

From the Testimony of Abraham Eckstein about the Selection upon Arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau

We couldn't take anything and the Germans, the SS people grabbed it away from us and they standing there with sticks and hitting left and right. The heads, wherever, they didn't care, but they was hitting everybody left and right. And as I am standing there next to my father and with my brother - I already didn't see my sister, I didn't see my...because they say "Frauen, frauen extra". The women separate, you know? So I didn't even have the time to give a kiss my mother or anything like that. I couldn't. There was nothing....And my father I see when we come, you know, there was a big reflected light there where they made the selection right and left. Right and left, so and one little SS had a gun and he was hitting people like this, with the gun. You know, right, left, right, left, right, left. So I see my father on the left - he run away that he shouldn't be hit and we made right and he made the left.

Q: They sent him to the left?

A: Yes, those the one who went right, they took them to work and those who went left already, they...that was straight into the gas chambers. In other words, they didn't see so much, more or less, they wanted the younger, the young ones to go to the right and the old ones eliminate, you know. But again, they were smart, they didn't want to have turmoil so those the one who was attached or young ones with the mother, whatever it is, so they let them go, they should go on the left, you know. And old ones on the right, but they tried to select them their way with many old ones to go on the left. We went on the right. Anybody who went those days...none of them came back. None of them came back, you know. They all went to the gas chamber and to the crematorium.

When we went through the selection so we had to start to move.

Q: But you didn't even realize that your father was going to the other side?

A: I didn't know those things. I didn't know where I am, what I am. I didn't know even if I'm in Auschwitz. What do I know - it was pitch-dark when we arrived there. Then started to get dawn. We had to run, young and old and as

we run we saw two big fires, cracking such a rings in the sky. Some of the people there was saying the "*vidui*". We thought that we going in the fire. My brother was crying: "What's going to happen to us?" I said: "Don't worry. Let's go. G-d is with us. And I'll never forget - it's a story in the "*Mikroos Gedolos*", in the Yiddish touch, a story in Yiddish where he is talking about Rabbi Akiva. He goes through at nighttime on a carriage with his bodyguard through woods, you know, and he sees again two gendarmes and a man between the two of them, hanging on both sides woods, you know? And they, and the man was black and they kept on hitting him and burning him. The story after it is not necessary to tell, but that story remind me when I went between those two fires. Why? Because they say that Rabbi Akiva talked, you know, that man called that rebbe, Rabbi Akiva, should come to him, that he didn't behave in this world and he's punished and he didn't give for his son the right education. So he pleaded with the rebbe that he should look for that son of his and give him a Jewish education and he should learn him *Ivrit* and he should say "*kaddish*" after him, etc., etc. That remind me very much this story that I am in the same situation, you know. That's the way I felt, but still it all...I was calm and I was walking and I said: "Whatever is going to happen, is going to happen. I am in it and I cannot do anymore."

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