

## In Honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day, *Yom Hashoah*



**[Chaim Simcha Mechlowitz, a farmer and tanner, Vysni Apsa, Carpathian Ruthenia],  
ca. 1935-38**

© Mara Vishniac Kohn, courtesy International Center of Photography

This portrait of a Jewish farmer in the remote Carpathian village of Vysni Apsa, ca. 1935-38, was included in Roman Vishniac's seminal publication, *A Vanished World*, 1983, and is one of his most well known images. Following the publication, the farmer's daughter identified him as Chaim Simcha Mechlowitz.



**[Chaim Simcha Mechlowitz tilling his fields, Vysni Apsa, Carpathian Ruthenia],  
ca. 1935-38**

© Mara Vishniac Kohn, courtesy International Center of Photography

In 1941 Mechlowitz and his family were expelled from their home and forced to wander through the Carpathian mountain region searching for refuge. They eventually returned to Apsa, where Mechlowitz's wife died of pneumonia; he remarried later that year. In March 1944 Germany seized control of Hungary and began transporting the Jewish population, including Mechlowitz, his wife, and eight of their children, to Auschwitz. Mechlowitz and his wife, and all but one of the children, perished at Auschwitz.

Four of Mechlowitz's older children survived the war. His granddaughter, Lisa, recently

donated family photographs of her grandfather and his family, made in the same years that Vishniac took his iconic images of the farmer, to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, D.C. She also shared the family story.



**[Family photograph of Chaim Simcha Mechlowitz, his wife Etel, their ten children and a niece], 1935**

Unidentified photographer

Courtesy United States Holocaust Memorial Museum/Lisa Wahler



**[Family photograph of Chaim Simcha Mechlowitz, his wife Etel, and six of their children], ca. 1941-42**

Unidentified photographer

Courtesy United States Holocaust Memorial Museum/Lisa Wahler



**[Chaim Simcha Mechlowitz, a farmer and tanner, Vysni Apsa, Carpathian Ruthenia], ca. 1935-38**

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While war was raging in Europe, Vishniac's portrait of Mechlowitz was included in an early 1944 exhibition of Vishniac's work, *Pictures of Jewish Life in Prewar Poland*, at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York. Mounted in an effort to raise awareness for the plight of Eastern European Jews, the exhibition was on display as the Jewish communities Vishniac so poignantly portrayed, including the village of Vysni Apsa, were being annihilated in the final years of the Holocaust.

Working in collaboration with the USHMM to develop a shared digital database of Vishniac's images, the Vishniac Archive at ICP now has records of Mechlowitz's family history and family photographs, as well as the stories and records of dozens of people whom Vishniac photographed.

**On this Holocaust Remembrance Day, *Yom Hashoah*, we take a moment to honor the memory of Chaim Simcha Mechlowitz, his family, and all those who perished in the Holocaust. May their memory be a blessing.**

- author, Maya Benton