

# *The Editor's Column*

There is no limit to the number of accounts relating to the Holocaust. Fifty-six years after the horrors, we still read reports in the newspapers of the reuniting of brothers or of cousins, either by chance or after years of searching for each other's whereabouts, with all of them thinking throughout that time that they were the sole survivors of their families. They now discover that some relatives survived and raised families – there are nieces and nephews, cousins, grandchildren and sometimes they even discover that they live in the same towns and even on nearby streets. Over time, in the nature of things the number of these stories has decreased. In years past, when more of these miracles could have taken place, people did not want to hear and they cut themselves off from the past, as it was unapproachable. Only with the passage of time, have they begun listening to the past, visiting their former homes, searching for relatives, erecting monuments to their memory, attempting to identify the places, reconstruct their towns and villages, their communities and their families. Little by little, they have discovered that beyond the troubles, persecutions and killings, a flourishing Jewish culture died in Poland and surrounding countries. A culture that influenced every aspect in each and every life, a culture that has not been adequately portrayed nor has enough been written about it.

A number of articles in this issue deal with Poland. David Shahar reveals the long route he took from the rampages in his town at the outbreak of the war until he found out how his father was murdered, and his efforts that eventually led to the setting up of a monument on the mass grave where his father lies buried. Paul Ginsburg of the United States returned to his ancestral hometown, found the mass grave where the town's Jews were buried alive, cleaned the small marker that had been placed on the spot after the war and completed the cycle that began 103 years ago when his great-grandfather made his way to the new world and in this way provided him with life. Israel Pickholtz describes a group of Jews, who were his relatives, who survived as members of "Hershke's Band," by making their way from place to place wandering in the forests. The short piece by Ayelet Klausner connects with the Holocaust from the vantage point of a high school student who visited Poland in the framework of a school sponsored Roots trip.

The opening essay of this issue is an article on our central topic – genealogy. Over the past few years, families that have a tradition of being descended from King David have initiated greater efforts in this research. Moshe Shealtiel describes his studies and details the fascinating adventures he has had in trying to find the connection to the House of David. Joe Isaacs takes us on a tour of Central London, and along the way meets his forebears all of whom lived in the surrounding area. Giora Fuzailoff provides us with the third installment of his informative articles on the Jews of Bukhara in Central Asia and Israel. Mathilde Tagger shows us that there are genealogical records of another kind, in far off New Zealand.

Two events are reported on by their participants. Menashe Horowitz summarizes the study evening held in Tel Aviv titled "The Golden Age of Lithuanian Jewry," and Harriet Kasow describes an interesting visit to the Museum of Babylonian Jewish Heritage located in Or Yehuda.

Our regular columns contain reviews of the book *Fez and Its Scholars* and important sites on the Internet.

At this point, I extend to all of our readers wishes for all the best for the year 2002.

*Yocheved Klausner*

## **From the Desk of Chana Furman** *President of the Israel Genealogical Society*

Our members will receive this issue of *Sharsheret Hadorot* long after the Society's General Assembly has taken place. Minutes of the Assembly were sent to each branch, but I think it is worthwhile to mention here a few of the decisions that were taken.

There were some personnel changes made in the Branches and in the Executive Committee. We extend heartfelt thanks to all our volunteers.

The most important subject on our agenda is increasing our membership. The Assembly expressed the hope that we will succeed in this endeavor, and that many of our members will join this effort.

I would like to stress again an important issue that is discussed constantly. Greater involvement and participation of our members in the monthly activities of the Society is imperative. Maybe we could have an e-mail discussion on the subject and examine the practical possibilities, in the light of the subjects discussed at the assembly.

As in the past, I would like to ask all our members to share with us any suggestions, questions, and perhaps answers they may have. Please don't hesitate to write to the e-mail address or the regular mail address of our Society.

# Tracing a Davidic Line from Babylon to the Modern World \*

*Moshe Shaltiel-Gracian*

My purpose is to tell a story that is hard to believe. The story's conclusion is that the oral and, at this late stage the less than half-believed traditions of a number of Jewish families that they are descended from the house of David – is true. Among these families are my own, the Shealtiels, and among the others are the Benvenistes, the Charlaps and more. My argument is based on historical and archaeological sources, as well as the most up to date scientific evidence – DNA testing. Let me plunge straight in by going back eight hundred and forty-one years to 7<sup>th</sup> August 1160, when Count Ramon Berenguer IV of Barcelona issued a license to Pere de Balma to pitch a tent in the market in return for a fee of 600 *sueudos* or 200 pigs. As was common in those times, the document bore the signatures of the Count himself, the Bishop of Barcelona, and other notable courtiers. Two years earlier, on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1158, Berenguer ceded to Ramon Tureddel a one-quarter interest in a mill in the area of Villa Terrassa. Here again, the Count's signature was accompanied by the signatures of some of his courtiers. These two documents record straightforward legal and business transactions in Latin, as was common in those days. What makes these commonplace historical records unique is the signature of one of the members of Count Berenguer IV's court. Not only was it the signature of a Jewish courtier, but also he signed his name in Hebrew. The Jewish signatory was Shealtiel, the son of Sheshet, "blessed be the memory of that just man." Who was this Shealtiel, a man whose talents and pedigree were recognised by the royal court and whose pride was such that he saw it as natural that he should sign his name in the characters of his ancestors? In order to answer this question we need a little history.

The Spanish *Reconquista* was led by the counts and kings of Aragon and Catalonia. From its inception it created a need for settlers to fill the vacuum created by the retreating Muslims. This led to openings for

administrators, physicians, financiers and diplomats. All these needs were filled by Jews from the south, who were fleeing the co-incidentally increased fervour of Islam. Thus began the second "Golden Age" of Jewish Spain, this time under Christian rule. At this point we see the rise of an aristocratic class, the *Nessiim* or princes of Barcelona, who led the Jewish community and served the royal courts of Aragon and Catalonia. Shealtiel, son of Sheshet *Nasi*, was a member of this class. In order better to understand the *Nessiim* of Barcelona and their role in the history of Spanish Jewry we need to take a step backwards.

Let us then go back further, some sixteen hundred years. In the year 597 BCE Jerusalem surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, thus ending a brief and ill-fated attempt to liberate Judea, at that point a vassal of Babylon. The last king of Judea, Jehoiachin, was exiled to Babylon, where, after several years in prison he was released, awarded a palace, a position in the court and recognised as the head of the Jewish Diaspora under the rule of the Babylonian empire. His son, Shealtiel, was the first Exilarch, the head of the Diaspora, or in Hebrew, *Rosh haGola*. He was the founder of a new dynasty of the house of David that was to last for more than seventeen hundred years.

In 1020 CE *Mar Hizkiya b. David* became the Exilarch. He held this position for thirty-eight years until 1058, when, following a court intrigue, the Caliph of Baghdad executed him and for a time bringing to end the dynasty of the Exilarchs. Documents of the period state that Hizkiya had several sons, two of whom escaped to Granada, Spain, where a friend of their father, R. Shmuel haNagid, held the position of Grand Vizier. By the time the sons arrived in Granada, Shmuel had died, but his son, Yoseph, took in the refugees. Eight years later, on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1066, Yoseph was assassinated. According to medieval sources, at

least one of the brothers escaped to the north and resettled in the “Edomite kingdom,” a reference to the emerging but independent Christian County of Aragon.

Following my study of more than three hundred medieval documents, which I have assembled, translated and reviewed for the first time, I believe that they demonstrate that the two sons of Hizkiya were *Mar David*, father of *Mar Haim* (also known as *ibn Yechia*) and *Hizkiya II*, and *Mar Isaac*, father of *Mar Shaltiel*, *Mar Yoseph* “Oroved” and *Mar Menachem*. Four of the five grandchildren of Hizkiya would be the patriarchs of all the families of the Barcelona *Nessiim*.

I will focus on three sources:

1. Historical documentation, including the manuscripts I mentioned, medieval Jewish accounts, and findings from the Cairo Geniza;
2. Archaeological artifacts, that is tombstones, seals and escutcheons;
3. DNA testing to confirm lines of kinship that have formerly been attested only by oral tradition.

A key document that supports my conclusions is the record of a real estate transaction in Barcelona, dated 12<sup>th</sup> October 1061. The original Latin text reads: “Bonhom, a Jew, trades with Miro Guadall and his wife Ermessenda, land located within the boundaries of the city of Barcelona.”

In the English translation of the Latin text, published in the Miret edition of *Documents sur Les Juifs Catalans*, there is a reference to an accompanying Hebrew text, recording the same transaction. It is translated into English as follows: “Reina, a daughter of Master Saltel and her husband Gerson, son of R. Mosse, exchanged some land with Miro Guadall and his wife.” The different name of the husband arises, of course, out of the use of a vernacular name in the Latin text (see illustration in the Hebrew section).

For some time, I have had a copy of the original Latin document and the English translation of both the Latin and the Hebrew texts as they appear in the Miret edition, but it was a chance encounter with the Charlap family, which drew my attention to the Babylon Exilarchate. This family has a

tradition of a celebrated forebear, Chiya el Daudi, who descended from the surviving son of the last Exilarch, as set out in Arthur Menton’s book “The book of Charlap.”

When I revisited the history of Babylon and the Exilarchs, I was struck by the designation in the Hebrew document of Saltel as “Master,” and decided to examine the Hebrew text. A quick reading of the text in Hebrew was one of the most exhilarating experiences of my life. My hunch was correct. There was an error in the translation. The word used in the Hebrew text was *Mar*. *Mar* does indeed translate as “Master,” but – and this is a huge “but” – only in modern Hebrew, not at the time it was written. In medieval and ancient Hebrew the word *Mar* was a title. Indeed, as Rav Sherira *Gaon* asserts in his *Igrot*, it was a title given exclusively to the *Rosh ha-Golah*, the Exilarch of the house of David, from the first Shealtiel, son of king Jehoiachin, to the last, *Mar Hizkiya*.

Three years after the execution of the last Exilarch, in the area to which his children had reportedly escaped after the death of their protector Yoseph haNagid, we find a new *Mar*, Shealtiel, whose descendants were to become the *Nessiim* of Barcelona. Shealtiel, son of Sheshet, the signatory to the 1160 document was a great-grandson of Mar Shealtiel, who I will prove was the grandson of the Exilarch, *Mar Hizkiya*.

In 1165 the famous Jewish traveller, Benjamin of Tudela wrote, “...two days thence lies Barcelona, in which place there is a congregation of wise, learned and princely men, for instance R. Shesheth, R. Shealtiel and R. Shlomo and R. Abraham B. Chisdai of blessed memory. The city though small is handsome and is situated on the seashore. Merchants resort thither for goods from all parts of the world: from Greece, from Pisa, Genoa and Sicily, from Alexandria in Egypt, from Palestine and the adjacent countries.”

His depiction of Barcelona and its Jewish princes was accurate. The Shealtiel family, along with its branches and related families, Perfet, Benveniste, Cavaller, Gracian, Chasdai and Cresques flourished, enriching their community, their rulers, and themselves for more than four hundred years. My research

concludes that families of all the *Nessiim* of Barcelona were the descendants of *Mar Hizkiya*, for the most part comprising the direct descendants of his grandson, *Mar Shealtiel*. These findings, which I have been able to document, shed new light on the life and accomplishment of the *Nessiim* of Barcelona and offer a better understanding of their functions, their complex relationships, the character of their leadership, and the tribulations which brought about their eventual demise.

Why did the sons of the Exilarch Hizkiya b. David, continue using the title *Mar* given that they were deposed, exiled and far from acting in their royal capacity? Initially I took a view based on my reading of contemporary accounts that Hizkiya was the last Exilarch. I reasoned that his kin wanted to preserve his memory and the singularity of their identity as distinct from the other *Nessiim* to be found in Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, Eretz Yisrael, Provence, Cairo, Alexandria and the Egyptian countryside. All of these were of the house of David, but on my construction of the family tree the Barcelona *Nessiim* were the last of the line of the *Rosh ha-Golah*.

However the question remains, why did they discontinue this custom and revert to the title *Nasi*? I believe I have found the answer to this question and an account of the true state of affairs in Baghdad, the seat of the Exilarch, in the monumental work of Prof. S.D Goitein: *Mediterranean Society: the Jewish communities of the Arab world as portrayed in documents of the Cairo Geniza*, University of California Press, 1978. From the fragments of the *Geniza*'s Hebrew documents, we find that due to conflict within the community and a withdrawal of the Caliph's patronage, the office of the Exilarch was vacant until 1061. Thereafter, however, a new *Rosh ha-Golah* was appointed and an Exilarch was chosen in controversial circumstances in 1069. In that year, one Abu Ali II ibn Fadlan, a formerly leading Jewish courtier, regained his influence after eleven years of obscurity. In place of the traditional elective body of the Jewish royal family, he was the power behind the appointment.

In light of this reading of the *Geniza* documents, it is reasonable to speculate that while the seat was vacant and during the period of the controversial appointment, the Barcelona family maintained their claim on their former throne, no doubt supported by some members of the Baghdad community.

As time went by members of the family who remained in the East, nearer the seat of the Caliphate, seem to have gone further. Thus, one scion of the Davidic line with a pedigree as authentic as any, was Daniel b. Azarya, son of the Exilarch *Mar Azarya b. Shlomo*, the immediate predecessor of *Mar Hizkiya*. Daniel became the head of the academy in Eretz Yisrael. Yoseph, the youngest of his three sons, moved to Cairo a few years later (1080/1) where he attempted to establish a new Exilarchate and had some degree of success. A document found in the Cairo *Geniza* dated 1090 was issued by "The Court of *Rosh ha-Golah*" and signed by Yoseph b. Daniel. In other documents issued in Fustat, Egypt, in 1088 and later, David b. Daniel was entitled "The great *Nasi*, the *Nasi* of all [the diaspora of] Yisrael."

At best, this was a provincial or Egyptian version of the original Exilarchate. Memories of their former majesty would have dwelt with the family in Barcelona even as the exiles began to grow roots in their new land. They had also to take account of changes taking place in the Islamic world. The increased independence of Islamic countries such as Egypt led to a decline in the Caliph's political reach. This in turn led to a reduction in the practical power of the Exilarch in Baghdad. In addition, the abandonment of the tradition of tolerance and a rise in fundamentalism made the seat of the Exilarch both less attractive and more volatile by comparison with life in the Edomite kingdom. Nonetheless, in 1090 David's eldest son, Hizkiya II, returned to Baghdad to resume the Exilarchate and thereafter his relatives in Barcelona ceased to use the title *Mar*.

The *Nessiim* of Barcelona preserved the traditions that they brought from the east. They combined scholarship and wealth, philosophy

and diplomacy, political power and religious leadership. Some of the greatest thinkers, many of the physicians, and all the Jewish courtiers, *Elfakim*, and diplomats of the Crown of Aragon were *Nessiim*.

The *Nasi*, R. Yehudah b. Barzilay, *Bonjuda Sapiens* (the wise), a philosopher known for his codification of the Jewish laws of the 12th century, has been erroneously identified by some historians as the founder of the Shealtiel family, and by others as the forbear of the Gracians. This is mistaken. Barzilay was in fact the paternal grandson of *Mar* Yosef Oroved, a brother of *Mar* Shealtiel. In a genealogical confusion typical of the times, he was also the maternal grandson of *Mar* Shealtiel. His father, also Barzilay, married a cousin, Bonadona, the daughter of *Mar* Shealtiel.

To complicate an already complex family structure, Yehudah's sister, Reina, married Perfet Shealtiel, son of Meshulam "Baron" who lent his name to a whole new branch of the Shealtiels. Meshulam is the Hebrew for perfect and it is rendered as *Perfet* in Latin and Catalan. Perfet was the brother of the "first Benveniste," Yosef, and the son of Isaac, son of *Mar* Shealtiel. Barzilay died without issue and his heirs were the children of his sister Reina, Meshulam (Solomon or Sulam) Barzilay, Isaac and Shealtiel.

Another *Nasi*, Abraham b. Hiyya, an early ancestor of the Charlap family, is known as the person whose command of geometry and finance helped the king of Aragon divide and redistribute the conquered Muslim lands. He is also known for a controversy that erupted between him and "Sapiens." In this dispute, R. Yehudah ruled, contrary to R. Abraham b. Hiyya, that it is against the scriptures to postpone a wedding because the stars displayed "bad omens." This early display of antagonism to superstition became the battle cry of the *Nessiim* during the dispute between the Kabbalists and the Rationalists, better known as the "Maimonides controversy."

Unknown until now was that Abraham b. Hiyya and his brother, the famous Bailiff of Saragosa, Bonjudah Vital, had a third brother, Moshe, and that their father, Hiyya, can be

identified as *Mar* Haim, another brother of *Mar* Shealtiel, a cousin to Barzilay. All were the great grandchildren of *Mar* Hizkiya.

On the death of his father-in law and cousin, Sheshet Benveniste, Makhir bar Sheshet *Nasi*, assumed the leadership of the community. Shortly thereafter he became the first *Nasi* to run into a populist rebellion. He used his position in the royal court as a Bailiff and his family relations with the Kolonymus *Nessiim* of Montpellier to thwart the rebels. In a polemic issued by the *Nessiim* of Montpellier, they criticise those who rebelled against the Barcelona *Nessiim* because "they do not have the portion or inheritance of the son of Jesse." This statement from the Kolonymus *Nessiim* whose descent from the house of David is beyond dispute, is in itself a powerful testament to the origin of the Barcelona *Nessiim*.

