

In 1943 we were notified, that everybody would be transported to the concentration camp Tivrov. One could only survive there, when able to work hard. The road to Tivrov was about 15 km long and many people walked this long way—the weak and ill were carried by wheelbarrows—others had to be supported and held by someone. Our mother was carrying us in her arms.

When we arrived at the concentration camp, we found many people, and there was no food! But somehow our mother managed to “bake” some bread-pieces. Even if bread was full of mold, we ate it, there was nothing else.

One day a „Christian” police officer said to my mother: “You have two children, if you want to live, then run! Every day 100 people are transported away from here and are not returning!” My mother was very afraid, but saw no way to escape, until one day she discovered a part of the barbwire which was not guarded. One night she woke us up and said: „If we want to live, then we have to try to escape now!” I was the smallest and I crawled on the ground underneath the barbwire to the other side. Then I pulled my brother through, and we both pulled our mother—who was flat on the ground—through this small opening. During the night we walked through deep woods, because the Nazis were on the roads with motorcycles. We hurried from one dense part of wood to the next for shelter, until we arrived back at our hometown, back to the Ghetto. There we found only one aunt alive. Her daughter had already died. She was living in the Ghetto together with three other families. During the night we closed everything out of fear, because the Germans walked around at night looking for young girls. One night they knocked at our door. A man said: “If you will not open, you all are going to be killed!” Quickly they hid the young women in a big box, but there was no air and they could hardly breath. My mother knew that the Germans were very afraid of typhus. She quickly wrapped a white cloth around her head, made her face wet and pretended to be ill. The Nazis opened the door, searching around with a torch, then suddenly my mother started to shout: “Typhus, typhus!” That terrified them and they quickly ran away. The girls were saved. My mother herself was still young, but she was a very clever, and courageous woman.

But another time I had to witness how a young girl got raped. I want to tell you about this, because Hitler had strictly forbidden any relationship with Jewish people, in order to keep the ‘pure race.’ Nevertheless, I became an eye witness of these rapes and I know what really happened. A German, who came to rape the girl put his gun on the table in order to frighten us, and then he took the girl. The father of the girl was present and cried and cried and cried..! When the Nazi left, he forgot to take his gun. The girl’s father was emotionally so disturbed, that he ran after this Nazi and shouted: “Sir, sir”, and gave him his gun, full of fear he could otherwise return to get it. As I am telling you this, I can see everything in front of my own eyes. Everything that happened I still remember! Once in the Ghetto we all had to come to the parade ground. An old man was ordered to the center. He was so skinny that he had lost his trousers. One could see, that he had wrapped a Shabbat cloth around his waist to be able to continue to keep the Shabbat. The most valuable remaining thing for him was his Shabbat cloth. 100 people were taken away, and we never saw them again. All of us were afraid to also be transported, but suddenly a Nazi signed some papers and we were sent back—embracing each other and crying because we—on that day we were not transported to be killed. It is possible, that it was God Himself, who saved us!

In March 1944 the Cossacks came. They did not know who was a Jew and therefore we once again were in great danger. After the war I went 4 years to school and always had the best grades. In a factory I learned how to work with machines, later I studied to be a tailor. For me it was difficult to sit all the time and so I worked in a cinema. Wherever I was, I sang. This is my therapy. While I am singing, I forget! Actually I was too young to sing in a choir, but the director heard me singing and admitted me to his choir. Later I went to the Ukrainian military and even there I sang. Here in Israel I became part of a choir who sang to the former mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, and with him were many other old “Jidditskis” (Jewish people). I sang the song “A Yiddische Mama” to them and everybody had tears.

I cannot bear when somebody is sad, then I start to sing and try to make the people happy. Now we are in Israel for 20 years. In the Ukraine we lived near Chernobyl and witnessed the accident.

However, that was not the reason why we came to Israel. My grandfather was a teacher of Yiddish and my daughter a real Zionist.”

Michael traveled to Germany not long ago and had a really good time, but nevertheless he told me: “It is so good being back: Home in Israel.”

*“I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.*

*Surely the righteous will praise your name and the upright will live before you!” Ps. 140:12-13*



Michael with Antonia

