

This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Rabbi Bernard Spielman on July 14, 2014 in Boynton Beach, Florida. And I'd like to thank you for agreeing to speak with us today and to share your experiences with us and to explain to us what you saw and went through during the war years.

My pleasure.

I will start at the beginning and ask you, what was your date of birth, where were you born, and what was your name at birth?

Well, my date of birth was February 20, 1932. I was born in Essen, Germany. What was the next part?

Your name at birth.

My name was Bernhard, with an H, Spielmann with two N's at the end. This is really the German spelling. About two months after my birth, it was 1932. So my parents were already aware of Hitler's beginnings. And they decided to leave Germany and go to Holland.

So this is even before Hitler takes over power.

It was just about the same time, I would imagine. They moved to a city called Maastricht in Holland. Not an unknown city. Very nice community. Had a synagogue. It had I don't know if it was a rabbi or a lower level clergyman, but very nice. He was also a shochet, one who slaughtered the animals in a kosher way.

One of my-- I'll skip a little bit. One of my memories was to take the chickens, the live chickens, and bring them to him to slaughter. And then he would put the chickens in a barrel, because there was still-- the blood was still coming out. And one of the horrible memories I had was the fact that the chickens still kept jumping even while they were being slaughtered.

In any case, Maastricht. We lived on a street called [STREET NAME] number 16. It was a nice street of attached houses. I was the oldest of four children. So the next three were born in Holland. We began being subject to the planned manner in which Germans treated Jews. They didn't overnight take us away to a camp.

Oh, hang on a second. I'm not even at the war year yet. I still want to talk about your childhood and growing up.

Yeah, I'm going to. Go ahead.

Because I assume that this planning happened after Germany occupied the Netherlands.

Yes.

OK, and before then, was there German influence in Maastricht?

No. No German influence whatsoever. It was a good Dutch community. We went to public school. Public school met on Saturdays. We never attended on Saturdays, because my family was an observant Jewish family. Living with us was my father's sister, Mirl with her name, who shall come into the picture a little bit later in more detail. As I said, we were enrolled in public school.

I have some questions.

Please.

OK. I noticed on one of the documents that you were going to talk about later that your birth is recorded in Germany that you were born in Essen, but it says that your citizenship is Polish. Is that correct?

Probably, if that's what it says.

How would that be?

Because my father, my father's citizenship was Polish.

I see.

My mother's citizenship, which will come into play again, was American.

So neither of them was German citizenship?

That's correct.

Although you were born in Germany.

There are some documents that say that they are given permission to reside in Germany after they moved to Germany. And then different places in Germany they had to get a certificate of permission, residency permission.

So what was their story?

Excuse me?

What was your parents' story? How did they meet?

Well, first of all, my mother was born in New York on one of the trips that my grandparents took back and forth between the United States and Germany. They had a shirt factory in Essen, Germany, my grandparents did. How my parents met exactly, they never really revealed other than that they did get married in Germany.

My father was a very intelligent man who never had the opportunity to have an extensive education. So in Germany, he became a shoe salesman, believe it or not, and supported his family that way. When we moved to Maastricht in Holland, he became an optician.

Really?

And he traveled all over Holland selling frames and lenses. And so most of the week and most weeks, we didn't see much of him except that he came home for Shabbos and for the weekend.

What was his name, by the way?

His name was Alexander. Alexander S, standing for we don't know. But he very often signed, has a signature Sander Spielman, which I think is really the second part of Alexander. But it was Alexander S. Spielman, which later on, much later in the United States, he was given a briefcase to carry, and that was given to him by the management. And unfortunately, they put his initials on the briefcase.

Oh no. [LAUGHS] Oh no.

I'll leave it at that. I'm not going to explain it any further. But be that as it may, he was an optician in Holland and traveled extensively all over Holland. We eventually, three of us went to public school. The fourth one, my youngest sister, was born six weeks before they took us away to the camp.

So she was a baby.

She was only six weeks old. In between, if you're ready for it. No?

Not yet. Not yet. Not yet. I still have questions about the older generation. So your father's name is Alexander. What part of Poland did he come from?

He came from a place called Przeworsk, which sometimes was Poland and sometimes was Austria. I think it's a Austria, Poland boundary. So depending on who had control.

Who controlled it.

But in the main, it was Poland.

And what propelled him out of there? Why did he leave?

Well, Poland was not too great a place for Jews either. There was a lot of anti-Semitism. But frankly, I don't know the answer to your question. I don't know why he left. I know that his sister, Mirl, left with him. He had another sister who settled in Holland, who interestingly was hidden by a family, a Dutch family, throughout the war.

And when Holland was liberated, we brought her to the United States to be reunited. Another sister of my father went to the state of Israel and settled on a kibbutz in Israel and her husband on the same kibbutz became an expert on breeding fish.

Really?

In Israel.

And fish farming?

A fish farm.

So I count right now at least three sisters that your father had.

That's correct.

Were there any other siblings?

No.

So it was one boy and three girls.

Right. But there were siblings for my mother.

I wanted to ask about that too.

OK. My mother had a sister, and she had three brothers. And of course, her parents. Her sister and two of her brothers and her parents all went to the United States before the war.

Well, that's an interesting side story to your own as to when did they leave Germany, what happened to the shirt factory, and at what year? I mean, what can you tell us about that?

I can't give you dates.

It's OK.

All I know that one of the brothers of my mother settled in the same town in Maastricht.

I see.

And I'll jump a little bit. And he and his family lived up on the hill in a nice home from us away, a different street. And they left for the United States on the last ship that left the United States.

You mean left the Netherlands?

Excuse me. That left Holland for the United States. We were supposed to go on the next one. We were all crated to go. We never left. So they lucked out. He came to the United States. A very phenomenal-- don't touch that. Phenomenal business man who when he came here went into two major businesses. He became a distributor for liquor beverages, and he became a munitions manufacturer.

Actually, the two have a connection. That has a connection. In order for a person to shoot a gun, sometimes he has to down some whiskey.

OK. I'm not going to argue that one. But suffice it to say, he became a millionaire.

Yeah, yeah.

And was very helpful when we finally made it. So we'll get to that a little bit later. So how are we doing as far as--

I still want to know a little bit about your grandparents owned a shirt factory in Essen. What happened to that?

They must've sold it when they moved to the United States. They were not-- my grandparents were not young when they came to this country.

And another question.

And they settled in Brooklyn, of course.

