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Jakob Lundwall

Circumventing Silence
The 'Tripod of Personal Shoah Memory' (Commemoration, Remembrance and Recounting) of Holocaust Survivors in Israel between 1951 and 1961

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By Jakob Lundwall

Image 1 Photgraph, Kluger Zoltan, CHILDREN WITH THE AUSCHWITZ CAMP NUMBER ON THEIR ARMS, The State of Israel National Photo Collection, Item: 001425

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“Whoever has succumbed to torture can no longer feel at home in the world”
Jean Améry

Introduction – A Crumbling Resolution of Silence

Lizzie Doron's opening of her book *Hajta po pa'am mishpacha* [*There Once was a Family*], an autobiographical account of her memories about her life as a survivor's daughter in the Israel of the 1950s and early 1960s, is a suitable starting point for this dissertation. Its literary soberness conveys the hardship, dismay and haunting memory of the Holocaust experience by many survivors who came to Israel during the first years of its existence in these simple, yet clear and precise words.

> *At the beginning of the Fifties a new land was established in the state of Israel, the Land of "Here".*
> *In this land lived a persecuted people, who came from the Land of "There".*
> *Its inhabitants have not actively chosen to come here wilfully, they were left with nothing but a strange language, peculiar customs, memories and nightmares.*[1]

Unfortunately, Doron's works have so far not been translated into English. There is no account of them in the catalogues of the British library, nor in those of any other major library or distributer.[2] Doron's works have barely been touched in Anglo-Saxon historiography, even though they are bursting with astounding testimonial material. This is regrettable in particular as her books are marked by a spirit of lucid memory of her early childhood among people scarred by the Holocaust in Israel. Her writing is characterised by the tangible feeling of loss that engulfed her daily life in the 1950s in "The Land of 'There'". It was manifested partly by survivors who partly chose to speak about what had been inflicted on them and partly by those others who vowed to remain silent. Doron's books portray the Holocaust survivors who settled in the then young Jewish state as somewhat forlorn figures, caught somewhere between past and present in a no-man's-land of memory and denial, and focuses on the difficulties involved for them and their children. As Helena Doron, her

[1] Lizzie Doron, *Es war einmal eine Familie*,(Frankfurt, 2010),p.5
[2] British Library, http://explore.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?dscnt=1&tab=website_tab&dstmp=1394459276486&vl%28freeText0%29=lizzie%20doron&fn=search&vid=BLVU1&mode=Basic&fromLogin=true (viewed: 10.03.2014, 13:48)

survivor mother remarked occasionally, "In the end, I am always in Auschwitz."[3] Above all though, Doron's literature showcases throughout that the palpable memory of the Holocaust was ubiquitous in Israeli society in the immediate aftermath of the Shoah, even though common notions of the supposed silence of survivors would suggest otherwise.

In my dissertation I therefore wish to explore what I would call the 'tripod of personal Shoah memory' consisting of

I) *Commemoration*

II) *Remembrance*

III) And the *Recounting* of individual Holocaust experiences in Israel roughly between 1951 and 1961.

These years were not chosen arbitrarily; as a matter of fact they happen to be two decisive landmarks in the context of this topic, as 1951 was the year in which a Knesset law concerning the establishment of *Yom HaShoah* [the Israeli Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Day] was passed.[4] In respect, 1961 was the year that saw the opening of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem – an event which, according to Boaz Cohen, was when personal forms of Shoah memory were officially introduced to a wider public sphere of remembrance, thereby laying the cornerstone of collective Israeli Holocaust memory.[5] In examining this 'tripod of personal Shoah memory' within the survivor's personal spheres, I hope to showcase that, contrary to the so called "Myth of Silence", survivors did in fact indicate on various different levels what had happened to them and how they dealt with their memory.

Generally, this "Myth of Silence" is the hitherto common scholarly explanation of a post-war social phenomenon in the 1950s which presumed that many Holocaust survivors had fallen silent and could or did not wish to speak about their experiences, for no non-survivor was willing to listen.[6] Over the last decades, however, this idea of supposed silence has been challenged extensively.[7] This was predominantly done by those historians dealing with the post-war American Jewish context such as Hasia R. Diner, Beth B. Cohen, David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquest who all sought to showcase the fact that multiple areas of

[3] Doron, *Familie*,p.22

[4] Dina Porat, *Israeli Society, the Holocaust and its* Survivors,(Portland, 2008), p.347

[5] Boaz Cohen, *Rachel Auerbach, Yad Vashem, and Israeli Holocaust Memory*, in: Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry Vol. 20,.197-221, (2007), p.213

[6] Anja Kurths, *Shoahgedenken im israelischen Alltag*,(Leipzig, 2008),p.93

[7] Shirli Gilbert, *Review: After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, in: *English Historical Review* (July 2, 2013),p.1

silence coexisted alongside the survivors' determination to remember, to commemorate and to recount. Diner portrays comprehensively how Jewish American survivors kept their memory alive through various methods, even though they felt that none of their unaffected American-born relatives wanted to hear about what they had undergone.[8] As Cohen noted, "[survivors] held (...) services, erected monuments, and assembled memorial books. Others wrote memoires. [...] Ample evidence contradicts the myth of silence."[9] What all of these works show is that not only a dualism of proclaimed silence and fragmented discourse *existed* but that both dichotomies could in fact *co-exist*. This challenged "Myth of Silence" in America is also applicable in the Israeli context of the same period, even if various paradigms differ.

A necessary point to consider in this respect is of course the fact that in the Israeli context one is dealing with a mostly Jewish environment which was still endeavouring to find a novel self-conception as resilient, brave and hard working Jews – a self-understanding which was deemed incompatible with defenceless Jews being slain in gas chambers.[10] It was this environment that even at times blamed the victims themselves for the Shoah.[i] For many *sabras* [native born Israelis] and, in fact, for the corpus of Zionists, the Holocaust represented the epitome of a failed Jewish existence in Diaspora and bitter native rejections emblematised that.[11] Many Israeli non-survivors would refer to those who had escaped the genocide as "rejects", "banished", "deportees" and "human dust".[12] Another common condescending colloquial term was "*sabon*" [soap] – a reference to a widespread myth that the fat of incinerated Shoah victims was used to produce soap.[13] According to various survivor interviews I have conducted, a somewhat silent agreement between traumatised survivors and rejecting natives was made to take on a state of "collective amnesia" in terms of Holocaust memory during that time – "a resolution not to talk about it", as Holocaust survivor Lilly Schächter put it.[14] Mostly, this was done in order to avoid inner tensions and

[8] Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love – American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust*,(New York, 2009),p.7
[9] Beth B. Cohen, *Case Closed – Holocaust Survivors in Postwar America*,(London, 2007),p.172
[10] Kurths, *Shoahgedenken*,(Leipzig, 2008),p.93
[11] Hanna Yablonka, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, (London, 1999),p.46
[12] *Ibid.*,p.9
[13] Doron, *Familie*,p.53
[14] Jakob Lundwall, Interview, Lilly Schächter, (Jerusalem, 17.03.2014)

uncomfortable situations between natives and survivors.[15] Yet, how consistant were both sides in keeping this resolution of not talking and not asking?

