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THE HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S EXPERIENCE AND ITS REFLECTION IN  
LITERATURE

(ZKUŠENOSTI PŘEŽIVŠÍCH HOLOCAUSTU A JEJICH POZNATKY  
V LITERATUŘE)

**Bakalářská práce**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem závěrečnou práci vypracovala samostatně a použila jen prameny uvedené v seznamu literatury.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is focused on a description of historic events which lead to development of holocaust. The main aim is to illustrate the horrible conditions in concentration camps and to portray and compare life experiences of Elie Wiesel and Kitty Hart who both survived holocaust and wrote autobiographical books about it.

# 1. Introduction

I have always been interested in the events and stories about World War II. Mainly in the stories of people who survived imprisonment in concentration camps. I always related to their stories and it was impossible for me to understand how could they go on with their lives after experiencing something so cruel and appalling. I also could never understand how something like holocaust could happen. How could people who were involved in this could let that happen.

This bachelor thesis deals with the events which preceded holocaust. It describes the situation in Europe after the World War I. and growing anti-Semitism and hatred towards Jewish people. In following chapters it describes conditions and everyday life in one of the worst concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz. The thesis also portrays brief history of Jewish people and their lives before World War II. Chapter about trauma and dealing describes very fragile topic of healing survivor's souls and minds after going through a living hell in concentration camps. I think it is important to realize that the liberation did not end the suffering because it lingered in survivor's minds and memories.

Following chapters describes life of Elie Wiesel and Kitty Hart and their experiences from the time they were imprisoned in concentration camps and how they survived. Analysis compares this two narrative stories. It compares differences and similarities.

The aim of my bachelor thesis is to describe the events before and during holocaust. I tried to portray the era and changes among people, how they started to hate Jewish people because of controlled propaganda. How Jewish people lost their homes and lives over night. I also described the process of dealing with trauma after surviving holocaust because

I think it is a very important process. I wanted to express the suffering people went through and the injustice.

For further illustration the work includes appendices which could be found at the end of this thesis.

## 2. Development of Holocaust

The history of the world contains many cases of human cruelty. One of them, holocaust; is the most elaborated, spiteful and beyond comprehension of the human race. Holocaust in Europe started before World War II, with growing anti-Semitism and the strengthening of Nazi party although the term itself was made up many years later. When talking about holocaust many people recall the persecution and murdering of Jewish people during World War II.

According to Petrie (1998) the term holocaust was first used by Elie Wiesel in his autobiographical book *Night* but it became known worldwide after 1970 when a television mini-series about genocide of European Jews was made. (Blodig, 2005)

The term holocaust expresses total destruction, especially by fire, absolute devastation or burnt victims. Hebrew uses the term Shoah to express persecution and killing of Jews. The initiators themselves used euphemistic term the Final solution to the Jewish Question. (Blodig, 2005)

According to Raphael Lemkin (1946) the author of the term genocide, which is made from the Ancient Greek word *genos* (race,clan) and the Latin suffix *cide*(killing), “*Genocide is the crime of destroying national, racial or religious groups*“. (Lemkin, 1946) Blodig (2005) claims that genocide of European Jews during World War II. was systematically planned and realized and it worked as a cohesive system which was highly efficient and where thousands of human beings were slaughtered in a very short-term and their personal belongings were sorted out for the usage of others. This highly systematic action, realized in the centre of civilization with almost no contact between the killers and the victims shows a totally different form of genocide. Holocaust needs to be considered as

a unique example of genocide which is incomparable with no event whatsoever before or after holocaust. (Blodig, 2005)

Germany before 1914 was on the top of European industry and German people were proud and well educated. Although after World War I. Germany went through a social and economic crisis. War did not affect Germany as much as other European countries but defeat caused bitterness and humiliation and those two aspects weakened the new democratic state established in 1919. Above that, Germany had to pay reparations, give up territories and colonies and disarm. So the Treaty of Versailles was not very advantageous for the country. Altogether with economic crisis in late twenties it only made space for Nazi ideology to expand and to set its roots. Adolf Hitler, the main character of World War II. and protagonist of campaign against Jewish people, became a member of Nazi party in 1919. Before he joined the army he spent five lonely years in Vienna, living in bad conditions. During this time his anti-Semitism and racist thinking was formed. In 1920 Nazi party was renamed to NSDAP and anti-Semitism became a part of Nazi ideology. Over the years Hitler gained power, mainly due to his strong determination and ability to influence people by his forceful Nazi-oriented speeches, and became a chancellor of Germany in 1933. The first concentration camp in Dachau was build two months after his appointment which gives us an evidence of his fierce desire to initiate elimination of Jewish and other people whom he considered inferior. In 1939 Germany invaded Poland and World War II. started. Hitler started his cruel crusade against Jews in 1936. Crystal Night, Nuremberg laws, The star of David, ghettos, deportation and building concentration camps. All of these horrible events which happened during the years led to the one most dreadful – gas chambers, invented for systematic mass murdering and quick removal of inferior groups of people, which were realized in 1942. (Bartel, 2006)

Nazis built many concentration camps during World War II. and killed and chased over six million Jews and people from other countries in Europe between the years 1933 to 1945. (Bartel, 2006) Never before in our history can we find such a systematic, planned, controlled process of murdering innocent people who did nothing wrong but being a part of the Jewish community, being different, homosexual, mentally disabled or a person who disapproved of the regime.

### **3. Concentration camps**

The term closely connected to holocaust and World War II. is concentration camp. Aly (2006) says that concentration camp is a place used for large-scale retention or holding prisoners who are placed there without legitimate trial. (Aly, 2006) People were basically dragged away from their homes, families, lives, to live in a horrible conditions in crowded concentration camps where they were kept against their will. Nazis built over 20,000 camps between 1933 and 1945. (Encyclopedia, 2014)

Aly (2006) claims that before concentration camps were fully developed and used, Nazis slowly adopted forced emigration and deportation policies. In September 1939 Germany was extended by four empires – Poland, Benelux states, France and states of southeastern Europe so Germans needed space for new inhabitants and they needed to get rid off the inferior ones. Projects such as deporting people was meant to see many deaths from hunger, forced labour, and bad medical conditions. The goal of these projects was to eradicate as many people as possible through the means of horrible physical and mental torture such as – long-distance marches in freezing weather conditions, transports in unheated cattle cars, and leaving people off in deserted, barren areas. When projects of deportation failed, Nazis had to come up with another solution. So they followed mediaeval model of ghetto, where people who were considered outcast were concentrated. Poles and Jewish people were relocated to ghettos so there would be space for Germans. (Aly, 2006) Ghettos were established in the worst parts of towns and people lived there in terrible conditions, with little space and almost no food. People in ghettos were isolated from the rest of the world by fences and brick walls and they were constantly watched over by soldiers. Mortality rate in ghettos was dreadful, mostly children and old people were victims of ubiquitous hunger and diseases. The first ghetto in Poland was established in the

town of Piotrków Trybunalski in October 1939. In 1940 additional ghettos in Łódź and in Warszawa were established. The Warszawa ghetto was the biggest one with about 480 000 people being concentrated there. Other ghettos were Lvov, Lublin, Vilnius, Kaunas, Bialystok, Krakow and Terezín. Mass deportations from ghettos to concentration camps began in 1942. As I stated before, the very first concentration camp in Dachau was built in 1933. In that same year was also built concentration camp Oranienburg followed by Sachsenhausen in 1936, Buchenwald in 1937 and many others in following years. (Blodig, 2005)

