

**KALMAN, (Kalmanovitz), Nathan**  
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**Five Audio Tapes**

*Abstract*

Nathan Kalman (Kalmanovitz) was born in Lodz, Poland on October 15, 1909. His childhood was very painful. He and his father were beaten for being Jewish. Growing up in a Hasidic family before World War Two, Nathan worked with Zionist organizations in Krakow from 1934-1935, and then returned to his parents' home. He married Baslia on January 8, 1939.

After Poland was invaded on September 1, 1939, Nathan and his family heard rumors that ghettos were being built. In two days, he and all his family were moved to a ghetto. During this time, he worked as a carpenter and locksmith for seven to eight months. On Erev Rosh Hashanah, after returning from work, he discovered that his two-year-old son had been taken and put on a truck, never to be seen again.

Eventually, all the family was sent to Auschwitz by train, a ride of 18 to 20 hours. Upon arrival, they were stripped of all possessions, and their heads and faces shaven. He held his father as the older man died. The SS later cut off the father's head and showed it around.

Nathan was sent to Goerlitz camp, where a Jewish Capo took away his photo of his family. Nathan spent ten months until it was liberated on May 9, 1945. He was so weak that he could barely walk. After being treated for swollen legs, he returned to Lodz. He found that his entire family died during the war. Nathan registered to emigrate to Israel. But Hanna, whom he had met during the war, wanted strongly to go to the U.S. Although he wanted strongly to go to Israel, Nathan emigrated with her to the United States.

Nathan and his family settled first in Scranton, Pennsylvania, but to escape the cold, they moved to Tucson, Arizona, where they lived for 13 to 14 years. The move proved excellent for Nathan, whose cough disappeared. In 1969, they managed to go to Israel, funded partially by receiving German reparations for his Holocaust experience. Initially, the Germans had not wanted to pay reparations because Nathan had not spent a full year in a camp. After a doctor intervened on his behalf, Nathan received about 6,000 (type of currency not specified in transcript).

During this time, his daughter Malka said she wanted to attend college in Israel, although she changed her mind later and decided to continue her education in the United States.

Nathan continued to make repairs to his family's two homes in Tucson, where they continued to live. During this time, they bought a house for Malka, who married and became a social worker.

Nathan says he continues to feel good about being Jewish, and is especially proud of his Hebrew education by his father. Although Nathan received reparations, he says, "Reparations can never make up for what we lost. My whole family is gone. I am in pain and am living in my past." Praying is "different, not the same as in my past." But he adds that now he has "a good life."

## Tape I, Side A

Nathan Kalman (Kalmanovitz) cannot remember his childhood without pain. His education was half regular, and half was Hebrew. His Hasidic family lived in a mixed neighborhood in Lodz, Poland. He was ridiculed because of his religion and his clothing. He quit school at 16 to help out at home. He was the youngest of five children. His father worked in their textile business, and later gave that up to work for someone else. Life was very hard. They lived near their Hasidic family. Their friends, mostly Jewish, were involved in Zionist organizations. He met his wife there. As a child, he was beaten up several times by non-Jews and police just for being Jewish. He was called names. His father was beaten also. In 1934-1935, Nathan went to Krakow to join Zionist organizations and to organize new kibbutzim. It was a hard decision to leave his parents. After a year, he returned home where he lived until the war started.

**01:22** Friday, September 1, 1939, Hitler picked Lodz as ? Nathan's oldest sister had a beautiful salon in Lodz. The landlord was a Nazi. He gave her eight days to leave the premises. The Reform Synagogue was burned down that night, and others followed. Ordinances posted on walls ordered Jews what to do and not do, and where to go and not go.

**01:80** For example, if a Jew was outside after 5:00 PM, he could be shot. Nathan's mother helped them survive by smuggling things in or out of town. Nathan married Baslia on January 8, 1949. His brother David was a carpenter. He made Nathan's furniture and mirror.

**02:07** A German came to their home, liked the furniture, and told them that he would take it from them for 4,000-5,000 zlotys (Polish currency, this is what was written). But the German didn't want them to tell anyone, because he could have taken the furniture without paying for it. Because he did not have all the money, he paid the difference by giving them coal, rice, and other things.

**02:70** The landlord was a baker. One day, Nathan noticed that the bakery was abandoned, and the bread in the oven was burning. They all had to leave the house and march away. Somehow, they left, but walked back to their house. The baker had Nathan help him for a few days. The Jewish community had to work as laborers.

## Tape I, Side B

**03:81** In a high school, a German ordered them to fill up his truck with coal and empty it in the basement. In February, Nathan's mother came to help them. She took something to someplace ? Nathan wanted to go with her, but she didn't let him because his wife was sick. He came back five minutes later, and his mother was gone. He never saw her again. His older brother came to Lodz, but couldn't stay with them. They couldn't feed him. Nathan asked the landlady for something, and she gave them two loaves of bread. They gave some to Nathan's brother, and he left. They didn't hear from him for a long time. His finger was injured because a German insisted that...? (sentence makes no sense).

