

B'NAI GOMBIN

Newsletter of the Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society

Issue 7, September 1998

Editor: Noam Lupu

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The Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society (GJHGS) is a non-profit organization that seeks to educate the public about the history and genealogy of the Jews of Gombin. To achieve this goal, the GJHGS collects and publishes relevant materials, encourages historical and genealogical research, and undertakes activities aimed at preserving documents and relics of the culture and history of Jewish Gombin. *B'nai Gombin* is the newsletter of the GJHGS. Everything published in *B'nai Gombin* is meant to provide information for Gombiners and their descendants. Articles, stories, poems, or other genres about Jewish genealogy, Poland, Gombin, or other subjects of interest to Gombiners submitted, may be published in *B'nai Gombin*. The views and opinions expressed in *B'nai Gombin* are not necessarily those of the Gombin Society. For further information or to receive back issues, contact the Gombin Society (GJHGS) by mail at P.O. Box 503052, San Diego, CA 92150.

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ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Gombin Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society is a non-profit organization, open to all people, from all over the world, who have an interest in Gombin Jewish history and genealogy. The goals of the Gombin Society are to:

- Educate the public about the history of the Gombin Jewish community and the genealogy of the Jews of Gombin.
- Collect, teach, disseminate, and publish knowledge and information on the history of the Gombin Jewish community and the genealogy of the Jews of Gombin.
- Encourage all interested persons to pursue historical and genealogical research focused on the Gombin Jewish community.
- Undertake activities aimed at protecting, preserving, and restoring vital records, documents, and physical relics and landmarks of the culture and history of the Gombin Jews.
- Undertake activities to preserve the memory of the Gombin Jews who perished in the Holocaust.
- Assist the activities of all other organizations whose objectives are related to the preservation of the heritage of the Jews of Gombin.

B'nai Gombin is the quarterly newsletter of the Gombin Society - GJHGS. Its main purposes are to inform Gombiners of projects and activities of interest to them, as well as to share experiences and writings. Any articles, stories, poems, or other genres may be submitted for publishing. The views and opinions expressed in *B'nai Gombin* are not necessarily those of the Gombin Society. For back issues, contact Noam Lupu at the Gombin Society's address.

Gombin also has a World Wide Web page at <http://weber.ucsd.edu/~lزامosc/gombin.html> including information about Gombin's history, the Holocaust in Gombin, the Gombin Society, the E-mail Mailing List, *B'nai Gombin* and more.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Before my paternal grandmother passed away in 1995, I had never attended a Yizkor service at shul. But after her death from cancer, I always accompanied my dad to shul three times a year for Yizkor. Nonetheless, when the Yizkor part of the service came up, I still left the sanctuary, myself having no direct halachic relation for whom to mourn.

I cannot say exactly when I came to the realization that I did indeed have family I could mourn for, or at least for whom I could say a prayer. But soon enough, I was staying with my father for the Yizkor Service, praying for the six million, for the family I had lost in the Holocaust. They are family I have never met, family that was never given the chance to be born. They are the great-aunts and great-uncles who were burned in the Chelmno gas chambers, the second and third cousins who would have been filling the streets of Jewish Gombin.

On this Yom Kippur, during the Yizkor Service, I will be saying a prayer for them. And I will also be saying a prayer for all the dead in the Gombin Jewish cemetery, those souls interred there, who are just now finally able to rest as our efforts to seal off the cemetery and designate it a halachic place of burial continue.

You have already shown your help to them in providing the means for us to put up that fence and enclose the cemetery. Now please join me in praying that those souls, those relatives of ours buried in Gombin, miles and miles away, may rest in peace.

As we say: "May their souls be bound up in the bond of life. May they rest in peace. And let us say: Amen."

Noam Lupu

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Gombiner friends and family,

It is hard to believe that another quarter has passed so quickly and that spring has turned into summer and summer is beginning to look like fall. But, the time has not passed without a lot of exciting things happening. The following is a list of some of the events that have passed:

Book of Names: During his last trip to Gombin, to check on our cemetery project, Jeremy Freedman was given a wonderful gift from the Landlovers Society, a book of Gombin Citizens from the late 1800's through the early 1900's. Our wonderful friend Ada Holtzman made the effort to translate all of these names and dates into a format that makes it simple for you to search for your family. You can get there by linking from the Gombin site to Ada's web site.

Yizkor Book Translation: As you know, half of the Gombin Yizkor Book was written in Yiddish. So much wonderful information wasn't available for all of us to read. Try as we may, we could not seem to get this large task completed. And along came Mr. Holtzman and suddenly the task was "doable." Mr. Holtzman has translated all the Yiddish into Hebrew and from there... we'll have it translated into English. Thank you Mr. Holtzman for all your wonderful work and we all wish you a speedy recovery from your recent illness.

Memorial Monument at Chelmno: We are making a great deal of progress on the Chelmno Memorial. The design has been completed, text (4 languages) reviewed and approved and work has begun (see page 9).

