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Hello. I'm Leatrice Rabinski. Today we are interviewing Freda Traub, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section.

Freda, we're so grateful that you're willing to share your Holocaust experiences with us. Would you tell us a little bit about yourself now, your family?

As you said, my name is Freda Traub. And my husband is Moshe Traub. We live in Cleveland Heights. We have three children, very wonderful, good children, which are following our steps from our grandparents and parents, very Orthodox, very religious children.

Are your children married, Freda?

Yes. I have three of them. The oldest is a son, Chaim. Then I have a daughter, Rivka, and the youngest is Chane. My son Chaim lives here also in Cleveland Heights. My two daughters live in Chicago.

Do you have any grandchildren, Freda?

Yes. We have 17 grandchildren from all three of them together, very nice.

Could you tell us something about your community involvement? Are you in business yet or active in the community?

I used to be much more. I was younger. I worked for the [NON-ENGLISH], for which I was vice president. And I worked for [NON-ENGLISH].

These are religious organizations?

No, they all are religious organizations.

Right, to help people in distress and orphans?

Right, exactly. Then I'm a housewife. I also work a couple of times, a few days a week. This keeps me busy, which I like very much.

Freda, we'd like, perhaps, to transport you back now to your childhood and to tell us about your family when you were growing up. Where were you born, Freda?

I'm born in Poland, in a little town, Lask. I was there till I was about five years old. Then my father got a position as principal in Lódz.

Is Lask near Lódz?

It's about two hours to travel, two hours from Lódz. My father got a position as a principal as Yesodei HaTorah.

That means the Law and the Torah.

The Law of the Torah.

The Law of the Torah.

The Law of the Torah. And we lived close to the school. It was like a cheder and also yeshiva. The children were there. They started out from three years old till 18.

So a cheder means a--

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The younger ages.

Younger aged school for religious studies and the yeshiva were the older students.

Right. Exactly. Yeah. My mother was a housewife.

How many children were there in your family, Freda?

We were seven together. We were four girls and three boys. I was the oldest.

So the other ones were very small. The youngest was one-year-old when the war started.

Could you tell us some of your happy memories from your childhood, perhaps about holidays or life every day?

I will try a little to look back. I personally was a very happy child. The girlfriends liked me very much for it because when I was around, everybody felt good and was happy.

We went to school together with a girl. We stopped by the other's house, we picked up, and we walked about 20 minutes to school and 20 minutes home. This was after we moved to Lódz, I must add this.

How should I say? The school itself was the best school that Poland had. It was Bais Yaakov, together with the English, Hebrew, Jewish, and English.

That meant the House of Jacob?

Right. This was the name of the school. There was four grades, like gymnasium. But in Poland, wasn't like here, exactly, the grades. We started at one, first grade, and we went till seven.

After the seven, already, there was gymnasium, which meant higher education. We had in the school four higher grades. My father personally felt that I have a good mind, a good head, and he wanted me very much to become a teacher.

Did you think about becoming a teacher?

I used to like it when we played with the girls school. I always liked to be the teacher. So when my father used to say she'll be good in it, she'll be good in it, and he hoped to send me that time to Krakow, where the main seminary is for Jewish teachers, Hebrew teachers.

After this, then we lived in Lódz. What should I say?

Could you tell us something about holiday celebrations?

There were nice times. Especially as children, we looked forward every week to the Shabbos.

The Sabbath?

Shabbos, for this we looked forward, because there was such nice time for us. We gathered together. We belonged to [NON-ENGLISH], which they have, here, also the same organization. It's a Orthodox organization for girls.

We waited. The food was special good. My mother also cook for Shabbos. She baked challahs, and she baked cakes, and she baked cookies, and she made delicious fish. The meal was very great.

The morning meal was always, like, we started with chopped herring and then fish. Then we had egg salad mixed with chicken livers, which also was delicious. Then there was cholent, which I never know in English how to say it. We still use the word "cholent" on it.

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Could you describe what "cholent" was?

Yeah. We start out the cooking Friday, because we were not allowed to cook on Shabbos. We take meat and potatoes and onions. This cooks all through the night, because as Orthodox people, you are not allowed to warm up food on Shabbos.