Of course. Another question dealing with your father's family. His parents, did they stay in Poland?

No. I have no knowledge of his parents. I never knew his parents. I don't know whether they were ever alive when I was alive. Never spoke about them. Not a word.

But it sounds that all of his siblings survived except for--

All the siblings survived. Except the--

The lady we'll talk about.

Mirl we'll talk about later.

OK. So now we're back in Maastricht. And my question is, what language did you speak at home?

We spoke Dutch.

So your parents picked it up very quickly?

Quickly. They had a rule. You must speak the language of the country in which you live as quickly as possible. Same rule when we came to the United States. We didn't speak any English except haltingly. They made a rule. All foreign newspapers could not come to our house anymore. Only a Dutch newspaper. Only an American, English language.

So we picked it up very quickly. The kids, none of us have any German accent. Except if you listen, I have maybe, but you can't really detect it. My parents never lost their German accents.

Did they speak Dutch with a German accent?

They spoke Dutch with no accent. But they spoke English with a German accent. Or Dutch accent, whatever it was.

OK, so let's talk about your siblings now. What were their names again?

OK. I was the eldest. Next was a brother called Nathan. And then was Hannah. Rina Hannah Lora but everybody called her Hannah. And then the youngest was Edith.

Before I forget, what was your mother's name and her maiden name?

My mother's name was Helen, and her maiden name was Hudes. H-U-D-E-S.

Hudes?

Hudes.

Hudes, H-U-D-E-S. OK. Was there a large Jewish community in Maastricht?

No, but there was a small Jewish community, but it was large enough to have a Hebrew school and to have a shochet and to have regular services. And it was large enough for them to have certain customs, such as it was an orthodox synagogue where they-- a place for women upstairs and men downstairs. It was a place where on their holidays, the men, many of the men wore top hats.

Oh, really?

Yeah. Which they kept in the synagogue. When I eventually went back after the war, I went to the shelf where they kept the boxes in which they kept the top hats. The shelf was still there. No boxes.

No hats.

No boxes. No hats. Anyway, so it was a reasonably active Jewish community.

You started to mention school and I kept interrupting to go backwards. But let's talk about school now. What kind of memories do you have of going to primary school there in Maastricht?

Going to public school, school was always a good activity. We always-- we had a tradition of learning anyway. Jews are always interested in education. My parents were no exception. So we were always encouraged to do well in school, and we did well in school. Edie, of course, never made it to school. She was too young. But the others went to school, to public school as well. If you'll let me, I'll begin to tell you how we left the public school. At some point.

OK. I'd like to ask a few questions about it though. Another question not about public school but before I forget it. Were there other German Jewish families in Maastricht who had also left Germany and settled there?

I don't know. It's possible, because Maastricht was about as close to the German border. It was the first city. And it was also close to Belgium. We would go on vacations in Belgium. So it's possible that there were other German Jews who were as smart as my parents and left Germany at the right time. Does that answer the question?

That answers that question. Thank you. And yes, Maastricht is a beautiful little city, and it's so close to those borders. You can take a stroll and be in another country.

That's correct.

And so here's the question about school. Do you have any memories in public school of what the kids were like and what the teachers were like?

Well, what I want to answer is that life was very normal. And the teachers did not treat us in any way differently than they did any of the other kids. We were full time students, and we were treated like any other residents were. There was no anti-Semitism that we were aware of.

At least not any open anti-Semitism that affected us in any way. And even as I said before, we didn't go to school on Saturday. They permitted us not to do so even though they had Saturday sessions. So that was very nice and reasonable. We didn't feel any pain at all.

OK. But now, if you're born in 1932, that means you would only have been in elementary school.

That's correct. I only went to public school. I'll come back to it, because you won't let me go there. I went through the third grade in public school.

All right. Now I'm ready.

OK. I want to back up a little bit, because I want to tell you what the Germans did to us after they conquered Holland.

And that was when? How old were you when they came there?

I think it was 1939.

Do you remember it?

I remember it.

What did you see?

Because it was a very short, nondescript war, because Holland was not equipped in any way to fight the Germans. So it was very short.

Did you see-- do you remember seeing tanks or soldiers?

I remember seeing soldiers, because in Maastricht, was a place called kaserner, which is a military, kind of a military area like the military. Not a base, but a place where soldiers would be. And so the Germans took that over almost immediately.

But in connection with the Jewish community, the Germans, from my point of view, have always been very methodical, very scientific in everything that they did, very planned. So they didn't destroy the Jewish community just like that and take us away and say goodbye. They had a method.

First they took away all telephones from the Jews. There was no more telephones. Can't communicate. Then they took away the radios so we should not know what's going on in the rest of the world. Then they took away the cars. And that was the end of my dad being able to make a living, because he travelled with that car. And I remember I believe it was a Chevrolet, but I'm not sure.

So those things were done. Then the next step was to forbid us to go to public schools. The kids could no longer go to public school. So the Jewish community did what they would be expected to do. They formed their own school. Small school, Jewish teachers.

One of the teachers was a woman who was the daughter of the man that was put in charge by the Germans of all the Jewish community. And this man, we think because he wanted to stay alive, made up the list of Jews for the Germans to take them away to Westerbork. One of the Jew-- one of these. And his daughter was one of the teachers.

Now, you have to know that the United States has interesting laws. My mother is an American citizen. My father is not. I'm not automatically, because the law was that if you're born to an American citizen in a foreign country, you're not an automatic American citizen. Then they changed the law, and my brother and Hannah, Nathan and Hannah, were automatic citizens.

So you were born before that law was changed, and they were born after it?

Correct. And then when Edie was born, the law turned back again.

Oh my goodness.

So Edie and I were not automatic citizens, and the two middle ones were, which meant that my father and I and-- not Edie, because she was too young. My father and I had to wear the Jewish star.

But your other siblings didn't?

And the other siblings didn't. And my mother didn't.

Isn't that amazing?

Yeah, it was amazing. But what was bad was that this woman teacher noticed that two of us were not wearing Jewish stars. And she confronted us, and she said to us, if you show up in this school again without your Jewish star, I'm talking about the other two, I will report you to the Germans. So now we have a dilemma, right? Of course they showed up without the Jewish star.

