

Readings on Freedom

Contributed by [JewBelong](#)

Source: YAIR LAPID, MEMORIES AFTER MY DEATH

They marched us down the length of Pozohony Street, toward the Margaret Bridge and that was when we understood they were bringing us to the edge of the Danube, where they would shoot us and leave us to die under the ice. When we arrived at the foot of the bridge, a Soviet reconnaissance aircraft appeared out of nowhere over our heads. The death march stopped, and there was a moment of chaos while the Nazi guards sought refuge in the entrance to buildings and shot their sub machine guns skyward. Mother and I were standing next to a small public toilet of metal and painted green and mother pushed me inside. 'Pretend you're peeing' she said. I stood there frozen with cold and fear, but I could not pee; when you are thirteen years old and frightened you cannot pee. The Soviet plane had meanwhile disappeared and the march resumed. Not a soul noticed that mother and I had remained in the toilet. Half an hour later, not a single person from the march was left alive. This was a key moment in my life, the moment that defines me more accurately than any other – more than anything I ever did, more than any place I ever visited, more than any person I have ever met. Not because I was spared – every survivor has his own story or a private miracle – but because I had nowhere to go...in this big wide world there was not a single place for a Jewish boy of thirteen whom everyone wants to kill.

So we went back to the ghetto. Years later on a trip I took to Budapest with my son Yair, we took a walk and found ourselves, without planning to, at the Margaret Bridge. We strolled along, chatting merrily when suddenly I stopped and, shaking, pointed at something ahead of us. At first Yair could not understand what it was that I was pointing at, but there it was: the public toilet made of metal and painted green. We stood there, two grown men, hugging and crying and stroking the green walls of the public toilet that saved my life, while the Hungarians who passed us on the street did so with caution, convinced they were looking at two lunatics. 'My boy,' I said once I was calm enough to speak, 'it was in this place, without my even knowing it that I became a Zionist. It is the whole Zionist idea in fact, The State of Israel is a problematic place, and we'll always have our arguments with it, but this is the very reason it was established. So that every Jewish child will always have a place to go.' I hope that Yair understood. I am certain that he did not forget.

- YAIR LAPID, MEMORIES AFTER MY DEATH