

HISTORY

HEROES

LEADERSHIP

ETHICS



## FINDING LEADERSHIP

A 45-60 minute activity for 7th – 12th grade students

*Photo: Commander Boloffi, a Jewish Italian partisan, leading a column of partisans in a victory parade at the end of the war. Italy.  
Source: Musuem of Resistance*

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### Lesson Overview

Encourage your students to challenge their assumptions about leadership and authority, and inspire them to step up and make a difference. Explore leadership as a set of activities anyone can perform – regardless of who is 'the leader' using life lessons from young partisans who proved that young people can make a difference.



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# Who Are the Jewish Partisans?

**par-ti-san** *noun*: a member of an organized body of fighters who attack or harass an enemy, especially within occupied territory; a guerrilla

During World War II, the majority of European Jews were deceived by a monstrous and meticulous disinformation campaign. The Germans and their collaborators isolated and imprisoned Jews in ghettos. Millions were deported into concentration camps or death camps—primarily by convincing them that they were being sent to labor camps instead. In reality, most Jews who entered these so-called “work camps” would be starved, murdered or worked to death. Yet approximately 30,000 Jews, many of whom were teenagers, escaped the Nazis to form or join organized resistance groups. These Jews are known as the Jewish partisans, and they joined hundreds of thousands of non-Jewish partisans who fought against the enemy throughout much of Europe.

## What Did They Do?

Partisans were determined to do battle with the Germans. They were not powerful enough to attack them frontally; that was the task of Allied armies. But partisans could use speed, surprise, mobility and full knowledge of the area to attack the Germans and then escape before their enemies had time to confront them. Jewish partisans blew up thousands of German supply trains, convoys, and bridges, making it harder for the Germans to fight the war. Partisans also destroyed power plants and factories, focusing their attention on military and strategic targets, not on civilians. Jewish partisans forced the Germans to expend massive amounts of resources on combating them, disrupting their focus from multiple fronts against the Allies. One German commander called the Jews a “dangerous element” for their participation in partisan units in Russia.<sup>1</sup> In Lithuania, where Jewish partisans made up approximately 10% of all partisan fighters, they were responsible for 79% of derailed German trains and injuring nearly 50% of all enemy soldiers.<sup>2</sup> Jewish partisans saved thousands of Jewish lives, in some cases literally breaking Jews out of the confines of well-guarded ghettos, and in at least one situation, digging a tunnel to free 250 people from a ghetto. It is important to note that many partisans credit three things for their survival—luck, knowledge, and opportunity—not heroism, courage, and bravery.

## How Did Other Jews Resist?

Resistance against the Germans took many different forms. In addition to the physical resistance of the partisans and ghetto fighters, spiritual resistance took the form of prayer services, and teaching children to read Hebrew. Artistic resistance produced art and poetry in ghettos and camps. Without taking up arms, these Jews stood in defiance to the Nazis, who sought to strip Jews not only of their lives, but also of their dignity and self-respect in order to facilitate the killing process. Jews countered the Germans and their collaborators in still other ways. Smugglers sent children to safety and couriers carried messages between the ghettos. Forgers created documents to ensure Jews safe passage to non-occupied countries or create fake identity cards that allowed Jews to “pass” as non-Jews. Jews in the work camps also sabotaged guns and other products they were forced to make for the Germans.

## Why Should We Learn About the Jewish Partisans?

Most students falsely believe that Jews went “like sheep to the slaughter.” They perceive the Holocaust as a piece of Jewish history only about victimization and the loss of hope. The experience of thousands of Jewish partisans who stood up to tyranny and oppression, fought courageously—and often successfully—against the Germans, and saved countless lives is an important part of Jewish history that few students are aware of. This information has the power to transform people’s perception of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust, providing a clearer picture of Jewish heroism and character. After learning about the partisans, non-Jewish teens acquire a greater understanding about the Jewish people, leading to interfaith dialog and tolerance, while many Jewish teenagers often feel empowered, developing a stronger sense of Jewish identity and pride. The story of the Jewish partisans is empowering, and demonstrates how young people can make a positive difference in the world.