- 04:58** Rumors had it that ghettos were being built, and that the people were going to wear striped clothing. It all happened exactly that way. In two days, they had to go to the ghetto. Nathan's sister Hinda, her husband, her one and a half year old baby, and Nathan had already been taken there. His wife Baslia's family needed help. Nathan helped her, and his sister housed his father. Nathan had three rooms with his wife and in-laws. He worked as a laborer, demolishing houses.
- 05:46** When they called for carpenters and locksmiths, Nathan raised his hand. He worked there for seven to eight months. When he was stopped from doing that work, he did something very dangerous. Luckily, he managed to get out of there.
- 06:00** People came to look inside from (illegible word), and took him away to a barrack. He received a piece of bread and a little soup, and they were sent away. Nathan's brother-in-law helped him get out of that place. They were lined up five in a row. They wanted to steal some wood. A man named Fuchs hit Nathan on the head. He turned and somehow managed to get out of there. His brother told him to bring him a little soup, and he would give him some wood. Nathan's child, Israel Itzik (Probably Itzak, but Itzik is what was written), was hungry and cold. Itzik was born in 1940. Nathan had made him a little mattress. Nathan went to bring soup to his brother. A German directed Nathan to his house. The German didn't help him, but made his life awful for two hours. A Polish man tried to help him, but could not do so. Finally, his replacement arrived. He had been told that Nathan wanted to escape.
- 07:60** He kept hitting Nathan on his head. Nathan fainted, but somehow survived.

#### Tape II, Side A

- Nathan worked in the militia. One day, his father decided that life was not good because everything was gone. That day, Nathan decided not to go to work so he could be with his father at 5:30. Nathan lifted his father's head as he died. Nathan's brother came over with some boards for a casket, but no casket was used. They buried him around Purim.
- 00:25** Their train journey to Auschwitz lasted between 18 to 20 hours. They heard shots from time to time. They found out that people who were trying to escape were being shot at. Most of them were killed, but some escaped. Arriving in Auschwitz, they left everything on the train. They were chased off the train and beaten and rushed by the mean, very nasty SS. The SS told them to go to the shower, take off their shoes, eyeglasses, and the strap (belt?) Nathan put certificates worth money in his shoes. Afterward, their heads and faces were shaved. Their talits and tzitzis were thrown away. Nathan wanted to be with his friend. Their barracks were big. They were told that ten people were hanged there last week because they had hidden some gold. Nathan and his friend went to work. They go some coffee. They called it ?
- 01:30** They wanted Nathan to carry a barrel, which weighted more than he did. They thought about the people whom they had lost. May 9, 1945, they were liberated. Nathan was so

weak that he could barely walk. They were full of very big lice. During appell (roll call), Nathan realized that his legs were so swollen that he went to the revier ? (infirmary), where he got some pills. After a few days, the medication helped. After work, they got half a liter of soup, while the SS were eating like pigs. He could not understand their cruelty, eating boiled potatoes and not giving them even the water in which they were cooked.

**02:36** Nathan helped peel apples, and managed to take one. He was caught, and beaten. One time, while someone else was being beaten, Nathan's glasses were broken as he walked by. He couldn't work without them. He was taken to a doctor in town, and given new glasses.

**03:40** Nathan was always attempting to do the right thing, to avoid getting in trouble. When a friend was taken away, Nathan went to see where he had been taken, pushed his way inside, and kissed his friend.

## Tape II, Side B

Nathan rested a few minutes and then came home. His father and mother were alive. He lived with them, his wife, and child. He looked for work. The manager placed him at the elevator on the first floor, which was good luck. The manager, (illegible name), was very good to him. The manager gave Nathan little things like sugar and other delicacies.

July 1944: A new list of names came out, and Nathan was not on it. The people were to be taken away. He was on the third list. He packed a bag in preparation to leave, but his wife insisted that he see someone who would help him stay. His two-year-old child, a few days before Rosh Hashanah (does not indicate what happened by this sentence – later it is recorded that the child was still alive). There was a new order for all of them to be at a gathering place, to be sent away.

**01:45** Nathan's brother, a watchman, was suffering from tuberculosis. Nathan's sister insisted that they all visit the brother in the hospital. On Pesach, he came home. He gave the child his bread; they had no matzo. It was cold and dark. Nathan's brother died, his sister was gone also, leaving only the father.

**02:03** August 1944: Nathan stole a few potatoes. While his wife was cooking them, the police came and took them to be loaded onto cattle trains. They tried to save their child, and fed him.

