

Becher - Mount Misco

boite 210

NY 82

Claude and Becher walking down the road in Mount Misco.

Q: Okay now, can you tell me why... why Rabbi Weissmandel is so important and so unique in the story of the Holocaust.

A: Because Rabbi Weissmandel was the first person that... explored if the Nazis could be bought off with money in that way to save Jewish people, and as he did it, in Bratislava, he sent Hochberg that came along with Wislitzky to... from Vienna, to be his to help him out in the Jewish problem. He asked Hochberg to go into Wislitzky and thereby to explore with him if for a certain price the deportations could be stopped. Rabbi Weissmandel of course had no idea if that would work, but the Rabbi of Heitra, Rabbi Ungarn, his father in law, told him to do this method. He had told him two years before he did it in the first place... because of Rabbi Weissmandel's need to be in a committee with other members that no one should be able to divert the rescue efforts. He from the other, the other people did not want to go along with this way, which they said was the old-fashioned way of the Jews middle... in the middle ages in Europe, which was not good any more. And that the Germans cannot be bought off with money.

Q: And what is your own opinion about this?

A: And we see from the way that Rabbi Weissmandel handled the matter, that the Germans were possible to be dealt with in this way. Not because they really wanted money, even though the individuals did want money for their own personal pockets, they felt that if the Jews would be able to give money, in this veil its very possible that the whole way of the war may be changed. Which means that instead of the allies - England and America - fighting the Nazis with Russia together, they had in their minds that if the Jews would be giving

money to them, their hearts would also change in some direction that some kind of deal would be made in the long range with America contrary not with Russia.

Q: What do you mean, the Nazi hearts?

A: The Nazi hearts, right.

Q: And you believe in this?

A: Not that...I mean, we believe that it was always, till the end, the Nazis couldn't understand why the Americans and the British picked the Russians to be their allies against the Nazis, why they didn't consider Communism as a worse enemy than Nazism. But of course, this wasn't the main objective. Rabbi Weissmandel's main objective was only the rescue.

Q: Yes. Okay, could you elaborate on this?.....coup.

A:

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Q: Okay, why money was the most important problem for Weissmandel?

A: Rabbi Weissmandel opened the source of rescue in 1942 after the deportation had started...

Q: In Slovakia.

A: In Slovakia, which was the first country that began deportations after the Wannsee conference, where all the Nazi leaders got together and decided on the Final Solution. Rabbi Weissmandel in the spring of 1942 visited Hochberg, who was Wislizeny's aide in Pressburg where they had their office to deal with the Jewish problem in the entire Slovakia. And he told Hochberg and he showed him that he was a rabbi among the Jewish people. He returned from Europe the day the war began to be here, in Slovakia, to let world Jewry, of which the Joint is the established leader, the established head...

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Q: ...body.

A: ...body. And to let the Joint know of all the things happening to the Jews in Europe. He showed Hochberg his passport, and he told Hochberg that religious Jews were always against the boycott against Germany, which the Zionists had established, had begun...

Q: Why? Could you explain why the religious....

A: Because....

Q: ...the religious Jews were against the boycott.

A: Religious Jews were against the boycott because the boycott is a show of force against the country. And the Jews are not allowed to show any force against any country, especially if they could do harm to Jews living in that country, which eventually happened, because there were still 500 Jews living in Germany when Stephen Wise declared the boycott in 1933 of all German goods.

Q: Yes, but why do you say that the Jews are not allowed to use force? This is an important point.

A: Jews have always been a people that have acted modestly with humility and humbleness in all the countries of their abode. Because the Jews were sent, we believe, the Jews were sent into exile by the Almighty...were sent to Galuth, exile, to atone for their sins, because they were not humble, because they relied on force and didn't rely on the Almighty. And the Jews who are dispersed at all corners of the world in every country, are told to be faithful citizens of every country where they live. Jeremiah the prophet said so after the first destruction of the temple, when he told Jews that were going to Babylon that they should pray for the peace of the land where they live, and be... if the land will have peace, they will have peace. This is why the Jewish people were against this show of force against Hitler, which they felt would not do anything but harm the Jews living in Germany.

A: Yes.

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Q: When Rabbi Weissmandel went into Kochberg....

A: Because he... excuse me, and this was the outlook of Rabbi Weissmandel?

A: This was Rabbi Weissmandel's outlook, and the outlook of all righteous Jews in the world at that time. Rabbi Weissmandel, who was the son-in-law of the Rabbi of Koltra, and lived in Koltra,....

Q: Koltra is a little town in Slovakia.

