

Sephardi Voices UK

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Marcelle
Forename:	Shamash
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Interviewee POB:	Unknown
Interviewee Occupation:	Housewife
Father's Occupation:	Unknown
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[00:00:00]

Recording an interview with Marcelle Shamash on the 26th of March 2010 in Kensington, London.

Yes, what do you want to know?

Can you tell me a bit about your childhood?

My childhood is a lot – a big thing. You know, I told you I have a grandfather who has got – who was a banker and he has, er, what did I say? I don't know, Eighty-one. Eighty-one. He has Eighty-one in – not in his house but in other house. Eighty-one was a sort of office-cum-café, somewhere where people could come and sit with him and talk to him. So if – and if they want to know more about anything, they can – they know that there are people coming there and they would hear news, you know, you know. And he had, er, *ada* –

Diwan ?

La la, No, no. *Ada* a secretary, had, er, somebody at the guarding on – at –

At the door?

At the door. And a lady who makes tea, coffee, everything for the people who are coming. And he has somebody also who do things for him, you know, he want to send him there, there, that's it. You know, it was – we lived in – outside – on the river. And we used to go to – for – back from school there and my father would come and take us to the house, to our house. [00:02:06] Sometimes, sometimes when *ada* the children, my brothers, have a whole week in school but the ladies have Wednesday half, so I come there and the men who I told you about, the one who have, er, who help my grandfather used to take me home. You know, he was 6', 7' or [laughs] very, very big, very tall, very heavy, very *ada* and he used to walk behind me a bit. So one day he saw somebody running after me. I used to have people running after me and that's why they don't let me on my own. Yeah. So how – he didn't know, the man on the

bicycle didn't know that I have somebody with me. He was coming near me on the bicycle and he came, that man came and he made the bicycle a hundred pieces.

[Both laugh] He beat him up or he just smashed his bicycle?

La, No, not he beat him up. He said don't – never come near her, any time, any more.

Right. So a girl on her own, or a Jewish girl, was this?

La la la, no I was different because they said that I was beautiful there. I don't know. I don't want to say that. They said that and they had people after me.

They were harassing you in the street?

Harassing, harassing me. But my father wouldn't let me one minute on my own, not one minute.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because you were the only girl, you had three – two brothers.

Yeah, I had two brothers, yeah.

Right, yeah. And tell me about your school. [00:04:07]

My school, I was always the first in school. And, you know, I had, er, the teachers when they – when I was –

Which school was it?

Alliance Israélite Universelle. It's, er, Khedouri.

The Laura Khedouri School?

The Laura Khedouri School.

For girls?

For girls. And they have Laura – not Laura, they have the school for boys. And the boys and the girls are near each other. You know, I was very good in school. One day my teacher was – didn't come, she was sick, and, head teacher also didn't come. It was – she was sick. So the head teacher, other teacher – other school, of the boys' school came in to take us, to ask us things. He ask us some question in maths. He said 'I went to buy this, that *ada* for my, that for my *ada*' And I all – when he was saying it I already knew –

Knew the answer.

[Both laugh] He said, how much did I spend? I said, I did like that [both laugh]. And I told him, this much, huh. He was flabbergasted. And then *ada* – and then something else and they, all this time I was answering him. I did even told my brother – my father about it. [00:06:01] One day, long time afterwards, he met the teacher, this teacher and he said, do you know, I was in school and I saw your daughter, she's a wonderful *ada*. she's really intelligent [both laugh]. And my father came to me and he say, why didn't you tell me? I said, what for?

[Both laugh] But girls in those days, what kind of future did they have?

You know, in my time they went to *ada* – they went to – after they, er, we finish, we made – *ada brevet élémentaire*, and we made a – *ada* like GCE –

GCSE, like –

In Arabic and, er, we did that. This, er, there is no more in this, to teach us there in our school. All of the girls went to Shamash School.

Right. So you came to the end of the Alliance Israélite and you went to a sort of finishing –

La, Shamash. Well, a Shamash school. The men, the head of the school, he was an Englishman.

Of Shamash?

Of Shamash. And he was very friendly with my father. Actually he was Jewish and he used to come to us every – every Friday, he used to have dinner with us [laughs] and he told my father, you know, I am sorry, I think your – *ada* she won't be happy in my – in your school because she [laughs] – again she is beautiful.

[Both laugh] She's too beautiful.

Yeah. And I'm afraid the children will, er, the boys will be, *ada* –

Will be distracted? [00:08:05]

Not distracted but will – they will give her bad time, you know.

Ah, okay. And this was a mixed school? Boys and girls together or –

Well, not at the beginning, no. At the end only, the last few –

The last year or so, yeah.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

And this was in the '30s, we're talking about? What time of – what period of time? 193 – the end of –

dhalik ma 'af. I don't know. Thirties, forties [laughs].

You were born in 1921.

Yeah.

So you would have been, um, what, sixteen.

Yeah, like that. Like that.

Sixteen.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

So it would have been 1937.

Yeah, yeah.

Something like that.

Huh?

1937, it would have been, yeah.

Anyway, anyway, I stayed *ada* I didn't go. But in our school the headmistress said she will bring somebody to teach us anything we want and it would not be in a school, it would be outside, in the, you know they have a big room for, um, you can use the big room there. You know? Somebody have – a French lady came and she taught us about music. You know, she, er, music. She brought all sorts of, er, *ada, shismu, qawanat* ?

Records?

Records. And she taught us everything and we were – anything I know about music, about *ada*, it's from that – I learn it from that. And she taught about, er, you know, anything which is a bit high. [00:10:02]

Yes. Yes, sort of cultural.

Cultural. Eh, cultural. So we learn anything that cultural, we know, we learned from –

Did you consider yourselves closer to Western culture or Arabic culture or what?

I did cons – er, I didn't consider myself anything. I am – I was just like very open and very – yeah.

And what kind of music, for instance, did you listen to?

Listen. Everything *ada* –

Yeah.

Give me, tell me, huh?

I mean sort of English music or was it Arabic music or sing it – er, folk music, classical music?

Classical music, from the beginning till the end. Till, *yaanu* from the beginning, French, German, Wagner, any – everything, everything.

So it was all the classical composers.

Classical composer. And, you know, anything I know about it, it's from that. Yeah.

Yeah. And what about Arabic music? Did you listen to Arabic music?

Yeah, but because everywhere I go [laughs] –

They play their –

They play Arabic, yeah, yeah.

Yeah. And what about books? What sort of books did you read?

French, mostly. Because I wasn't good in English. I wasn't actually very, very good, so, you know how I did GC, GC ? Your cousin, Hilda, was doing her GC, GEC, and at the time, nine died.

Ah, wait. Wait, we're going forward now. So that's many years later. [00:12:02]

Many years later, yeah.

Many years later when you're already married.

Married, yeah. Yeah.

Yes. And can we just go back though to your schooldays? What kind of prospects did you have? I mean did you see yourself working or going to university?

Nothing. Nothing. At the time I didn't feel anything. No prospect, nothing. You know –

Was that general? I mean all the Jewish girls, they were expected to get married?

Married, yeah, that's it. And some – but some people who went to *ada* – they got to work as well. They got works. But I didn't go, you know, and my father insisted that I learn to sew.

[Both laugh] Very practical.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. [Background noise] Sorry.

Okay, we need to – can we just go back and talk about your house? You said it was on a river.

Yeah.

What did it look like?

Its all *ada* it's open. It's open, it's not, er, *ada* –

You mean it had a courtyard?

Courtyard in the middle. And it has even a garden [laughs].

It had a garden in the middle, so it must have been very big.

Hmm, no, no, not – yeah.

And who lived there? Did you live with your gran, er, with your –

Parents.

With your parents?

Yeah.

Just the –

Just the parents.

Just the parents.

And my brothers.

And your brothers. And you had servants?

Of course. You know, we had a servant called Maryam. Maryam, her mother was a servant to my grandmother.

[Both laugh] Amazing. Was she a Jewish woman?

She's Jewish woman.

All the servants were Jews?

Huh?

The servants were Jews?

Yeah, at the time. You know, when her mother was er to my grandmother, she used to bring her and work with her. [00:14:08] And when my mother got married, she took her as a – she became her servant. And this servant became just like a mother to us all.

Amazing. Like a nanny?

Huh?

She was like a nanny?

Like a na– everything, you know, everything. She does everything for us, huh. You know, I used to go to school, my mother used to do a very nice – we used to – to wear all same thing, *yaanu*.

Yeah, a uniform?

A uniform. But usually my mother used to do it at – in – because in the school there is a place where there are – they sew. There is a big place maybe –

Like a workshop?

Workshop, yeah. And she used to do my dress there. And, you know, all my class would wait until they saw my dress [both laugh] so they will copy it.

[Both laugh] Copy it. That's terrific.

And it was usually navy blue. And it has white collar and white here [demonstrates]. Every single day, this Maryam will take all this and she will er, she will put a new one, a clean one, and the next day it will be another clean one, yeah. So I was always tiptop at school.

Beautifully turned out.

Beautifully turned out. And one day even the teacher called me in the er in a room and she said, you know, I want you just be – just as good as Marcelle. [00:16:02] [Both laugh] You know. Just as clean as her.

[Both laugh] Did some of them look very dirty and –

Huh?

They looked a bit shabby?

[Both talking at once] They looked – well, they don't care about *ada* [both laugh]. So this is what my – *ada* – you said my youth, this is what my youth, I was top, top, top every time.

Right. And how many in your class? How many people?

Maybe thirty, more than – forty, something like, yeah.

Forty, forty in the class.

Hmm.

And I heard there was a system that if you were very, very good you skipped a class.

I skipped a class. And do you know what they do? Your auntie Renée was [laughs] higher than me [laughs]. They used – teacher who used to call me [laughs] to their *ada* to their [laughs] – to their classes, so that they will – they ask me question and either math or anything and I answer them. Imagine they ask, they call me the middle of the lesson, *ada* –

To go and tell the older classes?

To go – older, old classes. Actually [both laugh] afterwards really I thought it's very, very bad to be [laughs] I am younger than her [laughs] better than her [laughs]. She left.

[Laughs] Oh, my goodness [both laugh]. I'm surprised she spoke to you after that.

La, la, she was my good – the – only my good friend. She Renée, my good friend. You know, when I was young she used to take me if there is a wedding, let us say, I was young like ten years old, like that and I want to do my hair, she used to take me to the hairdresser, her. [00:18:02] She did everything toward me, yeah.

Yeah. That's wonderful.

You know, when we were all the time together, your aunties and myself, all the time together.

Did they live nearby?

We – next door to us.

Next door.

Yeah, yeah. We lived –

The family lived very close by together?

Together. Huh?

Together, yeah.

They told you that my – the – their – my – our mothers are *Khawatin*.

Yeah, yeah, that's right. Well, I'll just explain. They were both called Khatun and so the plural of Khatun is [attempts to pronounce].

[Marcelle] *Khawatin*.

Khawatin. That means – khatuns have left. The Khatuns.

[Both laugh] The *Khatuns*, yeah.

Khawatin [laughs].

You know, my mother, her name was *Khatun* and her grandmother was – her name also was *khatun*. And they were next door to each other and they used to do everything together, go walking, go playing, [laughs] go visiting, everything together. So one day I came, I – we had a Muslim er, what is it? A gardener. And I said, has my mother – is she here? She said, '*la, khawatin talawu*'

That means they've left?

They left. *Khawatin* –

The khatuns, the khatuns have left [both laugh]. Very good. And what was your relationship with the Muslims, would you say?

Fabulous, fabulous. But not at the beginning, when I was young. You know, [laughs] you know, I had my nose up like that a bit. I used to go – I have to go – to go home, I have to walk on the, you know, on the road, on the pavement. [00:20:04] *La, la. Ada–* on the – there you see, *er*

Yeah. No, no, no, when you walked on the road?

On the road, you see, on the road.

On the path?

La not path. There is *ada*

A wall?

Like –but I –

Bridge?

No, no.

[Laughs] Sorry.

Promenade.

Oh, on the promenade.

On the promenade.

Yeah, yeah. Along the river.

Along the river, the promenade, huh. And there was people, Muslim people, and they were – one was, one family all *ada* er ladies, young ladies, so [laughs] when I used to walk there in front of them I was always afraid. They said, *ada* they said, they started telling me, er, then *alm'a anfishe* with er the nose.

And you'd have your nose up in the air.

Yushem alhawa like that, which is –

It was your breathing the wind or something?

La, la, my nose which –

Oh, in the wind.

La, er. My nose breathing, breathing, breathing the wind. Then I hear they used to say that's how I am, yeah, about me, they used like, er, they don't like me. What do they do when they don't like somebody?

They insult you?

Insult me. They insult me [laughs].

Okay. What, just bec – but you were a stranger to them? You were just walking past?

Walking. *La*, not a stranger but they know that I live a bit further down the road, yeah.

Yeah, so as if to say, who do you think you are, with your nose –

*La, la, not like that because ēk, they don't like me because my nose was up like that. [00:22:05]
le nez est retroussé. [laughs].*

Oh, I see, right, yeah, it's just the way you looked?

Yeah, yeah. le nez est retroussé.

Not that you thought you were better or anything like that, just that you looked different.

I looked like that, yeah. I looked – le nez est retroussé. But I [laughs] – you see, French, English, I don't remember anything.

Yeah. No, no, you remember very well. So, um, but your relationship with the Muslims, Muslim neighbours, was good?

Very good. They love you, they used to love me. They loved me. And my best friend was Muslims.

Yeah. But they were not school friends?

No. But I didn't have Muslim friends, school. It was all Jews. Yeah.

Right, okay. And tell me about your grandfather, what happened.

My grandfather –

No, sorry, your – yeah, your grandfather.

Yeah, what happened.

Who was murdered.

Uh-huh. You know what, my grandfather was a banker and he used to give money to people. If they won't, er, they won't pay at the time, they used to give him either land or house or something or other, huh, or a garden. And he had so many gardens, so many places. Well, you know, he used to take us to the garden with him to see the people there. They didn't know what to do for us when we go on the – when we were young I mean, near nine years, ten years, like that, eight years, huh. They cut one of the date –

Palms?

And there is inside something *ada* very nice to eat. [00:24:00] And the other one will go and make some yogurt and, er, for us. They don't know what to do.

These are the customers of the bank?

La. Huh?

No?

The customers of the bank.

The customers of the bank.

Yeah. You know, they used to call *ma'azbi*, my – they used to call my grandfather *ma'azbi* and my – my top one, my – *shismu*

My mast – er...

Master, master.

Master.

Yeah, my master. My master is here, so *ma'azbi* they call it in Arabic. Yeah. So, you know, we used to go to the garden and to the orchard, let us say. All sorts of food. Yeah, we take fruits and we go home.

Yeah, yeah. So you just helped yourself?

Help – they give it to us, not us. Not us, [overtalking].

Yeah, they allowed you to help yourselves.

They bring er and they send it to us, yeah.

Right, right, sort of they were so grateful.

Yeah, grateful.

So what happened, then, when –

Ah. One of the thing, it was just like becoming better, the place. It not –

Yeah, the area where –

The area where my grandfather –

Where the diwan was.

He has a farm. It became very, very good. You know, people are living there.

Right. They wanted to make it residential?

Residential. So my grandfather told them that he wants the place but he gave them some time. And this –

So the people who were living there, the tenants –

Yeah, the tenants.

He told them, I want it back.

Back, he want it back.

Yeah. But you've got some time to find a new place.

Yeah, to find a new place. And one of their children was a bit, er, was –

Disturbed?

Disturbed. He came and killed my father, er, grandfather.

He came and killed him. How did he kill him? [00:26:01]

Huh? I don't know –

[Both talking at once] With a knife? He stabbed him?

With a knife, with stab him. He know he was coming down from the – from in the middle of Baghdad to the house and on – near the house, he stabbed him.

Gosh. And were you with him at the time?

No, no, no. No, [overtalking].

Nobody saw it happen?

No, no, not nobody saw it. But he had somebody with him, he saw it. Yeah.

And you were about ten at the time?

Maybe, yes, even.

Yeah. And what happened – I mean what happened? Was there a court case? Were – was he arrested?

Court case and, you know, because we're Jews they wouldn't kill him. They wouldn't – no, they wouldn't –

So the penalty for murder would have been death.

Death. But they wouldn't kill him and, you know, we have a friend who was – who lives near us, he was with the King, he was –

Friendly with the King?

Not friendly. He works with, and he meet, er King.

He worked for the King?

For the King. And my mother went to see him.

King Faisal, was this?

Huh?

King Faisal?

Faisal, yeah. My mother went to see him and because we were neighbours and she ask him that he will do his utmost to have him killed, um, but he didn't – he couldn't do anything because we were Jews.

Because you were Jews.

Jews, yeah.

So the law didn't apply in the case of Jews.

I don't think so. It wasn't –

Yeah. No. And do you know what happened to the murderer in the end?

No. He – they put him in jail. We didn't care afterwards. Yeah.

Yeah. So he wasn't, you know, and there was no blood money paid or anything like that? No.

Nothing, nothing, nothing like that.

[Both talking at once] No, nothing like that. So, um, that's interesting. And that must have been a big shock for the family. [00:28:02]

[Marcelle] *Oui, oui, oui, oui, oui, oui, oui, oui.*

'Cos it was your mother's father.

Very – *oui, oui, oui*, very big shock because my grandfather used to like us very, very much, you know. And he used to – when he used to come from the office he used to come straight to our house and he used to play with us [laughs] *trick-truck* and things like that, you know. Because we were good children and we're all of us very intelligent, like your father, huh [both laugh]. And my brother, older than myself, he used to be very, very happy with us.

Yeah. And he used to treat you like adults?

Adults, yeah. Anyway.

And then you were growing up towards the end of the '30s and did you then think about getting married or –

You know, actually er, your grandmother had Naim, her brother, and he used to come to – we used to be all together, together, and you will – Elias Sofer, He was also –

He was another cousin? Yeah.

Another nephew, Naim.

Nephew, okay. So it was very common for cousins to marry.

[Marcelle] *La, la, la, la.*

No.

It's not a cousin. He's not a cousin for – of me.

Oh, he wasn't a cousin, sorry.

No, he was a different family completely. But he was the brother of my other auntie. Yeah. Your father – your grandfather was my mother's uncle.

Right. So you knew Naim and [both laugh] – sorry.

[Both laugh] What?

Yeah, yeah. So at what age did you decide to get married? [00:30:03]

It's not in my hand. It wasn't in my hand. It was in my father's hand [laughs].

Ah, was it your father who – er, your father decided when you would get married? Or –

La, la. People are asking, asking for my hand. And –

How old were you then?

Er, nineteen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty. And my father had refused without even telling me. There was one which I liked, not very much [both laugh]. Not I like, not much, no, which I –

You liked the look of him?

Not the look. Yeah, I thought maybe he would be okay because he is – he was always – he was away in school, not in Baghdad, he was in Europe. Yeah, he was a bit, er –

Yeah. Yeah, he was a bit more Western?

