



Veln mir lebn? Drawing, Beate Schützmann-Krebs

The Last Way

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| <p>ikh bin arayngefaln in eyn vagon tsuzamen mit mayn mume un feter. oykh Yakev, der eks-komendant fun lager iz geven in zelbn vagon (1): <i>ikh, Berl, Blumke un Rokhele Zakheym, Henekh Muglos mit der tokhter Mertshe, Yisroel Kalinovitsh, froy un tsvey kinder, Avroheml Efraymzon (Shishkes) (2) mit der froy, zun un tokhter. Dode Kirpitsch, muter un bruder Zundl</i> (zikh gevorf'n fun tsug), Yankl Kozoltshik (Yankl „Khazer“), Moyshe Skovronski, froy un tsvey kinder. (1)</p> <p><i>mayn feter Yisroel Skvoranik („Afrikaners“) mit der froy Peshe un tsvey yinglekh, Lozerke un Hershele, Nyomke Skavranik un froy- Dvore Manikhes, Hersh'l Abramovitsh,</i> (zikh gevorf'n fun tsug), <i>Motl Kirzner un Yudl Kaplan,</i> ikh hob farnumen a vinkl un gezesn farshidene gedankn un bilder zaynen mir gekumen far di oygn.</p> <p>eyntselne etlekhe yidn hobn gezogt tehilim un di froyen hobn geveynt.</p> <p>tsu undzere vagonen hot men nokh tsugetshepet di reshtlekh yidn fun Sokolke un tsuzamen hobn zikh ongezaml't 1200 mentshn. etlekhe sho zaynen mir geshtanen oyfn vokzal un farnakht hot zikh der tsug gerirt in veg arayn.</p> <p>yederer iz geven zikher, az men firt undz keyn Treblinke, bay Malkin(3).</p> | <p>Together with my aunt and uncle, I fell into a wagon. Besides me, there were in the same wagon (1): <i>Yakob Kozaltshik, (Yankl "Khazer"),</i> the former commandant of the camp, <i>Berl, Blumke and Rochele Zakheim, Henech Muglos with his daughter Mertshe, Israel Kalinovitch, his wife and two children, Abraham'l Efraimson (Shishkes') (2) with his wife, son and daughter. Dode Kirpitch with his mother and his brother Zundl, (who threw himself off the train), Moische Skovronski, his wife and two children.</i></p> <p>Furthermore, as mentioned above, my uncle <i>Israel Skvoranik ("The African's"), his wife Peshe and two sons, Lozerke un Hershele, Nyomke Skavranik and his wife - Dvore (Deborah) Maniches, Hersh'l Abramovitch, (who threw himself off the train), Motl Kirzner un Yudl Kaplan.</i> After sitting down in a corner, various thoughts and images came to my mind.</p> <p>A few Jews recited psalms, and the women wept.</p> <p>In addition, the remaining Jews from Sokolka were squeezed into our wagons, so that we were 1200 people in total. We stood at the station for a few more hours until the train started moving in the evening.</p> <p>Everyone was sure that we would be taken to Treblinka via Malkin(3).</p> | |
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- 1) I have combined several sentences here, because there was a duplication. Yakov (Yankl) Kozaltshik was called "The Pig", because he was so tall and bulky.
- 2) Shishkes= in general, a shishke is a pine cone. Given the grammatical form, Shishke could be a derivative of the masculine given name Chizkiyahu, so the expression could mean something like Shishke's son or of Shishke's family.
- 3) Malkin= **Małkinia Górna**. The station of this village was at that time a stopover on the Warsaw-Białystok railroad line for those trains that transported, i.e., residents of the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka II extermination camp



Małkinia Górna, tracks, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Ma%C5%82kinia_G%C3%B3rna?uselang=de#/media/File:Ma%C5%82kinia_-_stacja_kolejowa_3.JPG, licensed: [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/), author: Adam-dalekin-pole (own work), no changes made, File:Małkinia - stacja kolejowa 3.JPG, Erstellt: 12. Januar 2014, 15:25:24

