

**IMPORTANT**

This transcript is copyright of the Association of Jewish Refugees.

Access to this interview and transcript is for private research only. Please refer to the AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive prior to any publication or broadcast from this document.

The Association of Jewish Refugees  
2 Dollis Park, London N3 1HF  
Tel. 020 8385 3070

[ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk](http://ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk)

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript however, no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform the AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive.

<b>Collection title:</b>	AJR Refugee Voices Archive
<b>Ref. no:</b>	RV103

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Fachler
<b>Forename:</b>	Eli
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	27 October 1923
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Berlin, Germany

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	4 September 2005
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	Salford, Manchester
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Rosalyn Livshin
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	4 hours 36 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:  
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

**INTERVIEW: 103**

**NAME: ELI FACHLER**

**DATE: 4 SEPTEMBER 2005**

**LOCATION: SALFORD, MANCHESTER**

**INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN**

**TAPE 1**

RL: What is your name?

EF: Eli Fachler.

RL: Do you have any other names?

EF: No. I had a nickname in the army, they called me Lofty.

RL: And your Hebrew name?

EF: Elazar.

RL: Were you named after anybody?

EF: My grandfather, my mother's father.

RL: And when were you born?

EF: 1923. October 1923.

RL: And where were you born?

EF: In Berlin.

RL: First of all, if you can tell me something about your family background, your parents and their families.

EF: My parents both came from Poland, as I understood, from the facts and tellings that my father used to work for the German railways during the war in Poland

**Tape 1: 1 minute 38 seconds**

and came with the German army at the age of about 16 working for the German railways to Germany and settled in Germany.

And his cousin who became my mother was left behind, and he went to collect her from Poland and brought her to Germany where they married in 1922, and I understand the Rabbi who conducted the service at the time was a very famous Rabbi, Rabbi Hildesheimer, who was in charge of the Rabbinical Seminar of the Adass, that's a very well-known institution and he conducted the Chuppat Kiddushin, the wedding ceremony.

RL: So, they were cousins?

EF: They were first cousins. My father's father and my mother's mother were brother and sister.

RL: Just looking at your father's family for the moment. What did you know of his parents and of his siblings?

EF: Well, at the age of five, I was taken to Lodz, where my father's sister, he only had one sister and one brother, was getting married, so I saw my grandparents briefly during that time. My grandfather with a long beard, and they happened to be in the milk business. They had big churns of milk which he then distributed probably to shops and he divided it up into smaller vessels or whatever it was.

And my mother, and my grandmother, who came to Berlin later on to visit, and so I got to know her as well. I obviously, when it came to see my aunt who got married, and the younger brother of my fathers, called Nathan, Nussun ....., and I know that my aunt, the one who got married, married somebody called Jacobovitz, and later on I understand they had two sons and the business that he was in apparently was something like ironmongery, that is what I learnt later.

RL: And did they both live in Poland ...

EF: In Lodz ...

RL: In Lodz ...

EF: ... everybody on my father's side lived in Lodz. Now in Berlin itself there was a cousin of my father, so going back, my father's father, and my mother's mother, were brother and sister, but there was another brother, Itzik, whose son and family also lived in Berlin, so that my father's first cousin, and his family and us became very close, we lived

in the same street opposite one and another and every, well during the week as well, but certainly on a Shabbat morning after Shul, we used to go in there for Kiddush, and that is where I learned to drink *Schnaps* at a very early age. Now if you want to know, they

**Tape 1: 4 minutes 49 seconds**

had four sons and one daughter, and that daughter eventually married my mother's brother, one of her brothers, there were nine children of my mother's family, but only three in my fathers.

RL: So, one of those children married her uncle?

EF: No, second cousin I should imagine, something like that ...

RL: Right ... right ...

EF: I mean her father was a first cousin of my mother.

RL: Right ... right ...

EF: My brother's brother means the first cousin of her father, that is the one that she married.

RL: Right ... right ... gosh ... right ...

Do you know what kind of an education your father had?

EF: As far as I remember he had a basic education in what they used to call Talmud Torah in Lodz, as war broke out when he was only 16, I suppose his education was interrupted but in Berlin itself he must of sort of educated himself, because all the family, and all the friends from Poland used to come to him to write official applications to whatever government department because his German writing was excellent and the actual style of writing was ... I have still got letters and postcards from him which has shown his writing which was completely out of the ordinary, so he was certainly perfect in German, and certainly perfect in Yiddish, my mother used to read Yiddish both with my father and .....but he was very good in Hebrew culture as well, in Jewish culture. And he was very proficient in doing Kriat Hatorah, in leaning on Shabbat in our Shul, so ...

RL: What kind of religious education had he had?

EF: Considering he had left home also at the age of about 16 or 17 it was a very traditional Haredi household and he gave his children the same kind of education, that is why I was sent to the Adass School in Berlin. A Jewish school, a frum Jewish school.

RL: Had he ... he had not really had the opportunity to go to a Yeshiva?

EF: No ...

**Tape 1: 7 minutes 36 seconds**

RL: No ...

EF: No ... I mean his Jewish base was really just the Talmud Torah, but as I say he certainly jumped in learning from after that, once he was back in Berlin, and he went into business with his cousin, who was his another brother, of his cousin, that is going back to grandparents, my grandfather's brother had several children, of which one was the one which lived opposite and another son of his, another cousin of my father, lived in a different part of Berlin, and he went into partnership with my father to start with, it must have been just after the war, in second hand furniture. Afterwards they split up and my father went into textiles.

RL: Right ...

EF: Whereas both brothers, cousins of my father, stayed in the furniture business, both of them, second hand and new after that.

RL: And on your mother's side if we can learn something about her parents, your grandparents on that side and what you know.

EF: Now, my grandfather, from what I understand, obviously, passed away before I was born, because I was named after him. My mother had eight siblings, there were nine of them altogether, I got to know all of them, partly because I saw them in Poland, partly because they came and lived in Berlin for a while, and one of the brothers lived permanently in Berlin, he was a tailor and he first worked for a firm of tailors and then he became self employed with his own tailoring business and I saw him marry the daughter of my father's cousin. So, I was taken to Poland at the age of five, I went to visit my grandmother, and the youngest brother of my mother, so my youngest uncle was still at school. He may have been at the age 13 to 15 when I saw him, I also saw a sister of my late grandfather, she had a little stall of sweets in the market, the little village of Ilza was built around the market place and on the market place were all the stalls, and my aunt, my great aunt rather, had a stall of sweets and she tried to pamper me, and I took a physical dislike to the primitive conditions that I found in Poland, being used to Berlin and nice streets and trams and that sort of thing, and you came on to cobblestones and very primitive living in Poland and I felt that it wasn't for me. At the age of five mind ...

RL: What do you remember about your grandmother?

EF: My grandmother, I remember, was a similar build to my mother who was, you know, strong and full bodied, and I remember she wore a sheitel and her face was obviously wrinkled as was my great aunt. But otherwise, I don't really remember much

because there was no contact on a personal level, because a five-year-old and a fifty, sixty-year-old, so ...

RL: Was she working at all?

**Tape 1: 11 minutes 39 seconds**

EF: I wouldn't know ...

RL: No ...

EF: I wouldn't know. How she kept herself, after all, she had some at school but some were working and grown up. If I remember at the age of five none of them were married yet apart from my mother. And afterwards they all got married, so if they were already self supporting then maybe they supported her, maybe, I wouldn't know ...

RL: And when they, when they got married, did they continue living in that area? Or did they move away?

EF: Well, a younger sister of my mother, called Peppi, Auntie Peppi, Tante Peppi, she came to live with us, to bring us up more or less because my mother was busy in business. So, Auntie Peppi was more or less our nanny for many, many years until she married a fellow Pole in Berlin, Herman Jupe, was only about a year or two before I left Germany. Actually, Yudit, the son of my father's cousin Goethen, who married my uncle, they got married also a couple of years before I left Germany. They got married in 1937, their son was born in 1938, my auntie Peppi stayed with us until about 1938, married this Jupe and then I think they had to go to Poland I think at that time, all Poles were more or less expelled like my parents as well.

RL: And the other siblings of your mother?

EF: Other siblings, now there was the penultimate youngest sort of thing, Yukel, Yaakov, he was also a tailor and he came to Berlin for a while and worked together with the permanently resident brother Theo, and I got to know him quite well and then he went back to Poland as well. I heard as I grew up, that various brothers of my mother got married, but I have no details of who or what and so on. Some of them stayed in Driltsch and some of them moved to Lodz, because family was in Lodz as well. Other details I do not have, I have details about Yukel, the penultimate one, because I caught up with him again after the war. That is a separate story, I will come to that later.

RL: Right. Do you know what kind of education your mother had?

EF: Very basic, she could read and write Yiddish, Hebrew, she could pray, obviously. Her German was speaking alright, very good, writing I should say was almost non-existent, she did write but it was very, erm, hesitant hand writing, she had to think about each letter more or less, it was very slow.

RL: Had she worked at all before marriage?

EF: I wouldn't know.

**Tape 1: 15 minutes 14 seconds**

RL: Hmmm ....

EF: I wouldn't know.

RL: And when did they marry?

EF: In 1922, I think August 22.

RL: And where did they marry? Do you know?

EF: In Berlin.

RL: In Berlin ... okay.

EF: What kind of religious upbringing did she have?

EF: Also, very traditional.

RL: Did she wear a sheitel?

EF: Observant ...

RL: ... after marriage ...

EF: No, she didn't.

RL: Right. So where did you come in the family?

EF: I was the first born, in October 23.

RL: And after that?

EF: Three and a half years later was my sister, Miriam Ruth, she had blond curls.

RL: What is your earliest memory as a child?

EF: At the age of about two, two and a half, I went to kindergarten, Tante Cilly and Tante Hanna. And from a very, very early age I was interested in the opposite sex, they pursued me and I pursued them, and that was fine. There were things that I learnt in kindergarten was when we played certain things, and we started kind of knitting or



crocheting, at a very, very early age, maybe at about three, three or four, and we used to learn colours, and I remember sitting on the potty in the kitchen, and we had some visitors, and my mother was remarking to the lady visiting that the nice colour was that the cardigan that she had, and especially the fringe colour, she couldn't remember the

**Tape 1: 17 minutes 11 seconds**

name of that colour, so I piped up, from the potty, orange ... orange ... they couldn't believe their ears. That was one of my first memories, as a scene ... mentioning that colour. When you talk about the profession of my mother, there was a profession, she did learn dressmaking, she was a dressmaker, and she continued dressmaking in Berlin before she actually gave it up and joined my father's business. And I remember that she was designing dresses, with proper designs, and I remember the name of the material they used and the type of fashion ...

RL: Can you tell us?

EF: Yes, there was taffeta and *Falten* which means pleats and the names of the material I remember at time, know what they were called, I knew everything then ...

RL: And did she do this from home?

EF: Yes, she did it from home.

RL: Was this ...

EF: Sewing and doing everything, designing and so on.

RL: Was this her own business or was she working for someone else?

EF: She was on her own, she did it privately, it wasn't a big business but ... people came to her, she was known as a designer and dressmaker.

RL: Can you describe your home, where you were living, and what it was like?

EF: Now the first home that I remember was opposite my father's cousin on Fehrbelliner Strasse in Berlin. There was a shop in the front with a shop entrance with a display window which showed knitwear and *Trikotagen* and we lived in the back of the shop on one floor, the ground floor, the house was like most blocks of flats in Berlin in our district, had a big yard at the back, and all the flats were built around that yard so we were in the front, facing the street. And ... on the first floor I believe lived the caretaker of that block of flats, who took in the rent and he had a girl of my own age called Margot, their name was Kuzanke and later on when Hitler came to power that girl she joined the BDM, Bund Deutscher Mädels in other words she joined the female Hitler Youth. She never became unfriendly, we were always on speaking terms, it didn't seem to worry me greatly, and that was what I remember of the first place we lived in.

Then at the age of ten, in 1932/33, we moved around the corner to the Veteranenstrasse, and we lived on the upper ground floor. The lower ground floor was shops and

**Tape 1: 20 minutes 11 seconds**

the owner of the block of flats, a fellow called Wernicke, had a grocery shop, and we went down a few steps into the shop and his son became pretty a high-up SS man, prancing around in his black uniform, with all the regalia on it, but again we did not feel any abuse from them or anything like that. We were tenants like there were quite a few tenants in that block in Veteranenstrasse. Our, again, we were facing the front, and because of that I grew up, Veteranenstrasse was a fairly busy street which led into a crossing called Brunnenstrasse, which was a very ..., lots of shops and at the corner was a multiple store called Hermann Tietz, the biggest branch was at the Alexander Platz and diagonally opposite was a shoe shop called Leiser, L-E-I-S-E-R, which in German means quieter, *leise* means quiet, *leiser* means quieter, and I still have a pair of shoe stays with the name of LEISER on it which I brought with me from Germany, I have still got those. And it was a very busy street with a tram running outside, so noise puts me to sleep rather than keeping me awake. I stay more awake in the countryside with the birds chirping than with the noise going on outside, so I am very much used to having grown up in a capital city, with all the noise there.

In those days there were still lots of horse drawn carts, especially when it came to commercial vehicles. Now a son of my father's cousin, he had four sons and one daughter, three of those sons established a factory that made springs, for beds, there are proper springs inside, and they were put on the actual bed base, and on top of that you put the actual mattresses and covers and so on, but the actual spring was like an oblong square with metal springs inside and they used to go in and ..... pulling the little hooks that kept the springs in place. And now, when we moved, from the Fehrbelliner around the corner from Veteranenstrasse they moved on the horse and cart belonging to eventually that son, who had that factory, and I was sitting on top, with the coachman, and I was holding the reins of the horse, and then the tail went up, and down came a few horse balls onto the street, and the streets weren't clean, because there were quite a few horses still about. And that is the way we moved, and they kept the horse in the back, opposite where we lived in Fehrbelliner Strasse, was a little stable and that is where they kept the horse.

RL: Can you describe the apartment that you lived in?

EF: Yes. Now the Veteranenstrasse, as I say we lived on the upper ground floor, so when we went into the hall of the block of flats which ended again in the court yard with lots of flats around it, so as we went into that hall of the building, the first door on the right was our door and then there were some steps up into the upper ground floor which was our flat. Again, we faced to the front, the windows, there was no double glazing of the windows as such, but there were always double windows, one that opened out and one that opened in, so we always had a gap between the two windows which as good

double glazing as you can get, to keep out the noise, to keep out the cold, to keep out the heat, whatever.

**Tape 1: 25 minutes 35 seconds**

And in the same building there were some more Jewish tenants. One of them owned a shop underneath, haberdasher, called Treuner, they had a boy about my age called Arnold, and it was very tragic, we were all immunised against chicken pox and measles and so on and apparently, he must have been allergic to something and he died from the immunisation at the age of eleven I believe, ten or eleven. It was very tragic and I remember sitting there in the flat upstairs saying Tehillim and he passed away.

Now, interestingly enough, on the second floor, lived a family called Bickel, now Bickel had a big furniture shop, across the road from our flat in the Veteranenstrasse, and their furniture shop was next to Moebel Hoeffner, which was a well-known furniture shop as well, and that is where Herman Göring and his wife Emma used to go and buy their furniture. We used to see them come there. So of course, when Hitler came to power, the shops opposite us was the jewellery shop and the furniture shop and others, when Hitler came to power, I believe on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1933, very shortly afterwards was the official boycott of Jewish shops, so he was standing in the window on a Shabbat looking out, and then we saw the SA, in their brown uniforms with the Swastika coming and daubing “Juden” and “Don’t buy here” and other things on all those shops. They didn’t smash the windows at that time, that came later at Kristallnacht, but they put, they stood in front of the shops and tried to prevent people from going in there. Now, Bickel who had the furniture shop, had a daughter, and that daughter married a Rabbi, or shall we say somebody who was going to be a Rabbi, somebody who was studying in the Rabbiner Seminar of Hildesheimer, which I talked about, which was part of the Adass network. I went to the school, there was the Rabbiner Seminar and they also had a hospital, the Adass hospital where I and my sister were born, in Berlin, so that daughter of Bickels married that up and coming Rabbi. His name was Berkovitz, Eliezer Berkovitz. So, my father hired them to give me private lessons in Chumash, Rashi and after I’ve still got the Chumashim that I learned Chumash and Rashi with him, I’ve still got them. Now this Eliezer Berkovitz became later on known one of the foremost Jewish philosophers of our age, he taught at Skokie Chigago, at the Academy, the Jewish Academy there, my nephew went there, and he was a young man teaching Chumash/Rashi. I remember when the twins were born, I used to, at the age of about 13/14, I used to parade with the pram and the twins, down the streets in Berlin. So, we were quite close and unfortunately, I know from Germany he came to.... Leeds, first I believe, before he went to the States, and I had one or two correspondents but never managed to meet up with him again. Later on, when I lived in Yerushalayim and I could have really gone to see him, but he was already very busy and he was already the president and I never somehow, to my regret, whilst he, when we lived in London one of his sons came to our Shul once or twice, and I introduced myself to him, and he was one of the boys that I used to wheel in the pram, one of the twins.

RL: Coming back ... you were describing the apartment ...

**Tape 1: 30 minutes 25 seconds**

EF: The apartment was, of course we had no shop anymore, because I know my parents gave up the shop in Fehrbelliner Strasse and did the main markets in Germany. All over Germany.

RL: Why did they do that?

EF: I should say that the street where the shop was not suitable for passing traffic, it was a very quiet street, and it was more like a stall, because we were doing a market already whilst I had the shop, so anybody who came into the shop could see already my aunt who was looking after it would take the name and address and my parents said this cost so much, it was all marked, and the problem with the customer who came into the shop, I can't remember any, they must have been very few and far between. So they did the markets then, and one of the markets they did, oh, we wanted to go back to the flat first before they came to the market. The flat was two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, a bathroom, that's it. With proper furniture and as I said the lounge was facing the front, the street, and I slept on a couch in the lounge.

RL: And of course, your auntie was there as well.

EF: Yes, she was there as well.

RL: Yes, yes ... ok. You were going to say about the markets?

EF: The markets, one of the markets, I mean they went to Hanover, Braunschweig, Cottbus, Frankfurt, Frankfurt on the Oder, which was very much Germany, it was on the Polish border and became that later, and then to North Germany, they went to Bremerhaven and then to Kolberg, Kolberg was a seaside resort, on the Baltic, near Stettin, Stettin was the main railway terminal, and from there we went to Kolberg, Kolberg had what they had a Messe, a yearly market which was the big event and we went in the summer, we rented a flat, so we enjoyed ourselves at the seaside whilst my father and my mother were doing the market. And Tante Peppi came with us as well to look after us, I remember this for several years, going to Kolberg.

Once I remember being in the Gymnasium already, that our class teacher, our form teacher, who was also the head of the school, because his son was in our class, so he became our form master as well as our teacher. He was vacationing in Kolberg. I got the shock of my life, I came to Shul and during the week and I see him there, of course very much, very informal, and I didn't know how.. , what does one do ... and I had to be on my best behaviour, it was very difficult. So that was one of the places I remember I used

to go with my father, when it was holidays, I used to go to other places like Cottbus, Hanover or Braunschweig.

