

**We Must  
Never  
Forget:**

***The Story  
of the  
Holocaust***

**TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE**

A VIDEO FROM KNOWLEDGE UNLIMITED, INC.

TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE

for

**We Must Never Forget:**  
*The Story  
of the  
Holocaust*

A video  
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## **We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust**

### *INTRODUCTION*

For young people today, the Holocaust is already a remote tragedy. Even their parents have little or no direct memory of that terrible time in human history. Nevertheless, today's kids need to know about the Holocaust. We must find ways to impress the enormity of its horror on each generation. Only in this way can we continue to remain vigilant about such evils and derive any meaning at all from what happened in Europe in the early 1940s.

It was with this aim in mind that we undertook to produce a video on the Holocaust. It's a story that has been told many times. But we felt an obligation to tell it again in a way that would make it especially accessible to young people in schools today.

For this reason, the video's opening dialogue tries to bring the Holocaust into the present in order to challenge viewers not to distance themselves from it. The program then reviews the historical context in which the Holocaust arose. Here, it poses one particular question: How could such horrors arise in a nation as civilized and tolerant as Germany had become by the turn of the century? To try to answer this question, the video reviews such factors as the long tradition of anti-Semitism in Central Europe, the aftermath of World War I in Germany, the coming of the Great Depression, the appeal of Nazism, and Adolf Hitler's rise to power.

The program then introduces Rosa Katz, a remarkable Holocaust survivor from the Polish city of Lodz. Her gripping account of her family's terrifying confinement in the Lodz ghetto and her imprisonment in Auschwitz takes viewers into the very heart of the "Final Solution." At this point, the narrative simply supplies a general context for Rosa's dramatic personal story.

The video concludes with some remarks about the demands the Holocaust makes on all of us today — and with a fitting appeal from Rosa Katz to appreciate our nation and its freedoms, and never "take it for granted." We hope this video will help your groups better understand and come to terms with this painful episode in human history.

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## **We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust**

### **The Teacher's Resource Guide**

The guide consists of the following:

- 1) A brief introduction, describing the video and stating goals and objectives.
- 2) A "readiness activity" to be completed before viewing the video.
- 3) Four follow-up lessons to be completed after viewing the video.  
A reproducible activity sheet accompanies each lesson.
- 4) The complete script of the video WE MUST NEVER FORGET: THE STORY OF THE HOLOCAUST.
- 5) A brief bibliography.

### **Learning Objectives**

After viewing the video and completing the activities in this guide, students should

- 1) Know the basic facts about the Holocaust and understand something of the historical forces that gave rise to it.
- 2) Appreciate more fully the true extent of the horror of what took place in the Holocaust.
- 3) Be better able to do follow-up reading and research on the Holocaust.
- 4) Be able to understand and reflect on the Holocaust and its continuing importance to all of us today.

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## **We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust**

### **A Readiness Activity**

(Do this activity before viewing the video.)

**Objective:** Students will be better able to appreciate the video after they identify key personalities, terms, and events described in it.

Use the **Readiness Activity Sheet** (opposite page).

1. Split your class into four small groups.
2. Reproduce copies of the **Readiness Activity Sheet** and hand them out. This sheet contains a list of names and vocabulary terms.
3. Tell the class members that they will be viewing a video on the Holocaust. Warn students that the story is an upsetting one, but explain why it is so important for them to know about it. Also indicate that the video will make use of and expand on the terms on their lists.
4. Assign each group three of the names or terms on the sheet. Give each group about ten minutes to discuss its three items and agree on definitions for them. Ask one person in each group to record the group's definitions for each term in one or two sentences.
5. Have each group read its definitions to the whole class. Discuss the names and other terms, and try to supply more complete information where necessary.

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## **We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust**

### *Readiness Activity Sheet*

In a small group, discuss the three names or terms you have been assigned from the list below. Have one member of the group record an agreed-upon definition or description for each of your names or terms.

**Holocaust**

**Nazi**

**extermination**

**Adolf Hitler**

**Auschwitz**

**Heinrich Himmler**

**“Final Solution”**

**Great Depression**

**anti-Semitism**

*Kristallnacht*

**Warsaw ghetto**

**Holocaust revisionists**

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# We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust

## LESSON 1

**Objective:** Students will develop their ability to read critically and, through first-hand accounts, increase their understanding and appreciation of what it was like to personally experience the Holocaust — and survive it.

