

# Golda Salamon

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Maramarossziget

Romania

Interviewer: Emo Major

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*Golda Salamon, or auntie Galdi, as people call her is a young-looking aunt of small stature.*

*She pays a great attention to her everyday dressing, she likes cheerful colors. She lives alone in the family house in Maramarossziget [today Sighetu Marmatiei], which was the home of a large family until the World War II.*

*Her grandparents on the mother's side lived there with their eight children, and her parents too brought up there seven children.*

*Auntie Galdi is now alone. She is left alone not only in the house, but in the whole town, one could even say that she is left alone in the whole historical Maramaros:*

*she is last who lives here from the Hasid community, which used to have several ten thousands of members.*

*She has a great farm, she keeps poultry, and there is always work to do around the house or on the fields.*

*She doesn't have children, and maybe she could live on her pension, but she is attached to her inherited lifestyle.*

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- **My family background**

My grandfather was called Jankel Malek, he was born in Jod [today Ieud in Romanian, 55 km far from Maramarossziget to the south-east], but they sold their properties and moved to Sziget [short for Maramarossziget], they lived in this street.

He was a farmer, they had a good piece of land after [behind] the house, its cultivation was their main occupation, and they kept cows and poultry.

He didn't attend yeshiva, but he was religious, a Hasid, he went to the synagogue every day. His wife was Eszter Szegal, she was born in Szaplunca [today Sapanta in Romanian, 18 km far from Maramarossziget to the north-west].

My two grandmothers, namely the mother of my dad and the mother of my mum were full sisters. Both grandmothers were very religious.

Their hair was cut short, but they didn't need any wig, they were wearing shawls knitted in the back. Both the father and the mother of my dad were deported [from Maramarossziget].

My father had only one younger brother, Avrom Malek. His family lived here in Sziget, in this street. His wife was called Szimi, they had about six children: Blime Hana, Mojse Lajzer, there was Dina, she didn't come back [from deportation], then there was Berl who didn't come back either. I don't know the name of the other children, as they were little.

Mojse Lajzer left for Israel in the 1950s, his children were still little. He lived in Haifa, had a small store there and he was managing it. He has a son and a daughter, they are still living in Israel.

His son -he is the older - lives in Haifa, he has eight children, as he's religious. I don't know what he is living on. In Israel those who have many children get a significant allowance from the state. The daughter of Mojse Lajzer lives in Jerusalem, she has only three children.

My father's name was **Izidor Malek**, Ezra in Jewish. I don't know precisely when my father was born, but he must have been 3 or 4 years older than my mum [so he must have been born in the 1880s]. He was born in a village, Jod.

Both my dad and his younger brother attended the yeshiva in Pozsony [1](#), in the Czech Republic [Golda Salamon refers to the territory of the Czech Republic during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy].

So they were religious, we were regarded as religious Jews. My dad had a short beard, his brother was bearded too, they also had payes.

My parents were first cousins. Dad attended the university in Pozsony, in the Czech Republic, the Jewish university, the yeshiva, and when he came home from there, he always visited mum, he was courting her. The two grandmothers were delighted about this, as they wanted a religious couple.

This was permitted by the religion. And none of the children were disabled; they were beautiful, healthy children.

One must not marry his aunt, the religion prohibits it, but not the cousin, one can marry a cousin. [Editor's note: The rules and prohibitions concerning marriage (respectively sexual relations in general) are specified in Leviticus 18:6-30, this part became the main reference in later rabbinic, Halakhic rules referring to marriage.

According to the Torah it is prohibited to establish sexual relations with parents (18:7), with the spouse of the parents (18:8), siblings and half-brother or half-sister (18:9), with one's own descendants and the descendants of a parent's spouse (18:10-11).

Leviticus 18:12 prohibits men to have sexual relations with their own aunt (“Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister”, and also prohibits to approach the wife of one's uncle. However the Torah doesn't mention the marriage between cousins, respectively between uncle and niece, thus it doesn't prohibit it. The marriage between cousins, respectively between uncle and niece was a wide-spread custom in Europe and in the East until World War II.]

My grandpa on the mother's side was Nachman Walter. I don't know where he was born, he wasn't alive anymore in that earliest period I can remember, he must have died a long time before, I could not tell when precisely. But they lived here, in this house, my mum lived with them, and they stayed here after she got married to dad.

Both of my grandmothers lived in this street. In Hungarian they called it Thokoly street, for Romanians [under Romanian rule after 1920, after the Trianon Peace Treaty] [2](#) it was always Dragos Voda street. Only the numbers changed [since then], as more houses were built in the meantime.

But it is also called Karacsfalusi street, because this road goes to Karacsfalva [Tiszakaracsonyfalva, in Romanian Craciunesti, 9 km far from Maramarossziget to the east]. Many Jews lived in this street, almost in every house. Four of my uncles and one of my aunts lived here as well.

Grandfather Walter had much land, elderly neighbors, who had known him explained to me that he had sold continuously pieces of his lands; they too had bought land from him. He also had a brandy distiller, he kept horses, cows. A lively farming was going on, there were two servants, and two coachmen too who went to the forest and transported wood. That is why the courtyard is so big, and the stable was large too.

He did transporting too, he had a dray, he transported goods with it from the railway station. They transported wine, brandy, sugar, flour, everything carried by the wagons into a storehouse, and they passed these to the shops from there. In older times there weren't large carriages or trucks, goods were transported by drays. The dray is 3 meters long, 2 meters wide, and two strong horses [are harnessed] to it.

My grandfather was Hasid, he was bearded. He had two wives. His first wife died during childbirth, and she left behind 6 children, then my grandfather married my grandmother.

She wasn't a young girl yet, they had two children together, my mum and my aunt. I think his first wife was called Szure [Sara, Sari] Dina, because in our family there was a grandchild called Szure Dina, Sara in almost every house, all inheriting the name of my grandfather's first wife.

My grandmother was called Hene Rajze [Raise] Szegal, she was born in Szaplonca too. My mum's mother had died here, in Maramarossziget, before they have taken us, she didn't go to the ghetto. We were taken in 1944, so I suppose she must have died in 1943. I don't know how old she was, but she couldn't be that young, she was around 75. She is buried here, in the Jewish cemetery.

My mother had seven brothers and sisters. The oldest was **Haim**, he was a shoemaker, his wife was called Klari, Kajle in Jewish. Haim had four sons and a daughter: the oldest was Sandor, in Jewish Szedl, then Nuti, Nute in Jewish, there was Mojsi [Mojse], and Szruli [Szrul]. The girl was called Malka, Malcsi, her husband was Jenő Simonovits, who became my first husband.

They lived together ten years, than the children and Malcsi were deported and never came back. They had two children. The girl, Sari was 5 years younger than me, but she was slenderer and taller than me. Tibi, the little one was three years younger than his sister, so they were quite little children, when they were deported. Three boys came back from Haim's family: Mojsi, Nuti and Szruli. Sandor was the oldest, he didn't come back, nor did the girl. Szruli went to America, he stays in Brooklyn.

My mother's next brother was **Fishel**, Fesl – Fish means fish in German –, he lived next to us in the second house, he also had a dray and lived on transportation. Fishel's wife was called Pepi, Perle, they had eight children, two girls and six boys. The oldest boy was Muci, I don't know his Jewish name, then there was Mojsi [Mojse], Slojmi [Slojme], Nachcsu [Nahman], Valvi [Volv];

I don't remember the name of the sixth boy. Nachcsu lived here after the war, he had a store in Szinervaralja [today Seini in Romanian, 26 km from Nagybanya to the north-west], then he left for Israel too, he lived and got married there, but he isn't alive anymore. There were two girls too, one of them was Sari – she learnt sewage in a dressmaker's shop –, the other Agi. Sari's Jewish name was Szure Dina, her grandfather gave her this name after his wife, Agi was Ajgl [Ajge], she received her name from her mother's family.

These two girls didn't even return after the war, they both left for Israel, but both are dead by now. The older, Sari got married in Israel, but she lived mostly in Canada. She died a few years ago of cancer, she had got it in the concentration camp. She died in Israel, but his husband took her body to Canada, she is buried there.

The parents of her husband are buried in Canada, so he took his wife too there; he said that when his time would come, he would like to rest there. Her husband is 83 years old, but he is well-preserved, he is vegetarian, he eats only vegetables. Sari has only one daughter, a journalist, she lives in Canada, but she was born in Israel.

We called her Nina, her Hebrew name is Knina Sichermann. Agi lived in Israel in a kibbutz that wasn't a much religious one, as they said that pigs were kept there. I was there for two months in 1973, a cousin took me to that kibbutz, as I hadn't seen Agi for a long time, since she had been deported.

There was a girl then, auntie Rozi, **Roza**, she must have been the third [among the brothers and sisters]. The family of my aunt Roza was also very religious, but not Hasid, like my dad and his brother. The husband of my aunt Roza was also from Sziget, Henrik Zimmel was his name.

He had a kiosk in Maramarossziget, where he was selling southern fruits, and all kinds of delicious sweets, chocolates, things like that. His tent was in a place where four streets were crossing, and it was just in the middle. He had a very profitable business, as children went there to buy sweets, and adults too –who had money – bought there delicious things.

Auntie Roza and my uncle Henrik were always in the store, and they had a servant who did the cooking and the housekeeping. They were in clover. They had only two children, one was Nachcsu, Nahman, he inherited my grandfather's name, the other was Sari, she got her name also after Szure Dina, the first wife of my grandfather. Both left for Israel after the war, they don't live anymore.

There was then uncle Miksa Walter- I don't know his Jewish name -, his wife was auntie Hanni - Hanna perhaps in Jewish -, and auntie Hanni also had a daughter, Sari called Szure Dina, and had a son, but I don't know yet his name, I have never seen that boy.

They lived here in Sziget, but far from us, they lived in the town [in the center], because my uncle Miksa was a printer. They were modern Jews, came here rarely, they didn't visit too often grandma, they weren't religious. I heard that Sari was alive, but she didn't come to Sziget after the war, so I haven't met her.

There was an engineer, he died in Viso [short for Felsoviso]. That must have been Joska [Jozsef] Walter, as I think his younger son inherited his name. He had three sons: Imre, Laci and Joska. I didn't know them, I just heard the family talking about them. For I was very attentive to everything, people used to say that I knew too much.

I liked very much listening to the elders' talk. First the father died, as in older times pneumonia couldn't be cured, he died of it, and soon after his wife, Matild died too. The children grew up here in Maramarossziget, in our and other aunts' house. Imre was a furrier, he fled for Russia.

When Hungarian troops entered here [in 1940, after the Second Vienna Dictate] [3](#) many young people fled, they thought life was great there. Russians didn't want them to go there at all, their own people was enough. They said: 'If you want to introduce communism - those told us, who ran away, then returned - you shouldn't come to our country, we have communism here, but you should go where there isn't, you should introduce communism there'.

Imre lived for a very long time in Russia, he worked for I don't know how many years on a homestead, where there were cows, horses, stuff like that. He got married there - the woman wasn't a Jew, but he didn't manage to marry her [officially] -, and they had two daughters.

Then he came home, in around 1948, he couldn't stay there, the Russians sent him home, but he couldn't bring his family with him, they wouldn't let it. He wanted to bring his wife by all means, but he couldn't. He went to Bucharest, to here and there, but no success.

They wouldn't allow it. Finally he left for Israel, and established there other family. Laci and Joska left for Israel before the war. The older, Laci was an ambassador in Poland. He graduated in Israel, and became ambassador there. I don't know if he was married or not. The younger, Joska was ambassador too in Hungary, I don't know in which year. That is what my cousin - auntie Roza's daughter - told me, she knew better, as she was older than me.

Jeno Walter was the youngest boy, he made his living by a dray as well. Jeno Walter had neither payes nor beard; they were modern, though kept a kosher house. His wife was called Blanka Wiesel, they didn't have children.

After that my mother and her young sister, Paula, **Perle**were born from my grandfather's second marriage. Paula's real name was Perle, but we called her auntie Pepi. She was a beautiful girl, she had a little white dog, a puli called Buksi, she always went for a walk with the dog, it had a very nice small chain. And she always met her suitor. An engineer was courting her, but he wasn't religious, therefore the family didn't allow them to get married. In those times religion was given a special importance.