**02:70** A neighbor hid. When found, he was beaten to death and thrown on a truck. Nathan's mother-in-law was on the same truck. Nathan was sent to the side where he could work.

His father was very sick with gangrene. Nathan knew a doctor who Nathan thought could help the father. The doctor tried unsuccessfully – the father was too ill.

### Tape III, Side A

Nathan stayed next to his father overnight. The next morning, they were to be transferred again. At the appell, they were called by number. He observed their method. One of them tried to escape, but was caught and beaten terribly. The SS went for a list. When he returned, he started calling names in alphabetical order. Those whose names were not called were to stand on the side. Nathan was one of those on the side. They got a piece of bread and a little soup, and they were to board a train. This was Erev Rosh Hashanah, 1944. They arrived at Goerlitz camp. A prisoner here, the Haqer ? Capo, asked who ever was in ghettos or some other camps to step out. Some were nominated to a position. There were two places where they could work, namely Farberware (?) or ? They chose Farberware ? where they made ammunion. He didn't know exactly (illegible word) what it was used for.

They got jackets to keep warm. Five of them got some soup, but the others had nothing. Nathan stayed with his friend. Nathan walked a long distance to work. There were five or six machines. A Frenchman showed them what to do. The German foreman took over. He threatened them constantly with being shot if they did something wrong.

His work number was 54-753, as he seems to remember it.

**02:17** People got hurt sometimes. One man lost a leg, but he got an artificial one. As Nathan walked by a person who was being beaten, Nathan's glasses were broken. When he was taken into town to get a new pair, he saw people walking around, laughing and talking. He couldn't believe that a war was going on. He got two marks for doing a good job. He worked there until the end of the war. Around the end of the war, he got two apples. He ate one and sold the other for bread and a portion of soup. At the end of the war, a German manager came over and offered Nathan some food that mice had chewed on. He spent ten months in Goerlitz. They noticed strange things happening. It was the end of the war. Some people ran into town and looted stores. The residential town of Goerlitz was very nice. Five people wanted to return to Lodz. They were weak and hungry. The Germans had food, but the camp inmates did not.

### Tape III, Side B

They remembered that on their way back and forth from work, they had seen a huge store. They went there and saw Russians or civilians breaking the door and window. They took other people, too, girls as well. Nathan's weight was around 35 kilograms. They stayed in Goerlitz for five to six weeks. Someone brought a (illegible word). A religious boy killed it, and they ate meat for the first time.

**00:35** They rode home on trains, a journey of more than two days. They lied flat on the car's roof. One man sat up and was knocked down. They thought he was dead. But someone found him after he'd been thrown far from the train. He was treated at a hospital.

His two brothers, two sisters, and their families were gone. One brother-in-law survived, and he invited Nathan to stay with him. Nathan was selling papers? He lived there for three or four months. He helped people get from Germany to a Displaced Persons (DP) camp. He met Hanna. They also left for Germany, to Dreichenhaup? somewhere near the mountains, where Hitler had held conferences. Nathan stayed in Germany for four to five years.

**01:30** They wanted to leave there. They ended up in Bergen-Belsen. Hanna went from there. They had difficulty with their papers. Anti-Semitism was still alive

**01:55** Nathan was registered to go to Israel, but a commission came from America. Because Hanna really wanted to go to the United States, Nathan went with her, although his greatest desire was to go to Israel. He had always hoped to go to Israel.

**01:95** 1950: They lived in Scranton, PA for a few weeks. By now, they had two children who were five years apart. One was a daughter, Malka Leah, after each of their mothers. Rabbi Gutterman had agreed that they should name their daughter as such.

**02:40** They moved to a better apartment, because they wanted their children to live in a better neighborhood.

**02:60** They moved again to a better apartment. Nathan worked as a sewing machine operator for a while, and then changed to a different kind of work. Hanna also worked hard. They saved enough money to buy a three-story house. They became sick.

#### Tape IV, Side A

The weather in Scranton is cold. A German doctor friend advised them to move to Tucson, AZ. They did, and stayed there for 13 to 14 years.

**00:40** Soon after they moved there, Nathan got better. His cough was cured. Hanna supported then. He couldn't find work for a long time. Finally, they bought a little house, and Nathan fixed it up. Then they bought another one in an area where there was a large student body.

**00:72** In 1969, they went to Israel for the first time. They received Wiedergutmachung (restitution) about 6,000 (Deutschmarks? Dollars?), German reparations for being in concentration camps. Because Nathan had not spent a whole year in camp, the Germans did not want to pay him anything. He went to a doctor who helped him get the money, which helped them travel to Israel. During their three months in Israel, they rented their houses to college students. A rental agent took care of the issues with the students. When the family returned, they found that the houses and furniture had been damaged. In Israel, they stayed in Beer Sheva, a damp area. At a Polish doctor's suggestion, they moved to Arad, where it was dray, as in Tucson. Later, they bought an apartment. Hanna had worked in a factory for about \$1.25 an hour. Some people made only approximately 50 cents an hour. This was in Tucson. Nathan did not want her to work in Israel.

