

# *Buzik*

*Baruch Yung's  
Autobiography*



# **Buzik**

## **Baruch Yung's Autobiography**

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Translator's note: Hebrew was not Baruch Yung's mother tongue, and this was reflected in the way he expressed himself and wrote. I have endeavored to maintain his authentic writing style in this English translation. Therefore the text may not always be grammatically correct.

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**Thank you, Hovav, Tamir, Tai, Clil, Faran, for listening to me, helping me  
and coming with me into this adventure. I love you so much.**

*In memory of those who acted with humanity and great courage in a dark time of hatred and persecution.*

*In memory of the people who, in the years when it was prohibited to help Jews, knowingly endangered their lives and the lives of their families, and opened their homes and hearts to Baruch Yung, my father.*

**The peasant Kozakova and her daughter**, who lived in Ludmir (Volodymyr-Volynsky).

**Fiale, the Czech officer**, who was shot during the war when it was discovered that he had been spying for the partisans.

**Andriy the Ukrainian and his wife, his policeman brother and their parents**, who did not survive the war.

**Pelikan the Czech, his wife and children**, from Dolynka.

**Naum and Uliana Trachuk**, from Vorchnov (Verkhniv).

***May Their Memory Live On***

**Baruch Yung**

**1928-2008**

**Your story as you wrote it...**

Your story, your childhood, your life, in the time of Holocaust and resurrection, as you wrote it.

I have not changed or edited anything, so that we can feel as close as possible to you, to imagine the sound of your voice.

Your words accompanied us in May 2019, when we left on a journey in your footsteps, to the landscape of your childhood.

I have attached some of the moments written from that journey to your book.

Thank you.

Ariela

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## *Before We Begin*

Before we get to the story, we would like to offer some context, regarding the time and place Buzik—Baruch Yung—lived and in which his story takes place. A few words about World War II, about the Holocaust, and about Poland.

World War II was the greatest war humanity has ever known. Official estimates put the total death count at over 70 million, more than any other war in history. The war began on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939, with the invasion of Poland by Germany. The war in Europe ended on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945, with the German unconditional surrender to the Allied forces.

As the war broke out, Eastern Poland—where Baruch lived—was invaded and occupied by German forces. Soon after, control over the area was transferred to Russia as part of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Eventually, Nazi Germany took over the area again in 1941, as they broke the Pact and engaged the Russians on the Eastern Front.

Before World War II, Jews lived all across Europe. The Jewish population of Poland alone was around 3.4 million. The Jews in Poland lived in organized, vibrant communities. They had schools, Yeshivas (religious education for young Jewish men), Synagogues, craftsmen, and businessmen. This all ended when the war began.

Over the duration of World War II, the Nazis and their helpers executed a systematic genocide of the Jewish people, now called The Holocaust. They murdered over 6 million Jews.

During the 6 years of war, the Jewish people were persecuted in every possible way. they were banished from schools, forced out of their jobs, their businesses and shops were shut down. They were forced to wear yellow badges attached to their clothes at all times, to mark and distinguish them from the rest of society. The Nazi authorities closed off neighborhoods and turned them into Jewish Ghettos, where no one could get in or out, and transferred all of the Jews to those secluded quarters. The Ghettos were usually located in the poor and crowded areas of the town, and the Jews were forced to live in small crowded apartments, sometimes more than one family in an apartment.

Life in the Ghettos was very hard, the people living there suffered from hunger, they were taken to do forced labor, and forbidden from going outside the ghetto.

Every now and then, the Nazis would perform “Aktions”. They would gather the Jews, then divide them into separate groups, tearing families apart in the process. Some groups would be taken to labor camps, some to concentration camps, and some to the death camps. Those who were not chosen were to remain in the ghetto, awaiting the next Aktion.

Being Jewish during the war was dangerous. Life inside the ghetto, the only place the Nazis allowed the Jews to live, was hard and dangerous. Outside the ghetto, things were even worse, as the local populations often cooperated with the Nazis and helped them hunt down the Jews.

The Nazis were intent on cleansing the world from Jews. To that end, they obviously considered Jews, but also members of other religions, if they had a Jewish parent or grandparent, or if they converted from Judaism. As far as the Nazis were concerned, all of those groups were considered Jewish.

In Vohlin, the area where Buzik lived, the locals—the Polish and the Ukrainians—cooperated with the Nazis in the persecution of the Jewish people. Some of the Jews living in Vohlin at the time were sent to death camps—most of them to camp Belzec—but most of the Jewish population was taken to nearby woods or fields and shot to death. Entire towns and villages were “cleansed” of Jews that way.

In 1939 there were 25,000 Jews living in Ludmir, one of the biggest towns in Vohlin. By the end of the war, only 140 remained.

When the war ended, the Jewish survivors started gathering at displaced persons (DP) camps. They came out of their hiding places—from monasteries that gave them shelter, from the woods after fighting alongside the Partisans—from the concentration camps, and from the death camps. At the DP camps, they received medical attention, food, and water. They recovered slowly, trying to look for any surviving family members.

But getting to the DP camps wasn't easy. To get there, the survivors had to cross borders and face open hostility towards Jews. They had to sneak through mountain

passes, snow, forests, and any other possible way, trying to reach the camps. They would journey alone or in groups. Kids, adults, babies, and elderly. Many of them hoping that from there, they would be able to continue on, and go to Israel (then Palastina).

At that time, the State of Israel was not yet founded. But the Jewish settlement in Israel was well on its way to become a sovereign state. When the war ended, many representatives were sent by the Jewish people of Israel to help the survivors. They provided guidance—teaching them about Israel, teaching them songs—and gave them hope knowing that a good, safe life among other Jews, awaited them in Israel.

The same representatives were also responsible for the Bricha (escape) Movement. The same movement that transported Jews all across Europe, guiding them to ports and to ships that will carry them to Israel.

Israel—Palestine, at the time—was still under a British Mandate. In 1946, that Mandate government decided to deny the Jewish immigrants access to Israel. To deny access to the same people who survived the war. From that point, all immigrant ships arriving at Israel were turned back, with the people on them taken to holding camps in Cyprus. Thousands of Jews were held in those camps instead of arriving in Israel. The camps existed until 1949.

On November 29th 1947, the UN voted to divide the territory of Palestine into Jewish and Arab sovereign states. The Palestinian Arab leaders, as well as the Arab states, unanimously opposed it and conflict soon began. First, the Arabs in Palestine started attacking the Jewish settlements. Then, after Israel declared its independence on May 14<sup>th</sup> 1948 and the British Mandate ended, the Arab states—Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon—joined the local Arabs in fighting against Israel, escalating the conflict to start the Israeli War of Independence. The Jewish people were once again fighting for their lives. During the war, some settlements were besieged by the Arabs. Convoys of armored vehicles, guarded by multiple armed soldiers guarding the convoy from snipers and the siege forces, had to be used to get food and water to the besieged settlements.

The survivors of World War II—now immigrants in Israel—joined in on the fighting and played a significant part. During the War of Independence more Ma’apilim (immigrants)



kept arriving from Europe. Some of them were sent directly to battle, as the Jewish state lacked soldiers and was fighting multiple armies on multiple fronts.

The war officially ended in January 1949. In the years since, Jews kept immigrating to Israel from all over the world. From Europe, the Americas, North Africa, Yemen, and many other countries. Many arrived after being victims of antisemitic violence and persecution in their countries of origin. They immigrated to Israel, knowing that in Israel they will find, at last, a safe harbor—a home—for the Jewish people.

With this brief overview, we barely skimmed the surface of the events covered within. Still, we hope that we managed to give you sufficient context for the story you are about to read.

# Baruch Yung

I would like to put my life story on paper, although many years have passed since I decided to do this. And I admit that the children pushed me into doing it.

- a) Who is their father? Since they did not know my family, because nobody was left alive, then at least to tell them about the family.
- b) To write about the years 1939-1945, the Nazi rule of Poland, how I got through those years.
- c) That they will remember and know what the Germans did to the Jewish people.

## *Life in Ivanychi*

My name is Yung Baruch and my parents' names: my father Mordechai and my mother's name is Esther.

I was born in the town of Ivanychi in the Vohlyn (Volhynia) province of Ukraine in the year 1928, on Yom Kippur evening (I think it was on the date 16/9/1928) (the date was indeed confirmed by Aunt Bracha). In the town I was born in lived about 35 Jewish families and about 40% of them was my family. From my father's side and from my mother's side.

My father had three brothers and five sisters. My mother had four brothers and two sisters. They could be called multi-child families. I did not know my mother. She died two weeks after giving birth to me (all this is known to me through stories). I grew up in my grandfather and grandmother's home, my mother's parents.



Mordechai and Esther

I grew up in my grandfather and grandmother's home until the age of five or six (as far as I know, the woman who nursed me was a Christian). After my mother died, my father married her sister (under family pressure) and she also, after giving birth to a daughter, died two weeks later. The girl also grew up in my grandfather and grandmother's home. What I remember is that the girl was sick with an English disease [Haemophilia], the truth is I do not really remember her.

All these years I lived together with my father at Grandmother's. When I grew and was about six, dad left grandma's house and together with me, moved to live in another house. Since he couldn't leave me alone at home, so he hired a woman who will cook and clean and take care of me, because father was all day not at all at home, he dealt in trading grain and fruits.

During the fruit season he would dispatch railroad wagons, fruit to factories and also fruit for sale in the other markets. On my vacations from school he would take me with him on long

journeys to big cities. He also had a grain storeroom and would buy grain from the farmers and sell it to the flour mill that was in our town.

In economic terms father's situation was good, he just didn't have luck in other things. And after a time when we lived alone, father married again, with a woman who did not have children. She was not young, but was an intelligent lady with an education. But it didn't work and father divorced. Years later, I blamed myself that because of me it happened, because she wanted to educate me with education like in the big city, how she was used to but I was not used to this education and then, when my father would return home in the evening, I would cry and tell him what that woman did to me. (She didn't want to give me cookies, forced me to sleep in a nightgown and more).



Mordechai, his second wife Adela and Buzik

My father did not marry again, he hired a woman and she ran the house and took care of me. And so I started to go to the Polish school in the morning, and in the afternoon to the Hebrew school, and so the years passed. I grew up and then my father sent me to study in another city, Ludmir, to the “Tarbut” school [part of a network of secular, Hebrew-language schools. *Tarbut* is the Hebrew word for culture]. I would go every day by train there and back, the distance was 28 km each way. There was a special students’ train that left at 7 in the morning and returned at 3 in the afternoon, and also at 7 in the evening there was another train to return home. In the students’ train there were about 200 Christian students and 11 Jewish students, and I was one of them. Of course there were fights, but we had nothing to be ashamed of, we returned the blows in the right amount.

For the Tarbut school you had to come wearing a dark blue suit and hat and in winter, a coat of the same color. Since it was a Hebrew school, we studied there also on Sunday. But on Sunday there was no train suitable for getting to school, so we would go on Saturday evening and we had a place to sleep and eat [in Ludmir]. Of course, the children’s parents rented the place and paid good money for looking after us.

I wrote a few lines ago that we travelled on Saturday evening and regarding this I have a little story. A train would pass through our town on Saturday at 4:30 in the afternoon and at 11 at night. At first we all travelled at 11 at night, because we didn’t want to desecrate the Sabbath. But this disturbed us and we would get to the apartment where we lived at about 12:30 and until we fell asleep the time was 1:30 and this made it harder for us, and for me especially and the following day we would return home at 7:30 in the evening. So I spoke with my father, that I wanted to travel at 4:30 before sunset and then I still have time to meet friends, to go to a movie, between 7 and 9. It was prohibited to go to a movie from 9 to 11, the school did not agree to that. My father did not object, but asked me how I will feel alone and I told him I was ready and began to travel at 4:30. A few Saturdays went by and slowly, slowly, everyone joined. And so the time passed until 1939, the beginning of the Second World War.

In one of the bombings of the town, my father was injured. There was no doctor to treat him. As much as I can remember, he lay not at our house, only at Aunt Mirrel’s. I sat on father’s bed and the thought that my father will not live did not leave me. And I remember, at night, the Polish army that was retreating from the Germans came

through and among them was a doctor, who was asked to come and treat him, then he said, "What difference does it make if there will be one less Jew?" and I think that he did decide to look after him. He gave the kind of treatment that, by morning, my father was dead.

I remained alone, no father and no mother. I didn't understand why fate was cruel to me.

I remember, that I travelled together with everyone to the cemetery in the other town Porytsk (where Malka's mother lived, Malka is now in Argentina) and when I returned from the cemetery, Uncle Binyamin (mother's brother) took me to his home and my sister was with Aunt Mirrel (father's sister).



Buzik and his sister , Bluma

## *The Wanderings Begin*

I did not write that when the war broke out in 1939, the Germans did not come to us, only the Russians came and of course the Jews were happy. Thousands and thousands of people fled Poland when the Germans entered there, Jews and non-Jews, and the German planes would bomb the convoys of fleeing people. Among all these people, relatives from the city of Lodz also came to us. Three children from the family arrived: Henryk, Mordechai (Marian) and Beilah, and they lived with my uncle Binyamin and uncle Koppel, because their wives were the sisters of their mothers. To Henryk, of blessed memory, I was very attached. He was older than me and looked after me, and we slept together in bed. But, after a short time, the Russians sent Henryk and his brother to Russia and that's why they stayed alive. Henryk in the end arrived in Israel and his brother is in Poland.

But I didn't stay long with Uncle Binyamin, I didn't get along with his wife so I moved to live with Uncle Moshe, the brother of my mother. He used to live in the city of Ludmir. It is not good to be an orphan.

I stayed at Uncle Moshe's until the year 1941 when the Germans arrived, because in the part of Poland where we lived, the Russians had arrived in 1939. (According to an agreement between the Russians and the Germans). Uncle Moshe lived outside the city of Ludmir, he had a farm and also a grain storeroom. There, at his place, I learned how to work with all sorts of farming tools. And this helped me greatly after I left the ghetto<sup>1</sup>. I remember the day the Germans turned up in the street (Lutska) where we lived, (I don't remember the date) and then began the fear, what will be? Because we knew what the Germans did to the Jews in Germany.

The first Germans I saw appeared in tanks, young men. They stopped the tanks alongside us. Next to us was a big empty lot, they came to ask for water, washed

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<sup>1</sup> During World War II, the Nazis established more than 400 ghettos in order to isolate Jews from the non-Jewish population and from neighboring Jewish communities. The Germans regarded the establishment of ghettos as a provisional measure to control and segregate Jews. The assumption behind this separation was to stop the Jews, viewed by the Nazis as an inferior race, from mixing with and thus degrading the superior Aryan race. Nazi high officials also believed that the Jews would succumb to the unfavorable living conditions of the ghetto, including lack of food, water, and living space. Furthermore, the ghettos served as round-up centers that made it more convenient to exterminate large numbers of the Jewish population later. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ghettos-under-the-nazis/>

themselves and treated us ok, and then large amounts of the German army started to flow on the road, but towards the Russian border.

We lived in fear, because we knew what the Germans do to Jews, but we had nothing else to do and nowhere to escape to. Perhaps a few escaped and were captured and killed by the Germans. The Polish and Ukrainian residents helped the Germans capture the fleeing Jews. The Germans announced to all the residents that whoever delivers a Jew to the Germans will receive a prize. There were a few *goyim* [gentiles] who hid Jews.

The Jews began to accumulate food and build hideouts, some of the hideouts were intended for people and some for property. Because the Germans and *goyim* had begun to rob whatever they could.

After the German army passed through, the S.S. and German police appeared and began to confiscate Jewish property and killed and gave orders that all the Jews gather in one place, and thus the ghetto was established.

My uncle, as he was considered a farmer, did not have to go to the ghetto and in the meantime we remained living outside the ghetto. Every morning we left to work in the field. The distance was about 4 kilometers from the house, the fear was great because we were afraid of everyone. Of a German, of a Ukrainian, of a Pole, because a Jew was not considered a human being.

One morning I turned to my uncle and told him that I want to go to visit my birthplace, which was also his birthplace. He objected at first, because he was scared that something would happen to me, but in the end was convinced and that's how I walked about 30 km. Of course, I walked by foot and was scared, but I wanted to see who stayed to live there and if they are still alive at all, because there were all sorts of rumors. Everyone said something different. After walking for about five hours, I got there in the afternoon and what I saw was that in all the homes of the Jews were living *goyim*. Not one Jew. I didn't want to ask what had happened, because I knew what had happened. So I turned to one peasant, to whom the family had sent lots of property, to look after in case anyone in the family stays alive, the property will be split equally. I turned to that peasant not to ask for some of the property. First of all, I didn't know that everyone had been killed and so I thought that I didn't deserve part of it. And secondly, what can I do with this part while I am not sure of my life. So my intention was to clear

this up with him, maybe he knows what happened with my family. What can I tell you, I barely managed to escape from the peasant, he wanted to kill me. He chased after me, and after the peasant stopped, I turned around and told him that if I stay alive, I will take revenge on him. If I think about it today, where I got that confidence I don't know, but what is certain is that I wanted it to be that way.

I went back to my uncle that same day, and I told him what I'd seen and what happened to me, we sat and wept.

## ***In the ghetto***

The following morning we received an order from the Germans, by the Jewish Committee in the ghetto, that in a week we will also move into the ghetto. The truth is that we wanted to go to the ghetto, it was hard to be alone among all the *goyim* and so we thought, what will happen to everybody will happen to us. Two days before we moved into the ghetto, an order came from the Jewish Committee that the Germans want from all the Jewish farmers' families a sum of money and gold (the number of farming families was about 20). The Jews gathered and said that we didn't have money, nor gold. Then the Germans came and took all these families, and me among them, to the prison in Ludmir and told the Jewish Committee that if by a certain hour they will not be handed the desired amount of money and gold, they will kill us. The negotiations, if you could call it that, went on for three days and we're in the prison waiting for the verdict. And indeed, at the end of the third day in the evening, we were released. When we got home, there was nowhere to go, because while we were in the prison the Germans and Ukrainians broke in and smashed and robbed, and there was nothing left for us in the house. Good thing that my uncle had made a hideout where he hid things, that they did not find. We collected what was left and the following day went to the ghetto.

It's hard to explain what I felt when we went into the ghetto. First I felt we had entered a big cage, that whenever the Germans want you, you are at their disposal. You are not free and cannot go wherever and whenever you want, because in the ghetto there was one gate, where guards stood. Two Germans, two Ukrainians and one Jewish policeman from the ghetto.



On the first evening we were in the ghetto, I told my uncle that I will not stay in the ghetto. The uncle worried about me very much and wanted me to stay next to him, but I explained to him that I will go, I don't know where, but to wherever my legs carry me. If I will be able to stay alive then I will stay and if not, it's better for me that way and not to sit in the ghetto and wait. (I'm amazed today by how I could function like this. It turns out that my situation, that is I was left without parents, lived with one uncle and then another, and the situation in the ghetto, toughened me and so by virtue of the situation I could function and decide, because I had no one to guide me and also nobody knew what was good).

Meanwhile, people began to go out to work according to the Germans' demands, not to earn, they didn't pay. Of course everyone wore a Yellow Star<sup>2</sup>. I did not have to go to work because I was young, but my uncle went. He was a tall man, well-built and all the hard jobs fell on him.

My job for all those days was to sneak out of the ghetto and barter for clothes, food and sneak it back into the ghetto.

When I would go out of the ghetto, outwardly I had exaggerated confidence and in my heart fear. I remember how several times I returned in the evening to the ghetto, of course I did not leave or enter through the gate, only there were places where there were hidden gaps in the fence and several times when I returned, I met the German town commander of the S.S. walking around looking for Jews. His name was Westheider, he would treat me just like all the Christian kids who came to steal things from the ghetto and he would not drive them away, and that's how I would get into the ghetto.

One day I heard that my uncle told his wife Rachel that tomorrow they will take him to work with bombs and then I began to cry. When they asked why I'm crying, I told them what I know about working with bombs, that the children told me. I told my uncle that tomorrow morning we will both turn up for work. He will register and go home, and I will go in his place, because the Germans didn't check according to name, only according to the number of people. As we approached the railway tracks, where the wagons were, I



<sup>2</sup> Jews throughout Nazi-occupied Europe were forced to wear a badge in the form of a Yellow Star as a means of identification. The star was intended to humiliate Jews and to mark them out for segregation and discrimination. The policy also made it easier to identify Jews for deportation to camps.

got out of the line and stood at the side, together with the many Christians who came to see how the Jews were loading bombs, when each one weighs 60-80 kilograms and each person has to take one bomb and run with it to the train carriage and so on all day long. The Germans who guarded the Jews, each one had a rifle and in addition, a short rubber pipe, at the end of which was an iron ball and with this pipe, they beat and also killed. And that way every day about 30 Jews were killed in this job and I went every day instead of my uncle, until that job was over.

After that I continued to go to jobs instead of my uncle. They sent me to work in a military camp, as a servant of a young German officer (a German born in Poland). He would leave on his table money, gold, weapons and that's how he checked me, that I'm not a thief.

The conversation between us was held in Polish. I would accompany him everywhere, held his bag or his coat. He was responsible for the prisoner-of-war camps in the city. There were four such camps. And then I saw what conditions they gave the captives, dirt, hunger.

Once I saw something that I did not believe human beings could do to each other. They brought a truck with rotten vegetables, but really rotten and poured it, then they brought prisoners under guard and didn't let them approach to take from the rot that was spilled, but hungry people couldn't resist and went to take, and then the Germans shot each one and I stood on the side and watched and didn't know then that they also did such things to Jews.

