# “Here I am, Father”: Experiences of Fatherhood in Diaries of Fathers from the Warsaw Ghetto

## Abstract

While there has been considerable research on women and motherhood during the Holocaust, less attention has been given to fatherhood during the same period. This article explores the experiences of Jewish fathers who lived in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Holocaust and sheds light on their roles and challenges in the face of extreme adversity, as documented in their diaries.

Many fathers, who had traditionally not been involved in household chores and childcare before the war, found themselves taking on these responsibilities in the Ghetto. The harsh conditions and constant threats forced fathers to adapt and take on new roles, both physically and emotionally. This included not only providing for their families, but also nurturing their children’s well-being, both physically and psychologically.

A close examination of the diaries of fathers in the Warsaw Ghetto reveals their struggles to protect and care for their children in the midst of a daunting reality. The diaries convey a range of emotions, including fear, frustration, guilt, and love, and demonstrate the profound impact of their traumatic experiences on their sense of self. Fatherhood emerges as a dynamic construct shaped by circumstances, with extreme events requiring fathers to adapt and balance traditional roles with new challenges in order to protect their families. These diaries provide a unique perspective on how fatherhood was redefined and tested in the collapsing Warsaw Ghetto.

## Introduction

If Josima Feldszuhhad survived the Holocaust, her name would undoubtedly be well known today. Even in her youth, Josima showed signs of a promising future as a composer and virtuoso pianist. The fact that she was a talented child was recognized by those who did not know her personally, as evidenced by announcements published in the Ghetto inviting residents to attend her concert performance.[[1]](#footnote-1) However, most of our knowledge about Josima’s talent comes from a completely non-objective man who loved her deeply—her father, Dr. Rubin Feldszuh(pen name Rubin Ben-Shem), who wrote extensively about his daughter in his long and detailed diary from the Warsaw Ghetto. Feldszuhwrote one of the most detailed surviving diaries of life in the Warsaw Ghetto, describing the creation, operation, and destruction of the largest Jewish ghetto from the Holocaust period. Feldszuh’s diary, with hundreds of pages filled with cramped handwriting, describes in painstaking detail his experiences of life in the Ghetto. Feldszuh began his diary immediately after the German invasion and ended it with the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising by the Polish Resistance on August 1, 1944.

Rubin Feldszuh **(**1900–1980) was a leader in the Zionist Revisionist movement, a teacher, a writer, a rabbi, and a journalist in the Warsaw Ghetto. Yet, it is clear from his diary that, above all, he was Josima’s father.

The fact of his being a father and the description of his relationship with his daughter are woven throughout the length of the diary. This is not a marginal or negligible aspect of his existence, but rather the central and sometimes the only motive for many actions he took over the years, in addition to the many and diverse actions he performed in the public sphere, as can be seen in a passage from his diary:

My daughter exhibits talents of a genius, she amazes all her listeners. Experts say they have not heard such playing for many years, and that a bright future awaits her abroad. Just escape with her, and fast. And now my heart beats twice as fast, to save myself, my wife, and most of all her, this lovely pearl, this beautiful jewel, this divine light. [[2]](#footnote-2)

During his struggle to save Josima from the Warsaw Ghetto, which was gradually being eliminated, Feldszuh rarely could sleep. While Josima was delighting the children in Janusz Korczak’s orphanage with her wonderful music, her father was trying to smuggle her and his wife out of Poland. Shortly before the Uprising broke out, the family managed to escape from the Ghetto and go into hiding. However, the harsh conditions of their time as fugitives, and their years in the Ghetto, all took their toll. In April 1943, Josima died of tuberculosis. She was just 14 years old.

Rubin Feldszuh was not alone. The Holocaust presented an unimaginable ordeal and challenge, especially for parents, who did everything in their power to protect their children. However, in many cases, they were unable to do anything to prevent the deaths of their offspring. The loss of a child symbolized the loss of the future and hope, as also expressed in the lament of the poet Itzhak Katzenelson for the Jewish people, a lament that begins with his description of the pain over the loss of his wife and two children.

But how can I? How can I lift my head? They took my

wife, sons Benzion and little Yomele. No more with me

yet they’ll never leave, o dark shadows of my brightest ones,

shadows cold and blind. [[3]](#footnote-3)

This article explores the issue of Jewish fatherhood during the Holocaust. However, since Holocaust experiences varied dramatically from place to place, for the purposes of this article, I will examine this issue through the diaries of fathers who lived in the Warsaw Ghetto.[[4]](#footnote-4) From this, two questions arise: What was the role of fatherhood in their considerations? In what way did it shape their perceptions and actions in the reality in which they lived?

Many Warsaw Ghetto residents wrote diaries. Some of the diarists were women or boys or men who were not fathers.[[5]](#footnote-5) Likewise, some diaries were written by fathers who did not make extensive references to their children in their writings. For example, the educator Chaim Aharon Kaplan rarely wrote about his daughter and son in his diary. One likely reason for this is that his adult children lived in the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, and therefore his worry for them was less. Nevertheless, at the beginning of his diary, he briefly addresses the gap between the personal and the public, noting that the idea of being a father was always present in his thoughts:

Within the general *tzores* [troubles], everyone has his own special corner with his own unique individual *tzores*. Even within a general *androloimosso* [a chaotic, harsh collective punishment], everyone lives his own life. Being a central and major figure in the general upheaval that has radically changed our lives and turned my world upside down, I never for a moment forgot those closest to me, even though they were several thousand *parasangs* away from me. These faraway-close ones, are they not my sons and daughters in the Land of Israel? I understand their spirit and their state of mind during the terrible events of the war when the wings of death hovered over our heads.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Kaplan’s words also echo the sentiments of other fathers for whom their fatherhood remained a central aspect of their behavior even if they did not explicitly and extensively write about their children in their diaries. For instance, Emanuel Ringelblum, who wrote very little about his son in his diary, chose to stay with him in prison during his final days. He refused an opportunity to escape and was executed in the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto along with his wife and son.[[7]](#footnote-7)

## Why specifically fatherhood?

To address this question, it is necessary to first discuss the rupture that Jewish masculinity suffered during the Holocaust period. The Nazi occupation led to a profound breakdown in the status of men within the Jewish family, creating a disrupted space in which social and normative conventions disintegrated. For example, instead of the normal ratio of men and women, where women outnumber men by about 2–3%, the Jewish Polish space had a significant female majority, a phenomenon referred to in Maria Ferenc Piotrowska’s work as the “feminization of the ghettos.”[[8]](#footnote-8) There were several reasons for this. In Poland, for example, many men abandoned their families immediately after the German occupation, out of the belief that during wartime, men face greater dangers than women and children. Moreover, many Polish Jewish men were soldiers in the Polish army, and consequently were in danger, not necessarily because they were Jews but because they were enemy combatants, as Chaim Kaplan described in his diary.[[9]](#footnote-9)

