



שאלת חיים

הייתי בדרך לאושוויץ

A question of life

I was on my way to Auschwitz

Docostory Publishing Ltd

The book was published with the help of:



Yad Vashem

The Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Authority
The foundation to support memoirs of Holocaust survivors



Azrieli Group



The Azrieli Foundation



Claims Conference

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany

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Tel: 09-7419471

www.docostory.com
Israel
2014

A Question of life

Menachem Frenkel, a Jewish boy of Polish origin born in Belgium,
deciphers his childhood experience and his origins

To remember and never forget!

The book is dedicated to:

All the children that were murdered during the Holocaust.

My father Alter Chiel, Z"l, who was murdered in Auschwitz.

My mother Devora, Z"l who herself survived difficult times, took care of my sister and me with bravery, courage and devotion during the terrible war. After the war, she found us where we had been hidden and together we went to Israel.

May they have a long life:

To my sister and brother-in-law, Miriam and Enzo Nitzani and their family, to whom I am very close.

To my dear wife Esther who accompanies me throughout our lives with partnership and understanding.

for memory and testimony for the future generations:

to my beloved children, grandchildren and great- grandchildren at whose request and for whose sake the history of my life was put into writing.

וְהָיָה רִאשִׁיתְךָ מִצֶּעֶר; וְאַחֲרֵיתְךָ, יְשׁוּעָה מְאֹד. (איוב ח' ז')

Remembered kindly:

The priest Glasberg and the Cardinal Gerlier, who saved us from the hands of the murderous Nazis.

Madame Germaine Chesneau and the Hughes family.

Thanks to:

Miriam, Nirit, Ravit, and Ruth who helped publish the book. Yad Vashem and the Azrieli group for their contribution for printing the book.

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Prologue

We are traveling by train from Dunkirk to the south of France, my mother my father, my 14-year-old sister Miriam and me, a little boy, four and a half years old.

We had left Antwerpen (Anvers) Belgium A few days before and stopped at Dunkirk – a port town at the most Northern point of the sea line of France on the border with Belgium – we boarded the train on our way to the south of France. The train might have gone through Paris I'm not sure of the route since I was only four and a half.

At one of the stops, my father got off the train to buy us something to eat while we waited on the train for him to return. Suddenly we heard the conductors whistle, and the train pulled out of the station before my father came back. The train is moving, and we can't see him anywhere.

The panic that struck my mother my sister Miriam and me was overwhelming – I think that was the moment I learned what true fear was. Even now, when I remember those long-ago moments that belong to a different world and time, a heavy feeling overwhelms me.

As we sat on the train, panic stricken, not knowing what to do, my father, who had managed to jump on the train at the last minute, made his way through the carriages until he got to us.

My father came back, but his momentary absence brought to my young mind all the events that were surrounding me to a level of awareness: I believe that the unforgettable fear that got hold of me in those moments arose from the general atmosphere around us. Although a few minutes later, after my father returned, I felt a huge relief – we are still a family – that was the first time I started to understand the situation we were in. I was four and a half and my sister Miriam was fourteen.

What were we doing in Dunkirk, why had we left Belgium and where were we going – I didn't know - these questions and others rose and bothered me throughout my life.

The older I got the more questions I had, everything that happened during those years, I had to learn and decipher myself while growing up.

A. In Europe

1. What were we doing in Dunkirk

Dunkirk is a port town on the northeast of France on the border with Belgium. When the war broke out my family tried to escape Antwerpen, where I was born. we planned to make it to England by boat but failed.

Antwerpen is in the North on the border with Holand. in those days the port in Antwerpen was the second biggest port in Europe after Rotterdam which is only several Kilometers north from Antwerpen and was a strategic target in the second world war.

With the German occupation on the eighteenth of May 1940, Antwerpen was bombed, and the town is in chaos.

Some of the Jews from the city tried to escape to France and Britain. We also tried.

Uncle Avraham, my mother's brother said: "we're not staying here, I have a car and we are leaving!" he probably owned a car – which was unusual at the time, for only the wealthy owned cars.

I know that before they left, a big argument broke out.

My Mother asked Avraham and his wife Helena – who was my mother's and Avraham's cousin from the Bornstein side of the family – to take my Grandmother Mala with them in the car. My Grandmother Mala, my mother and Avraham's mother, lived with us in in Antwerpen for about a year.

After escaping Belgium, my mother and her brother didn't meet for many years.

Avraham drove to Dunkirk in his car with his wife, his two young daughters and my grandmother, and we followed by train. We left Belgium in the summer of 1940: my parents, my 14-year-old sister and me, four and a half years old. I remember leaving the house with a few parcels, on the way to the train station, to travel to Dunkirk with the intention of boarding a ship to England.

When we got off the train at Dunkirk my parents took me in a stroller. Dunkirk was being bombed. Battels were taking place between the British army, which was retreating from France, and the German army: at the beginning of the second world war a large British Expeditionary Force (BEF) came to France but did not intervene in the fighting until the German invasion of the low countries, Holland, Belgium, and France, in

May 1940. On the tenth of May 1940 Germany opened war on France through the low Countries. The French army's chief of staff's plan was for the French troops to go through Belgium to stop the German army, but the French conception proved useless, and within two weeks the Germans managed to overthrow the French army.

The BEF found itself under siege on the La Manche Channel and cut off from most of the French forces. By this point the victory was clearly with the Germans. The Dunkirk evacuation, codenamed "Operation Dynamo" also known as the "Miracle of Dunkirk", was a naval evacuation operation of hundreds of thousands of British and French soldiers from Dunkirk to the British coast – a rapid evacuation using every available sea vessel that the allies had. The forces were assembled near Dunkirk in the South of France, some of the forces were fighting the enemy to slow them down until the full evacuation of the British forces from France. Many French soldiers and civilians were also evacuated to Britain.

During the operation, which lasted from the twenty sixth of May until the fourth of June 1940, nearly three hundred and forty thousand soldiers were evacuated by 900 sea vessels including: merchant ships, fishing boats, yachts, rescue boats and even boats from the River Thames fire brigade. Two hundred and thirty-five boats sank during the operation to evacuate the British army from France.

My mother's brother, Avraham Markovich, and family, along with my grandmother managed to get to England. Avraham spoke English and they managed to get on one of the last boats leaving Dunkirk port.

They were very lucky but probably suspected that anyone trying to make their way by train would not succeed to get to England, and sadly, we failed to get to England. They were met in England by cousins, who managed to escape their fate in Belgium.

The argument between my mother and my uncle turned out to be right. It was a matter of life and death and brave decisions had to be made. Maybe if they had taken one of us with them in the car they might also have been saved and made it to England. This was a tragic situation, part of the family managed to get to England, but my family, traveling by train didn't even make it to the port.

2. what was an extended Polish family doing in Belgium

I, Menachem Marcel Frenkel, was born on the fourteenth of February 1936 in Antwerpen. My mother my father, and sister, came to Antwerpen from Poland not long before.

I managed to find out from my mother a little bit about her family. My mother was born in Wolbrom Poland – one of the small cities between Krakow and Sosnowiec, my father was born in Olkusz Poland.

I know nothing at all about my father, Alter Chiel Frenkil, or his family.

My Mother, Dvorah (Doba) Markovich was born in Wolbrom in 1902. I am named after my mother's father, my grandfather Menachem Mendel Markovich, but have no information about him. We had two photographs of my grandfather and as a child I studied his face until I knew all his features. My mother's mother, my grandmother, Mala (Malka) Bornstein I knew only a bit.

In the photograph of my grandfather Menachem and my grandmother Mala they looked like religious people of the time: they were very well dressed. My grandfather – a tall man wearing a black hat, a long beard giving him a very elegant appearance, with a stern and straight forward look on his face. although he did not have Payot (sideburns) as is the custom of the Haredim. My grandmother is standing by his side, she too has a serious look on her face, she was a big woman with presence, her hair is pulled back, and she is wearing a dark flowered dress.

My grandmother Mala, my mother's mother, comes from the distinct Bornstein family which is attributed to the (אדמו"ר) ADMOR (Rebbe, master and teacher) Bornstein from the Sochaczew community, I am not sure where exactly Sochaczew is in Poland, I've heard that there is a succession to the ADMOR here in Israel. At the head of the community today stands a young man who is married to the daughter of the Rav of Antwerpen. He too doesn't know how to elaborate more about Sochaczew or the Bornstein ancestral line, apart from the fact that most of them lived in Belgium, Antwerpen, and when the second world war broke out a few managed to escape, some to England and some even to Israel.

My Grandmother, Malka Bornstein and my grandfather, Menachem Mendel Markovich, had five children, three sons: Alter the eldest, Yitzchak (Itche) Mayer, who was called by everyone Izidor, and Avraham, the youngest boy, and two daughters: Regina, the youngest and my

mother Dvorah, who was born in 1902. All the Bornstein brothers and sisters were born in Wolbrom, Poland.

I don't know how my grandfather, Menachem Mendel Markovich, made a living, but I do know the Menachem and Malke got divorced – which was very uncommon for a Jewish couple, born mid-19th century, from the information I got from my cousin Sarah, Uncle Avraham's Daughter: our grandparents got divorced, and our grandmother along with all the children kept Markovich as the family name.

At some point during the first world war, the Russians conquered Wolbrom and expelled all the Jews. The family moved to Sosnowiec, a town around 30 Kilometer away which was still under Polish rule.

Following the peace agreements after the first world war, 19 new democratic states rose in Europe including Poland which received its independents in November 1918.

Between the first and second world war, in the Zagłębie region in southwestern Poland, there were two large towns, Sosnowiec and Bendzin with many small towns between them. More than fifty thousand Jews, over half of the Jewish population from the area, lived in these two largest towns.

Since Bendzin was founded in the thirteenth century, around 500 years ago and to this day there has always been an active Jewish community.

At the end of the nineteenth century Sosnowiec developed from a small settlement to a big town because of increasing utilization of the coal and iron deposits that turned the town into a crossroads of trade routes.

My uncle Alter, my mother's oldest brother's name appears in the book of residents of Sosnowiec.

My mother spoke Polish and Yiddish and knew how to pray in Hebrew, even though I don't think she got a formal education like her older brothers. I don't think it was acceptable at the time for girls, I know that Chaim Nachman Bialik was a teacher in a Jewish school in the town, and that the Jewish community was very active and respected. All the youth movements were represented: Hapoel HaMizrachi, Maccabi sport, Betar Gordonia and more, although I don't think my mother was a member of any of them.

For a certain period, at the beginning of the century, was a good time for the Jews of Sosnowiec - it is said that the General mayor was married to a Jewish woman and life for the Jews was good.

Our family lived in a large house on the main street, Yosefa Pilsudski St. in the center of town. Three shops were situated at street level at the front of the house.

The family lived together in the large building which was divided in to six apartments: my grandmother Malka and my grandfather Menachem Mendel (until they divorced) and their five children, my mother's brothers, and sister: the eldest brother Alter with his wife Rose and their two daughters, Rina and Miriam. Yitzchak Mayer – a successful businessman- and his wife. Avraham, until he left for Belgium (and from there to England). Regina, the youngest sister, and my mother. They were all was religious to one degree or another.

A central figure in the family was my mother's brother, Yitzchak Mayer Markovich, called Izidor, the wealthiest of the family. He owned a few businesses in Sosnowiec one was an active flour mill. He was the main provider for the large family. Yitzchak and his wife had no children and in those days that was an accepted reason for divorce. I have a picture of my uncle and his wife prior their divorce, in the photo he is completely bald and doesn't look young.

From 1918, the end of the first world war, until 1939, twenty-one years, the young independent state of Poland changed governments frequently, two separate constitutions were legislated, one president was assassinated, a military revolution which led to a military government, and all the while coping with the growing antisemitism. In 1921 a constitution was approved in Poland by a new parliament with two houses. The elected president was assassinated a few days after being elected, and the new parliament wasn't stable enough to handle all of this.

During the 1920's the family's financial situation begins to worsen. The family gossip is that my mother and her younger sister Regina, whom obviously were not young spoilt Jewish girls, smuggled rolled up cigarettes, which they hid in their clothes, and sold tobacco which entered Poland through the Czech Republic border. It's not known to me if they were ever caught, since it was not a risk-free pursuit, but that was the only way they could help the family deal with the financial crises that began to afflict them.

My mother Dvora Markovich married my father Alter Chiel Frenkel in 1926. I hardly know anything about my father's family, originally called Frankil. I presume my parents' marriage was an arranged match – a Shidduch שידוך especially in light of the fact that my father was not from Sosnowiec but came from Olkusz (Olkush) a town about 30 or 40 Kilometers away (in the direction of Krakow).

My father Alter Chiel Frankil was born in 1898.

His Father was Yakov Frenkil. According to information we got from museum of the Jewish Diaspora. the origin of the name Frenkil is from the expelled Jews of Spain, who fled to eastern Europe through France which was then ruled by the Frank tribes.

His mother's name was Blima Rozenberg (in various records they are listed as Rosenbergov, but their name is Rosenberg).

Unfortunately, I have no information or photos of my grandfather – Yakov Frankil or of my grandmother Blima Rozenberg. The only information I have of the Rozenberg family is that they were religious Jews that were born and raised in the Jewish community of Olkusz which is about 30 Kilometers away from Sosnowiec.

Olkusz had salt mines and a big enamelware factory, I assume that it was not a disconnected town, I know it had a train station.

Even though Olkusz was a small town, it is said that a time honored ancient Jewish community lived there. the founders of Olkusz were two Jewish brothers who settled there in the thirteenth century about 900 years ago. At the end of the nineteenth century the "Jewish Shtetel" did not exist, the reason for the decline of the Jewish population in and around Olkusz, lies in the ban on migration due to Olkusz being a border town.

I don't know if my father went to "Cheider" (חיידר) when he was three years old or was educated at home by a private teacher, it depended if they were a wealthy family or not. I do know that at the end of the 19th century most of the children from the Jewish community, around a hundred boys learned at the "Talmud Tora" which became a modern day "Cheider."

When the first world war breaks out, my father is 16 years old.

With the outbreak of war, the Russian army advanced West and South and many Jews from Olkusz fled to Krakow.

About a year or two later, during the first world war my father was drafted and was a soldier in the Polish army. It is more than likely that he was recruited by force, as was the common practice in Poland. During the war my father's surname was shortened to Frenkel.

I still have my father's worn-out enlistment certificate. On This hundred-year-old document, it states that my father served as a wireless technician – back then the army used telegraph machines.

The Jews tried to avoid enlisting in the Polish Army, also because of the dangers, and on a personal level because they could not lead a Kosher life in the army in terms of food and keeping Shabbat,

I didn't hear any stories from my father about his time in the army, but I know it was very meaningful to him. I have a photograph of him in the Polish army uniform during the first world war, a young man 17 years old, I have looked at this picture endless times, my father looked very young with a thick mustache.

There is a young man who I don't know, standing next to my father, from the distinctly different facial features it is obviously not his brother. I'm not actually sure if my father had brothers. My Mother claimed that my father had seven brothers and sisters, in contrast, my uncle Avraham Markovich, who was around the same age as my father, claimed that my father was an only child. I presume that my mother was right.

I have no information what my father did after the war.

From the end of the war in 1918 until he married my mother in 1926, I know nothing, I don't think he had a profession.

My father was twenty-nine and my mother was twenty-five when they got married – two people from completely different backgrounds and life experience.

My parents marriage license was given to them in 1926 in Sosnowiec, where the Markovich family lived, my sister Miriam was born in 1927, a year after the where married.

There is a disagreement in the family about the date of Miriam's birth, Miriam claims she was born on February or March, but according to the documents we have, it states that she was born in January.

Even though my parents were married in Sosnowiec in 1926, I have another marriage license from 1929 from Olkusz. The strange thing is that my sister is also included on the marriage license. for some reason they registered a second time (maybe before they left Sosnowiec), on this marriage license it states that they have a daughter, born 1927. That is to say that there are two marriage licenses registered to Alter Chiel Frenkel and Devora Markovich.

My parents probably met in Sosnowiec, it was customary for the young man to come to the girls home to write out the terms of the Ketubah כתובה and receive the bride from her parents. After they were married, my parents lived with my mother's large family in the three-story building on Yosefa Pilsotzki street.

My parents were religious but not Haredim. I think they kept Shabbat to the best of their ability in the circumstances. From what I understand all the Jews in the area were traditional Ashkenazim and belonged to the Admor of Sosnowiec congregation which originated in Wolbrom, the birthplace of the Markovich family.

My mother did not wear a wig, my father always wore a hat, they looked like any western couple of those days in Europe, but their surname Frenkel was a distinct Jewish name, there are several surnames beginning with Frenk like: Frenkental, Frenkel, Frenkiel, they were usually Jews who went through France and migrated to Poland, Hungary, and Germany.

My mother's youngest brother, Avraham, moved to Belgium around the time of my parent's marriage. He married Helene Bornstein, his cousin from his mother's side. The Bornstein's were already living in Belgium and had business dealings with the diamond mines and connections with the "British Giana", a British colony in South America.

Avraham joined his wife's parents and uncles in the family diamond business.

My Parents started their married life in the Markovich house in Sosnowiec the future look bright even though the economic situation in Poland was getting worse: more than 30% of the Polish residents lived

as discriminated minorities: Ukrainians, Jews, Germans, and Belarusians.

The first few years of Poland's independence the currency and the economy stabilized mainly by heavy taxes imposed on the Jewish merchants.

In 1926 there was a military revolution, the army appointed governments as they chose and encouraged antisemitism. With the outbreak of the global economic crisis (the great depression) in the United States in 1929 investments stopped coming to Poland. Avraham, who was already in Belgium, told my parents to leave Poland and come to Belgium saying: "your situation will be much better here". My parents took his advice, and in 1929 they immigrated to Belgium. They settled in Antwerpen, the second biggest city in Belgium, located in the north of the country near the border with Holland. The rest of the family stayed in Poland.

3. why did we leave Belgium so fast

My parents got visas to Belgium, they left Poland and joined the wealthy Bornstein family who specialized in the diamond business. Avraham, my mother's brother left Poland as a bachelor, he met and married the Bornstein's daughter in Belgium. The Bornstein's had lived in Belgium for many years (maybe when they were expelled from Wolbrom they went straight to Belgium or maybe they left Poland when they were recruiting young men to the army) from what I know from the Bornstein family here in Israel they were very wealthy. One of Helene's brothers was sent to study in the United States and became a doctor, the other brothers worked in the diamond trade.

The Shiduch between my uncle Avraham and his cousin Helena was probably set up before he came to Belgium. After they married, they lived in Antwerpen, they had two daughters – Mina and Sarah. Mina is my age and Sarah is a little younger than my sister.

I don't know who paid the fare for my parents and sister to Belgium, maybe my mother's brother Izidor who stayed in Poland, or maybe Avraham supported them when they came to Belgium and maybe he helped them buy the train ticket to Antwerpen. I asked my sister Miriam who is nine years older than me, but all this happened when she was a young child, and she didn't know the details.

As well as joining the Bornstein's diamond business, my uncle Avraham who was probably very talented and quick learner, and according to my mother's stories, due to his excellent knowledge of languages he worked as an interpreter on the many passenger ships that came to the busy port in Antwerpen. Avraham spoke Polish and Yiddish from home, he quickly learned the local languages, French and Flemish, and his English was quite good. He also knew biblical Hebrew from home, not modern Hebrew.

Avraham was waiting for the arrival of my parents at the train station in Antwerpen, and most probably with the help of the large family he found them a place to live and helped them out financially until my father started working.

my father's passport was stamped by the Polish embassy in Antwerpen, showing that he arrived in Antwerpen on the twenty seventh of March 1929 – I'm not sure what his status was in Belgium, but I know that because he was a foreign citizen, he had to renew his work permit every three months.

In Antwerpen my father qualified as a diamond polisher, and this is how he made a living. He probably learned this in the family diamond polishing plant. Polishing a raw diamond was done using a magnifying glass called a "loupe" and demanded concentration and patience. The art of polishing a raw diamond could take from a few hours up till a few days depending on its size. Diamond polishing is done using traditional tools that have been used by the industry for decades. The "Dop" – the head that holds the raw diamond is attached the polishers table and can rotate in all directions. The quality of the polishing has a direct effect on the appearance and price of the diamond. A raw diamond is lifeless, only correct polishing, done by following clear rules can make a diamond reflect light and shine. The finale shape of the diamond depends on the purchaser. I think that my father had healthy eyes, because in the photos I have of him he is not wearing glasses.

My parents joined the Jewish congregation in Antwerpen. They kept a Kosher home, on Shabbat and Chagim they went to the community's Synagogue in their best clothes.

I assume that the move from Sosnowiec to Antwerpen was a big change for them and influenced their way of life. My mother didn't work, she

took care of the house and family, my father learned the trade and worked in the family diamond business. My father picked up the language very quickly, in Belgium he learned to speak Flemish and spoke and read French.

For the time being, Miriam was their only child, they might have had difficulty conceiving again, or maybe they decided not to have another child due to financial problems, even though they received a lot of financial support from the family. Without their support they wouldn't have been able to get by. My mother spoke Flemish and all our years living in Israel she would often mention the names of the family members from Belgium. Antwerpen was home to one of the largest and oldest Jewish communities in Europe. Before the second world war the Jewish community had over thirty-five thousand residents.

In 1933 Hitler came to power. I don't know what my parents in Belgium understood of the changes happening in Germany, the neighboring country.

The family had settled into a routine in Belgium, my sister Miriam was in elementary school, my father was working for the Bornstein family in the diamond business, and my mother is pregnant with me. Seven years after settling in Belgium, in the winter of 1936 on the fourteenth of February, I was born. I'm not sure if it was common practice back then to give birth in hospital or have home births. One of the few memories I have of our neighborhood is that across the road from our house on Maria Lane St. was an army hospital. Apart from my date of birth, I know nothing about my mother's pregnancy or the circumstances of my birth.

The birth of a son was a joyous occasion in our family. From all my generation, I am the only boy, and because of that I am the only one named after my grandfather Menachem, my mother's father. Menachem Mendel Markovich. The name Menachem, like other names in our family, was passed down through the generations, as was also with the Bornstein family. Most of the Jews were given a second secular name, so in addition to Menachem I was also called Marcel, a blue-eyed baby boy.

We lived in a three-story building on Maria Lane Street No. 66. The staircase leading to the third floor was at the side of the building. It was a modern house with electricity and running water. I don't remember us having a radio, in fact I have no memory of anything that happened

before the outbreak of war and the upheaval my family went through. What did our house look like inside, what furniture did we have, where did I sleep, what floor was our apartment on and who were my friends. From the few photos I have from before the war I am with my parents and sister. We have a picture of us on a summer day at the beach in Antwerpen, by the clothes we are wearing, it looks like our financial situation is reasonable. My sister attends "Thach'camony תחכמוני elementary school" and I go to kindergarten, our education must have cost money.

Uncle Avraham and his wife Helena have two daughters, Sarah, (who later immigrated to Israel), is the same age as my sister and Mina, who is my age (lived in England). My sister Miriam and our cousin Sarah attended the same school. The two families were on good terms and led a traditional but modern lifestyle, they were not Charedim, and neither was the school the girls went to. I know every detail of the only photo I have of me in kindergarten: my eyes are blue, like my mothers with curly blond hair. My memories are from the few photographs of me from Belgium, I was too young to have any real memories. My first memories are from the beginning of the war, when I was about three and a half.

The war started in September 1939 (a few months before it came to Belgium): with no declaration of war, Nazi Germany invaded Poland my parents' homeland, and conquered it in a short period of time.