RL: So how long did they used to be away from home?

**Tape 1: 34 minutes 6 seconds**

EF: Well, we used to always be at home because these Messes, or markets, only lasted about, never more than three or four days. Kolberg was different because there we stayed for a couple of weeks, because that was a yearly event, but the other ones were sort of almost monthly events or bi-monthly events and things like that. So, they went away, mostly during the week but they were always home for Shabbat, and stayed home over Shabbat, because obviously, although Shabbat was the most profitable trading day my parents never traded on Shabbat.

RL: What are your memories of Shabbat and of Yom Tov?

EF: Well, Shabbat and Yom Tov, it was as I say, it was our custom ... let me go into our synagogue first. The district where we lived, the Fehrbelliner Strasse and Veteranenstrasse, at the other end of the Fehrbelliner Strasse, part was called Anklamer Strasse, and when you turned right you came to Zionskirchstrasse, Zionskirchstrasse means the Church of Zion, and it ended in a park that was called Zionskirschplatz, or park, so Church of Zions Park. In the middle of it there was a church called Zionskirsche, Church of Zion, so when you went down from there into the main road that went down the bottom of Veteranenstrasse and you came to the Brunnenstrasse, the main road, now as you turned round the corner from the Anklamer Strasse into the Brunnenstrasse to the right, one of the first houses there was number 33 Brunnenstrasse, B-R-U-N-N-E-N, Brunnenstrasse, again built like all the other flats, through a, a corridor, like a hall, into the court yard at the back, and there was our synagogue, called Beth Zion. So, everything there was Zion orientated, it happened like that. So that synagogue, Beth Zion, it was established in the early 20s, and I have a book about the synagogues in Berlin written by, I think by Sinasohn. He lived in Manchester, he was the principal of the primary and secondary, and secondary school of the Adass. So, he was my director, my principal when I went to Primary School, and he wrote the book about the Adass and the synagogues of Berlin, and he wrote about the Beth Zion Synagogue, about the early Rabbis and the members of the executive, the *Vorstand*.

Now when I grew up already my uncle, the cousin of my father, used to live opposite, he was already a big macher, he was a Gabbai, the Gabbai of that Shul, so my father used to do the Kriat Hatorah, and as I said he was the Gabbai and on Shabbat, Friday night and Shabbat we went to that Shul and I remember being about five or six or whatever it was, maybe less, and I started crying for one reason or another, and I remember my father going "Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh" to be quiet, they were davening there. I remember the names of the Chazzanim we had, one called Bischofsverder, and I believe he also ended up in Leeds, and then I don't know if he went to America or not. But he left already early, during the Hitler time, shortly after 34. Then we had a Chazzan, a smallish person,

a powerful voice called Appel, A-P-P-E-L, now that Appel came to England to Leeds, became a Dayan in Leeds and he died not all that long ago, and I read about his sons either in Israel or here, as Rabbis and so on, that was our Chazzan as I remember as well. Now the Rabbi of our Shul was a chap, a man called Dr Ezekiel, Rabbi Doctor Ezekiel Landau, L A N D A U. Now he claimed to be a descendent of the Noda BeYehuda,

**Tape 1: 39 minutes 16 seconds**

Which was one of the sages in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century in Czechoslovakia, Prague. Noda BeYehuda was well known. He said he was one of these descendents. Now this Rabbi Doctor Ezekiel Landau married the only daughter of a very Chassidic Rabbi in the east end of Berlin called the Besoyner Rov who lived on Dragonerstrasse which is sort of parallel with the Grenadierstrasse which was the quarter for Orthodox Jewry, like Stamford Hill or Borough Park, and things like that, or shall we say more like 777, like Brooklyn, and that is where the Shteibblachs were, a lot of Shteibles, and where you had the kosher chicken people, the kosher butchers, Dragonerstrasse, Grenadierstrasse. And later on in life I came together and was almost dependent on people that used to have businesses there, but that comes later, much later, when I came, after the army already.

So, he married the only daughter of the Besoyner Rav, now he was very well. And I remember the Besoyner Rav, a very small figure, with a beard that must have gone down to his groin, and it sort of came down to a point, a very long beard. And he spoke at his grandson's Bar Mitzvah, two of his grandsons' Bar Mitzvahs. This Rabbi Landau had two sons and one daughter, Sonny, Ziggy and Lotte. Now at the Bar Mitzvah of his grandsons he came to our Shul and spoke, you know, to the Bar Mitzvah boys, in Yiddish. Now I knew Yiddish from home because my Aunt Peppi was not very proficient in German so in my presence they spoke Yiddish, but they didn't want me to understand they spoke Polish, which I just don't know, it was never a language that I took to, so I could understand *Paparossi* means cigarette, *do widzenia* means bye bye, *dzien dobry* means hello or good day, but apart from those few words I never, never ... it is a language ... it is so alien to the Anglo-Saxon languages, or to later on French, to proper Slavonic languages, so I never caught on with ... if they didn't want me to understand, they spoke in Polish. Probably in Polish because it came naturally to them, not because I wouldn't understand. My Aunt Pepe of course spoke mainly in Yiddish to them so I learnt Yiddish from a very, very early age, and it was so similar to German it was no difficulty for me to speak it and afterwards read it fluently and write it.

I am going back now to the make up of Eliezer Berkovitz and Rabbi Landau. When Rabbi Landau left I remember I must have been about 14, we knew that he was leaving for England, so I wrote ..... and I said "How does one get into England?"

He said "Forget, it's almost impossible."

I think he could go to England on a transit visa because he had affidavits to go to America, so do I surmise now. And after he left this young Eliezer Berkovitz became the Rabbi in our Shul, as he had already graduated by then, he was already Rabbi Berkovitz.

Back to Rabbi Landau, he, interesting, he told us, well he told me certainly that he had a higher Jewish education, that means the Gemorrah, Talmud, Shulchan Aruch from a

monk in Czechoslovakia, he took his graduation afterwards at the Rabbiner Seminar but the basic Talmudic and Shulchan Aruch he learned from a monk in Czechoslovakia, which was to me quite extraordinary. So, Doctor Landau as I say graduated in the Rabbiner Seminar as did Rabbi Berkovitz, as did Yossel Burg, he came one of the cabinet, one of the founding fathers of the State of Israel and was a minister of many

**Tape 1: 44 minutes 20 seconds**

governments. Have you heard of Yosel Burg? And one of my private teachers afterwards, called David Rebhun, he was learning there. So, I come back to school later on to give you some idea of how the schooling was.

So, as I say, in our synagogue, this Rabbi Berkovitz became the Rabbi and then of course with Kristallnacht. We were sleeping upstairs when all of a sudden, the noise broke out on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November. My father was already not there, I will come back to that later, and there was my mother, my sister and myself standing up here and listening to all that commotion downstairs, and they were really breaking the windows and smashing things, inside the Synagogue, which was in the courtyard, opposite the ... sorry I missed that out ... we moved to the Brunnenstrasse, I didn't tell you that, after the Veteranenstrasse, in about 1937 we moved to the Brunnenstrasse. Right in front of the Synagogue, in the same building. Me again had our windows to the main road and in the court yard there was the synagogue, sorry I left that out, because we were talking about the synagogue. So, on Kristallnacht we were standing, you know listening upstairs, to all the noise going on, and we heard the SA downstairs shouting '*Hier sind noch Juden oben*'. It was the first time I felt real fear. I felt real fear, real fear ... I had never felt it before. But they never came up, they never disturbed us, and they smashed everything inside of course and the Shul was closed and we had no more Shul, that was the end of our Synagogue, our bet Knesset.

RL: How big a gathering did it attract?

EF: Oh, we had, I should say a membership of about at least 500, and the attendance on Shabbat was ... I would say was anything between one and two hundred, there was a gallery for ladies upstairs and the men in the middle, and you know the Ark and all the trimmings.

And the other thing the Synagogue did for me was that Dr Landau trained his children to, obviously to learn their Jewish subjects of Chumash and so on, and give little talks on what they learned, they didn't make it up themselves, like preaching from the pulpit, to the children's service, in the afternoon on Shabbat. We went to the children's service, and I was also one of those who learned and preached. Now, apart from going to a Jewish school, I also attended in the afternoon at least three times a week, what we called Cheder, Hebrew classes, Doctor Landau was the teacher, another one was Doctor Freier, he was a husband of Recha Freier, of Youth Aliyah fame, Recha Freier and Henrietta Szold founded the Youth Aliyah and made it the success that it was, so her husband, Doctor Freier was one of my teachers in Mishnayot. Doctor Landau taught us Gemorra and Rabbi Frank taught us Chumash Rashi, so Frankfurter also taught us Bar Mitzvah,

the tunes and everything like that, and so, Doctor Landau introduced these speeches and little lectures by us youngsters at the age of, after Bar Mitzvah, and that is how I learned to give a lecture, my his sons did the same, they are much better than me of course, but ... of course what I did first, I wrote it all down, I tried to memorise and so on, much later I got so ... I should

**Tape 1: 49 minutes 6 seconds**

say ... I had my little what they call [...], just little words, and from that I developed my theme, and the next one and the next one. But that is the first time that I had to learn by heart what I have got there ...

RL: So was the membership of the Shul ... What background were the people?

EF: They used to call it, should I say, very traditional orthodox, certainly orthodox, you would not get any cars coming there on Shabbat and leave them outside, it was all you know, in walking distance, the membership, we lived around there.

RL: And were they mainly German born or Europeans?

EF: Mixed, mixed, mixed ... I should say mainly German born, but a third might have been Austrian.

RL: And how did the two sections get on?

EF: Oh, it was fine, fine ... well as far as I remember, I mean don't forget, by the time Hitler came to power I was just the years old, what happened before I wouldn't know. But I remember in school, there was a very distinct German Jewish arrogance towards the non-Germans. So much so, that at the assembly you always had to stand and sing the German anthem, "*Deutschland über alles*", both principals in the primary school and in the Gymnasium were German ex-servicemen, Jewish ex-servicemen, decorated, Iron Cross, the principal I think was wounded in the war, and was limping, I don't know if he had an artificial leg or something. So, our principal, Schlesinger, whose eldest boy was in our class, he had nine children, and I learned later that he was taken from the Jewish hospital with his whole family in 1941 or 42 or maybe even 43 and sent to Auschwitz with the whole family and perished there. And that was an ex-German soldier, *Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten*.

RL: So, you were saying about the division at school between the German born and the ... can you tell me a bit more about that and how it manifested itself?

EF: Well, I should say the German Jews looked down on what they called the Austrian, the ones from the east, because after all they had been established in Germany some families for 1,000 years and these were really immigrants, recent immigrants, and of course their culture was very much German oriented. Like we had at school Goethe Schiller, Heine. Heine you weren't allowed any more, Chamisso, I learnt a lot from Chamisso, there was a really good German education, so those German Jews, from as



ever orthodox as ever, were certainly very much into German culture, but the Austrian weren't so you found that they used to congregate, the Austrians, within their own circles, as the German Jews were in their own circles as well. I wouldn't say ... well there was a certain amount of animosity, because some of the Austrians resented being treated like that, and when Hitler came of course all that more or less disappeared. I say

**Tape 1: 53 minutes 0 second**

More or less. I still heard some of the people from the east, when they saw a German Jew, they could see him, "who is that Yekke, who is that Yekkische there." They could see who is a German Jew. But, I must say, in school itself, the children, there was no distinguished, just we were all together, and we were at each others houses. I mean, for instance, the Posen family, was a well known name in Frankfurt and Berlin, they were silversmiths, they had silver shops in the main Unter den Linden, which is near the Brandenburg Gate. They had a shop there, they were Posen... Posen and he was the treasurer of the Adass school system and he had a daughter who was my twin, born on the same day, and at the school, when the school put on plays for Purim or Chanukah and so on she and I used to have the main roles in the Purim shpiel, like Achashveirosh and Esther and things like that, and I was quite keen on her actually, and she was freckled, and, but that is another story that comes later. But it just so happens that again they were very German but I did go to their house and I did go to various German houses of the high ups in the school system, and I felt no discrimination whatsoever, but I did feel with the grown ups that sometimes I was ... but then unfortunately we came to haunt them, the German Jews and we had to, and I still laugh, when I hear these ex-Germans, Yekkes, speaking Yiddish in Gateshead, and I say I have never heard such good German before ... because they tried to speak Yiddish in the camps, but not Austrian, real Yiddish

RL: The school that you went to ... What standard of Hebrew education did it have?

EF: Oh, those who graduated to university, they went up to Gemorrah standard, they learned Gemorrah. When I left, it was about two years before the Abitur, we went up to Shulchan Aruch and Mishnayot. There were at least two to three hours of Hebrew lessons every day, with the general knowledge, semantics, French, Latin and all sorts of things.

RL: And also, even though you went to a Jewish school you went to cheder, you had cheder ...

EF: Yes, because my father felt that the Jewish school education was too limited with what he wanted me to learn, so I always had from an early age, a private teacher, when we could afford it and then cheder, which also cost money, but it was in a class, a different thing, there was a sort of routine when we went to cheder in the afternoon when we had no school. Later on, we had afternoon school so I had private lessons.

RL: Did many other children do that also?

EF: Some of my classmates did, yes. Again they lived in different parts of Berlin, so I only knew the ones I was very friendly with and who lived around the corner from us and

that we went together to school on the *Stadtbahn* which was the railway, local railway, and I came back the same way and we went to each others houses, but they were also Austrians by then, they were rich..... compared to us.

**Tape 1: 56 minutes 50 seconds**

RL: Did you belong to any youth groups?

EF: I started off when I was about ten or eleven with Ezra, that is Ezra Noar Agudati, and from there I graduated to Bachad, the Kibbutz Hadaati movement.

RL: And how often did Ezra meet?

EF: Oh, we met every Shabbat, and we walked for miles and miles to various people's houses, I remember the madrich of the Ezra was called Hass, and I think they had a wholesale grocery business and I went to them and also one of them was Jacobovitz, this Jacobovitz was the Chief Rabbi's parents, I went to their Sukkah with the Ezra, and Rabbi Jacobovitz was three classes above me and his younger brother was in my class. He lives now in Canada and his children live in Golders Green. So Emmanuel I know from a long, long time ago ...

RL: This film is about to end so we will just stop here.

EF: Good.

**TAPE 2**

RL: This is the interview with Eli Fachler and it is tape 2.

So, you were just telling me about the youth groups that you belonged to and you mentioned Ezra, and you mentioned also another group.

EF: Bachad, which is spelled in German or English B-A-C-H-A-D, it is an acronym for Brit Chalutzim Datiim, which means the organisation of religious chalutzim, pioneers. It was quite strong in Berlin, purely orthodox, Israel orientated, Palestine, and it was one of the groups, organisations rather, which was affiliated to the Kibbutz Hadati in Israel, so the youth groups were called Brit Chalutzim Datiim, and the younger ones were called Bnei Akiva or should I say, Bnei Akiva. Yes, Bnei Akiva, the younger ones. The older ones who were not kibbutz orientated were called Torah v'Avoda, which was also a sister organisation within the larger Mizrachi movement, Mizrachi Hapoelim Mizrachi. So this umbrella organisations had these sections like the Chalutz movement, kibbutz haDatiim, Brit Chalutzim Datiim, Bachad, Torah v Avodah, which was the Israel orientated professionals, businessmen or workers or whatever it is, Torah v Avodah, which means Bible and Work, and in Ezra of course, like most youth movements outside Ezra they are called Israel, it was then Palestine, obviously. All movements outside Israel had a parent

organisation in Israel, like Chalutz in Britain or Germany, was in Israel. The General Kibbutz Movement, which was split into three or four, like Kibbutz Meuchad, and whatever the other kibbutz movements were called. Including, there was for instance

**Tape 2: 2 minutes 51 seconds**

the Hashomer Hatzair in Germany and Britain which was part of Meretz, which was Mapam. So, they were certainly anti-religious, Russia-orientated, very communistic, looking for world revolution as a solution to the Jewish problem rather than Zionism as such.

RL: Who was in charge of the movement? The BACHAD movement?

EF: The Bachad movement, in Germany, and then later in England, it was a man, and he is still alive, in his nineties, very active in the movement, called Aryeh Handler. Aryeh Handler hailed from Magdeburg and he was in charge of the BACHAD movement, they worked very well together with the Chalutz movement, all the Zionist groups worked more or less well together in order to achieve things with the Nazi regime, he was in charge of the movement there, he had access to the Gestapo and the various Nazi bureaus and departments connected with immigration to Israel. The main centre was called the Palästina-Amt, which means the office for Palestine, nothing to do with Arabs, only with Jews mind you. And that was on the Meineckestrass on the west end of Berlin, and both of the offices that had to do with immigration were situated there. I do not remember where the BACHAD office was, or the Mizrachi office in Berlin, but I know that it was in London when we came to London.

RL: How often would you meet as part of BACHAD and what kind of things did you do?

EF: We were a youth group. Anything from about 14 to 17, boys and girls, we would meet on Shabbat mainly in various people's houses, and we would discuss Parshat Hashevuah or politics or just going rambling or just, you know, being as a group together talking, social intercourse.

RL: Right, and did you go for rambles during the week?

EF: Not during the week, but we went for weekends sometimes, we did go on rambles together, and in Britain more than in Germany I attended camps.

RL: Were there camps in Germany?

EF: Yes, there were camps in Germany, there were Hachsharah Kibbutzim in Germany as well. Steckelsdorf was one of the religious ones.

RL: But you didn't go ...

EF: I went during the summer holidays to one of them, to the school, not to the BACHAD, to one of those BACHAD kibbutzim in Germany, with one of our teachers, he was the PT teacher, he was in charge of our group, the school group, not BACHAD, and that is where I got very attracted to the way of life they were leading in the religious  
**Tape 2: 6 minutes 37 seconds**

kibbutz and the ideologies they propounded and where I picked up the Ivrit pronunciation, the Sephardi pronunciation, because before that it was all Ashkenazi. Haolom and Boruch and since then I went to Boruch Ata, and since then I have kept that, with my father's consent.

RL: So where was this kibbutz that you visited?

EF: It was in Judenburg, a place called Judenburg, it must have been in central or south Germany or something like that.

RL: And what was the name of it?

EF: I think it was called Judenburg but I am not sure, I know there was one called Steckelsdorf which was one of the Kibbutzim there, but I don't remember, as a movement, it was one of the camps there. It was in or near Judenburg, which means Jewish Hill.

RL: How Zionist were your parents?

EF: Very Zionist orientated.

RL: And did they belong to any organisations?

EF: No, they belonged to ... the only Zionist organisation, there was the ..., they didn't belong to anything like Mizrachi?

RL: Did they belong to any other kind of organisation or society?

EF: No, excuse me ... no, it was all mainly Synagogue orientated.

RL: There were no other groups that they ... ?

