

**INTERVIEW WITH LILY YOSZEF**

**Translated from the Hebrew**

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**TRANSCENDING TRAUMA PROJECT**  
**Council for Relationships**  
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## INTERVIEW WITH LILY YOSZEF

**INTERVIEWER:** This is an interview with a survivor, Lily Yoszef. It's July 11, 1996, in Kiryat Gat, Israel.

Could we start please by, could you tell us your name, your age, and where you were born, please?

**LILY YOSZEF:** I'm Yoszef, Lily. I was born in 1925, October 11, in Vilnograd, in Sevlus.

**INT:** Okay. And could you tell me who was in your family, the names, and...?

**LILY:** Bleier. There were three girls and two boys. Irene, Adele, Lily, Ernie and Shonny.

**INT:** And what did your father do for a living?

**LILY:** An agent. My mother didn't work, she stayed at home.

**INT:** Okay. And how would you describe how you lived? Were you poor, were you rich, were you in between?

**LILY:** When, the situation?

**INT:** Before the Holocaust.

**LILY:** Before the Holocaust?

**INT:** Yes. Poor, rich, or in between?

**LILY:** In between. In between.

**INT:** And now you live in Kiryat Gat. How long have you been living here in Israel?

**LILY:** We came in '75, we came in December, and have always been living in Kiryat Gat in this apartment.

**INT:** How many children do you have?

**LILY:** Two. I have a daughter who was born in '47, and my son in '52.

**INT:** What countries were your children born in?

**LILY:** They were born in Russia. When they were born it was Russia.

**INT:** Are they married?

**LILY:** Yes. Yes.

**INT:** Grandchildren? Do you have grandchildren?

**LILY:** Yes.

**INT:** How many, and...?

**LILY:** My daughter lives in Rishon LeZion, and she has a daughter and a son. And my son has a daughter and lives in Kiryat Gat.

**INT:** And what do you do now? Does your husband work, do you work, or you're retired now?

**LILY:** We worked here in Israel. I worked eleven years and then I went on pension.

**INT:** What kind of work did you do when you came to Israel?

**LILY:** How many years did we work?

**INT:** What did you do, what was your work?

**LILY:** I worked in a shirt factory. "Ligat," there was a factory here, Ligat, and I worked making sure there were no defects, etc.

**INT:** And your husband, what did he do for a living?

**LILY:** He also worked in a factory, "Bagir," worked for 14 years on computers.

**HUSBAND:** Patterns.

**INT:** Could we now go back to before the war and speak about your life before the war? Could you tell me what it was like growing up, what your town was like? Was it mostly Jews or non-Jews, or did they all mix together?

**LILY:** Everyone lived together, you didn't even feel it. There was no anti-Semitism, there was nothing. We were neighbors living together. We worked together. There were no problems.

**INT:** What kind of school did you go to?

**LILY:** In between. (Asks her husband in Hungarian.) Eight years and then four, like "Bagrut." [Israeli system of high school preparation exams for college]

**INT:** Elementary school eight years and then high school?

**LILY:** By us it wasn't high school, it was four years after eight years.

**HUSBAND:** 12 grades.

**LILY:** 12 grades.

**INT:** What age were you when you started school?

**LILY:** Six, or seven. Until 17.

**INT:** How old were you when you couldn't go to school anymore with the war? Were you able to finish school?

**LILY:** No, no, no. I finished school. A year later the war broke out.

**INT:** Could you tell me a little bit about your parents, what they were like? Describe your mother and your father.

**LILY:** Where did they stay?

**INT:** What kind of people were they?

**LILY:** My father was very intelligent, he spoke German perfectly and worked with a lot of room (Hungarian with husband).

**HUSBAND:** He had a store.

**LILY:** Intelligent. He was a gabbai. He was a Zionist, also a gabbai, and also he was a principal in the Hebrew school without taking money. Without money, voluntarily. Voluntarily. My mother was at home, five children who were small, she stayed at home, and cleaned, everything was okay. We had a pretty house with a garden and everyone liked us.

**INT:** What kind of person was your mother? Was she a happy person, a sad person?

**LILY:** In between. Yes, in between.

**INT:** What kind of family did she come from?

**LILY:** My father?

**INT:** Your mother.

**LILY:** My mother was alone at home. Why? Her whole family was in America. She stayed alone here. Before World War I in '14 my grandfather went to America and my grandmother and the children stayed at home. And Mother was the oldest and she sewed, and for four years didn't even get a letter from the grandfather. And Mother didn't know what is going on with the family. That's what she told us. After the war in '18, Grandfather came and took the whole family. Just Mother stayed back because she was married. (Hungarian with husband)

**INT:** Did she miss her family?

**LILY:** Mother would always cry for her family. She didn't see her mother and father. She was alone. And exactly -- I stayed alone in Russia, just like here. Adele and Irene went to America, and I stayed alone after the war here. In Easton, Easton. You know where that is?

**INT:** Yes, Easton, Pennsylvania.

**LILY:** Easton, Pennsylvania, that's where Grandfather was, in Easton. And then he took his whole family. Just Mother stayed alone. And there was the Holocaust, and they took the whole family.

**INT:** So the same thing happened to you?

**LILY:** After the war we came home, with Irene and Adele, and they went to America. (Hungarian with husband)

**INT:** So you feel like your mother? You felt like your mother when they went to America?

**LILY:** Yes. Yes. It wasn't easy for the family, why they didn't take the family going to America. She wanted to always, but then there was the Holocaust, and Father was 50 years old and Mother was 49, and they took everyone from the house to Auschwitz.

**INT:** Let's go back again and talk about, if we could talk about your father now. Was he a happy person, a not happy person? What kind of person was he?

**LILY:** At the time...

**INT:** Before the war.

**LILY:** Before the war he was a person who only knew how to be good and give good to people. As much as I told you, that's how he was. He wasn't at home that much, Mother

was always at home with the children. Father had a small store, and was a gabbai, and with the Hebrew school. We didn't see him that much, just on Shabbat.