This introduces a striking aside. Makhir was named after a legendary ancestor from the maternal line. His mother was the sister of the *Nasi* Todros b. Kolonymus, of the famous *Nessiim* of Provence. She was a descendant of Makhir, the kin of an eighth century Exilarch, who was brought to Narbonne by the Carolingian king, Pepin the Short, the father of Charlemagne. According to both Jewish and Christian sources (Rabad and the *Chansons de Geste*) Makhir married Pepin's sister. Some Carolingian historians go further and identify Makhir as Theodoric (Todros) father of William, Duke of Toulouse, from whom many of the royal houses of Europe descend, including the British royal family, via a female descendant of Makhir, Saint Ida, who married Egbert, the Duke of Wessex. This may sound far-fetched, but reputable scholars of the period subscribe to it. Our presentation, however, will focus only on the Jewish lines of the house of David.

The massacre of 1391 destroyed the Barcelona Jewish community. Of the 1800 Jewish inhabitants, four hundred were killed, while the rest saved their lives by accepting baptism. Among the dead was one of the shining lights of the Shealtiel Gracian family of Catalonia, the distinguished Rabbi, Shealtiel Hen Gracian

(b. 1345). Shealtiel was the son of Astrug Gracian, a first cousin of Saltell Gracian of Girona (Arnau d'Anglesola) and the tenth generation descendant of *Mar* Shealtiel. Of Girona's two Shealtiel brothers, Bonnet converted, (the Jesuit philosopher Baltasar Gracian is his direct descendant), while Bonjudah survived but died without issue. Another brother, Salomon Gracian, and his son, Saltell Gracian, both residents of Barcelona, luckily were abroad and thus survived. Solomon's wife and his granddaughter converted to save their lives, but a short time later were smuggled abroad, probably to Egypt, and returned to Judaism. Christian traders, competitors of Salomon, reported the apostasy to the Inquisition, which launched an investigation. Salomon was able to get the Queen to clear him, but he saw the writing on the wall and once again used his links to the royal court to obtain a free conduct on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1408, which he used to move on. The family moved first to Istanbul, where in 1500 a descendant of Solomon followed the Catalan tradition of his family to become the first *Kakhya*, the officially recognised leader of the Jewish community of the Ottoman Empire. This was a position not unlike a courtier to the Sultanate. Later, the family settled in Crete and after the Ottoman invasion moved to Italy, mainly to Livorno.

My research shows that at this point the family split into three units. One branched into North Africa, to Algeria and Tunis, thus becoming the Chaltiels. The second branch moved to England, most likely via Gibraltar. The third adopted their vernacular name, Gracian, or in its Italian version Graziani and, once again branched out. Some moved to the East, settling mostly in Bulgaria while others remained in Italy, most of them assimilating. There is evidence that the famous Italian General Graziani was a member of the family.

Another Shealtiel, R. Isaac bar Sheshet, the *Ribash*, escaped to North Africa where he became the chief Rabbi. His direct descendants are the members of the bar-Sheshet families. A grandson of the *Ribash* (his daughter married her first cousin) was Isaac "Bonafos" Shealtiel,

and thus a full-blooded Shealtiel remained in Spain, became a physician and then practised in Montpellier. So too did his son, Abraham, who in 1429 married a cousin, Michal, the daughter of Solomon Cresques *Nasi*, most likely a Kolonymus. Their two children, Yehudah b. Shealtiel, a physician, and Moshe b. Shealtiel, a scholar who published the earliest printing of Maimonides in Hebrew, the *Mishneh Torah*, both left Spain before the expulsion and founded the Salonica branch.

And so, the Shealtiel family saga which began its Spanish chapter almost one thousand years ago with the escape of a Jewish prince came to an end four hundred years later, once again with the escape of his descendants, a physician, a rabbi, a scholar and a merchant. It was the end of our Spanish experience, but not of course of our family history.

The historical sources alone make a compelling case. I will now add some archaeological findings to support it.

First, the tombstone of Shmuel Shealtiel *haNasi* ("the Prince") dated 1092, which was discovered in Monzon del Campo, in the northeastern Spanish province of Palencia, and is now on display at the Jewish Museum of Toledo. Both the refugees from the Granada massacre and Chiya el Daudi are known to have spent time in this small hamlet.

Second, the Kolonymus Seal, on display at the Narbonne Museum, bears the six-pointed star and the lion of Judaea combined with a crown, the token of royalty.

Finally, strikingly similar to the Kolonymus seal, and the most persuasive evidence of their common ancestry, is the much more impressive Shealtiel coat of arms. This depicts a crowned lion with a human face, which is the defining characteristic of the lion of Judaea, holding a sword in his "hands."

I found the first mention of a Shealtiel coat of arms in a manuscript dated 28<sup>th</sup> July 1307. This is the transcript of the trial for fraud of Astrug Saltel – whom I am happy to report, was acquitted. One of his kinsmen was a witness at the trial and the latter is described in Latin as *scutiferium Saltell* – "shield-bearing Shealtiel." The escutcheon itself bears the proclamation (in Hebrew letters) DEGEL MACHANE DON

SHALTIEL CHEN – “the coat of arms of Don Shealtiel Chen” (literally: the flag of the camp of Don Shaltiel Chen). The name “Chen” is translated to “grace” in English, and was known in Catalan as Gracian, like my own name (there is a rabbinical family in Israel named Chen, they are also descended from our family). The escutcheon is on display at the Crete Museum. Ironically, the museum kept it in a storage room until I rediscovered it with the help of my friend, Professor Nikos Stavoulakis. The rules governing issues and displays of coat of arms in medieval Europe were strict, in particular concerning those with royal symbols. The rules were straightforward: only recognised royal families had the right to use such symbols. It is compelling evidence for the generally accepted character of the claims of the family that it should have been granted the right to bear emblems forbidden to non-royal Christian aristocracy.

Finally, we come to the scientific evidence. Early in 2000 the CBS program *Sixty Minutes* devoted a segment to the DNA testing of the Lamba tribe in Africa. This proved their claim to be descendants of the *Kohanim*. I contacted the producer, Shari Finkelstein, who put me in touch with the scientists who conducted the test. The reasons I sought them were three-fold. The first was to prove that the Shealtiel family was a single family and could therefore be taken as the modern descendants of the Barcelona family. The second was to test my view that the Benveniste and Graziani families are branches of the Shealtiels. The third and most challenging was to test my suspicion that the Charlap family, all Ashkenazi, but claiming links with the Shealtiels some nine hundred years ago, also share common ancestor. Neil Bradman who headed both the *Kohanim* study and the sampling of the Lamba tribe, agreed to do the test. The first sampling was done in July 2000, at the Shealtiel family reunion in Barcelona; subsequently additional samples were collected from the Charlaps who did not attend the reunion. This DNA search tests samples for y-chromosomes, that is, from males. Oral swabs are taken from males, who should have distinct and known unbroken paternal lines.

As an added interest, we sampled one Yemenite Israeli named Moshe Shaltiel and a representative of a large Mexican family, Saltijeral, who have a tradition that they are crypto-Jews. In the case of the latter, I was able to confirm that their roots go back to Catalonia. I also threw in a sample of a person I knew could not share the y-chromosome with the Shealtiels.

A few months later, the results came in. Bearing in mind the universal incidence of false paternity and that some families suspected that the name Shealtiel came from a female ancestor, it was not surprising that there was no uniformity in the results. Nonetheless, the largest group of those who share the same y-chromosome is the one that included the majority of the Shealtiels, Benvenistes and Charlaps, also strikingly including the Yemenite Moshe Shaltiel and the crypto-Jew Saltijeral. And in our test, the single known non-Shealtiel, matched no group.

The inclusion of the Charlaps in the largest matching group was thrilling news. After all, Shealtiels and Benvenistes could have exchanged genetic material at any time over their constant co-incidence in the Sephardic community. If, however, we are to believe their oral tradition, the Charlaps have lived isolated from the Shealtiels and Benvenistes for nine hundred years, as Ashkenazi Jews in Poland. Their presence in the largest matching group serves powerfully to confirm their claim of kinship with the Shealtiels. Their prolonged separation from the others in the group enables them to serve as a biological clock. This establishes a timeline for the descent of the group from a common ancestor: he must have lived at least some nine hundred years ago, that is, before the Charlaps left Spain.

In conclusion, I now invite you to concur with me in my judgment that the oral traditions of descent from the house of David to be found among the Shealtiels, Benvenistes and Charlaps have survived a thousand years of turbulence to be authenticated. Scientific evidence in combination with the oral tradition establishes the descent of the entire group from a common ancestor some nine hundred years ago. This combines with the written and

archaeological record to enable us reasonably to identify him as the forebear of the first Shealtiels of Barcelona. The Shealtiels were recognized by their community as *Nessiim* – Princes, but for their first few generations of Catalonian exile, they assumed the title *Mar*. This was a token of their singular identity as descendants of Exilarch Hizkiya, by definition a scion of the Davidic line. But to reassure you, I promise you that this Shaltiel will be making no more royal claims today. Indeed for my part, I am content merely to present my evidence for you to review, as a token of what a multidisciplinary approach can accomplish in the field of Jewish genealogy.

\* These remarks were delivered on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2001 as part of the proceedings of the 21<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Jewish Genealogy, London, England. For more information please contact the author.

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# Education among the Jews of Bukhara \* in Light of the Community's History between 1793-1930

*Giora Fuzailoff*

Translated from the Hebrew

## Chapter I. Education among the Jews of Bukhara in Central Asia

### 1. The Period of Rabbi Joseph Maman.

In 1793 Rabbi Joseph Maman, an emissary from Eretz Yisrael arrived in Bukhara (Fuzailoff, *Sharsheret Hadorot* 16:1). Various sources indicate that R. Joseph found that the local Jews did not carry out the observance of mitzvot properly. They recited their prayers from memory, as they did not have prayerbooks available. Ignorance reigned as they had had no educational institutions and many were illiterate.

Rabbi Joseph consented to the request of the leaders of the community and was appointed the local teacher. A madrasa was opened to teach Torah and a minyan (10) youngsters were entrusted to R. Joseph to train them as teachers as well as to qualify them to act as slaughterers of kosher meat. The community's leadership chose to put him in charge of all kosher slaughtering of meat and to build a mikveh according to his specifications.

Because of the educational activities of Rabbi Joseph, Bukharan Jewish spiritual life was revolutionized. The traveler R. David d'Beit Hillel, an emissary of the Ashkenazic Perushim community of Safed, relates that in the year 1827, he met two Jews in Baghdad from Bukhara who were on their way to Eretz Yisrael and they told him of R. Joseph Maman's accomplishments in their community. He adds, "My entire conversation with them (the rabbi's two students) was in Hebrew." He reported that they were scholars "who were expert in all the Jewish practices and in Hebrew literature, and that they were more devout than any of the other Jews I met in Kurdistan."

Rabbi Joseph Maman had an enormous influence on Bukhara's Jews. Not only did he save them from spiritual assimilation, but thanks to him and to the students he trained to succeed him, Central Asia developed into a

center with deep Jewish roots faithful to Israel's Torah and to its hope for redemption. In the words of Tager, "Hacham Joseph created a generation of upright people, taught Torah to the masses and provided Bukhara with a large number of educated Jews who spread Torah to every district of Bukhara. His many students spread out and settled in every city of Central Asia bringing Torah to countless other Jews... He was the father of the Hovevei Zion Movement in Bukhara and encouraged them to settle in Eretz Yisrael and to visit the holy places ... He called on the wealthy of the community to publish many books for the good of their community ... and they did so."

### 2. Jewish Leadership in Bukhara after Rabbi Joseph Maman.

After the death of R. Joseph Maman in December 1822, his student Mulla Pinhas "Hagadol" [the Great] (1788-1858) headed the community. He was assisted by Mulla Pinhas "Hakatan" [the Small], known as Mulla Naioz (1805-1875), who was also the student and son-in-law of R. Joseph Maman.

As the successors of R. Joseph Maman, the two complemented each other. Mulla Pinhas Hagadol served as the spiritual leader and the Chief Rabbi, headed the Yeshiva and the court, and supervised the network for slaughtering kosher meat, while Mulla Pinhas Hakatan headed the community's fiscal affairs with regard to support for the Yeshiva. They were aided by a number of elderly rabbis of the community and during their time, Bukhara was transformed into the center for the Jews of Central Asia. The movement of Jews from Bukhara to Samarkand, Tashkent, Andigan and other Central Asian cities increased. However, in each of them the religious leadership of the Central Yeshiva of Bukhara was felt, for it was there that the future teachers in the various communities were trained.

After the death of Mulla Pinhas Hagadol in May 1858, Rabbi Joseph Ben Baba was

selected to serve as the head of the Yeshiva in Bukhara until the appointment of the son of Mulla Pinhas, Rabbi Isaac Hayim.

Rabbi Isaac Hayim (1848-1896) served as a rabbi from 1866 when he was only eighteen years old. He led the community for thirty years. His son, Mulla Hezkia Hakohen Rabin served as the community's rabbi until he fled to Eretz Yisrael in 1930.

### **3. Institutions of Jewish Education in Bukhara.**

There were several levels of knowledge in Bukhara's Jewish community. While there was ignorance in the lower stratum, the upper classes sent their sons to the Talmud Torah where they even studied Kabbalah and the Zohar. The traveler Charney who visited the area in 1864 reported to the newspaper Hamagid, "Most if not all are honorable people and men of action who study Kabbalah and follow the practices of the Sephardim of Jerusalem and Livorno."

On the other hand, another report in Hamagid (1868) relates that in the city of Turkistan there are very few Jews, and they are not knowledgeable in Jewish practices since they are far from the center in Bukhara. They have prayerbooks from Livorno and London, but most of them cannot read them.

Learning conditions were very difficult. An account from the city of Samarkand in 1889 states that there were a dozen schools for children and between forty to sixty pupils studied in one room, according to the statement of the rabbi of the community, Rabbi Isaac Hayim. The building was divided into two parts; one of them served as the school and the students sat on the floor. Naturally, given the conditions, the chances of receiving proper educational development were very slim. In reality, these were not educational institutions, but places where children could spend their time without bothering their parents and without being attracted to secular culture. Appropriate textbooks were unavailable until teachers who came from Jerusalem brought suitable books and in addition, significantly changed the teaching methods.

After the aliyah of the teacher Rabbi David

Hefetz to Eretz Yisrael in 1870, R. Abraham Hayim Gaon invited a Jerusalem scholar, Hacham Joshua Shushan, to come to Bukhara. With his arrival, a school for outstanding pupils was opened in the house of Jacob Musaioff where Talmud was also studied. Among the students were R. Zion Zufioff and R. Abraham Aminoff – who subsequently served as the rabbi of the Bukharan Rehovot neighborhood in Jerusalem – R. Moses Pelosof and others. It was expected that these students would form the vanguard of Bukharan religious leadership in Central Asia and in Jerusalem.

When the majority of them settled in Jerusalem, a spiritual vacuum was created in the cities of Bukhara even though those who moved to Jerusalem helped their brethren in Central Asia substantially. Up until 1920, scholars who came from Jerusalem to serve as teachers, rabbis and judges in the communities filled this vacuum to a certain extent, as we will see later.

The Talmud Torah and Yeshiva of Rabbi Shushan relocated to Samarkand from Bukhara in 1879. In the wake of the formation of Russian rule in the ten years earlier, many of Bukhara's Jews moved to cities that were under Russian control, as there they felt more liberated there.

The traveler Isaac Levi Avrekh, who visited Bukhara in 1887, writes of the difficult religious conditions and emphasizes the lack of sacred texts. He tells that R. Solomon Musaioff and R. Simeon Hacham opened a Talmud Torah for poor boys in Bukhara and even went out to raise funds for this project. However, the students abandoned their studies at an early age to go to work. Girls were not formally educated at all and did not even know how to recite the prayers. Ephraim Neimark who visited Bukhara in 1886 reports on a dearth of Talmud texts, and points out that only a few of the boys in Bukhara study Talmud, and that in Samarkand, they only studied Ein Ya'akov, a collection of the legends found in the Talmud. However, as a result of the Russian conquest along with improved economic conditions the religious situation changed for the better, though ignorance still prevailed – "I met children of ten years of age and more in

Bukhara who did not even recognize a single letter."

In contrast to the Talmud Torah schools, Talmud was studied in the Yeshiva of the rabbi of the community, R. Isaac Hayim Hakohen. From the beginning of the 1890's, emissaries who came from Eretz Yisrael taught in his Yeshiva and they guided the elite of the religious leadership of Bukhara.

Moses Samuel Rivlin, who lived in Bukhara between the years 1888-1896, relates that the Jews were taught in Hebrew in their schools, and adds, "It is proper to encourage them, since most are very poor and they do not have the wherewithal to maintain suitable schools," Ha'olam, 1920. It seems that he is referring to the schools in which the representatives from Eretz Yisrael taught.

In any event, from the descriptions it appears that the level of education in Bukhara until the beginning of the 1890's was very low. There was a higher level in the private schools funded by those who ran them and in the Yeshiva of the rabbi of the community. Jews did not send their children to the government run schools out of fear that they would abandon the Jewish way of life.

#### **4. Educational Institutions in Samarkand.**

As previously stated, the Bukhara Yeshiva relocated to Samarkand in 1879. It was launched in the house of Hadji Yedidiah Eliyasoff and was headed by R. Joseph Chogahinoff and R. Joshua Shushan, assisted by R. Abraham Aminoff.

This Yeshiva brought somewhat of an improvement in the religious level, especially among the older people. In a letter addressed to Moses Williams, the representative of Baron Hirsch of Vienna and reprinted in the newspaper Havatzelet in 1889, we read "We do not have any schools to teach our children Torah and mitzvot, nor trade schools to teach them crafts, for without them even our holy Torah according to the advice of the sages could not survive." Probably their condition was described so bleakly since they were interested in receiving contributions from Baron Hirsch who was about to visit them. It seems strange that there were not adequate funds to establish a Talmud Torah, while at the

same time hundreds of Samarkand's Jews moved to Jerusalem. There they built homes with their large amount of accumulated funds and contributed sizeable funds to several Jerusalem institutions.

