In memory of Rabbi Shmuel David and Rebbetzin Tzivia Walkin—
their wise visages accompanied me through many worlds.

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Preface

A VOICE KNOCKS:

Chaya Leah Walkin's Story Finds Me

I sleep, but my heart wakes,
The voice of the beloved knocks…
I have removed my cloak,
How shall I put it on?

Shir Ha'Shirim 5:3

The world was mad enough in 2015, the year in which this book project found me. This was the year in which Reuters reported that 65.3 million people were uprooted worldwide, many of them fleeing religious wars and terrorism. This was also the year in which the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) attacks were carried out on three continents. At the same time, China was building artificial islands in the South China Sea to ratchet up its bellicose claims against Japan. Though aware of these events, I was not planning to write a new book that would juxtapose global madness and the inner resources of refugees in catastrophic times.

In spring of 2015, I thought that my academic and writing career had come to a natural end. It was a period of personal reckoning about how to face the unknown path ahead. I was ready to wrap up four decades of China studies.

The afternoon that I finished the retirement address was drenched by cold rain. I allowed myself to ask for the first time without dread: "What next?" Not five minutes later, my cell phone rang. The caller was David Sokal, the son of a refugee from Vienna who kept in close touch with the community of "Shanghailanders." David started to speak enthusiastically about a special *rebbetzin* (wife of a distinguished rabbi) named Chaya Leah Small who had moved

him deeply with her story, her warmth, and her unique open-mindedness. He said that this special lady wanted to write a book about her experiences during the Holocaust and that she had asked David for help. Not being a writer himself, he thought of me.

Looking at the pounding waves beyond the beach house, I agreed to help. It was too odd to have gotten this call out of the blue just when I had reached the end of what I thought was my public purpose. Here, it seemed, was someone who could use my skills. Since I had mentored beginning writers before, perhaps I could advise the *rebbetzin* how to jot down something enduring for her children and grandchildren.

David surprised me by the depth of his admiration for this woman whose roots stretched deep into world of Talmudic scholarship before the war. He told me that Chaya Leah's mother had grown up in the home of the Chofetz Chayim (1839–1933), the venerated sage of Radin. Her grandfather had been the chief Rabbi of Pinsk. I listened, aware that David was praising the kind of Torah wisdom that had shaped my own life.

On April 28, 2015, Chaya Leah Small came to visit my home. I had emailed her about my willingness to help with the memoir. I knew from David Sokal that Chaya Leah had broken her leg and that this was going to be a daunting journey for her. The day of the visit, I ran around cleaning the house, preparing some soup, arranging flowers. I felt as if the great Chofetz Chayim himself had deigned to come to my house.

As the hours stretched and Chaya Leah was stuck in traffic, I had second thoughts: Why was this life-seasoned woman making this great effort to come to me? If we were to speak about her remembrances and how I might help in the writing process, we could have used Skype and saved all this trouble.

When Chaya arrived, I was surprised to see a petite, marvelously stylish woman step out of the car driven by her son, Shaul Small. She was carrying a gift, a hand-painted vase, which she handed to me saying:

> *This is for your tears.*
> *I came to visit you because you are widow, like me.*
> *I know how painful this time is for you and I came to offer you some* nachama *(comfort).*

This is not what I had expected at all. Chaya Leah's use of the Hebrew expression for relieving grief after death touched me to the core. I realized that this visit was not about her memoir, not even about Shanghai. This was

something more personal—an encounter more generous than I could have imagined from a stranger. Tears welled up even before I could serve the tea, and later some soup.

In the end, we talked for a few hours and I suggested strategies for Chaya Leah Small to start a rough draft of the memoir. She was determined to try. In an email, which I received after Shabbat on September 17, 2015, Chaya Leah found the words, again, to speak of our losses, about the ongoing grief that binds us more deeply than her childhood refuge in China, which was also the locale of my academic studies:

> *I felt every ache, pain, emotion, farlorenkiet (a feeling of being lost) as you.*
> *I felt like a wrung out rag.*
> *I felt I was drifting.*
> *So alone, so lost, and yet surrounded by so many...*
> *Like a child who learns how to walk even though the child can do it alone, the security of holding a finger is all that is needed to go.*
> *Now we have to walk alone without even a finger.*

In this email, a mother of five children who had endured a traumatic childhood as a refugee speaks in the voice of a forlorn widow. The line breaks, the punctuation are Chaya's. They are poetic without any conscious intent. And they hit their mark—they helped to mobilize my own resources in the service of a new narrative.

