

RG-50.120*0271

Akavia, Chanan – 4 Tapes

Tape I

- 1:02:11 On March 19, 1944 the Germans entered Hungary. Chanan was a high school student in the city of Uzhhorod. Although he lived a normal life, echoes of what was happening all over Europe came to him, though no one believed refugees and eye-witnesses to the extermination.
- 1:04:51 Chanan returned home to Sighet, Romania, where his family lived. All was chaotic.
- 1:06:03 Chanan was born on July 29, 1927 in Sighet (Sighetu Marmatiei).
- 1:06:11 The city and its landscape.
- 1:10:59 The Jews (50% of the city) and their occupations.
- 1:12:36 Chanan's father Moshe Haim Yakubovich, the son of Yehuda Liba and Hinde, was born in a little village near Sighet, to very poor parents. By training and occupation, his father was an expert on lumber mills and tree diseases.
- 1:14:42 Chanan's immediate family was very well-off. Father was a self-made man.
- 1:17:22 Father was the head of the community until they were all deported to Auschwitz.
- 1:18:44 Talks about his home
- 1:21:24 Chanan's mother was Rivka bat (daughter of) Liba and Chaim Davidovich. She was born in the same town as Chanan's father. Her family was very well off.
- 1:22:21 Chanan's parents were married in that little town of Apc. His father was away in Bosnia for long periods of time. Their first five children died at birth or immediately after. Only the sixth child, a girl (Tzvia) survived. The rabbi ordered them to add to her name another one: Chaya (for life).
- 1:23:11 When Tzvia was still young, the family moved to Sighet, where Chanan was born.
- 1:23:36 Talks about his mother.

- 1:29:23 Describes the holidays at home.
- 1:36:32 Talks about his education.
- 1:37:42 Describes the changes that take place upon the entrance of Hungary to Sighet.
- 1:39:17 Chanan was sent to a Jewish gymnasium in Budapest, where he became more secular.
- 1:46:26 In 1943, Chanan's parents transferred him to Ungvar, closer to home.
- 1:53:00 Bergen-Belsen. Chanan waited for three hours for the privilege of laying tefillin, together with many others. He promised God that, if his family survives the war, he would return to lead a religious life. But if the family died then "God died too."
- 1:54:11 His family included four children. Tzvia, a brother Yitchak, himself, and Hinde.
- 1:55:24 Chanan describes his siblings, one by one. A small, "poor" wedding for his sister Tzvia. All the paupers of the city were invited.
- 1:58:17 Describes his home.
- 2:06:50 Paternal grandfather lived with Chanan and his family. He was an expert in sending lumber down the river. He was also the company's accountant. He was burned in Auschwitz.
- 2:09:32 His maternal grandmother also lived with them. She and the great – grandmother were burnt.
- 2:11:09 Home help. The end of the second helper, at Auschwitz.
- 2:14:21 Description of the home.
- 2:16:21 The time period between March 19 and May 1, when the family was deported to Auschwitz.
- 2:16:56 Germans enter Chanan's town. His father was in the Judenrat, a fact that broke him. Options for escape were weighed, but it was decided against.
- 2:22:00 Anti-Jewish laws were implemented in Sighet. The Germans came to the

house and dispossessed the family. Then, they moved to the ghetto, where Chanan worked in distributing the mail. The young people went to live in a barn. Expresses thoughts and reflections.

- 2:52:00 The ghetto period was short, about two to three weeks.
- 3:00:00 Chanan was an obedient child who listened to his parents' decisions to stay together as a family.
- 3:01:53 Tells about the influence on Chanan of the attorney Fred Preminger, who had fled to the forest and then was caught and deported.
- 3:05:25 Talks about deportation day.
- 3:16:46 Describes the train.
- 3:25:00 Describes the arrival at Auschwitz. This was the last time that Chanan's name was Lipi Yakubowicz ben (son of) Rivka and Moshe Chaim. After the train doors were open, he became a number.
- 3:26:45 He describes the sights and sounds; the smell. Chanan says that he was limited by human language that cannot describe the horrors of the first two days in Auschwitz.