I want to also one phenomenal memory I have. Walking to school, to that school, with a Jewish star one morning. I'm walking on the sidewalk. In Holland, a lot of people use bicycle for transportation. So here's this man going to his job in a suit and a hat. He had a suit and a hat on. And he sees this little kid with a Jewish star. And he stops his bicycle, he puts it down, and he comes over to me, and takes his hat off and bows and put his hand back on, got on his bicycle, and went on his way.

Oh my.

Can you imagine that?

I can see why that would stay in your memory.

Unbelievable. It was something worth a million dollars. Anyway.

And how bitter to realize that your teacher in the Jewish school is the one who would say such a thing.

It's true. And the conclusion that I've come to myself is that people will do things in order to survive, even terrible things, even making up transport for the Germans and then being the last one to get sent out of here. Didn't help. But people will do things. People will also do decent things, like this guy with the hat and another thing I'll tell you about after we got to the camp.

OK. Now, did your mother when you moved to Maastricht and at any point, did she get in touch with the American embassy to see whether or not there would be any protection for any of you to get to the United States?

As I know it, before we were supposed to go to the United States, there was a lot of correspondence to try to make sure that we would be able to go along with the others and my dad. And as I understand it from some of this correspondence I've seen, they were told no, no, no. And eventually, they were actually given permission, including my dad and all the children and my mother to go. And that's when we got all ready and crated and unfortunately didn't make it because there wasn't any other ship.

No other ship. No other ship.

So now comes a day we were informed by the Germans that tomorrow morning you are to report to the jail, because we're going to take you to a place where you will be happier as Jews to live. And they didn't tell us where that place would be.

Would somebody come personally at the door and say this?

Yeah, somebody knocked on the door.

Was it a German?

A German in uniform.

And did you understand German?

Well, my parents spoke German.

I know, but when he spoke, when this person spoke.

I wasn't witness to this.

I see.

Will you stop touching that thing? I'm touching the mic. Yeah, so I did not personally witness this. Suffice it to say, a fascinating thing happened in addition that day. We get another knock on the door from our immediate neighbor who told us the following. That overnight over the roof, we should bring to them all of our valuable China, all of our valuable jewelry, and all of our valuable silverware.

And if we had them, carpeting if it was valuable. We should bring them over the roof, because these were attached house, to their house, and they would keep them until we would come back. That's the way they put it. Said when we come back, they would give all this back to us.

How did you take that?

Well, we were overwhelmed by the kindness of-- but we also expected it. Because Holland was a place where Jews came from all over the world as refugees. They came from Spain. There's a Spanish, Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam. Holland was known as a place that would accept people from all over the world if they needed to run away from what they had to face. The Dutch people were known, and we expected them to be decent human beings.

Well, you see, as you're telling this, there's a suspicion that comes to mind of neighbors who would want to have these valuables and not necessarily return them.

That's correct. But that could be in the back of your mind. And a lot of people, interestingly, have said the same thing to me. What the heck? I mean, they were just helping you in order to enrich themselves.

Well, one doesn't know. But it is one of those thoughts that comes to mind.



That's one of those thoughts. And it could have entered our minds too. But what prayer as they say. We didn't have a prayer. We didn't have a choice.

Of course. Did you do that?

We did it that night. Now, I can't-- I should-- there are plates and dishes there, red and white, that you can see.

I see those, yes.

Those were saved.

Oh my goodness.

I'll tell you later how we got them back. Unbelievable.

OK. So that night, they come and they say--

They helped us take the stuff over the roof to their house. The next day, we went to jail. And we were told to be prepared to leave the next morning.

You were eight years old.

Yeah. No, I was 10.

Was this 19-- you were born in 19--

I was 10.

So it was 1942?

Yeah, '42. I was 10.

So in other words, between the time they occupied Holland and the time that you were taken away.

Was all this process.

So it took a couple of years.

That's correct. It was so methodical. So that at no point did you have a suspicion that anything physically was going to happen to you. Do you understand? We were fooled by this whole procedure. Step by step.

It reminds me of that saying or that sort of like riddle. Again, dark humor, but how do you boil a frog? Very slowly.

Exactly. You got the point. That's exactly the process that we went through.

So you're taken to jail.

So now one of the documents over here that we captured later when I went back after the war to Westerbork came from a book about Maastricht and the Jews of Maastricht. And the researcher at this Westerbork museum now we went back to brings out a book about Maastricht.

And he leafs through the book and opens the book by accident to a page that has a document made out by the burgomeister, the mayor of Maastricht, that the following family by name of Alexander, Helen, each one of us, was transported on a train that was to go to Westerbork on such and such a date. That document is in that book, and that's

what he opened by accident when we were there.

Oh my gosh.

You can imagine that moment.

Well, tell me about the other moments, if you can recall them, when you're a kid and you're in the jail and you're getting on the train. What did everything look like?

I'm going to tell you that too. First of all, we were put on the train. A regular train. Regular seats. But it was early in the morning. And my father was a religious man. And we were guarded by German guards now.

So you weren't put on a cattle car?

No. We were not. Cattle cars were for later people. We went to Westerbork and you have to know that Westerbork was not a concentration camp. It was what was called a durchgangslager.

Transit camp.

It was a place where they decided which camps you should go to and what type of camps. So we were put on a regular train. My dad, it was early in the morning. He put on-- you know what tefillin are? The phylacteries and these talits. And he's reciting his prayers in Hebrew in front of these, God bless him, German guards. And of course, they didn't do anything to him. They left him alone, thank God. But that was the kind of person my father was.

And unfortunately for me, I picked up some of those habits. And throughout my rabbinic, I paid severe penalties for that later on, because I took stands that were not always popular. So I delivered sermons against the Vietnamese War way before it was popular. And I delivered sermons on the need to give full equality to gay people, because gay people were in some of the camps that I was in, things of that nature. So I got into trouble--

In your own life. Yeah.

Yeah, my whole life. But it was worth it to me. I did it consciously not to provoke people but to take stands on matters that needed attention on an ethical level and on a legal level.

And is that something you're saying you saw your father model?

Yes. That's what I'm saying exactly. That's where I think I got it from. OK. So now we arrive in Westerbork.

How far is that from-- where is it in the Netherlands, this Westerbork?

The northern part, and we were on the southern part. So we arrived in Westerbork with my sister Edie, six weeks old. And one of the things that the record needs to show that I also learned at such an early age was that there was a German soldier, a guard, at Westerbork that smuggled in milk for my sister.

Really?