At the very beginning of the persecution of Jews there were ghettos. After some time people from ghettos were transported to concentration camps, where their lives were horrible and they could die any day by hunger, diseases or in the hand of a soldier but they had better chances to survive concentration camp than being transported to extermination camps which were built with only one purpose – to destroy, to kill, to eliminate as many Jewish and other inferior people as they could. Among the worst extermination camps belongs – Chelmno, Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibor, Belzec and Auschwitz. Auschwitz, which was the biggest concentration and extermination camp, was established on Himmler's command in 1940 near the Polish town Oświęcim. (Blodig, 2005)

Concentration camp Auschwitz had a 40 km<sup>2</sup> area and consisted of three camps – Auschwitz I. and Auschwitz II. Birkenau and Auschwitz III. Buna. Birkenau was 3 km away from Auschwitz I. and it was more extensive. In Auschwitz died more than four millions of people from all the countries occupied by Hitler. In the camp died people of different religion, dissimilar social classes and professions disregarding age of those killed. People were transported to Auschwitz in closed cattle cars, without any food and there was no hygienic facilities for them. The doors of the cars were first opened in Birkenau at the railway platform where the selection was performed. According to Höss (2006), the

commander of Auschwitz, the cars were opened one after another, after handing over the luggages, Jews had to individually appear in front of the SS doctor who decided if they were capable of work before they were taken into the camp. (Höss, 2006) The SS members screamed at them to take off their clothes and rushed them into the showers, where they switched very hot and very cold water. No matter what season of the year it was, the SS drove the people out of the showers naked and dumped clothings at them which were either too small or too big and in filthy condition. Then the prisoners proceeded to registration where they got a personal number which replaced their name. The numbers were tattooed on their left forearm. From that moment, prisoners lost their identities and became only a number. The prisoners had to put their number on the clothes and also wear a triangle which had different colours according to the crime which the people committed. The most common was the red triangle which marked political prisoners and the green triangle which were worn by criminals. People who were seen as not good enough by the SS were moved to gas chambers with the pretext of taking shower. In the gas chambers there were showers installed however no water ever ran through the pipes. The SS drove the people in the gas chambers, then tightly closed the doors and threw Zyklon B through an opening in the ceiling. After fifteen to twenty minutes the gas chamber doors were opened. The dead bodies were treated in very inhuman ways; those with tooth made out of gold were pulled out, their hair were cut off and any form of jewellery worn by them were taken. The dead bodies were then transported to cremation centers to be burnt in fire. They destroyed all personal documents of the dead but they kept a book of the dead which contained the names of the dead people and also the cause and time of death but this records were made up only to serve as a cover-up for the crimes the SS were committing. The SS chose some prisoners to work in specific work unit the infamous „Sonderkommando.“ Their task was to clean out the gas chambers and to burn the corpses.

Subsequently they were also sent to the gas chambers so that they would not live to tell anyone of the frightful things which took place there. (Smoleń, 1966)

Zyklon B is a deadly poison which reacts and kills very quickly. The victims die through suffocation accompanied by fear, dizziness and vomiting. A large number of cans with Zyklon B was found in the storehouses in the camp premises. After the discovery of Zyklon B effectiveness the Nazis felt relieved that they have discovered a method of killing mass number of people within a short period of time without having to worry about blood body marks. With Zyklon B they had their solution, as we can see in the testimony of commander Höss after the war: *"The gassing was carried out in the detention cells of Block 11. Protected by a gas mask, I watched the killing myself. In the crowded cells, death came instantaneously the moment the Zyklon B was thrown in. A short, almost smothered cry, and it was all over... I must even admit that this gassing set my mind at rest, for the mass extermination of the Jews was to start soon, and at that time neither Eichmann nor I was certain as to how these mass killings were to be carried out. It would be by gas, but we did not know which gas and how it was to be used. Now we had the gas, and we had established a procedure."* (Höss, 2006)

The life inside the walls and fences of Auschwitz was harsh and dreadful. Prisoners had to attend a roll call every day so that the SS could count them. At first, they had to assemble three times a day, then only two times and later only once a day which was in the evenings. Sometimes these roll calls lasted for hours. One former prisoner recalls standing in the line all night from 7 pm till 2 pm the next day. Another former prisoner from the camp which held female prisoners remembers kneeling on the ground with her arms lifted up for hours. People who did not want to go on living like this, without hope or faith, living in such a bad conditions, or people who simply could not go on in this misery often committed suicide by jumping on the wire fence. People in the camp had to work very hard

every day. Firstly, they had to built Auschwitz II. Birkenau. Then they worked in agriculture, in fish and poultry companies, in industrial companies and they built gas chambers and crematoriums. Companies and camp administration had money from forced labour of Jews. The food in the camp was horrible. Prisoners got half a litre of substitute black coffee for breakfast, then a soup for lunch and a substitute black coffee or tea, small piece of bread and sometimes a piece of margarine, jam or cream cheese for dinner. This low-calorie food was not enough for the body of the adults, and not even for children. With the hard work and little rest, many fell sick and perished as a result of severe exhaustion. The children who were born in the camp were killed and children at the selection who were not taller than 120 cm were sent to gas chambers. Due to very bad hygienic conditions a lot of disease spread in the camp, and the hospital could not deal with all the sick people so the „doctors“ sent people who were ill to the gas chambers as well. The doctors also performed experiments on human beings, on children and they assisted during the executions. They also killed many people by injecting phenol into their hearts. The people in the camp were punished for everything, for example for going to the bathroom, eating an apple, smoking or writing a letter. The punishments served for destroying and terrorising prisoners. They were beaten by a stick and the prisoners had to count every blow in German and if they said it wrongly, the beating would begin from the beginning. Another type of punishment was hanging on a beam, working out of their normal work hours (mostly during the night or for some days in a row), standing at attention, transfer to another camp or being in a cell in the underground of block number 11. Block number 11 was an isolated area where more than 20 000 people were shot at the wall of death. If someone tried to escape and they were caught, he was immediately sent to the gallows. Even though life in Auschwitz was hard, people found a way to protest against Nazis. Secret meetings were held where stories of great artists and places of each country were

told. Messages about Nazis cruelty were smuggled outside of the camp and one of those messages got to London where it was broadcasted over the radio. After this incident and with the growing sense that they will loose the war, Nazis tried to destroy the camp. They wanted to blow up the camp and murder all the Jews. They tried to cover their tracks and destroy everything they could. On 27<sup>th</sup> of January 1945 around 3 pm Soviet soldiers came to Birkenau and liberated it. Evaluation and investigation of all crimes committed by Nazis inquired International military tribunal in Nürnberg. Rudolf Höss was arrested after the end of the war, sentenced to death and hanged in Osvětim in April 1947. (Smoleń, 1966)

