

PASSOVER COMPANION

תשפ"ג | 5783



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This matzoh cover was made by Sarah Rafalowicz, from Kielce, as a gift for her intended husband, Pincus Bertram, of Dubiecko. The front is hand-embroidered with flowers and Hebrew: *Seder shel Pesach*. The tabs are embroidered Cohen, Levi and Israel. She embroidered a Star of David on the back with the Hebrew year (taf resh tsadi tet, i.e. 5699 = 1939) and her initials Shin Resh for Sarah Rafalowicz. Lace is sewn around edges. She brought it as a gift on a visit to Dubiecko in the spring of 1939, and then returned home to Kielce. The wedding was planned for the summer, but because of the unsettling times, it did not take place. Gift of Hannah Bertram, 52.94.

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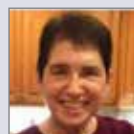
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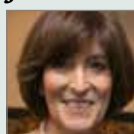


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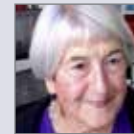


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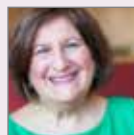
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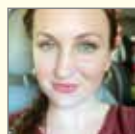
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INTRODUCTION

APRIL 2023/NISSAN 5783

Dear JewishGen Community,

As part of a multi-year effort, JewishGen has been translating Yizkor (Memorial) Books. To date, 161 books have been published, with dozens of other projects in progress. They offer researchers the opportunity to explore what life was like in towns throughout the world before, during, and after the Holocaust.

Rabbi Efraim Sokolower, who wrote an introduction to the Yizkor Book of Chorzele, Poland (see the Passover related excerpt on page 21), described the pain of not being able to visit the graves of family murdered during the Holocaust. And how, decades later, the memory of the Shoah, and the destruction of so many communities, was slowly being forgotten. In his words:

The terrible tragedy of the murder of six million Jews – men, women, and children – no longer makes an impression in the world. People have already become accustomed to these words, and their meaning has turned into a mere linguistic expression.

In response to this, the publication of a Yizkor Book would serve as a “memorial monument” for generations. He wrote:

Whenever we look into it, we will be inspired to remember our relatives in our hearts, and this memory will draw us closer to their spirits and souls. When the righteous Joseph was in Egypt, oppressed in body and spirit, young in years, of refined soul and noble spirit, he fell into impure and cruel hands. Before his eyes stood the image of his elderly father, and since he saw the image of his father, his spirit was strengthened to withstand all the obstacles and oppression in his path. This memory gave him the power and encouragement to gird himself

and continue on in the tradition of his dear father, as he received it during his childhood. This memorial book will adorn every house of our fellow townsfolk, and will stand constantly before our eyes in honor and glory.

We hope that this Passover Companion, which contains Passover related Yizkor book excerpts, will likewise help ensure that the memory of those murdered during the Holocaust will not be forgotten, and that we will strengthen our sense of identity and what it means to be part of the Jewish people.

Thank you to the many volunteers who have made this Passover Companion possible, specifically: Lance Ackerfeld who oversees the Yizkor Book Translation project, Joel Alpert who oversees the JewishGen Press, Bruce Drake who drafted the article introductions, and to Richie Baum and Gayle Justman for proofreading.

Wishing you all a happy Passover, and Chag Kasher V'Sameach,

Jack Kliger
President & CEO
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A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

Avraham Groll
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THE BREAD OF OUR AFFLICTION

Przedecz (Pshaytsh/ פשייטש), Poland

Przedecz was a town in western Poland about equidistant between Poznan on the west and Warsaw to the east. Jewish settlement began there towards the end of the 14th century. In 1921, its Jewish population numbered just over 3,000. But in December, 1940, as the Nazis were advancing in Poland that population stood at 840 Jews. And, in the year after that, many of them were taken to labor camps. The following year the Przedecz ghetto was liquidated.

In the “The Bread of Our Affliction,” from the town’s Yizkor book, Passover becomes a tragic milestone in the darkening lives of the Jewish people as many faced death in the gas chambers of Chelmno, about 20 miles away. The chapter includes testimonies recalling what was once a joyous holiday: “Sit, sit, make yourself comfortable and listen, since this is the last Seder in town, and the second under such circumstances. We will not sing here anymore, even though we haven’t been singing for a long time.”