- 01:50** While they were in Israel, Malka said that she wanted to go to college there. They bought a lot in Arad for her, to have a three-story house built on it. For (illegible name), they bought a ready-built house.
- 02:00** Malka changed her mind, and decided to continue her education in the United States. They hurried back. She went to school and got a job. She worked hard, and received scholarships.
- 02:35** Nathan fixed up the houses in Tucson, where they lived for a while. Hanna worked. They bought a house for Malka in Tucson, too. (Illegible name) was looking for fun only.
- 02:60** Malka married and became a social worker. When she was well settled, Nathan and his wife returned to Arad. In 1989, they moved back to the U.S. because Nathan needed an operation.
- 03:25** Nathan says he needs to add something about his father in 1940. The SS cut off his head, and then showed it off.

Tape IV, Side B

Question: How do you feel about being a Jew?

Answer: I feel good about being Jewish. I have to watch myself. I had been in D.Z. for six years. My parents taught me well. I would never change.

**03:70** My father educated me. My Hebrew education is the equivalent of a college degree.

Question: How do you feel in regard to reparations?

Answer: Reparations can never make up for what we lost. My whole family is gone. I am in pain, and am living in my past. Davening (praying) is different, not the same as in my past. I have houses, a good life. But people are jealous of me? We worked hard for what we have.

**04:18** Back to Auschwitz. I had a friend in Auschwitz who had a special job. He got paid in small amounts of cash (marks). We could buy food items for it. I stood in line for some bread, and the man standing ahead of me in line stole it from me. I feared that my friend would become very angry, and our friendship would be over. When my friend returned, I told him about it, but he did not react badly. After the war, he and I went to a beer garden, and I told him the true story again. When I did so, he cried.

**04:61** There was another bad experience about bread. A person stealing bread from another person could get killed immediately. A man sleeping next to me put his bread in his wooden shoe and slept on the shoe. The bread fell out of the shoe and the man thought I stole it. But I showed him where it was.

- 05:18** In the ghetto: There was a room in one place where people could hide in an emergency. Before Rosh Hashanah in 1942, our baby was two years old. I heard some strange sounds outside. SS were driving by on motorcycles. We took our child in that hiding place with one other child. It was a little room, about two meters by two meters. We hid there a few times. One time, on Erev Rosh Hashanah, when I came back from work, my child was gone. He was taken and put on a truck.
- 05:90** On our way to Auschwitz, as we were packed into a cattle car, I heard shots. People were being shot on the spot. I was wearing a watch, and didn't know what to do with it. There were also some certificates worth money. When we went in for the shower, I pushed these papers away from me. We were being beaten constantly. We got the clothing and got dressed. Looking at myself in a mirror, I was shocked.
- 06:90** In a barrack, some Jewish Capo was checking things all over while he was hitting us. He asked for money. He said that yesterday we hanged ten people. He said that he didn't like to do that, but he kept searching.

Tape V, Side A

Question: How did you feel about Jewish Capos?

Answer: I had no feelings, we were only numbers. We were given something to sleep on. My number was on my uniform. I only remember 57??? I chose to sleep near a friend. In the morning, we were awakened to go upstairs. The Capo asked for certain kinds of workers. Someone recognized him as being from Galicia. He lived like a king. He wanted some craftsmen to come forward. Bikes and guns needed to be worked on.

**00:44** We walked one and a half hours to the work place, where there was a heater that was shut off most of the time. For lunch, we received soup. I went back for seconds, but I was recognized as having had some already, so I didn't get any. The Capo beat me up. Then again later, I was called to get five lashes.

**00:90** We were told to take our shoes off when we were sent to the shower. I had a slice of bread and a picture which I put into my shoe. The Capo took the picture of my whole family away.

**01:40** A German cook driving a horse and buggy dropped a sack of potatoes in the room for the Capo. We were starving and they had so much food. I asked the little boy to give us the water from the potatoes.

**01:57** He wouldn't do so. After the war was over, I couldn't leave the camp for three days. Other people went around looting stores. A couple on the way to work asked to give me something. They wanted to give me an egg sandwich. I got very angry and didn't take it. I was looking at the people, seeing half dead people walking around.



**01:90**

I asked a Polish Capo where the other 300 people were and what they were called. I noticed people looking at something. Two boys had snuck away, and I took the place of one of them. Three hundred people were needed, but there were 302. They had to get rid of two people. So as I came out, followed by another, they were beaten to death.