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The Ghetto Fighters' House – a Museum and More

Kibbutz, Archive, Museum – Beginnings

We came here to build homes filled with life.

– Yitzhak Antek Zuckerman

April 18, 1949

A windswept hill in Western Galilee, about 2 miles from the coast. An Ottoman aqueduct. A hint of wildflowers in the spring air. A group of young men and women, most of them from the 'Dror' youth movement in Poland, are on the natural slope preparing for the ceremony which will establish their new home in the nascent state of Israel. These are not just any ordinary pioneers; if one could roll the clock back six years to the day, some of them would be awaiting the battle for the survival of the Warsaw Ghetto – or for the survival of Jewish dignity. Others would be in partisan units hiding in forests, trying to save the lives of those with them and battle the hated Nazis; others would be slaving away in work camps scattered throughout Poland. And still others would be in hiding, awaiting the day that they could stand proudly in the light of the sun. They had survived, and this was to be their home (Fig. 1).

Their kibbutz, the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz, would be no ordinary Israeli settlement. Alongside the fields, cowshed, chicken houses, dining hall, and children's kindergarten, would be an archive. The kibbutz would be their future, the children born there proud to grow up in a free

Fig. 1
The first assembly in 1949,
from the collection of Ghetto
Fighters' House



independent state. The members slept in tents, and the first wooden buildings were dedicated to the juxtaposition of future and past: a children's house and an archive.

They found meaning in their survival; they had a role to fulfill as witnesses, to speedily collect testimonies of the Holocaust. The kibbutz members began collecting official and personal documents and photographs to document the Holocaust period and the communities that had been destroyed. The work of collecting and sorting was viewed by the kibbutz members as carrying out the Last Will and Testament of those who had perished, and a direct continuation of documentation work done in the ghettos. They knew somehow that they needed to rush, to save everything they could. They called out to the public to contribute whatever could be added to the growing archive. They branched out into different areas, types of holdings, everything they could access was of value.

That first ceremony would bear the seeds for the annual assembly, around the themes: Holocaust, Revolt, Rebirth. Each year, six torches are lit. Flowers are placed in honour of the Righteous who saved Jews. Members of youth movements and the nearby Naval Officers' Training High School, carry flags for the singing of the anthem. The assembly is attended yearly by thousands (Fig. 2), while many others connect to the broadcast which has been in place since the Covid pandemic.

The Ghetto Fighters' House (GFH) Archives

*If all the seas were ink and all the forests were pencils,
it would not be enough to describe what happened here*

– Dario Gabbai¹

The GFH Archives hold various kinds of materials, among them: letters, personal and official documents, diaries, testimonies (written, audiotaped, and videotaped), films, photographs, an art collection, and an artefact collection. Much of the archive holdings are accessible online through the Ghetto Fighters' House archive database.² Documents appear in Yiddish, Hebrew, and most European languages. Among the holdings are unique collections. It holds the writings of the poet and playwright Yitzhak Katzenelson, and some by the renowned educator Janusz Korczak. It preserves documentation from the Łódź ghetto. The 'Zionist Coordination' for the discovery and recovery of Jewish children in postwar Poland who had been placed with non-Jews in wartime recorded testimonies by youthful Survivors, which were placed in the GFH.

1 Dario Gabbai (1922–2020), a Holocaust Survivor, and member of the Sonderkommando at KL Auschwitz-Birkenau, for more see G. Grief, *We Wept Without Tears*, Yale 2005.

2 See: GFH Archives, <https://www.gfh.org.il/eng/Archive> (access: 9.05.2025).



Fig. 2
The assembly in 2024,
© Ghetto Fighters' House

Other collections are: Adolf-Avraham Berman's collection on underground activity in Warsaw after the ghetto's liquidation; stage director Jonas Turkow's collection on theatre and culture in the Warsaw ghetto; the Zionist pioneering organisation HeHalutz; the collection of children's testimonies compiled by Benjamin Tene, an emissary of the HaShomer HaTzair movement in postwar DP camps; and Yisrael Kaplan's collected testimonies of Holocaust Survivors from Lithuania. It also holds a large collection of personal materials on Dutch Jewry and unique photos from the British internment camps in Cyprus for clandestine Jewish immigrants to Mandate Palestine. The Art Collection holds dozens of works by various artists, the Artefact Collection, and more.