## **4. Life before holocaust – Jewish history**

Bartel (2006) claims that Jews lived in Europe for more than 2000 years. In 1933, when Hitler became a chancellor of Germany, more than 9 million of Jewish people lived in 21 European countries. In eastern Europe Jews lived in small towns, they spoke Yiddish, which is a mix of German and Hebrew, and they worshiped traditions and observed commandments of orthodox Jewish religion. In big towns of western Europe Jewish people lived like other inhabitants. They shared culture, clothing styles, language and they worked for example as lawyers, salesmen, teachers, doctors. (Bartel, 2006)

Brod (2013) says that in the past, Jews had to face strict and limiting laws and rules more than other inhabitants. For example since the Middle Ages they have been excluded from society, they had to live in ghettos and wear yellow circle on their clothes and they could not work. This changed in 1781 with toleration patents made by Joseph II. which sort of emancipated Jews with other people, but they were under a state supervision, and they had to change their jewish names to German ones in order to make it easier for the officers. They also had to speak German and attend German schools. In addition, military training was obligatory. Emancipation comes in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is sometimes called “opening of the ghettos“ where Jews had to live until 1848. After 1848 Jews can freely live, study, work and do what they want as well as other people in Austria-Hungary. After World War I. Europe changed and new states were established so the inhabitants of this newly made states searched for their identity. So did Jewish people. There were Jewish people who spoke Czech and felt like part of the Czech community, Jewish people who spoke German and Jewish people who did not feel good in either of these two groups. They were called Zionists and their opinion was that Jews are a special

nation and that they need their own state and it should be in Palestine where they have their roots and history. (Brod, 2013)

The history of Jewish people since the beginning of time is written in the Bible. The very first ancestors of Jewish nation were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They extended their family in Egypt and became a threat so God called up Moses to take them away from Egypt. They were on a journey for years where they faced many battles and unfairnesses. After that Jewish people stopped dedicating their attention to God which made him angry so Babylonian king destroyed Jerusalem and relocated Jews to Babylonia. Until they were finally freed by king Cyrus. Jewish people returned to the ruins of Jerusalem and built the new temple in honour of God. (Bible, 1982)

Even in the Bible we can find age-old traces of injustice on Jewish people. In the story of queen Esther who was a Jewish girl who married king Asverus. She was an orphan so only her foster father Mardocheus came visit her. Mardocheus fell out of favour with the king's best official who published a document with royal seal that all the Jewish people in Babel will be murdered. Mardocheus and Esther were Jewish. Esther explained everything to the king and the document was destroyed. But the roots of hatred can be seen in such an old document as Bible surely is. (Bible, 1982)

The evidence about first Jews living in Europe are fragmentary and the very first record about Jews living in medieval Europe are colonies of Syrian merchants in the towns to the north of Loire or in the south of Gaul. Carolingian era formed Jewish people who started their structure of inner organized and cultural life. Large families migrated from south Europe and built villages in the area of Champagne and around Rhine. These small villages started to grow in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and were occupied with long-distance trade.

People living there tried to live in harmony and peace. In this era was literature centre of cultural and religious life. (Barnavi,1995)

As I stated before, life during Middle Ages was horrible for the Jewish people which started to change after 1781. Jews in the 20<sup>th</sup> century united together to feel protected from suspicions and hostility of surrounding world and were stronger thanks to their religion, traditions, education and language. Ultra-orthodox Jews were only focused on prayers and faith while orthodox Jews were getting used to habits of the country they lived in but followed basic rules of their religion. The basis of lives of Jews was education and studying of the Bible. Since the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century Jews spoke the language of the country they lived in. (Gilbert, 2003)

In the thirties of 20<sup>th</sup> century rapid change set into the lives of Jewish people. Hitler's vicious plan described in his book *Mein Kampf* (1925) about getting rid of all inferior Jews were quickly put into practice. It started slowly with discrimination and grew into fearful events such as for example "*Kristallnacht*." When 200 tenement Jewish houses and 7500 Jewish shops were burnt down. Over 30 000 Jews were dragged out of their houses and transported to concentration camps. Many people were beaten on the streets, 36 killed and 55 more died later due to severe injuries. This terror was still not enough for the German government so they imposed sanctions on Jewish people and basically made them pay what Germans destroyed. Three weeks after "*Kristallnacht*" Jewish children were transported to England which was supported by the English government. More than 9500 children were saved till the war started in 1939. For most of them saying goodbye to their parents meant not seeing them ever again. (Johnson, 1995)

Life of Jews before World War II. was good. They had very rich cultural life and their language and literature flourished. They were famous lawyers, doctors, scientists, artists,

writers and musicians. Among famous and respectable Jewish artist belongs for example Otto Klemperer, Bruno Walter, Arthur Rubinstein, Max Reinhardt, Kurt Weill or Elisabeth Bergner. Jews in Poland before the war had their newspapers, magazines, socialistic and Zionist groups, theatre and musical groups, film companies, charity organizations and sport clubs. (Gilbert, 2003)

Once the persecution of Jews started thousands of them emigrated to England, Palestine or USA. Society was manipulated through the hatred of anti-Semitic posters, caricatures of Jews in the newspaper, daily posts in the newspapers full of vicious attacks on Jews, by signs on the pubs that Jewish people are inconvenient or by a movie called The Eternal Jew made in 1940 which describes Jews as hideous creatures. On 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1935 Hitler signed The Nuremberg Laws which classified Jews as subjects without any political rights. After that Jews were deprived of German citizenship, excluded from civil services, various professions, intellectual and artistic life. Attacks, dismissal of work, imprisoning, burning of books and shops happened on a daily basis. (Barnavi, 1995)

Life of Jewish people after World War I. was better than ever before. They had their lives, traditions, professions, faith and families. But with Hitler and his hatred came terror, misery, sadness, hopelessness and fight for one's own life. Families were separated, dreams and lives shattered and future was uncertain.

## 5. Trauma and dealing

Life after holocaust must have been very confusing, fragmented, shattered and divided for the survivors. The life they knew was changed through terrifying, dreadful and frightful experience which could not be forgotten. The victims were ripped off their basic human rights, dignity, their freedom and free will. It is very hard to try to rely and connect to their feelings and thoughts after everything they went through. In my opinion, dealing and trying to continue in their lives was as hard as trying to survive all of the monstrosities of concentration camps. How can one possibly go on if he had to participate in something so unnatural and twisted. You can never forget. They had to start over, many of them were just by themselves, because their families were killed in camps. And if they returned to their homes, Glassman (2008) claims that some people met with unfriendly behaviour from the side of their neighbours who occupied their flats and things. They were also very angry that the survivors came back and told them that they thought they all died in concentration camps so what are they doing back home. (Glassman, 2008) No sorrow, understanding or compassion.