Yiddishisms like "*farlorenkiet*" had been one ingredient peppering the various mother tongues that surrounded my childhood in a city in Romania, densely populated by Hungarians and Germans. This city was also home to survivors of the *Shoah*. Two of the neighbors who shared our communal kitchen and bathroom had Auschwitz numbers on theirs arms. Thus, I came to understand Yiddish almost without trying.

Chaya Leah's story was a different, yet familiar, continuation of fragments I first encountered in my mother tongues. I responded to them out of familiarity with both Chinese and Jewish history. As in King Solomon's masterful poem, *Shir Ha'Shirim* (*Song of Songs*), I found myself addressed in a state somewhere between sleep and wakefulness.

In the spring of 2015, I was just trying to wrap my China studies, not start a new book. Yet, being that child of survivors from Romania, I could not turn away from recording, shaping, and vivifying one more voice from the Holocaust that is slipping away from us with the passage of time.

Over time, Chaya Leah became for me far more than yet another witness's voice. As I began to craft her story, it became a unique window into the world of a Jewish child who withstood the madness of the world in a way that remains compelling even today. Along the way, I also discovered that my social science training about "objectivity" had to make room for something else, something that I came to accept more readily through Chinese terms such as *zhuguan* 主觀 ("host perspective") and *keguan* 客觀 ("guest perspective").

This discovery came several months after our meeting in April 2015, as I gave Rebbetzin Small some concrete suggestions to jumpstart a book of memoirs. I shared with her a technique that I have used with my students over many decades. It is called "junking." In this process, I urge the writer to spew forth a first draft that is rough, unorganized, and wrestles with bits of concrete information. Later, we could sort through the rubble to excavate some major themes. I told Chaya Leah to send me her jottings and that I would help her in the revision process further down the road.

The energy, skill, and vision with which she plunged into the junking process amazed me. Within weeks of our meeting, Chaya Leah started to send me pages that rivaled the best of my graduate students' early efforts. These pages were filled with details about her childhood, her adult years, and the trauma of becoming a refugee in times of war. In one of first pages of this draft, I found an entry that revealed Chaya Leah's determination to give voice to her unique, and obviously subjective story:

> *The phone is ringing off the wall.*
> *No, I am not answering.*
> *My neighbors are worried.*
> *They are knocking at the door.*
> *You guessed it.*
> *I have started writing this book.*

By July 2015, Chaya Leah had written about 70 pages of so-called "junk." As I started to edit them, I saw immediately that they contained gems of historical importance combined with powerful spiritual and personal insights. I also began to glimpse an altogether different book that I could write, which would add historical context and thematic breadth to Chaya Leah's jottings.

I was not sure that I really wanted to commit to such a project or that Chaya Leah would agree to the change in the direction of our collaboration. This was something that we had to discuss in person. So, five months after our

first meeting, I flew out to Chicago for three days of conversation and research. During the first hours after our warm reunion, I asked Chaya Leah the question that I was asking myself: Do we want a book by an orthodox *rebbetzin* that is likely to reach only a limited audience interested in the religious outlook of Jewish survivors who took refuge in China during the war?

Or do we want a book that will reach a broader audience by addressing more objectively various themes beyond the framework of the yeshiva world? Chaya Leah's response was unequivocal and also surprising. Yes, she was willing to let this become my book, one in which my voice and my concerns would shape the meaning of Jewish refuge in times of war.

She trusted my research and analytical skills and had been overly generous in praising the literary value of my previous works, which she had read before our meeting in Chicago. More importantly, she stressed, she did not want the book to be "*fa'chnyoket*," which is a Yiddish term for someone who is unctuously religious.

