

News from *Remember Us*

In this issue:
Yom Hashoah
Photo Essay



Spring/
Summer
2009

“So long as we live they too shall live, for they are part of us as we remember them”

Youth and Yom Hashoah: Creating a Continuum of Remembrance



Photo: Irwin Shirwo

How will we make a bridge of memory between the final generation of Holocaust survivors and the rising generations of young Jews who will never be able to meet a survivor? As individuals, institutions, and a community, we are charged by history with creating a culture of memory that will ensure that there is a continuum of remembrance, and that memory inspires us to make a better world.

This issue is devoted to the thoughts and actions of people who are responding to this unique moment of memory in our unfolding Jewish history. We offer these

ideas in the hope that the reader will be moved to engage this timely question—the transmission of memory—and help provide opportunities for our young people to be strengthened and empowered through their inevitable encounter with the legacy of the Holocaust.

These stories of continuity come from individuals, synagogues, supplementary schools, and agencies all over the country. The theme of each story is how continuity is being created by individual acts of understanding and commitment.

This year the Remember Us concept of remembrance—one child remembering

one child—was incorporated into Yom Hashoah, Holocaust remembrance commemorations, across the country. We worked with agencies in several cities (Ashland, OR; Boston; Harrisburg; Ithaca; Milwaukee; Nassau County, NY; Portland; San Francisco; Santa Rosa, CA) to explore ways for children to become meaningful participants at Yom Hashoah. The ideas generated by this pilot effort are presented as a photo essay on pages 4–5. ■

Thanks to Rabbi Irving “Yitz” Greenberg, and Barbara Reiss of Upstart Bay Area, for help in clarifying concepts of continuity.

New Participating Communities

Remember Us welcomes the following communities in which children have participated in the project. May they go from strength to strength.

Australia

Sydney
Coogee Synagogue

United States of America

Alabama

Huntsville
Temple B'nai Shalom

California

Calabasas
Congregation Or Ami
Palo Alto
Congregation Emek Beracha

District of Columbia

Washington, D.C.
Washington Hebrew
Congregation

Florida

Coral Gables
Temple Judea

Illinois

Glencoe
North Shore Congregation Israel
Wilmette
Congregation Sukkat Shalom

Maryland

Damascus
Congregation Or Chadash
Potomac
The Diener School

Massachusetts

Boston
Jewish Community Relations
Council of Greater Boston
Brookline
Congregation Kehillath Israel
Needham
Temple Beth Shalom

Missouri

St. Louis
United Hebrew Congregation

New Jersey

Cherry Hill
Congregation M'kor Shalom
East Brunswick
East Brunswick Jewish Center
Mount Laurel
Adath Emanu-el

New York

Brooklyn
Congregation Mt. Sinai
Glen Cove
Holocaust Memorial &
Tolerance Center of Nassau
County
Great Neck
Temple Israel of Great Neck
Plainview
Manetto Hill Jewish Center
Schenectady
Congregation Gates of Heaven
Spring Valley
Temple Beth El

North Carolina

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Temple Israel

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Portland Jewish Academy

Pennsylvania

Philadelphia
Mishkan Shalom Synagogue
Richboro
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The Woodlands
Congregation Beth Shalom of
the Woodlands

Virginia

Centreville
Temple Beth Torah

Meet the Remember Us Board

Michael Berenbaum, PhD (Los Angeles) is a scholar, professor, rabbi, writer, and filmmaker, who specializes in the study of the memorialization of the Holocaust. He was project director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and played a major role in its creation. He has served as president and CEO of the Survivor of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, and is currently director of the Sigi Ziering Institute: Exploring the Ethical and Religious Implications of the Holocaust, located at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles, CA. He is the author and editor of eighteen books.

Ruth Goldberg, Attorney (Philadelphia) serves the Jewish community through Federation, education, and social service agencies.

Samara Hutman, Board President (Santa Monica) serves her community as an active leader in the arts and education. She has been an effective change agent in restoring the arts to underserved public schools, forming religious community, and bringing Holocaust memory into a wider community.

