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**Kooper, Shalom**

**Tape 1 of 3**

- 1.01 Shalom Kooper is a member of the kibbutz Degania "B." He was born in March of 1918, in Ofochno (????) Poland.
- 2.16 Paternal grandparents were Chasidim, fervently orthodox. Had many children.
- 2.20 Maternal grandfather was a merchant and well-off and lived in Lodz.
- 2.39 Shalom's father was the eldest, and meant to be a rabbi. He was the first sent to study at the rabbi's house, and then to the yeshiva. While there, he became interested in Zionism and left the yeshiva.
- 3.20 Shalom's great-grandfather, Chaim Isaac Wagman, served as rabbi, ritual slaughterer and mohel in his area of Poland (Malinitz???). Shalom was the first great-grandchild and was sent to visit there in the summer.
- 4.09 Shaloms' parents married at a young age. The father was supposed to sit and learn. In the meantime, WWI broke out and they left Lodz (where they lived and were married) for the grandfather's town. There, Shalom's father taught Hebrew to adults. He was an ardent Zionist, and spread the Zionist gospel.
- 5.13 When Shalom immigrated to Israel, in 1946, his uncle (the father's younger brother) already lived there. He let every Jew native of Ofochno know that the son of Yaakov Yosef Kooper (Shalom's father) had arrived in Israel. An evening was arranged immediately in memory of Shalom's father in the auditorium Ohel Shem. The mayor of Holon, who was Yaakov Yosef Kooper's student in Poland, spoke. The first mayor of Holon was Pinclas Eylon.
- 6.10 Shalom was born at the end of WWI in Ofochno and they all returned to Lodz. The other two siblings died in their infancy, and Shalom remained an only child. His health was his parents' main concern.
- 6.42 Upon their return to Lodz, they found that all of their property had been taken away. Father became an unsuccessful businessman.
- 7.30 Mother helped to procure a living. The house was full of books. Father subscribed to two Israeli newspapers: Hatzofe and Haaretz, and to the monthly Haolam. Shalom's monthly was Olami Hakatan.
- 8.02 Father was active in Tzeirei Mizrahi. The home was moderately observant. Mother read Yiddish. Father read Hebrew, for the most part. He was able to read from Hebrew and translate orally into Yiddish for his wife.

- 9.06 Shalom was a sickly child, and a “late bloomer” physically. He went to school to the “Gymnasia Yarneh” – the only one in Lodz where all subjects were taught in Hebrew. Later, he was transferred to “Beit Ulpana” where subjects were taught in Polish, but they studied Hebrew. ??? and other subjects in Hebrew. Many prominent people sent their children to study there. Shalom was the best Hebrew student, thanks to his early exposure to it at home. Many in the higher ranks of the Zionist youth movements studied there (Betar, B’nai Akivah, Hanoar Hatzioni, etc.).
- 11.39 In 1931, near Shalom’s Bar Mitzvah age, B’nai Akivah was founded. The founders were alumna from Beit Ulpana and some of the students in the higher grades.
- 12.00 They immigrated to Israel in the 1930’s to the University or to other higher education institutions. Shmuel Ravitzsky, Eliezer Shtern, Ehrlich, etc.
- 12.41 B’nai Akivah was a liberal youth movement.
- 20.00 Certificates for immigration to Israel were given to those who had spent a few years in those communes. Finally, a commune was established in Slavkuf (???) near Crakow. After WWII broke out a number of those people succeeded in going to Israel. But the majority of the B’nai Akivah youth pursued an academic career upon arrival in Israel, rather than a kibbutz life.
- 21.38 Shalom never went to the training commune. As a member of the ruling group, he was needed in town.
- 21.49 Shalom’s parents always wanted to immigrate to Israel, but they did not have the economic means to do so.
- 22.00 To enable Shalom to immigrate to Israel, his friends already there, registered him in the Jerusalem Conservatory, as he played the violin.
- 22.40 Shalom was always fond of the arts, especially theatre. He also sang well and was a soloist in the chorus of the Great Synagogue, in Lodz. The remuneration he received for his singing on Shabbat and holidays was enough to pay the tuition in the gymnasia.
- 24.0 In order to assemble all the recommendations needed for acceptance in the Jerusalem conservatory, a lot of time passed. Shalom then decided to immigrate to Israel illegally, joining the thousands in the “Alyiah Bet” – the illegal immigration. He was almost 21 years old. In order to receive a passport, he had to renounce Polish citizenship, which he did willingly.
- 24.52 In one of the Saturdays of the summer of 1939, a farewell party was organized for him. His suitcase and passport were already in the immigration office in

