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# Editorial

When we engage in genealogical research we explore our family history, with the purpose of creating a family tree. We look for sources, working hard at finding the best way to discover past generations, and we collect more and more data, hoping to turn all those little pebbles of discovery into a complete mosaic. We gather names and dates – since they are the building blocks of genealogy – names of people and of towns and villages, dates of births, marriages and deaths, as well as dates of expulsions and pogroms.

It is perhaps appropriate to pause for a moment, and look closer at this abundance of names and dates. We will then remember that behind every date there is an event in a person's life, behind every place name there is an environment in which he or she was born and grew up, and behind every person's name there is a whole life. All these combine to form a story, simple or complex, private or involving an entire community. It is a pity to lose the living story, the lone branch of the tree, in the great forest of data.

In this issue of *Sharsheret HaDorot* we make room for a few of these tales, bearing the formal description of "human interest stories". *Lucien Harris* tells us about his warm relationship with his grandfather, *Mathilde Tagger* relates the fascinating story of the life of her great uncle Messod Fortunato Cohen, while *Martha Lev-Zion* combines the story of her genealogical research with the lives of two sisters. Although one perished in the Shoah, the other was saved and is now a "charming lady of 90", living to tell her tale. And *Helen Stepak* tells us the story of a place. She takes us to the tenements of Lower Manhattan, where, at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, Jewish immigrants who arrived from Europe lived in overcrowded apartments, raised their children, worked hard trying to make a living, and dreamed of a better future.

We also present the informative kind of genealogical articles. *Melody Amsel* tells of the book she is writing on the Stropkow community, *Shlomo Shamir* discusses the importance of names in genealogical research, *Shmuel Spector* writes about the Community Registers Project of Yad Vashem, and *Jean-Pierre Stroweis* describes the project of digitizing the Pages of Testimony at Yad Vashem.

The regular features of our journal have not been forgotten – books, article abstracts, letters to the editor – and we offer the reader two new sections:

1. "GenTips" – advice and useful tips germane to Jewish genealogy. This time the topic is an explanation of the *soundex* system.
2. A selection of useful Jewish genealogical websites, listing websites of genealogical and related fields.

In the previous issue of *Sharsheret HaDorot* we published **Harold Lewin's** article *The Sterns of Frankfurt and their Absorption by the English Nobility*. We are republishing the English version because of various unfortunate lacunae in the last issue, for which we apologize to our readers and to the author.

Since this is the Spring issue of our journal, I take the opportunity to wish our readers and my coeditors a pleasant, interesting and relaxing summer vacation.

*Yocheved Klausner*

## Naftali Bar Giora (Bamberger) Z"l

*Esther Ramon*

We regret to inform you of the passing of our former member, Naftali Bar Giora (Bamberger). He died suddenly during his researches in Stuttgart, Germany on January 15, 2000 and was buried on the Mt. of Olives cemetery in Jerusalem.

Naftali Bar Giora contributed a great deal to genealogical research in his work on Jewish cemeteries in Germany. He deciphered tombstone inscriptions and made a huge effort to add as much information as possible to the information on each of the deceased.

He published eight books in a format that was easily accessible to the researcher. They include **Diersburg, Wuerzburg, Gebenhausen-Goettingen, Celle, Gailingen. (2 vols.), Wanbeck (2 vols.), Neuwied & Schmieheim (2 vols.)**. Two additional books are waiting to be printed and we hope his wife will find the assistance in successfully having them published.

May His Memory be Blessed!



## The Sterns of Frankfurt and their Absorption by the English Nobility

*Harold Lewin*

### Summary

This is an encapsulated account of the genealogical history of the Frankfurt Sterns and of the brothers Stern who took up residence in 19<sup>th</sup> century England.

**The Symbiosis of Wealth and Nobility.** It has sometimes happened that a financially strapped English family of aristocrats has acquired a fresh injection of wealth through an arranged marriage with the children of a wealthy Jewish immigrant. It seems that the ethnic origins of the newcomer were far more likely to have been overlooked when he possessed great wealth.

**Philanthropy, Industry and Good Works.** Many British Jews have received public honour as a consequence of their philanthropy, industry or their contribution to the well being of society. Names that immediately spring to mind are: Rothschild, Sassoon, Disraeli, Goldsmid, Faudel-Phillips, Montefiore and Samuel, although there are many more. Lord Reading, who attained the post of Viceroy of India, was born Rufus

Daniel Isaacs, the son of Joseph and Sarah Isaacs on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1860, and achieved his most prestigious office through his ability and industry. Jews have been very active in British politics (some examples involving the Sterns are given later) and have also had some influence on the British monarchy. A son of Ernest Solomon, a British Jew, was once married to Wallis Warfield. King Edward VIII's intention to marry her forced his abdication and permanent exile from the United Kingdom. The Stern antecedents of the Earl of Snowdon, once husband of Princess Margaret, are described later in this article.

**Confusion of Family Names.** So far as its strictly verifiable genealogy is concerned, the beginnings of the Stern dynasty is to be found in the Frankfurt ghetto with **Süsskind Schneur Stern (1610-1686)** who is considered the forefather of those using the Stern family name. However, one confusing aspect of the genealogy of that period in Frankfurt and probably elsewhere in Germany, is that the same family could carry

any one of several names, depending upon the place of residence. The family branches were known variously by the names Haas, Beer and Kann, each representing one of the Haas, Bär or Weisse Kanne houses owned by the same extended family. At the time that part of the family became known as Stern, the family residence bore the sign of the Stern or star.

**Salomon (Schlom) son of Meir.** The Stern story really begins with Salomon (Schlom), son of Meir Bing or Bingen (who came from Bingen to Mainz in 1517 and died in 1559). Schlom was the son-in-law of the wealthy Beer Buchsbaum from Nuremberg. At least 200 years before the Rothschild brothers left the Frankfurt ghetto for England and France, the Frankfurt Stern family was considered very wealthy. For example, in 1556, Salomon (Schlom) paid taxes on a fortune of 10,000 gulden, while Salomon's son, Samuel Haas, (died 1572) was the richest member of the Frankfurt Jewish community and was taxed on 15,000 gulden. To provide a measure of comparison of the currency of that time, it's interesting to note that Ann of Cleve's brother William, Duke of Cleves, agreed to relinquish the City of Soest in order to obtain a contribution of a mere 1000 gulden towards his sister Ann's dowry prior to her marriage to King Henry VIII of England.

**Süsskind Schneur Stern (1610-1686).** For simplification we will skip four generations and introduce Süsskind Schneur Stern, the forefather of the Sterns. However, the reader interested in more detailed information, will find these skipped generations in the simplified genealogical chart of the Appendix. Süsskind married Eva Drach and had five sons, including Jacob Stern, the founder of the Soest branch, Samuel Süsskind Stern (d.1741), an exchange broker who married Schönche Oppenheim in 1689 and Isaak Süsskind Stern (d.1733), whose descendants were the banker de Sterns of London. The sons Isaak and Samuel are recorded as having supplied the Philippsburg fortress of the Archbishop of Speyer. Although contemporary Frankfurt records

describe him as a baker and dealer in pearls, Süsskind Schneur Stern's main business activities were connected with banking and financing and the family fortunes are said to have comprised extensive mineral rights, including revenues from the salt mines at Bad Orb.

**Samuel Hayum Stern, (1760-1819)** a great great grandchild of Süsskind Schneur Stern, started as a wine merchant but later developed a large banking organization. He married Sara Kulp, daughter of Judah Kulp, one of their sons being Jakob Samuel Stern, the father of David and Hermann Stern..

**Jakob Samuel Stern. (1780-1833)** Five generations after Süsskind Schneur Stern, Jakob Samuel lived at the family house at Frankfurt's 12, Rechneigrabenstrasse and worked as a wine merchant. He married Theresa Wohl, daughter of Wolf David Wohl. One of their nine children was David Stern (1807-1877) who became Viscount David de Stern, while another was Hermann Stern (1815-1887) who became Baron Hermann de Stern. Both Stern brothers were London bankers.

**David Stern later Viscount David de Stern (1807-1877).** David Stern was born in Frankfurt and set up residence in London. He married Sophia Goldsmid, daughter of Aaron Asher Goldsmid and sister of Julia who married his brother Hermann. The two brothers founded the banking company Stern Brothers, a firm with a reputation for arranging financing for various governments. The title of Viscount was conferred on David Stern in 1869 by the King of Portugal in recognition of the part taken by his firm in floating Portuguese loans. From that time the brothers added the prefix *de* to their names. Viscount de Stern was a member of the Commission of Lieutenancy of the City of London and a director of the Imperial Bank. His sons were: Sydney James Stern (1845-1912), later created Lord Wandsworth and Sir Edward David Stern (1854-1933). His daughters: Helen Caroline de Stern who married Charles Warde in 1890 and Alice

Theresa de Stern who married Francis Alfred Lucas in 1887.

**Sydney James de Stern later Baron Wandsworth. (1845-1912)**, elder son of Viscount David de Stern, was made a peer after serving as a member of Parliament for Stowmarket, and he also became a Viscount of the Kingdom of Portugal. He held the post of Honorary Colonel of the 4<sup>th</sup> Volunteer Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment and was a member of three London clubs. He had two sons, Sir Frederick Claude Stern who married Sybil Alice Lucas in 1919 and Sir Albert Gerald Stern.

**Sir Albert Gerald Stern (1878-1966)**, son of Sydney James de Stern, was educated at Eton College and Christchurch College, Cambridge. He studied banking in Frankfurt and New York and became a partner in the family firm of Stern Brothers in 1903. He was responsible for arranging a large loan to the Sultan of Morocco at the request of the Foreign Office and an advance of one and a half million pounds sterling to the Young Turks in Constantinople (now Istanbul). During WWI (1914-1918) he became Director General of Mechanical Warfare, largely because of his important contribution to development of the first tank. In the Battle of Arras in April 1917, those British tanks played a very significant part. Stern was made a Lieutenant-Colonel during the war and was knighted K.B.E. in 1919. In 1922 he married Helen, daughter of Sir Frederick Orr-Lewis, renounced Judaism and converted to Christianity, but was not actually baptized until 1966 when close to death. From 1944, he was Chairman of the Governors of Queen Mary College and in 1945-46 was High Sheriff of Kent. He and his wife Helen Merryday (d.1974) had two sons, John and David Stern and daughters Ann Stern and Patience Merryday Stern, who married Michael Campbell Devas.

**Sir Edward David Stern (1854-1933)**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> son of Viscount David de Stern. His first marriage was to Constance Jessel daughter of Sir George Jessel, Master of the Rolls, in

1883. 17 years after the death of Constance in 1908, he married Sybil Tuck, daughter of Sir Adolph Tuck, the marriage settlement being one million pounds sterling. There were no children from either marriage. Edward David Stern was knighted in 1904. In addition to his being Managing Director of Stern Brothers and Director of the Midland Bank, he held many honorary posts including that of High Sheriff of Surrey, Governor of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London and Lieutenant-Colonel of the Volunteer Battalion, E. Surrey Regiment. He was a member of three prestigious London clubs and owned a country estate in Chertsey, Surrey. On his death their Majesties the King and Queen sent heartfelt sympathies to Lady Stern.

**Baron Hermann de Stern (1815-1887)**, son of Jakob Samuel Stern, was born in Frankfurt and worked as a banker in Paris and London where he established the banking firm Stern Brothers at 6, Angel Court, London, together with his brother David (later Viscount). He married Julia Goldsmid, daughter of Aaron Asher Goldsmid in 1845. In July 1864, the King of Portugal conferred on him the title of Baron in recognition of the services rendered to the government of that country by Stern Brothers. At the time of his death he was a Director of the Imperial Bank, the Bank of Romania and the London and San Francisco Bank. He was one of the richest men in England, his fortune being estimated at 15 million pounds sterling in the 1880s. Baron Hermann and Lady Julia de Stern had two sons, Herbert and Alfred, and two daughters, Julia and Emily Theresa.

**Herbert de Stern (1846-1919, First Baron Michelham)**, son of Baron Hermann and Lady Julia de Stern, married Aimée Geraldine Bradshaw in 1898. They had two sons, Herman Alfred de Stern, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Michelham who married Bertha Capell, and the Honorable Jack Herbert de Stern.

**Julia de Stern (d.1935) later Lady Salomons**, daughter of Baron and Lady Hermann de Stern, married Sir David Lionel

Salomons in 1882. Her sister, Emily Theresa, later Lady Sherborne, married Lord Sherborne in 1894

**A Family Dispute.** A serious fissure within the extended family of de Sterns in the U.K. was publicized in 1919 when the Evening News of 10<sup>th</sup> March reported a hearing in the Probate Division of the High Court. According to the news report, only two days prior to the death of Herbert de Stern, the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Michelham, a Miss Bertha Capell married the Baron's son, Herman Alfred de Stern (who, on the death of his father, became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Michelham), and received a wedding gift of 600,000 pounds sterling. Doubts were raised at the Court hearing on the mental state of the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron when he made the gift to his son's bride, and on the validity of a will written just before the Baron's death. One interesting piece of information emerging in Court was that part of the assets of the estate had been sent from the U.K. to Belgium and Germany for safe keeping! This family dispute was not settled until 1928.

#### **Other English Personalities having Frankfurt Stern Ancestry**

About six years ago Dr. Anthony Joseph (see Bibliography) provided a succinct account of the Stern genealogy. It was based on two articles in German that clarified the Stern antecedents of Anthony Armstrong-Jones, (Earl of Snowdon), former husband of Princess Margaret. Mendel, youngest son of Süsskind Schneur Stern, was the great grandfather of Caroline Stern who married Aaron Messel of Darmstadt, the ancestor of Countess of Rosse, the mother of the Earl of Snowdon.

One of the Stern ancestral charts in the Appendix shows Jakob Samuel Stern (1780-1833) in generation 41. His sister (not shown in the chart) was Karoline Stern (1782-1854) who married the banker Baron Salomon Mayer von Rothschild in 1800. Their daughter Betty married Salomon Mayer's youngest brother James, the ancestor of all the Paris Rothschilds and their great grandson through Betty was James de

Rothschild (1879-1957), Member of (the British) Parliament.

**Patterns of Birth, Marriage and Burial in the Stern Descendants.** As with many other famous and affluent Jewish families who left the European ghetto, the improvement in societal status in their adoptive country was often accompanied by a severance of any attachment to Judaism. This phenomenon is seen in some of the newspaper announcements relating to the English descendants of the Frankfurt Sterns.