A: ...is a town in Slovakia.... went to Presburg, which is called Bratislava, to deal with Kochberg first on an individual basis for some people.

Q: This means...

A: ...but when he heard from Hochberg, speaking on the phone to Wislizeny and reporting to him....

Q: Wislizeny was the aide of Eichmann, no?

A: Yes. Wislizeny was Eichmann's aide, and was in charge of the deportations from the entire Slovakian territory. And Eichmann was in charge of all the deportations in the Jewish section of the... of the

SS.

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Q: Yes, do you believe that if the Jews of Germany and the American Jews would have behaved towards the Nazis in the traditional way you just talked about, do you believe sincerely that the things would have taken another turn? Because the extermination of the Jews was one of them....

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A: We of course believe that the boycott was very.... a very grave catastrophe that fell upon German Jewry and then upon the entire European Jewry because of what later happened. Jewry always considered that antagonism against any power, especially a world power like Germany

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was in 1933, would have very grave consequences, which it turned out. Because of the Jewish history at the First Temple, by the Second Temple and consequently all through the ages, when rabbis and orthodox leaders always tried to appease various world power and not to wage war against them. These things are written down endless times in the passages of the Bible. We have this in the chapter of Judges in Bible, when one of the nations around Palestine, Israel, at that time wanted to wage war, and at that time also the chief judge Yiftach sent messages: why do you want to wage war, what do you want. let's do peace. And King Achav also at the same time, many years later, during the first temple also tried to work with peace not with war...

Q: But do you think really that it would have been possible...

A: Nothing....

Q: ...that the extermination of the Jews was a basic plan of Hitler?

A: History cannot be turned back. It all happened. But we know from basic history that if this could have happened, you could never know what... what things might have changed. We know from the destruction of the First Temple, Rabbi Yochanan Ben-Zakai also wanted to appease and make peace with the Romans, while there was a sect among the Jews that didn't want to make war, and they brought about a catastrophe. But Rabbi Yochanan Ben-Zakai, who did make peace with the Romans was allowed to open a Yeshiva and to do various different types of rescue work. But because he could not persuade all the Jews to do the same thing, the temple was destroyed. Our sages tell us, that if the Jewish people wouldn't have listened to the hoodlums at time, at the first destruction - by Babylon, at the time of the second destruction by Rabbi Yochanan Ben-Zakai, the temples would never have been destroyed. We can only go by what our sages tell us in the Talmud and in past Jewish history. And that is why the Jews during the time of World War II tried not to antagonize the Germans, not to anti-

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gonize the Nazis, especially the power that they were. We see from many different power in the world that also tried at first to appease Hitler. What Hitler's plans were at the beginning, what went on in his mind, nobody of course could say. Anything could have changed like things changed anyway. In the middle of the war nobody could say that if you wouldn't have....

Q: This means that you are against any kind of resistance?

A: Well, not...not resistance so to speak. If someone goes to come upon you and says he wants to kill you, of course you are permitted to save yourself, if you CAN save yourself. And each instance of resistance in World War II must be judged on its own merits. What the basic idea was, that if there never would have been a boycott, and if there would have never been declarations of war against Hitler as Stephen Wise had declared in front of a mass meeting in New-York in 1938, and when Hitler saw the clippings of the newspapers, the Jewish newspapers were brought to him and English newspapers, where had mentions that Stephen Wise had declared war in the name of all of Jewry. Hitler fell flat on the floor and beat the carpet. Rabbi Weissmandel mentions in his book 'Min Hameytzar!', and he said: now I will destroy them. Now I will destroy them. And Stephen Wise is declaring war on him, he doesn't have any guns, he doesn't have any power, so this means the declaration of war is declaring war in the name of the Jewish people, which means all the Jewish people and the Jewish people in Europe as well. And Rabbi Weissmandel mentions this. Stephen Wise was in a very safe place in the United States, he wasn't close to where Hitler was, but at the same time he was endangering the Jewish people in Europe by his declarations against Hitler.

Q: Yes, but the first declaration of war was made by Hitler against the Jews, don't forget this.

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A: Be the only thing we could... Jewish people have is to try to cause this ruler or any rulers that come out against Jews. We know from this all through history, that many times big tyrants were very much against the Jewish people, but like it says in the Torah: the minds of kings is in the hands of the Allmighty. You never know what could happen. In Russia the Jews were also under tyrannical Tsars, and at the same time, when they made very large, very great edicts and decrees, they also changed after a certain time as well. And you could have never known what could have happened. We only know that the consequences were bad with all this against Hitler.