This reality led to a dramatic decline in the number of men in the Jewish population. By October 1939, men constituted 46 percent of the Jewish population in Warsaw.[[10]](#footnote-10) Furthermore, since the onset of the Nazi persecution of Jews, Jewish men had been forced into labor and sent to work camps, and were murdered in higher numbers than women. These factors led, among other things, to men constituting about 42 percent of the Jewish population by January of 1942. In the 20–29 age bracket, the ratio of Jewish men to women was 35 percent to 65 percent.[[11]](#footnote-11) While Nazi murders of Jews directly affected the mortality of Jewish men, researchers also point to other reasons that could explain the drop in the male population. One explanation is that Jewish men exhibited less psychological resilience than women in the face of the harsh reality of Nazi occupation and persecution, and therefore succumbed to depression and apathy. Another explanation is that while Jewish men were forced to undertake strenuous physical labor, the living conditions in the Ghetto did not allow them to maintain the caloric intake required for this. As a result, men became weaker and more susceptible to disease and death.[[12]](#footnote-12)

In addition, Jewish men suffered to a greater extent than any others from German persecution and assault, which included imprisonments, public humiliation, and beatings. Traditional Jewish masculine symbols, such as wearing a beard and *payot* (sidelocks) were ridiculed and even endangered those men who continued to wear them. This led to a new dependence by men on women, as described by Reuven Feldszuh:

In an interesting turn of history, last year when the German abductors started up and instilled fear in all of us..., all the men tried to accompany a woman. The soldiers who captured them were attentive to the women and treated the fair sex almost as if they were human beings, and the man was usually saved by her. Even when a soldier approached and demanded that the man go with him, the woman pleaded and reminded him that this man was her husband, her brother, her father, the man chaperoning her to the doctor, and son, and she saved the poor man.[[13]](#footnote-13)

However, many Jewish women were also affected, whether by being subjected to forced deportations, starving to death, dying from diseases, and more. This situation left many men as the sole parent, in what was a new reality for them. These fathers had no choice but to take on household chores and childcare. Even in cases where both parents survived, family structures were dramatically altered. The transition to the ghetto (where ghettos existed), the loss of livelihood, and the menacing reality, all led to a reevaluation and shift in parent-child and spousal relationships. Behaviors and responsibilities that were traditionally associated with one gender were transferred to the other.[[14]](#footnote-14)

As both Dinahart and Johnson have shown, fatherhood is an essential element in defining male identity, and the modern era is characterized by a greater presence and participation of fathers in their children’s lives.[[15]](#footnote-15) Examining the characteristics of fatherhood during the Holocaust, it seems that there was a significant involvement of fathers in the lives of their children, physically as well as emotionally. Was this the case before the war? This is a difficult question to answer, as not all the diaries used in this study describe the period before the war. However, Feldszuh’s descriptions of other Jewish fathers indicate that there was indeed a shift, and fathers who had not previously been involved in household chores, childcare, and concern for their children’s safety found themselves taking on these tasks, even in cases where the mother was still alive and present. Did the physical and sociological upheaval experienced by Jewish men in Warsaw also affect their self-perception? Did this dramatic change result in a modification of their perceptions of masculinity—specifically, did it also influence their perceptions of fatherhood and the paternal self?

The topic of fatherhood during the Holocaust has received little attention from scholars. This stands in sharp contrast to the extensive studies that have been conducted on Jewish women, femininity, and motherhood.[[16]](#footnote-16) One of the reasons for this is that women’s heroic actions to save their children—which often deviated from traditional gender roles—were documented both at the time of the events by various sources, including women’s diaries, letters, and by third-party witnesses, and in later testimonies of children about their mothers. In contrast, the fathers’ actions were not always addressed in the writings of the period. To some extent, this was because the various actions taken by fathers to save their children and protect their families were perceived as trivial and as behaviors that were expected of a father according to traditional gender roles, whereby the father is expected to must ensure his family’s security and provide for them. Thus, apparently, a father who fulfilled his “gender obligations” was not considered exceptional or noteworthy. Another possible reason for the relative dearth of documentation of fathers’ actions is the separation that often exists in men’s writing between the personal and the public. Thus, even public leaders who were known to have been fathers left records of their public actions. However, the personal side of their lives, in which they struggled to save their children, remained muted or absent.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Nonetheless, fathers assumed a significant role within the family structure during the Holocaust, and many tried to do everything in their power to save their family members, provide for them, and protect them in the midst of the chaotic reality they faced.[[18]](#footnote-18) The primary sources for this article are ego-documents written by fathers under Nazi occupation, in which they refer to their own parenting experiences or those of others around them. Among these diaries, many differences can be identified that stem from the various events of the Holocaust as they unfolded in each location. It is difficult to compare the lives of Jews in the Polish ghettos to those of Jews who went into hiding in Vichy France. The fathers’ ages were also a factor that affected their experiences. For example, a father with small children who were completely dependent on him differed from a father whose children were grown and had already left home. Worldviews and belief systems also gave rise to differences—a religious father devoted more attention and interest to the issue of observing the *mitzvot* [Jewish commandments] and to the weakening of religion among his children, whereas a secular father would likely not have been concerned by these same issues. However, there is one common denominator among all the diarists—they were all fathers during an unimaginable period of hardship, where they experienced a constant threat to their own lives and to those of their children. They all felt involved, in one way or another, in the children’s lives and constantly kept an eye out for what they understood to be the best interests of their children.

It is important to note that this study, which seeks to amplify the voices of Jewish fathers during the Holocaust, does not attempt to compare the suffering of fathers with that of mothers in order to determine who suffered more. The premise of this research is that, while the loss of a child is equally painful and horrifying for both parents, and while both parents sought to act for the good of their children, the ways in which they acted may have differed as a result of various gender biases and influences.[[19]](#footnote-19) Thus, this study does not seek to place men and women against each other on opposite sides of a scale. It is likely that identical or similar patterns can be found in how Jewish fathers and mothers fed, cared for, and attempted to save their children during the Holocaust. This should not come as a surprise. The novelty of this study, therefore, lies in giving a voice to the fathers in order to paint a more complete picture of parenthood during the Holocaust, a story that, to date, seems to have been told only from one side.

Various theories about masculinity have suggested that masculinity is a dynamic category that changes according to culture and circumstances. Accordingly, fatherhood is also a dynamic category that responds to changes by altering its modes of action and expression while maintaining the fundamental definition of fatherhood as inherently linked to the need to protect the child as those who continue one’s lineage.[[20]](#footnote-20) Researchers such as Gideon and Beck have argued that the family structure has changed in the modern era. The traditional family unit, with its clear historical and organizational characteristics, has become a more individualistic space where the individual makes decisions on their own.[[21]](#footnote-21) Thus, when exploring the characteristics of fatherhood during the Holocaust, there is a wide range of behaviors that can be considered as stemming from fatherhood, beyond the classic behaviors on which scholars have focused to date, primarily providing food, housing, and protection.