From which I learned that you can never generalize about any group of people. You can't say all Germans were bad or all Germans were Nazis or all Germans were anti-Semites. And I learned that at such an early age that, of course, it meant a tremendous amount to me all of the rest of my life. So even though I can't get myself consciously to buy German goods, I don't feel that the current group of Germans are Nazis at all.

And it was because that man who brought milk for your sister?

That one man. That one man taught me that at that early age.

Those are amazing things and amazing sorts of lessons.

Oh, you're right. But these things do have an effect on you.

He didn't know that he was doing more than just bringing milk.

Yeah. But he was doing more. He was doing more than anybody else. You understand? And he was doing more than any German dared to do. So that was the point. We were put in barracks in Westerbork. Children slept in one room, the adults in another.

Kids are going to be kids under all circumstances. So one night all the kids, I don't remember how many of us in this particular barrack, were in this room put to bed. Yeah? And at one moment, at one point, this older woman comes in to find something that she needed. Whatever it was, a handkerchief, whatever. She comes into the dark room, and we decide to make her life interesting.

[LAUGHS]

By making mice noises.

[LAUGHS]

And this woman went out of the room screaming. She ran out of that room, and we had our reward. So my point is that even under all these extreme circumstances, kids will be kids.

When the adults found out, they probably gave them at least a moment of relief if they heard of that and then laughed.

We never gave that thought.

Oh, you never?

But I hope so.

[LAUGHTER]

Yeah, well, anyway.

So you were there, and the parents were separated from the kids. But Edie, was she with your mother?

We were in the same barracks. We were in the same barracks.

Oh, the same barracks. OK.

In Westerbork. Naturally, we all had to get baths. We had to get cleaned up, because Jews are automatically dirty. All of that. Even the children.

Who were the guards? Were they Dutch or were they German?

All Germans.

All Germans.

There was a German kommandant who incidentally, I hope I'm right, favored German Jews who spoke German.

Really?

I think. And I'll tell you why later. But they were all Germans. German soldiers.

Any Dutch people in any kind of position?

Yeah, in some capacity. But I was a kid. I don't tangibly remember how Dutch people functioned. But I'm sure that they were part of the help. They were employed probably as cleaning people and people who prepared some kind of meals. Suffice it to say that we were not in Westerbork very long. Westerbork, incidentally, is also the camp that Anne Frank eventually ended up in. Be that as it may, we were told one day that we are going to be moved. First of all, let me go back just a minute, if you don't mind.

Sure, please.

The sister of my father lived with us in Maastricht.

Mirl?

In Maastricht.

Was her name Mirl?

Mirl was taken away before us. And we never knew what happened to her after that.

Really?

She went to Westerbork also before us. But in this list I have here of all the Spielmans is Mirl Spielman. And on a certain day, she was sent to Auschwitz. And then two weeks later, she was exterminated. All that is in that list.

So when did you find this out? When did you get this?

When I went back after the war to Westerbork and asked for do they have a list of people who were in Westerbork. And this researcher brought us this list. You remember I told you that the Germans destroyed all records. But the inmates kept records themselves, and they hid them under the planks of the barracks. And when the barracks were dismantled afterwards, after the war, they found all these lists. And he showed us that we're on the list, including Mirl.

Now, do you remember what year you went back to find this out? I mean, what year you went back to Westerbork?

Yeah.

When was that?

I'm trying to remember the exact year. But it's on one of the documents. So I can try to remember the exact year. But suffice it to say, Edie and her husband and Rozelin, my husband and I, the four of us went back.

But it's decades later?

Oh yes, it's way later. It's after we're married already in this country.

So it's only then that you find out what happened to your aunt?

All those years we never know. We always-- we never know what happened to her. So going back to Westerbork, Westerbork was a durchgangslager. So you would find out whether you would go from there to an extermination camp or a work camp.

But you didn't know what they were.

A labor camp or where we went. We went to what was called an internment camp, a very special camp. Remember this. Internment. Internment camp was for citizens of the United States, Great Britain, certain Jews who had visas for Palestine, those primarily allied countries that were at war with Germany. Those citizens were sent to internment camps for future exchange for German prisoners of war.

Did you know this at the time?

Yes.

Did you know that there were extermination camps at the time?

Yes.

You did? Even in Westerbork?

We were so lucky to go to an internment camp, because that's what saved our lives. But my father was not allowed to go with us. He remained in Westerbork. And they didn't decide what to do with him. We went to an internment camp. And all four of the children were allowed to accompany my mother.

Even though the--

Even though the two that were not, because maybe they just-- I don't know if they were confused or they didn't know about all this. But suffice it to say, the four children and my mother went together to a camp in Germany called Liebenau.

Did you have German citizenship?

I don't think so.

Did you have Dutch?

I think I had Dutch citizenship.

And so Edie would also have Dutch citizenship?

That's correct. She was born-- I mean, all of them except me were born in Holland anyway. So some of them would have dual citizenship. Anyway, we went to a place called Liebenau, which was a fascinating place.

What made it fascinating?

It was fascinating because it was a convent.

[LAUGHS]

It was a convent. So all the personnel were nuns. German nuns. The nicest people you could meet.

Oh my goodness.

Who treated us-- but there were Germans in charge. But on this convent, in this convent, they put us-- there wasn't, obviously, room for a large number of us. And we were placed in a certain part of the convent. And my mother, God bless her memory, she was one of the strongest women also that I have ever been exposed to.

And she didn't like the fact that we were put in a certain place that wasn't where she could take the best of care of us. So she went right away to the German kommandant and demanded that we were given a special area with beds and so, like a little, small apartment just for us. And sure enough, she succeeded.

Oh my goodness. [LAUGHS] Oh my goodness. Do you think-- I mean, it must have been that her citizenship and that of your two siblings had a role in all of this that you ended up in this direction than another one.

Well, I just told you, this was called another internment camp. This was for American citizens. Yeah, that special camp. Keep it in mind, because that's why I'm here, frankly. I wouldn't be alive. We weren't in Liebenau very long when we were told that we would be transported to a camp in France called Vittel, V-I-T-T-E-L, which was a large area made up of former hotels. After all, these are American citizens. You gotta take care of them. That was enclosed by barbed wire fences.

Oh my goodness.

So you couldn't go into town. This was like a little community that was created by the Germans called Vittel. Internment camp Vittel. Suffice it to say that the accommodations in the hotel were terrific. Here we will given a reasonably large apartment. It was two bedrooms. And we lived on the third floor of this with a balcony. Wow. I mean, Jews who were supposed to be exterminated, and here we are in this special camp.