- Warsaw, and then the tension between Germany and the other European countries began. Shalom's immigration date was delayed by 2-3 weeks, and on September 1<sup>st</sup>, war broke out. Before that, and since the rise of Hitler to power, there was not much change in Lodz. The Jews lived with anti-Semitism everyday.
- 33.57 On the same morning war broke out, on September 1, 1939, waves of male Jews (from very young adults) began leaving the city of Lodz in the direction of the east. Shalom and his father did, too, joining the thousands of Jews, fleeing in a chaotic wave. German planes began flying through and shooting. The Jews walked at night and hid during the day. Poles already turned against the Jews. There were very few willing to sell them food, and only for exaggerated sums of money. For 4 days, they fled on foot covering about 1/4 of the road to Warsaw, where Shalom thought his passport would assure him and his father safe passage. The Nazis were faster, traveling by tank and other vehicles. They overtook them, and the Jews did not get to Warsaw.
- 37.50 They were forced to walk to the town where Shalom's father had studied in his youth with the rabbi (Mishchunov??).
- 40.13 The killings started. Jews began falling on the rocky ground. Shalom held fast onto his father's shoulder, not to be separated. They laid near each other, for hours and hours, until dawn. They returned to Lodz, which took them 10-12 days.
- 46.49 While Shalom and his father were on the road to Warsaw, many of the Jews killed from the air on the first days of war were brought for burial at the Lodz cemetery. The only Jews remaining in the city were women, children and the elderly. Everyday, they would go to the cemetery to try to identify their dear ones.
- 49.00 Upon their return home, Shalom and his young father (in his 40's), were busy trying to make a living. That was the preoccupation of most of the Jews. Bread was already rationed, but whoever had money could buy it in the black market.
- 52.00 No Jew could be outside after 5 p.m. and they could not work in their professions or use public transportation - this was the beginning and the Germans were very organized.
- 54.00 Lodz was annexed to Germany.
- 54.26 All the anti-Jewish laws of Germany were also applied to the Lodz Jews. They became disenfranchised Jews.
- 56.44 In January 1940, the Germans gave the order to the Jews to transfer a certain section of Lodz – Balute.
- 57.00 Germans would rove the streets, enter buildings, and take Jewish youth to work, forcibly. Sometimes, they did not return.

- ????? The ghetto was located in Balute, a very poor Jewish neighborhood. Beyond that, lived the Poles, very near the Lodz cemetery. They transferred the Poles to the city, to the homes of well-appointed Jews. An in one week, the transfer had been completed.
- 07.29 The move to the ghetto was traumatic. The Jews could not take furniture with them. They fashioned carts out of their furniture to move the rest of their belongings. The Germans were posted on the side of the road, filming and photographing the exodus. Also, they kicked and hurt the passing Jews at will.
- 07.54 No one knew that the ghetto was to be closed. Between 150,000 and 170,000 Jews moved to the ghetto. Conditions were crowded.
- 09.50 Shalom's family hid their valuables and books in the attic and basement.
- 10.30 After the war, Sara Stern returned to Poland and was asked by Shalom to try to bring some of the valuables, but none were found.
- 11.35 The ghetto began organizing. First came the housing office, which assigned each family its dwelling place. Shalom's family received a room in a house in the ghetto border. Shalom did not live with them.
- 13.00 Once in the ghetto, and before it closed, a group of members of youth movements decided to leave.
- 15.00 Poles lived on the other side of the ghetto. They agreed, for a handsome sum, to smuggle groups of Jews through the cemetery. For the most part, though, the Poles put the Jews in the hands of the Germans.
- 18.00 Since that door was closed, Shalom and other people from other youth movements decided to become activists in the ghetto.
- 18.16 Rumkowski was the head of the Judenrat in the ghetto.
- 19.17 Rumkowski directed a youth village in Poland and had a special feeling for children.
- 19.40 The youth movements sent a delegation to Rumkowski, in order to get parcels to work the land. He agreed. The youth movements did not use their original names, but they were called A, B, C, etc. B'nai Akivah was D.
- 20.20 The Germans went along with the plan because they wanted the Jews to produce, but in fact the parcels produced very little. They were the camouflage for the activities carried out by the youth. The parcels were called "kibbutzim."
- 21.38 The youth lived like in summer camp when they were together.