Rafel Film in Imperial War Museum: Many of us knew that we had a treasure in the Rafel film of Gombin before WWII. Apparently the famous Imperial War Museum of London agrees. Starting later this year, the museum will be making parts of the film in a permanent Holocaust exhibit due to open later this year. At the site of the exhibit, a plaque on the wall will acknowledge the legacy of the film. Perhaps a quick trip to London can be built into the trip we'll take to Poland later this year.

Headstones: Since the beginning of this project, it has been our goal to bring as many headstones back "home" as possible. And home they are coming.... Several residence of Gombin have found headstones from the Jewish cemetery on their properties and have voluntarily returned them to us. Others were used as curbstones in the streets of Gombin... not anymore! Through our efforts many of these stones have now been removed to a local warehouse for safekeeping. Very soon, we will return them "home".

Cemetery Project: Our cemetery project is moving along nicely, but with so many complicated tasks, our wish that it may be complete by this fall may not come true. But, not to worry... I understand that Gombin is just as "lovely" in the springtime. And perhaps this will give a little more time for additional headstones to miraculously appear!

Our trip to Poland: Many of us were hoping to make Poland our destination for later this fall, but as the chill of fall becomes the cold of winter, Poland is no place to choose to be! We have decided to postpone our group trip to Poland until next spring. With the extra time, we will be able to find a volunteer to work on hotel accommodations and transportation in Poland for this miraculous trip. If you would like to be a travel coordinator, please let us know!!

Bi-annual Summer Meeting: Although we have always planned our summer meeting to be bi-annual, I sure missed seeing everyone this past summer. I can only hope that you have all had a good one. By our meeting next summer we'll all be able to share and swap our Gombin (and London??) pictures and stories. Already I am looking forward to that day. So, as you can see, much is truly happening in our organization. But, it cannot happen without you and your input. Please continue to share on the on our e-mail exchange and help when you can. Please enjoy the wonderful articles in this newsletter and share our excitement. Have a happy and healthy New Year and may God watch over all of you. And as they say... next year in Poland.

Sincerely,
Mindy S. Prosperi, President

ABOUT MY FRIENDS IN THE BUND: LOVE AMONGST TEEN SOCIALISTS

from the memoirs of Jacob M. Rothbart

In the year that I left Poland in 1906 for America, there were about four hundred members of the Jewish socialist labor party known as the Bund, which I helped organize in Gombin. This was a secret organization and our main get-togethers were at mass meetings and small meetings of leaders. I have written previously about the successes of the organization. Now I want to concentrate on personal feelings and relationships that developed among the members. Most were between the ages of sixteen and twenty. A number of couples fell in love. There was one place where the lovers would come in secret almost daily. This was in the German churchyard when there were no services. The priest knew the goings-on in the churchyard but pretended not to know.

Shortly after I left Poland, some members had to leave the country for spying on the Russian government. I recall two men who were arrested, one Jew by the name of Teifield, and the other a Pole who was an active sympathizer. Both were sent in chains to Siberia. Teifield died from the cold and I lost track of the other man. Another friend was arrested and sent to the city of Lomza but was released with other prisoners when Kerensky became Prime Minister. After World War I, in 1919 when the Germans left Poland, some of the couples in the Bund were married in Gombin. Others who had to separate found each other again in the United States and married there. I will mention a few whom I knew well in Poland before 1906.

Yitzchak Moshe Guyer and his wife Broche came to America in 1919 already married. Sloime Adler and my sister Rivka married about 1909 in Poland and emigrated to Canada in 1927. Laib Wolman married Sarah Golda. Melech Tadelis married Mindel in secret

and later came first to Newark then Chicago. They all raised beautiful children and grandchildren. Two close friends were unable to get together at the time, Chayele Shtoltzman and Saltcha Wolfvitz. Nobody knew what happened to them or whom either of these women married until one of the sons came to the United States and reported that his mother had been sent to a concentration camp under the Nazis and died. Others moved to different countries and were married. In 1928 Rochel Freizinger came from Rio de Janeiro to Gombin and married for the second time: the new husband was Henokh Goldschmidt.

I wanted to write this short memoir with the intention not to neglect the personal lives and loves of my Bund friends. In other words, the Angel of Love did not fall asleep but continued to do its work as it always has through the ages.

**S h a n a
T o v a !**

A Happy New Year to our
Gombiner family, friends
and readers

from the GJHGS Board of Directors

UPDATE ON CEMETERY PRESERVATION

by Jeremy Freedman

The Hebrew month of Elul is an appropriate time to be writing an update for descendants and contributors about the cemetery preservation project. Traditionally at this time of year, during the weeks leading up to Rosh Hashana, we visit the graves of our departed loved ones. This is not so easy when we live thousands of miles away from the sites we would wish to visit. Hopefully this brief report will help you turn your thoughts to that desolate plot, desecrated and abandoned more than 50 years ago, where our forebears' remains lie buried.

