

Eisler, Ester
RG-50.120*0300
1 videotape
In Hebrew

Abstract: Ester Eisler was born in Czechoslovakia in 1926 to a family in good economic standing. Things began to deteriorate in Sala after the arrival of the Hungarians in 1938. In 1944, the Germans came and created a ghetto. Soon, the Jews were taken to a larger ghetto in Nové Zámky. She was later sent to Auschwitz, where several of her family members were immediately killed. She was later transferred to Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, and Duderstadt, doing various work, from making drapes to working in an ammunition factory. On April 2, 1944, she was marched out of the camp on a death march because the Allies were advancing. They arrived in Wolfenragul, where Ester hid with other girls when other prisoners were told to move to Theresienstadt. Ester's group was liberated on April 13th. She went back to Czechoslovakia to look for surviving relatives, but eventually immigrated to Israel illegally. After being held up on Cyprus, she eventually was taken to Palestine.

01:00:30 Ester Eisler (nee Kalish), was born in Czechoslovakia in 1926. Her family was observant. There were three sisters, and an older brother from the first marriage of her widowed mother. The boy was three years old when Ester's mother married her father. The boy's name was Yosef. In 1939, he immigrated to Israel. Ester's two sisters were Lea, a year and a half younger, and Miriam, six years younger. Ester was the oldest of the girls.

01:02:02 Sala, Ester's birthplace, was the regional center for many smaller communities and the school was located there. The town was located in Slovakia, between Nitra and Galanta. Her father was from Sala, while her mother was from Nitra.

01:02:55 Ester's mother had two brothers in Nitra who would come to visit often, until 1942 when one was taken to Poland. The other brother moved to Hungary where Ester's mother would travel to bring him food. He lived in "consular" houses, belonging to either the Swedish or the Swiss Embassies. He had obtained documents as a "non-Jew". His son stayed with Ester's family.

01:03:46 Ester's mother was very active in women's and communities groups.

01:06:24 Her father had a large textile shop with three employees. The family was well off. There was a Jewish nursemaid for the children, who spoke German well and taught it to the children. It was customary for families in good economic situations to learn and use German. Ester's family spoke

it on Shabbat. In school they spoke Slovakian and in the street, Hungarian, as the town was close to Hungary.

- 01:07:33 The family also employed a cook and a cleaning person. The home was large and her mother worked in the store.
- 01:11:02 There were many gypsies in the area, who bought merchandise at the Eisler's store. The family also employed them to harvest the fruit of their orchard and to do other jobs in the home such as laundry, canning, etc.
- 01:11:33 Ester's mother was in charge of shopping for the store. When the train conductor saw her coming or when she was delayed, the train would stop or wait for her.
- 01:12:49 There were 120 Jewish families among the total population of 5,000. She talks about the relationship between Jews and non-Jews. When Ester went to high school, the Jewish kids had to attend class on Shabbat, but they were exempt from writing. When the class prayed, the Jews were excused and left the room. Milk came from non-Jewish farmers. There was always a Jew witnessing the milking, otherwise the milk would be pronounced non-Kosher. The children could not befriend non-Jews.
- 01:16:44 Ester's family was Zionist. After the Shabbat was read and its songs were complete, the family always added two or three Zionist songs.
- 01:21:21 She discusses the activities of the youth on their day off.
- 01:24:03 She explains the process of her older brother immigrating to Israel.
- 01:25:44 In the winter of 1938, the Hungarians came to the country.
- 01:26:00 In 1941, their store was closed. They managed to hide some fabric and would sew things in the evenings to be sold. Their store was taken over by the Pope's cousin. At first, they got along with him. Then, the relationship deteriorated and he wouldn't allow them to set foot in the store. It was 1942.
- 01:29:46 Ester was taught to sew at age fourteen.
- 02:05:57 During the war, her mother organized food parcels to send to Vienna to the needy Jews. Ester's father listened to the radio and made an album with newspaper clippings on the progress of the war. Since he was no longer busy in the store, he would study Torah.
- 02:12:37 Ester's father was the treasurer of the Jewish community.

