



# SPACE S

Revisited

A Journey to Poland  
Graduates of Beth Chana High School  
Orange, CT 2006

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*Dedicated To Those  
Who Travel With Open Hearts  
Ready To See  
What Fills The Spaces*

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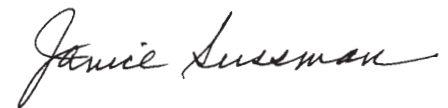
**SPACE/S REVISITED** is a sequel to the original **SPACE/S** which recounted in poetry and illustration a March of the Living journey to Poland and Israel. It is a further demonstration of my desire not only to acknowledge and give respect to those who passed but to acknowledge and give respect to those who survived and continued to live. We stand on the shoulders of those who came before. Their angst fills our psyche. Their hope for a new beginning fuels our hope. Their commitment to continued faith is our inspiration.

It is with this belief that Stan and I established the **LAURA AND JOSEPH KAUFMAN AWARD OF FAITH**. This award acknowledges a graduating student of the Beth Chana High School who studies the causes and history of the Holocaust, participates in a visit to Poland and records her feelings and thoughts about these experiences in the most thorough and meaningful way.

During their journey to Europe, this year's graduates visited sights that are painful to see while tracing the routes of our religious culture. As you will read in their journal entries, they experienced an enormous range of feelings—sadness, disbelief, horror, anger and compassion—and as they headed home were filled with—hope, thankfulness, pride and most importantly, Faith. It is this eternal Faith that is critical to the continuity of the Jewish people.

This year's panel of judges selected Miriam Schottenstein and Zehava Newman as recipients of the **LAURA AND JOSEPH KAUFMAN AWARD OF FAITH**. Their contributions are included in **SPACE/S REVISITED**.

I hope you, too, are as impressed with their understanding as I am.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice Susman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.

**FAITH**

How can we who haven't suffered  
Through those times  
Know the depths of desperation  
Or enormity of hope  
That filled these souls

**WE CAN ONLY IMAGINE**

Nights filled with darkness  
Nights filled with fear  
Days that were nights

We see the remnants —  
Shoes, hair, eye glasses, a locket  
And we live with their pain  
Pain of the ages  
Pain that causes us to  
Question  
Pain of the ages that  
Demands we are strong

To live  
To hope  
To recreate  
To recreate  
Again  
And  
Again

**TO HAVE FAITH**

Janice Sussman



Study on "Emanah I"  
D.N. Sessel  
2005

### *...Letter from Rabbi Hecht*

In May 2006, six girls from Beth Chana Academy accompanied by Judaic Studies Principal Susha Alperowitz and Malka Katz embarked on a memorable journey to Poland and Czechoslovakia as part of their senior year program. The trip was the culmination of an intensive study in the history of the Holocaust. Their studies were brought to life as they visited concentration camps, cemeteries, synagogues and schools. They saw first-hand the remains of ghettos and the remains of a thriving culture.

Several of the girls recorded their thoughts in journals during the trip and many wrote essays after returning from Europe. They all came away with an added perspective on the importance of their heritage and the responsibility that we carry as Jews to perpetuate the religion of our ancestors. The memories of the trip will last a lifetime and inspire them as they continue learning and living the ways of Torah and Mitzvot.

The LAURA AND JOSEPH KAUFMAN AWARD OF FAITH makes this opportunity available to Beth Chana seniors. We appreciate the mission of this program and the valuable experience it affords our students.

Rabbi Sheya Hecht  
*Director*

### *...Letter from Mrs. Alperowitz*

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, wrote in one of his letters, "Trust in G-d is our way of turning pain around. It proves to G-d that, although we may not fully understand our pain, we recognize it as part of a greater good, and despite all our setbacks, despite our confusion, we remain absolutely confident that goodness will prevail."

Who would have thought that the six Beth Chana girls who left New Haven for their senior trip to Poland would return with strengthened faith and resolve, echoing the words above. How would seeing the tragic pages of history unfold before their eyes at Majdanek, the eerie and horrific feelings at the sight of devastation at Auschwitz or facing the realization that millions of lives were snuffed out at the crematoria of Birkenau, affect a group of happy, upbeat, optimistic young ladies, living in our blessed United States of America? What would be their mood after seeing yesteryear's thriving Torah Center of Lublin reduced to one living Jew who holds the key to the cemetery or seeing the many synagogues, once filled with hundreds of worshippers, now turned into museums filled with tattered, torn and tear-stained religious artifacts and belongings of those who perished?