#### **Marriages.**

October 1871. James Stern, son of the late Julius Stern of Berlin and Frankfurt to Lucy, youngest daughter of late Joseph Biedermann of Vienna, at the West London Reform Synagogue.

July 1883. Edward David Stern to Constance, 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter of Lady Jessel and the late Right Honorable the Master of the Rolls, at the West London Reform Synagogue.

July 1894. Lord Sherborne to Emily Theresa, daughter of the late Baron Hermann de Stern, at the Registrar's Office, Kensington.

June 1919. Frederick Claude, son of the late Sydney James Stern, to Sybil Alice, daughter of Sir Arthur and Lady Lucas at the West London Reform Synagogue.

June 1922. Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Albert Stern 2<sup>nd</sup> son of the late Sydney James Stern (Baron Wandsworth) to Helen daughter of the late Sir Frederick Orr-Lewis and Maud Lady Orr-Lewis at the Memorial Church of St. George, Cannes.

December 1925. Sir Edward David Stern to Sybil Grace Tuck, daughter of Sir Adolph and Lady Tuck, at the West London Reform Synagogue.

June 1952. Michael Campbell, son of Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey Davas, and Patience Merryday, daughter of Sir Albert and Lady

Stern, at the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Teston.

**Births.**

February 1931. The christening of the daughter of Sir Albert and Lady Stern will take place at St. George's Church, Hanover Square, today. The child will receive the name Elizabeth Ann.

**Burials**

April 1883. Constance, beloved wife of Sir Edward David Stern. Funeral at Ball's Pond Road Jewish Cemetery.

April 1933. Sir Edward David Stern Bt., beloved husband of Sybil G. Stern. Funeral at

Ball's Pond Road Jewish Cemetery.

August 1933. Lady Helen Caroline Warde, daughter of the late Viscount de Stern and sister of the late Lord Wandsworth. Funeral at Teston Church and memorial service at All Saints' Church, Maidstone.

January 1966. Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Albert Stern, the World War I tanks expert, who was converted to Christianity in 1922. Funeral at Teston Church, Maidstone.

November 1974. Lady Helen Merryday Stern, widow of Sir Albert Stern. Funeral at the Parish Church of St. Peters and Paul, Teston, Maidstone.

**Correction**

John Nathan of New Zealand and Ramat Gan has very kindly drawn my attention to an error in this article. Here is the correct relationship:

1. Sydney James Stern (Lord Wandsworth, 1844-1912) did not marry.
2. Sir Albert Gerald Stern and Sir Frederick Claude Stern were sons of James Stern (d.1901) who married Lucy Biederman of Vienna in 1871, and grandsons of Julius Stern (1807-1852) banker in Berlin and Frankfurt. Julius was a brother of Viscount David de Stern.

**Appendix**

Please note that the actual generation number in these charts has no significance other than showing the generational sequence, and the choice of 30 as the first generation number is quite arbitrary.

Meir Haas-Kann	Salomon (Schlom) Haas-Kann settled in Frankfurt in 1530	Samuel Haas d. 1572 m. Schönlin	Beer Haas m. dau. of Joseph Oppenheim d. circa 1630	Samuel Beer Haas d. 1657 Descendants had family names: Beer, Kann, Stern	Joseph Jakob Kann-Stern d. circa 1643	Süsskind Scheur Stern (1610-1686) m. Eva Drach
Generation 30	Generation 31	Generation 32	Generation 33	Generation 34	Generation 35	Generation 36

Beer, Haas, Kann and Stern Genealogy over Period 1450-1686

Süsskind Schneur Stern (1610-1686)  m. Eva Drach	Isaak Süsskind Stern  m. 1681 d. 1733	Jakob Isaak Stern  m.Sarche Wohl 1719 d.1748	Süsskind Jakob Stern  m.Breinche Hann 1750 d.1780	Samuel Hayum Stern (1760-1819) Banker m.Sara Kulp	Jakob Samuel Stern (1780-1833) Wine Merchant m. Theresia Wohl	Wolf Jakob Stern (1801-1854) Banker m. Rosine Ellissen 1827
						Anton Jakob Stern (1805-1885) Banker m.Fanny Speyer 1835
						Julius Stern (1806-1852) Banker m. Louise Ellissen 1834
						<b>Viscount David de Stern.</b> (1807-1887) <b>Banker</b> m.Sophia <b>Goldsmid 1841</b>
						Karoline Stern b.1808 m. Angelo Marx 1828
						Siegmund Jacob Stern (1809-1872) Banker. m. Betty Hirsch 1843
						Leopold Stern (1810-1846) Paris
						<b>Baron Hermann de Stern</b> (1815-1887) <b>Banker</b> m. Julia <b>Goldsmid 1845</b>
						Salomon Stern b.1818 m. Johanna Ellissen 1853
<b>Generation 36</b>	<b>Generation 37</b>	<b>Generation 38</b>	<b>Generation 39</b>	<b>Generation 40</b>	<b>Generation 41</b>	<b>Generation 42</b>

Descendants of Süsskind Schneur Stern over Period 1610-1887



David Stern (1807-1877) London Banker. later Viscount de Stern. m.Sophia Goldsmid	Sidney James Stern (1845-1912) Wandsworth)	Sir Frederick Claude Stern m. 1919 to Sybil Alice Lucas
		Sir Albert Gerald Stern (1878-1966) m. 1922 Helen Orr-Lewis Baptised in 1961
	Helen Caroline Stern m.1890 Charles Warde	
	Sir Edward David Stern (1854-1933) m. (1) 1883 Constance Jessel m. (2) 1925 Sybil Tuck. Knighted in 1924	
	Alice Theresa Stern m.1887 Francis Alfred Lucas	
<b>Generation 42</b>	<b>Generation 43</b>	<b>Generation 44</b>

Descendants of Viscount David de Stern over Period 1807-1966

Hermann Stern (1815-1887) later Baron de Stern. Banker in Frankfurt, Paris and London. m.1845 Julia Goldsmid	Herbert de Stern (1846-1914) First Baron Michelham. m.1898 Aimée Geraldine Bradshaw	Herman Alfred Stern, Second Baron Michelham m. Bertha Capell
		The Honorable Jack Herbert Stern
	Alfred de Stern (1847-1919)	
	Julia Laura de Stern m.1882 Sir David Lionel Salomons	
	Emily Theresa de Stern (1845-1905) m. 1894 Lord Sherborne	
<b>Generation 42</b>	<b>Generation 43</b>	<b>Generation 44</b>

Descendants of Baron Hermann de Stern over Period 1815-circa 1940

Footnote. Harold Stern (1897-1980) was an uncle-in-law of the author. In October 1974, Harold Stern wrote: *As regards Sir Edward David Stern, when I was a little boy, my father (Jacob Stern) told me that he was his cousin and that there had been some row between families and all communications had ceased. That is all I know.* Research, however, indicates that Harold's father, Jacob Stern, lived in Lithuania and sailed via Riga, arriving in New York in 1882 and in the U.K. circa 1890. To date, the author has no evidence whatsoever of a rich Frankfurt connection, nice though it might be!

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## Solomon Isaiah Stern

*Lucien Harris*

The only Grandpa I knew was my mother's father, Solomon Stern. My father's father, Isaac Harris, who reached England with his large family from Russia in 1891, died in 1904, years before I was born. In 1904 Isaac became one of the founders of the Manchester Jewish Hospital, Elizabeth Street, Cheetham, after he had been Founder-President of a small synagogue in Greengate, Salford. This synagogue was close to his double-fronted house at 46 Ravalld St, off Blackfriars Rd. Isaac Harris, a master (or self-employed) tailor, taught the trade to his three sons Zalman, Elias (my father) and Saul.

Solomon Stern was a different cup of tea. Born in Lublin, Poland in 1861 into a family of goldsmiths, as a lad he was regarded as an *ilui* (child prodigy) at *Cheder* (childrens' talmudic class). Family lore says that he visited the Gerer Rebbe and was later sent for a period of Talmudic study at the Breuer School in Frankfurt. He had a famous cousin, Reb Gershon Henig (Redzin), who was credited with studying at the Sorbonne in France and also with having identified in Italian waters, a snail, which had provided in ancient times, the original dye for the *Tallit* (prayer shawl).

Solomon was married at 16 to Salomee Plonskier (then 15), a native of Plock, Poland. They later moved to Antwerp where daughters Berthe (my mother), Henriette and Euphrasie were born. Their fourth daughter, Suzanne, was born in Paris.

In Antwerp, Grandpa became a prominent diamond merchant. At the turn of the century, attracted by gold and diamond prospects, he went to South Africa, and as a "family Zionist" ended up in Cape Town with Morris Alexander and Philip Wigoder in the newly-created S.A. Zionist movement. They diligently sold Jewish Colonial trust shares to their contemporaries.

Adventurous Solomon volunteered to serve in the British Army in the Boer War, became a sergeant-major and in 1903 was granted

British naturalization papers. Back in Belgium, he resumed his diamond business until 1914 when WW1 broke out. His British passport helped him to move his entire family to London, where they lived at 88 Grosvenor Rd., Highbury and later at 36 Canonbury Rd. with the Krever family. Solomon appeared before the Anglo-German Tribunal after the war and won several arbitration cases against German businessmen. For a short time when WW2 broke out, he was evacuated from London. However, he returned and collapsed and died in the street in 1943. He is buried at the Enfield Cemetery.

My mother and I often went to London for a week or so to stay with my grandparents and I grew to love and respect Grandpa very much. Being a learned man, he encouraged me during my studies at Manchester Grammar School and at Brasenose College, Oxford. In fact, he was the only close relative who came especially to Oxford to witness my graduation in Law at the Sheldonian Theatre. I often went up to London to see him where he always took me out for a meal, regaling me with fascinating stories of his travels and experiences. He was thrilled that I had studied Latin and Greek, since he commanded many languages: Polish, German, Hebrew, Yiddish, French, Flemish and English - and often quoted passages to me from Goethe and Schiller. He often asked me to stylise his memos to H.M. Government about an invention of his, aimed at helping British submarines withstand enemy attacks. He also lobbied Jewish leaders to help him acquire areas of land in Brazil on which to re-house Jewish refugees from the Nazis. To his disappointment, neither project was taken up by the authorities.

He got much joy from my marriage in 1937 to Marie Polinsky and made a very warm and emotional speech at our wedding in Manchester. He also went to the Anglo-Palestinian Club in London to say good-bye to a group of British *Hehalutz*

pioneers going out to Palestine, since Marie's younger sister (Yehudith Avni), was one of them. She helped to found Kibbutz Kfar Blum in the Upper Galilee and still lives there.

As a lifelong Zionist, he was delighted that we moved to London in 1941 at Dr. Weizmann's invitation. In 1942, he came to

77 Great Russell St. to attend a Jewish Agency farewell party when I joined the RAF.

How could I ever have expected such wonderful experiences with my Grandpa, whose memory I cherish to this day! *Y'hi zichro baruch!* (May his memory be blessed!).



## On the Legacy Left by Messod Fortunato Cohen, The Uncle from Brazil *Mathilde Tagger*

From my childhood days, I heard about my paternal grandfather's brother who left his native city of Meknés, Morocco, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to go to Brazil where he hoped to earn his fortune. I also heard that he died in Brazil. My grandfather put aside his *Gallabiah*, donned a European suit and set out to bring home the money his brother left behind.

About ten years ago, while working on my maternal grandmother's family tree, I thought it also wise to gather information on my father's family especially as there was only one aunt still living from my father's generation. I believed that this would be the only opportunity to obtain information on my father's family. This was because of three reasons: (1) The lack of birth and marriage lists from Meknés; (2) The destruction of the old Jewish cemetery 50 years ago; (3) The almost impossible task of locating relatives because of the family name, "Cohen."

Among the queries I directed to my Aunt Heftsibah were questions about the uncle from Brazil. She told me that his name was Messod Fortunato. Messod is the original name and Fortunato is its Portuguese equivalent. She also added that my father, who was born after the death of Fortunato, was named after him. She also emphasized to me that all of these events took place before she was born. I kept this information but did

not follow up on it as I was occupied with other family projects.

In 1993, I read an article in *Avotaynu* about Moroccan Jews in the Amazonas region of Northern Brazil. This called to memory my Uncle Messod Fortunato. I began to search the literature with the goal of trying to understand what impelled him to move so far away from home. It soon became clear that Uncle Messod Fortunato was not the only one to follow this path, but, apparently, he was among the first.

The historical background of the immigration of Moroccan Jews to Brazil at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is explained by the following facts: after the declaration of Brazil's independence in September 1822, her Constitution was ratified in 1824. Among its articles was the recognition of freedom of religion within her borders. A few Marrano families returned to Judaism, but the majority of them were completely absorbed into Brazil's Christian society.

The first Jewish immigrants who arrived after independence were all of Sephardic or Oriental background. They came from Morocco, Turkey and other Arab countries. For the most part, they settled in the northern part of the country in the provinces of Amazonas and Pará.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Jews in Morocco underwent a severe economic crisis

caused by the slowing of trade with Algeria, which had become a French colony. In addition, the children from the cities of northern Morocco who had completed their education in the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, (the first one in the network) had no opportunity to earn a living. The immigration of these young people was made easier by the availability of ships that traveled from the port of Tangier in northern Morocco to the ports of Belém or Bahia in northern Brazil.

These immigrants were either bachelors or married men who left for Brazil without their families. For the most part, they engaged in shipping crude rubber from the depths of the jungle via the Amazon to Belém, the port city at the mouth of the river. As the years went by, most returned to their native land with the funds they accumulated enabling them to be financially secure. A small number of the immigrants married local women, mostly Indians, and established their homes in Belém or Manaus, today the capital of Amazonas Province.

There were two factors that ended this immigration in 1910: a crisis in the rubber industry and the outbreak of a yellow fever epidemic that claimed a great number of victims. As an aside, in 1998 during a visit to Manaus, a surprise awaited me as the local guide for our group of Israeli tourists was a descendant of one of these marriages. His name, Benaroché testified more than anything else to his Moroccan-Jewish roots. Our colleague in the Israel Genealogical Society, Mazal Linnenberg-Navon, at the time added a new aspect in the story of Fortunato, which is recounted in the book by Raphael Hayim Moshe Ben-Naim, *Drush Eretz Yisrael (Homilies of the Land of Israel)*.