Western, yeah.

That's what appealed to you, yeah.

So my father didn't tell me. At the end when I heard about it, that he wouldn't tell me, I said, why didn't you tell me? Huh.

Okay.

You know, with Naim, with my husband, he was all the time with us. And with – because he was brother of your grandmother, and we started, well, you know, I was so shy, all my life. I got – when I got engaged I didn't even know his face, I was so shy.

Really?

Really and truly. I didn't look like that. I didn't look –

You didn't even look at him, yeah.

Not *hek* properly, no.

[Both laugh] But you knew him beforehand?

Yeah. Not only I knew him, I used to like him and he used to like me.

Right.

And, you know, actually your aunties, your mother's brother, er, sisters, were very unhappy, you see, you know, he used to go, let's say, for – to Beirut and he used to bring something for me. [00:32:16] And they were, why for only for her? [Both laugh] But I didn't know about that. Later, he told me. He told me I get – I got all sorts of, er, I was not happy. I was afraid to show them that I get – I care for you.

[Both laugh] Right, so it was a bit of a love match between you.

Yeah, yeah.

And was this unusual?

Huh?

In your circle, was it unusual?

La, la, it's not unusual. No. There happen in some –

It did happen, yeah.

Very little, but not er –

But mainly the marriages were arranged, weren't they?

Yeah, at – at the time, yeah. But not for us, no. So – but at the time there was a war, the big war.

Yeah, 1939, the Second World War.

Yeah. And he was in – he was taken to do his service.

Military service.

Military service. And when he finished his military service his parent shipped him [laughs] to India.

Ah, okay. So when he finished his military service –

Yeah, because –

In the Iraqi Army.

In the Iraqi Army, and the German was near Baghdad, [overtalking], near Baghdad. They send him to India.

And was this around the time of the Rashid Ali? Um, no?

La, la.

No, no. This was before?

Before. They sent him to India. [00:34:00] And at the time when he asked for my hand, I didn't accept. I said, why didn't – when he go, he went to India, he didn't tell anyway, he didn't tell me [both laugh]. So my father started telling me, no, because they were afraid to say anything, they had a – yeah.

Right. He was sent to India for his own safety?

Safety, yeah.

Because they didn't want him to –

You know, at the end in India he started working and he was doing well and he thought of marriage. So he er, wrote to his father. He said, either this girl, or no more, or no marriage [both laugh]. So my – his father sent for my father to ask him. My father said, because he is in India and there is a war, I don't want to decide now, I don't think, no, there is no, nothing, because I am afraid that it might not be. So –

And you were in Baghdad at the time?

I was at the time in Baghdad.

Yeah, yeah, so this was around 1940?

Huh?

1940?

At the time, huh?

What year was this?

That – no, you are asking me about –

Yeah. No. But in the war, anyway. In the war, in the war.

Now I am forgetting everything.

[Both laugh] Not to worry. And your brother, my father, had already gone to study in England.

In England. Yeah.

And what were your feelings about, you know, being separated from –

We – I am telling you, it was hopeless, hopeless. The whole time we were sending telegram, send – and other was sending back telegram, I am okay [laughs].

Yeah, yeah, you were very worried. [00:36:02]

We were very, very, very, very worried. You can't imagine how worried we were. And you –

So this was wartime and – yeah.

You know what, and during the war he went – before the war he went to see his uncles in – they had a farm in south of France. The south of France, he went to see, and the war started and he couldn't go back.

He was trapped.

Trapped. He couldn't go back to England. So until he went there, we were sort of life we had.

Did you feel that you were safer in Baghdad during the war or do you think he was safer in England?

La, we wanted him – we didn't want him to be in France, we wanted him to be in London, so we tried everything for him, asking him, go to London, to – go back, go back, go back. And do you know what happened to my uncles?

What?

They were in the south of France. My – one uncle was – he got in – he studied in England and became doctor and he finished the doctor and he went to south of France so that he can take a boat and come back to Baghdad at the time. And that's how Maurice went with him, to the south of France. At the end, instead of getting – to come to the south of – to Baghdad, he couldn't find a ship and he stayed in –

In France?

In France. When the German went to France, went in the south, to the south of France, they took everybody and put them in a concentration camp in Paris, near Paris.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, to Drancy.

Huh?

They took them to Drancy, the – yeah, yeah, go on, yes.

Yeah, near Paris. So when the – when the English and the American came and took Paris, they opened the concentration camp and they let everybody out. [00:38:15] At the time, the French made another – against, you know, on – oh, er, they came back for twenty-four hours and they saw everybody in the street and they kill him. They killed him.

They killed him, yeah.

Two of my uncles were killed there. You know, they killed everybody.

They were shot.

They were shot.

They were shot in the street.

In the street. [Both talking at once] It only for twenty-four hour –

[Both talking at once] And one was deported to Auschwitz, wasn't he?

No, no, no.

No?

No, no, no.

No, that's interesting.

Both of them were in France.

Both of them were in France.

In France and –

And they were shot.

You know, actually when we heard about it, my mother had her hair, it became white immediately.

Yes. She lost two brothers.

Two brothers. And one was a very good doctor and the other one was *ingénieur agricole*, you know.

Gosh. Going back to the war, the middle of the war, the Rashid Ali coup, were you aware of that at the time, and the Farhud? Do you have any memories of the Farhud?

Of course, of course. We were at home and, you know, the er, the English were taken away. They took the English out and er, and Rashid Ali became master and they were against the Jews. And we had some farmers in the street there, they came to our house. You know what? After Rashid Ali, we were afraid to be at home. [00:40:00] There was, er, neighbour, there was a neighbour, a doctor, a very well-known doctor, and he was actually with the German. He was – he liked German. But as our neighbours, he accepted us to be – to stay with him.

Right. So you moved in with your Arab neighbour?

Neighbour, a doctor. And he was a Nazi. He was a Nazi.

He was a Nazi. How interesting.

But he – but, you know, we're neighbours for a long, long time and they know us and they know everything about us, so accepted us. Believe me, I can see the lady doing the beds herself for us.

Yeah, fantastic. So during the Rashid Ali [overtalking].

La, [overtalking], when we were there, these men – people had, Arab came into our house. You know, they came into our house, haha, how do we went to the – this neighbour? Because we had – in our house we had two doors, one door on one street and the other door on the other street [laughs]. When he – they came to on one door, we went to the other door and we went to our neighbours.

So what, the people – was it the mob were – the people came to take you or attack you, or what?

Yeah, to attack us. To attack us, yeah.

What did they look like, the attackers? Did you see them?

Like *ada* very, very, *rammaat*.

Like the rabble?

Rabble, rabble. The rabble.

Yeah, the rabble in the street. Were they armed?

I, we don't know what they were, did. *Nah 'nah*, they came in one *ada*, and *nah'nah* we went to the other.

So you went out the back door?

Not the back door, the other – because there is another er, you know, our house was in middle of two streets.

Okay, yeah, I'm with you.

Yeah. And we went to er, and we went to our neighbour.

To the neighbour, right.

Neighbour. And they went in and they brought every – they took everything, all –

So the rioters or the attackers?

Everything. Huh?

They broke in to your house. [00:42:09]

House, and they took everything.

They took everything.

All the furniture. Next door, the other side of the – our neighbours, they were Jews, and they had a friend, he came to look for them because he was afraid that they were – because everywhere they were against the Jews, the er. There, you know, actually the lady who used to take care of my grandfather, to make tea and coffee, her and her children, they were killed.

[Gasps] Gosh.

You know.

This was Maryam? No.

Huh?

Maryam ?

La, la, la. No, no, no.

No, not Maryam, somebody else.

La, la. Ay old– when I was eight and [overtalking].

Right, yeah, you're talking about, yeah.

Yeah, she was, you know. She was.

She was killed and all her family?

Huh?

Her family was –

Her family as all. You know, er, they had, you know, our neighbour, the Jews neighbour at the other side, they have a friend, a Muslim friend who was afraid that they might get hurt, so he came to look for them. And they told him ‘ah, look, it’s *bet* Ezra Bikhor getting *ada*, ’ getting, er, burgled and other –

Yeah, looters.

So looted, so he *ada*– with a gun, he –

He took a gun.

La, la, he took a gun and he –

He frightened them away?

[Marcelle] *La, la*.

No?

He shot – he shoot one. One.

Yeah, he shot one shot.

Shot one shot and the people threw everything on the streets [laughs].

On the floor.

[Both laugh] And ran away. And ran away. So they brought everything down again, ada and put it in the house [laughs].

So they took all your stuff which they were going to steal.

To take.

They put it all back again.

[Laughs] We were afraid, they throw it in the street and run away. **[00:44:10]**

[Both laugh] And meanwhile, you were sheltering in the other house.

Yeah.

And you waited for everything to die down?

Yeah, to die down and –

[Both talking at once] And you moved back?

Actually at the end of this, all this trouble, it died down because we were, you know what, the British came back, they stayed be – outside.

They were outside Baghdad.

Outside one day. And for this, one day outside, this happened.

Yeah, one day. Do you know of many people who were killed, apart from the lady who made the coffee and her family?

I – no, no. Before, before, every now and then somebody will be killed.

Yeah. You mean before the riot, before the –

Yeah, before this –

The Farhud.

Huh?

Before the Farhud?

Farhud, yeah. And one of them was my – was a cousin of my father. And my father was – this is after, when Naim was a member of parliament. And, you know, this is after, not at the time, you know.

Not at the time, no, that's after, okay.

No, after, after they – because I mean Naim was member of parliament already and he ask *ada* the prime minister in the – in the thing –

In the parliament?

In the parliament. He said, why you are killing now Jews, huh? He said, don't ask me, ask Israel. You know. They said Israel was making that, killing people here, so that the people will go.

Go and leave?

Would leave.

This is much later, after Israel was founded.

Oh, much later, much later, yeah.

Right, right.

Yeah. [00:46:01]

Going back to the time when you got married, then. What sort of wedding did you have?

You know, actually I had to go to – because Naim didn't come to Baghdad, he's, you know, after –

He was in India?

La, in India. He used to write to me but my father wouldn't accept. He used to read the [laughs] – because he wasn't, er, he wasn't accepting to get engaged, yeah. He used to read what he was saying and he used to [laughs] answer him back.

[Both laugh] So he never passed the letters on to you?

No, no, not to me, no, because he was afraid that I will be unhappy [both laugh]. You know, at the end, Naim told him, if you want me to come, I will come, whatever you say, I will do. But my father started thinking, if he comes and he will be taken to the, er –

The army?

To the army, it's not good for me as well. It will be *ada*, So he told him that if you can find, er, you can get some *ada* visas, we'll accept. And for a year, huh [clears throat].

Visas for you to go?

To – for me, for him and for my mother.

To go to India?

To India. [Clears throat] *ada*, I can't hear, and now I am tired.

You're tired. Shall we have a break?

[Marcelle] *Laqiki*

Let's have a break.

Huh? We'll have tea?

Yeah, we'll have tea.

[Sharon] Whatever you want.

Pause.

[Sharon] Okay. You'll see [inaud].

Yeah, four. You were saying, Auntie, that you went to India, you and Naim and your parents.

[00:48:01]

No, not my parents, my mother only –

Only your mother.

You know, for a year he couldn't get any visa.

Visa, to go back to Iraq?

No, no.

No? To –

To go to – a visa for us, he couldn't get. And even the *ada*, the Iraqi minister there, the ambassador, tried hard. He couldn't *ada* do because at the time the English didn't want any family, a whole family, to go. So they accepted my mother only and me. Yeah.

And then what happened? How did you end up getting married?

Ah, so he got the visa. Once he got the visa, we are – we started thinking about *ada*, about engagement. We got eng – [clears throat]. My – who will engage me, the girl, er, the father of Naim. So he has to go to tell the rabbi, the that he wants to engage me for Naim.

So wait a minute, this was in Baghdad?

In Baghdad, yeah.

The – Naim's father had to go the rabbi.

Rabbi, tell him that he wants to – that he had a – engage me for – instead of Naim.

So it was like a sort of special ceremony, or what?

La. He has to sign.

Right, like a contract?

The rabbi has to accept. But he didn't go. He sent his son to – Sasson was here, he send the son to see the rabbi. So this rabbi, he *ada* he told him, please don't talk and tell anybody now because it's not done yet. [00:50:00] He couldn't carry it in his *ada*.

He couldn't keep a secret?

He couldn't keep a secret. He used to go and say, oh, there'll be a big, big, big, er, *ada*, er...

Wedding?

Not wedding, a big, er, *schkoun* ? *qabl* the wedding ?

A big henna?

[Marcelle] *La*.

No, a big engagement party?

Engagement. There will be a big, big engagement soon. There will be a big, big engagement soon [both laugh]. So they tried hard to get him to say who, so he couldn't though, so okay, [inaudible] and he told everybody, yeah. So I started having telephone calls from people. They were telling me, why, you're – this is a bad man, he has got a son there in –

Really?

Honest [both laugh]. Huh. He has got a son there. Because they want me to be have either their – for their son or themselves.

Yeah, they want you for their son.

Yeah. Er, he is a very bad man, he has got a son there, he has got *ada*. I went to my father, I was crying, I said this is what they said. He said, from now on, you don't have to – you mustn't

take the phone and you must – in the street, they called, *ada*, they stopped me and they talked to me. Also I am like that. They are *ada* they want to marry me, they want to *ada*. So my father said, no more. I had to go – to wear an *aba*.

Really?

Oh, yes.

So you had to wear a veil?

No, no, *aba*, *aba*, like that, so that they would not see me.

So they wouldn't recognise you.

Recognise me. And I know I mustn't take phone call at all. So at the end, we make the engagement because we had a visa. [00:52:05] They got my mother a visa and me and we went, we started to think about going, but no, no, aeroplanes. There is nothing, nothing, nothing.

No planes.

No planes. I stayed in Baghdad, I don't know how long why I couldn't get a place. So I had a cousin in Basra. She is with, um, I forgot the name. The Englishman there, and they have a sort of, um, they can do things with –

A consul?

Huh?

Consul?

Not consul, no. Somebody who can deal with aeroplanes. The name I forgot. He was very well-known in Baghdad, the name of this man. And she is – her husband was with him, he works with him, so they said, oh, you go there in Basra and try and maybe they will do something. At the end we had to – they found a place that I have to go only with my – like that, no, no, no –

No luggage?

None. Huh?

Just what you were wearing?

No luggage at all. No, just what I was – I am wearing. Yeah. And we accepted. So we went [laughs]. Huh.

So you flew to India?

I flew to India. But not to Ind – er, to India, to Karachi, because of – to – it was Karachi, to – yeah. You know, I'm – my father in law, [laughs] when he thought that we were ladies only were *ada*, were – was travelling, he said he doesn't want me to be like that. [00:54:13] He had a friend who – who, er, [laughs] had a big, big name, of Indian name. *Ada*, they distribute ice for all Baghdad. You know, at the time they didn't have fridge. They distribute ice. And to all Baghdad, everyone has got his ice from this man. They are very, very big man. He called him and he said, do you have people there? He said, yes, of course, my *ada*. He said, my *ada*, I am going away on my own with my mother and he want me to – he want a letter from him to the man there. So he gave me the letter. I came – because Naim doesn't know when I will be there. It's all of a sudden I got a place on there. I – we were staying in a hotel, so I phoned them. I had the number of their telephone. I phoned them, I said we are here in the hotel and we have a letter to *ada*, for you. They came and they read the letter and they made a big fuss of us [laughs]. They wanted to take us, they wanted to do this, they wanted to do that. We said, we know, until Naim will come, we'll do everything with you. But every day they used to look after us, you know. So when we arrived, we phoned Naim and we said we are here.

[00:56:00] So until he got a place in the train and he came for two nights on the train, he came, ah, with us, and he started taking care of us. We don't do anything. So I told him about this, er, these people, and he wanted to leave without seeing them. I said, no, we have to see them. So we went, both of us, to their office and we saw them and they were very happy and were very polite to us and things like that. So we went, er, I went with Naim to there. You know why I am telling you this story? Because on our way back to go to Baghdad, we were on the boat and the boat *ada*, stopped in Karachi. And while we were there, there was a, you know, while we were on the boat, we brought our things, there was somebody there, a Jew from Iraq. *Ada*, He was – *ada* friend – he's a brother of some very good friend of ours but he didn't – but we didn't know what is all about him. Only we said a friend. So [clears throat] it turn out that he was – they want him, he did something wrong and they want him to be *ada*. I don't know what he did. They are asking him to go to Baghdad for the – to get – I don't know what he – to prison or something or other. And we didn't know anything, only he's a Jew from our friends and his brother or our friends. [00:58:00] At night while we were sleeping he came *ada*, he took the thing.

The Jew?

Ada, this Jew. Naim was hanging his, er, near the window. He came and took everything in the pocket of Naim.

So he stole?

He stole.

He stole everything?

He stole everything. And he took *ada*, you know, on the boat there were gun, gunners, because it was, er...

Wartime?

Wartime. Gunners. He stole something off the gunners and he went out [both laugh]. And he went out and he put a woman's –

He disguised himself?

Disguised himself. And what in Naim's *ada*, you know, we went out from India, we had some jewellery, we had something with us, huh, that we can – they give us a permit to take it out. But then it go – went, so we can't – we can't take the jewellery.

You couldn't take the jewellery with you, yeah.

What would we do, we don't know. So I said, Naim, we'll ring the people.

The ice people?

The ice people. We'll ring the people. They came in and they said, don't – told them, don't worry, we are responsible. This is *ada*, They have it, they have the copy in –

Yeah, of the permit?

Permit, in Bombay, and we'll send it to you [both laugh]. So we could take it back [both laugh]. So, you know, something from other, I think.

Yeah, you never know.

No, you never know.

When it could come in handy to have these connections.

Handy. So we could take our jewellery and they gave us – we could take it.

Yeah. What a story. [01:00:03] So you went back to Baghdad.

We went back to Baghdad.

And you got married.

[Marcelle] *La, la.*

No, you were already married.

We got married in – you know, at the time it was wartime and they wouldn't accept – only forty-nine people.

Yeah. But where was this?

Huh?

Where?

In Bombay.

In Bombay.

Forty-nine people. Even they sent somebody from the government to count them.

That's the guests, forty-nine guests?

The guests, forty-nine guests.

No more than forty-nine? Not even fifty guests?

Not even fifty. Forty-nine.

Right. Including the bride and groom?

Including everybody [both laugh]. So we didn't have a big wedding. Yeah. We have only the family.

Only the family. And was it – it was a Jewish religious ceremony?

Of course, very religious.

Was the rabbi from Bombay? Or did you –

Yeah, Bombay. You know, er, do you know, um, who is here? I've forgotten.

And did you have a henna before? Did you have a henna?

Somebody, I don't know. I don't – I forgot. If I have or I not, I don't know. But somebody did a party, like Ghali was there. He [overtalking] something, yeah.

That was your future brother in law.

