

Levin, Shlomo
RG.50.120*0305
Four Cassette Tapes
In Hebrew

- Abstract: Shlomo was born in the early nineteen thirties in Kovno, Lithuania into the prestigious Levin family. During the war his family was moved to the ghetto in Slobodka. In April of 1944 the ghetto was liquidated and Shlomo was deported to Auschwitz. At Auschwitz he worked as a carpenter. When the war ended, he moved to Israel and dedicated his life to service in the Palmach, then in the tank corps, and finally the Israeli army. In 1957 Shlomo was married.
- 01:00:42 Shlomo was born in Kovno, Lithuania to the prestigious Levin family. His mother was a Karmovsky, and that was also a respectable family. His parents' names were Reuben and Masha. Shlomo was the oldest child, born in the early 1930's. He had a sister, Manya also called Malka, born in 1933 or 1934. Shlomo was called "Solomonchik" at home and then only "Monchik."
- 01:02:44 Shlomo's father was born in Latvia in 1899; his mother was born in Vilna in 1904.
- 01:03:17 His parents met and married in Kovno, where they were studying. Both had a university education.
- 1:05:50 The maternal grandparents had a high economic standing. Their house was Shlomo's house.
- 01:13:54 They spoke Yiddish, Russian, Hebrew and German. The latter they learned from a nanny they had.
- 01:15:19 The family participated in Jewish observances. Shlomo belonged to a Betar youth group.
- 01:27:02 Shlomo describes his after-school activities.
- 01:29:01 Shlomo describes the Jewish observances in his family's home.
- 02:04:28 He describes Pesah at their grandfather's house and talks about his childhood.
- 02:20:06 Shlomo describes his summers.
- 02:26:08 He talks about when the Russians entered Kovno.

- 02:28:07 When Polish refugees began arriving, the locals did not receive them well.
- 03:01:32 The Russians took away all the businesses, or intervened in the transactions. Shlomo describes changes in education.
- 03:08:57 The Levin family was chosen for deportation because they were rich and “exploiters” of their workers. The latter testified on Shlomo’s family’s behalf to the fact that they had never exploited them. Thanks to that testimony, the family was allowed to stay.
- 03:17:16 Shlomo describes the changes under the Russians in 1940.
- 03:21:49 Stories of Polish refugees began to infiltrate into Shlomo’s consciousness.
- 03:25:00 Shlomo’s father exchanged valuables for gold coins and hid them in his belt so they would not be accused of being “bourgeois” in case the house was searched by the Russians.
- 03:26:28 On June 22, the Germans entered Lithuania. They made preparations to entrench themselves in different houses. At the 7th Fort there were killings in the street. Shlomo’s grandparents, aunt and uncle fled to Vilna.
- 03:28:00 Rumors began to reach them that the Jews would be removed to a ghetto in Slobodka where 80% of the residents were not Jewish. Shlomo’s father, who knew many gentiles through his business, managed to find a house there in exchange for his own.
- 4:05:32 The house in Slobodka had multiple rooms, but the Levin family was only entitled to three. They invited the sales manager to live with them.
- 04:10:00 Then the ghetto was enclosed.
- 04:15:23 The ghetto was closed on August 15, 1940. Around this time Shlomo lost his father.
- 04:14:20 Shlomo describes his first encounter with Germans.
- 04:16:21 He talks about his father’s death.
- 05:04:10 Shlomo describes the conditions at the beginning of the ghetto. There was an abundance of food.
- 05:10:03 Then there was a small “action” that involved 1,200 Jews who were taken for annihilation at the 9th Fort.
- 05:17:03 The big “action” was a few months later.

- 05:20:48 Shlomo describes everyday life.
- 06:10:00 He describes preparations for the big “action” in October 1941, when 10,000 were taken for extermination in the 9th Fort.

Tape 2

- 7:01:44 In December 1941, the Germans started to search for valuables. Shlomo held on to the family’s “gulden” (money).
- 07:11:18 In 1942, Shlomo needed to learn a trade. He and his friends chose carpentry because the workshop was outside the ghetto. The workshop did not prosper.
- 07:20:34 Shlomo describes moving over to a different plant within the ghetto where they worked for more than a year.
- 07:23:18 In 1943 they were informed of the imminent liquidation of the Vilna ghetto. Shlomo had grandparents, an aunt and uncle there, and also part of their own property.
- 07:28:56 The family came from Vilna to the Kovno ghetto to join Shlomo and his family. Shlomo describes housing and occupations of the newly arrived family. His grandmother lived with Shlomo’s family.
- 08:04:41 Other occupations that Shlomo held were the raising of hens, doves and angora rabbits for commerce and food. He also played games of checkers and cards.
- 08:10:55 There were plays and concerts in the ghetto.
- 08:19:03 Shlomo describes how almost every family had a hiding place “Malina.”
- 08:22:00 Shlomo talks about the hanging he witnessed in the ghetto.
- 09:04:31 He states that the year 1943 was relatively quiet.
- 09:28:02 In 1943, the ghetto was transformed into a work camp. The discipline was stricter.
- 10:02:27 In March 1944, the camp was closed. No one could enter, exit, or return home from work. Shlomo was at work and so was his mother. At home, his grandmother was left to take care of Shlomo’s little sister and a neighbor’s girl. An “action” was carried out to collect all the non-

workers: the children, the elderly. His mother could not find Shlomo's sister and grandmother. That "action" was preceded by one when the Jewish police were taken and executed in the 9th Fort.

