Jonathan. To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility. Schocken: 2005





## 6

# The Rabbi Leaders

**M**oses Maimonides, the great medieval Jewish scholar and philosopher, said, “If an enemy should tell the head of a Jewish community, hand over a Jew for us to put to death or all of you will die, the person should not be handed over.”

During the Holocaust many community leaders were put into this situation. Some of these community leaders were rabbis. One rabbi said, “If a Jewish community has been condemned to death and there are means of rescuing part of it, the leaders of the community should have the courage to rescue whomever they can.” However, other rabbis, when requested to make a selection



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of those to be sent to their death so the rest of the community could remain alive, abided by the ruling of Maimonides and did not hand over a list. This became an important question for rabbis and community leaders.

During the years the Nazis occupied Europe, millions of people became known by a number instead of a name. Perhaps you have seen people with numbers tattooed on their arms. Perhaps you have wondered what the number meant. These were the numbers the Nazis tattooed into the arms of their prisoners. Each person imprisoned in a concentration camp had a number. Number 187,894 was given to the rabbi, Dr. Leo Baeck, who had been head of the Berlin Jewish community in Germany.

On January 27, 1943, at 5:44 in the morning, German SS soldiers came to Rabbi Baeck's home in Berlin and told him he was being taken to the police station for questioning. Dr. Baeck, who usually arose early in the morning anyway, asked for an hour to put his things in order. Although Nazis usually did not observe the courtesy of informing their prisoners where they were taking them or of giving them time to prepare themselves, they did give Rabbi Baeck the hour he requested. He wrote a letter to his daughter, who was living in London, and made out payments for his gas and electric bills. He was sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp.

Rabbi Baeck was almost 70 years old when he was sent to Theresienstadt. He was put to work pulling a garbage wagon. He seemed not to mind. This man who had always been a scholar, a teacher, and a rabbi would not let a little thing like pulling a garbage wagon make him bitter. He continued to discuss philos-

## The Rabbi Leaders

ophy and literature with the man hitched next to him as they pulled the garbage.

In Theresienstadt he comforted the sick, attended the dying, and taught the living. Soon after he came to the camp, a Rabbi Beck who was imprisoned there died. Adolf Eichmann, the man who engineered the murder of the 6,000,000 Jews, came to Theresienstadt. There he met Rabbi Baeck. He was very astonished and said, "Herr Baeck, are you still alive? I thought you were dead!"

Rabbi Baeck looked him right in the eye and answered, "You are apparently announcing a future occurrence."

Although Rabbi Baeck realized by 1933 what Adolf Hitler thought about Jews, he felt "as long as there is one Jew left in Germany," he had to remain there. He had been invited to the United States to be a professor at the Hebrew Union College but refused. In 1939 he led a group of children out of Germany to England and could have remained with them there but chose to return to his people in Berlin.

Dr. Baeck knew what was going on in the concentration camps. He spent many sleepless nights trying to decide whether he should tell the Jews what awaited them when they were shipped away. Finally he decided not to. He felt that perhaps some would not be put to death, but rather to hard labor. Why should he cause them the pain of knowing what was to be? It was a difficult decision to make, and it is difficult for us to say whether it was right or wrong.

During this time Dr. Baeck composed a Yom Kippur prayer for his congregation. It was a prayer that spoke of Nazi brutality. He

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knew that the Nazis had spies in every synagogue and that many Jews had been sent to death camps for lesser reasons, that torture and death awaited those sent to camps. Yet Rabbi Leo Baeck was a man of great courage and strength. His prayer was recited aloud.

At the end of the war, a foreign officer appeared in Theresienstadt and offered to take Dr. Baeck out immediately. The Rabbi refused to be treated as a special case. He had come with the others, and he would leave with the others.

In September 1943, on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Marcus Melchior, the Chief Rabbi of Denmark, was informed that there was going to be a roundup of the Jewish community by the Nazis. When the Jews came to synagogue that evening, Dr. Melchior informed his congregants of the danger and urged them to flee and hide, explaining that High Holiday services would not be held. He made sure those who were in synagogue would inform those who had not come. In Denmark it was a little easier to hide because the non-Jewish community was willing to help the Jews. In most other countries, the non-Jewish community did everything it could to stop Jews from escaping.

In Rome, Chief Rabbi Israel Zolli was afraid of the Nazis. He had heard about what was happening and particularly was afraid of their treatment of rabbis. He pleaded with the head of the Jewish community in Rome, Ugo Foa, to urge the Jews not to assemble for any reason whatsoever. He suggested that they could have services at home, for God is everywhere. He urged Foa to announce that large groups should not congregate in public places. Foa was very angry with the rabbi and scolded him, saying he should give strength and confidence to his people and not

## THE HOLOCAUST

run away himself. Zolli later turned out to be a traitor to the Jewish people, perhaps the only one among thousands of rabbis.

In 1943 a very large transport of Jews was being sent from France to concentration camps. The Chief Rabbi of France, Isaie Schwartz, went to Vichy, then the capital, to protest against this act. The Security Police said it was necessary for the protection of the French Jews to remove those who had come to France from other countries. Rabbi Schwartz argued with the police that the French Jews did not want to be "protected" in such a manner. His argument did not help. Like cattle, the Jews were shipped away.

Rabbi Zvi Koretz was appointed to be head of the Salonika Jewish community in Greece in 1942. He carried out the orders of the Germans to try to convince them that the Jews were loyal and orderly. Many of the survivors of Salonika believe that if Rabbi Koretz had not hurried to carry out German orders, more Greek Jews might have escaped or hidden. On the other hand, the surrounding non-Jewish community in Greece was not friendly to the Jews, so that there would have been little assistance and few places for a Jew to hide.

The Rabbi did try to urge a large segment of Jews to accept work in Greece rather than submit to deportation to Poland, which he suspected meant death. But the Greek Jews had seen how difficult working conditions under the Nazis could be, and most decided to go to Poland.

Rabbis and community leaders were no more or less human than other people. Leading the community meant many fateful decisions. Some rabbis were afraid, some were brave, some

### **The Rabbi Leaders**

made decisions for the community that they thought were best. There were those who collaborated, and those who tried not to collaborate.

**FIRST THEY CAME**<sup>1</sup>  
By Pastor Martin Niemöller

First they came for the Jews  
and I did not speak out  
because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the Communists  
and I did not speak out  
because I was not a Communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists  
and I did not speak out  
because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for me  
and there was no one left  
to speak out for me.

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<sup>1</sup> Niemöller, Pastor Martin. "First They Came."  
[http://www1.yadvashem.org/education/learningEnvironment/english/Poetry/poetry.htm#Stay\\_Put](http://www1.yadvashem.org/education/learningEnvironment/english/Poetry/poetry.htm#Stay_Put)



17

## The Righteous Gentiles

**Y**ad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, is located on the Mount of Remembrance. The road leading to the building is called the Avenue of the Righteous. It is lined with trees planted to honor righteous Gentiles, or non-Jews, who helped save Jews during the Holocaust. Each tree bears a plaque telling about the person in whose memory or honor the tree is planted and the words “He who saves a single life, it is as though he has saved the entire world.”

One tree is planted in memory of a Dutch citizen—Joop West-

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erwill, a courageous and noble man who helped hundreds of Jewish children and teenagers escape the Nazis.

The Dutch people strongly believe in justice, decency, and freedom. To Joop these values meant more than life itself. A teacher and principal of a school in Rotterdam when Germany invaded the Netherlands, Joop was approached by some young Jews asking him to help hide and assist in the escape of Jewish children. "I have been waiting and hoping for this," he said. "When one tries to teach in the face of this humiliation to humanity, it is impossible."

Joop rented apartments in his own name and let Jewish families live in them. At times he had three apartments filled with Jews trying to escape deportation. Once he wrote he would have liked to be Jewish. "You Jews are unique and have the highest regard for human values. In the face of the persecution and shame the Nazis heap upon you, you still hold your heads high and instill culture in yourselves and your children." Joop always encouraged Jewish children in hiding to continue their studies and often said that after Germany was defeated, he, his wife, and four children would go to Palestine and settle on a kibbutz.

On one trip in 1944 he took a group of children to the Spanish border. The children were tired, frightened, dirty, and cold. Before he left them, he spoke to them in words they remembered many years later. One child who survived, Sophia Nussbaum, said, "I'll never forget him. In those dark days he was the only spark of humanity."

For twenty months Joop did his lifesaving work, sometimes sleeping only two hours a night, because by day he continued to

## The Righteous Gentiles

work as principal of the school. On March 11, 1944, Joop was captured by the Nazis while trying to smuggle two girls into France. In jail he was constantly beaten and tortured but would give no information. When in solitary confinement he taught songs and gave lectures to others in nearby cells. In August 1944 he was shot by the Nazis, although his friends had tried to arrange his release.

Oskar Schindler, a German Catholic industrialist, had an enamelware factory in Cracow, Poland. He employed several hundred Jews whom he saved by bribing German officials who wanted to deport them to death camps. He managed to find food for "his Jews" and kept them in the factory. When the factory moved to Czechoslovakia, he brought his Jews with him. In the new location they made punch presses and then shells for guns. Schindler told the Germans he needed these people, even children, for the war effort and somehow saved them all.

Schindler was determined to keep "his Jews" and even went to the death camp Auschwitz once to rescue some of his Jewish women and children who had been sent there by mistake. Although food was scarce, he did everything possible to feed "his





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Jews” and provide them with a safe place to live. After the war he moved to South America and became quite poor. But he was always helped by his grateful Jews all over the world, and when he died, he was buried in a Christian cemetery in Jerusalem.

Every person who helped hide and keep Jews put his or her life in danger. Nevertheless, the list of righteous Gentiles is a long one. Staszek Jackowski, a young Catholic carriage maker, lived in the Polish town of Stanislaw. As a young boy, he had a Jewish friend, Max Saginur. When the Nazis sent the Jews from the nearby ghetto to concentration camps, Staszek found his friend Max and brought him home. As the war continued, he hid thirty-one other Jews in a bunker underneath his house. Toward the end of the war he told Max, “I never thought there would be thirty-two of you. I did it for you. I know you would do the same for me. If they catch me saving you, they will kill me. I might as well be killed for saving thirty-two as for one.” But he was not killed. Some of the Jews he saved later brought him and his family to New York and supported him until he found work.

Hans Fritz Graebe, a German engineer, saved the lives of hundreds of Jews by employing them on engineering jobs, often at his own expense. Fritz was stationed near the Russian border, where mobile killing units rounded up Jews and shot them so they fell into a pit. Fritz was sickened by the sight. He thought about his mother’s question when something evil happened—“Fritz, what would you do?” It was his mother’s sense of justice that she had instilled in him at an early age that caused him to act in this heroic way. Although he was questioned several times by the Nazis, he continued with his difficult, brave work.

## The Righteous Gentiles

Aristedes De Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese consul in Bordeaux, France, during the war, wrote thousands of visas for Jews to go to Portugal through Spain. Spain and Portugal were neutral countries in the war, and the Portuguese authorities forbade him to do this, but he continued until he was physically brought back to Portugal. All his property and wealth were taken away, and he was not allowed to practice law any more. His family, including his wife and fourteen children, was very poor, but he said, “I had to save these people—as many as I could. If I was disobeying orders, I would rather be with God against men than with men against God.”

Raoul Wallenberg was a Swedish diplomat who was responsible for saving thousands of Hungarian Jews from death. He established “safe houses” in Budapest which he purchased or rented and from which he flew the Swedish flag. He issued Swedish passports to 20,000 Jews and created special shelters which housed 8,000 children. One woman he saved said, “He gave us a sense that we were still human beings,” something the Nazis had taken away from them. When Wallenberg learned that the Germans planned to destroy the Jewish ghetto, with its 70,000 Jews, he threatened the German commander that he would see him hanged for war crimes if he went ahead with the slaughter. It was near the end of the war, and the Nazi backed down. In an indirect way, Wallenberg had saved another 70,000 Jews. In all Wallenberg saved about 100,000 Jews from certain death.

The people of LeChambon, France, a village in the mountains of southern France, managed to save about 5,000 Jews. Pastor Andre Trocme, the minister of the village, and his wife, Magda,



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were Protestants. They protested the treatment of the Jews. The youth of LeChambon wrote a letter to the minister of youth in Vichy, the Nazi headquarters in France, and said, yes, there were Jews in LeChambon, but since there was no difference between Jews and non-Jews, LeChambon would disobey any orders to deport them. A couple of weeks later, a high official of the Vichy government came to LeChambon and demanded the names and addresses of Jews hidden there. Since all the Jews had false identity cards, Trocme told the truth when he said he did not know their names.

The pastor's house was a stopping-off place for refugees who passed through the town. As soon as possible, they were moved to a more permanent shelter. Then a team of men took them across the mountains to Switzerland, which was a neutral country.

Trocme was arrested with two other men from LeChambon. They were released about a month later. When refugees knocked on the door of Magda and Andre Trocme's home, Magda would say, "Naturally come in, yes, come in."

Sometimes goodness was in one person, sometimes in a group of people, occasionally in an entire village, once in an entire country—Denmark. The world must be grateful for these courageous human beings who knew they could be killed for what they did but did it in spite of personal danger.

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Joop Westerwill tried to help his Jewish children continue with their Jewish studies. Sometimes when children

## The Righteous Gentiles

were left with Catholic nuns or priests, they would convert the Jewish child to Christianity. Joop had a deep respect for the religion of the Jewish children he helped. Can we respect another person's beliefs without wanting to change them? How could the Catholics explain their actions? How could Joop Westerwill explain his actions?

2. To help Jews, Joop gave up everything he had. From what you read of his life, what ideals did he have that made him a good teacher? Did he ever really stop teaching?
3. What incidents show that Jews never forget those who have been kind to them and helped them when they were in danger or need?
4. What did Staszek Jackowski tell his Jewish friend? Was he right?
5. What was one of the reasons Hans Fritz Graebe helped save Jews?
6. Was Aristedes De Sousa Mendes a brave man? Was he fighting the system? What did he say? Was he right?
7. Why did Jews want to work for Oskar Schindler?
8. One woman saved by Raoul Wallenberg said, "He gave us a sense that we were still human beings." What did she mean by that?
9. There was not one person in LeChambon who collaborated or helped the Nazis find the Jews hidden there. Why?
10. Do you think you could have, and would have, acted as bravely as these righteous people under these circumstances?

## **CHESED IN THE WARSAW GHETTO<sup>1</sup>**

### **Self Help**

The Jewish community organized a social welfare committee known as the *Zydowska Samapomoc Spolczna* (Jewish Social Self-Help), or the ZSS, in order to provide assistance to the Jewish residents.

"Centos", (the "National Society for the Care of Orphans"), ran schools and provided food, clothing and shelter. These self-help organizations employed hundreds of people, offering a daily bowl of soup as salary. Amongst the most important elements of self-help were the "House Committees", which functioned in almost every apartment house. House Committees were not bodies that were appointed from above, but rather, emerged voluntarily from amongst the house tenants. There were almost 2000 House Committees that fulfilled important functions, such as providing medical care for the needy, and organizing cultural events.

Masses of people ate meals at its soup kitchens, which gave out a bowl of soup and a piece of bread to all those who came. During the first half of 1940, the organization's aid activities focused on opening public soup kitchens and distributing food to the needy. In addition they also helped thousands of Jewish refugees and captives who were pouring into the ghetto, and established institutions for child care.

### **Soup Kitchens**

After Warsaw was occupied by the advancing German forces, Emanuel Ringelblum, the historian of the Warsaw Ghetto asked a young journalist, Rachel Auerbach, to assist the Jewish residents of Warsaw and the influx of incoming refugees. A soup kitchen opened, in an effort to feed the hungry and the homeless. \*

Auerbach relates,

*On October 1, ..the day of the Nazis victory march into Warsaw, I marched through the side streets that we were allowed to walk on, in order to avoid the Germans. I have with me the necessary documents for the new kitchen, and a box of dried plums...*  
(Emanuel Ringelblum, *Selected Documents from Warsaw Ghetto Archives, Oneg Shabbat* p. 64)

On the first day the kitchen opened, on 40 Lezsno Street, they served 50 meals. As time went on and the need grew, more and more soup kitchens opened up, and Rachel oversaw their operations.

After the Warsaw Ghetto was sealed in November, 1940, the food coming into the ghetto was restricted. The Nazis allotted only 180 calories per person, and therefore ghetto inhabitants began to starve. The work intensified, and the soup kitchens now served thousands of people a day. By 1942, they were serving more than 100,000 people.

*If, in July 1942, according to the German statistics, there were over 350,000 Jews alive in the ghetto in the summer of 1942, this was because of the incredible organization, the desire towards life, and the wisdom of those who worked in the public soup kitchens as well as those who were*

<sup>1</sup> Yad Vashem: 2005. <http://www1.yadvashem.org/education/lessonplan/english/January1-2006/january1-2006.pdf>

*in the civil resistance and all those who.. were able to help out.(p. 76)*

All kinds of people helped out at the soup kitchens, such as teachers who would also teach Hebrew, to the children gathered for meals there. For example, there was a kitchen on Nowolipki 22, where the children would gather for meals there and the teachers would teach Hebrew. Clearly, the kitchen became more than just a place to eat a hot meal.

*Soup kitchen.. its not easy to define this institution. A kitchen meant a great deal. It was an organization of welfare, and as time went on, especially once the ghetto was established, it became a unit of other activities, both underground and not, of the Jews of Warsaw. Political activities, cultural activities, and later on even the Uprising.. (p. 67)*

Rachel and her comrades could not have imagined that the kitchens would become some of the central places in the Warsaw Ghetto.

### **Emanuel Ringelblum on Self-Help in the Ghetto:**

Despite the will of Jews to help themselves, they were trapped without the means to operate and maintain soup kitchens. On May 26, 1942, Ringelblum notes:

*"...Relief work doesn't solve the problem; it only keeps people going a little while. The people have to die anyway. It lengthens suffering but cannot save them; if it (the Jewish Self-Help) really wanted to do anything, it would have to have millions of zloty at its disposal every month, and it does not have them. It remains a proven fact that the people fed in the soup kitchens will all die if they eat nothing but the soup supplied and the dry rationed bread. The question thus arises whether it would not serve the purpose better to reserve the available money for selected individuals, for those who are socially productive, for the intellectual elite, etc. But the situation is such that, first of all, the numbers even of such select individuals is quite considerable, and there would not be sufficient even for them. Secondly, the question arises why should one pronounce judgement on artisans, laborers and other useful persons, who were productive people back in their small towns, and only the ghetto and the war have turned them into non-people, into scrap, into human dregs, candidates for mass graves. There is left a tragic dilemma: What shall one do? Shall one (hand out the food) with little spoons to everybody, and then no one will live, or in generous handfuls to just a few.....?"*

*Documents of the Holocaust p. 232*

# **UNIT THREE: Saving Lives/Rescuing Jews**

## **ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:**

1. The principle of *Pikuach Nefesh* (saving a life) can encourage people to do everything in their power to save people in a society where others are indifferent.
2. In a time of dire circumstances, the value of helping others encouraged people to risk their own lives to save others.

## **GOALS:**

1. To allow students to see the motivations behind why people chose to risk their own lives to save others.
2. To show students the different ways that people saved lives and rescued others.
3. To encourage students to see Jews as heroes during the Holocaust.
4. To encourage students to act in the same way in their own lives when coming to the aid of other people.

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

1. Why did people choose to save others?
2. What was the outcome of people's efforts to rescue Jews and how did they go about doing so?
3. What can the Jewish value of *Pikuah Nefesh* teach us about the demand to save another person's life?

## **MEMORABLE MOMENT:**

Liberator's visit to class

## **UNIT ASSESSMENTS:**

1. Class play
2. Answers to Discussion Questions
3. Journal Entries

# Lesson 3.1: Moral Choices

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT restate what altruism is.
2. SWBAT compare/contrast the boy in the poster with author of the poem, Peter Fischl
3. SWBAT identify victims, bystanders, and perpetrators in the poster and poem.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### **1. Altruism:**

- Write the word “altruism” on the board. Have students brainstorm the meaning of the word and write their responses on the board. If students need assistance with the key elements of altruism, here are some examples:
  - Directed towards helping another or others
  - May involve a high degree of risk or sacrifice to the helper
  - No external reward
  - Voluntary action

### **2. Victims, Perpetrators and Bystanders:**

- Instruct students to go to the following site with a picture of the young Polish boy with his hands up and the poem following it by Peter L. Fischl:
  - <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/FischlPoem.htm>
- Before reading the poem, have the students study the Little Polish Boy pictured and write a description of him that they may share with the class.
  - What is he thinking and feeling?
  - What do his eyes and expression tell you?
  - What emotions do you think he is experiencing?
  - How do you feel about him?
- Read the poem aloud to the students without comments or explanation. Ask for their response and interpretations. Would they answer the question in #1 any differently now that they have read the poem? Did the poem give them a greater understanding of the poster?
- Explain to students that the poet was a hidden child during the Holocaust. Have them read the background on the poet (Resource 3-1.1)
- Have students answer the following questions in a class discussion:
  - Why did the poet choose the little boy as the focus of his poem?
  - What is happening to the boy? Why are rifles pointed at him? Compare and contrast the little boy and the men holding the rifles. If one could describe the little Polish boy as 'innocent, harmless, helpless, and defenseless,' how might the soldiers be described? The others portrayed in the poster?
  - Any study of the Holocaust recognizes three elements: perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. How are they all represented in the poem? In the poster? What do you know about their contributions to the Holocaust?

- To whom is the author referring in the lines "the world who said nothing," "who saw nothing," "who heard nothing"? Why did the author repeat those lines? What effect did that repetition have on you?
- During the Holocaust, what actions could have been taken by individuals? By groups? By governments? How might history have been changed if more individuals, groups, and governments would have taken those actions?
- How does the author assure the little boy that now the world will see, hear, and commiserate with his sufferings?
- Does the author reveal a desire to exact punishment on those who said, saw, heard, and did nothing? If so, where is that revealed in the poem?
- How is the Little Polish Boy in the poster like the little calf that Peter Fischl cheered for in the slaughterhouse? How did the little boy and the calf fight for survival? How were the odds stacked against them?

### **3. Reflection:**

- Have the students write a story about a time when they made a conscious decision to help someone in a difficult situation or about a time when someone came forward to help them.
- Describe the event in detail and tell how you felt during the situation.
  - What were some of the complications or difficulties that you faced?
  - Were there any moral or ethical dilemmas that needed to be addressed?
  - What were your feelings after this situation ended?

