



25/492
 April 14, 1995
 14 Nisan 5755

Sh'ma

A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

Celebrating 25 years of diversity and dialogue

In this issue

As we remember the Shoah, we present five pieces which struggle to make a place for the Holocaust within the categories, liturgy and lessons of the Jews' eternal story.

Finding libivne Fred Wasserman

In 1938, Esther Ziegelman, a widow, and her two children, Luba and Aaron, left Luboml, Poland for America. Recording the moment--in fact, fixing it for all time--is a photograph taken of the three just before their departure, surrounded by dozens of family and friends. The Ziegelmans were going to join Esther's brothers who had already settled in New York City. The family, the friends, the world they knew, were completely destroyed just four years later when the Jews of Luboml (Libivne in Yiddish) were massacred by the Germans.

Now, some 56 years later, Aaron Ziegelman, a successful New York businessman, has initiated and is sponsoring the Luboml Exhibition Project to help preserve the history and memory of the *shtetl*. The Project is developing an exhibition for venues in New York, Israel and possibly other locales. Here on a grand scale is a recreation of a thousand private searches for roots--trying to portray a whole town, an entire way of life. Libivne has been dispersed. The pieces--scattered people, photographs, objects and memories--must be gathered together to recreate the town, even if only metaphorically.

Remembering What Came Before

The exhibition's goal of portraying the people and the life of Luboml (and not just the story of the *shtetl*'s liquidation), is emblematic of a significant shift or broadening in the way people are approaching the Holocaust. Increasingly attention is

extending outward from the events of the Shoah *per se* to an interest in the world which existed before. For example, A Living Memorial to the Holocaust--Museum of Jewish Heritage, currently under construction, has taken as its mission collecting and exhibiting not only the Holocaust, but also the world before, the aftermath and the history of Jewish immigration to the United States over the last three centuries; and the museum at Yad Vashem is planning to give significantly more attention to life before the Holocaust in the new permanent exhibit which is currently being developed. By learning about the richness of Eastern European Jewish culture, and on a more personal level looking for their own ancestral *shtetlekh*, people are seeing the Holocaust as part of a much larger Jewish historical picture and deepening their understanding of the full import of the Shoah.

One Town's Story

Luboml had one of the oldest Jewish communities in Poland, dating back to the 14th century. In the 1930s, the town had

Inside...	
Michael Strassfeld	p. 3
Mark Meirowitz	p. 4
Eugene L. Pogany	p. 6
Allan Kensky	p. 7
Ta sh'ma	p. 7
But others say about	p. 8
Book reviews	p. 8

a vibrant community of 3,500-4,000 Jews (around 90% of the town's population) with another 6,000 Jews in the surrounding area. The community supported a Great Synagogue, many *shiblekh*, Zionist organizations, *khadorim* (traditional Jewish elementary schools), a Talmud Torah, a drama group, a bank and a library.

The town's Jews were killed in a series of "actions" which culminated in the final executions which began on Hoshanna Rabbah 5703 (October 1, 1942). Only 51 Luboml Jews (excluding those who emigrated before the Holocaust) are believed to have survived the war, variously by hiding, joining the partisans, adopting false identities, or serving in the Soviet army. In 1974, many of the survivors and other Libivners published a comprehensive *yisker-bukh* (memorial book); an English translation, to be published shortly, will be one of the very few *yisker-bikher* entirely translated into English.

Survivors rarely have tangible mementos; it is the families who emigrated in the 1910s, 20s, and 30s who are more likely to have had the luxury of carrying things with them. As Project Director, I have personally spoken with many Libivners. Typically people don't think they have anything, maybe a few photographs. They often think I'm crazy when I ask for documents and three-dimensional objects--household and religious articles, clothing, children's toys.

But with a little persistence, it's surprising how many people start to think of things which they or their parents or their in-laws carried with them when they emigrated. And they always have another cousin I should call who might have something. They all seem to know each other--after all this was a small town and everyone seems to be interconnected through blood and marriage. Sometimes it feels as if I'm at the center of this great *mishpokhe*, acting as a go-between for people who have lost touch with each other over the years.

Tangible Memories

The outreach effort has been quite successful. To date, the Project has made copies of almost 800 photographs from over 50 sources in the United States, Israel, Canada, Argentina, Brazil and Poland.

The Project has also located a number of artifacts for potential use in the exhibition, generally humble objects which carry poignant family stories. Notable finds include phylacteries in a velvet pouch embroidered with the words "Luboml, Poland" sent to a bar mitzvah boy in New York in the 1930s; a wedding invitation for Sore

FRED WASSERMAN is the Project Director of the Luboml Exhibition Project. He curated the exhibits at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum and co-authored *Ellis Island: An Illustrated History of the Immigrant Experience*.

Lichtmacher and Leyzer Kershenboym, married in Luboml in 1932; a pair of silver wine cups which were buried in Luboml and retrieved by Rivka Shlivo Karpus following the war; a U.S. non-quota immigration visa for Icek Moszek Axelrod, 1927; a series of documents which show the emigration of Zelig Faigen from Luboml to Buenos Aires in 1928, including a passport, medical certificates, and poems given to him when he departed; Moshe Shalev's identification card from Palestine, 1936; a fork and spoon given to Bracha Oselka Fuks by her mother when she made *aliyah* to Palestine, ca. 1935; Shabbat candlesticks and a matzoh cover brought to New York in 1920 by the Bokser family; a towel Miriam Hetman embroidered as a going-away present for her son Yaacov when he made *aliyah* to Palestine in 1936; Rosh Hashanah cards; an unusual Passover card; and fourteen minutes of rare (and extraordinary!) film footage shot by American tourist Ethel Zim during her visit to Luboml in 1933.