The daily trips were long and intense, the evenings filled with discussion. Yet, no matter how many questions arose, the girls knew, as we all do, that we do not have the answers, nor can we begin to comprehend. Yet, question we must, because that in itself underscores our faith in the One Above and our strong belief that justice, kindness and goodness must prevail.

Six young ladies returned to New Haven with a greater awareness of G-d's guidance and an awareness of man's effect on the world. The stillness of the ghettos and concentration camps spoke volumes to six teenagers who recognize the power of a deed and are determined, with greater strength and conviction, to carry on the legacy of six million holy souls whose lives were cut short. Am Yisroel Chai!

Susha Alperowitz  
*Judaic Studies Principal*



# SPACE/S REVISITED POEMS AND REFLECTIONS

FROM THE GRADUATES

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LAURA AND JOSEPH KAUFMAN AWARD OF FAITH

Miriam Schottenstein

Zehava Newman

Detail of "Mincha with the Tower", oil on canvas  
D.N. Sessel  
2006

May 22<sup>nd</sup>, Monday. “Warsaw Cemetery”, 4:50 p.m.

*The cemetery is unbelievable. All I can think is ‘So many.’ So many souls, so many lives, embedded in that forest of trees and jungle of stones. The paths are muddy and unkempt, the headstones unattended and left to rot. Time abuses the only tangible testament to those lost lives. I wonder if I have any family buried there. We said tebiellim prayers at the mass graves. These graves are horrific in that they aren’t graves at all but just a span of yellowed grass. Mass graves deserve more honor and homage. Tebiellim was also said at the Novemensker Rav’s kever.*

*I really appreciate the statue of Januz Korzacz. Unlike many statues and monuments, I feel that the image of him cradling a child on his shoulder and holding the hand of another reflects what I’ve read about him and his character. He cared lovingly for those in his charge and brought them forth to their deaths with dignity.*

“Ghetto Wall” 5:25 p.m.

*The wall is the only remaining piece of the Ghetto. It is sad because it is such a poor representation of the Warsaw Ghetto.*

*It was left to me to imagine what that wall meant to the people living there at that time. That wall meant barriers. That wall prevented any connection to the outside world and any hope of escape. The wall was a barrier that left them starving and hungry, allowing them no access to food, even bread. An image from a film came to mind as I stood there, an image of corpses, people on the verge of death who had curled up close to the wall in hope that they wouldn’t be trampled by passing horses.*

May 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday/Wednesday, 1:06 a.m.

*Now that we have been to Majdanek, I have seen the conditions which had reduced those dignified and proud people to the point where they perceived themselves as barbarians. I’ve seen piles of their hair, which was shorn so fast their scalps bled. I’ve seen the shoes they wore on their feet which still reek of foot odor. And the wood, mockeries of beds, where they spent their nights dreaming, hoping, missing and despairing — perhaps even praying. How could they have felt human?*

*Walking skeletons. Who would have wanted to be remembered like that? They were ashamed. What memories did they leave us? So much death. A plethora of pain. Unfathomable. How could this have happened? It wasn’t a*

*punishment. I don’t want to get into questions that search for the reason. I know I won’t find one. It’s frustrating. And whom will it help?*

*I think all we can ask ourselves is, what do we do with the past now? How are we supposed to react to it? It’s so illogical. (When I think about it I can feel my eyebrows stuck in a shape of confusion.) I do not believe in questioning G-d. Who am I to do that? All I know is that I’m a Jew and I have faith, faith that is not based on understanding but based on feeling.*

*Just a theory but I think it may be that those who lose their faith in G-d have really just lost faith in themselves. Perhaps they recognize their inability to comprehend and explain, and then attribute their personal weakness to loss of faith in G-d. Belief is not simultaneous with understanding. I know that’s presumptuous but that’s just my naive and inexperienced theory. (Bli Ein Hara)*

*Oh-boy I’m rambling. It’s 1:30 a.m. sleep time. Overall I would say that today was a day in which I’ve experienced more than I’ve experienced in all the months of my life put together. I thank G-d with all my heart for my family and friends and the beautiful life he gives us to live.*

May 24<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday, 11:55 p.m.