It was the last Seder with her parents for one of the contributors to the chapter. She remembers a child bursting into tears when he asked the question, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” and crying out “Chelmno.” Another had suffered through all the horrors of the time – hunger, forced labor, beatings and degradation – and wrote of the last Seder she experienced in Przedecz. Her little brother said to her, “I don’t want to die.” And every Passover after that, she heard his voice.

The following is a composite of events described to Y. L. L. Shlomi by Tuvshe Yakubovitch, Rushke (Shoshana) Yakhimovitch, and perhaps the daughter of Khaim Kladovsky and others

Sit down, please, and recline. After all, today is the first Seder night. There are no feathers in the blankets or pillows; the Germans ripped them all up and threw the feathers to the wind. They searched for gold, silver and jewelry in the pockets.

Sit, sit, make yourself comfortable and listen, since this is the last Seder in town, and the second under such circumstances. We will not sing here any more, even though we haven't been singing for a long time.

These are my memories of the last Seder in the town of Pshaytch (Przedecz in Polish) in 1942, shortly before the poisoning in the gas chambers in Chelmno. We remember little about the Haggadah, about the miracle of leaving Egypt, nor do we mention matzah because we have none, just a poor man's bread, the real "Bread of Affliction", large quantities of maror (in English, bitter herbs) – bitterness; nonetheless, we prepare a Passover Seder.

(Translator's Note: the next few paragraphs were told by Tuvtshe Yakubovitch.) One hundred girls and one boy, Avromek Zikhlinsky, were in the first transport in 1940, recalled Tuvtshe Yakubovitch. We had been assembled via a list from the Jewish council. They said we were going to pick potatoes and beets in the fields. It was around the time of Sukkos (Translator's note: October). They divided us into three groups once we arrived in the region



Cover of a Passover haggadah with commentary by Rabbi Yitzchak Itzik Horowicz, and his son, Rabbi Yaakov Ori Shraga from Pshaytsh (who passed away on March 2, 1839).

of Poznan. We were sent to three farms which were converted into labor camps; Gnojno, Lojewo (in Yiddish, Layove) and Tuczno. I was with my sister Hella. We brought with us bedding, clothing and underwear. We worked hard from dawn until dusk. The local Volksdeutsche (people whose language and culture had German origins, but who did not hold German citizenship) guarded us and liked to beat and whip us to show their importance

and power. The camp had its own kitchen, but at the beginning we received packages and a bit of money from home. Understandably, not all parents could help. We also received help from friends. We were not free to wake up and go to sleep at will, because of lights in the living space, nevertheless the possibility of legitimate cultural activity didn't exist. The exchange of letters with our families was limited. We asked after and thought about them. From time to time, someone would go home for a few days. We had to buy a furlough with money or a gift for the head of the camp, the Volksdeutsche Urbansky, or other services for the Hitleristic low life creatures.

The worst was when they took us from one place to another. We had already settled in a little, placed a bit of straw on the plank beds we slept on, become familiar with the surrounding population through which we were able to offer our belongings and goods – so-called – for a bit of food, and then they moved us to a new place. For a long time, we slept in the hall of the theater in Inowroclaw (in Yiddish, Inovrotslav) on bare boards on the stage, and this was in winter, with a frosty wind blowing in from all sides. We all caught cold. Understandably, we sent or wrote letters in Polish or German. We had to write carefully. Writing between the lines, not everything could be inferred.

Before Passover 1942, thanks to some money my sister Hella and I received from home, I received a three-day furlough.

It had been two years since I had seen my parents and brother. My brother Mordkhai was in a prisoner camp as a Polish soldier, which I hadn't yet learned. But I still had my parents

and two brothers, Yakov and Notte.

Sitting anxiously impatient on the train, I had to remain inconspicuous, since I did not have permission to ride this means of transportation.

With great fear, I got off the train at the last station in the hamlet of Szatki (Tseti in Yiddish) and walked the last eight kilometers.

I arrived in town on Passover eve, at night (*Translator's note: Wednesday evening, 1 April 1942*), when Jews are required to go to the synagogue, but I met nary a Jew. I was overcome with fear in that horrible stillness.

I could not enter my house. My parents had been moved to the ghetto and had left everything behind. A Christian let me know where to find the Jewish quarter. Pshaytch (Przedecz) is a small town, and it was not difficult to find the place where those remaining were, in a very crowded, destitute situation.