The Archives and the Museum were directed by Zvi Shner. Born in Łódź, he survived the war as a forced labourer for the Soviets. Zvi was the first administrative director of the Museum, and ran the museum complex until his death. Sara Shner was a partisan during the war. They met in postwar Łódź; both were leaders in the 'Dror' youth movement. Sara was part of the Zionist Coordination, tasked with locating Jewish children after the Holocaust. Sara chose the pen name Neshamit, and became a researcher and writer. They worked with others from the kibbutz, and advanced the archive which was enriched by many contributions over the years, becoming the basis for the museum.

An item from our archive

Arie Würzberg was born in Borysław (now: Boryslav, Ukraine) in 1930. When the war began, Arie's parents died, and he was left with his elder sister, Ester. In April 1943, Arie and his sister were transferred to the Plaszow camp. From his testimony (Fig. 3), we learn of Plaszow through the eyes of a youngster, disinfection, quarantine, forced labour, selections, and his attempt to survive by working as an adult. With the approach of the Soviets, Arie was sent to the Mauthausen and

Przepracowaniem tak aby zimę 1942-1943 r. Poza ten czas przepracowano parę sergiów. Główne i starych wyprodukowano. Mniej przepracowane do budowlanej firmy jako pomocnicza murarze. Ta firma nazywana się „Häserverwaltung u Bauabteilung”. Tam przepracowano dwa mrożce, a wtedy przepracowano do innej budowlanej firmy „Zentralwerkstatt Berlin”. Tam były straszne warunki, kierowcy mi wiedzieli co przyjdzie z ceny głowę do domu. Po krótkim czasie połączonych się z nimi grupy ewakuowane. Przenieśliśmy mniej jak gęśce do liny, „Judeenstrasse”. Były to centralne zbrojownie robotników w tym mieście. Wtedy dochodziło po ulicach ber spiski i biegły w mieście różne drobnostki przebranżone do skór i w ten sposób ewakuowano do siedziby i innego. W kwietniu 1943 r. urządziono nas do koncentracyjnego obozu „Rathausen”. Tam przepracowano serwisy i dezyfikację. Następnie zaprowadzone nas do kwaterunku. W kwaterunku położone nas w jednym baraku około 800 ludzi. Tam zrodziły się nasze żelazki. Po trzecim dniu przydzielono kwaterunek przy „Görlitz” przydzielono do kapitulacji warunków i mniej do planowania naszej. Tamki parę, spomina i jednym były mortuary. Pierwsze parę mrożą do mrożym w tym obozie przepracowano jedną serię. One odgrywały się mrożym. Po pierwszej urządzili

Wszystko zaniedbano w id kwaterach idy mrożo nie widać. Wszystko kasało mrożni i po rogu i poolei i wszystko pochodziło do lekko „99” kiedy kiedykolwiek po prawo but za lato. Wtedy mrożni nie lekko dostawały chowiąc karko i na mrożym dnia urządziono do „Oberschlesia”. Wtedy mrożni nie mrożni restaurant zupy. Wtedy urządzono koi dnia kiedy zaniedbano się w domie w tle wszystko denna dnia. Następnie zaniedbano tam i kwaterunku. Po tym i ja zaniedbano do tyd co pochłoną prawo. Dary dni po tym urządziono nas do transportu do domu „Rathausen”. 2 po raz kolejny tam straszne warunki. Nie było gdzie spać, nie było co jeść, a przepracowano mrożno 18-20 godzin na dół. Po tym zaniedbano urządzili połączonych np. Moja siostra pracowała w linie, a ja przy wierzeniu cementu. Dziesięć pracujących pod ciemnym. Wysadili tam Niemcy fabrykę zmiełotów. Oboi tam licyt w czasie gdy były mrożym ludzi 2800. Gdy wojnę zaniedbano były mrożniki od nas urządziono urządzili do mrożym obozów. W pierwszym mrożni urządziono kuchnię i od tego czasu nie umiem nie przetrwać. Następnie urządzono urządzili mrożym do koncentracyjnego obozu „Rathausen”. Tam przebranżony tam serwisy i dezyfikację. Następnie zaprowadzono nas do kwaterunku. Tam przebranżony 4 tygodnie. Główne wyprodukowane prawie urządzili do mrożym w kwaterunku. Tam 2 tygodnie przebranżone zaniedbano mrożym. Ja pracowałam w obozie po

Fig. 3
Pages 4 and 5 of Arie
Würzberg's testimony, 1946,
from the collection of Ghetto
Fighters' House

Gusen II camps. He worked at breaking rocks and hauling stones, in very harsh conditions, and suffered terrible hunger. From there, he was transferred to the Guenskirchen camp, and a while later was liberated by the American army. After the war, Arie went to a children's home in Ludwikowo, Poland. His testimony is part of the Benjamin Tene collection of children's testimony.

