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Dreams as a Source for Holocaust Research

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Dreams as a Source for Holocaust Research

On the night of 23–24 September 1939 during the siege of Warsaw, Chaim Hasenfuss, aged 33, had a nightmare. He wrote: "I saw various atrocities during the dream, interrupted by the blast of bombs, grenades, and the German artillery. And I dreamed that here in Warsaw, which was suffering from food shortages, they were selling human meat."[1] Was it a vision of the hunger in the Warsaw ghetto, a premonition of cannibalism (several instances of which did occur there), or even a harbinger of the genocide? Or was it perhaps – as various dream books would have it – just a prognosis of family conflicts, carnal pleasures, or worsening health?"[2]

Introduction

Dreams are historical material and the history of their interpretation is an element of the history of culture. Dreams can be interpreted in various ways and on various levels. Depending on the given culture, historical period, religion, and social or individual beliefs, they can be guidance from an oracle, an order from God, a warning from the dead, a sign of internal conflicts, or unsatisfied desires. But I do not wish to delve into historical, anthropologic, or psychological analyses. I intend to treat dreams from the Holocaust period as literally as possible and try to find out how they contribute to our knowledge about the Holocaust experience. Hence, I concentrate not on the theories of dreams, their analysis, or interpretations, but on the dreams themselves, their content, influence on the dreamers, and their consequences.

Dreams can be research source material for historians, anthropologists, and scholars of culture.[3] Dreams from the period of the Third Reich have been ana-

[1] Chaim Hasenfuss, Dwa lata wojny (przeżycia i refleksje) [Two years of war (experiences and reflections)], Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego [Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute] (later: AŻIH), 302/157.

[2] Interpretation of dreams see, for example http://magia.onet.pl/sennik/mieso,1090.html, retrieved 3 July 2013.

[3] See for example Eric R. Dodds on dreams in ancient Greece: idem, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: University of California Press, 1951); Alain Besançon

lyzed, too. During 1933–1939 Charlotte Beradt, a German Jewess with communist sympathies, asked people about their dreams. She emigrated to the US in 1939, taking the dreams she had collected with her. This material consisted of about 300 anonymous dreams plus Beradt's short description of the dreamer, the dream's context, etc. Beradt analyzes the political themes appearing in the dreams in order to show how the totalitarian reality penetrated the deepest layers of the human psyche, how fear finds its reflection in dreams rendering rest from the everyday terror impossible, how fascism robs one of the most private, intimate sphere, and how it colonizes and appropriates the subconscious.[4] They become an instrument of terror, inspiring anxiety, fear, and a sense of guilt for the "crimes" committed during the dream.[5] In his afterword to Beradt's book, Bruno Bettelheim wrote that "tyranny robs one of dreams long before and long after Macbeth."[6] And historian Reinhart Kosselleck wrote in his article on Beradt's book that dreams "are elements of the historical reality, and although they are not facts, they are testimonies of terror. Those dreams do not refer only to conditions that made precisely such dreams possible. As a phenomenon they instrumentalize terror. […] They show the anthropological dimension which goes beyond their status of a written source, and without this dimension it is impossible to understand the effectiveness of terror. Terror is not simply dreamt, [but] dreams themselves are part of terror, which permeates the human being even in their dreams."[7]

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on Raskolnikov's dreams in idem, *Histoire et experience du moi* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971); and *Dreams and History: The Interpretation of Dreams from Ancient Greece to Modern Psychoanalysis*, ed. Daniel Pick and Lyndal Roper (London–New York: Routledge, 2004); Peter Burke, "The Cultural History of Dreams," in idem, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Jacques le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[4] Charlotte Beradt, *The Third Reich of Dreams: The Nightmares of a Nation 1933–1939* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1985).

[5] Beradt describes, for example, a 1934 dream of an anonymous physician. "[I]t was about 9 p.m. I finished my consultations and I stretched on the couch to relax with a book about Mattias Grünewald when suddenly the walls of my room and my apartment disappeared. I looked around and to my surprise I saw that as far as the eye could see the apartments had no walls. Then I heard a voice from a speaker: 'As per Decree of 17 October concerning the removal of walls…'" Beradt writes that the day before the physician forgot to hang out the flag in the window and that when he was reprimanded by the neighborhood watch he thought to himself: "not within my four walls." The dreams made use of that sentence simultaneously producing a cruel metaphor of totalitarianism – a world without walls, see: Beradt, op. cit., 21.

[6] Ibidem, 152. In Scene II of Act II Macbeth says the following after the killing. "Methought I heard a voice cry 'sleep no more!/ Macbeth does murder sleep,' the innocent sleep,/ Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,/ The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,/ Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,/ Chief nourisher in life's feast (William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* [Dover Publications, 1993]).

[7] Reinhart Kosselleck, "Terror and Dream. Methodological remarks on the experience of time during the Third Reich," in idem, *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 210–211.

Irina Paperno writes in a similar vein about the influence of terror on the content of dreams in her article about political dreams constituting a historical testimony to Stalinism. The author presents studies of several cases showing, similarly to Beradt, how deeply the totalitarian reality penetrates the subconscious of the dreamer and the content of his dreams. She writes that "dreams are the main medium that convey fear, and can be used as a model of feelings of subjects in the kingdom of terror."[8] In Poland Henryk Bereza[9] recorded his dreams for many years and then published some of them. If we knew nothing about him and found the records of his dreams in a bottle on a beach they would become interesting material for the historian. It could easily be established in what milieu the author worked, while the dream about an arrogant saleswoman at the butcher's[10] would suggest that he lived in the times of real socialism. They would also offer an ideal opportunity for "gossiping" historians to demonstrate their skills – there are mentions of various homosexual and heterosexual love affairs.

Can a dream be a source for studying such experience? Can a dream be a historical source? Kosselleck wrote that "Dreams, although immaterial products, nevertheless belong to human artefacts and as dreams they do not offer a real reflection of reality. However, this does not mean that they are not part of everyday life and therefore since Herodotus it has been believed that they are a valuable historical source."[11] More and more often historians use "subjective" personal documents, testimonies, and memoirs to describe the course of events also from the perspective of victims.[12] Jerzy Topolski writes that not only documents or objects can be historical sources, but also "'anything' that helps reconstruct the image of the past."[13]

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[8] Irina Paperno, "Dreams of Terror. Dreams from Stalinist Russia as a Historical Source" in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* vol. 7, 4 (2006): 793–824. Perhaps the most moving example she gives is the story of Andrei Stiepanovich Arshylovsky, a peasant from the Tyumen region in the Ural Mountains and a local activist. He dreamt about becoming a writer and kept a diary in which he expressed his criticism of the regime and recorded his dreams. After his arrest in 1937 the diary (particularly the dream about meeting Stalin) became a piece of evidence against him and a proof of his controversial views. Arshylovsky was executed.

[9] Henryk Bereza, *Oniriada* (Warsaw: Skotnica, 1997). The book is a collection of the author's dreams during 1976–1996.

[10] "In the store I buy a piece of kielbasa – I take a piece of paper to wrap it – the saleswoman attacks me – I begin to shout how horrible it all is […]" H. Bereza, op. cit., dream of 20 May 1977, p. 22.

[11] Kosselleck, *Terror and Dream*, 209.

[12] See for example two books recently published in Poland: Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews. 1939–1945* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008) or Christopher R. Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (New York–London: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2010).

[13] Jerzy Topolski, *Jak się pisze i rozumie historię: tajemnice narracji historycznej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2008), 338.

Dreams are an important source not only for historians, but for anybody who wants to approach the human experience – including the experience of the Holocaust. This certainly concerns the level of emotions, both conscious ones and those less easily accessible, buried deeper. Dreams are a testimony to the experiences and emotions of specific people in a given cultural context and at a specific moment in history. And even though they are unverifiable sources, they are ontologically "real", even though the truth which emerges from them often has a metaphorical character. Dreams can also have a performative character – they can have a causative effect on reality when they bring about specific actions. For they affect not only the emotions and experiences of the dreamers, but they also – particularly dreams of warning and of the future – can cause specific actions and events and, hence, create history.

A dream is a peculiar historical testimony: it is a personal source, an "ego document", as Rudi Künzel[14] calls it. Dreams reflect feelings – not necessarily in a direct way – which is to say they are an emotional response to real-life situations and experiences. Feelings are an important element of the complex mosaics of the Holocaust experience and dreams can be one of the sources for learning about them. Dreams are a particularly ephemeral source, perhaps the most ambiguous and delicate of all personal sources. They talk about psychic reality – the world of inner feelings which sometimes remain unclear even to the dreamer, for dreams give us a peek into the subconscious. Dreams belong to the category of intimate experiences and sharing them is difficult. Thus, all remembered and recorded dreams are a precious gift, a proof of trust and an expression of readiness to share a very personal experience – also with us.

Not all dreams we have are important. Sometimes the subconscious gives us very important information, while at other times the information is of totally marginal importance. Some dreams are just "remains of the day", as Freud called them – "trash" that ends up in the dumpster of the subconscious. Such bland dreams do not attract our attention and are soon forgotten. The dreams remembered and recorded in Holocaust-period texts are all important ones. This importance is clear from the fact that their authors not only remembered them, but deemed them worth writing down. Thus, the surviving dreams went through two important filters. Firstly, they were the ones that got remembered from among the many dreams dreamt during the Holocaust, so they were somehow important, striking, or meaningful. Secondly, the dreamers chose them from among the remembered dreams to be recorded – they proved worthy of preservation, analysis, and retention.

