

[SPEAKING HEBREW] But say it-- say again what you're singing now.

This is a song of-- it must be-- I don't remember. It is about a woman that remembers her husband or lover, and after a long time, the first part she sings. It's, again, a very simple melody.

Then she says a sentence while the piano was playing, and then at the end, she-- suddenly two sentences that doesn't relate to her remembering. It goes like this.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

You sang the whole song? Yes.

This I--

We'll write-- we'll write it down.

This-- I sing the whole song.

[CROSS TALK] piano.

Only the--

Do you have another song?

Only the [INAUDIBLE].

That's fantastic. Thank you.

This is a nice-- this is the one that--

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

No, no, no.

No?

I-- it could be that it had another part or something. I know only this one.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

But it's so poetic. It's so-- it shows the situation as she remembers him. And he was a matter-of-fact man, and she was a dreamer. And it is like this. Because there was a lot of love in the ghetto, a lot of sex in the ghetto, which is not-- not always love, of course, because people didn't know what will be tomorrow. They didn't know what-- how will they get up the next morning. So--

When did you leave the ghetto?

Very late, in October '44, to Auschwitz of course. And I had a very bad time. My story's a very heavy one. The students always ask me, why did you survive? Why not somebody else? I don't know. It must lie in the character of people, of single people.

I always-- I never-- I never want it all. I never dreamed about what would be. I only always wanted the next morning. You know?

Mm-hm.

I couldn't stand it. The people-- after Auschwitz, I was in Bergen-Bergen, and it was so cold, the north of Germany, and no work. You should know that no work is the biggest punishment that can be because the day never ends, and the women try to huddle like this together, and speak about cooking, and about the house. I had such a living room, and my curtains, and how do you do this sauce, this Rotev. If I put a little bit of--

And I couldn't stand it. I never, never sat with them. I always ran out into the cold, and I roamed the camp. And I always wanted to find something that could be put into my mouth, even living, anything, just something that could be eaten. And--

What do you mean with living?

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

But like what?

No, I-- like what? I don't know. I dreamed about something.

You're joking.

I think the most astonishing-- the most astonishing fact [INAUDIBLE] maybe one of the few people, maybe the only one, that she finished Odyssea, I would call it, might call it like that, in Theresienstadt. The last station--

Yes.

--is back in Theresienstadt.

I am one of the very few--

I think it's the only--

No, there have been few transport, but they took them on the way somewhere. Yes, I-- it's like a detective story. It's written-- it's--

Interesting. I didn't know this.

Now, I-- we have been in Bergen-Bergen in the winter of '44, the whole winter. I just want to tell you that to be in Bergen-Belsen it's to go away. It's a big accomplishment because after the war, the-- how do you call it? The expert--

Researchers?

Researchers-- they said that in Bergen-Bergen you could last mostly six weeks. There was almost nothing to eat. And we came out. They brought us for work. She didn't understand. How could we work? We couldn't walk.

It was the last part. And we went to the center of Germany, and we worked in a factory. And when the war started, the Americans started coming. They had to transport us to the East. The Russians have been more far away than the Americans in Germany, so to take us to the East and to look for an extermination camp to put us-- to pass us on.

To see the shooting or how they will finish us-- it's not important. And then even the SS are free. The SS have been mostly women and mostly 16 years old, even less, young girls. SS-- very cruel and very sadistic. I have never saw such behavior with the SS men because the SS men will not handle the Jews. This is under his-- under his-- he's too-- a coward.

So these girls have been-- they learned. They will learn this since the age of 12. They still lived it. They were still very ambitious. So they had been cruel. And they took us on the train, and the train always stopped because there had been no [SPEAKING HEBREW].

Bombed.

Bombed out. The war was already above us, and the train was made of wood. And we knew we were done because it was-- the most probable thing was that we will get burned in the train together with the German soldier, which couldn't go out because it was closed from outside.

And so we went, and then stopped, and then went back, and then on another--

--track.

--track, and again stopped, and it took weeks. We didn't know what's going on outside. We have been lying. We couldn't stand already on the feet. We had been lying one on the other because it was without any food, without any water for weeks. And I-- I still had a little bit of energy because I was schlepping the dead women to one corner of the train so we won't be together with them. Because of my profession in Bergen-Bergen I told you, I was working with the bodies for another soup.

And so I was the expert with the corpses, and so I schlepped them to one part. And we were lying on the other part. And each night there was some women that I could-- I had to schlep them. And we went to some part of Germany very near the Czech border to the East, and then the highest officer, the SS-- he didn't know what to do. Even they didn't have what to eat. So he left the train to see-- to look for orders, and he took a car that was standing there and went away.