Years later I found out that as soon as the Germans invaded Poland in 1939 my uncle Itche Mayer Markovich was murdered. I heard many stories of him from my mother.

The Germans, who at the start of the war reached the Czech Republic, situated at the foot of the Tatar Mountains. From there they entered Sosnowiec. My uncle was shot in cold blood at the entrance of his flour mill. I got this information years later, when I was already in Israel, from close family friends, they also gave me the address of the house and the flour mill.

I later learned that Itche Mayer was the only one of the family who didn't leave Poland.

From my understanding, back in 1936 the economic situation in Poland was very bad, and this gave the Zionist youth movements an extensive field of action to persuade Jews to leave Poland and go to Israel. My mothers oldest brother Alter Markovich, was in his forties when he got a

"certificate" a permit to enter Israel – as an activist within the Hapoel HaMizrachi movement. Uncle Alter was probably more Zionist than Charedi, for Zionism did not characterize the Charedim, who objected Zionism. It was very hard to get a certificate if you didn't have family in Israel, but somehow, he and his family managed to attain a permit, and in 1936 the family, along with his young sister Regina, emigrated to Israel.

My uncle Alter, his wife Roza with their two young daughters, Rina and Miriam settled in Tel Aviv. Since he didn't have a profession, he worked as a night guard at one of the factories in the South of the city.

After the girls got married, Alter and Roza continued living in their small apartment in south Tel Aviv bordering Jaffa.

My uncle Alter told me himself, that on the top floor of their building, the controversial hero of the underground movement, Yair Stern, hid, and was later discovered and murdered. I remember this because this detail in his life story left a great impression on me.

In fact, it was Alter, who had emigrated to Israel ten years before us, who helped us get a permit to enter Israel in 1945.

My aunt Regina also lived in Tel Aviv. She worked at "Elite" factory. Regina married a young man that worked as an electrician and drove to work on a motorbike. She asked her husband to give up his dangerous bike and even threatened him "it's me or the bike", because he wouldn't give up his motorbike they got divorced, a short while after that he was sadly killed on his motorbike in an accident.

Even though Regina was an attractive woman she never remarried and stayed a widow for the rest of her life.

Avraham was the first to leave his home in Sosnowiec and move to Belgium, in 1929 my parents and my sister joined him in Belgium.

Seven years later, in 1936, my uncle Alter with his family and young sister, emigrated to Israel. My grandmother Mala stayed in Sosnowiec with her divorced son Itche Miyar for a year, and then to everyone's surprise made her way to Antwerpen where I met her for the first time.

Today I can understand why everyone was amazed, I can't imagine my grandmother's journey, how did an elderly Jewish woman manage to cross Europe by herself. From the information we have from her passport, my grandmother Mala left Poland in 1937, crossed through Germany on her way to us in Belgium. Her passport was stamped at

every crossing point maintained by the German army, which was already preparing for war.

On the eighteenth of May 1940 the Wehrmacht army conquered Belgium: they bypassed the French defense line, known as the "Magenot line", so as not to confront the French army, they then went up through Luxemburg and Holand, and down into Belgium. Most of the European countries, including Holand, Luxembourg, Belgium, and France, fell very quickly into the hands of the Wehrmacht army. Britain remained alone in the battle, until the Soviet Union and the United States joined the war.

Before the German army entered Antwerpen they bombed the city from the air – the air raid on Antwerpen is probably my first childhood memory. Opposite our house was an army hospital, I remember looking out the windows of our apartment. As a four-year-old boy I was captivated by what I saw happening outside. The sights and sounds of explosions that I saw from my living room window are one of my earliest memories. I saw the Belgium soldiers holding Rifles and shooting through the hospital windows – they were probably injured soldiers from the front lines. We heard the air raid attack on the city, but I don't remember us going to a bomb shelter.

As soon as we heard that they were starting to arrest the Jews – the whole family escaped from Belgium.

In the summer of 1940, ten years after my parents came to Belgium, they tried to make their way to England but failed and instead made their way to the South of France.

My uncle Avraham with his family and my grandmother, managed to board a ship to England. Two years later, in 1942, my grandmother Malka passed away.

May her memory be blessed.

4. How did my family fall apart

Summer of 1940. We're on a train, part of a large wave of Jewish refugees leaving Belgium because of the war. I don't know this, since I am only four and a half, and have complete trust in my parents. Eleven years before, they came to Antwerpen, and now they must leave the new life they made for themselves. We are on a train travelling from Dunkirk to

the South of France, we will cross the whole of France until we get to Toulouse, where many Jews fled.

On the fourteenth of June 1940 Paris falls into the hands of the Germans, and two days later, the sixteenth of June, prime minister Reynaud breaks down in front of the majority of his government, who supported a "separate peace" – which was in fact a political surrender to the Nazi German Military administration – and Reynaud announces his resignation.

Two weeks after the occupation of Paris, the "armistice agreement" was signed between Germany and France, which divided France into two regions: the "occupied" region – the North and the West, under the German military regime, and the South and Center – where a French government, headed by Marshal Petain, a commander and statesman, who rose to fame as the protector of France in the first world war. He is the head of a country called "Vichy of France" when the third French republic comes to an end. General Charles De Gaulle, who opposed the surrender of France, escaped France with the help of his friend, British General Edward Spears, who secretly smuggled him on board a plane to London. Churchill latter wrote in his memoirs that "On this small plane De Gaulle carried what was left of the honor of France".

From the time we separated from Avraham and the family, who by now were on their way to England, and we boarded the train from Dunkirk to the South of France, I don't think we got any help from anyone.

We wandered around the South of France for a while. We were still a family, but a family of refugees, displaced and cut off from any Country willing to take us in, we are supported by various organizations of Jews and Gentiles trying to provide humanitarian aid. France was flooded with refugees fleeing the Nazi occupier in Germany and Austria and from the fascists in Spain.

From the information I got from my sister: for a long time – nearly a year- we went from one refugee camp to another in "free France" some were built by locale humanitarian organizations, Jewish and non-Jewish: Sentorion, Sinrock, flabas la Flor in Monfelia in central France, Rivesaltes in the Pyrenees-Orientales – close to the Italian border. I know the names of the refugee camps from a list my sister wrote, she remembered them all.

Jewish and non-Jewish organizations tried to help ease the suffering of the refugees. They entered the camps and managed to get people released, they also managed to smuggle people out - mostly children.

I don't remember much from that time, but probably with the help of the underground organizations we managed to leave the refugee camp, and after a year of wandering we arrived at "camp De Montelimar" which was halfway between Marseille and Lyon. With the help of refugee aid organizations, we were able to get out of the refugee camp and rent a small apartment in Montelimar. We lived there for about a year; I remember that year as being relatively quiet.

The house belonged to a locale gentile named Faure. The owner lived on the second floor, and we lived on the first floor.

our house had two rooms, in one room we slept, and the entrance room was used as a kitchen and living room. Near the front door was a coal heater, on which we would also cook. The top of the heater was made of cast iron and on it were fixed black iron rings to place the pots. (etched in the few memories I have is of a night when the heater's chimney malfunctioned and the house filled with thick smoke, we all woke up in the middle of the night and ran outside).

The toilet was outside. If I remember correctly, there was no running water in the house, only outside. It was nothing like the high standard of living which we were accustomed to in Antwerpen, but I was a young child and didn't pay attention to such details, and it didn't bother me at all.

In the winter when I was five and a half, shortly after the beginning of the school year, I happily started first grade in the local school.

Over my clothes I wore a dark school apron, like all the students. Apart from the apron we didn't have a school uniform. Because I was born in Belgium, I spoke French and had no problem fitting in at school. The academic discipline was very strict: we were given checkered notebooks for writing, if the handwriting went over the mark, you were at risk of being hit on the fingers by the teacher's ruler.

We wrote with a dip pen and inkwell (not with a fountain pen – that was a privilege only for the rich) and of course we had to be careful that the ink didn't drip and stain our work.

We practiced on a black slate board with special chalk. Every student had a small personal board, called in French "ardoaz" on one side of the board were lines for writing and on the other side squares for math.

I had a photograph, which I lost, of my whole class with our teacher, who had a very strange name – "monsieur Tomat" – which means in French, Mister Tomato. In the Photo I am holding my slate board, written on it in chalk is the name of our school "akol dh Marshal Petain" – Marshel Petain School (after the war they changed the name to "Marshel De Gaulle School). I don't know why they did this, it was an all-boy school.

I walked to and from school, as a small child, the school seemed a long distance from our house, I don't remember being scared of anything or anyone on my way, I managed by myself just fine, I felt like a normal child and didn't encounter any special problems. I went to school in Montelimar for a whole year. The morning started with a school assembly in front of the French flag, which was then raised, and we all sang the French national anthem.

I learned to read and write and do math. On the cover of the notebook was printed the multiplication table which we had to memorize. In those days it was common practice to memorize a lot of things. To this day I do multiplication in my head, in French.

My sister also went to a new school, she attended a vocational high school for clerical studies in Montelimar, called in French "Stendo D'laktilor" it was very common study path for young girls.

Montelimar was known for its Nougat Candy industry, which were very popular in the South of Europe and the demand grew the closer it got to Christmas. There were a lot of nougat candy factories in the town and my father worked in one of these factories. To me it was very nice because he would bring us candy from work. It was very hard to find sweets during the war. My mother didn't go out to work, as she took care of us and the house.

Our family managed financially, but I'm sure money was tight. I assume that my father didn't earn a lot of money, but everyone around us lived in deprivation during the war, and a lot of products could only be bought with food stamps. The food stamps included cigarettes and wine, which for the French constituted essential subsistence products – French without wine doesn't work... and the same went for cigarettes that were also rationed. Because we didn't use these products, my parents sold them to make a bit more money.

I don't know if there were other Jewish children around, because all that period, I didn't know I was Jewish and was not aware of the subject and its implications: we didn't wear a yellow patch and I had never seen

anyone with one (even though it was already required of French Jews to wear one). We walked around the city freely.

Opposite our school was a big town square with a small coffee shop where we would go and eat ice cream. In the center of town there was a pond that would freeze in the winter, and I remember going ice skating with my sister, we had special blades that attached to our shoes

Seemingly, for me it was a quite year, a year without any problems or unusual events, but of course I wasn't aware of what was going on around us. Because we weren't officially registered as town residents, we registered at the municipality to receive food stamps from the government – and that is how they identified us – the moment we registered in the municipality to get food stamps, our name was automatically put on all the other lists, and one of the lists was with the French police, which in those days functioned mostly under the hands of the German occupier.

Personally, I don't remember the threat of war in that period, I had no idea that my father had to report to the police station, I later found out that he had to report once a week to register, after he registered, he could continue to live his life until the next week. From the paperwork I collected I found the summons to the police station.

I don't know if during that time my parents had any connections with other Jews. My parents obviously didn't talk about that in front of the children. Apart from that my parents spoke to each other in Polish – a language I didn't understand, except for a few words. I don't know if my sister remembered Polish, maybe she also didn't understand what they were talking about. We both knew Flemish and Yiddish. For the whole year, apart from my father reporting to the police station, everything was fine, in fact, the memories I have of my father, in particular and our family life in general, are from that year. I don't remember us having a shortage of anything, on the contrary, on the evening that the French police came to our house, I was alone, I remember that the first thing they did after entering the house was open all the kitchen cabinets and eat all our food.

A lot of Jews came to France as refugees from Eastern Europe and Germany with the rise of the Nazis to power.

Two years before we came to France in 1938, the Jews had been divided into two groups, French Jews and "foreign" Jews that had been naturalized in the past few years, the first and second generation – at

that time there were over three hundred thousand Jews living in France, most of them recent migrants.

France was full of non-Jewish refugees as well who were refused citizenship. However, the distinct anti-Jewish policy began in the summer of 1940. A month after the occupation. The French Jews believed that this policy would only be applied to the foreign or stateless Jews, it soon became clear that the Vichy Government didn't distinguish between foreign Jews and French Jews. All over France, especially in the South, concentration camps were established for the foreign citizens including the Jews.

In 1941, before the Nazis full occupation of France, my father was drafted into the army. He was recruited into special units of Polish citizens who were recruited into the French army. After the defeat of Poland, a Polish army was established on French soil according to an agreement between the Polish and French governments-in-exile. Most of the recruits to the Polish army were: Polish Migrants living in France, volunteers and Polish soldiers who managed to escape to France.

I have a document from the Polish embassy stating that my father fulfilled all his military obligations and therefore was authorized to seek employment, but only certain jobs were allowed, not everything was open to him. Even In his passport my father is registered as a Polish citizen.

In 1941 the "big roundup" starts – the Raplah- men were taken to work camps and isolation camps. Around forty thousand Jews were imprisoned in concentration camps in terrible living conditions.

In August 1942 my father was arrested. He received a summons to come to the police station, from there he was taken to the concentration camp " Venissieux " near Lyon.

My mother knew that my father had been arrested, she didn't go to visit him, but that evening she sent my sister by train to Venissieux camp to bring my father food, money, and clothes.

I presume there was a lot of risk involved. Miriam was supposed to travel to Venissieux by train and return the same evening. I knew that my father was not home, but I didn't know that he had been arrested, and I didn't know that Miriam had gone to Venissieux - I was told nothing about this. In the evening, my mother went to the train station to wait for Miriam, I was at home by myself, I was probably asleep.

while my mother was out, the French police came to our house, the front door was locked. They entered the courtyard and knocked on the tin shutters shouting "open the door" until I woke up.

I opened the door, and by their uniforms I recognized immediately that they were French policemen, they entered the house and asked: "where are your mother and sister?" I told them that I didn't know.

I wasn't afraid of them; I didn't know what they wanted – since I had no understanding of what was happening around us. They didn't get angry, and they didn't yell at me, they just sat around the table, searched the cupboards, and took out all the food they could find, opened a bottle of wine, cooked themselves a meal and sat around eating. Meanwhile, my mother returned home, but without my sister – Miriam didn't return that night.

At the entrance to the courtyard of our house, my mother saw the French police car and immediately knew that they had come to arrest us. She entered the house shouting protests that she would not let them take us with them, but it didn't help her, they took her by force and left me at home, by myself.

I sat for hours petrified, my father hadn't come home for days, my mother had just been taken by the police, and my sister Miriam had not returned home. That night I was alone at home. Apart from crying I didn't know what else to do.

Mr. Faure, our landlord, was probably too scared to come down to our house, even though he had been brave enough to rent us the apartment, and was very friendly to us. That night I didn't see him, and none of his family dared come downstairs.

In the middle of the night the police returned with my mother. It turns out that after many pleas on her part, they let her come home and take me with her, she quickly managed to pack a few of our belongings from around the house. The policeman looked at me and said: "Get dressed." We were then taken to a truck that was parked in the road.

As we were leaving the house, they asked my mother where my sister was, my mother told them that she was in Lyon, she didn't tell them that she was supposed to return that night, but the next night they returned to our house to wait for her.

I remember them putting us on the back of the truck. Only my mother and I were there. I look at my mother, but she is silent, she says nothing, and I don't ask, despite the complicated situation: my father has been

taken, my mother didn't know what had happened to my sister, and the two of us are being taken to an unknown destination. I continue looking and her, and she stays calm, she does not cry or shake.

They took us to the train station; the police escorted us off the truck. There were probably more Jews at the train station, but I don't remember.

We boarded a train to Lyon. The distance from Montelimar to Lyon is around a hundred and fifty kilometers, in those days it took about three hours. My mother managed to bring some food from home. I sat with my mother on the train, there were other children in the carriage with us, so I am not too worried. When we arrive at the train station in Lyon, we are put again in the back of a truck, this time they take us to Venissieux concentration camp, about a ten-minute drive from the train station. The next evening my sister arrives to Venissieux camp.

Our father is no longer there.

5. what happened to our father

France was no longer a refuge city for our fleeing family.

Since the summer of 1941, when the National Assembly in France announced the end of the third republic, and Marshal Petain, 84 years old, as the elected head of state. The Vichy government was in fact a German puppet government for all intents and purposes, afflicted with undisguised antisemitism. Some of the government officials even had army ranks from the S.S and swore allegiance to Hitler.

On the eleventh of January 1941, Hitler and Petain met in Montour. The result of this meeting was an agreement to collaborate, which led Petain to take an active part in persecuting the Jews. Under Petain's leadership, the Vichy government passed anti-Jewish laws which eventually led to the annihilation of twenty percent of the Jewish population of France. First the foreign Jews were persecuted. Non-French nationals were sent to work camps which were built immediately after the partition agreement between Petain and Ribbentrop, the Vichy regime gave the chiefs of the civilian police authority to put "residents from the Jewish race" into camps, even before the German army had invaded "free France". Those who arrived before 1936 were given French citizenship, but we came to France in 1940.

After the Vanaza conference in January 1942 the Nazis began preparing for the expulsion of Jews from France and other Western countries. The preparations were done slowly and methodically, the Nazis made every effort to secure the cooperation of the French government – the spring and summer of 1942 was a turning point both in the occupied areas and the areas under the Vichy Regime. The Jews were rounded up and sent to concentration camps; most of the work was done by the French police. In Northern France, which was under German rule, preparations were being made for the deportation of the Jews, the first order is for Jews to wear a yellow patch; first the foreign Jews and shortly after, the order was applied to "Jewish residents with French citizenship".

All the French Jews were marked, assembled, and persecuted, and in some cases sent to extermination camps. It became known that Petain himself worsened the anti-Jewish legislation dictated by Nazi Germany. Petain forbade the French Jews from working in education and law, and even prevented them from running for election – similar measures to those taken in Nazi Germany itself. The Jews were isolated and excluded from economic and political life, their property was confiscated, and they were marked and numbered, many were detained in camps, before their extermination.

In August 1942, when my father was arrested, he was sent first to Venissieux camp, one of the many camps built in the South.

They were hastily built and contained huge barracks, with the aim of housing the many refugees. The concentration camps in France were humbly called "hostels" but the living conditions in them were horrific.

The Jewish detainees were imprisoned behind barbed wire fences. Thousands of detainees died from starvation or froze to death. Others died from diseases caused by poor sanitation and the lack of medication. Because of the dreadful conditions in the camps, historians called them "disgrace camps".

In 1942, after the German occupation, a crucial meeting was held in Berlin to organize the expulsion of the French, Belgian, and Dutch Jews. The submissive Vichy government collaborated with the Nazis transportation system. They located Jews in the North and sent them on cattle trains to the huge concentration camp Drancy and from there to extermination camps. This is what happened to my father.

The road between Mersey and Paris is about eight-hundred Kilometers and is known as the "sun road", it was still called that during the dark years in France.

At the end of the sun road, a little north of Paris, towards the German border, on the "Masino Line", on the outskirts of Drancy town, the Drancy camp was built. It was surrounded by watch towers and barbed wire fences. Around the courtyard was a long building four story's high shaped like a horseshoe. It was originally built as a large apartment building for public housing, but never got finished. In August 1941 the building was converted into the primary detention camp for holding Parisian Jews who were later deported to extermination camps.

The living conditions in the camp were harsh. The main building was built to house seven hundred people, however there were more than seven-thousand prisoners in the camp, without basic supplies or means of housing, there were no beds, no mattresses no blankets. The camp was known for the brutality of the French guards towards the prisoners.

During 1942 the Jews were rounded up and sent en masse to the Drancy camp.

At the end of 1942, in retaliation to the Allies landing in North Africa, the Germans invaded our residential area – in "Vichi France" and started building extermination camps. Until then it wasn't known about the extermination of Jews, just the round up of Jews was known. On the twenty-second of June 1942, the first thousand Jews were sent to extermination camps in the East. Drancy camp was for the Jews of France, the last station before exile to an Unknown destination – "the transportation to Auschwitz". Whenever "room became available" in Drancy camp, Jews from different Camps in France were gathered and sent to Drancy camp. During the active days of the camp, a total of seventy-thousand prisoners were imprisoned in the camp, the majority were Jews, and a few underground French activists.

My father was arrested in August 1942, in that summer, forty-two thousand French Jews were sent from Drancy to extermination camps in the East.

the Drancy concentration camp was known as the "corridor to Auschwitz" since it was a transit camp to the extermination camps. My father was sent to Auschwitz on the second of September 1942

transport number 27, a short while after being imprisoned in Drancy. In my father's transport were one thousand and ten people.

We didn't know this at the time.

Until the liberation of France, in the summer of 1944, eighty thousand French Jews perished in the Holocaust.

May their memory be blessed.

6. how did I get out of Venissieux camp

My mother holds me by the shoulder, looks me straight in the eyes and gives me a new name. your "name is Marcel Faure ", she says – this is the name of our landlord from Montelimar. "You are not Frenkel you are Marcel Faure ", she says determinedly, it didn't seem strange, I heard that my uncle Avraham shortened his surname from Markovich to Mark when they moved from Belgium to England, to fit in with society.

On a cold night at the end of summer 1942, my mother and I arrive at Venissieux camp, near the town Venissieux which belongs to the South of France – known as "free France".

It all happened at night. Even in the dark I could make out shacks, arranged in long, straight rows. Before it was turned into a concentration camp Venissieux was a French army base.

The huge shack is full of people. More people than it can hold. There are no beds and no mattresses, the floor is covered with straw for us to sleep on along with the mice and lice. The toilets and drinking water were placed outside the shacks.

The following day my mother still had no information about my father or my sister, but she kept strong in spirit. I don't remember her ever crying or breaking down. The night after we arrived my sister Miriam was brought to the camp. She told us that that when she returned to our house in Montelimar the policemen were waiting for her. What went on between them I don't know, she never said that anything unusual happened. She just said that she asked the policemen where her mother and brother were and that they said they were taking her to us, and that is how she came to Venissieux camp. She was sixteen at the time, I don't think they hurt her. She never told me.

I don't remember much about life inside the camp.

I don't remember my mother talking to me or other people, I also don't remember how long we were there. I have hardly any memories from there. We were together: my mother and my sister, and for me, at seven-years-old, that was enough.

The fate of many children was difficult. Some were in the camp alone, without their parents. In the desolation that surrounded us, the devotion and mutual help stood out. The women in the camp took care of the children left without parents.

I later learned that my sister and I were only in the camp for a few weeks.

In the summer of 1942, it became clear to everyone, that by the Nazis and the Vichy government policy there was no distinction between the French Jews and the foreign Jews, the differences also began to blur between the various organizations that were involved in rescuing Jews and children in particular.

French religious leaders took a clear stand against the bad treatment towards the Jews. The most famous was Monsignor Saliege, the archbishop of Toulouse, who ordered the reading of the "Shepherds Epistle" which he distributed in all the churches under his authority, calling for the defense of the Jews, despite the efforts of the Vichy police to prevent their distribution. The Shepherds Epistle of the archbishop was distributed and read as a sermon and was passed from hand to hand in the churches. This motivated many Christians – from senior clergy to ordinary believers – to open their hearts and help the persecuted Jews. As a result of this, many French citizens supported the resistance and rescue movements. And thanks to the archbishop the rescue of prisoners in the camps in France became the most intensive and extensive, more than any other country in west Europe, and certainly not in East Europe.

Almost all the concentration camps had Jewish and not Jewish activist, who helped as much as they could to ease the lives of the prisoners in the camps. They tried to take care of basic needs like food and clothes, blankets, and mattresses. They tried any way possible to release and rescue as many people as they could from the camps, focusing mainly on the children. locale Jews with French citizenship were active in our camp, among them was Doctor and Priest – Alexander Glasberg – the son of a converted Jewish family from Ukraine, when it was still part of the Russian Empire.

