

# JewishGen CHANUKAH COMPANION

5786 | תשפ"ז



MUSEUM OF  
JEWISH HERITAGE  
A LIVING MEMORIAL  
TO THE HOLOCAUST



JewishGen  
מִרְבֵּן עֲולֵמי לְגַנְגָּלוּגִיה יְהוּדִית  
The Global Home for Jewish Genealogy

## About JewishGen

JewishGen is the genealogical research division of New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, and serves as the global home for Jewish genealogy. Featuring unparalleled access to 30+ million records, it offers unique search tools along with opportunities for researchers to connect with others who share similar interests.

Award winning resources such as the Family Finder, Discussion Groups, and ViewMate, are relied upon by thousands each day. In addition, JewishGen's extensive informational, educational and historical offerings, such as the Jewish Communities Database, *Yizkor* Book translations, InfoFiles, Family Tree of the Jewish People, and KehilaLinks, provide critical insights, first-hand accounts, and context about Jewish communal and familial life throughout the world.

Offered as a free resource, JewishGen.org has facilitated thousands of family connections and success stories, and is currently engaged in an intensive expansion effort that will bring many more records, tools, and resources to its collections. In addition, JewishGen offers study/volunteer immersive travel experiences to Poland in order to help inspire the next generation of Jewish genealogical leadership.

For more information, and to get started with your research, please visit [www.JewishGen.org](http://www.JewishGen.org).

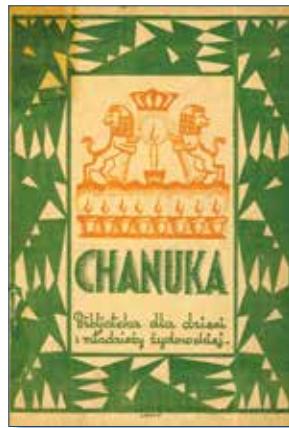


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### About the Cover Image

The Looted Books Project has been able to unite hundreds of books that were looted during the Holocaust with the original owners and their descendants. This lovely book about Chanukah, published in Warsaw in 1930, embodies a small memory from a lost world.

Unfortunately, it lacks even a trace of provenance. It is a sad symbol of the many books and the many memories that have been lost and will never be recovered.

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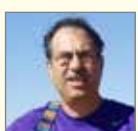
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To learn more about volunteering, visit: <https://www.JewishGen.org/JewishGen/GetInvolved.html>

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By Yekhiel Dancyger



*Chanukah Celebration, 1946-1948, Bergen-Belsen, Germany.*  
Gift of Judith Naomi Fish. Collection of the Museum of Jewish  
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As the only Displaced Persons (DP) camp in the British Zone of Occupation specifically for Jews, Jewish life and tradition thrived in the Bergen-Belsen DP camp. Taken at a Chanukah party between 1946-1948, this photograph features Saul Edelstein as he celebrates with his family in the camp. No more than five years old, Saul stands on a chair in front of a menorah as he sings the songs of Chanukah. Behind him, adults look on, proud of both Saul himself and the new generation of children post-Holocaust that he represented.



# INTRODUCTION

## Chanukah Companion 2025/5786

Dear Friends,

We hope this finds you and your family well.

Chanukah tells the story of oppression of the Jewish people in the second century BCE by the Seleucid Greeks and how, under the leadership of the Maccabees, they were able overcome their enemies and apathy to re-establish the Jewish way of life. The Maccabees had a number of qualities that enabled them to do this. They were resourceful, they were resilient and they felt responsible for one another. These are values that have enabled Jews to survive difficult times throughout our history. They are no less important today as the Jewish community faces many challenges including the rise of antisemitism in the United States, Europe and elsewhere.

The essays in this edition of the Chanukah Companion reflect the traits that the Maccabees possessed. The first essay describes a wonderful project that our own Karen S. Franklin has led. In addition to murder, Nazis robbed Jews of their property. Among the items that were stolen were books that had belonged to European Jews before the war. They had been looted from their original owners and ultimately discovered in the library of the notorious publisher of the antisemitic *Der Stuermer*, Julius Streicher. After the war, they were eventually returned to the reconstituted Nuremberg Jewish community. Karen's project has been to recruit JewishGen volunteers in order to find the heirs of the owners of the precious volumes and return the books.