# Lesson 3.2: *Pikuah Nefesh*

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT analyze texts for the meaning of *Pikuah Nefesh*.
2. SWBAT state their positions regarding moral choices and ethical dilemmas.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### 1. Text Study:

**Avot D'Rabbi Natan 31:2** – “To preserve one human life is to preserve the entire world.”

- Why do you think that this is the case?
- What does this text teach you about the importance of every individual?

**Leviticus 19:16<sup>1</sup>** – “Do not stand idly by while your neighbor’s blood is shed.”

לֹא תֵעָמָד עַל־דַּם רֵעֶךָ

- This verse is considered the source for the idea that saving a life is one of the most important mitzvot. What does this verse mean?
- What does the word “idly” mean?
- Why do you think that the text uses the word “your neighbor”? What does that teach about the relationship between all people?

Explain to the students that the only commandments that *Pikuah Nefesh* does not override are murder, idolatry, and adultery.

- Why do you think this is so?

*Pikuah Nefesh* demands that you save someone’s life at all costs, even if it means breaking a commandment. It makes saving someone’s life a paramount duty from which one should not desist. In the following lessons, we will hear about people, including non-Jews, who engaged in the act of saving another person’s life. In doing so, they upheld the principle of *Pikuah Nefesh* and have made a conscious moral choice to help others.

### 2. Moral Choices – Ethical Dilemmas:

- Present the students with two columns of ethical choices to be made. For instance, saving your own dog vs. saving a stranger in a rushing river, violating a law vs. saving a life, doing something that goes against your morals vs. saving someone.
- Ask the students:
  - Are these choices easy ones to make?
  - What would you choose if this was a real life situation? Why?
  - How can the Jewish value of *Pikuah Nefesh* help you make these decisions?

### 3. Reflection:

- Have the students reflect on the following:
  - Is there a case of some value that you hold that you would not violate that value in order to save a life?
  - Do you have your own personal equivalent to murder, idolatry and adultery?

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<sup>1</sup> JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh. The Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia. 2003, p. 252

# Lesson 3.3: Hiding Jews

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT analyze the conditions in which people hid during the Holocaust.
2. SWBAT compare/contrast books about people being hidden.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### **1. Hiding:**

- Ask students to consider what it meant to hide during the Holocaust. Have them answer the following questions:
  - What were some of the problems that people in hiding had to face?
  - How do you think people in hiding got food? What kind of food did they get?
  - What threats did those in hiding face on a daily basis?
  - What survival mechanisms did people use?
  - How might the adults in hiding cope differently than their children? What emotions, challenges, or concerns might face an adult in hiding that would not apply to a child?

### **2. Compare/Contrast Books**

- Have half the class read *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl*<sup>2</sup> and the other half read Miep Gies's *Anne Frank Remembered*<sup>3</sup>. They should be assigned these books far enough in advance to give them time to read at home. These books will need to be purchased by the school. If there is time for them to read key portions in class, that will save the school from having to buy them.
- Have students work in pairs or small groups to compare and contrast the experiences of Anne Frank and Miep Gies.

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<sup>2</sup> Frank, Anne. Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl. Pocket Books: 1953

<sup>3</sup> Gies, Miep. Anne Frank Remembered. Simon and Schuster: 2009



# Lesson 3.4: Smuggling

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT analyze the motivations behind why people smuggled items.
2. SWBAT explain how Varian Fry rescued Jews during the Holocaust.
3. SWBAT analyze the difficulties that Fry faced.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### **1. The Little Smugglers:**

- Introduce students to the poem Little Smugglers (Resource 3-4.1) written by Henryka Lazawart, a young Polish-Jewish poet who was murdered in the Treblinka extermination camp. She wrote this poem in honor of the children who risked their lives to smuggle extra food for their families into the ghettos.
- Read the poem and answer the questions below:
  - What were the dangers that the little smuggler faced in order to obtain bread? (walls, guards, fences, extreme weather conditions, risking his life, fear in his heart)
  - What did s/he worry about? Was s/he afraid of dying? (concern about who will bring his/her mother food tomorrow)
  - Who is taking care of whom? (Children caring for parents)
  - How often does the child smuggler have to risk his/her life for bread? (all seasons of the year)
  - This poem focuses on 3 groups of people. Identify these three groups. Describe the role each one has in the poem. (smugglers, ladies and gentlemen, Germans)

### **2. Smuggling People:**

- Instruct students to go to the following website: <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/vfplay.htm>
- Assign students the various parts within the play and have them act out the play in front of the class.
- After reading the play, discuss with them the following questions:
  - In what ways was Varian Fry able to smuggle Jews?
  - What risks did he take?
  - Was he successful?
  - How was Varian Fry honored after the Holocaust?
  - In what ways was he involved in *Pikuah Nefesh*?

# Lesson 3.5: Rescuing Jews

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT analyze the motivations behind a rescue in Denmark.
2. SWBAT compare/contrast the reasons why people chose/didn't choose to take part in rescues.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### **1. Rescue in Denmark:**

- Distribute *Rescue in Denmark* (Resource 3-5.1)<sup>4</sup>. Have the class turn to the first page of the handout, and choose a volunteer to begin reading out loud. When the reader has finished reading the first paragraph, pause and ask the group:
  - How was the situation for Danish Jews different from Jews in other German-occupied countries until 1943?
- After reading the second, third and fourth paragraphs, pause and ask the group:
  - What event propelled the underground in Denmark to go into action?
  - What made Helsingor (Elsinore) an ideal place for Jews to go if they wanted to escape Nazi-occupied territory?
- After reading the fifth and sixth paragraphs, ask the group:
  - Why might Ronne and Kior have been interested in helping the Jews?
  - What reasons might they have had besides humanitarian ones?
- After reading the seventh, eighth, and ninth paragraphs, ask the group:
  - How did the underground keep the Jewish children from crying on the boats to Sweden?
  - How many trips did the Elsinore Sewing Club take to Sweden?
  - Did they rescue people besides Jews? If yes, who?
  - What risks did the people who were involved with this “club” take when they agreed to help rescue Jews?
  - How is this story of the rescue in Denmark unique?
  - What kind of cultural and political systems should a nation create in order to be able to participate/organize such moral action?

### **2. Reflection:**

- Have the students write why they think that some individuals and groups decided not to accept the bystander role during the Holocaust. Encourage them to reflect on ways that they and others that they know do and do not accept the role of bystanders in their school and communities.

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<sup>4</sup> Echoes and Reflections.” Anti-Defamation League, Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, Yad Vashem, 2005

# **Lesson 3.6: Rescuers**

*(fully scripted lesson)*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. SWBAT analyze the motivations behind why non-Jews chose to rescue Jews.
2. SWBAT identify the risks involved when non-Jews helped Jews hide or escape and the moral choices that were made.
3. SWBAT reflect on what they might have done had they lived in Nazi-occupied Europe.

## **MATERIALS:**

Computers  
Journals  
Pencils/pens

## **TIME TABLE:**

Rescuers – 30 min.  
Visas to Save Lives – 20 min.  
What Would You Do? – 15 min.

## **ASSESSMENT:**

Answers to Rescuers stories  
Answers to Visas to Save Lives activity  
Journal Entries

## **PROCEDURE:**

### **1. Rescuers: (30 min.)**

- Direct students to the website: <http://www.humboldt.edu/~rescuers/index.html>
- Have them read the introduction and go to the table of contents. Have the students pick one of the rescuers stories and answer the following questions.
  - First read about the conditions of the country in which the story takes place. List three factors that made it easy/difficult to hide people in that country.
  - Read one of the rescuers stories. Answer the following:
    1. Why did this person risk their life to save the Jews? Do they provide any explanation in their story? If not, try to explain their motivation based upon what you have read.
    2. How did the rescuers hide the people they sought to protect? On a separate piece of paper draw a diagram to explain how the Jews were hid.
    3. Did they ever come close to being discovered? Explain.

## 2. Visas to Save Lives: (20 min.)

- Have students go to <http://www.rongreene.com/2Sugphoto7.html>
- Tell them to read this story about a Japanese diplomat who risked his career to save Jews from certain death.
- Instruct them to restate the story in their own words.
  - What was unique about Chiune Sugihara and why does the author of this introduction believe that he was willing to take risks to save others?
- Have students view the Photographic exhibit which links from the main page. Be sure that they read the captions (they include quotations from some of the people that he saved).
  - How many visas did he issue?
  - How many lives did he directly save?
  - If you count the number of people alive today who are related to those he saved how many people did he save as a whole?

## 3. What Would You Do? (15 min.)

- Ask the students:
  - Have you ever been in a situation where somebody around you said something about another person and you felt it was wrong, but you didn't want to say anything because you wanted to be friends with the person/group?
  - What are some reasons why people didn't attempt to rescue the Jews? (Most of the people in Nazi occupied Europe stood by while millions of people went to their death either because they didn't see anything wrong with it or because they were afraid to go against the Nazis.)
  - Now that you have read some of these stories what might you have done had you been a non-Jew in Nazi occupied Europe. Write a reflective essay explaining your reasons and motivation. Try to draw on examples from your own life to support your claims.
- Instruct students to write their answers in their journals.

# Lesson 3.7: Liberators

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT restate the conditions in which liberators operated.
2. SWBAT analyze the feelings that liberators had upon liberating the camps.
3. SWBAT apply what they've learned towards asking questions of a liberator.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### **1. Liberators Background:**

- Share with the students the following information on the liberation of the concentration camps to give them a background. (Resource 3-7.1)

### **2. A Liberator's Thoughts:**

- Have the students read "A Liberator's Thoughts." (Resource 3-7.2)<sup>5</sup>
- Inform the students that the speaker is Harry Herder, Jr., who was nineteen at the time he and other U.S. soldiers liberated Buchenwald in April 1945. Ask the following questions:
  - What kinds of questions is Harry Herder asking himself following his experience at Buchenwald?
  - Why does Harry reflect on his German ancestry?
  - What choices would Harry have had if in fact he had been a German citizen and in the German army during World War II?
  - What role does Harry believe his upbringing would have played in his choices?

### **3. Guest Visitor (memorable moment)**

- Invite a soldier who liberated a camp to come in and speak to the class. Have students prepare questions in advance of the presentation.

### **4. Reflection:**

- Have the students write a journal entry from the perspective of a liberator. Rather than focusing on what the person saw, have student concentrate on the emotions, thoughts, and reactions of the liberator and how it must have felt to save all these people's lives.

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<sup>5</sup> Echoes and Reflections." Anti-Defamation League, Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, Yad Vashem, 2005

### **BACKGROUND ON PETER L. FISCHL<sup>1</sup>**

A traumatic experience that marked Peter's life before the Holocaust came at age eight when he was taken to the offices of the slaughterhouse in Budapest, Hungary, on a business trip with Tibor Fischl, his father. Peter heard the screams of the animals being slaughtered, and he wandered through the open door, straight to the slaughterhouse area, and stood on the fence watching the carnage as several hundred animals were killed. Butchers gave each animal an electric shock in the ear, and when the animal fell on its side, the butchers moved in with huge knives and saws, cutting the animal in half, cleaning out the innards, and hanging the halves on hooks. The young child stood in horror and disbelief as butchers sloped around in the animals' blood, going from one to another in brief minutes.

The last animal alive was a small calf that fought valiantly for his life. The first two butchers chased the spirited calf and slipped and fell into the pool of blood on the floor as the calf bolted to freedom. Other butchers joined forces, becoming covered with splattering blood as the calf dashed and circled, trying to escape. Peter screamed a "bravo" for the little calf that seemed to look at him, his sad eyes saying, "I've done my best. Farewell!!" The small boy watched in horror as seven butchers descended on the defenseless calf, finishing him in seconds. The arena was empty now. Only Peter stood at the fence crying. Little did he know that in a matter of a few years, he and his family would stand in the middle of their own "arena of death."

In March 1944, Peter was walking along a street in Budapest when the Nazi troops, the true butchers of the world, occupied his city. Knowing what had happened in Poland in 1939, Peter ran home and asked his father if they, too, could be butchered. His father answered, "Yes."

Peter became a "hidden child" by hiding in a Catholic school with 60 other Jewish children, and on November 27, 1944, his father called him from his hiding place. With the shouting and shooting by the Germans in the background, Peter was almost speechless as his father said "farewell" for the last time. That young boy has struggled his entire life with dreams of seeing his father coming home.

He first saw the photograph of the "Little Polish Boy" in the late 1960s in a Life Magazine, November 28, 1960 issue, on page 106, as it was taken by the Jurgen Stroop photographers for Hitler's birthday as a gift, by publishing the photo in the "Stroop Report" Newsletter in 1943. Shaken, he immediately identified with the "Little Polish Boy." For four or five years he struggled with the boy in the photo, often talking to him. Early one morning, Peter went to his typewriter and wrote the poem so that millions could not remain indifferent and silent in the face of the senseless, outrageous carnage of the Holocaust.

Peter Fischl lives in Burbank and his sister lives in Hollywood, California, the only survivors of their family, victims of the Holocaust, one of mankind's most egregious crimes against humanity.

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<sup>1</sup> Holocaust Education Foundation, Inc.: [http://www.holocaust-trc.org/p\\_fischl.htm](http://www.holocaust-trc.org/p_fischl.htm)

**THE LITTLE SMUGGLER**<sup>1</sup>

Henryka Lazawart

Past walls, past guards  
Impudent, hungry, obstinate  
I slip by, I run like a cat  
At noon, at night, at dawn  
In foul weather, a blizzard, the heat of the sun  
A hundred times I risk my life  
I risk my childish neck.

Under my arm a sack-cloth bag  
On my back a torn rag  
My young feet are nimble  
In my heart constant fear  
But all must be endured  
All must be borne  
So that you, ladies and gentlemen,  
May have your fill of bread tomorrow.

Through walls, through holes, through brick  
At night, at dawn, by day  
Daring hungry, cunning  
I move silently like a shade  
if suddenly the hand of fate  
Reaches me at this game  
'Twill be the usual trap life sets.

You, mother  
Don't wait for me any longer  
I won't come back to you  
My voice won't reach that far  
Dust of the street will cover  
The lost child's fate.  
Only one grim question  
The still face asks  
Mummy, who will bring you bread tomorrow?

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<sup>1</sup> Lazawert, Henryka, as quoted in Trunk, Isiah, *Holocaust curriculum for Jewish Schools - Civil Self Defense*, New York: American Association for Jewish Education, date unknown, p. 8.

## Lesson 7 Rescuers and Non-Jewish Resistance

### STUDENT HANDOUT – Rescue in Denmark



Christian X, King of Denmark

In Denmark, a country located immediately to the north of Germany, Jews were able to lead an unusually normal existence in comparison to Jews in other countries until autumn 1943. In exchange for the government of Denmark's agreement not to resist the German invasion in April 1940, the Germans permitted Denmark to maintain her own government and allowed an unusual amount of freedom for a region under German domination. This freedom allowed Danes to maintain their pre-war democratic values. The King of Denmark, Christian X, strongly disapproved of antisemitism and refused to allow the Germans to single out Jewish citizens of Denmark for persecution. According to Preben Munch-Nielsen, one of the rescuers, "in Denmark, we didn't distinguish between Jews and non-Jews, we were all just Danes." Jews felt safe.

All of this changed in 1943 when Berlin ordered the deportations of the Jewish population of 8,000. Secret plans were made for a massive roundup of Jews to take place on the night of October 1–2. Thanks to the loyalty and humanity of a few prominent Danes, the head of the Jewish community was warned about the upcoming *Aktion*. On September 29, when Denmark's Jews assembled in their synagogues for Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) services, they were given the bad news.

Immediately, the Danish underground swung into action. People from all walks of life pulled together and participated in a massive rescue operation. Within a few hours, virtually all of the Jews of Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark and the country's largest Jewish community, were spirited out of their homes, hidden, and then taken in small groups to fishing ports. The Danish fishing fleet was quickly mobilized to ferry them to safety across the water to Sweden. On October 1, when the Germans began their planned roundup, moving from house to house with prepared lists of victims, their knocks went mostly unanswered. All in all, 7,200 Jews were saved.

One incredible story of courage and rescue took place in Elsinore (Helsingor), a small, picturesque fishing town on the northern coast of Denmark, located only two and one-half miles across the sound from Sweden. Elsinore has always been renowned for its castles and its beautiful vistas, but in 1943, because of a bookbinder, a reporter, a detective, a bookkeeper, and a physician, it became the site where one of Denmark's most effective underground resistance efforts took place.

When the Germans decided to implement the "Final Solution" to Denmark, a newspaper reporter named Borge Ronne was in Elsinore, walking past a friend's house. He noticed ten strangers leap out of two taxicabs and run into a garage that was attached to his friend's house. Ronne immediately rang the doorbell and told his friend what he had seen. "It's all right," was the explanation. "They're Jews who have come to Elsinore to escape the Nazi roundup."

This was the first that Ronne had heard of Jewish persecution, and it got him thinking. A few hours later, he bumped into Erling Kior, an acquaintance of his. Kior was deeply upset by a random shooting by German soldiers that had taken place the night before in his neighborhood. Ronne passed on to Kior the news he had learned about the raids to arrest Jews, and the rescue efforts that had been going on in Elsinore. "How about helping the Jews to get across to neutral Sweden?" asked Ronne. "It would be one way of getting back at the



## Lesson 7 Rescuers and Non-Jewish Resistance

### STUDENT HANDOUT – Rescue in Denmark

Germans.” That meeting was the beginning of the Elsinore group. Ronne and Kior, knowing that they needed additional members, contacted Thomod Larsen, a Danish police officer. They felt that Larsen would be particularly valuable to them because he had access to confidential reports about refugees, underground groups, and Nazi plans in Denmark. For additional assistance, Larsen enlisted the aid of Ova Bruhn. Fishermen were contacted who agreed to cooperate.

Their one concern regarded the transporting of Jewish children. The fishermen knew that if the children cried during their dangerous voyage to Sweden, they would all be in jeopardy. To answer the concerns of the fishermen, Ronne and Kior approached Dr. Jorgen Gersfelt, a physician who practiced in a nearby fishing village. Gersfelt agreed to help them, using sedatives to keep the children quiet during transport.

They called themselves “The Elsinore Sewing Club.” Using fishing boats, speedboats, and other means of transportation, the Elsinore Sewing Club made as many as ten trips to Sweden every day. Thanks to these five brave Danes, there was a steady stream of Jews going from Elsinore to Sweden, saving the lives of thousands of Jews. After most of the Jewish refugees were safe in Sweden, the Elsinore Sewing Club continued its transportation activities, ferrying to safety non-Jewish political resisters and English and American airmen who had been shot down over Denmark while flying bombing missions over Germany.

Despite threats, close calls, and raids by the Gestapo, the Elsinore Sewing Club continued its rescue efforts. By the middle of 1944, Thomod Larsen had been critically shot by the Nazis, Borge Ronne had to flee to Sweden to save his own life, Erling Kior had been captured and was a prisoner in the Porta concentration camp, and Dr. Gersfelt was forced into hiding with his wife. Only then did the work of the Elsinore Sewing Club come to an end. In the end, only 500 Danish Jews were deported to Theresienstadt ghetto, under the watchful eye of Danish members of the International Red Cross. These Jews were never sent to extermination camps and on April 15, 1945, the Danish Jews were released to the Red Cross and returned to Denmark. About 450 Danish Jews survived Theresienstadt.

## **LIBERATORS**<sup>1</sup>

As the Allies retook control of lands that had been occupied by the Germans, they came across many Nazi camps. In some instances, the Nazis had tried to destroy all evidence of the camps, in order to conceal from the world what had happened there. In other cases, only the buildings remained as the Nazis had sent the prisoners elsewhere, often on death marches.

However, in many camps, the Allied soldiers found hundreds or even thousands of emaciated survivors living in horrific conditions, many of whom were dying of malnourishment and disease.

The liberation of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps began in Eastern Europe when Soviet troops reached Majdanek in July 1944. Soon they found many other camp sites, some of which were camouflaged from the outside. The British and American troops who were approaching from the west did not reach the concentration camps of Germany until the spring of 1945. What they found were tens of thousands on the verge of death, as well as piles upon piles of corpses. The Allied liberators tried to help the survivors, but many died anyway in the weeks after the liberation.

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<sup>1</sup> "Echoes and Reflections." Anti-Defamation League, Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, Yad Vashem, 2005. P. 260-261

## A LIBERATOR'S THOUGHTS

I thought of my German heritage, my Grandfather Hugo who had come to the United States from Germany while he was still a teenager, my mother's grandparents who had come over from Germany long before that...

I wondered...suppose my ancestors had not come to the United States; suppose they had stayed in Germany, and, through some fluke, the two people who had become my mother and father had met, and I had been born a German citizen. What would I be like? Would I be like the people who had instituted and guarded a place like Buchenwald? Could I have been that? Would I have been in the German army? The answer to the last question is obvious — certainly I would have been in the German army. But what kind of work would I have done? I hoped that I would not have been like most of the Germans I had seen. I could have accepted a likeness to some members of the German army whom we had fought, but there were many I would have been uncomfortable with. Much of what I had seen ran counter to everything my mother had brought me up believing.

# **UNIT FOUR: Spiritual Resistance**

## **ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:**

1. In the face of the horrors of the Holocaust and debilitating conditions, the Jews engaged in spiritual resistance which allowed them to keep hope alive.
2. Spiritual resistance was a way for Jews to resist the Nazis as an alternative or in addition to physical resistance.

## **GOALS:**

1. To allow students to see other forms of resistance other than fighting and armed struggle.
2. To provide students stories to examine that exemplify spiritual resistance during the Holocaust.
3. To allow students to determine the motivating factors behind spiritual resistance.
4. To encourage students to see Jews as heroes during the Holocaust.

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

1. What were the ways in which Jews engaged in spiritual resistance?
2. What motivated Jews to resist?
3. How successful were these acts of spiritual resistance?
4. What kind of impact did spiritual resistance have on the morale of Jews and on the preservation of people's hope?

## **MEMORABLE MOMENT:**

Creation of Underground Newspaper

## **UNIT ASSESSMENTS:**

1. Answers to Discussion Questions
2. Class Reports
3. Curriculum Creation
4. Underground Newspaper Creation
5. Journal Entries

# **Lesson 4.1: What is Spiritual Resistance?**

*(fully scripted lesson)*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. SWBAT state the various forms of spiritual resistance that Jews used during the Holocaust.
2. SWBAT restate the theory of Victor Frankl's Logotherapy.
3. SWBAT compare/contrast the differing types of spiritual resistance.

