

Remember the PAST.
YOU are the FUTURE

DEDICATON

I dedicate my life's story to my children Tsipora Gur and Moshe Litvak; my grandchildren, Saar and Ilan Gur and Lior Litvak. For many years I could not reconstruct my thoughts about the Holocaust. We are the last generation of survivors. In order not to forget what the Nazi murderers did to us, it is our duty to transmit it to the next generation and it will be their responsibility to transmit it further.



Dear Saar:

As you become a Bar Mitzvah, I see you mature enough to read and understand the history of our family. I am sharing this with you, with the hope that you will find this a source of inspiration and strength, building your own commitment to Jewish life.

I was born on March 12, 1923 (according to the Hebrew calendar, it was Purim), in the city of Baranovich in Poland. In Baranovich there were approximately 28,000 inhabitants. Of them, almost half were Jews. The city was level and around it there were forests. It was divided into three sectors; the new; the old and the center. The city developed as a result of the main train lines connecting Moscow; Warsaw; Berlin and Paris.

Baranovitch was a center for Torah studies. There were many Jewish schools, Yeshivot and synagogues. Rabbi Elchanan Vasserma, the illustrious scholar, was the director of one of the yeshivot and later on was killed with his students in the city, during the Holocaust.

My father and grandfather on my father's side prayed in the synagogue "Baaley Melacha"

My mother prayed there on Shabbat and on holidays, but on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur she liked to pray at the Yeshivah although it



The main street in Baranovitch (the postcard was printed in Moshe Litval's printing company).



My parents Ziporah Feige (Griver)
and Zvi Herschel Pinchusowitch.

was far from our home.

At the Yeshivot students came to study from the surrounding areas.

It was customary that they eat in the different homes each day with a different family. I remember that in our house we had a student from the Yeshivah eating on Sundays, a different one on Tuesdays, and still another on Friday evenings, Shabbat at noon and holidays.

My mother's name was Feige - in Hebrew, Tsipora and she was from the Griver family. My father's name was Hirshel, in Hebrew, Zvi.

The grandfather from my mother's side was Yehuda Griver and the grandmother Rebecca. The grandfather from my father's side was Israel Yehuda and the grandmother, Rachel. I received her name and was my grandfather's favorite of all the grandchildren.

At home we were six children; four girls and two boys. The oldest was my sister, Tanya, who was born in 1906. She was married to Pesach Boim from Kobrin. They had two daughters that were killed during the Holocaust.



Grandma Rachel Pinchusowitch.



Grandpa Israel Juda Pinchusowitch.

Grandma Rebecca
and Grandpa Juda Griver



Grandma Rachel and
Grandpa Israel Pinchusowitch



before World War I in the village
near their factory for tar and turpentine.

My second sister, may she live a long life, is Lisa and she was born in 1908. She was married to Lova Borek and they have a son, Theo, who lives in Los Angeles. They have two daughters, Karen and Stacy Ann. My brother, Lola, was born in 1910 and died in 1986 on the 13th of AdarI in Haifa, Israel. He was married to Genya Kaniznikov and they have two children, a daughter Shaula and a son, Tsvika. Shaula has two sons, Shai and Gil and lives in Kfar Ganim (Petach Tikva) Tel. Aviv, Israel. Tsvika has one son, Nir, and lives in Haifa, Israel.

The fourth sister was Osna (Osnat), who was born in 1918. She was killed during the Holocaust in 1942 between the 22nd and 26th of September. The fifth was my brother Eliezer, who was born in 1920 and was also murdered during the Holocaust on September 22, 1942, in the second action.

I was the youngest in the family and the only survivor of the Holocaust. (My brother Lola and my sister Liza left Baranovich before the war. My brother Lola went to Palestine to study and my sister Lisa left for New York.

We were a middle class family. My father owned two factories, one that manufactured tar and turpentine and one that was a lumber mill. Both factories were in the village of Les'na in Poland, 30 kl from Baranovich. They were in a partnership with my mother's two brothers, Moshe and Josef Griver.

The tar and turpentine were produced from the roots of trees. There were two huge special ovens in which they burned the roots, and the roots, when they were burned, would secrete a black sticky substance - tar - and the liquid - turpentine. They would sell the turpentine to pharmacists and export the tar to Germany.

My mother was one of six children, three boys and three girls. My mother's two brothers, who were partners, were killed during the Holocaust with their whole families.

Her two sisters were Rachel and Haska. Rachel died at a very young age from Tuberculosis and Haska, her son, Lolik were murdered in Ghetto Baranovich.



The house in Lesna and one of the workers.

One of the furnaces in the factory for tar and turpentine in Lesna



Uncle Moshe on the left near a train car
filled with tar in Lesna.



One of the buildings in Tartak.
From right to left:
Uncle Joseph Griver,
Uncle Moshe Griver and the supervisor.



Uncle Mordechai,
Chaim ~~GERLONSKIY~~ (the daughter
of Gitel's brother), Aunt Gitel, Hailza

Her third brother, Mordecai Griver, survived the Holocaust with his family and immigrated to Israel after the war. He died in Moshav Temurim in the Negev. His daughter, Haya, lives in the Moshav with his three children, and his son, Michael lives in Gevataim with his two sons.

We lived in Baranovich on Szosowa Street, number 204 in a private home until World War II. There were three bedrooms in the house, a large dining room, a living room, a hallway and a kitchen. There were two entrances to the house. The main entrance from the street and the second from the yard. In the yard entrance there were three small rooms that were used for food storage. One of them was used during Succot as a Succah because its roof could be raised. Around the house was a beautiful flower garden, and in the back a large fruit garden. There were strawberries and other kinds of berries that grew on bushes (malines). There were cherries, plums, pears and two kinds of apple trees. There were also



(her daughter, who lives in Israel)
and I standing near the furnace in Grabowiec.