The remaining essays are excerpted from our collection of *Yizkor* book translations. The first of these from the Solovievka/Justingrad (Ukraine) *Yizkor* book, explored how the children of the town were able to find all kinds of materials with which to play with. On Chanukah, they made their own *dreidels* and their own playing cards. The next piece, from the Volkovysk (Belarus) *Yizkor* book, is a wonderful story about the Jewish contractor, Hershel Berg, who was beloved and respected by all classes of people starting with the czar. Herschel and his wife go out of their way to help Jewish soldiers conscripted into the Russian Imperial Army. This selection recounts how he was able to lessen the punishment of a Jewish soldier who unwittingly endangered his fellow soldiers by lighting Chanukah candles on a box of gunpowder. The last piece, from the Zawiercie (Poland) *Yizkor* book, is a passage from a moving memoir of a young man who, during World War I, helped a Jewish commander in the Austrian Army put together a minyan to say *Kaddish* during Chanukah.

The Looted Books project is a wonderful example of how an ancestor, via a lost object, can somehow return and enter the life of a descendant. The *Yizkor* book excerpts, which were produced by Lance Ackerfeld and his team of translators, reflect the qualities that the Maccabees exhibited: resourcefulness, resilience and responsibility for one another. Moreover, each essay reveals the color, the smells, the details and above all, the feelings of many of our ancestors in prewar Europe. Many thanks to Karen S. Franklin, Janet Isenberg, Lyn S. Hill, Bruce Drake, Caitlin Hollander Waas and Alexia Wang in bringing this material together.

Wishing you and your family a happy, healthy Chanukah.

Jack Kliger  
*President & CEO*  
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Paul Radensky, Ph.D  
*Director*  
*JewishGen & the Peter and Mary Kalikow Center*  
*for Jewish Genealogy Research*

# THE LOOTED BOOKS PROJECT

by Lyn S. Hill

MANY OF US are familiar with the dramatic photos of Jewish books thrown in piles and publicly burned by Nazis after they came to power in 1930s Germany. What is less well known is that many books taken from Jewish organizations and individuals, as well as from other persecuted groups, including communists, socialists, Catholics, and critics of the Nazi regime, were not burned but sent to personal or institutional libraries.

Many of these stolen books have been documented, and, through the years, there have been various efforts to restore them to the legitimate heirs of their original owners.

Efforts to restitution looted books have been less well-known than those regarding looted art. In most cases, unlike much of the art that was stolen by Nazis, the individual books have little monetary value. Their worth lies in the deep connection to lost relatives that they bring to those who have their ancestors' possessions restored to them. Most of the identified descendants are aware of the relatives who once owned the books, but some find themselves newly introduced to aunts, uncles or cousins, many of whom were Holocaust victims.

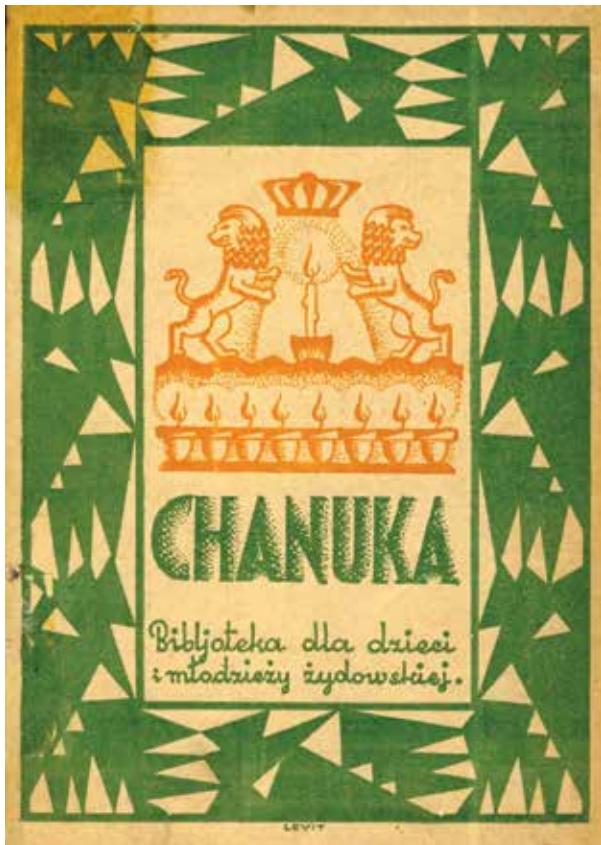
Tens of thousands of books that were housed in university and government libraries throughout Europe, Russia and Israel have been returned, most following the 1998 adoption of the Washington Principles, which guide the United States and 43 other countries on how to handle

