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A Hebrew Worker, Survivor of Auschwitz, 1953,

chalk on paper, 20x30cm,

collection of the Ghetto Fighters' Museum,

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The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

NAFTALI BEZEM

THE SURVIVOR AND ISRAELI SOCIETY¹

RACHELI BERGER

This article presents the unique efforts made by artist Naftali Bezem to combine the memory of the Holocaust with the developing fabric of life in the State of Israel in his art. Bezem was born in Germany, deported to Poland in the autumn of 1938 and immigrated to Israel just before the outbreak of World War II. On the backdrop of the life story of Bezem, whose parents perished in Auschwitz, Berger's article analyzes his decision in 1953 to create a variety of artworks on the subject of the Holocaust. The turning point that produced this outburst of creativity was the documentary exhibition on the Holocaust. Bezem and his wife Hannah were asked to design for the opening of the Ghetto Fighters' House Holocaust museum in Kibbutz Lohamei Hagetaot.

This article focuses on the artist Naftali Bezem, who was deported from Germany as part of the Zbaszyn deportation in 1938 and immigrated to Eretz Israel just as World War II broke out. In the 1950s, Bezem began to respond intensively to the Holocaust with two styles of painting: a realistic style in the 1950s and the use of symbols from the late 1950s on. With both styles, Bezem gave expression to two striking subjects: his grief at the fate of his family that perished in the Holocaust and his total identification with them, and

the integration of the Holocaust into Zionist ideology. This article focuses on the year 1953 and on Bezem's desire to fuse Holocaust awareness into the fabric of life in Israel.

FROM ESSEN TO JERUSALEM

Naftali Leo Bezem was born on November 27, 1924 in Essen, Germany. After World War I and the establishment of independent Poland, his parents fled from Poland together with 70,000 Jewish refugees who relocated in Germany during and after the war. His



1. Naftali Bezem, *A Hebrew Worker, Survivor of Auschwitz*, 1953, chalk on paper, 20x30cm, collection of the Ghetto Fighters' Museum, Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz

father, Yitzhak, was the sexton of the Alltag Synagogue for Orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe (Ostjuden). Naftali spent much of his childhood there. He studied in a traditional Talmud Torah school and later in a German elementary school.

Hitler rose to power when Bezem was eight years old, and he spent six years under Nazi rule. The Ostjuden already lived in constant fear of deportation during the Weimar Republic years. From 1922-1932, 4,000 Ostjuden were transferred from Prussia

alone back to Eastern Europe.² About these years Bezem remarked: "I grew up as a Jew in a hostile and murderous environment, but the home, our home, remained a one-hundred-percent Jewish home."³

On October 26, 1938, SS chief Heinrich Himmler ordered to prepare for the mass deportation of Jewish Poles from Germany to Poland. Already the next day, from the evening on October 27 to October 29, some 17,000 Jews were brutally deported across the Polish border. The Polish border guards

responded in different ways: In some cases, they allowed the deportees to enter and in others, they did not. Some of the deportees entered Polish territory while others were forced to remain in the no man's land between the two countries, with a small number permitted to return to Germany.⁴ The most infamous case involved the Polish border town of Zbaszyn (Zbąszyń, Dzbanszyn), which at the time had a local population of about 5,400. Bezem and his family along with more than 6,000 other deportees lived for many long months in subhuman conditions in Zbaszyn.

On October 30, 1938, assistance came to Zbaszyn from Warsaw, and on November 4, the historian Emanuel Ringelblum, Yitzhak Gitterman and the Joint Distribution Committee set up the General (Jewish) Council to aid the Jewish refugees from Germany in Poland. Ringelblum described the situation there on December 6, 1938:

*I worked for five hours in Zbaszyn. [...] We set up an entire village with departments for supplies, hospitalization, carpenters' workshops, barbers, a legal department, an immigration department and local post office. [...] The refugees see us as brothers who have rushed to their aid at their time of hardship and catastrophe. [...] Cultural activities have been developed here. The first thing that we introduced was to speak Yiddish. [...] Zbaszyn has become a symbol of the abandonment of Polish Jewry. Jews have been humiliated and are treated like lepers, fourth-class citizens, and we are all experiencing a terrible tragedy.*⁵

Bezem's family spent nine months in Zbaszyn, meaning that they were among the deportees who lived there the longest – until Germany invaded Poland – which is why the parents were unable to leave Poland. The three Bezem sons managed to escape: Natan and Moshe, the elder brothers, were smuggled across the border to France from

where Natan travelled to the United States via Holland and Moshe reached England; Naftali was sent to Eretz Israel as part of the Youth Aliya program. "It was called the children's immigration, a new immigration track that Henrietta Szold had just developed."⁶ At the train station, his parents wept, "And I was a total idiot and didn't realize that it was goodbye forever."⁷ His father's last words were: "Remember that you are a Jew."⁸ That was the last time Bezem would ever see his parents. Unable themselves to escape, they perished in Auschwitz in 1943.