According to Glassman (2008) when talking about holocaust, genocide, torture or terror, forgetting would mean a denial of history, misery and suffering of all the victims. But some of the victims wanted to put the past behind them, to forget and they tried to. Lived their lives with a clear state of denial. These people were affected the most because everytime something went wrong in their lives or if they had to undergo any other trauma or loss, everything they tried to keep under surface, came right back, and the feelings were even stronger than before. Glassman (2008) says that suppressed feelings which disappear from our consciousness are still present in an unconscious state. So denial of feelings like anger, rage, destruction leads to a feeling of being “imprisoned“ in our reality. Suppression

of memories happens when we keep them out of active consciousness because their content is unacceptable to the normal mind. If the suppression would be loosened then the person would perceive unbearable pain and anxiety. (Glassman, 2008)

According to Tischler (2009) the word “trauma“ has its origin in Greek language. It is derived from a Greek verb *to stab* and its meaning is *a wound*. In medicine and surgery the word *trauma* is used for wounds caused by damage of the body. Freud used this term for specific psychological phenomenon which was an experience that caused anxiety attacks such as terror, fear, shame or physical pain. Later on was trauma described as an experience which, in a very short time, confronts the mind with the stimulus which is too hard, strong and tough to cope with. Nürnberger (2009) says that trauma can be one-time (such as death of a relative or a friend, rape) or repeated (repeated torture). If the person is exposed to the trauma for a long time it can lead to depression or posttraumatic stress disorder. As a traumatic experience is considered a life-threatening situation, sudden loss of a close relative or friend, any violence which restricts personal freedom of individuals and witnessing a violence or crimes committed on other people. (Nürnberger, 2009)

People and their dealing with the past, trauma and horrible experiences were different but many of them quickly got married and started new families that should replace people whom they lost during the war. Children born after the war in families of former victims did not have an easy life considering persisting memories and traumas of their parents. They were often given names of dead relatives who died during Nazi's cruel dominance and they somehow felt like being a part of the family legacy but they could never exceed idealized relative after whom they inherited their names. There were also overprotecting parents, who were distrustful against everybody and everything. In some families, the parents cared the most about the food, because they still remembered how it feels like, to be hungry. So their way of expressing their feelings was a table full of food,

and basically food all the time, that lead to eating disorders and obesity. Traumatized parents often did not want to let their children go on a trip with their class or anywhere far from home, because they still recalled the feelings of loss, when someone they knew and loved, went away and never came back. Another feature of traumatized parents was the caution not to get emotionally too close to their children and they also did not want the children to be emotionally dependent on them because they did not want the children to suffer so much if they would die or disappear as it happened to them. But the children obviously desired love and attention from their parents and when they saw the aloofness they felt responsible for that and not good enough for the parents. (Nürnberg, 2009)

Nürnberg (2009) claims that transmission of trauma across generations is like an endless circle. Fortunately, there exists a way out. Traumatized people have to share their experiences and try to put it into words, talk about it, that way they realize a lot of incidents, feelings and perceptions and they do not have to hide, displace and deny what happened and they can get rid of tormenting feelings of guilt which comes along with trauma. The process of healing and therapy is the same with children and grandchildren of survivors of the holocaust which is the realization of the issues and finding out about the past from concrete stories. If they realize that the feelings of anxiety or guilt are not theirs but are transmitted, it is easier for them to cope with it. They can realize that their behaviour is a seventy-year-old experience which was transmitted unprocessed. It does not mean that the second and third generation will not transmit any experiences to the other generations. (Nürnberg, 2009)

As Ivan Kamenský (2009) reflects on his life when he spent his childhood hiding, which had an impact on his future life. Kamenský was born in 1941 and when he was seven months old he and his parents were hiding in an old public house. His physical and mental development started to stagnate due to a long-term stay in the dark and in the

company of traumatized parents. This conditions endangered his life. By the end of 1942, when he was fifteen months old he was a weepy, timid, fearful, barely speaking and physically weak child. And because of his long wavy hair, they often dressed him as a girl, so that was the first time when his identity was changed. His parents had to flee to the mountains where they hid in the bunker. Severe cold, hunger, omnipresent fear lead to destruction of life values and so being captured by Gestapo at the end of 1944 was somehow considered as a redemption of a long-term insecurity. Kamenský and his parents were set free in 1945, he was shy and timid and his parents had a lifelong consequences. When he was eight years old he lived only with his parents, without any closer relatives since more than thirty of his direct relatives died in concentration camps and those who survived moved to Israel or Hungary. He knew he is Jewish and he knew it is something dangerous. He was still physically very weak, thin, fearful, quiet, timid and very often ill. He made up his own imaginary world where he ran away in his loneliness. After war, his father changed their name, so that was the second time when his identity was changed. When people knew about his origin they very often stopped talking when he appeared which was awkward for him. He read everything he could about the holocaust and concentration camps and he eagerly listened when his father talked about it. It was something mysterious for him, something he did not go through, he did not have the memories of but something what affected and influenced his life in every way. He says that his childhood, growing up and a huge part of his adult life he did not live his authentic life and that he was not his real self but he hid his true identity. During the years of 1990 till 1993 he underwent an intensive psychotherapy which helped him to form his Jewish identity and encouraged him to openly claim that he is Jewish. In 1996 he spent a week in Prague moderating a discussion and a narration of stories of survivors in the framework of the project of S. Spielberg. After hearing so many stories he found out that people who had

unworried and happy childhood without antisemitism were better in coping with hardships and suffering of the future years of their lives unlike the children who were born during the years of persecution, had to hide all the time and never experienced anything else before.

Kamenský was a child who was born during the persecution, it took him a long time to face his fears and to at least partially heal his soul and let his mind accept what happened to him, his parents, his family and all the Jews in general during the World War II. He went through a psychotherapy at the age of 49 and thenceforth he did seminars and narratives with Holocaust survivors. He also spent a week in London on Holocaust survivors centre and then worked for seven years as a member of The Club of Holocaust in Košice. Since 1996 he worked on the project "Families after Holocaust." (Kamenský, 2009)

Different story about surviving Holocaust is a story narrated by Petr Riesel (2009). He tells a story of his three and a half years spent in Terezín. He lost his father, his home and was excluded from school when he was six years old. He got separated from his mother in Terezín. The trauma of losing his father continued by being without a mother or anyone close in such cruel conditions. As a kid from 8 to 12 years he did not get education and the only thing he knew within the ghetto was hunger and fear, he did not know that there is hope or faith, so that he could not have recourse to it. Riesel (2009) describes that after liberation he felt depression, emotional deprivation, emptiness, passivity, alienation and the overall weakening of personality who survives without education and upbringing. He and his mother got a flat after Germans in Plzeň but they also needed medical care, psychotherapy and other help, which they did not get. He said that they were liberated but not free, they were unable to adapt to the life in freedom. It was hard to get rid of the suffering, misery and humiliation and to gain self-confidence and built trust for the meaningfulness of their deprived lives. They did not know how to continue living their

lives – freed but imprisoned in their own destiny. The word hope was absent for them. They did not see it, they missed beauty, certainty and love. Riesel (2009) says that they appreciated having food, clothes and clean bed where they could have a long undisturbed sleep which was like a gift for them. The first incident when Riesel truly felt his strong emotions related to the trauma he went through was at school when he asked the boy sitting next to him if he can borrow his pencil. The boy said that he will not borrow it to a Jew. Riesel recalls jumping on that boy, striking him down and that it was impossible for the teachers to get him off the boy. A remarkable change in his personality and his perspective of life happened when he fell in love with a girl at the dancing lessons. She made him enjoy life, she taught him new things, showed him culture, arts, music, theatre and he wanted to live again. But he still perceived anti-Semitic thoughts and words among people in high school and later also in college, when he told them he was Jewish they apologized but these feelings and expressions about Jews were still among people. What was very important for him was education. He became a doctor and he wanted to be a psychiatrist but he could not because of the communist regime. He made himself to be a defiant and fierce person who does not give up easily. That was his kind of a defence. He also underwent psychotherapy which was painful and almost agonizing but it helped him. (Riesel, 2009)

In general, Riesel (2009) says that he had problems with assimilation and identity, with self-confidence and self-esteem and that he found peace and fulfilment in his work.

