



The Joseph & Belle Braun
Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Stories of Strength: Our Ancestors and the Holocaust

A Note from the Director

One of the most significant and poignant days in our Religious School calendar each year is Yom HaShoah. As we approach this solemn occasion, we face the delicate challenge of teaching our students about the Holocaust. It is crucial to strike a balance—sharing the truth of this harrowing history while also protecting the emotional well-being of our students, ensuring they feel a sense of safety and pride in their Jewish identity.

This year, in 5785/2025, as we mark approximately 600 days of Jewish people in hostage situations, this task felt especially daunting. It is understandable to feel a sense of anxiety about celebrating one's Judaism when so much of our history has been marked by persecution. In many ways, the memory of the Shoah doesn't feel like a simple "never again" scenario. But in preparing our Anshe Emet Joseph & Belle Braun Religious School students to learn about the Holocaust, I found myself thinking: how can we make this educational, personal, and yet celebratory?

This resource is for teachers, students and families to read about resilient Jews who are our very own ancestors. Each person built a beautiful family and after a few generations, these strong Jewish decedents stay connected to their Judaism at Anshe Emet.

May we always be able to share our personal stories with our own children to share with them the strength and pride of our Jewish ancestors. May we both honor those we lost in the Holocaust and celebrate the fortitude of the Jewish people.

Sincerely,

Mardi Caminer

Grodzin Director of Education & Innovation



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Frida Altman

Information courtesy of The Altman Family



Frida is on the left and her brother is on the right

Birthdate:

Birth location: Romania

Story:

Frida was born in a small town in Romania. As a teenager she moved to Budapest with her brother, Chaim. When the Nazis invaded Hungary, they were captured and sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Frida and her brother miraculously survived and were transported to Sweden as refugees before the end of the war. They were reunited there - neither one knew that the other had survived. The rest of her family was murdered by the Nazis. In Sweden they boarded a ship headed to pre-independence Israel but were blocked by the British and were redirected to Cyprus where they lived as refugees for an additional two years. Eventually they got to Israel. Frida met her husband Binyamin Altman and

together they had two children. Her son, Shmuel Altman and his wife Miriam had three children. One of them is Eyal Altman, Benji Altman's dad.

Frida was a loving mother and grandmother who put family above everything else. She lived out the rest of her life in Israel, and did talk about her experience from time to time. Her brother Chaim moved to Canada and then to the US as a young adult. He wrote a book about their experience, called "Abiding Hope: Bearing Witness to the Holocaust" (under the pseudonym Benjamin Samuelson).



The Joseph & Belle Braun
Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Martin Schild

Information courtesy of The Caminer Family



Birthdate: May 31, 1916

Birth location: Hessdorf, Germany

Story:

Martin was born to Ida and Abram Schild and had 3 older sisters: Nelly, Sophie and Erna. He had two uncles, Julius and Joseph, who came to the United State in the late 1800s or early 1900s.

Martin was sent away to boarding school in Dortmund, Germany. In May 1936, after being sponsored by one of his uncles, Martin arrived on the USS Washington to the US. As a passenger on the ship, he won a pie-eating contest.

He settled in Cincinnati, Ohio, where his uncles lived with their families. On his first night at his uncle's home, he was told, "Tonight you speak German, tomorrow English." His love of baseball started within a month or so after arriving in the US. He went to a Cincinnati Reds game and was interviewed by the announcer. He worked for his uncles which helped support his parents and sisters to come to the United States in 1937.

Martin attended night school to learn English and became a U.S. Citizen. In 1941, when he was to be sworn in as a US citizen, he missed the ceremony to enlist in the Army. He was in various training camps until 1943, and then he went to Military Intelligence

Training at Camp Ritchie in Maryland. This was a 16-week course. The US saw the value of his knowledge of the German language. Upon completion, he was sent to Europe and embedded on the front lines with an Anti-Aircraft unit. He was an interpreter or translator, but he conducted interrogations of captured German soldiers. He was on Normandy Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He was in Paris, France, and Brussels, Belgium. At one point, he was injured by shrapnel (pieces of ammunition) and contracted jaundice. He recovered in a hospital in Brussels.