**INT:** What was her relationship with her father?

**LILY:** Very beautiful. He had a beautiful voice, and Friday night they would say, "Father, sing. Sing something." On Rosh Hashanah it was something, something. It was beautiful, he had a beautiful voice, and **he** was beautiful (good-looking). He was tall.

**INT:** Was he affectionate towards the children?

**LILY:** Yes. Very. Very much so.

**INT:** And also to your mother?

**LILY:** Yes. He gave 100% respect to her.

**INT:** How would you describe your parents' relationship?

**LILY:** We were children, not so big, 17 years old, and before school we were...Adele was in the gymnasia in Munkács. Everything was okay.

**INT:** Could you describe each of your siblings?

**LILY:** To tell?

**INT:** Starting with the oldest.

**LILY:** Irene helped Mother a lot, and studied English privately. Why? Because we always thought we were going to America. Adele was in the Gymnasium, in the big city, she studied there.

**INT:** In Munkács?

**LILY:** Munkács, which was in Uzhgorod, the capital was Karpati, Uzhgorod. Adele studied for half the price because Father worked in the school, he was the Hebrew school principal, so she studied for half the price.

**INT:** And who was next?

**LILY:** I finished twelve years of school and then I was home for a few months, and there was the Holocaust.

**INT:** And who came after her?

**LILY:** Small children. They learned in a Hebrew school.

**INT:** What were their names?

**LILY:** Ernie and Shonny. They were small. One had his bar mitzvah and the small one did not have his yet. The small one had a beautiful voice, so he sang in shul.

**INT:** Like your father.

**LILY:** Yes, he was small. They would give him a table and chair, and everyone heard, this little one, Shonny. Everyone would come to hear this. The most beautiful.

**HUSBAND:** He was the chazzan.

**LILY:** This boy, the chazzan.

**INT:** What was his name?

**LILY:** Shonny.

**INT:** Now, if you could describe what their personalities were like. Were they friends? What were the sisters like, especially?

**LILY:** What?

**INT:** Their personalities, how did they act, feel and think, your sisters? How were they?

**LILY:** Everyone was the same, no difference. Like everyone, normal. Adele sewed a little for us. It was okay at home, nice.

**INT:** Was Lily closer to either sister?

**LILY:** No, everyone was together. It was okay.

**INT:** What was the difference in age, two years, one year?

**LILY:** Years?

**INT:** Yes.

**LILY:** Irene was the oldest, was born in '22, Adele in '23, and I was in '25. If we weren't together, we wouldn't have stayed alive. Alone in the Holocaust, who was alone didn't stay alive. Because we were three together, hand in hand.

**INT:** Could you describe, did you have any anti-Semitism growing up at all? Do you remember anything?

**LILY:** There was nothing, we didn't feel anti-Semitism. Just before the Holocaust, there were Hungarians, so you felt it.

**INT:** So when there were Hungarians before the Holocaust you felt it?

**LILY:** So you felt it, everyone had to bring a yellow star, yellow star, and everyone would say...

**HUSBAND:** Yellow.

**LILY:** Yellow, would say, "There's a Jew, there's a Jew." No, no. They didn't hit us or anything.

**INT:** They just looked at you.

**LILY:** Looked at us, we didn't go out much, we sat at home.

**INT:** Mostly sat at home?

**LILY:** Yes, yes. We weren't comfortable going outside, then everyone would say, "Look, a Jew." They knew, they recognized us, it wasn't a big town, city. Everyone knew each other, everyone knew me.

**INT:** What year was that?

**LILY:** '43. (Hungarian with husband)

**HUSBAND:** '39. 1939.

**LILY:** '39. (Hungarian to husband)

**INT:** But before '39 nothing happened to you?

**LILY:** Before the Czechs it was better. The Czechs weren't anti-Semitic. The Hungarians started and the Germans came together.

**INT:** What was the role of religion in your life, as a child and in your family?

**LILY:** It was Pesach, and they told us there will be a ghetto soon. Do you know what a ghetto is? And they put all the Jews in the ghetto; we didn't really believe it. After Pesach they started taking the families and put everyone in one place.

**HUSBAND:** A street.

**LILY:** That street was closed for the Jews.

**HUSBAND:** They closed one street and [put] everyone there.

**LILY:** They closed one big street, and in one small room they put about 50, 60 people.

**INT:** But before the war we want to talk about.

**LILY:** The family wasn't observant, just kept Shabbat, kept Shabbat, not so religious. Father wasn't with a...

**INT:** Beard.

**LILY:** No, no, we just kept Shabbat. It was kosher, that's how it was in the city. Everyone, that's how it was then.

**INT:** Everyone was like that.

**LILY: Everyone.** Everyone. There was no such thing as not being religious. One like this and one like this. Everyone. They kept Shabbat. But after, not so...

**INT:** You weren't very observant.

**LILY:** No, no, there was no such thing. Only kept Shabbat. (Hungarian with husband)

**INT:** You said that your father was Zionist. Did he want to move the family to Israel before the war?

**LILY:** Yes. He wanted to go. And Mother just to America, her family was there.

**INT:** Did she want to go to Israel, your mother?

**LILY:** If Father wanted to, she didn't have a choice.

**INT:** Before the war did he want to go to Israel?

**LILY:** No, only visitors. There was Father and Mother and six brothers for Mother, so what does Israel give him? There was no one in Israel.

**INT:** There was nothing in Israel.

**LILY:** There was no family in Israel, **everyone** was in America, Everyone. Everyone. In Easton, in Philadelphia, in New York. Just not in Israel. There was no Israel. It was Palestine.

**INT:** Okay. So now we want to talk about the war. Is that okay with you?

**LILY:** I told you after Pesach they started to take families with suitcases, with...a bag. We closed the door -- we had a private home. They took us, and they put us in one room with a few families and we all sat on the floor.

**INT:** This was in the same town, the ghetto?

**LILY:** Yes, they closed one street and there...we were just Jews in the ghetto and there we couldn't go out, couldn't go out, only stay inside.

