

When the doors finally opened in Auschwitz, Birkenau, many had already succumbed to the squalor, filth, and hunger having been locked up with little or no food or water for months. (Bun ff(14) re Jo(\$-3pf76)3() TJETQ.000008869 0

At the beginning of August 194

the SS officers. Guess what? She brought another stove in the very next day and stood up to these officers.

My mother was the last of th

In the early morning of April 29th, 1945, Dachau was finally liberated by the American army. After seeing nothing but death all around, the soldiers could not believe their eyes when they saw seven mothers with their babies. Even at liberation, many prisoners died because of diseases such as typhus, also starving prisoners were given too much to eat too quickly.

Before being separated, my parents planned that if they survived, they would each return to their city. After regaining strength, my mother was driven by jeep with a doctor and a nurse to Prague and stayed for two to three days and onto Bratislava and then to her home in Komárno. The news of my mother and baby reached my father in Hungary. He immediately traveled to Komárno. So it was they met. My father was shocked to see his wife with a blue-eyed blonde-haired baby. My mother said, "It's ours. He has your ears."

Those who survived the Holocaust began to realize the extent of the disaster that befell them and their families and slowly started to put their lives together. In most cases, nothing remained of complete families or property and survivors left abroad. My mother's sister left Europe before the war, and with her husband, settled in Bowmansville on a small farm near Toronto. It was Toronto that my parents would eventually come.

Before finally leaving on the ocean liner, the SS Washington from France, they spent several months in Barbizon, an area close to Paris, in shelters that were arranged by an organization that rescued Jewish orphaned children.

We spent several months in Barbizon, France, and then sailed to New York. The entry papers were not in order, and we ended up in Cuba for about six months waiting for a visa. In 1947, we finally arrived to Toronto.

Paul: Wow. It's amazing because there were so many times in your mother's journey where she's being marched around and she's being sent here and things are getting bombed. So often she shouldn't have made it, but she did. Her whole life, and your life too for that matter, is just miraculous.

Leslie: Yes. Obviously, the hand of God was there. There's no question about that. People have asked her, "How can you believe in God?" People have died and it was horrible. Her answer was simply, "I brought a baby back from hell." It's a very personal thing, obviously. Everybody has a different take on this, and this was her. She came from a religious background as my father did as well. This is having a Munna as we say in Hebrew, having faith. This is I think what carried them through this so the terrible time.

Paul: Your father became a rabbi. Was it after the war when he landed in Canada or had he become a rabbi before leaving Europe?

Leslie: No, he wasn't. He was a very well-educated man and he got a position in-- when we came to Toronto in 1947, they were working in whatever they could get. Stuffing mattresses in the factory. My mother was doing some work in sewing.

Paul: Wow.

Leslie: We were there for two years then he became the rabbi there in the city and a teacher. Then from Timmins, they moved to a place called Sudbury. Then from Sudbury, we finally ended back in Toronto where my parents opened up a bookstore in 1956, a Judaica, which they had for 40 years.

Paul: Yes, it's like a landmark there in Toronto. Miriam's Judaica, right? It's quite the establishment for sure. Now, if you don't mind my asking, how did your mother come to peace with this and also your father? How did he maintain his faith despite the horrors that he saw as well?

Leslie: Not the simple answer. The only thing that comes to mind is the fact that they were believers in God and believers in the fact that whatever was destined to happen was the plan, the master plan. We can't understand the master plan, but we have to abide by it. Whether good or bad in the way we see things, it's always good in the eyes of God. In some sense, that's how I think how he reconciled or that's how it was reconciled.

On the other hand, my mother's brother lost his wife and children and he totally went

I send this message to the people of Germany, especially the young people, also politicians, educators, clergy. We must learn how to understand other suffering nations of the world. We must practice tolerance except our differences, skin, color, religion. We are all God's children. The young people must fight for democracy. Take an example from the young people of Iran. Because they wanted democracy, thousands of them were killed. Don't be afraid to speak up. Don't be complacent.

You have an example of the Hitler, who poisoned the people and taught them to hate and blame the Jews for everything. People believed him. I pray and hope that in your generation, the world will change. Thank you for listening to my message." It was delivered in Toronto, January 2010.

What she said here basically is understanding tolerance, education. Don't be ignorant. If you have any questions, learn about something. Just don't take things at face value, and dig. Understand what went on. I think that's the lesson that I heard, that I've been taught. Like I said, I'm passing this on to my children as well.

Paul: Wow. Well, Mr. Roosevelt, thank you so much for your time, for sharing your story, your mother's story. A remarkable tale of courage, and bravery, and love, and frankly, miracles. Lots of miracles to make this happen. I really just want to let how much I appreciate your time and thank you so much for sharing all this with us.

Leslie: You're very welcome. Thank you very much for having me.

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[00:33:03] [END OF AUDIO]