

Jewish Life in the Shadow of Destruction

Yitzchak Mais

Current awareness of the Holocaust stands in marked contrast to that of the early postwar decades, which witnessed—with some notable exceptions—a “strange silence” shrouding the Holocaust, in both Jewish communities and the academic world.¹ In the last three decades, however, in addition to the creation of Holocaust museums and memorials around the world, there has been an unparalleled explosion of creative and intellectual activity aimed at dealing with this unique catastrophe. These activities range from popular TV dramas, movies, plays, and fiction to art exhibitions and concerts, along with an expanding body of scholarly research and publications in such diverse fields as history, literature, philosophy, and psychology. Six decades after the end of World War II, the Holocaust is recognized as a watershed event with ramifications of critical significance for Jews and non-Jews alike.

Unfortunately, both popular and scholarly works dealing with the Holocaust routinely highlight the Nazi process of persecution that ultimately ended in the brutal murder of the Jews. Scant attention is paid to Jewish life in Europe before the Nazi assault. Thus we know the Jews primarily as victims, with little knowledge of who they were. We learn little about their family life, their communities, their languages, and their views of their world and future before the war. Nor do we know how they responded to the unimaginable assault on their lives and their families. Regrettably, Jews under German domination are often depicted as passive objects—faceless extras in the drama of their own destruction.²

A disturbing consequence of this lack of knowledge is that often, in very subtle ways, Jews themselves are blamed for being victims.³ The questions people ask often imply guilt. The Holocaust author and survivor Primo Levi observed: “Among the questions that are put to us [survivors] there is one that is never absent: Indeed, as the years go by, it is formulated with ever increasing persistence, and with an ever less hidden accent of accusation. More than a single question, it is a family of questions. ‘Why did you not escape? Why did you not rebel? Why did you not avoid capture beforehand?’”⁴ These queries imply that the victims could have acted differently, and that by not doing so, they were somehow “wrong,” or even worse, might be somehow responsible for their own demise.⁵

This widespread depiction of Jews as innocent but passive victims presents a fundamentally skewed picture of what was a far more complex and nuanced situation, and prevents people from viewing the behavior of Jews during the Holocaust in a positive light.

There is a need, therefore, to present the often-ignored Jewish dimension of the Holocaust. Doing so will help audiences get inside the heads of the threatened Jews, so they can understand not only how Jews perceived and reacted to changing Nazi policies but how they understood the implications of these policies. A more complete perspective will reveal that Jews were not passive victims, but active agents who responded with a surprisingly wide range of resourceful actions. Such a presentation is the objective of both this volume and the exhibition that inspired it.

The presentation of the Jewish perspective, as opposed to the Nazi perspective, requires us to suspend our historical hindsight. Although we know that the Nazis carried out a systematic assault on the Jews that culminated in mass murder, Jews at the time did not know this. The unprecedented nature of the murderous anti-Jewish policies made it nearly impossible for Jews to understand their impending destruction.

Visitors to our exhibition will be challenged to re-evaluate their understanding of what constitutes resistance. While we consciously offer no rigid definition of what comprises Jewish resistance, we have organized our presentation around four categories of responses that reflect the intentions—and often the results—of the actions of a multitude of Jews who attempted to defy the Nazis. These four types of resistance occurred in all areas of Nazi domination and are an adaptation of the categories suggested by the Swiss historian, Werner Rings, in his important research on how European peoples responded to German occupation.⁶

Rings' four categories are Symbolic and Personal Resistance—attempts to preserve individual dignity, Jewish identity, and Jewish continuity; Polemic Resistance—attempts to compile and spread the news of Nazi brutalities to Jews in occupied Europe and also the free world; Defensive Resistance—attempts to aid and protect Jews; and Offensive and Armed Resistance, spontaneous acts of revenge and organized armed efforts against the Nazis and their collaborators.

Our goal is to demonstrate that there was no single response but rather a *multitude* of reactions intended to defy German plans to dehumanize Jews and destroy Judaism. Our “typology of resistance” outlines the diverse Jewish responses, but importantly, without establishing a hierarchy of merit.

