

**Weiszer, Miryam (Miriam)**  
**RG-50.120\*0354**  
**Three Video Tapes**  
**In Hebrew**

**Abstract**

Miryam was born in Miskolc, Hungary, on January 20, 1928 and had five sisters. The family interacted well with their Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors. On March 19, 1944, the Nazis entered the village. Residents who had various jobs on farms went into hiding, but they were discovered and sent to Auschwitz. Miryam's mother was selected by Mengele for extermination.

Miryam was sent to Allendorf an der Lumda, where she found better work, living conditions, and participated in various cultural activities. After Allendorf, she was on a death march to Bergen-Belsen and was liberated by the Americans. She developed relationships with them because they were very kind to the Jewish girls. From there Miryam traveled to Niedergrentz bach and Ziegenhain, where she encountered the Jewish Brigade.

Miryam and her older sister Bracha decided to immigrate to Palestine, it took them many attempts and many routes to get there. Illegal immigration landed them in a refugee camp in Cyprus, where Miryam led a life of activism. She met the heroes of the Kibbutz movements and various Jewish leaders, including Hertzfeld, Ben-Gurion, and Golda Meir.

Miryam arrived in Israel in the midst of the War of Independence. She traveled to Kibbutz Afikim and settled there until the kibbutz was evacuated during the war. She finally settled in Kibbutz Hahotrim, where she has endured many family tragedies.

**Oral History**

**Tape 1**

- 01:00:00** Miryam Weiszer was born in Miskolc, a small town in Hungary, on January 20, 1928. She had five sisters. They had a large extended family, and their economic situation was sometimes difficult. The children were sent to a public school because there was no money to pay for a Jewish education. Miryam had to play Jesus in a Christmas pageant.
- 01:03:18** Miryam and her sisters had a relatively good life when they attended elementary school.
- 01:04:04** Although her parents knew German, Hungarian was the main language spoken in Miryam's home.
- 01:07:32** Miryam's father was a life insurance agent. Her parents, though observant Jews, were also "good" Hungarians.

- 01:09:12** One of Miryam's sisters was active in Hashomer Hatzair, a socialist Zionist youth movement. Miryam also wanted to join the movement. She became a Zionist, and later on joined Betar, a Jewish youth organization that was Revisionist Zionist.
- 01:10:00** To help the family financially, Miryam's sister learned to sew. She worked as a seamstress while her mother stayed home.
- 01:17:58** Miryam's family would celebrate the Jewish holidays at home.
- 01:29:00** Her family had a close relationship with the general community and there was a very welcoming atmosphere in Miryam's home.
- 02:00:00** They would celebrate Havdalah in the home. Sometimes things were not very happy because her father would occasionally slap her and her sisters.
- 02:06:00** Miryam's family was religiously faithful but also doubtful about their religion.
- 02:11:23** The family had their last Passover Seder in the spring of 1944.
- 02:18:00** There was anti-Semitism surrounding the community, but when the first Polish refugees began arriving in Hungary nobody believed it would happen there.
- 02:24:07** In her youth, Miryam learned photography but was not especially successful at it. She became involved with Betar and other local activities.
- 02:25:48** On March 19, 1944, Miryam was with her friends from Betar when the Germans entered the city. Anti-Jewish measures were implemented immediately.
- 02:30:18** Miryam's sisters were married, including the fourth one, Yuyi, who was the first to get married in 1942.
- 02:31:36** The oldest sister, Esther, was the second to get married.
- 02:35:36** Miryam's third sister also got married. But in 1943 and 1944, the first young Jews were sent to work camps, including her three brothers-in-law and an uncle. Some never returned.
- 03:00:00** Yuyi, already pregnant, left the ghetto with a Hungarian police officer who was a friend of her husband. She left with him, pretending to be his wife, and went with him to his village. However, she returned after a few days because she missed her family. Another sister was hidden in a wine cellar and also left the ghetto.