Q: Yes, this was the outlook of Rabbi Weissmandel.

A: This was Rabbi Weissmandel's outlook. At the same time the Zionists, who in the United States and all the countries of the world made a boycott against Hitler, Ben-Gurion and Scharett, the Zionists in Palestine, made an agreement with Hitler, with the SS, in 1938. The agreement was called the Haavara agreement, the transfer agreement. The Zionists, who were interested to make a boycott against German goods all over the world, for their own personal interest in Palestine, to bring Jews there and for their interest that Germany should keep out the Jews and... which Germany was also interested in ridning Germany of Jews, they together came to the same conclusion. And this is where they made the transfer agreement where Jews would leave Germany without any goods, without any money, but they could deposit money in the Reichsbank - 50,000 Reichsmarks were permitted for every Jew - and this money could be transferred to a Deutsche Bank in Palestine, where the money was given over in goods in Palestine. No other German could import into Palestine any goods from Germany, except these goods that were brought about to the Haavara agreement. Another show of how Zionism collaboration with the Nazis was in 1938, when the Zionists invited Adolf Eichmann and his superior

Hagen(?) to come to Palestine. They both came, but because the Arab riots had begun, they had to leave after a day. And I went to Cairo to visit both of these Nazis, to go about on the entire agreement and to get of course with Jews. The Zionists were interested that German Jews would leave Germany and come to Palestine, because of their interest of having a majority of Jews in Palestine, where they could later say that they were a vibrant settlement and therefore ask the nations of the world to grant them some kind of independence. And the Nazis had their interest of bringing Germany to be Judenrein and both of these interests came to the same point with the Haavara transfer agreement.

Q: could

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Q: Yes, if the...for instance, if you had been - God forbid - in Poland during this war, and if the Nazi had come to you and cut your Peies and your beard to humiliate you, as they did with many orthodox Jews, what would have been your reactions?

A: That's that?

Q: Why not?

A: It's not...not relevant.

Q: I want to know why it's not relevant. I want to know why it's not relevant?

A: I can't go back and say what I would have done. You can only see what other Jews have...what other Jews did.

Q: Okay, what did they do?

A: They did nothing. Why? They thought that in this way they were under the Nazis, under these Nazis, and the Nazis were doing with them whatever they wanted. They said that they wouldn't be killed. It's hard to say what every Jew had in his mind, nobody knows, because

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there is nobody around to ask anymore.

Q: Yes, but you are talking yourself about non-resistance, and this is a point that I would like to...to understand...

A: There is a difference between the non resistance of the Jews in this way that they did not resist during World War II, they didn't have nothing to make any resistance with. What could they do? the Germans were a night army, and they conquered France, and they conquered everybody. So that Jews without guns and without anything, how could they resist? Jews got their families, their women, their children with them, and they thought maybe the war would end, maybe something...maybe there would be a turn of events, maybe something would be...

Q: Yes, but let's suppose that they would have guns. Are you in principle against?

A: We're not...

Q: Weapons and guns?

A: We...in. It's very hard to answer such a question. It's

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A: We have such a idea of resistance and what Jews are supposed to do between Chanuka and Purim. Chanuka and Purim are two holidays that Jewish people celebrate over the entire world, two occasions that miracles occurred for them. But there is a basic difference between the two. Chanuka, which is 8 days, is made not to fast and for merriment mainly to pray. We say Hallel, the verses of praise which are in King David's book - the Psalms. Purim is mainly a holiday of feasting and drinking and merriment. The rabbis tell us what the difference is between these two holidays. Chanuka was made because there was a decree from the Greeks to tear away the entire

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religion, Judaism during the Second Temple. They gave out various decrees that Jews are not allowed to observe the Sabbath, and Jews are not to circumcise their children on the eighth day, and Jews are not allowed to learn Torah. And at that time, Matithiah, the high priest, gathered together the Jews and he made a rebellion, he voted against these Greeks, the Syrians, which wanted to transform Judaism, to take the people away from the faith. And he succeeded. A few against the many, we say in our prayers, the weak against the strong. Why? Because the Almighty was with them, this is a fight to serve...make Judaism able to exist, to survive. And they won Purim, which happened a couple of hundred years before, during the Babylonian exile, towards the end of the Babylonian exile, was also at a time when there was decrees on Jews. But it was a decree which Haman had gotten through the Persian King to kill all the Jews. There was no assistance that the Jews could save themselves if they would not observe Judaism, and they desecrate the Sabbath or...and so on and so forth. Nothing could have saved the Jews. There was a decree to kill all the Jewish people. At that time the Jewish people through the sages did not make a rebellion, did not revolt. They fasted and they prayed, as it says in the Megillah that we read on Purim - the whole entire story of Queen Esther and Mordechai, that the Jews entreated and went to beg before the King. And in that way they were saved. Different of course is Chanuka, when the Jews could have saved themselves by changing their religion and not observing Judaism. But at that time, when there was a fight about the Torah, the Jews had to go out and fight in battle to save Judaism. And they succeeded. The rabbis which saw at the time of Purim that this is not the way, to battle, it's a decree from Heaven. So the only way was to entreat. In every case Jews did the same thing. They always want to analyse what situation was it, that brought about the decrees. Is it a decree against the faith, against Judaism as a faith, as its spiritual is, or is it

