

INTERVIEW WITH RABBI LEIZEROWSKI

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Council for Relationships
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INTERVIEW WITH RABBI LEIZEROWSKI

INTERVIEWER: Today is September 4th [1995] and this is Norman Garfield and I'm beginning to interview Rabbi Boruch Leizerowski.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. Halevi Leizerowski.

INT: Can you tell me where you were born and what is the time? Geboren. (Born)

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My boss.

INT: Av Beis Din, Philadelphia.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Av Beis Din in Philadelphia. I see I need help. (Laughs) I was born in Mintz. This was Poland. And raised by my father before he taught me. Then I went, my older...

INT: I want to ask. Can you say your father's name and your mother's name?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My mother passed away very young, thirty-six years old.

INT: And you were how old?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And I was five years old. My father's name was Shraga Feivel Leizerowski. A very pious man and a learned man in Jewish. And he started Torah to taught me. Then we got a rebbe in cheder, I went to cheder. When I start already Chumash and a little Mishnayos and Gemara, my older brother, Yitzchok, Harav Hagoan Reb Yitzchok Leizerowski. He was a pupil of Reb Yeizel in Navordok Yeshiva. Navordok Yeshiva was maybe in Poland. They after, in the first war, World War, they moved to Russia, and after the war, they came back to Poland, and he opened a Yeshiva in Ilya, also Poland. This is known as Grodna, Lita. He opened a Yeshiva and he took me to his Yeshiva. (Wife comments in the background) A Litvishe yeshiva. He was a big lamden, a great talmid chochom, and he got a yeshiva, and I started in his yeshiva to learn.

INT: Wieviel (How many) year old?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Wieviel year old? Before Bar Mitzvah.

INT: And you had to go away from home?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: From home.

INT: What was it like to leave home? Do you remember?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To leave home? Like every yeshiva bochur. This was a nature. A child would grow up, he went to a yeshiva or a cheder.

INT: So you knew this is what you were going to have to do?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Have to do.

INT: Did you have brothers?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A small town by us and we weren't rich.

INT: Your father was a rav in the town?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He taught grosser bochurim (older boys) Gemara.

INT: Okay. Now let me ask you-what do you remember of your mother?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My mother...

INT: Do you remember?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, I remember her. Yeah.

INT: Say about her.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My mother, I must say, first of all she was a chachama (wise woman), I think, and a tzadekes (pious woman) too. She lived with her mother-in-law for many years.

INT: So she was a tzadekes.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And they never got an argument. She must be a chachama. But she got sick and she passed away very young.

INT: Do you remember when she passed away?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Huh?

INT: Gedenkt when she got krank (do you remember when she got sick)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: When she-

INT: Krank. Do you remember?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I remember, yes. Yes. She was lying in bed, I remember. She told me to pick up her leg and I made too strong and she said, "Oy, my leg." Nebbich. Yes, I remember this forever.

INT: And you had brothers and sisters in the house?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We were four brothers.

INT: Four brothers.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Four brothers. No sisters.

INT: And the Tate.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And the Tate. The Tate remarried again.

INT: Wait. When the mother, your mother, geshtorben (died), there was a bubbe in the house?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The Bubbe Raizel, yes.

INT: What was the bubbe like? What was her name?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Tzirel Leah. Tzirel Leah. A very smart woman and a hard-working woman, my bubbe. She raised the children. She did everything in the house. After some years, my father remarried and had children with the other wife. It was already a little squeezed.

INT: But when you were the kleinst of the brueder (youngest of the brothers)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I was the youngest from the four.

INT: Did she spoil you like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My bubbe?

INT: Was she strict? Did she let you do what you wanted to?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My bubbe was a very good nature. She got respect. What the bubbe didn't like it, we didn't do it. It was a moral house, a very moral house, and the children were raised with derech erez, derech erez (respect).

INT: Was the father a shtarke (strong) with the children?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. He was a very quiet man. He never hit us, never nothing. But this was the nature. When you learn Torah and you know what Kaved es Avecha v'es Emecha (honor your father and mother) means, you raise the children like it should be with children, like it should be.

INT: Was the father's mother and father living? The other bubbe and zayde?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. Nobody was already as I remember. They passed away before.

INT: How about uncles or aunts?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Uncles and aunts? I got nothing in the same town. In Ilya we got a little family.

INT: But not in the same town?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Not in the same town.

INT: You lived in a house or a kleiner (small) apartment or what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In a house. A little house.

INT: Your father had a little house.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Our own house, yeah. A full life.

INT: The brothers were in the house at the time?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The oldest brother was in Russia in the time of the war. The second brother and the third brother-the second brother was already in yeshiva, in Navobroduk. And the third one was a young boy. He was also in the same house. And I was a yingele of funf yahr (boy of five years).

INT: What year was this?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Huh?

INT: What year? The year.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Year? I don't remember the year. This was after the First-

INT: World War.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: World War.

INT: So you were left with one brother in the haus (house)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the haus with two brothers.

INT: With two brothers.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Two brothers.

INT: You were close, you learned with them or you talked to them or what happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh yeah, sure we're very close. Very close. All our lives, later too, we were a very close family.

INT: What did they do, those two brothers?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The other two brother-

INT: No, no, then. Then.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then?

INT: What were they doing? You were five. What were they doing?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The oldest was already in Navobrodek, in yeshiva. The second was in our little town.

INT: What was he?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: There was a cheder in our...in cheder.

INT: And the other one?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The third one. Was the cheder. The second was already in yeshiva in Navobrodek.

INT: Did you go to the same-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Bais Yosef.

INT: You went to the cheder yourself?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I start the cheder by Reb Zalman and-

INT: What was it like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The cheder? A cheder was one man got in his house a cheder. Fifteen, ten, how much children he could teach and he would observe in his house. And we groups. We sit by a tisch and we learn together, aleph, bais, kametz aleph ah, kametz bais bah. In one zman I read already the tefillos. I could daven. Here takes four years, and they cannot daven, and we-in our times, our system, that we didn't have the other education. The English or the Polish. We didn't have it. All day, all Torah. Is in one half year, I started to read already Boruch She'amar, Ashrei Yoshvay Veisecha, the whole words we put together. The whole system. I prefer even today the old system, because I see this is a lot faster with the children who study.

INT: Was he strict? Did he have the katchke?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, the rebbe was strict, yeah. Katchke, mit a katchke.

INT: Yeah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: But I was a listener. I would listen.

INT: But if you didn't listen, he gave a-he gave a patsch (smack)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. With the hands, with the katchke. He didn't kill nobody. No. For sure.

INT: Were the children like afraid of him? They were afraid of him?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They were afraid of him, yes. We couldn't keep the children in the class-one of the minuses from a teacher. You must know how to keep the class.

INT: Wieviel stunder beliebt mit the rebbe (how many hours where you with the rebbe)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: All day.

INT: Entire tag (day).

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: All day we were by rebbe.

INT: What did he teach you? Aleph-Bais?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Aleph-Bais, to read words.

INT: The Chumash.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the Siddur. In the Siddur. When you know good Siddur, when you read the Siddur fluently, we start Chumash. After Chumash we start Mishnayos. After Mishnayos we start Gemara. But as I mentioned, I was a good student in the cheder too. I have a good tefisa. I catch easy. But today I don't catch-I don't remember. (Laughs)

INT: I want to ask you, when the Mama geshtorben (died), do you remember the levaya (funeral)? What happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The levaya? I remember. It was in Europe, it was winter, a little sooner-I don't remember the month. But there was a little snowfall and the levaya was very late, maybe by mincha time till they took her to the Bais Hachaim. I was by myself, left in my house by myself. All the people went to the levaya. I didn't understand the tragedy because the bubbe was there, the Tate was there, but later, every day what I got older, I felt the pain. But when I was four and a half, five years, I didn't understand the tragedy where you lose a mother, and the bubbe was very good to us. We didn't feel a difference from the Mama's time, till the bubbe's time. She lived for us. She raised us.

INT: Did she cry a lot about her daughter or was your father crying?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is not the daughter. She was the father's mother.

INT: I mean for the daughter-in-law.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Father's mother. Her mother was dead already. Her family was in Ilya. In Ilya. A town farther, bigger town.

INT: How about your father? Do you remember him being sad?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I remember him very well. My father was a very pious man. He knew ganz Tehillim by heart. And Tehillim is very hard. He knew it by heart. And he was a good Ba'al Tefillah and read the Torah. A learned man.

INT: And when your mother died, did you see any change in him?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A change in my father? My father is gewen (was) hard to...he kept everything inside. You didn't see outside nothing.

INT: Did he cry?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Cry? (Laughs) Maybe he cried when nobody could see. He was a very frum, very frum man. Nebbich. Then I start by my brother in the school before the yeshiva-because my brother was there, I studied with him, and I went to Talmud Torah. In the Talmud Torah yetzt. After I finished Talmud Torah in Ilya I came in the yeshiva.

INT: But I want to understand. When you went to the Talmud Torah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: Your father-was remarried yet or no?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. Remarried.

INT: What do you remember about him getting remarried, bringing a new woman into the house?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The woman into the house? Like a stepmother. And she wasn't a bad woman, but a stepmother. And she got herself already children, two children. They came, too. They were in the house. You get a little crowded, you know.

INT: Wieviel yahr alt (how old) were the kinder?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eier kinder (children). I helped to raise the first boy, a bubela, nebbich, a tayara yingela, ah. We looked to go out from house. We were too crowded.

INT: Was the bubbe in the house too?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Bubbe was in the house.

INT: Did she get along with the-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. She get along.

INT: The kitchen. Whose kitchen was it? The bubbe's kitchen or-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: She took over the kitchen. She cooked mostly. And the bubbe took care of us and the kinder.

INT: She had kleiner kinder (small children).

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Kleiner kinder.

INT: Her husband died? Her husband had died?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. She was an older girl. A girl, vus heist in English, a lady? She wasn't married before.

INT: She wasn't married before. She wasn't married but she had two kinder?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Mit (with) my father. (Laughs)

INT: Oh, with your father. Oh! She had two brothers there and you helped raise them.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, yeah.

INT: Do you remember when they were born? The bris?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The yingele, the elterer (older) I remember. The first one I remember. He had maybe four, five children with her later.

INT: So the house was getting-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Too crowded.

INT: The house was small. How old were you when you went away to your brother?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: With my brother I was already like eleven years.

INT: Eleven years. You left the house. It wasn't so shwer (hard) to leave the house?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. I felt for my brother. I was close to him and he got responsibility. He was the oldest and he raised me.

INT: So you went to his house to live with this brother?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He didn't have a house. He was single.

INT: So where did you stay?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We rented a room, an apartment, and we lived there.

INT: You and the brother?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And I lived with him, yeah.

INT: And the other brother?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The other brother was in Navordok.

INT: Already.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: So it was you and the brother tzuzammon (together).

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, with the oldest. With the oldest. Then after he brought the other brother too, to yeshiva.

INT: Who made the food?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The food? There was a kitchen for all the students. A kitchen. The ladies made a committee from ladies. It's already younger used to eat days by every balabost. Every-

INT: Essen tag.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Essen tag. This one gave you Sunday, and the other one gave you Monday, and so forth. And if you didn't have a tag, the bochurim used to prepare to eat in yeshiva. The big bochurim got a kitchen, a woman would cook for them.

INT: Shabbos. Where were you Shabbos?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Shabbos also yeshiva. We sat with baalei-batim-took to their houses, they took, and the other ones they stood in the yeshiva. They ate in the yeshiva.

INT: In the place where you were born, was there any problem with goyim there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: With goyim, problems? No. The whole parnassah was from the goyim. The whole parnassah was because in town lived goyim and outside from their, this is a dorf, they used to come into the little town to buy what they need for their farms, and the people, the Jewish people mostly got stores. All kinds of food and clothing. What a human being needs-that was the parnassah. But everybody got his own cow, the Jewish people. A chicken, his own chicken, eggs, and a horse. We got-a lot of them there had a little ground too, like a farmer. He planted his own potatoes, also. A full life.

INT: On Shabbos, alles fermacht (everything was closed)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, alles. Alles closed on Shabbos. Everybody's in shul and we learned a lot with Rav in shtiebel.

INT: What was the Rav's name?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Zakheim.

INT: Zakheim.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Zakheim, I remember, yes.

INT: Do you remember him?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: His father was in Baranowicz. Baranowicz was a big town, a new town. They start to build after the war, the First World War. And his father saved Pilsudski. Pilsudski was a Marshall in the army, the Polish army, and when Poland took away from Russia this part of Russia, Pilsudski was the chief. And there was a front, they fight, and Pilsudski run away. It was very dangerous. He run away and his father, the Rav's father, took him in in his house, dressed him for a woman and he milked the cow. And the Russian came in. (Words in Russian) He says, somebody here? Zugt him, no, nobody, and they saved him. After he-they gave him a little change for tobacco, for schnapps. He got rich, this father. His son was the Rav.

INT: When you lived in the town with your Tate, did they only speak Yiddish or only speak Polish?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Always Yiddish. They speak to the goyim, they speak goyish. Byelorussian. White Russia. I speak today the language, too.

INT: So they spoke Yiddish to the mishpocha (family), but to the goyim they speak Byelorussian.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Everyone knew Yiddish. Who didn't know Yiddish? Later afilu (even) by the little assimilation what came in after the years, everybody learned Yiddish and a lot learned Hebraish, too. The bigger towns were Hebrew schools.

INT: A man told me, raised in a Polish town, that later on he went to a school where they taught him in Polish.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, yeah.

INT: Did that happen to you, too?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure.

INT: You went to a school where they taught you in Polish?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein (not) our school. Our school was a Jewish school, like a cheder, a Jewish, or a Talmud Torah.

INT: Where your brother was.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Where my brother was-in Ilya, and I went to this school.

INT: All day long you learned.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Torah. Torah. Chumash, Tanach, Dinim. We have a lot to learn.

INT: He was a melamed, a rav?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My brother? My brother was a Rosh Yeshiva. He said a shiur twice a week for the big bochurim who know how to learn a blatt Gemara for themselves. My brother was a lamdan.

INT: So you stayed till when?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I stayed from seven o'clock was davening and eight o'clock was the start of the yeshiva. We learned till twelve. Twelve they davened mincha, we got a little meal and back to the yeshiva.

INT: What kind of davening was it, like Ashkenaz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Ashkenaz. Yes.

INT: Were there chassidim in the town?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In our town wasn't chassidim and in Ilya also not, no. It was Ashkenazim. But later, when I came to Lodz, I learned about Chassidus more.

INT: But at this time...Now, did you have a bar mitzvah and do you remember the bar mitzvah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, a bar mitzvah Monday.

INT: What was that like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It was Monday. They bought a bottle of schnapps with a herring and after the davening was the party. L'chaim, said l'chaim.

INT: The Tate came? The Tate came?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Nein. The Tate nisht gekkamen (didn't come), far away Ilya.

INT: Wieviel kilometer?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Wieviel kilometer? This was like overnight to...a trip overnight. The whole night you should travel.

INT: Did you miss your father when you were away? Were you homesick?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My brother was very close to me and I didn't feel so...

INT: For the father

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. Because my brother was older, my brother was like a father to me.

INT: What was he like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Huh?

INT: What was he like as a person? An easy-going person, a hard person, he kept it in, he laughed? What kind of person?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Easy person. Easy person. Our education was very big kovod, big kovod. Not to scream, not to...A better house, a better house.

INT: He was like a tatte or a brother?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Everything. (Laughs) He was everything. And the father wasn't there and the brother was everything to me. Then the second brother came in to his yeshiva. He was already a very warm man. A warm caring person. And he was to me like a mother. A warm person. He learned. He got a good head and he grew up and he was the son-in-law of the Katiner Gaon. Katin was a big town and the Rav was a grosser mensch and he took him for-I show you, here is a picture for his youngest daughter. He was the son-in-law. Then he became the Rav in Naravick, near Bialystock, a little town. He became the rav there.

INT: Okay. So how long were you there till?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Huh?

INT: How long were you there till?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the yeshiva?

INT: From the brother.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then my brother married a girl from , near Vilna. He moved-

INT: Litwak. A Litwak?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Huh?

INT: A Litwak?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A litvishe. His father-in-law was like a chasid. He was from chassidishe, his father-in-law. But he's a litvishe. was a litvishe town.

INT: Where did he meet her?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It was a shadchan.

INT: He went there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He went there to see her, sure. It was a shidduch. And he married this girl and he took the yeshiva from Ilya and brought it to (?). And in Ilya took over another Rosh Yeshiva. I stood a little time with the other Rosh Yeshiva, Weintraub. Weintraub. A big-a big lamden. He was from Russia. He became later a Rav in Karlin. That's his yeshiva, Karlin, yes. Pinsk-Karlin. And I stood with him a couple of years.

INT: After the brother left?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: After the brother left. I stood in Ilya with the other.

INT: With the other brother?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The other brother too, but with the new Rosh Yeshiva. He wasn't there later.

INT: Why didn't you go-why didn't you go with-both of you with your brother?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To my brother? We wanted to stay a bit with the Rosh Yeshiva to learn from him. A new Rosh Yeshiva and he brought a lot of older bochurim. It was already the yeshiva grew up more. We stood with him.

INT: And when would you go back to see the bubbe and the Tate? Pesach? Yomtov?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Pesach sometime, yeah. Yomtov. Pesach. Mostly on Pesach.

INT: Do you remember the Sedarim?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The Sedarim? (Laughs) Sure, I remember.

INT: What was it like? What was it like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Like a Seder you cannot...this is a feeling-a feeling. You see the Hagaddah. Our father used to explain what the meaning from the Hagaddah, and everybody took part in the discussions, how Hashem Yisborach showed the miracles. You have what to say about the Hagaddah. The meal wasn't so ay-ay, but the Hagaddah was right.

INT: The Hagaddah was right.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The same Hagaddah we say today, (laughs) but today we have the table is decorate nicer like it was then.

INT: And the two brothers would come back with you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: One brother.

INT: One brother.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: One brother. The oldest brother met a girl from the same town and he married her there. Dos is gewen de gvir fun shtoten (it was the rich man in the town). The richest man. The richest man from a little town.

INT: A grosser chasunah (big wedding)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The chasunah, I'll tell you truth, I don't remember the chasunah. I don't remember the chasunah. A little chasunah. This was after the war, but he got the biggest house in town. His father-in-law later passed away.

INT: So who was at the Seder? It was the brother and you.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: From the first wife.

INT: And the brother from the second wife.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The bubbela, yeah.

INT: And the bubbe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The bubbe and his wife. Sometime we invited an orach (guest).

INT: That's when you came home.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: That's when I came home. Once a year, mostly once a year.

INT: How was it when you came home and saw the bubbe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The bubbe I remember when she passed away, my bubbe.

INT: Where were you at the time-do you remember?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I was maybe eight, nine years old. She passed away on the hand of my older brother. He hold her. She was in bed and he held her, "Bubbe, bubbe," closed eyes.

INT: Do you remember the levaya (funeral) for her?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The father was crying. (Wife speaks from the background) Oh, oh, this story.

INT: Tell me that story.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: When the Germans-

INT: So this is much later yet.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. When the Germans came in in our little town, the houses were a lot of them burned from the war. It was crowded. People in one house. They took, in a nice day, they took a lot of people and they sent them out in another town. I don't know what it is. And they put us in a train and they send us avek from there. On the way my bubbe says, Boruchke, Ich bin azeh alt, and I never traveled with a train. You are so young and you travel with a train already. Yeah. We suffered there. They put us-by the end from the town by the goyish street. We suffered. And we couldn't go on Shabbos to the davening. It was very far to the Jewish town. And we suffered a lot. But after a couple of years, like two years, I think, we were there, then we came back to our old way.

INT: This is from World War I?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: World War I, yes.

INT: What do you remember from the Deutschen (Germans) from World War I?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The Deutschen were other Deutschen than this was. The Jewish people got very good by the Deutschen, because they could speak a little with them, and the goyim didn't understand a word. And they were mentchen like every nation. Yes, like every nation.

INT: So the town changed how during the war? You were how old during the war?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I was a baby.

INT: What do you remember about the war?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I don't remember from then nothing. (End of tape 1, side 1) ... it was a mittah (funeral bier), they call this a mittah, and they carry him all the way till the grave.

INT: She was buried near your mother? The same Bais Hakvoros (cemetery) as your mother?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Close to my mother, yes. Now I don't know even where from the grave.

INT: So you were now with-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: With my older brother. With my older brother. I learned a couple of years with my older brother. Then I went to Baranowicz. You heard the name?

INT: Yeah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I went to his yeshiva. I went to Grodno. Slonim a little.

INT: What was in your mind about your parnassah? What did you want to do?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I want to be a rav.

INT: You wanted to be a rav. (Phone interruption)

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I wanted to be a rav.

INT: Why? The Tate-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is the fantasy from every yeshiva bochur. The highest madrega, what can you reach? To be a rav.

INT: A rav in the stadt.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In a stadt (city), yeah.

INT: Not a Rosh Yeshiva.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No.

INT: A rav in a stadt.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. This was the gresta yichus.

INT: And the brothers too? Your older brothers?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My brothers-my older brother was Rosh Yeshiva, the second was a rav, and the third one is also a rav. I was a rav in Lodz before the war, in Chevra Shas. It was a shul.

INT: We'll get to that. Now you're studying. You're learning Gemara, you're in the Bais Medrash.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Gemara, Bais Medrash. Yes. The Bais Medrash in kibbutz, at home-unser yeshiva was called-he is in kibbutz. It means in kibbutz he's learning for himself. He doesn't need a rebbe.

INT: Oh. And what was the essen (eating), the shlaffen (sleeping)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The essen in yeshiva-when I came on to the last yeshiva-mine was the Chofetz Chaim Yeshiva. You heard the name of Chofetz Chaim? The Mishna Brura.

INT: Yes. So he was-he was the Rosh Yeshiva there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: When in the young days.

INT: Radin. In Radin.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Radin. That's right. The Rosh Yeshiva was Rav Naftoli Trop. I learned by Rav Naftoli Trop. After Rav Naftoli Trop took over, Rav Naftoli's son-in-law, and the Chofetz Chaim's son-in-law. Two Rosh Yeshivas.

INT: But the Chofetz Chaim was still alive then.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. He was still alive.

INT: Did you see him? The Chofetz Chaim?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure, I used to daven in his house. Every day I saw him. I stood with him like I talk to you.

INT: But he didn't-he didn't give a shiur?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, kein shiur he didn't give. He was already in the nineties when I met him. He used to give a shmooze, Friday night and Shabbos night. He gives mussar, mussar. Always mussar. Yeah. After I was finished by my brother, I learned a couple of years. The last yeshiva, as I mentioned, I was Baranowicz, I went to Radin. They didn't accept so easy because it was crowded the yeshiva, but I got protection. My brother wrote a letter and the rav from wrote a letter that I'm a gutte kopf (good head). They took me in and I learned there seven years. Almost seven years I learned there. And I got smicha in yeshiva, from yeshiva.

INT: What was the rebbe like? The rebbe was who?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The rebbe is gewen (was) Rav Naftoli. Dos nit a rebbe (this is not a rebbe) what is sitting-

INT: He didn't give shiurim.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Two. Two shiurim a week. Montag and Donnerstag (Monday and Thursday) but those were higher learning. Pilpul. A kashe (question) and you can answer with a teretz (answer). It's not you sit down and learn what the gemara says. This you must know already by yourself. And I got smicha from Reb Mendel in yeshiva.

INT: Reb Mendel who?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Reb Mendel Zaks. The son-in-law from Chofetz Chaim. And then I got smicha from the Tiktiner Rav and from-

INT: Where were you eating in the Yeshiva?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In yeshiva, every bochur, they start from twenty-five dollars a week till forty dollar a week, the bochurim. Younger gets less. If you learn more years you get a little more. From this money you rent a place to sleep, you rent a place to eat, and this was for everything.

INT: Where did you stay, somebody's house?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Somebody's house. I got a room with my other brother. We got a room.

INT: Together with your brother.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Right. With the younger brother.

INT: The younger brother.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Second after me. From the Tiktiner Rav.

INT: Shabbos? What was Shabbos?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Shabbos? Also in the , the kitchen where we were. Ten bochurim took together and we rent a baalbaste who will cook for us Shabbos. All week they cooked for us, and we managed. Who had a little money from house, he lived better. Who didn't have...

