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Surviving Through the Lessons of Sports
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During the Nazi era, European Jews experienced tremendous persecution in the form of racial laws, ghettoizations, and death camps. In the 1930s both antisemitism and the enthusiasm for sports were a part of German society and culture. As an act of defiance and neutralization of prejudice misbeliefs, Zionist Organizations created sport associations. This was a means to promote their ideology of establishing a new homeland.

Playing sports increased the willingness of survival upon being sent to the camps during World War II. The participation and competition allowed for the Jewish communities to create an identity and disprove the Nazis ideology of being subhuman.

These sports associations were well liked by their members. It allowed for people to forget about their misfortune, and it added a sense of belonging and inclusion to Jewish citizens within their society.

References:

Photograph Number: 18055
(USHMM)
The donor, Ilse Dahl (left), competes against two other runners in the 100 meter race at a sporting event in Berlin.

Photograph Number: 20509(USHMM)
Group portrait of Jewish youth in a soccer team in Berlin. Tosca Kempler (born Taube Sussman) is the daughter of Jacob Sussman (b. Lublin, Poland) and Sima (nee Fluss) Sussman (b. Pysznica, Poland).