Meanwhile, that officer was sent to the front. On the day when he went away, he was very sad and left me a lot of money and warm clothes. And set me up for another job. He delivered me to an adult German who took care of injured horses. This German also spoke Polish, and together we looked after the horses and the German treated me very well, cooked good food for me and also let me take food home. Of course, he helped me get it out of the military camp, and after I got used to that German and the good conditions he also received an order to go to the front. He parted from me like a father from a son, left me money and a watch, and he cried. But the truth is that it didn't touch me anywhere, I thought – one less German.

I then went to work in a kitchen, there I worked hard and also got beaten. Together with me worked a few older Jews. One morning, when we came to work, they told us to wait

outside and then a German appeared, gave each one of us a spade, told everyone to lie down, passed and marked everyone's length and width and told us to dig a meter deep. Fortunately for us the soil was sandy and we dug quickly. Since Germans were standing around and beating us, we would work faster. We were told that we were digging pits for ourselves, after we finish to dig, they will kill us. There were six of us (the question is whether I was considered a man). Six armed Germans guarded us. By noon we had finished digging and then we were told, that these pits they need for sewage, because there was no central sewage there.

It is hard to explain the feeling that a person feels when he is digging a grave for himself.

But I also overcame that.

After some time I was sent to work in warehouses, to where the peasants would bring, for the Germans, potatoes, grains. It is right to point out that I did not carry sacks of grain, I only maintained the cleanliness. Food I was not lacking, the peasants gave me lots of food, but also there the work ended.

Life in the ghetto was hard, the crowdedness, the fear and we the children sometimes knew more things than the adults knew, because we went everywhere, we approached the Germans, heard what people are saying.

One day, when I left the ghetto for the market in the city, I met one woman, her name was Kozakova. She used to live next to my uncle's plot of land. She stopped me and asked me how I was doing. Where is everybody? And during the time she spoke to me and caressed me, I asked her a question, if I could be at her place and hide. She answered me simply that I could live in the house, many people do not come to her (she was a widow and had a daughter aged about 20). She also told me that she will watch over me as long as she will live. I kissed her and told her that within 10 days I will come to her. I returned to the ghetto and began to prepare to leave the ghetto. I told my uncle that I am leaving the ghetto and where I am going, he was not happy. He did not want to part from me and said that he knew the environment better than me, but he gave me some money and clothes. I stayed another two weeks in the ghetto and conducted trade. I would go out of the ghetto, buy food, bring it into the ghetto and sell at a higher price. I ran errands because I wanted to earn so that I'll have something to live from. In

the ghetto the time passed quickly and the day came when I parted from my uncle and his family, and never saw them again.

## **The wanderings continue**

I moved in with that *goya* [gentile woman] and brought her lots of clothes for her and her daughter, and also money. I lived with her. All day long I sat in the house and did not leave, so as not to be seen. I had one job – to look after her cow. The cowshed was attached to the house and there was a passage, and if by chance a stranger came I would enter the cowshed, where I had a hideout and spare food. The food I ate at her place was bread, butter, cheese, eggs – I looked good. She took care of my clothes, repaired them and I stayed with her for about three months.

There were rumors that there had been a pogrom<sup>3</sup> in the ghetto, so one night I decided to return to the ghetto. Of course, I did not find my family – other Jews now lived in the house where they had been living. I knew there was a hideout and wanted to know if they had found it. Using all sorts of ruses, I found out how to check it but the hideout had not been opened. I opened it and took out a lot of things, and began to get used to the ghetto. In the ghetto I met a girl who was in my class before the war. She asked me where I live and I told her that I remained alone and sleep in a different place every night. She spoke with her parents and they invited me to live with them – they were called Bichler. But I didn't feel good about them. They also wanted me to go outside the ghetto to exchange fabrics for food, which by then was already dangerous.

Then one day I discovered that in the German police in the city works a translator, a Czech called Fialle, a good friend of my father. He worked for the Germans but was actually a spy for the Partisans<sup>4</sup>. I found out where he lived and decided to go to visit him. I wanted to ask him if I could go to his village, to live there. As soon as I found the house and walked in I saw a girl – I knew she was Jewish because I knew her. She did not know who I was. I asked whether Mr. Fialle is at home, and she told me that he is but has German guests. I spoke in the Czech language because I wanted them to think I was from his village. The girl told me that she couldn't go in to call him. I understood why, so asked if there was somebody who could call him and then she called an elderly woman. I told her in Czech that I ask to see the master, she told me to wait, but when I told her that I still have to get back to the village, she went to call him.

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<sup>3</sup> An organized massacre of a particular ethnic group, in particular that of Jews in Russia or eastern Europe.

<sup>4</sup> An armed group formed to fight secretly against an occupying force, in particular one operating in enemy-occupied Yugoslavia, Italy, and parts of eastern Europe in World War II. <https://www.dictionary.com/>

The truth is, I didn't know if he would know me and what his attitude to Jews was, but my confidence was so excessive that I didn't think it could be otherwise.

And indeed, the moment he appeared he did not know me so I asked him to go into another room, where I told him who I was. He jumped on me, hugged me, kissed me, then quickly gathered himself and asked if I would not be scared to go into the guest room with him. He wants to present me to the Germans as a relative of his, and then I'll have free entrance to his house. I asked him in what language to speak and he told me Czech and also a little Ukrainian, and I knew to speak both languages well. I entered the guest room with him. Don't ask - I behaved perfectly, and even received blessings and chocolate from the Germans. It should be known that these are not ordinary soldiers, rather officers. He explained to them that I had come from his village and brought him greetings from his wife. (He was in the city alone. His wife was a teacher in the village.) I stayed there for some time because I wanted to talk with him. After the Germans left, he took me into a side room and began to ask me what about my father and all the family. When I told him, tears welled in his eyes. He told me that he is keeping two Jewish girls in his home and the Germans know that they are Christians. I told him that of all our town, apparently no one is left. And that I want to leave the ghetto, I am afraid in the ghetto.

As night was already approaching, I left him. He told me that whenever I want, I can come. When I returned to the ghetto in the evening the family who I lived with told me that people were looking for me today and called the name of a man. I knew who the man was, he knew our entire family in Ivanychi and Ludmir, so I immediately went to him.

Although it was prohibited at night to move around the ghetto, I knew all the ways how to get there. I knocked on the door of that man and after a short investigation they opened the door for me (usually they would not have opened it, because they were scared, since at night Ukrainians would enter the ghetto and rob everything the Jews had) and then the man told me that somebody told him, that in the Sokal ghetto, they saw my uncle Melech, the brother of Uncle Moshe and Aunt Bracha. I stayed to sleep at that man's place. But I couldn't sleep and decided to go to Sokal ghetto. The distance was about 60-70 kilometres one way.

The next day, I left the ghetto and went to the Czech to tell him. When he heard the story, he encouraged me because here I have been left alone and if I have decided to go, then he asks me for a favour, to deliver a letter to his wife. But in the case that they arrest me, to destroy it. I agreed.

The following morning I left on my way. The distance to the Czech's house was about 32 kilometers, but in the afternoon I was already at his house. I travelled quickly for two reasons: I walked fast and part of the way I hitched a ride on a wagon. I reached his wife and gave her the letter, he wrote to her who I am. I told her where I was headed, and she told me it is dangerous right now to go, since the Germans were chasing after the Partisans and they had closed the border and there was a lot of army. I slept at her place and the children asked me about their father. He had a son my age and we were very similar (this saved me later). She suggested that I stay with them for a few days, but I was scared of his children.

Although I was also a child, I was already a very adult child.

I told her that I want to go to the town, to see and she begged me that I would not go, she knows that there is not one Jew and that if I will go they will kill me. So I decided to return to the ghetto (I write and recount this, I went, I returned, but all this involved endangering life).

On the day I returned to the ghetto, I went immediately to the Czech, because I had a letter for him (I forgot to tell that his wife gave me two new sets of clothes, one I wore and the other was in my bag). After I told him everything, he told me that in his opinion, not far is the day that there will be a pogrom and he promises that the moment he knows something, he will come and take me out of the ghetto.

And indeed twice he came and took me out, luckily for me nothing happened.

## Vladimir Nazarik Alexandrowitz – Volodka

When I repeated into the Czech's ears that I want to leave the ghetto and go to the villages to seek work, then he got me an identity card, as a Ukrainian, with my picture and my name was **Vladimir Nazarik Alexandrowitz**.

I began to memorize for myself, that from today that is how I'm called and I must not forget. I did not take from the ghetto many clothes and no special things, so that they won't think I'm a Jew. Indeed, I could tell anyone that I broke into a Jewish home or a Jewish shop and took it, but I did everything I could so that I wouldn't have to explain to anyone. So I took a stick and a cloth backpack like the *goyim* do. In the bag I put a few not-new clothes and some food, like bread, eggs, onions, I made a knot in the backpack, put the stick through the knot and put it on my back. One thing I forgot to take with me and that is shoes. The winter was already approaching and I was barefoot, and there was no chance that I could get shoes. But I didn't take and left on my way.

On the way, not far from the city, I met two other youths my age and we walked as a threesome. I wasn't interested in walking together with them, but they did not leave me and so we continued to walk along the main road, until I saw a dirt side-road and then I told them that I'm turning left. They didn't want to go left and so we separated. Their reasoning was that the Germans don't really differentiate between a Jew and a *goy*, but the Ukrainians do, and not far away on the road I am taking there is a village where they are murderers and criminals. I was not convinced and went on my way along the dirt road, the time was about 11, I assessed judging by the sun, because I didn't have a watch and from afar I saw that many *goyim* are approaching, men and women, among them two Ukrainian policemen. I was scared of the policemen because they were worse sometimes than the Germans (in the ghetto I saw how a Ukrainian policeman rips babies a few days old in half, with his hands) so I immediately sat down at the side of the road, took out the food, took my hat off my head and began to eat. They all passed, greeted me, and I continued to eat, when I saw that they had gone, I got up and continued to walk, for hours.

I continued walking, not along the main road, but deeper, and then I heard two gunshots from afar, but I didn't pay attention to it since gunshots were everywhere, since almost every resident had a weapon (when the Russians retreated they left a lot of weapons).

The soldiers would throw away the weapons and go into captivity, because they thought that with the Germans it would be better).

At about 2:00, I approached a village that I didn't know and from afar I saw farmers plowing, I started to get closer but came across a wide and deep water canal, and here a peasant approaches and shouts to me and directs me to a passageway, and when I got close to that place I saw a long, narrow bridge and crossed to the other side where the peasant who directed me stood. I saw that he was poor, judging by his clothes, and his general appearance was wretched.

He started to question me, where I am from and where I am going. I told him that I come from the Vinnytsia area, that there the Germans killed many people, since the Partisans murdered six German soldiers. And I told him that I remained alone and they killed all my family, and now I'm looking for a house that I can live in and work in return for that. Of course, the whole conversation was held in the Ukrainian language, which I knew well.

He asked me if I knew how to plough and farming work in general, and then I told him to try me, because I saw he had a pair of horses and a plough. He accepted my offer, so I put the horses into a furrow and began to plough and showed him that I'm a good worker. After I had been ploughing for about half an hour, I stopped and told him that I have to stop and continue to look for a place, and then he told me that I don't have to look, because I have found a place. Although he was not rich, food and lodging he can give me. Regarding clothes there is a slight problem. I was happy that he was willing to accept me, because at night to walk around the fields and in the villages was frightening, because control was not only in the hands of the Germans, but also in the hands of the Partisans, who had split into several groups: there were those against the Germans and there were those who wanted an independent Ukraine.

When I got home with the peasant, I saw how poor he was, but his poverty did not interest me. I was looking for a place to be for some time. Of course his wife began to question me and later shouted at her husband, why he accepted me, because they barely have what to eat. In summary, I stayed with them and worked hard. Life was hard, to eat I ate *shit* and to work I worked from early in the morning to night. To sleep, I slept in the kitchen on two wooden benches and covered myself with sacks.



Every evening the neighbors would gather in their kitchen and told stories about the Germans and the Jews, and that's how I got to know many things. For example, that the two youths that I walked with, a Ukrainian policeman shot them, and that in the ghetto there was a small pogrom and why small – because a few Jews were left.

The winter was approaching and I had no shoes, in the days of frost and snow I wrapped my legs in rags and that's how I walked and worked.

One evening I heard one peasant recount that he had been in the city and saw that the ghetto was open and anyone can go in and take all sorts of things. The following days it snowed and froze and in weather like that you don't go out – you sit at home, and then the peasant said to me, since I don't have any clothes and shoes, maybe I should go to the ghetto and bring clothes for me and also for them. I told him I was afraid to steal. Maybe it's possible to buy, but I don't have any money. Anyway, he said that in a few days one of the neighbors is going to the city and he'll take me and bring me back. He also got a little money and some butter that I can sell and with this money to buy him all sorts of things. I wasn't so calm about that journey, because I didn't know if the ghetto exists, if there are Jews, maybe the pogrom is continuing, but I decided to go because I had no choice. I had no clothes and the peasant also forced me to go shopping for him. I cannot explain what I thought and what I felt the moment I was on the road with the peasant, during the journey, about three hours we travelled. When we reached the city, we began to ask passersby what's the situation? Is it possible to get into the ghetto? The people told us that it's prohibited to enter the ghetto, that there is a guard and that the Jews had returned to the ghetto. I was happy inside that maybe this time, my uncle in the ghetto is alive, but I was happy too soon.

I came with the peasant to the market parking lot. I told the peasant that each will go wherever he wants, and at a certain time we will meet by the wagon. I arranged this with him since I didn't know what was happening in the ghetto, will I be able to stay in the ghetto? Then if I cannot stay, I'll return with the peasant back to the village, and if I can stay, I will not come to meet him.

I began to advance towards the ghetto, through ways that I knew, but the ghetto was under very strong guard. (When I was already in the ghetto, they told me that the guard was because there is a rumor that Russian Partisans will come to free the Jews from the ghetto – stories) and then I decided to wait until night and then maybe I'll be able to

sneak into the ghetto and then I began to look for a place where I can wait until night and suddenly remembered my Czech and went to him. Of course, the meeting was with tears in our eyes, but no crying. I told him where I'd been and how I came back, the eggs and butter I gave to the Czech's kitchen. And then he told me that my uncle is not alive, he knew the whole family (maybe you'll be surprised, I could not cry and I don't remember that during the war I cried at all).

I asked him to get me into the ghetto, he did not want to take me at night, so I slept at his place and the following day we both went to the ghetto, through the gate where both German and Ukrainian guards stood. When we were already in the ghetto, he entered with me the office of the Jewish Committee and asked for a place to live. I, at the same time as the Czech and committee head were talking, the thought came to me that surely a committee member who I know (his daughter studied with me, his name was Klorgloss) will think of me as an emissary from the Germans (there were also Jews like that), so I had the *chutzpah*<sup>5</sup> to ask that the conversation would not take place in a room with other people, rather a room in which there were only the three of us.

The two adults looked at me but agreed, when we entered the room and closed the door, I spoke first. In the Polish language, so that the Czech will understand and also the committee member, and then I told the committee member that he must think me a German emissary who will live in the ghetto, and then the Czech said that since my father, he meant my father, is not alive, so he is taking care of me. But he cannot keep me at home in both the city and the village, because it's not safe. He told him the whole story about the connection between me and him, and I stayed to live with the committee head, not for a long time.

That same day I didn't do anything, and the following day I decided to look for acquaintances in the ghetto, but I hadn't forgotten that I'd been told that my uncle, Melech, was in the Sokal ghetto. I started to get ready for the road. I began to leave the ghetto to carry out trade, because I wanted to have money for the road. Of course I left the house of the committee member, I couldn't stand him. I knew his wife and his

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<sup>5</sup> A mix of targeted, intelligent insolence, charming penetrance and irresistible audacity, in Yiddish and Hebrew. (Wikipedia)

children, and his whole family was killed, only he remained and then he took himself a young girl hardly 18 years old as his wife.

I moved in to live with another acquaintance. I stayed in the ghetto for about a month and was ready for the road. I went to the Czech to tell him that I'm going and where I'm going. Again I took a letter for his wife, and left on the road.

That same day I reached the village of the Czech's wife, I slept there, and the next day I could not leave in the morning because it was snowing heavily, so I sat there in the house and about two hours before darkness left on my way. Why did I leave so late? Because I wanted to visit another *goy*, also a friend of my father, he also knew how to read and write Yiddish. His name was Andriy. When I got to his house, the house was closed. For a moment I panicked, where will I go? And then I remembered his father. In the winter it gets dark early and by the time I reached his father's house it was already dark, and when I approached the door a dog pounced on me and tore my pants. I probably shouted, the door opened and I heard them asking who it was. I didn't know what to answer so I said "first let me in and then you'll see who I am." When they let me in I knew they wouldn't know me, so I told them that I actually came to their son, but his house was closed so I came to them. But the question was who I am, and I pondered whether to say and in the end I said that I'm the son of .... And then the old man began to ask me to tell him all the names of the family, only that way he will believe me. After I told him about all the family he grabbed me, hugged me and kissed me. The old woman immediately began to sew other pants from fabric and I sat and told them my story. Then I asked where their young son is and was told that he is a policeman for the Germans. The old man saw I was startled. He told me that they recruited him, but I have nothing to be frightened of with him, he won't do anything to me and if he will make problems, then he'll kill him.

They let me eat and then I got into bed with the old man, then we hear knocks on the window, it was the sign of the policeman son. The old woman went down and opened the door, I covered myself with a blanket over my head, so he will not see me. The old man started a conversation about what is happening to the Jews and what happened to the Jews of our town, and asked the son what he would do if he met familiar Jews from the town. The young man did not immediately respond but after a few minutes said: Father, I have not sold my soul to the Devil, I am in the police for several reasons: 1- they

recruited me, 2- I didn't want to be sent to Germany, 3- I didn't want them to harass my family, since they know that we had especially good relationships with the Jews and then he mentioned my father's name. Then the old man removed the blanket from me and told him "look who's lying here" and he apparently caught on quickly. He took me in his arms and began to shake me and cry. It took about half an hour for him to calm down. And then again, stories, questions and answers. I asked him who lives in our family's homes and he told me. When I explained to him that I'm continuing tomorrow to the Sokal ghetto, to look for my uncle, he objected and said that the road is dangerous, there are Germans on the road. I told him that I'm more scared of the Ukrainian policemen than the Germans, he told me I'm right, but explained to me how to go and cross the border without running into guards. I also told him that I did not come to stay with them, since they are so good to me that I don't want to endanger them. But I asked him to go to his brother and call him. He left and after a short time returned with his older brother, he already knew who I was because his brother told him, we sat some more and then went to sleep. I slept that night with the old man in bed, and slept the kind of quiet sleep that I hadn't slept for a long time.

The *goyim* wake up early in the morning, and so did I. They let me eat and gave me food for the road, I departed from them and left. I tried to avoid the houses because I didn't want to run into anyone, and walked towards Sokal.

## ***In the Sokal ghetto***

I tried not to deviate from the road and this was very hard, because it was winter and there was snow, and I had to reach the forest from a certain direction so as to get on the right track to the city, and indeed I succeeded. I entered the forest. I had to walk about 6 km through the forest, I was really afraid and ran so the distance passed quickly. I didn't meet a living soul, I was alone all the time, and when I got close to the city a few *goyim* appeared from different directions and we entered the city together. The guards stopped some people, but I got through quietly. I didn't know how I'd get to the ghetto, but it wasn't long before I saw a Jewish policeman approaching, with a Yellow Star. The man was, of course, without a weapon and full of fear, he was about 30, he walked towards me and kept on walking. I began to follow him, at first he didn't feel me walking behind him, but I tried to get close to him so he would feel me. Indeed,

when we did reach some side road, where there were no people and he probably thought that from a boy there's nothing to fear, so he turned to me and asked why I was following him. He spoke in Polish. I addressed him in the Ukrainian language and asked him to take me into the ghetto. He apparently didn't understand Ukrainian, so I addressed him in Polish and then he understood me and asked why a Christian boy wants to go into the ghetto? "Well," I told him, "Sir, I am a Jewish boy" and began to speak with him in Yiddish. And then he came close to me, took Yellow Stars out of his pocket, put one on my back and one in front, and that's how we entered the ghetto. The policeman took me to the local committee, where they asked me where I'm from and what I'm looking for. I told them that I had come to look for my uncle, but they didn't know anything about him. Then I asked them if there is a woman here from our town, who lives here and indeed one committeeman knew who she was and they led me there. I followed the policeman and thought to myself, maybe I'll also meet my uncle there and then I won't be so alone, but when I got to the place, I immediately knew her and she knew me. Her name was Dina Borshtein. She soon began to ask me about her family and what could I say, that there was no one. She began to cry and shout, after a few hours she calmed down and when I asked her if my uncle is here, she said that there is nobody from our town in the ghetto. Not from my family either. After I had received such a reply from her, I had nothing more to do in the ghetto, but it was almost dark so I slept at her place and the following morning left the ghetto to return to the city of Ludmir.

## **Back on the road**

The weather was wintry, snow was falling, so I wanted to travel back by train, but the distance to the railway station was about 4 km, on the bridge stood German guards and checked almost everyone who came through. But I passed and they didn't look at me at all, but when I got to the station, they announced that there was no train, as snow had covered the tracks. I returned to the city and began to plan my way back.

First I went into a restaurant and bought two cookies and a glass of milk. After that I went to the market and bought saccharine (sweetener), I bought it for two reasons: The first was that if they arrest me then I'll say that I buy and sell, and that's how I earn in

order to survive, and if they don't arrest me, then in the Ludmir ghetto the sweetener is expensive and I could make a profit.

