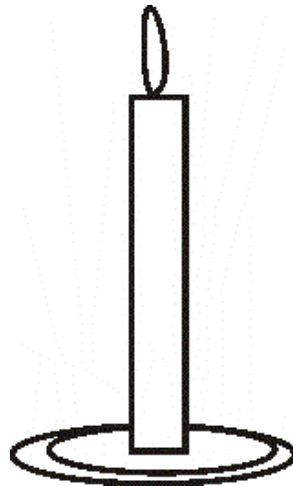


REMEMBER THE CHILDREN



A TWINNING PROGRAM
For Bar and Bat Mitzvah students



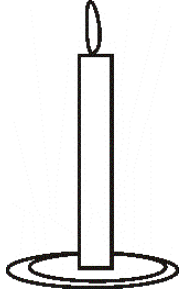
A Project of the
**World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors
of the Holocaust**

and

The Holocaust Education Coalition

For information contact: Holocaustchild@comcast.net

or call 1-248-932-1834



“Remember the Children: a Twinning Program”



Each person is of value. Each child’s potential to grow and flourish is an unknown; however, the possibility of achieving and living a fruitful life has not always been given to all children. During the Holocaust, a million and a half Jewish children under the age of 16 were murdered in Nazi-occupied Europe. The children of the Holocaust, those that were killed, have often been forgotten. One reason is that they lived very short lives and we know little about them. Some wrote poetry before they perished, or did drawings. Some books have been written about them. Yet, these remnants of their memories do not help our children today understand this enormous loss.

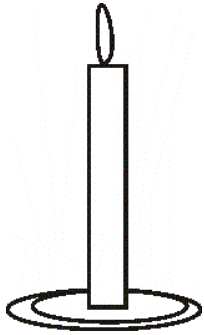
“Twinning” is not a new concept. When Russian Jewish people were not allowed to come to the United States, many Bar/Bat Mitzvah children from America “twinned” or shared their Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony with a child from the Soviet Union. This was an emotional and fulfilling experience for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah students. Now, the “twinning” concept needs to be reintroduced to our young children.

This “Remember the Children: a twinning program” can now be applied to the children who perished in the Holocaust. One way for Jewish children to learn about the Holocaust is to include the story of a Jewish child who perished in the Holocaust in his/her ceremony. Ideally, the student will do much of the research him/herself, in terms of contacting relatives, a member of the Temple or synagogue or museums, for names, places, photos, history, etc. The student can be helped by a synagogue’s own members, such as camp Survivors, Child Survivors and Children of Survivors. Other adults who can help may include relatives, especially older relatives, who may remember young family members who perished. This process will bring young and older family members closer in a deep, emotional way. The whole process can be very moving, and families should be cautious about the involvement of older Holocaust Survivor members as well as young Bar/Bar Mitzvah students.

The children who perished in the Holocaust were never given the opportunity to have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Many of their histories are vague and information is not readily available. However, this program will provide parents, teachers and Rabbis with names of children who lived in France, Poland, Belgium, Germany and the other occupied countries, books to review, websites to visit, assignments to give, memorials to create and other ideas to use in order to make this project meaningful and valuable.

“Remember the Children” gives the Bat/Bar Mitzvah ceremony a focus for remembering, and that all Jews are responsible for remembrance. Having the occasion to celebrate need not negate the occasion to remember. This program will offer a way for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah student to truly perform a mitzvah.

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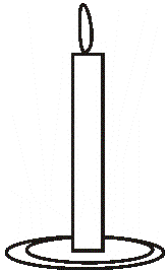
Remembrance and Twinning



Things you can do to remember a Jewish child who did not survive

1. During your Bar/Bat Mitzvah service, you may discuss the story of your “twin.” You may mention the name and perhaps the place of birth and the place of death.
2. During your Bar/Bat Mitzvah party, you may light special candle in memory of your “twin.” This could be a candle of a different color set next to the thirteen candles that you would normally light.
3. During your party, one of your thirteen candles could be dedicated to your “twin.”
4. During your party, you could dedicate one of your candles to the million and a half Jewish children who perished in the Holocaust.
5. You could plant a tree in memory of your “twin” in the Children’s Forest in Israel. The telephone number of the Jewish National Fund is 1-800-542-8733.
6. A certificate could be mailed to a family member, or your Rabbi could collect the certificates and create a special place for them in the synagogue.