Such proof that there was a strong desire to recount one's Holocaust experiences is poignantly given by Aviva Unger who had survived the war in Poland on the Aryan side: "What I had dreamed about, that when I came [to Israel] they would say, 'Sit down, talk!' […] They did not want to know […] There is no grave. No tombstone, nothing. At least make them a monument with words!"[16] Or as Ruth Bondy who had survived both Terezín and Auschwitz wrote: "But we had to talk and talk until we spilled it all out. But no one wanted to listen […] We learned quickly: be an Israeli when you go out and a camp inmate in your own home."[17] Choosing to immerse in silence might truly have been the declared objective, but to what degree could this state of silence be maintained? The fact that this resolution was breached on numerous occasions is illustrated by a series of Israeli authors of the survivor and first generation such as Lizzie Doron, Gila Almagor and Aharon Appelfeld. It is their accounts that form the primary source cornerstone of this dissertation alongside several interviews with Austrian and Bohemian Holocaust survivors I have conducted on field trips to Israel in December 2013 and March 2014. Their experience of this supposed silence was a broad melange of explicit indication, hinted recounting, sudden outbursts, communal support and constant lived remembrance – overall, they experienced a 'filtered' impartation of memory which stands firm against the "Myth of Silence" in the Israeli context.[ii]

Generally, this widespread stance of a supposedly muted inner-Israeli Holocaust discourse is incomplete in so far as it fails to acknowledge those times when the Israeli Holocaust survivors *did* choose to speak about their experiences. It is not that I deny the established principal concept of mistrustful natives and muted survivors, rather I wish to nuance where possible. As I will seek to showcase in this dissertation it was chiefly a question of *who* the survivors decided to talk to if they chose to do so and which other forms of displaying memory they applied in the process. In the words of Holocaust survivor Victor Schächter: "One did speak about it. The question is: what was spoken about with whom."[18] Furthermore, I propose an alternative understanding of the imparting of memory which fuelled understanding between survivors and non-survivors going beyond the spoken word.

[15] Yablonka, *Survivors*,p.60
[16] Film, *Return to Life*,(Beit Hatefutsot, 1990), testimony: Aviva Unger
[17] Ruth Bondy, *Belevo Shel HaMizrach*,(Tel Aviv, 1975), in: Yablonka, *Survivors*,p.60
[18] Jakob Lundwall, Interview, Victor Schächter, (Jerusalem, 17.03.2014)

Conveying memory has to be understood as an entire array of behavioural patterns, customs, rituals, tropes, micro-acts and habits which, taken altogether, emitted the survivors' memory outward to the Israeli public. This interpretation is congruent with the Israeli historian Hanna Yablonka's argument that "an internal discourse among the survivors [...] *radiated* [emphasis added] outwards to the Israeli society" thus forging a public Shoah awareness and discourse, although one built on said filtered information.[19] These partly non-verbal manners of communicating may be summed up as what I have called a 'tripod of personal Shoah memory'. This triptych of remembering, commemorating and recounting was applied on various degrees in one's private sphere thus circumventing the collective resolution of silence. Certain things were told to specific people and other stories were withheld from others according to one's instinct, one's personal relation to that person in question, and according to additional external factors.

For the sake of structuring my findings, I will partly adopt Yoav Heller's concept of a multi-dimensional understanding of the survivor's personal sphere in which he/she could apply their own 'tripod of personal Shoah memory'.[20] These spheres will be used as chapters for this dissertation. In Heller's work on the Holocaust survivor Zvi Spiegel he identifies four distinct spheres within the personal realm of the individual survivor from which I shall utilize the first three, as can be seen hereafter:[21]

I) The Public Sphere

II) The Communal Sphere (which I would wish to slightly alter to 'Fellow Survivor Sphere')

III) The Family Sphere[iii]

Acknowledging that Israeli survivors did find ways to impart their personal memory in whatever form to certain parts of the greater Israeli collective through their 'tripod of personal Shoah memory', will add a differentiated perspective on the social interplays between survivors and non-survivors in the early years of the young Jewish state. Furthermore, by examining the personal world of survivors further understanding will be added to an existing broad historiography which so far has, however, mostly dealt with what were only *public* mechanisms of Holocaust memory in Israel during the Fifties.[iv] The personal

[19] Hanna Yablonka, *The Development of Israeli Holocaust Consciousness – The Nuremburg, Kapos, Kastner and Eichmann Trials*, in: *Israel Studies* 8, 3, (2003), p. 10
[20] Yoav Heller, *The History of Zvi Spiegel*, p. 172
[21] *Ibid.*

ambit of the survivor in that respect is still very much *terra incognita*. Above all though, this dissertation will put the survivors to the fore by understanding them as human beings who naturally had the desire to remember what had happened and who yearned to render their experiences to their compatriots, wishing to breach the silence and thus marking a new beginning for themselves.

The Public Sphere – "Some people want to forget where they've been; other people want to remember where they've never been"[22]

The sight of Lizzie Doron's childhood neighbourhood Ramat HaSharon just south of Tel Aviv on the morning of *Yom HaShoah* must have been a dignified and humble one.[v] When, according to Jewish understanding, the day of commemoration began at dawn the day before, all the families would gather in their apartments, draw curtains and close their window shutters. The darkness was only illumed by the yellow flickering of *yahrzeit* candles in every home - "night had begun before the sun had set." [23] The next day the district's children were all dressed in the bright colours of white and blue, something of great symbolic significance as they wore the colours of the Israeli flag.[24] They chose to mourn in the colours of patriotism, rather than black. Utter silence dominated the area, grocers closed their shops, survivors tried to stay together, so as "not to be alone", some women left their faces not made-up, not wanting "to be beautiful on this day" and children of survivors were hugged and briefed by their parents about how to behave.[25] As the obligatory sirens started announcing the two minutes of silence people would start to cry in silence. It is in this first chapter that I will display multiple examples of how the public sphere of Holocaust awareness and the private needs of survivors intertwined, thus shaping the survivor's own understanding of his/her commemorative requirements and how in doing so, their Shoah memory was radiated outwards to others.

Every year that day, Helena, Lizzie's mother, however, commanded her daughter to stay at home. "I hereby inform you that my daughter will not be at school for *Yom HaShoah*" she would write to Lizzie's teacher Pola and continue, "This siren is not meant for me [...] Today there is no need to cry, today all the others cry", and "My daughter has plenty of memorial days [...] She has no uncle, no aunt, she has neither a grandmother nor a grandfather, she has no family whatsoever, that is why every holiday and every ordinary day of the week is a memorial day. Why can she not have one day off a year?"[26] Lizzie Doron would stay at home, watch as traffic came to a halt as the sirens howled and saw how the local doctor went from house to house to treat those elderly survivor neighbours who had

[22] James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge*, (New Haven, 2000), p.1
[23] Doron, *Familie*,p.103
[24] *Ibid*.
[25] *Ibid.,pp.103-4*
[26] *Ibid.,pp.105-6*

suffered from nervous breakdowns after various personal commemorative acts.[27] The literary images that Doron paints of how *Yom HaShoah* was commemorated in her neighbourhood signify the commonly experienced dichotomies that this day brought for those who had survived – guilt of having stayed alive, yet gratitude of having been able to start a new life in their own Jewish state; grief that one wished to attend to in the security of one's own home, yet also grief that one wanted to share with others; the desire of commemorating together publically, yet again the utter refusal to partake in any form of staged unity of grief.

