

Drori, Channa
RG-50.120*0328
Two Video Cassettes
In Hebrew

- Abstract: Channa Drori was born in Prague, on November 4, 1931. Her family owned and managed farms in Olbramovice, Czechoslovakia before the war. Her family did not observe any Jewish holidays. Channa's parents divorced when she was a small child. Her mother, who moved to Prague after the divorce, was eventually sent to the Lodz ghetto. Channa lived with different aunts until her deportation to Terezin, where she met up with her father. Channa remained in the ghetto even after her father had been transported to the east. She participated in Brundibar, witnessed the gassing of the Bialystok children, and was in Terezin when the Red Cross came to inspect. Shortly following the inspection, Channa went to Auschwitz. After only a week, she was transferred to a factory in Ederdam. As the war drew to a close, Channa was sent back to Terezin. Following the ghetto's liberation, she returned to her village, but after learning that she was the sole survivor in her family; she joined a kibbutz and immigrated to Israel.
- 1:00:58: Channa Drori (nee Polakova) was born in Prague, on November 4, 1931. The family lived in a farm, not too far from Prague. In fact, the family owned several farms, a tradition originating from her father's side of the family. They lived in a village named Olbramovice, 60 km south of Prague, on the same farm as her grandparents. Channa's father, an agronomist by profession, managed the farm. Channa's parents had married for love, but life on the farm did not suit her mother, who was a very intelligent and curious woman, well. Channa's parents divorced when she was very young. Oddly, both Channa's mother and her step-mother were surnamed Pollak.
- 1:04:33: Nannies took care of Channa.
- 1:07:11 She went to school in Olbramovice for first and second grade, but transferred to Prague for further schooling. Rumors about Hitler spread throughout Prague, many people wrote anti-Hitler songs.
- 1:08:53 Channa and her family were the only Jews in town. In her parents' documents the notation "no religion" was included. The family celebrated Christmas and Easter, they did not celebrate any Jewish holidays. Once, her parents took her to synagogue in a neighboring town in order to hear the shofar. Channa was so terrified by the sound that she started to scream and her parents had to remove her from the synagogue.
- 1:10:00 She talks about her grandmothers.

- 1:15:11 Channa participated in religion lessons at school.
- 1:17:08 With the Nazi invasion her father, who was an officer in the army, was mobilized to protect the borders. He returned, crying, after a few days and began weighing their options. They debated about fleeing to New Zealand, where they could continue farming. Channa's mother thought otherwise. She filled up a trunk for Channa and wanted to send her to a boarding school in London. Neither of the plans came to pass; the family thought that the war would blow over. When the entire village witnessed the entrance of the Germans, the family thought otherwise. They decided to stay put, but to put their farms (fictitiously) under the ownership of a non-Jewish name. They found such an owner, who immediately kicked them off their farm. (They learned later that the owner eventually collaborated with the Germans.) Channa's father found work in construction and went to live with his brother. Channa went to live with another aunt. (This aunt, with her husband, eventually immigrated to Israel, becoming thus the only members of Channa's family to survive the war.)
- 1:23:05 Channa moved in with her mother who was living in Prague. She attended third grade until it was prohibited for the Jews to study in public schools. Channa's teacher took an enormous risk by continuing to teach Channa and four other Jewish children in her own home. When the neighbors began to suspect the teacher, she was forced to stop teaching. However, they found another teacher who could rotate teaching them at different times; Channa and the four other children were able to learn for an additional year.
- 1:26:00 The first transports to Terezin started. Channa's father was one of the first sent to prepare the camp. The story of the postcard—the best story written by children—was sent to Tela Pollack, Channa's former music teacher (and later her step mother).
- 1:27:12 Channa tells the sad story of her mother who was trained to work in a lab. The Gestapo coveted the villa that Channa's mother and her mother's sister had built in Prague, and, because they would not give it up, Channa's mother was sent to the Lodz ghetto. From Lodz, her mother was sent east to the concentration camps.
- 2:00:00 Channa describes moving in with her eldest aunt for her last year and a half in Prague.
- 2:03:10 She talks about her schooling in Prague and her motivation to learn.
- 2:04:00 Channa describes the anti-Semitism of children in Prague.

- 2:10:00 She explains what anti-Semitism in the “Czech style” was like.
- 2:11:00 She mentions the introduction of the yellow star.
- 2:18:00 Channa expresses her feelings about living in a city, as opposed to the freedom she had experienced while living on a farm.
- 2:18:41 Since her father was already in Terezin, Channa could not wait to join him.
- 2:19:56 She describes the atmosphere at the time of Heydrich’s assassination.
- 2:22:06 She made preparations for the deportation to Terezin (drying bed linens to hide the dirt, drying vegetables, packing and weighing the baggage to meet the approved weight requirements.)
- 2:26:00 The children rebelled against the Germans’ restrictions.
- 2:29:00 Channa visited and played in the arena “Hagibor.” On July 16, 1942, she was deported to Terezin. Three days prior to her deportation, she and other Jews were told to show up to the round-up location. It was a traumatic experience. She describes the place of round-up. Channa and her aunt, named Anichka, left together. She recalls reading a book about Madame Curie then. She observed that the conduct of the Germans instilled fear in everyone’s heart. They walked from the train station, under the cover of night. She describes the cattle cars. She was able to reunite with her father at Terezin.
- 3:00:00 Channa talks about her family pictures. She describes the living conditions in the “Hamburg” block, room 104. Tela, a music teacher, was the house-mother (and later her real step mother).
- 3:05:40 A Scarlett fever epidemic spread throughout the ghetto. Channa contracted it and was quarantined for six weeks. After her recovery, she was sent to a different dorm, L410. It was a dorm for Czech speakers. Channa’s remembers that her room number there was 28.
- 3:13:16 Channa recalls her father’s and her aunt’s addresses in the ghetto.
- 3:14:00 She talks about her interaction with her father.
- 3:18:00 She explains the daily schedule.
- 3:27:00 She describes the hospital.