- 03:08:03** The sisters decided to volunteer for farming work since all the local workers had been mobilized.
- 03:09:30** The farm was fifty kilometers from the city. The work was related to forestry and was very strenuous. About thirty people volunteered, and they spent a month there. One day Hungarian officials showed up and moved them to the ghetto.
- 04:00:00** When Miryam and her family arrived in Auschwitz, her mother and sisters were marched to Mengele. Her mother and younger children did not survive. An orchestra was playing Ravel's "Bolero" to greet the newcomers.
- 04:05:38** They were processed into the camp and placed in block B-3, which consisted of about 1,500 women.
- 04:11:07** Miryam had a set schedule while at Birkenau.
- 04:13:37** Despite being in a concentration camp, the prisoners were able to entertain themselves and maintain a sense of humor.
- 04:15:00** Selections by Mengele continued, and there was always the fear that some of the sisters would be put on a transport. Although two were selected, they managed to stay behind.
- 04:21:15** The entire camp, including one of Miryam's sisters, was sent away.
- 04:29:26** They arrived in a new camp, Allendorf an der Lumda, in Germany. It was about sixty-five kilometers from Frankfurt and the camp had better conditions all around.
- 04:30:00** At the new camp, the workers were allowed to work outside. They built an artificial hill to camouflage an explosives factory.
- 04:33:00** There were positive and loving interactions in Miryam's room, which housed sixteen women.
- 04:35:00** People worked in nearby farms on Sundays and obtained extra vegetables to add to their diet.

## **Tape 2**

- 01:00:00** In Auschwitz, inmates would walk long distances to showers. All the gypsies that arrived were burned in two days.

- 01:17:47** Miryam had pleasant roommates while at Allendorf.
- 01:23:47** On Sunday evenings at Allendorf, Miryam would participate in a literary circle.
- 01:33:00** During their entire time at Auschwitz, the female inmates did not menstruate.
- 02:00:00** As a result of the work conditions outdoors, Miryam became sick and spent a week in the sick-room.
- 02:05:00** Work in the factory was very difficult. Miryam weighed only thirty-five kilograms while working in the factory but had to lift fifty kilograms.
- 02:13:00** Miryam and her sisters shared the meager rations they got among each of them.
- 02:16:00** There was a very caring and loving dynamic among the five sisters.
- 02:31:00** A Passover Seder was held in the camp.
- 02:32:26** The prisoners were ordered to evacuate the camp. They marched thirty kilometers during the night to Bergen-Belsen under bombardment while Miryam and her sisters hid in a barn. The Americans arrived, and the Germans fled.
- 03:00:00** The women made eye contact with men in the camp who were from Holland and Italy. They met men doing forced labor from different countries.
- 03:03:00** After three days of hiding from the Germans, the girls decided to come out and greet the American soldiers. The soldiers would distribute the sisters amongst the nearby homes in the village of Niedergrentz bach, two or three to a house, but the homeowners put the sisters into a barn. When the American soldiers returned the next day, they forced the German homeowners to go to the barn and give the survivors rooms.
- 03:10:00** The sisters had strong reactions after the war.
- 03:16:23** There were plenty of tears after liberation.
- 03:26:00** There were several events after liberation in Ziegenhain. Miryam met Israelis from the Jewish Brigade.
- 03:30:00** American soldiers, among them African-Americans, looked for women, and the Germans told them to go to the Jewish girls. There was a panic

among the girls. One of the black soldiers and one of the surviving girls both spoke French. She told him of their experiences, which he translated to the others into English. The soldiers cried and left, but showed up the next day with a huge box of chocolates for them, which were the first the girls ate after the war.