I found my mother in the house. My father was still at work. The curfew (police hours) hadn't yet come. He worked as a tailor for a Volksdeutsche woman living in the former apartment of the Rappaport family. My brothers were already in one of the murderous camps, and in my lifetime, I would never see them again.

Many parents came to me asking about their daughters. I could not offer them anything more than greetings. I could not tell them the whole truth. But in my last visit, our parents had talked only about Chelmno and how the liquidation of the Ghetto was approaching. They knew exactly what was happening there. My father returned late, and after he finished



Mrs. Kayle Yakubovitch, of blessed memory, and her daughters: Hella and Tuvtshe.

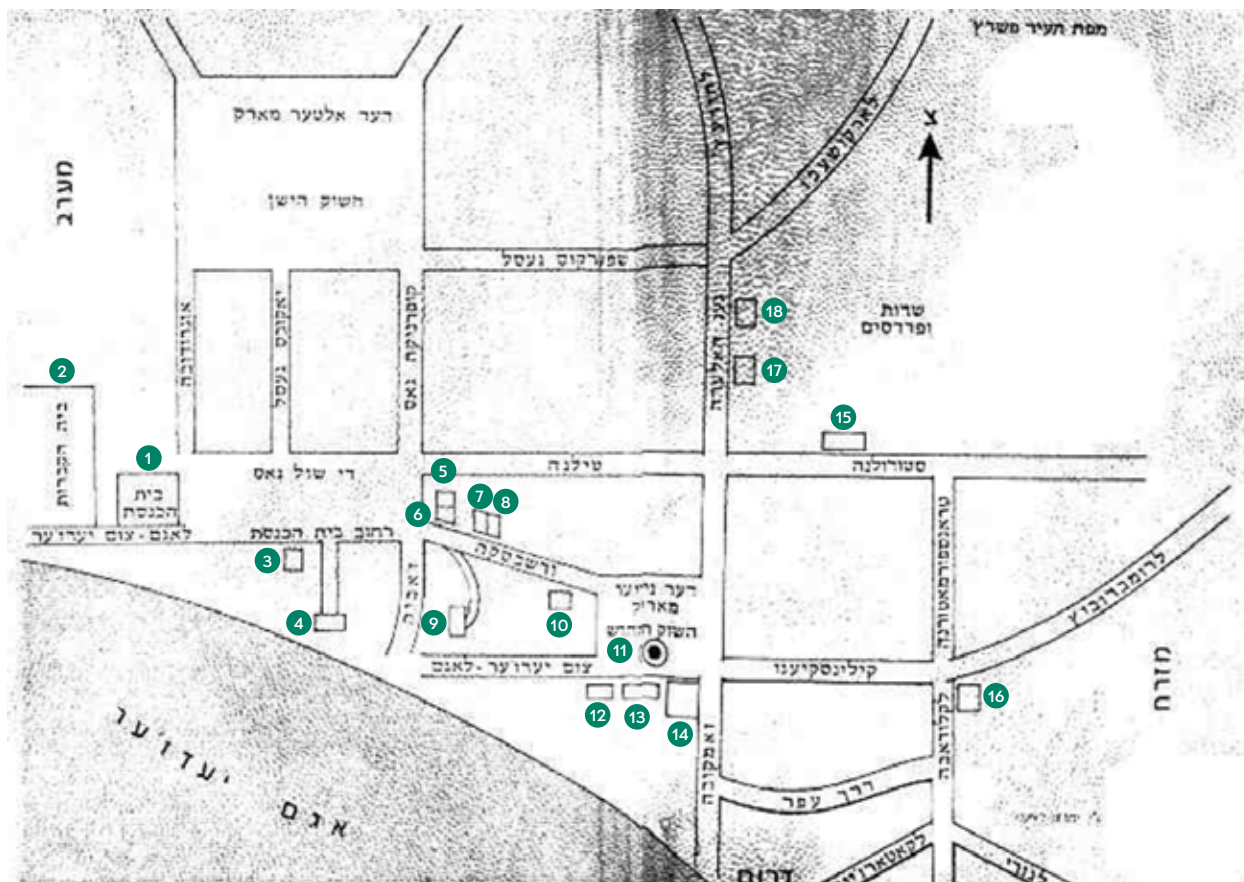
praying, we sat down for a Seder. Many women were in the group. Their husbands were in camps. Among them were widows – although not all – knew about that yet. Some little boy asked the questions “Why is this night different”. In the middle, he burst into choking tears and cried out Chelmno. The child was

perhaps five years old. I don’t remember whose child he was. The windows were curtained. Two candles burned on the table. My mother managed a few dry white pletzels (a flatbread similar to focaccia). All of us tried with all our might to hold back our tears, but when my father came to the passage “we shouted unto G-d and he heard our voices” he could no longer control himself, and continued with quiet sobs until the end of the service.