Bezem arrived in Eretz Israel on August 14, 1939, just two weeks before World War II broke out. "I arrived on a ship in the Tel Aviv harbor, which at the time was not really a harbor and now is a collection of restaurants, and we were thrown – together with the valises – from the ship into small boats that took us to the shore. Imagine me flying through the air and landing on the strong chest of a harbor stevedore."⁹ It was a very hot day and because he had been constantly seasick since the ship sailed, Bezem had not eaten anything in the days before he arrived: "When I arrived in Israel, I was 14 years old. I was alone and seasick, the heat was scorching and everything was spinning around me. I passed out. It was the first thing I did when I came to this holy land. Not a very impressive thing to do – the sandwich I was given in the clinic quickly got me back on my feet again."¹⁰

The fainting spell, the first thing that happened to Bezem after setting foot on Israel's shore, made him resemble, in his eyes, "those Jews that fall on their knees and kiss the soil of the holy land" upon arrival.¹¹ Bezem repeatedly drew this symbolic act in his paintings. The immigration to Israel of Bezem the refugee who was saved from death, and Eretz Israel, the place of his refuge, became a constitutive experience in

his life and major themes in his work.

In 1939-1942, Bezem lived with various families (an aunt in Tel Aviv and foster families). He studied at first at the Gymnazia Herzliya high school and then transferred to a commercial school. During these years, he experienced numerous difficulties, as he stated in his interviews:

Of course, I didn't know a word of Hebrew. I didn't have the slightest idea of where I was. At first, in Israel, I would get off the pavement when a healthy-looking fellow was walking towards me. I thought that that was how things were supposed to work, that a Jew always makes way for someone else. I walked with my head down. To raise one's head, that was a revolution.¹²

I was a spoiled Mama's child that didn't know how to take care of himself. I changed my socks only once a month because I didn't know how to wash them. I didn't know the language. All I wanted was to rest my head on my mother's shoulder. No ambitions. Just to survive.¹³

A soft, spoiled 14-year-old boy who came all alone to an unknown land and encountered conditions that can be cautiously defined as lovelessness. At home, I was the "beloved son," my parents' favorite, and here when I came to Israel, I found myself moving from one institution to another, from one foster family to another [...] who with all the good will in the world were unable to provide all the depth and breadth of the love that I needed. I was a feeble sapling that needed a huge amount of water to recover.¹⁴

Three principal difficulties may be identified in Bezem's words: the language barrier, the difference in mentality due to his transition from the Diaspora to life in a proud and resilient Jewish society, and most importantly, being separated from his parents. Until 1943, Bezem corresponded with his family through the Red Cross. He was all alone and lived in a state of constant

anxiety regarding his parents' fate. In those years, he studied painting with Schwartzman and Kulvianski.¹⁵ Only after he moved to Kiryat Haim and joined the Marxist Hashomer Hatzair youth movement did the collective lifestyle become a substitute home, playing an important role in his absorption in Israel. "It solved many cultural, social and emotional problems for me."¹⁶

In 1942, when he was 18, Bezem tried to enlist in the British army, but was not accepted due to his ill health. Instead, he volunteered for the British army camps in Haifa. During the war, Bezem studied painting with private teachers such as Perli Pelzig and P.K. Hoenich.¹⁷ After Romel's defeat at El Alamein in November 1942, after the German threat to Eretz Israel had been repulsed, he was accepted in 1943, at the age of 19, as a student at the New Bezalel Academy of Art in Jerusalem. Mordechai Ardon, the director of the academy at the time and also a former refugee from Germany, became a father figure to Bezem and influenced his artistic perceptions as a means to respond to the historical events.¹⁸

After the war ended, Bezem learned that his parents had perished in Auschwitz. This came to him as a terrible shock. During the war, he had been occupied with trying to find his place in Eretz Israel, and he repressed his fears and anxiety for his parents with a "kind of bizarre obtuseness."¹⁹ When he learned of his parents' murder, he lost all faith in humankind. "What is the point of all the human efforts if this is the result? I did not become a cynic because it simply did not suit my nature, but I became a fatalist. I believed only in fate."²⁰

Bezem excelled in his studies at Bezalel and was very active as a student and was elected head of the student union. In 1946, after completing three years of study, he became a teaching assistant in Bezalel's preparatory

course and gave drawing lessons at the academy. In retrospect, Bezem leveled harsh criticism at Bezalel's treatment of Holocaust survivors: "As if it had happened to someone else. Two outstanding painters, Avigdor Arikha and Maryan [Pinchas Burstein, who became known by this name. R.B] came to Bezalel from the camps, but we showed them no mercy and gave them no special treatment. It's no coincidence that they didn't remain in Israel".²¹ Arikha and Maryan left Israel in the 1950s and won international artistic acclaim for their work.²² In his words, Bezem positioned himself alongside the Israelis, as if he too had been among those that mistreated the survivors, thus emphasizing the disparity in the absorption in Israel of the artists that had arrived in Israel before the Holocaust and those that arrived after it.