And he put the reigns, the government, to his lover. She was 15. And she was a stupid girl, and at this point, she opened the train. She opened the train. It's running? No?

Mm-hm.

Oh, wait. She opened the train and wanted to register us. So she opened the train and let us throw out the bodies and then come out, and some-- few of us had to-- have the clean-- had to clean the train. And at this point, one of the Czech women, who was much older than us-- she was-- she must have been some 37 or 36. She was the only one that could approach the SS because she made-- each day, she made lists of girls that went to the factory, so she had contact with us.

She approached her and told her, we all know we are going to die, and it's not important to us. It's not important if they shoot us or if we die every night here. But perhaps you can put the end of it. It's not so far away. Over the frontier is a extermination camp called Theresienstadt. And perhaps you have a phone or such a field phone.

And the SS-- she was so-- she was so frightened. She didn't know what to do with all this. Responsibility so she tried on the field phone, and she got Terezin. And I think-- this is my version. I don't know. I-- I didn't have proof. The people told me afterwards that in Theresienstadt the Irka Fugli was a young engineer that was responsible for heating, not for the Jews' heating, for the-- they choose him for the Germans.

He was in the Office of the Germans, and he took up the phone-- picked up the phone. And he told her in a very good German, yes, bring them all up. We will finish them off. Because she asked, is this the vernichtungslager? Yes.

And so we came after a long time to Terezin, and it was the first-- it was the first time, the people of Terezin saw people like us. And they were frightened. They didn't open the train for hours. They didn't know what to do.

It was such a chaos, in such a-- did you know that Alisa Schiller was one of them that were in that-- that was in the Theresienstadt when we came? And they have been so frightened because we-- I stood on the corpses, and there was a

little opening, so a few of them. And our faces have been not human.

We didn't have-- the scalps, the hairless heads. And the eyes inside, and the bones outside. And we didn't look like-- people thought that we are some kind of animal. They bring some animals in, but they didn't know which one.

The first thing they did-- they closed the children in the houses. There have been children-- only the children from the half-Jews, from the mixed marriages. They closed the children in. Then they called all the physicians and the nurses, and they started making soup.

And they brought the soup to the train, not the people--

--to the soup.

--to the soup. Because they didn't want to touch us. They want to-- they didn't know what to do. And the physicians said it's very dangerous, of course. Then at last they opened the train. You know how they'd open the wagons.

And nobody comes out. So they called, come out, come out. You are in good hands. Nothing will happen to you. We knew that nothing will, we Czech girls. There have been at least hundreds of Greek girls and Italian girls. I have part of the list here, only part, with names and everything. And they were crazy. They didn't know what they saw. They are going to the gases, to the gas chambers.

So then somebody shouted from inside, we can't walk. So they brought four young men with a blanket and hold the blanket, and we rolled into the blanket somehow. And they put us on grass. There was a piece-- there where the-- where the [NON-ENGLISH] are ending. You know the space? You know the place where they are ending?

Hamburg, in--

Hamburg, yes. There it was a little lawn. They put us on the lawn in rows, and then they physicians started coming from one to the other if she was still alive, and asking her name, and if she's ill, sick. And I was perhaps very much responsible because I passed the typhus on this train to many girls.

And in my second life, it was already-- I passed it because I died before, and then I came back again. This is something that the children never understand that I-- that I become again. I was proclaimed dead and almost buried, yes.

Only once?

Yes. No, I-- and then they-- and then they-- we told them about-- that we have typhus and everything. And at least 100 Greek girls disappeared. They have been so afraid. They disappeared.

Then they saw from afar that they are giving soup. They felt it. They somehow came back and stormed this barrel, such a barrel. In Theresienstadt, it was such that you could move. They jumped on the barrel, and overturned it, and they lied and licked the grass.

The soup.

The soup-- it was terrible. We didn't want the soup. We knew we are home. With, the Czech girls-- we have been so quiet because we knew they will help us, they will-- we are home. And we didn't see any soldiers, any SS. And then all the girls with the typhus or post-typhus-- they put us in the [NON-ENGLISH], in a big hole. And there I spent another six weeks in the quarantine, and I didn't know during this time what's going on in the ghetto.

But what was interesting, after such-- after a fortnight, I could stand on my feet. I was lying in a bed with a white blanket, and they gave me soup, how much I wanted. And once they brought me an egg-- I don't know where from-- some girl friend of mine. And they gave me milk even. I was--

An egg, egg they brought you.

She saw an egg someplace. I don't know where. And milk they gave me and everything, and I thought I'm in heaven. And after a fortnight, I could stand on my feet. Then they waited me with all the food inside. I had 36 kilo, which is, in English, I don't know how much pounds.

Not very much.

