**Hersh Wasser on Hardship in the Warsaw Ghetto**

Hersh Wasser (1912- 1980) was born in Poland. He was an active member of Left Po’alei Zion. In December 1939 he arrived in Warsaw, as a refugee, together with his wife, and became a prominent member of the Warsaw leadership. He was involved in public affairs of the ghetto and in social work. He was a participant in the Oneg Shabbat archives, an illegal project of the ghetto connected with self help and welfare organizations. Wasser survived the war and immigrated to Israel in 1950.

Thursday, December 12, 1940

Frost is coming. Dipped to 5° centigrade today. There are so many poor people in rags and tatters. More and more families are falling away from their wretched potato-ration state of well-being, and going over to begging. They lose all modesty, all restraint, and try to cling to life’s surface at all costs. Outdoors, they sing, they act, they shout, they weep, they throw fits, they lie spread out on the hard concrete. The stream of humanity passes by. Hardly sparing a glance. Everyone is so full of his own troubles. One can veritably see the impoverishment of the Jewish population striding in seven-league boots. The economic support of the handful of Jews is steadily waning. I don’t doubt that there are wealthy Jews, but it is not they who stamp today’s Jewish existence with tragedy. The craftsman, the businessman, the jobber, the clerk, is – in as far as his livelihood resources are concerned – totally undermined.

A problem with garbage. There is no sewage question in the quarter, but a garbage question – definitely… It seems that the commissariat-stewards are meanwhile unable to administer the buildings properly. And garbage collects. For the time being, the house committees are dealing with it. There are notices everywhere informing the residents that all garbage must be burnt. The only thing to be thrown away is ashes and fire-resistant articles. Such as tin, brick, etc.

Mlawa is no simple matter: last Thursday, as Mlawa delegates told me, many trucks arrived. There had been talk of transports previously, but no-one knew whether the Poles or the Jews were to be shipped out. In any case, when the trucks arrived, there was a run on the Town Hall to obtain certificates of residence permitting the holder to remain in town. The expulsion resulted from the ghetto having been instituted. About 4,000 people were removed. Their location is unknown.

**Life in the Warsaw Ghetto**

Life in the Warsaw Ghetto, Emanuel Ringelblum quoted in Yad Vashem Documents on the Holocaust, pp 228-229:

Smuggling began at the very moment that the Jewish area of residence was established; its inhabitants were forced to live on 180 grams of bread a day, 220 grams of sugar a month, 1 kg. of jam and 1 kg. of honey, etc. It was calculated that the officially supplied rations did not cover even 10 percent of the normal requirements. If one had wanted really to restrict oneself to the official rations then the entire population of the ghetto would have had to die of hunger in a very short time....

The German authorities did everything to seal off the ghetto hermetically and not to allow in a single gram of food. A wall was put up around the ghetto on all sides that did not leave a single millimeter of open space....

They fixed barbed wire and broken glass to the top of the wall. When that failed to help, the Judenrat was ordered to make the wall higher, at the expense of the Jews, of course....

Several kinds of guards were appointed for the walls and the passages through them; the categories of guards were constantly being changed and their numbers increased. The walls were guarded by the gendarmerie together with the Polish police; at the ghetto wall there were gendarmerie post, Polish police and Jewish police...The victims of the smuggling were mainly Jews, but they were not lacking either among the Aryans (Poles). Auerswald, too, employed sharply repressive measures to stop the smuggling. Several times smugglers were shot at the central lock-up on Gesiowka Street. Once there was a veritable slaughter (100 persons were shot near Warsaw). Among the Jewish victims of the smuggling there were tens of Jewish children between 5 and 6 years old, whom the German killers shot in great numbers near the passages and at the walls....

And despite that, without paying attention to the victims, the smuggling never stopped for a moment. When the street was still slippery with the blood that had been spilled, other smugglers already set out, as soon as the "candles" had signaled that the way was clear, to carry on with the work....

Name:

Date:

**Hersh Wasser on Hardship in the Warsaw Ghetto**

1. How do people react to the people begging for food?
2. What is the garbage problem?
3. What do the people try to obtain when they hear of transports coming to the ghetto?

**Life in the Warsaw Ghetto**

1. Are the residents given enough food to survive?
2. What did the Germans put on top of the wall to prevent smuggling?
3. What happened to the people the Germans caught smuggling?   
     
     
     
   1. Was it effective?