The changes that occurred in the role and function of the father should also be examined in the context of the social space in which fathers operate, from a broad perspective as suggested by the various theories of social networks that have been developed in recent years.[[22]](#footnote-22) According to this methodology, the individual or society being examined should be considered in light of the various different factors with which they interact and maintain social relations, and from which they weave the connections that enable them to undertake a particular action or another. For the purpose of this study, I have focused on the father’s relationships with his children, his partner, the official and unofficial bodies that operated in the Ghetto or wherever he lived, and his relationships with the local population. From here, I have explored the tools and actions that were available to the father in the impossible circumstances in which he found himself and his family.[[23]](#footnote-23)

While there has been scant research on fatherhood during the Holocaust, one of the accepted claims in the literature is that while Jewish mothers adapted relatively quickly to the changes imposed during the Holocaust period, Jewish fathers struggled to adapt to the new reality. Many sank into depression and despair, and ultimately perished. According to this argument, the reason for the relative success of Jewish mothers and the shortcomings of Jewish fathers is that, although everyday reality and circumstances dramatically changed during the Holocaust, the essential gender role of motherhood did not change.[[24]](#footnote-24)

In contrast to this argument, Maddy Carey has shown that not only was the institution of fatherhood during the Holocaust not dramatically damaged, but it was even more recognized and appreciated by children than motherhood. Carey argues that paternal identity is one of the normative representations of masculinity, one that Jewish fathers clung to throughout the Holocaust period. Their role as fathers was to provide shelter and food—but no less importantly, to guide and instruct their children, and to support them emotionally. Carey’s work has helped us expand our understanding of the roles of Jewish fathers during the Holocaust beyond how they were presented in previous studies.[[25]](#footnote-25)

However, to date, no scholars have attempted to present the issue of Jewish fatherhood during the Holocaust through the eyes and words of the fathers themselves. Both Tec and Carey, for example, rely primarily on testimonies from child survivors given years after the Holocaust. The testimonies may suffer from various memory biases, while the passage of so much time may result in the addition of insights and perspectives that were not necessarily present at the time the events occurred.

## Diary Writing as a Paternal Duty

The practice of keeping diaries during the Holocaust was a widespread phenomenon, at least in relation to what might be expected from a community experiencing such profound oppression. Accordingly, the diary is a genre that has been the subject of numerous studies. Various researchers, including Amos Goldberg, Alexandra Garbarini, and Dalia Ofer, have shown that through a close reading of personal texts written during the war, it is possible to trace the psychological changes and mental processes that Jews underwent under Nazi occupation. In his research on diaries written during the Holocaust, Goldberg shows how the language in these diaries changed. The traumatic events found their way into language and writing through the structure of the language, forms of expression, and imagery used by the diarists.[[26]](#footnote-26) However, the writing of trauma is expressed not only in form but in content and essence as well. Keeping a diary was perceived by many Jews as an act of resistance to the Nazis’ goal of erasing all memory of Jewish existence. For those Jewish fathers who wrote diaries, their writing was also an active expression of their attachment to their paternal role, as Sewek Okonowski explains in his diary:

I, a young and hotblooded Jew, a direct scion of a Hasidic family from both my father’s and mother’s side, and a lover of the new spirit of Palestine, today understand the harsh truth: only the elimination of the national character can save our future generations from the bitter fate that awaits the Jewish people. We will be the last to experience in the depths of our hearts the final Jewish tragedy, who must live halfhearted lives or perish. We have no right, Dasenka, to knowingly condemn our children to the same fate that our fathers unknowingly condemned us, and these pages will help me in this because human memory is weak.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Okonowski was not a father. He wrote his diary in the form of a love letter to his beloved wife, Hadassah (known as Dasenka), who had been separated from him. However, his role as Dasenka’s husband, and his dream of bringing children into the world with her led him to contemplate his role as a father and motivated him to write a diary. The poet Yitzhak Katzenelson kept a diary in the Vittel camp in France to which he was deported with his eldest son after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943. He opens it by commemorating his children and wife who had been abducted and sent away in the mass deportation of Jews. His decision to begin his diary with this, as well as his later monumental poem, “The Song of the Massacred Jewish People,” opens a door to understanding the reason for, and character of, his writing during this period—that is, to commemorate his wife and children by writing about his days in the Ghetto and afterwards. In other words, the loss of his future as a father were largely what drove him to write and document events.

Feldszuh’s diary, too, was shaped according to his perception of his role as a father. Feldszuh wrote his diary on small scraps of paper that he managed to save and smuggle with him during the war. In March 1943, after managing to escape from the Ghetto, he began to transfer his diary entries to notebooks. At this stage, it seems that he undertook an initial editing of his manuscript, from which point, he continued writing in notebooks, presumably continuously, until the end of the war. The diary was written in dense, almost illegible script, and parts of the pages were soaked and erased. Nevertheless, Feldszuh wanted his diary to be published, and therefore, in addition to publishing short excerpts in the press, he worked on making the work more readable. Following his arrival in Israel in October 1945, he initially transcribed the central part of his diary into notebooks in clear handwriting, and later the text from the notebooks was typed and then typeset into a nearly 800-page manuscript, which was apparently intended for publication.[[28]](#footnote-28)

As noted, not all of Feldszuh’s diary was copied and printed. The typed portion begins in November 1940, at the time of the Ghetto’s closure, and ends on April 4, 1943, at the moment when Josima’s parents paid their last farewell to their daughter before they managed to escape the Ghetto—just a few days before Josima succumbed to tuberculosis. Why, despite the fact that he continued to write his diary for two more years, did Feldszuh later decide that the diary section to be published would end just before Josima’s death? This question leads us to one of the most significant and meaningful topics found in the diary—the question of fatherhood and the figure of the Jewish man during the Warsaw Ghetto period. Fedlsuh’s decision to end the published version of his diary just before Josima’s death, and to conclude it by focusing on the image of his daughter, sheds new light on the entire diary and his motivation for writing it. It situates fatherhood as perhaps the most significant element in Feldszuh’s life. This is not to say that this was his only reason for writing his diary, but it seems that one cannot ignore the fact that fatherhood served as a motivation for writing at least part of it.

The French historian Lucien Febvre wrote in 1941 about the need to take into account the place of emotions and their influence on modes of action when writing history.[[29]](#footnote-29) This approach continued to develop in the years that followed, showing that the way in which events were experienced had a decisive effect on the actions taken by different people. In the fathers’ diaries, there is extensive reference to the various emotions that overwhelmed both the fathers and their children. Feelings of fear, frustration, love, and pride are widely found in the fathers’ personal writings. The trauma is reflected in its full force in diaries from this period. The choice of what to write and what to omit, the use of a specific term or another, and even the very act of writing, all bear witness to the experiences that were documented, not only the experiences explicitly documented in the diaries, but also the hidden ones.[[30]](#footnote-30) It seems that fatherhood was a significant and essential aspect of the daily lives of these Jewish men, and was directly and markedly influenced by the events that were unfolding in the Ghetto as conditions there deteriorated. To illustrate this, I will present three stages in the history of the Warsaw Ghetto, and examine what Jewish fathers recorded in their diaries about their children during the same periods.

## From the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising through April 18, 1942

In September 1939, the Nazi German army invaded Poland and quickly subdued the Polish resistance. The Nazis’ antisemitic policies against Polish Jews began being implemented shortly after the occupation, a directive to confine Polish Jews in ghettos as one of the first actions.[[31]](#footnote-31) The city with the largest Jewish population was Warsaw, and its ghetto was closed to the outside world on November 16, 1940, until May 15, 1943—the day on which the Germans, under the command of Jürgen Stroop, bombed the Great Synagogue of Warsaw, with Stroop declaring that “there is no longer a Jewish quarter in Warsaw.”