## **MATERIALS:**

Student journals  
Pencils  
Resource 4-1.1  
5 post-it notes per person  
3-4 pieces of poster board

## **TIMELINE:**

Set Induction – 15 minutes  
Logotherapy – 20 minutes  
Jigsaw activity – 30 minutes  
Reflection exercise – 10 minutes

## **ASSESSMENT:**

Categorization of Resistance  
Answers to Logotherapy questions  
Journal Entries

## **PROCEDURE:**

### **1. Set Induction (15 min.)**

- Divide the students into groups of 3 or 4 students.
- Invite students to brainstorm how one might have resisted the Nazis without the means to use force the ability to physically resist.
  - Have them come up with 5 answers each and write each answer on a post-it note.
- In their groups, have the students share their answers and categorize them into groups of categories, placing each of their answers under a particular category. All of the post-it notes should be placed on one piece of poster board.
- Bring the students back together as a class and ask each group what categories they came up with. Note the similarities between each group's answers.
- Explain to the students that they will be learning about each of these categories throughout this unit more in depth.

## 2. Logotherapy: (20 minutes)

- Pass out the handout on Logotherapy (Resource 4-1.1)
- Give students a background on Dr. Victor Frankl. You may use the following website as a resource: <http://www.logotherapyinstitute.org/life-and-works.html>
- Ask the students the following questions:
  - In what ways is Logotherapy a form of resistance?
  - What are the main ideas of Frankl's theory?
  - How is his theory applicable to those who went through the Holocaust?
  - How did Frankl's experiences impact his theory?
  - In what ways could you use Frankl's theory in your own life?

## 3. Jigsaw activity: (30 min)

- Divide the class into four groups and assign each group one of the following types of spiritual resistance: art, music, poetry, religious observance, literature. (You will want to spend time with the students and make sure that they understand each of the items on the list. This lesson may need to be split up into two parts.)
- Have students search the archives of the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website ([www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)) or Yad Vashem ([www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)) for examples of their respective group's topic.
- Have students present their topics to the class with the following prompts:
  - How can actions like these be regarded as resistance?
    - Encourage them to recognize that, within a system of mass hatred like that created by the Nazis, almost any affirmation of one's humanity—saying a prayer, whistling a tune, saying hello to a friend, standing up after one has fallen—springs in some measure from that impulse to resist, striking out against the denial of basic human rights.
  - Ask that each group bring in one piece of primary source material to the presentation to share with the class (e.g. a piece of art, a prayer, a first-person testimony or diary entry, a song).

## 4. Reflection Exercise: (10 min.)

- Give students the following prompt:
  - Write about a time when you felt the need to act in opposition to others around you, either for moral, religious, or personal reasons.
    - How did you resist the pressure to act according to others' behavior, expectations, demands, or requirements?
    - Were your efforts successful?
    - Why did you feel the need to resist?
    - How did you feel while you were resisting? Afterwards?
    - Did anyone support or aid you in this?
- Invite students to share their answers with the class.

# Lesson 4.2: Cultural Activities

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT analyze testimonies of those who engaged in cultural resistance.
2. SWBAT analyze various paintings and drawings from the concentration camp Theresienstadt.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### 1. Cultural and Spiritual Resistance (20 min.)

- Distribute Resource 4-2.1 *Cultural and Spiritual Resistance*<sup>1</sup> and have the students read the documents.
- Divide the class into small groups.
- Have each group use the documents and testimonies that they read about to answer some or all of the following questions: (I've bolded some of the questions to highlight in order to focus the discussion.)
  - Which of the documents would you identify as examples of struggle? Resistance? Survival?
  - Is it difficult to categorize the actions that Jews took under one of these headings? If so, why?
  - **How does the information in the documents illustrate the need Jews felt to maintain the traditions that had been in place prior to the war?**
  - What role do traditions and customs play in people's lives?
  - **Why do you think it was so important for Jews to remain connected to the traditions and customs that were part of their lives even when this connection placed them in immediate jeopardy?**
  - Jews in the ghettos tried to maintain their customs from before the war, but at the same time were confronted with a totally different reality. How are these two themes reflected in the documents and testimony?
  - **What were the dilemmas in maintaining traditions and customs during the Holocaust?**
- Bring the groups back together to discuss these documents and testimonies and share their thoughts.

### 2. Theresienstadt: Cultural Life

- In a computer lab, introduce students to the cultural life in the concentration camp Theresienstadt by clicking on the following link:  
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10007461>
- Once you have finished reviewing the summary of cultural life at the concentration camp (the main body of the first webpage), have the students click on the “see more photographs” link on the top of the page.

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<sup>1</sup> Echoes and Reflections.” Anti-Defamation League, Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, Yad Vashem, 2005

- In groups of 2 or 3, have students look at the photographs and pick one that they would like to report on.
- They will then report on the following:
  - Background information on the painting or drawing (they can look at the information on the bottom of the picture to get background information)
  - What does this painting/drawing represent?
  - How was it used as a way to spiritually resist?
- As a class, ask the following questions:
  - How is art a way to spiritually resist?
  - How can drawing something bring back memories of the past or take us to another place mentally?



# Lesson 4.3: Religious Observance

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT recall the dilemmas and risks taken by Jews in order to fulfill their religious obligations.
2. SWBAT will identify the motivating factors behind why Jews engaged in religious holidays despite the circumstances.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### **1. Passover in a Concentration Camp:**

- Read “Passover in a Concentration Camp<sup>2</sup>” (Resource 4-3.1)
- Hold a class discussion with the following questions as prompts:
  - What kinds of risks did Jews have to go through in order to celebrate a Jewish holiday?
  - What was required to put the Passover seder together (help from non-Jews, etc.)?
  - The narrator comments: “Nothing was as soothing and satisfying as the knowledge that even in this God-forsaken death camp, where the value of a cigarette was greater than a life – even here, three little matzoth had been baked in preparation for the forthcoming Passover festival.”
    - Why do you think that baking the matzoth was so significant for this man and his fellow Jews?
    - What is it about celebrating the holiday in the midst of all this horror that was so comforting to the Jews?
  - Despite the meager resources and no wine to bless, the Jews in this story were incredibly happy to be celebrating Passover. How is this happiness an act of resistance?

### **2. Journal Entry:**

- Have the students write about the religious traditions and customs in their lives.
- Ask the following prompts:
  - Have those customs ever been challenged by others?
  - If so, what did you do to help protect those traditions and customs?
  - Why did you feel the need to protect them?
  - Were you ever embarrassed by some of your traditions or customs?
  - Why did you feel this way?
- Allow time for students to share their answers if they wish.

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<sup>2</sup> Stadler, Bea. The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance. Behrman House, 1995. P. 125-131

# Lesson 4.4: Education

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT identify how education was conducted in the ghettos and concentration camps.
2. SWBAT analyze the motivations behind why education was so important despite the awful circumstances.
3. SWBAT identify the values upon which they believe an educational curriculum should be based that is written in the ghetto.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### **1. Education in soup kitchens and dining halls:**

- Explain to the students that in the ghettos, the soup kitchens and dining halls became more than just places where meals were served. They became centers for informal clandestine classes conducted by teachers who posed as soup kitchen or child care workers.
- Pass out the Statement of Aims from the Warsaw Ghetto (see Resource 4-4.1). Explain to the students that the following is the statement of aims for the secret educational program and activities that were actually conducted at three children's soup kitchens in the Warsaw ghetto.
- Give the students a few minutes to read the statement.
- Ask them the following questions:
  - What objectives can you see from this statement of aims?
  - In what ways do these objectives reflect the reality of the circumstances in the ghetto?
  - What is motivating the creators of this statement to educate their children?
  - What is important to them?
- Pass out the mission statement or statement of principles for your educational institution.
- Have the students compare this document to the one that they just read.
  - How are they similar?
  - What are the differences?
  - In what ways is the purpose of education universal to all situations, no matter what the circumstances?
  - In what ways were the aims unique to the situation?

### **2. Create your own curriculum:**

- Have the students imagine that they are creating a curriculum for children in the ghetto.
- Emphasize that they should focus on values and principles to be taught rather than pure subject matter like math or science.
  - What would they choose to include in this curriculum?
  - What values and knowledge would they impart to the students?
  - What items would you include that relate specifically to life in the ghetto or concentration camps?

- Show the students the following curriculum for education in the Vilna Ghetto (Resource 4.2).
  - How does this compare to their curriculum?
  - What insights can you gain about what was important to teach in the ghetto?
  - What does the curriculum choose to focus on?
  - How is this curriculum designed specifically for students in the ghetto?
  - In what ways is this a form of resistance? (specifically with reference to the emphasis on teaching moral values and love of Judaism and the Jewish community)

# Lesson 4.5: Underground Press

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT state the aims of those who were engaged in setting up the underground press.
2. SWBAT analyze the motivations behind why people engaged in these activities.
3. SWBAT develop their own underground press in order to determine what is important to include and to put themselves in the shoes of the Jews during the Holocaust.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### **1. The Underground Press:**

- Read “Underground Press<sup>3</sup>” (Resource 4-5.1)
- Have a class discussion with the following questions as prompts:
  - How did Jews go about getting the necessary equipment for the newspapers?
  - Why would people go through such risks to smuggle in equipment simply for a newspaper?
  - In what ways were the newspapers helpful to those who were reading it?
  - What information was contained in the newspapers?
  - The newspapers were used for both resistance and for spreading hope. How was this accomplished?
  - What were the different types of papers that were published and what were their aims?
  - How were the newspaper writers’ pens used as weapons, as the last statement in the article suggests?

### **2. Jakob the Liar**

- Rent the DVD “Jacob the Liar”<sup>4</sup> and watch the movie in class.
- Have a class discussion:
  - What motivated Jacob to do what he did?
  - What kind of impact did he have on others?
  - Even though he embellished and lied in his broadcasts, how did this help people keep their hopes up?

### **3. Underground Newspapers (memorable moment)**

- Using the information that the students have learned in this unit, break students into groups and have them construct their own underground newspaper about spiritual resistance. This can be a newspaper from one of the camps or ghettos.
  - Articles and advertisements should reflect the knowledge of the culture and the environment that they’ve gained from this unit and also any previous units.

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<sup>3</sup> Stadler, Bea. The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance. Behrman House, 1995. P. 105-112

<sup>4</sup> Kassovitz, Peter. “Jacob the Liar.” Tri-Star Pictures, 1999.

## **LOGOTHERAPY**<sup>1</sup>

Adapted from, Joseph

Logotherapy is based on human spiritual values. The theory says that the human being is endowed with free choice, an attribute modeled by spiritual values. In the process of being in a situation where one is encountering severe and crippling circumstances, Logotherapy emphasizes the search for meaning in human life, maintaining that the human being has a fundamental “will to meaning.” One of the main causes for frustration and much of mental and emotional problems associated with the Holocaust, is the lack of assurance that there is indeed some meaning to human existence. For Frankl, meaning is pivotal for human survival.

Dr. Frankl asserts that even under such unspeakable conditions as those found in ghettos and concentration camps, a person is not stripped of his/her ability to decide what is to become of him/her, both mentally and spiritually. Frankl writes:

...even a man who finds himself in the greatest distress, in which neither activity nor creativity can bring value to life, nor experience give meaning to it – even such a man can still give his life a meaning by the way he faces his fate, his distress. By taking his unavoidable suffering upon himself, he may yet realize values. Thus life has a meaning to the last breath. For the possibility of realizing values by the very attitude with which we face our unchangeable suffering – is the highest achievement that has been granted to man.

Writing about the Holocaust, he states:

...Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such circumstances, decide what shall become of him – mentally and spiritually. He may retain his human dignity even in a concentration camp... There is also purpose in that life which is almost barren of both creation and enjoyment and which admits of but only one possibility of high moral behavior: namely, in man’s attitude to his existence, an existence restricted by external forces. A creative life and a life of enjoyment are banned to him. But not only creativeness and enjoyment are meaningful. If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be meaning in suffering...

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<sup>1</sup> Rudavsky, Joseph. To Live with Hope, to Die with Dignity. Jason Aronson Inc.: Northvale, NJ, 1987. P. 199-202

In Frankl's view, the sanctity of human life is expressed in human beings' search for meaning and his commitment to a meaningful existence even in the extreme. Frankl reflects authentic Jewish thought which focuses on innate human worth and sanctity. Even in the Holocaust period it is clear that life is not an act of denial, resignation, or despair. Life is an act of hope, an act of faith. It directs human beings to work towards the sanctification of life as he/she faces its realities, even its horrors, meeting them with meaningful living. This is true for all human beings. Even during the Holocaust, human beings were not helpless or meaningless. On the contrary, the human potentiality was expressed in the movement towards sanctity and human worth even in the most desperate conditions.

Lesson 6 **Jewish Resistance****STUDENT HANDOUT – Cultural and Spiritual Resistance**

“In the ghetto, there are, of course, many people who are shaking their heads and refusing to participate in this deception, because in their opinion, the life of the Jews in the ghetto does not permit the shallowness of social life. However, this means repressing the tortured people’s fundamental expression of the will to live and shutting off the only avenue of affirming the importance of that life. To sit in a theater again, far from the gloomy atmosphere of the prison, to chat in the lobby of the Cultural Center during the intermission again, to flirt, to show off a new dress or an attractive hairdo — this is a human need that cannot be repressed. This was the way it was for the people who lived in this superior cultural center, as Litzmannstadt had been in the years preceding the war. And to whomever reads this in the future, the writer wants to say that from his perspective, the suffering of the ghetto was not in the least alleviated by these shows, even if they did provide a few hours of pleasure.”<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

Announcement! Re: Obligatory Registration of Musical Instruments

January 17, 1944

“For once, a measure not aimed at the stomach of the ghetto dweller, but no less severe on that account. [The ghetto is thirsty for culture...] Now this last vestige of that happiness is to vanish. One can readily imagine what it means for a professional musician, a virtuoso, even a dilettante, to be forced to give up his beloved violin [...] The street will notice nothing; harsh life will go on; and to the torments of hunger and cold will be added the unappeased craving for music.”<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \*

June 9, 1942

“A hunger for the printed word is now making itself felt more strongly in the ghetto. To ascertain how hungry people are for books, it is enough to take a look at the kilometer-long line at Sonenberg’s lending library (even there!) [...] Each reader walks up to the table, requests a couple of titles, finds out if a given book is available (it usually is not), receives a couple of books to choose from, and has to make up his mind in a hurry. There is no time for long deliberation, as there once had been.”<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \*

March 4, 1941

“The soup kitchen for the intelligentsia is a regular meeting place of the who’s who [...] Only here do they at least have an illusion of things they had become accustomed to in the old days: a certain degree of courtesy [by the staff] in their conduct and attitude toward those who are now destitute and stripped of their status [...] From time to time, the kitchen management organized reading and poetry evenings and concerts. The aim was to give the ghetto inhabitants cultural entertainment and provide financial support for the artists. [...] The moments spent in kitchen number 2 – [...] those are also moments of an exchange of opinions, something like a club in which those people, the who’s who meet over lunch.”<sup>4</sup>

## Lesson 6 Jewish Resistance

### STUDENT HANDOUT – Cultural and Spiritual Resistance

“The living spirit behind the school was Yitzhak Katzenelson [Warsaw ghetto]. He was our most respected and popular teacher. His specialty was Bible, and he taught his students to love their people and their heritage, and to strive for national independence. His enthusiasm was contagious and at its height he would start singing and his students and the family in whose apartment they were studying would soon join in. It was usually very difficult to find classrooms in apartments, but there was never a problem in securing one for Katzenelson’s lessons.”<sup>5</sup>

\* \* \*

“On the New Year we prayed illegally. The ban on communal worship was still in effect. In secret, in side rooms near the dark, closed synagogues we prayed to the God of Israel like Marranos in the fifteenth century. But one day before the eve of the Day of Atonement [...] permission for communal worship. This permission was not unconditional, however. It is still forbidden to pray publicly in the synagogues, and they remain locked. The law was relaxed only to permit communal worship in small groups in private homes, on condition that they don’t make noise and that there is no crowding. The Jewish community of Warsaw left nothing out in its prayers, but poured its supplications before its Father in Heaven in accordance with the ancient custom of Israel.”<sup>6</sup>

#### End Notes

<sup>1</sup>Arie Ben-Menachem, *The Lodz Ghetto Chronicles*, Vol. 3, [from Hebrew: Marion Duman]. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1988, p. 305.

<sup>2</sup>Lucjan Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto, 1941–1944*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984, p. 434.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., at 201–202.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., at 28–30.

<sup>5</sup>Zivia Lubetkin, *In the Days of Destruction and Revolt*. Israel: The Ghetto Fighters’ House, 1981, p. 69.

<sup>6</sup>Chaim Aharon Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Ghetto Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999, p. 207.





15

## Passover in a Concentration Camp\*

In America, we open our Passover Haggadah and begin, “Lo, this is the bread of affliction. . . .” We eat matzo-ball soup, haroset, matzoth, and all the other wonderful foods to celebrate our Festival of Freedom. We may recall the hard tasks that the Jews were forced to perform in the land of Egypt at the time of Moses, but Jews in other times had hard taskmasters too. During the Holocaust, Jews were forced to perform hard labor, get

\*Excerpted from *The Yellow Star*, by S. B. Unsorfer, published by Thomas Yoseloff (with the publisher’s permission).

## THE HOLOCAUST

along with almost no food or sleep, and live in filthy crowded conditions. The Nazis thought nothing of beating, torturing, and murdering Jews. Nazi guards would take a baby out of its mother's arms, smash the baby's head against a wall—and then go home to play with his own children.

Out of this nightmare came a Haggadah and matzoth. This story is told in the words of one who believed in the sun even when it was not shining, and in God—even when He was silent.

“Knowledge of the approach of Purim and Passover gave us some hope and courage. I approached Schiff, one of the prisoners who worked in the office, and asked him to ‘organize’ some paper from the office so that I would be able to write a Haggadah for Passover. Schiff gave me some discarded, odd pieces of paper, most of which had drawings of fighter aircraft on the back.

“Each day when I returned to my bunk from a night of work, I spent an hour on my Haggadah. Writing from memory the story of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt was a worthwhile task. It helped keep my mind off our terrible tragedy and worries about the future. Even during working hours I tried to direct my attention to passages of the Haggadah that required writing. Happy memories were brought back to my mind, of my childhood, and of seder nights at home, when I sat at our table listening excitedly and attentively to Father's recital of the Haggadah which he always did so beautifully and inspiringly.

“Indeed, this work served as a source of great courage and hope for me. It was a reminder that our people have gone through many difficult and tragic experiences in our long history, and have been freed each time, by the will of God, from

## Passover in a Concentration Camp

bondage and slavery. How wise, I thought, of our great rabbis of the past to command that the stories of Passover and Purim be repeated each year, and thus remain alive among the Jewish people. Where would we have gained the courage and strength to survive all our sufferings, were it not for our great and historic past?

“Yes, I felt Passover ought to be celebrated in the camp, and not just by reciting the Haggadah, but also by eating the traditional matzoth. I went to the foreman who worked on the tool bench, a quiet man who had been kind to me in the past. ‘Herr Overseer,’ I said, ‘I want to ask you a very great favor.’

“‘What is it?’ he looked surprised.

“‘Nothing dreadful,’ I assured him hastily. ‘I want you to please bring me half a pound of plain flour, which I need badly. I beg you.’

“‘Flour? What the devil for? Birthday cake?’ he smiled sarcastically.

“‘For a purely religious purpose,’ I explained. ‘No one will ever know it came from you. There is no one else I can turn to.’



## THE HOLOCAUST

"He looked cautious. 'Things are hard nowadays, the guards are strict in their inspections, and the atmosphere is tense. I can't promise.'

"What he said was true. Besides the raw material and transportation difficulties, ever-increasing air-raid alarms reduced our working time to a few hours per shift. We knew that within a matter of weeks, or possibly days, great changes would take place. The factory would have to close, and we would either be liberated or transported elsewhere to be killed. At the back of our minds we hoped we would still be at the Nieder-Orschel camp when the first American tank bulldozed its way into the village.

"On Saturday morning, just before Passover, the civilian employees of the camp collected their personal belongings, since they were leaving camp because of lack of work. In the rush, the friendly overseer came to me as I did the final cleaning of my machine.

"He pushed a small bag of flour into my pocket and whispered: 'We shan't be coming here any more. I brought you the flour and good luck.'

"I was pleased. 'If we are to get the matzoth made,' I said to my friend Benzi, who was our leader, 'it must be done this evening immediately after the end of the Sabbath, otherwise we shall have no fire for baking.'

"So at the end of the Sabbath, Grunwald, Fischhof, and I sneaked out of the barrack and into the smithy's workshop. Fischhof worked desperately at the bellows to liven the dying embers. Grunwald worked hastily on the dough, while I cleaned up a dirty tin plate to serve as a platter.

## Passover in a Concentration Camp

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*From Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto by Emanuel Ringelblum. The Jews in the ghetto were disturbed by the lack of matzoth for Passover. They did not realize how much worse it would be when they would reach the concentration camps. Yet wherever Jews were when the holiday of Passover came, they yearned for matzoth, the symbol of freedom.*

April 17, 1941. There were fearful scenes in the office of the refugee organization on the eve of the Passover holiday. A crowd of 7-8,000 refugees gathered, waiting for matzoth and other packages. People applied to receive free packages whose neighbors considered them to be persons of means and who a short time before had been able to help others. The disappointment of those who could not receive packages is indescribable.

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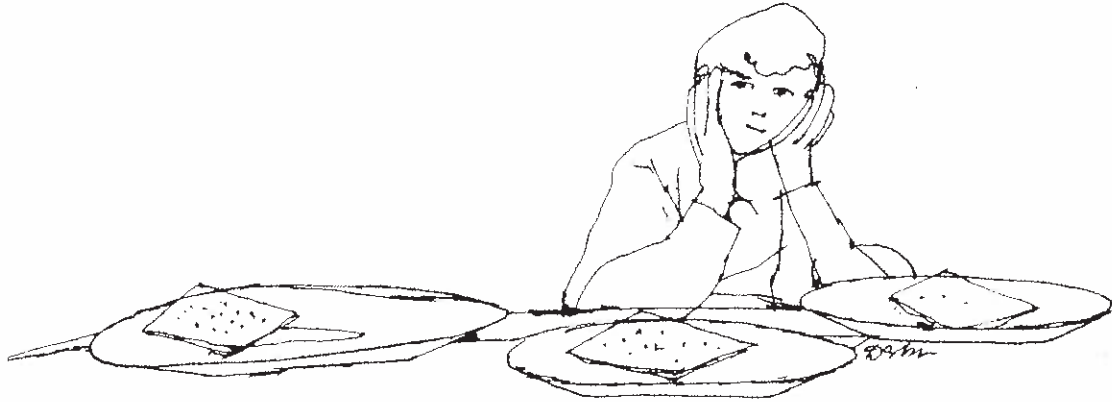
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"Within half an hour, three tiny round matzoth were taking shape and color, accompanied by our happy murmur that these matzoth were being prepared for the sake of God and His Commandments.