Uncle Mordechai and his son,
Michael, in Grabowiec.

My mother's sister
with her husband
and son who lived in Warsaw.
They came to Grabowiec
when World War II started and
died in the Holocaust.



agres - a small green sour fruit and
"Pozeezki" - a small red fruit which both grew
on bushes.

In the yard there was a small wooden shed
that was used as a bathroom. In those days
there were no toilets or running water. Also
in the yard was a cow shed with one cow,
chickens and during the winter, also geese.
We had a special place in the cellar to store
vegetables, milk and dairy products, meat and
pickled produce.

In the middle of the yard was a well for pumping water. The well was shared with gentile neighbors by the name of "Buhaj." In those days there were no refrigerators. We kept everything in a cellar. Ice cream could be found only in a few special stores and was kept with ice.

At home we always had a live-in maid. She would milk the cow, prepare cheese, sour-cream, butter and yogurt for the household use, and also once-a-week would bake bread. The maid would go with my mother to the market and help her carry the groceries. She also would do the washing and ironing.

The washing was done once a month for three days. In the winter, the clothes would freeze like a board and it took a few days to a week until it would dry.

My mother was a volunteer -community worker and devoted a lot of her time to help the needy. Many times she would send me with an older woman to gather wood for the poor for the cold winter. My father would send a coach with a coachman and when it got to be full, mother would divide the wood among the poor-

My older sister, Tanya.





Tanya with her husband
Pesach Boehm.

Tanya's older daughter,
Lubinka,
that died
in the Holocaust.



she even put it near their door. My father spent most of the week at the factory supervising the process of production. He would arrive home for Shabbat and holidays on a train.

In the village we had a house with a housekeeper. As a child I would come there house with the factory stood near a pine tree. This was a vacation resort and in the summer many people would come to the village for vacation and rent rooms or apartments. During the day we would lie in hammocks which were tied to the trees in the forest. We would pick small yellow mushrooms (lisiczki) and black and red berries. I loved eating them with sour cream.

As a child, I was very skinny and when I came to the village my father tried to fatten me up. He would bring me milk in the morning, straight from the cow full with foam, and an uncooked egg straight from the chicken. He would make a hole with a pin from both sides of the egg and I would drink it as a game. When he had time, he would take me in a beautiful carriage on a tour in the

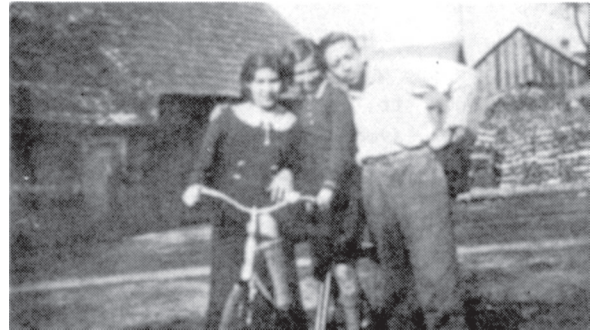
neighborhood or to visit relatives.

My mother would go to a natural spa like "Truskawec" because she had problems with her gall-bladder and liver. In the city, at home, the housekeeper would stay with my sister.

As a child, I studied in an elementary school named "Mecelavsky" and later on in "Beth Jacob," then in a Polish high school and at the end in a Teacher's College, "Beth Jacob" in Krakow. There I studied from 1937-1939. This was a college with room and board. I managed to return home before World War II broke out in September 1, 1939.

On September 1, 1939, the Germans attacked Poland at Hitler's command without declaring war. The German army, armed with the most modern weapons, advanced quickly in three divisions, from the north to Prussia, from the west to Selesa, and from the south to Slovakia.

The advantages that the German Army had in weaponry, planes and armored tanks, gave them a swift victory and by the end of three weeks, the Polish Army was defeated and Poland



Osnat my sister, I and my brother, Elizer, in front of our house in Baranowitch.



Myself with the non-Jewish neighbor, Buhajowa, and our dog, Laika, in front of our house.

surrendered to the Nazi German conqueror. What helped the quick victory were also people who belonged to "fifth column." They were Germans who lived in Poland and ordinary traitors who lived in Poland before the war and volunteered themselves to the German Army.

The Germans conducted the war completely ignoring International Law. They bombed unvalled cities, convoys of civilian refugees and treated the population in the occupied territories with extreme cruelty.

Poland was divided into two parts - the western part to Germany and the eastern part to Russia. Our area was conquered by the Russians. They commandeered our factories. My sister Osnat and my brother, Eliezer, went out to work. They wanted to deport my father to Russia but we succeeded in cancelling the decree. We were forced to let the maid leave and take in a tenant because our house was too big according to the ordinances. Luckily, the tenant was a doctor - a surgeon from the city hospital and a very nice man who was a refugee from Warsaw.

I continued to study in an evening high school and received my diploma as an honor student. The diploma was decorated with the picture of Stalin and Lenin. The Russians sent many wealthy capitalists to Siberia. At that time this was catastrophic for the people, but they were saved from the Holocaust. Full freight trains would pass near us towards Russia. We lived close to the train tracks. The Jews in the city organized help with food and drinks and we, the teenagers, would wait for the refugees and serve it to them.

On June 22, 1941, without any warning, Hitler's troops invaded Russia and drove the army back. His plan was to force Russia to surrender and to annex the territory to Germany and then to start the genocide of all the Jews in the conquered territories.

At the beginning of the bombing, we fled to a small town. We loaded food and some of our belongings on a wagon that my father brought from the village. When we returned home, we did not find a thing. The house, the barn and the cellar were burned. We found a

place to live with Atia Lemon on Senatonska Street, near the market.

Two weeks after the Germans successfully conquered the area, they began the persecutions. They apprehended 70 males, herded them to an unknown place and killed them. Until today, we don't know where they were buried.