Huh?

Your brother in law.

My brother, yeah.

And he gave you a party as well?

Maybe, yeah. You know, you know, here, must be the Masris, two brothers. One is married to Violet Masri. And his brother. Yeah. Brother is the father of, er, of what ?

Um, Vivian Baruch.

Vivian Baruch yeah. *Ada* – the two. [01:02:01] Their father was there and he was very friendly with my father in Iraq and he took – he arranged everything, the marriage, the – everything. He went – he was the one who signed for us.

Yeah. So he was like your witness at the wedding?

The witness. And he signed for us, for everything. He did – he arranged the wed – we didn't know where is the, er, where do we do the wedding, we didn't know anything. He arranged everything for us.

Fantastic, yeah. Very good. So you came back to Baghdad.

Yeah. And I was expecting Jimmy.

Right, Jimmy. Right. And when did Naim become a member of parliament?

After. After that. After. David was two years, like that, two years. Yeah. Also David has got one-year, or eleven months difference [laughs].

In – there's only eleven months between your two sons?

Yeah, I think so. I am not sure.

[Both laugh] We can work it out. And why did Naim decide to become a member of parliament?

You know, he had so many friends, you can't imagine, Muslim friends. Did you see here the prime minister, he just like his son.

Right. So he had a lot of Muslim friends.

Yeah, a lot, a lot. This *ada* or you can see us in *ada*, in – I will tell you a story about it.

Yeah.

[Sharon] The story is better when we do the –

Okay. Yeah, yeah. Right. And who suggested that he become –

All of them.

They all said, you should –

The mayor, the *ada*, suggested and he didn't know if he – so he said, I will ask my wife if I – she accept [both laugh] because it takes a lot of time. So I said if – I saw him, he wanted very much to *ada*, I accept it. [01:04:08]

Right. And at the time, how many Jews were members of parliament? How acceptable was it?

At the time, three. I think three Jews. Anyway, I will tell you what I was saying at the time. I forgot.

Yeah. You were expecting your children.

Huh. They were two, three years old. So we had to make, you know, to make parties at home. Parties at home but without me, I don't go in front of them. Yeah, they were Muslim.

Oh, that's interesting. So the Muslims wouldn't have you in the same room or how does it work?

La, la, I didn't go near them. We have a big garden and they used to – we used to do the parties in the garden. In the garden. I didn't go near the Muslims. I didn't go there, for who are going – going and coming, [laughs] Jimmy and David [laughs].

So your sons were the waiters or the, er hosts?

[Laughs] No, not we had a lot of a waiters. Mummy, they are eating with their hands, Mummy [both laugh]. They are doing this. Every time was a – there is a big problem [laughs].

So you were in a separate room or was this –

We were in – they were all in the garden and I was – I didn't even go near them, yeah.

So you didn't actually know them socially.

No, no, socially. Not the people who are, you know, who are not the people of the – not the big people, you know, the minister and people like that. The one who are going to vote.
[01:06:00]

Oh, the voters.

The voters.

Oh, I see, so you had like parties for the voters.

For the – yeah.

So the – like rallies.

Rallies, rallies. You know, Naim has people with him. He will go – they will go first to a – every time, every day somewhere, they go, huh. They will go first, where they take with them some *ada*, bringing some things like that, they give them, and then afterwards Naim comes.

Okay, so he – they prepare the ground for him.

The ground for him. And then he will go there and he talks to them. This is how it works.

Right, how it works. So he would give them drinks and food and make –

At – no, not food, something easy, something, pistachio, things like that. And then they are – have arranged the place and then Naim was there at the end. Yeah.

Right. And that's how he got the people to vote for him?

To vote for him. And do you know, [laughs] do you know who was sitting when the votes were coming? The mayor of Baghdad. He wanted to be sure that every [laughs] – every one is counted. The mayor of Baghdad, he was Naim's *ada* men know.

Yeah. So he made sure that all –

[Laughs] All the – everything.

All the votes were counted.

[Both laugh] Were counted.

So what were his duties once he was elected? What did he have to do?

You know, this is what I – one of them, of those who were – he said why you are – they killed – he asked the prime minister, Nuri Said.

Right, so he was defending the Jews –

Jews, yeah.

In parliament.

In parliament.

And when – and how were these Jews killed? I mean –

We don't know. [01:08:00] They – they're – they were, let us say, in the club, he – they went out from the club and they was killed. We don't know.

Right, so in the street, random, er, random murders?

We don't know, yeah. So he asked the prime minister, he said, why you are killing the Jews and things. He said, don't ask me, ask Israel. And it was true, because Israel wanted the people to *ada*, to go out.

But they weren't killing people?

No, no. Well, one or two thing, two definitely they did. I am telling you, they did, because they didn't say it like that, ask Israel. And at the time, we heard that Israel was doing one or two, er, three people. Yeah. Two or three. Because, you know, for a year they – nobody moved. Nobody moved.

Right. It was under emergency law?

Nobody leave.

Martial law.

La, la. Nobody leave because no – the Jews were afraid to leave.

People were – yeah.

And they don't know what's *ada*, so they started killing people, so everybody *ada*, signed.

Ah. Oh, okay. So you're talking about 1950? Are we now in 1950?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, '50, '51, like that, yeah. So everyone signed.

Do you remember the execution of Shafiq Ades?

Of course I do remember, yes.

Yeah. How did you feel at the time?

Very bad at the time. *Esha-aldekhalek, Ada*, You know, I tell you about this. You saw the prime minister and the minister of interior. You know, there were – we went – we were taking the boys to Aiglon. Not Aiglon, to Marmousets in Switzerland, huh. And we went through, er, *ada*, we went through, er, Vienna. [01:10:05] And we were walking the first day in the streets, and all of a sudden, the prime minister was there with his son. The moment he saw Naim, he checked his son and he was [both laugh] – and he wanted Naim. The whole time, Naim. And the children, is going to be with the children, who will take them? I say, I took them on my own, two small children with all their, er, *ada*, with all their thing.

Luggage?

Luggage. I have to be responsible to Switzerland. And then from Geneva to go to the mountain, everything, I did it myself because of him.

Because of the...?

The prime minister.

The prime minister. The prime minister –

Because he wouldn't accept to leave Naim. Naim –

Right, so Naim was forced to stay behind?

Yeah. Yeah.

And you –

I took over.

You took over and you decided to leave –

Because it was –

Is this – this is in 1956?

Er...

No? When you decided to leave Iraq for good or was this just a holiday?

[Marcelle] *La, la, la. La, la.*

That was just a holiday.

I – for good is Naim not any more there. He was – he died.

He died.

Yeah. The thing is, er, what, er, *ashash*, where I was?

Sorry, I interrupted. You were in Switzerland. You had to organise the trip.

I took, I took, I took that.

All by yourself.

So this man, every day he took him somewhere, Naim. One of the days, he did – we took him to a – at night, we took him to a cabaret, huh, to the cabaret. [01:12:02] And striptease.

Striptease.

Striptease [both laugh]. A striptease. At the end, when she took everything, the minister of interior couldn't take it, so he, with his gun he shot *ada*.

He shot his gun?

Eh, he shot his gun and the whole place was all over the thing. They want to call the police, they want to do the – Naim told them, what are you doing, you are going to make a big thing, this is the prime minister and the minister of interior. He – what are you –

This is in Switzerland, in a striptease –

Ada, Not Switzerland. In, er, what did I say before?

France?

Huh?

No, not there.

Um. Anyway, I will remember. In –

You said Marmousets ?

Huh?

Marmousets, No –

No, Marmousets, there were children is in –

Yeah, the children.

But I am saying in Vienna.

Oh, in Vienna, yeah. It was in Vienna, yeah.

And we were – it was in Vienna. And he *ada* he shot –

He shot his gun.

His gun, and the whole place was upside down. Everybody was shouting, everybody was running. And they want to tell the – they bring – they brought the police and they said, you are going to make a big scene. And this is prime minister of Iraq and the minister of –

And the minister of the interior.

Uh-huh, interior. So they accepted they wouldn't touch it. Imagine what sort of – and I was so, er, I started *ada*, shouting at them, I was 'what it is [shouting] ?' I was afraid, I didn't know what was going on. I started shouting at him. **[01:14:00]** [Both laugh] They are man, like anything, mad, a baby.

They're very hot-blooded.

Hot-blooded, yeah.

Yeah, and he got excited and he decided to fire his gun.

Eh, now, don't you see the people when they're happy, they –

They shoot in the air.

They shoot their gun in the air.

They shoot in the air, that's true. But it's lucky nobody died or –

No, but he – that he shoot it on top, like that. But the people who were sitting there, they didn't know.

No, no. It must have been terrifying to hear this loud bang.

Huh?

Yeah, in the middle of the striptease club [both laugh]. Gosh, what a story. So you went on trips with Naim as part of his sort of parliamentary – these were like sort of parliamentary trips with the ministers? Accompanying the minister?

Not parliamentary, no. We saw him just like that.

Oh, you just saw him. So you didn't –

Saw him and –

It wasn't an official trip.

No, no, no, no, no.

No, you just happened to bump into him.

We happened to – we saw him. We were very unhappy because the children, we didn't know what to do with the children, so I had to – you know, when I came back to Naim, Naim was so thankful for me, he went and bought me all sorts of thing [both laugh]. *La*, before I came, all very, very nice things, huh. Expensive things.

Yeah. So this was in the '50s? Early '50s? Or '40s? When was it? Can't remember?

Before '50. '51, er, '40, *la*, not '40 – '50-something.

'50-something. So you were –

Yeah, '52, '50 – er –

So you were able to travel to Europe and come back again.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Right. [01:16:00] So tell me what happened next? 'Cos Naim died, didn't he?

Naim, er, oh, Naim died.

In '56, was it?

Yeah, '56.

He died in '56.

Yeah.

And how old were you then?

Thirty-five.

You were thirty-five. And you had three young children.

Three young children.

And the youngest was how old?

Two years old.

She was two.

Yeah.

And you were left on your own, yeah.

On my own. My parents, you know, my parents were not with me. They were in Europe.

Right. You were on your own in Baghdad.

Yeah, on my own in Baghdad. But I have friends, you know. I have Claire Chitayat, and she stayed with me, she slept with me and Muzli, Bertha's sister, your auntie.

Why didn't you leave with all the other Jews in 1950?

I was okay.

You were okay.

Yeah.

You felt secure?

Not secure. I didn't want to go with them. I can, er, I can go any time I wanted. Why go with the Jews? I can take it, er, *ada*, you know, I have afterwards and, aha, Naim had a, er, *ada*, it will come. I will tell you afterwards. He takes care of Naim things. Er, solicitor. I've got a solicitor, a Muslim solicitor. And he doesn't – Naim doesn't go everywhere, he sent this solicitor instead. [01:18:00] Huh. And when Naim died, he became mine, huh. And the brother of this solicitor was the man who takes care of everything, you know, in like media police law, like the man who take care of –

Who looked after all your affairs?

Not my aff – his brother was – the affairs of Iraq. That's just a –

Okay, like a minister?

Minister, but it's everything, like minister, interior minister, like interior minister. He was there. And afterwards, you know, if I want to *ada*, I was – I had this man, this minister of interior, I can go any time I want. Why I go with the people?

Yeah. So you felt privileged in a way –

Yeah, privileged.

Because of your connections –

Yeah, of my connections.

With the ministry, I mean you could travel abroad which no – not – the other Jews couldn't do.

No, no, no, no. A lot of Jews were not. I could do that. That's why I didn't go out. And *ada*, you know, afterwards when this – they started taking people to – in the – to prison, huh, they used to come to me and go and talk to that man. Huh. And he used to tell me, be sure that I

will do anything, that I won't be in trouble about the people. He gave me his assurance, you know. Yeah. Be sure of that, I will have food, they will have everything, we will take care of them, that we can – I can't do anything because the top people want that way, because they were against –

So you couldn't use any influence. [01:20:00]

I could – no, but he helped.

He helped them.

Yeah, he helped them.

Those who were in prison?

Yeah, those – yeah.

He helped, yeah.

He said they'll have food, they will be well-taken care of.

He improved their conditions.

Huh? Improved.

He improved their conditions, but he couldn't get them released.

La, they can't – they couldn't get him, er, get them released.

Yeah. And did he at any time feel afraid to go and plead –

I don't know what he felt or anything. I don't know [both laugh]. This is what [overtalking].

Yeah, I mean he didn't feel that he could be put in jail?

Huh?

He didn't feel he could be put in prison?

I don't know. I don't know whatever. I will tell you, my father had a house and he sold it. And he sold it and he send them, the money away. And how do he send the money? Tell me.

Through the...?

I have Selim Lawi in Geneva. In Beirut. He has a friend in Baghdad, he send him to me, and this friend, he used to take everything and take it to the outside.

Right. And this was obviously against the law at the time.

Of course, of course at the time, yeah.

To smuggle money out of the country.

Yeah, yeah. So the – at the time the minister of interior – not interior – I don't know, one who was very bad, who was against the Jews, sent for my father; where is the money? Huh. So I went in early morning to a friend, a Muslim friend. They are – they were *ada*, they were very, very –she used to come to England.

Al-Mah'deri [01:22:06]

Al-Mlah'deri that's it [laughs]. And I forgot the name, you see. You didn't forget, I forgot the name [both laugh]. The H'erderi, I went to the H'erderi, in the early morning, at four o'clock in the morning they saw me. [Gasps] So, what is happening? I said, do you know, they sent

for my father. Can I tell them that I owe you money and I gave it to you? He said, come here, sit here, we'll have to talk over, it over, so that our talk will be the same, the same, tell them, and he was very, very –

So you tell them the same story.

The same story.

Yeah, yeah [laughs].

This is how my father – huh. You know –

That's how he managed to get the money out.

Yeah, out [both laugh]. You know, but still they sent for my father. They sent for my father, they want him to – I was next door at your, um, at your grandmother house, at *amah* Khatoun next door. *Ada*, Somebody rang the bell and Menashe went and he said, you know, they were asking about Ezra Bikhori's house.

That's your father?

My father. And so I said, oh, was it somebody *hek dada* ? He said yes. And I was – I was phoned the office and they were sending somebody to see me from the office. I said, oh, yes, come. So I went there. I went there and I saw police, two policemen, but not in their *ada*.

Plain clothes?

Plain clothes. They said, we came to see, to take your father. I said, my father, you know, how they knew about my father? They phoned him. They phone him. [01:24:01] They said, we have a letter from your children. Where do you live? And they were happy. My father was happy. He told them, I live in this and this.

So he gave them the address?

The address. They came there. They came there. My father was very, you know, old. And he was – and very, very upset and he was talking nonsense. Even – And I didn't know that all the story that he gave them address, they phone him, all this, I didn't know. What I thought, it was nonsense he was talking. Telephone, letter, I don't know what [laughs]. I didn't know that. So I said, can you see, he is not well, huh. If you want me, I will come instead.

Yeah. But did they tell – did they say why they wanted to take him away?

No, no. They – no. They want to say *ada*, the man, the policeman, he want to see him. But he didn't say anything. Yeah. So he saw him very old and he is not talking – he was talking nonsense [laughs] and I thought he was talking nonsense [both laugh]. He said – I said, I will come.

Instead?

Instead. She said – one minute. He phoned the police station. He said, his daughter is here and she said she will come instead of him because he is very, very old. I saw him very old, he is not well. If he will come out of the house, we are not – we will be responsible for him. So [laughs] I was – it was very, very hard without *ada*, without sleeves. I was a – he said, my mother called me. Marcelle, please go and change, do something [both laugh]. [01:26:00] In front of this man, in front of this man.

You're not in a fit state to go to the police station.

[Both laugh] In front of this man. He said, don't – he told them, don't worry, she like my sister. I will take care of her and I will bring her back, he told her like that. I don't know why he was helpful for me. So I went with him. I went with him. The whole time he was telling me, don't be afraid, talk, talk, talk, talk, the whole time, talk, talk, talk, and he said, he is old, he is *ada*, he is *dadada*, All the time, talk, talk, he told me. He is teaching me.

Yeah, he's trying to give you the excuses.

Yeah [laughs]. I went there. I went [laughs]. I went there and he, this man was asking me, oh, why – what *ada*, about my father, were the – I said he – I started talking, talking to him, he is not well, blah, blah, blah. He said, you're *ada*, he was writing something. He said, sign. I said, well, don't we – I want to see what I am signing [laughs]. Huh. He said, okay. I looked at it and he said, it's – any time he will – she said that any time she – he – they will want him, she was responsible for him I said okay, and I signed. He said, do you know Arabic? [Laughs] He thought I didn't even know the Arabic, *ada*, I can talk but I don't know writing and things like that, he [overtalking].

Why did he say that?

I don't know.

Why, because women didn't usually know how to write?

Maybe because – I don't know. I don't know. He said, do you know Arabic? I said of course, huh. [01:28:02] Anyway, I signed and I went home. I went home. Huh, the police station was next door to my uncle, to my uncle. He has got – *ada*, uncle, er, doctor. And he has got his *ada*,

Surgery?

Surgery there. And he used to take care of all the police [both laugh]. And you know, honest to God, when I see – I think about my life, it's all fabulous, something coming, helping me.

Yeah, coincidence.

Coinc – luck, luck, all the time. Huh. I used to take care of them. So this man wanted to bring him, to take me home. He said, don't worry, I am taking her home, huh. This is my uncle said [laughs].

Your uncle said that?

[Both laugh] And he, my uncle gave him –

Yeah, so that must have been a very traumatic experience for you, to be taken to the police station.

But I was – I was lucky, really I was lucky.

But you were lucky 'cos –

I came home afterwards the – my solicitor came home to see me. He said, you know, my *ada*, my brother came in and he said, *ada*, the man was there, *ada*, he wanted my mother – father to come, to come. And he was – maybe you're not right.

No, no, no, I'm fine.

Ada, My brother, my my brother came while this man was staying *ada*, Ezra Bikhor. He said, what is – what's about Ezra Bikhor. His brother said what's about Ezra Bikhor ? He said, he want him to come and talk to him, to interrogate him. [01:30:04] He said, *ada*, he is very, very old, he can't [both laugh] – he's very old, he can't – imagine, he came in the room when he was talking telephone, Ezra Bikhor. He said, he is very old. If *ada*, we would not be responsible.

Responsible, no [laughs]. So it was –

Everything came to the same thing. So he said *twatjile* means will *ada*, to *twatjile* not today, we will have it. We'll –

We'll release –

Not release.

No, no, we'll, um –

Make it later.

Ah, okay, we'll postpone.

Postpone it, we'll postpone it. So my father er got it postponed.

Right. And is it because he sold the property that –

They want to ask him where is the money?

They wanted to interrogate him about the money.

Yeah. And they put for three months the policeman in front of the house so that he wouldn't go out.

So he was like under house arrest.

House arrest.

Right. This was in the early '50s, was it? Sort of something like that.

No, after the '50s.

Yeah, after the '50s. Yeah.