The priest, Glasberg, finished his studies a few years earlier and requested to be posted in Lyon there he started helping the many refugees escaping the Nazis. Glasberg was the founder of a Christian organization called "Amitie Chretienne" who, under the patronage of the Cardinal of Lyon, Pierre-Marie Gerlier, hid and saved children. In fact, they ran our camp, under the watchful eye of the French police. The French police allowed the members of the organization to enter and work in the camps. It was a kind of collaboration where the French police turned a blind eye.

Then the organization OSE entered the picture. OSE is a global health and relief organization for Jewish healthcare.

The organization was founded in saint Petersburg in 1912 in the days of the pogroms, when the Jewish population suffered from extreme antisemitism, the anti-Jewish laws forced the Jews to live in their small towns (Shtetel) in severe overcrowding and extreme poverty.

The Jewish scholars which included Doctors, lawyers, teachers and more, founded aid and relief organizations, and OSE was one of them.

Since its founding, the organization dealt in education, medicine, and aid. After the Russian revolution, in 1923, OSE transferred its base to Berlin, and with the rise of the Nazis in Germany they moved to Paris and called the organization: " Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants" the center for children's aid. With the surrender and division of France, OSE relocated their center from Paris to Montpellier in the South "Free France", it was a legal operation that aided in health and welfare in the detention camps, its main purpose was to help orphaned Jewish Children.

The organization was crucially important to the survival of thousands of Jewish children under the Nazi regime. OSE was recognized in France as a humanitarian organization, they founded and managed fourteen institutions for orphaned Jewish children.

In November 1941 by request of the Germans, the Vichy government founded "the "UGIF", for the purpose of gathering all the Jewish organizations under one roof to supervise them, among them was OSE. After the roundups in the summer of 1942, and the occupation of the South of France, the situation in the camps worsened, the organization helped the imprisoned Jews in the camps, through the French Red Cross.

The organization continued working legally, but also worked underground, helping with financial aid, issuing documents, entrusting

children under different names with non-Jewish families, smuggling children over the Swiss boarder and more.

During the war OSE handled over twenty dormitories that housed one thousand six hundred boys. Most of them were saved, thanks to this, from the concentration camps.

From 1942, with the expansion of the "hunt for Jews" and their arrest in the non-occupied areas, the OSE administrators understood that the Jewish children were not safe in the dormitories: the police had conducted searches in a few of them already, they decide to set up a secret system and entrust it to Georges Garel an engineer, and resident of Lyon, This is how OSE founded the "circuit Garel" (Gaska). The Garel networks mission was to rescue children under the age of sixteen, by hiding them in institutions or with non-Jewish families or smuggling them to Switzerland.

The goal of the organization was to slowly empty out the dormitories and hide the children in institutions, with foster families, in monasteries or farms. The archbishop Saliege gave Georges Garel a list of addresses of institutes and Christian foster families willing to take in Jewish children to provide them with adequate living conditions to save them being sent to death camps,

This involved changing the children's identity. This was done by giving the child a new 'Ari' name. apart from this the organization also had to supply the institutions or families taking in the children, with food cards, financial aid, and recruit young social workers to keep track of the children. My sister Miriam got a forged birth certificate and changed her name to Mirian Faure, my name remained Marcel Faure the name my mother gave me in the camp.

The organization used professionals to forge documents for the children as well as for the boy scouts and the local Zionist youth movements.

One of the well-known cases is the rescue of one hundred and eight children from Venissieux camp near Lyon, who were waiting to be deported to Drancy camp and from there to Auschwitz.

On the 26th of August it became known to the organizers that out of the hundreds of Jewish families in the Venissieux camp a transport, including children was about to leave for Drancy camp.

Apparently, Priest Glasberg from the "Christian friendship" contacted OSE and together they launched a secret operation to rescue the children. George Garel stood on behalf of OSE at the head of the

operation. Three other organization: OSE, Amitie Chretienne and the Jewish underground in Lyon, worked simultaneously to get a hundred Jewish children out of Venissieux camp.

After negotiations with the Nazis, conducted by OSE personnel with the help of priest Glasberg, for the release of a group of children from the camp, it was agreed to release a hundred and eight children under the age of sixteen. Those over sixteen, in the eyes of the Nazis, were old enough to work in the camps like adults.

Priest Alexander Glasberg and his brother Vila, representing the Christian friendship, took advantage of the inconsistency of the instructions coming from the Vichy regime, and saved half of the prisoners from deportation. Among them where a hundred and eight children.

After a lot of effort, the OSE activists, with the help of the French Underground, got permission to take the children out of the camp and place them in different locations. My sister and I were included on this list.

Miriam was sixteen and I was six and a half.

The first agreement given by the Germans, was on the condition that the children's parents sign a consent form agreeing to hand over their children. The parents who remained in the camp needed to have complete trust in the OSE employers that they would take good care of their children and place them in good hands. For most of the parents it was very difficult to trust strangers and send their children to the unknown. Glasberg, who spoke fluent Yiddish from his childhood, managed to persuade the parents to hand over their children to him. There were many heartbreaking scenes, of children holding on tightly to their parents before parting.

Those living outside the camp, the priests, and the police, knew that the next station from our camp was Drancy camp. They knew that the next Transport was leaving soon, but the people in the camp, including my mother, didn't know.

I was a six-and-a-half-year-old child, and it didn't occur to me that this might be the last time I would see my mother.

I remember the conversation with my mother, she repeated in my ear the name she gave me when we came to the camp, and added: "remember, you are Marcel Faure, and under no circumstances don't take your trousers off int the company of another person!" she was very

serious, and I listened to her. Even though I didn't understand the fateful significance or the seriousness of the situation. I also didn't know that I wouldn't see mother for a long time. I never saw my father again.

Priest Glasberg was in the camp office, when a telegram arrived from the Germans saying that the permission given to remove the children from the camp—was cancelled.

As soon as he saw the telegram, he hid it under his black gown and speeded up the mission: that night he got us all out of the concentration camp and dispersed all the children. The next morning, when the Germans came looking for the children and couldn't find them, they were furious: "but you got a telegram!" after searching the office thoroughly, there was no telegram to be found...

Heading the operation on behalf of OSE was underground agent, George Garel.

Shabbat Eve, the Twenty ninth of August 1942, under the cover of darkness, the group of children were taken to an abandoned Carmelite monastery, within the city of Venissieux, within twenty-four hours all the children were smuggled out by the members of the Christien Friendship, and the underground organizations and hidden in different locations around Lyon. Governor Angeli had already realized that the committee had fooled him, and he wanted to catch the children as quickly as possible. He ordered the priests to hand over the children's details and whereabouts, but they bravely refused to betray the children and gave him false facts and details. All one hundred and eight children were saved.

The children who were taken out of the camp were transferred to non-Jewish children's homes and foster families. The process of moving the children to hiding places was not easy, for some of the children, my sister included, the OSE activists had prepared in advance forged documents, sometimes their real name was hidden somewhere on their bodies. From a certain age it became difficult because the children had to get used to lying. When the situation worsened, their identity was hidden also from the foster families, and only the OSE workers who handed over the children know their real identity.

I wasn't given a forged document; my name was already Marcel Faure.

A few years ago, I met a Jewish man named Lucian Lazar, who was one of the young boys who led us out of the concentration camp. Today he is an historian working with "Yad Vashem". He has published a few books

in Hebrew and French. One of the books he wrote, was about the life and work of the converted Jew, priest Alexander Glasberg who rescued us.

Lazar told me that when we were taken out of the camp, they called on the Jewish boy scouts to escort us to our hiding places, he was one of those boys. They bought with them boy scout uniforms from home for us to wear. He didn't remember who he himself had escorted; I was too young to be in the boy scouts. We left the camp with nothing but the clothes we were wearing.

After we had been scattered around Lyon, we never spent more than one night in the same place.

We were taken out of the concentration camp in the middle of the night and were hidden all around Lyon. We were dispersed to different locations around the town. At first, we were moved about from place to place. My sister and I stayed together.

One night we were smuggled aboard a laundry ship that was sailing on the river in Lyon. "Bato Lavaz".

The OSE workers kept tabs on the children and visited them in their hiding places. social workers and other volunteers, some with fake identities, took care of all our needs, while hiding the purpose of their visit.

From the hundred and eight children who were smuggled out from the camp, only the two of us were on the laundry ship. All the children were dispersed and hidden separately. We know two sets of siblings, that also weren't separated.

While we were on the ship, we were only allowed on deck at night, during the day we had to hide below deck in extreme heat. We were on the ship during September and October, and it was very stuffy below deck between all the storage rooms. The laundry was washed in the river, and the ironing was done on the ship. The river was full of ships, mostly transporting coal and other various goods.

I don't remember where we slept, but I do remember being out on deck at night and hiding below deck during the day. All of this was supervised by the same people who had smuggled us out of the concentration camp, some were Jews with French citizenship, and some were from the Catholic Church, members of the "Amitie Chretienne" organization patronaged by the Cardinal of Lyon Mr. Gerilia and his helper, Priest Glasberg. I never saw them on the boat or met them. I was with my sister and that was enough for me, I didn't ask any questions. The crew of the

ship were religious Catholics I remember them saying grace before eating, I don't remember being hungry.

Behind all stages of the rescue were members of the organization who put themselves at risk, and some paid for it with their lives. With the escalation of the anti-Jewish policy in the summer of 1942, the head leaders of OSE in the South were forced to flee France and go to Switzerland, and a large part of their activity went underground. Nearly thirty members of the underground network were murdered or led to their deaths. Georges Garel, the underground leader, managed to establish a wide rescue network in which Catholic and Protestant institutions took part along with public and private institutions. The network took care of all the needs of the surviving refugees (The underground network also organized secret crossing of the border into Switzerland and Spain). With the help of about a dozen Catholic, protestant or secular organizations, the Garel network managed to save more than one thousand five hundred children.

Georges Garel died in Paris in January 1979.

Thanks to his position as a Catholic priest and his connections with the senior officials of the Church, Alexander Glasberg managed to arrange hiding places for all the Jews smuggled out of the concentration camps in the South of France, and move them from place to place, and by this managed to save hundreds of Jews.

In December 1942 Glasberg was forced in to hiding, as the French police and the Gestapo were searching for him. His brother Vilo continued standing at the head of the network they founded to smuggle out Jews and hide them. In August 1943, after being reported on, Vilo, who was hiding under the name Victor Vermont, was caught. A German officer saw that the name Vermont – glass mount, was a translation of the name Glasberg, and assumed that it was Alexander. To save his brother, he didn't correct them. He was arrested, deported, and murdered. Alexander survived the war and even assisted in bringing Maapilim to Israel and helped with the founding of the state of Israel. Years later he was defined by the Knesset of Israel as one of the great friends of the State of Israel and the Jewish people. Alexander Glasberg died in France in 1981.

In the year 2004, both brothers were recognized as " Righteous Among the Nations".

7. who is Madame Germaine Chesneau from Peyrins

I don't know how long we were on the laundry ship, but it was clear that we wouldn't be able to be aboard the ship during the winter. After leaving the ship we were moved around to different hiding places. I don't know where we were for all those months, I'm not sure that my sister knows either, but we were together and that was a light in a very dark time. We moved around a lot until we were placed in a children home in Peyrins village close to Roman city.

This happened of course at night, these things always took place in darkness, I think we arrived by bus or by truck.

In Peyrins there was a children's home that was used as a dormitory for French children – "Chateau De Peyrins" was a private institution run by Madame Chesneau.

In 1994, when the French government decided to pay compensation to families who had a family member sent to an extermination camp, I received from them a document confirming that the children's home received from the OSE organization twenty five Franks a day for each child, I don't have my sisters document, but every child that came to the home had all their details written on this document, it states that we arrived at the children's home in October or November 1942. I don't recall the first moments entering the home, I suppose children tend not to give meaning to such moments if they are not traumatic, even if they are fateful.

There were forty children in the children's home before we arrived. They left before we came, they might have gone back to their families because of the war. The "Chateau Da peyrins" was an ancient three-story building, which in the past was the home to the French Royals from the area – it was a beautiful castle. The place looked lived in, as if the French children had just left.

Eighty out of the one hundred and eight children taken out of the camp were bought there, most of them were around my age and a few were older, like my sister. Nearly all the children were Jews from the camp, a few were the children of French activists who had been killed or captured. A large part of the staff was also Jewish. When we arrived at the children's home, I registered under the name Marcel Faure.

I had no problem with the name Marcel, as that had been my name in Belgium. I don't recall ever asking where my mother was, or anything similar, I got on great with the other children, and don't remember ever

fighting with anyone. I was with my sister who was nearly ten years older than me, and that made me feel very safe, even if it was not expressed or gestured.

There were another two couple of siblings from Belgium, around our age, that we were very friendly with. (Helen and Paul Shpilman, they made Aliyah and live in Kibbutz Yavne and Kibutz Shluhot. Another brother and sister, Sammy and Martha, who after a few years living in Israel went back to Belgium.

In the documents I have today, it states that the institution was run by Christian Catholics who Belonged to the "Amitai Cartin" organization – a Friendship Association for Jews, headed by the Cardinal of Lyon, but was managed by Madame Chesneau.

Madame Chesneau, the longtime director of the children's home, managed the institution before and after the war.

Opposite the entrance to the Chateau were stairs leading to a courtyard, in it was a garden called the "Potage" garden where we worked and cultivated the vegetable garden. In the back were the staff quarters. The kitchen and the dining room were on the lower floor of the Chateau, the second and third floor functioned as living quarters for the children. I don't recall how many children slept together in a room, but I do remember the big halls used for living rooms. The right side for the boys, and the left side for girls.

Madame Germaine Chesneau was a woman with seniority and experience and managed the children's home with rigor and strictness. Order was before everything. Even if she didn't shower us with affection, we had a lot of respect for her.

We were forbidden to leave the compound and go to the village, and a regular schedule was kept.

In the morning, we each made up our own beds, then went downstairs where the toilets and sinks were and washed before going to eat breakfast. We each got two slices of bread a day, everyone was given a small cloth bag to save the leftover bread from our meal – and we would carry it around with us all day. We already understood that it was difficult to get food during the war. The adults never ate their bread when it was fresh, for the fear that maybe there would not be bread the next day.

Everyone saved their bread in the cloth bags, so instead of eating fresh bread we mostly ate stale bread. I was only seven years old but

understood that there was a shortage of food and clothing. I was always hungry, a feeling that I had never felt before.

After breakfast we went to study or work in the vegetable garden. The lessons in the Chateau were divided by age and took place in the dining room. The older children learned more than us, my sister learned what everyone else was learning even though in Montelimar she was in high school.

Us youngsters didn't learn much, most of our time was spent playing or working in the vegetable garden, we hoed, planted and picked the fruits of our labor for our everyday use. The adults guided us in the gardening work.

Among other things, we grew leafy artichokes in the garden. From these leaves they made us different dishes for lunch, even though the children didn't like the taste of the artichoke leaves. By Madame Chesneau rules, whoever ate all their food would get an apple at the end of the meal.

Madame Chesneau was not a warm woman, there was no show of affection, but we knew that someone was taking care of us, I'm not sure if it's possible to give love and attention to a hundred and twenty children.

She was a very special woman and we all had great respect for her (for the fact that I remember her name, even though I left the children's home when I was seven). We only celebrated Christian holidays. I don't remember anybody ever coming to visit us, and we never left the Chateau to go to the village or town. There was also a problem with medication, I have no idea what they did when children got sick, maybe they called a doctor to the home because we weren't allowed out. The only place we were allowed to go was the forest close to the Chateau where chestnut trees grew, we would spend most of our afternoons playing there.

We didn't know what was happening with the war, as we were disconnected from the real world, isolated in our own world – besides the vague knowledge that there were people out there trying to find us and that is why we are living in the children's home. We asked no questions, and never complained, this was the reality we knew – Europe of those days was in chaos.

8. how did I get to Raymond and Paulette Hughes house in Rosans

One evening in March, a year and a half after we came to the children's home, Madame Chesneau noticed that one of the workers hadn't returned to the home at night – she feared that the woman had been arrested, she quickly arranged for all of the children to be dispersed to nearby villages.

That night I arrived at a big country house in the village Rosans. The distance from Chateau De Peyrins to Rosans, located in the high Alps of Provence, was a hundred and fifty Kilometers. This was the first time they separated me and my sister.

I don't remember that. I learned all the details of that night much later, in adulthood, when I started investigating my life story during the war. From what I was told, one of the women workers from the children's home was arrested or caught, in her pocket was a list of all hundred and forty children living in the home, she was probably arrested by the police, when she didn't return that night to the home, Madame Chesneau immediately got suspicious. She might have had some information about police presence in the area, and on her instruction all the children were dispersed off that night.

I remember that before we left, the workers at the home, repeated to us over and over again the same instructions my mother had given me, if we were asked to lower our trousers, not to do it. That was when I started to understand that we were still being chased, that we weren't safe. Although in the institution I was hungry and poor, I was still with my sister and friends and felt protected.

I don't remember how I got to Rosans, in a document I have it says that on the fourteenth of March 1944, we were evacuated from the Chateau – that means we were in the home for a year and a half. it also states that I got to Rosans, located in the French Alps, which is about an hour's drive to the border between Italy, Switzerland, and France, to the house of Raymond and Paulette Hughes – whom I remember perfectly. Paulette and Raymond were a young couple without children (their only child was born in 1947, two years after I left).

Raymond's grandfather, old Mr. Hughes, the head of the family, was considered in the village as a very wealthy man. The family owned a flour mill, a bakery, and a sawmill. Raymond worked in the family business and Paulette, his wife, was a school teacher and house wife. When I got to them, I was very unkept, and probably had lice in my hair and clothes,

they burned all the clothes I arrived in, in a small fire in the backyard, they shaved my head and scrubbed me outside in the yard in the concrete sink used for laundry. After I was clean, they bought me new clothes.

I woke up the next morning to the aroma of fresh baked goods from the bakery located in the front of the house (facing the street). The house was behind the bakery. That morning, in honor of the occasion, they cooked a big ham, and a cooked piece of meat was hanging in the kitchen. The wonderful smell sent a message to my stomach the certainty that there was food for me in this place.

"Now I will have plenty of food" I thought to myself.

In the children's home, there was a shortage of food and clothes. Madame Chesneau, with all her good intentions, did the best she could with the money she got for our keep from OSE, twenty-five Franks a month per child.

When we visited them in 1982, Mr. Hughes told me that in Rosans village there was an institution for mentally retarded boys – "la Stick" they were there from the age of 18 until the end of their days, all the resident in the institution were evacuated because of the war. In that same institution, under the management of Mrs. Fishbecher (Jewish?) a large group of children who were smuggled out of Madame Chesneau children's home in the middle of the night, were housed there. When I asked Mr. Hughes why I wasn't placed with all the children he told me: " there wasn't enough room in the institution for everyone, and you were the youngest, and life in the institution wasn't suitable for your, so we took you in".

Years later I speculated that because they didn't have any children, it seemed like a good opportunity to get a child as a present. Maybe... they were young, between twenty and thirty years old, they might have had certain plans for me. They told me that my sister was sent to a monastery in Roman. I don't remember if I had time to say goodbye to her, but I remember trying to imagine her dressed as a nun. From the time we left the children's home I didn't see her. Maybe it was a Christian Mission, a school for nuns (Miriam never told us).

I didn't feel like I was in hiding, I had my own room on the second floor in the attic, the chimney from the fireplace went through my room and made my room nice and warm. And I even went back to school.

I was registered as Marcel at the village school and went to school every day with all the children from the village.

Boys and girls learned in separate classrooms, I'm not sure why. All things considered, I think I was a good student. I reached this conclusion by the amount of French I still know, I can even read and write, albeit, with a few mistakes, but I must have learned something there. I don't recall learning French history, and we didn't talk about the war. By the time I went to school part of France was already conquered by the Americans, and the war was coming to an end, even though the Germans still controlled the South of France and Italy, which was near us, and were still rounding up Jews and the French activists who were still fighting against them.

Every morning, I left the house like all the children, wearing a black apron over my clothes. I wore nothing on my head. I think it was a catholic school. I didn't feel any different from the other children, I spoke French from birth, and I was blond with blue eyes...

On Sunday's I went with the family to church, but apart from that I don't remember celebrating any Holidays. They were not religious, and I didn't know I was Jewish so whatever they did seemed natural to me. The whole village was in alliance with the French underground, even though the German Army was right in the village, and the gentile I was with was declared - Wanted.

He took upon himself a huge risk. Not just him, but the whole family. They had a big family in the village, Uncles and cousins, whose descendants still live in the village in Rosans.

I presume that because the entire village supported the actions of the French underground the family allowed themselves to keep me openly, knowing that no one from the village would inform on them. I know that there was a lot of anger at the French for their behavior towards us during the second world war, but in Rosans, everyone was in favor of the underground and against the Vichy Regime. Like in every small village, Rosans also had a policeman who they trusted completely and knew that he would not inform on us, he protected us and didn't cooperate with the French – everyone in the village knew I was Jewish.

Apart from the young couple, an uncle and two aunts also lived in Raymond's grandfathers house, (for a long time I thought he was Raymond's father, but then found out that he was the grandfather).

When I came home from school, we all ate lunch together. The seating arrangement around the dining table emphasized the family hierarchy.

When I approached the table, I first had to ask permission from the grandfather: may I sit down in my place? The seating arrangement was permanent: the grandfather sat at the head of the table, I was given a place of honor – to his right, the young couple sat to his left, and the aunts opposite. Before he gave me permission to sit down, he would say: "Marcel, will you go down to the cellar and bring me some wine? The wine was poured from big barrels, I believe the wine was homemade, and that they pressed their own grapes. I brought to the table red wine in a special glass pitcher, and only after the grandfather started eating, the meal began.

I was the only child in the house and was treated excellently – I felt like part of the family. Food was plentiful, fresh pastries from the bakery, and children shaped rolls that one of the bakers made specially for me, vegetables from the garden and pork chops – everything we wanted.

Meat was served every day, and the wine that was served with every meal, was poured also for me. This is how we ate every day, lunch, and supper, as is customary with the French, food is very important.

After the meal, I would go with Raymond to deliver bread to the surrounding villages and towns,

Everyone in the area knew everyone, and no one asked: "who is this boy".

I walked freely around the small village to school, to the sawmill and the flour mill that were located by the river where there was a waterfall, that operated the grinding wheels.

They owned three cars: a truck for the flour distribution, a van to distribute the bread, and a black Citroen private car. During the war they didn't use the private car because you couldn't find Benzin. But the van and truck had a trick, they were powered by wood "gozogen" Half of the cargo was loaded with a supply of wood for the trip and the remaining half was loaded with bread for distribution. The German soldiers were also included in our route and got bread from us. Every day we entered the German army base, there, they didn't hunt the Jews, that was the job of the gestapo and the SS.

In the beginning, in 1940 the place was conquered by the Italian army, at some point the Germans dismantled the Italian army and occupied the territory in their place.

Raymond was the permanent distributor to the German army. I presume he got paid.

My job was to unload the packages from the truck and distribute the bread, I wasn't scared of the Germans, I was young and didn't know much about the war. It was the French police, who cooperated with the Germans, that were more of a threat to Raymond, who was a member of the underground.

Over time I was given more responsibilities around the house.

In the morning, before going to school, I would light the fire in the fireplace. I would bring logs from the neat pile in the yard and burn them. In the afternoon I went out alone to the pasture with the pigs and ducks. When I came to Rosans I was a city boy, and knew nothing about farm life, but they taught me the chores and I didn't see it as a burden, I did it happily.

