

1 INTERVIEW WITH: Rabbi Nathan Lipshitz. #19

2 INTERVIEWER: Shelly Gordon.

ORIGINAL

3 DATE:

4 PLACE:

5 TRANSCRIBER: James R. Maves, 1833 Rome Ave.,

6 St. Paul, MN 55116

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8 Unknown words are spelled phonetically in all caps.

9  
10 Q. My name is Shelly Gordon. I would like to ask you a  
11 few very general and very specific questions about  
12 your experiences during the war.

13 First of all what is your name?

14 A. Nathan Lipshitz.

15 Q. And where were you born?

16 A. In Poland, in a little town in GAL-IT-SIA by the name  
17 of YALLO-POLAIR SKA-RIN-SKA.

18 Q. And where are you living today and what do you do?

19 A. I'm living in Brooklyn, New York. I am a Rabbi and I  
20 also do a little business on the side, or vice versa.

21 Q. Okay, very good then. Can you tell me, generally,  
22 what were your experiences during the war, when were  
23 you born and what family situation existed when you  
24 began feeling the changes towards the early parts of  
25 the war?

1 A. My family, my father was the Rabbi in that little  
2 town. It was only a little over 100 families. He  
3 was the Rabbi there. And I wasn't in the town even  
4 when the war broke out because a brother of mine got  
5 married 10 or 12 days before the war broke out and I  
6 got stuck at my grandfather's home in GES-KO, which  
7 was a town not far from Krakow. He was a Chasidic  
8 rebbe. I was there very often and I loved to spend  
9 the time there.

10 And the war caught us there. The war broke  
11 out Friday, September the 1st, and Tuesday the next,  
12 which was four days later, we were already on the  
13 march with my grandfather and grandmother and some of  
14 the family and a sister of mine who was pregnant at  
15 the time and we were just marching and running. On  
16 the way -- it's no use going into so many details,  
17 there was really no end.

18 But it was very -- on the way we bought a  
19 little wagon and starting to travel and there wasn't  
20 enough place so whenever we had a chance to get a  
21 hike saying we'll meet there, we'll meet here. We  
22 never met again, not never. We didn't meet again  
23 because our destiny we didn't control at all because  
24 in some places you came with a wagon or with a car  
25 and you couldn't pass, a bridge was blown or the army

1 was standing there.

2 So finally we met after several weeks  
3 already in the other part of Russia, of Poland, which  
4 was <sup>Ulan</sup> LA-VOF. But I was with the Germans after losing  
5 myself with my grandfather and sister.

6 Q. What do you mean you were with the Germans?

7 A. With the German -- the German army caught up with  
8 us. When I was in the little town of <sup>Ulanow</sup> ILL-A-NOF at  
9 Rosh Hashana they caught up with us and after they  
10 caught up with us we decided no use running any more  
11 so we tried to go back.

12 Several of us we started walking back. It  
13 might have been maybe 70 or maybe 100 kilometers so  
14 we figured slowly we walk back. Not nobody expected  
15 anybody to go back. We walked that several miles  
16 from <sup>Ulanow</sup> ILL-A-NOF to <sup>Nisko</sup> NIS-CO. This was under water <sup>San</sup> Sun,  
17 <sup>San</sup> S-U-N, it was about twelve or ten kilometers the  
18 whole road. There was so much happening on that road  
19 walking while the German -- walking back where the  
20 Germans proceeded the other direction with the full  
21 equipment of well-equipped army that before that  
22 little <sup>Nisko</sup> NIS-CO we arrived I begged a few people saying  
23 please let's go in the back of some empty house, rest  
24 as long as we need because I feel that my heart will  
25 stop because from fear. They kept on shooting at us,

1 doing all kinds of things that I felt plain, I was a  
2 young boy of 20 years old, I felt that I wouldn't be  
3 able to hold out.

4 And we rested there until we walked into  
5 the town, NIS-CO, went into the school, there was  
6 nobody there, windows broken out, but already under  
7 the German occupation. We were there for a little  
8 while. Then two young girls, a woman and a girl,  
9 walked in looking for people. They were a few days  
10 before the Germans took the Jewish men to work there  
11 and they all ran out, went to villages to farmers  
12 that they knew and did business with. There was only  
13 woman alone and they were afraid and they came up to  
14 find some people.