This was the last Passover Seder with my parents. After my return to the camp, I did not see them again. Nor did I hear from them again. But when I had returned to the camp, I had to describe everything anew. This time I could not control myself.

(Translator’s Note: The next few paragraphs were told by Rushke (Shoshana) Yakhimovitch and perhaps the daughter of Khaim

Kladovsky.) Bitter herbs. Egg. Rushke, take me with you. Shank bone, karpas (a raw vegetable, usually parsley or celery), matzah. Chelmno. Gas chambers on wheels. Charoses. Wine. Everything, everything, I have forgotten nothing. Beautiful candlesticks with candles, a white tablecloth, covered matzah, everything,



Map of the City of Przedeck
KEY

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Synagogue | 10. Young Mizrachi |
| 2. Cemetery | 11. The pump |
| 3. Chevra Tehillim | 12. Fire fighters |
| 4. Mikva | 13. Butcher shops |
| 5. Bank | 14. City Hall |
| 6. Beitar | 15. School |
| 7. House of the rabbi | 16. Police Station |
| 8. Beis Midrash | 17. Library |
| 9. Slaughterhouse | 18. Post office |

everything, just as it is supposed to be. Rushke, don't leave me behind. Everything so beautiful. Traditions, customs, clean without chometz. Kosher. Without memories, without bitter thoughts, without parents, without graves for a brother and sister, how can this happen, how can we understand this?

With these words, Rushke (Shoshana) Yakhimovitch began her description, her description of the last Seder she experienced in Pshaytch (Przedecz) in 1942. I was sent to Gnojno, a hamlet not far from Inowroclaw (Inovrotslav). A ranch. From the autumn of 1940, I began to work there in the field picking

potatoes, beets, guarded by savage, brutal Volksdeutsche with sticks, whips and other instruments to beat stooped shoulders wet from rain. They acted with particular cruelty towards the Krel and Engel sisters. There was not a day or a night without beating them, accompanied by wild laughter. They took special pleasure in beating and kicking the unfortunate girls until they bled. They beat other girls too, but they mistreated these girls in an animalistic way. They had not dropped anything or done anything wrong. The truth is that they simply chose them as a scapegoat. Without any reason. That is how it was, because they were the rulers, the masters. As for culture, I believe they could not read or write. They spoke Polish poorly, and their German was not any better. That is how it was. The stick was in their hand. And they knew how to use it. After that, there was clearing the fields and carrying full sacks of produce on our backs. Then they harnessed us to the wagons because they treated their horses with respect. They kept us busy caring for the pigs, cows and horses. To cut straw, to cook potatoes for the animals, from which we also ate a little, stealing food from the pigs. Not everyone had the means to buy food from the local peasants or trade a piece of clothing.

We lived like this for a year. Then they took us to Lojewo (Layove) camp. The guards there were a bit more humane. They did not beat us. The work there was also not easy. Perhaps it was more difficult. We excavated ditches, arranged wagons, transported the carts, which we had first filled with earth, and then poured additional earth on the road as appropriate, filling holes and puddles.

At this same time, that is autumn, 1941, they brought another group of thirty girls from Pshaytsh (Przedecz) to a camp in Tuczno, not far from us. Among the girls was Kayla Vishnivska. At about the same time, they brought a large group of men from Pshaytsh (Przedecz) to work in a sugar factory near Lojewo (Layove). We received very little food, and the men received even less. Many of them died from hunger and hard labor. The weak ones were sent to the hamlet Amze, which was near Inowroclaw (Inovrotslav), where they were shot by the German executioner. Among those killed were Yakov Pinkhas Rumer, Dovid Vishnievsky, Hersh Zielinsky, Shlamek Makovitsky, Moishe Raukh, Mendel Kviat, Dovid and his uncle Israel Khaym Zielinski, Maniek Raukh, and many others.

