



1. Shaving brush that Yaacov (Jacki) Handeli received from American soldiers when he was liberated at Bergen-Belsen

Yaacov (Jacki) Handeli was born in Greece. He was 17 years old when the British army liberated Bergen-Belsen on April 15, 1945. Joe Raspanti, an American soldier, met Jacki after he and several friends had been searching for food. Raspanti took them to his unit's doctor and a sergeant was assigned to look after them. Jacki later recalled:

"He took us to the field showers, removed our clothes and threw them into the fire. We were given towels and for the first time I had soap – scented soap – and hot water. We took our towels into a tent where there were several soldiers. They laid a blanket on the ground and began throwing all sorts of things onto it: If they had two pairs of shoes, they threw in one pair, as well as chocolate, cigarettes, clothes and underwear, everything that you could imagine. We got dressed in American uniforms and we received special food..."

Raspanti gave Jacki a shaving brush, shaving cream, and a razor. Jacki wrote the date on the brush: 17.4.1945 (April 17, 1945).

"I remained with the American Army and I became human again. They made a human being out of me."

Jacki used the shaving brush for many years until he decided to donate it to Yad Vashem as a testament to his liberation.



2. Towel and plate that Anna Eisdorfer received from British soldiers on her liberation at Bergen-Belsen

When the British Army liberated Bergen-Belsen, the survivors were given towels, crockery (plates, dishes, cups), and silverware. For Anna, who was liberated one year after she had been deported from her home in Hungary, these symbolized the first signs of a return to civilization.

Anna was deported to Auschwitz in May 1944 together with her parents, her younger brother, and three sisters. Anna's parents and brother were murdered immediately upon arrival, but the four sisters were selected to live. In Auschwitz they later met their older sister and her daughter. After six months of forced labor, the sisters were forced on a death march. Marched in the snow for seven weeks and barely receiving food or water, they were in very poor physical condition when they reached Bergen-Belsen. Shortly after liberation, two of the four sisters died.



3. “Precious Items” from Auschwitz Kept by Rivka Mincberg – a cloth bag containing soap, a sponge, a toothbrush, a button and a tiny piece of lipstick wrapped in paper

Rivka Mincberg was born in Poland in 1924. During the war, she survived forced labor in an ammunition factory, several concentration camps, and a death march. For her, “Liberation Day” was miserable. “I had nothing to rejoice over.” The items pictured here were found by Rivka’s children after her death. In her testimony to Yad Vashem, she talks about them:

“...You see here what I brought from Auschwitz. Today it looks like nothing but it was something very precious. You couldn’t acquire it with money. There is a spoon here – who had a spoon? They would eat like this, drink from the utensil, from a piece of tin...I had a spoon, I was rich...”

And I had soap – this is what we were given – the piece of soap that I took with me through Auschwitz, through Ravensbrueck, via Neustadt-Glewe to Tel Aviv... This is a small sponge here that I would wash with...I was very rich.

There is another very important item in this paper – there is lipstick that I received a small piece of... I was with my mother the whole time, and before a selection I would want my mother to look healthy, so I would rub some on her lips and cheeks so she would look healthy...”



4. Shirt which Petachia Blickstein received on his liberation

In 1941, 18-year-old Petachia Blickstein was deported from his home in Czernowitz, Romania and forced to work in various labor camps. With time, Petachia’s clothes wore out and he had to wear cement sacks instead. In his testimony, Petachia describes his experience as a forced laborer in a factory:

“It is impossible to describe the suffering there... Every act was accompanied by blows... [I was] thin and my body was covered in sores as the result of malnutrition. I was naked except for the cement sack that was my shirt...”

In August 1944, Petachia was transferred to an area where he received real clothes for the first time.

“We travelled and travelled until we reached Iasi... on the border... they gave us shirts. Then I threw my cement sack shirt away... [In the camp] we had made [shirts] from sacks of cement and they were two or even three layers thick, and we made holes for the arms and they kept us warm... Then they gave me this shirt this was my first shirt after the cement sacks and I have kept it all these years...”

Iasi was liberated by the Red Army in August 1944.

Items are from the Yad Vashem Artifacts Collection: 1. Courtesy of Yaacov (Jacki) Handeli, Jerusalem, Israel; 2. Courtesy of Edna Eisdorfer-Miziritzki, Safed, Israel; 3. Donated by Buki Greenberg, Beit Herut; 4. Courtesy of Petachia Blickstein, Tel Aviv, Israel. Learn more at “Artifacts Related to Liberation,” <https://www.yadvashem.org/artifacts/featured/liberation.html>.