In comparison with the story of Kamenský we can see a difference in perception of holocaust and trauma. Kamenský was born in the years of persecution and never knew anything else than fear, hunger, darkness and hiding, being on the run all the time, although he was too young to perceive all of this fully. But the consequences formed his whole future life. Riesel on the other hand was born before the war and he was older when

he experienced living in Terezín but he was still a lost child, not knowing about hope. They both felt depressed and had to undergo psychotherapy to find their identity and to cope with their past.

These two narrative stories shows how persistent are the feelings of emptiness, depression, fear, denial and anger and that dealing with trauma is a long-term issue.

## 6. Elie Wiesel's life experience

Elie (Eliezer) Wiesel was born on 30<sup>th</sup> of September in 1928 in Sighet, Romania. He had 3 sisters. His father was an educated, good man who cared for others but did not know how to express emotions. He was a respected figure in Sighet and many people came to him for advice or help with almost everything. Elie himself was very religious, he studied Talmud during the day and visited synagogue at night. He made friends with Moishe the Beadle as they called him in Sighet with whom he talked about Kabbalah, about spiritual and life questions and their talks usually lasted for hours. One day a command came that all foreign Jews have to leave Sighet. Moishe was one of them. After this stressful experience life in Sighet got back to normal. After a few months, Moishe returned. Different. Changed. There was no sparkle in his eyes. He told a story about cruel gestapo officers who made them dig out their own graves and then beat them to death. Moishe managed to escape because he pretended to be dead. Jews in Sighet did not believe him. It was the end of 1942. The life of inhabitants of Sighet continued as before.

In the spring of 1944 they thought the end of the war is near. Although they heard stories of how Jews in Europe are treated they did not believe it, and those who did, refused to admit that the soldiers could also come to their town to drag them away. Elie begged his father to sell everything they had and move when there was still the opportunity to get away. When German soldiers got to Budapest, people in Sighet still believed they will not get to their town. German soldiers were in Sighet within three days. The restrictions started to appear. Jews had to wear yellow star and they could not leave their homes and they did not have the right to travel by trains, visit restaurants or coffee houses. Soon after they were sent to ghettos until the message about deportation came. Elie and his family were not in the first transport instead of that they were moved to another smaller

ghetto. They still had hope that war will end soon and that the deportation will never happen. But one day they had to leave the smaller ghetto as well. The soldiers moved them to synagogue where they waited for 24 hours. The next day they marched to the train station where a convoy of cattle cars was waiting. They put 80 people in one car and gave them a few loaves of bread and some buckets filled with water. The cars were sealed. The train started to move. People in the cars had to stand because there was no space and they could barely breathe, were very thirsty as it was so hot inside the car. One lady got mad and started to scream: "Fire! I see a fire! I see a fire!" She screamed for hours, as if some evil spirit had possessed her. As if she could see what happened to so many Jewish people. When the train stopped for a while someone near the window read the name of the station – Auschwitz. Nobody knew that name. The train slowly continued until it finally stopped in Auschwitz –Birkenau.

The selection started. That was the last time Elie saw his mother. He stayed with his father, they both lied about their age. Elie said he was 18 instead of 15 and his father said he was 40 instead of 50, a prisoner who briefly spoke to them advised them that. They stepped in front of Mengele, the angel of death, as he was nicknamed. Elie could not believe what was happening around him. A truck full of dead babies stopped right next to him to unload the dreadful cargo into a prepared pit. Elie says that he could never fall asleep after that. He also describes his first night in the camp which turned his entire life into the one neverending darkness. *"Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, that turned my life into one long night seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky. Never shall I forget those flames that consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence that deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul and turned my*

*dreams to ashes. Never shall I forget those things, even were I condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.*“ (Wiesel, 2014)

Elie describes routines after selection how they made them take off their clothes, shaved their hair and beards, how they disinfected and showered them. He says they lost everything and became somebody else. They tattooed them the next day. Elie got a number A-7713 which replaced his name. The SS moved them from Birkenau to Auschwitz I. Elie stuck to his father. They were in Auschwitz I. for three weeks where they slept a lot because they did not have to do anything. But then they were moved to Buna. They had to go through another medical examination and then they were moved to a work unit to sort out things in a storehouse. As time ran Elie was only interested in food. He says it was his whole life. Only his stomach could feel the flow of time. Prisoners in the ghetto had to watch executions in the gallows. Elie was transferred to a building work unit and worked hard 12 hours a day. Then another selection took place. All prisoners had to undress and walk in front of Mengele, as he decided who will live and who will not. Those who did not pass the selection were told to stay in the camp the next morning. Among those people was Elie's father. They spoke before Elie had to go to work. He thought about his father all day, wishing to die right at that moment. He was afraid of the evening, if his father will be alive or not. A miracle happened. His father passed the second selection and they were reunited in the evening.

Winter set in and Elie had to undergo an operation of his leg due to a long-term problem where his leg would swell during cold days. After the surgery he should have stayed in bed for two weeks but a command about evacuation of the camp came so he searched for his father. Once he found him they had to decide whether to leave or stay in the camp (because Elie could smuggle his father into the hospital and sick people could stay in the camp) but there were rumours that the camp will be blown up after everyone

had left. As Elie found out after the war if they would have stayed in the camp they would have been freed by Russians two days later. Before the prisoners left the camp they had to clean up all the buildings, so that the liberators would not see the conditions they had to live in. As the evening of leaving the camp came as Elie recalls: *“The gates of the camp opened. It seemed as though an even darker night was waiting for us on the other side.”* (Wiesel, 2014) Strong cold wind was blowing as they marched not knowing where to. If someone could not go on and stopped, the SS shot him. Elie continued to run because of his father who was his support. Dawn set in when they finally let them rest after they had walked for more than 70 kilometers. Elie fell asleep but his father woke him up so that he would not die. Some people around them fell asleep and never woke up. All around them were people dying. It was a quiet agony.

