

JewishGen PASSOVER COMPANION

תשפ"ה | 5785



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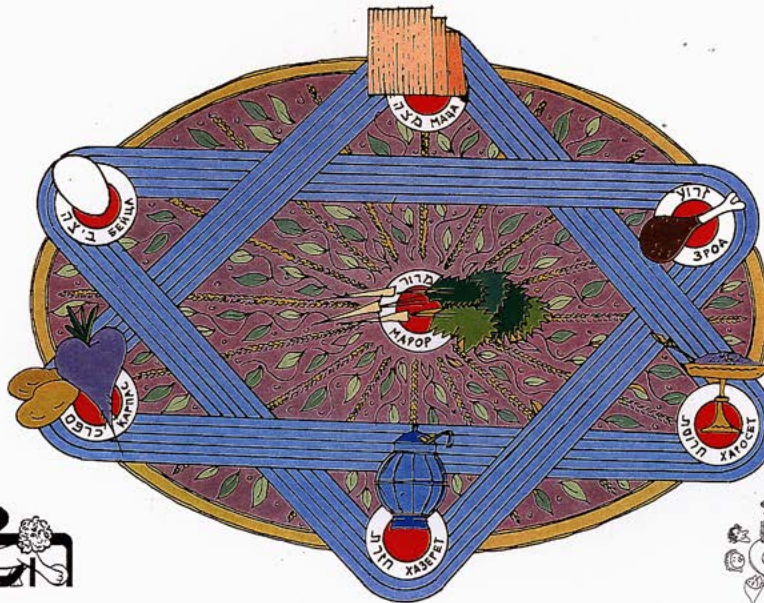
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Hillel/JDC Pesach Project is made possible through a grant from the Samuel and May Rudin Family Foundation

© Picture: Alexandre Ziouzine, St. Petersburg Hillel

About JewishGen

JewishGen is the genealogical research division of New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, and serves as the global home for Jewish genealogy. Featuring unparalleled access to 30+ million records, it offers unique search tools, along with opportunities for researchers to connect with others who share similar interests. Award winning resources such as the Family Finder, Discussion Groups, and ViewMate, are relied upon by thousands each day. In addition, JewishGen's extensive informational, educational and historical offerings, such as the Jewish Communities Database, Yizkor Book translations, InfoFiles, Family Tree of the Jewish People, and KehilaLinks, provide critical insights, first-hand accounts, and context about Jewish communal and familial life throughout the world. Offered as a free resource, JewishGen.org has facilitated thousands of family connections and success stories, and is currently engaged in an intensive expansion effort that will bring many more records, tools, and resources to its collections. In addition, JewishGen offers study/volunteer immersive travel experiences to Poland in order to help inspire the next generation of Jewish genealogical leadership.

For more information, and to get started with your research, please visit www.JewishGen.org.



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Hillel Passover placemat for use in the former Soviet Union. Gift of Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, 1125.98.1

Paper, white background with color illustrations. Seder plate in center incorporating blue Star of David, each of the seven dishes labeled in Hebrew and Hebrew transliterated into Cyrillic. The order of the seder is illustrated,

with headings in Hebrew and explanatory text (beginning with the Hebrew word transliterated into Cyrillic) in Russian. Hillel in Cyrillic in red at top center, flanked by symbols of Hillel and JDC. At bottom left in English: Hillel/JDC Pesach Project is made possible through a grant from the Samuel and May Rudin Family Foundation. At bottom right in English: (c)Picture: Alexandre Ziouzine, St Petersburg Hillel. Made in the US to be used in the Soviet Union. The first Hillel in the former Soviet Union was opened in September 1994.