Immediately afterwards came the order of a yellow patch. Every Jew had to sew a yellow patch on his clothing on the front of the left side and on the back on the right side. The patch was 10 or 12 centimeters in diameter. After a while, the patch was changed to a yellow³ star.

The Jews were forbidden to walk on the sidewalks - but had to walk in the street. This way they became an object of cruel treatment and brutality. They were forbidden to leave their homes, ride the trains, or to enter stores, etc. Placards were posted in the stores, windows saying, "entrance forbidden for Jews and dogs."

One day the Germans caught a group of males. They took their identification cards. Among them was a dancing teacher whose name was Morin. They ordered him to dance and struck him with murderous blows. They took out another Jew who had a beard and ordered him to put a Talit on. They shaved half of his beard and ordered him to join the dance. They tortured them all and at the end, took them to an unknown⁴ place and killed them.

The Germans enclosed us in a Ghetto behind wire fence. We were forbidden to go out without a permit and German escort. In the Ghetto leaders were chosen called "Judenrot". These people were responsible to carry out the German's decrees. They collected our jewelry and valuables as tax for the Germans. All the young people had to go to perform heavy labor. My brother, Eliezer, worked for the O.T. - people who were responsible for the roads and food supplies.

Sitting from the right, Grandpa Israel Juda Pinchusowitch the child, is the daughter of my mother's brother, Moshe Griver, Grandma Rebecca Griver (my mother's mother) and my father, Zvi Pinchusowitch.



Standing from the left, my mother, Ziporah Pinchusowitch, my brother Lula, my sister Osnat, myself and my brother Elizer.



My sister, Lisa and her husband, Luba
March 12, 1930.



I am standing at the entrance
to our house in 1933.



I am in a summer camp during
my studies at the Seminar in
Chrobaczuw in 1938.



Myself during my studies at
the Seminar Beth Yaakov in
Krakow - July 12, 1937.

My sister Osnat and I worked for the Signal Corps doing the laundry. Every day we washed the cloth by hand. I was not accustomed to this physical work and my knuckles swelled on my hands. A doctor by the name of Lubranitzky, who lived with us at home put leather straps on my hands to help the pain.

The soldiers who came to take their laundry would give us leftovers from their food rations, such as a piece of bread, cheese, a little sugar, etc. For us, this was a big help, because in the Ghetto we got very small portions of food - 125 grams of bread a day (5 oz), sometimes we got beans, potatoes, a little oil and matches.

Moshe Litvak, my future father-in-law, divided the food portions. The portions were very small and not enough. We would smuggle food at the risk of our lives.

Before long, the Germans started the massacres. One day they caught three hundred-fifty men, put them on trucks and took them to an unknown place and killed them.

In the Ghetto, we lived on Sadowa

Street, in a house of the Rivkin family. On March 3, 1942 they divided the population into productive and non-productive people. The first group was needed for hard labor. The rest, approximately 3,000 people were old people, children and widows whom they decided to kill.

On the night of March 3, 1942, the "Judenrat" gave a certificate only to the people that were staying. Those people had to gather on Sadowa Street between Wilenska Street and Soshona.

They divided the Ghetto into two parts. Those who had the certificates had to go to the meeting place and the rest stayed where they were.

The Germans stood at the crossing place and checked the certificates. My brother Eliezer, received a very hard slap across his face. On Purim eve, at 5 o'clock in the morning, we all gathered on the street. The Germans stood at the intersection of Sadowa and Sosnow Streets and would direct people to

the right or to the left. Right was for death and left, for life.

At the intersection, we explained to the Germans that my father and, Eliezer, my brother, are carpenters and my mother, Osset, my sister and I are seamstresses. We thought that those were needed skills and because of those skills, we succeeded in remaining alive. They told us to go to the left. Those who turned to the right were beaten cruelly by Latvians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Poles and Germans, They shoved them into trucks and took them to the "Green Bridge" for their last trip.

On one of the trucks there was a young lady named Betza Narkonski. She had a Polish boyfriend, who was a refugee from Warsaw and was an electrician. He worked for the S.S. When the trucks were ready to go, he arrived with his German commander at the last moment and he removed her from the truck.

Her mother and brother were not allowed to get off and were taken to the "Green Bridge" and killed. It is very hard to describe the scene of what happened in that

place, when they separated the children from their parents and the parents from their children.

Those who were sentenced to death were commanded to dig a big communal grave, to take off their clothing, to arrange the clothing in piles according to their style and then to stand at the edge of the ditch. The Germans shot them row by row when they were naked. They put on music in order to screen out the cries and screams of the murdered. The Germans drank until they were intoxicated and engaged in their art with great pleasure.

The Gentiles reported that when the grave was covered the earth trembled because their bodies were still alive. In the same slaughter, my Aunt Haska (my mother's sister), and her son, Lolik were killed.

At the end of the slaughter, the Germans gathered 40 men from the Jewish Police in the Ghetto. They brought them to the graves to arrange the dead bodies and cover the graves. At the end of their work, they also shot them. After that, a German commander arrived at the Ghetto by car and ordered the director of the

Judenrot, Mr. Izekazon and his assistant, Mrs. Mann to join him. He took them to the graves and shot them, too.

Those were the last sacrifices for that day.

In the afternoon, when they completed their quota of murders, life in the Ghetto returned to normal.

The next day we went to work as usual. Mother and I worked at cleaning homes and doing laundry for some nurses who would serve food and administer first aid to the wounded soldiers who had returned from the German front.

My brother, Eliezer, worked at the O.T. in supplies, and my sister, Osnat, worked for soldiers in the Air Force. My father did not work and he stayed in the Ghetto.

One day the Gestapo commander, Joseph Letween arrived at the Judenrat with a list of 13 doctors. He ordered them to appear immediately. The Jewish police gathered 11 of them. They were loaded on to the car and they disappeared without a trace.