Early '50s or something. You know, *ada*, um, here, she used to teach bridge, what, Leonie. Her husband was in jail. She used to take for him some food, huh. The man who is *ada* of the jail, he said do you know Marcelle Shamash? She said, of course. He said, tell her not to stay at home. Huh. Because we are going to ask her to come, to ask her question. And if she will

not be at home until *ada*, she will know exactly what's all about, you know, and she can take care of herself. [01:32:09] So for three months I didn't stay at home. I was at my uncle house [laughs]. Imagine.

Gosh, yeah. I mean that must have been a terrible thing to go through, a woman on your – I mean a woman with young children –

Yeah, but – and this man, the man was so good because he know my husband, huh, because he wanted to protect, he told their – tell her to go, to go to, er, not staying at home.

Right. But if he hadn't known Naim, God knows what would have happened.

What?

If he hadn't known your husband, what would have happened?

Yeah. This is it. I don't know. I don't know how my life was there. I am telling you, it's something, from one thing to another.

Okay. So you lost your husband unfortunately and it was – you felt you needed to leave 'cos by then your brothers had left?

[Marcelle] *La, la.*

Is that right?

La. I had nobody there.

Nobody there. Your parents? Were still there?

My parents, you know what did they do? Straightaway they came when I lost my husband, after two days they were in. And, you know, they were all the time I was not well, crying the

whole time. Okay. Crying the whole time, and they were sit – I *ada*. They were sleeping, one this side and one this side and I was in the middle. You know, I was gone completely, the whole day, the –

Yeah, of course. I mean it must have been a terrible shock, what – he had a heart attack and died?

Yeah. Huh?

He had a heart attack and died? [Background noise] Whoops, sorry. Right. Okay. Can we go back to 1948, when Israel was created? [01:34:04] Things got very bad for the Jews, yeah? And were you aware of the underground Zionist movement?

Of course. Look, my – we have, er, my grandfather has a *shul*.

Yeah, a synagogue.

Synagogue, he had a synagogue. And the people, this *ada*, they in– in our synagogue they put the – some, er, arm –

Weapons?

Weapons, huh, arms. So –

Which synagogue was it?

Ezra Dawood Synagogue.

Ezra Dawood

My grandfather.

Right. The one who was murdered?

Huh?

Ezra Dawood

Synagogue. He was murdered. *Ada*, they put their – the *Ada*

The weapons?

The weapon. We don't know about it. My uncle didn't know about it. They put it. We don't know. So one day they call my uncle and they open this and they found the – we didn't know about it, so they thought that they knew that they didn't know about it, we didn't know about it, they put it like that. Imagine, of course I know about it [both laugh]. The whole family got *ada*. We didn't know what will happen to my uncle.

No, no, no. So you were –

And they took *ada*. – they took a photograph, my uncle standing around, [laughs] so opening.

[Both laugh] So did you know people who were arrested as a result of the –

I know many people who were arrested *ada*. Now I forgot the names, I forgot everything.

Yeah, yeah, that's right. [01:36:00] Did you see your role – or Naim saw his role as trying to defend these people, trying to help them?

Yeah, of course, all the time, all the time. All the time. Yeah.

And did he feel that the relationship with his –

[Both talking at once] I tell you a story.

Muslims – with the Muslims he knew, did it change?

La, la. It didn't change at all, the relationship. I'll tell you a story. My – when the Jews were going out of Iraq, they were very nasty to them in the airport. You know, they open everything, they throw everything, they wouldn't even – one day, my auntie was – by passport she was leaving to – her husband was in Europe and she wanted to go to see him. She was wearing her pearl, a real pearl. She said, why do I take the pearl with me? Because I am coming back, please take it. Huh. She put it in a handkerchief and she gave it to me. I put it in my *ada* in my bag. A policeman came. What did you put in your bag? I said, my auntie, she was taking with her a pearl and I took it in my bag. Give it to me. I said, I won't give it to you. Why I give it you? If I am in the road and I see somebody and he said, give it to me, why I give it to you? [Both laugh] You know why I was very firm? Naim was with me. Naim was member of parliament. He wouldn't – he didn't say a thing. But I was the one, I was always talking [both laugh]. Because he didn't want to make it harder. I said I won't give it. He said, yes, I am telling you, give it to me. [01:38:01] I said, no, nobody. I won't give it to you at all, whatever you will do. The *ada* of the airport, the master of the airport, you know there is a balcony? Huh. He came to the balcony and he saw us, because he know Naim and he know me. He saw us talking to this man. He wanted – he didn't want to make it harder. He said, everyone who is not going away, let him leave the airport. We – I left the airport [laughs] without talking to the policeman, you know.

Oh, that was lucky.

Yeah. *La, la*, not lucky. He wanted us to go. He didn't know what to do. He said, everyone who has *ada*, you leave the airport. So I – and I saw what they are doing to the Jews. I was really, oh, very, very upset. And I started shouting on time. I said, if you – we don't know and we don't do anything about them, who will take care of them? Huh. He said, what do we want to do? Come, let's go to Beth Lawi, you know, where they sell, *ada* to the office of Beth Lawi. They have, you know, they have *ada*, working for them, *ada* they have four or five children, five girls, all married. What is it? What is the name? Er, you know, when he died they made a big fuss of him. He used to write. A writer. Iraqi Jew. He was working in Beth Lawi and

Sasson, you know, the people who were there also. [01:40:03] We said, what do we, er, what do you think we can do? We'll call – we have, er, *ada*, we know of a solicitor. His name, the name, he was well-known. We'll tell him to see to it. At the end, we said what solicitor? What *ada*. I said then the best thing you go to see him. My husband said, okay, we'll go. He took me to see the main police *ada* of the whole Baghdad, of the whole Iraq. You know, [sighs] we went there, he *ada* he gave him his card and at the time because we – at the time, *ada*, they wouldn't let us in until we saw – Naim send his card. So they took the card and they said, come quickly, because member of parliament. Huh. They took us to him, to this man. Naim said, you know, this is my wife, she has to talk to you. She want to talk – she wants to talk to you. I said, if I know that you are *ada* a very good man and a very straight man. I told him all the story, what they did to my *ada*. They stopped my – they stop my auntie to go away. They stop her at the airport. And this, the police, what was he doing to me and then what they were doing to the people who are going away and they're throwing everything out. [01:42:05]

Yeah, they're throwing all their luggage.

Luggage and everything, huh. Straightaway he phoned to the airport. He said, called *ada*, 'shism'a, the other police talk to me, hold him.' And my auntie, let her go [both laugh]. Huh. Let her go, huh. And I will do something for the people who are *ada*, who are doing that for them. So there was better of, very, very better, not like that. You know we did? [Laughs] I made a committee. This committee will *ada*, will take everything they are sending away, out. You know, people are leaving the houses free. They're not –

Yeah. Yes. Yeah, they were abandoning their houses.

Abandoning, huh. We took one house and we bring – we brought all this what we were taking from them, we took it in the house. And all the people who are coming from the north, from –

So the Kurds?

The Kurds, everyone.

The Kurdish Jews?

Huh?

The Kurdish Jews? Or the –

What?

Kurdish Jews?

Eh, Kurdish Jews. They don't have a place, so *ada* we brought [laughs] some *ada* thing with [laughs] we hanged everything in. Huh. And, you know, I went through all my friends, everything [laughs] we had, like mattresses, were like *ada*, we took it. And we took it in that –

Put them in those houses?

In the house. And, you know, the people who were coming from the Kurdistan, we, er, used to sleep there. And every day, every day, I cook 500 eggs. [01:46:05] [Both laugh] And near me there is a *ada*, who makes bread, near me, near my –

Yeah, a baker.

Huh?

Yeah.

Yeah. 500 *ada*.

Fantastic. So you fed them and you housed –

Huh, whatever. We can't fed – feed them better. We –

Yeah, fantastic.

Huh? And what we – all the sort of *ada* of what they turn out like even pots and pans, we give it to them. But later they are not so bad with them. Yeah, after that.

Yeah. No, no. After that.

After that they were not so bad with them. Yeah.

That's fantastic. Thanks to you [both laugh]. And you organised the committee for that?

I organise it, the committee.

And you had the eggs boiling in your house, in your kitchen.

In my house. I do it for *ana*– I did it. Not you know, I didn't take money. I did it myself.

Yes, fantastic. And you never felt like you wanted to leave at that time?

No, no, I was all the time – but Naim was still there. Yeah. You know, [laughs] they used to call me Jeanne d'Arc [both laugh] because everything I wouldn't accept.

[Both laugh] Yeah, yeah. You used to fight for everything.

I fight for them, fight for them yeah.

[Both laugh] Very good. So you must have felt very strange when most of your family had left, most of your friends had left.

Yeah.

I mean what kind of social life did you have?

I wasn't going out anyway. But not my friend. They didn't leave. Berthe Dangoor didn't leave. All of them, they were there, Naim and Abdallah and their children and Maurice Chitayat and everybody was there. [01:46:05] You know, they used – when Naim died, they used to come every, every night, all of them, every night. They wouldn't let me on my own. And people, it's something, you *ani*, what they did for Jimmy, yeah. They did exactly, Muslim, Christians and Jews for Naim.

Right, so they all came and they gave you support.

Came, support, everyone, everyone, I am telling you. Because he was very well-liked. And he was thirty-nine.

He was only thirty-nine.

Thirty-nine. You know –

So yeah, so at that point you decided it was time to leave.

I didn't decide anything.

No?

I let it go like that. At the end, my brothers want to see me, huh. They were all in England and they want to see me, so they decided that, huh, in the meantime afterwards I told you that *ada, shism 'a, bat Musria, shism 'a, Li*–

Um, what, the – Lisette ?

[Marcelle] *La.*

No. Er, Hilda?

Hilda, Hilda, was doing GCE. So I said I will take up the GCE with her. I will do it.

Yeah, you'll study together.

To study together. So she brought all what we have to do. And at that time I wasn't good in English. Believe me, a whole book, a whole book, I took every, every word in the dictionary and I wrote it, so that I would know.

Fantastic. So you could speak English. [01:48:00] And then it wasn't straightforward to come to this country, to come to England.

[Both talking at once] No, I told you how.

You said that they weren't giving visas.

I told you how it not giving visas until my brother, Maurice, said they accepted that either you can *ada*, you can apply. I came here in London, they stopped me at the airport, why you are coming, why you are [makes noise]. They didn't – they gave me only two weeks to stay here. And then this two weeks, I went to see the – I went to see the, um, where do you go to see –

Er, to the passport office?

No.

To the Home Office?

Home Office. I went to speak to the Home Office and I told them about my *ada*. I said my husband did his study in England, he was in GCE, in the *ada*, in the university UCL.

Yeah, UCL. UCL, yeah.

In the university. My brother were in university and he was – he likes very much England and I want to give my children English study.

Education, yeah.

Education. So –

Hmm-hmm.

[Sharon] Um.

Right.

[Sharon] Just talk about this.

Can you tell me who the people are in this photo?

They are my mother, my brother, Maurice, myself and my brother there, Albert, who was a young baby.

He was a babe in arms.

Yeah.

Yeah. And Maurice was standing to the right. Yeah.

To the right of my mother.

To the right of your mother.

Yeah. [01:50:00]

[Sharon] Where – when was –

And when was it taken?

When, er, when we were young.

1920s? 1920s in Baghdad.

Not '20, no.

No, no, in 1920s?

'20, yeah, no, 19 –

'25, '26?

[Both talking at once] Yeah, like that, '20.

Something like that, yeah.

In Baghdad. You know, my grandfather used to have this thing and they used to put some in the *diwan*, white, white sheets, you see. Like this.

Yeah. So that was the way –

Yeah, he was –

It was like a sofa?

Sofa, yeah. This is the sofa before it was like that.

Right.

[Sharon] Where was it taken? In the house –

In our house.

In your house. In Batawin, by the river?

No, no, no.

No. This was a different house?

Yes, of course. Yeah, in Baghdad, in the middle of Baghdad.

So you moved out of the middle of Baghdad.

Baghdad to Batawin.

To Batawin later, maybe in the '30s?

I don't know which.

Yeah. So at the time you were living in the centre of Baghdad.

Not '30, before '30, because I was ten, if I am '30, before.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was before.

Yeah.

So you lived maybe in the –

Maybe, maybe –

Taht el-Takia ? Or one of the Jewish areas?

La, la, la, la, la. No, I don't even know what's that.

No, but it was in the middle of Baghdad.

Yeah.

Okay, thanks.

[Sharon] It is record.

Don't you want this picture?

Can you describe this picture? Can you describe this picture?

What? He was so young. Many people behind him hold him and they put something on their hair, white, so that they – we won't see who are they.

Who it was. So they covered their heads with a white cloth and they were holding Maurice.

Maurice, yeah. [01:52:00]

Maurice. And you were maybe about –

I was sitting, yeah.

Two? Two or three?

La. One year and a half [laughs].

Yeah. You were one and a half.

There is only one year difference.

Yeah. So that's Marcelle with Maurice, as babies, or toddlers.

Yeah [laughs].

[Sharon] Oops. In the middle.

Can you describe the picture, Auntie?

You know, it's after my wedding. They gave me this as a wedding present.

So what you were wearing was an Indian sari?

Yeah, *sari*. Er, not *sari*. This is not Indian. It's *ada* er, they call it *shalwar*, er –

Ah, shalwar kameez.

[Marcelle] *Kameez*. It's a *shalwar kameez*.

So it's like, um, Pakistan –

Because *shalwar*, this is *shalwar*.

Yeah, yeah.

[Marcelle] *Shalwar kameez*.

That's a shalwar kameez.

Yeah.

Which was given to you...?

As a present for my wedding. And after that I put it on and took a photo.

Ah, okay. And that was at the time you were married in India, in Bombay, in 1943.

Yeah.

Right. It fired the gun?

La, that's here.

Oh, that was.

That one.

Oh, wait, so this is not the same thing. This is –

This is *ada, shisma*, party at Nuri Said for – for –

[Both talking at once] Okay, so it was a different –

In for the *nuwwab waahwuzara*, for the people of parliament –

Yeah, so that caption I wrote for you goes with that picture.

[Sharon] Oh, so we have to do it together.

Yeah. So that was taken in Vienna, in – when that –

[Sharon] Okay, so what is this picture?

Yeah, so this picture is – belongs with this caption. [01:54:01]

[Sharon] Okay, but this one, what –

This one is party –

Party, given by Nuri Said, the prime minister Nuri Said, for member of parliament and ministers.

[Sharon] I'll just write party. What – where is it?

Given by –

In Iraq.

In Iraq.

[Sharon] Yes, you were –

In 1951.

1951. Given by Nuri Said.

The prime minister at the time.

Yeah. That was in his home? In his home or in his –

No, no, outside, in *ada*, Nuri Said, *aida*.

[Sharon] Okay. Cut. Let's do it.

No, not in his home, no. So many people. Yeah, not in his home. Oh, in a place.

Yeah. You're tired, Auntie. I think we'll come back and do the rest [laughs].

[Sharon] I'd be happy to do it.

Yeah.

You know, the thing is, that in the morning I didn't realise that I told you I was dreaming, I wasn't there. If I would have known, but what – you said ten o'clock.

Yeah.

But I was dreaming, I am telling you. I didn't think.

You mean you weren't – you forgot that we were coming.

I forgot sort of, yeah [laughs].

Yeah, so it was a good thing I phoned [laughs]. No, no, no, it's fine. It's just we've still got quite a lot of your life to cover.

[Both laugh] Oh, I have so many, so –

So much, you know.

So much.

Sharon, would you be happy to come back?

[Sharon] Yeah, I would be very happy.

When you get back from Israel?

[Sharon] Yes, when I get – I really would like it, so –

So then towards the end of April?

[Sharon] Yeah.

We'll make another date?

Okay.

Yeah. Are you happy with that? I think it's better 'cos you're getting tired.

Yeah, and, er, when I said I am tired, I am tired, I'm forgetting, you don't – you don't *ada*, I – you don't, er –

Understand?

Not understand. You don't believe. **[01:56:09]**

Yeah, I don't – well, because by normal standards, you know, you sound perfectly, you know, it's just the odd word you can't remember. Yeah.

You know, when I go out to the whole day, I don't do anything, I'm getting ready for – or going out, so I am all there. When you see me [overtalking].

Yeah, yeah, I know. All your efforts are concentrated on going out.

Yeah.

[Sharon] Okay, let's do that.

Yeah.

[Sharon] Oh, we're still interviewing. Okay. Doesn't matter.

Oh, dear.

[Sharon] Oh, no, no, don't worry.

Are you recording now?

[Sharon] It's recording. Talk about picture. And I'll do the last one.

Can you describe this picture?

I am – my – how do I know? It's *ada*, I am there, eating.

Yeah, this is Nuri Said invited these men wearing Bedouin headdresses.

La, eh, their dresses like that. There are very few like Naim labussi

Yeah, so that was – they're wearing traditional Arab costume.

Yeah.

And he had a banquet for them.

For the prime – for the prime min – *ada*.

Prime minister Nuri Said.

Said, has a *ada* party for the member of parliament and the ministers.

And their ministers, at which you were present, you and Naim.

No, I wasn't.

No, you weren't.

La, only men.

Only men. So this was – this – Naim was there.

Yeah, Naim was there.

Yeah, Naim is in the centre, one of the few wearing European dress.

Yeah, yeah, with white thing.

With a white, er, he has a white tuxedo.

Tuxedo. Not during the day. It's *ghada'*, it means lunch.

Oh, lunch. Lunch.

Yeah. [01:58:00]

It's lunch. And these are all Arab MP – members of parliament.

Member of parliament, yeah.

And most of them wearing Arab headdress.

Yeah.

So the kaffir.

Hmm.

I forgot to say when. That was 1951.

'51.

In Baghdad?

In Baghdad, in *ada* 17 of six, er, fifth –

Okay, 17th of May?

January, February, March, April, May. May.

May 1951.

[Sharon] Okay. Play with this.

That one.

[Sharon] Yes, you play with both of these.

Can you describe this one?

Yeah, this is the prime minister with in, er, in –

Jamal al – al –

Jamil al-Midfa'i.

al-Midfa'i?

Yeah. He was in, er, where was he?

Vienna?

Vienna [both laugh]. He was in Vienna. And we took him to *ada*, to a –

Striptease [both laugh].

Casino, to [overtalking].

Ah, to a casino.

Yeah, and for dinner.

For dinner, er, with the minister of interior. And there was an incident that night where the minister of the interior drew his gun and shot in the air, he was so excited [both laugh]. And this was in the early '50s? No.

Yeah.

Yeah, 1950s.

Yeah, '50, '50 – yeah.

Yeah.

[Break in recording]

This is Monday 10th of May. Lyn Julius interviewing Marcelle Shamash, the second part of the interview. We stopped in 1956, didn't we?

No.

No, you don't remember.

[Both laugh] No. This is the year that I came to London.

It's the year you came to London.

Yeah.

