From time to time someone burst into a quiet cry that would stop immediately when the rest of the people who were praying, stopped to look quizzically at him. They looked to him to ask why the crying? What is the point crying for the dead? At a time when we should envy them? Aren't we the living also sentenced to death, waiting for it to come, hour after hour day after day?

The young chazan (the good chazanim were killed in the aktion) sings Kol Nidrei, whilst the people praying consumed by their past memories. They are not joining him in his recital of their old beloved tune, as in the days before the bloodshed. When the Chazan sang, "may it be forgiven for the entire congregation of the children of Israel " only a few people from the congregation repeated the verse after him, letting the chazan continue his personal prayer. When the Chazan recites the blessing "Shechiyanu": "who has kept us alive", wild cries from the corner of the shed crossed the room exclaimed: "It's a lie! It's a lie!"

The people praying began to strike the wooden benches with their fists saying "oy, oy" a desecration of God's name - quiet, not at Kol Nidrei, quiet yet, the man who had disturbed the prayers did not take any notice. Rather, he raised his voice and with his cry silenced the congregation. He stopped them from striking the wooden benches.

The man is Reb Chaim, a straight and God-fearing man, who for his sixty years of life was careful in keeping all the mitzvot. He did not turn away from the Torah and his faith.

During the bitter day of the last massacre, his whole family was taken away from him. In a miraculous way, he stayed alive and could not explain to himself how it happened, that he, the eldest of all - survived, whilst his young sons and daughters were led to a death pit behind the parameters of the city. From that day on, probably something (turned) in his mind. He started to...
curse the name of the God of Israel, denouncing principles that were holy to him, all of his life. Those who were surviving in the Ghetto understood this change. Ghetto inhabitants were not surprised that people went mad. Reb Chaim stood in the center of the shed and his tallit was hanging from his shoulder, his eyes were blazing. He began to imitate, with sarcasm, the voice of the chazan. "Blessed are you Hashem, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this". Do we really owe Him thanks for doing us this great favor, leaving 150 Jews out of a congregation of 5000 to survive for another hour...

For twenty four hours we will stand and lie with no shame, without believing a word that come out of four mouths and the verse " you have chosen us from all the peoples, you loved us, and found favor in us, you exalted us above all the tongues".

Reb Chaim clapped his hands in satisfaction and said in a weak voice from his depths: "Gentlemen have you heard of a God destroying His people from the face of the earth because of their sins and crimes? Is it not nonsense to believe in it? Doesn't a God that knows the "mystery of all living", that even the massacre of His chosen people will not bring anyone back to good? After everything he did to us, people still repent for their bad ways, began to believe that there is a God and started to followed the ways of the Torah. Yet, what we are witnessing is that "there is no justice and no judge". We say in the Yom Kippur prayers that "we are your people and you are our God, we are your sons and you are our Father, we are your sheep and you are our shepherd, because you are a merciful and compassionate God". What would you say to a father who is killing, even if it is in a time of anger, all his children, till the last one? Would he be called a father, a robber, murdered, bandit?...

Source: Moshik Kahanowitz in Davar, the eve of Yom Kippur, 1944. From Ani Ma'amin by Mordechai Eliyav.