Dr. Levenbok and a medical student, Shanilzki Meron did not show up and were saved. The families were told to prepare packages of clothing and food for them. This was only a ruse because the packages were found later on in the attic of the S.S.

At a later date the Germans gathered the skilled workers and moved them to Koldyczewo Camp. There were Poles, Gypsies and Russians - all skilled workers.

On September 1, 1942 they brought Dr. Levinbok from the Ghetto to the camp after he had twice succeeded in remaining in the Ghetto. In Koldyczewo Camp the Jews dug a tunnel and a large number of them succeeded in escaping and survived. Those that were caught were killed.

On September 22, 1942, a day after Yom Kippur, we all went to work as usual. Near the Ghetto gate the German who would lead us to work waited for us. At that time we were not permitted to go alone. We had to go in groups in the street accompanied by a German.

Immediately after we left the Ghetto gate we saw something unusual. We understood that something is going to happen. At the corner of each street the Germans stood with weapons.

They gathered us on Senatorska Street near the post office.

I was there with my mother and my brother Eliezer. Eliezer begged me to escape to one of the yards and hide. I did not want to leave mother and therefore, asked him to try. He succeeded in sneaking to one of the yards, but someone betrayed him and the day after he was brought to the Ghetto and killed. They brought us to a big yard near the Polish Bank. We stood there in groups according to the work places and near each group stood the German escort.

Our German Escort realized what was going to happen and decided to save us. He told us that the minute he would give us the signal to go, we had to walk quickly after him without turning our heads and looking backwards. Suddenly we heard the bark of an S.S. "Stop!", but the escort answered that he had permission and everything was in order. I hid my mother

in the middle of the line so they would not see that she is older and we arrived to work.

We left "hell" behind us. We could see people kneeling in a circle and around them trucks with loud-speakers playing music to drown the screams and cries of those victims sentenced to death.

Some of the groups that were needed for work were released and the rest were brought by trucks behind the city on the way to Grabowice Village. The Germans ordered them to take off their clothing and arrange the clothing in piles according to their type. They had to stand at the edge of the grave. This time the graves were dug in advance. The Germans prepared tables with strong drinks for themselves and often they got drunk and they started the "art" of killing with very high spirits. They killed the victims with machine guns. Every row of people that reached the grave had to straighten the bodies in order to save room and then they slaughtered them.

Babies were torn in half in front of their mothers. Those who did not die

immediately were suffocated. Also, here the earth was seen moving after the graves were covered.

That night a Jewish man passed by that area with a wagon. He was collecting the refuse from the latrines. Suddenly he heard a muffled cry. He found a little boy that was wounded but not killed. He wrapped him with rags and put him in a barrel of human refuse and brought him to the Ghetto. He was operated on and lived until they destroyed the Ghetto. This was the second action.

My mother and I came to work without knowing what had happened to my father, Osnat and Eliezer. At the end of the day we did not return to the Ghetto as always but stayed with a German who lived close to the nurses and had mercy on us.

The next day we heard that Eliezer was caught and was brought to the Ghetto and killed.

Osnat, my sister, tried to kill herself by drinking poison that she had prepared. Sadly for her, they cheated her of the attempt by substituting a tranquilizer for poison.

When she realized that it was not poison, she jumped from the truck and escaped. This was a sleeping liquid and she fell asleep in one of the ditches on the side of the road. When she woke up, she did not have any place to go and she returned to the place where she worked hoping the Germans would let her continue, but the Germans turned her over to the S.S. who killed her.

My father succeeded in surviving. He hid in a secret hiding place under the floor in a house we had lived in, where the entrance was hidden. This hiding place he prepared a long time ago with some other man. Many hiding places were prepared in the Ghetto when we realized the situation. The Germans searched for several days. There were also traitors among the Jews who thought that by discovering the hiding places, they will save their own lives. One of them who was saved was shot later on by the Partisans. Our hiding place was not discovered and those that hid there were saved.

Among the people hiding was a woman with a baby a few months old. When they heard the

footsteps of the blood-thirsty murderers overhead, the baby began to cry and the mother who was afraid that they would discover them all, strangled her child with her own hands.

On October 25, 1942 I returned with my mother to the Ghetto and we found my father alive. He was very depressed frightened and in a very difficult emotional state. The Germans reduced the area in the Ghetto and we moved to a different house. My mother and I continued to work and my father stayed in the Ghetto.

My mother tried to convince me to leave the Ghetto and join my uncle, Mordechai, who was hiding with his family in the swamps near Wielkie Luki.

I did not want to leave my parents alone, but they convinced me to go and later on they would join me.

My father did not believe that it would be possible to be saved. He was afraid that in the winter, if we would hide in the forest, we would leave tracks on the snow and we would not be able to survive.

My departure remained a secret. No one, not even our neighbors, knew that I was planning to leave the Ghetto. The Ghetto was very crowded. Everyone got one square meter for living space. We slept two together.

The day before I left, my mother took me to the Rabbi in the Ghetto to ask for his blessing for my leaving. My mother, being religious, believed that this will protect me on my journey. Before I left, she said to me: "Go my daughter. I have a blessing from the Rabbi from Darhetein that I and my children will never suffer from hunger, I hope you will survive." She and my father kissed me and we separated forever. The last night before I left, my mother did not sleep at all. All night long she hugged and kissed me. She thought I was asleep.

On December 10, 1942 I left in the morning with the group as if I was going to work. On the way I disappeared and went to the Wolanski family who lived outside the Ghetto - across from the market. They had a special permit to do so.

The whole day I sat outside in the yard, in the bathroom and in the evening, when it

started to get dark, Hatzia came. Hatzia was a Polish non-Jew that helped a lot of Jews in Baranovicz. He is one of the righteous of the nations and those of us who survived the Holocaust, brought him later on to Israel and we planted a tree in his name at the entrance to "Yad Vashem" in Jerusalem.