The Hebrew word Elul is an acronym for *Ani L'dodi, V'dodi Li*—I am for my beloved, and my beloved is for me. This idea fits nicely with the *Chesed Shel Emet*—the supreme form of altruistic kindness that describes the care taken over burying the dead and respecting their last resting place. In the early part of this year Gombiners worldwide demonstrated their *Chesed* by donating many thousands of dollars to the Gombin memorial projects at the cemetery and at Chelmnno.

The finalisation of the plans for the cemetery have been greatly assisted by our partners at The Nissenbaum Foundation in Warsaw. Not only have they agreed to make a substantial financial contribution, they have also taken responsibility for dealing with the various levels of bureaucracy and officialdom. Further, they are organising the materials and labour and the execution of the project.

I am pleased to report that we have, in the past few months:

a) Resolved problems over defining one corner of the boundary, in this respect we were greatly assisted by Dayan Menachem Gelly of the London Beth Din who gave us an important halachic ruling.

b) Agreed with Mrs Dusik, the Nissenbaum Architect, that the gateway will be modelled on the design of the recently erected gate at the nearby Zychlin cemetery.

c) Received satisfactory assurances that there will be no development between the cemetery gate and the road.

d) Accepted Nissenbaum's recommendation that the gate should be mounted on a brick pillar and wall with an explanatory plaque legible from the road. This will not preclude the subsequent erection of a monument within the gates.

e) Accepted Nissenbaum's recommendation to remove a few young trees and to even out the ground along part of the boundary, so as to facilitate the erection and permanence of the fence. In the light of the additional work we have agreed to contribute a further \$2,000.

The upshot is that I am expecting the work to commence either side of the Winter and to be finished by the end of the Spring, with a view to a dedication ceremony in Summer 1999.

On behalf of all my family I wish Gombiners everywhere a Shana Tova u'M'tuka - a Good and Sweet New Year.

Postscript: As this issue was going to press I learned from our partners at the Nissenbaum Foundation, and from our friend Jerry Temanson the English teacher in Gombin, that work on the cemetery fence has just begun. The posts have been erected and the brick wall and pillars (upon which the gate is to be mounted) have been constructed. It is anticipated that these works will be completed, and that the fence and gate will be in place, before the end of October. Many thanks to all who have contributed to the realisation of this project, I look forward to meeting old friends and new at the dedication ceremony next year.

GOMBINER MEMORIAL PROJECTS: A WONDERFUL RESPONSE

by Leon Zamosc
Fundraising Campaign Coordinator

Back in February, after receiving many initial pledges from dedicated Gombiners, and after securing logistic and financial support from other Jewish institutions, the Gombin Society launched a fundraising campaign for two special projects: erecting a monument at Chelмно in memory of all the Gombiners murdered during the Holocaust, and building a fence to save and protect the abandoned Jewish cemetery in Gombin. From the pages of our newsletter, we appealed to all Gombiners and descendants to join in and contribute as much as they could for the sacred cause of remembering.

I am now pleased to report that, thanks to the marvelous response of Gombiners from all over the world, our fundraising effort has been a great success. In the five months of the campaign, we received 81 special donations for the memorial projects (60 from the United States, 15 from Israel, 6 from England, and 1 from Panama). The total amount we raised was \$33,994. Of this total, \$7,278 came earmarked for the memorial at Chelмно, \$12,600 for the cemetery restoration, and \$14,116 for both projects as needed.

As explained in the previous issue of *B'nai Gombin*, the cost of the memorial monument at Chelмно is \$10,000. In the case of the Gombin cemetery restoration project, we have committed ourselves to match the funding provided by the Nissenbaum Foundation with \$15,000 of our own.

Given the way in which the donors earmarked their contributions, the donations designated for the Chelмно monument and the cemetery restoration were not enough to reach the individual targets for the projects. Still, thanks to the fact that many Gombiners donated “for both projects as needed,” we will be able to bridge

both gaps, and also pay for all the other expenses related to the projects (recovery of gravestones from streets and sidewalks of Gombin, legal fees, expenses for the official demarcation of the cemetery, costs of the fundraising campaign itself, dedication ceremonies, etc.). As agreed in the 1997 board meeting of the Gombin Society, any remaining funds will be used to install a plaque at the Jewish cemetery site in Gombin.

All those who contributed for these special memorial projects received an official receipt from the Gombin Society, along with a card including a message of grateful recognition from our society’s president Mindy Prosperi. As promised in our appeal, the full roll of contributors is published in this issue of *B'nai Gombin*, reflecting their stated wishes on the designation of their donation and its dedication in honor of particular persons or families. The listing has been organized by general contribution levels (*bronze* donors up to \$500, *silver* donors above \$500, and *gold* donors above \$1,000).

Once again, I would like to express my appreciation for the committed attitude of so many Gombiners. Having talked with lots of people, I know that it was a difficult decision for those who had reservations about undertaking memorial initiatives in Poland. But in the end the response was conscientious and overwhelmingly positive, as Gombiners from all walks of life recognized the significance of what they were being invited to do: nothing less than reaffirming, even in the midst of those who may be hostile towards us, that we the Jews are alive, and that we do not forget our oppression, the murder of our people, and our duty to protect the place where our ancestors lie.