**INT:** What year was this?

**LILY:** This was '43. (Hungarian with husband) He wasn't at home. He was in...

**HUSBAND:** In '44. '44.

**LILY:** He was away four years.

**HUSBAND:** It was March.

**LILY:** May, May, May.

**HUSBAND:** April, the end of April. It was Pesach.

**LILY:** Why? How do we know, we had a yahrzeit then. The end of April. It was Pesach. Pesach, and on Shavuot we had a yahrzeit. We were there till Shavuot, on Shavuot we came to Auschwitz on a train. In the train we were like animals.

**INT:** Like animals?

**LILY:** Like animals. Every ten minutes someone would die. There was no air, no water, nothing. Together with children.

**INT:** Before that, what happened between 1939 and 1943?

**LILY:** There were Hungarians. After the Czechs, the Hungarians came in and then the Ukrainians.

**INT:** What year did the Ukrainians come in?

**LILY:** In '43 there were Ukrainians together with the Hungarians. (Hungarian with husband) And the Germans came in, the fascists.

**INT:** In '43?

**LILY:** In '43 the fascists came and took us. (Hungarian with husband)

**HUSBAND:** The Hungarians.

**INT:** What about the Ukrainians?

**LILY:** Fascists, also.

**INT:** What happened to the Jews?

**LILY:** They [the Ukrainians] beat them up.

**INT:** What happened to the Jews when the Hungarians came in?

**LILY:** They took everything, the store. The Jews weren't allowed to have anything, store or grocery. They took everything.

**INT:** What did your father do?

**LILY:** They took from Father, he had something with Hungarians with a few partners. It wasn't allowed. In order to make a living he stayed there to help. It wasn't a long time.

**INT:** How long was it?

**LILY:** It wasn't a long time. It was hard, hard, very hard. There was no living. Why? They took everything from the Jews. From the Jews they took everything. Stores and all businesses.

**INT:** How did they get food to eat?

**LILY:** I told you. Someone got a license and then partners, there were partners.

**INT:** A Hungarian got the license?

**LILY:** No Hungarians, there were even Jews who got. There was a law like this there. There was a law, so someone got.

**INT:** What did the daughters do?

**LILY:** Irene was in the store and Adele sewed.

**INT:** So Irene worked in the store.

**LILY:** And Mother sewed. And Mother sewed at home. So with that there was a little livelihood.

**INT:** And what about you?

**LILY:** I was little. I just finished school a few months before. I didn't have time. There was no time.

**INT:** Are there any stories you can tell, things that stick out in your mind about those years between 1939 and the ghetto?

**LILY:** No, not much. It was everything. The Ukrainians came and took everything what was by the Hungarians. After that came Germans, and that didn't go so fast, the time, so a few years it was also the Ukrainians, and also I don't know really what they were. They were with black.

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

**INT:** So now if we can talk about the ghetto and what happened from there.

**LILY:** In the ghetto it was very hard, the way we felt and everything. Everyone crying and scared and we don't know where we're going. One person said it's for work, another said soon you're going home. Not understanding anything. We didn't have newspapers, or radio, or television. Didn't know anything -- like animals.

**INT:** How were your mother and father handling this?

**LILY:** It was very hard, was very hard, we didn't have food. Mother took from the house all we could and there to cook. Mother had one oven and there everyone cooked, made a fire outside as much as we could. They gave us bread every day, bread and milk. It wasn't enough.

**INT:** But were the parents giving the children strength? How were they coping? Were they crying, were they strong?

**LILY:** They talked to me as much as they could. So maybe that one took us, and that helps one with another. And we don't know what's going to be afterwards, so he told us, Father talked to us, so we weren't scared, so we had strength.

**INT:** He tried to calm you?

**LILY:** So you don't have to look at what you're eating, is it kosher, not kosher. You don't need anything. What you get to eat, you eat. You don't make problems for one. So Father doesn't give you the food, so Mother doesn't give us. What they give, whatever you get, every time together, together.

**INT:** And what about your mother?

**LILY:** Mother, like everyone, Mother was afraid with children, so what will be afterwards, so how will it be. You don't even think, you can't think. So what will be you don't know, don't know what will be. What waits for us.

**INT:** How long were they in the ghetto?

**LILY:** From Pesach till Shavuot.

**INT:** Six weeks about.

**LILY:** Yes, about six weeks. And then they took everyone into groups. Every day they took a group and...

**INT:** From Shavuot, from Pesach they took?

**LILY:** From Pesach, Pesach until Shavuot every time they took groups, and we don't know to where, to where. No one knows where we're going.

**INT:** You just saw that they're taking groups.

**LILY:** There was a big shul there, and there there were people, and they wrote down all the families. "What is your name?" And Father did this (turned around to look) and got beaten up.

**INT:** Your father.

**LILY:** Yes. And we see all of this and it hurts us. After that they took us in a train -- not a simple train, like animals. No window, there's nothing, and no air, and there, there every minute maybe someone died.

**INT:** How were you feeling at this point?

**LILY:** No words, there are no words. No words. (Crying)

**INT:** What happened after that? (Pause) Are you okay? (Lily crying)

**LILY:** Yes. (Gets a tissue, something to drink. Pause.)

**INT:** I'm sorry. It's too hard sometimes.

**LILY:** He was four years (her husband) and he wasn't in the ghetto, he wasn't at home. He wasn't. My husband, he was married. After the war we got married. So then -- they took from families everything, work camp, labor camp. How do you say it? Where they worked.

**INT:** A work camp, a labor camp.

**LILY:** They worked, not a ghetto. They came to the house, when they were at home already, four years. He worked, he wasn't at home four years. This hurts us, but we don't even deserve compensation. Four years he wasn't at home, but doesn't even deserve compensation. Doesn't deserve it, and I also didn't get compensation.

**INT:** Why not?

**LILY:** There were problems for me, with my lawyer, and there were problems. Now they give very slowly, very slowly, no, there are problems.

