

Some of the Prominent Members of Oneg Shabbat:

Emanuel Ringelblum (1900-1944)

Historian, public figure and member of the “Poalei Zion Smol” party, Ringelblum initiated and directed the underground archive “Oneg Shabbat”. One of the heads of the self-help network, he was also one of the pillars of the public resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto. Ringelblum took pains to produce ongoing documentation of Jewish life under Nazi occupation, and even tried to decipher and evaluate the events unfolding around him. He smuggled his family over to the Aryan side, but returned to the ghetto on Passover eve 1943, where he remained until after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. He was then sent to the Trawniki labor camp, but was smuggled out of there by Polish friends who took him to the place where his family and tens of other people were hiding. In March 1944, the hiding place was discovered, and all those living there were imprisoned, together with the Poles who had concealed them. A few days later, they were all shot amongst the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto.

Hirsch Wasser (1912-1980)

Economist and member of the “Poalei Zion Smol” party, Wasser was the director of the Borocho library in Lodz before the war. At the start of World War II, he fled to Warsaw together with his wife Bluma, and turned to Ringelblum, who recruited him for self-help work. Wasser headed the Landsmannschaft division, responsible for contact with the refugee organizations, which enabled him to assist with the collection of information about the fate of Jews in different towns. He served as secretary, board member and archival committee member of the Oneg Shabbat archive. He wrote a diary, was responsible for paying the archive workers, and together with Ringelblum and Gutkowski, wrote the “Yediot” in April 1942, which told of the extermination of the Jews. Wasser was caught during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, but managed to jump from the train and return to Warsaw. He hid in southern Warsaw together with his wife, Hirsch Berlinski, Pola Alster and Eliyahu Erlich. In September 1944, the hiding place was discovered, and most of its occupants shot. Wasser himself survived the war and led the search for the hidden archive.

Avraham Levine (1893-1943)

Historian, teacher and member of the “Zionim Haclali'im” party, Levine worked in YIVO's Warsaw office before the war. He knew Ringelblum both from YIVO and through his work as teacher of Hebrew, Bible studies and Jewish history at the “Yehudiah” high school for girls in Warsaw. While in the ghetto, he continued to be active in the field of education, and was one of the central figures on the Oneg Shabbat staff, also serving as a member of the archive's board. Until the major deportations, he wrote his diary entries in Yiddish, but afterwards switched to Hebrew.

Rabbi Shimon Huberband (1909-1942)

Historian and rabbi, at the start of the war Rabbi Huberband fled from Piotrkow Trybunalski to Sulejow, where his wife and son were killed in a German bombing raid. In early 1940, he came to Warsaw and met Ringelblum, whom he knew through his work in YIVO's Warsaw office. Rabbi Huberband was appointed head of the

religious department of the Jewish self-help network, and was also a central figure on the Oneg Shabbat staff. As well as documenting religious life during the war, he also researched many other topics. Rabbi Huberband and his second wife were murdered in Treblinka in August 1942.

Peretz Opoczynski (1892-1943)

Opoczynski was a poet, writer, journalist and member of the “Poalei Zion Yemin” party. In the ghetto he was a mailman, a position that allowed him to see many different aspects of Jewish life in the ghetto. In addition, he was an active member of the tenant committee of his building (21 Wolynska). His writings on different topics, including tenant committees, and the fate of children in the ghetto, formed an important component of the archive. His diary describes the second half of 1942, and stops abruptly at the beginning of January 1943.

Israel Lichtenstein (1904-1943)

Teacher, member of the “Poalei Zion Smol” party and editor of the Yiddish newspaper, at the start of the war Lichtenstein joined CENTOS and went on to do many administrative tasks for the Oneg Shabbat archive. On 3 August 1942, Lichtenstein and two of his students (David Gruber and Nahum Grzywacz) buried the first section of the archive under 68 Nowolipki Street. He was killed at the beginning of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Gele Seckstein

Seckstein, an artist, was Israel Lichtenstein’s wife. She taught drawing in the underground school at 68 Nowolipki Street. Her drawings were buried together with the Oneg Shabbat archive. She was killed at the start of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Rabbi Klonimos Kalman Shapiro - the Piaszena Rebbe (1888-1943)

Rabbi Shapiro was a prominent young Hassidic leader in Poland between the two world wars and during the Holocaust period. He was appointed “Rebbe” after his father-in-law’s death in 1909, and made the town of Piaszena his center of activity. He divided his time between Piaszena and Warsaw, where he established the “Da’at Moshe” yeshiva. He was active in the field of education, and was renowned for his book “Hovat Hatalmidim”. During the war years he continued to hold a “tisch” every Shabbat, and even gave sermons that addressed the hardships of the times. He never stopped trying to raise the spirits of the Jews imprisoned in the ghetto, even when they were overwhelmed by the crowding, starvation and disease, and when the deportations of 1942 began. He himself was deported from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Bodzin labor camp in the Lublin district, where he was murdered on 3 November 1943.