Yes, it's some 60 pounds or something like that. And that was it. I roamed the ghetto afterwards like in a dream. I didn't-- there have been some soldiers, but I didn't get it in. I-- some Russians, and some English, and some-- like I didn't-- I didn't took it in. I couldn't-- I wasn't able to-- was not able to understand what's going on.

I met a girlfriend, a few, and one gave me my old dresses. It's still there. And like this-- there was a day that I came to some--

You had your old dresses back?

Yes, but--

The dresses--

--one I took, and it was too big. But I took it on.

This is even before the transport.

Yes, yes, yes. It was my-- because my brother make the valise for me. I was in prison at the time, and I went to Auschwitz straight from prison. So he made my valises, and he put something inside. And this is like this. And they told us, it's the end of the war, go.

This was all, of course, after May 8.

Yes, and this was one day that I saw people going to a table, so I also went to this table. And a man stood there, and he gave me this little piece of paper. I still have it, this red [NON-ENGLISH]. And I said, you can go. Where to go? Where do I go? Where do you-- where you want, where you want. You go where you want. Just go.

But I don't know where I'm supposed to go. So he looked at me like this, and I think, it's the end of the war. You can go wherever you want. The end of the war? It took some time. And then I started going-- like I never remember which way I went out of the Terezin. And I would so much like to know. I don't know.

I went like a pencil, like this. I went through the fields and everything, so this is already the story after the war.

And eventually you got back to Prague.

Yes, I-- and I came back to my village and everything.

[PLACE NAME]?

It was a very difficult time. I should only tell you one thing-- the time after the war is not less terrible than during the war. There have been people that made it after the war. I remember that the whole world danced and sang, and never will be another war and everything.

And Manka Alter was hungry. Manka Freund at the time was hungry. I was hungry. I was ill. I had nobody. It was a terrible time. I can't tell you how terrible. I had nowhere to go. I went, in Prague, each day some 2 kilometers to a place that they give soup. You understand? It was difficult. It was difficult.

All of your family--

My brother came back.

Your brother came back.

My brother came back, and they took him to a military service as he came from Auschwitz. He spent a year as a soldier. Imagine. So I didn't know where he is, and he didn't know how I'm going, how I'm doing.

But the meeting between you--

It was very--

--and your brother-- it's something that I cannot forget.

Yes, this is like in an operetta.

She didn't know he's alive.

Yes. I thought he's-- somebody told me he's dead. Yes, there are stories, hundreds of stories.

But this one, this one, please, for us because this is the most beautiful story. She was sure--

About my brother?

Yes.

It was not sad. It's something like-- I came to my village, and there have been a family inside. And I couldn't through throw them out because Jews-- normally, when they came to the houses, they threw the people out. I couldn't because it was a family. They suffered from the Nazis. They gave them the Jewish house instead of their.

And I was suffering there. I saw them sleeping in the beds of my parents, and the same cover was on the beds. And they took-- the Germans took the furniture out but not all of it. And I couldn't stand it.

And they gave me food. They gave me food each day. But I always-- after I ate, I stole the bread on the table. They asked me why I steal the bread. How I-- I put it in this blouse.

And once, I was so fed-up, I was so down, I decided to go in some other village where I knew that the son must have come back. And I go with-- I came to him, and he opened already the shop. He was already a boss. He stayed in Terezin the whole time. He made a wonderful living there. He worked at a goy. He was the only-- blacksmith, is it?

Mm-hm.

Blacksmith you say.

Blacksmith.

In ghetto, he treated the horses from the SS, and the boss, the goy boss, brought him good things from outside and everything. He came. He looked wonderful. He brought a lot of things from the ghetto home.

And he's sitting on the bed, and I'm sitting on the other bed, telling him how terrible it is, that I don't want to stay, I don't know what to do, and I'm fed up. And I speak about my brother, that he died, that somebody told me exactly in the Revier how he died.

And I said to this chaber-- I said, sometimes I see him as if he's standing in front of me. Now I see him. He is standing in front of me, and I don't know what to do. And he make like this, just a movement, and then suddenly he jumps up and runs to the opening and embraces my brother. He was standing in the door.

And I looked. I couldn't believe it. I didn't know what's happening. Then they came apart, and I see my brother. And I make like this. I came to him, and he-- suddenly, I opened my eyes. He didn't come to me. He stand in front-- in the middle of the room and make like this from all sides and says, how's my jacket? He stole some chicken on the way. So this was the big comeback. He was half a year on the way, half a year.

Did he come to Israel after all?

No, he couldn't. After I left, he-- they closed that frontier.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

[SPEAKING HEBREW] 26.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

George in English.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

It's your part of the story.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

No, no, [HEBREW].

[SPEAKING HEBREW]

No, no, no, toda.

[SPEAKING HEBREW]