EMISSARY IN CYPRUS

In 1946, Mordechai Ardon sent two Bezalel graduates – Naftali Bezem and Hannah Liberman – to teach art in the detention camps in Cyprus on behalf of the academy and the Jewish Agency. These were camps established by the British in 1946 for immigrants apprehended on ships trying to illegally enter Israel.²³ Bezem first met Liberman, his partner, on the trip to Cyprus, in 1943. Liberman, the daughter of a member of "Hashomer", a student of agriculture and biology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem who had begun to study at Bezalel too, "was large, blond, gorgeous – and a kibbutz member. She was the land of Israel for me."²⁴ "They were a family of healthy-bodied Russian peasants. At our wedding, I weighed 40 kilos."²⁵ Hannah gave Bezem the feeling of home and rootedness that he so missed: "She gave me, a young Jew from the Diaspora, the feeling of the homeland, the true values of Eretz Israel."²⁶

In 1947, Naftali and Hannah set out for

Cyprus. For many, the camps there were an oppressive experience – after the terrible war years, the survivors once again found themselves behind barbed wire in Cyprus, still being prevented from starting their lives anew in Eretz Israel. The Rothenberg Seminar, in the context of which Bezem taught, along with the other cultural activities in the camps enabled the survivors to fight boredom and close the gaps that had accumulated in their education during the war years. Their art studies helped the survivors to process the difficulties of the past and present and express their hopes for the future. Among the illegal immigrants that arrived in Cyprus were a number of promising young artists at the beginning of their artistic careers, such as Shraga Weil, Shmuel Katz and Moshe Bernstein.

At Bezalel in 1946, Bezem noted that he had treated the survivors coldly, as did the "Sabras," whereas in Cyprus, he reconnected to "the old country" anew. The experience of the encounter with the Holocaust survivors "proved to me irrefutably that emotionally I was and remained one of them."²⁷ But this empathy with the Holocaust survivors was still not evident in his work. Bezem taught in Cyprus for nine months, after which he was replaced by the sculptor Zeev Ben-Zvi.²⁸

1953

Naftali and Hannah returned to Israel and were then sent as emissaries to Paris (1949-1951), where Bezem painted his parents for the first time. However, the main impetus that drove him to devote a central place in his art to the Holocaust was the year 1953 when he and his wife were asked to design a documentary exhibition on the Holocaust in the Ghetto Fighters Kibbutz.

On April 19, 1951, the Ghetto Fighters' House that would document and perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust was dedicated in the kibbutz. When the Yad Vashem Law

was passed in 1953, the museum in the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz was already three years old. On Holocaust Memorial Day, April 12, 1953, the Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Heritage Museum was opened in the kibbutz. Naftali and Hannah had worked intensively on the structure and graphics of the exhibits for three months. "We saw the first documents that arrived, notes, photographs, goodbye letters. I was very emotional and upset but I internalized what I saw, digested it. Hannah was in a complete state of shock."²⁹ The exhibition was educational and informational and sought to reflect the Holocaust period and the resistance in all the countries of Nazi occupation in Europe.³⁰

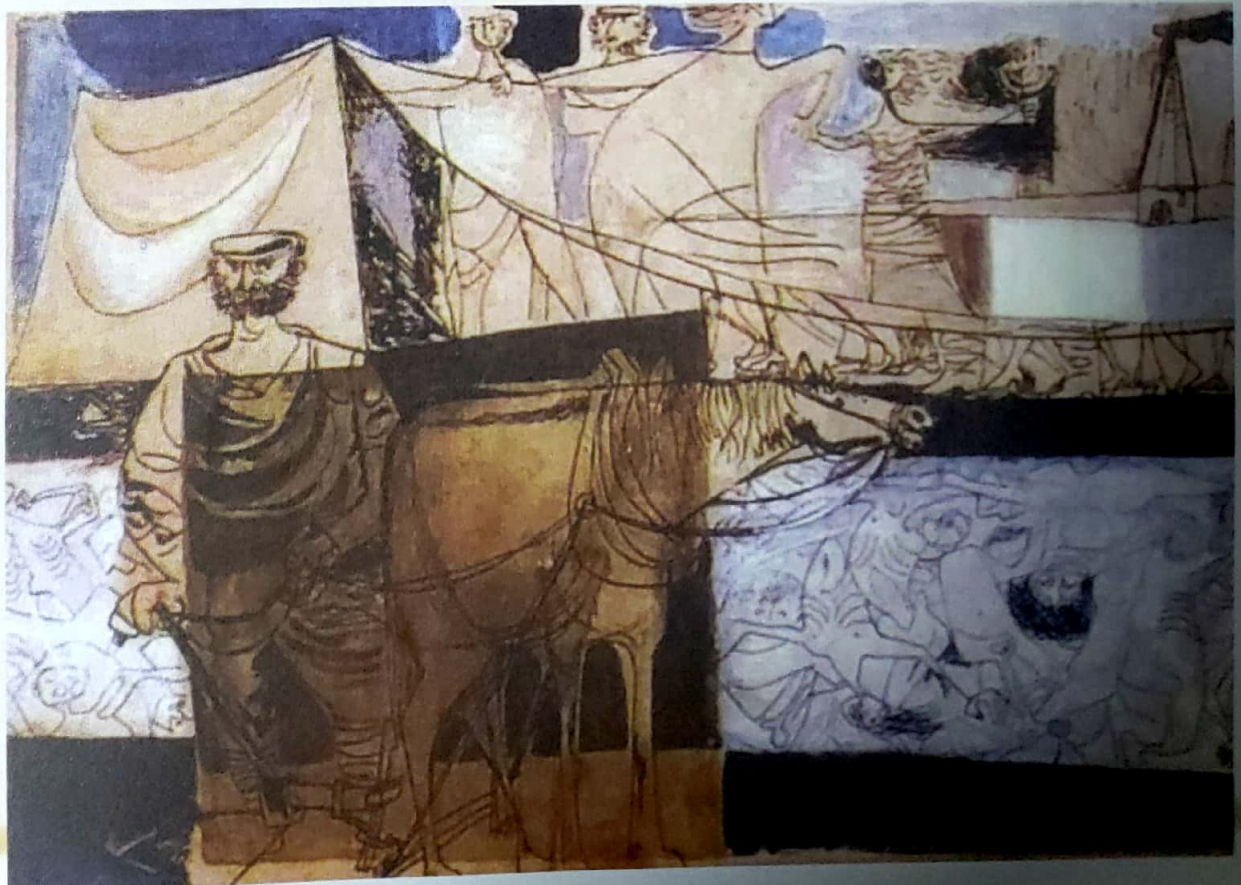
The local Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz publication – *News of the Ghetto Fighters Kibbutz* – wrote about the exhibition and that it represents "great progress compared to the previous exhibitions in the Ghetto Fighters' House both in terms of the large number of exhibits, as well as how they are arranged and presented."³¹ In the first years after the