INT: Once a year you came back to the Tate?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Once a year mostly, yes.

INT: Once a year. The Tate was proud of you, of what you were?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. Yeah, sure.

INT: And he went over the learning with you when you came home?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. This was his whole pleasure. His whole pleasure when the children were learning good. Then he was a mechutan with the Tiktiner Rav. This was the gresta kovod (biggest honor).

INT: And what were happening to the yingele, the other children? Reuvenle, you said.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Reuvenle.

INT: Yeah. What happened with them?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He, nebbich, is ungekommen in Novobrudek.

INT: So he learned, too.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. He learned in Novobrudek, yeah.

INT: So you're learning...how old was your father? Your father died in the milchoma (war) or your father died?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, my father-Hitler killed him.

INT: So he was there in the same town-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He was in the same town, but I was already in Lodz.

INT: Now wait. So you're still in the yeshiva and you're seven years in the yeshiva.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Seven years in the yeshiva. Then I married a girl from Lodz.

INT: When did you come to Lodz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To Lodz I came-also I was like six, seven years in Lodz. Seven years. After the petira (death) from Chofetz Chaim, a year after the petira from Chofetz Chaim I came to Lodz.

INT: To be a rav.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. Nit a rav (not a rav). I was only a son-a-law by a rich Yidden, a rich man. He got a big house, tenant house, and he got one daughter and-

INT: So why did you...? Why did you go there? Because you met somebody? To chassunah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, sure.

INT: Oh, so after seven years you decided genug (enough).

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Genug, yeah.

INT: How did you know?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My brother was in Lodz to take money, solicit money, for the yeshiva, for his yeshiva. He met there my future father-in-law, and he told him he has a daughter, so and so, so and so, and they red him a shidduch from Radin, another bochur. Rav Moshe Sasson. Big yichus. And it didn't come out. And he asked him, maybe he knows a bochur. And my brother says, "I'll send you my brother. Look him on, maybe you will like him." And I came and they saw me, we spoke and-

INT: You met the mother and father?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Her mother and father.

INT: Her mother and father.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: She was one daughter.

INT: One daughter. So you met them.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, I met them.

INT: And he had a parnassah, a grosse parnassah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He got rent from the house. He got a tenant house.

INT: Oh, he rented the rooms?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Rented the apartments.

INT: That's how he lived.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: That's how he lived, yeah. It was a big house, five floors, a second building.

INT: What was his namen? What was his name?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Zuckerman. Eliyahu Zuckerman. He was born from Minsk. Zeldovitch-maybe he didn't know this. In Minsk was a Zeldovitch. He got a bank, very rich. He was from this family. Zeldovitch family from Minsk. And he lived in Lodz. He got-before he got a school came up his own school for children. They were teaching children. Then he got another house and sold the other house and bought this house and then his parnessah was from the houses. The house is still existing. It was in ghetto.

INT: You came to the house and met the Mame and Tate.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Mame and Tate, met the girl.

INT: Brudr (brothers)? Bruder from-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nobody. Nobody. Only one daughter.

INT: Okay. Then you got with the chasunah. Do you remember the chasunah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure,I remember it. My brothers came.

INT: Your father came?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My father came. And it was a chasunah. After I sat down and learned. There was a rav. He was a little mishpocha (family) to us, Rav Segel, the Rosh Bais Din. He was a family to us and he helped me a little in the-a push. Gave a push. Then after a year, a year and a half, I got a shul. I got a shul. It was in a home-a big home, and he built there a shul and he took me in as a rav. I was there a short time.

INT: What happened to the old rav?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To the old rav?

INT: Was there a rav before you in that shul?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the shul there was nit. I was the first one.

INT: The first rav.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The first one. Then became empty another shul, Chevra Shas. This was already younger people, rich people, and they lost their rav, and they took in me. And I was till the war by this shul.

INT: What were your baalebatim like there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The baalebatim, most of them were Litvisher baalebatim who came in from Lita and Lodz, and they established themselves. Mostly were sochrim, businessmen.

INT: Lodz was manufacturing.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Manufacturing. They were manufacturers, they were in sukkah business. Richer people, better people.

INT: Can you talk about the rabbanim in Lodz? How many there were-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure, I can.

INT: The names, what kind of shuls there were.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The rabbanim in shul were in Lodz were according to Chassidim. Every sect of the Chassidim, like Ger had their rav, Alexander, their rav. The sect is from Chassidim. And Chassidim, I mean, a lot of sects, and they got shtieblach for themselves, they used to daven, and they got their rav. Everybody pushed it in his rav in the kehilla. There were over forty rabbanim in Lodz.

INT: How many?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Forty. This was registered. It was not registered. What they didn't have a right to sign a wedding. If I made a wedding, Rav Segel signed for me.

INT: How many had the authority?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The authority-over forty.

INT: Fertzig (forty)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Fertzig, yeah.

INT: Fertzig.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Fertzig rabbanim.

INT: Who could sign. But there were even more rabbanim.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: More rabbanim. It was three hundred thousand Jews. Over three hundred.

INT: Was there a chief rabbi, a grosser rabbi?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. There was a chief rabbi. Here is a picture from the chief rabbi. When he passed away another came in, one rabbi. Since the other-after Rav Meisel, nobody was the chief, but Rav Segel, as I mentioned, he was the Rosh Bais Din, a title under the chief rabbi, the Rosh Bais Din. He was it.

INT: Was there a Rosh Yeshiva? Was there a yeshiva in Lodz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A yeshiva. There were two yeshivos in Lodz.

INT: And who was the-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Every-and dos is gewen (this was) in the Litvishe shul was a yeshiva. Diskin got a yeshiva. Diskin's Yeshiva they called it, and they got a Rosh Yeshiva.

INT: And what were the problems like on Shabbos? Did everybody close up, fermacht (closed) on Shabbos like in a kleiner stadt (small city).

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Ninety-nine percent.

INT: Ninety-nine percent.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: How about kashrus? What kind of problems with kashrus?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, kashrus. Kashrus was a big problem. We got a problem and we got from the state anti-Semiten. They didn't give us how much animals we need. They give us only accordingly they have. How many Jews are there? Three hundred Jews. Three hundred Jews, you should have hundred cows. If it got treif, they don't give us more. And they wanted us to eat the chelek (part), the back part. The back part we cannot eat because there is a lot work. It doesn't pay to make kosher, to take out the veins.

INT: Treiber is it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Treiberen, yeah. (Laughs) Good. Doesn't pay. It was a big problem with meat. Big problem. And when there's a problem with meat, you should watch more. Other families had give what I get.

INT: So the butchers were how many? The butchers, the mashgiach.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, mashgichim. Sure, sure. Mashgichim watch.

INT: You were involved in this?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein, nein, nein. I was a Winkulmirer.

INT: Did the rabbanim get together, the misnagdim?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure, the-iz nisht gewen a Litvisher rav. This was my taana (complaint) in Lodz. When took over the memshala (ruling) in ghetto, I told him-he was a Litvak. I told him "You know our situation. We never got a rav from the Litvishe. Now you are a Litvishe and I'm a Litvishe. Let's do something." I had a whole story with this ma'aseh (affair). He told me this month will not be a meeting. Maybe next month. There will be a meeting, we will talk about that. But now not yet. And this was my-my mazel. If I would be accepted in this, when I talk to him, I wouldn't be here, because after they made this meeting, the Deutschen (Germans) said, give us the list from all rabbanim. So they gave them the list. They came in the night and took away all of them.

INT: And you weren't on the list.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I wasn't on the list. I wasn't there.

INT: Okay. So with kashrus there was problems.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Problems.

INT: Shabbos was okay.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Shabbos, nisht. No problems.

INT: How about gelt (money) for tzedakah (charity)? Was there-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, Lodz gave tzedakah.

INT: Were there poor people there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Lodz gave tzedakah, yeah.

INT: And they had for yesomim (orphans) and orphans and widows and they had-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Everything. There was an orphan's home and a Talmud Torah and a hospital.

INT: Genug gelt (enough money) for this.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Genug gelt, not genug gelt. I have a book. They used to call him the schnorr mit the car. A schnorr hut gefuren (went) mit a car. He can be in Poland. (Laughs) Who gets a car? He was a manufacturer from clothes. Tishtochal vus memacht. Like a big rich man. He was a president from the home. He used to go drive a car and-

INT: To schnorr gelt? He came in a car?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In a car, yeah. The schnorrer mit the car. Glicksman.

INT: And the Bais Hakvoros (cemetery), everything was-everybody had their own?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This belonged to the kehilla (community). It was a big kehilla.

INT: One kehilla? One Bais Hakvoros for everybody?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: One Bais Hakvoros.

INT: For the chassidim and for the misnagdim.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: For the misnagdim. All one.

INT: Did they get along-the chassidim and misnagdim?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, yeah. The chassidim-the chassidim got the majority. The misnagdim was the minority in Lodz. Sure. The Rav was a misnagid. Rav Meisel. Meisel. They write the picture here.

INT: How about Eretz Yisroel? Did anybody think about going to Eretz Yisroel during that time?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Lodz, the Gerer Rebbe pushed very much. He said to the rich people, "Divide your fortune. Put in something in Eretz Yisroel." He was a pusher. He himself bought a lot land in Eretz Yisroel.

INT: And he told his chassidim to go to Eretz Yisroel?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Chassidim to go there. The other rebbes didn't do it so strong, but he-he saw it. He saw it a little far. The Gerer. And he said to the people to go. He has a big community now in Eretz Yisroel, the Ger.

INT: What did you think about Eretz Yisroel then?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eretz Yisroel?

INT: Did you think about it at all?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: About Eretz Yisroel, there's no question what I think. This is our holy land. We should give the life for Eretz Yisroel.

INT: But then. But in the Twenties, in the Thirties. What did you think about Eretz Yisroel? What did you learn from your Rosh Yeshiva, from the melamed?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eretz Yisroel got a name there is Chillul Shabbos, there is tarfus (unkosher), and they said, how can we send our children, to become goyim? Therefore they were against-a lot of them were against, but Ger said send your money away for them. Save what you can in Eretz Yisroel.

INT: And send the kinder (children) there.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein, nein. Kinder too.

INT: Did he go himself?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Himself, yeah.

INT: When did he go, before the war?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He was three times in Eretz Yisroel before the war.

INT: Before the war he went?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: He had a lot of baalebatim in Lodz.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure.

INT: This is the Ger.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, yeah. Ger was one of the biggest.

INT: Was he a big talmid chochom?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A tzaddik, a talmid chochom. Sure. And Alexander also, a big, grosser rebbe.

INT: What was it like with the-we'll stop soon. What was it like with the goyim in Lodz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The goyim-the goyim are big anti-Semiten in Poland. In Poland they are big anti-Semites.

INT: But your kleiner stadt you said, was-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It was quiet, yeah. It was quiet there.

INT: In the other places you learned before Lodz, it was quiet?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: More quiet. Sure. They lived more close together and they knew each other. They knew that it was better. But a grosser stadat was tzuris (anguish). A woman. She made a gezerah (decree) about the meat and she made a lot of gezoros (decrees) to keep the people busy. The Germans prepared themselves for war, and Poland had got in their minds what you doing with the Jews. This was a politic mayor.

INT: But in the Thirties? How were the goyim in the Thirties?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the Thirties. Anti-Semiten. Big anti-Semiten.

INT: What did you have to do with them?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We have to do a lot, because they are the buyers. They are the majority. They are the buyers. And the positions in the higher offices. You cannot put a Jew in.

INT: In the medina (country)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure.

INT: Did the goyim come to your shul or did they come around?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, never. Never.

INT: Did they make any tzuris? You never had any-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. This not. This not. This not.

INT: Do you remember-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: When a policeman went to the street, everybody shaked. Moreh gehat (they were scared). Here is jail, you're afraid from a policeman. There was a moreh (fright) for a policeman.

INT: What happened when a Jew went to court?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The courts? All gewen-although there were a couple Jewish lawyers, the court all anti-Semiten. Shon Poland is an anti-Semitisher state. Anti-Semites.

INT: You didn't have anything to do with galachs (priests)? Did you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: With galachim (priests), nein, nein, nein. Even I didn't look in his eye.

INT: Now, was there a Bais Din in Lodz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. Rav Segel had a big Bais Din. Rav Heiner.

INT: Did Yidden in your shul or other shuls, if they had a-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Din Torah.

INT: A cheshbon (accounting), a problem.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Din Torahs.

INT: They would go to Din Torahs.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: First of all they went to Din Torah.

INT: More than here.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: More! A lot more. A lot more.

INT: When two Yidden had a problem-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, they went to the Rav. First of all they went to a Din Torah. And what you make, you make. You didn't have a choice, they went to the court. Why should you think that the Polack or the English judges are smarter than the Rav? Why?

INT: So there they would go to the Bais Din in Poland?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Bais Din. Yeah, a lot. A lot of Din Torahs. Then there's agunahs and chasunahs and gitten. It was a-in Lodz I got already a yetzer hora to Rabbanus, because I saw this is a big undertaking. In our little shtetl, the rav hat gehat (had) a sheylah (question) once a week or twice a week, a lefel mit a tepel. Lodz was something else.

INT: Was there any problem with marrying goyim? Did anybody ever marry a goy?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, there wasn't such a magayfa (plague). It happened once or two times. The magayfa we didn't-no, no.

INT: Because then already the Yidden spoke Polish.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Polish, a lot of them, yeah. The richer, the richer class. They sent their children to college. Numerous clauses how many Jews can come into a college. It was very hard. If you would let in, more Jews would be there. But they didn't let in.

INT: But from this generation, this generation, you had baalebatim already in the thirties. Their children did not-did look to go to cheder like you did in the system that you went through or they were more-they were more secular?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, this the time-the time came where they made schools-obligations schools like today. The public school. Poland was also public schools. They forced to go to school. But if the Jewish school got the classes, it was all right.

INT: So they went during the day to the public school?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Public school a lot went.

INT: Gymnasium?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: And then afterwards they went to the cheder?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My rebbetzin-

INT: But this wasn't as good, or it was as good as when you went all day?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It wasn't good. (Laughs) It wasn't so good, because they got a little assimilated.

INT: Yeah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure.

INT: So some of the younger ones were not as frum as the Tate?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: (Sighs) For sure not.

INT: You had in your shul like that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oy, sure.

INT: Were there any-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: But rich as the father was, he was less frum. He had a big-a bankbook, what does he need Hashem Yisborach? The poor people (laughs) who don't have the book, they need Hashem Yisborach.

INT: What were the problems in the shul? You had a president in the shul? You had-can you remember what-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, sure. Problems? Yeah, sure. You got.

INT: Oh, kibudim (honors).

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Kibudim or how to keep up a shul. A shul cost gelt (money) to keep up.

INT: You had a shammash in the shul?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A shammash in shul.

INT: A chazzan in the shul?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Not every shul. My shul didn't have a chazzan. I got who to daven. Yeah. A shammash we got.

INT: And Yom Kippur?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yom Kippur was Yom Kippur. Ba'al Tefillah, sure.

INT: The same Ba'al Tefillah for Yom Kippur?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, for Yom Kippur was a Ba'al Musaf, another one Shacharis.

INT: Do you remember their names?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I don't.

INT: No. And they had-if they had a chassunah they had it in the shul?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A chassunah?

INT: Yeah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Mostly-

INT: Outside.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Outside, outside. Mostly chassunahs outside.

INT: And a bris?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Also outside. No shul.

INT: You must have been very young as a rav?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure.

INT: How did you feel being-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the twenties. In the twenties.

INT: With all the problems of older people, what was that like? Were you nervous? Were you worried, or you had somebody to call up when you had shaylos (questions)? You're a younger person with such-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I got a lot experience because in our family was rabbanim a lot, and you got experience. Enough experience. I saw it in house from my father, from my brother. It wasn't a problem for me.

INT: It wasn't a problem.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. I grew up in this atmosphere.

INT: So you knew with a shaylah (question) what to do?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh yeah, sure.

INT: Did you ever have to call somebody else to help you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, I didn't. Sometime you are asking an opinion, but what would you-what did you say, but not an obligation. What you say they should listen. Every rav knew mostly every shaylahs. He must know himself. Here when a student

finished, and the Rosh Yeshiva gave him his telephone. If he will have a shaylah he will call me. By us it wasn't so. (Laughs) By us, if you learned for rabbanus, you should know what-

INT: Was there an eruv in the town?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Lodz, didn't. No. We didn't have an eruv.

INT: Did they want to have an eruv or what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. Most no. Most were frum, so they didn't carry on Shabbos.

INT: Why?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The chassidim. One said yes, and one said no, so hat geblieben (stayed) no. They didn't take a rav, a chief rabbi, also this was the machlokes vus es gewen (argument that there was). This chassidim say, "Yu want a chief rabbi, let it be from ours." And these said "From ours." It was also geshlept (stretched out). But the last time, they wanted to take the Lubliner Rav, they wanted to take. But this was a little- because Laibele Minsberg, the president from the kehilla, was a (?), and he was also a . He was afraid he'll come in town, they will say send him to the parliament, not Laibele Minsberg. This was the politics.

INT: So a Jew could go to the parliament, though?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Who?

INT: A Jew could belong to the government politics?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh yeah, sure. Sure. Mer wen gehat vertlach (we had a few), gehat three.

INT: Frumer Jews?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Frumer. Rabbanim. Three. Levine was and Laibele Minsberg and Shapiro. Three was. The Agudah three.

INT: The Agudah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And the Tzionim (Zionists) had also two or three.

INT: You were a member of the Agudah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I am a member of the Agudas Yisroel, yeah.

INT: Did you go to any meetings of the Agudah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh yeah, sure.

INT: In Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure.

INT: In Europe, it was alle tzusammen (all together), from the Agudah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nit alles tzusammen (not all together). Lodz, the Agudah in Lodz-

INT: Oh, Lodz Agudah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Lodz Agudah, but no, to the conventions I wasn't. I was too young.

INT: All right. Let's...

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: Let's stop here. (end of tape 1, side 2)

INT: Today is Sunday, January 21, 1996. It's erev Rosh Chodesh Shevat, and I needed to ask you some basic questions that I didn't before about where you live and how many children you have and what their names are. Could you tell me now-you live on Gilham Street, 1134 Gilham, and could you tell me your wife's name?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Wife's name is Chaya Rivka. In English they call her Clara.

INT: Okay. And the children?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The children. My oldest son is Abraham, the second one is Isaac, then is my daughter is COSBL, and my youngest son is Dov.

INT: And can you tell me a little bit about each one of them, what they do?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My oldest son is an attorney here in Philadelphia. My second son-

INT: He's married?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He's married. He has three children. My second son, Isaac, lives in Philadelphia, but his position is in Camden. He's the rabbi of the Anshei Emes shul, one Orthodox shul there. He's the rabbi there and-

INT: He's married?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, he's married. He has one child. His wife is Esther Pilah. And most of the time he spends in Philadelphia. Most work for a rabbi is in Philadelphia. But he must be Saturday and Monday and Donnerstag (Thursday) and the holidays in Camden. He works in Trenton.

INT: In Trenton.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Trenton, yes. Anshei Emes...one big synagogue, Orthodox. He's the rabbi there.

INT: And the daughter?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The daughter lives in Philadelphia. My son-in-law is a big talmid chochom, a famous talmid chochom. He wrote a book already in halacha, and he's the rav in Elkins Park in Philadelphia.

INT: Young Israel?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Young Israel. He's teaching in the school, in the Hebrew school, the highest class.

INT: Rabbi B.?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Rabbi B.

INT: And your youngest?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My youngest son is working in the kashrus field. He's the head mashgiach of kashrus here in town.

INT: Okay. I wanted to ask you, we were up to the point where you were explaining to me what it was like in a shul in Lodz.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Lodz?

INT: In Lodz. And you talked to me about getting married, and I wanted to go back and ask you about that. When you were a yungerleit, a younger man, right before, what was your dream? What did you want to be?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My dream was for rabbanus. I'm from a rabbinic family and this is what we like to do. My oldest brother, Yitzchak, my oldest brother, was a Rosh Yeshiva from the Bais Yosef Yeshivos. In Poland were a lot Bais Yosef sect, like here the Lubavitcher. This was in Poland the mussarnickers. They learned mussar. The Bais Yosef Yeshivos. Er gehat (they had) a yeshiva in Russia, in Kanotop, then they got the second Yeshiva in Iwie, here in Poland, then there was in Elkonick a yeshiva. And the first years I learned in his yeshiva. And the second one, Gedaliah. I got another brother, Gedaliah. He was in Novobrudek. This is in Byelorussia-White Russia. But it was Poland. For the Poland side was Poland. He was a businessman. Auch (also) a big talmid chochom, a yeshiva bochur, but he was in business. The third one was a rabbi in Narev, near Bialystock. He was also a rabbi in stadt. He was a son-in-law from the great, famous rabbi in Tiktin, Rav Lieder. His son-in-law he was. And then I came and I also, my fantasy was to become a rabbi. And I married in Lodz a girl and I became the rabbi in Boruch Bender's shul. This is gewen (was) connected with an old-age home, this shul.

INT: Did you have a dream of what kind of shul you wanted to be a rav in?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: By us wasn't two kinds of shuls, just one kind.

INT: Grosse shul, a kleiner shul?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A gross shul, a kleiner shul. This was a nice shul, but connected with an old-age home. Then I left this shul and I was appointed to a higher kind shul. This wasn't bigger in size, but-

INT: More gelt?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A shul-nit, more gelt, more talmidei chachamim. The shul was the name Chevra Shas. They learned every day a daf (page) in Shas.

INT: Daf Yomi.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Daf Yomi, right. A Daf Yomi. It wasn't then Daf Yomi, and rich people, manufacturers and big talmidei chachamim. I was for seven years there a rav.

INT: Did you give shiurim there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Every day a shiur.

INT: Oh, every day. Cause Daf Yomi's your shiur.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Every day a shiur.

INT: And on Shabbos they didn't give droshos, or did they?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Droshos was occasionally, when you need something, it was a simcha, a little something, then you spoke, but the droshos weren't there every Shabbos, no. In Europe wasn't this style. And from this shul, the Germans came in. Everything was closed and all destroyed. I was-four years I was in Ghetto Lodz.

INT: Can I ask you...let's go back. You were married.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I was married.

INT: Do you remember the shidduchim, what that was like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: Tell me about it.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A rich man and a big talmid chacham. He was from Russia, from Minsk. I didn't think twice about it. From the finest mishpochas (families).

INT: He had a business?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He got business, yeah. He got business before I met him. When I met them and I got married with his daughter, they had an apartment house.

INT: They owned an apartment house?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They owned an apartment house. And this house is still in existence in Lodz. (Gives the address)

INT: So you were a catch?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I was a catch, yeah. I was a good boy. (Laughs)

INT: Because you're a talmid chochom?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. Talmid chochom from a nice family and the shidduch was like every shidduch.

INT: How many times did you meet before the chassanah (wedding)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A couple of times.

INT: And you knew this was for you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. I agreed and she agreed. (Laughs)

INT: Did you have in your mind in those days what you wanted from a wife or it didn't matter or what? A sense of humor? What did you think about?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A rabbi is a human being like everybody. (Laughs) The aspirations-the intelligence from everybody separate. This is the future, this is his future. I am a (pause)-I am a deep believer and I know that sholom bayis, this is the foundation from a family, and in this way we went.

INT: And how could you tell in two times meeting her, that she was the person, that she would give you sholom bayis in the house? Is it possible? How did you know?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A shidduch is heaven. A shidduch is from the heaven. You can see ten girls and nobody likes you or you her, and it comes to one...

INT: Was the right-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. It was hard for a yeshiva bochur because my father-in-law was himself a lamdan, a big lamdan. He learned also in his young days. He was a son-in-law from a big lamdan in Minsk. There was a family...ich fargessen (I forget). The family was a big banker. He was related to this family.

INT: Was the wife living when you-?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A wife too, yeah.

INT: And brothers and sisters?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We came in into ghetto, we came in all together.

INT: We'll come to that. Did she have brothers and sisters?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nobody. She was a bas yechida (an only daughter).