Although most Jews fell victim to Nazi brutality, they did, not, as a rule, give in to demoralization or moral collapse, thus refuting the prevalent stereotype: True the Jews were slaughtered, but clearly not like sheep! The tragic fate of the Jews demands empathy and commemoration; the dignity and strength exhibited by both victims and survivors in the face of unprecedented violence requires recognition and demands respect. For Jewish audiences, there is a particular need to understand the diversity of Jewish defiance.

Yehuda Bauer, the noted Israeli Holocaust historian, highlighted this relevancy: “A Jew seeking to understand what his Jewishness means must take into account his people’s greatest catastrophe. He must ask himself, for example: How did the values and attitudes to which I am heir stand up under the most terrible test in history? If Jews were able to face the Nazi terror in one way or another, is it because something in their tradition, culture or history helped them, or did their particular tradition have nothing to do with it? Is there something that I as a Jew should remember and which I should warn Jews and others, lest a similar fate befall them?”⁷

A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE ON THE HOLOCAUST

David Engel’s essay “Resisting in Jewish Time” (p. 10) argues that a Jewish perspective on the periodization of the Holocaust will complement the traditional approach that divides the Holocaust into stages using milestones defined by the actions of the Nazis.⁸ A central theme in our Jewish-centered narrative is the evolution of Jewish responses to the various Nazi policies devised against them. To illustrate this evolution we have developed four thematic periods: **Responding to the Nazi Rise to Power; Resisting Occupation; Resisting Deportation; and Resisting Mass Murder.**

Responding to the Nazi Rise to Power

In general, the initial Jewish reaction to Nazi anti-Jewish measures, on both the individual and communal level, was an attempt to lead normal lives. This striving for normalcy can be seen in numerous initiatives undertaken by leaders of the Jewish community, by Jewish organizations, and by individual Jews, all of whom responded to what they believed was a brutal—but temporary—situation. This range of activities addressed the material and spiritual needs of the persecuted Jews, reflecting the resourcefulness and vitality of the Jewish community as well as its desire to frustrate the aims of the Nazis and their collaborators.

This active opposition to an increasingly hostile environment began in Germany in 1933 shortly after Hitler's rise to power. It included creating alternative activities and organizations for Jews to replace those from which they were excluded. A major achievement was uniting the often-conflicting ideological groups under a single umbrella organization, Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden (Reich Representation of German Jews). Led by Rabbi Leo Baeck, this official representative body was formed in September 1933 and served as a much-needed liaison with the hostile Nazi government as well as a source of material aid, education, and emigration assistance for its Jewish constituents.

That same year also witnessed the creation of the Kulturbund (Cultural Union of German Jews), which allowed Jewish artists and audiences, who had been excluded from public cultural life, to continue their cultural activities in newly organized theaters and orchestras throughout Germany. As a reaction to their exclusion from the general Winter Relief programs in 1935, Jews established their own Winterhilfe (Winter Relief), which aided and supported many impoverished Jews who, for the first time, needed to receive welfare. Finally, throughout this period, the Jewish community initiated practical alternatives for banned Jews in a variety of disciplines (medicine, law, education, sports), allowing them—at least for a time—to pursue their interests and their profession after being “legally” excluded by the regime.

There were also a number of attempts to confront and reduce Nazi persecution and discrimination. Jews undertook legal actions in the courts, and attempted to sway public opinion. An extraordinary legal initiative was the Bernheim Petition, which challenged the legality of Nazi anti-Jewish laws within the areas of former Poland that had been annexed to Germany. Backed by Jewish organizations, Franz Bernheim filed a complaint against the German government in the League of Nations (the predecessor to the UN) in May 1933. Remarkably, the League, which supervised this area, upheld the grievance. Germany was forced to retract its laws and, until 1937, stop discriminating against Jews in Upper Silesia.

Clandestine political groups opposing the Nazi regime counted among their members an unusually high number of Jewish activists, including those who

Jews were not passive victims, but active agents who responded with a surprisingly wide range of resourceful actions.

made up the Jewish-organized Baum Group. Jewish political activity dramatically increased, especially among the various Zionist movements, which escalated their social, educational, and political activities, allowing desperate Jewish youth an opportunity for positive self-expression, and sustaining their hopes for emigration to Palestine.