**INT:** You didn't have a good lawyer?

**LILY:** No. There...lawyer and she gives for, she sits with her draft and does nothing. Afterwards, I heard that you have to check. I went there, and they told me, "You have nothing. You don't give us anything. Where do we know where you were?" So she starts from the beginning, so now, until now, I didn't get compensation. Can you help with this?

**INT:** Did you hear of "Amcha"?

**LILY:** Where?

**INT:** It's in Yerushalayim. I have the number, but I forgot to bring it, and I will call you with the number.

**LILY:** They help? How can you help? I spoke today with Tel Aviv with Gruzenberg, we have an office with Gruzenberg. So he said, now we're giving, '93, '94, so after the lawyer did at the beginning, so we're just starting '95, and '95, as of now we are not giving.

**INT:** [To translator] Ask if we can continue, if it's okay with her, with the story.

**LILY:** Of course.

**INT:** What happened after the train?

**LILY:** We arrived in Auschwitz, and didn't even have time to say good-bye to Mother. There was left and right, left and right, and Mengele was there. You know who he is. So he saw Mother with the small children. So Mother with children to the left, even don't know, I didn't have time to say good-bye. So it was the three of us -- Irene, Adele and me.

**INT:** On the right.

**LILY:** On the right. You go, they go in another place, and you, you don't understand in this, where we are. We don't understand this where they went.

**INT:** Did you know where you were? Did you know what Auschwitz was?

**LILY:** No, no, no. You never heard that there is a place Auschwitz, and this was three years ago. There was Slovakia, so they build like this for the Jews. They started in Slovakia, and we don't know, no one knows, so there is something like this. They build a crematorium, and we don't know anything, nothing, nothing, nothing.

**INT:** So you had no idea...

**LILY:** It was a secret. Do you know what's a secret? So no word from there doesn't leave, what will be there.

**INT:** So when you arrived you didn't know where you were?

**LILY:** No, we didn't know. Five, ahead. Where? To the bath (bathroom, toilet).

**INT:** Did you know where your mother and the boys were?

**LILY:** To the big bathroom we went, there they took our hair. And gave a dress with stripes and a number. And I'm not Lily, nothing, just a number. (German 3134) I just know it in German. This I just know in German. Just a number, we were, just a number. Afterwards I got this from Switzerland. So where was I.

**INT:** What is this? [Looking at document Lily hands her]

**LILY:** It's from Switzerland. I was in the Konzt-lager. It's for compensation.

**INT:** Now, you got it?

**LILY:** No, it's when we went ten years ago, this was there, my number.

**INT:** For your compensation.

**LILY:** It was Auschwitz, Birkenau. Auschwitz, Birkenau.

**INT:** Did you know where they took your mother and brothers?

**LILY:** No, no, no, no. No. When we came back after a year, we found nothing, and they told us there was the crematorium, and Mother with the children, with father, all went to the crematorium. So after the war, after we came back home, we don't know where they are. Every time we wait to see if they'll also come home. When we weren't the three of us together, then we wouldn't have stayed alive.

**INT:** If you hadn't been together?

**LILY:** No, no. No one who was alone. Whoever was alone, wouldn't stay alive. And there was snow, 40 degrees ice.

**HUSBAND:** Cold. Cold.

**LILY:** Cold, a few poles and some...

**INT:** There you slept in something like this?

**LILY:** No, that was in Auschwitz.

**INT:** In Auschwitz.

**LILY:** In Auschwitz they made a barrack.

**INT:** Like a small house, hut.

**LILY:** No, not a small house. Were you in Yad Vashem?

**INT:** Yes.

**LILY:** Nu, what you saw is where we, on the bed were ten people. Five like this and five like this. Not a bed, it's steps, and steps. Three steps. And every place were ten people, there five and there five. So that, you've seen the...

**INT:** Yes, I saw the barrack.

**LILY:** In Yad Vashem, the barrack. And there they give food once a day, some kind of soup, and twice a day they would count, they counted in five, in five, in five, in five. In the morning it was, we woke up at 3:00 A.M. It was so cold. So (shivering) cold like this. At night (evening) they counted again, and it was so hot, that people died there with this heat, it was 50 degrees, percent heat in Auschwitz. And rain, at night it rained.

**INT:** It rained all the time?

**LILY:** Not all the time. 50%.

**INT:** Did you see people die?

**LILY:** Of course.

**INT:** All the time?

**LILY:** That sat next to me.

**INT:** How were you coping with what you were seeing and what you were living through?

**LILY:** Nu, we were only there five, six weeks. Afterwards they took us from there, six weeks.

**INT:** Yes, it was hard, so how from an emotional point were you able to cope?

**LILY:** We don't understand where we are, we were like not, not normal.

**INT:** You didn't have time to think about what was happening.

**LILY:** No, no, no. Every time they would select, they kept on taking people for work, people who were....

**INT:** Strong.

**LILY:** Strong. Strong, and there were no strong ones in the crematorium, so we don't know where they took them.

**INT:** But they took you...

**LILY:** So it's hard for us, every time Irene, the oldest, she was the smallest from Adele and me. And every time you need height, everyone, one to a different place. So we had problems with Irene. Irene was small, so every time I would say, "She's alone, alone," we would say, "No, no, no, no! She's not alone, we want to be together, we're together." It was **something**, the hardest. Once at night, every night they took, I'm staying alone. And I don't know where they are. And then after a day, two days, we found one another.

**INT:** So you were separated a little.

**LILY:** This, this, this every time, hand in hand we were, so you're afraid, so take one with another is the hardest. So, we don't know, didn't know.

**INT:** Who was giving the most strength of the sisters, or was it all the same?

**LILY:** No, not the same. By me I had luck, for me I had luck. I would run a lot.

**INT:** Run a lot?

**LILY:** Run a lot. There was someone who said, "Oy, you look like my daughter, you look." And she gave me food, and I would always give my sisters. So every time, when they asked who wants to work, to do dishes, I would say, "Me, me," I was always the first.

**INT:** You had a lot of strength?

**LILY:** I had the most. Adele was always sick, very sick.

**INT:** Was weak.

**LILY:** She was very sick. Weak, sick. Once I saw the German, the SS. I said, "She sews," so she did some sewing. And got some bread. So that's how day by day we had some food. Once we went to work, and there someone old gave me (Hungarian to husband) from the bread he didn't have.