- 10:14:43 In March, and April of 1944 they heard that the Germans were retreating. Everyone started worrying about how to save themselves, arranging hiding places or fleeing.
- 10:18:32 Shlomo's family distributed the money that they had to both Jews and non-Jews who could help them.
- 10:19:48 Then the ghetto was liquidated.
- 10:20:00 Shlomo, his mother, uncle, aunt and grandfather went in the first group who were taken, voluntarily, to the train. It was June of 1944. They decided that any survivors would meet at the grandfather's house in Kovno after the war. They were going in the direction of Germany. The first stop was Stutthof, where women and men were separated. What to do with the children was a question. Shlomo asked his mother where to go, and she sent him with his grandfather and uncle. Women stayed there, with a few children.
- 10:27:28 The next train stop was at the Kaufering train station. They arrived on foot in Landsberg.
- 11:04:20 After a few days, 130 children were required to go to Dachau.
- 11:18:16 Shlomo describes their arrival in Dachau and their encounter with other nationalities.
- 11:24:03 He describes the transport to Auschwitz. One of the friends decided to jump off the train and he survived.
- 12:03:30 A second one also jumped but was killed. By then, the old German guards were awake from their sleep. The count was missing two.
- 12:04:34 Shlomo describes the arrival at Auschwitz the night of July 31, 1944.
- 12:10:34 They were put in lager A (barrack), the quarantine block.
- 12:16:00 While there they were tattooed with a number, given clothing and other things.
- 12:22:45 Shlomo describes his work.

12:25:04 Some of the children contracted scarlet fever. They were quarantined and locked up with a group of Polish children.

12:27:40 Shlomo describes the Rosh Hoshanah “selection” carried out by Dr. Mengele when 60 - 75 children were taken to the ovens.

Tape 3

13:03:10 Shlomo describes the new barracks.

13:04:51 He talks about corporal punishment.

13:08:30 Shlomo talks about the daily schedule.

13:13:00 Hungarians were exterminated on a daily basis.

13:28:27 Shlomo was transferred to D lager (barrack).

14:06:00 He talks about his new friendships with the Polish Jewish children.

14:09:04 Shlomo describes his different jobs.

14:15:09 He talks about death in the camp.

14:24:00 Shlomo talks about the latrines.

14:27:00 He talks about singing and humming in the camp.

15:08:04 Shlomo was in Auschwitz for about two and a half months.

15:23:47 On January 18, 1945, Auschwitz was about to be liquidated. The Russians were approaching, German fighters were disappearing.

15:25:34 The death march began in late afternoon.

16:03:26 They stopped at Altaner.

16:11:43 They arrived at a train on the border with Austria.

16:15:20 There was a bombing while they were on the train. They were headed to Mauthausen.

16:18:21 Four people in the close group of Shlomo’s friends were killed in the attack.

- 16:23:23 Shlomo arrived in Mauthausen at night. They were put in the lower section of the camp.
- 16:28:50 Shlomo describes their terrible living conditions in Mauthausen.
- 17:00:37 During February, March and the beginning of April, war was winding down. In February, they were not allowed to go into the barracks; they had to be outdoors, in the cold and rain.
- 17:08:00 Shlomo describes the nights.
- 17:14:00 Everyone looked forward to liberation.
- 17:20:00 By mid March, they were moved to the higher section of the camp where there was less mud. There weren't any barracks there, but there were tents. The population was foreign. There were not enough mattresses. Conditions were worse in the upper part of the camp.
- 17:22:58 The tents were bombed, and there were many casualties.
- 17:26:20 Shlomo talks about cannibalism. Shlomo says they learned from the Hungarians how to prepare the meat. They would obtain the flesh from pieces found on the fence after the bombings. They also ate lots of snails they found on the vegetation and cooked them on bonfires.
- 18:07:50 Two to three days after the bombing, they were sent walking to Austria. It was the beginning of April. Shlomo's group and the Polish youth became a group that walked together. Some Hungarians were also in Shlomo's group.
- 18:09:50 Shlomo talks about their arrival in Gunskirchen, 30 Kilometers from Linz.
- 18:13:00 Shlomo describes their physical deterioration. Their living conditions were very bad.
- 18:14:10 Shlomo tells about his loss of a belt with coins that he had.
- 18:15:33 It was the end of April, after two to three weeks in Gunskirchen.
- 18:20:36 A day or two before liberation, Austrians and Germans appeared from the Red Cross with plenty of food. Many people died from eating too much.
- 18:22:24 Shlomo describes liberation day and the aftermath.

Tape 4

- 19:00:36 Shlomo describes meeting an Israeli officer with the Jewish Brigade. He talks about his arrival in Munich and his encounter with the Lithuanian community. Shlomo was hospitalized until February in order to recover.
- 19:15:00 Shlomo accepted the suggestion to go to Israel. While waiting for a certificate he taught some Hebrew.
- 19:17:34 In February 1946, he left Marseille for Palestine.
- 19:20:53 Shlomo describes his arrival in Atlit at the end of March 1946.
- 19:26:19 Shlomo's destination was the Kibbutz Usha.
- 19:29:00 Shlomo talks about going to study in Magdiel, at the agricultural school.
- 22:03:10 He gives a summary of lessons learned during the Holocaust and his own credo.
- 22:12:30 Shlomo talks about the Eichmann trial.
- 22:15:37 He tells the Kastner story about Karnovsky, his uncle and how he was murdered on his way back to Poland. He was considered a collaborator.
- 22:20:27 Shlomo describes the importance of Israel and his vow to dedicate his life to the country.
- 22:21:00 Shlomo describes his service in the Palmach, and then in the tank corps, and in the permanent army.
- 22:29:00 Shlomo was married in 1957.