This is the autobiography of a courageous woman who defied family and tradition by dedicating herself to art. The book illuminates the relationship between her life and her artworks about war, the Holocaust and other manifestations of the Human Condition.

MY LIFE INTO ART: An Autobiography

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AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Judith Weinshall Liberman

Forging her own destiny in defiance of family and tradition

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About the Image on the Front Cover

This is a reproduction of the author's SELF PORTRAIT OF A HOLOCAUST ARTIST #54. In this work, the face is made up partly of Anne Frank's features, partly of the author's. The author's part is based on a photograph while that of Anne Frank was created by the author via acrylic painting. The merged image conveys the author's feeling of identification with Anne Frank, the world's best known Holocaust victim. It also symbolizes the title of this book.

MY LIFE
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AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER 1

I don't remember much about the boat that took me away from my home in Haifa, Palestine, to America. I was only eighteen years old when I underwent that fateful voyage, but I don't believe that my memory lapse is due simply to the passage of over sixty years since I left home. After all, I remember things that happened before my journey began. Besides, although I can't recall much about the boat itself, I remember quite keenly some of the feelings and thoughts that engulfed me during the three long weeks of my passage to America.

By the late summer of 1947, when my voyage began, the boat that took me away from home had been converted from being a vessel used by Britain for military transport during World War II into a commercial passenger boat. The boat was called the "MARINE CARP." My main recollection of the boat is that it was small and crowded. I remember that my cabin had three bunks, one on top of the other. Luckily I arrived ahead of my cabin-mates and was able to claim the top bunk. I don't recall who my cabin mates were, doubtless because I spent much of the journey in my bunk, feeling ill.

I recall that the boat docked in Alexandria, Egypt, a day or so after we left Haifa, and I took the opportunity, while the boat was stationary, to go up onto the deck and breathe some fresh air. The water in the bay was murky, but the colorfully clad snake charmers and other enterprising Egyptians on the shore were a welcome distraction from the confines of my cabin. From Alexandria the MARINE CARP sailed to Piraeus, Greece, before continuing on to New York. Again, in Piraeus, I climbed onto the deck. I remember feeling the urge to jump into the Mediterranean and swim all the way back to Haifa. The water was clear and inviting. But even though I was a fairly good swimmer, having spent many days every summer since my early childhood swimming in the Mediterranean, I realized that I was not capable of swimming the

hundreds of miles from Piraeus back to Haifa. Besides, much as I might want to go back, I dared not do so.

Actually, I wasn't sure I wanted to go back, at least not right there and then. Only a couple of days had gone by since the MARINE CARP left Haifa, and the incidents of the hours before I boarded the boat were fresh in my mind.

Months before that day, my mother had given me a suitcase in which to pack my belongings for America. She had the maid, Marie, a dark-haired, uneducated but hardworking and kind Arab girl from a small Lebanese village, fetch the suitcase from the storage space above the bathroom, where, judging by the dust that covered it, the suitcase had been stored for a long time. Marie had worked for our family for years. She obediently dusted the suitcase off and handed it to my mother, who, after inspecting it for dust, handed it to me. The suitcase was a large and sturdy one, made of brown leather, and it had two metal locks, the kind that snap in and out. Although the suitcase had markings indicating that it was quite old and had been extensively used at some point, probably by my father on some of his early business trips to Europe, I did not mind its age or evidence of wear since it was large and sturdy enough for me to pack my cherished belongings in.

When my mother gave me the suitcase, I placed it on the floor in the corner of my room. I untied the string that was neatly tied with a bow around the suitcase and kept the suitcase open so that I could easily add whatever I needed to the items I had already packed. Every day I would think of another item I could not bear to leave behind, whether a book, a souvenir or a piece of clothing, and would place it in the open suitcase to take with me to America. More than once during my months of packing, my mother came into my room. She seemed to approve of the way I was packing my stuff.

On the morning of the day I boarded the MARINE CARP, I finally had to close my suitcase. A terrible surprise awaited me. The locks would not snap shut. I noticed for the first time that the locks were rusted. The mechanism on each lock was frozen in position. I tried to loosen the locks by prying them with a screwdriver but they would not

budge. I was quite alarmed, since I only had a few hours before I was scheduled to be at the Haifa docks.

I went to my mother, who was resting in her bedroom, to tell her that the suitcase would not snap closed.