After I'd arranged everything, I began to walk in the direction out of the city. The snow didn't stop falling and my fear grew, because in my estimation in about an hour it would be night and at night to walk through the forest (6 km), all alone in a hostile environment. The snow covered the ground and it was difficult to identify the way, and it was easy to make a mistake and who knows where I'd end up, and secondly there were robbers in the forest, they would pounce on people and take everything from them, even clothes. And there were also German guards who patrolled the forest. Yet despite everything, I had the confidence that nothing would happen to me.

After I'd crossed about 4 km of open field and got close to the forest, it was already night, and then I heard someone walking behind me. At first I was really frightened, but the fear couldn't help me, so I stopped and in the Ukrainian language asked who it was and waited. And then a man approaches me, well dressed and white from the snow and asks me where I am going (it should be remembered that I was 13 years old). It took a few moments until he was alongside me, and then I recognized him and at that same moment knew how to answer him. I told him that I'm the son of Fialle the Czech and came to the city to buy saccharine (I had to be careful of that man, because he belonged to a family of thieves and murderers) and now I'm returning. Well, everything worked out. He told me who he was (although I recognized him) and we carried on walking. I knew that he wouldn't continue with me for long, since he lived not far from where we'd reached, and indeed the moment we finished walking through the forest, he turned left. He invited me to sleep at his place. I answered him that they're waiting for me at home and I have to get there, otherwise they'll be concerned about me, and we parted ways. He continued in one direction and I continued in another direction.

The snow fell intermittently, but I was completely covered with snow, and I was hot. Before that *goy* and I parted ways, he explained to me how to go, but at night with the falling snow it's very difficult to be accurate in your direction. I saw from afar a light and that was the direction I walked in, but I didn't know that in snowy nights light can be misleading and I reached another place, indeed not so far from the road that I should have reached, and a few moments later saw a house and there was light in the house. I

decided to go inside, to ask where I am and which way to go. If I had known before I knocked on the door who I would meet, I would have quickly run away from there. I knocked on the door and walked in, as soon as I entered I saw sitting next to a table the owner, I knew who he was. He used to work for my uncle Melech, in the grain storeroom, as a porter. The *goy* I met on the way and the *goy* whose house I'm in are brothers, they're criminals and thieves. I was afraid he would recognize me, but his first word was "Fialle! What are you doing here on a night like this?" I recovered and in the Czech and Ukrainian language explained to him that I went to Sokal to buy saccharine and now I'm going home and got lost, so I'll thank him if he'll explain to me how to continue on my way straight home. He offered me to sleep at his place, I told him that they are waiting for me at home and will worry about me. His wife gave me hot milk to drink and a slice of bread and butter, and when I'd finished drinking and eating, I thanked them and left. After he explained to me which way to go, I knew that I must not go that way, since I'd really get to Fialle, and didn't want to. I wanted to get to the old couple I slept with on the way to Sokal. (Indeed it was already dark but I estimate that the time was about 7 in the evening).

The distance from the place I was in to the old people was about 6 km. I don't remember how long it took me to get there, but when I stood by their house they were already asleep. I shouted at the window, because that was the sign between us if I return at night, so they'll know it is me, because otherwise they almost never open the door at night, out of fear. When the door opened and I entered, they were very happy to see me safe and sound, and told me that they worried about me. I gave them some saccharine and also a few matchboxes I had. They were rejoiced at that and kissed and hugged me again. I was served cooked food, because she kept cooked food every evening, so she will have to give me when I return.

I finished eating. Of course I told them how the route had gone, who I had met. He heard who I'd met on the way back and then said to me "If you were saved from them, then you will stay alive."

I lay down to sleep and asked them to wake me early in the morning, because I want to leave their house, that no one will see me. But they did not wake me and let me sleep, and when I awoke it was already almost noon. Meanwhile the old woman had made me another pair of pants and shirts, so that I'll have. And then the old man told me that I

should stay until tomorrow, and tomorrow morning leave early, because otherwise if I go today I'll reach the Ludmir ghetto at night. I accepted his explanation and was happy because after all, it was dangerous for them if anyone will see me. So I did not leave the house all day. I don't remember what I did at their place all day, but I slept there and the following morning they woke me when it was still dark. Of course, without food they would not let me go and I also received from the old woman a package and asked her what was inside, she told me it was food, but I knew that she also put in some clothes she had sewed for me. I hugged them and kissed them and left. (When I came at the end of the war to visit them, they were no longer alive.) I left them in secret, so I won't be seen and continued to walk towards the Ludmir ghetto.

When I try to think today, what I thought then when I went to the ghetto, I was afraid of everyone who passed, because who liked Jews? But apparently, the will for life is very strong.

The journey passed for me very quickly, because sadly, it was better for a Jew in the ghetto, but I didn't feel that way. I felt safer outside the ghetto.

About 4 km before the city, I met a *goy* who was travelling in a wagon in the opposite direction. When I saw him, I saw that it was our neighbor from my home town, I knew he would know me and indeed he knew me, after all, he was considered a friend of our family and my uncles stored much property at his place. I was surprised to hear from him, as a friend, the question "you're still alive?" and then I realized that he's not a friend, he was a murderous criminal and then I answered him that I am alive and will live and will take revenge on him ( and indeed, that's how it was). After I told him that I will take revenge on him, I was sorry that I'd told him that, because I knew that he could finish me off in the meantime. And then he started to chase after me, but I was a child and ran fast, and he returned to his wagon and I fled into a field, and until the city did not return to the main road because I feared that he was looking for me or maybe had notified some policeman.

I managed to reach the ghetto around midday. Of course, I didn't go into the ghetto through the main gate, rather sneaked in through a breach in the fence and entered the ghetto around noon. I put my package at the family I had lived with once (the Bichler



family), wandered around the ghetto a little and searched, maybe somebody from the family remained alive, but I didn't find anyone. Then I left the ghetto and went to the Czech Fialle, because I had a letter for him from his wife. I met him just as he came to eat. I sat with him and told him about the road I walked and who I met, and he told me that he feels something with the Germans and it has to do with the Jews in the ghetto. He promised that he will take care of me if he knows about something. I, on the other hand, said that I was thinking in a few days to leave the ghetto completely and go. To where, I don't know, but I'm scared to stay in the ghetto.

After I ate with him, I went. He went with me to the ghetto and took me in through the main gate. Always when he would take me in through the main gate and the Ukrainian guards would salute him, I felt very strange, but it was very convenient for me.

The next morning I rose, walked around the ghetto, met all sorts of acquaintances and children and heard stories, and then left for the city, outside the ghetto, to buy myself some things for the road. This means clothes, since I didn't want to take clothes from the ghetto, I was scared that they will be recognized as Jews' clothes and didn't want to stand out. So I went to the market to buy, and even before I bought anything, many Ukrainian policemen appeared and also Germans, and they began to catch people, young and old, and load them onto trucks. It turned out that they were taking these people to Germany to work, but luckily for me they concentrated all the people in the police courtyard, where they took us off the vehicles and arranged us in rows. We stood like that for about two hours. In the end, a German officer and a Ukrainian officer appeared, and the third was no less than my friend the Czech. He was used as a translator, since the Ukrainians did not know German. I began to rejoice in my heart and hope that he will release me, although I did not understand how he could do this. Until they reached me took a long time, since everyone wanted to be released so they told them all sorts of stories. I tried to stand out so the Czech will notice me before they reach me, and meanwhile he will think how to release me, because he didn't think he would find me here. I didn't manage to get him to notice me before they reached me, and then the Czech began to laugh and said something to the German officer, the German looked at me and in the end shouted at me and said "Nu, get out of that line, it's not you we want to send." I don't know how I had the sense not to react to what he had said, because I understood what he said, so I stood and waited, and then the German

grabbed me and pulled me out of the line and told the Czech to take me out of the police courtyard. The Czech came close to me and spoke to me in the Czech language, and then I realized what he had said to the German. If you remember, in the previous pages I wrote, when I first came to the Czech and he took me into his guest room where there were German officers, he presented me to them as a youth from his village. Among the officers was an officer who is now in the police. So he had no difficulty in releasing me. He told me to wait for him by the gate, and he will bring me to the ghetto. After he went, I remained by the gate, embittered, desperate and thought about my situation. The truth is that I was sick of life, if I could even call it a life. It's hard for me to understand this today, what pushed me to stay alive after I remained alone and with the Germans.

To my sorrow, I cannot mention the dates of all the events that happened to me and this is for all sorts of reasons. First of all, I didn't live by dates. My agenda, or indeed my entire life, was similar to an animal trying to save itself from hunters or from other predators, and another reason, many years have passed and it's difficult to remember. I do not consider this to be of any importance.

It was clear that this happened during the time of the Germans, in the Second World War.

## **How to continue?**

After the Czech returned to me by the gate, he took me to his home, gave me food and money, and brought me to the ghetto, inside. I asked him to put in some clothes of sewn fabric that the *goyim* make alone and indeed that same day he brought me a few sets of clothes and other things, of course he didn't take money from me.

I promised him that before I leave the ghetto I'll come to say goodbye. I stayed in the ghetto for about two days and planned the continuation of my life, and then decided to return to my hometown, Ivanychi. And again I took a bundle of inelegant clothes, not the Jewish version of clothes, only the clothes that the Czech gave me and some food, and went on my way.

I was always glad to leave the ghetto, although I never knew what awaited me outside. I knew almost certainly that in Ivanychi not a Jew remains, but I decided to go anyway

and when I approached there and found out that there is no one, I carried on walking towards the town of Porytsk, 7 km away.

It was a small town and there I had family (Malka's mother and her husband's family and two girls). I tried not to pass through Ivanychi, so as not to encounter some familiar *goy*, because I feared they would capture me and deliver me to the Germans. So I did a big detour and at night slept in the forest between Ivanychi and Porytsk.

Do you know what it means when a boy aged 13 sleeps alone in a big forest?

But life is stronger than anything.

When I woke in the morning, I began to plan which way to go, and after I finalized the direction, began to walk. The environment was familiar to me since I used to visit my uncle and aunt a lot, although I didn't go by foot, there was a wagon that travelled on tracks and a horse would pull it.

After I reached my uncle and aunt, I also met there the younger brother of aunt Bracha, his name was Koppel. The joy was great, the questions and investigations began, after I told them everything and they told me how and what had happened to them, I asked my uncle if I could visit my father's grave and then he began to cry and I didn't understand why. He told me that the cemetery was destroyed, the *goyim* took the tombstones and there is no possibility of finding any grave. I was very sad, but there was nothing to do, that was the reality.

After I was together with them for about a week, I told my aunt that I will leave them and return to the Ludmir ghetto. But I didn't really intend to return to the ghetto, because I wanted to look for a place with a *goy*, but I didn't want to tell them because they wouldn't have let me go. Aunt Bracha's brother didn't want to let me go to the ghetto. He wanted me to stay around the family that remained, they could see me all the time, because they still thought that nothing would happen to them. So they knew that I didn't want to stay with them, but they wanted me to stay in the vicinity. My aunt's brother started to look for a place, that is he thought to who I can go that would maybe accept me, and if not accept me at least would not hand me over to the Germans. Meanwhile I stayed with them. Until one day I told my young uncle that I want to go, and he told me to turn to a Czech called Pelikan. He was a friend of the family. I told him that I don't really believe in friends, and recounted the story about the Ukrainian who received all my family's property and when I came to him wanted to give me to the Germans. But

anyway, we decided that I will go to Pelikan. And then the young uncle told me that he intends to go to the Ludmir ghetto. I asked him why he would not let me go yet he would go, I don't remember his reasoning, but I asked him not to go because it's dangerous for him.

I haven't written this, but in the city of Ludmir there were many Ukrainian policemen from the area we lived in before the war. Me they didn't know because I was a child, but I told my uncle that they could recognize him, as if I felt it would happen like this. Later I found out that a policeman knew him and handed him over to the Germans, and they shot him.

## ***At Pelikan's***

I reached the Czech in the middle of the day, (the distance from Porytsk to where the Czech lived was about 14 km). I met him and told him who I was and whose son I was, and then he said to me: "Is your grandfather's name Binyamin?" I told him yes. And then he told me that grandfather once helped him with money and that saved his farm (it should be taken into account that he had about 50 hectares). The Czech had a son my age and an older daughter.

When I got there, they let me eat and I stayed in the house until the evening. In the evening the family gathered, the Czech told them who I am and that he feels that ethically, I must be protected. He warned the children not to talk, and whoever asks should be answered that I'm a relative and my parents were killed. I knew the Czech language well and everything worked out. In the morning I would go to pasture with the cows, he had about 30 cows. Of course, me and the son. The pasture was mainly in the forest, each cow had a bell on her neck. In the evening I helped in the farm and everything went well. I was treated well. Almost every evening, the Czech and his wife would sit and ask me about what I'd been through and what happened to the family. It was a Sunday, I remember that the Czech told me to harness the horses and travel to the neighboring settlement, to a certain farmer, to take harrows and a plough that the farmer had borrowed from the Czech. The residents of the settlement I went to, they were all Poles. When I approached the entrance of the village the horses started to make strange sounds and didn't want to continue. I got down from the wagon, grabbed

the horses and together we walked. When I entered the village I saw killed people on the road, and not a living soul in the houses. The horses didn't want to continue, so I tethered them and continued to the farmer. His house was the fifth from the beginning of the village. I carried the tools on my back to the wagon and returned to "my home". When I got there I told them what I'd seen. I guess it was hard to believe my story, so my landlord went with his neighbor, to see. The Poles were killed by Ukrainian partisans (Banderowcy).

At Sunday lunch everyone sat at the table and asked me how I could go into the village, after I saw what had happened. I answered them that I'd already seen things like this and it didn't scare me.

Between me and the landlord's son tension arose, since he would take advantage of me and leave me all the cows in the pasture and run away, or not leave with me in the morning. Sometimes we even had fights, but I didn't tell anyone, since I didn't want him to get angry with me. That Sunday after the meal I went outside, then the daughter approached me and told me that she knows what her brother is doing to me and had told her father. I knew I was in trouble, I cannot stay. And that's how it was, because the father beat the son. And the son came to me and told me that he'll run away from the house and hand me over to the Germans. My response was aggressive, I told him that before he gives me to the Germans I will kill him, because I have nothing to lose. I turned to his father and asked him to let me off the grazing for a few days, because I don't feel well. He agreed, and then the son went grazing with the cows, but not to the forest.

I went to the daughter and told her what had happened between me and her brother. I asked her not to tell her father, and if she could find out if there were any Jews in the area. Two days later she informed me that in Porytsk there are Jews. I told her to prepare for me some food and clothes, and that I am leaving them, but only after a few days she can tell her father. Because I was scared that her father would shout or beat his son and the son, out of revenge, would tell the Ukrainian police and they'll search for me. That's how I knew that if they were looking for me, I wouldn't be in the area anymore.

And after a few hours I returned back to Porytsk, to the family. I told them what had happened to me and they told me how they were and what had happened to Koppel. We

sat and cried about our bitter fates, and my aunt and uncle asked me not to leave them. Whatever happens, we will be together.

Every day I would hear shouting and crying, and that was a sign that they had killed Jews. I could not live like that. I decided that I will go anyway and not stay with them. I parted from my aunt and uncle and their two daughters, Hayka and Layka, and left, and I never saw them again.

I didn't know that area, I didn't know where I was going. My legs took me and I walked for hours. I walked and didn't stop anywhere, but saw that night was approaching and I needed a place to sleep. And then I decided that the first house I see, I will knock on the door and ask for a place to sleep.

## ***At the goya's***

I knocked on the door, a woman aged about 40 opened the door and asked me what I was looking for, I replied that I was looking for a place to sleep, and maybe also a place to live and work. Of course, she asked me who I was, I had an almost constant refrain that I would recite. The refrain changed only if I came into another environment. This time I told her that I was from the Sokal area and my parents died and we children scattered, each one went in a different direction and that's how I got here.

After my speech she let me into her home, gave me something to eat and I had to sleep in the granary, and was told to wake up early in the morning and begin to work. Judging by the work schedule she gave me, it would have taken four men to carry out the work. But I didn't tell her that I couldn't do that much, and went to the granary to sleep. Before I fell asleep, I heard her leave the house. And probably from exhaustion I fell asleep, when I awoke it was already morning, I got up and started to work. I took the cow out to pasture next to the house, opened the coop so the chickens could go out and a few other things. And then I went to the house, to ask where needs ploughing, because she told me but didn't show me the plot. I couldn't get into the house, it was closed. It turned out that she had not come back to sleep. I started to walk around and look for other jobs to do. In the end she returned, she was a little drunk, and began to shout at me that I hadn't managed much and told me that I won't receive any food.

Out of habit, I always had bread, so I didn't beg her to feed me. I went to the coop, took a few eggs and drank them and ate bread, and was satiated.

In the middle of the night I heard from her house singing, laughing, shouting. I went down to see and saw Ukrainian policemen and some girls and in the house a party, some were already drunk, and here I was overcome by fear. Because I was scared that she'd want to show them her worker and take me down from the granary. So I went down and walked into a field. There stood a pile of straw, I went inside and lay down, and decided that if I see that they came to the granary to look for me, I'm not going back to work for her. Luckily for me, they didn't come looking for me. In the early morning I went back to the house and began to work outside. I found a pistol, a knife, cigarettes and money. I took a little money for myself, and the other things I hid, when I came for lunch I think, I brought her all the things. The lady was still asleep. I took the leftovers from the party, meat, sausages, and ate and also took some for my stock, and went back to work.

Towards the evening she began shouting at me again and then I told her, Lady, I'm working as much as I can and if you're not satisfied, I'll go. "Yes," she said, "you can go." On the table were the objects that I'd found, I went and took some more money, and left. I went to the granary to take my bundle, when I left the granary I heard her calling me to return, everything will be fine and I can already sleep in the house.

Since it was already almost evening, I came back and went into the house. She gave me good food and gave me more money to convince me to stay, but I told her that I would continue to sleep in the granary.

I was scared to sleep in the house, it turned out that she was a widow and would party every night, and I was scared to sleep in the house. Her guests were not to my taste, when I slept outside or in the granary I felt free. I can always run away if I have to. Well, after she brought me back and asked me to stay, I ate dinner and went to sleep, and the next day I was to wander again.

## **With a new family**

I rose early in the morning and left. When I had already gone about 20 km, a wagon harnessed to a horse passed me, a good one, there sat a young man about 25 with an old woman. They looked at me, I greeted them and wished them a good day. Then suddenly the wagon stopped and the constant question, who are you? To where? And then I began the story anew. The woman told me to get on the wagon and I kept going with them and continued to tell her who I was. When I finished telling her, she told me I should go with them to their house, and for now I'll stay with them and she'll ask people who needs a youth for various jobs around the farm. Of course, she asked the son if he agreed, and he agreed. And so we travelled on for another 10 km or so until I reached their home. On the way she told me that she's coming from the funeral of her sister's husband who the Germans killed, so she pitied me. When I got down from the wagon, I helped her son get into the stable and had a look around. I saw that the house stood next to a not-large forest, but imagined that in the forest there were all sorts of partisans and it would not be pleasant to meet them.

The farm was not big and there wasn't much work. I tried to be industrious and helpful, I wanted them to be satisfied with me because I really wanted to stay with them. The woman looked after me like I was her son, would bathe me, gave me clean and good clothes, gave me good food. All the time she tells me that I don't have to work so much. The son was hardly ever at home. He belonged to one of the Partisan groups, because there were several Partisan groups, there were in favor of the Germans, there were against the Germans, there were for an independent Ukraine. Every Sunday I would go with the woman to church. In the church I wasn't with her all the time, I joined the other children. Of course, for one reason I didn't want and didn't know their prayers, but everything worked out well. The woman really liked me.

One day, my landlady's sister appeared, the one whose husband the Germans shot, and started to tell me all sorts of stories, that it's hard for her alone in the farm with two girls. And then, of course without my knowledge, they agreed between them that I would return with her sister to her farm, for two weeks. Of course I could have objected, but I couldn't do that because my landlady treated me like her son.



(I remember that one day, I went into the forest to collect wood and suddenly found a small fox howling and unable to walk, I took it with me to the farm, my landlady gave me food for him and tethered him. I continued to look after him and he grew. At night foxes would come to visit him. One day, when he was already quite big, I was playing with him and he bit me. In anger and pain, I opened his chain and let him go. I realized that he belonged to the forest.)

Well, I went to the new farm with my landlady's sister. I didn't want to leave because here was good to me, but felt that I had to go. When I got to that farm I saw that the work was plentiful, but since my landlady told her sister not to give me much work and not hard work, I really didn't work hard. In the farm were four cows, but I was not the shepherd because there was the village shepherd. He would gather all the cows and bring them back at the end of the day.

The farm had a couple of horses, chickens, pigs and about 7 hectares of land.

They received me well, I mean the girls, one was aged 18 and the other, 20. I had a good bed (a straw mattress), they bought me clothes and told everyone that I was their relative. She did everything her sister told her to do. The next morning I began to work, went out to plough in the field, in short to do all the necessary jobs apart from sowing, for that job I was too small and didn't know to do it, so for sowing they hired a neighbor to do the sowing.

I felt good at their place, they protected me, looked after me. I felt wanted and they appreciated what I was doing for them, and then they started to convince me to stay with them. The truth is that I didn't want to, but for some reason I said that it makes no difference to me, but her sister would not agree. And then she decided that there was a holiday coming, and she'll invite her sister and they also have a brother-in-law who lives far away. She will invite them since she wants to confer with them about a groom for her daughter, and then she'll also talk about me. But there were another three months until the holiday, and in the meantime I stayed with her.

I worked very hard, but was happy because I was treated well. I didn't have time for thoughts. All day long I worked and in the evening, before I lay down I was already asleep. I wasn't strong enough for these jobs because after all, I was a child.

