

WITNESSTODAY

SHAVUOS: THE TIME FOR ACCEPTING

May 6, 1940 - **Nisan 28, 5700** - Betty Vredenburg, a Dutch Jewish girl is born in Amsterdam to Abraham and Rachel.

May 10, 1940 - **Iyar 2, 5700** - German forces invade the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

May 21, 1944 - **Iyar 28, 5704** - Betty Vredenburg, age 4, murdered in Auschwitz.

May 15, 1944 -22 Iyar 5704

Hungarian Gendarmerie, along with the German Security Police, began the systematic deportation of Hungarian Jews. In a brief span of 54 days between May 15, 1944 and July 8, 1944 nearly 440,000 Hungarian Jews were deported mainly to Auschwitz-Birkenau.



theguardian.com
German invasion
of the Netherlands

Shavuot 1944 - Sivan 5704

Yitzchak Pomerantz, an officer in the Soviet army, entered the town of Jozefow, Poland with his unit. It was the holiday of Shavuot and he along with some Jewish friends, went to the Jewish cemetery. There they found about 80 Jewish soldiers “with anguished looks on their faces.”

“None of the soldiers had a siddur or knew davening by heart. I stood up and announced, ‘We are standing by the gates of Poland, a land that has been...the bastion of Yiddishkeit in Eastern Europe. Yet as survivors of our great nation, we have been sent by Heaven to rescue our brothers...We have a divine promise that Yisrael will endure forever. Today is Shavuot, the Yom Tov commemorating the giving of the Torah. At this twilight hour let us pledge to be faithful to our Creator and to be good sons to our grieving nation. May we soon live to see the geula...I davened Maariv aloud and 80 voices responded to my tfillos with a thundering tear-choked Amein”

Yitzchak Pomerantz, Itzik, Be Strong!, New York: CIS Publishers, 1993, pp. 271-273



Old Jewish
cemetery in
Jozefow, Poland

Project Witness Stays Ahead of Covid-19

As the implications of the lockdowns necessitated by Covid-19 became apparent, Project Witness staff immediately went to work to share the wealth of its Holocaust collection and educational services with young and old. Our most immediate concern was how Holocaust survivors would be feeling and what they would be needing. We made every effort to be available to those in need.

We made all Project Witness documentaries, teacher training seminars, conference and webinar lectures available to the public to be viewed on demand on a complimentary basis via the Project Witness website. Log on to Project Witness.org to locate a treasure trove of excellent material.

We offered teachers access to classroom units that could be used for remote learning, together with in-person advisory sessions by our senior researcher, if requested. We notified school principals that we stand ready to assist them in arranging a program for teens to “visit” on the phone with elderly survivors who may be lonely and to offer them appropriately monitored help, such as shopping or essential pick-ups, should they need it. In consultation with social work professionals, we compiled a check list of

procedures, topics, and suggestions to assist teens in this important work.

Our Neshama Mishnayos program for young boys is active and boys are learning mishnayos at home in memory of children who were murdered in the Holocaust. Each boy receives a passport with the name, picture, and individual information about a specific child, and his mishnayos learning is dedicated to the memory of that child.

Over the past three weeks, Project Witness presented three exceptionally successful web seminars featuring Dr. Rafael Medoff, Founding Director of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies in Washington, D.C. and the author of 20 books. Dr. Medoff’s presentations on the topic of America’s Response to the Holocaust elicited very positive reviews. The material that Dr. Medoff so skillfully presented highlights his meticulous research and resulted in three masterful lectures that can be viewed on the Project Witness website.

It is worth your time to log on to Project Witness.org to review the material that is currently available. If we can be of further service, please contact us at 718-305-5244 extension 244.

Project Witness Addresses the American Response to the Holocaust

On April 29, May 6, and May 13, Project Witness presented a three-part series on America’s Response to the Holocaust: New Research; New Controversies. This series featured Dr. Rafael Medoff, Founding Director of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies in Washington, D.C. The response to the webinar series was extremely positive and we had hundreds of viewers.

Dr. Medoff divided his topic into three distinct sections: a) 1933-1941; b) 1941-1945; c) The Rabbis’ March in October 1943. He addressed the questions of how much the United States government knew and when they knew it, as well as what action was or was not taken. The results of intensive research on these questions has yielded proof that the United States government knew much more than the American public was told. In his first lecture, Dr. Medoff highlighted America’s immigration policy, U.S. relations with Nazi Germany, the Evian Conference, the U. S. response to Kristallnacht, the voyage of the St. Louis; and the Wagner-Roger Child Refugee Bill. In each situation he sadly proved that the United States chose to ignore the plight of the Jews.

In his second lecture, Dr. Medoff disclosed how U.S.

immigration policies were carefully monitored at the highest levels; how and why the United States did not match the Kindertransport to Britain; the SS Einsatzgruppen and how the Final Solution evolved; how it took several years to finally establish the War Refugee Board; how President Roosevelt’s attitude toward Jews, though carefully concealed, was clearly negative, and perhaps saddest of all, how Jews in the United States revered President Roosevelt, not realizing just how much he could have done to help the Jews escape the jaws of Nazism.

The third session in this riveting lecture series dealt with the determined efforts of 400 Orthodox rabbis who marched to the Houses of Congress to request assistance for their brethren in Europe. Their efforts were rebuffed but the ultimate results of their unusual action had broad repercussions.

The entire series is available for viewing at no charge on projectwitness.org.

Sponsorships for these webinar programs are available. Please contact Project Witness at 718-305-5244 extension 244 to arrange for sponsorships in honor of a simcha or in memory of a departed family member.



Speaker: Dr. Rafael Medoff

Director of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, in Washington, DC.