In this camp, I want you to listen carefully, we were allowed to receive American Red Cross packages, which included canned goods, chocolate, and cigarettes. Chocolate and cigarettes were as good as currency for which we could purchase anything from outside. And it was just a wonderful thing. Why was it wonderful? Because the British people in that same camp were allowed to receive British Red Cross packages. But none of those Red Cross packages were allowed to contain cigarettes unless they could prove that they smoked.

Oh my goodness.

Now, here are are a whole bunch of people who never smoked trying to smoke and coughing like mad in order to pass this test that the British Red Cross had made. And they also had to sign a statement that for whatever packages they received, they would reimburse the British Red Cross after they were liberated.

Oh my goodness.

If they were liberated.

My goodness.

That's the British Red Cross compared to the American Red Cross that had no such restrictions. How about that?

How bizarre.

Now, that also, that whole business with the cigarettes and the chocolate and it being currency permitted Jews to bring in-- what do you call it? What do you make? Bring in flour to make matza for Passover right in the camp under the Germans' noses without them ever knowing it. And all stuff like that. They also organized a school. The school, since this was in France, were taught by British nuns. Again, nuns, who were unbelievable human beings. They taught us some English. They tried. Mathematics and so on.

Did you have any interaction with the German authorities?

Very little. They were there. They were administrators. But in the main, the community organized itself, and they made life livable. In this same camp were a group of Polish Jews who had visas for Palestine. And the Germans were waiting to see if the British would honor the visas. If the British would honor the visas, they would remain interned for future

exchange for German prisoners of war. If they would not honor the visas, they would be sent back to Poland to the extermination camp.

Oh my God.

One day the decision was made by the British not to honor those visas. And there were people, mass suicides.

Oh dear.

People jumped out of the windows, because they knew what they would be going back to. And it was horror. Unbelievable.

Were these families or were they generally Polish men?

Families.

Polish families.

Some of them obviously, not all of them, committed suicide. But a good number of them. And it was just, I mean, it's there. It never goes away. Suffice it to say, that a very strange thing happened one day. A new group of new transport came to Vittel from Westerbork, from Holland. And lo and behold, my father shows up. He was given the job of accompanying a blind man to help him on this journey.

Oh my goodness.

And I think that it's because the German kommandant liked German Jews. Because there doesn't seem to be any other rational reason why my father should be permitted to come and rejoin us. It was just an unbelievable moment.

It sounds like from real lows to real highs.

There's no sane explanation except that it happened.

I want to go back to that predicament and the tragedy of those Polish Jews. After those people who jumped out and committed suicide, jumped out from windows and so on, was there an actual transport back to Poland?

Yes. They took them all back to Poland. Every one of them. That's the real tragedy that those who didn't commit suicide all went back to Poland. And it's very quickly. Before they could think of anything to do, they were taken away.

How soon after that did your father arrive?

I'm not sure what the time frame is. But suffice it to say, he came and rejoined us. Life was fascinating, because on the same floor that I lived, there was a man who offered to teach the young kids Talmud.

Really?

Yeah. He was a scholar, a young rabbi, and he wants to teach. So we went and took advantage of it. And one day he says to me, you know, I'm very troubled, because you don't let your payos grow. You don't have any-- you know what I'm talking about? They're the curls. Orthodox Jews, many of them, have these payos. And I didn't have them.

Were you an orthodox family?

Yeah, but never in Holland, though. There are orthodox and there are orthodox. Not all, for example, many of the Chabad Jews here don't have payos. But in any case, he says I will have real trouble. So until you grow some payos, you can't come anymore.

So what can I do? I didn't come. To his credit, he knocked on the door one day a few days after, and he says, I take it back. Come. Come to study. Anyway, some life goes on. Adventures happen all the time. One day all the Germans disappear.

Before we get to that--

Before we get to that.

Before we get to that, did the adults have to work when they were in Vittel?

No.

No? So it was like a holding camp?

They were prisoners of war. That was it. I mean, they gave-- they did feed us. But the adults did not have any responsible functions other than that they organized the community and they made sure that people had what they needed to have.

So you were interned. You can't leave. People are fed. Did anybody--

You were in prison. It's like being a prisoner. You can't go out, and you can't do anything.

Did anybody ever complain of hunger?

No. Not in this camp. And not in Liebenau.

In Westerbork?

In Westerbork, I don't remember, to tell you the truth. But I would not be surprised.

OK. You would not be surprised if people were hungry?

That people were-- that there was very limited food.

OK. So that was my question about Vittel. And you say one day the Germans disappeared.

Disappeared. And then the rumor starts that the Americans are coming. So the Germans ran out. By the way, let me go back for a moment. There were some people in Vittel who were spies for the Germans.

In the camp itself?

In the camp itself. And who would report people about whatever violations that there might be. And when the Germans left, the Jewish-- the French underground came into the camp, and they rounded up all these--

Informers.

German collaborators. And they put them on trucks and they took them away. And they were including women.

These were-- were they German nationality?

No, they weren't German.

They were anybody?



They were just among us. And they did things, I guess, again, to survive. They were spies. And the women, they cut off all their hair. They put them on these trucks, and they left, and they were never heard from again. Not by us, and I bet by nobody else either.

Did you know who was a spy and who was an informer?

Not really. Otherwise we would have avoided them. But I think they were good enough so that you really didn't know who they were. Except I don't know how they were discovered, but they were, and they were taken away. That part I remember. I remember when the gates were open. That whole thing.

The gates were opened. Not one person left the camp. We were conditioned that if we would do anything like that, we would not survive. So nobody went out. Nobody left the camp, even though the gates were open.

Here's a question. In all of the time that you were, well, maybe even say from the time that Germany occupied the Netherlands, did you see anybody treated violently? Did you see anybody murdered? Did you see anybody killed? Did anybody die in Vittel not their natural deaths?

Not that I know of. We weren't long enough. Oh, you mean in Vittel. The only thing that I know of in Vittel is the suicides. Because we lived a reasonably good life, and we had all this currency. It's unbelievable how helpful that was to make life livable. Anyway, the day came when the gates were open. Nobody left. And finally, in addition, the American army came into camp to deal with us and to talk to us and to take count of how many Americans and how many British and so on and to organize what would happen next. Well, what happened next was another fascinating chapter.

What happened?