Jewish religious institutions became a haven for those rejected by German society by intensifying their educational and outreach programs to all members of the Jewish community. The law banning *shechitah* (kosher butchering) in April 1933 was successfully evaded by a few dedicated individuals, who continued to perform kosher slaughtering clandestinely throughout the 1930's despite the threat of severe punishment.⁹

Jews were forced to decide whether to stay and “ride out the storm” or to leave. But options for those who wanted to leave were limited, since countries like the United States, Great Britain, and British-controlled Palestine refused to revise their strict quota system to admit more Jewish refugees. Many Jews had to rely on their ingenuity and courage. The fact that thousands escaped to Shanghai, the Dominican Republic, and other countries with unfamiliar cultures indicates their determination and desperation. We can empathize with parents who were faced with the choice of letting their children go on their own to Palestine, via Youth Aliyah or, after *Kristallnacht*, on *Kindertransports* to England. Parents had to struggle with their deepest fears of never seeing their children again.

Avraham Barkai, a noted researcher, observed that the manifold initiatives undertaken by the German Jewish community were “an important expression of its solidarity, cohesiveness, and the collective will to resist the ever more hostile environment.”¹⁰

Resisting Occupation

It can be said that individuals and communities base their expectations for the future on their experience of the past. In many lands occupied by the Nazis—Poland, Lithuania, and the Ukraine in particular—many Jews were influenced (and tragically misled) by memories of the benevolent German occupation of World War I, considered a vast improvement over life under the brutal Czarist regime that it replaced. Although Jews in Western Europe feared a German invasion, they were confident that their generally successful integration into society would result in their protection by local authorities. Moreover, they believed that their non-Jewish neighbors would not abandon them.

Occupation occurred in different countries at different times between 1939 and 1944¹¹ and had different effects. The attempt to isolate Jews was universal, but isolation could range from discriminatory laws to the requirement for Jews to wear the yellow star to forced concentration in sealed ghettos. For the most part, Jews recognized the occupation as a difficult but not unusual hardship of a wartime regime.

This resigned recognition was especially true among Jews who confronted hellish conditions in the ghettos

of Eastern Europe. It is important to understand life in the ghetto the way imprisoned Jews experienced it, and crucial to consider it from their perspective and within the context of their understanding of the future. Unaware of their impending fate, Jews approached life in the ghettos on its own terms and not simply, as it is generally perceived today, as a way station to the death camps.

Almost without exception, we note that Jews in sealed ghettos, as well as those living throughout occupied Europe, strongly believed that the forces of good would ultimately triumph over the forces of evil, and that the Allies would eventually defeat Germany and her collaborators. Hence, Jews developed the deep conviction that, just as they had repeatedly been saved from enemies who sought to destroy them throughout their long history, so would they ultimately be rescued from the Nazis. Although large numbers of Jews would surely perish, the majority optimistically believed that it was possible for many, especially the productive, to hold out and survive their oppressors—a conviction known in Yiddish as *iberleben* (to survive and outlast).

Jews, therefore, viewed occupation as an existential challenge that required them to look to their long tradition of autonomous Jewish communal life and to

Jews Defeat Nazis in an International Court of Law: The Bernheim Petition

"All the News That's Fit to Print."

The New York Times.

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LATE CITY EDITION
POSTSCRIPT
WEATHER—Fair and continued warm today; showers tonight. Temperatures Yesterday—Max., 83; Min., 64

L. LXXXII...No. 27,528.
Entered as Second-Class Matter, Postoffice, New York, N. Y.
NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 1933.
P
TWO CENTS In New York | THREE CENTS Elsewhere Except City. | Within 200 Miles | FOUR CENTS Elsewhere Except City.

BERNHEIM VOTE AUTO TAX CITY WIDE FIGHT BEGINS; LEGALITY IS CHALLENGED

APPROVED 52 TO 2

in Charges Mayor's Fact That Levy Not for Relief.

TOLLS INCLUDED

t Rise in Maximum to Accompany 5-Cent Riff on Taxi Rides.

GROUPS PLAN SUITS

of Like Law in Buffalo's Attack—Industries Fear Grave Losses.

ote of 52 to 2 the Board of passed the Municipal As-bill providing for raising 30 in new revenue from

SENATORS TO DELVE INTO MORGAN TAXES; PRESSED BY GLASS

Virginian Cites Challenge to Authority—Committee Moves to Ask New Power.

ROADS LINKED TO BANKERS

Pecora Tries to Get Answers From O. P. Van Sweringen, Who Forgets Borrowing.

