

## *The Editor's Column*

This is the third issue of *Sharsheret Hadorot* to be published in 2002. It bears the number 4 and with it, we conclude Volume 16 in the year 2002. We have done this to enable us to begin Volume 17 with the onset of the secular year. The issues will continue to appear as before in February, June and October.

Some of the articles in this edition of *Sharsheret Hadorot* focus on stories of families and others are more general in nature and cover various topics.

Three in the second category provide us with helpful tools in genealogical research. Miriam Aviezer advises us on the most appropriate way to interview survivors of the Holocaust. It seems that the subject of the Holocaust is never far from us even as the number of survivors diminishes due to natural causes. Israel Pickholtz in the framework of his research in which he traces people who bear the same first name, presents us with both the system he developed and how to overcome problems that arise. Yehuda Klausner opens with a series of short pieces containing advice on recording genealogical data.

Helpful tools of another nature are presented in three additional items. Shalom Sabar's article instructs us on how to draw genealogical facts from Ketubot [Jewish marriage contracts]. His comments are based on Professor Sabar's lecture delivered to the Jerusalem branch of the IGS. Joseph Covo describes the Jewish cemetery of Shumen, Bulgaria, as a resource for genealogical research. The names in the Ketubot on one hand and the names engraved on tombstones on the other hand, and in the middle along the entire road – again names: Adolfo Kuznitzky writes on Jewish names in Italy and what we can learn from them.

As always, material on the family itself is an important part of this issue. In a detailed and moving piece, Basil Sandler tells us how he solved a family mystery – from knowing absolutely nothing about it to the discovery of new family members and forging warm bonds with them. Edward Gelles presents us with his research on his mother's family and we look forward to the next issue where he will follow up with a parallel item on researching his father's side. Our member Joe Isaacs writes about a solution similar to that of a 'detective mystery' in connection with the name of one of his family members. In another piece, Joe Isaacs details the relationship of his English ancestors to the noted author Charles Dickens. Lastly, Ellen Stepak, describes an interesting and enlightening trip to Lithuania contrasting it to a similar journey she took last year to Belarus.

Naturally, our book section and our review of other journals render an important contribution to this issue.

When this issue of *Sharsheret Hadorot* reaches you, we will already be in the year 5763. In the name of the Editorial Staff of *Sharsheret Hadorot* and in my name I want to wish all of our readers as well as the entire Jewish People, a good year, a year of renewed interest and enjoyment, a year in which blessing will accompany everything. I close with the traditional New Year wish: May you all be written and immediately inscribed for Life!

*Yocheved Klausner*

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

The 16-4 issue appears after the Holidays as a direct result of the adoption of the IGS of the calendar of the fiscal year (January to December). This year, the Holidays extended the summer vacation and, as in most of Israel, our activities will resume "after the Holidays."

The crowning achievements of 5762 alternate between current accomplishments – such as the opening of a new branch of the IGS in Bet Shemesh and the relocation of the Jerusalem Branch along with the IGS Library to their new home and our future project – hosting the 24<sup>th</sup> International Jewish Genealogical Convention in 2004 in Jerusalem.

The IGS library is undergoing reorganization, reclassification and cataloging with the help of a computer program. The catalog will be accessible to our membership and others who are interested through the IGS Web page and a printed copy will be on hand at each branch. I want to take the opportunity to thank the head of our library, Harriet Kasow, for her inexhaustible efforts as well as her endless investment of time and thought in our library's reorganization.

The 2004 Convention in Jerusalem – after the decision to hold the Convention was finalized, the required preparations have commenced. The time we have, nearly two years, is limited and the work ahead, as we all know, is overwhelming. A number of projects undertaken by volunteers from the IGS have already begun. I extend my thanks to them. As the time of the Convention draws closer, we will require more volunteers. We ask those members who are already willing to help to please write to Mathilde Tagger [tagger@actcom.co.il](mailto:tagger@actcom.co.il) or to me [ehfurman@netvision.net.il](mailto:ehfurman@netvision.net.il)

A report on the progress of preparations for the Convention will be distributed at the annual meeting of the IGS.

This summer saw the publication of three books written by our members:

Melody Amsel: **Between Galicia and Hungary: The Jews of Stropkov.**

Details concerning the book can be found at: <http://www.avotaynu.com/books/stropkov.htm>

Rose Lerer Cohen and Saul Issroff: **The Holocaust in Lithuania 1941-1945: A Book of Remembrance.**

Details concerning the book can be found at: <http://www.jewishgenmall.org/newproduct.asp> and [www.israbooks.com](http://www.israbooks.com)

Joseph Covo: **The Jews of Ruschuk, Bulgaria, Between East and West.**

We are indebted to Rose, Melody and Joseph for the tremendous efforts they devoted in the restoration of the history of the localities that nurtured their families' roots.

Our ongoing request – *please let us know as soon as possible if there are any changes in your address, e-mail or telephone!*

Please do not hesitate to contact me concerning any comments that you may have on any area of IGS activities.

We all hope that in the New Year 5763 that is about to begin we will continue to develop our activities for the benefit of our entire membership.

With best wishes for a good and blessed New Year!



## The Two Mark Benjamin's or was it One? \*

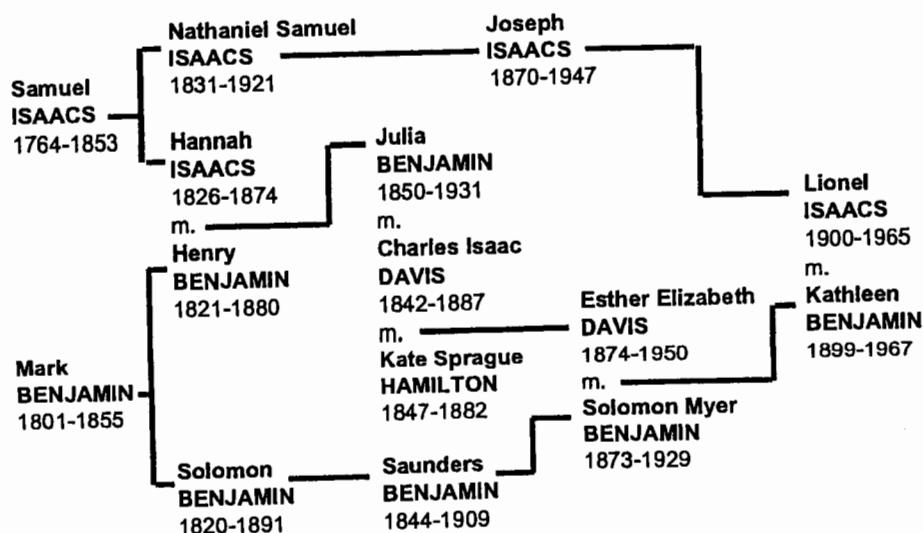
*Joe Isaacs*

I knew that my father, Lionel Isaacs and my mother, Kathleen Benjamin were distant cousins, but they always said that the relationship was very complicated and I never knew exactly how. I knew from a family bible, which had details of my mother's family, the Benjamins, that my great great-grandfather was Solomon Benjamin. His marriage certificate dated December 1<sup>st</sup> 1841 told me that his address was 2 White Horse Street, Piccadilly and that his father's name was Mark, a clothes salesman. The 1841 Census showed that Solomon was living on his own at that address. In 1851 he was living nearby at 10 White Horse Street.

I started to look for Mark. In Piggot's directory of 1832, 1833 and 1834 there is a Mark Benjamin, Clothes Salesman at 31 Paddington Street and in the 1842 Post Office directory at 43 Marylebone Lane. This led me to the 1841 Census for that address. Mark Benjamin is shown with his wife,

Elizabeth and their ten children, the oldest being Henry. In the 1851 census the Benjamins had obviously moved on and I could not find them. In spite of searching I could not be sure if Solomon's and Henry's fathers were two Mark Benjamins or whether Henry and Solomon were brothers.

Some time later when I was trying to find out more information about my great grandfather Nathaniel Isaacs' six sisters I found that his sister Hannah Isaacs had married Henry Benjamin from 43 Marylebone Lane. Maybe this was the connection between my parents? I was also investigating further details of my grandmother Esther Elizabeth Benjamin's stepmother, Julia Davis. I obtained her marriage certificate to Isaac Davis and found that her father's name was Henry Benjamin. I then ordered a copy of her birth certificate, which made it clear that her parents were in fact Hannah and Henry Benjamin. Obviously, this was a tie up between my parents.



The Benjamin and Davis families always lived in the West End of London and had attended the Western Synagogue where their marriages had taken place. From the Anglo-Jewish archives at the University of Southampton Parkes Library I found that a Mark Benjamin had died on June 26<sup>th</sup> 1855. At the Family Records Centre I found the will of Mark Benjamin, fruiterer. His address was 27 Thayer Street, Marylebone and he named his son, Solomon of 10 White Horse Street as one of his trustees. Obviously, this was my great great-great-grandfather. I immediately checked out the 1851 census in Thayer Street, and it was quite clear by looking at the names and ages of his children that this was also the missing Mark who had

lived in Marylebone Lane – the two Marks were in fact one. I was then able to tie up the relationship of my parents and show exactly how the Benjamin, Isaacs and Davis families were related.

Julia, interestingly was in fact simultaneously (1) my first cousin twice removed, (2) my first cousin three times removed and (3) wife of my great grandfather.

\* The contents of the above article first appeared in Shemot, Volume 9,3 (September 2001), The Journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain and is printed here by the kind permission of the editor.



## My Connections with Charles Dickens \*

*Joe Isaacs*

When I was young my Grandmother, Elizabeth Rosa Isaacs (nee Quinion) told me of her father, Samuel Quinion, who, when he was a young boy, was taken by his father, also Samuel Quinion, to visit Charles Dickens at his house on the Thames. The river was frozen over and an ox was roasted on the ice. In "David Copperfield" Mr Quinion, Murdstone and Grimby's managing clerk was named by Dickens after my great-great-grandfather, Samuel Quinion.

A few years ago, when I was researching the name Harris I found a fourth cousin, Jonathan Harris. We were each able to update the other about our mutual relatives. Included were two cuttings from the Jewish Chronicle about my Great Great-Grandfather, Myer Harris. These gave me two more connections with Dickens.

My great-great-grandmother, Rebecca Harris (nee Braham) was a niece of John Braham, the famous tenor who started his musical career as a choir-boy in the Great Synagogue and went on to a career as a singer, composer

and producer. His most famous composition was "The Death of Nelson" which he sang at nearly all his appearances. He built the St. James's Theatre and there produced and appeared in an operetta, "The Village Coquettes", the libretto was written by Dickens, and they took the curtain call together on September 25, 1836.

Rebecca, the oldest daughter of my great-great-grandparents Myer and Rebecca Harris was married to David Isaacs who was a dealer in iron in Smith Square. There is a description of his premises in "Our Mutual Friend". It is described as "*A dealer's in old iron. What a rusty portion of a boiler and a great iron wheel or so meant by lying half-buried in the dealer's fore-court, nobody seemed to know or want to know. Like the Miller of questionable jollity in the song. They cared for Nobody, no not they, and Nobody cared for them.*"

Now I have found a fourth connection. In my synagogue library, I came across a book entitled "Anglo-Jewish Letters" by Cecil Roth. Roth introduces four letters between

Mrs. Eliza Davis and Dickens under the heading *The Genesis of Riah* (1863-4) with the following:

*Charles Dickens had entered unfavorably into Anglo-Jewish annals by his creation in Oliver Twist of the hideous character of Fagin. But this is not his only association with the Jews. In the 1850's he had lived in Tavistock House, Tavistock Square. This subsequently passed into the hands of a Mr. and Mrs. Davis (from whose ownership it was later taken over by the Jew's College, which for many years used Charles Dickens' library on the first floor as its lecture-hall). This circumstance gave rise to the interchange of correspondence here reprinted, and to the introduction of the unreal benevolent character of Riah in "Our Mutual Friend".*

My maternal grandmother's name was Davis and I was able trace the Davis family back through four generations without finding an Eliza. My great great-grandfather was Charles Davis, a widower, who married Sarah Benjamin on June 2, 1841. My great grandfather, Isaac, was born on June 14, 1842 his birth certificate states that his father, Charles was deceased. Last year when searching through the Anglo-Jewish Archives at Southampton University I came across details of the descendants of Frederick Davis, son of Charles Davis and Betsy Harris. It stated that Frederick's daughter, Elizabeth Belle, married Benn the third son of James Phineas Davis of Tavistock House. He was the husband of Mrs. Eliza Davis. I now had to find whether the second Charles was my great great grandfather. I have since traced Charles' tombstone, his death certificate and the letter of administration of his estate, which showed that the two Charles's were one and the same.