Hatzia brought me to his home, but did not take me inside right away. He left me in the barn and went to make sure there were no strangers in the house.

In his house I met Moshe Top, who was wounded in his hand from a bullet when he tried to enter the Ghetto through the fence. He came from the Partisans (The Jewish Resistance) to take his girlfriend, Braina. Today, he lives in Natanyia, Israel without legs and married to a different wife.

At midnight, a Jew came to Hatzia to take me to Uncle Mordechai. I don't remember his name. He emptied the bathrooms. He had a cart with a big barrel and with a stick and a bucket he would transfer the excrement to the barrel and pour it behind the city. He was familiar with the roads and knew my uncle.

Very few Jews knew the ways and the back roads in the area, since most Jews worked in the city. We arrived safely to Uncle Mordechai. My Aunt Gitel was there, her mother, and older woman, their son, Michael, their daughter, Hatzia, the niece of my Aunt Haya Rabinowicz and two children. One named Avremel, who lives in the United States and the other named Josef, who lives in Israel.

My uncle built a hut in the swamps. The hut was like a dog house made from very thin wood tied with straw. He covered it with straw and grass that we found nearby. We would crawl into the hut. We could only sit or lie down. We would lie down in two rows and in the middle lay Yankelwitz, the second head of the Judenrat.

The place that we lived was swampland so the Germans were afraid to venture in. When we would take some of the mud, this created a water hole. The hole would be full with insects, but we would drink the water. Once a week, at night, we went with my uncle and his two children, Miska and Haya to the village with backpacks and sticks in our hands. We went to the farmers to get bread

and pork.

My uncle gave then, in exchange, valuables and clothing. They sold it and with the money, bought us food. Sometimes, when we arrived, we were given potato soup or "Maslanka" - water that remains from making butter. We were embarrassed to gulp it down because for us, it was a delicacy. I remember how once they asked us to drink the Maslanka saying "drink, because anyway we'll give it to the pigs."

We ate three times a day one slice of bread with a piece of ham, and once a day, hot tea. The tea we would prepare in a Samovar over coals so the smoke wouldn't be seen. It took me time to get used to eating pork because I came from a traditional family and never ate traif (non-kosher food). My uncle convinced me to eat because he was afraid that I would get sick from lack of vitamins.

During the winter, we had to carefully keep an eye on the samovar with the tea because when the snow melted under the samovar, it could easily tip over. It happened, not once, that we were left without the tea.

In those days that we succeeded to boil the water, we would pour the tea into aluminum cups that hold heat and we would warm ourselves before we drank.

During the whole winter we did not shower as there was no place to do so. We did not change our clothes and picked off the hundreds of lice. From time to time we would go out to the snow, take off our clothes, and pick off hundreds of lice and put on the same clothes again. We rubbed kerosene on our heads to prevent lice. During the day we took turns guarding the place. Sometimes we played cards and sometimes we caught little field mice that came to look for crumbs. We would put them in a can, look at them and then release them.

The situation in the swamps was very hard. We were afraid that some of the non-Jews in the area would discover us and betray us to the Germans.

At the beginning of the winter of 1943, one of the farmers, an acquaintance of my Uncle Mordechai, agreed to hide us on top of his barn in the attic. We scattered a lot of hay on the floor and behind the hay we

spread blankets, and there we lay all day. The farmer and his wife were lacking children and were very good people. They would bring us food three times a day. They bought the food in the city on market days so that they would not draw attention of the neighbors to the large amount of food they had.

In February, 1943 we heard that the Russians were getting closer. We heard that Paulus, the commander of the sixth division was captured near Stalingrad.

This was a strong blow for the Germans, but for us it gave us hope that the Russians would continue to drive back the Germans and win the war.

Until then we had no hope because the Germans were advancing every day.

It was very hard for us because most of the time we were lying down. One night, Michael, my cousin, got diarrhea. Living in the attic with no bathroom, we would go to the bathroom between the ceiling boards and it would fall down into the barn. That night the farmer couple's favored pony stood innocently. The pony got all dirty by the dripping. When the farmer came in the morning and saw what

happened, he was very angry and could not forgive us. Full with anger he screamed, "everything I can understand, but how could you have a bowel movement on my pony, I can't understand." We asked him to forgive us and explained that it was not on purpose. We were afraid that he would not shelter us anymore. In our hearts, we cried and laughed because what could we do? The farmer put his life in danger because if the Germans would catch us, they would also kill him.

One night the farmer came running scared to death, and demanded that we leave the place immediately because the Germans arrived to the village and were searching, house by house.

We left immediately and escaped back to the swamps. We carried our grandmother, making a chair with our arms, and this way we continued running away from the place. The next day we returned to our old hut in the swamps.

Mula Yankelwitz was also with us in the swamps. He succeeded to escape from the Ghetto after the second slaughtering. He bribed a few Germans who guarded the Ghetto and with their help, he smuggled people out

and saved them from slaughter.

One evening, when he went to get more people out, a car with Germans arrived suddenly. They lit up the area with large search lights and caught all the people who tried to escape. Yankelwitz succeeded to hide behind a staircase and later on, ran to the workshop. There he stayed in hiding for a few days. When the murderers did not find him, they took his wife and their infant daughter from the Ghetto and demanded that he must report before them. If he would do so, they would release his wife and child. Of course, this was a lie. They killed his wife and daughter in the gas chambers that we called ~~Dushgrwsky~~. *Busheywolski*

Yankelwitz escaped from the town and came to us to the swamps. Later on he joined the Jewish underground, the "Partisans." At the end of the war he arrived in Haifa, Israel and there he died.

The conditions in the Ghetto worsened day by day. There was a lack of food and groups of people started to escape to the forest, some with weapons and some without. The "Judenrat" could not prevent the escape

because it was all done undercover.