This was an old-world expression that I did not know. Chaya Leah explained to me that it connotes an overly scrupulous attachment to the details of Jewish law without consideration for the larger context. This was the kind of book that Chaya Leah did not want. This was the kind of book I could never write.

Thus, a different project began between us. I would research and write the story of a Holocaust survivor focused upon the voice of a little girl of distinguished Torah lineage who witnessed a world gone mad. Chaya Leah would be my interlocutor while her jottings provided the morsel of living memory that I needed to flesh out the theme of Jewish resilience during the journey from Poland through Vilna and Kobe to wartime Shanghai, and beyond.

In the process of trying to make sense of Chaya Leah's story, I found myself going back again and again to the Chinese lexicon for "objectivity" and "subjectivity," which have been translated poorly in modern social science parlance. 客觀 and 主觀 are four characters which were borrowed in twentieth-century China from the dense language of classical poetry to suggest a marvelous interaction between the "guest's view" and the "host's view."

The guest, the outsider, the traveler passing through, is privileged with knowing an object from without. The host is within, limited by the partiality of her knowledge derived from an intimate world that the guest can never fully share.

In this book, I was the guest warmly invited in, like you, my reader. Beyond our gaze and grasp lies the subjective world of *zhuguan*—which I am tempted to call here the "*Jew guan*." This is Chaya Leah's universe of Torah roots and Jewish faith that sustained not only her family but may also provide a key to our own survival in a world that shows no signs of lessening madness.

Acknowledgments

The first and greatest debt of gratitude for this work is due to the Rebbetzin Chaya Leah Small. She has been a constant, devoted, caring companion along the journey of this writing. Her friendship is more precious to me now than I could have ever imagined possible when our paths first crossed in the spring of 2015. My hope is that this work will bring her *nachat ruach*—comfort and joy of the spirit—and that she will be blessed with long years and good health in the midst of her loving family.

Rabbi Chaim and Rebbetzin Henny Walkin, Chaya's brother and sister-in-law, respectively, have also been treasured advisors as I delved more deeply into the subject of the Walkin family legacy in Pinsk, Vilna and Shanghai. It has been a great privilege for me to be invited into Rabbi Walkin's gracious home in Jerusalem, where I witnessed personally the enduring generosity and open-minded commitment to Torah values that stretches from the pre-war world in Europe to all parts of the Jewish world today.

Chaya Leah's extended family has been supportive of this project all along. Her children, especially Sarah (Dubby) Pollack, responded with alacrity and kindness to my requests for information as well as driving Chaya Leah to meet me whenever and wherever time permitted. This kind of dedication speaks volumes about the values that Chaya Leah embodies and has conveyed meaningfully to future generations.

In Jerusalem, I have received research help from Ms. Rita Margolin of the Yad Vashem archives. A native of Pinsk, Ms. Margolin went beyond the call of duty to help me find original documents about the death of Chaya Leah's grandfather, Rav Aharon Walkin, known as the Pinsker Rav.

Closer to home, I am greatly indebted to David Sokal for introducing me to Chaya Leah in the first place. Having interviewed David's father—Dr. Robert Sokal (a refugee from Vienna)—twenty years earlier when I was writing about Shanghai's Jewish life for the first time, I knew of David's interest in the stories

of kin who had crowded the alleys of China during the Shoah. Although I met with David's parents and sister often, it is his own ongoing commitment to the legacy of the Shanghai refuge that moved me to start this project. His learned comments inspired me and kept me going all through the writing of this book.

Unexpected generosity and research help also came my way from Professor Yoshiko Samuel of Wesleyan University. She was supportive and helpful in this project, especially as I began to probe Chaya Leah's sojourn in Japan and the rope-jumping song that she carried from Kobe to her own children in America. Yoshiko was so moved by the memory of a Jewish child refugee that she contacted Professor Masahiro Iwai, a well-known ethnomusicologist from the University of Kobe. These two scholars puzzled over Chaya Leah's childhood snippet with marvelous empathy and insight—thereby encouraging me in the larger effort of understanding the fractured meanings of Jewish refugee life in China and Japan. From Chicago, Dr. Khane-Faygl Turtletaub provided linguistic support with the transliterations of key Yiddish phrases in Chaya Leah's narrative.