- 02:22:00 Ester's parents' families were taken to Opole.
- 02:23:28 The Germans entered the city in 1944 and a ghetto was created. Ester's house was in the middle of the ghetto.
- 02:25:59 The local gendarmes cooperating with the Germans, came to the house, broke into the safe and took everything of value.
- 02:28:11 She describes the activities in the ghetto.
- 02:28:41 The Jews were not there for long. They were taken to a larger ghetto in Nové Zámky. They were housed in a former brick factory, opened on all sides. For the most part, there were women and children there. When put on the train to be deported, many of the goyim cried, while many cheered.
- 3:02:00 She describes her arrival at Nové Zámky. The mail was delivered through the Red Cross a week later. The family received a notice from Ester's brother in Palestine. The notice said that there was a certificate for the entire family awaiting them in Budapest.
- 03:04:27 Ester's mother decided that everyone's fate will be hers too, and did not redeem the certificate.
- 03:07:38 She describes the transport to Auschwitz. Ester, her sister Lea, and a cousin were sent by Dr. Mengele to the "good side" while Ester's mother, grandmother, and sister Miriam were sent to the "wrong side."
- 03:13:15 She talks about processing into the camp. It was May 1944.
- 03:14:19 She describes the transfer to Birkenau.
- 03:16:23 The Jewish Slovakian girls were the go between with the Germans. There was a bad relationship.
- 03:19:22 After two to three weeks, Ester began to work making drapes.
- 03:26:39 She describes punishments in the camp.
- 04:06:32 Ester and the members of her group were transferred to Bergen-Belsen, where they were housed in tents. It was September.
- 04:08:02 Ester's sister Lea fell ill.
- 04:10:18 Lea created a connection with the autonomous camp of Kastner.
- 04:15:07 Between September and November, they did no work.

- 04:16:29 On November 5, they were transferred to Duderstadt, under Buchenwald's jurisdiction. 750 young women arrived there. They were sent to work in an ammunition factory. The production process is described. They worked 12 hours a day.
- 04:19:37 The entire plant was built underground.
- 04:21:00 After a week in the camp, Ester's sister, Lea, died.
- 04:27:59 They stayed there until April.
- 05:03:38 With the advances of the Allies, the inmates were marched out of the camp on April 2, 1944.
- 05:04:10 She describes the Death march. Maybe 150 died. She talks about their arrival in Wolfenragul(?), where Agfa had a factory. Workers there were political prisoners. When the front approached, all the prisoners were told to leave the camp and they were taken to Theresienstadt. Ester and another eight girls decided to hide in the camp. The next day they were found and taken to the regular police; both Wehrmacht and SS had already fled. They were given blankets and were sent off. They begged for food in the area and were finally liberated by the Americans on April 13. She tells the story of the liberation in Bitterfeld, near Leipzig, and the transfer to Halle, from where repatriations took place.
- 05:27:03 Ester's group was the first the Americans liberated. They had close ties with the Jewish soldier who took them under his wing.
- 05:27:38 She describes her trip back to Czechoslovakia to look for surviving relatives. Her parents also had hidden some valuables under a step in the attic.
- 06:01:30 Ester managed to get her home back and they started a "Hachshara" a year of preparation with Bnai Akiva in preparation to immigration to Israel.
- 06:03:34 Ester met her future husband then, and they were married soon after.
- 06:05:00 Ester talks about the surviving relatives of her family.
- 06:05:42 Ester managed to re-open the family store.
- 06:06:37 They immigrated illegally to Israel on the "Yagur," the first ship that the British sent back to Cyprus.

- 06:09:38 Ester's first child died. Of the twins of her second pregnancy, one child also died. Her body had suffered too much in the camps. Ester was taken to Palestine from Cyprus, together with 300 pregnant women. Her husband followed a month later, in January 1947.
- 06:10:31 She talks about life in the DP camp.
- 06:12:27 In Israel, Ester's brother waited for them with a house ready.
- 06:16:00 Ester describes her family today.