**INT:** The hard part, the crust.

**LILY:** Yes, she didn't have teeth, so there was a container full and said, "Come here, come here, you are so pretty. There is a container of bread over there. I will give you bread." I was scared to go, they hit us for that. So every time I had a little food, and I would always give it out like birds in the mouth. We were all scared. I had strength.

**INT:** You had a lot of strength? Where were you getting your strength from?

**LILY:** It's (Hungarian). It's my personality. I was...

**INT:** You're optimistic?

**LILY:** Optimistic, the most optimistic. Irene was always quiet. She never spoke; she would always sit like this, scared.

**INT:** Shy?

**LILY:** And me, not. I always ran. Once outside I ran and there was another camp for boys. And I said, "Come here, come here, I'll give you meat," like salami. I was very hungry, I said, "No, it's not for me, not for me." They gave through the gate, and I wanted to take it and **everyone**...

**INT:** Jumped on you.

**LILY:** Jumped and I was full of blood. There was a tiny piece left.

**INT:** He gave you.

**LILY:** I got a tiny piece, I wanted it, I gave it to her to her mouth. I would always go to get the food. I was the strongest.

**INT:** What about Adele, what was Adele like?

**LILY:** It's personality.

**INT:** What was she like then, was she more like you or more like Irene?

**LILY:** Irene was quiet, she couldn't. She sewed there (Adele), always sewed. I went there and got some fabric. I took some fabric and she made... (Hungarian)

**INT:** A dress?

**LILY:** Not a dress.

**INT:** A skirt?

**LILY:** Not a skirt.

**INT:** Apron?

**LILY:** Yes. I went next to the kitchen, I said, "Give me, I'll give you some bread, give that to me."

**INT:** And you had bread to give to them?

**LILY:** No, so from there I got a little bread, I put it underneath and ran, ran, ran, ran, and gave it. Always hungry, always hungry.

**INT:** And you gave people bread.

**LILY:** Yes, a lot, as much as I could, one slice, to help everyone. We were five together: Adele, Irene and a young mother with a daughter. Whenever I got something, I gave everything for them, every time to them.

**INT:** You were together the whole time?

**LILY:** Almost until the end.

**INT:** Who was this mother and child?

**LILY:** The mother came home after the Holocaust and she died after a year, after a year. Her daughter until now is my friend.

**INT:** Your friend?

**LILY:** Yes, but she stayed in Russia.

**INT:** But who were they? How did they make the connection?

**LILY:** The daughter was my age.

**INT:** You were friends there?

**LILY:** Yes, yes, yes, very good friends. The mother died after one year, two years after they came home.

**INT:** But during the Holocaust, the time you were in Auschwitz?

**LILY:** No, no, no, no. I don't know. We were three and we always had to be five in one row, five.

**INT:** She was always near you?

**LILY:** We were always together, always together.

**INT:** What were their names?

**LILY:** The daughter is Piri, and the mother was Teri, Teri Nayni.

**INT:** So how long were you in Auschwitz?

**LILY:** Six weeks. After that in Stutthoff, after Auschwitz it was Stutthoff.

**INT:** What kind of work did you do in Auschwitz? Did you work?

**LILY:** In Auschwitz we didn't work, in Stutthoff also we didn't work. In Stutthoff there were selections all the time. Every day there were 20,000, 30,000 people, a lot of people, and they would make lines of five people for work. They wanted the strongest to make an airport. An airport. They built an airport, there you needed the strongest. That's in Stutthoff. And every day, every day, you're scared, who are they going to take?

**HUSBAND:** Who would be left.

**LILY:** Not left, who would they take.

**INT:** Where was Stutthoff, in Austria or in Germany?

**LILY:** Silesia, Poland. There were also barracks there.

**INT:** Barracks?

**LILY:** Barracks. Three floors where we slept. I was there in the summer.

**INT:** In Stutthoff it was summer.

**LILY:** It was summer.

**INT:** What was the situation there? How did they live and how did they eat?

**LILY:** It was very hard, we didn't work, every day they took some people. There were less and less people left. Not the strong and not the weak.

**INT:** In between.

**LILY:** In between, the strong they took for the airport. So we stayed and afterwards they took us to Baumgarten, a few thousand people to Baumgarten.

**INT:** After Stutthoff. How did you survive all the selections?

**LILY:** With a train.

**INT:** But in the selections in Stutthoff, when they took people every day, how did you...

**LILY:** It was extremely hard, to always stay three together. It was **very**, very difficult, extremely hard.

**INT:** So how were you able to do it?

**LILY:** This I don't even understand how we did it. I always ran and we were always together. I made myself smaller, she made herself bigger, and hand in hand we went and that's how we managed.

Then we went to Baumgarten. In Baumgarten it was a tent.

**INT:** But to stay three together must have been so difficult.

**LILY:** They took us in a train to Baumgarten. It was in... (Hungarian to husband)

**HUSBAND:** In the field.

**LILY:** In the field in tents, ten in each tent. Five on the left and five there. There we worked.

**INT:** It was very hard to always stay together. How were you able to do it?

**LILY:** There it was quiet, everyone was together. There were no selections there.

**INT:** But before that, how were you able to do it?

**LILY:** It was extremely difficult. A few times they took me, "Come here, you're alone, I want you for work, in the kitchen I want you." "No, no, no, we're together!" It was **so** hard, something which is not normal.

**INT:** And they believed you, when you said that?

**LILY:** It was extremely hard to stay together. In Baumgarten it wasn't. Everyone worked together. Big, small, skinny. There were no problems there.