- 22.12 On the Polish side of the ghetto, there was a neighborhood called Marishin (???) before the war. Rumkowski received permission from the Germans to open a large orphanage there.
- 22.30 The buildings were wood cabins in which the Poles had once lived.
- 23.23 The number of dead Jews grew exponentially. Many died of hunger. Lodz was the most hermetically closed ghetto. No one left the ghetto to work outside, therefore no one could smuggle food in, or join the underground, for instance. There were guard stations high above the fences, and they sometimes aimed for sport to kill a passing Jew.
- 26.05 Rumkowski chose the alumnae of the Hebrew gymnasias as educators in the orphanage. Not all were teachers. Every educator had an aide. The aide came from the youth organizations. Shalom was chosen to go out to the orphanage as an aide.
- 27.38 Marishin was like a ghetto inside a ghetto. Only the workers could go in. Jewish police guarded the perimeter. The Germans were in the next perimeter, encompassing the entire ghetto.
- 28.01 The news spread that in the orphanage, 3 meals a day will be served. In the ghetto, hunger was rampant. There were already food coupons. It was an art to make food last until the next distribution.
- 29.52 Soup kitchens were organized for the workers.
- 30.22 Life in Marishin was completely different and unreal.
- 30.30 Shalom really was the leader of his group, as were many of the aides that hailed from the youth groups.
- 31.37 Shalom received a group of orphans, and became an “independent” teacher. Many children were brought into the orphanage after their parents died (but the children stayed at home with the dead body).
- 32.47 Shalom’s group had 32 children. Many times, older brothers were allowed to be with the younger children, making this heterogeneous group harder to teach.
- 33.33 There was order and a fixed schedule. There were a slew of illnesses and health conditions resulting from the lack of nutrients and care in the ghetto. Many suffered lung complications and there were few medicines. Describes life in the orphanage.
- 45.39 One day, in 1942, German vehicles suddenly came to the orphanage. Each group was summoned to appear in the main field. There were rumors that the children

- will be removed. It was the same time that “actions” began in the main ghetto. Shalom encouraged some of the older children to run and go into hiding in the ghetto. There were 120 teachers and between 1,000 and 2,000 children. The Germans stood around in jeeps and motorcycles and gave all of the adults the order to congregate in one of the houses – where they were shut in. All of the children were deported to Chelmno and died there. Shalom was a witness in Bohum??? Germany about this “action.” The next morning, all of the adults were let out to an eerily quiet orphanage.
- 49.47 Shalom went to the “preventorium” where many lung patients were hospitalized, and two of Shalom’s children were as well. Doctors there told him that the Germans are coming soon for the children.
- 51.41 When the Germans appeared, the adults were, again, locked up on another floor. The children were thrown from the windows into the trucks.
- 3.00.00 On the way back to the ghetto, they managed to get into the prison to see if any child was left there or any of the adult members of the youth movements. They were given policemen uniforms by a policeman friend. It was a day when one of the S.S. high commanders was to visit.
- 3.06.21 The administrative organization in the orphanage – Rumkowsky gave his protégées the best jobs. The place was run like an autonomous city.
- 16.00 Educational organization.
- 19.00 Mortality in the orphanage.
- 24.00 Names of the orphans in Shalom’s class.
- 25.00 Children’s council.
- 31.00 Holiday celebrations at the orphanage were carried out by groups.
- 33.57 The Great Synagogue of Lodz was torched by the Nazis.
- 35.00 Shalom developed his talents to educate the orphans while he was in the youth movement, B’nai Akivah.
- 38.00 Bath day at the orphanage.
- 39.00 Basic care of the orphans.
- 40.00 Children’s favorite activities at Marishin.
- 43.00 Orphans did not ask questions about the war. They matured before their time.