"What do you mean?" she asked, her voice rising, the way it always did when she became angry. She quickly got up from her bed. My mother was a large woman despite her many years of special diets, yet she moved much more quickly than I could, perhaps because at one point, back in the nineteen twenties, before she had children, she was a classical dancer.

"The suitcase won't close," I said softly, trying to diffuse the situation by sounding calm.

"What do you mean?" my mother repeated, her voice now even higher and her forehead furrowed and lined, the way it always appeared when she lost her temper. Her henna-dyed red hair made her seem as if she was on fire. She was now standing facing me, and although, having inherited my physique from my father, I was taller, though leaner, than she was, she easily pushed me out of the way and walked down the hall into my room. "Show me!" she snapped.

I followed her into the corner of my room, my heart beating fast as it always did when my mother was angry. I walked gingerly past her, crouched over my suitcase, which now had its cover down, and tried to snap the locks closed. I tried one lock, then the other, then back to the first. The locks would not move. They were frozen in place. I was afraid to look at my mother.

"Try again!" my mother commanded, her voice rising. "Marie!" she yelled. "Come here right now and lock the suitcase!"

Marie hurried up the hall and quickly bent down beside me. She tried to snap the suitcase shut but neither one of the locks obeyed.

"Rust!" Marie said matter-of-factly as she rose. "Old suitcase!" I could hear her walking out of my room down the hall into the kitchen.

Marie's comments seemed to set my mother off.

"How dare you not try the locks before?" she shouted at me. "How dare you leave things for the last moment?"

I was still crouched over the suitcase, afraid to rise and face my mother. I felt ashamed of myself for not having acted more maturely. It was indeed irresponsible of me not to try the locks even once during the many months I spent packing. I should have known there was something wrong with the locks because of the string. If I had tried the locks before I began packing, the problem would have been detected sooner and the locks could have been repaired. Or, if they could not be, perhaps a new suitcase could have been purchased, although I did not remember ever seeing a store that sold suitcases in Haifa. This suitcase was probably purchased in Europe…

I was immersed in my feelings of shame and guilt when I suddenly felt a fierce stinging pain in my head. My mother was pulling my hair. Pull, pull, pull! It felt like my hair was coming out in clumps. Pulling my hair seemed to be my mother's favorite form of chastising me, other than locking me up in a closet. I wished I did not have long hair, but rather short hair, like my brother, Saul, so my mother could not pull it.

"Empty the suitcase and take it down to get it repaired! Hurry up!" my mother yelled as she continued to pull my hair.

I had tried to hold back but finally burst into tears. My mother seemed to calm down a bit.

"There is a suitcase repair shop down on Haim Street, and another on Herzl Street. Hurry up! You have to be at the port right after lunch!"

"Marie!" my mother called. "Bring a string and tie up the suitcase. Hurry up!"

I emptied my suitcase and Marie tied it up. I grabbed my wallet and took the suitcase to get the locks repaired. The suitcase was large and heavy and I could barely manage to keep it off the ground. The repairman on Haim Street was the closest. He checked the locks, pronounced them too rusty to function, but proceeded to repair them nonetheless. I didn't see how he did it. I was too upset to pay attention. Maybe he simply oiled them. At any rate, it was not long before he proudly showed me how well both locks now worked due to his skillful manipulation. I found myself wishing that he had taken longer to

perform his magic, because I did not feel like going home and having to face my mother any time soon. But I knew I had to leave. I paid him and went home.

My mother was resting again.

"Did you get it fixed?" my mother called from her bedroom.

"Yes," I answered.

I walked to my room, gathered the items I had so carefully selected over the past few months and placed them back in the suitcase. I snapped the suitcase closed. Marie had my lunch ready and I had a quick bite. Then my mother called a taxi and rode with me down to the Haifa port. We did not say a word on our way to the harbor. When I boarded the MARINE CARP, I noticed many people standing on deck, waving to family and friends on the dock below. I didn't know if my mother had come out of the taxi to wave to me but I didn't care. I found my way to my cabin and lay down on the top bunk. I cried and cried. After a while, I felt the boat moving. Maybe it was a good thing I was going away from home.

CHAPTER 2

Because of travel schedules beyond our control, my brother, Saul, left Haifa the day before I did. He was on his way to London, where he planned to study law at Lincoln's Inn. Months earlier, we had both taken the London Matriculation Examination, which was similar in function to today's SAT tests. As I recall, we were both placed in the "A" division, which meant we passed the test with distinction. Our parents' plans for us were that I would be going to America to study journalism in college and then return to Palestine and that after completing his course of law studies in England, Saul would come back and join my father's law practice in Haifa.