Within the archives lie additional stories awaiting discovery. Each item or document tells the story of an individual – a life that was extinguished, or the miraculous survival of the very few.

The Tears of the Jewish People – The GFH Art Collection

In the summer, autumn, and winter of 1943–1944, Yitzhak Katzenelson and Miriam Novitch, a young activist with the resistance in France, were both imprisoned in the Vittel camp.

Before the war, Yitzhak Katzenelson (Fig. 4) had been headteacher of a school in Łódź, married, and he and his wife were the parents of three sons. At the beginning of the war, they went to Warsaw, where Katzenelson was a teacher in the 'Dror' youth movement clandestine seminar in the ghetto, where he produced poetry and plays. Katzenelson lost his wife and two of his sons in August 1942 – they were murdered in Treblinka. He witnessed the first armed resistance in January 1943. In April, the young rebels smuggled him out of the ghetto with his remaining son. They escaped to Vittel in France with false papers. There Katzenelson produced many pieces, among them the Vittel Diary, and his masterpiece eulogy *The Song of the Murdered Jewish People*. His writings were hidden or smuggled out of the camp; one copy sent to the Jews in the Land of Israel in the handle of a suitcase of a young citizen who was exchanged. In 1944, the Polish Jews were deported to Drancy, and from there to Auschwitz. None survived.

The founders called the museum 'The Katzenelson House', named for this poet and teacher. Miriam Novitch later declared:

Fig. 4
Itzhak Katzenelson with Zvi
and Ben – Zion, the elder
two of his three sons, 1938,
from the collection of Ghetto
Fighters' House



I met the great poet Yitzhak Katzenelson, and he told me, 'Go through the world and collect evidence of the tragedy that befell the Jewish people because the day will come when people will say it did not happen, it is not true.' He foresaw it.

Miriam Novitch described her mission as collecting the tears of the Jewish people. It was she who founded the extensive art collection held today in our archives, among her many activities. Over 100 artists are represented, from the well-known to anonymous works by souls who picked up pen or crayon and did not survive to claim their creation.

We are fortunate to hold drawings by Josef Bau (Fig. 5), who was a resident of Kraków, a prisoner in the ghetto, and then in the Plaszow camp. From Plaszow, he was rescued by Oskar Schindler. The drawing which hangs in the Yizkor Hall shows a group of men. They are in camp uniforms, and their faces are sketched with rough lines in black and white crayon on a background of brown paper. Their gazes are all focused on the centre of the drawing, the only item in colour – a loaf of bread. One of the men holds a knife and is cutting the bread, dividing it into portions for the men who are attentively watching his every move.

This drawing shows us the preservation of values, solidarity, and the just division of meagre rations. This same resilience is shown in a unique item saved from the Blechhammer work camp. It is a small wooden scales, which was created by an anonymous woman. The scales were made to divide the women's bread rations equally among the five women who were to share the bread.

The art in our collection is exhibited with maximum attention paid to the preservation of unique and rare pieces. Several of the sculptures are placed throughout the museum in appropriate spots to enhance the understanding of the exhibitions, and dedicated art exhibitions are created from time to time.

At present, we are fortunate to be able to show the expressive art of Orna Ben Ami, who works in three-dimensional sculpture placed on a background of two-dimensional photographs. The theme of her exhibition is refugees, and she shows the fleetingness of our material possessions and our concept of home, as well as the fragility of these in our lives. She tries to express the trauma of deportation and homelessness and uses a very present material, sheet metal and wrought iron, to contrast the temporariness of the homes lost by refugees. Quotes from Holocaust diaries enhance the exhibition, which ends with a statistic of the number of refugees reported by the United Nations concurrent to the date of the opening of the exhibition. Little did we know two years ago, before the war in Ukraine and the present war in Israel, how close to home and pertinent these experiences would become. The GFH expresses its hope that all who are captive or removed from their homes will be returned speedily.