I wasn't afraid, everyone saw me and knew me, I didn't feel hidden, and didn't encounter any problems. When we visited Rosans in 2011, Raymond's sister told me the village people called me "La petit Marcel" (little Marcel) there were probably more Marcel's.

But there were also days I didn't go to school.

The days that the Gestapo or the French police would search the village, on those days I stayed at home. Every so often they would raid the village looking for Jewish children and French underground activists. Years later I found out that forty-five youngsters were caught. Raymond usually knew beforehand about the expected raid,

and on that day, I didn't go to school, I went to hide with him in the flour mill or the sawmill.

There were times we spent three or four days in the sawmill, which wasn't working during the war. I don't remember us discussing the situation, but I probably had a basic understanding of what was happening: they were looking for us and we had to hide. Pollet, Raymond's wife would fetch us our meals to the sawmill. We hid there, until it was safe to come out and we could go home. Raymond always stayed with me, I never stayed there by myself, so I never felt persecuted.

I was a child and didn't understand much of what was going on around me. I knew there was a war and there were people trying to catch and

arrest us. Not me personally, we had to be careful not to get caught, so we had to hide, I was treated nicely and never suffered.

You could say that in the Hughes house I was treated like one of the family and included in everything. There was no shortage of food, they bought me clothes, school equipment, and sometimes on a Sunday, they would take me to meet my friends that were living at the nearby institution. The winter in the Alpes was very cold and covered with snow. I remember us taking a wooden bench from school, turning it upside down and sliding down the mountain slopes.

Even though I didn't know where my mother and sister were, I felt a hundred percent safe with them.

I even got used to the fact of being by myself, first they took my father, then we were separated from our mother, and then I was separated from my sister.

To their credit, Raymond and the family took care of me as best as they could, and I lacked for nothing. Food was not a problem, because as the owner of a flour mill and a bakery, they worked right through the war, unlike many others. I lived with them until the end of the war in 1945.

9. My mother comes to take me

The Americans came to the village a few weeks before my mother and sister came to get me.

Since the occupation of France by the Germans, it was clear to the Allies that to end the Third Reich, they would have to conquer Germany which meant: landing on the coast of France or Belgium and moving forward overland into Germany.

From the end of 1943 large forces were assembling in Britain – British, Americans, and more, in preparation for the invasion, American General Eisenhower was in command of the mission. Mid 1944, it was clear that the Allies invasion into France was getting closer. In June 1944 the Americans invaded occupied France: the invasion to Normandy took place on the sixth of June 1944, the Free French Forces didn't take part in the invasion, but the Resistance staged an uprising against the Germans with over two hundred thousand activists, to assist with the invasion in any way they could. They attacked the German supply and

transportation lines, thus preventing a lot of German units from reaching the front line to fight the invaders.

In the beginning of August 1944, the Free French soldiers landed in Normandy under the command of Leclerc. The soldier's main mission was to reach occupied Paris and liberate it by French soldiers. On the twenty fourth of August, they reached the entrances of Paris and fought fiercely against the Germans inside the city. On the twenty fifth of August the Germans surrendered and on the twenty sixth of August, General De Gaulle entered Paris as victor.

August 1944 Paris was liberated.

On the fifteenth of August 1944 the French First Army participated in the Dragoon military operation. They landed by sea in the city of San Trope in the Provence region, and alongside forces of the United States Army, they liberated Canne, Tolon, and Marseille. After that, they fought in the Allied sector and liberated the Vosges region, the battle continued into the Alsace region.

Even though they entered Occupied Paris in August, it took a long time to liberate this part of the South of France which is right on the Italian border: with the help of the Resistance fighters and the Free French Army under the command of De Gaulle, they infiltrated Belgium on the second of September 1944, and ten days later, the Twelfth of September they crossed the German border. Here they were restrained by the "Siegfried line" which the Germans had set up before the war, they stopped there through the winter.

Even though the English had landed in Italy with the American brigade soldiers in Normandy and the French army in Paris, the distance between Paris and Rosans was eight hundred Kilometers the Americans arrived at our village towards the end of the war, in 1945. Until then the Southern part remained in the hands of the Germans. In the first months of 1945. The Allies pressed on with determination, on German soil. At the end of April 1945 both armies met at the Able River, and finally broke through the German defense lines, also in north Italy.

On the thirtieth of April 1945 the Russians conquered Berlin, and Hitler committed suicide. On the Seventh of May 1945 the Germans signed an unconditional surrender and the war in Europe ended.

A few months before the end of the war, we could already feel the end was near. There is an atmosphere of change in the air, the American soldiers came, and the German soldiers left.

I remember when the first US Army cars arrived, the first thing the American soldiers taught us was how to say "Chocolate" and "Chewing Gum" – we had never tasted anything like it before.

When the war ended Raymond took out his black Citroen from the garage and took us for a drive in his car – it was a thrill for all of us.

And then one day my sister and mother arrived.

I don't remember anyone telling me they were coming. I'm not even sure that Raymond knew. There were no telephones then.

I just remember Miriam and my mother arriving.

With the liberation, the Jewish organizations traveled all over France to collect the children and youths who were hidden in villages and institutions throughout France.

In the summer of 1944 the different Jewish organizations, OSE among them, started collecting the children throughout France, some were left without parents. The different organizations were trying to connect children with their parents and families.

This was very difficult since some of the foster families refused to give up the children they had cared for.

Some of the children had been baptized into Christianity, some wanted to stay in the monasteries. Children who had crossed the border to Switzerland, returned, and OSE daycare centers that had closed during the war, reopened to take in all the children. In total, over ten thousand children were saved in France by organizations that cooperated. Among them were six thousand and seven hundred children saved by the OSE organization. According to their records they knew where all the children were hidden, and at the end of the war, one spring day in 1945, my mother and my sister came to get me.

To find me, my mother had to go to the different OSE organizations who took care of us, and there got information of me and my sister's hiding place, and also got an idea of what we went through in the past three years. It is possible that my mother thought she would have to fight to get me back – as it was known that in some cases the families refused to return the children after the war.

The war was over, and they came.

I don't know what happened to them, or where and how they met. Because I was only nine years old, they both don't want to tell me what they went through while we were separated.

I don't know what the date was when my mother and sister appeared at the Hughes house.

I don't know what happened to my mother in the three years we were separated, apart from the fact that she was hidden in a gentile's house. More than that I don't know.

My sister was in a mission for nuns in Roman and stayed there till the end of the war. It was not far from Peyrins village where we lived together by Madame Chesneau.

I had no connection with my mother from the moment we parted in Venissieux camp, we separated when I was six years old. I remembered my mother. My sister and I had only been separated for a year and a half. The meeting was cold and to the point. I don't remember any particular excitement; we spoke a bit but didn't hug.

After such a long time, and everything we'd been through, it was strange to be together again, they were probably tense because they didn't know in what condition they would find me. Raymond invited them in, and they stayed the night.

I realized that they had come to take me.

It wasn't easy for me to leave the life I knew in the big village house, surrounded by family, and without deprivation – but family is family

There was no doubt, and there was no discussion about the matter.

I recall that before we left the Hughes Family, Raymond gave us a basket of food, since the economic situation after the war was very bad.

Before we made Aliyah to Israel, we went to visit the Hughes family and Raymond and say goodbye for the last time. When we left Raymond filled our basket with food again. I conclude from this that their parting with me was done in good spirits and was not accompanied by an argument or conflict of any kind.

My mother my sister and I went back to Montelimar, the city where we were arrested in at the beginning of the war.

We rented an apartment.

I don't remember going to the synagogue or mixing with a Jewish community in town.

We still have no information about my father.

We are defined in France as exiles. As a result of this my mother received food stamps and five hundred Francs a month, we had to make do with that, it probably wasn't enough.

I didn't go to school. I walked around the town, the American Army was also roaming around the town.

One day I meet some black American soldiers, they invited me to their camp and gave me food and candy, and a pair of sunglasses as a gift. This went on for some time, I would spend time with them, but they never came to our house.

Released prisoners of war started arriving at the Montelimar train station. I stood on the platform for days searching for my father. Maybe I will find him among the prisoners of war, some of them were in very bad shape, I didn't dare speak to them. We knew that my father had joined the French army as a Polish citizen, and I thought maybe he would retune with them.

We were sure he would return. We had no indication that he wouldn't return, but he didn't come. We waited for years, hoping to find him.

At some point my mother took me to a camp for Jewish Children that was organized by the Jewish Agency, then my mother and sister went to Belgium. I presume that my mother hoped my father had returned there.

I was very upset that they were leaving me alone again but didn't make a fuss. I stayed in the camp. Once again, I have no contact with my mother. I'm not angry yet but I can feel something stirring up inside me.

To cross the border from France to Belgium special permits were needed, which the Jewish Agency helped her get. they helped as much as they could, she told them that when they return from Belgium, she wants to make Aliyah to Israel. In Belgium they went to the apartment we lived in before the war – Mria le St. Antwerpen. Trying to find a trace or sign of my father, to see if maybe he returned to the house we'd left. To see what was left behind.

Their visit in Belgium was short. They went and came back without any exciting news.

There were people living in the house. They couldn't find my father's personal diamond polishing equipment. Apart from a silver wine cup, a pair of candle sticks and a few documents: my parents and my grandmother's passports, they found nothing.

I am still in the Jewish Agency Camp, with me are other children, that are also making Aliyah to Israel, but I feel very lonely.

With the help of the Jewish agency my mother managed to get us certificates to enter Israel. My mother wants to go to Israel, she sees no hope of life in France or Belgium.

My mother had no profession, which would make it difficult to get by and she has nowhere to go.

Avraham, my mother's brother, is in England, and Alter her other brother has been living in Israel for the past ten years, since he left Poland in 1936.

I don't know how they contacted each other but with Alter's help, my mother managed to obtain Certificates to Israel.

My mother was already forty-three, and didn't know how she would manage in Israel, but after everything that had happened, none of the survivors wanted to stay in Europe.

Finally, they picked me up from the camp, and we moved to Paris.

The Jewish Agency opened an office in Paris which helped organize our Aliyah to Israel. The Brigade personnel assisted in giving certificates to the immigrants. The state of Israel hadn't been founded yet, and coming to Israel without a permit was illegal.

The Brigade's job was to gather the Jews and get them ready for their immigration to Israel, they were housed in one of the palaces of the Rothschild family near Paris.

Paris didn't make an impression on me except for one incident: De Gaulle returned from England, and standing proudly as head of the French army, that took part in the invasion together with the American army, along with the liberation of Paris. After the war, a large military parade was held in Paris – a great victory display along the Champs-Élysées. This made a big impression on me. I remember seeing all the war weapons passing by in convoys at the foot of the Arc De Triomphe, they displayed airplanes and tanks, everything we knew from the war. The streets were crowded with people drunk with the joy of victory and from French wine that flowed like water. At the same time, a parade of disgrace was held for the collaborators. I remember that well, mainly due to the cursing and swearing at them from the celebrating crowd. After the defeat of the regime, Petain became a symbol of the disgrace of France and the darkest years of its history. The people of the left wing

never forgot the Vichy regime and Petain's cooperation with Hitler, the antisemitism, the enslavement of French citizens to forced labor in Germany and the Transport of the Jews to extermination camps in the east.

After Germany's defeat in the war Henri Philip Petain was tried as a traitor and was sentenced to death. His sentence was later changed to life imprisonment. The Vichy regime and Petain as its leader are co-responsible for the Holocaust of the French Jews.

We stayed in Paris a few weeks, while they set up a camp in Marseille, for all the Jews who were immigrating to Israel, the Brigade personnel assembled all the Jews. In the camp they taught us Hebrew, and Jewish customs. Up till then, I didn't feel or even know that I was Jewish.



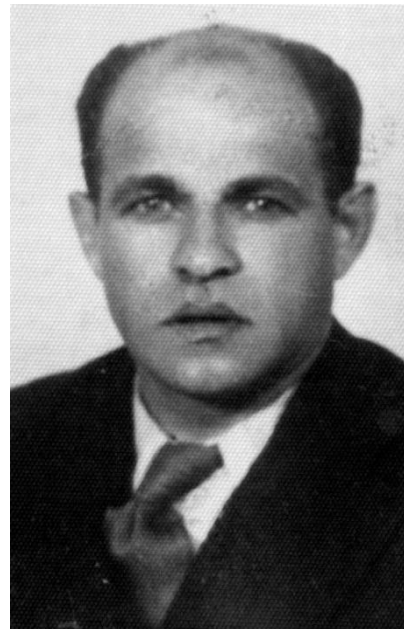
Menachem with his mother in Belgium



Menachem with his father in Belgium



Dvora Frenkel 1928



Alter Chiel Frenkel



Paulette & Raymond Hughes in Rosans



Our house - 38 Pilsudski Street Sosnowiec POLAND



My sister Miriam with my parents



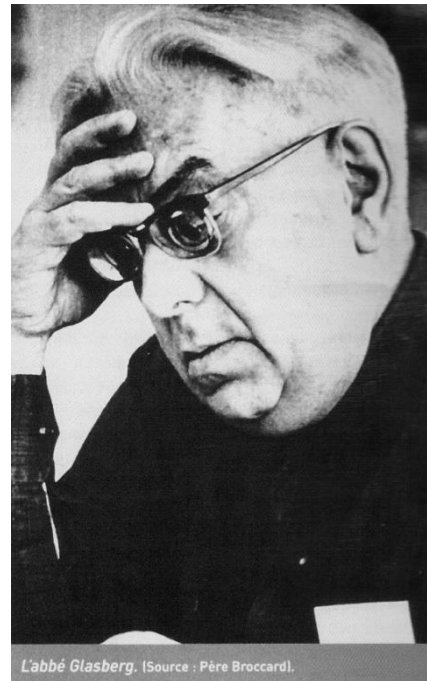
my father in the Polish army
1916 first world war



Saving the children from Venissieux camp



Cardinal Gerlier



Priest Glasberg



Madame Germaine Chesneau receiving the
"Righteous Among the Nations" award

B. In Israel

1. The Ship "Mataroa"

Us and many others waiting to go to Israel, assembled in Marseille in the Autumn of 1945, before the High Holidays, we would be sailing aboard the ship "Mataroa". Mataroa was the first ship to bring "Oliim", new immigrants, to Israel after the Second World War. Most of the passengers aboard the ship were Holocaust survivors, among them were the "Buchenwald Children" (a group of children, survivors of the Buchenwald concentration camp) and a group of children who had been hidden in France and Switzerland during the war.

We boarded the Mataroa on the third of September 1945, it was the ship's second voyage to Israel, bringing about a thousand new immigrants, and British soldiers going on vacation in Egypt. Eight hundred of the immigrants had permits – Certificates, and two hundred snuck on board the ship as "illegal" immigrants with no permits. The ship departed from the Toulon port from the South of France and arrived in the Haifa Port after sailing for seven days.

We were told to carefully guard our immigration permits: blue tickets that my mother kept in her purse. Some attached it to their pocket watches or jewelry that they had. We had to show our permits when we boarded the ship, while onboard the ship it became clear to the British that there were more people than Certificates, they also noticed this by the shortage of food.

Aboard the ship were additional children (at a convention of the "Mataroa" passengers that took place a few years ago, I heard that two babies had been born on the ship).

For fun, we collected bottles to try and catch fish. In my mother's bag I found a spool of thread in an empty coffee jar, which I thought might be helpful, when I opened the thread, suddenly a wad of dollars flew out of my hand. It turned out that my mother had hidden the money in the coffee jar, to my surprise she wasn't angry with me...

From what I can remember as a child, the atmosphere on the ship was good – today I know that each of the passengers carried with them a harsh personal story. The land of Israel was a vague and mysterious concept for me. An American army Rabbi accompanied us on the voyage, he gave us small Mezuzahs and Sidorim in French and Hebrew. There were also workers from the Jewish Agency who taught us Hebrew.

As the ship approached the shore, I remember a confrontation between the British representatives and the "Hagana" representatives who accompanied us, due to the Hagana's attempt to hoist the Israeli flag on one of the masts. On Shabbat the eighth of September 1945, the first day of Rosh Ha'Shanna 5706 – תש"ו we arrived in Israel. Because we arrived on Rosh Ha'Shanna a halachic question arose – were we allowed to go ashore. The Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yitzchak Halevi Herzog ruled that we were allowed to go ashore. The ship then continued to Egypt. Haifa's chief Rabbi was among the people waiting to greet us on the platform.

As soon as we got ashore, the English soldiers started looking for the non-legal immigrants that tried to flee the ship, and then pandemonium started. The British ordered that all the immigrants be transferred to Atlit camp, some managed to escape and some were caught and taken to the camp in Atlit, along with us.

We had to travel from Haifa to Atlit by train. Some of the Olim, concentration camp survivors, were afraid of traveling by train, and at first refused to get on the train. Fortunately, we hadn't been through such a traumatic experience, but the sight was distressing.

Even immigrants with Certificates, like us, were held in the camp in Atlit for an isolation period of two weeks. The political activists welcomed the immigrants and divided us among them – as was customary...

On our arrival at Atlit we were "welcomed" by being disinfected with DDT and other such things.

Since we had permits and relatives in Israel we were released. (a short time after we arrived, on the ninth of October 1945 A break-in operation was carried out by the Palmach who infiltrated the camp while posing as teachers, took over the guard posts of the English soldiers and released the non-legal immigrants and activist that had been caught).

We stayed for a short time with my uncle Alter and his wife in their apartment in Tel-Aviv.

Alter had been in Israel for ten years, but his financial situation was bad. Financially he couldn't help us. They had two grown daughters, one was married, and he worked as a night guard at one of the factories. My aunt Regina lived in a room in a three-room apartment in Tel-Aviv which she shared with two other families.

The situation in the country was hard, and my mother had to find a solution for the three of us. Alter was active in the Mizrachi organization, and through his connections with the "Youth Aliyah" movement he was

able to arrange for my sister to study in the religious Youth village near Kfar Hasidim and I was admitted to the youth village Yakir boarding school in Kfar Haroeh (כפר הרוא"ה). My mother and sister went to live in Kfar Hasidim. My sister studied there, and my mother worked in a clothing warehouse, repairing clothes. I was sent to Kfar Haroeh.

2. Kfar Haroeh

Kfar Haroeh is a religious Moshav in the center of Israel, North of Emek Hefer. Named for the first Ashkenazi chief Rabbi of Israel, Rav Kook (Rav Avraham HaCohen Kook). The moshav was founded in 1933 by immigrants from Europe, associated to HaPoel HaMizrachi, movement.

In 1939 Rabbi Moshe-Zvi Neria founded "yeshivat Bnei Akiva" High school on the moshav, the first yeshiva high school.

A year later Rav Avraham Zukerman joined yeshivat Kfar Haroeh. The youth village Yakir was founded in 1945 in Kfar Haroeh where the students were taught to combine Tora and work.

While we were on the ship I told my mother: "I don't want to be in an institution again". I didn't understand that there wasn't a lot she could do for me, since we came to Israel only with the clothes we were wearing. We had no money, she couldn't afford to rent a flat for us, again I found myself in an institution - boarding school. I felt that once again I was forced to find my way alone in a place I knew nothing about. I was very angry and said to my mother: it's over, I don't want to go to an institution again". She heard but said nothing: it was very hard for me to understand why now, when we can finally be together did she chose to send me to a boarding school. I was very angry.

I was one of the first children to come the school. At first, we were housed in the Yeshiva building. I remember that they laughed at me because my shoes had wooden soles... when we came to Israel after the war, there was a shortage of everything, and they laughed at me. My sister and mother were not with me. I felt alone and didn't want to be there, so I ran away, one of the youth leaders managed to find me and bring me back, but I continued running away as often as I could, with every opportunity I had. Very often they had to search for me and bring me back the school.

In the beginning we were only two or three children, and the first year we learned in the religious school in Kfar Haroeh, over time more children arrived at the school, most from Europe there were a few from Russia. I met a friend my age, Shlomo Pash.

I remember being laughed at; I didn't understand why. I didn't know Hebrew, I didn't understand the teachers, the youth guides, or the children. I only understood math, and this more than the others.

in the school, it was impossible to create classrooms for each age group separately, instead we learned in groups everyone according to their knowledge of Hebrew. By my age I should have been in the fifth grade, but because I hardly knew any Hebrew, they put me in the third grade, without taking into consideration that my knowledge in Math was better than the other students. In the school in Rosans we had already learned elementary math (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division).

This was not easy for me, it reminded me of all I went through in the institution in France, only now I was much older.

I recall that one day one of the boys told me that another boy had cursed me behind my back. Since I was much older and bigger than him, I had no problem and hit him. All the other children came to warn me: "run away before his father comes and beats you up". And again, I ran away from school.

My mother was living with my sister in the religious Youth Village near Kfar Hasidim which was also part of HaPoel HaMizrachi. At some point, the administration of Yakir school, called my mother and asked her to come and live and work in Kfar Haroeh in hope that I would stop running away. A short while later my mother came to live in Kfar Haroeh, the conditions were very hard: eight women, most of them Holocaust survivors, worked in the kitchen, the clothes warehouse and cleaning. All eight women lived together in one room in a shack, the toilets were of course outside. The conditions for me were also bad. The young children were moved to tents, to make room for the older children and workers to live in the rooms. There was no electricity in the tents and at night they were lit with paraffin lamps. I still had a lot of anger in me: "here I am in Israel, I have a mother, and yet my situation is no better than the orphans who have nowhere to go. I have a mother; we came together on the same ship – but we don't have a house and I'm living in an institution..."

In some cases, the parents came to Israel after their children. The active rescue organizations, including the Jewish Agency and Youth Aliyah, brought the children to Israel first.

My sister Miriam who is nine years older than me, stayed a while longer in the Religious Youth Village. when the time came for her to go in the army, she was given an option to apply to nursing school, which she did and started her studies in Hadassa hospital in Mount Scopus, Jerusalem where she lived.

The anger towards my mother, was perhaps justified, but only when I grew up, I understood that there was actually nothing she could have done to take care of me. She was also frustrated. Maybe she thought that the situation in Israel would be better than it was, although the truth is that I don't know what she thought. It could be that she spoke about these issues to my sister who was older, but she never spoke to me about them.

In those days there was a day called "Ribbon Day" a day when all the youth groups would volunteer and go from door to door to raise money for donations for different causes decided by the national institutions. The name of the day referred to the ribbon that was given to those who donated money, it was either attached by a pin to their garment or stuck on the door frame – showing that the family had donated. The purpose of the ribbon or sticker was to encourage people to donate. some of the donations were made by asking passers-by on the street. On all the ribbons was written "Keren Kayemet" the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and underneath was written: "give a onetime donation for your brother, the refugee", I still didn't know Hebrew that well, but I knew I was the refugee.

In Europe I felt independent and mature, and suddenly, I was treated like a little boy, a refugee and they expected me to cope and act accordingly. The loneliness weighed down on me, on top of that that coping with the rules and regulations: I had to start studying, there is a daily strict agenda, and truth be told – my head was not into studies.

By my understanding, most of the teachers and youth guides didn't take into consideration that these were children who had been through the Holocaust, even though they had some idea of what some of the children had gone through, they enforced their rules on us, especially everything concerning religion. Naturally a lot of children, me included, rebelled. And we were punished right and left. For instance, if we didn't come to the synagogue in the morning - we were punished. The principal

of the school was a Rav who taught also in another yeshiva, who didn't consider the fact that all of us had been "off track" all through the war.