The time passed quickly and the guests arrived for the holiday. Her sister, who arrived first because she lived close, hugged me and kissed me and asked how I was being treated. My reply was such that she could understand that I had it better at her place. But when I saw the brother-in-law I was surprised, because before me I saw a man with an intelligent appearance, a handsome man of 50. Well-dressed, polite and not rude. It was hard to describe him as a peasant. He shook my hand and asked who I was, where was I from and how old I was, and told me that his sister-in-law was very pleased with me. And then he turned to his sister-in-law and told her that he knows I can hear, and she will kill me with so much work. A youth of his age cannot run a farm like this. The rest of the conversation I didn't hear. I went to work and he stayed to talk with his sister-in-law. After a while, without me feeling or hearing, the brother-in-law (Trachuk) stood before me and asked me to stop working and sit down. He also sat down and began to ask me all sorts of questions and tell me all sorts of things. The conversation excited me, the way he spoke and explained, because the conversation was only about farming, how to work and how to manage everything. After some time the conversation ended and he left.

I kept on working then suddenly appeared one of the daughters, to help me to finish quickly, because there's a festive dinner. Well, the work went fast, I changed clothes and went to join the meal. My place was next to the brother-in-law and he kept looking at me, and this began to disturb me and eventually the meal ended. Again the conversation between us began. The next morning he went with me to the field, and when we were in the field alone he turned to me and said "you're not Ukrainian, you're Jewish, but don't be afraid, I like Jews."

At that moment I could not talk and was so surprised that I didn't know what to do, I also didn't know whether to deny what he was saying or confirm. Indeed, I decided to confirm what he said and told him all about my life. He hugged me and told me not to fear and he will save me.

He also told me who he was and that during the Polish rule, he was a communist and sat in prison (Berezje Kartuskiej) and that he was educated and had a farm of 80 hectares of land. Children, he had only one daughter and she was already married. He left me and returned by foot to the farm and I kept on working, but my output wasn't like on any other day. I didn't know if he was really a good person and would help me, but I

thought to myself that until that day whatever I had decided did not turn out badly, so this time as well I had made a good decision.

The days approached when the guests had to go, her sister agreed that I will stay and the joy was great. And then the brother-in-law motioned to me to step outside, supposedly to explain to me something about the farm, and said to me, remember, what I'm saying will surprise you. At that moment I was struck by fear, but he kept talking and said "I want you at my home, you will be our son, you will live in our house, which is run like at the Jews. My wife used to cook for a Jewish dentist called Berman, in the city of Ludmir." (That moment I remembered that I studied with the daughter of that dentist at the Tarbut school in the same class before the war) But he told me that he had a problem and I cannot move to him yet. The problem is that he had been informed on that he was a communist, and has problems that until he can arrange things with the authorities will take time. So he doesn't want me to come now, only to come when he's done with the problems then he'll tell me to come. We parted, he left me money, hugged me and went.

I remained confused, didn't know what to decide, whether it's the right step that I'm about to make, to leave here and go to the new place. I don't know him well enough to know if he really means well. But in the end, when I'd finished arguing with myself, I decided as I had acted until then, I went wherever I thought would be good for me, so also this time and I waited for the day he would tell me to come.

Meanwhile, something new happened at the family I worked for, the daughter married and stayed to live with the mother. Then the new son-in-law began to show off and act like the landlord, and of course the first victim was me. So I decided to leave already and not wait for the brother-in-law to tell me to come, rather to find a place to work and live not far from the brother-in-law's house. Then I turned to the old landlady and told her that I didn't get along with her son-in-law and it's bad for me, so I'm leaving and going to her brother-in-law, he might find me a place.

She was not happy that I was leaving, but along with that was pleased that maybe her brother-in-law would accept me. I stayed a few more days then left on my way.

## On the way to Trachuk

I had to travel 38 km, and had to plan where to go and where I should not go, because there were Germans or Ukrainian police and it was dangerous to encounter them.

I cannot say that I went without worries, it was a new environment for me and I didn't know any bypass routes (and that's very important). I came across lots of German army, but luckily, not the Ukrainian police.

It took me three days to cross that distance. I had to sleep and that was a problem.

Where and who to turn to? I decided to turn to a family that is not rich, to a small farm. A family that is not rich, they are usually more compassionate people and indeed that was true, because I always told them that my parents had been killed by the Germans and I'm going to a relative to live with him.

I was also worried about how I'll manage until that brother-in-law would accept me, but everything worked out really well. I found a place to work for a small farm owner. They were old people and had one son who turned out to be involved with the Partisans, and from me they wanted to work in the farm.

They had in all 1.5 hectares of land, one horse, one cow, pigs and chickens. It wasn't easy, but I got on top of the work quickly. The food at their place was terrible and filthy, but not because they gave me bad food, they also ate the same food.

The son wasn't home at nights and slept during the day. So I slept at night in his bed and on the nights he was there, I slept together with him in the bed. I felt good about them, although I wasn't as comfortable as with the previous family, the dirt bothered me, but they treated me well and for me that solved all the problems.

The landlady was a very religious woman who demanded that I go to church. I had no choice, I had to investigate and find out what to do in church and how to behave. I began to find out among the youths I would meet and play with. I remember one event in the church when I didn't know what to do. It was the day when they go to confess and I didn't know what I should tell the priest, because we had to line up. The priest sits in a sort-of partition and everyone enters and tells him how he sinned. But I didn't know how to behave, so I stood in line for a long time and when I approached the priest listened to what they were saying to him, until I knew exactly what to tell him. In the end I went in to the priest and he asked me what bad things I had done. I was already prepared and told

him that I had cursed my mother, and then he told me to come to him again. Of course I didn't. After I left and there were no more people waiting for him, so everyone gets into a circle and the priest goes to each one and places a small slice of holy bread in the mouth, and they also have to kiss the cross.

I felt that I could not swallow the bread and certainly couldn't kiss the cross. And then, just as the priest approached me I dropped the hat I held in my hand, and as I bent down to pick up the hat, the priest passed me and continued and did not come back to me. So I did not kiss the cross and did not eat holy bread.

But all the people who were there, they were neighbors of my landlord and saw me in the church. They didn't see what happened, that I didn't kiss the cross, but they saw me in the line and then I knew that they would not think of me as a Jew, and this gave me more confidence.

Apart from the farm jobs, their son demanded of me that I be his messenger and deliver mail to various Partisan branches. His parents didn't want me involved in this, but he told them that if I don't listen to him he would make my life miserable. Well, I agreed and began both by day and by night to distribute mail to various branches. But between two branches there were 15-20 km and I rode a horse.

It should be noted that there were three types of Partisans: 1. Fought for Ukrainian independence, 2. Supported the Germans, 3. Supported the Russians.

I worked for a group that espoused Ukrainian independence. Of course, I knew all the places where they were. And there was there one commander who really fell in love with me and gave me a gift, a rifle without a butt and with its barrel cut. So you could hide it under your coat. Anyway, they thought of me as one of theirs, and I was even promised a respectable role in independent Ukraine. And that's how three months passed, and then I felt that I could no longer continue at that farmer's. I lived about 6 km from the place I wanted to move to. It was hard for me to decide to leave, despite all the bad things that were, and go to a new place, without knowing what awaits me there.

But one bright day, it was a Sunday, I remember, I was on my way to the other farm. It was a beautiful day and I strolled, I don't remember what I was thinking about because many times I had asked myself who I am, what was I doing here among the *goyim*, I remained alone, I had nobody and also this time I asked myself what will be in the end,

until when will I roll from one place to another. But in any case I wanted better conditions, to be treated better.

And so I walked and thought to myself, and when I was already not far from the farm I saw cows outside and somebody guarding them. When I got closer, I saw it was the peasant (it was hard to call him a peasant, he was an educated and intelligent man) guarding the cows. I approached him, he immediately knew me and told me that everything's already arranged and I could come to him. He had already prepared his wife and suggested to me that in another week he would wait for me, and now I should go quickly, so the residents of the house will not see me, or the story he had told his wife would not be true.

Of course I approached him, he was surprised to see me and asked me how I arrived so early, because he didn't know that I had left his sister-in-law and that I work here in the area. I told him the whole story and went back to the farm where I worked. I continued to work and act resentful, so as to justify my departure. I began to complain that it was hard for me to work both in the farm and to work for the son, and then began a quarrel between the son and his parents. I took the few clothes I had and went. That was after the son hit me, he blamed me for causing the argument. But anyway, he went after me and brought me back to the house. Then I saw that his mother was sitting and crying, and the father hugged me, and then the quarrel between the son and the parents renewed and I saw that I would suffer the most. I snuck out and went.

It was in the afternoon hours and I went to the new place. I can't describe and explain what I felt at that time, what I thought at that time. I think only about that I could write a lot.

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And maybe I'll try to write a little about myself: I was a Jewish boy of 12-13 [probably already 14-15, A.B.], without a home, without a family, without the right to exist as a Jew and trying to stay alive, in a time when the fact you are Jewish disqualifies you from living. And not only the Germans maintained that, also the Ukrainians, the Poles, the Czechs. However, the will to live was strong. Despite all the hardships, I wanted to live. It's hard for me to understand that today, from where I got the courage, my decisional ability to decide that here is good for me and there is not good. I, anyway, don't know to explain it.

## *At Trachuk's*

And so I got to the new place, opened the door and went into the house. I went through a short corridor and there was another door, when I opened it I was in the kitchen. In the kitchen, which was big, stood a table and at the table sat the landlord and his wife and married daughter (I found out later that he only had one daughter).

Of course, I greeted them in Ukrainian and then he rose, approached me, extended his hand and called me by the Ukrainian name Volodka and told his wife, here, this is the boy. I of course didn't know what he had told her about me, because she'd seen me at her sister's. His wife rose, came to me, hugged me and said "You should know, if you'll be ok then you have a warm home here." I said thank you. Immediately I was told to wash my hands and sit down to eat.

The bundle of clothes I had brought they checked and threw into the trash. After the food, they took me to a big furnished room with a wardrobe, bed with a springy mattress, bookcase and other things, and I was told this was my room. The room had three big windows facing a beautiful fruit tree garden. Soon they heated water and bathed me. You'll be surprised, his wife bathed me and she didn't know I was a Jew and she really scrubbed me and put me in bed.

I was surprised to see an orderly house very similar to a Jewish home. The clothes I was wearing they threw away and soon the daughter and mother took my measurements and began to sew me clothes. Pants, shorts, night shirts. Because the woman said that it's not nice to be dressed in my clothes while I'm with them. I didn't know what her husband had told her about me, I only found out after a long time.

Well, the story he told his wife was not complicated. He told her that he saw me at her sister's, he immediately knew that I came from an advanced home and not from a peasant's house, and when he started to talk with me I told him where I was from, who my parents were and what happened to them. And here he put in his own story. Since he had sat in prison in Berezia Kartuskiej, where communists sat, so he told his wife that my father also sat there and he knew him. And since he found me at her sister's, then fate has dictated him to raise me with him.

The clothes they made for me here, were no longer from dyed white cloth, rather real fabric from a factory, they probably had a stock at home. I was very surprised by the

house. The rooms were tidy and the furniture attractive, clean, tasteful. The kitchen was neat, there were no rough pots like at the peasants', rather pots, plates, spoons, forks, knives, like in a Jewish home, I was really surprised. The thought crept into me, maybe everything that I see used to belong to Jews and they took them, but I couldn't believe it was so. A long time later, she told me she had worked as a cook for a dentist in the city of Ludmir, his name was Dr. Berman. That name reminded me of something. That when I studied in the Tarbut school, a girl studied with me, her name was Tzipora and she was Dr. Berman's daughter (I visited the house many times). The story lasted for hours, because she told me how her life was there and that the family was no longer alive, and that she maintains the household like she learned at Dr. Berman's and then she burst into tears and the story stopped.

I was accepted into that family like their child. I slept alone in the room. They never woke me up for work, but I insisted on getting up early every day and take care of the cows and horses and pigs. They followed me, how I work. When they saw that I'm a good and devoted worker, I was told that I was a member of the family and was responsible for jobs on the farm, according to the landlord's instructions.

Every morning three laborers would come from the neighboring village, to work in all the farm jobs as well as in the field. The farm had 11 cows, four horses, pigs, chickens, geese. The land was about 80 hectares. In the season, they would bring more laborers, men and women, to work. The landlord would involve me in decisions about the farm. He would prepare a work schedule, what jobs need doing and I had to make sure that the laborers carried them out. I would wake up every morning at 4, but if I didn't wake up, the landlord would get up and not wake me.

Of course, my very appearance in the farm to supervise and give instructions upset the laborers and one veteran laborer there was very upset. He went to the landlord, let's not forget that the landlord was a communist and had a special approach to laborers, anyway he didn't justify the laborer and the laborer began to maintain a good relationship with me. For example, the cow shed and chicken coop had to be cleaned out every day, but the laborer didn't do this job. But because I was strict, the job was done, everything was clean and orderly. Also the jobs in the field. I knew what needed doing in each plot, such as to plough, disk and when we needed to sow, the landlord intervened and supervised the work. That way I took control of all the work in the farm



and was treated very well. By the landlord and his wife and also by the laborers (of course, the laborers knew that I was a relative of the landlord).

And so the days passed and I was busy on the farm and felt good with myself and wanted in this house. So not once I forgot who I was and why I had to look for another place, because it was good for me here. I was treated like their son (they didn't have a son). I invested much thought in this matter, because reality brought me to this thought. I don't have anyone, wherever they know I'm a Jew they'll kill me, and if I have a place where the landlord knows who I am and despite everything looks after me, is good to me, treats me well, takes care of me like their son, as I didn't know what was going on in the world, there was no radio, no newspaper and everyone told a different story.

It was a Sunday, I got up early to look after the cows and all the animals, since on Sundays the laborers didn't come to work and I didn't want the landlord to get up, so I tried to do this work. His wife and daughter went to the church and I fed all the animals, checked that everything was ok and when I finished, sat in the yard on a bench. Everything was quiet all around, and I thought about myself. I sat like that for a long time, and it turned out that the landlord watched me sitting there, but didn't interfere with me. In the end I got up, went into the house, ate, drank and went to my room. I hadn't yet closed the door when I heard a knock on the door, and the door opened and the landlord entered. He asked me if I'm feeling well, and I told him that I feel well and thanked him. He replied that he was really happy that I feel that way. But why was I sitting like that in the courtyard and what was I thinking about? I wanted to tell him that I was resting from work, but I knew he was a shrewd person and knew me very well, and he would know the difference between rest and thought. So I told him exactly what I was thinking. And when he heard what I was thinking, he was amazed. And he began to explain to me, after all, you're a Jew and belong among Jews. The bad time will pass, we will look after you and after that you will return to where you belong. I understand your indecision, but you should know that the war will end, it won't go on indefinitely. And you'll be able to live among Jews.

It was hard for me to believe that it will really be like he said, because I knew and heard that they had killed all the Jews. But I decided to listen to him for now, and continue with life as it was.

From that day on, he would really follow me, and if he saw me immersed in thought in some corner, he would approach me and tell me all kinds of stories and that's how he'd bring me back to reality.

The summer passed, the fall began, mud, rains, wood is needed to heat the house.

There's one way to get wood, in the forest, from the forest keeper, for vodka. There was no vodka to buy, it had to be made alone. The vodka was made from fruits, potatoes and barley.

Indeed the authorities did not allow producing drinks alone, but the people would do it, especially at night since at night government representatives almost never came to check, since they were afraid to travel at night, because at night the Partisans controlled the roads.

Since we needed wood, we prepared the device in which the mixture was cooked, from which we made the vodka. The device was a vat that was usually used for cooking potatoes in the winter, for the cows and chickens and pigs. We just had to add a few tubes, and the device was ready. The mixture from which the vodka was made had to be prepared about two weeks before starting to make the vodka, as it had to ferment. I, who had no experience in this, had to learn and indeed I sat for a few evenings and watched how to control the flame, which is actually the main action since the strength of the drink can be adjusted according to the strength of the flame. And of course, after I tasted it a few times and I wasn't used to alcoholic drinks, I got drunk and fell asleep, and then everything was burned. When I awoke and saw it was burned, I was scared I would be shouted at, but my landlord laughed and told me "You don't know that's why I left you alone, so you will learn. And I knew that the first or second time, people fall asleep from tasting too much of the drink. I'm sure you'll fall asleep again, but there's nothing to do, the drink causes sleepiness."

And indeed I also fell asleep the second time, even though I did whatever possible not to fall asleep. But after that everything went well and we managed to produce about 50 bottles of the drink. Not all of it went to getting wood, the landlord also drank a little. And then, when the first snow fell and it was possible to travel by winter wagons, we travelled to the forest to meet with the supervisor and finalize the amount of wood and the payment. Of course, he asked for not only vodka, but also food. Of course, the first time we took with us a few bottles of vodka and some cuts of pork. The negotiations

with the forester were held not in my presence, but I was told that if I came without the landlord, then everything would be fine. And that's how I began to bring wood from the forest to the farm. I didn't load, I didn't unload, there were laborers who did that. Of course we brought the full amount of wood. The laborers sawed them and with axes, prepared small pieces but, since there was a further stock of wood, the new ones were arranged behind the buildings, not the house but the cowsheds and granary.

One day, during lunch, the landlady turned to me and told me that I don't have to get up early. It's winter now and cold, I can sleep as much as I like. I objected to this arrangement because I felt that I owed them as much work as possible, in return for them protecting me. But that didn't help me. I would get up at 8 or 9 in the morning. My breakfast was ready, everything was hot. I'd eat, dress warmly and go out to the farm. There was nothing to do since the laborers did all the jobs, and then I went home. There was no radio, because the Germans did not allow it. Sometimes I played checkers with the landlord, sometimes he'd tell me all sorts of stories, and so the time passed. Sometimes the landlord's friends came, I never joined in, I only sat far away and listened. In such cases I got to know all sorts of things: what's the situation with the war, what's with the Jews, where there are more and where there aren't any more. Of course, it was all news from the area.

One day the landlord told me that we have to go to a flour mill, to grind flour for the house and bran for the beasts. But in every flour mill you had to send 30% what came out to the authorities, and my landlord didn't want to, so he told me that he has a good friend who owns a small flour mill, that at his place you don't have to give 30% and he also receives a confirmation that he had given the 30%. But it's far, about 30 km each way so he usually sleeps there.

We began to remove the grains from the hideout (of course we hid the grains, otherwise the Germans came to take, the Partisans came to take and there were also some thieves). The following morning we set out, we didn't stop anywhere on the way, we only stopped to give the horses water.

We took a good, strong pair of horses, so we could travel without stopping.

We reached the mill in the afternoon. Of course we were well received, because he was a good friend of the landlord, we ate and rested. And at night, when no stranger was in

the mill, we began to grind our kernels. It wasn't a sophisticated mill, before the war there was a steam generator that powered the machines, but now there was nothing to activate the generator, and it was broken anyway. The mill owner changed it somehow and it could be operated using horses. Of course, the horses didn't activate the entire mill, only three machines – one that ground, the second that ground and separated the flour, and the third for the bran. I don't know how it happened exactly, but it worked roughly like that.

I harnessed the horses to the machines, and all night I walked behind them in a circle. When it began to get light we had to stop, even though we hadn't managed to finish everything. Because the mill owner was scared that he would be seen working at night. We loaded the flour and bran on the wagon, the grain we didn't grind we left at the mill and said I would come again, to finish the grinding. I rested a little as did the horses, we ate and left on our way. We went slowly, and returned home approaching evening. We unloaded the flour, I put the horses into the stable, went into the house and sat down to eat.

And then the dogs began to bark, it was already dark, but I saw and heard a rider on horseback entering the yard and heading for the house. The landlord got up, opened the door and went outside, and it turned out to be a representative of the Ukrainian Partisans and he had to take some people about 50 km away, and if we don't take them, then he's taking the horses himself. Of course they agreed, and the landlord went and returned the next afternoon, tired and sick and then I told him that if the Partisans come again, I'll go with them. Of course he didn't agree, but I persuaded him that I should go. Meanwhile the winter ended. There was nothing new in the farm and I was busy with farm jobs.

I remember, it was a Sunday towards the evening (as I have already written, the house I lived in now was far from the village) and we were busy, me and the landlord, feeding the animals when we heard the sound of a wagon approaching the farm. The landlord and I went out of the cow shed and saw entering the yard a wagon harnessed to two horses, and in the wagon sat six partisans with weapons. One of them jumped from the wagon, approached us and said that as the horses they came with were tired, so they want a wagon with a pair of horses and to pad the wagon with hay so they could sleep, and we have to take them a distance of 85 km. An argument broke out between the

landlord and the partisans, but it didn't help and in the end he invited them into the house, let them eat, and meanwhile I prepared a wagon with a pair of good horses. I went into the house and asked for food for the road, and as soon as they finished eating we left on our way. The landlord and his wife hugged me, kissed me, asked me not to go, but it didn't convince me. Because the problem was that we have to take them, to the place they want to reach is a distance that will take 3-4 days there and back. The landlord is a sick man and I am young.

I left on the way, it was already night and it should not be forgotten that the situation was like this: There were several types of partisans, 1- partisans who wanted an independent Ukraine (Banderowcy), 2- partisans who wanted Russian communist rule. Those who went with me were partisans who wanted an independent Ukraine. And when we travelled at night, they were always careful not to meet the communist partisans. After two nights we reached the place they wanted. We only travelled at night, by day we slept in a forest. And when we got there, they got down from the wagon, left me the remaining food and gave me a rifle with a shortened barrel and bullets, and told me to go home.