THEY CLASH, BOTH ANGRY

Inquiry Centres on Purchases of Equipment After Control of Lines Was Financed.

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
WASHINGTON, June 6.—A searching inquiry into the income-tax records of J. P. Morgan and his score of partners was virtually decided upon today by the Senate committee which has been delving into the operations of the banking firm. The decision preceded a day of further investigation in which Ferdinand Pecora, counsel for the committee, sought to tie the House of Morgan up with the control of the Van Sweringen railroads. The question of Morgan taxes—

Mattern Flies for Chita; Tells of the Trip to Omsk

Ice on Wings Caused World Flier to Dive 6,000 Feet Over Ocean, He Reveals—Broken Strut Puts Him Behind Post and Gatty Record.

James Mattern, the Texan who is flying around the world from New York, is reported by The Associated Press to have left Omsk, Siberia, for Chita, Siberia, at 6:10 P. M. yesterday, Eastern Daylight Time. He was then ten and a half hours behind the time at this point of Wiley Post and Harold Gatty, whose record he is trying to beat.

By JAMES MATTERN.
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OMSK, Siberia, June 6.—I arrived from Moscow at Omsk this afternoon, feeling fine, and rested and am ready to go on to Chita.

I have had adverse weather and wind conditions on each leg of the flight. The New York to Oslo hop was hard on me. I collected ice four times over the ocean.

A 6,000-foot dive was made with ice on my wings. A wing cracked. I had to fly blind 200 feet above the ocean to get warm air. The only way to get through was to turn North.

The elapsed time from New York to Oslo was twenty-three hours. The motor was running great.

I had three hours' rest in Norway and repaired the wing that had cracked in the middle of the ocean.

I had four hours of blind flying across the Baltic Sea to Moscow. I have been eating nothing but oranges that I carried from New York. I am not getting fuel out of my fuselage tanks.

After my arrival in Moscow I had three hours' sleep and worked the rest of the night on the ship. On the Moscow to Omsk flight

everything went well. Most of the way, however, I had to fight headwinds.

I crossed the Ural Mountains and took the direct airline over the flat steppes. The temperature changes have been terrific, ranging from zero to 100 degrees.

I was very tired when I arrived at Omsk and slept on the ground beside the ship. They awakened me at intervals for refueling instructions. I got three hours of sleep and am now feeling fit and ready for the next lap.

JIMMIE MATTERN.

By The Associated Press.
OMSK, Siberia, Wednesday, June 7.—James Mattern, American round-the-world flyer, took off toward Chita, Siberia, 1,700 miles east of here, at 1:10 A. M. Moscow Time (6:10 P. M. Tuesday, Eastern Daylight Time).

At the take-off the Texas pilot was ten hours and forty-one minutes behind the time set by Wiley Post and Harold Gatty when they set the world-girdling record of

Continued on Page Three.

NAZI REGIME YIELDS ON JEWS IN SILESIA; WILL MODIFY LAWS

Allows League Council to Make Binding Report That Reich Recently Rejected.

TO END TREATY VIOLATIONS

But Berlin Has Not Agreed to Revoke All Anti-Jewish Measures in Province.

GIVING IN ON OLYMPICS

Resolution Expected to Be Adopted by Committee Today Assuring the Rights of Jews.

By CLARENCE K. STREIT.

Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
GENEVA, June 6.—By abstaining from voting, the German Government allowed the Council of the League of Nations this morning to adopt in a binding way the report of Sean Lester holding that the application of anti-Semitic measures in Upper Silesia complained of in the petition of Franz Bernheim violated the convention for the pro-

ROOSEVELT MODIFIES CUTS IN VETERAN ALLOWANCES, BUT FAILS TO WIN HOUSE

American Protest to Bolivia On War Damage Is Reported

By The Associated Press.
WASHINGTON, June 6.—Reports that Bolivia was prepared to make material restitution for damage done American-owned property at Puerto Casado by Chaco war-bombing planes were received here today from unofficial sources.

Bolivia, it was said, had informed the United States Minister in La Paz the bombing was justified by military necessity in her war with Paraguay.

The United States was understood to have protested the bombing, which took place on April 27, through its legation at La Paz after the International Products Company of New York and American residents had complained.

The Bolivian Government is said to consider the area of military importance in the war with Paraguay but to be prepared to negotiate a settlement of private claims of Americans.

