

This is an interview of Joan Krasch with Meier Stessel.

What's your name?

Joan Krasch.

Cash?

Krasch. Mr. Stessel, would you give your full name, and your mother's maiden name as a beginning?

Meier Stessel, I'm the son of Moses Stessel. And my mother's name was Toby Goldstein. And as a matter of fact, I was named Toby Goldstein almost in my papers. My birth certificate was Toby-- was Meyer Goldstein, because they were not married by the court, legally. Only when I was maybe 13, 14 years old.

Where were you born, Mr. Stessel?

I was born in Nasaud, Romania. And I was born in 1925, Nasaud, Romania. Then, we moved to another town, was called Bethlen, where I grew up more, my early years from my childhood.

Well, this place was a part of Romania till about 1940, '39, '40, actually, when it was transferred under the jurisdiction under the country of Hungary, as a part of [NON-ENGLISH] of Transylvania. What was one of the agreement, what Hitler had with so-called three Allies, Hungary, and Hungary, I think, it was-- it was called the Vienna Agreement, between Hungary, and I think was Italy a part of it.

But our part of the country went back to Hungary. That we did belong since after the First World War, till about that time, it belonged to Romania. And so it belonged to Romania about 20 or so odd years.

Would you like to tell some of the family or community experiences that you had before the Holocaust? What was like in your community?

I was a son from the-- from my father, was a very religious man. He came from a religious background, family, including my grandparents, and so far, were very religious people. My father was a [NON-ENGLISH]-- called in Hebrew, [NON-ENGLISH], and in English, a scribe.

And I was the fifth of the six child from my family, that consisted of 13 children. From my father's-- from my father's children, consisted of 13 children. Who three were from my first-- three were from a stepmother, who I never did know, who died during the First World War. The other came-- was from my mother.

And I was, I think, the fifth boy of my mother. And I had this experience just recently, to mention that I lost, from my family, I lost 10 brothers and sisters. Actually nine in the 10 died in the War of Independence in Israel. But I lost nine brothers and sisters in a concentration camp.

And I had just the recent experience telling about it in public, because I was honored in the United Jewish Appeal in my community, they asked me for some background. So I put this as a point of history. And what we don't-- I, myself, didn't realize, and we don't realize, what does it mean?

I lost 10 brothers and sisters, or nine, and we lost 6 million in the Holocaust. As a number, we don't realize, what does it mean? But I had an occasion, just a couple of weeks ago, to realize myself, what does it mean.

I was invited, by a first cousin wedding, in Brooklyn, in Williamsburg, was a very religious man. And he did give away, he married his daughter, I think. And on occasion, he was living, by the way, in another-- he was the part where he and his brothers were living was Romania, itself. His parents were lost in the Holocaust, but he, himself, and his brothers and sisters, somehow, with a miracle, they survived.

And he showed me in the table-- by the way, I'm very proud of him-- showed me in the table, one of the table in the guest of the wedding, that here is my table. And I looked at the table, and there was 10 or 12 brothers and sisters, his children, sons and son-in-law, all very religious people.

And I was on one side very happy to see this, and the other side, I just realized for a second what I lost. That in a sense, that he has his children, and maybe 50, 60 grandchildren. And what we, people who perished in the Holocaust, the people who would have been-- the people would have lived, how many people descended-- how many scholars, Jewish scholars, and how many scientists?

How many communities would have been perished all over the world, descended from these people? And that moment, really, I did realize what does it mean to lose your so close people in your family.

Do you remember what life was like with your brothers and sisters in Romania? Do you have some particular memories, say about Passover, holidays?

Well, we were a religious family, myself, had a religious background. Studied in yeshivot, and different school. And then, I studied-- I learned textile industry, what I'm involved right now with the textile industry.

And we were a very religious family. And not to get in details so much, what kind of family we were, that how far close-- if we were a religious family, and made hardly a living. And a concept, hardly a living, we in American couldn't measure. What does it mean?

Coming in our house, we had a bed, and I slept with three or four children in the same bed. And bread-- wasn't too much, because it was bread and butter. We not talk about it, but bread and milk, mostly, was the breakfast.