As coordinator of the fundraising drive, I would also like to thank fellow Gombiner activists Jeremy Freedman, Ada Holtzman, Mindy Prosperi, Noam Lupu, and Steve Tadelis. Together, we put much effort and dedication into this ideal. It has been clearly worthwhile.

ROLL OF DONORS

1998 SPECIAL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN FOR GOMBINER MEMORIAL PROJECTS

GOLD DONORS

- Nissenbaum Foundation, Poland (president Zygmunt Nissenbaum); donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration
- Israeli Gombiner Organization (“Vaad” secretary Rivka Aloni); donation for both projects; in memory of the Jewish community of Gombin
- Gombiner Young Men of New Jersey (president Raymond Boll); donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of the Gombin Holocaust victims
- Gombiner Young Men of New York (president Ben Kraut); donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of the Gombin Holocaust victims
- John and Sue Ballard, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of all those who were stricken by the Holocaust
- Rose Greenbaum-Dinerman, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of parents Jacob and Hena Greenbaum, brother Stanley, his wife Helena and their child Izic
- The Fajgenbaum and Lupu families, United States and Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of the Laks and Posner families
- Jack, Frances, Mark, Debbie Frankel, Suzanne and Bob Nathan, United States; donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of parents Isadore and Sosia; brothers Beniek, Moishe, Herszl, and Michael
- Jeremy Freedman, England; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration; in memory of Shmuel Zvi ben Yehuda Tiber (Harris Samuel Tibber) and his wife Feige Itta bat Yitzchak Tadelis Friedman (Fanny Tibber)
- Geoffrey Greenwood, England; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration; in memory of the Gordon family
- Michael Heller, England; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration; in memory of the Gordon family
- Ada Holtzman, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of my late beloved mother Riwcia Holcman nee Gostinska, born in Gombin 1914, died in Israel 1969
- Jacob and Wanda Spiewak, United States; donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of the Spiewak family
- Naomi, Anna and Leon Zamosc, United States; donation for both projects; on behalf of Izek Zamosc, in memory of the Holocaust victims of the Zamosc and Pioro families
- The Zolna family, United States; donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of Wolf Zolna, Ester Raca Zolna, Raca Tiber, Chuna Zolna, Jacob Zolna, Josef Meyer Zolna, Chana Zolna, and Frida Zolna

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Silver Donors

- Harold and Sarah Boll, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the Holocaust victims of the Boll and Woidislavsky families
- Henry, Steven, Michelle Frankel, United States; donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of parents Isadore and Sosia; brothers Beniek, Moishe, Herszl, and Michael
- Joan Freedman, England; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration; in memory of Shmuel Zvi ben Yehuda Tiber (Harris Samuel Tibber) and his wife Feige Itta bat Yitzchak Tadelis Friedman (Fanny Tibber)
- Lawrence Guyer, England; donation for both projects; in memory of all the deceased members of the Chaja (Guyer) family Martin and Sheila Guyer, United States; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration; in memory of Abram Guyer
- The Seideman and Intrator families, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the Zajdeman and Gelbert families
- Mindy and Robert Prosperi, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the Bigeleisen family
- Harold Rafel and family, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of Jetta and Samuel Rafel
- Adam, Michael and Steve Tadelis and Sara Shapiro, United States and Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of the Tadelis and Wolman families
- Jeffrey and Laurel Wruble, United States; donation for both projects; in honor of Melvin Wruble

BRONZE DONORS

- Rivka Aloni, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of parents Zanwil and Malka Gelbert, sister Lea and her husband Icchak Bauman and their daughters Cipora and Fella, and brother Moshe Gelbert, all perished in the Holocaust
- Elliot & Jane Ballen, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the Bigeleisen family
- Panina Ballen & Chris King, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the Bigeleisen family
- Sam & Ethel Ballen, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the Biegelaisen family
- Sandra Barnett, England; donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of the Zielonka family
- Sara Baumel, Israel; donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of parents Baruch and Channa Kukuridza, brother Arie and Dyna Kukuridza and their children, sister Miriam and Szimon Sanicki and their children
- Rebecca Bolnick, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of Rose Hellerman
- Channa Bruk, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of parents Eliahu and Rasza Holcman who died before the Holocaust in Gombin, five married brothers and two married sisters and their thirteen little children who perished in the Holocaust, most of them at Chelmno
- Gayle, Rose and Isadore Frankel, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the entire Jewish community of Gombin and especially Sam Frankel, a survivor of the Holocaust who was born in Gombin in 1922 and died in the U.S. in 1990
- Rose, Gayle and Isadore Frankel, United States; donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of Sam Frankel
- Ben and Evelyn (Guyer) George, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of Rissman family and Pinehas (Guyer) Chaja