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a decree that nothing will help, that is just to kill out everybody and that's all. Can they be saved if they convert or not. At each epoch through history, the Jewish people analysed through their rabbis through their sagas what they have to do. The same thing happened many thousands of years later, when Tsar Nikolai in the 1840's, in Poland was at that time taken by Russia and there was a decree which came about through the influence of reformed and enlightened Jews, that went to Tsar Nikolai and through his ministers decreed that all the Jews must change their garb, they should not wear their traditional long coats, their hats, their side curls and Payes, the women should not wear dresses that they had, all different from the gentiles around them where they had lived. The only way to get the Jews to be the same like other people would be if they would throw away their garb, which was considered a religious garb, and dress like all the other peoples. Tsar Nikolai in turn decreed that all the Jewish men must have their beard and Payes cut off. He sent them soldiers to do this work. A great rabbi in conjunction with a number of other rabbis got together and decided that this was a decree against the faith. It was not a decree to kill out the Jews per se, there was a decree only against a certain part of the faith. At that time, when there was a decree against the faith, Jews had to sacrifice their lives. Even though in Judaism there are only three where a Jew is always required to sacrifice his life and not to transgress: one is murder, another is promiscuity and the third is idol worship, in this case where there is a certain amount of semblance that they want to transform the Jewish people, even with a minor edict, as Tsar Nikolai wanted to by cutting off the beards and Payes, the rabbis saw to it that it should be known through out Poland that this thing, the Jew must sacrifice his life rather than not...to transgress. When Tsar Nikolai saw that the Jews were resisting in such a way, he went and changed the decree that it

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was abolished.....

Q: But how did they...Did they resist?

A: They resisted by the decree by hiding, which was mostly the resistance...by hiding.

Q: They didn't comply?

A: They did not comply with the decree. There were some Jews that wanted to show that if the government says so we must do it. But it was a minority, just individuals. And they were despised by the entire population. The majority of Jews, well over 99%, did not comply and kept their garb until the end.

Q: This means, according to the religious outlook, one has to fight only when the Torah, when the faith is in...

A: According to...according to the faith, the only time when one is permitted to resist, is when the faith is in danger. The same thing happens

....

Q: and do you consider that during the Hitler time it was the case? Was the faith in danger?

A: During the Hitler time we consider that this was a case just like Purim not when the faith was endangered. There was a decree for all the Jews as such. There was no such thing. Hitler did not state that the Jews could save themselves by becoming Christians, or by being unJewish. Hitler made Nuremberg Laws that looked back for Jewish grand-parents. When on either side of a singular individual person....and if such, he was still considered a Jew, according to the Nuremberg Laws, and was so dealt with, was sent to concentration camps. In that case, because it was a decree not against the faith, against Judaism per se, but the Jew as a person...

Q: and the lives...

A: ...the Jew as a people, this was a case just as Purim where the Jews ...the only way to turn was to turn of course, to the Almighty, who is

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SEVEN FACTS ABOUT THE

MUET - plans de coupe sur le pont

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Claude et Becker marchent dans la rue a Mountisco.

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Q: But it's very very puzzling... it's very puzzling what you say, because let's admit that Hitler would have succeeded in destroying the whole of the Jewish people - it was his plan as a matter of fact - in such a case there is no Jewish faith any more. If there are no Jews there is no Judaism.

First we have a promise by the Almighty, who wrote down in the Torah and prophets...other chapters of the Bible, later, in the prophets, that never will the children of Israel cease to exist. But we have in the Talmud an expressed quote, also brought down from the Torah, that the Almighty had done a gratitude to the Jewish people by making them dispersed through a large number of nations, "so if ever a catastrophe would fall on the Jewish people in one place, they always have another place to turn to." We learn all this from one of the chapters in the first volume of the book of Moses, the patriarch, was meeting with his brother, and he divided his children into a couple of camps.

