



B'NAI GOMBIN

Newsletter of the Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society

The Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society GJHGS) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that seeks to educate the public about the history and genealogy of the Jews of Gombin. To achieve this goal, the GJHGS collects and publishes relevant materials, encourages historical and genealogical research, and undertakes activities aimed at preserving documents and relics of the culture and history of Jewish Gombin.

B'nai Gombin is the newsletter of the GJHGS. Everything published in *B'nai Gombin* is meant to provide information for Gombiners and their descendants. Articles, stories, poems, or other genres about Jewish genealogy, Poland, Gombin, or other subjects of interest to Gombiners submitted, may be published in *B'nai Gombin*. The views and opinions expressed in *B'nai Gombin* are not necessarily those of the Gombin Society. For further information, contact the Gombin Society by mail at 185 Skyline Drive, Highland Mills NY 10930 or by email.

www.gombinsociety.org

© 2009. Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society. ISSN #1096-7354

The officers and board members of the Gombin Society and their families send their greetings,
Shana Tovah Tikatevuh, 2009 (5770)

View of the Gombin Shul



Lithograph of the Gombin Shul, by Chaim Tyber of Kutno. Thanks to Jose Klingbeil. Used with permission of the owner of the lithograph, Raymond Szymonowicz in France.

Remembering 1939; 70 Years Since the Nazi Invasion of Poland and the Destruction of Jewish Life in Gombin

On September 1, 1939, the Nazi German armies invaded Poland. Within the first five days they had crossed the broad plains of Western Poland to surround Warsaw. The small market town of Gombin was located on this road to Warsaw. The excerpts below from the Gombin Yizkor Book (1969) come from two accounts of those early days of the Second World War. Most of this article is quoted from Ben Guyer, who has been an articulate historian of this period. The shorter section from Rose Dinerman describes the destruction of the Gombin Synagogue. At this season of awe, we remember...

From Ben Guyer ("In the Gombiner Ghetto and in the Nazi Camps"): "I was mustered into the Polish army in March, 1939, and served in the 21st Infantry Regiment, in Warsaw...

"I served in the Warsaw Regiment until the end of August when general mobilization was instituted and Poland was expecting a momentary attack on the part of the Nazi armies. We were sent on foot in the direction of Mlava, near the Prussian border. As soon as we arrived at our destination, war broke out. From that moment we did not have a moment of respite. The Germans poured fire on us – from their planes, tanks, artillery and armored cars. And we, armed with primitive weapons, were unable to withstand the pressure of their fiery *gehenna*. We began retreating from the start, not stopping even once to engage in a position battle. Their fire pursued us by day and by night and we retreated, in terror, in the direction of Yablonne and Warsaw, where we took up positions behind the so-called 'Miedszin Rampart.'

"There we remained till the day Warsaw, surrounded by the Nazi armies, blazing from the enemy serial bombardment, without food or water, surrendered. The Polish regiment defending the capital, were forced to put down their arms and become prisoners of war."

From Rose Greenbaum Dinerman ("Survived as an 'Aryan'"): "Soon after their arrival, the Germans rounded up all the Jewish males between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five and took them to the large synagogue, which had the reputation of being one of the finest in Poland. They put the synagogue to the torch and burned it down. The assembled Jews were pushed and shoved toward the billowing flames, beaten savagely all the time. My brother, Stan, was among those beaten and tortured; he hardly escaped with his life."

From Ben Guyer: "The Germans packed us into trains and sent us in a westerly direction. But when the train arrived in Kutno, I jumped out and started for Gombin, my home.

"I returned to Gombin during the intermediary days of Succoth. The weather had turned cold and the town was unrecognizable. A great many homes had been destroyed by the Nazi bombardments and fire, and the Jewish population was in the grip of German terror...

"On more than one occasion I was seized on the street and put to work and made to feel on my body the blow of a Nazi whip and stick... In Gombin, the Germans instituted the Jewish

badge, a six-point Star of David, worn on one's clothing.

"I began working at tailoring and lived with my brother's family till March, 1942. I will not go into details about Jewish suffering and pain during those long bloody months. Our life was cheap, worthless; it was in the hands of bandits and murderers, dressed in S.S. uniforms and those of the Wermacht. Day after day we were systematically robbed, beaten, humiliated and tortured...

"In the middle of 1941, when the German armies began moving toward the Russian border, a rumor spread in the town that a German soldier had been murdered by a Pole. Nobody knew whether this was true or whether the Germans simply decided to create an incident that would frighten the Polish populace. They seized a large number of Poles and drove them into the market-place; the leaders of the intelligentsia, they locked up in the church. Later, they issued a command that all Gombiner inhabitants, Poles as well as Jews, assemble at the marketplace, where they staged an execution. They took ten Poles out of the church and stood them against sandbags. A platoon of soldiers, brought from Kutno for the purpose, shot them. The bodies of the executed were left to lie on the ground till late at night...

"I spent a year in the Konin camp, till the spring of 1943. (I found Jews from Sanik, Gostinin, and a number who managed to escape the

Zychlin massacre.) It was not a work camp but a *gehenna*. We slept on wooden boards, without straw. The prisoners fell like flies- from starvation, unbearable work and beatings... each time a Jew became sick with a communicable disease, all the occupants of his barracks were sent to Chelmno and death...