Tape II

- 4:00:00 From the time of their arrival in Auschwitz, the Jewish deportees were moved to Treblinka and Buna, but Chanan uses the name "Auschwitz" as the terrible symbol for those places, not exact geographically.
- 4:04:20 Talks about the transfer to Block 44, which was one of the youth barracks.
- 4:06:05 Describes the barracks, life within, the fixed daily schedule, and the food.
- 4:31:05 There was a bordello in Buna, and the people in charge of the inmates were given coupons to use them; there was also a soccer field, an orchestra, and a canteen. They traded for cigarettes and food.
- 4:40:57 They worked in Buna for the "I.G. Farben Industries." Chanan worked in "Commando II." They manufactured cement pipes in different diameters that needed to be classified by size (1/2 meter and more). After two to three days, Chanan's fingers were caught between the pipes and they were crushed. He ended up staying in the camp hospital for a few days.
- 4:47:22 Describes the hospital patients.

- 4:53:00 He worked in the toy workshop in “Commando 90.”
- 5:00:00 Talks about moral dilemmas. *Very interesting!*
- 5:09:30 Describes the selections in Buna.
- 5:18:02 Talks about the hangings.
- 5:23:27 Talks about the relationships between different groups from different nationalities in Buna.
- 5:26:39 Talks about the different age groups in Buna.
- 5:30:10 Describes the German involvement in Buna.
- 5:33:28 Chanan is transported away because he answers in the affirmative when asked who graduated high school? He is then separated from his brother, cousin, and brother-in-law. It was the beginning of September. He is sent to a course. It was a factory to build anti-aircraft weapons. The factory was Laurahütte located near Katowice.
- 5:47:27 Talks about a hanging in Laurahütte
- 5:49:02 Chanan was injured, and the wound became infected. He was forced to go to the camp hospital. The treatment was painful, done without anesthetic. He went back to work immediately.
- 5:53:03 Talks about relationships in Laurahütte.
- 6:01:13 He left by train from Siemianowice Slaskie (Laurahütte) to Hanover. It was winter. The whole area had been evacuated.
- 6:04:09 Describes the voyage.
- 6:08:27 Describes the arrival in Mauthausen, and then in Gusen (where he found out that his family from Buna was there too, but he never met them).
- 6:12:02 After a short time, they were all transported to another camp in Hanover.
- 6:15:55 Chanan is sent again to work in a weapons factory, in a huge hangar. There were daily bombings.
- 6:18:03 Describes the work.

- 6:28:45 They spent the winter in Hanover, and then they were transferred to a different place.
- 6:30:00 Talks about the evacuation to Bergen-Belsen. Chanan was very weak already. They walked for three to four days.
- 6:45:37 Talks about his arrival in Bergen-Belsen, where he is told his father is alive, in the same camp. The first days there.
- 6:51:05 Talks about cannibalism among inmates.
- 6:52:17 Chanan said he had the feeling that the presence of the angel of death was fighting him with his last strength.
- 6:53:08 Describes liberation
- Tape III
- 7:02:04 At liberation, Chanan stayed in bed, because he was very weak, so he did not go out to greet the British liberators. Talks of encounter with a cousin.
- 7:11:13 Talks of his personal feelings upon liberation.
- 7:14:32 After a few days, Chanan was taken to the hospital unconscious. He wakes up later, without knowing how many days he was out of it.
- 7:28:35 Describes his feelings upon awakening. He weighed less than 28 kg. He was bedridden for months.
- 7:34:00 Chanan declared his wish to return to his birthplace, in Rumania, Sighet, but still could not walk.
- 7:37:44 Chanan and Dr. Freed, from his town, decided to go to Sweden, where they were sending patients for recuperation.
- 7:43:09 Talks of leaving the hospital at Bergen-Belsen. Departure for Sweden, via Lübeck. There they underwent disinfection with DDT, etc.
- 7:46:30 They were put on a ship in the direction of Sweden.
- 7:50:24 Describes arrival in Sweden, in Malmo, where they are quarantined.
- 7:51:54 Describes the hospital and the emotions of those who arrived there.
- 7:55:00 Talks of the shocking encounter with the general population and the awareness that the tragedy of the war did not happen to the entire world,

but to a specific population, Chanan among them. The rest of the world kept on living their normal lives.