SHORTER WEEK AIM OF INDUSTRY BILL

SLASHES HELD TO 25

But Order Covers On Direct Service Cases—Cost Is \$60,000,000.

REBELS FOR SENATE PL

This, Including 'Presumptive Disabilities, Would Erase \$170,000,000 Savings.

OFFICES BILL IS HELD U

Leaders Study Parliamentary Strategy to Bar Reversal for the Administration.

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
WASHINGTON, June 6.—A compromise move by the President today to modify veterans' pension

engage in activities to confront and frustrate their tormentors. They provided services that were normally supplied by municipal authorities and now were administered by the Jewish Councils, such as housing allocations, food distribution, employment, sanitation, health services, refugee shelters, schools, and religious services. Other organizations, like the House Committees in Warsaw, which often operated in opposition to the Jewish Councils, instituted a wide range of voluntary welfare and social services to combat starvation, demoralization, and rampant epidemics.

A particular challenge facing the Jews was the need to maintain morale in the ghettos. Social and cultural activities were initiated by prewar political parties like the Bund, the Zionists, and the Socialists. The various Zionist youth movements played an especially critical role in sustaining and nurturing ghetto youth, both physically through their soup kitchens and spiritually through their educational and social initiatives (p.80). Rabbis led religious activities, often clandestinely. The numerous cultural activities, which ranged from theater productions and concerts to art exhibitions and literary evenings, were clear evidence of an untrammelled spirit and the desire to live in the fullest sense of the word.

There were also many examples of underground activities, including the daring work of the women couriers, who risked their lives disseminating and receiving information from the isolated Jewish communities throughout Europe; the publication and distribution of illegal underground newspapers to inform the population of the true nature of German policies; the establishment of clandestine archives to document the events for posterity; and the extremely dangerous acts of smuggling food into the ghetto by children.

Lucy Dawidowicz, the historian, provides a moving summary of Jewish defiance in the ghettos: "Despite the attempts by the Germans to impose a state of barbarism upon them, the Jews persisted in maintaining or in re-creating their organized society and their culture. The milieu in which the Germans confined them was a state of war or condition of insecurity.... Nevertheless, in nearly all the ghettos, the Jews conspired against the Germans to provide themselves with arts, letters, and society—above all, with the protection of the community against man's solitariness and brutishness. Never was human life suspended."¹²

Resisting Deportation

In considering the Jewish responses to mass deportations, one thing must be remembered: Although we know today that Nazi trains led to Auschwitz and other killing sites, Jews, at the time, did not. It is important to distinguish between the early deportations of Jews from their towns to larger cities, other provinces and even other countries, which resulted in actual resettlement, not murder, and the later deportations of Jews to the death camps. The precedent of the early deportations made Jews more susceptible to deceptive tactics later when the Final Solution was actually implemented.¹³ Most Jews were taken in by Nazi deceptions, and accepted the claim of "resettlement in the East" as "reasonable" and consistent with the Nazi policy of forced population transfers. Many Jews were disarmed by the German use of terror and deception, as well as by their own inability to imagine what was truly unimaginable.

Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, ghettos were established in some of the major Jewish population centers in the German-occupied Soviet territories. These included Vilna, Kovno, Riga, and Lvov. In contrast to those established in Poland prior to June 1941, these ghettos were created in the wake of the mass shootings carried out by mobile killing units and local collaborators. Jewish responses in these new ghettos were similar to the acts of defiance that took place in the Polish ghettos, as we have described previously. Life continued, but under the heavy shadow cast by mass shootings and accompanied by an intensifying sense of isolation. Menacing rumors of deportations added to the burden of a constantly deteriorating situation in which life was impossibly hard and fraught with hunger, disease, and the imminent prospect of death.

Some Jews, particularly those active in the Bundist and Zionist youth movements, as well as a few political activists in the ghettos, began to perceive the possibility of a shift in anti-Jewish policies. The omens of a radical new reality—seen in random mass shootings and deportations—led to a deepening sense of vulnerability and uncertainty.