Use **Activity Sheet for Lesson 1** (opposite page).

1. Reproduce and hand out copies of the script for the video WE MUST NEVER FORGET: THE STORY OF THE HOLOCAUST. The script starts on page 14 of this guide.
2. Reproduce copies of **Activity Sheet for Lesson 1** and hand them out. Have students read the instructions on the activity sheet carefully. Then answer any questions they have.
3. Give students enough time to read the video script and one other personal account of the Holocaust by a Holocaust survivor. Several such accounts can be found in the bibliography at the end of this guide. Make sure the students take detailed notes as they read.
4. Have the students write an essay comparing Rosa Katz's Holocaust experiences with those of the survivor whose book they read. Ask them to base their essay on the questions on **Activity Sheet for Lesson 1**. Also encourage students to explore their own thoughts and feelings about what they read.
5. Use the essays as the basis for a class discussion. You may also want to post some of your students' essays.

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# **We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust**

## *Activity Sheet for Lesson 1*

Read the script for the video WE MUST NEVER FORGET: THE STORY OF THE HOLOCAUST. Pay particular attention to Rosa Katz's description of her experiences during the Holocaust. Then, go to your library and pick out a book by a Holocaust survivor on his or her experiences.

As you read the video script and the book you select, take careful notes. Use them to answer the six questions listed here. Then, write a brief essay comparing the experiences of these two Holocaust survivors. Be sure to include in your essay the answers to the six questions listed below.

- 1. What was the name of the other Holocaust survivor you chose to read about? What was the title of his or her book?**
  
- 2. Briefly describe the experiences of this survivor.**
  
- 3. In what ways were Rosa Katz's experiences in the Holocaust similar to those of the other individual whose account you read?**
  
- 4. In what ways were the experiences of these two survivors different?**
  
- 5. What incidents in the two accounts made the greatest impression on you? How did these events make you feel? Why?**
  
- 6. What lessons, if any, do the stories of these two individuals teach us?**



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# We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust

## LESSON 2

**Objective:** By comparing the Holocaust to conflicts that appear to be genocidal in various parts of the world today, students should gain an increased awareness of why the lessons of the Holocaust are as relevant today as they were in the 1940s.

Use **Activity Sheet for Lesson 2** (opposite page).

1. Discuss editorial cartoons with the class. Help students understand what makes an editorial cartoon persuasive or thought-provoking. You may want to have the class discuss some examples of cartoons from the editorial page of your local newspaper.
2. Reproduce copies of **Activity Sheet for Lesson 2** and hand them out. Have students read the instructions on the activity sheet carefully. Then answer any questions they have.
3. Tell the students they will be writing out answers to the questions on the activity sheet itself or on separate sheets of paper as needed.
4. Choose several students to read their responses to the entire class. Use these responses and others as the basis for a class discussion on the cartoon and its message about the Holocaust.

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## We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust

### *Activity Sheet for Lesson 2*

The editorial cartoon at right was drawn by Yasmin Golan, a high school student in California. Study Yasmin's cartoon carefully. Then write out answers to the questions below.



1. Part of the sign in the cartoon says, "Never Forget, Never Again" — words that Jews and others often use when talking about the Holocaust. What point do these words help this cartoon make?
2. In your opinion, are there any situations in the world today that are in any way comparable to the Holocaust? Explain your answer.
3. What do you think the world community, our own nation, and each individual can and should do to prevent other Holocausts from happening?

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## We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust

### LESSON 3

**Objective:** Students will learn more about certain Nazi perpetrators of the Holocaust. As they do, they will develop a better understanding of the difficult ethical issues raised by the concepts of “crimes against humanity” and war crimes trials, and by the effort to assign blame for the Holocaust.

Use **Activity Sheet for Lesson 3** (opposite page).

