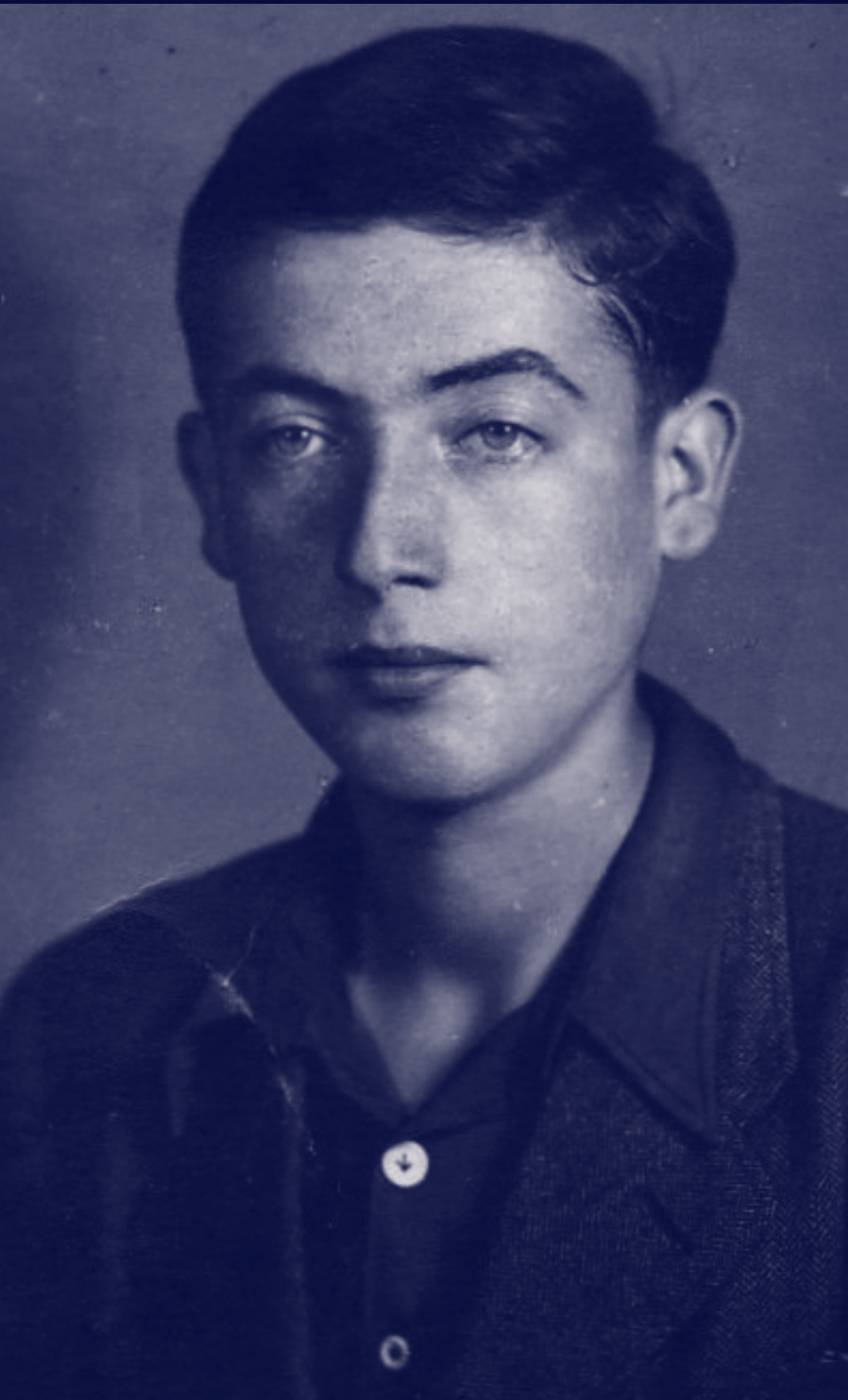


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Moshe's Story

COMING OF AGE DURING THE HOLOCAUST — COMING OF AGE NOW



STUDENT WORKBOOK

MY NAME:

Chapter Three

IN APRIL 1940 THE NAZIS ESTABLISHED a ghetto in Brzeziny. Moshe's home was already inside the designated ghetto area so the Goldfeiers didn't have to move, but family members from other parts of town were soon forced to join them and the conditions were difficult for everyone. The apartment quickly became cramped. Disease was rampant, especially during the warm summer months, and food was scarce. Moshe and his sister had to find jobs in order to receive food rations. Moshe finally found work making uniforms for the German army. At age 13, he was the eldest male in the family and took on responsibility for supporting the family's needs.