There were no psychologists or counselors. We had a teacher called Aviel that came to Israel from Holland before the war, so he personally didn't know what happened during the war, all the youth guides and caretakers were young themselves and none of them understood the state we were in. There were things that some of the children did that looked strange to other people: they stole, especially food, they took bread, or a cucumber or jam. Cooked food they couldn't take.

At first it was hard for me to accept the fact that my mother could not handle home and family life in Israel. With time I saw that it was the situation with a lot of the survivors. Slowly I came to terms with the situation, I understood that there was no choice.

3. From a war to a war

Times were hard. It was not a pleasant period in Israel. Many problems forced the settlers to fight for their existence, and at the same time struggling for the existence of the state of Israel. We came from a war that had just finished straight into another war.

On Shabbat morning the twenty ninth of June, the English soldiers entered Kibbutz Givat Haim, which was near us, to seize weapons the underground members of the Haganah organization had hidden around the Kibbutz – in "Slicks".

Givat Haim was preparing that Shabbat for the "the milk yield" celebration of the Kibbutz, when at five o'clock in the morning the British army surrounded the Kibbutz with armored cars, and tens of soldiers started searching for illegal weapons. The Palmach members quickly tried to disguise the Slicks that were scattered throughout the Kibbutz. A lot of weapons were found and confiscated, the morale in the entire area was low. The underground activists started planning their retaliation action, and us children started with a retaliation of our own.

The English soldiers would drive around the settlements in cars with a trailer attached carrying water or fuel. Our role as children was to run behind their cars, open the taps of the trailer and drain it completely of water or fuel.

After that black Shabbat, a retaliation was conducted against the British,

I remember that in the summer me and my mother went to visit my sister in Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. That night the Etzel placed charges and blew up the south wing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, where the administration employees of the mandatory government stayed.

We were on the bus when a group of British soldiers ordered the driver to stop immediately.

I didn't know Hebrew yet. When the soldiers boarded the bus, everyone raised their hands, my mother immediately said to me: don't raise your hands, we are not afraid" everybody on the bus raised their hands except us. The soldiers told everyone to get off the bus, but me and my mother continued sitting. I don't know how they persuaded my mother, who didn't speak English or Hebrew, to get off the bus, but in the end, we did, we went into town and found a hotel in Zion Square, Jerusalem. At the same opportunity my mother took me to see the Tower of David and the Kotel – the Western Wall. This was before the war of independence. During the British mandate when you wanted to visit the Western Wall, only a certain amount of people were allowed to enter the small plaza, that couldn't hold a lot of people. Those who were allowed through were checked, as a result, a custom developed: to smuggle in a Shofar, and try to blow it at the foot of the Kotel.

One of our friends, Eliahu Slonim, told us that his father Mordechai Slonim had a tiny Shofar and that he was one of the Shofar blowers at the Kotel (Eliahu Slonim was later killed in the battle against the Hussian police on Hoshana Rabba 5717 תשי"ז 1957).

My sister started learning in Jerusalem six months before the war of liberation, that started immediately after the UN partition plan was accepted on the Twenty ninth of November 1947.

I remember going to the beach near Michmoret, with soldiers who fought in the second world war, they taught us how to shoot English rifles and Stens. They taught us face-to-face combat with sticks, and basic first aid.

When the war broke out, we were not allowed to leave the school. All the men were drafted. Some of our Youth guides were army age, and the others falsified their age to advance their draft date and take part in the war.

Only women and children were left in Kfar Haroeh.

From a security point of view, we were connected to the nearby Bnei Akiva Yeshiva. The Yeshiva had a weapons warehouse that the guard oversaw. We joined the older children from the Yeshiva, and guarded in pairs, the Yeshiva boys with rifles and us with a small stick in hand.

Before the war of liberation, right opposite Kfar Haroeh was an Arab Village "kacon", the other Jewish settlements in the area were Ein Hachores, Givat Haim and Moshav Hogla, were founded before the war, but were further away, we were the closest to Kacon, right opposite. I don't remember anyone invading our territory, but some of the children still lived in tents, with no electricity, and were exposed to any unwanted intrusion.

We heard gunfire coming from there at night and could see the fire from their rifles.

When the war of liberation broke out the sheikh of the village, Abu Issa, promised the Arabs, that within a day or two the Arabs would destroy all the Jews and they would return to their homes. The sheikh had friends in Moshav Hibat Zion, and he himself left the village and hid with one of his friends in Hibat Zion. His daughters learned in the religious school in Kfar Haroeh... all the villagers ran away, he was left with all the land from the village. A movie was made about him, I presume he is not alive today, but his sons still own the land. The settlement Geulei Teiman was founded on the land of the village, and later the industrial area of Emek Heffer.

We weren't worried, we already knew what war was, even though it was different to what we had experienced before, but physically we didn't feel threatened and morally we knew how to cope. Over time our teachers were drafted as well as some of the graduates from our school. We personally knew some of the soldiers killed in battle.

They trained us for all kinds of scenarios that might happen, nobody knew what to expect. In the Hagana training we jumped from the top of the water tower into taut tarp held by our friends. The first time was scary. Rav Neria was the first to jump, he was young then of course.

My mother and I were in Kfar Haroeh and my sister was studying at the hospital in Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. From her room on the mountain she witnessed the murderous attack on the convoy, by the Arabs, in which seventy-eight passengers were killed: Doctors, nurses, patients,

scientists, and faculty. On the thirteenth of April 1948. She left Mount Scopus on one of the convoys and continued her studies in "Hadasa" in Nevieim Street in Jerusalem.

During the war we had no contact with her.

My Bar-Mitzva was held in Kfar Haroeh, in 1949 a short while after the end of the war. The event was very small and modest: my sister Miriam couldn't make it. The period of austerity was announced in Israel, food was rationed by food stamps.

After the war of liberation, the workers of both schools, the Youth village and the Yeshiva, bought land from the JNF, on the hill next to the Yeshiva and built their homes in the "Chazon (vision) neighborhood". My mother also bought a lot of land there, but it was many years before she had enough money to build her house on it. During those years she continued living and working on Kfar Haroeh.

4. Kfar Avraham and Mikveh Israel

However much I tried to avoid living in institutions, at that point, my life continued in institutions. Although I consciously and explicitly tried to avoid it, at that point, my life continued in institutions. I had no choice.

I lived four years in Yakir School in Kfar Haroeh. After I graduated Yakir school in 1949, I was sent for eighth grade to Aliyah school in Kfar Avraham, near Petach Tikva.

Compared to Yakir school, Aliyah School was another world. The treatment we received was completely different, no comparison, and the physical conditions also improved: the dorms and the food, girls learned with us – my mood improved a lot.

The institution was funded by the Mizrahi Women from America – today it is called Amit. (a few years ago, my daughter Shlomit and her husband Meir worked there as guide counselors).

A respected man, Mr. Orbach, was the principal, he was later appointed principal to a school in Jerusalem. The administrative director, Yoel Shifton, later became deputy mayor in Jerusalem.

In Kfar Haroeh everyone worked in agriculture because there was nothing else. In Aliyah School even though the agriculture field was very developed, that wasn't the only option: as well as the chicken coop, the

cowshed, the improved mechanization (we had a tractor) there was also a metal workshop. I chose the workshop. So, in addition to the regular studies, I studied framework. I left after eighth grade since there was no high school there.

I wanted to study mechanics in a trade school in Tel-Aviv, Amal school, and even took the entrance exam, but then found out that the school did not include housing. The trade schools at the time didn't have dorms, so instead I went to learn in Mikveh Israel.

In 1951 I started high school in the religious sector of Mikveh Israel. That is where I met my teacher Carmi, who was already married with young children. he still lives there today.

I felt very good in Mikveh Israel, the rules weren't too rigid, even though I seldomly went home.

Agriculture was the only option they had; I began to feel strongly that I had a desire to live in a rural village. I believe it had to do with the time I lived in Rosans in the south of France. The quiet life I remembered from the village was etched in my mind and seemed like another world: the calm atmosphere, everything conducted slowly, and the connection to earth and nature, I was left with longing and a desire for rural life, and Mikveh Israel fit, more or less.

In the first year it was customary to work in all the different agriculture fields they had, and in the second year you picked a field to specialize in. when I was introduced to beekeeping , I became attached to the beekeeper manager, a dear man named Perman, he said to me: "you're staying with me" and for the next three years, until the end of high school, I worked every day in the bee hives, and became professional in "beekeeping" – a beekeeper.

In Kfar Haroeh school and in Aliyah School, the concept of going home for weekends didn't exist, because most of the children had nowhere to go. In Mikveh Israel, our class was made up of children who came from the Aliyah school, from the youth Aliyah, and some were Israelis who occasionally went home for Shabbat. I didn't go home. My mother was still living in Yakir youth village in one room with the other workers. I preferred to stay at school.

on Pesach, most of the children had nowhere to go for the Seder night, so we would have a communal Sedar in Mikveh Israel. I invited my mother to join us. My brother-in-law Enzo and my sister Miriam were in

England for a few years sent by "The Dead Sea Works" where Enzo worked. So, we had nowhere to celebrate Pesach.

My friends and I never complained, we felt good about it. We spent our school vacations doing gardening jobs in the nearby city of Holon, and even managed to make a little money. With the money we made we could go to the swimming pool, or buy stuff, but there was nowhere to buy anything in Mikveh Israel...

After three years of school, at the end of eleventh grade, I received a graduate certificate from Mikveh Israel. I had a document in hand but wasn't sure if this was the profession I wanted. For our last year of school (twelfth grade), we were offered to continue studying in the Faculty of Agriculture that had just opened in Rehovot, this is even though we only had three years of high school instead of four and hadn't taken the matriculation exams. The year after we left the high school was four years and they took the matriculation exams.

Even without a high school diploma, at that point I felt that I had had enough of school, I didn't feel different. Apart from the fact that my life circumstances stole my childhood, I had more life experience than others. To a certain extent, this made it easier for me to adapt to living away from home and dealing with the various institutions. I was a graduate from the "school of life".

5. Army, defense, and settlement

I attended Mikveh Israel until July 1954 – as a new immigrant, my army recruitment was postponed. I lived with my sister and brother-in-law in Be'er Sheva until I was recruited for my army service. Because I was an agriculture school graduate, I got a job as an agriculture teacher in schools in Be'er Sheva, and for a short period I was a קומונר, youth group coordinator for the Bnei Akiva youth movement.

I started my army service in January 1955.

Nachal - נוער חלוצי לוחם – נח"ל – Fighting Pioneer Youth is a program that combined military service and farming. The members were allowed to do their military service as a group rather than being split up into different units. A Ga'rin (a group) is formed before the army service and decide what Kibbutz or Mushav they will go.

Garin Nachal (core group)

We were still learning in Mikveh Israel when we started organizing our Garin Nachal. It was obvious to me and my friends that a Moshav was the way we wanted to go. We turned to the Bnei Akiva institutions and the Moshavim Union for help and guidance, but they refused to help us. We turned to the Youth and Nachal division, a joint institution for the army and the settlement movements and asked to go to Nachal as a Garin to a Moshav. Their answer was that they couldn't help us: "you can only do it through Bnei Akiva and apart from that you also need at least thirty people in the group".

We went to all the schools in Israel looking for anyone who was interested, we asked anyone who was due to start his army service to join the Garin. We managed to get thirty people! Our recruitment date was in January, a month before my nineteenth birthday. The training base was full, so we were sent to, what is known as "Shalat Mukdam (Shalat stands for **שירות ללא תשלום** service without payment) for three months to Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu. And only after that we started basic training.

In basic training we were given a rifle with the letter **ת** (תרגיל) a training rifle that doesn't shoot. When we were given rifles and grenades and started going out on ambushes, I suddenly realized that I could protect myself – a new and exciting insight that I kept to myself and didn't share with anyone.

Being part of the Nachal group eased the loneliness throughout the service, I recall that when we got our first leave from the army on Pesach, I went to my officer and told him that "since I don't have anywhere to go I would like to stay in the base: his answer was very surprising "you're going on leave and we'll arrange a hotel for you in Tel-Aviv where you can have the Seder with all the other guests. Every incident like this bought up anew the hard feelings.

After basic training, we went for Shalat to Kibbutz Ein Ha'Hnaziv, but I was not interested in Kibbutz life. We kept dreaming of life on a Moshav. when we all finished basic training the Moshav union arranged accommodations for us in the empty houses at the edge of Moshav Takuma in the Negev, until we started our advanced training.

At nights we would guard the Moshav together with the Moshav members. This was before the "Sinai operation" and the Fedayeen (Arab terrorists) made our lives very difficult: they would place mines on the tractor route to the fields, charges were placed in the water pumps or in the structures of the main water valves. They would steal from the fields

and houses anything they could get their hands on, aluminum pipes, work animals and so on.

The officer in charge of the area trod on a mine and lost his leg. Once the Fedayeen, armed with grenades, entered Moshav Pathish while a wedding was taking place, a few of the guests were murdered.

Because we regularly went on ambushes, we always kept our rifles with us. I was issued a "Sten" rifle a light and cheap weapon from the second world war.

When I would go to Be'er Sheva by myself or with friends to a movie or show, I always dismantled my rifle and carried it in a special bag, which always stayed with me, so that when we returned home at night, we had a weapon with us.

During my army service, the service was extended from two years to two and a half years, we were still in active duty during the Kadesh War in 1956. I was stationed at the train station in Be'er Sheva, helping load the wounded soldiers coming from the front lines.

Surprisingly and very unexpectedly the Jewish Agency assisted us in founding a new settlement near the settlements: Shuva, Zimrat and Shokeda, near the regional center and Toshia school in the regional council Azata. We were told that when the houses and agricultural structures would be ready, we could move into our own settlement. In the meantime, we lived as a Ga'rin, first in Tekuma and then in Yoshiviya.

Meeting

During the organization of the Ga'rin Nachal I met Esther Refaeli, my future wife. Esther was a garin member from the start.

Esther was born in 1936 in her parent's house, Ruth, and Refael Hirsh in Sde Yakov. Her father was a Zionist and came to Israel from Germany via Syria and Lebanon without a Certificate. in Germany he studied education, archaeology, and ancient languages. He was a teacher and a youth counselor in the youth movements "Ezra" and "Bachad" בח"ד ברית חלוצים דתיים the Association of Religious Zionist movement. He joined "Rodges" an agricultural farm in Germany founded in 1929 that helped prepare the pioneers for farm work before they came to Israel to work on a Kibbutz.

Esther's surname was Hirsch, but was later changed to Refaeli, after her father, Refael, died at a very young age.

Esther's mother's maiden name was Halbershtat. She came to Israel with the "Rodges group" – young religious Zionist's who came to Israel from the Rodges farm in Germany, and settled north of Petach Tikva on land that was bought by a Jewish owned German company and donated to the pioneers. This group was called "Rodges Kibbutz" since a lot of "Halutzim" (pioneers) came from the farm in Germany and founded a few Kibbutzim in Israel along with other religious Olim from other countries in the decade preceding the establishment of the state of Israel. They served as an example to other religious kibbutzim in solving many Halacha problems, like milking cows on Shabbat, feeding livestock on Shabbat, planting hybrids (legumes and grains) and observing Shmita Laws, and problems that arose before the establishment of the state such as: Carrying weapons and operating spotlights and signaling devices on Shabbat. The members of "Kibbutz Rodges" were the founders of "Kibbutz Yavneh" in 1941. They also initiated the establishment of the religious youth village in the Zebulun Valley in 1936 and the religious sector of Mikveh Israel school, where I learned. Esther's parents insisted that they speak only Hebrew at home. They spoke German to the grandfather and the two grandmothers who came from Germany before the Second World War.

The Rodges Kibbutz refused to take in their elderly parents, so they left the Kibbutz and settled in the religious Moshav Ovdim (a cooperative settlement of individual farmers) "Sde Ya'akov", west of the Izrael Valley. The whole family lived together in one courtyard.

In 1937, the first group of young boys and girls from Germany came to Sde Ya'akov as part of the youth Aliyah movement (who later formed the Ga'rin of Kibbutz Shluhot). Esther's father Refael was the group manager and counselor, in addition to working on his farm. Esther's parents belonged to the "hapoel HaMizrachi" organization and ran a religious home. My wife has three brothers, the eldest, Yosef, the second son Hanania (who sadly passed away recently) and the youngest Yitzchak.

Marriage and fulfillment

While I was in the army, Esther finished college, where she studied education. She requested to move to the Negev in the South to work.

She worked as a teacher in Be'er Sheva and Ma'agalim and lived with the girls from the Ga'rin in Tekoma.

once I finished my army service, we decided to get married. We got married in Sde Ya'akov on the fifth of Tammuz 5717 – the fourth of July 1957. We were both twenty-one years old. It could very well be that my prolonged lack of a home and family life created the desire and the need to quickly establish a home and family of my own.

Our Ga'rin was about to establish a new Moshav – Kfar Maimon - around the Azata Regional Council which included the Immigrant town of Azata – today the large city of Netivot. In its Jubilee year, the Azata council renamed itself "Sdot Negev". Today the whole area is called "Otef Gaza (Azza)" - "surrounding the Gaza strip" for security reasons.

Most of the Ga'rin members were not married and they went to live in Moshav Yoshiviya", while waiting for the permanent homes to be built, and working in the fields of the Moshav.

Esther and I lived in the regional center "Ma'agalim" because there was no suitable accommodation for married couples in Yoshiviya. Esther continued working as a teacher, and I was an agriculture instructor in Beit Ha Gedi. We waited for the permanent housing in Kfar Miamon to be ready. On the thirtieth of Shvat 5719, the eighth of February 1959 our son Yechiel was born. He is named after my father Alter Chiel, and was lucky to have two grandmothers, my mother, Dvora and Esther's mother, Ruth.

Kfar Miamon is the first Moshav founded by a Ga'rin from Bnei Akiva. The establishment ceremony was held on the sixteenth of Av 5719 the twentieth of August 1959.

We were among the "Shuva block". The first Moshav founded was named Shuva the second was called Shuva 2, the third Shuva 3 and so on we were named Shuva 5, but the name was later changed to Kfar Maimon to commemorate the name of the Rav Yehuda Leib Maimon (Fhishman) who was the first minister of religion in Israel, he was one of the leaders of the Mizrachi Movement, and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Rav Maimon participated in the ceremony and was honored with setting the Mezuzah on the Synagogue.

A few days before the ceremony we entered our new homes in Kfar Maimon: "on paper" it was a Moshav Ovdim, but in reality, there was nothing there except for the new houses the Synagogue a Mikveh the

office a kindergarten and fifty farm structures that the Jewish Agency had just finished building.

A macadam (soiling) road led to the entrance of Kfar Maimon, where there were only dirt roads crossing loess soil which raised perpetual dust, and that is without mentioning the sandstorms that hit us frequently. Each member was given thirty Donam (30,000 square meters) of land, water quota, a chicken and egg quota and this how we started working. There was a water infrastructure in place and before Rosh Hashanah we were connected to electricity. Because we had been married for two years, we had more equipment than the others, we had a stove top, a fridge, a washing machine, and a little baby, Yechiel who was six months old...

Initially, field work was based on horses and carts, eventually we gave back the horses and with the help of the Jewish agency, every two families bought a tractor together, and started working.

We raised chickens and grew vegetables, and over time, when the flower industry started to develop in Israel, we entered the flower business. At first it was a job without income, I continued working as an agriculture instructor through the Jewish agency outside the Moshav. Not only did we face the problem of livelihood, but also with the necessary financing for investment and development of the farm.

We managed, we all worked together, and hired workers.

All the settlements in the country were within the political parties, we were affiliated to the Moshav Association from Hapoel HaMizrachi. At that time, they generally didn't establish individual settlements, a group of several settlements were established around a regional center which had a joint school for all the settlements: Kfar Miamon, Shuva, Zimrat and Shokeda, which belonged to the Azata Regional Council. Our regional school was "Toshia".

The policy of the state, the Jewish Agency and the Settlement institutions was to defend our borders. Our Moshav was established on the Gaza border, three years after the Sinai Operation in 1956, shortly after the Sinai Operation the fedayeen terrorist from Egypt and Gaza strip started harassing us again.

From the day we founded the Moshav until the six-day war, we were on guard duty at night, mostly against theft, although there were also more serious occurrences. The Fedayeen terrorists roamed around the area stealing whatever they could from the fields: horses, aluminum pipes,

taps and more. Apart from stealing they would also blow-up wells and our water systems. Sometimes after blowing up the water system, they would shoot or throw hand grenades at the repairmen. They didn't enter the houses, but it was a very difficult time...

It was also problematic getting to the Moshav at night. The night guards would wait by the bus stop with a horse and carriage for the last bus coming from Be'er Sheva or Tel-Aviv and escort the residents to their homes. The bus stop was more than two and a half Kilometers away from the Moshav.

When the first tractors came to Kfar Maimon, we used them to visit friends from neighboring settlements via dirt roads.

Three Kilometers of road was paved from the main road into Kfar Maimon, however, the paths and roads inside the Moshav were dirt roads for many years.

Our daughter Tamar was born on the twenty first of Tamuz 5721 the fourth of July 1961, Michal was born on the sixteenth of Av 5722 the fifteenth of August 1962 and Shlomit our youngest daughter was born on the fourteenth of Elul 5729 the twenty eighth of August 1969.

After the children grew up Esther returned to work as a teacher. We were busy from morning till night: during the day I worked as an agriculture instructor for the Jewish Agency, I would come home from a day's work, take the tractor and start working in the fields and farm. The eggs were sent every evening to the egg warehouse. During the day my wife looked after the chicken coops. We raised our children from a young age to help around the farm as much as they could.

Our means of production were insufficient, the chicken coops were too small, the output from the field was not a sufficient livelihood. I decided to make a change and not rely on agriculture: in 1965 I went to work for the "Plastro" factory in Ashkelon that manufactured plastic pipes. Because I was the sales representative in the South, they helped me buy a car – a considerable incentive in those days... the salary was more than I was making as an agriculture instructor, so we were able to afford the expenses of owning a car.

After a year the factory in Ashkelon closed, and I went to work as a sales representative for "Motzari Tehen" in the Plasim factory in Kibbutz Merchavia.

After ten years I stopped working outside and returned working full time on the farm, we had a coop with five thousand chickens for fattening.

In 1998 after the state reduced the production quotas and removed the subsidies and the industry expanded to the free market, we stopped raising chickens. the slaughterhouses demanded that we raise four thousand chickens each cycle, and for that I would have to invest a good few million to build a bigger and modern coop, my conclusion was that at my age it wasn't worth it, and we shut down the chicken coops.

I still had an orchard of oranges, grapefruits, and lemons. And privately as a supplement to my livelihood, I sometimes worked as an earthwork's supervisor.

The children grew and left Kfar Miamon. All four are married with children: Yechiel studied computer science after his army service, he works and lives in Be'er Sheva. He married Sharon Atkins. She did her army service in a garin Nachal in Moshav Shadmot Mehola in the Jordan Valley, then worked as a kindergarten teacher until her first son was born then became a stay-at-home mom. They have four sons.

Tamar did her national service in Magen David Adom ambulance service, she studied in "Hadasah" college" and works as a Laboratorian in a clinic. She married Avraham Aserin, a Doctor of Chemistry, they have seven children and grandchildren. They live in Jerusalem.

Michal did her national service in Shaare Zedek hospital, she studied bookkeeping, and works in the Jerusalem Theater. She married Tzvi Koren, the owner of "Tfutza" a newspaper distribution company. They have five children. They live in Jerusalem.