So this cooked through the night. Then in the morning, we ate it. It was really delicious.

We also used to make P'tcha. I don't know if even you know what it is. It's a Jello from meat-- from meat./

It's from the calves' foot.

Right. Then we had, as I said, cholent. And we had kishka. Then came the meat and dessert.

But the thing about Shabbos was even the poor people-- we weren't rich people, but we weren't poor people, like middle class you could call it. But even the poor people, when they didn't have the whole week meat, they always saved a little money. When it came from Shabbos, they wanted the best. They tried the children to show the life what Shabbat should be.

Of course, when we ate, my father sings [NON-ENGLISH], the Shabbat songs we sang. It was one of the nicest things. I remember when we still lived in Lask, we came to visit our grandparents very often. My uncles used to come, because my mother, she's from a family of eight, three boys and five girls.

So the son in-laws used to come and just happened they had beautiful voices and came at Shabbos. People in the streets really stood by the window just to listen to my uncles singing. Those were very nice times, very nice times, let's say.

So you had very happy childhood memories?

Yes. We were a happy family, a loved family. We were close, especially with my mother. My father was more the strict person, being so strict. But my mother was mild and very, very, very good mother, very good to us.

Do you remember anything about the community of Lódz from your childhood? Did your family participate in any of the community activities?

I remember that we belonged to the most Orthodox shul, synagogue in Lódz. Especially, as I say, there was the great rabbis. There were the shochtim. How do you say shochtim in English?

Those were the ritual slaughterers who slaughtered the meat in the kosher fashion.

Yeah.

It came the same. We met together. My mother used to go to shul every morning.

To the synagogue?

To the synagogue, that's right. We went to the synagogue every Shabbos and yontif. And I helped out at home,

With the younger?

With the younger sisters. But my father was a little against I should-- I put it, I'm wasting the time, helping out at home. I should do more studying and more reading.

Because he pled, he wanted so much to me to be a teacher, he wanted I should do everything I can to help

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it. He himself used to bring me the books to read. So still now, it's my hobby to read. I like to read.

Freda, do you have any recollections about the city of Lódz? Was it a small, medium city? What was famous about Lódz?

Lódz was the second biggest city in Poland. It was an industrial city. There are many rich Jewish people in Lódz. There are also, of course, poor people. But it was a nice community. It was very nice except for one thing, that the non-Jewish Polish people were not very nice with us.

Do you have any specific memories about that? Do you recall any incidents?

I can only say, let's say, in the stores. They were boycotting the stores. The non-Jewish wouldn't buy at the Jewish stores.

Let's say, there used to be the custodian of the building. He always locked the gate 11:00 in the evening. But I remember it was Friday night. We had a gathering, and I came home.

I always remembered I have to be home before 11:00 because the gates were closed. I was not allowed to ring the bell. Usually, we paid something to the custodian for opening, if we came late, for opening the gate.

It was one Friday night. He saw me coming. It was only 20 till 11:00. He locked the gate. I couldn't do nothing. I couldn't go in. I was waiting the street, sitting all night through till the morning.

My parents didn't worry in that time because they thought that I'm sleeping over at a girl's friend, what happens very often. But when they saw I came so early, when they opened in the morning the gate, I right away come home, they asked me what happened. I told them what happened.

There were little incidents. Like, sometimes they stood by the stores and watched that non-Jewish customers shouldn't go in. They didn't trust that they won't, they shouldn't go in the stores.

The taxes, they always took from the Jewish people twice as much taxes as they took from the non-Jewish. It was hard. It was a very hard time in this particular case. But as far as the Orthodox community, it was a very nice community, really very nice.

Do you recall any famous personalities in your immediate Orthodox community, a special rabbi or teacher?

You see, Ms. Rabinski, my father, as his father before, and even from my mother's side, they all were Hasidim.

Followers of a rabbi.

Following this rabbi. This rabbi was the Gerrer Rebbe, Rabbi of Ger. In Poland, it was Gora Kalwaria, you know.

That was a section in Poland.