Eliza Davis was so grateful to Dickens making amends by introducing the character of Riah that she presented him with a Hebrew and English Bible inscribed: "Presented to Charles Dickens, in grateful and admiring recognition of his having exercised the noblest quality a man can possess – that of atoning for and injury as soon as conscious of having inflicted it". Dickens declared in his

acknowledgement of 16 November 1864 that he hoped there was nothing but goodwill between himself and the Jewish people.

\* The contents of the above article first appeared in *Shemot*, Volume 9,1 (March 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.*

## Interviewing Holocaust Survivors \*

*Miriam Aviezer-Steiner*

Translated from the Hebrew original

Yad Vashem, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, was established in 1953 and the Oral History Section was the first division to function. Initially, testimonies were gathered at Beit Volhynia in Givatayim and the first director was the author Rachel Auerbach, who had worked in the Ringelblum Archive in the Warsaw Ghetto. Over time, the department was relocated to Har Hazikaron in Jerusalem. One of the important functions of Yad Vashem, which documents and collects testimonies from the period of the Holocaust, is the gathering of Oral Testimony from the survivors. The former head of the Yad Vashem Archives, Mr. Krakovsky said: "Many important events that occurred during the Holocaust do not appear in any official documents, therefore, these testimonies are the sole evidence of them ever having taken place."

The interviewers are not given special instructions, but it is emphasized that they must be accurate with their historic facts and careful in the spelling of the geographic names, to record in Latin letters the names of the camps, the people and their duties. This guideline requires from the interviewer general knowledge of the period of World War II and the Holocaust as well as familiarity with the history and geography of Europe and of North Africa.

After a form is received containing the personal details of the survivor and the places he was during the war, a preliminary discussion is held before the actual interview. The questions that will be asked during the interview are gone over – the interviewee will be asked to relate details of his extended family, about life before the war, about the environment in which he was raised, the relationship with the non-Jewish population, about his involvement with the Jewish community, its institutions and organizations

and about the period of the war – in chronological order.

This preliminary conversation enables the two to become acquainted. The interviewer learns to recognize the characteristics of the interviewee – his ability to express himself, his education, the level of his knowledge of Hebrew, his fluency of speech and his Jewish cultural background – religious or secular.

It is important for the interviewer to project a friendly temperament, along with empathy and the feeling that he understands the conditions that the interviewee endured during the Holocaust. It is possible to project these feelings as side comments in the middle of the conversation. If, for example, the survivor was a native of Delft, Holland, one can add, "Oh, the delftware;" or if he is from Budejvice, one can add, "Budweiser beer;" if he is from Plonsk, one can mention Ben-Gurion and if his hometown is Wadowice, we can add, "like the pope."

In this way, we gain his confidence. The questionnaire that the survivor lists the places where he was helps the interviewer prepare. By checking a map we can see the part of Europe where the person lived when the war broke out, under whose rule it was, if that area was annexed to another country, if it was near a border, the sea or mountains. Topography has an important role in understanding the story, especially if escaping capture or joining the partisans is a part of the story. Occasionally, the person interviewed opens with, "I was afraid of the A.K. (*Armia Krajowa*) and the interviewer must know why. Or if he says, "I received help from the DELASEM, OSE or JOINT," the interviewer must fill in the complete name of the organization. At times, camps other than Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek, such as Gusen come up. When the interviewer knows that there was a Gusen I and a Gusen II, which were sub-camps of

Mauthausen, he gains the confidence of the person interviewed.

Frequently, the survivor does not recall dates and in the process of the interview he poses a question: "In which year was the Battle of Stalingrad?" The interviewer must answer, "In 1942." Or the surrender of Italy, (September 1943) or the Wansee Conference (January 1942), Kristallnacht, the Anschluss and other such occasions. The interviewee relates to the interviewer as an expert on the Holocaust and if the answers given are not adequate, he is likely to lose the confidence of the person he is interviewing. Knowledge of the area's geography helps as the story unfolds, especially when someone who wandered from place to place is giving the testimony. If he says, "we crossed the Bug," and the interviewer does not know that he is referring to a river, he may say, "It was hard to climb, wasn't it," (since he thinks he is talking about a mountain). Such a faux pas destroys the interviewer's reliability. The short time period before the interview begins is utilized to gain face-to-face impressions and to tie up any loose ends remaining from the previous telephone conversation.

The approach and the manner of the interview have changed over time. The early interviews were short and consisted of questions such as 'where did you come from,' and 'what did you experience.'

Today, we request the survivor to tell us in detail about his house, the community, Jewish life in the community before the war, the attitude of the non-Jewish population, the general perception of the Jews in the town. We also discuss more explicitly than before the survivor's arrival in Eretz Yisrael, his absorption, the attitude of Israeli society and his first steps in the Land of Israel. We attempt to cover the period of the Holocaust from various vantage points and we emphasize the personal and emotional aspects of daily life in the ghetto, in the camps, in hiding, in finding simple solutions to difficult problems such as how to keep warm in minus 20 degrees when all he is

wearing is a thin shirt, what kind of shoes were worn on the "Death March," how does one cope with fear or in situations that he got into where an immediate and sometimes fateful response was required or how does a sole surviving child who has no one manage all alone. Questions are asked about the power of resistance in the face of death, the survival instinct, what gave him power to survive and maintain sanity and about the never ending pain over the loss of a child or parents in the midst of the intensity of the war . . .

How do you take someone who has been through it all, put him in front of cameras with a stranger asking him to expose himself and tell of events that he has tried to forget, events that he has locked up in his heart? When the survivor is approached, generally his first response is, "Who would be interested [in my story]," "Everything has already been told," "The children do not want to hear about it." The interviewer has the feeling that he is intruding on the privacy of the survivor, putting salt on his wounds and asking too much of him. However, as much as this sounds incredible, many times no persuasion is needed after they are told, "What will remain after you is the story," "Survivors survived to recount what they experienced," "Your story is a memorial to your loved ones who perished," "Your testimony is a living witness that will remain in the Yad Vashem Archives for educational and research purposes." Sometimes, it is difficult to locate survivors and the most successful way is through their grandchildren. When the grandchild is the initiator and he himself brings his grandmother or grandfather to Yad Vashem, it is impossible to refuse. The testimonies, in the final analysis, are meant for them, the grandchildren.

\*This article is based on a lecture delivered by the author at the Tel Aviv branch of the Israel Genealogical Society on 17 December 2001.

At the end of her lecture, Ms. Aviezer shared some examples of testimonies, some models of the techniques in the use of collateral material and what is done with the recorded testimonies. Two examples of testimonies follow:

**Illustrative Case 1 – File Description – Testimony:** The witness was born in Pirot, Serbia in 1920.

A poetic description of the life in the Sephardic community in the town of Pirot in southern Serbia; the relocation of the family to Belgrade; studies; joining the Zionist youth movement Hashomer Hatzair; description of the Zionist movements and their nature; the outbreak of the war; anti-Jewish legislation; failed attempt to flee; the family's escape to relatives in Pirot that was annexed to Bulgaria; the attitude of the local population and details about Jews and others; on 12 March 1943 the assembling of all the Jews at a central place and being taken from there in cattle-cars in the direction of Bulgaria; description of the trip; the fears; the uncertainty concerning the destination; the decision to escape; the difficult taking leave of parents quietly; jumping while the train is in motion; arriving at the city of Lom, Bulgaria, on foot as the train continued on to Treblinka. A Bulgarian Jew that he meets not only refuses help, but also advises him to return to the train; continuing on to the train station and because he is wearing a leather coat (that is similar to those worn by investigative detectives) he has no unusual difficulties in returning to his uncle in Sofia; meeting with his fiancée and her family; the story of their rescue by the Serbians; continuing with his fiancée's family; crossing into Albania where they were under Italian rule in Confino Libero; with the arrival of the Germans in September 1943 the flight to Italy with the help of a Bulgarian Jewish escape group; in 1945 from Italy by way of Alexandria, Egypt, to Eretz Yisrael; life in Israel; coping with his flight from the train and the fate of his extended family that perished in Treblinka.

**Places mentioned in testimony:** Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania, Italy, Egypt, Pirot, Belgrade, Lom, Sofia, Alexandria and Treblinka.

**Terms/Organizations:** Hashomer Hatzair, Attitude of the Serbian population, deportation train, escape from train.

**Illustrative Case 2 – File Description – Testimony:** The witness was born in Zagreb, Croatia (Yugoslavia), 1929.

Description of life until the beginning of the war; Zionist education at home, kindergarten and Jewish primary school; outbreak of the war in April 1941; attempts of her mother to save her daughter [the witness]; trying to include her in the Kindertransport and also searching for someone willing to smuggle her over the border; through the intervention of a woman in Trieste along with a large payment, the witness was sent to an uncle in Italy (a moving letter from her mother to this uncle is included with the testimony); life in Rovigo, Italy, as a civilian prisoner of war with an emphasis on the warm and friendly attitude of the Italians; escape to Padua and the village Arrara St. Giorgio after the surrender of the Italian army in September 1943 where she was hidden along with two other families; encounter with soldiers from Eretz Yisrael; transferred to a refugee collection point in Taranto Gulf, village St. Maria, under the supervision of the Joint; from there to a village near Rome and in 1946 – Aliyah to Eretz Yisrael; meeting of the witness with her father who arrived to Eretz Yisrael to Kibbutz Merhavia; the pain on the loss of her mother.

**Places mentioned in Testimony:** Yugoslavia, Italy, Zagreb, Rovigo, Padua, Taranto St. Maria, Rome, Merhavia.

**Terms/Organizations:** – Wartime refugees; children; soldiers from Eretz Yisrael; attitude of the Italian population; in hiding, Aliya, Kindertransport.

The document also tells the type of recording (audio or video), the language, name of the interviewer, characterizations, date and place of interview, length of interview and accompanying materials. In order to protect the individuals' privacy, we deleted the names of the witnesses.



*Miriam Steiner-Aviezer researches the Holocaust in Yugoslavia and has been interviewing Holocaust survivors since 1983 under the auspices of Yad Vashem. She is the*

*author of the book, The Soldier with the Golden Button, on the experience of children during the Holocaust. An English edition has also appeared.*

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## **My Mother's People \***

*Edward Gelles*

The 18th day of March in the year 2000 marked the centenary of my mother's birth. I decided to write an article about her, but I lacked knowledge of her family background. I am still finding out much about our ancestry. A brief biographical sketch has turned into a lengthy genealogical study. My parents belonged to a generation of assimilated Viennese Jews, who attached more importance to participation in their contemporary culture than to a study of their family. I had to find my roots largely through my own efforts.

My mother Regina Griffel (1900-1954) was the daughter of David Mendel Griffel of Nadworna (Nadvornaya) and Chava Wahl of Tarnobrzeg. She had an elder brother Zygmunt (1897-1951) and a younger brother Edward (1904-1959).

The Griffels were a large clan who had prospered in 19th century Galicia under Austrian rule. The Nadworna line claimed descent from David Halevi Segal, the 17th century Chief Rabbi of Lvov. My great-grandfather Eliezer Griffel (1850-1918) built up a commercial empire based on oil wells and saw mills. His business interests went far beyond his native town. Many members of the clan worked in one or other of his enterprises.

Eliezer married Sarah Matel (-1940), daughter of Isaac Chaim Chayes of Kolomea

(Kolomyya), from a branch of the Chayes family that was based in Brody.

For many centuries, this family produced distinguished rabbis and flourished in Poland as well as in Italy. Zvi Perez Chayes (1876-1927), a Chief Rabbi of Vienna, was a distant cousin. Eliezer and Sarah Griffel had ten children including my grandfather David Mendel, Isaac Chaim, and Zissel, who are shown in the accompanying Table. Isaac Chaim had many children, and other Griffels were also quite prolific, so that even after world wars and the Holocaust their issue is more numerous than can be accommodated in the text of this article or in the Table.

The Wahls of Tarnobrzeg claimed descent from Saul Wahl Katzenellenbogen and the 16th century rabbis of Padua and Venice. Chava Wahl (1877-1941) was one of six siblings. The progeny of three Wahl sisters is shown in the Table.

My grandparents had moved from Nadworna to Stanislau (Ivano Frankovsk) when my mother was quite young. At the outbreak of World War I, they sought refuge in Vienna and in 1921, their daughter Regina married David Gelles, who had established himself as an advocate there. My brother Ludwig and I spent a happy childhood in Vienna between the wars. We fled to England shortly after the Anschluss in 1938 and my mother died in London in 1954.



