

The Story of Yehiel Borgman z"l

Yechiel Borgman was born in 1920 in Boryslaw, Poland, the youngest of ten children in a large and diverse family. Yechiel, the youngest, excelled in school and later studied to become an accountant. With the German invasion and the start of pogroms and Aktions in Boryslaw, Yechiel's family was murdered. Yechiel managed to escape and was wandering in Russia with many other Jews. Yechiel reached the Ural Mountains and worked there as an accountant in an ammunition factory.

In 1943, at the time of the creation of the Polish First Army, Yechiel volunteered to serve in the Red Army and was attached to an artillery unit. With this unit, he advanced to Chełm in Poland and participated in the liberation of Lublin and the Majdanek concentration camp in 1944. After the liberation of Majdanek, Yechiel was part of the force that participated in the heavy fighting and liberation of Warsaw where he was wounded. In Warsaw he first encountered the survivors, Jews who emerged out of their hiding places, wearing rags, starving and sick. The encounter with the survivors and the difficult images affected Yechiel deeply.

After his recovery, Yechiel participated with his unit in the liberation of additional towns. In 1945, his unit crossed the Oder River and took part in the heavy fighting to conquer Berlin, where he was wounded again. Yechiel received six medals for fighting with the Red Army and his participation in the liberation of concentration camps and towns.

At the end of the war, Yechiel met Raya, a survivor herself, who suffered much along the war and they married. Yechiel tried to find survivors of his family. But unfortunately, it became clear that his parents, his brothers and their families were all murdered in the holocaust.

Raya and Yechiel lived relatively comfortably in Poland thanks to his senior position with the Red Army. They had a daughter who passed away at the age of eight months. Later they had a son, Ben-Zion who was named after Yechiel's father. Yechiel worked as an accountant, but the hardships continued, until someone tipped the authorities that he was Jewish and he was sent to a work camp for five years. Raya worked tirelessly for his release. After his release, the family immigrated to Israel in 1957 and settled in kibbutz Ein HaShofet. Their daughter Hana was born there and was named after Yechiel's mother.

Yechiel worked in the kibbutz factory, in the vegetable garden and the dining room. He had difficulty adjusting mainly because the lack of language knowledge and the attitude toward new immigrants at the time. However, his growing family and the discovery that his brother Avrum

and his family survived, immigrated to Israel and lived in kibbutz Shamir caused him much happiness. Later on, he discovered a few cousins who survived and immigrated to Israel with their families: The Bakenroths, the Abels (his cousin was the treasurer of the Haifa municipality for many years) and the Szpeichers (his cousin was a school headmaster in Argentina, where he lived after the holocaust and before immigrating to Israel).

At the same time Yechiel kept in touch with friends who remained in Poland and through the Joint organization helped them financially.

The hardships and tragedies impacted Yechiel's health. In his last years, he was ill and passed away in 1996. He was survived by his wife Raya, his children Hana and Ben-Zion and seven grandchildren.

Submitted by his daughter Hana

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