I am also thankful to Hebrew University, especially to the Mandel Center for Advanced Humanistic Studies, for a Visiting Professorship that enabled me to revise this work in a truly beautiful and inspiring landscape. My research assistants—Yochana Storch, Hadas Sharon, and Gleb Diorditsa—were resourceful in accessing sources and in the creation of a Powerpoint presentation that enabled me to share preliminary findings from this work in the spring of 2017.

Last, but not least, I want to express my gratitude to the staff of Academic Studies Press for their skilled and visionary approach to this book. Professor Roberta Farber, acquisitions editor, was the first to respond warmly to the manuscript. Eileen Wolfberg did an extraordinary job as copy editor while Alessandra Anzani helped with images and moved the book along toward publication expertly.

Without all this kindness and help, Chaya Leah Walkin's story might have remained a fragment of memory sheltered by the Walkin family alone. Now, it has a chance to reach the wider audience that it deserves. Needless to say, any errors in the book remain my own responsibility, for which I beg the reader's forgiveness at the start.

Introduction

THE VIRTUE OF ONE VINEYARD:
Jewish Refuge Reconsidered

> *Solomon had a vineyard,*
> *He let others guard it…*
> *My vineyard stands before me.*
> *You Solomon, keep your thousands.*
>
> Shir Ha'Shirim 8:11-12

Each story of refuge with dignity is worth telling. Each has a different melody, a different message. Once Chaya Leah Walkin's story found me, I knew that I was obliged to convey its undertones in a way that sets it apart from many other narratives of survival during the *Shoah*. Through the writing of this book, I became the guardian of a unique vineyard, unlike the "thousands" that the *Song of Songs—Shir Ha'Shirim*—attributes to King Solomon. He owned many fields and could afford to allow others to watch over them. For me, the act of listening to one particular voice in the fullness of its emotional and historical details transformed yet another Holocaust remembrance into a life-nourishing garden from which, I hope, others may draw nourishment as well.

Judith Miller had already pioneered this narrative strategy as early as 1990 in a book entitled: *One by One: Facing the Holocaust.* In this work, Miller sought to counter the dullness of the past that accosts us when we survey the huge field of atrocities in the twentieth century. The best antidote against the urge to either summarize or deny the lessons of the *Shoah* is to rescue singular fragments one story at a time:

> Abstraction is memory's most ardent enemy. It kills because it encourages distance, often indifference. We must remind ourselves that the Holocaust

Rebbetzin Chaya Leah Small in her home in Chicago with collage of Jewish refugee.

> was not six million. It was one plus one, plus one… (Only thus) is the incomprehensible given meaning.[1]

Judith Miller's project honored the singularity of the dead and challenged other scholars to similarly vivify the lives of those who survived atrocity.

Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan Van Pelt embraced this challenge as well in their study, *Flight from the Reich: Refugee Jews 1933-1946*.[2] Published in 2012, this work combined documentary evidence with personal accounts to paint a more vivid portrait of various pathways of refuge out of Europe during the *Shoah*. Fleeing, as Chaya Leah Walkin's journey shows, did not evict one from the Holocaust experience. Rather, it shifted the locale, embedding Jews into geographies and temporalities that were unfamiliar and often terrifying.

1 Judith Miller, *One by One by One: Facing the Holocaust* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1990), 123.

2 Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich: Refugee Jews 1933-1946* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012).

It was flight itself that tested the innermost resources of Jewish life in a world gone mad. What did refugees carry with them to survive with dignity? In Chaya Leah's Chicago home, I found a piece of artwork that sharpened this question in my mind. It is a collage hanging in a hallway quite apart for the many lovely Chinese vases and cloisonné-decorated cabinets that recall Chaya Leah's childhood in Shanghai.

