

TZEKO, JUDITA  
RG-50.443.0004  
Three videocassettes  
In Italian

- 1.01.1 We were a closely knit family from Corfu. My father owned a tailor shop. We were four daughters. Our family was very religious. My father's father was a rabbi. He lived for a long time in Ferrara, then Milano and eventually in Paris. He had three sons who, after receiving their education from a school called The Baroness Hirsch School came to live in Corfu. My father, one of the three boys, opened a tailor shop which was successful and provided for us a comfortable living. We lived very near the synagogue. The house we lived in had four rooms and a kitchen, but no bath [most of the houses did not have baths]. My mother, nee Eliezer, was from Janina. My father was a soldier there, and that was how he met my mother. My mother spoke Greek and later learned some Italian. People also learned French in the 'Alliance' schools. Those were good schools, but unfortunately we didn't have an Alliance school on Corfu. I enjoyed learning; I was always reading. I attended the Talmud Torah School in Corfu for six years, in the afternoon, but in the morning I went to the Greek schools.
- 1.10 The war came to us in 1940. Since we were not rich, my father felt that all of us should learn a trade. A school which had recently been established was teaching, among other things, sewing, so I and one of my sisters signed up. I became a good seamstress and learned French and Italian.
- 1.11 My sister and I also met our husbands there. My husband's name was Sotiri Jekos. There was a large Jewish community on Corfu. We called it 'Little Jerusalem'. There were four synagogues: The Puglian, the Greek [Romaniota], the 'New School', and another very small one called Midrash. It was very orthodox. We went to the Puglia synagogue, a grand synagogue. Many of the Jews on Corfu were very poor. The poor men worked as porters and the women as servants in Christian homes. The richer Jews helped the poor ones with food and clothing. There were no Jewish lawyers or other professionals and only one Jewish doctor. The Jewish community which I knew had connections mostly with Italy, Puglia in particular. Puglia is a province in southern Italy, and the synagogue presumably was founded by Jews formerly from Puglia.
- 1.20 We had an extremely large extended family. We were four sisters. My mother had two sisters in Janina, with six children. From my father's side we had three male cousins; and many, many more cousins. After the war many of those who survived went to Israel. My parents always lived in Corfu. In 1940 the war started for us, and in 1944 the Germans took my parents to a concentration camp from where they never returned.
- 1.22 Judita talks about the 1940-41 bombing and burning of Corfu by the Germans. She tells that her father's store was destroyed and he started another one, and that they all worked trying to maintain a normal life. Then there was hunger and rationing, and everyone was hungry, particularly in the city. After the Germans took over in September 1943, Jewish life became totally inactive; the Jews were afraid to go outside their homes. Judita's entire family stopped working except for her father and

her sister Nata, who gave private lessons and who also was a Red Cross volunteer and thus could move around more freely.

- 1.29 Judita describes Jewish life before the war as normal for their family. Although there was some anti-Semitism, the Jews and the others - Christians and Moslems - interacted. Judita had many non-Jewish friends in school, and her father dealt with non-Jews in his business. All that changed after 1940 when the war started.
- 1.01 Judita says that during the German occupation life was rough for the Jews, but at first no worse than for the non-Jews. The Jewish adults like her father, knew about the atrocities the Germans were committing against the Jews, but unfortunately they didn't know the specific details like the fate of the Jews from Salonica, Janina and Patrazo. Judita's sister Nata was in high school and she was part of the young people's anti-Fascist movement; she even distributed leaflets for a period of time, until her father made her stop - but the young people couldn't do much. When the Germans started taking the Jews, the young people asked Nata to join them in resistance [EAM] and go to the mountains, but she refused because she wanted to stay and help her family. She also worked with a doctor translating technical books from French to Greek.
- 1.10 Judita tells how a sailor named Jekos Satiri, her future husband, came into her life. She knew him from school and also, through her sister's work with the Red Cross. He would help wounded at the Red Cross. He was a sailor then. He invited her to come to his sister's house in the village. His sister, Elena Delaporta, had a house where she lived with her husband and two children. The house was located near the port and a customs office, and there were many German soldiers there.
- 1.22 After a few visits to the house by some German soldiers, Judita and Jekos Satiri and his two brothers decided that the place was not safe and they decided to leave.
- 1.23 Judita learned of her family's fate much later, from Jekos' brother. A man from a well known family of Corfu, Kaplodisiria, promised her that he would go to Germany and bring back her parents; of course he did not keep his promise.
- 1.26 Jekos rented an isolated house near a river and they moved there [Jekos, his two brothers and Judita]. Even there, once a German soldier on a horse came looking for the 'fraulein'. A peasant lady told her to hide in the barn with the cows. Jekos also was afraid and at first didn't even want to go out of the house, but later would occasionally go to the village to buy some food. Judita became ill there and she started losing weight. Jekos despaired. At that time they were very interested in each other, but they were never intimate in any way [the four of them living in the same room].
- 1.34 Later Jekos proposed to her, saying that it didn't look nice for the two of them to live so close to each other without being married. She was baptized and they were married in a large monastery named Platitera.
- 3.01 The interviewer asked many questions about the baptism and Judita answered that she had to convert because at the time there were no civil marriages. She had to wear a white gown, which she borrowed from an old Greek lady who was to be her