From time to time, the Partisans (Jewish underground) came to the Ghetto trying to convince people to join them.

On December 12, 1942, Yodel Oshorovsky attacked a German railroad worker in order to take his weapon. A fight developed and a grenade exploded. They both were killed and this hastened the liquidation of the Ghetto.

On December 17, 1942, a letter from my parents was brought to me by the contact man who had taken me from the Ghetto to the swamps.

In the letter, my parents wrote that they miss me very much and they would like me to come back. To my regret, I did not make it. The day I received the letter, the final liquidation of the Ghetto took place.

At 6 o'clock in the morning, the German S.S. entered the Ghetto with police from White Russia, Lithuanians and Ukrainians. They took 300 people from the O.T. workers, 200 people from Baulutony and approximately 100 people from the Gestapo workers and sent them to their work place. All the rest of the people left in the Ghetto were ordered to gather in

one of the streets and to lie down on the ground with their faces in the snow. They gathered them in big, closed trucks, while firing gun shots. They took them to mass graves near Grabowicz. At the same time, the murderers entered the industrial area of the Ghetto. They gathered everyone, took the craftsmen and the experts that they needed and moved them to the right side of the street. The rest, including women and children, they sent to the left. People from the left side tried to steal to the right, but they were shot immediately.

During the summer month of 1942, the Germans transferred Jews from Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Holland and France through Baranowich toward Russia.

The Germans invented different lies in order to mislead the people. Then they transported them to their death.

One day, a group of 3,000 Jews from Czechoslovakia arrived to Baranowich. They were intellectuals, nicely dressed, and everyone carried valuables from home. They were convinced that they had been brought to work. When they arrived to the city, they

were transferred to trucks and were told that they were being taken to lunch. The trucks had a special arrangement where the gas from the exhaust would go into the car and suffocate the people. These trucks were called "Dushegu^lcki" - "suffocate souls."

The bodies were transferred to the forest "Hagei", behind the new section of Baranowich. They tossed them into a ditch and those that were still alive were shot.

They also killed the Czechoslovakians who accompanied the train in order not to leave witnesses to this terrible act.

They brought 8 Jews from "Koldechevo" Camp to cover the graves and they killed them as well. Our hiding place in the swamps was getting more dangerous day by day. Survivors started to arrive to us and we were afraid of the non-Jews (Goyim) in the neighborhood. We succeeded to make contact with the Partisans and they transferred us in groups to the forest.

Uncle Mordechai sent first his wife Gitel, and his children Haya and Michael. He also sent Avremel and Josef the two children

whom the uncle saved from Grabovitz. (Avremel was the shoemaker's son and Josef, the teacher's son) They joined the group of Partisans named "Nekolsky."

Lonia, Vania and "Katzap" (that's how we called him), belonged to another Partisan group that would come to us to the swamps on their way to and from missions in town or on their way to meet their contact person. They would bring us information on the situation in the area. When they came the second time, the uncle wanted to join them with Haya Rabinowich and leave me with the grandmother (Gitel's mother), for a few more weeks.

I refused to stay and left with Uncle Mordechai, Mrs Galai and her son. In every village the Partisans had a contact person who would give them information about the situation and the existence of the Germans.

We left with two wagons, In the first wagon were the three Partisans with us. The Partisans had weapons and the uncle had a rifle. That night we did not go to our contact man and on the way, in one of the intersections we fell on a German ambush. Suddenly, a shout in German was

heard. "Who is it?" Stand and say the password!" The three Partisans jumped from the wagon and came running to us. They told us to run after them. The Germans started to shoot and light the area with rockets. (You could collect pins - there was so much light)

The two Partisans who were not Jewish and Uncle Mordechai returned fire. When the rocket bombs would blow up and light the area, we fell on the ground and then continued running. I heard the whistle of the bullets near my ear and was afraid to get wounded and fall into German hands. They used to torture every Partisan in a very cruel way. I ran the whole time after Lonias and I made him promise me that if I would get hurt, he would not leave me wounded in the area and would kill me, himself.

We succeeded to survive this incident and discover that Katzap disappeared Lonias was in charge of the group. He sent Vania to look for him. We could not find him and continued on our way.

Later on, we found out that Katzap decided to run the opposite way from all of us, so he could definitely be saved.

After we went from the area, we came to a farmer's house. Lonia checked the map to see where we were. He got information from the farmer on the place where the Germans were, and then made him harness his horse and take us to the next village. There he promised to let him go (and he did). In the next village, he took another farmer, who led us to the area where the Partisans were. There, in one of the houses, they treated us with hot potato soup. We rested a little and continued by foot to the Partisan's group whose leader was Neckolsky. He was a Russian that was sent especially to organize Partisans groups.

We arrived late at night and to my surprise we saw a big camp with cabins. In the clearing in the forest Partisans were sitting around fires singing Russian songs. I did not understand the happiness because there was not one person who did not lose a relative or his family. But life continued.

The Partisans would go on missions. They bombed trains, trucks, ambushed German convoys, gathered information and reported in to the Russians.

In the group we had a liaison officer and a transmitter. He would daily transmit and receive information to and from Moscow.

In our camp we had many women and few children. The men and few women would go at night to the surrounding villages and take food from the farmers. When the farmers saw that the Partisans were taking their flour, they stopped grinding large quantities and kept the seeds. We were left without a choice but to build a millstone and every two had to grind two buckets. It was very difficult to crank it and therefore we had to put only one handful of seeds at a time. This is how we had to bake our own bread.

Uncle Mordechai built a large hut for us. The roof was covered with grass and sand and inside instead of a bed he built, on the floor, a raised layer made from tree trunks and on top they put sticks covered with grass. We slept in a row one next to the other.