EF: No, there was a Jüdische Gemeinde, there was Adass, there was Liberals and Reforms. When I say they belonged to ... it was religious orientation more than an actual political one. Because within the Jewish organisations there were political trends, obviously. So, when people had their annual or bi-annual elections to the executives of the Jewish community then they had the arguments about whom to vote for.

RL: How far did you participate in the culture around you?

EF: Fully. 100%.

RL: What would you do? In what way?

**Tape 2: 9 minutes 16 seconds**

EF: For instance, I was in the school sports team and I won second place in putting the shot in my year, and we paraded on the Jewish sports grounds on this event. I was active in that. There were youth groups and school activities, and the school itself had various excursions during the year with the form master and so on.

RL: What about entertainment?

EF: Entertainment ... well, as a child I was taken to the theatre by my mother, for children's live pantomime and things like that, Hansel and Gretel and stuff, I had one or two nightmares from some of these plays, but real cultural entertainment really started later on in school, when Hitler was already in power, the Jews weren't allowed to attend general opera or theatre, so the Jews made their own with their own artists, who weren't allowed to work as Germans any more or with German institutions, they made their own Kulturbund and we went to opera performed by the Jüdische Kulturbund and I remember my first opera was the Barber of Seville, and our music teacher, Mr Freier, again, going away, Mr Freier came to England, he lived in Bedford where the BBC orchestra was evacuated during the war and he was one of the conductors of the BBC symphony orchestra, so he was quite a musician, so this Mr Freier got us to, to introduce us to opera and so on. Introduction to theatre I didn't need much because theatre literature was part of the German curriculum. Shakespeare in German, Goethe and Schiller, and when it came to school plays, I used to always perform, so I knew about German theatre.

RL: What about cinema?

EF: Yes, I was an avid addict for about a year or two, much to the disgust of my father anyway, I should be improving myself, you know, he used to lecture me, instead of just watching the screen, but I consciously copied some of the characters that I saw on the screen, like, one was called the Hussar, he was. Hussar means someone who was in the cavalry, it was someone who was sitting upright and so on and I always walked extremely upright with my back and I think I just tried to copy this type of figure. And I remember years later, I am going back about twenty years or more or thirty years from now, we were living in London already and we were very friendly with another family, and I took my wife and that friend, a lady friend, to the opera or the theatre in the west end, and as I opened the door for them that friend said to my wife "He has got a figure and he knows it." So that came from going to the cinema.

RL: And what about reading of books?

EF: Oh, I devoured books, not necessarily ... mind you I was fascinated by literature as such, German literature, Schiller and Goethe and so on and Chamisso, Heine was

forbidden, I was always, how should we say, addicted, probably, to poetry, because to me poetry is like music, to, you know to get things to rhyme and then, certain, how shall we say, rhythm. Rhythm to me is music, I used to compose, I remember later on at school in Scotland when it came to Youth Aliyah, I had a classmate and I brought him probably to  
**Tape 2:14 minutes 0 second**

tears when in the evening when we went to sleep, I used to talk in rhyme only. That sort of thing, and we used to make it up, to me poetry was ... yes, from an early age in school I was reciting poetry already, not only that, in kindergarten I was reciting poetry, I remember as a boy of about three or four in kindergarten I was lighting Chanukah candles with my father standing beside me and prompting me. So, I used to reciting and things like that. Also, I know it was one of my school mates who now lives in London, whenever we were together at any particular function, anything that has to be read out like poetry or something he said "Eli, come here."

RL: Did you learn to play any musical instruments?

EF: Only the gramophone. I started, no, not really, I didn't really start the violin, I was supposed to start the violin or piano but I didn't, I never did.

RL: Okay. Did you mix at all with any non -Jewish children?

EF: Yes, that is a very interesting chapter. When we lived in Veteranenstrasse in the same block there was the back flats, where the yard was, there was a family called Schultz, a very German name, and there was a son my age called Bruno, Bruno Schultz, and you know, again from the age of ten or eleven we played together, we played marbles, I mean also there was Arnold Turner, the one who died from immunisation and we were very close, we played marbles and things like that and he joined the Hitler Youth and you know told me what they did at camp, they youth they fraternised with the BDM, with the girls camps and what they got up to, and up to the last day when we left Veteranenstrasse we were on very friendly terms. There was one non-Jewish friend who actually, who was friend; he was also the first one who introduced me to sexual activity at the age of ten or eleven, telling me all about it. The real, what you call Aufklärung in Germany, the real know how of how sex works came from a classmate of mine later on, at the age of 13 or 14, or maybe 12, I can't remember any more, he is still alive in America, we are still in touch.

RL: Did you have any unpleasant experiences with non-Jewish children?

EF: Yes, during the Hitler time, I wore what they called a *Studenten*, which was a special cap for students with silver stars on the side made from silk, as a matter of fact, the hat shop, in the shop where I bought them, I was very friendly with their daughter, Toni, he was called Diesenhaus, Diesenhaus in Yerushalayim and in Tel Aviv there is a travel agent called Diesenhaus. I don't know if they are any relation or not, but anyway, this Toni Diesenhaus was slightly older than me, well developed, and I certainly took a shine to her and she took a shine to me. I was pretty precocious as a child, I was always

looking much older than I was, and we had a love affair, more or less, I mean nothing physical as such apart from kissing, but I, what I did, I wanted to sit next to her at one of those opera performances by the Kulturbund and I wrote to the organisers, would they please sit me next to her when I come. That letter was promptly forwarded to my school

**Tape 2: 18 minutes 13 seconds**

principal who called in my parents and said “There is a flame, extinguish it now before it goes any further.” I never forgave him, I never forgave them for sending that letter to them in the first place. It was so cruel, so cruel. I think she perished in the holocaust, I am not sure, we moved away.

And her sister was, how did I get to meet her, her sister was in the same class as my sister in a different school, in a Jewish school, in a Jewish girls school, there wasn't a mixed school, in the Adass we had a Girls Gymnasium, and a Boys Gymnasium, my sister went to a Jewish girls school and Toni's sister was in her class and at the birthday party of that sister, I was invited as well, I was the only boy with twenty girls, and there was Toni as well and we were the older ones, and the father came in and he saw us sitting there, and he saw I was the only boy and he said “Ah [German phrase]”, the cockerel in the chicken pen. It was a hen party, since then we got....., and we lived in the same street, the shop was further down the street. And then I got these caps, they had sort of, they looked almost like, I would say, you see very often in Europe these officials wear these ..... with something in front and these [...] and I had a silk one with three stars on the side, and when I walked in the street once or twice you had some goyishe Hitler youth knocking that cap off my head, but I fought them. I fought them every time, I stood my ground, I didn't run away. I mean, as usual with such gangs they didn't dare accost me when they are on their own, it was only when they were in groups of two or three, it did not annoy me greatly. I was fairly tall and ... for my age. When I went to school, I was one of the tallest and fattest in my class, after that I got very thin, but when I actually went to school at the age of six, I was ...

RL: And then as Hitler came to power and the years went by, how did that affect the family?

EF: Very much so, I mean, what happened, when there was one Messe, sort of market, yearly market or monthly market in one of those provincial towns, barred you from having stands there. So, economy became very, very difficult, I mean we had ... how we held our head above water I don't know, because I was never as a child invited to any discussions about ... I mean we heard the grown ups talking about the certain things that were happening, and how long will Hitler last, or won't he last and all the usual, I know ..... but economics. I know my father's cousin's family had money with the furniture shop and with the factory making those things, but I know that for us making a living became harder and harder, without anything being said, and I know sometimes, and I know my father had to borrow money and then pay it back, so it became a very hard time ... I mean also because of our family situation there was a reduction in my school fees, we didn't have to pay the full school fees.

RL: You mentioned how in 1937 you moved, what was the reason for that move ...

EF: To Brunnenstrasse ...

**Tape 2: 22 minutes 15 seconds**

RL: ... for that move ?

EF: It could have been financial, that the flat in Brunnenstrasse was cheaper to rent, we never owned a flat, we always rented, most people rented. Brunnenstrasse was probably cheaper, I surmise, maybe because the SS son of the owner said get rid of the Jews, who knows?

RL: Now you were living in Berlin and ... do you remember anything about the Olympic Games?

EF: Yes, very much so, 1936 ...

RL: What can you tell me about that?

EF: Well, I will tell you what, first of all on every street corner practically there was a box with German papers like the 'Völkischer Beobachter', the Nazi paper, and 'Der Stürmer' were displayed. They were very anti Jewish with the caricatures with long noses and things like that. At the Olympic Games, these things disappeared, because they didn't want all the foreigners seeing all that, so Berlin really during the Olympic Games was a pretty civilised town really. The provinces didn't have it so good but Berlin certainly was. Of course, we saw then on the newsreel in the cinema the mass parades and you felt part of it, irrespective of everything, you certainly felt part of it. I didn't realise at the time, I was too young, to fully appreciate the irony of a negro winning the hundred metres, Jesse Owen, and Hitler not shaking hands or giving him the medal, because how can a non-Aryan be more proficient and physically better than an Aryan, but I didn't appreciate that at the time, not until afterwards of course, when one grows up one knows about such things and I know certain Jewish athletes were not allowed to take part. I think some athletes didn't want to take part, Americans, because of Hitler, but I gathered that much, much later, but the atmosphere in 1936. And Leni Riefenstahl who made the film about the Olympics, it was a classic, absolutely. It was brilliant when we saw it. Whether she was a confidante of Hitler or a mistress, I don't know, but she, either she is still alive or she died a year or two ago, there was a whole documentary about her, she never married. Leni Riefenstahl, to her Hitler was God.

RL: Did you witness any of the parades in, you know in ...?

EF: Not in our street, not in our street, no ... there was not a parade in our street. Yes, you had little groups of SS or SA officers, and Hitler Youth did march up and down when they assembled because one of their meeting places was on the ground floor, in the cellar, underneath where my father's cousin lives, he had a factory underneath, and groups stood



out and they made military exercises and .....forward marching, but apart from that ... no ...

RL: Did you ever see Hitler?

**Tape 2: 25 minutes 50 seconds**

EF: The only ... not personally, no, I never did. The only time that I saw the marchers in their uniform actually doing things, was when it was the boycott, when they daubed the Jewish shops in Veteranenstrasse and again when they smashed our Synagogue, it was the first time I had ever experienced fear.

RL: So, what happened after that night of Kristallnacht?

EF: Let me ... I have to go back a little bit ...

RL: Right ...

EF: Kristallnacht was on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November. Before that on 28<sup>th</sup> October ... about 11 days, 12 days before, it was what they called the Polenaktion, Polenaktion, was when Germany decided that after Poland issued a decree that anybody who has not lived in Poland for five years or so will use their Polish nationality, and wouldn't get a passport. Then there was a scramble for Polish passport by all these stateless Jews, who came from Poland, and I remember queuing outside the Polish consulate waiting for passports and in the end, we were given passports so we had Polish passports. So, when they made this decree about not allowing Jews to come back to Poland, because it was very anti-Semitic, the regime in Poland, and the background of somebody. I think Pilsudski was the president. No, it wasn't, no Pilsudski was only in the war time, sorry the one who got shot down. Anyway, the foreign minister was back and there was a very anti-Semitic government, and they made this decree because they were afraid, they would get flooded with Jews. So once the decree came about, Nazi Germany decided to get rid of all the Polish Jews before Poland closed the borders, so on 28<sup>th</sup> October there was the Polenaktion, and they rounded up all Polish citizens, and don't forget that Germany was so orderly, everything was recorded in the police station, exactly who was living there and with the name and date and date of birth and married and children and everything. They made lists, and those lists were prepared, it must have been a week or a few days before, maybe over a week before, and anybody over the age of 15 was on that list, but only men, in Berlin they only took men, in Poland they took whole families, and also the age difference, they didn't like in Berlin, so in Berlin they only took the men over 15, so in the night or early morning, it was still dark, of 28<sup>th</sup> October, the police knocked at the door and asked for my father to come to the police station, and from there they went to an assembly place and then they went in lorries and were taken to the Polish border and at night they were pushed over the Polish border by foot into Polish territory and there the Poles stopped them and interned them, well not interned them but assembled them all into one place called Zbonszyn and in German called Neu Bentschen and this is where they stayed for about six months. And so, there was just my mother, my sister and myself

left, and when I woke up my mother told me “Father has been taken away.” .....so the minute we heard that I went into, not hiding, I went into, to stay with my father’s cousins across the road because we lived on Brunnenstrasse already but they were still in Fehrbelliner Strasse, around the corner, because they had Turkish nationality. They did arrest people in the street as well, asking for papers. My luck was that I was 15 on 27<sup>th</sup> October, and the list was older than that, so I wasn’t on the list so they didn’t take me. It was all beshert. So now we come to Kristallnacht, only 3 of us for Kristallnacht and my father was already gone and there we were upstairs when they did the .... After Kristallnacht my father’s cousin decided that it was enough, Hitler was not going to go away, and they fled illegally by taxi to Belgium. There was the road traffic going and we paid a hell of a lot of money for the whole set up that smuggled Jews out of Germany to Belgium and France, Holland, Switzerland and so on, and that family, my father’s family managed to escape there. Around about December 38 or January 39.

**Tape 2: 31 minutes 5 seconds**

RL: So, what were you doing?

EF: Oh, I kept on going to school. My mother carried on with the markets wherever she was allowed, but then Hitler, Nazi Germany made a pact with Poland, and they allowed those Polish Jews in Zbonszyn or Bentschen to come back to Germany, to wind up their affairs and be allowed for that for about a month or two and then Poland will receive them back with all their possessions, whatever their furniture, and money wasn’t even allowed ... but a certain amount was, let’s put it that way, so that my father ... I went back to school, we are talking about now November/December. My school was functioning still in the Tiergarten but only until March/April 39. Now the German Jews at Kristallnacht were mainly sent to concentration camps were made to sign over their bank accounts or whatever to the German state and told, you know, that is it, leave Germany if you can, German passports you have got with a “J” stamped in it, and also all Germans had to have a Jewish name added to their German names in their passport as well now, so a lot of German Jews obviously scrambled to get permits to go abroad wherever they could and to emigrate. A lot of them managed to do it, but the experience of having been in concentration camp, like my French teacher at school, a very German Jew who came to our school because he was kicked out of the non-Jewish German school where he was teaching before, he was quite a high academic, Buchsbaum, and when he came out of the concentration camp, I saw him at one of those performances of the Kulturbund and he was certainly shattered. He had lost a lot of weight.

So, the ... the family I had left, my mother and my sister and myself and my brother tried to make ... eek out a living, going to Berlin to various markets, and my father was coming home in April, May or June. I ... the one who had, the brother who had the spring factory, he belonged to, or had connections to B’nei Brith, in the Jüdische Gemeinde, in the Jewish community, and B'nei Brith was also active in getting permits for children to come under the Kinder Transport, they were one of the organisations like Aliyat Noa, there was the B’nei Brith as well but they had people in England guaranteeing for a child with £50, and my sister and I were on that list, as soon as our

name would come up or our number would come up we would go on Kindertransport, but before that I got my place with BACHAD and Aliyat Noa, so we had to go for what they called *Vorbereitungslager* which means preparation camp for eventually integrating into a religious kibbutz in Israel, that lasted two weeks, near Hamburg, Altona a place called Blankenese, BLANKENESE, which was a kind of holiday resort, the estate belonged to the [...], and they gave it for this training and that is where I spent two weeks, what they called *Vorbereitungslager*, preparation, and then you were sort of selected to see if you were suitable to join the kibbutz movement in Israel.

**Tape 2: 35 minutes 42 seconds**

RL: So, what kind of things were you doing there?

EF: Mainly agricultural and to see what stamina you have got. Well I had to sit and peel a heap of potatoes, to see how long it would take us, there was about two or three of us just peeling potatoes, which to me seemed very stupid, but ... and then we were ideologically indoctrinated, you know, about socialism, where you added things, like ....., when an article is made the raw material cost so much, by the time it is an article how much it is worth, advertising and things, it was all completely new to me, but I absorbed it all and we talked about forbidden subjects that weren't allowed to be taught anywhere else, in the privacy of our groups at kibbutz we were then introduced to socialism and social ideology which was part of the kibbutz movement, obviously. So, after two weeks we were all waiting, trembling about did we get accepted to go on Aliyah or not. .... not allowed to go on Aliya, because Britain had not allowed enough certificates to come to Palestine, to Israel, only a certain number, unless you had money, you could come as a capitalist and if not, you can't and that sort of thing. But only a certain number could come to England on the Kinder Transport and join organisations that were set up here for these children, including hachshara kibbutzim in England, which were set up here. So, I was given a place, to go in May, to England, or rather Scotland.

What happened there was that the estate of the late Lord Balfour, the Balfour Declaration, whose stately home was called Whittingehame in Scotland, in East Lothian, near Haddington, near Edinburgh, that palatial place was made into a farm school, already in January/February 1939, and a certain number of children, under Aliyat Noa, the youth aliyah, were placed there to be given schooling in normal subjects up to a certain age, and agriculture, and that is where I arrived on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May.

My father wasn't back from Poland yet, yes, he was, I am sorry, my father had come back from Poland already, because I remember them both standing at the platform at the station, waving goodbye.

And, do you want me to talk about the goodbye?

RL: Yes.

**Tape 2: 38 minutes 40 seconds**

EF: Right. Now I knew that my place would remain. Now before that the Adass School was closed down. At the end of the semester which was in March, and the new school year opened up in April, and we all went to the other Jewish school, belonging to the Jüdische Gemeinde, to the Jewish community, it was not orthodox, it was then mixed. And we had teachers like Rabbi Nussbaum, who became the famous Rabbi in Hollywood, who converted Elizabeth Taylor. I mean, those were our teachers, you know ... throwing up names like that. And of course I was only about six weeks there, but I got what they called an *Abgangszeugnis*, a certificate that I attended that school for the last six weeks, but I got all the other *Zeugnis* from the Adass....what grades I got, how far I got, and that is how, and after that short stay in that school I went to the assembly place and we were all told, the group of a few hundred who were on that train, from the Hauptbahnhof in Berlin, and there was my sister and my parents, standing on the platform, and of course in that group that went on that train were quite a few people from our Bachad Group, in Berlin, we went together. And there a girl from Breslau, was also there, in the same, in the same compartment more or less, and she got hold of me, and I was smitten from the word go. Apparently, she had gone to a good school, but apart from that she had also gone to a theatrical school in her spare time, and she was a child actress and dancer etc. I thought, very pretty, and anyway, she took hold of me, and that was, she was my first real girlfriend. For about a year we went together to the same school to Whittingehame and so on.

So that was the goodbye. And I didn't think, ever, that I wouldn't see my parents again. It was like going on holiday. Sooner or later either I would come back or they would follow. I knew then that leaving Germany was a relief, it was definitely, you were getting free, you were being freed from something.

