

**Yom HaShoah  
Remembrance Service  
French Survivor:  
Rachel Malméd Epstein**



**Thirtieth Commemoration  
Dix Hills Jewish Center  
April 7, 2021  
26 Nissan 5781**

**We Gratefully Thank Our Generous Partners  
In DHJC Shoah Education & Programming**

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**Deborah & Neil Harris in Memory of the Weksberg Family**

**Susan & Alan Kreitzman in Memory of the Six Million**

**Gladys & Donald Stone in Memory of family we will never know  
who perished during the Holocaust**

## French Survivor Rachel Malméd Epstein

5 a.m. June 19, 1942. Compiègne, France, a city just north of Paris. A pounding on the door of the family of four. The parents were rushed out of the third floor apartment by French police under the orders of the Germans in charge, leaving behind their hysterical children — Rachel, 10 and Leon, 5. On the way down the steps, M. Malméd asks his Gentile neighbors on the second floor to care for his children until their return from the police station. They never returned. Henri and Suzanne Ribouleau cared for the children of Srul and Chana Malméd — despite great danger to their lives and the lives of their two teenaged sons — for the remainder of the war.

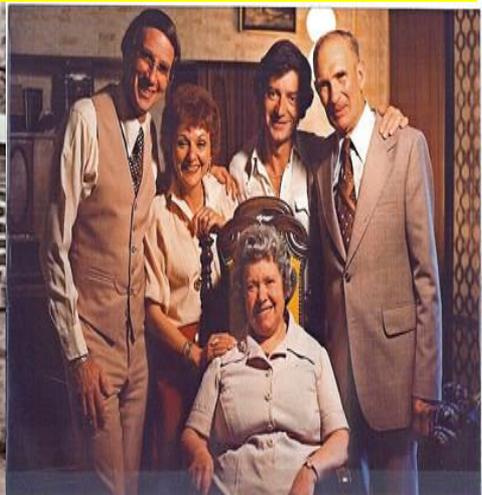
**JOIN US AS RACHEL TELLS HER STORY THROUGH A RIVETING FILM AND PERSONAL MEMORIES.**

Rachel's unique story focuses on the light in the darkness — the triumph of goodness despite evil.

A documentary made of her story, along with her own recollections, will leave you spellbound!



*Suzanne and Henri Ribouleau with Rachel and Léon Malméd*



*From left to right, Izzy Epstein, Rachel Epstein, Leon Malméd, Henri Ribouleau, seated Suzanne Ribouleau in 1978 on Long Island visiting the Epsteins*

## THE HOLOCAUST IN FRANCE



*Deportation of Jews during the Marseille roundup, 23 January 1943*

The Holocaust in France was the persecution, deportation, and annihilation of Jews and Roma (Gypsies) between 1940 and 1944 in occupied France, metropolitan Vichy France, and in Vichy-controlled French North Africa, during WW 11. The persecution began in 1940 and culminated in deportations of Jews from France to Nazi concentration camps in Nazi Germany and Nazi-occupied Poland. The deportation started in 1942 and lasted until July 1944. Of the 340,000 Jews living in metropolitan/continental France in 1940, more than 75,000 were deported to death camps, where about 72,500 were killed. The government of Vichy France and the French Police participated in the roundup of Jews. Although most deported Jews died, the survival rate of the Jewish population in France was up to 75%, which is one of the highest survival rates in Europe.

## BACKGROUND

When the Germans occupied France in the summer of 1940, there were around 700,000 Jews living in French-ruled territory, of which 400,000 lived in French Algeria, then an integral part of France, and in the two French protectorates of Tunisia and Morocco. After the occupation of Belgium and the Netherlands in 1940, France hosted a new wave of Jewish immigrants. France was divided into two areas of control: the north came under Germany military rule; in the south an anti-Semitic nationalist French state was set up under Marshal Henri-Philippe Petain. The regime there collaborated with the Germans, and it was the French police that carried out the anti-Jewish actions. On October 4, 1940, the enactment of the Jewish Statute deprived French Jews of their civil rights. Concurrently, registration and dispossession of the Jews were also instituted. Thousands of Jews, mostly refugees and immigrants -including German Jews who had been deported from various parts of Germany- were sent to detention camps in Southern France. The main detention camp was in Drancy, a short distance from Paris. In the summer of 1942, prior to the Jews' deportation, the yellow star was instituted. Between 1941 and 1944, nearly 76,000 Jews, including children, were sent to Auschwitz.