Shlomit did her national service as a youth counselor in the high school in Arad where she graduated. And her second year was in a Field school in Eilat. She married Meir Lev-Ari while she was learning at the Bar Ilan University. they are both teachers and educators. They have seven children. They live in Ramat Magshimim in the Golan Heights.

None of our children stayed in Kfar Maimon. It is a shame that none of them live with us on the Moshav, all our lives we take care of our children, and living near us when there are no sources of income here is not realistic.

In my army reserve duty, I spent thirty years in the Vehicle Department. In the Yom Kippur War I was a Sergeant in the "Reserve Vehicle Unit". My Job entailed recruiting vehicles for service during the war. I checked all the cars to make sure they were in good working condition, and again after the emergency period for damage assessment. I took part in all the wars in Israel, for me, the Yom Kippur War was the most difficult war

both mentally and emotionally, because our unit took care of the logistical side of the temporary cemeteries in the south.

In 1977 when Egyptian President Sadat came to Israel, I was in Reserve Duty. He landed by helicopter at the Hospital in Be'er Sheva, And I was present at the ceremony held in the city. At the end of 1981, three years after the peace agreement signing I was part of a delegation organized by the Ministry of Agriculture for a project in Egypt as a gesture of peace. My friend and co-worker Ori Doron, who organized the delegation to Egypt, conducted an early visit to the sight to prepare the plan.

He called me and announced: "we have to meet for an urgent matter, but I can't tell you over the phone". When we met, he told me excitedly: "listen, we are going to Egypt to install a drip system in the Sadat family's plot in his home village".

That was on Friday, and the departure date was set for the coming Wednesday. "I don't even have a passport" I told him anxiously.

"Don't worry" he said and started "pulling strings". He called someone from the ministry of Agriculture and after their conversation told me to go on Sunday morning to the home office, and a passport would be waiting for me. We were told not to tell anyone anything regarding the trip, because President Sadat feared that this would become known among his many enemies inside Egypt.

On Sunday morning my passport was waiting for me in the home office in Be'er Sheva, and on Wednesday we flew to Egypt. We did the work in Sadat's village called "Yamit Abu El Com"

When we finished, the embassy secretary took us to a meeting with the Egyptian Minister of Agriculture who asked us again not to tell anyone where we had been. Suddenly the minister addressed the embassy representative with concern: "what will they tell their families? The representative answered him: "it's not a problem for us, they will just say that they were called up for reserve duty". The Minister laughed and calmed down.

Between December and May nobody knew about the project. In May, a journalist, Ori Dan, published a book titled "Cyperus papyrus operation" which was the name of our secret project.

In 2001 I became a volunteer policeman; I saw an advertisement that the police were looking for volunteers in our area. I got in touch with

them to find out what the requirements were and what my commitment would be, I was told that I would volunteer in police uniform, twelve hours a month. There are two types of volunteers, one is called "classic" and the other is called "in uniform". The classic volunteers stand at the road blocks without uniform and help the police. When I started volunteering, I gave a lot more hours than required, most of the time I was standing at roadblocks, I didn't see much sense in that. I choose to be a volunteer in uniform, I passed the three required courses.

I was enrolled in the police station in Netivot and quickly forgot the time I worked only twelve hours a month. I worked a lot more than that. Routinely I would work once a week for a six-hour shift from eight in the morning until two in the afternoon, we handled traffic and security issues.

On top of that there were special assignments depending on security events: they were mainly the transition of Arab workers with no permits, and suspicious objects. After that there was of course the rockets fired at Netivot from Gaza. Every time a rocket fell, we had to close off the area, and not let anyone near the fall site until the bomb squad arrived. If it was in a residential area, we would tell the residents to close their windows and shutters. I dealt with hundreds of suspicious objects. I dealt less with fallen rockets, mostly because they fell in open areas and are not discovered immediately, only later when the farmers would go out to their fields, they would find shards from the rockets.



Miram and Menachem in France



Police delegation 2012 with
the chief of police in Birkenau



In Jerusalem with my mother and my sister Miram

C. Looking for answers

1. The beginning of the search

The need to know and the search for answers started unconsciously and the age of nine, a short time after I went to Kfar Haroeh.

At the end of 1945, French was still my spoken language, I wrote a letter to Raymond Hughes from Rozan – I probably missed them, and I remembered the name and address by heart.

For a while I sent them letters, but after never receiving a response, I stopped, thinking that maybe I didn't remember the exact address...

The only real friendship I had was with my new friend from school, Shlomo Pash, apart from him, I had no close connection with anyone, including my mother and my sister – they refused to talk about the Holocaust with me – both of them never spoke about it.

They didn't tell me anything, and as time went by more and more questions arose: how did they find me at the end of the war? What happened to them during the time we were apart, where had my mother been? How did we get along during the war? How did we have money to survive, and lots more.

They never told me what they went through during the war, and I never told them what I went through, nothing.

I got used to being silent.

Every time I tried to ask my mother something about the war, her answer was short and decisive "it's none of your business".

My sister Miriam is nine years older than me, and I assumed that she knew and remembered a lot more than me. But she didn't want to talk about it. She married Enzo Nitzani on the eighth of September 1949.

Every so often Miriam would say something by accident. She did not want to talk. Most of the time during the war we were together, we were only separated for the last year and a half. I moved to Rosans village, and she stayed in Roman City. I know that she was in a monastery until the end of the war, more than that she wouldn't say. She doesn't want to remember or talk about that period.

I remember the few details I was able to get out of her: when I reminded her of moments of fear we felt when the train pulled out of the station

without our father, until we saw him making his way to us through the crowded coach, I knew that none of us had forgotten, but because I was so young, I couldn't remember where we were going. My sister remembered that we were traveling to the South of France. Miriam also remembered the names of all the concentration camps we passed through in France, and what happened to us in Lyon, after we were smuggled out of Venissieux Camp until we arrived in Peyrins. When I asked her about our time on the laundry ship, she confirmed my memory. I wanted to ask her how long we were on the ship, how did we get from place to place, who took us, and how did they get us out, but she said: leave it, I don't want to hear it, I erased it from my memory". I presume that she didn't tell her husband either.

My mother never "showered" us with hugs. I have no memory up to the age of four, from the outbreak of the war, and with our wandering and survival, we became refugees, from then on, I remember the relationship being very methodical. My mother didn't talk about my father either. Even though we kept expecting him to come home.

Our first few years in Israel we hoped that he would return. We thought that then, everything would be alright.

The radio broadcasted a daily show called "searching for lost relatives" we were regular listeners, like many others in Israel. Uncle Avraham in England tried any way he could, to help us search for him. After three years of waiting and searching, we began to come to terms with the fact that my father was not coming back. We understood that the chance of him returning was slim, even though it had happened that relatives were found after years of searching.

After we got married, we were busy from morning to night with our own issues, the farm and raising our children, and had less time to read the newspaper or listen to the radio. We lived in the South, in Kfar Maimon and contact with my mother was not frequent due to the distance. We didn't have a car, and taking the children by bus was very difficult. We didn't even have a telephone. My mother came to visit us mostly on Shabbat and Chagim. She was still working and living in Yakir School at Kfar Haroeh.

We lived in a small house, and when my mother came to visit us, she would sleep in one room with the children. We had two bedrooms, a hall, a bathroom, and a kitchen. I remember my mother would cry out in the night calling my father's name: "Alter". She would shout so loud that we could hear her in our room. My wife was startled by this, and couldn't

understand how after all these years, with no expectations of my father ever returning, my mother still called out his name. as if she still had hope of seeing him again.

I understood the tormented hope of my mother, it didn't surprise me, but it was very hard for me to hear, I never went to her, to wake her up or comfort her. Because of our complicated relationship, I was simply not capable of such exposure. On those nights all the broken memories came back and with them all the unanswered questions I had.

Despite the acceptance of fate that came with the passing years, I kept searching. I don't think that any of the survivors ever really came to terms with the loss.

In 1961, the year our daughter Tamar was born, the Eichmann trial started in Israel. Eichmann was responsible, on behalf of the Wehrmacht, for transporting the Jews of Europe to death camps.

The trial, which received extraordinary media coverage in those days, was broadcast to every house in Israel, everyone stayed close to the radio to listen to the trial.

The memories arose anew, and with them the need to know, a desire that never really stopped.

The question of what happened to my father remained an open issue shrouded in mystery. Added to that was the fact that I wasn't really sure if my father was an only child or had brothers.

While we were still in France my sister went in search of my father, on her return, she said that from what she discovered, our father had been in Dachau camp. From the information we had we weren't sure if he was sent to Dachau or Auschwitz. It was very important for us to find out.

During the Seventies I decided to look for information on my father through the German Embassy.

I went to the German Embassy to inquire after my father. They sent me to the Red Cross; through them it was possible to get information on relatives who had disappeared during the war. I sent a letter to the address they gave me with all the facts that I had about my father. Six months later I received a letter from the "Missing Persons Department" of the Red Cross with documentation of dates and places that my father had been sent to. In August 1942 my father was arrested and sent to Drancy Concentration camp and in September was sent on Transport 27 to Auschwitz. Blessed be his memory.

2. Compensations

My mother stayed in Kfar Haroeh.

When she wanted to build her house on the plot she had purchased, we needed to obtain funds.

At her workplace in Yakir institute, she wasn't yet eligible for pension. Even though they set aside the required amount from her salary they did not complete their part.

I was still learning in Mikveh Israel when I started my battle to prove her right to receive a pension, and at the same time look for sources of financing for the construction of her house. Finally, we managed to reach an agreement, and my mother got her pension fees.

With the end of the World War, the issue of compensation was on the agenda. At the end of the Fifties, before the ministry of finance reached an international settlement, no one received compensation through the Finance Ministry. Each Holocaust survivor, with the help of lawyers, sued the German government directly. The law firm "Amiti" situated in Pincas St. Tel-Aviv specialized in this and charged high service fees from its clients, which were of course paid out of the compensation funds when they were received.

My sister didn't want to sue, but I went with my mother to the law firm. Because I was a minor, I wasn't eighteen yet, my mother claimed compensation for herself and for me.

We went a few times to the law firm: there were so many people suing the German Government, that the lawyers couldn't handle the load. It was an unforgettable sight. Most of the Holocaust survivors were young, but there were also adults among them who needed money to survive. Everything was conducted in German and interpreters were needed. The office clerks were unable to overcome the amount of people coming to their office.

One man from the office who stands out in my memory is Kliger. Noah Kliger, his former name was Norbert, he was born in 1926, in Strasbourg the capital of Alsace region in France on the border between France and Germany.

He was raised and educated in France, Luxembourg and Belgium. He arrived in Israel as a survivor of the Auschwitz extermination camp, he spoke German and was considered an expert on the Holocaust. He later became known as a journalist for "Ydiot Achronot" newspaper, a

sportsman and an Israeli author. At that time, he worked for the Amiti law firm. Once during a meeting in his office. I got very angry and "turned the table over". A little while ago I met him at a memorial ceremony in Poland and reminded him of this incident.

In March 1952 A payment agreement was signed between Germany and Israel. The agreement stated that Germany would pay compensation to the state of Israel in recognition of its responsibility for genocide and damage to property and lives. Following the agreement harsh arguments broke out in Israel between those who were against the payments and those in favor of the payments. There were protests and demonstrations against the payments outside the Knesset and confrontations in the streets.

As part of the settlement my mother attained for me five thousand Mark, and she received a monthly payment of a few hundred Marks. Together with her monthly salary she managed to make a living and build a modest house in Kfar Haroeh.

Following the lawsuit filed in Germany, the documents concerning my father were sent to my mother, including a message from the Red Cross of the place that he perished. Now that she definitely knew that my father was killed in Auschwitz, she knew that there was no hope of him returning, however, she continued to protect me: she never showed me the documents she received and never told me about them.

My mother's refusal to share information with me was deep and persistent. It was not only that she didn't want to talk or tell me anything, when I said to her: "you must have some documents, let me see them". Her answer was always the same: "it's none of your business, don't get involved, just leave it alone."

I found these documents thirty years later.

In 1981 when my mother moved into a retirement home, we rented her house.

While clearing out the house I went through her stuff and found a box with documents: Polish passports belonging to my mother my father and my grandmother. There was the work permit my father was required to issue every six months in Belgium. Documents from the Polish embassy in France confirming that my father had fulfilled his military commitment (he served in the French army with the Polish unit), receipts of "renta" – an allowance my mother received from the French

government –because my father was deported (Transferred to a concentration camp) by the French police and much more.

It was a significant discovery that sparked my interest in the details of my childhood – suddenly I had formal documents to rely on and not just parts of stories and fragments of memories...

Most of this I didn't know before I saw the documents. I felt like I was rediscovering everything, as if for the first time, and trying to make sense of it in my head. There was a document from Belgium written in French that I didn't understand its meaning. I asked my sister and brother-in-law for help: "do you know what this document is?" I asked, my brother-in-law said stubbornly: leave it alone, don't get into it".

I took the papers and went to the Belgium Embassy in Tel-Aviv, after going over the papers they said simply: This is confirmation of pension payments that your father paid while working as a diamond polisher" "what can I do with this" I asked, they explained kindly: send a letter to the address at the head of the document and they will advise you." I was very surprised: "that's very nice what you're saying, but there was a war, it's been over fifty or sixty years, do you think that the account is still there?" the polite clerk replied: "yes, it's there, write a letter, don't worry".

I wrote them a letter, the reply I received stated that there is an arraignment between Belgium and Israel through the National Insurance, and I should ask them.

I went to Jerusalem to the international department of the National Insurance, and met a nice man, I explained the issue to him and he answered me patiently: "listen, from what I know, nobody has ever managed to get money from them" I asked him to give me the forms to fill out anyway and added: maybe this I a little rude, but it is hard for me to write in French, could you fill out the form for me? He spoke French and happily helped me fill out the form then said: "I have a request of you – if you succeed to get money from them, please let me know".

After a few letters to and from them, I received a package with a detailed report, from the day my father started working in the diamond factory up to the date I sent my request – they calculated and sent to my bank account fourteen thousand Shekel. In the nineties it was much more than it sounds today... afterwards the Belgium Government decided they would also compensate for lost property. I wrote a letter again and received a few more Shekels to my bank account.

Now I wanted to pay of my small debt to the National Insurance: I called the helpful clerk in Jerusalem, and told him all that had happened and said: "I'll send you the letter", he said: "there is no need I trust you, good for you – you are the only one I have heard of that received money from them!".

My mother didn't get to enjoy it, she died at the age of eighty-four. It turned out that she was eligible for getting a pension from Belgium for twenty-four years, from the age of sixty. I still don't understand her stubborn refusal to share information with me. I don't know if she was trying to protect me or herself...

My sister didn't want to sue, but in 1995, following a change in the law, I managed to persuade her to sue. We took all copies of the claim forms that my mother had filed in the 1950s. I saw them for the first time, and they are in my possession.

Evan after the war ended my mother still had a hard life.

She never quite got used to life in Israel. She couldn't speak Hebrew properly and forgot her French, the only language she spoke was Polish and a little Yiddish.

When my sister and brother-in-law lived in London for a few years, my mother decided to go and visit them. In those days you traveled by boat, not by plane. She went from Haifa port to Merci, France and from Marseille by train to England. My sister wrote to her: "when you arrive in London, call me and we will come and pick you up", but she didn't call and arrived suddenly at their house. My sister was very surprised and asked her: "how did you get here?" to which my mother answered: "with no problem, the taxi driver spoke Yiddish".

In Antwerpen a lot of Jews spoke Yiddish, so surprisingly my mother felt at home in London. She was a survivor and knew how to get by.

My mother died in 1987. We sold her house a few years ago.

Despite her difficult life, she lived a long life and died at the age of eighty-four. In her lifetime she had seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

May her memory be blessed.

3. The eighty first blow

We arrived in Israel a few months after the war finished in May 1945, on Rosh Hashanah. The people in Israel didn't believe what the adults told them about what we had been through during the Holocaust. As a young boy I didn't dare tell anyone what I went through. Even in the sixties, Holocaust survivors still didn't speak about it. I heard people say, "why didn't you resist?" they made us feel guilty about what we went through ", that we went like "sheep to the slaughter". I remember being called "soap" in school, but I didn't know what it meant.

(Wildly circulated rumors claimed that soap was being made from the bodies of the victims in the concentration camps. Yad Vashem has stated the Nazis did not produce soap from Jewish corpses. But when the survivors came to Israel, they insulted them by calling them soap).

Later on, the stories from the concentration camps and extermination camp started coming out.

Those in the camps know the danger they were in, but even they didn't know exactly how the horrors were conducted. Slowly I started to understand what they were talking about. In the mid-seventies there was more awareness about the Holocaust thanks to the documentary film "The Eighty-First Blow" that was released in Israel in 1974, this was the first part of the trilogy written by Chaim Goury, who produced and directed the film with Jacquo Erlich, and David Bergman. The film covers the Holocaust and the survivors who came to Israel. The trilogy includes "The Last Sea" (1979) and "Flames in the Ashes". (1985).

One of the films describes the incident of Jacquo Erlich a television cameraman who shot the films. Erlich was one of the children that were with us in Peyrins – in Madame Chesneau's children home. He is the same age as my sister. When we were evacuated from the children's home, he was smuggled into Switzerland. (we found out later that they planned to smuggle us also to Switzerland but didn't succeed).

Erlich invited me to the premier in Tel-Aviv.

The movie "The Eighty-First Blow" is about the Holocaust from the rise of the Nazis to power to the destruction of the Jews. The name of the film is taken from the testimony of Michel Goldman Gilad, one of the Ghetto survivors, who was whipped by the Nazis 80 times, he managed to survive and made Aliyah to Israel. He was a police officer and one of Eichman's investigators. The film deals with the indifference with which the stories of the survivors were received in Israel.

According to Goldman, the eighty first blow was when he came to Israel, and nobody believed his story.

Michael Goldman Gilad was chosen to light a torch in the "Torch-lighting ceremony on Independence Day 2011 (5771).

4. Turning point

I married at a young age.

My wife Esther and I had four children. we had to provide for this big family – I continued with my life but every opportunity I had I continued searching for answers. I still felt that I knew nothing about my early childhood in Europe I had only partial details which left me with an experience in which the hidden prevailed over the revealed.

My transformation happened in the eighties when I met myself and my story.

I have talked about the box of documents I found in my mother's house in 1980 – this awakened in me a great curiosity about the details of my childhood – in the box there was only one document with my name, my childhood name: Marcel Frenkel, that appeared in a food stamp book from Belgium.

On a tour we did in the Beate Klarsfeld museum, many details were added to the missing picture in my mind. Serge and Biata Klarsfeld, a French couple, who dedicated their lives investigating the stories of the victims of the Nazis in the Second World War, they were Nazi hunters. One of the Nazis they caught was the gestapo Commander in the city Lyon, France, Klouse Barbi, known for his cruelty towards the Jews and the underground fighters and was called "the butcher from Lyon". Biata and Serge Klarsfeld published a book that had the names of eighty-thousand French Jewish victims of the Nazis. They managed to obtain eleven thousand and four hundred pictures of Jewish children, with the aim of giving every victim a name and a face. The French railway company – SNCF – had a traveling exhibition called "Jewish children deported from France".

The monument in memory of French Jews killed in the Holocaust in "Roglit Forest" in Emek Helah was founded by Serge Klarsfeld, who was the president of the organization "the boys and girls of the victims of the Holocaust of French Jews". Eighty-thousand trees were planted in Roglit

Forest, the number of Jewish deportees from France during the Holocaust, most didn't return.

I found paperwork documenting my father's Transfer, there were one thousand and ten people. all of them, except ten, were sent straight to the gas chambers as soon as they arrived in Auschwitz, meaning that only ten survived.

Only then did I start understanding what happened to us. The Germans, instead of infiltrating into France via the Maginot Line they went up to Belgium, and that is how they came to us, and we fled. I understood what Free France was, I started to complete the picture and understand how we were caught. Among the documents, I found my father's summons to the police station where he had to report once a week, and the food stamps we received until my father was arrested. I started understanding what happened to us.

As a child I didn't really feel the war. I knew they were looking for us, I didn't know they were looking for Jews. I knew that I had to be careful. No more than that.

I don't recall why I went to Be'er Sheva that day, on Christmas, I think it was 1979 or 1980. In one of the shops, I saw Christmas and New year cards. Without thinking too much I bought a card, and without telling anyone I sent a greeting card to Raymond Hughes and his family, whose address was etched in my memory. After a lengthy period with no contact with any one in France, and more than thirty years after we parted – he suddenly answered me. I immediately replied to his letter, wrote our phone number, and told him that I would like to come and visit them in France.

Not long after, I received another letter from Raymond saying that if I didn't remember how to speak French, he would bring an interpreter to our visit. (my French was not bad, in the seventies five families of new immigrants from France arrived in our Moshav, and I was asked to help them settle in – and slowly my French came back to me).

Raymond and I started writing to each other, I asked for his phone number, and we spoke a few times. I really wanted to visit him in the village, but my wife didn't want to go, she was afraid of the mental upheaval a visit like this could cause.

In 1982 I finally managed to convince her, the children were grown up, and we had money for the trip.

Excitedly I phoned Raymond and told him we were coming to visit and gave him the date of our arrival.

He was excited for us to come, and we started preparing for our trip. Our son Yechiel was out of the army already, and our daughters Tamar and Michal were both working in Jerusalem. Our youngest daughter Shlomit stayed with friends. We flew to Italy, from there we went to France – I, with great excitement and my Israeli born wife who knew my life story, with curiosity mixed with hesitation.

We landed in Rome, we spent Shabbat in Florence, after Shabbat I called Raymond telling him we would visit them the next afternoon. In my excitement I got confused and told them the wrong day in French, as soon as I realized what I had done I called again and apologized. Raymond's wife Paulette asked us what to make us for lunch, knowing that we are religious. I told her everything except meat and wine: "don't bother yourselves, we bought food with us, so you don't have to worry". They were very understanding.

The next afternoon we arrived. The family were surprised that I remembered all the details of the house: I commentated that the pendulum clock hadn't been moved and was in the same place as it was. I remembered the families seating arrangements for meals around the table. The grandfather sat at the head of the table, and I by his side, it was my job to bring a pitcher of wine from the cellar for every meal. In the morning before school, I would bring logs for the fireplace. When I returned home from school, I joined Raymond as he distributed bread to all the locale villages. After years of hunger, I got from the family, good food, new clothes, and above all loving care. I have incredibly good memories from the year and a half I was with them in Rosans.

5. A search for traces of the past

Our meeting with the Hughes family.

When we crossed the border from Italy to France my wife expressed concern: "don't get your hopes up, you don't know how they will receive you" I said "Esther, don't worry I don't have big expectations". In my heart I felt that the people who had endangered their lives to save me, would welcome us with open arms, and if not – we will say hello, have a cup of coffee, and be on our way.

We reached Rosans, a village in the high Alps of France. I, of course, was very excited – I was about to revisit my childhood, a place I hadn't visited since the war, to meet the people I lived with for a year and a half, over forty years ago, and have great memories from there.

We met at the entrance of Raymond and Paulette's new house: We shook hands, we all had tears in our eyes. There was no hugging (I'm not even used to hugging my family). They greeted us warmly. Raymond Hughes was the head of the village and lived in a new house, not the old house I lived in with them. They invited us in for coffee, and then we walked around the village. They invited us to sleep there that night and we happily accepted their invitation.

