

## Questions to Consider When Viewing Video

1. How did life begin to change for the Zelczer family and for all of the Jews in Hungary in 1939?
2. In 1942 how did discrimination and prejudice by the authorities force the Zelczers to desecrate their Sabbath?
3. In 1944 how did the non-Jewish friend of the family offer to help the Zelczers? What was their response?
4. What were the conditions in the ghetto which the Jews endured for the next five to six weeks?
5. Why didn't the Jews rebel in the ghetto or at the time they were forced into the trains?
6. What happened when the people arrived at Auschwitz and the train cars were opened?
7. When the trains stopped and before the families were separated, what were the last words of Alex's father to his family?
8. In January, 1945, as the Germans started to evacuate the camp, what was the discussion among the sick prisoners in the infirmary?
9. What did Alex and his surviving siblings do after their arrival in their hometown after liberation?
10. After many years of silence about his experiences, why did Alex decide to "open up and talk" about his tragic years during the Holocaust?

# Holocaust Survivor

## Alex Zelczer

Filed on May 10, 2005



*"We had no idea we had arrived  
at the gates of hell."*

*- Alex Zelczer*

Face to Face

A Holocaust Education Program at  
Congregation Shaarey Tikvah  
Beachwood, Ohio

**Alex Zelczer was born in 1927 in Hungary. His parents owned a bakery, and the nine children in the family helped in the family business.**

**Life was good until 1939, when the Hungarian government started to copy the Nazi propaganda campaign. Flour was rationed, and Jewish bakers got very few rations. Of course, it was hard to run a bakery without flour!**

**Another time, in 1943, the police came and forced Alex's father to open the bakery and bake on the Sabbath, "just because they said so."**

**On the last day of Passover, 1944, one of his father's non-Jewish bakery customers offered to hide the Zelczer family from the Nazis on his farm. Alex's parents decided not to accept the offer. Several days later, the Hungarian government ordered all Jews to report to the Beregszász Ghetto. After five or six weeks in the ghetto, they were deported to Auschwitz/Birkenau on crowded cattle cars.**

**"We had no idea we had arrived at the gates of hell," he recalled. His father's last words to him were, "When this is over, make sure you go home. We're going to meet, all of us, at home." Within an hour or two, they were separated and Alex never saw his father or mother again.**

**After four or five weeks at Auschwitz/Birkenau, Alex was moved to Jaworzno, where he was assigned to build an electrical generating plant. The food was meager, and the prisoners were worked to exhaustion.**

**One day in early January, 1945, Alex was too weak to walk to work. Despite the fact that prisoners unable to work were sometimes killed, he reported to the infirmary. As the Russian front approached, the Nazis began to evacuate the camp and ordered the prisoners to join a death march. Alex and the other patients said they were too sick to march and remained in the camp. On January 26, 1945, they were liberated by the Russians.**

**Soon Alex decided to comply with his father's request to return home. With meager clothing and no possessions or identification, he set out trudging through the snow. He eventually arrived in his hometown, where a cousin nursed him back to health.**

**Of his parents and their nine children, only Alex and four of his siblings survived and came home. Together they reopened the bakery but realized that they did not feel comfortable in their hometown, where most of their neighbors had turned against them. They left town and made their way to the Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Germany.**

**Alex lived in a DP camp until 1947, when he was able to obtain a visa to the United States, a country that he loves very much. Alex urges his listeners to appreciate the freedoms of this great country and not take them for granted.**