At the end of the war, he returned to the US. In December 1945, he married Rose Strauss, and they moved to Cincinnati. He was a traveling salesman, and she was a hairdresser. Two of their children were born in Cincinnati. They moved to St. Louis and then New Jersey before settling in Chicago, where they had a third child.

Martin never talked to his children about his time in the war. However, he once shared with his daughter that he was a driver for General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who later became President of the United States.

Much of what was learned about his time in the Army was through his photo albums, documents, and items that he kept.

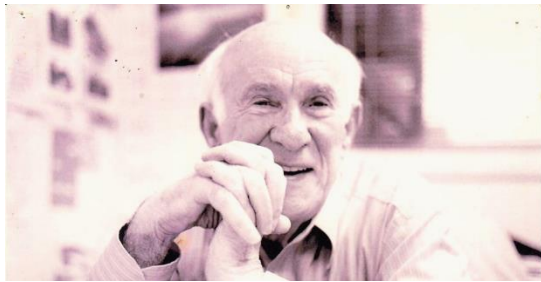
Many similar stories can be read in the book *Sons and Soldiers* by William Collins.



The Joseph & Belle Braun
Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Leon Cooper

Information courtesy of The Carr Family



Leon Cooper (Zade)



Zade on the left

Birthdate: 1929

Birth location: Poland

Story:

Leon Cooper, later known as “Zade” to his family, was born in 1929. Leon grew up in southwest Poland, near the German border. His father owned a dry goods store, and his mother was a homemaker. When Leon was a boy, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. When rumors began to surface about the possibility of a war with Germany in August 1939, Leon’s parents sent him and his two sisters to live with an aunt 40 miles from the border. But, the next month, Nazi forces occupied all of Poland. Leon was twelve days shy of his tenth birthday when the German Army marched into his hometown of Chorzów, Poland, in September 1939.

Leon’s parents rejoined their children, and the family began life as refugees. They resettled in the town of Działoszyce, Poland, a town transformed into a ghetto by Nazi Germany to segregate Jews. Jews wore armbands and had many limitations on their lives. Each day, life became more and more restrictive for Jews. Leon and his family remained in Działoszyce until September 1942.

When World War II began, Leon and his father were taken to a labor camp in Krakow called Plaszov, while his mother and sisters were sent to Belzec. Conditions in the labor camp were harsh—there was not always enough food, sleeping arrangements were overcrowded, and Jewish prisoners were treated poorly.

Shortly afterward, in the summer of 1943, Leon was put to work in Okar Schindler's pots-and-pans factory. Schindler was a German businessman who helped save many Jewish people by employing them in his factories. Schindler made sure that Leon and others had food and were kept as safe as possible during the war. The German guards were not allowed inside the camp, and workers got enough to eat there. Later, the workers in that factory were named “Schindlerjuden,” – Jews who owed their lives to Oscar Schindler.

Later, when Schindler’s camps were closed down, Leon was later sent to a camp in Czechoslovakia. By spring of 1945, he was sick with typhus. But days after he became ill, Russian forces liberated his camp. Around that time, Leon learned that he was the only member of his family who survived. After a period of recovery, 16-year-old Leon came to the United States as a refugee with other teenagers. He arrived in New York in 1946, and after moving a few times, he moved with his best friend to Houston, Texas in January of 1947. Leon had heard that Texas was full of cowboys, which made it seem like an exciting place to live.

Leon completed high school and then was drafted to serve for the US army in the Korean War. He returned to Houston, and soon after he met his wife, Shirley, at the Jewish Community Center. They built a life together, started a small business, and raised two daughters. Their family remained active in the Jewish community and their synagogue, and Israel was a very important part of their lives.

Leon devoted much of his later life to educating others about his experiences during the Holocaust. He spoke at schools, churches, museums, and community gatherings across the state of Texas, using his story to illuminate the realities of history and to underscore the moral imperative of confronting injustice. Through his powerful testimony, he shared enduring lessons, including:

- The importance of compassion and empathy for others, regardless of their background or circumstances
- The moral responsibility to speak out against wrongdoing, even when it is difficult or unpopular
- The danger of silence and complicity in the face of injustice, and the critical need for individuals to take a stand.

Leon also contributed to a famous book and movie about Oskar Schindler, helping to ensure that Schindler's story was told accurately. The movie, "Schindler's List," was released in 1994, and he was proud to have played a role in preserving history.