Ben-Naim writes in his rabbinical style: "Messod Cohen, a native of the Western Interior [meaning inner Morocco where the city of Meknes is located], as a young man left his native city and his father's house to wander on paths in order to find a suitable place for him to live and earn a livelihood. Finally, he settled and spent the rest of his life in the city of Bahia, [today Salvador de

Bahia] in Brazil, a city of gentiles with no Jews at all. There he changed his name to Fortunato Cohen. Occasionally, he left it for business or travel. In 5651 [1891], he traveled to the city of Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. Also in Lisbon at the very same time was our Holy Teacher Rabbi Ya'akov Ben-Attar [the grandfather of Mazal Linnenberg -Navon]. He was also born in the same part of Morocco and had settled in Jerusalem. He was sent as an emissary of the Holy Congregation of righteous people to collect funds. The rabbi had the occasion to speak with the philanthropic Messod Fortunato Cohen two or three times. He saw that they got along well and he delicately requested from the generous one [Messod Fortunato Cohen] that he fund a Yeshiva in Jerusalem for the Community of Westerners [Mugrabim – Moroccans] where ten scholarly students, chosen by the emissary [Ben Attar], would study. And so it was. The patron [Messod Fortunato Cohen] allocated a set sum every year . . . .The Yeshiva established was named with the agreement of the emissary *Mishmeret Kehunah* [The Guard/Watch of the Priesthood]. Studies began in the month of Tammuz 5651 (1891) and continued until the death of the patron. Throughout his life, the patron sent the money periodically via his acquaintances in Lisbon. The head of the Yeshiva and his aides waited for the patron's arrival in Jerusalem. He promised the head of the Yeshiva that he would settle accounts with his partners and settle in Jerusalem. Before he was able to fulfill this wish, he died there. After his death, it became known that the patron left a valid will with a notary, as was the custom of the place, and appointed two trustees over the division of his assets. One was from there, a non-Jew, and the second a Jew, the honorable Don Isaac Halevi and his partners, from Lisbon. He explained in his will what he was leaving to his beneficiaries. The remainder he divided into various portions to be dispensed according to what he had written. Among the bequests, he left a trust for a certain amount, the income from which was to maintain a Yeshiva in the Holy City. The will was written on the 28<sup>th</sup> of the

month of Tishrei, 5768 [23 October 1908] and its provision for the Yeshiva is exactly the same as in the previous will written fifteen years before.

In this case, the Jew [Messod] was located in a city that was all gentile, without even another ordinary Jew. All the notaries are gentiles and he had to will his possessions in three different wills with different notaries with some changes (except for the provision for the Yeshiva, which was not changed). His will was valid according to the law of the land and local custom, as is the practice in Brazil. The Jews act accordingly since there are no rabbis or scribes. The majority, if not all the Jews there, is Moroccan.

The patron knew nothing about Jewish law; he did not know how to read and he did not even know how to sign his name. As his friends attested, only with great difficulty were they able to teach him to sign his name in the local language. The acts of charity that he did during his life were to his brothers, his relatives, and the people of his city and the scholars of another city in the West. Even now, in his will he directed that Torah Scrolls be written in his city, that four female orphans there be provided with funds to marry ..." Here end the captivating comments of Ben-Naim.

In October of 1999, I was at the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People to research material for an American genealogist who requested that I try to locate some documents concerning his Moroccan family. I examined all the cards in the file drawer that dealt with Morocco. I suddenly stopped at the section on Meknes. Written on the card right in front of me was "The will of inheritance of Messod Fortunato Cohen, Meknés, 1910." The document, written in Hebrew in Sefardi cursive style, was not a will but a decision of the Rabbinical Court of Meknes, headed by Rabbi Jacob Toledano, which rendered its decision in September 1927, on the matter of the guardianship of the funds of the legacy of Messod Fortunato Cohen. This decision involved the bequest designated for the two minor orphan granddaughters of Meir Cohen, the brother of Fortunato. The source of the funds was from

the inheritance that was distributed to the four siblings of Fortunato: Meir, Yehudah, Eliyahu and Rahma. Since Meir died a short while after receiving his portion, his two other brothers, Yehudah (my grandfather) and Eliyahu took upon themselves the guardianship of their brother Meir's two orphaned minor granddaughters, as Meir's son Avraham had also passed away.

The story of the patron of the *Mishmeret Kehunah Yeshiva* fits very well the stories about my grandfather's brother. Ben-Naim writes of "the youngster from the inner West." In those days, the vast majority of the Jews of Morocco who settled in Brazil were from the north of Morocco and were not natives of the interior. That is to say that, the very presence of Messod Fortunato Cohen, a native of Meknes, in Brazil was unusual. The combination of his two names adds proof that we are dealing with one and the same person. Another reason for identifying the founder of the Yeshiva with my grandfather's brother is that Fortunato became very wealthy, using as evidence the vast sums that he bequeathed to his brothers and which are recorded in the documents in the collection of the Central Archives. Ben-Naim indicates that the city of Bahia was both Fortunato's place of residence and death. This is confirmed by the documentation in the Central Archives. Therefore, it seems to me that one can confirm with a very high degree of probability that my grandfather's brother was, indeed, that very "Benefactor."

The document in the Central Archives supplied me with the name of my great-grandfather: Yitshak Cohen, who according to my calculation was born around 1820. My grandfather Yehuda had three brothers: Messod Fortunato, Meir, Eliyahu, and one sister whose name was Rahma – who had no children. It is probable that there were other siblings but there are no records of them and none were mentioned when the will was drawn up. It is also worth mentioning that not only the brothers received an inheritance as was customary in those days, but Messod Fortunato also included his sister Ruhama as an equal beneficiary.

Aunt Heftziba, who was mentioned in the beginning of the article, was slightly mistaken with her information. With all that I have discovered, I now have the motivation to commence building a family tree for my

father's family from Meknes, Morocco, despite the inherent difficulties of finding relatives who bear such a widespread name as "Cohen."

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## Life in the Lower East Side Tenements of New York City

*Hellen Stepak*

While at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Jewish Genealogy Conference in New York, I had the opportunity to do some personal research. This included a guided tour of the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where I knew that my father was born and had lived for a brief time. My own family's address had been on Clinton Street, in the heart of the neighborhood. We learned about life on the Lower East Side from the middle of the last century through the 1920s, as we walked during the tour down Hester Street and Delancey Avenue, names recognized from film titles.

Approximately one third of the Jews of Eastern Europe emigrated during this period; most arriving in the US. There would have been many more, had not the US Government, from 1922, imposed restrictive

quotas on immigration from specific regions. Millions of people took their first steps in America in this part of New York City although most of the Jewish residents of the Lower East Side moved on to other places as their financial situation improved. Jews from Eastern Europe formed only one of many groups, and the process continues today. In some ways, one can compare the conditions in the period 1882-1922, when most of the Jewish immigration took place, with the life of those who emigrated to Israel before or just after the establishment of the State. In both places, poverty was ubiquitous. However, since almost everyone was in a similar situation, those growing up did not necessarily feel deprived and the way of life left behind in the Old Country had been tough. Still, in many ways the adjustment to the new life was difficult. In New York,

conditions were especially crowded, and disease abounded.

The tenements were of five or six floors, twenty-five feet wide, with four small apartments on each floor, and no elevators. Apartments were so crowded and hot in summer that many people slept on building roofs. The inhuman conditions in the apartments, lacking sufficient windows, fresh air, electricity and indoor plumbing, caused well-intentioned people to bring about changes in the building codes, through the Tenement Act of 1901. Two indoor toilets were installed on each floor, shared between the four apartments. Fire escapes were built outside the building, and an airshaft was cut through the building center, allowing more light and air. However, the space for this was taken from the already tiny apartments, where on average 6-8 people resided. In the event of a fire, the airshafts worsened the situation by allowing the fire to spread rapidly throughout the building. And, without providing much extra light, they caused an additional health hazard, as some of the residents threw trash down them.

Approximately ten years ago, two New York women decided that there ought to be a museum that would perpetuate the memory of the Lower East Side tenements. While searching for a suitable place they visited 97 Orchard Street to rent an office until a museum site had been found. Their discovery that the building had been closed and almost abandoned since 1935 meant that it was actually an archeological site. From 1994, the Tenement Museum has been an ongoing project, and there are plans to open two more apartments to the public.

The apartments represent different time periods. One of the three already open to the public was occupied by the Jewish Rogachevsky family, and it has been redecorated to show how the occupants lived in 1918, the very year in which my father was born. These apartments have been arranged as if the families who lived in them were still there, and the museum has had cooperation from the descendants. The apartments each had three small rooms, one of which served as kitchen, dining area and

bathroom. At times, the large bathing and laundry sink was covered with a board to serve as an additional bed. In order to function as a museum, the building had to be adapted to modern codes of fire safety.

The neighborhood had an active community life. At one time there were some 500 synagogues, many of them organized by immigrants from the same *shtetl* in the Old Country. There were *landsmanschaften*, organizations of people originally from the same or neighboring places. These included burial societies, that enabled the poor to have a proper burial. There were Yiddish newspapers, and eventually labor unions were organized to fight for minimal work conditions.

On August 14<sup>th</sup>, we visited the New York Public Library on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. There I found my family record in the 1920 US census data on 213 Clinton Street. They had arrived in the US in 1912. In one tiny apartment my great grandparents, Morris (Moshe Klotz) Kalish, 56, and Jennie/Nochi (Nechame Zlate Kling) Kalish, 55, their son, Abraham, 29, daughters Rose, 22, Sarah, 19 and Celia 17, and their youngest son, Sam, 14, all lived together.

Also in this apartment were my grandparents, the married daughter of Morris and Nochi, Dora (Dina Kalish), 25, her husband, Samuel (Simcha) Goldenberg, 28, and their son Hy (my father "Chaimke", listed as Herman in the census), age one year. In all, this comes to 10 people. So, difficult as it is to imagine, I have to believe what we were told on the Tenement Museum tour, that family members often had to sleep in shifts, and that several would sleep with their heads on the sofa, their bodies on boards propped up against it.

In 1920, those immigrants who had work, were mostly engaged in garment manufacturing. Morris is listed as a "spooler" of sweaters. The older siblings were "operators" of white goods or clothing - I assume of machinery for sewing the fabric. Sam Kalish was still at school and Samuel Goldenberg was a furrier. This picture is typical of life in the Lower East Side. In good times, there was work; but very often there



simply was none. And even when there was work, the pay was scandalously low - especially in the sweatshops, where a workday could be as long as fourteen hours, with absolutely no social benefits. Gradually, though, with the rise of the trade unions in the early part of this century, conditions improved, until the sweatshops were eliminated.

The buildings on the block of 213 Clinton Street have long since been torn down, and in their place is a large medical facility, but many of the other tenement buildings remain. Some of the old landmarks remain, too, but like the *Forward* Building, they often have Chinese lettering above their doors. However, we were surprised to hear that the neighborhood is undergoing a renewal of Jewish religious life, as some young

Orthodox families are making their homes on the Lower East Side.

In the introduction to his book, *The Bintel Brief*, a collection of letters written to an advice column in the Yiddish newspaper, *The Jewish Daily Forward*, over a period of sixty years, Isaac Metzker also describes these difficult conditions faced by the new immigrants to the US. My grandfather began attending English lessons at night school as soon as he arrived in New York, and became a US citizen as soon as he was eligible. Hard work and industry enabled immigrants to improve their status and, notably, many of their descendants have succeeded extremely well. Despite the hardships and sacrifices, they were the lucky ones, since we know the fate of most of those who remained in Europe.



## The Jews of Stropkov: Why and How I Wrote a Book

*Melody Amsel*

I am not a Holocaust survivor. Nor am I even from Stropkov, a small town in northeastern Slovakia. But I am the granddaughter of Shia Amsel, who left Stropkov in 1904 for America. My grandfather never spoke to me of the family he left behind - his father, sisters, brother, nieces, nephews and cousins. Neither did he ever speak of their fate.

A newspaper article with a photograph captioned *Matza Making in Stropkov* once caught both my eye and my imagination. Was I looking at my relatives? Out of curiosity, I wrote to the woman interviewed in the article, who directed me to the annual memorial service for Stropkovers at *Martef HaShoa* in Jerusalem. There I met survivors who had known my family personally, and also learned that two cousins had survived the war.

Curiosity also led me to the Yad VaShem Archives, where I found and photocopied the Stropkov transport lists. These exist because, during the Holocaust, the Slovaks had

struck a bargain with Nazi Germany: Slovakia would pay Germany 500 Deutchmarks for each Jew transported, and in return, the Nazis guaranteed to rid Slovakia of its Jews, and to allow Slovakia to keep their assets.

I contacted the Stropkov cousins who had survived, hoping that they would tell me about their families, but they simply could not talk about their losses. So I asked the survivors whom I had met in *Martef HaShoa* for help. They knew my Amsels well - but lamented that they had forgotten many of the names of many others who had perished. I mentioned that the transport lists I had copied named Stropkovers one by one. Then, naively, I offered to write about the town, if the survivors would help by sharing their memories with me.

And so it began. I contacted one survivor after another, and before I knew it, I had compiled an extensive list of people interested in contributing their memories to a

*yizkor* book of Stropkov. Over the next year, I interviewed Holocaust survivors living in New York, Kosice, Stropkov, and all over Israel. I corresponded with others from Canada and Australia. Through the auspices of the Internet site, [www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org), I also "met" many descendants of immigrants from Stropkov, amateur genealogists like myself. Little by little, as I gathered more and more information and contacted more people, I became the hub of a *Stropkov* electronic wheel. Yet I could not have done this alone: everyone along the way helped me, translating from Hungarian, Polish, German and Slovakian; sharing memories, postcards and precious photographs; drawing maps and answering my endless questions.

When I was finally ready to write the book, I realized that I had amassed so much material that the standard *yizkor* book format could easily become a Jewish history of the town and her villages.

I arranged my material chronologically and began to write. The actual writing took me over a year, since, at the same time, I was still interviewing people. I was also visiting libraries and archives, trying to understand everything before writing, researching topics like the development of anti-Semitism in eastern Slovakia, the cause of cholera, the uses of pink salt, how *kichlach* was made and beer iced in the summer, and which melodies were sung at a Stropkov Pesach Seder. While writing, I was also trying to "reunite" Stropkov families torn asunder by successive transports, using as a source the Yad VaShem lists.

However, these lists told only part of the tale: what of those who served in the Slovakian Sixth Army Division in 1942, or others who had hid, escaped or received exemptions? By a stroke of luck, I secured information from the 1940 Stropkov census - an actual house-to-house survey of every Jew in town. By combining this information with that of

the transport lists, and by also relying on survivors' recollections, I compiled, with great effort, a master list of the Jews of Stropkov before the transports of 1942. In the long run this may prove to be as valuable, at least to genealogists, as my history of Jewish Stropkov.