Alas, when they married her [to someone else], she wanted to kill herself. The chupa was ready [the wedding ceremony was over], and people waited for her at dinner, and she knew well – as she got married in this house, and the train goes through our garden – when the train was passing, she ran to the train, she wanted to kill herself, because they didn't let her marry the person she loved.

People rushed to her from the garden and took her back. The husband of my auntie Perle was Fishel Fogel. He first ran a pub, which became bankrupt, then he tried out all kind of things, he didn't have a secure job. He traveled mainly, he was always on the road, he was presenting goods from factories.

That's what I heard back then. They had six children, the oldest was Nachcsu [Nahman], one of the girls was Julcsi, then there was Lajbi [Laje], Hersi [Hers], Berl, and the youngest was Lia, a girl. None of them returned [from deportation].

My mother's name was Berta Walter, her Jewish name was Bajle, but everybody called her Berta. She was born here, in Sziget, in 1889. Her hair was cut short too, but she left some on the forehead, which was showing when she put on a shawl.

She also had a wig, but she didn't put it on at home, just in the synagogue, there she put on a turban or a little hat. Yet my older sister didn't want to cut off her hair when she got married, she was wearing a shawl only. My mother had seven children, though she could have had more.

She could have had 11 children, but one them died, a girl called Rozika, she got suffocated because of a bean, she put it up in her nose, it swelled up there, and she got suffocated.

She was at my grandmother on the father's side, my grandmother was shelling beans, the child was playing with them, grandma was busy, she didn't pay attention, and when she noticed what happened, and took her to the doctor to take out the bean it was too late.

This sister of mine had died before I was born, she must have been two years old. And my mother also had miscarriages, the babies weren't born. I heard them speaking about this at home, she could have had 11 [children]. And seven left alive.

They [the parents] were deported in 1944, in the year we were all taken. They were taken first to Birkenau, and from Birkenau to Auschwitz, that was the concentration camp of death.

We were seven siblings, there were four brothers and three sisters counting myself too. Formerly it was a great sin not to give birth to a baby, they considered that you had killed that baby, if you didn't give birth to it. It had to be born. That is why there were so many children.

I tell you, 7 children were in our family, in one of my uncle's 5, in the other uncle's 8, my third uncle had 6, the fourth had 6 too. There were many children in every Jewish family. It wasn't a fashion to have an abortion or to take these pills in order to not to have children or to miscarry it, it wasn't a fashion at all, but a great, a very grand sin. But children weren't as demanding as they are today. They didn't need swank or I don't know what kind of clothes, they were modest.

First there was **Dina Walter**. She was born in 1920, when my mum didn't marry yet my dad, her name was Walter as my mum was a Walter. Her husband was Mano Gertzovits, Mendel, who came back after the war [World War II], and got married again. My sister's husband had a younger sister,



Rozsi.

My sister left with her two years old daughter, she didn't return. Then there was Nandi, Nandi Malek after my dad, Mojsi Malek, Jaszi Malek, David Malek- we called him Dodi, but his real name was David - and the youngest, my sister, she was called Rifki Malek.

We were all born in every second year after each other, Nandi in 1922, Mojsi in 1924, me in 1926, Jaszi in 1928, David in 1930 and Rifki in 1932. Nachman inherited my grandfather's name, but he was called Nandor. None of my brothers and sisters returned.

### • Growing up

I, Golda Salamon was born here in Sziget, on 30th November 1926. I don't know from whom I inherited my name, but it is interesting that there wasn't any other Golda in the family, just me. There was one more, I think a relative on my mother's side, but they lived in Szaplunca, not in Sziget.

Since we usually didn't look for names somewhere else, but just in the family. They give names after the grandparents, if they are no longer alive, or after a family member if they die. I have only one name, I was called Galdi from the outset. My sister, Dina had only one name too. I don't know either about Dina having a further name. However it is a custom to give two names, especially for boys. Dodi, David had also the name David Hers.

We were considered to be religious Jews [Hasidim], as my dad and his younger brother attended the yeshiva in Pozsony, in the Czech Republic. So they were religious, and my grandmothers too were religious. Hasidim were very religious, and they observed religion.

They had a separate synagogue, separate slaughterhouse, separate shochet, they did not mix with Sephardim [Editor's note: Golda Salamon calls the Neologs Sephardim, but not only her, they were called Sephardim in Sziget in general.]. They said those were Sephardim, and they were Orthodox. The very religious ones were Orthodox. They wouldn't have eaten from a meat slaughtered by a Sephardi shochet, they considered it to be treyf [non-kosher].

The Sephardi synagogue is the one that is still left, they didn't demolish it. Before the war, when we had our great festivals, Rosh Hashanah for example, meaning New Year, they always engaged a famous cantor from Bucharest, Varad [short for Nagyvarad], Kolozsvár, who was praying and who conducted the whole liturgy, thus the prayer sounded great.

These cantors are usually opera singers, so they must have a good voice. On these occasions religious Jews came to that synagogue too to listen to the cantor. Still there were many Jews in those times, the seats in the synagogue were numbered, and one could buy a place.

During autumn festivals you had to give cash for a seat, you couldn't get in just like that, up there were seats for women, and down for men. Hasidim too engaged many times cantors in the great synagogue. If not, there was a chazzan who could pray well, and had a good voice. But there wasn't any opera singer, any cantor. Festivals were very beautiful once. On the Day of Atonement the 'Kannedra' [Kol Nidre] started in the evening was so beautiful, it was very nice once.

The Sephardi rabbi, Danczig [Editor's note: dr. Samuel Benjamin Danczig was the rabbi of the Neolog community in Maramarossziget between 1906-1944. (The Heart Remembers. Jewish Sziget, ed. by *Association of Former Szigetian in Izrael*, Havazelet Press, 2003).], was a very intelligent person, he had a doctorate, he was a learned man.

His wife was Hanele, she came from a rabbi family. On 'Ziua Eroilor' holiday [Heroes' Day in Romanian ], when people used to go to the Jewish cemetery and to the catholic one too, the rabbi always came with us, and he gave a speech, he recited a Kaddish for the dead.

The 'Zecse Maj' [10th of May [4](#) in Romanian written phonetically in Hungarian] was celebrated, and the main national day was 'opt junie' [the 8th of June]. [Editor's note: On the 10th of May the day of the coronation of Romanian King Carol II [5](#) was celebrated, but it was also the Day of the Watchmen ('Ziua Strajeriei' in Romanian) [6](#), on this day the guards kept parades and celebrations in the honor of the king.] I don't remember when 'Ziua Eroilor' was.

[Editor's note: According to the resolution adopted on 4th May 1920 it was introduced in Romania that people would commemorate soldiers who had died during World War I too on the 8th of June, 40 days after the Christian Easter. Thus Ascension and Heroes' Day was celebrated on the same day.] However on that day every pupil went to the cemetery. This was when I was a schoolgirl, before the war.

There were many synagogues in Sziget. There wasn't any Neolog synagogue, only this one that is left, the others were religious, Hasid. In front of this one, which persisted, there were two.

There was then the 'Great Synagogue', the 'Old Synagogue', that's how people used to call it, where a grandchild of Teitelbaum was the rabbi.

[Editor's note: Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Teitelbaum (Yenuka, the Child, 1912-1944) was the last Hasid rabbi in Maramarossziget, between 1926-44, he died in Auschwitz (The Heart Remembers. Jewish Sziget, ed. by *Association of Former Szigetian in Izrael*, Havazelet Press, 2003).] This synagogue was in the place where the monument of deported is today.

There used to be the public baths too. We had one more bath; a synagogue was next to it too. Besides there were three or four other synagogues, smaller ones, not such big synagogues. However the rabbi of Borsa [today Borsa, 80 km far from Maramarossziget to the south-east] had a synagogue in Sziget, the rabbi of Karacsfalva and the rabbi of Szaplonca had synagogues here. [Editor's note: The denominations were given according to the origin of a synagogue's community.] Almost every village had a rabbi here.

All of them had their own Hasidim, their own community belonging to them, who attended the synagogue. The community bought the building they transformed into a synagogue, and they brought a rabbi here; if he had already a synagogue here, he lived in Sziget, and established a family here.

The synagogue of Szaplonca had many members, because Szaplonca wasn't far from here, and the rabbi of Szaplonca had followers there too. Many people came to the rabbi of Szaplonca on high holidays, and they had no place where to sleep, so they slept in the hayloft, just to be together with the rabbi.



As it was acknowledged that the rabbi of Szaplonca was a very wise man. The synagogue of the rabbi of Borsa and that of Karacsfalva were in this street.

Where the hospital used to be, where Mrs. Kenyeresi was the doctor, the two synagogues were in front of that, a little bit further on from Elie Wiesel's house. All these elder Jews would know better, who attended the synagogue. Women didn't really go to the synagogue, girls didn't at all. Thus I can't inform you well in this matter.

There were many small synagogues, houses for praying, where thirty-forty persons would pray. But at great festivals, when they knew that a cantor came, they reeled off the prayers, and went to listen to the cantor. Yet they didn't have seats, as all places were occupied, they could enter though. My father wasn't a Sephardi, nevertheless he went to that synagogue to listen to the cantor.

There was a small synagogue [house for praying] in this street too, my father went there. Those who lived in this street went to that one. This small synagogue didn't have a rabbi, just a teacher – they called him 'rabaj' –, who taught the children Jewish [Hebrew].

We had a 'hajder' [cheder] here – where the Talmud was taught in Jewish –, because there were many Jewish children in this street. Everywhere where there were Jewish children, a cheder was established. It is compulsory; children [boys] go to cheder from the age of four.

They use the pencil there already, and they start to learn the numbers, they have to write numbers until 100, from the age of four. And they also learn the alphabet, which is in Jewish, since they are four.

Thus our children when they go to school at the age of six or seven, when they go to the first grade, they are not so ignorant, because they know already to count, to write letters, so they learn well, and comprehend things faster than those who attended only kindergarten, and have never taken a pencil in their hands.

These children, our children were all good students, as they were taught from the age of four already. And they attend cheder when they are in the 5th, 6th, 7th grade. Since they study the whole book of prayers.

My father was religious, he attended the yeshiva in Pozsony, so he interrogated the boys [my brothers] every Saturday afternoon to find out what they had learned, what they knew. The boys knew very well to pray in general, because they were studying a lot. It wasn't easy, as they had to go early in the morning to the cheder to this teacher, and they had to arrive in school at seven.

The girls had to learn only to read. They had to learn only from the age of 12-13, and we didn't have a teacher who would have taught the girls separately. The 'rabaj' was teaching boys only, but not girls. We had a young teacher, who also had finished yeshiva, and was a learned man, he taught only girls, at our house or at my aunt's house, it depended.

There were two girls in my aunt's family, we were two sisters, there were three other girls in the neighbor's family, we took our exercise-book and pencil, and he was teaching us how to write. First he teaches the Jewish names of months. Then the alphabet. If you know that, you can connect words. Back then it was compulsory to know these.

My poor grandmother, my mum's mother always used to say: 'Learn how to pray properly, you should know at least to read in the synagogue, otherwise when you will go to there, you would count the windows and the doors, because you won't be able to read. Learn how to pray, because one must know it.'

As people were very religious in that village, in Szaplonca, where she grew up, the girls were studying like the boys. Finally I couldn't get to [didn't have time to] learn to read well, I know, but not well, I'm not as good in reading as I should be.

Since I was deported in the meantime, and we didn't have enough time to learn. I couldn't get to learn well how to pray either. It is very hard for us to pray. It isn't in Israel, because they speak that language that is written. We pray, but we don't know what. I can read it, but I don't know its meaning.

Only if it is written on the other side in Jewish, in the Jewish jargon [in Yiddish]. When I was a girl, there were women in the synagogue who could pray very well, and there were some like me, who had to give to others the book, to look up the part the rabbi was reciting.