*Regina Griffel (1900-1954)  
with her elder son Ludwig (1922-1942)*

My main theme is the methodology of finding my mother's family connections, but first I must introduce some of the key individuals of my story.

Eliezer Griffel, the patriarch of the Nadworna clan, was known as Zeida (grandpa). He was the head of the Jewish community dominating its religious, political, and economic life. He gave his religious adherence to the Hasidic rabbi of Otonya (Otnya).

Zeida Griffel was a deeply conservative paternalist, a philanthropist and an outstanding businessman. He is supposed to have gotten on well with the Emperor on the latter's visits to his outlying province. They talked mainly about horses. David Mendel and Isaac Chaim Griffel followed him in the family business and represented the

ultra-orthodox Jewish community in local affairs. While Isaac Chaim's children and some other siblings remained within the Hasidic fold, David Mendel's children were exposed to Viennese enlightenment at a tender age.

Chava Wahl's father and mother, my great-grandparents Shulim Wahl and Sarah Safier, had a traditional Jewish background and their families were also very wealthy. Shulim's occupation was listed in the town records as "capitalist."

My uncles Zygmunt and Edward Griffel prospered in the timber trade in Lvov and in the export-import business in Warsaw. They often came to visit us in Vienna, and I thought that they cut quite a dash. Edward in particular had been all over the world and his cosmopolitan outlook seemed ahead of his

Boston are Zygmunt's and Edward's sons, respectively. The former had a distinguished career in the U.S. Foreign Service, and the latter developed a successful computer software company.

My mother had an interesting set of first cousins. On her mother's side there was Dr. Abraham Low (1891-1954), one of the children of my great-aunt Blume Wahl (1864-1903), who became a distinguished psychiatrist in Chicago and a pioneer of modern community mental health care. His popular work *Mental Health through Will Training* is still selling after half a century. His daughter Marilyn Low Schmitt is a professor of art history and worked for the Getty Museum. She and her sister Phyllis are associated with the institute bearing their father's name.

My great-aunt Rachel Wahl (1879-1965) had two children by her first marriage to Abraham Taube (1873-1906), Rega who lived in Rio de Janeiro and Zyga who made his home in Los Angeles.

Their children are my cousins Viola Sachs, a professor of American literature at the University of Paris and Thaddeus Taube, a Californian businessman who has become a noted philanthropist and benefactor. Rachel Wahl's second marriage was to Chaim Simon Ohrenstein and they had a daughter named Lucia (1910-1988), who became Countess Tripovich and a leading light of 1950's Rome café society.

There could not be a greater contrast between my mother's first cousins Lucia Ohrenstein, the socialite, and Dr. Jacob Griffel (1900-1962), the deeply religious savior of thousands of Jews during the Second World War. But then they were from different branches of the family tree. Jacob was a son of my great-uncle Isaac Chaim Griffel (1880-1930). Jacob's nephew, Andrew Griffel, born in 1942, has also devoted much of his life to charitable and humanitarian work. My mother's first cousins included others of Griffel descent, such as Dr. Arnold Lam (1902-1986), the son of my great-aunt Zissel.

These people and their progeny carry with them the millennial heritage of our people, and more specifically the genetic inheritance of several ancient families. It is tempting to look at some of them in the light of family traits, endeavoring to discern genes from the Griffel, Chayes, Safier, and Wahl lines, particularly because of the high degree of inbreeding which must have reinforced certain inherited attributes. For example, Taube and Wahl are related, and indeed there are more or less distant connections of Chayes and Griffel with the Wahl-Katzenellenbogen clan.

There seemed to be several good reasons for writing this article, not only as a tribute to my mother's memory and as a historical record, but also to set out how I began to construct this family tree.

I had lost contact with my Griffel cousins in the 1950's. I did not know where my grandmother came from or who many of my relations were. The voyage of discovery on which I embarked four years ago has given me much historical insight and self-knowledge. I have also made new friends and come across some interesting personalities.

In the appended summary of my genealogical search, I refer to articles on family branches or individuals, to documents and other primary sources, and to useful addresses. At the beginning was my parents' marriage certificate obtained from the Jewish Community Offices in Vienna. It confirmed my mother's place and date of birth and gave the full names of her parents. I have written brief outlines of the Wahl and Chayes family histories. The background to the Griffel family since the mid 19th century is to be found in the Nadworna Memorial Book and in the Stanislaw volume of *Arim ve-Imahot be-Israel*. Vital records on Eliezer Griffel and David Mendel Griffel came respectively from Rabbi Kolesnik of Stanislaw and from the Warsaw Archives. The Chayes connection with Kolomea is referred to in the Brody Memorial Book and elsewhere. I looked vainly for my grandmother Chava

among the Wahls of Nadworna and it was not until I had discovered some of her siblings that I found her family in Tarnobrzeg. From a World War I postcard written by Abraham Low to my mother in Vienna the trail led via the Austrian Army Museum and the Wellcome Library for the History of Medicine to Chicago and to the Low cousins, who have flourished and multiplied in America for nearly a century.

The connections with our Wahl family gradually emerged. Abraham's mother, Blume Wahl, is recorded in the Strasbourg municipal archives, where her birth and marriage in Tarnobrzeg are confirmed. Then followed a birth certificate of one of Abraham Low's siblings, which stated the full names of her parents and grandparents and located them in Tarnobrzeg. That town's archives are not easily accessible, but through the kindness of the Deputy Mayor I obtained extracts from the 1880 census which confirmed the names and birth dates of most of the Wahl family. I had found my grandmother at last. Furthermore, I now knew who my great-aunts were. I contacted Rachel Wahl's descendants Thaddeus Taube in California and Viola Sachs in Paris, who gave me some additional anecdotal guidance to the fate of other relatives, and particularly to the career of Lucia Ohrenstein. I lost no time in researching her remarkable life story. Abraham Low's daughters then rediscovered their father's ship's manifest of 1921, recorded at the time he emigrated from Vienna to the United States. It contained references to his uncle Moses Wahl. This led me to a probate document in Vienna, which had further data on my long-lost great-uncle. The ramifications of the Wahl family are intriguing in their complexity. My great-grandfather Shulim was the son of Leiser Wahl, who in his time was the richest

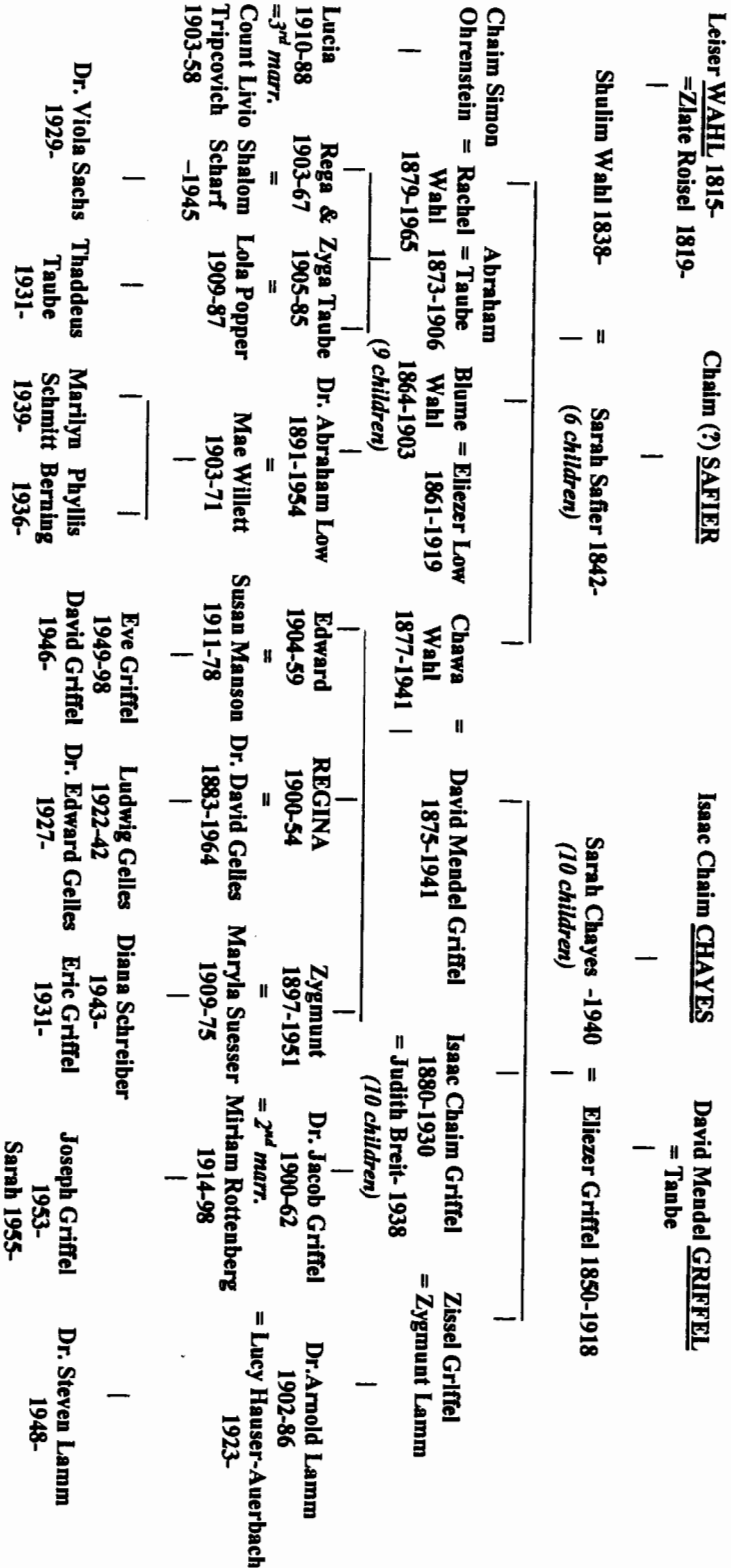
man in Tarnobrzeg, according to the memoirs of the town's mayor. A daughter of Leiser Wahl married a son of Moses Hauser, Count Tarnowski's Arendar. The latter's son-in-law Salomon Lamm was connected with the Lamms who later intermarried with the Griffels. Much work also remains to be done on the Taube connection and on the Safier family.

I found data for my uncles Zygmunt and Edward Griffel on the Internet and in the Nadworna records of the Baron Hirsch Cemetery on Staten Island. Zygmunt's wife Maryla was the granddaughter of the banker Salomon Meir Wohl of Cracow and Vienna. In this way, the Wohls of Cracow are linked to the Wahls of Tarnobrzeg. Edward's wife Susan Manson was connected with the Friedman Hasidic dynasty. So apparently was my father, Dr. David Gelles, at least according to his obituary notice in a Viennese newspaper. My paternal grandfather was the last of an ancient rabbinical line from Brody.

There are innumerable cousins descended from Eliezer and Sarah Griffel. The most noteworthy is Dr. Jacob Griffel, whose intellectual and moral qualities and selfless efforts on behalf of his fellow Jews during and after the World War II merit greater acclaim than he has so far received. The following generation includes the grandsons of Zissel, Chaya, and Isaac Chaim Griffel, namely the physician Dr. Steven Lamm, the psychiatrist Dr. Yehuda Nir, and the past president of the American Jewish World Service, Andrew Griffel.

\* A research grant from Tad Taube and the Taube Family Foundation is gratefully acknowledged.

My Mother's Family Connections



Shulim Wahl and Sarah Safer had six children. The Table has details on three daughters. The other siblings, Zypora, Chaim Leib, and Moses, will be found in some of the references given above. The nine children of Eliezer Loew and Blume Wahl are listed in the article on Abraham Loew's ship's manifest and discussed elsewhere. The Table includes three children of Eliezer and Sarah Griffel. The full list of their ten children is David Mendel (1875-1941), Machla (1876-), Zissel (1878-), Isaac Chaim (1880-1930), Shaya (1883-), Leibish (1885-), Benjamin (1887-), Rivka (1888-), Rachel (1892-), and Chaya (-1918). The progeny of my grandparents David Mendel and Chava Griffel are given in full. Isaac Chaim and Judith Griffel are shown as the parents of Jacob Griffel. The latter's siblings included another David Mendel (born 1902), the Conservative Rabbi Henry (1910-1968), the lawyer Samuel Shmelke (1913-99), and Shalom, Taube, Machla, Rachel, Balia, and Rivka. The children of Jacob Griffel are shown as Joseph Isaac and Sarah, those of Schmelke are Isaac, Baruch, Moshe Eliezer, Judith, and Rivka, while Henry's children are Andrew Griffel (born 1942) and Judy. Reference has also been made to Dr. Yehuda Nir (born 1930), the grandson of Chava Griffel, and there are many other members of the clan. Two further generations could soon be added to the Table.