* * * * *



"Remember the Children: A Twinning Project"



Notes from Temple Beth Israel, Pomona, California, USA

The twinning program at my temple is going very well. As of this B'nai Mitzvah class (i.e. this year's) the children HAVE to do research on a child they choose: either from Serge Klarsfeld's book of French children or from one of the URL's (websites) which I gave them (that includes Holocaustchild). They must tell the congregation on the day of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah why they chose that particular child and tell all they know of the child's story.

They will, from now on, also display a picture of the child if one is available, either before the entrance to the sanctuary or on the bimah or both. Their teachers have noticed that when the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child speaks, the guests are looking at the picture in the booklet they all make - so from now on a bigger picture will be displayed so that the guests pay more attention.

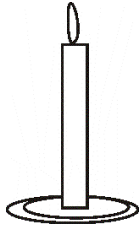
We also have an instructional Bar/Bat Mitzvah booklet. Some children choose their own family, maybe a great-grandparent or a grandparent, if they are survivors. One I know of has chosen a small cousin who died at age 3. They make up their own Bar/Bat Mitzvah booklet with the usual prayers and their own, as well as the story of the chosen child who died and his/her picture (if available). I have just given them a URL for the children of Bialystok who came to Theresienstadt and were eventually gassed in Auschwitz.

Another survivor and I are in temple pretty much every Sunday to speak to maybe 2 or 3 children at the time to help them to choose someone, or to tell our story so that they know what sort of thing to expect.

Gabriele Silten

* * * * *

Twinning, as a personal experience



Nathan Durst,
Israel



The idea to “twin” our lost children at special occasions, has many aspects.

After I read about it in Mishpocha, I thought only about the educational aspect.

The granddaughter of my sister would have her Bat-Mitswah, and I asked my niece about the possibility of ”twinning”, during my speech at the party. I would like to memorize, two sisters, Jenny and Fanny, then 12 and 14 years old, who did not survive.

As my family is orthodox, they asked first the consent of their mentor, Rav Riskin from Efrath, who reacted very positive to this idea. To tell youngster about the family background, or the personal experiences during the Shoa, has for sure educational meaning.

Somehow, when I recalled pictures from my childhood, separated from the family when I was 8 years old, I mostly thought about the few memories I had from my parents; from these two sisters I did not have many reminiscences, so somehow the memories about them became even more vague.

The Batmitswah was held in August in Herzlyah, Israel.

Through the preparations for my speech, I came in touch with deep layers of my emotions, and the existence of my perished sisters became reestablished in my memories.

Thus, besides the educational aspect of keeping the memories alive, twinning gave me the possibility of reconnecting with my own family, for sure a meaningful emotional enrichment.

Thank you.

* * * * *

MESSAGES ON TWINNING



FROM AVIVAL PEARLSTON

June 4, 2002

Mr. Lichtman,

A few months ago my mother, a holocaust survivor and a member of the Toronto Child Survivor/Hidden Children group, let me read about the Twinning Program in one of your Mishpocha issues. At the time we were getting ready for my daughter's Bat Mitzvah and were looking for a meaningful link to this simcha. I asked my daughter to read about this program and she was interested in pursuing this idea. Needless to say this dedication was very moving and appropriate. Here is Maya's dedication:

“This Bat Mitzvah is a celebration of my entering into 'adulthood'. I realize that today's children, myself, my friends, take this sort of thing for granted. During the second World War there were a million and a half children, who perhaps also took this for granted, but were not lucky enough to reach this stage. Rene Lichtman, vice president of the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivor of the Holocaust, decided to start a program called "twinning". This program has to do with the million and a half Jewish children who perished in the holocaust. None of these children were able to be Bar-Mitzvahed. The "twinning" program allows children who are about to be Bar/Bat Mitzvahed to share their celebration with one of these children.

