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Reznick, Nissan

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- 3.25.04 Nissan Reznick was born in 1918 in the Ukraine, in the town of Yekaterinoslav, which the Soviets called Dnepropetrovsk. At 1½ years of age the family moved to a little town, David Grudek in White Russia, in the province of Polesia. Nissans parents' family also lived there.
- 14.16 At the age of 6, Nissan and his parents moved to Pinsk where he remained until WWII broke out.
- 41.00 Nissan's mother was an orphan. She had a sister. His maternal grandfather's name was Nissl???the Reinbinder. Nissan was named after him. The grandfather was very orthodox and enlightened.
- 5.52 Since there were only daughters in the family, and therefore would not be anyone to say Kaddish (the prayer for the dead), the girls had the same education as the boys (including the modern Hebrew language).
- 7.23 Nissan was one of 7 children (5 boys and 2 girls). His parents worked. His father had a butcher shop. Saturday, the day of rest, was dedicated to the children to assess their progress in school.
- 8.32 Nissan's father was a Hasid. Nissan's Sandeck, at his bris, was the Lubavitcher rebbe.
- 9.33 Nissan attended one of the Tarbut network of schools in Poland upon his mother's insistence. The other brothers learned in very religious Yeshivas.
- 10.40 For his other religious studies, Nissan had a daily private tutor (Talmud, etc.)
- 11.00 Father had a brother in the town, three uncles and sisters who left for the U.S. and Argentina.
- 12.00 The village was poor. The Jews were small merchants and peddled their merchandise from town to town.
- 15.29 In Pinsk, the family improved their economic status. Nissan finished high school also in the Tarbut system where he started to study for his Bacculaureate (which he completed in Israel).
- 16.00 The Jews in Pinsk were affiliated with the myriad of movements then in existence: ????, Communism, Hasidisim, Zionism, etc. There were Yiddish and Hebrew schools, Yeshivas, public Polish school for Jews, and private schools.

- 18.37 Life was effervescent there. Albeit poor, for the most part, Judaism was lived to the hilt by all. Cultural life and expressions were rich.
- 22.41 Nissan's family was followers of the Hassidic Rabbi of Karlin (??), near Pinsk.
- 26.29 Nissan joined the youth movement Hanoar Hatzioni where many of the Hebrew high school students were active. There was a high educational level there. There were daily activities also: lectures, outings, games, etc. The close contact made for life-long friendships. The discussions dealt with the future of the Jewish people and of Israel. University studies were shunned because the purpose was to immigrate to Israel and settle in a kibbutz.
- 40.05 Nissan's brothers were Elchanan, Shmuel, Mordechai, Yosef, and Daniel. There were also Chana and Eidl (named the grandmothers). Parents were strict.
- 50.00 Pinsk had a Jewish majority, and their contact with Poles was very limited. After 1934-35, anti-Semitism was more public and prevalent.
- 54.00 The pogrom in Pinsk in 1919.
- 57.33 War broke out, and Poland in divided between the Soviets (East) and the Germans.
- 59.00 The story of how Nissan missed being inducted in the Army. He was 21.
- 5.10 Moshe Kol, a Pinsk native, sent to the Hanoar Hatzioni many books from Israel. They comprised a huge library. It was decided to distribute the books between the members and to bury documents and other archival material in the Jewish cemetery, across the street.
- 11.00 From Warsaw, news came of impending attacks on the youth movements. Hanoar Hatzioni upper echelons arrived in Pinsk. Other youth movements chose other cities to relocate.
- 17.45 Hanoar Hatzioni went underground, and kept a minimum of activities in the main areas of the principle.
- 18.00 With the transfer of Vilna to Lithuania, the Zionist youth movements decided to move the operations there, in order to facilitate the immigration to Israel of the people who already were in the pipeline to leave Poland.
- 22.23 Nissan, together with Salomon Entin and David Gronshko, were to travel to Vilna and establish a base to absorb the group's members.

