

Eva and Moritz Zelmonovits

Haya Shaked (born Eva Zelmonovits) and Moritz Zelmonovits were born on June 6, 1932 in Ujfeherto, Hungary. They were two of five children of Michael and Rosi Zelmonovits. Michael was a merchant and peddler, and he headed a very religious family. In early June 1944, the family was deported to Auschwitz. Eva and Moritz arrived on their twelfth birthday.



Rosi Zelmonovits with her children (left to right): Moritz, Volwi, and Eva, 1943 (courtesy of USHMM)



Eva and Moritz Zelmonovits, 1943 (courtesy of USHMM)

Josef Mengele greeted the new arrivals looking for twins, but Rosi did not want to be separated from her children. As a result, Eva and Moritz accompanied Rosi and youngest brother, Volwi, as they were sent to the left. At the entrance door to the gas chamber, Eva's mother had a change of heart and told Eva and Moritz to go back and tell Mengele they were twins. Eva never saw her mother and youngest brother again.

Eva and Moritz joined a few other sets of twins and were taken for showers, tattooed and assigned barracks. Eva went to the sick rooms and Moritz to the Roma camp. However, they saw each other occasionally during some genetic tests. They were not subjected to many experiments and were treated much better than most prisoners. They did not have to report for daily roll call, for example, which was a terrifying ordeal for most prisoners.

As Soviet troops approached Auschwitz in January 1945, Eva was among those prisoners forced on a death march to Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany. Moritz remained in Auschwitz and was liberated by the Soviet army on January 27, 1945. After liberation he began searching for surviving family members, and after a tip about a Hungarian man who was in the hospital, he found their father. Michael Zelmonovits weighed only 97 pounds, but Moritz helped him recuperate, even though he himself was also weak and suffering from a lung condition.

After the war ended, Eva returned to their hometown, where she reunited with her father and Moritz. Michael Zelmonovits sold their apartment, and they moved to Budapest with help from the Joint Distribution Committee. Eva resumed her studies at a religious girls' school. Moritz, however, stayed in a JDC-sponsored hospital to recover. He lived there from 1945 to 1956. Their father, meanwhile, remarried in 1946.

In 1949 Eva decided to immigrate to Israel as part of a Youth Aliyah group. Her older brother Shlomo, who had emigrated shortly after his liberation from Auschwitz, heard from a friend that his sister had arrived in Israel and found her. In 1956 Michael and Moritz Zelmonovits immigrated to Canada. Moritz later moved to New York.

Eva's tattoo number: A 5419

Moritz's number: A3102