

Visgorditzki, Ya'akov
RG.50.120*0301
One Video Cassette
In Hebrew

- Abstract: Ya'akov Visgorditzki was born in Kovno on October 19, 1931. He was one of five children of Nesa and Yosef, and only he and his sister, Mira, survived. Ya'akov describes Kovno, relationships with the Poles, the brutality of the Lithuanians, ghettos, "actions" and selections. After the ghetto was liquidated, women and children were sent to Stutthof. Ya'akov went with the men to Augsburg, Dachau and Auschwitz. Ya'akov was chosen by Dr. Mengele for extermination but at the last minute joined a survivors group. In January 1945, while marching, Ya'akov escaped with two Poles and ended up in Katowice and then went to Gliwice where he became a servant for a Russian officer. After four years he went to an ORT school in the Ukraine. In 1950 he returned to Lithuania and was reunited with his sister, Mira, in Vilna. Ya'akov became a cab driver and immigrated to Israel with his wife and son.
- 1:00:39 Ya'akov was the son of Nesa and Yosef and one of five children. Ya'akov was born in Kovno, (Slobodka), on October 19, 1931. His family was at home when the war broke out. On the second day of the war, the father took the family on a wagon in the direction of Leningrad, some 30 km. But the Germans took the horses, and the family was forced to go back. On the way, his father and an older brother were taken by the Germans, and his mother returned home with the children. Poles who had worked for them before the war took over their house. Ya'akov managed to visit his father and brother just once at the 5th Fort. That was the last time Ya'akov saw his father. His brother managed to escape and lived with them in the ghetto.
- 1:05:51 Ya'akov's parents' families were large. They all lived in Kovno. His father worked as a wagon driver. Ya'akov's mother was a seamstress who learned her trade in Berlin. His family included his parents and siblings: Mira, born in 1920; David, in 1924; Leah in 1926; Meir in 1933, and a baby girl who died soon after her birth.
- 1:08:20 Ya'akov and his siblings attended synagogue on the Shabbat, and Hebrew school. The family was traditional. Ya'akov's father was 40 years old when he was killed and his mother was 35 when she was killed.
- 1:12:40 The family was not wealthy, but lacked for nothing. Mira bought a Phillips radio in 1939. That was an event for the whole neighborhood. Ya'akov got a bike from her for his birthday in 1940. Mira was the only survivor in the family.

- 1:13:57 The family was not Zionist.
- 1:15:00 Ya'akov talks about the Russians coming into Kovno, and the changes that occurred.
- 1:17:30 Describes relationship with the local Poles.
- 1:18:40 Talks about the Jewish neighborhood.
- 1:20:00 Describes the local river.
- 1:21:40 Talks about his friends.
- 1:24:27 Talks about the Lithuanians.
- 1:28:00 Describes participation in Jewish youth movements.
- 2:00:00 Talks about the first day of the war.
- 2:05:00 Talks about how the Lithuanians attacked them.
- 2:10:00 The small ghetto was erected.
- 2:15:21 The great "action" and selection. Ya'akov's mother and her younger children were taken.
- 2:18:00 In 1943 Mira got married. Ya'akov moved in with her. David was active with the partisans.
- 2:20:00 Leibele Gilman, his cousin, managed to get food from outside the ghetto. They never suffered from hunger.
- 2:28:00 Describes his activities in the ghetto.
- 3:02:39 The day Ya'akov left the ghetto to live with Mira was when the children's "action" took place. They went to live in the Shantz (?) camp. Ya'akov went to work as a "gopher," so he was out of the camp when the "action" took place.
- 3:12:41 Describes the return to the ghetto in 1944.
- 3:14:00 An attempt to escape the ghetto cost the life of(Ya'akov trails off)
- 3:14:50 The ghetto was liquidated. Women were sent to Stutthof (with the children) and the men to Augsburg. Ya'akov joined the men.