establishment of the museum, the exhibits had a solely illustrative purpose. The survivors told their own stories and the exhibits served to concretize their testimony and create a supportive narrative environment. Thus, for example, an inmate's uniform hung on the wall only by way of illustration, rather than as a museum artifact in of itself (fig. 2). The exhibition was a success and in the months of April-August, more than 5,000 people visited it, of whom about 70 percent were schoolchildren and teenagers.³² The director of the House, Zvi Shner, wrote in a letter to Hannah and Naftali Bezem: "The number of visitors is large. The response is generally serious and favorable."³³

The construction of the exhibition in the Ghetto Fighters' House had an enormous impact on Naftali Bezem, and consequently, it was as if a dam had been broken and he began to create a wide variety of artworks on the Holocaust. In 1953, Bezem drew a sketch for a fresco that showed a man leading a plow and a horse (1953, fig. 3); behind him, the picture was divided into two areas: In



2. Part of an exhibit from the exhibition in the Ghetto Fighters' Museum, 1953. Design: Naftali and Hannah Bezem



3. Naftali Bezem, Sketch for a Fresco, 1953, gouache on paper, 24x40cm



4. Naftali Bezem, *Mass Grave (outline)*, 1953, pen and marker on paper, 45.5x65, from the artist's collection



5. Ephraim Moses Lilien, *Poster for the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel*, 1901, Israel Museum collection, Jerusalem

This image shows the front cover of a manuscript, likely the Lindisfarne Gospels. The cover is made of dark, ornate metal (possibly silver or gold) with intricate interlaced knotwork and a central oval medallion depicting a scene with figures and animals. The cover is surrounded by a wide border containing numerous small, rectangular illustrations of various scenes, including figures on horseback, people working, and groups of people.

The figure of the Hebrew farmer in the drawings in the front is familiar from the poster of the Fifth Zionist Congress illustrated by Ephraim Moses Lilien in 1901 (fig. 5). In 1901, Lilien, a delegate to the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel, took the famous photograph of Herzl on the balcony of the Three Kings Hotel. The illustration on the Congress poster was drawn in the German art nouveau style – Jugendstil. An angel standing next to an elderly Jew caught in barbed wire – symbols of the Diaspora – points eastward; and on the side is a man plowing, the symbol of the return to Eretz Israel, the fulfillment of the verse that appears in the decorative frame: “May our eyes behold your return to Zion with mercy.”³⁴ The poster became one of the most popular Zionist works of art and was repeatedly reproduced and used for multiple events. In the world of images of the Zionist movement, the man at the plow became a symbol of Zionism and the return to the Land of Israel because he embodied the concept of productivization that was deeply anchored in Zionist thought along with physical contact with the soil of Eretz Israel. Thus, for example, in 1913, the man at the plow can be seen at the center of the cover of *The Second Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund* (fig. 6).³⁵ Bezem’s work contains three levels: The past is persecution and death, embodied in the pile of bodies, the present involves material hardship and is expressed in the drawing of the *ma’abara*, but the man at the plow in the forefront of the picture is preparing for the future. That is the Zionist idea – going from bondage to freedom, from the Jewish village to the expanses of nature, to agriculture and the piece of land that means economic normalization and an end to wandering.³⁶

6. Cover of The Second Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund, 1913, Israel Museum collection. The book is kept in the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemet Le'Israel), Jerusalem.