What they did was very smart. They realized that nobody leaves the camp. If we're afraid, we're not ready to live in an open society as free citizens. We're not prepared. We're conditioned not to go out of the camp. So they took all the Americans and they brought us to a mountain village called La Bourboule. They put us into a hotel for reorientation as to how to live as free people.

Well, tell me, in what way, aside from the example of not leaving a camp when the gates are open, what other symptoms or characteristics did interned people exhibit that would tell somebody you're not ready to really be released?

Well, we were always-- everybody is always afraid. You never were sure what the next day would bring. You never know whether you're going to be sent somewhere else. You never know whether your citizenship is going to be revoked or whether they're going to find out about the visas. You live in fear even though you try to live as normally as possible.

So it's perpetual insecurity.

Yeah, it's conditioned. Conditioned response is that you're a prisoner. Don't you dare try to get out of this prison that you're in. What was fascinating about, I'm jumping now to La Bourboule.

Please, please.

The first kids, the first people in that whole people that began to feel free were the children. We did not feel the restraints of the adults. So we went out into the street. We ran around. We played games. We went on hikes. But the kids were the first ones to do so. Eventually, of course, the adults also responded. And then the day came when they told us we would go to the United States.

Excuse me. Hang on just a second. Hang on a second.

[SIDE CONVERATIONS].

And so we'd like you to repeat your explanation about the first kids who felt freedom. So it's just a repetition. We'll tell you when to go. OK. Now? All right. So if you could tell us, who were the first--

Interestingly, when we got to La Bourboule to learn how to live like free people again, that the first real respondents to this were the children who went out of the hotel and started to act like normal kids, to play games, to go on hikes, to run around, to be mischievous. It was very pleasant. Very pleasant life. And as I said, the adults eventually responded. It was really a very positive experience living like free people and having no restrictions.

And the day came when we were told that we would leave and go to the United States. But we would have to go to Marseilles, where the ships were. And there we would be put on a ship that would carry wounded American soldiers to the United States. So now we're exposed to English speaking on a constant basis.

And these soldiers, some of them had senses of humor. And some of us, even though we were children, we were wearing these knickers, and they would make fun of us because nobody in the United States wears these knickers. Why do you wear that stuff? We didn't have anything else to wear.

Kids are also curious.

Yeah, but we were-- we really were, wow. OK. Eventually, we got the message that they were just kidding around. And we were put on a ship, as I said, for wounded soldiers. But can you imagine a kid. I'm now 12 years old. I'm going to the United States and I'm going to get here one month before my bar mitzvah.

Oh, wow.

But I'm 12 years old. My family as a group is taken into the captain's cabin. And we are forced to swear that we will not reveal the name of the ship that we are on until after the war is over.

Wow.

This is 1944, you understand? The war is still going on.

So tell me, when were you--

So can you imagine what it feels like for a kid to be taken into the confidence of the United States Armed Forces and to become a part of that and swear that we are not going to reveal the name of this ship until after the war? It was such a treat. You can't imagine what that meant. Now we're really beginning to be part of this place where we're going and what we're going to become a part of. But this symbolic moment was phenomenal.

It's also you're treated with trust.

Yeah. Everything. I mean, it meant so much in so many different ways. We were now, we were mentioned again. We're human beings who are part-- who are full human beings.

That's an interesting thing that you're saying, because that tells-- that implies that imprisonment took away some part of your humanity.

It sure did. That's why we had to go to La Bourboule. To become human again. To become free, full human beings without always looking over your shoulder.

And that's what two years did? It was about two years you had been imprisoned. Is that right?

Yeah.

From 1940. When were you liberated? Do you remember the month?

'44.

1943 or '44?

1944.

What month?

It must've been-- you know, I knew you were going to ask that question, and I knew I couldn't answer it. But it must have been-- look, we were in La Bourboule for maybe two months. And we left, we arrived in the United States on December 20-- I remember that it was December 25, but some of documents, which was Christmas day. And I jokingly always say I considered conversion, but I changed my mind. In any case, so come back--

Probably early--

October.

September. Something.

Something like that.

OK, so it's certainly after-- certainly it would be after June, D-Day. And it takes a few months to be able to get through the countryside. OK. All right, so we have an approximate time. Late summer, early autumn.

Correct.

Would be about it. All right, so after the captain takes you in his confidence and you don't reveal the name of the ship, at this date, can you tell us what the name of the ship was?

Thomas H. Barry.

Thomas.

B-A-R-R-Y.

Thomas H. Barry.

Thomas H. Barry. Yes. And we were glad to reveal that after the fact. But we never told. Nobody ever found out until the war was over. And then, of course, we were very happy to say it. And I'm glad you asked. OK. Now we're told we're going to arrive in New York. And our relatives here are informed, and they all come to New York.

Why, we don't know, but at some point they change this, and they sent us to Boston instead. And all of our relatives are here. I mean, are waiting in New York. And so we went to Boston. The Boston Red Cross. And they arranged for us to take what do you call that? A milk train? Is that it? At night that goes at night. Anyway, it was a night train.

An overnight train.

Overnight train back to New York. So now we get a view of the United States. What does the United States look like?

And so what was the first view.

Horrible.

Really?

All we saw was rails. Rails don't go travel to the nice parts of town. They go in the back of factories. We're looking and looking for the gold in the streets that we were told we would find. And all we see are these ugly buildings all the way from Boston to New York.

Well, but you probably went into-- you probably were in South Station or North Station. I mean, both of them. And South Station going to New York is back of factories. In the beginning, you go through South Boston. You go through an industrial area first.

Horrible.

Yeah.

Compared to our expectations. I mean, it wasn't so terrible. And we kept looking for the gold that was supposed to flow in the street that we were told. The United States, gold's flowing.

So what train station did you arrive in in New York?

I'm trying-- I don't remember either. It must have been--

Grand Central?

Grand Central Station.

Or Penn? You don't know?

I don't remember. I was so excited about the relatives who had returned. We had some of them. Some we knew even, the people who we lived in Maastricht. My cousins and my uncle and aunt. But others, we hadn't seen for a long time, since before the war. So all these people, it was very exciting. So you tell me when to stop.

Well, no, no. I still have a few questions. And that is your relatives, did they meet you at the train station in New York?

Yeah.

OK. So you've met up then. And then when was the first time you went back to Maastricht?

Much later. I'm 12 years old. I went back to Maastricht as a married man.