claims for Nazi-looted art and other objects. Individual researchers, historians, librarians and families have tracked lost volumes, using lists created by the Nazi looters and inventories compiled by libraries where the books are held. The recent emergence of online genealogical websites and availability of historical documents on the Internet, has greatly helped to accelerate the process of identifying rightful heirs.

The Nuremberg Stadtbibliothek (Municipal Library) has about 9,000 books that were stolen, mainly from Jews, but also from other victims of Nazi persecution. The books that were looted by Julius Streicher, a Nazi official and antisemitic propagandist, were given to the Jewish community in Nuremberg, which placed them in the Stadtbibliothek. About 2,000 of the books have bookplates, inscriptions or other identifying marks that indicate their original or most recent owner.

Leibl Rosenberg, a member of the Jewish community of Nuremberg, has made it his life's work to find rightful heirs of the books' owners and arrange to send the books to them. In 2023, Karen S. Franklin, Director of Outreach for JewishGen and Director of Family Research at the Leo Baeck Institute, reached out to Leibl Rosenberg, with whom she'd previously worked, to offer help in locating the owners of the looted books in the Nuremberg library.

Within a few months, with a presentation through Jewishgen and an article in the Leo



Baeck newsletter, Franklin had recruited a cadre of volunteers from all over the U.S., Canada, Europe and Israel. Janet Isenberg, managing director of the project, coordinates the work of the researchers and assists with every aspect of the project. These professional and amateur genealogists have made significant progress in finding and contacting descendants and books have been and continue to be restituted to them.

While most genealogical searches move upwards as individuals or families search for ancestors, the Looted Books Project searches work the other way around, starting with an individual who may have lived a century ago and moving down through generations to find children, grandchildren or, in some cases, nieces, nephews or cousins. Even when rightful heirs are identified,

it is necessary—and not always easy—to find contact information that allows the researchers to be in touch with them. Not surprisingly, some heirs have been suspicious when they are first contacted by a stranger who is offering them something they were not expecting. Fortunately, researchers are able to direct the heirs to reputable online sources like JewishGen for press releases on the project.

Researching the individuals who originally owned the books has often yielded fascinating facts about them; often the volunteers are able to share details with the descendants who learn about their ancestors for the first time. In the late nineteenth century and the first third of the twentieth, when most of the original owners lived, book ownership was primarily restricted to educated professionals—doctors, lawyers, scientists, teachers, rabbis or very successful businessmen. Most, though not all, were men. Many made meaningful contributions to the society in which they lived.

The descendants the volunteers have identified live all over the world: many are in the United States, but they have also been found, so far, in Israel, Germany, France, England, Canada, Austria, the Netherlands and Spain. Like their forbears, they are a diverse group, many of whom are prominent in their fields, which include medicine, science, law, academia, foreign service and broadcast journalism.

The individuals and families who learn that they are to receive these books are “deeply moved to have their ancestral legacies returned to them,” said Karen Franklin. And the volunteers who enable the restitutions find the work incredibly fulfilling.