Saul was born in the month of October in the year 1927. The name "Saul" was traditional in our family. My paternal great grandfather's name was "Saul." I believe that the tradition dates back to the sixteenth century, when my ancestor Saul Katzenellenbogen-Wahl, also known as "Saul Wahl," lived and, according to legend, occupied the throne of Poland for a day, which earned him the name of "King for a Day." At any rate, since my brother, Saul, was only a year and a half older than I was, we grew up together, almost like twins. We had no other siblings.

We looked quite a bit alike, Saul and I. We both had light brown hair, though his hair was lighter than mine. We were both gray eyed and fair skinned, and when we were little my mother insisted that we go to the barbershop every two or three weeks to get a haircut. She would phone the barbershop ahead of time to set up an appointment and tell the barber to make sure we both got a short cut. At the appointed time, Saul and I would dutifully walk together a short distance down Pevsner Street from our apartment to the barbershop.

At that time we lived in a penthouse condo apartment at the corner of Pevsner Street and Haim Street, where we had lived ever since I was a toddler. Actually, after an interruption of two or three years during World War II, when we resided in a ranch house on Mount Carmel, we were still

living in the same apartment on Pevsner Street when Saul and I left home in August 1947. Because our building on Pevsner Street was on a hillside, it was four stories high from the front but only three stories high on the side, where the main entrance was located. Aside from the garden apartment at the front, the building consisted of six apartments, two on each of three floors. Since ours was on the top floor, we had to walk up six flights of stairs to reach it. During the war years, before we moved to Mount Carmel, whenever we heard a siren going off, as it did when an Axis air attack on Haifa Port was suspected, we had to run all the way downstairs to the air-raid shelter. The shelter was located in back of the garden apartment right underneath one of the first floor apartments, and was accessible through a door at the main entrance. Our family, together with other families living in our building, spent many nights sitting up in the shelter during World War II, waiting for the all-clear signal to sound so we could go back to bed. I still remember that at times, after the air-raid siren was sounded, my brother, Saul, refused to go down to the air-raid shelter but insisted, rather, on going out on the balcony to watch enemy bombers as they flew overhead. More than once we found shrapnel nearby after the air attack. Yet Saul was undeterred. His courage amazed me.

Our building on Pevsner Street was brand new when our family moved in. It was considered one of Haifa's best in terms of design and construction. My parents knew the architect, Mr. Rosov, and were able to have our apartment built to their specifications. The apartment was spacious. It was divided by means of a door into two parts. The front part consisted of a large foyer with a fairly sized dining room to the left of the entrance door. The dining room had multiple purposes, among them to accommodate the cook, who slept there on a folding bed, which she would fold up and neatly cover early each morning. My father's study and the living room, to the right of the entrance foyer, were both quite large. There was a balcony off the living room, where, weather permitting, my father would normally have his supper when he returned from the office late in the evening. The door separating the front part of the apartment from the main living quarters opened onto a long central hall, with a spacious, well-equipped kitchen to its left. The kitchen had its own

balcony and an open staircase all the way down to the back yard, so the cook or maid could take down the trash without having to haul it through the apartment. Further down the long hall, on the left, was a bathroom which contained a tub, a shower, a sink with a vanity, some cabinets, and a huge wall mirror, and next to the bathroom was a separate half-bath, containing a toilet and a sink. The space above the bathroom and the half-bath was for storage. At the end of the long hall was my room, which was quite large and accommodated two twin beds, one of which was mine, the other being my nanny's. My room had two big windows, one on each of the exterior walls, plus a balcony. The balcony connected my room to Saul's, which was right next to mine and was off a shorter hall that was perpendicular to the long central hall of the apartment. The balcony was used by Saul and me to visit each other's rooms and was an alternative to the hall as a passageway. At the end of the short hall, beyond Saul's room, was my parents' master bedroom, which was enormous, as its length was equal to the width of the short hall plus the balcony plus the length of Saul's room.

The section of Haifa where our apartment was located was called "Hadar," which is the Hebrew term for "beauty" or "glory." With few exceptions, Hadar consisted of apartment buildings, usually no taller than two to four stories, rather than of single-family homes. Although Hadar was mostly residential, it had some commercial enterprises, especially on Herzl Street, which was Hadar's shopping center. On Pevsner Street, where our apartment was located, we had a grocery store as well as a pharmacy, which made it very convenient, especially for a family with children. There was also a barbershop about a block away from our apartment building on Pevsner Street, which is the one Saul and I used to go to.