Yeah, this was a town where he lived, rabbi. I remember that three times a year my father traveled to see the rabbi. It was usually on the high holidays, like New Year's and Yom Kippur, Atonement Day, and even for Shavuot.

Which is in the springtime.

Yeah. They traveled to the rabbi. This was their style of life. The rabbi meant everything to them.

It means to me right now, too, the same as my husband. We also travel now to Israel to see the rabbi and to be with him a little, to spend a little time with him. Thanks God that, really, my children are following the same footsteps, which we are very proud of it, very happy.

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This rabbi had a special influence on your family?

Oh, yeah. Whenever there was a hard decision to decide, whatever we couldn't make out, my father always went to the rabbi and asked him. His advice meant everything to us, whatever he said was kodesh, you know, holy.

Even nowadays, the people who believe in those rabbis, they do the same thing if crisis comes or something, or even a happy thing, sometimes. They'll go to the rabbi and discuss it with him. Whatever the rabbi said is what we did. We are always happy to do it this way. Somehow it works always out fine, very good.

Freda, do you remember any special personalities from your childhood that perhaps stayed with you, teachers or famous people?

I remember the principal of our school. His last name was Rabbi Berliner. He was a very great person, a very great person. Of course, I was still a young girl. It isn't much that I could remember things like-- an adult looks at everything different than a child looks.

I used to love to go to school because I loved the girlfriends and I loved the teachers. But we worked harder than the regular public schools because we learned the same things what the public schools learned. We also had to learn Hebrew and Jewish and Jewish history and Jewish Bible. So we worked a little harder.

That was in addition to the secular side.

Right, right.

Your father was then a principal of this Bais Yaakov school.

No, not that, the boys' school, which started from young boys till 18-- well, to 18 years old. It was on Poludniowa 34 building. He put a out a-- said a lot about [NON-ENGLISH], you know, education. He was a man of educational works he did.

I remember, he used to travel to the little towns to start Bais Yaakov schools. Not in such a grand way like Lódz had it, but just two hours a day so that the Jewish children-- this was only for girls-- would be able to know about the Jewish education, about Jewish life in the future. Of course, they should know how to pray and how to read Jewish.

He accomplished a lot with it, very a lot. At that time, I didn't realize it. But now when I look back, he did great things in his life.

Could you tell us a little bit about your family at home, what kind of language you spoke and how you amused yourself at home?

Amused?

Yes.

The two main languages were Jewish and Polish. We spoke more Polish than Jewish, because I was surrounded with the girlfriends in the school. But at home, we used the Jewish language because my parents didn't want us to forget the Jewish language.

Also in school, we learned two additional languages. We learned Hebrew, and we also learned German. This German came a little handy to me afterwards in the war. I didn't know to speak well the languages, but I knew a little, and I knew the grammar.

You were able to understand?

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To understand, and later, when the German came, it really came-- because it just happened I was a blonde hair and greyish-bluish eyes. So I pretended that I'm a German in that time. This helped my family a lot.

Right.

Yeah.

Do you recall any specific memories about relationships with your younger brothers or sisters?

You see, I was the oldest. So they're really very young. I remember more the sisters than the brothers. Because first, there were four girls.

It's a funny thing I remember, my mother used to talk about it. When she had the fourth girl, she cried. Because she wanted so much a baby boy, and she had four girls.

The rabbi of the town, this was still in Lask, he came over to congratulate her on the baby. He told her, I promise you, next one you will have a boy. It's interesting that she did have a boy and then she had two more boys.

So really, with the boys, they were too little to have much in common. Of course, they were my brothers. I loved them, and I couldn't say played together, but we were together and amuse ourself together.

But with my sisters more, because the youngest hadn't started school yet, but the next one to me in that time, this was before the war, went already to school. We're a very close family, very good, close family.

My mother, she was really-- not believer. [NON-ENGLISH] She was never--

A righteous person.

Whatever went wrong, even the worst times, she said, God will help, and God will help. And I remember just a little thing, something. It was in the war, in the ghetto. And there were two days passed, and we didn't have any bread. My mother was lying in bed, and I was sitting on the bed.