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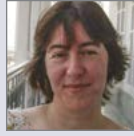
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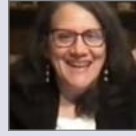
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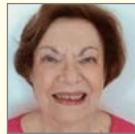


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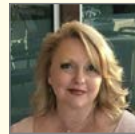
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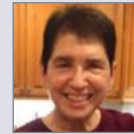
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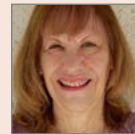
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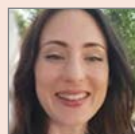
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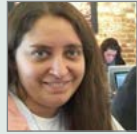
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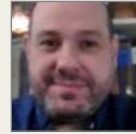
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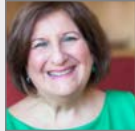


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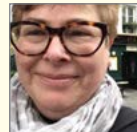
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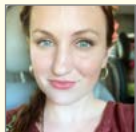
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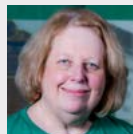


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INTRODUCTION

PASSOVER COMPANION 2025/5785

Dear Friends,

On Seder night, we seek to strengthen our identity, renew our appreciation for being part of the Jewish people, and tell the story of Judaism's survival against all odds in each generation. We tell the story of faith, sacrifice, endurance, and the will to survive. We teach ourselves, and we teach others that the Jewish People are meant to serve as “a light unto the nations.”

But we begin by recognizing that hatred has no reason or justification, and that our nation must always bear this in mind.

The Passover Haggadah traces the history of antisemitism to a surprising figure, and to someone who lived hundreds of years prior to the Pharaoh of the Exodus story. It points to Laban, brother of the matriarch Rebecca, who harbored genocidal aspirations for the nascent and emerging Jewish people.

The Haggadah states: *GO [to the verse] AND LEARN what Laban the Aramean sought to do to our father Jacob: Pharaoh condemned only the boys to death, but Laban sought to uproot everything.* (Translation from Sefaria).

Why is Laban highlighted in this way? And what was the cause of his hatred?

The biblical commentators point out a terrifying and painful truth: Whereas Pharaoh could ostensibly justify his plans based upon fear of a Jewish alliance with an invading nation, Laban could offer no such rationale. He had a professional and personal relationship with the patriarch Jacob (his nephew), who spent 21 years in his employment, and married two of his daughters (Rachel and Leah). Yet, despite these relationships and the fact that Laban faced no threat or danger from Jacob, he nevertheless attempted to eradicate all that Jacob had built, to the very last person. It was based purely upon hatred. Pure, irrational, and destructive.

Laban is the archetype of an antisemite, and is therefore the source of antisemitism which has manifested itself throughout the generations – and one that the Jewish people has constantly struggled with. On Seder night, we don't just recount the miracles and liberation. The Haggadah tells us that in each generation, an enemy will arise to attack. The text does not explain why. Perhaps it is because sometimes there is no other reason than simply the fact that we are Jews.

But what can WE do about this?

At the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, one of the only Holocaust institutions to contain the word “Jewish” within its name, we likewise seek to tell the story of the Jewish people. Our focus on antisemitism – particularly how it culminated in the Holocaust, and more recently on October 7th – helps strengthen Jewish identity worldwide through in-person exhibitions, programs and the Peter & Mary Kalikow Jewish Genealogy Center, and virtually through the digital resources of JewishGen.

But while the basis of these tragedies might be rooted in hatred (as described in our core exhibition: *The Holocaust – What Hate Can Do*), and we strive to memorialize those who have fallen victim to these destructive forces, our focus is on current and future generations, and how we can prevent them from falling prey to an evil which has ensnared so many over time.

To this end, we offer teacher training, and welcome tens of thousands of students – mostly non-Jewish – through the doors of our museum each year. Notably, the Museum recently received a grant which helped us expand our educational effort to include 8th graders in New York City.

A tremendous source of material which helps strengthen identity, and assist with Holocaust education and remembrance is found within Yizkor Books. These “memorial books” were written by Holocaust Survivors to memorialize the Jewish history, heritage, culture and general way of life which had existed in towns destroyed by the Germans. Translated into English by JewishGen, they contain treasure troves of information, including histories of the towns, biographical sketches, maps, poetry, photos, descriptions of life during holidays, and almost all culminate with first-hand testimonies of what happened during the Holocaust.

In this Passover Companion, we share excerpts that describe the tremendous dedication – *mesiras nefesh* – that so many of our ancestors displayed when preparing for and observing Passover, sometimes in the harshest of conditions. There is also a poignant article written by Caitlin Hollander Waas, a genealogist at the Kalikow center, about the importance of Jewish genealogy.

We hope it will inspire you to reflect upon your place within the Jewish people, what you can do to fight back against antisemitism, and think about how you will inspire future generations to align themselves with the values and ideals our ancestors held most dear.