But new questions and options also arose: How does one evaluate Nazi occupation, now compounded with random mass shootings? Is cooperation or defiance the best way to ensure survival of the community and

The public will be challenged to reevaluate their understanding of what constitutes resistance.

individuals? Should Jews obey orders for “resettlement in the East,” or should they try to go into hiding, or escape to the forests? When childbearing is banned, is it better to try and perpetuate the Jewish community—or is it wrong to bring a child into the world? How can your contact with the outside world—the need for spreading the news, getting the news, and seeking aid—be maintained, and will the world respond? Is it better to work for the Nazis and survive by being useful, or is it wrong to aid the enemy?

In the variety of responses taken by the desperate Jews, one finds no single answer, no single reaction—only “choicelss choices.” Jews everywhere confronted impossible dilemmas and obstacles without being certain that the course of action they chose would ultimately result in saving their lives. Yet, even in this context, they acted.

Women couriers smuggled clandestine reports of massacres in the recently occupied former Soviet territories. These reports reached various political movements in the Polish ghettos and were disseminated via underground press to ghetto inhabitants. But the overwhelming majority refused to believe that *all* Jews were slated to be killed. Their continuing belief in *iberleben*—that rescue and survival were still possible for many Jews—prompted them to vehemently oppose the idea of armed resistance.

While small groups of young people began planning for armed activities against the Nazis, the majority of Jews in ghettos continued their previous patterns of confronting Nazi persecution. In Warsaw, only toward the conclusion of mass deportations and near decimation of the ghetto in the fall of 1942, did the few remaining Jews accept the option of armed revolt and support

the young activists. In Vilna, on the other hand, the underground never received the support of the ghetto population and was forced to escape to the forests to carry out armed resistance (p. 108).

The onset of deportations from Western Europe to the “East” in the spring and summer of 1942 also raised deep concerns about the appropriate response to the Nazi onslaught. There was an urgency to identify options for survival: Some Jews, like the family of Anne Frank, went into hiding; some were smuggled from France into neutral countries. But only a limited number of Jews had the contacts and financial means to either hide or escape.

In Eastern and Western Europe, the option of armed resistance was often dependent on the ability of Jews to receive material support from national underground movements. But members of these movements operated from a different perspective and timetable. Non-Jewish resisters wanted to delay their armed uprisings until the German forces were seriously weakened. Jews did not have the luxury of waiting while the killing process intensified and their communities were threatened with imminent annihilation.

Yet in Belgium the circumstances demanded independent Jewish armed action. On July 31, 1942, an underground Jewish group destroyed files from Belgium’s Jewish Council in order to sabotage deportations and, on April 19, 1943, resistance fighters in Tirlemont stopped a deportation train headed for Auschwitz and freed 200 Jews (p. 124). In Eastern Europe, ghetto underground groups were determined to fight with arms despite the lack of material support from national underground movements.

New and daunting choices and challenges presented themselves as the uncertain threat of mass deportations grew. Should they report for deportation or try to hide? Which neighbors could be trusted to supply food and shelter? Hide the entire family or just the children? Should parents arrange to have their children hidden with non-Jewish families or in convents?

Since German policy punished the entire Jewish community for illegal acts of individuals, there was constant tension about the decision to engage in acts of sabotage, escape, or armed resistance. The decision to escape to the forest often pitted individual survival against survival of the family, since partisan units would

accept individuals but not entire families. There were also other critical issues: If you wanted to take up arms, did you want to be part of a distinctly Jewish resistance, remaining to fight in the ghetto as a Jew among Jews? Or should you escape to the forest to join the universal struggle to defeat the Nazis?

The variety of Jewish responses makes it clear that there was no one answer or reaction: Individuals interpreted events differently, saw different consequences, and argued with great intensity about which path of action was more likely to save lives and communities.

Resisting Mass Murder

By the time that most Jews began to comprehend and internalize the reality of Nazi mass murder—often only after their arrival at a death camp—they had long been cut off from the outside world and they were in a dreadfully weakened physical and mental state. They had few, if any, resources to call upon.

It seems, however, that humans, by nature, resist acknowledging absolute helplessness. This resistance to hopelessness is a major factor in understanding how Jews responded during the Holocaust; it explains why those who eventually took up arms or supported armed resistance did so only after finally losing hope of a better outcome, or realizing that no amount of productive work, cooperation, or bargaining could save them. They also knew that their actions would pose no threat to the survival of the already doomed—or destroyed—community.