According to various testimonies, and as evidenced by a document found in the Ringelblum (Oneg Shabbat) Archive, which recorded the experiences of Jewish women in the Warsaw Ghetto, it appears that in the initial stage of the German occupation of Poland and their entry into Warsaw, it was the women who took active measures such as preparing shelters, fighting fires, and caring for refugees.[[32]](#footnote-32) However, as time went by, despite the desire of the women to contribute and participate in public affairs, there was resistance to their involvement. After the establishment of the Warsaw Ghetto, it was the men who led most public activities.[[33]](#footnote-33)

During the period between the decision to establish the Ghetto and it being sealed within its initial boundaries, many of Warsaw’s Jews were forced to leave their homes and congregate in an area that encompassed about four percent of the total area of the city. In addition, Jewish refugees who had also been uprooted from their homes in other parts of Poland, began to arrive in Warsaw. The boundaries of the Ghetto changed during the years of its existence, and while large areas were removed from its territory, more and more Jews were brought into the Ghetto from the cities and towns surrounding Warsaw.[[34]](#footnote-34) Chavi Dreyfus divides the Warsaw Ghetto period into four stages. The first stage ran from the moment of its creation until April 18, 1942, during which time it was established and consolidated.[[35]](#footnote-35) During this initial stage, mutual aid workshops were established in the Ghetto, some educational systems were in operation, and there were occasional cultural and leisure events. The Ghetto’s local governing systems, led by the Judenrat, were still running, and life at this stage maintained a semblance of normalcy.[[36]](#footnote-36) However, even at this stage, there was a gradual but steady deterioration in the condition of the Ghetto Jews. The overcrowding began to take its toll, and the loss of livelihood experienced by many Ghetto residents, coupled with the erosion of community structures, led to the disintegration of existing community frameworks. As famine began to grip the Ghetto, working and lower-middle class Jews struggled to survive. The overcrowding, lack of food, scarcity of heating materials, and poor sanitation led to the spread of diseases and epidemics in the Ghetto, which resulted in a dramatic increase in mortality.[[37]](#footnote-37) Demographic changes at the macro level, and various changes at the micro level resulted in a shift in accepted gender roles in many Ghetto families.[[38]](#footnote-38) During the early years of the Ghetto, women were in the majority and their situation was relatively better, if only due to the fact that they faced a slightly lower threat than did men. This situation allowed women to extend their protection to men and provide assistance to them where possible.[[39]](#footnote-39) According to Ofer, at this stage, the family unit operated in a united way, with each member having a role to fulfil: the role of the men was to find housing and provide a livelihood.[[40]](#footnote-40)

There are a great many different answers to the question of how fathers coped with the circumstances into which they were thrust, starting from the closing of the Ghetto to the outside world in November 1940. Unfortunately, it is not possible to testify about most fathers, as they did not leave any written evidence behind. Yet a number of Jewish fathers did choose to document their lives and struggles during the Warsaw Ghetto period. They also dedicated extensive pages of their diaries to writing about their children and describing their actions and feelings as they attempted to survive Ghetto life. It appears that, in the initial stage of life in the Ghetto, the fathers’ top priority was to care for their children as much as possible. This sentiment was explicitly expressed by Feldszuh in his diary.

Feldszuh was a well-known public figure in the Warsaw Ghetto. His name is mentioned several times in Adam Czerniakow’s diary and Emanuel Ringelblum also made occasional reference to him. Like his cousin, the writer S.Y. Agnon, Feldszuh was born in 1900 in the town of Buczacz (then in Poland, now in Ukraine), and completed his academic studies in Vienna. During his studies, he immigrated to the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel (then part of British Mandatory Palestine) as part of a group from the Labor Zionist secular youth movement Hashomer Hatzair. There, Feldszuh helped establish Kibbutz Kiryat Anavim, but was forced to return to Europe due to his father’s ill health. Feldszuh completed his doctoral and rabbinical studies in Vienna, and then moved to Krakow in Poland.[[41]](#footnote-41) Although he began his Zionist journey in Hashomer Hatzair, he later became active in right-wing Zionist circles, primarily in Brit HaTzionim HaRevizionistim (“The Alliance of Revisionist Zionists”) and the Beitar movement. He even maintained close ties with Revisionist Zionist leader Ze’ev Jabotinsky, until the two had a disagreement. Feldszuh was engaged in teaching before and during the War. At the end of the War, he once again immigrated to the Land of Israel where he started a new family. His post-war publications appeared under his Hebrew *nom de plume,* Reuven Ben-Shem.

Feldszuh married musicologist Perla (Penina) Richter (1900–1943 or 1944) in 1928, and the couple had one daughter—Josima. When the Second World War broke out, Feldszuh and Richter were living at 66 Leszno Street in Warsaw with their 10-year-old daughter, Josima, a musical prodigy who amazed her audiences with her piano playing. Josima performed in several concerts before the war, and looked to have a promising future as a pianist.[[42]](#footnote-42) Josima also composed several pieces, and during the early years of the Ghetto, appeared in concerts in the Ghetto to much acclaim, filling her parents with both pride and worries over her well-being.[[43]](#footnote-43) After Josima’s death, her parents continued to live in hiding. According to Feldszuh, his wife Perla lost her will to live and passed away about a year later. However, records found in the Bad Arolsen archives suggest that Perla had in fact survived until September 1944.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Feldszuh began writing his diary on the day that the Germans invaded Warsaw, and finished it on the day the Red Army entered Lublin, where he spent the final days of the War. Feldszuh’s diary is one of the most detailed accounts of the establishment, operation, and destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, the largest of the Jewish ghettos during the Holocaust period. Of all the diaries written in the Warsaw Ghetto, Feldszuh’s diary is one of the longest and most detailed.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Among the myriad topics that Feldszuh writes about, one stands out prominently: his relentless attempt to save the life of his daughter in the Ghetto. For him, this is the purpose of his existence, and he must do everything in his power to protect his family.

I am a father, the head of a family entrusted to my care. I have to take care of its existence and health... More than once, my heart shrank when I heard the tale and at the sight of the beautiful, yearning eyes whose ambitions were not fulfilled. I decided to cause uproar, to destroy graves, to turn the world upside down, to grab every rich Jew by his beard and threaten him.[[46]](#footnote-46)

In addition to writing about his experiences as a father in the Ghetto, Feldszuh dedicates many pages of his diary to describing some of the other fathers who are also living there. Some of these fathers found it hard to cope with their new circumstances and the change in their social status,[[47]](#footnote-47) while others were driven by concern for their families, until this overwhelmed them.[[48]](#footnote-48) Among his detailed descriptions of life in the Ghetto, Feldszuh created a “catalogue” of all the various beggars that filled its streets. Among the 70 types of beggars he counted, he described several for whom fatherhood was the driving force behind their choice to go and beg for money on the streets. For example, he describes the “little carts”:

The father sticks his family in a cart, to show off his handiwork... [When he comes across] any suitable person, he suddenly starts scolding in a loud voice: “*Halt*!” and then quick as a flash, “*Oh, sorry, sir! I didn’t see, my kids are screaming for bread*.” Even this has some success, mainly with men.[[49]](#footnote-49)

However, as emerges from several of the fathers’ diaries, it seems that they were not only concerned with preserving the physical well-being of their children. As noted, Emanuel Ringelblum hardly mentioned his son Uri in his diary. The main focus of his writing was the public aspects of his actions, and he barely touched on his personal life. Nevertheless, in one of the few instances where he did write about his son Uri, he expressed great joy that his son was learning German and improving his knowledge of the language.[[50]](#footnote-50) Calel (Calek) Perechodnik, in his diary, written after the *Grossaktion* (“Great Action”—the Mass Deportation and murder of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto that began in summer 1942), and after the loss of his wife and daughter, describes his memories of the early days of the Ghetto when he was with his young daughter:

In a small room, we spent the winter and summer of 1941 in relative peace, devoting ourselves to the education of my little Atushka. Although we denied ourselves many things, no food was too expensive for our daughter... You were always one of us, and she developed and blossomed before our very eyes, raising great hopes for the future.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Feldszuh also dedicated a great deal of time and effort to encouraging and developing Josima’s talents. For example, at the end of a concert that Josima held to raise funds for the public schools in the Ghetto, he wrote in his diary:

Now it suddenly dawned on me that right here in my home, a musical genius was growing. I was blessed with such a treasure, twice over. My heart shrank at the thought that we might have to waste our time here, without proper attention and education, and who knows what else awaits us and what will become of us if we don’t get out. I determined within my heart to devote all my time, my energy, my honor even, to thinking only about migration, day and night, to create an opportunity for escape, to run away with her and to showcase her to the world, so that it will open up and delight in her.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Feldszuh was very passionate about his daughter and wanted to help her develop her talents and improve her education. This was just as important to him as caring for her physical well-being. Thus, on top of their worries about the harsh existence that was putting their children’s life in tangible physical danger, Jewish fathers were also preoccupied with ensuring their child’s spiritual development and future.

Feldszuh was not only intent on preserving the life and soul of his own household. He also worked extensively to establish educational institutions and frameworks for children in the Ghetto. He was not alone in this. Kopel Piźyc (1895–1969), father to Miriam and Ruth (aged 19 and 9 respectively in 1940), was extensively involved in humanitarian and educational work for the children of the Warsaw Ghetto. First and foremost, he was involved in feeding children, primarily those of refugees who were deported to the Ghetto. Later, he would expand his activities to include educational work and the establishment of children’s communities.[[53]](#footnote-53) His words align with the records of Hillel Seidman on the education system in the Warsaw Ghetto. Seidman noted the tremendous efforts that were being invested in establishing an education system for the Ghetto children—at first clandestinely, and from January 2, 1942, legally and with German approval. [[54]](#footnote-54) Piźyc wrote his diaries while in hiding after escaping from the Ghetto with his daughter Miriam during the Mass Deportation. His diaries are divided into personal journals recording events concerning his family up until the end of November 1943, and entries that deal with his educational work in the Ghetto, where he was a central figure in cultural life as well as and a man of status and wealth. Piźyc does not create a clear connection between the different sections of his diaries, and we cannot conclude that his work for the Ghetto children was motivated by his fatherhood. However, his work helps to direct attention to those fathers who also expanded their range of activities beyond the narrow family sphere and clearly did so as a result of their identity as fathers. An example of this is the author Yosef Kirman, as emerges from the Ghetto diaries of Rachel Auerbach:

Y. (Yosef) was truly a family man. He sent his two children and his young wife to her hometown to protect them from typhus and from endless hunger. His yearning for them knew no bounds. These yearnings consumed his thoughts to such an extent that he wanders around the city, grief-stricken and sad for the children. He passed on his love for his own children to all children. To all these hungry children, stretching out their hands, singing in thin voices and crying, filling the entire space of the Ghetto. He wanders down the crowded street on the way to his home, distributing the last pennies from his wallet to the little beggars; and they, the children, recognize him from afar, run after him, and position themselves ahead of him. All his conversations revolve around a single focus point — the children...[[55]](#footnote-55)

From this, we can see that in the early stages of the Ghetto, when life still had a certain degree of normalcy and routine, and despite the growing difficulties and intensifying struggle for survival, those fathers who were able to do so endeavored to enable their children to live as normal a life as possible. Their struggle was not only focused on meeting the physical needs of their children by ensuring they had access to food and medicine. To a significant extent, it also involved a commitment to ensuring that their children continued their education and to nurturing their talents.

However, it should be noted that those fathers who wrote diaries during this period are not necessarily representative of the personal circumstances and attitudes of all fathers in the Warsaw Ghetto. They primarily wrote about their personal experiences as fathers from families that were in a tolerable economic situation. Other fathers, whose financial situation was more precarious, were forced to involve their children in their attempts to earn a living, and had almost no time for education and nurturing talent—and these fathers also did not write diaries.

## From the “Night of Blood” (“Bartholomew's Night”) on April 18, 1942, until the end of the Mass Deportation on September 21, 1942.

The second phase of the short and brutal existence of the Warsaw Ghetto began on the night of April 17–18, when the Germans’ brutal treatment of the Jews intensified and widespread slaughter began to occur on the streets of the Ghetto. The Mass Deportation of Jews from the Ghetto began on the evening of Tisha B'Av on July 22, 1942 and continued through Yom Kippur on September 21, 1942. During this short period, more than a quarter of a million Jews—almost 90 percent of the Ghetto’s population—were sent to their deaths at the Treblinka extermination camp.[[56]](#footnote-56) The Mass Deportation significantly altered the social and community fabric of the Ghetto. Now, women and children were under greater threat. Accordingly, the sense of responsibility and concern for their fate felt by their husbands and fathers—who had to use all their resourcefulness to try to save them—also increased. Kopel Piźyc testified that being a father, and the responsibility this placed on his shoulders, changed his way of acting.[[57]](#footnote-57)

In order to protect the lives of their children and family, Ghetto fathers often relied on their personal connections and social networks. For example, Piźyc describes how, during the Mass Deportation, he tried to find a hiding place for himself and his daughter Miriam, after he succeeded in smuggling his wife and younger daughter out of the Ghetto:

I am crying, asking him, maybe he knows of a place to hide. He advises me to immediately go to house number 50, the baker’s house in Lejman, where I might get a place in “Sacharan.” I ran there with Miriam. I met a few acquaintances there, and crying and begging, I crept into “Sacharan” which was closed to everyone.[[58]](#footnote-58)

The constant concern for saving the lives of their children—both physically and psychologically—naturally intensified the fathers’ own emotions, one of the most significant of which was their sense of guilt. While these fathers tried to maintain a show of confidence to their children and shield them from the horrors of reality, in their personal diaries, they wrote about what they really felt.The guilt that some fathers experienced was related to actions they did or did not take, which they believed could have somehow changed the course of events. The most striking and painful example of this is found in the diary of Celek Perechodnik, a member of the Jewish Ghetto Police, who personally took his wife and daughter to the deportation square, believing he could save them later—something that did not happen. Perechodnik was not the only father who failed to save his daughter. Many other children of many other fathers were deported to Treblinka with her. Perechodnik writes about this at the beginning of his diary:

Her loss was caused in equal measure by German vandalism and by my own complacency. Therefore, I ask to that my diaries are seen as a confession before death... I appeal to the democratic world of the English, the Americans, the Russians, and to the Jews of Palestine to avenge the blood of our women and children who were burned alive in Treblinka. We Jewish men are not worthy of revenge. We perished due to our own fault and without the glory of the battlefield.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Shmuel Winter, one of the inner circle of the Oneg Shabbat (Ringelblum) Archive, who kept a diary during his time in the Ghetto, also wrote of the terrible guilt he felt when his wife and young son were taken during to Treblinka during the Grossaktion in summer 1942. Rachel Auerbach testified that from that moment on, Winter became a broken man.[[60]](#footnote-60)

The poet Yitzhak Katzenelson also lost his wife and two young sons in the Grossaktion, and was left alone with his son Tzvi. Katzenelson managed to escape from the Ghetto and was sent to the Vittel camp in France, where he wrote his “Vittel Diary”—a lament for the destruction of Polish Jewry and the Warsaw Ghetto. This work, written in the form of a monograph, incorporates excerpts from his diary from his days in Bialystok with his son Tzvi. It includes a deeply emotional account of his final days in the Ghetto, from the start of the *Grossaktion*, in which his wife Hannah and his two sons Benzion and Benjamin were sent to Treblinka, until his escape.

