

Messianic Jews in the Fires of the Holocaust

From "Jewish Believers in the Warsaw Ghetto"

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"...In his monumental book, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, Peter F. Dembowski calculates that there were 5,000 to 6,000 Jewish believers living in the Ghetto at its height.³ **[This is just one location alone.]**

Rachmiel Fryland speaks of his own interaction with the remaining believers in the Ghetto:

In late 1944, by hiding in cemeteries, deserted churches, and the homes of fearful friends, I was one of the few surviving Jews in Warsaw outside the ghetto. In that enclosure were 5,000 Jews, the last of Warsaw's original 500,000. By God's enabling, I secretly slipped into the ghetto and was able to speak comfort to a few of the Jewish believers still alive. **Other Jewish brethren heard the message and believed in Messiah Jesus.**⁴

Fryland was one of the most well-known Messianic Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. His first-hand testimony provided information about the life of the Jewish believers in Warsaw before and, to some degree, during the war.

One of the most significant Jewish believing voices was that of Dr. Ludwick Hirszfeld, author of the book *The Story of a Life*. Dembowski says, "Herzfeld (sic) is the most knowledgeable informant about the Ghetto and many aspects of the daily life of the Ghetto dwellers."⁵

Dr. Hirszfeld's autobiography, written soon after his escape from the Ghetto, gives a detailed description of his life and that of others, as well as providing testimony of his faith. He was a well-respected scientist who had served as a medical doctor in the Polish army in Yugoslavia. There, he began his lifetime work of developing methodology to identify blood types, which scientists still use today. Hirszfeld became a believer in his twenties, and the vitality of his faith comes through in both his writings and actions.

According to the records of various Jewish missions and churches, there were many conversions preceding the Holocaust. These continued all the way until the destruction of the Ghetto. Warsaw, a hotbed of Messianic activity, was home to more than a dozen Jewish missions.

The believers who came to faith through the Jewish mission agencies and Evangelical churches before and during the Ghetto counted the cost. These true believers found comfort in their dire straits through the Messiah.

While we do not have many records of their voices, one day we will hear their stories of martyrdom and suffering. In the eternal kingdom, their voices will be lifted with ours in praise and worship to the One who suffered on our behalf and was raised in triumph, conquering death, evil and every enemy of God and His chosen people. The grace of our Messiah and Lord will wipe away the horror of the Ghetto.

Sources:

1 The Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust: <http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/timeline/ghettos.htm>

2 IMCCAJ Vienna Conference 1937

3 Peter Dembowski, *Christians in the Warsaw Ghetto: An Epitaph for the Unremembered*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005) 68.

4 <http://www.messianicassociation.org/bio-frydland.htm>

5 Dembowski, 114.