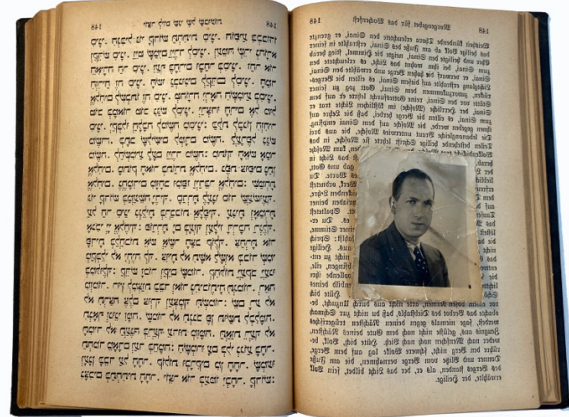
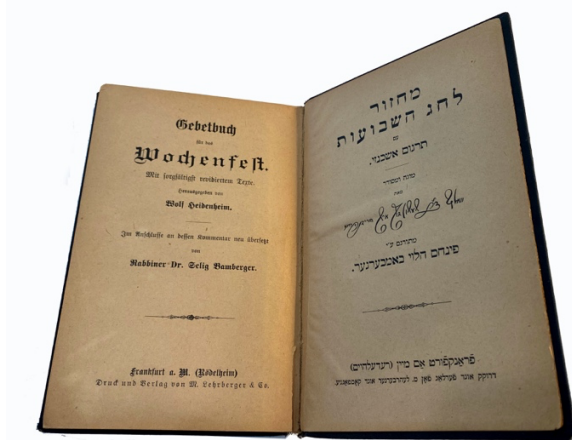


Frankel

My dad changed the spelling. His father spelled it Frenkel.



Gebetbuch für die Festtage (Prayer book for the Holidays)

Description: Black, hardcover, gold-leafed prayer book with embossed design on front. It has been well-worn and its binding is cracking from regular use and age, so much that someone tried to repair it with black tape. It contains Hebrew prayers with German translation in an old-fashioned (Fraktur) font.



I first received this prayer book in 1997 from my father, two years after his mother Martha had died. My father had been giving prayer books from his mother's collection to a friend with an interest in Judaica. Some books had belonged to his mother, others to his mother's second husband Max, an Orthodox Jew who had lived with her in Washington Heights in Manhattan. Before my dad donated this particular prayer book—which he thought was one of Max's—he thought he should leaf through it first.

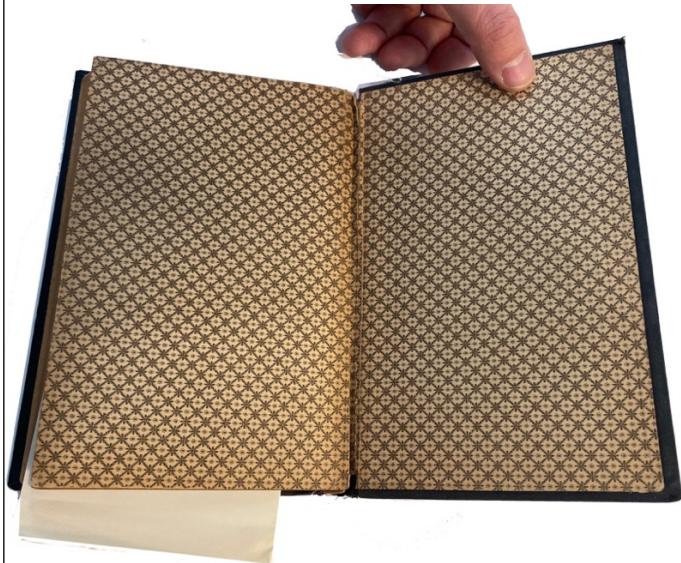
When he opened one of the pages, he was surprised to find a photo of his then 34-year-old father, Abraham (Adolf) Wolf Frankel gazing back at him from between the pages. On the back of the photo was written an address in Poznań, Poland, where my father's

stateless family had settled temporarily after being deported from Ulm, Germany to Poland in 1938. Eventually, in the middle of 1939, the Nazis had permitted my father's family to return to Germany in order to liquidate their assets, which included a valuable string of tobacco shops in Ulm and Stuttgart.

So, this prayer book must have been taken by my grandmother when she fled Nazi Germany via Lisbon in the fall of 1941. She would join my father, whom my grandparents had sent out of desperation on a children's transport to the United States a year and a half earlier. My grandmother was not allowed to take much on the ship, so this prayer book must have been very significant to her. The fact that her husband was deported first to Jungfernhof near Riga, Latvia, then to the partially built concentration camp at Salaspils, where he was murdered through starvation, hard labor, and exposure to frigid cold, only increases its poignance.

When my dad bestowed this heirloom, he wrote: "Your grandfather looks young and handsome. He is several years older (probably 4 years) than you are now but that will change. ... The cover has been repaired once and needs to be bound again. It has an edging of gold leaf and good paper and was undoubtedly bought, kept and used on special occasions with reverence and love. But it also, as you know, was there in times of trouble and tragedy. ... It belongs with us and I can think of no better place for it then to give it to you and hope that it will have a place and meaning in your home."

I only gradually came to know of my family's connection to the Holocaust. On visits to my grandmother, there was an occasional mention of a grandfather I never knew, but I wasn't old enough to understand the scope of the loss. When the miniseries *Holocaust* came out in 1978, I remember watching my parents becoming tearful and the painful discussions that followed. That summer we visited Dachau, a camp where some members of my family had suffered. Those were the first signposts in my Holocaust awareness.



I now know much more about the details of the fate of my grandfather and how he died of starvation, hard labor, and exposure during the coldest European winter of the twentieth century. But I still don't really know much about him personally. I learned from my father that his dad was kind, studious, hardworking, and somewhat reserved and quiet. (Of course, my father's limited memories of his own father ended abruptly when my dad escaped Nazi Germany at the age of six and a half.) And I can infer that my grandfather was religious from references in his letter to the foster family that would

adopt my dad in America. But these were not conversations I felt comfortable having with my Oma—there was too much sorrow and regret there.

In 1997, my father gave me his dad's prayer book. Inside was a photograph of his father with an address on the back of the place in Poznań where the family had taken refuge after being deported to Poland in 1938-39. It was powerful to have a tangible reminder of my grandfather, and my dad's emotion upon giving it to me made it feel even more significant.

I brought the prayer book and photograph in 2018, when I was invited to my grandmother's Bavarian village. There was a ceremony for the dedication of a memorial to the village's Jews, including my family members. Before I gave a speech at the ceremony, I traveled to Poznań and to Riga, where my grandfather had died. I had anticipated feeling emotional at the memorial sites in Riga. But I was unprepared for the power of standing at the same location as my family had lived in exile in Poland, holding up the photograph of my young grandfather, on the back of which he had scrawled the address which had guided me to that spot.



Steve Frankel (November 3, 2018). Masztalarska 8 in Poznań, Poland

The book is now located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, under the care of Steve Frankel, Abram (Adolf) Wolf Frenkel's grandson.