The SS commanded to line up and march again. They left the dead behind and continued on their path full of fear, misery and hopelessness. Many people died during the march because of the cold and exhaustion. They finally came to Gleiwitz where they stayed for 3 days without food or water. They heard cannon shots but they did not have the courage to believe that the rescuers will come in time. The third day, the SS drove them out of the barracks and gave them a little piece of bread. They did not get any water and they could not move so they ate snow with a spoon from the back of the person standing in front of them. The SS were laughing at them. The train without a roof came and the SS put 100 people in one cattle car. Elie felt nothing but indifference. It did not matter to him anymore if he dies and when. The train stopped and the SS shouted at them to throw out the dead, so they did. Someone wanted to get Elie’s father as well, because he seemed dead but Elie finally woke him up. They spent 10 days on the train and out of a hundred people, only twelve survived. Elie and his father were amongst the twelve. They were in Buchenwald. His father got sick with dysentery and the doctors did not want to help him.

He was lying in the barrack ill and other prisoners beat him and stole his food. On 28<sup>th</sup> of January 1945 his father was still alive but hallucinating, calling his son when the SS officer went around the barrack and heard him. He shouted at Elie's father to shut up but he did not listen so the officer beat him up. Elie did not do anything, just watched it. Then he sat next to his father and watched him die. When Elie woke up the next day, his father was gone, taken to the crematorium. On 10<sup>th</sup> of April around 20 000 people were still in Buchenwald. The SS wanted to evacuate the camp till the evening and then blow up the camp. But they did not manage the evacuation so people stayed in the camp for one more day, till April 11<sup>th</sup>. At around 6 pm the first American army tank appeared. The first thing the prisoners cared about after the liberation was food. Three days after Buchenwald was freed Elie got food poisoning and spent two weeks between life and death. One day when he got the strenght to get up he wanted to see himself in the mirror. He did not see his face since he left the ghetto. When he saw himself he saw a corpse gazing at him. He says he will never forget that look. (Wiesel, 2014)

## **7. Kitty Hart's life experience**

Kitty Hart was born in 1926 in a Polish town Bielsko. She had a peaceful childhood filled with sports and holidays spent in the mountains which she admired and loved. In 1939 she was chosen to represent her country in Palestine with a junior athletic team. She and her mother went on holiday, her father and brother were to join them later but one day her father called that they should return immediately. When they got home, there was panic and mess. Her mother told her that the war was coming. Kitty did not understand why, with whom and what the war had to do with them. Her father decided that they will leave so on 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1939 they did. They went to Lublin. Kitty did not know what was happening but she began to slowly understand when they did not go back home when school started.

One day a command came that all Jewish men had to come forward. Many men ran away and so did her brother, but father refused and said that he would stay with them. New laws and restrictions came out everyday. No Jewish children could attend any school and inhabitants were pushed to the edge of the city with the intention of making a ghetto. Very common were searches done in the houses and flats belonging to Jewish people so they started to create hiding places in between walls and secret entrances to cellars and lofts. Radios and newspapers were forbidden so people did not know about what was happening and the extend of the war. It was also forbidden to cook. Despite all these limitation Jews had to face, Kitty says that Germans were unsuccessful in breaking their spirits.

In 1940 her father decided to leave again. He wanted to cross the German- Russian borders but they did not make it. Kitty and her parents were very lucky that they could speak German so well because they had to prove their identity many times and each one of the soldier believed them to be Germans, because her father had a paper where his name

was written in German and a paper proving he served in the Austrian army. They had to return to Lublin because it was impossible to cross the border but there was a Jewish ghetto which was supposed to be closed, so they were on the run again.

In August 1941 they had to leave their grandmother behind because of the long distance march which was ahead of them. Her father obtained new identity papers and they had to learn their new lifestories and names and finally had to separate. Kitty and her mother got on a train to Bitterfeld where they started working in a rubber factory. As time passed they felt unsafe again as they were closely watched and spied on. One day Gestapo came for them. They were investigated and put into a cell. They thought they would be executed in the morning. They placed them in front of the wall where normally executions were carried out by shooting prisoners. The officers then started to laugh and told them that they will not die so easily. They moved them from one prison to another. First they were at Halle/Saale, in Leipzig and then Dresden. Then they put them on the train to Auschwitz. They got there in the middle of the night. Kitty saw the sign *Work brings freedom* then they marched to Auschwitz II. Birkenau.

Once they got there the officers commanded them to take off their clothes, they disinfected them, shaved their heads and other parts of their bodies and gave them clothes which did not fit them. Tattooing followed and Kitty got a number 39934. She knew their condition was bad but she did not let herself fall in despair. Everyday a roll call was done in order to count prisoners. They often had to stand three or four hours, sometimes longer. One very important thing which Kitty described was possessing a bowl which was used to serve food and drinks. They also washed themselves using the bowl and used it when it was impossible to leave their spot during the night and they could not go to the bathroom. Women in the camp tried to take care of their clothes and wash themselves when it was

possible, for example with a tea which they sometimes got. To buy a better clothes women saved their portions of bread because food was a means of payment. (Hart, 1961)

One night Kitty slept next to a gypsy woman. They talked and she took her hand and read in it. She told Kitty that she will make it to freedom one day. The gypsy woman died that night. Kitty's mother worked in a hospital compound whereas Kitty herself worked outside the camp. Her work was to carry heavy stones and after first day of doing so she knew she will not survived if she had to continue doing so as the work was very exhaustive. Moreover the march to the work place lasted for two hours, so that was four hours a day walking, then working hard and followed by two to four hours roll call. So the next day she secretly joined another work group. The new group was digging up graves. She had swellings from the beating and dog bites but it was still better than carrying stones. She describes everyday as an awful fight for one's existence.

After some time spent in the camp Kitty got lice and it was impossible for her to get rid of it. After some time there was another selection supervised by Mengele when all the girls had to take off their clothes and walk in front of him naked. He decided whether one lived or died. Some girls who did not want to go on anymore were found near electrical wire fencing. Kitty and her mother stuck together and supported each other when one of them felt that she can not live anymore. In the winter in 1943 a general roll call was commanded. Prisoners had to stand for 14 hours while another selection took place. Later that year Kitty got typhus and was in a hospital for a long time. Her mother worked there as a nurse so she was with her all the time and hid her between mattresses before selection. Kitty got better but was confused for months. Soon after another selection controlled by Mengele took place. Kitty gathered all her strength and once again made it. Thereafter she got pneumonia. She had inflammations and abscesses in both ears so the doctor pierced it with knitting needles and because of that she was deaf for months. On her birthday, her

mother gave her an onion as a gift and wished her many happy returns. The onion was luxury to her.

In early 1944 she had to say goodbye to her mother, not knowing if she will ever see her again because she was chosen to work in a Kanada Kommando so she had to move to another camp. Her job was to sort out things of people who had been murdered . She recalls that the worst part of that job was when she found identity papers or photos of dead people. There was so many stuffs from almost all European country. Expensive wines and food, soaps, fragrances and almost anything one could think of. She did not want to take the things of the dead but her friends convinced her. So she had more food, she could take a shower everyday, she got clean clothes and gained weight, she read books. Everyday she and her friends watched people go to their death and they did not understand it, but after some time they got used to it. From time to time she could visit her mother in the camp and she always smuggled some clothes and food for her. Her mother got sick with typhus but recovered. Everyday she watched people marche to a certain death not knowing what was going to happen. After seeing so many horrible things she suddenly felt that there was no hope anymore.