# CHILDREN'S GAMES AND PLEASURES

## Sokolievka/Justingrad: A Century of Struggle and Suffering in a Ukrainian Shtetl, as Recounted by Survivors to its Scattered Descendants

Edited by Leo Miller & Diana F. Miller

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The following article is drawn from *Justingrad—Sokolievka, A Shtetl Destroyed*, a memorial booklet published in 1972 and included in *Sokolievka/Justingrad: A Century of Struggle and Suffering in a Ukrainian Shtetl, as Recounted by Survivors to its Scattered Descendants*. The booklet was created by the seventh-grade students of the *Kibbutz Mashabei Sadeh*, an Israeli community in the Negev desert, who undertook the project under the guidance of the Yad Vashem – The World Holocaust Remembrance Center. These twelve-year-old students collected testimonies, letters from survivors, and the reminiscences of Baruch Bernstein, a native of Sokolievka and a retired librarian and teacher, to document the life of this once-thriving Jewish community.

The booklet reconstructs daily life in Sokolievka: the bustling streets and markets, the workshops of craftsmen, the rhythms of study and prayer in the *cheder*, the festivals and celebrations, and the games and work of children. Through the voices of the survivors and the meticulous research of these young historians, the text preserves the customs, traditions, and the spirit of community that characterized Sokolievka before its destruction.

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**HOLIDAYS PROVIDED CHILDREN** with a multitude of games and pastimes. From Rosh Hashanah to Succos, the *chaleh* or other bread (over which the *Motzi* blessing was said at the beginning of a meal) was spread with honey: children saved the honeycomb wax and played with it at *cheder*. From the palm leaves of the Succos *lulav*, they braided finger rings, baskets

and mats. As Chanukah approached, they gathered lead for the teacher's assistant to cast into *dreidels*. It was traditional for the assistant to pass out gifts to each child at some holidays: a *dreidel* at Chanukah, a bow and arrow at Lag B'Omer, a wooden sword for Tisha B'Av.

Card playing, like *dreidel* was customary at

Chanukah. Older children, in *Chumash* and *Gemara* class, who could imitate printed Hebrew letters beautifully, used to design their own playing cards, *kvitlach*. These were numbered from *aleph* (one) to *lamed-beis* (thirty-two). They inscribed the letter numerals on ordinary paper, pasted them on heavy packing paper, drying them in the ovens, because winter air is damp. They cut the cards apart, and colored them, using crayon pencils blue at one end and red on the other. For yellow they borrowed cinnamon from mother's kitchen. They also made paper purses for collecting Chanukah *gelt*.

Each holiday had its fun, bows and arrows on Lag B'Omer, *grogger* noisemakers at Purim. Many and varied were the children's games, activities, and pleasures.

A child beginning to learn to read in the *cheder* would be "tested" by his parents. They would set him before them and tell him: if you read well, an angel will toss you a penny from heaven. As the boy read, his mother stood behind him, holding the penny over his head. When the reading went well, she let the penny fall onto the siddur and the child was so happy!

On winter nights, when the winter stove was lit with straw, children would spread the straw looking for husks with kernels still in them, which they toasted over the fire and ate. When mother bought a pumpkin, she let the children

split it and take the seeds for drying. Mother usually shared lighter and pleasant labor with her boys and girls, in baking, in plucking goose feathers to stuff pillows and bed covers (feather beds), in caring for the goats that were in most houses.

Girls had games of their own. They played a lot with jacks, *tsheichen*, using small bone joints of sheep or goats, smooth and shiny from play. The game was like "five stones" that (Israeli) girls play nowadays. Girls were permitted to buy rubber balls at the vendor stands, and they bounced them, interchanging hands and feet, as they do now. Girls were always closer to home and had the burden of house chores.

Both small boys and older sought adventures. They went out to open spaces, hunted for junk and all kinds of finds (*metzios*). They risked their lives rowing on pond waters in broken wooden troughs. Summer time they would go in groups to bathe in the river, and to spend hours in the craftsmen's workshops, where they would pick up materials for work and for play.

On *yerid* (market) days they would roam the market in packs. When the boys came to the cattle market, they would repeat the Talmud passage about the "ox which gores a cow," and in their naivete would wait to see it happen.