1. Ask students what they know about the Nuremberg Trials. Discuss the idea of “crimes against humanity.” Ask them to discuss the idea of establishing such a category of crimes separate from the categories of, say, war crimes or crimes against civilians. Do they think such a concept is valid? Who should be considered a “criminal against humanity”?
2. Then, reproduce copies of **Activity Sheet for Lesson 3** and hand them out. Have students read the instructions on the activity sheet carefully. Answer any questions they have.
3. Briefly discuss the people listed on the activity sheet.
4. Have each student choose one of these individuals and answer the questions on **Activity Sheet for Lesson 3**. A section of the bibliography lists references for this activity.
5. Collect the activity sheets and use them as the basis for a group discussion about these individuals and their roles in the Holocaust.

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## **We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust**

### *Activity Sheet for Lesson 3*

Listed below are seven individuals who had a role in the events of the Holocaust. Choose one of these figures and use encyclopedias, books, and other library sources to learn more about him. Your teacher or librarian should be able to help you locate sources. Then answer the questions below. Share your answers and thoughts with your class.

**Heinrich Himmler**  
**Adolf Eichmann**  
**Martin Bormann**  
**Hermann Goering**

**Klaus Barbie**  
**Reinhard Heydrich**  
**Joseph Mengele**

- 1. Which person did you choose? What role did the person you chose play in the Holocaust?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. Was the individual you chose ever brought to trial for his part in the Holocaust? If so, what was the outcome of the trial?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. How responsible do you think the person you chose was for the events of the Holocaust?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4. Was this person properly punished for his part in the Holocaust? Why or why not?**

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## We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust

### LESSON 4

**Objective:** Students will learn more about what the Allies knew about the Holocaust during the war and what they did or did not do about it. In addition, students will become acquainted with the difficulties and pressures involved in decision making at the highest levels of government.

Use **Activity Sheet for Lesson 4** (opposite page).

1. Reproduce copies of **Activity Sheet for Lesson 4** and hand them out. Have students read the instructions on the activity sheet carefully. Answer any questions they have.
2. Have students read one or more books or magazine articles that deal with the question of why the death camps were not bombed. Several sources are listed in the bibliography at the end of this guide. Especially recommended is "Why Wasn't Auschwitz Bombed?" a chapter in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* by Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum.
3. Have the students pretend to be key advisers to President Franklin Roosevelt. Tell them that, based on their reading and their answers to the questions listed on **Activity Sheet for Lesson 4**, they are to prepare a "position paper" telling President Roosevelt whether or not to bomb the Auschwitz death camp.
4. Choose six students to present their position papers and discuss their recommendations as a group before the entire class. Allow the rest of the class to ask this group questions and participate in the discussion. Then have the entire class vote on how to advise the president on this matter.

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## **We Must Never Forget: The Story of the Holocaust**

### *Activity Sheet for Lesson 4*

Most historians agree the Allied governments knew about the Final Solution at some point during World War II. And at the time, some people wanted President Roosevelt to order the bombing of the death camps, specifically Auschwitz.

Read one or more books or magazine articles dealing with the issue of why Auschwitz wasn't bombed. Your teacher or school librarian can help you locate sources. Then write out your answers to the questions below. Pretend you are an adviser to President Roosevelt and write a "position paper" advising him whether or not to bomb Auschwitz. Use your answers to the questions below to help you write your position paper. Be sure to come to a firm decision backed with facts and sound logic. Be prepared to share your position paper with the rest of your class.

- 1. What exactly did the Allies know about the death camp at Auschwitz, and when did they obtain this knowledge?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. What arguments can you think of in favor of the idea of bombing Auschwitz during the war?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. What arguments can you think of against the idea of bombing Auschwitz during the war?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4. What would be your final recommendation to the president on this matter? Why?**

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SCRIPT

*We Must Never Forget:  
The Story of the Holocaust*

**SOLDIER WHO LIBERATED THE CAMPS**

"It was horrible. I'll never forget it. All those bodies. They were people! Even the living looked like walking dead. We'd been through war. I'd seen men die. I'd seen legs blown off. I thought I'd seen it all. But I found myself wondering: 'How could anyone do this? How could they do this . . .'"

**YOUNG PERSON**

"Yeah, I've heard about the Holocaust. That was a long time ago — you know, history. I mean, I *know* people do awful things. Even today. It's rotten, sure. But why keep dwelling on it, you know what I mean?"

**TEACHER**

"The students I teach are well-meaning enough. But it's hard to get them to see that they need to know about this. There are even people who say the Holocaust never happened. That's not history — it's slander! But how's a young person today supposed to evaluate that?"