I remember that my mother didn't eat for two days, and of course, we didn't eat. I was crying. My mother said why are you crying, Freda? Why are you crying? And I said I know you didn't eat for two days. I have nothing to give you.

My mother said, for this you are crying? Look, couldn't this be much worse? If God forbid I would have surgery, and the doctor would say you are not allowed to eat for three days, so you would have more to worry about. You would worry I should get well, and the surgery should be successful, but you wouldn't think of eating.

So you see, it could be worse. We will have the bread, will come the next day, and we will, again, have a piece of bread to eat. What I'm trying to say is whatever, even the worst, she always believed, her faith in God, and we are the same.

I must say, we are the same. And Moshe and I are also the same. We believe in God, that He is right in whatever He does.

Freda, you had mentioned that you came from very large families. Could you tell us about your extended family, your mother's family, your father's family?

My mother, there were eight children together, three boys and five daughters. They were all married, and they all had children. To put together, my grandparents had 50 some grandchildren by that time when the war started, including us.

Of course, the uncles and the aunts and the grandparents and great aunts and great uncles. We were 90

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some people in the family. I'm sorry to say that I am the only one, the only survivor from all of them.

From 90?

From 90 some, I am the only one. I had an uncle and a aunt in Israel. But they left in 1937. Thanks to this, that they left 1937, I had a chance to have an uncle and my aunt.

You see, my children always complained. I remember, when I was younger, why don't we have a grandmother? Why don't we have a grandfather?

Why don't we have? Everybody has grandmothers. Everybody has grandfathers and uncles and so.

They were too young at the time to talk about those things, about the Holocaust. I didn't want. But when they grew older and older, we did talk to them about it. So we won't live forever. We want them to remember the Holocaust. It's something which shouldn't be forgotten and it should be talked.

Even now, when we gather together, in the best times, we will still talk about the Holocaust.

Of what happened.

Because you can't forget. It's just something, sometimes you want to push it aside. I don't want to remember. What good does it bring?

Then you think, if we all forget it, it would be bad. We must remember.

Freda, you mentioned that your father also came from a large family?

My father also came, not as large as my mother. He had two sisters and a brother. But there weren't so many grandchildren. His mother died when he was very young.

By us in the Jewish religion, we name the children after the death. I am named after his mother. He was a little boy when his mother died. But no one is left from his family. I mean, from his-- I mean from-- you know?

So I am the only one from both families, my father's family and my mother's family. I don't know. I think maybe the only thing I can say I had to survive so I could bring up children and they should bring up children. That's all I can say. Because me being here all together, if we believe in miracles, which I do, it's all a miracle, the whole life.

Freda, what is your earliest recollection that things were not going well in Lódz?

It was already in 1938 that we heard Germany going on bad things, that the Germans are already sending Jewish people away, they break in in the houses there in Germany and they steal everything, they rob everything. But you know, we didn't see it. We just heard things.

Till '39, we knew it getting worse and worse. Then we heard that they are coming to Poland. The Nazis are coming to Poland.

The war started, I think September 1, if I'm not mistaken, a Friday.

1939.

1939. In September 5, which was a Tuesday, I think, they were already in Lódz. It went very fast, very fast. As soon as they came to Lódz, of course, they changed the name from Lódz to Litzmannstadt. From that time on, we knew that Lódz is Litzmannstadt.

Can you tell us the reaction in your family? What did your father think? What did your mother say?

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You see, we decided, my parents decided, that it would be better to be in a big town like Lódz. So really, they were thinking we should all go to Lask to our grandparents and be in a smaller town. Because as soon the Germans came in, they right away started to break in, in the Jewish houses, and they stole.

This was not enough. They hit and they hit us. They hit the people until they fell to the ground unconscious, some of them are just blood was running.

And if they didn't enough, the non-Jewish, the Polish people, they helped them a lot. They showed them which were rich Jewish people and the places where they lived. They helped them. Whatever the Nazis didn't take, they took it.

But worse than this, it was when the war started, we had to stand in the line for bread. We still paid in that time. There's still money, the value of money. We were standing in line.

But if the Polish recognized that you are Jewish, they'd throw you out from the line. It became very hard to have bread. We had to pay to those who had the bread, the non-Jews, five times as much, and later, 10 times as much.

