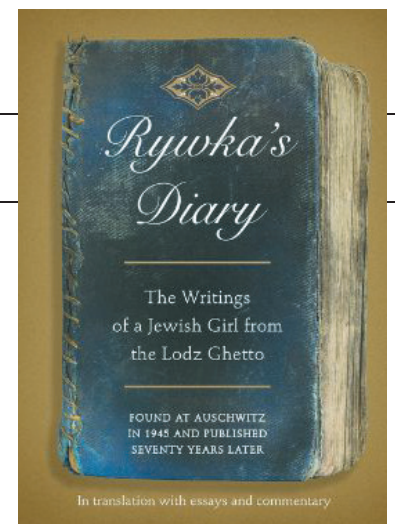


A Girl, A Diary, A Mystery



SAJE program tells of the beauty and anguish of a young diarist in WWII.

Elizabeth Applebaum | Special to the Jewish News

When the Soviet Army liberated Auschwitz, a physician named Zinaida Berezovskaya made a chance discovery that became both an extraordinary revelation and one of World War II's great mysteries.

Near the crematoria, Berezovskaya found a 112-page notebook, heavily stained but still readable, the penmanship vertical, neat and strong.

It was a diary, written in Polish, and for more than 70 years it remained safe, but mostly forgotten, in Berezovskaya's home. When Berezovskaya died, her granddaughter inherited the notebook and began to research its story.

At 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13, the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit's SAJE (Seminars for Adult Jewish Enrichment), in partnership with the Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus and the Jewish Family and Children's Services Holocaust Center of San Francisco (JFCS), will present "The Diary of Rywka Lipszyc," the story of a Jewish girl in the Holocaust, her remarkable diary and the many questions surrounding her disappearance.

Rywka (pronounced Rivka) Bajla Lipszyc was born in 1929. When the Nazis came to power, her family was forced to the Lodz Ghetto, where Rywka's parents died and where, from October 1943 to April 1944, Rywka kept a diary. Her entries are painful, describing the brutal conditions in the ghetto; thoughtful, as Rywka considers her relationship to God; and inspirational, as the writer reflects on the world and her struggles to remain hopeful.

From Lodz, Rywka was sent to Auschwitz, transferred to Gross-Rosen, survived a death march and was imprisoned at Bergen-Belsen, which was liberated in 1945 by the British Army. Rywka survived Bergen-Belsen and was taken to a hospital — the last place where any record of her life exists.

Dr. Yedida Kanfer is coordinator of Education Services at the JFCS Holocaust

Center in San Francisco and one of the guest speakers at the Dec. 13 event.

"Teens today relate to 14-year-old Rywka, as do adults who remember their own adolescent angst," she said of the diary. "Rywka's teenage years, of course, were compounded by the harshness of ghetto life, Nazi dehumanization and genocide. In these circumstances, Rywka was one of few youth diarists we know of who directly addressed the question of faith. Rywka lost both of her parents in the ghetto and two of her siblings, yet her religious belief gave her hope to persevere."

She added that "Rywka shows us that the way to combat hatred and intolerance — whether during the Holocaust or in today's world — is through hope and love. She dreamed that people would someday read her words, and the diary itself can be seen as a prayer: a call for a better future."

Published in 2014, Rywka's diary already has been translated into French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Slovakian, with Hebrew and Polish language editions in progress.

"The Diary of Rywka Lipszyc" will include lectures and a 17-minute film presentation. The event will be held at the Berman Center for the Performing Arts, 6600 W. Maple Road in West Bloomfield.

Also on the panel will be moderator Dr. Jan Maisel, associate clinical professor at the University of California in San Francisco, and Dr. Anna Muller, an assistant professor at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and curator of the Holocaust exhibit at the Second World War Museum in Poland.

Tickets are \$12 and include a meet-and-greet, book sale and dessert reception. To purchase: theberman.org or (248) 661-1900.

The JFCS Holocaust Center in San Francisco would appreciate any information that might help in the search for what happened to Rywka Lipszyc. Please contact the Tauber Holocaust Library at HolocaustCenter@jfcs.org. *