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*Dr Edward Gelles was born in Vienna. He fled with his family to England in 1938 where he has lived ever since. He has a doctorate from Oxford University. He was a research scientist, art dealer, and is now devoting himself to writing about historical and genealogical matters. His father's family were Galician rabbis for hundreds of years while his mother's people were in the timber and oil businesses in Galicia and the descendants who survived are now mainly in America and Israel.*

## Our Travels in Eastern Europe in 2001 and 2002

*Ellen Stepak*

The following paragraphs will deal for the most part with my recent trip to Lithuania; however, comparisons to our trip last year to Belarus are inevitable. In July 2001, we traveled with the Association of Pinsk, Yanov and the Vicinity, to Belarus and Poland. This was not a strictly genealogical tour, however most of the members of the group were either born in Pinsk, or had parents who were born there or nearby. Therefore, for the majority of the group, there was the possibility of visiting former addresses of family members. In my case, this was not possible, as my grandfather's family had left Pinsk for the United States early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and we had no addresses to look up.

The trip to Belarus was organized on a limited budget. However, even had one preferred a deluxe trip of Belarus, it would be difficult to find anything over a two-star hotel, outside of Minsk. We stayed at the Pripyet Hotel, the only hotel in Pinsk, to the best of my knowledge. Part of it is located in the former Jewish boys' technical school, though there is a large Soviet-era addition. The hotel is government owned, and the less said about it, the better. Though our group had paid for an air-conditioned bus, we never had one that was properly air-conditioned. No one came down with food poisoning, but neither did we actually enjoy the "cuisine."

One of my biggest hopes had been to visit the graves of my ancestors in Pinsk. I was not prepared for the situation in which *not even one grave* remains in all the former cemeteries in the city. Pinsk was once a proud, mostly Jewish city of some 30,000 out of a total population of 40,000. But the Soviet Byelorussians nearly completed what the Nazis began: to erase all signs of the former thriving Jewish communities. Still, lest one get the wrong impression, Pinsk is a beautiful city, along the Pina River, and we had an extremely meaningful, memorable and interesting journey. Both individually and as a group we were able to visit several

small towns in the region, including Ivanik, the former Jewish agricultural village near Pinsk where relatives of mine lived until the Holocaust. One of the most important aspects of the trip was visiting the memorials at the sites where the Jews of Pinsk were murdered during the Holocaust, reading aloud words written by Mr. Nahum Boneh, president of the Pinsk Association, on the significance of each place, and reciting the *Kaddish*. We were glad to have gone there with a group, not only because of the group experience, but also because of the difficulty in finding someone in Pinsk who spoke English, to accompany us to the shtetls and translate. However, this could probably have been arranged in advance.

Our trip to Lithuania was quite different in almost every aspect. Once again, we were part of a group, organized by Howard Margol of Atlanta. Every year for the past ten years, he has led a group of people of Lithuanian Jewish ancestry, bringing them to visit their roots. The trip is organized at the highest level possible. The hotels and the food in Vilnius and Kaunas were excellent. The guides were top notch. After five days spent touring mostly Jewish sites, including institutions of the Jewish community in Vilnius (Vilna), the capital, the group split up to visit the individual shtetls of the participants, with guides and drivers, for two days. Then the group met again for two more days in Kaunas (Kovno). In both Vilnius and Kaunas, our group visited the Lithuanian archives, where we had the opportunity to obtain documents of our families. However, not everyone took advantage of this possibility as one needed a certain basic knowledge of his family history, especially the name of the family's shtetls. In addition, one had to write to the archives in advance, in order to have documents prepared for him. The current economic situation of the two countries appears to be quite different. The Lithuanian people are proud of their renewed independence. Lithuania is working hard to

comply with the conditions of the European Union, toward acceptance to full membership. Belarus reminds one more of the former Soviet regimes, still with centralized ownership of over 80% of the economy and extremely low salaries. Yet, the Byelorussian people are also mostly happy to have left the Soviet times behind them. However, in both countries pensioners are having a hard time, and may even long for the days in which the government saw to all their basic needs.

Also in Lithuania, most of the Jewish cemeteries have been destroyed. But in my limited experience, there appear to be more remaining than in Belarus.

With regard to both trips, one of the highlights was meeting and befriending people with shared backgrounds and a common interest, experiencing the same things together.

In the State Historical Archive in Vilnius, we met with the Head Archivist, Galina Baranova. There were no surprises, as she had sent me a list of the records she had found on my surnames, before the trip. I had written asking for copies of certain documents I knew about, and Galina had prepared these photocopies for me. They charge a basic research fee of US\$100, then \$5 for each photocopy, and \$13 for each translated document. I had elected not to request translations, and received a brief oral description of each document. The documents I received from the Vilnius archive include death and marriage certificates. In the Vilnius archive, they hold the existing records of Revision Lists and vital records. Unfortunately, there were no breakthroughs in my research. But I was happy just holding the copies.

In Kaunas, I was indeed surprised by some of the documents found by Vitalije Gircyte, Head Archivist. There were several papers documenting my great grandmother's immigration process, together with three of her children. One of these was an affidavit from 1913 of my great grandfather, who was already in New York City, and who applied to the Russian consulate for members of his family to immigrate to the US. Another was a

police document from January 1914 charging the family a fine of 300 rubles for the two oldest brothers, who had left and evaded serving in the Czar's army. However, by December 1913, the last of the family had left, and there was no one left to pay the fine. In this archive, there are generally no vital records or revision lists, though this is not entirely true. Some vital records do exist but only in a file pertaining to a court case, police report, will, etc. A vital record can be located only by referring to the main file and not to the vital record itself. One may find internal and external passport applications, tax lists and a variety of other documents, pertaining to the former Kovno Guberniya. In addition to the abovementioned papers, I received a list of everything they found on the Kling family in the vicinity of the town of Vabalninkas (Vabolnik). When writing for information, it is worthwhile sending one's surnames and dates and towns to each of these archives.

We had several towns in mind to visit in the shtetl tours. These included Kupishok (Kupishok), Vabalninkas (Vabolnik), Seta (Shat) and Jonava. We managed to visit all of these towns, albeit briefly. Our guide for this part of the trip was Regina Kopilevich. She had already been to these towns and thus was able to save us time in looking for the former synagogues, schools, Jewish neighborhoods and cemeteries. She was anxious to practice her Hebrew, which is quite advanced. After leaving Vilnius, we first went to Kupishok. We visited a retired head of the Ethnographic Museum. We stopped at several former Jewish sites, including the former cemetery, to which a small number of gravestones have been returned, and the main synagogue, which has become the municipal library.

From Kupishok we continued to Vabolnik. There, we had advanced knowledge from Ann Rabinowitz of the Kupishok SIG of a cemetery still in place. However, nothing prepared us for what we found. The cemetery was maintained in exemplary fashion. Many of the graves were upright. The grass was cut. We reckon there must be nearly 500 tombstones. But many are illegible, having faced the elements for over a hundred years.



The stones are somewhat primitive, without any decoration, just the first names of son/daughter and father, usually a few words of perpetuity and the date of death. We set to work documenting as many as we could in our limited time. Regina is very experienced at reading difficult gravestones. We worked from 4 to 7 p.m. This was June 18<sup>th</sup>, and therefore it was not yet dark at all, but we still had to drive some 40 kilometers to Panevezys to our hotel, and to have dinner. We considered returning the next morning to Vabolnik, which we did, spending an additional three hours working in the cemetery. Upon our arrival, we found a local man at work, and he joined us, in uncovering the partially buried or moss-coated stones, so that we could record them. We were grateful to him and to the mayor – so grateful, that we decided to go see the mayor of the town to thank him. In our two days' work, we recorded about 180 gravestones.

Other members of our group, very likely, had a very different kind of shtetl visit. Since we spent so many hours at work, we were unable to talk to many people. In Kupishok we were able to speak to some, and in Seta we visited a nice old woman, Mrs. Pulonsky, who is accustomed to Jews coming by to talk to her, generally about once or twice each year, because of her home's proximity to the former Jewish cemetery. By now, the guides know to look for her. Mrs. Polonsky remembers several of her Jewish neighbors, and remembers the day they took the Jews away, including the Greenblatt family, for whom she had worked.

On the very last night of our journey to Lithuania, we attended Friday evening services at the synagogue in Kaunas. It is a

beautiful synagogue, although there was barely a minyan and one wonders how it survived the War. On our way to the synagogue, we met a group of elderly men outside, including a couple of brothers whose surname is Dudak. From Regina, we had already heard about two Dudak brothers from Jonava, living in Kovno, who prayed in the minyan. So my husband Zvi began talking to one of them, Yankel David. When Zvi mentioned the family we are researching, Klots, who left Seta long ago for Jonava, he laughed. Zvi assumed he was laughing because of the funny name, but no, it was because Yankel David was a grandson of Hirsh Klots. After the prayer service ended, we met a cousin of the Dudaks, who is a grandson of Reiza Klots. We have not yet figured out the connection, but we hope that we will, thanks to the Litvak SIG All Lithuanian Database and the lists from the archives. And I would be remiss not to mention the valuable work of Ada Greenblatt, researcher of Seta/Shat, whose relatives Mrs. Pulonsky remembers.

*Ellen Stepak, a member of the Tel-Aviv branch of IGS has lived in Israel 30 years. She has been searching family roots for 6 years. She grew up in Huntington, Indiana in the United States and studied at the University of Wisconsin. Her forefathers immigrated to the United States from the area of Hesse in Germany, Poland (Lodz, Vohlin - Kremenets region, Pinsk), and Kupishok in Lithuania. One of the highlights of her story is that her gggrandmother's brother who was from Tennessee served in the Confederate Army during the American Civil War.*



## Max, a well Kept Secret \*

*Basil Sandler*

In 1999, on a visit to Cape Town, South Africa I phoned my cousin Ronnie Levinsohn whom I last saw as a child. I was telling him of our visit to Latvia the year before and that we visited Kuldiga [Goldingen]. There we visited the synagogue and the square where the Jews were killed and we found the monument in the forests where the bodies of the Jews were thrown in a mass grave. I told him that our grandfather Nissan was killed on 1 July 1941 and that Dora our grandmother and our aunts Ralla and Rachel were killed on 3 July 1941. He then asked how I knew and I said that there had been a letter. When he asked who wrote the letter I said I did not know. After a lengthy silence and some pressure, he told me that the letter came from my mother's boy friend and that there was a child. A boy friend I could believe but I thought he was being malicious about a child. At that time, I made a joke about a possible child.

In May 2001, we visited Vancouver, Canada. We went to see my Aunt Gwen Hermann (my mother's youngest brother was married to Gwen) and we told her the story of our conversation with Ronnie. She told us that Hermann spoke about Maxim [Maximillian] an adopted baby brother whom he remembered as he was 10 years old when Maxim was adopted. This was the first time in my life, at the age of 73 plus, that I ever heard of the name Maxim. That week we met Philp, Gwen's son, and we also spoke with Lesley, Gwen's eldest daughter, who lives in Cleveland, USA.

After Hermann died in an automobile accident, Uncle Adolph, my mother's oldest brother was very nice to Gwen, Lesley and Philp. Lesley was then a teenager and she was pressing Adolph to tell her about Kuldiga, the family and particularly Maxim.

At first he refused but after a few months he agreed to tell her the story on the condition that the boys, Basil and Jossie, must never know since it was a terrible scandal that

could harm them – these were the standards from those days. So, Lesley told us:

Ida, my mother, had an affair with a neighbor, resulting in the birth of Maxim. My grandparents adopted him as a son and Ida was sent – banished – to Aunt Ralla Sebba in Cape Town at the age of 15. Within the next few months she was introduced to my father, they married and lived in Wellington, a small country town.

Today I try to imagine the state of mind of a 14-15 year old girl expelled from her loving home and sent on a voyage to England and then from Southampton to Cape Town, which in those days took many months. Her fears, her insecurity, her trials and tribulations must have been traumatic – to say the least. Only now, having heard the story, do I ask many questions. I never thought about my mother's age, how she came and why she arrived in South Africa before her brothers. In retrospect, these circumstances saved her life from the Nazis. Otherwise, she would have shared the same fate as her two older sisters who were killed by the Germans.