Leon Cooper passed away in 2015, just before his 60th anniversary to Shirley. Shortly after, his granddaughter Dina gave birth to a daughter and named her Talia Liv in his honor. His legacy continues through his family and the lessons he shared with the world.



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Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Yechezkel (Ezekiel) Gluzman and Hadassah (Elsinka)

Information courtesy of The Epstein Family



Birthdate: October 1925 and October 1928

Birth location: great grandma: Hungary, great grandpa: Poland

Story:

Geffen's family, on his mom's side, is from Israel. His mother's parents, Shmuel and Shifra Sheinfeld, were born in Israel in 1948, just as the state itself was "born." Shmuel's parents made Aliyah from Eastern Europe in the 1920's. Shifra was born to parents who both survived the Holocaust and later moved to Israel.

Shifra's father, Yechezkel Gluzman, was born in Poland in October 1925. Geffen's middle name is Ezekiel after his great grandfather. The Nazis invaded Poland in the fall of 1939 when he was not yet 16 years old. He was the only one of his immediate family to survive the Holocaust. As a young teenager he was a Partisan and hid in the woods with other Jewish Polish people, fighting and running from the Nazis. He came to Israel all alone after the war.

Shifra's mother, Hadassah (or Elsinka, as she was called as a child by her family) was born in Hungary in October 1928. The Nazi's invaded Hungary in the spring of 1944 when she was 15 years old. She was the youngest daughter in a large family. She and her family were captured by the Nazis and sent to a concentration camp called Auschwitz. She and her sister helped each other survive. After the war, she went to Israel, joining an older sister who had lived there for years and years. Her other sister and one surviving brother came to New York.

In Israel, Geffen's great-grandparents met (they were both still teenagers), got married and had three daughters, one of which was Shifra. The parents didn't talk much about their experiences during the war, though Hadassah had a number tattooed on her arm by the Nazis. They were busy with working and raising a family, then grandchildren and travel. When Yechezkel and Hadassah got older, they told their stories to interviewers with Steven Spielberg's Shoah project and took their three daughters on a trip to Poland to visit the camps. Geffen's great-grandfather, Yechezkel, wrote a book about his experiences. The audio tapes, video tapes and book are all ways to ensure that we never forget what happened to them and millions of other Jewish people just a few generations ago.



The Joseph & Belle Braun
Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Max Bank, Phillip and Esther Galin, and Ernst and Gina Eisler

Information courtesy of The Evnin Family

Birthdate:

Birth location:

Story:

Josh's grandfather [Asher, Max, and Noa's great grandfather], Max Bank survived the Holocaust and ultimately immigrated to the United States from Poland. We have his account of his experience, filmed (as part of the Shoah Foundation project) and artifacts from his arrival, name change, the list of concentration camps he survived, and ultimate citizenship documents. Max Bank lost his family in the war/Holocaust and started over in Chicago.

On their maternal side, all my (Karen's) grandparents were survivors. These are Asher, Max, and Noa's great grandparents. They were builders of the state of Israel.

On my father/their Saba's side: my grandparents, Phillip and Esther Galin, came from Poland and arrived in Israel after the war with my father as a baby. They were settled as refugees and ultimately received the support necessary to build their lives in Israel. The rest of Esther's family was killed in the Holocaust. Phillip had two brothers who also managed to escape to Israel at different times during the war.

On my mother's/their Safta's side: my grandparents, Ernst and Gina Eisler, escaped to Israel from Austria during the war. Gina was able to escape with her brothers, their wives, and their mother (which was unusual because she was already older, and travel was difficult and expensive). Ernst lost all his family in the Holocaust.



The Joseph & Belle Braun
Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Morris and Rose Stal

Information courtesy of The Freilich Family



Rose and Morris Stal

Birthdate: Morris- September 1, 1919 & Rose- July 1919

Birth location: Morris- Radom, Poland & Rose- Przytyk, Poland

Story:

Morris Stal was born on September 1st, 1919 in Radom Poland. As a young child, he moved to a smaller town about 20 miles away called Szydlowiec. Szydlowiec was a predominantly Jewish town. He lived comfortably and spoke fondly of his childhood there. Both Radom and Szydlowiec were turned into Ghettos once the war started. My grandfather was one of the last people to leave the Ghetto. He was then taken to a few different labor camps and then Auschwitz. He was liberated by the Soviet Army on May 8th, 1945, while on a march

from Auschwitz. He then went to the Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp in Germany where he met my grandmother.