Sometime after the first year of my research and travels, I realized that without additional financial resources, my progress would simply slow down to a crawl. So, uncomfortable though it was, I composed a *schnorr* letter asking survivors and descendants of Stropkov for donations to cover basic travel, materials and telephone expenses. The response was heartening - and my work picked up speed. At this time, I received a letter from a man who had been a toddler in Stropkov in 1942, someone whose family had been largely spared, because they held a *vynimka*, or official exemption from transport. Although my benefactor did not know me, he "guaranteed" that the book would indeed be published.

From that moment on, every time I sat down to write, I knew that the book would become a reality. The writing itself was painstaking and time-consuming, but despite the difficulties, I felt a pressing obligation to continue - and to finish it quickly, for the sake of the survivors. I wanted to give up many times, but the faith of my benefactor and the survivors encouraged me at every turn. The Holocaust material was heart breaking. Often I received photographs of people who had perished, well after I had gotten to "know" them through my research. How painful it was to meet them face to face at last - and realize that they, who lived as you and I, are no more.

Now, over two years since the odyssey began, my book, *The Jews of Stropkov*, is complete and being edited. It will be published in a single volume, in both English and Hebrew during the coming year.

## Hunting for Himmelhochs

*Martha Levinson Lev-Zion*

My good fortune is to have always been interested in the history of origins. From earliest times I can remember asking how? why? who? And what's their relationship to us?

My mother's father, Samuel Rothschild, orphaned when he was ten, couldn't give me the information I sought. I knew my father, Selvyn Levinson, had only one childless sister, who lived in Canada, rarely paying us a visit, and I figured that was because she wasn't used to large families. I was quite sure that each of my paternal grandparents was an only child.

I was busy pursuing every thread I could locate, concentrating mostly on my mother's family who came to the United States prior to the Civil War. Then, out of the blue, I got a call from Jean, a cousin on the side of my father's mother, wanting to confirm the information she had on our branch of the **Himmelhoch** family and to share whatever information I could offer her. Jean began by telling me - over my protestations - that my grandmother, Rae **Himmelhoch**, was one of four siblings. I told her she must be mistaken and called up my eldest sister in California to ask what she knew. It turned out that neither of us knew anything! In those conversations with Jean, a valuable seed was planted. She asked me if I hadn't been told that all **Himmelhochs** were related.

Knowing not to trust hearsay, I looked up the name **Himmelhoch** in Alexander Beider's *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames in the Russian Empire*. Beider's entry (p. 239) reads:

*"Gimmel'gokh (common in Courland) N: himmelhoch (German) extremely tall, Gimmel'gof"*

N means a surname based on personal characteristics while Gimmel'gof is a related surname.

Now I can add a footnote to Dr. Beider's book: **Himmelhoch** is indeed a common name in Courland, but all **Himmelhochs** belong to the same family! Our predecessors

obviously took the command to "be fruitful and multiply" quite seriously!

My cousin Jean and I began to pool our resources, she working in the States and I in Israel. According to Jean, the **Himmelhoch** family was originally from Latvia, from a place called Sassmacken. I remember doubting even that information, since the culture and language of my grandparents was German, not Russian; and I could not find Sassmacken on any map. It turned out that there was indeed such a place, whose name had been changed to Valdempils. As I studied the history of the area from where the **Him(m)elhochs** came, Kurland or Courland, I understood the German background and realized I would have to open my horizons in order to locate all the **Him(m)elhochs**.

Coinciding with my discovery of the reality of Sassmacken, I was invited to Bet Hatefutsot, the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora and its Goldman Center for Jewish genealogy. One pays, types in a name and, if lucky, up pops a tree. I typed in **Himmelhoch** and discovered a tree with people living right here in Israel! The staff of the Center willingly looked up the name and address of the submitter of the tree. Alas, when I called, no one knew anyone by that name at that address so back to square one.

It pays to use the Internet and to be a subscriber to Jewishgen. I would sign my postings with a signature containing the names of the people being researched. On one occasion, a few months after my visit to Bet Hatefutsot, I received an e-mail asking if I could possibly be searching for the family of **Wulf Himmelhoch**. I replied to the effect that all **Himmelhochs** were related and that I was searching for every one I could find. "Well," he wrote from England, "these **Himmelhochs** are cousins of mine and they live right there in Israel!" I am sure that he heard my whoop even in London! I immediately called up my newfound cousins, encountering suspicion at first, but I persevered.

Their story was as fascinating as it was sad. Meri Himmelhoch had left Latvia in 1936 when she went to Kovno, Lithuania to marry Abraham Hochenberg. In 1941 Abraham bought blank Polish passports in Kovno from a Jewish lady who was emotionally involved with someone important in the Polish Passport Office. Abraham chose the name Kagan, which he thought would be easy for his son, Moshe who was then four years old, to remember. Meri thought that Abraham had obtained transit visas via the Japanese consul, for Vladivostok, Russia to Kobe, Japan. Later when trying to verify the facts from various sources such as Sugihari historians and the Dutch consul's son from that time, I discovered that those Japanese visas had been forged.

Needless to say, the trip to Japan was wrought with anxiety and close calls. The family stayed for three and a half months in Japan, finally receiving a visa to Santa Dominica in 1941. They also obtained transit visas to India and South Africa but really wanted to reach what was then British Mandatory Palestine. While in Bombay, Abraham sent Meri with her one-year-old infant daughter, Nina, in arms, to ask the British for a visa for Palestine. However, they were flatly refused. The Hochenbergs were in Bombay for eight and a half months, living in a Jewish boarding house. Finally, they found a boat going to South Africa, arriving in Capetown in May 1942. They greased palms to enable them to stay for an additional month and every month thereafter more were greased. At weekly intervals they were told they were being deported, and each time obtained medical certificates confirming that a family member was too sick to travel. They were not allowed to work legally. After five years and still more payments, they obtained permanent status in South Africa. Only after Abraham died at the end of 1964, did Meri and her daughter Nina come to Israel, while Moshe went to London.

While the Hochenbergs were using all their ingenuity and money to stay alive, the fate of the Himmelhoch family in Latvia was very different. In Meri's immediate family, there remained in Latvia her two older sisters, Susa

(Sara) and Lena (Hannah), her older brother Boris (Boruch) and her parents Wulf and Etta née Berhman, Himmelhoch, as well as an enormous number of cousins.

Along with 2,166 other Jews, Boris was drafted into the 20th Division of the Latvian Riflemen. During 1942, almost the entire division was killed near Staraja Russa in Russia. Meri did not learn until much later that her brother Boris had fallen on 16 February 1942, and had been buried in a mass grave along with the some of the other 1,600 - 1,700 Jewish soldiers.

Meri's oldest sister Susa was married to Sacha Sachs and had two young daughters, Heini and Harriet. The entire family was murdered in 1941 at the time of the elimination of the Riga ghetto.

At the Jewish Museum in Riga, one can see a photograph of a lovely statue by the artist H. Himmelhoch. This sculptress was Meri's sister Lena. In her own words, Meri describes her talented sibling:

"Lena Himmelhoch was born 1903 in Tuckum, Russia, now Latvia. We lived from 1914 to 1920 in St. Petersburg, after Russia expelled the Jews to the interior. Afterwards we returned to Riga. Lena entered the Academy of Art in Riga and there studied drawing and her favorite subject, sculpture. At one of the exhibitions in the Academy, her professor told our mother, 'Your daughter is my best and most gifted pupil, but I don't think she will succeed very well for there are two things against her: she is a woman and Jewish.'

In 1918, that part of Russia became a republic and was named Latvia (Lettland). Lena spent about seven years studying in the Academy. When she finished she was well known. One of her big orders was for a sculpture to be placed in the garden of the owner of the main Latvian newspaper. It was like a fountain, depicting a mother holding her little child over her shoulder with water coursing over the two figures. The sculpture was very beautiful and well accepted (this is the photograph one sees in the Jewish Museum in Riga - M. L-Z.). Many people

would stop by the gate to admire it. As a young teenager, I was taken by Lena to all the concerts as she was also very musical and always encouraged me to go to operas, theatres and art exhibitions. She inherited her musical talents from our father, Wulf **Himmelhoch**, who had a very good singing voice.

Lena was killed by the Nazis together with her entire family. She could have saved herself, for she had an opportunity to leave the country, but would not leave her parents behind. (Wulf was by this time quite ill with

a heart condition and could not possibly travel. M. L-Z).”

Today, Meri **Himmelhoch Hochenberg** is a charming and lovely 90 year old, the sole survivor of her immediate family that was brutally murdered. I have been able to trace this family back 300 years in Courland where they were successful merchants and manufacturers. Now not a trace of them remains in Latvia, except for a sad little picture of a magnificent fountain sculpted by Lena. Alas, even the fountain has now disappeared.



### Searching for the Lindman family from the Vohlyn Kolel *Shmuel Shamir (Mizrachi)*

During the Turkish and Mandate periods, and even close to and after the founding of the State, there was a very strong movement and pressure put on by the national leaders at the time to change names from those of the Galut to Hebrew ones. This occurred both for given names and surnames. For this reason it is so hard to research family history when one is trying to discover one's roots and build a family tree. The following few examples will demonstrate this problem:

Eliezer Perlman = Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the re-newer of the Hebrew language.

David Green = David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister.

Golda Meirson= Golda Meir, the 4<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister.

Aubrey Eban = Abba Even, Foreign minister and our first representative to the UN.

Moshe Shertok = Moshe Sharet = 2<sup>nd</sup> Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

Shneur Zalman Rubashov = Zalman Shazar, 3<sup>rd</sup> President of the State of Israel.

Shmuel Yosef Tchatchkes = Shai Agnon, the national author, winner of the Nobel Prize.

Yitzhak Yezernitzki= Yitzhak Shamir, Prime Minister of Israel.

Shmuel Mizrachi = Shmuel Shamir, writer of this report.

Some of the above mentioned (e.g. Ben Yehuda, Agnon, Ben Gurion) changed their surnames many years before the founding of the State.

In order to uncover the original names, we need to deal with the history of names. This type of research is called onomatology. We used this kind of research when we wanted to find members of the Lindman family. This sort of study often involves uncovering the names of family members together with their first names for reasons of inheritance, creating a family tree and for purposes of marriage in order to avoid incest. Additionally, biographical information is obtained for statesmen, writers, scientists and political leaders.

The procedure for name changes during the mandate period was very simple. Every person was permitted to change his name by giving notice to the Department of Aliya and Travel. This notice would be published in the official newspaper for a payment of 25 Egyptian Grush (legal currency in Israel until 1927). If someone changed his/her name without notification as explained above, and did not publicize this in the official newspaper; the government did not recognize the name change for the purpose of

registering land transfers. Moreover, the person who gave a false notification about his/her identity for official purposes could expect to be taken to court for a criminal offence. This arrangement was created in keeping with an official announcement that was published by Herbert Samuel, the first Governor, in March 1921. Thus notices of name changes continued to be publicized in the official newspapers and in collections of publications (Yalkut Hapirsumim) until 1956. These notifications were meant to be open for public review, but there was no book or key, which would allow tracing the name change. This custom, which was unsatisfactory, caused chaos and worried the founding fathers after independence. Therefore, in Aug. 1956, the Name Law 5716-1956 was passed.

The new law regulated the naming of children; the surnames of adopted children, surnames of couples, name changes, and giving a name to someone who has no name. In addition, the law required publication and registration of any name changes, and gave the authority to the Minister of the Interior to veto the choice of a name or a name change, if, in his opinion, the new name could cause damage to public safety or sensitivities. The law also determined that anyone who changed his name could not do so again within seven years without special permission from the Minister of the Interior. The choice of the name and the change were registered in the Registry of Name changes, which was open to public scrutiny. In fact I could never find such a Registry. One case where the court intervened and prevented public deception occurred when a certain individual's mistress wanted to change her surname to his surname on the death of her husband. The case was *Zamulin vs. Minister of the Interior*, Supreme Court Case 7/66 (4) 645.

Our search for the roots of the Zisha Wolf Lindman family gave us the opportunity to review the history of immigration and settlement in Israel in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The search began with the decision of the Sha'ari court in Jerusalem in 1922,

which listed the names of the descendants of Zisha Wolf Lindman, who had died at the time of WWI. The names were: Sara Breiya bat David, whose full name was Sara Zviah bat David Lindman – his widow; Naftali ben Zisha Wolf (without a surname); Meir ben Zisha Wolf (no surname); Rahel bat Zisha Wolf (first name, but no surname); Feige bat Zisha Wolf (first name in Yiddish, but no surname); Heinele bat Zisha Wolf (no surname).

The search for the descendants in the generation of the grandchildren revealed that the names and the family tree were incorrect. The descendants didn't have the same identity card numbers as the above-mentioned and they didn't have the same address as these people. Therefore we had many problems when we wanted to correct the name discrepancies in the land registry and to base our request for correcting the names registry according to the Hija (declaratory judgement of the Sha'ari court).

I invited two of the grandchildren, descendants of Meir and of Rahel, to see me, and they brought two death certificates: one for Meir Lindman, the son of Zisha Wolf and Sara Zviah who died on May 12, 1978, and another certificate for Rahel bat Zisha Lindman who died on April 6, 1985 and had changed her surname to Pel'i after her marriage. The identity number of the sons and the names of their parents were found on the Israeli death certificates. Further examination of the rulings of the Sha'ari court, written in Arabic, in addition to a search of the Arabic census in Jerusalem of Sep. 9, 1939, revealed that at the time that the Sha'ari court ruling was registered in the Mandatory Farms Registry, the name of Sarah Zviah got corrupted to 'Shibriyah' whereas her death certificate of Jan 10, 1967 gave us the name of her father. From here there was no difficulty in requesting a name correction in the Land registry for all three of the family members. This correction was made after we ordered the documents from the Ministry of the Interior according to the identity numbers, and discovered the same dates of death that we had found in the Hevra Kadisha of the Jerusalem community.