**ROSA KATZ**

"I am a witness. Nobody can tell me this never happened. I am the only one who survived from my family. I had a wonderful family. I was the youngest one of four children — very protected by my brother and my sisters, and my parents, of course. And it's so hard for me to talk about it. But I feel it's necessary, especially to the young people in schools — teenagers — they've got to know what prejudice and bigotry can do to people. And what Hitler did especially to the Jewish people, it's unforgivable. And we have to know about it so this can never happen again to anybody."

**SOLDIER**

"I went back to Germany awhile ago. It's a nice

place — friendly people, for the most part. They're no different from you and me. I mean it seemed so civilized. But I keep thinking about what I saw — in the camps, the ovens. Some of these people did that. And if that's so, it could happen anywhere. It could happen here!"

*We Must Never Forget:  
The Story of the Holocaust*

**NARRATOR**

Holocaust. The word alone has come to stand for the ultimate in horror.

The Holocaust was Nazi Germany's plan to destroy every last Jew in Europe — perhaps in the world.

It came horribly close to succeeding.

During World War II, in the early 1940s, as German armies swept west and east, in nation after nation, Jews by the hundreds of thousands were put to death. Six million Jews in all, along with millions of Poles, Russians, Gypsies, and others the Nazis wished to eliminate.

How? How could this have come to pass?

Officially, the decision was made on January 20th, 1942. On that day, 15 top Nazi officials met here, in Wannsee, a suburb of Berlin. Refined, educated, apparently civilized men, led by SS General Reinhard Heydrich.

Heydrich told the meeting, "Practical experience is already being collected . . . in relation to the future Final Solution of the Jewish problem."

At Wannsee, the Nazi leaders gave this "Final

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Solution” — the murder of all of Europe’s Jews — the official go-ahead.

But the Wannsee Conference was only carrying out the orders of Adolf Hitler. In the 1930s, Hitler and his Nazi Party had taken control of Germany — bringing to power one of the most hate-filled dictatorships in history. And of all the objects of Hitler’s hate, the most despised by him were the Jews.

Hitler’s anti-Semitic ideas produced the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

But he only succeeded because millions of Germans found it easy to accept these ideas.

In a way, that’s surprising. After all, Germany had long been among the most enlightened of nations. Its universities were world famous. German music, arts, and literature were also appreciated around the world. In science and technology, Germany was second to none.

In this enlightened atmosphere, Jews were not merely accepted, they were often highly influential. In World War I, German Jews fought patriotically for Germany.

So what went wrong?

For one thing, World War I itself went wrong. Germany suffered total defeat. Moreover, the peace settlement that followed humiliated Germany. The victors forced Germany to accept total blame for the war. They made it pay billions in fines called “reparations.” And they took away German lands to the north, east, and west.

Tragically, it was Germany’s first truly democratic government, the so-called Weimar republic, that had to accept this settlement. As a result, millions of Germans came to hate the Weimar regime and its democratic ideals.

Then in the 1930s came the chaos of the Great Depression. Six million Germans lost their jobs. Desperation spread. People longed for someone to blame.

Centuries-old hatred of Jews in Europe made them the easiest target. Jews were often seen as an alien group. Vicious lies were made up about them. Some

even said that Jews stole and sacrificed children. This cartoon’s caption says, “Here little one, have some candy! But for that you’ll have to come with me . . .”

Jews were portrayed as money-hungry parasites living off other nations — destroying their racial purity in the process. This cartoon says, “Money is the god of the Jews.”

Some Germans believed Jews were at the center of a vast conspiracy to take control of the whole world.

These crude views were brutal and absurd. But millions of Germans had been taught to believe them. All it took was a mesmerizing leader to ignite this mixture of desperation and anti-Semitism. And which of us is not drawn to a strong leader in times of fear and confusion? In the 1930s, millions of Germans were ready for Hitler.

As one historian put it, “Many Germans were dreaming of . . . a tough and cunning leader able to bring order to the country, discipline the people, put an end to party rule, take hold of the reins, and know what to do.”

**[Hitler speaking, crowd cheering]**

**NARRATOR**

Germans voted for the Nazi Party in increasing numbers. And in 1933, Hitler took power — legally. He quickly destroyed all political opposition. He was the Führer — an absolute ruler with unlimited power. To justify this power, Hitler needed to unify the country against a common enemy. He had already identified one: the Jews.