Throughout the text, the poet moves between the personal and the general, between writing about his intense longing for his wife and children, his feelings of guilt for not being with them when they were taken, and the unanswered question of whether there was a chance they were still alive, to writing about life in the Ghetto during and after the *Grossaktion*. From there, Katzenelson continues to lament the destruction of the Jews of Poland and across Europe.

In one of the many passages where he describes his children, he writes about how, to a certain extent, the death of his son is also his own death, as his son Benjamin had inherited his father’s hair and smile. After the father lost his hair due to the ravages of time, this feature lived on in his son. The loss of Benjamin, therefore, was also a physical loss of a part of himself. Katsnelson then expands his perspective, seeing not only his personal tragedy but also the destruction of the whole of the Jewish people.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Even Feldszuh, who did not lose his family during the *Grossaktion*, was tormented by thoughts about saving his daughter, and about his part in the fate that had caused her to be in the Ghetto at that time. His constant worry about his daughter’s life—both its physical and emotional aspects—and his desperate, unsuccessful attempts to secure decent living conditions for her, created a dissonance within his self-perception as a father. This intensified various emotions and sensations and turned his self-identity into a mix of feelings and a battlefield of internal psychological struggle. For example, alongside feelings of responsibility and commitment to saving his daughter, there were also feelings of self-disappointment, failure, and guilt. In front of his daughter, he attempted to show confidence and minimize difficulties, but privately, in his diary, he wrote what he really felt. The ongoing war and his failure to save his family also determined how he saw himself, including his helplessness, which in his eyes was a failure of masculinity, as he wrote on January 20, 1943: “**And I, a man, am powerless to save my dear one**.” However, it would be not be accurate to portray this as a linear progression of deterioration. Even after writing this statement, in an account of another event on the same day, where Feldszuh had to fight for his wife and daughter to go into hiding, he describes doing this because of his role as a father and the head of the family **“Then the powers of my ancient ancestors entered me.”**

The immense hardship and loss of additional family members led to despair and a willingness to resort to extreme measures, or at least to contemplate what had previously been unthinkable. For example, the educator Avraham Levin wrote in his diary on August 24, 1942, during the height of the Mass Deportation from Warsaw, and 12 days after his wife was taken, leaving him alone with his 15-year-old daughter, Ora:

Ora is sick again. Her fever reached 40 degrees. I was forced to leave her with Natsia [Levin’s sister, T.M], even though she was in great danger. For the first time in her life, her mother isn’t by her side when she’s sick. Can such a situation be described? This question of the mother also causes me great pain. What to do with her? I gave my consent to let her sleep the eternal sleep rather than hand her over to the murderers. But Y. refused to actually do it. Even the devil could not have imagined such a situation.[[62]](#footnote-62)

In these brief words, Levin expresses the difficulty he experienced when trying to care for his sick family while he was alone without his wife. In such a situation, he “gives his consent” to actively hasten his daughter’s death. The question of actively killing children, or at least the willingness to conceive such an act, has received little attention as an aspect of life in the Ghetto.[[63]](#footnote-63) However, here, this issue should also be examined as an aspect of paternal concern. As Carey shows, even behaviors considered harmful or unacceptable were carried out from a patriarchal worldview that viewed the father as the head of the family—and as such, the person on whose shoulders all responsibility for the family rested.[[64]](#footnote-64) It seems that Levin’s thought, even if he never acted on it, stemmed from the feeling that he could no longer protect his family. To prevent his daughter from suffering, he considered ending her life. As noted, this remained merely a thought, but contemplating the fate of their family members and how they had failed to save them made the lives of the Ghetto’s fathers unbearable.

## Mid-September 1942 until the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on April 19, 1943.

The third phase of the Warsaw Ghetto began after the *Grossaktion*. At this stage, approximately 55,000 Jews remained in the Ghetto, of which 36,000 were officially registered and about 20,000 had managed to escape the Mass Deportation and remained in the Ghetto without permits, and thus faced even greater danger than those who were registered.[[65]](#footnote-65) This stage was characterized by preparations for a second deportation, which was clearly imminent, and then in actually contending with the second Grossaktion when it took place in January 1943.

The majority of those deported were women, children, and the elderly. Given that deportation meant death, the need to find hiding places for these Jews became extremely urgent. Therefore, by April 1943, the Ghetto residents prepared for its final stage by creating hiding places that became known colloquially as “malinas,” and preparing bunkers.

If until the period of the *Grossaktion*, the main struggle of the Ghetto Jews had been to try and maintain as normal a life as possible, or at least a semblance of normality, then the Mass Deportation that began in the summer of 1942 marked the end of the Ghetto and brought to the surface thoughts that had been previously suppressed. The struggle for rescue and escape had now become the most critical issue.

By October 1942, more reliable reports about what was happening in Treblinka had begun to filter through to the Ghetto. On November 10, a survivor from Treblinka managed to reach the Ghetto. He detailed the horrific events in the extermination camp. The assumptions that had now become substantiated facts shook Feldszuh to the core. The realization that death was the expected future for him and his family increasingly took hold in his consciousness. Alongside his terror and feelings of helplessness, this also aroused a deep anger. Feldszuh’s anger toward the Germans was not necessarily about his expectations of his own death, but about the lives of his family. However, precisely this understanding about the inevitable future led to his choice of decisive action, as he wrote in December 1942:

We are digging. We dig at night, our own hands prepare the ground for us, for our wives and our children. We want to save them, to get them out from the jaws of the panther [sic], and who knows if we are not handing them over to terrible beasts, to tuberculosis bacteria, to the bacteria of insanity and derangement, to the bacteria of skin diseases, to terrible intestinal and stomach diseases, to longings and sufferings, which they, our beloved ones, will endure as we look on, in our presence. And we will be powerless to save them, and we won’t have the strength to kill them, to suffocate them with our bare hands.[[66]](#footnote-66)

The impetus behind his actions was not necessarily aimed at saving children, as it was clear to any rational person that the chances of doing so were minimal. Rather, Feldszuh acted in order to prove to himself that as a father, he had done everything in his power to resist the cruel fate. This would enable him to honestly say that he had fulfilled his duty and done what was expected of him as a husband and as a father.

As soon as I hid or hid my wife and children, I understood that I had fulfilled my duty, and now an SS officer or Ukrainian could discover the hiding place and shoot me or my family. I saved my own soul. Not my life, but my soul.

Feldszuh describes how, during this period, attempts to smuggle the remaining children out of the Ghetto became increasingly desperate, and people used any remaining connections they had with Poles on the Aryan side of the city in the hope of finding a hiding place for their children.[[67]](#footnote-67) Thus, if at the beginning of the war he presented his role as a father as someone who brought Josima out into the world to showcase her talents, now his duty as a father was to conceal her—something that was not likely to lead to her being saved, but would at least quiet his conscience. That is to say, Feldszuh did not shirk his fundamental and essential role as a father—his sense of obligation and self-perception had not changed; rather it had undergone a transformation and adaptation in light of the harsh reality confronting him.