To learn more about **Sokolievka/Justingrad**,  
please visit: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Sokolivka/soke019.html>

# CHARACTERS & PERSONALITIES: ZVI BERG (HERSCHEL THE CONTRACTOR)

## Volkovysk Yizkor Book

Translated by Yitzhak Bereshkovsky, Tel-Aviv

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Volkovysk, located in present-day western Belarus, was a vibrant town at the crossroads of rivers and railways, serving both as a strategic fortress and a regional hub for trade and culture. Documented as early as the 12th century, Volkovysk became home to one of the region's oldest Jewish communities. For centuries, Jewish residents shaped the city's economy and cultural life, dominating commerce, craftsmanship, and religious institutions. By the early 20th century, Jews comprised more than half of Volkovysk's population, defining its neighborhoods, markets, and daily rhythms.

Yet the history of Volkovysk was marked by repeated invasions, fires, and shifting borders. Under Russian imperial administration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Jewish men were conscripted into the Russian military, a service that promised protection for their community but demanded loyalty under harsh conditions. Amid these pressures, Herschel Berg, a respected military contractor, became a lifeline for Jewish soldiers, supporting them in both their duties and their devotion.

One story preserved in the thank-you letters Herschel Berg received illustrates his remarkable dedication, as he protected a Jewish soldier from harsh punishment for keeping the Chanukah light atop a powder box.

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**THE YARD OF** Herschel the Contractor was located near the barracks, on Kopustinsky Pereulok as the Russians used to call the street. As far back as 1885, he was a contractor for the military. He was an observant Jew and highly regarded in military circles.

Herschel Berg passed away in 1923. After his death, I (his son-in-law) was appointed to open

his iron safe where his documents were found. In the safe, I found a wooden container that had a lock on it. There were many letters found in the box, visa cards, telegrams, and other significant papers, all of which reflected on his multi-faceted activities in providing assistance and concern for those near and far, for Jew and gentile, for the needy and suffering. There were thank you letters

from parents, sisters and brothers, brides and rabbis, officers and generals. Mostly, there were letters of gratitude from mothers, who blessed him for the many favors he bestowed on their sons who served in the 16th Artillery Brigade which was billeted in the Volkovysk barracks. In one envelope with the double-headed eagle and the Czar's crown on it, there was a letter inside printed in gold letters, which had the signature of Nicholas II. This was a thank you for hiding and safekeeping the repository that contained all the funds for the brigade in the year 1905, at the time of the uprising of the soldiers, when the brigadier-general found it suitable to trust the safekeeping of this repository to Herschel, until such time as the unrest died down. Herschel kept the repository at his home for two months and later returned it in the best of condition to the general.

Among the papers, an order by a Russian general was found, in which a Jewish soldier was sentenced to seven days arrest and to receive four lashes from Herschel the contractor in the presence of a captain and an adjutant. The soldier receiving the punishment was standing guard at the gunpowder magazine on the night of Chanukah. He wanted to light the Chanukah candles, and he had put them on one of the powder boxes. The soldiers on guard duty at other posts, seeing the light, began to shoot as a means of sounding a fire alarm in the camp. The Jewish soldier was arrested. His excuse for lighting the candles was not accepted, and the matter was turned over to the brigadier, who sent for the contractor. Herschel Berg, in

his defense of the Jewish soldier attempted to introduce a humorous tone, in order to make the charge seem less severe. At the conclusion, the brigadier sentenced the soldier to seven days in jail, and he ordered Herschel to do the following: "Give him four good lashes, so that he will know and remember that one does not light Chanukah candles on Russian powder boxes." It was precisely in this fashion that Herschel Berg was often able to stand up for Jewish soldiers, thanks to his good name and strong influence in the military circles, and thereby rescue them from harsh punishment, assisting them with loans, and in general assisting them in a variety of circumstances.

Herschel always had a minyan in his home at which the Jewish soldiers could participate in prayer. His home was always open to the soldiers who did not want to take their meals at the military mess. They would always get together at Herschel's, especially on the Sabbath and for festival holidays, where they would enjoy the good Jewish delicacies that his wife, Leah, would prepare for them. She would also provide them with ritual fringed undergarments for their use.