Fig. 5
Josef Bau, *Concentration Camp Inmates Dividing a Loaf of Bread*, 1945, from the collection of Ghetto Fighters' House



The Museum Exhibitions

A Story of the Human Spirit – Warsaw

The GFH core historical exhibit, "A Story of the Human Spirit", recounts the story of the Jewish community in Warsaw, the largest in Europe and the second largest in the world, with over 300,000 Jews, comprising one third of the city's population. This community was diverse and vibrant.

The first hall delves into the interwar period, where Jews from various backgrounds debated their future and expressed themselves through a multitude of cultural outlets. Daily newspapers represented every political and social perspective, and almost all religious streams were present. Many Jews embraced aspects of Polish culture, while others sought to address economic injustices through political activism. The Zionist movement, with its various factions and parties, was also influential.

The exhibition then takes us to the September 1st 1939 attack by Nazi Germany, further depicting the hardships faced by Jews trapped within the walls of the ghetto—poverty, disease, and starvation. The exhibition is created with a collage of period film, photographs, and testimonies read by modern-day actors and actresses, all coming together to allow the visitor a multifaceted glimpse into the war years in the Warsaw Ghetto (Fig. 6). Despite these challenges, the community persevered, smuggling in food, maintaining medical care, and sustaining cultural activities. The clandestine Oneg Shabbat Warsaw Ghetto Archive collected valuable materials to preserve the memory of Jewish life.

As news of mass murder reached the ghetto, the youth underlined the need for armed resistance. Facing imminent deportation, they formed underground fighting forces and sought weapons. The exhibition showcases the bravery and determination of all who resisted.

Moving to the "The Warsaw Ghetto Fights Back" exhibition from the eighties, visitors view dioramas depicting the Uprising from the perspective of the Jewish fighters. The heroic but ultimately doomed armed resistance is portrayed, while many ghetto inhabitants dug into underground bunkers, refusing to board the deportation trains.

In the aftermath, the Uprising was crushed, the great synagogue destroyed, and the last rebels escaped from the burning ghetto.

Yitzhak Antek Zuckerman had been an educator and a leader in the 'Dror' youth movement, active in the ghetto, to preserve the movement's structure and the resilience of its members. He was a leader in the initial organisation of the ŻOB, youth who had decided to resist, bearing arms, which they acquired with great difficulty. This was one of Zuckerman's roles. He survived the war, and was one of the most influential of the founders, working towards the establishment and direction of the museum. He later said:

I don't think there is any real need to analyse the Uprising in military terms. This was a war of less than a thousand people against a mighty army and no one doubted how it was likely to turn out.

This is not a subject for study in a military school. Not the weapons, not the operations, not the tactics. If there is a school to study the human spirit, there it should be a major subject. The important things were inherent in the force shown by Jewish youth, after years of degradation, to rise up against their destroyers, and determine what death they would choose: Treblinka or Uprising. I don't know if there's a standard to measure that.

The story of Zivia (Cywia) Lubetkin is that of an exemplary woman who transitioned from a 'Dror' youth movement leader to an educator and activist, and a leader of the underground. Escaping the ghetto during the Uprising via sewer tunnels, hiding among the Poles in Warsaw neighbourhoods, eventually becoming one of the first live witnesses to appear before the kibbutz movement leaders in the Land of Israel in 1946, Zivia later became one of the founding members of the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz. Her narrative is ingrained in the exhibition throughout. Her biography is the theme for our major theatrical presentation, 'Last on the Wall', an inspiring 40-minute portrayal that has been well received by our audiences. She married Yitzhak Zuckerman after the war. Zivia Lubetkin said:

What gave us this moral strength? We were able to endure life in the ghetto because we knew that we were a collective, a movement. Each of us knew that he wasn't alone. [...] From the very first moment until the bitter end, we stood together [...]. Our movement values showed us our goals and how to achieve them. This was the source of the strength to live. It is the very same source which keeps the Survivors alive even today.