For how long, or when ... it didn't really go on our mind. Why? Because the company, the boys and girls, was so absorbing and me being what I was, active, I wasn't a passive bystander. And we got to the frontier, between Germany and Holland, and once we crossed it, of course the Gestapo came in, "What have you got in your case?" And I think I had one or two silver things with me. I think it was all written down what I had, which was my silver cup given to me for my Bar Mitzvah, given to me by the family of my father's cousin, I have still got it, and some other things, but everything was alright. And in the end, they left, and the train eased itself over to the Dutch Border where the Dutch came in, and the cry for joy that arose from everybody there, such a sense of release, was spontaneous, overwhelming, I will never forget it, I mean ... that was.

Had we known that we were, when you lived in a dictatorship like Germany, we grow up there, things become normal, you know you took it for granted that you mustn't do this, and mustn't do that. The minute the shackles come off, when you feel released, it was fantastic, I mean at the age of fifteen and a half I was certainly conscious of it, and most of the people that were in our group were about the same age. Some a little younger, some a year older, some things. That group stayed together, then we went to the Hook Van Holland, a boat overnight ... to ... I don't know ... Der Haag, I think, the harbour,

**Tape 2: 43 minutes 52 seconds**

and from there to The Hague, to Holland, and then from there we got ... no to Holland, sorry, and from The Hague we went on a boat to England. We arrived in Dover, and from Dover to Liverpool Street Station, where we were ... no not Dover, I am sorry, it wasn't Dover, from The Hague to Harwich, from Harwich to Liverpool Street Station, where we were met by the British representatives of the Hechalutz, you know one of the movements, who took the whole group under their wings, they took us around London, where we first saw Charlie Chaplin, Modern Times, in Trafalgar Square, in one of those big cinemas where you eat as well. They took us to a kosher restaurant in Berwick Street. It was then the first time we had kosher sausages, which, there was no kosher meat in Berlin. And as a group we were taken onto the train in Kings Cross in the evening, and we arrived in Scotland, in Haddington, the following morning on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May. And then we were taken by lorry to the farm school in Whittingehame, by one of the teachers.

What else do you want to know?

RL: What kind of things did you bring?

EF: A trunk. And they gave you a list of what you had to bring, like rubber boots, and working clothes, towels, underwear, suits, shirts, there was a list ... and then my silver cup as well.

RL: Anything else of value?

EF: Well, obviously family photos and things like that, I took with me, or was later on they came by post they came, but basics, mainly basics, and ten Marks, which was then 17 shillings.

RL: And then ...

EF: In a trunk, with my name, Eli Fachler, with I got a list, I have got the list still of what I could bring ...

RL: And what was this like?

EF: And of course, my reports, my school reports ...

RL: And what was it like in Scotland when you arrived?

EF: The time of my life, the best years of my life ... the best years of my life ...

RL: Can you describe where you were living? The set up ...

**Tape 2: 46 minutes 27 seconds**

EF: Yes ... it was a farm school. The headmaster was called Maxwell, he was a Scotsman, with a kilt. And he tried to model that school to be the Eton of the refugee schools. Houses with housemasters. What we did, right from the beginning, is congregate in kvutzot, because each according to the Israeli parent company so to speak, had their own kvutza. So, there was a hechalutz, there was a scout group, there was an English scout group ... which was apart from Germany, there were the more or less general Zionists, and as I say there was the kibbutz movement, more religious, anti religious and religious – and I became the head of the religious group which was called BILU – Beit Yaakov Lechu Venelcho, I think it was the second or third aliyah, we called it BILU. And we were the religious kvutza and one of the rooms, one of the big rooms was made into a Beit Knesset, and we organised services, the place was run on strictly kosher and Shabbat lines. Some of the anti religious chalutzniks went outside the grounds on Shabbat to smoke, which was forbidden anyway, but we knew already. The discussions amongst the groups, there was a house newspaper which was displayed on the notice board. And of course, the anti-religious vote against you know, how can one believe in all this religion now that we have got Freud and Marx and so on. And I answered “In order to be a Jew do I have to know what Marx had to say?” You know ... it was a real ... it was, invigorating, it was certainly, and life was very full, it was really full.

So, we had lessons in the morning. Our English was non existent more or less, and we spoke a lot of German. And officially in the general assembly of the school, a rule was made that only English or Ivrit was allowed to be spoken in the school, after all we were a school in preparation to going to Palestine as chalutzim so we had to learn Ivrit.

In order to learn Ivrit we had two teachers, two main teachers for Ivrit. One was called Mar Yaffe, who was a pupil of Bialik and one was called Mar Gilboa, he was one of the main actors of the main actors of the Ohel theatre company, which was together with Habimah at the time. Habimah was one and Ohel was the other. Whether one was more bourgeois and the other was more labour orientated, I can't remember ... but if one looked up the history of Ohel and Habimah you would read all about it.

Mar Gilboa, he became afterwards a Hebrew teacher with the London County Council, and he taught evening classes. I never met him again, but others who did meet him, and he got friends with people in Letchworth later on who actually went to his classes and mentioned my name, and he said “Send him my best regards.”

I mean interesting chapter, this came later, when our own son meets later the headmaster of Whittingehame at Hebrew U, but that is another story.

So, in Whittingehame, as I say, it was very, I became the leader of that, of the BILU, and obviously we had ... and right at the beginning ... put it this way, right at the beginning we had cultural activities. Now what cultural activities.

**Tape 2: 50 minutes 42 seconds**

And I read, in German, H G Wells, The History Of The World, and there he starts about the theory, and how it all started from the amoeba to the fish, to the birds, to the animal, to the monkeys and to the human beings. I got all that. And the same afternoon I gave a lecture on that, in German, to the group. So, you know, I had the book in front of me, but I remember that as one of my first experiences there. So anyway, I was elected to lead the group, and we went on tiyulim and we had cultural activities, and then we had of course, the teachers, and they were very devoted.

Now the domestic running of the school was in the hands of a lady, Miss Laquer. It was a French name, she was German, she was the head of the *Haushaltungsschule*, the Domestic School in Frankfurt where my wife learnt her cooking and her baking. Miss Laquer and one of her assistants, Fraulein Fischel, Miss Fischel was her assistant in our school as well, they came over together, Ruth Fischel. And then there was another one who was from there who later on married the ... who became the second mother of a good friend of ours in Yerushalayim, now that is a small world. She is still alive as far as I remember, so Ruth Fischel and Mar Gilboa got on very well I understand, but there wasn't any, as far as I know, any hanky panky.

So, the coincidence of it, I never knew about, I never knew about Miss Laquer being the director and principal of the house and in Frankfurt, anyway, it was run on strictly orthodox lines, so much so that on motzei Shabbat which in wartime was double summer time, and in Scotland, was around about midnight, and we couldn't make havdala. And Shabbat has its own problems with the non religious and the anti religious ones who wanted do things that we were not officially allowed to do within the grounds, perhaps it was interesting in that respect.

RL: How many children were there?

EF: When I was there, about 120 boys, and about 80 girls, so it was certainly a mixed boarding school, with its own problems and benefits.

RL: And what were they?

EF: I remember one particular girl, she was the daughter of a big macher of the Zionist organisation in Czechoslovakia, she came out with her group, she was older than us by about two years, and she left Whittingehame fairly early to go to America, where her father had managed to get to, or to Palestine ...

RL: You say you were organised into different houses? How many houses were there?

### **Tape 2: 53 minutes 55 seconds**

EF: Well, we had, at least six houses, and there was competition between the houses. Our house master was called Mr Walters, and in my book you will see the incident I described, Mr Walters ... was all right, I mean, all right, I shared one room with his a

certain Max Shajes, who now lives in Manchester by the way, who I have seen sometimes when he comes to Israel, whom I recited poetry at night when I was speaking in verse only. So, our room were all given marks, for how tidy it was, and how clean it was, so we managed to get our good grades and marks.

Now Mr Walters, I had nothing against him as such, during mealtimes, when we all sat together in the dining room there were certain rules. Now certainly during benching there was Birchat Hamazon, there was no talking, or when he used to make announcements there was no talking, or ... and .... At one meal, I think somebody talked to me at a time when there was no talking allowed, and he thought it was me or something like that, and he got up behind me, and I was sitting now, behind me and he hit me, you know, on the ear, or on the back of the neck, and as a reflex I stood up and smashed him one against his face .... I mean, it was a pure reflex, I mean if somebody hits me, I hit back. So, he grabbed me by the arm to the headmaster's study. He told him what I had done, and I apologised, "I am sorry, but if somebody hits me, I hit back, you know it wasn't me who talked, but that is not the point, I didn't mean to hit him, it's just, I didn't mean to hit him." The punishment must be, you can't just get away with it. So, I was given seven days gated, no, seven days confinement to a special room there, which was the sick room actually, so I had to be seven days in that room without going out. At the time I think I wrote about it, at the time I wrote in a diary. One appears to be a prisoner, I mean I was not a prisoner, but in prison, I was in that room. But I had everything, my girlfriend came, everybody came, bought me food, bought me food ... there were lots of visitors, but to be confined to a room at the age of 15, I wasn't 16 yet ... [big sigh].

### **Tape 2: 56 minutes 39 seconds**

Now, shortly after that I think the war broke out and we all sat in the ... no before that, we were agitating for madrichim, for youth leaders, to be in charge of the various groups. We were the youth from youth aliyah from bachad, from the religious kibbutz movement, from the chalutz movement, scout masters, everything, to be our educators, apart from the formal teachers that we had. And so, at the Assefa klalit, at the general assembly we were allowed to speak only in English or Ivrit. My English was not that good, German I wasn't allowed to speak, so I spoke in Ivrit. "Why are we waiting?" "When are the madrichim coming?" "You promised us and they are not here yet." And I heard my Mar Yaffe, my Hebrew teacher whisper into Maxwell's ear, the headmaster, and the headmaster said to me "Al tihye tipesh" "Don't be a fool." And the children, or the fellow pupils clapped to me. You know, when I spoke in Ivrit .... Madrichim, madrichim ... like a rebellion. So, I wasn't a rebel but being a spokesman, like that, afterwards, with hindsight, I think he probably wanted to get rid of me .... But I will come to that in the next tape.

RL: Right, well we will just stop here. The tape is about to end.

### **TAPE 3**



This is the interview with Eli Fachler and it is tape 3.

Now you were telling me about your request in the assembly.

EF: Now yes, there was a general assembly held periodically, either once a month or once every few months, I can't remember, and that particular assembly the madrichim had not arrived yet, and we were asking for them and asking what is holding them up, why don't you. I should imagine that Maxwell the principal wanting to make Whittingehame into the Eton of the refugee schools, wasn't all that keen on youth leaders. You know, it was just political, political Zionist ambitions, although this group was officially in preparation of you know, joining the kibbutzim in Palestine. But from that time on I was I think wrongly perceived as being some kind of ringleader.

Now, the consequent to that, first of all war broke out, and I remember everybody being assembled on Sunday morning 3<sup>rd</sup> September, as if it were yesterday, and Chamberlain over the radio telling us that the ultimatum to Germany had expired, to leave Poland, and we were therefore at war with Germany.

At the time, whilst we were at war with Germany, it does not affect us either physically or emotionally because it is something that is outside our immediate experience, until a week or two later, and an RAF plane was patrolling the Firth of Forth, which is a big bridge in Edinburgh, near Edinburgh. And he came over our school, he knew there were children there, and did acrobatics, flying acrobatics, aerial acrobatics and one thing led to another, he must have hit an air pocket and crashed. And where were we? There we were. A crashed plane. Burst into flames, we were rushing there, we couldn't do anything for the pilot, who burnt in the plane, that is how the war was brought home to us, about three or four weeks after the outbreak of war.

Then we go forward now to September. About a couple of months later, I think it was about November already, our kvutza, the BILU was the first to go on tiyul, on excursion. I was the head, so without me there would be no tiyul. On the other hand, our house I believe, Mr Waters house was gated. Now gated means that we weren't allowed to leave the grounds or school premises. Because something had happened, whatever the incident was I don't remember, whether it was all put up to keep me in school and not let the kvuta out, I don't know, but what it meant practically was that I made myself a cheshbon, I made myself a balance sheet. If I stay, like I am supposed to, in the grounds, then the kvutza won't go on the tiyul, if I break the gated and go with them, then I get punished. Now what can the punishment be? Another week in solitary, two weeks in solitary, I have been in solitary already ... no matter, it is more important not to let the kvutza down, than not to let them go, so I broke it and went out.

### **Tape 3: 4 minutes 36 seconds**

The kvutza had a nice tiyul, had a lovely day, it was autumn and that part of Scotland was marvellous, it was warm, and all the leaves were yellowish, orangeish, really nice. The scenery outside was breathtaking. We had wild strawberries growing along, we had

brooks and waterfalls, it was idyllic. And I came back in the evening, I went to the headmaster's study, I broke my gated, and he decided to expel me. And I knew if he expelled it wasn't just because I broke the gated. Having got the false impression of me being some sort of ringleader and rebel, he couldn't stand the competition. I was being expelled and he told the governors of the school and Edinburgh went to London, that he was expelling me for indiscipline and insubordination and all sorts of things that I am ..... Fine.

So Mr Walters, the housemaster, took me to the station, that night, or in the afternoon I believe. No, it was at night. The train to Kings Cross which took overnight and arrived in the morning, in November it was still dark. And foggy, and I get out of the train in Kings Cross, and I am standing there with a suitcase, they were going to send the rest of it on, with a suitcase, I was quite tall mind you, I was as tall as I am now more or less, and on the platform, in the dark, blackout, don't forget we had no light shine, only a single spotlight in certain places. I look around, nobody is there, nobody to meet me, and all of a sudden, a towering policeman "Are you Ely Fatchler?"

Eli Fachler ...

"Are you Ely Fatchler?"

"No".

"You come from Haddington Ely Fatchler?" Don't talk to me. "Yes, ah, there is a lady waiting for you".

He took me to Miss Mundy, who was in charge, or one of the people in charge of the Jewish shelter in the East End. She took me to the Jewish shelter in the East End and gave me a cubicle and arranged for a meeting with the Zionist organisation, the chalutz, the bachad, all together, to see what to do with me.

So, the meeting took place some time in the afternoon, whatever it was, and they asked me "Do I liked it at school?"

"I love it, it is my life."

"Why were you expelled?"

So, I told them "Look, the official reason was because I broke the gated but I had done a cheshbon, I made the balance sheet of what would happen to me if I did it, so I did it."

And there we were waiting for the madrichim, and they were not coming, and we agitated for them to come, we want madrichim. And these people at that meeting were all madrichim and people who ... they were the ones to send them to us. They were waiting to get the okay from the Jewish refugee committee. And would I like to go back? I said, "Of course! What a question!"

"All right"

### **Tape 3: 8 minutes 41 seconds**

The next day I was sent back to Whittingehame. The headmaster greeted me, he said "Let bygones be bygones", and by that time he had already been given notice of three months. The madrichim arrived about a week or two later, and he left about January after that, February maybe, and he never forgiven the Jewish .... for giving him the sack. They treated him shabbily.

Some of our fellow pupils got very, very friendly with him, and stayed in touch with him afterwards, when he went to South Africa, he emigrated to South Africa later. He was a good headmaster, likeable person, he had like a boxer's nose, very expressive face. In total distinction to Mr Waters who was a bland face. And the other teacher that we took to very much was our science teacher, Mr Drew, D R E W, he taught us science and he invented some kind of fire extinguisher which was very important when the firebombs fell, I forget the name, I have got it written down somewhere, in my files.

Now, one of the girls, who I knew from Berlin, because I went with her brother to school, to the same school, and she went to the parallel school, fell in love with him, not Jewish, and they were going to get married actually, this was all after we left, obviously. But that science teacher, Mr Drew, towards the end of the schools existence joined the RAF and was on the coastal patrol and he was shot down over Ireland, off the Irish coast, by some German fighters or whatever it is, and he died, it must have been about ... 1941 ... 40/41. Now the girl, Ava Bickhart who was going to marry him was already heartbroken and she had an accident standing with a nightie, with her back to the fireplace, which caught fire and she burnt. That was such a tragedy, so now they had both perished. The brother stayed alive and I met him in London years and years later, quite a few years ago, it must have been ten or twenty years ago. So that was another incident of the school. The school was full of happenings, and when you are involved in it, that is it.

### **Tape 3: 11 minutes 49 seconds**

Now you want me to go back to the pre war years, pre war months rather. I was in Scotland three months before the war, it was May, end of May ... June, July, August ... three full months plus and then on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September war broke out. My sister who was also on the list that my cousin had arranged with the Jewish community through B'nei Brith was on that list and she managed to get a permit to come on the kinder transport, under B'nei Brith, somebody guaranteed, and these papers were forwarded from Berlin to Poland, where she was living with my parents, who left Berlin in July, and she went on her own as a 12 year old, from Lodz, to Berlin, picked up her papers and joined the Kinder Transport I think during the second week of August, and came with one of the last transports that arrived in England, I think second or third last transport, it was lucky. And she was with B'nei Brith, and she was put in a hostel in London, who with the outbreak of war a couple of weeks later all got evacuated, and she got evacuated to Hemel Hempstead, with some more Jewish girls, and to a non-Jewish family, and as they got correspondance in German. Before that we corresponded with Poland direct, and we used to write postcards, my sister wrote to me, my parents, and of course with the family in Belgium. After war broke out, I still corresponded with my parents via Belgium until it was 1941, to England, so we kept in correspondence up until 1940, in 1940 when Belgium was overrun and then of course the correspondence was stopped and the only communication after that was through the red cross for a very short paragraphs and that terminated in 1942. When I assume that they were either shot in mass graves by the Einsatzgruppen that is according to my uncle who survived, which is a different story. Poland/Russia, and the official Yad Vashem records say that the people from Driltsch

were taken to Warsaw and from there to Theresienstadt where they were all gassed. So, in either way, I don't know any date of death, it must have been in 42 because after that the red cross, all enquiries were not answered.

**Tape 3: 14 minutes 48 seconds**

RL: So, you were in Scotland?

EF: Yes.

RL: You called it a farm school.

EF: Yes.

RL: What agricultural work or farm work was done?

EF: Now then, we did, there was a Miss Richards, not Jewish, a very sort of muscular stout lady, she was in charge of the chickens, she explained to us Rhode Island Reds, white chickens, the brown chickens, the cockerels and the hens and what they do and the way they live, we learnt all that. And the eggs, brown, white and how to look after them and in those days, fortunately, there were no batteries, it was all free range, and houses for chicken.

They also taught us horticulture, about plants, we did you know planting and harvesting and so on. And then we had the proper agricultural with instructors, where we, where I was driving a combine harvester, and I learned how to drive a tractor, ploughing, and I managed to practically overturn one harvester, and broke the actual thing that goes round. We did the harvesting on a threshing machine, once the corn was harvested it was put into bales and into the, I forget what its name was again, those little bundles and into the harvesting machine, and they came out, one end the straw was bound and the other end the corn was put into sacks, and I was stood on the top of the machine feeding it, and all the mice that were in the corn, I drew a pitch fork into the mouse, and that is how I learned how to be finicky about rats and mice and such things. I would take them by the tail.