- 23.00 After Sukoth, Nissan went by train to Vilna. He departed from his home for the first time, and bid them farewell. Upon arrival in Vilna, his task was to find residences for the people who were to arrive shortly after.
- 27.00 The joint??? provided funds for their work, as well as Hadassah. About 300 members were there.
- 28.18 Soon, all of the borders were closed, and many members were deputized by the movement to help the survivors steal the border (Dec. 1939 – Jan. 1940, the borders were not hermetically closed yet). Some were taken into custody by the Russians, and were immediately replaced. Local Jews helped greatly.
- 30.00 The youth movements had to provide not only educational or cultural programs for its members, but also work opportunities to combat their idleness.
- 32.00 Lilka Burnes is sent to Warsaw to check on those left behind. All was well there.
- 34.58 The members sent to the Russian section were caught and imprisoned.
- 37.01 The dispersed groups in Lithuania began relocating them from Vilna to more managerial places (Sianlai???).
- 38.00 Obtaining, falsifying and distributing certificates to go to Israel, Curacao, Japan, etc. represented a big hurdle and produced many discussions as to who would be entitled to use them.
- 42.00 Nissan's position on the debate (in Israel) between Berl Katzenelson and the Israeli envoys that chose to return to Israel when the situation got bad.
- 49.00 Upon the re-opening of the border, Nissan's mother (as well as others) came to visit her sons. This was their final good-bye.
- 50.00 The idea of an underground is born.
- 50.30 When Russians entered Pinsk, Tarbut was changed to a Yiddish school.
- 50.47 Cultural activities in the underground.
- 53.00 The "official" farewell of the activities in the movement in Kovno; establishment of its underground.
- 54.00 Contacts with the leaders of the Zionist movements after the war broke out, June 22, 1941.
- 56.42 Contact with the family after the Russians entered Lithuania.

- 57.17 Economic situation of youth was dire, especially for those with no training.
- 59.00 Germans began to bomb Vilna. The movement decided to flee to the East, leaving behind a few members to help the rest to flee as well.
- 6.02.02 Germans took over Vilna in a few days, easily overriding the Russian army. The Russians had already eliminated the leaders of the Jewish community, among them were the wealthy and the merchants. Dr. Vigotsky and his work as a Jew, while a member of the Polish Parliament, met his end at the hands of the Gestapo.
- 4.07 Now the Germans began eliminating the rest of the leadership, including the Judenrat.
- 7.00 Nissan found work as a cleaning man in ??? a German office. He found blank forms for work permits and stamps. He filled out tens of them to distribute to those in the underground.
- 14.44 Talks about going to the ghetto. The former dwellers of the houses in the ghetto were sent for extermination to Ponar.
- 15.00 30,000 Jews entered the two ghettos. Abraham Pinchuk, head of the “old peoples” home, tried to move all of the residents with their belongings and supplies to the ghetto. The elderly people were caught by the Germans (while making their way to the ghetto) and were sent to Ponar.
- 18.00 Pinchuk obtained permission from the Judenrat to open a kitchen in the ghetto with the utensils and products he had brought in. The first soup kitchen was opened in the ghetto.
- 20.00 After the food was distributed, the kitchen became a cultural activity hall (under the direction of the former youth leaders: the “chalutz coordination” across all of the movements).
- 21.59 When Pinchuk came to the ghetto, he brought ID’s of the people in the nursing home – offered to falsify them to show the carrier was Aryan and not Jewish.
- 22.00 The help provided by the Polish boy Scouts movement in the underground.
- 28.00 News arrived to the ghetto about Ponar – that it was an extermination camp and not a labor camp. News was told by the few who saved themselves and fled.
- 30.00 A proposal arrived to the ghetto. Through the good offices of an Austrian officer (Shmitt), that it would be possible for many Jews to move to Bialystok where the situation, for the moment, was better. This proposal was conveyed to the underground by a Jew (Adler). The Vilna underground decided not to send Jews