To learn more about **Volkovysk**, please visit:

<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Volkovysk1/vol259.html>

# SAYING KADDISH IN ZAWIERCIE\*

Yizkor Book of the Holy Community of Zawiercie and Environs

Yekhiel Dancyger | Translated by Jon Levitow

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Zawiercie was called “za – Vartshe,” meaning on the far side of the Warta River. In its early days, this small town in southern Poland featured a few dozen houses and barns, largely unnoticed on regional maps. By the end of the 19th century, Zawiercie began to develop, especially with the construction of a railway line connecting Warsaw to Vienna. This new infrastructure attracted industry and commerce, transforming the town into a bustling center of trade. Education and religious study were central to Jewish life in Zawiercie, and many students who studied in the Zawiercie yeshiva became great scholars with reputations across Poland.

During World War I, Zawiercie was under Austro-German occupation, making the transport of food and supplies extremely dangerous and difficult. On his wedding day in 1915, Yekhiel Dancyger undertook an unusual mission to deliver food for the local Jewish population. He navigated checkpoints and Hungarian-occupied zones, meeting the Jewish watch commander of the Austro-Hungarian military post, who had recently received news of his mother’s death. With the help of Yekhiel and his companions, the officer recited *Kaddish* for his mother under the open sky. The memory of Yekhiel’s Chanukah adventure unfolds a vivid tapestry, illustrating the courage, resilience, solidarity, and humanity of the Jewish community even amidst the hardships of war.

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**SATURDAY EVENING AFTER** Sabbath ended during Chanukah of 1915 – the period of the First World War – I had the good luck to become a groom. Of course, it was a great joy for me, for my bride, and for my relatives. Fine if modest weddings could still be celebrated in Zawiercie because the front was a way off. The area around Zawiercie and Zawiercie itself were

divided by the railroad line into German and Austrian occupation zones. The right side of Zawiercie and the territory that lay to the right of the railroad tracks (Kromolow, Pilice, etc.) were Austrian territory. The left side (Poreba, Siewierz, etc.) was the German zone of occupation.

The border was heavily guarded by the occupying

armies of both Austria and Germany because there was a very active smuggling trade. The Austrians occupied the most economically productive lands in Poland. The German zone had less productive land but was more industrialized. The economy of Austro-Hungary was in fact mostly based on agriculture, and Germany's much less so. Therefore, Germany imported more from its part of Poland than Austro-Hungary did.

In the Austrian zone of occupation there was no lack of food, but in the German zone there was. Smuggling paid. Everyone smuggled – some took a kilo of butter and some eggs in their pockets, just to cover household expenses, and others sold large transports in order to make a living.

There was also legal commerce with the approval of both occupying forces in order to guarantee the distribution of food to the population of Zawiercie and the surrounding area, on the German side in particular.

Because the house where the military authorities were stationed was not far from my parent's house (by the crossing), Jewish officers in the Austrian army used to come to visit. I got to know them well.

Once an officer asked me if I could contact someone who could get flour in order to make bread for the people in Zawiercie.



Great Synagogue of Zawiercie on Marszalkowska Street  
Collection of the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

I said that I would be able to do so. I did this in partnership with Leyb Rushinek.

Since the railroad bridges were all destroyed, everything had to be transported by horse and wagon.

So we rode out into the countryside – to Poreba, Zarki, etc. – and we worked at full speed.

So it was, in the heaviest period of our commercial activity, I became, as I said, a groom. On the night that my *tenai'im* (lit. “conditions,” a prenuptial agreement between the families of the bride and groom) were signed, at 10:30 at night, after I had been entertaining my bride and the “conditions” ceremony guests, Leybush Rusinek arrived and whispered in my ear that we had to go to Zarki, and I had to go because the authorization to do business was made out in my name.

Did I have a choice? We went.

We went through the crossing between Zawiercie and Zarki, where an Austrian soldier was always posted to inspect travelers to make sure they had passes.

“Pre-pu-sku,” (A halting version of “przepustke” – Polish for “pass.”) – said an Austrian soldier, a Hungarian.

I quickly put my hand in my chest pocket in order to take out my pass, my “przepustke.” I took out a large stack of papers – the “conditions” for my wedding that had been written a few hours earlier – and gave them to the Austro-Hungarian soldier. I saw immediately that when changing, I must have taken the “conditions” instead of my pass.

The soldiers turned the papers one way and another and could not figure them out. Leybush

was also stunned: “What did you give him?” he asked me.

