

# Chairman's Message



By Gerald M. Schreck

Growing up as I did in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn in the 1950s and 60s, my world was filled with Holocaust survivors. The grocer down the street had a number on his arm, as did the sweet, middle-aged lady who lived upstairs, as did most of my friends' parents. These survivors, men and women who came to these shores, penniless and bereft of family and friends, picked themselves up by their bootstraps, bringing new meaning to the word "survivor." Indeed, a good number of the survivors I knew succeeded on so many planes—they married and had children, building new generations of Torah Jews; they built businesses, bought real estate and were astonishingly successful. On the ashes of the Holocaust, they stubbornly planted new seeds, refusing to submit to despair.

I recall at one point working on a business deal with a survivor of Dachau. To my amazement, my "partner" was ready to take a big business gamble. "How come you're not afraid of taking such a big risk?" I asked him. He smiled, as he pulled up his sleeve and pointed to the number tattooed onto his skin. "Afraid? Of what should I be afraid? Nothing worse can ever

happen to me."

I believe it was this fascinating combination of fearlessness, determination and, above all, faith in Hashem that enabled the survivors to start anew, to begin afresh after the endless horror.


We are a blessed generation. We live in a time when Orthodoxy is, *baruch Hashem*, flourishing in remarkable ways. Walk down the streets of Flatbush or Woodmere, New York; or West Rogers Park, Chicago; or Pico-Robertson, Los Angeles; or Bnei Brak, and you will see impressively large Torah institutions, bursting with young children eager to absorb the Torah of their fathers. All of these institutions were founded on the spiritual strength of our survivor parents and grandparents. The boom of Torah we witness today is a tribute to their unflinching, enviable *emunah*.

While we can never stop learning and teaching about the heinous atrocities of the Nazis, we also must teach our children about the spiritual resilience and tenacity of their ancestors. In the pages ahead, we present an extraordinary array of photographs and essays documenting the vastly unexplored terrain of spiritual resistance during the Holocaust.

Of course, not all survivors were able to hold onto their faith. In an exceptionally thoughtful and moving

article, *Jewish Action* writer Bayla Sheva Brenner takes us into the hearts and minds of children of survivors who chose to embrace the Judaism rejected by their parents. We thought it especially appropriate to explore these topics during the summer months; what better way to feel the enormity of the tragedy of the Churban than by examining the *churban* that happened in our own century?

On a lighter note, this issue also includes the humorous musings of Rabbi Steven Pruzansky, of Congregation Bnai Yeshurun in Teaneck, New Jersey, as he spends a few months trying out life as an Israeli. Also in this issue, we probe the sanctity of Jerusalem from a halachic perspective. While there are those in the broader Jewish world who believe Jerusalem is expendable, as Torah-abiding Jews, we cannot agree with them. In his insightful article, Rabbi Daniel Feldman, a professor at Yeshiva University, helps us appreciate the centrality of Jerusalem in halachah and in Jewish thought.

Of course, the issue is filled with many other articles I hope you will find interesting and meaningful. As always, feel free to e-mail me your thoughts and comments at [ja@ou.org](mailto:ja@ou.org). 

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