

FASCINATING FACTS IN JEWISH HISTORY

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As the Soviet forces neared Auschwitz in January, 1945 the Germans hastily tried to cover up their atrocities. Buildings and documents were burned and 56,000 remaining prisoners were marched off to the German interior. Nearly a third of these died on the march. Many more died in the various camps they were transferred to. When the Red Army reached Auschwitz there were approximately 7000 prisoners there. These were too feeble to march and had been left behind to die. Among them were some 600 orphan children, some having actually been born in the camp itself. What happened to them? Three stories.

Perla Spinka, a Jewish girl from Poland, was deported with her aunt and her cousin from a labor camp in Bliżyn in July 1944. Normally there would have been a selection upon arrival and the children would have been murdered. The Jews in this particular transport did not undergo selection on the selection ramp and so everyone, including the few children among the adults, was sent to the camp. Perla was given prisoner no. A-15515. After one of the selections in the camp, Perla's aunt and cousin were sent to the gas chamber, but she was cared for by other female prisoners and thus survived until liberation. On January 29, 1945, Perla was put under the care of 16-year-old Kazimiera Nowak, a resident of the town of Oświęcim (Auschwitz). One and a half months later she was found by her mother, who had survived the ghetto in Piotrków (where they had been separated) and next a labor camp in Skarżysko. After they were reunited in Oświęcim, the mother and daughter moved to Łódź. In January 1946 they left Poland and settled in Palestine.

Lyudmila Bezludova (birth name unknown), was born in 1940. She went with her family to Majdanek and from there transferred to Auschwitz on 15 April 1944. Lyudmilla was registered as prisoner no. 77263. After liberation, she was transferred in a group of Belarusian children to a care center in Kraków, then to an orphanage in Harbutowice near Kraków and then to the Bucze Harcerskie preventive center near Skoczów. There she was renamed Hanna Kosińska. In 1963 she met up with her mother and siblings for the first time since they were separated in Majdanek. At the time her family was living in Orsha, Belarus. Lyudmila, however, stayed in Poland.

Josef Hajman, a four-year-old Jew from Slovakia, brought to Auschwitz concentration camp at the start of November 1944. The child was diagnosed as having third degree alimentary dystrophy (wasting syndrome), vitamin deficiency and internal hemorrhaging. He died on 30th March 1945.

According to the Red Army chroniclers *the orphaned children were first transferred to care centers in Kraków and later to other places further afield. A dozen or so children were taken under the loving care of local inhabitants. Later some of these children were adopted.*

For these children 13 Shevat in 1945 marked the end of the war. For some it also marked the end of their lives as Jews.