If we weren't good enough in praying, we didn't find it, as it isn't written fluently, one always had to leaf a bit to find what he was saying. Women too went to the synagogue at autumn festivals. They all bought the place where to sit, the synagogue was maintained from that money. We, young girls attended this small synagogue [house of prayers].

I wasn't married before the war [World War II] yet. Mainly married women go to the synagogue. Girls go sometimes to look around, but only those women go there to pray who are married. Anyway it isn't obligatory for women to go to the synagogue everyday, just for men.

Men went to the synagogue every morning, especially those who weren't employed. In older times people didn't have an employment, they did dicker [free commerce]. My father came regularly as well to this small synagogue. Jewish men have a 'tveln' [tefilin] they used to put on while praying, the boys learn at the age of 13 how to put it on, and since that age it is compulsory for them to go to the synagogue.

Every man must have a tallit, even if he is not religious, he takes it with him to the other world, he is rolled up in that when he dies. He puts it when he goes to the synagogue to pray. One can not buy it from the shop; I don't know which factory made it. It was cream-colored, with black stripes on both sides, and it had fringes at the four ends, tzitzit, that had to be sewed on.

Men also wore slipovers, it was made of white linen, and it had fringes at the four sides. It was a slip-on clothe, they wore it under the shirt so that the fringes would have not hanged out. But when they were praying, they put out the fringes. Back then a Jewish child would go at the age of four to the cheder, and wear a slipover. He put it in the morning, as soon as he got up.

Women didn't use to pray at home. The many children consumed their time, they didn't have time to pray. It wasn't compulsory for a woman to pray. But in our family [for example] the custom was that when we set down to have lunch, we had to take down the rings, wash our hands, and there was a certain prayer we had to recite.

If you had eaten a fruit, there was a prayer that had to be said, when you cut the bread, there is another to be said. These customs were compulsory for women, but going to the synagogue... [wasn't]. At least here, in our town. They used to go in older times, the grandmothers, as long as they could. They did. But their children didn't.

There were two mikves [ritual baths]: the central one, in front of the Old Synagogue, the other one was totally elsewhere, so I've just heard about it, but never been there. We always went to this central one. Neologs, the other community could go as well to both mikves.

In those times we washed ourselves at home, there wasn't a bathroom in every house like today. And we went to the public baths to take a bath. Men had to go more frequently than women. We, the young used to go bathing to the Tisza or Iza rivers.

I went to the Tisza to bath in swimsuit, back then there was a canal which is no longer there. An old woman visits me sometimes, she keeps telling me even today: 'Galdika, we always took delight in watching you, you were such a beautiful girl, you went to the Tisza in swimsuit.'

It was a beautiful swimsuit, an American one, dark-blue with nice white flowers. And I didn't get sunburn, so that my skin would peel, but I got a creole-like dark skin. 'Your blue eyes – she always says – were so shining. We always looked at you with my husband, what a beautiful girl you were.' 'Oh dear – I say to her – Irenke, it was so long ago. It might not even have been true.'

However we used to go to the central bath too, especially after I got married, we had to go once in a month. It was a big bath, there were about 12 bathtubs – there were rooms with two, respectively with one bathtub –, and there was a mikveh, a kind of lake, you had to go down some stairs to it.

First we washed ourselves thoroughly in the bath, and then we had to go into that lake. There was a woman responsible for the bath, as mikveh wasn't only about going in and taking a bath.

They cut your nails, as you mustn't have long nails, and one had to go down the three stairs to that lake [basin], and had to dive completely three times; then the woman responsible for bathing said a prayer – she was out [on the verge of the basin] – and one had to say after her, if she didn't know it. I hated diving, when I was married, my coiffure got always spoiled.

Before getting married the bride is taken to the baths, where she is being taught about religion and how she should observe it. It is a Jewish woman's duty to light a candle every Friday evening [at sunset] – I light four candles myself even today, two for the dead, and other two because I'm married –, and she has to say a certain prayer.

The other duty is to go once in a month to the ritual bath, after her menses ends. Back then challah was baked at every Jewish family for Sabbath – they called it 'koldecz' or 'barhesz'; they took out a little from the dough they would make the challah of, they said a prayer and throw it into the fire, no matter if it was baked in a stove or in an oven.

These three things have to be known by a Jewish woman when she gets married. She went to the mikveh with her mother-in-law, her mother or sister-in-law, so that she would learn her duties and how to behave. She went to the mikveh for the first time when married, before that she just took a bath, like today in the bathroom, but she wasn't allowed before to go in the mikveh.

The reason why people say that our religion is a rigorous one is that when a Jewish girl gets married, and she has her first menses after that, she mustn't sleep with her husband for two weeks. The days are counted in a way so that the menses is taken into account, so after 12 days she is clean for sure.

Since some women have longer menses, some women have shorter ones. You put some white little rags there to see if you are completely clean. And when she is completely clean, after 12 days, then she can go to the mikveh. But they didn't count too much, because children came one after the other. Women don't have menses during those nine months while they are pregnant, just after that. Many times the baby is not even one, one and a half, the next is coming.

People say that Jewish men usually frequent prostitutes. I've been asked by several people about the reason for it. I tell them: don't you know the Jewish religious prescriptions? A Jewish man won't wait so long until his woman becomes kosher [clean] again. If it occurs to him, he won't let the opportunity slip, on the contrary, he looks for it. And this is not a sin.

There were women who took care of it, they just had to be assured not to take home some disease. There was a brothel here too, in Maramarossziget, where such women of pleasure were. Many men used to go there, because they could be sure that the girls there weren't ill, so they wouldn't take up any disease. It had a price, people could have fun there, they could dance, amuse, they could do everything there.

One had to pay in, it wasn't for free. And if one wanted to consume, it had to be paid as well. There were very beautiful women one could spend a night with, provided he had paid in. Only beautiful women were there, there were Jewish girls too, oh dear. Religious men didn't go there, just those who weren't that religious. They did. Both of my two husbands told me they had been there when young. They wouldn't tell me if they went there when married as well.

We had Jewish balls before the war [World War II], at Purim and Chanukkah. I was a lass, I didn't go to balls, but my sister did. People didn't dance Jewish dances in a Jewish ball, as there were many Christians too, not only Jews. They danced tango, slow fox – it is a bit more shaking one, but still an even one, similar to the tango – and things of the kind.

The household was kosher in every Jewish house, because it was good for the health too. As we don't mix the milk-pot with pots for meat, it is not good to boil the milk in a pot that you use for frying the meat, you need a separate pot for milk. Thus we always had a separate pot for milk and one for meat.

That is how most Jewish families proceeded. Now what means kosher? In big cities meat is bought ready koshered. But we bought the meat, kosher meat was slaughtered specially for us; we had a shochet who slaughtered the animals, and we had a butcher who cut up the meat.

When we brought home the meat, we would put it into water to soak it so that the blood would have gone out of it, then we would put salt on both sides, and leave it like this, salted for one hour.

We had special baskets for salting, from where the bloody fluid would fall drop by drop. We had to salt it above a bowl or a butt, after one hour we would rinse it three times, then it is koshered. We do this because Jews don't eat blood. It is forbidden, that is why meat needs to be koshered.

In summer Jewish families prepared cholent usually. We didn't make fire in the summer, so we would take the cholent to the neighbor at noon, there they made a fire in the stove, and every Jew from that street took there the cholent. It got ready by next day noon. They also prepared grated potatoes.

That was always the Saturday lunch. It is a good dish, as it has a lot of meat in it. Cholent is prepared in a crock, when heated up, crocks retain the warm. Thus men took home the cholent hot when they returned from the synagogue. The first dish was always fish.

We didn't prepare it, because children wanted to eat too, but they could have not been given, because fishes have small bones. So they prepared instead eggs with onions. It is also a Jewish custom to prepare for first dish fish in aspic. In every Jewish family they prepared stuffed fish.

The meat is minced in tiny pieces, it is mixed with eggs, grated onions, hot pepper, breadcrumbs, and the [skin of the] fish is stuffed with this mixture. I can skin fish very well, only its tail remains. One has to be well up in this. First my husband wouldn't have understood that I couldn't.

'If you don't know how to do it, ask somebody, but it needs to be done.' I was good in preparing stuffed fish. If there isn't fish, they prepare a similar first dish, but of chicken breast.

They slice up onion, carrot, parsley, they put it on to boil, then the chicken breast is minced, mixed with spices, breadcrumbs, egg, they make balls of it, and boil it in the vegetable soup.

Not much soup is required, it needs only to cover the balls. It is called false fish. It looks like stuffed fish, as it can be prepared together, in this case it has to be sliced alike fish.

Or balls can be prepared in all kind of forms, but it has to be flavored.

There were **Passover**[Pesach] bowls kept in the loft in a big chest. They brought down and wash them before Pesach. They used the same bowls all year, but Pesach lasted one week, and they used separate bowls in that period.

They got prepared for Pesach, they usually organized a housecleaning, the kitchen was whitewashed, painted.

Children were very happy at Pesach, they got new shoes and clothes, thus we always waited for Pesach. At Pesach we have potatoes, eggs, onion, meat and matzah – we don't eat bread at Pesach, only matzah –, that's what Jews eat.

The first dish was eggs with onion: eggs are boiled, onions are cut into small pieces, and eggs are grated on the onion and mixed.

At Pesach we usually kill a chicken, we fry the liver on the coal, and grate it into the eggs with onion. They eat it with matzah or boiled potatoes, some like to put into it the boiled potatoes, some like to eat it separately.

This is the first dish, the eggs with onions. Even today those who observe Pesach eat this meal. Then they had meat-soup.

The noodles put into the soup were prepared of potato-starch. 3-4 eggs were beat up, they put into it 3-4 spoons of potato-flour, a little salt and oil. In older times they didn't really use oil for frying, but mainly goose fat. (We used to fatten goose as well, and we would cut it at Pesach. Geese were sitting on eggs, and ganders were cut in order to have both fat and meat. We used mainly poultry, not beef.)

At Pesach noodles were prepared of potato-flour and eggs like the dough of the pancake. As it mustn't have been chopped up. They baked it on a baking dish, then they cut it for noodles.

[Editor's note: Golda Salamon's relating refers to a specific custom of over-assurance: since the matzah consumed at Pesach as bread is made of wheaten flour before Pesach, but a great attention is paid not to let the mixture of flour and water rise when they prepare it.

The matzah meal is prepared by grinding finely the matzah, which of course doesn't contain leaven. This meal can be used for preparing any kind of meal during the eight days of Pesach, since the matzah meal can't rise when it is "re-used" – thus the Halakhic prescriptions doesn't prohibit the discretionary use of the "matzah meal".

But because at Pesach the prohibition of leavened meals is a very strict rule, there are some people who by way of precaution extend the prohibition to meals made of matzah meal, therefore they won't let the mixture of meal, water and eggs to stand for more than 18 minutes, and in order not to exceed time they bake the dough immediately after mixing it.] It was put in bowls and the soup was turned on it.

After that we had meat, vegetables and khremzlakh. They used to bake khremzlakh at Pesach: they grate potatoes, put eggs into it, and roast it like meatballs, but a little bit flatter. We ate that with meat. We had plum jam for compote, or stewed apple, we had that most often. Boiled eggs play a great role at Pesach.

They eat boiled eggs, especially on the two Seder nights. Dad has always observed Seder night, it was 1-2 o'clock in the night when he finished reading out everything and explaining it to children in Jewish. It is written in Hebrew, but we couldn't speak Hebrew yet, like people did in Israel, we spoke the jargon Jewish, the Yiddish.

We spoke at home Hungarian and Yiddish. My grandmother on the mother's side didn't speak Hungarian, she was speaking Jewish [Yiddish]. But we spoke Hungarian, because mum and dad went to school in the Hungarian era [in the time of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy], they spoke a very good Hungarian, but they didn't speak perfectly Romanian.

They were reading the Hungarian newspaper – as they couldn't understand the Romanian one – and Hungarian books. There was a printing house here in Sziget, there were two of them in fact, we had Romanian and Hungarian newspapers in my time, that's what I remember, that must have been in around 1940 [at the end of the 1930s].