To tell the truth, I didn't know what that place was. It was late at night, as it was near a forest, I came off the path with the wagon, let the horses eat and lay down between the trees and watched over the wagon. I waited for the light of morning. But I fell asleep and luckily no one took the horses and wagon. When I awoke it was morning, it was already sunny. I began to check where I was and what I saw was a forest and cultivated fields. I decided to wait until some farmer appears for work in the field and then I would ask where I was. After a while I saw from a distance of about 300 meters a wagon approaching with a farmer and probably his partner. As they approached me, I waited for them. When they were almost next to me I said to them "good morning" in Ukrainian and they replied, but judging by their reply I realized that they weren't Ukrainians, but Czechs. And then I turned to them in Czech. When they heard that I spoke Czech, they got off the wagon and asked me where I was from. I told them all the story and then they gave me hot milk to drink and food, and told me to wait here in place, they'll soon return and then I can go with them.

They went and I waited. I didn't go anywhere because they told me there were Germans in the area. And indeed after a short time they returned and I followed them. When we

got to their farm, they told me to go into the yard. It turned out that they were rich. Soon they sent a laborer to untie the horses and take care of them, and me they brought home and began to serve me hot food and drink, enough that I thought I'd explode. Although it wasn't night I didn't hold on, I hadn't slept for two nights. They woke me up to eat dinner and after that I continued to sleep until the morning. When I got up in the morning I felt good, they gave me breakfast and food for the road for me and the horses, and I set out. They parted from me warmheartedly.

The way back took me a day and a night, when I got back to the farm the old people no longer knew what to think. They thought I'd never come back, thought the Germans had caught and killed me. For three days they didn't give me anything to do, just demanded that I eat and rest. I rested for three days and maybe more, but I returned to activity on the farm, to check the tools (ploughs, harrows), the wagons also needed checking, the horses' harnesses, and if you discover damaged things you had to bring in a professional to repair them. Although there were no factories, there were craftsmen. Good news began to arrive, that the Germans were retreating everywhere. Of course, they were talking about Poland. There were places that when the Germans retreated they looted, killed, and burned the villages. And then the activities of the Ukrainian partisans (Banderowcy) began.

Of course I was glad that the Germans were retreating, but you had to be careful not to move around outside, to actually sit in some hideout, to hide the animals, because otherwise they would have killed them or taken them.

I'd been so preoccupied with the farm that I'd forgotten who I was and what this means to me as a Jew, that the Germans were retreating. Although I knew, almost certainly, that no one from my family remained alive, but anyway I thought, maybe yes. I knew I had an aunt in the Land of Israel and a distant female cousin in Argentina.

By the time I saw the Germans retreating, it took another month, it should be noted that they fought hard, but that didn't help them. The Russian army came with momentum and the battles were fierce, but it did not help the Germans, they continued to retreat and the Russian army continued to press them and they continued to retreat. I stood on a hill and watched how the Germans were fleeing. It was the time of the grain harvest and this helped the Russian soldiers get close to the German positions and attack them. A few days later, the Russian army appeared and in my landlord's farm the Russians

established a medical station. There were wagons to carry the wounded, doctors and nurses, and I moved around among them. But my landlord was afraid of the Russians, since he, despite being rich, was a communist, and had sat in a Polish prison (Berezia Kartuskiej), he didn't know what would happen to him when the Russians arrive.

It should be noted that people did not know what to expect, what the Russians would do to the population, the majority of whom were satisfied with the German rule, and of course there were those who suffered from the Germans.

It should also be noted that the Ukrainian population was more anti-Semitic than all the other populations, such as the Poles, Czechs and others. Regarding the Czechs, I'm almost certain that there were some who cooperated with the Germans, but I personally know that they helped the Jews. And then the day came and I saw how the Russian army attacks the Germans and the Germans flee. I stood maybe 200 meters from the German artillery position and saw how Russian soldiers conquer the position and kill the Germans.

At that moment all sorts of thoughts passed through my mind and one of the thoughts was, "there, I stayed alive", but I had no joy, as I knew that it was almost 100% certain that I remained alone, from so many family and other acquaintances from the area, who I was born and grew up with.

Well, the Russian army arrived and began to check who collaborated with the Germans, and began to organize the whole village, so there would be a committee, and a committee head. Of course the informing began, each one informing on the other. But the Russians didn't conduct inquiries, whoever was informed on, they took and sent him to Siberia and destroyed his farm.

And within all this situation is me, a Jewish youth who everyone knows by the name Volodka and that he is Ukrainian and has to look for a new way, and he has no one to guide him, because after all I was a 16-year-old youth, without parents, without a family, without a guiding hand what and how to behave.

Because after all, the situation was dangerous, the Germans were still fighting – they hadn't surrendered yet. The Russians acted cautiously, they had fought against the Germans and Ukrainian partisans, so the situation was hard. It was frightening to go out at night, and sometimes also in the day.

It should also be known that at the farmer's I was, his wife didn't know that I was a Jew, even though she would bathe me every week in a tin bath and her husband didn't tell her.

## **The imprisonment**

And then, one day we see entering the yard a group of soldiers with an officer of the Russian army. I ran outside to see, and when they saw me, the officer called me and asked if the man called Trachuk is here. Of course I told him he did and that he was at home. The officer told me to call him outside. I ran home quickly and called him. The moment he went outside, two soldiers immediately caught him and tied his hands. The officer read the accusation from a page, but nobody understood what the complaint was and they went to the nearest city, Ludmir.

I went into the house and then his wife told me she knew why they took him, when I asked why she told me that her husband sat in the Polish prison Berezie Kartuskiej and her husband was a communist. I may have still been only a child, but I understood that a communist is not a rich person, and my landlord was rich. But that was the fact, they had taken him. Truth was, the Russians didn't like the Polish communists. When we were remained alone in the house, me and the landlady and she cried, an idea came into my head, to go to the city of Ludmir and talk with Jews there. I knew that there were some Jews there, as my landlord would tell me all kinds of things, of course not at home, so his wife would not hear.

My plan was to go into town, meet Jews there and tell them that this *goy* saved me from the Germans and now I want to get him out of the prison. But I didn't know what reasoning to give the landlady, because she wanted me to go to her brother and her daughter and let them know, and I knew that would not help. So I decided to tell her that I am a Jew, because I no longer had any fear. Well, I told her "I want to tell you something that you do not know about me, I am a Jew, your husband kept this secret all the time, but now I want to save him from prison, so I want to go to the town." She hugged me and didn't want to believe me. I told her I was telling the truth, and in time she would see that is true. I asked for permission to take a horse and ride into town. Her reply was, and I was indeed surprised, "take whatever you want, you're part of the



family.” I went over, hugged her and kissed her. I went into my room, changed clothes. I went to the stable, took out a horse, put on the saddle (it was a special saddle that the landlord had made for me) and left on my way.

The distance was about 16 km on dirt tracks and I really galloped, because I wanted to get there as early as possible. I don't know how long the journey took me, because I didn't have a watch, but when I entered the city by horse, I didn't know to where to turn or who to turn to. While I knew the city well, but after years of war and after the Germans had retreated, I didn't know who I could meet and whether I'd know him. I reached the city and began to look for Jews (I knew the city because I had lived in it, studied at the “Tarbut” school in the Hebrew language). As I remembered, there was a center in the city where all the merchants would meet. The center was next to a movie house on the main street. I realized that I couldn't reach this center on horseback, so I rode to the street where I used to live before the Germans came. I knocked on the door of one house, where I knew lived a Ukrainian who I knew and believed would receive me well, and that's really how it was. He brought me into his house and began to ask me all sorts of questions, how I had stayed alive. I told him briefly and asked to leave the horse with him, because I had to go back to the center of city. He didn't have a stable, but a yard he had. I tethered the horse, food I brought with me. I went to the center to look for a familiar Jew. Because I had two questions: The first question, who is the police commander in the city and how can I get to him? And the second question, how can I sell a ton of wheat, because I knew that to get him released I will need money to pay somebody.

And indeed when I came to the place where Jews moved around and started to come closer, one Jew separated from the group, approached me and asked me what I was looking for and who I was. Of course, first of all I told him who I was and after he remembered he forced me to drink and eat, and then he took me to a Russian man, a police officer that through him the police commander could be reached. Of course, he told us what the price was for contacting the police chief. We got up and went to look for who was buying grains, of course we met this man and concluded that tomorrow I will begin to bring him wheat. Since on a wagon with two good horses 700 kg can be loaded, I will have to travel twice and the price for 100 kg is 350 rubles (it should not be forgotten that I was about 16 years old, and from where did I take all this initiative?).

I went back to the place where I'd left the horse, it was already getting dark, but I rode back to the village. When I reached the farm the landlady was standing outside waiting for me. She was worried. As soon as I dismounted from the horse, the laborer who worked in the farm took it and I went into the house. Of course I told her everything and asked her if she agreed with what I was going to do. Her reply was a big hug and kisses. I asked her to tell the laborer to load the wagon with sacks of grain, so we could reach the city early in the morning, because the grain had to be brought to the storeroom of the flour mill (Shulman) and then to deliver it and go back to the village, to bring the second delivery. I didn't go back again, only the laborer and I went to this Jew, so he would go with me to get money for the grain. I found out that the man who received the grain in the flour mill was the one who pays the money. I received about 5000 rubles.

I stayed to sleep at that Jew's in the city, so that the next morning we could start to make contact with the police chief. To the police officer who was, so to speak, the mediator between us and the police chief, I gave 1000 rubles and when he asked also for the commander, I told him I will pay him. The next morning, I waited next to the police station for the officer who would take me to the police chief, but waited for a long time and he didn't show up. I began to clarify and found out that he had been on some police action at night, and still hadn't returned. I was left with no choice but to try to get to the police chief, but there was a problem, at the gate stood a policeman who would not let me in. I stood there for a long time and waited, maybe the policeman would move somewhere and then I'll sneak in, and that's how it was. He probably went to some room, to check something and then I snuck in and began to ascend to the police chief.

When I reached his door, I stopped and to tell the truth, was afraid, but I knocked on the door and entered. He was surprised to see a youth walk into his office (the truth is that he didn't know me as a Jew). His first question was "what's this about?" And then I told him that I had come to ask him to release Mr. Trachuk. That was the *goy's* name, that I'd come to beg mercy for. His reply was that it was not in his authority but in the hands of the prosecutor. And then I told him who I was and what my connection was with the *goy*. He did not stop me from talking, but when I'd finished he gave me a chair to sit on. And then he started asking me all sorts of questions, and when he'd finished all the questions, he got up, told me to stay in his room and went to the prosecutor to clear it

up. He returned after a long time and then told me, there has to be a trial and if he is found innocent then he'll be released, and if he is not found innocent, then he will sit for a long time in prison. But there are all sorts of ways that will enable him to be found innocent. First, I have to testify, but since I was not yet 18 that's a problem, that I won't be able to testify. The other thing is if he's found innocent, he won't be able to return to the farm to work, they will find him a place to work in the city and once every two weeks he'll be allowed to go home.

I began to explain to the police chief that he is old and sick, and then he told me "those are not alleviating reasons". The only thing that could help that the verdict would be as he said, was money. Deep inside myself, I was glad that I'd heard what can help, although I still did not know how much money. After he told me money, he paused, and then a few moments passed before he continued. The prosecutor will have to receive 3000 rubles and he doesn't want from me money, he only wanted me to get for him a residential apartment among the Jews, and he will give me a *laissez-passer* [travel permit] so that I can go to Kharkiv, a city in Russia, to bring his wife and boy. The trial will take place only after I return with his wife and she will have somewhere to live. I was a bit startled by his demand, to bring his wife with the child. But I agreed and told him that I ask that they will let me visit my *goy* in the prison and bring him some clothes and food. He told me he could arrange that for me, but not today only tomorrow. I told him that's fine and left the room and went to the Jews to look for an apartment.

I found out that the Jew who bought grain also deals with apartments. For 1500 rubles, he gave me a three-room apartment, with furniture. I received an official confirmation that the apartment was rented for two years, of course under my foreign name and received the key. I took the horse and went to the village.

The landlady was waiting for me. I told her everything I'd done, and of course she was glad and kissed me and hugged me. I ate and lay down to sleep, because I was tired.

The next morning, the laborer loaded another wagon with grain and I took the landlady with the food and clothes for her husband, got on the wagon and we went to the city.

When I reached the city, I went to the police chief to get an entrance permit to the prison and told him that I already had an apartment for him. He was so happy that he took me and the landlady in for the visit. I won't explain how the visit was, just one thing, after his

wife told him about all the things I'd done, then he told her that she has to listen, whatever I say must be done. The time came to end the visit.

I told the landlady that she should go home and I'll stay in the city for a few days. I didn't tell her I was going to bring the commander's wife. I returned to the police, and went with the commander, to show him the apartment. He liked it, I gave him the key and he told me to come back with him to his office. And then he thanked me greatly and I told him I was ready to go, and that same day, it was already afternoon, I boarded a freight train that went to Kharkiv. Of course, with all the permits necessary for the journey there and back.

I rolled on that train for two days, until I reached the Kharkiv railway station. I carried a letter to the owner of the station buffet (or maybe an employee of the buffet, because it was governmental), after reading the letter, he sent a girl to the house or workplace of the officer's wife and she brought her to the station, and then I handed her the letter from her husband. After she finished reading the letter, she asked when there was a train back to Ludmir, after all there were no regular train schedules then, so we had to wait at the station until we could catch some train going in the direction we needed. About nine hours passed until a freight train stopped. One of the station workers put us in an empty carriage. I forgot to tell that his wife did not have a lot of luggage, she had one suitcase and one package and two children – one aged 8 and the other aged 10. And that's how the way back began, but this time it took just 1.5 days. When we got to Ludmir, I took them to the commander and there my role ended, because I'd looked after an apartment for him before I went. And how did I look after an apartment for him – one of the Jews in the city knew about a furnished apartment, empty, but it cost 1500 rubles, to transfer the apartment to my name and I handed over the house to the commander. Of course I sold grain, so there would be money for all those things, but everything was with the *goy's* knowledge that I was with him and rescued him from the prison.

With that ended my business with the police officer and I went back to the village, to the farm. I didn't stay long in the village. While I was in the city of Ludmir and worried about releasing the *goy*, I had met Jews and they told me that it's possible to be smuggled through the border into Poland and from there to join the Jews going to Germany and from there to Israel.

The truth is that I didn't know much about Israel, although I'd studied in the Tarbut school and there we had notebooks from *Keren Kayemet* [the Jewish National Fund, which funded new settlements and immigration] with a map of the Land of Israel, and the students had to buy stamps, which were parts of Israel, and that was what I actually knew.

But another thing attracted me to Israel, I had an aunt there, my mother's sister, her name was Bracha and she lived in Haifa. (This aunt raised me, because my mother died when I was two weeks old).

After the *goy* was released from the prison and according to the authorities' decision, he was not allowed to return to the farm to work, but they gave him a workplace in the city, as a night watchman at the pharmacy in the city. Of course his wife was glad, because it was better than prison. We would visit him twice a week, bring him food, clean clothes and more.

One time when we visited him, I decided to talk with him about it, that I wanted to try to reach a place that from there I could get to Israel. The truth is, I was afraid of the very complicated and dangerous road that stood before me. But since I did not feel that I wanted to detach myself from being a Jew and meeting my aunt, this gave me the desire and strength to make every effort to reach Israel.

The first thing I did, I talked to my landlord. He was very pleased that I'd turned to him and didn't flee without telling him. And then he started taking interest among the Jews in the city, what I had to do to get to Israel. One day, when I came to visit him in the city, he told me that I had to smuggle myself over the border to Poland. He had already set it up, but before I leave him, he asked me to think about it. If I want to stay with him, he would transfer the farm to my name (80 hectares) and I will stay with them.

But as soon as he finished talking, there was a pause in the conversation, and then he began to talk again and said "No. You should be among Jews and if you remember that you have an aunt in Israel, your place is there." And with that the conversation ended. He spoke to his wife, that she should prepare me clothes for the road. He also acquired, through the Jews, clothes for me. He told her about money, where to take from. Of course this took time, about six weeks, until everything worked out.

But I also had something left to arrange. I spoke to the prosecutor in the court, with a request to revoke the verdict that requires that my *goy* lives and works in the city and

not on his farm. Of course I didn't tell him that I intended to go to [pre-state] Israel, but I told him that I wanted to go to Russia to study in a military school. This he liked very much and so he gave me the approval that the *goy* could return to his farm forever. And he took care of my documents for me, so that I could travel to the military school. Of course, this whole deal cost money, 1200 rubles.

## ***In Russia***

The *goy* returned to his farm and I had to wait for an approval from the school that it was willing to accept me, so I'll have a cover story for the authorities, that I didn't disappear.

And really, two days after I received the permit to go to the military school, to the city of Kharkiv, I sat and thought. If I go to that school, I'll never see my aunt in Israel, because a military school has a military regime and I wouldn't be able to correspond with her and not to see her, and that I couldn't do. So, I did not go to the military school. Then I found out that the Russians were also willing to send young men and women to a professional school for engraving and locksmith work. I decided to sign up, because I was the decider, I had nobody to give me advice, guidance, I was alone. About two weeks after I registered, I received a message (because I would ask every day when we're going) to appear at the City Officer, in the city of Ludmir. And that's what I did, they registered me, of course not as a Jew, but according to the Ukrainian name I had.

Of course, the whole process was with the *goy's* knowledge while I was with him, and he asked for one thing, to let him know where I am and if I need anything. He'll find a way to get it to me.

Of course, after I'd appeared in front of the city officer, they would not let me go anywhere and in the middle of the night a train arrived, not a passenger train, they were freight cars. That's how I travelled for about 24 hours. At one of the stations where the train stopped, I saw that they were disconnecting some cars from the train, and another locomotive was pulling them. I found out later that all the young men and women in the freight cars that train was pulling were not going to the professional school, but to a school for coal miners, and there they would study for half a year, and after half a year

become professional coal mine workers. Truth is, most of them broke out crying and shouted.

I did not cry, I did not shout, because I had no other place. I reached the new place at about midnight, it was cold outside, winter, -40 degrees [Celsius]. They put us 30 people to a room, each one had a bed, mattress and thin blanket to cover yourself. There was a small stove in the room, that as long as it was lit, it was warm, but when it wasn't lit, it was cold. Very cold.

In short, that's how I lived for about two months, until the winter ended then suddenly I found out that in the other room was a Ukrainian youth, who came together with me from the city of Ludmir and knows me as a Jew. I was very frightened, and I told him that if he reveals to anyone that I'm a Jew, then I'll kill him. He promised me not to tell that I'm a Jew and that's how the work began in the coal mine.

On the first day, they gathered us in a large hall, about 300 youths, and told us what a coal mine is, how to behave and what work we would carry out. Food, we ate twice a day – in the morning at 5:00 and evening at 18:00.

In the mine they attached me to a veteran worker and he taught me how to mine coal, and how and where to move it. I was attached to a laborer, a good man, aged 50 and after he got to know me better, of course not as a Jew but a Christian Ukrainian, he would bring me every time some dish that his wife cooked, and then I visited him at home. I'd never seen such poverty. There was no mattress, the bed was straw and the straw they covered with some piece of cloth. The women made them clothes from sacks. After about two weeks, I was called into the office and they examined me, how I read Russian and also write. The next day I was appointed the main assistant of the group's instructor.

On the day we did not work, once a week, then I had to read aloud to the group, the articles of Comrade Stalin. What he says and what he wants. And another job they gave me, once a week I would sit in the kitchen and supervise that they don't steal products, and of course that same day I was in the kitchen, I ate for the whole week.

And then I found out that the woman in charge of supplies was Jewish, and one young girl who worked in the kitchen was also Jewish, she was the woman's granddaughter. The kitchen supplies would arrive once every three days. What I saw, a lot of American conserves. One day when it was my turn in the kitchen, I saw the granddaughter going

out with a bucket of water and it turned out that in the bucket was a can of food, and she was hiding it under a pile of coal outside. I was overcome with fear, because if she's caught with the can, they would blame me for not being a good supervisor. It took me some time, what should I do and I decided to go into the warehouse and tell her to quickly return the can to the warehouse, because the laborers will return and take coal to heat the room, and then they'll find the can and an investigation will begin. So I went into the warehouse, closed the door and told her what I request, that she send somebody to return the cans of food to the warehouse. I thought she was passing out, sat her on a chair and called her granddaughter. I didn't know they were Jews, but when the granddaughter came in and saw her, the old woman blurted two words "er veyst", which means, "he knows".

Please don't forget that I was then 17, I stood by the door, opened it and told the granddaughter to run and bring the can, and then I will talk to them. When the granddaughter returned with the can, I was relieved and asked them what the two words they had said were, and then I told them that I understood the words. "Well," I said, "if you want me not to talk and tell what happened today, you have to promise me that you won't reveal to anyone". They promised me and then I told them, in Yiddish, that I was a Jew.

What happened at that moment cannot be described, they both kissed me and invited me to their home. I told them that I could not do that for now, because I'm also afraid that others would know I'm a Jew, and that's how the event ended.

I continued to work in the mine, I worked together with German prisoners. I excelled at work, so they gave me an assistant, a German prisoner. His job was, as I advance and mine the coal, he takes it out and holds up the ceiling, so it would not collapse on us. But he didn't do the work as should be, I had about 50 cm to reach the corridor and then the ceiling collapsed and it poured onto the prisoner, I managed to move slightly forward and with my hammer, that I mined the coal, I managed to make a hole in the wall that separated me from the corridor. Through the hole I pushed the handle of the hammer, it was soon seen there and they came and took me out, the German they didn't look for. And then I decided to flee, how, I didn't know yet.

I forgot to point out that the school where I learned how to work with coal was in the city of Lysychansk and the school was called Piezao 23.



