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## Sharing a name, Bat Mitzvah links ceremony to child of the Shoah

By RABBI JUDY CHESSIN  
 Special To The Jewish Press

*"There are stars whose radiance is visible on earth though they have long been extinct. There are people whose brilliance continues to light the world though they are no longer among the living. These lights are particularly bright when the world is dark; They light the way for humanity."*

DAYTON, OH — This Hannah Senesh poem was a particularly moving song for the conclusion of the Bat Mitzvah of Sarah Wolf-Knight, last Labor Day weekend at Temple Beth Or.

Its 23-year-old author, Hannah Senesh, left her relatively safe home in Palestine (now Israel) in 1944 to parachute into Yugoslavia and help rescue Hungarian Jews who were to be deported to Auschwitz. Senesh successfully landed behind enemy lines but was captured, tortured, and executed by the Nazi regime.

The words of Senesh's poem, Yesh Kochavim, struck Sarah Wolf-Knight, daughter of Randall Knight and Eve Wolf-Knight, as particularly meaningful as she prepared for her Bat Mitzvah.

Sarah wanted to illumine the name of a forgotten victim of the Holocaust at her Bat Mitzvah. In her searching for a "twin" in the records of the Yad Vashem Name Recovery Project, imagine Sarah's surprise when she found her very own name: Sura Volf.

Sura Volf was a 12-year-old school girl in Kutu, a town in the region of Stanislawow, Poland. All that is known of Sura is that she was born in 1929 and that her father's name was Mendel.

In March 1942, the Jews of Kutu, Kosow, Pokuki and Stanislawow were forced into one small ghetto, where 16,000-18,000 Jews lived in only 520 houses with little food or medicine. The Jews of Kutu suffered from famine, thirst and typhoid.

Then on the last day of Passover 1942, the SS went through the ghettos and shot every Jew they encountered. The Ukrainian police units followed, setting houses on fire and shooting Jews as they came out of their hiding places to escape the flames. A list of names from that action included the name of 12-year-old Sura Volf, daughter of Mendel.

Sarah was determined that this girl, whose name she coincidentally bears, not be forgotten.

She dedicated her Bat Mitzvah service to the memory of Sura Volf. While Sura surely did not have a Bat Mitzvah ceremony, she was remembered with tears as Sarah Wolf-Knight ascended the bimah, led Shabbat services, and read from a Torah scroll, itself a survivor from Czechoslovakia.

Since 1955, Yad Vashem — the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes' Authority, in Jerusalem — has sought to preserve the memories of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust, collecting their names and as much information as can be found about each and every soul.

Pages of Testimony have been gathered and com-

puterized and may be found on The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, at yadvashem.org, where one can freely access information on the more than 3 million Jewish victims identified so far, as well as submit additional names and information online. Almost three million more names must be recovered and time is of the essence as our survivors grow older and memories dim.

But Sarah insured that at least one victim, Sura Volf, will never be forgotten.

Basing her words on a poem by Howard Kahn, Sarah wrote the following poem in Sura's memory:

When I was 12, I studied to become a Bat Mitzvah.  
 When Sura was 12, girls didn't have Bat Mitzvah ceremonies.  
 When I was 12, I learned to read Torah for my future as a Jew.  
 When she was 12, she learned how to keep a kosher home for her future family.

For my Bat Mitzvah, I searched for the perfect dress.  
 For her Bat Mitzvah, Sura searched for bread crumbs to eat.

At my Bat Mitzvah, I take an oath to live as a Jew.  
 At her Bat Mitzvah, she took an oath to die as a Jew.  
 At my Bat Mitzvah, I lifted my voice in song.  
 At her Bat Mitzvah, she lifted her voice in fear.  
 At my Bat Mitzvah, I began my road of life.  
 At her Bat Mitzvah, she began her road to martyrdom.  
 At my Bat Mitzvah, family and friends came to say "L'chayim."  
 At her Bat Mitzvah, the matriarch Sarah came to escort her to heaven.  
 At my Bat Mitzvah, I was called up to the Torah.  
 At her Bat Mitzvah, her soul rose up to God.

Now that I am 13, I become a Bat Mitzvah and live.  
 Now that Sarah is 13, Sura becomes a Bat Mitzvah with her.  
 Now that I am 13, and a Bat Mitzvah,  
 Sura Volf will live on through me and she lives now within each of us.

One of the many gifts Sarah received in honor of becoming a Bat Mitzvah was a certificate for naming a star from the International Star Registry.

Bringing Hannah Senesh's poem to life, Sarah chose to name her star "Sura Volf."

Now Sura Volf's memory and her star will illumine Sarah Wolf-Knight's path — for the rest of her life.

*Rabbi Judy Chessin is senior rabbi of Temple Beth Or in Washington Township, and serves as chair of the Dayton Synagogue Forum. She has participated in the Jewish Educators Seminar at the Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies in Jerusalem. This article originally appeared in the Dayton Jewish Observer*

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