And the state didn't forbid people to write in Hungarian or to publish Hungarian books. As if the parents went to a Hungarian school, they would read Hungarian newspapers, they liked to learn of the news. In those times very few people had a radio – in this street there might have been two radios, not more –, I won't even mention television sets.



They liked to listen to the news, and they could get some from the newspaper. Here in Sziget Jews talked a lot in Hungarian generally. Where Jews were staying, in that house they spoke Jewish. The elder spoke, but not all children did. A very few spoke German, only those who lived environs Viso, where Germans, Saxons lived. Here in Sziget only those spoke German who were taught to, who kept a governess who spoke German. Hereabouts Jews spoke mainly Hungarian.

Most [of Sziget's population] were Jews, there were quite a lot of Romanians too, but here on the main road only Jews lived, Romanians lived always farther back [in the outskirts]. Thus Jews weren't badly off. There were many poor Jews too, and wealthy Jews, but generally they weren't badly off. And Romanians and Jews didn't hate each other, they got on well.

The [Romanian] children didn't go to school, they didn't really have the possibility or the ability, but otherwise all people were on good terms, we never used to tell the other you are a Jew, you are Hungarian, or Romanian, no, there weren't such things.

The [Jewish] children who went to Romanian school had to speak Romanian. As one had to go to school, and it depended on the regime, if Romanians were [ruling], you had to learn in Romanian, if Hungarians [had the power, Golda Salamon refers to the period between 1940-1944, to the 'Hungarian era'] [7](#), you were learning in Hungarian.

Mum always used to say: 'Children have to be taught according to the regime. What good for going to a Hungarian school, but it is Romania where we are living? You can't get on.' I had a neighbor, she had two daughters. One of them was learning to be a medical assistant in Szatmar, the other was younger, she was attending grade school.

The elder wrote her mother a letter: 'Take out Aniko from the Hungarian school, and let her go to the Romanian one, because every after-noon I have to seat and transform [translate] Hungarian into Romanian so that I can answer next day at school.'

I failed to pass the first grade, because I didn't speak Romanian, only Hungarian, then my mum took me to a little Romanian girl with whom I used to go to school together, so that I would play with and talk to her and learn Romanian. Thus when I repeated first grade I could speak Romanian.

I finished six grades in a Romanian school, and only one in a Hungarian one, the seventh, Hungarians were here then [in 1940, after the Second Vienna Dictate] [3](#). In the 7th grade I had a teacher, Imre Kis, he and his wife were young married, and had a child. Lojszu was the headmaster of the Hungarian school. I attended only elementary school, I couldn't get further [because I was deported].

#### • During the war

However, we didn't really go to school in the Hungarian era, because Jews weren't accepted [because of the Anti-Jewish laws in Hungary] [8](#). And we were wearing the yellow star [Yellow star in Hungary] [9](#), we weren't allowed to walk on the streets. However it didn't last too long, as we were taken.

They closed a few streets, and we were all taken gradually into the ghetto. That was in 1944, shortly after Pesach. We celebrated Pesach at home, and after Pesach we were in the ghetto already. There were three streets that belonged to the ghetto, and all the Jews from Sziget and the

nearby villages were taken there. They took the Jews even from the villages, they came by wagons. And 2-3 weeks after they started to put us into stock-cars, and transported us to concentration camps.

[Editor's note: 12,849 Jews were deported from Maramarossziget on 16th, 18th, 20th and 22nd of May 1944-.] You couldn't run away, because wherever you would run, they would have shot you. Only those survived who were hidden away in time.

There were persons hidden in some kind of cellar, someone brought them food, and they survived somehow, or there were people who hid in a well in which the water had dried up. There were some who escaped, but only a few. And there were people who wandered in the forest until they were caught. But they took everybody on the whole.

My aunt had six children, not one returned among them. In the other family with eight children two girls and a boy returned from the six brothers. My third aunt had two children, both of them returned, and from my oldest uncle's family, where there were four boys and a girl, three boys returned.

But the girl didn't come back – she was the wife of my first husband –, she was my cousin, she was taken with two children, she didn't return. Those who went away with children usually didn't return, because children couldn't survive, they wouldn't leave the children [alive].

Those had a chance to return who were transported in the same stock-car with their mother-in-law or mother, and they gave the child to the mother, and if the woman was young, she was selected for work. Quite a lot young women were taken, young mothers, who were with their children.

When we arrived in Birkenau – it was illuminated in such a degree that one could have found the needles –, we were chosen [sorted out] not by Germans, but by Polish, who had been taken first into concentration camps. It was them who built up the 'waschraums' – waschraum [washroom] is the place where we washed ourselves – and the toilets and the blocks, because we were staying in blocks like coops, you could only sit, but you couldn't stand up. There was a doctor, Mengele, he examined everybody

[Editor's note: It is only a presumption that Mengele would have examined personally the people.] only with the eyes, he wouldn't touch people, but you had to undress completely, you were holding your clothes in your hands, and he would show with his finger, which would go to the right, for work, and which would go to the left, into the crematorium. Seven crematoriums were functioning day and night where I was. I passed [the medical examination] 18 times.

They separated me there from my parents and siblings, I never saw them once again. And he [the doctor] sent many people to the left, persons for example, on whom a few pimples came out because of the intense sunlight, he saw that, and found it no good. In brief he sent many to the other world.

A great number of people. Well, my mother wasn't even 50 when she got deported. She was still young. I spent about 5-6 months in Birkenau, I worked there too, but I got a number in Auschwitz, they tattooed me, and I kept on working there.

They didn't call us on our names, they called us only by our numbers. 7986.

'Neunundsiebsigsechsendachtsig' – that's how they called me by number. Every morning at three, three and a half we had 'zahl apell', meaning that they counted us. We had to get up, we were taken out, alike soldiers, we had line up in lines of five, and they counted us.

Then we got breakfast, a bitter tea and 25 decagram bread for a day. A black bread, like a brick was cut in four, and that was the bread [portion] for four persons for one day. This was given in the morning.

Then they asked us who wanted to go to work. I was the first to step out, so that I would leave the concentration camp, so that I would not stay in that crowd, I wanted to go to fresh air, it didn't matter what I had to work. Just to be outside, and not inside.

Well, and [there] they brought us lunch, we would line up again by fives, I was always in front, because I was small, I wasn't as tall as the others. They put in a rounded bowl some wish-wash, I couldn't call it otherwise, but you didn't get a spoon or something, you slurped a little, and the person behind told you don't eat too much, so that I get some for myself.

Dinner was a bitter tea, and bread, if you left some. It was a holiday when they cooked potatoes in their jackets, without cleaning them, and they would give 3-4 pieces of cooked potatoes. It was a holiday to get some. Otherwise we got a very very bad food. The food was terribly bad. So that's how we were living in the concentration camp.

I was working on the field, for example a land was ploughed up, which might not have been for 50 years. And we got iron hoes to chop up the soil, which was grassy, so that it could be cropped. And I worked in an aircraft factory one winter.

As during winter it was snow too, it was cold, we couldn't work on the fields, so I worked in an aircraft factory, we had to produce spare-parts. People worked there in three shifts: morning, afternoon and night shift. [I worked in the morning], then they would count us, and take us back to the concentration camp at around 5 in the after-noon.

They brought into the concentration camp women from Germany as supervisors, who had had a bad conduct, they were the kapos above us. They wore striped clothing, we wore only single-colored, gray clothing. They couldn't manage them in Germany, they had put them in prison, they had punished them, but these women still were whores.

And they brought them into the concentration camp, they were our supervisors. They didn't work, just looked after us so that we worked. There was a kapo, she asked the girls who could wash, put up and comb hair. I always presented myself, I [said that I] could do it.

I have never done it, however I put her hair up with small pieces of rag and newspaper, as we didn't have any roller, I combed it out in the morning, because she wanted to look nice, so she would give me of the food she got, they had separate kitchen. Because I washed and arranged her hair, I cleaned her underwear, she always gave me a bone, like we used to throw one for dogs. However it was good, it helped me a lot. That's how I could work. That's why I succeeded [to survive].

There was then a man from Temesvar, he must have been around 50 years old, and he fell for me. He was an SS, a guard. When we got into the concentration camp, they cropped our hair completely, but I had a curly hair, and it grew back prettily.

It wasn't long, but I had some hair, and I wasn't an ugly girl one would have thrown away. He says to me: 'Aranka - in Hungarian Galdi is Aranka -, after the war, when it will end, will you be my wife?' 'I will, of course.' It cost me nothing to tell him I would be his wife.

They escorted us to work with dogs, on every side there were 4 guards with dogs. The dogs were trained, if you weren't bent down, and the guard would call it, the dog jumped on you, and tore you until you bent down and worked, and it wouldn't have left you until the guard would shout 'Phooey'.

It meant that it was enough, that the dogs shouldn't continue tearing you. As there were elder women among us, who could get into the concentration camp, they bore all this with a great difficulty.

The young could carry on better, how old was I, I was only 15, I could bear it better, that is for sure, as that one who got in, and was 25, 30, 35 years old. Well now, because he [this guard] hoped to marry me after the war, he brought me [some food].

They didn't get either I don't know what kind of pate, but he brought two slices of bread fried in margarine. Since we got a little margarine sometimes together with the breakfast bread. And sometimes he brought me salami, he made a sandwich. He packed those two little slices of bread in a paper, and he bound it in a handkerchief.

He pretended next to me, as if he had skipped the handkerchief, he picked it up, that's how he managed to give it to me. And that's how I could survive. A little bit from here, a little from there, and that's it. However it was hard, I weighed 37 kilos when I was set free.

In Auschwitz the concentration camp was fenced in with wire, and they introduced electric current in it. If you put your hand on it, you perished there. Women were on one side, men on the other. Sometimes we went to the wire fence to talk, because they couldn't forbid that.

I met there by chance a Czech boy, who was a musician, he also threw me across the wire bread or warm stockings, when it was cold, things like that. He too: 'When we will be set free, will you be my wife?' 'I will.' I promised this to all of them. One has to endure many in order to survive.

I underwent many things. We stepped on the dead as if they had been stones. One didn't care with other being than himself. If someone was propping against the wall and told you: 'Brother, help me, bring me some water!', but you had to go far to find water, [you didn't go]. You cared only for yourself, to be able to survive, you couldn't help the other. It was very hard, it was terribly hard.

We were taken from Auschwitz to other concentration camp, I was in a concentration camp in Bergen-Belsen, and in other one, and the last one was in Mauthausen. I traveled enough in stock-cars when I was taken from one concentration camp to the other. It was full of snow, and the shoes froze to our legs, when it started to thaw.

Well, we bore that too, but not everybody did. They gathered there [to Mauthausen] all the heftlings [prisoners], they undermined the concentration camp, it was supposed to explode on the 7th of May [1945].

They wanted to explode us, because they realized they were going to lose the war, and they didn't want it to become known what they did, the way they tortured people. The mines had to be placed by Jewish boys.

We had luck that the Americans came in on the 4th of May, and they destroyed the mines.

- **After the war and later life**

Many people would have died there, I don't know how many heftling, as they were called, there were both women and men. I got so used to be led everywhere by guards with dogs, that when I was set free, I was looking back all the time to see if the guard was coming with the dog. This became rooted in us. We couldn't believe anymore that we were free. It was very difficult.

After the release I got ill. The Americans were wrong to bring so much food; they brought us large kettles of food, which they shouldn't have had. We were so starved, we didn't get even water for 3 days in the concentration camp in Mauthausen.

First they could give us only bread and granulated sugar, they had a huge quantity of granulated sugar. But after that they started to bring food in kettles, goulash and stuff like that. They should have started with dietary regimen, with tea, zwieback, something of the kind. But people are starved, and they don't think they would get ill.

Many people died then. They had enough, they got diarrhea, and died of it. They weren't resistant enough. And I fell ill too, not because I would be that greedy, no matter how hungry I am, I can't fall upon food, but everything was so fatty, our intestines didn't get used to it. I got diarrhea too, but it wasn't so serious, and they took me to hospital.

I got half a liter of blood in one arm, a half in the other; the blood flew down so quickly, because the veins were empty, and I also got a liter of glucose in one leg, and a liter in the other. When all that glucose flew down, I felt I could get up from my bed.

