

RG-50.120*161

Testimony of Zipora Vardi (Hebrew)

Tape 1

- 1:01 Born 1928, Yuel(?) Hungary. Small town, 5,000 Jews. Describes Jewish community and family life, early childhood. Extended family spread out all over Europe.
- 1:16 Government mistreatment of Jews; family moves to predominantly Jewish neighborhood. Friends with German [gentile] neighbors. Describes persecution of German and Austrian Jews 1934-35, incl. her family there.
- 1:25 Hungary joins Nazi axis. Illegally listening to Moscow radio. Describes experience with gentile shoemaker; effect of persecution on Jewish professionals. Discusses and illustrates her memory characteristics: remembering by association.
- 1:43 1939-start of war. Learning of murder of Jews, Kristalnacht. Describes how news was heard. Getting false papers to avoid forced labor. Murder of unattached Jews in town.
- 1:55 Describes survival of her aunt. Brother taken to forced labor at the front lines. Describes finding Yad Vashem document of her brother disappearing Jan.-March 1943. Second brother sent to forced labor inside Hungary. Describes extent of knowledge of war and persecution events.
- 2:12 1944 German occupation of Hungary. Describes details of persecutions, establishment of ghetto, ghetto life.
- 2:26 Two sisters planning to escape. Zipora and her mother caught by gendarmes. Mother forbids sisters to join them. Taken to railroad station going east. Finds young Jews in freight car who tell them about killing of Jews, crematoria. The young Jews plan to escape at night to go to Slovakia, where there are not as yet deportations of Jews. They had a saw to cut chain on door and jump from moving train at night. (Gendarmes had been replaced by German SS who are

- more polite.) Mother encourages her to jump, but she doesn't. Arrive Auschwitz with open freight car door.
- 3:00 Train stays all night in Auschwitz. Father puts on talith and prays. Prisoners order them out of car. One tells her to say she is 18, not her actual age. Runs to say goodbye to father – beaten back. Selection. Mother taken to left – bad side. Taken to barracks in Auschwitz-Birkenau; ordered to undress; beaten; taken to shower room; given prisoner garb; taken to camp. Told about gas chambers and crematoria.
- 3:32 Describes *appel*, distribution of utensils and food, tattooing of numbers. Talks to woman with children in a separate block.
- 3:28 Assigned to work in crematoria warehouse of belongings taken from arrivals. Hiding jewelry by burying it. Describes burning of corpses outdoor – crematoria overloaded. SS man orders them to dress better. Describes seeking moment of privacy.
- 3:37 Encounter with the “one eye” SS man. Find dead infant amongst clothing and bury him. Changing scarf colors to meet other women in toilet. Learns that her two sisters also came to Auschwitz. Describes how they hid things through searches.
- 3:44 Visit to Lager Z – Musselman people. Describes punishments of German Kapo. Caught throwing letter over the fence – describes beating.
- 3:49 Describes de-lousing. Taken to textile factory work. Describes selection; hunger – reminiscing about good meals. Sister refuses to eat, Zipora prepares special food for her.
- 3:56 Rosh Hashanah – praying/talking to God. Yom Kippur – fasting, saving/hiding food ration. Aborted selection, running naked in the rain back to barrack. Eats sister's ration.

Tape 2

- 4:06 Recapping days after Germans entered Hungary. Incident with German soldier and their German neighbors.

- 4:15 Auschwitz end of October. Describes conditions, reactions of different women. Dealing with religious practices. Encounter with woman from home town on way to gas chamber.
- 4:35 Attempted escape from Auschwitz-Birkenau. Woman sentenced to be burned alive in crematorium commits suicide in front of German. Describes uprising in Auschwitz. Knows Laufer (in Israel) – one of few who survived.
- 4:42 Informed about end of selections. Pretends to be sick to join sister in infirmary. Describes loss of shoe – help from SS woman.
- 4:50 Death march Jan. 18, 1945. Evacuation from Auschwitz. Everyone must go – marching out at night. Road covered with dead people. Five days and nights without food or water.
- 5:08 Come to railroad train – 150 people to a car, with two SS men. Get food – piece of sugar and margarine. Describes arrival in Ravensbrueck. Makes new, close friend, Eva, who dies at night in her arms.
- 5:27 Moved to “penalty” block. Moved to Neustadt-Kleve(?) camp. Digging anti-tank ditches. See German civilians retreating. Being guarded by teenagers. Makes friends with Elsa, 10 year older woman. Elsa steals some of her bread.
- 5:42 Selected as part of group taken to kitchen and given Red Cross food package to be divided up. “Kinderblock” being established for show. Describes days of liberation – May 2-3. Everyone running to kitchen.
- 5:58 “The gate is open.” Thousands of women afraid of one woman pretending to be SS,
- 6:01 Reflections on liberation – eating, washing. Russian soldiers arrive, inmates go into town looking for food.

Tape 3

- 6:09 Recounting first day when Germans abandoned camp. Describes people dying after liberation. Stealing bicycle from German civilian policeman. Announcement of end of war. Russian soldiers not helpful.
- 6:22 Going “home” by foot. Continuing by horse and wagon to Stettin. Assaulted by Russian soldiers. Describes getting new horses, searching for food, rape attempts by Russian soldiers. Meeting Jewish soldiers.
- 6:41 Arrive Stettin. Russians take away horses. Meet up with Belgian POW’s who help them. Sign up with Czech officials who take them by bus to Prague. Describes experiences in Prague and travel to Bratislava and Michalouša. Finds her brother.
- 7:05 Going by train to Budapest. Goes with cousin to her home town. Learns about death of her sister in Auschwitz.
- 7:12 Life in town “normal”; no one pays attention to her. Describes living conditions, trading illegally in Budapest. Struggling with religious beliefs. Joins Bnei Akiva. Learns about likely death of her two sisters in Riga. Decide to go to Palestine. Looks up the shoemaker, who now wants her to join communist party. Describes meeting with German neighbors, their experiences.
- 7:51 Misses transport to Palestine because of illness. Crosses border – ends up in Germany, DP camp Wintzheim. Create kibbutz, training in agricultural work. Israeli representatives (“shlichim”) do not relate to them, and vice versa – did not feel wanted. Comes to Israel, joins army during war of independence.
- 8:04 Describes settling in Kfar Etzion. Setting up home for widows and orphans.