After this we still needed to change the name of Feige (in Yiddish), to her name in Hebrew – Zipporah, when we still didn't know her married name. Further discussions with the grandchildren brought out that fact that this aunt had died six years ago, and that her name was Zipporah. Still, the sons remembered that she had left a daughter by the name of Edna who was living in Haifa at 21 Vitkin St. A check of this address gave nothing since there was no Edna living at this address. An additional conversation with the sons reminded them that her name was Edna Gilat and that in fact she lived at 20a Vitkin St. in Haifa. I called Edna Gilat on the phone and was told that her mother had died on Aug 6 1994 and that she has a death certificate and a copy of the will. These documents helped me to correct the name of the heir from Feige to Zipporah and to fill in her surname after her marriage - Segel. There was still one more problem. In the ruling of the Sha'ari court Feige was listed as the daughter of Wolf Zisha, whereas on the death certificate she appears as the daughter of Moshe Lindman. Another look at the "*Pinkas Hamukhtar Toderos Warshawski*" (1905) gave the following 4 names:

1. Zisha ben Wolf Lindman from Kishinev, Vohlyn, born in 1269 Hajra, which is the same as 1835 in the Gregorian calendar.
2. His son Moshe Wolf of Kishinev, Vohlyn, born in 1298 Hajra, same as 1882.
3. His wife Rivka bat Avraham of Kishinev, Vohlyn, born in 1272 Hajra, same as 1856.
4. His daughter Feige of Kishinev, Vohlyn, born in 1296 Hajra, same as 1880.

It is now clear that Zipporah Segel was not the daughter of Zisha Wolf Lindman, but his granddaughter. In the death certificate that I had ordered I found the proof when I discovered that she was born in 1912, and that she was the daughter of Moshe and Yehudit Lindman, and for this reason was not registered in the registry of the *Pinkas Hamukhtar Toderos Warshawski* (1905).

With the completion of the above searches, we continued to look for Heinle whose name appeared in the Hija of 1922. She wasn't

registered with the "Pinkas Hamukhtar Todros Warshawski" (1905). One would have to conclude that either she didn't live with the rest of the family, or that she had died or that she had been born after 1905. The third generation descendants were only ready to admit that they had an aunt by the name of Leah who used to live on Rehov Mapu 5 in Tel Aviv. This aunt had died and left two daughters who live in Australia. We continued our search in the registry of the census of the Jews in Jerusalem that had been carried out by Land of Israel Office of the Zionist Union in 1916, and also in the burial societies that were active in Jerusalem. Here we had problems because we didn't know the married names. We thought that perhaps the solution might lie in the cemetery on the Mount of Olives in the section near where Zisha Wolf is buried. What we didn't know was to which *Eda* (ethnic group) he belonged and when he had died.

We went back to the voter registry of 1939 and found that Sara Zviya and her daughter Rachel were part of the Vohlyn Kolel and from the Ashkenazi Eida. We turned to the Hevra Kadisha of that Kolel and were told that they know nothing about this. We asked where the cemetery of this Kolel is and were directed to the middle section of the Hassidic Kolel on the Mount of Olives. We went to that cemetery and again came up with nothing. The heads of Kolel Vohlyn didn't have any organized records and they didn't record the date of death. In addition they had neither the married name nor the date of marriage, and the address was missing. We went back to the state archives and requested to see the census books from 1905 during the Ottoman period. The answer we received was that the man in charge of the books has retired and the census books are fragile and in bad condition and can't be viewed by the public. Instead we were allowed to see the lists of the "Pinkas Hamukhtar Todros Warshawski", and here we found four Lindman family members, and next to them the name of the city from which they came and the name of the Kolel to which they belonged: Kishinev, Vohlyn.

A reminder here that on April 4, 1903, the

Kishinev pogrom occurred. Fifty Jews were killed and hundreds were injured and much Jewish property was vandalized. As a result of this pogrom, Haim Nachman Bialik wrote the poem, "In the Murder City". The pogrom incensed the Jewish world and accelerated the emigration of Jews from Russia to the Land of Israel. In the offices of the Kolel Vohlyn, we found six old, disused books. These had no interesting information for us. Still we did find two names of students who had received allocations of funds. They were Zisha Wolf Lindman and Moshe Bra"z Lindman. There was no other information there. We then tried to find out when the family had immigrated to Israel and we decided to search the history of the former residents of Vohlyn. When did the members of this kolel arrive in Jerusalem and in what neighborhoods were they concentrated were our questions.

In his book "The Jewish Yishuv in Eretz-Yisrael in the years 1840-1881", Ben Zion Gat wrote on page 117, "The Ashkenazi community is divided into kolels mainly according to religious traditions (Prushim and Hassidim) and according to their place of origin. The oldest and largest kolel among the Ashkenazi kolels was the Prushim Kolel founded by Rabbi Menachem Mendel and Rabbi Abraham Shlomo Zalman Tzoref after the earthquake in Safed. The first Hassidim also eventually joined the members of this kolel, who were then the only representatives of Ashkenazi Judaism. Although those first Hassidim had settled in Jerusalem, they still received their allocations from the Hassidic kolel in Safed and Tiberias. For this reason, they were considered a special kolel: a Hassidic kolel. All the students of the Vilna Gaon were members of this kolel as well as those from regions of Russia, Lithuania, Vilna, Horodna, Pinsk, and Minsk, in addition to those with origins in Hungary, Germany, Holland, Austria, and Bohemia. This situation continued until 1849 when local Israeli kolels began to be founded. The number of Prushim kolels reached nine by the end of this period". On page 123, a description of Kolel Vohlyn was given, "The members of the kolel usually sat in Safed and

Tiberias. The Jerusalem kolel was founded in 1841 and was the head kolel for the Hassidic community and from which most of the other hassidic kolels separated. In the opinion of Dr. Neuman, they reached 1000 members in 1860, and in 1866 they had 500 members. Graetz says they had 492 members whereas Lunz says 770". The first communal worker of the kolel in Jerusalem was the printer, Israel Beck, and in the next few years we find his son, Rabbi Nissan Beck, in charge of the kolel and its representative. This information did not help us to decipher the mystery, except for the discovery that the kolel in Jerusalem was founded in 1849.

Given the lack of concrete evidence to base our case on we decided to check if the house on 5 Mapu Street was still standing, and if this could help us solve the problem. Our visit to the site taught us that the house had been destroyed several decades ago, and that the site is now used as a parking lot. Therefore we changed the direction of our search, and we checked at Tel Aviv city hall if there were files for building permits or records of city tax payments by the residents of the building during the period before the building was demolished. We found that about 12 families had lived in the building in the forties and fifties. We didn't find the name Lindman among them. A search of the city records showed a Leah and Rahel Spitzer, the family of Helena Haber, and the family of Leah Deutch who had moved, according to the information in the file, to 40 Shalom Aleichem St. in Tel Aviv. In a search of the voters' list of 1955, we found the identity number of Leah and her birth date - 1898, and her father's name - Zisha, and her daughter's name - Rivkah (the same as her grandmother). An additional search at the Hevra Kadisha and the Ministry of the Interior uncovered the information that Leah Deutch was the "Heinele" that we had been looking for all this time. We also found out that she had died on 14 of Tevet in 1971 and had left two daughters: Rivkah Goodwin of Edmonton, Canada who is 77 today, and Esther Brosh of Tel Aviv, who today is 75. Thus we closed the circle on the search and filled in the missing information regarding



the inheritance and corrected the mistakes in the land registry.

The conclusion for the genealogical researcher is, therefore: Never be discouraged. Search and review again and again, every bit of information, check and

compare the information with your own lists and the oral information, and any information from any source. The final result is that every generation leaves its own stamp and fingerprints that act as a map for the generations that come after it.



## The Community Registers Project of Yad Vashem

*Shmuel Spector*

*Summary of a lecture*

In 1953, the Knesset passed the law creating Yad Vashem, initiated by the then Minister of Education, Ben Zion Dinur (the only law that ever received a unanimous vote). The purpose of this law was to record for posterity the names of the people, communities and organizations that were destroyed. Yad Vashem would be maintained as a perpetual memorial.

Dinur was the first Chairman of Yad Vashem, and as an historian, he aimed to continue the tradition of keeping the records of the community registers. It became apparent that 6600 Jewish communities were involved and each community was a well organized entity, with a synagogue and rabbi, ritual slaughterer, etc. There were also the exceptions of some Jewish families scattered among several villages. Discussions took place between the years 1956-58 on the aforementioned project, and the young historians of that time (Ettinger, Ben Sasson et al.) argued that it was an impossible task. It was finally decided to publish volumes in an encyclopedic format, with entries to be as brief but as detailed as possible. Each entry would contain 3 parts:

1. The history of the community up until the end of World War I.
2. The community between the two world wars, either up until 1939 or 1941 (depending upon the locale).
3. The Nazi occupation – the Holocaust.

Another problem that came to light was how

to designate the geo-political locale at the beginning of each entry, inasmuch as there were constant border changes. It was decided to record each locale as it existed just prior to the Holocaust i.e., 1939. Another problem was the small number of sources and shortage of manpower to do the tedious work in researching and recording data. Finally two people were found: one was familiar with Germany and the volume on Bavaria was begun, the second was knowledgeable with Romania and work was begun on the Romanian communities. The project began at the beginning of the 60's and in 1973 received the Israel Prize. At this time, the 3 volumes were readied for publication, one on Bavaria and the two volumes on Romania.

In the meantime, other sources were added. With respect to the first part of every entry (histories of the communities from its beginnings) there was material in various encyclopedias on many communities. With respect to the two other periods, the period between the world wars and the Holocaust era, very little was written and every scrap and bit of information had to be collected. Much material was gleaned from Jewish newspapers, diaries, and the many periodicals that were published in Poland and its environs. Almost every large settlement had a newspaper. The Jewish National Library through the years has collected these newspapers and that facilitated the efforts. One source was Yizkor books that have been

published over the years; an additional source was evidence given by Holocaust survivors. A project of obtaining evidence began in a number of locales at the same time: Poland, Slovakia, and displaced persons camps in Germany. Sometime later, Professor Davis joined this project and led the oral history project.

Up till now, 19 volumes of community registers have been published out of a projected 29 volumes. Several volumes are currently being printed and as for the other volumes, entries have already been written and are in the editing process.

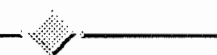
We are now in a much better position with respect to sources. In the 1970's Poland became accessible (even before the establishment of diplomatic relations) and Yad Vashem now had the possibility of working in their archives. Shortly thereafter, East Germany and Czechoslovakia gradually became accessible. The last was the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. The first journey to the Soviet Union was made in 1990, and rich sources were found. It became apparent that the Soviet government saved every scrap of paper. In every liberated city, the Soviets established, as a directive from the higher ups, a committee to investigate Nazi crimes. There were 3 parts to these committee reports: 1. Instances of murder and cruelty to the civilian population and prisoners, including names and numbers. 2. Russian youth who were taken from Russia to work in Germany. 3. Plundered assets from museums, schools, cultural institutions etc.

These reports are unique and singular sources of the events of the Holocaust at these locales. The original intention was that every committee would be comprised of a doctor, priest and the local party secretary, but in reality military officers or the KGB did the work. Inter alia, they collected evidence from the local populace and survivors, and these testimonies were collected according to legal

procedures, with special attention being paid to the recording of places and dates and with the signatures of the committee members on the protocols etc. The witnesses could not remember all the details. A huge amount of material was collected. Material from the 1920's and 30's was also found in the Soviet Union. Within the framework of the Department of Education of the Soviet Union, there existed a Department of Minorities and within this a Jewish department, which was administered by Jews until Stalin closed down this department.

Aside from the body of historical material, there exist within these encyclopedic entries of community registers, stories on daily living, persecutions and pogroms and their consequences, the Haskala movement and its ramifications, and the assimilation, which was unique to the Soviet Union. There is an index in each volume of names and places.

A year ago, thought was begun on how to make this information accessible to the international community. It was decided to do a translation into English. The cost of this undertaking is enormous. Yad Vashem consulted with a private publisher in Jerusalem who deals with publishing encyclopedias. He suggested condensing everything into 3 volumes in English. Yad Vashem took up the challenge, a translation team was selected and work was begun. In order to reduce the amount of material, the section dealing with the history of the locales was deleted from every entry and the section dealing with the period between the world wars was shortened. In all 3 volumes there are 450 photos, and maps are included. The name of the encyclopedia in English is "Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities Before and During the Holocaust", with an introduction by Elie Wiesel. The distributor of the English edition is New York University Press. It is hoped that these volumes will be ready by Passover 2001.



## Abulafia Center – Founding Conference

On December 16<sup>th</sup> 1999, at the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv, the founding conference of the Abulafia Family Association was held. The Abulafia Family represents a history spanning a thousand years stretching from Spain to Eretz Yisrael. Two hundred people took part, representing all branches of the family in Israel.

Ms. Varda Sarnat initiated, organized and chaired the conference and the former President of Israel, Yitzhak Navon and currently the head of the National authority for Ladino Culture greeted the participants. Mr. Sidney Corcos, a member of the Israel Genealogical Society and director of the Science Museum in Jerusalem, spoke on the history of the Abulafia family to which he belongs, displaying the family tree with the aid of slides and photographs. He spoke of his moving meeting with his cousin, Dr. David Abulafia of the History Department of Cambridge University whom he had never met before and who had come from England to take part in the conference. This, Mr.

Corcos said, closed a circle begun almost 100 years ago, when David's family left Morocco to settle in England and family contact was almost lost.

Mr. Giora Tryphon spoke on Haim Abulafia, known as the "Etz Ha-Haim". Professor Aviva Doron, head of the Haifa University's unit for research into the cultures of Spain and Portugal spoke on the Hebrew poet of Toledo, Todros Abulafia. Dr. David Abulafia spoke on the life of the Abulafia family in medieval Spain between the years 1000 and 1500. The last talk at this very full and moving evening was by Mr. Amnon Gross, who spoke on the kabbalist Rabbi Avraham ben Shmuel Abulafia.

In closing, it was decided to continue family activity and to proceed with the idea of opening a family heritage center in Tiberias in the old Beth Midrash built by the son of Rabbi Haim Abulafia (the "Etz Ha-Haim"), who renewed Jewish settlement in the Galilean city.

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### An Appeal *Ada Holtzman*

I devote a great deal of my spare time to various projects to perpetuate the memory of the victims of the Holocaust on the Internet. Among them, I have opened a special website called "Treblink." This site is dedicated to the memory of Yankel Wiernik, one of the Treblinka insurgents whose testimony was published in New York in 1945. This report is now available on this site. The website also contains a list of all the names of the Jewish communities whose names are inscribed on the symbolic grave markers at Treblinka, a memorial to those communities that were wiped out in this camp. My goal is that each community will

have a linked Internet page showing the Jewish life that was lost and the Jewish life that once flourished before it was stilled and then commemorated symbolically on stones at the killing field—Treblinka.

To date, the names of 224 communities appear, with some 60 of them having linked memorial pages. Because of their size and influence on the history of the Jews of Poland, a separate site must be provided for Warsaw and Bialystok. We have added a number of towns, 11 to date, which for some reason or other do not have a symbolic stone at Treblinka despite proof that their Jewish

communities were destroyed in this death camp.

