

My Abba, Shlomo, speech by Rahel Brodi-Sharrock.  
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My father, Abba, Brody Shlomo was born in 1929 in Bánffy-Hunyad, Transylvania, Hungary, today it is Huedin, in Romania. His home was of an ultra-orthodox character in a Jewish community of about a thousand people.

He was the middle child of 5 siblings. From his stories over the years I got the picture of a happy hard working family and my Abba, a bit of a cheeky child, that tested the boundaries. For example, Being orthodox meant you could not pick fruit from the tree on Shabbat but there was nothing to stop you from putting your hands behind your back and eating the apple bite by bite from the tree!

I guess there was always some undertow of Antisemitism but real unsettling trouble started for the family in 1940.

My Abba was 11 years old.

The family was deported to Budapest and concentrated in the Sovolc concentration camp. My father and brother Leib-Hersh were transferred to a camp belonging to the JCC (Jewish Humanitarian Organisation) outside Budapest, Hungary, where they stayed for a year separated from the family.

My Abba and siblings with their mother returned to Bánffy-Hunyad and a year later his father was returned. They spend one winter at home.

In the summer of 1942, he was sent with younger brother Michael to a camp in Hungary on the banks of the Danube, where we stayed for four months.

The family were released to their home again and lived together for one year.

19 March 1944 Germany invaded Hungary.

17 April 1944 My Abba, Shlomo and family were put at the synagogue school yard in Huedin.

28 April 1944 The family are deported to Cluj in Romania

29 May, 1 June 1944, On Shavuot, After six weeks, Shlomo and family are loaded on trains to Auschwitz extermination camp in Birkenau. where he stayed until January 1945.

At first he was with his father .

And later He lived in the children's camp, mainly in C Lager. They Were put to work planting potatoes in ditches and covering them with straw. The camp was next to his brother Leib-Hersh barracks, He worked in the Kanada warehouses (where the Germans stored stolen belongings from prisoners) and delivered food, clothes and shoes through the electrified fence to Abba.

Abba managed to pass Dr. Mangala's selection safely by, as he used to tell, puffing his chest, trying to look taller and healthy.

My Abba seems to have been very resourceful in the fight to stay alive.

On one of these occasions when he was under curfew before being taken to the gas chambers, he asked an acquaintance he spotted through the narrow window to locate his brother in order to rescue him from the shack. Since his brother Leib-Hersh worked in cloth

sorting, he had gold and diamond rings and was able to bribe the capo and He was saved. He was caught a second time and put again in the barracks for candidates for the gas chambers.

In a recording of 'Memory in the Living Room' called '5 Times Facing the Gas Chambers' my father recounts other events where he faced sure death but with great measure of good luck, resourcefulness and self belief he lived on to tell his story.

He was liberated by the Americans from GunsKirchen camp in city of Wels on 5 May 1945 after enduring the death March.

Free and alone he joined the Jewish Brigade and went to Italy. The Jewish Brigade gathered Jews from all around Europe into camps in Italy where they fed them, helped to find surviving relatives and organised boats to take survivors to Israel.

Abba, in 1947, after a time in Italy boarded a boat to sail to Israel only to be denied entry by the British, transferred to detention in Cyprus. He remained there until March 15, 1948. He returned to Atlit, Israel on board '4 Haruyot' and joined Agudat Israel group to settle in Ramat Hader. Shortly after he enlisted in the army for the Givati Brigade and participated in battles in the south in the war of independence, 1948. And again my amazing surviving Abba who lost many friends, fellow soldiers in the front line, survived. Abba went on to serve his country in 1956, 1967, 1973 wars and in the reserves for many years.

I had to tell you all of this even if somewhat briefly for you to also appreciate that in spite of losing his parents, all siblings but one sister, extended family and other tragedies he experienced in his life over the years, somehow he was able to find joy and happiness in life around him.

The joy of his first visit to France to see his only surviving sister, Rivku Elizabeth and her family of 8 children was described to me beautifully in letters. With full descriptions of culinary experiences.

On my parents first visit to NZ we toured the South Island. Everything was beautiful... he could have lived here... only he could not become a refugee again, he said. The joy and wonderment he experienced visiting the glaciers will forever stay with me.

Abba passed away in January 2023 he was 94. May his soul rest in peace.