- 03:36:00** Only two sisters remained in Germany. The others returned to Hungary to look for their husbands.
- 04:00:00** All the sisters stayed in Niedergrentzebach for six months until September, 1945. They survived on the rations given to them by the city mayor and from what the Germans still had. When the Germans refused to give them something, the Jews would say to them the only German phrase they knew: “You are a big pig!”
- 04:06:14** Miryam and her sister Bracha decided to go to Palestine, for they had already established contact with the Jewish Brigade.
- 04:10:49** The members of the Jewish Brigade suggested that whoever wanted to go to Palestine should meet in Bergen-Belsen. It took two days for Miryam to arrive at Bergen-Belsen because of transportation difficulties and the language barrier, as she did not understand Yiddish. At Bergen-Belsen, she met friends who had stayed there and did not look well. Between June and July she took some of them back into Niedergrentzebach for a few weeks to recover. Miryam contracted scabies, a very contagious disease, and was hospitalized in a beautiful palace that was being used as a hospital.
- 04:14:02** The original plan was to arrive at Bergen-Belsen in the hands of the British, where they would be taken to Belgium, where the Jewish Brigade was based. They would then cross the border and get on boats to Palestine. There was a lot of organizing to do at Bergen-Belsen because David Ben-Gurion was scheduled to visit.
- 04:22:00** Back home in Hungary, Miryam’s sisters experienced much anti-Semitism.
- 04:25:50** The group that was going to Palestine gathered together to train for different activities essential to eventually living on a kibbutz.
- 04:27:00** Among those people at the site were Avigdor Hecht and his mother, who was called “Mommy.”
- 04:30:00** Miryam witnessed the beginning of “Beit Hahalutzot,” a hostel for immigrant women and female pioneers, in Bergen-Belsen.

**04:32:00** Hungarian soldiers were warned to leave the Jewish girls alone and they were threatened by a group of Zionist activists. The soldiers finally left.

### **Tape 3**

**01:00:00** There was a connection between the survivors and the soldiers of the Jewish Brigade (Haim Kahane was one of them). Although they were only in their early twenties, they managed to understand and solve problems with great maturity.

**01:05:40** The survivors managed to lead normal lives.

**01:10:00** Initially, all the different Zionist groups were together. Later, they started to drift apart into their own ideologies.

**01:12:00** Miryam talks about “Nekamah,” or vengeance.

**01:14:00** Miryam has felt the same way about the Germans since her trip to Germany in 1990.

**01:16:49** There were several conflicts with the British while in Bergen-Belsen.

**01:17:00** In Bergen-Belsen, Jews of different origins had friendly relations with one another.

**01:21:00** Oftentimes soldiers of the Jewish Brigade exchanged passports with the survivors, so they could go to Israel.

**01:24:00** Survivors often held demonstrations because they wanted to be allowed to immigrate to Israel. By the time the Jews approached the camp gates, the cold water sprinkling from the hoses of the British greeted them.

**01:24:46** One of Miryam’s sisters made windbreakers from the tarpaulin of tents for everyone. The windbreakers she made were rain-proof and warm.

**01:28:02** In July 1946, Miryam began her immigration to Israel but was late crossing the border. She and the group of immigrants she was with were forced to return to Düsseldorf, not Bergen-Belsen. She spent a month in Düsseldorf before returning to Bergen-Belsen.

**01:31:24** By the time Miryam returned to Bergen-Belsen the atmosphere there had changed. The Jews had begun trading with the Germans on the black market. The Jewish Brigade was not there, and there were no pioneers. Miryam and her sisters stayed in Bergen-Belsen again for two months.

- 01:35:00** In September 1946, Miryam and the others attempted to leave for Palestine again.
- 02:00:00** Some of the food staples in those years were peanut butter and dulce de leche.
- 02:03:00** There was a food distribution center in the camp. Miryam primarily worked as a counselor.
- 02:06:37** After the High Holy Days in September 1946, Miryam made another attempt to leave through France in command-cars provided by the British. A member of Miryam's group was killed accidentally by a car that lost its brakes. The group was told to return to Buchenwald. The camp was divided into two, separating the different groups of halutzim (pioneers). There was a training forum (that helped prepare for life on a kibbutz), and the other served as a dorm.
- 02:10:03** The next attempt at immigrating to Palestine occurred in February 1947.
- 02:12:00** Miryam remembers the fathers of the Kibbutz movement, like Hertzfeld, from whom she and the group also learned the most popular songs at the time, like "Zemer, Zemer Lach," which means a "roll" in Hungarian. Since the group did not know Hebrew they managed to learn the songs by associating the words to their own language. "Zemer, Zemer Lach" became the "roll" song.
- 02:12:41** The group continued through Landsberg and crossed the border into Italy. One of Miryam's brothers-in-law refused to cross on foot. He and the sisters tried to get onto a very full train, and one of the sisters almost did not make it on board. The police were waiting when they arrived in Ulm. Miryam had pushed the train's emergency break and was taken to the police station, where she explained the emergency of the situation. Her sister had a foot on the train and did not want to leave her behind. After bribing the officers with cigarettes, she was let go.
- 02:15:44** Miryam and her family returned to Buchenwald, from where they made their next attempt to leave.
- 02:16:21** One of Miryam's sisters stayed behind in Buchenwald while four sisters, including Miryam and her brother-in-law joined the next group. They crossed the border into Austria.
- 02:18:00** From there, in very heavy snow, the group crossed on foot into Italy.
- 02:18:50** They arrived by truck in Milan, where they spent a week before traveling to Rivoli, a refugee camp. After a few weeks and after more people joined

