

# V'nahafokhu

Business



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Bergers were one of the most prominent Jewish families in Beregszasz, Hungary. The mother, Ita, ran a successful import-export business, and the father, Shlomo, was known for his knowledge of Torah. They had four children: Feige, Esther, Beru, and Shulem.

They were a wealthy, observant Jewish family who served God with fervor, keeping strict kosher, making elaborate Seders on Passover, creating a beautiful Jewish home. The Bergers' lives were turned upside down in the 1930s and 40s. With Hitler's regime came yellow stars on their rich clothing, swastikas spray painted on their beautiful home, terror and tension permeating every aspect of their lives. Feige's husband, Ignacz, was taken away soon after they were married in 1940. Her father tried to escape to Belgium, but was identified as a Jew by his beard, which he refused to shave off. The rest of the family was taken to Auschwitz in 1944.

Since they refused to eat any non-kosher food, Ita traded scraps of food for cigarettes that Feige could smoke. The women ate next to nothing for the year and a half of torture they spent in Auschwitz. After liberation, Ita, Feige, and Esther went back to Beregszasz and were reunited with Beru and Ignacz, learning that Shulem died. The family was decimated. While they mourned, God reminded them that life had not always been filled with death: they found pictures of their families and their wedding from the ransacked photographer's shop. Homeless, they were sent to a Displaced Persons camp.

Despite their horrific memories, Feige and Ignacz dreamed of the new life they could make together. The two came to New York a week after the

Jewish holiday of Purim on March 22, 1949. The Purim story follows the life of a Jewish woman, Esther, who was forced to marry the Persian King Ahasuerus. When she learned of his adviser Haman's plot to destroy the Jews, she bravely stopped Haman's plot from succeeding. The theme of the story is v'nahafokhu, the Hebrew word for things getting turned upside down.

Everything turned around on Haman: he was hanged on the gallows he built to hang Mordechai (Esther's guardian), and his decree to destroy the Jews was rewritten. Haman is said to be Hitler's ancestor. It seemed that Hitler would complete Haman's final solution, with hundreds of concentration camps darkening the air with smoke. Suddenly, German forces began losing, and the Soviets liberated the concentration camps. The mighty Third Reich ended. Hitler committed suicide by ingesting poison and shooting himself; this mirrored the gas chambers and mass shootings that took millions of Jewish lives.

His body was then partially cremated, another echo of his disposal of the Jews. Purim is celebrated in the Hebrew month of Adar. The word adar means strong. Feige and Ignacz were truly strong; they came to America with nothing and built up their lives. This was a personal v'nahafokhu; they managed to turn their lives from survivors with numbers on their arms to an all-American family. They managed to rise above the trials that had tested them and remained Orthodox Jews, perpetuating the Jewish nation.

Feige always felt that having children and preserving their religiosity was the sweetest revenge she could give Hitler, showing him that his mission failed: Jewish children are being born. The Jews live. V'nahafokhu.