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| <p>Yakev hot oyfgebrokhn dos fentsterl un a grupe yungvarg hot zikh gegreyt tsum shpringen. der tsug iz gefloygn in fuln gang. ikh hob oykh bashlosn tsu shpringen. mir hobn ayngeshtelt a ray. der ershter iz geshprungen Shepsl Kushnyers yingl, Moyshela, un don (dan) der- der tate.</p> <p>azoy hobn zikh gevorf'n eyne nokh nokh di tsveyte in fuln loyf fun tsug. a muter hot tsugeredt ire tsvey kinder tsum shpringen un nokh aleyn geholf'n dem yingele baym fentster. der hoypt-initsyator iz geven Yakev, velkher iz geshtanen baym fentster un hot ayedn geholf'n zikh varfn fun tsug.</p> <p>ven ikh bin tsugegangen tsum fentster un zikh gevolt oyfheybn tsum aroysspringen, iz tsugelof'n mayn mume un mikh getsoygn baym arbl. mit trern in di oygn hot zi mikh gebetn ikh zol nisht shpringen. ikh zol forn tsuzamen mit zey un vos es vet zayn mit zey, vet oykh zayn mit mir.</p> <p>mayne tsvey kuzins hobn zikh ongehangen oyf mir un gebetn, az ikh zol nisht shpringen. dervayl iz der tsug farbaygefor'n Bialystok un ikh bin a tsemishter geshtanen bay der vant fun vagon nisht visndik vos ikh zol makhn.</p> <p>Yakev aleyn hot zikh oysgeton biz tsum hemd un di kleyder aroysgeshmishn durkhn fentster. er hot gevolt aleyn itst shpringen. zayn dikayt hot im</p> | <p>Yakob broke open the small window, and a group of young people prepared to jump out. The train flew along at full speed. I, too, decided to jump. We lined up in a row. First to jump was Shepsl Kushn(y)er's boy Moishela - and then his father himself.</p> <p>And so one by one jumped out of the train, which was running at full speed. A mother encouraged her two children to jump and helped her little son at the window. But finally, the main initiator was Yakob, who stood at the window, helping everyone to throw themselves off the train.</p> <p>When I went out of the window to pull myself up to jump out, my aunt rushed to me and tugged me by the sleeve. With tears in her eyes, she asked me not to jump. I should go together with them, staying with them at all costs, whatever might happen to us.</p> <p>Also my two cousins held me and asked not to jump. Meanwhile, the train was just passing Bialystok, and I stood bewildered against the wall out of the wagon, unable to make a decision.</p> <p>Yakob stripped down to his shirt and threw his clothes out the window. He now wanted to jump</p> | |
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| <p>geshtert. dos fentsterl iz geven tsu kleyn far zayn ibernormaln kerper.</p> <p>ven er hot gezen, az ale zayne onshtrengungen zaynen umzist, hot er aroysgenumen a fleshele sam un dos oysgetrunkn. dos sam hot oyf im nisht gevirkt genug. zayn harts iz geven shtarker vi dos sam. er iz gelegn oyf der erd un gerevet vi a gekoylte khaye. a vayser shoym hot zikh im bavizn oyf di lipn. keyn vaser iz bay keynem nisht geven men hot bloyz gekent krign dem frost fun di breter un mit dem hot men im take opperatevet.</p> <p>yetst hot men zikh dernentert tsu Malikn. di etlekhe yidn hobn ongehoynbn zogn tehilim mit trern in di oygn. Zeydl Filipski hot ongeton</p> | <p>himself. However, his corpulence did not allow it; the window was too small for his oversized body.</p> <p>Realizing that all his efforts were in vain, he took out a vial of poison and drank it off. But the toxin did not work sufficiently on him; his heart was stronger than it, and he now was lying on the ground and roaring like an animal after the slaughterer's cut, with white foam on his lips. None of us had water, we could only scrape the frost off the boards, but we actually managed to save him with it.</p> <p>We were now approaching Malkin. Again, some Jews, with tears in their eyes, started reciting psalms. Zeydl Filipski put on</p> | |
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| <p>talis un tfilen (1). bay yedn hobn zikh getreyzelt hent un fis. ot zaynen mir shoyn bald in Malkin un do veln mir undzere lebns leygn oyf der vog-shol.</p> | <p>his talis (tallit, prayer shawl) and tefilin (1). Our hands and feet were shaking: In the next moment, we will be in Malkin, and our lives will be put on the line!</p> | |
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- (1) tfilen, tefilin = the Jewish phylactery, capsules of black leather, from which hang black leather straps (retsues), and in which lie pieces of parchment with prayers or verses. The tefilin are worn by adult men (sometimes women, as well) on the head and on the left arm, most commonly early in the morning on weekdays when praying.