We got charity packs from the Americans while in bed, there was chocolate, zwieback, granulated sugar in it, even toilet articles for women, toilet soap, lipstick, eau de cologne, and some long-life dry cakes. It helped too, we had a good time in bed. But when I felt I was able to, I got up, I took my sheet, and [I thought] I would go to take a bath.

Since there was a bathtub, and a common bath too, like a lake, but it was roofed. As I got into the water, I didn't feel good, I felt that my heart wouldn't resist. I got out of the water at once, and I wound around myself the sheet, but I dropped on the corridor.

They took me into the room, and gave me a tough scolding because I went to bath and I got up from bed. We got every day a basin of water, but I couldn't wash myself as in a bath, just how one could wash herself in bed. And they really scolded me.

Then an American professor came, he examined and took a look at everybody, he interrogated the doctor on everyone's problem. He says, 'What does this little girl have, as she looks fine.' My face

didn't get so thin, but when the doctor uncovered me, the American professor was frightened of me.

is that I was 35 kilos then. The doctor said that I didn't have any specific problem, it was just that they couldn't stop my diarrhea. The professor took out a box of his bag, as he had a camera on one shoulder, and a medical suitcase on the other: 'You shall give from this medicine nine pieces in a day.

Three in the morning, three at noon, three in the evening. For three days. This is a medicine, he says, which takes away by hand the illness. If she doesn't get better in three days, then on the fourth day you shall give her only in the morning and at noon.' And indeed, just as if it had taken away the illness by hand, I recovered due to that [medicine]. I could eat, and I didn't have diarrhea anymore.

Then they started to count up and send us home. They listed us, meaning that we got papers, and they told us which train to get on, and that train would take us to Vienna. Many people came home in stock-cars. But when I was coming home – this should have happened in winter [in winter of 1945-46] – I had luck, because I got in a normal train.

The seats were occupied, the Romanian officers returned from war. Two persons were sitting in a line, I asked them to make room for me, because I wasn't able [to stand], I was extremely weakened – I could speak to them in Romanian. I sat next to them.

After that Russian soldiers came up, they were pulling down girls from the train, they mocked of girls, it was terrible. A Russian wanted [to pull] me down, but one of them [of the Romanian soldiers] told him 'This is my wife, you have nothing to do with her', and they didn't let me go. Well, that's how I arrived to Vienna.

They waited for us already there, there were two large villas in Vienna, and all the girls and boys who came from concentration camps were transported there. We underwent doctors' round [medical examination], they gave us to eat and sent us onward. I haven't had any organic disorder, only that I was extremely weakened, and I had a very abundant flux.

That was because of the weakness. And the doctor said that this had to be treated, I couldn't go further. There were about two hundred beds in that large villa. A young boy was laying next to my bed, he must have been 5-6 years older than me, he was from Kolozsvár. We were talking. He says to me: 'How can you imagine that I'm coming home from the concentration camp, you pretty young girl, and I would sleep alone?'

However he introduced himself, his name was Laci. I said: 'Listen, I'm ill, and I'm not interested in such silly things. I'm happy to be alive.' Well, he understood that, and behaved very nice with me afterwards. He was together with three girls and two boys, all from Kolozsvár, I said: 'You will go further, but I have to stay here, I have to stay in the hospital.' But I didn't want to stay in the hospital.

Thus Laci went to the doctor and told him that 'She is my sister, I'm responsible that she would arrive to Pest with us. Give me a paper so that she gets a berth on the train.' And I was given a small pillow and a rug, and that's how I got to Pest. And I stayed in hospital in Pest too, until I came to the hospital in Kolozsvár.



I arrived in Kolozsvar in 1946, it must have been spring, it wasn't cold. In Kolozsvar I stayed another three months in the hospital. There a woman from Sziget recognized me, she was referred to the hospital too, and she gave a phone call to Sziget, so that if someone from my family came home, would know that I'm alive, I came home, I'm in the hospital.

Then my former brother-in-law, Dina's husband sent me money to go home. He was married again, as my sister didn't return, and he sent his brother-in-law. I told his brother-in-law, that he could leave me the money, it could be useful when I needed something, if they wouldn't give me enough, but I could not go home yet, the lady-doctor won't let me, because I haven't recovered yet completely. They gave me medicine there, and the flux was over.

It was winter already when I had to go home, it was cold. I went to Szatmar by train, but there wasn't any train from Szatmar to Sziget, I could travel only on truck. In winter, on the top of some barrels, I arrived home somehow. I couldn't come here [to the house], because the army post was here, it [the road] was blocked, they wouldn't let me pass through.

The trains transporting German prisoners from the front arrived right there, and they selected the prisoners at the army post. If one had an SS tattooed under the armpit, he couldn't go home, he was sent back to Russia. He was sent to Siberia, or I don't know where, but wasn't allowed to go home. The ordinary Germans, the Wehrmacht were released. Thus one couldn't simply cross there, they had to go by a roundabout route.

I arrived at night, an acquaintance received me, I slept in his house, and the next day they sent somebody to pick me up, because I had arrived. My former brother-in-law came, as he had a horse, a cart, he did the rounds, and that's how he took me home.

But my life was plenty of vicissitudes after that too. He was married already, he had a sister-in-law, brother-in-law, wife, and she didn't approve of me, well [I was] the first wife's sister. My brother-in-law was attached to me, I couldn't say the contrary, but he didn't stay at home, and women didn't treat me well.

Thus I went to a cousin of mine, to Mojse Lajzer Malek – he is a cousin on my father's side, he is living in Israel –, I lived in his house, but I didn't feel at ease there either, because he wanted to marry me, and I didn't want to accept his proposal.

Then he married a girl from that yard, she got married to him willingly, thus they didn't welcome me anymore, I had to leave that house too. My life was a series of vicissitudes until I got married. I married a man who was 19 years older than me, because he had an apartment, he was well-situated, and I had a place where to lay my head.

As soon as I got home from the concentration camp, a boy called Hersi Ilovits, Herman Ilovits started to court me. We spoke Romanian, as he didn't speak Hungarian. He came from across the border [from Ukraine, from the east of the River Tisza], when this became a Hungarian land [in 1940, after the Second Vienna Dictate] [3](#), he came here. This boy wasn't religious after he came home [after the World War II]. He was a serious suitor, but I didn't want to marry him, because we were almost the same age.

I thought one could not live on love. I didn't know what he was doing for a living. He kept it secret. Since he was doing business with currency, and this was forbidden those times. I found this out

when I got married. He came to me that day by fiacre, as there weren't taxis then, in 1947, and he told me, 'It doesn't matter now, you are going to get married, but at least tell me why you didn't want to marry me.'

'Well - I said - only because we are the same age, I didn't know from what could you support me, as a wife.' The poor boy answered to this: 'I thought of everything, except that you were afraid that I couldn't ensure you bread and butter, I wouldn't have thought of that.' After that he took out a lot of money, and showed it to me.

He didn't stay for the wedding, he left. There were several Zionist movements here [in Maramarossziget], the Mizrachi [10](#), the Betar [11](#), and there was a kibbutz, some young men also lived there, who didn't have any parents, didn't have anybody.

I don't know more about all this, because I didn't want to participate, I didn't go there, I only heard about them. Later Hersi took away a girl from the kibbutz, they got married, they had a child, left for America, and his wife became deranged. He [Hersi] became very religious, he died in America.

Well then, I got married, I knew this man, as his [first] wife had been my cousin. That's how it had to happen, it was fate. My husband, Jeno Simonovits - in Jewish they call him Jajni, Jojne - was born in Remete [Palosremete, today Remeti in Romanian] in 1907. He lost his father when he was eight. His mother was left with five children.

He started to work at the age of eight, he was already a wage-earner. He went to shake plum and walnut from the trees, and he got paid for it. Then he became a coachman, he explained me all his life and the things he passed through. He had here [in Sziget] an uncle, who had a perfumery, he saved money there, that's how he managed to become a 'szkimbas' [schimbas in Romanian, substitute], a hussar - 'szkimbas', that's how hussars were called.

[Editor's note: There weren't hussars in the Romanian army, Golda Salamon refers to soldiers when she says hussars.] Only that person could become a hussar, who had money. He was orphan, although he was working and saving money, so he had money. My second husband was a hussar too, they were soldiers together [in Nagyvarad], both my first and second husband. All this in the Romanian era [under Romanian rule, after 1920].

My first husband was a very skilled horse-coper, a good merchant, he knew all about animals, cows and horses. Soldiers had to present themselves with their own horse. He joined up with such a beautiful mare, a white one that the colonel told him: 'I shall ride this horse.'

You go to the stable and look for other horse, which one you'd like. But you won't ride a more beautiful horse than mine. When you'll get disarmed, you'll get back your horse.' It was so splendid, one couldn't even paint a more beautiful one. As he was an expert, and he knew what he was buying.

He was [a soldier] in Varad, and he told me that one could go to the synagogue with tickets at the autumn festivals, like in the opera, one had to buy a seat.

A very famous cantor was praying, who was an opera-singer, and even the officers bought tickets - the first line was occupied always by officers, and all of them were there, even the Christians -, because they enjoyed listening to the cantor's prayer. They didn't understand what he was saying,

but he could perform it in a very good style, and my husband said that it had been marvelous.

The wealthy Jews, who had their own factory, and were well-to-do, always invited at autumn festivals one or two soldiers for dinner. Or at Yom Kippur they entertained the soldiers before going to the synagogue, and also after that. As they knew that soldiers couldn't organize that in the barrack, thus the wealthy Jews invited them home. My husband related this to me, as he used to be a hussar [soldier].

My first husband explained me many things, for example he told me the most things I know about Elie Wiesel's father, because my husband was 19 years older than me. Elie Wiesel is a Nobel Prize winner, and he is acknowledged. [Editor's note: In 1986 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace.] No wonder that he was so clever, as his father was a very intelligent man.

His father was such an intelligent man, that many times, when the court was holding a knotty trial, the prosecutors would call him and ask his opinion. Generally Jews have the custom not to take a case to the court, but to resolve it amongst themselves.

For instance, if I have an unresolved matter with my friend, Emi, let's say she cheated me in a business affair, then I would choose a person I suppose he's clever, she also would choose somebody, and these two persons select a third one. This third person is the one who takes a decision. And the third one was always Elie Wiesel's father. His decision remained untouched. His word was never altered by anybody.

My husband related me a case. My husband was a baker, and there was a merchant, from he bought flour by wagons. However, they weighed one sack of flour, and the weight of this first sack, it was about 80 kilos [they counted the other sacks on the basis of this weight], they didn't weigh all the sacks.

I don't know how many wagons my husband bought from that merchant. My husband had a partner, Gyula Gordan, who liked very much to drink and to play cards. They had a quarrel before the Hungarian era [7](#) [before 1940], because he knew very well, that he was the master, as it [the business] was running under his name, because he was Hungarian, a Jew wasn't allowed to hold a bakery, and he treated my husband very badly - he settled up with my husband when he wanted to, and he didn't, when didn't want to [he wouldn't give my husband his share], etc. So they decided to split, my husband would run his business separately, and his partner would do whatever he'd like to, this Gyula Gordan.

Thus my husband and his brother-in-law went to the bakery, took the sacks of flour, they put one here, one there, so they distributed them. And they put them on the balance sheet to see how many quintals were left for each of them, and it was then that they realized that a sack weighed only 75 kilos, not 80. Therefore the merchant had stolen 5 kilos from each sack.

That's on what they had an argument. Then the father of Elie Wiesel decided that if Gyula Gordan took an oath to that he had been unaware that the sacks contained only 75 kilos, he would have not been convicted. He won then.

However oath is a terrible thing for us, it's not like raising your hand and saying [in Romanian] '...spun adevarul, si numai adevarul, nu ascund nimic din ceea ce stiu...' ['... I tell the truth and only the truth, I keep nothing from what I know...'], this is a tale. For us, Jews an oath is a terrible

thing.