In August of 1944 the SS eliminated the whole gypsy camp. Men from Sonderkommando destructed crematorium II. and III. They burned it down. The SS looked frightened. It was a heroic action of a few men, an act of revenge. A command about evacuation of the camp came. Kitty's mother went to SS officer Hessler to let them go on the transport together. It was very big risk for her but it worked. Hessler transferred Kitty back to camp so that she could go on a transport with her mother. One night they had to gather and leave the camp immediately. The train composed of cattle cars were already waiting for them. There were so many of them that they had to stand all the time or take

turns in sitting. It was dark in the train, it was sticky and stuffy and almost no air. They got to a small camp near Reichenbach and they worked in a factory.

In February 1945 they had hope of liberation because they heard gun-fires but immediate evacuation followed. They marched for more than 20 hours uphill. They could rest at night but were marching during the days. They did not have anything to eat so they raided nearby houses and farms. After days on the march they came to Trautenau where they stayed for 2 days until the SS put them on the train again where they spent 5 days. They were in another camp, had to work underground for 14 hours making ammunition. But after some time they were put on a train again and brought to Fallersleben. Auschwitz girls, as Kitty calls them, clung together. They had running water and flushing toilets which was a sheer luxury for them but a lack of food. And once again cattle cars were waiting.

The train took them to Bergen Belsen which was overcrowded so they drove them back to the cars and closed the doors. They left them there. It was almost impossible to breathe and it was so hot. She thought they will die at last. The next day SS opened the doors and took them to Salzwedel. After a week spent there rumours surfaced about Allies were spoken again. On 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1945 her dream came true. An American convoy was spotted in the distance. They were finally liberated. First thing most of the prisoners did was to eat as much as they could. Then Kitty and some of her friend went down the city to get their revenge, the revenge she dreamed of the whole time spent in the camps. But when it came down to it she could not do it. So she and her friends stole food and got back to the camp. Her mother was just giving a testimony to one of the journalist. They spent some more days in the camp and then lived in a residence. Her mother started to work at military headquarters. They searched for their family members, after some months they both realized that they are dead. (Hart, 1961)

## 8. Analysis of Wiesel and Hart

In this chapter, I would like to analyse some of the facts and life experiences described in both books. I would like to point out the things they have in common as well as the differences. In both books we can see similar and sometimes almost identical moments from lives of Wiesel and Hart. For example in the selection supervised by Mengele, they both described that they had to take off their clothes and walk in front of him and they also pointed out that in order to pass this selection, one had to gather all his strength and almost ran so that Mengele would not notice how weak they were. Another resembling feature is described in their perception of bombing. Elie remembers: *“We were not afraid. And yet, if a bomb had fallen on the blocks, it would have claimed hundreds of inmates' lives. But we no longer feared death, in any event not this particular death. Every bomb that hit filled us with joy, gave us renewed confidence.”* (Wiesel, 2014) Hart was imprisoned in Dresden when air raid started but she, as well recalls the feeling of joy: *“Allied bombers so close to us. From high up, with a view over the whole town, we could see fires all around us, as the bombs struck the houses. All our windows were shattered and the roof was cracked. We cheered wildly, oh, if only a bomb would hit the prison!”* (Hart, 1961) They both felt joy to see the Allies destroy Germans. They did not care if they would get killed, but they were happy that someone is fighting their enemy.

Hart and Wiesel witnessed many horrible things while being imprisoned in the camp. Most of them could never be erased from their memory. For Hart it was the sight of people going to meet certain death. Men, woman, young, old, babies in the arms. Wiesel says that the first night spent in the camp turned his life into complete darkness.

The difference between these two books is in the way the events were described. Kitty Hart as a girl illustrates everything in a very specific detailed way. She describes

horrible, unbearable things which happened to her or to the people around her but even in this misery one can still feel that she has not given up. The thought of not wanting to live anymore surfaced once, when she had to clean their block of the dead bodies of her friends. That one day she really thought about ending her life by jumping onto the electrical fence but her mother told her she has to go on. So she did and in the following pages of the book you can see again her strong will to live, to survive to not give up on life. On the other hand, Wiesel's narration is darker, if it is even possible considering the topic of holocaust. Wiesel also often played with the thought of jumping onto the electrical fence because it would end his suffering, but he never actually got the courage to do it. Wiesel's narration is more focused on the events which happened during his imprisonment and he describes it as facts interspersed with his inner reflections of God and his rejection of faith which was once very important to him but now did not matter because God let this cruel event happen to them. Both Hart and Wiesel described their doubts of God. Wiesel says he was lost in a world without God and Hart thought about how could God not see this suffering of the innocents.

Another difference can be found in Hart's narration from the girls point of view. She describes how being thin was unfashionable and how the girls in the camp tried to take care of themselves for example by washing with tea or sometimes even urine. How they tried to keep their clothes clean and how they saved their small portions of bread to buy better clothes, because food was one of the strongest means of payment.

Another aspect of their lives which is the same is the change of their personalities. They were both 16 years old when Nazis dragged them into concentration camps. Hart survived there for more than 2 years and Wiesel for more than 8 months. In the books we can see the change from the childish carefreeness and lightheartedness to maturity and development of life values. During that horrible time when they were imprisoned they

understood how wonderful it is to be free, what freedom itself means and how good it is to be able to make our own choices, to sleep in a bed with undisturbing sleep, to wear clean clothes, to eat as much food as they can. How amazing it is to be with the people you love and how comforting it is to see them happy, unharmed and satisfied.

Hart also describes that in the camp people could not hide their true selves: *“Only here one could get to know the true character of a person, not like civilization where people tend to hide behind masks, disguising their real selves. Here was no need for disguise and all ones points, good or bad, were exposed. Only here could one encounter such real friendships, where one friend would literally give up the last crumb of bread, or drop of water to save another, or even risk destruction in order to help others. Here, too, one came across the other extreme – the utterly selfish who only thought about their own survival at the expense of their own people.”* (Hart, 1961) Hart described that she had a lot of friends in the camp, mainly from her block, who supported each other. Wiesel also had a few friends in the camp but from his point of view men did not stick together as much as women did. Wiesel recalls that when his father was ill, lying on the block when other prisoners stole his portion of food and beat him. He describes relations among prisoners as rather unfriendly.

Another difference can be seen in the family background. While Hart’s father quickly understood that something bad is about to happen and did everything to save his family. Wiesel’s father thought war will soon end and he did not want to admit the threats the Nazis posed. When restrictions and the command came to wear yellow star symbol Wiesel recalls hearing his father say: *“The yellow star? So what? It's not l e t h a l...”* Wiesel accompanies his fathers words with a sad statement: *“Poor Father! Of what then did you die?”* (Wiesel, 2014) Hart’s father died during the war and so did her brother.