In 1889, Rabbi Joseph Chogahinoff moved from Samarkand to Jerusalem and was among those who founded the Bukharan Quarter. Ten years later, in 1900, he returned to Samarkand and resumed his position in the spiritual leadership of the community. He established a large Talmud Torah that developed into one of the most important educational institutions in the city where dozens of students studied and were trained to serve in various religious capacities for the Jews of Samarkand and in its vicinity. The influence of these religious leaders was important in strengthening the national religious feeling, in keeping with the teachings of R. Joseph Chogahinoff who continued in the vein of the spiritual leadership of R. Joseph Maman. Their educational philosophy emphasized the link between the Jews of Eretz Yisrael and the Jewish communities in Central Asia along with the aspiration to make aliya in the Land of Israel.

There was also a significant improvement in the religious level in the smaller Jewish communities in Central Asia. Emissaries from the various Kolels in Eretz Yisrael visited these communities where they were sent by the leadership in Bukhara to fulfill the local needs. Thanks to these emissaries, aliya to Eretz Yisrael increased.

#### **5. Jewish Education in the cities of Bukhara.**

The close relationship with the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century inspired the Jews of Bukhara to establish in their communities educational institutions similar to those that they encountered in Jerusalem. The first Hebrew language school was founded in Samarkand in 1898 by Hajji Hizkiya Issacharoff and the head teacher was Rabbi Solomon Tager of Jerusalem. He later served as a teacher and Chief Rabbi in the cities of Turkestan. R. Joseph Hayim Chimiagaroff assisted him.

Eventually the school was recognized by the Russian government and even received an annual grant of 600 rubles. Emissaries from Eretz Yisrael, such as Hacham Abraham Zafan, served as teachers while Ashkenazi instructors taught mathematics and Russian. Some fifty pupils were enrolled in the school. R. Joseph Chogahinoff established an additional school in Samarkand where rabbis and scholars from Eretz Yisrael along with teachers trained by R. Joseph were the instructors. The curriculum was similar to that of the Talmud Torah schools of Jerusalem. It was headed by a commission of local Bukharan industrialists and businessmen including R. Benjamin Abrahamoff, the owner of vineyards and wineries in Samarkand, Jonathan Mullakandoff, Mashiah Fuzailoff and others. Tuition was based on a sliding scale. A large building was constructed when the number of students increased. Matzot for Pesah were baked on its lower level and some fifty students studied on the upper level.

Through the endeavors of Joseph Davidoff and Isaac Baruchov, Rabbi Solomon Tager arrived in Tashkent in 1902. His appearance brought about a religious revival in the life in the local Jewish community. In that same year, two additional Hebrew language schools opened their doors. Scholars from Eretz Yisrael also served as their teachers, among them R. Jacob Bekhor Meshulam, R. Bekhor Papolla, R. Abraham Pinto, R. Judah Kastill and R. Jauda Shalem, along with Rabbi Asher Kodayatov who came to Bukhara from Blakh in Afghanistan. Some of the teachers from Jerusalem were expelled from Russia in 1916 because they were Ottoman citizens.

Raphael Potelachoff and the Vaadiyayoff brothers founded a Hebrew language school in 1905 in Kokond. Raphael Potelachoff (Bukhara 1865 - London 1936) was among the wealthiest Jews in Bukhara. He owned thirty-six cotton factories, two vegetable oil plants, factories that produced soap and cigarettes, coal mines and oil wells. He even established a railroad network in Central Asia. As in the other schools, teachers of religious subjects and Hebrew were brought from Eretz Yisrael while those of mathematics and Russian came

from Russia, and Odessa in particular. Two female teachers also taught at the school. Kokond's wealthy Jews during this time behaved like the Russian aristocracy – Raphael Potelachoff sent his son Zion to study at the Russian High School in Skobilov and at age 18 he enrolled at the University of Berlin. It is possible to understand that having female teachers on the faculty was not looked upon as being something unusual. The parents of the students paid an annual tuition of seventy-five rubles. R. Raphael Vaadiyayoff maintained two classes at the school from his own pocket.

These wealthy families attracted the attention of high officials and the anti-Semitic press in Russia. In March 1913, representatives of these families approached the regional governor to approve the articles of association for "The Society to Provide for the Students of the Jewish School." The governor denied the request and the discussion on the matter continued until 1917. The idea of setting up such a group was not revolutionary and followed a well-established pattern common in the general educational system in Tzarist Russia of that time. The children of the well to do paid a rather high tuition while the children of the poor studied for free.

A Hebrew-Russian elementary school and High School were established in 1914 in Kokond. The school operated until 1918, and it had 120 pupils. Among the teachers were Hacham Yehuda Kastill, who encouraged the well to do to send their children to study in Eretz-Yisrael, and Zvi Hefetz, who came from an old Jerusalem family. The Ashkenazi teachers were Yitzhak Norman, Amitin Shapira, Idelman and Greenberg. They helped the Bukharan Jews to organize the Zionist movement after the Russian Revolution.

Books printed in Jerusalem and translated to the Jewish-Tadzhik language were of great help: the Tanack (Bible) translated by R. Shimon Hacham; the novel "Ahavat Zion" by Avraham Mapu; "Zichronot Levet David" (Memories of the House of David) by A. Fridberg, and many works by Bukharan poets. Some 190 books were printed in Jerusalem for the Bukhara Jews.

Students of the new Jewish educational institutions became the leaders of the Zionist

movement in Turkestan during and after the Bolshevik revolution. Among them were Avraham Pelosof Pinhasoff (Imanueli), Yaakov Pinhasov (Pinhasi), Eliyahu Issacharoff, Zion Potalachoff and many others. They were influenced in their endeavors by the religious-Zionist education they received from the teachers from Eretz-Yisrael, as well as by the tradition of their home and community. When the Zionist organization ceased to function in Russia, in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution, most of them fled to Eretz Yisrael.

#### **6. The Hebrew Schools in Turkestan and the Language Problem.**

As mentioned earlier, the Jews of Bukhara had a long tradition of Hebrew national education. The graduates of the Hebrew schools in Bukhara constituted the backbone of the national leadership.

In 1916 the first government-approved Hebrew school in Samarkand was run by "Agudat Hoveve Sfat Ever" (Association of the Lovers of the Hebrew Language), headed by Avraham Imanueli. After the revolution the school operated under the auspices of the "Tarbut" society. The teachers received special Hebrew training, and the authorities recognized the Hebrew language as the language of the Jewish community in Bukhara. The teachers enjoyed the status of civil servants. A special government order, issued on May 14<sup>th</sup> 1918, declared that the establishment of the Hebrew school contributed to the unity of the people, and that each nation was allowed to study the national language.

In a short period of time, five Hebrew schools were opened in Samarkand, but the "hadarim" (Torah classes for young children) continued to exist. The Hebrew schools had approximately 700 pupils (150-200 pupils in each school), and every class had a "mehanech" (educator). They studied two hours a week both Hebrew and Russian, but since the language of instruction was Bukharan the children did not manage to learn a great deal of these two languages. The schools were usually located in houses that were confiscated from the rich Jews; for example, Rahamim Fuzailoff taught in the house that belonged to his father, R. Refael Fuzailoff.

After the revolution, Eliusha Issacharoff opened a High School in the new section of Samarkand and gave it his own name. The pupils studied Hebrew, natural sciences, arithmetic, history, geography etc. In 1922 some of the courses were held in Hebrew. The Ashkenazi teachers did their best to train and guide local teachers and to obtain textbooks, and Amitin Shapira even published a geography book. But books were scarce, and the progress was quite slow. The students spent most of the time in idle talk, writing slogans and singing revolutionary songs.

At first the schools did not have special names, out of fear that a Jewish-Zionist sounding name would attract the attention of the authorities and the anti-Zionist Jews, and the school would be accused of Zionist activity and closed. Each school was given a number, or bore the name of the former owner of the building. Only later were the schools given particular names, like "Bialik," "Mapu," "Eshkol" etc.

At the seventh congress on the Russian Zionists, held in Petrograd in 1917, the status of the Hebrew language as the language of the Jewish culture and instruction in schools was put on the agenda. Opposite it stood Yiddish, loved by many all over Russia. For the Turkistan delegates, the fact that the language question was raised and discussed was significant. S.M. Rivlin, who worked in Bukhara in the field of education from 1889 to 1896, writes: "One cannot imagine that Yiddish could be accepted as their language, since they never used it" (Haolam 1920). Avraham Imanueli addressed the audience in Hebrew, and appealed to them: "If you will speak your language and we will speak ours, we will never be able to unite and form one nation, because we will not be able to know one another ... we swore to speak only Hebrew among ourselves..."

In addition to the struggle within the Zionist camp itself, the supporters of the Hebrew language had to stand up to the Bundists, who preferred Yiddish as the language of instruction in school, and later to the Yevsektzia (the "Jewish Department" in the Communist government). The Bukharan Jews maintained that Hebrew was their national

language and they do not know any other. The communist authorities supported them and permitted them, as they did other nations, to use it. Even Hebrew libraries were opened.

In 1920, the government established the **Improse**, an institute for training teachers for the various nationalities in USSR, and in 1921 an Improse was opened in Tashkent, for the Jews of the area. The teachers at the Improse were at first Ashkenazi Jews and later local teachers. The language of instruction was Russian and Hebrew, but from 1923 it was only Russian, and Hebrew was taught until 1924. The period of study was 6 years, and the students received scholarships for the entire period. They studied science, chemistry, physics and mathematics and were trained to serve in key positions in the new regime. Some of the graduates of this institution became scientists. The first principal of the institution was Yitzhak Ben Simon from Jerusalem, and after him Rahamim Bedlov. The school was under strict control of the Yevsektzia, and from 1923 a prerequisite of admission was membership in the Komsomol (the youth movement of the Communist party). In 1930 the school relocated to Kokond.

In 1921-22, due to the increasing influence of the Bundist elements in the Yevsektzia, coupled with their traditional opposition to Zionism and hatred for Jewish religion, Hebrew ceased to serve as language of instruction in the Hebrew schools. In 1928 the Hebrew script of the Bukhara Jews was replaced by the Latin alphabet. Jewish schools were closed and Jews who wanted to give their children a Jewish education had to resort to the clandestine Talmud Torah schools, run by the Chabad movement in Samarkand, that had about 800 pupils.

## **Chapter II. The Education in the Bukhara Community in Jerusalem – 1882-1914**

### **1. Talmud Torah before WWI**

In the 1890s, as aliya from Bukhara increased, many children of rich families arrived to Jerusalem to study. Among them was Imanuel Pelosof, aged 14, who came to Jerusalem with R. Yosef Chogahinoff and R. Shimon Hacham.

They were joined by Reuven Zvi Mahabashov, aged 9. The children were brought to the house of their guardian Mulla Avraham Asheroff, in the Bukharan Quarter, close to Mea Shearim. Mulla Avraham hired a private teacher to teach them Talmud, and a few weeks later they began attending the school (Bet Midrash) of the Mughrabi community in Jerusalem. In his memoirs Pelosof mentions that they encountered difficulties in their studies, since they didn't know the Mughrabi language. They were then transferred to the Rothschild Talmud Torah, where they learned Ladino and they began to show improvement. Pelosof remained in Jerusalem until 1894, when he returned to Bukhara.

The children of the Bukharan families studied in the Talmud Torah "Tiferet Yerushalayim." Moshe David Gaon states that in the first "grade" were 2 pupils from Bukhara, in the second 7 and in the third one pupil, Zvi, the son of R. Shlomo Musaioff. Later they built their own Talmud Torah in the Bukharan Quarter, since they considered Torah learning a supreme value.

In an early report from the Talmud Torah, prepared by the Principal R. Yehuda Kastill, we find details about the number of teachers and pupils, the curriculum, etc. R. Kastill was later sent to Turkestan, where, together with Zvi Hefetz, he founded a modern Hebrew school.

The administration of the Talmud Torah was excellent and so was the relationship between the heads of the community and the teachers and pupils. R. Yehuda Kastill writes in the preface of his report: "Our aim, to be accomplished before any other, was the holy undertaking to sustain the **Talmud Torah**, since educating our children and our society in the ways of science, wisdom, faith and good manners by fine teachers and scholars takes precedence over anything. . In time, as our society and settlement grew, we expanded our school and opened its doors to the children of our brethren from other congregations, who were poor and unable to hire teachers for their children."

Additional information can be found in A.S. Hirshberg's book "Beeretz Hamizrah." He spent six months in Jerusalem in 1899, and

writes: "I visited their Talmud Torah and tested the students in the Holy Scriptures, grammar of the Hebrew language and one problem of the Talmud, and found that they excel in their studies. I was impressed in particular by the fact that all classes are held in Hebrew, and this method was not a result of external influence." 125 children studied in the Talmud Torah. The rich pupils (about 25) paid full tuition; 10 paid half, and the majority – Bukharan as well as from other communities – were exempted from tuition.

The age of the students was 4 to 15. The classes were held all week, including Shabbat – 8 hours on weekdays, 5 hours Friday and Saturday. The studies included the Bible, the prayerbook, reading of the Torah, Hebrew grammar, history of the Jewish people and arithmetic. In the higher grades they studied Mishna, Talmud and Shulhan Aruck (the Jewish law), with their commentaries. Special emphasis was given to memorizing the lessons. The curriculum shows that the founders of the Talmud Torah intended to impart besides the broad spectrum of Torah studies, a good knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish history. It should be noted, however, that apart from elementary arithmetic no general studies were offered.

The behavior, appearance and health of the pupils were particularly stressed. Special attention was given to personal hygiene, since there was no running water at the time and any negligence could cause diseases. The teacher was responsible for his pupils inside as well as outside the school. He received a monthly report from the pupil's parents concerning his behavior at home, and his duty was to supervise his regular attendance, and to warn the parents when they sometimes sent their children to work.

There were 3 positions among the employees of the institution: the teachers, the supervisors and the president. The president was responsible for all school activities, including administration. The supervisor was the acting principal of the school, supervised the teachers and answered to the general committee of the community. Each of the seven teachers was responsible for his class and the children's behavior. It is surprising to note that the

teachers enjoyed social benefits: a teacher who served 20 years received a yearly pension of half his salary for his lifetime, on the condition that he continue studying Torah.

In Jerusalem, the Bukhara Jews were influenced by the customs and traditions of the Jerusalem Sephardic community, and even the cantors in the synagogues adopted the Jerusalem "nigun" (melody). Some of these melodies are still used this day. R. Kastill, with the support of the rich Jews of Bukhara, published a booklet named "Kol Zimra" (Jerusalem 1896) – a collection of prayers and "bakashot" (supplications). In Bukhara, he wrote a collection of "piyutim" (religious poems) in honor of the rich members of the community.

## **2. Support of the Talmud Torah by the Jews in Bukhara.**

The Jews in Bukhara supported massively the Talmud Torah, and every town and village sent large sums to the institution. Some of the funds were allotted to the Yeshiva "Rehovot Hanahar" headed by the Kabbalist scholar Chayim Shaul Duvek Cohen. R. Kastill regularly reported the activities of the school to the supporters in Bukhara, "so that the generous donors could see that their money is used for the study of Torah and their contribution is of great benefit."

In 1910 the situation changed. The restrictions imposed on the Jews in Central Asia and the difficulties encountered when sending money to Jerusalem, combined with the increase in the number of poor and elder immigrants, caused difficulties in the community. Food and shelter for the poor had to be provided, and as a result the activities of the communal institutions, among them the Talmud Torah, were curtailed.

The pilgrims who came to Jerusalem from Central Asia on Pesah 1910 were touched by the situation, and they appealed to their brethren in Asia: "The 'little temple,' that is, the general Talmud Torah founded in order to give an education to the holy poor children is now abandoned because of the lack of spiritual and material means." They decided to support the school and to encourage others



in Central Asia to do the same. An appeal by the Bukharan pilgrims in Jerusalem to their brethren in Asia, in the month of Nisan 1910, signed by Yosef Davidoff, Hizkiya Issacharoff and Pinhas Abramoff, is kept in the archives of the Bukhara community in Jerusalem. In 1911 a similar request for support was sent, with the explanation that the students of the Talmud Torah are mainly orphans and of poor families, and they are trained to serve as rabbis and teachers in Jerusalem and Bukhara, "and we will not have to bring Torah from far places, but all servants of the community will be our own." An emissary from the Bukhara Jews in Jerusalem was also sent at that time to Central Asia to collect money for this purpose.

In spite of the difficulties, the Talmud Torah prevailed. In 1912 new directors were appointed, and strict supervision of the income and expenses was introduced. The pupils had to pass exams every week, by specially appointed teachers; once a year, on Hol Hamoed Pesah, public exams were held, in the presence of Jerusalem scholars and Rabbis. The new leaders of the Talmud Torah were R. Avraham Aminov, R. Yohanan Simhayoff and R. Moshe Cohen Malhayoff; the treasurers were R. Avraham Aminov, R. Shlomo Musaioff and R. Shlomo Sofaioff; the examiners R. Yosef Yadid Halevy, R. Refael Shlomo Laniado and Mulla Yohanan Simhayoff. Special invitations, which included the order and content of the exam, were printed. The exam was held in Hebrew, the subjects being problems in the tractates Brachot, Shabat and Betza of the Talmud, as well as Tanach, grammar and language. The last exam of this kind was held in April 1914.

In the month of Heshvan 1913 another emissary, R. Moshe Aligola, was sent to Central Asia to collect money for the Talmud Torah. He carried a letter, which stated additional reasons explaining the necessity to support the Talmud Torah of the Bukhara community in Jerusalem:

1. The children cannot learn in the schools of other communities, since they do not

understand the language.