Gwen remembers that Maxim wrote a letter to Hermann asking him for money to buy a bicycle for his bar mitzvah. The money was sent; the war came and there was no further contact.

In 1947, Adolph received a letter from Maxim telling him that he witnessed the murder of his family, that a neighbor saved his life and that he served with the Partisans. He then returned to Kuldiga, he had no one and nothing and he needed help. He might have written twice. According to Anita, Adolph's daughter, her mother Minnie did write twice but never heard anything further. This is possible, as the Russians seized control of Latvia, closed all borders and barred any contact with the West. These letters were probably destroyed; no one had any idea whether Max was still alive.

The secret of Maxim that was so successfully kept by everyone, including my mother,

suddenly popped out of the hidden box. Where was he? Could I find him? How should I go about looking for him? These were million dollar questions and it was like looking for a needle in a haystack. But I made up my mind that it would not be for a lack of trying and I started my relentless search for the long lost brother whom I only had recently discovered. I checked with the Jewish Agency, I checked the population list of Israel, I searched the Internet, I contacted HIAS to check the USA and Canada lists, I contacted a genealogy site in England and asked relevant questions – without success. I wrote e-mails to about 50 Levinsohns, some replied and three of them were relatives. I visited the Archives of Latvian Jewry in Shfayim and found files concerning Kuldiga. Interesting, but no results. I made contact and visited with Martha Levinsohn-Lev Zion in Beersheva. Her father also came from Kuldiga and went to the USA but we do not know if we are related. She is an expert on Latvian Jews specializing on Jews from Kuldiga.

On our last visit to Kuldiga, I found the phone number of the local tourist office and I decided to phone. A nice lady named Daina answered, spoke to me in English and gave me her home telephone number. She became my Good Samaritan and said she would try and help me find the missing relative. Two days later, I phoned but nothing was found at the municipality.

She promised to go to archives and when I spoke with her a few days later, she had found the birth certificate of Maxim. He was born on 29 November 1924 in Kuldiga. Only my mother's name appears; no father's name is recorded. The address of the family farm also appears. She sent the certificate to me and said she would make further inquiries among the older people. When I spoke with her a week later she said that she met a man who is a schoolteacher and claims to have known Maxim for 30 years. He said that Maxim lived somewhere in one of the neighboring villages. She was going to put an ad in the local newspaper and she told me to contact her on Friday. At that point, we knew

that Maxim had remained in the area and that we had a fair chance of finding him.

It was Thursday night, the end of July, two months after I first heard about Maxim. The phone rang and Riva answered. She said that I should sit down and handed it to me. A voice said, "My name is Rita Levinsohn. I am Max's daughter." I was in shock. I cried – I could not believe it. Rita speaks poor English and it was frustrating since I wanted to know so much.... Max had died 10 years earlier of cancer. Rita gave me Iveta's, her youngest daughter's, telephone number. When I phoned her, a new world opened up for me and I realized that I had found our lost family. The next morning I spoke with Daina and she then told me that two people had called her responding to the notice we put in the newspaper. They were from the Burkovska family, the family who adopted Max. She also told me that she had phoned Maxim's wife Elena, who lives in the small village Edole, 16 kilometers from Kuldiga.

My brother Jos and I decided that we both must go to Latvia. Iveta became my main contact. I discussed our planned visit with her as well as the many questions about our newly discovered family. They had no idea about us – all they knew was that Max's mother had run away.

It seems that Maxim hardly spoke about the Levinsohn family, as it was too painful for him. He worked as a driver for the local fire brigade and played the saxophone, piano and accordion. He also had his own band that played at local festivities and parties. Rita, his only child, moved to Riga to study and then married Gethmane (who was half Jewish) and had 2 daughters, Ilona born in 1977 and Iveta born in 1978. Some eight years ago, she divorced and married her present husband Alex in 1994. Ilona is married to Raymond and Iveta lives with her boyfriend Sasha. They all live in Riga. They wanted to know all about us so I wrote to Iveta daily and together we planned our week in Riga.

We were all very excited with the prospect of meeting them in person. I had a good feeling about them and I knew we would be happy with them. But until we met them, we could

not be certain. On the 27th of August, we were on our way to Riga where we landed that Friday afternoon.

Our meeting was very emotional with tears, kisses, hugs and simply looking at them and visa versa. Rita and Alex, Ilona and Raymond, Iveta and Sasha, Jos and Diana, Riva and yours truly were overcome with a warm feeling that finally we had met. Unfortunately, Max and our mother Ida were missing from the reunion.

Throughout our visit, the fact that my mother did not have the pleasure of meeting this loving family was on my mind. That night we had dinner at Rita's place. The atmosphere was warm and loving. The weekend was a period of getting to know each other. While we were touring or dining, many questions were asked and answered by all. A lifetime of events and stories unfolded – they were amazed at all the new relatives they suddenly found and we were interested in their history and the way they lived. They are all well dressed and educated, and work in good positions.

On Monday, we all went to Kuldiga and Edole. At Kuldiga we visited the synagogue, which today is a cinema. Max's wife Elena was waiting for us in Edole and the meeting with her was emotional. We were shocked that she lived in an old house with four other families and had to fetch water from a pump 100 meters away. Her home consisted of one large room plus kitchen that held all her possessions, but it was comfortable and pleasant. A serious discussion took place before lunch with many questions asked by all with Iveta translating. A key question was that after Ida had settled down in South Africa why she did not try to find Max. It was Riva who came up with the probable answer that she was told by Adolph, her oldest brother, that everyone including Max was killed and with that she decided to block him out of her memory. Elena prepared a delicious lunch that also included many items from her garden.

We then went to the cemetery where Max is buried. Elena gave us permission to say Kaddish, which Jos and I said. I then gave a speech telling them how sorry we were not to

have met him and what a wonderful family he had. I also asked for his forgiveness if anyone of our family did him harm. It was bizarre when just before we left Elena stood in front of the grave and made the sign of the cross.

We then went to the Levinsohn family farm, about 16 kilometers from Kuldiga – Rita knew where it was since she had visited a friend there without knowing that it had belonged to her family.

The farmer was pleasant and showed us the large old house of more than 15 rooms. It was a mess, with most of the rooms being used for storage. This visit was traumatic for us since this is where my family lived and where my mother grew up.

The next morning we toured the Edole castle built in 1270, the oldest castle in Latvia. The castle has a museum, a gallery and beautiful grounds. My niece told a guide that we were her grandfather's brothers and to my amazement she said that she had recognized me. I looked and acted a lot like Max.

We were invited by the Burkovskas in Kuldiga. Their family was our grandparents' neighbors. It was their father Janos who saved Max from the Germans. Sasha and his sister Ingrid, as well as Indre who is Sasha's daughter and a well-known actress in Riga were also there. In fact, Indre came all the way from Riga to meet us. Again, it was very emotional and there were a lot of tears by Sasha who was recovering from a stroke. They were friendly with my grandparents Nissan and Dora as well as with my aunts Lilly and Rachel. For the first time we were able to ask questions about our grandparents and aunts – questions from the grave.

We wanted to know why Rachel and Lilly never married. Ingrid said that Lilly had a boyfriend but did not want to marry him. Was the family religious? Sasha said that they were and went to the synagogue on the holidays and on Saturdays. Who was Max's father? Sasha hesitated and said Yakobson, but did not know more. The scandal was still haunting them. Photos were shown and one was given to me. It is the day of confirmation showing Max, Janos, his wife and Sasha and

Ingrid as children. It was taken in the summer of 1941.

Having spoken with the Burkovska's, with Elena, Rita, Iveta and Ilona as well as Gethmane, Iveta's father and having heard the stories and read the letters received – here are the exact facts of Max's life, a well kept secret.

My mother Ida (Yetta) had an affair with Janos Burkovska, a neighbor. Ida was 14 years old. Maxim, (Maximillian) was born on 29 November 1924. Ida was sent to South Africa and her parents Nissan and Dora adopted Max. The childhood photos we have of Max are with his two aunts Lilly and Rachel who brought him up. Hermann, Ida's youngest brother was 10 at that time and he spoke about him to his wife Gwen. I was friendly with Hermann when they lived in South Africa and we talked about the family but Max was never mentioned.

Nothing was heard during the war except for terrible rumors about what the Nazis were doing to the Jews. In 1947, one letter or possibly two letters arrived from Max to Adolph, my mother's oldest brother. He told him that he had survived the war, that Nissan was killed on 1.7.1941 and that Dora, Lilly and Rachel were killed on 3.7.1941. A neighbor adopted him and afterwards he had fought with the Partisans. After the war, he returned to the Kuldiga area and said that he was alone and needed help. He never received a reply from South Africa.

The truth was that when the Germans came they rounded up all the Jews and held them in the Kuldiga synagogue without food and water. Janos Burkovska tried to get food and water to the Levinsohns but the Germans would not allow this. He then went to the Gestapo and told them that they had made a mistake since there was a boy Max who was not a Jew – he said to them that he was one of us – he is my son, look at him he is a gentile. Janos risked his life and angered his wife who did not want Max.

Two days later, the Gestapo agreed to release Max on two conditions: that he be confirmed (baptized) and that he be adopted. Janos fully agreed. That is how Max's life was saved. He

stayed with them for a while and Janos's wife always blamed him for everything.

He was sent to a work camp and he was conscripted into the German Army. He was sent to Germany and Italy and when the war ended in 1945, he was a prisoner of war in Italy. He returned to the Kuldiga area where he was on his own in difficult times. As the Burkovska's were not helpful, Max became a driver for the local fire brigade of Edole. He taught himself to play the accordion, saxophone, piano, organized a band and wrote music. His band played at local festivals at the castle, weddings etc. He was a very popular figure, full of stories and jokes. At one of these functions he met Elena and married her in 1955. They lived in the same house where Elena lives today with no running water or indoor plumbing. Rita was born in this house. At school she was called a beautiful Jew. She did not know what a Jew was so she started reading about them and Max confirmed that he was born a Jew. All she knew was that her grandmother (Max's mother) had run away and that her name was Levinsohn.

While in Kuldiga we met Daina my Good Samaritan and we all went for lunch to celebrate the discovery of our new family. We parted with Elena after emotional good byes.

We returned to Riga exhausted but happy. We visited the Jewish center in Riga, spoke with the secretary and asked that Janos be recognized as a righteous gentile. We understand that they were investigating the facts. It all ended quickly. The moment of departure came and we were heartbroken to leave them. We had fallen in love with our new family and wanted more of them. Rita, Alex, Iveta and Sasha are coming to visit us. We decided to help Elena move to Riga so that she could be with her children in better conditions. Money was collected with the help of Lesley, Philp, Jos and Israel. A suitable apartment has not yet been found but hopefully it will work out soon.

\* This article is based on a lecture given by the author at the Negev Branch of IGS.

*Basil Sandler was born in 1929 in South Africa. He studied at the University of Cape Town. In 1948, he made Aliyah with his wife Riva, lived on Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch, in Moshav Bet Yanai and in Netanya. They have 2 sons, 2 daughters, and 14 grandchildren who all live in Israel. His has been a farmer,*

*business executive in Tel Aviv, manager of the tourist complex in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, head of the Aliyah Department of the Zionist Federation, Johannesburg South Africa and an envoy of the Israel Government in Germany.*



## **Ketubot for Genealogy**

*Shalom Sabar*

A lecture given at the Jerusalem Branch of the Israel Genealogical Society

Summarized by *Jean-Pierre Stroweis*

On July 24, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av, (the day dedicated to love in the Jewish tradition), the IGS hosted Prof. Shalom Tzabar (Chairman, Dept. of Jewish and Comparative Folklore, The Hebrew University), who spoke on Ketubot, a particularly well-chosen subject for that date.

The Ketubah is the Jewish marriage contract, drawn between a groom and a bride, according to Halakhah, Jewish Law. The Ketubah lists the marital and financial commitments of the groom towards the bride at the time of the wedding, which is payable when/if she becomes a widow or gets divorced. This document serves as a protection for the Jewish wife and helps to preserve the institution of the Jewish family. There is no mention of the Ketubah in the Bible. But, as the Bible does mention the 'get', that is, the document of divorce, it is assumed this was an early practice. By the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, written marriage contracts had come into common usage among Jews. The language and form of the Ketubah itself were formulated in the time of the Mishnah.

The Ketubah provides a wealth of information, on the bride and the groom, on the wedding witnesses, on the community, on artistic and folkloristic issues, on the ideals of marriage, and on the history of Jewish names in many and various locations where the Jews lived in the past.