And your husband had just died suddenly.

Yeah, suddenly, yeah.

Leaving you with three small children.

Yeah. [02:00:00]

Right. And how did you come to London?

Because, you know, I had to see my brothers and my father and mother as well. They were here. And they wanted to see me but they can't come because they were not Iraqi.

So they lost their nationality when they moved to London?

Yeah. And they want me to go to them. It was difficult to get the visa because of difficulty with Ghali.

Right. And Ghali was your brother in law?

My brother in law, Naim's brother. You know, Ghali was here buying things, buying buildings and things and he had – he wanted the money. Usually we have this building in Baghdad, they – it brings rent, you know. And *ada* Ghali's son in law is taking care of his – of Ghali and Sasson. You know what he did? He took the money, all the money, and send it to Ghali, Sasson did it –

So he sold the building, is that right?

[Both talking at once] No, no, no. No, no, no.

No, he rented it? Sorry.

Huh?

Yeah.

Ada, he took the building after the rent and he send it all to Ghali, Sasson's part and Ghali's part. Sasson wants his money. He phone Naim and he gets in touch with Naim, my husband. And he told him that he didn't take the money, it's Ghali who took the money through his son in law. He goes to Ghali, he phoned Ghali and he was in America and Ghali was in England. **[02:02:02]** He said, no, it's Naim. So one day a friend of Naim, a lawyer, phoned Naim and he said, you know, your brother is making it *ada* on you, harsh.

Is tricking you?

Huh? *La, la*, no, no. He want to go to the law because –

Yeah, a case, a court case?

A court case. Sasson who wants to go to the – because he wants his money. And, you know, because I like you very much I didn't want to take the thing. So Naim started to talk, to Ghali, and decided that it's the best thing is we go to London and Sasson will come in London and they will sort it out. We'll take all the books with us and he will – they'll sort it out. And Naim gave the name for the visa, the name of Ghali, he said he has got *ada* work with him. When the *ada* ask him *ada*, the people who are – the government ask Naim, ask him about, he said, no, he doesn't want him. So they put us in a, er, they wouldn't give us any more.

So they wouldn't give you a visa.

No, no. Not a visa, not any more. They wrote on the passport, visa is refused. So what can we do?

So you were stuck.

We were stuck.

Stuck in Baghdad.

Eh. *La*, stuck, we were stuck. So by *heck*, by miracle the government changed at the – there was a new, a new...

A new government? [02:04:02]

A new cabinet and new prime minister. And the prime minister was Jamil al-Midfa'i.

Right, he was a personal friend.

And he was very, very, very, friendly with us. Very friendly with us because when Naim became a member of parliament, before Naim became a member parliament, when he became prime minister he had Naim near him. And he doesn't know English, nor French, nothing, only Arabic [laughs]. So he had Naim near him to translate, like the, er, [clears throat] the French

ambassador, the English ambassador [coughs] asking him, whom do you put as a minister of health or anything like that, huh. And so chancellor, he said Naim Shamash [both laugh]. So there was every – the next day, in all the papers [both laugh] it's not true.

No, no, no. He said he was the chancellor?

He wanted to [both laugh]. Anyway, *ada*, when he became prime minister, Naim ask him, he told him about the story and ask him if he can arrange for a visa to – or, for Sasson to come as an American.

Yeah. Oh, he was in America?

He is an American. He was American. Yeah. And he ask him if he can arrange to come to Baghdad, and he did it, Sasson came. Sasson came and he saw all the books. You know, Who would survive by a miracle like that? Naim was – he had some mail coming and he open one of the mail, *ada* by mistake and he saw –

Sorry, I'll just stop here. [02:06:12]

And he say, *ada*, when by mistake Naim open a letter, *ada* a letter from Ghali to his son, er, son in law. And in the letter he said – he told him, you take all the books and *ada*–

And destroy them?

Destroy them. [Gasps] So Naim was completely, you know, and this is what I think, he got –

So upset? Yeah.

Upset all the time and he died because of this ups – er, yeah. You know, so Naim called Elias, Elias because he's –

Who's Elias ?

Huh?

Who is Elias?

Elias Sofer,

Oh, Elias, his cousin.

Not a cousin. He is a nephew of Naim.

Oh, his nephew, okay.

Yeah. Because Naim in India, he was partner with Elias, so they are – they worked together and they like each other. So he called Elias and he said, look, this is what happened. He said, don't worry, I will come, we'll take the books and we'll take it to *ama khatun*, *ama khatun ma*? Bertha's mother, and the sisters of both of them, of Ghali, of Naim. So they took the books and they went to *ama khatun* and they said, look, this is what happened. He said, to hell with Ghali, bring the books, I will keep it for him. Huh. So she took the books, she kept it herself. So when – Sasson came to Baghdad, the books *ada*, she gave him the books and *ada*, Amal Yumir, her husband, yeah, and *ada* [02:08:12] A accountant came with them and they look. At the end, they saw that Sasson, *ada* has to give to Naim I don't know how many thousands back because Ghali is taking everything out, huh. Anyway, at the end *ada* with Sasson it was finished, huh, and Sasson with *ada*, with Naim, they got – they knew what was it and Sasson, you know how – Sasson, he had a policeman all the time he was in Baghdad, looking. He didn't want him to go anywhere, only at – because, you know, it was during – I don't know who's – who was there at the time, who –

So you're talking about 1955, something like that?

I don't know. Anyway, *ada*, everything is arranged and finished. *Ada*, now how we are going to London, we can't get the visa, so –

Yes, 'cos Ghali because of Ghali.

Eh, because he said he get it.

He wouldn't, um –

Want me as –

Be your reference?

Reference, yeah.

He wouldn't be your reference.

Yeah, he gave a reference. So my brothers *ada* said, oh, okay, we'll come and meet you in Switzerland, so I came to Switzerland and we met there.

Right, so they were already living in London, your brothers? [02:10:02]

Yeah, and they were English, British, all of them.

Yeah, and they were all British.

Yeah. So I came to Switzerland to meet them and I met them and they were *ada*, we talked together and they saw the children, you know, because after Naim they want to see in what way we were.

Yes, yes, that's right. So in the meantime, Naim had died of a heart attack and in 1956 –

Eh, that's why they want me to come because they want, my brother want me to come, see me, to see how because of Naim died.

Right, but at that point, apart from the problem with Ghali being your reference, the government was allowing free movement of Jews?

No, no, no. Eh, at the time, yes, that's why I –

Yeah, at the time, so in 1956 it was still okay.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. So I – still okay, I came to Switzerland and we met and we talked. And at the end, Maurice came back home and *ada* Albert said, I will take you. Huh, the children, I put them in the *marmuzi*.

Yeah, in a school.

In the school. Not school, *ada* –

Like a nursery?

Nursery, in the *marmuzi*, and Albert told me, I will take you for a bit, to go to Italy, to see *ada*, so I went with Albert. And while we were, well, near Milan [sighs] we came to the hotel and we saw in the *ada* newspapers, Iraq, police, *f'afish*, all sorts of things about Iraq. So we don't – we didn't understand what is it because it was Italian, the newspaper. So we took a newspaper and went to the hotel manager [laughs] and we said, what is this? He said, there was a –

A coup?

A coup and *ada* in Iraq and *ada*. [02:12:03]

And the King was, er –

Ada, they killed the King, they killed the prime minister, they killed –

So they killed Jamil al-Madfa'i?

La, la, but he wasn't – at the time that he change, Nuri Said came.

Yeah, Nuri Said, yeah.

Yeah, yeah.

Yeah. And he was killed.

Huh, he was killed. He was killed *ada*. So I can't go back, so I said, we will try to go to – in Switzerland I can stay. They wouldn't – at the time they were very difficult, they won't give a *ada* to anybody. Yeah. So I had a friend, a cousin, married to a judge in France. I went there to ask him and he tried hard but he couldn't get me a place.

So to get you into France?

Huh? Eh, not – *la*, I went to France but I wanted to stay in France. He couldn't. He couldn't.

So all these countries were very difficult about letting people in.

Very difficult, yeah. Anyway, I didn't know what to do. I went back to – with the children. I went back.

To Switzerland?

To Switzerland because they said that it was, er, Christmas and they are going to – huh, then I put them in school, proper school, in Switzerland, Aiglon College, Aiglon College. They wrote to me and they said *ada* they are going – for Christmas, they are going to close it, a month, they close it. So I had to go back to Switzerland and put the child – and I looked for a chalet. [02:14:04] You know, sometime I went – one day I remember I was going from one place to another to see the chalet, which one I would rent. And there was – I heard somebody talking

to me. I turn my head and it was I talk, I always talking to myself because I had nobody to talk to [both laugh]. You know. Anyway, *ada*, I found a chalet and my children kept the chalet. And I had people coming to stay with me, like Blanche Umrad like Albert, my brother came to stay with me, you know. And it was very, very – every day in the morning we have to *ada* open the *ada* because of the snow. Yeah, we have –

You had to clear the snow?

Huh?

Clear the snow?

Clear the snow so that they can't go out of the *ada*.

[Both laugh] It was a bit of a contrast to Iraq.

Yeah, yeah. And one night, all of a sudden there was no electricity and everybody was shivering, so I didn't know how to do the – I phone here, I phone there to arrange for electricity. I didn't – because it's all new for me. Anyway, they came the next day and *ada* they put the electricity back. Anyway, *ada* while I was there with the children, usually I used to take them to the mountain to ski. [Clears throat] One day I got a letter from Maurice. He said –

That's your brother?

My brother. He said – I wrote there the name of the... [Pause] Oh, I don't know what the name of – huh, the minister of interior in Iraq, in London.

In London [02:16:25]

He said today there is –

You've written his name down somewhere [laughs].

Yeah. Anyway –

You can't find it. Never mind. But yeah, so you got in touch with the minister in London?

La, la, not [overtalking] got in touch. He said today in the parliament, *ada* the minister for interior said the people who have their children, British, they can come.

A-ha. And they had British nationality?

British, my – no. My brothers.

Oh, they did, yes.

My brothers. So my father and mother, they were staying there, before they wouldn't – they wouldn't let them but afterwards –

Yeah. They became British? Or not?

No, no, no. No, they stayed there because they could stay, like being British but not, yeah. So he said, why don't you go to the – and I had only two months in my passport and they want, the Brit – if they give me a visa, the British, they want a passport, longer.

So what passport did you have at the time?

Iraqi of course. Iraqi. So he said, go to the – to Geneva and go to the embassy there, the British embassy there, and tell them the story that my, er, until you are *ada* with your mother and father in Baghdad and my mother and father became –

British.

Not British. They could stay, and I am on my own.

Right. [02:18:14]

And I want to go to see them. So they wouldn't accept.

They wouldn't accept. So your parents had already gone to London?

No, no, long time in London, my parents. I was on my own. All the time from Baghdad I was on my own. Anyway, anyway, I said, you know, I am here on my own, I want to go and see. They gave me only two weeks. I went to London and they kept me at the airport, talking to me. I said, *ada* they wouldn't accept to make it more than two weeks. Okay, I took the two weeks, huh. And then I wrote to *ada* I got in touch with the Home Office, I told them my story, and they said, you know *ada* I want to bring my children here to the – to schools because my husband was in university and school, he likes education, English education, and I want to *ada*. So they accepted to bring my –

They accepted, yeah.

To bring my children but I have to show that I have money, I don't stay.

Yeah, yeah, that's normal.

Huh?

Yeah, yeah.

I show them that I have money in London and money coming from Iraq, huh, for their education. I show them. So they said they will– they will decide later.

Yeah. [02:20:02]

The month go, they come and then no answer, and I was really – I didn't know what to do. So when I was afraid, they told me, don't worry, once it is too long, it took too long, it means that

–

That means you're here to stay.

[Both laugh] Yeah. At the end they *ada* they want to see me at the Home Office. I went there and I told them, you know, I have a daughter about four years old and she is on her own. I put her in a *ada*. If you are giving me *ada*. please let her come now.

She was where, in Switzerland?

Switzerland.

In a sort of–

In a home.

In a home.

You know, this home, she was young, very young. Instead of being with the home, I put a lady with her, a young *ada*, about twenty years old, *ada*. I paid for the lady to stay there so that –

Yes, like a nanny?

A nanny. All the time. I paid for them, huh, and she take – she took care of her. I said, please let her come before. So they said, we'll see. At the – and two – after two week or ten days, they phone, they said, you can let them *ada*, send it.

Yeah. And the two boys were where?

Were in Switzerland.

They were also in Switzerland. But they were older, so –

Older. And they were in school.

In school. In a boarding school?

Huh? Boarding school, yeah. And boarding school was very, very good to them, really good, you know. It – they were in Baghdad and there, they – it opens their minds.

Did they know French before they –

[Marcelle] *La, la.*

Before coming to Switzerland?

No, no, no.

So they had to learn French? [02:22:00]

Yeah, they learned French, they learned Italian, you know, when they have children like them, and they had a very, very good time also, you know, yeah.

So what year was it that you moved to London permanently?

'56 I think.

Yeah. Oh, it was after the end of the King and all that, yeah.

Yeah, yeah, of course after. Of course after.

Yeah, because he was '58 I think, the King. Fifty years deposed.

[Both talking at once] Yeah, I know.

But anyway, late fifties.

Late fifty, okay. And I moved to London. And, huh, for the children, my *ada* we said they have – we have to have *ada*, they accepted in a school, so I, you know, for the school every day I used to go somewhere.

Every – to a different school?

Different school, to see it. This, they don't want this, they want this, so it was *ada*. At the end I found somebody, I found the school, I forgot now the name.

Oh, Carmel College? No.

La, la, la. No, no. Carmel College, I couldn't get in.

No, you couldn't get them in. Yeah, yeah.

Anyway, I found a school and they said – the school said, okay, we'll accept them but they have to pass our exam. So –

But they didn't know English?

Huh?

They didn't speak English?

They knew, they knew a bit, huh. So they have to pass their exam. Of course they – because in Aiglon College they learn English. So *ada*, so I wrote to the children, it's matter of life and death, you have to pass this exam because otherwise, you won't be able to come [laughs]. At

the end, they passed it and I got – I got a wire from Jim, he said we passed our exam. [02:24:08]
[Both laugh] So they came. Huh?

So they came.

They came. In the meantime, I started arranging the flat and, you know. This flat downstairs, *ada*, you know, Daddy wanted money because –

So my father, your brother...

My brother. He wanted some money because he was buying and he was arranging the *ada*. He said, give me some money and I will give you 10% of the flat. And so he gave me one flat, which is 10% of the whole thing. Yeah. He gave me that and I was okay.

So you were living downstairs in the same building as your brother.

Yeah. Yeah. And I gave him some cash to help him and he gave me this building downstairs. You know, whatever he was saying, as if it was somebody *ada*, is god is telling me [laughs]. Whatever. You know, at the end, even one day the children said, if you – he tells them, don't eat this you won't eat it [both laugh]. That you will eat it [both laugh]. Whatever I could, like my *ada*. So when he was doing the flat, he was not well. Every single day I used to go with him. Every single, because I was with him in – at home, in Surrey. Every, because I was afraid for him to get – he's getting very –

Tense? [02:26:00]

Tense. Every single day.

So this is before you moved to London, before they moved to London, 'cos he was in Surrey in a little house.

Yeah.

And he managed to –

Arrange the –

Arrange to buy a building in Queen's Gate Gardens.

Huh?

In Queen's Gate Gardens.

Yes. And *ada* –

And you had one of the flats in the building.

Yeah, one of the flat. And, you know, I – because he was doing them up, the flats, every single day, how long it took, a year, I was with him. Every single day with him because I was afraid that he might be tense or something or other. I was afraid for him that he will – yeah. Anyway, so *ada*, I stayed now, I stayed there once the children came, I was in my flat. I didn't have anything [both laugh]. *Ada*, I don't know how many chairs I bought, a small table, like a small table, a kitchen table, and we used to eat on the kitchen – and sometimes, you know, Eva, Eva, we were very close.

Yeah. She's my aunt, another aunt.

Huh?

From my – on my mother's side. Yeah.

Ada, David's wife. Huh. So she used to come and I used to give her dinner. You know, how, what do we do? We *ada*, there is something on in the kitchen, we used to bring it [laughs] so that we get – one of us would sit on it [both laugh]. I have only four chairs.

[Both laugh] Living very mobile.

Huh?

Mobile chairs. You moved everything, all the furniture.

I had nothing at all. Only mobile and beds.

[Both laugh] And beds. Life must have been very different for you in London compared to Iraq. [02:28:03] I mean what were main differences?

[Marcelle] *La, la, la.* Huh?

What were the main differences for you?

For me, *ada*, Iraq the same thing for me. Why? Because this I have to *ada* to make food for the children, to take care of them, there in Iraq as well.

Yeah. So there was no change in terms of your family routine. You still had to feed your children, yeah.

In my family routine. But you know, as – I didn't even know very well English, so I didn't know at all anything. So when there is something I used to go to Daddy and ask him, what shall I do this, what shall – how do I do that? Yeah, about, yeah. At that, you know, like the bank, like *ada*, I used to ask him about it. Yeah. So this is how it was.

Hmm-hmm. And what about – in Iraq you had a lot of help, didn't you? You had –

Three, three people.

Three people.

Here, I got one girl, *ada*, which she – which she – which her *ada* from, she is learning here and she came to stay with me. And she was –

Like an au pair?

Au pair, au pair. She was an au pair. And she was very, very good. Very good. She loves us, she loves, she adore us. And, you know, because I was good to them, huh, and I was open and not, yeah, and she actually she stayed two years.

Hmm, that's very good for an au pair.

Very good. She say *ada*, I am telling, she used to adore us, to adore us. She used to take Janette to the *lycée* and bring her back. And [laughs] she was beautiful, beautiful, this girl. [02:30:02] and Janette was always telling me, she said, Mama, why – Mummy, why all, everybody is looking at us? [Both laugh] And you know, when I tell – I told *ada* this, I said, you know, because you are so beautiful, she said that's why I love to be with you because I know that you are a good family, huh, and that's why I am – I don't want to be *ada*. At the end, after two years, she left and she get married in there. And she *ada*, she wrote to me every year. Every year she used to write to me.

Oh, how lovely.

Huh?

Very nice.

Very, very nice. This is how all my people, all my *ada*, they stayed too long, yeah.

Yes. Very good. So tell me what made you decide to go back to Iraq?

Huh. I had a property, I had *ada*, this er, Shamash Building.

The Shamash Building, which is quite well-known.

Well-known.

Very well-known in Rashid Street.

How do you know?

Because it has been mentioned. I mean people know it. It's a landmark.

Everybody. Huh?

A landmark in Baghdad.

Eh, in Baghdad. Shamash Building. And *ada*, Ghali you know what he –

That's your brother in law? Yeah.

Huh?

Your brother in law?

My brother in law. *Ada*, They sold it – there. It's –

His share?