'god-mother'; she had to change her name to Agni. She and Jekos were married two or three days later. The priest wanted to know why she was converting, whether it was for the love of Jesus. He instructed her to forget all about Judaism. She told him that she didn't love Jesus, that she was Jewish and loved Moses, and if he had problems with that he could forget about the conversion. She also carried a mezuzah with her which her grandfather had given her in better days [and which she later gave to her son]. During this time she read the Jewish prayers in secret - she didn't even tell her husband about it. One day her husband asked her what she was reading and she told him 'nothing.' She believed in the old, wise saying: 'don't trust a nonbeliever even after he is buried for three days.'

- 3.09 The interviewer asked if she married her husband for love. She responded that at first it was just to save her life. But as the time went on she learned to like and even respect him, and finally after all his 'you are nice,', 'you are beautiful,' 'I love you,' and such, she was very comfortable with him.
- 3.12 Judita tells about her sister Irena. While hiding she had lost contact with Irena. Later she learned that Irena knew a man named Dimitrio Metalinose who took her to the home of his mother and sisters where she lived. [Judita was told that before being taken away by the Germans, her parents had given their blessing to this arrangement.] The Metalinos family was rich and had a very large house. Irena also married Demetrius in the same manner as Judita did. Irena was a very pretty girl, one year younger than Judita. Irena was born in 1925, Judita in 1924.
- 3.19 Judita was asked when they started their normal life. She says that life restarted after the Germans left in 1944. The people started saying 'the Germans are leaving,' the bands started playing and everyone started celebrating. Her husband started working immediately in a factory. He was an accountant and they needed his skills. Then he worked in a real estate office. The two of them lived very well. At first they rented a small apartment, but when their son was born they obtained a larger place.
- 3.23 Asked about Judita's sister, Renata, Judita tells that Nata also had an opportunity to save herself, but she decided to stay with their parents and was taken to Auschwitz with them. She suffered a lot, like everybody. She returned from Auschwitz an invalid [80%] with a broken spine. She decided to go to Israel - her country - where no one would call her bad names. Judita also convinced her husband that they should go to Israel, but after staying there at a 'Hachshara' [processing station for new immigrants] for a while, she was told that she had tuberculosis and could not be accepted for settlement in Israel (?). Judita returned to Corfu and eventually doctors cured her of her illness.
- 3.29 Her sister Renata [Nata] met a man - Gatania - on the ship going to Israel and they married. They both had suffered a lot. They were on the ship Exodus, where they met, when the British navy intercepted the ship near the shore and sent all of the refugees to internment camps in Cyprus. There was a book, *Exodus*, written by Leon Uris, and it was also a movie, describing the struggle of the Jewish survivors to reach Palestine.

3.32 Judita shows pictures of her sisters Irena, Nata and Rachel. Judita talks about her dedication to Judaism and her pride in being Jewish. She tells how happy she is that her son loves Jewish traditions. And while many Jews even now are changing their Jewish names for some other names, she is happy to maintain her identity and proudly displays her Jewishness.