"There was in our camp a young rabbi from Saniki, named Arunzon, who was a very refined person. We saved his life by "making" a cobbler out of him. The rabbi kept a diary, which unfortunately disappeared¹."



Ben Guyer appears in this famous photo of the liberation of the Buchenwald Concentration camp (Margaret Bourke-White, May 7, 1945, Life Magazine. www.isurvived.org) He is clearly recognizable as the 7th from the right, behind the man in striped uniform.

¹ This diary was found and published: Y.Aaronson "Aleí Merorot" (Leaves of Bitterness), Bnei Brak, 1996, including "Scrolls from the Slavery House", the diary from Konin.

The Holocaust and the Rissman Family

By Arthur A. Gertzman, Great-great grandson of Moshe Rissman (born 1820) of Gombin,
President of the Gombin Society

I have been collecting information about my mother's family for many years. Earlier I had assembled the data and prepared a family tree. In the course of doing this, information from several sources that heretofore were just miscellaneous facts have led to a new realization for me. I have always known that my granduncle Manele Rissman was killed in the Holocaust. He probably died in Chelmno or possibly even before in the early killings in Gombin. I knew that his wife and those children still in Gombin had also died. These are tragic facts which had been somewhat abstract in my mind as I am so far removed from those horrors. I had no direct knowledge of Manele; he was a name on a geno-gram and a faded image in photos and the 1938 Rafael film.

As I searched for more information I found more names of actual blood relatives that I had never heard of.... people that had been born, brought forth families, lived and loved....and then all died in 1942. Most of them lived in Gombin or in nearby Sanniki, a smaller village a few miles from Gombin. I continue to do searches and find more sources and information. This has become a fearsome activity as I may find yet another dead relative killed in the horrors of Poland in World War II.

The abstract nature of these facts has now evolved for me into a feeling of direct connection, of having a sense of closeness to these people. I have found over twelve people plus several as yet unidentified children. They were direct blood relatives that I can never know but whose memory will be retained by me and my family. I am now writing a book to record the history of this Rissman family and of the actual family members whom I might have known. I am writing it for them and for my grandchildren who will know about Manele and Sara and eight year old Zelda and their many cousins from Sanniki and Gombin.



Photo from Gombin Yizkor Book: Left to right: Sara Rissman: second wife of Manele, born ca 1876 – died 1942; Nacha Rissman (standing) daughter of Chaya and Manele Rissman, born ca 1900 – died 1942; Nacha's husband, Mordechai Woydeslawski (standing); Zelda Rissman daughter of Sara and Manele Rissman, born 1934 – died 1942; Manele Rissman born 1870- died 1942; Shiye (Sidney) Rissman (standing), emmigrated to the U.S.; father of Evelyn Kepes of Michigan.

Annual Meeting- Gombin Society- Hold Dates

Sunday in early November; New York City, Place to be named

Join other Gombiner *lantsman* at the annual meeting to be held in New York City this November. The date is not yet set, but will likely be one of the first Sundays in November. Watch the web site www.gombinsociety.org for location and details.

This is the time to tell family stories and learn about relatives. The leadership of the Society will update the projects in Gombin, including work on a monument to the famous shul, rededication of the cemetery, new findings at Chelmno, and more. Hear about the work on Minna Packer's latest film.

Lunch will be served (modest charge).

Support the Gombin Society in 2010

With a renewed and energetic leadership, the "Gombin Society" is re-dedicated to preserving and educating future generations about our rich historical ancestry. We are preserving the history, genealogy, heritage and culture of the Jewish community that lived in Gombin, Poland for more than three centuries. The Society will assure that the Gombin Jewish record will not have been destroyed by the Holocaust.

Yes! I want to keep my family's memory alive by supporting the Gombin Society.

- ☐ \$1,800 – Platinum Level
- ☐ \$1,000 – Gold Level
- ☐ \$500 – Silver Level
- ☐ \$60 – ***Family Membership***
- ☐ \$36 – Contributor
- ☐ \$18 - Supporter
- ☐ _____(Other)

*Your TAX-DEDUCTIBLE
contribution can be made out to:*

The Gombin Society
c/o Mindy Prosperi
185 Skyline Drive
Highland Mills, NY 10930

Name & address & email _____

Send the names and addresses of other Gombiner descendants to add to the mailing list.

For credit card payments via PayPal, please visit our website: <http://www.gombinsociety.org/>

The Gombin Society is a registered 501(c)3 not for profit organization



GOMBIN JEWISH HISTORICAL & GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT: Arthur Gertzman; SECRETARY: Mindy Prosperi; TREASURER: Joe Richards

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Phil Ball, Elliot Ballen, Dana Boll, Harold Boll, Bernard Guyer, Soren Packer, Minna Packer, Arthur Stupay, Rob Stupay

REPRESENTATIVE IN ISRAEL: Ada Holtzman; REPRESENTATIVE IN BRITAIN: Jeremy Freedman; WEBMASTER: Noam Lupu; NEWSLETTER: Bernard Guyer

Mailing address: 185 Skyline Drive, Highland Mills NY 10930

Website URL: www.gombinsociety.org

Letters to the editor can be sent to bguyer@jhsph.edu or 305 Tuscany Rd, Baltimore MD 21210



B'NAI GOMBIN

Newsletter of the Gombin Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society

185 Skyline Drive, Highland Mills NY 10930