15 We went up to those family, a family by the  
16 name of Nestle. We were there a few days until the  
17 day after Yom Kippur. The people came back to town,  
18 all the men, but the day after Yom Kippur all of a  
19 sudden all the Jews had to evacuate, to evacuate  
20 because that Sun, that river, was supposed to be the  
21 border between Germany and Russia.

22 So the Germans -- and this was of the  
23 German side supposedly. So the Germans give it a law  
24 everybody had to run.

25 I had an -- I don't know if I should tell

1 you there was an experience with me that it's -- this  
2 is a big experience that day. All the Jews had to  
3 leave. So this was a fairly rich family with a big  
4 business of piece goods they had. The style was  
5 mostly people that were halfway well off as far as  
6 making a living didn't buy ready-made clothing, only  
7 went to the tailor and bought material. So this was  
8 a fairly large business and there were one of the  
9 rich people there so they had a wagon, a couple of  
10 wagons to take all the merchandise with them. So  
11 naturally the Germans came over and took everything.  
12 This went on for a couple of hours. Soon the  
13 Pollacks and the Pollack were standing there and  
14 making fun and grabbing things. And this went down  
15 for awhile. We had fights there with some of the  
16 Pollacks who tried to grab. And we went over the  
17 Sun, over to the other town which I was originally  
18 caught on there Rosh Hashana with the Germans. That  
19 was supposed to be the first town on the Russian  
20 side.

21 Q. Were you in hiding or did the Germans know you were  
22 there?

23 A. Yes. Then was people were floating back and forth,  
24 back and forth. There was no hiding. But I did one  
25 thing, I was there from before Rosh Hashana until

1 then. I had with me a diamond ring which was, by the  
2 way, not mine, only my sister-in-law who had just had  
3 married gave it to me to fix because it was broken.  
4 And I had a golden watch that was also the handles  
5 were somehow loose and I was supposed to go somehow  
6 and fix it and bring it home. So I was stuck with  
7 it. When before the Yom Kippur I forgot to mention  
8 they gave out a law that any Jew who has any gold,  
9 silver, money, has to bring it.

10 Q. Turn it in?

11 A. Turn it in. If not it was punished by death.

12 Q. Yes.

13 A. I had it in my pocket.

14 Q. You were hiding it?

15 A. In my pocket when this happened. So there was a  
16 FOLK STORAGE in that town who had an arm band just  
17 like all the police that the Germans appointed him  
18 but he knew all the Jews there and he seemed to be  
19 pretty friendly with the Jews and with that family  
20 particularly. I went over to him and I remember he  
21 was called Shawl, like a Jewish name Shawl, and I  
22 went over to him and said, "Could you tell me that  
23 law, does it apply to every Jew or only to the people  
24 that live here?" Because I was a passerby. He says,  
25 "I don't think it means you, but leave." But I

1 didn't leave. And this going back to that day of Yom  
2 Kippur. And I buried it in the backyard of that  
3 house of this family, this Nestle family. And we all  
4 went.

5 On the way out when we went I had forgotten  
6 it and I would have probably not taken it anyway  
7 because on the way really I had forgotten to pick it  
8 up again and it was left there. We walked with those  
9 couple of wagons to get out of there. We got out  
10 over the water. No, not, I'm sorry, not over the  
11 water, going towards the water.

12 Then all of a sudden they came over to me  
13 and they started to work on me, different people that  
14 try do it they had some money buried in that  
15 backyard. They knew they couldn't do it because they  
16 were local, living there, I was just a passerbyer.  
17 There was no law against a passerbyer. Trying to  
18 make me go back and dig that money and bring it to  
19 them. I was frightened to heck and I said no, no,  
20 no, and you know, SHA-SHA-FEM, they send over the  
21 sister.

22 She started to talk me into it and another  
23 one. I softened up and I went back. I said, "I will  
24 see, I will see." All of a sudden a farmer with big  
25 strong horses passed by and they asked him who are

1 you -- they knew he was a customer of theirs and they  
2 were very close relatives. They tried to talk him  
3 into taking me back to that little town. And they  
4 told him a story, he wanted -- he didn't want no  
5 money. He knew, he said, "The money wouldn't be  
6 worth anything." So I said to him let me have the  
7 merchandise, we'll give you -- I think I promised him  
8 the watch or something, promised him something of  
9 value. So he took me and we went back. He was  
10 supposed to stand in the street corner and wait for  
11 me.