INT: Now when you got married you moved to where? To an apartment near the shul or a house, or he gave you an apartment?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We lived together with my parents-in-law.

INT: In the same-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the same house, yes.

INT: Was that hard? Was it shwer (hard) to do that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: She was the only daughter. It was a nice apartment. Not in a house, we lived in-

INT: But the same apartment with the father-in-law and the mother-in-law.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeh.

INT: Why did you...did you want to do that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: Why?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They were nice-they were nice to live together. She was the only daughter. Why should we live two people in this house and two people in the other house? They liked the daughter to live in their house, and I wasn't against.

INT: So everybody got along?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes, very good.

INT: Whose kitchen was it? The mama's kitchen?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The mother-in-law was the most boss in the kitchen.
(Laughs)

INT: I see. And how long did you live there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: How long? Five years. Five, yeah. Five years.

INT: And all that time you were at the shul that you explained, the Shas?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: You were there.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. And in the shul I lived four years, mistama (probably), because I was a year in the Boruch Bender shul. In this shul I was four years.

INT: Four years. Were there any children during the five years?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: (pause) No.

INT: None.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, she had a miscarriage once.

INT: Once a miscarriage.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This daf zein (must be) in this history? Vus us zeir business? (What is it their business)?

INT: But you survived that. I mean it happened and you went on.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. I was in ghetto. I was four years in ghetto.

INT: Let me ask you. What do you remember first about the Germans? Did you know they were coming? Did you hear about the war? Tell me at the beginning. Think back. When did you know?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It was a blitzkrieg.

INT: It was all of a sudden.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: All of a sudden in one week.

INT: Do you remember where you were when the blitzkrieg came? Tell me.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In our apartment, where we lived.

INT: Which apartment? With the father-in-law?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, everybody. The whole family.

INT: Tell me what happened.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This was Sukkos. They came in on Sukkos in Lodz. Like today they announced the war, tomorrow morning is war in Lodz.

INT: And what were you doing? Tell me.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: What we did, we destroyed the sukkos. Downstairs, in the yard, were sukkos built. We destroyed-everybody destroyed the sukkah.

INT: Why?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because we were afraid they will come in. If they see the sukkahs, they know Jews live. We Jews-we want to bahelten (hide), to behalt this.

INT: I asked you that because I interviewed a man who said he-they told him that the Germans from the First World War weren't so bad.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure.

INT: But how did you know already that they were?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The family used to say-to tell. Our families. Our parents. They said they were nice people.

INT: They weren't nice people.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They were nice people.

INT: Oh, they were nice people.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The First, the First War, sure. They were nice people. Better than the Polacks.

INT: So how did you know to take away the sukkos?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This we heard already what happened when Hitler spoke and before-we didn't know. We lived in a time was from radio we could listen.

INT: So the blitzkrieg came and you took down the-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The sukkos.

INT: Do you remember when you saw soldiers the first time?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We avoided. We didn't go in the streets even. We avoided to go in the streets, only what you must, and they caught us to work.

INT: But did you keep the shul going at the beginning? Can you explain it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, it already start already...this was in-

INT: This was...let's say when it was. It was 1939 and it was Sukkos of 1939.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: Now, let's talk about from then on. So in 1939 already-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Took a couple of weeks and all the people went to shul.

INT: Went to shul and arbet (work).

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And davened, like usually.

INT: Then what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: But they avoid to go like they went from the Poland's time. And every day was another gezerah (decree). Every day was another announcement. Jews, you shouldn't do this, you shouldn't do this, They shouldn't go on the pavement, they should go...when you see a German, avoid him. Go on the other side.

INT: But no star. Did you have to put on a star yet?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Later star is time. Later.

INT: Later. Okay. But this is the first few days. So then what? Explain what happened. How did it-how did it happen?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is the happening. Every day was another announcement in the papers, on the radio, that the Jews cannot have stores. They sent in their people to take over the business. My boss-where I lived-was a rich man. Carpet-store from carpet. They sent in a German and he took over. And every day was something else. Then is how to buy food. Get harder every day. Then we started to talk they will make a ghetto. Everybody prepared himself to move.

INT: To move.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, and-

INT: What happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: On a rainy day it was, and today, a snow there, I remember. This was the last day. The date-I cannot remember the date. So they said the town must be Judenrein, must be cleaned up. And we went. Whatever on the platzes (shoulders). We couldn't even find a horse and wagon to transport you.

INT: How far was it from where you lived-the ghetto?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It starts from like three blocks from us where I lived in town. Three blocks down saw the ghetto.

INT: And how did you decide what to take?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Decide what to take-what we could take, we took.

INT: Candlesticks, or pictures, or what? What was it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: What we could, we got. We took what we-

INT: Do you remember? Do you remember?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The furniture-a little furniture, not everything, because we have-we got one room in ghetto. We got one apartment from a kitchen and a living room. Not a living room, a bedroom, for both families. We made from the kitchen, we made a bedroom and a kitchen. Everything we used together. Small like this-like this room, for two families.

INT: So you took-do you remember what you took? Personal things?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We took-

INT: Sefarim (Jewish books)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We got a new bedroom, beautiful furniture, new furniture, we took it in the ghetto. And the table we didn't.

INT: How about pictures?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Pictures, yes. We didn't have a special-special pictures.

INT: How about silverware?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Silverware, yeah. The silver we had and the clothing what we got we took in. The other things remained in the apartment.

INT: How about from the shul?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The shul-nothing. No more shul there. This was in town. In the ghetto we made a couple of times a minyan in my house, in another house and later...(interruption)

INT: What did you do with the Sefer Torahs and other sefarim?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The Sefer Torahs the gabbai took away. The gabbai and the president, they took away the Sefer Torahs. It wasn't mine. It was the shuls'. Aber gehat (but I had) a Sefer Torah. Sefer Torah was in the apartment.

INT: What did they do with it? Do you know what they did with them?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. Nobody knows. They remained in town. The Germans took away everything. They sent it to Germany. Good books they sent to Germany. Sefer Torahs they sent to Germany. Everything what they could take they took away.

INT: So whatever silver you had on the mantle, the Aron Kodesh...you didn't have any of that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, I didn't.

INT: Now you came to the ghetto with your wife and your mother-in-law and your father-in-law, and you found-how did you find a place?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They put us in our-our house was in ghetto, our building, and we got there a-this little apartment.

INT: Because he owned, the father-in-law owned the building.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Owned the houses.

INT: Did you have in mind what was going to be, to run away? What were you thinking about with the father-in-law?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A lot people run away before they came in the ghetto. I got in my mind to run away, to Vilna, but my father-in-law was against and I listened to him.

INT: What was his argument?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: "Where will you go? You are a single. Where will you go? What do you know? Maybe so many Jews remain here, we will stay. We will see what it will be." We stood. First one he passed away, my father-in-law, then the mother-in-law.

INT: But wait. You went into the apartment all together.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: All together.

INT: What was life like there? How did you get food? What was-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Food?

INT: Yeah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They made already stores in ghetto. They made shops, stores. The people who were tailors they worked for the Germans. It was the Jewish people took care of these things like doctors and shoemakers. They made shops. They worked for the Germans, and they let in so much and so much. Sack potatoes the first time, a bread a week. One bread a week. Bread was three pounds. This was for a whole week for a human being. Then they made class. Was a big hunger there. I told you that this cost a pound of the peels from the potatoes cost was ten dollars. Then you need a prescription for this.

INT: Did your father-in-law bring money into the-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He got a little money, yeah.

INT: He had money that he brought with him.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. And, you know, then I met Romkowski, and I told him I would like a job. I look for a job you shouldn't work on Shabbos.

INT: Did you know Romkowski from before? Let me say. Romkowski was the head of the Judenrat as I remember. You knew him from before in Lodz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Not much. I saw him a couple of times, but I didn't know him close. I saw him a couple of times. He was a president in a childrens' home-in an orphans' home.

INT: He was a lamdan (learned man)? He was a-what was his-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He was an intelligent man. Fine, intelligent man. He was a Lubavitcher.

INT: Yeah? So you went to him to ask him for a job.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And I met him in the street, on [name of] Street, and I told him I would like to remain in, what do you call this in English? When somebody moves in in a house, he should be registered that he lives in this and this and this. You give to the bureau in the town. Then to take care you should be clean.

INT: The janitor, like.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: To keep the apartment clean? The building clean?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The building.

INT: The building. Superintendent or a janitor.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Not a janitor. We got a janitor. I was more like a superintendent.

INT: A superintendent. The electrical to make sure it worked and-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And it should be clean, because so many people in one this. Can be an epidemic this. And I asked him for this job. They gave me not only our house, they gave me three houses. Others that were on the same street. And I was inspecting every day.

INT: How did you decide that's the job you wanted?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because I understood if I don't need to go to a shop, at least I can keep Shabbos.

INT: Oh. And you knew you needed a job.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: How did you know you needed a job?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, sure. I wanted a job because you must work. If not, you will not have what to eat. They will not give you what to eat.

INT: Did your father-in-law tell you this kind of a job or you thought of it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein, I thought myself, because I knew a little in this field, because we carried on our house in Lodz by ourselves. We knew what should be done to fix, to this.

INT: You knew how to fix things?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, I understood. Sure.

INT: Did you ever fix things?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, I didn't. Never. Never fixed. Because this is the janitor. In Lodz you must call somebody in.

INT: So how did you know then-how did you know?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I know because we got our own housing when I was a child in a little town. Here I knew everything what happened. They went for money in the house. They came and said, this is broken here, this is broken this, we should call him to fix it. I knew already, so it was good. This was a good idea. Everybody should come...in shop you must do something on Shabbos. I didn't have a shop. I didn't have nothing. I only-every day was a meeting in the office. I came in and I said this and this should be done there and there and I took the minutes, a report. Every day a report.

INT: About the condition of the buildings?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Condition of the buildings, yes. The people.

INT: And you reported to Romkowski or a different-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Nein. It was an office, a special office.

INT: Special for this. What did your father-in-law do? What was his job?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He was an old man and it took very a short time, maybe he was three, four months in ghetto and passed away.

INT: Could you have a regular levaya (burial) for him?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: For him?

INT: Do you remember the levaya?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Nein. Kein regular levayas wasn't. Came there to our house with a wagon, took the body. Who wants to go with he could go. It wasn't a public levaya like...Later this wagon used to go in the whole town. You found here a man and here a man and here in the street people.

INT: Did they bury him in the Bais Hakvoros (cemetery)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Bais Hakvoros.

INT: The one that everybody used before the war?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is written in my sefer, that people were lying months in the cemetery till they came to bury them.

INT: He was lying a month or other people?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, he was...because in our building lived somebody who worked by the cemetery, I got a push.

INT: Was he sick before he died? Did you have a doctor?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. He wasn't sick. But he had a stroke in the ghetto and he passed away. It took one day.

INT: When he died, how did you feel? Did you feel any responsibility about the family and you were there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Surely. He was my father-in-law, and a Jew, and he could live a lot longer, because of the situation. I felt like we feel today. Was the same. The people are people.

INT: But you were now the head of the house. Did you feel that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: You had the responsibility?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The mother-in-law was. I had fifty percent of my name, my wife. They gave us before the like nadin (dowry).

INT: And who made the decisions in the house about what to do?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: All together. We spoke all together. We made the decisions together. Like today.

INT: Okay.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: There's more tzuris but-

INT: But when he was alive you all talked together, or he made the decisions?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: All together.

INT: Okay. So what happened after he died? What do you remember?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: After he died we remained, and I worked and brought. Then they used to pay me the Romkowski money, the ghetto money. And this was enough to pay for our bread. You couldn't get for the money nothing, the Romkowski's money. For real money also you couldn't bring in nothing, because you were in a ghetto, it means with a fence, an iron fence was around the ghetto.

INT: So when you originally thought about running away, did you think now still about running away? Did you think about running away in ghetto?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Why? What?

INT: Did you think about running away?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, I wanted to run. People were spontaneous. You don't know what to do. You see people are running, you want to run. People are coming, you want to come. You cannot make the...but I thought to run.

INT: Even in the ghetto?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, in the ghetto wasn't worth it. No. The ghetto nothing. Before the ghetto. This was before the ghetto. When you were in ghetto you couldn't go out, no. This was ninety-nine percent dead, because the soldiers used to...around the ghetto, and across the street were the goyim, and they shout, "Juden, Juden!" The Polacks.

INT: The Poles. So if you ran out they would-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. They would...shoot him. Sure. No question.

INT: Were there any Poles in the ghetto?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. No Poles. Only Jews.

INT: Only Jews. No Germans?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Also not. Nobody.

INT: Did you talk-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Grosse shanda. How can you live with Jews together?

INT: Did you talk to other Jews about what was going to be?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: (Laughs) We talk every day. This was the whole-

INT: And what was it? What did people think?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We didn't have radios. It's capital punishment. But they got. People got and they bring the news. One heard from a German, one heard from a Polack, some were in the streets and some got radios.

INT: And what were they saying?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: That the first-he takes the whole world. We thought he will take the whole world, maybe he will free us. But years later we found out that he wanted to destroy the Jewish people, the Jewish nation. As long you could work you worked. Later you got swollen your feet with water and they passed away. They passed away, in the thousands.

INT: How did they look, the Jews at the Judenrat, like they would help them, or they were part of the Germans or what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, they were (end of tape 2, side 1)

INT: What were they like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They was people who fought for life. Everybody fought for his life. He was stronger, he could take away from you, he took away. This was the life. Like animals. Animals, he was hungry, he takes away from another animal. A human being is the same way.

INT: Did frumer Yidden act any differently than non-frumer?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Frumer Yidden act different, yes.

INT: How? Can you say?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because they know what gezeilah (stealing) is. They know what hunger means. They know more and they will know that you shouldn't hurt somebody. They were more restrict. The not frumer like here. Like today in our civilized world. Wer is shtarker (who is stronger) wins.

INT: What was Shabbos like and kashrus like in the ghetto?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Shabbos-who could keep Shabbos? Who kept Shabbos?

INT: Was there wine?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because we used to this life. We know that Shabbos you cannot work, but if they stayed there the Germans with a gun, you should do it. You should save your life. This is only for three mitzvos you should give the life: avodah zara (idol worship), gelui arayos, shefichas damim (murder). If he told you to shot somebody, I should kill somebody, then I should let me killed. I shouldn't kill somebody. This is only for three mitzvos, but the other mitzvos he should do if you have no choice to save your life. We were in the same situation.

INT: Did you daven with a minyan?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. We made a minyan a couple of times. In my house we made a minyan, then we got another house. But was not in the popular streets so nobody should know.

INT: It was assur (forbidden) to have a minyan?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure.

INT: And to put on tefillin?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We got tefillin. We put on tefillin every day.

INT: Do you remember-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: But nobody could saw in house what I am doing. I put on tefillin. Sure.

INT: Do you remember what Pesach was like that year, in 1939?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Pesach was the same-same like alle Yomim Tovim. It was a problem with the matzah, but we got a couple of matzos to be yotzeh (to fulfill the mitzvah). This was a hunger. What can I tell you? A big hunger.

INT: A big hunger.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The greatest-the greatest catastrophe what people died it was from hunger.

INT: Did you see your old baalebatim around in there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I saw a couple, yeah.

INT: And rabbis?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Rabbis, too. They didn't know...I was saved with a miracle. I wasn't a registered rabbi in Lodz. In Lodz were forty rabbis registered. Another twenty were vinkel rabbis. He's a rabbi in a corner from the town somewhere, but when he made a wedding he couldn't sign. He must go to another rabbi, to a friend, he should sign. And the Lithuanian people-I was a Litvak. I am a Litvak. We didn't have too many rabbanim.

The head rabbi, this is the head rabbi, was the big...(shows a picture) this was the Lodzer Rov. I came when he passed away already. He wasn't there. But his grandchild was the head rabbi. Between the other rabbis and when I need something was legal, I used to go to his son-in-law, to his grandchild, and he used to sign for me. In the ghetto I decided he left over a-it was Rav Segel was his name. Rav Segel had a son-in-law. He also wasn't legal, a legal rabbi, and he came in the ghetto to Romkowsky and he said, "My father-in-law is old and I would like to become in his place in the rabbinate." And he took him in. When I heard this story I got in mind, now, when Romkowsky before was a chassidische president. He looked for more the chassidic people to push in, but Romkowsky was already like I said a Lubavitcher, and a Litvishe, I thought I would speak to him. He should take me in in the rabbinate, because when you work in the rabbinate you get a bread more in the week.

INT: This is in the ghetto?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the ghetto. And now he spoke to him once and he told me this month was already the meeting. We will not have another meetings not to talk. Later, by the next month, we'll have a meeting, then we will see. We will see about-

INT: Making you in the register?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Huh?

INT: Putting you on the register.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. Maybe. I don't know. Maybe. And this week what I spoke to him, and this was after the meeting what he appointed this rabbi, and in the same night came the Germans with a car and took away all the rabbis.

INT: All the rabbis?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: All the rabbis what was on the list.

INT: The forty rabbis.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Nein forty. Forty rabbis were before the war. Before the war. There were efsher (maybe) six or seven, and they took them away and we don't know the lake in water. I didn't speak already no more. I didn't want-

INT: Somehow the Germans got the list from Romkowsky?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: From the meeting was the rabbinate...the meeting what was in the community, in the kehillah.

INT: How did the Germans found out what Romkowski-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They call up, give me the list how many rabbis.

INT: He gave the list.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He gave it. End with the rabbis. No more rabbis in ghetto, officially.

INT: Did you think about where the Ribono Shel Olom (G-d) was in this?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This topic I don't want to touch because I don't know what to say.

INT: Then. How about then?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then?

INT: What were you thinking then?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We think we did something wrong. We don't accuse the Ribono Shel Olam. He's the Creator, He's the Merciful. Something who is doing wrong, we are doing wrong. The humanity. Not Hashem.

INT: The Yidden or the Deutschen or who? Who were you thinking?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The Deutschen are the rashiim (wicked ones). This is Amalek. It was already in the history. Haman was in the history. This another Haman was. But he know already the history from Haman. What Haman did, he did more. He could do it because they organized more. The Germans-the Germans...our army. The English army that came in, the first army. They believed us, because they saw the churban, the destruction in Germany was. They saw us, that we...I weighed, mistoma (probably), ich weis (who knows), a colored soldier found me, and he carried me like a baby, pound I was weighing. They saw it with their eyes. They believed. But the other, when they went away the first groups, and they came in from America the new ones, they looked around and said, "What are you telling us these stories? They did so and so and so. Nice people. The Germans are nice people."

INT: When did Americans come?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The Americans-

INT: Came to the ghetto?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They came, I mean, after the redemption.

INT: Oh, afterwards.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: From Germany, yes. They didn't believe us, because they couldn't understand.

INT: So but you were thinking then maybe you did something wrong, maybe the Yidden in Poland did something wrong?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Avadah (sure). We accused ourselves, sure.

INT: You had baalebatim who came and said to you, “Rebbe, what we do?”

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know.

INT: So you didn’t tell them anything. You didn’t give them eitzos (advice) about what-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. No. Eitzos, no. I knew they are frum, they are good, they are the Jewish people. The Jewish people in the worst situations they are better than anderer (others), than other people in the same situation. Now it’s already fifty years after the war, we don’t understand what happened.

INT: But then, at that time in the ghetto, all of a sudden-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We didn’t understand, no. Dos is gewen a rasha, a meshugana. The Ribono Shel Olam gave him the power and he did what he wants to do. We don’t know this. We will not know till Moshiach will come. Then maybe we will know what happened there.

INT: Was there any thinking that that was Moshiach tzeiten (times)? Did anybody think that that time was Moshiach tzeit?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure. We waited for Moshiach for every day. (Laughs)

INT: But how about specially then? Did anything special about then in the ghetto that people...did people say that? Maybe now is the time.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We used to say. We used to say, sure. Somehow, somebody should remain. This is what we asked of the Ribono Shel Olam. This is not to understand. In the situation what we live today in, you understand? They gave us a little land-United Nations gave us a little land and build and do it. And they did fine. Fifty years later, they are taking away-you understand this, from Eretz Yisroel. Can you explain this?

INT: No.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: What happened here?

INT: No. But we have to look and say that Jews did something wrong?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They do something wrong. Yes, they do. They do something wrong. If somebody in the Knesset, a Jewish lady, steps up in the Knesset and she knows that Dovid Hamelech is by us, (laughs) the second to G-d. Frum, a believer. Gave his life for Hashem, gave his life for the Jewish people. And she said he’s a faker. He’s a ganev (robber). Insulted our great grandparents, Abraham, Jacob. This is not nature. This is not nature.

INT: But you didn't have people like that in Poland, did you, in that time before the war, who said such things?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Such people in Poland? I don't remember. No. There was not believers. Sure there was the non-believers. You can find a mechalel Shabbos too in Poland, in Warsaw. There was the store open too, but you cannot say he's mechuyv misah (worthy of death), not capital punishment.

INT: When you were in the ghetto, were you thinking about what happened to your brothers and your parents?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure. I think not only in the ghetto, I think today too.

INT: Today. But did you try to-did you know where they were then?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I knew where they lived. This lived in Elkanick, this lived in-

INT: But you didn't know what happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. No, nothing. No post, no writing.

INT: So you couldn't tell.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No.

INT: All right. So-(phone interruption)

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Like by us-what they did by us, they did in the other towns. (Interruption)

INT: Did the father-in-law ever tell you any secrets?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah?

INT: The father-in-law. Is there anything you know that he told you that was like a secret about the family or anything you want to say? Is there anything you knew about any-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. They didn't have a family. This was the whole family wus hat gehat (what they had). They didn't have family no more. He was born in Minsk, in Russia, and Poland with Russia were two wars. You couldn't contact nobody from this.

INT: So what happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the family, it was a small family.

INT: Small family. So now what? You're with your wife and the mother-in-law.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And the mother-in-law.

INT: And you're there.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We lived like other people lived in the ghetto. They lost weight. They lost weight little by little, my mother-in-law, and one day she passed away. Was osgedart from food. Then my wife was all right, I think, and one evening she came in-she went into the neighbor. The neighbor-was there maybe a half an hour. Comes in to house and falls on the couch and passed away.

INT: How old was she?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This must be a heart attack. I didn't know what it is. From hunger. Hunger. We were very hungry, very hungry.

INT: But you didn't know it was coming? She didn't seem sick.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, she didn't. No. (Pause, sighs)

INT: How did you-what did you do? How did you react to that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I reacted what every husband reacted when there's such a tragedy. I was hungry, too. (Pause) You cannot do nothing when you are in a prison. We were in a prison. You couldn't-and the people, the other people didn't have more than I. You cannot ask from nobody.

INT: You sat shiva? Did you sit shiva?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure. Sat shiva and said Kaddish. What I could, I do-I did.

INT: And how was it being all alone? What did you-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: All alone was very bitter. Very bitter. Very, very bitter. Then start the last-the last year she passed away.

INT: It was in 1940 or '41 or when? When did she pass away? The Germans came in '39-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: '39. And this was already in 19-

INT: 1939 the Germans came in Sukkos.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: '39. Was '40, '41, '42. This was in '43.

INT: So you lived in the ghetto three years?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Five years.

INT: Five years.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Four years. Four years.

INT: Four years in the ghetto.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Four years in the ghetto.

INT: And the food was less and less?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Less and less. Less and less.

INT: I think I read that the Lodz Ghetto was the last ghetto left, because people worked.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, yeah.

INT: Did you know that at the time?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I knew it, yeah. This was a productive ghetto. They got good shops and the Wehrmacht needed this work what we did. But between them-between them the parties I don't know the...and the war. Everybody wanted to be the boss over the ghetto. They said, "I'm responsible for the ghetto. I will carry the ghetto," and the army said, "We should take over the ghetto, because we use the products what they are making." This was between the Germans.

INT: Did you see the Wehrmacht?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: Did you see the Germans inside the ghetto? Did they come later on, the soldiers?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. But the soldiers we saw outside from the fence.

INT: So the main problem was what there? Starvation?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Starvation.

INT: Not the Germans doing any bad things then?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. In ghetto they didn't do nothing. Whom they needed, they used to make from time to time they came to this house and looked for something what they can grab. They got already people who showed them here was a rich man. They called him in. Where is your money? I don't have or something. They killed him. They killed him or they hit him. They hit him. I saw the room where they took him in.