"Nothing was as soothing and satisfying as the knowledge that even in this God-forsaken death camp, where the value of a cigarette was greater than a life—even here, three little matzoth had been baked in preparation of the forthcoming Passover festival.

"There were tears in the eyes of every one of the eighty inmates in Room 10, when after nightfall on Wednesday, March 28, 1945, I opened my little handwritten Haggadah, lifted up the three little matzoth, and recited the first chapter, beginning with

## THE HOLOCAUST



the familiar opening words, 'Lo, this is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat, let all needy come and feast with us! This year we are here, next year we may be in Jerusalem. This year we are slaves, next year we shall be free men!'

"Everyone came to our table. Rabbi Domany, a little old man from Hungary who lived in the next room, was asked to sit at the head of the table and conduct the seder. I read the passages from the Haggadah as loudly as I dared, and the rest followed in a whisper. Then, raising the rusty cup of black coffee which he had saved from the morning in place of the traditional cup of red wine, Rabbi Domany called out in a tear-choked voice the words of the Haggadah:

And it is this promise which has stood by our ancestors and by us. For it was not just one person who rose up against

### **Passover in a Concentration Camp**

us to destroy us, but in every generation men rise against us.  
But the Holy One, blessed be He, delivers us from their hand.

“How true were the words that evening. Never before have so many men at one and the same time been so overawed in their trust of Almighty God as on that evening in Room 10 at Nieder-Orschel; never before was there such a truly solemn seder service; never before was there such longing for God and His protective arm.”

**STATEMENT OF AIMS<sup>1</sup> – WARSAW GHETTO**

1. We proposed to convert the public soup kitchens into educational centers to educate and influence our children.
2. Above all, through our concern for the health of the children, we hope to develop in them a sense for hygiene and beauty.
3. Notwithstanding the perilous times in which we are living, we hope to strengthen the spiritual lives of the children.
4. ...We hope to prepare the groundwork for converting the food centers into children's collectives...
5. We shall try to provide children with opportunities to experience normal emotions, particularly joy, as often as possible.
6. We shall see to the social and moral education of the children by developing in them appreciation for friendship, sociability and a sense of responsibility with special emphasis on punctuality.
7. We aim to develop the mental capacities of the children in every way possible.
8. We will seek to instill in the hearts of the children a love of the Hebrew language and for Jewish culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Arye Bauminger, Nachman Blumenthal and Joseph Kermish, eds., *Hayeled Vehano-ar Bashoah U-vagevurah* (Jerusalem: Hotza-at Kiryat Sefer, 1965) pp. 55-56.

**OUR PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION<sup>1</sup> – VILNA GHETTO**

- A sense of national Jewish dignity.
- Love of the history of our people, with particular attention paid to the period of our national independence and the fighters for the freedom of our people: the Hasmoneans, Bar Kokhba and the heroes of Masada.
- Knowledge of the Present State of our people: Jewish life in all the Jewish communities.
- Faith in the future of our people...
- Love of work and freedom.
- Love of mankind, and for the fight against oppression, the partnership of all the nations in the fight for a better and just world.
- Knowledge of the Land of Israel to be taught as a subject in its own right.
- Religion taught as a non-obligatory subject for students who wish to become acquainted with the principles of our religion.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Dworzetsky, *Yerushalayim de-Lita in Kampf un Umkum* ("Jerusalem of Lita, in Struggle and in Death") (Paris: Yiddishen Nationaler Farband in America and Yiddishen Volksfarband in Frankriech, 1948) p. 136





13

## The Underground Press

**H**ave you ever really thought about your newspaper? It is delivered each morning to the house. You read it, throw it away, or recycle it. Perhaps you worry about the news, but have you ever wondered how a paper is published? Typesetting equipment, copy paper, dummy sheets, paper cutters, presses, ink, and paper are just a few of the things needed. Someone has to get the news, write copy, edit and correct it, set the type, and run the presses. Needed, above all, is freedom to move about, freedom to receive the latest news, space to set up machinery, freedom to run the presses day or night, and freedom to distribute the finished newspapers.



### The Underground Press

When we read the following sentence, we feel it must have been written at a time when there was a great deal of freedom: "Publications have multiplied like mushrooms after the rain." We may guess it was written when competition among newspapers was strong and when many people purchased many different papers. But it is not so. The sentence was written by Emanuel Ringelblum, one of the historians of the Warsaw ghetto during the Nazi occupation, between 1939 and 1944, the year in which he was killed.

How could it be that during the Nazi occupation "publications multiplied like mushrooms after the rain"? Jews were being forced into ghettos, murdered in the streets, transported to death camps. There was little food, no warm clothing, no fuel. Terror was all about—how could the Jews concentrate on newspapers?

In Vilna during the first weeks of the Nazi occupation, there were no newspapers. Then, a German-Polish paper appeared, published by the Polish, full of anti-Semitic articles. It angered the Jews of Vilna. They wanted to publish their own paper, but it was not allowed. They were forced into a ghetto in 1941, where, in January 1942, the United Partisan Organization was established. Isaac Kowalski, a printer and writer, was one of those in the ghetto. He asked the UPO to give him permission to organize a secret press. The organization agreed but did not know where to get all the necessary equipment and supplies. Isaac managed to get a job in a German printing shop, the Aushra Press. At lunchtime, when one of the shop exits was open, Isaac would go to the exit with type in his pockets and lunch box and turn the type over to a friend who always gave him another lunch

## THE HOLOCAUST

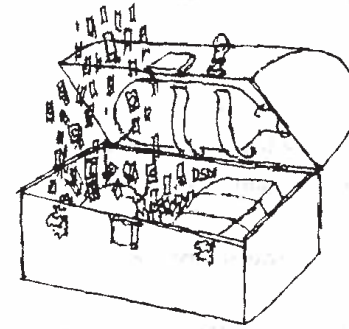
box exactly like the first. Isaac then would go back into the plant and innocently eat his lunch. Isaac's "outside" man was a Pole by the name of Jan Pzewalski.

In three months, after many narrow escapes, enough type was assembled to start a paper. Now Isaac had type, but where to get a press? Isaac found a small, worn-out handpress in the typesetting room. Within a few days, the press was taken apart and smuggled out of the print shop in pieces. After a day's work at the German press, Isaac stayed up all night preparing the illegal newspaper with Jan and Mrs. Pzewalski. The first edition of the paper, *The Fatherland Front*, made a strong impression on those who read it. The Gestapo tried desperately to find where the paper was being printed and by whom. When the ghetto was destroyed, Isaac Kowalski, together with other Jewish fighters, went to the forest. He brought the press with him and, when the war was over, returned to Vilna, bringing the underground press equipment with him.

Vilna was not the only city where there was an underground press. Bernard Goldstein writes in his Warsaw ghetto memoirs about the illegal press in that city:

Every Jewish printing plant, including the smallest, had been taken away by the Germans. Our underground press, therefore, consisted of two mimeograph machines, which had been removed from certain offices and hidden. After the small supply of ink, paper, and stencils had been used, we acquired new supplies, but with great difficulty. We worked in constant fear that if copies of our paper fell into the hands

## The Underground Press



of the Germans, they would be able to track us down through discovering our sources for paper or ink.

For safety the editorial work and the actual printing were separated. One person was the contact between the two. Distribution was also separate from printing. If any distributor fell into Nazi hands, he could not, even if he was tortured, endanger the plant.

Morizi Orzech, one of the heroes of the Warsaw ghetto, returned to Warsaw from a German prison in April 1940. He insisted that we issue a Polish paper to keep the Poles informed of what Jews were thinking, doing, and living through. He was a talented writer and became the principal editor for Jewish and Polish papers and bulletins. He urged us to fight against the Germans for a better world.

One of the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto was sent out to learn what was really happening to Jews after being deported, al-

## THE HOLOCAUST

though it was already suspected that they were being sent to their death. Zalman Freydrich was chosen for this errand. In a town near the village of Treblinka, he learned the truth about the Treblinka camp, the freight and cattle cars packed with Jews, the “showers” that were really gas chambers. Freydrich returned to Warsaw with this information, and based on this, a special edition of *Storm*, one of the underground papers, was issued with a description of what was happening and a warning: “Do not be deceived. . . . You are being taken to death and extermination. . . . Do not give yourselves voluntarily into the hands of your executioners!”

In Warsaw there were three main Jewish political groups. The underground press played an important part in each. The function of the press was to strengthen Jewish resistance and stamina in the face of the terrible persecution. The press also tried to give some hope, that in spite of persecution, they could hold out and would yet live to see their enemies overcome. *The Young Guard* encouraged the youth to continue the fight but not to neglect education. Another youth publication, *Flames*, and *El Al* (Upwards) also urged continuation of study and resistance. *El Al* said: “We have not gone and shall not go willingly to slaughter. . . . Despite the ghetto, despite our misery, we shall raise our heads high and look ahead. . . . In spite of everything our motto remains: Scouts—upwards!”

*Against the Stream* was a paper for elderly people, issued monthly in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Polish. *The Dawn, Before Spring, The Spark*, and *Ferment* were others. In addition to these, a three-page daily bulletin was issued with news from various

## The Underground Press

fronts. The news came from a radio hidden in the lodgings of Mordechai Anielewicz. *Dror* (Liberty) was an important publication in Yiddish and Polish, and *Bulletin, Our Way, Stamina, The Call of the Youth, Torches*, and *Our Mottos*, were a few of the youth publications. *Shaviv* (Spark), the illegal monthly of one of the youth organizations, was published in Hebrew and *Our Hope* in Yiddish.

Some of these papers were smuggled even into the concentration camps. Many of the “smugglers” were young women who carried illegal publications to far-off places in spite of the risk involved. Editors, printers, and distributors of these illegal papers were mainly leaders and spokesmen of the underground who practiced what they preached.

Between 300 and 500 copies of the various papers were published, and about 20 people read each copy, passing it from one to another. Great care was taken. Still many people connected with the newspapers were arrested and murdered.

The papers told of life in the camps; the reactions of the Jewish masses; reports of sabotage, resistance, and struggle; economic conditions; accounts of bravery; sometimes poetry; and calls for revenge. The readers were alerted to the true nature of the Jewish police, some of whom in normal times had been thieves, smugglers, and the dregs of the community. The editors also wrote against the Jewish councils at times when the councils instituted unfair laws or regulations against the Jews in the ghetto.

One important subject discussed in the underground press was the hope of settling in Eretz Yisrael. “As long as there is an Eretz

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Yisrael, the Jewish people will not be exterminated,” said *Our Path* in May 1942.

So we see that the written word is of great importance. Those who put the underground press together in each ghetto took great risks. Papers were written and published at the cost of many lives. The people who worked on the press were the quiet heroes. They did not carry guns but used their pens as weapons against the Nazi warlords.

# **UNIT FIVE: Physical Resistance**

## **ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:**

1. Despite the overwhelming odds against them, Jews engaged in physical resistance to fight back against the Nazis and to disrupt their actions.
2. A desire to help Jews in need motivated Jews to engage in physical resistance.
3. Faced with certain death, many Jews utilized physical resistance to preserve their honor and die with courage rather than succumb to the Nazis.

## **GOALS:**

1. To provide students stories to examine that exemplify physical resistance during the Holocaust.
2. To show students that Jews were not like lambs to the slaughter and that many of them fought with courage and tenacity.
3. To allow students to determine the motivating factors behind physical resistance.
4. To encourage students to see Jews as heroes during the Holocaust.

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

1. What were the ways in which Jews engaged in physical resistance?
2. What motivated these people to fight back?
3. How successful were these acts of physical resistance?
4. What kind of impact did physical resistance have on both the war effort and on saving other Jews?

## **UNIT ASSESSMENTS:**

1. Answers to Discussion Questions
2. Journal Entries

# Lesson 5.1: “Like Lambs to the Slaughter”

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT define where this phrase comes from and what it means.
2. SWBAT analyze how this notion of “lambs to the slaughter” has impacted Jews’ understanding of the world’s response to the Holocaust.
3. SWBAT contrast this notion with physical/armed resistance.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### 1. Text Study

- Have the students read the following text study:  
*Jeremiah 11:18-19*<sup>1</sup>:  
“God informed me, and I knew – then You let me see their deeds. For I was like a docile lamb led to the slaughter; I did not realize that it was against me they fashioned their plots: ‘Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living. That his name be remembered no more!’”
- See Resource 5-1.1 for some background information on the text to assist the students. You may read it out loud or pass it out as a handout.
- Ask the following questions:
  - What is meant by a “lamb led to the slaughter”?
  - How does this understanding of the text relate to the Holocaust?
  - By invoking this phrase, is this an accurate representation of how the Jews acted during the Holocaust? (rely on the students previous knowledge about what they’ve learned about the Holocaust before)
  - What are some parallels that you see between this quote and how Jews were perceived to have acted during the Holocaust?
  - Is there some justification to this label? Did Jews actually go like “lambs to the slaughter” in some instances?
  - The commentary suggests that the people knew about the destructive plots, but they did not think that these plots were directed against them. Do you think that there were Jews during the Holocaust who ignored what was going on and went to their death unaware? Why or why not?

### 2. Article

- Read the article “Like Sheep to the Slaughter” by Yisrael Rutman. (see Resource 5-1.2)
- Ask the following questions:
  - How is Rutman’s understanding of the phrase similar/different from the origins of the phrase that we learned about in the text study?
  - What is Maharasha’s alternative explanation? Do you agree with this and how does this change your view of the phrase?
  - Do you think that this phrase can still be attributed to the Jews during this time? Why or why not?

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<sup>1</sup> JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh. The Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia. 2003. P. 1,038

- How can we, like Rutman, seek to change the meaning of the phrase to fit our own conception of how Jews acted during the Holocaust?

### 3. Concept Attainment:

- Create two columns on the board or have them already written out on a poster board in order to save time. The first column contains acts of spiritual resistance:
  - Examples include: creating schools in the ghettos; maintaining religious customs; writing poems and songs or performing concerts and plays; drawing, painting, or secretly photographing observed events; and keeping records of ghetto or camp life and hiding them in the hope that they would be discovered after the war
- The second column contains acts of armed resistance:
  - Examples include: bombings of a bunker, camp, office, or train or an uprising or revolt using weapons and arms.
- You can include more examples as you wish.
- Leave the column headings blank. Ask the students to come up with column headings. Most likely this won't be very difficult so once they come up with the headings, assuming that they match the ones intended, and then move on.
- What are some additional differences between the columns besides Spiritual Resistance/Armed Resistance?
  - Spiritual resistance answers include: Acts of opposition that used cultural traditions and spiritual bonding to undermine Nazi power and inspire Jewish hope. For most Jews, acts of cultural and spiritual resistance were the only possible means to oppose Nazi tyranny. These actions were very conscious and are expressed in diaries and memoirs.
  - Armed resistance answers include: acts of opposition, defiance, or the sabotage of Nazi plans using weapons or including typical battles, attacks, or guerilla strikes.

### 4. Wrap Up:

- In the following lessons, we will examine how a lot of Jews during the Holocaust did not go like "lambs to the slaughter." Many did indeed fight back physically and through various means that were available to them that we just learned about. Explain to the students that they will be learning more about different types of physical and armed resistance. Despite this notion that many people have become accustomed to, we must see Jews as having resisted being sent to the camps. When faced with certain death, many chose to fight back. While doing so they preserved their honor and had the courage to die with dignity.



# Lesson 5.2: The Partisans

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT define who the partisans were and how they operated.
2. SWBAT analyze the motivations behind the partisan groups.
3. SWBAT state the conditions that the partisans operated in.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### 1. Partisans

- Distribute and read the *Partisans*<sup>2</sup> student handout together (Resource 5-2.1). Ask students to consider the following questions:
  - What were the main differences between a non-Jewish partisan and a Jewish partisan?
  - What dilemmas did a Jewish person face when thinking about whether he or she should flee to the forest?
  - Very few people could even consider fleeing to the forest; for most Jews it was impossible. Why?
  - Why did partisans feel it necessary to keep their existence secret – even from local farmers and peasants?
- Show students the announcement that was written and read by Abba Kovner at a meeting in Vilna on January 1, 1942 (Resource 5-2.2)<sup>3</sup>. Tell students that Abba Kovner was a young Lithuanian Jew who was a member of a youth movement that believed in building a socialist Jewish state in Israel. As a young activist in the ghetto, he was part of the underground and eventually the leader of the group. He urged people to leave the ghetto and escape into the forest, though his own mother and brother and many other family members stayed in the ghetto and were murdered by the Germans and their collaborators. After reading the announcement together, have a discussion based on the following questions:
  - To whom is Abba Kovner directing his message? Explain why this was his audience.
  - What are Abba Kovner’s arguments in favor of resistance?
  - Do you agree with Abba Kovner’s statement, “It is better to die as free fighters than to live at the mercy of murderers”? Why or why not?
  - Why do you think that most Jews who participated in the revolts were youth? (Make sure that students understand that most of the Jewish population – parents of children, the children themselves, the elderly, the sick, and the millions who were murdered before conditions became ripe for revolt – could not take part in the armed uprising.)

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<sup>2</sup> Echoes and Reflections.” Anti-Defamation League, Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, Yad Vashem, 2005

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



## 2. Personal Story:

- Read story *Instant Adulthood*<sup>4</sup> by Abe Argasinki (Resource 5-2.3)
- Ask the following questions:
  - How did Mr. Argasinki cope with the death of his parents?
  - What do you think it was like for a boy that age to have to live on his own?
  - Do you think that what happened to his family impacted his ability or desire to be a partisan? Do you think it would it have happened otherwise? Why or why not?
  - He had to kill as part of his service. Do you think it was easy for him to do this? Why or why not?
  - He ends his story with the statement, “I wonder to this day how it feels to be a teenager.”
    - How do you think it felt to have lost his childhood?
    - Being around the same age as he was, do you think you could have done what he did? Explain.

## 3. Reflection Activity:

- Have students research other examples of partisan resistance during WWII: Italian, Slovakian, Polish, French, Yugoslavian, and others. They may use the Yad Vashem or US Holocaust Museum websites as guides or any other sources that you find appropriate including the books that are listed in the bibliography. Instruct students to write an essay comparing and contrasting the partisan movement they researched with the Jewish partisans’ movement. How were they similar? How were they inherently different?

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<sup>4</sup> Argasinski, Abe. “Instant Adulthood.” As told to Arnold Geier in Heroes of the Holocaust: Extraordinary True Accounts of Triumph. Berkley Books: NY, 1993. P. 38-48

# Lesson 5.3: Armed Resistance

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT define the various ways that Jews engaged in armed resistance.
2. SWBAT compare the connection between the Nazi efforts to eradicate the Jews and physical resistance, as well as the special meaning resistance had during the Holocaust.
3. SWBAT analyze the motivations behind armed resistance.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### 1. Set Induction:

- Explain to the class that, in addition to the underground partisan resistance that occurred in the villages and countryside of Nazi-occupied territories, there were forms of active resistance including armed revolts that were organized in the ghettos, concentration camps, and even extermination camps during the Holocaust. Explain that it is important to note that many Jews resisted the Nazis. Also explain to students how difficult it was for Jews to conduct active resistance. To help put this in context, tell students that at the time these revolts took place, the German army was considered the strongest armed force in Europe. After all, it took four years for the American army together with the allied countries and the Soviet Union to win the war against Nazi Germany.
- Tell the students to imagine that they have chosen to fight back. What would they need to do this? (supplies, weapons, food, etc.) Make a list on the board. Then ask them what would potentially keep them from being able to resist (lack of hope, hunger, lack of resources, etc.). Explain that even though many chose to fight back, it was not an easy task and the chances of success were slim. However, despite this, the Jews did what they could in order to resist.

### 2. Armed Resistance:

- Distribute the student handout *Active Resistance in the Ghettos and Camps*<sup>5</sup> (Resource 5-3.1). Have students read the information aloud or in small groups. Discuss the reading with emphasis on the following questions:
  - What motivated Jews to fight the Nazis?
  - How were their motives similar or different from other examples of resistance that we have learned about?
  - What does it mean to “offer resistance for its own sake”?
  - Discuss the tension between the *Judenrat* and the underground fighters regarding active resistance.
  - Can you think of similar situations where groups of people have had different ideas on the “best way” to resist?
    - E.g. Nisei resisters of the internment of Japanese Americans and the Japanese American Citizens League; Black Panthers and the civil disobedience philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

<sup>5</sup> Echoes and Reflections.” Anti-Defamation League, Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, Yad Vashem, 2005

- After a general discussion of resistance in the camps and ghettos, distribute the *Personal Testimonies*<sup>6</sup> (Resource 5-3.2) handout. After the class has read the handout (either in groups, individually, aloud, or for homework), use the following questions to guide a discussion:
  - How did Jews obtain weapons during the Holocaust?
  - What difficulties did they face in obtaining the weapons?
  - Why was it important for Zalman Gradowski to leave written testimonials behind?
  - Can you offer a title for this passage?
  - In your opinion, is the man who wrote these lines a hero? Why or why not?
  - What, in your opinion, makes someone a “hero”?

### 3. Reflection:

- Either in class or as homework, have students write in their journals about the following:
- Reflect on the spiritual/physical resistance that you have learned about. Why is one form of resistance more appropriate than another in certain situations? Think of an example of a situation that would warrant each type of resistance.

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<sup>6</sup> Echoes and Reflections.” Anti-Defamation League, Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, Yad Vashem, 2005

# **Lesson 5.4: Mordechai Anielewicz**

*(fully scripted lesson)*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. SWBAT to recall the main points of the story of Mordechai Anielewicz.
2. SWBAT analyze the motivations behind why Jews chose to fight.
3. SWBAT compare Anielewicz's choice to fight with how other people reacted.

