

RG-50.120*0303

Bak, Shoshana

2 Videocassettes

In Hebrew

Abstract: Shoshana (nee Steinwruzel) Bak was born in Belz, Ukraine on January 16, 1933. Shoshana's family owned a store. They were very observant. Her family experienced occupation under the Russians and the Germans. Her father was killed in an "aktion" by the Germans. She lived in a small ghetto near her grandparent's village until going into hiding. She was in hiding for 18 months before getting caught. Upon capture, her mother and she were sent to Kamionka then to the Lvov (Lviv) ghetto then onto Auschwitz and finally onto Bergen-Belsen. After liberation, her mother and she were sent to a DP camp in Sweden. They learned that her sister, who had been sent to hiding elsewhere, had also survived the war. Her mother and she immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1946 and her sister followed them there in 1947. Later in her life, Shoshana served in the Israeli Army and married a man who was not a survivor. She did not talk about her war experience until she was summoned to testify at a Nazi criminal trial in 1967. Shoshana's experience in the war did not decrease her faith.

01:00:20 Shoshana was born in Belz on January 16, 1933. Her maiden name was Steinwurz. Her family had a fabric store. Shoshana had a sister who was born in 1929, named Yocheved. They had a Polish cleaning lady and a Jewish nanny. Her mother spent her days working in the store and her father traveled often to Lvov to make purchases for it. The town wasn't particularly well developed. Water was brought in buckets by water-carriers. A radio was introduced with great fanfare just before the outbreak of the war. There were always many Jews coming to town to get advice from the famous Belzer Rabbi. Shoshana saw the Rabbi once walking in the summer, dressed in his fur capote, his eyes closed, being led by helpers. Her mother explained that the Rabbi preferred not to see the "sins" around him: women walking with their heads uncovered and in short sleeves. Laundry was done in the Bug River. Sometimes Shoshana would go with the cleaning lady and sit in the sun while the lady did the washing.

1:05:00 The house was observant, but her father did not cover head while outdoors. Shoshana's mother came from a Hasidic family. Her mother's father had been a religious judge in Krakow, Ben-Zion Wrubel. He was prominent in his community. The house that Shoshana grew up in was a Zionist house. She heard that her mother had obtained a legal certificate to go to Israel, but she had to give it up because of her father's opposition.

1:09:11 Jews lived mainly around the town's square. Shoshana's parent's names were Uri and Sara Meyer.

- 1:12:07 After the war broke out, her family left Belz in order to go to Raszkow where they were well received by Shoshana's grandparents. They moved in with them. They lived near the city square, across the street from City Hall.
- 1:13:17 Shoshana was 6 years old then started school in a Jewish school.
- 1:14:00 The Russians were in town. They took away the grandparent's store. Shoshana's mother had to learn house chores.
- 1:15:42 Shoshana describes life in town under Russian control.
- 1:16:22 Her father began to work in a soda factory while her mother sold merchandise in order to feed the family. She describes a Yom Kippur "Aktzia."
- 1:21:55 Shoshana explains what happened when the Germans entered the town.
- 1:22:49 During the Russian occupation, every private residence was opened, including Potosky's estate.
- 1:25:00 Shoshana's father tried to befriend the Germans through gifts and other things, just in case he would need their help.
- 1:27:35 The schools were closed when the Germans arrived.
- 1:28:00 During the first "Aktzia" the family hid in the hospital where the father worked. The ghetto was established after the second "Aktzia."
- 2:00:30 Shoshana talks about the food and water before the ghetto.
- 2:03:58 The third "Aktzia" was when Shoshana's father and extended family were killed.
- 2:13:00 Shoshana's sister obtained fake papers as a Polish girl and went to work for the Germans. Shoshana was sent to a Polish family with whom her parents had done business. After a week, when she could not adjust, she returned home. She attempted to leave the ghetto but that ended in failure as well. She returned to the Polish family from whom she had fled before. They were hidden in a bunker dug in the cow shed. Shoshana talks about her life in hiding, a period that lasted 18 months.
- 3:05:09 Another Jew joined them in hiding. The entire group was transferred to another place. They were transported in potato sacks.