"I intend to present everything accurately so that the entire world may know..."³

The Hall of Camps

The foyer of the hall gives an overview of the Final Solution and the Nazi camp system. When one enters the main part of the hall, one is faced by a model of the Treblinka II death camp, located northeast of Warsaw. Opposite it is an overblown photograph of the area of the camp as taken by Soviet military photographers at the end of the war, showing the destruction of the camp, aimed at denying its existence, denying what had occurred there. The three camps which were the scene of the murder of Poland's Jews, Bełżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka, were destroyed.

Yaakov Wiernik, a master carpenter from Warsaw, arrived at the Treblinka death camp in August of 1942. There, he managed to get assigned to a work detail and soon became the carpenter assigned to the upkeep of the camp. He was the go-between, taking messages for the camp resistance between the different sections of the Jews forced to work

3 J. Wiernik, *A Year in Treblinka*, New York 1944, p. 3.

at the camp. After the Uprising in Warsaw, fewer and fewer trains entered the camp, and the resistance realised that their time was soon to come.

On the 2nd of August 1943, the signal was given, and the escape began. We have no way of knowing how many of the prisoners reached safety, but we do know that fewer than 100 Survivors came forward at the end of the war. Over 800,000 had been murdered at the Treblinka camp.

The responsibility of memory weighed heavily on Wiernik's shoulders. When he made his way to Israel, he decided to build a scale model of the camp that he knew so well. His byword was "tell the story so that no one will be able to deny it". His model stands at the centre of the Hall of Camps exhibition, at the lowest level, metaphorically and physically, of the museum building. It stands as a memory to those over 800,000 murdered souls and the resilience and audacity of the very few who managed to escape and prevent the Nazis from denying their crimes.

Around Wiernik's model (Fig. 8) stand other items relating the narrative of the evil that was Nazi Germany: photographs, testimonies, and other artefacts. Each piece has been chosen to illuminate the contrast between the evil and dehumanisation of the Nazi camps, and the resilience and determination of those Jews who sought to preserve their dignity and humanity.

We are fortunate to have received footage from Claude Landsmann's masterpiece 'Shoah', placed in a monitor beside the model. This exhibition is a central one in which participants learn of the core events of the Holocaust.

"Run boy, run and save your life"⁴

Among the Trees – The Holocaust in the Soviet Union

One of the main legacies left to the GFH staff by the founders is the cry to tell the story.

In recent years, we have enhanced the map of the Final Solution in the Hall of Camps with an installation projected on smart glass, showing the advance of the war in 1941 to the territories of the Soviet Union, the Holocaust by Bullets, and very early attempts at documentation. The installation also presents stories of resistance. It is a commemorative wall for many of the nameless victims who were shot – family by family, community by community, area by area, in the vast reaches of the USSR's open spaces in the east.

This year, we are proud to inaugurate an exhibition that will become a part of our core. It is entitled "Among the Trees". It tells the story of those founders of the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz who originated from the areas annexed by the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union itself. The narrative of the Holocaust by Bullets is presented in a tapestry of testimonies, voices from that lesser-known part of history. The audio-visual presentation is screened in a forest setting (Fig. 9), the soundtrack of

4 Testimony of Meirke Agami, postwar, from the exhibition soundtrack

the testimonies accompanied by an original musical composition, taking the visitor through the history in an emotional, immersive experience.

The presentation is preceded by an introductory hall giving context to the stories of the Jews who had been living in these areas for centuries. The exhibition presents the social, media, historical, and geographical complexities, alongside a glimpse of the lives before the war.

The final space in the exhibition is dedicated to discussion – to process the experience, understand the contribution of Jews to partisan activity and the Red Army's victory over Nazi Germany. One can contemplate the tragedy that befell over one-third of the victims of the Holocaust who hailed from these areas. Testimony of the witnesses is presented through the Yahad-In Unum database.

The Jews of Holland "[...] even an ordinary secretary or a housewife or a teenager can, within their own small ways, turn on a small light in a dark room"⁵

About 75% of the Jews in Holland perished in the Holocaust. Their story is presented in the hall dedicated to this community, who had been assimilated into Dutch society for many years. The vast majority of those who were murdered were sent to their deaths in Poland. The story of both those deported to Poland and those who survived in hiding is presented in the exhibition. One sees through these stories the importance of the actions of the general population, whose choices could mean the difference between survival and deportation. One of the areas in the exhibition holds a scale model of Anne Frank's family hideout, given to the GHF by the Madurodam open-air museum.