INT: For money?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, give the money. Where is your money?

INT: And Romkowski? Did you see him much?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. I saw.

INT: And what did he say? What did he say about what was going to be there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We should work to save our lives. What we can do. They promise that the ghetto will exist. They cheated him too. They cheat him too. They told him you will give production more, the ghetto will stay. You give less production, we will destroy the ghetto, and he thought maybe he can save somebody. This was his kavanah (intention) was. But he got to eat, he got a nice house to live. He was the fuhrer (leader). I don't accuse him. I don't accuse him.

INT: Were there others like him?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They say a joke how he became the Judeneltester. The Germans gave an order to the whole...What is in English? The committee from the Jewish community.

INT: The kehilla.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The kehilla should come together for a meeting because the Germans will come in over the ghetto and he will speak to them. And he came in and I don't know how many people were there. Some run away to Warsaw. Some remained. They came in and said, "Where is the Elteste?" It means who is the president? And he thought the eltester in the years. Who is older. (Laughs) He was an old man. He stood up. Ich bin the eltester. So daf bleibt shon en eltester. You remain the eldester. (Laughter) This was a joke, you hear. He became the Elteste. Then they told him, "tomorrow you must give me the list of the committee, what they are doing, what's their business." And he must do it. They came there for a meeting.

INT: Did the Germans ever speak to the kehilla?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: The Germans. Did they ever speak to the kehilla?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They spoke, sure.

INT: And what did they say?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They say, you must announce in the ghetto that they will-cannot go out from this hour. Only from this and this hour. To go over the other side from the town, we will build a bridge, because we need the street. We are taking away the street. You will cross with a bridge. It was decided. They gave an order from Romkowsky. (Phone interruption) If they talk to whom?

INT: The Germans. Did they ever talk directly to-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To the people?

INT: Yeah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. Never.

INT: Never.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They talked to Romkowski, to the people who they appointed, and he gave us the orders.

INT: Did you know what else was going on in the war at that time?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the world?

INT: In the war. In the world.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the war?

INT: Yes **RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Very little. Very little.

INT: Did you know about concentration camps?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: That we have concentration camps?

INT: Did you know about that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The first time we didn't know where they are taking the people. We thought they are taking them for work. But later, the third, fourth transport, they wrote on the walls from the train, inside, that they brought them to Treblinka. When the other people came in the doors, they saw geshriben darten shtait (written there) Treblinka is gewen. We understood already where they were taking them.

INT: What kind of people did they take?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Before they take the older. The older who couldn't work. Then they took the children. They took the mothers. Then they took away who it was. Every shop should release a hundred people. It had five hundred people, they will remain with four. Give them a hundred people. You must give them the names from a hundred people.

INT: How did they decide?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This was a tragedy, a big tragedy. The leader from the shop must give them this and this and this and this. This was a responsible job. I give you your life for the Germans. This was a big list. You must give. And if not they will come in in ghetto, they will catch people in the streets. Several ways. Will come in shop and will take. He did it himself. He gave a reshima (list).

INT: Even though they needed these people to work, they still got rid of them?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. And he wrote this is an important for the shop. This is the privileges which was already, therefore they don't like him. He took not more. But he

thought, we will give him today so much, so much, maybe we can save the others. He lived in a dream. The dream was to save the people.

INT: Are you allowed to do that halachically?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Halachadik is a shaylah. A shaylah. Many times no. If they say, "give me this one," you must give him. But if they tell him, "give me three, five, six," this means he must choose, he shouldn't do it.

INT: And how about the children? How did they-how did they give up the children?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The children, yeah. They came in hospital. They came by themselves and they took them, the children who were in the hospital.

INT: How about children in the house though?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Children remained.

INT: Oh, the children remained in the house.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then Romkowski spoke. "Mothers, if you want to go with the children you can go. They will not demand the children. Choose it what you want to do." Some mothers went with the children.

INT: But they took all the children?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: All the children.

INT: I read that.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: But not at one time. They took one transport, another transport, another transport.

INT: And how did they decide who would give up the children?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: How did they decide-this is the question?

INT: The same way.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Same way. This is my low point, when I start about the children, I get very nervous.

INT: That happened in 19-all along they were taking the children. All along.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. All along.

INT: And your parnassah? What happened with your job in the building?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My job I kept till the last day. Till the last day from the ghetto.

INT: Nobody bothered you about the job? They let you stay with the job.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: As long I was in ghetto. When I left the ghetto, there still in ghetto remained a group that cleaned out the ghetto, Jewish people. And then they found a bunker. Was a doctor, noch epes a pur mensch, and the doctor took a stone and gave it to them in their face, the German. He shoot him.

INT: What did you have in your mind to keep going? You're there alone. I mean, what did you have in mind? What kept you going?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Mine was that Hashem Yisborach will save me. This is what I got in mind. I saw all the-how this went. All the time I hoped Hashem Yisborach will save me. And He saved me.

INT: Why you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: Why would he save you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because everybody believes that he's right, that I didn't do anything wrong. Why should Hashem Yisborach punish me? Why?

INT: But you knew other people?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh? Everybody thought the same. But one reached to the conclusion, one didn't. You see I'm here. (Laughs) Another fifty years.

INT: But when you looked around at other frumer Yidden and rebbaim and rabbanam and some of them didn't survive also. How could you-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I hoped yeah. I hoped. We hoped. We hoped. We hoped. We didn't give up hope. I saw. I saw everything. And I was not an organizer. Some people got to help themselves, to catch another soup. I didn't have this plusses. But Hashem Yisborach kept me, you see? When I came already in Auschwitz. Not Auschwitz, Dachau. In Auschwitz I was one month, six weeks or one month, and they sent us to Dachau. In Dachau they gave me in in a Block. You know this how we lived? A big ditch in the earth and put a roof. What you go in you make the height. Here is six foot, but under the roof is a foot, two, three, four, five, till seven feet. You understand what I'm talking?

INT: Boards? You mean to sleep?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A board, yeah. To sleep. When you-

INT: You walk in, bend down, you go onto a board and you sleep.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: There was the order Block, the Block Eldtster was a Jew from Wien (Vienna). A German Jew. He was the buyer from Grand Rose. In Wien was a big store, Grand Rose, a store. (Phone interruption) And he became the Sturbeneister from our Block. And it took maybe a week or two and then they changed him in another Block, and another German Jew came in for the Block instead. And he said to the other what came in now, zugert eir, zei dortein (take care of) auf de rabbiner. You understand me? "Take care of this rabbi." I was so scared. From where does he know that I am a rabbi? This is not good for me. (Laughs) (end of tape 2, side 2)

INT: He was a frummer man in his life?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. Nit frummer. Jewish. A German Jew.

INT: Did you ask him how he knew?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. (Laughs) I was happy to see him, he was happy to see me alive.

INT: Tell me what a day was like for you-a day was like for you in the ghetto, when you were alone. Tell me how you got up in the morning and what you did. What was a day like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I got up in the morning.

INT: You got up in the morning.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I davened first of all. Put on tefillin and davened. Ask Ribono Shel Olam to help me. Help. Then I went out. I got what to eat. I took a bite. If not, I went out without a bite, and I inspect the houses. Got four houses, big houses. I inspect it and write the report, and came home. I made a little water. Before I got a little wood, we got a little wood later. We took off from the chairs the pieces what we don't need from the-from the what do you call this, where the silver is putting? The credenza. You take off this wood to make a little water, cook water. Later we burned up everything what we got it the house.

INT: To keep warm?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: What is wood. To keep warm. To keep a little cooked water. And so we managed.

INT: The night? What did you do at night?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Night? Night you sleep. You have your bed. I got my bed. I slept. And tomorrow is again. Maybe, you know, something good. You heard something. You speak with people.

INT: Did you ever cry?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Cried in ghetto? I cried when they passed away, I cried enough. I cried enough.

INT: When they passed away?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The family. The father-in-law, the mother-in-law, my wife. I cried enough. I was like meshuga. By the wife I didn't know what this is. I never saw. They passed away in bad week, but she came in from the street from a neighbor in the same house. She was by a neighbor and came in and fall on the couch and start agony. I called the doctor and he told me agony and I didn't know what he's talking to me. I was so meshuga. (Pause, sighs) We went through.

INT: Where did your koach (strength) come from in those years?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Koach comes from-

INT: Alone.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: From belief. Belief in G-d. And if He's doing so it must be He's right, not me. Our teachers, our families, our father taught us that Hashem Yisborach is a merciful G-d of people. Now why shouldn't I believe this is true?

INT: But you didn't see rachmanus (mercy) there.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: You didn't see much rachmanus on people there.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, I didn't see. No. It wasn't easy for me. I was there too long. When Doctor, wer is gehasen (who is) the rasha (wicked man) who made these selections?

INT: Yeah. Eichmann. Not Eichmann.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Mengele.

INT: Mengele.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Mengele. I was twice under his supervision what was he picked out the people. I got frozen. I told you that I came in Auschwitz, with a nice pair of shoes, because on my block lived a shoemaker and he saw my shoes are torn, he said, "I will make you a pair of shoes." And he combined-I don't know. He took the leather, he made me a pair of nice...(tape shuts here) The Blocl Eltester saw my shoes. "Take off your shoes." He took away my shoes. The Block Eltester is like a king. He did what he want with his sheep. Oy. (Tape shuts) Take away the shoes. Without shoes, how can you exist? This is winter. He gave me one shoe, a wooden shoe, and another one a leather

shoe. A big one. And a wooden shoe. He said, "Put on this." I put on this. What can I do? He took away my shoes. These two shoes, what he gave me, saved my feet.

INT: That he gave you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: Why?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because I got summer shoes, and in the snow, in the blotter, I would froze my feet. These two big shoes, I put a lot of paper with my legs and the blood is gegangen. But I was frozen on my finger. One finger [toe] off was frozen. And swollen. I couldn't walk. And Mengele came at this time, and everybody should march and he looked. I thought that Mengele would see me I'm limping, he would send me to Auschwitz. And I made myself strong and straight and he put me on the-

INT: To live.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Healthy. Healthy people. And the not healthy on the other side. We thought, these people, they're not healthy will go to Auschwitz, and we will remain here. Then I came, I thought, what did I do? All my time in the ghetto, in the lager, I thought where Hashem Yisborach, where G-d will lead me is good. I will not do with my mind nothing. Don't look that you think this is better. Don't do it. Go like it is. And G-d helped me. Already they gave me the piece of bread, but because they took us out from the lager to walk deeper in Germany. The healthy ones. And I saw I made here a mistake. I made this. I'm limping. How can I show that I am good? And I again in this same line, what should pass by, and I limped like I felt.

INT: But you knew if you limped he would send you to-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To Auschwitz.

INT: Why did you do that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Why did I do that? This is my idea. And I thought I should leave it like Hashem Yisborach. The truth. Do like it is. Let Him lead you. And I went to the other side when he saw. He put me to the sick. And I remained in the lager. We was this group what went to deeper in Deutschland came mistoma (probably) twenty percent came in to the place. Eighty percent they shoot on the way, because they couldn't walk no more. And those that were in the lager, came a big truck and they evacuated us with trucks to the station. And this was my hatzalah (salvation).

INT: To the railroad station.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To the railroad station.

INT: To go to Auschwitz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Nein. We didn't know where it was. They took us with the trucks and when the truck went on its way, a train came from the Front, from the army. And American airplanes shoot on this train and they shoot on our truck. On my truck was dead people from the Americans shot, but I remained. I don't know how. In my same truck what I was were shoot people, three or four. And I remained. You see miracles. Ask questions, why?

INT: So you had yourself in Hakodesh Baruch Hu's hands?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Hashgocha, (Divine intervention) yeah.

INT: And you didn't look for kuntzim (tricks)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Nein.

INT: Even in the ghetto?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. Straight. Like Hashem Yisborach makes, He makes.

INT: How did finally the ghetto empty? What happened finally when the ghetto emptied?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Empty the ghetto?

INT: What happened? Explain to me how it happened.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I don't know. I remained in Germany.

INT: No, no. In the ghetto in Lodz. What happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I was from the last days. Romkowski went a day before me or a day after me. This was liquidated. Nothing there.

INT: How did you, without kuntzim, how did you get to be the last person out of the ghetto?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I don't know. I lived through, and very with kovod, with respect. Myself, yes.

INT: Did they take other building inspectors before you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, yes. Sure. Was a whole group.

INT: Who decided? Who decided?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This was the chairman from this department.

INT: Did you know him?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No.

INT: Why did he let-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: But I asked Romkowski for this job, and maybe he told him, maybe.

INT: You don't know how they left you to be the last building inspector left?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. I don't know.

INT: But they kept taking more and more people?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: Did you know where they were taking them to?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They-everybody looked for jobs. People looked for jobs, and they came in an office and the office used to appoint. Here you needed ten people, here needed one people, a hundred people. And they write it.

INT: But now the ghetto is emptying out, in Lodz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: But every member remained in-we find positions.

INT: But how did he explain, Romkowski, that if before it was arbet (work) and you'll be okay. Now he's taking everybody away. There's no one. What was he saying? There's no more arbet?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I hoped-I hoped and it didn't work, because they took him also. They gave him a letter that he was a very nice man, he did for Germany, and they killed him. Bieber was in ghetto the whole boss. He became a millionaire. He took away from the ghetto the millions. A Wiener German. A socher (businessman). But he was the...He gave him a letter. You should show with Auschwitz this letter, they will treat you good. And he showed this letter. (Laughs) The letter. They took him in a little bus-in a little bus they took him and his wife and his wife's father. The whole mishpocha (family). And they gassed him in the car.

INT: Did he have children?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, he didn't have children. I don't remember. He didn't have. He was-in ghetto he was in the kehilla a macher (doer) and he was the president from an orphan home.

INT: So the ghetto was emptying out.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Emptying out.

INT: Getting less and less.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Less and less.

INT: The Germans-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And the last I don't know. They kept a group of a couple of hundred people. They used to clean up. To take away the good furniture, they sent to Germany. Everything what is left they send to Germany, what is usable. What is not usable remained in ghetto.

INT: And you were doing that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. No. Not me.

INT: When did you leave? You weren't the last ones left?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The last transport.

INT: The last transport. And who came-somebody came and told you now you have to go?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. They caught me.

INT: How do you remember it? Explain it.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I was hidden. The last day I was hidden, not in my house, by a neighbor.

INT: Why did you decide to hide?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: There is people, in my house nobody was. Empty. I came in one night and I slept over and I closed the door. Tomorrow morning they broke the door. They send around to look if there's...this I didn't tell you. I didn't tell you how I was saved from the Germans, with the last-when they looked over our house.

INT: No, you didn't tell me. How did it happen?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: For another day. It's already an hour and a half.

INT: Okay. Okay. All right. Fine. So we'll start there. That's wonderful. We'll start right there. (Break)

INT: Okay. This in Norman. It's, I think, April 30 [1995].

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Rabbi Leizerowski.

INT: Interviewed by Norman Garfield, and the last time we talked, you were batzelen mir (telling me) about being alone, I think, in haus (house), and somehow you were saved. Can you tell me how?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This was in the ghetto, in Lodz. This was our house. Five floors an apartment house. We lived in one room and I supposed to go out to work approximate eight o'clock. I was an inspector.

INT: The buildings. You had three building to inspect?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Three, four buildings, yes. And I was late a couple of minutes. I hear that in the other corridor across from our apartment are the Kriminalpolizei.

INT: Who were they? Can you say it in English?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Kriminalpolizei-they were the Kriminalpolizei. They used to kill the people. They had a man. They knew that he was a rich man or something. They said, give us the jewelry. Give us the money. If he said I don't have it or something they used to hit him so hard, many people died.

INT: Now these were Polish or these were Deutschen?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Polish. Mostly Polish. Deutschen? False Deutschen.

INT: And they were in the army or they were civilians?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Civilians.

INT: They just came in regular clothes.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In a regular car, yeah.

INT: Now, were they a gang or were they from the government?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, no. Not a gang. From the German state. They appointed. The Kriminalpolizei. Don't know what a Kriminalpolizei is?

INT: Police?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They are looking for money by the Jews. Maybe you have money. Maybe you have diamonds, something. You should give up for the Deutsehen. And they broke off the door in the other apartment house, the other corridor, and they came in and they looked around there. They took maybe a half an hour. And I was afraid to go out. If they see me, that I am the time for work-it's too late. They can kill me. I was sitting in house and just what Hashem Yisborach-how can Hashem Yisborach help me? It's the same corridor. I was on the right side and they were on the left side.

INT: You had the door closed.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I had the door closed, yes. And I didn't know what to do. I stood by the door and thought, was mispallel, prayed to G-d He should save me. I thought maybe they will open other apartments too. They can do what they want. They were the

bosses of the town. But Hashem Yisborach helped. They didn't come to another door, only this one, and they went out. And I stood by the door and I was mispallel Hashem Yisborach should watch our doors, because, you know, the mezuzah what is up on our door is written on the mezuzah outside what we read "shin, daled, yud." It means Shaddai, the name of Hashem Yisborach. The name of G-d. The name means shin, daled, yud, means shomer, the shin means shomer-watch, the daled means dalsei-the door, the yud means Yisroel. Shomer dalsei Yisroel-watch the door of your children, of Yisroel. And I kept my hands on the mezuzah and I prayed this prayer and Hashem Yisborach helped me. They went away and I went to work. This is what I want to tell you, the meaning of a mezuzah. A mezuzah is watching our houses. Nature is if you are worthy. If you were mispallel (prayed) with your whole heart, Hashem Yisborach answers you. Like it was in Egypt when they left. The blood of the Korban Pesach what was smeared on the doors from the-

INT: I'm sure there were many frumer Yidden in Poland mispallel-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Majority was frum.

INT: So they were mispallel by the door and the Deutschen came in.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Came in.

INT: Nu?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This we cannot explain. What happened there nobody can explain. It was a gezerah (decree). Like a churban Bais Hamikdash, like the destruction-more than the destruction from Bais Hamikdash.

INT: So you survived.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I survived, yes. I survived till they sent me-got me by the liquidation, the last...this was a half a year before they liquidated the ghetto. Then-

INT: Okay. Let me ask you. We came now...your job is to check on the apartments.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. And see it's clean-the hall is clean, if there's not sickness. If there's sick people, a sick man, I should report to the office. Maybe it's typhus or something. Sickness. Epidemic.

INT: You would report to who? A Jew?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A Jew, yeah. The Jewish office.

INT: And what would they do?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They used to take for everything and do what they could. But we should know and there shouldn't be an epidemic in ghetto.

INT: I see. Now when the Germans came this time, how much time was left in the ghetto? How long after that were you taken?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: After this. Maybe close to a year.

INT: A year afterwards.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. I lived there, they liquidated it all. Then house by house. Our house already was liquidated. I went to another house, an empty house. I was hidden myself.

INT: How did the Germans get the Jews out of the ghetto? What did they do?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They went from door to door. Out. Out. Out. And they took them to a place where the busses and trucks were waiting for them to take them to Auschwitz, Dachau, other concentration camps.

INT: I see. Did you have in mind what to do, a plan, to hide? What did you think?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No plan. I got a plan to hide, yeah. In our house, as I mentioned before, where we lived, was before the war was a reservoir, what kept the water that came down from spigot. We were from spigot. Is on the roof is built like a tank, a big tank. In the ghetto we didn't have water already, it was empty. And I hid myself in this reservoir, and I took in a ladder. I took it inside, the small ladder. It was five steps, six steps, and I took it in inside and they couldn't see. They were upstairs on the roof, not the roof, but the attic. From the attic you could go in in this reservoir.

INT: When did you go there? When did you go?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This the last days when they liquidated our block. I was lying there when they came up. They couldn't go in. They shoot in the high in the reservoir, but it didn't went through.

INT: Did you have food with you? Did you take food?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. I didn't have food. I didn't have. But I thought maybe they will go over our block, I will come out and look for something, but I see-I saw when they are shooting in. If I would stand up or something, they would shoot me-could shoot me. I wait till they went down, and I came out and went to another house to hide when they were already over this block. Was clear. And I stayed in a corner. But they came again and the whole house and looked again, a second time.

INT: In the house where you stayed.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: There were a couple of people more who stayed, and they caught us.

INT: This was in the morning or at night?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This was in the morning.

INT: Early in the morning?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. They caught us and brought us to the...

INT: The people who came to look for Yidden, they were Germans in uniforms or they were Polacks? What were they?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Soldiers from the army.

INT: Regular soldiers.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Two soldiers with ammunition, and they took the people, the Jewish people, they should show them how to go in, how to go out. The big houses. I heard of a man who showed him the door, there the door. He said, oy, vei iz mir. He was sorry what he opened the door.

INT: Why did he-why did he do it? Why do you think he did it, the Jewish man?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He did. He must do! They told him, "Show us all the doors. Open up the doors." He must go. They were forced to go.

INT: Did they take him, too?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: They took him, too, with you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, yeah. Nisht mit mir (not with me). He was-(SurLK inserts a comment here)

INT: There was a time, I read, when finally Romkowski asked for all the children.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. They gave him the order he should announce in ghetto. It was an announcement. He wanted to give the children and it didn't work. He was all his life a president from an orphan's home. Do you think he didn't like children? He liked children like everybody. They gave him the order. All the children they don't work, they shouldn't be fed. You should bring together all the children.

INT: So what happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: What happened? Who could hide the children for a while, he did it. Who couldn't-they came and they took.

SurLK: And how long could you hide them-for another hour, for another day, for another month?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You cannot run away. You are circled with-

SurLK: You know, lots of Americans say, “Never again it will happen. We will defend ourselves. If they ever take us, we are going to fight.” With what? With what can you fight?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Against a rifle?

SurLK: Ten, three, four soldiers, German soldiers. There was a column of eighty-four people and my parents went then to the forest. They shot them. What could they do? What? After hunger, after the cold, after starvation. You were lucky you were standing at the grave. Everything will be over in a few minutes they probably felt. Oh. We will defend. Of course the Warsaw Ghetto. They had already accumulated there a little bit ammunition. You must understand that in 1944 it was already five years Warsaw Ghetto. After five years, people started to think, maybe we want to go, we will fall. They will shoot us. But we are going to fight. This was after years and years, when people realized what the end is going to be.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: There’s no out. There’s no hope.

INT: You didn’t realize what the end was in 1941 or 1942?

SurLK: No! No! 1941-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: But Warsaw knows that if they catch them, they will kill them out.

SurLK: In 1942, there was at the end the Wannsee Conference, where the Final Solution, where they...and then it started before. Beating and hunger and ghettos and dirt and everything else was happening from the first day that they came in.

INT: But nobody thought it would end the way it did.

SurLK: No! No. My parents had the opportunity-my mother begged my father, “Let’s run with the Russians.” He said, “What? With the Russians? With the communists? What will they do to us? They will take us to labor camp? They will give us a lot of work, force us to do hard labor, and you will stay home with the children. You will cook something.” Who would think that something, such a catastrophe will come over the Jews?

INT: Who would think?

SurLK: Who would think? Who-who in their right mind could imagine?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The first war. The First World War, they say that when the Germans came in Europe, like in Russia, they treated them better than the Poles.

SurLK: They were-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because they could speak to us. We understood them.

SurLK: They were trying, the Germans-when my mother said they made a big ball after World War I when they came in, because the Russians were bad. The Czarist Russians, the Cossacks, with Chmielnitsky, they were bad. The Germans were going to be...They were a fine people. Who could think that such a devil could manipulate such a catastrophe? Such a destroying of the people.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nobody believed it.

SurLK: I hear very often the Americans saying, "How could they be? How could they just die like that without defending themselves?" With what?

INT: There was nothing there. The goyim didn't give you anything either.

SurLK: The goyim, yeah, they gave us more. More in die erd (the earth) to put us. I was saved by a Christian family.

INT: Yeah?

SurLK: I was saved by a Christian family. I didn't hear from them-they are not here anymore, but their children. One was nine years old. One was four years old. To show you an example. Last Sunday the rabbi said, you must call them. You don't hear from the children. They are today also fifty years old.

INT: They live in America?