Harry Pelz (Milwaukee) is retired from a successful career in business. He was CEO of the largest independently-owned paper recycling and brokerage company in the U.S., which became a founding member of Recycle America Alliance. He is involved in several charitable organizations in the Milwaukee area, and serves as board president of a Holocaust education and resource center.

Janis Sherman Popp (Palo Alto) is a recipient of the University of Judaism's Merit Award and the National Community Leadership Award from the Jewish Theological Seminary. She has been a career volunteer in the Jewish community for over 35 years. She served as editor-in-chief of the conservative movement's Outlook Magazine, and president of the Board of Directors of the Bureau of Jewish Education in San Francisco.

Barbara Tobin, MPA, Treasurer (Sebastopol, CA) has a background in Jewish communal work, nonprofit administration, and human resources management. She was the founding administrator of Remember Us, and continues to serve as the Names Database Manager.

Status of the Remember Us Project

Remember Us: The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project offers an invitation to children who are preparing for bar/bat mitzvah to remember individual children who were lost in the Holocaust before they could be called to the Torah. We recommend ways for children to express their commitment to memory, and ask that they consider dedicating their tikkun olam and mitzvah projects in the name of the remembered children.

10,176 children have received names from Remember Us, in more than 400 congregations in 34 states and 6 countries.

Participation is always voluntary, and there is no charge. The concept has been endorsed by all denominations. ■

Stories of Continuity

Continuity through the Life of an Individual

This bar mitzvah had a very surprising ending. It was the first bar mitzvah of a student who chose to embrace the Wisconsin Remember Us Initiative. Sam Habush Sinykin became bar mitzvah on September 20, 2008 at Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun in Milwaukee. His guests were greeted with a brochure that announced that Sam would be remembering Schmuel Burstein, a twelve-year-old boy from Poland who was murdered at Treblinka during the Holocaust and never had the opportunity to have his own bar mitzvah. Prior to beginning his d'var Torah, he explained that, as he worked diligently to master being a bar mitzvah, he kept Schmuel Burstein in his thoughts and in his heart. Sam talked to the congregation about the importance of his family, and the centrality of our Jewish community in Milwaukee, in Israel and of k'lal Yisroel to his life. Then, he caused my heart to skip a beat and to leave few present with a dry eye. Sam announced that from this day forward, his middle Hebrew name would be Schmuel for Schmuel Burstein, who he vowed to remember not just on this special day but for the rest of his life. This new adult in the eyes of the Jewish community understood the tragic impact of the Holocaust on the Jewish people, but also embraced the enduring vitality of Jewish life on his very special bar mitzvah day.

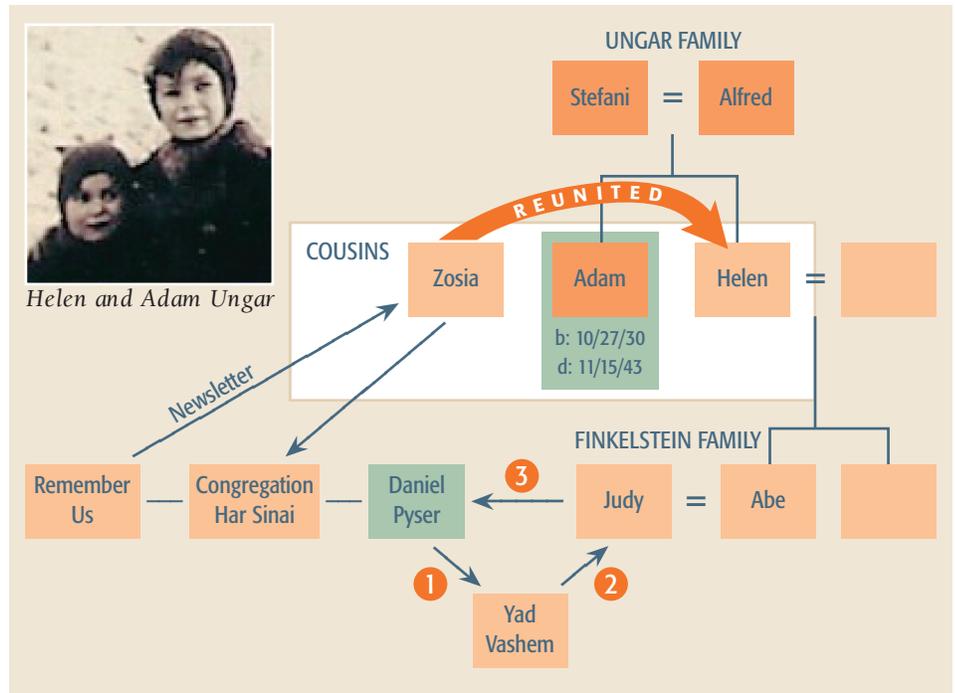
—From the Wisconsin Remember Us Initiative

