



Photo courtesy of WHNT

*How did an infant find safety  
in the darkness of  
underground caves?*

## HERSHEL "GRISHA" GREENBLAT

Hershel Greenblat was born in the Ukraine in the spring of 1941. The German invasion of the Soviet Union had already begun. Hershel's parents, Manya and Abraham, were involved in the resistance, which put them in great danger. They moved frequently to avoid capture. The first two years of Hershel's life were spent hiding in a cave known as Priest's Grotto, part of a huge cave system near Kiev in what is now the Ukraine.

Hershel's parents and their fellow refugees in hiding depended on food scavenged from nearby farms. Freezing winter temperatures made conditions in the cave barely survivable. In the cave, Hershel became seriously ill, but, amazingly, he survived without medicine. The family then faced another emergency. While outside the cave looking for food, Hershel's mother was injured. Baby Hershel was left in the cave for almost nine weeks with others to look after him while his parents went to seek medical attention.

When his parents returned, they took Hershel from the cave and headed east to avoid the Nazi advance on the Soviet Union. Hershel remembers being carried by his father through areas of destruction. They finally sought refuge in Krasnodar. There his father was imprisoned for stealing bread to feed his family. Alone, Hershel's mother gave birth to a second child, a daughter.

At the end of the war Hershel, his parents, and his sister fled the Soviet Union and traveled 1800 miles to American-controlled Salzburg, Austria. They learned that his mother's extended family was murdered in Ukraine, in the ravine at Babi Yar. His father's family had been killed in gas chambers at the killing center at Majdanek, in Poland.

*"These soldiers treated us with kindness. They treated us  
with respect. The American soldiers saved us."*

Hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors ended up in Displaced Persons Camps in Europe run by the Allies. The majority of these refugees no longer had homes to which they could return. Others wanted to leave the painful memories of the war and the Holocaust behind them. They hoped to create new lives elsewhere. Many remained in the Displaced Persons Camps until they had destinations and permission to emigrate. Hershel and his family lived in these camps in Austria for five years until they received permission to come to the United States.



Photo courtesy of Aish.com

They arrived on the ship, the U.S.S. General Ballou. Hershel clearly remembers his father pointing out the Statue of Liberty as they pulled into New York Harbor.

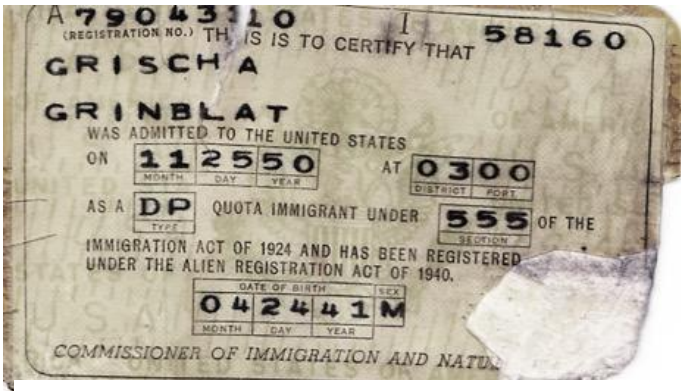


Photo courtesy of Aish.com

The family came directly to Atlanta with only \$80 in their pockets. The Atlanta Jewish community helped them begin a new life. Hershel’s father ran a grocery store in downtown Atlanta for many years. Hershel became an American with the aid of his first teacher in Atlanta. “You are now an American,” she told him.

Hershel travels wherever he has the opportunity to tell people his story and remind them to speak up when they see or hear something wrong. Hershel is proud of his American life. He and his wife Rochelle had two sons, and grandchildren and great grandchildren.



Map courtesy of US Holocaust Memorial Museum