We need to take into consideration that a recorded dream is already an interpretation, for its record is a translation from the language of the dream to the always imperfect language of reality. Regardless of the translator's experience it

[14] See: Rudi Künzel, "Medieval Dreams: a Sample of Historical and Psychoanalytical Criticism," *Psychoanalytische Perspectieven* 20, 2 (2002): 215–233.

is impossible to overcome the differences between the languages of the dream and of reality. What is logical and coherent as well as natural and obvious in a dream often seems peculiar or unrealistic in the morning.

Aside from those deformations it is also important that we spontaneously memorize, first and foremost, the overt "manifest" content of a dream – that is, what is visible on the surface and what can be accepted and revealed to oneself and others. Aside from the manifest content there is also the "latent" content, as psychologists call it – unspecified dream thoughts and imperceptible images which we memorize with difficulty. According to psychoanalysis, that content incomprehensible to the dreamer himself can be approached and extracted from the subconscious actually only through free associations and other forms of psychotherapy. This requires an effort that Freud calls "dream work" (*Traumarbeit*).[15] As we will see, some dreamers can interpret their own dreams no worse than professional psychoanalysts.

Dream interpretation has a long psychological and historical tradition. But I am interested here neither in the history of such interpretations, nor in the psychological analysis of dreams aimed at finding out what a given dream means. I focus on the dreamers' reflections and on their own interpretations, if they provided any. In this paper I deal neither with the theory of dreams nor their physiology or anatomy. I look at Holocaust-period dreams wondering whether they provide any information absent from other sources. I am interested only in dreams dreamt during the war,[16] both those written on the spot and those recorded years later, in memoirs or diaries. Such a decision might seem slightly unconventional from the methodological perspective. Nonetheless my priority is to analyze dreams as historical sources. Consequently, I focus on the important ones. Dreams remembered for years, imprinted in their authors' memory, are an important element of the Holocaust experience. From my point of view the quality and importance of the dream are important, not the time when it was recorded. Unlike everyday "small" dreams, the important "big" dreams are meaningful, remembered – they affect and inspire the dreamer. Such dreams make one reflect on the unsolvable dilemma: do they reflect what the dreamer already "knows" (or at least senses), or are they a source of

[15] Freud changed and developed his concept of dreams (e.g. in his books *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*). I mention it in a very simplified, concise form.

[16] Post-war dreams are a totally different, broad topic, with rich literature. Dreams reflecting war-time experiences constitute rich material for therapeutically work with survivors and they have been described in dozens of texts and studies on trauma. Here I omit this overly exploited topic. The Jews who survived could not escape their dreams. See for example Michał Głowiński "Sny i przywidzenia," in *idem*, *Przywidzenia i figury. Małe szkice z lat 1977–1997* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1998) and "Sny i przywidzenia," in idem, *Fabuły przerwane. Małe szkice 1998–2007* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2008).

new knowledge?[17] Some people seem to "know" – their dreams are a "great and terrible mystery" to their relatives, as Reuwen Feldszuh commented on his wife's dreams. Perła Feldszuh-Richter had dreams that often puzzled those around her, ever since she was a child. Here is the entry for 22 March 1943 from her husband's diary written in the Warsaw ghetto when they were in hiding: "these dreams cannot be a warning because they do not show possibility of rescue and they come at a moment when escape is impossible. There is a germ of panic and anger in their form and content. […] Once during the war my wife woke up shouting that she saw me under a cherry tree. I was shaking the branches and cherries were falling onto our heads – mine, hers, and our daughter's. I did not manage to run away. The cherries symbolized tears. And she asked me not to go out, because something bad would happen to me. I laughed at that warning, and the feminine imagination, but I stayed at home for the whole day. When I went out in the evening I came across a gendarme. I did not bow to him and he punished me. I barely survived. […] She had an interesting dream several months before the establishment of the ghetto. Warsaw in its entirety was squeezed into a long tube closed on both ends, and those inside had to endure a stench which was getting worse and worse. Before the deportation, when people were saying that the Jews had only 40 days of life left, she dreamed that all the tenements in Warsaw lifted off the ground, as if suspended on a thread, about to fall and crush the Jewish pedestrians. Her dreams always portended something bad. Unavoidable evil that there is no escape from, that you cannot turn away from, and one you cannot lessen even if only a little."[18]

Dreams from the Holocaust period are not an easily available source. They rarely appear in the hundreds of testimonies, published memoirs, and surviving diaries. After a meticulous search through the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute (*Żydowski Instytut Historyczny*, ŻIH) and in Yad Vashem and using publisher materials I collected a sample of 144 dreams of 66 people. 102 dreams come from 24 persons (including: 23 dreams from Aba Arie Weinstein, 8 from Lutek Orenbach, 7 from Chaja Finkielsztejn, 6 from Rachela Auerbach, 5 from Janusz Korczak and Aaron Elster respectively, 4 from Fela Fischbein, Cesia Gruft, Mieczysław Pokorny, and Brandla Siekierka respectively (including 1 from Brandla's husband), 3 from Szajndla Halpern, Małka Krajnowicz, Morris Breitbart, and Eugenia Sztiwel respectively (including 1 from her husband) and 2 from Maria Lewi-Kurowska, Liliana Lipes, Renia Knoll, Estera Deckier Abramowicz, Rózia Wagnerowa, Irene Hauser, Rywka Lipszyc, Mr. and Mrs. Malach, Lejb Rochman and Miriam Kuperhand. The remaining 42 dreams are dreams of one-time authors. In this text I do not carry out a detailed analysis of all of the collected

[17] See: Roger M. Knudson, "Significant Dreams: Bizarre or Beautiful?," *Dreaming* 11, 4 (2001): 167–177.

[18] Reuwen Feldszuh, Diary (originally in Hebrew, Polish translation by Ela Linde), Yad Vashem Archive (later: YVA), O33/959.

dreams. I only present a sample which gives an impression as to their variety and significance.

There are many ways to classify and systematize dreams with regard to their content, structure, meaning, dynamics, etc. In this essay it seems best to use the chronological-synchronic approach and, within the chronological approach, to divide the collected dreams on the basis of their function. This division reflects the role dreams have in the dreamer's reception. Many of the dreams presented here have an emotional significance and express feelings. Others have a motivational function: they stimulate the dreamer to make a decision or act. Other still are warnings which are to boost the dreamer's vigilance and protect him/her from misfortune. And finally there are the dreams which portend future events.

The chronological approach takes into consideration the subsequent stages of the Holocaust and the diverse situation of the dreamers. The awareness of the Holocaust (absent during the ghetto period and common during hiding after knowledge about extermination had become obvious) is the major criterion of the chronological division. The synchronic approach allows us to take into consideration the dreams dreamt by various people during the same period. A single dream belongs to an individual history, but a bigger number of dreams from the same historical epoch can be evidence for a certain kind of a collective experience. A diachronic analysis – one that analyzes the dreams of one person during a longer period of time and takes into consideration the changes and processes they undergo – would require biographical information and the use of psychoanalytic tools. In my collection only the 23 dreams of Aba Arie Weinstein could be analyzed in such a way. The insufficient knowledge about their context, however, renders such an analysis impossible in their case.

Dreams in the Ghetto

On 2 July 1940, still before the creation of the ghetto, the Warsaw Judenrat chair Adam Czerniaków recorded his dream, "I had a dream that I handed over my responsibilities to Mayzel. What a beautiful illusion."[19] Maurycy Mayzel – former chair of the Warsaw Jewish Community – went east with a wave of refugees in September 1939. By order of Warsaw's President Stefan Starzyński, Czerniaków assumed Mayzel's position. A year and a half later, that is, on 11 January 1942, Halina Szwambaum wrote the following in a letter she sent from the ghetto to her teacher Stefania Liliental, living on the "Aryan" side: "I dream about grass, about being able to lie down on it, about a clearing, about trees, about a forest. Once I had a dream about the sea, but it was unpleasant."[20] The ghetto

[19] Adam Czerniakow, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow, Prelude to Doom*, ed. Raul Hilberg (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999), 169.

[20] AŻIH, Bernard Mark's collection, set 546, Listy Haliny Szwambaum do Stefanii Liliental [Halina Szwambaum's Letters to Stefania Liliental].

and its dreams stretch between those two visions: a pleasant one about setting oneself free from the burden of responsibility, and an unpleasant one about the lost world.

Certainly many Jews in the ghettos had retrospective dreams – dreams about the past that bore memories of pleasant moments. In the context of the ghetto such dreams became unpleasant for they made one aware of the enormity of loss, of being robbed of freedom, and they reminded one about the inaccessible and already distant world beyond the wall. Lutek Orenbach had similar dreams to Hala's. While in the ghetto in Tomaszów Mazowiecki he missed his beloved Edith Blau, who was in Minden near Bielefeld. Over 100 of his letters have survived.[21] Some of them describe his dreams, which expressed, e.g., his longing for the period when he was with Edith and some friends in Bydgoszcz, where they met and organized an amateur theater. "Last night I had a dream that I was in Bydgoszcz. I am performing in our theater. Everybody is there: Ruth, Nusia, Bronka (but not you). I send Bronka home to bring me my white shirt, shoes, and a belt… Funny? Why do we have such stupid dreams? To remind ourselves that there was something nice in the past and that it went away… like smoke…?" (letter of 17 January 1940). The retrospective, "stupid" dream, reminding the author about the lost past makes him angry and disillusioned.