2. Each community has its own school – why not the Bukharan community?

3. There is no study like the study in Eretz Israel (Sifri, Parashat Ekev).

4. It is our duty to provide for the poor – study, shelter and food.

5. Shortage of scholars in the community, in Eretz Yisrael and in Bukhara.

In the letter it was suggested that every town and village in Bukhara send two children to study in Jerusalem, and be trained to serve as rabbis in Central Asia and guide the people. In addition to the fear of spiritual decline, there was the danger that the communities would remain without spiritual leaders, since most of the rabbis who served there came from Eretz Israel and, as foreigners, were in danger of being expelled from the country. The letter was signed by the leaders of the Bukharan community in Jerusalem – Rabbi Yakov Meir, Rabbi Eliahu Panigel, Rabbi Haym Nahum and the Chief Rabbi of Bukhara who was at the time in Eretz Yisrael, R. Hizkiya HaCohen Rabin.

The efforts of the leaders of the Bukharan community in Jerusalem, with the help of the leaders in Central Asia bore fruit, and despite the financial difficulties in that period, the learning institution was strengthened and survived.

\* The article was written with the assistance of a research scholarship from the Paz Fund of "Brit Yotzei Bukhara," Tel-Aviv.

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## Sudilkov: 103 Years Later

*Paul Wilcher Ginsburg*

Few people can point to the shtetl of Sudilkov on a map of Ukraine. Most maps, in fact, do not even show Sudilkov. Historically, it was known throughout the Jewish world as a center of the Hasidic movement, for the manufacture of Talitot (prayer shawls) and for printing Jewish books. Sudilkov was the home of the famous rebbe and author of *Degel Mahaneh Ephraim*, Rabbi Moshe Hayim Ephraim, grandson of the Baal Shem Tov.

We can trace a Jewish presence in Sudilkov back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Sudilkov's Jews endured the pogroms of Chmielnicki in 1648-1649 and later the pogroms of the Ukrainian nationalists in 1919. Despite many hardships, the Jews of Sudilkov survived and continued to create a thriving community. However, during the Holocaust, Germans and their Ukrainian neighbors murdered Sudilkov's Jewish community.

Today Jewish Sudilkov is no more. Evidence of its former history has been erased. Villagers have used tombstones from the Jewish cemetery to construct new homes. Like other shtetls in Ukraine, Jewish Sudilkov was reduced to a memory.

This shtetl was the birthplace of my great-grandfather Nuchem (Nachum) Wilcher. Nuchem, son of Yitzhak and Gissie, was born in 1874 into a family of two brothers and one sister. As a teenager, he was drafted into the Czarist army. Following the lead of his older brother Aaron, Nuchem left Sudilkov and immigrated to America. On February 23, 1898 he arrived in New York aboard the S.S. Furnessia. Shortly thereafter, he was reunited with his brother Aaron in Philadelphia. In America, Nuchem Wilcher became Nathan Ginsburg.

It has been a family tradition among male Ginsburgs to keep Wilcher as a middle name in memory of our family's roots. However, as time passed and Nuchem's descendants assimilated into American culture, memory of the significance of the name Wilcher was forgotten.

As a teenager, I became interested in family

history. I loved visiting my great-aunt Isabelle in Chester, Pennsylvania and asking her about our family and its origin in Russia. As the family historian of her time, Isabelle kept records of the family and often visited the cemeteries in which our family is buried. Aunt Isabelle sparked my interest to learn more about our family and perhaps one day to visit her father's shtetl in the Ukraine.

With the death of my last grandparent in 1999, I suddenly realized that my connection to the past was quickly fading. I felt that unless I did something, unless I picked up the torch that Isabelle carried, these people would vanish from history without a trace. How would I be able to answer the questions that my children would one day ask about their ancestors? What am I to tell them when they ask where they come from?

Aunt Isabelle told me about Sudilkov when I was a teenager. It was not until February 2000 that records I discovered in the National Archives in Washington, DC confirmed my Sudilkov roots. Shortly thereafter, I found evidence of my Sudilkov family documented in Russian records. Armed with this knowledge, I set out to learn all there was about this shtetl of my ancestors. I quickly discovered just how difficult it was to locate information.

In March 2000, I developed a website to commemorate the Sudilkov Jewish community and made public all the information I collected. The next step was obvious. After 103 years and three generations in America, Nahum's great-grandson planned to return to Sudilkov. Visiting Sudilkov in cyberspace could not substitute for actually seeing Sudilkov with my own eyes. I did not know what I was supposed to find in this rural Ukrainian village. I knew that if nothing else, the trip would make me appreciate America and be thankful that my great-grandfather was brave enough to cross the Atlantic in an era before the airplane. However, I knew there was something more. I felt that there was a missing piece of my family's history left to discover in Sudilkov.

Before leaving Rockville, Maryland in July 2001, I did not realize that this would not only be a trip of thousands of miles, but it would also be a journey inward. A journey to a place I felt was the root of my soul.

My wife and I spent the first two days of our journey touring Kiev and the surrounding area. On July 16<sup>th</sup>, accompanied by a driver and guide, we drove 150 miles west to the shtetl of Sudilkov. It did not take a lot of imagination to picture what Sudilkov looked like when my great-grandfather left in 1898. Sudilkov was frozen in time. Ukrainian peasants rode horse-drawn wagons transporting bales of wheat. Cows, goats, horses, chickens, ducks, geese, and packs of dogs were all in abundance, making the trip a safari of farm animals. With no running water in their homes, the people of the village drew their water from wells and washed their clothes along the banks of the lakes and streams.

Despite its primitiveness, Sudilkov was beautiful. Walking its back alleys and dirt paths I felt that I had walked them before. I learned that Jewish Sudilkov was situated along the main street and square, known as the "Misto." The center of Jewish life in Sudilkov was built around the synagogue. The Germans destroyed it in 1941. Today a small kiosk stands atop the former foundation.

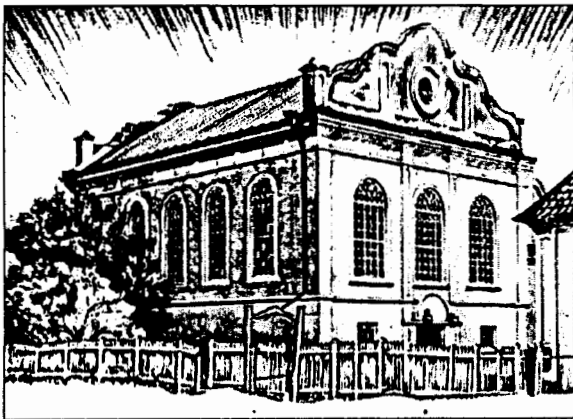
Across the road from the synagogue was the Jewish market. In this place, Jewish farmers and merchants would gather to sell their wares

and produce. Today it is an empty gravel lot, its former use long forgotten.

The only remaining evidence of Jewish life in Sudilkov is the Jewish cemetery located next to the Stav lake. Today the Jewish cemetery is in total ruins. Before 1941, a wall surrounded the cemetery and protected the graves. Today the wall is gone, and cows and people walk freely through the cemetery and over its gravestones. Almost all of the markers are unreadable, as they are either broken or eroded. Nevertheless, fragments of the Hebrew inscriptions on these stones are still legible. While I was standing in the Sudilkov cemetery, it occurred to me that with the passage of time, the rain would slowly erase the Hebrew letters and all traces of its Jewish inhabitants would be forgotten forever.

We continued to walk around Sudilkov for the rest of the day. We met some non-Jewish residents of the village, and they invited us into their home. They were amazed that an American who had roots in Sudilkov would travel so far just to visit this tiny village. They recalled Jewish Sudilkov prior to the war only in positive terms.

Walking along the dirt paths and back alleys, I tried to absorb this once in a lifetime experience. Sudilkov for me was an oddly beautiful and tranquil place. I tried to understand the lesson I was supposed to learn. Yet, any meaning or lesson eluded me when I left Sudilkov on the first day.



*Drawing of Sudilkov synagogue*



*Kiosk on site of the synagogue*



*Jewish cemetery*

We spent the next two days visiting Jewish sites in nearby Shepetovka, Slavuta, and Anapol. During this time, I learned of the rich Hasidic history of the area. This area was the birthplace of the Hasidic movement. Every cemetery we visited had the gravesite of a tzadik or rebbe. It was amazing that in rural Ukraine, in what seemed like a million miles from civilization, Hasidism was born and spread to the rest of the world.

Along with the Hasidic sites of the area, we visited many sites where Jews had been murdered during the Holocaust. Just two of the sites that we visited were the mass graves of thousands of people and a well into which 300 Jewish babies were thrown and then murdered when grenades were dropped onto them. There were memorials for the Jews of the nearby shtetls. Where was the memorial to Sudilkov's Jews? A population could not simply disappear into thin air.

On the day before returning to Sudilkov, we traveled south to Medzhibozh to visit the gravesite of the founder of the Hasidic movement, the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov was known for teaching that nothing in life is an accident and there is a deeper meaning to everything. Maybe it was in the merit of visiting his grave that I would learn the meaning of why I came to Sudilkov. When I returned to Sudilkov for the last time, I was not ready for what I would see and the lesson I would learn.

Jewish Sudilkov had not vanished. During my last visit, I learned that there are three mass

graves in Sudilkov. Only one site has a memorial and it was in someone's backyard, hidden from the world. To get to it, we walked across the main square and across the vacant lot that once was the Jewish market. We continued walking straight down a dirt alley that led to homes that once belonged to Sudilkov's Jews. An elderly Ukrainian woman, who had witnessed the killings, showed us to the memorial. We entered through the gate and went around the corner to the backyard. It was full of loose limbs, rotten wooden beams, and other debris. All this needed to be cleared out to gain access to another wooden gate on the other side of the yard.

We entered a little courtyard where we could see a small memorial with a Yiddish plaque. The memorial and courtyard appeared as though no one had visited there in over a decade. The Ukrainian woman provided us with a wet cloth so we could read the inscription that was concealed under a layer of dirt.

Then, she explained what had happened in this place.

The Germans and the Ukrainians took the Jews of Sudilkov – all of whom were too old or unable to walk to the ghetto in nearby Shepetovka – to this courtyard. There they dug a pit into the earth and buried Sudilkov's Jews alive. The Ukrainian woman told us that when the pit was covered, the earth continued to move for days because beneath the ground people still struggled for life.



*Clearing out debris*

Jews who knew of the atrocity erected this tiny memorial after the war, and the Ukrainian family who took over and occupied the formerly Jewish house dutifully maintained it. The family continued to look after it despite persecution by the Communist authorities for tending to the "Jewish" memorial. Today the son of the Ukrainians who cared for the memorial is too sick to properly maintain it.

At this memorial, I discovered why I came to Sudilkov. If my great-grandfather had not left Sudilkov before World War II to begin a new life in America, he may have perished there during the Holocaust. My father would have never been born, and I would not be alive. It was too much for me and both my wife and I broke down.

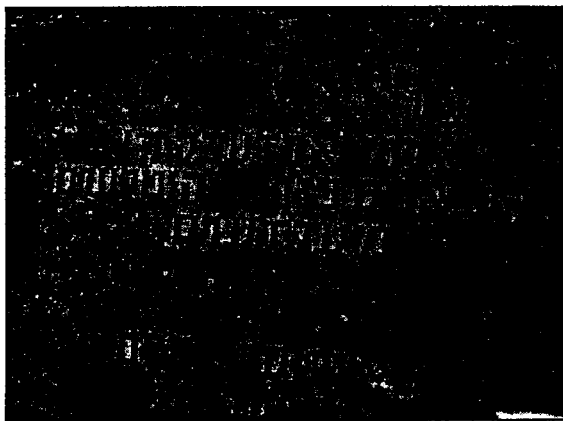
The Jews of Sudilkov did not disappear into thin air. They were here in front of me, buried alive by their neighbors and German murderers. The horror of this place has never before been told. The story of what happened

here remains trapped in a Ukrainian backyard blocked by debris.

Sixty years later, it is too late to avenge these people. I can only tell the world their story, internalize it, and pass it on to the next generation. I now understood the purpose of my visit to Sudilkov. My journey came full circle. To walk away from this place unchanged was impossible.

The Rabbis of the Talmud said, "Every person of Israel is required to ask: When will my deeds reach the deeds of my forefathers?" By leaving Sudilkov, my great-grandfather had given me life. To me there could not be a greater hero. I can only pray that I will live up to his legacy.

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*Part of the Yiddish inscription*

## A Grimaylow Family in the Forests of Skalat

*Israel Pickholtz*

On Wednesday 22 August 2000, 21 Av 5760, I met with Leah and David Schwarz at their home. We met for two and a half hours and during most of that time Leah's sister Nusha participated.

I knew for some time that Leah's maiden name was Pickholz, but only recently did I learn that David was part of the group of forest dwellers known as "Hershke's Band." This group moved from one hiding place to another in the forests around Skalat, stealing what they could from the anti-Semitic Ukrainian peasants in the villages. The story of this group, which numbered over thirty Jews, is told in "Death of a Shtetl" by Avraham Weisbrod, an English translation of which will be available online soon. What I did not know was that Leah, her two sisters, her two brothers and - nearly until the end - her parents were all part of this same group of survivors.

Leah (age 81) and Nusha (age 73) are the children of Israel Aharon and Rosa (Horovitz) Pickholz of Grimaylow, which is near Skalat. Another sister lives in Buenos Aires and there are two brothers in Israel. The eldest brother was in the Polish Army and he was among a group of Polish prisoners of war murdered by the Nazis in 1941, near Lublin. David (age 86) is also from Grimaylow and has one surviving brother in the US. (The ages cited are from the time of our meeting).

I had had one telephone conversation with Leah about a year earlier, but it was not productive and I never followed up. I located her through a Page of Testimony she had submitted to Yad Vashem in the 1950's. They still lived at the same address recorded in the document.

Leah apologized frequently for seeming to be incoherent and for speaking without adhering to the chronological sequence of events. She also apologized for David's memory and hearing difficulty, however, I found them both to be quite lucid. Now that their children are grown, they have reverted to speaking in Yiddish between themselves and Leah apologized (quite unnecessarily) for forgetting

the right Hebrew word from time to time.

I am not competent to tell this story and I shall merely summarize in brief anecdotal fashion, some of what they told me. It is important to note that for many years they did not tell the stories themselves. The ruling Labor Zionist establishment told them - as they told all survivors - that publicizing these events would only bring them embarrassment and would "make their children defective." Even today, they have said very little to their own children and grandchildren. Years ago, Leah attempted to record the events in writing, but she did not save any of it.

When Grimaylow was to be declared Judenfrei, the Jews were taken to the Ghetto in Skalat. They were still in touch with the older brother Shmuel [Samuel] (he went by the surname Rosenstrauch, his maternal grandmother's name) who was in the Polish Army near Lublin. Shmuel wrote to them in code telling them to dig bunkers under their home and to prepare hiding places in the forest. Under the cover of night, they did both, often after a day's work in the lager (the work camp). The necessity of removing the evidence of digging by morning complicated the project. A recurring theme in all that Leah says is that since her brother Samuel showed all of them how to survive, he must have survived, too. She sincerely believes that he will walk in the door some day, even though he would now be eighty-four years old.

The tunnel under the house was reached through a closet and although theirs was not the only one in the ghetto, it was one of the more effective ones. As a result, whenever there was a hint of trouble, many others came and could not be turned away. To David's mind this spelled trouble, and he was sure the Nazis and the Judenrat would know to look there. On one occasion, David and Leah and their baby son Michel Leib chose to hide in the unused attic in a barn rather than hide in their own bunker. This precaution proved unnecessary, for Leah's mother cut open pillows and scattered the feathers around the house and

told the Police "see, others came before you and found no one."

David had particularly harsh words for the Jewish Police who helped the Nazis more than was absolutely necessary. On one occasion, a Jewish kapo and a Nazi soldier passed a children's hiding place and the kapo saw urine dripping down, and he gave away the hiding place to the German. Before they fled to the forest, there was one occasion when David saw that Leah and Michel Leib had been discovered and he turned himself in rather than be separated from them. At one point, the child was simply torn apart before their eyes.

David and Leah were part of a group sent by train to Belzec, but shortly after leaving Skalat they succeeded in jumping from the train. The Germans were drinking in celebration, thus the first jumpers - those who were not killed in the jump - escaped back to Skalat. Leah had received instruction on how to jump without falling under the wheels of the train, but she did sustain a shoulder injury in the fall.

On one occasion in the synagogue, where the Jews were taken before being killed or deported, David was beaten so badly that his blood splattered on the high ceiling. On another occasion, after they were already in the forest, Leah and her mother were captured when going for food. They were held separately while the Nazis and the Judenrat tried to force them to disclose the hiding places in the forest.

Leah's parents were killed relatively late in the war and both on the same day, after they were discovered in the forest. Unlike the younger Jews, who heard their death screams from nearby, they were not able to run. Later they went back to bury them. I asked Leah if she knew the date her parents died. She said that different people had different opinions as to the correct dates to mark their Yahrzeit. In fact, their notion of time in general was distorted, so in order to satisfy differing opinions, they even ended up marking both Passover and Yom Kippur twice.

The three human traits that seem to be the critical ones in the survival of Hershke's band are awareness, preparedness and determination. They were aware of what was happening around them and what was in store

for them so they did not believe the desperate false illusions that characterized so many other Jews. They prepared bunkers and hiding places in the ghetto and in the forest, and they acquired the skills they thought necessary for survival. Despite setbacks, they carried out their plans. They also had some assistance from a very few local peasants. But with all that, David said more than once that their survival was nothing less than a miracle.

There came a time when they were joined by a few Jewish partisans who had four guns. Leah says, "then we weren't gibborim (heroes) any more. We felt safer and it was easier to steal food and survive, but once you have guns, you aren't a gibbor."