It is remarkable that, in the face of these grim realizations, and after years of physical and mental stress and deprivation, so many Jews still had the fortitude and will to try to take control of their lives. Many determined to die with dignity, others decided to die fighting, still others held fast to their beliefs and identity, trying to preserve their values and faith.

While the general public knows of the heroic revolt in the Warsaw Ghetto in April 1943, it is often considered an isolated occurrence. In fact, armed underground groups operated in more than ninety ghettos throughout Eastern Europe. As stated previously, most Jews opposed armed uprisings because they felt that they would hasten the total destruction of the ghetto. Because of this opposition from fellow Jews, many members of the underground decided to escape the ghetto

and join the partisans. Nonetheless, armed uprisings broke out in the ghettos of Bialystok, Bedzin, Krakow, Czestochowa, Lachwa, and Tyczyn.¹⁴

Large numbers of Jews also participated in partisan and underground movements throughout Europe, in countries such as Belgium, France, Greece, Holland, Italy, Slovakia, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia. Remarkable manifestations of Jewish resistance were the unprecedented armed revolts in three of the six death camps. Fully realizing that few would actually survive the revolt or the ensuing escape to the forests, Jewish prisoners planned and carried out uprisings in Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz-Birkenau (p. 130).

But it is important to stress that armed resistance was not the only form of Jewish defiance. Other forms of resistance manifested themselves wherever Jews were. These other forms of resistance carried out by Jews in death camps included escapes to inform the outside world about the system of industrialized mass murder; the struggle by many to preserve communal values and humanity through religious observances or mutual aid; and, finally, the awe-inspiring example of those Jews, who, upon realizing that death was imminent and unavoidable, chose to set an example by the way they died.

Some left behind ethical wills, imploring their families to remember the tragedy, avenge their deaths, and continue to live as good Jews. There are examples of Jews chanting prayers or singing national or Zionist anthems as they were led into the gas chambers.¹⁵ These desperate but heroic last acts were a clear defiance Nazi attempts to dehumanize them and an absolute expression of symbolic resistance.

Understanding the Holocaust from a Jewish perspective allows one to acquire a deeper awareness of the obstacles and dilemmas that Jews confronted and promotes a respect for the varieties of Jewish defiance. As one resister reflected, the miracle was not that Jews could occasionally take up arms, but rather that such diverse forms of resistance existed at all.

Ultimately, in this book and exhibition, we have sought to change the widely held perception that Jews, by and large, failed to resist. The question is not, as some would pose it, Why did Jews fail to mount cohesive and effective resistance to the Nazis, but rather, how was it possible that so many Jews resisted at all?

ENDNOTES AND SOURCES

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3. Heinz Kellermann, "Ende der Emanzipation?" *Der Morgen*: 9 (no. 3, August 1933), 174.
4. Quoted in Kellermann, 173.
5. Jacob R. Marcus, *The Rise and Destiny of the German Jew* (Cincinnati: Union of Am. Hebrew Congregations, 1934), 2.
6. Kellermann, 174.
7. Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* (Leipzig: Verlag von Oskar Leiner, 1866), 4:1-3 passim.
8. "Martin Buber on Tasks of the Center for Jewish Adult Education," in Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, and Avraham Margaliot, eds. *Documents on the Holocaust* (Yad Vashem, 1981), 51-52.
9. Quoted in Rivka Perlis, *Tenu'ot haNo'ar haHalutsiyot bePolin haKevushah* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1987), 140.
10. "Restauration oder Renaissance?" *Der Morgen*: 9 (no. 7, 1934), 390-91.
11. In the first months of the Nazi occupation of Poland some non-Jewish Poles thought they were at a disadvantage because, unlike the Polish Jews, they did not have collective representation to plead their cause. See David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939-1942* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1987), 169.
12. For an account of how Jews in various countries came to experience the Nazi regime see David Engel "Holocaust," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, <http://www.yivo.institute.org/publications/>
13. For the text of Kovner's speech and a colleague's response see David Engel, *The Holocaust: The Third Reich and the Jews* (London: Longman, 2000), 103. Also in Arad, *Documents on the Holocaust*, 433-438.
14. Quoted in Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 60.
15. Rózka Korczak, *Lehavot beEfer* (Merhavia: Moreshet, 1965) 50.
16. Quoted in Yael Peled (Margolin), *Krakov haYehudit 1939-1943* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1993), 163.

