

## Miriam Kastenbaum-Fuchs

In preparation for the Yad Vashem trip to Poland with my sister Margalit Yosifon, we were asked to compile a list of family members who perished in the Holocaust. I naively thought that the list of my and my husband's families will include 20 – 30 names at most. After a short research I was amazed to discover more than 240 dear family members that were annihilated by the murderers.

This was a very emotional and significant journey. We realized how profound and deep the Jewish culture in Poland was before the war and the incredible death toll in the Holocaust.

When we arrived at the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp we headed to the museum with its chilling exhibits. The place was crowded with visitors. In the sea of suitcases I suddenly saw a suitcase with my maiden name - Hanna Fuchs. Who was that girl? I decided to investigate upon my return to Israel, and I searched the internet for the roots of my family and that of Hannah Fuchs, that mysterious owner of the suitcase. I traveled through time, place and existential questions relating to the establishment of the state of Israel. I felt that every Jew should make this journey.

I felt it was a journey into my soul, into the souls of my parents who were born in Poland. My father, Shlomo Yaakov Fuchs z"l was born in Czestochowa and my mother, Miriam Kestenbaum z"l was born in Drohobycz.

My mother Miriam was the youngest in her family. She had four brothers and three sisters.

My mother Miriam, her brother Abraham Aharon Kastenbaum z"l, her two sisters Tzipora z"l and Mina z"l are shown in this photograph.



Her brother Abraham Aharon Kastenbaum z"l became later one of the founders of Hapoel HaMizrachi and the religious settlement movement in Israel. Thanks to him, my mother Miriam was able to obtain an immigration permit, saving them both from the holocaust. Young Miriam belonged to the Hashomer Hatzair movement in Drohobycz. She always told us about the Anti-Semitism in town. When in later years I suggested to take her on a roots journey, she refused because of the degrading treatment from her neighbors.

My mother-in-law, Yehudit Gertel was in the Birkenau camp. I saw the places she talked about when she agreed to share some of the horrors she lived through during the holocaust with her grandchildren. I stood near the gallows where the girls who worked with her at the factory were hung after smuggling some gunpowder from the factory.

I imagined her standing there in the freezing cold and watching her friends on their final journey.

In the last pavilion before leaving the museum, we lit candles and read the names of the murdered. The list was very long and my tears blurred the names.

When I returned home I decided to immortalize them all by creating a family tree of the Kastenbaum, Kimelheim, and Mayer families.

Hanna Granot