ROLL OF DONORS

- Leon Green, United States; donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of Jaine and Jenta Greenberg
- Annete Gurian, United States; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration
- Ben Guyer, United States; donation for both projects
- Bernard Guyer, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of Sydney B. Guyer
- Cheryl and Dan Guyer, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of members of the Guyer family who perished in the Holocaust
- Clara Herbst, United States; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration; in memory of Max Green
- Alon Holtzman-Horowicz, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of great-grandmother Rasza Holcman and all the relatives who died before their time in the Holocaust
- Meir Holtzman, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of parents Eliahu and Rasza Holcman who died before the Holocaust in Gombin; five married brothers: Moshe Aharon, Josef, Abram, Hersz Lajzer, Israel Baruch ("Buczik") and two married sisters: Golda Itta and Fajga Frajdel, their spouses and their thirteen little children who perished in the Holocaust, most of them at Chelmno
- Seymour and Selma Jacowitz, United States; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration; in memory of Benjamin Jacowitz and Frances Jacowitz
- Channa Kaliczewski, nee Stern and Eliahu Stern, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of my beloved family: sister Golda of blessed memory, parents Mindel nee Holcman and Shaul Stern and syster Dyna, brother Icchak (Icze) his wife Lea and their children Sara and Mordechai who perished in the Nazi Holocaust
- Inbal Katz Holtzman, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of my ancestors' families from Gombin and Plock: Holcman, Gostinski, Stolcman, Honigstok, Zawirucha, Sannicki, Zlotnik, Lisser, Eibeszyc, Bauman, Lukseberg, Stern, Goldman, Tiber and Wojdeslawski
- Ross Knights, United States; donation for both projects; in the name of late Grossmutter Viola Ruth Koreb
- Mollie Kraut (Mrs. Max Kraut), United States; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration
- Mendel and Helen Laski, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the Laski family
- Helen Liebow, Philip and Fred Gerkin, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of Sylvia Gerkin and the Gurker and Sochacki families
- Yosef Lushynski, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of Nysen, Marjem, Icek, Frymet and Ester Luszyński
- Milton Manchyk, United States; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration; in memory of the Manchyk family
- Mary McCole-Blaukopf and Dan Blaukopf, United States; donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of Deborah R. Blaukopff and George C. McCole
- Ester and Moshe Nutkevich, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of father Rabbi Natan Neta Nutkewicz, God revenge his blood; mother the Rebetzen Raca Rajzel Nutkewicz nee Zolna, God revenge her blood; brother Mordechai Nutkewicz, God revenge his blood; grandfather Hersz Natan Zolna; grandmather Sara Ryfka Zolna; uncle Wolf Zolna his wife and children; aunt Lea nee Zolna and her husband Josef Holcman and their children; Dyna Zolna and her family
- Steven and Phyllis Rafel, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of Sam and Yetta Rafel
- Ester and Zvi Rigbi, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of Fajwel and Ciwia Borensztejn and their descendants

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Jackie and Jordan Roberts, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of David Burns
Marion Rosenfeld, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of Sam Ballen, first cousin
Marion Rosenfeld, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the Bigeleisen family
David Rothbart, United States; donation for both projects
Eleanor Rothbart Goldman and Jonathan Goldman, United States; donation for both projects; in memory
of all who perished prematurely
Ethel & Leon Rothberg, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the Bigeleisen family
Hyman and Anna Russak, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of Russak and Gayer
families
Gail and David Salomon, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of Nathan Weiss
Zisa Schwartz, Panama; donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; on behalf of Rachmil Schwartz;
in memory of Bajla Schwartz
Hania Shane, United States; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration; in memory of Noah, Jetta
Teifeld and family
Nancy Simon, United States; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration; in memory of Sol Simon
(Cimalinski), husband and father
Alex and Melissa Spiewak, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the Spiewak family
Anthony Stern, United States; donation for the Gombin Cemetery Restoration
Saul and Helen Tataraka, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of parents Rajzel and
Meyer, sisters Tobi and Rivka, brother Leib, grandmother Blima Guyer
Dikla and Itzhak Weicman, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of beloved parents Menachem
and Channa Weicman, sister Chaja Weicman, grandfather Lajbel Kerber and his brother Herszel
Kerber who perished in the Holocaust
Ruth Weiss, United States; donation for the Gombin Memorial at Chelmno; in memory of Nathan Weiss
Aaron Wejngrom, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of Dora Zieger nee Wejngrom and her
husband Jechiel and son Berele; Dora's father (Berisz) who was killed by the Bolshevik invaders in
Gombin, 1920; and the Frenkel family from Gombin who perished in the Holocaust
Ronald and Melanie Gould Wilensky, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of our par-
ents Lewis and Pearl W. Gould and Benjamin and Annette Wilensky
Bernard and Janice Winter, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of Jacob and Sadie
Winter
Ben and Sarah Gutman, United States; donation for both projects; in honor of Melvin Wruble
Emrick and Renee Mason, United States; donation for both projects; in honor of Melvin Wruble
Melvin Wruble, United States; donation for both projects
Solomon and Sonia Friedman, United States; donation for both projects; in honor of Melvin Wruble
Minna Zielonka-Packer and family, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of the Holo-
caust victims of Michael Zielonka's family: mother Dina Zielonka, father Shaya Ber, brother Chaim,
sister Minna and her baby Pesa
Zvi (Herman) Zielonka, Israel; donation for both projects; in memory of the family of Philip Zielonka
Fizel Ber
Burton Zisk, United States; donation for both projects; in memory of Herman Zisk and in honor of
Frieda Zisk