In the moment that I understood what had happened, I couldn’t help bursting out into laughter.

The soldier became angry and took the rifle off his shoulder. He yelled at me, “Na kom – an – dan – ture” (into the command post!) and pointed the way with his hand to a small, nearby house.

The guardhouse was squat and small (no more than two or three rooms). It had previously functioned as the guards’ quarters by the railroad crossing.

A wave of warmth hit me, penetrating my frozen limbs as I entered the first room. There were more soldiers in the other rooms of the guardhouse, and they had taken care that the rooms were well-heated.

The soldier who had led me in from outside left me with the soldiers in the guardhouse. With the “conditions” in his hand, he went in to the watch commander, who was an Austrian Jew.

After a couple minutes, the commander came over to me in the first room. He approached me, holding the “conditions” in his hand, and in a loud voice said, “Congratulations, groom!” and gave me his hand.

“I am delighted, completely delighted, that you came here today,” he said.

I wondered why the Jew was so delighted, but I didn’t wonder for long. The Jewish officer invited me into his room. As he did so, he told me he was doing so in order that the non-Jewish soldiers wouldn’t see how happy he was.



Ziegler family, 1923, Zawiercie, Poland. Gift of Sylvia Fagen, 688.90  
Collection of the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

“I am delighted because you and the other Jews that are still outside are like a gift from Heaven,” said the watch commander.

The soldier who had brought me in from outside stood by perplexed, and, clicking his heels like a good soldier, ordered the other soldiers, “Attention!” He raised his hand to his hat in a salute, and the other soldiers did the same back to him.

I remained with the Jewish watch commander in his office. I saw that he was crying and couldn’t speak.

Frightened, I asked him what had happened, and why he was crying.

He asked me to sit down and asked me how many

Jews were still outside. I told him, eleven.

When he heard that, his face lit up with joy.

“Good,” he said. “Come outside with me to see the other Jews, and I’ll tell you all my story.”

We went outside, and he told us the following: “My name is Shloyme Blat, and I’m an imperial soldier. I’ve lived through a lot. I’ve been on many battlefields. Now my regiment has come to your district for some rest, and I am very happy to be able to rest and recover my strength. Things don’t always work out the way you want, though. After a short time here, the military post brought me a letter from home, and at first, I was happy to see it, but when I opened it and read it, I received the terribly sad news that my mother had died.”

He stopped for a moment because he could barely speak, and then he went on:

“It happened, according to the letter, exactly a year ago. Today, precisely, is my mother’s death anniversary, *yortsayt* (death anniversary). As prescribed by religious law, after Sabbath ended I sat down for an hour of mourning. I thought and thought, how would I be able to say *Kaddish*? I beg you, dear Jews, make it possible for me to say *Kaddish* for my mother for the first time.”

The Jewish watch commander took out a small volume of psalms, recited a chapter, and then he said the first *Kaddish* for his mother. He said it while he was standing outside, under the open sky, in a foreign country, where he knew no one.

“And now, my dear Jews,” he said to us, “move fast and see to it that you get back to Zawiercie as soon as possible. The inspecting officer will be here early in the morning, and he could cause trouble.”

He asked us to come back and bring Chanukah candles (it was Chanukah at the time).

We did what he asked. We went back to Zawiercie as quickly as possible. Early in the morning, on time, we were back at the post and brought the Jewish watch-commander Chanukah candles, brandy for a toast, and something to eat along with it.

The Jew recited a couple psalms and said *Kaddish* again.

After praying, the Jewish soldier from Reyshe said farewell to us and thanked us from his heart.

He said that he hoped we would think of him and of his mother’s death anniversary, *yortsayt*, every Chanukah.

Every year at the end of Sabbath during Chanuka, I think of this event, and I become very sad, after the Nazi blood bath, when I recall that there were once better times, even under German occupation.

Once...once...

\* This story appears in the Zawiercie Yizkor book under the title “‘Conditions’ As a Pass: A Tragic-Comic Event.”