- 3:19:33 At Augsburg there were 130 children. After a week all the children were put on trucks and taken to Dachau. On the way, at a stop, they found out about the crematorium in Dachau.
- 3:22:19 They were put in the same camp as foreign political prisoners. The children had a counselor who was in charge.
- 3:25:26 Describes the transfer to Auschwitz.
- 3:26:30 On the way, they found out what Auschwitz really was and also about the crematoria there. Some children jumped off the train.
- 3:28:38 The counselor was with the children already in Dachau, where he trained them to mind and obey orders upon arrival to the storage barracks, next to the crematorium. The counselor, Halperin, gave the children the order to stand in formation. The camp counselor then decided to send the children to one of the barracks, instead of the crematorium. They were sent to Camp A, for quarantine, and were in barrack number twenty-eight.
- 4:00:00 In the first "action", which was later cancelled, children less than 1.40 meters tall were sent away. In order to add height, the children filled their shoes with rocks. It didn't help Ya'akov who was 1.35 meter and was chosen to go.
- 4:01:49 In the second "action," Dr. Mengele himself made the decisions. Ya'akov was chosen for extermination, but at the last moment he managed to join the group that would live.
- 4:03:47 At the end of 1944, they began dismantling the crematoria at Auschwitz. The older children went to work in the potato fields, but Ya'akov did not.
- 4:05:00 Tells about arrival of the Polish and Hungarian children.
- 4:08:00 Transfer to Camp D.
- 4:13:33 Description of work in crematorium four, in the dismantling of which Ya'akov worked.
- 4:15:00 Describes conditions in the camp.
- 5:05:52 The children all went back to the quarantine camp, although after Dr. Mengele's selection, only about 30 children were left. The camp was dismantled.
- 5:11:08 In the beginning of January, they were taken out by groups. After the morning drill, they were told to take bread with them. It was cold. They

started to walk and many died from the cold. The rest were then divided into two groups. The elderly, young, and infirm on one side; the young and well on the other. Ya'akov was taken care of by two young Poles. They walked 72 km to Camp Gliwice (Gleiwitz).

- 5:14:03 They managed to join the well people who were put on coal wagons, in the middle of the cold. Whoever could not stand the cold, froze to death. The train moved aimlessly back and forth. Finally the Germans ordered all surviving people off the train, and the march continued.
- 5:15:50 Shots were heard ahead. The two Poles helping Ya'akov threw him into the forest near the road. Ya'akov found an abandoned pig pen and fell asleep there. The next day, they heard tanks. They peeked through the door and saw the red stars of the Red Army.
- 5:16:00 They understood that it was the end of the war.
- 5:16:51 Talks about their arrival in Katowice where Ya'akov found out that there was a camp commander who was a Jew. After a short time, he was reappointed as commander of the city of Glewice where he had been for a while. A tailor sewed Ya'akov a Russian soldier's uniform. After a while, the commander, his secretary and chauffeur suggested that Ya'akov go with them, and on the way, they would stop in Kovno to see if anyone survived from Ya'akov's family. It turned out that it was all a lie. They were headed for Odessa and then to Marseille.
- 5:22:42 He was taken to a room full of officers. One of them suggested to Ya'akov to go with him as a servant. For four years Ya'akov was with him. He arrived in the Ukraine.
- 5:23:34 In 1946 or 1947 Ya'akov left the officer. He started to drink. Then he started to go to the ORT school.
- 5:28:58 Upon graduation from ORT, he got a job in the aircraft industry. The Russian had changed Ya'akov's name to Ya'akov Mikolaievich and recognized him as a son. After Ya'akov left him, he returned to his original name.
- 5:30:00 Early in 1950 Ya'akov managed to go back to Lithuania.
- 6:07:53 In Lithuania, he found out that his sister Mira had survived and was living in Vilna. Ya'akov arranged to get transfer papers from his job in the aircraft industry and moved to Vilna with his sister.

- 6:09:09 Ya'akov was enrolled in the obligatory army, where he served four years in the Ukraine. He also learned to drive and got his license. He became a Jewish officer's driver. He also learned auto mechanics.
- 6:13:57 Ya'akov was a driver and the mechanic of many sport groups for ten years. He got married and had a son.
- 6:15:44 Ya'akov became a member of the Komsomol in order to be able to drive a taxi, which paid better.
- 6:18:00 Ya'akov was convinced to go to Israel by a passenger in his cab, who turned out to be Russia's ambassador in Israel, and who hid the fact that he was Jewish. Ya'akov immigrated to Israel in 1958.