

Questions to Consider When Viewing Video

1. Why did Judith's father leave her mother before Judith's birth?
2. How did Judith's mother let her husband know about Judith's birth, and why was this important to him?
3. Why did Judith's mother decide to give her up to a stranger's care?
4. What was Margit's role in the Hungarian resistance group?
5. Why did the Nazis let Margit go?
6. How did Margit's identity change?
7. When and where did Margit meet Judith and her mother for the first time?
8. How did Judith's mother survive the Holocaust after giving Judith to Margit?
9. What life changing decision did Judith's mother and her aunt make on the forced march?
10. How did Judith's father locate them after the war?
11. What did Judith learn about herself from her final visit with Margit?
12. What lesson does Judith share from her experience as a hidden child?

Holocaust Survivor Judith Weiss Shamir

Filed on February 9, 2006



"Whoever saves a single life is as if one saves the entire world."

*-Judith Shamir
(from the Talmud)*

Face to Face
A Holocaust Education Program at
Congregation Shaarey Tikvah
Beachwood, Ohio

Judith Weiss Shamir was born in Hungary in the early 1940's. Before she was born, her father was forced to leave his pregnant wife to fight against the Russian Army in 1943. He was captured and placed in a Russian POW camp.

Judith's mother went into hiding with various Christian friends to avoid the Nazis. She quickly realized that trying to hide with a baby was not a good idea. She reached out to a friend who had contacts with the Resistance and arranged for her baby, Judith, to be "hidden" with a non-Jewish woman, who pretended the child was her own.

Margit Polgar was a young messenger for the Hungarian resistance and traveled between safe houses. She needed a new identity to keep her safe from the Nazis, who had captured and detained her.

Margit posed as a married woman living with her parents in Oroshaza, Hungary. She took Judith to the village southeast of Budapest and raised her as her own daughter.

Judith's mother sold her sewing machine to get the money to give to Margit to care for her baby. She gave Margit a backpack to hold the baby's belongings with a secret compartment

that held Judith's papers and her true identity. All she asked of Margit was to make sure Judith knew her real name and that she was Jewish if they were unable to reunite after the war.

Judith's mother survived many close encounters with the Nazis but was able to return home after the war. Her father also survived and walked from Russia back to Budapest. Miraculously, all three were reunited in Oroshaza.

The family moved to Israel in 1948. They lost touch with Margit but never stopped trying to find her. Judith moved to the United States in 1968. She has three children and 12 grandchildren. In 1992 Judith received a phone call from her father with the good news that he had located Margit but that she was in very poor health. He urged Judith (now in Cleveland, Ohio) to visit Margit.

Judith did visit Margit, who filled in the many blanks from Judith's childhood. The lasting impression that Judith carries with her from that visit was Margit's words that she did only what any decent human being would have done in a similar situation. Judith speaks to school groups now to ensure that Margit's selfless heroism will not be forgotten.