Jack Kliger
President & CEO

Avraham Groll
Vice President for JewishGen

THE IMPORTANCE OF JEWISH GENEALOGY

By Caitlin Hollander Waas

All too often, people dismiss genealogy as nothing more than a hobby; something to do in retirement, a way to pass the time. But it is so much more than that. Tracing our family history is an act of remembrance, a way of ensuring that those who came before us are not forgotten. It helps us understand who we are, where we come from, and how the choices of past generations continue to shape us. By remembering those who came before us, we ensure that their legacies are carried forward: their triumphs celebrated, their struggles acknowledged, and their impact felt.

This time of year, the past feels especially alive. Though each generation has experienced Passover differently, its essence would still be recognizable to our great-great-grandparents, and theirs before them. The words we say, the foods we eat, the rituals we pass down – each was shaped by those who came before us, just as we, in turn, shape and preserve our traditions for the future.

At JewishGen, we believe that the work of preserving the past is not just about honoring history in the present – it's also about ensuring that future generations can carry it forward. Through our indexing projects, we make historical documents accessible to everyone, ensuring that the stories of our ancestors remain within reach. Our educational programs help empower people to explore their heritage and continue this vital work. This ongoing effort deepens our connection to the past, allowing these legacies to resonate for generations.

When we gather around the Seder table, we are not just recounting the Exodus; we are connecting with a history far greater than our own lifetimes. The past is alive in us, woven into our traditions and our identities. And when we take the time to uncover our family stories, we strengthen that connection – not only for ourselves but for the generations yet to come.



PESACH EVE IN OUR LITTLE SHTETL

Piesk, Belarus

The following account was written by Hinde Binkovitz-Wiener.

The period between Purim and Passover was a time of frenetic activity for the Jews of Piesk in Belarus, a town of small wooden houses and roofs of straw. Wheat that was pure for the holiday had to be bought, matzohs had to be made, and the houses had to be “koshered” which meant ridding them of anything unfit for Passover use. Furniture was carried outside so the house could be cleaned thoroughly and the kitchenware and dinnerware purified by putting them in boiling water. Seamstresses worked day and night, as every girl and woman wanted to be renewed with a dress for Pesach.

When Seder night arrived, every house appeared transformed. The father sat upon his regal leisure chair like a king. His wife was the queen, and around them were their children. The youngest child asked the Four Questions and the father had to answer. The door was opened for Elijah the Prophet to enter. The mother could hardly sit through the first Seder, so tired was she from the preparations.

The little town of Piesk (its Yiddish name) was part of Poland until 1795, when it was annexed by Russia. In 1920, it returned to Polish rule, only to be annexed again by Russia in 1939 and ultimately became part of independent Belarus after the breakup of the Soviet Union. It is in the west of Belarus near the Polish border. When the Germans took the town in 1940, they established a ghetto which was later liquidated, sending the Jews to labor and death concentration camps.



Cover of the original Yizkor book

Pesach preparations would begin immediately after Purim when we were finished with the tasty hamantashen. You then went to the megillah reading in shul and with hammers and grogers slew (by drowning out his name) wicked Haman. Then, began the [Passover] preparation ritual.

Everyone, who was able, immediately bought wheat meal. Avrum Shebach, the miller, already



The Jews of Piesk being taken to forced labor during the First World War

was concerned that the meal ground in his mill should not become “*chometzdick*” (impure for Passover use). Everybody bought according to their ability and the size of their family.

It was expensive to have the baking done at a private bakery; [therefore] the poorer Jews got together and, communally, baked at the place of whoever had a large oven. The work was divided according to each person’s skill. There was a meal pourer and a water pourer. The water had to be kosher. The (gentile) water carrier, Muchashke, could not fetch the water; only a Jew could bring it.

A female kneader performed the kneading and handed off to the women rollers and they to the perforators. From the perforators, it went to the oven placer. When the matzoh was done, a

female partner in the undertaking would lay it in a clean pillow case and suspend it from the ceiling of her home so the matzoh would not come in contact with “*chometzdick*” things. In this way, they would bake matzoh for everyone.