Wiesel's mother and three sisters were gassed in Auschwitz and his father died just a few days before liberation of dysentery.

The thing which these stories have in common is certainly the unbreakable will to live. Even though both of them saw and experienced unimaginable things they somehow fought to survive each and every day of their lives. They had thoughts about dying but this was inevitable because death surrounded them all the time but they just continued fighting until one day when they were finally liberated. Not free, but liberated. It was their lifetime burden to live with the experiences they had gone through in the concentration camps.

Another similarity is their bond with a parent. Hart was in the camp with her mother while Wiesel with his father. All the time they supported and helped each other although Wiesel admits having shameful thoughts when the SS officer beat his father. Wiesel did not help him and wanted his father to be quiet. He was angry at him that the officer beat him and while his father was dying the doctor advised him to eat his father's portion of food because the father would die anyway. Wiesel thought about it, but did not do it. One time he also describes that he wished his father would be dead so that he did not have the burden of taking care of him. Wiesel describes how horrible and awful these thoughts were that made you question everything you know and made you think in such a selfish way towards a member of your family. Hart and her mother stucked together as well. They stood by each other while one of them was ill and shared words of love and kindness when their spirits were down. When Hart had better work than before and therefore access to food and other goods she always smuggled as much as she could back to the camp for her mother and friends.

Food and their attitude towards it Hart and Wiesel also describes similarly. As Hart narrates in her book: *"I only had one thought now, food."* (Hart, 1961) Wiesel says almost

the same thing: *“At that moment in time, all that mattered to me was my daily bowl of soup, my crust of stale bread. The bread, the soup - those were my entire life. I was nothing but a body. Perhaps even less: a famished stomach. The stomach alone was measuring time.”*

(Wiesel, 2014) They both agree on the fact that being so hungry all the time drives a person crazy. They described how food was the only thing on their minds after a long time spent in the camp.

Description of long hopeless days and nights spent in the trains is also similar and Hart describes how someone started to sing a sad song and the whole train began to sing too. Wiesel on the other hand narrates that someone started to scream and everyone who could started to howl, moan, shout and cry. People left alone at the mercy of their fates locked in the cattle cars singing and howling. Only a thought of that is scary and so horribly heartbreaking in its essence.

Both Wiesel and Hart had to march not knowing where and for how long. Once the Nazis felt that the Allies were getting closer, they decided to evacuate the camps. Hart and her friends were on the march for days. They switched many camps and places before the war was over. Wiesel and his father marched all night until they came to Gleiwitz where an unforgettable thing happened. Wiesel's friend Juliek played on a violin in the barrack full of dying, exhausted people without any hope for the future. Wiesel described it: *“He was playing a fragment of a Beethoven concerto. Never before had I heard such a beautiful sound. In such silence. The darkness enveloped us. All I could hear was the violin, and it was as if Juliek's soul had become his bow. He was playing his life. His whole being was gliding over the strings. His unfulfilled hopes. His charred past, his extinguished future. He played that which he would never play again.”* (Wiesel, 2014) When I read this all I could see are dying people, listening to the heavenly music in such a horrible place. Wiesel has an ability to describe these dreadful events in the way that it really touches your soul.

Hart focuses on detailed description of events and places and Wiesel as an author of a biographical book is more focused or deals with thoughts and passages where he describes his feelings of hopelessness and sometimes bizzareness as we can see in the description of his friend playing the violin. Imagination of Beethoven's music in such a dark place is just unbelievable and Wiesel narrates it in only a few sentences but which are filled with all the emotions one can feel while listening to the music in a concentration camp after such a long time being without family, friends, their lives and dreams, without hope.

To sum up, in these two narrative books we learn about experiencing both mental and physical pain, about feelings of hopelessness, humiliation, sadness, anger, despair but sometimes also about the feelings of hope and faith. Even though Hart and Wiesel literally went through a living hell they managed to survive. Their stories shows many differences mainly in the way they describe events but also many experiences which are almost identical.

## 9. Conclusion

This bachelor thesis is focused on the development of holocaust and on comparison of two narrative books written by Elie Wiesel and Kitty Hart who both survived holocaust.

The first chapter explains the word holocaust itself and describes the situation in Europe after the World War I. Next chapter deals with the development of concentration and extermination camps and portrays everyday life of the prisoners in concentration camp Auschwitz. Following chapter describes brief history of Jewish people and provides an outlook into their lives before holocaust. Next chapter describes the problems of trauma caused by holocaust experiences and dealing with it. It is shown on two narrative stories of people who underwent trauma as children.

Second part of my bachelor thesis deals with the stories of survivors. It describes their lives and their perception of things that happened to them. It contains analysis of chosen books.

To sum up, this project shows cruelty and unconcern of Nazi's leaders and officers who silently watched people die. It shows strenght of powerful leader who can influence many others to follow him. It shows desperate situation of people who suddenly became inferior. Who became dangerous for the state. For Germans. It shows people's destiny which was chosen for them. They were innocent, yet guilty. It shows us a dark secluded place of human mind which is capable of realizing such awful things as concentration and extermination camps surely are.

World should never forget this cruel chapter of our history. It destroyed many lives, hopes and dreams. Tore up many families and lovers. Stole people's will to live, to be happy, to love and to have faith.

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### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Birkenau barrack

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## Appendix 3: Children and women waiting for selection

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## Appendix 4: Furnace for burning corpses

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## Appendix 1

Birkenau barrack



## Appendix 2

Railway



### Appendix 3

Children and women waiting for selection



## Appendix 4

Furnace for burning corpses



## Annotation

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	<b>Martina Hubíková</b>
<b>Katedra:</b>	Katedra anglického jazyka
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b>	Mgr. Andrea Hoffmannová, Ph.D.
<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2015

<b>Název práce:</b>	Zkušenosti přeživších holocaustu a jejich poznatky v literatuře
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	The holocaust survivor's experience and its reflection in literature
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Tato práce je zaměřena na vývoj holocaustu v Evropě a na příběhy lidí co přežili útrapy v koncentračních táborech. V teoretické části popisuje historické pozadí doby před druhou světovou válkou, popisuje historii židovského národa, koncentrační tábory a trauma. V praktické části popisuje dva autobiografické příběhy přeživších a porovnává jejich zkušenosti.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Holocaust, koncentrační tábor, Osvětim, smrt, mučení, Židé
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	This project is focused on the development of holocaust in Europe and on stories of people who survived torture in concentration camps. In theoretical part it describes historical background before World War II., concentration camps and trauma. In practical part it portrays two autobiographical stories of survivors and compares their experiences.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	Holocaust, concentration camp, Auschwitz, death, torture, Jews
<b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b>	4 listy příloh
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	53
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	Anglický

## **Résumé**

Tato práce je zaměřena na vývoj holocaustu v Evropě a na příběhy lidí co přežili útrapy v koncentračních táborech. Popisuje historické pozadí před druhou světovou válkou a klade důraz na vyjádření postavení židů ve společnosti. Zabývá se traumatem a jeho léčením. Porovnává příběhy přeživších a ilustruje krutost a zlomyslnost Nacistů.