Raymond told me what he remembered. finally I got explanations of things I didn't know. He told me how I came to the village, he talked about the children who came to the "La Stick" institution which was a little far from the village, and was empty from its disabled occupants because of the war. He explained to me that when the group of children arrived, there was not enough room for everyone, and as I was the youngest, they thought it was less suitable for me, so they took me to their house. (the disabled residents lived there from eighteen years old to the end of their days). I accepted it, without knowing if there was an ulterior motive. But it was clear to me that he endangered his life.

I found out that there were other Jews hiding in the village – nobody betrayed us. Negotiations were conducted with the institutions in order to save them, but twenty-five Jews were arrested and sent to Auschwitz.

He told me that he was also wanted by the Germans. He reminded me that on the days the Gestapo searched the village, we would hide in the sawmill, sometime for a few days until we could return home. I didn't remember any of this. Only when we visited them did I understand the danger he put himself and his family in, just to save me.

Raimonds sister-in-law, his wife's sister, told me that she was my school teacher – I didn't remember that either.

Their only son, Pier, was born two years after I left in 1947. He lives in Mersey. He knew the whole story of my being in the village during the war, and his children, Raymond's grandchildren, have even sent me a few letters.

The next day they took us around the village, we visited the bakery next to the old house, and to visit one of the workers I remembered.

I asked to visit the church. By chance we met the priest, Raymond said that they weren't religious. In this respect I had no problem because I was not required to follow the Catholic religion as a child. Rosans is a quiet village in Provence, very unique. Everything is conducted calmly. The residents walk every day to the village bakery to buy their baguettes, the village policeman rides a bike, like you see in the movies, and everyone knows everyone. It's like a different world.

Everybody greeted us warmly, the two aunts, who still live in the old house invited us for lunch. The bakery, which Raymond still owns, is attached to the old house. I remembered every detail of the house.

During the meal, the aunts brought out all of the letters that I had written them since I was nine years old in Kfar Haroeh. I was shocked but didn't show it. They asked me if I remembered the letters I had sent, I answered them in French "of course", in Hebrew I said to my wife that I would like to ask them why they never answered me, I decided not to ask them so as not to embarrass them. They only had the letters, without the envelopes, so I couldn't see from where I sent the letters. I looked at Raymond and saw he was not comfortable with the situation. I had sent the letters to him, not to the aunts, who I hardly remembered, and not to Paulette his wife who I also hardly remembered as a child I was closest to him. I didn't say anything, I was so grateful for what they had done for me, that I didn't want to make them feel embarrassed. So sadly, the question why they never wrote to me, remained unanswered and now I had another question, if they hadn't answered my letters, why did they show them to me?

I tried to ask them how my mother and sister knew how to find me in 1945 when the war ended, but I didn't get any information, although I felt now, like I remembered from my childhood, that they weren't disappointed when they came to get me, and they weren't angry when I left.

My memories from there are good memories. That afternoon, we were about to part again. I thought to myself, that this dear couple opened their home to me once more...

I invited them to visit us in Israel, Ramon said he would like to come but to my surprise his wife said: "I'm not coming" as soon as I saw there was a conflict, I didn't want to interfere, and didn't ask her why.

We thanked them for their hospitality, that they opened their home and their hearts for us. Raymond asked that we take a picture together.

We parted, Esther and I continued to the Louar Vally.

For our meeting with Madame Chesneau we drove to Peyrins

From my memory A path of about a kilometer long leading down from the road led to the entrance to the chateau. A small stream flowed all along the way where we used to play. We made it easily to the village, but I couldn't find the road to the Chateau.

I asked someone: "is there a children's home around here?" he answered me confidently "do you see the cross? go up there" when we got there, I saw that this was not the right place. I entered one of the offices and asked: "excuse me Madame, I am looking for Chateau La Peyrins" she knew where it was and gave me directions, I continued and asked: do you know where I can find Madame Chesneau? She knew her and said that Madame Chesneau. is living in the children's home. We drove there and met with Madame Chesneau.

I imagine that everyone who was in the children's home remembered her. She ran the institution strictly and kept all the children in order. I guess nobody ever forgot her name. when I and my friend Pinchas Ronen (Shpilman) reminisce about those days we remember the games we used to play. He is three years older than me and left before I did.

I know that Madame Chesneau continued managing the home after the war. When we came to visit, there were no children, and Madame Chesneau, who was already in her eighty's, continued living there in the staff quarters behind the Chateau. I entered the Chateau and met her. She was in the kitchen. I suddenly remembered that she walked with a limp because she had a prosthetic leg. I recognized her immediately, but she didn't recognize me.

I introduced myself and she said: I remember that name, although I don't remember you. I remember your sister! Before our trip I told my sister that I planned on going to Peyrins and visiting Madame Chesneau. Madame Chesneau had three daughters, one of them was the same age as my sister and they were good friends, they are still in contact. Madame Chesneau said that other children who were in the home during the war had come to visit her. My friend Pinchas Ronen visited her with his children.

While we sat talking, she phoned her daughter and asked her to come – I didn't remember her – she came quickly and was very moved.

It turned out that our visit with her was a short while after she received the "Righteous among the nations" award – in 1979. Before our trip, I went to the old city in Jerusalem and bought some souvenirs made from olive tree wood to give away when I felt the need. Before we left, I gave Madame Chesneau a small souvenir. She gave me one last look and said: I don't remember you because you were very young but your sister I remember very well, she had a head full of curls..."

We parted and continued our journey to Halowar Vally.

On the way there we went through Montelimar – the town where I lived with both my parents, the town where we were still a family.

I visited Montelimar in 1982 and again in 1995.

We went to Versay and then to Paris, we had a nice trip, from there we went to England, and stayed with Esther's cousin in London.

Righteous Among the Nations

After we returned home from France, and the children saw the pictures from our trip, only then did I start telling them about my childhood, it took me back to that period.

When I returned home, I couldn't stop thinking, what can I do with all this new information I have.

I had met and heard of friends who had been hidden and survived, and when they became adults, they gave financial aid to the families that hid them. In my case there was no need for that. On my visit to Rosans I saw that financially they didn't need me – they had a lot of property, and their situation was very good.

But I still felt that I wanted to do something for them.

After hearing all the stories, I felt that they had been significant in my life, and I wanted to do something. I inquired at Yad Vashem and requested that the people who saved me during the war, receive recognition as "Righteous Among the Nations".

The application process itself is not simple It requires a lot of resources, will and mental energy. I tried discussing it with my sister, to hear her opinion, but she and my brother-in-law didn't feel like me. When they were in France, they also went to Rosans. after they returned home, they didn't tell us much, just that they were received very nicely, and

everything was okay. They also visited Madame Chesneau's children's home.

At some point I took the initiative and started the process.

In accordance with the Israeli law adopted by the Knesset in 1953, the title "Righteous Among the Nations" is given to a non-Jew, who helped save Jews during the Holocaust, while putting his life in danger. The basic idea of this phrase is that the person to whom the title was given is entitled to be called a "Hasid" "Righteous" in the meaning used in Judaism, even though he is a gentile from the nations of the world. – meaning he is not Jewish. Each file of a candidate for receiving this honor, is discussed and checked strictly by the committee headed by a Supreme Court Judge. After all the material is collected in the department of "Righteous Among the Nations" in Yad Vashem and is supported by testimonies from survivors and reliable archival material. The law established a clear and detailed definition for the term "Righteous Among the Nations": someone who risked their life to save a Jewish life, without asking for or receiving a reward as a condition for the rescue.

The award is presented to the rescuers or their next of kin in Israel or in their countries with Israeli diplomatic representatives. These ceremonies are attended by local government representatives and are given wide media coverage.

They receive a specially minted medal bearing their name, a certificate, their name is added to the Wall of Honor and a tree planted in their name (sometimes by the saviors themselves) in the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem. The award is to convey the gratitude of the Jewish people through the generations for the compassion and high morality that these people demonstrated during the Holocaust towards the Jewish people. Up till now the award has been given to over twenty-four thousand people.

I didn't have any documents to show apart from the list of children who were taken out of Venissieux a camp in all of OSE's records, where I appeared as Marcel Faure, and the facts that I gave them about the Hughes family.

If I'm not mistaken the last record of us was taken when we left Madame Chesneau who had lists of all the children and where each child went.

The procedure at Yad Vashem is strict and complicated. They interviewed me, asked questions, researched, and checked. I handled

everything with relative composure. They checked what they checked by their criteria, and I waited for an answer.

One of the criteria for example was that the rescuers did not receive any kind of payment; I told them that as far as I know the Hughes couple did this voluntarily: to the best of my knowledge, they didn't receive any sort of compensation, and as a child I certainly couldn't pay them".

After a while I received an answer that they had registered Raymond and his wife as Rightness Among the Nations, and they were invited to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem for the award ceremony. I called Raymond to invite him to Israel for the ceremony. I understood that he probably wouldn't be able to make it, I requested that a representative from the Israeli embassy in France will present him with the award.

Raymond was very surprised, and he and his wife were very honored. He was very respected in his village and was head of the village for thirty-six years. Many people came to honor him. On one of the Saturdays in July 1986 all his family members gathered in Rosans, a delegation from the Israeli embassy in France arrived with the ambassador, Ovadia Sofer, representatives from the village authorities and the council gathered to present the "Rightness Among the Nations" award to the Hughes couple.

I wasn't informed about the ceremony and didn't take part in it. The next day I received an article with a photograph of the ceremony from a local newspaper.

I felt that I had done the only thing I could do for them, they appreciated it and were very moved.

The director of the children's home Madame Chesneau was given the Rightness Among the Nations award from Yad Vashem in 1969.

In Peyrins, France they named a school after her in recognition of her many activities in education and for dedicating her life to others, while risking herself her family and her employees at the Chateau. There are known cases in France of people who were killed because they hid Jews.

It was the children from the children's home with Madame Chesneau who requested Yad Vashem to award her Rightness Among the Nations title, I joined the request list later.

Not long ago I met Zako Erlilch, who filmed a T.V documentary about the Rightness Among the Nations in Europe. During the war he was smuggled into Switzerland. Pinchas and his sister Chaya were also

smuggled out of France, they crossed the Pyrenees through Spain and arrived in Israel a year before us in 1944.

I learned that there were two attempts by Uza to smuggle us out as well: I have a letter with a list of children that they tried to transfer to the United States, my name is on this list, they also tried to smuggle us into Switzerland – but were unsuccessful. In 1969 Jacquo Erlich was among those who submitted Madame Chesneau's details to receive the Righteous Among the Nations title. When the Israeli television wanted to make a documentary about the Rightness Among the Nations in Europa, they contacted Zako, a T.V photographer. When the production team received the list of participants, Madame Chesneau name appeared, Zako announced "of course I'm going".

My friend Pinchas who was with me in Aliyah School, told me that he also signed up Madame Chesneau to receive the Rightness Among the Nations Award. I got in touch with Yad Vashem and asked them to add my name to the list, they sent me for an interview in Tel-Aviv to a man named Fladiel who dealt with this matter. I was added to the list.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, there were approximately three-hundred and fifty thousand Jews in France, after the Holocaust there remained only eighty-three thousand Jews, among them were thousands of children, most of whom were saved by Jewish organizations, and a few were saved by extraordinary individuals.

I kept in contact with Raymond, I called from time to time and received letters from him and his wife, on one occasion she told me that Raymond was not well.

In 1995 I went with a friend to an Agricultural exhibition in the South of France. We landed in Marseille, rented a car with the intention of traveling north towards Paris, we decided to visit Rosans first. On the way there we saw construction being done on the road, I stopped to ask one of the workers how to continue to Rosans.

"Excuse me" he said "who are you going to visit there?" when I told him, he said "you know he is very ill" I knew this from a phone call from his wife and knew that something was not right. We spoke for a while and I told him that I had been in Rosans during the war, he told me that Raymond had suffered a stroke and was in a wheelchair. I think he was about eighty years old, and I knew this might be the last time I saw him.

When we arrived, he was sitting in a wheelchair, and was very happy to see me. We chatted with him a while then continued on our way.

Raymond died in 1998, he was eighty-three years old.

May his memory be blessed.

When Raymond died, his son Pier called to tell me, and that is how the relationship between us began. Pier studied economics and lived with his wife and children in Marseille. Every so often we would speak on the phone. He let me know when his mother died.

I met Pier for the first time in 2011, we met in Rosans, even though he doesn't live there, he would go there for vacations. He called me and said: "I have booked you a room at the chateau" I didn't remember there being a chateau in the village – it turned out that a dutchman bought the old chateau, renovated it for eight years, and opened a hotel, he spoke English, French and Dutch, and lives at the chateau with his family.

I met Pier and his family in the village. The old house had been sold – They probably shared the money from the sale of the house with the aunts, but the bakery, the sawmill and the flourmill about half a block long remained in his possession.

I don't feel close to him since I didn't know him, but I do feel some connection to him. When we met, I called him my little brother "Mon petit Ferer" I'm sure he was touched. I felt that I owed them...

As head of the village for thirty-six years, a village square was named after Raymond. I got a call from the village council, inviting me to the ceremony, but I couldn't make it with such short notice. A local journalist wanted to interview me by phone for the ceremony. I asked my brother-in-law to help me word it out in French and I faxed it to him.

The last time we visited the village It turned out that the municipality was expecting us and asked us to take a picture of ourselves at the new Square. Only then did I find out that a memorial plaque had been placed on the municipality building wall and on the institution wall, on them were inscribed twenty-five names of the Jewish young men who had been caught in the village during the war and sent to Auschwitz. They were part of a group of forty-five Jews who came to work in the village in 1939. The whole village must have helped hide these men, the village leadership – "lmar de village" contacted the local institutions and registered each one with a fictive profession in demand to obtain work permits for them to stay and work in the village. Sometimes I ask myself why they were caught, and I wasn't. I credit that to Raymond. When I

came to pay the bill at the Chateau before we left, the manager told me that "the bill had been taken care of" I felt very uncomfortable finding out that Raymond's son Pier had paid for our stay at the Chateau.

We are in contact with him. Every year I send him oranges or dates, depending on the season.

Visiting Venissieux, France

In 1999 a delegation from Lyon visited Be'er Sheva As part of twin city relations between Beer Sheva and Lyon, I was invited by the French embassy to join the delegation for lunch, and this is when I met Mr. Azulay and Mrs. Valery a French journalist who has published two books about the Jews in France during the Holocaust. One book is titled "Saving the Jewish children from Venissieux " in the book she describes the entire historical situation and the conduct of the rescue institutions.

In our visit to France in 2011 we stayed in Lyon and went in search of the Lyon concentration camp on the outskirts of the city. Today there is a residential neighborhood there and the camp no longer exists.

I got to the area, but after having no luck finding any sign of the camp, I called Emil Azulai, a Jewish resident of Lyon, who is in charge of the relationship between Israel and Lyon and the chairman of the Merchants' Association in Lyon, whom I had met two years ago in Be'er Sheva, when he answered my phone call I told him that I am in Lyon and would be there for Shabbat, and would like him to give us directions to the camp. He said he would be happy to help "the camp does not exist anymore but there is a memorial plaque in memory of the Jews that were in Venissieux camp, but I wouldn't be able to find it by myself" he said "I will call Valerie, and she will get in touch with you". After a while Mrs. Valerie called the hotel: "we will come and pick you up tomorrow, Friday, and take you to Venissieux camp, wait for us by the entrance of the hotel at eleven o' clock. We were staying at a hotel in vilraban in the Jewish quarter, most from North Africa. While I was out in the morning buying Challot for Shabbat, Valerie called to ask if we could meet earlier. At nine o'clock they picked up my wife and I, they also couldn't find the memorial Plaque. Only after calling the municipality to get directions, did we find it. Graffiti was painted on the memorial Plaque: "dirty Jew" and "Sarkozy your mother is Jewish" and so on, Emil called the Mayor's office and asked him to take care of it.

When we parted, he told me that in October another delegation was coming to Israel: "we will travel around Israel and on the last night we will be in Tel-Aviv – I will send you an invitation".

We received the invitation, and my wife and I went to the meeting. There were other children rescued from Venissieux, camp. I only know Helen Shpilman, today called Chaya Armon, she lives on Kibbutz Shluhot. Our parents might have known each other since they were originally from Belgium. Her brother Paul who changed his surname from Shpilman to Ronen, was with me at Aliyah school in Petach-Tikva. He is a few years older than me.

Speeches were made at the meeting and the French ambassador was there. I asked Mr. Azulai if I could also say a few words, I made a short speech, and got very emotional, but I saw this as an opportunity to thank the French people for hiding the persecuted Jews and saving many Jewish children – around ten thousand children were rescued. I asked Valerie, the journalist, if maybe she could help find people who hid us in Lyon. But so far hasn't found anyone. I guess the people themselves are no longer alive, but their children probably are.

Visiting Montelimar, France

In 1995, when a friend and I went to France for an agriculture exhibition, by my request we first went to visit the Hughes family in Rosans and on the way back stopped at Montelimar. The town where we still lived together as a family. The town was unrecognizable. The school that I went to in the center of town had been knocked down. The Charles de Gaulle school is still active but had been relocated. The town had grown a lot. A nuclear reactor, producing electricity, was built on the riverbank, and the water from the river is diverted to cool the reactor.

We stayed in a small hotel, in the evening we went down to the lobby, and I started a conversation with the woman at the front desk. I asked her if she has lived here a long time, she told me that she was born there. I showed her the copy of the arrest warrant that my father received from the Montelimar police station – this is the only document I have with that has the city stamp on it. The woman at the desk turned a bit pale and answered me in French: do you really want to know? It was during the war, that is, it was a long time ago, and we had nothing to do with this – but I know that after the war the citizens themselves headed by the

"Maki" (French grille fighters, who operated while hiding in the dense Maki Forest, hence the name), killed the chief of police who made life miserable for everyone. The chief of police was part of the gang of the infamous SS officer Kraus Barbie, the entire area of Lyon was under his command.

Visiting Sosnowiec, Poland

In 1999 Esther and I with two of our children, Yechiel and Michal went in search of my family's past in Poland. We landed in Warsaw, went sightseeing around the city and the next day went to Sosnowiec, where my parents had lived. Today it is a large town. After my daughter Michal got married, I met friends of her in-laws in Jerusalem, who said that he also came from So Sosnowiec and that his father was the city, Rabbi.

Sosnowiec is in the south-west of Poland, about fifty Kilometers from Krakow and located at a busy international railway junction. From the end of the 19th century the city grew at a rapid pace and turned from a small settlement into a large and industrial city. Throughout the city there is an old electric train that looks like it has been there since my parents lived there.

Evan before the war there was a Zionist awakening in the city which influenced my uncle Alter and my aunt Regina to immigrate to Israel. through part of the activities of the youth movements and the centers of the Zionist parties. My mother's brother Izidor was the last one of the family that lived in Sosnowiec.

In September 1939 the Germans conquered the city, attacking mainly the Jewish citizens: the synagogue was burned down, Property and money were confiscated, and businesses were expropriated. In the spring of 1943, the remaining Jews of the city were rounded up and sent to the Bendin ghetto.

We went to check the municipal archive in in Sosnowiec. After I told them what I wanted they gave me a note, on it was written "archive 32". We found archive 32, there I found my parents' marriage license. On the license was written the address of the family house. I got a copy of my parent's marriage certificate.

People who knew the family told me that the Germans who came to the area through the Czech Republic, shot my uncle near his flour mill in the

first few days of the war. We found the family house, where Izidor was probably living by himself, after my grandmother left. We went around the house. On the bottom floor were three shops and above them six apartments on two floors. We presume that the shops and the apartments belonged to my uncle. The door to the stairwell at the front appeared to be closed. We walked around to the back of the building, when one of the residents noticed us from his window. My wife called up to him and asked: "do you speak German?" he said "yes, are you from Israel" when we said yes, he invited us up to his house. I don't know how he knew we were from Israel. I asked him how long he had been living in the house, he replied: "I have lived here since 1945". Over a cup of tea sweetened by sugar cubes, he told us that the house had been nationalized by the Polish government and local tenants moved into the house in 1945 after the war. The Jewish property remained abandoned and was handed over to other people including my uncle's property.

At one point I tried to locate documents to prove that the property belonged to my family - my uncle's private property – but soon realized that it was like "fighting windmills" and gave up.

According to the records in the Resident Registry Books in Sosnowiec where my uncle Alter's name appears (he was the oldest brother), It was a big community and there is still a large and ancient Jewish cemetery there, from before the war. After the war around four hundred Jews returned to Sosnowiec but left shortly after.

From Sosnowiec we went to Auschwitz-Birkenau. I entered the archive and got all the information I could about my father. We toured the camp and crematoria; I lit a memorial candle.

We continued to Olkusz. I had made reservations in advance to all the hotels so as not to waste time. all the time we had was dedicated to tracing my family.

Visiting Olkusz, Poland

In contrast to the route my father took from Olkusz to Sosnowiec, we went from Sosnowiec to find traces of his family in Olkusz. In my father's time it was a small and remote town. But because of its strategic location and economic importance, the city was hit by many wars. Especially during the Ottoman and Russian invasions and the Swedish invasion during the period of the Polish-Lithuania kingdom. And even

more so at the end of the seventeenth century with the third partition of Poland in 1795 when it was included in the realm of the Kingdom of Prussia.

The town began to restore itself only in the middle of the nineteenth century with the founding of independent Poland, in 1918 Olkusz became part of Poland. In September 1939 with the start of the Second World War Olkusz was invaded and conquered by the German Army. At the beginning of the war there were three thousand and five hundred Jews in the town, who were a large percentage of the population. With the occupation of Olkusz by the Germans the persecution of the Jews started, they were recruited for forced labor, stigmatized and their property was confiscated. Of the three thousand five hundred Jews in Olkusz at the beginning of the war only one hundred and fifty survived, after the expulsion of the Jews from Olkusz the Jewish cemetery was desecrated, Tombstones were uprooted and used to pave roads.

At the end of 1944 Olkusz was conquered by the Red Army, with the communist occupation and the fall of Germany, the Jews started returning to the town, But the commissioner of goods, a well-known anti-Semitic Communist, transferred all trade to Polish and Communist hands, and the few who returned found themselves with no employment, their family homes had been taken over by Polish citizens. Some of the survivors organized together and tried to reclaim their property but were avenged by the locals, and so the few that returned, left Olkusz.

Today there are no Jews in Olkusz.

We arrived at the hotel in Olkusz, we got organized and walked into town. Today there are thirty thousand people living in Olkusz – not a small town. We went to the local archives. I requested more information about my father's family, how many siblings did he have, and what happened to them during the war. If he was an only child, then I had nobody to look for. But if there were seven brothers and sisters – I wanted to find them. The answer was disappointing: "our archive only goes back to the last fifteen years; we don't have any information beyond that". We met a woman there who spoke German, she told my wife that "the big archive has been moved to Warsaw".

I found someone who spoke Polish and asked him to help me fill out the forms, that were sent right away to the main archive in Warsaw. After a few weeks I received a very strange reply: "We don't give out information about people who are not alive".

We knew about the remains of the old Jewish cemetery – a remnant of the seventeenth century, but we couldn't find anyone to ask for directions. All the people spoke Polish and all the signs were in Polish, (I understand a little Polish, but am not fluent, just a few words).

We decided to find the Jewish Cemetery by ourselves. We walked along the main road but there were no signs showing the direction to the cemetery. After walking for a while, I spotted a sign "Africana Museum" I said "oaky if that's a museum there must be someone there who speaks something other than Polish". Inside we met a tall man, who spoke German – my wife speaks German, we told him we were from Israel, my wife asked: "maybe you can help us, we are looking for the old Jewish cemetery".