This is true, how to escape I didn't know, but it was clear to me that I had to take with me the youth who knew I'm a Jew, or else he would tell on me. I remembered that the husband of the woman in charge of supplies was the administrator of seven coal mines, so I asked to meet him, and of course, the woman was glad I was ready to visit her at home.

I met the man, a Jew of about 60, and after a few hours of conversation over several days, I told him my problem, that I wanted to escape and have another youth that I have to take with me. He told me he would check what could be done. After a few days, I received a message from him to come and then he told me that he'd prepared for me a transit permit to Kiev, but without that boy. Meanwhile I wrote letters to my *goy*, of course he couldn't send me money, it was not allowed, so he would send me warm upper clothes and I took them to the market and sold them so I had money. But you cannot buy a train ticket if you don't have a transit permit. I did not want and could not travel by train with a ticket for two reasons – with a ticket, you'd never manage to get on the train, but with 20 rubles in hand, you'd also have a place to sit. So I decided and spoke to the youth, if he wants to join me and run away, and he agreed.

I gave him warm clothes and one day towards evening, we disappeared, of course after I'd researched and checked when and where there was a train. We reached the railway station in the city of Lysychansk, I gave him money and told him to buy two tickets to the next station, a distance of 400 km. I don't know today, but then, next to every railway station cashier stood at least two policemen and my youth approached the cashier to buy the tickets. I hid far away and saw that the cashier doesn't want to sell him without a transit permit and he said he didn't have, and then the policemen took him.

## On the way back

That same night, I didn't get on the train, because I was afraid he would tell the policemen who I was and where I wanted to go. I walked around all night in all sorts of alleyways in the city, so as not to stand out and when the morning arrived I went to the railway station. I had a transit permit, that the husband of the woman in charge of supplies gave me and it served me to reach the city of Sarnaki in Poland, that was the train's last stop.

I got off the train and didn't know where to go. Suddenly I encountered a man, who judging by his appearance was Jewish and his job was to stand here and look for Jews fleeing Russia. I told him I needed to get to the city of Ludmir, and then he told me to go with him and tomorrow he'll take care of me. I didn't agree and then suddenly into the station came a train of the Russian army, soldiers returning to Russia. I knew that the train passed through the city of Kovel and there I had to get off. Suddenly, as I was standing and calculating whether to board that train, a Russian officer comes down from the carriage and asks me why I'm still there, and I tell him that I want to reach the city of Kovel and he takes me by the hand into his train compartment.

In Russia, in every train compartment there was a shelf for sleeping. I asked him to wake me before the train reaches the city of Kovel. I don't know if he fell asleep, when he woke me, the train was already 30km before the Russian border. I became nervous and fearful, and when the train stopped, I got off quickly. I didn't know where I was, I was hungry and cold, I began to look for someone to find out what this place was. It was already in the afternoon, I didn't see anyone. I sat down in the corner of a shack that served as a railway station.

I sat and thought again, who am I?

But it's hard to think when you are hungry and suddenly appeared a railway station worker and asked me who I am and what I'm doing here and where I need or want to go. In reply I said "first of all, I would like to buy myself food because I'm hungry" and then he told me that "there's no food to buy here, but I invite you to my house and my wife will give us food". Of course I told him that he didn't have to, but by the time I'd finished talking with him I was already in his house. A small apartment, one-and-a-half rooms and a kitchen. He spoke with his wife, I didn't hear what and she served food, of course

not meat, but borscht<sup>6</sup> with potatoes, semolina with salmon, and I was filled. Of course I thanked them, and then asked him when a train passes through here on the way to the city of Kovel.

It turns out that at 12 at night a military train passes and stops for a few moments and if not that train, there are no trains. Well, I decided to get on that train, not in a carriage, only outside. Every carriage had a 'stall', where a soldier stood and guarded and underneath was an empty floor. And, of course, I got on this floor and started to go. From this place to Kovel was about 180 km. I tried not to fall asleep, or else with this train I'd reach the devil knows where.

After I'd already travelled for a long time, I began to follow the signs of the stations, to know what the name is, and here I see a sign in Russian and Polish for Kovel. I didn't know how I could get down, so that the soldier sitting in the stall wouldn't see me.

Suddenly the train stopped, I began to think how to get down the carriage's steps, I was afraid the soldier would see me. And I was half frozen, it was cold, so I decided to roll myself off the train. I decided and did.

I lay outside the railway tracks and thought, "what now?"

After I lay there for about an hour, the morning light began and I began to walk towards the station. I walked with difficulty, but in the end got there and what do I see, soldiers of the Anders' Army (Poles) and as soon as they saw me, what a wonder, a medic came and gave me some medicine and hot food, they rubbed my body with vodka and I came back to myself.

All the time the medic took care of me, I didn't say anything. Truth is, I didn't know and couldn't speak because I was frozen. And after I began to talk, I told them where I was from and where I was coming from, and that I wanted to get to the city of Ludmir. They could not help me with that, only gave me food. Meanwhile they left and I stayed and began to think how I could get on a train going to Ludmir. I walked around the station and looked for a way to get on a train. Suddenly I saw a man in the uniform of a railway worker, and in each hand he carried two parcels and I saw it was heavy, I approached him and offered to help. He stopped and told me that he had to get to the city of Ludmir.

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<sup>6</sup> A soup made with beets and usually served with sour cream, associated with the cuisine of eastern and central Europe, especially Russia, Poland, and Ukraine. <https://www.dictionary.com/>

I didn't believe my ears and told him that I also want to go to Ludmir. But I have no money for a ticket and so he suggested that he'd tell the ticket inspector that I'm traveling with him and since he was a railway employee he didn't have to pay for me and would say that I was a relative of his who helped him with the packages.

In short, I went up with him to the train and the train moved. When I reached Ludmir, I jumped off the train so as not to go through an inspection, and went into the city.

Where to go? I was dirty, with torn clothes and then I remembered that the *goy* I had stayed with works as a night watchman at a pharmacy. And so I turned towards the pharmacy. It was already afternoon and my *goy* was already there, guarding. When he saw me, he ran towards me, hugged me and kissed me. That night I spent together with him and told him everything that had happened to me, and I finally fell asleep. In the morning he woke me, and the first thing he told me was that his wife would soon arrive and bring me clothes, lots of food and money. I asked, why money? And then he told me, "listen, if you want to stay with me, then I can promise you that the whole farm, the lands I have, I will give you". But, he thinks my place is among Jews and that I should go to Poland and from there to Israel. "After all, you have an aunt there and because of that you need money, for the road".

His wife came the next day and brought clean, new clothes and many other things. All day while I was waiting for his wife, the *goy* slept and I thought about what to do, to stay or go. But the *goy* had spoken to me like to his son, so I decided to accept his offer and his wife cried all day.

And that's how I began my way to the Land of Israel.

## **On the way to the Land of Israel**

Well, the first thing I had to do was to cross the border between Ukraine and Poland. It wasn't a land border, the border was the River Bug. In this the *goy* helped me, he found someone who dealt in transporting people to the other side, he paid the smuggler, and of course the smuggler worked at night.

At about 3 at night, he transported me. I didn't take any baggage, only what I could wear, because I didn't know where I'd end up. Money I had, the *goy* gave me 10000.

After the smuggler brought me to the other side, he told me not to walk in the dark, when the daylight comes I can go, and he left.

I remained alone. I didn't know where I was, if it's far from a settlement and what settlement.

I sat and thought about what I'd already been through and what awaited me. But now I had a purpose, to get to the Land of Israel. Because I thought that if I'd stayed alive through the Germans, then I would try to get to the Land of Israel, to Aunt Bracha.

Daylight began and then people appeared, walking and travelling in wagons, I joined them, and found out where they were going and was told that tomorrow is market day and they were going to buy all sorts of things and also to sell. But I still didn't know the name of the city and the distance to it. Finally I found out that they were going to a city called Hrubieszow and the distance was 20 km. And so I walked together with them and they let me eat and drink and towards evening, it was still light outside, we entered the city. At that moment, I left them to look for Jews. And indeed, it was not long before I met some Jews, and began to find out all sorts of things and, of course, where I could stay.

One Jew took me to his house. In his house I met his wife and son, older than me. Of course, they let me eat and gave me a place to sleep, but as I lay down the son approached me and started asking me who I was, where I'm from and where do I want to go (the son was 18 years old). Of course I told him in short who I was, where I was from and where I want to go.

And then he said, "Get dressed, I'll go with you to meet Jewish youth, they have a club." Of course I was glad and we went.

As we approached that clubhouse I heard the sound of loud laughter (laughter that I hadn't laughed for many years). We walked into the room, there were about 30 youths there, boys and girls, my age and older. Of course, everyone wanted to know who I was and then approached me a man older than the others, and said, "Since everybody is asking and wants to know who you are, so if you want, everyone will sit down and you'll tell what you have to tell," and that's how it was. It took a few hours, because not only I told, there were also questions and it took time to answer. When I'd finished, it was already late. The man turned to me and suggested that I stay with him. He was alone in his room and had something to tell me that will surely interest me. The youth who came

with me told me that he'd explain it to his parents. And that I could stay with that man, who was called Shmuel.

When I got to his room, he started telling me who he was and what he was doing. It turned out that he was sent by the "Dror Movement"<sup>7</sup> in central Poland, in the city of Katowice, and he assured me that he would transfer me to a place where they had established youth centers and everyone wants to get to the Land of Israel, because here, we have nothing to look for.

I lived with Shmuel for a few days, if I remember, about four days. And then he informed me that he's going to the city of Sosnowiec and I should go with him. I went with him, and all the way he explained to me how the youth live there and they call this place kibbutz<sup>8</sup>. And I thought, they can call it whatever they want, the main thing is that I could get to the Land of Israel.

And then I arrived in Sosnowiec, in the kibbutz. They received me well, of course I had to tell them who I am and where I'm from. Everyone was told that they have to work in all sorts of places. I informed them (the instructors) that I'm not afraid of work. So they sent me, with a few other boys, to work in a big warehouse that was full of pots of all kinds of sizes, and we had to sort them. There were other types of workplaces, but we also had to do kitchen shifts, and of course I did my shift and felt happy. I am among Jews and have no need to fear.

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<sup>7</sup> Dror youth movement was founded in Poland in 1915 out of a wing of the Tze'irei Tziyon (Zion Youth) study circle.

<sup>8</sup> The Kibbutzim that were established in Poland after the Holocaust, were "Children and Youth Kibbutzs", founded by Zionist youth movements. The "kibbutz" was like a home for those orphaned by the Holocaust. It was where they lived, where they worked, create cultural events and lived together in a communal group. They had counselors, who helped them regain faith in the future and prepared them for immigration to the land of Israel (then Palestina).



Kibbutz "Dror"

I learned all kinds of songs, and since I knew Hebrew, I found books, even in Hebrew and began to read massive amounts. The time was good for me, I already had some friends, and it could be said that I felt like I was living in a new world.

I don't remember how long I stayed in the kibbutz, in Sosnowiec. But on a certain day, we were informed that soon we would leave Poland and go to Germany, and from there, later, to the Land of Israel. And then the day came and we set out, of course by train and also by freight vehicles, to Germany. Our kibbutz reached the city of Landsberg. There they put us up in a big building. After we got organized, we began to go out to all kinds of jobs, usually in UNRRA<sup>9</sup> warehouses and the instructors began to teach us about the Land of Israel. There were also emissaries from the Land of Israel.

But from Germany we didn't go so fast. I even returned from Landsberg to Poland, on a movement<sup>10</sup> mission, to deliver all kinds of documents, but also dollars. Of course, this

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), administrative body (1943–47) for an extensive social-welfare program that assisted nations ravaged by World War II. Created on Nov. 9, 1943, by a 44-nation agreement, its operations concentrated on distributing relief supplies, such as food, clothing, fuel, shelter, and medicines; providing relief services, with trained personnel; and aiding agricultural and economic rehabilitation. In addition, it also provided camps, personnel, and food for the care and repatriation of millions of displaced persons and refugees after the war. UNRRA discontinued its activities in 1947. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations-Relief-and-Rehabilitation-Administration>

<sup>10</sup> Briha ( translit. Briħa, "escape" or "flight"), also called the Bericha Movement,[1] was the underground organized effort that helped Jewish Holocaust survivors escape post–World War II Europe to the British Mandate

time also I had to cross a border, this time from Germany to Poland. I took advantage of the possibility and got onto a train taking Poles back from Germany to Poland. They didn't know I was a Jew, and I could travel with them as a Pole, because if they knew I was a Jew, they would have strangled me.

I remember that the first time I traveled from Germany to Poland, another boy went with me, who asked me to travel together, he went back to Poland to look for family. Of course, I agreed and thought that it won't be boring. He also didn't look Jewish, he was called Bolek, but after we got onto that train and had travelled for about two days, it turned out that we were reaching the Polish border and have to change trains to a Polish train, and from there we have to buy tickets in Polish money and I didn't have any. I began to look how to change dollars carefully then suddenly, one evening, before we reached Poland, I hear two people, not far from me, speaking in Yiddish, quietly of course, so they won't be heard, and they were smuggling animal hides from Germany to Poland. When the morning light began, I approached one of the two Jews, called him aside and told him that I needed Polish money. From what I'd heard, two tickets cost about 500 zloty. But the man began with "What? he doesn't have any," and then I told him that if he's prepared to give me the contents of the big package, then I'll sell it and will have money, but he understood the hint that I know that he's smuggling hides and he opened his wallet, took out 1000 zloty and gave it to me. I told him to give me an address in Poland and I'll return the money. His reply was that he didn't want any connections with me. I left him. We began to approach the Polish border. I wore three-quarter length boots, the dollars they put inside the boots' soles. We reached the border and then it turned out that the Poles returning from Germany were taken to some camp, so I decided to bypass it all and we boarded a train that was leaving the border. Everything went well, we reached a small town and at the railway station we found something hot to drink and eat. We walked in, sat down and I asked for tea and a sandwich. The boy who was with me saw there were girls sitting there, went and joined them, and started to offer them American chocolate and American cigarettes, and before long, one of the girls got up and went outside, and a few minutes later, Polish police entered and arrested both of us.

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for Palestine in violation of the White Paper of 1939. It ended when Israel declared independence and annulled the White Paper. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bricha>



They brought us to the police at night. They did not interrogate us. Of course I was angry at the boy and demanded that he tells them that he didn't know me, that by chance we came in together. He probably felt guilty, that he'd got me in trouble, agreed and the next day when they investigated us, I didn't smoke, didn't have American cigarettes, but I had received while we were in the carriage with the Poles, from some Pole, two packs of German cigarettes and that's what the Poles found on me. And on the boy who was with me they found in his pack American chocolate, cigarettes and other stuff. The end was that they released me after two hours of interrogation and him, I don't know what happened to him.

After they released me, I had a problem. I had no money to buy train tickets and food. I had to sell two shirts that I had so I could continue to the city of Lodz.

The train traveled all night and towards morning it stopped, then it turned out that it wasn't entering the city of Lodz, but going in another direction. Of course, I got off and other people got off and we had to wait for another train that was going to Lodz. It was cold to wait outside, I went into the railway station and there was a restaurant there. I was hungry, but a lot of money I didn't have, I thought to buy a bowl of hot soup. But there were a lot of people in the restaurant and nowhere to sit. I watched to see who was finishing eating and then I saw a young man, well dressed and elegant, who had almost finished eating. I approached him and asked if I could sit there after he gets up. Of course he agreed and a conversation between us began, and from what he said, I realized he was a Jew. After we'd finished eating he began to find out when there was a train, and it turned out that it would be late and will only leave at 11 in the morning. Then he told me that he wouldn't wait in the station, he's going to a hotel and asked me if I'm going too. I told him that I would not go, since I was left without money. Then he told me that he would pay for me and I'll pay him back. Of course, I agreed and we went to the hotel. He took a room with two beds and we continued to talk. I didn't know how to answer the question who I am, where I come from and where I'm going. Then I decided to tell him that I was from Germany and returned to Poland to look for family. And then he began to ask me if there are Jews in Germany and what are they doing and where are they continuing to. Of course, I told him everything, and in the middle of the conversation I told him that I think he's a Jew and stopped talking. I wanted to see his reaction. When he began to stutter, in other words he didn't know what to tell me, I told

him that I'm a Jew. He did not believe me, you don't look like a Jew. I told him that because of that I stayed alive.

He told me that he had an elderly mother living in Lodz and worked somewhere else. I asked for the address, so that I could return the money he gave me, but he told me that I didn't have to pay him back. The train eventually arrived and an hour later we reached the city and parted.

I knew where I had to walk to and got there. I was well received, they gave me food and clean clothes. I asked to meet with the person responsible for the place, because this place was a kibbutz, where young men and women gathered and from there continued to Germany and the Land of Israel. I needed the supervisor, to hand him a letter and give him the dollars I'd brought him.

After I met him and handed him the letter, I told him where the dollars were and gave them to him together with the boots, and remained shoeless. Of course, they soon bought me other shoes and I received some pocket money and a place where I could eat in the city. They didn't want me to eat in the kibbutz. They didn't want them to know who I was and where I came from.

And so I did nothing for a few days, I slept, I ate, until one day they called me and told me that I had to try to get to Germany through Berlin and see if it would be possible to transfer people this way to Germany, to the American zone.

Early the next morning, I left by train in the direction of the city of Szczecin, there was no train further than that so I continued by hitch-hiking with Russian military vehicles. In the end I got to Berlin, to the American zone. I turned to the local Jewish Committee, I had a letter to deliver them. I didn't know what was written in the letter. But after they read the letter, one man, whose role I did not know, called me to the office and told me that he knew what I'd come for, but he'd already checked the matter and there was no possible way to transfer people from Berlin to the American zone. I asked for this in writing, and left on my way back to Poland, to the city of Lodz, to the local leadership that sent me to Berlin.

I arrived safely in Lodz. After a few days, a group of adults and youths organized, they attached to me another boy, older than me, he explained to me how and what I had to do when crossing the border from Poland to the Czechoslovak Republic.

It was the first group I'd had to cross the border with. I, at the Czech border, declared that we were refugees from Greece and we spoke Hebrew, those who knew, and those who didn't know, kept quiet. The Czech border guards knew that it wasn't true that we were Greeks, but the dollars they received arranged everything. The group, after crossing the border, boarded a train to the city of Prague, to the Haluvton camp. There would gather all the people who had arrived in *Czechia* from the Polish border and from there in turn, one group at a time continued to the Czech-German border.

That border was hard, the German side was strict about documentation and it was impossible to bribe them. After the people had crossed the German border with me, we passed the checkpoint and there was a certain place that I had to go to and meet two guys and indeed I met them, delivered the people and went to sleep, because it was about 10 at night.

There was a small German hotel there, where I would sleep every time.

I woke up in the morning, got dressed and was served breakfast. I finished eating and went to the train that reached the border to return to Prague. Of course, I didn't have a passport, but I had a certificate confirming that I was returning to Poland from Germany, of course with a non-Jewish (Ukrainian) name. I reached Prague and went to the Haluvton camp. Usually there were more people there to transfer to Germany, but this time there were no people waiting for me to transfer them to Germany and then I decided to go back to Poland. Of course the decision to return to Poland again was not my decision, the people I worked with, they gave me the instructions how and when I have to be in each place. But since the Haluvton camp was empty, I was instructed to return to Poland and there already awaited me two groups that I had to take over the border.

I arrived at the center in Poland, there I rested and changed clothes and waited to be instructed when I'm going back to Germany and which group I was getting. That was my job at that time, to transfer children and adults from Poland to Germany, and from there they continued to the Land of Israel.

Well, the instruction was received in the form of a message.

Since I was in Poland, there is an instruction to send me a group of youths, and that I have to transfer them from Poland to *Czechia* (Prague), and from there the group would be taken and I had to return to Poland again.

Of course, I followed the instruction and did about another six times from Poland to *Czechia* and the German border. The seventh time, I decided that I'm continuing on my way to Israel.



“To eternal memory from the road  
froee Bavaria to Poland - Munchen,  
Prague, Warsaw, Berlin, and  
again.”

Landsberg 25.2.46  
Baruch



Baruch in Germany 1946

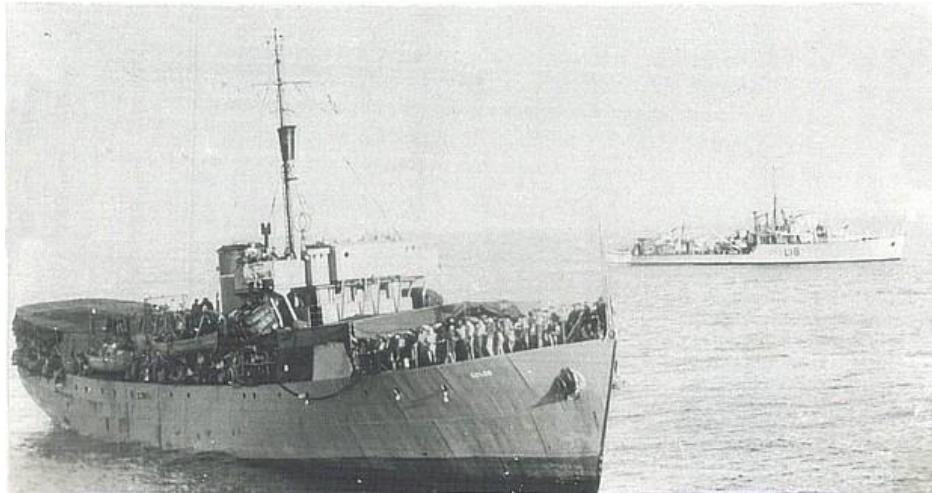
Baruch and Oscar, Landsberg 1945

From the inscription that Oscar wrote to Baruch, in Yiddish:  
“...we will meet again, I am sure,  
And that time, everything will be good.”