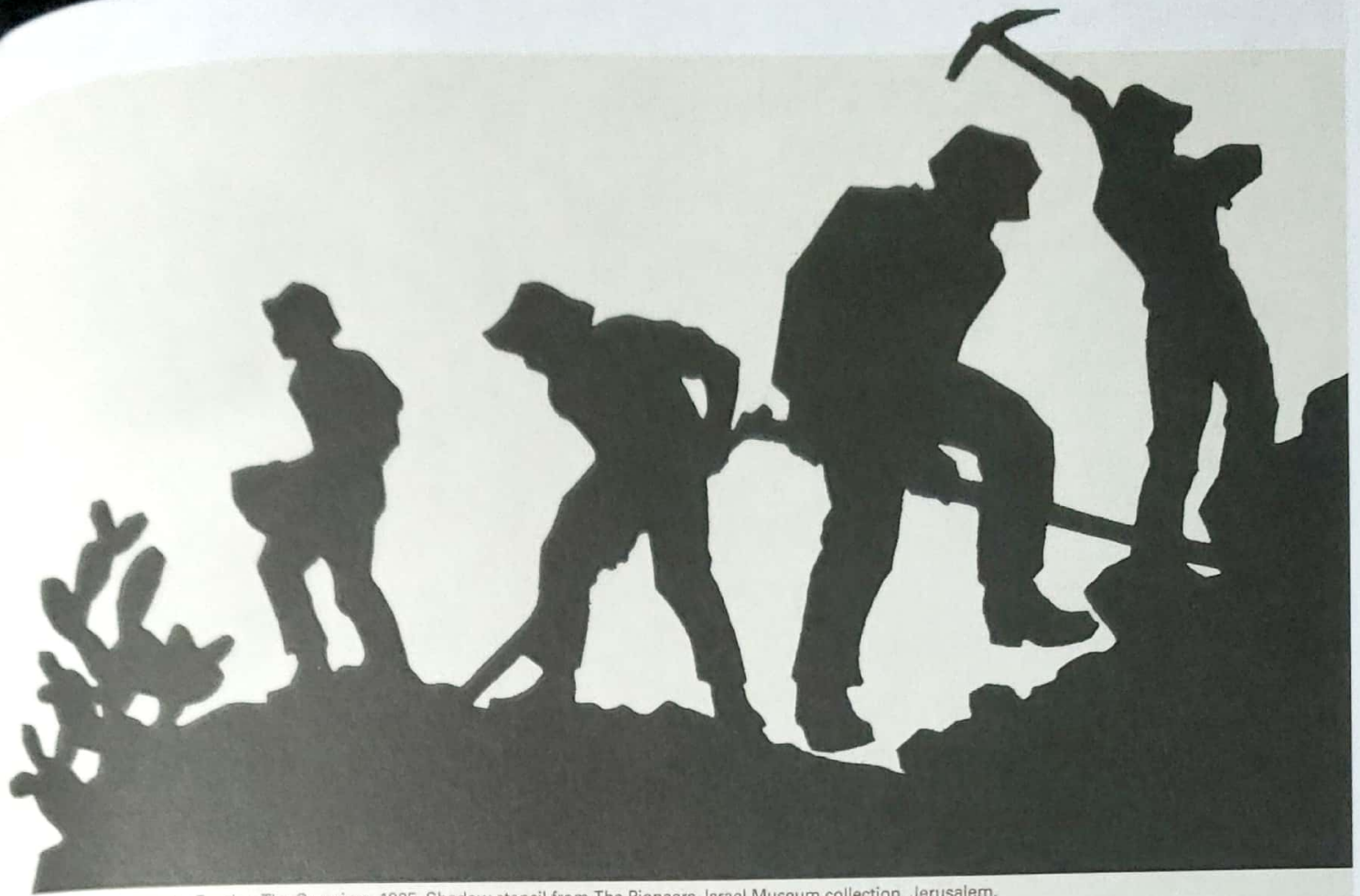


7. Naftali Bezem, *A Hebrew Worker, Survivor of Auschwitz*, (outline), early 1950s.

Zionism was repeated in the image of the "Jewish Stone Hearer," who appears in two works by Bezem with a number tattooed on his arm (1953, figs. 1,7). The motif of the number on the arm had already appeared in one of the sketches of "Mass Grave." There, the number is swallowed up in the pile of bodies, tattooed on the arm of one of them, whereas here Bezem chose to emphasize the number of the arm through a number of means: the position of the arm, the large size of the numbers, the blue color on which is a grey shadow in the sketch. Bezem had other drawings showing a tattooed number on the arm with the letter A for Auschwitz. In each of these works, Bezem inscribed a different number so it is likely that he was

not depicting a specific individual, but rather an archetype of a survivor.

In his hand, the survivor is holding a pickaxe – a heavy quarrying tool with two sharpened heads that serves to dig into rocky soil, uproot rocks and the like – with strong upward movement, conveying a message of strength and power. The image of the quarryer was identified in the images of the Yishuv – the pre-state Jewish community – with the Third Aliya; wave of immigration in the years 1919-1924, most of whose members were pioneers that engaged in strenuous physical labor such as draining swamps, paving roads and preparing the land for farming.³⁷ The story woven around the Third Aliya portrayed young idealists who toiled laboriously during



8 Meir Gur-Arie, *On the Road or The Quarriers*, 1925, Shadow stencil from *The Pioneers*, Israel Museum collection, Jerusalem.

the day and sang and danced at night. Out of the poverty and hunger emerged dozens of songs, songs of hardship and work. The chief source for the songs of the Third Aliya was "The Pioneers" songbook, published in Jerusalem in 1925.³⁸ Almost all the lyricists and composers were anonymous, and alongside the songs appeared silhouettes, the work of the artist Meir Gur-Arie. One of the silhouettes is the drawing *On the Road or The Quarriers*, and copies of it hung in many homes (figure 8).³⁹ Thus, the drawing became one of the quintessential symbols of the Third Aliya in particular, and of the Eretz Israel identity in general. Anita Shapira wrote about it as follows:

Already in the 1920s, something came into being that was accepted by the Zionist public opinion as the Eretz Israel image. The valley and the lifestyle of the work battalion were part of Eretz Israel. The work paving the roads was undoubtedly part of Eretz Israel. [...] The lifestyle in the agrarian settlements, and even

*more so in the kibbutzim and moshavim, was considered the nucleus of a new form of life, one that suited Eretz Israel.*⁴⁰

Karl Mannheim wrote that the strongest messages that a society conveys within itself are those that are conveyed unwittingly to the one conveying the message and the one receiving it. The contrast between the Eretz Israel lifestyle and that of the Jewish Diaspora, of the new Jew as compared to the Jew of the Diaspora contained a very powerful educational message because it was conveyed unintentionally. Ideology and literature were employed to convey these messages.⁴¹

Bezalel drew the "Diaspora Jew" Holocaust survivor in the image of the "new Jew," a muscular, powerful laborer with all the typical characteristics of the pioneers of the Third Aliya. The survivor he drew was actually consistent with the features of male beauty attributed to the hero of the mythical culture of Eretz Israel, which was especially



9. Bezem, *Wall of Memory - From Holocaust to Rebirth*, 1970, aluminum cast relief, Yad Vashem, donated by Shmuel Chirug

notable, according to sociologist Oz Almog, in the visual arts: "In posters and notices put out by the national institutions in Palestine in the 1930s, and in the work of graphic artists, painters and photographers of the Fifth Aliya, which brought many artists to Palestine, the Sabras are generally sturdy, handsome and erect men. The image was first modeled after Soviet propaganda posters, which portrayed a stereotypical muscular Soviet laborer."⁴²

The stereotypical image of the robust laborer continued to appear in the 1940s and 1950s in the works of artists such as Yohanan Simon, Shraga Weil and Naftali Bezem,

who identified with the goals of the leftist Hashomer Hatzair movement and Mapam party and volunteered to illustrate posters for the party. The value of manual labor was emphasized in many posters through the use of stereotypical work tools, such as the hammer, pickaxe and shovel.⁴³

The image of the survivor stood at the center of additional works of Israeli art in the first half of the 1950s (Mordechai Ardon, *Girl No. 109336*, 1950; Moshe Bernstein, *The Scream (Auschwitz)*, 1954; Avigdor Arikha, *The Survivor*, 1955). In these works, the survivor is portrayed as weak in body and



mind in contrast to the strong and healthy Hebrew. This image was rooted deep in the pioneering ethos even before World War II, only to grow even more powerful after the encounter with the survivors, who were perceived not only as foreign to the new culture, but also as physically and mentally ill due to the diseases and malnutrition they had suffered during the Holocaust.⁴⁴ Unlike them, Bezem moved the center of gravity to the rehabilitated survivor in Israel: the number from the past with the pickaxe of the future. The pickaxe, a quarrying tool that requires a great deal of physical strength, and the plow

of the plowman, symbolize the survivor's will to live and his powerful desire to rebuild his life.⁴⁵ When Bezem characterized the Holocaust survivor by means of a sturdy appearance and manual labor, he on the one hand accepted the messages sent by Israeli society, with an emphasis on the need for the survivors to participate in building the land, and on the other, challenged the image of the helpless, feeble survivor in need of help from the hardy Sabras that had taken root in those days in Jewish society.

This article focuses on the image of the survivor in the works of Naftali Bezem in 1953, an image that took on further features in the transition to the 1960s and 1970s as can be seen in his wall sculpture from 1970, *Wall of Memory – From Holocaust to Rebirth* at Yad Vashem (fig. 9). The relief begins with images of death in a line of people being led to the crematorium, a slaughtered fish and the image of a mother, and moves on to the resistance fighter and Bezem's deep identification with the survivor-refugee that boards a ship to Israel and the image of the weeping lion, another image of Bezem himself. Bezem considered himself the archetype of the refugee-survivor who transferred the image to the national level – an expression of the continuity of the Jewish people in Israel. This idea was constructed through the use of the iconography that Bezem developed in the 1960s: A lion bearing the Sabbath candlesticks, which are the thread of Jewish identity that runs through all parts of the relief, the cactus plant that arises from its image and symbolizes the next generation and hope, and with its tears, he "stands lamenting above the mass grave of his massacred next of kin [...] weeping at his fate as the only remnant that survived, the guardian of his people's memory."⁴⁶

