

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

## **Archives**

### **Oral History Interviews of the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center**

**Interview with Rabbi Jack Ring  
November 19, 1992  
RG-50.002\*0077**

## **PREFACE**

On November 19, 1992, Rabbi Jack Ring was interviewed on videotape by Joseph J. Preil on behalf of the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. The interview took place in Union, New Jersey and is part of the Research Institute Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies.

Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center created a summary and time-coded notes for the interview. The reader should bear in mind that these finding aids attempt to represent the spoken word in the recorded interview, yet have not necessarily been verified by the interviewee. The finding aids should not be used in place of the interview itself.

Rights to the interview are held by the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum houses a copy of the interview as a result of a contributing organization agreement with the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. Details concerning the Museum's rights to use and reproduce the interview are contained in the contributing organization agreement.

**Summary of the**  
**Interview with Rabbi Jack Ring**  
**November 19, 1992**

Currently a resident of Elizabeth, New Jersey, Rabbi Jack Ring was born on September 14, 1916 in Pultusk, Poland. Only three of Jack's sixteen family members survived the war. Jack's oldest sister-in-law and her oldest son are in Israel.

German authorities directed Jack and his sister and mother to the Russian zone shortly after war broke out. They moved to Wyszaków, and then to Białystok, both in present-day Poland. After hearing that Vilnius, Lithuania would be independent, Jack headed there in hopes of finding safe haven. He rejoined the Mirrer Yeshiva in which he had studied some years before. Jack met his sister's fiancé in Vilnius and they headed back to Białystok. The Russians shipped the family to Dzerzhinsk, in White Russia, (Belarus), where his sister and her fiancé were married. When the Russians invaded the Baltics, the students of the Mirrer Yeshiva miraculously received permission to enter Japan in 1941. The students traveled by train to Vladivostok, Russia, where they boarded a ship for Tsuruga, Japan. All expenses for the trip were paid for by Rabbi Abraham Kalmanowitz and Rabbi Aharon Kotler of the Vaad Hatzala in New York.

In September, 1941, the Japanese moved the Yeshiva to Shanghai, where they remained until August 29, 1946. During that time German authorities pressured the Japanese into setting up a ghetto, but were unable to set up a killing program there.

After the war almost all of the students of the Yeshiva came to the United States. Two of the Yeshiva leaders, Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein and Chaim Shmervillevitz went to Palestine where they helped develop Yeshiva education in Israel. Jack married an American girl in 1947 and they have four daughters and ten grandchildren.

**Time-coded notes of the  
Interview with Rabbi Jack Ring  
November 19, 1992**

01:00:00 Rabbi Ring shows Talmudic commentaries published in Shanghai by Miner Yeshiva during the Holocaust. This is a sample of the comprehensive publishing effort of the Yeshiva.

01:05:00 Rabbi Ring was born August 14, 1916 in Pultusk, Poland, two kilometers from Warsaw. Father was a Gerer Hasid, a business man who died in 1933. Ring's father had a large mill that employed many workers. Jack's mother was his father's second wife. She was 15 years younger than his father. In 1939 there were seven siblings from both marriages.

01:10:00 Two sisters of Rabbi Ring were already in the United States. Five siblings remained in Poland in 1939 together with their mother. Jack, his mother and his younger sister were all in Pultusk when war broke out in 1939. They went to brother Chaim who lived in the next town, Wysków (Poland)

01:15:00 The next day, a German soldier on horseback told Jack to call the people to the village market. The Gestapo then entered the village and gathered the Jews together. The Jews were then put into trucks to go to East Prussia, Germany. They stayed overnight in Pultusk.

01:20:00 A German officer pulled him out of the group and told him to go home to Pultusk. Jack's family was then directed to the Russian sphere. They were then directed to Czyzewo, a small Polish town under Russian control. The next day, Jack, his mother and sister went by train to Bialystok, Poland, a major city.

01:25:00 When Jack heard that the Russians were to make Vilna (Vilnius, Lithuania) independent, he determined to go to Vilna (Vilnius) which he felt would be safer for him as a Talmudic scholar. Jack rejoined the Mirrer Yeshiva. Three hundred fifty Mirrer students had left Mir to be in Vilna (Vilnius). This was the joint decision of the Yeshiva deans and students. Jack and the Yeshiva accidentally independently decided to flee to Vilna (Vilnius).

01:30:00 Jack's sister had a fiancée, Yoahov Rosenberg, who came to Vilna (Vilnius) to join the family. He wanted to return to Bialystok, as he was under the impression he would obtain employment there. The mother and sister joined him. The Russian promise of jobs was a ruse to ship 40,000 Jews to Dzerzhinsk, near Minsk in White Russia, (Belarus). Jack's sister and fiancée were married by a Rabbi there.