12 Q. Was it dangerous for you at that time?

13 A. Yes, very dangerous, very dangerous. But not  
14 directly that.

15 Q. Where were you on your way to?

16 A. VILL-A-NOF.

17 Q. Did you eventually proceed back with the group?

18 A. Not with the group I went back first. Wait, there is  
19 where the thick part comes. I went back and I went  
20 and there was a soldier with a rifle marching up and  
21 down, up and down. It was they confiscated the very  
22 good stuff, a lot of it into the same house. They  
23 took the house and they had the merchandise there so  
24 there was a guard standing there back and forth. I  
25 watched him very closely. When he was turning the



1 other way I ran into the backyard and started  
2 digging. My watch and diamond ring I found right  
3 away. I starting digging again and they told me  
4 under the barrel of -- there is a barrel with sand  
5 standing there. When I came in there was no barrel  
6 with sand but there was a box with sand so I figured  
7 it must have been a mistake. I moved away that box  
8 of sand, which was very difficult and I worked very  
9 hard on it, and I had to go down on my stomach and  
10 push it so therefore I was full of sand with my body  
11 and then I started digging there.

12 Sure enough while digging, digging all of a  
13 sudden I near a boot, I see a boot, you know those  
14 big shiny boots, and I see that soldier who was  
15 marching up and down was there. (Inaudible German  
16 question probably meaning "What are you doing here?"  
17 So I tell him a story that I came back here, I was  
18 living here, and I tell him the story but nothing for  
19 them, that I pass by here and I had this and this  
20 with the ring and I picked it up. "No, you are  
21 looking for this and you are looking for that." And  
22 I denied the whole thing. He takes me outside and  
23 looking around, "No, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." I denied  
24 the whole thing. I said, I'm looking for something,  
25 if I can find something to eat, some story. He

1 doesn't believe me.

2 Then finally he looks in my pockets and an  
3 officer comes over and he looks in my pockets and he  
4 finds the ring so he says, "You are digging for  
5 valuables." I still deny. I said, "I had that."  
6 But I'm dirty, this was in my pocket. Then all of a  
7 sudden that guy Shawl comes over and tells the story  
8 well this guy asked me the other day. When he told  
9 him that is it.

10 So the officer comes over, he tells me,  
11 "Your penalty is death. You are going to be shot."  
12 And he puts me on the side of the wall, he asks  
13 somebody to tie my eyes. So I had a handkerchief, I  
14 said, "Here". So he says he was doing it actually  
15 showing, he told me that too, "I want you to know I'm  
16 not doing this because you are a Jew, this could have  
17 happened to a German. The law is to be shot if  
18 somebody didn't give up the money, the Jews."

19 I told him, "But I am not from that town, I  
20 am a passerbyer." He said well see what that man is  
21 doing, he told us that you did that, you knew about  
22 it and you didn't move, you didn't go away. Fine, so  
23 he says he is going to shoot me and I give him the  
24 handkerchief and he ties my eyes and then he says,  
25 "Is there anything you want to say?" He was trying

1 to persuade me and the people around that he is  
2 trying to do the right thing, that it's according to  
3 law, not just killing he felt doing it that way.

4 All of a sudden that Shawl got a little --  
5 yes, so he asked me what I want to do. I said one  
6 thing, please write my address to let -- notify my  
7 parents what happened to me, they should know what  
8 happened to me at home. So he calls over that Shawl,  
9 he tells him to write down his address and let know  
10 his parents. If he meant it I don't know. Then he  
11 started to right down my name and address. While  
12 this happened apparently he softened and tears came  
13 to his eyes and he started to beg the German to let  
14 me go.

15 The German officer got very, very angry.  
16 He says, "If you don't move away", in German, "you  
17 will be shot. Run away." So he started to run and  
18 he had the slip of paper with my name dropped, then  
19 he is calling back, "This pick up, this you should  
20 do." He tried to be on the level so to speak. He  
21 came back, he took it, and he went away.

22 He puts me to be shot and the soldier that  
23 was on the guard yeah, he started to think what to do  
24 after the Shawl left. He is talking it over. He  
25 takes my handkerchief down. He was thinking if he

1 should do it or not.