- 45.00 Hunger, and how to solve it, was one of the main topics in Lodz.
- 47.53 Shalom had his own group at Marishin for about one year.
- 48.00 Health conditions worsened with each passing day.
- 52.00 Children saved food from their own rations to help their families in the ghetto.
- 54.30 Daily routine in the orphanage. Games: soccer, checkers, chess, and marbles.
- 4.03.16 There was only one group of 9 older boys (18-19 years of age). They were talented, special boys.
- 4.06.44 In Auschwitz, Shalom made a vow, with one of his orphans (Ilyia Huberman), to arrive in Eretz Israel.

**Tape 2 of 3**

- 4.09.16 Names of directors of Marishin.
- 10.00 During the war, B'nai Akivah and Hashomer Hadati merged.
- 11.31 Nazis didn't care to keep children, as they were not "productive." There had been "actions" already in the main ghetto, to get rid of children and mothers. Only 5 of the older children survived the liquidation of the orphanage.
- 14.00 No knowledge of annihilation "en masse" of the Jews.
- 16.38 More about the last day at the orphanage. Feelings. Visit of S.S. to the prison on the same day.
- 22.00 Presence of Bokser during the "action."
- 24.34 Shalom was called to testify in the trial against Bokser after the war.
- 24.58 The testimony.
- 27.00 Encounter with Shalom's parents. Return to his parents' house.
- 30.00 Ill health – Shalom worked in the bakery, then in the kitchen. Food distribution.
- 35.00 Resumed work and activities In the youth movement.
- 37.00 Acquaintance with Pulover, stage director and actor (who worked with the comedians Dzigan and Shumacher), Pinchas Schwartz (painter), and stage director Markovich.

- 39.00 Cultural activities in the ghetto.
- 43.41 More about the activities and organization of youth movement in the ghetto.
- 44.59 Shalom worked in a nail factory.
- 48.00 Rheumatism attack while working there.
- 50.00 The nail factory was the place where the heads of the communists worked.  
Radziner was the director.
- 51.37 Communist party lived in a state of euphoria in the ghetto, awaiting the arrival of the Russians.
- 55.55 It was thought that working in the factory and being in touch with the communists would provide a contact with the outside world.
- 59.17 The strike in the nails factory.
- 5.03.00 Work in the ghetto kitchen.
- 14.30 Shalom's father worked as a manager in a sewing workshop and then as a guard in a horsemeat butcher shop.
- 16.19 Shalom's father was tortured cruelly for not vacating the sidewalk to let a Nazi commander pass. He lay for months, but recovered.
- 20.30 Shalom's mother worked in clothing storage and classification.
- 21.57 In the summer of 1944, notices began appearing requesting professionals for other places, promising excellent benefits, housing and food. This was pure propaganda for the Jews to come forward of their own volition. The plan was to liquidate the ghetto.
- 22.00 Educators were forced to lend a hand when Jews, deported from Germany, Austria and Luxemburg, passed through the Lodz ghetto.
- 24.00 Differences between German Jews and Lodz Jews.
- 24.50 Shalom studied Russian, English and French by himself in the ghetto.
- 26.00 After the orphanage was liquidated, Marishin became a prison for gypsies from around the world.
- 30.00 Attempts at growing vegetables, by planting them in a baby carriage, which was then taken for a walk by an elderly person in order to catch a few rays of sun.



