



SIEBENQUELL

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# »In every person there is a spark that cannot be extinguished«

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SOURCE: [WWW.YADVASHEM.ORG](http://WWW.YADVASHEM.ORG)

A short time ago, the title of a book caught my attention. I started inquiring into the background of the book and came across a short film, the clip of a conversation between two men.

The one was white-haired, very expressive in his facial expressions and body language, his eyes radiant, his voice soft and friendly. He spoke with a mild Eastern European accent. His first sentence made me pause: In the early 1940s, one of his teachers had taken leave of his students before his deportation to Auschwitz with this sentence: »Remember one thing. There is a spark, a divine spark, in every one of you, and it cannot be extinguished.« And then this now 87 year old man began to tell of an extraordinary experience to the man sitting opposite him. He, too, was deported as a Jew, together with his family. As a 15 year old, he began to feel like an »old inmate« after only one year in Auschwitz, when suddenly a SS guard picked out ten people. He was known for his brutality - he had already beaten many unconscious or even to death. Now he roughly called out ten people, and the young man is he last one to appear at the gate. There, the SS guard takes a salami out of his pocket, cuts it into ten pieces, gives each a piece and abruptly snarls »take off!« to each of them. »And thus I return to this story«, concluded the old man, »in every person there is this spark - and suddenly it was there!«

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It was the gentleness and the radiance with he spoke these words that took a hold of me. This man, Jehuda Bacon, had lost his entire family in Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. He was liberated as a young boy in 1945. As an old man he not only told us this story, but demonstrated with his entire presence that his inner spark had not been extinguished by bitterness, hardness, accusation, or powerlessness and brokenness - neither in the horrendous time in the concentration camp, nor in the time thereafter. In the hell of Auschwitz he discovered for a moment what his teacher had left him and never again forgot it: In every person there is this spark that cannot be extinguished. He went on to become an artist and has lived for decades in Israel.

November 9th is annually marked by the remembrance of the burning synagogues and destroyed shops of Jewish citizens in 1938, this escalation of inhumanity and violence which ended with 6 millions Jews as its victims.

How grateful I am, to still be able to hear and see people who experienced and survived this time of despised humanity, and who can tell us, with their words and their entire being, that the divine spark was not extinguished, that it lives and flickers in them, indeed, that they were, time and again, able to detect it in their oppressors.

May we be warmed and animated by our own spark. May we, in our encounters with people, note and value their spark, and may we be the ones who tell others: Do not forget, whatever you might experience: in every person there is this divine spark that cannot be extinguished!

By the way, the book I referred to earlier is entitled »Solange wir leben, müssen wir uns entscheiden« (As long as we live, we must decide).

Rosemarie Monnerjahn

Vallendar, November 9, 2016

*\* Jehuda Bacon, To the Man who Restored my Belief in Humanity, Prague, 1945*