My mother made some artificial soup, or so-called vegetable soup, was our lunch. But when I went away later, I went when I was 14 years, I went away myself to study in yeshivot. Later, I collected myself and I studied-- I went to study in a yeshivot not far from Budapest, where I end up eventually coming to Budapest to study at a professional trade.

But peculiar about it, that I try to help my family. My father-- my father's, I mean, my own family, by sending home bread, because it was hard to get enough bread-- was under Russian. And my sister, who she is one of the-- we are left over three alive, my sister lives in Jerusalem now, she is-- she's a step sister. Yet, I'm so close to her-- like from one mother, she is with from one father, but not to one mother.

She used to send me-- my sisters used to send me cheese, kosher cheese. And I used to sell it. Therefore, I used to help them-- this other story. But the cheese arrived half rotten, and the bread arrived half rotten. But we were very close.

And when in 1944, in a later date, I studied textile, and hardly made myself knowledgeable a little in the trade, in textile-- weaving, to be specific. And in 1944, when the German occupied officially Budapest, Hungary, the first thought was myself to go home. I didn't realize what I'm doing, but the first train what I was able to get, I picked myself up and go home.

I probably don't regret-- I don't regret it. I don't regret it. I would never forgive myself in my life, if I wouldn't go home in that occasion.

But I went home, and probably if I would have stayed in Budapest with some of my friends on that occasion, who did remain in Budapest, too, I know him. Well, I know him, then went through-- went other travel through. But then went through the concentration camp experience, as some of them did. So you cannot really say what would it be right or wrong to do, but I felt emotionally in that time needed to go home.

And if I had the privilege to see once more my father and mother, and some of the children who were home-- 80% of the children were still home. Including my sister who is, right now, one of the survivors. She's in Jerusalem. So I feel very emotionally satisfied that I went home.

And I went home a few weeks later, obviously, it started-- I went home about, I would consider this time of the year. I don't know exactly the date, but it was right after Passover. And a few weeks later, just started-- a few days later started the special laws that you have to wear stars, the yellow stars, and other.

What year was this that you're talking about now?

I'm talking about 1944. In 1944, that after a few weeks, we were all assembled, and then taken to a ghetto and concentration camp. So the closeness with our family, we were a big family, but we were very close to each other. And very-- I would say, we always talked about home, but I only realized a few weeks ago what would be-- how nice would it be that the family would grow up, and how many families will be. How many [NON-ENGLISH] families will be, how many children will be involved in the whole family.

But since we did not privilege, we did not have, so to speak in Hebrew, to say the [HEBREW], the privilege to arrive that.

Another aspect of the closeness of the family-- I have my sister, who she's a survivor, and people talk about her. She had certain responsibility as a, so to speak, as responsible of the house, in the camp. And people say, she saved a lot of people's lives. She was like an angel.

But peculiar about her, that when I went home, and after a few weeks, the German started to occupy-- every town, they had a system how to do it. And with their officers, you felt they are present, you felt-- the laws didn't come straight from them, comes from them to other official Hungarian and local officials.

But you felt they're present. In the town where we grew up, called Bethlen, this town was known in terms of background, from aristocratic families. Who like you call it Lord and princes in once upon a time. As a matter of fact, they share history that the town is named after a prince, whose name is Bethlen. And he supposedly maybe was once a descendant from Jewish people.

But in effect, there was about four or five cottages across-- big houses-- for servants, what do you call this-- a special house for princes. And for other like castles, big castles. And that was known that the castle did belong to the graves of Bethlen family. There were a few children and parents from the family, it was about maybe half a dozen.

And once upon a time, the whole town belonged to that family. I would say hundreds of years ago. And at the time, after the federalism started to get apart, so a lot of farmers got land, and so far. But still, the big castles, the big castles, that are left-- lot of land. And so far, but they belong to the same people.

So the Germans occupied one particular castle. And they had their headquarters. And somehow, there were rumors around the town that one of my brothers, who turned out to be, years later, he was killed in the War of Independence, he was lost in the War of Independence, after all that he went through. And he was captured, so to speak, at the time, by German officers.

And he was maybe 13 or 12 years old. And dressed like a religious boy, with payots and so far. And they took him in-- maybe he was 15 years, I would say. They took him in, so to speak. And to wash-- to clean up the car.

