

My dear friends, **Happy Liberation Day!**

80 years have passed since the liberation of the horrible Bergen-Belsen camp. The time of our freedom – in every generation.

There are survivors among you who remember the hell of that time.

Some of you were born in the wonderful "baby boom" that broke out after the liberation.

And there are also those of the **second, third and fourth generations** among us.

All of the latter **owe their lives to the survivors**, who aspired to reach the Land of Israel because that is how they were raised at home.

If you had not decided so, we would not be here today.

You gambled without fear on the Zionist experience and were rewarded with rehabilitation in a unique and special Jewish state. It was not easy: a struggle for housing, livelihood, education, health, and also a struggle for security. **Fighting again for the right to live freely as Jews.** And some of you paid with the blood of the members of the new family.

We, the future generations, stand before you in awe. You are an amazing generation that did not loudly demand from the young state "I deserve it." You raised us quietly and humbly, and you did not sleep at night because of us.

Those who were born "there" experienced the amazement of the teachers, when they said they were born "in Bergen-Belsen."

Most of us have lived since the 1950s, and we have shared everything we have been through since then.

The last year and a half has also demanded rare physical and mental efforts from you.

2024 was a difficult year for us in the organization. Two excellent chair persons left us forever: the legendary Shraga Milstein, and my sister Yochi Ritz-Olewski, the amazing one.

80 years! Who would have thought!

Liberation Day is a day with a double meaning: sadness about the suffering and loss, alongside joy over liberation and a return to life. It is difficult to understand this, it is difficult to cope with it.

How will the Germans ever understand all this? They are incapable of it.

In the last two years, we have experienced a worrying phenomenon of **our exclusion from the ceremonies in Bergen-Belsen in Germany**. We were not allowed to bring our messages, even after October 7, 2023. **Something very bad is happening** to the management of the Memorial Sites Foundation in Lower Saxony. Is this anti-Israelism? Is this the new anti-Semitism in disguise? Is this political corruption? It is certainly a disgraceful failure of management. Who knows what else is rotten and hidden beneath the quiet surface there.

Unfortunately, it is happening on my watch. **I stand here, in the place where my father, the late Rafael Olewski, stood for many years**, a great man whose great shoes I was afraid to step into. Who hasn't heard the name Olewski at home?

So, this role also obliges me from a family perspective.

In general, it is a great privilege for us the management to volunteer for the organization and to do everything we can for you.

I would like to introduce the management: **Riki Ze'evi-Wolfowitz, Deputy Chairman; Tamar Gilboa, Pini Dreilinger, Rachel Bebes and Hagai Rosenblum**.

We wish you all a happy Liberation Day, good health and success, and good news for the entire Jewish people!

We all hope for the release of all the abductees soon!

For the greeting "**Shehecheyanu**" I am honored to invite **Zecharia Zederman, a Belsen survivor who celebrates his 100th birthday today!**