At the barbershop, Saul and I would sit in the two adjacent high black seats, our feet dangling, and get our hair cut at the same time, each by one of the two barbers who operated the shop. As the cutting progressed, I would look at my reflection in the mirror and then at Saul's and would notice how much alike we looked, especially as the hair cutting progressed and my wavy hair was cut off so that my remaining

hair looked as straight as Saul's. My mother insisted that the hot, muggy climate in Palestine demanded that children have short hair.

Sometimes when we were little, Saul and I were also dressed alike. I remember one outfit we had when I was about four years old, which was made of black velvet with the top featuring a round white satin collar and little white buttons. The outfit was to be worn for special occasions, such as birthday parties. A couple of years later, in 1935, when Saul and I spent the summer in Italy on holiday together with our nanny, Shifra, while our parents toured the continent, we sported similar navy blue sailor costumes, complete with a stripe-edged sailor collar and tie. Although our school uniforms were distinct, with girls having to wear dresses made of a light blue cotton fabric and boys required to wear khakis, we both had to wear the school motto on the upper part of the uniform over the left chest. The motto was "walk humbly" spelled out in Hebrew ("vehatznea lehet"). It was taken from the book of Micah where, in 6:8, the prophet says that God "has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy and to ***walk humbly*** with your God?" This motto was embroidered on a triangular patch of cobalt blue edged in gold thread, with a silhouette of the main building of our school at the top and the words "walk humbly" across the base of the triangle at the bottom, both embroidered in white. We wore our school uniforms six days a week, since we only had the Sabbath off. Even on Sabbath morning, Saul and I dressed alike, as we belonged to the Scouts and had to wear the required khaki Scout uniforms. Only on Saturday afternoons, when I would get together with my friends, did I have occasion to wear a pretty dress. And in the summer, too, since there was no school and we did not have any Scout meetings. But then I would spend most of my days at the beach, swimming, wearing a bathing suit. It never rained in Palestine in the summer.

Back in the nineteen thirties, when Saul and I were children, shopping for ready-made clothes was not in vogue, at least not in Haifa. I can't recall if ready-made clothes were even available in Palestine in those days. In any event, my mother's custom was to hire a seamstress, who would come to our apartment every season for a week or two to sew the

children's clothes. These would consist not only of coats and jackets and dressy clothes but also of school uniforms, Scout uniforms, some undergarments and night clothes. My mother had a large Singer foot-pedaled black sewing machine, which was kept covered with a beautiful flowery dark brocade throw when not in use, and the cover would come off before the seamstress arrived. Our dining room was converted into a sewing room for the occasion, at least until lunch. Lunch was the day's big meal in those days and was served around 2 o'clock, when my father came home to dine and rest before going back to his office for the afternoon and evening. The meal always consisted of several courses, including appetizer, soup, entrée, cooked vegetables and potatoes, salad and dessert. For many years, the meals were prepared and elegantly served by our full-time cook, Paula, who lived with us well into my teen years, until she left to get married. We also had a full-time nanny, Batya, who replaced her older sister, Shifra, when the latter left to get married. Batya joined our household some time after Paula did and only left to get married a couple of years after Paula.

Mrs. Berkowitz, the seamstress, was quite adept at her trade. I believe she had immigrated to Palestine from Romania. She had a flushed red face and was very short and plump, but she was quite agile. She would manage to sew numerous garments for Saul and me during the week or two she worked at our apartment each season. My mother loved to shop for fabrics and sometimes she would have me tag along on her trips to the fabric shops that punctuated Herzl Street. I enjoyed looking at the neat displays of colorful bolts of fabric stacked one atop another almost up to the ceiling along the walls in the shops. I could imagine some of the beautiful clothes the fabrics could be made into. And when the shopkeeper brought down one of the bolts of fabric and noisily unrolled it over the counter to present it to my mother, I enjoyed quietly touching the fabric to see if it was thick and dense or see-through and airy, if it felt scratchy or smooth, crisp or soft.