Lutek misses not only the past, but also – or perhaps mostly – Edith. The dreams of the boy in love are perhaps the ones in my collection closest to ordinary dreams from the pre-war period, as they are not permeated by the ghetto experience. Or do they prove that love and longing can be stronger than the fear and terror of everyday life during the occupation? "Two nights ago I had a dream (can you hear?!) about you, for the first time in a long time. I saw you in the window, you were smiling as wonderfully, as beautifully as always. And this is the meaning of life – the smile" (6 February 1941); "I've recently had another dream about you. You were in your apartment. I came in. We kissed… God, what a beautiful dream it was. Is there ever going to be a moment like that?" (25 March 1941). Such a moment did not come. Lutek and Edith never met again. He died in unknown circumstances, whereas she survived the war.

Longing and dreams about love could have also helped the Jews escape from reality and find respite in the company of their loved ones. Lucky were those who could escape the ghetto in their dreams and rest their souls for a moment in a different world. Escape dreams played a vital role, for they allowed one to regain strength, experience positive emotions and break free from the nightmare

[21] Love story described by Edith Brandon in *Letters from Tomaszov* (copied typescript), Library of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (later: USHMM), DS135.G5 B73 1994; collection of letters deposited by Edith in the USHMM Archive: RG-10.250. See also Barbara Engelking, "Miłość i cierpienie w Tomaszowie Mazowieckim," in *Zagłada Żydów. Pamięć narodowa a pisanie historii w Polsce i we Francji*, ed. Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak, Dariusz Libionka, and Anna Zięibińska-Witek (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2006).

of everyday life. In April 1942 Janusz Korczak recorded in his journal several dreams he had over the course of a single night. Let me quote his description of one of those dreams:

> I'm driving or flying, or swimming, or running […]. I am in the countryside, but in a distant unknown country where I have never been before. […] I go into the yard – the farmer greets me cordially. […] And then he asked, "Come into my cottage, we'll eat and drink God's gifts." We were just about to sit at the table. I could already see the white bread on the table, butter, cheese, kielbasa, and a pitcher of milk. I woke up. I was angry. Not even in a dream can one eat a tasty pre-war supper. What can you do?[22]

The ability to fly, obvious in a dream, allows him to escape the horrible reality and takes him to a distant free country. But in the end the ghetto catches up with Korczak even there, forbidding him to satisfy his hunger.

In June 1942 Korczak wrote down three dreams he had on the same night. We can easily spot reflections of the ghetto's everyday life in them. "Unbearable dreams. Last night [I dreamed about] Germans. I was in Praga without the band. It was after curfew. I woke up." In his next dream Korczak was on a train. "[T]hey move me into a compartment a meter square, with a few Jews already inside of it. Last night the dead again. Corpses of dead children. A dead child in a wooden tub. Another one, skinned, lies on a plank bed in the morgue, breathing visibly." In the third dream "standing high up on an unstable ladder, father puts big pieces of sponge cake into his mouth, with icing and raisins. He puts the crumbs he cannot fit into his mouth into his pocket. I wake up all sweaty at the scariest moment. Isn't death such a waking up at the moment [when] it seemed that there was no way out?"[23].

The events of everyday life penetrated not only those three dreams Korczak had in June 1942, but also many other dreams recorded in the ghetto. The writer Rachela Auerbach examined, conscientiously recorded, and at the same time interpreted her own dreams. She was a student of Prof. Kazimierz Twardowski at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów, where she attended psychology lectures among ones from other fields. Her interpretations of her own dreams are almost a textbook example of Freud's "dream work," which I have already mentioned. It involves extraction of what is behind the subconscious and unclear images and wondering what they are trying to tell us. Consequently, a dream is consciously given meaning. "Dream work" allows one to go from the subconscious to the conscious and to extract the latent meaning and content. Dreams reflect certain important experiences and events both in

[22] Janusz Korczak "Dwa sny moje dziwne," in *Janusz Korczak w getcie. Nowe źródła*, ed. Aleksander Lewin, texts edited by Monika Ziółek (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Latona, 1992), 216–218.

[23] Janusz Korczak, "Pamiętnik," in idem, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 4 (Warsaw: Nasza Księgarnia, 1986), 370–371.

their manifest content, whose meaning is obvious to the dreamer, and in their latent content, whose meaning needs to be discovered. Rachela Auerbach records and interprets her dreams like an utmost conscientious student of Freud. On 4 March 1941 she wrote:

> [L]ast night I had two dreams which can be easily analyzed. In the first dream I was walking along a street […] with a tall man. That dream features a reminiscence of my daily walks with […], who usually escorts me to Tłomackie Street 5 and the meeting with the former director of the self-sufficient kitchen on Zamenhofa Street. He was surprisingly happy [to see me] after such a long time and he walked me to the corner of Karmelicka Street and I was holding him by the arm and this iota of old-fashioned male affection did not fail to imprint itself on my subconscious. The echo of the longing lying there deep down, of the hunger, of the lack of an arm, of two male arms.[24]

She also dreamt about a cat – "extremely dirty, mangy, covered with bloody scabs and dust and soot and crawling with flees." It filled the author with both compassion and disgust. She realized that it resembled a client of the people's kitchen she was running. The woman was "dripping with dirt, lice, and she stank. Her ruin is proceeding at an alarming pace. […] Her emaciation has become extreme […]. Moreover, she grabs and steals whatever food she can, she begs and still displays quite a strong instinct for self-preservation, but all that together does not exclude the possibility that one day I will find her dead on the street and bury her in a common grave."[25]

Auerbach associates the dream images with the events of the day in the ghetto and the link between those feelings allowed her to uncover the latent content of her dream. The other dreams recorded in her *Diary*, a year later in March 1942, already echoed the initial news about the Holocaust, of which Auerbach (as a collaborator with Ringelblum and his underground ghetto archive) was of course aware. Rachela records in her *Diary* the news coming from Warsaw about the mass murders in the provinces, about the cruelty and ruthlessness of the Germans. She records a dream in which she experienced this herself:

> [T]hat fate had befallen me, too. I had been captured, tied up with a rope, and carried to a garden […] and laid down before a burrow where a huge dog was sitting. […] the horrible torment of that dream consisted mostly in trying to find a way to survive. […] At the same time I was frantically wondering whether I could talk to, somehow communicate with the village women working nearby. I was looking for some neutral words which

[24] AŻIH, ARG I 405 (Ring. I/641), Rachela Auerbach, Dziennik [Diary], entry of 4 March 1941. The text was published in *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Getta Warszawy*, vol. 7: *Spuścizny*, ed. Katarzyna Person (Warsaw: WUW and ŻIH, 2012), 169–170.

[25] Ibidem, 170–171.

> would not give them a reason to denounce me. At the same time […] they had to make them release me and shelter me from the pursuers. The doubts and that fear. It was a horrible torment, a sheer nightmare. I woke up in cold sweat.[26]

In this extraordinary dream we find a conglomerate of feelings which were to be experienced by the Jews in hiding: living as if outside the world, the impossibility to communicate with people and with the beings that surround them, but who are no longer human. The lack of words to ask for rescue, the fear of denunciation and of falling foul of somebody – the torment and horror that defied description. Rachela Auerbach went into hiding a year later, having left the ghetto on 9 March 1943. Nonetheless, she managed to anticipate the feelings that were to accompany her on the "Aryan" side. Even before it was directly experienced, the Holocaust seeped into one's soul, penetrating one's dreams, destroying one's defense mechanisms, and causing inner devastation.

Some dreams, particularly those regarding the death of one's relatives, can be regarded as prognostic. Maria Lewi-Kurowska moved from the Warsaw ghetto to the area near Ostrów Mazowiecka, from where she sent food parcels to her starving family in Warsaw. The day before her return home she had difficulty falling asleep:

> I could not fall asleep. I fell asleep early in the morning. I had a dream that I had come back home and found out that my father had died. The dream was weird and vivid. I clearly saw myself walking through all the rooms crying because my father was sitting by the table in the last room reading a book like he usually does. He's strangely pale and I tell him, "Daddy, I had a dream that you died." He did not say anything, just nodded his head. I suddenly woke up, literally sick, with a stomachache […] that dream was weighing down on me. I couldn't shake it off.[27]

After her return to the ghetto she came across her sister on the street outside their home who told her, "Daddy's dead."[28]

Eliszewa Binder wrote her memoir in Stanisławów. The young woman (born in 1920) died, and her diary was found in the ghetto ruins. Her grandfather on her mother's side died in March 1942, before the final liquidation of the ghetto. Eliszewa and her sisters decided to spare their mother the news so as to not worry her. Several days after the grandfather's death "mom told me that she had a dream in which she saw her father dressed in a fur coat among bodies of long dead people. Seeing her terror, he consoled her saying that he had permission." Binder makes the following comment on her mother's dream. "How would Freud explain that dream? I have no idea and I can only admire the secret

[26] Ibidem, 194.
[27] Maria Lewi-Kurowska, *Pamięć pozostanie* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Myśl, 1993), 43.
[28] Ibidem, 45.

mechanisms of the human heart and subconscious. I am sure that Mom can subconsciously sense the tragedy."[29]

Fela Fischbein, who was hiding near Krosno, acted similarly to Eliszewa after she left the ghetto. Her husband's brother, Adolf, was denounced by Poles in the summer of 1943 and killed by the Germans. Fela, who maintained contact with all her family members hiding in the area, kept his death a secret from her sister-in-law Franka. When she visited her in Krosno Franka asked her about Adolf. Fela assured her that he was in hiding and that he was fine. After one of the visits Fela recorded Franka's recurring dreams in her diary:

> I had to be really sensible while making up the story about Adolf's brother, whose death [Franka] had been unaware of for a year. I invented a story on the way that he was alive and that he was with somebody at Mr. Mietek's. […] She somehow believed me, but asked me from time to time: "What did you say? What happened? Something's not right here. If he's alive, then what does he want from me? He keeps me awake at night."[30]

One of the most emotionally appealing dreams is the one Leon Berenson wrote down in the ghetto in his diary between 14 and 17 April 1941: "I had a dream that my teeth fell out. Borkusia would say that it means the 'death' of somebody close to me. She had been saying the same thing for 30 years, but I don't remember if she had ever been right."[31] This time that woman named Borkusia would have been right, as Berenson died a week later, on the night of 22–23 April.

