

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

## **William Helmreich Oral History Collection**

**Interview with Rabbi Shmuel Halpern**  
**August 27, 1989**  
**RG-50.165\*0043**

## PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Rabbi Shmuel Halpern, conducted by William Helmreich on August 27, 1989 as research for his book *Against all odds: Holocaust survivors and the successful lives they made in America*. The interview was given to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on Oct. 30, 1992 and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

## RABBI SHMUEL HALPERN August 27, 1989

(Long pause before tape starts.)

SH: Well, I am very mad at the (needs translation).

WH: You know that Gruenbaum, the new President of Young Israel said, (?there's a ban?) and he doesn't want anybody to go visit Poland anymore, and they're stopping all those visits. They cancelled all the tours.

SH: They should. You know why? I (inaudible) very simple. Three and a half million Jews were there before the war. Do you know what kind of wealth is left there that they are enjoying? (inaudible or needs translation). It – a minimum of 500 billion dollars worth of property in Poland, if not more, left from all these loge, (most inaudible – he names towns. . .) what I know, from all Poland, is that everyone had a little house, a little property. And this is, I say, 500 billion dollars. This is a conservative (figure). Maybe 5 times as much. And now, the anti-Semitism, the hatreds, still! And they enjoying, they got rid of us. And finally, now, we are going with (Inaudible. Sounds like 'tire root') which is their own problem, their main income is (sounds like: 'tire root?'). We are helping them! For what? Why? And I hope, that at least the Germans, not that they are – saints, but at least - .

WH: They gave reparations.

SH: They admit that there was something wrong, and they are trying to, to give some – some (inaudible).

WH: How do you explain those Poles who say to Jews, there are some, very, very few (needs translation) - .

SH: Dr. Helmreich, I want you to know, that from thirty million people, so you'll find 20. I don't know what percentage this is, because I would say probably a fraction of one thousandth of a percent.

WH: It's no metsieh.

SH: Big deal.

WH: Yes. By the way - .

SH: If you are talking about the Danes, you could say something. Or you go in today to any place in Poland. And I spoke to my cousin and people who went there. (inaudible-needs

translation). 'Hey, Jews are still living!' It bothers him (the Pole) that Jews are still living.

WH: Do you think that what happened there could happen in America in any way?

SH: I'll tell you. I hate to say it. For a few things. Number one, I don't like to make a prediction. And I am by nature not a pessimist. People don't realize, and I told you, and you know it by now, I believe in (?haskoka?). But you know there's a little bit (?method adopted?) and there's a, - intellectual. You know what our mazel is, the mazel from the Jews, (inaudible-needs translation. . .there's no American people. . .needs translation. . .if there would be a. . .needs translation. . . there would be trouble.).

WH: But you mean, they come from so many different groups.

SH: It's all about ethnic groups. – A minority, put – the majority is put together from another group.

WH: What about the shvartze?

SH: The shvartze is also a minority . . . (inaudible).

WH: You don't think that they hate us more than the whites?

SH: All the goyim, they hatred comes from one group. That is the church. Mainly the Catholic church.

WH: So even if we are many nations in America, it still could happen then. . . (inaudible) one religion.

SH: Yeah, (inaudible) but they're not the same. (inaudible) There's no state religion, that's number one, and number two, there is a strong Constitution. To break a Constitution, how long does it have to last? Nobody can predict. However, I hope it's not going to – that what's happened there, cannot happen, but it may happen in various different ways. The hatred in America is mainly in the – well, you talking about the Black. Do you think that – why did the Polish people not make concentration camps? They hate us. They didn't have the know-how. They would have done it if they would have the know-how.

WH: And the Blacks?

SH: And the Blacks, the same thing. They're not – this is a luck. If they would have the know-how, and - .

WH: Except once in a while you get a guy like Jesse Jackson, he's a - .

SH: Jesse Jackson is an opportunist. Tomorrow, somebody will offer him a million dollars to do the opposite, - like every shvartze.

WH: He could be the friend to the Jews.

SH: A shvartze is a shvartze. A shvartze is in – an Arabe and a shvartze is the same thing. You cannot trust them. (?Jesse making peace.?) I mean, you as an American already grew up in America, probably, spent the schooling in America, and American history, and you think you dealing with people, you make an agreement with two different people, you make an agreement, and you sign, and that's it. And it's not being implemented. You sign a peace treaty, with all these signatures, by the Arabs, and they will swear, and they will swear by their mother and by the Holy Ghost, and Mohammed to be it. Tomorrow comes another guy, naturally, you got see it. Because he doesn't know anything.

WH: You don't think we should give back – (inaudible the (?Sharom?)) do you?

SH: (inaudible).

WH: I didn't think so.

SH: What I can give them back, they wouldn't want it back.

End of Tape #1, Side 1

### Tape #1, Side 2

WH: (?) don't have the same hatred as say a person who got it from the church, that he's - .

SH: Absolutely not! But they have a, how you call it – a (?zahm?) viciousness. When he gets mad at you, nobody in the – they found religion, or not religion, he can tear you apart (inaudible). But the Arabs have been in that hatred towards the Jews, by the British starting because they were believing in (?dividing?) rule. And, it developed, and they got (?clinched?). The majority of the Arabs are people that are being led. And they are not the leader.

WH: But some people say that they also have a strong part in their culture that makes them want to have nechama, revenge, - and also, covert, honor.

SH: (inaudible) but nechama, itself, it has nothing to do with hatred. He may hate a , a Indian, for the same reason, or hate the British for the same reason.

WH: You mean he's not a basic anti-Semite they way a person is - .

SH: No, no he's not, he's not because - .

WH: He doesn't believe that we killed Mohammed.

SH: No, no. No. (inaudible. . .?this comes down to cost of dollars?) the attitude. . . they hate us, because, you know they talked them in, and 'you took away my land.' Very simple... (inaudible. . .). It's not directly against the Jews. He has the Christian, from that point, (inaudible-? He could hate?) Christianity just as well.

WH: Doesn't he feel though, that from everything that we did for them, now, in the last - .

SH: No, it's - this is the only political fact (inaudible. . .) and if somebody bumped into your head all the time, that a guy took away your wallet.

WH: How do we deal with that problem?

SH: How do we deal with them? First thing, you made a mistake in '67. Not to annex the whole thing. That was it. And our problem here is not the Arabs.

WH: How do you know what our problem is?

SH: (needs translation but talking about 'ravs') See, that's the problem. (without that problem:) The intifada would have been cleaned up in three days.

End of Tape #1, Side 2

Conclusion of Interview