A group of Jewish members of the Lenin battalion of the Lipczany forest. 1944. Location: Belorussia. Source: Museum of Jewish Heritage

## Life Lessons of the Jewish Partisans

Most of the Jewish partisans that JPEF interviewed agreed that three important life lessons must be passed on to future generations:

- *Young people can make a difference*
- *Stand up to tyranny, oppression, and discrimination...early*
- *Never give up*

JPEF encourages educators to discuss these with their students throughout this lesson.

## What is JPEF?

The Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation develops and distributes effective educational materials about the Jewish partisans, bringing the celebration of heroic resistance against tyranny into educational and cultural organizations. JPEF produces lessons, study guides and films for 6th-12th grade History, English, Ethics, Leadership, Jewish Studies and more. JPEF educational materials are a key curriculum component in thousands of Jewish and secular schools worldwide.

1. Documents of the Holocaust, edited by Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman, and Abraham Margalioi (Lincoln, The University of Nebraska Press, Jerusalem, Yad Vashem 1999), 441–444.

2. Fighting Back, Dov Levin, (New York, Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1985), 196.

# How to Use this Lesson

The Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation has produced a comprehensive and thought-provoking new curriculum called RESIST. The lessons of RESIST transmit values and enduring understandings arising from the stories of the Jewish partisans.

This RESIST lesson is divided into five sections. These sections provide teachers and instructors with an overview of the lesson, a guide containing background information on the subjects at hand, instructions on how to prepare for the lesson, an easy-to follow lesson procedure, and materials and attachments necessary to conduct the lesson. The following is a list of these five sections:



*Recreation of how partisans laid explosives on train tracks. Location: Lithuania. Source: Ghetto Fighter's House*



*JPEF presentation at Camp Tawonga. 2005. Source: JPEF Archives*

### **Overview**

Contains a summary of the lesson and learning objectives.

### **Guide**

Provides additional information for the teacher/instructor about the topics at hand.

### **Setup**

Lists the materials and space necessary to carry out the lesson and explains how to prepare for the lesson.

### **Procedure**

Lists step-by-step instructions for running the lesson. Action words are boldfaced.

### **Attachments**

The worksheets, forms, and other materials needed to complete a particular lesson.

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# Overview

*This lesson will take 45 – 60 minutes and is targeted for 7th – 12th grade students.*

### Lesson Summary

Leadership and authority are concepts that are often confused with one another. People see leaders as those in positions of power: the captain of the basketball team, the President of Student Government, the CEO of an organization, and the Prime Minister of a country are all perceived as leaders. This perception relegates leadership to those 'in charge' by default, thereby leaving those who are not 'in charge' with apathy: "I'm not in charge, so there's nothing I can do. I can't change anything."

Using the framework described by Ronald Heifetz in his book, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, this lesson aims to redefine leadership as distinct from authority. It will challenge students to understand leadership as a set of distinct activities in which anyone can participate.

Finding Leadership will enable teens to study leadership through the lens of the Jewish partisans. Their stories serve as an excellent source of material for the study of leadership because Jewish partisans did not set out to be leaders. Rather, their extraordinary circumstances forced them into positions where they would discover their own potential to lead. The lesson employs partisan actions as a model of how to understand and exert leadership. Finding Leadership combines traditional Jewish text study with informal activity to create new and enduring understandings and enhance a student's desire and ability to affect a positive change in the world.

### Lesson Objectives

- Differentiate between leadership as an activity and leadership as a position
- Explore the actions of various Jewish partisans
- Discover how selected individuals became Jewish partisans
- Discuss various Jewish perspectives on leadership
- Cite examples of specific challenges faced by the Jewish partisans
- Determine the ways in which the Jewish partisans exerted leadership
- Determine ways to exert leadership in one's own life



*Portrait of Jewish Partisan Sara Ginate at the liberation of Vilna in Poland. 1944.  
Source: USHMM*

# Guide

### Leadership...

is radically different from authority. They often stand in stark contrast to one another. In order to define the notion of leadership, it is first important to understand certain aspects of group life. Leadership involves identifying and managing the adaptive challenges facing a group. It is an activity that can be done by any member of a group whether or not one has formal authority. In any given group at any given time, a number of individuals can be exerting leadership.