SurLK: No. They live in Poland. So I tried to get the connection. By the time I got the connection it took me an hour to call the overseas operator. Finally I got them. I hear his wife call him to the telephone. Oh, he started to cry and I cried. After five minutes he forgot completely whom he was talking to and he said, "You remember what we did for you?" I said, "Of course I remember. That's why I am writing and sending some money, whatever I can." He said, "I wanted to talk to the Jews, but I don't know, they are such an unintelligent people here. I don't have whom to talk to." I was so, you know, I was so surprised. He said, "You're an intelligent girl. You would understand." I didn't say nothing. Later on we talked about the family, about the other brother and his son-in-law. He said, "He is no good. He is no good. I told my brother, but he looked at me like you look on a Zhida, on a Jew-"(end of tape 3, side 1)

INT: Before we leave the ghetto when they come and took you, can you talk a little bit about Jewish life in the ghetto? The Yomim Tovim, brissen, Shabbos, kashrus, halacha?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The situation in ghetto started with a Jewish life. Everybody was in ghetto. The Germans didn't come in in the streets to look at somebody. We lived for ourselves. We kept what we could. We made a minyan in a house to daven before the people went to work. They must work on Shabbos. They made a minyan and they davened and we read the Torah, but everything was hidden. Nobody should know, nobody should hear. And we kept kosher as much as possible.

INT: The fleish (meat)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We didn't have meat anyway. Anyway they didn't give us meat. And we kept kosher. And we learned and we davened. It was frum. But everything was under fear. You don't say Shema Yisroel-you don't scream, somebody can hear. Later they agreed when went a year, a little more. I don't remember exactly the date. They allowed to bring in horse meat. Horse meat in ghetto. It was a big geshreie. Most of the Jews screamed, we don't know. We don't want to bring in such an aveirah (sin) in the ghetto, but a lot of young people, and the hunger was very strong. They said, "Bring in what you can, and we'll eat what we can." And they-it was a meeting from the rabbis, the rabbanim, and they cried and they fasted till they gave a permission for sick people to eat what they give us.

INT: Were you there at that-when the rabbis got together?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I wasn't in the rabbinate there. I wasn't there in the rabbinate.

INT: But you were a rav? You were a rav.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Only in a shul, but not everybody...in Lodz was maybe forty rabbis. Twenty were registered in the kehilla. Twenty were in the shuls. This was a separate story with my-

INT: I remember.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: How I remained.

INT: Yeah. Did you have to go according to the psak halacha (halachic ruling) to people who came to you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure. A lot of people...the rabbinate allowed to bring in for sick people who want to save their lives. They brought in, they used to give ten gram or fifteen gram. I don't know. I didn't eat this meat. What they gave us we managed to live without a piece of meat. A lot of people it was a necessity for them, and they ate. We got a bread, a bread mistoma zein (probably was) three pounds or four pounds. I don't remember how much a bread was. This was for a week, a whole week. And then so many gram this, so many gram this. It was a hunger. As I mentioned, maybe I mentioned already, the people ate not only the potato, but they ate the peels from the potato. The peels. When the kitchen was-they made cooks, a kitchen, and they used to peel the potatoes, and a bissel wasser (a little water) with a potato-this was a soup. Everybody who works got a soup a day. But later, the peels were outside, they fell out. What can you do with the peels? It came so far, then the people used to grab the peels. Then they made that a doctor must prescribe you for a pound of the peels of the potatoes, and it cost dollars. Five, ten dollars. Every day was higher the prices from a pound of peels from the potatoes, because the hunger was stronger and stronger all the time. This was the situation. Falflegun, they called it. Farflegun. And you worked for a full day and you came home and you got a soup. One day a little soup, water with two potatoes or one potato. And this was-

INT: What about wine, yayin?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Who saw wine? (Laughs) How can you see wine?

INT: No wine.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The people don't saw wine. They don't see nothing. Nothing. Only the-the ration what they gave. Bread and five grams honey, sometimes, five grams margarine. This was the farflegun. Not to die, not to live.

INT: What was Shabbos like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Shabbos, the factories worked on Shabbos. All who worked in a factory they worked. Like my position, I could observe Shabbos.

INT: Did they come and ask a psak halacha about working?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: People would ask the halacha? Sure they asked the halacha. And the people knew this is-every Jew knew this.

INT: You had to work.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: How to act in this situation. Some people were in the factory and they didn't work, if they knew good the foreman, he saved them. Like many rabbis were in the factory, written not as rabbis. It was written as a worker there. The foreman knew this is a rabbi. He didn't look at him. He works a lot. My position, therefore, I picked myself this position, because we had our own house. I got an idea how to run a real estate, and I knew that I can observe Shabbos. Didn't do nothing.

INT: But you were alone?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, I was with a family. I was with a family.

INT: But after-after the family was no longer-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Father-in-law, mother-in-law.

INT: But after they were no longer living, you were alone.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Remained myself.

INT: On Shabbos. Did you go to other people on Shabbos?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. No. Who can invite you? Who has more? Nobody can invite you. The same thing. They save a piece of bread and...

INT: Okay. So the Germans came and took you to the station. Back to when the Germans found you in the apartment, in the house.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the apartment, yeah.

INT: They took you-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It was a soldier. This was a soldier. Then send him to the ghetto to gather the Jews to send them back to-to send them-

INT: Did he give you a chance to take things with you, or what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I got my clothing a little. Yeah. On our back. I took it on my back and he took us to the platz (plaza) where the trucks stood and waited for us.

INT: And what happened? You just get on the train or they took your name down or what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nothing. We didn't. They put us on the trucks.

INT: On the trucks.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And took us to the train. And the train-this was a train from cattle, what they used to transport cattle. They put us in the trains, fifty, sixty people. You couldn't move. We were sitting on the floor and another one, they put another one till they filled up. And a German soldier with a rifle sit by the door. They close the door and he was inside.

INT: The German was inside?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: One German, yeah. He watched us with a rifle.

INT: Inside the cattle car?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Inside, yes. (In a low voice) What could you do? You couldn't do nothing.

INT: What happened? And then the train started.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The train started to move. We didn't know where. They told us we are going for work, a camp for work. Nu, we thought we will work. What can you do? And we will survive. But it wasn't a camp for work. They brought us to Auschwitz.

INT: How long was the ride on the train?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Overnight.

INT: What was that like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Overnight.

INT: Do you remember what it was like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: Do you remember in the train what it was like? Do you remember? Gedenk er in the train what it was like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the train? Everybody hoped that it's true what they said, that this is an arbet camp, that it should be a work place. They take us to a workplace. But we came in inside, we saw the fences around, the iron fences, I understood that it's bitter.

INT: When people found out on the train or on the truck that you're a rabbi-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They didn't know. Nobody knew.

INT: They didn't know.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: One girl knew, but nobody talked.

INT: Nobody talked about it.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. Nobody talked.

INT: So you came in the train-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The train-they closed...the train came in lager, they closed the doors and opened up the doors. "Out! Out! Every package what you have put away there."

INT: Did you know where you were then when they opened the doors up? You still didn't know.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, I didn't know. Auschwitz, we heard of Auschwitz. We heard of Auschwitz, but we didn't know this. Later we knew. The people who were there, it was Jewish people that opened the doors of the train.

INT: You heard about Auschwitz before you came?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: What did you hear about it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is a camp of death. A camp what's with the gas chambers.

INT: You knew about that in the ghetto?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. Yes. Yes.

INT: How did you know? Somebody came back?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because with the first transports we didn't know where they sent them. Then when they came back the wagons, in the wagons was written on the

walls, Auschwitz. When somebody came in the wagon he called outside "Auschwitz."
We knew already.

INT: And how did you know what went on there? What happened there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They spoke in ghetto. Everybody knew this was a concentration camp where they gassed the people.

INT: But I wonder how they knew? Nobody came to live from-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because when the first transport came and the second, when they knew where they are brought, they write on the walls of the train.

INT: Yes. But how did they knew what they do there? They couldn't write what they do.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You saw the chamber. They talked about in ghetto about this for years. They knew this is a concentration camp where they gassed people. They knew.

INT: So when they opened the doors up you knew this was-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Out. Put away the packages. And some of them they sort, segregation. The Dr. Mengele came and other doctors, and they looked at you. If you can work they said to the right side. Who couldn't work-on the left side. I was in the same train that our tenant-from our house a tenant was also there. He was a good carpenter, a furniture carpenter. And I asked him a favor. "You know me. When they will ask whether you will remain. They need a worker. We thought they needed the workers. I asked him he should say that I'm his helper. Do me favor. He said, "Good. I will say so," but he...they put him right away on the left side.

INT: On the left side. How about children? Where did children go? Children.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In our-in our wagons wasn't already children.

INT: There wasn't children.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I was till the last minute in the ghetto. From the liquidation a couple of weeks.

INT: I see.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: There wasn't children, no.

INT: So what kind of people went on the right and what kind of people went on the left?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The stronger one, who they saw that they are going stronger is on the right side. They will work.

INT: You saw Mengele do this?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Twice. I saw him twice.

INT: He looked at you and he said-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: To the right.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is a different story how I remained. I made up my mind...everybody thought what to do. Go on the right side, in the left side. I decided, I don't know what is the best way. I leave it to Him. Where they will send me I will go, and I did nothing.

INT: But did you have a bad foot then?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. This was later.

INT: Later. Okay.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And they put me on the right side.

INT: Okay. So then what happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then they put us in a Lager 9. Lager 9 was they start to build a new lager, and I came into this group. They built a lager. They built the streets. Then we worked for the highway.

INT: Yeah, but wait. On the first day, the ershten tag-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The ershten tag we were-

INT: What happened? Did they give you a shower? Did they give you different clothes? Explain what happened.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. Yes. They told us, take off your clothes and we will give you other. I didn't had a shower. The shower was in the crematorium. What they sent to the crematoriums, they told them take a shower before. They closed the door and they gassed them, and we who remained on the right side, they send us to blocks. To blocks. The Polish Army had there a station for soldiers with horses, and the horses got stables, long stables. They put us in these stables. For two hundred people, four hundred people. We were in the stables. And we lie on the floor there.

INT: Just with the people on the transport. You were with the people on the transport.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. This was-the left ones they gassed the same night.

INT: Did you know that, what happened to the left?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They gassed them.

INT: How did you know?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because the smoke there. You feel the smoke from the flesh, from burned meat.

INT: And it happened that first day when you came, all those people?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. When we came, yeah.

INT: Who was supervising you on the first day, to go here, to go here? Who was telling you what to do?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is a Jew already. A Block Eltester. And he belonged to number one block. There was a Jew. And other blocks were Polacks. The head of all the...Shtubelsester, was a Polack. They put us in this-

INT: Was this Jew nice?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: The Jew. Was he nice or was he hard?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, not bad. I didn't suffer from this. He took away only my shoes, he took away. I came with a pair of good shoes, and he saw the shoes and told, give the shoes. Give me the shoes.

INT: So what did he give you in its place?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: What he gives me? One shoe a leather one, a big one, and the other shoe another kind of shoe. And I gave them away. I knew he can do what he wants with me. I gave away the shoes and I put on these shoes. And this was for me a yeshua (salvation). This was good for me. Because I came with summer shoes, nice shoes, and winter, in the snow and the blood, the place is...I would say would be frozen the feet.

INT: Did anybody explain to you when you came to Auschwitz, These are the rules, this is what's going to happen here?"

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, sure.

INT: Who said it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You must listen to everything. You must stand up in this and this hour. You must go to the washroom to wash off your face and come back.

INT: Who explained that to you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The Block Eltester. Blocl Eltester. I didn't suffer from the Bloc Eltester. And the other-when I was already in another block, also I got mazel.

INT: Okay, but let's stay with this one. So you went to sleep the first night there. You laid down. Where was it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: On the floor. On the floor. A bed on floor, where the horses stood.

INT: It was all men? You were all men?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: All men.

INT: All men. The same age? Like twenties, thirties?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. A young, an old, all together.

INT: Everybody stayed there.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The women were in another place.

INT: And what were they talking about, the Yidden? What were they saying?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The Yidden? We saw we are lost. Maybe they will send us to work-will be good. If not, chas v'sholom (G-d forbid), what can you do? I was Shavous there. It was Shavous, yeah. Shavous. Shavous, by nacht (at night), was a selection.

INT: 194-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: '44. Was a selection. And they came with their dogs, with their...a lot of them they were there already. And they opened up all the blocks. Out on the busses, on the trucks. And they took away then-only one block remained. Our block remained. Our block, block twelve? Yeah. Because there was the specialized workers. Good shoemakers. Good shlossers.

INT: When did you come to Auschwitz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In '44.

INT: When?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Before...this was-I don't remember.

INT: Around Purim? When was it-in the wintertime? Was it cold?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It was cold, yeah.

INT: So it was around, probably, the wintertime.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Noch (after) Pesach.

INT: Noch Pesach. Okay. So you were telling me the selection, but between the time that you came and this selection you were telling me, what happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We didn't work. We stood up in the morning, out from the door six o'clock. We stood outside. It was very cold. It was very cold.

INT: Did you have a coat? What did you have?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. I didn't have a coat. They gave us, from our talleisim made shorts from, and later they gave me something from a soldier. They took away our kleders (clothing)-they took away.

INT: You didn't have tefillin? You didn't have anything. Tefillin?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. I didn't have. Everything was in the package. In our block was one pair of tefillin. Somebody they knew already better, they smuggled in a pair of tefillin. But in the grosser block we didn't have nothing, when we came in the stables.

INT: So you came out in the morning and you stood there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Outside we stay.

INT: And do what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nothing. You don't do nothing. A kapo would clean up the place, swept out, cleaned up, and we stood outside. Later they let us inside back, and we were waiting for the soup, so it went away a couple weeks.

INT: When the soup came, how was it? You didn't have a lefel (spoon) or what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, no lefel. (Laughs)

INT: So how did it happen? How did you drink the soup?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I got a broken pushka.

INT: A can? A little can?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A can. A can. And this was my teller (plate).

INT: And you drank this soup from the can.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We drank the soup. I got, I think, a wooden lefel. A wooden lefel, I think I got.

INT: Where did you get it? A wooden spoon?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I don't know. Maybe I found somewhere.

INT: So what did you have in the morning? What did you have in the morning when you got up?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the morning was a wasser (water) with a bissel (little) coffee. Shwartz (black). With nothing. Only a glass of warm water. Later they gave us a soup, like twelve o'clock. They gave us a soup. And then they brought the bread. They give us a piece of bread. This is all.

INT: This is the supper at night?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: Meanwhile all day, when you went back in, you went in the afternoon you went back in?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the stables.

INT: So what did you do, you stayed there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We stayed there. We talked. We talked.

INT: What did they talk about?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: What did they talk about? What's going to be the end of us.

INT: And what did they think?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And prayed Ribono Shel Olam maybe will give me a bread. I will come in the house, he will give me a whole bread and I can take how much I want. This will be my paradise. Little by little they divided us and sent us. I went to a Lager 9 to build a new lager...were already there. You saw a lager.

INT: Yeah. A lager house. I mean a bunk, barracks.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Much worse. It was taking out the earth like four feet, and the sand was a wall. The wall was the earth. The floor was the earth. And on this earth, on this wall, was a little brettter.

INT: Wood?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Wood, yeah. And on the wood stood a roof. A roof. It wasn't walls, but the roof was on the earth. When you go in, down two steps, three steps, and this floor was you could sit here. You cannot sit there, because the roof is already low.

INT: But you sat on what, on the blutter?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Earth.

INT: The earth. The plain-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Plain earth, yeah. And when you go to sleep, you lay down and put your head here and you put your feet on the brettter.

INT: So how was it working? What was it working?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nothing. Nothing yet. But when they came in this lager, at night, six o'clock is an appel. You go out, they count you-everybody's here, and they send groups. You will dig-you will dig the canal, the water. You will do the other work. The electric company would make the electric and others were out in the field to help the farmers. Others-I was commanded to build the highway. Geferliche arbet (terrible work). They gave me a little train, brought the sand from the other mountains to these mountains, and we straightened out two mountains. Filled up in the middle. To build a highway.

INT: Who was the supervisor, the baalebos? Was the Eltester or what? Who was it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: There were the Deutschen. Civil Deutschen. Civil Germans.

INT: Were they nice or mean or what were they like, the Germans?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They were quieter. But our, what he was watching us with ammunition. They were banditen.

INT: German soldiers?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Soldiers.

INT: They stayed with a gun.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: With a gun. All the day. All the time.

INT: So you were working?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To fill up the tank with sand and send away, and the other train comes in and again. All day. And four, five o'clock we used to go back to the camp. So day by day.

INT: Did you daven at all when you got up or during the day?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. You davened. Sure, you davened. Who knew by heart, davened. Who didn't know, didn't.

INT: How about Shabbos?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Wus is Shabbos? (Laughs)

INT: No, but when you knew. Did you say?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The same thing. There was no Shabbos. Who could manage not to dig in the earth, they managed. They didn't see, the soldier. If he saw, you must do it.

INT: You must do it, yeah. So how long...and at night you slept in the lager?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the lager. Every day you go back to the lager and in the morning you go to work.

INT: Did you see what was happening in the rest of the camp? Where the women were or anything? The transports that came in?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The women were separate. In Lager 9 was a fence, another fence by one corner where there were the women. The women worked also.

INT: Did you know where the crematoria was in the-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure I know. You saw it. They came and they saw the chimney.

INT: It smoked a lot? Was it always smoking, or at night?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A couple of times, yeah. And I also-since I was in Auschwitz, I was in Auschwitz, I think, maybe a month. I was in Auschwitz and they sent us in the lager. In Lager 9. Then they brought us-Lager 9 was liquidated.

INT: How did that happen? So you were in Lager 9. You slept there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Slept there. Everything there.

INT: And what happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And I went every day to work.

INT: And then what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then they liquidated this lager.

INT: How? How did it happen?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They couldn't-they couldn't keep up there something. Wasn't enough work. They liquidated us and they-

INT: How did they do it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: How did they do? They made an appel and said, "Tomorrow morning, at six o'clock, you must be here. We are moving from here." They divided-our lager they divided like a lager. Auschwitz-in Auschwitz was one lager and a second lager and a third lager. I was in Lager 4. They sent me to Lager 4. Lager 4 was-

INT: Inside Auschwitz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Inside Auschwitz, yeah.

INT: Okay. So what happened when you went there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We stayed there a couple of weeks. They made selections. They said, you look better, they remain. They kept you there. Who looked bad they sent away.

INT: So Mengele again-Mengele again?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Mengele, yeah.

INT: So what happened? Just this lager came out? Just the people that were in this new lager, Lager 4 did you say?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Lager 4, yeah.

INT: Only the people there he made the selection from. Only the people there, in that lager, he made the selection from, or the gantz (whole) camp?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This in the Lager 4 was the gantz camp. Not one block.

INT: Oh, it was the whole-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The whole-the whole place.

INT: The whole place. So how many people came out for him to make the selections?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In our block, there was another block and another block, but our block was-in our bloc was a couple of hundred. Four, five hundred.

INT: Did you know any of them from before when you went there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. I knew. Jewish people, you mean. Yeah.

INT: There were only Jewish people there.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Only Jewish people, yeah.

INT: So now they said, come on out, and what happened? They told you to walk by Mengele? You had to walk by him?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. Walk by him. I, by the work what I worked for the highway, I froze a little finger (toe) from the highway. It was very swollen, very swollen, and I couldn't walk. But I heard that Mengele is here for a selection, I thought, what shall I do? He should know that I cannot walk or not? I decided I will limp. I will limp. I did this and went by, and he told me on the left side.

INT: On the left side.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: Did you know what happened to people who went on the left side?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, I didn't know. I didn't know. And they gave us a piece of bread, we should march to another camp. I don't remember exactly. To the right went to the other camp or the left side, but they put me to the sick ones.

INT: With the sick ones.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. To the sick. (End of tape 3, side 2) And they gave me already the piece of bread and we waited. But I thought I cheated him now. I act all my time in ghetto and in the lager. I cheated him. I cannot walk, and I make myself that I can. I managed, how I don't know how, I managed, and I came in again in the group what is-what didn't pass by already, and I went a second time before him, and I limped.

INT: You limped.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. I limped. And he put me on the sick.

INT: On the sick. And you didn't know what was going to happen to the sick?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. I didn't know. I didn't know. And the sick, they put us back in our blocks. And the healthy ones...they went to another lager. Another lager. This was already before the end from their career. And-so I heard, maybe, I don't know, maybe ten or fifteen percent, they know. But this is written already, this statistic, that remained from the whole march. Remained a very small percentage.

INT: And what happened to you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Me? I was lying in my block, in my barrack, and we heard already in a couple days, a couple days it will be. We heard already the American airplanes are near to us. But they kept us closed in the blocks and in a nice morning, we didn't see the Germans. The watch of the Germans we didn't see. And the American Army came in.

INT: Do you remember what happened when you first saw the Americans?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Saw the Americans? (Laughs) We run to them and they looked at us, we looked at them, and they brought trucks and they start to evacuate us, to take us out from the blocks.

INT: Were there any Deutschen left there or any Germans at all left in the camp?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein, nein.

INT: So you went with the Americans in the-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: With the Americans. They took me in a truck and they brought us to-(interruption)

INT: To the hospital in Germany.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Close to Munich. It was a little, like a church, with buildings, and they got there a hospital for soldiers. The soldiers went out. They took out the soldiers and they put in the Jewish-

INT: From the time that you went on the truck to the hospital, did you meet any Yidden? Any American Yidden?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, sure! Many! (Laughs) When they take us the Germans took us out from the lager to bring us in another place, and on the way was an American...because a train came in in the same time and our truck came in, in the same time, and they start to shoot. The Americans start to shoot. On my truck, they killed a couple of people. Jewish people. I don't know. I saw it. I looked at the airplane. I don't know. They kill another one in the front of me and on the left side one, all dead from the shooting. They didn't know what it is. And the train stopped there, and when it became quiet we saw the German, the soldiers, are running in the forest. Running in forest. And we, not me, but other people, run to the train, open the train. They came in. They found a biscuit, like matzhlach. Little matzos. This was like the next week, Pesach Sheini, was it when we were liberated. Pesach Sheni. Nissan is Pesach, and Iyar is Pesach Sheni, the second Pesach. The second Pesach I got a matzahleh. People gave me a matzahleh. I didn't went to the...in the train. And we saw this is the end. The train stood, then they came, the goyim, the Deutsche goyim came and they saw us and they made a soup for us. They cooked for us a soup. This is a little village.

INT: The Germans?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The Germans.

INT: Civilians. The regular people.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: They were very nice? They were nice?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Very nice. They saw this is the end. The German soldiers were already in the-in this little town. And they cooked for us a soup.

INT: Then what happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then they put us, the Americaner put us on another truck and they sent us to Santafalia, to the hospital.

INT: I see. Now in the hospital, did you meet-was there any rabbis there, American rabbis? Did you meet anybody?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Chaplains?

INT: Yeah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. I didn't see it. No. We had nothing. Later, he used to come.

INT: In the hospital you slept in a bed? And you had food?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A bed. A hospital bed. Mit a German doctor. And one of the- one of the heftlinger, one of our people, he's from the Lithuanian a doctor, Greenberg. They appointed him from head of the hospital, and he knew me a little.

INT: He was from Lodz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nisht from Lodz, no. He was from Lita. From Lithuania. A Litvishe. Greenberg-he's here, still here. Now he's in America, was in Eretz Yisroel. He's now here. I mentioned his name in my book. And he was the doctor, and the nurses were from the Church-what do they call it, sisters?

INT: The nuns.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The nuns. And they fed us and the doctor, the German doctor, took care. Then they brought a couple of Jewish doctors from the heftlinger were there, and we stood there a couple of months.

INT: You started to get better physically?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Started to get better. I couldn't walk. I couldn't breathe. Near a half a year I was in the hospital.

INT: Almost a year.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. When they found us in the camp, it was a colored soldier. An American colored soldier.

INT: A colored soldier?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Colored soldier. He carried me like a baby in truck.

INT: During the year, did you ask where's your mishpocha (family) or what-how did you-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I knew my mishpocha is not-no more there. I knew it. Everybody knew, because my father-in-law passed away in ghetto. First one. Then the mother-in-law. Then my wife.

