

Obituary or Hour-Glass

Categories: Phenomena

Emaciated person, about to die from starvation.

M. Nowak

Klepsydra [clepsidra] (Meyers Konversations-Lexikon). Water clock, used earlier for timekeeping of court speeches, like hour-glasses symbolic of life going by.

In the Polish and Yiddish languages, it also means an obituary. In the Ghetto, it was a common term for emaciated people looking like their own obituary (a living corpse). Their days were numbered, and the term meant sympathy. When such a poor blighter was recommended for a workshop, he certainly had to be rejected as a klepsydra. Because the multitude of the ghetto inhabitants was in terrible condition, it is easy to imagine how usual the term klepsydra was.

Oskar Singer

Resources

Encyclopedia, p. 112.

Tags

folklore starvation language of the ghetto

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