Rose Stal was born Rose Bojmal in July 1919. She was born and raised in a small religious town, called Przytyk, in Poland. Observing Judaism was a big part of her family's life. Once the war started, she was taken to various work camps and used her skills as a seamstress. She was eventually taken to Auschwitz and then another labor camp where she was also liberated by the Soviet Army on May 8th, 1945. Following her liberation, she went to the Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp in Germany. This is where she met my grandfather. They lived there for 5 years before immigrating to the United States. During their time in Feldafing, they got married and had two sons. My mother was born a few years after they arrived in the United States. Both of my grandparents lost most of their family members. My grandfather talked about his experiences often and was filmed discussing his time during the war through Steven Spielberg's Shoah foundation. However, my grandmother did not like to talk about her time during the war and there is a lot we do not know about her story. Both of my grandparents instilled the importance of being proud of our Jewish heritage and the importance of keeping it alive. They have also served as examples of resilience, hope, and love.



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Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Chonna Applebaum

Information courtesy of Danielle Goldman



Birthdate: March 28, 1905

Birth location: Wyszow, Poland

Story:

My Great Grandpa (Zeida), Chonna (Charlie) Applebaum, was born and raised in Wyszow, Poland. Charlie was active and well known in Zionist and Socialist groups in Wyszow. Tensions were rising in Poland, and Charlie knew he couldn't stay out of trouble for long, so he left. Later on, after the 1939 Nazi invasion, most of Charlie's family was killed in Auschwitz.

Charlie went to Cuba; the US would not take him until he stayed in Cuba for 2 years. In Cuba, he met and fell in love with my Great Grandma (Bubby), Ida Wolkin, who had left Russia. She left for the US first, and he went to visit her during an organized trip but was not allowed to stay. He stayed illegally and married her, they had a son, and he applied for citizenship – and he then was jailed. He could've been deported, but the US pardoned him, and he was released. He went on to remain active in Zionist and Socialist groups in Brooklyn.



The Joseph & Belle Braun
Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Howard Melton

Information courtesy of The Lechter Family



Howard pointing to a photo of him and his wife on their wedding day

Birthdate: February 13, 1931

Birth location: Kaunas, Lithuania

Story:

Howard Melton was born in 1931 in Kaunas, Lithuania. He lived with his parents and two sisters, and his father worked in a shoe factory. Life was simple but difficult.

When Howard was 10 years old, Germany invaded Lithuania, and his family's life changed forever. Jewish families, including his own, were forced to wear Stars of David on their clothing and follow strict laws. Soon, they were moved to a crowded ghetto, where there was little food, and many people died from hunger and hard labor. Howard lost many family members there.

In 1942, his mother sent him and his sisters to a work camp, hoping to keep them safe. But a year later, his mother and sisters were taken away, and he never saw them again.

Howard was sent to several concentration camps, including the notorious Dachau. He was forced to work long hours with almost no food.

Despite the terrible conditions, Howard found a friend named Albert. They stuck together, helping each other survive. They buried potatoes to eat later, even though they rotted.

In April 1945, as American soldiers got closer, the Germans forced the prisoners on a 10-day march. Many did not survive. One morning, Howard woke up to find the guards had disappeared. Hours later, American soldiers arrived, freeing them and giving them food.

Howard was extremely weak and spent two years in the hospital recovering. Eventually, he moved to the United States, learned English, and settled in Milwaukee. He reunited with his father and met the love of his life, Evelyn. They got married and had four children.

Howard shared his story with schools and communities, teaching people to treat others with kindness and stand up against hate. His message was simple: "Treat others the way you want to be treated."