And in the same time, they beat him around, trying to tell him, why don't you tell me some secret of spies, or whatever. They trying to get him involved, he should say certain things to accuse some of the Jewish families of certain things about them.

And the rumors come around, and when we heard about it, my sister, who is in Jerusalem now, and she was always going-- willing to give her life to rescue somebody. She did it a few years earlier, but other occasions. But this particular case, she went to the graf, to, so to speak, to the prince, who we had certain relation because we were a poor family, my sister, and my other sister used to do homework.

Well, often she used to sew, and the other she used to fix in that time silk stocking, what used to fix, by pulling up the eyes, so to speak. She made a living for the certain things. She did know the prince's daughter.

So she went, and using her personal influence, so my brother-- the prince's daughter and the family, went to the German officers, and he was released. This is the type of devotion or care, what we have to love each other. And my sister, by the way, went through with some experience her-- she had a sister and a brother who went from one mother--

And by the way, this sister I talk about, the other sister I never did know personally. But she was left over to be grown up by her grandparents. But anyway, when the Germans started-- they were living in Czechoslovakia, when the Germans occupied Czechoslovakia, this sister was taken away already to some type of a camp. And my other sister, when trying to help to rescue-- and she succeeded in doing that.

So she was-- I give her a lot of credit. She was known to be, so to speak, [NON-ENGLISH], to give herself up for some other people, for the family of other people. And later, as I said, people telling stories about her, that she went out of the way to help other people in the camp.

So we went-- a few weeks later, actually, when I was home, as I was telling the story, we were going to be assembled to go to a ghetto. So how usually this assembly was done, by an order from the German police-- the German command, local command, to the Hungarian police, through the president of the Jewish community, that you have to assemble back and forth at so and so time, to get to so and so place. And this place happened to be the public school. In order to leave so and so time for that action to the ghetto.

Now, we were in a town about two or three hours ride with a train to the ghetto, obviously. The rumors, the order was to get together about 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon, to take whatever you can take with you, to go to the ghetto. To the assembly place.

I'm trying to-- I'm saying this whole story, this particular aspect, because a very touching thing what happened in that afternoon. Now, I'm going to share a little background. Now, [BACKGROUND NOISES] it wasn't allowed food-- we couldn't have taken too much things with you. But people took a bundle of linens and other things, whatever you could take with you.

Well, I have there in the town, there was a second cousin, a third cousin of mine, a second cousin of mine, who was mayor to the town. And he was, I call, a man with a full heart. And when I was very young, I used to have a private lesson with him, in his house, 5 o'clock in the morning, with his brother-in-law, who was my age. We used to have a private-- so the big lessons that didn't have anything to do with our studies.

And he happened to get married in our town-- he took a first cousin for a wife. So his first cousin, and he, himself, were second cousins of mine. So was a relation. But anyway, when I went to study the yeshivot, and I went kind of on my own expense, somehow I worked hard to get even my travel expense. And without knowing where or how I'm going to keep myself up, and most of the time when I went, I took with me a few other boys from town to study, my influence to come and study.

P.S-- that was the surprising thing. When I went to study in my first time, in the first of the Jewish month in the calendar, all of a sudden, I got a check. A check, an equivalent of \$30, \$40, or \$50 American money. At that time, it was a lot-- I mean, equivalent in that money, what was worth it.

I got a check from this man, as an expression of support for my studies. And doing in every first of the month, that particular half a year when I studied there, I got a check from this man. This is how-- when I sometimes tell people about this story-- this is how the council of support [BACKGROUND NOISES] of Jewish studies was known, or was to give away, to give support, without any-- nobody to know about it.

So this man, I call, he was a man with a full heart, and full devotion for Jewish education, for Jewish life. Sorry to say, he and his wife, and four or five children, didn't come back. He came back. He remarried, he had no children. But his wife, and the whole family what is maybe 20 people, or 30 people, nobody come back. I mean, this is what we don't

know-- nobody had come back.

And they were all people with heart like gold. They would give their life, tzedakah and charities, and all that. But I'm bringing up the story, when I come-- I was in town in that day when we supposed to assembly. And I went home. And somehow, this man passed me in the street, took off his pocket, took out a bunch of money, and said, here take it. Take home, maybe you can buy something.

