

שרשרת הדורות  
**Sharsheret Hadorot**  
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## *Editorial*

For over two years, until the middle of 2004, all of our resources were focused on the International Conference in Jerusalem. There were many concerns and doubts were ever-present. It seems that our entire membership, including those who did not serve on the organizing committee and were not directly involved in the planning, wholeheartedly participated providing vital assistance wherever needed.

To our delight, the success of the Conference made us forget our doubts. We can be proud that the lectures were good with some being even exceptional and that the Conference was well organized and a good atmosphere prevailed throughout. A good measure of our thanks goes to our friends around the world who did not hesitate, in spite of the uncertainty, to come and honor both Jewish genealogy and us with their presence.

Of course, there were some difficulties and we will have to study them to avoid them in the future – something that will certainly be done. Now that we have all had a chance to relax, we can enjoy the fruits of the Conference. We are very happy to report that our journal *Sharsheret Hadorot* is one of the first beneficiaries and thank everyone who made it possible. This issue, the last of 2004, is almost entirely dedicated to the Conference. Two of the major articles are based on lectures presented.

The contribution by Yves Fedida deals with the census arranged by Sir Moses Montefiore that was taken in 1840 in Alexandria, Egypt. This census was unique both in its being taken and in its results. I do not generally comment on the illustrations accompanying articles, but this time I would like to depart from my practice and call the attention of our readers to the photograph of the beautiful Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah the Prophet) Synagogue of Alexandria that appears in the Hebrew version of the article.

The second article focuses on a topic rarely covered in this journal, genealogical research on the Jews of Romania. We are pleased that Lucian-Zeev Herscovici provides us with a comprehensive and learned outline on this topic. We look forward to a sequel.

We find another instance of the Conference with the summaries of the international meetings arranged by the Special Interest Groups – SIGs. From these abstracts, we learn about the membership of the various groups, their areas of interest and the progress of their research. In this issue, we discuss nine of the SIGs and in our next issue we may include more.

Two articles are not connected with the Conference – Edward Gelles from England continues to weave the stories of the various branches of his family before us. This time, he focuses on the city of Brody. Ehud Cain (Chaikin) tells us of the writing of two books dealing with his family history.

Our regular features, although abridged for this issue, are as vital as ever.

Mathilde Tagger brings us the summaries of the articles in the journal ETSI, and a review of the new biennial that focuses on research of the Sephardi world past and present. This is a welcome addition to publications on topics dealing both with Sephardi Jewry in general and Sephardi genealogy in particular.

Finally, something that we have been anticipating for quite some time, Yad Vashem has posted on the Internet its central database that includes the names of those who perished in the Holocaust who have been recorded in various sources including the Pages of Testimony and Yizkor books. Access to the general public will be available shortly.

When my column appears, we will be nearing the secular New Year but these words are being written at the onset of the New Year according to the Jewish calendar, between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur 5765. Therefore, I would like to combine two wishes into one and hope that all of our readers will have a good year, one marked with success in research, a year of peace and the fulfillment of our hopes and aspirations – according to both the Hebrew and the secular calendar.

*Yocheved Klausner*

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

**I**ssue 18-4, concludes the first year since Sharsheret Hadorot became a quarterly. The events of the International Conference are still fresh in our memories and its influence permeates all activities of our Society.

Our Internet site [www.isragen.org.il](http://www.isragen.org.il) is undergoing updating and other changes required by normal technological developments enabling us to expand what is available to our readers. Our new Webmaster is Rose Feldman, who was the Webmaster of the Conference Internet site. Arkady Brazin our former Webmaster remains as technical adviser. We extend Arkady a great big thank you for developing our site and offer our good wishes of success to Rose on her new undertaking.

Please visit the site and see the changes and additions for yourself. You will find material from the Conference and other items in an easy to read format. There are many and varied plans for the site's continued development and you can learn about them by frequently visiting our site.

Our member Harriet Kasow, the head of our IGS central library in Jerusalem is about to complete the computerized cataloging of our collection. I want to take this opportunity to thank Harriet for this most welcome task in which she dedicated all of her efforts, utilized her extensive experience and devoted a great deal of time. Our goal is to post the catalog on our Internet site for the benefit of all of our members.

Additional recognition of the Conference came in the press, with articles appearing mostly in English and on radio.

The broadcaster Ruth Bachi-Kolodny, who participated in the Conference, hosted on the program "In My Parents' House" our members Dr. Hanan Rapaport, Alon Ginzberg, his mother Yael Ginzberg (nee Berman) and his uncle Eli Berman, all descendants of the Steinberg family of Motza, a village on the approach to Jerusalem.

In the framework of the "Moreshet [Heritage]" series, the journalist Yedidya Tan'ami on two live broadcasts interviewed Esther Ramon, Shmuel Even-Or (Orenstein), Ephraim Levi, Avraham Sfadia and Chana Furman. Mathilde Tagger, Dr. Hanan Rapaport and Jean-Pierre Stroweis were heard in the second interview broadcast.

