



## Val's Story, Chapter 5

In 1944, the situation was radically changed. The Russians, the Communists were winning and the Germans were retreating. As the Russian Red Army was approaching the borders of Lithuania the Nazis had to decide what to do about the remaining, the rump of the Jewish population. There were only about 10 or 12 thousand left alive, what to do with them. To finish us off or to take us to Germany? Just at that time there was a shortage of labour, they were bringing in people from Auschwitz. There was a shortage of labour in Germany itself and they decided to take us to Germany to build new underground factories for the production of the brand new Messerschmidt jet fighter because the facilities above ground, the factories above ground were bombed out. So our fate was to be taken in cattle wagons, crowded like Ibi. It was a journey of 3 nights and 3 days and we arrived in Bavaria, in southern Germany, into a satellite camp of Dachau. As soon as we entered the camp the frisking, the searches started. The prisoner who searched me was a German prisoner, was a criminal, and he took everything away from me, all my documents, all my papers, all my pictures, and he gave me back the picture of my mother. Unfortunately just at that time an SS guard walked by and he noticed it. He rebuked the German criminal and he told him that won't do at all, he might still think he's a human being. He took the picture and tore it up. So all connections to my past were gone, finished. I got a prison garb, striped uniform, I got my new identity sewn into my jacket. You see in Lithuania they were killing us alright but we still had our documents, we still had our name, we still had our identity. All that vanished in the German concentration camp. In fact life was very cheap. We were worked to death and then replaced by a new lot where we came from. Within a fortnight or three weeks we were like walking skeletons. It was practically impossible to survive and do back-breaking work on the starvation rations we were getting and that's where we lost our remaining ghetto prisoners which managed to stay alive in the ghetto. Most of them died in that German concentration camp.

In fact it was so bad we were completely demoralised. We were drained of all our moral foundation within that one last year in that German concentration camp. We became completely indifferent to the fate of our fellow prisoners. All we worried about survival. The survival instinct kept us going or kept some of us going and the suffering of our fellow prisoners did not affect us. We were callous, and we were selfish.