Dreams from the Deportation Period

In the spring of 1942 the Germans began to liquidate the ghettos across occupied Polish territories. Jews from more and more cities and towns were gradually deported to the death camps. Initially, they were unaware of what awaited them. With time the awareness of the oncoming annihilation became common through hearsay, gossip, and accounts of escapees and eye witnesses. But the premonition of the oncoming catastrophe and the awareness that "something" was up had been common even before people realized its scale, before they un-

[29] Eliszewa Binder, Dziennik [Diary], AŻIH, 302/267. The passage about the fur coat concerns the fact that in December 1942 the Jews had to give the Germans all possessed fur coats, jackets, etc. Failure to perform the order was tantamount to a death sentence.

[30] Fela Fischbein, Dziennik [Diary], YVA, O3/3785, entry of 24 May 1944.

[31] See: [Leon Berenson], "Nieznany dziennik z getta warszawskiego," ed. Michał Czajka and Tadeusz Epsztein, *Biuletyn ŻIH* 1 (2013): 32–67. Only the last five journals written down in 1941 have survived from Leon Berenson's diary (23 March–18 April). They were discovered soon after the war in the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto. The earlier journals transferred to the "Aryan" side disappeared. The surviving ones are so badly damaged that some fragments of the text, for instance the date of the quoted dream, could not be deciphered.

derstood that the Germans indeed planned to exterminate all Jews. The general fear found its reflection in dreams focusing on visions of deportation. This is what Irene Hauser, who had been deported from Vienna to Łódź, wrote in her diary on 20 August 1942 during the period of deportations from Łódź: "I had an interesting dream: a long train ready to depart, and the director of the train waiting for me to get on and thus give a sign to depart. It's seven o'clock."[32] A few days before the liquidation operation in Lwów, in which her parents died, Rózia Wagnerowa had the following prognostic dream: "I saw a storm at sea and my parents and sisters were floating on a rather small ice floe among the raging waves, and they were holding out their hands toward me begging for rescue to the shore where I was standing."[33]

Rywka Lipszyc from Łódź, born in 1929, had another kind of dream connected with the deportation period dilemmas. On 2 March 1944 she wrote in her diary:

> I am still shaken by last night, or actually by the dream I had… Oh, what a dream that was!… It was dark… Chaja came and said that she wanted to be a decent person and that was why she not only went there, but also volunteered for deportation… She was not the only one… Others did the same thing… […] Oh, I cannot express the sensation I felt. But I know that I saw spots before my eye… Something was choking me. I could not say a word. I could not decide if I should volunteer or stay… For I had to stay with Cipka and I could not separate from Surcia… Oh, what a terrible feeling!… […] I still cannot shake that terrible feeling off…[34]

During the deportation the stress of everyday life was accompanied by emotionally tiring nightmares. Fela Fischbein had "bad dreams due to oversensitivity and fear."[35] And even though she did not record them we may suspect that they reflected the fear and anxiety that accompanied the terror she felt over the oncoming extermination. Aleksandra Sołowiejczyk-Guter was waiting for the liquidation of the section for "the unemployed" of the Vilnius ghetto, where she found herself. She was desperately trying to obtain a yellow *Schein*, enabling one to transfer to the section for "the employed." A fragment of her diary: "In these conditions sleep is not a rest, but a tiring nightmare."[36] During the summer of 1942's deportation operation in the Warsaw ghetto Ita Dimant could not fall asleep as she was tired after the events of the day. In her diary written two years later in Germany where she performed slave labor as an "Aryan," she recalled the following:

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[32] Irene Hauser, *Cud, że ręka jeszcze pisze…*, Polish translation by Jerzy Witold Solecki (Warsaw: Libellus, 1993). The diary stops on 8 September 1942 – the author was perhaps deported to Chełmno with her child (and husband?) during the "children campaign."

[33] Rózia Basseches-Wagnerowa, Dziennik [Diary], YVA, E/1144.

[34] Rywka Lipszyc, Łódź ghetto diary, typescript.

[35] Fela Fischbein, Dziennik [Diary], YVA, O3/3785, entry of 24 July 1944.

[36] Aleksandra Sołowiejczyk-Guter, Dziennik [Diary], YVA, E/285.

> [I]n the end I take *adalina* to fall asleep. But in my sleep I have many bad and chaotic dreams. I see the beloved faces distorted in pain and in animal-like fear. Skulls with empty eye sockets are dancing a death dance. Somebody is running after me with a revolver. I crawl into some attic. A police whistle splits my ears – everybody out… Another clear sound of a whistle. I storm out of bed, jump onto the floor and… Oh, it was just a dream.[37]

Dreams of Jews in Hiding

Most of the dreams I have collected come from the hiding period, perhaps because it was the period when the Jews recording their experiences were most focused on their own emotions. Moreover, those who were in hideouts and could not go out had a lot (or even too much) time to describe their internal life. They also recorded their dreams.

Many dreams reflect the experiences from the deportation period. Those dramatic events returned in dreams. Jews in hiding live in constant stress, constantly at high alert, sensitive to all possible dangers, always ready flee or fight. The days, weeks, months, and years of living in stress, and being practically unable to rest even for a moment, surely take some psychological toll on them. The night does not bring relief. It is a time when Jews experience feelings repressed during the day in order to lessen the despair, avoid letting down their guard or losing the strength necessary to persevere. But emotions and the subconscious abide by their own rules. As soon as one stops keeping an eye on them, they run rampant and begin their spectacles. They exploit a moment of inattention to strike with all their might and they begin a spectacle of suffering, fear, terror, despair, and horror.

After a frantic and spontaneous escape during the liquidation of the ghetto in Otwock, Izabela Czajka-Stachowicz was lucky enough to find shelter in the home of a blacksmith in a nearby village. The first night "the dream turned into a delirium… My ribs ached during the dream. Latvians and SS-men were chasing me in the dream… I kept running into obstacles… I woke up screaming: 'They're coming! They're coming!' Once I screamed so loud that the blacksmith got out of bed, and came to wake me up by putting his heavy palm on my forehead."[38]

Having survived the massacre of Jews in Simno in Lithuania, Aba Arie Weinstein and his brother found shelter at the Matulewiczs' in a village near their home town. Aba Arie kept a diary until the end of the war, in which he recorded many of his psychological observations and a total of 23 dreams. This is the biggest number of dreams by a single author in my collection. Most of them are his own, but there are also several of his brother and Mrs. Matulewicz, who liked telling her dreams and then demanded their interpretation. During the

[37] Ita Dimant, *Moja cząstka życia* (Warsaw: ŻIH and Twój Styl, 2001), 84.

[38] Izabela Czajka Stachowicz, *Ocalił mnie kowal* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1956), 24.

first days of hiding, on 13 September 1941 Aba Arie wrote down the following. "[I]t was a horrible night. In my uneasy sleep I dreamt that I was standing at my own grave;" September 15: "I had a tiring night with awful nightmares," September 21: "I have horrible nightmares at night; and during the day my mind is full of wild fantasies."[39] Nine months later he writes down: "I have been dreaming about the members of our family for many nights. Last night I also dreamt about my family and that awful scene – a policeman comes over and tells us to leave the house and to gather in the center of the town."[40] After another nine months the death of his relatives is still vividly present in Arie's dreams. "Last night I dreamt about my parents. I kissed my mother and father and talked with Benjamin. I asked him why he let them kill him, why he did not run away. My poor brother said that he could not escape and he showed me how they drove them to the pits […] My poor brother."[41] Weinstein also often dreams about his youngest brother, Jehudinka, whose death was an exceptional blow to him.