When the matzoh ritual concluded, koshering of the home began. There were houses where from Pesach to Pesach there was extraordinary cleansing. Then began the working season of Frieda the whitewasher. From whitewashing the houses, her earnings were sufficient to live the entire year with her husband the kulak [Note: a landed peasant].

Women carried out all the furniture into the street and koshered the home. When the home was cleansed of *chometz*, they koshered the oven and the entire kitchenware and dinnerware.

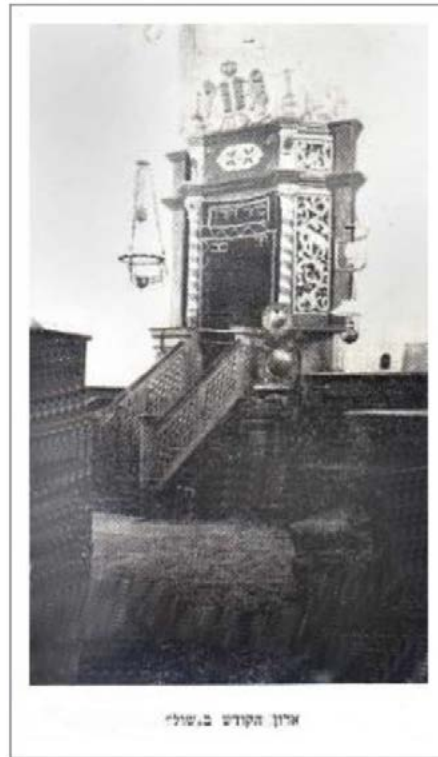
Water was heated in a kettle; and stones were added. When the water boiled, they would put in the kitchenware and dinnerware.

Erev Pesach, the *chometz* would be sold to Muchashken the water carrier; and he, the Christian, earned nicely from this trade. I also remember the job of beet [preparation]. After the beets were left standing [in water] for three weeks, the water became scummy. The scum was removed; and a good borscht remained for Pesach to have with matzoh. [Note: The writer is describing the preparation of russel, a variety of borscht obtained through fermentation.]

Wine was made from raisins and water. Honey was cooked with water; hops were added. This was allowed to sit. As dear Pesach arrived, there were resources to treat one's guest.

The seamstresses worked day and night, as every girl and woman wanted to be renewed with a dress for holy Pesach. When Seder night arrived, the home was not recognizable. Every house appeared so pure and holy. The father of the family donned his kittel [a white linen robe worn on solemn occasions and used as a shroud after death] sat upon his regal leisure chair like a real king. His wife was the queen, and around them were their children. Wine was poured for everyone at the Seder without forgetting a cup for Elyohu-Hanovi [Elijah the Prophet].

The youngest child asked the Four Questions; and the father had to answer. The door was opened for Elyohu-Hanovi to enter. The mother could hardly sit through the first Seder, so tired was she from the preparations.



Aron Kodesh of the Synagogue

On Khalemoyed (the intermediate week-days of the holiday), girls and young men traveled as guests to other *shtetls* to get together with family and, in the meantime, to take advantage of the time to see about a match. Thus, the Jews lived for centuries, worried about livelihoods and were happy with their spiritual life without [the bounties of] wider civilization, without radio and television, without electrical devices – until the coming of Hitler, may his name be blotted out, killed everyone.

The Jews who emigrated to other lands and continents have acclimated themselves to their environments. But, from time to time, they remember and yearn for those times.

To learn more about **Piesk, Belarus**, please visit: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/piaski/pie478.html>



THE NIGHT OF THE SEYDER

Siemiatycze, Poland

The following account was written by Michel (Mikhl) Radzinski.

This excerpt looking back at Passover in Siemiatycze is from a memoir that is part of the JewishGen Yizkor book collection. It is an exploration of Passover traditions including the origin of the *afikomon*, the significance of the prophet Elijah, and the eloquence of the Seder text which explains the purpose of the matzoh: “This is the bread of affliction, which our ancestors ate in the Land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry let him come and eat; whoever is needy let him come and sit at the seyder table. Today we are here; next year in the Land of Israel. Today we are slaves; next year free people.”

The Seder night was marked in every Jewish home in Siemiatycze. No matter how small and how poor the families, each conducted its own Seder at their own table. They put aside their daily routine and became immersed in the story of the Exodus from Egypt, with the great dream of deliverance.

