

MOSHE BEJSKI'S HERITAGE AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE RIGHTEOUS IN OUR EDUCATION

Our history studies on the righteous began by reading and analyzing a seminal book on the memory of good : “Il Tribunale del Bene” “The Jury of good”, by G. Nissim , which tells the story of Moshe Bejski, one of the Jewish people saved by Oscar Schindler and Head of the Righteous among the nations Commission from 1970 to 1995.

Moshe Bejski devoted his life to be a pearl fishermen.

The righteous, like precious pearls, must be looked for, must be observed carefully, because each of them has a unique story that is worth remembering. Moshe Bejski was able to draw a universal meaning from his personal experience, which was to become his life's mission.

Moshe Bejski was born in January 1921 at Dzialoszyce, near Cracow.

On the 1st September 1939 the Germans invaded Poland and then he was forced to live as a fugitive till September 1942 when the Jews' deportation began.

He ran away from the camp he had been put into and asked a Polish friend for help but he was refused. In Cracow he met an ex colleague, Marian Wlodarczyk who took him in; soon after, however, Moshe decided to go back to the camp, since he did not want to put his friend in danger.

In January 1943 he was sent to Plaszow prison camp , which was a crucial experience for him.

In fact “The experience of the camp of Plaszow – as Nissim says – gave him a special sensibility that only few men have.

Facing such a tragic situation he got used to gathering even the slightest hint of good, any flickering semblance of humanity.

The meeting with Oscar Schindler, whose list he accidentally managed to be on, was crucial for him. It was very difficult for Moshe to have Schindler awarded as a righteous among the nations, even if the latter had saved more than one thousand Jews. Schindler did not meet the ideal Righteous that the Yad Vashem's Commission was looking for. Morally he was not exceptional or consistent; he often got drunk, he squandered his money and he womanized. It was difficult to understand that such a man had undergone a deep change.

When Bejski chaired the Commission of the Righteous among the nations, “he - says Nissim – took into account one element only: their own responsibility towards another human being. This was the only kind of good that was to be taken into consideration.”

So Moshe devoted his whole life to the Remembrance of Good, since he strongly believed that such acts should not be forgotten by present and future generations. He didn't forget the Evil, of which he was a victim and a witness. He simply chose to make the Good stand out.

It is thanks to Moshe Bejski and his work as head of the Yad Vashem Commission

That we have come to define who a “Righteous among the Nations is”.

The men who have been awarded this title are not heroes, nor perfect men, but people who, in spite of their limitations and weaknesses have chosen to behave differently from the majority.

A righteous among the nations is one who does not accept to give up his being a man and refuses to remove an inner feeling of sympathy for the others.

Moving from the reflections of Hannah Arendt on the banality of evil we have identified the mysterious force that compels the righteous to act.

It is just because they listened to their conscience that they said: “I can't do evil”.

Remembrance is a task and a responsibility.

Knowing about the past helps everyone of us to understand that we have a role in history. One could say that these righteous were normal or ordinary men, but they did great things for humanity, even if they did not manage to stop all the contemporary evil.

However, if we put forward the question of our moral responsibility to oppose these events, if we react against every act of evil and every act of dehumanisation, then we can revive them and what they have taught us will not be lost.

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