They light two huge candles, the person who has to take an oath is dressed in a snow-white gown and white socks, they take out the Bible, the Torah scroll, they put it on the table where they recite the preceding prayers, they open the Torah scroll, there is a part he has to read.

And he has to recite the prayer, which is written down there, and if takes it on, the rabbi administers an oath to him. 'If you feel you are telling the truth, do you dare swearing an oath for it?' He answered yes. [Editor's note: The biblical texts often mention oaths and pledges, the rabbinic tradition (Mishnah, Tractate Nedarim) controls already their use, and the later tradition is dead against this custom even if it doesn't prohibit it explicitly.

The reason for this is that when taking of the oath one summons the name of God, as if he would call Him to bear witness to his truth – see the biblical formula starting with 'Khai Hasem' ("The Lord lives"). In turn this is contrary to the Torah commandment "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God". Rarely though calling the name of God is permitted in case of a strong reason.

But the person taking of the oath is dressed in white, that is in the mourning color according to the Jewish tradition, which is also the color of Yom Kippur recalling the divine judgment, they take off his shoes also according to mourning customs, and they put before him the Torah to remind him the emphasis of his action, and to the consequences in case of a false oath.

According to the Halakhic rules the person taking of the oath doesn't have to read from the Torah. The oath is being taken of in the presence of the rabbi.]

They ask him three times: 'Have you considered it thoroughly, whether you wanted to swear an oath or not?' My husband said that it had been terrible even to see him in that large white gown – it had been embroidered – and white stockings, white cap on his head, those two candles, and he had said in front of the Torah what he had had to say, everybody had shuddered, if he had told a lie, a great misfortune could have occurred. And that's what it happened.

He swore the oath, and next morning he found his son dead in his bed. It's not an invented story. My husband said – he had been for him to swear – that he had had a very bad conscience that he had agreed to his swearing. Since he loved very much that boy.

He was such a nice child, 16 years old, they had only this son, they didn't have any daughter, nothing. It didn't take even two weeks, and that man [his hair and beard] turned to snow-white, he became completely white because of this annoyance [grief].

He used to have brown, dark brown hair and beard. People told him: 'You see, they told you three times to swear the oath only if you felt you knew nothing on this issue. Since what you are going to say, it is not a simple [spoken oath]. It will have an effect.'

I kept this in my mind, my husband talked a lot about this story, because he was attached to his [Gyula Gordan's] son. He had to go once in a week there to give an account of how many bread had been baked, how much flour had been used, that's how he knew the child. He knew all these matters before the war, and he related them to me.

Actually I knew Elie Wiesel's father, because I was born in this street, and they lived on the opposite side, at the corner of the Kigyo street, where the [Elie Wiesel] memorial house is. He was a well-built, broad-shouldered, tall man, he had a small beard.

He was religious, but very clever, a very clever man among Jews. He attended school, I don't know his qualifications, but he was a very learned man among Jews. He was a merchant, but I don't know what he was dealing in. Elie Wiesel had two sisters.

He was around 15 years old, when he was deported. It's a great matter that he survived, as they didn't leave such children alive in the concentration camp. It seems he must have been a well developed child. When he comes here, he speaks mainly Hungarian, he doesn't speak Romanian anymore. His wife is from Hungary, she is a Jewish woman, but they speak Hungarian among themselves. He has only one son.

In this war [World War II] my first husband was taken to work service [forced labor] in 1943. People received their call-ups, and they left. That was in the Hungarian era [7](#). They were taken to the frontline, they didn't even know that we were deported in the meantime. He says that he was at the river Don, where the battle was the hardest. Russians really ran into Germans and Hungarians [there were heavy fights].

They went through many things too. First he got typhus. He told me how he survived: he was in a big barn-like construction with other patients, and since they [the soldiers] were returning from the battlefield, they all were lousy, because they couldn't wash, so he took his blanket and went to sleep outdoors, he didn't sleep inside next to the others.

That's how he escaped with life and limb, as the Germans set on fire that shed made of planks, where the other patients were. He was outdoors, thus the fire didn't touch him. However the illness brought him down, he was much weakened. They went to the village, he had a wedding ring he had taken from home, he sold it to the Russians, he got some bread and curds, and he recovered with difficulty.

He could get back from there [the river Don] that he became a prisoner. Russian women went there [in the camp], whose husband and sons were fighting in the war, and asked people who would go to work for them. My husband spoke Russian well, many Ruthenians lived in Remete, the village where he had been born.

Thus he presented himself, because he could speak with them. He worked as a prisoner in a house where they ran a farm. He recovered completely at this family, because instead of water they were drinking milk.

He was good in it, he milked the cow for the woman. They have cows with red and white blotches, they give a lot of milk, they give 38-40 liters a day. Well, they can't sell all that milk, so they drink it instead of water. The woman does not cook.

Before going on the fields, she makes fire in the oven, she puts on mush, that kind of food Russians eat, they have enough meat, as they keep pigs, and by the time they get home, the food is ready roasted and cooked, they eat that. It's not rice-milk, but a rounded, yellow mush, he says. Well, it's not bad, it's already cooked in the oven together with meat, it couldn't be bad. But the woman does not buckle to cook.

My husband was able to do everything: to harness the horse, to shoe the horse, he knew how to milk, how to mow, and the housewife liked very much that he was good in everything. She didn't really want to let him go home, because she didn't know yet if her husband was alive, what had happened to him, as Russians too had left on the frontline, but only a few returned.

She told him: there are enough women, why should you go home, you can get married here too. He says, but I do have a wife and two children. He thought they would be at home, he didn't know that they had been deported. However when soldiers were set free, he also asked permission to go home.

He wouldn't have thought that he would not find his wife home, as she was young. He got papers, and got home properly, he wasn't obliged to stay, only if he wanted to. He was set free very early, he was at home in March 1945 already.

He found his feet well here, there were Russians, there were Russians everywhere, but he could speak their language. And it counted a lot. When he got home, he took up the house of my uncle, Haim Walter, in this street, and the Russian colonel and his wife lived in his house, the woman was a doctor.

He was a baker then too, and the lady-doctor always brought him dough to bake it for her, or just to take it. And my husband could go into the lager [barrack] too, so he knew well the colonel, but my husband didn't know that he was a Jew.

We used to observe Chanukah, like Christians did Christmas. At Chanukah one lights eight candles put in the window, eight candles during one week. And the colonel says to my husband: 'You have a festival, when you light candles in the window. If you want to know, I'm a Jew, I just didn't reveal myself to you.

But now I want you to take me to the rabbi.' He opened a case – he was returning from war, he went across many countries and many towns –, and took out a black material they make the caftan of. And my husband took him to the rabbi, he stepped aside, and the rabbi and the colonel were talking among themselves about the Torah, the religion.

My husband told me that this Russian colonel had been such an intelligent, cultured Jew, he had asked such questions the rabbi that the later had had to think hard to be able to answer them. And nobody would have told that he was a Jew. My husband said that he had stepped aside, he just had watched [the conversation].

He [the Russian colonel] was a very learned man among Jews. People were religious, very religious in Russia. They didn't observe religion under communism that much, but they were religious. Christians were in the same situation, they were religious, but they weren't allowed to be.

Communists didn't respect religion, they didn't believe in it. But back then Russians, as my husband told me, drew off the curtain of their small window, they knelt down, crossed themselves, and they prayed every evening. According to their ancient custom.

They took care not to let people see that they observed religion, that they were praying. They lived in small hovels, there wasn't any floor, just a table, a berth and maybe two chairs, that was the furniture. They thought if there was a communist world, the religion would have vanished in Russia.



But it didn't, because when they opened the church, so much people came to the church, even the third street was full with people, they set up microphones where the priests celebrated the mass.

Religion didn't vanish, because old people taught the youth religion at home. Well in fact the person who doesn't believe in anything is qualified to be an animal. Because an animal believes in nothing. It's tied to the manger, and doesn't believe in anything. Well then, if there is no religion, and you don't believe in anything, life is very empty.

I knew my future husband, because one of my cousins had been his wife, who had left with two children, and didn't return. They lived too in this street, opposite to our house. He knew me well too and my parents from home. That's how I became his wife. We had only a religious wedding, but not a civil marriage.

My husband used to say that if we had children, it was worthy going in for getting married, but if we hadn't, it had no reason. We didn't have any children. I don't blame him, as he had had wife and children, but he never allowed me to see a doctor, to get examined, because it might have been a minor problem.

I would have liked to have at least one child. He said that if God didn't give us in a normal way, he won't let me see a doctor, he won't let me undergo an operation, to go to baths, he won't let me anywhere. He didn't want to let me anywhere. That's how I lived next to him thirty years.

He repaired this house, only a stable and the walls were left, he built up all the rest. The walls remained, because they are large stone walls. They are old-styled, that's why they are so high. After that we got back the house and the garden, we cultivated all the land here.

Then cooperatives were established [during the collectivization in Romania] [12](#), and they took the lands. But I didn't lack anything with him, because he was skilful, he ensured everything. We kept all kind of poultry, we had cows, horses, we were farmers. We had a dray, and we transported things.

My husband wasn't religious at all, he didn't go to the synagogue, he went there only during the autumn festivals, at Rosh Hashanah, on the Day of Atonement and at Sukkot, on these high holidays. He attended before the war [World War II] the Neolog synagogue. He wasn't religious at all, but he didn't mix milk with meat, and he observed religion possibly, but he didn't go frequently to the synagogue, because he didn't have time for it, he was busy even on Saturdays.

He died in 1970, here in Sziget, he is buried in the Jewish cemetery. We had no rabbi anymore, the schochet buried him. I sat shivah, but not on the ground, just on a chair. I couldn't sit for long, we still had the horses, and I had to look after my duties.

After he had died, I sold many things, I sold the horses too, but I got married for the second time, and he had a horse too. My second husband was Aron Salamon, they called him Uri. He was 1 year younger than my first husband, he was born in 1908 here, in Maramarossziget.

We had only civil marriage, in around 1972. I had to get married, as due to our profession we had two drays, horses, I worked with drivers, who were very impertinent, I couldn't stay alone. Back then one had to get married early.

Among us, Jews, if a woman loses her husband, it is not a sin to get married even after four weeks.[Editor's note: According to the rabbinic tradition it is desirable that a woman gets married after becoming a widow or after divorce. However the waiting period after the death of the husband or after divorce is three months, because this amount of time is (was) needed to find out unmistakably whether the woman was pregnant from her previous marriage.] Since our religion says that instead of fornicating, it's better for her to get married and have a family.

One of my husband's sisters was Rifki Salamon, called Rifki Moldovan after her husband. She got married here [in Maramarossziget], her children were born here, but they were little when they left for Canada. She has two daughters and she has grown-up grand-children already.

When I visited them [in 1975], the older girl, Hedi's daughter was in the eighth grade, she is Pamela. I could talk to Hedi, because she left from here, and also with her husband, because he is from the old 'Regat' [Editor's note: 'Kingdom' was used by Transylvanians in everyday speech when referring to the Romanian Kingdom, before the unification of 1918.

It remained in use after the unification, designating the regions of Moldavia and Wallachia that had formerly composed the Romanian Kingdom.], and he could speak Romanian perfectly. But I couldn't talk to the children, they speak only Ivrit, English and French – as the place where I was used to be a French colony.

The second younger sister of my husband was Kornelia. Her son, Miki was chief editor at a newspaper in Banya [short for Nagybanya] before leaving for Israel. Miki too has a son, who is building engineer, and also an architect. He lives now in America, they took him from Israel to America.

My second husband had a younger brother too, Jozsef Salamon. He was a very handsome boy. Joska was director at the MAT, the brandy and wine warehouse. His wife is Dori, and they have two daughters: Aliz and Havana. In 1964 they left for Israel, the girls were children yet.

Both girls have husbands who are doctors. What happened was that the two boys studied medicine in Italy, because it is very expensive in Israel. The university is in Jerusalem, and one has to pay a lot of money for it. So they went to Italy, and studied there.

One of them was already engaged to the younger, Havana, when he told the other: 'Hey, wouldn't you like to come with me to visit my fiancée? She has an older sister, she might like you.' And he succeeded in it.

