

Tova, would you please continue with your narrative.

I'm glad that you called me Tova. Hebrew name, good, Guta, good. What's your first name?

Dow.

Dow, bear in Hebrew.

That's right.

What's your first name?

Daniel.

Daniel. Now back to the when the war August 1944. He's arrived too. Selections. Endless selections stripped of everything except the soul. Mother and sister and I, we survived the selections and, miraculously, we were sent to a labor camp away from Auschwitz, which was miraculously within two weeks.

And we went to the German soil, the Bremerhaven area, [? Oberheiden ?], Neuengamme area, somewhere there, and lived in barracks. And there was a request from the German government, from the private proprietors, to come and clean up the debris that the Allies were bombing Germany-- when the Allies were bombing Germany. And the people, the population of Germany in Bremen, had bunkers, and they had warehouses, and they had cellars with food supply.

And they wanted to get to the food supply since the Allies bombed their properties. And we, one group of us, went to that particular area to work and get those debris away, so the population, the civilians rather, could get to their cellars. We lived in barracks and with conditions that is hard to describe.

But we already got the treatment from Auschwitz to have one layer of clothes in winters. And in Europe, August is cold, and September and so on is very, very cold. So we had already this experience from having one layer of clothes on us when we were shipped out of Auschwitz.

And when we arrived, all we got is a blanket, which served in daytime as a robe, as a cover, and at night time for sleeping purposes. The barracks, when we arrived, were 500 Hungarian Jews, women. And with our transport, 300 Polish women made it 800 women in this particular forced labor camp.

There was no particular brand of punishment in this camp but hard, hard, hard work and no proper attire, no proper clothing. I did find two left shoes, two left wooden shoes. And as a matter of fact, I had no hair, but I wore a turban, which I found a red turban. Some people recognized me later in Israel by the girl, the pretty girl with the red turban, they told me a few years ago when I was in Israel.

And they remember that. And I remember I had this red turban on my head. And the soldier, the Nazi soldier, which happened to be I think Lithuanian guard that was trained by the Nazis to watch us, he said to me, which I remember. This is a little on this story.

He said such a pretty face and such wrong with your feet. What's wrong with your feet? I had two left shoes, and he couldn't figure out that they were left shoes, two left shoes. That's a little bit on a story like this.

We had to March for around 15 kilometers per day, including transportation by wagons and a ration of food, a small ration of cold, almost lukewarm, coffee, which nobody liked, and of ration of bread that we got at 4 o'clock in the morning when we got up. And within moments, the whole ration was gone because hunger knows no boundaries.

And it was consumed right away. But in the barracks, in the beginning, we had very strict Lagerfuhrer. But then later, somehow, a new one came in and he was somewhat better. As I said, without any brand of punishment.

But just we had our own difficulties to survive. The stay in Bremen lasted from August-- late August till early April. Escape was very slim because reprisal, when you were caught, not only your own brand of punishment, but the rest of the prisoners and the people of the camp were punished.

So nobody really tried to escape, but I did escape. Not because I wanted to escape to save my own life, but my sister was coughing, the last stages of tuberculosis. She was coughing with blood already. I reveal this to you because it's for the sake to be known as a victim of man's inhumanity to man, a victim of malnutrition.

My beautiful sister Sarah, teenager, choking with her own blood because she had contracted tuberculosis due to malnutrition. And she asked me gently in her gentle, soft, beautiful little voice, if you are outside working on the debris in the city, did you ever see a drug store that you maybe can walk in and buy me some cough drops or cough medicine?

And I did. In my shabby two left shoes and my wrapped around blanket, but with my red turban. I showed up in one of the drugstores. And with a very fluent German because I know German very well from Professor Herrschiff's two daughters, that during the ghetto they were my friends.

And I spoke beautiful German, but my clothes revealed who I am. And the drug is not even asking for the money, which I didn't even have. He gave me cough medicine and I ran back to place of work. I was already denounced that somebody is roaming around the street.

I was just beaten up severely and taken away a ration of bread that night, but I had seen a smile on my sister's face and that was my reward for escaping. And I felt good inside as she felt. And she did smile because for days and days and days she could not eat the ration of bread and the black coffee.

I was exchanging her ration of bread for something that we acquired in the city, [PLACE NAME] city, which was prevalent that we did have some little extras in the city. For example, very popular it was-- and this should be on the records-- that the civilians, some of them, had mercy, and they showed mercy, and they showed compassion, and they showed their Menschlichkeit by nodding to us and crying and many, many times giving us-- throwing things as food or a pair of socks or something.