the group, they traveled to Ladispori by the sea. They stayed there for a few weeks, managing to go to the beach to Rome and other places.

- 02:21:13** They traveled to Bari by train and were taken to a small fishing village and from there in a dinghy. They took the rubber dinghy to a 1,500 ton ship anchored far from the coast. The ship took 1,500 passengers, and those on the ship experienced sea-sickness and had little food and water.
- 02:24:02** A plane spotted the ship off the shores of Palestine.
- 02:25:17** They were intercepted by British destroyers that punctured the refugees' ship. The refugees tried to fight back with cans of food. They were towed to Haifa and then to Cyprus, to Camp 55.
- 02:27:40** Miryam remembers a summer camp in Cyprus.
- 02:28:24** She also remembers being processed into the camp.
- 02:29:15** Miryam learned Hebrew in the camp and had to do labor that the camp required of each group.
- 02:31:30** At the end of 1947, two Japanese ships carrying 15,000 passengers arrived at Cyprus without first stopping in Haifa.
- 02:32:44** Miryam was inducted into the Haganah and also passed a commander's course.
- 02:34:12** Refugees who had gone through Cyprus and arrived in Israel before Miryam told her they had left the camp through tunnels they had dug.
- 02:34:34** Miryam remembers the Polish refugees' arrival at the camp in Cyprus.
- 03:00:00** Golda Meir visited the camp in Cyprus and told Miryam that her tent was exemplary. Shoshana Damari, an Israeli singer and actress, among other entertainers visited the camp as well.
- 03:04:37** When the United Nations partitioned Israel in November 1947, there was much celebration in the camp, as the division among political parties began in Cyprus.
- 03:08:43** Miryam learned signal language and flag semaphore and communicated with the other camp in Famagusta, about a kilometer away.
- 03:11:32** On the day the Queen of England gave birth to a son, amnesty was proclaimed. The amnesty stated that anyone younger than the age of sixteen could leave Cyprus. Bracha and Miryam, though both older than

sixteen, looked young enough to leave, and did so. The trip to Haifa took a whole day, but because there was fighting in Haifa, they were redirected to Tel-Aviv, where they heard shooting from Jaffa.

- 03:13:24** After a few days in an institution in Netanya, they were put on buses to Kibbutz Afikim.
- 03:18:34** The reception at Afikim was warm although they were shot at from Jordan while working in the fields.
- 03:22:00** Miryam made many friends and acquaintances at the kibbutz.
- 03:23:40** When Israel declared independence, the Israeli War of Independence began. All children and adults, including Miryam, were evacuated from Afikim.
- 03:25:24** Miryam found a job working for the Ramban hospitals in Haifa, which had first been liberated.
- 03:25:42** When Miryam arrived in Hahotrim, she met her future husband, Haim Kahane.
- 03:29:00** Three weeks after they were married, Haim was killed in a work accident.
- 03:30:24** Miryam then married Gideon, Haim's friend.
- 03:35:00** Miryam had several family tragedies. Her first-born son died and her sister died.
- 04:00:00** Miryam had several jobs in the kibbutz.
- 04:10:18** Photographs are displayed.