INT: How about uncles and cousins? Did you ask?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They were in another town, not in Lodz. Lodz-we were already in Lodz, today, Friday, Donnerstag night was they announced the war and Friday they were in ghetto, in Lodz, in town. It's close to Germany. They were by Minsk, they lived my whole family.

INT: Did you ask about where they were?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Whom you will ask?

INT: Oh, they didn't have like a Red Cross.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We understood what happened. They must have the Russians before the Germans came. A lot of them went away with the Russians. They remained. Who didn't go-

INT: So what did you do for the whole year? What did you do? What did you do during the day?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In hospital.

INT: Yeah. During the day.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: What can you do? What can a patient do in hospital? We have our books. They gave us already a little literature and they brought us religious books and we read. We spoke. We read. We cried.

INT: Did you have a minyan there? Did you have Shabbos there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Later-later when I came a little-when I built up myself, they brought another two rabbis in this camp, from Lithuania. Also from camp. And we were already three rabbis, we started seeing how can we do something to improve our Jewish life. And I went in another town. They sent me. I could walk already. They bought-they found for me some-a suit, a gray suit, I remember, and somebody gave me a pair of shoes, and I went to Augsburg, I remember. There was a chaplain, and I asked him, maybe he can help us with a Sefer Torah. We want to make a minyan. And he helped me with a Sefer Torah. He gave me a Sefer Torah with two tallesim. Little tallislach. And I came back already. We got a little tallis, we got a Sefer Torah, and we start a minyan.

INT: Every day?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Every day.

INT: And Shabbos?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Shabbos too.

INT: What was Shabbos like in the hospital? Did you have wine?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Shabbos? Nobody did nothing. Like we observed Shabbos.

INT: Did you have wine? Did you have challah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. We didn't have wine. But we got already-they give us-they gave us-they baked themselves, baked little challos and bread, and this was the Shabbos.

INT: So you were in the hospital-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the hospital-then we found-

INT: What were you thinking about in the hospital?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: What were you getracht (thinking) there in the hospital?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Was hat mir getracht (what was I thinking) in the hospital?

INT: Yeah. What were you thinking about in the hospital?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Thank the Ribono shel Olam I am alive now. What it will be I don't know. But what the Ribono shel Olam wet machen (will do) we'll accept, as long we don't afraid to look at the land of Germany will not kill us, it's good.

INT: And what were you thinking about you were going to do in the future? Did you think then you're going to go back to Poland, to Lodz? Did you think?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. I decided I will not go more back to Poland.

INT: Why?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because they are anti-Semites, and we don't have to want to go over there. With whom will I speak? With whom will I live? I remained there. We have a big house there. There's an apartment house.

INT: In Lodz.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Lodz.

INT: So did you know that other Jews wouldn't be there? Maybe a lot of Jews would have gone back.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. No. No. Not a lot. They went. A couple went to look for family, they came back and they said, nothing there. Nothing. Even they took down a lot of houses from the ghetto, to make a difference from the town and the ghetto. The first streets from the ghetto they destroyed. And I thought what it will be with all these people will be with me.

INT: And where will you go? What did you think about?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then, as I mentioned, we found between the patients, we found a Jew, a German Jew who was a shochet (ritual slaughterer) before the war. And we asked him maybe he can slaughter for us a shtickel (piece) meat. We want to have a piece of meat. And we found a piece of iron, steel, and we went to a blacksmith and he made us such a knife, a special knife. A chalaf they call. And this gentleman, I forgot his name. I forgot even the name from the chaplain what gave me the Sefer Torah.

INT: American chaplain. He was an American chaplain?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: American chaplain, yeah. And we made this chalaf, and he became already more and more stronger. He was also a patient now. And we decided to ask a piece of kosher meat. And Dr. Greenberg ordered the people that were responsible for our faflegund, our food, he gave us a cow and we slaughtered it kosher. And we start to have a little meat in the hospital. Then when we pushed a little more, the Dr. Greenberg became the head of the whole Jewish camp. They moved to Munich, they got an office, and it was established that some...from Bavaria, this state had...from Jewish people. And every party sent his, Agudah, Mizrachi, the left ones, the Shomer Hatzair, they sent delegates and they made a central committee, what I mentioned. And we spoke also to Dr. Greenberg we would like to start to do something for our neshama (soul) part. Books, prayer books, a Gemara, to start the life, to bring back the-

INT: What was Dr. Greenberg like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Greenberg?

INT: Yeah. Was he a frummer man? Did he know?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He was a fine man, a fine Jewish man. The Lithuanian Jew, even the doctors, the lawyers, they knew something in the Torah. A lot of them. They knew a lot of Torah. He was from a fine family. He helped us a lot. He helped us.

INT: So what did he say?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And we established an office there and we start to organize the life, the religious life. Then here in America is Agudas Harabbanim. They made a Vaad Hatzalah to help the refugees to come back to religion, and they sent us a couple of chaplains there and we came in contact with these people. There was a Dr. Smith. In my book is there. You didn't see my book?

INT: No.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, you should read it. It will give you a little idea more what it was like.

INT: Okay. What party did you belong to?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: Did you belong to a political party?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I belonged to the...came a Dr. Smith from Cincinnati. Agudas Harabbanim from America sent a Dr. Smith from Cincinnati. He was connected with the army in Germany, and he helped us establish this religious life. And they made a rabbinate. Rabbi Sneg was an older man from the town. He was a chaplain in the army in Lithuania.

INT: An American?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: An American?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Nein.

INT: Oh, a chaplain in the Lithuanian army.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A chaplain in Lithuanian, yeah. And he became the president. I became the vice president from the Agudas Harabbanim, and another, a couple rabbanim were members, and one rabbi was a boy, a single boy, he became the secretary, and we made an office in Munich. Who needs something he came to us. America sent us some tefillin, some talleisim, and we divided it between the camps. In Bavaria, the whole Bavaria. Then we wanted to have a Gemara, and went to the army. They gave us paper to print a Talmud, and we printed a Talmud in Germany.

INT: You found a printer?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: An entire gemara you made?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: An entire Gemara. Not one Gemara, the whole Shas.

INT: Who paid for this?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This paid the army.

INT: The American army?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes, the American army. You want to see a Gemara?

INT: Yeah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is the Gemara. (Break while he shows the interviewer)

INT: We're going to go back now-we're going to go back now to after Auschwitz. You came to Dachau.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I came to Dachau.

INT: How did that happen?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: From Auschwitz?

INT: Yeah. How did you get to Dachau?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Shavous, I think, was the selection in Auschwitz. They gassed the whole camp. Our whole camp, they gassed.

INT: In Auschwitz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Auschwitz. One block remained, and I was in this block.

INT: Why did that block remain?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because they were the-the good masters. They were good workers, specialized workers. Electricians, carpenting, electric.

INT: And what were you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I was nothing.

INT: No, but how did you-how did you stay in that block?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is a miracle.

INT: Explain.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A miracle. When it was-when they said, everybody to his block, and we know this is a selection, I went in in this block.

INT: So you didn't stay in that block usually?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. No.

INT: And nobody said-nobody-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nothing. Nothing.

INT: Nobody varft you arus (kicked you out)? Nobody did that.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No.

INT: They kept you in that block?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: So before you said you used to go straight. Remember you told me? But here you made a little kuntzen (tricks)-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Alle Yidden. I mean everybody's running.

INT: And you went to this block.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Went to this block, yeah. I think Block 12 wes gewen (it was). I don't remember where they were.

INT: But how did you-did you see them taking everybody in the camp to the...what happened? What happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. This was the night but it was light enough. They opened up the block, trucks were standing outside, the Germans with the pistols with hind, with dogs, "Out, out, out. Out of the block." They harget (killed), they geshlagen (they beat). It was a tzumishana. Everybody was rushing to reach the truck, not to get killed before reaching the truck. They went away. When they finished up, it was quiet, shtill, like a cemetery.

INT: Nobody was in the camp?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nobody. Only our block.

INT: How many people would you say went into the trucks?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Many hundreds. Many hundreds.

INT: And your block was left?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My block was left. It's not a block, what we call a block. I mean one stable.

INT: How many people?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In that stable? It was also a couple of hundred.

INT: A couple of hundred.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: So what happened? You're there now in the block. You're there-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sitting in the block. Became day, daylight, came in the head kapo from the whole-the whole-not from our block, but from all of them.

INT: A Jew or a-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, a Polack. A Polack. And he said, “You have luck. They send you to Germany.” And came trucks and they took us to the-I think with the trucks we went-I don’t remember. The trucks took us or the train. I don’t remember.

INT: You came to where? To Dachau?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To Dachau.

INT: Do you remember?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To Dachau to 8. The block was 8. Eight block in Dachau. I went to Block 9.

INT: Okay. With all the same people?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The same people.

INT: What did Dachau look to you like? The selbeh wie (same) Auschwitz or different?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Dachau is gewen de selbeh (was the same)-nein. Darten is gewen (there was)-darten (there) in Auschwitz was the buildings better buildings, because it was built for the horses, for the army, for the Polish army. The horses. Blocks. On the ground. This was in the ground. Like I show you. This was in the ground.

INT: So Dachau-they were built better. So then what? You were in a barracks?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In a barracks.

INT: So you’re in Dachau in the block.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I’m in Dachau. In Dachau-

INT: Who’s the supervisor? Who’s the supervisor in Dachau? Another Yid A kapo? A Deutsch?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A Deutsch. Nit a Deutsch. A Yid. A Deutscher Yid.

INT: A Deutscher Yid?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A Deutscher Yid. It was the kapo in my block. In my bunker.

INT: He was a nice man or what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, he was a nice man. He helped me a little.

INT: So what happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He was the...In Wien was a house. A big house. He was the buyer for the house. A Jew. A Jewish man. He saw me after the war.

INT: So how did he...he lived how many years? He lived in Dachau.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Who?

INT: This Deutsch. The Deutsche Yid.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, not in Dachau.

INT: Where was he?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Dachau I don't know how long he was there.

INT: This is 1944, you're talking about already.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: '44, yes.

INT: So he lasted a long time there.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: So what happened now?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He became the boss of our block.

INT: And what was the life like there? What did you have in the morning? What did you do? What did you eat for lunch?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the morning a coffee. They called it a coffee. Schwartz water. Black water. We had black water, and you step on to the work. Everybody was in groups. A foreman was going with you. You will dig the ground today. You will make the roof of the barrack. Everybody got his job. The divisions were collective, and this was...I worked mostly by the highway.

INT: How about for lunch? What did you have for lunch?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We got this portion of bread every day. A portion of bread. A slice of bread. Sometime there was a little marmalade and a little this. You used to do what you want. Eat when you want. This was for a whole day.

INT: A whole day. How about at night? Did they give you anything at night?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. When we came from work was the head meal. Potatoes mit...We ate this with-mit a little kraut or another vegetable. This is all.

INT: But better than Auschwitz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. Better than Auschwitz.

INT: And how about where you slept?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Where I slept, is gewen...

INT: Why?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because this is a small this. You cannot-only you can stand in the middle of the house. The middle of the room. On the side you couldn't stand. You must sit down. You cannot stand, but people are going out and in. You must sit on your side. A little more, the roof is on your head.

INT: Did you see German soldiers there in Dachau?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. Every morning. It was every morning when I opened my eyes. They in all four corners from the block. On this block was, lumer zugen (let's say), forty houses, forty bunkers. Every end of the bunker was a house on poles and he stood in the house with a machine gun. We were circled with guns. You would go too close to the wires, sometime he warns you, if not, he's shooting to you.

INT: I see. Did you have anything to do with the Deutschen, the soldiers?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. I avoid what I could. But they saw me when I went to work. The soldier goes with me.

INT: The soldier went with you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure. Every group gets a soldier what is watching you.

INT: Now when you went from Auschwitz to Dachau, did you hear rumors about the war? Was it-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: What did you hear?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: One said I heard the Russians are progressing. All the stories. What fantasy can bring in your minds, this was.

INT: Were your fantasies that you were going to survive now, or you didn't know, or you weren't-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We didn't know.

INT: What did you think?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We know that in Dachau is also-is also they came and gassed people.

INT: Did you notice any chimneys or anybody getting gassed at Dachau?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. On my side I don't remember. But they gassed. They gassed people in Dachau too.

INT: What did the kapo, the Jewish kapo, tell you about how to live? Did he give you any eitzos (advice) about how?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The kapo said you must obey every order. You must obey. I wasn't hit, chas v'sholom (G-d forbid) by a Jewish kapo. Never. Once I wanted to catch a little soup. He gave me a patsch. Nu, a patsch.

INT: But he told you you must obey.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Obey.

INT: Okay.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He's the prince. You must obey. If you do something what he doesn't like, he can kill you.

INT: The kapo can kill you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: He had a gun?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because he wanted to show the Germans that he's keeping order.

INT: But he had a gun? The kapo had a gun?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My kapo was a Yid.

INT: He didn't have a gun though. A gun.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. But hargenen (killing). Shluggen with a shtecken (hitting with a stick).

INT: Did you ever see a kapo kill anybody?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nisht. Nein. No.

INT: Never. So you worked there what? On the road. On the highway, you said.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The highway, yeah. This was in Lager 9. This work is from Lager 9.

INT: And this is already in Deutschland you worked?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Deutschland, yeah.

INT: And you went out from the camp every day in Dachau and then you came back?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Back to the camp, yeah.

INT: Did you see any Germans when you went out? Civilians? People who lived there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, I passed by a house and I saw there is open the windows and a chair with tables is standing. Oh my G-d, I forgot even that we have a table, there exists chairs, you sit. I was-this was for me strange. My G-d. Such a world, and we are lying in the grave all day, all night. But what can you do? You do the best.

INT: Did you see Germans? Did you see any of the people that lived there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. Not too many, but I saw, sure.

INT: And they looked at you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, they didn't look at me at all. We passed Czechen when we went to Auschwitz. The Czechen, the women, came with a little food. They wanted to give us a little food. The Germans didn't allow it.

INT: The Polish women wanted to give you food?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. Czechish.

INT: Czechish.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We passed Czech.

INT: They didn't allow it.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein.

INT: How long did you work on the highway?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A couple of weeks.

INT: A couple of weeks?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: Then what happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then we went to another work in lager. In lager what there is to do. We took the garbage from the camp and brought on the fields from the farmer who was close to us.

INT: Then what? How long were you there all together in Dachau?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I left-I'm telling you-a month in Auschwitz and then we were till Pesach Sheni, till this week.

INT: And then the Americans came to Dachau.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To Dachau, yeah. (End of tape 4, side 1) I told you before that Dr. Smith came and organized us and we organized an Agudas Harabbanim in Germany. Agudas Harabbanim in Germany we organized, and I became the rabbi from the zone, the whole zone. Then I left the Central Committee and I went to the town Munich. We lived in Munich, but Munich for ourselves made a rabbinate.

INT: In the town of Munich?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In the town of Munich. Special for the refugees.

INT: When you were in the camp-when you were in the zone, the chief rabbi of the zone, do you remember any shaylos (Halachic questions)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Many shaylos.

INT: What kind were they?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The shaylos mostly was agunos. The women lost their men and we don't know what happened with them. Then gitten (divorces) too. There was a shaylah from gitten. People came. They were married, they say, in Poland. They was married in Germany, some were. And now they cannot stay together. It was a problem with gitten. Kashrus. How do you make kosher everything what you can? There was a lot to do there. A lot to do.

INT: Were they shaylos that you didn't ever hear before, or ever think you'd ever hear before? Very shwer (hard) shaylos?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Shwerer shaylos, avadah (of course) they were shwerer shaylos, but we managed to do this. We were a couple of rabbis.

INT: You talked it over?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: From Hungary a couple. We solved all the problems. I mean, the gitten was a very big problem, because you write a get only where it was before the war, from our foreparents. Because to establish a name for a town is complicated too, and therefore we used to send...There was a rabbi from Warsaw, from the shearis haplaita (survivors), and we used to send to him the gitten.

INT: In Warsaw?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nit in Warsaw.

INT: Where?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He was a rabbi in Warsaw before the war.

INT: Before the war.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And he remained alive, and he lived in Veity, near Frankfurt. We used to send to him. Then we sent a rabbi from Munich there and it was written gitten. We managed to pasken what we could. If not, we connected with Eretz Yisroel. We called. We wrote to Eretz Yisroel, and they helped us out.

INT: How about with the agunah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The agunah is a very complicated procedure, but lots of them we found out. How long do we-

INT: A little more we'll go.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A little more.

INT: So the agunah, tell me. It's a shwerer (hard)-

SurLK: Don't sit too long.

INT: No, I won't. A little more and that's all. The agunah problem is a shwerer problem.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Agunah? Very shwer. We tried to found out witnesses who were with him together and he saw him in this and this situation. He was in a hospital. They were in a-how his health was. And so a lot we could help, on the smach (say-so) from the witnesses we make conclusions.

INT: Did people come and say, "Rabbi, how could this happen? I was a frummer Yid?"

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. Yes. The question is still now and we don't have an answer.

INT: And when they came to you there, what did you say to them?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: "I am asking the same question."

INT: That's how you answered them?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: That's what I answered. (Chuckle) Something-something from Heaven what we cannot explain. We cannot understand. When Messiah will come, Moshiach, he will tell us what it was.

INT: But you don't say it's for aveiros (sins)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Aveiros? I don't think we were so sinners. In Poland there wasn't so much sins. In Germany, everywhere, never to have punished capital punishment, we didn't do such aveiros. I don't know. It's min hashamayim (from

heaven). Avadah something in heaven. They know. Messiah will teach us, will tell us what happened, why we suffered so much. Why we paid such a price. (Pause) There is no answer for this question, why.

INT: So when the Yidden came, you said there's no answer.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We cried together.

INT: How about Yidden that said they're not going to be frum anymore? Were there any that said that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. Yes. We heard such answers, and the end was that they became frum. The frum people became freier, became non-believers, because they think I was such an observer and G-d punished me so much. But the freier, they say, "Why do remain us? Why do remain I alive? I was a sinner. I know I didn't do-I didn't listen to the Torah. Why am I here?" He became better. Thankful. More thankful. What is it, I don't like to discuss, because I don't know the answer.

INT: How about for yourself, that you stayed alive?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Myself, I have more emunah (belief) now than before. Because I am asking, why I am-why I remain. Because I'm from a family-every one of my brothers, every one of my family was a lot frummer from me, higher from me, better from me. Why I am here? The youngest-I am the youngest from the four brothers. One was a Rosh Yeshiva, a great Rosh Yeshiva, and one was a rav, a rabbi, and the youngest was a student in the yeshivos, and I remained. I am not a type to make something, to organize something. I lived on my portion. I didn't get another bite of bread, and I am here.

INT: Do you know why? Why you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I don't know why. That's what I'm asking why. It's a siman (sign) that He is showing. He runs the politics, not me, not the human being.

INT: So you came to Munich and you were the rabbi in Munich?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Before I was in the Central Committee, in the rabbinate for the whole...Vice president for the whole zone. Then Munich came to me. Munich organized a committee and they said, we need a rav for our town because many people are settling here in town and there are problems, halachic problems. We want to have a rav for our town.

INT: So you said okay.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. We stood before an election. Rabbi Sneg wanted, other rabbis wanted, I wanted, and I won.

INT: How about Jewish Deutschen?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Jewish Deutschen?

INT: Yeah. Rabbis.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They got another kehilla. They got another rabbi.

INT: Oh, this was for Polish Yidden that remained in?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Polish. Polish, Lithuanian.

INT: Oh.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They got their communities.

INT: I see. So you had a shul there? Was there a shul?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A big shul. The whole town. Munich was maybe five, six shuls.

INT: They weren't old shuls, though.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: Were they old shuls or new shuls?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, no. Our shul wasn't also. We got a—from a sculptor we got a big building with a big room. One room was very big, greater than my shul, twice. And the Germans were empty. The Germans gave us this house to organize our kehilla.

INT: I see.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: With an office. I got an office in another house across the street, and there we made the shul and a mikvah we built. I built a mikvah.

INT: And there's parnassah from-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: There's parnassah also for you from the kehilla?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Parnassah? The community, the kehilla, the German kehilla used to pay me. The German kehilla should pay me, too. They paid for me, too. What was it? Two hundred marks. It wasn't enough. But I got din Torahs. I got weddings. I got a wedding, he gave me a present.

INT: Did you ever have to deal with the Deutschen, the goyim, the Germans?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: How did it feel walking around there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: How did it feel?

INT: What was it like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They say they didn't know nothing from this what Hitler did. They are not a Hitler. I am not a Hitler. They lied. They lied. They knew very well.

INT: How do you know they knew?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: How did I know they knew? They took away my bedroom and a German sleeps in it. From where do you have it? I bought it in Lodz. It's my bedroom. And everybody got a son in the army. Everybody got a grandson in the army. They knew.

INT: How did it feel like for you to talk to them?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To talk to them? They are very polite. They are very nice, but in heart I know what they wish me.

INT: But you-how about you talking to them? I mean, did you-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I had to talk, I talked. What shall I do? They are people, you tell them to kill, they kill. You will tell them, the state, who is the leader, he will tell you to kill, he will kill.

INT: Like ferd (horses).

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Like ferd, yes. Horses, yes. This is the kind of people. But look their culture, their buildings, their cars. You see there a car? Great people. Talented people. This is what I'm talking always. When the American army came there and they saw the ruins and they saw the people, our people who remained, they looked-what do I mean-must believe. You see dead people. They believed. After they helped us, the American army. The second army when they came in, they didn't believe us. Nice people. They killed you? They gassed you? They kept you in hunger? This cannot be. How? Look. A goy mit a goy. A goy mit goy-every goy everywhere is at home. He eats the same. He believes in the same G-d. A goy mit a goy. They didn't believe us even. I spoke to a high officer, an American officer about the paper for the printing the Shas and he said, "Oh, you need paper. And I need a pair of shoes." Then he said to me, "The Deutscher kinder hat not nich kein (still don't have) oranges." The Deutscher kinder darfen essen (have to eat) oranges." And we don't have even bread.

INT: The American soldier said this?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. The American. A captain.

INT: So you dealt with Germans, you dealt with the Americans then?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, sure.

INT: You spoke Deutsch?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Ich farstehe (I understand).

INT: How did you learn Deutsch?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is a bissel (a little)...and when you're between the Deutschen. I was in the ghetto and this, I learned a little more.

INT: Now what did you think? You were going to stay there in Munich?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. I knew I will not stay in Germany. I was a king in Germany, the couple of years what I stayed there. An office with a secretary, with a car with a chauffeur for my position. It was a good position.

INT: So why wouldn't you stay?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I couldn't live-I will have a child, he will grow up in Germany between the sonim (enemies)? Every this is in blood, Jewish blood. I should stay away from my enemies.

INT: So what happened after that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: After that came the consul, the American consul. I was registered for America and I could go to Eretz Yisroel, because Rav Herzog, zichrono livrocha, he came to visit us and I asked him what shall I do? He told me, "Come to Eretz Yisroel. We will see something to help you." It means he will give me a position. I thought, if he will give me Tel Aviv, I would accept, (laughs) but later I came for a visit in Eretz Yisroel and I asked what can I get for a position here. He said, "We have Arad now. Arad is a little shtetl by the border. This I have it, I will give you." He will give me Arad, and the mountains there. I didn't want it.

INT: What year was it when you went to Eretz Yisroel? When did you go to Eretz Yisroel?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Before I came. In 1950.

INT: From Germany you went to Eretz Yisroel to see-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Rav Herzog, Rav Herzog was darten (there).

INT: You went to see Rav Herzog.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He came in Munich.

INT: Yeah, but before you came to America, you went to Israel?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Nein. It didn't work. Then when I was already here...I came to America.

INT: You came to America and then you went to Israel, oh. Why did you go to America first?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To America first? Because the consul pushed me. He said, "If not, I'll take you off of the list. If you don't go now, I'll take you off from the list." And I was afraid. I had already two small children. Come in Eretz Yisroel, mit a dira (apartment) and-what will be?

INT: You didn't have any mishpocha in Eretz Yisroel?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nobody.

INT: How about in America?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nobody. In the whole world.

INT: In the whole world. Did you find out about your mishpocha in-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Eretz Yisroel I found a cousin. A lady. A married lady. When she left from Poland to Eretz Yisroel, she was a young girl. Sixteen years. Seventeen years.