GOMBIN MEMORIAL MONUMENT AT CHELMNO: PROGRESS REPORT

by Leon Zamosc

All the details about the Gombin Society's project to dedicate a monument at Chelmno were published in B'nai Gombin's special report on the society's memorial initiatives in Poland (issue 6, February 1998). As our readers will recall, the project is being done with the assistance of the Konin Regional Museum, which is in charge of the Chelmno extermination camp site. Ms. Lucja Pawlicka-Nowak, the museum's director, has been very cooperative, responsive, and always consistent in all her contacts with us. While we have had to face and overcome a number of difficulties, we expect that the work on the monument will be completed before the end of the year. What follows is a brief summary of all the relevant developments.

Overcoming objections to the text in the plaques:

In Poland, erecting a monument is a complicated endeavor, requiring review and approval from several governmental institutions. All these approvals are being obtained for us by Ms. Pawlicka-Nowak. In March she informed us that the Polish Council for the Protection of the Memory of Struggles and Martyrdom objected to one of the lines in our memorial plaque (our allusion to the Valley of the Shadow of Death) and wanted to modify the text from Jeremiah that we quoted in the plaque (according to some official version of the Catholic Bible). After strong protest letters sent by Gombin Society directors from the United States, England and Israel, Ms. Pawlicka-Nowak wrote again reporting that the problem had been solved and the text approved without change.

Hebrew and Yiddish texts, design and construction:

Mr. Jan Rassumowski, the artist who designed and started the construction of the monument, needed Hebrew and Yiddish texts in original lettering with large-

sized literal print. GJHGS director Ada Holtzman prepared them in Israel and, during a short trip to Poland in early April, delivered them to the Konin Museum. Ms. Holtzman expected to review other details of design and construction, but she could not meet with the museum director and the artist. The matter was pursued by fax correspondence, until we received formal reassurance that all the details would conform to our desired specifications (use of bolts to fix the plaques, position of plaques and languages, position of monument relative to path, etc.).

Advance payment wired to Poland:

According to the contract, 60% of the monument cost would be paid in advance and the remaining 40% when the work is finished to our satisfaction (the total cost is \$10,000). When it became clear that the fundraising would meet the overall targets, the down payment was wired to the artist via a lawyer in Warsaw. In late June, Mr. Rassumowski confirmed that he had received the payment, sent us the final proofs of the plaque texts for approval, and announced that he intended to finish the work in September.

New architect to complete work by end of year:

In late August, museum director Ms. Pawlicka-Nowak informed us that Mr. Rassumowski had died unexpectedly and that his colleague and friend Mr. Stanislaw Mystek would continue and finish the construction of the Gombin memorial. She reassured us that the work would be completed as planned, but she also told us that she anticipated that the transfer of responsibility to Mr. Mystek would involve some delay. Taking this into account, we estimate that the Gombin Memorial Monument at Chelmno will be ready in November or early December, which implies that the dedication ceremony would have to be planned for the early Spring of 1999. We hope to be able to provide definitive details in the next issue of *B'nai Gombin*.

ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF THE “SUCCESSOR GENERATION”

given by Ada Holtzman
at the Holocaust Day Assembly
April 23, 1998

I am standing here today, a representative of the “successor generation”, a sabra born in Kibbutz Evron in Western Galilee, daughter of Rywcia and Meir Holcman from the town of Gombin in Poland, who lost 13 beloved cousins, 16 uncles and aunts, a grandfather and a grandmother and even a great-grandfather, Mosiek Gostinski, aged 80, whose life the Nazi butchers also didn’t spare. I am standing and tears are choking my throat and I swear I’ll never forget!

I remember, when I was a little girl, my mother of blessed memory, Rywcia, returned home all excited and agitated and for quite a while, nothing could calm her: “They caught Eichmann!” As far back as that, a mere kid, I realized that something terrible had happened to my family and to my people, and that it was fairly recently, not in some distant, mythical past, something that would leave its permanent imprint on my generation.

Part of the survivors are still alive, walk among us, plagued by nightmares and anxieties. The German criminals as well are still around in their prosperous villages in the “Other Germany”, enjoying their generous pensions, while their remnant victims walk around like shadows in our land, struggling for their rights and very survival.

Holocaust deniers pop up everywhere. The internet bristles with provocations and disgusting lies. In my travels to Poland I still encountered everywhere anti-Semitic graffiti, and the Star of David is again hanging from the gallows - and no one utters a word of protest. Therefore, before the story of the Shoa and the bitter

lessons to be learned from it are forgotten on some shelf of history books, before the last witness disappears from among us, we must not stop acting for the preservation of the memory. Because the future is concealed in the past and therefore we must do something about it..