My mother always had stacks of fabrics available for Mrs. Berkowitz when she came, as well as fashion magazines, which my mother loved to read. The two of them would huddle together when Mrs. Berkowitz first arrived, to discuss the type and style of garments to be

sewn for Saul and me for the upcoming season. After the consultation, which might last several hours, Mrs. Berkowitz would undertake to measure us. She would jot the measurements down with a well-sharpened little pencil in her well-worn little red book, remark on how much the children had grown since the previous season, and, based on the new measurements, she would proceed to cut the fabrics. I remember that Saul was quite giggly when Mrs. Berkowitz tried to measure him, exclaiming, "Stop! That tickles!" and running away, only to return for another try. Mrs. Berkowitz never used a pattern for cutting the fabric, but simply made her measurements of the fabric with the help of an old gray tape measure, marked in centimeters, which she normally kept tucked in one of her pockets. I don't believe ready-made clothing patterns were available in Palestine in the nineteen thirties.

My mother, who had impeccable taste, had her own dressmaker from whom she would custom order her outfits. These custom outfits were mostly black or gray or a combination of these, sometimes punctuated with purple or lavender, and required numerous fittings, which my mother did not seem to mind. Since she made frequent public appearances as an actress and as a poet reciting her own poetry in various forums during the 1930s and 1940s, my mother always strove to look her elegant best. My father, who was not only a prominent attorney but also a public figure lecturing frequently on public issues throughout the country, had his own tailor who knew how to create some sharp looking suits. So that when Mrs. Berkowitz arrived at our apartment, my brother and I knew it was the two of us who were getting new clothes.

I loved new clothes. Just thinking about having a beautiful new dress transported me into a magical world of grace and beauty, where I was a princess admired by all. But Saul could not care less about clothes, except, perhaps, military uniforms, which he admired. His main interest in Mrs. Berkowitz's visits was her pincushion. As she bent over the dining table, which had been converted for the occasion into a cutting table, Saul would gleefully take a pin out of the pincushion and poke Mrs. Berkowitz gently in her generously padded behind. He would then quickly replace the pin in the pincushion and sit down smiling pleasantly, as if he had done nothing wrong.

"Ouch!" Mrs. Berkowitz would cry playfully as she straightened up and looked around her. "Who did this? Was it you, Saul? Judith would not do such a thing. She is a good girl."

I believe Mrs. Berkowitz had no children of her own and enjoyed having us around even at the cost of painful pranks.

Saul and I differed not only in our attitude to new clothes but in other ways as well. From early childhood, my brother seemed to be much more serious than I was, or at least more directed. I think he was still in elementary school when he decided he wanted to be a lawyer, just like my father. Even at that early age he could not wait for my father to get home, whether for lunch or in the evening, so they could discuss some case my father was involved in. It was undoubtedly my father's pleasant, respectful and serious demeanor when he discussed his cases with Saul that encouraged Saul to try to understand what my father was telling him and to respond. Often, during school vacations, Saul would spend his days at my father's office down town on Kingsway Street, performing small tasks, reading and absorbing the atmosphere of a busy law practice. My father was never condescending, always polite and always encouraging. He was not only the most brilliant man I have ever known but also one of the kindest.

In a way I envied Saul. I envied him the special bond he had with my father. I loved my father dearly, and I knew he loved me, too, but it was obvious to me that he and I did not have the same connection he had with Saul. Yet whatever the emotional cost to me, the fact was that I was not interested in law, and pretending I was interested was not something I felt capable of doing. As time went by, the two of them began engaging in discussions of public issues and international affairs. I didn't really understand what they were talking about or, indeed, why what they were discussing was of any importance. I lived in my own world.

And in fact my world was quite different from theirs. I liked pretty things like dresses and flowers and pictures and picture books and dolls and puppies. I adored coloring books and spent many hours, especially when I was sick and had to stay in bed, which happened only too frequently, using color pencils to color the pictures in one coloring book after another. I had never seen a squirrel in my life, because there were

none in Palestine, but years later, when I saw my first American squirrel, I recognized it by the bushy tail I had colored in one of my coloring books in my childhood. I loved cutting paper dolls and their clothes out of paper doll books and dressing the dolls in their glorious outfits. I enjoyed doing arts and crafts such as drawing and painting and sewing and embroidering and crocheting. I collected little stickers and pasted them in my sticker books. I bought new souvenir books every year and had my school friends and teachers write words of wisdom in them and autograph them for me. I also loved reading, especially the biblical story about Joseph and his brothers. I was distressed at how Joseph's brothers sold him to the Egyptians because they were jealous of their father's special love for Joseph and how, when Joseph's brothers grew up and had to go down to Egypt because of the famine in ancient Israel, Joseph, who was by then an important person in Egypt, forgave them and took care of them. I must have read the story of Joseph and his brothers dozens of times, and it moved me to tears each and every time. Looking back, I believe Joseph's story resonated with me more than any other story I have ever read.