2 All of a sudden the farmer comes to look  
3 for me because he didn't -- he expected me to get  
4 back, 7 o'clock was curfew, nobody is always allowed  
5 to be there, he wanted to make it before curfew  
6 otherwise he was in trouble so he came to look for  
7 me. So he asked me, "What are you looking for?" He  
8 tells him the whole story, how he came to look for  
9 this family. Then they decided that for sure. So he  
10 ties my eyes and tells -- the soldier goes on the  
11 other side, he loads his rifle and he counts and he  
12 says, "Fire". He shoots and I feel only a freeze in  
13 my body, through the whole body like under the skin  
14 it freeze but I don't feel anything. So as I kid  
15 figured I heard, I said SMIZE, and scream, that's  
16 it. I don't -- it was like an eternity but I didn't  
17 know what happened with me. I was sort of I guess  
18 for seconds --

19 Q. Had you been shot?

20 A. I wasn't even touched. The German came over to me,  
21 the officer after that, and he says to other guys,  
22 "This must be something from heaven that this man is  
23 a marksman shooter, he shot at him at the best range  
24 and he didn't reach him. Let him go".

25 He came over, ripped the handkerchief off.

1 He said to me, "You have more luck than brain." And  
2 that soldier with a rifle came in and he says hum, so  
3 he gave me -- hit me over the head with the rifle and  
4 he says, "Run". As soon as I started running, "Halt,  
5 halt." He took out that diamond and the watch and he  
6 threw it, "You swine, you pig, you have a piece of  
7 bread to buy." He tells me to run.

8 The farmer with the horses he had sent him  
9 away yet already. He said, "Run". And I run, I  
10 caught up with him. Where I caught up with him we  
11 come before the water the farmer says, "Where is my  
12 pay? " He wouldn't let me go, the pay. I didn't  
13 have the pay. I finally talked him in to go and he  
14 went as far as the middle of that water which was  
15 only a couple of minutes before the curfew where  
16 anybody almost who had been caught, including a  
17 Pollack, would be shot. So we had to rush and this  
18 persuaded him to go as far as into the water. By the  
19 way the water that was the Sun and on that spot it  
20 was fairly shallow with the wagon could pass.

21 And we went and sure enough when he was  
22 like in the middle of the water knowing that it's  
23 already past the German's side he stopped right  
24 there, the horse and wagon, and says, "Look, this is  
25 it, I'm not moving until you will pay me." I finally

1 took out the watch and gave him and he says, "What, a  
2 watch without handles? This is not" -- I said, "It's  
3 gold." "Nothing doing. I want some material where I  
4 could make merchandise, I could make clothing." I  
5 didn't have that and I started begging him.

6 Then all of a sudden we hear two  
7 motorcycles running. So I said to him, "Now if you  
8 are not running, it's 7 o'clock already past, they  
9 will consider you as being out, it's past, they will  
10 kill you just as well as me. If you want to take a  
11 chance, fine." This persuaded him, he went over  
12 outside of the water and we went behind the sand,  
13 there was a like a little hill with sand, we went  
14 behind and we started to move. When we started to  
15 move in the other side and he wasn't afraid no more,  
16 he stopped again, "You got to give me money or  
17 material." I said, "No, I haven't got it." I tried  
18 the only thing I did have on me was that diamond ring  
19 and I don't want to part with that, I knew this was  
20 -- I knew this was my livelihood, I may need for a  
21 piece of bread. And I want to get off the wagon. I  
22 wanted to run. He holds me and doesn't let me go.

23 So all of a sudden there appears a few  
24 young kids like tramps who were fighting with me  
25 before trying to steal from the wagon again different

1 pieces of material and we fought back and forth and  
2 my fault all of a sudden one of them, the leader  
3 like, the leader of the gang, says to the Pollack he  
4 says, "This guy has suffered enough, we give him a  
5 lot of trouble before, let him go." He didn't right  
6 away. They started beating him up and that is how I  
7 went. I started walking away myself and all of a  
8 sudden those two motorcycles I see they were running  
9 after me, they are going over with a PRUM. They  
10 couldn't ride with a motorcycle but they put a  
11 motorcycle on a PRUM and I see this from the other  
12 side. A PRUM means just it's made like a boat but  
13 just boards put together to hold just like a  
14 platform.