To read more and hear Howard speak, follow these links:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/456ba0a5e39f43d09dadddae1782d473>

<https://youtu.be/qVvJ-hFy6GA?si=KFPowZjrUXx5eQ2D>



The Joseph & Belle Braun
Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Rubin and Luba Literman

Information courtesy of The Levine Family



Birthdate: 1923

Birth location: Plock, Poland and Stopnica, Poland

Story:

Rubin Literman was born in Plock, Poland and attended a Jewish High School there. He was one of eight children, 7 brothers and one sister. His father was a merchant. After graduating high school, Rubin and three of his brothers set up an accounting office.

There was local antisemitism, but the Jews were able to go about their business and ignore it, until September 1, 1939 when the Germans invaded Poland. Plock was taken over almost immediately, and the Jews were forced to live in a ghetto without rights of privileges. Two of Rubins brothers tried to flee the ghetto and enter the Russian zone, but were later captured, taken to Auschwitz, and did not survive.

In October 1942 all the children from the ghetto including Rubin and one of his brothers, were gathered and brought by truck to a concentration camp called Skarczisko. His brother tried to escape but was stopped and brought back on the truck. Three days after, everyone left in the ghetto was taken to Treblinka where no one survived. Rubin remained

in Skarczisko where he had to perform hard labor in a munition factory for two years. Everyone tried to look healthy since those who appeared ill and unable to work were sent away and did not return.

As the Russians drew near, the Nazi's moved the men working at Skarczisko to Buchenwald and the women, including Rubin's future wife, Luba, to Leipzig. In Buchenwald he managed to send secret messages to Luba and continued working in a munition factory. One day, there was an explosion which killed all of Rubin's friends. After 8 months, as the Americans drew near, he was put in a cattle car of a train to Theresianstadt where he was liberated on May 8, 1945. Rubin hoped to unite with family and friends from Plock but sadly learned that nobody had survived.

Fortunately, he was reunited with Luba in Germany while working as a police sergeant. Because of United States quota limitations, the couple had to wait four years in Germany before being allowed entry into the US where they moved to Buffalo. In 1981 he visited a group of survivors in Jerusalem where each person brought a rock with the names of lost family members engraved. He always impressed on his children the importance of carrying on so that the memories are not lost.

Growing up, Luba and her siblings went to Hebrew School every day. She was unable to go to High School due to Nazi restrictions imposed on Jews after they invaded in September 1939. They forced the Jewish residents of Stopnica to wear yellow stars of David on their arm and enforced curfews. Luba's family stayed because they thought it wasn't too bad and her father's business was still relatively successful. Her father was an Orthodox Jew and owned a successful business selling yard goods.

In 1941 the Nazis started taking people in Stopnica to labor camps. In 1942, they said if all the young people will willingly go to the labor (concentration) camps, then they won't touch the older generation. So Luba and four of her siblings who weren't married, went to the camps. Luba's parents, her oldest brother, and oldest sister stayed. The older siblings stayed because they had young children who they did not want to leave behind.

Luba was sent to a very hard concentration camp: Skarzysko, where she worked in an ammunition factory. The man in charge of Luba took her under his wing and made sure she did not get the very hard work, or else she would not have survived. In the camp, Luba had to sleep in crowded barracks and always shared a bed with her sister. Later, Luba was put on a crowded cattle car and taken to Leipzig. There, she worked at another concentration camp.

At the beginning of 1945 the Americans or Russians drew very close, so the Germans forced everyone in the camp to start a long, hard walk to Germany. Luba and the other

women would get together secretly to recite poems, sing, and cultivate hope. After 2 months of walking and living in the woods, the group arrived in Germany and the Russians made sure the Germans were no longer a threat. A kind Russian officer gave Luba and a few other young women horses so they could go back to Poland. Eventually, she made her way to the same place in Germany as Rubin, and they were married shortly after the war.



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Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Bayla “Bella” Mann (Bubbi) and Chaim “Henry” Mann (Zayde)

Information courtesy of The Mann Family



(Left) The entire family at Bubbi & Zayde's wedding in April of 1941

(Right) The couple in Minneapolis, Minnesota

Birthdate: married in their early 20's in 1941

Birth location: Gordz, Lithuania

Story:

Bayla (“Bella”) and Chaim (“Henry”) Mann were born and raised in a small town called Gordz in Lithuania. They went to school there, and Bayla studied to become a nurse. In 1939, when they were both in their early 20s, they got married. But just two years later, in 1941, the Nazis invaded Lithuania. They marched through Gordz and burned the town to the ground.