**INT:** It's very unusual that sisters could stay together.

**LILY:** It was luck, every time. We had luck every time. So we stayed together. Because of that Adele and I today are such good sisters. (Crying)

**INT:** Close.

**LILY:** **Good, good!** Did Adele tell you about me?

**INT:** Yes.

**LILY:** What did she say?

**INT:** I can't talk about it now. I just want to talk about you, okay? Maybe afterwards, okay?

**LILY:** Okay. There we worked very, very hard. There they made (Hungarian)

**HUSBAND:** For the soldiers they made...

**INT:** Trenches?

**HUSBAND:** Yes, trenches. And covered it with weeds, grass.

**LILY:** With weeds, grass.

**INT:** Not to see it.

**LILY:** And we took (Hungarian)

**HUSBAND:** Took by hand.

**LILY:** By hand as much as we could, it wasn't enough, they did it just a show.

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

**LILY:** They gave us four and five. So I said, "It's not enough. Give us more," until we...

**INT:** So you dug and then covered it with grass.

**LILY:** There were SS there, and were always watching. Watch what we're doing, and when you do less than you were supposed to, so they beat you up. If you did more than you were supposed to, they beat you up.

**INT:** Were you beaten?

**LILY:** (Laughs) Of course! All the time! Every day!

**INT:** How was your belief in G-d during that time?

**LILY:** No, no, we didn't think about G-d, every day people died, we didn't think, we just stayed alive.

**INT:** You didn't think.

**LILY:** Every day, every day, people fell, there was no food. Once a day, they gave soup with nothing in it. We didn't have strength, and even our...So we don't think, why are we living? It doesn't make us feel anything.

**INT:** It doesn't give you anything.

**LILY:** No. We didn't think. You live or not live. That's how it was. Meanwhile it was good there, it was summer then. It started to get dark. Almost everyone got separated there.

**INT:** Everyone separated there?

**LILY:** It was 40 degrees there -- cold. 40 degrees, do you know what that is? You stand and fall and that's it.

**INT:** Froze.

**LILY:** 2,000 people they started evacuating. So there were 50 people left -- maybe.

**INT:** You started with 2,000 people in Baumgarten and then at the end you were 50?

**LILY:** Even 50 normal people that felt good. Everyone weighed 20 or 25 kilograms. We were like musselmen. We remained musselmen.

**INT:** Did you pray to G-d to help you survive?

**LILY: No!** It doesn't help anything. We didn't believe there.

**INT:** What about Adele?

**LILY:** We didn't believe in G-d, there was no G-d. We didn't know. We didn't know if it's Yom Kippur, don't know nothing, we don't even know what day it is. We don't know, we don't understand. Just scared when we would get beaten up. There wasn't then...

**INT:** How did the three of you make it out of all those people? Why were you among the fifty?

**LILY:** Why was it, why was it, after we had to evacuate by foot.

**INT:** From Baumgarten?

**LILY:** Not Baumgarten. After, there was another place.

**INT:** They took you by train?

**LILY:** Not by train. By foot. We were in another place after that. It was tzertim (?). Very high in a circus. And there we also worked.

**INT:** So from Baumgarten they took you, how did you get there?

**LILY:** By foot. It wasn't so far. One to two days we walked to a place like a moshav, like a settlement. It was like in a circus, round with wood and there was...

**INT:** And there you slept?

**LILY:** There we worked outside, but then the dark came -- winter started.

**INT:** Yes. What was the place called after Baumgarten?

**LILY:** (She tries several words). I don't remember. It's like a moshav. (Hungarian between Lily and husband. Husband walks out of the room.)

Do you know up till now he never heard my story? Until now he **never** heard my story.

**INT:** Really?

**LILY:** No. He, not till now.

**INT:** The whole story, or just...

**LILY:** He doesn't know where I was, he can't, he can't.

**INT:** Why not? Why?

**LILY:** It hurts him.

So winter started and they said whoever doesn't have strong shoes stays here. And we came and gave them shoes. They were made out of wood. The shoes were made from wood. (Shows interviewer her misshapen foot) With me, here are my feet. From here, everything is dead, everything, until now. (No feeling in her foot) Until now. Look, until now.

**INT:** Adele told me about this.

**LILY:** And they said, whoever doesn't have strong shoes, they stay here alone. And who has good shoes, don't go down for a while by foot. We go, why? In a little while the Russians are coming. After two days we got there. There was one small bed and Adele, Irene and I, we sat on the bed with all our clothes.

**INT:** It was cold. It was very, very cold.

**LILY:** It was cold. And they said when there is a siren, to leave very far from here, the whole place is going to explode. Why? Because the Russians are coming. Very soon the Russians are coming. So the whole street will explode. So when you hear a siren, run, leave fast. So then at night we were sitting like this, the three of us, and then we hear a siren (Whoo, whoo). So then **everyone** got up to run. On top of each other, people died there. It was a **big mess**. And Irene was weak and there was snow. And I took her, schlepped her and said, "Come, soon there will be an explosion, soon an explosion!" And everyone, everyone like crazy ran. People died there! Something, something not

**normal.** And then we went back to the house and asked where and told us there, and we saw that only half were left alive, not even half. There was nothing left.

**INT:** Nothing.

**LILY:** Only small rooms, small rooms like this one. Nothing left where there was a window. And it was cold, very cold.

**INT:** They bombed it?

**LILY:** They bombed **everything**. When we started out by foot, 1,000 out of the 2,000.

**INT:** Half.

**LILY:** Half. And we weren't allowed to walk in the street, because the tanks drove by. So we walked.

**INT:** On the sides.

**LILY:** On the side. There was corn there, outside corn left. And when someone would fall, they would say, "Kill him, kill him, kill him," just like this.

**HUSBAND:** They'd shoot.

**LILY:** Once at night we were where animals sleep, like animals we slept, and then there was a fire and they said we did it, we did it.

**INT:** That you made the fire.

**LILY:** They said they know that we did it, and they said everyone has to die, kill them. And we were saying, "When you're at home, tell my..." We didn't think we would stay alive. (Crying) So a lot of people ran away from there. It was a mess. There were SS with rifles. I don't even know how many stayed alive there. I don't even know if 100 stayed alive. "Alive," nu, that's not alive. We didn't have food, no bread. I didn't see bread for three weeks.