An engineer was courting Aliz, but she liked more this boy, because he was very nice. He was called Albert. His father died during the war, his mother was left a widow, he was the youngest child, and gave lessons to cover his study expenses. Aliz has three sons, Havana has four, she had twins, that's how she has four children.

My second husband got married for the first time in 1936, his first wife was from Ermihalyfalva, I think she was called Juca. He had a daughter, his wife was deported together with her. His wife returned, but in 1954 the poor woman died of cancer. His first wife was still alive when they moved to this street.

As the house, where he had [previously] lived was demolished, a huge factory was built there, and in the place where his house used to be a ten-storied block was built. My second husband died in 1989, before the revolution. [before the Romanian Revolution of 1989] [13](#)

While my first husband lived, I couldn't go anywhere, we were farming, and I couldn't leave the house. We were keeping all kind of poultry, we had cows, we had horses, and my husband didn't want to be left alone even for one day. When I got married for the second time, I left my husband at home, and I could travel.

In 1973 I visited Israel, and in 1975 America. In Ceau's time [Ceauesescu, Nicolae [14](#) in a short form] they would let you out [from the country] in every second year [ref: Travel into and out of Romania][15](#). In those times a return plane ticket to America cost 13,000 lei, to Israel 2,500 lei.

In Israel people usually speak Hebrew. I speak only Yiddish, I can't speak Hebrew. I can read, as I was taught how to recite, how to pray. But I can't speak, thus I don't know what I am reading. Those who live in Israel learnt to speak Hebrew too, everybody speaks it.

When I went to Israel, I could speak Yiddish and Hungarian or Romanian only with elderly acquaintances, which had left from here. I couldn't speak with children. They don't speak Hungarian, or Romanian, nor Yiddish, Jewish, as we speak, they speak only Hebrew, French and English, that's what they are being taught in school.

There was a family with a five years old girl, she could speak a perfect Romanian, because she emigrated together with her grandparents, who were from the old Regat; in order to be able to talk to her grandma and grandpa, the girl was taught Romanian. In school she spoke Hebrew and English, but at home only Romanian. I could speak in Romanian with that one girl. Well, one can hear all kind of languages in Israel. There were people who could speak only Russian, that was where immigrant Russians were living.

Usually people have only 1-2-3 children in Israel, they don't have eight and ten anymore, only those who are very religious or don't like to work, and the state is supporting them, if they have many children. Since in Israel those, who have many children get a considerable support from the state.

I was visiting a relative, a woman came in, and she took a heap of bread, about 17-18 pieces of bread. I say: 'Sari, what is she going to do with so much bread?' She answers, 'She has a big family.' 'What about her husband?' 'Well, she says, the state supports them. They get a good sum every month, and they raise the children of it, so that the country [the population] would grow.' Well, for boys the military service is compulsory.

A soldier is trained for four years there, not like here. But that soldier knows everything, not only how to use a weapon. For example if a tank driver is killed, he can get on and drive the tank. And they learn to be pilots. Girls too do military service for two or three years, depending on the field they choose.

However they are not treated differently because they are girls, they pursue the same training as the boys. They even have to clean the toilets, they are being taught everything. Religious girls don't enroll, they aren't obliged to. However, there if a girl hasn't been a soldier, she is not acknowledged; in general a girl has to be as capable as a man.

When I visited Israel, I thought that seeing these beautiful festivals I would remember those times when we had been celebrating at home. But festivals are not observed there either. Here [in Maramarossziget] people used to observe festivals consistently, even after the war [World War II], when there were still living Jews.

They weren't much too religious Jews, but we used to observe the holidays according to the custom. But in Israel I told my sister-in-law, 'Come with me to the synagogue so that I discover your traditions.'

It was the day of Simchat Torah, when the autumn festivals are ending, when they take out the Torah and they dance with the Torah. 'Oh, are you still observing this nonsense?', she says: 'Why should we go to the synagogue?' She doesn't light candles, she doesn't observe Sabbath. All this in Israel, on the sacred land. She says, 'We can't live on this', that is the religion. They are all great patriots, that's true. But they don't observe religion.

In Benei Beraq they do, only religious people live there. A cousin of mine lives there, they observe festivals as the custom is, and Sabbath too. But in other places not really. Well, they work all week. Children are taken to the 'cresa' [day nursery in Romanian] from the very beginning, and parents are working all week. On Saturday there are clothes hanging everywhere, it's washday. Although they have bathrooms, there is warm water, cold water at every house, but they don't have time for it.

They are free on Saturday, so everybody is cleaning the house, washing, putting things in order, because they start to work again on Sunday. Thus they don't have the possibility [to observe religion]. I haven't got used to what I saw there.

And on the Day of Atonement my brother-in-law, the younger brother of my second husband, Jozsef Salamon, who came from a religious family, went to the beach. Not to the synagogue. Since they had a day off on the Day of Atonement, they didn't work.

People became insensible. I haven't seen one of my cousins, Sari Walter for 50 years. She came here [in Maramarossziget] to visit after 50 years, as she used to live in this street. We were talking. She says, 'I don't observe any tradition. I don't believe in anything either.'

When they took us out, she says, and we were sleeping in the open air, where was God to help us? I'm not able to believe anymore.' 'Yet it's not what you saw at home, your mother was very religious - I say - and you come from a religious family.'

'It was a long time ago, people believed in God then, and they believed God would always help. But from where I came back... I don't believe in anything.' I say: 'But only an animal has no faith. Life is so empty if you don't believe in something.'

You tie an animal in the stable, of course, it is not capable of believing in something, because it's an animal, but a human being has to believe in something. It's not the way you imagine. If everybody thought as you did, people would scratch each other's eyes, if one had more [fortune] than the other. You shouldn't think like that.' 'It's useless - she says - you know yours, and I know mine.' I could not convince her.

I could travel to America, because an acquaintance was here, and she compiled the invitation letter. She is from Romania, and we were on good terms. Her nephew, Sanyi Leichter was from Aknasugatag, but she didn't even drink a glass of water in his house, because Sanyi's wife was Christian; she was religious, and stayed at my house. Since I was acknowledged as a Jew, because my parents were Jews too. And back then I could observe religion, as we had a shochet.

America is very beautiful, it can't be even compared [to Romania]. First I visited Israel, and I thought there couldn't be a more beautiful country than Israel, as it is indeed very beautiful. But after going to America I noticed a huge difference. It seemed to me that Israel could be related to America as Romania to Israel.

Well America... one could not even tell what a country it is. The people, the buildings, the employments, everything, it can't be compared. In America I arrived in Brooklyn. Brooklyn is so big, as three towns together in Romania.

I visited there a cousin too, Szruli Walter [Haim Walter, the son of one of the mother's brothers], but I stayed mainly at an acquaintance, who had sent me the invitation letter. And they would come by car, and take me to Philadelphia, to New Jersey, I visited several places at my cousins. Then I was in Canada for three weeks, at my sister-in-law, Rifki Salamon.

Before the war [World War II] they [Jews] were very religious here in Romania, and Americans didn't really observe religion. After the war it was inversely. People became very religious in America, there are many religious people.

Well, in Israel there are towns where religion is strictly observed, and there are towns where people don't observe religion at all, not even the Day of Atonement. People I got to know in America usually observed [religion], otherwise the community would speak badly of them.

For example if one [a Jew] has a store, and he won't close it on holidays, or he won't offer kosher things in the store, Jews don't go there shopping. There are modern Jews, many, but there are also Jews who wear payes. In some towns you find only such Jews. In Brooklyn there are many religious Jews. With beard and payes. Black hat, marvelous black patent-leather shoes, white socks, their overcoat is pitch-black, they wear caftan, and the white shirts are glittering.

Women have wigs there, but there are so nice little wigs, that no one could tell that those are wigs. And they put above the wig also a small hat, when they go to the synagogue. They have to be religious there. As if the parents are religious, then the children are too.

And they have so many children as many God gives them, they are not that modern to have abortions. Our religion strictly prohibits that, it says that it means killing a human being. Thus there are many children in a family.

In Maramarossziget religious Jews became estranged from religion [after World War II].

For example I knew boys who attended the yeshiva, they were expressly religious, and when they returned [after World War II], they had special hair-cuts, these burger-boots came into fashion, and they were wearing those, and breeches, and they smoked on Saturdays, they didn't observe religion anymore. In older times people were more religious here than in America. After that religious people went to America, and they observe religion strictly there. Here religion is observed

less.

We still had a shochet after the war, and we had a chazzan, the synagogue was open on Sabbath. So there were some [religious Jews], but they left after a while. One of the slaughterers left for Israel, the other one died, that's it. Jews dispersed. Those who were religious left, they wouldn't stay here at all. They left far and wide, but most of them went to America, not to Israel.

Sometimes people come from America, a bus comes with fifty-sixty people, who go to the cemetery and pray there. Many rabbis are buried here, Teitelbaum is buried here, and women, the wives of the rabbis, they are buried separately. And young people come too, bochers, who are studying, and elderly people, they come to anniversaries, they know when a rabbi has an anniversary [of the day of his death].

They come mainly on such occasions. Even today if religious [Hasid] Jews come, they won't go to the Neolog synagogue. They discuss in the front-office what they want to, but they don't go in the synagogue.

After I got married, I attended the synagogue. During the autumn festivals I had a seat bought in the second line, Danczig was praying, he was the rabbi. He was wearing a helmet similar to the priests' helmet, and a large claret belt [on his waist], knitted like the catholic priests' belt, our rabbi was dressed similarly.

All this was after the war, he came back to Sziget, and emigrated to Israel from here. Since we are just a very few left, it [the praying] is organized in the small synagogue, there is a chazzan, Sandor Leichter, and a part is fenced off, where women sit.

But nowadays I don't go to the synagogue, because there aren't Jews. With whom should I go to the synagogue? Should I sit there by myself? There are mixed marriages, one has a Russian wife, the other I don't know what, these come. No, I prefer to pray at home.

After my first husband died, a neighbor woman and me went to the central [ritual] bath, in a room with two bathtubs, and we took a bath there. We went there once in a week or once in two weeks. In 1980 it was still functioning, but then it was closed.

After Jews left it was closed, and people started to modernize, everybody set up a bathroom in their house. They didn't go to such ritual baths anymore. My second husband too had a bathroom, as he had to get shaved all the time. The kitchen was large, we built two more walls, we introduced the water, so we could have our own bathroom, we didn't need to go to the public one.

I kept yet a kosher household. I wash the dishes together, but I don't mix the bowls for milk with those for meat. One doesn't put sour cream in dishes with meat. It's interesting, none of my husbands was religious, they didn't have payes or beard, but they didn't like to mix things, to put sour cream on meat stewed with paprika or on stuffed cabbage or I don't know what. Sour cream was used separately from the meat. That's what they got used to.

I prepare cholent even today. Cholent is good if cooked of last year's beans. First I let the beans to boil, and I filter the first brown fluid. After that I put the beans on the stove in the pot for cholent, I put in the meat – the meat has to be uncooked –, and it needs spice.



It needs two onions cut into small pieces, hot pepper, garlic, paprika, and a little salt, but not much, as it gets salty while boiling. It's good if it's greasy. But we don't prepare it with fat, sometimes they make it from fatty meat, but nowadays people refrain from greasy meals.

I cook it using oil, I put in it about two deciliters of oil, I fill it up with water, and let it boil slowly, as usually we don't stir it, just let it boil. When it is almost cooked, we put a half glass of hulled barley. It is of wheat, Romanians call it arpacas. It needs to be put in.

We don't have slaughterer anymore, after the shochet died, nobody came to replace him. But if I buy meat, I kosher it. As I got used to it, that the blood has to be steeped out of it, it has to be salted, washed, and after that it can be cooked. It's good for the health too.

I don't eat pork even today, we are not accustomed to it. It is a sin, we learnt that it was a sin to eat pork. Pork is extremely unhealthy. If you get ill, the first thing is that the doctor forbids you to eat pork, because it's very stodgy, and fatty too, it's not healthy.