I did better at school than Saul did, but that had nothing to do with either aptitude or intelligence and everything to do with personality and interests. Actually, I was only one year behind Saul at school rather than the two years our birthdays would have dictated because when Saul was in the first and second grades, he would come home and teach me what he had learned at school, whether reading, writing or arithmetic. So that by the time I came to take the entrance examination at the Reali School, which was considered Haifa's best private school, I was so proficient at reading, writing and arithmetic even before my sixth birthday that it was determined that I should skip the first grade and go directly into the second. I went to the Reali School through the twelfth grade and was always the youngest in my class, graduating from the Reali High School shortly after my seventeenth birthday.

As the years went by, Saul developed his own interests in subjects outside of school and neglected his school studies. He loved to read the biographies of world leaders, collections of great speeches, books on world history and mystery stories, especially those of Agatha Christie. So although he had enough smarts to get by at school without putting in any

great effort, he was just an average student. When a new school year was about to begin and I expected to inherit Saul's school books from the year he had just completed, he never seemed to have any, although he readily acknowledged that he remembered our parents buying the books for him at the beginning of the year. He probably left them at school or at the library and never missed them. So I always had new books, which, I must confess, I did not mind having.

I was an entirely different type of student than Saul was, perhaps because I did not have his wide-ranging interests and always regarded school as my first priority. The Reali School believed in giving plenty of homework, with little help from the teachers and many assigned essays and examinations. Even in elementary school I spent hours each day doing my homework. Incredible as it may sound, I loved school and actually enjoyed doing homework, as it allowed me to figure things out for myself and learn new things. Hebrew was my mother tongue and the primary language in which all subjects were taught at the Reali School, even Math. By the fifth grade we began studying English, and a couple of years later we began learning French and Arabic. All four languages were part of my curriculum at the Reali School all the way through the twelfth grade. I loved studying languages and spent many hours looking up words in my various dictionaries and practicing speaking the different languages by listening to foreign-language radio broadcasts or phonograph records and imitating what I heard. Math was another subject I adored, as were literature, history and bible studies. At the Reali School the Bible, which meant the Old Testament, was intensively studied through all twelve grade levels. It was approached as a book illuminating ancient history rather than as a religious document dictating either matters of belief or worship. I loved finding out about my historical roots by studying the Bible. As I recall, only the books of the Prophets were approached at the Reali School as providing a guide for human conduct because they dealt mainly with Man's proper behavior toward his fellow Man rather than with Man's attitude toward God. I have never forgotten this important insight into the Prophets that our teacher, Dr. Yehezkel Kaufman, instilled in his students at the Reali School, and when I left Palestine in 1947, I

brought a set of Dr. Kaufman's ***HISTORY OF THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL*** with me to America.

CHAPTER 3

When Saul and I left home in late August 1947 to pursue our studies abroad, he in England and I in America, my father was being held prisoner at the British internment camp of Latrun. He had been arrested together with other leaders of the Jewish Community of Palestine.

Latrun is in the valley of Ayalon, a short distance west of Jerusalem, where the Bible tells us that Joshua defeated the Amorites and where many other battles have been fought through the centuries.

About a week before I was scheduled to leave for America, I was taken by taxi from Haifa to Latrun, a distance of approximately three hours, to say goodbye to my father. I remember it was a scorching summer day. My uncle Haim, who was married to my father's beloved younger sister, Raya, and worked as one of the attorneys in my father's office, had assumed the management of the office in my father's absence and arranged for my trip.