The point where the individual survivor came in contact with the public sphere of remembrance in Israel during the 1950s was a poignant and important one, for it was then when he or she acquired the blessing to commemorate publically from the non-survivors who in 1951 made up roughly ¾ of Israeli society.[28] This moment was not just given on *Yom HaShoah*, but on other occasions too where the general public permitted a state of open Holocaust awareness and hence an overlapping of the Shoah understanding of Israeli survivors and non-survivors. It was mostly in these instances when the resolution of silence was actively breached and the experiences of the survivors entered a broader public realm by permission. To give one example apart from *Yom HaShoah*, many survivors and their children still recall the tense silence that engulfed their homes when the radio programme "Looking for Lost Relatives" was broadcasted nationwide twice a day and one eagerly anticipated perhaps catching a name of even the most distant of relatives who might have survived and was now in Israel.[29] Gila Almagor, the daughter of Henya Almagor who had lost most of her family in the Holocaust and consequently had to be admitted to a mental health institution, was instructed hysterically by her mother to write down all the names that were broadcasted, because Gila's Hebrew was more advanced than her mother's.[30] Such broadcasts merged both the public and private ambit of Israeli Holocaust awareness, as did the official ceremony at Yad Vashem – they constituted a space of permitted consciousness. Furthermore, individual incentives to erect memorial stones and remembrance plaques or even found commemorative organisations such as the Ghetto Fighters' House *Lochamei HaGhetta'ot* close to Acre were a visible statement that penetrated deep into the non-

[27] *Ibid.,p.105*
[28] Kurths, *Shoahgedenken*,p.90
[29] Dalia Ofer, *The Past that does not pass: Israelis and the Holocaust Memory*, in: *Israel Studies*,Vol.14,Number1,(2009),p.5
[30] Film, *HaKaytz Shel Aviya*,(Tel Aviv,1989)

survivor consciousness.[31] However, the official ceremonial act of commemoration at Yad Vashem was thought to be the paramount act of public Israeli Holocaust tribute by the officials.[32]

Nevertheless, most of the survivors whom I have interviewed for this dissertation stated that they never, or hardly ever, participated in these official *Yom HaShoah* ceremonies at Yad Vashem, the organisation that was entrusted to coordinate the event as from 1953 due to the minimal observance practiced among the Israeli public.[33] Auschwitz survivor and artist Yehuda Bakon for instance did take part in the first official *Yom HaShoah* ceremony at Yad Vashem. This was only done once though, for he felt that this contrived sensation of remembrance was off-putting and impersonal, "*They* [the non-survivors] did not really understand what we had lost and what we wished to remember."[34] Many of the survivors chose to commemorate whenever memory about their loss would haunt them and not when the state and the non-survivors dictated them to do so. Survivor Dov Freiberg describes how his ghastly memories kept creeping up in his mind uncontrollably, "a small picture flashes quickly through your mind – you see a picture of Sobibor [...], a nude woman walking to the gas chambers."[35] As the Israeli historian Dalia Ofer notes, "images of the dead turn up at important turning points in their lives: holidays, weddings, festivities, births and deaths", their haunting memory was one of uncontrollable eruptions and outbursts which, at least in the beginning, did not require a formal day of public commemoration but rather one of personal coming to terms whenever needed.[36]

Genuine personal commemoration had to stem from the survivors' subjective needs in their moments of eruptive memory. It also partly explains why so few survivors adhered to the official ceremonies at Yad Vashem, the epicentre of public Israeli Holocaust commemoration.[37] Many of them chose not to comply with ordered *Yom HaShoah* commemoration, but rather decided, whether intuitively or not, to commemorate individually, finding their own outlets and means of coping. "We [as a family] did not really

[31] Kurths, *Shoahgedenken*,p.243
[32] Jackie Feldman, *Between Yad Vashem and Mt. Herzl: Changing Inscriptions of Sacrifice on Jerusalem's "Mountain of Memory"*, in: *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 4 (Fall, 2007),pp.1151-2
[33] James E. Young, *When a Day Remembers: A Performative History of "Yom ha-Shoah"*, in: History and Memory, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Winter, 1990), p.62
[34] Jakob Lundwall, Interview, Yehuda Bacon, (Jerusalem, 18.12.2013)
[35] Film, *Return To Life*, (Beit Hatefutsot, 1990), testimony: Dov Freiberg
[36] Dalia Ofer, *Fifty Years of Israeli Discourse on the Holocaust: Characteristics and Dilemmas*, in: Anita Shapira (ed.), *Israeli Discourse in Transition*, (Westport, 2004), p.143
[37] Young, *Day Remembers*,p.62

solemnise *Yom HaShoah*. Instead we celebrated *Yom HaZma'ut* [Independence Day] (a week later) by dancing in the garden, by singing and celebrating until it was darkest of night", survivor Lilly Schächter recounts.[38] In her eyes life, rebirth, and Zionism were celebrated overtly, whereas *Yom HaShoah*, surprisingly, was not a day to be upheld especially. According to the historian Idith Zertal, the state of Israel wished to give the survivors a stage to mourn and commemorate publically with *Yom HaShoah* – however, this was done not entirely for the survivors' sake, but rather to strengthen the ideals of a resilient Zionism which would oppose potential future anti-Semitic atrocities.[39] The result was that many survivors felt publically humiliated for not having resisted Nazi violence at all or not enough and have thus failed these summoned Zionist beliefs.[40] "The survivors represented the dead", as Holocaust survivor Aharon Appfelfeld stated.[41] For them public commemoration on *Yom HaShoah* had failed its remit, as it increased misery rather than alleviating it.

The public display of memory on *Yom HaShoah* seemed impersonal to most survivors, especially *because* they were met with such rejection from the native Israelis. As Austrian survivor Hannah Blau puts it, "I did not wish to participate in something that did not touch me, that had no meaning to me, something that was not really meant for me."[42] Thus most survivors chose to find their own rituals for *Yom HaShoah* – as it were, their own personal version of how to commemorate. The most common form, apart from solemnising certain days, such as birthdays or known death dates of lost relatives/friends, was the lighting of *yahrzeit* candles in memory of those who had been lost in spirit of the Jewish religious mourning tradition on *Yom HaShoah*. This phenomenon is evidenced by most autobiographical or semi-autobiographical accounts, interviews and testimonies: Doron's mother Helena would go as far as light one *yahrzeit* candle nearly every night.[43] Hannah Blau on the other hand would be less exuberant in her *yahrzeit* ritual, even though she says she still contemplated, especially during the 1950s, to light one candle per lost relative. "But it would have been impossible and *meshugga* [crazy] to light 37 candles for every single one