I decided that I would like to share my Bat-Mitzvah with two of those children who perished in the holocaust. Karolec Klingkhoffer was a cousin of my grandmother's. His birthday was October of 1933. When Karolec was nine years old he was shot by the Germans along with his father. Igush Mumber was also a cousin of my grandmother's. He was born in 1941. Two years later, Igush and his parents were shot by the Germans while escaping from the ghetto. I dedicate this day to them.”

Mr. Lichtman, since Maya's Bat Mitzvah, I have read and heard of several children who have also shared their simcha with children who were not as fortunate. This is a great idea! My daughter, Maya Pearlston, was Bat-Mitzvahed on January 12, 2002 at Beth Radom Synagogue in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Avital Pearlston.

From: Olga Weiss

Sent: Sunday, May 04, 2003

Dear Rene,

The daughter-in-law of a member of our group wants to do a twinning for her son's bar-mitzvah and she wanted to know if there was a certain format that she should use. Could you give me some guidelines which I will then forward to her. They can be simple. Thank you,

Olga Weiss

Curator of Exhibition and Museum Registrar

Spertus Museum

618 South Michigan Avenue

Chicago, IL 60605

A TWINNING STORY: **SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA**

From: ariane2000@msn.com
To: holocaustchild@comcast.net
Sent: Saturday, August 23, 2003
Subject: Bar Mitzvah Twinning

Dear Sir/Madame,

Our son is to celebrate his Bar Mitzvah on Shabbat Bereishit (october 25th) this year. We wish to make this important occasion even more meaningful by twinning Jesse with a child who died in the Holocaust before he was able to celebrate his own BarMitzvah. I found your e-mail adress through an internet search. looking for resources on this topic.

Could you please provide me with information about your Bar Mitzvah Twinning programme. Ideally we would like our son to learn as much as possible about the child involved, his family and town.

With thanks
Ariane Schneider
(Sydney Australia)

From: ariane2000@msn.com
To: Holocaustchild@comcast.net
Sent: Sunday, August 24, 2003

We have no immediate relatives that I am aware of that were lost in the Holocaust.. I will therefore contact the "Sydney Museum" - our Holocaust museum, to see if they can suggest a survivor that would be willing to talk to our son. Will they be aware of this programme? Will they be able to suggest to us, how to structure the interview and what to include in the Bar Mitzvah ceremony?

With thanks for your help and suggestions,
Ariane

From: [Education at Sydney Jewish Museum](#)
To: holocaustchild@comcast.net
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2003

Dear Mr. Lichtman:

I am writing in reference to your 'Twinning' program that Ariane Schneider--a Sydney resident who I understand has been in contact with you, told me about. We are interested in pursuing a similar program here at the Sydney Jewish Museum and I was wondering if you would be able to send me more information and perhaps answer some questions.

My most pressing question is how you handle the privacy and copyright issues. How do you go about choosing the children to be researched and are their complications about obtaining permission if there are still family members living?

Also, how do you guide students in their research? Do you have particular internet sites and archives that they use? Or is it up to the student to do that initial groundwork?

Finally, do you charge for this program or is it a free service? How do you let people know about the program--is it only through your internet page or do you actively market the program?

Thank you so much for your help with this. Best wishes,

Avril Alba
Education Manager
Sydney Jewish Museum
148 Darlinghurst Road
Darlinghurst, 2010
NSW
T 9360 7999
F 9331 4511

Education at Sydney Jewish Museum <education@sjm.com.au>
Sept 4, 2003

Thank you so much Rene for all this information--I am sure that it is going to prove very helpful as we progress forward with this project. It sounds like you have a wonderful program set up!
Thank you so much again for all your help.