The worst part was for the men, for the Orthodox men, the ones who had beards and payots. You know what I'm talking?

With the side curls?

Right. Here, everybody can have a beard, and they want today beard. It's in style. But in that time in Europe, only the Orthodox people wore beards.

So when the Nazis saw them in the streets or the lines or whatever, or they still went to the synagogue in the very beginning, they dragged them in the streets by the beards. They pulled the beard. Then they dragged them in in the barber shops to cut off the beards with the payots. As long as they didn't kill them then, they were all right.

I remember at one point, I came home. I had a key. This was the very beginning of the war. I opened the door. I noticed there was a man in the house, unshaved.

I didn't know who the man was. I said, who are you? I was very afraid. Then I heard my father's voice.

He said Freda Pesel, it's me. It's me. It's your father. From the voice, I saw it's my father. But I really didn't recognize him at all. He looked so different.

What happened?

He was a different man without the beard and without the payots and all of it. He told me what happened, said they dragged him into the barber and they cut off his, you know. But he was lucky to get away like this.

From that time on, all the others did the same thing. They wore scarves on the chin tied on the head. They felt very uncomfortable without the beards. For all their lives, they had beards, and now, you know?

They tied up the chin to cover that?

They were. They had chins, yeah. But worse than this was that they were afraid to go on the streets. Because the morning, they caught people in the streets and they sent them to labor work. It's not enough to work, this was in Lódz itself. Not enough to work, but they hit them. The men came home with scars, with bruises. You could see blood on their bodies.

So they're afraid to go on the streets. So they couldn't even go to stand in the line for bread, even if they wanted. The money ran out. There was no more money.

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He wanted to live, to have the children, to give bread to the family. So that's why they thought that the best thing would be to go to Lask. It'll be easier in the small towns.

Your father and mother made that decision about your family?

Yes.

What did the members of your family do then?

We were little children, still. I mean, I was the oldest. I was a teenager, you know. We did what my parents wanted us to do.

So we decided, they decided that my father said he wants there to be, because we had that apartment there. So he was there. Then they decided, because I was the oldest, I would stay with my father. My mother, with the children, went to Lask.

In that time, you could still go to other little towns. The Nazi let you. After a while, my mother came back with my youngest sister. She left the other children there with my grandparents.

As soon she came back, it started the ghetto.

What year was this, do you recall?

My sister?

No, what year was this?

It started '40s, started around 1940.

1940?

Yeah. Then it started the story with the ghetto.

How was the ghetto started? How did you hear about this?

You see, before even the ghetto started, I was there. The Nazis, they broke in in the houses. They took everything, except some of the furniture which was too heavy to carry. If someone had, especially the rich people, the gold, silver, money, whatever there was. They took everything.

Then we heard that we will have to move. We have to go to a ghetto. There's going to be a ghetto.

Did you know what a ghetto was, Freda?

No, not in that time, I didn't know. I just knew that we are going. We have to move to a neighborhood which was more the lower neighbor, the poorest labor, the poorest people lived in-- you'd call it Baluty. It was in Lódz. But very poor people lived, in very small apartments. We know we have to go there.

Did you ever visit there so that you knew what it looked like?

To tell you the truth, no, I had no relatives there. I can't remember friends there. So I was never there. But then it started. They said we all have to go and live in the ghetto.

How did that affect your father and mother and you and your little sister? What did you do immediately?

It was terrible, not only for us, but for everybody. We had to leave everything behind. Because what could you carry?

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We couldn't use anymore the streetcars, because Jews are not allowed to the streetcars. I forgot to tell you, see, they knew already at that time who the Jews are, because we had to wear on the clothes the yellow patch in the front and in the back.

What was the patch like? Did it have a special shape?

Yeah, it has like Mogen David.

The Star of David?

The Star of David, that's right. We had it in the front and the back. We couldn't hide anymore. It was nothing if they would cut someone. If they knew it's a Jewish without this, they right away get shot.

Till the ghetto, I was able to help a little my parents. As I mentioned before, I could have gone on for German. Then changed my name, my parents, from Freida to Freda, because it was a German name. I used to still to go on the streetcars to the smaller town, Pabianice.