As I walked home, in the [INAUDIBLE] and were supposed to assembly to go into the ghetto. So this second cousin of mine-- the name, by the way, is Abraham Josef Dascau, who is living now in Jerusalem, who lost his wife and four or five children, first wife and four or five children. So he took out a handful, put his hand in the pocket, and took out a handful of money. He said, go see maybe you still can buy something, you can buy something to take with you.

And I think, we went home-- obviously, it wasn't time to buy, and wasn't where to buy. What was the irony about it? The money-- was money was worthless. And people who were millionaires, who were poor, were young, who were older, the money was worthless. You took with you with your hand whatever you could.

The following day, we arrived in a ghetto. What all of us got a tent-- some of us got a tent. People who had houses home, factories home, who were poor people home, got also a tent. Some I saw, I do remember, going in and being in the ghetto, and going out to work. They always-- the Germans had a philosophy how to get rumors, and to get people-- they had a system how to get people calm down, they shouldn't worry.

So they took out young people, like myself, to work. And we went out in town to work. But I do remember distinctively how in the same ghetto, there was a family of in our town who hardly were Jewish people. Except once a year, they used to come to the temple, to the synagogue.

They were more-- they were like manufacturers, they had a factory-- wood manufacturers, wooden sticks, or other equipment from wood. Because we were in the mountains, and there was a lot of wood around. So this man was a wood manufacturer. But they were so assimilated, themselves, from the Jewish people, that they didn't belong to the Jewish people.

But when I saw this he had a young daughter, and going around with a tennis shorts, dressed in the camp, in the ghetto, she probably did feel she is in some sport place, in some summer camp. This was her feeling.

And this is the sadness-- how people that still believe in the ghetto, in illusion you would go from there to some other place, in a working colonies, or working place, or some other-- nobody prepared us, or told us, that what we can expect when we go to the concentration camp.

As a matter of fact-- as a matter of fact, when we arrived in the concentration camp later, the Germans, who survived to go, not to go straight to the gas chamber, they made us writing home letters, or cards, that we all feel all right, we are working, and so far. This is mainly to give rumors around that everything is OK.

I'd like to stop the tape now, because it's almost at the end of the first side. And we'll turn it over and continue.

Side before-- was the sadness that what I realized the day when we were assembled, that in man had enough sense to realize a few minutes earlier, and some people don't even realize later, that they buried-- they had monies, they took money with them, they took other things with them in the ghettos. But this man had enough sense to realize that the money is worthless.

And how to imagine that for hours and hours, somebody is a millionaire, could be a millionaire, or could be valuable, and have to close his store, and his house, and his well-being, and walk away whatever he has in his hand, and that's all belongs to him. And even this will be taken away from him a few weeks later. So this is the reality how people got to know with the time.

And I guess, one of the things that people, like myself, who were used to hardship before, were able to take a little heat

a little more easier, more relaxed emotionally, the hardship in the camp. Some other who had it so well off home, they were far worse position when they arrived with a hardship in the camps.

Therefore, specifically between the mature people, some of the very assimilated, well-to-do people, particularly assimilated, who were mixed up between the non-Jewish population, they had such a disappointment as knowing, in fact, that a lot of that-- for this type of people, committed suicide. Over there, they were very quickly destroyed emotionally, and they let themselves down, and they passed away very quickly.

Do you want to talk on this tape about the experiences that you had in the camps? In being taken to the camp, and in the camp?

Well, I'm going to talk about a few episode, what is on my mind. And obviously, every aspect, every person who is in a camp can tell stories and stories. And by the way, my wife is very good at it. She is specializing in this field.

But I'm not the man of writing, of words. But I will say a few things. I think in one year, when we were in the camp, we were about-- I was in seven camps. And one of the camps, I was working so hard, I felt that I have no chance to survive. And this is one of the camps, we were working 12 hours or so at night, in a salt mine.

I supposedly did belong to a group, to so to speak, mechanical-oriented people. They picked us up in Auschwitz, in Birkenau. And we were sent, so to speak, to work in the-- around the factories where they made the different ammunition, different war material.