INT: But you checked in Europe to see whether you had any mishpocha left?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nobody. Nobody.

INT: You checked?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Didn't check. Where can I check?

INT: I don't know. Where your family came from?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nobody's there. No Jew is there in the whole town.

INT: Did you ever go back to Lodz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No.

INT: When you were in Munich?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. I know that Lodz-who the family was, was a small family. My wife's family.

INT: You didn't go back there.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nobody.

INT: Nobody. Where did you meet your wife?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The first one or this one?

INT: This one.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This one. When I was the rabbi in Munich, a chief rabbi, she had a cousin in the Russian Army, and her cousin came to Switzerland. In Switzerland they had an aunt. The aunt was...the great rabbi, the famous rabbi from Switzerland was Dr. Taubus. Dr. Taubus was the chief rabbi in Switzerland, and this is a cousin, the aunt. And they start to speak that there remained a girl. They took her to Switzerland from Poland. After the war they took her from Poland. And she was by the Rabbi Taubus.

INT: In Switzerland?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Switzerland. A couple of years. She grew up and they talked about a shidduch and he said, we have in Germany the Chief Rabbi Leizerowski, a very fine man, and this and this started so she came.

INT: She came to Munich.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: She came...we met on the way. Met in Munich by the border.

INT: She came by herself?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I went there and we saw each other, and there was a shidduch.

INT: There was a shidduch. Do you remember the chassunah (wedding)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I remember the chassunah.

INT: What was it like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: What kind of wedding could it be? I don't have nobody, she has nobody.

INT: She lost everybody?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Everybody.

INT: What part of Poland was she from?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: She was Crakow. Lemberg. Lemberg. She was in college in Lemberg.

INT: So you had the-you had the chassunah in Munich?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Munich. In Dachau.

INT: In Dachau?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because my friend, an old rabbi, came from Russia, and I gave him...Dachau belonged to me.

INT: The area.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The area. And I gave him this position and we became very friendly. Then we found that we are connected somehow, and he made the wedding in his house, and das is das (that is that). He was the father and the rebbetzin was the mother, that passed away not long ago. And we married off.

INT: Then you had an apartment?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then I got an apartment in Munich, in the town, and we got the two children, we got in Munich.

INT: Where were they born, the children?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In a hospital in Munich.

INT: In a hospital?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: They were two sons?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Two sons, yeah.

INT: So you made brissen?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure!

INT: Where did you get the mohel from?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The mohel? The mohel-we got a mohel in Munich. We had a good mohel.

INT: Yeah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: A Polisher?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A Romanian Yid. He was a mohel, and the hospital gave me their dining room, the hospital. They used to respect us after the war. For an over-rabbiner, for an over-rabbiner, vet mir gemacht the mittag (made lunch) an hour before their meal, and we took over the hall. It was a nice bris. She got more flowers than we have here. (Laughs)

INT: All right. We'll stop here. (Break)

INT: Today is August 7 [1995], and I'm speaking with Harav Boruch Halevi Leizerowski. My name is Norman Garfield. I wanted to ask you about Europe.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Europe again?

INT: Before we leave, before we go, do you remember about wanting to sit shiva for anybody in the mishpocha? Did you ever sit shiva? The Tate, the Mame?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I was sitting for three people shiva.

INT: Who?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: My father-in-law, my mother-in-law, and my wife. I myself sat three times.

INT: In the war time?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Lodz. In Lodz. In ghetto.

INT: In Lodz. And after the war, did you find out dates when the Mama geshtorben (died), the Tate geshtorben.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nobody. You make a date. Israel proposed to make a date in a taanis, in a fast day what we have in summer, shivaser b'tamuz, and we accept this date and I keep the yahrtzeit for all of them on this date.

INT: For all the mishpocha?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: For all the mishpocha. Father, brothers, sisters, their children and grandchildren. They got married before me. I was the youngest in the family. For all of them. Seventy, eighty people. Close, not the far, mishpocha. By the close ones we were four brothers. The other children were younger.

INT: And every year?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Every year I keep in this same date, I keep the yahrtzeit for all the mishpocha.

INT: Can you remember the first Tisha b'Av in Europe after the war?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: After the war where was Tisha b'Av? I was in Munich.

INT: What was it like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It was like we cried twice so much as we cry every year. Three times as much. We saw the destruction with our eyes. You don't need to think a lot to cry. You cry from yourself. When you remind yourself about the children, the small

children, how they threw them from the windows from hospital, in a truck. (In a low tone) These pictures I don't want to elaborate about this, because I'm getting sick. This picture will remain with me till the last day of my life. (Pause) This was already in Lodz. (Low tone) The children, mothers. They came.

INT: You were in the hospital and you saw this?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We saw it. We were outside.

INT: On Tisha b'Av, did people come and say, "Rabbi, nu, what happened?" Did they come?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nobody asked the question. Who believed, believed. Who didn't believe, didn't believe. What they saw is catastrophe, and we cannot explain, and we don't have the words to explain, and we don't know what to explain. Nobody knows what happened here. Till now, the greatest don't know. The believers saying, "We are the shuldige," wie zogt man (how do you say) the shuldig.

INT: Guilty.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: Not guilty.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Guilty. We are the guilty.

INT: Oh. We are the guilty.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We are the guilty. The believers, the big believers. Something wrong. With Hashem Yisborach there's nothing wrong. He doesn't want to punish. A father doesn't want to punish his children, but if it happened, that means that the children weren't good. The others say, we were better than-a lot better than andere, than others between the nations. Between who believed. We were many times better and and ehrlicher (more honest) and we don't know. What happened here we don't know. Till Messiah will come, he will maybe explain it to us.

INT: Did you ever ask any gedolim about this or hear drashos about this?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: That didn't ask. We spoke, but nobody...if somebody says he knows why, this is a joke.

INT: People say Yidden should have come to Eretz Yisroel in the Thirties. This is why it happened or-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We saw-we saw that the best way is to fight out for a state. At least when you are a state you have a consul, you have a...you can speak. You have a mouth who will speak to talk to the world. We didn't have even one who should speak in our name. Nobody. This was a big tragedy.

INT: Now you had how many children in Europe after the war? Born in Europe. Children.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Whose children?

INT: You.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Mine. I didn't have children.

INT: After the war, there were no children.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: After the war. These are my children.

INT: In Europe. In Europe you had children?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Europe I got two, yeah.

INT: Two children. Who did you name them after?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And after we put so many names as were possible. All my children have three names. Avrohom Aaron Aryeh, the oldest, a lawyer, because I want to make everybody something he should remember him. My second one is Yitzchok Mayer Tzvi, three names. Berel also three names, Dov Sholom Shraga. My daughter has also two names. She was born on Shavuot. She's named after my wife's mother. Also three names. We pushed three names, so many names as we could for a child, everybody should be mentioned in our lives.

INT: And the aineklach (grandchildren)? Do they have names?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The aineklach the same. Matale Chana, two names. Frayde Leah, two names. Yaakov Meir, two names. Everybody has two names. We need maybe seventy, eighty names. The closest. But who could have so many children?

INT: So you decided to come to America. You said there was no breirah (choice). You didn't want to go to Eretz Yisroel and be in a town somewhere.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. When I-as I told you, when I became the Chief Rabbi in Munich, we organized the Agudas Harabbanim there. Myself, Harav Shneg and a third rabbi, and when Munich said-many people, they came in Munich, many Jews, because this was the point where the Americans gave you the visa was in Munich. I start my office in the kehilla, with the community. It was a German community separate from our community. We were the Orthodox. (Phone interruption) I told you I was seven years in Munich after the war. I was the Chief Rabbi. I was the vice-president of Agudas Harabbanim what we got, they created in Germany. The Agudas Harabbanim in America sent to us a Dr. Smith, an American man, in the name of the Agudas Harabbanim here in America, to help us to organize the religious life. Dr. Smith came in the name of the Agudas Harabbanim, and we gathered all the rabbanim, how many they got, they got. Some were before the war rabbanim, some weren't, but they were learned people. We

appointed them for rabbanim in the camps around. We made a meeting, and he organized this Agudas Harabbanim for Germany. It was a chaplain from the army, from the Lithuanian Army. It was an older man, and he became the chairman, became the president, and myself was the vice- president, and a third one was the secretary. And we made the Agudas Harabbanim.

INT: From Deutschland? From all of Deutschland?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Nein. The American zone. The English zone had a separate, and the Russians (end of tape 4, side 2) As I mentioned, the American zone was the most rabbis organized in our rabbinat, the Agudas Harabbanim we called it. And in the English zone they got also such a group. And we did what we could to bring back the people. People were from the...they came from the forest back where they didn't see even a rabbi's face. We didn't have siddurim, prayer books. We didn't have a Torah. We didn't have the books. The Germans burnt all the books. If I found a Sefer Torah in Munich after, because the first Sefer Torah I went to Augsburg. There was a chaplain, I forgot his name. This is written in my book, in the preface of the book.

INT: An American chaplain.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: An American chaplain. And he helped us with two tallisim, I remember he gave us, and he gave us a Sefer Torah that he found by the Germans, and we started a minyan to daven. This was in the hospital, when we were in the hospital. When we came down already then, we moved from hospital to Munich.

INT: How about food? What did you do for food? For essen? For eating?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Food? The first food we ate was what the hospital gave. We didn't eat meat. The not frum ate meat, too. They ate everything what the hospital gave. But when we got a little stronger, we went down from bed, we organized for ourselves, for the Jewish patients, kosher. They found a shochet, from Germany was, between the patients, and we went to a smith, a blacksmith, and he made for us a special knife, the chalaf. We couldn't buy this. And we start to slaughter an animal for ourselves. Even this day, we got kosher food. Then we moved to Munich, because Munich was organized a big committee from all the little camps. They sent representatives and they made a committee. The representatives for the German, for the magistrate and for the American people. And then in this building we got an office for the Agudas Harabbanim and we did what we could to improve Yiddishkeit.

INT: What kinds of shaylos were there? Agunah shaylos?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, agunos. A lot.

INT: How did you handle that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In this we must have a bais din. If we got witnesses what he saw the husband dead, or he saw when they took him in in the chamber, if we had a base on what to build the teshuvos, we gave permission to remarry.

INT: And if he just disappeared? If they didn't have-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Just disappeared, it was cases what we didn't-we didn't let. We sent it to Eretz Yisroel, the rabbinate, in Eretz Yisroel the rabbinate. A lot came for...they accepted that she can't remarry, they answered the rabbinate in Eretz Yisroel.

INT: Did you make chassunahs?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, I had many chassunahs! I got in one day, Lag B'omer, I got eighteen chassunahs in one day.

INT: Who wrote the kesubos?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I myself. The rav. They wanted me. I got a help too in rabbinate, but they want me. I got myself eighteen chassunahs in one day. Lag B'omer.

INT: So you had to worry about the agunah problem?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: You had to worry about agunos?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh yeah, sure. I made weddings for American soldiers with our girls too. A couple of chuppahs. I have somewhere pictures of the American soldiers. They got a chaplain in Munich, was a chaplain, a Reform, a younger man, but a very, very nice younger man. Boy. Very nice boy. A Reform rabbi. And he used to bring to me the weddings. If somebody came to him he said, "When I will make the weddings, they will not believe that they are married. (Laughs) Come with me. I be the shammash and you make the chuppah." Klausner. His last name is Klausner. A good boy. He saw me standing in hospital. I didn't have shoes. One shoe a zoy and a zoy. I saw him once in new shoes, one Shabbos, and when he came and saw me, he went away, put on his old shoes and he gave me his new shoes what he bought. Dr. Klausner. Dr. Rabbi Klausner. A good boy. I would like to see him again in America. He's somewhere, but I don't know where he is.

INT: Now, did you know any rabbis in America from Agudas Harabbanim?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: From before? I knew the rabbis from Poland what I know they were in America. My professor, my Rosh Yeshiva from Radin, he was also in America already. I wrote to him about the prospects here, if I can get a position. He wrote me that here is very hard to get for a European rav a position. But even so, the rabbi there, Chief Rabbi Herzog was in Munich, and he proposed to come to Eretz Yisroel. He will see to help you to establish-

INT: You met him-Rabbi Herzog?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. Sure.

INT: What was he like?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Dr. Herzog? With a big beard. A Yid from Eretz Yisroel, the chief rabbi.

INT: You spoke what with him? Yiddish?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yiddish, Yiddish, sure. He spoke a beautiful Yiddish. I understand Hebrew too. I speak a little Hebrew too. And he said, "My opinion is you should come to Eretz Yisroel and no question and we will place you in a place." But I got already two small children. One of them was a year, a year and a half, and one was a year. Where can I go to Israel, I'm thinking. I didn't have money. I lived very nice in Germany. I got my...this is *gewen* (was) from the *kehilla*. The German *kehilla* gave us a part of our expenses, and I got *din Torahs* a lot which brought in a little money. And I got an office with a car with a chauffeur. We lived good in Germany after the war. But I thought in Eretz Yisroel you cannot come with nothing. And the consul pressed very much on us that we must answer him; if not he will take me off of the list, and I didn't have a choice, and I agreed to come to America.

INT: Who asked you to come?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Who asked? They sent me from here, from Philadelphia, from a shul a rabbinic certificate. And I came and I became the rabbi. Rabbi Leventhal was here in America, the chief rabbi from Philadelphia. Old man and a great man, and I got his shul on Parkside Avenue.

INT: He was on Lombard Avenue, too.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He was on Lombard, then he moved in Parkside Avenue.

INT: Why didn't you stay in Munich?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Munich? I didn't want to stay in Munich. You cannot stay where all the Germans were. We cannot stay there. Too much Jewish blood in the soil.

INT: Did you think about staying there at all, in Munich?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Munich, never. Never. I knew this is only a step. You know, Eretz Yisroel-we like to go to Eretz Yisroel, but it worked out this way.

INT: How did you find the shul in America? How did you know that they-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In America, I wanted to stop over in New York when I came with an airplane. They gave us an airplane, because Yitzchok was a child from four weeks. Four weeks. Eight weeks. I don't remember. They gave us a flight.

INT: What was it like to fly on an airplane then?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: What was it like? Do you remember what it was like to fly on an airplane?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The soldiers, the American soldiers what they brought the soldiers in Munich, they have a plane for back. They say for small children and sick people, they gave them airplane flights.

INT: Were you scared on the plane?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, not scared on the plane. I'm a grown man. (Laughs) It was a hard flight, not like today. Terrible.

INT: I know. How many hours?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We went to England, not to England, what do you call in England what they fight with England.

INT: Ireland? In Ireland?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Ireland, yeah. We came the same day in Ireland. We stood over a night and then the second day we were in America.

INT: What did you think when you left Europe, when you left Munich? You would never see-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I thought Hashem Yisborach will help us. He gave me life in Germany, He will give me a life in America, too. We came. It was...they put us downtown in a house, rachmana litzlan, was shmutzig (dirty).

INT: But you didn't explain how you got a parnassah yet from...when you were in Munich, how did you know? Did you come with a parnassah? Did you know that you were going to come to a shul in Philadelphia or you didn't know?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, I didn't know. Didn't know what shul.

INT: You didn't know?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, nothing.

INT: What did you know? Who was going to take care of you and where did you know to come?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The Jewish people will take care of me. There's a lot of Jewish people. There will come a rabbi. I was not the first one. I knew that America helps the refugees. I thought what will be with everybody will be to me.

INT: How about the rebbetzin? Did she want to come, too, or she wanted to go to Eretz Yisroel?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: She wanted to go to Eretz Yisroel, but where the husband goes, so the wife goes. She cried a lot when she came. She saw the hotel what they gave us. I got here one of our people from Munich whom I married off in Munich, they heard that the rabbi is here, they come and they say, come. It was Donnerstag (Thursday). They say, you will stay over Shabbos with us. We will see around what-what is what.

INT: How did you come to Philadelphia in the first place? Why Philadelphia?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Took the train.

INT: No. Why did you come to Philadelphia?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is the Joint. They sent everybody to his place. "You belong to Philadelphia," they told me. I thought to stay Shabbos in New York, they didn't let me.

INT: Did you know somebody in New York to stay by?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. I got good friends. A big rabbi there who also was in Europe.

INT: So you came to Philadelphia, and the Joint took care of you? Who was there when you got off the plane?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: From Joint Committee, in Philadelphia.

INT: They were waiting for you.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Were waiting for me.

INT: And they took you to this house.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, to the downtown.

INT: So it was a house.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It was a shelter house. This was a hotel, called a hotel.

INT: Yeah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: She cried. We didn't have no milk, we didn't have-like you come-

INT: So the first Shabbos, where were you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The first Shabbos I was by a landsman what I married off in Germany.

INT: He found out you were coming and he got in touch with you.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He came and took me to their house.

INT: Where was it, in what section, do you remember?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Parkside Avenue.

INT: Parkside Avenue.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: 42nd and Parkside.

INT: And he went to Tiferes Yisroel Shul?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: And there was a rabbi there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: There wasn't a rabbi, officially a rabbi. Leventhal was the rabbi. And he was sick. He was not sitting. I went to daven there, and the next week they asked me to speak for them. I didn't know what they want, but I understood that I should give a speech. And I spoke for them, and they liked it very much.

INT: Mostly Europeans there or Americans?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Mostly Europeans. Mostly Europeans.

INT: You spoke in Yiddish?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, sure.

INT: So they offered you-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You remember wie gehasten (what was his name), the lawyer. Ominski. You heard the name Ominski.

INT: He's a lawyer.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A lawyer Ominski. He was the coroner. He was from my members. We had a lot of European people, talmidei chachamim, better people. I spoke. Next Shabbos they asked me again to speak so I spoke, and they came with a proposition, maybe you would like our shul. How much you are paying? We are not a rich shul. And they said, four dollars a week. I thought, all right. Maybe four dollars they start. And I became the rabbi in the shul.

INT: And how did you find a house to stay in?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They bought me a house.

INT: They bought you a house.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. After a couple of months...we rented an apartment. A nice apartment.

INT: So they bought you a house.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, after I became their rabbi they started to think maybe I should have a house here, and they gave a down payment and they bought me a nice house. Four bedrooms. Between Forty and Forty-Second.

INT: Did you run into any landsleit that you knew from Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Landsleit, nein landsleit, but we gave a couple the newcomers, and they heard my name. They knew my name.

INT: Did you meet other rabbis in Philadelphia?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I met all of them.

INT: Who? Who did you meet in Philadelphia from the rabbis?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Rabbi Yollis, Rabbi Novoseller, Rabbi Wachtfogel. The whole rabbinate I met, but they didn't do for me too much. They were afraid. They didn't do for me. But the shul was very nice to me. Very nice.

INT: Were there organizations that you belonged to with rabbis? A bais din?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then I met the Lithuanian organization. In Germany I was the president from the Lithuanian organization, vice-president. In Munich. And here I asked from the Lithuanian people and we met and I spoke for them. They helped me, too. They helped me.

INT: Okay. Do you remember the first Pesach in America? The first Yomtov in America?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, sure I remember. We made a Seder in the house. We had small children. We didn't have nobody from people, but for our family. Avi was already three years and he was two years old, Yitzchok, and we make a Seder like in Europe. We did all of life.

INT: Was America much different than Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Much different.

INT: Tell me how.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The functions are different. A difference. A big difference. But they respected me very much. They loved me, not just respected. Then there was another shul, Poplar Street. They came and they invited me I should come in from time to time. I got from them a couple of dollars, too.

INT: You made chassunahs and levayas?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Everything. Chassunahs, levayas. The first levaya I came across a Yid, and he said, Rebbe...I think the first was an unveiling. And he asked me, "Rebbe, you will go with me to an unveiling." I didn't know what an unveiling means!

INT: In Europe...no. When you put a stone, a matzevah-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, I know! (Laughs)

INT: No, in Europe, did they put a matzevah in Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, they did.

INT: And what happened?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I have a good speech on this topic. An unveiling. I didn't know what means unveiling. You tell me put a stone, I know, I could understand. He spoke in Yiddish, but unveiling I didn't know. And I took a dictionary, a German-English, (laughs) and I found out unveiling it means to open up, like what is covered you open.

INT: Did they have such a thing in Europe? I mean a thing over the matzevah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. They didn't cover the matzevahs. We put a matzevah and we say a few words and the meaning from a matzevah, but seldom what you make. For great people you are making something. In Lodz I made the matzevah, I put the matzevah for the Chief Rabbi of Lodz, what was there. Meisels. The children asked me to make for him there and we made it, but here it's a part of the income for a rabbi.

INT: So what did you do the first time?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I saw already that it's opened up, and by uns hat mir gesagt (by us we say) they're going to put the matzevah. I looked who is right and who is wrong. It's interesting that here they say richtig. In Europe they didn't say right away. You cannot put a matzevah after you are gone. The matzevah...I explained this. The matzevah means every day of your life you build your monuments. You put a stone to a stone. Your actions is the stones, and you build a monument. If you act nice, you help people, you are a nice man, is your monument a big one.(Laughs) If you don't-it's nisht. Your monument is very small. You can put a stone that reaches ten feet high, but it's a small matzevah.

INT: Very nice. So you did it.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And so I started. And then they came with funeral, bar mitzvahs.

INT: Were the funerals different?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Funerals is also different.

INT: How? How was it different?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Europe you didn't say a speech for everybody who passed away, only for people who have a great name. But people that are dying from a main, we didn't speak a hesped (eulogy), but here everybody, for everybody you make a hesped. Nu, you find already something good what he did and you tell to the people they should learn from the niftar (deceased) who is going away, we should take over the good deeds and practice in life.

INT: And bar mitzvahs?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, I learned to speak.

INT: Bar Mitzvahs?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Bar Mitzvahs too.

INT: The same as Europe or different?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. Like Europe, yeah. Except we didn't make such elaborate parties. We didn't have it. A bissel bronfin with a little cake, it was a bar mitzvah.

INT: Now what about kashrus here?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, kashrus? Here, you mean?

INT: In America. In Philadelphia.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Philadelphia, then they didn't let me in in the group what they have here. B'emes. They were afraid a little of me.

INT: This was Leventhal, under Rabbi Leventhal?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein, the Leventhal didn't take part already. Maybe in half a year later he passed away.

INT: Oh, so who was it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The other rabbis what were here. I don't want to...I told you the names. On the board were many rabbis here. They had a group, but in my field, I'm a rav in two shuls, three shuls in my neighborhood, and I want to know what is happening here. Then they told me if Agudas Harabbanim in New York will accept me as a member, they will take me in. I went once in New York. I show them my book what I wrote in Halachic these things, so they signed me in right away, and I became the vice-president in Agudas Harabbanim.

INT: And here with the kashrus?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Then they took me in in the kashrus, and I started. Then Rav Leventhal passed away, Rav Yolles took over, and he made me here for the vice-president for the Vaad Hakashrus. Rav Yolles, when he passed away, I took over the whole thing.

INT: I see.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Now I'm the Rosh Bais Din. I have a bais din, a court with two rabbis. We write divorces, other things, and I'm the president.

INT: How about Rabbi Novoseller? He was close to you, up the hill.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The old one?

INT: Yeah. Did you meet with him and talk?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh yes. Many times. Sure.

INT: He was in the kashrus?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He was.

INT: In Wynnefield.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: He was in the kashrus, yeah.

INT: And you had more children while you were in that shul?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Here? Here I have two children.

INT: Two more children.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Two more children.

INT: So in that shul, and where you lived in that house, you had four children.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: And where did you decide to send them to school?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Bais Yaakov. The Bais Yaakov school. We sent them to this school.

INT: Did you try to get in touch with any other landsleit in America while you were here that knew about-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. I was very close with the Lithuanian. Many individual people helped me (Phone interruption)

INT: So you tried to get in touch with landsleit in America?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah.

INT: And what happened? Did you find many of them?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nit fun landsleit, but from Lithuania people I found, and from time to time they helped me out a little. They helped me out to establish better. Then after seven years on Parkside Avenue it came the change, the whole neighborhood changed overnight. Other neighborhoods takes a couple of years; there it was overnight. In one year was another kind of people. And we started to look around. We couldn't find a shul. Couldn't find. And the Northeast wasn't too big a shul. We started, the Lithuanian people, I told them I don't know what to do, where to move, and they said, "Maybe we'll buy a house and we'll start small. Maybe later we'll--"

INT: These were people from-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: From Europe.