Best wishes,
Avril

To: Holocaustchild@comcast.net
Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2003
Subject: Re: Bar Mitzvah Twinning

Dear Rene,

Thank you very much for your follow upon this matter. Yes, I contacted the Sydney Jewish Museum and they helped me to find a survivor in our community who was willing and excited by the prospect of having his brother 'twinned' by my son. We would very much like to have a commemorative certificate to commemorate this occasion. Our Son's Name is Jesse Solomon Schneider and his twins name was/is Norbert Wilkenfeld. I will copy the certificate so that I can give a copy to his brother - Gershom Wilkenfeld - who so willingly gave of his time and himself.

Thank you so much for all your help
sincerely
Ariane

From: ariane2000@msn.com
To: Holocaustchild@comcast.net
Sent: Sunday, October 12, 2003
Subject: Re: Bar Mitzvah Twinning, Sydney

Dear Rene,

We are also very excited about participating in this project. We are planning and hoping for it to be special, exciting and moving for our son, our guests and the survivor. Jesse's Bar Mitzvah is on Shabbat

Bereishit - October 25th. It would be our pleasure to send you a summary of the process we went through and a copy of Jesse's speech. I know that the Sydney Jewish Museum is also very enthused by this project and is hoping to establish it here within our community too.

Thank you for sending us the commemorative certificate, we are looking forward to receiving it. We will be in touch as soon as our feet touch the ground after the Bar Mitzvah

Fondly
Ariane

Hi Rene,

Well the Bar Mitzvah is over and it was just so wonderful, better than I had ever imagined. Jesse did a fabulous job in Shule and it was abuzz with excitement and love and support. The kiddush was great and so was the reception. Jesse spoke twice - once to give his D'var Torah and traditional vote of thanks and then a second time about his Holocaust twin. We received only positive feedback about our Bar Mitzvah and in particular about the Holocaust twinning. It was a fabulous experience for Jess, his parents, the survivor and every guest that was at our function.

I have attached a brief summary of the process that we went through in the course of the twinning project and also a copy of Jesse's speech.

I have asked permission from Mr Wilkenfeld for his name and his brothers name and photos to be published and he gave it with his blessing. I will send you a photo of Jesse and Mr Wilkenfeld just as soon as we get them back.

Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information.

Ariane

Remembrance and Twinning **Summary of process, Sydney, Australia**

1) Initial Online search finding sites:

www.wfjesh.org

holocaustchild@comcast.net

www.jewishtorontoonline.net

2) E-mail contact with Rene Lichtman (Holocaust education coalition, holocaustchild@comcast.net) who suggested contacting my local Holocaust Museum or Society to see if they could direct me to an appropriate survivor.

3) Called the Sydney Jewish Museum and spoke to the Education Officer – Avril Alba - to explain the concept of Holocaust twinning and ask if the museum would be able to help me.

4) E-mail contact with The Sydney Jewish Museum providing web links. Avril contacted Rene Lichtman to gather further details and also check out copyright issues.