## **MATERIALS:**

Resources Section:

- Anielewicz Story (Resource 5-4.1)
- Background information on Anielewicz (Resource 5-4.2)
- Anielewicz's last letter (Resource 5-4.3)
- Yad Mordechai monument picture (Resource 5-4.4)

Student journals

Pencils

Long rope strong enough to play tug-of-war with

## **TIME TABLE:**

**Set Induction:** 15 minutes

**Story and Discussion:** 25 minutes

**Wrap Up and Discussion:** 35 minutes

## **ASSESSMENT:**

Answers to tug-of-war game

Answers to Anielewicz questions

Journal Entries

## **PROCEDURE:**

### **1. Set Induction (15 minutes)**

- Tell the students that they are going to play a game of tug-of-war. The cost of losing should be something that strongly motivates them to try as hard as they can, such as an imaginary pit of muck in the middle, class pride, or losing out on some sort of prize. Explain that instead of splitting the class in half, you will have 30% of the students facing off against 70% of the students. Before beginning the game, split the students into the two groups, and have them strategize about how they are going to go about winning. Then have them play tug-of-war and most likely the larger group will win unless the smaller group comes up with some sort of plan that allows them to win. Either way, who wins the game is not the ultimate point. After the game, have them come back together as a class to discuss. Ask the following questions:

- For the larger group, did you feel overconfident that you would win?
- For the smaller group, did you feel that winning was hopeless?
- How did the strategizing sessions go?
  - For the larger group, did you all put much thought into strategy or were you convinced that with your superior numbers, you would win?
  - For the smaller group, did the strategizing session help allow you to think that maybe there was a chance that you could actually win?
  - For the smaller group, why did you choose to participate at all knowing that the odds were stacked against you?

Explain that today the students are going to learn about Mordechai Anielewicz, the leader of the resistance movement in the Warsaw ghetto. Despite overwhelming odds against him and his comrades and facing certain death, Anielewicz chose to fight the Nazis. Just like in the tug-of-war game, there was almost no chance that the Jewish fighters would defeat the Nazis. However, they chose to fight anyway. Tell the students to think about this tug-of-war exercise as they read this story.

## 2. Story and discussion: (25 minutes)

- Read the story of *The Boy Who Fought Back*<sup>7</sup> (Resource 5-4.1) (For more background information on Mordechai Anielewicz, see Resource 5-4.2))
- Ask the following questions:
  - What kind of a person was Anielewicz?
  - Being convinced that all the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto would die, Mordechai asks the question of “how shall we die?” His answer was that “we have decided to die in battle.” Why do you think more Jews didn’t take Mordechai’s attitude? **Note to Teacher:** Make sure to discuss that not all Jews believed that they were going to die at the hands of the Nazis. They were often unaware of what was really going on. In addition, at a time like this, people have a tendency to lose hope and face their fate. Finally, many were convinced that there was nothing that they could do and that fighting against the powerful Nazi forces was futile. In addition, as we have learned about previously, many people decided that there were other ways to resist other than fighting.
  - The Nazis indicated that “the Jewish resistance was unexpected, unusually strong, and a great surprise.”
    - Were you yourself surprised at the early successes of the resistance group in the ghetto?
    - The Nazis seemed to come into the ghetto overconfident. Do you think that the Jews had more will to fight than the Nazis? How does that translate into greater tenacity to fight? (recall the tug-of-war game and ask the students how that relates)

## 3. Reflection Exercise (10 minutes)

- Have the students write an entry into their journals and give the following prompt:
  - Imagine that you are Mordechai Anielewicz and you are writing a letter on the day before you die.

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<sup>7</sup> Stadler, Bea. The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance. Behrman House: 1995. P. 65-70

- What would you tell the world?
- What justifications would you give for fighting?
- How do you feel at this moment? (triumphant/dejected?)

**4. Class discussion** (15 minutes)

- Allow students to share small portions of their journal entries (to save time)
- Discuss as a class the following prompts:
  - How did it feel to imagine that you were Anielewicz?
  - What were some difficult aspects about writing this letter?
- Show the students Anielewicz's letter<sup>8</sup> (Resource 5-4.3)
  - How does this letter compare to the one that you wrote?
  - Are you surprised at the level of satisfaction that Anielewicz feels at this moment?
  - How do you think people perceived his message after his death?

**5. Wrap Up: Remembering Mordechai Anielewicz:** (10 minutes)

- Show students the picture (Resource 5-4.4) of Anielewicz's statue in Israel at Kibbutz Yad Mordechai.
- Background Info: Kibbutz Yad Mordechai was founded in 1943 and named after Mordechai Anielewicz. A giant statue of the hero clutching a grenade overlooks the community. Behind it is the Kibbutz's old water tower that was shelled by the Egyptians during the 1948 War. The kibbutz has a museum dedicated to the ghetto fighters.
- Indicate how Israel has chosen to honor his memory by putting up this monument and creating a museum about him and the ghetto fighters.
- What do you think is the symbolism of putting the statue next to the water tower that was destroyed by the Egyptians?
  - Expect the following answers:
    - Even though the water tower was destroyed, it was preserved, just like Anielewicz was killed but his memory was preserved.
    - It shows how Jews can overcome adversity and remain to this day.
- It is also our tradition as Jews to remember those who have fallen and to honor them by ensuring that their memory is preserved and encourage the students to honor the memory of those they learn by remembering their stories.

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<sup>8</sup> Stadler, Bea. The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance. Behrman House: 1995. P. 68

# Lesson 5.5: Women Fighters

## OBJECTIVES:

1. SWBAT restate what roles women played in physical resistance and how they contributed to the effort.
2. SWBAT compare/contrast how women's roles were different from men's and what advantages/disadvantages they had.
3. SWBAT analyze the motivations behind why women chose to fight.

## CORE ACTIVITIES:

### **1. Set Induction:**

- Ask the students about women's and men's role in society today. In addition, ask about what their grandparents did and what their gender roles were like. Expect them to answer that other than a few minor differences, today men and women are relatively equal in status in our society. Women can do just as much as men can. However, this has not always been so. During the time of the Holocaust, gender roles, especially in the European household, were very well defined. For the most part, women had specific duties and acted out particular roles. Today, it is very common for a woman to be a soldier in the army and women serve in all levels of the military, although not so much in combat. During World War II, women were not allowed to be soldiers and only served in the military in limited ways, such as nurses and administrative staff. Today, we are going to learn about women who defied all boundaries and stereotypes and fought alongside men and engaged in many of the acts of physical resistance that we have learned about so far.

### **2. Women Fighters:**

- Read the article *Women Fighters*<sup>9</sup> (Resource 5-5.1). Prepare the students by asking the following questions:
  - In what ways do you think women were able to help the resistance movement?
  - What would motivate women to participate?
- After reading the article, ask the following questions:
  - Were you surprised at the level of participation of women in the physical resistance movement? Why or why not?
  - These women displayed courage and a passionate will to fight. How were they successful in their efforts?
  - Compare/contrast the advantages that women and men had with regard to fighting and physical resistance.
    - What advantages did women have that men didn't? (They were less likely to be suspected of smuggling something. They could flirt with the male German soldiers. They were not seen as an initial threat by the soldiers.)
  - What kind of legacy did these women leave behind?

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<sup>9</sup> Stadler, Bea. The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance. Behrman House: 1995. P. 95-102

# Lesson 5.6: Jewish Fighters from Palestine

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. SWBAT understand that Palestinian Jews, despite not being under immediate threat from the Nazis, chose to fight and help save other Jews.
2. SWBAT analyze the motivations behind why Palestinian Jews chose to fight.
3. SWBAT recall the strength of character and will power that the Palestinian fighters possessed.

## **CORE ACTIVITIES:**

**NOTE:** Make sure that students know that references to Palestinian Jews means Jews coming from the Land of Israel before it was a state.

### **1. Rescue from the Sky:**

- Read *Rescue from the Sky*<sup>10</sup> (Resource 5-6.1) and ask the following questions:
  - What special connection did the Palestinian Jews have to the Jews who were suffering in Europe and what made them want to go and fight? (Talk about the responsibility that Jews around the world feel towards each other.)
  - Why would they risk their lives when they were not under any immediate threat from the Nazis?
  - What advantages did the Palestinian Jews have who parachuted into Europe? (Recall that many used to live there and knew the terrain and language.)
  - What does it say about the character of those who were captured when they refused to give up information, even after being tortured?

### **2. Reflection Exercise:**

- Re-read the poems that Chana Senesh wrote.
- Explain that these poems are still recalled today in Jewish and Israeli culture and in Jewish prayer books (see Mishkan Tefilah).
- Have the students imagine that they are on a plane heading into Europe where they will parachute down and fight to save the Jews.
  - What will they say to their friends and family back home? To the Jews who they are going to help?
  - What will their actions say to the world?

### **3. Wrap Up:**

- Have the students recall the story of Masada. (Be prepared for push-back from the students regarding this story. Many Jews find this story problematic.) Remind them how a small population of Jews resisted the massive Roman army and held them off for months. In the end, they chose death over enslavement. They chose to fight rather than give up and surrender to the Roman army.

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<sup>10</sup> Stadler, Bea. The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance. Behrman House: 1995. P. 167-164



- Read the excerpt from Elezar ben Yair’s speech at Masada.
  - “Since we long ago resolved never to be servants to the Romans, nor to any other than to God Himself, Who alone is the true and just Lord of mankind, the time is now come that obliges us to make that resolution true in practice...We were the very first that revolted, and we are the last to fight against them; and I cannot but esteem it as a favor that God has granted us, that it is still in our power to die bravely, and in a state of freedom.”<sup>11</sup>
- Ask the following questions:
  - How is the story of Masada similar to the physical resistance that we have learned about?
  - What connections and differences can you make between the stories?
- Read Elezar ben Yair’s last quote: “it is still in our power to die bravely, and in a state of freedom.”<sup>12</sup>
  - Could this same statement have been made at the time of the Holocaust?
  - How could this line of thinking have motivated countless Jews to fight back during the Holocaust?
- Bringing us back to the first lesson of this unit, the impression that Jews did not fight back against the Nazis is a simply a myth.
  - How is this so? Recall all the ways in which Jews carried out acts of resistance in every country of Europe that the Germans occupied, as well as in satellite states.
  - Where did they resist? (They resisted in ghettos, concentration camps and killing centers, under the most harrowing of circumstances.)
  - What is our job today in order to counter this myth? (It is our job today to counter this myth and to remember the heroes who fought and died for Jewish survival and to carry on their story.)
  - Why is it important to counter this myth?

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<sup>11</sup> “Elazar ben Yair’s Speech at Masada.” Jewish Virtual Library.  
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Quote/yairg.html>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON JEREMIAH TEXT<sup>1</sup>**

“In its present context what is revealed by God to the speaker are the evil deeds which account for the destruction of the tree. The evil deeds are schemes directed against the speaker. The speaker was blithely unaware that he was the target of their plans. This sudden realization of what is afoot has only come to him via divine revelation. Before the reception of this information he was like a tame lamb being led to the slaughter, unaware that it is the meal or sacrifice. The figure graphically describes blissful ignorance. He may have known about the schemes of destruction, but he did not realize “it was against me they fashioned their plots.” The plot is simple, but uses the image of a tree and its destruction to summarize the scheming. The intention is to wipe out the name of the victim from memory, to cut him off from the land of the living. The tree is a flourishing one, so its annihilation is all the more surprising and shocking. In response to this dastardly plot the speaker appeals to God, the righteous judge, for protection because he has committed his case to him. Such protection is expected to take the form of divine vengeance against the plotters.”

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<sup>1</sup> Carroll, Robert. Jeremiah: A Commentary. Westminster John Knox Press, 1986.

**“Like Sheep to the Slaughter” by Yisrael Rutman<sup>1</sup>**  
(*sheep has been replaced with “lambs”*)

"Like [lambs] to the slaughter." That, we have been told, is how six million Jews went to their death in the Holocaust. Almost a whole people are said to have accepted their annihilation in an inexplicable trance of national passivity.

The burden of Holocaust historiography in recent years has been to undo that image, and thereby to restore Jewish self-respect. To that end, numerous cases of heroic resistance have been documented, from the Warsaw Ghetto uprising to the forests of Eastern Europe and even within the death camps themselves. And if resistance was the exception rather than the rule, it is easily enough understood in context. Confronted by overwhelming force, with a scarcity of weapons, weakened by systematic starvation, and faced with the Nazi doctrine of collective responsibility, whereby whole communities could be massacred in retaliation for the rash acts of individuals, resistance was simply not a practical response.

Five million Russian prisoners of war understood this, and went to their deaths at the hands of the Germans without resistance, and yet nobody speaks of them as having gone like [lambs] to the slaughter. In 1939, the Poles and the Czechs did not put up a fight against the invading Germans, and yet they were not branded in this way. It is unfair, therefore, to affix this badge of shame exclusively onto the Jews of Europe, who had much less to fight with, and much more to fear from the enemy's wrath.

It would seem, then, that this ignominious phrase should be expunged from the history books. Historical truth and Jewish pride demand it.

But even if we could effectively rid ourselves of it in connection with the Holocaust, it would still not disappear from the pages of Jewish history. For the phrase "[lambs] to the slaughter," is not an expression that came into being during or after World War Two. In fact, it is almost as ancient as Jewish history itself.

## **HISTORY OF A PHRASE**

Where, then, does the phrase come from?

In 1942, it was used by resistance leader Abba Kovner to rouse the Jews of Vilna to rise up and fight the enemy. Some attribute the phrase to him. But we know that he was not the first to use it. *Bartlett's Quotations* credits it to none other than George Washington! In a 1783 address to officers of the army, he stated that without "freedom of speech [we] may be taken away, and dumb and silent, we may be led like [lambs] to the slaughter." Perhaps, by some accident of history, Kovner stumbled onto the same inspired simile as America's first president? Or perhaps Kovner knowingly borrowed from Washington's speech? Anything is possible.

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<sup>1</sup> Rutman, Yisrael. "Like Sheep to the Slaughter." AISH.  
[http://www.aish.com/holocaust/issues/Like\\_Sheep\\_To\\_The\\_Slaughter.asp](http://www.aish.com/holocaust/issues/Like_Sheep_To_The_Slaughter.asp)

What is more likely, however, is that both Kovner and Washington were familiar with it as a phrase that appears several times in the Bible. The Talmud (Gittin 57b) invokes the phrase (as it occurs in Psalms 44:23) in reference to some of the most celebrated acts of Jewish martyrdom. Of the four hundred Jewish children who threw themselves into the sea rather than allow themselves to be taken to Rome for purposes of sexual immorality, the Talmud says that for God's sake they died "like [lambs] led to the slaughter." In the same Talmudic passage it is said of the seven sons of Hannah, who allowed themselves to be killed by the Greeks rather than bow down to an idol, that they too went like [lambs] to the slaughter.

The Maharsha in his classic commentary on the Talmud explains the phrase "[lambs] to the slaughter" in a manner strikingly different from what we are used to. It had nothing to do with humiliating passivity. It means that death to these giants of faith was something that they faced as casually as [lambs] going to the slaughter, free of the dread and terror otherwise associated with a violent demise. Theirs were acts of faith and courage, not cowardice and despair.

On Tisha B'Av, a central part of the liturgy concerns the Ten Martyrs, Rabbi Akiva and other leaders of the generation, who were killed by the Romans during the terrible persecutions that took place in the closing years of the Second Temple period. They understood that the time for military defense of Jerusalem was over. Although they did not resist the Romans physically, they continued studying and keeping the Torah, in defiance of a Roman ban that carried the death penalty. Ultimately, they accepted death upon themselves as a matter of Divine decree. Maimonides (in *Yesodei HaTorah* 5:4) states that no more exalted position exists in Jewish tradition than that which was attained by those ten individuals who went, as he writes, "like [lambs] to the slaughter."

## **JEWISH VALOR**

On July 29, 1941, the Jews of Kelm in Lithuania were taken out by the Nazis to be killed. When they had finished digging the pit that was soon to be their mass grave, Rabbi Doniel Movshovitz was given permission to address the people. He told them "that they stood at that moment in exactly the same position as the Ten Martyrs." Their unshaken faith would, like their forebears', stand forever as a monument to Jewish valor in the darkest times. (*Adapted from "Rav Dessler," P. 254*)

The Jews of Kelm were not the only ones. A story is told of how, during the Holocaust, the Germans rounded up all the Jewish residents of a village in the middle of the night, and brought them to a large pit to be shot. One of the Jews approached a Nazi officer and said: "In civilized countries, it is customary to give a person the chance to say a few final words before executing him." "Granted!" shouted the Nazi officer. The Jew looked the Nazi square in the eyes and said: "Thank you, God, for making me a Jew and not a German."

In the light of Jewish tradition, the true meaning of "[lambs] to the slaughter" emerges. The millions who perished in the Holocaust -- our parents and grandparents -- share the name of glory with Rabbi Akiva and his generation.

## Resource 5-1.2

And as for ourselves, it provides us with a way to approach God in our own difficult times. For, in spite of all that we have suffered, we have not surrendered our Jewishness, we have not forgotten who we are. And we shall not be forgotten.

## Lesson 6 Jewish Resistance

### STUDENT HANDOUT - Partisans

Partisan units are guerrilla fighters in occupied territories. During World War II, partisans risked their lives by organizing secret resistance to Nazi control. They attacked German-held railroads, bridges, and military installations. They also organized efforts to assassinate Nazi collaborators (local people who were helping the Germans.) During World War II, partisans in Nazi-occupied Europe were mainly active in Eastern Europe. There was partisan activity in Yugoslavia, Poland, Greece, Slovakia, Belorussia, France, and Italy.

There were many crucial differences between Jewish and non-Jewish partisans. Non-Jewish partisans joined the fight either as ultra-nationalists who wanted to rid their countries of all foreigners, or as socialist-leftists who wanted to combat Fascism. They left their families at home, generally expecting to return to them after the war. The Jewish partisans were not fighting for an ideal such as nationalism or anti-Fascism. The Jewish partisans were fighting for their lives. Jewish partisans believed that they would never see home or family again, especially since the Nazis had already murdered most of their families. Furthermore, non-Jewish partisans had support, and believed that as patriotic citizens doing their duty for their country, they could usually rely on local farmers to provide them with food and supplies. Not so the Jews. Jewish partisans could rarely rely on the locals, who often hated Jews.

In order to become a partisan, a Jew had to overcome all sorts of obstacles, grapple with emotional dilemmas about abandoning family and community, and choose a life in the dangerous forest. Leaving the ghetto was forbidden by the Germans and usually if a person was caught he or she would be shot on the spot. After a successful escape, he had to enter the forest and locate a partisan base whose members might or might not have been willing to accept him. Despite all these obstacles, Jewish partisan activity in Eastern Europe swelled to considerable proportions. Scholars believe that some 20,000-30,000 Jews participated in the partisan units in the forests where they carried out daring raids and rescue operations. The East European forest was a natural place for Jews

running from the Nazis to hide and regroup for partisan activity. First, the territory was full of thick woodlands and many swamps, which provided ample cover. Second, many of the Jews had lived in nearby areas before the war and were familiar with the terrain. After the Germans launched mass murder campaigns in Belorussia and Ukraine during the second half of 1941, many Jews felt that their only choice was to flee to the forests. From that time on, Belorussia had the largest concentration of partisans in Eastern Europe. By late August 1941, there were some 230 partisan units in the region, with about 5,000 fighters (Jewish and non-Jewish). Just two years later, the numbers had multiplied greatly, with 243,000 partisans in 1943 and 374,000 in 1944.



A group of Jewish partisans from the Kovno ghetto in the Rudniki Forest

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Many Jewish partisans in Belorussia had their own units that operated as part of the general Belorussian partisan movement, although some of these Jewish units lost their Jewish character over time. A unique Jewish unit in Belorussia was led by the Bielski brothers. Operating in the Naliboki Forest, it consisted of 1,200 people, including partisans and a family camp.

The partisan movement in Lithuania developed much later than the one in Belorussia. There were about 850 Jewish partisans active in the forests of Lithuania (mainly the Rudninkai Forest), making up around one-tenth of the entire Lithuanian partisan movement.

## ANNOUNCEMENT BY ABBA KOVNER

“Jewish youngster, do not trust those that deceive you. Of the eighty thousand Jews in ‘The Jerusalem of Lithuania’ [Vilna], only twenty thousand have survived. In front of our very eyes, they tore our parents, our brothers, our sisters from us.

Where are the hundreds of men who were abducted for labor by the Lithuanian ‘kidnappers’?

Where are the naked women and the children who were taken away from us on the terrible night of the provocation?

Where are the Jews who were taken away on Yom Kippur [taken on that day]?

Where are our brethren from the second ghetto?

Whoever was taken out of the ghetto gates never returned again.

All the roads of the Gestapo lead to Ponary [the woods in the outskirts of Vilna where Jews were shot by the Einsatzgruppen]

And Ponary is death!...

Hitler is plotting to annihilate all the Jews of Europe. It befell the Jews of Lithuania to be the first in line.

Let us not go like sheep to the slaughter!

It’s true, we are weak and defenseless, but the only response to the enemy is resistance!

Brothers! It is better to die as free fighters than to live at the mercy of murderers.

Resist! To our last breath.”



## Instant Adulthood

As told by Abe Argasinski,  
formerly Erich Segal

LVOV, POLAND  
MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA

As a 12-year-old boy, just two weeks away from my Bar Mitzvah, I was neither aware of nor, frankly, gave much thought to the events which were overcoming my family, my country, or, as it turned out, human history. My life in Lvov, Poland, was pleasant enough and centered around school, Mother, Father, my younger brother Ernest and my pigeons.

I had eight pigeons in a coop on the roof and cared for them lovingly. I had eleven more in the attic of a little house near my father's lumberyard, about nine miles from Lvov. The yard sat between two forests, with adjoining villages, one inhabited by Poles, the other by Ukrainians.

The Poles and Ukrainians did not get along, and

every few months they would clash. When the Poles celebrated a religious holiday and didn't work, the Ukrainians went into the "Polish" woods and cut timber which they brought to my father to buy. The Poles would ambush the intruders with knives and sticks, and blood would flow. During a Ukrainian holiday, the situation reversed, and Polish blood was shed.

Since my father's mill operated day and night, he lived in the small three-room house during the week. Members of the family would come whenever possible and stay with him. He knew of my love for pigeons and had the attic divided into two sections—one as a laundry room, and the other, with a window opening onto the roof, as a pigeon coop. He also built a secret compartment into the floor of the first section to hide some jewelry and cash for an emergency.