Ma tamaan. And I, when I was in Baghdad I arrange to *ada* to be sold, this building to be sold. And the one at the – the one who was taking, he was taking me, taking it, he said that he is coming to England to take Ghali's as well. [02:32:05] So in one go he will take the whole – practically the whole thing. I said, take mine before. He said no, he will come here and *ada*. He came to London with *ada*, with the man who was arranging it, he had someone.

Like the lawyer?

[Marcelle] *La.*

The solicitor? The –

No, no. Anyway, the one who knew about it and he was *ada* –

Estate agent?

Estate agent. And he came with the estate agent. So when he came here and he wanted to buy it, Ghali put his foot down, he wants more from me, £3000 more from me. So I *ada* I told *ama khatun*, er, grandmother.

That's, er, my grandmother.

Ama khatun

Your gran? Er, your mother.

No, no. Ama khatun is –

Oh, my grandmother on my mother's side, yeah.

Ada, Naim's sister and Ghali's, sister. I said can – to hell with him. I will come with you. She went with me, she – and Maurice also came with me, to Ghali. He wouldn't accept. He want £3000. I said to – I will give him £3000 because the whole *ada* is *ada* I am selling the whole thing, hmm. I said, okay, I am accept. So, you know, the man who was *ada* buying the flat, buying the building, he was a Muslim. And he said – and I can't take a flat, a building, that *ada* from somebody who is instead of helping his – the peop – the youngest, the younger

who lost, the young people who lost their – her – their brother, he is taking some money.

[02:34:08] I don't think I can take *ada*, er, I buy it from him. So –

So the deal fell through?

Fell through. Afterwards *ada*, Ghadi's son in law arrange in Baghdad to be sold. And I was in here in London and he sold it. And, you know, the day that it – the minute he sold it, he put himself in *ada* and he came illegally. He went to Persia. And he –

Yeah, so he escaped from Iraq.

He escaped from Iraq.

With the money? With his money?

Eh, he took the money and –

Yes, he managed – he took the money and ran.

Not in *ada*, he send it through bank or something. The same day, he escaped. So I was now I don't know what to do.

Yeah. So you still had your share.

I – my share and Sasson share.

And Sasson share.

Sasson share. The poor Sasson share. His daughter, she didn't get the money at all.

They were in America?

They were in America. I went to Baghdad to sell it to myself and I arranged everything for the children.

What year was this? '65?

'64.

'64.

Ada. I arranged there that I will sell my share and the children's share as well. And the children, they have to go, to come to Baghdad to sign. [02:36:03] And, you know, I arranged everything and they were coming, the children were coming and they, the same day will go out. Huh. Arranged it. And all of a sudden then there was another coup.

[Laughs] Another coup.

La, not another coup. There was *ada*.

'67 war. The '67 war broke out.

'67 broke out. So how would I bring the children? So I didn't bring them. So I sold my share only.

So what happened after '67? Did you notice a big change?

Ashra, I – they want to put us in jail, all the Jews, they were *ada* eh. There is no life after that because the, you know, I remember just like that I was at a hairdresser and all of a sudden we heard some *ada*.

Shooting?

La, la, no, no. *La.* Cars and *ada*.

Hooting?

Huh?

Hooting? Hooting.

Huh?

Hooting?

No, no. Cars and everything, walk, *ada*, going on in the street. And we said, what is it? What – everybody started saying. They said, there is a war and they are sending army to Israel. So imagine, quickly, quickly I went home and finish. No, nothing, I wouldn't get out.

So you stayed at home?

At home.

You locked yourself at home?

Huh?

You locked yourself up?

Locked myself at home. And everybody did the same. So there was talk that they will put us in jail, they will *ada*, they are all, um, the Jews are all traitors, I don't know what, and they will help, they will help the Israeli, so they were very, very against. [02:38:08]

Right. So what did they do specifically to you? I mean first of all, you couldn't travel, could you?

No. And they took some people and they *ada* they hanged them.

Right. That was in '69?

'69, they hanged them.

Did you know any of the people personally who were hanged?

Of course, of course. One of them, one of them that *ada* was Rachel, *ada* Dunnoos.

Dunnoos, yeah, Elie Dunnoos was saved.

He was going with the others and they don't know like *ekt* sometimes *ekt* sometimes I don't know how he –

I think he doesn't really understand why he was saved in the end.

Spared.

Spared.

Yeah, yeah.

But you knew others.

I knew others, I knew. And very good people, very good, good people. Yeah.

For example? Did you know Albert Nunu?

La, Albert Nunu is different.

Oh, it's a different case.

Different case. It's not that time. You know, Albert Nunu had a friend, *ussmu* - I wrote it down because...

Albert Nunu was also hanged but not then?

Huh?

He was hanged.

Not hanged. They killed him.

He was just killed?

Yeah. Huh, he had a friend, a very good friend, Hassan Tukhala his name. *ada* Hassan Tukhala the government – who were – who was against the government and they want to kill him, so he left Iraq and he went to *ada* Beirut. [02:40:05] So they want him back and they know that Albert Nunu is his friend, they told him if you don't come, we'll kill Albert Nunu. And this is how they killed him.

So they killed Albert Nunu, yeah.

Albert Nunu, hmm, because –

But not – he wasn't one of those who was hanged in the square?

No, no, no, no. They killed him, they killed him.

Right. So did you know the people who were hanged in the square?

Eh, of course I know them all. But now I forgot. I should have, you know, this *ada* I wrote the name because when I remember them, I *ada* I wrote it. But I didn't remember. I don't remember –

And do you remember that day clearly when they were hanging the Jews in the square?

One man, I stayed in, at home like when you go, you make *ada* six months, seven months for people who died, they – what is it, for –

Oh, yeah, like a shiva?

Shiva. And I put it in one month, I made a *shiva* for them.

Really? Yeah.

But we were afraid like anything. And you know, when they went to fight Israel, the whole day, the whole day, on the television, on the – they said, oh, they killed so many people, they killed this, they killed that, they killed – and they're *ada* they pushed Israeli out and we were – we didn't know what will happen to us afterwards. And next, and then we were – the next day *ada* Victor, Victor, I don't – *ada* came to us in the morning. He was friendly with *ada*, with Muzli's husband? [02:42:05]

Menashe ? Yeah.

Menashe, he was friendly with Menashe. He came early, early in the morning and he used to listen to *ada* to Israeli tele – *ada*.

Radio?

Radio. We were afraid to listen because we were surrounded by *ada* by people who are – who were not Jews. He didn't have anybody at home, so he listened the radio and he told us everything is finished [laughs].

Yeah, the war is finished.

The war is – we're finished, they took them all, they killed them and – yeah. So we were happy that Israel existed. But at the end we – that's why afterwards they killed the people.

Right. So they made a big sort of spectacle of these, yeah, of these nine – I think there were nine – Jews.

Yeah. You know, *ada* he went near where they were hanged and he – they clapped and they sang and everything. Yeah.

Yeah. And did you watch this on television or no? No?

We were just like dead, I am telling you. One month –

Like a shiva.

Shiva, yeah.

And what – how did you communicate with your family in London, with your children? Could you communicate?

Ada with, er –

By writing? By letters?

Writing.

By letters. What about telephone? No?

No telephone at all.

Why? Was it cut off?

I don't even know. I don't remember actually. I don't know.

No. So you could only communicate by letter.

And now that it was too late now, that I am starting forgetting things. [02:44:01] Otherwise, if it would have been before this *ada* before, everything I knew it.

No, you know a lot. You still know a lot.

[Marcelle] *La, la, la.*

[Both laugh] So you were at home, you were more or less a prisoner in your own home.

My own. And you know what? Now I have a friend. *Huh shism 'u, ada*, the one who taught, here, bridge, Léonie.

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

She had her husband in jail and she used to take him to – every day she used to take for him some food. And the man who was *ada* inaud getting, er, the policeman there, he said, do you know Marcelle Shamash? She said yes. He said, go and tell her that let her not stay at home because there is *ada* asking about her. You know. Asking about her. Because of Wali, asking about her. So, I went to uncle, er, to Dr Yus– my uncle. I stayed three months there. He told her that once they go and look at her, er, look for her in her house, she will not be there, so she will have time to arrange somebody to help, you know. Actually, you know, I was one who help them, the Jews there. How? We had a *ada* lawyer. *Ada* this – Naim would never go when he was *ada*, never go to do things in government places. [02:46:01] He has this lawyer, he send them to do everything for him. And this lawyer had a – has – his name is Ibrahim Shahin. And he, this lawyer has a brother called, er, *ada* er, *wele-elshamakh, hai ewa*–

Don't worry about it. It'll come back to you.

Yeah. Ismail, Ismail Shahin. This is – he was the top of the policemen who took – who get *ada*, he get Baghdad under his thumb.

Right. He was the chief of police of Baghdad?

The chief of police in Baghdad.

Ismail Shahin ?

Huh? Yes, he was. So when they used to take *ada* people for – to in prison, they used to come to me, please do something. So I used to go to him. I said, please, *adouli*, they are nice people, *wada*. He said, don't worry, I will really take care of them. And you know who was the *nasib* ? The minister of interior. So he said, don't worry, I will give them very good food and I will take care of them. But they couldn't do anything otherwise. He couldn't do anything because the *ada* of –

The minister of the interior?

Interior, yeah.

Would stop them.

Stop them.

Right. Because he was more powerful?

More powerful.

Yeah. So you did try to use your connections.

I do every time, every time, somebody comes, straightaway I used to go to him. [02:48:00]

Yeah. And did you actually save anybody, do you think?

You know, I tell you, when I came from Baghdad, I came illegally, you know. *Ada* here, there was here, here Mr Goldberg, he is the American envoy to the UN, UN. He was here in London and they told me that because you have just come from Baghdad, you go and see him. And they *ada* Percy Gourgey came with me and we – I went to the hotel to see him. And I told them – him about they are taking – there are so many in prison there and they are – they don't know what they are – is happening for them, huh. And they're very, very unhappy and they're – and you have to do something because, you know, they have seven people – nine people they put in *ada*.

They hanged?

They hanged. So he said, what do you think I should do? I said, look, the French, they can help, huh. There *ada*, there is a Karim Khan, the son of, um, *ada* of Ismail, Ismaili *adouli* Aga Khan.

Oh, yeah, the Aga Khan.

The son of the Aga Khan, he's very friendly with the people in the government. You tell him. Huh. And you know, when we – I was in Baghdad they chucked all the student in university out. [02:50:09] They are not allowed –

Yeah, allowed to study.

To study. Not allowed to study. So the Spanish, you know, the Spanish embassy *ada*, arranged for all these people to give them some lessons and they said I went to –

To Spanish? Spanish lessons?

Spanish, eh.

Yeah, very good [laughs].

Spanish, huh [both laugh]. I went there to learn Spanish with them. And I said, these people because they helped, you get *ada* you get to them, the –

Yeah, you ask them for help, to release all the other people in jail? Who were in jail.

They were in jail. At the end, they did something. And, you know, there is *ada*, um, Shohet. Heskeli Shohet, he was in jail. He came afterwards to London, you know, he came to see me and he kissed my hand [both laugh]. He said it was you who took – who got us out of jail [laughs].

Jail, yeah, that's fantastic. So, you know, you did a lot. When you actually got out of Baghdad you were able to do something for them.

For them, yeah.

But let's go back a bit to 1969. All these people have been hanged, you feel you're a prisoner in your own house. What happened then?

You know, and I couldn't get out. I couldn't make – arrange anything because of my father and mother. And I said if I leave my father on his own and he is completely gone, very, very old, I can't live, I will have my, er, some –

Can I just ask you, how come – and they were in London, weren't they? [02:52:07] Why did they go back to Baghdad?

Because they have a lot of things they want to sell. They have to – their house, their – they have a lot of –

So did they go back with you, in '64?

No, no, no. No, they went there and they wrote to me, they said, come, never mind. Yeah, yeah.

Okay, so they went in the early '60s.

Yeah, afterwards. *Ashutuqa.*

Yeah, so they were – so in '69 they were very ill, or your father was ill, or he was very old.

Old. I couldn't – I said I can't take it, my conscience will not allow me, huh.

So you couldn't really leave without them.

Without them, yeah. People are going illegally and I can't – I could have gone but for my father I stayed. So one day I heard that there is a possibility that – because of this man, of this *ada* –

Can you tell me the story?

Huh?

Tell me the story.

Ashkun ?

Of the, er, of how you got your father –

Yeah. *La*, Goldberg, because he met *ada* something and he said, no, he said your – *la*, he told the Iraqi that you don't let people go? They said, no, we let them go, no. And so they gave to two family *ada*–

Passports?

Not passport, no. They said, yes. One of them is Maurice Khalastchi's auntie. And the other is my father and mother. So [laughs] it's a long story. When I was in – before I went to Baghdad I was with Selim Lawi in mountain, leaving with them. [02:54:04]

In Lebanon?

Lebanon, on –

Yes. So that was in the '50s?

La, '64.

Oh, '64. Yeah, yeah.

I was living in them, how many days I don't know because I was on my way to Iraq. One day before I went to Baghdad, a day before, I wanted to buy a shoe so I have – from the mountain I have to go to Beirut. That day was *ada* –

Was Rosh Hashanah?

How do you know?

You told me.

[Both laugh] *Rosh Hashanah*, and *ada* and Eva said she wouldn't take a car and she would have to leave me on my own. So I said, don't worry, I know where is the place, I will go there. I will go there, I went there, I couldn't find the place. And I was looking here, looking there, and there is – they had the – a wife of Luzri. He was in Iraq, minister of interior in Iraq, Luzri. And he used to come to my – to our house and play poker with Naim and he used to be very, very friendly with Naim. And she saw me there. She said, ah, Marcelle, *shukh'ayran, akhayrana*. It means you don't know what you are doing, you don't know what happened to

you. I said I will tell you the truth, I want to go and buy a shoe and I couldn't find the shop. She said come, I will take you with me. So she went and sat down waiting for me to finish. I told you that the girl, a girl, a young girl, ah. [02:56:02]

No, no, tell me again.

A young girl came, a very beautiful girl, about twenty, like that, twenty-two. She said, ah, *khala*, how are you? I said, what are you doing in Beirut? She said I have my father here, *ada* the friend of Albert her father. Yeah, I came to see him. And tomorrow I am going to Iraq. She said, oh, Marcelle is going to Iraq too. Sit together and *ada*. And the next day, we sat together and we talked and – It happened this *ada, shis'mu, [inaud]*

The friend of Albert Nunu?

I told you of it.

Yeah, I can't remember now [laughs].

Hassan Tuhala was the uncle of somebody in Baghdad who was taking care of all the Jews' things, you know, if they want to buy things, if they want to sell things, they can't take the money until he would say yes. If he wants to go to the bank, he has to give them –

Permission?

Permission, everything, huh. *Ada* the nephew of Hassan Tuhala, so when I heard that my – I can – my father could get a passport, I went to see him because I have to go and ask him for a passport. I went to see him and he said, *tal ibara*, go out.

Go? Wait outside?

Wait outside. I go outside, I said, you know, you don't know your people. My husband was very, very friendly with your uncle and, you know, and they are very nice people, my *ada* your cousin is a friend of mine. He said, *sit alli, inch'allah* [laughs].

And the cousin was this very beautiful girl you met in Beirut?

Eh, I met. It happened like that.

Yeah, by coincidence.

Coincidence. And I always I said by chance. Not chance, *shismanu*,

By luck, really.

Luck, by luck. Yeah. *Ada* and I said she's a very nice – he said, *alinch'allah*. So once he said *alinch'allah* I thought he likes her [both laugh]. And I said, do you want me to talk to her? He said, why not? Huh. Yeah, he said yes. So I said, now what do you want? [Both laugh] I said I want permission to – for my father to have a passport. He said, tell him to come tomorrow. I said, you know, he's very, very old and he can't come here because he can't – he has to go upstairs where he is, he can't go upstairs. He said, then what do you want? [Laughs] I said, I will bring him. I leave him near the porter, down, and you send somebody to take his *ada* to sign his –

Documents? Yeah.

Huh. Straightaway I went, I brought my father straightaway [both laugh]. I said, he's here your – so he sent somebody and he *ada* my father signed in front of him and that's it. This is a starting of our – so he became so friendly with me [both laugh]. He – I said, you know, I want to go too, because I have got my children there and he said, now, I can't do anything, first your father and then you. [03:00:10] Okay, I said okay. So he said where *ada* whenever there is – you can – you can't do anything, they stop you, come to me [laughs]. So from one place to another, from, um, from one place to another I went, *di di di mat'u mat'u lamasadah'*

Yeah, you died.

Went home and home and home, from everywhere.

You went from one place to another.

To another, to have their *ada* their acceptance to –

What, for the passport?

For the passport, everything. The last thing was [laughs] was the, er, *ada* tax people. I have to have a letter saying that my father doesn't – they don't – doesn't owe anything to the tax people. And they said, come tomorrow. I said, okay, I will come tomorrow but please be careful because the *ada* the Arabic rioting, it all depends on –

Where the dots are.

Dots.

Where the dots are.

Dots, yeah. I said, like *ada* my father is Bikhori, they put him Binjori. *Eh*, It's true. *Ada* I had a friend, Dunnoos, they said Dubboos.

[Both laugh] It means a pin.

A pin. It's a pin. And he said 'isn't they said *duyus*?' *ya 'anus*–

That means, er, a rascal. [03:02:02]

Huh?

A rascal? dayus

La, not rascal. He has got a bad mother, *shism'a*

Oh, oh, um, er...

[Both laugh] Anyway –

A bastard?

Bastard. He's in Arabic, *dayus*

Yeah, dayus.

Once he said *dayus*, and you don't want to say it. I started laughing my head off. And said, I like this and I will remember it all the time and *ada* [both laugh] because I love so much this joke [both laugh]. He said, now, what do you want? I said, write to me a letter [both laugh]. He wrote a letter to me and I took it.

Yeah. And it was all correct? The Arabic was correct?

Correct, everything. I looked for the *ada* correct. At the end *ada* he has to give money as well to the government. I don't know what is it called. Um, £500 each.

Really?

Yeah.

In order to leave Iraq?

Yeah, Iraq, to leave.

It's like, er, exit tax.

Exiting. Exit tax, he gave *ada* and arranged quickly, the, um, the visa. I went to *ada* to British embassy and I said I want a visa. And I went in and they told me, how come your father is going? I said I have my brothers there and he is not well and he has to do some operation and *ada* I want him to go. He said why don't you go? I said, they don't give me, huh. [03:04:01]

Yeah, the British embassy said why don't you go?

Why don't you go? I said they don't give me. I have my children there on their own. They don't give it to me, so I want my father first. And they gave it straightaway, huh. Straightaway, and do you know what they said? They said we phoned London to tell them, and London phone *ada* Maurice to tell him that he is coming, that my father is coming and he was not there, he was in Israel I think.

Oh, in Devon? I think. Oh, yeah, in Israel maybe, yeah.

Israel, who was there *ada*, *shis'mu*, *ada*, *bat* Renée,

Joyce?