Siemiatycze is roughly 80 miles east of Warsaw. From 1807 until 1915, it was ruled by Russia, but Jewish life flourished most during the period from 1918 to 1939 when it was incorporated into Poland, which had re-emerged as an independent nation following World War I. Siemiatycze was to a large extent destroyed during World War II and its significant Jewish community was almost completely exterminated by the Nazis.

The night of the seyder in particular brings Passover to my mind. On that night Father was king and Mother was queen. As I grew older, the queen image of Mother on the night of the seyder revealed itself more sharply. The beauty of the seyder-night was boundless and it was celebrated with pure joy.

On that night you left your daily routine and

became immersed in ancient Jewish history, in the story of the Exodus from Egypt, with the great dream of deliverance. I was strongly taken by the figure of Elijah the Prophet (*Elyo'hu hano'vi*), for whom the door of the house was opened at reciting the passage that began, “Pour out your anger...” (*shföykh khamosekho*).

I see our home vividly before my eyes, the



The Great Synagogue

candles in the candlestick burning with holiday brightness, the swinging lamp (*henglomp*) over the festively set table, Father at the head of the table in a white linen robe (*kittl*) and behind his back, on both sides, the reclining couch (*heseyvbet*) of two large cushions. Father sat leaning (*ongeshpart*), nestled in an expanse of softness, and one could sense how great were his pleasure and his pride (*nakhes*) in his wife and children.

The great enjoyment of a Jewish king on the seyder night is to sit in a reclining position (*zitsn mesubin*) on soft white cushions. Mother, although she did not sit leaning on cushions, nonetheless glowed like a true queen. She sat relaxed and beaming, taking in with her kind eyes the entire table and the faces of all the family. Unfortunately, she was not lucky enough to enjoy for long the children she so loved. I was eleven years old when Mother became ill and died.

The seyder-night was marked in every Jewish home in Semyatitsh. No matter how small and how poor a family was, it conducted its own seyder at its own table. This is what made everyone feel a part of world Jewry. On the same night all Jews celebrated the holiday of deliverance and held a seyder as a religious service. It is important that we remind ourselves from time to time how our parents prepared for Passover, Father with his devotion to the Passover ceremony, Mother with her outstretched arms, her radiance, her warmth over the seyder. Like a lovely queen she warmed everyone with her glow, a true Jewish queen whose power lay in her goodness.

True, good food and wine were served at the seyder table, but most important were the Haggada (*bagode*) and the hymns and rituals connected to it. The solemnity of the seyder began with the questions of the youngest in the

family: “Why is this night different from all other nights of the year?” Father’s reply and the tune in which he began to read the Haggada’s description of the dramatic course of Jewish history made you feel you were taking part in the great drama of deliverance.

In later years, when I was already conducting the seyder in my own home, I would reflect on the introductory text to the seyder, which is in Aramaic, the vernacular of the Talmudic period: “This is the bread of affliction, which our ancestors ate in the Land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry let him come and eat; whoever is needy let him come and sit at the seyder table. Today we are here; next year in the Land of Israel. Today we are slaves; next year free people.”

I am sure that in the period when this “Ha lakhma anya” text was composed, the words were no empty phrases. In those days the seyder was held with doors open and any needy person could come and seat himself at a table. Bound up with this was the belief that a disguised Elijah the Prophet might appear in the form of an unknown guest or stranger. The figure of Elijah the Prophet always stimulated my imagination. As a child I saw him in many different ways. I saw him on Friday night in the besmedresh in the person of a pauper who stood waiting for a householder to invite him home as a Sabbath guest. I saw him in the guise of a watercarrier and in many other figures of poor and devout Jews, suffering and silent.



The Torah Committee

In my imagination, Elijah did not appear alone, but was often in the company of the concealed Thirty-six Righteous Men (*lamed-vovnikes*), disguised beggars and blind men who saw further and deeper than the seeing. I always envisioned him on a mission to help some Jew, a pauper with faith, a quiet Jew who recited Psalms (*tilim-yid*).