And unfortunately, there was a very, very bad accident in the first year already. One of our boys caught his foot in a machine and it had to be amputated. But he got back and he had an artificial leg, and he stayed the whole course, sort of thing, were brilliant boy, very good boy, very strong boy. It was one of those things that happened, and he stopped the machine and so on. So, we did harvesting and we did everything in the farm school.

**Tape 3: 17 minutes 25 seconds**

RL: And did you have Jewish lessons? Religious lessons?

EF: Oh yes, oh yes, we had ... ahh ... this is an interesting question. We didn't have a religious teacher as such, we had Hebrew teachers, who taught us Hebrew, but not so

much actual ... like we used to have before Chumash Rashi, we organised ourselves. We had shiurim by ourselves, already what we had learned, and we carried on learning, preparing, teaching and planning. Some of them had gone to Yeshiva before and had a higher education a bit, so we carried on like that in our Jewish learning. We did not have a Rabbi to teach us, that came later, I will tell you when we will come to that.

Before the war, in July 1939 was the official consecration of the school. Now that consecration of the school in July, Mar Gilboa, the actor Hebrew teacher, gave auditions about someone to recite chapter 77 of Ezekiel, the chapter of the Dry Bones. And I thought I would give it a shot, and to my surprise, I won the place, I auditioned, and I performed Ezekiel. Now you must picture the scenery, in the front lawn of that big building, there were rows and rows of chairs. There was the Mayor of Edinburgh, the Chief Rabbi of Scotland, the committee members, behind members of the staff, invited, people from the Jewish community, non-Jewish dignitaries, lots of people like that. And then, raised on that lawn, was a smaller lawn, platform, with rhododendron bushes right round it, and there I come out, from the bushes, onto the little platform, the natural one, in my black robe with a cord round it and a beard and a stick, I am Ezekiel. And I recite, in Hebrew, the whole chapter of Ezekiel 37, the dry bones. The press was there, it was reported in The Scotsman, and my son, our eldest son Yankee, when he was editing the book said "If it was in The Scotsman, maybe there are some back numbers still." And he got it, he found it, and he framed it and I still have it at home. It was a report of the consecration in July '39.

RL: Yes.

EF: Before I was expelled, before I was a rebel, and you remember the Chief Rabbi of Scotland, he was similar in stature to the Chief Rabbi of England who was J Hertz, and he was also very small of stature, and you know, what is called Rabbi Daiches, yes Rabbi Daiches, or even Reverend Daiches, I am not quite sure. But one question, once, I, in the seven weeks between Passover and Shevuot, one doesn't shave. Sefirat Haomer, during all that time. And I kept my beard growing, but between Rosh Chodosh and Shevuot it is the five days in between you are allowed to do all that, in preparation of Shevuot. And I still hadn't done it. So once he came there before Shevuot and he saw beard and he said "Sephira?... don't you know the five days between Rosh Chodesh and Shevuot you are allowed to shave, that is what I learnt from him.

RL: Did you have any contact with the wider Jewish community in Scotland?

**Tape 3: 21 minutes 59 seconds**

EF: Not really contact, no, they used to come, the governors used to come and look at the, what the money was going to, and ask any questions. "Is there anything we want? Are we satisfied? Do we have any complaints?" that sort of thing, from time to time. And we knew who they were, like Reuben Cohen and his younger brother who was much taller, they were the Ideal Stamp Company, they were called, they were giving out savings stamps in those days, the same company, and they had some kind of a business,

and they were one of the big machers in the Jewish refugee committee in Scotland, in Edinburgh anyway. And then we got to know one or two others of the community, but contact with them I only got when I went back as a teacher later.

RL: And whilst you were there did you experience any bombing?

EF: No, not directly, we heard about bombing of the Firth of Forth and so on but we didn't see it. Apart from the flying incident with the plane we had no war experience.

RL: But you were at ...

EF: But what was a very traumatic experience was after the madrichim had arrived, around about December 39, January 40, when France was overrun in May 1940, the Aliens Act was passed by parliament, Churchill took over from Chamberlain and one of the first things they did, because of what happened in Europe, with the fifth column was to intern all German nationals. So that was when Lord Haw Haw escaped and the others were interned. Lord Haw Haw was British but with an alien VISA we were interned. So, we were all interned under 18b and quite a lot of the children over 16, again 15/16 was the borderline, and some of our madrichim were German nationality and they were also interned and they were all sent to the Isle of Mann, internment camp, so all of a sudden, we had fewer madrichim, because those were interned.

About, at least thirty or forty or maybe fifty of the boys, the girls they didn't intern, the boys only. They were sent to the Isle of Mann, where they were kept together obviously, and after about a couple of months they came back, they were released, because then the release process was instituted straight away, when they saw they were not enemy aliens but friendly. They came back and life carried on as normal, but it was still a traumatic experience. One of the people who were interned were another cousin of my parents in London on my father's side, a different branch altogether, but they were interned, I mean, so we knew, there was a personal touch.

As a friendly alien, Polish, I was not interned, as a lot of others were not, because there were a lot of others ... even stateless were interned, but German passports were interned

RL: How long were you at the school for?

**Tape 3: 25 minutes 48 seconds**

EF: From May '39 until July '41.

During that time a lot of things changed, I mean Maxwell was dismissed. We are coming to January, February, March, 1940. The internment took place in 41 and there was a break of appointed headmaster, from the time that Maxwell left until the appointment of the next one, and during that time Lady Traprain, Lord Traprain or Viscount Traprain was a nephew of Lord Balfour, who Whittingehame belonged to, the estate belonged to, who had leased it to Youth Aliyah, the Jewish Agency.

Now his wife, Lady Traprain was the daughter of the Dean of Westminster, and she was very cultured, very educated, very refined, she had two or three children who went to Eton, a similar age to us, one younger, two older, and she took over the running of the academic staff. And then the domestic arrangements, she took over, she came every day, did her rounds, she invited clusters of pupils for tea in the afternoon to her cottage or whatever she had in the grounds, she called it "The Mill", and so we got to know Lady Traprain, her husband was away in the Navy. He afterwards became the chief of the national coal board after the war, Lord Traprain, and then he became Lord Balfour and one of his sons who was at Eton at the time became his heir to Lord Balfour of Whittingehame who I eventually invited for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary to Lavi. And I went to their house, and I hosted them in Yerushalayim and then Lavi of course, but that as I say is a separate story, which comes in connection with the appointment of the next headmaster.

Now after Dunkirk, 1940, France fell, internment came about, and Dunkirk took place. One of the people who were ... who were with the expeditionary force, in France, was a Jewish chaplain called Bernard Cherrick, Bernard Cherrick was a graduate of Jews college and he was called the Reverend Bernard Cherrick. His secular education was concentrated and specialised as George Bernard Shaw, and he was appointed headmaster ... I would say about six months after he came back from Dunkirk, so we are talking around about October/November 1940, maybe earlier, maybe two or three months before that, during which time Lady Traprain acted as principal/ headmistress, so we are talking about February/March 1940 until about August/September 1941, no 1940, I am sorry, 1940.

### **Tape 3: 29 minutes 41 seconds**

Then Bernard Cherrick came on the scene. Now one of the main youth movements in Britain, Jewish youth movements, was Habonim. Habonim started out as being very much Synagogue orientated. Nearly every Synagogue had a Habonim group. For the people who went to Shul it was mainly a traditional Jewish youth group, youth organisation, with the influx of continental children, because there was Habonim in Germany, that Habonim was far from Synagogue orientated, much more ... if not irreligious at least mixed, and certainly religion was not one of the foundation stones of that particular movement.

But when Habonim on the continent came to Habonim here, England obviously influenced it, but, at that time, that Bernard Cherrick was one of the youth leaders in Habonim before, and another of the younger youth leaders was a young lady called Hannah Silberman. She must have been about 19 at the time, 19/20, and we were then, in 1940, about 14/16, getting onto 17, in October I was 17, in 1940 I was 17.

Now she became a secretary, and she took a job at Whittingehame, she was quite an efficient secretary, she had a beautiful soprano voice, she was Habonim learned in Jewish things, and he was of course the Reverend Bernard Cherrick, he was Jews College

educated, and he afterwards gave us shiurim, he could teach us Limudei Kodesh, but his forte was definitely George Bernard Shaw, so whatever I learned about theatre and plays and introduction to plays was Bernard Shaw. Although we learned Shakespeare as well that came ... I performed Shakespeare much later when I was in the army, but that was Bernard Shaw.

Now Reverend Bernard Cherrick, eventually, after the war, emigrated to Israel, worked for the, like fund raising more or less, he worked for the Hebrew U at Yerushalayim, and he became the vice chancellor. When one of our youngest sons studied at Hebrew U he introduced himself to Bernard Cherrick, and at one of the meetings that my son was there, to do with one of the programmes that came from America, he said to them, "This young man, I taught his father at Whittingehame, Meir Fachler, I taught his father". But it came in very useful that he was Vice Chancellor when I invited Lord Balfour to our anniversary of Whittingehame, we invited Cherrick as well, obviously, and I went to Cherrick at university and I said "I am inviting Lord Balfour ... is there anything ..." I mean finances, I mean who is going to find money for it. He is going to pay his own fare, that is fine, it is very good of him, but once he is here we have to look after him. He said "Don't worry, the university will host him." Until he got to Lavi for the reunion, there you will host him, and when he comes back here for a day or two then we will host him and then he can go back. So, Cherrick promised to host Lord Balfour in the name of the Hebrew U, don't forget that the original Lord Balfour was at the consecration of the Hebrew U with Weitzmann in 1925 I believe. So, the connection was certainly there. And I managed to organise that ... and he was ... unfortunately between Cherrick's promise to host him and the reunion in Lavi, in I think, I believe it was January or February, no ... it was May, May 89, in May 89 Cherrick passed away. Unexpectedly ... I was at the levaya, at the funeral, on Har Zeitim, and I had been on his memorial day outside, several times already when people from the university gathered to commemorate his Yahrzeit day on Har Zeitim. Cherrick passed away, so I went to the university, to whoever took over, and I said "Look, Cherrick said he would host him, and now he has gone."

"Don't worry, if Cherrick said it, the university will host him."

They did indeed, and they took him into The Hyatt Hotel which was very near where I live in Yerushalayim and I looked after him there and then took him to Lavi for the reunion and he spoke, and I spoke, and it was quite very emotional, and, he, I mean ex pupils, it was more than 50 years after Whittingehame, it was quite, what should I say, emotional ... So that was Bernard Cherrick.

### **Tape 3: 35 minutes 53 seconds**

He was there until I left and Hannah Silberman was with him, Hannah Silberman was afterwards, she became one of the wardens in the youth hostel in Wales, Merthyr Tydfil near Newport. I visited her afterwards from the kibbutz, and she told me already then, that she had her eye on one of the teachers in Scotland, in Edinburgh, who published a book, Ivri Limed Ivrit, that a Hebrew should learn Hebrew, and it was like a Hebrew grammar and vocabulary and so on, and she had her eye on him. Eventually she caught



him and they married, they didn't have any children, and they became the wardens of Jews College for many, many years.

RL: What was his name?

EF: Levy. She was Hannah Silberman and then Hannah Levy.

So, as I say, the world is small, but this is all interconnected, Whittingehame and Hannah Levy and of course I met Harold Levy in Scotland when I was in Whittingehame. When I was in Whittingehame our Mar Gilboa our actor teacher organised like a group, acting Hebrew plays to go to Glasgow, and perform in the Jewish institute for the Jewish community there, showing them what was being done in Whittingehame. Because I believe some governors might have lived in Glasgow and belonged to the Jewish community. And I remember being given food in a restaurant called Janine's, which was a very well-known Jewish restaurant in Glasgow, and we ordered myself at the house of Links. Links was the owners of one of the biggest warehouses in Glasgow, the well-known warehouse, and Links closed on Shabbat, which was to us, not usual, before the Wolfsons became the Wolfsons, Links was the main name in Edinburgh and we kept up contact for quite some time, so that was already not long before we left Whittingehame, it was already in the summer of 1941, Mar Gilboa took us there.

And then of course, people got placed in apprenticeships, and I applied for an apprenticeship in engineering, but by the time it came about I had to leave Whittingehame already and I just went and I just joined the hachshara kibbutz at Hardmead near Newport Pagnall.

It is then that I got to know Harold Levy in Glasgow, and afterwards in my kibbutz days I had more and more contact already with him through Jewish education, and that is when I became a teacher in the, in what used to be Whittingehame, they moved to another place, I had a lot of contact with the Glasgow community. But that is another chapter.

RL: So, take me on now, from Whittingehame, and your movement out of there.

### **Tape 3: 39 minutes 36 seconds**

EF: Now, at the age of 17 and three quarters, in July 1941, I was placed, again there was no saying what they were doing, it was all done by the Jewish refugee committee, they were more or less our guardians, until we were 21. Nobody had voting rights until 21, 18 wasn't thought of yet, so I was placed by the BACHAD movement into one of their kibbutzim, hachshara kibbutzim in preparation for eventually getting certificates to go to Israel, then Palestine. Now that kibbutz, there were several kibbutzim, hachshara kibbutzim in England, some larger, some smaller, ours must have been about the smallest there was. It was called Hardmead, H-A-R-D-M-E-A-D. A cottage in the fields, about a good three quarters of a mile or a mile from the road, it was up a path, no running water, there was a well, there was a pump, and there was a little brook. And there was certainly no water toilet, I think we had those chemical toilets. I am not quite sure, my mind is a

bit hazy about that, but I know that there certainly was a pump and there was a well, with beautiful water from that well.

It was near Newport Pagnall, it was between Newport Pagnall and Bedford. We used to do our shopping in Bedford at Marks and Spencer, where I bought my first bluish shirt. And the meat we got from Oxford and in Bedford there was our music teacher, although I never had contact with him then, but I knew that something was going on there. There was a Jewish community there in Bedford who we did not contact much because of the evacuation, it was the beginning of the war, but I got a lot of contact later, when I was in the army. Now in that kibbutz, there was about one married couple, who were in charge. And there was about, I would say just about a minyan of boys, I would say about 12 to 15 boys, and about half that number of girls and that married couple.

Now when I got there it was a few days before shiva osor b'tammuz, it was a fast, the fast of Tammuz, and a delegation came from London, two delegations, one from Torah V Avodah, which was like B'nei Akiva, BACHAD sort, but the bourgeois section, for students from Jews College and academics and youth leaders. Youth groups, Torah v Avodah they was called. They were looking for a camp site near a Jewish place, to put their tents and so on.

And then came the Synagogue group, Ben Zakai which my wife belonged to, for Rabbi Schonfeld in Stamford Hill also looking for a camp site. So, they both established their camp sites near our kibbutz, so my wife came with a friend of hers, belonging to that group to spy the land and when they came in, she recognised one of the girls from the kibbutz was from Frankfurt, you know, she recognised her, Betty Einhorn. So, they said "Hello," "How are you?" "What are you doing?"

So, they said "We want to make a Ben Zakai camp here."

"Oh yes." "How many girls?" "How long for?"

"Now look I have got a boyfriend here, Jack Adler. Zilly has got a boyfriend here, Leo Wolf. This one has got a boyfriend here. Don't you dare approach any of those boys." "Fine."

So Fritta, her friend that she came with, I think they stayed for the night, or just for the day and the evening, and she asked Betty, "What about that tall boy there?"

"Oh him, he is just a youngster, he only just joined us a few days ago."

"Has he got a girlfriend?"

"No."

"Right."

So, to cut a long story short, the two camps were together and they did what two camps do, they raided one another, and from the Torah v Avodah camp I took one of the girls on my horse, and became very friend with her family later, I became very friendly with her brother, who was then in Carmel College, he is now in Manchester, Rabbi Gastwirth. His sister was on my horse, she is not alive anymore. And then from the Ben Zakai camp there was Emmanuel Jacobovitz who became Chief Rabbi, there was the Rabbi of Liverpool. It was again, these people, they were youth leaders and youngsters in our kibbutz at that summer camp of 1941.

Now my wife, now my wife Eva Becker then, lived in Letchworth with her parents and as a British subject she would do her war work or army. Now, she was working with the Jewish refugee committee, and one of the people connected was Arieh Handler who was in charge of the BACHAD, and he said to her why don't you do agricultural work, it is war work, join up with one of the kibbutzim.

Now, neither her mother, nor her friends' mother in Letchworth would have allowed the girls to join a kibbutz like that, but she hatched a plan, each one told their mothers that the other mother allowed it. So, both mothers allowed the girls to come, and she joined our kibbutz and Hannah her friend joined one of the other kibbutzim, where she also met her future husband, and I made a bet with one of the boys in our kibbutz, Heini Mehrgut from Hamburg that I would go out with that Ava Becker. And he said "Nah, you won't, look at you". And I bet a bar of chocolate, and I won the bar of chocolate and I took her out, and the rest is history. So, three and a half years later we got married when I was 21.

RL: How long did you stay on this little kibbutz in Hertfordshire?

**Tape 3: 46 minutes 57 seconds**

EF: Until November 41, and then we joined one of the other kibbutzim and we founded Buckingham. It was a much larger kibbutz, specially built in Nissan huts by the Ministry of Agriculture, and two other kibbutzim joined us, from the same movement, and of course it was a much larger entity.

And again, Chava and I were friends there and it was, by the time I left there, which was in January '42, we ... or was March 42, it was understood that we would get married, we were already known as a couple, like many other couples were already known, we got married while we were in the kibbutz while we were there still.

And then I left on the invitation of the then headmaster who took over in Whittingehame after another one in between, and this was called Polton House, where the refugee children from the Kinder Transport who were really young, had grown then to 15/16 and 17 evening went to the successor of Whittingehame called Polton House, near **Lasvay** in the same distance district of East Lothian.

RL: Can I just ask, just before we go into that ... the little kibbutz in ...

EF: Hardmead.

RL: Hardmead. Who was the married couple in charge?

**Tape 3: 48 minutes 25 seconds**

EF: Good question. Rachelle Durracher Rachelle and Bob Durracher D-U-R-L-L-A-C-H-E-R. Also, from Hamburg.

RL: And did that kibbutz close down in November '41.

EF: Yes ..... the Ministry of Agriculture, it was really very primitive, and then we went to what in those days seemed to us very luxurious actually, with the Nissen huts with proper heating and ovens and a stove and chimneys, and it heated the whole room, primitive nowadays but it was luxury in those days.

RL: And who was in charge of it?

EF: In charge of it was a, I think he was a conscientious objector, Akiva Kornbluth with his wife Ray. They actually came also from, lived in Letchworth actually, and they were the wardens, the official wardens by the agricultural wardens who paid them to look after the hostel, it was called an agricultural hostel. It was in Maids Morton in Buckingham.

RL: How many of you were there?

EF: There we were .... bum bum bum bum bum ... I should say about 50 boys, 40 or 50 boys and about half the number of girls, and again there were married couples there as well, but only one or two.

RL: And what kind of work were you doing there?

