

I, Ido Kanyon, stand here before you, in awe and gratitude, on behalf of the Burg family from Israel. I wish to thank all the people who helped organize this ceremony and especially Mr. Rainer Becker, chairman of the Fellowship of Christians and Jews, who knew Simon Burg, my grandfather and Mrs. Anette Sailer, who initiated the memorial in dedication to our family.

Please allow me to tell you the story of our family through a letter, addressed to our family members who lived here, in Banfe, and perished during the holocaust.

Dear Berta, Benjamin and Martin, uncle Josef and aunt Berta,

We are your Nieces, Grandchildren and Great-grandchildren, the Burg family. We have never known each other - You were taken away from your home in Banfe, from this very place, on April 27th, 1942, exactly 80 years ago.

Simon didn't talk a lot about what happened during the war. There was a silent agreement between us all - not to discuss what happened in Germany.

Like many other survivors, he chose not to share the memories, grief and horror, leave the past behind and start a new life, a new family. We knew that Simon had parents, aunt and uncle, and a younger brother and that they all lived in a small village in Germany. We were not told much more than that.

One day, a few months ago, we received an email that kindled our interest in the history of the Burg family and brought back forgotten memories. Mrs. Anette Sailer contacted us and informed us of an upcoming ceremony in remembrance of our family. Mrs. Sailer is the daughter of Mr. Gottfried Ulrich, who passed away in 2017. After his unfortunate death, Mrs. Sailer found Gottfried's notes and in them, recollections of his good friend Martin Burg, our uncle. In his memories, Gottfried writes about the way Martin and himself celebrated Saint Nicholas Holiday, how they used to dress up, ring doorbells and recite poems together.

Eighty years later we learned more about our uncle: that he had friends, liked to sing and was a beloved young son to his parents.

We were very excited to receive this new information about Martin and our family. After reading the stories Anette has sent us, we wanted to learn more: What were Martin's hobbies? His dreams? What kind of relationship did he have with his older brother Simon?

We will never know. All we know is what we've heard from Simon many years later: between 1938-1939, Benjamin Burg and his son Simon were arrested under different circumstances. Once released, Benjamin and Berta realized how dangerous it was for Jews in Germany, and they decided to send their 15-year-old son Simon to Palestine. This dramatic decision saved Simon's life, and we are here thanks to those who made it.

We assume Martin wasn't sent to Palestine because he was too young. We believe the family decided to stay in Banfe, hoping for a better future. On April 27th 1942 SA men forced the family out of their home here in Banfe, and from this very place the family was sent to the death camps.

Dear family, Berta, Benjamin and Martin, Josef and Berta – we wanted to tell you that the boy you sent to Palestine survived. After arriving in Palestine, he used his knowledge and skills as a cattleman from Banfe to treat the cows in the Kibbutz. He missed the family he left behind and was terrified by rumors arriving from Germany, praying that you are somehow safe.

Simon was one of very few German Jews who were recruited by the British army and sent back to Europe to help fight the Nazis. One day in June of 1945, while still serving as a British Soldier, Simon arrived at Banfe and Laasphe. When he opened his mouth and spoke in fluent German, the people of Banfe realized the soldier was actually Simon, the only survivor of the Burg family. Simon returned to his hometown to face the terrible truth – his family was gone, and he will never see them again.

Back in Israel, Simon fought the independence war and helped shape the young state of Israel. He married Perchia and fathered Nurit and Edna who are here with us today. Although an Israeli, his German origins could not go unnoticed; he spoke Hebrew with a German accent and had very polite German manners. We never thought of him as a refugee who escaped his homeland, leaving his family behind. We never thought of him as a war hero. Our father did not seek revenge and was not overwhelmed by grief. He

was a kind family man who cared about his two daughters, took the grandchildren to the zoo and bought them ice cream while singing a German children's song. Although fully engaged in his daily life in Israel, he never forgot you. We could hear him call your names in his sleep.

Dear family, we stand here in your hometown and remember your suffering and our loss. We can only imagine the love and longing for the son you sent away to a distant land, to the promised land. We wanted you to know that your family lives and thrives in the state of Israel. There are grandchildren and great-grandchildren - all happy and healthy and remember their ancestors.

A week ago, our family celebrated Passover. We gathered around the table on Seder night and told the story of the Exodus. The Bible tells us that when Moses and the Israelites escaped from Egypt, Moses brought back Joseph's bones, honoring his wish to be buried in the promised land.

We cannot bury you in the promised land, but now, thanks to the dear people who initiated and worked hard to create this monument and ceremony, we can honor your memory here and carry your heritage within us back to where you sent your son Simon 80 years ago - to the land of Israel.