This work centers upon an aged man in a black coat and hat, walking stick in hand, grasping a roped-up suitcase. Old-fashioned bags and trunks are strewn all about him. A dismantled room looms in the background. The white bearded figure does not look back at all that loss and destruction. He has grasped only what he can carry with fierce determination. He will move on.

At first, I only noticed the haunted gaze. This does not seem to be the first time that the man—clearly a Jew—has been chased out of his home. Nor has he become inured to the pain of leaving precious bits of the familiar past behind. Yet, the more I looked at the collage the more I came to appreciate the moral strength it takes to select what to carry.

Even in a hurry, grab what is most precious, make a choice about which valuables go into that one suitcase, which values will keep you strongly Jewish in alien worlds. This is also the leitmotif of the Walkin family's refugee experience. It is a history-seasoned strategy for meaningful survival that stretches all the way to the Spanish Inquisition and, before that, to the Babylonian exile.

One could say that Jews became expert refugees by force of historical circumstance. But that is not quite the truth. There were innumerable small and large acts of choice that shaped survival, that lent it meaning beyond physical endurance. In Chinese, the term for raw tenacity—*ren* 忍—is comprised of an ideograph showing a knife over the human heart. Here, endurance requires one to submit to violence, to outwit its brutality by simply going on. Chaya Leah and her family did more than endure.

Reflecting upon the meanings of their Jewish survival, I found myself coming back to the philosophical meanings of "agency." This overused theoretical term does, nonetheless, capture something essential about Chaya Leah's journey. It highlights the autonomous resources within a person or community that facilitated survival with dignity in harsh times. Even as a small child, Chaya Leah Walkin understood that Jews were more than victims of a vicious fate. In the effort to understand this sense of an inner fulcrum

for action, I turned to the work of my Wesleyan colleague, historian Gary Shaw, who argues:

> It is time for historians to show how attempts to understand the self are essential to historical work… For it is the agent in concert with others who is the one sure place where meaning gets made and unmade, and where history is waged and witnessed.[3]

Shaw, from his position as editor of *History and Theory*, dared to take issue with the various theoretical frameworks, including Marxism and Postmodernism, which took the agent out of history. He pointed out that the responsibility for making meaning out of the debris of the past remains compelling for each of us who writes history. We cannot shoulder this task without taking into account how individuals and groups fashion survival into something more than naked endurance.

Philosopher Emil Fackenheim, in contrast to Gary Shaw, tackled the question of endurance in light of his own experience as a survivor of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Decades before *History and Theory* debated the problem of agency, Fackenheim forced himself to look into the ashes of the *Shoah* and declared:

> A Jew endures because he is commanded to endure instead of going mad… Whence has come our strength to endure, to affirm our Jewishness against the forces of hell itself? The question produces abiding wonder. It is a commanding Voice without which we would have perished in our affliction.[4]

This "voice" can be heard in Chaya Leah's jottings about China and Japan as well. These places allowed Jews to outwit the madness that engulfed Europe during the Holocaust. The voice described by Fackenheim was also audible in Kobe as well as in Shanghai. It echoed forward in time and continued to strengthen Jewish identity after the war.

BUT DO WE LEARN FROM HISTORY?

For Fackenheim, the voice commanding endurance emanated from Auschwitz and had to be heeded as an additional commandment beyond the 613 that

3 Gary Shaw, "Agency and Language in the Postmodern Age," *History and Theory* (December, 2001): 1-9.

4 Emil Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections* (New York: Jason Aronson Inc., 1970), 182.

form the core of traditional Judaism. For Chaya Leah, survival with Jewish dignity was an essential outgrowth of the Torah itself and of the distinguished legacy of Talmudic scholarship that had shaped the life of her parents before they became stateless refugees.

Born in 1916 in Halle (Germany), Emil Ludwig Fackenheim was a Western-educated intellectual in his 20s when he was arrested during Kristallnacht. Chaya Leah, by contrast, was merely a child of five when she had to hide in a wagon to escape the murderous hatred of Jews raging in Europe. Her expression for the Holocaust—*Churb'n*—draws upon an older, more traditional lexicon than Fackenheim's philosophical reflections about Auschwitz.