And did anybody from the family go before you did?

Yes.

Would have been your parents?

You want to know the answer to that?

Yes.

Because the person who went first with my father. And he went back to Maastricht then he went back to that neighbor.

That's why I wanted to ask.

And every item that was transported over the roof that night was waiting for my dad.

Wow.

Every item. How's that? We have the dishes. He brought back the carpeting, the silver. My granddaughter, my daughter has the silver. And the dishes got divided when my when my mother died. They got divided among all of us. But they're there.

Well, when you tell this story now at its end about the items, it's like the German soldier who brought milk. They saved the items, but the gift back was a lot more than just that.

Well, the German soldier did something. You're right. It's the same dynamic.

The same dynamic.

And these people many, many years later, they saved it all. And my dad went back and got it all. It was another one of those wonderful moments.

One of the reasons I bring this up is because I've talked to people who were in such-- in some interviews who were in such dire circumstances of being completely marginalized from society, of being thrown out from it, of having, let's say, parents torn from them when they're still kids, of more or less feeling that the world has turned their back on them. And I remember one lady telling me that when she was rescued by somebody who was a Gentile, what she was given was not only that her life was saved but her belief in humanity was restored.

Exactly.

And that always stayed with me. That until then, she felt like everybody had turned their back. She was betrayed. What had happened?

We were lucky that that was not the consistent message that came out of this experience. That periodically there were people whose humanity was greater than the adverse circumstance that we were in. And in general, we were lucky. We didn't go to an extermination camp. We went to an internment camp. And I tried to underline that for you, because that was very special, and that caused us to remain alive whereas other people exterminated. No question about it.

Did you, when as the years went by, did your experience influence the path you chose for your own life?

Yes. I had some very interesting influences. Number one, when I came here, it was one month before my bar mitzvah. So my grandfather was living in Brooklyn. I was put in my grandfather's house. My parents went and settled in Orange, New Jersey. So I'm separated now to prepare for my bar mitzvah. One month. Kids, you prepare for all year. I got a headaches from the tension.

But suffice it to say, they enrolled me in the Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin, one of the big yeshivas in Brooklyn. In their wisdom, they decided that a kid my age who doesn't speak fluent English must be retarded. So they put me in the second grade. And nothing I could say could get me out of the second grade.

Good God.

It was horrible. But bar mitzvah preparation went on. Comes the day of my bar mitzvah. Is held in the synagogue of the yeshiva. And in that synagogue, the customers that are doing the Torah reading, you talk. So I have to tell you that I did not hear a word of my own haftarah on my bar mitzvah.

And I didn't hear a word of the speech that I memorized in Yiddish for my bar mitzvah. And I never got out of the second grade in the yeshiva. So when the bar mitzvah was over, my parents asked me whether I want to continue living with my grandfather and can go on the yeshiva or do I want to rejoin them in Orange, New Jersey. Guess where I went?

[LAUGHTER]

Yeah.

I went to Orange, New Jersey where my father was already employed by the millionaire brother-in-law, my mother's brother, who had settled. We were living in Orange. He had a mansion in South Orange. There are four Oranges. None of them, they're all individual cities. Anyway, he had a job as a liquor salesman. But he was employed immediately. They bought a house. This millionaire, they bought a house in Orange. A two family house. Immediately, we had a place to live in. I tell you, I mean, we were in so many ways we've been lucky in our lives.

So I went to Orange. And I'm enrolled now in the public school. In the public school, they put me in the sixth grade to start with.

So step up.

Big step up. And that was just for one month. Then I was put in the eighth grade. And I was given this teacher who decided that enough is enough, and she's going to tutor me after school so that I could be in the proper grade, in my proper grade, which was the eighth grade. And that she did. Can you imagine what kind of-- now I come from a yeshiva and get put in the second grade and here I get a tutor who makes sure that I get to my right spot in life.

Well, you know, for a kid, that's awfully important. For a kid--

Tremendous. Quick side. Some years later, my brother is in the same public school. My brother is given the job of teaching a kid who had come from Germany who was in the-- what do you call it? The German Hitler Youth, the youth program.

The Nazi youth program. Yeah, that's right.

Hitler Youth. He's given the job of helping tutor this German kid. Irony of irony. Beautiful. It worked.

Did it? It worked? Wow.

OK. So now I go-- I don't know how far you want me to go. I had a good friend you adopted me in the public school who played the clarinet. Non-Jewish kid, became my best friend. One day he says, I want you to meet with my family. And I meet with the family, and they explain to me that he's switching to saxophone, and he wants me to have his clarinet and take lessons on the clarinet.

And did you?

And I took lessons on the clarinet from the man who was the head of the band at the high school. So by the time I get to high school, I'm already in the band playing second clarinet. I was also the choir. I love music. Music is phenomenally important to me. I joined synagogues that have music. I do unbelievable things as a rabbi for the music.

In one congregation-- do you know? Are you Jewish? You're not Jewish. But Kol Nidrei is the most important prayer at the beginning of Yom Kippur. And it's chanted three times by the cantor. And all my life I dreamed of having the middle Kol Nidrei played on a violin.

It must be beautiful.

It's a beautiful melody. So now I'm in Allentown, Pennsylvania in a congregation where it's possible. Where they even have an organ, which they don't usually have in a conservative synagogue. And I have this woman who is a convert who plays the viola and the violin. And I asked her whether she would be willing to do the middle Kol Nidrei on the violin. And she said yes.

And you were able to have it done?

And it was done. Now, my emeritus rabbi said when I was elected, the day I was elected to the pulpit, he told the board of directors that he changed his mind, that he's not going to retire. And for as long as I was a rabbi in that congregation, he acted as if he were the senior rabbi and I was a junior rabbi. But it didn't affect the way I-- so he did the second service for Yom Kippur in another large auditorium.

But you could turn a switch of the PA system on so you could hear what's going on in the main sanctuary. And I asked him whether he would permit that violin to be heard in his service. He said no. But at some point, I don't know why, he changed his mind. And it was played in his service too.

Let's suffice it to say, there was not a dry eye in either congregation. But that's an example of the kind of things that I have done in my rabbinic throughout with great pleasure. But it also tells you how much music is a need that I have.

Did you talk as a-- in your ministry.

Yes?

Have you brought up your experiences that you went through? In what ways?

Well, I would use some of the experiences in my sermons occasionally. After I went to Holland, went back to Westerbork, I left you here a copy of my sermon, two sermons that are delivered to the congregation explaining my experiences.