[38] Jakob Lundwall, Interview, Lilly Schächter, (Jerusalem, 17.03.2014)
[39] Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*,(Cambridge, 2005),p.57
[40] Heller, *Zvi Spiegel*,p.176; Tim Cole, *Images of the Holocaust*, (London, 1999),p.123; Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million – The Israelis and the Holocaust*, (New York, 1993),p. 199
[41] Heller, *Zvi Spiegel*,p.176
[42] Jakob Lundwall, Interview, Hannah Blau, (Jerusalem, 18.03.2014)
[43] Doron, *Familie*,p.9

[of my dead relatives.]"[44] She, as many others, settled with two, one for all her relatives and one for all her friends.[45]

But some survivors chose to have little additional memorial rituals of their own – something that that would go beyond traditional mourning and would encapsulate the essence of what they wished not to forget. In Doron's 1950's neighbourhood Ramat HaSharon there lived a survivor called Joshi Postawski. His entire pride was his little garden full of flowers in front of his apartment which he would cultivate with deepest dedication. [46] Still, once a year, around spring time when the flowers were in full bloom, he would tear every single one of them out of the soil – this occurred on the evening before *Yom HaShoah*. "He tore them out mercilessly with well-targeted, rapid movements and chucked them all next to his tree", Doron recalls, "When the next morning dawned, the day of *Yom HaShoah*, Dorka, Efraim, Mirijam, Sarka, Ruben, Itta and other neighbours would come to Joshi's garden. One by one they came, stood still for a moment, looked around to ensure that we, the children, would not watch them in their pain. It was only then that they would enter the naked garden und put a twig on the pile of torn-out flowers, or a floret or a picture. Before they left they wiped away their tears. [...] [Every year] Joshi would water his flowers which would eventually become a wreath on *Yom HaShoah*. [His son] would stand at attention [...] and salute the flowers, which his father had piled up there. [...] [Then] he would sit on the top stair and [simply] keep staring for the rest of the Memorial Day."[47] Smaller personal acts of commemoration were performed without any legislative order to do so – Israeli commemoration simply had not yet been unified properly by having settled on agreed collective commemorative procedures.[48] A photograph taken in Jerusalem on May 1st 1954 confirms such individual commemorative performances (*see:* Illustration 2): it features a group of men standing behind a building on Mount Zion, with an Israeli flag held up high. The scene that is depicted here is a personal memorial service for the Jewish victims of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, some survivors of which actually lived in the house seen on the photograph.

Kurths argues that smaller communities of Shoah survivors would often partake in each other's private acts of commemoration, for their grief was only accessible to each other

[44] Interview: Hannah Blau
[45] *Ibid.*; interview: Moshe Blau; interview: Leo Luster; interview: Lilly Schächter
[46] Doron, *Familie*,p.97
[47] *Ibid.*,pp.97-8,p.102
[48] Young, *Day Remembers*,p.71

and not to outsiders.[49] They knew that if you had been *sham* [there], then you could comprehend their suffering *po* [here]. "A stranger could not understand [us and our story]", as Treblinka survivor Joseph Cherney said.[50] Feeling that nobody wanted to listen or attempt to understand was frightfully painful for most survivors, or as one of Lizzie Doron's friends Chajale Poliwoda said, "Our parents died several times. My parents [...] died during the Shoah, a second time when they came to Israel [because of the way they were treated] [...] and [another] and final time when they really died."[51] As the historian Beth B. Cohen described it, "[the survivors] [therefore] sought one another [...] they wanted the comfort of others like themselves."[52]

[49] Kurths, *Shoahgedenken*,p.89
[50] Film, *Return*, testimony:Joseph Cherney
[51] Doron, *Familie*,p.57
[52] Beth B. Cohen, *Survivors tell a different Story*, in: David Cesarani, Eric J. Sundquest (eds.), *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*,(Oxon, 2012),p.188

The Fellow Survivor Sphere – "There were no secrets in our quarter"

When Menachem Sholowicz, Asher Ud and Jakob Zawodkzki met in line at Auschwitz waiting to have their camp numbers tattooed on their arms they made each other a promise: should they, for some miraculous reason, all survive, they would meet again in Israel and remember what they had endured together.[53] The consecutive inmate numbers engraved on their arms bear witness to this meeting – B14594 (Menachem), B14595 (Asher) and B14596 (Jacob). They kept their promise and met up again in Israel and have continued to do so time and time again. Jacob Zawodzki recounts, "Wherever you went [in Israel those days] you heard that people with numbers were [crazy]" he taps his forehead, "they were from the 'other' side."[54] Only being able to exchange thoughts and deal with their memories together gave them the strength to ignore prevalent mistrust against survivors. The majority of them chose their friends from among themselves and opened up to them to the widest degree.[55] This had a therapeutic and cathartic effect and it therefore comes as no surprise that meeting up with fellow survivor friends was called "going out for a good time", despite knowing that one was to presumably yet again expose oneself to a wealth of haunting memories.[56] In the following section, I will exemplify how the Fellow Survivor Sphere was used as a hub for exchange of memory and dealing with certain traumata in the circle of trust that one shared with other fellow survivors.

In her book *Lama lo bat lifne HaMilchama?* [*Why did you not come before the War?*] Lizzie Doron describes a bizarre ritual which took place every second week in her home. She writes about how her mother Helena met fortnightly with her female friends who also had survived the Shoah to wail together whilst drinking coffee. They would draw the curtains, "fearing to be heard by strangers", and then they would "shriek 'vey, vey, vey' and cry and yell."[57] The women would wail, express their emotions to the fullest and loudest extent and curse the Germans and their perpetrators in Yiddish.[58] Doron recalls informing her mother about the arrival of her survivor friends: "I remember them only as numbers [...] I would announce them [...] '546772 is arriving!' or '94826 is nearly here.'"[59] No non-survivor,

[53] Film, Dana Doron, Uriel Sinai, *Numbered*, (Israel, 2012)
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] Yablonka, *Survivors*,p.61
[56] Ofer, *Israelis and Holocaust Memory*,p.5
[57] Lizzie Doron, *Warum bist du nicht vor dem Krieg gekommen?*, (Frankfurt, 2004),pp.25-6,p.28
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] *Ibid.*,p.25

nobody who had not been *there* was permitted to these gatherings, not even God, whom Guta, the rabbi's wife, wished to call upon.[60] But Helena refused to have God in their circle even if only as a symbolic gesture, as God had been absent *there*, so there was no room for him *here* either.[61] These meetings were of a tremendously secretive character. The survivors shown in Doron's account had to create their own hermetically enclosed realm, free from anything that might jeopardize the integrity of remembering together of those with a common history. It was then and only then, that memory could be dealt without hindrance and external interference.