Even Yitzhak Katzenelson, who remained with his son Tzvi in the Vittel camp, did not despair of his paternal role, despite his deep grief over the loss of his wife and two younger sons. Katzenelson immediately placed the fact of losing his family at the beginning of his diary as the organizing framework for his life thereafter. The deaths of his two children and his wife represented not only a personal loss, but the loss of the entire Jewish people. According to Katzenelson, if they were still alive, he would have the strength to mourn this destruction. However, their death left him mute and unable to cope with the terrible catastrophe. His family were a part of him, and with their loss, a significant part of him also died.[[68]](#footnote-68) Yet, Katzenelson still had a living son who was with him in Vittel. The comparison between the dead and living children is fascinating, as while only pain and longing are presented in relation to the dead children, there is also frustration and difficulty associated with parenting a teenager in general, and particularly in such a chaotic period.

Tzvi is going crazy in his own way... He lay down on his bed and fell asleep. I'm very sorry for Tzvi. When he was awake, he would irritate me by smoking cigarettes, by talking, and by his responses to questions about matters outside of Vittel. It also irritates me that he does not sigh in secret, that he does not express in silence his sorrow and anger about the things that have happened. But now that he has actually fallen asleep on his bed, I feel very sorry for him.[[69]](#footnote-69)

Hence the difficulties of being a father are also reflected in the poet’s relationship to Tzvi, the surviving son. There is a desire to keep him alive, but also an aspiration for him to grow up to be a well-mannered young man who behaves appropriately. This stems from a concept of fatherhood in which it is the responsibility of the father to ensure his children are educated. In his brief remarks here, Katzenelson reflects the struggle that many fathers faced as a result of their inability to educate their children according to their worldview amid the chaos of the Holocaust, which had shattered the family structure from its very foundations.

Conclusion

From the findings that emerged from the various diaries examined here, we can see that within the complex identities carried by Jewish men, the period of the Holocaust strengthened their paternal identity, which became the most dominant element influencing their decision-making and perception of reality. Ironically, it was the traditional concept of masculinity according to which the father is the head of the family and responsible for its well-being that drove Jewish fathers during the Holocaust period to take on additional roles and responsibilities. In addition to their traditional roles, they entered the life of the home, taking on primarily the responsibility for providing for the family, ensuring its security, and educating the children. From the understanding that a child’s welfare is deeply connected to their emotional well-being, fathers tried to help and support their children in these aspects as well. Nevertheless, in light of the chaotic and horrific circumstances of the Holocaust, Jewish fathers understood that despite all their efforts, the chances of succeeding in saving their children were extremely slim. This understanding caused fathers to express their despair about the future and to describe the difficulties they experienced and their disappointment in diaries. However, except for the case of Abraham Levin, who contemplated killing his daughter to prevent her suffering, Jewish fathers did not express a willingness to give up or shirk their role.

Fatherhood was in fact dynamic. While the areas of life in which Jewish fathers involved themselves changed and adapted according to their shifting circumstances, the intrinsic meaning of being a father did not change. Jewish fathers not only clung to their paternal identity, but even adopted it as the deepest and most significant aspect of their identity, when their other identities were lost or could not be actualized.[[70]](#footnote-70) Therefore, contrary to claims that parental identity disintegrated during the Holocaust, it is clearly evident from the diaries of Jewish men written during the Second World War that the fact of their fatherhood was most significant part of their identity, and became a clear and undeniable expression of their masculinity.

Another important aspect here is the adaptations that fatherhood underwent in the Warsaw Ghetto in response to changing circumstances. In the initial stage, as society began to disintegrate, fathers mainly concerned themselves not just with meeting the material and physical needs of their children and family, but also—and perhaps more so—with meeting their psychological, educational, and moral needs. In the second stage, as the Nazis began to liquidate the Ghetto, fathers focused their efforts on physical preservation and survival, relying on their social connections and networks. Finally, Jewish fathers mourned and lamented the loss of individual children, which to a large extent also symbolized the wider destruction of Europe’s Jews.

Between those who lament the failed fatherhood and those who praise the fatherhood that managed to flourish, it seems that the story of fathers during the Holocaust has yet to be told in the way they themselves narrated it, about their pain, their failures, and feelings of guilt, but also about the courage, dedication, and sacrifice they were called upon to make. The image of the Jewish father that emerges from these Ghetto diaries is that of a broken man who nevertheless strives to maintain his masculine, paternal identity as he grapples with an impossible and brutal reality.