Of course, I had to meet with certain people, to close the matter, that they let me continue to Germany and from there to the Land of Israel. The approval was arranged and they even arranged with which group I would make *aliyah* [immigrate] and even the name of the ship (the Wedgwood).

Of course, after I received the approval to leave my present role and return to the kibbutz in Sosnowiec and from there to make *aliyah* with the whole group, I parted from all my friends, who I worked with and returned to Sosnowiec. At kibbutz Sosnowiec they gave me a few days' vacation, to rest and on the set date, all the group left the place. We travelled in all sorts of vehicles for about two days and then reached a port city. We didn't go into the city, we were stopped about 3 km before the port city. And there we saw a ship from afar, and it's beginning to approach the coast. We were arranged in rows, each one with his baggage and they explained to us how we would board the ship called Wedgwood. I think the whole matter, to get off the trucks and board the ship, took about an hour. The ship got underway.



Illegal immigrant ship Josiah Wedgwood off the coast of Haifa. 27.6.1946



The message of the Jewish illegal immigrants that were on the Josiah Wedgwood ship, to the British and to the world:

“WE SURVIVED HITLER, DEATH IS NO STRANGER TO US  
NOTHING WILL KEEP US FROM OUR HOMELAND  
THE BLAME ON YOUR HEAD IF YOU FIRE ON THIS  
UNARMED SHIP “

The thoughts that went through my head – how I, who remained alone from a family so big, am on the way to the Land of Israel, where I have an aunt and that's all that is left from the whole family... How I had the strength and resourcefulness, to pass through that way and overcome all the obstacles I encountered on the way, and these obstacles were not simple. You did something wrong and you're gone. To this day, when I've already established a family and have grandchildren – from where did I get that resourcefulness that pushed me into doing everything I did and stayed alive? Is it the will to live? But I didn't have an ordinary life, I didn't have a childhood, I was an orphan, I didn't have a mother, I didn't know her (she died after my birth – I grew up with grandmother and then moved in with father).

## ***In the Land of Israel***

The ship approached Haifa port (early 1946), the captain of the British ship gave instructions to enter Haifa port and from there they transferred us to the Atlit camp. They put us in huts that used to be British, where we stayed for about two weeks. One day, all sorts of representatives of kibbutzim<sup>11</sup> from the area appeared in the camp and one of the kibbutzim was Yagur. The group I belonged to decided to go to Yagur. Our group was called "Furuncle", and right from the beginning I had lots of furuncles [boils].

In kibbutz Yagur we were divided into rooms, two people per room, in a hut. They gave us clothes and attached to us an instructor, a kibbutz member called Bialystotsky. They began to teach us the Hebrew language. I knew Hebrew, to speak and write, because I studied at the Tarbut school when still in Poland, where the language was Hebrew. One day, I was sitting at the kibbutz gate when a man and woman got off a bus. The woman I did not know, but the man I knew, because he had brothers where I was born. They approach me, the woman asks me, do I know one Baruch Yung? I said: "I know him, but let's go to look for him". I didn't want the show next to the gate. I left them next to the dining room. It was in the afternoon, I told my instructor some story, that I'm going to my room. [They were Aunt Bracha and Moshe Kessel, and Baruch identified

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<sup>11</sup> Kibbutz (plural kibbutzim)

A collective community in Israel that was traditionally based on agriculture. The first kibbutz, established in 1909, was Degania. (Wikipedia)

himself when they reached his room – A.B.]. In my room I told them, and everything was good and beautiful.

In the kibbutz, everyone worked. I tried to work in all the branches such as field crops, vineyards, plantations, I also worked in the dining room. I worked for some time distributing food to sick people in their rooms. On a particular day I was called to the secretariat and they told me that there was a certain branch called Tnuva, that is, the kibbutz has vehicles and it distributes the products of [the national dairy producer] Tnuva, in Haifa and the Haifa Bay.

That's how I began to work for Tnuva, my partner was a kibbutz member and his name was Fuks. We would leave early in the morning, at 4, go to Tnuva in Haifa to load and then distribute in shops and factories. That's how I kept working for Tnuva for a long time, until the War of Independence broke out and I was recruited.

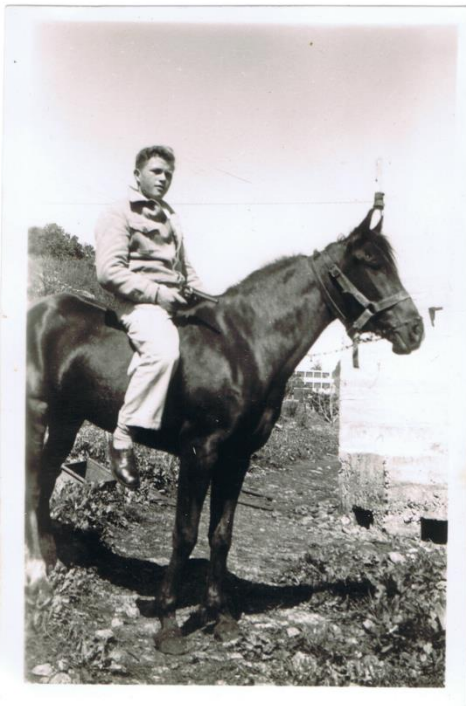
The kibbutz sent me and I received from the kibbutz a weapon (a tommy gun). It should be said that in the kibbutz we trained, we were taught all kinds of weapons, how to activate and in general how to use it. We went through some of the training like in the army.

In short, when I got to the army, I was transferred to Battalion 21, Carmeli Brigade. The brigade commander was Moshe Carmel. (Before I enlisted, I would go with Tnuva vehicles that distributed milk products in Haifa, as an armed escort, because we had to cross Wadi Nisnas [an Arab neighborhood] at the entrance to Haifa, to the industrial building that stood at the entrance to Haifa. Above would always stand a British tank, which was supposed to protect us. It did stand there, but did not defend us. It watched how the Arabs were shooting at us, and that was it).





Before my official recruitment [to the Haganah paramilitary organization], the IDF didn't exist yet, so I was in protecting convoys<sup>12</sup> in the Upper Galilee and Western Galilee, in [the kibbutzim] Hanita and Matzuva, to get people out by sea and by land. All those convoys. One day, we were told to go to the Galilee, to [moshav<sup>13</sup>] Ramot Naftali. We got to Ramot Naftali at night. We came all the guys, everyone knew each other from the surrounding kibbutzim. Then there were Israeli ghaffirs [Jewish policemen in Mandatory Palestine]. There was one Gideon, who was my commander. With the 21<sup>st</sup> Battalion I went down to the Galilee, to the area of [kibbutz] Kfar Giladi and from there we went up to attack the Nebi Yosha police station. When we reached there, the police station was empty, all the policemen had fled. We remained there, built positions, that were directed towards the Malkia settlement in the Galilee, because they [the Syrians] fired shells and also tried to capture our positions, but they did not succeed.



We were there for a few days, one day in the morning, there was shelling from the other side, from the Syrian side. I was alone in a position. It was breakfast or something,

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<sup>12</sup> A convoy of armored vehicles, delivering food and water to Jewish settlements besieged by the Arabs.

<sup>13</sup> A type of Israeli settlement, in particular a type of cooperative agricultural community of individual farms. (Wikipedia)

people had gone. Suddenly a shell falls into the position, hits something and enters the ground, but doesn't explode. I look, the shell is in the ground, I fear it will explode. I fled to a bunker. So from the position to the bunker you had to cross about eight meters of open ground. At this open ground the Syrians fired all the time. Somehow I got to the bunker, where there was a nurse from Yagur. I tell her: "Look, a shell fell inside the position".

An officer stands there and says, "Why are you telling stories". I said: "Come see". That Gideon was also there, he came back from the position and said: "Yes, you're lucky." But after a few days, a shell penetrated the position and I was wounded in the head by a piece of shrapnel.

It went through the tin helmet I had on my head. And I want to shout for help and cannot speak, cannot be heard. So I took out the first aid I had. When I stopped the blood, I felt I could speak so could be heard. I said: "Gideon! Gideon!" and he puts a bandage on me and wants to carry me out of the position. I said: "You cannot, wait until it is dark and then you can cross, otherwise you'll also be hit". He said: "No, you must not be left here". He tied me a bandage and carried me across that open land to the bunker. Then they lay me down and I became cold. They put tons of blankets on me, I couldn't lie down any longer. The medic from Yagur, she took care of me. But the wound was serious and they decided to send me to the hospital in Safed.

The only vehicle there was to take me was a bus belonging to the Hever company from Haifa. They took me into the bus on a stretcher and we started to go. The road to Nebi Yosha was very narrow and difficult, and the shells from Malkia kept exploding, and in the end the bus overturned. There was great panic, but somehow they got a small ambulance and took me to the Hadassah hospital in Safed.

I was conscious. I reached Safed, I remember, at night. There was a large reception hall, I lay on a stretcher. I was dressed in an American military suit. In one of the attacks when we attacked Malkia, on the other side, I found a backpack with three American suits. Then the head nurse took scissors and cut everything. When she took my watch, I said: "Move the watch to the right side". She said: "Oh, you're still conscious".

And from there straight into the operations room – there was no electricity and they operated on me by the light of kerosene lamps. The medical team in the hospital, they were doctors and a nurse from the Polish Anders' Army, who were in Russia, they were

all Jews. The nurse who took care of me, looked after me – her name was Sonia, her husband was a doctor. She shaved my head with a razor used for shaving beards. And I remember counting to 30... Ten days later, I woke up. The doctors and nurses spoke Russian, they didn't know that I understood Russian and understood everything they were saying about every patient, but what they said about me, that hurt me.

Well, after I underwent surgery, for 10 days I don't remember anything, I was unconscious and was told later that the nurse Sonia looked after me day and night.

I forgot to tell that I was also paralyzed on the left side.

After ten days I awoke and began to sing, so I was told, and asked for food and everyone was happy. But I could not chew, so what I did eat was thick cultured milk, and that's how I got stronger every day.

With me in the room lay a man who had lost a leg, he was from moshav Beit Yitzhak. A shell took his leg up to the knee. But he was an idealist, so he wrote a letter home: "We were a family with eight legs and now only with seven and a half". When his wife came to visit him, I asked her to deliver a letter for me in Yagur, to the guard. Well, she took the letter from me and indeed gave it to the guard at the gate of Yagur, thanks to an Egged driver who agreed to stop by the entrance to Yagur. That letter was meant for my friends in the group. I didn't know what the reply would be and how they would react.

But on the first Shabbat, about five-six friends from Yagur came to visit me and brought me good things, food, fruit, clothes, candy and books to read. I was very happy and they were also happy, but at the end of the day they left and I was left alone again.

Then I was informed that my aunt is to arrive the next morning from Haifa. I called the head nurse and told her: "Here there will be crying. My aunt must not know that I am paralyzed in half my body, she must not cry in my presence, or this will disturb me, and do not tell her many stories, I'll tell her." I, for the two kisses I gave that unmarried nurse, could have had anything. My aunt arrived, she didn't know I was paralyzed. When she was about to leave, I told her that I was paralyzed. She sat down, she cried, was there for about three days then returned to Haifa.

The situation with my wound was getting much better. The doctors decided to send me to a convalescent home on the Carmel, and also sent a letter to the doctor explaining what my condition was and how to continue to treat the injury.

I asked the doctor in the convalescent home to call the doctor of kibbutz Yagur and explain to him the condition of my injury, because I had it good in the convalescent home, but couldn't find there company that I could have conversations and play with and more...

The doctor from the convalescent home asked me how to meet with Dr. Ogolnik. A few days later the two doctors met and I received permission to leave the convalescent home and move to Yagur.

In Yagur they arranged for me a tidy room, not in the hut, and then they put me in an ambulance and I went to Yagur. Of course I could only manage in the room, a woman from the kibbutz was assigned to look after all my treatments, food, clothing, medicines and more, and that's how I gradually cured.

After some time, I needed treatment from a neurologist so it was decided that a driver would take me to the clinic in Haifa, in Hechalutz Street. But after a few days, I asked the doctor to let me take the bus, and I succeeded and until the end of the treatment I went by bus. The treatment from the neurologist I needed, because I was paralyzed on the left side and he treated me and managed to cancel the paralysis almost completely. When I felt I was already healthy, the wound had healed – I turned to the work organizer and asked to work. They told me to choose which job I wanted to do, and I chose to distribute food and deliver it to sick people in their room. This let me get to know certain people. And that's how every day passed, I got stronger and felt capable of doing any job.

That's how I got to work on a car, not as a driver but as a number 2 to the driver, to help load at Tnuva and distribute the milk products to shops, especially on Nordau Street in Haifa and also factories in Haifa Bay, milk for the workers and the workers' kitchen in Kiryat Haim.

I became the permanent partner of a kibbutz member called Fuks and worked with him, and he also taught me to drive. After I got my driver's license, I received a car and also a partner and so I continued to work, from 4 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon. I would often visit at my aunt Bracha's in Haifa. In the evening we would meet to hear lectures on all sorts of topics, and also had parties and trips. Especially on Shabbat. And that's how the time passed.



Baruch and the Kessel family – Bracha, Moshe, Sara and Iris,

Then I found out that many of the guys had begun to leave the kibbutz and moved to all kinds of places to live and work (Haifa, Kfar Kisch, Beit HaArava and others) and it turned out that in the kibbutz I began to make connections and renew friendships. So I had lots of places to visit. Eventually I left Yagur and went to work in Kfar Kisch as a driver. They had a Brockway truck, and I would take supplies to nearby settlements and lived in Kfar Kisch.

That's where I met Shoshana – my sister-in-law today. In the evenings we would meet and tell all kinds of stories and sometimes sing and dance.

There I met Miriam, who is now my wife and we would go traveling and even went up Mount Tabor. She lived in Haifa and we would meet and talk there, and sometimes she would come back with me to Kfar Kisch. And that's how time passed, and we decided to marry, I found another place to work. It was in moshav Shadmot Dvora as a driver and also a tractor operator. We received an apartment there – a Swedish shack.

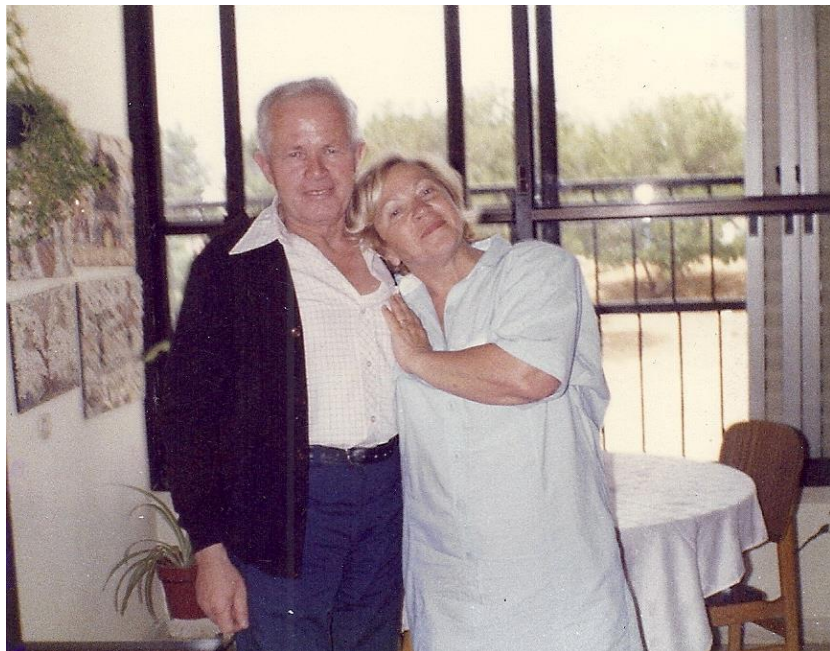


I acquired kitchen utensils, as I would carry the supplies to the kibbutzim and moshavim, I would acquire from them plates and pots and stuff, so that we didn't lack anything.

I worked as a driver, tractor operator, until I was sick of that business. I took a leap to Beersheba.

There was no money. I came to Beersheba, went in to the deputy mayor, the mayor wasn't there. I said: "I want to be a resident of Beersheba, but I have no money". He said: "Listen, they're building auxiliary farms in Beersheba, I can register you for the lottery". He registered me. I had to give some 100 or 200 liras, for that I took a loan from my salary. Later I had to pay 600 and that was a problem. I didn't want to turn to anyone from my family. I took three salaries and paid. That's how I established the home. We lived there for a few years and moved to a bigger apartment. It was an apartment covering thirty-eight square meters [410 square feet], we moved to a fifty-seven meter [614 square feet] apartment. There was born my second daughter Sara, who is now in a kibbutz near Eilat. My son was born in Afula. After a few years I left that apartment, we moved to a seventy-two meter [775 square feet] apartment. There Ariela was born. That's in Beersheba.

And from there I moved to Ashkelon. Here things worked out for us. I bought a hundred-and-four meter [1,120 square feet] apartment, we've married off our son, married off the children. We hope to continue.





Nina Natalia  
Kshonze  
Henrik's wife



Henryk Kshonze



Baruch with Sara and Iris Kessel



Marian Kshonze



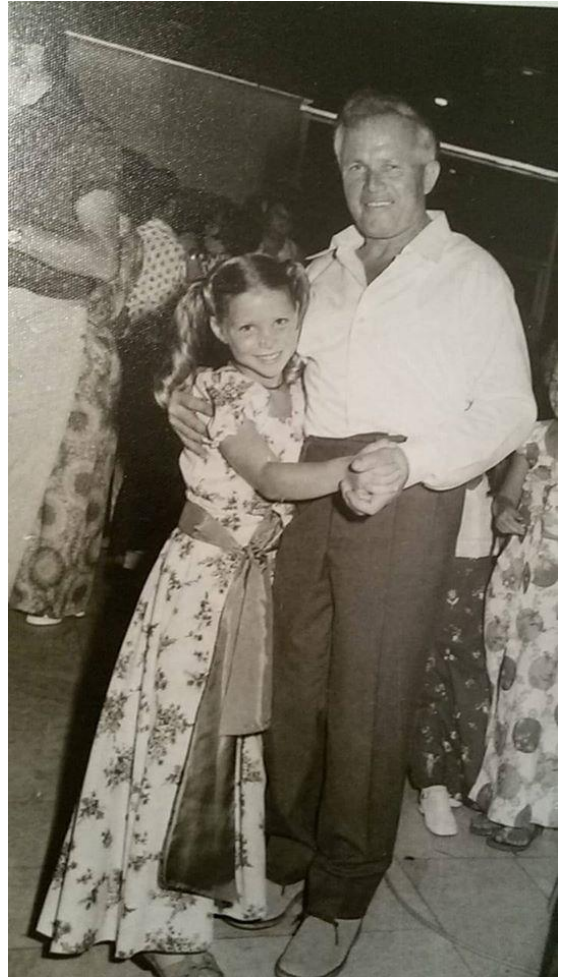
Baruch and Eliezer  
at Shadmot Dvora







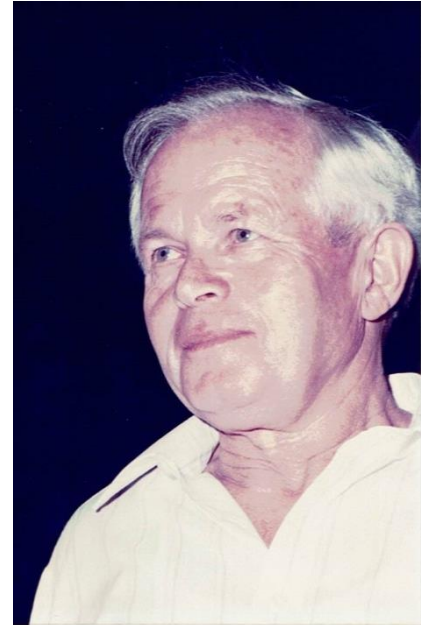
Baruch, Miriam and their children, Moti and Sara'le.



Baruch and his youngest daughter, Ariela.

## *In your footsteps*

One day I came to an understanding that it is important for me to be there, in the places where you grew up, the paths you traveled during the war. Something in me wanted to really feel, first-hand, by foot, the places you lived in, maybe from the desire to get closer to you. After a period of research, during which I searched in records, in museums, I activated a genealogist in Poland and nagged family members, to find out more, to feel there was proof of the existence of the lives that were there, we managed to find one record documenting the death of your aunt, of your mother's sister Adela, and a detailed description of the fate of the Jews of Ivanychi, Porytsk and the area.



In May 2019, I left on my way. Fortunately for me, I was joined by my children and my husband, and together we left in your footsteps, to the area that was once part of Poland and today belongs to Ukraine, knowing that we were bringing your memories to a place where not a trace remains of what was.

Victor was the one who drove us to the area that no guide even knew, worried about finding people who would tell us, looked for more documentation and of course, took care the glorious meal in Lviv. Great thanks go to the man with the tough appearance and big, caring heart.

I chose to attach to this book, which is full of your words, some words of my own, about the encounter we experienced, the encounter that contained us, the stories, the reality and the 'something else' that only when we got there was possible.

This journey still lives inside me and us, the sights, the questions, the revelations, are still looking for their place inside me.

Today I can say: I was there, I saw, touched, I met.

Thank you father, for writing down your recollections, that you have allowed me give recognition to the stories, to the people you met on the way, to the experiences you experienced and to your family, ours.

For them, for you and for us.

I love you,

Ariela Bahar, your daughter.