My uncle Haim was a shrewd lawyer and a successful businessman. Despite his achievements, I was not fond of him. I found him physically unattractive, with his wide, flat nose, bulging eyes and balding head. Although he was of small stature, he had a commanding voice and demeanor and seemed to like to throw his weight around. In this he was quite different from his wife, my dear aunt Raya, who was soft-spoken and gentle. I often wondered what attracted my aunt Raya to my uncle Haim in the first place, since she was quite beautiful, with clear blue eyes, a porcelain complexion and flowing light brown hair. She was also very bright, as evidenced by the fact that she had attended medical school in Russia, the family's native land, before she immigrated to Palestine. The story was that shortly after my aunt came to Palestine with the rest of the Weinshalls in 1920, she met Haim, who had come to Palestine as a boy a dozen years previously and finished high school there. After graduating from high school, Haim, being a loyal Turkish citizen, had served as an officer in the Turkish army against Britain in the

first world war. Turkey had been the ruling power in Palestine, as well as the rest of the Middle East, for four hundred years, until it was defeated by the Western powers in World War I. Haim spoke fluent Hebrew, which was the commonly used language of the Jewish Community in Palestine, and, after he and Raya met, so the story goes, my aunt Raya hired him to be her Hebrew teacher and fell in love with him because of his fluent Hebrew. To this day I don't know if that story is true and, if not, what else might have attracted Raya to Haim. At any rate, I myself was in awe of running afoul of Haim, especially now that my father was incarcerated and my uncle had assumed control.

When he arranged for my trip to Latrun, my uncle Haim warned me to say nothing to my father during my visit which might be even remotely construed as being subversive, because that might get my father into trouble. Haim had insisted on reading the handful of letters I had written to my father while the latter was in Latrun, a censorship which annoyed me because I considered it an invasion of my relationship with my father. But I dared not protest. I was too intimidated by my uncle Haim.

Looking back, I think perhaps my uncle was not entirely wrong in admonishing and censoring me. He was probably aware of the fact that I would often speak out in favor of the Jewish militants, who were fighting against the British government for a Jewish state in Palestine. The pro-militant position was a minority position in the Jewish community of Palestine in the mid-forties, and, in fact, my espousal of the militants got me into trouble in high school, when most of my classmates, who were opposed to the militants' position, decided to shun me for a few months, an experience I still remember quite vividly. It so happened that at that time, Arthur Koestler, the famous writer, was staying at our apartment in Haifa, where he was working on his soon-to-be-published 1946 book ***THIEVES IN THE NIGHT***. He was curious to hear about my classmates' boycott of me, prodding me with questions about my political views and those of my classmates. Koestler was a long-time friend of my parents', having met them when he came to Palestine in the 1920s, and he was later to describe their early friendship, a friendship which was to last for the rest of their lives, in his autobiographical book ***ARROW IN THE***

BLUE, published in 1952. But before ***ARROW*** came out, Koestler wrote about my outspokenness in his book ***PROMISE AND FULFILMENT***, published in 1949, while I was studying in America, in which he recounted, on p. 195, that, ***"A couple of years ago, when she was eighteen, she used to write me fervently patriotic letters which, had they been intercepted by the British censorship, would have promptly got her into jail."*** I was a teenager when these incidents occurred and, in retrospect, my militant talk was designed to make me feel and seem more sophisticated than I was, and perhaps even curry favor in my father's eyes. Although at the time I attributed my uncle Haim's interference with my freedom to the fact that he was not only a bossy person but also belonged to one of the leftist parties and thus espoused a moderate stance vis-a-vis continued British rule in Palestine, the truth is that I did not really have a clear picture of the complex situation in Palestine or the ramifications of the position I was espousing. Unlike my brother, Saul, my own understanding of and interest in matters political was superficial and fleeting.

The camp at Latrun was surrounded by heavy barbed wire. During my visit, my father and I were made to sit on wood stools, facing each other but far enough apart so we could not even touch, let alone hug or kiss. All I remember of that painful encounter, which lasted but a few moments, is my father telling me that his incarceration should have no bearing whatsoever on my going to America to study because pursuing my studies in the West was important not only for my personal future but also for the future of our nation. According to my father, the future Jewish state would have to be based on Western values, and studying in America was a way for me to acquire such values. Much as I would have liked to cancel my trip to America and stay in Palestine to be near my father, I knew my father would never approve. It was futile to even ask. I held back my tears.

Disappointed though I was, I could not help admiring my father for always being public minded, even at the cost of personal pain.

My father had been arrested the first week of August 1947. Suddenly, without warning, two British police officers came to our apartment in the middle of the night, when we were all fast asleep, and

rapped loudly on the front door. Saul was the first one to wake up, and when he saw a couple of policemen through the glass pane in the front door, he opened the door. One of the police officers asked Saul if he was Dr. Abraham Weinshall.

"No," Saul said. "I am his son. Dr. Weinshall is sleeping." Saul was calm. He assumed the policemen had come to get my father because someone needed some urgent legal advice, although the late hour made that quite unlikely.