There is no such thing as the 'leader.' Instead, a group member may become sensitive to the adaptive issues the group is facing, and help the group work together, mobilizing group resources, to face the adaptive challenges. In his book, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, Ronald Heifetz writes, "exercising leadership means going against the grain. Rather than fulfilling the expectation for answers, one provides questions; rather than protecting people from outside threat, one lets people feel the threat in order to stimulate adaptation; instead of orienting people to their current roles, one disorients people so that new role relationships develop; rather than quelling conflict, one generates it; instead of maintaining norms, one challenges them."

### Authority...

Does a group confer a position upon an individual. When individuals come together to form groups, they look towards one figure to stand at the helm, to provide direction and protection, and to ensure the group's functionality and order. The authority figure is responsible for the following aspects of group life:

- Orientation: Clarifies the roles of the members of a group, and maintains organizational structures of accountability
- Direction: Helps provide the group with direction
- Protection: Protects the group from the external environment, managing the boundary between it and the outside world
- Maintaining Norms: Sustains the group, suppressing deviance, providing solutions to problems that arise, and bolstering its norms
- Quelling Conflict: Diminishes chaos in the group, and works to keep the group at the lowest possible level of tension

### Jewish Texts and Values...

are explored in this lesson. Over the centuries, many authorities have given us their versions of how to live in a holy way according to the words written in the Torah. In Jewish tradition, there are some especially important texts for the study of the Torah and its manifestation in our daily lives. Most of the opinions in these texts are those of rabbis. Some texts are commentaries on other texts. The first text to appear was the Mishnah, compiled by Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi around the year 200 C.E. The Talmud, completed in the 5th century C.E., expands the Mishnah, and the codes (written throughout the Middle Ages) explaining the Talmud. Other materials –ethical statements, stories of the rabbis' daily lives, fantastic tales, speculations on

the afterlife, and even dream interpretation found its way in to these texts as well.

### The Game...

entitled Leading Numbers, is to be used during this lesson (See Procedure, Section B). The goal of this game is for the members of the group to work as a team to count from "1" to "10". The rules are as follows:

1. The counting must be random, with participants calling out consecutive numbers
2. No discussion or planning can occur before the game starts or during the game
3. Once the counting starts, no other talking besides the counting may occur
4. If two or more people say the same number at the same time, the "group" as a whole is "out" and must start over again from "1".

The group succeeds if they reach "10". Then they can try to count to "20" or higher, with everyone in the group having to say at least one number. This game, which also serves as an "ice-breaker," has many known variations. However, JPEF has decided to use the variation of the game in which everyone must participate, rather than having students possibly show indifference and call it participation. Everyone must say a number in order for the group to successfully reach its goal. Leadership requires action and this variation of the game works because students must take action to lead them to a common goal.

### The Film...

*Introduction to the Jewish Partisans* is 7 minutes long and can be viewed as a part of this lesson (see Procedure, page 6). The film gives crucial background about the approximately 30,000 Jews—many of them teens—who fought back against the Germans and their collaborators in armed resistance groups.

### The Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation...

produced the film used in this lesson after interviewing over 40 surviving partisans. Narrated by Ed Asner, it includes rare stock footage and photographs of partisans in action. The film can be ordered through JPEF by calling (415) 563-2244 or emailing [dvd@jewishpartisans.org](mailto:dvd@jewishpartisans.org). For more about the Jewish partisans, please visit [www.jewishpartisans.org](http://www.jewishpartisans.org)

# Setup

This activity requires advanced preparation. Please review the activity, in its entirety, in advance. If you decide to include the "Leadership Rewards" game (step C-4 in the procedure), it is essential that the facilitator set a light-hearted and fun atmosphere with the liberal distribution of pennies in this section of the activity.

