

Paul Jonas

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Summary

Paul Jonas was born in Sanok, Poland on June 22, 1922 as the second youngest of seven children of Rose and Herman Jonas. The children were Avram (the eldest), Joe, Esther, Shulman, Hilda, Paul and Mania (the youngest). His father owned a bank and two lumber mills and his mother had help at home. Their town was on the Polish side of the San River and Ukraine was on the other side. The family spoke Yiddish and Polish and were observant Jews. His father was very charitable. Paul experienced almost daily antisemitic attacks from the children as he walked to school. When the war began, the Germans occupied the town and told the family to leave so they walked over the San River to Tyrawa Wołoska, a town on the Ukrainian side. They had relatives there who would not let them in so remained outside until the Russians ordered them to take a cattle car to Novosibirsk Oblast in Siberia. Avram remained in Sanok with his girlfriend as thought Poland would win the war. He was killed the day before the Allies came but the rest of the family survived. Stalin needed people to work and become Communists which the family favored as everyone is equal. The family lived and worked in the woods for two years, surviving on soup and one slice of bread a day. They saw people dying daily. They were freed after two years and went to live in Kaymen (?), Russia, where Paul was a dental technician. He was in the Russian Army for a year where he served as a dentist and was dismissed. The family's passports were taken away but they obtained new ones through a friend and took a cattle car to Krakow. The war was over but they were afraid they would be killed if they returned to Sanok. The Jewish underground helped them get to Salzburg, Austria where they lived in an Army barracks in Haline for four years. Paul worked as a dentist and the JOINT supplied food and clothing. Paul's sisters all met their husbands in the camp who were also survivors. President Truman signed an agreement that the US would accept immigrants who had a sponsor in the US so the family came to the US in 1949. Paul's degree was not accepted in the US nor was he accepted into Medical School so he attended school in Wurzburg, Germany for four year. While there, Paul married a German girl who converted. When he returned he got a degree at the University of Pittsburgh. His parents resided in Brooklyn where his father became a carpenter and lived until he was 87. Paul feels you have to go through his experience to understand it. He believes there must be a God as he is alive. Paul is thankful his children and grandchildren do not have to go through such experiences as his.