15 Q. Like a raft?

16 A. Like a raft. Pardon me, I didn't remember the  
17 expression for the moment. And I said, "They are  
18 putting the motorcycles up there, they are very, very  
19 much in a hurry and they are running." And I was  
20 sure that somehow that they were running after me. I  
21 found out later they didn't. What happened was that  
22 Shawl, the German, finally went away from the Germans  
23 and he came to that little town and he told us they  
24 finally started digging after I left and they found  
25 the money that that family left. And then they were

1 sure that I did it and that it changed their mind and  
2 they wanted to kill me. And they ran after trying to  
3 get me.

4 So I went away, I ran and there was a  
5 forest maybe one kilometer away and I went very fast  
6 and I went into that forest. I said there is no way  
7 for me to hide except going to the top of a tree. I  
8 climbed up on a tree and I sat there and I saw the  
9 motorcycles passing back and forth, back and forth,  
10 two motorcycles, back and forth, back and forth. And  
11 I was sitting on the top of a tree very frightened.  
12 Then all of a sudden the rain started, a tremendous  
13 rain and I started to get sleepy with the rain  
14 feeling wet through and through. I had almost no  
15 clothes on until I went and so I felt I'm going to  
16 fall asleep and fall down. And then I started to  
17 hallucinate, I felt I was losing it, so I took the  
18 belt that I had and I tied myself around an arm of  
19 the tree and I fell asleep in that vein until there  
20 it was daylight. Then slowly I got down and I went  
21 into the little town, walked. That was the end of  
22 the story.

23 Q. Amazing. Now can you tell me, briefly, what happened  
24 to you until the end of the war and when did you come  
25 to the United States?



1 A. What do you mean by until the end of the war? Where  
2 should I leave out?

3 Q. Where were you when the war was over and what  
4 happened to you?

5 A. I went from there, this was supposedly the Russian  
6 side, we were there a few days and a few days later,  
7 which was SHO-SHANA-RABBIT, at night a Russian  
8 soldier, the Russians came into that little town, the  
9 Russian soldier went around to the Jewish officer  
10 which by the way to wake up all the people realizing  
11 he found out that the Russians are going to move back  
12 again so all the Jews should run away. And we all  
13 started to run again until I came to the part, went  
14 back deeper into the part that was occupied by Russia  
15 which was <sup>Lenberg</sup> LENBERG. I was in LENBERG which was a big  
16 city, thousands and thousands of people from the  
17 other side and we were there -- I was there maybe six  
18 weeks or so. My grandfather was there, my sister was  
19 there, it started to get like a home but in the same  
20 time we felt that the screws are getting tighter from  
21 the order, of the Bolchevik order. And everybody was  
22 looking for a way out and all of a sudden I'm told  
23 there was a young man who came from Lithuania talking  
24 people in to run out because Lithuania is still a  
25 little independent country and there is a hope from

1 there to be able to evacuate, to more run into  
2 another country wherever possible.

3 So I went there with another couple of  
4 people, we were stopped on the way, we went through  
5 the border there, wintertime, for three days and  
6 three nights. We were caught by the Lithuanians,  
7 sent back. We finally make it and we came to  
8 Lithuania which was a new world, free, everything.  
9 But there were Russians sitting there already.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And after awhile, about six months later, the  
12 Russians took over whole Lithuania and became a part  
13 of Russia. When it became a part of Russia they was  
14 starting rumors, everybody was trying to get a way  
15 out. The Japanese consulate is about to close and he  
16 is giving out transit visas through Japan. I was one  
17 of those who had the audacity to dream that Russia  
18 will let anybody out. Finally we went and we got  
19 visas to get out. Nobody tried but almost a year  
20 later they started to let the people out. That is  
21 how I got to Russia.

22 I came back, I didn't go all so easy  
23 because you had to have American dollars. We didn't  
24 have American dollars. So I went not so legal to  
25 Moscow and Moscow I couldn't get anyplace. And it

1 was very difficult until finally we got out to  
2 Japan. We were there in Japan for about six months,  
3 then this was I arrived to Japan on sometime a few  
4 days before Passover which was April and about  
5 September the same year the Japs sent us out to  
6 Shanghai and we were in Shanghai when the Pacific war  
7 broke out. We came to Shanghai September; December  
8 the Pacific war broke out with America. We were  
9 stuck there until the end, until around the end of  
10 September '46 we got a Visa to America and that is  
11 how I came to America.