This memorial site is made up of material that generally includes: a map of the town or area, a history of the community, public institutions and organizations that existed before the Holocaust, a database of assorted genealogical information, testimonies of survivors, old photographs, lists of those who perished in the Holocaust, lists of those who survived, prominent people in the rabbinate, the Zionist movement, the community, and in the arts, etc. Unfortunately, for technical reasons, the material must be in English.

I appeal to all those who are interested in helping find LINKS, or in helping to build commemoration sites for those towns whose communities were destroyed in Treblinka, to contact me. Your help will be much appreciated.

EMAIL: [ada01@netvision.net.il](mailto:ada01@netvision.net.il)

URL: <http://www.geocities.com/Paris/Rue/4017/treblink.htm>

For example, Plotsk (Plock), my grandfather's city in Poland – its community was destroyed in Treblinka even though its Jews had by 20 February 1941 been expelled to various ghettos. Their sacred ashes were scattered in the furrows of Treblinka, and their memory is engraved on the symbolic tombstone in this horrendous place. One marker for thousands of pure souls – among them the family of my grandmother Rasha – Zlotnik, Tzinmun, Kwaldo, Eibschutz, Liser .

In memory of Plotsk, I have created a Memorial Site called P.R.I. (Plock Remembrance Initiative).

Address: <http://www.geocities.com/Pasris>

[/Rue/4017/INDPLOCK.htm](#)

This site can serve as an example for other Internet memorial sites that will be established to commemorate the destroyed communities. The work of commemorating never ends – for two years I have been adding layer upon layer to this virtual Memorial. Currently, for example, I am reworking the well-known story of Sholem Asch, *Shtetl*, for this site. The author's grandson, David Mauzner of London, has given me permission to circulate the story on the Internet. In order to write this monograph, Sholem Asch lived in Plotsk for a full year. The images and types he found in the city provided him with the inspiration for this noted work.

One symbolic tombstone commemorates Warsaw's Jews. More than 500,000 Jewish human beings were erased from the Book of Life and from the chain of generations and a lone stone is their grave. Many sites and various sources are devoted to Warsaw and to the Ghetto Uprising on the Internet. There is a need to integrate them and link them all to one site - Warsaw -- The largest of the Communities of Israel.

It is appropriate to note the work that the Organization of Polish Jews was able to achieve. Through a rather complicated operation, they added to the Treblinka site more than 80 symbolic stones commemorating communities not previously represented. For this holy work, we send both our thanks and blessing to the Organization.

*For a list of communities annihilated at Treblinka please refer to the list at the end of the Hebrew version.*

## Summary of IGS Meeting with Dr. Sallyann Amdur Sack

Harriet Kasow

The meeting took place on March 8 at the Leo Baeck Institute, Jerusalem. The speaker and welcome guest from the United States was Dr. Sallyann Amdur Sack, Editor of *Avotaynu* and Program Chair of the Salt Lake City 2000 International Genealogy Conference. Her talk centered on the following topics: developments at Yad Vashem, the Mormons' filming projects and the Family History Center, and tips for researching family roots.

Sallyann participated in the Names Conference held at Yad VaShem that coincided with the inauguration of the new Archives and Library building and reported on the following developments:

1. A database comprising two million names will be online by the end of the year.
2. Other institutions such as the Spielberg Foundation, the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., the Auschwitz Museum and the International Red Cross will share their databases with Yad Vashem. This is a cooperative enterprise requiring volunteers for entering the data. It will be possible to search by town, name and submitter, with alternate and variant spellings for each. The service will be limited by privacy considerations only. Compatibility of the various databases has yet to be established. Yad VaShem will be sharing its database indices with other organizations.
3. There will be a List of Lists comprising 4 million names available online.
4. Yad VaShem is to put pressure on civil registration offices throughout Europe to share data in a similar manner to the JRI Indexing Project.

The Mormons are continuing to microfilm records of interest to Jewish genealogy,

although for political reasons a Family History Center will not be established in Israel. An example of recent microfilming activity is the Lithuanian birth, marriage and death records. Sallyann suggested that those needing FHC records should attempt to barter for data available in Israel. She then discussed avenues to explore when researching families in Eastern Europe. One should understand the history of those times and the circumstances of living for those families. She mentioned naming customs that included a child receiving a second name during illness in order to confuse the Angel of Death. Sibling sons were given different family names as a means of avoiding the draft.

The importance of the central town, generally the market town, was illustrated by the fact that people not from that town married there. The custom of *Sheva Berachot* meant that the wedding festivities lasted 7 days and therefore guests came from all over to celebrate. Revision lists and conscription lists are important sources for the researcher. The short story *Back from the Draft* by Sholom Aleichem illustrates the problems of conscription in those times. Copies of the Tsarist edicts relating to Jews are available in Washington D.C. archives.

Among other nuggets of information is the discovery of all the Lida District (Belarus) records in the Grodno Archives which are now more receptive to queries. The Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. will supply lists of archives. Of these, Lviv, Ukraine is the largest and holds 50,000 property declarations of Viennese Jewry. Lastly, *Where Once We Walked* will be revised by the end of the year. This was a most informative session from a woman who has, genealogically speaking, been there and done that.

# The Yad VaShem Archives and Library Building Inauguration Ceremonies

Harriet Kasow

The inauguration ceremony of the Yad VaShem Archives and Library Building was held on Mar 7, 2000. The dignitaries included the President of Israel Ezer Weizman, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, Finance Minister Avraham Shohat, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council Professor Shevah Weiss, President of the Conference for Jewish material claims against Germany Rabbi Dr. Israel Miller, Chairman of the American Society for Yad VaShem Eli Zborwsky and Chairman of the Yad VaShem Directorate Avner Shalev. Other guests included diplomats and heads of the various museums devoted to the Holocaust. It was a standing room only event enlivened by a children's group playing Jewish music.

The brief speeches touched on aspects of the Holocaust and the establishment of Yad VaShem. Finance Minister Avraham Shohat reminisced on growing up in Israel during the Holocaust and on his parents' concerns over their relatives left in Europe. A survivor, Shevah Weiss, who is also Head of the International School for Teaching the Holocaust, emphasized that the activities of Yad VaShem were dedicated towards not allowing the Shoa to be forgotten. Rabbi Israel Miller pointed out that the \$20 million contribution by the Claims Conference came from unclaimed Jewish property and not from German reparations, and that it is a fitting tribute to those who perished, providing an important archive for world Jewry. Avner Shalev spoke movingly of the history of Yad VaShem, and in particular, of the documentation compiled in Warsaw by the Polish historian, Emanuel Ringelblum. Shalev read part of a letter written by the

historian before hiding his collection, noting that it was preserved so that future generations would know what had happened. One could trace the beginnings of Yad VaShem to this collection.

Other donors included in the honors: Danek Gertner, of Austria, for the Conservation and Restoration Laboratory, the Bann Brothers of the Netherlands, for the Computerized Project, Fred Kort, of U.S.A. and Mrs. Zisa Aizenman-Schwartz & family of Panama, for the Reading Hall, Mrs. Eugenia Sperber Halbreich, Brazil, for the Research Unit and Paul Lipschutz, Sweden, for the Research Center.

The Archives and Library contain personal testimonies and memoirs of survivors, records of war criminals, Nazi documentation and memoirs. A computerized database of testimonies searchable by names and towns is available. There are 55 million unpublished documents in 40 languages, 130,000 photographs, and 10's of thousands of survivors' testimonies, in addition to film, artifacts and about 100,000 titles and journals in many languages. Some of the material is fully computerized and easily accessible, i.e., the Pages of Testimony and the photos and there are finding aids for the other material. This is all housed in a building beautifully designed by the architect Daniel Lanski.

Coinciding with the inauguration was an International Conference and Workshop entitled *Recording the Names*. For this observer, the ceremony was very moving, signifying the opening of a first rate research facility dedicated to a historical tragedy of unimaginable proportions. The significance of this new research center for posterity cannot be overestimated.

## Digitizing the Pages of Testimony. A Long-Awaited Breakthrough in Shoah Research

*Jean-Pierre Stroweis*

Yad VaShem pursues its massive reorganization and development. The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority has opened its new library and archive building. Located on Mount Herzl, Jerusalem, near the new School for Holocaust Studies, the new facility has a sober architecture that faces the beautiful Judean hills. The visitor is impressed by the well designed and functional layout. The library and the archive share two spacious halls containing many computers, microfilm readers and printers for public use. Reference books are directly accessible from library shelves, but more precious documents such as Yizkor books are available only upon request. And most important, the staff is friendly.

The inauguration of the building, on March 7, 2000, in the presence of President Ezer Weizmann and many other distinguished guests, coincided with a two-day international academic conference on Jewish Names, where the digitized database of the Pages of Testimony and a collection of digitized pictures were first presented to an international audience of scholars and archivists.

For genealogists, the availability of a computerized repository for the Hall of the Names is a long-awaited event, and the result is most rewarding. Pages of Testimony comprising information on Jews who perished in the Shoah, have been contributed by survivors since the early 1950s and stored in the Hall of the Names. The concept of these Pages has proven to be a very significant instrument of remembrance, in both its individual and collective dimensions. Often, the Pages in the Hall of the Names serve as the closest substitute for a burial place and are accepted as legal evidence in courts of law.

A Page of Testimony is a form filled out for any known Jewish victim over eighteen years of age. It provides biographical details

(name, birth date and place, parents, spouse, children, profession, citizenship, place of residence before and during the war) and may indicate the circumstances of the death. Sometimes, it also includes a photograph. The accuracy and the completeness of the details are variable and depend on the informant. He or she, usually a close relative or a friend, informs us of the fate of someone known personally. Therefore, the Pages of Testimony hold a unique, individualized seal and sense of truth lacking in a name found, say, in lists of deportee transports, camp inmates, or ghetto inhabitants. In addition, the information on the informant creates an anchor for future generations.

Some two million Pages of Testimony have been gathered in Yad VaShem. In many cases, there are several Pages for the same person. Children under eighteen who perished are often declared on the Page of their parents. Therefore Yad VaShem officials do not give a definite figure for the number of victims documented here.

A large number of Pages were filled during the 1950s, and more arrive every day. In recent years, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the wave of *aliyah* from the former Soviet Union and the feeling of many Holocaust survivors that the time is now ripe to bear witness (thereby reopening hidden wounds) - all these reasons favored the growth of this collection. We believe that use of the new database will accelerate this trend.

\* \* \*

The first time I made an inquiry at the Hall of the Names was in 1989. At that time, and until recently, one could hardly search victims by surname. The clerk of the Hall of the Names would insist on exact spelling of first name and surname, plus the city of residence of the persons sought. Then the clerk would search through the microfilms of the collection of Pages, leaving no room for alternative names and iterative searches. Moreover, the microfilm was never totally up

to date.

If one searched for a common Jewish surname such as Goldberg, one would most probably find several Abraham Goldbergs, and would be unable to look at all the other Goldbergs for which Pages had been submitted. It was almost impossible to browse hundreds of Pages of Berkowicz, Hoffman or Horowicz, or to go over the numerous alternative spellings. Therefore, I had simply focused on my paternal line surname, Sztrowajs, because of its rarity. I discovered fourteen Pages of Testimony for this name. They helped me greatly, and through them, I was able to contact two living first cousins of my father. However, I had not even tried to search all my other ascendant lines of Resnik, Ptasznik and Maisel.

Being unable to do an extensive search of the microfilms, I only filled in a few Pages for my closest relatives, hoping that others would have filled out Pages for known distant relatives.

This illustrates just how inefficient the retrieval was. A few years ago, Yad VaShem finally started to digitally record the details of the newly received Pages, and even to generate a list of surnames. But this was not yet enough. It was not surprising that I once had a dream that this whole information base was being digitized and searchable via the computer. And this dream has now come true.

\* \* \*

The huge conversion effort has been made possible via financing by the Commission for Dormant Swiss Bank Accounts, since it considered the information in the Pages of Testimony valuable for locating the heirs of the owners of dormant accounts.

The digitizing effort has been a major technical success story in its own right. It has been reported elsewhere, so I'll only provide an outline of the steps of this process.

**Digitizing:** each original Page is scanned into black and white digital pictures (JPEG format) by extremely fast scanning machines.

**Data entry:** all hand-written biographical details of each Page are deciphered out of the digital picture, translated and keyed in to the

computer, in Hebrew and in Latin characters, as completely and as close as possible to the original. Information about the informant (name, address, kinship to the victim, date of submission) is also processed.

**Validation:** The data entry is carefully checked out. Problematic names and locations are clarified by a team of scholars.

A dedicated software program has been written to give access to this digital repository. So, by sitting at a computer seat in the archive one has immediate access to two million Pages. The database may be searched by entering a name, birthplace or citizenship ... actually anything registered in the Pages. Multiple criteria queries (e.g. search surname X at location Y) are possible. The system is very versatile and the graphics user interface is very intuitive for one used to surfing the Internet.

The first result from the query is a list of all individuals who match the query criteria. Each is identified by surname, first name and place of residence (if known). Then, by simple click (selecting a given individual from this list), the picture of the Page of Testimony or the biographical details can be displayed in printed Hebrew and Latin characters, as they were keyed in during data entry.

I must admit that in the past, many words had remained unidentified from the photocopy of the microfilm, I now had a second chance to interpret correctly the often barely legible words written by survivors at such a tense, emotional moment that their handwriting was often impaired.

Married women are usually registered under their spouse's surname, so it was formerly not possible to search for them on the microfilm, when the surname of their husband was unknown. These days are gone. This time, I traced a few married women from their maiden name. I would not have been able to otherwise locate these records.

The program offers several different search modes for names. You can search for the names in the way you spell them (exact spelling). You can instruct the program to search for the name using a phonetic similarity (you do not have to feed in a



Soundex value). Or you can search for the names having the same consonant patterns (eliminating the vowel variations) or according to the etymological root of the name. Of course, the computer response is slower when it searches for many alternative spellings, but it is worth waiting the extra time, as names and localities were written in a wide (and wild) variety of forms that cannot always be anticipated. For example, a name written in Hebrew דויטש was spelled in Latin as **DOJTSZ**, very far from the expected **DEUTSCH**.

I also searched for the names of persons who submitted the Pages. If someone has filled in a Page for one of your relatives, it is extremely worthwhile to look at all the other Pages this same person may have submitted. This way, I was able to find out about the sad fate of the spouses of my Strowajs cousins and uncles, for I had no idea of their surnames.