YITZCHAK MAIS, pp. 18-24.

1. Michael Marrus, "Varieties of Jewish Resistance: Some Categories and Comparisons in Historiographical Perspective," in Yisrael Gutman, ed., *Major Changes Within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust: Ninth Yad Vashem Historical Conference, June 1993* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), 272-273. Regarding how Jewish Theology disregarded the Holocaust, see Emil L. Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections* (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), 71. Regarding Sociology, see Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (London: Polity Press, 1989) ix, 10-11. For an opposing view see Hasia R. Diner, *Before The Holocaust: American Jews Confront Catastrophe 1945-1962* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2004).
2. Regarding Jews as "...the perfect victims—weak, ineffectual, incapable of helping themselves," in Holocaust related films, including Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* see Judith E. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film*, (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, Second Ed. 2002), 203-215.
3. Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998); see also Isaiah Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), ix-xi, and Eva Fogelman, "On Blaming the Victim," this volume, 134.
4. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London: Sphere Books, 1989), 122.

5. For a discussion of Holocaust museums and the issue of survivor culpability, see Yitzchak Mais, "Institutionalizing the Holocaust: Issues Related to the Establishment of Holocaust Memorial Centers," in *Remembering for the Future: Papers of the International Scholars' Conference* (Oxford: Pergamon Press: 2, 1988), 1778-1789. A revised, popular version appeared as, "Institutionalizing the Holocaust" in *Midstream*: 34 (no. 9, Dec. 1988), 16-20.
6. Werner Rings, *Life With the Enemy: Collaboration and Resistance in Hitler's Europe 1939-1945* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 154, 162, 172, 189.
7. Yehuda Bauer, *They Chose Life: Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1973), 55-56.
8. The traditional perpetrator-driven periodization divides events as per the evolving anti-Jewish policies: 1933-39, legal exclusion; 1939-41, isolation and ghettoization; 1941-45, mass murder.
9. Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 33.
10. Avraham Barkai, *From Boycott to Annihilation: The Economic Struggle of German Jews, 1933-1943* (Hanover, NH: Univ. Press of New England, 1989), 98.
11. For a chronology of occupation, see David Engel, "Holocaust," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, <http://www.yivo.institute.org/publications/>
12. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), 327.
13. These earlier resettlements included: The forced relocation of Jews from smaller communities into larger ghettos, e.g., Lodz, Lublin, Warsaw, between 1939-1941; the July 1940 expulsion of 7,500 Jews from southern Germany to transit camps in France; the deportations of some 20,000 German and Austrian Jews to the Lodz Ghetto in November 1941, and over 35,000 Jews to the Minsk Ghetto from late 1941 onwards. In Czechoslovakia, the Nazis established "the model Jewish ghetto" at Terezin (Theresienstadt) in November 1941, to which almost all Jews from annexed Czech lands were deported.
14. Shalom Cholowsky notes that there were over sixty ghettos in the area of Belorussia with armed undergrounds, *Al Naharot Haniemen Vehadnieper* (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 1982), 333-337; see also Shmuel Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed: Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland 1942-1944* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984), 161-234, and Dov Levin, *Fighting Back: Lithuanian Jewry's Armed Resistance to the Nazis, 1941-1945* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985).
15. See Filip Müller, *Eyewitness Auschwitz: Three Years in the Gas Chambers* (New York: Stein and Day, 1984), 70, 110-111.

INTRODUCTION: SANCTIFYING LIFE

AND GOD'S NAME, pp. 26-27.

1. Ernst Simon, "Jewish Adult Education in Nazi Germany as Spiritual Resistance," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*: 69 (1956).
2. Yisrael Gutman, "Kiddush Ha-shem and Kiddush Ha-Hayim," *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*: 1 (1977), 185-186.

RABBI LEO BAECK, pp. 28-29.

SOURCES

"Words of Consolation" in an attachment to a letter from the Association of Bavarian Jewish Communities (Verband Bayerischer Israelitischer Gemeinden), Munich, August 8, 1935. Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (CAJHP) N 3/5. Translated from German by Ilona Moradof. English translation of "Yom Kippur prayer" in Michael Berenbaum, *A Promise to Remember: The Holocaust in the Words and Voices of Its Survivors* (Boston: Bullfinch Press, 2004), 9. German original in Leo Baeck Institute, New York.