12 Q. Who were you traveling with? Were you alone when you  
13 said you we want to Japan?

14 A. Alone.

15 Q. What happened to your family?

16 A. My grandfather who was a Hasidic rebbe, there was a  
17 lot of HIS-CE-DE-LEMBER surrounding him, I did try  
18 persuade him to go the same way, he wanted to,  
19 everybody was saying this is as cold almost as  
20 Siberia, how are you going to be a Rabbi in the 70's,  
21 how are you going to smuggle a borderline, how is  
22 that for you? Didn't. So he was left in LENBERG  
23 there. Nobody wanted to go.

24 Q. How about your mother, father, brothers, sisters; did  
25 any of them survive the war?

1 A. Nobody survived. My mother is the only one who died  
2 before the war and my father was killed -- we were  
3 six children, we were all killed out. Not in  
4 concentration camps, only one or two of the family  
5 was in BAK-NE-YA ghetto but the rest of the family  
6 were taken out from the little town to the next town  
7 or two, they were slaughtered out in a few days, all  
8 shot out.

9 Q. How did your experiences during the war affect your  
10 thinking today and, you know --

11 A. As far as religion you are concerned?

12 Q. Religion, your outlook on people? How has it changed  
13 you in any way?

14 A. Well the religion as far as my belief in religion or  
15 even to the degree of orthodoxy I did not change. I  
16 did change to a degree where mainly because I  
17 couldn't keep up my deeper thinking, it was a sort of  
18 loosening up, and I decided maybe that the BURNISH  
19 LAW wouldn't mind to me taking a little bit vacation,  
20 not meaning vacation as far as not practicing the  
21 religion, I kept on practicing all the time, but on  
22 an easier basis. Like let's say a day that I'm not  
23 learning isn't a sin. Or I took off the bearded face  
24 and because of work and because of this and for quite  
25 a number of years that I didn't wear it which I

1 changed later but never to shatter my belief in God  
2 or even in any of the even what is called the  
3 dogmatic beliefs of the religion did not shatter.

4 Q. Are you bitter about what happened to you and your  
5 family and other relatives?

6 A. I don't know if I can apply that word bitter. I  
7 don't know how this can fit in. I'm broken down, I  
8 can't revive, I can't feel happiness as I ever felt.  
9 There isn't -- I don't think there is an hour in the  
10 day of the 24 hours in the day or any day of the week  
11 that I shouldn't think about that whole thing and  
12 about the family and what she would say and what he  
13 would say and how I would play with my nieces and  
14 nephews and all this. This is more a part of my life  
15 than when even when I'm dancing at my son's wedding.  
16 I was only as I mentioned before I don't know if I  
17 did say that to you, I was only with the Germans two  
18 weeks. I don't think that it passes more than a  
19 month or should pass a month or two that I shouldn't  
20 have dreams of the Germans coming in, shooting and  
21 killing and waking up with sweat. Only two weeks I  
22 was with them, and not in a concentration camp.

23 Q. So you are psychologically and maybe even physically  
24 still affected by your experience?

25 A. Oh, definitely. I would say definitely, yes.

1 Q. Do you share these experiences with your family or  
2 with your congregation today or are you unable to  
3 talk about these very personal experiences?

4 A. I am able to talk about it. I do occasionally talk  
5 about it with the family but I don't make as a  
6 principle to make a whole issue and talk about it all  
7 with the congregants, no, I wouldn't say so, but  
8 somehow it always comes out either comparing through  
9 conversation or through any episode that happens in  
10 life it always come up. We live with it, sleep with  
11 it day and night and it's something it's a part of  
12 our life that it cannot disappear.

13 It's what happened, how it happened, it's  
14 so shattering that you never read a thing like this  
15 in history, you never were told like this a kid from  
16 your parents, this is something that I think that a  
17 human mind cannot comprehend it. It cannot be  
18 digested mentally even more than physically. And I  
19 don't know the answer. It's something that is  
20 missing words. As least I don't have that many words  
21 in any of the languages to try to express my feeling  
22 of emotion. I only know that it got the whole of me,  
23 the whole time of me and the whole life of mine. To  
24 a great degree my children to, to a degree, yes.