A very few managed to survive the camps in Poland – one instance is the story of Jaap Van Gelder, who later Hebraised his name to Yaakov Ben Dror, Jop de Hund, and Maurice Sechlewis Schelkes, who were photographed in the series known as the Lily Jacobs album. Van Gelder was a member of the Westerweel underground in Holland and was caught and deported to Auschwitz – he was 16 years old. His entire family was murdered. He survived several camps. He later came to Israel, served in the army, and raised a family. This story exemplifies the ability of an individual to survive the worst, and rebuild from there.

"He who saves one life, saves the world entire."⁶ Dare to Look

The exhibition "Dare to Look" portrays the rare and precious stories of helpers and saviours who, through their efforts, preserved the lives of Jews threatened by the Nazis. The visitor is presented with an art creation showing pairs of eyes, and on the main wall of the room, a photo collage displays the many people who turned their backs on what was happening and the few who dared to look.

5 Miep Geis, the helper of the Frank family.

6 Mishna, Sanhedrin, 4:5.



Fig. 6
Warsaw – The Interwar
Gallery, © Ghetto Fighters'
House



Fig. 7
The Warsaw Ghetto Fights
Back, © Ghetto Fighters' House



Fig. 8
The Wiernik's model,
© Ghetto Fighters' House



Fig. 9
The Audiovisual Presentation -
Among the Trees, © Ghetto
Fighters' House



Fig. 11
Facing the Glass Booth,
© Ghetto Fighters' House



Fig. 12
The Yizkor Memory Wall,
© Ghetto Fighters' House



Fig. 13
Exhibition – The Jewish
Child during the Holocaust,
© Ghetto Fighters' House

An interactive and informative educational module is operated through the cell phones of the participants, who scan a barcode and are drawn into the world of an individual who dared to act and save his or her friends or a stranger (Fig. 10).

Another option in the hall is the film-based activity "Voices in the Void", which was prepared with the cooperation of the Foreign Ministry of Denmark. This activity presents the testimony of Bent Melchior, his family, and his community, who were saved by the actions of the heroic Danish underground ferrying 8,000 Jews to safety in Sweden. Our participants discuss the values underlying such acts of rescue and the relevance of these past actions in today's world.

Six Million Prosecutors – Facing the Glass Booth.

The 1961 Adolf Eichmann trial marked a pivotal moment in Israeli society. The procession of witnesses over several months and the solemnity of the testimonies given in court transformed the way Israelis, who had not experienced the Holocaust firsthand, listened, absorbed, and perhaps better understood its horrors. Instrumental in aiding the prosecution were the archivists and founders of the Ghetto Fighters' House. In the famous opening statement of the trial, prosecutor Gideon Hausner declared:

I am standing here today in the stead of 6 million prosecutors.
I will be their voice.

The bulletproof-glass booth in which Eichmann sat throughout the trial is now the focal point of the exhibition entitled "Facing the Glass Booth" (Fig. 11), prompting visitors to consider their stance when confronted with evil. Six testimonies have been chosen to represent the witnesses, and documents line one wall. A multi-voice presentation screened in front of visitors concludes with the haunting question: "Can it happen again?". This question serves as a catalyst for discussions about the nature of evil and humanity's responsibility in preventing its resurgence.

While every historical event has its unique circumstances, the struggle between inherent good and evil persists in every society. The staff of the Ghetto Fighters' House sees it as their mission to tilt the balance towards good, even if only slightly. We explore ideas of retribution and the aspiration for a just society as a fitting response to individuals like Eichmann and his likes.

The 'Yizkor' Hall

The Hall of Memory is the exhibition showcasing the archival holdings. It is a solemn dark space with glass walls, allowing us to open a drawer of memory, to illuminate an artefact or a piece of art and to learn the story of the individual behind the item. The drawers are thematically arranged to form a cohesive whole.

On one of the walls of the hall, we find a video art installation (Fig. 12). On the wall, letters make their way slowly from the floor and arrange themselves, letter by letter, to produce the names of over 4,000 Jewish communities destroyed during the Holocaust. The names of those communities, interchanging between Hebrew and Latin lettering, take several seconds to find their dedicated place within the name of the community. As soon as the name is formed on the wall, it immediately breaks apart – symbolising the length of time required to create a community and everything it is composed of, and the ease with which the communal ties can be broken and the community destroyed.

