

Mitzelmacher, Sara  
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Two Videos  
In Hebrew

**Abstract:** Sara Mitzelmacher was born in Kaunas (Kovno). Her family moved to Ukmerge to live with some family for a short while, but eventually moved back to a gymnasium in Kaunas. Her parent's names were Dina and Shalem. Sara moved in with a Zionist aunt. She returned to Ukmerge to finish her high school education. Her first job was as an accountant in Kaunas while she continued to study economics at the University. Sara's sister moved to Palestine, and her brother likewise wanted to, but was stopped by their mother. The brother died in the war. Sara witnessed first the Russians and then the Germans enter her village. She was settled in the ghetto there. Eventually, she was deported to Gefalag, then to the Siauliai ghetto and finally to Stutthof. After a short time, she escaped and ended up journeying with the partisans. She traveled to Warsaw and was helped by Haikah (Hajka) Grosman. After the war, she settled in Palestine where she married.

1:00:00 Sara Mitzelmacher was born in Kaunas, Lithuania on March 15, 1915. Sara, nee Uritz, was born to parents of the lower class. When she was five or six years old, the family moved to Jurbarkas and after a few years they moved to Ukmerge.

1:01:43 When Sara went to high school she was sent to a Russian school, but her very Zionist aunt did not like that and had Sara transferred to the Jewish gymnasium. Sara discusses Schwabe in Kaunas. Her school's director eventually became the first rector of Hebrew University. For a five year period, Sara lived with her aunt, but her parents finally demanded that she come home to Ukmerge. There she studied in a private Hebrew high school until graduation.

1:03:47 Sara's family's economic situation was made more difficult once Hitler came to power. Sara went to Kaunas to look for work and gained employment as an assistant accountant. She meanwhile also studied economics at the university. (She wanted to study medicine, but she could not since she was Jewish.) Sara had a sister who immigrated to Palestine in 1939 with the Hashomer Hatzair and a brother who was in the Revisionist movement. Her brother was supposed to go to Palestine that same year. Unfortunately, Sara's mother did not want two of her children to leave home at the same time. Since Sara was the oldest, she managed to move her brother to Kaunas, where he studied at an ORT school.

1:05:29 Sara's mother was from Lithuania and her father was from Minsk, Belarus. He was a communist.

- 1:09:12 After two years, Sara was forced to stop her university studies. Sara's brother completed his studies and went to work. When the Russians came to her village, Sara, along with all the Jewish workers, were fired from their jobs. However, Sara managed to find another job—albeit with very low pay—at the City Hall. The partners in all of the firms were disposed of and the one brick factory in town was nationalized.
- 1:12:17 Sara describes the general situation once the Russians came.
- 1:14:00 Sara's brother was taken to the 9<sup>th</sup> Fort.
- 1:18:32 During the Russian regime, Sara met many refugees. She tells a story of three refugees that her parents helped.
- 1:23:08 Sara's parents tried to persuade her to come back to them in Ukmerge, but she declined because her grandmother and aunts lived in Kaunas.
- 1:24:41 The Lithuanians would point out the Jews to the Germans to be taken away.
- 1:29:16 A month after the Germans came in, the ghetto was established. Sara explains what the strategy was for the Jews to be relocated to the ghetto. She moved in with her grandmother, her two aunts and a great uncle.
- 1:32:00 Germans organized searches for expensive items.
- 1:33:28 Sara describes the body searches.
- 2:00:00 She talks about her first days in the ghetto, especially the hunger there. Someone was hanged as an example in the ghetto.
- 2:06:26 Sara talks about the Jewish police and the Judenrat.
- 2:07:50 Genz, who had formerly been Sara's Lithuanian language teacher in the gymnasium, was put in charge of the Vilna ghetto. He was a wonderful teacher and a good human being. (Many of her teachers in the gymnasium had moved to Palestine prior to the war.)
- 2:10:23 In the ghetto, Sara was sent to work at the airport. Russian prisoners also worked there and under tough conditions, mainly hunger, they died like flies.
- 2:12:00 Sara's family was very hungry. She managed to leave the airport, covered the yellow badge, went into the city, and made contact with people she had worked with at city hall. She would sell them goods that she would

bring from the ghetto, in exchange for food products (some of which she sold, but most of which she kept.) The whole operation was very risky.