By the beginning of 1942, they began to liquidate the camps of Tuczno and Gnojno and sent everyone to the camp at Lojewo (Layove). A large number of youths arrived from the town of Radziejow. In Lojewo, the head of the camp selected Kayla Vishnivska as foreman of the girls (the elder Jew). We should write a second chapter about her, the good things she did. She organized a workshop for seamstresses, headed by Yetta Lntzitzka, for Pshaytsher girls in Lojewo; with ten girls, the work was not too difficult, and quietly they earned a bit of food which they gave to the starving men in the sugar factory. But with it all, we were anxious. We received bad news from our parents at home. Thanks to Kayla Vishnivska, I was able to be free for a week and go home. The others who went home with me for that bitter Passover were Khava Zielinsky, Feyge Pshedetzke, Tova Yakubovitch, Brayna Engel, Brayna Ofnbakh.

We kept apart, in the event the Germans would capture one of us (we were not travelling legally), but we all arrived home. These were difficult days with our close ones for all of us. I found my mother and my eight-year-old brother Levi in the ghetto. They had been thrown out of our home. My family now lived in a small attic room at Avrom Fisher's. My father, Khaim Kladovsky, and my eldest brother had been sent to work a few weeks after I had been sent away, and no one had had any news of them since. I was told my father was killed working at the trains in Inowroclaw (Inovrotslav), but I later learned he was taken to the death camp Amze and murdered there. Tell me, my dear one, where is your grave? Where are your bones? When is the anniversary of your death?

My mother was hungry. She sold everything in order to send me packages to help me endure my suffering. My little brother became small and weak from these problems. He had begun to have a speech impediment. When I left to return to camp, he accompanied me. On the road, he asked, Lushke, take me with you. Lushke, I don't want to die. They will take us all to Chelmno where they will gas and burn us. Little brother, how can I? I have no idea what will happen to me. But Lushke, I don't want to die.

Every Passover I hear Levi's voice. Lushke, I want to live. Lushke, Lushke, Lushke.

I want to live.

Project Coordinator: Roberta Paula Books

Purchase a hardcover copy of *Memorial Book of Przedecz*:
www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/ybip/YBIP_Przedecz.html

To learn more about **Przedecz**, please visit:
www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Przedecz/Przedecz.html





THE PASSOVER SEDER IN CAMP

Skalat (סקאלאט), Ukraine

Skalat is in western Ukraine and, according to its Yizkor book, is one of the oldest Jewish shtetls in Galicia, where Jews had settled in the sixteenth century or earlier. About 4,800 Jews were living there in 1939 before the German invasion.

In 1942, the German opened the Skalat Camp where the forced work ranged from hard labor in a quarry for those who were stronger and healthier, to maintenance tasks such as carrying water, chopping wood, sweeping, hauling garbage, cleaning privies and peeling potatoes in the kitchen for people broken in body and spirit.

This was the setting for “The Passover Seder in Camp,” a chapter from Skalat’s Yizkor book. It tells a story that is similar to that in other Yizkor books, about the ways Jews found to celebrate the holiday in the harsh conditions of the Nazi camps. “Someone suddenly said: ‘Jews, let’s prepare a Seder. Isn’t this the first Seder night?’” And so they did.

It happened after the Pre-Passover ‘action’ in 1943. All the clothes of the victims had been brought to camp for sorting, baling and transporting to Germany. The camp Jews experienced terrible moments in the course of this work. Often someone would recognize his child’s dress, or the clothes of a brother, father or

dear friend. Although their emotions had long since been dulled, a bloodied garment could have a shocking effect on the strained nerves of an inmate. Who could say whether tomorrow or the next day, some other Jew would be sorting his blood-soaked clothes?

Often American dollars or gold coins would be found sewn into the seams of the clothes. The overseers would watch everyone's hands and the ordinary inmate would wonder: "Whom will these enrich? Obviously some officials. But couldn't we better use the gold to rescue ourselves?" A piece of jewelry would fall from a garment to the floor, it would shine for a moment and then the glow would be darkened by the thoughts of one's own perdition.

A certain part of the camp population sought solace in religion. Hassidic young men, such as Asher Geter, Mechel Klein, Nisan Messing and others, would organize prayer sessions. Marking the yahrtzeit and saying the Kaddish prayer were the most moving expressions in this sorrowful existence. The daring to be pious under those conditions gave hope to the

discouraged and brought dreams of liberation to their souls if not to their bodies. For some, faith and prayer could sometimes cancel out decrees.