*Over the past few days I’ve noticed something about my friends and myself. I’ve noticed that we are naturally happy kids who strongly gravitate towards joy and cheer. And though we are all thoughtful, our happy souls refuse to revel in despondency and depression for long.*

*I noticed all of this as we sat in the van while dusk settled upon us. A collective silence had filled the air. Each of us was lost in our own heart’s emotions, images and thoughts. Stories of the war had just been told, stories that touched us all deeply, for some bringing tears to the eyes and for others, tears to the heart.*

*It was then that songs came pouring out of us, faster than we could catch them. Cries of, “What should we sing next?!” with answers like, “a happy song of course!” Our souls were filled with sadness and each of us was ready to make room for joy and life. We sang until the sky grew black and until the hands before our faces became imperceptible, the niggunim poignantly soothing our pained and aching souls.*

*Salvation. When? I had asked myself at the time. Could Moshiach really be just around the corner? At that moment I recall wishing with my whole being that the Holocaust was really “the last war (Gog-Ooo\_Mab—Gog).” Enough suffering, blood and death. Please continue to let our families live in a time of peace and bring us to the ultimate redemption.*

May 25<sup>th</sup>, Thursday, 12:30 a.m.

## NEVER SHALL I FORGET

*Elie Wiesel*

Never shall I forget that night,  
the first night in the camp  
which has turned my life into one long night,  
seven times cursed and seven times sealed.  
Never shall I forget that smoke.  
Never shall I forget the little faces of the children  
whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke  
beneath a silent blue sky.  
Never shall I forget those flames  
which consumed my faith for ever.  
Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence  
which deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live.  
Never shall I forget those moments  
which murdered my God and my soul  
and turned my dreams into dust.  
Never shall I forget these things,  
even if I am condemned to live  
as long as God Himself.  
Never.

*This poem is exceptionally appropriate in relation to today's events. The sights we beheld today vivify and allow the imagery and emotion evident in the poem to come to life.*

*For me, today (Auschwitz-Birkenau) was the most intense part of the trip. Birkenau especially seems to be the culmination of my experience. It's something out of a nightmare. To think that, that horrific estate was constructed for the purpose of suffocating, burning and torturing Jewish people...HOW? How did it happen? What were those beautiful, precious and pure souls doing in that flesh-eating monster called Birkenau, Majdanek and Auschwitz? Six million people. Three hundred Yankee Stadiums.*

*Though I was not there sixty-five years ago, I feel as though I can identify with Elie Wiesel's poem, **Never Shall I Forget**. After today, never shall I forget. The images Wiesel uses were some of the very same that were going through my mind as we stood in the crematoria and gas chambers and stared into the barracks. Though it seems impossible to conceive a mass of six million, the face of one child, the face of one mother, lingers in my mind.*

May 26<sup>th</sup>, Friday, 7:30 a.m.

## "I DID NOT MANAGE TO SAVE"

*Jerzy Ficowski*

I did not manage to save  
A single life  
I did not know how to stop a  
Single bullet  
And I wander round cemeteries  
Which are not there  
I run  
To help where no one called  
To rescue after the event  
I want to be on time  
Even if I am too late

*As I sit here on the plane leaving Poland I read this poem and feel that it befits the moment because it is true. Here I am leaving the scene of the crime and what have I done? Yes, I have seen the camps, the ghettos but what did I DO?*

*"I did not manage to save a single life. I did not know how to stop a single bullet. All I have done is "Wander round cemeteries which are not there." And I sit here and think to myself, "I want to be on time even if I am too late."*

*Those six million people are gone. I could do nothing to stop it. But I know that even if I did not save a single soul, that if this trip accomplished anything, it has instilled in me that I am here to make sure that there won't ever be a next time.*

*The wakeup call rang at seven in the morning. If we don't get up, I have no doubt they'll leave without us. The whole trip seems like a dream. Everything is just a stage for a movie set or something like it. I could never live here. There's something odd about the air. I think it's more than just the haunting history of the places we've been and those we will soon visit. Every step, every cobblestone has a story. I feel helpless asking the questions so many asked before me, and countless people will ask after. How could any people allow this to happen to another people? How could such visible atrocities not meet resistance?*