- 5) Meeting Between myself (parent) and Avril (education officer) to discuss a) step by step plan b) type of questions that were appropriate/inappropriate for the survivor c) what to expect when talking to a survivor d) necessity (or not) of having a professional staff member accompany us to the interview.
- 6) Avril researched the children's memorial and files of Survivors that are registered with the Sydney Jewish Museum and found those that met our criteria – 1) Male and 2) having perished before the age of Bar Mitzvah. She approached them and found one that was willing to meet and talk to us. We were informed of the Survivor's name and the area from which he came
- 7) Basic research by child (assisted by parent) – using web and books (resources available at the Holocaust Museum) about the Holocaust and the area from where the survivor and his family came from
- 8) Parent and Bar Mitzvah Child – spent a day at the Holocaust Museum. Experienced the entire museum, with slight focus on children. This experience may be expanded by being accompanied by a survivor guide.
- 9) Parent and child discussed what he would like to know about the child who perished and formulated some suitable questions.
- 10) Phone contact with Survivor – set up appointment
- 11) Meeting with survivor – Parent and child both present. We spent several hours together learning about the survivor and his family. It was an illuminating experience. Both the Bar Mitzvah child and the parent took notes (with the survivor's permission) for clarity later.
- 12) Discussion between parent and child re: meeting with survivor. Parent clarifying any questions that Bar Mitzvah child had, and opened discussion about how the Child felt – giving him the opportunity to talk about any feelings of fear or sadness.
- 13) Child wrote speech for his Bar Mitzvah about the child that perished. He wanted to do something meaningful and lasting and so decided to promise to light a Yahrzeit candle and tell the story of the child who perished every year on his Bar Mitzvah anniversary.
- 14) Invited survivor and his wife to the Bar Mitzvah function – we wanted him to be present when the Bar Mitzvah child made his speech rather than just reading it later. They accepted the invitation.
- 14) Bar Mitzvah morning – brief discussion about the child who died.
- 15) Bar Mitzvah Function – Bar Mitzvah child makes speech about Holocaust twin. We were lucky enough to have access to photos of the child and these were shown by projector whilst the speech occurred.
- 16) Small Thank-you presentation made to survivor, to thank him for giving so freely of his time, his memories and himself.
- 17) Bar Mitzvah child received a certificate from the Sydney Holocaust Museum commemorating the “meaningful way in which he was marking his Bar Mitzvah”
- 18) Both the Bar Mitzvah child, his parents and the survivor would like to maintain contact – we are exploring ways in which to do so – perhaps a Shabbat dinner together every now and then, or Shabbat lunch together on the anniversary of the Bar Mitzvah.

Notes of Interest.

- 1) The survivor was able to provide lots of information about his experience but only basic information about his brother who perished. This was a little frustrating for the Bar Mitzvah Child and made writing the speech a little more difficult as both stories needed to be interwoven and told.

- 2) The Survivor was very touched by the idea of the Bar Mitzvah boy lighting a candle each year and telling the story. He does not know the actual date of death of his brother and has never had a specific date on which he remembers him. He very much liked the idea of having this date of remembrance and the fact that our son will tell his story every year so the child will not be forgotten.
- 3) We had only positive feedback after the function – everyone was thrilled with the concept and with the speech that the Bar Mitzvah child delivered. In my estimation – it was a hugely positive experience for everyone involved in it.
- 4) There was some discussion with Rene Lichtman about a certificate that mentioned both the Bar Mitzvah child and the child who perished. It would be lovely if it contained Hebrew and English names (if known) and the name of the Parsha that is now the Bar Mitzvah for both boys. I think this would be very meaningful and would be lovely to present to the survivor at the function.

From: [Education at Sydney Jewish Museum](#)

To: [Holocaustchild](#)

Sent: Monday, November 17, 2003

Subject: Re: "Remember the Children: a Twinning Project" in Sydney

Hi Rene:

Thanks for your email. Yes, we were also delighted with Jesse's project--thank you so much for your help and advice in getting this going. We are hopefully going to be undertaking this with other Bar Mitzvah students in the future. It will certainly be helpful to be in contact with Sydney members of your organization--thank you for the offer. And I look forward to hearing about how the project is progressing on your end.

Best wishes,

Avril

* * * * *

Norbert Wilkenfeld

**Norbert was unable to have a Bar Mitzvah.
My Bar Mitzvah day is his Bar Mitzvah day.**

**By Jesse Solomon Schneider
(Sydney, Australia)**



Norbert Wilkenfeld lived in Aken-Elbe in Germany.
He was born in 1935 and was the youngest of three children. His brother, Gershon, was born in 1926 and his sister, Bertha, was born in 1928.