## *May 2019, Vohlyn, Ukraine*

We stand in the middle of the town, which looks like time has stood still somewhere in the 1970's. Simple buildings, lacking grace or attention, peeling walls. The few vehicles parked on the side of the road resemble the [defunct Israeli car manufacturer] Susita we had in my childhood and it is quiet, as if the town had been emptied of people. Blue-eyed Alexei approaches us and invites us to follow him. We stop on the bridge that crosses over the stream, the bridge on which marched and drove the Nazi occupation forces, back then in 1941 and changed the place forever.

Until that invasion, Porytsk had been a vibrant and lively Polish town. Many merchants would come there, because it was close to a main road, had many villages in the vicinity and was the commercial and cultural heart of the area. Many of its residents were Jews, and an abundance of synagogues were established there, so there was representation of the various ideologies. Children from the area came to study at the local school and at the end of the school day, the Jewish children stayed to learn Torah and Hebrew. Even the Zionist youth movements were active in the town, yes, even the [left-wing *Hashomer Hatzair*] *shmutzniks* were here.

Here was the first school that my father attended as a child. Here my grandfather is buried, in the local cemetery, and here my father met for the last time Koppel, his beloved uncle, who asked him to ask for help from Pelikan.

We are standing with Alexei in a green area, devoid of buildings, on the river bank, white goats walk past us and graze on weeds. Alexei extends his hand to show us all the area, here, he says, was the goats' neighborhood, the Jewish neighborhood, who raised goats rather than pigs.



I close my eyes and imagine the house of my aunt Rachel, where she lived with her daughters Hayka and Layka, I see Buzik the child, my father, come to visit them during the war, see them part for the last time.

We know, Alexei continues to recount, that in the area there were whole villages of Jews, that were even called names from the Jewish tradition, one village was named

after the *yoreh* [the first rain], another was named after the *shofar* [ram's horn], but nothing remained. Also, not a thing remains from the Jewish cemetery. Yes, I remember, the cemetery was destroyed already at the beginning of the war. Alexei recounts that the few who did survive the Germans were obliterated by the Soviets, who ruled here after the war and wanted to erase the history of the place, and since then time has frozen in Porytsk.

Alexei tries to gather every crumb of information he knows of, to tell us. That's the little I can do for you, he says, and looks at us with his clear blue eyes and apologizes, that this is all that's left, just a few stories and the candlesticks that one of the residents found in a field and since then he hides them and doesn't let anyone see them. Once there was life here, he says, now we're trying to start again.

We came here out of a desire to connect with the life that was here, before the war, but its absence made it difficult for us. We were left with the stories that my father left behind him and with the absence that is so present, in what remains of Porytsk.

We thank Alexei and walk quietly to the van, then continue on our way.

By the roadside, a few kilometers from there, we found it.

A small tombstone, erected in memory of the Jews of the region who were murdered and buried in pits, in agricultural fields around us, then, during the war.

I stand there with my husband and my children, read out the names of my father's uncles and aunts, the names of the grandmothers and grandfathers, placing stones in their memory.





I think about Bluma, my father's younger sister, about Mordechai, my grandfather, about Grandfather Binyamin and Grandmother Sara Gittel who brought him up in infancy, about Great Grandfather Baruch, who he was named after. I think about Grandmother Leah, about all the cousins my father played with in the streets of Ivanychi, about Mirrel and Binyamin, about Beilah Kshonze, who came here from Lodz at the beginning of the war in the hope of survival... I light a candle in the memory of those whose names remain, and in memory of those who even their names are not known and lived here and were murdered here. For the rest of the journey, every hill horrifies us, who knows what lies beneath it...

All around everything is green and beautiful, trees, fields, but the pain does not let go. I think about the bright eyes of Alexei and his kind words, and also connect to the good. In fact, we are the good, the sensitive and caring Alexei, Victor who is taking us on the roads, and we, who came here to see and remember. We, descendants of one of the few who survived from that impressive community, who choose to connect to life and to love.

We continue...

## *Dolinka*

The black van gallops along the roads, bobs and bounces between the potholes and bumps of what is called here a road, but somewhat lacking asphalt. Victor steps hard on the gas pedal and curses the roads, the Ukrainians and everything possible. I don't understand Russian, but it's impossible not to understand his displeasure at the roads. At every encounter with residents he attacks, what are these roads? And they shrug their shoulders and answer "Ukraine".

From time to time, a vehicle appears opposite us that looks like it was manufactured in the 1970's, and sometimes appears a horse and cart.



When we met the first cart we rushed to photograph, it looked nevertheless a bit unusual in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but then they continued to pass by us on the roads and we realized that here, a horse and cart is an accepted mode of transportation.

To the sides of the roads spread fields and plantations, from time to time farmers could be seen in the field. Weeding, hoeing, reaping with an old-fashioned manual scythe, or ploughing with a hand plough, like my father ploughed, here in this same area, when he moved around with the papers of a Ukrainian boy and worked for peasants. More than 70 years have passed, but here, time passes differently.

I'm sitting in the car, looking at my family. I remember how in the morning I prepared them, that today we won't find anything because in this area not a thing remains, not even a record of my father's family.

Today we are returning the memories to places that have forgotten them.

Occasionally the road passes through a village, four-five houses on each side of the road and that's it, the end of the village, continue to the next village.

Suddenly my dear husband calls "Dolinka!!" Somehow, he managed to decipher the Cyrillic letters on signs, even while moving. "Dolinka" he says and my heart starts beating hard, Dolinka, my father was here.

Until we realize and digest that we are in Dolinka, we've already reached the end of the village.

Victor stops the van. What do you want to do here?

I catch my breath and ask him to ask where the village cemetery is, maybe there I'll find the headstone of Pelikan, the Czech who brought my father into his home during the war. The man who gave him shelter and work. The man who treated him as his son, risking his life and the lives of his family. The man who was a friend of Great Grandfather Binyamin and did not let the danger and the war change him.

The peasant we meet says that the cemetery is a regional cemetery further along the road. I understand that I probably will not find Pelikan's grave and ask Victor to go back to the village and stop for me somewhere, so I can conduct a short ceremony. Victor turns around and drives slowly, waits for me to tell him where to stop. I looked for a place where I would feel as comfortable as possible, and asked him to stop.

I got down from the vehicle and tried to find a place at the side of the road where I could stand and say a few words, without disturbing the locals. While I'm still trying to find the place, I hear shouts in Ukrainian and see a woman walking towards us waving her arms. I shrink, what have we done? Why is she angry? Alex, the translator, speaks with her. "She's asking what we're looking for", he says, "she wants to help". I smile to myself, is this what is called "inter-generational transmission"?

Alex turns to her, "We are looking for Pelikan, do you know anything about him?"



“Pelikan?” she replies, “of the Czechs”. “Yes’, Alex replies. “Once the whole village was a Czech colony, but they all left after the war”, she recounts. “But I can show you where his house was, his farm”.

I hear and do not believe, really? And so the woman approaches me, with the apron and headkerchief, walks to the path that begins right next to where I was standing. She goes into the area, “I’ll show you what’s left of his farm”, she continues to say. We follow her, and Alex doesn’t stop muttering “God is with us today, God is with us”.

The path is covered with weeds and we walk between them, in her footsteps. To our side stand dilapidated wooden huts, inside them lamps, a closet, as if someone had left in a haste. Near a low building that is still not clear to us what it is, she stops.

We approach and see that she is standing next to a well, yes an old-fashioned well, with an iron chain attached to a bucket. “This was their well”, she says, Pelikan’s well.



My body shudders,

it’s hard for me to speak. From this well my father drew water and drank, to this well, he took the cows to quench their thirst after grazing. Next to this well my father lived, stood and sat and maybe even fought, 78 years ago, in the time of the war, when he moved around as Volodka, Vladimir Nazarik Alexandrowitz.

The woman continued to tell about her grandparents, who lived in a neighboring village and always maintained good relations with their Jewish neighbors. About the Czechs who left at the end of the war and left the village to Ukrainians from the area, about the Soviets... and I told her about my father, a good thing Alex translated.

We stood there next to the well, took photos, touched. I placed on it a stone I had brought from Israel, on which I wrote his name in Hebrew, Pelikan. I thanked him in a trembling voice and read the words of [Israeli poet] Haim Hefer about the Righteous

Among the Nations [an honorific describing non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews].

***“ ... In the terrible war it was they who stood every day in battle, and they are the Righteous in Sodom, thanks to them this world did not collapse...”*** (Haim Chefer)



Months later, when we sat at home and remembered, I told my children how amazing it was that we stopped near the Czechs' area. "Mom", my son told me, "you still haven't realized that you chose to stand right next to Pelikan's house? The exact place, not in the Czechs' area."

Only then, when my son reconstructed for me what had happened, did I internalize that.

## *In a moment we'll be there*

In a moment we'll be there, I try to go back in time, to imagine the little town somewhere in Poland, then, before the war. The people who walked the streets, the farmers, the merchants, the children running around. Imagined my father, who was quite a rascal, going to visit Grandfather Baruch, Uncle Binyamin. But I don't really know how to picture them, did they have beards? Hats? Or were most of them "free"<sup>14</sup> like my grandfather? What did my father's uncle's fabric store look like? What fabrics did they have there? Was it a *shtetl*/[a typical Jewish small town or village in Eastern Europe] like in the stories? I wish I'd asked...

In a moment we'll reach the town in which eighty years ago, the Yiddish was mixed with Polish and Ukrainian, because everyone lived here together, in proximity.

In a moment we'll reach the town where my father was born and my grandmother died, where the Yung family and the Szmalc family lived, at least three generations.

In a moment we'll get there and bring with us my father's memories, to the place where they were created.

The van races over the potholes that are called a road here, and in the vehicle only the voice of [Israeli singer] Topol can be heard, singing Hassidic songs, like my father loved and our short breaths.

In a moment we'll be there...

The Cyrillic letters written on the sign claim that we have arrived, we are in Ivanychi. In the small commercial center, which welcomes us at the entrance to the town, written in large letters is "I love Ivanychi", as if it was a vibrant tourist city and not some far-flung town that you need a durable vehicle if you want to reach it.

We continue driving to the Ivanychi stare – the old part of town.

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<sup>14</sup> Religious people who maintain the freedom to choose which parts of Judaism to observe, and how to live their day-to-day life.

Next to a small white house, we stop. We've reached the museum. The manager awaits us at the entrance and leads us into the local museum. Three small rooms with displays of farming tools, furniture and a few photos, remnants of Ivanychi's agricultural days, the ones before the Second World War. We looked at the photos, our eyes scan



for a picture of the flour mill, the one we remember from father's stories, but there isn't one, the manager doesn't even know about it. Also no sign of the Jewish life there had been in the town. The manager smiles and admits that she has almost no information about the Jews who lived here, apart from the knowledge that Jews had indeed lived here. She invites us for a tour of the town. Nothing remains of those days, yet still we walked along the street in which many of the town's Jews lived once. Here was the synagogue, she points and across the road, the church, they lived here together very well, before the war. The last old house in the street was demolished over ten years ago, if only we'd come here then, she says.

We walked along the street, where there are small houses, well-kept gardens, new life and I, I read out some more of my father's memories, and pictured the street then, with Yiddish in the air. I could hear the meeting near the synagogue, all the members of his vast family, hear the cries of children playing in the yard, see the men enter for the prayers, at the end of which they'll all go together to eat a family meal and Buzik, my father, with his father and sister, will have to choose whether to join Grandmother Leah or Grandmother Sara-Gittel...

When we returned to the museum, with trembling hands I pulled out pictures I had brought with me and showed her, the nice manager, look, I said, these photos were taken here, in Ivanychi, as if I had a need to prove to her that they lived here, that there were Jews here, that my family was really a part of this place.

In a moment we will part, we thank her for the tour and the warm reception. The manager approaches Alex and hands him a note. We saw the exchange of glances between him and Victor, but had no idea what it was about. Alex looked at us and said,

“We’ve kept this as a surprise, we didn’t really know if it would work, the manager has located the grandson of Trachuk, you can meet him today.

I don’t remember if any of us managed to utter a sound, I do remember the tremor that spread through my body. They’ve found the grandson, they’ve found the grandson. What took me out of myself was the voice of Alex, who was astonished to see the tears on my son’s cheeks.

For this, I didn’t even dare to wish. With quivering legs and tearful words I thanked her, them, the universe, and we went on our way to meet the grandson of Trachuk.

After a challenging break in Ludmir, we left on our way to Vorchnov. The same potholed roads, the same feeling of nowhere and here are houses. It turns out that Vorchnov, which has always been a Ukrainian village, is a relatively large village that judging by the appearance of the village houses, some of its residents are extremely affluent. We rushed along the roads looking for Trachuk’s house. It amazed me that his name was still familiar, since he only had a daughter and she did not continue to bear the name. But every local we stopped alongside on the way and asked knew who we’re talking about, and waved his hands in the direction. Victor was already furious at the wandering between paths and fields, but the house, as my father described it, is at the edge of the village. Victor turned into a path between plantations, we reached the house, the excitement grew, but the owner said it was the next turn, that is, further along the dirt track, between the apple trees. Victor cursed, but luckily for us was determined to find the house, to reach the grandson. We continued a little further along the dirt track then turned between the apple trees. In front of us stood an old house, with windows covered with plastic so the rain and cold would not penetrate, next to us were wooden structures that had seen better days.

I remembered my father’s stories about the big house that Trachuk had, his many plots of land, the laborers. I advanced towards the stairs, at the top stood a wrinkled old man, who seemed very excited. I approached him, my legs trembled and my breath was rapid, I extended my hand to Anatoli and he held it with both his emaciated hands and mumbled a few words in English, apologizing for not really knowing how to speak in English, kissed my hands and invited us into his home.

We entered the cluttered and cramped house, the air was stuffy, everything was old and crumbling, electric wires hang outside the walls, beds, lots of beds, clothes hanging on a line to dry, many pictures and Christian features on the walls. The house, like my father recounted, was built around a heating stove that also serves as a cooking oven in the kitchen, so the rooms are connected to each other like a chain.



He stopped at one of the pictures, that's Trachuk, he said, my grandfather, who was a priest. A priest? Are we in the right place? My head began to work, doubts arose, my father always said that Trachuk had sat in a political prison in Berezie Kartuskiej because he was a communist or because he was rich, he never said he was a priest, so maybe it's not the same person. On the other hand, he was the only Trachuk living in the village, on the third hand, according to my father's stories, Trachuk was an educated and sensitive man, who not only looked after my father's wellbeing, but also spoke with him about feelings, guided him, supported him. So maybe Trachuk was arrested for being a priest? Perhaps he simply concealed his being a priest from my father, so he would not be suspicious? Maybe because of his being a priest and helping the oppressed, the Russians arrested him when the end of the war arrived? I remembered that my father always wondered how a communist could be rich, with vast lands and laborers...

I looked at the pictures of Trachuk, of his wife, while listening to the grandson's voice. He does not remember much about his grandfather, he was a child when he died, but he lived here, in the house he built in 1928. A house once considered large and luxurious, and today looks like a remnant from another era. Although the house had been connected to electricity, there still isn't running water. The apples from the plantation that he served us, he washed with water in a bucket that stood in the kitchen. We stood in a house that had accumulated within it time, objects, images, odors. The presence of his



grandparents and his mother was everywhere, apparently also in his life.

I looked at this man, who welcomed us to his home with excitement, that the first words he said, when I showed him a picture of my father, when I told him in a trembling voice that thanks to him I am here, in the world, were “that is how it should have been”, as if the most obvious and natural thing for a man to do is to hide a child and save his life, even at risk to his life and the lives of all his family members. An old, solitary man, living in poverty. Once he was a teacher. Today, his students who still maintain contact, they are his main connection to the world. It was hard to conduct a long conversation with him, he jumped between subjects and matters. It was important for him to tell us about his mother, a woman he greatly appreciated and loved. I looked at him and thanked him and his family for the right, for the possibility of meeting with someone from Trachuk’s family.



I find it hard to describe the feeling in words, to be inside the house where my father spent two years of his life. A boy, a youth, with no family, who works for a living and has to be alert all the time, to guard his life, in a world so hostile. A youth who was blessed that a man with a huge heart would invite him to his home, protect him, take care of him, look after him with love while endangering himself, would save his life.

To be inside this house where my father was Volodka, the same Volodka who could have chosen to stay here, as a member of Trachuk’s family, and continue to live with a

loving family, but on the recommendation of that sensitive and noble man, chose to return to being Baruch Yung and emigrate to Israel, to live among Jews. With a bag of apples and tears in our eyes we left the house, which was once considered big and impressive and today is rickety.

Next to the van stood a man alongside a new, big motorcycle. A short inquiry revealed that he was Trachuk's great-grandson, Anatoly's nephew who came to visit his uncle. Tears again flooded me and my legs, which had almost stabilized, began to tremble again. I approached him with the pictures of my father, you see? He saved him, you see? Thanks to your great-grandfather, all of us here and Andrei, who didn't know we were supposed to arrive, that we turned up unannounced so suddenly out of nowhere, told us what that he also knows of a young woman who Trachuk hid in the attic at the beginning of the war.

"That's how it should be" he said naturally. These words, bringing Trachuk there, to us, the man and his human and merciful heritage continues to pass to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren...



Once I was breathing normally again, I asked Andrei where Trachuk is buried, and he said that the following day they were going to his grave. I placed in his hand the stone I had brought from Israel, and asked him to place it on Trachuk's grave.





The next day, we received a photograph of the tombstones of Trachuk and his wife Alana, on which Andrei, the great-grandson, placed the stone I had brought from Israel, the stone on which is written Trachuk, in Hebrew.

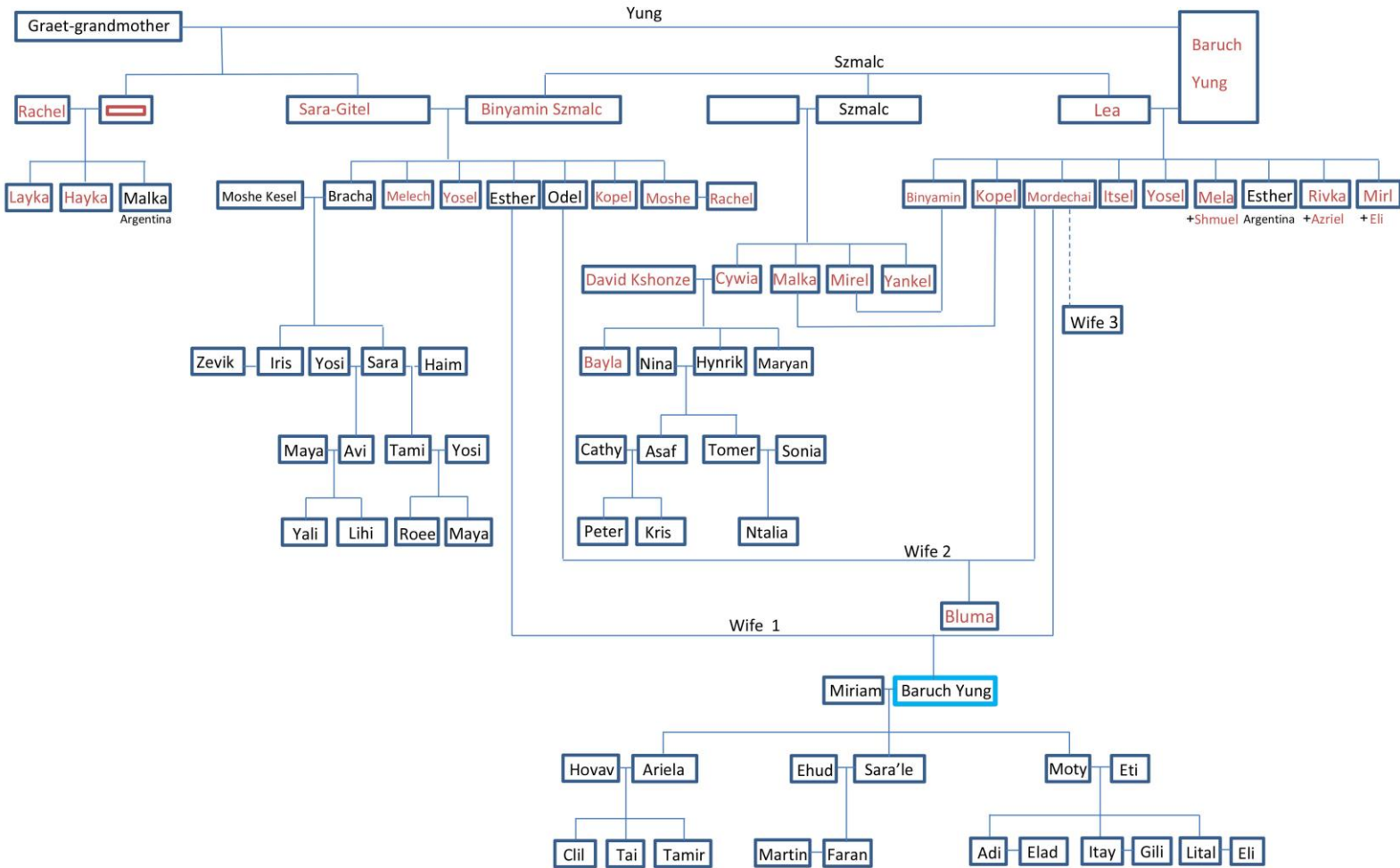
And yes, the tombstone says Trachuk, it was him, despite the doubt.



***“... I try to think about the people who gave me shelter and refuge,  
I try to think, and hear, and ask:  
If I was in their place what would I have done?  
If I, in an ocean of hatred, as the world collapses and burns,  
If I could I shelter a foreign son?...”***

RIGHTEOUS OF THE WORLD by Chaim Chefer

# The Yung – Szmalc's family tree



The names of the people who were murdered in the Holocaust are written in red.  
 Their families were murdered also, but we don't know their names.  
 May Their Memory Live On