Joyce Nunu, she was there. Joyce Nunu was there, she took the message and she *ada* David, when Maurice came she told him and they were expecting him. So everything was difficult. At the last minute they *ada* [sighs] and he was there, he has to take a – he was in the airport and he has to – they – I have to take a permission to go there. I said – they said '*Bikhor ? Ma ismo Bikhor.*'

That is not his name?

No, his name, *ma*, another name, I don't know. I said of course not. His name is Bikhhor and you don't know it Bikhhor. Like you don't know *ada* name of *ada* Muslim, *fl'a* this name. *ada*
[03:06:00]

How do you know it's not his name? You said, how do you know it's not his name?

Not his name. You – and I want – and I said I can't do anything. I said I want to talk to the –
to –

To the boss?

The boss. So the boss came to see me. I said, do you know *ada* the other one doesn't understand anything, huh. I said I want to talk to you because I know that you will understand [both laugh]. About this Bikhhor, I said 'how come ? he is Bikhhor.' At the end *ada, haqamas witalu ada qal li okay.*

Yeah, that's the boss? The boss signed off?

He signed and yeah, he sign. So at the end we were sitting, my Auntie Muzli and myself, we took care of them. We were looking up, our up and they were down, for them to – they were leaving.

Leaving, to catch the plane?

To catch the plane. A bus. Not the – for them. They are take – a bus was taking all the people –

All the passengers? Yeah.

To the plane. They took everybody but them two. ... *khatalu* Muzli huh, again, they are stopping, I wonder why, I wonder why. I was so unhappy, you can't imagine. At the end, it happen that they – because the bus is too high, my father couldn't do it.

[Both laugh] He couldn't get on the bus?

Huh?

He wasn't – he couldn't get on the bus, that's why? Yeah.

On the bus. But before that and they brought a taxi for him and they took him. *Ouf, labassud ghayintum.*

What a relief.

A relief. Because afterwards I could *ada* myself I could do and something. But afterwards I came and after two, three days, they *ada*, this man was against the government [both laugh] and they took him out [both laugh]. **[03:08:06]** The one who are –

Hassan ? Hassan ?

The man who helped me.

Oh, really?

Yeah.

What, er, Hassan's nephew?

Hassan's nephew. *Ada* nephew who they took.

They took him.

Everyone.

Do you know what happened to him?

La, they even they said they killed him.

He was killed, yeah.

Yeah. I don't know what happened to him. The thing is *ada* all the Jewish people were very, very happy. I was the only one—

Who wasn't – yeah, 'cos he did you a favour [both laugh]. He did you a big favour.

A big favour because he said he will try and —

Yeah. I mean how long could it have taken to get the passport if you hadn't persuaded him?

No, I don't know. I don't know how long, maybe because my father was old and I am, me— there is a lot in the middle, there is *ada* in the middle.

Yeah, yeah, it could have taken months maybe.

Huh?

It could have taken a long time.

Long time. Anyway, *ada* people are going out illegally and they heard that, aha, one day and they said everybody who is going, I am ready to go.

With them?

With them. I said without taking anything in my —

In your clothes, in your —

In my clothes. I don't want to take anything.

With the clothes on your back.

Huh?

Yeah.

Not even a bag, nothing. So one day *ada*, Rejwuan, Chaim Rejwuan, that's the husband of Amal, came to me in the morning, early morning, very, very early, it was Saturday, a Sunday, and *ada* on Sunday usually the maid goes home because she was *ada* [03:10:13]

Yeah, it was her day off.

Day off, and she was catholic, I don't know what.

Yeah, a Christian.

Christian. And I *ada*

So we got to the point where you managed to send your parents off to England with a passport, which was most unusual at the time. In fact, only two people were issued passports, a very old lady who you knew and your father. So the only choice you had was to leave Iraq illegally. And that meant through the mountains of Kurdistan and over the border into Iran. Is that right?

Yeah, yeah.

Now, what would happen if the Iraqi authorities caught you?

The people who went before me, they was caught and they put them in jail and then they, afterwards they talk about it and then they left and they, er –

They let them go?

They let them over. Let them out.

Let them out.

But, you know, huh, for me, I told you that *ada*, Amal's husband, shis'ma–

Chaim Rejwuan

Chaim Rejwuan You see, I'm forgetting. Chaim Rejwuan came to see me in the morning, very early morning. Your auntie Muzli and her husband were asleep, so I awake, I was awake, I was taking a bath. [03:12:05] So I put *ada* on my head, er, a towel, and I went down to open the door. He said where are they? Where are they? I said they are asleep. He said shh and then close the door. So I closed the door. He said, I think we're – I am starting to arrange to go out. Are you still – do you want to go? I said, any time. And he told me he has to give this money to the – I said, anything.

Anything, yeah. So how did he actually arrange for you –

To arrange with *ada* with somebody Iraqi.

A Muslim?

La, no, no, Jew. And he was arranging it. He was arranging it. And *ada* he had to go to see the – I, when I am tired I can't remember, talk –

Do you want me to stop, and come back?

One minute, I want to sit. Kurd, Kurd. He has – he saw somebody *ada* talking to the Kurd. And the Kurd said they can do it.

They can do it?

They can. Hmm. And we have to give them so much and [overtalking].

So much money?

So much money. Afterwards he said, you mustn't tell anybody. I said this is your *ada* I can't – if you don't want me, I won't open my mouth. It's your – anyway, *ada* at the end, when he said he'll go and look and see if it's on, he came *ada* we waited, we waited for him and I didn't know what to do.

This is Chaim Rejuwan you're waiting for?

Yeah. He didn't come, so I couldn't stay at home, so I went to see them, to see him. I said I will go to see him home, at his home. I went there, I wrote a note to Menashe and Muzli to say that I will be out, I will –

You were living with them at the time?

Yeah, yeah. To say that I will be out, I will come back. I didn't tell them where. So I went to them and [sighs] Amal was also very, very, er, very –

Agitated?

Agitated. I didn't –

That's Chaim's wife? Yeah.

Yeah, didn't come here, so we waited, we waited. At the end, he came and he told us that everything is arranged, he will do – he has to do this, that, he will go first himself one day ahead and then he will write a note on the next day to, er, to *ada* to tell us what to do if we – it is on or off. He is going up to the north.

Up to the – Kurdistan. Yeah.

You know, *ada* somebody who was living in front of David, *ada* the brother – the son – the father of Amal is *Ah shismam* ?

Yes, [inaud].

Khalastchi Huh. The father of Amal Khalastchi and David, he was living this opposite.
[03:16:06] So when he saw Chaim going and coming *ada* he thought –

He was suspicious?

Suspicious. So he sat the whole day waiting for Chaim as well on the *ada*. So *ada* he saw Chaim where he went, he followed him and he saw everything. The next day *ada*, the next day he went early to where the cars were.

Chaim went?

No, no.

No, no, this is, er David's father? No, David [inaud].

[Marcelle] *La, la.*

Amal's –

The man who was opposite.

Oh, the man opposite, yeah.

Opposite. You know, he is married now to, er...

Yeah. He was a Jewish fellow?

Jewish fellow.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And he saw where the cars were going from?

Yeah. So he went and he saw the *ada* the driver who is talk to Chaim and he said, huh, do you have anything? He gave him *ada* Chaim – he thought he knows Chaim, he thought it's Chaim's people, he gave them the *shisma*, So –

He gave him what? The number?

La, la, the letter of Chaim what say, what the –

Oh, okay, yeah, the note from Chaim –

No, not –

Which Chaim had, er –

Yeah, yeah.

*So he thought he was talking to Chaim's family but in fact he was talking to the neighbour
[laughs].*

Talking to David, to *ada*, to the neighbour. He gave it to Chaim. So this man went to David Khalastchi and he told him that he knows and he is going with this man. And he went.
[03:18:00]

So he went instead of you?

Huh?

He went instead of you?

Instead, eh, he went instead of us and we didn't know.

[Gasps] He took your place.

Huh, he took our place. So the next day *ada* he went to tell David. He said, *h'ek* he gave him the *ada* and –

Who gave?

Ada, the man ha shismu ?

The taxi driver?

[Marcelle] *La, la.*

No. The neighbour?

The neighbour, the neighbour. He gave *ada* the neighbour *tafani* is married to the sister of, er, Ingrid Bikhor *shsism'an* to who ?

So Taman

La, la. Ingrid.

Oh, Ingrid is – Samra, Samra.

Samra. The sister of Samra. This man is married to her. I don't know – I forgot the name.

Yeah, it doesn't matter.

Eh, *ada* he went there and finished. Afterwards, Menashe, huh, I didn't tell you about Lisette. Lisette, I talked Chaim–

That's my cousin, Lisette on my mother's side.

And – eh, *la, la*, before – when Chaim said that everything is arranged, I said, you know, I have to ask you for two people, Lisette because her parents will not leave and she will die if she was –

She was only in her twenties. Twenty-one or something?

Eh, anyway, she will die if she wouldn't –

If she doesn't leave.

She doesn't leave. If I go. So can I – I tell Lisette only. He said, no, no, no, no. [03:20:00] I said – *la, la*, before I said Lisette and my cousin, *bitcha* Yussef.

Gladys?

Gladys. These two girls I –

Two girls. They were both in their early twenties, yeah.

So he said, no, no, no, definitely not. Huh. I said, okay. Then he came at night to see me.

Yeah. This is Samra's, um –

Huh?

The neighbour? This is that neighbour, you're talking about?

No, no, no.

Or the taxi driver?

La, la. Chaim before he left.

Oh, Chaim, Chaim before he left, okay. Yeah, yeah.

Before he left he came to see me and he said, okay, only Lisette because her sister is married to his brother, *ada*, Hilda.

Hilda, that's right.

Married to his brother.

To, yeah, Freddie.

He said only Lisette. I said okay. So I said I will tell them. So next day I told Muzli and Menashe and I said –

That's Lisette's parents.

Parents. And I said you know, it's all just like my daughter, I will take care of her, I will take very, very care of her.

Good care of her, yeah.

Good care of her. So – but they wouldn't accept. And Menashe who was adamant he wouldn't –

He said no?

He went, no, no, because he said if she goes and they come to ask him where she is, he – what does – what he will say? They want him from her, er, they want her from him. So at the end, she made ana you know what I did? I took my place and I went in my room and closed the room. I didn't want to get involved. [Coughs] And I can hear the crying, the noise.

Big argument?

Big argument [both laugh]. But I don't know what they're talking but I can hear all –

You can hear the noise.

Yeah, the noise.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. [03:22:00]

At five o'clock in the afternoon I got a knock at my door. I open it and Menashe came with a bunch of flowers. He said this is for you. I said poor Lisette, now I know that Renée, she has accepted that I will take her with me. Yeah. So we took Lisette with us.

Right, yeah. But he was more worried about what he should say to the police than about, you know, what would happen to Lisette if she had to stay on in Iraq.

Yeah. But later when this man took the *ada* of Chaim, the – Chaim's letter, he didn't want to let us go. Not me, not – everybody. So they came, him and David Khalastchi, they came to

see me, to see us. I was at Amal. I slept at Amal because I didn't want *ada* er, I stayed in – at Amal. I didn't want to leave her on her own. So they came to us in the morning, early morning, and they told us about this Iraqi man that he took the thing and they're afraid now to leave us with this driver.

A-ha, yeah.

Yeah.

So what happened next?

[Coughs] You know, *ada ana* was not talking at all. I was – I was –

So Chaim had gone off. He'd gone. Chaim had gone to Kurdistan. Chaim Rizwan had already disappeared, he'd gone.

Disappeared, yeah.

And this other fellow who lived opposite had taken your place.

Yeah, my place.

Your taxi, and gone off to Kurdistan, leaving you there, yeah.

There. [03:24:00] So Amal put her other and she said, I want to go and see the driver. She went to see the driver. He wouldn't talk to her. He said, I don't want to take you, I don't want to *ada* because this man came in and I am afraid that they might know that I am taking people and things like that. I don't want to take you. Go and talk to my cousin here, the other driver. So she talked to him, *ada* and said – anyway, come tomorrow and we'll see. So she came back and she said I am going. I am going because Chaim is there. If we don't go, he will be – he will be out of his mind. Yeah. So I didn't – *ada*. Once she said I am going, I start collecting the things to put it in [laughs].

All your belongings? No.

Not – no, I didn't take anything. The children's things, I was collecting. So Menashe said, 'yuh, *ada*, the wise lady, who talk. Why don't you talk?' I said, you know, whatever Amal says, I am doing it the same. This was – he wanted to say no, I don't want to go or something [both laugh]. But Amal, er, whatever Amal decide, I will do it. So [laughs] they –

So he didn't say anything?

Can't stop anything [both laugh]. So next day *ada* David Khalastchi came to fetch us.

That's Amal's brother?

Huh? Amal brother, to take us to the driver. So we went there and the driver accepted us.

Yeah. [03:26:00]

We were all like that, huh.

What, covered in, er, what, disguised as an Arab?

[Marcelle] In *aba, aba, aba*.

Arab lady?

Like Muslim. Yeah, like in –

In an abayah, yeah.

Abayah. I was – and my name was Khadijah [both laugh]. And Amal, I don't know what her name was. And *ada* we went there.

And what did you take with you? Nothing? No – a suitcase?

Nothing. But Amal, she had children and she took some and I carry it for her, one I carry for her. So I went, we went there, they put us in the car, *ada*, near us, we were Lisette, Amal and myself and *ada* his sister and *ada* the young man, Fuwad, I don't –

Fuwad ? Yeah, yeah. He was a baby, wasn't he?

Baby, baby, baby. And –

Yasmeen, Fuad and Salman.

At the back, and we went *ada* and the elder one, he –

Yeah, Salman?

Salman, he sat near the driver and there was a Kurd, a Kurd also a passenger. They don't – we don't – the driver doesn't know him and we don't know him, the passenger.

So it was a very big taxi, then.

La. Two near the taxi and three –

Three at the back, okay.

At the back. And the baby. And then we told Salman, you never – you mustn't talk. *A'madan*

Yeah. And he was how old, Salman?

Salman was about, er, *mah'af*–

Five years old, something like that?

Yeah, like that. Anyway –

Why didn't you want him to talk?

If he talks to the Kurd, Kurdish *ada*, *khatash khayek*, the Kurd man, *yaofah* the Kurdish man, he knows what –

He would know he was Jewish? [03:28:03]

Jewish, and we are going to –

He would know he's going to Kurdistan.

Yeah. So we went. *Ada* Fuwad, he see only – he couldn't see his mother, with *aba*, and all of us with *aba*..

She was covered in an abayah, yeah.

Yeah. He started –

Screaming?

Crying, like that, crying, crying [imitates crying]. Huh. Believe me, like that, his face was.

[Laughs] His face was like a tomato.

Huh, tomato. Anyway, we couldn't do anything. We were passing. Somebody stop us, *ada* two soldiers stop us. They look here and here and they look, they saw this *ada*

Screaming.

Screaming, screaming, a baby. And they thought we are *ada* the Kurdish wife [both laugh].
So they let us pass. After that Amal put down a bit her *aba* and *ada* he started –

He calmed down?

Calmed down.

'Cos he recognised her, yeah.

He recognised her. And he was dead tired, he slept. The next stop, 'cos – so they stop us in the middle. The next stop they saw somebody lying like that, a baby lying like that [laughs].

A baby asleep, fast asleep.

Fast asleep. They let us go.

[Both laugh] The baby was your – was –

Actually when I –

He saved you, yeah.

When I see, I see *ada* Amal's son, I said, you let us be free. [03:30:05] You free, make us.

Yeah. So if you'd been stopped and they found out you were Jews –

They will take us back.

They would have taken you back and put you in jail?

And put in jail, yeah. Anyway, at the end we went. In the middle of *ada* he lost his way. The driver lost his way. What, in the middle, he doesn't know where to go, which way to go because he went not on the main road, he went inside a desert. So we start and *ada* talk, we can't talk because of the man *ada*.

So you couldn't actually tell him anything, you couldn't give him advice.

We couldn't – what shall we give him advice? We don't –

You don't know the way either, yeah.

So at the end he saw a very small light from far, he went to the light, it was a *ada* farmer's cabin. And he asked the farmer and he told him how to go.

Yeah. And you were in the same taxi all the time?

All the time. So *ada* we went and then we came to *la la* not this one. We went to the taxi with him all the time, it's not there or that way, we didn't know how to walk. After that we went to this taxi driver home. It's one room, everything is there, but they were very clean. They –

Yeah. He lived in one room? [03:32:01]

One room.

He was a Kurdish man?

A Kurdish man. Everything is there. And he said he left us there and he said he will go and find out what he will do, he will call the people who are responsible to take us. And his wife made some food to us but who will eat, we said –

You didn't feel like eating?

No, eating. He said – he was telling us, eat, it's not right, it's not *ada* you have to taste it. She will be angry. She ate [both laugh] that night and we didn't, we couldn't put it in our mouths.

Yeah. You were so nervous?

Nervous. So afterwards the man who was taking us to – huh, we were in Erbil. The man from Erbil to the top, to the –

So you had a different driver?

Different driver, different everything. This one *ada* got –

He lost his way?

He lost his way. Yeah. Because I remember we could talk because you said you couldn't talk, we could talk. We said – we told him we'll do anything for him if he will find a *ada* where we are and things like that. Anyway, we went, we arrived to a place at night and *ada* and we were stopped, the driver stopped. And they were talking between them. There was another one of them, with him. Two, there were. They were talking, talking, talking between them. We didn't know what they were saying. It *ada* they don't know the place, so they found this –

This farmhouse? [03:34:.02]

Farmhouse.

With the light.

And *ada* and he took us to the hotel, to – no, to the –

There was a hotel?

Not hotel, no. To, er, *ada* where we met Chaim on the mountain. We met Chaim and this man, the Iraqi man, also –

Oh, the one who took your place?

The one who took –

He was waiting there too.

Yeah, waiting with Chaim. *Ada* so Chaim was doing the *ada*, he said *kaka ma'af, ha shismu* ?

Swear word?

Huh?

No?

Sir.

Sir?

In *ada* mister.

Yeah, mister, in, er –

In Kurd.

Kurdish, yeah.

Kurdish. He says, I forgot the name, *kakat ada*. And I thought *sudoka ada kakat ala'da al yahudi*.

[Both laugh] You thought it was some Kurdish nobleman.

Kurdish, yeah [laughs]. So another taxi took us to the frontier and the frontier was closed, they took us to a hotel, sort of a hotel. You know, the hotel, it has only bed without anything.

No sheets?

No sheet, nothing. No, nothing. Nothing. So we stayed like that, very, very cold. Imagine, in December and on the mountain.

Yeah. So it was very cold.

Very, very cold. At the end, in the morning we – they took us to the frontier and we went.

Yeah. But there was a road that, um, all the way? [03:36:00] Because I heard that part of the journey, you had to do it on a mule or –

La, la, it's another – it's another journey from ada. The mule is from south, not from ada Erbil.