It was the first night of Passover. The inmates returned from work, tired to the point of exhaustion. They remembered the Festival of Spring and Freedom. Nature is waking up to life: the skies turning blue, the earth green; first born sons are dying, slaves are becoming free people. The brutal overseers are assailed by various plagues. Pharaohs drown. And homes of the past awake in memories.

They remember a table covered in white, candles flicker in silver candlesticks, the Pesach table is prepared, the cups of wine in place. At the head of the table a seat is pillowed for the Master of the Seder to eat reclined, as a king.



Children of the Hebrew School in Skalat, 1937



The *Grina Kloiz* – the Green Chapel Study House – in Skalat

Joy shines all about, encircling wife, children, and friends. Remembering this, eyes start to glisten.

Someone suddenly said: “Jews, let’s prepare a Seder. Isn’t this the first Seder night? The Kommandants are carrying on over there – we

can take care that they don’t catch us. We’ll have the Seder! “Lookouts were posted at the gate and on the staircase. If anyone were to appear, an agreed-upon signal would be given and everyone would pretend to be asleep on their cots.

The secret quickly spread from ear to ear and soon the very air was filled with it. A table is born. From out of the table grow two burning candles. A bit of matzo lies as a reminder, a tin plate on the table bears haroset and maror. Three Jews sit on a bench and prepare to repeat the wondrous tale of bondage and freedom. "Today we are still slaves, but next year we shall be free men!" The walls are draped with dark shadows that move surreptitiously with the flames of the flickering candles. Rows of heads look down from the double-decked cots, their frightened glances turn in anticipation to the pale light from the Seder table. Hearts tremble, uplifted in ecstasy a shiver rises from the depths of the sleeping shelves, from the corners, from under the table, from beneath the beds, from all of the crowded surroundings. The room is filled with a mass of human heads, resembling frightened ghosts. They want to hear the reading of the Haggadah.

The familiar melodies rise: Avodim Hoyino (we were slaves)...times gone by...once there was a conspiracy in B'nai Brak... quiet!...quieter!.. They will hear us! The singing grows softer and

softer, the ears, sharpened by fear, bend to the melody but it is hard to catch the living words... quieter! Still more quiet lest we be heard. The path to the heart is open, and the melody is felt even if not heard. From here it is but a short step to the tear ducts. Soon everyone is crying. The very air is transformed into a lake of tears. Everyone remembers the past, yesterday, today...

From the table one can barely hear the intoned words: Blood...Frogs...Lice... – and all about one feels the impact of the plagues. Were there camps in Egypt?

The great mystery of faith, though mixed with pain, descends over everyone's spirit and proffers a measure of solace.

Asher Getter chants the Hallel (hymn of praise). When the four cups have been filled with tears, Nisan Messing ends with the allegorical song, Chad Gadyo (I had a little Kid).

Thus the camp inmates celebrated the night of the first Seder.

Project Coordinator: Kathryn M. Wallach

Purchase a hardcover copy of *Skalat, Ukraine: A Memorial Anthology for a Community Destroyed in the Holocaust*:

www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/ybip/YBIP_Skalat.html

To learn more about **Skalat**, please visit:

www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/skalat1/skalat.html





THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD – PASSOVER

Chorzele (כאָזשעל/חורזיל), Poland

“The Feast of Unleavened Bread – Passover” from the Yizkor book of Chorzele, Poland is a happier story than the other Yizkor book chapters in this Passover guide because it recounts the celebration of the holiday in happier times.

The town is in east central Poland, 70 miles northeast of Plock and 70 miles north of Warsaw. The Kehila was formed at the turn of the 1820s and 1830s. Its people were craftsmen, traders, laborers and owners of shops, bakeries, an inn as well as most of small industries such as the brewery, brick factory, and tannery. In 1905, 2,301 Jews lived there and in 1939 the population was 1,300. After the outbreak of World War II, all Jews, except for three families, left Chorzele.

The chapter starts with the matzo baking that began after Purim and describes all the rituals that followed: the cleaning of the houses, the search for leaven, and all the preparations for the Seder. And then the Seder itself, which was celebrated much as it still is today.