One of the camps he divided it to fight, but one camp he divided to be able to run away, to be able to save, just in case the first camp is destroyed in the fight, lost. All the commentaries bring that this goes on the way Jewish people are in exile, through diaspora. "Wherever there was one tyrant that made some kind of decree on the Jewish people in one country, there was always a different country that opened the doors for the Jews. When there was the Spanish inquisition, the doors of Poland were opened for the Jews, the door of Turkey, the doors of Holland, and so on and so forth. In many places we find this all along through the history of the Jewish people. Whenever there was trouble in one place, Jews were able to exist in another place.

Q: This is the deep meaning of the diaspora?

A: This is one of the reasons of the diaspora, although there are many other reasons of the Galuth, of the Exile. Many spiritual and religious reasons, but this is the reason, this is one of the basic (cough) how Jews are able to exist also in the diaspora because of the promise from the Almighty and the fact that they are dispersed through all the nations of the world. Even Hitler when he came about, when he made his Wannsee Conference, had only plans for Europe, North Africa, and parts of Asia. The United States wasn't even in the plans. He had plans made up for the extermination, forbid, of 12 million Jews, which he counted as all the Jews living in North Africa, Europe (which included Russia as well) and parts of Asia, which he had entered into his mind that this is what he wants to conquer. But Jews on the other side of the Atlantic, North America and South America were not even entered into his plans in the original form. It was of course his political fight anyway.

Q: All right. Now let's...let's come back to...to Weissmandel.

A: Getting back to Rabbi Weissmandel (cough): When he entered into Kochberg's office, (cough)...he entered into Kochberg's office to approach

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him with the deal, he felt...

Q: The deal was his own idea?

A: The deal was his own idea, but he had concurred together with Rabbi Ungerman, his father in law, had told him that this path should be taken from the very first day. Rabbi Weissmandel went into Hochberg's office, and he told Hochberg that he was a representative of the Jewish organizations, of the free world, of America and England. And the representatives were in Switzerland, and he was here in Pressburg specifically for these organizations, to let them know on the outcome of the war and what ever was happening to the Jewish people in that part of the world. He asked Hochberg if there was any way to be able to annul the decree of deporting the Jews to Poland. He told Hochberg that on one side he has already done enough to satisfy the Germans, satisfy Hitler, by expelling a large number of Jews, on the other side there is nothing to be said about that the Germans are going to win the war, and then if the Germans w...if the Germans lose the war and the allies win, they will all get up to a day of judgement and they will be judged for whatever they did. So he told Hochberg that the chance of the Germans if they lose the war, make sure you have something on that side as well, and go to Wislizeny, go to your boss and put these words into his ear as well. I am sure he is also thinking about this time, just of the case the Germans may lose the war. And ask him if there is a price. Hochberg first was screaming at him, but then he started listening, and he said: Okay, wait, while he went in Wislizeny. And the hours passed, and Hochberg came back in a rush and said: yes. The Nazis have given the O.K. and there is a price. The price is 50,000 dollars in American dollars in two payments. The first will show his good will by diverting the first three transports to Poland. Every week two transports left. And the next three trans-

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ports will not go. After these three transports are delayed, you must bring 25,000 dollars. Then the Nazis will show their good will and stop transportations for another seven weeks, that you should be able to bring the other 25,000.

Q: That was in 1942?

A: This was all in the spring of 1942 after 100,000 Jews from Slovakia were already deported into Poland. And there were still 35,000 Jews left. Rabbi Weissmandel accepted the deal. There was one condition besides settling with the Slovakian government as well, the money must have some proof that it came from out of Europe, that the dollars had come from Switzerland, from America, from the free world.

Q: Why, why? Why was this necessary?

A: This is the point, going into the politics. Do you want to go into that?

Q: I want to understand.

A: Wislizeny wanted proof Rabbi Weissmandel had mentioned that he was here from the outside world. Now, Wislizeny wanted to prove that the Jews that they felt had brought the United States into war with Germany, in their mind they thought that the Jews were the ones who had brought the United States into war, that the Jews were softening up in their attitude towards the German government, and the best proof of softening up is paying the Germans for the lives of some other Jews in Slovakia or in other countries in Europe.... (noise of aeroplane all through the answer)

Q: You don't think that this was because Wislizeny and all the Nazis had believed in the reality of international Jewry?

A: True, it is true, they believed...

Q: This was a myth.

A: He believed in the strength of international (cough) Jewry. (cough)

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It is true. They believed in this, but which was not true. And they also believed that the Jews would care about one another

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