We didn’t know and certainly didn’t understand the burden of sadness and pain weighing on my parents shoulders. A bleeding wound which never healed. They were a generation of pioneers, inspired by Zionist strives of building here their home, of creating a new, better society in our old-new homeland. A home for the Jewish nation and a more just society for man as a human being. It was a generation enthused with the idea of survival and building of the Jewish Land. Even the joy at the miracle of the State’s birth was tempered by the mourning, the bereavement, the unbearable pain which cannot and never will be relieved. That is how we grew up, always touched by pain, notwithstanding the reticence of our parents, who tried to protect us by hardly ever mentioning the tortures they had gone through.

We, who grew up in a free Jewish State, could not understand how six million souls could have been taken to the slaughterhouse. How the German nation, a nation of culture and poetry, a nation of music and philosophy, could have bred from among it a monster, embraced and worshipped it, followed it and turned into a nation of heinous murderers, engulfing a whole continent in blood, tears and infinite pain. How an entire country, Poland, could have been turned into a giant slaughterhouse, the killing fields, while the whole world just stood by... except for a handful of just Gentiles, the Righteous among the nations, whom we shall never forget either.

—continued next page

How the inhabitants of an entire town, the town of Gombin, women and men, oldsters and children, were rounded up for three days and nights in the fire brigade square, without food and water, than with blows and pistol shots were pushed into satanic gas vans, cries "Shema Yisroel", darkness... The brain does not grasp and the heart refuses to believe. Were the murderers, too, born of mothers? How will we ever be able to understand? How could we ever have visualized such total destruction? It is simply impossible. But may be we can visualize lovely Channale and Perla, Eli, Andzja and Szajna, Channa, Eli, Hela and Channa, Elja-Chaim Rutka Bajla and Perla... We see them clearly among the tears... They were all my cousins, little B'nai Gombin... They were all my generation, innocent children without graves and their ashes are scattered in the fields of Chelmno, Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek, Stutthof, Bergen Belsen, Belzec... floating in the rivers of Poland restless, without a tomb, filling the endless mass graves hidden in the forests of that land.

And what was their guilt? That they were born Jews. That is the lesson we should never forget! There, on that other planet, only about fifty years ago, they did not distinguish between left and right, between secular and observant, between the chassidim and the people of the intelligentsia, between folks from Saloniki or from Lodz, between the simple man and the great rabbi, between the Zionist Khalutz or the Bund activist, between the Betar members or Ha'Shomer Ha'tzair socialists...

There, everybody with Jewish blood in his veins shared a common fate. Therefore now, after 2000 years of exile, now that we have a country of our own; now, when in about a week's time we'll celebrate the State's 50th birthday, let's unite and work together and jointly in all fields of society and culture. Let's remember on what foundation the Jewish State was established and what a horrible price we paid for our independence. Let's guard this state like the apple of our eye. We haven't got another country and let's always remember how bitter was our fate when we didn't have a

state. Let's avoid internal quarrels and destructive struggles. Let's fight extremism and racism in all their forms and let's develop equality of rights for the minorities and the weak among us.

We are met here today in order to observe a ceremony of communion and remembrance, but a one survivor once said on the radio - "What we need is not one day to remember, but one day to forget..."

From this stage I appeal to spare no effort for commemoration of the Holocaust and its victims: to learn and to teach, to act and to activate, to listen and make your voice heard, to be careful and to warn, to cry out and to alert, to remember and to remind ...

No one else will do it for us. This is our duty and also our right, we the successor generation, we who were born with a burden of sadness and pain on our shoulders. We are the vengeance and our children are the consolation...

We won't forgive and we won't forget!

WANT BACK ISSUES?

If you would like to receive back issues of *B'nai Gombin*, send your request to the following address:

Noam Lupu
Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 503052
San Diego, CA 92150

GOD HID HIS FACE: POWERFUL WORDS FROM GOMBINER RAJZEL ZYCHLINSKY

by Noam Lupu

*All the roads led to death,
all the roads.
All the winds breathed betrayal,
all the winds.
At all the doorways angry dogs barked,
at all the doorways.
All the waters laughed at us,
all the waters.
All the nights fattened on our dread,
all the nights.
And the heavens were bare and empty,
all the heavens.
God hid His face.*

Over a year ago, in the Spring 1997 issue of *B'nai Gombin*, we published a translation of a Yiddish poem we had found by the Gombiner poet Rajzel Zychlinsky. The poem, officially translated as "I Want to Walk Here Once More," was dedicated to the Gombiner Holocaust victims who died in the Chelmno gas chambers in 1942. Using images of the natural beauty of her hometown Gombin and of the horrors of her last experiences there, Zychlinsky portrays at one a remorseful anger with her town and a nostalgia for its past.

At that time we did not know that Zychlinsky had just published a new collection of her work in California, where she today resides. Her son, who lives in Berkeley, was one of the translators of her poetry from its original Yiddish. When I spoke to the publisher of the book, he gave me some background information about Zychlinsky's life and career.