When Adar comes, joy increases. When Purim ended, matzo baking would start. We would bake at the home of Rachel-Leah, who brought us milk every morning. The kneading woman [kneterke] sat in a room. She kneaded the

dough. Twelve women wearing white aprons that covered their entire body stood face to face on both sides of the table that was supported by stilts. They would roll the dough until it was thin and round. The dough would be given to

the redler who made holes along the matzo with a studded roller. Then it would be given over to the sheiber who placed it into the baking oven, from which kosher for Passover matzos emerged.

All the furniture was taken out of the houses and placed in the yard. The double windows would be removed. The rooms would be whitewashed. The aroma of spring encouraged and awakened the desire to act, do, and help.

The search for leaven would be conducted on the night before the festival. Crumbs of bread would be placed in several corners. Father would take a wooden cooking spoon in one hand and a bundle of duck feathers in the other hand. I would hold the candle. Father would recite the blessing for the search for leaven, and we children would go and seek out the leaven. He would sweep the leaven into the cooking spoon with the feathers, cover it with a cloth, tie it, and burn everything completely.

After the search for leaven, we would go to the wooden bridge at the Orzyc River, where we would immerse the new tableware that would be used for the first time on this festival. We would draw water for the matzo shmura with a special pitcher, to use for baking the next day, the eve of the festival. At home, the Passover dishes would be taken down from the piekelek.

I had the job of taking down all the books to air them out, including the large, leather bound set of Talmuds and about a hundred other books. They had to be removed from the shelf and checked page by page due to the suspicion that crumbs of chometz might have fallen into the pages while eating or reading.

On the morning of the eve of the festival, prior to 9:00 a.m., we would quickly eat three rolls of bread with coffee. 9:00 a.m. would be the transfer time. We would have to eat on the porch, for the inside was already sealed off from chometz.

We would go to bake matzo shmura. Here, the men did all the work: they kneaded, rolled, etc. They recited verses and sang. The matzo shmura was very expensive, and was designated only for father, and only for the Seder nights.

In the afternoon, we would eat potatoes with borscht. This borscht would be brought from the cellar, where there was a barrel of beets that had been picked for some time, had become sharp and sour, with the taste of good wine.

We would go to Fiszlender to get a haircut (he lived in a one room attic). Many people would be waiting.

He received a “machinka” from his daughter in America, but he did not know how to use it, so he continued to work with scissors. He was not the only Jewish barber in the town. There were people in the town who grew their hair like monks. There was also Notka Yaakov-Pesach’s who had a haircutting machine. I would say to him, “Notka, I am already big, and I want you to leave me a grzyba.”

I went to the son of Chaim to purchase a hat that he had brought from Warsaw. He would look at me, measure my head size with his glance, and say, “Number 32 will fit you.” It did not fit. He would put two fingers on one side of the hat, two fingers on the other side, and pull it forcefully until they had made a knock. He put

This is a handwritten document in Hebrew, likely a legal or financial record. The text is written in a cursive script and is organized into two columns separated by a vertical line. The document appears to be a record of the sale of chometz (leavened products) from the eve of Passover, as indicated by the caption. The text is dense and covers most of the page.

The sale of chometz [leavened products] document from the eve of Passover



A view of the cemetery

the hat back on my head and said, "It fits you," as he pulled me to the mirror on the wall.

At home I found out that they brought a new coat from Feivel-Berl. I was fortunate, for he was the best tailor, and he would sew for me. At Father's order, they would make it wider, so it would also fit me five years hence. I went to the synagogue with the new coat and hat, and felt like a scarecrow in the fields.

There was a spring wind, and an encouraging feeling. The prayers were recited by Father in the festive melody that was unique to him. I believe that the festivals have their own additional soul.

At home, all the preparations for the Seder were made. Father would wear his kittel. There would be a large pillow on the chair to lean upon, as a sign of royalty. Everyone sat around the long table in a crowded fashion. Many exacting preparations had been made. The maror [bitter herbs] was checked to ensure they were strong, and the charoses was checked to see it has been made properly. There were three matzos on a plate, covered with a cloth. Everything was set up in accordance with the laws of

Passover: the shank bone, the karpas, etc., some on the right side and some on the left.

Father was a scholar, but he nevertheless reviewed the laws, even though he knew them well, to ensure that no error would be made, Heaven forbid, in any of the minutiae of the Seder.

We would wait impatiently. We were very hungry. The weakness penetrated to the

heart, but we sat patiently, with appreciation and reverence for everything that Father was doing. He began by explaining the essence of the festival, the exodus from Egypt. We did not rush, for it is a mitzvah to tell the story at length.