The oldest known fragments of Jewish marriage contracts are Aramaic papyri from Elephantine, Egypt, which are dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.; from Eretz Israel there are fragments from the Bar Kokhba period; they have an archaic shape and are significantly different from the Ketubot of Medieval and later times.

The oldest decorated Ketubot come from the Cairo Geniza and date from the 10<sup>th</sup> century on. Each Ketubah from this period is a unique original masterpiece, with distinctive text and decorative patterns. It presents the bride's dowry, to be read publicly during the wedding to the audience. The content of the dowry was provided in great detail, thanks to specialized experts. Historians use these descriptions to learn about the clothes and the traditions of the period.

In medieval Germany, Ashkenazi Jews established a simple, common text recurring on all Ketubot. Even the account of the dowry was fixed. It is thought that this standard formulation was established during a period of unrest and persecutions so it could be easily replaced in case the original Ketubah was destroyed.

In medieval Spain, Sephardic Jews continued to use distinct Ketubot, and the Ketubah is a very vivid document, with a wealth and variety of details. One Ketubah contains the signatures of nine witnesses, whereas only two witnesses are required according to the

Jewish law. The name of the cities is often followed by the name of the river passing by. No mention of sovereign rulers is made in this period (though later Sephardi Ketubot and those made in Islamic lands at times do mention names of rulers). Each Ketubah is usually divided into two parts: the narration of the wedding event on one side, and the terms and conditions on the other side.

The practice of using the portable Hupa (the wedding canopy) is Ashkenazi and dates from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Sephardim used fixed Chupah, and, unlike the Ashkenazim, their weddings were conducted inside the synagogue usually.

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish weddings took place during the first half of the Hebrew month, during the waxing of the moon, as a symbol of fertility and prosperity.

After their expulsion from Spain, Sephardic Jews kept their traditions. For example, many Ketubot from Venice are decorated in Moorish style with large horseshoe arches, and under the influence of Venetian Baroque art the Sephardi Ketubah becomes a genuine work of art. Quotations from the Bible are often part of the ornaments.

The Italian influence gives birth to the use of blazons, heraldic shields or emblems adopted by families. In Halakhic discussion, the Italian sages indicate that blazons do not imitate Christian practice; the opposite is true, as they represent the symbols of the 12 tribes of Israel in the book of the Numbers (Bamidbar).

Sometimes, the family names of the groom and the bride are not even explicitly written; instead, the heraldry symbol of the family is drawn. For example:

- The symbol of the Norzi family (Italy) is 3 covered heads in a triangle.
- The Foa family (Italian of French origin) is represented by two facing lions around a large palm tree with Magen David.

- The blazon of the Rappaport family shows the etymology of their name. The blazon includes hands raised in blessing (indicating Kohanim), a crow (*rabe* in old German) and the name of the city of *Porto* (Italy).

Sometimes the drawings refer to the names of the bride or groom: for Esther, a scene of the Megillah (Book of Esther), for Jacob, a ladder to heaven, for Yedidya, the scene of King Solomon when he suggests cutting the baby in half, etc...

The Ketubot of Moroccan Jews often have something in common. A long enumeration of the ancestry of the bride and groom, which was supposedly to prove the family's Spanish origin. Most Moroccan Jews were married on a Wednesday, to follow an old Jewish tradition (Mishnah Ketubot, 1:1). Thursday was the day where the Beit Din (Jewish court) was in session and any claim (re-the virginity of the bride) could be brought before the court.

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## The Jewish Cemetery of Shumen, Bulgaria

### A Source for Genealogical Research

*Joseph Covo*

The tombstones of the 653 Jews buried in the Jewish cemetery of Shumen between the years 1873 and 1966 are an important source of information, not only concerning the names of the local Jews, but also regarding the names of the predominantly Sephardic community of Bulgaria.

Shumen or Shumla, as this old Bulgarian fortress town was called during the 500 year rule of the Ottoman Empire, lies in north-eastern Bulgaria, about 100 km south of the Danube River and 60 km west of the Black Sea coast.

According to the book *Description de la ville Choumla* by Barbie de Bokaje, professor of geography in the French Academy, who visited this town in 1810, the Jews settled in Shumen in the first half of the 18th century. At the time of his visit there were in Shumen a total of 4,000 houses, 38 of which housed Jews. Considering an average of seven persons of a typical family at that time, about 260-270 Jews lived in Shumen.

According to the hand-written notes by the Shumen born Raphael Farin (1889-1951), the first Jew who settled in Shumen was Haim Aharon Ashkenazi, the chief-doctor ("Hakim Bashi") of the then Turkish Governor. In 1830, because of a fierce cholera epidemic, many Jews from Adrianopolis (Edirne) fled to Shumen. The fire in the Jewish quarter of Adrianopolis in 1835 brought an additional group of immigrants to Shumen, among them the Navon and Shoev families. According to a German traveler from Leipzig who visited Shumen, at that time a thousand Jews lived in this town.

In 1855 the local Jewish community decided to build a synagogue which was dedicated in 1860. After the 1873 cholera epidemic, the old cemetery was abandoned and a new one established.

In Shumen, as in the rest of the Ottoman Empire, the Jewish children received their education in the "meldar," a religious school very similar to the "heder" in Eastern Europe.

Thanks to the intervention of Menahem Navon (1828-1906), head of the Jewish community and after a fierce fight with the conservative members of the Community, a boys' school founded by Alliance Israélite Universelle was opened in 1869. In 1871 the Talmud Torah merged with the Alliance school and in 1874 a girls' school was also founded by the Alliance. In 1878, after the Russian-Turkish war and the liberation of Bulgaria, the population grew to 1400 people due to newcomers from nearby Bulgarian towns, such as Russe, Vidin and Nikopol, who had fled from the advancing Russian army. However, the first official population count in 1880 found only 777 Jews in Shumen as many of them returned to Russe and Vidin. Before World War II, the number of Jews declined to 540 Jews.

The Jewish Community of Shumen took a very active part in the Bulgarian Zionist movement before WW II, after which almost the entire Jewish population immigrated to Israel. Today very few Jewish families live in Shumen, and some of them have intermarried, as in the rest of Bulgaria.

A considerable number of important Bulgarian Jews were born in Shumen. Amongst them are Dr. Asher Hananel, the Chief Rabbi of Bulgaria before WW II, Leon Surujon, one of the most prominent violinists and his sister, the painter Sultana Surujon. Colonel Abraham (Moreno) Moshe Graciani was one of the few Bulgarian Jews who attended the Military Academy in Sofia and reached the rank of Colonel.

My visit in Shumen in May 2001 presented a sad view of the deplorable state of the local Jewish cemetery. The lack of appropriate care after the massive Aliyah of the Bulgarian Jews in 1948-49 made access to the graves impossible and left the fence partly damaged. The Shumen Jews living in Israel responded generously to the appeal for donations for the repair of the cemetery and its fence. The work has already started and



visitors willing to pay their respect to their loved ones will be soon able to do this. The periodic maintenance, which the very small Jewish community has agreed to do, shall, eventually, permit a more in depth study of the information contained on the gravestones of the cemetery.

As in the rest of Bulgaria, today the largest part of the old Jewish population of Shumen lies buried in the Jewish cemetery, a silent

and sad testimony of this once vibrant and active Jewish community.

### Burials in the Jewish Cemetery of Shumen (1873 - 1966)

Numbers near each surname indicate the number of burials under it. The full data will be soon parked on the Internet site of the Federation for the Advancement of the Sephardic Studies and Culture at: [www.sephardicstudies.com](http://www.sephardicstudies.com)

Surname	No.	Surname	No.	Surname	No.	Surname	No.	Surname	No.
Aboav	1	Ben Aharon	1	Benyesh	1	Katalan	1	Perets	1
Adato	1	Ben Asher	6	Berakha	5	Kemalov	1	Pesah	1
Aladjem	1	Ben Avram	6	Buena	1	Kinn	1	Peso	1
Alfassa	2	Ben Basat	1	Caneti	1	Krispin	3	Pulman	3
Alkalai	2	Ben David	4	Cohen	34	Kuzi	1	Reinald	1
Almaleh	9	Ben Eli	1	Confino	5	Leon	8	Rodrig	11
Almoznino	3	Ben Eliezer	2	Cordova	1	Lerea	1	Romano	4
Amar	1	Ben Eliya	1	David	1	Levi	21	Rubisa (de la)	2
Arditi	4	Ben Haim	2	Djivri	2	Lidji	16	Salomon	1
Argoeti	2	Ben Isak	4	Elazar	1	Mayer	3	Salomonova	1
Aroeti	2	Ben Mayer	2	Farhi	69	Mayo (de)	1	Samuel	1
Aroyo	1	Ben Menahem	2	Finzi	1	Mazal	1	Sarfati	1
Asher	1	Ben Meshulam	1	Gatenio	2	Mefano	1	Sariolu	1
Ashkenazi	56	Ben Mordekhai	1	Geron	9	Mayer	14	Shimon	3
Aslanov	3	Ben Moreno	1	Gershon	1	Menda	4	Shiprut	1
Astrug	6	Ben Moshe	2	Goldstein	1	Meranda	3	Shoef	2
Atias	1	Ben Nesim	2	Grasiani	7	Meshulam	6	Simha	1
Avram	4	Ben Rei	1	Grunberg	5	Mirzrahi	17	Stromsa	1
Avramova	1	Ben Salomon	1	Haim	2	Moiseev	1	Surujon	18
Aziz	1	Ben Shimon	10	Hakim	1	Mordekhai	2	Toledo	2
Azuz	2	Ben Shelomo	4	Halfon	1	Moreno (de)	1	Uziel	1
Bakhsi	14	Ben Shemuel	9	Hananel	3	Moshe	1	Waisman	1
Barukh	8	Ben Yehuda	3	Hayon	1	Nardea	1	Yakov	2
Barukh (de)	1	Ben Yosef	4	Isak	2	Navon	4	Yankel	1
Basat	14	Benado	1	Isakov	1	Ninio	1	Yehia	3
Bealin	1	Benataf	2	Kalev	1	Panijel	1	Yehuda	1
Bejerano	1	Bennun	2	Kalmi	2	Papo	1	Yihia	1
Bekhar	5	Ben shoam	1	Kalo (de)	1	Pasi	1	Yosef	1
Ben	1	Benvenisti	3	Kamhi	7	Pelosof	16	Yulzari	4

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*Born in Sofia, Bulgaria, Joseph Covo (B.A. in Political Science and Journalism and M.A. in International Law from the Hebrew*

*University) after spending two years in forced labor camps during World War II immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1944. After the proclamation of the State of Israel and service in the Israeli Army, he was sent by the Jewish Agency to South America to promote the emmigration of young Jews to Israel. He dedicated his career to promoting Israeli technological training systems in the Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries. After his retirement three years ago he studied Ladino literature at Bar-Ilan University. His book, the history of the Jewish community in Rouschuk, Bulgaria was just published.*

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## Jewish Family Names in Italy \*

*Adolfo Kuznitzky*

Summarized and Translated from Spanish to Hebrew by Joseph Covo  
Translated from the Hebrew

In Issue 16 (March 2002) of *Toldot*, the publication of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Argentina, an interesting article appeared on Jewish family names in Italy by Adolfo Kuznitzky. The author based his paper on the research conducted by a number of scholars on the topic including Pedro Dineri, Cologni, Hazan, C. Roth, Schaerf and others. In the first part of his article, Dr. Kuznitzky focuses on a number of the basic rules of onomastics, the study of names. He states that there are two methods used to determine names: the nominal for the first name and the cognominal that also includes the family name. At the same time, while the first method is always subject to change and gives people the widest range in choosing a first name, the second method which includes the family name is fixed and set and also has overtones of being imposed. This method points out particular details connected with the bearer of the name, e.g. places, occupations and the like. This phenomenon is much more widespread among Jews. Sixty percent of Jewish family names in Italy

indicate a place of origin or residence, while this holds true for only 37% of Italian family names of the general population. It is not coincidental that four of the family names of Italian Jews who were awarded the Nobel Prize reflect the cognominal method: Levi, Montalcini, Fermi and Segre.

In the author's opinion toponyms (a name derived from a place or region) are good indications of the place of origin of Italian Jews. On the other hand, names ending with "audi" (Granbaudi), "esio" (Milanesio), "ero" (Barbero) and "asco" (Bagnasco) typical names of the Piedmont region are not Jewish. In many cases, Jews tried to hide their origin. They did this by rearranging the order of the letters - thus, Levi became Viel, Eliav became Veali and so on.