Yes, the civilian population of Bremen people, there is such thing like humanity. There is such a thing like inhumanity. Some of the stories I hear about other friends and other people that were helped. And very popular, my mother, who was the queen of our household, came out with outstretched hand to some of the civilian woman. And said [GERMAN] my mother [GERMAN]

And they gave her some things. Civilians. It's the evil that hurts. There's a touch of evil in all of us, and there is touch of goodness in all of us. And in wars, no one is a winner. And one day on Yom Kippur day.

That was the day where it just happens that this is my grandfather's [NON-ENGLISH] who died in the ghetto by natural causes, which I mentioned to you. He was, some people say, a wise man, almost like a tzadik and he did die on Yom Kippur just prior to the Yom Kippur prayers of Yom Kippur when he was expired by natural causes in the ghetto.

And that was the day where some of the woman-- the Hungarian woman, mostly they were in the barracks. They asked permission that day to stay behind in the barracks and pray, praying without books, knowing when Yom Kippur is, knowing prayer heart, pious Jewish women. They knew when it is, what it is and why they want to pray.

And it just happened that this particular Yom Kippur, for no reason whatsoever, the strategy doesn't work that way, was bombed by the Allies. And nobody was hurt. Perhaps the prayers to God, perhaps the prayers of those pious Jewish woman, nobody was hurt.

As a matter of fact, the guards were helping out the women, like my sister with high fever, out in the fields, out from the burning barracks, through the windows to pull them to safety. And when we came back home that day, we saw the remnants of the fire and we, right away, worried about the people inside because it was designed that the people-- the

sick people because the Lagerfuhrer was not that cruel and he let the sick people stay in the Lazaret, in the infirmary, I think it's called.

And then when we saw that this was leveled to the ground, we worried what happened to the sick people that they were laying. And my sister was laying, I think, in the grass or somewhere far removed. And I knew she spits with blood, but I kissed her right in the mouth.

And 50 years later, I'm not sick God protected me for my love for her. I'm not sick, I never was sick, but she was sick. And I kissed her right in the mouth, which whenever I hear the prayer in my mind, I always remember how I had this beautiful, lovely, gorgeous sister, almost like welcoming her back from that moment to life because I thought she was gone already because of the fire.

Being on the place of work, one day I contracted-- my feet got infected badly. And we had no bandages, but my mother had a layer of cloth, a shirt, and she ripped the shirt from her own body and bandaged my wounds. And the owner, when we were working in his place, the German civilians, I pleaded with him to plead with the guard to let me sit out the day with my bleeding feet, my wounds.

And he did grant me permission to sit and stay and rest for the day away from the work. And the owner's dog, it was like a German shepherd. It was a regular dog. He kept a vigil at my side.

And he did not let anyone near me. He was cleansing my wounds, that dog. And that day, I felt protected and loved. When I was a teenager, getting into early teenage-hood, becoming a young lady with the desire for privacy. And it was explained by my mother, the structure of womanhood and the desire for privacy and becoming a lady while she was putting a ribbon in my hair, as to distract me from the severity of the conversation.

She was almost like embarrassed. And she was putting colorful ribbons into my hair to distract me, to make me feel more comfortable on the subject of privacy. But little did we know that when we were transported at one time from one area to another with a huge group of women through the fields, exposed to everybody's view, in front of everybody. And for some, it took a great courage to go on the side in view of strangers and eliminate.

And how tragic. This was in contrast to what I was told about privacy and facing this particular moment when the SS woman, which were the cruelest of the watchmen, came over in process of eliminating and kicking, and kicking, and saying, you swine, you have enough.

How simple human behaviors needs turned into a tragedy of having a woman to woman tell you, you have enough. While I was in Germany, I mentioned already, that evil is evil and goodness is goodness. I often wondered about this German population supporting Nazism during the war and before the war when their own country lies in ruins and there is suffering all around them.

And then nothing stopped the Nazism. And the good people of good conscience must be aware of potential danger. The German forces were closing in-- No, the Allied forces. Excuse me.

The Allied forces were closing in on Germany, and Germany was losing the war. And the orders were, Final Solution, remove the evidence and total destruction. Final Solution, and liquidation of the ghettos to obliterate all the evidence, what was done.

And that was a regrouping of masses. And from that, Bremen forced labor camp, the group of 300 Polish and 800 Hungarian woman, we had to be evacuated to Bergen-Belsen. It just happens that, again, I showed my mother and I, my sister being very, very sick. They gave her a chance, and the other people, to be transported with wagons, by wagon.