In the camp we had a kitchen with a cook. Her name was Rachel Berkowitz from Baranowitz. She was there with her husband and two young children. One winter day the Germans arrived

at the forest. The Partisans left the place and scattered mines in the area escaping to the depth of the forest. One of Rachel's younger children started to cry and it was impossible to quiet him down. The Partisan's commander offered Rachel to hide with her young son under a haystack, but she was afraid. Because the child's crying identified the direction of our escape, the commander did not have a choice. He did not want to endanger the whole group and shot the child. The Germans arrived at our camp and stepped on some mines. A few of them were killed and they did not continue to search for us. It is hard to describe how much suffering this poor mother went through.

Rachel Berkowitz (the cook) knew my parents and tried to find me a job in the kitchen. I was happy to work there because I had plenty of food and could also bring it to the families.

At the end of 1943 our group was divided into fighters and those who could not fight. The fighters were transferred to a different group and we stayed in the same place. The huts were hidden between the trees in the

depth of the forest and the Germans were afraid to enter because they could not carry with them heavy ammunition.

The Partisans were taking shifts hiding between the trees, on top of the trees and inside hollow trees. They could see what was going on but could not be seen. When we started to get closer to the front we often saw airplane fights. How happy we were to see the Russians downing the German's planes.

The life in the forest was not easy but it was better and safer than the swamps. We suffered from diarrhea, sores from lack of vitamins, tooth aches and other illnesses. I was lucky that a Russian doctor gave me vitamin pills which prevented me from developing sores. This doctor was parachuted especially to operate on a wounded officer. The doctor amputated his leg with a tree saw. The officer was saved and returned back to Russia at the end of the war to be fitted for a prosthesis. We had very few clothes to wear. We sewed our bras by hand from parachutes and those without shoes wore sandals made from reeds or "Lusa" which was found in the swamps and the farmers would

weave baskets from it. With these slip on shoes I returned to the city after the liberation.

We could not get rid of the lice even though we would wash, bathe and boil our clothing. These blood suckers did not leave us until we arrived in Israel after the war.

The Russians advanced and started to push the cruel enemy. We started to hope for the Russian's victory and for the long hoped-for liberation. For a long time we were filled with despair--we could not believe that any of us will remain alive. We prayed to see in our eyes the fall and total destruction of the Germans who wiped out our people and killed our brothers sisters and our nation.

On July 8, 1944, the Russians liberated Baranowitz. The center of the city was mostly burned and instead of the houses we found German graves. The Russians arrived a few days later. The first soldiers we met we kissed and hugged because we did not believe that this moment of liberation would happen.

We returned back to the city and tried to find a place to live because our houses were all destroyed. Uncle Mordechai found a house

which belonged to his relatives. When we came there we found a Polish family living there and the Russians were evacuating the rooms in order to set up an office. Suddenly one of the Russians turned to me and asked if I knew him and I looked at his face and said "No". Then he asked me "Do you remember the name Yermalayev?" I burst into tears because he was the manager of the grain warehouse where my sister Osnat worked. She worked for him in 1939-1941 under the Russian regime. He started to ask about the family and in tears I told him that I was the only survivor and that very day we returned from the forest looking for a place. He explained to his staff that I was the sister of their worker and they have to evacuate the house and give it to us. Immediately after, he took me with him to the main office and introduced me to the director of the whole state. The director was a russian Jew and his name was Gutkovitz. His son, who was my age and went to high school with me, died in the war against the Germans. He offered me the job as a personal director which was a high position and an excellent salary. He and his assistant, Katizhev,

taught me and helped me the whole time. They also provided me with food stamps and clothing from the Red Cross. I did not have clothing to change.

The survivors began to return to the city in groups and would break into apartments vacated by the Germans. In the house of the Kodevitzky's brothers they opened a synagogue. A Torah that had been hidden was found. The prayer of "Kol Nidre" recited on Yom Kippur at the Synagogue I'll never forget. This prayer had to reach heaven. The pain and sorrow of this magnitude can only be felt by those who survived the Holocaust.

Some of the Orthodox Jews started to grow a beard and "Payot" (side curls). There were no Jews left with beards. Whenever I bumped into a man like this with a beard and payot, I would stop and look at him. For me it was a special moment, reminding me of my past. Anti-semitism was very strong. Some of the non-Jews did not want to return the possessions that they were given for safe keeping until after the war and some did not want to return the children they saved.

On Sundays when we did not work we

started to erect tomb stones on the graves. One of the monuments commemorating those killed in the "First Action" we built near the "Green Bridge". The second monument honoring those killed in the "Second & Third Action" we built near Grabowitz. My brother Eliezer, my sister Osnat and my parents are also buried there. Around the graves we found evidence about the horrifying murders. Scattered were children's shoes, broken toys that were no use to the non-Jews, human bones and hair. We gathered it all and buried it all near the mass grave. After a short period the monuments and grave stones were found shattered and on one of the stones was written, "They deserved this." On the graves horses, cows, and sheep were grazing there on the fresh grass.



This is a photograph of the mass grave from the "Second & Third Action" and the monument we built there. There are buried 12,000 people. This picture we took the day we built

the monument. I am standing behind the monument on the right. The old cemetery was destroyed. The fence was broken and the grave stones scattered. We could not continue

living among the murderers and the graves, so we decided to immigrate illegally to Eretz Israel. Rumors were circulated that illegal immigration started in Poland. I saved some money from my salary and prepared supplies for the journey. I resigned from my job and one day I left on a cargo train to Poland. My Uncle Mordechai and his family stayed in Baranowitz. I joined Shelubsky who was married to Hadassa Ravitzky's aunt. (She was my father's niece). We arrived at Lodz and there I joined some acquaintances. We bought food in Poland traveled to Germany by train without paying and would exchange the food for clothing or other valuables. (The Germans did not have food after the war.) We returned to Lodz and would sell it at the market.