Dr. Kuznitzky differentiates between Jews who "lived in Italy forever" and those Jews who arrived because of persecutions or expulsions, such as Jews from Spain. As examples, he gives the names Useglio (an original Italian Jew), Foa (of French origin), Otolenghi (of German origin) and Zamorani

(of Spanish origin). Among Italian names that point to a Jewish ancestor, are many that show that the bearer wished to emphasize his Christian identity – among these are De Benedetti (blessed), Battezzato and Aguado (one who has been baptized), Sabatini and Sabatello (derived from Shabbat) and Del Monte (from the mountain, as the majority of Rome's Jews lived on Mt. San Lorenzo). The author also calls attention to the name Arias, which in his opinion is derived from the word "parias," the term used in Portugal for Jews who remained in that country.

In the second section of the article, Dr. Kuznitzky presents a list of Jewish family names and divides them according the following criteria:

1. Family names of Spanish origin: Agranati, Alamanzi, Aragona, Duran, Gironi, Porto and Segre.
2. Family names of French origin: Bedarida (Bedarides), Carcassona (Carcassone), Cavaglione (Cavaglion), Foa (Foix), Momigliano (Montmelian).
3. Family names of German origin: Allpron (Heilbrun), Diena (Jena), Luzzatti (Lausitz), Morpurgo (Marburg), Minzi (Mainz), Otolenghi (Ettingen) and Treves (Triers).
4. Ethnic family names: from France – Gallico and Zarfatti; from Germany – Grego, Polacco and Tedeschi.
5. Toponyms – deriving from North or Central Italy: Ascoli, Bassano, Camenino, Cividale, Fano, Foligno, Milani, Modigliani,

Montefiore, Orvieto, Padovano/i, Pavia, Peruggia, Pugliese, Recanatti, Rieti, Romano, Sonnino, Vercelli and Viterbo. Regarding the name Finzi, the author indicates that it is one of the most prestigious and widespread names. There are three possible origins of the name: from the Italian city Faenza, from the name Pinhas or from the city Pilsen.

6. Family names with a Hebrew origin: Angeli (Malachi), Bemporad (Ben Porath), Benedicto (Barukh), Bolaffio (Abulafia), Bonaventura (Mazal Tov), Cesare (Hezekiah), Colombo (Jonah), Consolo (Nahman), Del Vecchio (old), Ferro (Barzilai), Forti (strong), Grassini (Gershon), Guiglielmo (Benjamin), Leone (Judah), Marco (Mordecai), Mestre (Rabbi), Pacifici (Solomon), Sacredote (Kohen), Tranquillo (Manoah) and Vivante (Hayim).

In a number of places, the author reminds us that the determination of the origin of the family names mentioned in his article must be done with the utmost caution since they are not exclusively Jewish names and represent only a partial indication regarding the possible Jewish origin of the bearer of that name.

\* Based on the article that appeared in *Toldot*, the journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Argentina, Number 16, March 2002.

## **Given Name Analysis**

### **A Tool for Single-Surname Research and Very Large Families**

*Israel Pickholtz*

#### **Defining the problem**

In single-surname research and in very large families, there is often a problem keeping track of all the people with similar given names. In the course of coordinating the Pikholtz Project (the stated purpose of which is "to identify and reconnect all Pikholtz descendants"), I found a critical need to track all those with similar names in order to avoid duplicating entries as well as to help establish relationships. Rather than try to learn how others dealt with this problem – and surely others must have – I decided to develop a system that fit my own needs and it is this which I wish to share in the following paragraphs, using the specifics of the Pikholtz Project as examples.

Until the late 1800's, most of the Pikholtz families were based in the East Galician towns Skalat and Rozdol and we therefore cast our net for vital records in these two towns. As the JRI-Poland indices became available, we were able to widen our efforts to other East Galician towns based on family traditions, US, Viennese and Israeli sources and references within JRI-Poland itself. (I would be remiss if I did not mention the role of any number of JewishGen subscribers who were quick to point out any Pikholtz references they happened to run across in the course of their own searches, particularly in US records.)

It therefore became critical to be able to identify any "new person" as perhaps being someone we already knew. For instance, we had some forty different people named Isak (or Izak, Eisik, Ajzek, Eisig, Icyk, Itzik, Itsig, Isaac, Yitzhak...) Pikholtz and we began to expect that any new reference would refer to someone we already "knew." But it was difficult to use my genealogy program itself (Brother's Keeper) to identify those already recorded, both because of the many different spellings and because of the inability of the program to produce a simple table with

identifying information, available at a glance.

#### **The type of solution**

I therefore decided to create a table for each significant given name and in time, it evolved into twenty-nine tables of male names and twenty-five tables of female names – some with forty to fifty entries and others with just a handful. Entries include all Pikholtz descendants, regardless of surname.

I chose HTML rather than Excel as my medium for several reasons:

- \* The tables could be put on our website for easy access by other members of our project team.
- \* The tables could be made more esthetic, with more efficient use of color.
- \* Column widths would adjust automatically.
- \* The individual tables could be easily linked to a master page entitled "Names the Pikholtz Families Gave Their Children" with a link to each name. This master page is color coded according to the number of entries on each page. (I am sorry to say that I have not kept that coloring up to date, but it is good enough to differentiate the "popular" given names from those less frequently used.) This page includes a list of comments and explanations, to which the casual user can refer.
- \* We maintain the capability – as of yet unused – to link each person to the HTML page that has details on his specific branch or family.

Before explaining the structure of table, let me mention several administrative decisions I made.

I included only those people born in Europe until 1940 and those born elsewhere until 1922. The logic here is that those born later are less difficult to identify and their names are less closely tied to their ancestors than those in earlier generations. In any case, adding a few dozen modern Josephs or Sarahs would just clutter up the tables and

detract from their usefulness.

Although the purpose of the analysis is to look at Pikhholz descendants, not spouses, it is not always clear in the older birth records which parent is really the Pikhholz – perhaps both. So I included both names in these instances.

Anyone with two names was included on both lists. Moses Hersch is on the "Moshe" list and on the "Hersch" list. Similarly, Aunt Bessie, who was Devorah in Hebrew, appears under both names. I also included on the "Chaim" page those people for whom the name Chaim was added during a serious illness, in keeping with a widespread Jewish practice.

The names are defined as inclusively as possible. The "Mordecai" page includes

Jewish variations of Mordecai as well as Max and Markus. I went so far as to include people who used the name secularly even when the Jewish birth name was different – for instance the "Samuel" page includes Sams who were initially Zisa, Schneur or Shalom.

Overlapping names are listed together – for instance Aryeh and Yehudah, both of which are often Leib, are on a single page. (In fact, that was how I first noticed that among the Skalaters, Leib is Aryeh, while among the Rozdolers, Leib is Yehudah.) I did the same for Esther and Judith, which can overlap with Yetta. (I have no doubt that some would argue with how I handled the names Cirl and Rosa.)

#### Designing the table

## Pikhholz Descendants Named **CHANA**

Birth Name	Hebrew Name Ref. No.	Father's Name Mother's Name	Birth Year Birthplace	Residence Spouse's Name	Death Date	Family or Source	Remarks
Chane Chaje	Chana Chaya 1947	Motie Taube?	1823~	Skalat Eliezer	14Jul 1896	Eliezer	Grandmother of #198, 1965, 2023
Itta Chane Damm	3575	Eisik Damm Feige	1870 Rozdol	Rozdol? Ahron Fuks?		Rozdol index	
Chanzie Frankel	2396	David Lazel Frankel Bessie	1875 Skalat	Skalat -	1876	Pittsburgh	
Jtte Chana	2843	Jossel Szeindel Sauerberg	1877 Rozdol			Rozdol birth records	
Annie	Chana 1175	Bernard Bluma Bernstein	1878~	Philadelphia Nathan Tersuhow	14May 1959	Steve	
Chanzie	3065	David Schmucl Freude Lincycz	1880 Skalat			Skalat birth records	
Chane Jente	3069	Moses Hersch Frymcie Gruberg	1880 Kaczanowka	Kaczanowka -	21Dec 1883	Laor	
Jtte Chane	3019	Dawid Wolf FeigeLea Fridman	1881 Rozdol			Rozdol birth records	
Chanzie	1944		1892	Skalat Moses Liebergall		Skalat records	Maybe connected to "Tonka"

Birth Name	Hebrew Name Ref. No.	Father's Name Mother's Name	Birth Year Birthplace	Residence Spouse's Name	Death Date	Family or Source	Remarks
Enge	Chana? 2350	Joseph	1890s	Isaac Greenspan		Rita	
Chana	3356	Max Buna	1892~ Brooklyn?			EIDB	
Beile Chane Ornstein		Srul Ornstein Riwke Reisie	1893 Skalat			Rosa & Eliezer	
Chana Tanne	Chana 1736	Bendit Tanne Lea Shteg	1895~	-	Shoah	RavJG	
Chana Kiwetz	Chana 1965	Zwi Kiwetz Tema	1897 Skalat	Skalat		Eliezer	First cousin of #1198, 2023
Chane Chaje	3514	Josef Cirl	1897 Skalat			Rosa?? &	
Ann	Henie? 370	Abraham Manya Horowitz	1898~	New York Sam Fink	16Aug 1978	Yitzhak	
Chane Chaje		Cirel	1898 Skalat			Skalat birth index	Father may be Josef Pickholz
Chana Malka Haftel	Chana Malka 147	Velvel Haftel Sosi	1902~ Synowodsk o	Givatayim Dukas	Dec 1966	RavJG	
Chana Langenauer	2500	Yosef Raizel Langenauer	1903 Rybnik	Bernard Laufer	1982	RavJG	
Chana	Chana Chaya 1198	Eliezer Sarah Cackes	1914 Tarnopol	Tarnopol	- 1942 Shoah	Eliezer	First cousin of #1965, 2023
Chane Chaje Kiwetz	Chana Chaya 2023	Eliezer Kiwetz Devorah	1922~ Skalat	Skalat -	Shoah	Eliezer	First cousin of #1965, 1198
Chana	Chana 1594	Chaim Pesa Heller	1924~ Skalat?	Skalat? -	Shoah	Tonka	First cousin of #1885
Chana Messing	Chana 1885	Nisan Messing Cyla	1929~ Skalat?	Skalat? -	Shoah	Tonka	First cousin of #1594
Chana Zamojre	2563	Mathilde Liebergal	1931~	-	Shoa	Tonka	

I find it of critical importance to be able to see all the pertinent information on any person at a glance; therefore, I needed a table that would not require horizontal scrolling. This necessitated creating a two-line row for each entry, allowing me to put different types of information on each line.

To save space and to avoid spelling conflicts,

those whose surnames were some form of Pikhholz are listed without the surname, but the given names are in blue. (I use these tables only on screen - if I printed them, I would probably have used bold fonts rather than blue ones.)

Entries are listed more or less in order of birth, with some concessions to apparent

family groupings and possible duplications.

Following are explanations of the eight columns in the table.

#### Birth name

Full given name on the first line, birth surname (except the surname Pikhholz, as explained above) on the second line.

#### Hebrew name / Ref. number

The first line here is for the Jewish name, but for the most part I did not bother with it unless it was both known (rather than assumed) and manifestly different from the given birth name. The second line is the person's number in my genealogy program, for my own convenience.

#### Father's name / Mother's name

Full birth names for both, where known. Those with surname Pikhholz are in blue.

#### Birth year / Birthplace

Birth year is listed in four different ways:

- Normal black text when the year is known.
- Normal black text with tilde (~) where the year is close but not definite, such as when derived from reported age at death.
- Green text when the year is derived from the birth of the first known child. I assume first-time mothers to be twenty-two and first-time fathers to be twenty-five.
- Blue text when the year is a guess or a gross approximation.

Birthplace is based on records. I did not write the country of birth because I know where all the places are and did not want to take up more space.

#### Residence / Spouse's name

Town of residence is usually based on later records, including the births of children. For some people, multiple residences are listed. Spouse's name is full birth name, where known. If spouse is also Pikhholz, this is specified.

#### Death date

Gregorian date, or year, if known. "Shoah"

(Hebrew for Holocaust) is indicated where relevant.

#### Family or source

There are some thirty known Pikhholz families of four generations or more and I have named them by primary town, prominent ancestor or modern researcher. My own branch, for instance, is called "Pittsburgh," even though some of the members have never set foot in the city. Where the person's branch is known, it is listed here. As I wrote above, I considered hyper-linking this to the detailed family structures, but have not done so for now. (Such a link is of no particular use to me and hasn't proven to be of interest to others.)

For those whose family branch is not yet known, I have listed the source of information (or one of them, at least) about that person – for instance "Yad Vashem," "EIDB," "Skalat death records" or "Rozdol birth index."