This Yiddish term builds upon the Hebrew term for "destruction" associated with the ravage of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. *Churban,* which connotes a fiery ruination, also calls to mind the biblical concept *korban* used to describe the sacrificial burnt-offerings that sanctify both God and the Jewish people. By the late 1940s, the expression *Churban Eyrope* was on the lips of most Yiddish-speaking survivors who sought to fathom the destruction of the world that they had left behind. Looking back at her own family's survival, Chaya Leah marveled at the legacy of scholarship that had carried Jewish life forward from the ashes of the Holocaust:

> *The churban destroyed all the yeshivas, yet the Mir is the only Yeshiva that was saved whole, as after the second churban, Yavne remained whole.*
> *And we see what followed as history repeats itself.*
> *The Mir in Shanghai was saved as a whole and look at what they accomplished, and the blooms of their work.*
> *History repeats itself.*
> *But do we learn from history?*

Here, Chaya Leah is paying tribute to the extraordinary renewal of Torah learning that followed the survival of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Shanghai during the war. Her own family's links to the yeshiva are discussed at length in this book. For now, it is important to see how Chaya Leah placed her own experience as a refugee in the larger context of Jewish history going back to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.

Her reference to Yavne is no accident. It shows a conscious continuation of the legacy of Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai (30–90 BCE), who (according to the Babylonian Talmud) asked Vespasian, the emperor of Rome: "Give me Yavne and its sages." Ben Zakkai was not immune to the horror and pain that

beset Jerusalem after the destruction of the Temple. Yet, he also understood that continuing Torah scholarship in the hamlet of Yavne would ensure Jewish survival despite this catastrophic loss. Chaya Leah looks back and sees both Yavne and the Mirrer Yeshiva as beacons of hope, as sources of spiritual flourishing for the Jewish people as a whole.

At the same time, her scorching question stands: "*But do we learn from history*?" This question rang loudly in my mind as I was working on this book. Looking around the world today, I saw very few signs that we have learned enduring lessons from *Churban Eyrope.* I think back to Max Kaufmann's heartrending work entitled *Churban Lettland* (The Destruction of the Jews of Latvia)[5] published in 1947 and realize that the twenty-first century continues to besmirch the memory of Jews murdered during the Holocaust. As recently as May 2016, a major memorial to the Lithuanian *Shoah* was vandalized in honor of Adolf Hitler's birthday. News flashes of Jewish names defaced with swastikas deepen for me the searing doubt in Chaya Leah's question: "*But do we learn from history*?"

I have no answer, but I do know that there is a terrifying moral and historical myopia afoot in the world today. Wanton cruelty reigns undiminished after the Holocaust. Hatred and murder of Jews, alas, has not become a matter of past history. So Chaya Leah's question and Emil Fackenheim's injunction about endurance have lost none of their bitter force. One way that this book addresses ongoing madness in the global context is by detailing the inner resources that enabled refugees to survive with dignity. Restoring "agency" to victims of hatred helps us, quite literally, to see them and ourselves in a fresh light.

The urgency of this task became apparent to me as I looked at a loudly publicized art exhibition entitled "Love Without Boundaries—Jewish Refugees in Shanghai." First opened in China in 2011, the exhibition also arrived with diplomatic fanfare to the International Convention Center of Jerusalem on May 10, 2015. The show revolved around forty oil paintings depicting various aspects of Jewish life during the war in China. Here was a glossy, sentimentalized version of Jewish survival that veered toward historical distortion again and again.