THINK AND WRITE: What is your daily schedule like? Do you have any responsibilities to help support your family? How do you feel about this?

Mrs. Goldfeier decided that, despite the terrible conditions and great danger, Moshe must have a bar mitzvah in the ghetto. She did everything she could to make this happen, finding a teacher, gathering a *minyán* together in secret, and even obtaining a Torah for the service. The ceremony took place quietly, in a tailor shop.

▶▶ WATCH AND LISTEN: "BAR MITZVAH IN THE TAILOR SHOP"

THINK AND WRITE: Why did Mrs. Goldfeier want her son to have a bar mitzvah despite the serious dangers? What is the meaning of your bar or bat mitzvah to you and your family?

FOR YOUR RESEARCH: How is Moshe's bar mitzvah in the ghetto an act of resistance against the Nazis? Find out more about spiritual resistance during the Holocaust and describe some other examples.

Moshe and his family tried to cope with their difficult situation, but the Nazis began to make life even more unbearable. Jews were told to report to a gathering place and were then taken away, their destination unknown. Many times, they took away the elderly or the sick. One day, the Nazis made an announcement to bring all the small children to the town square. Fearing the entire family could be punished if she refused to comply, Moshe's mother brought two-year-old Leonek to the gathering area. She returned two days later, without him. No one knew where those who were taken were sent, but it was clear from Mrs. Goldfeier's stunned and broken expression that she had no hope that Leonek would survive.

FOR YOUR RESEARCH: Leonek was only a small child when he was taken away from his family. How many children perished in the Holocaust? Why would the Nazis target innocent children?

In May 1942 the Brzeziny Ghetto was **liquidated**. The members of the Goldfeier family managed to pack a few of their belongings and were then forced to walk three kilometers to the train station, where the Nazis loaded them onto a train heading to the Lodz Ghetto. Moshe's uncle and cousin volunteered to remain in Brzeziny along with three hundred others to clean up the ghetto now that it was empty. Moshe considered staying with his uncle and cousin, but Mrs. Goldfeier insisted that he leave with her. After the war, Moshe

found out that the Nazis killed all three hundred men after they cleaned up the ghetto, burying them in a mass grave outside the town.

THINK AND WRITE: Many of the men, women, and children who were murdered during the Holocaust were buried in mass graves, where no markers can be found to identify them as individuals. How can we honor and remember those whose gravesites cannot be identified?

When they arrived in the Lodz Ghetto, the Goldfeier family found a two-room apartment. Moshe and his sister found work in a leather workshop, where they made saddles and suspenders for the German army, and their mother found a job in a soup kitchen. The head of the *Judenrat*, whose name was **Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski**, promised the ghetto inhabitants that if they were productive they would be able to continue living in the ghetto. There were frequent **deportations** from the ghetto

during 1942 and 1943, and everyone was afraid. Each time they rounded up people for a deportation, Moshe's brother Berek would hide in a cut-out wall space behind a cabinet.

In the summer of 1944, the final liquidation of the Lodz Ghetto began. Moshe and his family were able to elude deportation until they were placed on one of the very last **transports** in September. No one knew where they were going as they were all herded onto the **cattle cars**.

▶▶ **WATCH AND LISTEN: "DEPORTATION"**

FOR YOUR RESEARCH: Over the entrance to Auschwitz was the sign, "*Arbeit Macht Frei*." What does this mean? Why did the Nazis put this sign at the entrance to Auschwitz?