Continuity in a Family

Emily's Bat Mitzvah was this past September. She was given the name Michal Abramovitz. Though we couldn't find much about her or her family, Emily upholds her memory daily. She was given a quilt as a gift and Michal's name is right beside Emily's. The older people love that she is doing this, and it has given Emily a sense of understanding that she didn't have before. Emily says the mourner's kaddish for Michal every Shabbot. We have a son who has a Bar Mitzvah this coming March and plan on participating again and

Continued on page 5

An Incredible Subsequent Connection



The Remember Us newsletter published a story last year (Fall/Winter 2008) about a bar mitzvah named Daniel Pyser and the research he did on the boy he was given to remember, Adam Ungar. The article included this paragraph:

Adam was sent to a camp and his sister Helen was taken in by a Polish family and then a Czech family.

About one month after the newsletter was published this is what happened:

Daniel's rabbi received an email from a person named Zosia who lives in Canada. She had just purchased a computer and was learning how to surf the web when she came across the Remember Us newsletter. Inside she found the story of Daniel's remembrance of Adam Ungar, the young boy who perished. She was surprised and very emotional because Adam Ungar was her cousin. Adam's sister Helen survived the Holocaust and ended up staying for some time with Zosia's family in Czechoslovakia before she came to the United States in 1954.

Daniel's rabbi connected Zosia with the Pyser family who in turn connected her with Helen. Through Daniel and the Remember Us Project, Helen and Zosia have rekindled a lost family connection.

Daniel writes:

"When my mom told me what had happened with Zosia; how she read my article and contacted my rabbi, I thought it was exciting. Knowing that remembering Adam at my Bar Mitzvah impacted his family was meaningful in itself. However, being able to connect two lost family members through the article in the newsletter is incredible. I never expected to have such an impact on a family just by doing this mitzvah. It started off with receiving the name of a boy who perished in the Holocaust and has turned into a lasting connection with his family." ■

Help bring the Remember Us concept of remembering a child lost in the Holocaust to another young person who is preparing for bar/bat mitzvah

Donations can be made online at www.remember-us.org

or mailed to

Remember Us Project
2777 Yulupa Ave., #273
Santa Rosa, CA 95405

Thank you.

Youth Participation in Yom Hashoah Commemorations

Within one generation Yom Hashoah commemorations will become very different. Today they honor those who survived. In the future, *we believe that they will also honor those who remember.*

The Remember Us Project this year started working with agencies and institutions around the country on ideas about bringing young people into Yom Hashoah, to give them a place at the table, to provide a connection to lost children, and to honor them from the start for their witness to memory.



School Visits

In Santa Rosa, California, children from a local public high school attended the Yom Hashoah commemoration, in connection with the Holocaust study project in their social studies class. Their interest and commitment was honored by the assembly.



Art Projects



Artwork related to Holocaust study, including memorials made for individual children, were displayed in several cities. Children in some cities received names from

Remember Us to incorporate in the Butterfly Project.



Legacy Statements

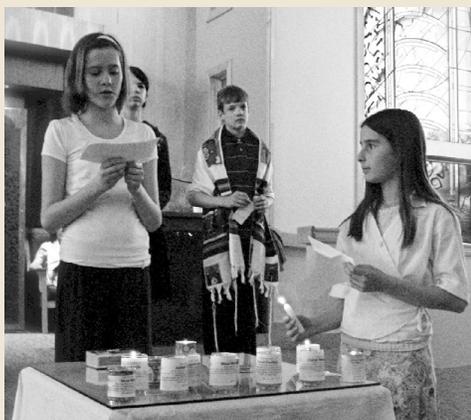
Hillel students at one commemoration were invited to prepare their reflections on the transmission of Holocaust memory to their generation. Spokespeople for their community presented their thoughts.