*I guess the point isn't how vividly we imagine trains of cattle cars filled with Jews being rushed into the camps or how emotional the sight of the barracks makes us. It's how we are different people after we get back home. The pictures will be keepsakes of our trip forever but if I don't grow as a person, do one more mitzvah or do one thing better than I did it before, this trip would have been a failure. In the Holocaust many Jews denied and cursed G-d during their experience. There were others who sacrificed their very existence to say a simple prayer or to light Chanukah candles.*

*We take our freedoms for granted. Why do I need opposition to make me want to do something? It shouldn't be like that. This experience broadened my scope of the war years and of the Jewish suffering and, I believe, knowledge is power. What to do with the knowledge is the question. The truth is, the generation that went through the Holocaust is aged and survivors are passing away. If we don't know their stories, who will pass them on to the next generation? Remembering is our obligation. But action should be the result of all we absorb here.*

*Am I a different person because of this whole experience? It may be too early to tell. I need to go home and get back to reality to measure the influence of this trip. In some ways it was just an introduction. No one will ever know all the stories and no one can really fathom the magnitude of the lives that were lost. Every life is an entire world. Each life is precious yet it is impossible to mourn for each. The best we can do is choose one story and try to rectify it in some way by fulfilling just one mitzvah that that person was denied the chance to do. As I prepared to stand in front of this crowd tonight at graduation to share thoughts from our journey through Poland, I feel the responsibility to confess my resolution out loud. Perhaps it will give me the strength to fulfill it. I hope that each time I daven, I will pray with true kavana, intention, as a testament that evil cannot break the strength of one's connection to G-d.*

*Human nature causes us to go adrift and dwell in the past. People spend their precious time wondering if what they do, or more importantly, what they say, will cause others to judge or vacillate in opinions about themselves. Then we splurge more precious time, speculating if we could have chosen better syntax or diction to communicate our thoughts. I, too, unfortunately, fall under this category and there is more than one somebody who could prove that.*

*There is one past, however; that I am certain to trace back to, which won't be squandering my high quality moments. And that is, my senior class trip to Poland. My journey began in the midst of my Beth Chana surroundings. Even before I stepped foot on the Delta/Air France aircraft, where with my luck, I earned the glorious middle seat—both ways, in fact! Mrs. Merriam gave my class the gift of sharing her time with us, to give us the tools that would enable us to gain from this remarkable trip. With a mere three dense lessons and a library worth of information, I found myself contemplating on the airplane.*

*More than 60 years prior, events occurred that metamorphosed our world forever. The stench of human corpses consumed the air in Europe. Children, despite their ages, were tortured, starved and beaten emotionally and physically. Limbs lining the streets, bloated stomachs, bulging cheekbones and skeletal figures were everyday sights. Six million innocent individuals perished in the Holocaust just because they were Jewish.*

*When I was thirteen, I was stranded in Gander, Newfoundland, because of the 9/11 terrorist attack. Only two Jews lived there and one happened to be a Holocaust survivor. He relayed the following story to a Rabbi who was also on the flight, my mother and me. But before he began, he had us close the door and sit down. He removed his laced shoes and thick socks. My eyes winced and a flurried chill rippled beneath my skin at what I saw.*

*“When I was five years old,” he began, “the Nazis tortured me. They hung me and my brothers by our toes for hours on end,” he continued with choked vocal chords. “I have never told this to anyone—my wife and eleven children are Christian, but after speaking to you, I feel a bit relieved. I am a closed man and I was only able to conceal this secret from the world by never going to the beach and by dressing modestly. We were children. Minutes are like days when a child is full of anticipation. But I have never been so, so violated. The minutes to me were longer than my entire life and the consequences wound me every day.”*

*On that day my mind, eyes and body stored his touching story. The sting in my eyes will never be forgotten and only years later would I know how much this sorrowful story would resurface in my life.*