- 3:10:18 The hiding place was in a bunker full of explosives. They were forced to leave the place and were caught by the Germans.
- 3:21:54 She describes the transfer to Kamionka and then to the Lvov ghetto.
- 3:24:09 The Lvov ghetto had become a concentration camp. Her mother went to work. Shoshana was too small to be sent to work. It was 1944.
- 4:01:41 It was decided that the whole group of 100+ people would be sent on a march to Plaszow, but the children (seven all together) were put in a wagon. Her mother received a heavy blow on the head, but she survived both the blow and the heaving bleeding that followed it. Shoshana's mother put on the wagon with the children.
- 4:05:36 Shoshana describes their arrival in Plaszow and her idle days there.
- 4:10:09 She talks about being transferred to Auschwitz.
- 4:17:26 They arrived in Auschwitz on October 10, 1944.
- 4:23:43 They were transferred to Bergen-Belsen, traveling by train and on foot. They were put in tents first and then in barracks.
- 5:09:00 She describes life in Bergen-Belsen.
- 5:21:46 Before liberation, Shoshana and her mother contracted Typhus.
- 6:01:00 After liberation, Shoshana and her mother were taken to a hospital where they recovered. They were sent to Sweden under the auspices of Count Bernadotte. They went first to Lubek, by stretcher, then were disinfected and afterwards were taken to the sauna, where they were sure they would be killed. They began to scream and were taken out.
- 6:03:43 They were transported by ship to Sweden to recover.
- 6:06:02 Shoshana still cannot walk well and uses orthopedic shoes.
- 6:09:31 While recovering in Sweden, they received a letter from Shoshana's sister, who also survived.
- 6:11:41 The family decided to go to Israel and received certificates. Just before getting on the ship, a 17 year old boy begged them to take him with them, which they did, putting themselves into all kinds of difficult situations during the trip. They managed to have him come off the ship dressed as a port worker. They arrived in Eretz Israel on May 28, 1946.

- 6:16:38 Shoshana explains their effort to bring her sister to Eretz Israel. Her sister finally arrived in 1947.
- 6:20:34 She talks about her first steps in Israel.
- Tape Two
- 7:01:12 Shoshana describes hiding valuables in order to retrieve them after the war, but they never went back for them.
- 7:04:01 Shoshana gives descriptions of the “actions” that she had witnessed while she was in hiding.
- 7:07:00 She talks about her experiences in the “Young Women’s Boarding School” in Jerusalem. Shoshana was the only survivor, but the majority of students were orphans.
- 7:08:17 Shoshana served in the Israeli Army, although she was observant. Passover Seder led by a priest’s son, a Brit serving in the Israeli Air Force in 1950.
- 7:09:29 Shoshana’s faith was not shaken by the war.
- 7:12:27 She never returned to her birth place.
- 7:13:33 She only started talking about her war experiences after 1967, when she was summoned to Stuttgart to testify against two Nazi criminals, Blum and Koronka. The former would unleash the dogs on the Jews; the latter was the one who had hit Shoshana’s mother over the head.
- 7:15:32 Shoshana talks about the trial, the German escorts and her testimony.
- 7:21:57 After the trial she opened up about her experiences during the war. Beforehand, she had suffered many psychosomatic illnesses because of the repression of her memories of the war.
- 7:29:23 No one told her what the outcome of the trial was.
- 8:00:01 Shoshana had lost the sense of smell during the war. She talks more about the physical and psychological consequences of the war.
- 8:15:40 She describes meeting her husband in Israel. He is not a holocaust survivor.
- 8:20:24 She talks about being fondled as a child.

- 8:21:00 Shoshana describes her view of the world.
- 8:23:15 Shoshana is absolutely not attached to material things.
- 8:23:53 Her worst memory is of the crematorium at Auschwitz.
- 8:25:09 Shoshana talks about her family.

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