The Yad LaYeled Children's Museum

*He who cares for days – sows' wheat
He who cares for years – plants trees
He who cares for generations – educates people.*

– Janusz Korczak

The Yad LaYeled Children's Museum is a unique pavilion on the grounds of the Ghetto Fighters' House. This exhibition (Fig. 13) is an educational endeavour which proposes to present the Holocaust to the young learner. Guides at the Ghetto Fighters' House offer a rich repertoire of educational experiences. These include theatrical glimpses into the lives of children during the Holocaust, unique workshops, and visits to the core exhibition "The Jewish Child During the Holocaust". The exhibition opens in the Terezin ghetto space, where stained glass copies of children's art created there shed coloured light onto the visitors. The colourful butterfly is far out of the visitors' reach, the floor is a grey, metal sun, cold and harsh. Short quotes appear on the concrete walls. Central to the exhibition is a pillar engraved with names representing the over 1 million children who perished in the Holocaust. As young visitors progress through the exhibit, they descend along a sloping path, turning corners and encountering different areas. This design portrays the unknown future the children and their families faced, while the memories of previous experiences fade into the background. One theme of the exhibition is 'sources of strength'. Testimonies line the path, with recorded voices and video testimonies sharing stories of how children coped with hardship. Visitors learn about the diverse experiences of children of similar ages, each finding their own ways to endure.

Other halls are the sunlit room titled "My Childhood Began Here", which tells the story of rehabilitation, and the Janusz Korczak Hall, which portrays the groundbreaking educational philosophy of the pedagogue, and the housemother Stefa Wilczynska, in the orphanage they established in Warsaw.

Workshops echo this theme of strength, offering opportunities for children to engage in art, creative writing, photo analysis, and

discussions about their experiences. Geared towards children in 5th to 8th grades, aged 11 to 14, the museum aims to provide meaningful and age-appropriate education about this challenging period in history.

Additional Activities and Programmes at the GFH

The archive and its dedicated database serve as an open invitation to scholars and laypersons alike to explore various topics of interest and uncover untold stories. The GFH lecture series, 'Cathedra' conducted in Hebrew, and the international 'Talking Memory' Series, conducted in English, shed light on both well-known and lesser-known aspects of the Holocaust. The English-speaking international audience is encouraged to register for notifications about our 'Talking Memory' programme, allowing you to participate in lectures from abroad and engage with this important historical discourse. Dedicated study days at the museum, along with lectures commemorating special events or significant dates, are held.

Our library holds a multitude of rare documents, as well as being a resource centre for research and enrichment.

Over the years, we have been fortunate to host special guests who have graced us with visits; many have been interviewed, or have donated their personal archival items.

The Centre for Humanistic Education

was established over 25 years ago to create dialogue between groups in conflict. Arab youngsters, both Christian and Muslim, from schools in the vicinity come to the centre to hold discussions based on current events and topics from the history of the Holocaust. Each such group is then paired with a group of Jewish students from a different school. The Jewish students also hold a series of preparatory discussions, after which the two schools engage in a series of activities in a so-called "safe space." The centre is run by Ms. Noha Khatib, an expert in resolving conflict through dialogue and interaction.

The Education Department

and the GFH staff of docents are the 'hosts' who mediate the expositions, historical content, and value discussions with our many visitors who experience the museum through a study day. There are several themes to choose from, leadership, the image of humanity between good and evil, a geographical overview contrasting different areas, the Jewish child, resistance, and more. Our programmes are based on value-driven education and dialogue. The preservation of humanity in the face of incredible evil is a theme that inspires the scholars to hold meaningful discussions with participants in our study days.

Online Programmes

In recent years, educational modules have been created for online access. They can be guided by one of our scholars, or accessed by the class teacher. Among these modules one can find 'Voices in the Void' – The Rescue of Danish Jews, Under Bislinei's Skies, the story of rescue in a Circassian Village, Jewish Warsaw, Youth in the Interwar Period, and more. We have enabled virtual tours or access to content of several exhibitions.