1. An announcement that was published in the ghetto for a concert to be held on March 15, 1941. Private archive, Feldszuh family (alias); Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*, translated by Emma Harris. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press 2009. p. 627 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. December, 1940. Reuven Feldszuh’s diary, AEO O.33/959 also appears in “Diary, Printed Copy.” Quoted in: Amir Hashakal: *Dr. Reuven Feldszuh (Ben Shem) and the Hemanoz Journal*. Retrieved on 15/12/20 from https://meyda.education.gov.il/files/noar/yoman.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Katzenelson, Yitzhak. *The Song of the Massacred Jewish People*. Translated by Jack Hirschman. Regent Press, Berkeley, CA., 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For the purposes of this article, a “diary” is defined as a text written during the events themselves or close to them, during the Second World War. The texts contain aspects of personal writing with a chronological sequence. For more on this matter, see: Rabbi Berl Mark on the diaries of the ghettos and camps, in: H.A Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Ghetto Diary*, Jerusalem, 1966. pp. 20; Amos Goldberg, *Trauma in the First Person – Writing Diaries during the Holocaust.* Be’er Sheva, 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For example, Seidman’s diary. Hillel Seidman, *Warsaw Ghetto Diary*, Tel Aviv, 1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Kaplan, *Megillat Yesorin*, pp. 111–112. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://archives.jdc.org/exhibits/in-memoriam/emanuel-ringelblum/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Maria Ferenc Piotrowska, ‘“Isle Of Death’: The Demographic Grounds Of Social Changes In The Warsaw Ghetto,” *Annales De Démographie Historique*, 2018 no. 2, pp. 137 –158 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Kaplan, Scroll of Agony, 6/9/39. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Dalia Ofer, “Gender Issues in Diaries and Testimonies of the Ghetto: The Case of Warsaw,” in: Dalia Ofer, and Lenore J. Weitzman, *Women in the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. pp 143–168. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Piotrowska, Isle of Death, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. End of January 1941, Feldszuh Diary, YIVO O.33/959 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ofer, “Family under duress,” pp. 51–70 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Dienhart, A. *Reshaping Fatherhood. The Social Construction of Shared Parenting*, Thousand Oaks: SAGE 1998; Johansson, T. “The Construction of the New Father – How Middle-Class Men Become Present Fathers,” *International Review of Modern Sociology* (2011), 37(1): 111–126. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Regarding the study of the experience of femininity, see; Ofer D., *“*Gender-Writing Women, Writing the Holocaust.”**.** *Writing the Holocaust* (2011), pp. 7–25; Rittner, Carol, and John K. Roth, *Different Voices: Women & the Holocaust.* New York, 1993.; R. Briednthal, et al. Eds., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany,* New York, 1984; C. Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland. Women, The Family, and Nazi Politics*, New York, 1987; Baumel, J. T., *Double Jeopardy. Gender and the Holocaust*, London, 1998; Bock G., “Nazi Gender Policies and Women's History,” in *A History of Women in the West. Vol V: Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century*, Baud, F., Ed., U.S.A (1992), pp. 148–176; Kaplan M. A., *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, New York, 1998; Ofer, D., and Weitzman, J. L., *Women in the Holocaust*, Eds., New Haven and London, 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Margarete Myers Feinstein, “Absent Fathers, Present Mothers: Images of Parenthood in Holocaust Survivor Narratives,” *Nashim*: *A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues, No. 13, Jewish Women in the Economy* (Spring 2007), pp. 155–182. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ofer, “Family under duress,” pp. 51–70. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Goldenberg writes that there were different practices in that “same hell.” Goldenberg, Myrna, *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender and the Holocaust.* Edited and introduced by Myrna Goldenberg and Amy H. Shapiro. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Kunel, Reuven. *Gentlemen*, translated by Oded Volkstein. Haifa: Pardes 2009; Hirsch D., ‘“Who is a Man?’” Critical Perspectives on Theories of Masculinity,” *Theory and Criticism* 48. Summer 2017. Pages 11–34 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Giddens, A. *The Transformation of Intimacy. Sexuality, Love & Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Cambridge: Polity Press 1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Erickson B H. “Social Networks and History: A Review Essay,” *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History* (30:3 1997), pp. 149–157. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Nechama Tec, *Women and Men in the Shadow of the Holocaust*. Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, 2012 (1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Carey, M. Jewish Masculinity in the Holocaust: Between Destruction and Construction. New York, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Goldberg, *First Person Trauma,* pp. 366–343. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Sewek Okonowski, *A Meeting in Samara: The Diary of a Jew Hiding in Warsaw.* “Ghetto Fighters, 2016.” Pp. 74–75. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. However, it should be noted that despite many attempts over the years, the diary has not yet been published. The diary is set to be published by Yad Vashem, with academic editing by Bella Gutterman. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. In: Plamper, Jan, and Keith Tribe. *The History of Emotions: An Introduction. Translated by Keith Tribe. First edition*. Oxford, 2015. pp. 40–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Garbarini, Alexandra. *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust*. New Haven, 2006; David Engel, “Will They Dare? – Perceptions of Threat in Diaries from the Warsaw Ghetto, *Holocaust Chronicles* (1999) 71–82. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Heinrich’s infamous *Schnellbrief*, sent on September 21, 1939, ordered the concentration of Jews from towns and villages into cities. Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust*, New York 1982. Pp. Greater ones. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. No. 4 Mrs. H. in Testimonies of Women regarding social work in September 1939 and during the occupation. Written by an unknown person. ARG I 506 (Ring. I/158) [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. No. 3 Mrs. M. ARG I 506 (Ring. I/158) [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Israel Gutman, *Jews of Warsaw 1939-1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt*, Jerusalem, 2011, pp. 123–29. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Chavi Dreyfus, *Warsaw Ghetto –- The End: April 1942–June 1943*, Jerusalem 2017, pp. 43*–*46. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid., pp. 62*–*83. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Piotrowska, “Isle of Death,” pp. 140*–*141. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid., pp. 137–158. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. End of January '41, Feldshuh Diary, YIVO O.33/959. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ofer, “Family under Duress: A Male Perspective,” (Edited by: Christian Gerlach), in *On the Social History of Persecution*, De Gruyter Oldenbourg 2023, pp. 51–70. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Weinbaum, Laurence. "Shaking The Dust Off: The Story of The Warsaw Ghetto’s Forgotten Chronicler, Ruben Feldszuh (Ben-Shem).” *Jewish P”litical Studies Review* (2010), pp. 7–44.‏ [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ofer, “Family under Duress,” p. 53.‏ [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Hanukkah 1940, Feldszuh Diary, YIVO 0.33/959. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Tracing request concerning FELDSCHUH PERLA 1900-00-00. ITS Archive/ 6.3.3.3/ DocId 82989615. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Yosef Karmish, “On the Margins of Ben Shem’s ‘Notebook,’” *Mashua; Annual File for Holocaust Awareness and Heroism* 10 (Tashamb), pp. 52–58; Laurence Weinbaum, “Shaking the Dust Off,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 22, pp. 3–4 (2010). pp. 7–44. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Record from November 1941, Feldszuh Diary, Archive O.33/959. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Record from January 1941, Feldshuh Diary, YIVO O.33/959. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Record from March–April 1941, Feldszuh Diary, Yad Vashem O.33/959. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Record from May 1941, Feldszuh Diary, YIVO O.33/959. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Emanuel Ringelblum, diary and notes from the war period – Warsaw ghetto: September 1939-December 1942. Jerusalem, 1993, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Celek Perechodnik, *The Sad Role of Documentation*: *A Hidden Diary*, Jerusalem, 1996, p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Hanukkah 1940, Feldshuh Diary, YIVO O.33/959. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Kopel Piźyc and Mira (Piźyc) Flint, *The More Will be Given Up, Who Will Cry? Diary and Writings of a Family from the Warsaw Ghetto*, (Editor: Hui Dreyfus), Jerusalem 2013, pp. 118–152. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Hillel Seidman, *Warsaw Ghetto Diary*, New York, 1967, pp. 334–339. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Rachel Auerbach, *Wills of Warsaw*, Ra’anana 1985, p. 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Dreyfus, Warsaw Ghetto, page 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Piźyc, yet to be published, page 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Perchodnik, The Sad Role, pp. 11–12 [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Shmuel Kassov, *Who Will Write the History for Naomi to Write our History?: A New Look at Oneg-Shabbat – The Important Jewish Archive from the Warsaw Ghetto*, Jerusalem, 2014, p. 174.– [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Katzenelson, “Pinkas Hakehillot,” *Last Writings*, p. 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Avraham Levin, *The Notebook of the Teacher from Yehudia: Warsaw Ghetto* April 1942- January 1943. Ghetto Fighters, 1949, p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. In the literature, there are several references to the question of infanticide during the Holocaust, but in most cases, this was aimed at preventing the confinement of other people. Feldszuh describes in his diary a case of a mother who chose to starve to death with her children rather than seek help from the community, but this was a single case that he reports. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Carey, “Jewish Masculinity,” p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Dreyfus, *Warsaw Ghetto*, pp. 243–245. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Entry from December 3, 1942, Feldszuh Diary, Yad Vashem O.33/959. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Record from December 21, 1942, Feldszuh Diary, YIVO O.33/959. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Yitzhak Katzenelson, *Other Writings*, p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ibid., p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. In this context, it is worth mentioning Krondorfer’s discussion regarding Perechodnik. He quotes from Perechodnik’s diary the account of an event during the height of the *Grossaktion*, when, after his family was deported, Perechodnik held a child on his lap while waiting in the *Umschlagplatz*. After some time, he returned the child to her mother. According to Krondorfer, this shows the erasure of Perechodnik’s paternal identity and his specific adherence to being a member of the Jewish Ghetto Police. In contrast, Carey sees this event as an intensification and expansion of Perechodnik’s sense of fatherhood beyond caring for his own biological child. See: *The Holocaust and Masculinities: Critical Inquiries into the Presence and Absence of Men*, edited by Björn Krondorfer and Ovidiu Creangă. Albany, 2020, pp. 39-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)