25 Q. What symbolism does this gathering have for you?

1 What do you think the impact should be?

2 A. Let me for a minute. I cannot answer this for the  
3 moment.

4 Q. That is fine. What brought you here, can you answer  
5 that?

6 A. The same thing that brings everybody.

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. I don't believe something like this will happen,  
9 after all there are so many influential Jews in  
10 America, an President Roosevelt will never let this  
11 should happen, an American president. So there was  
12 one Rabbi, an older man, now to me he is young  
13 because he was probably in the 50's but then he was  
14 an old man to me, he was from LENBERG. He says I  
15 will tell you what happened, when all the Jews will  
16 be killed out America will send an organization, they  
17 bring bread packages and all kind of things and that  
18 will be the thing that they are doing. We wanted to  
19 kill him. And he says to the Jews will say memorials  
20 put up and this guy who was -- he remembered from the  
21 first world war, they will just talk and after the  
22 war they come with packages. That man said that, he  
23 said if we wanted to kill them who have ever  
24 believed, he said this is what is going to happen  
25 after the war.

1                   As kids I remember when we were kids my  
2 mother wanted a threaten you or you did something  
3 wrong or she wanted you to eat something and she says  
4 the Gypsies will come and catch you, you know, so you  
5 could imagine that this could come in life one day or  
6 other little story, the devil, but who wouldn't --

7 Q. Who would ever think?

8 A. Who would ever think. I did after I was two weeks  
9 with the Germans I did. I did say once we will never  
10 see anybody alive and they wanted to kill me, they  
11 asked me why. I said I have seen the Germans take a  
12 child -- oh, this I didn't tell you. Better off,  
13 it's too far, too much. Taking a child, I told it to  
14 another guy, and on the two legs, it was three months  
15 old baby. You know what they said to the mother?  
16 You know the law is you are not allowed to have  
17 babies, Jewish Occupational Law, this was only the  
18 German were two weeks there, and this was -- the baby  
19 was three months old. He said I don't care. They  
20 took the child by the two legs, splashed it in the  
21 wall, the brains splashed all over on the ceiling.  
22 The guy didn't even get excited, the guy didn't get  
23 mad. When I saw that I said this is it. If they can  
24 do it and not even angry and just routine, I had that  
25 feeling.



1 Q. And not even get emotional about it?

2 A. No, not emotional about it. I remember in Poland  
3 there was here and there something the Polish people  
4 used to go over and hit the Jew. Before he hit you  
5 he started to say you dirty Jew, he put up an anger  
6 he wanted -- he couldn't do it without getting  
7 himself angry first. And here you see killing just  
8 like that and without even any emotion. So then I  
9 say if they say they will destroy us we better  
10 believe it.

11 Q. You saw the capability?

12 A. I felt that I was --

13 Q. Did you know when you were in Europe and traveling  
14 from place to place did you know what was going on in  
15 the labor camps, the concentration camps and the  
16 killings on the street for no reason?

17 A. This in the first stage of occupation a few things  
18 like this happened in several towns but after a quiet  
19 down, and it did quiet down, the rumors were this was  
20 to threaten us, we are going to be slaves, we are  
21 going to be in bad shape, but nothing to that  
22 extent. We started to hear that when we were already  
23 in China after the Russians were already about a year  
24 and a half in the war and their war prisoners started  
25 to smuggle themselves backs to Russia and then they

1 started to write in the Russian papers in Shanghai.  
2 Then the other papers but first the Russian papers in  
3 Shanghai quoting the Russian papers from Russia and  
4 then we started to hear all this and we knew.

5 Q. You did not know what was going on, the gassing in  
6 the labor camps?

7 A. Yes, the Russian paper would write it. We did know  
8 it, yes. We never believed that it's going to be  
9 such a thorough job. Everybody kept on hoping and  
10 hoping that maybe some, maybe, but we knew there are  
11 of everything was written we did know that was  
12 gassing going on and mass slaughter. We did know it,  
13 yes.

14 Q. How do you feel about the existence of Israel?

15 A. If there is anything in the world that could be said  
16 that is a drop of NA-HUMA, what is NA-HUMA, a little  
17 pay back, a little bit of -- I haven't got that  
18 expression in English that I want to say. NA-HUMA is  
19 --

20 Q. Maybe you could explain it?

21 A. I will wait for the moment. Sort of rehabilitation  
22 let's say, it's not the right word.

23 Q. Revenge?

24 A. No, rehabilitation to a degree that we were paid back  
25 was to the small degree maybe those that didn't --

1 weren't touched themselves maybe they would say  
2 Israel is a making good for all that to us that  
3 happened no matter how happy we are and this is also  
4 something that it's the greatest thing that could  
5 happen to a nation it's still we don't feel that it  
6 is compensated. The word is compensating. It's not  
7 full compensated but it's the best that could  
8 happen. This is the only thing we will feel it's  
9 some sort of a compensation to a degree.