- there because of the danger involved. Pessimism about the survival of Jews in Europe was prevalent.
- 45.49 Decision to establish a group to revolt and use self-defense. The dangers were clear.
- 47.00 Nissan started to establish a connection to other Jewish groups to join. Many of the leaders did not join for personal reasons.
- 52.30 Delegation sent to Warsaw to ask for help through the good offices of the Austrian Shmitt (December 1941).
- 56.00 Abba Kovner read the convocation to start the armed struggle in the ghetto. He had been hiding in a convent with false documents, with the assistance of the Polish scouts. He stayed in the ghetto then, after his presentation. The local communists supported the move and went against the USSR's position to fight the Nazis on the battleground.
- 57.00 Poalei Zion did not join in the struggle then, neither did the Bund.
- 7.00.00 The underground was established and guided by several principles; passive resistance (when called upon); training in the use of weapons; boycotting and attacking Germans property and means of transportation. The attack should be initiated only when the liquidation of the ghetto became imminent. Leadership of the underground was elected. Wittenberg was chosen, a communist, so that the contact with the Soviets (a source of help) would be better.
- 3.56 Bund also joined later.
- 4.52 There was no difference among movements or political parties.
- 5.29 A radio was obtained and hid in the same place as the weapons' storage place, in the kitchen.

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- 29.40 At first, the underground worked in groups separated by origins (every person represented his own movement).
- 32.50 There was an expectation of weapons supply from the Polish scout organization, but that fell through as the Vilna ghetto residents and its underground were suspected of being communists.
- 33.18 There were "actions" on Yom Kippur and after. The first ghetto was being emptied.

- 33.40 Hanoar Hatzioni established a “kibbutz” on 7 Hospital Street, to help the underground members who did not have any means of support. Some 20 people lived there. A bakery was opened there, too.
- 34.50 More ID documents were distributed in the ghetto. The people who worked in ammunition depots smuggled light weapons and explosives into the ghetto.
- 37.30 Training started in earnest, this time mixing the groups that belonged to different organizations.
- 39.44 Cooperation with YIVO helped bring more weapons to the ghetto, supplied by the likes of Shmenke Kaczerginsky, Abram Sutzkever, Abba Kovner’s brother Michael, and others.
- 40.29 Nissan was in charge of the finances, fundraising, and more in the headquarters.
- 41.14 Irena Adamovich, a nun, among the leaders of the scouts in Poland came to visit the ghetto. Describes the conversations with her. She reported on Treblinka and Majdanek and faulted the Poles for collaborating. She also agreed to travel to Kovno and Sianlai to meet with the leadership there. Irena went to Israel later on, and met many of her acquaintances from the war.
- 50.10 Jewish police. After the Warsaw ghetto uprising, the Nazis began using the Jewish police force to go into the ghettos. The Jewish Police (Genz was the commander) followed more and more orders given by the Germans: the latter tactics and trickery. Glasman (the assistant police commander) resigned, as he refused to follow those orders. He was moved to the building committee with a few others. This was also a key position, living quarters, hiding places, etc. Oshmyani (???), when he refused to fulfill doubtful duties there, he was imprisoned (he suspected an “action”). Although, the Jews there were told that an “action” was coming, and not a transfer to Kovno, they refused to believe.
- 8.00.00 Communist activists inside and outside the ghetto.
- 10.00 The Wittenberg case, commander of the underground.
- 23.10 Crisis among the underground members after the killing of Wittenberg. Disappointment at the ghetto’s insistence to give him to the Gestapo. Underground is urged to join the partisans, which in 1943, began to operate.
- 24.14 Glasman was in the first group of the underground to join the partisans (half of the 30 were killed in an ambush) in the month of July.
- 25.26 The womens delegation to the Russian front was to inform the world about what is happening to the Jews. The BBC did not mention anything in their broadcasts. Sonia Nadisker, a fervent communist, was one of them. They posed as the wives