- 4:00:00 In room 28, Tela again became Channa's house-mother. Channa describes the condition in the block and the activities there. Her neighbors were boys. She recalls her first impression of them and her relationship with them. She was in a very advanced learning program. Due to the nature of the ghetto, some of the teachers were taken away, but there were always others who arrived. The school subjects changed according to what the new teachers knew best.
- 4:06:09 Channa had a special notebook full of her own poetry.
- 4:08:00 Channa sang for the seniors in the ghetto.
- 4:09:51 She talks about the latrine cleaners.
- 4:10:00 Food was distributed carefully; a decision was made to give more to the children and the youth and less to the elderly and the infirm.
- 4:11:49 Hunger was prevalent.
- 4:13:00 They traded food for items.
- 4:16:00 Channa talks about a social worker in the block.
- 4:17:00 She mentions the "lice fighter."
- 4:18:00 Channa received extra food parcels.
- 4:21:00 She describes L410 again and more in-depth. All the girls fell in love with the young man who managed the block.
- 4:23:17 Channa admired communism.
- 4:25:20 The Jews in Channa's block had a Seder for Pesah. Verdi's requiem was performed in Terezin, accompanied by Tela on the harmonica. Channa turned the pages. She talks about the significance of performing that music in Terezin.
- 4:30:11 She describes the sick room in the block. Most of the block was afflicted with encephalitis. Many faked on their reflexes tests so as not to be diagnosed.
- 4:33:08 Channa participated in "Brundibar." She played the part of a dog.
- 5:03:11 Many died from illnesses.

- 5:04:05 There were whole blood injections (intramuscular), from the blood of the parent to the child, in order to prevent polio.
- 5:05:18 Between 5-8 pm, children who had parents in the ghetto could visit with them.
- 5:15:14 The Bialystok children arrived in Terezin and were gassed to death. Channa witnessed their reaction in the shower room. At the time, the children at Terezin did not know what was happening to the Bialystok children.
- 5:19:14 In November 1943, the inhabitants of Terezin were summoned to a roll call. It took place in a nearby valley outside the ghetto. The roll call lasted the entire day. When the order to return to the ghetto was given, people happily returned—as though they were going to their home sweet home. The haste back to the ghetto was such that many were trampled to death. The whole point of the endeavor was never explained...but they were alive.
- 5:22:36 During 1943, many children in Channa's block were deported, and many new ones arrived.
- 5:24:30 After Stalingrad, they all felt that the war would soon be over and that life would return to what had existed before.
- 5:26:38 The ghetto was beautified in preparation for the Red Cross visit. Each person understood that they had a role to play. The deportations stopped during the preparation and visit, but recommenced immediately after.
- 5:34:12 There were evacuations en masse. On the eve of Yom Kippur, Channa's father was sent away. Channa waited with her father and Tela the night before.
- 6:00:00 Channa talks about her relatives in Terezin.
- 6:06:38 She was part of an evacuation. She remembers getting onto the cattle cars.
- 6:08:20 Channa describes the trip to Auschwitz, her arrival there, and the selection by Mengele. Her aunt was taken to the "wrong" side.
- 6:12:44 She talks about the intake.
- 6:14:29 Channa describes the block and the latrines.
- 6:15:40 She describes roll calls and the food there.

- 6:18:31 Channa was in Auschwitz for only a week. There she witnessed shocking events.
- 6:20:00 Some of the newly-arrived, including Channa, were sent to an ammunitions factory in Ederdam.
- 6:27:12 Bombardments of industrial complexes became more frequent, but the factory Channa worked at was spared. Food became more inadequate than ever before.
- 6:30:35 Channa describes the evening activities.
- 6:33:04 She describes the Italian prisoners.
- 6:34:55 Channa talks about the living conditions in the factory.
- 7:00:00 She interacted regularly with the other inmates; they organized cultural activities for each other.
- 7:16:53 In April 1945, they heard the American tanks nearby. All the prisoners were put on open trains in the direction of Mauthausen. The German “helpers” were the Hitler Youth. After two days on the train, it turned out that Mauthausen had already been liberated. The 500 women from the factory continued on the train, without food or water. After many stops, they were ordered back to Terezin.
- 7:25:21 On May 1, 1945, the Germans left the ghetto and no one was left in-charge.
- 7:26:24 On May 4, 1945, Russian tanks arrived in Terezin. Channa and the other Jewish prisoners stayed there until May 12, waiting for a train to take them home to Prague.
- 7:28:03 In 1944, Channa had contracted typhoid fever.
- 7:29:51 Only while working in the factory at Ederdam, Channa learned from the kapo what was really happening in Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- 7:32:37 Channa returned to Prague and then to the farm in Olbramovice, to await the rest of her family. Tela, her step mother, stayed in Prague and tried to start a new life.
- 8:00:00 Channa waited for her family, going to the train station every time a train was scheduled to arrive in Olbramovice. One day, Tela came and told Channa that she had information on how her father died. Channa felt abandoned and in crisis. Not one close relative came back.

8:06:20 Channa describes her first steps after the war. She returned to Prague, started going to the gymnasium and studying piano lessons from Tela. Channa felt that Tela was entitled to make a new life for herself; she felt Tela should not be left to raise a difficult teenager. Channa contacted a youth movement slated to settle in kibbutz Hahotrim. In March 1949, she left for Israel. She describes her arrival in Israel and her first steps there. She felt very lonely. She talks about her marriage and family.