When the Russians came and the Jews were free to come out of hiding, the Jews of Grimaylow went back to see what was left of their town and their homes. Of course, everything was destroyed. Leah's sister Yetka wanted to go with her boy-friend Yehudah, another of their band, to see his hometown of Podwoloczysk and from there to his family in Argentina. Leah and the others wouldn't hear of their unmarried sister's going off with a young man and there in the devastation of their home, they set up what was surely the last huppa in Grimaylow.

David did not consider staying in Galicia a moment longer than necessary and they followed the Russian troops as the front passed through Rumania. After the Struma was sunk, the quota of immigration certificates that had been allocated to the passengers was reused (several times!) and that is how David and Leah reached Eretz Yisrael in 1944. They had three more children and have seven grandchildren and one great-grandson. Nusha stayed in Poland with the two brothers who were drafted into the Soviet army. All three made aliya in 1957, from Poland. Their father had only one sister and she was killed, as were her husband and two daughters. It turns out that their father had gone to the United States in the early 1900's, but returned to Grimaylow to be with his parents.

The Pickholtz family we call "Grimaylow" has a tree of seven generations, with fifty-six descendants and twenty-four spouses. Leah

and Nusha do not know of any connections to the Skalat Pickholtz families.

Epilogue: A year later, the brother-in-law Yehudah has died in Argentina and Hershke himself has died in Uruguay.

*Israel Pickholtz is married to Frances (of the*

*London Silbersteins), lives in Gush Etzion and is a member of the Negev branch of IGS. For the last three years, he has been one of the coordinators of the Pikholtz Project, to identify and reconnect all Pikholtz descendants.*

The web site describing that project can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/pikholtz>



## Among the Jews Killed in the First Mass Murder in Occupied Poland Was My Father, Hayim

*David Shachar*

Translated from the Hebrew

### **Background: The Town and the Family**

In 1939, my family, the Himmelfarbs, lived in the small town of Krasnosielc, which was located about 100 kilometers northeast of Warsaw on the river Orzec. The family consisted of 12 people – father, mother and 10 children (7 boys and 3 girls). My father Hayim was born in 1892 in the town of Kopszewnica, which was in the environs of Sandomierz on the Vistula. He studied at the Gur Yeshiva, was a Gur Hasid and his profession was that of a ritual slaughterer (shochet). His father, Avigdor was in the dairy business.

The Nazis murdered my father on Sept 5 1939, during the first massacre in Poland. My mother, Hinda, of the Kuropatwa family, was born in the town of Gniewoszow near Lublin. Her father, Ephraim Yitzhak was also a ritual slaughterer. After my parents were married in 1910 they moved to various towns in order to make a living, and in 1924 they arrived in Krasnosielc where my father was appointed shochet by the Jewish community. My mother died in 1981, in Haifa. My parents had 14 children, 4 of them died of childhood diseases that were prevalent at the time. When the war broke out there were ten children of varying ages. Four brothers served during the war in different armies: Polish, British and Soviet. My brother Hershel died in battle in June 1941 at the beginning of Operation Barbarossa. During

Israel's War of Independence, 4 brothers served in different units: the Negev-Palmach brigade, the Alexandroni brigade and in Jerusalem.

### **The First Days of the War**

On Friday, September 1, 1939, at about 3:00 a.m., we heard artillery fire. It was coming from the German army that had crossed the Polish-German border, only 35 kilometers from our town. The town's Jewish population numbered about 2000, which represented about 50% of the town's inhabitants. A large part of the town's Jews fled on Friday and Saturday to other towns in the vicinity, which they thought would be safer. On Saturday, my family also fled to different places in the area. My father, two of my brothers and myself walked 25 kilometers to the town of Makow Mazowiecki.

On Sunday, September 3, 1939, the first German patrols entered our town. They searched for the ritual slaughterer for they preferred kosher meat for hygienic reasons. They sent someone to Makow to inform my father to return. On Tuesday, my father, my brother Yitzhak, older than me by two years and I returned. On the way, we encountered many German army units and patrols that were heading towards Warsaw. At a certain point the soldiers stopped us and searched my



father's bag and found there among other things: tallit, tefillin, halaf – the ritual slaughtering knife – and shofar (this occurred during the High Holy days). They wanted an explanation of the shofar's use. All the explanations that my father gave were not sufficient and they decided that it was an instrument to communicate with the retreating Polish army. They stood us next to a tree and bent down opposite us in a shooting position. Suddenly, an officer on a motorcycle appeared and after an exchange of words with the soldiers, he ordered us to leave the place quickly. That same night after the trouble on the way, we arrived home and met with mother who had been very worried.

On Tuesday September 5, the Germans rounded up all the men – Jews and Poles – at the bridge that the retreating Polish army had managed to blow up. They ordered all of them to bring wood logs and with the guidance of the army engineer they were to fix the bridge and make it a passage for armored cars. During the work, the Jews were abused and made fun of, especially the elderly in traditional dress with its unique characteristics. At noon, my father and a number of other Jews were sent home in order to bring food for everyone, with a warning that if they do not return all the others would be shot. After a short while, my father returned with food that my mother had prepared and I joined him and helped him to carry the food. As we reached the army station at the bridge, the soldiers commanded me to return at once. Father kissed and hugged me very hard and said to me in Yiddish: "They spit on us, they beat us, I don't know what will happen, take care of your mother." These last words of my father, I have never forgotten and will never forget my whole life, especially the final instruction to take care of mother. Up until then, I had been completely dependent on my parents.

In the evening, after curfew, the hours went by and the men did not return to their homes. The hearts of the women were filled with anxiety and fear, and some of them ventured to leave their houses, in spite of the curfew, to look for their husbands.

People who lived near the synagogue told us later that during the night they heard sounds of

shooting coming from the direction of the synagogue. The next morning, Thursday, some of the women, among them my mother ran to the synagogue to find out if indeed something had happened there during the night, as the rumors had indicated. The German guards posted at the synagogue did not permit them to enter the building. They appealed to the German officer in charge and he told them that the men were sent to other places that needed repair. Two days later the guards at the synagogue were removed, and the women rushed into the building. What they had most feared proved to be true. The walls were full of bullet holes and on the floor they could see traces of blood, although it was clear that the Germans had tried to clean up the floor and remove the evidence. The tables and benches were overturned. In spite of all that, the possibility that a mass murder had taken place seemed very unreasonable at the time, because there was no direct evidence and there was not a known precedent to such murder.

At the end of September, on the eve of the Feast of Sukkot 1939, all the Jews of the town were ordered to leave the place in two hours and move in the direction of the area that was under Russian occupation. The order came from the commander of the German troops and from Richter, the Volksdeutsche who was appointed by the Germans as the temporary mayor of the town. They added, that unless we move out of the town they would not be responsible for our fate. The Germans permitted us to use the services of the local coachmen for transporting our belongings, and, together with many other families, we started moving east. We arrived at Bialystok, in the Russian area, and we lived there for several months, with many other Jewish refugees. During that time we continued hoping that our father was alive, despite the rumors that indicated otherwise.

### **The First Testimony of the Massacre**

One day, in November 1939, my brother Hershel returned to Bialystok from a trip to the town Lomza, and told us that he had met a Jew by the name of Mosze Szkopf, one of the group that had repaired the bridge that first day. He told my brother the following frightful

story, which we couldn't believe (the story was later confirmed by Yitzhak Galant from Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, who recorded the testimony of his father Abraham Galant, one of the survivors of the massacre).

On that bitter and terrible day, the Germans called on all the men to help restore the bridge that had been blown up by the retreating Polish army. They had to carry heavy logs through the marsh on the way to the bridge. Two or three elderly men, who stumbled and fell, were shot by the Germans on the spot and their bodies thrown into the river. Many others were abused and beaten. At the end of the day, the Germans separated the Jews from the Poles and formed two groups. A few of the Jews who were hatless and not wearing traditional clothes, managed to join the group of Poles, and were thus saved from the fate that awaited the others. All the other Jews were taken to the synagogue and the German soldiers pushed them in and ordered them to sit on the benches close to the Ark of the Torah. The Germans began to mock and tease them: "If your God is omnipotent, pray to him and we'll see if he saves you." Some of the soldiers pulled at their beards and tortured them. The victims cried out "Shema Yisrael" and immediately the first round of shots was fired. After the soldiers checked to see how many Jews were killed they fired a second round. Suddenly, another German unit headed by an officer in a white uniform broke into the room, the officer ordering "halt!" (stop!). He approached the Jews, saying that he was a doctor, told them not to be afraid and looked for those who were still alive. He found seven who were only wounded, having been protected by the bodies that fell over them, among them Mosze Szkopf. The German officer ordered his subordinates to give the wounded first aid and to transfer them immediately by ambulance to the hospital in Olstein, Prussia. Two of them died after a few hours and the other five recuperated and were released from the hospital. My brother Hershel told us that he asked Moshe Szkopf if our father was among the seven wounded. The answer was negative. It was not easy to believe this story. A few details seemed very strange. Why did the Germans decide to murder the Jews, who

hadn't done anything wrong? Why did the shooting stop so suddenly and why were the wounded men brought to a German hospital and cared for? In the depth of our hearts we struggled to hope that the story was not based on truth. Many years later, I learned that my mother had sent a letter from Bialystok in 1940 to my brother Yosef (who had immigrated in 1936 to Eretz Yisrael) and told him about the testimony of Mosze Szkopf. Yosef released the letter to the press, and later the letter was published in the book written by Shlomo Karmel, of our town.

### **The Investigation of the Massacre and the Memorial for the Victims**

From the day I saw my father for the last time, until I heard the shocking testimony of the murders, I felt a terrible urge to find out what was the fate of my father. I knew that I would not find peace in my soul until I knew exactly what happened.

In 1965 I accidentally came upon the book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1960) by William Shirer, translated into Hebrew about that time. I read it with much interest. To my great astonishment, I discovered in the chapter entitled "The Fall of Poland" a description of the murder of about 50 Jews by German soldiers in a town not far from the border. Shirer did not give the exact name of the town, but the details of the story matched astoundingly the details of Szkopf's testimony. One passage in particular attracted my attention. In it Shirer wrote that the murderers were court-martialed and the prosecutor asked the death sentence for the accused, but eventually they were sentenced to imprisonment. He also said that the news about the court-martial leaked to the German press and were published there.

In 1988, after Communism collapsed and the gates of Eastern Europe were opened to visitors from the West, I went for the first time to Poland, with a group. One day my wife and I left the group, hired a local guide and went by taxi to the town of Krasnosielc. It was very exciting to return to my birthplace, the town I left when I was nine years old. I didn't meet anyone I knew, but I was amazed to see that almost nothing had changed. Most of the

houses were there, although the Jewish inhabitants were replaced by Polish inhabitants. I remembered the place where I used to buy ice cream and the houses of my acquaintances and friends from long ago. Our house, however, burned down shortly after the war.

I ran to the spot where I parted from my father, whose memory never left me all these years. Then we went to the building that was the synagogue and we found it standing, but it was now a warehouse for agricultural products \*. That day we were not allowed to enter the synagogue. I didn't give up, but continued my efforts to discover the mass grave and to find a way to build a memorial for my father, of blessed memory, and the other victims of the massacre. It is difficult in the framework of this article to describe all the stages of this endeavor, but in short I will mention that with the help of Polish friends we located the mass grave in the courtyard of the synagogue, 50 meters from the building. The military attaché Jurgen Knoppe and the cultural attaché Dr. Susanna Reiner, of the German Embassy in Tel Aviv, as well as Mr. Stephan Steinlein of the German Embassy in Warsaw helped me to obtain the relevant material from the German archives. We also received a grant from the German Foreign Office for this purpose. A committee of four members was established: Ed Piser, Nathan Blenkitny, Avi Gollender, and myself in order to realize the commemoration project. With the help of this grant, contributions by former residents now living in Israel and in the United States, and some personal funds, I began to build the memorial to my father and the other victims of the massacre.

Four plaques were installed on the outer wall of the synagogue. On them are engraved in four languages – Hebrew, Polish, English and Yiddish – the description of the Jewish community and the bitter fate of its members during the Second World War. The memorial on the grave was built by the “Va’ad Lehantzahat Hahayal” (the committee for preserving the memory of the soldiers) and was transported to Poland by the Polish National Airline LOT. Thirty-one names, which I gathered with great effort among the

people in Israel and the US, are engraved on the memorial, in Hebrew and Polish (see list). On June 5, 1996, after seven years of hard work, the unveiling of the monument took place, in the presence of the representatives of the embassy of Israel in Warsaw, of the German embassy and of the Polish government. In attendance as well were most of the local residents and visitors from Israel. Wreaths were placed on the monument, the town was decorated with the flags of Poland and Israel, and the local firemen's orchestra played the national anthems.

My brother Michael led the full religious ceremony, and both my brother and I had the sacred privilege, after fifty seven years, to recite the Kaddish at the burial place of our father, may his memory be blessed.

### **The List of Persons Murdered in the Krasnosielec Synagogue on 5.9.1939**

1. Akiva ANCHOWICZ
2. Abraham BABCZYK
3. Mglá BEREL
4. Noah CZERWIN
5. Shmuel DUBNER
6. Yehuda FRENKIEL
7. Hirsch GOLOBRODA
8. Chaim GOLDKRANZ
9. David GLANDBARD
10. Chaim ArieH HOCHMAN
11. Shmuel HOCHMAN
12. Chaim HIMMELFARB
13. Yechiel Meir HENDEL
14. Shlomo IZRAEL
15. Yaakov Moshe KOTLAS
16. Zellig KAFKA
17. Moshe KOZICA
18. Abraham KOZICA
19. Yehoshua KLAINMAN
20. Yehuda KAMINSKY
21. ArieH LICHTENSZTEIN
22. Moshe Aharon MOSZKOWICZ
23. Yeshua MUZKAT
24. Yaakov MELBAR
25. Abraham OLBRISZ
26. Pertz ORLANSKY
27. Yaakov OSTROZINSKY
28. Meir RABINOWICZ

- 29. Shmuel Yosef RABINOWICZ
- 30. Leib ROZENTAL
- 31. Pincus ROZENTAL
- 32. Baruch WILSON

\* See illustrations in the Hebrew version.

*David Shachar was born in Krasnosielc, Poland, and during World War II he was a Volunteer in the Polish People's Army. In 1948 he volunteered for Machal in the War of*

*Independence (Negev Brigade of Palmach and Communication Corps). He is a radio electronic technician and worked for several organizations, including the Government. During the last 10 years he has devoted all his time and energy to commemoration projects in Poland, mainly of the dramatic events which he personally experienced, and the establishing of memorials to the Jews who perished in the Shoah. He is presently writing his autobiography and history of his activities.*



## Impressions from a "Discovering Family Roots" Trip to Poland

*Ayelet Klausner*

Translated from the Hebrew

There is a good reason why trips to Poland are known by the term "Discovering Your Roots." We traveled to find our past and by doing so, find ourselves and our futures.

In Poland, more so than any other place, we become aware of our connection to our tradition. Lighting candles and reciting Kiddush, when done at Maidanek, are neither a trivial event, nor are they merely a religious act. They are meaningful symbols full of implications about who we are and what we left behind in this country and in these places.

The almost obsessive search of all of us at every place we visited hinting at our family history was unbelievable. All of us came with names of relatives and towns and we searched for them with all our might. At Treblinka, we sought entire communities. In Prague and Terezin, in the endless lists of those who perished, we searched for a lost relative.

I had a personal revelation - arriving at Terezin, surrounded by the names of children, I found a tiny bit of myself. The

name of one boy - Thomas Klausner; a name that could easily have been replaced by my brother's name or even mine.

In Poland, we found our past. The pain, the anger, the humiliation, the desire for revenge. But, we discovered more than that. Our immediate future was revealed. Zionist feelings, patriotism intensified as we deepened our search for answers to the unsolvable question that hovered over us all. The answer we found did not satisfy our questions, but it more than consoled us concerning the future. The solution that most, if not all of us reached was THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

Poland drew us a step closer to ourselves and completed a small but important part of the puzzle of our past. A puzzle that we will have to work hard to connect its parts that are scattered everywhere.

*Ayelet Klausner is a 12<sup>th</sup> grade student in the Amal Comprehensive High School, Beersheva, majoring in Studies of Eretz Yisrael.*



## A Walk from 2001 to my Family in the Nineteenth Century\*

*Joe Isaacs*

This last July I attended the 21st International Jewish Genealogy Conference that was held in London at the Inter-Continental Hotel, Hyde Park Corner. On the first evening I left the hotel to find a nearby shop. Within a very few minutes I found myself in Shepherd's Market [1] and realized that it was when researching my ancestors who lived in this very area that the search started in earnest. My great-great-grandparents, Solomon and Elizabeth (nee SOLOMON) BENJAMIN lived here in Mayfair for all their adult life. This made me realize how many of my ancestors were born, married and/or died as well as worked within an easy hour's walk of the conference venue, a radius of two miles.

Solomon's son Saunders, my great-grandfather also worked in Shepherd's Street [1] as a livery tailor, supplying livery to the gentry. Both Solomon's and Saunders' relatives were so proud of living in this area that Shepherds Market and Mayfair appear on their tombstones.

Crossing Oxford Street, I arrived at Marylebone Lane. Here and also in Paddington Street and Thayer Street close by [2] was the home of great-great-great-grandparents Mark and Elizabeth (also nee SOLOMON) BENJAMIN. Mark was at first a clothes salesman but later was an orange salesman and fruiterer.

Saunders' wife Elizabeth (nee HARRIS) BENJAMIN had 16 children one of whom was my grandfather Solomon Myer BENJAMIN who was born in Addison Road, Kensington. This is half a mile above the two miles, although others of his siblings were born in Sloane St. [3] and Mayfair, which was well within this limit.