But in order to eat pork, you have to be accustomed to in your childhood. Well then, in my age, if I didn't care my health, how would I look like? Since I'm almost 77 years old. But thanks to God, I'm fine. I don't eat what it is not good for me. I cook it, I prepare it, as I have guests sometimes, but I don't eat of it. Just what I know I'm allowed to and it's good for me. I don't go to doctors, I don't take any medicine.

Once I lead great stress on dressing. Once I went every week to the hairdresser. My hair was so beautiful, that one could take delight just in seeing it. I had plait when I was a girl, but after that I had short hair, and it was arranged in curls. Back then the fashion was to wear curls. But today young women don't go to the hairdresser, only the elder. When I visited Israel and America, I saw that older women go to the hairdresser, they follow the old fashion, young women don't [go to the hairdresser].

One more thing. It makes one older to take everything to heart. For example I have quite a large garden, which goes with the house, and they haven't given it back yet. I won't kill myself because of that. No one pocketed that land, when they intend to give it, they will do, but I won't make a big deal of it, like others, who are able to commit I don't know what. No.

Whatever will be, will be. Thanks to God, I'm fine, I have money to live on, as I don't get a normal pension from the Romanians, only 340,000 lei, but I'm receiving the German pension [compensation], because I was deported. I'm given this for several years, since we could compile in Romania the papers and send them to Germany.

They found me there, where I had worked, because I had been numbered in the concentration camp, here is my concentration camp number, A lager, 7986.

The other day a bus came with young people – there were Jewish children among them, but most of them were Romanians –, who got out from the bus at the synagogue, and they looked for me, I had to explain them, to these young people, the things I had gone through, so that it won't occur again what it had happened in 1944. That they slaughtered like this people.

Since I was for one year and four months in concentration camp, when they deported me from here. But a very few returned, very few.

Those young people asked me questions, and I had to answer all of them. In Romanian, as there were Jewish children among them, but just a few, the greater part was Romanian, who won't believe even today, that there had been such a slaughter.

- **Glossaries:**

## **1 Yeshivah in Pozsony**

The first yeshivah operating on a regular basis in Pozsony was founded by Rabbi Jom Tov Lipman around 1700. It was the first among such institutions founded in Hungary, and the most important. From the early 1700s the organized teaching of the Talmud has never ceased in Pozsony. Some of the outstanding early leaders of the yeshivah were Mozes Charif, Izsak Dukla and Meir Barbi; during their activity the yeshivah reached the level of its counterparts in Prague, Nikolsburg and Leipnick.

The school acquired world-fame under the leadership of Mozes Szajfer (Mose Szofer, Schreiber Mozes) at the beginning of the 19th century.

Due to Szajfer the yeshivah got independent from the community, thus he provided the yeshivah with internal autonomy and a real college feature. He also increased the severity of the syllabus: the main emphasis was on the precise knowledge of the religious rules, and he prohibited the teaching of secular subjects.

In front of his college he struggled with Moses Mendelssohn, who launched in 1819 in Hamburg the reformed Judaism, a movement breaking away from Orthodoxy, and undertaking the ideas of enlightenment. His conservative dressing, hairstyle and beard were imitated by his students.

**2 Trianon Peace Treaty:** Trianon is a palace in Versailles where, as part of the Paris Peace Conference, the peace treaty was signed with Hungary on 4th June 1920. It was the official end of World War I for the countries concerned. The Trianon Peace Treaty validated the annexation of huge parts of pre-war Hungary by the states of Austria (the province of Burgenland) and Romania (Transylvania, and parts of Eastern Hungary).

The northern part of pre-war Hungary was attached to the newly created Czechoslovak state (Slovakia and Subcarpathia) while Croatia-Slavonia as well as parts of Southern Hungary (Voivodina, Baranja, Medjumurje and Prekmurje) were to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later Yugoslavia).

Hungary lost 67.3% of its pre-war territory, including huge areas populated mostly or mainly by Hungarians, and 58.4% of its population. As a result approximately one third of the Hungarians became an - often oppressed - ethnic minority in some of the predominantly hostile neighboring countries. Trianon became the major point of reference of interwar nationalistic and anti-Semitic Hungarian regimes.

**3 Second Vienna Dictate:** The Romanian and Hungarian governments carried on negotiations about the territorial partition of Transylvania in August 1940. Due to their conflict of interests, the negotiations turned out to be fruitless.

In order to avoid violent conflict a German-Italian court of arbitration was set up, following Hitler's directives, which was also accepted by the parties. The verdict was pronounced on 30th August 1940 in Vienna: Hungary got back a territory of 43,000 km<sup>2</sup> with 2,5 million inhabitants.

This territory (Northern Transylvania, Seklerland) was populated mainly by Hungarians (52% according to the Hungarian census and 38% according to the Romanian one) but at the same time more than 1 million Romanians got under the authority of Hungary.

Although Romania had 19 days for capitulation, the Hungarian troops entered Transylvania on 5th September. The verdict was disapproved by several Western European countries and the US; the UK considered it a forced dictate and refused to recognize its validity.

**4** 10th of May: national holiday in the Romanian Monarchy. It was to commemorate Romania's independence from the Ottoman Empire, granted in 1878 by the Treaty of Berlin. As a result of a parliamentary decision Carol I of [Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen](#) was proclaimed King of Romania on 10th May, 1881.

**5** King Carol II (1893-1953): King of Romania from 1930 to 1940. During his reign he tried to influence the course of Romanian political life, first through the manipulation of the rival Peasants' Party, the National Liberal Party and anti-Semitic factions.

In 1938 King Carol established a royal dictatorship. He suspended the Constitution of 1923 and introduced a new constitution that concentrated all legislative and executive powers in his hands, gave him total control over the judicial system and the press, and introduced a one-party system.

A contest between the king and the fascist [Iron Guard](#) ensued, with assassinations and massacres on both sides. Under Soviet and Hungarian pressure, Carol had to surrender parts of Romania to foreign rule in 1940 (Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR, the Cadrilater to Bulgaria and Northern Transylvania to Hungary). He was abdicated in favor of his son, Michael, and he fled abroad. He died in Portugal.

**6** Strajer (Watchmen), Strajeria (Watchmen Guard): Proto-fascist mass-organization founded by King Carol II with the aim of bringing up the youth in the spirit of serving and obedience, and of nationalist ideas of grandeur.

**7** Hungarian era (1940-1944): The expression Hungarian era refers to the period between 30 August 1940 - 15 October 1944 in Transylvania. As a result of the Trianon peace treaties in 1920 the eastern part of Hungary (Maramures, Crisana, Banat, Transylvania) was annexed to Romania.

Two million inhabitants of Hungarian nationality came under Romanian rule. In the summer of 1940, under pressure from Berlin and Rome, the Romanian government agreed to return Northern Transylvania, where the majority of the Hungarians lived, to Hungary.

The anti-Jewish laws introduced in 1938 and 1939 in Hungary were also applied in Northern Transylvania. Following the German occupation of Hungary on 19th March 1944, Jews from Northern Transylvania were deported to and killed in concentration camps along with Jews from all over Hungary except for Budapest. Northern Transylvania belonged to Hungary until the fall of 1944, when the Soviet troops entered and introduced a regime of military administration that sustained

local autonomy. The military administration ended on 9th March 1945 when the Romanian administration was reintroduced in all the Western territories lost in 1940.

**8** Anti-Jewish laws in Hungary: Following similar legislation in Nazi Germany, Hungary enacted three Jewish laws in 1938, 1939 and 1941. The first law restricted the number of Jews in industrial and commercial enterprises, banks and in certain occupations, such as legal, medical and engineering professions, and journalism to 20% of the total number.

This law defined Jews on the basis of their religion, so those who converted before the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, as well as those who fought in World War I, and their widows and orphans were exempted from the law.

The second Jewish law introduced further restrictions, limiting the number of Jews in the above fields to 6 percent, prohibiting the employment of Jews completely in certain professions such as high school and university teaching, civil and municipal services, etc.

It also forbade Jews to buy or sell land and so forth. This law already defined Jews on more racial grounds in that it regarded baptized children that had at least one non-converted Jewish parent as Jewish. The third Jewish law prohibited intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, and defined anyone who had at least one Jewish grandparent as Jewish.

**9** Yellow star in Hungary (to be translated from Hungarian)

**10** Mizrachi: The word has two meanings: a) East. It designates the Jews who immigrate to Palestine from the Arab countries. Since the 1970s they make up more than half of the Israeli population. b) It is the movement of the Zionists, who firmly hold on to the Torah and the traditions.

The movement was founded in 1902 in Vilnius. The name comes from the abbreviation of the Hebrew term Merchoz Ruchoni (spiritual center). The Mizrachi wanted to build the future Jewish state by enforcing the old Jewish religious, cultural and legal regulations. They recruited followers especially in Eastern Europe and the United States. In the year after its founding it had 200 organizations in Europe, and in 1908 it opened an office in Palestine, too.

The first congress of the World Movement was held in 1904 in Pozsony (today Bratislava, Slovakia), where they joined the Basel program of the Zionists, but they emphasized that the Jewish nation had to stand on the grounds of the Torah and the traditions.

The aim of the Mizrach-Mafdal movement is the same in our days, too. It supports schools, youth organizations in Israel and in other countries, so that the Jewish people can learn about their religion, and it takes part in the political life of Israel, promoting by this the traditional image of the Jewish state. (<http://www.mizrachi.org/aboutus/default.asp>; [www.cionista.hu/mizrachi.htm](http://www.cionista.hu/mizrachi.htm); Magyar Zsidó Lexikon, Budapest, 1929).

**11** Betar in Romania (to be translated from Hungarian)

**12** Collectivization in Romania: The Romanian collectivization, in other words the nationalization of private real estates was carried out in the first years of Romanian communism. The industry, medical institutions, the entertainment industry and banks were nationalized in 1948.

A year later, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, the general-secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, announced the socialistic transformation of agriculture. The collectivization process came to an end in 1962: by then more than 90% of the agricultural territories had been turned into public ownership and became cooperatives (Cooperativa Agricola de Productie). One of the concomitant phenomena of this process was the exclusion from public life of peasants, known as kulaks, who owned 10-50 hectares of land.

**13** Romanian Revolution of 1989: In December 1989, a revolt in Romania deposed the communist dictator Ceausescu. Anti-government violence started in Timisoara and spread to other cities. When army units joined the uprising, Ceausescu fled, but he was captured and executed on 25th December along with his wife.

A provisional government was established, with Ion Iliescu, a former Communist Party official, as president. In the elections of May 1990 Iliescu won the presidency and his party, the Democratic National Salvation Front, obtained an overwhelming majority in the legislature.

**14** Ceausescu, Nicolae (1918-1989): Communist head of Romania between 1965 and 1989. He followed a policy of nationalism and non-intervention into the internal affairs of other countries. The internal political, economic and social situation was marked by the cult of his personality, as well as by terror, institutionalized by the Securitate, the Romanian political police.

The Ceausescu regime was marked by disastrous economic schemes and became increasingly repressive and corrupt. There were frequent food shortages, lack of electricity and heating, which made everyday life unbearable. In December 1989 a popular uprising, joined by the army, led to the arrest and execution of both Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, who had been deputy Prime Minister since 1980.

**15** Travel into and out of Romania (Romanian citizens abroad, and foreigners into Romania): The regulations made it extremely difficult for Romanian citizens to travel into non-socialist countries. One could apply for a passport every second year; however, the police could refuse its issue without offering any explanation.

One had to attach to the application for a passport a certificate from work, school or university proving the proper behavior of the applicant, and an invitation letter from a relative or an acquaintance had to be enclosed too.

If a whole family solicited for passports, the authorities usually refused to issue a passport for one member of the family, thus forcing the traveler to return. The law controlled very severely the travel of foreigners into Romania.

No matter if they were tourists or visited their family, foreign citizens had to report when entering the country the number of days they intended to stay, and had to exchange a certain amount of money defined by the law for every day they intended to spend in Romania.

Furthermore a foreign citizen could stay only in a hotel. Any individual Romanian citizen could get a significant fine if it turned out that they secured accommodation for a foreigner. The only exception were first degree relatives, but they also had to be reported to the police, indicating the number of days they would spend at the person accommodating them.