Yoav Heller elucidates how during the 1950s the bulk of Shoah survivors would live in certain neighbourhoods, such as Bitzaron, or Ramat HaSharon as in Doron's case.[62] These 'Survivors' Compounds', as he refers to them, constituted a space of intimacy of memory and a fertile ground for a unrestrained presence of the psychological aftershocks of the Shoah – "the entire neighbourhood is a family", one of Helena Doron's friends proclaimed.[63] "There were no secrets in our quarter", Doron wrote as she recalls a blatant argument between two survivors who wished to organise their daughter's wedding: "Who are you going to invite? Are my mum and dad going to come from Treblinka? Uncle Israel and aunt Mira from Majdanek? Granddad Michael from Dachau?"[64] Austrian Auschwitz survivor Leo Luster remarks that the memory of the Holocaust would often slip through one's lips accidently.[65] These slips occurred repeatedly in those compounds as this sphere of personal remembrance provided a higher level of mutual trust between its inhabitants due to their similar experiences than other spheres did. For instance, when the children of survivors would play with matches, their parents would intervene: "We don't play with fire [...] We have seen enough smoke and fire in our time."[66] Or: "Children have to go to bed early to grow and their parents have to go to bed early to forget."[67] Or: "There is a train whistling in my head! Always whistling!"[68] Or else: "I have my experience with lice!"[69] Another noteworthy occurrence happened when Helena Doron wanted to open a bank account and

[60] *Ibid.*,p.27
[61] Dalia Ofer, *Fifty Years*,p.141
[62] Heller, *Zvi Spiegel*,p.182
[63] Doron, *Familie*,p.11
[64] *Ibid.*,p.14
[65] Jakob Lundwall, , Interview, Leo Luster, (Tel Aviv, 15.12.2013)
[66] Doron, *Familie*,p.46
[67] *Ibid.*,p.54
[68] Film, *HaKaytz Shel Aviya*
[69] *Ibid.*

was asked for her address. “Auschwitz, barrack number 2, opposite of the crematorium”, she replied without hesitation.[70] Linguist Ruth Wajnryb has termed such single phrased references to the Shoah “Holocaust Dicta” and has asserted their prevalence in daily lives of Holocaust survivors.[71] Overall, the Holocaust was always *mentioned* but never really *explained* unless the circumstances set forth otherwise, for example if one was to meet up to “go out for a good time” and speak about the past openly.

Among this environment of fellow Holocaust brethren one could give in a lot more easily to sudden outbursts, to flashbacks, to the dismay of loss and to overpowering images of memory than with non-survivors or one’s family. Lilly Schächter’s father, who had survived the Holocaust in Yugoslavia, while his daughter had been brought to England from Vienna in 1938, was diagnosed with a post-traumatic stress syndrome, “He really was psychosomatically ill and suffered a lot. [...] He tried to talk about it but he was too didactic and impersonal [in his approach]. That’s how he kept distance, I am sure.”[72] These mental conditions had to find their outlets sooner or later – and it was during night time when these instances of erupting memory accumulated significantly. Nightmares gave evidence of the deep-rooted trauma of many survivors.[73] Helena Doron and other residents of Ramat HaSharon would scream in their sleeps nearly every single night.[74] “At night [Helena] would die [...] for a few hours”, her daughter Lizzie Doron remembers.[75] These nocturnal moments would constitute a stage for outbreaks of subconscious angst and ingrained fears shaped by the experiences of the Holocaust which effected the entire neighbourhood. “At the dawn of night Mrs. Ida Zitrin would commence the ‘round dance’ by crying from her window: ‘Help! Help!’ [...] Awoken by this yelling Esterke Pshigurski appeared moonstruck on the street. [...] She would say: ‘This is Bergen-Belsen!’ [...] From the darkness Zila, the grocer’s wife, emerged. [...] She stood in her door barefoot, with a fine nightgown and began talking about Mojshele, her heroic brother, the leader of the resistance in the ghetto who was the first to be killed in the uprising.[vi] [...] She ran through the neighbourhood to find him. ‘Mojshele, where are you? Where are you?’ she cried and begged, ‘Mojshele, you must not die

[70] Doron, *Familie.*,p21
[71] Ruth Wajnryb, *The Silence: How Tragedy shapes talk*, (Crows Nest ,2011),p.192
[72] Interview: Lilly Schächter
[73] Michael Nutkiewicz, *Shame, Guilt, and Anguish in Holocaust Survivor Testimony*, in: *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Winter - Spring, 2003),p.14
[74] Lizzie Doron, *Das Schweigen meiner Mutter*, (Munich, 2012),p.47
[75] *Ibid.*,p.65

again!'"[76] Other people would also shout, yell, lament, cry and call for silence and order. Doors were opened, shutters closed and the next morning "it was like the night had never happened."[77] Naturally, it may be assumed that Lizzie Doron's accounts of her childhood experiences have been slightly adapted and enhanced in order to fit an appealing literary narrative, however, the patterns and outlines she describes in her works are congruent with that of other reports.[78]

In her semi-autobiographical childhood account *Ets HaDomim Tafus* [*Under the Domim Tree*] Gila Almagor recalls that Alex and Misha, two survivor boys from her youth village, would ever so often give each other a nightly piggyback and dash through the areal bushes, trees and fields howling like wolves.[79] This bizarre noctivagant practice had been their desperate survival strategy in the forests of Eastern Europe during the war so as to deter potential persecutors. Despite their newly gained social security in the Israeli youth village, which mostly housed young children of survivors and a few other young people who had escaped the Nazi destruction, both of the boys continued to roam the hinterlands of their new home with wolf-like howls as if the war had never ended and if their lives were still in constant danger. Their inter-dependency and fierce loyalty in these nights worried the other children as well as their guardians.[80] Gila Almagor remembers, "Their past was a mystery to me. I loved to look at them and to try to guess what it was like being from *there*. What do they remember? What are they running from?"[81]

So far, I have only presented the Fellow Survivor Sphere as an aspect of arbitrary neighbourhood situations in which the survivors seemed to have been brought together at random. Austrian survivor Moshe Blau expressed these haphazard living arrangement outcomes as such: "After having passed through the camp for the *olim chadashim* [new immigrants] one was allotted an apartment somewhere in the country. You did not really have a lot to say [...] I had no relatives – nobody. I was told to go and live in Mea Shearim in Jerusalem."[82] If those survivor compounds, as Yoav Heller has described them, were the

[76] Doron, *Familie*,pp.42-4
[77] *Ibid.*,p.45
[78] Carol A. Kidron, *Toward an Ethnography of Silence: The Lived Presence of the Past in the Everyday Life of Holocaust Trauma Survivors and Their Descendants in Israel*, in: *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (February 2009),p.5
[79] Film, *Ets HaDomim Tafus*, (Tel Aviv, 1995)
[80] Gila Almagor, *Under the Domim Tree*,(New York, 1995),p.32
[81] *Ibid.*,p.24
[82] Jakob Lundwall, interview: Moshe Blau, (Jerusalem, 18/03/2014)

product of chance, then the "survivor clubs" which "sprang up like mushrooms during the 1950s" were the result of proactive and wilful doing on behalf of their members.[83] By 1961 alone there were 104 survivor clubs scattered across the entire country, from Haifa to Be'er Sheva, from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.[84] Aharon Appfelfeld, nowadays one of Israel's most acclaimed novelists, was born in Romania and survived a concentration camp in Transnistria – his autobiography *Sippur HaYim* [*The Story of a Life*] is a reprocessing of his Shoah years as well as his time in Israel from 1946 onwards.[85] He joined his respective survivor club "New Life Club" after it had been established in 1950 with a focus on survivors from Galicia and Bukovina.[86] The central concept was for survivors to exchange memories and to listen to each other's suffering. "These places", Appelfeld writes, "were a substitute for home."[87] It were these clubs which became safe havens for their members, protected spaces where Yiddish, Polish, Russian, German , Romanian and other languages were spoken without shame, where afternoons were filled with extensive chess games, coffee drinking and lecturing.[88] It was here where Appfelfeld's poems were first read to an audience – not to Israeli non-survivor friends or acquaintances, but rather to fellow survivors, old and young, to partners in memory. They offered each other mutual support, organised individual memorial services, such as described in the previous chapter, published memoire books, held symposiums and tried to engage potential wealthy donors, and there were even initial plans to organise special classes for the survivors' children on Sabbath and Jewish holidays to teach them about their forefathers' lost communities in Europe.[89] The stories were recounted to each other and thus kept alive. Survivors regarded each other as trustworthy keepers and bearers of memory – people who could be confronted with it for they had experienced it themselves.