And my mother and I, we volunteered to go with my sister knowing that what do they do with the sick people, they probably destroy them immediately. But we did not care. We wanted to be together. And it just happened so that the other woman, the other group walked for days-- I think for one week. And we arrived with by then, which probably God protected those sick people and us for just having the notion to be together.

Arrival to the Bergen-Belsen which the notorious-- the Bergen-Belsen was a horror, not for withstanding nor any other reason for security reasons or any other strategy reason, of course not. We arrived at night, weather stricken, with diarrhea, inmates of Bergen-Belsen sitting in a huge room dripping with this diarrhea all over.

They put us in that room. Only when it started the dawn, the morning, we looked around and we saw horror. Skeletons, only bulging eyes and pitiful messes all around us. And we, sitting right there with the diarrhea streaking, people running back and forth not knowing where they are going.

It was a horror. And then the full ditches operation, and the unmarked graves with the millions of souls and all this to be obliterated so there should be no sign of the crime. We had to drag, which I could not do it. I was chosen to do it.

But my mother volunteered for me. A rope on the leg of the dead skeleton on the arm of the dead skeleton and dragging through their mass ditches and full operation. You have seen it, we have seen it, history tells it. We know it. It's my personal account for that moment right now.

Sister Sara, in the midst of the parasites, in the midst of the filth, in the midst of the hay infested with creatures, without supply of water. She was always longing for water. Sick people need water. Tuberculosis dries you out.

And I was standing for eight hours in the latrine, in the latrine, with a little cough that I found. And a few drops within eight hours of water. And I brought this water to my sister where she was laying, in the midst of parasites there my beautiful sister Sara.

The main water supply was closed. It was toward the end. But men's endurance is greater than you can imagine, that anybody can imagine. And we learned to tolerate the unbearable. And an active way of survival runs high while revenge, thank God, runs low. We all wanted to survive.

And trust in survival prevails above anything. And that's where my strength came in to be strong for myself, for my sister, for my mother, and perhaps with an idea, a very slim chance, of being strong to one day be able to meet my father again.

I still long for him. I am not so strong in giving up my mourning, but I want to preserve my period of mourning although it's so many years. I somehow cherish this mourning period although it hurts, but perhaps I want it to hurt.

It makes me closer to him. It makes me comfortable to have suffered from losing him, so I have the touch. The eternal touch with my father, like probably many people longing for eternal touch with the departed.

If you live a day longer, you feel perhaps God grant you life. And if you live an hour longer, maybe, maybe you'll be chosen to be the one to survive. And then you feel that you're not alone, that you are with God.

And maybe he will grant you life for you and your dear ones. That's where you get your strength. Faith in God. And throughout their hardships, the painful hardships, I did not lose the faith in God. I preserved the loyalty and integrity and faith, and faith and love for God.

Love for God never ends. That's how you get your strength. That's why you have your resistance, your mental, your spiritual resistance without being able to fight on the battlefield. Memories seared in forever, whatever ever is and whenever ever ends, probably never ends, but it's forever.

For millions it was too late, and for some it was a new beginning. And then it came, April 15, 1945, when the British army liberated Bergen-Belsen. Stripped of everything. My only possession the immortal, the remarkable, the indestructible soul.

Without any ovation or any special exultation, we welcomed the V Day, the liberation day. And just between the Twilight and the sunset, and between the fog and the night, we were liberated. Stricken with diseases, destitute and

preoccupied yet with daily survival, exhausted and living from just moment to moment.

That's how we welcomed the liberation, stricken, moi, with another typhoid. This time it was *bruÅ;nÃ½* typhoid, where the intestinal tract is infected due to unsanitary conditions. I am forever grateful to the fighting forces, American forces that liberated the American side, the British forces that liberated the British side.

And for this matter, the Russians that liberated the Russian side. For all the people, the fighting forces, forever grateful to them that risked their lives to liberate people out of misery and for their own conviction and a display of value of humanity, a display of mercy.

Sister Sara, being so sick at the age of 18, was also liberated by the British army and taken away to a hospital nearby, which happened to be Bergen. We were in Bergen-Belsen, but she was taken to the Bergen compound. Sister Sara did have a clean bed.

She did die in a clean bed, in a clean nightgown in sanitary conditions with plenty of water to drink. But she expired quietly two weeks after the war. And in May, sister Sara died May 1945. I will love her forever. But forever is long time to be departed.