My great-great-great-grandfather Saunders SOLOMON who was a clothes salesman also lived in Kensington in the High Street [4] together with his wife Rachel (nee DAVIS).

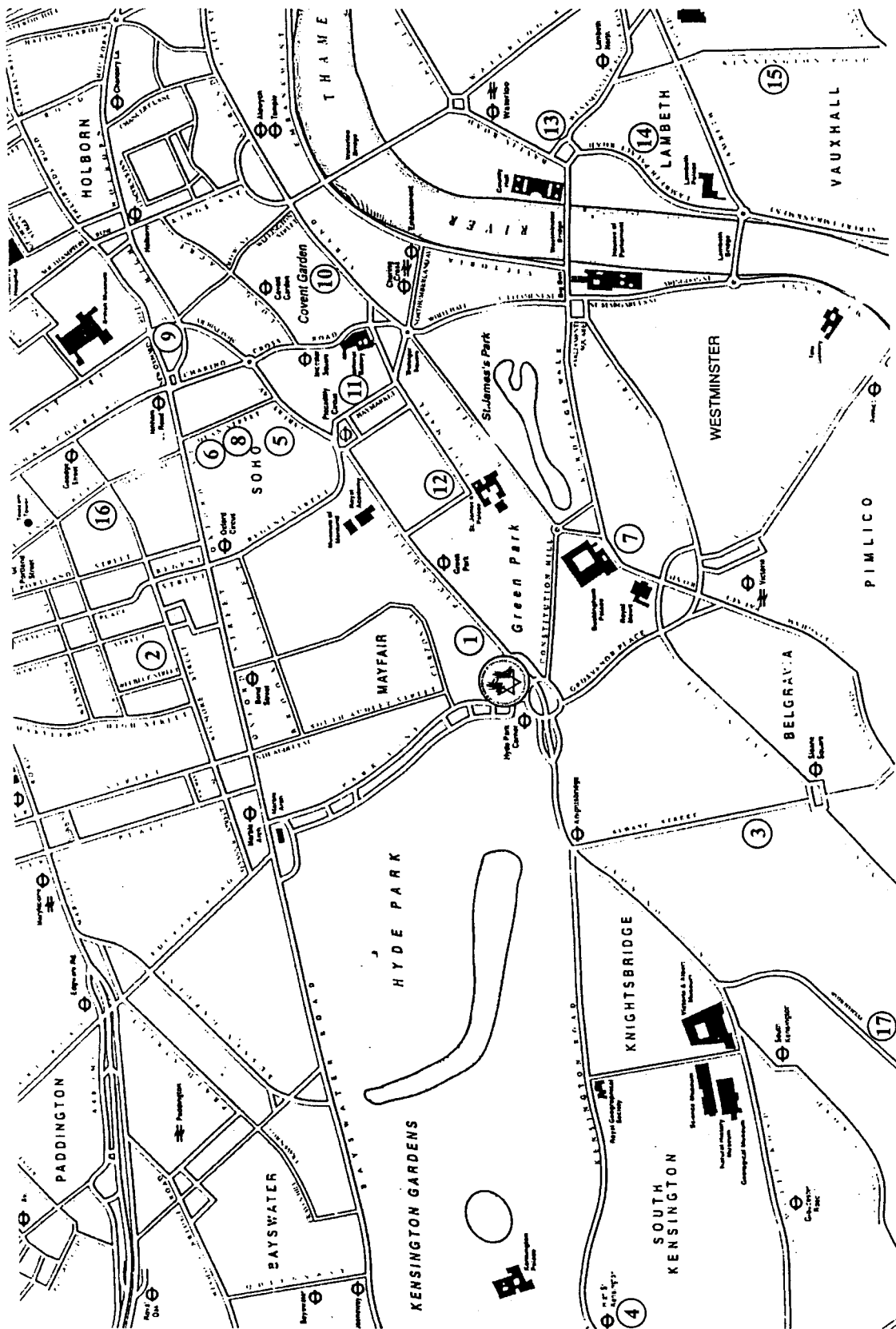
If I return to Oxford Street and walk towards Tottenham Court Road off on the right I will find Soho. Great-great-grandfather Charles

DAVIS, an auctioneer, lived in Gerrard Street [5]. He married great-great-grandmother Sarah (nee BENJAMIN) but died just over a year later and Sarah lived in Charles Street off Soho Square [6] for over 40 more years where she was a dealer in antiquities. Their son, great-grandfather Isaac DAVIS was born in Charles Street and married Kate Sprague DAVIS who was born in Stafford Place, Westminster [7]. Isaac and Kate lived nearby in Greek Street, Soho [8], where my grandmother Esther Elizabeth BENJAMIN (nee Davis) was born.

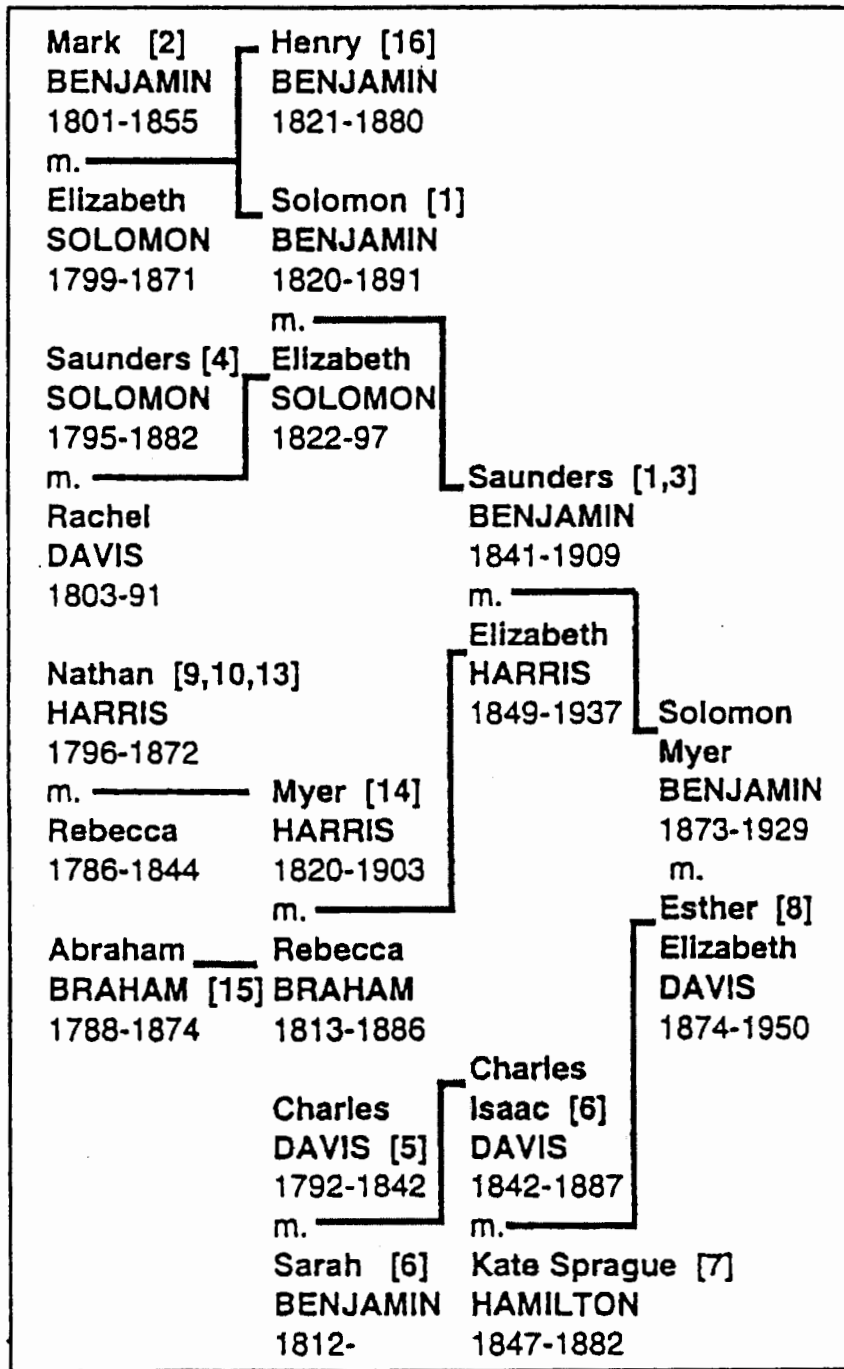
A little to the east of Charring Cross Road is St. Giles [9]. Great-great-great-grandfather Nathan HARRIS was born in this area. We will now move down to the Strand [10] where he was an appraiser and jeweler. We will shortly move South of the Thames but on the way will visit the site of the Western Synagogue in St. Alban's Place [11], just off the Haymarket. This is where most of those of my ancestors mentioned here were members. Not far away was Willis's Rooms in King Street, St. James's [12], where some of the family weddings took place with the Chief Rabbi, Rev. Dr. Adler officiating.

South of the river just the other side of Waterloo Station is Lower Marsh [13] where Nathan and great-great-great-grandmother Rebecca lived. Nearby in Lambeth Palace Road [14] opposite St. Thomas's Hospital lived great-great-grandparents Myer and Rebecca HARRIS (nee BRAHAM). Myer was a jeweller and diamond merchant, he was brought up in the Covent Garden area [10]. Rebecca's father, great-great-great-grandfather Abraham BRAHAM, an engraver, was close by in Kennington Road [15].

If I was tired of walking, I could have called Solomon BENJAMIN's brother Henry's cab (it would have to be by messenger or penny post, no telephones, faxes or e-mails then). Henry lived in Union Street, by Middlesex Hospital [16]. Perhaps he would have taken us to the Brompton Cemetery of the Western Synagogue in the Fulham Road [17],



Map of London



*Family Tree*

which is still within two miles radius.

To return to my starting point I cross the road and catch a Number 14 bus. From the upper deck I can look over the wall of the cemetery and see the resting-place of Henry and many of those mentioned. They have laid at rest there for over a hundred years.

[1] The numbers in square brackets apply to the map and the tree, see illustrations.

\* The contents of the above article first appeared in Shemot, Volume 9,2 (June 2001) The Journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain and is printed here by the kind permission of the editor.

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*Joe Isaacs was born in Slough, England and has been living in Netanya since 1975. All his working life he worked in the retail furniture trade. He is the fourth generation on every side to be born in England and several of his great great great grandparents were also born there. He has been interested in his family genealogy for many years and as well as running the Netanya Genealogy Group of the IGS is a member of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain and also their Anglo-Jewish SIG.*

—◆—  
*Only a genealogist regards a step backwards as progress*  
—◆—



## **28 Years of Genealogical Research**

A lecture given at the Tel-Aviv branch of IGS\*  
*Yitzhak A. Oked Sechter*

This is a very personal lecture, not an academic one, and being a journalist I'll add some anecdotes based on the 28 years of genealogical research and the difficulties on the way.

Like many of you, I also started my research a few years too late, only after both my maternal grandmother and my mother had passed away. Both were walking encyclopedias concerning family history, including names, locations, and general information.

A great deal of the success in this research is due to my wife Ita, as we have extensively researched both our families.

When we started 28 years ago we were literally in the Stone Age regarding family research. There were no personal computers, the internet etc. We got stuck trying to figure out how to give a reference number to a family, or how to differentiate generations when drawing by hand a family tree. A letter to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah didn't help either. Having a background in librarianship, I knew that once you decide on a reference system you're stuck with it for life.

In the end Ita decided to give each family a running number. The Sechters, for instance, started with the number 1000, the maternal Feldmans started with number 2000, and the numbers 3000 and 4000 went to Ita's families. Each family page received a running reference number.

Ita drew our first family trees on huge Bristol papers. She solved the generation problem by giving each generation on the tree one of the four basic colors, red, green, black, and blue and every four generations used the colors again.

The biggest help to our research in the pre-computer era was the 'family sheet.' We got the idea for this sheet from a friend in the United States who had received it from the Mormons. We made some changes in the sheet so it would be suitable for our Jewish research and added Hebrew lettering to it, then we took

it to a printing shop and printed some 1000 copies. Remember, copying machines were not so common then.

Ita decided to open a family sheet with a number only when a couple had a child. Until they had a child, they would remain on their parent's family sheet. I mention this family sheet, because it is the backbone of our research and I strongly recommend keeping data on paper. I'm now working with my third professional computer software program, and each time I changed programs I had to start from scratch putting all my research on the computer again. Our luck (backup) was the availability of the data we had on these family sheets in hard copy, meaning on paper.

### **Computers and Computerized Software Programs**

#### The Bad News:

1. No matter what the gurus tell you, a computer was and remains a "Golem."
2. Commercial computer software programs: there are so many of them (Hebrew-English; English only etc.) it is not easy to choose one. None are perfect. My advice is to request a demo copy and try it. If you feel comfortable with it, then go for it. But check and recheck each program, because once you've chosen a program it's like a Catholic wedding, you will not want so readily to depart from it because of the time you've put in it and the vast amount of information it contains. Some people will tell you that today with Gedcom you can transfer whole files from one program to another. But this is partially true; Gedcom usually does not transfer all the contents of your original computerized files.

Another drawback is that the software companies want to make money – naturally – and are coming out about once a year with a new version. I buy a new version only every few years.

Last but not least, these same software

companies are loaded with what I call "money traps": CD ROMs of family trees, cemetery projects etc., all of which they offer for a fixed price.

3. Going on line is not free from expenses: telephone time, modem, fast systems to unload material etc. The Internet server companies are not cheap and they all have their problems and drawbacks. They also don't seem to do a good job in ensuring you won't be hit by viruses, hackers or junk mail. The web is time consuming and you can easily get addicted to it, and sometimes from looking at too many family trees on the net you fail to see the forest.

4. Finding material on line: If you really want to find material on line you have to learn certain tricks of the trade, like how to look for the material, how to use the links etc.

#### The Good News:

Using computers does streamline your research, again depending on which software you use. You have neater trees, and you no longer need to draw lines by hand on Bristol paper. And if your computer doesn't crash G-d forbid, it is a neat way to store your material. Remember even the best computer in the world cannot really do all the work for you.

#### **Some Pointers from My 28 Years of Research:**

1. I believe success in genealogical research is 90% luck and 10% hard work. But without the 10% hard work there is no luck.
2. When you interview relatives keep your ears wide open, and record or write down everything, especially those little stories.
3. Try to find out from relatives if any one in the family left any written material. Sometimes even old letters are goldmines for us. An American cousin of mine, Minnie Landman DeNelsky left two manuscripts that dealt with her paternal and maternal families in the old country. It was not a perfect piece of literature but genealogically speaking it was a masterpiece, portraying life in the shtetl over one hundred twenty years ago. Another source, though only about things more recent, is the Steven Spielberg video interview project of Holocaust survivors and Yad Vashem's similar

projects.

#### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

Probably the most FAQ is: "Do you have any famous people in your family tree?" We the serious genealogists of course are not doing our research to find famous people but if we do find some it does add some excitement. I'm sorry to say that I have not been so lucky but if I stretch it a little I can say that outside of myself I have a famous person in my family tree, the American writer Samuel Clemens, a.k.a. Mark Twain, a distant cousin of mine through marriage and not a blood relative). How? My maternal grandmother Sarah Fishler had six sisters and one brother. One of the sisters, Edith, married a Philip Gabrilowitz who had a first cousin (the fathers were brothers though they spelled their names in English slightly different) a famous Pianist and orchestra director by the name of Ossip Gabrilowitsch. Ossip met and later married Mark Twain's daughter Clara Langhome Clemens.

Another FAQ is "what has been your greatest success in your genealogical research?" My greatest success till now has been to trace a person down who is not related to me at all. During World War Two as a little boy I was sent to study at a Baptist Military Academy in Texas. What was a nice little Jewish boy doing in a Baptist Military Academy is a story in itself. Anyway there I met and dated as a 10-year-old boy a 10-year-old Baptist girl called Anita Turner. After leaving the Academy our ways parted never to see her again. In the meantime I made Aliya to Israel, married, had three children and five grandchildren but for 53 years despite all my efforts I never managed to trace her down.

With the help of computer search engines I traced hundreds of Anita Turners on the net but no one was the one I was looking for. It was like finding a needle in a haystack. I only had her first name and maiden name to go on and also her mother's name since she was a member of the staff at the Academy. "If she is a typical American you will probably never find her since she has probably married and remarried several times," the skeptics warned me.

I finally found her with the help of the Google search engine that referred me to a Kentucky Genealogical society web site. There I found an Anita Turner. Since this was a genealogical group the program asked me if I was interested in unloading the Gedcom family tree of Anita Turner. I hit the yes button. Thanks to Bill Gates, to computer technology, and to the fact that I had on my hard disk a computerized program with Gedcom, in a matter of seconds I had her family tree in the regular computerized format I'm used to. There I discovered an Anita Turner married with four children. But due to the privacy act no birthdays marriage dates addresses were listed. With trembling fingers I hit the parents button and there was her mother, with the same uncommon first name, I remembered from my Academy days, meaning I had a bingo.

No, I haven't as yet met Anita face to face but have been in email correspondence with her.

### **Writing a Book**

I am not practicing what I preach, since I have not yet written a book about the family, but I strongly advise all of you to start writing such a book. Today with the very friendly word processors that correct even your spelling it is a lot easier to do than a decade ago. With the scanner you are also able to scan and paste pictures for your book.

What I'm doing at the moment is writing a fiction book partly based on my memoirs, which of course includes also some of my genealogical research work. I also reveal here a little secret, concerning fiction book writing. You need to include characters that stand out and are alive and memorable. Thanks to my genealogical work I have characters galore plus an unending bank of given and family names, so you see genealogy research has its benefits.