01:35:00 The young couple and Jack's mother were killed by the Nazis in 1942. He learned this from Yivo, it seems, after the war. Brother Chaim's oldest son went to Palestine before the war. His youngest son was killed immediately by the Germans and the middle son and Chaim were killed some time later. Chaim's wife survived and joined her son in Israel after the war. Brother Yuda Eiezer was killed with his wife, son, and daughter in the Warsaw Ghetto.

01:40:00 Brother Moshe married shortly before the war. He and his wife perished in the Warsaw Ghetto. Thus only three of 16 family members survived. Jack's early education began in traditional Cheder until age 11. Jack's father arranged for private general studies tutoring at home. From 11 until 16, he studied in Navaredok Yeshiva. Then, at 16, he went to Yeshiva in Lomza, Poland an advanced academy. In 1936, he went to Mir, Poland.

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01:45:00 Jack's Mother really wanted him to be a dentist. Father said Jack should decide, and he opted to study in the Yeshiva. The Yeshiva dean decided to move the students to Deidanov, Lithuania a small town near Vilna (Vilnius), in early 1940.

01:50:00 The Russians then occupied the entire Baltic. The dean therefore decided to divide the Yeshiva into four groups. Jack's group went to nearby Krakus (Krakes, Lithuania). They heard they could obtain visas to the Dutch colonial island of Curacao.

01:55:00 They needed transit visas. The Japanese consul in Lithuania's capital, Kovno (Kaunas), Senpo Suzghara (Chiune Sugihara), was a lifesaver. He gave out 3,500 transit visas to Japan. Now they needed exit visas from Russia. Miraculously, these were made available by the Narodny kommissariat vnutrennikh del or NKVD, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (the secret police). Why did the Russians agree? There is no explanation, it was a divine miracle. Money for the trip was essential. Two historic personalities in the U.S., Rabbis Abraham Kalmanowitz and Aharon Kotler, worked to provide the funds. It took them 14 days to travel 14,000 miles from Vilna (Vilnius) to Vladivostok by the Trans-Siberian train.

02:00:00 This was February 1941. They left Vilna so as not to be under the Communists. Russia occupied Lithuania at the end of 1940. Jack was in the first group to leave. They stayed overnight in Vladivostok and then boarded a Japanese ship. It was quite an experience to see a Japanese person for the first time in his life.

02:05:00 Jack arrived in Tsuruga, Japan. It was a beautiful country and people, a change from Hell to Paradise. Their destination was Kobe, second largest port in Japan. The Yeshiva rented a building in which hundreds of students could study. They arrived in February 1941. The Japanese

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were cooperative.

02:10:00 How were expenses covered? Once again, Rabbi Kalmanowitz and Vaad Hatzala provided the funds. The study was inspirational under the dynamic leadership of Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein and Rabbi Chaim Shmaelewitz. Rabbi Eliezer Judah Finkel had gone to Israel to work for the Yeshiva from there, with Rabbi Kalmanowitz in New York.

02:15:00 The Japanese Government made all foreigners leave (so that they could prepare for war). The Yeshiva went to Shanghai, China in the Japanese sphere. The Yeshiva was housed in Synagogue Beth Aharon in Shanghai, a beautiful building constructed by Rabbi Ashkenazi. This was ideal.

02:20:00 The Pacific War then broke out. Jack was in the hospital at the time of Pearl Harbor, due to dysentery caused by drinking water. They were in Shanghai from September 1941 until August 29, 1946, a total of five years. The Yeshiva's financial support came from the United States via neutral countries because Shanghai was under Japanese control.

02:25:00 Moshe Litzky, a Yeshiva student, was responsible for serving three meals daily to the hundreds of students. Rabbi Leif Blumberg, currently a West Orange resident, was in the Yeshiva and very involved in publishing the scholarly books in Shanghai required for Yeshiva study. Rabbi Levenstien set the tone for the conduct of the Yeshiva. From July 1943 until September 1945 a ghetto was organized in Shanghai. This represented the long arm of German influence.

02:30:00 In the ghetto's beginning, the Yeshiva building remained Beth Aharon. They were then

required to house the Yeshiva in the ghetto, in the Hongken (Hongkew) district of Shanghai, China. The Germans were unsuccessful in constructing their European-style killing program in Shanghai. After the war, probably 99% of the students came the United States on student visas, some individuals went to Palestine, and a few to Canada.

02:35:00 After the war, the Yeshiva leaders also came to the U.S. Then Rabbis Levenstien and Shmerelevitz went to Palestine where they made a great impression on the development of Yeshiva education in Israel. Jack married an American girl in 1947 and they have four daughters and ten grandchildren.

02:40:00 Jack feels he was saved by divine guidance. Rabbi Ring always spoke to his daughters and many others on all possible occasions about his experience. He feels that surviving the Holocaust gave him strength and power in terms of his faith. Jack feels this German activity is a continuation of German history, going back to the crusades.