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| <p>ot flit der tsug vi feyl un boygn farbay der statsye Malkin un blaybt nisht shteyn. a freyd iz gevorn bay yedn oyfn harts. di frume yidn hobn gezogt, az dos tehilim-zogn hot geholfn. itst firt men undz ergets oyf arbet, vi der direktor fun fabrik hot tsugezogt veln mir arbetn un leben vi in palatsn...</p> <p>mayn mume iz tsu mir tsugegangen un hot mir gezogt: „nu, ikh hob dir gezogt zolst nisht shpringen, vestu zayn tsuzamen mit undz!“</p> <p>ikh hob oyf dem gornisht geentfert. shveygndik bin ikh gezesn un ongekukt yedern bazunder- di sheyninke kinderlekh mit di shvartsinke, lebedike eygelekh, vi zey hobn zikh getulyet tsu der muter. ot her ikh vi dos yingele Valodke, velkhn der krist hot tsurikgebrakht, fregt oyf rusish: veln mir leben? vet men undz nisht shisn? un zayne lipelekh hobn zikh derbay getreysl.</p> <p>mayne tsvey kuzindlekh, Lozerke un Hershele, zaynen geshtanen leben mir un gehaltn zeyere hentlekh oyf mayn aksl:-Avroheml, vu firt men undz? fregn zey mikh mit a zis shtimele-du vest nisht shpringen, Avroheml, du vest zayn mit undz!</p> <p>a tifer zifts iz geven mayn entfer. kh'hob getsertlt mayne tsvey kuzindlekh mit di oygn bloyz, vayl verter zaynen fun haldz nisht aroys.</p> | <p>But, there the train flies past Malkin station in a flash, without stopping! We felt an inexpressible joy! The pious Jews claimed that their psalm prayers helped us: Now, we would be led somewhere to work, as the director of the factory had promised us; we "would work and live like in a palace"...</p> <p>My aunt came to me saying, "Well, I told you not to jump! Now you will be with us!"</p> <p>I didn't answer, just sat there in silence and looked closely at everyone in the wagon. There were the beautiful children with their black, lively eyes- how they snuggled up to their mothers! And now I hear Valodke, the boy whom the Christian brought, asking in Russian: "Will we survive? Won't they shoot us?" And his lips are trembling...</p> <p>My two young cousins, Lozerke and Hershele, stood beside me, their hands high on my shoulders, and asked in their sweet voices, "Avroheml, where are they taking us? You won't jump, Avroheml, you will stay with us!"</p> <p>A deep sigh was my response. I comforted my cousins, if only with my eyes, for the words stuck in my throat.</p> | |
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Di sheyninke kinderlekh, drawing: Beate Schützmann-Krebs