INT: But from the old shul most of these people, yeah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No.

INT: No?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The organization from the Lithuanian...and a couple from my shul too, yeah. Then came across a gentleman and says we are selling our shul, Strawberry Mansion became, and we would like to help you to buy a house here in Northeast to start a shul. And they helped a little, the Lithuanian helped a little, and we bought the duplex in front.

INT: There's a duplex on the...

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The duplex, we lived upstairs and the shul was downstairs.

INT: People came from the neighborhood?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: A lot of people came. A lot of people came. We were packed.

INT: Europeans or Americans?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Americans, too. Europeans, Americans. We got a minyan even in basement, for Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur. And they liked it. They like it very much. Then they bought the other house. They bought the other house and they took out the walls and they made it a little bigger. Larger. Now we can locate here about three hundred people. Two hundred downstairs and a hundred upstairs.

INT: When you were at the shul on Girard Avenue, did you talk much about the war to the Europeans that were there? Did they talk about it a lot or did they want to forget about it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They didn't talk, no. They didn't talk too much. I used to tell them the little by little I could tell them. But they weren't interested so much what happened. They knew that happened a tragedy, but they didn't saw. They didn't...Roosevelt didn't help the Jewish people. If I would say sometime a word, a bad word, that Roosevelt didn't help us, they were angry. What mean? Roosevelt makes us the Social Security. They thought that he made the Social Security for the Jewish people.

INT: Did you give drashos about the war ever? Did you talk about it?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah, I spoke a lot about the war. I explained them-what I knew I explained to them. They kept me very b'kovod (with honor), very, very. Respectful.

INT: But they didn't ask-they weren't interested so much. They were or they weren't?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Everybody's busy to make a living in America, you know how it is. They live a higher standard than in Europe, and everybody is busy. Nobody-the European, even they know what anti-Semitism is because we went through this. In America wasn't so much. It's here enough in America too, anti-Semitism, but in public we don't hear. In Europe everybody knew what means a sonei Yisroel (Jew-hater). (end of tape 5, side 1)

INT: How about the goyim here compared to Poland? Are they any different?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They are different.

INT: In what way?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Poland, by the Deutschen, when the Germans were there, if they saw a Jew, the Polacks said, "Jude, Jude, Jude."

INT: They point them out.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Point them out. In America, I didn't hear this.

INT: Did you ever experience anti-Semitism against you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I myself?

INT: Yeah, when you were here, in the early years or later?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I don't know if this belongs to our-

INT: Did it happen? Did anything happen to you?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. I didn't suffer from anti-Semitism here. I went once in town, near City Hall, and a big man, a strong, big-was six feet, fat, I don't know what kind of man this was. He looked at me. But I didn't ask, I didn't speak. He went away.

INT: Went away.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Maybe. They found in America too, also. But the state-I bless America. I pray for America, because who found me in Dachau was a colored boy, and he took me like a baby and he carried me to the truck to take me to the hospital.

INT: How about Jews in America compared to European Jews?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Jews in America-

INT: What's it like here compared to Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Europe, to a rich man-a poor man to a rich man couldn't step near to speak with him. In America you can be a millionaire, and he's from amcha (your nation). He speaks with you, he will help you, they will not help you, but he speaks to you. He's friendlier, more friendlier.

INT: How about the level of learning or knowledge about Yiddishkeit?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: About Yiddishkeit? No, you cannot compare. There was one big school. Every town was one big school. Everybody went three times a day in shul. Davening, and after the davening, learning. Another world. More believe. They need more G-d to help. Here if you are a rich man, you have a bank and you don't need Hashem Yisborach. You don't need His help. When it happens something, a sickness or something, we are running to G-d, but even after he has everything, because he feels secure. In Europe they didn't have so much security. I didn't have a checking account in Europe. Every day you should pray to Hashem, send me my bread.

INT: How about middos?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Middos tovos?

INT: Here and in Europe.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: American Jews are different. I wouldn't say they don't know so much, but they are good to other people. Good people.

INT: When you raised the children, and I talked to your daughter, so how did you decide what you were going to tell them about what happened to you? Did you decide you're not going to tell them or you are going to tell them or what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We didn't tell the children what happened.

INT: Why?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They used to come to us, my older son what went with the other day children, married children, they came once home and said, “Tate, vus is dus (what is this)? Er zug bubbe (they say grandmother), and where is our bubbe?”

INT: So what did you say?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Many times they asked. We didn’t want to aggravate them, to...even the picture, the scary picture what we went through, we didn’t tell them too much. Sometimes a word, but we didn’t...I don’t know if this is right. Maybe we should tell them like it was really, I suppose, but we didn’t. Many parents didn’t tell their children, because we wanted to save them the aggravation.

INT: So you didn’t tell the sons.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Nein.

INT: Or the daughter much.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They know. They understand. They know, but no, not exactly what had happened.

INT: How about telling them about your parents? Did you tell them-do they know about that?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. I tell them about my parents, how they were believers, how frum they were. How good they were. Yeah, I tell them. But this was an individual family.

INT: What were your worries about the children growing up in America versus if they were growing up in Lodz? What did you worry about here?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I was very worried, I was worried and the worry is a fact. This is a fact.

INT: What did you worry about?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You should put in a lot more work than in Europe. In Europe he lived, he grew up between Jewish people, and here he’s growing up between non-Jewish people. This is a big difference.

INT: Yes.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: And this affected. A ghetto is a klala (curse), the ghetto. This is a curse, but the ghetto kept Judaism. I lived...all yeshivos in Europe were in small towns, not in big towns. In a big town you get lost. In a small town, I don’t see other people. I see only these couple of people from town, my school. It wasn’t so dangerous. Here is an unlick (tragedy). We are losing our children, because they are a minority in

such a majority. And a boy is a boy, a girl is a girl, and this is what we have the tragedy. This is a big tragedy. America doesn't see what the future from this matzav (situation).

INT: So how did you try to raise the children? There is movies and TV sets.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We do everything what we could they shouldn't go here, they shouldn't go there, they should look for Jewish chaverim (friends). We did as much we could. Avi went away in the school. He went to Yeshiva University. We got luck. He agreed to go to Yeshiva University, but later he went in New York in college, and here his law degree he made here in Philadelphia, in Temple. This is not a maaleh, an advantage. Thanks G-d, G-d sent us a Jewish daughter. He married a Jewish girl. Isaac is a rabbi, a little better. It's a big problem, a big problem.

INT: What do you think about going to University for kinder (children)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You need knowledge. You must. You need knowledge. You cannot make a living without it. I myself-I was a famous rabbi in Europe. Famous. And here, because the language is not this language and this is different. Here we are fighting for an existence. The knowledge, we need the knowledge, but to go to the university is a danger.

INT: So what do we do?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: What do we do? We should try Yeshiva University, the other schools. Now in Israel they have universities. This is a problem, a big problem. I cannot answer you. To go, or not to send a child. The strong believers, they say we don't need college. We will exist without a college. But in life you cannot give an advice in these things. Without a degree you cannot-an animal today-you have a dog. He has a diploma.

INT: So for parnassah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: For parnassah.

INT: Otherwise?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Otherwise I wouldn't send.

INT: When you had to make-when you had to decide-when the children wanted to go to the movies or look at the TV, how did you decide with your wife? Was your wife stricter or you were stricter?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You want to know the story? When we were in Parkside Avenue, there was a lady...I have to think-my wife remembers the name. She came in and she saw us how we live and she went home and spoke to her son. Her son was a rich man, and he sent in to us a TV. Came a box, we opened up the box, we looked what it is. A TV. And my wife came home and she saw this box...she had gone to this lady and said, "Have mercy on us. Take this away. Take this away." So she was talking, "Maybe you don't know how to make a picture. We will teach you." She said, "No, I don't want to do

this. This, I don't want it. Give us better a player with music." (Laughs) And we brought back this in store. It was sent from store what she sent it. They looked at us and they didn't know what to say. If we are normal people. (Laughs) This woman. She understood that this is gehargenen (killing). Kinder with the television, this is a curse.

INT: You may have kept it? Maybe you would have kept it in the house?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Maybe I would keep it. I don't know. But she understood that this will kill the good children.

INT: Did the children want one?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Sure they wanted. What's the shaylah (question)? But now I see.

INT: Sure.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: She was right. Until now the frum people don't allow a television.

INT: How do you think you're different in raising the children because of what you went through?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I'm not the first. I'm like everybody. Everybody has the same problem. How to save them. This is a shaylah. This is the shaylah. Till now, we are here. We are watching. What we can we do. We speak to them and explain to them. When we will not be here...my son-in-law is very frum. Very frum. And Avi has a television. I know he has, my oldest. But Yitzchok, there we managed. It's a problem, a big problem. It's not our problem, but for people who believe, it's a big problem.

INT: What I wanted to ask you, you have seen so much tzuris in your life before.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes.

INT: How are you different when it comes to things that bother people here? Do little things bother you, or they bother you a lot? Are you different because of what you saw and what you went through?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I am not different. What I am different? I know a problem is a problem. You should solve it. But I'm using my belief to keep up-my belief from Hashem, what I believe the Ribono shel Olam will help me, with this power we are going, we are living. You must believe in something, if not, you accuse always yourself. Oh, if I would be smarter, I would be so-so...you eat yourself up. But when you believe, this is from G-d. Maybe it's a punishment, maybe it's for my good. It's easier to live. If you believe, it's easier to live.

INT: The belief says what to you-that you're doing the best you can?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The best way-I do what I can. Maybe I should improve this and this. Maybe I should improve myself.

INT: Did you ever think why you were spared?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Why I'm living?

INT: So many others-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I am asking very often this question. He says, "Why did they kill my father?" I say, "Why are you not asking why you remained? You have an answer?" I wasn't such a person that could help himself in situations. I said, I did once-it doesn't belong to this, but Mengele came in our lager. He came for an inspection and ate a sandwich. Do you go right and do you go left. Nu, this thought that maybe I go right, it means he will send us for work. He will leave us here for work. And the left he will send in Auschwitz, to the gas. And I got a frozen finger (toe). It was swollen. I couldn't walk, and I was afraid that if I will remain in this lager, they will gas us, and I made myself strong and I went through to him, and he put me on the right side. Straight for a march. They did mit avek shicken (sent me away) for a march. Somewhere, first of all. And they gave us already a piece of bread, a chunk of bread, and I am staying here. They went a little farther from me, and I thought, Ribono shel Olam, all my years here in lager I didn't do nothing with my sechel, with my knowledge, with my sechel, but I left Hashem Yisborach will do it. They will put me here, they will put him here, I will not do nothing, and today I couldn't walk, and here I made myself like healthy and he put me on the right side. It's nit good. Something I did with my knowledge. I must trust Hashem Yisborach. He will lead me. And I managed to go in again in this line, and I limped. I couldn't go, because I still have now the tzora with my finger, and he put me on the left side, and this was the saving-this is why I am here. If I would go with the march, ze gebliben (was left) maybe fifteen percent from the people remained alive. Fifty to sixty percent they killed on the way.

INT: So what does it say-you shouldn't use you sechel?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You should use your sechel.

INT: So how do you know?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: But first of all, you use Ribono shel Olam. You believe Ribono shel Olam. I could or go or not go. Don't do nothing. What they will do with you will be right. If I would go like the first time what I wouldn't be here.

INT: But I'm not sure how you make the cheshbon.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The cheshbon is-I don't want to decide how to go. You're a kalicka (sickly person). You cannot walk. Why did you make yourself you can? It's not right. You are like lying. My foot was swollen. Till now, I have a finger swollen. Why are you making that you're walking good? I couldn't go one mile, they would have shot me.

INT: But yet as a Yid in Lodz, you figured out how to stay alive?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. Yeah. That was a combination-

INT: You used your sechel there.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This was the combination. But, you see, by my logic was krum, was crooked.

INT: But the experience-the experience in the camps and in Europe, did it change you in any way or it didn't? Your sense of humor, how you think, what you get excited about, what you don't get excited about?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. Nein. Nein. It didn't change me too much. It didn't change me too much. My nature is my nature, but this is what I'm telling you. My father was very, very frum. Very frum, and he influenced us all that we should believe in Hashem Yisborach. My older brother was a Rosh Yeshiva, a great Rosh Yeshiva in Russia, in Poland, a wife and children. They killed him in Elkanich, near Vilna. The second brother was a Rav by Bialystock. The third brother was also learned in yeshiva. He was in business in Novobrudok. Also killed with their families. And I am here. I am asking this question very often. But ask how did they kill them, ask how do you live? Why you were-I was the youngest and they were big people, great people, and I'm here and they are not here.

INT: And when you look back at your life in America, does it give you a teretz (answer)? Do you see an answer from what you did here?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. I don't see a teretz. I don't see a teretz. (Long pause) And this you understand? They give you a little-a small portion what we got. According the Bible is our borders-were five, six, seven, or maybe...They gave you a little, and in fifty years they are taking back. Give away. They give away. They are seven big states, seven states on the globe. If they take away a piece from us, noch (another) a piece, noch a piece. This is also not normal.

INT: So we don't understand, is what you're saying.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We don't understand.

INT: Why it's happening.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You cannot explain. United Nations came together-the Jews must have a home. They gave a little home, a little home. Small borders. Today the big jets...

INT: How do you look at Eretz Yisroel? Do you see it as the beginning of the geulah (redemption) or do you see it as just a country?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Every day is the beginning of geulah. “Ani ma’amin b’emunah shleimah b’chol yom sheyavah. Every day I believe it can come the geulah.”

INT: Yeah, but I’m saying about Eretz Yisroel since 1948.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You cannot say this became what we have-became from your chochma (wisdom), because you’re smart. Hashem Yisborach gave us a little but the people don’t understand what Hashem Yisborach did with us. With the geulah. What he gave us this little land. Eretz Yisroel is not on the real tract.

INT: Why?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The leftists, communists. They are laughing from our lifestyle, from our history. They are laughing from Moshe Rabbeinu. They are laughing from G-d. And the rasha (wicked man), the big rasha-they see this is a...In Eretz Yisroel even is communists.

INT: When you think about the rabbanus in Europe, in Poland, now you look in America, in Eretz Yisroel, what’s the difference?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, the differences!

INT: Talk about it.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The difference is a big difference. A rav in Europe was to answer what is kosher, what is not kosher. What is moral, what is not moral. What is good and what is bad. Here they don’t ask like this. This they know by themselves. When a rabbi comes home and speaks to you, the player, the ball player there and there was very good. What is he saying? He doesn’t say what he should say. He should hold the people close to Hashem Yisborach, to show them that the Creator created the world, not to say this wasn’t born from themselves. The creation is a false ideology.

INT: Where’s the problem? In the chinuch (education)?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Chinuch, yes.

INT: And how? Why?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They don’t learn this. The rebbe in Eretz Yisroel, boys’ schools, cannot make a brocha (blessing) on the Torah. They speak Hebrew and they cannot daven. They don’t know how to daven, what to daven.

INT: How about in the frum community? In the frum community. When you look at rabbanim in Europe that you knew, gedolim in Europe, the regular that you knew, and you see the condition of rabbis today in America. What’s the difference?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Another kind. This is a social word. It’s a social word, a rabbi today in America. This is not a religious leader. In Europe was the rav, the rebbe-

they called him the rebbe, and he was the leader, the moral leader. You look up to him, how his personal life was. And here ret man (they say) a rabbi killed his wife, married with another.

INT: Yeah. But I'm talking about frummer rabbis, the frummer kehilla.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Frummer rabbis are a sample from this. We have a lot from rabbis.

INT: Yes?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Eretz Yisroel, yes.

INT: And in America?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. In America too. In Agudas Harabbanim, if you didn't have smicha what it should be, you couldn't become a member.

INT: How about the level of learning today in the world compared to what you saw in Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Learning in America-it's a lot of Torah here. They are learning a lot. It's not the level like in Europe, but a lot of Torah.

INT: And in Eretz Yisroel?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eretz Yisroel learns a sach (a lot). In America learns a sach. Yeah. Yeah. Proportional is not.

INT: Why not? Why isn't it as high as it was?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Because the life standard for the production. You cannot sell the Torah. One rav can sell a thousand people, ten thousand people in the town. To make a living, you want a car, you want special furniture, you must have the knowledge, the daily knowledge.

INT: And so what? It takes away from time to learn?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It takes away time from learning. It takes away. If you should be seven o'clock in an office, you cannot come to the minyan. Your life is pushing you. It's hard. Who can do it, can do it. Therefore today-

INT: How about yeshiva-leit?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeshiva-leit?

INT: Here, compared to in Europe.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Europe they suffered. Till high school, you ate days. Everybody a tag. I myself ate days. By Moshe and by Yaakov. Every day you got another house. They give you that day. Sometimes you didn't have a day, you fast. You didn't have to eat. Later in the high school already, I got my what do you call it before the highest pension. The highest pension was sieben und dreizig dollar a month. I got funf und dreizig dollar a month. Before the highest. I should pay for sleeping. I should pay for eating, for laundry, everything from funf und dreizig dollar.

INT: So does it make you learn better or worse or what?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In tzuris. We learned in tzuris. But we learned a lot.

INT: So how is it? It's easier here, yeah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Oh, yeah.

INT: So how does that-how does it affect the learning?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We have schools a lot more, and learning, because it's easier. Because you have today in yeshiva you have to eat-no hunger. You sleep in a bed.

INT: So the boys learn better or they learn worse?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Nein. They don't learn better.

INT: They don't learn better.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No.

INT: Why? But they have so much.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: I don't know. I don't know. The Gemara says, Tizharu mibnei aniyim shemehem tetzeh Torah. Respect the children from the poor homes, because from them will come out Torah. If you have too much- (end of tape 5, side 2) ...the unteshter shorah (the bottom line). What is a yeshiva man? What can he accomplish in life? What can he accomplish? One a Rosh Yeshiva, one of thousands, and the other ones don't have what to do. Teachers. It's good, but where can get a good position for a teacher? And even in Philadelphia, they don't pay enough to make a living, a good teacher.

INT: Did they pay better in Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: In Europe was a lower life standard. They didn't need so much.

INT: How about tzedakah? Jews give more in America or they gave more in Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: It's hard to compare. You cannot compare there. There was-a mensch who gave a dollar, he makes five dollars a week himself. He gave away a part

from his mouth. Here is mer gevirim (more rich people), they give more, sure. America gives many tzedakah, but it doesn't give away from its mouth. In Europe was a poor life. The majority, ninety percent, ninety-nine percent, was poor people.

INT: Even in Lodz?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Even in Lodz. Now is unions. We didn't have the unions before. Later they came, the unions. The unions helped out a little. You don't want the price, go home.

INT: Did you ever think about going back to Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. No.

INT: Why?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To whom I will go to Europe?

INT: To see, to go to Munich again. To go to Poland.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Munich, surely not.

INT: To Lodz.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Lodz. This I would like to see even. We left-my father-in-law left a five story house, building, an apartment building. It's still standing. I would like to see the little town where my father lived. Avadah. But I'm against the traveling to Poland. You are bringing in dollars. You are bringing matanahs (presents). They're sonei Yisroel. They are enemies, our enemies. You bring in our matanahs. Gelt.

INT: Is your old shul still there?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: Your old shul. The alter shul that you were in. Is it still there in Lodz, do you think? The last shul you were a rav in.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: It's still there.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is in a building in a...an apartment building. In an apartment building, my shul is there, yeah. One official shul there is in Lodz. I davened there also. It was hidden in between the houses. It was hidden. This shul building. Avadah I would like to see my little town, what happened to the shul, my father's town.

INT: Are there any Yidden left in the town?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No, nobody. Not one.

INT: But you didn't want to-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To whom I will go?

INT: You don't want to go. You didn't want to go.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: To whom will I speak, the goyim? They are sonei Yisroel there, anti-Semites what hate.

INT: They were Polish, not Ukrainian?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: They were Polish and Ukrainian too. Two kinds.

INT: Both the same?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Eh?

INT: They were the same sonei Yisroel.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: The same sonei Yisroel. From the moment what klal Yisroel, what the nation, our nation, took the ten commandments, came down a sinah (hatred) to Yidden. And this will go on, I believe, I think, till Moshiach will come.

INT: What about husband and wives in America compared to in Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: What do you mean, compared?

INT: Is it different, a husband and wife here than a husband and wife in Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You are speaking before the war?

INT: Yeah.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: After the war is tzuris, because the world is small now, no distance. The highest distance you can make overnight. This is a small world, and you know what happened here and what happened here, and the people, the children, are hearing what happened to this wife and what happened to this wife. This is another world now, another world. There was-they read a paper, but it wasn't such a this paper. He divorced three wives already, married for the fourth time. Who could afford such a pleasure? (Laughs)

INT: How about making decisions in the home? Do you think you're different with the rebbetzin than if you would have been in Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. No difference.

INT: Does she, because she's been in America, she has more of something to say? Is it any different than if you would have stayed there? Or is your daughter-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Who looked with the open eyes in Europe, a wife was the pillar of the house.

INT: Yeah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes. What I tell you-by the frummet people, the wife is a wife. What she wants she's doing, what she understands better she's doing. There never was by us like a slave, what you say the woman didn't have rights. It's not so. It was love by us. It was respect. This is another change. It's another change. It's not to compare the family, like it was in today's time. But this is not only a Jewish problem. It's not only a Jewish problem. It's a world problem.

INT: But I'm saying in a frum house, in a frummer house, the women today, the way your daughter is, the way your wife is, it's different in America than in Europe or not?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No. It's not different.

INT: Or your daughter-in-laws? Is it different?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Not different. In the frum houses, not different.

INT: Do the wives work more here, they don't work more than in Europe?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yes, they work more. This they choose. Then they also did, because the life standard is high, and one man in a family is hard to produce so much. She's helping out. But this is not a blessing. This is not a blessing. The children are growing up in stranger's hands. This is not good. A mother should go-she should raise the children, not somebody else. Either you must have help-this if you find where a woman helps out, but who doesn't need help, I wouldn't prefer that a wife should go to work or something. She's akere habayis. She's the leader in house. She should remain this. If we will not change the majority world, but you can only keep our group together. What we can do we should try to hold on the best way, because we believe what we choose. The world is nisht good. The world is nisht good.

INT: How about the Jewish world, the frum world? They say-Rabbi, they say there's more learning today, there's more people sitting and learning today than there was fifty years ago.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: This is true. This is true, a hundred percent, yeah. This is hundred percent. But what I told you, if the radio or the television affected the best of houses, therefore the real religious people are fighting against the television. Better not to have it. Thousands of thousands don't have it. This is a world problem, a world problem.

INT: You think it would have been better for the Jews to live a life like you had in Poland before the war than to be free in America, or not?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Avadah.

INT: What do you think?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Avadah. Avadah it would have been better.

INT: Yeah?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You had lots of people. You lived between Jewish people. You only see Jewish people. They knew-don't look, don't learn from the goy, your neighbor. Don't learn from him, and this was the ghetto system what was a blessing. I built a shul with blood, with shwer (hard) work, what we put into the shul. This is a change now. I don't know another year. Another year. Go start this now. I don't have the koach (strength). I don't have the ability now. What shall I do?

INT: In Europe it wouldn't happen?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: No.

INT: The Jews would-

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: We lived in our older zayda's house, the oldest great-grandfather. In his house we lived. (Laughs) Where do you see in America such a picture? A couple is married, they're changing three, four times their place for living.

INT: But you don't have the sinah (hatred) here. You don't have the sinah here, the enemies of the people. You don't have the anti-Semitism here like you had in Poland. Jews can do what they want here. There they couldn't as much.

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: You see America learned also this sinah. Hitler taught the world. The literature, the pictures, and everybody saw it. Maybe this is also a way of life. One rasha makes an impression on the whole world, and the communication with the seeing, it helps. Everything helps. To learn each from other. But this is-we call this progress, good. You can come in an hour what we used to go a week. Avadah it's nice, but this brings evil, too. The progress brings evil too.

INT: So you think it would have been better for Yidden if we stayed in a situation like Europe, like in Poland? With the ghetto?

RABBI LEIZEROWSKI: Yeah. The ghetto helps.

INT: All right. (End of interview)