Then we walked for three weeks. There was snow, two meters of snow. And we didn't have strength. I took Adele, Adele took me. "Come a little more, walk a little more. A little more. There is a light. That's where we have to go, where there is the light."

So that took three weeks. It was three weeks. I didn't see bread. Outside there was the... (Hungarian)

**HUSBAND:** Some plant from the ground.

**LILY:** You make sugar from it.

**INT:** Oh, sugar cane.

**LILY:** Yes, and I took and started eating like I was crazy. Then I got diarrhea from this. It was ice. Before that there was nothing. And I was so sick, I was white like this.

**INT:** You were white?

**LILY:** Three weeks so skinny, maybe 30 kilograms, not even that. I was the sickest.

**INT:** You were the sickest.

**LILY:** Weak, I got diarrhea from the ice I ate. It was like ice. At night they said, that's where we're staying in the barrack.

**INT:** And the SS were with you the entire time?

**LILY:** Of course! Every time, every 20 meters.

**INT:** And they let you eat from the sugar cane?

**LILY:** They didn't give anything. They didn't give food the whole way. We didn't get, I didn't see bread for three weeks.

**INT:** Three weeks.

**LILY:** Nu, we got there, we saw on the bottom there's water. (Referring to her husband) He doesn't know this, he never heard this ever where I was. There was no door, no windows, nothing. We were so tired. There were three floors there. No door. Like animals.

**INT:** There were four walls.

**LILY:** Yes, and we sat there and slept a little. I opened my eyes and I saw people eating bread. And like a madman I **took, I took** from the hands.

**INT:** Yes.

**LILY:** Bread, I was full of blood, a few small pieces of bread I took, I saw in hand two slices of bread. They gave bread while we were sleeping and we didn't know they gave some bread. And I took it and she's hitting me, from the head from everything, everywhere there was blood. I got a tiny bit, so a little, a little bread we got. We were there.

Every day there was "tiff."

**INT:** What is tiff?

**LILY:** We had a little hair, and with the hair was full of...

**INT:** Oh, lice?

**LILY:** Lice, full of lice. From the lice it was tiff, all the hair falls out and diarrhea. And there in one small room like this, 20-25 people, and every minute someone died. Died together there, where they urinated and defecated.

**INT:** Everything together.

**LILY:** Together, and every morning the SS, there was a fence and there the SS lived.

**INT:** Behind the fence?

**LILY:** There was a fence, and the SS. Every morning they came to see if someone is still alive.

**INT:** Came into your room.

**LILY:** Oh, there no one came in, you don't even have to see, that's, that's not people like us. And one morning there is no drill. Every morning there was a drill. Whoever could went outside, and we saw how many are left. It was a mess; the Russians were coming soon. It was near Warsaw. Danzig, it was Danzig. There was an airport there. When we were in Auschwitz they took strong people to build the...

**INT:** Airport.

**LILY:** Airport. And we met there people, whoever was left, we met there.

**INT:** In Danzig? Gdansk, right?

**LILY:** No, not Gdansk. That's Polish. It was Danzig. It was 20 kilometers away from Danzig, there was a labor camp. And once in the morning there was no drill. It's quiet. What happened? No SS, no one. They ran away from us. There was one girl who was a bit stronger than me left, said, "Lily, come. Maybe by the SS there is food."

**INT:** She told you?

**LILY:** Yes. She said, "Come with me." I left Adele and I ran there. There was an oven from the work. We took wood and made a little tea. Fire, I had a pot, and in it I made tea. Why? I couldn't eat anything. Diarrhea, diarrhea, diarrhea.

**INT:** You could only drink tea.

**LILY:** So when I brought it, so the whole thing fell on Irene's legs. (Crying) She was full of hot water. The hot water fell on her.

**INT:** Ah! It fell on her?

**LILY:** It was something tragic, she's **crying**, it was like that. It was all flesh. And Adele had fever 40 degrees (Celsius), more than 40 degrees. Lungs.

**INT:** She was sick in her lungs?

**LILY:** Her lungs were very sick. That's why she stayed there, in the hospital. She was very sick, very sick. And there was no SS. Where was the SS? No people lived there. People were afraid what is there. That someone's sleeping. I said, "No, she's dead a few days already. What do you want? No one here is alive." There was one person who was strong. She said, "Lily, come. Maybe there is food by the SS."

**INT:** You were sure that they all left?

**LILY:** They left. It was quiet there. We went there and found coffee.

(Lily and Husband speak in Hungarian)

We found there coffee, we found tea, found sugar, cake. They left **everything** there.

**INT:** They ran away.

**LILY:** Ran away. Two days like this it was and the Russians came. And said, "Is anyone alive here? Is anyone alive here?" Here no one is alive. Then there was a large advertisement, there is one, there is one labor camp left where no one is alive. "Girl, you are alive a bit, you're not dead." I said, "I don't know." I didn't even have...

**INT:** Strength.

**LILY:** Strength to speak, so he brought me tea and coffee and...

**INT:** The Russians?

**LILY:** Russians. And the woman every time at 5:00 would come to get the water and milk from the cow, from the neighboring settlement. So they took her to the settlement, and she brought us milk. People started to eat and they **all** died.

**INT:** Because they ate.

**LILY:** You couldn't. I don't know how we survived. How we stayed. (Crying)

**INT:** The three of you.

**LILY:** Ask Adele. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know how we survived.

**INT:** You can't explain it.

**LILY:** No, I don't even **think**.

**INT:** Yes.

**LILY:** So how do I start? I went home. I was in the hospital for three months.

**INT:** When you came back, three months?

**LILY:** Adele stayed there. And with Irene I went home, to our house.

**INT:** What was there, nothing?

**LILY:** No, others lived there, Gentiles. So they said, "We're not giving it back to you."

**INT:** They didn't want to give it back to you.

**LILY:** No. There was a cousin there, he had a kitchen and worked there.

**INT:** In the city.

**LILY:** He came back first, he came back first (her husband).

**INT:** He was the first.

**LILY:** He was the first to come home.

**HUSBAND:** One of the first.

**LILY:** One of the first, and they made a kitchen for people who came home. One day a brother was at home, another day another brother, then a sister. One day everyone came home. And he was outside and I said, "They're doing there a kitchen, food for people."

