BREAD OR DEATH
MEMORIES OF MY CHILDHOOD DURING AND AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

MILTON MENDEL KLEINBERG (MENDEL DAWIDOWICZ)

Omaha, NE
Just as Turkey served as a refuge for Spanish and Portuguese Jews, Poland became the Promised Land for the persecuted Jews of Western Europe. After the Holocaust, the United States of America and Israel became the last refuge for the Jewish people. This story is to remind my descendants not to forget our family’s tragic history and our ancestors’ struggle to remain Jewish under the most extraordinary circumstances.

I dedicate this book to my wife Marsha, my children Hershel and Cindy, and to Cindy’s husband Michael. Also to my grandchildren and their spouses: Liza and Dani, Zev and Shachar, Yossi and Shani, Natanel and Noa, Maayan and David, and Avishai. Last, but not least, to my great-grandchildren: Noam, Idan, Ayala, Raphael, Nevo, Tuvya, and Sara, who are the next link in our story of survival. And to all future additions to this expanding family.
The Holocaust was one of the darkest times in human history. When human beings did unthinkable atrocities to each other; when an entire people were persecuted for their beliefs. A time of mass genocide; a time of countless small evils.

This gripping story of a single family captures the experiences of that generation. It is the story of love, sacrifice, and incredible courage. It is the story of an uncompromising faith that the forces of evil will not triumph.

What can we learn from a young boy?

Though just a child, Milton Kleinberg acted with determination and heroism. Despite the tragedies and cruelty, he stood up and defended himself and others. Milton’s refusal to become bitter, to never give up, and to never look at himself as a victim – can inspire all of us today.

His words – “Shine a light on evil” – should be etched on all of our souls.

Evil takes many forms – it can be a sword-carrying soldier or a bullying elementary school kid. In all cases, evil
will not disappear of its own accord. Perhaps the primary responsibility of educators is to teach students to stand up for what they believe is right. We cannot be passive in the face of injustice.

The Jewish People have shown through their history that darkness can never triumph. The most significant moment in our history, the Exodus from Egypt, when a slave people miraculously marched out to freedom, has become a worldwide symbol of hope for the powerless. This belief, that tomorrow does not have to look like today, that we can and must make a better world, has been our gift to the world.

Above all, *Bread or Death* teaches us that it is possible to “Shine a light on evil.” We will all encounter evil in our lives. It is a lesson ever relevant for us, and never more so than today.

Rabbi Aryeh Ben David
Director of *Ayeka*: Soulful Jewish Education