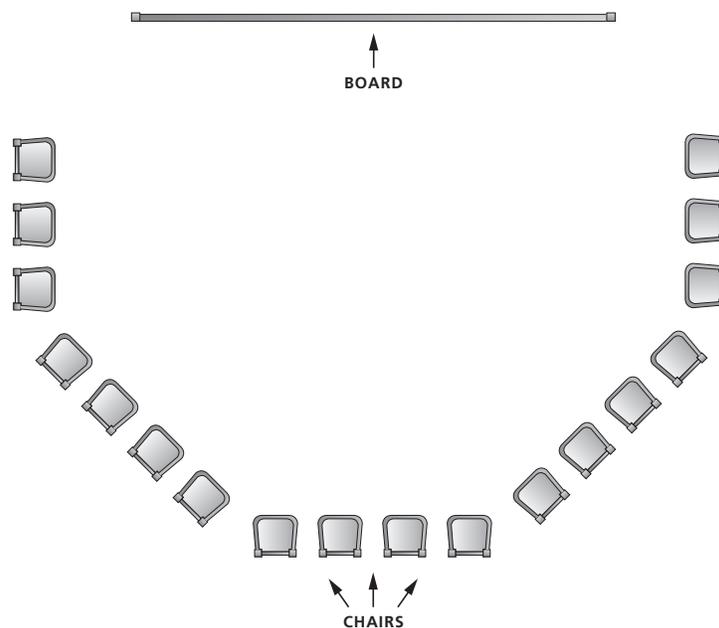
### What You Will Need

- A classroom or multi-purpose space
- Desks/tables and a chair for each student
- A chalkboard with chalk or a dry erase board with dry erase markers
- INTRODUCTION TO THE JEWISH PARTISANS film, or printouts of WHO ARE THE JEWISH PARTISANS? (page 1). The film is 7 minutes long and can be viewed on a computer with internet access at: [www.jewishpartisans.org/films](http://www.jewishpartisans.org/films) or you can contact JPEF for a DVD of this and other films. A projector or large-screen monitor is helpful.

- PARTISAN BIO printouts for each member of a team – there are 4 different bios and each team should receive a different one (pages 7-10)
- 1 REPORT FORM printout per team (page 11)
- 1 CUP FULL OF PENNIES per team (approximately 30 pennies per cup)

This activity should take place in a large multi-purpose or classroom. Chairs should be placed in a semi-circle in the center of the room. In addition, this activity requires a chalkboard and chalk or a dry-erase board with markers. Refer to the illustration below for a suggested room setup. The space should also be conducive to presenting a DVD presentation if possible.

### Suggested Setup



# Procedure

### A) CORE CONCEPTS – 15 minutes

- 1. Seat** students in horseshoe configuration. Ask students to name some leaders or types of leaders from local, national, and international levels. Write responses on board. Encourage them to include examples from their school, social groups, or families.
- 2. Ask** students to list qualities or attributes they associate with leaders and leadership positions, such as: Problem-Solver, Judge, Honest, The Boss, etc. Write responses on board and add any of the following, which were not already suggested:
  - JUDGE
  - THE BOSS
  - FIGUREHEAD
  - POWERFUL
  - SUPREME
  - DOMINATING
  - OPEN-MINDED
  - COURAGEOUS
  - COMMANDER
  - PROBLEM SOLVER
  - PIONEERING
  - INTEGRITY
  - HONEST
  - ELECTED
- 3. Ask:** "What is the difference between leadership and authority?" Field responses.
- 4. Say:** "Authority is a position, assigned to a particular individual in a group, but leadership is an activity, which can be done by anyone. Leadership involves helping a group achieve a goal or set of goals."
- 5. Re-examine** the list of attributes (from step 2). Ask students which qualities they associate more strongly with leadership and which they associate more with authority. Mark each with "L" for leadership or "A" for authority.
- 6. Point** to the list of leaders and roles (from step 1). Ask students to identify each item as "L" or "A".
- 7. Point** to list of leaders and roles. Ask the students if, in light of what of what they've learned, there are other individuals (Hitler, Churchill, etc.) and positions (student council, oldest sister, etc.) they would add to the list. Encourage them to include informal authorities (such as the first responder at an accident) and those without any authority (like the leader of a group of friends). Ask students to identify each item as "L" or "A"

### B) LEADING NUMBERS – 5 minutes

**Play** the game using the instructions found in the GUIDE on page 4 of this lesson.

### C) PROFILES IN LEADERSHIP – 15-20 minutes

- 1. Tell** students they will study examples of leadership from the lives of Jewish teens who fought back as partisans during the Holocaust.
- 2. Divide** students into teams of three to five. Distribute each team: a PARTISAN BIO and a REPORT FORM. Tell each team

to assign one or more roles to each member of their group: Reader, Note-Taker, Timekeeper, Facilitator, etc.