To me Elijah the Prophet was not simply a miracle worker (*bal-moyfes*). He always looked for righteousness and justice. Always poorly dressed, sometimes with a sack on his back or a bundle in his hand, bowed down, quiet, but beneath his bent form he carried an inner resolve, a great sense of purpose. I always saw Elijah the Prophet's mission as one of bringing consolation and kindness (*treyst un guts*) to people, of helping the poor solve their problems. On the seyder night I saw him as a messenger of redemption (*di geule*), practically a relative of the messiah.

The search for the ransom matza (*afkoymen* 'afkomon') has remained in my memory of childhood. Upon sitting down to the seyder

table, the middle matza is broken into two halves, one of which is the *afkomon* that is put aside until the end of the meal. As a child I did not think about the meaning of the word *afkomon*. Only later when I was at the training farm and learned a bit of Hebrew did I learn that the word is derived from Greek and, according to the opinion of some scholars, designates the invited guest at the seyder feast. And so the ceremony of the *afkomon* became clear to me: the seyder, according to an ancient custom, was conducted with open doors, the hungry and needy being invited to the table. However, there were guests who could not arrive in time; for them, a half of a matza and a portion of the meal were put aside from the beginning. The broken-off matza is therefore called *afkomon*, whose meaning is 'for the guest.'

To learn more about **Siemiatycze, Poland**, please visit:

<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/siemiatycze/sie012.html>



TWO WEEKS BEFORE PASSOVER

Kłobuck, Poland

The following account was written by Borukh Szimkowitz.

This chapter is a deep dive into the making of matzoh and all the community effort that went into it. A rabbi would test the baker's oven to determine if it had been properly koshered. The same was done for the kneading basins, the water pails, the tables covered in tin, rolling pins and the perforators for the rolled matzos. Every night in the pre-Passover weeks, townspeople went with water cans and pails to draw water that was carried to the bakeries where it was filtered into barrels. Every Kłobuck Jew felt it was a mitzvah to take part in the gathering and carrying water to the matzo bakeries.

Kłobuck was a small town in southern Poland. Kłobuck had been part of the Russian Empire but was incorporated into the newly independent Poland after World War I. In 1931, it was home to 1,650 Jews. Most of them were murdered or worked to death in the Holocaust.

In the *shtetl* they began to feel that the great holiday of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt was approaching – they began to bake matzo. The bakers – my father and Chaim Yehoshaya the bagel maker, Yakl Ribsztajn and Yehezkiel Mejtes, Moshe Mendl and Kopl the baker – were busy making matzo. They heated the ovens at night on Shabbos. After eating on Sunday morning, the rabbi went to look over the ovens to see if they had been properly koshered for Passover.



Reb Dovid Hirsh the shoykhet and khazan.

The rabbi had a system with which to test if the ovens were kosher. He rubbed on the bricks with a long piece of iron and, if sparks spurted, the oven was kosher. However, the rabbi was a sickly man and the iron would fall out of his hands and no sparks were seen. Then the oven would have to be heated again – until the weak hands of the rabbi scraped sparks from the bricks. The rabbi received three or four rubles for his efforts.

The supervisor of the bakeries was Reb Yudel Ahron Gad, a pious, strictly observant Jew and an Aleksander Hasid. He came to examine the utensils that had a connection to the baking of matzo several times a day such as the kneading basins, the water pails, the tables covered in tin,

rolling pins and the perforators for the rolled matzos. Pious and healthy “gentile girls” were mostly employed for the rolling. As soon as Reb Yudel entered, the gentile girls immediately moved from the tables. They knew that as long as they stood there, Reb Yudel would not approach the tables. After scraping the rolling pins with glass, Reb Yudel Ahron indicated to the “gentile girls” that they could approach the table.

Water for the matzo bakeries was taken from the river. It was called mayim shelonu waser [water that has remained in a vessel overnight]. Every night in the pre-Passover weeks, they went with water cans and pails to draw water that was carried to the bakeries. There the water



Last Kindergarten in Klobuck



Klobuck Jews in the Zagórz Concentration Camp

was filtered into barrels, covered so that it would cool off until morning so that it was worthy for baking matzos. Every Klobuck Jew felt it was a mitzvah to take part in the gathering and carrying water to the matzo bakeries.