Between 1933 and 1939, life slowly became more and more wretched for Germany’s Jews. They were identified and forced to wear the yellow Star of David in public. Soon they were segregated and deprived of all rights. Their businesses were seized. Some were taken to concentration camps. At times, sadistic attacks on Jews were allowed — even encouraged.

One of the worst moments came on November 9th, 1938. On that night, thousands of Jewish synagogues, homes, and other buildings were destroyed during *Kristallnacht* — “the night of the broken glass.”



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Meanwhile, the great democracies looked the other way as Hitler's plans for the conquest of Europe unfolded. In 1938, at Munich, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain agreed to let Hitler take over part of Czechoslovakia. He told the world he had secured "peace in our time." In fact, the West had once again backed down before Hitler's threats. It had helped make World War II all but inevitable.

In the 1930s, the world could see how badly Germany's Jews were being treated. But few imagined that Hitler would try to destroy them entirely. In 1939, even many Jews could not yet imagine what was in store for them.

Nevertheless, Jews throughout Europe were becoming alarmed. Simply by existing, Hitler was inflaming deep anti-Semitic hatreds in their own lands.

Rosa Goldberg Katz grew up in Lodz, a city in Poland. She was a young girl in 1939. Her sister Nechama had already moved to Palestine, the land that would become Israel. Rosa would survive the Holocaust. But the rest of her family in Poland perished in it — including her sister Miriam and her children, her mother Sarah, her uncle Herschel, her brother Mojshe, and her father, Abraham Aron.

We asked Rosa to describe the climate in Poland in the 1930s, on the eve of World War II.

### **ROSA KATZ**

"In Poland — we were segregated in Lodz. I only went to school with all Jewish children. We were segregated, like they were segregated black and white in the South. And every time I went by on the way to school, some gentile kids were waiting for us and would tear our papers up, our books taken away. This anti-Semitism in Poland was always. Even my great-grandparents had to cope with that.

"And we were always called 'Christ killers.' Many times I asked — and my kids asked the same thing — did we kill somebody? Christ was killed 2000 years ago. And first of all, he was Jewish, too. And the Jews did not kill him. The Romans killed him. So

what's this got to do with me? I wasn't even born. My great-grandparents were not even born. Why would they call us Christ killers?

"Every time there was a holiday, they had religious parades in Poland. They were carrying Holy Mary pictures and Christ pictures, and they were singing religious songs. They ended every song, 'Jews to Palestine. Death to the Jews.' This was going on all the time. There were some restaurants and hotels with signs on the front doors: 'Jews and Dogs Not Allowed.'"

### **NARRATOR**

It was only under the cover of World War II that the Nazis put the Final Solution into effect.

The war began in September 1939 with the invasion of Poland. Later, Hitler attacked and quickly conquered much of Western Europe. Then, in 1941, came his biggest assault — on the Soviet Union.

These conquests brought millions of Jews under Nazi control. Within weeks, Jews by the tens of thousands began to be herded into ghettos in cities in Poland, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere. Life in these ghettos quickly became intolerable. Misery, disease, and starvation spread rapidly.

Rosa Katz and her family were forced to leave their comfortable home and move into the Lodz ghetto — 12 people jammed into two small rooms.

### **ROSA KATZ**

"The conditions in the ghetto is just undescrivable. There's not enough words in the vocabulary to describe — the fear and the hunger. There were no hospitals, no medicine. People lived in horrible conditions. And then they kept shipping in people from different countries — from Czechoslovakia, from Germany, and also from Austria — into the ghetto. And there was not enough room for them to be put up. Conditions were horrible. People slept on the floors, in the hallways.

"And then the rations started. And this actually killed a lot of people. They went to sleep and they never woke up. We had to collect our rations at a

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certain area once a week. And people were so hungry, when they picked their rations up, it was enough to have one good meal, and they ate it all up in one day. And then they had to wait a whole week without food, to get the next rations. And this actually killed a lot of people.