- 3. Say:** "Your team's goal will be to complete a report about the leadership qualities of a Jewish partisan. Each team has received a REPORT FORM and a BIO. Use the information provided to your team to complete the form. Your team must work together to successfully accomplish your goal".
- 4. OPTIONAL: "LEADERSHIP REWARDS" GAME**  
**Say:** "Each team will also receive a cup full of pennies. Place these pennies where everyone on your team can easily reach them. Now this is important: Whenever a member of your team performs an act of leadership or performs their role well, your team should point out that act of leadership by giving that person a penny. Pennies should be given very liberally to one another, as each new example of leadership is demonstrated. For example, offer a penny to a member of the team who asks a good question or uses politeness. Offer a penny to a teammate who gives encouragement to another member of the team or who raises a good point. In essence, any action taken that helps your team accomplish its task, directly or indirectly, should be given a penny."  
Distribute a CUP FULL OF PENNIES to each team.
- 5. Allow** students up to 10-15 minutes to work on this project. Take notes on the ability of students to perform specific acts of leadership while in their teams.
- 6. Circulate** among groups to keep students on track, keeping it light-hearted and fun.

### D) TEAM REPORTS AND WRAP-UP – 10 minutes

- 1. Seat** students back in the semicircle, allowing teams to sit together.
- 2. Ask** each team to select a speaker and briefly present their findings. Discuss the various perspectives on leadership that emerge. Take notes on this discussion.
- 3. Read** the quotations at the top of each PARTISAN BIO. Discuss what you can learn about leadership from this quotation. Summarize each team's responses and write them down.
- 4. Say:** "While we do not face challenges anything like the partisans faced, we each have the ability and the responsibility to affect the environment around us for the better. Even if we are not in any position of authority, each student in this room has the potential and the power to exert leadership in your school, in your family, in the world around you, and in your own life."

# Jewish Partisan Bio: Sara Fortis

*There are eight levels of tzedakah [helping those in need]. The greatest level, above which there is no greater, is to fortify [a person by] giving them a gift or loan, or forming a partnership with them, or finding work for them, in order to strengthen their hand until they need no longer be dependent upon others..*

—Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)

Born in Chalkis, a small town near Athens, Greece in 1927, Sara Fortis never knew her father, who passed away when she was only two months old. Raised by her mother, Sara and her sister enjoyed a happy childhood. They were 100% Greek, and celebrated being Jewish by lighting candles every Friday and attending temple on holidays.

Sara knew it was time to leave her hometown when the Germans arrived in 1941. She had heard about Jews in other small Greek towns being deported by the Nazis, and never returning. Sara and her mother escaped to Kuturla, another small village, and hid there for a short while. When it was no longer safe for Jews, Sara was told to go, although the villagers agreed to hide her mother.

Leaving her mother, Sara joined the *andartes* (resistance fighters) where women were usually assigned to caretaking roles for the male soldiers. Sara refused, saying, "If I am a female partisan, I will have rights, and I will do something comparable to what you do."

Wanting to play a more significant role, she traveled by donkey from village to village and recruited other females who wanted to fight, telling them and their families: "Don't look at the place of the woman as needing to be at home all the time. Women can also help and have a role in resistance."

'Capitan Sarika', as Sara came to be known throughout Greece, formed an all-female platoon of *andartes* that became indispensable to the male fighters, transforming young village girls into women warriors. "In the beginning the girls would giggle, 'Ooh, will we hold that gun?' After a month went by, it was like they were completely different girls," Sara recalls. "They took it more seriously than I did."

On their first mission, Sara's platoon were ordered to throw Molotov cocktails to distract the enemy and allow the partisans to attack. Impressed by their skills, the male partisans invited the all-female group to join in many missions. They burned down houses, executed Nazi collaborators, and aided the men in a way no group of females had before. The male *andartes* were given credit for many missions the women completed, as it was unfathomable that women could accomplish such acts.