Official commemorations in Jerusalem, as in Shanghai, often depict child survivors in Shanghai as helpless beneficiaries of Chinese benevolence. One of the paintings in the exhibition that evoked this falsified pathos was

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5 Max Kaufmann *Churbn Lettland: The Destruction of the Jews of Latvia*, ed. Gertrude Schneider and Erhad Roy Wiehn (Kostanz, Germany: Hartung-Gorre, 2010).

entitled "True Emotion Breaks the Blockade." This work showed Jews behind barbed wires—something that never happened in Shanghai. The text that accompanied the painting embroidered an agency-denying narrative in the following terms:

> The Japanese authorities did not want to slaughter Jewish refugees directly. Instead they isolated the Jews, restricted their freedom and persecuted them. Once the Japanese authorities kept more than 2000 Jews in an area and cut down all power and water supplies in order to starve them to death. In the hard times, caged in the Ghetto, true emotion (sic) break the blockade. The kind Shanghai residents and some charity organization could not see them suffering from starvation. So they discreetly sent food and water to these Jews. In this way, the Jews behind the layers of metal fences could barely survive.

Chaya Leah was never one of the hungry girls receiving a handout behind barbed wire, even though some features of her childish face are recognizable in the painting. In fact, there were no such Jewish children in Shanghai during the war.

By trying to augment retrospectively China's role in the rescue of Jewish refugees, the painting portrayed a lie. The role of Japanese authorities in actually saving Jewish lives is an inconvenient truth that continues to be ignored on the Chinese mainland and denied in the painting.

Another aspect of the Jewish refuge in Shanghai during the *Shoah* that is literally being painted over here is the social and cultural distance between Chinese and Jews. In Chaya Leah's recollections, as well as in the writings of many other survivors, we learn that contacts between Jewish refugees and ordinary Chinese were rare and made awkward by language and religious barriers. "Love Without Borders," by contrast, emphasized the ties between charity-minded Chinese and helpless Jews. In the process, it robbed the refugees of their own agency by portraying them as victims of a cruel fate ameliorated by China's kindness.

In fact, the various Jewish communities in China had numerous cultural, spiritual, and financial resources to ensure survival with dignity. The Jerusalem exhibit, much like the one in the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, which opened in 2007, diminishes this aspect of history. Survivors of that period, most notably Dr. Lotte Lustig Marcus, have been publicly critical of these distorted, politically self-serving depictions of Jewish survival.[6]

6 Marcus, Lustig Lotte. "Contradicting Revisionist History." *Points East* 29, no. 1 (March, 2014): 1–3.

How to give voice to the agency that was accessed by Jewish survivors in China became one of the core challenges of this book. Digging beneath the "painted history" being currently produced was the first step in meeting that challenge. A more difficult narrative task awaited me as I sought to convey Chaya Leah's distinctive cadence and vision, especially in a field dense with autobiographies and memoirs about Jewish refuge during the war.

The very multiplicity of personal and scholarly accounts enabled me, in the end, to listen more keenly to Chaya Leah's own voice. As Alphonso Lingis noted in his study called *First Person Singular,* "voice is a matter of slow paced, often traumatic embodiment."[7] In Chaya Leah Walkin's embodied voice I heard the scars, hesitations, and hopes of a child who came of age in wartime China. References to Torah observance and to the distinguished Talmudic scholarship of the Walkin family peppered her recollection, and therefore also color my evocation of the unique timbre of Chaya Leah's voice.

This book, however, is not an act of ventriloquism. Chaya Leah Walkin does not speak through my voice. Instead, I have sought to create a different kind of middle ground between our disparate visions and versions of history. It was my decision, for example, to frame Chaya Leah's story with comparative reflections about history and trauma. After decades of recording the voices of Chinese intellectuals who survived the Cultural Revolution, I turned with a seasoned ear to the voice of the child who lived through the war in Shanghai. It was my choice to deepen the echoes between the child's voice and other survivors of historical trauma in order to augment the reader's understanding of why this narrative continues to matter in the twentieth-first century, many decades after the war ended in Shanghai in 1945.

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To enter Chaya Leah's world required me to carve a distinctive path through the thick forest of existing works about Jewish refuge in Shanghai. Chaya Leah herself was mindful of this large body of commemorative work, and wondered how one more account would add to or change the story of the *Shoah*. I told her that, in time, I would find the themes and the narrative strategy needed to make this book stand its own ground.

In the course of our collaboration, Chaya Leah sent me a volume of memoirs that had moved her deeply. It was written by Israel Starck and was entitled

7 Alphonso Lingis, *First Person Singular* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 264.

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