*On Sunday, May 21, 2006, my class traveled to Poland. This trip has broadened my views on tolerance for everyone whom I have or will come in contact with. While in Majdaneck, Auschwitz, Birkenau, Warsaw, Lublin and Krakow, I was an artist's creation dropped into a portrait. Only after my feet were firmly grounded on known territory did the events of our expedition seep in like red wine into a plush, off-white carpet. I had witnessed the remnants of Genocide. I observed barbed wire, crematoria, brick ghetto walls, wooden bunk beds, stolen shoes, pots, suitcases and Torah scrolls. It was a never-ending list, reminders of life.*

*I will never completely comprehend what occurred in the years 1935-45, yet I was granted an opportunity to become aware. But to become aware in our world is not sufficient. We need to publicize the events of the Holocaust. We need to educate the world to prevent another horrible event from arising in the future.*

*My trip to Poland was an incredible experience. I am extremely grateful for it. And, if you spot me gazing with glazed eyes, don't assume I am wasting treasured moments. On the contrary, I am reflecting on the past to improve the future.*

June 8, 2006

*In order to prepare for a trip of this emotional magnitude, I set my sights to get ready for all that I would be witnessing, hearing and learning. For weeks ahead of time, I read, I studied and I learned. When the time to board the plane arrived, I truly thought that I was ready, fortified and strong enough to face the experience.*

*How wrong I was! Nothing I ever could have done would have made me ready to face the destruction and devastation which were about to greet me. As one of our guides so aptly stated, "Poland is the largest Jewish cemetery on earth." It is so hard to imagine how the equivalent of one third of the state of Connecticut was herded into the Warsaw Ghetto to live in subhuman conditions, especially not knowing where their next ration of bread would come from nor what the next dawn or dusk would bring. People who had identities, homes, belongings and furniture were reduced to nothing more than a body which carried a tattooed number on its arm. Poets and doctors, journalists and Rabbis, nurses and scientists, all possessing brilliant minds, were turned into ash in the crematoria of Madjanek and Auschwitz-Birkenau.*

*The void was felt standing at the Warsaw Ghetto wall, sitting in the empty desks in the Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin and seeing the eight synagogues in Krakow made into museums. From once thriving and flourishing Jewish communities, nothing remains. Years of rich, Jewish life are gone forever. Standing at the mass graves and at the crematoria, imagining the Nazis laughing as they accomplished their task, terror and agony claim every part of my body.*

*How is it possible that a human could inflict such inhumanity to another person? How is it possible that a crazed, rabid leader could muster together armies and multitudes who would follow his directives to torture and kill? The infamous saying of the Nazi general, Hans Frank, "Jews are a race that must be totally exterminated," comes to mind. These words depict the very essence of Nazism and their perverted philosophy.*

*Each night before I went to sleep my mind was filled with stories and images of the day's experience. As I write this almost two weeks after the trip, I cannot shake that feeling and the question of how this could have happened. To stand in the watchtower of Auschwitz-Birkenau and imagine that as far as my eye could see, the acres and acres of land were filled with Jewish refugees is incomprehensible.*

*At the height of the Nazi extermination, eighteen thousand people were gassed and cremated every single day. A common thought that my fellow classmates and I shared was how could the world have stood by and remained silent? How could the civilized world, which was aware of the atrocities, not have done something to stop it? What was the logic?*

*And then, almost as a bolt of lightning, it appeared to me. All of our learning and the teachings of the Torah stress the idea that darkness is so great that even a small flame can dispel much of it. That flame can continue burning brightly, slowly but surely, illuminating one part of the world at a time until the darkness is banished.*

*As I looked around and saw the six of us standing on these hallowed grounds soaked with Jewish blood, I realize our privilege and responsibility. No, Hitler did not succeed in eradicating the Jewish people from this world. Instead, we are here today carrying on the great responsibility of living their lives as Jews. Their ability of doing Torah and Mitzvot were removed from them and it is our obligation to fulfill what they would have loved to accomplish had they been able to.*

*My emotions came suddenly but not at the camps, not at the crematoria, not at the synagogues. It wasn't at the cemeteries, either. My emotions came after I sat in bed at night thinking about everything I saw. That's when they came. Then I decided I had to write something to remember.*

### A POEM TO REMEMBER

*Naomi Levin*

The taste of ash and salty tears  
The smell of death and shortened years.  
A hollow silence echoes, rings  
A morbid melody it sings.