10 Q. I see. I had asked you one thing about are you  
11 bitter, what brings you here, et cetera, and then you  
12 became very upset.

13 A. Yeah, well this is not -- there was one question that  
14 I said for the moment I can't answer you and I didn't  
15 answer you. It wasn't that, no.

16 But bitter against who? Do you know a  
17 funny thing what happened that I had once a  
18 conversation with a very interesting man that I  
19 thought that he sort of went into this with a very  
20 wide scope. And he says you know to me a funny thing  
21 happened; when we were in another concentration camp  
22 and slaughtered we didn't look at the German no more  
23 as people are killing us, it's just a thing. It was  
24 no more that people against people. There was a  
25 thing that did that bad thing. We didn't -- it was

1 no more hate in that sense that we know hating for  
2 somebody that does you wrong because if you know this  
3 would have killed us, it was just like a machine is  
4 doing it. There was no emotional feeling that way no  
5 more. It's a very interesting observation and I  
6 asked after that a couple of more people and some  
7 stopped when I asked them, they said you know it  
8 sounds right because you see this all the time people  
9 doing it and after awhile you don't look at them as  
10 people no more.

11 Q. It may have been a psychological mechanism?

12 A. Yes, that is right.

13 Q. To enable you to survive and cope with what was going  
14 on?

15 A. Well, I was I said I wasn't in a concentration camp  
16 but this was what I was taken out when a man told me  
17 that and I thought it was a very interesting  
18 observation. It's a little different the way of  
19 looking at it.

20 Q. Is there anything special that you would like to add  
21 to this conversation, any feelings, any thoughts or  
22 any experiences that stand out in your mind that you  
23 would like to share with us?

24 A. Generally to be honest with you I'm a little tired  
25 now, quite a bit, but as long as you asked me about

1 something specifically that stands out I remind  
2 myself a little episode from the very early days  
3 before we ever even saw a German. But we were  
4 running in the fields and people were wounded from  
5 shrapnel and bombs, not bombs, actually the Germans  
6 came from airplanes and spreading fire and some  
7 people got wounded. One thing stands out in my mind  
8 I can never forget. There was one young man who was  
9 wounded and I went over to him, I didn't see nobody  
10 trying to help him, I went over there and I took a  
11 piece of my shirt and tried to help him bandage.  
12 There were people passing by and giving me hell why I  
13 stopped to run to try to save myself and giving  
14 somebody help.

15 This is a sort of one of those almost as  
16 bad that I remind myself how people became in a few  
17 days that it's almost standing out in my mind as one  
18 of those bad episodes that I have from the same time  
19 about a little later.

20 Another thing I remember as long as you  
21 asked one day we were hiding from the German planes  
22 that came down to shoot down and we were under a  
23 stack of hay to hide and then all of a sudden my  
24 sister said to me, you know -- and her husband was  
25 standing there, she was pregnant only about a year

1 and a half after her marriage, and she said, you  
2 know, thank God our mother is dead. I almost killed  
3 her. And how soon I found out how right she was.  
4 Because the living were sort of envying the dead.  
5 And this was even in the beginning before the real  
6 holocaust started.

7 Q. What is the name of your congregation, Rabbi?

8 A. I am not right now involved in a congregation. I  
9 have a congregation but other place. I am in  
10 somebody else's synagogue. I have not got a  
11 synagogue of my own.

12 Q. Fine. I want to thank you for spending this precious  
13 time of yours with us today.

14 A. I'm glad to be of help any time. Hopefully it will  
15 be helpful to somebody, to some people, to some mind  
16 or to some history writers and let's hope that I'm  
17 contributing even one little bit for other people for  
18 the future that will prevent anything of that kind  
19 and even if it shows only the first face of it that  
20 people will be ready a little stronger than normally  
21 to do anything possible to prevent and be strongly,  
22 very, very strongly against it. That is all I can  
23 tell you for the moment.

24 Q. Thank you very much, thank you.  
25