- of Polish soldiers who were looking for their husbands. Talks about their failed mission.
- 31.00 The ghetto is surrounded by Germans, Ukrainians and Lithuanians. Liquidation seemed imminent. Some residents had been taken previously to Estonia, from where they wrote letters to the ghetto.
- 31.57 Germans encouraged the ghetto residents to volunteer to work in Estonia. The underground was mobilized and took positions. The unarmed group was taken prisoner immediately by the Germans. Another battalion clashed with the Germans (who blew out the building). The Germans withdrew. Genz promised them 5,000 Jews to work in Estonia.
- 38.32 Underground decides to go to the forest, since there was no chance that anyone else in the ghetto will join them.
- 40.00 There were other organized groups in the ghetto waiting to go to the forest. The "Halutz" under the leadership of Sheinboim was one of them. The revisionists, under Baruch Freedman, which never intended to join the partisans. Another group was the policemen's (also revisionist) Genz who provided them with weapons.
- 44.20 A group of unorganized religious youth joined the underground and later the partisans.
- 45.32 The underground left for the forest in small groups. All of the weapons they had smuggled in, in coffins, were taken out with them in the same way, in the direction of the Vilna cemetery. About 100 members left the ghetto.
- 48.30 The group had to walk 200 km. to reach the forest, mainly at night. It took one week.
- 54.00 The ghetto "action" to Estonia happened on September 1st. The deportees were truly sent to work there. By Rosh Hashana, on September 23rd, preparations to liquidate the ghetto began. The remaining underground escaped through the underground pipes, to the Rudnicki forest (100 km. from Vilna).
- 55.16 Nissan went to the Narocz forest. Narkov was the brigade commander. The group included partisans from other areas, too.
- 56.38 After a week, the ghetto partisans were told to give up their weapons, and that they will be issued others. They were also requested all of their valuables in order to purchase weapons. It was a ploy; they were simply robbed. They were also told they cannot keep their Jewish identity as a group, as the organization shouldn't be by ethnic groups but rather by geographic areas. Nissan's group

- ceased to be called by the Hebrew word “Nekama.” It became Comsomolsky. Some Christians joined the group.
- 9.00.00 They complained about all of the above to Markus. He told them to fight with sticks.
- 2.40 The Jewish group went to Kazimir, the commander of the Lithuanian partisans, and requested to join them. Kazimir sent them, with weapons, to Rudnicki. The group was caught and killed after a battle. Only one person survived. Nissan had not left with them.
- 7.40 The Germans would come and encircle and blockade the forest. The partisans fled, in disarray, each left to their own devices. The group of Jews, who had only been there for a couple of weeks, was left alone to fend for themselves. They walked 1 km. and settled there, in miserable conditions, waiting for the siege to be lifted. It turned out that their hiding place had been 7-8 km. from the road – they were lucky that the Germans did not catch them (The group called itself “Nissl’s house” because of Nissan’s efforts in its survival).
- 14.20 Most of Nissan’s group was made up of women.
- 20.00 Living conditions in the forest.
- 26.10 Nissan’s Jewish partisans, a total of 9, prevailed upon Kazimir to allow them to join his partisans. He relented and ordered them to join the Vilna group in the Kazjan forest. They were there until liberation in June-July, 1944.
- 28.24 The partisans’ activities. Relationship with women.
- 38.00 Nissan and others remained in the forest for a month and a half after liberation in order to cleanse the place of Germans (who themselves had escaped there).
- 38.39 Return to Vilna; arrival there in August.
- 51.29 About Shutan.
- 55.28 About Genz.
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- 10.03.27 Death sentence decided against Esther Yaffe, Glassman’s lover. It was never carried out. When he left her, it was suspected that she had become an informant.
- 8.46 About Sonia Madersker
- 13.30 Daily life in the ghetto. Cultural activities. The struggles. Occupations. Education.