About 76,000 Jews were deported to Nazi concentration camps and death camp and 72,500 of them died, but 75% of the approximately 330,000 Jews in metropolitan France in 1939 escaped deportation and survived the Holocaust, which is one of the highest survival rates in Europe. France has the third highest number of citizens who were awarded the Righteous Among the Nations, an award given to "non-Jews who acted according to the most noble principles of humanity by risking their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust".

## RESCUERS

Not nearly enough was done to rescue the Jews during the Holocaust. Whereas governments, churches and international conferences failed to stop the Nazis from murdering six million people, thousands of individuals did effectively act to save Jewish lives.

Ordinary people of all backgrounds defied the dangers to come to the aid of persecuted Jews. Rescue efforts were geographically diverse. Rescuer's activities were influenced not only by the extent of Nazi control of an area but by the hostile or sympathetic attitudes of the population.

Rescue operations in Occupied Western Europe, particularly in Denmark, Belgium, France and Italy, succeeded in saving substantial portions of the respective nations' native Jewish communities. Danish citizens organized fishing boat flotillas that helped almost all of the country's Jews escape to neutral Sweden. In France, a variety of groups and individuals rescued some 7,000 children smuggling many into Switzerland and Spain. Involved were Protestant and Catholic church leaders and peasants as well as Jewish Child Care organizations.

The underground French organization Circuit Garel rescued many children from Nazi transit camps and hid them in foster homes. The villagers of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in Vichy France provided safe-haven for thousands of Jews until members of the Resistance could guide them into Switzerland.

A number of international organizations including the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the World Jewish Congress and the War Refugee Board, supported both overt and clandestine actions in order to save as many Jews as possible.

## THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT ADMISSIONS

For decades the French government declined to apologize for the role of French policemen in the roundup or for any other state complicity.

On 16 July 1995, President Jacques Chirac stated that it was time that France faced up to its past and he acknowledged the role that the state had played in the persecution of Jews and other victims of the German occupation. Those responsible for the roundup, according to Chirac, were "4,500 policemen and gendarmes, French, under the authority of their leaders [who] obeyed the demands of the Nazis."

In 2012, to mark the 70th anniversary of the roundup, President Francois Hollande gave a speech at a monument to the Vel d'Hiver Roundup. The president recognized that this event was a crime committed "in France, by France," and emphasized that the deportations in which French police participated were offenses committed against French values, principles, and ideals. He continued his speech by remarking on French tolerance towards others.

In July 2017, also in commemoration of the victims of the roundup at the Vélodrome d'Hiver, President Emmanuel Macron denounced his country's role in the Holocaust and the historical revisionism that denied France's responsibility for 1942 roundup and subsequent deportation of 13,000 Jews. "It was indeed France that organised this [roundup]", he said, French police collaborating with the Nazis. "Not a single German took part," he added. Neither Chirac nor Hollande had specifically stated that the Vichy government, in power during WW II, actually represented the French State. Macron on the other hand, made it clear that the Government during the War was indeed the French State. "It is convenient to see the Vichy regime as born of nothingness, returned to nothingness. Yes, it's convenient, but it is false. We cannot build pride upon a lie." Macron did make a subtle reference to Chirac's 1995 apology when he added, "I say it again here. It was indeed France that organized the roundup, the deportation, and thus, for almost all, death."

**We dedicate this 30th Yom HaShoah Commemoration at the Dix Hills Jewish Center on April 7, 2021, 26 Nissan 5781 to all the Righteous Among the Nations.**



Yad Vashem is Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. It is dedicated to preserving the memory of the dead; honoring Jews who fought against their Nazi oppressors and Gentiles who selflessly aided Jews in need; and researching the phenomenon of the Holocaust in particular and genocide in general, with the aim of avoiding such events in the future.