"We are here to take Dr. Abraham Weinshall into custody," one of the officers said.

"What in the world for?" Saul asked, his calm shaken.

"We have a warrant for his arrest," the officer responded.

Before Saul could go and awaken him, my father had awakened all by himself as a result of the commotion and came down the hall.

"They say they have a warrant for your arrest," Saul blurted out.

My father greeted the officers calmly and politely, as was his manner, and asked them what he was being charged with. One of the officers handed him a piece of paper, which my father proceeded to study in the dim light of the hall. My father smiled as he read the warrant. He was being arrested not because of any crime he might have committed but because he belonged to a political party that espoused the immediate end to British rule in Palestine and the prompt establishment of a Jewish state.

The officers were kind enough to allow my father to get dressed and gather a few personal belongings before they took him away. I was up by then, and my father kissed me and Saul good-bye.

For as long as I can remember, all through the nineteen thirties and early forties, violence by Arabs against Jews was a fact of everyday life in Palestine as Arab opposition to Jewish national aspirations grew. But by the mid nineteen forties, much of the conflict in Palestine had crystallized into Jewish-British fighting, especially because World War II created a desperate need for a home for the hundreds of thousands of Jews who were persecuted and displaced by the Nazis and were eager to settle in Palestine, while the British, in deference to Arab opposition, pursued a firm policy of restricted Jewish immigration into the country. Yet the Jewish community of Palestine was divided against itself in its attitude

toward British rule. The moderates, consisting of the parties of the left, while yearning for an eventual Jewish state in Palestine, seemed content, at least for the time being, with limited accomplishments such as increased Jewish immigration, and were willing to accept continuing British rule in Palestine as long as these narrow objectives could be achieved. They had their own armed organization, the Hagannah ("Defense"), which, as its name implied, was designed to engage in defensive operations only. The parties of the right, on the other hand, advocated the prompt termination of the British Mandate over Palestine, which had been set up after the first world war, and the establishment of a Jewish state that would allow unfettered Jewish immigration and be led by an independent Jewish government capable of charting its own destiny. My father was a leader of one of the parties of the right.

The months preceding August 1947 were especially turbulent in Palestine. Back in February of that year, the British government finally determined that in view of its inability to bridge the gap between Arab and Jewish demands, the problem of Palestine should be submitted to the United Nations for resolution. By spring, the United Nations sent a commission of inquiry to Palestine to look into the matter and come up with recommendations. During the commission's visit, one of the Jewish militant organizations, the Irgun (which means "Organization" and stood for "Irgun Tzvai Leumi" or "National Military Organization"), broke into the jail in Acre, north of Haifa, where some of the Irgun's members were being held, and freed the prisoners. In retaliation, the British government condemned to death three of the Irgun's members who were captured in the break-in. Despite international pressure and the Irgun's threat to kill two British hostages if its three captured members were executed, the British government carried out a public execution of the three Jewish militants. In retaliation, the Irgun executed the two British hostages.

It was in response to this escalating violence that the British Mandatory government decided, in August 1947, shortly after the execution of the two British hostages by the Irgun, to arrest three dozen of the leaders of the Jewish rightist parties of Palestine, including my father, even though these leaders had no direct hand in the militants' activities but were, at most, their spiritual leaders in advocating an end to British

rule in Palestine. Among the VIPs ("very important persons") who were taken to Latrun in August 1947 were four mayors of major cities in Palestine and many lawyers and other prominent professionals of the Jewish community. The British probably hoped not only to gather important information about the militants from the prisoners by interrogating them but also to persuade the prisoners to publicly condemn the militants. But the prisoners refused to cooperate with their interrogators at Latrun. None were persuaded to make a declaration against the militants. They stood steadfast against the British authorities.

The VIPs were held at Latrun for forty days. Their release happened to coincide more or less with my arrival in America in mid-September. Two months later, in November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly, following its commission's recommendations, passed a resolution to partition Palestine into three parts, consisting of a Jewish state, an Arab state, and an international zone including Jerusalem and its surrounding area. The Jewish community of Palestine accepted the United Nations resolution while the Arabs did not. There followed many years of Arab hostilities against the Jews.

This is the autobiography of a courageous woman who defied family and tradition by dedicating herself to art. The book illuminates the relationship between her life and her artworks about war, the Holocaust and other manifestations of the Human Condition.

MY LIFE INTO ART: An Autobiography