

## ORAL HISTORY

I have several reasons for asking you to tell me your remembrances:

1. I have read many books and articles about Germany in the nineteenth century, a few about rural \_\_\_\_\_ in the nineteenth century, and several about the places where my family came from, namely \_\_\_\_\_. These books explained the general history, the laws, and the cultural influences that affected Jewish life in the towns and cities. But what I did not learn about was what life was really like for Jews living in the countryside.
2. I realized after I talked with several relatives who grew up in Germany that unless the life of the Jews in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries before the Holocaust is documented all that information will be lost forever. Just simple memories of what life was like will keep the history alive. Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation interviews only briefly dealt with the daily lives of the interviewee or the lives of his or her ancestors.
3. Everyone has different memories. Sometimes several people share the same story; sometimes people remember the same event differently or not at all. All that information is important.

### Suggestions for doing the Oral History

- 1) The best way to do the Oral History is to speak into a tape recorder. That way you can go from one story to another. Pretend you are just talking to someone who is asking you questions.
- 2) Even if you think it's "not important" or "not interesting," please include it. For me everything is interesting.
- 3) Doing the Oral History should be pleasant for you. If there is a subject that you do not want to talk about, please don't feel compelled to do so.
- 4) I realize that it was a time of many changes. I am especially interested in life in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. If there are different memories for different times, please include them all.
- 5) Please feel free to add to the questions I asked, these are just "jumping off points."

I will then type up the Oral History on the computer. I would also like to place my primary research materials eventually in a library like the Leo Baeck Library or YIVO in New York so other researchers could use them too. I would, of course, ask your permission before doing so.

When you refer to other relatives, please say: the relation, given name then last name (for example, "my Grandfather, [name]"). If you don't remember the birth, death, marriage dates, or the names of all the children, please do not be concerned.

Feel free to use the local words that you remember, but try to give me an English translation.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Your Remembrances**

**Your Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your maiden name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Birthdate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Birthplace:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where did you grow up?** \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) What was your life like growing up?
- 2) Your Father
  - a) What did your father do?
  - b) What was his position in the local non-Jewish community?
  - c) What was his position in the Jewish Community? In the Synagogue?
  - d) What education did he have?
  - e) What languages did he speak/read?  
German, Hebrew, Jiddisch, Judeo-German, other
  - f) Any stories about him?
- 3) Your Mother
  - a) What did your mother do?
  - b) What was her position in the local non-Jewish community?
  - c) What was her position in the Jewish Community? In the Synagogue?
  - d) What education did she have?
  - e) What languages did she speak/read?  
German, Hebrew, Jiddisch, Judeo-German, other
  - f) Did she use the Mikveh? If not, did anyone you know use it?
  - g) Any stories about her?
- 4) Your grandparents? (please discuss each individually, by name)
  - a) What did each one do?
  - b) When they were elderly, did they live with you?
  - c) Did they die of old age or another ailment?
  - d) What was each person's position in the local non-Jewish community?
  - e) What was each person's position in the Jewish Community? In the Synagogue?

- f) What education did each have?
  - g) What languages did each of them speak/read?  
German, Hebrew, Jiddisch, Judeo-German, other
  - h) Any stories about any of them?
  - i) If you did not know your grandparents, what stories did you hear about them?
- 5) Your Great Grandparents and earlier ancestors
- a) Any stories
  - b) Any information
  - c) What was life like in that time or in earlier times?
- 6) Uncles and Aunts/ Sister and Brothers  
Any information regarding the above questions?
- 7) Did any women wear a wig?  
With what did they cover their heads?
- 8) Did any of the men cut their beards with a scissors rather than shave?  
Did the men always cover their heads? With what?
- 9) What was your house like?
- a) What was the address?
  - b) How many rooms: living, sleeping, garden, animals etc.
  - c) Did you have household help?  
For what? Were they Jewish or Christian? Who were they?
  - d) Was there a shop in the front or first floor?
  - e) Did your parents own or rent it?
  - f) What was it decorated with?
  - g) Was there a sukkah on the upper floor and open to the roof? In the garden?
  - h) Was there a mezuzzah on the front doorpost and /or every room?
- 10) Who were your friends?
- a) Family members?
  - b) Cousins?
  - c) Neighbors?
  - d) Schoolmates?
  - e) Were some of your friends Christian?
- 11) Jewish Holidays
- a) What did your parents/relatives do?
  - b) What did you do?
  - c) Shabbos
  - d) Rosh Hashanah
  - e) Yom Kippur
  - f) Hanukkah

- g) Purim
- h) Pesah
- i) Simhat Torah
- j) Sukkot
- k) Other

12) Foods and Dishes that were special to your area. (A longer questionnaire follows this interview)

- a) Prepared for the holidays?
- b) Prepared for special occasions?
- c) Everyday recipes.  
What did your family usually eat?