EF: Mainly being hired out by the Agricultural Ministry to the various farmers around there, my wife helped with the milking, I did the ditching and digging and pruning. You know, whatever one does on a farm, I didn't do the milking actually, feeding the cows, and drinking the cream off the churns when they came out with the milk, I used to drink the cream.

RL: What happened at Pesach time?

### **Tape 3: 50 minutes 41 seconds**

EF: Oh, it was fully ... we had matzos and everything. And the meals they came from Oxford, they were sent once a week or something, it was were collected I think from the train station at Buckingham, unless it was the coach ... but we had meat, we were well fed, and the cook was a Mrs Epstein and she always said "I only eat to annoy her." I used to eat a lot in those days "*Sie essen ja nur, um mich zu ärgern.*"

RL: And then you went on to Polton House?

EF: Now, there is a reason for that. The Hanhallah, the people in charge, in London, of the movement, I suggested to our group, in the kibbutz, I said "Look, we are being hired out, we are getting wages, and we do this threshing, harvesting and so on. Why don't we buy a threshing machine and hire ourselves out as a gang threshing for the farmers who haven't got threshing machines, get paid for that, and make some money, as a group, not individuals, as a group." Which is a very capitalist concept, you know. You would buy machinery, hire it out, get paid, it is a very entrepreneurial thing, and I agitated for that,

and the Hanhallah, the leadership from London came down and the Hanhallah, the leadership from London came down on us like a ton of bricks. “What do you think you are doing?” “There are kibbutzim in Wales who haven’t got shoes, leather on the soles of their shoes, and here you want to make money, you should give it to them.” And I know that the kibbutz in Wales which we visited on Pesach, they were already older, and smoking away their money, and I said “Why should I give hard earned money for them to buy cigarettes and other things? No wonder they have got no leather on their shoes, supposedly.”

And I vehemently opposed the idea of just sharing with other groups who were supposed to be independent, for ideological reasons. And I said “What is there against our ideology to make money for the kibbutz?” I mean out in Israel they all did it afterwards. That was one of the things to do as a kibbutz. They were trying to improve your standard of living. Anyway, they would hear nothing of it so I felt it wasn’t for me. Again, I was a bit of an agitator, so apart from me they tried to separate Chava and me, and they told her not to marry me, to marry somebody else, you know he Vaad of the kibbutz, they tried to persuade her, somehow it didn’t work, but that is another story.

And in the meantime, we had camps coming to Buckingham as well. Again from Torah v Avodah, and there were lots of young ladies, and some invited me to their houses in London, which I went to sort of thing, and Chava was getting very anxious about that, but it petered out, so I left for Scotland, and we kept in touch of course, and I became the assistant headmaster at Polton House, in charge of Jewish studies, and altogether of the Jewish set up in the school, you know the kashrut and Jewish studies and so on.

And at the reunion in Lavi in 1989 we still had some of my pupils telling my wife, you know, that all they had, they had from me, all they are they are because of me, it is very gratifying, sort of thing ...

**Tape 3: 54 minutes 54 seconds**

RL: How many children were there?

EF: There we were about 60, again two thirds boys and one third girls. And the wife of the headmaster, Mr Zurawel, Yaakov Zurawel, she was in charge of the kitchen and domestic things. Esther, Esther Zurawel. They had a boy called Yoel.

RL: Was it in the same place?

EF: No, no, no ...

RL: Right.

EF: They moved ... they moved from the mansion of Lord Balfour to the place called Polton House, which was also a country seat, but much smaller, much smaller and turned into a school with classrooms and dormitories.

RL: Who owned that property?

EF: I wouldn't know. The Jewish refugee committee must have leased it from somebody. No connection to Balfour.

RL: What can you tell me about your time there?

EF: At Polton House?

RL: Yes.

EF: Now at Polton House I did some naughty things, in so far as I got very involved with the Jewish community in Edinburgh, it was very near. And the youth group in Edinburgh and the Jewish community like all over Britain had Habonim, and I started the B'nei Akiva group and took all the boys and girls from Habonim to Bnei Akiva. I did the same in Glasgow, and it was taken over by a fellow called Benno Penner who enlarged it greatly. I re-established my connections with the Links family in Glasgow, that is when I got to know Harold Levy that was, who was on the Board of Jewish Education in Glasgow. That is how I knew about Harold Levy from Hannah Silberman, who when she got in touch with who was in Wales, in Merthyr Tydfil, and I got to know the Jewish community, the Caplans and the Zuckers and so on, their son was studying medicine in university. They were British Jews, but like most of the Jews they were immigrants, not the old Sephardi from commerce times.

So, through that I did get very active in communal affairs, educational, I was always in touch with London with the Bachad office, with Arie Handler and of course with Chava, with our old kibbutz, in Buckingham, with all our friends, and I was still more less treated as a member of the kibbutz, although working away.

Then comes the interesting part, what happens after that.

RL: We will just stop here, because this tape is about to end.

EF: It is amazing how time flies ...

#### **TAPE 4**

This is the interview with Eli Fachler and it is tape 4.

So, you were telling me about your outreach work in education and setting up B'nei Akiva groups in Edinburgh and Glasgow, that is where we ended. I don't know whether you were going to say anything else about that or if you had finished.

EF: What happened then, I was very active within the Edinburgh Jewish community and in Glasgow, then came the parliamentary decision that brought friendly aliens to

Britain. Dutch, Czech, Belgium, French and Polish ... unless they are in war work, which agricultural was by they way, they would have to join the British Forces.

Before that I had my calling up papers from the Polish forces, whom I refused to join point blank because of the anti-Semitism that was rampant and ingrained within the Polish army.

If you want me to talk about the one uncle who survived, he was in the Polish army at the outbreak of war. He was a communist from an early age, so naturally he went east when Poland was divided and managed to escape to Russia, on the way in Brest-Litovsk which was a frontier town between Poland and Russia he saw a 17-yea- old girl in a queue at the post office, fancied her and married her.

Now once of course they were in Russia they had a very tough time, going across Russia east to Tashkent on the way their eldest daughter got born, Pearl, and just survived on the mother's milk. They were starving, and my uncle, the entrepreneur that he was, when he stopped that train that went right cross Russia, he stopped and he went to the farmers near the railway track, and he brought potatoes or rather he exchanged potatoes for whatever he might have had on him, whether it was a watch or whatever, and with that he fed his family and sold it at a very high price to the other people on the train. That is how they survived, but they were really starving.....

#### **Tape 4: 3 minutes 3 seconds**

And in the end he survived the war and I managed to contact him, or he contacted me through the family in Belgium who survived, those cousins who fled to Belgium, they were in hiding there until 1942, and I still have a photo of my uncle and a cousin of my father, who was in charge of the Beth Din in Antwerp, with a beard and Zylinder, top hat and yellow star with a young newly married couple, all with yellow stars, in a group photo, which was published by Yad Vashem a couple of years ago and I have got that at home, it is in Yad Vashem and it is in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, that particular photo.

So, this Uncle Yuckel I think got hold of me, through Belgium, he must have thought you know there is a Milchman in Belgium and he knew about it, and in the end ... no, how did the family in Belgium find me? They knew I had gone to England, and we had had correspondence afterwards, so when the British army under Montgomery liberated Brussels, among that group of soldiers that were parading through the street and, she saw them coming up, there was one with Magan Dovid on, Shia Abramovitz, whether he was with the Control Commission or the British army or the Jewish Brigade I am not quite sure, but she went up to the Jewish soldier with the Magan David and said "Do you by any chance know Eli Fachler?"

And he said "Yes!"

You can imagine, in 1945, no 44, 44 I think it was still. The war hadn't finished yet, but Brussels had been liberated. Shia Abramovitz, with the British army, my aunt goes up to him, "Do you know?" And he said "Yes", and through army channels he got hold of me,

and told me where they were and what they were, and I got compassionate leave, and I went to Belgium and went up to them and then I got in touch with, or Uncle Yuckel got in touch with me. But that was another story that we will come to later.

Now where were we?

RL: You were about to be called up ...

EF: Called up ...

So, the Polish army I refused point blank, it was the decision of Parliament was that all friendly aliens have to join the British army if they don't join their own forces, and I joined the British army, that was in March 1944.

RL: So, you were in Polton House from March '42 ...

EF: No, '43 ...

RL: '43 ...

EF: Yes.

RL: Right. March '43.

EF: We started in Buckingham in November 1941 ...

**Tape 4: 6 minutes 24 seconds**

RL: Aha ...

EF: And we stayed in Buckingham for about a year and a half and then in March 1943 I joined Polton House, and then in March 44, again it could have been a few months either side.

RL: Yes ... yes ... yes ...

EF: So I joined in March '44 and basic training in Maidstone, at the barracks of the Royal Essex Regiment, Royal West Kent Regiment and after various tests I was found fit to join the infantry in the regiment of the Royal Fusiliers, City of London Regiment, who were allowed to march through the streets of London with bayonets fixed.

Now, there was during that period, the Chief Rabbis religious emergency council who provided kosher food for soldiers. And they provided me with kosher Squeg tins, Hungarian goulash, stewed beef, salamis, all sorts of things.



So, in the army when I was in Maidstone and Sharnhorst and wherever I was stationed later on, they knew me as Mr Kosher and I used to take my tins to the cookhouse, put it in the steam oven, open the steam oven until it was boiling hot and got my fleishig meals. So that was Mr Kosher in the army. As soon as I joined the army in June, three months later in June, on June 6<sup>th</sup>, Eisenhower decided now that I have joined that they could proceed with D Day and they invaded France.

Shortly after D Day I think was Shavuot, and I remember that Shavuot I was doing a route march of 24 hours or 48 hours with a full pack, it was my Shevuot and going through brooks and getting wet and drying off and in the end, the Captain said "well done" ... big deal, I could have done without it.

Anyway, so by that time I was already a Corporal, training others, because the basic training took place in March for six weeks and then I was in the Royal Fusiliers in other places. My army service ... I went to Sharnhorst, I went to Dover, I went to Folkestone, and there as an unpaid Lance Corporal I was training, I had a platoon under me, or a section rather, of a platoon, and we were training them to go over to France, so we spent at least two or three days or nights rather in the trenches on the cliffs of Dover, very cold, frosty, covered, and that is where I caught fibrocystis, in the back, so when I was discharged a few years later that fibrocystis got me a good pension, a few shillings. But, because of the fibrocystis I was hospitalised and sent to a hospital ... no that was it. I was visiting Letchworth, visiting my wife at the time ... oh, do you want to hear first about the wedding

RL: I heard about that from your wife.

#### **Tape 4: 10 minutes 37 seconds**

EF: Good, very good, so ... so I went, so I was on furlough for the weekend in Letchworth when I had this fibrocystis attack and the regulations then were, if a soldier gets sick he has got to report to a hospital, either military or an ordinary hospital, he is not allowed to be treated at home, so I went to the Lister Hospital with my fibrocystis, where I was treated and that was about January, February '45, maybe even March '45. After hospital came a convalescent home in Kempston, part of Bedford, near Bedford, Kempston Barracks. And whilst I was in a convalescent home came VE Day on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May.

Now I had a cousin by marriage, who was also in the army, he was a captain in the army, he was stationed in London, he was married to a non-Jewish woman, and to him I went on VE Day from the convalescent home to celebrate VE Day in Trafalgar Square, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May celebrating the end of the war. Buckingham Palace and that sort of thing, I was there.

After that I went back to the convalescent home, I was not needed in the Royal Fusiliers any more as an infantryman, the war was over. So, they didn't ship me out to the Far East because the Japanese war was still going on. Instead of which they transferred me to the

Royal Army Pay Corps, who needed people who can add up and read and write for demob, which was then going to be in full swing. The war in Japan, the end of that war was in sight once we knew about the atomic bomb, I mean Britain was part of it, so they needed people in the Royal Army Pay Corps to do all the calculations for who gets what, how much, according to the demob scale, age and length of service. So, they had a chart, and they had to reckon out to see how much you were entitled to. Yes, I think it was ... I was in training for about two days, one or two days, and I got it, I did it, so I was posted in Fooks Cray, in Sidcup in Kent. I was billeted in private houses which the army paid for our billets, and the Pay office was in Sidcup, and from there I got transferred to the Pay Corps in London, where I was again billeted privately. This time I could choose my billet and I took my room in the same house where Marian and my sister were boarding, in Stamford Hill.

And from there I went into the office every day, which was next to Harrods, the whole building of Lillywhites was taken over by the Royal Army Pay Corps. I had my own section and I demobbed soldiers, officers I don't know about. During the time there ... I will come back to that later.

Afterwards the Royal Army Education Corps needed recruits, and I applied and I became a sergeant in the Royal Army Education Corps. Within the war office I had an office in Victoria Street, around the corner from Whitehall, and I had an office in Palace Gardens opposite Kensington Gardens, near the very famous West End Synagogue, with its beautiful windows and beautiful décor inside. That is where we went to Shul. And we were still billeted in the rooms with Marian and my sister.

**Tape 4: 15 minutes 29 seconds**

Now when I was in the Education Corps, I organised groups for the Britain Can Make It Exhibition in 1946 ... '47, and took groups of soldiers.

Now lets go back a bit ... for the general election in 45, obviously I agitated for labour who promised the Jews that the White Paper would be revoked the..... white paper .....and Jews would be allowed to go to Palestine in unlimited numbers. So, I agitated, as usual, among the groups within the camp, at Kempton Barracks, and I was recuperating, you know to go to vote labour, in the election, and as you know they came in with a landslide in 1945.

Now going forward again to the Royal Army Education Corps. I didn't actually teach soldiers, although I must get say by my experience, the educational level of the British Tommy was abysmal, they left school at 14, it was really bad, because they really needed people who could read, write and add up, because the officers were officers. So, I was a sergeant in the Royal Army Education Corps, and I organised officers and NCOs in groups for various cultural activities. There was a meeting I organised which was addressed by a German, some official German.

Britain was already preparing then, we are talking about in 1947/48, and we saw the writing on the wall what Stalin was doing regarding domino tactics with Europe and they were already preparing the British public that the Russians aren't really our allies. I was quite disgusted then, but that German official came and said look we were all like German refugees at that time, ..... you are all Prussians and so on and look what the Russians did to us and they talked about the exchange of the Germans when the Russians came.

One of the groups that I organised was in the army education. I remember that particular incident. The other thing in the Education Corps was of course cultural and there was a competition, I was in the Army Education Corps, and about reciting Shakespeare. And I entered it and it was run in conjunction with the English-speaking institute in Hampstead, which is where actors get trained and so on. I entered and there was an adjudicator, and I recited Shakespeare's Henry V, "once more into the breach dear friends once more." And I won. So, I asked them afterwards "Look, with my accent, how can I win a competition."

"Accent has nothing to do with it ... it is the way you (waves arms around)" Then after that I saw the film with Lawrence Oliver, and when he did it, I was better, definitely (laughs). Anyway, so that was one of those, it was in the Albert Hall. So that was one of my experiences in the Royal Army Education Corps.

And about the time we got married already in 44, already you know that from my wife's story. I was in the army and then came demob time, my demob number was 57, like Heinz 57 Varieties and by age and length of service I came out in July 48, I got my month or two months or three months demob leave so we get integrated into civilian society and I got my demob suit, like all the others and I was .... by then we had two children, so I had to start to make a living.

#### **Tape 4: 20 minutes 20 seconds**

I had the house in Letchworth, well rented anyway, we lived in Letchworth, my wife probably told you about it, and so we lived in Letchworth. What was I going to do in Letchworth? So, my pre army job was teaching Jewish studies, my knowledge was fair, but compared to what other people didn't know I knew quite a lot. So, I applied to the London Board of Education to become a teacher in the religious classes, in the cheders, now they had afternoon Hebrew classes, Sunday morning and twice a week in the evening, and I started off teaching in Southgate under Rabbi Chait, C-H-A-I-T, Chait, he became very well known as well.

And I also applied for a scholarship; the British government was looking to train teachers in a teacher training college. The teacher training college offered me a job, fairly far removed from the Jewish community, the stipend was certainly not for any non-Jewish person, but when we learned to keep kosher and all that, it would have been extremely difficult with two children. So, I applied to the London Board of Jewish Education and I found that although I got a top grade salary it was certainly not enough to keep a family.

Luckily enough, my parents in law lived in our house and paid the rent, so my wife went out supervising the milk, as she probably told you, and she brought some money in, and we always tried to and managed to live within our means, which means at a very low standard.

Then, the coincidence in life, as they say beshert, there was a butcher in Letchworth, he was called Sigi Stern, he became a butcher in Letchworth, after he was an agent for a butcher in London who supplied Letchworth, a fellow called Cohen, and Stern thought "Why should I work for him?" He made himself independent, got himself together with Rabbi Schonfeld, got a shochet, and there were plenty of Rabbis in Letchworth and the shochet also lived in Letchworth, and they made Letchworth Shechita Board, under Keddassia. So, there was a this kosher butcher there, whose father had a, not a proper butchers shop, where they are allowed to train apprentices, but butcher distribution, he had a little shop in Vienna, already, so he knew about butchering already a little bit, but with no butcher but a very shrewd business man. So, he went on his own and he saw what business there was, and he supplied not only Letchworth but also the Adass people in London, you know Schonfeld's crowd, and he grew up the business pretty fast and pretty comprehensive. There was a grocery department with kosher groceries, and of course a meat department where he arranged shechita in the slaughter house off the, I think it was called the British Pig Company, they were doing mainly pigs there, and in Letchworth, and of course, and poultry but then he took over a printing works in Letchworth which had gone bust, he sold all the printing machinery to print off that crowd in London, called Nussbaum and converted that big shed of a printing works into a distribution centre, where we kept live chicken, where we did the shechita of chicken, where we did the koshering of chicken, it was a really big premises, and on the side there was a hut for the groceries.

#### **Tape 4: 25 minutes 19 seconds**

Now he had an employee called Moshe Chaim Grunbaum. Now that Moshe Chaim Grunbaum, his father had a shop in Berlin, in the Dragonerstrasse, where the Slovner Rav both lived. They were selling kosher meat at the time it was forbidden, people wouldn't buy from him because they suspected that he did a bit of stunning or something, but he said that anybody can come and see that there is not stunning. They did something illegal, that is fine, there was one but we never brought from them, but still, he became the assistant of ... and he actually ran ..., he was actually a good business man, an organiser more than anything, other than a business man, and he apparently said to Stern, I am not just a butcher, which he wasn't, his brother was the butcher, he was running the business, Moshe Chaim, his brother Igor was a big hefty fellow, he was the butcher there. So when he joined Stern, he said to Stern "I am not from a butcher's shop, I am a business man, I want percentage as we develop the sales", and he agreed to him, I don't know what percentage he gave him, but this Moshe Chaim knew me, because he was very friendly with my cousins across the road, from the Hagibor Sports group, playing table tennis and things like that, one of my cousins was champion once at table tennis in Prague before the war. So, Erich, the one who was the oldest of the factory making springs and Moshe Chaim were in the same Hagibor in Berlin, and that is how he knew

me and he knew my family. So, he said to Stern, there is this fellow in Letchworth, he knows how to add up, he knows how to read and write and he knows English, maybe you can use him for the grocery department and he can help me with the invoices and in the butcher's shop.