Speaking of benefits, I would like to mention here several other benefits my wife and I have reaped from our research. I was born in Venezuela to parents who were born in Eastern Europe in Bessarabia in little 'Shtetlach,' the central one being Klishkovitz. This area during the past 200 years has changed hands at least a half dozen times. Klishkovitz had its name

changed each time a different country took over. So whether I liked it or not I started pouring over history books and old maps etc. At the end, in the framework of the university studies, my wife and myself specialized in Jewish history especially Eastern European history. My wife did something extra: she also studied Yiddish to assist her in her genealogical research.

### **Where Do You Go from Here?**

I'm not so young, so the main question I ask myself is what is going to happen to all this research after we are gone?

My advice is to try and interest a child, grandchild, or a relative to continue your genealogical research. I have a strong candidate in my youngest son Barak Yisrael who has shown some interest, and is also a computer guru and knows how my genealogical research program works. He has gone in the footsteps of his father and mother and is on the verge of receiving a BA degree in History. We also hope some day to visit the 'Shtetlach' where our parents came from.

### **How Do You Preserve Your Work?**

The truth is that there is no sure way to preserve your work. I'll give you an example: the computer operating system Windows is about 10 years old, before that we had DOS. So let's say some one died just 15 years ago and had all his research on DOS and on a word processing program very popular in Israel then called Einstein. If you received the back up diskettes on his research, you would probably have a very hard time restoring and viewing his material on the modern computers of today. And in another year or two the computer manufacturers will probably stop providing the 3½ inch diskette drive, as they have stopped providing the old 5¼ inch diskette drive in the modern computers. My advice:

Use different preservation methods; try to keep up with modern technologies; share information worldwide with relatives and other people; keep multiple copies of your research in multiple places including abroad; keep a hard copy, and use high quality paper and ink.

## What Is the Direction of Genealogy in the Future?

When I started my research 28 years ago, I never dreamt in my wildest dreams that we would be having all these jazzed up computerized methods to help us in our research today. Keep your eyes wide open and follow up on the latest developments in the fields of genetics and DNA research. I'm positive that in the next decade, genetics and DNA will be revolutionizing our genealogical research, just as the computer and Internet have revolutionized our research these past few years.

\* The lecture was given at the Negev branch of IGS on 2 May 2001, and at the Tel-Aviv branch on 10 September 2001.

*Yitzhak A. Oked Sechter was born in Maracaibo, Venezuela and he made aliya together with his parents, grandmother and siblings in September 1950. His parents' family is from Bessarabia and Bukovina and many of them died in the Holocaust in Transnistria. Those that remained alive live around the world, mainly in Israel, North and South America. He is a journalist by profession, having worked for a leading Israeli daily newspaper for 25 years, publishing hundreds of articles. He has also freelanced and is now busy writing a thriller novel. Holds a BA degree in Jewish and general History at the Open University, Ramat Aviv, Israel.*

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## An Evening Devoted to the Study of "The Golden Age of Lithuanian Jewry"

*Summarized and Edited by Menashe Horowitz*

Translated from the Hebrew

On June 25, 2001, an evening devoted to the study of the Golden Age of Lithuanian Jewry took place at the headquarters of the "Igud Yotzei Lita" in Tel Aviv. It was organized by the Foundation for the Study of the Horowitz Family in cooperation with the Israel Genealogical Society, Igud Yotzei Lita and Israel Association of Former Vilna Residents.

The evening opened with greetings by representatives of the sponsoring groups, each emphasizing the importance of the evening from their own perspective. I would like to express my appreciation to Chana Furman, President of the Israel Genealogical Society for her remarks; it turns out that genealogists and members of the Horowitz family - both involved in building family trees - have much in common.

### The Foundation for the Study of the Horowitz Family

Before discussing the contents of the lectures presented at the conference, I would like to explain why the Horowitz Family Foundation sponsored an evening of study that was not devoted solely to the study of our family.

The Foundation is interested in researching the role that the Horowitz family played within the greater context of Jewish history and in documenting the cultural and historical framework in which they operated. In addition, it is exceedingly important to us to record observations of life in the pre-Holocaust Jewish communities. We see in this our contribution in the mitzvah of Zakhor - Remembering.

Faithful to this attitude, two years ago, in June 1999, we sponsored a study day devoted to the Golden Age of Prague's Jewish

Community that was in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to tradition, the family originated in the area of Prague. A Levite family from Northern Spain drifted to Bohemia and settled in the town of Horovice. A branch of the family that was economically successful was granted the right to settle in Prague and established its name as "Ish Horowitz," analogous to Von Horowice. From that time on, there is documentation of the family and its dispersal throughout Eastern Europe. On that study day, we examined the history of the family in Prague and its connections with other Jewish families in the middle ages. That meeting evoked great interest.

Encouraged by this success, we organized another study day following the same format in September 2000 on the Golden Age of Polish Jewry from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries. One of the topics of discussion was the Council of the Four Lands, which directly led to the present Conference dedicated to the Golden Age of Lithuanian Jewry.

### **Conference Lectures**

Three lecturers presented a range of perspectives on the history and culture of Lithuanian Jewry: Professor Dov Levin from the Department of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University, an authority on the history of the Jews of Lithuania; Mr. Daniel Ophir, director of Beit Hatanakh and secretary of the Horowitz Family Foundation and Mrs. Bilha Halpern, a lecturer in Bible and a researcher of Lithuanian Jewry.

I. Professor Dov Levin spoke on **The Two Unusual Golden Ages of Lithuanian Jewry – the Period of Internal Autonomy during the Committee of the Lithuanian Nation and in Modern Times.**

#### **The Committee of the Lithuanian Nation (1623-1761)**

The first Jews arrived in Lithuania from Southeast Europe in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. The rulers encouraged Jewish settlement in the towns by granting them economic privileges. In 1599, when Poland and Lithuania merged

into one kingdom, Lithuania already had between 15,000 and 20,000 Jews. The Polish government enacted a Poll Tax on all Jewish residents in 1580 and a nationwide Jewish organization was established to collect this tax efficiently. This institution was known as Va'ad Arba'a Ha'aratzot – The Council of the Four Lands that operated for 184 years until 1764. The Lithuanian Jewish community was originally part of the Council but it separated from it in 1623 and established The Committee of the Lithuanian Nation that functioned in a similar manner until 1761.

The Committee's basic function that warranted its existence was the distribution of the collected taxes to individuals and communities and delivering the taxes collected to the government and crucial points. Funds were allocated to individuals and communities (the Kahal) and community representatives would gather from time to time for meetings in various locations. In exchange for collecting the taxes, the government granted its Jewish residents extensive autonomy.

The Committee also dealt in judicial matters, relations between the communities, supervision of education and morality and the imposition of penalties. The minutes – protocols (Pinkasim) of these meetings, contain more than one thousand enactments and decisions covering all aspects of Jewish life in the region.

Over time, disputes and tensions between the communities and those in positions of authority in the Committee lessened. Political changes in Poland and Lithuania led to the end of the Committee's activities. The nobility and the government decided to annul the collective taxation of the Jews and revert to the pattern of individual taxation. After the Committee was no longer essential in their eyes, it was officially disbanded in 1761. It should be noted that in the estimation of many historians the National Committee was an example of one of the most successful experiments in the granting of internal autonomy to a national minority in Europe.

## **Autonomy in Independent Lithuania (1920-1924)**

Independent Lithuania was established after a long period under Russian rule following the end of World War I. This decision was reached at the Peace Conference, aided by requests by world Jewry, and in particular German Jewish Zionist organizations. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the Lithuanian government issued a declaration recognizing internal Jewish autonomy in the areas of social welfare, education, religion and cultural matters. The autonomy was based on local communities and the Association of Communities. To a certain extent, it was similar to the situation that prevailed during the period of the Lithuanian state, with the main difference being that it operated in a democratic framework.

At the end of 1919, Dr. Max Soloveitchik, who along with other Jewish personalities championed the autonomy framework, was appointed Minister of Jewish Affairs. The first national council of communities was established in January 1920 and the National Council, representing the Jews of Lithuania was elected.

Autonomy, with the right to levy taxes, establish an educational system, conduct a census of residents, etc., made self-rule possible. In 1922, the rights of Jews and other minorities were provided for in the Lithuanian constitution. However, because of the difficult economic conditions and the socio-political instability, there was a gradual backing away from most of the accomplishments. The activities of the National Council were terminated and all that was left was the Jewish bloc in the Lithuanian parliament. A fascist-nationalist coup took place in 1926 and the final whistle was blown on the short period of autonomy.

Even with the abolition of the autonomy framework, the Jewish educational system continued to operate in Lithuania. This included a teachers college, Hebrew language high schools and major Yeshivot (Slobodka, Telz, Kelm and Panevezys), which functioned until the German invasion. 94% of Lithuania's Jews were murdered in the Holocaust.

## **II. Dani Ophir spoke on The Aliya of the Disciples of the Gaon of Vilna to Eretz Yisrael**

The Gaon of Vilna, R. Elijah ben Solomon Zalman (1720-1797), made preparations to travel to the Land of Israel. He began the journey but for some unknown reason returned to Lithuania. However, a group of his students settled in Eretz Yisrael in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were the nucleus of the of the Lithuanian Ashkenazi community in Eretz Yisrael. To facilitate their aliya and to support those who came, they established a quasi-Zionist movement called *Hazon Zion – The Vision of Zion*, with its center in the community of Shklov plus branches throughout Lithuania.

The olim (those who moved to the Land of Israel) at first settled in Safed and later relocated to Jerusalem. They endured great hardship – suffering loss of life and property from a severe earthquake, epidemics and attacks. In spite of all of this, the community established itself over time and contributed greatly to the revival of the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael in the time of the Turks.

Those who established Nahalat Shiva and Mea Shearim the new neighborhoods of Jerusalem outside the city walls came from this group. Among the founders of Nahalat Shiva, the role of R. Arie Leib Horowitz was emphasized. It was in his wife's name – Altusha, a native of Hebron and an Ottoman citizen, that the property was officially registered. They also played a major role in the establishment of Petah Tikvah. It was noted that the Ashkenazi Haredi community in the Mea Shearim of today, sees itself as the continuation of the students of the Gaon of Vilna who settled in Eretz Yisrael.

**Bilha Halpern presented an impressive picture of the Role of Lithuanian Jews in the Haskalah and Zionist Movements.**

According to the criterion established by Professor Klausner, the Haskalah Movement spanned the hundred-year period from 1782-1882 and the Zionist revival movement

extended over 66 years from 1882 until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

### **The Haskalah Movement**

The winds of the Haskalah (Enlightenment) in Lithuania began to blow in the German language. Works written on the subject were translated and over time, they were initially written in Yiddish and Hebrew. The Gaon of Vilna prepared the groundwork for the absorption of general enlightenment in the Hebrew language. He required his students to learn the Hebrew language, its grammar and the Tanakh as well as general subjects such as geography, mathematics and medicine. In contrast, the Haredi rabbis vehemently opposed this and after the death of the Gaon of Vilna, the progress of this movement temporarily halted, but as time went on, the interest of Jewish intellectuals in general culture was renewed. Among the first generation of the enlightened ones who remained faithful to Jewish tradition, two well-known Vilna personalities stand out – the physician Judah, the son of Mordecai Halevi Horowitz, and R. Pinchas Elijah the son of Meir Horowitz. In the second generation, the Lithuanian intellectuals continued to spread knowledge and to criticize old frameworks. Lithuania became the center of the Hebrew enlightenment and the following are names of some of well-known Lithuanians: the poet A. D. M. Hakohen (Abraham Dov Levinson Hakohen), the poet known as YaLaG (Judah Leib Gordon), the author Abraham Mapu and the publicist known as MaLaL (Moses Leib Lilienblum) and others.

The Hebrew press was launched in Lithuania at this time, and included the weekly publications *Hamagid* and *Hacarmel* and the daily *Hayom*. Later, in Jerusalem, most of the newspaper editors were from Lithuania. The most noted among them was Eliezer Ben Yehuda, who revived the Hebrew language.

The Haskalah period went through a number of stages. Initially there were the fine ideas of harmony between nations and some intellectuals tended towards assimilation. However, the hopes of openness proved false, and after the pogroms of 1881-1882 in

Russia, a change took place in Eastern European Jewry. The Hibbat Zion movement, dedicated to realize the national hopes of the Jews in the Land of Israel, was founded and a great deal of literature on this topic was published.

### **Hebrew Revival**

Haskalah literature supported adapting to general culture while at the same time safeguarding the Hebrew language. The very act of writing in Hebrew on general topics was a revolutionary development. However, the Hebrew remained stilted and was based on the language of the Bible and that of the poets of Spain. In contrast, the revival literature called for the use of Hebrew as a nationalistic, cultural and political vehicle in preparation for the return to Zion. The Hovevei Zion felt that Hebrew had to be used for daily life and they developed a synthesis of biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew while encouraging the use of newly coined words. To advance the spread of the language they established 'Safa B'rurah – Clear Language' institutions in Central and Eastern Europe.

The major authors of Hibbat Zion and Zionism came, however, from Russian Jewry, but they included many Lithuanians, among them: Zalman Schneour; Druyanuv, M. Tz. Maneh, Levinsky, Jacob Rabinowitz, Professor Joseph Klausner and others. Among the activists, members of the First Aliya and the builders of the colonies were many Lithuanians. Included in advocates of the Zionist movement we make mention of the Lithuanians Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines, Professor Tzvi Herman Schapira, David Wolfsohn, A. D. Gordon and others. Together with this, it must be pointed out that a large portion of Lithuania's Jews opposed Zionism. Chief among them were the Haredim (ultra-Orthodox) and the members of the Bund – Socialist Yiddishists.

Especially significant was the role of Lithuania's Jews in the field of education. After World War I, Lithuania declared its independence. For a short period, Jews enjoyed internal autonomy, but this was cancelled in 1926. However, the Jewish

educational system that was established continued to operate until World War II.

The first Hebrew High School in Lithuania and, for that matter in all of the diaspora was founded in Marijampole in 1919 by Moses David Hyman (the grandfather of Bilha Halpern), along the pattern of the Herzliya Gymnasium in Tel Aviv. A few years later, a Hebrew language kindergarten was opened. There were both general and Hebrew studies geared to eventual aliya to Eretz Yisrael. The idealistic teachers saw education as part of the pioneering effort and most of them settled in Eretz Yisrael after teaching for a few years. Bilha Halpern's mother was an example of this phenomenon. A Hebrew

High School was opened in Kovno in 1920 and subsequently in other locations in Lithuania. In spite of the economic difficulties, children from villages also studied in the high schools established in the district cities.

In 1940, the Soviet Union annexed Lithuania and Zionism was declared a reactionary movement and Hebrew language education was prohibited. The Germans entered Lithuania in June 1942 and everything was destroyed in the Holocaust.

*Dr. Menashe Horowitz is the chairman of the Foundation for the Study of the Horowitz family.*

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## Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center

*Report of a Visit*

*Harriet Kasow*

Under the auspices of the Jerusalem Branch of the women's organization "NA'AMAT," Mathilde Tagger and I visited the Museum, Center and Library connected with the Jews of Iraq which is located in Or Yehuda. It is in the center of the country and was in the past settled by a large number of Iraqi Jews.

The Museum is a reconstruction and in some ways a reenactment of the Iraqi Jewry's dispersion after the destruction of the first Temple and their return to Eretz Yisrael in 1948-51. Among the displays is the Great Synagogue of Baghdad with the very special Torah scroll covers with inclined "rimonim;" a street of Jewish shops; illustrative models of the ways feasts were celebrated; and maps tracing the journeys and the places that were settled during various times. There are also models recreating the great Yeshivot of Pumbedita and Nehardea. Original documents and photographs trace the efforts to get the Jewish population to Israel upon the establishment of the state.

The President of the Center, Mr. Mordechai Ben Porat gave us a brief review of those efforts. Mr. Ben Porat was not only active in this endeavor but as Mayor of Or Yehuda

helped in the absorption process as well. Among the projects of the Center is an annual publication called "Nehardea, the Journal of the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center" separately published in Hebrew and in English. The staffed library has periodicals and books in its holdings.

The project that is most dear to family researchers is "Families of Iraqi Origin." The purpose is to document all Jewish families from Iraq in Israel and worldwide. This documentation is based mainly on the forms filled out by the 120,000 immigrants who came to Israel from Iraq between the years 1930-1975. A computerized program was developed for this purpose. Mr. Ben Porat reported that as of this date 100,000 entries have been computerized. In addition, the Center has family trees submitted by members of the community in Israel and abroad. This is computerized as well. They are requesting families to submit their trees to:

The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center  
Rehov Hahagana 83  
Or Yehuda 60251  
E-Mail: [babylon@babylonjewry.org.il](mailto:babylon@babylonjewry.org.il)  
<http://www.BabylonJewry.org.il>



## Genealogy of a different kind

*Mathilde Tagger*

Translated from the Hebrew


About a month ago we returned from a trip to the two main islands of New Zealand, and we found there a civilization about which we knew very little. It is the civilization of the native people, the Maori. I know that *Sharsheret Hadorot* is a journal for Jewish genealogy, however I hope that the editorial board will allow me to tell the story of a different kind of genealogy.

The Maori originate from the Polynesian Islands, in the Pacific Ocean, and they reached New Zealand about a thousand years ago. They were organized in tribes, and each tribe had its own village. In the center of the village they built a meeting place, where the members gathered to discuss the problems of the tribe. The meeting place is a very large wooden hut, whose inner walls are decorated with colorful paintings, with the color red dominating. The floor is covered with straw mats. Since it is not permitted to enter the meeting place wearing shoes, a special covered balcony was built, where the members leave their shoes, or rather their various footwear. The walls of the balcony are painted as well, and two or three columns can be seen on each side.