“And then there were selections. Soldiers came sometimes in the middle of the night, shooting from their machine guns and screaming ‘*Juden, raus, raus,*’ with loud voices and shooting. And people were just terrified. Nobody knew who’s going to be selected. Each day they chose elderly people, and sometimes blond people, or sometimes brown eyes. You know, they were looking, which ones to choose. And this was very fearful. And one time we went all out on a selection. And my cousin we shared the apartment with, who had two little children, two little girls, and they were taken away. And it was just absolutely devastating, to all of us.

“And the soldiers, they did so many horrible things. Like mothers came out with their babies in their arms. They would grab the babies from the mothers’ arm and threw them in the air, like target shooting. And when they fell to the ground, they had dogs with them. And the dogs tore them apart. And we had to stand there. And not to be able to do a darned thing. Can you imagine the feelings, even if you weren’t the parents, still watching that horrible thing, innocent babies?

“And then in 1942, we were at a selection again. This was when my both parents were taken away. My brother and I stood there, almost numb. I started screaming. My brother put his hand over my mouth so the Germans wouldn’t hear me screaming. And a neighbor pushed me down so they wouldn’t see me. My parents weren’t old, they weren’t sick. But at that time — this was ‘42 — they were undernourished. They had to climb on a truck. And they were pushed and beaten. And we had to stand there watching that. And all of a sudden, we realized both of my parents were gone.”

#### NARRATOR

Eventually, the Nazis let Rosa’s father return because he was needed in a factory in the ghetto.

#### ROSA KATZ

“Meantime, my brother met his wife, and he got married, so he moved out. So I was just alone with my dad. And I had to really take care of him. I was the caregiver to him. It was just very devastating not to have my mom with us.

“And the conditions in the ghetto got worse and worse and worse. All of a sudden, the population got less, because people were just dying, and people were taken away during selection time. And then it was ‘44. There weren’t too many people — there were no children, no babies left in the ghetto. Nobody had a child. They were all taken away. The conditions were terrible, especially the winters were, like, similar to Wisconsin. Very cold. It was colder in those winters than it ever was before. I don’t know why. I asked Almighty God, asked him ‘Why did you send all those horrible winters down?’ And we had no heatings. We were just freezing.

“But we survived. ‘44. This was August ‘44. There was just a handful left in the ghetto. So they decided to liquidate the ghetto.

“And we had to line up again and march to the railroad station. And they piled us into those car wagons. With just very little we could bring with us. And we didn’t know where we were going. The situation was so horrible in the ghetto that everybody was talking, ‘It cannot be worse. Wherever they’re going to send us, it cannot be worse.’”

#### NARRATOR

Meanwhile, in 1941, hundreds of thousands of Jews in the Soviet Union were already being murdered by so-called *Einsatzgruppen* — mobile killing squads.

The victims often had to dig their own mass graves before being shot and pushed into them, one by one.

SS leader Heinrich Himmler said of these squads, “To have stuck it out . . . that is what has made us hard. This is a page of glory in our history which has never been written and is never to be written.”

However, the Nazis were not happy about the mobile killing squads — not because of the *victims*,

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but, in part at least, because of the strain on the killers!

The death camps would solve that problem. The six main ones were Chelmno, Sobibor, Treblinka, Belzec, Majdanek, and Auschwitz. Soon, trains from all over Europe were emptying the ghettos and bringing victims by the thousands daily to these hideous death camps.

The gas chambers in them were impersonal. Guards need not watch the dying. The process of death became bureaucratic. Careful records were kept. Strict rules of procedure followed. First came the selection at the rail stations of those to be gassed immediately and those to be slave laborers for a time. Those marked for death filed into rooms such as this, often expecting only to get a shower. Deadly gas would fill the chamber, killing hundreds at a time in minutes. Afterward, bodies were cremated. Then, efficiently, valuable remains were stored: glasses, toothbrushes, shoes, gold fillings, even hair.

#### ROSA KATZ

“So there were several days we were in those wagons, with pails for our toiletry, no water, no food — just pieces of bread we had saved. We were so upset in the dark, for several days and several nights. Finally, the train stopped. And all of a sudden, the doors opened. We didn’t know where we were. And all of a sudden we realized it was a big sign on the station: ‘Auschwitz.’