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| <p>mir forn in der rikhtung tsu Varshe. s'iz shoy'n gut fintster. keyner shloft nisht. es hert zikh in der tifer fintsternish a shver ziftn un klaperayen fun fis. der frost iz zeyer a shtarker. di vent in vagon zaynen vays. der vayser frost dint als vaser. men kratst im mit lefl fun di vent un mit dem lesht men dem brenendikn dursh't.</p> <p>di ershte nakht iz farbay. inderfri zaynen mir ongekumen keyn Varshe. dortn zaynen mir shteyn geblibn a gantsn tog. fun undzer vagon zaynen aroysgeshrungen neyn perzon. ikh vel do brengen zeyere nehmen.</p> <p>der ershter iz geshprungen <i>Moyshe'le Kushn(y)r</i>. dan Shepsl Kuzshn(y)er, <i>Yosl un Khayim Braverman, Leybl Naliber, Hershl Abramovitch, Sonye Funk, Avroheml Kleynbard, Zeydl Yakobinski, Dora Kirpitsch un ir bruderl, Zundl Kirpitsch.</i></p> <p>mer hot men shoy'n nisht</p> | <p>We're traveling in the direction of Warsaw. It is already dark, but no one is asleep. In the deep gloom, heavy sighs and knocking noises from (cold) feet can be heard. The frost is very strong, and therefore, the walls in the wagon are white. We scrape off the frost with spoons and use it, as a substitute for water, to quench our burning thirst.</p> <p>The first night is over. Early in the morning we arrived in Warsaw, where we stopped for a whole day. Nine people jumped out of our wagon, here I give their names:</p> <p>The first was <i>Moishele Kushn(y)er</i>. Then followed <i>Shepsl Kushn(y)er, Yosl and Chaim Braverman, Leibl Naliber, Hershl Abramovitch, Sonye Funk, Avroheml (Abraham'l) Kleinbard, Zeydl Yakobinski, Dora Kirpitch and her brother, Zundl Kirpitch.</i></p> <p>However, the wagon was now strictly guarded so</p> | |
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| <p>gekent shpringen, vayl der vagon iz gevorn shtreng bavakht. in Varshe hot zikh nokh der dursh't bay yedn fargresert un keyn frost oyf di vent iz shoy'n nit geven.</p> | <p>it was no longer possible to jump. In Warsaw our thirst worsened even more, because there was no more frost on the walls.</p> | |
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| <p>dan hot men genumen betn di postns, zey zoln brengen abisl vaser. far a kleyn tepele vaser hot men opgegebn a zeygerl oder a fingerl.</p> <p>farnakht hot der tsug zikh vider gerirt fun ort. ven men hot gefregt bay di postns vuhin men firt undz, hobn zey geentfert, az zey veysn aley n oykh nisht. di eltere yidn mit <i>Zeydl Filipski</i> berosh hobn dem tehilim (1) fun hant nisht aroysgelozn. azoy zaynen mir opgeforn di tsveyte nakht un keyner hot nisht gevust vu men fort.</p> <p>oyfn dritn tog zaynen mir farbaygeforn a banstantsye vu es hobn gearbet baym reynikn dem shney etlekhe yidn un kristn. hart leben zey hobn gevizn mit der hant untern haldz un geshrien: me firt aykh tsu der shkhite, antloyft!</p> <p>glaykh hot zikh oyfgehoybn a geveyn fun di froyen un a shtarker tehilem zogn. oykh hobn mir gehert an oysgeshray, az men firt undz keyn Oyshvits. vu dos iz hobn mir nisht gevust. bay undz hot keyner nisht gehat gehert fun dem nomen. es hobn bloyz figurirt tsvey gehenems: Maydanek un Treblinka.</p> <p>s'iz tsugefaln di nakht. Yakev hot bafoyln men zol farbrenen alts vos men hot. <i>Ayzik Brustin</i> hot der ershter aroysgenumen a pekl gelt un es untergetsundn. nokh im hobn kimat ale, vos hobn gehat gelt, im nokhgeton.</p> | <p>We therefore asked the guards to bring us some water, but had to hand over either a watch or a finger ring for a small pot of water.</p> <p>In the evening, the train started again. When we asked the guards where we were being taken, they answered that they didn't know themselves. The older Jews with Zeydl Filipski at the head, did not take off the tehilim (1) any more. So, we left the second night, and no one knew where to.</p> <p>On the third day, we passed a railroad station where Jews and Christians were clearing away the snow. When we came close to them, they made a gesture with their hands under their throats and shouted, "Flee, you are being led to the slaughter!"</p> <p>Immediately, a weeping began among the women, and the psalm prayers became very loud. An exclamation was heard that we were being taken to Auschwitz. But no one knew where it was, we had never heard that name before. Only two hells had appeared to us so far: Maidanek and Treblinka.</p> <p>Night fell. Yakob ordered us to burn everything we still owned. <i>Aizik Brustin</i> was the first to take a bundle of banknotes and set it on fire. His example was followed by almost everyone who still had some money.</p> | |
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a fayerl hot gebrent in mitn vagon. trern zaynen gerunen bay alemen fun di oygn. fintster oyf di neshomes. khoyshekh - arum. oyf morgn fri, Dinstik, dem 21tn Yanuar, 1943, zaynen mir ongekumen oyf der ban-stantsye Oyshvits.

A little fire was burning in the middle of the wagon. We all had tears in our eyes, and a darkness settled heavily on our hearts. A complete gloom surrounded us. The next morning, Tuesday, January 21, 1943, we arrived at Auschwitz station.

1) the tehilem or tilim = Book with the 150 biblical psalm hymns attributed to King David



Auschwitz, photo courtesy of Tomek Wisniewski