1 The study presented in this article was conducted with the

- support of the Talpuyot Academic College of Education, and was written based on the doctoral dissertation: Racheli Berger, *The Influence of the Holocaust on the Israeli Visual Art of the First Generation*, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2008, Chapter 5.
- 2 Michael Brennet, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, Yale University Press, Jerusalem 2003, p. 200.
 - 3 Rafael Bashan, "The penance fish in the bosom of the lion: An interview with the artist Naftali Bezem," *Maariv Yamim Veleylot*, July 31, 1970, p. 13.
 - 4 Yifat Weiss, *Ethnicity and Citizenship: The Jews of Germany and the Jews of Poland, 1933-1940*, Jerusalem 2000, p. 233. For more on the deportation to Zbaszyn, see also Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Zbaszyn 1938 – A prewar Jewish Polish experience," *From Archive to Historical Milestones* (edited by Israel Gutman), Jerusalem 1997, pp. 19-33; Bauer Yehuda, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929-1939*, Philadelphia 1974, pp. 243-250.
 - 5 Raphael Mahler, "The Letters of Emanuel Ringelblum from Zbaszyn and about Zbaszyn," *Yalkut Moreshet*, II, 2 (1964), pp. 24-25.
 - 6 Emanuel Bar-Kedma, "A Jewish soul," *Yediot Ahronot 7 Yamim*, July 11, 1986, p. 36.
 - 7 Billie Moskona-Lerman, "The head of a lion, the body of a fish," *Maariv Sofshavua*, November 3, 1989, p. 26.
 - 8 Moskona-Lerman, p. 26.
 - 9 Omer Lachmenovitch, "The Jewish opposition," *Makor Rishon*, November 26, 2004, p. 33.
 - 10 Naftali Bezem, *Naftali Bezem: Boats, Immigrants, Parents and Cupboards, Tables and Chairs, the Candle Blessing, Lions and Fish, Plants*, Ramat Gan 1972, p. 9.
 - 11 Bashan, "The penance fish in the bosom of the lion," p. 13.
 - 12 Bar-Kedma, "A Jewish soul," p. 36.
 - 13 Bezem's words are quoted in Tal Bashan, "I don't forget to look upward," *Maariv Sofshavua*, December 11, 1987, p. 42.
 - 14 Bashan, "The penance fish in the bosom of the lion," p. 13.
 - 15 Emanuel Bar-Kedma, "Without Bezem, it won't work," *Yediot Ahronot 7 Yamim*, November 3, 1989, p. 40.
 - 16 Bar-Kedma, "A Jewish Soul," p. 36.
 - 17 For more on Hoenich, see Gideon Ofrat, *Naftali Bezem*, Ra'anana 2005, p. 14.
 - 18 For more on Ardon in World War II, see Berger, *The Influence of the Holocaust on the Israeli Visual Art of the First Generation*, pp. 25-27.
 - 19 Bashan, "I don't forget to look upward," p. 42.
 - 20 Bashan, "I don't forget to look upward," p. 42.
 - 21 Eilat Negev, "Cactus," *Yediot Ahronot 7 Yamim*, January 21, 2000, p. 48. Avigdor Arikha studied in Bezalel in the years 1946-1949, and Pinchas Burstein (who changed his name in Paris to Maryan S. Maryan) studied in Bezalel in 1949.
 - 22 For more about these two artists, see, Berger, *The Influence of the Holocaust on the Israeli Visual Art of the First Generation*, pp. 71-77.
 - 23 See in Nahum Bogner's book, *The Deportation Island: Jewish Illegal Immigrant Camps on Cyprus, 1946-1948*, Tel Aviv, 1991.
 - 24 Bezem is quoted in Bashan, "I don't forget to look upward," p. 43.
 - 25 Bezem is quoted in Yossi Shoval, "In Basel I found my tranquility," *Maariv*, December 4, 2003, p. 8.
 - 26 Bashan, "The penance fish in the bosom of the lion," p. 14.
 - 27 Bashan, "The penance fish in the bosom of the lion," p. 14.
 - 28 For more see Ben-Zvi on Cyprus in Berger, *The Influence of the Holocaust on the Israeli Visual Art of the First Generation*, pp. 49-51.
 - 29 Bezem is quoted in Bashan, "I don't forget to look upward," p. 43.
 - 30 Ghetto Fighters' Museum, "In the museum of Holocaust and uprising," *Yediot Ahronot*, October 3, 1953, p. 10.
 - 31 Ghetto Fighters' Museum, "In the museum of Holocaust and uprising," p. 10. For more on the museum approach, see Maoz Azaryahu, Batya Donner and Miri Kedem, *Beit Lohamei Haghetat: The Yitzhak Katzenelson Holocaust and Resistance Heritage Museum, 1949-1999*, Ghetto Fighters' Museum, 2000, pp. 19-22.
 - 32 Ghetto Fighters' Museum, "In the museum of Holocaust and uprising," p. 10.
 - 33 A letter from Zvi Shner to Hannah and Naftali Bezem dated May 31, 1953, Ghetto Fighters Archive
 - 34 Thanks to the entirety of his work, his illustrations and etchings on Jewish themes, his work in the Zionist movement and his connections with the social and cultural elite of the Jews of his time, Lilien became the most important Zionist artist of his time. See Micha and Orna Bar-Am, *Painting with Light: The photographic aspect in the work of E. M. Lilien*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 1990.
 - 35 See David Tartakover and Gideon Ofrat, *Bezalel 100: Book 1: 1906-1929, Book 2 1935-1965*, Jerusalem 2006, p. 66; Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry Before the First World War*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 128-129.
 - 36 For more about the symbolic levels of the pioneering labor cult, see Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, University of California Press, 2000.
 - 37 For more on the labor battalions, See Oved Michaeli and Hadassah Avigdor-Avidov, *The Story of the Labor Brigades*, Tel Aviv 2004.
 - 38 Meir Gur-Arie, *The Pioneers: Silhouettes with Pioneer Songs*, Jerusalem 1925.
 - 39 For more on the songbook, see Joseph Spivak, "Milestones in the history of Hebrew song," *Hagigei Haviva*, 5, 1997, pp. 261-282.
 - 40 Anita Shapira, "The Image of the New Jew in Yishuv Society," in (ed.) Israel. Gutman, *Major Changes within the Jewish People in Wake of the Holocaust*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1996, p. 415.
 - 41 Shapira, "The Image of the New Jew," p. 415.
 - 42 Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, p. 133.
 - 43 For more on the political posters in the 1940 and 1950s, see the exhibition and seminar held in Givat Haviva on May 2, 1994, Yuval Danieli (curator), *Art in the Service of the Party: Posters from the 1940 and 1950s*, Yad Yaari, Givat Haviva, 1994.
 - 44 Almog, *The Sabra*, p. 143. See a comparison of the works of Ardon and Bernstein in Berger, *The Influence of the Holocaust on the Israeli Visual Art*, p. 134.
 - 45 For more on the rehabilitation of the survivors in the 1950s in Anita Shapira, "The Holocaust: Personal memory and public memory," *New Jews and Old Jews*, Tel Aviv 1997, p. 97.
 - 46 Naftali Bezem, *Naftali Bezem: Boats, Immigrants, Parents and Cupboards, Tables and Chairs, the Candle Blessing, Lions and Fish, Plants*, Ramat Gan 1972, p. 14. For an interpretation of the wall sculpture in comparison to Bezem's earlier works, see Berger, *The Influence of the Holocaust on the Israeli Visual Art of the First Generation*, p. 139-142.