“We had no idea what Auschwitz was all about. We never heard about it, ‘cause we had no newspapers in the ghetto, no radios. It was taken away. We were not allowed to listen to anything. And all of a sudden, we were blinded, because we were in the dark for so many days. Shouts — the Germans shouting with their loud voices, ‘*Raus!*’ Swearing words, I’m not going to even repeat what they were saying. And we were just absolutely — I cannot explain how we felt. We didn’t know where we were. And naturally, we were blinded, we couldn’t see much, because we were in the dark.

“And we marched out, and we were told to line up. They took the men on one side and the women on the other side; and the young people on one area

and the older people on a separate line-up, which my sister-in-law’s mother was in — she was an older lady. All of a sudden I realized, my sister-in-law and I, we were holding on to each other. I said, ‘My gosh’ — her mother was gone. And then all of a sudden, her husband (my brother), and my dad . . .

“And my father looked at us from a distance, I noticed him. And tears in his eyes. He probably blamed himself for what was going to happen to his children now.

“And we had to line up — the Germans, how strict they are. We cannot even step out an inch. We had to be just lined up. And I realized I got a piece of old bread, dried up bread, in my pocket. And I just ran out of line, and I ran towards my dad. And I gave him that piece of bread. And the soldier noticed me, and he pushed my back with his gun. He hit me back to the line. I had a big bruise for a while. It was hurting. And I watched my dad breaking up that piece of bread. Apparently, I realized, my dad knew what’s gonna happen. He was passing crumbs of bread all around him to the other people — like the last meal, you know. The expression on my dad’s face, it was just terrifying to me. I realized he was crying. And this was the last time I saw my brother and my dad.”

#### NARRATOR

Rosa was now alone in Auschwitz. Both her parents were gone.

#### ROSA KATZ

“And then they marched us off, my sister-in-law and I. We were together, we were holding on. And she was crying because her mother was taken away. She lost two brothers during a selection, too, and never saw them again. So we were just holding on for dear life to each other.

“They marched us off to a barrack. We didn’t know what kind of barrack. And this was *the* barrack — where they cremated and where they gassed people, where they had showers. And there was Mengele, ‘the Angel of Death,’ they called him. He was there. And he was *very* polite to the ladies. Ladies to the right and ladies — ‘Madame,’ not ladies, he called them, ‘Madame, *rechts*, and

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Madame, *links'* — it was in German. And nobody knew what 'right' or 'left' meant. Apparently, my sister-in-law and I, we went to the right side, had the regular showers. And the other people were gassed. We didn't know about the gas chambers or whatever. But eventually, we found out — being in Auschwitz, we knew what was going on.

"They shaved our heads. We had to undress, right in front of all those soldiers sneering and laughing. I was a little girl, a teenager! And it was so embarrassing to take off my — it took me a while to do it. But all of a sudden I realized, and my sister-in-law Hela said, 'Rosa' — 'Roozhah,' actually, in Polish — 'you better do it. They're gonna hurt you! They're gonna beat you!' You know, I was beaten before when I went out of line.

"And finally, we had to take our clothes off. They shaved our heads. And then we had to march — they marched us in to showers. And then they gave us some horrible uniforms. And then all of a sudden I realized I didn't see Hela next to me. And all of a sudden I started calling her name, terrified I'm all alone — especially being the youngest one in the family, having older sisters and a brother older, so I was so protected all the time; I was never alone. And all of a sudden, my parents are gone. It was terrifying. And I started on the top of my voice — I took a big chance, I'm surprised that they didn't kill me for shouting — calling Hela's name. And all of sudden I heard somebody next to me calling my name. We didn't recognize each other, because they had shaved our heads."

#### NARRATOR

Rosa was confined in Auschwitz for a few weeks. Then one day, she and her group were suddenly ordered out.

#### ROSA KATZ

"And apparently, the soldiers who were in charge of our group, who told us to lie down on the fields right in front of the crematoriums, they forgot about us. And apparently, they were so busy, we were lying in those fields for about three days, three nights — no food, no water, no toilet. Can anybody visualize that? It was just undescrivable.

"And all of a sudden, somebody realized, all those people lying in the fields — we could hear shouts; shooting up; people, when the transports were coming in, crying and screaming; smoke from the crematoriums, again, all the time — and all of sudden somebody realized they didn't have time for us, to eliminate us. So they decided to send us to a different camp."

#### NARRATOR

It was this decision that ultimately saved Rosa's life.

