

**Rabbi Zvi Dov Slanger**

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### **Abstract**

Rabbi Zvi Dov Slanger (né Robert Irving) was born on April 23, 1934 in Budapest, Hungary. He had an older brother, Moishe Chai or Lazlo, born December 2, 1931, living in Old Jerusalem as is the spiritual leader of a Yeshiva and a younger brother, Gustav Yaakov, born March 27, 1936, the author of books of rules on agriculture; also a brother, Dovid Mayer, born in January 1946 in Israel after the war. Zvi's parents were Emily and Abraham Yiskor Slanger and were observant. His father was born in 1901 and directed a textile factory owned by his mother's family. They lived in a mixed neighborhood near a synagogue with indoor plumbing, a radio and a phone. Zvi attended a Jewish school in the 7<sup>th</sup> District until 1944 when the Germans came. The family spoke Hungarian and the parents also spoke German. When men of draft age were placed on forced labor, Zvi's father got a medical excuse. When his father's factory was taken away and they had restrictions on shopping and leaving the house, the family decided to leave Budapest. The family left their belongings with a non-Jewish friend (who disappeared) and fled to Switzerland on June 30, 1944. His father arranged they take a train with a group headed by Mr. Kastner going to Spain. They stopped in Linz, Austria and panicked as required to take showers and ended up in Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp where Mr. Fisher was in charge of the group. They did not know about concentration camps or that Jews were being killed. Daily they received soup and were given bread twice a week so were hungry, and they did not work. The bedbugs, one lavatory for 120 people and daily appels (standing outside for attendance) added to the difficulties. A young German soldier, who later they learned was Jewish, gave them a shofar to blow on Yom Kippur. They left for Switzerland in December and were required to walk in the freezing weather with no shoes to the unheated train. They were happy to transfer to the heated train in Switzerland. They were placed in a kosher hotel in the mountains near Montreux and nearby was a hotel for those who were not kosher. Zvi attended a camp for young people and after nine months the family went to Israel in September '45 via a train to Italy and a British ship. He and his older brother were placed in a Children's Home near Haifa for two and a half years and the younger brother stayed with their parents. His father sent for his money from the US and used it to open a factory to dye wool and to buy a small apartment in B'nai Brak. Zvi completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade at 15 and attended a Yeshiva. He remembers the Yeshiva being bombed during the War of independence. Zvi was a spiritual leader of a Yeshiva from '62 to '65 when he came to the US. His family prayed in Bergen-Belsen and heard people recite the Schema: "The Lord our G-d, the Lord is One" before they were killed. Because he survived, Zvi gained faith. He has one boy, Elya and three girls, Shoshana, Miriam and Gila. His son has seven children and his granddaughter has nine children. After the interview, several items are filmed: 1) The yellow star that his mother made and sewed to his shirt that he was required to wear when he went outside, 2) His discount ticket (as immigrant child) for a train to Spiez,

Switzerland from Berne on July 27, 1945, 3) His birth certificate from Budapest with no photo, and 4) Photo taken in '42 of the three brothers.