We are paying tribute with all those departed, with all those silent graves with an everlasting Memorial, the creation of Eretz Israel, the state of Israel. Being persecuted for thousands of years, the Jewish people needed a homeland. And through their brave and noble and strong in spirit, Israeli pioneers, Zionists, and the pioneers of Israel, in May 1948, on the fifth day of the year 5708, Israel was rebuilt and proclaimed as a Jewish state.

Although we still live in diaspora, the Jews, we have enormous ties, spiritual ties, to our beloved Israel. May the people of Israel live a long, peaceful life, in Israel high. My entire life was consumed and still is consumed by the weight of war.

But left with another dream, home. Now my home is the greatest and the fabulous America. God bless America. I'm happy to live in America.

I'm very proud to be a citizen of this beautiful country and search for a new life. I am here living in America building up a new life, whatever is left. But since 1952, God bless America. In spite of everything, I believe people are good at heart.

And I, for one, I lift up my voice with affirmation for life and in inspiration for mankind. Thank you.

Thank you. If I could just ask a question here that I was thinking about as you were speaking, Tova. You talked earlier about how you went from being a sheltered child to becoming strong.

I can see how you sustained your strength all through those terrible, terrible times and how you sustain it even now. How did you become strong? What is the transformation?

Self-preservation.

Self-preservation

I subscribe to that. The will to live is strong, stronger than you can imagine. The need for essential things runs very high. The need for mental is secondary where the physical is first hand.

And that prevails. And this is predominant in the need for survival. People survive the most awful conditions. They depart with children and fathers and mothers. They hide in the woods, there are people, the testimonies.

They're shot, they are encrusted, they are having the most enormous and almost tragic conditions, which you probably are aware of. And they still prevail because the sustenance, the survival, runs very high. The need for survival, you

always feel maybe if you live a day longer, you will survive.

And that's where you get your strength. And I happen to be, I think, half and half in my nature of being half gentle and half self-preservation. I wouldn't call myself tough. I wouldn't call myself brute.

I don't want to be evil ever. I don't want anybody to be evil. But a human being, the self-preservation is predominant.

How would you feel about being called heroic because the story of risking so much to get medicine for your sister is truly heroic?

I wouldn't call it heroic. I would label it love and care and need to care. If I had no need, my own need to provide and care, I'd probably be a coward. But I have a need.

I was the stronger one. Sister didn't survive. She was somewhat more gentle, more gentle, gentle only. Father, gentle only. The two didn't survive.

Father and sister. Mother, stronger. Myself, stronger. We survived. This is what I think. It's a certain perception of what you think, but this is what I think. Very good question.

What makes you tell your story? What prompted you initially to do it?

It's a manyfold thing. I would say with not being ashamed of that through the love and loss of my dear ones, and that goes for uncles and aunts and the extended family and cousins and friends and everything. Because for the memories that are seared in in me, I want to perpetuate, I want it to be known, I want it to be known for man's inhumanity to man.

I want it for history to know that this Holocaust, this Shoah, this Khurban that we're going through, went through, which we did go previously-- the Jews went through many, many tragedies. They also survived. And this is what part of this is, with this, I would say, quote, Jewish tradition, to survive or try to survive.

Was this answering your question?

Yes, it does. I would just like to say, in conclusion, that we were here to bear witness to your testimony. But we also bear witness to, in a sense, to your father's testimony, and your sister's testimony, and your mother's testimony too. And I thank you.

You are very eloquent.

Thank you very much. I appreciate what you told me. And very few survivors know about the circumstances in which both or one parents died. And those circumstances of others, sisters, and brothers, and friends, and people, especially, they cut deeper when they were teenagers. And some search endlessly.

And others avoid mentioning or erasing even from their own memories, never mind telling it to others and testify. But just even within the frame of their own memories, they are withdrawn and they hide. And they're still in bereavement, and they're still in deep mourning.

But they don't reveal. I mentioned, I don't want to be squeezed in my own body, so I tell for posterity, for history, for slaughters that will ever occur again, that such thing ever happened. Yes, man's inhumanity by the Nazi regime, whatever it took time, 12 years, between '39 and '45 left an effect on millions of people.

I promised you, Irene. My best friend that I work with, she's a German-born girl. And we love each other. She loves me, I love her. I told you, Irene, I will say it.

Irene is her name. She was born in '39. She has nothing to do with Nazism. I cannot blame any people or good people of goodwill. I only blame the Nazi regime and the people that did not protect themselves and did not protect others. And

we still have to worry about genocide that must never happen again.

And civilization can be destroyed by a madman over again and by a dictatorial fanatic if we don't work toward the peace within ourselves, within community, and toward peace with the world. I thank you.

[HEBREW]

[MUSIC PAYING]