- 2:18:07 Sara tells about an incident when she was caught trying to sell a diamond ring. She was caught because the buyer had reported her to the authorities. Sara was taken to prison for a month and later released. (Her friend, Rochelle Rod, paid ransom for her release.) Interrogations of the prisoners were carried out every day during the middle of the night.
- 2:29:51 Sara tried again to sell the diamond ring, mentioned above, at a Lithuanian's home, a home where she started to go to often in order to listen to the radio. Back in the ghetto, she would report the news to the Jewish police.
- 2:31:44 Sara talks about the future occupation that she would have in Israel. Also, she discusses her meeting with the "informant" who sold her out; taking her to the NKVD (where they did not believe the story) and her subsequent resolution to leave Lithuania as soon as possible despite the difficulties it would entail.
- 3:00:00 Sara spent two years in the ghetto, working in different places. During the deportation "action," she hid. A section of the ghetto was evacuated, including the room where Sara and her aunts lived. They moved to a different room.
- 3:08:52 Sara recalls the "action" to Estonia.
- 3:10:00 Two years later, there was an "action" in which hundreds of people were taken to military barracks in Kaunas, called the "Shantz suburbs." The people were kept there for a few months. The security was tough, and there were not any comings or goings there.
- 3:14:44 For a period in the ghetto, Sara and another six women were sent to work on a farm 14 km away. The work was good because they could easily steal food. Sara received this work through the intervention of someone who knew her brother. It was the summer of 1942.
- 3:20:45 Sara describes the cultural life. The Nazis stopped the Yiddish theater.
- 3:22:16 In the winter, it was forbidden to leave the residences after 5 pm, so they just slept once it grew dark. In the summer, the work day was longer. Sara talks about the Romanians that also lived in the ghetto. There were weddings as well as births in the ghetto.

- 3:30:39 When Sara was already in the Kaunas ghetto, she received information that the ghettos in smaller towns were being liquidated very quickly. Her parent in Ukmerge lived in one of these smaller ghettos.
- 4:00 Sara's recollections of Dr. Elkes are positive.
- 4:02:47 In the airport they would buy saccharine from the Wehrmacht. Sara would talk to them and they claimed not to know a thing about the killing of the Jews. Some of the girls in the ghetto were in the airport because they worked as maids for Wehrmacht officers. The Wehrmacht was in charge of guarding the workers in the airport. The girls were not afraid of them.
- 4:06:54 Sara witnessed German Jews walking by the ghetto to the 9<sup>th</sup> Fort and then heard shots throughout the night.
- 4:09:14 Sara was deported to Gefalag in Krefeld after spending two years in the ghetto. Sara's two aunts also went with her.
- 4:10:10 Sara talks about her two aunts.
- 4:11:47 She describes Gefalag.
- 4:13:00 While Sara was at work in the airport, she heard rumors that all the elderly people and the children were deported from the camp. It was true. Her aunts were not taken because they were kitchen workers, and kitchen workers had been spared.
- 4:15:04 They stayed there for about six months.
- 4:20:38 Towards the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943, Sara and her aunts were transported by train to the Siauliai (Shavli) ghetto.
- 4:20:53 Sara describes her arrival there and the new (to her) ghetto.
- 4:22:42 After a few days, they were transported again by train, in a cattle car, to Panevezys to the airfield. After another few days, they were transported to Stutthof. The trip took a few days.
- 4:24:20 Sara describes the trip. One person in the same car jumped off the train, hid and managed to survive. (Sara recalls that Barzilai was his Hebraicized name.)
- 4:28:00 Sara gives an account of every day life in Stutthof. They bathed in soap made from dead Jews' fat.

- 4:32:00 The camp was formerly a prison for Russian soldiers. On the walls was written, in blood: Avenge us.
- 4:34:00 A few days before Sara was deported to Stutthof, they heard that hundreds of Jews who had been marched away in order “to work” had been put on a ship and that the ship was sunk on purpose.

**One hour is missing.**

- 6:00:00 Sara talks about when she went with the partisans and her escape. She went to Bialystok, then to Warsaw and from there joined Hashomer Hatzair. (Haikah Grosman was the one who helped her.) She arrived in Lodz where she renewed contact with her sister. She worked for a year there. She received military training prior to going to Palestine. She went to France, via Germany.
- 6:12:25 After a month in Marseille, 3,000 people boarded a freight ship towards Haifa, where they arrived on May 10, 1948.
- 6:14:47 She talks about her first steps in Palestine.