Emptiness fills a bottomless heart  
With dreams destroyed before life starts.  
Evil hovers, laughs with glee  
Innocence mourns its death to be.

Tattered and torn the shoes in the aisles  
Broken and beaten bodies in piles.  
Bloodied by hate, beasts void of heart  
Mangled and strangled like violent art.

Empty socket, broken jaw  
Still they followed every law.  
Bones that pierced their paper skin  
Little faces, void of sin.

A lipstick stain faint on her cheek  
She'll lie on the floor and rot when she's weak.  
She will not be cuddled or rocked in a chair  
But gaze at the soil with her cold empty stare.

Rung out like water hung on its line  
Dripping on tables of oak that they dine.  
To that dreaded cement the barefoot boy goes  
While human hair adorns their clothes.

### THOUGHTLESS MEN

*Naomi Levin*

Those thoughtless men  
They widowed bliss  
They murdered love  
And its first kiss  
Killed the dead  
Killed the Living  
Killed the Happy  
Kind  
And Giving.

### A HEADLESS DOLL

*Naomi Levin*

A headless doll is lonely, thrown  
Into the piles  
Joins forgotten love that lies  
Inside those aisles  
From its little master it is torn apart  
**By those evil beasts who have no heart**  
**By those evil beasts who have no heart**

**Sunday, May 21, 2006**

*Today is the day we are leaving to go to Poland. The question we are continually asked is, "Are you excited?" Now what may seem like a simple question is almost impossible for me to answer.*

*Excited? That is not the right word. Am I ready? No, I am not prepared for the heaviness of this trip mentally or emotionally, even if I might try to convince myself otherwise. We are returning to our roots. My grandfather's birthplace was in Warsaw and G-d gave him the sight to escape only a few years before the establishment of the Warsaw Ghetto. So am I excited to step on the ground where my relatives walked before me? Am I excited to walk on the same roads that bore the blood of millions? No, I am anticipating, waiting and yearning to see before my eyes what I have viewed only through one-dimensional pictures. I do not plan to hold back my tears. But a question we must ask ourselves is, "Are we crying because we feel for the millions who were so brutally murdered or because we ARE them?" That is a question I plan to ponder on this trip. I need to get in touch with those who have passed on and try to let them live through me and achieve the goals they were not able to complete—to carry the Jewish people on and make it clear—Hitler did NOT win.*

**Monday, May 22, 2006**

*We're on the plane from Paris to Warsaw. I keep leafing through the many packets of information that we were given in preparation for this trip. The packets contained many numbers. There were small numbers of those who survived the Holocaust and equally small numbers of Nazis who were killed due to Jewish resistance. But the largest number were those lives lost in the Holocaust—six million Jewish lives.*

*We repeat the infamous number over and over again—six million. But can we really comprehend such a number? I come from a school of 21, heading to a new school of about 60. The latter number intimidates me. But six million is unimaginable. I try to mathematically picture the amount. If a football stadium holds 20,000 people, then it's 300 football stadiums. Over 10 of those stadiums were filled with children. Such an occurrence doesn't seem real or possible.*

*This provokes other questions, "Were the Nazis human? Was it possible that an entire nation was born without a conscience?" And this conscienceless existence was contagious for all those who revered and followed the Nazis.*

*And, what about the rest of the world who sat passively, comfortably by while this horror beyond horrors was taking place? The Holocaust was a time when the entire world lost its conscience. It seems unbelievable, yet undeniable. These events occurred and we are going to the site of it all right now.*

*... We have been touring Warsaw. The country seems like a giant cemetery. So many people perished within these borders. But something that truly amazes me is the Warsaw Ghetto wall. It fascinates me because such a huge part of Holocaust history became just that—a wall. It adjoins two plain apartment buildings and we have to weave our way through inhabited city streets to reach this great relic. This Ghetto must have been such a game for the Nazis. They constructed a wall, packed the Jews in like rats and watched as they tried to escape—only to be shot down like a hunter shoots his game.*

*This makes me reconsider my previous question, "Could they really just surrender their consciences?" The Nazis were husbands and fathers. I'm sure they were very befitting ones as well. But when it came to the Jews, the obstacles to the perfect Aryan world, conscience was not a factor. They denied the Jews a place in humanity to the point that many of them denied killing anyone. They instead used terminology like "The Final Solution" and "Liquidation." In their eyes they weren't killing but merely making the world a better place. And that thought appalls me.*