It seems that the nightmares did not subside with the passage of time. On the contrary, fuelled by the day-time fear they went rampant at night. In November 1943 Mieczysław Pokorny, who had been hiding on the "Aryan" side for over a year, wrote the following:

> Our nights are even less peaceful than our days. We are constantly plagued by nightmares which reflect our experiences in the ghetto or our present situation. We are constantly dreaming about those awful scenes we witnessed during the deportation of Jews from Warsaw, those fearful and horrible moments which will stay in our memory as long as we live. In the dreams we are constantly chased by German informers and blackmailers, who have recognized us on the "Aryan" side. Those experiences sometimes seem so real that you wake up all sweaty in terror.[42]

Several months later he wrote down the following:

> [D]ue to the dreams of persecution, the recent nights were a nightmare to me. I constantly see myself persecuted and hunted for by the Germans for my staying on the "Aryan" side without a pass. These nightmares are sometimes so horrifying that I wake up all in a cold sweat. One night I dreamt about Niska Street, where thousands of naked corpses of murdered Jews, men, women, and children were lying in the windows and even on the stores' doorsteps.[43]

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[39] Aba Gefen, *Hope in Darkness: The Aba Gefen Diaries*, trans. Ina Friedman (New York: USHMM, 1989), 10, 11, 15. After the war, in Israel, Weinstein changed his name to Gefen.

[40] Ibidem, entry of 1 June 1942, p. 69.

[41] Ibidem, entry of 23 March 1943, p. 126.

[42] Mieczysław Pokorny [Parker], Dziennik [Diary], YVA, O25/105, entry of November 1943.

[43] Ibidem, entry of 12 February 1944.

In November 1944 Dawid Fogelman, who was hiding in the ruins of Warsaw after the Uprising, wrote what follows: "I feel horrible at night. Each night I dream about some shouting and crying. I cry in my sleep. I get up in the morning feeling even more depressed."[44]

Fear for one's family and friends was an element of the mosaics of emotions which made up the torment of those in hiding. Of course, they already knew that most Jews, including their loved ones, were dead. They saw some of them dying or knew about the others from first- or second-hand accounts, but there was always some space left for illusions. They might have managed to hide or to escape from the train, or somebody helped them and they are still alive. The hope that some of their loved ones were still alive sometimes died in dreams that ruthlessly brought a premonition of their death. Melania Weissenberg, aged 12, born in 1930, who kept a diary while in hiding in Dąbrowa Tarnowska, dearly loved her best friend. This is what she wrote on 20 September 1942:

> Last night I had a horrible dream. No, not horrible. I am almost certain, oh, that something has happened to my sweet, dearest Bineczka. For I had a dream that her mommy was sitting in the kitchen and that she ordered [her] to fry her some chicken. So Binka grabbed the young bird and put a knife to its neck. I was standing next to her watching what she was doing. When I saw that she was about to slaughter the birdie I quickly turned my back, 'cause I couldn't look at it. A moment later I turned back and I saw the slaughtered birdie standing peacefully with its throat cut as if nothing had happened. And there was no blood anywhere. I even tried to chase it, but it only made a few steps and its eye lid was covering its eye in a strange way. And that's the dream.[45]

Melania's friend, Sabina[46] Goldberg, was indeed already dead. Removed from a hideout by Polish policemen, she had been killed several days earlier by German gendarmes in Dąbrowa Tarnowska.

Pola Wawer was in hiding with her parents in the town of Świr near Vilnius. As they needed to get money they took turns walking from Vilnius to the hideout. Once when she was waiting at her friends' in Vilnius for the possibility to return to her parents she had the following dream:

> I was walking with my father to mom, at night, like we often did […] across a marsh, which was yielding under our feet and splashing whenever we moved our feet up. Father is walking before me as if to find some more solid ground. The marsh becomes deeper and deeper. Suddenly my father cannot take his feet out of the mud and he begins to sink into it. I can

[44] Dawid Fogelman, Dziennik pisany w bunkrze [Diary written in a bunker], AŻIH, 302/35, entry of 3 November 1944.

[45] Melania Weissenberg's Dziennik [Diary] is in the possession of Jan Grabowski, whom I would like to thank for making that translation available to me.

[46] 'Bineczka' and 'Binka' are diminutives of 'Sabina'.

> see him sinking into the marsh as he looks into my eyes. 'Don't walk this way, Polunia, don't!' he keeps warning me. Horrified, I do what he says and I ask, 'What should I do? I could tear some clothes and you'll grab the end and I'll drag you out'. And father says, 'No, honey, you won't manage. Let it be. Don't walk here, go back, I'm begging you.' Father is sinking deeper and deeper before my eyes. I can see the marsh coming up to his mouth, his nose. I want to shout, but I can't. Not until the marsh is above his mouth and he stops talking to me. I begin to scream in terror and then somebody grabs me by the arm. It was the landlord.[47]

Pola was screaming in terror in her sleep. This is how she commented on the dream in her memoir: "There is not a touch of mysticism in me and I do not regard that dream to be a prediction of future events. It was just how my subconscious processed the anxieties and fears that filled me."[48] However, those anxieties and fears turned out to be justified. After several days it turned out that her father had been killed by a certain Sobolewski, who had been blackmailing her family for some time threatening to denounce them to the Germans.

Guta Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, who was hiding with her mother in a tomb at the cemetery in Chęciny, had an equally dreadful dream. The cemetery superintendent Karol Kiciński and his daughter were helping them while their cousin Izaak Grynbaum, who was hiding nearby "on the surface," was selling their things and bringing them money. Guta recalls the events of 28 February 1944:

> A nightmare woke me up in the middle of the night. It was dark in our basement. A corpse under a white blanket was lying on the floor. I saw my mother and her sister, dressed in black. They were crying out and mourning the dead. I was wondering who they were mourning. Who is still alive and can be mourned? I fell asleep again and forgot about that dream.[49]

Two days later on 1 March Izaak Grynbaum went to the town and never came back. He was murdered at night by members of a Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK) detachment.[50] He was shot from a machine gun and the town inhabitants found him naked on the Chęciny town square in the morning.

Dreams of warning or prognosis played an important role during the Holocaust. They were regarded as something more than illusions and they sometimes motivated people to take specific steps. Chaja Finkielsztejn, whom I have already mentioned, and her whole family had many prophetic dreams. She believed in them and followed the guidelines they contained. Anna Bikont devoted

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[47] Pola Wawer, *Poza gettem i obozem* (Warsaw: Volumen, 1993), 92.

[48] Ibidem.

[49] Guta Szynowłoga-Trokenheim, *Życie w grobowcu* (Warsaw: Ypsylon, 2002), 90.

[50] See: Alina Skibińska, "Dostał 10 lat, ale za co?" Analiza motywacji sprawców zbrodni na Żydach na wsi kieleckiej w latach 1942–1944," in *Zarys krajobrazu. Wieś polska wobec zagłady Żydów 1942–1945*, ed. Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011), 408.

a separate chapter of her book *My z Jedwabnego* to Chaja's dreams.[51] Chaja's dreams predicted the pogrom in Radziłów, indicated whom to turn to for shelter, predicted the course of the war (the German defeat at Stalingrad), and were a promise that the whole family would survive the war. "I had a dream that it was after the war, that we were in a place where there was some Zionist activity. Menachem held an important position and he was elected to a Zionist congress. We were with him in the presidium."[52] The whole family survived the war and emigrated to the Palestine.

Małka Krajnowicz went through a lot while hiding on the "Aryan" side in Warsaw. In one of her dreams her deceased mother told her whom to turn to for help. For some time Małka lived with other hiding Jews. She recalls in her testimony that during her stay there she had "been plagued by nightmares […]. I dreamt that the gendarmes came over […]. Some other time I dreamt that one night my dead parents were pushing me, weakened, in a pram."[53] Małka spent entire days outside because she had to earn money. She was not in the apartment on 14 December 1943 when the Germans came and took everybody away. She was the only survivor.

Mina Morer survived thanks to the dream of a certain peasant. After she had escaped from the ghetto and lost contact with her husband, she wandered in the forests near Jaryczew. One night she saw a hut by the forest and went towards it.

> Then the door opened, and a peasant in his underwear came out. He saw me and said that my husband was at his place. It was a true miracle, for the peasant had had a dream the night before to go out because there would be somebody walking toward him. So he took me to my husband, who had been hiding at his place for some time.[54]

Rationalists do not believe in dreams. Aba Arie Weinstein criticized the belief that dreams can predict the future: "Dreams are about what really happened and they cannot predict the future. This is fact-based knowledge. They taught us that during psychology lectures. It is not like most people think – that dreams provide an answer to their problems."[55] But some dreams did predict the future, also for those who did not believe in prophetic dreams at all. Maria Szelestowska describes an unusual story in her memoir. She did not go to the ghetto but stayed on the "Aryan" side with her Polish fiancé, who belonged to the underground. Her sister escaped from the ghetto in the summer of 1942. Maria found a room in the neighborhood for her, of course pretending that she was an Aryan. One evening in the spring of 1943 the terrified sister came running to Maria.

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[51] See: Anna Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego* (Wołowiec: Czarne, 2012), 463–507.

[52] Ibidem, 479.

[53] Małka Krajnowicz, Relacja [Testimony], AŻIH, 301/2818.

[54] Mina Morer, Relacja [Testimony], AŻIH, 301/2481.

[55] Gefen, *Hope in Darkness*, entry of 9 August 1942, p. 85.