**INT:** A kitchen for a lot of people.

**LILY:** And my cousin was there, and said, "Come to me, come to me. I got everything back, the apartment, kitchen a month back."

**INT:** You got your house back?

**LILY:** Not really.

**INT:** At the end you got.

**LILY:** Only after a year, after a year.

**INT:** And the whole year where were you?

**LILY:** He had an apartment, the cousin was there, with a...

**INT:** Your cousin?

**LILY:** My cousin, then they said in Bucharest they're giving us help. In Bucharest.

**INT:** That's how you met your husband?

**LILY:** No, no, no.

**INT:** Did you know him before?

**LILY:** I was with my cousin, I was living with my cousin and went to Bucharest for two months.

**INT:** To receive help there?

**LILY:** I got some help, I got a dress, and one pair of shoes and a few pennies. Pennies.

**INT:** Yes.

**LILY:** And after that...

**INT:** How did you meet your husband?

**LILY:** How did we meet, they came to us, everyone, my cousin had a big apartment, and everyone came. He found a lot of things, and he helped people a lot and also came to see what there is there.

**INT:** So your cousin helped a lot of people?

**LILY:** Yes, he helped.

**INT:** And people came to his house?

**LILY:** Yes, and at his house there was a woman with 12 girls and that was a friend of mine from a long time ago. So then we started what to do, what to do. Adele came home then.

**INT:** One minute. Adele told me that when she was alone, in the hospital, that was the hardest time for her that she remembers.

**LILY:** For Adele?

**INT:** Because all the time (during the war) she was with her sisters.

**LILY:** We were not allowed to stay there, it was not allowed, not allowed.

**INT:** Of course, of course. But, who had the idea to go home? Irene or you?

**LILY:** There were in every place Czechs and Hungarians, Czechs and Jews. Every place there were agents. To find people, help to go home. And they asked, "Where are you from?" So we kept on saying, "Czechs, we're Czechs," so we made a group of Czechs. A group of Czechs, a group of Polish, group of Germans. We were in the Czech group. And they put us on a train and said, "You're going home to Czechoslovakia." We didn't think it's already Russia. It was Russia when we came home. It was Russia, we didn't know.

**INT:** Were you going to come back to get Adele? What was the plan?

**LILY:** No. We lived with our cousin. And she knew where we were.

**INT:** Oh, okay, and she was going to come join with them.

**LILY:** She knows, she knew that we were going home.

**INT:** You told her you were going home?

**LILY:** Of course! She was in the hospital, I was working all the time in the storage room, there were oranges there, lemon, and I would bring her a lot of things from there, a lot, a lot of things. So she should have. I said, "When you can come home, we're staying there waiting for you."

**INT:** And she'll come to you.

**LILY:** And we waited at home in our city. "Until you come, we won't leave." We didn't know where we would go. We didn't know the address. Grandfather's, Grandfather's in America. We didn't know. And Irene said that she -- she was the oldest,

I was the littlest, I didn't know -- she knew that Grandfather was in Easton. Grandfather was in Easton.

**INT:** How did she remember?

**LILY:** Sam Green. Sam Green, Easton.

**INT:** How did she remember?

**LILY:** Sam Green, Easton. She wrote the letter, Sam Green, Easton. My aunt in Florida told me, she's still alive. She mailed it and they remember that every time from out of the country came a letter for Green for Grandfather, there was no address on the letter, just "Sam Green, Easton, America." So the mailman said, "I remember, it's for Green, Green, this is where he lives." So he took the letter for Grandfather.

**INT:** Unbelievable.

**LILY:** For Grandfather, he was alive. Was alive. And he was Mother's oldest brother.

**INT:** The oldest.

**LILY:** The oldest brother. That's not a person, this Green. What was his name? (Hungarian to husband) So when he heard the three of us were alive, an unbelievable person. He didn't know where to begin to help.

**INT:** He was very good.

**LILY:** Help, he said, "No one is staying there, you're all coming to America." So me, like Mother stayed there, I stayed there (in Russia). He (her husband) took me and didn't let me; he wanted me to stay here. So that's how I stayed alone, and Adele and Irene went to America.

**INT:** America? How did you feel about staying there (in Russia)?

**LILY:** It was a tragedy. It was a tragedy. So then Grandfather died. And this Green, Willie Green, I don't know. They didn't send a letter for years, I stayed alone like that. Like Mother stayed, how do you say?

**INT:** You felt like your mother?

**LILY:** How do you say, people have, everyone has their situation. How do you say, like Mother stayed. Like that I stayed. And Adele and Irene all the time said, "Lily, why, why are you staying alone there? What will be with Lily?" And I'm in Israel.

**HUSBAND:** Fate, fate, fate, fate.

**LILY:** The fate, the fate. Until now like this. And now I'm in Israel and they're in America. My mother was all the time alone. There is no one. That's their fate and this is mine.

**INT:** So why the decision to stay? Because of your husband?

**LILY:** Yes.

**INT:** Did you have friends there?

**LILY:** Of course! After you start. I had my daughter. I wasn't allowed to, I was so skinny, I was...

**INT:** You weren't allowed?

**LILY:** I was sick after my daughter was born. Our children are dolls! Dolls! We have wonderful children. My daughter looks like you. (Hungarian to husband) The nose is exactly like my granddaughter. Really. (Looking at photographs)

**INT:** Do you feel like people don't believe what happened?

**LILY:** No, they don't believe, why, they say by us it couldn't happen. In Israel, the people, it wouldn't happen. (Looking at pictures) This is my grandson's bar mitzvah in Rishon. This is my granddaughter. She looks like you. Exactly, the same nose, exactly like hers. (laughing) The son is now in Lebanon, this is the grandson. He's now in Lebanon and she's a teacher now in Rishon LeZion. For English, her English is perfect. This is my daughter. This is my daughter. This is my granddaughter.

(END OF INTERVIEW)