We invite you to explore our online workshops!

www.gfh-education.com/onlineworkshops

Witnesses

We treasure the meetings with our witnesses, who come to inspire the listeners with stories of survival. One of the witnesses, Miriam Harel (Fig. 14), born in Łódź, is one hundred years young! She survived the Łódź ghetto, Auschwitz, the death march, and Bergen Belsen. Miriam came to Israel and raised a family, her personal victory. Miriam's words to us: „I want to ask in every possible way, to remember that in the end we are all human beings. Always be good people, compassionate towards those around you, especially towards our fellow Jews, your brothers, and if there is anything important in life it is to learn, learn, and learn some more. That's the only way you can grow as a human being. That's the only way to overcome ignorance and hatred”.

Looking Ahead

"Rise"

As the generations turned, the weight of history was passed on to the next generation. A group of children approached the venerable figure of Antek Zuckerman, working up the courage to knock on his door with a request, "The name of the kibbutz is not good, we want you to change it." Antek explained with understanding – yet firmly: "The name makes the place, we do not live in an ordinary kibbutz. We are a memory to those who did not survive." This incident is the topic of one of our theatrical interludes, a monologue presented in the Hall of Testimony.

The hall brings the stories of the founders to the fore, those stories which the founders bore deep in their personal memories while the museum told of those who had perished. The founders were encouraged to tell their personal narrative in the 70's; the narratives were then collected in a book named *Without a Single Case of Death*.

This quote is taken from the testimony of Klara Bugomolski Grin. Before the war, Klara chose to become a neonatal nurse and midwife, a role of caring and optimism. Nothing could be further from the tragedy and cruelty of the Nazi years. She survived in the hinterlands of the Soviet territories. After the war's end, the Jewish Survivors sought to bring new life into the world, to rebuild their families and build new homes. Klara tried to reach the British held Land of Israel, and was intercepted

and incarcerated in a DP camp in Cyprus. She was one of the founders of the kibbutz, working as a nurse and caring for the elderly as well.

Klara ends her testimony in the book with the lines:

In Cyprus I returned to my profession. I brought new lives into the world, 1,556 births, all healthy, 'without a single case of death'. The choice of this quote to stand for the entire compilation expresses the founders' outlook and worldview. They were focused on rebirth, on the creation of an independent and secure state and a just society for themselves, their children, and the Jewish people, based on the lessons of the past.

The events of the past months here in Israel have raised discussion again, on the function of memory and the power of survival and rebirth. The hall will be the focus of our renewed centre "Rise" which will take example narratives of Survivors who found the strength and inspiration needed to recreate lives of meaning. It is hoped that the broadened and developed interactive presentation will inspire visitors to 'Tikkun Olam', a Jewish concept which means 'fixing the world', in all its various aspects, from the visitors' perspectives.

Dorka Bram Sternberg was born in Częstochowa into a religious family. Her entire family was murdered in Treblinka. She survived as a prisoner in the Hasag work camp. She joined the 'Dror' activists on their way to the Land of Israel; she later worked as a teacher for youngsters who had survived, and went on to become a member and an educator at the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz. Her message of hope: "We wanted to live again [...]. We established the museum so that young people would learn of what had happened because of hatred and prejudice. If they would understand, perhaps they would choose a better path".

Chavka Folman Rabban was a teenager in Warsaw, she participated in the seminar of the 'Dror' movement and heard lectures given by Yitzhak Katzenelson. She became a courier, passing as a Polish teenager. She accompanied Antek on a mission to Kraków, to meet the young activists there. They arrived just before the 'Cyganeria' attack, Antek was shot but made his way back to Warsaw. Chavka was caught, but succeeded in convincing the police she was not involved with the Jews. Nevertheless, she was arrested and deported to Auschwitz as a member of the underground. Incarcerated with Poles, she didn't know whom to trust, and only reaffirmed her Jewish identity when the war ended. She was then reunited with her mother, the only other Survivor of her family, and her movement friends. She passed away ten years ago, at the age of 89. She had been a member of the kibbutz from its beginning, an educator, public speaker, and a part of the GFH staff. In her testimonial biography on film, she asks penetrating questions: "Well if it bothers you, why don't you do something about it?" She states, "I never got used to things", demanding of us a self-examination: "What are you rebelling against?".

As we face the challenges of our own times, we hope to be able to answer Chavka and Dorka with an affirmative response; we spoke our minds, we did not ignore injustice, we did not get used to things, we did something. ▀

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Fig. 14
Miriam Harel giving testimony,
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