**Tuesday, May 23, 2006**

*Today we began the long drive from Warsaw to Krakow. On the itinerary is a scheduled stop in Lublin to visit the most preserved death camp in all of Poland—Majdanek. The thought that this camp remains so intact, that it could be 'up and running' in 48 hours, frightens me. But the thought that this camp exists as proof of the Holocaust's existence comforts me. No one can visit Majdanek and still deny the Holocaust.*

*Seeing the Nazi structure of Majdanek reminds me of a story I once read. It was about a girl who found herself in one of the main death camps. She was struck at first by the lack of organization and the lack of sanitary conditions. She was familiar with the professionalism and overall strictness of the Nazi way of life, so she waited for the configuration process to begin and the camp to become seemingly more in order. But that process never occurred and she soon realized the camp did have its structure. It was specifically designed so the prisoners would be overwhelmed by their own filth. They would become disgusted with themselves and their fellow inmates and the death process would therefore be much easier for the Nazis to conduct.*

*In Majdanek there is a monument with an inscription in Polish reading, "May our fate be a sign for you." This is a warning for future generations. Beware of people in authority who misuse it. Don't underestimate the power of a brainwashed nation. Don't assume you are the same as any ordinary citizen in the crowd because during WWII no matter how great you were, no matter what you made of yourself, when it came down to it, you were just a Jew.*

#### **Wednesday, May 24, 2006**

*We rise early for our day in Krakow. Although the weather is dimmer today than yesterday, the atmosphere is lighter. There will be no death camp visits today but the mood is eerie. This was a center for rich Jewry and now there isn't a Jew in sight. To think these streets were once swarming with traditional Jews, proudly sporting their religious get-ups through the city streets. I observe all the old synagogues and schools and try not to see them as just buildings but as sources for mystical knowledge. Throughout the day I close my eyes trying to envision the students learning with all their effort. I try to bring life to the crumbling walls. But it's hard to get in touch with the past without actually seeing it.*

#### **Thursday, May 25, 2006**

*On the way to Auschwitz-Birkenau we discuss stories of victims who survived. We learned how difficult it was for them to remain human while being treated like animals. We read about those who resisted.*

*In the evening we have a general discussion about the effect the trip is having on us and we share our thoughts. My realization is of a connection to the Holocaust Jews. There is absolutely no difference between us except that we were born in a different time and place. If I existed in Europe 65 years ago then I (G-d forbid) would have suffered through the Holocaust. We must remain strong and committed with a strong sense of unity.*

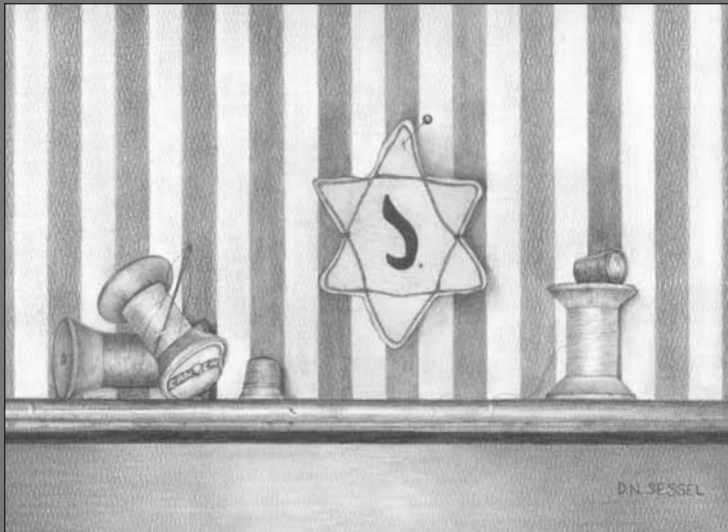
#### **Friday, May 26, 2006**

*Today we are leaving Poland on our way to Prague. We cannot forget the lessons this country and all the tragic remnants taught us. Ironically viewing the remains of the death camps in a sense strengthened my faith in G-d. I know I cannot question the most painful moments but believe that G-d is everywhere. Faith is not about understanding. It is about believing.*