Oh, thank you.

In Holland. So you can take it with you. But I've also gone to public school classes to be-- I was invited to speak about my experiences. I've spoken about them in other public places. I've been interviewed on the radio and on television about my experiences. So I have shared them.

I must tell you that I find it, however, almost impossible these days to go to any movie that deals with the Holocaust. I don't know why. It gets to be-- it's gotten so that it's too painful for me to do that. And so that's interesting. I talk about it when it has a good purpose. But to go-- Schindler's List was a positive Holocaust movie, and whatever opportunity I have to see it, I do. But in the main, I cannot go. And I even avoid Holocaust observances or memorials.

Commemorations, yeah.

In the community, unless I'm conducting them. That's a responsibility. But if I have as a lay person now without the rabbinical responsibility of a community, I don't go.

It's too much?

Too much.

Tell me, what do you say to those people or do you have anything to say to those people who went through the Holocaust and survived it and lost their faith in God?

Well, the only thing that I say consistently is, first of all, I accept what you say. And faith in God is not material when it comes to the Holocaust, in my opinion. And then I follow up with the following statement. I say that God did not put me into any of the camps that I was in.

That's right.

And he had nothing to do with my survival, and he had nothing to do with my liberation. The only thing in which-- the

only way in which God operates in the picture is that I think I still believe in a God who is not a puppeteer, who gave free will to human beings, and therefore can't be held responsible for anything that human beings do to each other one way or the other. And so God is that force, as [PERSONAL NAME] one of my teachers at the seminary, I agree that if there is a God, God is that force within the universe that makes for human self fulfillment.

And that means that force when he is called upon to help us make this into-- or Judaism wants the world to be, which is a decent place in which human beings live. And God bless us. I was gonna say God damn it. This is not a nice world in which we live, by any means, on any day. Not in Boynton Beach and not in Israel and not in the Gaza Strip. It's amazing how human beings can ruin the potential that the world has for being a heaven on Earth. That's my problem. That's my answer about God and faith.

Thank you.

And that's as far as I can go, because very often when I see what happens in the world, my faith in God is nil. But it doesn't matter. In Judaism, what matters is how we human beings behave. That's it. I don't believe in a world to come. I don't believe in the resurrection of Jews or non-Jews in the world to come. I don't believe my wife is in heaven. I believe she's dead. You'll excuse me. That's what I believe.

I believe that we have immortality only in the sense of the memories that we create and the people that we come in contact with. Period. That's our immortality. And believe me, as I walk through this house now that I lost my wife, every minute is a memory, is a reminder. Mostly positive, but also it hurts that she's not here. But she's dead.

I couldn't have asked for a more profound answer. Thank you so much. It is a huge question.

Yes, it is.

And people are plagued by it and are heartbroken by it.

Yes. And they can't accept that God didn't have a hand in the Holocaust. I understand it, but I can't-- I don't agree.

Well, thank you for sharing that.

You're welcome.

Is there anything else you'd want to add to what we've spoken about?

Well, the other part of that question. Why did I become a rabbi?

Exactly.

I mean, that's very critical. And my honest answer is that I became a rabbi to perpetuate what Hitler tried to destroy. And what he tried to do to me, what he tried to do to my people, and what he did to the world. And my function as a rabbi is to try to create a better world in which to live for myself and my fellow human beings.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

My pleasure. Thanks for asking.

And this concludes the United States-- unless you have something to say.

No. I was a rebel. I went to Brandeis University when it was yet recognized. I met my wife there.

Oh, did you?



My wife was two months younger than I but graduated a year ahead of me. So you know what I've tried to do all my life is to keep up with her. [LAUGHS] I went to the Jewish Theological Seminary, which is a seminary that trains conservative rabbis. Because I believe in tradition and change, not just tradition. That's my motivation. And that should be enough.

Thank you.

Turn off the sound.

Hang on a minute. We'll conclude it. This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Rabbi Bernard Spielman on July 14, 2014 in Boynton Beach, Florida. Thank you, sir.

And I say amen.

Thank you. Amen, amen. So tell us. What is this?

This is an internment certificate, but it's a very unusual one, because it doesn't talk about an internment camp. It talks about a place called La Bourboule, where we were sent after leaving the internment camp in order to learn how to be free human beings again.

OK.

Good enough? Now let me look at what I'm going to talk about.

This is Westerbork, I think.

Yeah. Bernard and Sender. This has the barrack number that we were in.

Have you gotten it? OK, what is this?

This is a small card that was issued to us at Westerbork indicating that we were now inmates of Westerbork in barrack number 43. And this one is mine. And the other one is my father's. All done?

Oh, like this? Oops. Do you want me to hold it?

This is a list that we asked for of people who had been inmates of Westerbork. And the researcher found this list and my immediate family is listed there.

And this was the list that was hidden underneath the barracks?

This was a list that was hidden by people who were in the barracks, because the Germans destroyed all records. And so they wanted to be sure that there was a record. And this is part of that.

And it has both your family, your immediate family, and your aunt Mirl?

Right. It has my family, my immediate family, and my Aunt Mirl that we didn't know what had happened to her. But she was exterminated in Auschwitz.

OK. Do you want to get that?

It'll stop. Now we're going to hear the message.

That's OK. Do you get that?

Yeah. I'm just trying to figure out where at the bottom the aunt is.

Right here by this dot.

There's a dot here.

[BACKGROUND NOISES].

Right here. [BACKGROUND NOISES].

Is that going to be caught on tape?

Yeah, and that's what I'm asking. Is that all recording?

Cut. We rolling? OK, could you explain then what this?

This is a police registration document. When my parents moved from Essen, where I was born, to Aachen in Germany.

And that's right outside Maastricht? That's the closest German city to Maastricht?

Close to Maastricht.

Are we rolling? OK, could you explain what this is?

This is a paper cut that I created. I do work in a paper cuts and in copper. This is in memory of the Holocaust. And it has in it the word zachor, which means remember. And also the two words Kiddush ha-Shem, the martyrs of my people. It has barbed wire for the camps.

It has the word yid above the Jewish star. And then it has the flames of the crematorium. And it is signed Yadash, which is my artistic name, and it is taken from Israel Dov Spielman, which is my full Hebrew name.

It's beautifully executed.

Thank you. Yeah, look at all my other stuff. Don't. That's all right. Oh, I can see it in there.