> When I came back home today late in the evening – she said, getting pale – my landlady stopped me at my room's doorstep: "I need to talk to you." I understood that somebody had told her I was a Jewess and that she would order me to leave her house immediately. But it turned out differently. The landlady dragged me into the kitchen and there, having sat down comfortably, she told me her dream.
>
> I had a fit of laughter. I laughed like mad, happy that nothing bad had happened.
>
> I knew that you would react like this – said my sister – but will you hear me out?
>
> It came as a surprise to me that she believed in dreams. She sensed my mood. "I don't believe in dreams so don't make a superstitious, stupid woman out of me. My landlady isn't one either. But she was terrified." And she finally told me the dream. […] The landlady comes into my sister's room, covered with spider webs. There's also a large spider and it seems to have just finished spinning its web. The room was uninhabited, terrifyingly empty and dark. There was an air of horror and clearly nobody had been there for a long time. The landlady woke up with a scream and as soon as my sister came back she told her what was up. She asked her to leave her house if she was an underground member for she had already lost her husband in a camp and did not want to lose her life, and that the dream was prophetic.[56]

While the sister was telling her the landlady's dream the Gestapo knocked on Maria's door. They had come for her fiancé, but as he was not there they took the women from the apartment (there was also another Jewess there who had just escaped from the ghetto). After a few months' imprisonment and interrogations in May 1943 the women had to join a transport of Jews about to be deported from Umschlagplatz. Luckily, they escaped from the train.

Believing in dreams reflects the feeling of hopelessness experienced in the real world. A Jew in hiding loses control over his life, unable to influence the course of events (particularly of the events which his life depends on) or to make any decisions. He is totally at the mercy of others, dependent on their good will, help, greediness, or meanness. That total dependency on the others and the total hopelessness are psychologically unbearable. One needs to find a way to survive. Moreover, idleness, uselessness, total emptiness of the passing days, and boredom can be a source of great suffering. Fantasies about the future – plans and projects stressing one's feeling of power and ability to influence reality – were one of the ways to deal with that situation. Solving everyday problems (and there were quite many) allowed one to display but minimal initiative and brought some positive results. Consequently, it significantly helped Jews feel human. People totally dependent on others, living in constant danger, and unable to influence what is going to happen to them might also look for external ways

[56] Maria Szelestowska, *Lubię żyć* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2000), 72.

to deal with their feeling of hopelessness. One of them was to believe in an external source of rescue and in various signs portending its arrival, and that was rather common in such situations. This is the source of faith in dreams, fortune-telling, horoscopes, and predictions, so popular during periods of uncertainty. In general, fortune-telling, séances, and prophecies (particularly those about the Germans' upcoming defeat) were rather popular during the war.

Visits of the Dead

Dreams of various function (warning, prognostic, emotional, premonition, longing, remorse, or those that expressed a hope for relatives' survival) had various forms. Those various themes most commonly found their expression in dreams about meetings with the dead. This matter goes beyond the chronological division proposed here, as it appears during the entire Holocaust period and is the most frequent theme. Encounters with the dead appear in 70 of the total of 144 dreams I collected. No other theme reoccurs equally often. But in fact it is difficult to draw any conclusions from this fact other than that relationships with the dead were highly important to those who were still alive during the Holocaust. Perhaps such dreams were more often remembered and recorded than other less important ones. Perhaps the longing for loved ones was the reason for their constant presence in the Jews' subconscious, which found its expression in dreams. Or perhaps the dead simply took care of their loved ones and tried to protect them.

Indeed, most often the dead give good advice, warn, inform, help, and sometimes want to simply bid their farewell. The painter Erna Rosenstein escaped with her parents from the Lwów ghetto to Warsaw, where they hoped to survive on "Aryan papers." A man they came across in lodgings promised to fix them up with a place to stay in the country. Having no other viable alternative, the Rosensteins and a certain Jewess they met by chance decided to go with him. After they had gotten off the train, on the way through the forest the man first murdered that girl. He then tied Erna up and murdered her parents. Erna managed to free herself from the bonds. She got to a hospital where "at two o'clock at night my mother came to me. Her throat had been cut, blood was gushing out. She came to my bed to say goodbye."[57] Erna escaped from the hospital and managed to survive on the "Aryan" side in Warsaw.

In the spring of 1943 Maria Lewi-Kurowska was already on the "Aryan" side. She planned to get her surviving sisters out too, but she lost contact with them after the beginning of the uprising in the ghetto. Maria did everything to rescue them until one night she had the following dream:

[57] "Pudełko też chce być ważne," Robert Walenciak's conversation with Erna Rosenstein, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 14–15, 2008, *Wysokie Obcasy* supplement. Text retrieved from the Gazeta.pl website.

> I dreamed that I was in my bed in that little room of ours and the door opens up wide and my grandfather comes in – Beniamin Lewi, who has always looked like a saint from a portrait, with his long white beard and rapt face. He comes in, straitened, along with the whole family from the ghetto. He tells everybody to stand before him and says, "Here they are, I've gotten all of them out!"[58]

Roza Rabczyk lost her parents and, one by one, all eight of her siblings in the Warsaw and Otwock ghettoes. She managed to protect her youngest brother, aged 10, the longest. They fled together to Świder, where she left him at a landlord's to go to Warsaw for a day to find a shelter for him. When she returned the next day she concluded the following:

> [M]y brother was not there. I do not know whether [the landlord] had driven him away or handed him over to the Germans. He said that he had not seen him leave. I ran around looking for him, crying, intending to poison myself. He was nowhere to be found. I still do not know what happened to him. At night I dreamed about mother. She said, "I took him to be with me." And this is how I became the only one left from my big family.[59]

Lejb Rochman, who was hiding with four other people in a village near Mińsk Mazowiecki, recalls that they had a morning ritual of telling each other their dreams. They told "horrifying, optimistic, meaningless, and highly meaningful dreams. Most of the dreams were so horrible that they left us shuddering long after we had heard them."[60] Many of the dreams featured their dead relatives. Rochman recalls that one night his sister-in-law, Cypora, started crying in her sleep.

> I woke her up and she opened her eyes wide and said, "Why are you waking me up? Mom was just biding her farewell to me." She said, "I am setting out along a long, dark path." And she cried some more.

Rochman's wife, Estera, often dreamed about her "dead, frail grandmother sitting in the corner of our hideout, saying, 'Hush, hush, children. I'm sitting here, watching over you.'"[61]

In many dreams the dead came to show a way of rescue. The liquidation of the ghetto in Sarny began on 28 August 1942. On the third day of the operation Gitla Szwarcblat had a dream about her deceased grandfather. "[He] told me to go to Stepań, where everything was waiting for me."[62] Following his guideline, Gitla went to Stepań, where an acquainted Polish woman helped her. Gitla sur-

[58] Lewi-Kurowska, *Pamięć pozostanie*, 93.

[59] Roza Rabczyk, Relacja [Testimony], YVA, O3/1608.

[60] Lejb Rochman, *The Pit and the Trap: A Chronicle of Survival* (New York: USHMM, 1983), 34.

[61] Ibidem.

[62] Gitla Szwarcblat, Relacja [Testimony], AŻIH, 301/1237.

vived thanks to the help she received from that woman and from many other helpers. She also had an exception will to survive, perseverance, presence of mind, and determination.

Estera Deckier Abramowicz was in hiding during the deportation from Równe. She and her sister Fryda planned to leave the town after the operation and try their luck on "Aryan" papers. In her postwar testimony Ester described one of her dreams. "I had a dream about my dead father, who said, 'Children, don't go today, 'cause today's your mother's [death] anniversary.' […] Mom was murdered on Tisha B'Av."[63] Estera and her sister listened to his advice and the next night she had another dream. "I dreamt about my dead father again, who said, 'Children, go out from here to the right. You'll walk through the forest and onto a hill and then go down into the first cottage.' And we went and it was how he said in the dream. We went into the first cottage and we saw the Virgin Mary on the wall." The peasant fed them and gave them provisions for later. They survived until the liberation, having experienced a series adventures such as surviving the deportations from Budzanów and Trembola, wandering in forests and fields, and fighting in a partisan unit.

In her memoir Sabina Rachel Kałowska describes the story of her cousin Szmuel Czałczyński from Włoszczowa:

> After the Germans had begun to close the ghetto […] in September 1942 Szmuel and fifteen other young Jews escaped to a forest. They had already contacted a local Home Army detachment. They were to get weapons from the Polish partisans and organize an armed Jewish detachment. But the partisans failed to keep the appointment in the village – somebody denounced them – and a detachment of Nazis from Włoszczowa prepared a manhunt. […] Fifteen Jews died during the massacre, with Szmuel as the only survivor. […] Wounded, […] he managed to get to a nearby Polish house. The people let him in, dressed his wounds, and put him up. He was then brought to old Mularczyk, whom he paid for a hideout and board. One night Szmuel woke up in the middle of a strange dream. His mother had come to him in the dream and said, "Son, you're sleeping here while they want to kill you." Woken up, he heard them talking about him, planning to take him to the forest and kill him there. He went downstairs to the landlords who got scared by his sudden appearance and he firmly said that he had survived once and that he would not let anybody kill him the second time either. If something happens to him, they would die too – he threatened them. He stayed at their place. They sheltered him until the end of the war.[64]

[63] Ester Deckier Abramowicz, Relacja [Testimony], YVA, O3/3067. Tisha B'Av – fast day on the ninth day of the month of Av; day of mourning, commemorating the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. In Jewish calendar the holiday is celebrated either in July or in the first half of August.

[64] Sabina Rachel Kałowska, *Uciekać, żeby żyć* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2000), 237–238.

Miriam Kuperhand's dead mother carried out a different kind of "rescue mission." Miriam (born in 1926) was hiding with her older brother Mojżesz after their escape from the ghetto in Siemiatycze. They wandered in the area, looking for a shelter. Her father was hiding in a nearby barn with her stepmother and stepsister. They heard false rumors that Miriam and Mojżesz had been killed. The father blamed himself and he became so depressed that he tried to hang himself.

