

Ester Fiszgop

Ester Fiszgop was born on January 14, 1929, in Brest, [Poland](#), to Abraham and Rachel Fiszgop. She and her younger brother Beniek were very close. Her father and grandfather owned a lumberyard together. Ester and her brother attended a Zionist school and each year during Hanukkah, the students would have parades to the synagogue. Ester remembered that often during the parades, Polish citizens would throw stones at them because they were Jewish.

In 1939, the [Soviet Union](#) occupied Eastern Poland as part of the [Nazi-Soviet](#) pact. Two years later, in 1941, German forces seized control and passed [anti-Jewish laws](#). At this time, Ester went to visit her grandmother who lived in Drohiczyn, a nearby town. Shortly after her arrival, Drohiczyn was made into a [ghetto](#) where Jews were forced to wear the [Star of David](#) and barter for food. Before the ghetto was liquidated, Ester and her great aunt and two cousins managed to escape. Ester's grandmother, however, was taken to the [Treblinka extermination camp](#) and killed.

In the fall of 1942, Ester and her great aunt and cousins fled and hid in the woods. They made contact with Leokadia Jurczuk, a Polish woman they knew who agreed to hide them outside Drohiczyn. Leokadia took the four of them to her sister-in-law's farm and hid them in a hole under a pigsty. After six months, they were asked to leave because townspeople were becoming suspicious. After they separated to find different hiding

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places, Ester wandered by herself and slept in barns or in the woods at night to avoid detection. Every so often, she would return to Leokadia and ask to sleep in her attic. Ester struggled to survive, stealing food and water wherever she could find it.



In August 1944, Soviet forces entered Poland, and Ester was [liberated](#). Soon after, she learned that her father had been killed by the [Gestapo](#) a few years before and her mother and brother had been taken to Treblinka when the Brest ghetto was liquidated. Ester reunited with her cousins and great aunt, and they all returned to Drohiczyn. They stayed there for a short while and then fled to [Italy](#). On the way there, in [Budapest](#), Ester met her future husband,

Jacob Zimmerman. Ester stayed in [displaced persons' camps](#) throughout Italy for the next four-and-a-half years. Then, in November 1949, Ester immigrated to New York City and lived with her uncle who had moved there before the war. Jacob came over shortly after, and they married in 1951.

Ester studied at Brooklyn College at night and had three children while she was in school, Rena, Alvin, and Bennett. She continued her education and graduated from the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1963 and became a doctor. At the time of her interview in 1998, Ester had four grandchildren, Adam, Matthew, Nathan, and Joseph.