Ah, okay, so some people had a different route.

Another, yeah, another, yeah.

And they had to get out of the taxi and get on the mule [laughs].

And then they took us there and then the next day we crossed the frontier.

Yeah. And why did the Iranians let you in?

Because they had *ada* arrangement, they –

With who?

With Israel.

Right, so there was an understanding with Israel that – to allow you into Iran.

Allow us. You know, actually my mother – everybody knew that we are on our way out. But my mother, we didn't get in touch with her. She knew as well. How she knew? Auntie Georgette phone her. She said Marcelle is out. How did she *ada* because – it's funny, because somebody [laughs] – it's another story. You know, there was *ada Tuti*. her – *ada*

Chitayat

Daughter of Louise, not Tuti, her sister

Yeah. Ruth.

La,ma Ruth. Anyway, *ada* older sister, she was getting married in England and I was – we were invited. And I was sitting on a table with Albert next to me. **[03:38:07]** Albert.

That's your brother, Albert? Yeah.

My brother, Albert, next to me. And the other one is somebody else, Shamash. What, who is he, I thought. I don't know. At the end, he came. It was somebody who *ada* Israeli, er, ambassador of Israel in, er –

Iran?

No, in Belgium. Huh. In Belgium. He knew everything. He came to sit near me and he said, Shamash? I said yes. Marcelle Shamash? I said yes. I said how do you know my name? He said when you went out, I was on the mountain.

[Both laugh] He was the ambassador.

La, la, not – he was working.

Working in the embassy.

But afterwards he became the ambassador.

Ah, okay.

He said, when you came in, I was in – up on the mountain. And this is how Auntie Georgette knew that I am out. My mother didn't know because I didn't –

No, 'cos she heard from him.

From him, because he phoned that they're out, she's out.

How funny.

Oh, isn't it?

Yeah, yeah. And he recognised who you were at this wedding?

At – he – my name, Marcelle Shamash, he recognised, yeah.

He recognised it. How funny. And this was a few years later you met him?

Yeah, yeah.

Yeah. How lovely. So you just crossed the border into Iran. What happened after that?

The police came to talk to us and we said we are refugees, Jewish refugees from Iraq.

[03:40:03] And he said *ahlan wa sahlán* in Persian.

Yeah, yeah, welcome.

Welcome in Persian, yeah, he said in Persian. And he said we'll have, er, here is too far away to take a train to go to, er, what –

Tehran?

Tehran, to Tehran. You see, I forgot the name of –

It's okay, don't worry.

[Both laugh] Yeah, to Tehran. We have to take you into – in a bus. And the bus will take about twenty – fourteen hours. I said, okay. We went in the bus and we went to the place where we could take the train. Yeah. So we took a train and we had a policeman with us.

Yeah. And all that was organised for you?

Organised for us, yeah.

By Israel or by the –

By Israel I think. Yeah. So *ada* we arrived in Tehran. We couldn't see Chaim, we couldn't – no, we couldn't see Eva.

Yeah. Eva was my other aunt, who lived in Iran.

Live in Iran. We couldn't see because – so we phone her and she didn't know that we are coming. So she run like mad and she came.

Yeah. So it was a surprise for her.

Yeah, yeah. She came. She knew that something, sometime will happen, yeah. So *ada* she – Amal stayed with Eva, I stayed with *ama* [coughs] *ama* Mess'uda. [03:42:00]

Er, yeah.

It's the sister of Amal Yumir.

Oh, okay, yeah, yeah. And she also lived in –

Somekh.

Yeah, in Tehran.

She lived there. Her son is Sasson Somekh. He was interned in a –

Yeah, a concentration camp.

Concentration camp, yeah. We stayed there but the whole time we were at David, er

David and Eva.

And Eva . You know –

And so you managed to organise all the paperwork to get to England. How did you do that?

You know, when I was there they said the British embassy is asking about you, asking about me. So I went to see them. You know, I took – I didn't have anything with me. I took *ada* [laughs] *shisamanu*, a card, *asfa*, *ah'ma-mah'ma* ?

Er, a red card?

La, la. Card. [inaud]

Yeah, don't worry, don't worry. No, you had a laissez-passer?

[Marcelle] *La, la, laissez-passer.*

[Laughs] Sorry.

Ada I had no bag, so I took ada a –

Suitcase? No suitcase. A handbag?

Not handbag. ada something to carry with, to carry. It's in –

A carrier bag?

Carrier bag, yeah. In paper.

Yeah, a paper bag.

Yeah, paper bag. I took it and I went, I took ada, I went to the embassy and I told them my story. [03:44:00] They were really very amazed how – what – how we did. And they were –

They were amazed at the way you left?

Yeah, amazed how we went, how we how shisma. And about the laissez-passer, they told us, they told me. I said we could have given you a laissez – English laissez-passer but ada but we have to write to London and it will take time. Here, in two weeks they are giving a laissez-passer. The minute you get it, we come, er, you come and we'll give a visa. So –

So that's how you got in, got –

But how I get the *passer*, the *ada*, *laissez-passer*, we have to go to the government and we have to tell them all the story, how. At the time, the Shia in Iraq, they were very, er, *ada*, Saddam was against them and they were all the time –

Persecuted?

Persecuted. And he *ada* send him away, send them away. Every day, buses, I don't know how many buses, Shia will come. At the time, when we went to see the police in Iran to get the *passer*, there was a Shia lady. She started telling us, oh, Jews, huh, you see what you have done, see what Israel has done to us, *ça ou ci*, what –

What, they were blaming Israel? Why were they blaming Israel?

Blaming, *la*, blaming everything, everything. But Jews were – yeah. So we were flabbergasted. She was with her brother, her brother was inside. [03:46:01] He came in and he saw how she was behaving and became very *ada* to her. He said, come on, let – he took her out.

Yeah, don't talk like that.

Not talk like that, yeah. But we were really, really amazed. What we have done to her, to get all this?

And this woman may have never seen a Jew in her life maybe. You never know.

Anyway –

So you were in Iran and you got the laissez-passer.

So they gave us *laissez-passer* because the Shah was with the Jews and that's why everything was free, very quick. Yeah. And really in two weeks I got it.

Fantastic.

Yeah. And, you know, during that two weeks I went to buy things.

Yeah, yeah. Now, when you left Iraq, were you able to take any money with you or anything at all?

Iraq? Nothing at all. Nothing, nothing.

Now, all that, er, the property you went to sell, did you manage to sell any of it?

Ada my share on it.

Share, yeah, of the Shamash Building.

Shamash Building, my share, not the children. Children, they couldn't come because – I told you why they didn't come.

Yes, yes, yes, because the war broke out.

The war broke out, hmm.

Yeah, yeah. And what about the house you lived in? What happened to that?

My father is *ada* he sold it. He sold it. And we lived in, er, next door to *amah* Khatun. On the – this building was my grandfather, next door to *amah* Khatun. And *amah* Khatun. bought it. You know, why –

That's my mother's mother, amah Khatun [03:48:00]

Yeah, *amah* Khatun bought it because my grandmother dead, everybody dead, nobody was there, she bought it.

Yeah, and she was still living in Iraq, wasn't she?

Still living, yeah.

At the time, she was there, yeah.

Yeah, yeah, she was next door and we were living in – when my father was living in – next door, *ada*.

Yeah, yeah. And what else? Was there any other property which you managed to sell? Or –

You know, I –

Or put it the other way, was there property which you had to leave behind?

Of course, of course.

Like...?

Like shares of children of *ada* the –

Shamash, in the Shamash Building?

So many things, huh, the lands.

So much land. How much? What land did you leave?

I don't know. Dad's side, I don't know.

No. Is it the land in Basra which was with the date palms?

Land, I don't know land.

Land, yeah. There was a lot of land that was abandoned. I mean –

What did you say about Basra?

Basra, there were date palms, date plantations.

Everywhere is *ada* a big, you know, from Basra to Iran, all was my grandfather's.

Yeah. You don't remember how many dunams or whatever? No. But all that was lost.

Lost, lost. I don't know. My uncles took care of them, not me. You know who is after me now? Alan, Alex. You have the number? I said nothing. I came out when I couldn't take anything.

Yeah. And how many years had you been in Iraq, trapped?

All my life.

No, no, no, I mean that last period when – from '64 to 1970. [03:50:00] So when you actually left through Kurdistan, it was six years. You hadn't seen your children for six years.

Yeah.

So you came back to England. How did you feel when you came back?

You know, as if – when I came back and I saw them in the airport, I feel as if I have taken a bath. Water, water, water coming down. So very, very not well. Yeah.

You felt sort of sweaty and –

Sweating, sweating, water coming.

And, um, but sweating because you were so, so [ringtone in background] – sorry. It's all right, don't – yeah, you just arrived from Iran and you broke out in a sweat when you saw your children.

I became very, very – *hek* I was very, very emotional. And then slowly, slowly – I didn't have anything to wear. Slowly, slowly, Diana took me to buy things.

That's your daughter in law, yeah.

New things, yeah.

And you had to settle back into your life?

Of course I had to set – first of all, I didn't have a place until I got my place downstairs. So I started buying things, like chairs, like beds, like – anythings, huh. So slowly, slowly. At the beginning I didn't care about anything [laughs] only the – I want them in, with me, the children with me. Hmm.

So looking back, what do you think you would have done differently? [03:52:05] If you had your life again, how would you have done it differently?

Nothing.

Nothing?

No.

You don't regret anything?

[Clicks tongue]

Do you regret the six years trapped in Iraq?

Of course, of course. You know, I used to have letters from Jeanette. He said, now this girl, the girls *ada* needs their mother. I *ada* I am on my own. You know, I read and cried the whole time.

And when you came to London, did you feel like a refugee?

[Marcelle] *La, la.*

No.

My home, my children, I am not.

Yeah, yeah. And the first time did you feel like a refugee, when you came in the '50s?

Of course, of course.

Yeah. Then you did.

Yeah, of course I did, a refugee completely.

And how did you feel towards England?

I was happy because they were nice to me and they let me in. They were nice, hmm.

Yeah. And you did mention that once you'd been back in England, in 1970 you started working for those people who were still in jail in Iraq.

Yeah.

And you went to see Ambassador Goldberg and you told him what to do.

[Both laugh] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And he was very, very helpful, really. And, you know, he said *ada* take, er, do write a letter and you go and take it to the Iraqi embassy now. He told us. So we wrote a letter *ada* what is it called? The letter where, er, to go to the embassy to tell them what we wanted.

Yeah, I don't know.

Anyway, and we took – we wrote a letter and we *ada* we took it, me and *ada* er, *shisamanu*.
[02:54:05] You see, I can't remember anything.

It's okay [laughs]. [Pause] Looking in your diary here.

And Percy Gourgey.

Oh, yeah, Percy Gourgey.

Two of us, two of us.

Yes, he was campaigning on behalf of them, the Jews, yeah.

Of Jews. That's the two of us. We took the letter and we gave it to –

Like a petition?

Petition.

It was a petition, yeah.

Petition and we took it, yeah.

And what did the petition say?

I forgot now.

Yeah. But release the people who are in jail.

Release, jail, yeah.

In 1970, this was, yeah.

I am telling, this Shokhet, came and kissed my hand. He said if it wasn't you, they wouldn't have released us.

Yeah. Yeah, that's wonderful. And how do you feel about everything that happened to you in Iraq? 'Cos you went through some very bad times.

Very, very bad time. I don't take it *ada* I am always open, open, open. I am not –

You don't feel bitter?

Bitter, no. Of course.

You don't hate anybody?

La, la. But of course in – I don't like Iraq now. Before, before I went, the last time, I used to say, no, I want to go to Iraq. Now, tell me go to Iraq, never again.

Really? So if tomorrow somebody said you are – you can go back to Iraq –

I don't want to go and I don't want to see anything about, I'm completely out of it.

Out of it.

Yeah.

Yeah. And what about Iraqi culture, the language? [02:56:03] How do you feel about that?

You know, all the languages have got their culture. Every one. *Ada* you know, French, they have wonderful culture, English, er, Iraq as well. Iraq really, really they are – in Arabic they are very, very good [coughs].

But some people feel nostalgia, you know, for Iraq and they feel it's their culture.

No nostalgia. Now I am telling you, before, before I went at '64 I felt nostalgia. I wanted to go, I wanted to see. After that, after what I [coughs] – I went through for six years, I don't want to see their face. But, you know, I had very, very good friends, very, good friends, like *Doori bint Galani* [[coughs]].

Now, he sounds related to Rashid Ali, [both laugh] Al-Galani . Yeah.

La la, haku, bat Sissa. My best friend, she used to come to England maybe so at my place, she wants to stay in my place.

So these were Muslim friends who were very good friends of yours.

Muslim, very good friends. You know, she brought everything for me. I had some –

Ah, this is Al-Makhderi ?

Huh?

Al-Makhderi ?

Al-Makhderi.

Yeah.

I, you see, I am forgetting, Al-Makhderia. They are very, very good friends.

They are very nice people.

Very nice. You know, they send for my father, the government send for my father because he sold his house and they wanted to see where is the money. [03:58:00] So my father took it out of course. So what do we do? They want him to go there, and I went instead of him. Did I say that I –

Yes, you already told the story, yeah.

I went instead of him and in the morning, early morning I went to see the *khederi*, at four o'clock in the morning. He said, huh, what happened? I told them they are sending for my father and they want to see if there – he said – I said can I say that *ada* I owe you the money – he owe you the money and he gave it to you? He said, sit down, we'll talk it over and we'll – so that our *ada* our speech will be *ada* exactly the same. And this is how the *al-khederi* are.

Yeah, yeah, very nice people.

Very nice.

So when you think of Iraq, do you think of just your nice friends, your good friends?

Yeah.

You don't think of the government or –

Government, I can't take them. But all my good friends, my good friend, when I was young I had a good time, when I was with Naim, when Naim was *ada* member of parliament I had a

good time. I used to go with him everywhere to the – to see the King, to see *ada* everywhere I used to –

And what do you remember of the King, for instance?

Especially *ada* his *ada* his uncle. The King was very young.

Yeah. He was only eighteen when he died.

Yeah, when he died. Especially –

Yeah, so the Regent, you remember the Regent?

Regent. You know, *ada* on the *ada* when we were in my – on the – on the – when the children were with me in Iraq and we were sitting sometimes in the morning on the steps and the Regent would pass by. [04:00:11] and he used to do, hello –

Yeah, he used to wave?

Wave to us. Mama, how did you know the Regent? How did you know? How?

[Both laugh] But did you actually speak to him?

Yeah, of course.

Yeah. And what was he like?

La, nothing. [overtalking].

He was like – he was –

What can I speak? What do I speak? Nothing. Hello, how are you?

Was he an impressive man, or not very?

Ali wali ?

Not very [laughs]. Let him go to hell, you just said.

[Both laugh] Yeah, yeah.

Well, I think he did go to hell, didn't he? Well, his son did.

Yeah, yeah.

Or his nephew. Yeah. So, well, you have no regrets for that period of Iraq?

No, no.

You know, under the King.

No. At the beginning, yes, before he got engaged, you know, I was in *ada* in Turkey, when he came to be engaged and all the government was there, all the ministers, everything, were all there. And he got engaged, this is I like what I saw. Yeah, yeah.

And did you know Nuri Said, the prime minister?

I – not – to talk to him, no. But Naim knows him. You know, when they used to kill the Jews, sometimes they used – like a cousin of my father got killed. He was going out from the club and they killed him.

What, just like that?

Just like that.

What, just for no reason?

Huh?

For no reason?

No reason.

And this would happen quite a lot, or what? Or just –

Seven, eight people like that happen, huh.

When? Where? How?

And I am telling you, *ada* the *ada* so Naim in parliament asked Nuri Said, he said why you let people, Jews, be killed? [04:02:06] Huh. He said don't ask me, ask *ada* ask Israel [gasps].

Hmm. But people in the street would kill Jews, just –

Yeah, yeah.

Just like that.

But we don't know. They were – they are killed, and that's it.

Yeah, mysterious.

Yeah, they – huh. Mystery. And so he asked in parliament, he said why you let Jews be killed like that? He said don't ask me, ask Israel.

Ask Israel, yeah. Yeah, and do you think things will ever change in Iraq? Do you think that now that there's democracy, do you think the Jews would ever go back?

I don't think so. I don't think so. You know, maybe the one who are very, very – they don't have here work or something, yeah. I don't think they will go back.

No. You don't think the place will change in any way?

First of all, if there is *Shi'a* and *Sunna* between them –

Yeah, they'll be fighting.

Fighting. You know about Saddam Hussein, I told you the *ada* the – what is the name of the family I told – you said?

Al-Makhderi?

Al-Makhderi. They have a daughter. You know, they were taking the house, their house, so she went to see Saddam.

So Saddam was taking their house? Taking the –

No, no, the government.

Oh, the government was –

She went to see Saddam. She said he was so good, he was so good. Straightaway he told the *ada* not to take it. And she said if it wasn't for Saddam, they will be – have been killing Shi'a and Sunna and –

Really? Yeah. So they were pro-Saddam, the, er, the Al-Makhderi.

Because the Sunna, the Sunna.

Because they were Sunna, Sunni, yeah. [04:04:07]

Yeah.

Right. And they supported Saddam.

Saddam, yeah.

Right.

They said it would have been a massacre.

Yeah, yeah. And –

And now we don't know what will happen.

Happen, no.

Yeah.

But now looking back on your life, you're happy with the way things went? You're happy with where you are now?

Of course, of course. I am happy with it. Yeah. But I had a very tough life. A really tough life.

You did. You certainly did. Can I ask one last question? And that is, those hours of boredom when you were trapped in your house in '67, '68, '69, how did you pass the time?

Reading. And, you know, with *ada*, Muzli and Menashe they have a garden and Menashe likes to put some flowers in, so we started learning all the –

The gardening?

La, all the names of the flowers.

The flowers [both laugh]. So you must be the expert on flowers.

Now I forgot everything [laughs]. *Ada* we, everything we know, the yellow one, the red one, the thing this one, what is it called. So there is one yellow one, Menashe couldn't remember the name, so one day I was reading a book and they were saying that it was at university and they had flowers on the wall, yellow flowers on the wall and er, they said their name. So I went to Menashe and Muzli ah, I found the name of this flower [both laugh]. It's something outstanding [both laugh]. [04:06:00]

Very good, yeah.

Yeah, but, you know, also we didn't have good time. You know, the war with Israel, very bad time. We didn't – Saddam came, we didn't know what they are going to do, they could take us, or kill us, I don't know. We can't, er, go out, we can't, you know.

Yeah. What were you – what did you think would happen if you went out, if you left your house?

I was afraid that how do I know.

Yeah. You think they would, er –

They would remember me and they will do something for me. I don't want to get into their – remembers [ph].

Yeah. Okay. I think we'll stop there.

Okay.

That was the second part of the interview with Marcelle Shamash on the 10th of May.

[04:07:01]

[End of transcript]