> One night when he and his stepdaughter were sleeping […], he removed his belt, threw it over a beam under the roof, made a noose, and put it around his neck […]. My stepmother soon woke up. […] The ghost of my mother, may she rest in peace, came to her […]. "Listen to me, Rojza," said my mother. "Szlomo needs you now. He is trying to hang himself from a rafter and it will be too late in a minute. Tell him that his children are alive and that they will soon join you and that I am watching over you the whole time. You'll survive. Tell him that."[65]

Rojza woke up and managed to rescue her husband. Miriam and Mojżesz joined them after several days and the entire family all survived the war.

Pnina Chaiet Potasznik escaped with her friend from the ghetto in Wołożyn during its liquidation. Driven off, the two women wandered from village to village for months. In her testimony Pnina recalls the following: "Winter came. Hungry, ragged and cold, we decided to commit suicide. To drown ourselves. We dreamt about one thing only, to be able to eat our full just once more." They decided to knock on a cottage one last time. "One can easily imagine what we looked like at that moment. The wife of the peasant and their five children looked at us sympathetically. They did not ask any questions. They sat us at the table and fed us." The peasants took care of them and sheltered them throughout the winter even though they were very poor. After nine quite peaceful months spent at the Kowalewskis', Pnina had the following dream: "one night I had a dream about my mother. She ordered me to leave the peasant's cottage for I was in danger. I was amazed by that dream for the whole day. Finally, I told the landlady my dream and that I was about to leave."[66] Despite the landlords' objection the girls decided to follow the guideline from the dream. They went to the forest and after some time joined a partisan unit. Soon after their departure the Germans evacuated the village of Kałdyki.

The dead sometimes appeared in the dreams of third parties and rescued their relatives. Having left the Warsaw ghetto, doctor Edward Reicher was in hiding on the "Aryan" side. As most Jews in such a situation, he often had to leave the apartment immediately and ended up on the street. One evening when he had nowhere to go he was saved by a prostitute on Koszykowa Street who invited him over. That decent woman sheltered him for several weeks. Whenever

[65] Miriam Kuperhand, Saul Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 49.

[66] Pnina Chaiet Potasznik, Relacja [Testimony], YVA, O3/1399.

she had a client she hid Reicher in the bathtub. One day she woke him up early in the morning and:

> "I had a strange dream, doctor," she said disconcerted. "I saw my whole life but backwards, from today back to my early youth. I saw my mother in the dream – that good, loving woman. She went with me to a church where I saw thousands of skulls. They were all moving. Mother took my hand and said that I was in danger!" Róża looked at me attentively. She was very shaken. "Doctor, this is a warning. Leave as soon as possible. Leave my apartment before something bad happens." I hastily washed and shaved myself. I cordially thanked her for her hospitality […] and left my asylum. That day nothing bad happened at Róża's, but three days later the Gestapo stormed into her apartment at night. They were looking for a Jew.[67]

The dead rescued the living indirectly and directly, they supported them and gave them hope. Gita Hopfeld's husband was killed by the Germans. The woman escaped from her home village of Sadurki just before the deportations and she wandered with two children in the area. Driven off and let in for several days, she wandered in the forests and fields. Discouraged and exhausted, she prayed to God for rescue. This is how she described the events of one night in her memoir: "[W]hen I finally fell asleep my deceased mother appeared in my dream. She came to me smiling and handed me a bottle of warm milk. '*Dos iz far di kinderlech*' (it is for the children), she said in Yiddish and disappeared. I woke up and I was somehow comforted by that dream."[68] Chanina Malachi was comforted by his mother in a similar way. Let me quote a fragment of the diary he kept with his wife while in hiding:

> I dreamt that while I was crossing the street I saw a woman standing on a hill in a very elegant outfit. I looked at her carefully and attentively and I came to the conclusion that it was mother. God bless her. She looked extraordinary. I grabbed her sobbing that things were so bad for me. She comforted me saying the following words, "It'll be fine, but don't you leave here."[69]

Chanina survived in that hideout until the end of the war.

But not all encounters with the dead were helpful or brought consolation. Such visits were sometimes painful. Mordko Breitbart escaped from a transport to Treblinka and was in hiding for over a year in a hole under Genia Bejenke's barn in Nowa Wieś. He took notes on pieces of paper. This is what he wrote in October 1943:

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[67] Edward Reicher, *W ostrym świetle dnia. Dziennik żydowskiego lekarza 1939–1945* (London: Libra Books, 1989), 113.

[68] Gitel Hopfeld, *At the Mercy of Strangers: Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland*, trans. Simcha Simchovitch (Oakville–Niagara Falls: Mosaic Press, 2005), 22.

[69] Hinda and Chanina Malachi, Dziennik [Diary], YVA, O3/3379, entry of 12 June 1944.

> [O]ne time at night here I saw granddad and grandma, granddad was crying uncontrollably. I saw only old people during the entire night, I saw them being escorted, I heard shots, I saw their pale faces and I saw daddy too, he was standing in front of granddad. I heard him tell him it's not true that people are being burnt and granddad wept, the whole night was a nightmare.[70]

Sometimes the dead were demanding and firm. In the summer of 1942 Mojsze Klajman was sent from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka, where he was selected for transport to a labor camp. Totally stunned, he did not know where he was or what was happening. He had a dream on the first night:

> [M]y mother came to me and sat on the floor. "My child, my only consolation," she says. "You're the last one left from our entire family. It's highly probable that you'll survive and you must avenge our blood, our having been innocently cremated. How horrible the death in the chambers was." She told me that she had suffered so much that she had bitten her fingers off. "Don't you sit idly, you must take revenge!"[71]

In his diary Mojsze often referred to his mother's order to take revenge. He participated in the uprising in Treblinka. He managed to escape and survived until the end of the war sheltered by a peasant.

Remorse was another unpleasant aspect of the Jews' contacts with their beloved dead. This is how Rózia Wagnerowa, who was hiding in the Lwów suburbs, described in her diary a dream she had after an exceptionally hard day:

> After I had managed to fall asleep early in the morning I had a horrible yet highly meaningful dream. I was in the ghetto during an operation, the last liquidation operation. I was safe, but my whole family fell victim to the operation. They did not take them right away but let them go back home. They told me that each of them had been shot in the heart and that death would come only after a few days. I was dumbstruck out of terror. For I could see all of them alive in front of me and I could not believe the story about the bullets in their hearts. "It might not be so, it might be a hallucination," I whispered in a faint voice. "But no, it's real," they claimed. Mommy was lying in bed. Everybody sat down around her. I stood on the side and begged them sobbing to forgive me that I would stay alive. But nobody replied. My sisters just looked at each other. I saw reproach in that gaze instead of forgiveness. I burst out in tears and woke up.[72]

Aba Arie Weinstein felt similar remorse about the fact that he was alive while his relatives had died. On 18 September 1941 he wrote: "I dreamt that Papa and

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[70] Morris Breitbart, *Awaiting a Miracle* (Parker, CO: Outskirts Press, 2007), entry of 10 October 1943, photocopy of the original on page 10. The quotation follows the original.

[71] Mojsze Klajman, Pamiętnik [Memoir], AŻIH, 302/118. Translated from Yiddish by Anna Szyba.

[72] Rózia Basseches-Wagnerowa, Dziennik [Diary], YVA, E/1144, entry of 23 June 1943.

my brother Benjamin came to us to the barn. We were elated but our joy subsided after papa's question, 'Where are your mother and little Jehuda?' Józef, Aba's brother who was hiding with him, had a similar dream that night. On 21 July 1942 Józef also "dreamt about Papa, who was crying and told us: 'Oh, if only Jehudinka were with you, wouldn't you feel better?'"[73]

Dreams about the Past and Future

Most of the dreams presented were painful, bad, or unpleasant. Even those which brought some guidance or rescue included an element of anxiety and fear. But there were dreams which did bring relief and rest. Brandla Siekierka recorded two pleasant dreams: on 26 June 1944 ("At least we have wonderful dreams. Last night I was on a train, I was a human being together with other people") and July 4 ("I had a good night, full of good dreams.").[74] Provided that they did not contain references to the Holocaust, dreams about the past brought consolation and relief. Memories of the pre-war period's cheerful, peaceful life brought momentary relief. In the fall of 1942 Aba Arie Weinstein wrote, "Last night was very pleasant for me. I dreamt that I was with my family – parents and brothers – everybody was alive and we were together."[75] Mordko Breitbart had a similar dream. He fondly described his dream's recollection of his home and his playing with his friends:

> [A] dream of joy and youth. The ground is covered with snow falling in tiny snowflakes. He is standing among his friends, both boys and girls, giving orders to commence a race. Next to them are the toboggans they'll race on in the evening. […] And after such an evening-time race one comes back home happy, to one's parents and sisters, and mother's in the small kitchen. […] Supper is waiting on the table.[76]

There are just a few dreams about the future in the collection. A fragment of Mieczysław Pokorny's reflection on dreams:

> [W]e dream about the blessed end of the war extremely seldom. Perhaps it seems so distant and we have so little hope to live to that moment that a world without the war, without the Nazi rule, does not exist even in dreams. We need to admit that dreams about the end of the war do bring us some relief and consolation, but they are like a deceptive mirage in a desert.[77]

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[73] Gefen, *Hope in Darkness*, entries of 18 September 1941 and 21 July 1942, pp. 13 and 82.