Sh'ma A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

Senior Editors Eugene B. Borowitz, Irving Greenberg, Harold M. Schulweis

Editor Nina Beth Cardin

Administrator/Production Bambi Marcus

Contributing Editors Michael Berenbaum, David Biale, Elliot N. Dorff, Arnold Eisen, David Ellenson, Leonard Fein, Barry Freundel, Reba M. Geffen, Neil Gillman, Joanne Greenberg, Lawrence Hoffman, Paula Hyman, Deborah Dash Moore, David Novak, Riv-Ellen Prell, Ellen Umansky, Elie Wiesel, Arnold Jacob Wolf, Walter Wurzburger, Michael Wyschogrod

Founding Editor Eugene B. Borowitz

Sh'ma welcomes articles from diverse points of view. Hence, the opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the editors. Donations to *Sh'ma* are tax-deductible. *Sh'ma* is available in microform from University Microfilms Internat'l., Ann Arbor, MI.

Book reviews are by Eugene B. Borowitz.

Address all correspondence, subscriptions and change of address notices to *Sh'ma*, c/o CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, Suite S-300, New York, NY 10016. Telephone: 212-867-8888; FAX: 212-867-8853.

Sh'ma (ISSN 0049-0385) is published bi-weekly except June, July and August, by CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, Suite S-300, New York, NY 10016. Subscription: \$29 for two years in U.S.; \$18 for one year; \$21 a year overseas; 10 or more to one address, \$9 each year. Retired or handicapped persons of restricted means may subscribe for one year at half price.

Sh'ma Online, an interactive discussion group, is available through any online service which can exchange with the Internet, such as CompuServe, GEnie, Prodigy, America Online, MCIMail, ATTMail or Delphi. To join, send a one-line message to: listproc@shamash.nysernet.org saying: **subscribe shma** your full name. Messages to *Sh'ma Online* can then be sent to: shma@shamash.nysernet.org

Copyright © 1995 by CLAL.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Sh'ma*, c/o CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, S-300, New York, NY 10016-1599.

Second-class postage paid at New York, NY

April 14, 1995

In the course of this research it has become clear that the amount of visual documentation in public repositories is fairly minimal. Luboml is located in Northwestern Volhynia, a border area which has gone back and forth between Poland and Russia/Soviet Union (it is now officially in Ukraine) and often been the site of warfare. This region experienced an extraordinary amount of destruction and apparently only limited documentation has survived. This makes the work of the Luboml Exhibition Project that much more significant. We are developing a photographic collection which ultimately will be donated to an archive, preserving Luboml for generations to come.

Why, people often ask, Luboml? Even Lubomlers themselves say the place "isn't unusual, it's just like every other town". But therein lies its significance, for Libivne is in some sense "every-shtetl". With its Great Synagogue and many small *shtiblekh*, its myriad Zionism organizations, its marketplace and many small shops, with the Hasidim and the secular, the traditional and the modern, Luboml reflects the life of many Eastern European Jews. In the specificity of Luboml, visitors to our exhibition will find the universal, and hopefully sense a little of what life was like in their own ancestral *shtetlekh*.

Is Your Family From Luboml?

If you or your family have ties to Luboml and you have photographs, objects or memories, please write to Fred Wasserman, Luboml Exhibition Project, 475 Park Avenue South, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10016 or call/fax 212-529-6440.

A Guide To Researching Your Own Shtetl

1. Speak to as many relatives as possible. Try to find out if a benevolent society is still in existence.

2. Consult the following books which give the location of the town and indicate whether there is a *yisker-bukh* (memorial book), an article in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, or other references to the town in published sources (be sure to check under all variant spellings/names of the *shtetl*):

Cohen, Chester G. *Shtetl Finder Gazetteer: Jewish Communities in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries in the Pale of Settlement of Russia & Poland, & in Lithuania, Latvia, Galicia, & Bukovina, & with Names of Residents*. Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, 1989.

Mokotoff, Gary and Sallyann Amdur Sack. *Where Once We Walked: A Guide to the Jewish Communities Destroyed in the Holocaust*. Teaneck, NJ: Avotaynu Inc., 1991.

3. Large collections of memorial books exist at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library, and the Jewish Theological Seminary. The books are predominantly published in Yiddish and Hebrew, though they may have some Hebrew or English items. They often have maps and photographs which can be appreciated even if you don't read the language(s).

4. For genealogical research consult:
Kurzweil, Arthur. *From Generation to Generation: How to Trace Your Jewish Genealogy & Personal History*. rev. ed. New York: Schocken Books, 1994.

Kurzweil, Arthur and Miriam Weiner. *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Genealogy*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1991.

Soc.genealogy.jewish is an on-line bulletin board with general information files on how to conduct a Jewish genealogical study, how to research Jewish cemeteries, and how to use the archives of Beth Hatefutsot. The internet mailing list for soc.genealogy.jewish is now housed at GITVM1.GATECH.EDU and welcomes new subscribers. To subscribe simply send an e-mail message from your service to: listserv@gitvm1.gatech.edu with the message: SUBSCRIBE JEWGEN [Firstname Lastname]. □

Excerpts from: prelude to a service for the evening of yom hashoah

Michael Strassfeld

The Holocaust is an indescribable event of unbelievable horror. It raises for many of us unanswerable questions of how the Holocaust could have happened, what was God's role, what was humanity's role, etc.

Perhaps then the most appropriate commemoration of the Holocaust is silence, for all words and all answers must be inadequate. There was a medieval kabbalistic

MICHAEL STRASSFELD is Rabbi of Anshe Chesed Congregation in New York City.