

PopChassid

20 Photos That Change The Holocaust Narrative



Victims. Helpless. Downtrodden.

That's the narrative that's been spread about Jews for the last 70 years since the Holocaust. We've embraced it to our detriment. We can't seem to address antisemitism without running to the world and screaming that we're being persecuted, rather than standing up strongly in defiance, aware of our own inner strength.

The Holocaust has scarred us, a yetzer hara (sneaky bastard of a voice in our heads), that keeps trying to tell us how we are defined by our past, controlled by events that happened to us, instead of using those moments as points of growth.

And, in a weird way, that's why all those images of us looking so helpless, so gaunt, in heaps of nameless bodies, have become a morbid fascination for us. We, and by extension the rest of the world, have chosen to define the Holocaust with these images.

But there are other images. Images that show a more subtle, more true, story. A story that shows our inner power, our inner turmoil in dealing with a situation we cannot comprehend, our attempts to gain justice, and our final steps into moving above and beyond our past and into a new future.

These are the images you will see below. Some of them may be disturbing to you. Some of them may inspire you.

But in the end, they do one thing that we desperately need as a people: they tell the real story of the Holocaust. A story that goes beyond victimhood and into our present-day lives. And today, on Yom HaShoa, 2013, it's about time that story got told.

Defiance

A Jewish Rally In The US, 1937



For some reason, we don't usually hear about American Jewry during World War II, so you may be heartened to know that in 1933, American Jews organized a nation-wide boycott of Nazi-Germany. Such a show of support, in so united a way is displayed beautifully in this picture from a rally in 1937.

Baking Matzos In Hiding, 1943



This amazing photo has made the rounds recently as well. It depicts Jews in hiding during Passover in Poland, baking matzos, their faces alight and happy. As we're leaving Passover now, may we be strengthened by their resolve. Image originally found in the [Yad Vashem Archives](#).

A Light In The Darkness, 1943



This incredible image depicts Jews, not in hiding, but within an transit camp in Holland lighting a Menorah on Hanukkah. If you look carefully, you can see just how packed this room is.

A Gift For Hitler, 1944/45



This image is of a man in the [Jewish Brigade](#), a segment of the British Army that fought the Germans in Italy in 1944. The rocket says “Hitler’s Gift”.

Liberation And Its Consequences

Celebrating



Taken in Buchenwald just after its liberation by the photographer [Margaret Bourke-White](#), this image is so powerful not just because it shows the pure joy of liberation, but because it turns these men who we have almost turned into mythic creatures into normal folks. The kind that celebrate with champagne and cigarettes. I hope they're still celebrating, wherever they are.

Shabbat In Buchenwald, 1945



This photo has made the rounds after the recent passing of Rabbi Herschel Schachter, depicted leading this Shabbat service shortly after the liberation of Buchenwald. There is something beyond moving about this image that shows the prisoners, still in their garb, still in their prison, but liberated and celebrating the most important day of the week. Read more about this special rabbi in this [obituary in the New York Times](#).

Heartrending Release, 1945



This once in a lifetime image depicts Holocaust survivors at the moment of realizing they are liberated. This is such a candid, raw photo you would think it was taken on a cellphone at the spur of the moment. Read more about [the story behind this photo here](#).

Beauty Liberated, circa 1945



Seriously, how is this image not beyond famous by now? Depicting a woman at the shortly after her liberation, so skinny you can hardly see her, her face is aglow and alive. As if she was never imprisoned.

Here's [the original source for this image](#), with a few more details.

Justice? circa 1945



This is actually a cleaned up version of [a photo posted by u/FTZ on Reddit](#). It depicts his grandfather, recently liberated from the Holocaust, aiming a gun at a Nazi soldier. It's hard to know just what is happening in this photo or what happened afterwards, but it starkly depicts another side of the liberation of the Jews. Whether this photo inspires or depresses, it shows us just how complicated the idea of justice can be, and how Jews have still struggled with it so many years after the Holocaust.

Moving Forward

Buchenwald Survivors Entering Israel, 1945



From Italy To The US, 1944



This image, taken by the photographer and writer, Ruth Gruber, depicts a group of Holocaust survivors attempting to enter the United States on a ship called the Henry Gibbins that was being hunted by the Nazis. These were the only refugees to be sheltered by the United States throughout the war. Some notable passengers went on to do great things, such as, “Dr. Alex Margulies, who became a distinguished radiologist and contributed to Cat scan and MRI technology; Rolf Manfred, instrumental in developing the Minuteman missile and Polaris submarine; Leon Levitch who became a composer; and Dr. David Hendell who became a dentist and pioneered the bonding of teeth.” [Read more about Ruth Gruber and the ship here.](#)

Brothers On Their Way To Britain, circa 1946



A Survivors' Marriage, 1946



Taken in Rishon Lezion, Israel, this image depicts two Holocaust survivors at their wedding. The bride (center), is named Chana Keller, and she survived a 800 km (500 mile) death march. I can't even image the happiness being depicted in this picture.

Singing In The DP Camp, 1946



This image of an unknown teenager singing in a DP Camp (where they held Holocaust survivors for a while) is just so beautiful. There's something so special about seeing an image of so many survivors in one picture, smiling, and with this girl in the center looking absolutely joyous.

A Survivor Performs Songs He Composed In A Camp, 1965



Aleksander Kulisiewicz, a Holocaust survivor, composed 54 songs while he was in a concentration camp, and performed them for fellow inmates in secret gatherings. He later went on to perform these songs in the 60's.

A Survivor Hits A Skinhead, 1985



A group of skinheads demonstrated in the streets of Växjö, Sweden in 1985. This woman, a Holocaust survivor, was one of the first to rush in and attack these men. Moments later, thousands of angry citizens swarmed the men and chased them until they finally locked themselves in a bathroom in a train station and had to be rescued by police.

The Next Step

A Beautiful Couple, circa 1980s?



This image was shared on Reddit by u/BobtheGuy with the title, “[It’s Holocaust Remembrance Day. So here’s my adorable Holocaust surviving grandparents](#)“. Here’s a beautiful description of their journey in his own words: “They actually found a Rabbi to marry them in the camp when they learned they were getting separated. The next day they were split up to different camps and didn’t know if the other was alive for the remainder of the war. They found each other in 1945 and the rest is history.”

Looking Into The Future, circa 1990s...



This image, showing a Holocaust survivor looking into the eyes of her granddaughter, went a bit viral on Facebook, and you can read the story about [how it got digitized here](#). This is exactly why we need to digitize more and more of these incredible images.

...And The Future Looks Back...



Perhaps one of the most gorgeous photos ever taken at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem. This image shows a young religious Jew looking up into the Hall of Names, an exhibit in the museum.

A Holocaust Survivor Skydives For 85th Birthday



The moment I saw this image of this Holocaust survivor who went skydiving in San Diego with his grandson (not pictured), I knew this was the image I had to end this post on. Nothing better depicts the unlimited future for Holocaust survivors and their descendants. Nothing better encapsulates the true freedom we can have when we use our past to grow instead of hold us back. Nothing is more beautiful than a man once in bondage in a world of total freedom. May we all realize how we're also flying through the sky.

- See more at: <http://popchassid.com/photos-holocaust-narrative/#sthash.tBeQvmyW.dpuf>