To learn more about **Zawiercie**, please visit:

<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/zawiercie/zaw202.html>



## About the JewishGen Yizkor Book Translation Project



*Yizkor* Books (Memorial Books) were traditionally written to memorialize the names of departed family and martyrs during holiday services in the synagogue (a practice that still exists in many synagogues today).

Over the centuries, as a result of countless persecutions and horrific atrocities committed against the Jews, *Yizkor* Books (*Sifre Zikaron* in Hebrew) were expanded to include more historical information, such as biographical sketches of famous personalities and descriptions of daily town life.

Following the Holocaust, the idea of remembrance and learning took on an urgent and crucial importance. Survivors of the Holocaust sought out other surviving residents of their former towns to memorialize and document the names and way of life of those who were ruthlessly murdered by the Germans and their accomplices.

These remembrances were documented in *Yizkor* Books, hundreds of which were published in the first decades after the Holocaust. Most of these books were published privately, or through *landsmanshaftn* (social organizations comprised of members originating from the same European town or region) that still existed, and were often distributed free of charge.

Sadly, the languages used to document these crucial histories and links to our past, Yiddish and Hebrew, are no longer commonly understood by a significant percentage of Jews today. It is our hope that the translation of these books into English (and other languages) will assist the countless Jewish family researchers who are so desperately seeking to forge a connection with their heritage.

Thank you to Lance Ackerfeld for overseeing the *Yizkor* Book Translation project, and to Joel Alpert and Susan Rosin for overseeing the JewishGen Press.

At the end of each week, we have been distributing “A Window into our Treasured Past” emails, which feature timely excerpts from *Yizkor* books in JewishGen’s archive. In choosing the weekly excerpts, JewishGen volunteer Bruce Drake tries to balance selections that recall the suffering of the Holocaust with chapters that paint pictures of what daily life was like in the communities of Europe, such as market days, how Jews made their living, the joys and sadnesses of every day life and portraits of memorable characters. Bruce has also overseen the completed translation of the Kover Yizkorbook and created Kehilalinks sites for Kovel and Wojnilow, now known as Voynilov in Ukraine.

## Yizkor Book Volunteers



**Lance Ackerfeld** was born in Australia and settled on Kibbutz Yiftah, Israel in 1977 where he has lived with his family since then. In 2024, he retired from his day job as a senior database and BI expert in the global “Netafim” company. He now devotes time to the *Yizkor* Book Project in which he has been involved in various capacities since 1999 and has led the project for more than 15 years.



**Joel Alpert** is a retired electrical engineer, who worked for MIT, Raytheon, the Israeli Armaments Authority and Bell Laboratories. He was born and educated in Wisconsin, lived in Israel, Boston and Tucson. He created the Yizkor-Books-in-Print project in 2012 and is now the coordinator of the project.



**Bruce Drake** spent most of his career in journalism, as a reporter and later White House correspondent for the *New York Daily News*, as Vice President for News at NPR, as executive editor at *Congressional Quarterly* and most recently as a senior editor at the Pew Research Center.



**Susan Rosin** learned about JewishGen after retiring from her role as a Software Development Manager at a major corporation. She soon began volunteering, and has translated *Yizkor* books (from Hebrew to English), and led the Last Name Indexing project. She now serves as the JewishGen Press Publications Manager.

To learn more, and to access the translations at no cost, please visit:

**[www.JewishGen.org/yizkor/translations](http://www.JewishGen.org/yizkor/translations)**



To purchase hard copies of *Yizkor* Books translated by JewishGen, please visit:

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Any Questions? Please contact Nancy Holden, Director of Education: [education@jewishgen.org](mailto:education@jewishgen.org)



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This menorah was presented to Yitzchak Yaakov Moshe (Moses) and Adele Eiger as a wedding gift for their 1911 wedding in Lublin, Poland. After Yitzchak passed away in 1931, Adele moved to Vienna with the menorah where they remained until the onset of World War II. Intending to move to England to escape the looming Nazi threat, Adele sent many of her belongings, including the menorah, ahead of her journey. She was unable to follow and tragically was murdered during Holocaust. Her daughter Batya managed to recover this menorah from a shipping agent in England who had held on to Adele's belongings, giving Batya back cherished memories of her parents after they had perished. Collection of the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.



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