The young man told us he was a historian, he said: "alone you will never find it, it is a waste of your time, I will come with you, he asked his supervisor to close the museum for a while and came to accompany us. I wanted to call a taxi, but he said: "there is no need it is very close we can walk there". We arrived very quickly.

We entered through a wall surrounding the cemetery. To the right stood a ruined building that was probably used as the purification room for the deceased before the burial. All the tombstones were ruined and scattered around. We walked through the ruins that had been covered by weeds over the years, but we didn't find anything belonging to the Fankiel family. The young man pointed to the pits in the ground dug by the German soldiers as their firing positions, which were still there after all these years. While we were searching the cemetery he said: "I have a friend who records Jewish tombstones. I'll call him and see if he can come and meet us". After they spoke on the phone, he said his friend would come from Kracov in the afternoon to meet us.

we arranged to meet again by the municipality building. To my surprise the historian came to the meeting with his wife and young daughter. I ran quickly to the nearest shop and bought some chocolate for her. He asked if he could take a picture of us explaining that he writes for a local newspaper and is writing an article about all the Jews that come to Olkusz looking for information about their families. I told him the little I knew about my father, he suggested we go and search at the small Soldier's Museum from the First World War which was nearby, we went there but found no documentation of my father.

I asked him if there were any Jews living here. He answered cautiously: "there is an old woman, but she is not well, one of her sons runs the local

bar in the old city and he is considered "Jewish", we'll go to the bar, order a drink and try to talk to him. I agreed, I knew that most of adults were already dead and if anyone was here it was their children or grandchildren.

We went to the bar and ordered drinks, he went to talk to the son and explain what we wanted, but the son made it very clear that he didn't want to meet us or hear our story. We understood that his situation was not easy.

When we parted from our new friend, I gave him the address of our hotel. He came to the hotel in the evening "I'm sorry but my friend from Krakow couldn't come". We ordered coffee, drank and talked. The historian told us that not long ago the town celebrated seven hundred years, but he knew that the town was actually founded nine hundred years ago.

His wife is a lawyer and I told them that I was interested in the town history. "Where did the Jews live" they Said "we're sorry sir but we can't give address – today other people live in those houses. His wife explained that after so many hard years, people are still afraid, when her husband heard that he suggested: "tomorrow I will take you to the site where the synagogue stood".

He took us, and pointed to an empty and neglected lot and told us "This is where the synagogue stood. When the communists came in 1955, they tore everything down and this is all that remains, no one dares to build on it..." the last rabbi in the town was Rav Yehosua Heshel Horovitz. The archaeologist told us that Olkusz was founded nine hundred years ago by two Jewish brothers.

We stayed in Krakow over Shabbat.

D. For the future generations: a testimony and a beacon

1. Testimony

Over the years I hardly talked to the children about the Holocaust, they knew that I was a Holocaust survivor, but they didn't know the details, not even on the Holocaust Memorial Day that takes place once a year, and raised waves of sadness that were sometimes difficult to contain.

In the nineteen nineties, my daughter Michal suggested that I should give my testimony in Yad Vashem, I said to her "Michal, leave it alone",

but she continued to plead with me to fill out the forms, but I didn't, Michal didn't give up: she called Yad Vashem and gave them my details and they contacted me. One day they said over the phone: "it's only a matter of time before there won't be any survivors left. Statistically thirty-five survivors die every day and if you don't tell your story there will be no one to tell it, we will send a team to you to record your testimony".

I told her: "please don't send a team, let me think about it and if I decide to give my testimony I will come to Jerusalem".

Our neighbor Reuven is also a Holocaust survivor. Fortunately, all his family survived, at one stage Spielberg's team came to film him and his family. It took me a while to understand that there weren't a lot of us left to tell the horrors of the Holocaust. In 1998 I decided to give my testimony.

I went to Jerusalem, they recorded and filmed me, then sent me a copy of my testimony: A booklet and a video tape.

I don't think my sister read my testimony. After I gave my testimony, they contacted me from Yad Vashem asking me to tell my story in schools.

2. Lectures

My neighbor Reuven was invited to give lectures and talks to high school students around the country. He asked me if I wanted to join him I thought about it and turned it over in my head but couldn't decide, the organization **ילדי שואה (י"ש)** children of the Holocaust also contacted me, but in the end it was a school principal who convinced me, I just couldn't refuse her invitation to give a lecture at her school. Since then, I have been giving lectures for over fifteen years.

I didn't get emotional when I gave my testimony and that's how it is when I give lectures in schools. When I speak before an audience I block my emotions. When I give my lecture to soldiers on Memorial Day, I always remember to tell them about that defining moment in my army service when I was given a rifle and hand grenade for the first time and knew that: "now I can defend myself". I share with them that moment that I kept to myself, nearly sixty years ago.

After I tell them my short history, I give as much information about the Second World War as I can depending on the time frame at my disposal.

Sometimes when I am standing before soldiers or high-ranking police officers and tell them my story someone can stand up and say: that's all very well but you were only six, why are you telling us stories"? and that is why I try to explain to them how this terrible thing happened: how did Hitler manage to conquer Europe in just two years? With the means that they had back then. Why didn't anyone stop him? The Americans didn't want to enter the war. Only after Pearl Harbor was attacked did they join the war, and the ships with Jewish refugees on them that were sent back to the inferno in Europe.

In my eyes the involvement with teenagers is very important, as is my continues search for new information, during which I have been exposed to Holocaust deniers. Holocaust denial comes in several ways: in attempts to deny the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis, or that the policy wasn't intentional or to claim that the dimensions were much smaller or that there were similar phenomena in history. But Holocaust denial started during the Nazi regime when they concealed facts, hid evidence and denied the execution and responsibility for the murders.

Some of the denial is based of dry facts which are not necessarily illogical: in 1942 the Vanza committee was held, where it was decided to exterminate the Jews. From the records of the Vanza committee there were reported eleven million Jews in Europe of them three million in Rusia. In May 1945 the war ended, meaning that every day six thousand Jews were killed, this fact is very hard to accept.

The disturbing facts just keep multiplying: three years ago, it was published that IBM leased equipment to the Nazis that was used in the extermination camps. Once a month a representative from the company came to service the equipment, yet they still didn't know what was happening in Europe???

It is unbelievable. Mr. Kurt Waldheim who served in the honorable position of UN Secretary, was a Nazi SS officer during the war.

All these infuriating things caused an awakening and counteractivity. Quite a few Holocaust survivors, who didn't want to remember their past and chose silence, like me, to my family members, mobilized to act against the denial conspiracy. Denial indirectly helps curiosity and the desire to know and understand the universal meaning of the Holocaust.

3. Torch-lighting ceremony

In 2006 I applied to light a torch in the Holocaust Memorial ceremony that takes place in Mount Herzl in Jerusalem. My application was accepted, and I received an invitation to take part in the ceremony. One of the conditions was giving testimony at Yad Vashem. In fact, this was also the result of a move taken by my daughter Michal.

She heard about this while working in the Jerusalem Theater with a man on the board of directors at Yad Vashem. One day she called me telling me to write my stories during the Holocaust and send it to Yad Vashem. When I received the call telling me that I had been chosen to light a torch at the ceremony I was on a trip in Tiberias with the police force.

Every year there is a main topic for the ceremony, this year's topic was "the image of man in the shadow of death". Before the ceremony a camera crew came to our house and filmed a short film about my life during the Holocaust and my life up to now. The camera crew asked me to accompany them to Jerusalem to the Righteous Among the Nations Park and point to the people who we recommended to receive Righteous Among the Nations award, or those that had directly assisted in our salvation: Cardinal Galià, Priest Glasberg, Madame Chesneau and the Hughes couple. All the other representatives that year were older than me, over eighty, one man joked with me saying "you're a youngster!". I was of course, invited to the rehearsal, and asked to go on stage accompanied by a family member.

The whole family came to the ceremony, my children and their spouses and children, my sister, and my brother-in-law with their son – it was treated as a once in a lifetime event.

Every torch lighter invited a family member on stage, our grandson Yair accompanied me on stage. Yair had been to Poland with his school that year when he was in eleventh grade. We stood together on the stage before the whole audience, it was very exciting and emotional. Thankfully I didn't have to talk at the ceremony. The ceremony was read by actress Yona Elian Keshet and after each survivor lighted the torch they showed the video they had filmed. Emotions were high.

A trip to Poland with the police force

In 2012 I visited Poland for a second time with a police delegation. Through the project "witnesses in uniform" עדים במדים which started in 2005, and delegations from the army and the police would go to Poland to see firsthand the atrocities in the camps and participate in "The March of Life". I asked a few times to join one of the groups, but it didn't happen.

When a new trip was being organized, my daughter Tamar got in touch with the chief of police, Yochanan Danino, a friend of Yechiel, my son (they were in the Yeshiva high school together "Yeshivat Or Etzion) and asked him if it would be possible for me join the group. It turns out that as chief of police he has the right to take six people of his choice with him. The chief of police took two widows, two pensioners and me.

I didn't have to participate in the two training sessions that preceded the trip, but on the Sunday before Pessach there was a general rehearsal that I went to in preparation for the trip. We were given equipment, a backpack and everything we needed for the march. Danino's head of office gave me a new police uniform instead of the faded everyday uniform I had. One of my personal goals for the trip was to march in Warsaw and Krakow in the Israeli Police uniform, it was very meaningful to me. Apart from me there were two other Holocaust survivors in the group, a retired police officer over eighty years old, a survivor from Salonika and a man giving witness. The rest, nearly two hundred were policemen with no direct connection to the Holocaust.

We left for Poland.

We landed in Warsaw, a group of two hundred policemen, we traveled in four buses to Lopochova forest where hundreds of Jews were shot into huge pits dug in the ground. During the week we went to Lublin, Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Treblinka.

The "March of life" takes place in Auschwitz. We held a ceremony at every site we visited – we were divided in to four groups, each group was in charge of one ceremony, the logistical organization was outstanding.

We walked through the streets of Warsaw and Krakow in police uniform.

I didn't tell anyone about my past, if anyone asked why I was on the trip I told them that I am a volunteer in the Netivot station. We were divided in to four groups, every evening the group commander gathered us all together and asked everyone to share their impressions with the others. I am used to blocking my feelings with people, nobody knew me, or

anything about my past. The commander knew my story, I asked him to be the last one to speak. When my turn came to speak, and explain what an elder man is doing among these young policemen, I told them my story, I was of course very emotional, and told the policemen to remember what they saw, felt and learned from their visits to the camps, because we, the Holocaust generation will not be around forever and it is on them to pass on the testimony's and memories , so it will not be forgotten and no one will deny the Holocaust of the Jews.

On the second evening the woman in charge of the delegation approached me and said: "tomorrow we are going to Majdanek, and you will lay a wreath on the monument during the ceremony". I appreciated this very much it was a chance for me to honor the victims, in the Israeli police uniform... I hardly slept that night from excitement.

The next morning was cold and rainy, and those taking part in the ceremony wore just their uniforms without a coat. I wore three long sleeved undershirts under my uniform and said to myself: "whatever will be will be".

At the Majdanek camp there is a mountain of ashes with a large monument at the top. When the head of the delegation invited me to lay the wreath on the monument she introduced me by name, she noted my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren and mentioned the fact that I was a Holocaust survivor. I went to place the wreath with great emotion.

(What happened from that point on was very amusing: from that day all the members of the delegation began to worry about my well-being: Menachem have you eaten? Do you want to drink, did you sleep all right...)

Treblinka extermination camp was completely destroyed, in Majdanek a lot of buildings were left standing, Birkenau was the largest camp, which had been built by the prisoners themselves.

We arrived at Auschwitz and toured the place. In Auschwitz everyone started to understand the horror. standing In front of mountains of personal belongings of the victims you feel what you can't grasp through words alone. It is just unbelievable. Suitcases with the names of their owners on them, dishes or hair shaved from women for the wig industry – only then did the people around me start to understand. When standing opposite cyclone B packs, the incinerator chambers, and the hanging poles. Seeing the torture building, the wall of death in front of

which those caught stealing or trying to escape were executed – you start to understand that the horror really happened.

I saw it on the faces of the policemen with me on this journey.

On Thursday, "the Holocaust Remembrance and heroism day" the march of life" took place. The evening before the march I asked the officer if I could say Kadish at Auschwitz. I said Kaddish with my throat choked with tears with another man whose grandfather perished in Auschwitz.

We marched from Auschwitz to Birkenau with twelve thousand Jews from all over the world. We headed the march – a group of policemen from Israel, Rav Lau took part in the march, Dodo Fisher sang, and Chaim Topol moderated the ceremony. To march in Poland in uniform was very significant for me.

After I returned from Poland it took a few days to get back on track.

For the children

The days were dedicated to the present: to the children, the family, work, but the nights took me back to scary places from the past recurring events begin to disturb my sleep like a scene from a movie that is shown over and over again especially two traumatic events: the first one is when we are arrested and I am left at home alone, and the second one is when my father gets off the train and doesn't return. My father did come back but the fear stayed – those moments when my father disappeared. I met fear at an early age and it left me scarred.

In my childhood and youth, I didn't deal with it much. Esther and I built a home, and brought life in to the world, I didn't talk much about my childhood, although Esther heard a little of my childhood experiences, and was with me on sleepless nights.

When I try to describe my childhood today, looking back I encounter a certain difficulty: all in all, I was looked after, I had a roof over my head, clothes and food. Although existence is not just limited to physical needs. From the moment we were arrested by the French police in Montelimar, I didn't see my parents and didn't understand the reality surrounding me, apart from the fact that I knew people were looking for me and wanted to arrest me – the knowledge that appeared in different variations as circumstances changed. I was at an age where I couldn't

do a lot for myself, and I was dependent on others. The thing that I knew was that they had taken my father and my mother had disappeared, and I had to be careful because they were looking for us, that they wanted to catch us – and I didn't even know why.

I was four when we left Belgium, separated from my parents at six and came to Israel when I was nine. At such a young age you don't remember much and understand even less. The fact that I was a small child was joined by the decisive experience of my childhood in the shadow of war: during the war I was a persecuted refugee, and after that an immigrant and a Holocaust survivor. I grew up with a lot of questions, and was left with no answers, it was up to me to put the puzzle together.

Finding the box of documents in my mother's house was the move that awakened in me a growing interest in the details of my childhood. Suddenly finding official documents to base facts on, and not just bits of stories and parts of memories... I was forty-five years old.

When I was less distracted from the worries of livelihood and the children were grown up, I went to France, and visited the places where I had lived. When Poland was freed from the communist regime we went to Poland, I also visited Belgium, I read a lot of material, watched documentaries, and I managed to piece the puzzle together myself: with time I started understanding the general situation and what happened to us a family. Although one question remains unanswered, why did my mother and sister keep silent all these years and refused to give me the answers I wanted so desperately and preferred to dismiss me by saying: its none of your business". Why did the two of them never talk when I wanted to know more.

Today I am a father of four children, and grandfather to twenty-three grandchildren and six great grandchildren. I always told my children the I was the "institution champion" because from the time I left home at the age of six until I got married I lived constantly in different kinds of institutions Eventually I grew into a man and got an education But in many ways – I didn't have a regular childhood.

They say that what you have not received yourself you cannot give to others. A lot of things I taught myself, but there is a big problem with the education today. In the school in France, we sang the national anthem every morning before entering our classroom, we would stand up when the teacher entered the classroom, we were taught how to speak to adults, how to speak in the third person to someone you don't know. But here in Israel it has disappeared, and these are the things that I miss.

There is not enough respect for the teachers in school, there is no distance between the teachers and the pupils and there is no acquisition of values. In our time in school, we were taught to love the country it was explained to us that we must build up the country, conquer the land and implement agriculture – today that doesn't exist.

The education my children received is different from the education my grandchildren receive today. My children did not allow themselves what the children today allow themselves today, although they were not disadvantaged at all: we travelled around the whole country, even in Sinai. We bought them presents, even the most expensive, we didn't deny them anything. Today, all the frameworks have been breached, and sometimes in a radical way.

My wife is from a "Yeke" household and there was order in the house, in never occurred to them to leave the table during the meal... we taught our children to love the land and be respectful, and I think we reap what we invested.

My children have read, listened, and watched my testimony.

They said they do not understand how it was possible to have a normal life after everything I went through. Growing up they didn't know or feel that they were second generation to the Holocaust. My girls said that they don't understand how they are so normal. When I heard them, I thought that it was actually good that I didn't tell them anything during their childhood – it was a compliment for me.

There was no pressure put on me to write this book, but the children said: "Dad, time is passing... write your story".

It was not an easy process. To go over all the history again, parts were extremely hard. And to ask the question: Who are the things aimed at...

A few years ago, I met Yosi Peled in his office in Tel-Aviv. He opened a cupboard behind him and took out a copy of his book and inscribed in it "to Menachem the Belgian from Yosi the Belgian". My neighbor Reuven a Holocaust survivor from Poland, also wrote a book, I met a lot of people who had written their life story. My wife also wrote about her family history. I said to myself: okay I will write a book – to leave something behind.

In one of the articles, I read about the liberation of the extermination camps in World War Two. There is a story about the brigade forces that landed together with the English soldiers in Italy and from there reached the camps, on one of the wooden bunks was engraved in Yiddish: "Ah

A question of life - Menachem Frenkel

Nekoma-Nisht Fergesen" "Seeking revenge – remember and never forget".

It is not easy to tell – but I accepted my children's request and wrote my life story.

Menachem Frenkel



The Frenkel family 2010, Menachem and Esther
Yechiel, Tamar, Michal and Shlomit

MINISTÈRE
DES ANCIENS COMBATTANTS
ET VICTIMES DE GUERRE

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

X.179

Paris, le 10 DEC. 1958
139, rue de Bercy - 12^e

DIRECTION DES STATUTS
ET DES SERVICES MEDICAUX
Sous-Direction des Statuts
de Combattants
et de Victimes de Guerre
Bureau des Déportés et des
Statuts Divers

Le Ministre des Anciens Combattants
et Victimes de Guerre,

à Monsieur le Chef de la Mission Française
de Liaison auprès du Service International
de Recherches
AROLSEN, Kreis Waldeck
(Allemagne)

DSD/R.Do
2^{ème} Bureau - Statuts

TID 638.409

OBJET : Demande de renseignements concernant
Monsieur FRAENKEL Alter Chiel né le 3 mai 1899 à OLKNEZ
(Pologne)

REFER. : Votre lettre n° 52638 CD/YZ du 1er juillet 1958
BNFR

Par lettre ci-dessus rappelée, vous avez bien voulu me demander de
vous communiquer les renseignements en ma possession concernant Monsieur FRAENKEL
Alter Chiel né le 3 mai 1899 à OLKNEZ (Pologne).

J'ai l'honneur de vous faire connaître que Monsieur FRENKIEL Alter
Chiel sans indication de lieu et de date de naissance, a été interné
à DRANCY à une date inconnue et déporté le 2 septembre 1942 en direc-
tion du camp d'Auschwitz.

MISSION FRANÇAISE DE LIAISON

Pour le Ministre,
Le Directeur des Statuts et des
Services Médicaux,

P.O. Le Chef du Bureau des Déportés
et des Statuts Divers,

A. 9. Jan. 1959
Enregistré 68 833
13 Feb 1959 (pas bourgeois)
Transmis à 512 57.8281

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Transport document to Auschwitz of Alter Chiel Frenkel

Liste des 82 enfants sortis du camp de Vénissieux
(liste non exhaustive et susceptible de modifications)

Nom	Prénom	Date et lieu de naissance	Enfants accueillis au château de Peyrins	Liste des 10 enfants dits aspécifiés (secteur Garel)
1.BAEKER	Hella	19/2/33 Vienne		
2.BAUMEL	Jean	24/9/33 Bruxelles	OUI	OUI
3.BENDER	David	8/7/37 Paris		
4.BERKOVITSCH	Rachel	18/7/31 Charleroi		
5.BRYKS	Armand	18/4/27 Francfort		
6.BRYKS	Selma	27/10/30 Bruxelles		
7.BRUHL	Rachel	?/1/37 Anvers.	OUI	
8.BUKS	Fanny	27/10/24 Lodz	OUI	OUI
9.BUKS	Armand	7/11/28 Lodz	OUI	OUI
10.DOLLMAN	Siegfried	6/4/32 Graz	OUI	OUI
11.DOLLMAN	Léon	31/8/33 Graz	OUI	OUI
12.EINHORN	Antonia	1/3/36 Anvers		
13.EINHORN	Nelli	14/9/30 Anvers		
14.EINHORN	Bertha	1/9/30 Anvers		
15.ERMANN	Jean	15/8/39 Anvers		
16.FABRYKANT	Jeanne	1/1/27 Zychlin		
17.FABRYKANT	Isaac	30/8/31		
18.FINDER	Horst	6/11/26 Rolianke		
19.FIXLER	Isabelle	?/6/38 Anvers		
20.FIXLER	Esther	?/4/36 Anvers		
21.FIXLER	Sarah	29/10/34 Anvers		
22.FIXLER	Hélène	21/3/33 Anvers		
23.FRENKEL	Myriam	6/1/27 Anvers	OUI	OUI
24.FRENKEL	Marcel	14/2/36 Anvers	OUI	OUI
25.FURST	Oscar	3/4/35 Berlin		
26.FURST	Manfred	14/4/30 Berlin		
27.GORGE	Jeannette	9/1/29 Luxembourg		
28.GROBEL	Mina	1/12/29 Anvers		
29.HIPZER	Kurt	23/11/26 Berlin		
30.HIPZER	Lili	17/3/30 Berlin		
31.JEJERSKI	Hella	23/11/30 Berlin		
32.JABLONSKI	Charles	25/6/36 Ixelles		
33.JUDELOVICZ	Rachel	20/7/32 Bruxelles		
34.JUNG	Juliana	1/2/39 Beregszasa		
35.KAMINKER	Rachel	22/12/35 Anvers	OUI	



Monument in memory of French Jews "Roglit Forest"



Lighting the torch with my grandson Yair



Placing the wreath in Majdanek

A survivor who volunteers with the police returned to Auschwitz

"To march here in uniform is to come full circle"



Menachem Frenkel, 76, was 4 years old when the Germans invaded Belgium, caught his family and sent them to a concentration camp. Frenkel was saved, but his father was killed in Auschwitz. This week he came full circle after arriving as part of a police delegation, wearing his police uniform to the place that symbolizes for him the worst of all - the extermination camp Auschwitz in Poland. "To march here in police uniform is to come full circle" he said with tears in his eyes.

Frenkel a police volunteer for the last eleven years, was born in Belgium. When the Nazis invaded the country, his family escaped to France. When the Germans came to France, they promised the French authorities that would not touch Jews with French citizenship however those who came from other countries were not protected. "Because of the great shortage of food, my father had to register us in order to receive food stamps. "Soon the Nazis caught us and sent us to a concentration camp from where my father was sent to Auschwitz and murdered".

Frenkel was saved and at the end of the war his mother found him and his sister. They made Aliyah to Israel. After his reiteration, he decided to volunteer for the police. "The country has done so much for us I decided I wanted to give back. I have already been to Poland but this year it is different – I returned here wearing my police uniform. I will march with pride in Auschwitz. To stand by the gas chambers knowing that my father was killed right here is very powerful and stirring".

Yael Barnovski, Poland

From ISRAEL HAYOM newspaper, Wednesday, 18 April 2012

Docostory Publishing Ltd