We filled the cups of wine. Father recited Kiddush out loud, and we recited it after him. The youngest present asked the four questions. Every word was a question. When he finished, we all broke out in unison in the recitation of “We were slaves.” Only someone who has read books about those who were captive or sold as slaves could understand, “and today we are free” in its unique sense.

We recited the haggadah, and stopped to listen to explanations and commentary, until we finally reached the meal. The first course was a hardboiled egg in salt water. We ate with an appetite. However, I suddenly got a stomach ache. The pain grew worse, and I writhed. However, I had to continue on.

Father took the maror with his fingers. The portion was the size of an olive [kezayit], which

is equivalent to a small egg. He swallowed it, and it got stuck in his throat. We were afraid. Avraham-Michel stuck his finger into Father’s mouth, to take remove maror. There were tears in Father’s eyes. However, he quickly resumed the Seder as if nothing had happened.

The Seder continued until after midnight. We drank the four cups in accordance with the law. We ate the afikoman (a custom that turned into a law because it was a custom). Wearily but with excitement, we recited Chad Gadya.

Throughout the festival we played with nuts: nis and druit, or seven gribelech, three next to three and one on top. We tossed a nut from afar. If it fell on top, we would take everything. If it fell on one of the three, we would only take that. I always lost my nuts.

The same Seder took place on the second night. However the additional soul was somewhat diminished, it did not tolerate repetition.

Project Coordinator: Susan Kittner Huntting

Purchase a hardcover copy of *Memorial Book of the Community of Chorzel* (Chorzele, Poland):

www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/ybip/YBIP_Chorzele.html

To learn more about **Chorzele**, please visit:

www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Chorzele/Chorzele.html



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Led by highly experienced staff, this 10 day travel and study trip will allow participants to explore Jewish heritage sites in Poland, and help clear-up a long neglected cemetery. Along the way, we will learn from rabbis, scholars, dignitaries, and community leaders, who will offer first-hand insights regarding the imperative (and challenges) of cleaning-up cemeteries in accordance with Jewish law. And we will discuss how local Polish communities view Jewish cemeteries in their towns, the need to preserve Jewish memory, and more.

◆ PROGRAM COST ◆

\$3,099 USD of which \$1,375 USD is eligible for tax-deductions for those eligible for charitable contributions. Reserve your space with a \$1,000 deposit. A Note: Cost is per-person, double occupancy with an option for a single supplement. Airfare is not included.

◆ WHO SHOULD APPLY ◆

Adults over the age of 18 are welcomed. Children 15 and up must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.



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This 10-day immersive program focuses on the role of Jewish cemeteries today in preserving the memory and legacy of former Jewish communities. Participants will help clean-up a cemetery, learn about symbols on tombstones, the general state of Jewish cemeteries in Poland after the Holocaust, efforts to preserve them from both a communal, political, and Halachic perspective, and consider the lessons which can be gleaned to inform our own life choices today.



WE WILL VISIT A NUMBER OF PLACES/SITES, INCLUDING:

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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 Nazis.

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 Joel Alpert for overseeing the JewishGen Press.



Lance Ackerfeld was born in Australia and settled on Kibbutz Yiftah, Israel in 1977 where he has lived with his family since then. By day, he is presently a senior database and BI expert in the global “Netafim” company and after work, 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 10 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.

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. He spent most of his career in journalism at the New York Daily News, NPR and Congressional Quarterly, and until recently, was a senior editor at the Pew Research Center.

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 that
JewishGen has translated, please visit:
www.JewishGen.org/press



The KehilaLinks project is managed by Susana Leistner Bloch, and until her recent and untimely passing in February, Barbara Ellman, z”l. Barbara began volunteering for JewishGen nearly two decades ago, and oversaw the creation of dozens of KehilaLinks pages which have helped so many thousands of people research their roots. Her work was very much “behind the scenes,” engaging with dozens of project coordinators and technical volunteers to provide support for the development and maintenance of KehilaLinks websites. However, she also traveled to conferences whereby she would make presentations, recruit potential volunteers, and speak passionately about how KehilaLinks served as a critical component of JewishGen’s suite of resources. Barbara will be deeply missed by everyone who knew her, and we continue this project in her memory. For more information, and to get involved, please visit: www.KehilaLinks.JewishGen.org.



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