[74] AŻIH, 302/123, Pamiętnik Brandli (Bronki) Siekierki z d. Fiszbajn [Diary of Brandla (Bronka) Siekierka née Fiszbajn].

[75] Gefen, *Hope in Darkness*, entry of 4 August 1942, p. 104.

[76] Breitbart, *Awaiting a Miracle*, entry of 16 November 1943, photocopy of the original on p. 14.

[77] Mieczysław Pokorny [Parker], Dziennik [Diary], YVA, O25/105, entry of November 1943.

Total emersion in the present, mobilization to survive each new day – from morning until evening – exhausted the Jews mentally and left little space for thoughts about the future in their subconscious. But they often talked about the future during the day. Diaries contain many passages regarding various hopes, plans, and ideas as to what would happen after the war. The Jews recorded their dreams, doubts, and projects for their future lives.

Understandably, during the day most of the time horizon was occupied by the present and the future. The former required constant attention, while the latter could be shaped totally freely following one's fantasies and imagination, which surely brought some relief. Not only because, from the psychological point of view, fantasizing is a creative process that decreases emotional tension, but also because it allowed the isolated, dependent, and humiliated people to maintain some self-esteem, dignity, and sense of identity. I suppose that during the day the Jews repressed their tragic past memories, for they occasioned destructive feelings that sapped their will and made it more difficult to keep the discipline and stout heart necessary for survival. Those feelings suppressed during the day and pushed into the subconscious found their manifestation in dreams. This might be why the dead are so present in them.

Aaron Elster, aged 11, found an exceptional way to survive the period when he was hiding alone in an attic. Every day his helpers gave his some food and emptied the bucket with waste. He spent two years on a bundle of hay, unable to go out or make any sound. He was constantly hungry and had nightmares. A fragment of his memoir:

> Nights drag by more than days. At night it is more difficult to endure the ice-cold temperatures, darkness, loneliness, and the dirt that surrounds me. I have been plagued by horrible nightmares, which I wake up from at the last moment, right when they are about to kill me. They are so terrifying that I cannot go back to sleep. I just lie there, shuddering and thinking about various painful ways to die. I am sure that if I give in to tiredness and fall asleep the nightmare will resume and I will once again be forced to go through the final moments before death.[78]

Loneliness, hunger, exhaustion, and suffering brought Aaron to a state of psychological derealization and depersonalization. The reality that surrounded him no longer felt real and the boy freed himself from his body. The fact that the world seemed unreal to him and that he had a feeling of being outside his own body (usually considered a mental disorder) proved to be what saved him. Aaron Elster spent two years alone in the attic suspended between dream and reality, in a trance of daydreaming and nightmares. At the same time, fantasies about the future consoled him.

[78] Aaron Elster, *I Still See Her Haunting Eyes: The Holocaust & a Hidden Child Named Aaron* (Peoria, IL: BF Press, 2008).

The dream Zbigniew Grabowski had in July 1942 was an exceptional kind of dream about the future. It offered consolation and relief and allowed him to free himself of fear. Here is the description of the dream from his memoir:

> The year 1942 was another horrible year of German victories and gradual extermination of the Jews. The Germans ruled throughout Europe, from the Pyrenees to the Caucasus and from North Cape to Crete. […] It seemed that there was no hope. And it was then in July 1942 when I had a dream which played a significant role in my life. I dreamed that another ten years had passed, that it was July 1952. The Germans ruled everywhere and I was in France. I was a member of *maquis* – the underground. I was in Lyon. I entered a building where a meeting was supposed to take place. It was quite dark in the staircase. I was walking up the stairs when suddenly the door opened before me on the second floor and somebody jumped out with a pistol and fired right at me. I felt pain. I fell on my back, down the stairs, and I died. I woke up. Not due to fear but with relief! "And so I have ten years of life ahead of me. I have nothing to fear!" The faith in the dream helped me at the most difficult moments: under the shelling during the Uprising, during interrogation at the Gestapo. I knew that I would survive.

He adds a comment:

> Many years later, after 1952, when I first came to the south of France, I made a special trip to Lyon. I looked for old buildings similar to the one from my dream. I entered various staircases. I awaited a shot, but nobody shot at me.[79]

Conclusion

We are not free in dreams, for we do not have free will. We cannot do what we want to. The dream imposes topics, characters, themes, and the manners of their portrayal. Even though we can fly in a dream, move in time, meet the dead, and have other unreal experiences, even so we cannot escape the dream itself. The dream gives us freedom while keeping us in its power, enclosing us within its own narration.

Do dreams only reflect some deep hidden wisdom, or are they also a source of new knowledge? Without answering this difficult question we may still use the information that dreams provide us. We can treat them as a source of knowledge on the experience of people in a unique existential situation. Dreams influence the course of events provided that, as in the examples described, their authors believe in them and take them into consideration while planning their actions in real life. Dreams also prove that the outside world permeates the deepest levels

[79] Zbigniew Ryszard Grabowski, "W skorodowanym zwierciadle pamięci. Szkic autobiograficzny," *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki* 50, 2 (2005): 24–25.

of our psyche. Dreams show how the experience of the Holocaust penetrates the subconscious of the dreamer and determined the content of his dreams.

Dreams can be a historical source for Holocaust research. They present historical events through the emotions and experiences of their participants. As I said at the beginning of this article, dreams are a testimony to their times – for example to the period of terror – and they give us insight into the feelings and emotions of people who lived during that period. Dreams from the Holocaust period should be approached in a similar way: they tell us a lot about the experiences of Jews during the war. For the Holocaust is not only a historical event. It is a human experience, a liminal existential experience, an experience of one's own death during one's life. To examine the broad psychological aspects of the Holocaust experience we need sources other than the "objective" documents that describe the course of the events. Dreams can be such a source. Records of dreams are a truly exceptional kind of personal document, for they are ever so intimate, private, and emotional. Usually they are told only to one's family or friends and in confidence, for they reveal a certain intimate area. We are aware that they are an element of our inner world, of our personal experience, to which we do not want to invite everybody. Thus, we should appreciate all the more the openness of those who entrust us with their dreams, inviting us into their intimate sphere.

Dreams are a subtle, sensitive, soft, and delicate source – one we should approach very delicately and carefully. Simultaneously, they are powerful documents and the more influence they had on the dreamers' actions the more convincing they are. They are also an example of a delusion – a very strong feeling that the fiction which one experiences is real. What should be regarded as an illusion, fantasy, or hallucination in the normal world, becomes a delusion in the Holocaust world. And that fiction is more real than the real world, which simply cannot be understood, let alone accepted. Contrasted with what the Jews experience in reality, which completely defies logic, dreams are coherent stories full of sense and meaning.

An analysis of Holocaust-period dreams shows us alternative ways to experience and express it. Dreams talk about the deeply hidden inner reality. They can be contrasted with innumerable testimonies, and, first and foremost, movies, which show only the outside aspects of that experience. Dreams reveal the realm of experiences of people completely overwhelmed by suffering, perhaps sometimes in a more apt way than the cinema or the words written in diaries and memoirs. But dreams do it in their own fashion and in a unique language, one often difficult to understand. It is not easy to make sense of what one remembers from a dream – of all those unclear, unconnected, absurd moments, and strange images and symbols. What is logical in a dream proves impossible to put into words during the day. To remember a dream requires a certain effort. Dream images often disappear after one opens his eyes. We spontaneously remember those which for some reason are important, striking, or powerful. These clear

and meaningful "major" dreams are the ones that get remembered and (sometimes) recorded – they are the ones we have access to today.

Dreams are a way to learn about human emotions, experiences, and fears. They also contain elements absent from diaries and memoirs written during the day. First and foremost, they show a reality which is different from the one described in consciously written reflections and memoirs. We learn from them, for example, that the present and the past, which are present during the day, are pushed away at night by the experiences of the recent past, which dominate the emotional landscape of Jews in hiding. Dreams also tell us that love is more powerful than death, for we do not stop loving somebody only because of that person's death. Family bonds continue to exist and relatives still care about one another.

But more importantly, vision images of terror and horror are among the most moving ones, as there is no censorship. Unrestrained imagination produces images which would not be produced in reality, for the conscious mind would filter them to reduce the pain. The dream world knows no limitations. Everything is allowed here and the visions of nightmares give us unexceptional access to the experience of the Holocaust, unavailable in other sources.

The several dozen dreams presented in this article allow us to raise the curtain of the ineffableness of the Holocaust experience – if only a little. Thanks to their uniqueness, dreams enable us – sometimes better than written words – to imagine what seems impossible to convey and totally incompressible and inaccessible to those who did not directly experience it. Perhaps the inexpressible can be approached through Holocaust-period dreams and their receiver's empathy. The incomprehensible cannot be expressed during the day, but the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust is expressed in dreams.

Translated by *Anna Brzostowska*

Abstract
Dreams are most often used during psychotherapy. Nonetheless, they can also be a historical source – a testimony to the experiences of specific people in a certain cultural context at a specific moment in history. Dreams from the Holocaust period show the diversity of emotions experienced by the victims, their inexpressible experiences, and their longing for their relatives.

Key words
Holocaust, Jews, dreams