I went there, and from there, I brought a little food. This helped a lot. But after the ghetto, there was no way to go out or go in.

How was the ghetto closed?

With wires. See there were more ghettos in Poland. But none was so strict and so terrible as the Lódz ghetto. In the other ghetto, somehow, there was a way that you could smuggle yourself out and smuggle yourself back in.

But in Lódz, there was no out and no in. This is the place you stay. You can only go out in the street in the daytime, not in the evening. If they caught you in the evening, they could shoot you right on the place. It was that no one dared to go out in the evening.

Do you recall seeing the different locked gates and the guards standing in front of it?

I can see those wires, the wires around the wires. There were, of course, buildings, but the places were not as nice and as comfortable as it was where we lived before, because we lived more in the center of Lódz, and all my friends were there.

It was one of the hardest thing, to go home in the ghetto. The people itself who lived there from before, they had very small apartments. Yet they had to take in us, too. They had to share the room with us, whenever we came. So there was very little space, really.

So you came into an apartment with strangers, complete strangers?

Yes, complete strangers, we didn't know them.

How did that work out?

Somehow, you'd be surprised, it didn't work out. It was very hard because we didn't bring any furniture there, nothing, just little pots and pans. We brought clothes, leftovers, what we had. We had bags. We carried them on the shoulders because we couldn't travel by streetcar or something.

You know what I remember right now, the march in Lódz from the town to the ghetto. It was such a terrible, terrible picture to see. You could see six, seven people in the width, and all marching, and all after there, marching. Carried bags, some carried baby carriages with things, whatever they had, to be able to take some more things.

Some had, you could see, a baby bed. You could see a carriage and other little things which could be taken.

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You know, if something, let's say if a buggy broke in the middle, the whole march stopped. We had to wait till the buggy was fixed, or the person had to go out from this, or leave the buggy.

We couldn't march anymore because we had to wait. We needed a place to go through. Or if someone, a man slipped, fell, the march stopped. The person stood up, and we marched farther.

Then we came to the ghetto. We just had to go in to the people who lived there. Everyone tried to find someone who would take them in. Of course, there was no choice for them. There was no choice for us. We had to make the best we could.

Freda, when you think back about leaving your original place where you had lived, what happened to all the things? Was there anybody left in the apartment? Were there non-Jews who had lived there?

Yeah, there were some non-Jews. When we left, what we left was all the furniture, the furniture which we left. The clothes we took, and the pots and pans we took.

We still locked the apartment up. Because we did hope to come back to it someday. We didn't stop hoping. After all, how long will the war last?

It was six months, another year, another six months, another few months. We didn't believe that it won't take for long. So we took the key with us.

You actually thought that you're going to be coming back?

Yeah, of course, we believed that the war will end soon. Every time, the war will end soon. We'll come back to our house, to our apartment.

It was not our house. It was a big building. You didn't own the apartment, you paid rent there.

Was there somebody in charge, a superintendent who took care?

Usually the custodian was in charge of this.

Did he have any feelings of sympathy for you? Do you recall?

No. I'm sorry. No. But I did hear that there were some non-Jews who did help some Jews. We weren't lucky, this lucky. We didn't find anybody who could help us from the ones we knew.

You didn't leave any precious possessions with anybody?

There were sentimental things, not so much value of. Like, for my parents, not so much my things. But we lived there for so many years. But we couldn't take everything. We just have to leave, hoping that some day we will come back.

When you came into the ghetto, would you describe what life was like in that new little dwelling place? How did you manage? How did your sleeping accommodations take place?

The sleeping in the beginning was very bad because we only had one bed, like, my mother slept. Then we had a rollaway bed which the people gave us who we moved in with. My father was on the rollaway bed. I slept on the floor. My little sister, like we took four chairs close to the wall. She slept on the fourth chair.

But this wasn't for long. After a few months, we got another bed, a rollaway bed. We're lucky. We got it from someone there. Me and my sister slept in this bed.

What did you do for food? How did you obtain enough food to survive?

This was the worst part of everything. We had coupons. On the coupon, we got a bread. This bread we had

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for a whole week.