PEDAGOGICAL NOTES

MICHAL STERNIN & SHULAMIT IMBER

EMPATHY TOWARDS HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AFTER MEETING THEM

Racheli Berger notes in her article that his encounter with survivors in the detention camp in Cyprus caused Naphtali Bezem, a native of Germany, to empathize with the survivors – an emotion he had not felt before. In his book *The Brigade*, writer Hanoach Bartov describes the encounter of the fighters of the Jewish Brigade with the survivors of the Holocaust in Europe, and in his article "The wicked slander about our indifference to the Holocaust,"¹ he writes:

Suddenly, in the summer of 1945, in this encounter was a situation: These – the still smoking embers – are our brothers. [...] These encounters have never given me rest, my entire life. There, in those situations, I had to make an internal decision, and it was a very difficult one, because for us, those who came from over here, it was not easy to love them, those that came from over there. I will tell you: I could love them only on one condition, that I told myself over and over again: This is me! This is my family! They all – but for the grace of God – could be me. It was simple: my father's family and my mother's family almost all remained there, and were lost there.²

Question for discussion: What, in your opinion, happened in the encounter on foreign soil that made it possible for those living in Eretz Israel to identify with the survivors?

In order to focus the discussion, a comparison can be drawn between Bartov's and Bezem's words and a description written by Avraham Aden (Bren), a company commander in the Palmach Brigade's Negev Brigade, and later a general, about his encounter with the immigrant soldiers:

It was my first meeting [with such] soldiers. They spoke in Yiddish. [...] At first, they praised me – they had been in the country for two weeks now and I was the first who had gathered them together for a talk. [...] Up until then, they had not been given a chance to express themselves, and no one asked how they felt, what they thought about the training and how they were being treated. Afterwards they got to the grievances, which were many: They said they were

being treated in a humiliating way by the NCOs who were training them. The young NCOs raised their voices and even threw stones at them. Some even bitterly remarked that the way the commanders were treating them reminded them of the way the Germans had treated them.³

THE EFFORTS TO INTEGRATE THE SURVIVORS INTO ISRAELI SOCIETY

Alongside the image created by Naftali Bezem of the worker-survivor, here is a Zionist movement image, showing a survivor with a tattooed number on his arm picking oranges:

A discussion may be held on the image of the survivor-pioneer and the Zionist effort to change the stereotype. A subject that can be discussed, for example, is the difficulty that some of the survivors may have had in performing labor that might have reminded them of the forced labor Jews were required to do in the camps, as historian Hanna Yablonka explains:

One of the testimonies: "A small percentage of them [the survivors] were familiar with the work [required of them], but their training had been received under the Nazi yoke of repression – this is not a good way to receive training." However, it was only at the beginning that their pasts had a negative effect, since as soon as it became clear that there was no connection between the hard labor they had experienced in the past and the kind of work they were expected to do now, many of them became enthusiastic and efficient workers. In the Kibbutz Beit Hashita magazine dated April 1946, Moshe G. wrote: "Here I am working in the vineyards, pleasant work with no German guard [overseeing me]. The lads jokingly call out 'Zacks,' (a sign that a German is approaching and we must speed up our work). [...] I never imagined that I would ever be a free man again."⁴

Questions for discussion: In your opinion, to what extent did the manual labor in Eretz Israel contribute to the rehabilitation of the Holocaust survivors? To what extent was it a source of resentment? Do you think the Zionist education made it easier or harder for survivors to integrate into Israeli society?

¹ Hanoach Bartov,

² *Ibid.*, p. 34. *I Am Not the Mythological Sabra*, Tel Aviv 1995, pp. 26-36.

³ Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, California 2000, p. 90.

⁴ Hanna Yablonka, *Survivors of the Holocaust: Israel after the War*, London 1999, p. 204.