Rajzel Zychlinsky was born on July 27, 1910. Her father, a tanner by trade, emigrated alone to Chicago,

where he died in 1928. Her mother and siblings remained in Gombin until their deportation to Chelmno. Zychlinsky, who in 1939 lived in Warsaw with her husband Isaac Kanter and had already published her first volume of Yiddish poems three years prior, fled to Russia, where their son Marek was born in 1943. After the war, the couple and their son returned to Poland and then moved to France and subsequently to the United States in 1951.

Between 1936 and 1993, Zychlinsky published seven volumes of Yiddish poetry. Her work has been translated into German for the book *Bread for Birds* published in Leipzig and into English for Aaron Kramer's anthology *A Century of Yiddish Poetry*. She was awarded the Itsik Manger prize in Israel in 1975.

God Hid His Face is Zychlinsky's most recent volume, containing various poems from past collections. Through her poetry, she captures and conveys the sensuality and impact of enclosed and hidden aspects of human life. Drawing from her experiences in her childhood in Gombin, during the Holocaust and as a survivor, Zychlinsky provides a view into the depths of her own nostalgia and longing for a past stolen from her.

Emanuel S. Goldsmith, Professor of Yiddish Language and Literature in Queens College, writes of Zychlinsky in his introductory essay: "When one reads her poems, one is convinced that only poets can rescue this most tragic episode in the life of the Jewish people from the jaws of meaninglessness and absurdity."

God Hid His Face may be purchased from its publisher for \$19.95 in hardcover at:

Word & Quill Press
1275 Fourth Street, Suite 247
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

LETTERS, ETC.

NEW MEMBER: YEHOShUA WITT

I have returned from Gombin. Greetings from Mr. Lukaszewsky. I am the grandson of Toby Karo, born in Gombin in 1901. I have now seen the original registration in the old book. Her father, mother and siblings are also recorded, as well as at least one of her grandparents Boruch Karo. My cousins are Tecktiel, the family of Frieda Karo, born in Gombin in 1902, also recorded in the old registry book. My great grandmothers family are the Wispe's of Gombin, some of whom I have heard survived. I have not yet met them.

Is there a way of looking at the list of members from the old Gombiner Lansdmanshaft from Chicago and New York? For my family of course. My great uncle Hirsh Karo or Caro, is mentioned a number of times in the Gombin Yizkor Book.

While I was in Poland, I attended a gathering of survivors from Piotrkow with their children and grandchildren. They have put monuments and plaques in five different locations in Piotrrrkov. It was incredible and very moving.

I have pictures of the cemetery from 1936 which include the old wall!!! I was in Gombin and doing research in 1989 and 90, but I did not know about any of you until about three weeks ago.

Best regards *Shana Tova U'metuka*,

Yehoshua Witt
14 Mishkanot
Jerusalem 94306

GOMBINERS IN THE KONIN UPRISING

“Toward the end of July Moshe Aaronson [a rabbi who kept a diary of events and list of deportees in Konin] wrote his last entry: ‘Yesterday the Gestapo men came and made a list. The signs are the same as they were last year for those taken to the valley of the shadow of death at Chelmnno. We all have the impression that they will soon come to take us. Our question

is whether we are finished and about to perish. But our own wills are as naught before the will of the Most High, the True Judge.’

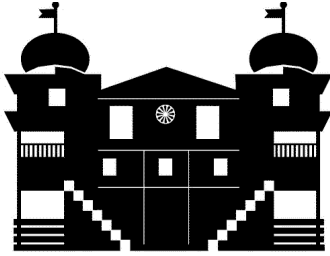
After the war, a survivor, Shmulek Mottel, wrote his own account of the camp's last days, published in the [Konin] Memorial Book: ‘On August 7, 1943, the Gestapo returned and we understood immediately that there was to be another “selection.” We knew well enough what this meant. It meant yet more torture, suffering, and death. We decided not to allow ourselves to be led like sheep to the slaughter, and that as the last choice open to us — if it were to become clear that the end was near and that we were to be martyred as Jews — we would join together to destroy the camp by fire.

On August 9, the uprising broke out. [This date is almost certainly a mistake; there is evidence to suggest that the uprising occurred on August 13.] Tabacznski and Kleinot from Gostynin, and Kamlazh from Gombin set fire to the sheds and hanged themselves in the blaze. In the main barracks, Seif from Gostynin and Philip from Gombin hanged themselves. The same fate befell Nusenowicz and Shlomo Michelski from Gostynin and Dr. Knopf, a Jew from Germany.

The bloody nightmare of that event will stay with me all my life... After firemen put out the blaze, we miraculously stayed alive, surrounded by a strong guard. The Germans ordered us to drag out all the dead, the burnt, and the hanged, and asked me and an elderly Jew from Gombin to deal with the corpses...

The bloody specter of those hard days in the Konin camp whirls around in my head like a demon, wherever I look or turn. The tragic occurrences made a powerful impression on the people of Konin. We, the fortunate survivors, stood with bowed heads before our heroes who would not allow the name Jew to be shamed.”

from Theo Richmond's *Konin*



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