The Nazis forced all 400 Jewish families in Gordz into the town's marketplace. Under heavy guard, they were kept there for three days without food or water. Then, they were taken to Kovno Ghetto, a slave labor camp in Lithuania.

Life in the camp was extremely hard. People were always hungry and weak. Bayla once tried to get an extra ration of potatoes, but a Nazi officer hit on the head. She suffered from migraines for the rest of her life.

After two years of enduring hardship, Henry, Bayla, Henry's sister Hanna, and two other Jewish men came up with a plan to escape. They had hidden money in their clothing when the Nazis first arrived, and they used it to pay a German Catholic farmer named Yoroslav Rakevcious to help them.

The farmer smuggled them out of the ghetto by disguising them as Catholics. They shaved their heads, wore crosses, and hid during the day. At night, they worked on Yoroslav's farm in exchange for food and shelter. The farmer's wife was deeply religious and believed that helping them would bring her and her husband to heaven. Thanks to their kindness, Henry, Bayla, Hanna, and the two others survived.

Sadly, none of the other 400 Jewish families from Gordz survived, including Bayla and Henry's parents and relatives—except for Hanna.

In 1945, after years of hiding, Bayla and Henry were finally freed when Russian soldiers defeated the Nazis. They were placed in a camp for displaced people in the American Zone of Germany. After 18 months, they traveled to the United States and eventually settled in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In America, they worked hard as painters and truck drivers and eventually started Mann's Kosher Poultry business. Later, they moved to Miami Beach and went into real estate. They lived in Miami for decades, where Henry passed away in the late 1980s at around 70 years old, and Bayla passed away in the mid-1990s in her late 70s.

Bayla and Henry's story is one of bravery, survival, and hope. Thanks to their strength and the kindness of a few, they built a new life and left behind a lasting legacy.



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Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Lynne and Roger Dukan

Information courtesy of The Markin Family



Roger Dukan post-war photos in Germany and Lynne & Roger Dukan

Birthdate: Lynne- April 18, 1923 & Roger- November 28, 1918

Birth location: Constantine, Algeria

Story:

My grandparents, Lynne and Roger Dukan [Jonathan and Daniela's great grandparents] were living in Algeria during World War II, where they suffered under the anti-Jewish laws imposed by the pro-Nazi Vichy regime. Both of my great-grandparents' families lost their assets, and many relatives lost their jobs. My grandmother and her siblings were expelled from their Alliance Française school simply for being Jewish.

To help support her family, my grandmother went to work as a seamstress. When the Allies arrived in Algeria, she welcomed the American army with open arms and worked for the military sewing uniforms. Prior to the Allied invasion, they lived in constant fear of a German occupation and also experienced acts of violence from some of their Muslim neighbors.

My grandfather volunteered to join the British Army and took part in the invasion of Sicily, along with other significant battles of World War II. He was seriously injured during the war, losing several fingers and toes. He never spoke about what he went through, and we believe he may have been held in a German prisoner-of-war camp.

My family members who remained in France during the war were not as fortunate—most of them perished in Auschwitz.



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Moses Mizrahi

Information courtesy of Deborah and Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi



Moses & Belina, 1946

Photo taken pre-WWII: Left to right: Moses, Stella (sister), Alberto (brother), seated is Kaden (mother), Group photo of Jewish School in Athens (no date)

Birthdate: December 30, 1911

Birth location: Chios, Greece

Story:

Moses was born in Chios, Greece in December 1911 to Isaak and Kaden. He was one of 6 children- two sisters and three brothers. It was difficult to be Jewish in Chios because his family was one of only 10 Jewish families in the town. Moses only attended one year of school and started working from the age of 10. He spent his summers swimming and fishing. His native language was Greek, but he was also raised to speak Sephardic-Spanish-Ladino. All of the Jews in Chios were Sephardic and spoke Ladino.

When Moses was 17, he and his family moved to Athens where there was a much larger Jewish community. He worked selling newspapers and later selling fabric to make clothing.