Shmura matzo [matzo made under close religious supervision] was sold by several Jewish Hasidim; Berl Baruch, the supervisor Reb Yudl Ahron and others. There were two kinds of *matzo shmura*: that which was baked right before Passover and only used on the Seder nights and *matzo shmura* that the Hasidim ate all through Passover. The Hasidim baked the truly watched *matzo shmura* on the eve of Passover. The baking itself was a bit of a holiday. Those taking part in the holy service came in

holiday clothes. They sang *Hallel* [songs of praise taken from Psalms] and Hasidic melodies when the matzo was placed in the oven.

Once a case occurred with Reb Berl Baruch that incited the entire *shtetl*. Reb Berl Baruch hid the *shmura* flour in the attic so that no one would touch it. Before Passover, when he took down the flour, it was completely wet. It was said cats had searched for a resting place on the flour... The flour was banned and the price of *shmura matzo* rose terribly in Klobuck.

In the houses of the Klobuck Jews, they began to prepare for Passover at Purim. In addition to scouring, washing, rubbing and scrapping every corner of the house, every woman of the house

was busy preparing beet borsht. They purchased herring casks, small and large, several weeks before Passover. They were scrubbed well at the river and then they were left to soak in the water for two weeks. Close to Passover the holiday knife was taken out. The beets were cut and they were stuffed into the casks. The full casks were covered with clean linen and were placed in a corner of the house. The children were told to be sure not to touch the casks and threatened with great punishment from heaven.

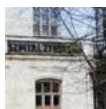
Three days before Passover the cask was opened and the borsht was tested; if it poured thickly it was a sign that the borsht was successful.

The “first born sons” ran to the synagogue and houses of prayer on the morning of the eve of Passover to celebrate the completion of the collective reading of the Talmud [commentaries]. The young men of the houses

of prayer already were there with copies of the Gemara [Talmudic commentaries] and showed the “first born sons” where to complete the last lines of the Tractate [section of the Talmud]. They drank a toast and the young man was redeemed.

After the burning of the *hometz*, they waited impatiently for the sun to set somewhere in the unknown distance and the joyful holiday night would envelope the *shtetl*.

To learn more about **Klobuck, Poland**, please visit:
<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/klobuck/klo050.html>



PASSOVER AFTER THE SHOAH

Dubno, Ukraine

*The following poem was written by Ya'acov Nathanael–Roitman
and translated by Selwyn Rose.*

This poem was published in a Hebrew language newspaper in the Palestine mandate in 1946. While it only mentions the holiday by name once, it is filled with allusions to Passover's rituals and symbols. In the night wind, the author hears the lament "This is the bread of our sorrow," recalling the words of the Seder ceremony. A "brick from the walls cried out" is a reference to the Egyptian slaves who made bricks for the Pyramids and "an unseen hand strikes out" represents the final plague G-d visited on the Egyptians claiming their firstborn. Mention of the Haidamaks is meant to summon memories of Cossacks who, during pogroms, looted prized candlesticks used to inaugurate holy days such as Passover.

The Nazis occupied Dubno in 1941 and created a large ghetto during Passover of 1942. Many were murdered in October of that year. The Jewish community ceased to exist and was not reestablished after the war.

Passover came in '46: in Dubno, the shul stayed closed the eve that made holy the day.
Though the snow was melting and the cherry–tree bloomed – each house was bent
and ruined, each roof was in decay.

The streets were bare and empty, not a soul was passing by, the doors gaped wide, as
did the gates, yet no one came that way.
Of all the things we dearly loved, the flames devoured them wholly
And only the night's chill wind lamented "This is the bread of our sorrow."

Abandoned seemed each household, a brick from the walls cried out,
An unseen hand strikes out and a buried voice bemoans.
A grateful Christian voice cries out while a flickering alien flame
Eats at the bricks, like a silver candlestick stolen by the Haidamaks.



Rückkehrerlager Dubno Ukraine

Entlassungsausweis

Name Gorlatsch Vorname Nikolaus
 geb. am 1917 Nationalität Pole
 Wohnort Leuberg Gebiet Leuberg

ledig, verheiratet ist laut ärztlichen Befund: tauglich — untauglich für den Arbeitseinsatz in Deutschland.