So we were picked up according to qualification. And we arrived first a place near Luxembourg, Heilbronn, on the borders of France. Our job was to iron out an underground mine, and then, supposedly, when we did this, we ironed out the underground mine. And eventually, there was set up there a factory for making airplanes.

But when everything was ready, so to speak, the American armies come closer.

Telling me about your work.

When the American army comes closer, they have to maneuver as to say we're going to be liberated. And eventually, in the last minute, they closed the camp, and we were brought back, in the last minute, inside Germany. So we did the same thing in another mine in Germany, in a salt mine.

Was in a more worse condition. I had to work 12 hours. And day, almost no rest, and no food. I felt I'm not going to hold up.

Now, here was an interesting story. I'm going to talk about two particular episodes, but this was one of the stories. In this camp, there was a man going out with me in one of the evenings. And most of the people were from Hungarian background, because the whole group belonged to the same group-- as we arrived, we were chosen from the same group.

So we were from Hungarian background. So there was on the line, 10 or 12 people going out, going out to work at night, with every few steps of us, there was a German SS soldier. But with a hunting dog going in the side, that if somebody would with a step in the side, he will be bitten with the dogs, and so forth.

And there was this fellow on my line, one of the inmates, one of the concentration camp inmates, who all the time was cussing, and using dirty words, what you can say, against God. Particularly what you can say in Hungarian language, and so, I suppose, in some other languages.

And I was very annoyed with it, personally, and I even said it to him. Why do you have to curse God in such a dirty language, and so forth, and so on. I was just so new for my hometown, from my parents' influence in the time to choose to be silent about it. But here comes a story that, in the middle of the night, there all of a sudden was a blackout.

It was a blackout-- in a case like this, you didn't have to work for a few hours till the electricity or something was wrong. Sometimes a blackout could be the main electrical line could be broken, or something else. It was a blackout.

But after the blackout was finished, we were assembled again, and we headed back to the camp. In a much earlier time than we would do otherwise. And when we went back to the camp, I not necessarily-- you stay in the line-- you don't stay in the line with the same people went to work. I mean, you went out maybe a few hundred people.

So when we went back to the camp, there was an appell, so to speak. An appell was called when people were staying in the line and you had to be counted for. And there was a demonstration of punishment. Who was the punishee, the man who got the punishment? Was this man who I experienced listen to him cursing God, on the way to work.

What happened? He was a man who was accused to be the saboteur. And he was put in a corner, tied up, all by hand, beaten-- but with every way people can beat him. And obviously, most of this beating was done by some of the bad people, who were in charge of the camp-- so kapos.

And I sometimes, I tell the story, how when this man was beaten, all the time he cried. And he screamed, oh, God, help me. Oh, God, help me. The irony about it, that in one sense, on one occasion, the same man was cursing God, and when he needed help, he only said, oh, God, help me. Oh, God, help me.

The end of the story is, a few months later I left the camp-- this man was never sent out again to a working group. He was kept in the camp doing art work, and was fed well, and so far. He had like a home rest, so to speak, assignment. And I heard this later, from other people who were free from the camp, that eventually his the order was come and he was hanged for the same accusation.

And another person I experienced that I had in this camp, that I felt so bad situation to my working there, that I felt very, very much that if I would continue properly, I wouldn't hold out. So all of a sudden, there come some miracle.

I had one boy from my hometown who was in the same camp. As a matter of fact, he who was, so to speak, an aristocrat from the town-- his father was a doctor and very well to do, was a very well-to-do person. And he, himself, in my hometown, except just his name, but I never had any friendship with him. And he was just the other way around, educated and in that time, high school, and probably he would have continued to go to college and to be a doctor like his father.

And opposite myself, was educated, Jewish education. But anyway, this fellow comes to me and say, listen, maybe you can help me. I was in the hospital, so to speak, in the sickness house, better to say, sickness house. And I was sick. And I got a transport to be sent to Dachau. And I don't want to go.

I'm getting some support, I have some friends here from the neighborhood who give me some time food, or so. Maybe you want to take my place. I said, there's no problem.

So we exchange name or numbers, because he was, let's say, a certain number was registered to be going there. So you will go there.

You didn't have your numbers tattooed?

Well, that number wasn't-- I have a number, but that number wasn't in that list. That was a different--

A different kind of number?

