

PINCHAS GUTTER

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



Pinchas Gutter, son of Menachem and Chaia, was born to a Hasidic (ultra-Orthodox) family in Lodz, Poland on July

21, 1932. Alongside his twin sister Sabina, he grew up in a religious Jewish community. His father was a winemaker, and the family lived in a building owned by Pinchas's grandfather.

On September 1, 1939, German forces occupied Poland and World War II began. After the German occupation of Lodz, life began to change for the Gutter family and for all the Jews of the city. After Menachem was beaten by the Gestapo (German secret state police), the family decided to move to Warsaw. Chaia, Sabina, and Pinchas were all blonde and could pass for non-Jews. They left for Warsaw without Menachem; he met up with them there.

When they arrived in Warsaw, the family lived with Pinchas' aunt. Seventeen people were crowded into the apartment. Pinchas would go out and get food for the family because he could pass for a Christian. After the establishment of the Warsaw ghetto, the family was forced into the ghetto.

During the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, the family hid in a bunker beneath the ruins of a building that had water and electricity. The uprising began on the first night of Passover, and the family was able to celebrate the holiday with wine and matzah (an unleavened flat bread). The family remained in the bunker for three weeks, until they were discovered at the beginning of May.

The family was deported to Majdanek, a concentration camp and killing center in Nazi-occupied Poland. When they arrived at the camp, Pinchas and his father were separated from his mother and sister. Pinchas' father told him to lie about his age and Pinchas told the Nazis he was a teenager. Menachem, Chaia, and Sabina were all murdered at Majdanek.

From Majdanek, Pinchas was transferred to Skarżysko-Kamienna and Tschentochau, forced labor camps in Nazi-occupied Poland. Pinchas was later sent to Buchenwald and Colditz, concentration camps in Germany. From Colditz, he was sent on a death march to the Theresienstadt camp-ghetto in Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic). Soviet Armed Forces liberated Theresienstadt in May 1945.

After the war, Pinchas lived in England, where he married Dorothy. They lived in Israel, Brazil, and South Africa before immigrating to Canada. After moving to Canada, Pinchas served as a lay chaplain at the Baycrest Jewish Home for the Aged in Toronto and as an honorary cantor at his local congregation. At the time of his interview, Pinchas and his wife had three children and three grandchildren. Pinchas' story was depicted in the film, *Political, Polish Jew: The Story of Pinchas Gutter*. He was also the inaugural participant in USC Shoah Foundation's Dimensions in Testimony project.

This interview was conducted on January 12, 1995 in Toronto, Canada.