Art der Krankheit: _____

Zuständiges Arbeitsamt _____

Er sie ist am _____ aus dem Aflagerlager Dubno mit einer Nachverpflegung für _____ Tage entlassen.

Der Gebietskommissar

 Der Lagerleiter



Clockwise from top: The Jewish hospital in Dubno; “Return-entry pass” for workers allowed out of the ghetto for forced labor; it allowed people back into the ghetto at the end of a day’s work; This is a photograph taken in Germany of Dubno survivors. They are holding a Memorial to the Martyrs of Dubno; Mattis the water carrier.

To learn more about **Dubno, Ukraine**, please visit:
<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/dubno/dub533.html>

About the JewishGen Yizkor Book Translation Project



Yizkor Books (Memorial Books) were traditionally written to memorialize the names of departed family and martyrs during holiday services in the synagogue (a practice that still exists in many synagogues today).

Over the centuries, as a result of countless persecutions and horrific atrocities committed against the Jews, Yizkor Books (*Sifre Zikaron* in Hebrew) were expanded to include more historical information, such as biographical sketches of famous personalities and descriptions of daily town life.

Following the Holocaust, the idea of remembrance and learning took on an urgent and crucial importance. Survivors of the Holocaust sought out other surviving residents of their former towns to memorialize and document the names and way of life of those who were ruthlessly murdered by the Germans and their accomplices.

These remembrances were documented in Yizkor Books, hundreds of which were published in the first decades after the Holocaust. Most of these books were published privately, or through *landsmanshaftn* (social organizations comprised of members originating from the same European town or region) that still existed, and were often distributed free of charge.

Sadly, the languages used to document these crucial histories and links to our past, Yiddish and Hebrew, are no longer commonly understood by a significant percentage of Jews today. It is our hope that the translation of these books into English (and other languages) will assist the countless Jewish family researchers who are so desperately seeking to forge a connection with their heritage.

Thank you to Lance Ackerfeld for overseeing the Yizkor Book Translation project, and to Joel Alpert and Susan Rosin for overseeing the JewishGen Press.

At the end of each week, we have been distributing “A Window into our Treasured Past” emails, which feature timely excerpts from Yizkor books in JewishGen’s archive. In choosing the weekly excerpts, JewishGen volunteer Bruce Drake tries to balance selections that recall the suffering of the Holocaust with chapters that paint pictures of what daily life was like in the communities of Europe, such as market days, how Jews made their living, the joys and sadnesses of every day life and portraits of memorable characters. Bruce has also overseen the completed translation of the Kover Yizkorbook and created Kehilalinks sites for Kovel and Wojnilow, now known as Voynilov in Ukraine.

Yizkor Book Volunteers



Lance Ackerfeld was born in Australia and settled on Kibbutz Yiftah, Israel in 1977 where he has lived with his family since then. In 2024, he retired from his day job as a senior database and BI expert in the global “Netafim” company. He now devotes time to the Yizkor Book Project in which he has been involved in various capacities since 1999 and has led the project for more than 15 years.



Joel Alpert is a retired electrical engineer, who worked for MIT, Raytheon, the Israeli Armaments Authority and Bell Laboratories. He was born and educated in Wisconsin, lived in Israel, Boston and Tucson. He created the Yizkor-Books-in-Print project in 2012 and is now the coordinator of the project.



Bruce Drake spent most of his career in journalism, as a reporter and later White House correspondent for the *New York Daily News*, as Vice President for News at NPR, as executive editor at *Congressional Quarterly* and most recently as a senior editor at the Pew Research Center.



Susan Rosin learned about JewishGen after retiring from her role as a Software Development Manager at a major corporation. She soon began volunteering, and has translated Yizkor books (from Hebrew to English), and led the Last Name Indexing project. She now serves as the JewishGen Press Publications Manager.

To learn more, and to access the translations at no cost, please visit:

www.JewishGen.org/yizkor/translations



To purchase hard copies of Yizkor Books translated by JewishGen, please visit:

www.JewishGen.org/press

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Calendar Listings and Registration: www.jewishgen.org/Education/edu-courses.asp

Any Questions? Please contact Nancy Holden, Director of Education: education@jewishgen.org

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