Usually, Jews could do nothing to resist the Nazis and local anti-Semitic populations. But when they could fight back, they did.

For example, in 1940, the Nazis herded more than 400,000 Jews into the Warsaw ghetto in Poland. Later, thousands began to be shipped out again to the death camps. In April of 1943, the remaining residents took action. With a few guns, hopelessly but proudly, the rebels held off the Germans for a full month. One said, "We saw ourselves as a Jewish underground whose fate was a tragic one, the first to fight. For our hour had come without any sign of hope or rescue."

In 1944, as the Allies closed in on Germany, the Nazi empire collapsed. Efforts to hide the Holocaust failed as one camp after another was liberated. Finally, the world would know the true scale of horror we call the Holocaust.

U.S. General Omar Bradley said of one camp, "The smell of death overwhelmed us."

Journalist Fred Friendly wrote to his mother to say, "Your son saw this with his own eyes and in doing this, aged ten years."

Edward R. Murrow, broadcasting from Buchenwald, told Americans, "I have reported what I saw and heard, but only part of it; for most of it, I have no words."

In 1948, Rosa Katz came to America with her husband Bernard — also a Holocaust survivor. Today, their large family represents a kind of triumph over Hitler, a final defiance of his effort to annihilate the Jews.

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But Rosa was one of the lucky few. A German mix-up helped save her life. She left Auschwitz with 500 other women and ended up in Berlin — which was supposed to be *Judenrein*, or “clean of Jews.” Soon, the Nazis discovered they had 500 Jewish women in Berlin, rather than French women, as had been ordered. They chose to cover up their mistake. Several months later, Rosa was shipped to a concentration camp at Ravensbruck. But within weeks, her group was liberated by the Swedish Red Cross.

Before Soviet troops reached Berlin, Hitler killed himself in his bunker. At Nuremberg, 22 top Nazi leaders were put on trial for crimes against humanity. Twelve were condemned to death. One of them, Hermann Goering, killed himself in his cell before his execution.

Today, the Holocaust is beginning to recede into the past. Many wish not to dwell on it any longer. And some so-called “Holocaust revisionists” are saying it never even happened. Yet even today, anti-Semitism is alive — in Europe and here in the U.S. as well.

Hate — especially racial hate — is unfortunately a strong and long lasting emotion.

#### **ROSA KATZ**

“I never allowed my kids to use that word ‘hate.’ They can say ‘dislike.’ But they always caught themselves when they wanted to say, ‘I hate this or this — oh, I’m sorry mom.’ And they’d change it: ‘I dislike.’ Because I know what hate can do to people, the tragedies that hate can cause, the tragedies that hate did to innocent people.

“And I just want to put my message to you, especially young people. You are the future of our country. We cannot allow bigotry to exist. This should be eliminated. Because I don’t care what color, what religion, what nationality, a Holocaust, what I went through, to see my parents be killed — I didn’t see it, but I know they were killed — not knowing if they were tortured or not, seeing babies being shot like target shooting — this should never happen to anybody. And I don’t want this to happen. And history has a way of repeating itself. Don’t allow it. Don’t be influenced by those hate groups.”

#### **NARRATOR**

Can the Holocaust really be understood? How can one “explain” such cruelty? Perhaps we can’t. Perhaps it’s important simply to remember it, to know that seemingly ordinary humans are capable of great evil, and to make sure it never happens again.

Historian Yehuda Bauer suggests three demands the Holocaust makes of us. Perhaps these can stand as a fitting conclusion to our look at this ugly chapter in the history of human barbarism. Bauer put his three demands in the form of commandments, such as those in the Hebrew Bible revered by all Jews:

“Thou shalt not be a victim.”

“Thou shalt not be a perpetrator.”

“Above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.”

#### **POSTSCRIPT**

#### **ROSA KATZ**

“After about ten days on the ocean, we were told as we’re getting near New York. And we all got on the top, we all got on the top of the decks. And from a distance, almost like a shadow, we saw the Statue of Liberty. And this was so emotional for all of us: ‘We are in America’ — the land of honey and dollars on the streets. Everybody believed that. And everyone on the deck was crying, just crying, ‘We are in America.’

“And I just want to point out to all of us — all of you, I should say, and all of us — how lucky we are to be in a country like America. Don’t take it for granted.”

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