13) Family Events

- a) Description of what went on
  - i) What did your parents do? What did other relatives do?
  - ii) What did you do?
- b) Births
  - i) Who attended the mother?
  - ii) Berit Milah/ Circumcision. Who was the Mohel?
  - iii) Baby-naming ceremony (Holegrasch)
    - (1) For girls
    - (2) For boys ?
    - (3) Describe the event
- c) Wimpel- did you or your brothers have a wimple? Could you describe how it was made and what it looked like? Do you still have it?
- d) Bar Mitzvah
- e) Your Marriage
  - i) Was your marriage arranged?  
If not, how did you meet?
  - ii) Was there a dowry? Amount?
  - iii) Was there a trousseau?
  - iv) Do you have a marriage contract of any of your relatives?
  - v) The event
- f) Marriage of your parents or grandparents
  - i) Was the marriage arranged?  
If not, how did they meet?
  - ii) Was there a dowry? Amount?
  - iii) Was there a trousseau?
  - iv) The event
  - v) What was the music at the reception: German? Hebrew, other?
- g) Death
  - i) Funeral
  - ii) Burial
  - iii) Sitting Shivah

- iv) Division of the property
- v) Information about the Jewish Cemetery
- h) Mikveh
  - i) Where was it?
  - ii) Years it was in use?
- i) Other

14) The Jewish Community

- a) How were the officers chosen?
- b) How was the person who led the services (when there was no rabbi) decided?
- c) How were the fees for the Synagogue decided?
- d) Did the older members of the Community always have the higher, more important position?
  - i) How important was the financial position?
  - ii) How important was religious education?
- e) How was a rabbi chosen?
- f) Any other information?

15) School

- a) Elementary school
  - i) Was is a Jewish School
  - ii) Where was it?
  - iii) Teachers?
  - iv) Friends?
  - v) Stories?
- b) High School
  - i) Where was it?
  - ii) Teachers?
  - iii) Friends?
  - iv) Stories?
- c) Religious School
  - i) Where was it?
  - ii) Teachers?
  - iii) Friends?
  - iv) Stories?
- d) What languages did you speak/read?  
German, Hebrew, Jiddisch, Judeo-German, other

16) Life after school

- a) Sports?
- b) Work?
- c) Responsibilities?
- d) Fun?

- 17) How did the Jews take care of the poor Jews?
- 18) Do you remember any Judeo-German (Jiddisch) folk songs
- 19) Do you remember songs in German like “In Nisan when the trees bloom ...”
- 20) Stories about the local Christians
- a) What the main employment of the Christians
  - b) Did the Jews and Christians live on about the same economic level?
  - c) Relationship of Christians and Jews
  - d) Celebration of Christian holidays  
Were Jews invited to join in the celebrations?
- 21) Work experience
- a) Apprenticeship  
Where, with whom
  - b) Work
- 22) What was your parents’ or grandparents’ relationship to Jews from Eastern Europe?  
Any stories?
- 23) Did the relatives who immigrated to America or England stay in touch with the relatives who stayed?
- a) Letters from them?
  - b) Visits from them?
- 24) Emigration to America
- a) Date?
  - b) How arranged?
- 25) Any other information or memories. Everything is interesting.
- 26) Other people who you think should share their Oral Histories.
- a) People who live in America?
  - b) People who live in Germany?
  - c) Christian townspeople who still live in or are connected with the town or village?
- 27) Description of old photographs or documents or things of interest  
Photocopies or copies would be appreciated. Do not send any originals!

Thank you!

## Food and Dishes Questionnaire

Please write how often you ate each dish (“often,” “never,” “special occasions,” etc.)

Please add any special memories and recipe information.

The foods listed in this section were also eaten by Christians, but Jews prepared them with kosher recipes and ingredients. Please note if you ate these dishes in your home during the weekdays (W).

Also please note if you ate them on Shabbos (S).