Established in 1953, Yad Vashem is located on the western slope of Mount Herzl, also known as the Mount of Remembrance, a height in western Jerusalem, 804 meters (2,638 ft) above sea level and adjacent to the Jerusalem Forest. A core goal of Yad Vashem's founders was to recognize non-Jews who, at personal risk and without a financial or evangelistic motive, chose to save Jews from the ongoing genocide during the Holocaust. Those recognized by Israel as Righteous Among the Nations are honored in a section of Yad Vashem known as the Garden of the Righteous Among Nations.

#### **The Avenue of the Righteous Among Nations**

In 1962, the Avenue of the Righteous was opened and a year later a public commission was established so that Yad Vashem could fulfill its legal duty to award the title of "Righteous Among the Nations," in keeping with systematic criteria. The Righteous Among the Nations award is a unique honor, which recognizes and commemorates the actions of those non-Jews who risked their lives in order to rescue Jews during the Holocaust. The concept of "Righteous Among the Nations," as coined by Yad Vashem, has become a universal term, accepted the world over. Yad Vashem has been preparing a comprehensive encyclopedia that will include all the rescue stories and summarize the Righteous project that has spanned these decades. As of January 2020, Yad Vashem has recognized 27,712 persons from 51 countries as Righteous among the Nations.

## SURVIVOR LEGACIES

### Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation

Moved by his experience in producing Schindler's List (1993) the Academy Award-winning film that did so much to call attention to the Holocaust, Steven Spielberg established the Shoah Foundation in 1994. Its interviewers have created one of the survivors' most impressive legacies: the videotaping of more than 55,000 interviews conducted in 43 different languages by survivors from 65 countries. Their combined testimonies are preserved on more than 32,000 miles of videotape. It would take more than 13 years of continuous viewing to see and hear them all. The Global Headquarters of the Shoah Foundation are on the USC campus. Other repositories for survivor interviews can be found at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem Israel, the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington DC and the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University.



*Our mission is to develop empathy, understanding, and respect through testimony.*

### Leading Change Through Testimony

*The Institute currently has more than 55,000 video testimonies, each one a unique source of insight and knowledge that offers powerful stories from history that demand to be explored and shared. The testimonies are preserved in the Visual History Archive, one of the largest digital collections of its kind in the world. They average a little over two hours each in length and were conducted in 65 countries and 43 languages. The vast majority of the testimonies contain a complete personal history of life before, during, and after the interviewee's firsthand experience with genocide.*

## **TODAH RABAH! THANK YOU!**

We dedicate this 30<sup>th</sup> Yom HaShoah Commemoration at the Dix Hills Jewish Center to all the *Righteous Among the Nations* “Whoever saves a life, it is considered as if they saved the entire world.” The Talmud

Let this service give us an insight into the more than 27,700 persons recognized to date by Yad Vashem as *The Righteous*, who during the Holocaust saved the lives of Jews and by doing so risked not only their own lives but that of their families.

We are delighted to welcome Rachel Malmed Epstein whose story of survival in Compiègne, France sheds light on the Righteous Family who saved her and her brother in 1942 and the decades long relationship that followed.

We warmly welcome Anita Epstein Leibowitz, Rachel’s daughter, who has supported her mom in the telling of her uplifting story of survival during a time of evil.

We thank Rabbi Howard Buechler for his valuable guidance and encouragement, support and participation.

Cantor Steven Hevenstone for his musical enhancement of the service.

Carol Kushner’s soulful musical introduction has set the mood for this commemoration.

The DHJC office staff have been unwavering in their assistance in our Shoah Programming.

Let this service help us to “never forget” our “Six Million”. We believe that just as the experience of receiving the Torah at Sinai gave us our identity as a people, the experience of the Holocaust must forever remain in our collective memories.

It is our responsibility to teach it to our children.

May the blessed memories of our Six Million and the victims of all genocides inspire us to acts of righteousness.

*Gail Jospa and Renee Steinig*

*DHJC Shoah Commemoration Committee*

*Booklet Sources include: The Holocaust Chronicle, To Bear Witness – Holocaust Remembrance at Yad Vashem & Wikipedia*