

## FOREWORD BY SIR MARTIN GILBERT

Rachel Kostanian's devotion to true history is evident in these pages. She has researched deeply in order to tell a remarkable story, that of the Jewish spiritual resistance in the Vilna Ghetto. She writes of the extraordinary achievements of those who were being held captive in the Ghetto.

These were not the achievements of a society allowed to live in peace: on business success, on wining and dining, on excursions to the countryside, on visits to other cities and even abroad, on the celebrations of peaceful industry and productive endeavour. Instead, these are the stories – often poignant in their intensity – of a community that struggled amid terrible hardships, dangers and the ever present threat of death, to retain its humanity, its zest for learning and education, its striving for normality amid grotesque abnormality, and above all its humanity – its Jewish soul.

Although almost all the people whose story Rachel Kostanian tells in these pages were murdered or perished before the end of the war, their achievements live on in her narrative as a result of her determination that the instinct for dignity and humanity should not die.

It is an inspiring story.

*Sir Martin Gilbert*