- 35.00 After notices began appearing requesting professionals, many Jews saw through the German plot and decided to hide. They also began squirreling food away.
- 40.00 Shalom organized a hiding place for himself and his parents in the same room they lived. The “action” lasted about 2 to 3 weeks. They didn’t have any food. The father was weak. They decided to show up to be transferred two days before the ghetto was liquidated.
- 47.13 They were given food, and loaded into cattle cars, where they were crowded and then shut-in. There were messages in Yiddish on the sides of the train: “Jews, you are being transported to your death.”
- 48.59 The train took them to Auschwitz.
- 50.00 Arrival in Auschwitz.
- 58.45 Shalom was in Auschwitz for 2 months. He lived in proximity to the crematorium that was in operation 24 hours a day.
- 59.00 Hundreds of people were put in a block that was home to 18 horses beforehand. Shalom was hit very hard on his hand upon his arrival to Auschwitz.
- 6.01.00 Encounter with one of his former students, Itzhak (Ilyia) Huberman.
- 6.03.16 There were no beds. Horse blankets were put on the ground to cover it. There was a fight for every inch of space in the block. The shoes became the pillows to protect them from thievery.
- 04.17 Distribution of food in the camp.
- 17.49 Shalom suspected he had gangrene in his injured hand.
- 08.48 Daily roll-call. Shalom was afraid to show up.
- 11.53 The new arrivals to the camp learned immediately about life there from the Jews who had already been there for a time.
- 12.48 Shalom introduced Itzhak Huberman as his younger brother. During all this time, Shalom told Itzhak stories about Eretz Israel, so as to move (in mind, at least) to a different reality.
- 15.00 The “human” heating system.
- 17.00 Distribution of bread.

- 22.00 Camp orchestra and other cultural activities. They received extra rations. Hunger was one of the motifs close to everyone's heard. "Mother's morning walk" (in Yiddish).
- 30.00 Shalom went to work. The narrow path was surrounded by an electrified fence of barbed wire. Many electrocuted themselves in despair (on purpose).
- 32.00 Work consisted of carrying combustible turf 2 km. outside the camp. They passed the fence of a women's camp; they were dressed in rags. While passing the camp, the male inmates would yell the name of their female relatives. A few times, an answer came from the women's camp. Shalom yelled names, too, but .....????????????
- 36.38 He also worked in rinsing the food containers which allowed him to lick them before washing.
- 38.13 How food was eaten to last longer.
- 40.00 Bathrooms in the camp.
- 42.00 Sleeping in the camp.
- 44.39 Recruiting for work as locksmiths. They needed 700 men. It took many days to interview.
- 49.00 Strategy to receive the place of those locksmiths elected, but in the meantime they were killed in the selections.
- 51.42 Day of departure. They needed to undress. Shalom's hand was discovered and taken to a cage. The people there were going to the crematorium.
- 54.45 Shalom's mother showed up in his dreams frequently, and instructed him on what to do. He managed to convince a doctor to let him go. Ilyia Huberman was already on the train to Braunshweig. The time and activities over the 6 to 7 weeks between arrival at the camp and the transfer to Braunshweig.
- 7.06.49 From the moment of arrival to the camp they smelled the chimneys of the ovens.
- 08.00 Apparent uprising.
- 09.00 The "Canada" block near the kitchen.

**Tape 3 of 3**

- 15.50 After the liquidation of the camp, Shalom suffered a crisis and felt he could no longer pray. ???
- 17.30 In the trains that arrived after Shalom's arrival to Auschwitz, Rumkowsky arrived, as well as the workshop's managers. They were murdered by fist while the former ghetto prisoners told the "Canada" dwellers who they were. Rumor had it that Rumkowsky was sent to the crematorium on his arrival day.
- 22.29 About the "Canadians" and Jacobovitch group.
- 23.00 New deportees, in a terrible physical state, arrived from Greece.
- 24.00 Shalom was in the "Gypsy" camp although he was not in the same block all of the time.
- 25.57 Arrival in Braunschweig, Germany. The German police lead the workers for kilometers to a camp surrounded by barbed wire; the barracks and bunkbeds. The Kapos were all German. The guards were all criminals serving life sentences in Germany.
- 33.00 Shalom was not chosen to go to the huge factory. He was assigned to clean the camp and also do the "busy work."
- 35.07 Sioma, a new friend.
- 36.00 Care of the wound.
- 44.00 Punishment for hiding from the ????
- 47.00 Kapo received 20 cigarettes in exchange for sending Shalom to the factory.
- 48.00 Many of the workers "disappeared" in Braunschweig in the 10-14 days since their arrival.
- 49.00 The workday was 12 hours long. Life in the concentration camp was unbearable.
- 52.00 Near the area there were camps for Ukrainians and Russians. Those were work camps (not concentration camps).
- 53.00 Shalom was taught the work he had to do on a sophisticated machine by an anti-Semitic Ukrainian worker.
- 54.00 Shalom's disappointment at a world that hates Jews.
- 57.00 Work at Siemens, at night.

