

OK, thank you for that. There were some distracting noises. And I didn't know what was going on. So my apologies for the interruption.

And you are safe?

I'm fine. I'm fine. So chaos is all around. The Soviet army is moving westwards. And you catch a train, a military train, that goes in the direction of Romania and Hungary.

Yes.

And so what happens then? And how many people are with you of your family?

With my family, only me and my mother, and then the partisans. I would say maybe a group of 20 partisans with the aim of reaching, at that time, it was Palestine. So we finally arrived in Bucharest. For me, it was like a new world, like Paris, discovered the first time coming from this backward place. It was beautiful.

So we stayed in a special home that the Israeli emissaries arranged for us. And we were waiting for certificates from the British authorities so we can come to, at that time, Palestine, because they did not allow just free movement. They had only a limited number of certificates that they gave. But since we were partisans, we got the first priority.

And the summer of '45 the ship arrived on the way to the Palestine. I remember arriving in Haifa, which is a main port city. When my mother went down through the [inaudible] from the ship and she kissed the soil. This was quite a sight.

And why didn't your grandfather come with you?

Well, he was already very frail. And all our movements to Rome and other places, you really have to be physically OK. He could not move like that. So [? Yousef ?] took care of him. And he took him to a camp in Germany, which is more [? worrisome. ?] He needed doctor's help. He did not feel well. So that's--

And [? Yousef, ?] what did he do, your Uncle [? Yousef? ?]

So he stayed in Germany for about a couple of years in the camp, tried to establish himself. And then he also emigrated to Israel. He. Married, for the time being, he married.

Here's another story about how he married and what happened to him. He came out of the forest. Again, stayed in all these liberated cities. And there was a friend of the partisans that got injured during the fighting with the partisans. And he had a big wound in the legs that did not heal for many, many months. So the minute they arrived, in the city I think it was in Lublin. They arrived there, immediately checked into the hospital. And the doctors started to treat him.

During the night, some Ukrainian nationalist came in and killed him in his bed. You can imagine what kind of hatred there was in this place. And they killed him. And a sister of this guy, who has during the war in Russia in Siberia, the communists moved her to there. And as a Polish citizen kind of, they released her to go back to Poland. So she came here. And this was her brother that was killed.

And she asked me what happened. And [? Yousef ?] was by his bed told her what happened and asked if his stuff, his belongings. And he's giving it to the sister. It turned out that the sister became later his wife. Interesting. Yeah.

And she had-- yeah--

So they all move together to Germany to this camp. So [? Yousef, ?] his new wife, and grandfather--

And grandpa--

And the grandfather passed away while staying there.

Do you know what the name of the camp was? Or do you know where it was?

It was, I think, Frankfurt am Main or something. I don't know.

OK, OK, yeah, there were DP camps around there.

Yeah.

Quite a few. And in the meantime, you, your mother-- what about Shia's children and wife, what did they do?

They first went to Manevychi Because they were such an established family, they thought maybe they can start something, make a living there. It didn't go well. At the same time, one of their relatives also was in the Russian army and came back. And this guy was married to Sara's sister, I mean the sister of Shia's wife. But she perished in the Holocaust. She was killed in Manevychi While he was in the Russian army, his wife and children got killed.

So it was natural for him to marry Sara So they married. And they first moved to Austria. They stayed there. And from there, they established themselves a little. And then they came also to Israel.

So your mother and yourself were the first ones there?

Oh, we were the firsts one to arrive in Israel. In '45, Israel did not exist yet. It was Palestine at the time, in '45.

And what were your first experiences in Israel? Where did you live? What did you do? How did you feed yourselves?

Exactly. So we arrived-- they had-- it was a little camp for immigrants. We stayed there for a couple of weeks. And then they started to see what they can do with us. So they suggested we go to a kibbutz. Well, it was a good solution for us. I mean, what else-- my mother didn't have any vocation or anything she could do and here a small boy. What can she do? So we went to a kibbutz.

And in kibbutz, my mother was not so happy about it. But I, for me, it was like paradise. This was the first time I could experience my childhood. It was wonderful.

Were you able to still have a childhood?

Yeah, sure, sure. This was the first time I experienced the childhood, yes, yes, at the age of 10.

At the age of 10. What was the name of the kibbutz?

[? Haramat ?] [? Hakodesh ?]

And what did your mother do on the kibbutz? And what did you do? Did you work at all? Did you go to school? Did you do all of it?

Oh, they gave me immediately a private teacher. Because you can say up till 10, I did not have any schooling, nothing. I knew to read Russian because I learned it for myself. I could read their newspapers and picked up Russian from hearing from the partisans. It's actually my best language was Russian at the time when I came, just hearing the radio--

Better than Yiddish?

And Yiddish, yes, talking to my grandmother, grandfather, and mother was Yiddish, yeah. But with other side, I talked Russia.

Of course, natural.

Yeah, this is what I picked up from all my surroundings. So they gave me a private teacher in the kibbutz. And I was studying there probably 10 hours a day non-stop, until they were able to bring me up to the level of the third grade. And then they send me to join the school. And from there I slowly was catching up what I lost.

And your mother, what was she doing on the kibbutz? What was her job?