During the first week of September 1941, there was a Christian holiday and, as usual, we were going to the lumberyard to spend a few days with Father. Too impatient to wait for my mother and brother, I took a trolley to the last station and made my way to the yard, walking and getting rides from farmers who knew me. I arrived there at mid-morning. After a short visit with Father, I went to the house, climbed the narrow stairs to the attic and tended to my pigeons. I was thrilled to see one of them sitting on several eggs. I had never seen pigeons being born. When I counted the flock, there was one missing. I climbed out the window onto the roof to see if it was there—it was. Down below, I saw Father greeting Mother and Ernest as they arrived at the yard.

About 20 minutes later, Mother called to me from downstairs that lunch was ready. I went down



in a minute!" I responded and turned my attention back to my pigeons. She called again and again, and each time I assured her I would come right down. Finally, I decided I'd better do as I was told. Mother would punish me with the snap of a towel to show her displeasure, and I wanted to avoid that. Suddenly, I heard loud sounds, like gunfire. The pigeons panicked and, with a fluttering noise, flew off, all except one. She remained on her eggs to complete her destiny. There was more shooting and I became very frightened. I went into the laundry room and hid under a big wash tub by turning it over me on the floor. The rat-tat-tat of gunfire continued and I trembled. I must have lost consciousness in my panic. When I awoke, all was quiet.

Boy, am I going to get it now, I thought. Mother will really let me have it with the towel for not coming down in all this time. Gingerly, I climbed down the steep stairs toward the kitchen.

The sight which greeted me is to this day engraved in my mind. Father, Mother and Ernest lay in pools of their own blood, their bodies riddled with bullets from Ukrainian rifles. They stared into nothingness. I screamed with all my might. "Mama, Mama." The echoes of my anguish bounced off the walls and the sound made me even more frantic. In a matter of minutes, my life had been transformed into a nightmare. When my voice gave out, I sat for a few minutes on the stairs and had only one desire—to get away from there fast.

I remembered the hiding place in the attic and emptied it of jewelry and about 3,000 Zlotys, a lot of money. I stuffed it in my pockets and ran to the home

of a woman who was our family laundress for as long as I could remember, and whose husband worked in the lumberyard. When she asked about my parents, I blurted out the details of our tragedy. "What should I do?" I cried. She gave me a pair of shoes and a few clothes, put a large cross on a chain around my neck and said: "Don't tell anyone you are a Jew. Come with me. I will take you to my sister." We walked through the woods for about 8 miles and arrived at an isolated farm house. On the way, I gave the washerwoman 500 Zlotys for the shoes and clothes. She didn't want to take the money but I insisted. She advised me to hold on to what was left. I would need it in the future.

The sister remembered me as an infant and greeted me warmly. She assured me that she had room for me, that I would eat well and she would take care of me. I would join her daughters, both a few years older, and help with the care of several cows and lambs in the fields. The washerwoman gave me a warm hug and kiss and left.

The following day, I walked to the meadows and found the girls near a campfire with other young people whose animals were grazing nearby. Apparently, the girls had let it slip that a Jew was living with them. Someone shouted, "Jewboy, Jewboy!" I vehemently denied it and, at the first opportunity, rounded up the animals and returned to the house. Next morning, while everyone was in church, I gathered my few belongings and left for the woods.

At the other end of the forest was Rudaldaniet-ska, a large and rich village. Just as I passed the majestic church in the village square, worshippers came

out the doors and congregated in small groups in the area. I greeted everyone with the customary "Praised be Jesus Christ." They returned my greeting with a smile and a wave. When I approached a group of about twenty men discussing politics, I greeted them with "Praised be Jesus Christ," and added "I am looking for work. I can take care of animals." One of the men immediately replied that he could use help on his farm. Another was more persuasive. "Not only do I have a few animals that need attention, but I am a blacksmith and I will teach you the trade. It will be good for you in the future." That made sense to me and I accepted.

My new employer was Kazi Witkowski, a widower with one son who lived with his family at the other end of the village. He took me to his house, pointing out his grazing lands on the way, and led me into a small but comfortable room. "I forgot to ask, young man," he remarked, "what is your name?" I was unprepared for that. The name Erich Segal would immediately brand me a Jew, no matter how large the cross around my neck. At that moment, I remembered that I had planned to express my condolences to my Polish school teacher, Mr. Argasinski, at the accidental drowning of Leszek, his son and my school buddy. "Leszek Argasinski," I replied.

Mr. Witkowski treated me like a father would. He taught me his trade, which I eagerly learned. I had talent in my hands. On Sunday, when he went to another village to visit his sister and her ailing husband, I made my way to the village where Mr. Argasinski lived. Father and I had often visited him there. He was warm and friendly and had heard of my family's fate. I ex-

pressed my sorrow at the loss of his son. He wept. "Professor," I pleaded, "I am without papers. Please let me have Leszek's documents." Without hesitation, the sad-faced man gave me his son's identity papers, which were more valuable than gold. With these, I could prove that I was Leszek Argasinski. I quickly walked back to my village before anyone knew I had gone.

About four months later, I was working in the shop with Mr. Witkowski when a husky young man of about 30 entered. He greeted my boss and came toward me. "So, there's the boy you told me about!" he exclaimed. My heart stood still for a moment. What did he mean by that? Mr. Witkowski smiled and introduced Mr. Kalju, commander of the local partisans. "Come with me," Kalju suggested in strong tones of command, "You will meet the others." I followed him to the general store in the village square where just about everything anyone could need was sold. Toward the rear, there was an entrance to a cellar. We went down into a huge storage room containing supplies of all sorts. There were about 400 men sitting around. The conversations stopped when we appeared, and Mr. Kalju announced, "Men, this is our newest associate, Leszek Argasinski." They greeted me warmly and they made me feel comfortable.

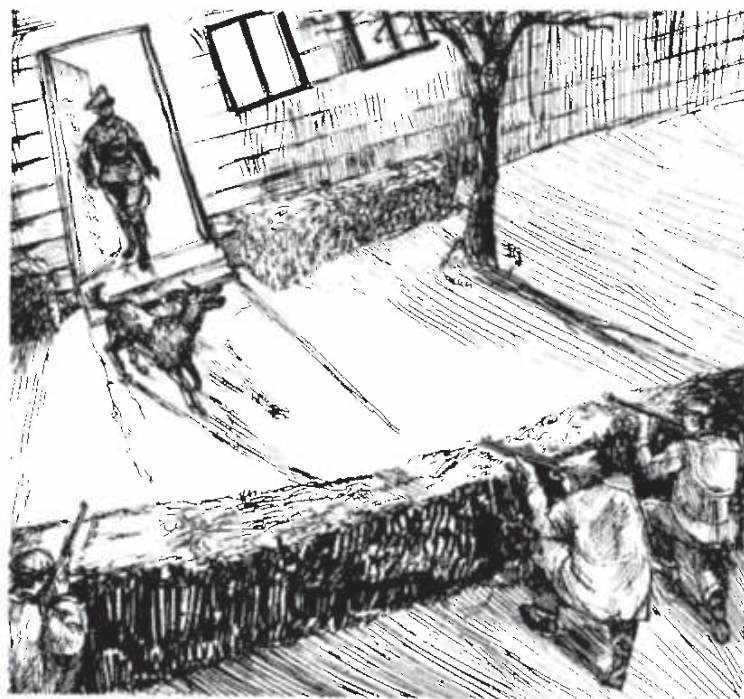
I was assigned to a squad of 12 men. We received training in shooting, use of hand grenades and handling explosives. I turned out to be an excellent marksman. We worked during the day, and, at night, units would be sent 30 to 50 miles away to blow up bridges or roads. The Germans concentrated their garrisons in the larger cities and stayed out of the small villages.

Railroad workers would inform the partisans of military trains scheduled to come through the area, their destination, and, sometimes, the contents of their cars. Partisan units would tear up the rails, destroy bridges, or ambush the train and, when possible, capture the valuable military supplies destined for the front. As a result, the partisans always had plenty of guns and ammunition.

Because I was an outstanding shot, I was assigned special missions of assassination. These included several SS and Gestapo agents, two SS women officers, and a traitorous teacher. Once, I was ordered to kill the SS Kommandant of a nearby village area. We knew he left his office every night at precisely midnight. My two teammates and I hid behind some bushes directly in front of the entrance door. It began to drizzle. At exactly 12 o'clock, the door opened, bathing the immediate area in bright light. I held my breath as the Kommandant's dog jumped down the few stairs, barking and yelping at us behind the bushes. They forgot to mention the dog, I thought. Would he give us away? The Kommandant gave a harsh command: "Komm, Putzi, komm!" And like a good German, the dog instantly obeyed. He whined a little as he returned to his master's side. There was a triumphant smile on the SS officer's face as I aimed, squeezed the trigger twice in rapid succession and the bullets partitioned his head into unrecognizable fragments. The rest of him fell with a thud, and we ran into the night, leaving a whining dog standing over his master.

Two days later, the Nazis hung 58 Poles in retaliation. I lived with Mr. Witkowski almost four years, and most of the time, he left me alone in the shop, confi-

dent that I knew the work and did it well. He was often away for a few days at a time, visiting with his sister, whose husband had finally died. Meanwhile, I tended to the cows, pigs and chickens, took care of customers, and helped older people who needed a strong arm to perform some chore they couldn't handle. I was swamped with work. The Germans were bogged down on the Russian front and devoted little of their attention or forces to small villages like ours. We rarely saw them, except when we ambushed them at night some distance away.





One day, Mr. Witkowski's son stopped by. I had seen him once before and had exchanged greetings. He talked to me as to a servant. "Did you cut enough hay for tomorrow morning's feeding?" he demanded. "Not yet," I replied, "I have been too busy." With that, he slapped me hard across the face and ordered: "Well, get to it, now!" I seethed with anger. The image of my family lying in pools of blood dominated my mind at that moment and I wanted to kill him right then and there. But I controlled myself.

Someone had a radio and told us that the Russians were approaching. In fact, I could hear the dim sounds of battle coming closer. I made my decision, took some food, clothing, ammunition, and my rifle and went into the forest, heading toward the front lines to find the Russians. I walked from village to village. In some, the Germans were still reported in the area, and in others they had fled. While walking through a wooded area, I heard a rustle in the trees above, and before I could look up, two Russian soldiers fell on me, pinned me down and disarmed me.

"You are a spy," they screamed at me. "No, no," I screamed back, "I am a Jew!" They took me back to their encampment and turned me over to an officer. "So you are a spy," he began again. "No, no, no, I am a Jew. Can't you understand? I am a Jew," I insisted. "We'll see, spy," the officer said. He looked around until he spotted another officer, obviously of high rank, with several medals displayed on his chest, including the Order of the Red Star, one of the highest awards for bravery. He called the officer over. "Colonel Wilenski," he said, "this man claims to be a

Jew." The officer studied me closely. I certainly didn't look Jewish, and the large cross resting on my chest was hardly supportive of my claim. Then he spoke. "Say the blessing over bread." I began: "Baruch attah adonai, eloheynu melech haolom . . ." He broke into a grin, embraced me with an authentic Russian bear hug, and kissed me on both cheeks. After I told him about my parents and my activities with the partisans, he assured me that I would never again have to worry about anything. "I am the commander of this unit, and you will stay with us." I was issued a new uniform, a Russian weapon, and, at 16, was considered one of the men.

Our unit fought its way toward Berlin, taking few prisoners. It was bloody and tough. I had had enough. I approached my friend and commander, Colonel Wilenski, and asked him to give me papers which would allow me to go back to Lvov and see if I could find anyone there who survived. He granted me that wish and, with a warm embrace, we parted. I commandeered a car from a German and drove east. Whenever I was stopped, the Colonel's papers were enough to let me proceed.

I never returned to Lvov. When I reached Breslau, I discovered that a Zionist group had formed a Kibbutz to train Jewish survivors for life in Palestine. Many were young people like me, and I felt comfortable with them. I worked as a blacksmith and handyman, married one of the survivors, raised a family, and lived in Breslau for over twenty years. By the mid-1960s, almost every Jew had left the



Abe Argasinski today

area, and we who had remained went to Israel to join the others.

It's been a hard and brutal existence for me. I have many regrets, but the greatest of them is that I lost my family and with it my childhood.

I wonder to this day how it feels to be a teenager.

## Lesson 6 Jewish Resistance

### STUDENT HANDOUT - Active Resistance in the Ghettos and Camps

#### Resistance in the Ghettos

In approximately one hundred ghettos, in Poland, Lithuania, Belorussia, and Ukraine, underground organizations were formed. The purpose of such organizations was to wage armed struggle, that is, to stage an uprising in the ghetto or to break out of the closed ghetto by the use of force in order to engage in partisan operations on the outside. In many instances, the two forms combined, the uprising being followed by an escape from the ghetto. There were also cases in which the uprising was spontaneous or improvised. In many of the ghettos where resistance was more organized, Jewish youth movements were deeply involved in the planning and carrying out of the plans. Active resistance occurred in many forms, from armed struggle through hiding and escape.

While preparing for armed resistance, clandestine groups in the ghettos faced extremely difficult problems, such as smuggling arms into the ghetto, training the fighters under ghetto conditions, and establishing a method for putting the fighters on battle alert in case of a surprise action by the Germans. No less difficult was the task of gaining the ghetto residents' support for the fighting underground. It was clear that the insurgents did not have the slightest chance of forcing the Germans to put a stop to the extermination, and it was equally clear that only a handful of fighters could actually succeed in breaking out of the ghetto to join partisan units in order to continue the fight against the Germans. This made the ghetto underground the only organization of its kind in recorded history to call for an uprising whose primary purpose was to offer resistance for its own sake, for vengeance and for posterity. As a result, in some ghettos there was a clash between the concept advocated by the fighting undergrounds — to rise up against the Nazis — and that of some of the *Judenrate*, which based their policies on the hope that at least a few of the ghetto residents might be saved by working in German enterprises and surviving to see Germany's defeat; this policy was incompatible with armed resistance.

The largest and most famous single revolt by Jews took place in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April and May of 1943. On July 28, 1942, at the height of the deportations from Warsaw to Treblinka, the Zionist youth movements set up the *Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa* (Jewish Fighting Organization; Z.O.B.). After the deportations ended early in September, the new body was able to begin preparations on a relatively large scale for a future uprising. Some 300,000 Jews had either been murdered on the spot or deported to their deaths, and no more than 60,000 Jews were left in the ghetto. The Z.O.B., owing to contacts with the Polish underground, found new avenues by which to acquire weapons, and it also undertook the manufacture of Molotov Cocktails in the ghetto itself. On January 18, 1943, the Germans sought to resume deportations from the Warsaw ghetto. The Z.O.B. decided to react, despite the small store of arms at its disposal, and for the first time there was street fighting in occupied Warsaw. On January 21, the Germans called a halt to the deportations. The two Jewish military underground organizations, the Z.O.B. and Z.Z.W. (*Zydowski Zwiazek Wojskowy* – Jewish Military Union, associated with the Betar youth movement), utilized the break to speed up the preparations for the revolt. At the same time, the civilian population set up underground bunkers where they intended to hide during the attacks. As the time of the attack neared, the two underground groups coordinated their respective plans of action.

German forces entered the ghetto in force on April 19, 1943, on the eve of Passover, in order to resume deportations to extermination camps. Meeting with well-organized resistance by the Jewish fighters, the Germans were compelled to retreat from the scene of the fighting. The Germans were surprised at the ability of the Jews to create a military force.

In the twenty-seven days that the uprising officially lasted, the Nazis deployed a considerable military force that in the first days of the fighting consisted, on the average, of 2,054 soldiers and policemen and 36 officers. Facing them were 700 to 750 young

## Lesson 6 Jewish Resistance

### STUDENT HANDOUT - Active Resistance in the Ghettos and Camps

Jewish fighters who had no military training or battle experience, and who for all practical purposes were armed with not much more than a few pistols. The hand-to-hand combat lasted for several days. The Germans were not able to destroy the Jewish fighters, many of whom managed to get away and retreat over the roofs after clashing with the Germans; nor could the Germans find the non-combatant Jews hiding in the bunkers. The Germans decided to burn the ghetto systematically, house by house. This action forced the fighters to take to the bunkers themselves and to resort to partisan tactics by staging sporadic raids. The flames and the heat turned life in the bunkers into hell; the very air was afire, the goods that had been stored spoiled, and the water was no longer fit to drink.

Gradually, the Jews' ability to resist or hide declined.



© Yad Vashem, Film and Photo Archive (1605/848)

*One of the most famous pictures of the Holocaust. German storm troopers force Jews of all ages in the Warsaw ghetto out of the bunkers during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April–May 1943.*

On May 8th, the headquarters of the Z.O.B. at 18 Mila Street fell, and with it the commander of the uprising, Mordechai Anielewicz, and a large group of

fighters and officers. The Z.O.B. fighters had not made any plans for a retreat from the ghetto; their assumption was that the battle would continue inside the ghetto until the last fighter had fallen. Thanks to a rescue mission arranged by Z.O.B. men on the Polish side, several dozen fighters were saved by escaping from the ghetto through the sewer system.

On May 16th, German General Jurgen Stroop announced that the fighting was over. He blew up the Great Synagogue on Tlomacka Street (which was outside the ghetto and the scene of the fighting) as a symbol of victory and to declare to the world: "the Jewish quarter of Warsaw no longer exists."

### Resistance in the Extermination Camps

In several camps, notably Sobibór, Treblinka, and Auschwitz-Birkenau, Jewish members of the Sonderkommando initiated uprisings. All of these uprisings were brutally put down. In Birkenau all the rebels were killed, but in Sobibór and Treblinka, a small number of prisoners managed to escape during the struggle. The Jewish-initiated uprisings in the camps were the only organized acts of armed resistance carried out against the Nazis in the concentration and extermination camp network.

The extermination camps constitute perhaps the darkest chapter in the history of the Holocaust. In a reality dominated by industrialized mass murder and the absolute oppression of the human soul, prisoners in the extermination camps were forced to cooperate with the murder mechanism. Some worked sorting the property of the victims, whereas others had the gruesome tasks of extracting gold teeth, gathering human hair, and cremating the dead. In Treblinka, Sobibór, and Auschwitz-Birkenau, groups of prisoners organized and headed the armed revolt. In all three camps, the revolts ended with the death of most of the insurgents. These uprisings occurred in places where life and death were intermingled, and the rebels' deeds reflected their desperate desire for life.



## Lesson 6 Jewish Resistance

### STUDENT HANDOUT - Personal Testimonies

#### From the founding meeting of the Jewish Fighting Organization (Z.O.B.)

"On July 28, 1942, a meeting of 'Hehalutz' was held. It was decided that a Jewish Fighting Organization would be established [...] however, the sum total of the ghetto's weapons at the time was only one pistol!"<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

#### From the words of Mark Edelman, a Warsaw ghetto fighter

"Then we collected weapons.

We smuggled it from the Aryan side (we took money by force from all kinds of institutions and private people)...

How much would you pay for a pistol?

From three thousand to fifteen thousand. The closer to April, the more expensive: the demand in the market increased.

And how much did it cost to get a Jew to the Aryan side?

Two thousand, five thousand. All kinds of prices. It depended on whether the person looked like a Jew, if he spoke with an accent, and if it was a man or a woman.

That means that for one pistol, it would have been possible to hide one, two or even three people for a month.

If you had been offered the choice at that time: one pistol or the life of one person for a month...

Such a choice was not offered. Perhaps it was even better that it was not offered."<sup>2</sup>

#### From the words of Zalman Gradowski, one of the fighters in the Auschwitz-Birkenau revolt

"Dear finder, search every part of the ground. Buried in it are dozens of documents of others, and mine, which shed light on everything that happened here... As for us, we have already lost all hope...

...The future will judge us on the basis of this evidence. May the world understand some small part of the tragic world in which we lived."<sup>4</sup>

Zalman Gradowski, September 6, 1944

[NOTE: The revolt in Auschwitz-Birkenau attempted to put an end to the murder by disrupting the operation of the crematoria, and also to create a memory and a testimony to the tragedy of the lives and deaths of the hundreds of thousands of people who were killed in front of their eyes. After writing down and documenting the events, they buried them near the crematoria. This document was written by one of the organizers of the uprising.]





**8**

## **The Boy Who Fought Back**

**MORDECHAI ANIELEWICZ**

**O**n a hill in Israel, at a kibbutz outside Tel Aviv, stands a bronze statue of a tall, proud-looking young man, shirt unbuttoned, chest bare. In one hand he clutches a Molotov cocktail.

This is the statue of Mordechai Anielewicz, and the kibbutz near the statue is named Yad Mordechai. Mordechai Anielewicz taught the world what it means “to die with honor.”

When Mordechai was a young boy, it was popular for Polish toughs to attack young Jews—just for fun. Most Jewish youths ran and hid, but not Mordechai. He not only stood up to the bullying Poles but fought back fiercely. When the toughs saw

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Mordechai coming, they would detour to stay out of his way. If Mordechai heard shouts for help on the street, he was out in a minute with his youth group to help the victims. He never started a fight, but he never backed down either.

When the Nazis occupied Warsaw and established the ghetto, Mordechai was a young man. He sought ways to help his fellow Jews, and at the end of 1942 he organized a fighting unit. He operated a secret radio station to inform the Jews in the ghetto of what was happening outside. He wrote short, powerful articles in an underground journal called *Against the Stream*. Copies of this journal were found in all corners of the country—far beyond the ghetto walls.

In his youth, as a member of the Zionist youth organization Hashomer Hatzair (The Young Watchman), he became known as “Chaver (friend, comrade) Mordechai.” The name stuck to him until he was killed.

Mordechai was convinced that everyone in the ghetto would die at the Nazis’ hands. “The question is,” he asked, “how shall we die?” And he answered, “We have decided to die in battle.” He began organizing all the young and middle-aged people in the ghetto for battle—girls and women, boys and men. He drilled and trained them and obtained weapons, some of which were purchased at enormous cost and smuggled into the ghetto. Grenades were produced by hand, at the rate of about fifty a day.

In January 1943 the Germans rounded up a few hundred Jews for deportation to the death camps. They dragged these unfortunate people to the Umschlagplatz, the roundup place in the ghet-

## The Boy Who Fought Back

to where victims were herded into cattle trains to be taken to the concentration camps. This time, Mordechai entered the crowd with his comrades. At a signal, they attacked the Germans. The captured Jews fled; the Germans scattered in confusion, leaving behind their wounded and dead. The young fighters stood their ground. Mordechai, after using up all his ammunition, attacked one Nazi soldier with his bare fists, taking the German’s weapons.