Sara 'Capitan Sarika' Fortis in a partisan uniform. Date unknown. Source: JPEF Archives.

Even so, Sara became a prominent and well-respected figure in the *andartes* movement in Greece. When the war ended, Sara was concerned that the girls in her brigade would not be taken back into their villages, which had strict rules defining a woman's 'proper' place. But they were all accepted, as was their Capitan because the villagers were proud of what they had done. Sara later traveled to Israel, where she met her husband and continues to live today.

# Jewish Partisan Bio: Gertrude Boyarski

*"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?  
But if I am only for myself, what am I?  
And if not now – when?"*

—Rabbi Hillel the Elder (Pirkei Avot 1:14)

Gertrude Boyarski (Gertie to her friends) was a teenager with a family and a home until the Germans invaded her town of Derechin, in Poland. The Boyarski family escaped to a nearby forest. In the months that followed, Gertrude saw her mother, father, sister, and brother murdered before her eyes in surprise attacks by German soldiers and by anti-Semitic Poles who hunted the woods for Jews.

Bereft of family and seeking revenge, she left the shelter of the family camp where she had been living and sought to join a partisan detachment under the leadership of the Soviet Commander Bullock. But she'd have to prove herself first by standing guard alone, for two weeks, a mile from the partisan encampment. She was 17 years old.

"I was all alone in the woods, in the middle of the night, dark, and each time I hear a little noise, I thought it's Germans... but I said I'm going to do it and I did it. Two weeks. It was like two years." Gertrude was accepted into the group as a fighter and lived in the forest with the partisans for three years. Her group aggressively attacked German soldiers who came to the surrounding villages.

As a gift to her country for International Women's Day (March 8th), Gertrude volunteered to burn down a wooden bridge that was used by German soldiers. As soon as Gertrude announced she was accepting the mission, her friend volunteered, too. They decided to go to a nearby village and tell them, "We need kerosene and we need straw in five minutes." When the villagers claimed they had no supplies, the two girls threatened attack the town if the people didn't cooperate. Five minutes later, the friends were on their way, straw and kerosene in hand.

Under cover of night, Gertrude and her friend prepared and lit the fire. German soldiers saw the blaze and started shooting. But "We didn't chicken out," Gertrude says. Instead, they grabbed burning pieces of the bridge and tossed them into the river until the bridge was destroyed. Then the two ran for safety.



Gertrude Boyarski in Poland. 1938. Source: JPEF Archives.

At war's end, Gertrude and her friend were honored with the Soviet Union's highest award, the Order of Lenin, for their successful act of sabotage. In 1945, she married a fellow partisan, and they settled in the United States. Though the times of strife are behind her, Gertrude still grapples with having lived through the war when so many perished. "I was the only one who survived. Why? Why me? I'm always asking that question."

# Jewish Partisan Bio: Frank Blaichman

*"For this mitzvah [sacred obligation/action] which I command of you today is not too wondrous for you, nor is it too far. It is not in the sky, so that you will say – 'who will go up to the sky for us, and take it for us, and help us to hear it, so that we can fulfill it.' And it is not beyond the sea, so that you will say – 'who will cross over the sea for us, and take it for us, and help us to hear it, so that we can fulfill it.' For it is very close to you, this thing; it is in your mouth and in your heart to do."*  
—Deuteronomy 30:11-14

Born in the small town of Kamionka, Poland, Frank Blaichman was sixteen years old when the German army invaded his country in 1939. Following the invasion, German officials issued regulations intended to isolate the Jews and deprive them of their livelihood.

Frank took great risks to help his parents and family survive these hardships. With a bicycle, he rode from the neighboring farms to nearby cities, buying and selling goods at each destination. He refused to wear the Star of David armband and traveled without the required permits, but his courage and fluent Polish ensured his safety.

When word spread that the Jews of Kamionka were to be resettled in a nearby ghetto, Frank hid in a bushy area outside of town. He stayed with a friendly Polish farmer and then joined other Jews hiding in a nearby forest. In the forest, the fear of being discovered was constant and Polish hoodlums beat any women that left the encampment. When Frank and some other refugees went to a nearby town to buy supplies, antisemitic Poles chased them into the forest with knives and pitchforks.