- 7:56:33 At that time Chanan was only seventeen and a half. He was diagnosed with Tuberculosis (TB).
- 7:57:46 Chanan's Swedish nurse was Marta.
- 8:00:00 Talks about the correspondence with Marta, and her story.
- 8:06:30 Chanan reads a letter, in English, from his nurse Marta, the nurse, in which she describes how Chanan was in the hospital.
- 8:09:15 Chanan is sent to a sanatorium for TB patients on the Island Lebro.
- 8:12:27 Talks of the beginning of disagreements among the Jewish and non-Jewish patients, caused by relationships with the nurses. The latter preferred the Jewish patients and the Poles were jealous.
- 8:14:58 During that time his search for family members begins.
- 8:16:48 Talks of the awareness of being alone in the world.
- 8:22:44 Chanan received a scholarship to study in a Polytechnic in Sweden. He began involvement with the Zionist organization, Hehalutz.
- 8:27:49 Arrival in Vickelbi, a kind of training farm in preparation for emigration to Eretz Israel.
- 8:29:20 First time he hears about Israel.
- 8:32:00 Describes Vickelbi.
- 8:36:25 Talks about meeting his future wife.
- 8:37:38 Describes his studies.
- 8:42:11 Chanan worked in the carpentry shop. He had a terrible accident.
- 8:44:39 Tells of locating his cousin, and finding out that his sister, brother-in-law and cousin survived the war, and lived in Prague.
- 8:48:14 Chanan was faced with a dilemma as to where he should go?
- 8:49:42 His family encouraged him to go to Israel, and he received one of the six certificates given to Sweden to be allowed to go to Israel.

- 8:52:00 He developed ear problems.
- 8:56:00 Talks of life in the Hehalutz group.
- 8:59:00 Describes Rushka, the leader.
- 9:04:00 He felt that what was more important for the group was the future, rather than the past, which was not discussed.
- 9:20:31 The group departed for Israel it was tough to leave.
- 9:23:58 Describes the sea voyage to Eretz Israel.
- 9:37:48 The ship “Cairo” took the group from Marseille to Israel.
- 9:39:47 Describes his arrival in Israel.
- 9:44:37 It was the end of May 1946. Describes the trip to their home in Israel at Degania B.
- 9:45:18 Arrival in the kibbutz under the auspices of Aliyat Ha-Noar.
- 9:51:24 Talks about his work on the kibbutz.
- 9:53:53 There was a lack of communication with same age group of Kibbutzniks.
- 9:58:00 One could feel the preparations for the fight against the British. Black Saturday was the turning point in the fight against them.
- Tape IV
- 10:02:14 The British arrived in Degania B. It was Chanan’s first awareness of being part of the Zionist dream.
- 10:03:15 Tells the story of Korchi, a young Yugoslavian Jewish refugee who came on the ship with the group from Europe. He lied about his age to be able to volunteer in the Independence War, and he fell in action.
- 10:06:30 Talks of life in Degania B and lack of interaction and understanding on the part of the Kibbutz members.
- 10:08:24 Chanan and Miriam marry at the Kibbutz.
- 10:10:46 Move to Kibbutz Ginosar, for two years. Same lack of communication with other kibbutz members.

- 10:19:32 Talks about friends at the Kibbutz who were also survivors.
- 10:23:22 He was frustrated at not being able to continue studying.
- 10:25:22 Chanan's wife contracts hepatitis a week before she is due to give birth. The baby survived only eight days. They were shocked and saddened at the lack of support both at the Kibbutz and at the hospital
- 10:28:31 Describes the War of Independence.
- 10:29:09 Their request to become full members of the Kibbutz was denied.
- 10:35:10 Talks of abandoning the Kibbutz Ginosar.
- 10:37:39 They joined other survivors as a nucleus for a new Kibbutz, Givat Haim.
- 10:39:28 They were sent to Tantura, and with the group from Sweden, they established the Kibbutz Nachsholim, at the sea shore. Fishing was their main source of income.
- 10:42:17 Chanan became the treasurer.
- 11:02:39 Chanan and Miriam adopted a child.
- 11:03:58 Miriam was struck by TB again. They had to give up the child. She was hospitalized for a year.
- 11:09:32 The couple decides to leave the Kibbutz and moved to Neve Amal.
- 11:22:46 They had a baby girl in 1954.
- 11:26:52 They moved to Tel Aviv in 1956, and began friendships with native Israelis.
- 11:32:19 Chanan came to the conclusion that, in the Israel of those years, people were afraid to ask survivors their story, and the survivors were afraid to tell, and there was no one to bridge the gap!
- 11:33:20 In 1964, Chanan was offered a post at the Israeli Embassy in Budapest. He took six to seven months to decide in the affirmative. His main objective in accepting was to show the world that the Jews were still there!
- 11:38:42 Tells of his experiences as a diplomat under a communist regime. He did more traveling in his official and personal capacities. He went back to the places where he suffered.

- 12:13:27 Talks about his mission in Sweden.
- 12:30:00 Very moving closing, quoting from his wife's book and from Sholem Aleichem's last will and testament.