The deportations stopped for three months. The Germans were preparing themselves for a terrible battle. But the ghetto fighters were also preparing themselves. Mordechai worked day and night. He was everywhere. He helped dig bunkers—underground hiding places with ventilator shafts for air—with secret tunnels. There were a number of very large bunkers hidden in the ghetto. Mordechai also helped set up tank-blocks in entrances to buildings. He organized the collection of arms and was in constant contact with comrades on the other side of the ghetto walls. He drew maps of the ghetto with detailed information—every alley and every passageway was marked out for the fighters. To a friend he wrote:

We don’t have a moment’s rest. We sleep in our clothes. At every entry to the ghetto we stand on guard day and night. We are making the final preparations. Soon we shall have to separate ourselves from life and go to the place that no one wants to go. But ours is the correct path. We cultivated in our hearts the idea of revolt—this is the path of the Jewish youth—be well, *chaverim*.

### **The Boy Who Fought Back**

On Sunday, April 18, 1943, the leaders of the central ghetto met with Mordechai as chairman. At the end of the meeting, he distributed weapons and baskets of handmade bombs, known as Molotov cocktails. Some food was distributed and poison for those fighters who might be caught and did not want to be tortured by the Nazis. Houses were barricaded with furniture and sandbags, pillows were placed on windowsills for support and protection. Finally an all-night watch was set up in the ghetto. It was the eve of the first seder of Passover, and Jews from the Aryan side of Warsaw had sneaked into the ghetto to participate in a seder with the other Jews. On Monday, the Nazis attacked. Because they themselves were afraid to face the fire of the Jews, they sent other groups ahead; first the Jewish police and then German and Ukrainian columns. Following these came a squadron of motorcyclists, heavy trucks, infantry, heavy machine guns, ambulances, a field kitchen, field telephones, and 12 panzer (armed) vehicles. On the main streets, they set up tables and benches for headquarters, and they installed telephones on the tables.

Full of confidence in their superior strength and weapons, the German column, singing loudly, reached the corners of the two main streets. Suddenly, a hail of Molotov cocktails sent them fleeing in panic, leaving behind their dead and wounded. One tank after another was hit with well-aimed handmade bombs; the men driving them burned alive inside. Panic broke out among the Germans. The Nazis reported to headquarters, "The Jewish resistance was unexpected, unusually strong, and a great surprise."

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On April 23, Mordechai Anielewicz wrote to a friend:

Be well, my friend. Perhaps we shall meet again. The main thing is that the dream of my life came true. I was fortunate enough to witness Jewish defense in the ghetto in all its greatness and glory.

The fighting continued, but lacking arms and ammunition, the Jews grew weaker. On May 8, the Germans found the main bunker at 18 Mila Street where many fighters, including Mordechai Anielewicz, were hiding. The Nazis threw poison gas into the bunker and shot all those who came out. Whether Mordechai was killed by the gas or whether he committed suicide, we shall probably never know.

Most of the fighters were killed, but a few of those who had fought against the Nazis escaped through the sewers and joined some companions in the forests to continue the fight.

The Jews in the ghetto, with their pitiful weapons, held out longer against their Nazi enemies than the Poles had held out when the Germans attacked Poland in September 1939.

## Mordecai Anielewicz<sup>1</sup>



(1919 or 1920 - 1943)

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Commander of the [Warsaw ghetto](#) uprising was born in a poor family in a poor neighborhood. After he completed his high school studies, he joined the "Hashomer Hatzair" youth movement. As a youngsters guide he excelled as a leader and organizer.

In September 7, 1939, a week after the war broke out, Anielewicz escaped with his youth movement friends from Warsaw to the east regions, assuming that the Polish army would restrain the German advance. In September 17, the Soviet army occupied the eastern regions of Poland. Anielewicz tried to pass the border to Romania to open a route for youngsters to Israel. Anielewicz was caught and put in a Soviet jail. After he was released he returned to [Warsaw Ghetto](#) passing through a lot of communities on his way.

Anielewicz stayed in Warsaw a short time and left for Vilna, Lithuania, where a lot of refugees, youth movement's members and political groups came from the west. The city was annexed to the USSR a short time before.

Anielewicz demanded from his colleagues to send back a group of members to the occupied territories in Poland to continue the educational and political activities underground. He and his girlfriend, Mira Fukrer, were among the first volunteers that went back to Warsaw.

From January 1940, Anielewicz became a professional underground activist. As a leader of his youth movement, he organized cells and youngsters groups, instructed, participated in underground publications, organized meetings and seminars and visited other groups in different cities.

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<sup>1</sup> "Mordechai Anielewicz." Jewish Virtual Library.  
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Anielewicz.html>



## Resource 5-4.2

Anielewicz dedicated part of his time learning Hebrew, reading and studying History, sociology and economics. At the same time his point of view was formatted and expressed in publications and lectures.

His activities changed when the news about the mass killings of Jews in Eastern Europe were known. Immediately Anielewicz start organizing self-defense groups inside the [Warsaw Ghetto](#). His first attempts to connect with Polish forces outside the Ghetto, acting under orders of the Polish government in London, failed. In March - April 1942, Anielewicz was one of the founders of the "Anti-fascist group". The "group" did not fulfill the expectations of [Zionist](#) groups, and, after a wave of arrests of communist members the organization, was dismantled.

When the major deportation to extermination camps started in [Warsaw Ghetto](#), in the summer of 1942, Anielewicz was visiting in the south-west region of Poland, that was annexed to Germany, trying to organize armed defense. At his return he found only 60,000 Jews from 350,000, and a small "Jews Fighter Organization", without any weapons and with a lot of difficulties, a lost of fighters and failures. Anielewicz started to reorganize the group with great success because there was much support for the idea of fighting after the major deportation of all the underground groups. Next step was to compose a public committee and a coordination committee. In November 1942 Anielewicz was elected as chief commander. Until January 1943, a few fighter groups of youth movement members were based in the ghetto. A connection with the Polish army commanded from London was made and weapons were supplied from the Polish side of the city.

In January 18, 1943, the Nazis planned the second big deportation of the Jews to the [extermination camps](#) from the [Warsaw Ghetto](#). The headquarters organization did not have enough time to discuss the possible response but the armed groups decided to react. The resistance was lead in two points. Anielewicz commanded the battle in the main street. The fighters joined the deported and when they got a signal between the streets Zamenhoff and Niska they attacked the escort. The Jews escaped and dispersed. Most of Hashomer Hatzair's members were killed in this battle. This was a very significant move because four days after the revolt, the Nazis stopped the operation.

The next three months - January to April 1943 - was an intensive preparation and very decisive period for the underground organization, under Anielewicz's command. In April 19, on the eve of Pesah, the last deportation began, and the uprising broke out. At the first the superiority of the resistance was clear, and the Nazis suffered many losses. Three long days of battles between streets took place. The Nazis greatly outnumbered the resistance in soldiers and weapons, so that the hundreds of fighters, with only hand revolvers, had no chances. However, the Jewish fighters didn't surrender, and even survivors in shelters did not exit them despite the calls and promises. The Nazis forces were compelled to burn house by house and to go through every shelter in the Ghetto. The fight lasted for four weeks, and in May 16, 1943, after a lot of casualties, General Jurgen Stroop could report that the Ghetto was defeated and "there is no more Jewish suburb in Warsaw".

## Resource 5-4.2

The first days of battles Anielewicz commanded the resistance forces. When the street fight ended he moved to the headquarters shelter to Mila 18 street. On May 8, Anielewicz was killed in the headquarters bunker together with a few colleagues.

In Israel Kibbutz, "Yad Mordechai" was named in memory of Mordecai Anielewicz, and a monument is erected in his memory.

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*From the last testament of Mordechai Anielewicz. Anielewicz wrote this letter when he knew that he was about to die. Anielewicz died when the ghetto was destroyed by the Germans, but the letter survived.*

It is now clear to me that what took place exceeded all hopes. In our opposition to the Germans we did more than our strength allowed—but now our forces are waning. We are on the brink of being wiped out. We forced the Germans to retreat twice—but they returned stronger than ever. . . . I feel that great things are happening and that this action which we have dared to take is of enormous value. . . . We need many rifles, hand grenades, machine guns, and explosives.

I cannot describe the conditions in which the Jews of the ghetto are now “living.” Only a few exceptional individuals will be able to survive such suffering.

The others will sooner or later die. Their fate is certain, even though thousands are trying to hide in cracks and ratholes. It is impossible to light a candle, for lack of air. Greetings to you who are outside.

Perhaps a miracle will occur and we shall see each other again one of these days. . . . The last wish of my life has been fulfilled. Jewish self-defense has become a fact. Jewish resistance and revenge have really happened. I am happy to have been one of the first Jewish fighters in the ghetto. Where will rescue come from?

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**The Mordechai Anielewicz Memorial, Yad Mordechai, Israel<sup>1</sup>**



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<sup>1</sup> Film and Photo Archive, Yad Vashem



## 12

# Women Fighters

**M**en, women, and children performed many individual and collective acts of resistance during the Nazi occupation of Europe. Each in their own way played a heroic part. But the heroism of the women was especially outstanding. Young girls and women fought with guns and homemade bombs; they sloshed through the filth of the sewers guiding people from the ghettos to the “other side of the wall.” They behaved heroically in ghettos, camps, and forests, and when there was no other way, they resisted passively. One Nazi grudgingly reported how courageously an old white-haired woman behaved as she stood beside

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a death pit, holding a year-old baby in her arms, singing him a song, and tickling him as he gurgled with pleasure. She could have run around, screaming, and tearing her hair, making the child's last moments a horrible nightmare, but she chose to end her life and his with dignity, no matter how much pain she felt in her heart.

Women as well as men were instrumental in making decisions about underground resistance. In the Bialystok ghetto, the records of a meeting show the names Sara, Fanya, Yocheved, Zippora, and Ethel—women whose last names we shall probably never know. All played a part in making the decision that the Bialystok ghetto would resist. When the Germans came, the ghetto fighters, men and women, stood their ground bravely.

Nuta Teitelboim, a young Jewish woman from Warsaw, blonde and blue-eyed, was “wanted” by the Gestapo. She was one of the most fearless fighters in the ghetto and organized a women's detachment in the ghetto. Later she fought heroically in the uprising. Known as “Little Wanda with the Braids,” she blew up cafes where German soldiers were drinking, derailed trains, and carried out daring acts of sabotage against the Nazis even in broad daylight.

Dr. Anna Broide Heller gave medical attention to homeless children of the ghetto; food and baths were given to them by other women. Some of them remade their tattered rags so that the children would have clothes just a little longer.

A long list of women who worked on or distributed underground newspapers includes Sonia Madesker, Bela Chazan, Tosia Altman, Feigele Milstein, Rivka Karpinkes, Rushka Zilber. And

## Women Fighters



there was Frumka Plotnicki, who brought money from Warsaw to Vilna, along with news about the Treblinka death camp. Lisa Magun was active in the Vilna underground and knew many of the underground's secrets. She was caught and tortured but smuggled a message out of prison that the United Partisan Organization should not worry. She would not betray them. She was so beloved the partisans later used “Lisa calls” as their password. Vitka Kempner was sent out on reconnaissance missions and blew up German transports, killing as many as 200 soldiers at one time.

From a report by General Stroop, the German general in charge of murdering the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto, we read:

During the armed resistance, the women belonging to the battle groups were equipped the same as the men. Not infrequently, these women fired pistols with both hands. It



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happened time and again that these women had pistols or hand grenades (Polish “pineapples”) concealed in their underclothes—up to the last moment—to use against the men of the SS.

Vladka, a teen-age girl, was able to live outside the ghetto walls because of her non-Jewish appearance. She was given the responsibility of smuggling dynamite into the ghetto, which she hid in greasy packages made to look like butter packets. Vladka was one of the few lucky ones who was not caught.

Zofia Yamaika, an underground leader, escaped to the forest, was caught, and was put on a train to Treblinka. She jumped from the train, pretended she was dead, and finally returned to Warsaw. In Warsaw she worked on an underground paper, was captured again, and was put into a German prison. She was finally allowed to go free and went once more into the forest. Her group was attacked by 300 Germans, and she and two Poles covered the retreat of the Polish partisan unit. Zofia manned the machine gun, and although the three were killed, even Germans praised her bravery.

Jewish women who were imprisoned in labor and death camps also practiced a form of resistance. Many of them observed the holidays the best way they could, lighting Sabbath candles made from a scooped-out potato filled with margarine and a rag wick. *Yahrzeit* candles to commemorate the dead were made the same way. Many of the women gave their lives for *kashrut* (observing the kosher dietary laws), choosing hunger and suffering rather than eat forbidden food. Some refused to work on the Sabbath,

## Women Fighters

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*Malka Zdrojewicz's memories were not the exception: women and men resisted the Nazis at every turn. It was not unusual for the Germans to line Jews up before a firing squad, kill some, and lead the rest off to the camps.*

In the brush factory there was an organized group of boys and girls. There was an arms cache under my bed as well. Some time later I gave up my work at the brush factory and so did the others. We went to a neutral place in the ghetto area and climbed down into the underground sewers. Through them, we girls used to carry arms into the ghetto, and we hid them in our boots. During the ghetto uprising we hurled Molotov cocktails at the Germans.

The Germans beat us up badly and lined us up to be executed by a firing squad. Suddenly, I felt a heavy blow on my head, and at the same instant I heard shots. Blumka fell dead on the spot. Rachela and I, together with the others, were driven to the Umschlagplatz. They later took us to Maidanek (a concentration camp).

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suffering blows and torments because they would not do what they considered a sin.

In one camp women had to prepare an area for the army on Rosh Hashanah. While they dug trenches, they prayed, stationing a guard at the front of each trench to warn them if the labor supervisor should come. On Passover some women ate nothing but a basket of raw carrots or cooked mashed potatoes and one



block even managed to hold a seder which about 300 women attended, singing songs from the Haggadah around an empty table.

Hundreds of women doctors appear on lists of Polish Jews who were murdered, including Maria Reiter, a pediatrician; Netty Bahr, an internist; Fryderyka Ameisen-Distler, a dermatologist; Sara Alterman, a gynecologist; and Rachela Wajsberg, a general practitioner.

Zivia Lubetkin, one of the few survivors of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, tells of the beginning of the revolt:

The young men and women who had been waiting for this moment for months, the moment when they would shoot back at the Germans, were overjoyed. I was standing in an attic when I saw thousands of Germans armed with machine guns surrounding the ghetto. And we, some twenty young men and women, had a revolver, a grenade, and some home-

made bombs that had to be lit with matches. It must have been a strange sight to see us happily standing up against the heavily armed enemy—happy because we knew their end would come. . . .

Hanka was another fighter. She was sent from Lemberg, not yet under Nazi control, to the Warsaw ghetto to warn them of what was coming. She had to swim through an icy lake in order to smuggle herself across the border. When she stepped into the freezing water, she lost her nerve and returned to Lemberg. Two days later she tried again, determined to succeed, and swam the icy water. Then she made her way to Warsaw, to warn the Jews there.

Reyne, who looked typically Polish, was very useful in smuggling arms. The SS man who tried to flirt with her never dreamed she was Jewish, carrying a pistol in her basket of vegetables. Meta also looked Aryan. She secured a job as a typist in Gestapo headquarters in Paris. There she was able to obtain valuable information and the document forms needed by Jews who had to pose as non-Jews.

Lia, a beautiful French woman, was a faithful rescue worker in Vichy, France. She carried funds, documents, or weapons to those who were hidden. She was an excellent bicyclist, and when she carried something particularly dangerous, she would ride swiftly. If she had to pass a policeman, she would let go of the handlebars and skim by, smiling sweetly at him. They never suspected she was a Jewish resistance worker.

Chaika Grossman, another heroine of the Bialystok uprising,

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writes: “. . . the true heroes of a nation are small people, almost unknown. . . . I recall the memory of the daughters of Israel who fell heroically on the battlefield—Lonka, Tosia, Frumka, and many others. . . .”

Rushka was one of the forest fighters who often dynamited railroad tracks. One winter day she fell into a pond. When her clothes froze on her, her companions suggested she return to camp. But though she was completely covered with ice, she continued with the rest.

One young woman journeyed from the woods into Vilna seventeen times to find groups of Jews who might still be hiding in the ruins of the ghetto so that they could be led to the forest.

Mala Zimetbaum and Rosa Robota were imprisoned in Auschwitz, one of the worst death camps. Both were involved in underground activities there, and both were caught, tortured, and died, but neither would give any information to their Nazi captors. When Mala was to be executed, she was brought to the center of the camp to serve as an example to others who might try to escape. She hid a razor in the sleeve of her dress, and before the guard could kill her, she cut her wrists. He was angry and shouted, “I will decide who will die and how.” She slapped him across the face with her bloody hands and said, “But I will die like a hero, and you will die like a dog.”

These were but a few of the Jewish heroines. Some were young girls—many of them in their teens—some were middle-aged women, and some were old, but they felt they had a mission, and they accomplished it, quietly and bravely.



## 19

# Rescue from the Sky

**A**s the Nazis closed in on them, the Jews of Europe looked desperately for help. They looked to their Gentile neighbors. They looked to the resistance fighters of the occupied countries. They looked to the Allies. They found no hands outstretched to help them.

Finally, near the end of the war, more and more of the trapped Jews turned their eyes away from the indifference about them and looked toward the heavens.

And help came to them from the skies. It came in the form of

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the *tzanchanim*—young Jewish parachutists from the Jewish community of Palestine.

The *tzanchanim* consisted of 32 men and women who volunteered to serve the British by parachuting behind enemy lines, where they were to do their utmost to disable the enemy. They blew up railroad tracks, bridges, and munition plants; they were also eager to establish contact and help the remaining Jewish communities survive and individuals to escape.

The Jews of Palestine were ideal for this kind of mission. Many of them had been born in European countries, knew the land, and spoke European languages as their mother tongues. And they were completely dedicated to the Allied cause.

The job of selecting and training the *tzanchanim* went to Enzo Sereni, an Italian Jew who had emigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1926, where he had helped build Givat Brenner, today one of the largest kibbutzim in Israel.

Even before Hitler came to power, Enzo recognized the true nature of Nazi anti-Semitism. During a visit to Germany in 1929 as a delegate of the Hechalutz (Pioneer) movement, he warned the Jewish communities that they were sitting on a volcano. Hundreds of Jews were moved by his message and by his enthusiasm for Zionism. Inspired, they emigrated to Palestine. In 1933 he returned to Nazi Germany and then went on to Italy, France, the Netherlands, and Norway to alert and rescue more of his people.

In 1940 he enlisted in the British secret service. At the same time he was a member of the Jewish underground in Palestine. In 1944 he was asked to train the *tzanchanim*. After choosing the team to be trained, Enzo himself enlisted. His best friend asked

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why he endangered himself, especially since he was by far the oldest in the group. “Voices,” he answered, “voices of my brothers crying from death wagons, gas chambers, and mass graves fill my heart.”

Headquarters for the parachutists’ training program was Cairo. The young men and women had to know by heart the names of the Jewish underground leaders and their identifying features. They had to know how to drive and how to use a wireless. They learned to handle explosives. They memorized a special code, and, of course, they practiced parachuting from airplanes.

Some were sent to Italy and waited there for their assignment. Enzo was with them. While Enzo waited, he received a letter from his small son, Daniel, who wrote: “*Abba*, it is not important if you die. The important thing is to die like a hero.” Enzo went to the airport in Bari, Italy, with each group, and as he looked over his *tzanchanim*, he thought, “Eretz Yisrael is not forsaken if she has children such as these.”

Wherever they went, the parachutists were treated as heroes. For the poor Jews enclosed in ghettos, hiding in forests, and imprisoned in death camps, it seemed like a miracle that these people had come to help. Free Jews from a free Eretz Yisrael risked their lives to help their brothers in Europe.

Enzo’s turn to parachute came on May 15, 1944, but the mission turned into a disaster. The pilot lost his way, and Enzo parachuted into a German camp. He was immediately captured by the Germans and taken to Dachau, a death camp, where he was tortured horribly. But he revealed nothing, and finally the Nazis murdered him.



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*A description of Chana Senesh from a letter written by a British officer. Five days after this letter was written, Chana Senesh was executed in the Budapest prison yard.*

I had the pleasure of meeting a young person from Jerusalem who parachuted to my headquarters in Slovenia and proceeded overland to another part of Europe. She was a grand girl and as plucky as anyone could be. Should you hear of her when she returns, please put yourself out to meet her. She was with two other men from Palestine. They were all excellent and will be regarded as great heroes as time goes on.

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Fourteen months after Enzo's death a ship bearing his name docked in Haifa harbor, proudly flying the blue and white Jewish flag. Palestine was still under the rule of Britain, who would not allow Jews to enter the land. But this ship carried a precious cargo that Enzo would have been proud of—a thousand "illegal" refugees, smuggled into the harbor.

Years later, at a memorial meeting for Enzo, one of Israel's leaders said of him, "If Abraham had founded the Jewish nation only for the sake of Enzo Chayim Sereni, it would have been reason enough."

Another parachutist from Palestine who gave her life to the cause was Chana Senesh—pioneer, poet, and parachutist. Chana was born in Budapest into a wealthy and prominent Hungarian

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Jewish family which had grown away from Judaism. At seventeen Chana became interested in Zionism. She learned Hebrew and decided to settle in Eretz Yisrael. She was accepted at an agricultural school in Palestine and then applied for a certificate to leave Hungary.

Ten days after her eighteenth birthday, she received the certificate. Three months later, she arrived. First she trained on a farm for her agricultural career. Then she settled on a kibbutz called S'doth Yam, a new, struggling settlement near Caesaria. She hardly missed her easy, luxurious life in Hungary or the elegant parties, beautiful clothes, and fine food. She only missed her mother.

Chana Senesh was a poet. She saw everything—her own life, the sacrifice her mother made in allowing her to leave Hungary, and the country which she adopted as her own—with a poet's sensitivity. Little by little she learned Hebrew well enough to write her poetry in it. One beautiful poem said:

My God, these should never end:  
the sand and the sea,  
the sound of water,  
the thunder of heaven,  
the prayers of man.

When she was chosen to be a parachutist, she wrote in her diary, "To leave this land and freedom? I would like to fill my lungs with the fresh air of Eretz Yisrael, which I will be able to breathe

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in the choking atmosphere of Europe, and to give it to those who have been denied the taste of freedom." Then she wrote:

To die—young—to die—No, I did not wish it.  
I love the warm sun,  
And I did not want destruction, war. . . .