The memory of the Holocaust was obvious to those around the survivors, to their children, to non-survivors who witnessed sudden outbursts of memory, and, above all, it was obvious to the fellow survivors who knew how to interpret certain behaviours and act accordingly. Furthermore, it was overt and present to those who were exposed to the

[83] Aharon Appelfeld, *The Story of a Life*, (London, 2006),p.184
[84] Kurths, *Shoahgedenken*,p.90
[85] Appelfeld, *The Story*,p.184
[86] *Ibid.*,p.183
[87] *Ibid.*,p.184
[88] *Ibid.*
[89] *Ibid.*,pp.184-5,pp.187-8

survivors' recollections of the Holocaust: however much they might have tried to conceal them in spirit of the collective resolution of silence, they failed in keeping it as demonstrated hitherto. The 'personal tripod of Shoah memory', commemorating, remembering and recounting, began to stall however when it came into contact with what was presumably the single most dearest thing to the survivors: their family.

The Family Sphere – *"My children and grandchildren are my victory"*

It was in 2012 that Hannah Rabinovitz, daughter of late Auschwitz survivor Leon Klinger, decided to have her father's concentration camp number tattooed on her ankle in remembrance of her father – vicarious memory, as James E. Young would have called it, on the very skin of the children of Holocaust survivors – a manifestation of memory not experienced by the person who bares it, yet central to this person's own understanding of these events.[90] For her, this number had always been present in her life, especially during her childhood in the late Fifties in Israel: "The number was part of him. Just like his freckles, his gray hair – he had a number too. [All of] that was my father."[91] For the historian Carol A. Kidron, who has conducted a comprehensive study on the presence of the Holocaust in the everyday life of survivors in Israel, the concentration camp number was one of many insignia of memory visible to the survivor's family.[92] After having interviewed 55 children of survivors she concluded that there were roughly four main "media" of Holocaust presence within the Family Sphere:

I) Silent survivor – descendant interaction with surviving artefacts of the death-world, including both relics embedded in the survivor's body (such as concentration camp tattoos)

II) Virtual interaction with ghosts of the Holocaust dead (as seen in Doron's reports on the nightly events in her neighbourhood in the previous chapter)

III) Practices of survival carried over from the Holocaust to Israel (e.g. Almagor's accounts of Misha and Alex's nocturnal breakouts as wolves)

IV) Parent-child dialogic interaction in the form of "Holocaust Dicta" and fragments of mythic tales of survival (such as illustrated in the chapter before) [93]

In her viewpoint, the Holocaust past was existent in these households "within silent, embodied practices, person – object interactions and person – person interactions."[94] Or as Hasia R. Diner pointed out in the introduction to her book *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, the survivors conveyed memory through "deeds and words", not just words alone, but also through embodied actions and behavioural patterns which were just as

[90] Film, *Numbered*, James E. Young, *Memory's Edge*,pp.2-4
[91] Film, *Numbered*
[92] Kidron, *Ethnography of Silence*,p.9
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] *Ibid.*,p.5

momentous.[95] Seemingly insignificant acts would therefore sometimes render more insight to their parents' pasts than long conversations. In this chapter I seek to show how survivors attempted to spare their children from their memory and their motives for doing so, but, eventually, how they revealed more than they might have intended to. Initially, I will outline the reasons why they may have felt uncomfortable mentioning the Holocaust directly to their children/non-survivor partners. After that I shall give a few examples how they conveyed their memory through the "media" of the Holocaust presence, as determined by Carol A. Kidron, or in a wider sense, 'the tripod of personal Shoah memory' as proposed by myself.

Before coming to Israel, Holocaust survivor Shoshanna Roshkovski was admitted to a DP camp in Germany, weighing barely 28 kilograms after having been liberated from Auschwitz.[96] It was there that she got pregnant from her newly wedded husband Abraham. When she was told about her pregnancy she acted hysterically: "I jumped off the table like a madwoman, 'Doctor, I am pregnant? [...] I don't want a baby. I want an abortion, I don't want a child! I can't hear a baby crying. I heard babies screaming in Auschwitz, I don't want it!'"[97] As she could not pay for an abortion she returned home and tried to harm the foetus by repeatedly ironing her belly and lifting heavy objects.[98] Despite her efforts she gave birth to a son six months later and "when they brought him to me, and I saw him alive, I thought of how I [had] wanted to kill him. I thought about it all the time and prayed that God would let me keep him."[99] Their son survived and in spite of Shoshanna Roshkovski's negative connotations to infant screams moulded by her time in Auschwitz it was his birth that signified a recommencement when they left for Israel afterwards. Her story is similar to that of Miriam Akavia from Krakow, who was first detained in the ghetto of Plaskov at the age of eleven, then transported to Auschwitz, and finally liberated at Bergen Belsen after having endured the death marches westwards. She too settled in Israel after the war. When her daughter Ronit was born in Israel she was amazed how many facial similarities with her lost relatives she could see: "Ronit brought much happiness into our lives [...] I saw [that] she

[95] Diner, *We Remember*,p.1
[96] Yad Vashem, *Holocaust Survivor Testimonies: The Displaced Persons' Camps*, testimony: Shoshanna Roshkovski, Abraham Roshovski, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urSGFm57rzM (viewed: 04/02/2014, 13:53)
[97] *Ibid.*
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] *Ibid.*

looked like my mother. [...] I saw mother's eyes. The next day I saw she resembles father. Then I thought, there is continuity after all."[100] Greek Holocaust survivor Abramo Nacson sums up having children after the Shoah as follows: "My children and grandchildren are my victory!"[101] To most survivors their children were the most important emblem of having triumphed over the Nazi's plans to erase Jewish life as a whole. "We beat the Germans here not with canons, not with tanks and not with aeroplanes. We beat them because we founded families" as Helena Doron said.[102] Naturally, one comprehends that they wanted to spare their children from their own past and that was for several reasons.