- 22.00 The Bund's position against the FPO (underground organization). Relationship with other Zionist groups.
- 30.00 The Wittenberg-Glassman controversy.
- 40.00 The relationship with the Genz.
- 45.00 The relationship with the Revisionists.
- 46.00 The collaborators: Dessler, Auerbuch, Ring???
- 56.36 Nissan's connection with his parents. His sadness because of the final separation, knowing that they will not survive.
- 11.10.00 The Jewish theatre in the Vilna ghetto.
- 13.00 Nissan's work in the ghetto.
- 16.00 The implications of the events Nissan witnessed and suffered during the Holocaust, and his life today.
- 19.00 The motivation behind not telling the children of the horrible events, and the silence on the subject in Israel for the first 20 years of independence.
- 23.07 About Abba Kovner. He was valued for his ability to express himself. But, he was a lover, he elevated himself over others, was always a "party" member, as opposed to all others in the FPO; was not militarily talented.
- 44.08 Return to Vilna, from the forest, in 1944, after the Russians freed the town. Many of the partisans did not want to go to the army. They got other local jobs, same in their professions.
- 46.49 Nissan and his friends decided to take the opportunity to advance westward.
- 47.07 The return to Vilna and what they found there. There were already Jews who had been hiding or in other places. Nissan got a job in the railroad, in aerial defense; therefore, he didn't need to go to the army.
- 56.52 Nissan went back home to visit and get in touch with the Lidovsky group. He had a document to travel. In Pinsk he found out the tragic fate of his parents.
- 12.00.00 After ½ day, he moved to Rovno. He was detained on the way, and accused of being a spy because of the tefillin he was carrying. Encounter with a Jewish station master.

- 4.50 Encounter with the Lidovsky group.
- 7.00 People are slowly making their way to Israel.
- 11.37 Chaim Peled was sent to Israel.
- 14.25 Nissan also visited Kovno, Sianlai, and encouraged the Jews to gather in Vilna.
- 16.00 Informant tells on the group on the way to Israel. They are detained after the Russians found a suitcase filled with falsified documents.
- 21.23 The group is reoriented to Levov, and then to Lublin. Adam Rand of Levov.
- 25.00 Nissan's journey to Bialistok, through Lide, in January-February 1945. Arrived in Lublin. Kovner was there, and Lidovsky and others. They received news that it was possible to leave through Romania. People began their waiting in Yezhov and Krosno???
- 28.00 Meeting in Lublin with Autek Zuckerman, Tzivie Lubetsky and Abba Kovner. Nissan did not participate in it. They talked about the future. They believed that there would be repatriation to Poland and Jewish life would resume. Nissan's group maintained that its future is in Israel.
- 32.00 With the liberation of Prague, the connection to the Jews there was renewed. They did not believe in political parties after the great tragedy. There has to be unity.
- 33.26 Talks about the "avengers," which Nissan did not join.
- 35.00 The "escape" (brecha) movement, the fruit of the cooperation of all of the movements together, and the lack of means of their participants. Many times, they robbed the wealthy Jews (those who refused to give willingly) and gave them receipts to be repaid by the Jewish agency upon arrival to Israel.
- 39.00 The Warsaw Jewish leaders also left.
- 41.00 Nissan stayed longer to organize the escape of the Russian Jews too. They began to rescue children from convents and catholic families.
- 43.14 Nissan was in Humenne on the border between Poland and Czechoslovakia when the war ended.
- 43.34 Arrival in Romania.
- 45.00 Reflections on the Gulf War (going on at the time of Nissan's interview) and a comparison with the feelings during World War II.

13.02.30 The praise of the youth movements during the war.

15.00 Differences between ideology of the youth movements from Warsaw and Vilna. The latter, Nissan among them, were in a hurry to leave the “cemetery.”

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28.00 Attempt to unify the different youth movements for the sake of immigration to Israel failed.

36.24 Attempts to find a way to Israel through Greece, Yugoslavia, or Italy.

37.20 A few certificates were issued for immigration to Israel. They were given to the survivors who had been in training farms. They departed from Bucharest. The rest of the survivors found an illegal way to Israel. The “escape” movement, and help from the Jewish Brigade.