Walks In Glen Cove, New York, there was a community walk at the Holocaust Education and Tolerance Center. Participants each received the name of a lost child, which they displayed as they walked in his/her honor. In Boston, the JCRC event included a walk to the Holocaust memorial following a program at Faneuil Hall. Children lined both sides of the path, each displaying the name of a lost child.



Multi-Generation Presentations

In Santa Rosa, California, three generations of one family told the story of their experiences in and related to the Holocaust, emphasizing how it had shaped their lives as generation succeeds generation.



Children Lighting Candles

In Ashland, Oregon, each child prepared a memorial candle with the name and biography of one child. At the commemoration, the children were the candle lighters, and read the names and stories to the congregation.



Young Musicians

Youth and teen musicians provided musical interludes to the commemoration proceedings.



Escorts

High school and college students acted as escorts for survivors. They were paired with survivors upon arrival and stayed with them throughout the events.



Partnering with *Unto Every Person There Is a Name*

From Harrisburg, Pennsylvania the Federation's Education Director sends this report:

I'd like to thank you again for allowing us to take part in your project by using your information sheets on children who perished in the Shoah. We had our annual *Unto Every Person There Is A Name* program last week. We conducted an experiment in that the opening ceremony (about an hour) was totally conducted by students in grades 6, 7, 8 (about 35 representing the different congregations and schools). We were pleased with a larger turn-out since each child brought parents, grandparents and siblings to the program. In addition to reading poetry and prose about the Shoah, each student was given an information sheet from your project. They prefaced their readings with "I will remember" and then read about the child who perished. Connecting contemporary children to actual children of the Shoah made it very "real" to our students and they were very moved by the experience.

After having used your excellent materials, I am thinking about expanding on your idea for next year. I am in the process of sending a letter and information sheets to our local Holocaust survivors and Second Generation members requesting information (the same type given in your info sheets) on their relatives who perished as children during the Shoah. (Both of my parents were Holocaust survivors and I created info sheets on my aunts and uncles who died as young children. These sheets were read by my students last week and it had a very profound impact upon me that evening). I'm hoping that by personalizing the info sheets, it will create a stronger connection between the generations.

Thank you very much for your generosity and support. I think your project is excellent and it added so much meaning to our Yom Hashoah observance.

Stories of Continuity

Continued from page 3

then again in September for another daughter's Bat Mitzvah.

—From a family in Pensacola, Florida

Continuity in a Synagogue

Our b'nai mitzvah students first participated in Remember Us in 2006. This was the basis of our congregation's first-ever commemoration of Yom HaShoah, and people were so moved that it is now an annual event.

I read about the Painted Prayers project in your newsletter (see link at bottom of column —Ed.) which includes creating watercolor paintings based on the study of Psalm 23, saying the names and biographies of the remembered children, and lighting Yahrzeit candles for them. Our Yom HaShoah program is based on these ideas. In addition, we have a speaker, songs, and poems. Of course, students also remember at their bar/bat mitzvah.

The students are quite serious and engaged, even those who tend to goof around. Twice this event has been on the last day of their public school vacation and required some of them to come back early from trips in order to be there. Students are drawn in by hearing survivors tell their stories, and the adults are drawn in by the students' participation.

—From a Cantor in Ithaca, NY

Continuity in the Life of Klal Yisrael

A recent bar mitzvah said this from the bimah: When one man had all of the power in Germany, millions of Jews were exterminated. Today as I stand on the bimah, I am living proof that Hitler failed. As part of my mitzvah project I am remembering a child that perished in the Holocaust. His name was Leibele Gelpert. Leibeledied at age six in the massacres at Ponary. He probably wasn't even old enough to understand the Torah and the history of his people before he died. Throughout my life on every Holocaust Remembrance Day I will say Kaddish for Leibeled. In honor of Leibeled I will live out the rest of my Jewish life beginning today."

—From a bar mitzvah

* See the article on Painted Prayers, page 3 at http://www.remember-us.org/pdfs-newsletters/remember_us_fall06.pdf

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