Every person got a bread, a whole bread for seven days. Then we got a soup. It was very little soup there, except water and a couple of pieces of potatoes, if we're lucky.

But somehow, the soup meant a lot because it was warm. It was hot. This will fill you up because of the warmness, you know. It was very good to us that we had at least this.

But we were hungry. The hunger was terrible. Time went by and people just died from starvation. There was nothing.

Especially the people who couldn't control the time and couldn't wait to have the bread for the whole week. They were hungry. When they got the bread, they already had not the bread a few days before. So they ate up, again, the bread, and they went hungry, again.

So the hunger, the starvation was in the ghetto as bad as in the concentration camp. The only difference was the ghetto, you still had a room. You still had a bed to lay down on.

And you were together.

And of course, we were still together, four of us. Of course, my parents especially, they missed the children, always worrying what are the little ones doing in Lask, what is going on there.

Did you have any news from Lask?

At one time, when there was Aussiedlung, when they-- we had already-- already liquidated the town. Then one day, some people were sent to the ghetto. My mother's sister was sent to the ghetto.

She told us that they liquidated the whole-- there was no ghetto in Lask. It was a little town.

Did you know what that meant, liquidation? What did you think happened?

I knew only that everyone was taken away from Lask on trucks. They took them someplace. But you know, I never thought of it that it's so very bad, that it's maybe just one other place.

Because in a way, we didn't know nothing. You see, we didn't know nothing about concentration camp in the ghetto. We didn't know about the crematoriums. We had no idea about it.

So you know, you want to believe. You still want to hope. Even as bad it was, I didn't want to die. I still had a desire to live, even as hungry as I was.

In that time, I still wanted to live hoping maybe next week, maybe next month, and the war will be over. We'll be all together again. But we didn't know that Lask was liquidated and that everyone was sent out.

Your grandparents?

The grandparent and there were--

And there were five brothers and sisters?

Five brothers and sisters and cousins, they were all sent. But I did also hear my aunt told us that they took in that time 70 people in Lask, which was my grandfather was between them. They just shoot him to death.

They knew that?

My aunt knew that, yeah.

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Where did this take place.

In the middle of the town, the middle of the town. They never came to [NON-ENGLISH], to be buried in the right place, as you know. My grandmother, my aunt told us, died from hunger. She was not as well, was not taken. She died from hunger.

She said the sister next to me, Hannah was her name, she was sitting on her bed, and she always laughed, my youngest sister, because she was named after her mother, a special sentimental thing. And she always-- she called her over. And she held her hands. And holding her, she died in her arms.

Then we knew that no one was left there. No Jewish people left in Lask. They were liquidated. And many other towns, too. And they liquidated other towns. They also send some people, maybe the stronger ones, the healthy ones, be able to work. But in the ghetto, we did work after a while.

You did work? Would you tell us what you did in the ghetto?

You see, the Nazis tried to build up like it was resort. It wasn't exactly factories. They took big buildings, made them for working places.

What type of work was there?

I personally worked in a straw resort. What we did was we braided the straws, made very long, long braids. Then the braids were sent to another resort where the people there made shoes out of the braids.

From what we knew, it was sent to the soldiers. Because this hold warm for them in the winter time. This was our work.

There's one thing which every day, by the end, I was glad we had it. You see, when we braided the straw, there were little kernels--

Of the wheat?

--from the wheat fell out on the floor. We were allowed to take them home. So after we finished our work, everyone standing on his place was lucky to take a little bit of it home. This meant a lot for us.

What did you do with those kernels?

My mother used to grind them. If we're lucky, sometimes we had someone working in the kitchen gave us a little potato peels, which we washed them very well, you know. My mother washed them. And they grind it together. And she made pancakes.

And once in a while, we exchanged it for a piece of bread. We just gave the-- asked for more bread. Like the Jewish police and the people who worked for the Nazis, so they had a little more food. So we exchanged it for a piece of bread. It was very--

What type of work did your father do?

My father was a watchman in one of those resorts. So he was home in the daytime. My mother didn't work.

Did she have to stand in line to get the food for you or exchange the coupons?