According to the historian Ruth Jaffe it was predominantly about not wanting one's children to comprehend their parent(s) as scarred human(s) and not wishing to cultivate an awareness "of having been reduced to the existence of a degraded human being [during the Holocaust]" caused by overmuch recounting.[103] "We had a gentlemen's agreement at home – My kids did not ask and I did not talk about it. I could not finish a single sentence without crying three times", as survivor Asher Ud describes it.[104] Fearing that their stories would inflict their Shoah traumata onto their offspring was a prime reason for remaining silent, as survivors Gita Kalderon expresses about her children in the late Fifties: "My children asked me about the number [on my arm] for many years. I thought that telling them about the horrors I had endured would make them feel sad and I did not want that. They got all the joy I could possibly give. I used to sing, my heart would be crying while my mouth was singing."[105] But as seen here, children were curious to find out about the mysterious behaviour of their parents and their state of silence. In her autobiography *VeYom ecahd od nipagesh* [*And One Day We Will Meet*, *Das Schweigen meiner Mutter*] Lizzie Doron recalls how her playmate Bracha told her that her mother promised to tell her all about "this place called 'Shoah'" when she would get her first period. "When you have your first period you can ask your [mother] about this Shoah-business I have told you about. You will be able to ask [her] about the crematorium, where they burnt Jews, [...] about Jews in pyjamas who looked like skeletons [...] and you will believe me that it is the Germans' fault, may their

[100] Film, *Return to Life*, testimony: Miriam Akavia
[101] Film, *Numbered*, testimony: Abrama Nacson
[102] Doron, *Familie*,p.137
[103] Ruth Jaffe, *The Sense of Guilt within Holocaust Survivors*, in: *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Oct., 1970),p.308
[104] Film, *Numbered*, testimony: Asher Ud
[105] *Ibid.*, testimony: Gita Kaldron

name and their memory be erased, that nobody in this quarter has any relatives left."[106] The beginning of menstruation signified the girls entering into a new stage of life, that of adulthood, and with it, Bracha's mother deduced, they would enter an age of reason which brought with it the capability to hear and ask about what happened in the Shoah and the appropriate handling of the answers. For now, all these children knew were flashes of Holocaust memory that were not yet explained coherently and put into a wider perspective. All they had was filtered memory.

As a result of the survivors' children seeing the silent suffering of their parents, Israeli behavioural scientists Dan Bar-On and Noga Gilad argue that "the second generation was impaired due to the burden of the Holocaust that their parents silently carried" and were thus effected by the aftershocks of the Holocaust in the handling of their daily lives to a similar degree as their parents.[107] Their parents' suffering hence became their own. It was this antithetic coaction between the desired 'resolution of silence' and the visible application of the 'tripod of personal Shoah memory' which resulted in this filtered dispense of memory. Arguably, the Family Sphere was a testing area for the survivors to determine *which* forms of memory were reasonable to be passed on to the public sphere. Their children witnessed their parents' tightrope walk between trying to both safeguard their memory, whilst simultaneously fiercely protecting them from it, repressing it and being overwhelmed by it on countless occasions – therefore, the Holocaust could be both absent and present in these households at the same time.[108]

Most evidently, the traces of the Holocaust were often engraved on the very bodies of the survivors, such as injuries and camp number tattoos. The silent body began to tell the story that the lips failed to recount. Lizzie Doron's mother Helena's left little finger, for instance, was stiff, distorted and unpleasant to look at. Asking her mother why this finger differed from the others Helena simply replied, "That is a souvenir from *there* [emphasis added]. It is a souvenir from the time when God had abandoned the world. [...] I have founded a family here, all by myself, with nine fingers."[109] In this account both the artefact of the Holocaust was apparent on the survivor's body as well as in fragments of mythic tales

[106] Doron, *Schweigen*,p.44,pp.51-2
[107] Dan Bar-On, Noga Gilad, *To Rebuild Life: A Narrative Analysis of Three Generations of an Israeli Holocaust Survivor's Family*, in: Amia Lieblich, Ruthellen Josselson (eds.), *Exploring Identity and Gender: The Narrative Study of Lives*, (London, 1994),p.84
[108] Heller, *Zvi Spiegel*,p.186
[109] Doron, *Familie*,p.10

of re-establishment. For the majority of survivors' children their parent's/parents' camp tattoos were pivotal in their understanding that their fathers and mothers differed from non-survivors. Carol A. Kidron cites a survivor's daughter "Hannah"[vii] and her "discovery" of the tattoo on her mother's arm: "I guess the first thing that comes to mind is my mother's tattoo [...] The first time I noticed it was when we were on the bus [...] I looked at other people's arms and saw that *they did not have* one. I asked her why the others did not have a number like her. She answered, 'Don't talk nonsense.' I got upset and told her to take it off. When she did not respond, *I touched it to see if it was connected*. [...] She got very angry at me and pulled down her sleeve."[110] Additionally to such external marks, a great deal of communication happened on a nonverbal inter-subjective level. It was in such moments when most children of survivors experienced the presence of the Shoah in their lives when they would often least expect it.

Lizzie Doron's friend Chajale Poliwoda's aunt Zila, the grocer's wife who had lost her brother Mojshele in the aforesaid ghetto uprising, would annoy her relatives due to her continuous stories about her Holocaust experiences. Many children in the neighbourhood sought her company to hear those stories their parents would refuse to tell them. This was done inter alia to understand their mothers and fathers better. Zila's tales of naming the lice on her head after *goyim* [gentiles] in her time spent in the concentration camp, how she scraped together rotten potato peals so as to avoid starvation, how Etel, one of her camp inmates, had to give birth to a miscarriage next to her and how there are people out there who have "both a name and a number" captivated the children's imaginations.[111] Although she recounted these events in a seemingly rational manner, it was her eruptive hysterical behaviour in other circumstances that truly fascinated the neighbourhood's children. Zila's son reported that he at times could not even take a normal shower without his mother bursting into the steamed-up bathroom and screaming: "That's the gas, there is the gas again!"[112] These detached outbursts underlined the lived memory of both survivors and their children in 1950's Israel. Other micro-acts of daily life that echoed the survivors' Holocaust experiences were the excessive recycling of bread, a habit stemming from the memory of severe hunger or looking extensively at photographs of lost relatives or

[110] Kidron, *Ethnography of Silence*,p.9
[111] Doron, *Familie*,pp.55-6
[112] *Ibid.*,p.47

friends.[113] Such was done by the survivor father of "Beth" who had concentrated the entire existence of his Holocaust past in his bedroom drawer, pictures, letters and such like.[114] He had created his own little Shoah black box and only he was permitted to look in it. "Michelle", the daughter of a survivor, recounts how her mother fed her children with an ordinary-seeming tablespoon, which though was one she had managed to keep from Auschwitz: "Look, she won", "Michelle" says, "she survived with the spoon. Every time she fed me or my sister she probably said to herself, 'Hah, I won – not only did I not die, but this spoon that kept me alive is now feeding my children.'"[115] However, the highest form of unspoken Shoah memory in the Family Sphere was the naming of one's children after lost relatives or, even more, after one's former children who had not survived the Nazi genocide.[116] This act of connecting the present with the pre-Holocaust time was presumably the most embodied form of memory survivors could think of. Dorka, the mother of one of Lizzie Doron's friends, named her son Dovele after her firstborn child who perished in the Holocaust. She had, however, never told her second son. She urged him to fulfil the promises his lost brother had displayed, like playing the violin, and moreover, she made him look like the other Dovele whilst keeping his identity and even his former existence secret from him. A picture of her first Dovele hang in her bedroom, sometimes "she would stroke the photograph, kiss the glass on it and start crying. [...] Every time Dovele wanted to know who that boy was she would reply, 'That is you.'"[117]