His family, originally from Poland, were the only Jewish family living in his small town. They lived a pleasant life – the children attended school, skated on the lake in winter and hiked, and rode their bikes in the summer. They lived a frum life – keeping Kosher, Shabbat and the Chagim and attending Cheder (in the house where Moses Mendleson was born). His father learned to be a shochet to provide them with kosher meat. He did not however, work full time in this profession.

Norbert's early life was totally dominated by the Nazis and the restrictions they placed on Jews and Jewish life.

From 1938, when Norbert was 3 years old, Polish Jews were being actively looked for and taken away from their families. Norbert's father, of Polish Descent, went into hiding and although they saw him occasionally, the family was left to fend for themselves.

Eventually, Norbert's father was forced to leave the country, fleeing the Nazis. He made his way to England and was arrested as an enemy alien and was sent on the Duneera to Australia.



During this time, Norbert's older brother, Gershon, supported the family by continuing to collect, owed funds, from his father's business clients. Some people refused to pay, but others did the right thing, and paid their debts.

In 1940, the German's issued an edict that all Jewish Boys of 14 years or older had to go to a concentration camp.

Norbert was 5 years old and Gershon was nearly 14 at this time. Now, as well as having lost his father, Norbert lost his older brother.

In an attempt to avoid arrest, Gershon was sent by the Jewish Agency, to Beit HaNoa (house of Youth) in Hamburg. Here, he was sent to school and to Hachshara – to prepare for Aliyah. In late 1940, his school was destroyed by allied bombings. Gershon spent most of his time in his bunker and doing fire duty, where he stood guard during allied bombing raids over Hamburg, and put out fires that were lit by the bombs.

Once, The hospital, the next door building, was bombed and the shaking damaged the office door of Gershon's living quarters.

He was able to enter, and see a list, that indicated that the boys, who had reached 14 years of age, were not being sent home, as those left behind were being told, but instead, were being sent to concentration camps.

Gershon decided that he was not going to wait to be taken away. He contacted his mother, and told her in code, that he was going to try to get to Palestine.

Gershon made his way to Berlin where he came under the care of Recha Freir, the wife of a Berlin Rabbi, who was involved in helping Jewish Children, who had been ineligible for other forms of rescue.

Gershon's mother brought Bertha and Norbert to Berlin to see him before he left Europe. Mrs Frier, gathered together 12 children – some as young as 6 years old and together they walked across Europe, through Austria, across the Alps, through Yugoslavia and Belgrade, always just 'one step ahead of the Germans'. Eventually, they reached Palestine.



In the meantime, Norbert, his sister and his mother returned to Aken-Elbe.

Before long, Bertha was separated from her family and Norbert was left with his mother.

Eventually, Norbert and his mother were sent to the Warsaw ghetto where they were reunited with Bertha.

Whilst in the Ghetto, Norbert's mother's sister (who was masquerading as a non-Jew) provided them with some food, but soon received a letter telling her that the family were going to be 'relocated' to Auschwitz.

It was here that Norbert, his mother and his sister, died, at the hands of the Nazis.



Norbert Wilkenfeld never led a normal life.

From his earliest days, his life was dictated by Nazi limitations, he was unable to attend kindergarten as this was closed to Jewish children in 1938, he was unable to attend cheder and have a Jewish education, he was unable to play freely, he was unable to get to know his family.

Norbert was unable to have a Bar Mitzvah.

Today, as I celebrated my Bar Mitzvah – I was a shaliach for Norbert.

I was bar Mitzvahed for him, and with him – as he was in my mind.

The Nazis may have tried to destroy us, but today, the spirit of one of those whose life they took, was able to participate in his Jewish Religion, the religion they wanted to eradicate.

My Bar Mitzvah day is his Bar Mitzvah day.

Each year, on the anniversary of My Bar Mitzvah – I will light a Yahrzeit candle for Norbert,
Nissan Ben Leib

I will remember him.

Thank you.

Jesse Solomon Schneider

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