- 8.00.12 Bombardment began at that time. Only Jews could not get into the bomb shelters.
- 02.00 Jews rejoiced and prayed for the bombs to fall on that place, even on them.
- 02.21 Some Jews took advantage at being left alone, and sabotaged the machines.
- 02.45 War had already come to Germany, and the armies of Russia and other countries were there. They heard from the local German workers.
- 04.37 Shalom transferred to the diesel machines section.
- 09.35 End of February - beginning of March, there was a roll call.
- 11.00 Living conditions in the barrack.
- 12.00 Clothing.
- 17.00 Jacobovitz and his group.
- 22.22 Escapees (Kapos escaped).
- 27.00 Conditions worsened after that. There was a roll call announcement that Jews are going to be transferred to a different camp. They walked in the snow the entire day to Vatenstaat(???)
- 29.00 Life in the new camp – in a bombed out barrack.
- 30.00 Shalom's work in disposing cadavers in another location.
- 38.00 Encounter with officials of the Red Cross.
- 38.44 The stay in Vatenstaat was about 2 weeks.
- 39.18 Arrival, by foot, to a train station – they were put into passenger cars, but were crowded like sardines. Some managed to situate themselves in the overhead baggage installation. Traveled for hours and days. The locomotive left the cars on the track and disappeared.
- 42.43 The plan was to kill these Jews, but the order never arrived to the guards and soldiers. Kapos began disappearing, too.
- 43.00 Arrival, by foot, to another camp called Ravensbruck (????). There was no room for the arriving Jews. Only 100 left from the Braunschweig 700.

- 45.00 Distribution of food sent by the Red Cross (5 kg. Packages). Many died from eating all at once; dysentery.
- 51.53 Exit from Ravensbruck.
- 52.00 Food bartering.
- 53.55 Witness to cannibalism.
- 54.00 Back to the trains, this time open-cargo cars. There was a lot of movement back and forth to avoid encounter with allied troops.
- 55.34 Arrival to Vebelin in the evening.
- 56.01 The liberation the next morning.
- 09.05 Encounter with Dr. Seri (from Auschwitz) in an improvised hospital. Shalom was engaged as a translator. He didn't want to stay.
- 08.00 Refused to go back to Poland. Began planning how to get to Israel.
- 12.09 Move to the American held zone in Lubek.
- 12.30 Meeting of survivors in Bergen-Belsen. Shalom was chosen as a representative from Lubek.
- 13.16 Encounters with survivors.
- 14.14 A Colonel Newman suggested to Shalom to go to Sweden to recuperate, rather than to Israel right away.
- 17.49 They were moved from Lubek to a "floating" hospital. After a thorough check-up and getting disinfected, a ferry to them to Sweden.
- 20.40 Beginning of contact with Israel.
- 25.29 Meeting of the Zionist movement in Sweden; Eva Warburg.
- 27.00 Attitude of Swedes during the war.
- 28.00 There were schools for Jews in Sweden, in the north (youth organization). Shalom was one of the teacher organizers of one of the schools. Shalom took his work as preparation for Eretz Israel.
- 31.00 Certificates arrived in Sweden and Shalom's school was given them as the first youth group to immigrate to Israel.

- 37.54 Arrival in Degania.
- 38.00 Rivka's arrival to Israel, with the illegal immigration.
- 39.00 Meeting with Hane Rovine and Friedland.
- 40.00 Return to Degania – Independence war in Israel. Talks about the difference between the two wars.
- 45.00 Life in the city and return to Degania.
- 46.00 ??? to tell the Holocaust story until later in life.
- 50.00 Obligation to keep some religious life for the sake of Shalom's parents. Struggle to keep religion as part of Jewish tradition and nationality.
- 53.03 Poem in memory of the orphans of Marishin by David Shimoni, "Stories from a Sick Child."