I made another query that illustrates the power of the system. I searched all the victims whose place of birth or place of residence was Staszow, a shtetl from Kielce Province in Poland, where my great grandfather had lived. Before WWII, Staszow numbered 4,800 Jews (out of 9,150 inhabitants), and only a few hundred survived. The database listed only 1,100 individuals from an estimated 4,500 victims. I will circulate this list at the next *Yizkor* ceremony of the Staszow *landsmanshaft* in Israel and hope this will help to fill some of the gaps.

At the conference, Alex Abraham, the Director of the Hall of the Names, illustrated the potential of the repository for scholarly Shoah studies. This two-million-name list is statistically a representative sample of the Jews who perished in the Shoah. For example, by counting all the Berkowicz victims per country and by weighting those figures with the overall proportion of victims in each country, he was able to find out in which areas that surname was most used.

\* \* \*

The system is close to being fully operational, although it still requires some tuning. I have only a few remarks and suggestions for improvement:

The Pages are displayed and printed at about 75% reduction scale from the A4 original format, a fact that greatly reduces readability. Another computer program used internally by staff allows zooming in thereby acting as a magnifying glass. This is a neat feature, but one not widely available to visitors.

There is no facility provided to output the results of the database in a digital form, such as a text file that one could e-mail to oneself.

I consulted some hundred pages and found that the data entry was usually complete and correct, although I have found what I consider a few misinterpretations, so I suggest watching both the printout and the picture to better interpret the information.

As I worked directly on-line with the database, the response time of the system was quite acceptable, as long as I did not make complex queries. A web version may need more power.

In conclusion, Yad VaShem has created a real breakthrough in Shoah research and in the documentation of the victims of the Nazis. Yaacov Lozowicz, the Director of Yad VaShem Archives, said that the system will eventually be available on the Internet. I very much hope so, but recommend anyone involved in Holocaust research to pay a visit to Yad VaShem as soon as possible. It is really worth it!

Opening hours for the Archives and Library are from 9:00 to 16:00, Sunday to Thursday; Yad VaShem is considering extending opening hours to week-day evenings and/or to Friday mornings, a must in my opinion.

Page of Testimony forms may be obtained at <http://www.yad-vashem.org.il>

## Institute for the Study of Ladino Language and Culture

*Levana Dinerman*

In 1992, the Maale Adumim institute was created. Its purpose is to document the Ladino language and culture in the Sephardic and Mizrahi communities. It was established by Sephardic charitable organizations with the help of the Arias Montana Institute of Madrid, whose primary interest is Jewish culture in Spain. The Institute is located in the town of Maale Adumim in the environs of Jerusalem. It contains computerized databases of Ladino songs in all styles and genres sung by informants from Israel and the Sephardic Diaspora worldwide. The Institute has a collection of books in

Ladino on the subjects of Jewish communities and in particular that of the Sephardim and Mizrachim. There are between 80-90 manuscripts written the Rashi script and *Soletreo* script (the handwritten Rashi script).

For information on how to use this material, please refer to the Head of the Institute:

Mr. Avner Peretz  
Maale Adumim Institute  
P.O.B. 35  
Maale Adumim, 90610  
Israel



## The 2004 International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Jerusalem

The board of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) - the umbrella organization for all Jewish genealogical societies worldwide - has chosen Jerusalem as the location for the 2004 International Conference on Jewish Genealogy.

The IAJGS Conference is the leading event in Jewish Genealogy. It offers the opportunity to learn of the latest developments in the field first-hand and to meet leading international researchers.

The Israel Genealogical Society and the Galilee Genealogical Society have offered to

host and organize the conference.

In 1994, about 250 people attended the conference in Jerusalem, while in 1999, more than 1,200 persons attended to IAJGS conference held in New York City. The next IAJGS conference will take place during 9<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> July 2000, in Salt Lake City. Information is available from: <http://iajgs.org/slcy2k>

If you wish to participate in the organization of the 2004 Conference, please contact Mathilde Tagger, Secretary of the Israel Genealogical Society, at: [igs@lexicom.co.il](mailto:igs@lexicom.co.il).



## Jewish Genealogy Websites - Israel

*Harriet Kasow*

Periodically, we will be reporting on JGWs (to get into the jargon of the Internet). With the flowering of the Internet as a research tool nonpareil, accessing Jewish genealogical websites of all stripes and colors is a relatively simple process. One can sit in front of the computer and trace the family tree with a double click. There are websites devoted to shtetlach, towns, cities and other geographical entities. There are family trees in the singular and in the collective. There are institutes, museums and libraries that include public, university and government. There are archives, societies, SIG's. There are governmental departments that can yield documentation of a relative's existence. There are databases of all sorts from Yad Vashem's Pages of Testimony to the Jewish Cemeteries Project. There are of course genealogical software sites that exist in order to make order of all this information. Finally there are sites that provide lists of sites for genealogical research. I am sure I have missed out on a few more avenues of research on the Web. Please feel free to inform us of those.

I would like to present a few web treasures that are located in Israel. I want to thank Mathilde Tagger for supplying me with a goodly number.

### **The Israel Genealogical Society**

<http://www.isragen.org.il>

Table of Contents: General Information

- Activities
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- Yizkor Books
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This site is still under construction (those items starred) but it is the first place to begin your online research in Israel. The Links include the following divisions:

- Archives
- Memorials \*

- Museums
- Institutions
- Universities
- Libraries \*
- Newspapers & Periodicals
- Bookstores \*

The Archives link includes the following:

- Central Archives for the History  
of the Jewish People
- Central Zionist Archives
- Israel Archives Association
- Israel State Archives
- Other Archives

### **Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People**

<http://sites.huji.ac.il/archives>

E-mail [archives@vms.huji.ac.il](mailto:archives@vms.huji.ac.il)

This site includes the Diamant Collection and Family papers from Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Argentina.

### **Central Zionist Archives**

<http://www.wzo.org.il/cza>

E-mail [cza@shani.net](mailto:cza@shani.net)

This site includes among other items, the 1939 Census of the Jews of Jerusalem, Electoral Records, Illegal Immigration (Aliyah Bet), New Immigrant Registers and much more.

### **Israel Archives Association**

<http://spinoza.tau.ac.il/aa/assoc.htm>

E-mail [archives@vms.huji.ac.il](mailto:archives@vms.huji.ac.il)

This lists the principal archives in Israel: Israel State Archives (which has the same home page and e-mail), Yad Vashem, the major city archives, and the Kibbutz Movements Archives.

The Museums link has the following that may be of use to Jewish genealogical research in Israel:

### **Beit Lohamei HaGetaot**

<http://www.gfh.org.il>

E-mail [mshner@gfh.org.il](mailto:mshner@gfh.org.il)

Beit Thereisienstadt  
<http://www.cet.ac.il/terezin>  
E-mail [terezin@inter.net.il](mailto:terezin@inter.net.il)

Diaspora Musuem (Beit HaTfutsoth)  
<http://www.bh.org.il>  
E-mail [bhgnigy@post.tau.ac.il](mailto:bhgnigy@post.tau.ac.il)

Memorial Museum of Hungarian  
Speaking Jewry, Safed

<http://www.hungjewmus.org.il/main.htm>.  
E-mail [hungmus@hungjewmus.org.il](mailto:hungmus@hungjewmus.org.il)

Babylon Jewry Heritage Center  
<http://www.babylonjewry.org.il>  
E-mail [bjhc@babylonjewry.org.il](mailto:bjhc@babylonjewry.org.il)

All these websites are gleaned from just one (the IGS home page) and we are proud to present it to our readers.



*Soundexing: what is it and why & how to use it?*

This column, appearing for the first time in Sharsheret Hadorot, is intended to assist every researcher, and especially those in the early stages of Jewish genealogical research.

This issue's topic has to do with researching surnames. Beginners don't often realize that their ancestors didn't really care how their surnames were spelled. They just voiced them, usually with a delightful Yiddish accent (if they came from Eastern Europe), and wrote the names as they imagined them. I can still hear the delicious Polish-Yiddish accent of my grandmother when she spoke in French (born in Lodz, she then emigrated and lived in Liege, Belgium). That accent totally permeated her letters to my mother, and produced something like: "Coma ti te son?" instead of "Comment tu te sens?"... ("How do you feel?").

Thus, names with similar sounds were written in diverse ways such as: SCHWARTZ, SCHWARZ, SZWARC, or BAUM, BOIM, BOJM. Such variable spelling sometimes occurs in a single vital record!

To facilitate research in databases, the

phonetic sound of names is coded, and the system is termed **soundex**. Surname soundex indexing (or 'soundexing') consists of a letter-and-number code. Names sounding similar (but written differently) are grouped within the same code, and are then arranged alphabetically not by surname but by **given name**.

There are two soundex systems: the National Archives and Records Administration Russell (NARA) and the DAITCH-MOKOTOFF (D-M) coding systems. The D-M soundex code is more appropriate for Jewish surnames than NARA. The rules of soundexing will be described for the simpler of the two codes only, the NARA code. A full description of the D-M code is impracticable due to lack of space, but its principles are similar. See the web sites below for details.

#### I. THE RUSSELL SOUNDEX CODING (NARA)

The NARA soundex was developed by Robert Russell in 1918, and is in use today by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Its rules are few

and simple:

1. Coding consists of a letter followed by three numerals (examples: L123, C472, S160)
2. The first letter of a surname is not numerically coded, but is retained.
3. A, E, I, O, U, Y, W and H are not coded.
4. Double letters are coded as one letter (as in Lloyd).
5. Prefixes to surnames like van, Von, Di, de, le, D, dela or du are sometimes disregarded.
6. The letters are coded to three digits as follows, using 0 at the end if necessary:
7. B P F V are assigned the value 1; C S K G J Q X Z = 2; D T = 3; L = 4; M N = 5; R = 6.

For example, NARA soundexing of KUMETZ gives K532.

Soundexing of the 1880, 1900, 1910 (partial only) and 1920 US Federal censuses was performed in 1930, for all US states.

## II. THE DAITCH-MOKOTOFF (D-M) CODING

The Daitch-Mokotoff Soundex System was created by Randy Daitch and Gary Mokotoff of the Jewish Genealogical Society. They created it because they decided that the NARA soundex system was not suitable for many Slavic and Yiddish surnames. For example, the name KUMETZ presented earlier, with a NARA code of K532, is written KUMEC in Polish (the Polish sounding of the letter 'c' is 'ts'), with a NARA code of K520. Obviously both forms related to the same name but the NARA system separates them in two different categories.

The rules of the D-M soundex are more elaborate than those of the NARA code, although not more difficult. They also include refinements that are independent of ethnic considerations. These are not

described here but a full listing of the rules may be found on the web site indicated below.

It is clear that the D-M soundex elegantly solves the problems recalled earlier. The two following examples demonstrate that whereas the NARA code separates names that should be grouped together, in D-M they are assigned a single code.

NAMES	NARA	D-M
ZILBERKASTEN	Z416	487954
SILBERKASTEN	S416	487954
KUMETZ	K532	564000
KUMEC*	K520	564000

*\*In fact KUMEC has two D-M codes – the second one is 565000, see explanations on the web site detailed below.*

The reader can practice D-M soundexing with the following examples:

Auerbach	A-UE-R-B-A-CH	097500
Lipshitz	L-I-P-SH-I-TZ	874400
Lippszyc	L-I-P-P-SZ-Y-C	874400
Ohrbach	O-H-R-B-A-CH	097500 X
Szlamavitz	SZ-L-A-M-A-V-I-TZ	486740
Shlamowicz	SH-L-A-M-O-W-I-CZ	486740

## III. WEB SITES

THE NARA CODE:

<http://www.nara.gov/genealogy/soundex/soundex.html>

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF BOTH CODES:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/soundex.txt>

AUTOMATIC CALCULATION OF BOTH CODES:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/jos>

## Book Reviews

**Register of the Portuguese Jewish Community of Tunis (1843-1854)** by Abraham Hattal and Joseph Avivi. Jerusalem, Ben Zvi Institute, 1999, 75pp. (Hebrew and French)

*Mathilde Tagger*

In 1989, these authors published their first book on the subject, which covered the years 1788-1824 and 1853-1873. The present publication of entries from the marriage register complements the first volume and unlike the first volume is bilingual, with text in Hebrew and French.

As before, the authors have added a number of indices which are very helpful to the researcher: an index of names of bridegrooms, an index of brides' names and an index of names of signatories: dayanim, parnassim and witnesses. The present volume contains 233 entries covering the period 1843-1854, whereas the first volume contained 1031 entries. Both books present the entries in chronological order.

After a tortuous journey, photographs of the marriage registers of the Portuguese kehillah of Tunis came into the hands of the authors, who decided that they had a moral obligation to decipher the contents and publish them. They have now covered the period from 1788-1873. They are aware that the Portuguese kehillah kept marriage registers from 1754-1917.

**Leah** by Dov Berl Albert, Published by the Author, 1998, 493pp.

*Yosef Ruhm*

The author, born in Plonsk in 1919, wrote this book in memory of his mother, Leah Albert, daughter of Berl ben Yitzhak Shidlo, born in 1893 in the village of Galomin near Plonsk. The book is written in the first person and describes his and his family's lives and the life of the Jewish community of Plonsk.

He presents the community, as he knew it from everyday direct experience: relations

between Jews within the community, relations between Jews and their Polish neighbors and relations with the authorities. The hardships of daily life are described as well as the trades and occupations, the commerce including market day and the cultural and Zionist bodies within the community and in public institutions and the lives of the pupils. The author gives the names and addresses of various skilled professionals in the town, sometimes noting their special characteristics. He lists street names connected with institutions, businesses and restaurants for each street. He recounts stories and episodes from the life of the Jewish community, giving the names of the people involved from Plonsk and surrounding townships and villages. Dozens of named individuals and families feature in these stories, usually with personal details and a reference to relatives in Israel and abroad.

Members of the author's family are naturally portrayed in great detail and the book contains many photographs-especially of the younger generation in Israel. Among the families connected with the author and mentioned in the book are Albert, Shidlo, Stern, Feldman, Finkelstein, Podemski and Podchlownik. The given names, Yiddish nicknames and Polish translations of some of the names are especially instructive. For the genealogical researcher, even if he or she does not discover relevant family names, this book is a rich mine of information, names and explanations imbued with an understanding of the Jewish life of the period.

In a separate chapter, the author recounts his experiences during the Holocaust. They include the hardships he underwent his escape to the Soviet Union, the death of his brother, his aliyah and the establishment of his family in Israel.