Different number. So I put myself in his place. And I went to Dachau. And by realizing only later that in the same time could have been the end-- Dachau, in another year, another time, another circumstances, people were selected to a sickness of transport-- of transport, to go to a place that meant after I see today the literature, reading about it, meant sure death.

What year was this?

This was in 1944. And beginning of-- yeah, at the end of 1944. So when we arrived in Dachau, they were still picked us up who were capable of some work, and would send us in a camp close to Dachau, Allach. So then, I got it already a little easier. And this is how, in short, physically, point of view, I was able to survive.

By the way, my friend, from my hometown, did survive. And he lives happily-- has a family in Israel. So the two main episodes, but it comes up in my mind.

Do you remember the day of liberation? You were in Dachau during the liberation?

Yeah, we were-- Dachau, or this is a camp close to Dachau, not in Dachau, itself, Allach. Belonged to very close, I don't know, maybe a few miles, only, but belongs to the administration from Dachau. We were overnight, practically speaking, the German authority, the German commanders disappeared. And we were left blue, so to speak.

Then we find ourselves liberated, in short.

They just deserted the camp? The Germans deserted the camp?

Yeah. And a few weeks later, after two or three weeks later, I saw-- I did not dream to go back to my hometown, where I was come to. Particularly, I saw a military vehicle with Jewish stars in it, and somehow, I started to talk to them, and I had my desire to go to Israel, and then to Palestine, at the time.

Then I asked him, how do you-- how can you go to Palestine? And they said, if somehow, eventually be able to go from here, but if you somehow can get to Italy, there's some way to go from there. Always not an official transportation, so to speak.

And then, I got together with a few of our friends, and we got somehow to Italy. And then, eventually, by illegal matters, I arrived to Palestine that time, right after the war, in 1946.

How long did you stay there?

I was there about 10 years.

And you found your brother there? Did you find your brother in Israel?

Well, my brother, my younger brother, who I mentioned about him before, arrived half a year or so later. As a matter of fact, I thought another brother will be there-- I still have a brother in Bucharest, and my dream was that he is still there. He went there, but it turned out to be this wasn't the case.

My younger brother arrived in Israel a little later. We brought-- my younger brother and myself, hardly trying to establish ourselves-- and establish ourselves, when all of a sudden, the war broke out. And we were members of Haganah, and I went to a different place in the country where he was, in a different place in the country.

And eventually, in the last days of the war, he was lost and he was missing in action. And he was, by the way, he was a medic man. And people come-- I mean, the whole group, the whole brigade was lost in action. And people talk about it, that he could have saved himself, but didn't want to lose his friends. He didn't want to leave his friends on the field.

I'm going to mention another episode, what is dear to me, I went through in Israel. When I arrived in Israel, by illegal matters--

Would you like to tell how you did get there?

There's a long history-- I was an organizer in a-- so to speak, in camp, in Italy. And there was the first American-- the

first civil ship, and so it's coming from America, if I'm not mistaken, to Europe. And then it ventured to Alexandria, at the time.

And this was a very known ship-- I forgot the name at the moment-- who was actually a war occupation ship. They took it from Italy, as war material. And I mention it [INAUDIBLE] Italy, I think. But anyway, this was the first civil ship who went from America to Naples, Italy, and then, eventually to Alexandria, Egypt.

I was an organizer, or manager, so to speak, and organized a camp not far from Naples. And I was with two fellows of mine, two people from the camp, going around. And Naples and I was then like a semi uniform with all kinds of little papers with me. I was a young fellow, was very active.

And here, I see the big ship. And I ask around where the ship going? They told me, to Alexandria. Now, it occurred to my mind that somehow we can smuggle ourselves out. And that time, there was a lot of English government in Palestine, had a lot of-- they were stepping up their control, not to let Jewish people going into Palestine. Because there was all kinds of incidents involved.

And there was the Jewish underground, had the word out [INAUDIBLE], I think there was a very dangerous amount. And I couldn't even talk to anybody I didn't know to talk. I didn't know somehow if I go to-- I will be able to come closer to Palestine. I convince my two friends, and we all, somehow, yes, I talked to-- I saw a Jewish man who was an American going to visit in that time Palestine.