1. noodle soup \_\_\_\_\_
2. barley soup \_\_\_\_\_
3. grünkern soup \_\_\_\_\_
4. sauerbraten with potato dumplings \_\_\_\_\_
5. meat (boiled beef) with white sauce. \_\_\_\_\_  
sauce ingredients: fat, flour, broth, horseradish \_\_\_\_\_
6. meat with horseradish \_\_\_\_\_
7. non-pork sausages \_\_\_\_\_
8. stuffed spleen \_\_\_\_\_
9. spätzle \_\_\_\_\_
10. vegetables with white sauce \_\_\_\_\_
11. sweet and sour red cabbage \_\_\_\_\_
12. lebkuchen \_\_\_\_\_
13. fish with sweet sauce and raisins. \_\_\_\_\_
14. karp \_\_\_\_\_
15. sweetbreads \_\_\_\_\_
16. goose fat \_\_\_\_\_
17. goose fat on bread \_\_\_\_\_
18. fried goose rinds (*gribenes*) \_\_\_\_\_
19. head cheese- made out of fat? \_\_\_\_\_
20. kalb- jellied calves’ feet \_\_\_\_\_
21. potato pancakes without onions \_\_\_\_\_
22. chicken \_\_\_\_\_

23. smoked meats \_\_\_\_\_
24. salami: \_\_\_\_\_
25. other meats \_\_\_\_\_
26. other fish \_\_\_\_\_
27. meatless meals: \_\_\_\_\_
28. bland food with no garlic \_\_\_\_\_
29. regional dish - kreplach \_\_\_\_\_
30. apple in "herring salad" \_\_\_\_\_
31. potatoes in clotted cheese \_\_\_\_\_
32. stuffed goose neck with chopped meat \_\_\_\_\_
33. goose \_\_\_\_\_
34. cake: bubuleh, lempleh (spelling ?) \_\_\_\_\_
35. sheet-cakes with plums and apples sliced on top. \_\_\_\_\_
36. nut cakes \_\_\_\_\_
37. crepe-like pancakes with apples on top \_\_\_\_\_
38. jellyrolls \_\_\_\_\_
39. stollen \_\_\_\_\_
40. wine creams- meringue, lemon cream, mocha cream \_\_\_\_\_
41. served to people when they were ill: bröcklein soup (egg drop soup with milk; roasted bread crumbs were sprinkled on top) \_\_\_\_\_

## Sabbath

1. Shabbesfrau: Did your family employ someone on Shabbos? What did you call that person? Was the employee a man or woman? What were his responsibilities?

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2. berches

Ingredients: \_\_\_\_\_

Was it braided? Was it decorated on top? Were there poppy seeds on top?

\_\_\_\_\_

Where was it baked? \_\_\_\_\_

The names and ingredients of the dishes below varied from place to place. Please tell me the information for your village or town. Also were the dishes eaten on Friday night or Saturday?

3. schalet: what were the ingredients? \_\_\_\_\_

Where was it cooked and when was it eaten? \_\_\_\_\_

4. gesetzt (Setting) soup: made with rice, bean, peas. \_\_\_\_\_

5. grünkern soup. What did it taste like? \_\_\_\_\_

6. kugel- noodle kugel (what were its ingredients) \_\_\_\_\_

7. bread pudding or noodle pudding \_\_\_\_\_

### **Holy Days and Festivals**

1. Rosh Hashanah - apple dipped in honey \_\_\_\_\_

not honey cake \_\_\_\_\_

2. Yom Kippur: breaking the fast with a light dairy meal \_\_\_\_\_

3. Sukkoth – cake topped with sliced plums \_\_\_\_\_

4. Hanukkah- no special foods. No potato latkes. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Purim

Pastrami \_\_\_\_\_

Haman figure cookie - called "Haman" \_\_\_\_\_

Like a gingerbread man- raisins for eyes and a dough noose around his neck \_\_\_\_\_

Or a figure stuffed with chopped raisins, prunes, and nuts \_\_\_\_\_

Not Hamantaschen as made in America today. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Passover

Erev Passover - corned beef \_\_\_\_\_

cake made out of nuts \_\_\_\_\_

mazzoklöße. Dumplings \_\_\_\_\_

mazzokaffee \_\_\_\_\_

7. Shavuot

raisin challah called koulets \_\_\_\_\_

a present for counting the Omer. Considered a cake. \_\_\_\_\_

Cheesecake \_\_\_\_\_