

*„For he who avenges blood remembers; he does not ignore the cry of the afflicted. O Lord, see how my enemies persecute me! Have mercy and lift me up from the gates of death, that I may declare your praises in the gates of the Daughter of Zion and there rejoice...!“ Psalm 9:12-18*

## **LILA + BARUCH KAPOLOVICH** **SHARE FROM THEIR LIVES:**

Written with the help of Teresa Voigt:



### **Childhood:**

Baruch Kapolovich was born in 1927 near Chust in Krajnikov in the former Czechoslovakia (today Ukraine). His parents were Simon and Bluma Kapolovich, they originally came from Hungary. He had two brothers (Israel and Dudi) and one sister (Bracha). However Baruch was the only one in his family who survived the Shoa. In 1938/39 the Hungarians invaded Czechoslovakia and a big part went to Hungary, also their city, Chust. Due to frequent changes of government in the region Baruch visited different schools, a Czech one, then a Hungarian and also a Russian one and therefore learned the different languages. Lila did the same.

Lila, born Lebovits, was born in 1928 near Chust in Szeklence / Sokirnice. Her parents were Mendel and Aranka Lebovits. She also had four siblings. Of them only one brother survived the Shoa. Lila's family was very wealthy. They owned a mill with a bakery and a store and also a tavern. She shared, that on Shabbat her mother regularly sent her to bring food to the poor.

### **Their terrible experiences in the Shoah:**

After the invasion of the Hungarians in 1939, anti-Jewish laws were established in the land. Baruch told us, that the Jews were not allowed to leave their houses anymore and signs were put on their homes with the inscription: "Here live Jews." At that time the Jewish community was very large and influential in Chust, not only in this city, but in the whole area and about 5.000-6.000 Jewish people comprised one fourth of the population of Chust.

"The Czechs always treated us well, but the Hungarians hated us," shares Baruch, "and they treated us very badly." Hundreds of Jewish people, without Hungarian citizenship were deported to the Ukraine and many were killed there.

Baruch and Lila told us of horrific incidents: "Sometimes Jewish prisoners were even buried alive. Some pretended they were dead, and a few of them survived this horror. Afterwards they came into the cities and testified about these unbelievable and terrible happenings."

In March 1944, there were still 5.000 Jewish people in Chust and a ghetto was created. The Hungarians also took all the Jews from the surrounding areas and put them into the same ghetto. More than around 10.000 people had to live there. It was absolutely overpopulated and dreadful conditions prevailed.

Both Baruch and Lila were brought into this ghetto near Chust in Szeklence/Sokirnice. At that time they did not know each other; they met only after the liberation.

Lila opens up: "My whole family was brought into this ghetto. We were deported in cattle wagons —70 people were forced into only one wagon. We received a command to throw all our valuables out of the windows. It was almost impossible to breath anymore, because it was so overcrowded and cramped and also because the wagon was full of human-feces of the people. There was no bathroom!"

After a few months Lila and her family were brought to a concentration camp – to Auschwitz! Lila's prisoner number was 37685. She shares that she always remembered that number, until today, although it happened such a long time ago. At the concentration camp they separated men and women. "I never saw my father and brothers again!" said Lila. (Only one brother survived!) In the beginning Lila was still together with her mother and her grandmother. But after a short while they were told that her mother and grandmother were chosen to do needlework. They were carted away, but not to do needlework: In truth they were gassed!

From Auschwitz Lila was deported to Stutthof, a concentration camp east of Danzig in Poland. There she stayed for about one month. Lila says: "Our heads were shaved! We could neither talk nor cry anymore; our inner being, our hearts, were like a stone. When there were roll calls, people were just falling over and died!"