**Mohelbuch, Lazarus Lieber Dreyfuss aus Endingen/Canton Aargau und**

seine Familie. 65 Beschneidungen 1827-1863. Menes Verlag, Baden, Switzerland, 1999, 78pp. Address: P.O.Box CH-5405, Baden, Switzerland, 25 Swiss Francs.

Mohelbuch, Lazarus Lieber Dreyfuss of Endingen/Canton Aargau (Switzerland) & his Family.

#### ***Esther Ramon***

All the pages of the ledger in which the mohel, Lazarus Lieber Dreyfuss, recorded the 65 circumcisions he performed between 1827 and 1863 are photographed in this book. There are accompanying German transcriptions by Peter Weiler. Peter Stern's fine editing of the material shows family relationships, important events and connections with other mohalim.

The book is an important source for genealogists researching this region of Switzerland and provides family trees of the descendants of Goetsch, Fromet Dreifuss-Bulag, Michel Dreifuss, Jakob and Marion Dreifuss-Weil and Lieber Dreifuss. It is also very pleasingly designed, adorned with photographs of persons, documents, tombstones and excerpts from newspapers.

The original ledger is in the Jewish Museum of Basel, and a copy of the book is in our library. It can be ordered from the publishers as listed above.

**Esperanza y Realidad by Isaac Dabbah Askenazi.** Mexico, 1982.

#### ***Levana Dinerman***

Sixty years after the establishment of the Haleb (Syria) community in Mexico in 1912, and his arrival as a child with his parents, Isaac Dabbah Askenazi wrote this book. In light of the fact that the values, traditions and culture of this community are disappearing with the passage of time, this book was written in remembrance.

The book was written in memory of his parents, Shlomo Dabbah Cithon and Nitza Askenazi with the purpose of documenting from his perspective the history of the Haleb community in Mexico: the immigration, the early days, its leaders, values, traditions and culture in order that the ensuing generations will know and be acquainted with those values. These values and traditions will hopefully be reflected in the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The book describes the planning and consolidation of the Syrian community in general and Haleb community in particular in Mexico. Mentioned also are the men, women, children and all those active on behalf of the community. The important events in the history of the community are included as well as the contributions of the community to Mexico in the fields of commerce and industry. All this as well as names can be found in this book.

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### **Book Notices**

**Shmuelevitz, Areyh. Ottoman History: Jewish Sources.** Istanbul, Isis Press, 1999. Price: US\$12.00 + \$1.60 postage to U.S. address. Orders to: D.S. Wilson, 4107 Division St. Los Angeles, CA 90065. U.S.A.

#### **Great Synagogue Marriage Records 1791-1830.**

This is an invaluable resource for the genealogist, family historian, social

historian and local historian that provides detailed records of marriages that took place at the Great Synagogue, Duke's Place, London, from 1791-1830. The records include the English and Hebrew names of the brides and grooms and their fathers. There are nearly 2,000 marriages recorded comprising 5,000 names and additional information. The records are fully indexed allowing for an easy search.

Many of the entries are fully annotated by the editor, with invaluable cross-references to other sources. This is a useful tool for students of Anglo-Jewish history and genealogy.

ISBN 0-9508437-2-9. 120 pp.

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Fax: +44 0 870 131 6629

Please note that on-line ordering by credit card is available for customers ordering from overseas. The price will be in dollars, \$13.00 + \$3.00 packing and airmail postage.

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## JGS Journal Abstracts

*Compiled by Harold Lewin*

Here is a guide to some JGS literature of general interest. Space limitations have necessarily excluded many valuable accounts of journeys to ancestral villages, parochial news and individual success stories. However, those whom the Serendipity Fairy has sprinkled with her magic dust are sure to find some useful information herein. Such fortunate souls are urged to read the original article, for the abstract rarely does it justice. Our apologies for all changes of title and missing credits.

**Explanation:** A note such as 3pp. (4) at the end of an abstract indicates an article about 3 pages long located in Ref. No. 4 (see Key to Journal References).

### ARGENTINA

**Genealogical Sources in Argentina** are provided by the Latin American SIG Moderator, Rob Weisskirch, in a short letter providing two useful addresses. 1p. (2)

### CANADA

**Imperial Russian Consular Records in Canada.** Researchers whose ancestors may have entered the U.S. via Canada should consult the consular records for the period 1898-1922, now viewable on a Website. 1p. (11)

### DENMARK

**Director of Danish Emigration Archive**

**Reports Passenger Lists Online.** The Denmark SIG Coordinator, Elsebeth Paikin, writes about the Danish Emigration Archive computerization of outgoing passenger lists, making them available online in a searchable database covering the period 1868-1903. Railways facilitated travel to the ports on the Baltic coastline and the fare to Denmark was often one of the cheapest. The database contains names of many Polish, Lithuanian and Russian Jews and the emigration records include much useful information. 1p. (1) & 3pp. (2)

### GERMANY

**Genealogical Research in Its Historical Context: Tracing My Family Back Eleven Generations.** In this article, Esther Ramon stresses the importance of knowing the historical context in which the researcher's family lived. She gives examples of her paternal and maternal lines and shows that her ancestors' place of residence was largely influenced by the political situation in the Saar and in Alsace-Lorraine and by the enmity existing between Germany and France for many centuries because of the strategic importance of these areas. 3pp. (1)

**Jewish Family Names in Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Baden.** This is a synopsis and partial translation of *Die Familiennamen der Juden* written by Erwin Manuel Dreifuss and



published in Frankfurt/Main in 1927. Baden was the Grand-Duchy in the southwest corner of Germany, today part of Baden-Wuerttemberg. Essential reading for those researching Jewish genealogy in this part of Germany. 10pp. (8)

**Wulff Levin Fränkel's Family of Vienna and Berlin** by Edward Salier, is a comprehensive history (including a family tree) of the descendants of Wulff Fränkel, an early Vienna exile in Berlin. Review by Ursula Muenzel. 7pp. (8)

#### **GREAT BRITAIN**

**The Wiener Library, London** is described by Cyril Fox. The legacy of Alfred Wiener is that, thanks to his vision, the tragic history of the Jews in this century has been documented and preserved. This article contains a large listing of books held by the Library on the fate of communities, often with lists of names, cemeteries, families, Yizkor and Ghetto memorial books. 3pp. (2)

#### **HOLLAND**

**Origin & Development of Population Registers in the Netherlands.** This summary by Ruth Diamond of an article in the journal *Misjpoqe* 1999/4 (author: J.W. van Koten) provides details of the Dutch registry system which is based on a French law of 1792, the Code Napoleon. 1p. (1)

#### **ISRAEL**

**Guide to Archival Records & Collections in the Central Zionist Archives** is a 55pp updating published in February 2000 of the extensive material held by the Zionist Archives, Jerusalem. 55pp. (13)

#### **WEST INDIES**

**Jamaican Jewish Genealogy** by Anthony MacFarlane reviews the history of Jewish settlement in Jamaica that commenced around the year 1495. The early settlement was by Jewish Portuguese merchants but by the mid-1700s Jews began arriving from the south of France, Brazil and British colonies. The author quotes a CD with over 50,000 names including all the Jewish families. 2pp. (7)

#### **NORTH AFRICA**

**The History of the Jews of Tunisia** by Alexander Rosenzweig is an interesting historical account of the vicissitudes of Jewish settlement in the area of Tunisia from the reign of the Emperor Titus to the present day. 5pp. (3)

#### **POLAND**

**In 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Polish Jewry: Demographic & Genealogical Problems,** Gershon D.Hundert describes some of the special problems encountered in researching 18<sup>th</sup>-c. Polish records. Details of various guides, bibliographies, handbooks and printed sources, together with details of surviving fragments of the 1764-66 survey of the Jewish Population. Included is a useful bibliography. 6pp. (1)

**Databases for the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery, the Lvov Ghetto and the Jewish Records Indexing-Poland Project** are all described using updated information. 1p. (1)

**Jewish Record Indexing (JRI) – Poland** announces acquisition of indices to more than 17,000 Jewish birth, marriage and death records for Warsaw from 1869 to 1894. Indexed by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation Genealogy Project from registers in the Polish State Archives Warsaw Region Branch. 1p. (4)

**List of Polish Landsmanshaften in Israel** is provided on the website of Ada Holtzman together with the name of the chairman of each Polish town organization. 3pp. (6)

**Polish Provinces to Change** provides details of 16 new provinces that replaced the previous 49 Polish provinces from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999. The change, approved by the Lower House of the Polish parliament, is part of a package of reforms. Info. originally from the Polish Genealogical Society of America. 1p. (12)

#### **UKRAINE & ROMANIA**

**Travel to Bucovina & Moldova** is an account by Ruth B. Gavis and Irwin A. Kaufman of three successive visits to

Ukraine and Romania to do genealogical research. Advice is offered on doing archival research in Moldova. 2pp. (1)

#### UNITED STATES

**Salt Lake City: A Genealogical Candy Store** is a succinct description by Gary Mokotoff of all the goodies available for the family history researcher at the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Jewish Genealogy from July 9-14, 2000. Emphasizing the great saving of research time achievable at the Family History Library, he compares, in a second article, the time taken for specific searches undertaken at the Library and from his home. 6pp. (1)

**The Name Search Database at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum** by Vadim Altskan & Michael H. Goldman. The new Search Database is designed to allow access to many different Holocaust name lists through one interface. Testing with a limited audience will commence within a few months. 2pp. (1)

**Homesteads in California: Federal or State** by Nancy Morebeck is for those doing California genealogical research, since the California Land Patents Database is now on the Web. It lists all Federal land claims indexed alphabetically by surname for each county. 1p. (9)

#### GENEALOGY SOFTWARE & THE INTERNET

**Web Searching Tutorial** by David M. Fox in Internet Corner, gives details of a useful web site of the University of California-Berkeley providing tutorials and workshops on how to use the Internet. 1p. (1)

**In How to Subscribe to JewishGen** David Fox gives directions for both subscribing online and via e-mail to JewishGen. 1p. (1)

**Some Currently Available Major Software Genealogical Packages** were reviewed by David Kleiman in a talk on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2000 in New York. He also gave several very useful Websites. 2pp. (5)

**Prima's Official Companion to Family**

**Tree Maker Version 7** by Myra V. Gormley is reviewed at length. 2pp. (5)

**Jewish Genealogy on the Information Super Highway** is a comprehensive list of databases, genealogy Websites, finding aids, maps and search engines, all useful for Jewish family history researching. List initially given by Bruce Kahn at Jewish Genealogical Seminar of August 1999 in New York. 3pp. (10)

#### HOLOCAUST STUDIES & HOLOCAUST CLAIMS

**German/Austrian Holocaust Victim Databases Currently Available on the Web** by Peter Landé describes currently available Holocaust-related databases (placed on Gersig website) useful for persons researching the fate of German or Austrian Jews. 2pp. (7)

#### JEWISH GENEALOGY – GENERAL

**Newsletter Editors' List** is a report on an Internet discussion group for editors of JGS journals and newsletters. It centres upon the difference between a small JGS with an 8-page newsletter containing local information and a large one with a 40-page journal containing full-length articles on a wide range of subjects. This situation poses problems about fair exchange, part financial, part informational. In addition, the airmail posting of about 50 copies to the U.S. places a large financial burden on societies outside the U.S. 1p. (2)

**The Ancestors of Eastern European Jews** by Vivian Moses, a researcher in genetic anthropology at University College, London, describes a project in which DNA samples are collected from Jewish male donors whose ancestors came from Eastern Europe. The aim is to determine if modern genetic analysis can confirm a common characteristic in the Y-chromosome of the donors. 5pp. (3)

#### SOURCES FOR SEPHARDIC RESEARCH

**Documentation on Sephardic & Balkan Jewry** at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives. Yitzchak Kerem's

article describes important Holocaust-era documentation on Sephardic and Balkan Jewry at the U.S. Holocaust Museum and the

U.S. National Archives facilities in College Park, Maryland. 2pp. (1)

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**KEY TO JOURNAL REFERENCES**

Ref No.	JOURNAL	GEOGRAPHICAL AREA	ISSUE	YEAR	VOL.	No.
1.	AVOTAYNU	International	Winter	1999	XV	4
2.	SHEMOT	Great Britain	December	1999	7	4
3.	SHEMOT	Great Britain	March	2000	8	1
4.	JGSGB NEWSLETTER	Great Britain	January	2000		10
5.	DOROT	New York	Spring	2000	21	3
6.	THE KOSHER KOALA	Australia	March	2000	7	1
7.	SHEM TOV	Canada	December	1999	XV	4
8.	STAMMBAUM	Germany	January	2000	16	-
9.	ZichronNote	San Francisco	February	2000	XX	1
10.	MASS-POCHA	Greater Boston	Summer/Fall	1999	VIII	3
11.	QUEST	Connecticut	December	1999	11	4
12.	MORASHA	Illinois	Winter	2000	XVI	1
13.	ZIONIST ARCHIVES	Jerusalem	February	2000	--	--

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**Letters to the Editor**

**Dear Editor,**

I would like to add some background from personal experience to the article by Israel Pickholtz, "A Visit to the Cemetery at Sheikh Badr, Jerusalem". (Sharsheret Hadorot Vol. 14 no.2). The cemetery at Sheikh Badr, Giv'at Ram, was established in 1948 in the thick of the battles and siege of Jerusalem. The temporary cemetery at Sanhedria in north Jerusalem was no longer usable because it laid within the firing range of the soldiers of the Arab Legion of Transjordan. (The temporary Sanhedria cemetery itself was established after access to the Mount of Olives for burials became impossible.)

Mr. Pickholtz writes, inter alia: "There are empty spaces between the graves, as if burials formerly there had been transferred to permanent resting-places elsewhere." The Sheikh Badr cemetery served as a temporary burial place for civilians and soldiers. When the decision was taken to establish the

Military cemetery on Mount Herzl, all the soldiers were reburied there except for those whose families were against reopening the graves. That is the reason for the empty spaces between the graves.

On Sunday, September 9<sup>th</sup> 1950, at 10:00 AM, a funeral was held for the fallen soldiers whose coffins had been transferred from the temporary cemetery at Sheikh Badr to the Military Cemetery on Mount Herzl. The funeral cortege set out from the Yeshurun Synagogue. About 200 coffins, draped in the national flag (including the coffins of my father and young cousin, who was not yet 17) were borne on vehicles in one long procession which passed in silence through the mourning streets of Jerusalem until it reached Mount Herzl, the final resting place of the fallen.

**Yaakov Tal Toledano**

Ramat Gan,

February 24, 2000.