We had to stand in line for whatever we got. I mean, sometimes, once in a while, we got a little potato, a few potatoes, we stood in line. It was, oh, such a holiday for to get a few potatoes once in a while, to be able to cook a potato. But it was very, very seldom. The hunger was terrible. People starved to death.

Do you remember any particular friends that you had in the ghetto or neighbors with whom you were close?

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Yeah. I remember. I remember a couple of neighbors of mine.

I remember an incident. It was at-- so the leader from the ghetto was Rumkowski, Chaim. He worked with the Nazis.

He was the Judenrat leader or the Jewish--

The leader for them. They called him the--

Jewish council.

Yeah. How should I say? Let's say in Warsaw was also a leader. I think Czerniakow was his name.

The difference between those two was that when the Nazis came to Czerniakow and said give us so many people, we want them. He said I'm not the one to give. They're not my people. They're God's people.

You can take me, but I cannot give you people. He knew. He committed suicide then, because he didn't want to help them. He knew they will kill them.

But Rumkowski, he worked with them. They wanted people. He saw that there should be people. So that day they wanted so many children.

Do you mean that he would take people from the ghetto--

He told them, you have to come. They knew where the people live. I mean, they just came in. The police came in, the Jewish police caught you, and they just dragged you out. You had no choice. You had to go if they came in, unless you were hiding. You're in hiding, you're lucky. Then you're just lucky.

Did you ever see Rumkowski?

Did I see what?

Rumkowski, do you recall?

Yes, a couple of times I saw when he was speaking in the middle of the street to the people.

Do you recall what he said ever? Or do you recall any--

He said we have to cooperate with the Nazis, so we could survive, so we could have the food. If not, they will stop to give us food, and it will be worse.

We have to do this, like in that time with the children. I remember I was at a neighbor's house. I knew her little two children, two little children. Two little girls, one was a year and a half and one was 3 and 1/2.

The parents knew they have to give. So Rumkowski said let every family give us one child. Because if I won't take the children, give them to the Nazi, Nazi will come in themselves and they will take all of them. He threatened us that.

So what do parents do? I thought, this happened. I saw it with my own eyes. She went over, the mother, to the 1 and 1/2 year old girl. She said, how can I send you? I cannot send you. You are too little. You don't know how to dress. You don't know how to eat by yourself. You are so little.

She talked to her husband, said what do we do. She went over to the older girl. They took her in their arms. And they said-- Feigle was her name. Dear child, dear Feigle, we are going to send you. It won't be bad. You will have a lots of girl friends there. You will play with them.

They talked to her and they said soon you will be together again. But remember to eat. The chills go out

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when I remember this, I'm telling you.

Remember to wear your hat when you go out. Remember here are your gloves, and here is your shawl. Always when it's cold, wear your shawl. Don't forget.

They didn't have a chance to say much. The father went over. They hold her in the arms. Then the police waited, the Jewish police, and they took the child away from her.

They were standing with their hands spread out. It had to be done. What could I have done? It had to be done.

In that time, I don't remember exactly how many children they took. But then there was the Sperre.

The curfew?

The curfew, yeah. In that time, I remember they took together about, I heard, 25,000 people. If I'm not mistaken, I think about 15,000 adult,

15,000?

15, and 10,000 children.

The children were taken in a separate round up?

And the Sperre was--- this was a very different way it was done. In that time, of course, we were still together, my mother and my father, my sister and myself. The Nazis themselves, we knew we were not allowed to get out from the house, from the room, whenever. They came into the building, and they shoot in the air, a few shoots we'd here. And raus, raus, raus. Out, out, out, everybody out.

They separated the men, the men separate with the boys and the woman separate with the girls. Then with a gun in his hand, he selected. He made a selection.

The ones, he said, out, out, out, out, like, raus, you know, they went to the front. They selected whoever they want. The last, we waited till it was finished, till they dismissed us.

So the ones who remained remained in the backyard. But we didn't dare to move till the Gestapo walked away.

Freda, we're going to have to stop for a moment and we'll resume your telling us of this horrible experience in the ghetto. Thank you.

I'll try. Thank you.

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