Since the Pikhholz families break fairly clearly into Skalaters and Rozdolars, I have marked the entries in this column with a yellow or blue background respectively.

#### Remarks

This column includes speculation on people who may be the same, but we do not have enough evidence to enter them that way. Where relevant, the "remarks" box is expanded to two or more rows.

#### Examples of Recent Success

##### Simon and Dwora

The JRI-Poland index, which recently became available for Kopicienice showed us births to Lea Pikhholz, daughter of Simon and Dwojra Pikhholz of Skalat. Lea's first child (Dwora) was born in 1882, so we assume Lea to have been born about 1860. We had no previous knowledge of a couple named Simon and Dwojra and it seemed to me that we had too many pre-1850 Simons so I considered that Dwojra might be the Pikhholz here. (We did in fact have a Simon who is listed as born 1838 by virtue of a child born in 1863 in Skalat.) So, if Lea was born 1860, her mother Dwojra should be born about

1838, if Lea is indeed her first child. (AGAD's Skalat birth records begin in 1860, so we don't have records for earlier births.) Lo and behold, on the "Devorah" page was a listing for Dwore who died in Skalat in 1861 at age twenty-three - i.e., born 1837-8. Further investigation made it fairly clear that Dwore's husband Simon then remarried, had children beginning 1863 and that the two Simons are one and the same. Since both families are Pikhholz and since we know that Simon's second wife had a different surname (Waltuch), we can therefore be quite sure that Simon was Pikhholz. Once I had the theory, I found a descendant of the Simon-Waltuch family who vaguely recognized a Simon-Dwojra descendant as "some kind of relative."

I also ordered the death record for Dwore and learned that she was the sister of the second wife - which seems to seal the connection. Simon's first wife died at twenty-three leaving him two young children. He then married her sister.

Without the given name analysis, we would still be seeing only the trees and not the overall forest.

#### Gittel-Riwke

Eliezer Pikhholz (later Haniel) was born in Kopicienice in 1880 and his mother died soon after. After making aliyah - apparently the first Pikhholz to do so - he married and named his first child Rivka, after his mother. When we found the Kopicienice records, we found both Eliezer's birth record and his mother's death record (1884) - in both cases, the mother was Gittel. I assumed that the mother was really Gittel-Rivka (or Rivka-Gittel), but that since she had died while her son was young, he did not know both names.

Up to this point, Eliezer's mother - who was born in Skalat, to Eliezer and Chane-Chaje Pikhholz - had been listed in the Given Name Analysis only under "Rivka," so I needed to correct that entry and at the same time enter her on the "Gittel" page. In doing so, I noticed a Gittel-Riwke Pikhholz, born in Skalat in 1886 to Josef Pikhholz and Cirl Pikhholz.

The combination of Riwke and Gittel in two women, one born right after the other died was too good to be coincidental. I already knew that Cirl was a first cousin of Eliezer's mother, but it seemed to me that this was not a close enough relationship to explain the naming of her first-born. I had no previous information on Josef's family, but it made me take another look at the possibilities on the analysis of the name Joseph. It was then I realized that this Josef was almost certainly Itzig-Joseph, the BROTHER of Eliezer's mother, born 1863. This younger Gittel-Riwke was not named for her mother's first cousin, but for her father's sister. Can I prove it? Not yet. But I sleep better at night, knowing that I have it figured out. And I would not have figured it out without being able to see all the Gittels and then all the Josefs the way I have them arranged.

#### Hersch from Stryj

Recently, I met a non-Pikhholz researcher who told me of his successes with prenumeranten lists, a source with which I have had no success at all. (These are lists in published books of those who subscribed in advance, thereby making it easier to finance publication.) He sent me a copy of a list from Stryj dated 1883, listing Hersch Pikhholz. Stryj is the city closest to Rozdol and in the late 1800s, quite a few Rozdolars lived there, although we have little data from Stryj records for the time being.

We have fifty Pikhholz descendants named Hersch in the given name analysis, thirty-seven of them with the Pikhholz surname and eighteen of those from the Rozdol branch.

Without the given name analysis, even citing those statistics would be time consuming, but using the "Hersch" page, it was easy to see that there was only one adult Hersch from the Rozdol families living in 1883. That one was from a 1835 birth record and we knew nothing else about him. Now I am fairly certain that he lived to adulthood, residing in Stryj - at least in 1883. Perhaps we will be able to confirm that when JRI-Poland's Stryj data becomes available.



## Conclusion

These and other successes would have been possible without the given name analysis. But I am quite sure that they would have been much harder to achieve, without the systematic approach that the given name analysis provides.

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*mostly in the Negev but the last ten years in Gush Etzion. His interest in genealogy began as a child, but he didn't do much about it until about eight years ago. For the last nearly four years, he has been working on a project to identify and connect all Pikhholz families everywhere. Israel is married to Frances Silberstein Safien (of the London Silbersteins) and is a member of the Negev Branch of IGS. The Pikhholz Project web site is at [www.pikhholz.org](http://www.pikhholz.org).*

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## Recording Genealogical Data

*Yehuda Klausner*

### 1. General

In the present and the following chapters I will outline a procedure for recording data by the researchers of Jewish genealogy, especially those engaged in Rabbinic genealogy. This procedure is also useful in writing texts and correspondence on the subject. It does not aim to suggest the enforcement of a rigid genealogical recording system, but to suggest some common rules, already used by many, in order to simplify the recording and to render it widely understandable, as well as to help the newcomers to genealogy and the less experienced. The suggestions are based on my long experience with a large database of persons of all kinds. The entire procedure will be described in several short installments, each dealing with one aspect of the recording.

There is no technical reason that prevents us from having the records in Latin fonts rather than Hebrew ones. There is only the sentimental reason. Since we are dealing with Jewish genealogy it would seem more natural to conduct the recording in Hebrew. For many practical reasons, however, such as the wide international connection, the management of the records in Latin fonts is easier, and it does not tarnish in any way the records. Moreover, in all genealogical softwares there are some extra unused fields, or fields that do not relate to Jewish genealogy. I shall refer to these fields as free

fields, and they may be converted and used by those who also wish to include the Hebrew spelling of the names, or for any other purposes.

### 2. Notations

After these general remarks, the following notations are suggested whenever applicable:

1. R' for "Rabbi" or "Reb," like R'Yehuda, R'Yekutiel etc., which is generally useful in correspondence. The notation R. used by some for the same purpose, can be mistaken for a given name or a middle name.
2. b' for "son of" or "daughter of" like Yehuda b'Shmu'el or Beile b'Yitzchak. It is from the Hebrew "ben" or "bat," a very convenient use of the same notation for both genders.
3. m' for "from" designating the location where the person is from, like R'Aharon m'Karlino or R'Pinchas m'Korets. It is also from the Hebrew "me" which translates "from," and is very useful to designate persons, mostly Rabbis but not only, from the time that surnames were not in common use and one way to differentiate between persons with the same given name was by the location.

It is suggested that the three notations, which are always followed by a name of a person or location, be used without a space between the notation and the name, in order to avoid separation between the notation and the name at the end of the line.

## Books

**To Live the Dream – Childhood and Youth in Russe, Bulgaria,** by Lilly Melamed Levi. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002.

*Joseph Covo*

As far as I know, after the deaths of Haim Keshales in 1977 and Benjamin Arditti in 1981, no important books on Jewish life in Bulgaria have appeared except for the volumes by Vicki Tamir Levi, published in English in New York in 1979 and of Michael Bar-Zohar that appeared in Tel Aviv in 1998. A book by David Cohen appeared in Sofia in Bulgarian in 1955. Nevertheless, in the past few years in Bulgaria there has been extensive research into the history of the country's Jewish community before the mass wave of Aliya in 1948-1949. A number of research articles has been published by various publishers, most of them financed by *Mo'adon Hashalom*, which is the central organization of Bulgaria's Jewish community today. Bulgaria's Jews are currently estimated to number between 3,000 to 4,000 people, less than 10% of their number before World War II. All the books that have been published on Bulgaria's Jews deal with the history of this Jewish community and its escape from total destruction towards the end of World War II.

Unique among the books devoted to the Jews of Bulgaria is that of Lilly Melamed Levi, which was recently published by Yad Vashem in the Korczak series.

The book is divided into three parts:

Part I – “Russe – A Lost World,” describes the background of the of the author's family, a typical Russe bourgeois family and their good relations with their Bulgarian neighbors.

Part II – “The Winds of War,” describes the period of the rise of the fascist Bulgarian government until the end of Nazi rule in 1944, through the eyes of the author, from childhood to maturity.

Part III - “To Live the Dream,” describes the author's activity in the framework of the Zionist youth movement “Hehalutz Hatza'ir [the Young Pioneer],” during communist rule and the fulfillment of her Zionist dream with her Aliya in 1948. She faithfully describes the feelings of a young Zionist who sees the coastline of the Land of Israel for the first time.

*To Live the Dream* is a very personal book, pleasant and easy to read. It follows the historical events as they occurred in Russe, which is located in Northern Bulgaria on the banks of the Danube. This, the author's first book, is the outcome of four years of writing. She tells us with great skill, not only about her family, her neighbors, her friends and the difficult period through which she lived but she also succeeds in bringing to us the feelings a young maturing Jewish woman, all of which are very moving to the reader.

**Studies on the History of Portuguese Jews.** New York, The American Society of Sephardic Studies, 2000. 232p.

*Mathilde Tagger*

Before us is a collection of twelve articles, divided in two sections. The first chapter focuses on the Jews in Portugal while the second discusses their dispersal in Europe and in the New World. Most of the articles deal with various aspects of the Marranos, both in an out of Portugal.

With the possible exception of the article “Tsar Peter I of Russia and the Jews of

Spain,” which includes a comprehensive and interesting bibliography, these subjects have been dealt with in other books. Another article has no connection with the Jews of Portugal. It deals with Moroccan Jews in the Amazon region of Brazil. The author, who is a native of that region, centers on the fulfillment of *mitzvot* [Jewish religious practices] in the impossible conditions of the

jungle at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. There is no other literature on this topic and, in reality, it is not a study, but it is based on personal testimony. When I read about the Portuguese Jews in Saloniki, I had the feeling that before me was an English translation of the chapter on the same topic in the Yizkor Book *Saloniki, A Major Jewish Center*, Tel Aviv 1967." The contents were identical. The editorial board completely ignored the flourishing Portuguese community that lived

### **New In the Library** *Mathilde Tagger*

**The History of the Jews in Arab Lands, Part I: Modern Times to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century** by Shalom Bar-Asher, Ya'akov Barnay and Yosef Tobi. Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 5741/1981. 450 pp.

This volume is the product of in depth research that covers the history of the Jewish communities in Asia: Yemen, Iraq, Kurdistan, Iran, the Ottoman Empire as well as the Jews of North Africa – Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. Documentary data follow the historical presentation, as is customary for scholarly historical studies of this nature documentary data.

At the end of the book, there is an extensive bibliography, a table of dates, and a list of

**The Jews of Ruschuk, Bulgaria, Between East and West**, by Joesph Covo. Tel Aviv, 2002. 208p. (Hebrew).

This book traces the history of the community now known as Rousse, and also provides many details on its Jewish life. While on one hand the community never numbered more than 4,000 Jewish souls on the other hand it counts many prominent individuals like the Nobel Prize laureate Elias Canetti and Salomon Rozanes, the historian of Ottoman Empire Jewry. There, on the banks of the Danube, currents of Oriental culture met with liberal ones from the West with unique results. Ruschuk became the cradle of the Zionist movement in Bulgaria. With the creation of the State of Israel, most of its Jewish inhabitants

in Tunis for some 450 years. Likewise, there is no mention in this volume of the Portuguese community in Amsterdam. At the end of the book there are four indices: a general index which includes names of people and subjects, names of places, names of Spanish and Portuguese Jews and a list of Jewish communities of Portugal in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the articles are in English; two are in French, one in Spanish and one in Portuguese.

maps and illustrations along with an index of the names of people.

The subjects dealt with in each of the geographical areas concentrate primarily on the political status of their Jews, including the various aspects of life in each community.

This volume of history can serve as excellent background material for those researching the roots of their families originating in the localities discussed.

immigrated to Israel and are numbered among its leading citizens.

The book includes a number of historical yet unpublished documents, many names, a large and detailed bibliography and a name index. From a Sephardic genealogical point of view, this is a new research tool that will help many of us.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that Joseph Covo is an active member of the SIG Sephardim within the framework of the Israel Genealogical Society.

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