So, I got approached by Stern, who I went to work for, now what he offered salary wise, was miles above what the London Board offered, apart from which he mentioned straight away, without me asking, I was far too green to ask, and he offered me a percentage of the turnover in the grocery department. So, I was supposed to run the grocery department and at the same time, once or twice a week or whatever it was, to help Moshe Chaim Grunbaum by the scale with the invoices.

**Tape 4: 28 minutes 2 seconds**

Now don't forget 1948 was rationing, meat rationing, so everybody got a ration card, according to which they were allowed a certain sum of money worth of meat. Poultry I believe was not rationed but meat was. Offal wasn't rationed, meat was. So, you had to calculate, if a certain cut of meat, like bola cost three shillings a pound and a pound of chuck or shin cost one shilling a pound, you obviously on your ration got more shin and chuck than you got bola. So, the customer could order, or want, side bola, long bola, shin, chuck, brisket or whatever it is, and according to that he was allowed a certain weight of that meat according to the money he was entitled to. Now I managed to do all that without a calculator. I just told Moshe Chaim who was on the block and on the scale, and I said, Mrs Sacklovitz is entitled to two pounds worth of meat and she wants bola, brisket and this and he would cut it and said so many pounds and ounces at 1 shilling 11 pence, and I managed to work out in my head exactly how much that was without even a reckoner. I was good at arithmetic, it was a gift, I mean. And with that of course the invoices went chick chack and so on. What we then had to do was, each customer, the meat was wrapped in a special paper and put into a bag and eventually it soaked through because it wasn't, we didn't have plastic, waterproof yet, we had certain different kinds of paper then, and on each bag the invoice on a label was stapled to the bag with a name, and then I had to go to London, various districts and drop these parcels in a depot where distributed, people came to the depot, paid the distributor what was on the invoice and that money then came to Stern. I didn't collect the money, I just distributed the parcels to where they belonged and we had a driver and then the driver, I devised the routes in London, which way to go, and then we went back very early, so I managed to go to, I think Haringey swimming pool for a swim in the afternoon, it was lovely. So I was in charge of the grocery department, with a percentage. I was in charge of the invoicing. I was in charge of the distribution, and with Moshe Chaim, who was in the office after doing the meat doing the accounts. Who paid, how much, what is owing. When did he pay, what did he pay, dates, I learnt all that said, and I was good at that. So, that is what I did until November/December 1948.

**Tape 4: 31 minutes 50 seconds**

So, at that time, we lived within our means and we more or less managed. And as you know that in January 1947 my mother-in-law died, I was still in the army, and in April 1947 Marian got married, and in January or something, 49 I think, or December 48 whatever, my sister was married and we made the wedding, and I was out of the army already, and as I say I was working for Stern. Fine

Now in 1948, December or so, I got a phone call from Yankel, my brother-in-law, that his brother-in-law, his sister's husband who had a restaurant in Manchester, called the Hadassia restaurant, and they wanted a manager, it was a good going concern, and they had heard about me, and what I was doing and so on, and they invited me to come as manager. The wages offered were at least double if not more than what I was getting in Letchworth. So, I told Stern and Grunbaum, I have got this offer, and I must give it a try. If it doesn't work out, look if you get somebody else fine, and if you don't, then we will see.

So I came to Manchester, now there was a Rabbi Vilenski who was in charge, who owns the restaurant, he had a ward, he was fostering, a refugee boy called Henoch, who was very streetwise and no good, but he knew how to, you know diddle and swiddle and I don't know what, but I was, there was nobody in charge, supposed to organise everything, with the money coming in and coming out and making sure that the customer was satisfied and making sure that the kitchen was clean, so the cook could do what he was doing, and the pastry cook, a different personality, and all that, and then I found that workload, it was from about eight or nine in the morning when we opened up, until about two or three the following morning, when I locked up. And after about a week or two, Rabbi Vilenski, who was supposed to organise everything, with my help, he fell ill, and he was bedridden for at least nearly a month, during that time there was a Civic Function in Newcastle with the Chief Rabbi coming, Rabbi Brodie, and we were catering, I did it, we managed it, by myself, but believe me, it was really ... I didn't have much more than four or five hours sleep in a day, and then when the restaurant is open, you are on your feet, that is how it goes.

#### **Tape 4: 35 minutes 19 seconds**

The other thing that disturbed me was that if I am supposed to be in charge, then I like to organise things, in a proper organised way. When you take money, and you want to make a cheshbon [Hebrew for bill] , you want to make a balance, this came in, that goes out, that is what we paid for, and we paid the suppliers for this, and in between Rabbi Vilenski comes in, and he goes to the till and he takes out a wad of notes, without telling me how much or what, and I said "How can you do that?" and he said "Don't worry, it doesn't bother you."

That is not for me. Very good. And then they used to come around in the evening with a cigarette hanging from this corner and ashes hanging down, and he with customers, "hello ... hello ... How does it? How goes it?"

So I said to him "I am sorry, .....I am not going to bring my family here as an underling with no responsibility. I can't do it."

I went back to Letchworth and I went back to Stern and Grunbaum, and seeing that I came back to them with my tail between my legs, so they reduced my salary, and did away with the commission, because they said "What can this poor fellow do? He is so dependant on us." So, they took advantage of it. I never forgave them for that, and I am not sure whether it was Stern or whether it was Grunbaum, but again, we lived within our means, we had children, stayed in Letchworth, worked for Stern, worked day and night for Stern, to the extent whenever chickens were to be collected from the farm, Stern told me to go out at midnight from the farm for next day shechita, and I did it. He took it for granted again, a job, I did it. I carried those big heavy crates, I drove the lorry, if we didn't have a driver I did it myself naturally. I went with Stern to the chicken markets, bought the chickens, came to the slaughter man them. When I arrived from day one I helped with the shechita. I helped the shochet, and he was doing the slaughtering, and one of the jobs of the helper was to remind the shochet what did he find inside the animal, when he does the inside examination of the lungs, and each part of the lung I learned to call them.... And if there is a lesion of something on that lung then the shochet had to tell me there is a lesion in this part or other ....., and all these names, I knew all that and after he had done an examination, he told me where he had found a little lesion I used to tell him there was one on..... and then we blew up the lung so we could see where the lesion was, we tried to remove it, poured water over it, if there was no bubbles it was kosher, and if started bubbling there was a hole there and it was treif. And when there was no lesion it was called glatt, you know chalak. Glatt kosher, there was no lesion, it means it was smooth, there was no lesion. I did that from day one. First with Rav Nachman Dachs, who was the shochet when I came, and then with an assistant for him, a younger man, when Rabbi Dachs was becoming old already, somebody came from Russia by the name of Ruskin, Yehoshua Ruskin, he had done shechita already in Russia, then he did together with Dachs in Letchworth, and I was always there to supervise and that went on until I left Stern.

#### **Tape 4: 39 minutes 21 seconds**

Now, being that involved, in the actual slaughtering, I was never doing slaughtering, but in the after slaughter, the bedika, what the meat looks like, the way the meat was cut up by Moshe Chaim, prices, weights, slaughtering [...] management, customers. And so the time had come to go out on my own. So, when Stern took on ... because he expanded, Stern expanded, he took on another butcher, Wapnick who was a butcher who closed down in South London, came to work for him and we floated the idea of, you know, opening up a butcher on our own. Maybe not yet, but we will see. So, customers came to Letchworth from Letchworth itself, Hitchin, next to Letchworth and Luton.

Luton was a large Jewish community, who had their own butcher. Now the butcher in Luton ... at the beginning of the war they had a Jewish butcher, at the end of the war closed down, he didn't want to know, and then the kosher department went to a non Jewish butcher, where the Reverend Ritvo was a shochet, they did one animal a week, or two animals a week, in the Luton slaughter house, so he made it to the non Jewish butcher who cut it up, there was a man there to see about the porging and pickling was all kept separate and one day a week we all came to the butcher shop and the non Jewish

butcher gave them the kosher meat, under the supervision of that Mr Wernick. I found, now, when the customers came to Luton they didn't want to buy from a non-Jewish butcher. It was kosher all right, but they just didn't fancy it, you know, what happened at night .... with the mixture.... and they came to Letchworth to buy from Stern and Grunbaum. Quite a few, I should say about 20 customers. And one customer, I should say more than one, but one customer in particular kept on nagging me and said "Come to Luton, we want a kosher butcher in Luton!" And I said "How can I? I can't open competition." But I said I will make enquiries, and I phoned up the shochet, who was the minister of Luton, and I said to him "Look, you know of me, you don't know me but you know of me, and there is another employee who was a butcher and we are interested in all". So, there was quite a bit of vested interest there, in so far as one farmer, or two farmers around Luton supplied the Jewish community with chicken, live chicken, and Reverend Ritvo used to go around the houses to shecht them, and then the housewife used to pluck it and kosher and things like that. So, for that of course he got paid, by the individual household, so there was a revenue which he was about to lose, apart from that I suppose he got some money for being a shochet as well and supervising of the butcher's shop, although somebody else also got paid, and the answer I got from him was "Look, why do you want to come to Luton? Why rock the boat? Now the war is over people are leaving Luton. Why don't you go to one of the up and coming suburbs of London like Boreham Wood or Kenton or anything like that, and open a butcher shop there in a growing community where there is more of a future." And I answered thank you very much. And I said to Wapnick, Luton seems to be out. And I told them, the Luton customers kept nagging me, I said, I quoted the goyta who went to the butcher shop for a woman. So I said "Sorry I have been approached..... and the answer is no."

#### **Tape 4: 43 minutes 46 seconds**

Then came the end of rationing in June or July 1954. Now, before I continue with the Luton saga, I must go back a bit. Wanting to be independent, seeing that Stern and Grunbaum did not appreciate my work, because the wages I was getting were really low by any standard, but then again what option did I have, but I managed on what we had, my father-in-law at that time had already gone to Israel and come back again and so on, I don't know if my wife told you about that ...

RL: She did ... yes ...

EF: So, in 1952 ... 1952 ... one of my fellow pupils from Whittingehame, called Kurt Nabel, had married a pupil of mine from Polton House, Esther, and Kurt and Esther Nabel came knocking at my door one day, with a young baby, a baby girl.... They had nowhere to go, can we take them in. I don't know if Chava told you about them. Knocking at your door, my father-in-law was living with us.

Ellen, sorry not Esther, Ellen, Ellen Weinberg, so they came and they told us the tale of him having worked in London for a fellow Bachadnik called ..... Steinberg who had opened a business of spare parts taken from demental ships and so on with radar and radio parts and apparently he had gambled away with Nabel, Kurt Nabel an amount of



money and in the end we got the sack from this, and what happened, Grodzinskis the bakers in London, Harry Grodzinski was very friendly with Ellen Nabel and had given tickets to join her mother who lived at that time in Turkey, she had survived the war and was living in Turkey, being the good wife she was she gave the money to buy the tickets to go to Turkey to visit her mother, or to join her mother, and Kurt promptly gambled it away in Brighton at the races, and then they became penniless, and they had no money for a ticket and of course Harry knew about that afterwards, so, what to do, and we took them in.

And he was looking for a job, and he managed to get a job with a big wine firm in London, who supplied wines to the House of Lords, a big firm, fine. He got a job there, and he was doing all the shlepping, or ... I have no idea, he certainly wasn't a salesman. So, friends of ours in Letchworth, Bornstein, you know, we were friendly with them because we lived in Letchworth, and Chaver Bornstein I got the house from.

I was blackmailed, I don't know if Chava told you about that, but that is another story, anyway the Bornsteins said to me "Look you've got this neighbour there he is working in a wine shop. Why don't you open a wine business? He knows about wines."

#### **Tape 4: 48 minutes 2 seconds**

So what did I do? I borrowed money from my cousin in Belgium, I rented a shop in Hitchin, and a shopping parade, just outside the town, not in the centre of Hitchin, called it the Hadassah Wine Company, because my sister was working for Hadassah in America, and took in Kurt Nabel as a partner. I brought a van for deliveries, and there was a partnership where I financed it and he was supposed to do the work of getting customers and selling it and so on. Because I didn't have to give up my job before being established as a wine merchant. The law in England was, I don't know if it still is, that you can sell wine and spirits wholesale, which means by the dozen, without a license, but as a retail in a shop you need a brewer's licence. Brewer's licences were granted once yearly in two sessions by Brewsters session it is called and they grant retail licenses to wine merchants.

Right. So, to start the business he left the firm and I had a van, and I made contacts with wine merchants, and he had contacts through his firm there. I had contact with the kosher wine merchants in the east end, Chaiken, Palwin and so on, and they gave the goods on credit, 30 days to pay, so I sold in between, I got the money and paid my suppliers. And that came, then came January 1953.

I now needed the license from the Brewster's session in January 1953 to open in Luton a little wine shop, even without Shabbat a retail business is different from just wholesale going around selling to pubs, which he managed to do a bit. Again, I helped in the evening a lot, through my contacts and we managed to organise things. Now, I applied to the Brewster's Session, and I thought, you know what I will take a solicitor. I went to a firm of solicitors, .....and Co in Letchworth and there was just one newly joined solicitor, Mr Coad, and he was given the job to represent me at the Brewster's Session.

And they said, well, you want to open a wine shop, there will be opposition from the existing merchants in Hitchin, and the pub isn't far from there, which is selling wines and spirits. I said as far as I know they are not selling kosher wines, there was a Jewish community and no kosher wines. Alright, get the Rabbi to appear on your behalf that they want kosher wines, and maybe we get through it. So, the Rabbi, I mean the solicitor represented my case, and took the Rabbi as a supporter that in a Jewish community like to buy kosher wines locally instead of having to shlep it from London, so the other merchants, the pubs as well as the other wine merchants in Hitchin said "We can supply kosher wines, so far we have had no demand."

So, I said "Look, it wouldn't occur to a Jew in Letchworth to go to a pub in Hitchin or a wine merchant to ask for kosher wine, you get it from London obviously. There they said "No, we can supply kosher wines, there is no need for a kosher ...". There is no licence for kosher wines, either you get a licence or you don't get a licence so I used the kosher to get a licence obviously, legitimate as it was. They said no we can supply kosher wines.

#### **Tape 4: 52 minutes 43 seconds**

And of course, my application was promptly thrown out, rejected. I did not appeal on that particular ground. What happened then was two things, Kurt Nabel my partner when he saw that a retail licence was not granted took whatever money there was and scarpered. I never saw him again, I never saw the money again.

What I did then was, I went to my suppliers and said this is what happened "He has all the stock." Take it back, I am keeping the wholesale business, so from time to time I will take stock on the credit basis and then pay you and they were amazed at what I did. I could have declared bankruptcy and not paid anybody a penny, instead of which I paid what I could, came back for goods and kept my reputation, or rather I established my reputation. So that being untarnished I carried on with the business, and what I did then was I took in a manager for the business.

Then something tragic happened, my wife probably told you, in February 1953 that is a month or a month and a half after the rejection of the licence, our son David died, you know all the details about that. So, the spring of 1953 was not a very happy time. After that, after the death of our son, I recovered a bit and I said I owe it to my family to get out of that narrow employment situation. And once I established the wholesale wine business [...] I said "No, I have got a partner Kurt Nabel, he is running it, I didn't tell him anything about how I financed it with money from my cousin in Belgium. I carried on with Stern and Grunbaum the way I was before, and I took in a manager, obviously I was closed on Shabbat, and the manager was not exactly a go getter otherwise he wouldn't have worked for somebody else. He used to be a driving instructor under which Chava and I passed our driving tests eventually. And he took in charge of the wholesale wine business, and for connections I sent him out to the pubs to sell and I got a bit of money in which just about paid his wages and rent but I had to subsidise a bit even then.

Comes January 1954, in January 1954 I did something different. There is ... Scouts in Britain as you know, and the Scouts had a scheme called "Bob A Job". Have you ever

heard of it? Bob A Job. That means you go to the scout group and tell them, he is a mob I want you to do, and for each job you do you get a bob, one shilling. Now here are 200 cards, which I designed, writing on the right side and ... Dear fellow citizen of Hitchin, I am applying for a wine retail license for such and such a spot. There is no wine shops the nearest wine supplier would be a pub or the wine shop in town, there is nothing in your own district here, I am applying, do you support my application. Please sign and send back the reply card prepaid, detach it and send it back to me. And I got well over 200 supporting replies, which I then presented to the Brewster's session, and I got my licence.

RL: Now I will just stop here, because this tape is about to end.

## TAPE 5

RL: This is the interview with Eli Fachler and it is tape 5.

So, you have got your retail licence.

EF: Now the retail license from the first Brewster session in January 1954, and there were two sessions which were almost like an Appeal's Court, where the opposition can still say, no, we object and they can overturn the first Magistrates' Courts decision, so a month later, there was always a month in between, so I was waiting to see what would happen, because they didn't tell you if they object or not, and I did it all without a solicitor, I did it on my own, I presented myself, gave the petition, didn't say anything about kosher, and I went into Hertford, which is the capital of Hertfordshire to the second Brewster's Session which is a higher Court, and they didn't object, so I got my licence.

After which in February our daughter was born, in 54, and when she was born one of my suppliers, a fellow called Tehillim, who was an importer of advocaat from Holland, kosher advocaat, and we were friendly with him, and he had a daughter, and the parents were very keen his daughter should marry our eldest son, and they really liked me, and they liked my family, and they were very friendly with the Tehillims and they moved to the Garden Suburb, Bishops Avenue, one of those big houses. Anyway, he said to me, no she said, "A daughter brings her own mazal, she brings her own luck".

And so, it turned out, in 1954, in June, July, that is when I went back from there, rationing finished, and meat came off the ration. Panic-stricken SOS telephone call from Reverend Ritvo of Luton, the gentile lady butcher gave notice at the end of rationing she is not carrying on, neither kosher nor not kosher, just giving up, because without rationing competition they weren't used to any more, because rationing there was no competition. "Would I come to Luton." Ahh, now the shoe was on the other foot, and of course the opportunity.

Let me go back a bit. When Wapnick, the other employee at Sterns and myself saw that there was no chance of going independent, Wapnick left, either to open up somewhere else, or join somewhere else or work for somebody else, because for him it meant

travelling to Letchworth, he didn't live there. Then Stern took, and Grunbaum as well, took another butcher, he was a master butcher from Vienna called Pressburger, Oscar Pressburger his name was Ossi, Oscar Pressburger he was employed partly by Stern as a butcher, partly by the community to keep the books for the community, memberships and that sort of thing, with his wife, Gila, he had a daughter Monica, who afterwards changed her name to Suzanne, very keen to marry our elder son, but, he was really a master butcher, and he then took over more or less from Grunbaum, who was doing mainly just the accounts for the business, and he was a butcher, and he cut up the meat, and what I used to do with Grunbaum, I would do with him now. He knew that I could do the accounts and so on.