Frank encouraged the men to organize a defense unit. They had no weapons, but Frank had heard of a Polish farmer who bragged of a secret cache of guns, scavenged from the retreating Polish army. Frank's defense unit went to the farmer's house, but he claimed there were no guns. So Frank had his men take several pitchforks and break off all the prongs but one.

Then they stationed themselves at a distance around the farmhouse so that they appeared to be soldiers carrying bayonets. Frank dressed in a discarded Polish policeman's overcoat, and went with one of his biggest men to confront the farmer. Claiming to be a paratrooper who was organizing a partisan unit, he requested the farmer's weapons. The farmer showed him the hidden arsenal, then said that it was only fair that if he had to give up his weapons, the partisans should take his neighbor's hidden weapons, too.



*Frank Blaichman in a Polish partisan uniform. 1945. Source: JPEF Archives.*

Frank's squad joined a larger all-Jewish unit, with strong ties to the Polish underground and Soviet army. They were responsible for protecting 200 Jews living in a forest encampment. Only 21, he was the youngest platoon commander in the unit. He even escorted the future Prime Minister of Poland to a secret meeting with the Soviet high command. "I'm very proud of what I did all those years," he says. "The reality was we had nothing to lose, and our way to survive was to fight."

# Jewish Partisan Bio: Joe Shasha Kubryk

*"...Anyone who destroys one life is regarded as if he or she had destroyed an entire world, and anyone who saves one life is regarded as if he or she had saved an entire world."*

—Mishnah Sanhedrin, Chapter 4, Mishnah 5

Joe Kubryk was born in the Russian Ukraine, not far from Odessa, on July 1, 1926. Before the war, the Kubryk family didn't experience much antisemitism, but after the war broke out, Joe's village was filled with Ukrainian fascists, who cooperated with the Germans to kill Jews. When Joe saw the Germans rounding up his classmates, he knew he had to run for his life.

When Joe was 15, he met a band of Soviet partisans. When they heard he was Jewish and alone in the world, they said,

"You are one of us," and took him to their forest camp. A few months after Joe arrived, a junior secret service was formed. Joe and the other teenagers began serious training in spying—learning how to recognize guns, artillery pieces and officers' insignia. They would pose as beggars and hang around the German camps, secretly gathering intelligence to bring back to their units. The teen spies also provided information to saboteurs who mined bridges and railroads to disrupt German military activity.

Joe frequently brazened his way into the ghettos to take young Jewish men out and lead them to partisan units. "I was walking in as a Ukrainian, a gentile boy, and tell the Germans that used to guard the ghetto entrance, 'I'm going to rob the Jews,'" Joe recalls. "And they were happy to let you do that." Joe would go in with several men, and return with one or two more: Jewish prisoners who he snuck out under the guards' noses when they weren't counting how many men went in. Joe estimates that 100 to 200 Jews were saved in that way.

Unfortunately Jews who managed to escape the ghetto were far from free and clear. Partisan groups who accepted Jewish fighters also discriminated against them. Though the partisans would give guns and ammunition to non-Jews who joined, Jews would only be accepted if they already had their own weapons, Joe and his comrades resorted to subterfuge in order to beat the rigged system. After a successful ambush on an enemy, instead of bringing all the captured weapons back to the camp, they would hide or bury some of the arms. When Jews entered the partisan camps, Joe would take them aside and hand them a weapon.



*Joe Kubryk as a young boy in the partisans. Source: JPEF Archives.*

After the war, Joe worked for the *Bricha*, the illegal immigration of Jews to Israel. Joe also fought in Israel's War of Independence before moving to America, where he became a successful businessman.

# Report Form



NAME(S):

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NAME OF YOUR PARTISAN:

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1) How did your partisan join the resistance?

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2) Give an example of a challenge your partisan faced. How did they meet this challenge?

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3) List 3 leadership activities that your partisan engaged in:

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4) Read the quotation at the top of your partisan page. Discuss what you can learn about leadership from this quotation. Summarize your team's responses and write them down.

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5) In what ways could you act as leaders in your own lives?

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