#### **Sunday, May 28, 2006**

*On the flight back, it was difficult to sleep so I used the time to reflect. A genuine lesson that I gained and I hoped many others did, too, was awareness. This lesson can be applied to all Jews, regardless of age. One must always be aware—aware of his place in society, yet aware of how circumstances can change instantly, aware of the times and aware of one's enemies, aware of G-d's guidance in the world and aware of man's effect on the world, aware that the past can't be changed but because of it, the future can be altered. That is how awareness can lead to action.*

*We must spread our awareness to the Jews who have an actual effect on society. We must remind them that assimilation will bring about their own downfall. And if this task of outreach even seems too great for our limited human abilities, then we must remember we are not alone. We do not only possess our own G-d given strengths but the combined strengths of the six million who perished. We inherited their strengths and now we can be better Jews on their behalf. Overall, we are not our own entities but part of a greater whole—the entire Jewish nation. With that in mind we can truly fulfill our purpose of enlightening the world from its dark past. There will be retribution for those who passed and their lives will not have been taken in vain.*



Study on "Day's Work I"  
D.N. Sessel  
2006

## SPACE/S REVISITED POSTSCRIPT

Today's world is still frightening and yearns for an awareness to stop the fears our children confront. We give them life, we offer them hope and we try so hard to shelter them from the harsh realities. But events erase their innocence. Read these words from children of today and make a commitment to do everything possible so we can believe it when we say, *never again!*

*Raizy Sessel studied the Holocaust and unfortunately had her own story of fear to tell—a story that took place in Orange, CT in 2005.*

**RAIZY SESSEL**

**Writing Assignment**

**May, 2005**

*Rachel, a young girl of ten, innocent and sincere, began her day thinking that there was only good in the world. She was carefree as she got dressed, happily thinking only about her fancy outfit. Wearing a soft, frilly, pretty Shabbat dress, she ate her breakfast while singing songs and cheerful melodies with her two sisters. With hands linked the three siblings skipped alongside the busy road to the synagogue not noticing the glances people gave them. Involved in her own little world, she felt safe and content because she knew that her father was right behind her at all times, no matter where she went.*

*As they entered the driveway of the synagogue, a car pulled in and began beeping at them. The magical world Rachel was in quickly changed to reality. The angry face of a man appeared as the window rolled down. The man was terrifying and Rachel, as well as her sisters, knew this was bad. As they continued walking on, the man shouted racial remarks at them. Her father tried to hurry them along but as they turned around again the man gave them the finger as he drove away.*

*Rachel reviewed the entire episode in slow motion as she tried to process the entire happening. She couldn't understand the reason why the guy was so angry with her. "What did I ever do to him?" she wondered. She thought about it all day and as she walked back home after services, she didn't skip the way she had in the morning. She walked home silently knowing that she was no longer in the magical world of her dreams. She was now in a world where people were angry with young girls in frilly dresses just because they were Jewish.*

May, 2005

*We should remember all the people who were killed for no reason and by doing this we should prevent the reoccurring of this happening ever again (with G-d's help). I try to understand the horror and can only imagine...*

### MY LAST DAY

*Talia Sessel*

I stand looking out to a place I called home  
Why can't I be with the people I love, I wondered  
But I dare not ask so I never knew

What makes me different from the people outside the barbed wire?  
How can I be like them?  
Then I realized I can't change

Around me are dead, starved and ill people  
Why doesn't anyone care, I thought  
It dawned on me that we were the enemy

I sit down on the floor trying to catch a pleasant smell  
How can no one smell the dead?  
I questioned but never found the answer

People lined up, forced by guards who were yelling  
Why don't people hear the cries for help?  
I heard them but I remembered I was different

People shot and killed in gas and flames had good memories  
How can people kill others?  
I didn't ask.  
I knew. They had no heart.

Now it is my turn to walk through the line of death  
I was told of others who perished  
But when I did I had no memories left for them to cherish

You have read these words,  
words of those touched ever so deeply,  
thoughts they have promised will  
last a lifetime. But now that they've  
written them, said them and felt them,  
the words will last for lifetimes to come.

“The one who does not remember history  
is bound to live through it again”

George Santayana

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