**Tape 5: 4 minutes 15 seconds**

And then Stern and Greenwald decided that it was time to move to London, because the clientele was mainly in London. Whatever there was in Hitchin, Letchworth or Luton and surroundings, even Cambridge, was very small compared to the potential that was in London. Also, what there was in London they were going to take one of the employees of the great butcher Frohwein in London who was a sausage maker, and make their own sausages and all that sort of thing, right. We did make our own sausages in Letchworth already Stern, with a non-Jewish sausage maker from the bacon factory, where we used to do the shechita. He was employed then by us to do chicken plucking, making sausages, and I don't think he was, I mean according to the shochet he wasn't exactly an expert sausage maker but he made sausages and it was alright. Because he had picked it up from the bacon factory where they made sausages. His name was Ivan ... Ivan Prunic, he was a Yugoslav, who was, I think was fighting against Hitler on the German side, and was taken prisoner, came to Britain and stayed here, fine. He married a German girl, a young German girl.

So, Ivan was a sausage maker, he was going to go with them to London, and so was Pressburger, of course, and so was I. So, I said to myself, "This phone call from Luton, it is an opportunity. But on the other hand, I am not a butcher. I am an administrator, businessman, call it what you like. I can cut some meat, but I certainly can't bone out a quarter and porgé it, at the speed that is needed. I could do it, you know, but it would take me a day. I had seen enough of it. So, I approached Pressburger, Ossi Pressburger and I said "Look, how would you like to come into partnership with me to open up in Luton." He agreed, and we gave, then I very generous, instead of giving the one weeks notice I was entitled to, I gave then I believe two or three months' notice, in order to train somebody else to take my job and not to leave them in the lurch. So statutorily I could have just walked out with a week or two weeks notice and let them stew in their own juice, but I said alright, I will train somebody in and I will leave to open up in Luton.

And I approached Pressburger and he said that he would come in. The pressure they put that poor bloke under was nobody's business, and in the end he sat in the car crying what they..., you know, I am telling you, not to, because he was a butcher. And the Bornstein's were agitating the other way "Leave Stern, go with Fachler. He is a good man."

So, what happened then was I opened up in Luton, I left them. Pressburger was still working for them, for a week or two or so, and he came in the evening to bone the meat, and then Pressburger said “Look, we need ...”, I saw straight away ...

Oh, let’s go back a bit, in order to be orderly. I said to Whitburn “Right, you get premises, organise yourself because I haven’t got the time to do it, and at a certain date I will come and open up and you do the shechita and I will get the beheimas. One condition is that I do the chicken, we don’t do any more private shechting, right. I will get the chicken from the farmer, you shecht and get your salary and that is it.

### **Tape 5: 8 minutes 37 seconds**

He wanted a share in the business, and I said “Right, I don’t mind.” So, he put a certain amount of money into the initial set up. When I started Luton, it was just a small shop, nowhere near enough for the clientele that Luton represented, I saw straight away, I said “This is no good, no room to move, nowhere to put ... the fridge is a joke, the machine for mince meant, the mincing machine, we can’t do any sausages here or anything like that. Chicken, no chicken ...” So, within a week or two he managed to hear of a butcher shop for sale, two spinsters, who were giving up the business after rationing stopped, and wanted to get out.

So, I rented the shop from them, at the back of which was a carpentry, large premises for the carpentry, which then had to pay rent to me. No, sorry, they paid rent to them and I paid rent to the distillers as well. And it wasn’t very much bigger, so after Pressburger left Stern, we opened up the big shop in Albert Road, pardon me. Anyway, it was bigger, with premises upstairs for my office, up and down the stairs, and a place for refrigeration for chicken and so on, and customers could stand in the shop without queuing outside.

And of course, what Stern did when I opened up, he wrote to all his Luton customers not to buy from me. They were up in arms “Who does he think he is?” “Telling us where to buy!” and that sort of thing. I got the Hitchin customers as well. And then eventually all the customers who brought from Stern, he didn’t had said he would supply them from London and so on, none of them wanted to stay with him. So, I said “I am not looking for customers. I have got not enough people in Luton. I don’t want to ... I don’t want to encroach.” Nothing doing, they all came to me. One or two customers who were sort of super Chareidi frum still brought from him, from London, they were family, so he still supplied them.

As I say, right from the beginning, I saw the potential there, and the one who helped me greatly at the beginning was Frohwein, the big butcher in London. He said “Look, there has to be competition, I am a great believer competition.” In the end I helped him out with a casting pen when he had no casting pen. He opened up in between with shechita, with Kedasia shechita, he left the London Board and all that sort of thing but I was all involved in all that.

I was also one of the founder members of The National Shechita Council, where I met most people from Manchester and from all over Britain, from Glasgow. I was representing Letchworth, Letchworth Shechita Board. And when I had a phone call, when Pressburger joined me, I had a phone call from Rabbi Doctor Schonfeld, the head of Kedasia, "Do we know that it is halachically forbidden to poach an employee from somebody else? You mustn't do that, Pressburger was employed by somebody else."

I said "Who told you I am poaching an employee? He is not an employee, he is a partner."

"Oh, sorry, I didn't know. I wasn't told."

After that he always called me his Luton butcher, Rabbi Schonfeld, "Mr Fachler, my Luton butcher." He did not know.

### **Tape 5: 12 minutes 40 seconds**

Now, green as I was, I made Ritvo sell his share, at a profit, to Pressburger, some money was coming in, and Pressburger supplied a certain amount of capital, and I made a partnership 50:50. Now the license was in my name, I was the kosher butcher, I could have, considering, we had four children already and he only had one, I could have turned round and said "Alright I will make you a partner, 75:25". He would have done it, I mean there was no question, he had one daughter to support and I had a different kind of expenses. It worked out that way that he could really save a lot of money and buy property and retire, later when we gave up part of Luton, when we did retire, whereas my savings went into my family funds. So, I was green enough not to do that, I should have been advised then to make it 60:40 or 70:30, but I made it 50:50. After all he was the master butcher, but I was the business man, and as such I started expanding and expanding the business to supply, first of all in Margate, Margate were looking for a butcher, and I applied to open a branch in Margate. So, in the end one of the hoteliers gave up his hotel and became a butcher in Margate, so I said "Alright, I will supply the butcher". So, I supplied the butcher in Margate, I supplied hotels in Bournemouth, I supplied the community in Cambridge, community in Oxford, community in Northampton and of course lots of individual customers in London. So, we had a driver, sometimes two drivers, and a van or two vans and we distributed the whole home counties with kosher meat eventually.

RL: What happened to the wine business?

EF: Ah, well the wine business, this Tehillim who I told you about, who said that a daughter brings her own luck, and at the Brewster's Session in 1955, after a year of retail, when I kept this manager on at the retail shop, which at least paid his wages and then the rent, it certainly wasn't anything like, with Shabbat closed, it certainly wasn't anything like as profitable, or it couldn't keep me like the butcher's shop in Luton which was an expanding business. So, if I had no option, I might have gone into the wine business myself without a manager and built it up, fine. But as it was, this Tehillim said to me "Look, there is a wine company interested in buying your business. Unwins. They have branches all over England." But all these things, when they start negotiating must be kept

top secret, you know, otherwise, or if I know that they wanted, so I asked him “Look, you know I am green, tell me what to ask for.”

He said “Look, stocks aren’t so much, goodwill aren’t so much, licence aren’t so much, he asked for so and so much money.” I did, I got it without argument. I went to the Brewster’s session the following year, told him that they want to buy my business, with the kosher wines and everything, and said it was a big wine company with branches, I don’t think there was any opposition because they were a big wine company themselves. And I sold that at a profit, and I managed to settle all my debts that I had accumulated in the wine business, with a bit of money over, and that was the end of my Hadassa Wine Company, and they called it Unwin. But the chapter of the Hadassa wine company is a saga in itself. And then I concentrated on the Luton business.

**Tape 5: 17 minutes 0 second**

RL: How settled did you feel in England?

EF: It was always our ambition to go to Israel. And I did, as soon as possible. So much so that in ... before I opened the butcher’s shop already in Luton already, in 1950s, 51/52, when my father-in-law had gone to Israel. Our son Chaim was born on December ’50, my wife probably already told you about it, he was born with infantile eczema, and we were told going to Israel was not good for his eczema, wait until he has outgrown it, you know, about four or five years, and go then.

Four or five years later, on my father-in-law had come back from Israel already, he had died here in England, and he was living in Manchester for a while. The eczema turned into asthma, which needed continuous treatment and so on and when I then moved to our kibbutz in Tirat Tzvi, our kibbutz in Tirat Tzvi, we said we want to come on Aliyah in 1952 and ’53, they wrote back and said “Yes, by all means come, but you have got to bring air conditioning, refrigeration.” But we needed money for that. I said “Forget that, we haven’t got that.” So anyway, and then with eczema, so we postponed it, but the goal was always eventually to settle here. Much as we were settled in our own community in Letchworth, which is a part saga by itself, how that developed, and up to 1970 when we were in Letchworth, and we left Letchworth in 1971, we ran it, I mean I ran it more or less after most people left ..... and we had the connection with Cambridge University, I don’t know if my wife told you, with the Jewish students up to this day the connections are there.

We were settled in England, yes, but the aim, hope, and ambition was always to become part of Israel. When we first visited in 1961, before the Six-Day War when I was only a little Israel and we ended up in Jerusalem at the Mandelbaum Gate, with the Arab legion looking down shooting down, and looking down from the Tower of David sort of thing, from The Citadel.

We visited Tirat Tzvi. Some of the chevra were on Tirat Tzvi and some on Lavi, and I saw the Tirat Tzvi, the palm trees, the houses, the plantations, the also developed there, I don’t know if they had the sausage factory there already or not, and I would have loved to

have been part of that build up, obviously it was on our land, I missed that, but I was certain that eventually we would become part of building up Israel.

And so, eventually I managed to purchase our dirah [Hebrew for flat] in Yerushalayim in 1971 when it was still being built and after the Six-Day War it was the next neighbourhood to French Hill, to be developed, and I brought it on a plan, on paper, and in 72 we moved here and we have been here ever since. Well, on and off, I kept up my business until 1987, but we came here for our children, our children nearly always spent their first few months of married life in our flat there, until they found somewhere of their own. All the children got married here, except for one. Grandchildren, we have now got our grandchildren, as you know, all living in Israel.

**Tape 5: 21 minutes 15 seconds**

RL: So, you actually moved to Israel in 1972?

EF: Yes.

RL: But you kept your business on?

EF: Yes.

RL: How did you manage that?

EF: So, I told the community at that time that I will disengage from the business eventually, gradually, not straight away because I have got to run the business there. I was coming and going, and I went into partnership then with a butcher in London which didn't work out, because the London Board of Shechita put their foot in it and they said that they must not supply, he must not become a partner with a butcher outside of London, or whatever. This again..... in my next book. So, but, until 1987 ... let me put it this way ... 1972 was the year I was going to disengage myself gradually as I sell it, it was a good going business, or wind it down, or whatever it is, and in a year or two, maybe three, go to Israel.

Then came the Yom Kippur War, we were here in 1973 in the Yom Kippur War, and after the Yom Kippur War the Arabs used the oil weapon worldwide, prices went through the roof, oil prices, the economy went sky high, and interest rates in the business went from six, seven percent, on which one bases, I based my business to 24/25 percent, so I got into debt with the bank to an enormous amount, I couldn't cover it. The business could not go up to these prices like some of the bigger people could. I mean, they could still keep their prices and still make a profit, my turnover was not big enough to do that, and going up with prices means a little bit of competition, so I had to struggle on, borrowing from the bank, which taught me big lessons, never do that, you work for the bank. And ... I couldn't walk away from it, I was too much in debt by 1973, 75 actually. In 73 the oil weapon started, and 74/75, that is when the economic collapse worldwide occurred. You know big depression. Mine wasn't the only business, I mean everything



went down, but the bank made lots of money. So much so that they bought shares that I had bought with money borrowed from them, they bought it back from me, kept it and then waited for the shares to go up again and sold them.

So, it was completely out of control, out of my control. It was the main reason why I did not actually move to, live in Israel, shortly after I made aliyah, but I made aliyah officially in 72, and then I changed from Oleh to temporary resident because it was advantageous regarding travel tax not to be an Oleh, but I had my Teudat Oleh right back from 1972, and I renewed it again when the tax came off.

RL: So were you still technically, or were you still physically living in England ...

**Tape 5: 24 minutes 15 seconds**

EF: In England?

As I say ... our children got married in Israel, we came to Israel at least three or four times a year, I used to tell people I live in Israel and work in England. That was my stance, my attitude, although we were living in England, by that time we were living in London already, Letchworth had finished by then in 72, we left Letchworth in 71.

RL: And how do you feel towards England?

EF: It has given me shelter, if not for England I don't know what would have happened to us, so for that I am eternally grateful. I am mad at the British Government for the 1939 White Paper, for trying to prevent the creation of the State of Israel in spite of the Balfour Declaration. I feel lucky to have lived in Balfour's Estate, to have managed to get Lord Balfour for the anniversary, for the reunion, I feel a kinship to England, and England. If I look at continentals and I remember what it meant to be, to living on the continent to the age of 15, it is not a very early age, one does get a good impression already, about the rigidity, the concept of dictatorship. There isn't just a dictatorship in Germany, before there was just ... a policeman was a figure of authority, in London he was a figure of a helper, he was there to help you. Civil servants were there to serve the public, that was the British ... that absolutely gets me, whereas the continental idea is that once you become an official and the....., you all of a sudden become, you know, are more than the general public, they have to serve you and not you them. Unfortunately, nobody was ...

RL: How would you describe yourself in terms of identity?

EF: First and foremost Jewish. I mean even from day one. The German Jews, on the continent said first and foremost German, of Jewish persuasion, that means they wanted to be en par with the non-Jewish Germans, the eastern Jews, who came from Poland and they were brought up in that atmosphere, never trusted the goyim, because of the experience they had in Russia and Poland, with pogroms and that sort of thing. So as Jews, religious Jews, we felt very comfortable in Germany until Hitler. But never to say,

never en par with the German goyim, because the German Jews wanted to be and tried to be. So, coming then from Germany to Britain, we were refugees, tolerated, well treated, and I did not encounter any anti-Semitism really. Although there was plenty of anti-Semitism about, I met people from Cable Street from the East End afterwards in the army, who were in the battle of Cable Street, and people who came from the East End and talked about the fascists and all that. So, there was plenty of anti-Semitism about and always one learnt also about the subtle anti-Semitism within the Foreign Office, you know, all this comes down to individuals, and they won't tell you "I hate Jews", they will do things in official capacity that will hurt or whatever it is, and they say "These are the regulations", or they make regulations. Some people come quite openly like Galloway, fine, so you know where you stand, I don't know what I prefer.

**Tape 5: 28 minutes 37 seconds**

But, as I say, I like Britain, I like to be part of Britain, as much as they acknowledge me to be part of that. I am first and foremost Jewish, I certainly identify with being Israeli. I have got no axe to grind with the adults as such, as long as they are civilised. When we came in 1967, before we bought anything in Israel, and after the 67 War, we were taken by an Arab, I think he was a Muslim Arab actually, through the Old City, onto the Temple Mount, into the Al Aqsar Mosque, he took us there, I don't know if he knew we were Jewish or not. He talked about Abdullah coming back to Jerusalem again and everything would be fine. The sort of things King Abdullah said before he was assassinated, so that is my homeland, I mean Israel is for me, and for my children's grandchildren. So, if you say "What do you identify with?" you don't identify for yourself, you identify for future generations, this is a ...

RL: How do you feel towards Germany?

EF: On the whole, I would say neutral. A lot of my contemporaries feel very, very bitter, let down. Their parents fought in the First World War on the Germans side and they were so ungrateful, and that kind of treachery effected them much more than us, who "What do you expect of goyim?" having seen the anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe of our parents, didn't believe the Germans, the cultured Germans, could do such a thing, but in the end it was too late to escape, they perished in the Holocaust, and then I see in generations, two generations later, in a democracy that hates war, has learnt to atone if possible for their Nazi past, definitely condemning it, the vast majority, there are plenty of pockets of it, one has, what shall we say historically, Hitler is due for what he did for Germany, apart from his anti-Semitism that he used as a base for getting money and re-arming and trying to conquer the world. What he did for Germany with unemployment and getting money from all sides against communism and so on, it was very much a personal calling of his, which he believed. He was an evil man, and all that, no doubt about it, and again, with hindsight, if any Jew had a gun, and the opportunity to shoot them, they should have done so, but they wouldn't have done, they were much too law abiding, much too indoctrinated in discipline, when you get a letter from the police station, the local one, you appeared, you don't disappear, you don't ... many of the Jews from the east knew what was coming and did not appear. I don't think there were many

manhunts in Germany looking for these people who disappeared. Very often they found them, but there wasn't ... not that I was aware of it at ... at the age of 15, I don't know what the grown ups thought ... you didn't hear much talk about it. But I do know that again, Joseph, one of the sons of my father's cousin, the brother of the one who .... , he was a lawyer. He married a girl..... who still lives now, in Frankfurt, they went back there. Her brother, fought with the republicans in the Spanish Civil War and was shot down as a pilot, and also, he got letters from his comrades. So, it was whispered around only, while I was a boy still, and I was very friendly with the younger brother, who was a year younger than me, and he became the captain. I told you about when we celebrated VE Day ..... there was the younger brother of the one who fell as a pilot in the Spanish Civil War.

**Tape 5: 33 minutes 9 seconds**

RL: Coming back to this country ... did you join any refugee organisation like AJR or ...?

EF: Yes, I joined the Ex-Berliners, that is one of them, and the AJR is another one and whilst I was here of course the Mizrahi movement, I was on the executive of the British Mizrahi. I was pro Mizrahi for many years, and I became a deputy of the Board of Deputies, representing my Synagogue, I was on the shechita committee of the Board of Deputies, I was certainly community active, and I tried to repay to Britain my contribution that I think was due to them and to the Jewish community to a certain extent.

RL: Is there any sort of message you would like to give?

EF: The message is really that I feel extremely blessed in the way my life developed with my family having lost parents and the wider family of my father and my mother in Poland. That the wider family that survived in Australia, in America and Belgium, and in England of course is seen, not deserved, as a blessing. How did we deserve it? I see it as a reward for the lifestyle my parents lived. So, because we didn't always get punished or rewarded for what we do, but future generations may gain the benefit for our deeds here. And that is the way I look at it, that is the world.

RL: Thanks very much.

EF: You are welcome.

RL: Thank you.

EF: This is me in the summer of 1945 on my first compassionate leave to Belgium taken in Antwerp where I found the family, cousins of my father, who survived in hiding in Belgium. Two members got lost to the Germans, they both tried to flee to Switzerland where they were caught by the Swiss and promptly handed back to the Germans. One was a brother of my mother, Uncle Theo, who married the daughter of ....., and one

was one of the sons called Loebel who went with them together to Switzerland and this one was brought back to Germany.

Chava and myself at a wedding in London around about 1958. you can see a Synagogue in the background that looks to me like the Edgware Synagogue.