39.00 Coordination between youth movements and struggles to make a way to Israel.

42.00 Organization in Terviso, Italy, establishment of “kibbutzim” throughout Italy. Nissan’s youth movement sent 52 groups to Israel, the highest number between all of the other movements to send illegal immigrants.

47.00 Nissan’s feelings as he met the envoy from Israel and the Jewish Brigade, after the war.

50.00 Emotional reaction of envoys when meeting survivors.

57.00 Rich cultural and educational activities in Italy.

14.08.08 Nissan arrived in Israel in 1947 and went to Kibbutz Nitzanim.

8.47 Nissan’s wife

00.01.00 The position of the FPO on waging war in the ghetto or fighting in the forests was consolidated in 1943. Before they were organized, the Jews who went to fight in the forests or on their own were liquidated.

4.40 The Jewish partisans were subsumed under the general organizations and had to give up their arms. Afterward, the Jews had to give up anything of value, also.

9.06 The struggle within the partisan organization, which did not relate to the Jews in positive ways. Life as a partisan in Narocz.

15.00 The extent of the Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda and its effect on the entire world, including the non-Jewish partisans.

- 22.00 The avengers, during and after the war.
- 28.00 Hatred toward Jews and its expression in the forest.
- 30.00 Nissan's life in Kibbutz Nitzanim. The fall of the kibbutz, at the hands of the Egyptian. Nissan was a prisoner of war in a kind of concentration camp in Egypt. Liberated after 9 months. The kibbutz was rebuilt in a different location.
- 51.24 The battle record of the struggle in Nitzanim. The accusations against the Nitzanim fighters; it was "political" in Nissan's view.
- 1.03.30 Nissan was sent by his youth movement to work in Argentina in 1951-53(4) and was responsible for the immigration of many Jews to Nitzanim and Eyin Hashlosha.
- 7.00 The battle for Nitzanim. 33 kibbutz members fell while defending one single position.
- 10.03 Difference between WWII fighting and the defense for the independence of Israel.
- 12.00 No one spoke about the Holocaust in Israel until the 60's. Meeting of Nissan with the Yiddish poet and former partisan Shmerke Kaczerginsky, in Argentina (where the latter perished in a plane crash).
- 15.00 Talks about the period in Italy, 1945-47. The illegal immigration.
- 19.40 The organization of Jewish life in Italy, getting ready for a long stay there while waiting to immigrate (concentration of Jews in Roma, Turin, etc.).
- 23.00 Arrival of Israeli envoys.
- 27.00 The unification of B'nai Akivah and Hanoar Hatzioni in Europe.
- 30.30 Nissan's participation in the Zionist congress in Basel in 1946. His testimony about the war left everyone impressed.
- 33.00 The establishment of a "sea kibbutz" in Fano, Italy.
- 39.00 Encounter with survivors of concentration camps.
- 41.00 Survivors did not come to terms with their war past until they had settled in their new country.
- 48.40 Nissan's first child, a daughter, was born in Italy.
- 52.40 The Joint supported the Jews in Italy.

- 54.00 Italians were supportive of the Jews.
- 55.03 Nissan immigrated to Israel in the ship, Transylvania, with a forged certificate.
- 56.00 Activities of Nissan's youth movement in the different cities before, during and after the war.
- 58.00 The fate of the Bund (the Workmens' Circle, in ???York)????????????????
- 2.01.00 Nissan discusses the Bund activities for the sake of Yiddish.
- 2.26 Nissan's reaction to Antek Zuckerman's book about the period after 1945.

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- 17.01.39 Nissan's reaction to Antek Zuckerman's book continues. Nissan's war credo.
- 18.10.06 The "Nekamah" (revenge) movement, and Nissan's non-participation in it. His reasons for this.
- 14.10 Nissan's words of praise of the Jewish youth.