But if I am commanded to live today  
In a stream of blood; amid terrible havoc,  
I will say, Blessed be the Name for the privilege,  
To live, and when the hour comes to die—  
On your soil, my country, my Homeland.

Together with her companions, she parachuted into Yugoslavia and slowly made her way to the border of Hungary. Meantime Hungary was invaded by the Nazis. But Chana continued her assignment.

After many days of travel through forests and villages, she succeeded in crossing the border but was almost immediately captured by Hungarian police. She was tied and whipped on the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet for hours. The Nazis wanted the secret radio code, but Chana knew its importance and would not reveal it, not even under terrible torture.

Then came the worst punishment of all. The Nazis located her mother and brought her to jail. They told Chana if she did not reveal the code, Mrs. Senesh would be tortured and killed. Still Chana kept the secret. Finally they let her mother go.

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Joel Nusbacher, also in Chana's group, was captured and imprisoned in the same jail with Chana. He soon discovered she was there, for everyone spoke of her with reverence and love. "Even in the police wagon she raised our spirits as she told of Eretz Yisrael," said one prisoner. Chana was three floors above Joel, in solitary confinement, but Joel cleverly invented a system of "talking" to her with mirrors. Chana also invented a system of "talking." She made large letters from paper, with which she formed words and sentences. From morning till night the prisoners watched Chana's window as she "lectured" to them on Eretz Yisrael and life in the kibbutz.

The guards even supplied her with bits of paper. From these she made small puppets. Then her window became a theater as well as a lecture hall. Finally, after two months, Chana was transferred to a large cell. First she conducted exercises for everyone. Then she led discussions, especially about Eretz Yisrael. She taught two Polish children who had spent most of their lives in prison to read and write and rewarded them for good efforts with paper dolls she herself made.

Chana and Joel were finally transferred to another jail in Budapest. Here Chana was put on trial and pleaded guilty. But at the end of the trial, she accused those in the courtroom, as well as all the Nazis and Hungarians who cooperated with the Nazis, of horrible deeds and murderous acts.

On a gray and rainy day in November 1944, the Hungarian prosecutor entered Chana's cell, number 13. She looked up as he asked, "Chana Senesh, you are condemned to death. Will you plead for mercy?"

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“Mercy from you? No, I beg no mercy from the hands of hangmen.”

“Then you may write farewell letters, for in an hour you will be shot.”

Chana wrote two letters, one to her mother and the other to Joel. To Joel, she wrote, “Continue—never retreat—carry the battle to the day of freedom!”

The hour was up. Chana was led to the courtyard, her hands tied to a pillar. A Nazi tried to put a blindfold on her eyes, but she refused to allow it.

Chana wrote a poem which begins:

Blessed is the match consumed in kindling a flame.  
Blessed is the heart with strength to stop its beating  
for honor’s sake.

Chana herself was the blessed match who kindled a flame in her people that will remain lighted forever.

# **UNIT SIX: Conclusion**

## **ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:**

1. The principles of heroism and resistance from the Holocaust can be utilized after the Holocaust ended.
2. The lessons of the Holocaust compel people today to take actions against genocide.
3. The memories of the Holocaust compel people to teach this memory to future generations and to never forget what happened.

## **GOALS:**

1. To show students that even after the Holocaust ended, acts of heroism and resistance continued.
2. To allow students to compare the Holocaust to modern day genocide.
3. To encourage students to use what they have learned to teach others.

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

1. What happened after the Holocaust was over?
2. Did events that are similar to the Holocaust ever happen again?
3. What are ways that students can teach about the Holocaust to their peers?
4. What lessons have students learned from this curriculum?

## **MEMORABLE MOMENTS:**

Survivor interviews  
School Presentation

## **UNIT ASSESSMENTS:**

Answers to discussion questions  
Class debates  
Journal entries  
Interview questions  
School presentation (Curriculum Assessment)

# Lesson 6.1: Nuremberg Trials

*(fully scripted lesson)*

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. SWBAT state what the Nuremberg Trials were.
2. SWBAT use their research skills to put together a short presentation that they will share with the class.
3. SWBAT evaluate the charges brought against the defendants and judge for themselves about the impact of these trials.
4. SWBAT state how the Nuremberg trials were acts of heroism and resistance.

## **MATERIALS:**

Computers  
Presentation Materials  
Journals  
Pencils

## **TIME LINE:**

Nuremberg Trials (20 minutes)  
Presentation (45 minutes)  
Reflection (10 minutes)

## **ASSESSMENT:**

Answers to discussion questions  
Presentation  
Journal Entries

## **PROCEDURES:**

### **1. Nuremberg Trials: (20 min.)**

- Have students research the Nuremberg Trials using the internet and any resources that they find on Google. Ensure that they are using reliable sources and not Wikipedia. Some helpful sites are:  
[http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/nuremberg/home\\_nuremberg.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/nuremberg/home_nuremberg.html)  
<http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/wcrime.htm>  
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005140>
- Ask students:
  - What were the Nuremberg Trials? (Answer: Court Proceedings convened after the Second World War to hold those responsible accountable for terrible acts during the war.)

- Tell the students that this was the first time in history that the people who caused a war or committed crimes during a war were held accountable for their actions on such a large scale. The actual idea for such a trial was first put into the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I, but it was never used.
- Ask students:
  - What were the charges against the defendants? (Answers: (1) Conspiracy, (2) Crimes Against Peace, (3) War Crimes, and (4) Crimes Against Humanity.)
  - What does conspiracy mean? (Answer: The systematic planning to commit any of the other three crimes listed above.)
  - What does Crimes Against Peace mean? (Answer: The waging of aggressive war in defiance of all international agreements which outlaw war as a form of national policy.)
  - What does War Crimes mean? (Answer: The killing, enslaving, or mistreatment of POW's or citizens, and the needless destruction of property.)
  - What does Crimes Against Humanity mean? (Answer: The killing, enslaving, deportation, or mistreatment of civilians either before or during war and any political, religious, or racial persecutions of a specific group of people.)
  - Who was put on trial for these charges? (Answers: People in Germany who were captured and members of the government and/or the Nazi party.)
- Tell students that this trial was important because the victors didn't just execute the losers. Those who were accused of crimes were put on trial by the countries that won the war. The rule of law was followed.
- Ask students:
  - Which countries won the war and thus had judges at the trial? (Answers: United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union)
  - Was everybody that was put on trial found guilty? (Answer: No)
  - Why was it important, from the point of view of the US, that not everybody put on trial was found guilty? (Answer: It gives the trial legitimacy.)
  - Do we still use this idea of a trial for leaders who commit terrible crimes today? (Answer: Yes)
  - Where do we still use this concept today and for whom? (Answers: A court has been created in The Hague, the Capital of the Netherlands, which resembles the court at Nuremberg. It is used for the people who committed crimes in the former nation of Yugoslavia during the 1990's.)

## 2. Nuremberg Presentation: (30 min.)

- Instruct students to use the following questions to prepare an oral or written presentation on the Nuremberg trial:
  - What charges were brought against the defendants?
  - What was the most compelling testimony against the person or group?
  - What defense did the defendants use?
  - What was the outcome of the trials? What was the punishment?

**3. Reflection Exercise: (10 min.)**

- In what ways were those who conducted the Nuremberg Trials heroes?
- Does this count as an act of resistance, even though it is after the fact of the Holocaust?
- What lessons can we learn from the Trials?
- Have them share their responses with the class.

# Lesson 6.2: Genocide Today

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. SWBAT define the roles of a range of individuals during and before a particular case of genocide.
2. SWBAT distinguish a level of responsibility for each case.
3. SWBAT analyze what it takes to be a rescuer when genocide occurs, using the examples of Damas Gisimba, Carl Wilkens, and Simone Weil Lipman.
4. SWBAT compare/contrast the stories that they have learned about in previous lessons with the story of Rwanda genocide.

## **CORE ACTIVITIES:**

### **1. Activity #1:**

- Break the students up into 3 groups. Assign each group one of the three handouts (Resource 2.1, 2.2 or 2.3)<sup>1</sup>. Ask students to assign a number (1-4) reflecting a level of responsibility for each individual listed. Students should be prepared to explain and defend their choices. Have students also note up to three instances about which they feel strongly and would like to discuss.
- In their groups, have students discuss their choices, focusing on items in which there is the broad disagreement. Ask students to try to persuade others who disagree with them to change their minds about a level of responsibility. Circulate around the classroom to observe, to field questions, and to assist with disagreements.
- Have the whole class discuss items with the most disagreement.
- Ask if anyone gave the highest level of responsibility (4) to every individual on the list. Discuss the implications of this approach. Draw out if a bystander can get a 4 in this instance. Why or why not?

### **2. Genocide Film:**

- The story of how Simone Weil Lipman was able to save thousands of Jewish children during the Holocaust is a starting point for an explanation of what it takes to defy genocide. The film focuses on Damas Gisimba, director of a small orphanage in Rwanda that was besieged by militias during the 1994 genocide. Students will learn how Gisimba, with the help of American aid worker Carl Wilkens, managed to protect, care for, and save some 400 people.
- Before watching the film, ensure that students know what genocide is and that they are familiar with the situation in Rwanda. The following resource can be helpful: <http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/history/>
- Have students watch the film by going to the following website. The film can also be downloaded).
  - <http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/analysis/details.php?content=2007-01-05&menupage=Central+Africa>

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<sup>1</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum "Resources for Educators." [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)



- How did students understand the main stories presented in the film?
  - What did Damas Gisimba, Carl Wilkens, and Simone Weil Lipman value, and what risks did they take by holding onto their values?
  - As events unfolded, what were Damas Gisimba’s concerns?
  - What does it mean—as both Simone Weil Lipman and Damas Gisimba state—to “see the other as yourself”?
- What does it take to be a rescuer? Think back to the incidents that took place during the Rwandan genocide.
  - What is the international community? Are you a part of it?
  - What role did the international community play during the genocide?
  - Does the international community have the responsibility of assisting countries threatened by genocide?
  - What does the community risk when it becomes involved in rescuing people from genocide and what does the community risk when it allows genocidal incidents to escalate?
  - What role can average citizens play in assisting when genocide threatens? How can you all get involved and make your voices heard against genocide?
- Can hatred be banished?
  - At the end of the film, Damas Gisimba stated that hatred must be “banished” to make the world a peaceful place and that children need a “good education.”
- Have the class discuss the following:
  - What is “hatred”? When is it dangerous?
  - What are examples of different forms of hatred in the global community?
  - Can hatred be banished?
  - What would it take to banish hatred?
  - Whose responsibility is it to work to end hatred or to respond when hatred provokes violence?
- How do the events that occurred in Rwanda compare to the stories that we have learned about in the Holocaust?
- In what way are the people in the film similar to the heroes that we have learned about?

### **3. Reflection:**

- Ask students to summarize the lesson and state any conclusions they may have. What connections do they see between this historical example and its issues of action and responsibility and their lives today as citizens of their community, country, and/or the world?
- How can they utilize what they have learned in this curriculum to help combat modern day examples of genocide?

# Lesson 6.3: Bringing It All Together

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. SWBAT summarize what they have learned throughout the curriculum.
2. SWBAT apply what they have learned by constructing questions for a survivor interview.
3. SWBAT present what they have learned to their school.

## **CORE ACTIVITIES:**

**NOTE:** This lesson will need to be done over several classes.

### **1. Summary of Curriculum:**

- Start by asking the students what is one thing they have taken away from this curriculum.
- Are there any acts of resistance or heroism that stand out among all the others?
- How has this curriculum changed their perception of the Holocaust?
- In what ways has it influenced how they look at the ways in which Jews reacted during the Holocaust?
- What can the lessons from the Holocaust teach us?

### **2. Interview Survivors: (memorable moment)**

- Students will break up into groups and each group will be responsible for seeking out a survivor from the Holocaust. This can be done in their local area or through e-mail/phone communications.
- Have them construct interviews that they will give to the survivor. Ensure that the interviews contain elements of the units that they have learned about.
- Questions should focus on the survivor's memory of acts of resistance and heroism from their perspective in the Holocaust. **Note:** It may be hard to find survivors who were actually engaged in resistance, but try to find people who knew about these acts or were beneficiaries of them.
- Upon completion, the groups will present their findings to the class.

### **3. School Presentation: (memorable moment)**

- Have students research Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) and how the Israelis choose to commemorate the holiday and in what ways Jews around the world engage in Yom HaShoah.
- Tell the students they will be holding their own Holocaust Remembrance Day at their school. Students will be responsible for creating booths that highlight heroism and resistance in the Holocaust.
- Have each group choose a Unit to present upon (Units 2 – 5).
- Each group will present a visual presentation of their unit along with handouts.
- In addition, one member of each group will be a leader of discussion who is responsible for presenting on their topic to the school.
- This will give students a chance to highlight what they have learned throughout the course.

### ASSESSING AND DEFINING RESPONSIBILITY IN THE BALKANS

*If you were a judge, how would you assess the “responsibility” of these people for what happened in the Balkans between 1991 and 1995? Next to each example, indicate one of the following:*

- |                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Not Responsible       | 3. Responsible      |
| 2. Minimally Responsible | 4. Very Responsible |

- \_\_\_ 1. A person in Bosnia who voted for a nationalist political party in 1990 that emphasized group differences.
- \_\_\_ 2. A Bosnian Serb who identified Muslim neighbors to militias.
- \_\_\_ 3. International negotiators who treated all the “warring parties” as equal, refusing to name an aggressor.
- \_\_\_ 4. A sniper who, under orders from a superior, killed civilians.
- \_\_\_ 5. A civil servant who oversaw the transfer of possessions from Muslims to Serbs.
- \_\_\_ 6. A Bosnian Serb soldier who let local “toughs” enter a holding camp and beat Muslim and Croatian detainees.
- \_\_\_ 7. A general with the Bosnian government army who did not punish troops who had committed atrocities.
- \_\_\_ 8. UN peacekeeping forces at Sarajevo airport that shone lights on civilians attempting to flee the siege on Sarajevo, thereby making them visible to Bosnian Serb snipers.
- \_\_\_ 9. An American citizen who tuned out all news from the conflict because it was too confusing.
- \_\_\_ 10. International governments that imposed an arms embargo on the entire region, reinforcing the Serb military advantage.
- \_\_\_ 11. Slobodan Milosevic, President of Serbia during the conflict, who inflamed popular nationalist sentiments and provided military support to the Bosnian Serb armed forces forcibly displacing non-Serb civilians.
- \_\_\_ 12. The UN official who turned down a request from UN peacekeeping forces for more help because the request was on the wrong form.
- \_\_\_ 13. A Major in the Bosnian Serb army who questioned orders to execute POWs, but carried them out anyway.
- \_\_\_ 14. The Croatian military commander who ordered the destruction of the historic bridge in Mostar.
- \_\_\_ 15. A civilian from any side who took over the abandoned home of someone displaced during the conflict.
- \_\_\_ 16. A civilian in Belgrade, capital of Serbia, who refused to hear evidence of Serbian atrocities.
- \_\_\_ 17. A Croatian nationalist who spoke admiringly of the World War II Croatian regime that killed hundreds of thousands, including many Serbs and Jews.

### ASSESSING AND DEFINING RESPONSIBILITY IN RWANDA

*How would you assess the level of “responsibility” of these people for the Rwandan genocide that began in April 1994? Indicate one of the following:*

- |                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Not Responsible       | 3. Responsible      |
| 2. Minimally Responsible | 4. Very Responsible |

- \_\_\_ 1. A teacher who categorized schoolchildren as Hutu or Tutsi for the government
- \_\_\_ 2. Civil servants who gave lists of Tutsis to the militias who then killed them
- \_\_\_ 3. A Rwandan soldier who opposed the killings, but did not speak out against them.
- \_\_\_ 4. Child soldiers, recruited into the Hutu militia, who killed Tutsis
- \_\_\_ 5. Radio broadcasters who called for the elimination of all Tutsis
- \_\_\_ 6. Members of the Presidential Guard who started the killing
- \_\_\_ 7. Foreign companies and governments who sold the Rwandan government guns, tanks, and other supplies before the killings. (Most killing was with machetes)
- \_\_\_ 8. Humanitarian organizations who gave aid to everyone-victims and perpetrators alike
- \_\_\_ 9. Diplomats who evacuated Rwanda, leaving their Rwandan employees behind \_\_\_ without protection
- \_\_\_ 10. The U.S. President who, during the entire three months of the genocide, never assembled his top policy advisors to discuss the killings.
- \_\_\_ 11. A Catholic nun who forced hundreds of Tutsis seeking protection in her convent to leave knowing they would be killed.
- \_\_\_ 12. A Hutu man who killed his Tutsi neighbor to divert the military’s suspicion away from himself and his house where he was hiding Tutsi family members.
- \_\_\_ 13. UN officials who ignored reports of genocide in Rwanda
- \_\_\_ 14. Belgian colonizers who, in the early 1900s, damaged ethnic relations between Hutus and Tutsis by promoting the idea that Tutsis were superior to Hutu
- \_\_\_ 15. Members of the UN Security Council who voted to reduce peacekeeping troops while the killings were ongoing.
- \_\_\_ 16. A man who helped his Tutsi friend escape, but participated in the killing of strangers
- \_\_\_ 17. A woman who did not kill anyone, but looted the homes of Tutsi victims
- \_\_\_ 18. A British reporter who incorrectly reported the genocide as “tribal warfare”
- \_\_\_ 19. An American citizen who tuned out all the news from Rwanda because it was too graphic and depressing
- \_\_\_ 20. UN peacekeeping troops who, following direct orders not use force unless fired upon, did not intervene as Hutus killed Tutsis

### ASSESSING AND DEFINING RESPONSIBILITY IN DARFUR

*f you were a judge, how would you assess the “responsibility” of these people for what has happened in the Sudan since 2003? Next to each example, indicate one of the following:*

- |                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Not Responsible       | 3. Responsible      |
| 2. Minimally Responsible | 4. Very Responsible |

- \_\_\_ 1. The pilot of a Sudanese government plane who bombs villages in Darfur.
- \_\_\_ 2. Foreign governments that export weapons to the Sudanese government.
- \_\_\_ 3. A Janjaweed militiaman who follows orders to burn a village.
- \_\_\_ 4. An African Union soldier, mandated only to monitor the conflict in Darfur, stands by as a village burns to the ground.
- \_\_\_ 5. A humanitarian aid worker who does not share information with the press for fear that the Sudanese government would jeopardize relief efforts.
- \_\_\_ 6. The CEO of a foreign company that invests significant funds in Sudan
- \_\_\_ 7. The leader of an attacked village who does not try to forcefully defend his village against Janjaweed raids.
- \_\_\_ 8. Organizations that declined to meet with a Darfuri man who was trying to draw attention to the crisis in Darfur in 2003.
- \_\_\_ 9. A high school student in the United States who has never heard of Darfur.
- \_\_\_ 10. A reporter who received information about violence in Darfur in 2003 and responded “if it’s not already in the news, it must not be a big enough story.”
- \_\_\_ 11. A poor Chadian farmer who refuses to let Darfur refugees in Chad onto his land to collect firewood.
- \_\_\_ 12. The pilot of a Sudanese government plane who knowingly bombed the site of peace negotiations.
- \_\_\_ 13. A rebel who assaults a civilian.
- \_\_\_ 14. A middle-class family in Khartoum who remains unaware of the violence in Darfur.
- \_\_\_ 15. A humanitarian aid group that pulled out of Darfur when its workers were attacked, leaving thousands of refugees in need.
- \_\_\_ 16. A survivor of genocide who is unwilling to speak out about her experience or the current events in Darfur.
- \_\_\_ 17. An American who avoids unpleasant news and is indifferent to news of atrocities coming out of Darfur.
- \_\_\_ 18. A European government that has condemned massive atrocities in Darfur but does not use the word “genocide” to describe the situation.
- \_\_\_ 19. A Sudanese general charged with coordinating operations between the Sudanese government and Janjaweed.
- \_\_\_ 20. The United States government, which declared a genocide emergency in Darfur in 2004 and then referred the case to the United Nations, saying that the United States had done “everything (it could) to get the Sudanese government to act responsibly.”
- \_\_\_ 21. An American who remained indifferent to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, but decided to protest against the Darfur genocide.
- \_\_\_ 22. American broadcasters (ABC, NBC, and CBS) who collectively run 25,000 minutes of annual nightly news and devoted 26 minutes to the Darfur conflict in 2004.
- \_\_\_ 23. International leaders who cited the need for “African solutions for African problems.”
- \_\_\_ 24. A U.S. diplomat who strongly opposes U.S. policy in the Sudan but publicly remains silent to safeguard his/her career.
- \_\_\_ 25. A Chinese industrial expert who worked on the pipeline that allows the Sudanese government to export oil.

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*This DVD compilation has several other documentaries that may be helpful to add to certain lessons.*

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*This book was not used in the Curriculum Guide but it is a useful resource to assign as homework as it is a relatively short book. It contains the story of a family who defied death and how they carried the strength and courage to survive.*

Echoes and Reflections.” Anti-Defamation League, Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, Yad Vashem, 2005.

*This curriculum guide has many useful resources and handouts that have been used in various lessons within this curriculum guide.*

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*This can give you more of a background on Logotherapy and is a short enough of a book for students to be assigned to read as homework.*

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*This book contains many stories of resistance and heroism that are first person accounts of what happened during the Holocaust. The stories contained within the book are moving and inspiring.*

Gilbert, Martin. The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust. Henry Holt and Company, LLC.: New York, 2004.

*This book can offer more stories of heroism and resistance and is organized by where the events were located.*

Jewish Virtual Library, [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.com](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.com)

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*This book was particularly useful for the Spiritual Resistance Unit and contains information on Victor Frankl’s Logotherapy as well as the concept of Kiddush HaHayyim. This concept was not covered in the Unit but it is worth utilizing as a resource to add to the lessons.*

Stadler, Bea. The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance. Behrman House, 1995

*This book contains many of the stories that were offered in the Physical and Spiritual Resistance Units. It is a very helpful resource to offer stories of resistance and heroism. In addition, each chapter has questions at the end to help guide discussion.*

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)

*This website has an Educators section which has many useful resources as well as teaching guides on how to approach teaching the Holocaust. This can be helpful if it is your first time teaching about the Holocaust. In addition, the website has a myriad of resources that are offered in their Archives section, such as testimonies and artifacts.*

Yad Vashem. [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

*This site has similar options as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website but can offer many aspects from an Israeli perspective.*