The kibbutz, it was changing. First, she worked in preparing clothes for the workers, like a sewing machine. She worked on a sewing machine. And then I think she worked in the flower garden. They changed. In the kibbutz, they changed. Every few months, they would change positions, giving people to work on all kinds of fields.

Did she eventually get used to it?

Not really. Eventually, she left it. A few years, she left the kibbutz.

OK. And you?

Well, I continued. And I liked it. And I continued studying. And then when [? Yousef, ?] my uncle, arrived, he said, you have to get out, because in the kibbutz you're not going to get a matriculation where you can continue higher studies. So I lived with my uncle for a few years finishing high school. And then after high school, I had to go to the army, Israeli army.

Where did you your uncle live?

It's near Tel Aviv, near Tel Aviv. It's a city called Holon.

Holon?

Holon, yes.

Holon. And your mother, where did she live after the kibbutz?

Well, first, she lived, by herself she worked in a school, a boarding school, as a helper. And later on in 1954, she married, remarried.

I was going to ask that, whether or not she ever remarried.

Yeah, she remarried in 1954.

OK. Did she ever have any more children?

No.

OK. And when she left the kibbutz after a few years, is that when you no longer lived with her? You stayed while she left?

Yeah, right.

OK. And how old were you at that time?

Well, I would say, 14 I would say, in '50.

And then you went to live with your uncle?

Yes.

And after high school, then it was the army?

Yes, three years of the army. And then I went to the Technion, which is university for engineering.

And so by this time, I take it, you must have been fluent in Hebrew.

Oh, yeah, definitely.

And when you went to the school for engineering, the university for engineering, how old were you?

This was after the army. I'd say maybe 22 or something like this, 22, 23.

So this is the mid 1950s.

Right, right.

OK. And when did you come to the United States?

I came in 1963.

And why did you leave Israel to come to the US?

Well, I think I look for more opportunities, because at that time, Israel was very poor. So it was really hardly anything there. And I was like almost, I would say, naked. I had nothing there except my degree. I didn't even have a place where to sleep, except be a guest at my uncle's house. So I said probably here have more a chance to establish myself and be a more independent. So this what happen.

So slowly I worked up here. And at that time, it's the '60s, '70s, '80s. This was the golden age of the United States engineering. The big thing in engineering happened here in the United States. So at the time, it was easy to find a good job and really to grow with the industry.

Did you marry here, or did you marry before you came to the US?

I came back for a vacation to Israel and married there and brought my wife to the United States.

And have you ever been back to any of the places that we spoke about today?

No. No. I'm kind of afraid to go back. I don't want to deeper-- to feel it again, at least not physically.

It's not an easy subject.

Yeah.

How many children do you have?

Two children, two boys.

Two boys. And it was one of your sons who originally got in touch with us.

Yeah, yeah--

Who arranged this--

He's the historian of our family. He tries to take care of it.

Well, this leads me to probably one of my final questions, which is, did you tell your children the details of your experiences? Did they know, as they were growing up, what this all was?

They know, I would say, the headlines, they know. And they are pressing me to sit down and write it. But I cannot really. So that's why you are some help. It's impossible to start writing about these things.

If you had to tell grandchildren and other children who have no idea what this was all about, what would you want them to understand? What would you want them to know? I mean, there's a certain amount that I think you would want to spare them. Most people do. But what would you want them to understand about these things?

Well, I would say people can become very dangerous at times when they are led by certain ideologies, and have to be very careful not to be allow, to happen anything try to active it as early as possible. Because--

Try to be-- try to be--

To detect it. And there are certain signs to give a warning that things are not going right. Because people can be marvelous, great, and they can also be dangerous, murderers, and all kinds of bad things can happen to a human, to the human kind. And if it can happen to such a educated country like Germany, it can happen to every country. And have to be always be on the lookout, watch it, and see any signs that a certain society is drifting to a bad place. And it can happen very fast. And people are not predictable. Have to be very, very careful.

Would you say that you still have a belief in humanity? Or is that one of the things you lost?

I wouldn't be so clear about it. I would say, you have to be careful. Humanity can be great if it is being taken care of, nature like, being fed with the proper stuff. And can be very, very dangerous and very destructive. So you have to watch it all the time. A human being is not the perfect being. It needs all the time somebody to watch it.

Well, I think it is in many ways quite amazing that you didn't lose this faith in humanity entirely. If you lost your faith in God, if there are things that changed you when I asked you earlier, to still give human beings a chance, that they can still have good functions, as you say, that's quite a bit for someone who by the age of 10 had seen what you had seen, and what it experienced what you had experienced.

So this is what I'm saying. It can go either way. People can be marvelous, great. But watch out. They can go to the other side very fast. It has to be watched all the time.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

Thank you for your patience and your contribution.

Well, it's been an honor. It's been a privilege. And I know that there is a cost involved. And so on behalf of the museum, we really thank you for that, for going through it with us and for sharing this.

That's a minimum that I can do. What are the next things that are going to happen?

OK. The next step is immediate. I'm going to close the interview by saying a sentence. Then I'll turn the recording off. And then we can talk a little bit more. OK?

OK.

At this point I'll say this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. Micha Gazit on

September 2, 2020. And thank you again. And now I will-- let's see-- conclude the recording.