And a young couple-- and another American, but mainly the young couple who was making aliyah. And I said, what the heck? I'll just hide in the boat, yes. So this way how we arrived in the boat, three of us. And we were hidden in one couple's house, a room. And then another couple, a more mature man.

And we arrived in Egypt. Somehow smuggled in the whole [INAUDIBLE]. But what I want to make the point, that eventually, I arrived in Palestine, dressed as an English soldier going on vacation. This was our disguise. We had false papers, but we arrived.

Anyway, I was giving a short pants, like we wear in Israel, with a shirt. We took off our military uniform, obviously. And they gave us a card to go kibbutz-- a ticket, bus ticket, to go to the kibbutz. This was all the reception what I got.

Was about this time of the year, as a matter of fact, it was sometime in March 1940. But I had in the end, in Jerusalem, and I made up my mind I have to go to see my aunt. I didn't know-- in a dream, I have an aunt, I didn't know who or where. So I took a car somehow, and I went to Jerusalem.

One of the boys, by the way, we were three-- one of them had a sister in Tel Aviv, didn't have a problem. And the other one, was an individual, and he, I understand, I never saw him again. He got wounded in the War of Independence, he got fully blind. And people told me about it, but I never saw him again. Only about that episode.

And what happened in the boat, I met one of the American families who helped us. He had a sister in Jerusalem. He said, if you come to Jerusalem, here, look me up. So I only have this right here.

So when I arrived in Jerusalem, I looked this man up-- his sister. Now, particular episode about this man. He was an Israeli, the fourth or the fifth generation. He's an Israeli-- Eretz Israeli, he called himself at the time. And he had a family of seven, eight children.

He, himself, had a title of a rabbi. But mostly he was a teacher. He was a teacher, once. He also had a title, rabbi, modern rabbi. He, himself, was a teacher, in Hebron, before the pogrom. Then, he went through different stages-- he was a teacher here. And eventually, at that time, he was working, so to speak, in the education minister, funded for the Jewish committees-- [NON-ENGLISH], it was called. And he was working there as one of the officers.

And I walked around his house, and told him what it was. He used to tell later the story, went in the other room, he cried. He come out, he said to me-- this I didn't know-- he come to me and said to me, you stay in my house like one of

my children. And I keep saying, it's one of the few-- very few, but one of the few, I find in that time, in Israel, what I call [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH].

What does that mean?

A Jewish with a heart and with a soul, a Jewish with a heart and a soul. And the fact is, this was Friday when I stayed with him in the house-- Friday night, we had a Saturday, Friday services. Saturday, we went to shul, Saturday, we went to shul. He was going-- one of his son was going to help me find my uncle-- aunt and uncle who went to Palestine in the late '30s, very religious people, to live in Mir Sharif.

P.S. I did find my aunt and uncle. Very strange people, didn't even invite me for lunch. But other people influenced me to leave everything here and go into study in yeshiva, what I did for a while.

So I left the people the following day. But we become very close to each other-- that he opened up the heart, and a place for me when I needed-- what kind of man the man was? The man, that one of the young fellows who come to look, to look up my relative, died in defending the old city.

And the same father lost another son before, in another place. And he published a book-- he got a book, called [NON-ENGLISH], that he has little bushes, but has very-- you don't touch it.

And the man, so to speak, had lost two children in the war. And this is how a very interesting episode what I went through, what I had experience in Israel.

The tape is almost at an end. Is there anything else you'd like to say before [CROSS TALK]?

I met my wife in a later-- when I was in Israel at the time. My wife, she was a survivor. And I felt that when I saw her, she and her sister, young girls, working and trying to establish themselves. And that time was already Israel.

I felt very, very attached to her. And we married-- I married my wife, who was a young girl in the time in Israel-- a young refugee who went and lost her parents, because she was in a concentration camp when she was 14 years old. With her sister, 13, miracle they survived.

And my wife is a very unique person. She didn't have any education at the time. But she kept going to all kinds of lectures, in her system, and her blood, was so to speak, to learn, and to do something.

And my personally, a little bit of guidance, I caused to make formal education, but she succeeded. And today she is going for her PhD at NYU.

That's wonderful. Thank you very much for participating in this interview.