I continued doing this until I succeeded in joining a group who went to Prague. We arrived in Czechoslovakia with Greek papers and from these we continued on to Lintz. I met my husband Zvi.

From Vienna, Austria we crossed the Duni River and we came to a deserted place. We loaded cargo trains. The young children were

given sleeping pills and the train doors were sealed and we arrived at Paduah, Italy. Here the Jewish Brigade, who were waiting for us opened the doors and we exited the train. The Italian authorities had to be bribed by the Brigade. From there we were transferred by trucks to Como De Lago to camps near lake Como. There we stayed for a few months in a detention camp. In the meantime, Uncle Mordechai and his family arrived. From here we were transferred to Nikelino near Torino. There we stayed in a Villa which was donated by a wealthy Jewish family for Holocaust survivors. We stayed there until we immigrated to Israel illegally.

The illegal immigration was operated by the Jewish Brigade from Palestine with aid from the "Joint" from the United States. Here I met Zvi for the second time and later on we got married. We lived here as if on a Kibbutz. We were approximately 100 people. We slept in beds, many people in one room. We ate together in a communal dining room. Our days were spent waiting to go to our homeland.



One day a young man arrived and told my husband who was the leader of the Kibbutz that he was sent by the Jewish Brigade to take 25 people to Palestine. An argument started among the survivors as to who will be the lucky ones to leave. I demanded from my husband that he should be among those that would go as I did not want to stay in the camp. But as the leader, he felt he could not leave the others, so we stayed. A lottery was done for the others to determine who would go. Each person was allowed to take a small suitcase with clothes, jewelry and money. When the group arrived at the train station, the people were told to give the man their suitcases and money for the train tickets. They waited and waited for him to return with the tickets. After more than 10 hours they realized that he was a con-man. The disappointed group then returned to the Kibbutz. Zvi contacted, by radio the Brigade headquarters about the incident. Later, he was asked to identify the young man who was caught as he attempted this with another group. He was shot.

One day two large trucks arrived covered with cloth. They choose a number of people, and with backpacks and canteens, we left for ^{Gethua} Vienna. On the way we stopped for inspection and one person from "Aliyah Bet" (from the Jewish Haganah - underground) would bribe the Italians and we would continue to go. The whole day we traveled and at night we arrived at a deserted place - a valley near the Sauna Port. We arrived in two convoys of Italian cars. We were 1257 illegal immigrants. When we arrived we could not see a thing but around noon we discovered a blinking flashing light from far away in the sea. The organizers of the illegal immigration started communicating in morse code with the ship and at midnight the ship arrived. The name of the ship was Yasha Wedgewood - named after the famous British parliament representative that supported the Zionist dream. On the ship was a team of American Jews who were Navy trained. This was the largest illegal immigrant ship that sailed from Italy. The ship was bought by the Haganah. The ship was renovated and turned into a refugee carrier. There were 3 or 4 rows of hammocks. We laid one on top of

the other. Everyone got a paper bag in case of nausea. The women slept inside the ship. The men on the deck. It was very crowded. Water was restricted - one canteen per day and food in small quantities. I felt very bad the whole way and threw up most of the time. The captain of our ship got drunk and thus our departure was delayed.

The police of Sauna received information about our ship. The police was under strict British supervision and they tried to stop the illegal immigrants. The people from the Haganah told us to go even if they open fire. The minute we were on the ship, the sailors cut the ropes and immediately we slipped away from the port to the sea. The ship started its journey and Dov Lifshitz-Magen was the Captain. His ship now is on Kibbutz Ramat Hasofet. The British followed us by air and sea. When we were in the heart of the sea, four battleships surrounded us. On the 26th of June, 1946, we arrived at the territorial waters (British waters). The British boarded the ship and at that moment the captain exchanged his clothes with a handicapped man and disappeared among the others. The ship

was towed to Haifa port after a hard eight day journey. I was very weak from throwing up and I was taken off the boat on a Red Cross stretcher. We were all taken to a camp in Atleit. We were the last ship to enter Eretz Yisroel. The refugee boat that arrived after us was returned to Europe by the British. Those that followed were taken to Cyprus and put in refugee detention camps.

We stayed at the camp Atleit for a few days and on the "Black Shabbat." When the British discovered the weapon buildup at Kibbutz Yagur, the British transferred us to tents and those arrested from the Kibbutz were brought to Camp Atleit ("black Shabbat" was called this because it was a tragedy for the Jewish people.)

Lola, my brother, may he rest in peace, contacted the driver, Mr Waldman, that used to bring the food supplies to our camp. With his help and with Officer Baum, who was Tarya's brother-in-law, we were released early. He took us by truck, hiding behind empty cans, to his house in Bat-Gelon, Haifa. There I met Lola and the reunion was very emotional. Tears flowed like spring water

Not only did Lola and I cry but with the whole Waldman family. Mrs. Waldman prepared dinner and afterwards. Lola took me and my husband to his rented room. He gave us his bed and went to a friend to sleep. Breakfast and lunch we ate in the room. Dinner we ate out. Lola gave us money because we didn't have a penny and after a few months, we rented an apartment for us on 16 Hashalom St in Haifa. Each one received 12 pounds and an iron cot. This was our furniture. When the Independence War broke out, I was drafted as a traffic police. My police identification number was 2080. I was part of the police force for 2 years and released when I delivered my daughter Tzipora.

When I was in Italy, my sister Lisa sent us papers to come to the United States. I wanted very much to be with my sister but after the Holocaust and all that I went through during the war, I knew that the only place for the Jewish person is in "Eretz Yisroel" - our homeland. That is why I decided to enter Israel even though it was fraught with danger - and still illegal.

I gave up my immigration papers to

America. Today, forty years after immigrating to Israel, I find it still hard to believe that I survived and realized the dream of reaching the Holyland. I feel now that I made the right decision and I am happy to live in our country in spite of the wars and problems that remain unsolved.