The interplays within the survivor's Family Sphere are manifold and complex. This chapter merely gave a glimpse into the complexities involved in the relationships between survivor parents and their children. More could be elaborated on child survivors adjusting within their new Israeli environment, such as depicted by Gila Almagor. Indeed, also the non-survivor spouses and partners of survivors could have been the subject of research in this dissertation. What were they told and what did they want to know and discover about their partner's former life in Europe? However, I have chosen the relationship between the survivor and his/her children because of the moral responsibility the survivors felt towards their offspring, both in sparing them from their past as well as imparting and educating them in the spirit of its legacy. Aharon Appelfeld sums this up rather well: "Holocaust survivors

[113] Kidron, *Ethnography of Silence*,p.6,p.15
[114] *Ibid.*,pp.11-3
[115] Ibid.p.11
[116] Kurths, *Shoahgedenken*,p.90
[117] Doron, *Familie*,p.32

had faced excruciating choices, the main one being whether to continue living with the memory of the Holocaust or start a new life. They had chosen the new life.[...] They had wanted to spare their children the memory of suffering and the shame; they wanted to raise them to become free men and women, without that dismal legacy."[118]

[118] Appfelfeld, *Story of a Life*,p.170

Conclusion – *Schweigen*

The German term for being silent is *schweigen*. Contrary to its English counterpart it conveys a greater sense of agency, a stronger feeling of actively choosing not to talk. Thus *schweigen* becomes an active response to a question or an accusation without words. In the context of the 'Myth of Silence' *schweigen*, to keep silent, may therefore be understood as an overt statement in itself. This active decision of being silent was something that was understood as an obvious sign of grief as well as shame. Thus even silence became a visible manifestation of Holocaust memory itself, evident to everyone who knew how to construe it, survivors and non-survivors alike. As one of Lizzie Doron's childhood companions said of her survivor parents in the Fifties, "my parents spent their lives here asleep and in silence" and yet she understood what it meant.[119] I argue that, antithetically, silence itself is among the biggest proof against the "Myth of Silence" for it was nothing more and nothing less than yet another facet of the 'tripod of personal Shoah memory' applied within the three spheres of the individual survivor's world – it was a candid statement of the prevalence of the survivor's haunting Holocaust memory he or she did not wish to talk about for whatever reason. This presence of absence, as one might call it, represented the voids in their lives.[120]

Having meticulously examined a considerable amount of primary sources and after having placed them within Heller's three spheres that constitute the individual survivor's private realm I conclude that the survivors did commemorate, did remember and did recount despite the commonly aspired 'resolution of silence'. The question was *what* was told to *whom* and through which means of conveying. Consequently, each sphere of the individual survivor simultaneously adopts one aspect of the 'tripod of personal Shoah memory'. In very broad terms the Public Sphere becomes the area of *commemorating* the event symbolically, the Fellow Survivor Sphere that of *remembering* and conserving memory with those who shared similar experiences and finally, the Family Sphere which became a space of filtered *recounting*. *Commemoration*, *Remembrance* and *Recounting* might indeed have overlapped each sphere and were flexible in their application, but generally they tended to remain within each specific sphere in Israel during the 1950s. The survivors' filtered dispense of Holocaust memory trickled outwards, reaching the awareness of survivors and non-survivors alike through more than spoken words, but likewise through

[119] Doron, *Familie*,p.58

[120] Kidron, *Ethnography of Silence*,p.6

deeds. Thus silence was breached and circumvented frequently. These deeds ignited by memory gave the survivors the ability to master their own memory and communicate it indirectly to the broader public. I understand my findings to be additional concepts within the historical work on Holocaust survivors. The 'tripod of personal Shoah memory' and its remit are to render a more nuanced outlook on the abilities of the individual survivor to have made his/her Holocaust memories visible within the Israeli society in the 1950s to a far greater extent than hitherto given credit for. Above all though, I wish to express that silence was a manifestation of memory itself which contributed to a wider awareness of what the survivors had been through.

On a hill on the fringes of Gila Almagor's youth village Hadassim there stood a tree whose leaves never fell off. Nobody watered it, nobody took care of it. Most of the children in this youth village were suffering from the legacy of the Holocaust in one way or another. There were two paths on the hill. One went up and the other one down. As time went on, there was an unspoken rule: One child went up the hill one path and down the other. As one went down, whoever was in line next started going up towards the tree. These children had come to cry "and pour out their hearts, one by one, under [the tree's] protective branches."[121] The "Domim Tree", a local crab apple tree, was these children's sanctuary and at the same time an emblem of personal Shoah memory. From afar other children would see how under the tree's leaves their friends would remember what they had lost. And even without words everyone would understand.

[121] Almagor, *Domim Tree*,p.IX

Illustrations

Illustration 2- Photgraph, Hugo Mendelson, MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE MARTYRS OF THE GHETTO OF WARSAW ON MOUNT ZION, IN JERUSALEM. NOTE THE FLAT OF THE GHETTO FIGHTERS, The State of Israel National Photo Collection, Item: 019752, (Jerusalem, 01/May/1954)

Appendices

[i] For further reading on early Israeli attitudes towards Holocaust survivors refer to:

- Hacohen, Dvora; *Immigrants in Turmoil – Mass Immigration to Israel and its Repercussions in the 1950s and After*; (New York, 2003)
- Rosenfeld, Alvin H.; (ed.), *Thinking about the Holocaust After Half a Century*, (Bloomington, 1997); chapter by: Shapira, Antia; *The Holocaust and World War II as Elements of the Yishuv Psyche until 1948*
- Strenger, Carlo; *Israel: Einführung in ein schwieriges* Land; (Berlin, 2011), especially p.57

[ii] For further reading on "The Myth of Silence" refer to:

- Cesarani, David; Sundquist, Eric J.; (eds.); *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*; (New York, 2012)
- Schlant, Ernestine; *Die Sprache des Schweigens: Die deutsche Literatur und der Holocaust*; (Munich, 2001)
- Novick, Peter; *The Holocaust in American Life*; (New York, 2000); especially pp. 85 – 170

[iii] I have chosen to omit the fourth sphere (Inner World of the Survivor) for reasons of unguaranteed factual determining.

[iv] For further reading on Public Memory, Commemoration and Research of the Holocaust in 1950's Israel refer to:

- Bar, Doron; *Holocaust Commemoration in Israel during the 1950s: The Holocaust Cellar on Mount Zion*, in: *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, Vol. 12, No. 1, (Autumn, 2005), pp. 16-38
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[v] After having assessed various maps of greater Tel Aviv referring to street names in Doron's described neighbourhood I have concluded that Ramat HaSharon was the district in which she grew up in.

[vi] It is has not been gone into detail to which ghetto her brother had been brought to. None of the usual Holocaust victim databases could render any significant results who her brother really was.

[vii] For reasons of discretion, Carol A. Kidron has anonymised the names of her interviewees. Consequently, I shall use inverted commas when these names are used, e.g. "Hannah", etc.

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