Before I describe the decorations on these columns, I would like to mention that the Maori have no written language, and therefore no written tradition. They have only an oral tradition, and in the course of their

lives they memorized the heroic stories of their fathers, from one, two, three and four generations ago. In order to record these stories, they carved and painted tree trunks, the sculptures portraying the lives of their forefathers – on each tree trunk one or two persons – and the important events in their lives. I am not an expert in art, but I think this is called ethnic art, a fitting term to describe a very simple but very authentic type of art. The scenes depict mainly the struggle with animals and with the forces of nature, or an extraordinary experience like saving a life of a man or woman. The result is stunning. The columns-sculptures decorate the entrance of the meeting place of the tribe. As I stood there watching the columns, I thought of the biographies of our own ancestors that we find in encyclopedias and other books. These important people, who became part of our history thanks to their deeds or impressive writings, are the pillars upon which we base our genealogical research. Fathers, pillars, sculptured columns with the lives of fathers on them ... I said to myself: is this a genealogy of a different kind? Or is it really so?

In New Zealand there are millions of sheep, and they have, of course, their own genealogy – just ask the owners of the huge farms. But this truly belongs to another story.



*Time flies! Genealogists are the navigators!*



**Fez and its Scholars** - Volumes I and II, by Rabbi David Ovadia. Jerusalem, 5739 (1979) – A book of major genealogical importance, reviewed by *Levana Albala-Dinerman*

Before us are two volumes filled with names and information on the history of Fez, Morocco, from the 8<sup>th</sup> century, when the city was founded, to contemporary times. Over the period of many years, Fez was a major center for Jews and Torah study. Beginning with the pogrom in 1391 until the expulsion in 1492 it attracted many exiles who came from the various regions of Spain and whose communities preserved the names of their places of origin. Thus, those from Castile and Aragon, as well as those from Valencia and Catalonia were known as Castelianos. Spanish was their main language of communication. Those from Andalusia were called Andaluse, while the Christians called them Moriscos, since they mainly spoke Arabic and bore names such as Ibn Attar, Even Tzur and others. Later, Marrano exiles from Portugal arrived, as Fez was an

important center for going back to Judaism. The two volumes contain many details of important events and list many personalities and scholars who established the character of the community and its operation over the years. They also contain edicts and correspondence, and mention the numerous books authored by its many scholars.

Volume I includes important indexes, some are listed alphabetically while others are separated according to personal names: an index of Jewish names, of non-Jewish names and of places.

The book is invaluable in researching Judeo-Spanish names of this particular period.

Copies are in the collection at the National and University Library at the Givat Ram campus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

The author, Rabbi David Ovadia is a native of **Sefrou**, Morocco and served as the town's rabbi for many years. He is the author of other books, among them one on the Rabbis of Sefrou. He has donated a large portion of that community's records to the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People.



## **Jewish Genealogy Web Sites**

*Harriet Kasow*

Yitzhack A. Oked Sechter and his wife Ita have prepared an eclectic list of web sites built up over the course of their family research. Following is a listing of these, arranged by categories.

Yitzhack and I have discovered that we are cousins. His father's mother is a Sadovnik from the shtetl of Klishkovitz, Kliskovtsy, Cliscauti (Russian, Ukrainian and Romanian names respectively), which is located about 10 kilometers from Chotin (Khotin, Chotyn and Hotin are variations) in what was Bessarabia and very close to Bukovina but is now the

Ukraine. Czernowitz is about 30 kilometers Southwest of Klishkovitz.

My father, Jacob David Sadoff (Sadovnik) is also from the same town but he represents the other Sadovnik family who is not related to him. My grandfather Yechiel had 5 sisters and several of them married Sadovniks, ergo the family connection. This is a small world that in my view points to the interrelatedness among Jews.

I have looked at all the sites to check that they are accessible and have given the shortest home page address possible to get to the desired information. They will be arranged in

the following way: general genealogical sites, Jewish genealogical sites, search engines including tutorials and guides or in Yitzhak's words the Do's and Don'ts, and maps.

#### **GENERAL (NON-SPECIFIC) \***

Ancestry.com [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)  
Ancestor Detective  
[www.ancestordetective.com](http://www.ancestordetective.com)  
Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet  
[www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com)  
FamilySearch Internet Genealogy Service  
[www.familysearch.com](http://www.familysearch.com) - This is the Mormon's website.  
RootsWeb.com [www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com) Some free newsletters include Rootsweb Review, Roots-L mailing list, Ancestry Daily News  
Ellis Island Immigration History Center  
[www.ellislandrecords.org](http://www.ellislandrecords.org)  
In order to use this site more efficiently an adjunct site was developed and it is my recommendation you use the following site to get to the Ellis Island records.  
Searching the Ellis Island Database in One Step [home.pacbell.net/spmorse/ellis/ellis.html](http://home.pacbell.net/spmorse/ellis/ellis.html)

#### **GENERAL (JEWISH)**

Israel Genealogical Society Home Page  
[www.isragen.org.il](http://www.isragen.org.il)  
JewishGen Family Finder (JGFF)  
[www.jewishgen.org/jgff/](http://www.jewishgen.org/jgff/)  
Jewish Research Index – Poland  
[www.jewishgen.org/JRI-PL/](http://www.jewishgen.org/JRI-PL/)  
Jewish National and University Library  
[sites.huji.ac.il/jnul/](http://sites.huji.ac.il/jnul/)  
Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People [sites.huji.ac.il/archives/](http://sites.huji.ac.il/archives/)  
Beth HaTefutsot (Diaspora Museum)  
[www.h.org.il](http://www.h.org.il)  
Ort [www.ort.org](http://www.ort.org) Has a link to the World Ort Archive Jewish Travel and Leisure  
[www.jewishroutes.com](http://www.jewishroutes.com)  
Avotaynu [www.avotaynu.com](http://www.avotaynu.com) Genealogical books, CD's, periodicals and microforms of a high level.

#### **SEARCH ENGINES**

Google [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)  
Metacrawler [www.metacrawler.com](http://www.metacrawler.com)  
Dogpile [www.dogpile.com](http://www.dogpile.com)  
Momma.com [www.momma.com](http://www.momma.com)

Wormhole [www.wormhole2k.org](http://www.wormhole2k.org)  
Alta vista [www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com) Includes an Advanced Search Tutorial  
HotBot [www.hotbot.com](http://www.hotbot.com)

#### **SEARCH ENGINE TUTORIALS (Do's and Don'ts)**

Bare Bones 101 – Basic Web Search Tutorial  
[www.sc.edu/beaufort/library/bones.html](http://www.sc.edu/beaufort/library/bones.html)  
Bright Planet: Tutorials  
[www.completeplanet.com/tutorials/index.asp](http://www.completeplanet.com/tutorials/index.asp)  
FindTutorials.Com –The Tutorials Search Engine [findtutorials.com/](http://findtutorials.com/)  
Free Pint-Search Advice Newsletter from the U.K. [www.freepint.co.uk](http://www.freepint.co.uk)  
Guide to Meta-Search Engines (Indiana University Libraries)  
[www.indiana.edu/~librcsd/](http://www.indiana.edu/~librcsd/)  
Helpers for Searching the Web (Bob Jensen)  
[www.trinity.edu/rjensen/search.htm](http://www.trinity.edu/rjensen/search.htm)  
How to Search the Web  
[daphne.palomar.edu/TGSEARCH/](http://daphne.palomar.edu/TGSEARCH/)  
How to Search the World Wide Web (Middletown Public Library, Rhode Island)  
[204.17.98.73/midlib/tutor.htm](http://204.17.98.73/midlib/tutor.htm)  
Infobasic Update-Internet Research Information [infobasic.com](http://infobasic.com) Searches for domain and IP addresses.  
Librarians' Index to the Internet: Searching the Internet [lii.org/search/file/search](http://lii.org/search/file/search) Lookoff  
[www.lookoff.com/tactix/queries\\_dosdents.php3](http://www.lookoff.com/tactix/queries_dosdents.php3)  
Michael's Internet Finding Tips (Michael Botos) [www.botos.com/train.searchit3a.html](http://www.botos.com/train.searchit3a.html)  
NUEVA: Choose the best Search Engine  
[nuevaschool.org/~debbie/library/research/adv](http://nuevaschool.org/~debbie/library/research/adv)  
[iceengine.html](http://iceengine.html)  
Pandia Search Central [www.pandia.com/](http://www.pandia.com/)  
Research Buzz Home Page  
[www.researchbuzz.com/](http://www.researchbuzz.com/)  
Scout Toolkit (University of Wisconsin)  
[www.ilit.bris.ac.uk/mirrors/scout/addserv/toolkit/searching/index/html](http://www.ilit.bris.ac.uk/mirrors/scout/addserv/toolkit/searching/index/html)  
Search Engine Watch: Search Assistance and Tutorial Links [searchenginewatch.com](http://searchenginewatch.com)  
SearchEngineShowdown.Com – The User's Guide to Web Searching (Greg R. Notess)  
[www.searchengineshowdown.com/](http://www.searchengineshowdown.com/)  
SearchIQ.com – Search Engine Reviews and Tutorials [www.searchiq.com/](http://www.searchiq.com/)  
Sink or Swim: Internet Search Tools and

Techniques  
www.sci.ouc.bc.ca/libr/connect96/search.htm  
Spider's Apprentice – Tips on Searching the  
Web www.monash.com/spidap.html  
Traffick.com – Guide to Portals  
www.traffick.com

UCB Internet Search Tutorial  
www.lib.berkeley.edu/Teachinglib/Guides/Internet/Findinfo.html  
University of Albany Internet Tutorials  
library.albany.edu/internet/  
Web Search Strategies (Debbie Flanagan)  
home.sprintmail.com/~debflanagan/main.html  
Web Searching websearch.about.com/  
Web Searching, Sleuthing and Sifting (Agela

Elkordy)  
www.thelearningsite.net/cyberlibrarian/learn.html  
WebSerch – The Web Research Resource  
www.clubi.ie/webserch/

#### MAPS

Mapa (Hebrew) www.mapa.co.il  
Yellow Pages (Hebrew)  
www.yellowpages.co.il Takes a while to  
download.  
Map Quest www.mapquest.com

- \* 1 All the "http://"s have been removed.
- 2. There are sites that do not require "www"

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## JGS JOURNAL ABSTRACTS

*Compiled by Harold Lewin*

In this modest guide to JGS literature in English, shortage of space has justified excluding descriptions of interesting journeys to ancestral towns, parochial news, and stories of successful family research. The articles selected here are mainly those containing information likely to be of direct benefit to family history researchers. If they find something useful, an effort should be made to locate and read the original article, since these abstracts can only point one in the right direction. The compiler begs forgiveness for all changes of title and missing credits. **Explanation:** Such a note as **3pp. (4)** appearing at the end of an abstract indicates an article length of about **three pages**, with its location in **Ref. No. 4**. The note **1p** indicates an item of length one page or less (see **Key to Journal References**).

### AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE

**The 1869 Austro-Hungarian Census**  
During the 19<sup>th</sup> c. the Austro-Hungarian Empire included territory that is now Croatia,

Slovakia, Slovenia and many other regions, in addition to present-day Austria and Hungary. Edward D. Luft's article is based on two LDS microfilms for Hungary, Saros County, Upper Taresai, Czaloesas Eesulet and Lubotin village near the Polish border. A list of towns in Horna Torysa County precedes the actual census listings on the microfilm. A guide (by Daniel Schlyter) aids finding the 1869 Austrian and Hungarian censuses in the FHL catalog. **3pp. (1)**

**Researching Jewish Family History in Croatia, Slavonia and Hungary.** This is an article by Malcolm Scott Hardy that first appeared in *Voice*, the publication of the Jewish community of Croatia / Zagreb in Autumn 2000. It is a remarkable contribution by a non-Jewish Historian and family history researcher who agreed to undertake research on the family of his Jewish wife. Information is included on the Hungarian censuses of 1828 and 1848 and on the Hungarian roots of Zagreb families. **7pp. (1)**

## **BALTIC STATES**

**Researching 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Census and Tax Lists from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania** by David and Sonia Hoffman describes the discovery of the complete set of the 1784 census of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Lithuanian State Historical Archives, Vilnius. The census covers much of the northern part of the Pale of Settlement including guberniyas of Grodno, Kovno, Minsk, Mogilev, Vilna and Vitebsk. The article also describes other useful archives including tax lists, and provides an extensive list of references. 3pp. (1)

**Collection of Box Taxes in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Lithuania** by David B.Hoffman and Vitalija Gircyte. The article explains how the Box Tax developed from a simple community tax levied on Kosher meat and poultry and used to meet basic community needs, to a tax levied by the local authority on Jewish factories, industrial enterprises, liquor sales and even on the wearing of Jewish clothing. The Box Tax lists contain valuable information that is sometimes more accurate than the more widely studied revision and family lists. 5pp. (1)

**Official Correspondence in the Kaunas Regional Archives as a Source of Genealogical Data.** David B.Hoffman explains how the multitude of correspondence held by the Kaunas Regional Archives can be an invaluable source of information for researchers looking for information about their ancestors from the seven Districts in Kaunas Guberniya. This article originally appeared in the Spring 2000 issue of Generations, Michigan JGS. 3pp. (3)

**All Lithuania Database Offers New Lithuanian Resources.** Carol C.Baker describes recent developments in the All Lithuania Database, which now contains almost 300,000 records. 1p. (4)

## **EASTERN EUROPE**

**Eastern European Archival Database Planned.** Miriam Weiner describes a projected online source for listings of ancestral towns, based on combined archival holdings in Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland and

Ukraine. These holdings will be posted on the Routes to Roots Foundation website in a consolidated Eastern European archival database. 3pp. (1)

## **GERMANY**

**Rarely-Used Sources for Jewish Family Research in Germany.** Angelika Gellmann-Kruger's article deals with archival and library sources that are often not the focal points of family research. They include such categories as: Trade Registers, Official Registers of Craftsmen and Apprentices, Official Gazettes, Wanted Persons Lists and Midwife Diaries. 6pp. (5)

**German-Jewish Family Names Connected with Place-Names.** Esther Ramon writes about the significance of the family name in the German Jewish community and its adoption following pressure from the authorities in the form of emancipation edicts. The change from patronymic to given name plus family name evolved from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup>. An interesting list of origins of family names in terms of percentage of the total number adopted in the State of Baden is provided. For instance, 41% of the population chose names originating in place names, while 2% chose names from plant life. 3pp. (5)

## **HUNGARY**

**Hungarian / Slovak Resources.** Debbie Korman lists a number of useful sources for Hungarian / Slovak research. In an article in another journal she describes a major Slovak database initiative. 1p. (3) (4)

## **POLAND**

**Warsaw Families' Genealogies.** An Internet posting mentions a book by Kazimierz Reychman published in Polish in 1936 which lists a number of genealogies of Jewish families in Warsaw. 1p. (3)

## **UNITED STATES**

**Jewish Burial Societies in the New York Metropolitan Area: Some Pointers about Landsmanshaftn Plots.** In the article, Ada Greenblatt describes the development of the

cemetery project of the New York Jewish Genealogical Society from its start 12 years ago. The JGS database now includes more than 10,000 burial society plots in Jewish cemeteries in the metropolitan area. Ada provides guidance on avoiding pitfalls and obtaining the maximum genealogical information from the database and cemetery records. 3pp. (1)

**Jewish Genealogical Resources in the Capital Area.** Judith M.White has concisely summarized the resources available for family research in the Greater Washington area. 1p. (2)

**Ellis Island Database Goes Online.** In this article, Randy Stehle explains how to use the EIDB and gives details about some of its limitations. 2pp. (4)

#### **GENEALOGY (GENERAL)**

**Patterns of Late 19<sup>th</sup> & Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Migration & Transmigration from Europe.** This is a paper presented at the Jewish Genealogy Conference in London, July 2001 by Professor Aubrey Newman of Leicester University, UK. Descriptions of the workings of the Poor Jews Temporary Shelter in London and of the various records of migrations, help to clarify some of the problems facing the Jewish family history researcher when he/she tries to trace the movements of an ancestor prior to arrival in the West. 4pp. (1)

#### **HOLOCAUST RESEARCH**

The three articles detailed below provide a wealth of information on the methodology of Holocaust research, relating particularly to the difficulties in researching the names of victims from Central and Eastern Europe. The articles are:

**Jews in Liepaja, Latvia, 1941-1945** by Edward Anders and Juris Dubrovskis 2pp. (1)

**Documenting the Fate of the Jews of Ostrow Mazowiecka** by Stanley Diamond. 3pp. (1)

**Where Did They Die? In Auschwitz? Or Did They Survive?** By Peter Lande. 3pp. (1)

**Sources of Information on Holocaust Victims and Survivors.** In this article, Peter Lande describes, in a most informative and concise format, the Holocaust-related documentation and archival resources available in each country. 6pp. (2)

#### **RABBINIC GENEALOGY**

**Depicting Interconnected Rabbinical Families Simultaneously via The Jewish Historical Clock.** Michael Honey describes an esoteric method of charting that allows us to see clearly overlapping relationships among several contemporary families. Michael claims that if one can find a Rabbi in one's genealogy, it is often possible to push the genealogy back several generations. The article is too difficult for this compiler to comprehend, but many researchers do understand and appreciate the original and brilliant methodology. 6pp. (1)

### **KEY TO JOURNAL REFERENCES**

Ref No.	JOURNAL	GEOGRAPHICAL AREA	ISSUE	YEAR	VOL.	No.
1	AVOTAYNU	International	Fall	2001	XVII	3
2	Proc. 35th Annual Convention of the Association of Jewish Libraries	U.S.A.	June 18-21	2000		
3	ROOTS-KEY	Los Angeles	Spring	2001	21	1
4	ZichronNote	San Francisco	August	2001	XXI	3
5	STAMMBAUM	Germany/Prussia	Summer	2001		19