In 1944 the Germans came to Athens. Over the next six months, every Shabbat the Germans would make the Jews give them their names as they entered the Synagogue. Then, the day before Pesach, the Germans took all the Jews from the shul and went to their houses to collect the rest. They put all the Jews from Athens on a train to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Moses was separated from his family. As a strong young man in his early 30's, he was assigned to be a "Sonderkommando" working in the crematorium. Once the Russians started drawing near, the Germans made everyone in Auschwitz walk toward Germany. After walking for two days, Moses had to get on a train. Sadly, on the train, Moses saw his brother die. When the train stopped in Vienna, Moses decided to jump off. He went to the police where an officer was able to communicate with him in Greek. The police did not know he was Jewish, so he was given a blanket and food and sent to prison. After a few weeks in prison, he was sent to a work camp which he was able to escape after two weeks. He made it to a safe house in Vienna with the help of friendly strangers and found work as a woodcutter. After chopping wood for three weeks, the Russians arrived in Vienna and Moses was able to go home to Athens, Greece with the help of the International Red Cross. He was introduced to Belina Donia and they were married in 1946. Belina had her own series of adventures including being hidden by neighbors along with her sister, mother, and baby niece.

In 1948, Moses and Belina's only son, Alberto, was born. In 1956, through the auspices of HIAS, the family emigrated to the U.S. and settled in Cleveland, Ohio. The generosity of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland helped get them settled and helped their son receive a Jewish education.



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The Finkelberg Family

Information courtesy of The Sauer Family



Birthdate: unknown

Birth location: Ukraine

Story:

Our family is from Zydica, Lithuania and Lemshi and Chernigov, Ukraine. Kaia and Hayden's great-great grandfathers met on the boat from Odessa, Ukraine to Galveston, TX.

We assumed our Ukrainian family had perished until my mom [Kaia and Hayden's grandmother] looked at the testimonials on Yad Vashem and saw my grandmother's maiden name, Finkelberg, and the same towns listed with survivors. My mom had her Russian-Jewish manicurist write a letter to the contact listed in Moscow with a photo of my great-grandfather's family from 1911. Three weeks later, a letter came back with information about each person in the photo*. The contact in Moscow had been looking for us all these years (this was 2007) and were unable to find us because my grandmother had changed her last name after marriage and her brother had changed his name to something less Jewish.

It turns out, several descendants of the people in the picture had made Aliyah and were living in Bat Yam and Ashkelon in Israel. These descendants came to meet me in Jerusalem just a couple months later (in 2007) when I was on Taglit. They had survived WWII by continuing to run east farther into Russia. They said they had burned all the correspondence between my great-grandfather and themselves as it was dangerous to have proof of a "way out".

*The information the Moscow contact provided me about each person in the photo included the following: The boy on the bottom right was killed serving in the Red Army. The tall man in the back was the brother of my great-grandfather. He is the only one we really don't have an account of, so we are assuming he was killed at some point during the Shoah.

The man in the framed photo being held is my great-grandfather. He sent the photo back to his family after he arrived in the United States in 1910.



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Anshe Emet **Religious School**

Bluma and Gilbert Finkelstein

Information courtesy of Sara Ventura



The above picture are Jewish people on the ship who survived the Holocaust and were able to go to the America for a new life. The trip took approximately 12 days.



Gilbert and Bluma's family picture taken in 1939. You can see them with the two white markers in the back row. Except for Gilbert and Bluma the rest of the family were killed during the Holocaust.

Birthdate: unknown

Birth location: Drzewica, Poland

Story:

Bluma and Gilbert Finkelstein, my great-grandparents, survived the Holocaust against all odds. When the Nazis invaded their hometown of Drzewica, Poland, they rounded up and killed most of the Jewish population, including much of Bluma and Gilbert's families. Knowing they had to escape, the couple ran to a farmhouse, where a brave farmer hid them under the barn floor. After about a week, they left and fled into the forest, where they joined the partisans—groups of fighters resisting the Nazis in the Poland forests.

Life in the forest was tough. They were always on the move, carrying weapons, battling hunger, and surviving freezing winters. Gilbert, who wasn't a big man, carried his rifle,

machine gun, and even Bluma's rifle to keep them both safe. But they never gave up. They fought alongside other partisans until the war finally ended in May 1945. After the war, they received citizenship and eventually made their way to Minnesota, where they built a new life. Despite everything they had been through, they never lost their strength or their love for each other.