Shortly before the Conference, a new Hebrew forum became available on YNET <http://www.ynet.co.il/shorashim> Communities/Society and Community/Family Roots and Family Research.

We call on all of you to enter and participate by providing answers and sharing your knowledge especially for those still unanswered questions. There are more than one thousand questions with some still waiting for an answer. Do not hesitate to participate.

Please, do not forget to update us on any changes of address, telephone and email.

My email address is [ehfurman@netvision.net.il](mailto:ehfurman@netvision.net.il) and you can write in Hebrew or you can write to P.O. Box 86, Kiryat Gat 82100.



# The 1840 Montefiore Census of Jews in Alexandria \*

*Yves Fedida*

## Census & Montefiore

The word “census” has generally been an anathema to the Jewish mind-set throughout history. Each successive census having been followed by phenomenal events such as slavery in Egypt, wandering in the desert, battles, plagues, heavy taxation or temple destruction, our forefathers had grown understandably wary of them, whatever their initial purpose might have been.

Yet in 1839 Moses Montefiore commissioned the first census of Jews in Eretz Yisrael. It was published in Jerusalem, by the Dinur Center for Research in Jewish History (Merkaz Dinur), 1987, and part of it was indexed and translated into English by Mathilde Tagger.

Together with other Montefiore census material of Eretz Yisrael (in particular those of 1849, 1855, 1866 and 1875), it is available in Microfiche or microfilm from the Montefiore Endowment in England. The London School of Jewish Studies has the original documents, while many university and specialized libraries such as the Alliance Israelite Universelle and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem have copies of the microfiches. In the middle of these numerous documents lies seemingly inexplicably the 1840 Montefiore Census of Alexandria Jews, followed by an era worthy of admiration.

It is one of a kind, as it lacks apparent ties with the others, and to my knowledge, is the only one commissioned by Montefiore outside of the administrative boundaries of Eretz Yisrael. It stands out because of its historical setting, its contents and the use it was put to. It forms the cornerstone of the social and educational development of Egyptian Jews as a contemporary

community in an Arab land. It is made up of 16 separate fiches and 418 entry lines. I have translated it into English, with the help of Avraham Malthête, palaeographer at the Alliance Israelite in Paris. M. Strum of Australia had previously published a partial list of names on the HSJE (Historical Society of Jews from Egypt) web site. There are still shortcomings and mistakes in our work; hopefully these will be corrected over time. The material is now available in detail on the [www.nebidaniel.com](http://www.nebidaniel.com) website concerned with the preservation of Alexandria Jewish heritage.

A British Jew of Italian origin, extremely wealthy and a young retired stockbroker, Moses Montefiore had been sheriff of the City of London and was the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. He was indeed an exceptional man who had decided to dedicate the latter part of his life to philanthropy, to the protection of his fellow-Jews (which he later also undertook in Russia, Morocco and Romania) and to the rebirth of his people in Eretz Yisrael, where he helped found hospitals, housing projects, agricultural settlements and synagogues.

In 1827 on his first journey to Eretz Yisrael, which was to instil in him his mission, and cement his passionate love for the land, he passed through Egypt and met with Mohamed Ali. There were no major sailing routes going directly to Jaffa or Haifa in those days from any European port, so Alexandria had become a regular stop-over for the Orient ever since Mohamed Ali had lifted the old Ottoman ban on European vessels and had rehabilitated the port.

For his second trip to Eretz Yisrael in 1839, he naturally again went through Alexandria. However, Egypt's status had fundamentally changed since 1831, when Egypt had conquered Syria, Eretz Yisrael and even part of the Turkish homeland. Mohamed Ali was established as the de-facto ruler of Eretz Yisrael and the objective for the British

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\* *Based on a lecture given at the 24<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Jewish Genealogy held in Jerusalem July 2004*

philanthropist presently extended beyond the first social encounter. It set to convince the Pasha to lease out to Montefiore for a protracted period a great number of villages for Jewish settlement. It stands to reason that the aim of the 1839 census in Eretz Yisrael, as that of the subsequent ones, was to take stock of the few means and the crying needs of the Old Yishuv.

#### **But why Alexandria and why 1840?**

When he alights from his vessel in Alexandria over a year later, on August 4th 1840, it is unfortunately not for a real estate deal, but because Jews were in need of protection at that time and place. He comes with the backing of Austria's Metternich and more importantly that of Lord Palmerston, who had given instructions to British Consuls to afford protection to Jews where required and who, long before Balfour, favored the establishment of a Jewish Homeland in Ottoman Palestine.

Montefiore stands as the representative of British Jews in the company of Adolphe Crémieux, an eminent French lawyer representing French Jews and German born orientalist Solomon Munk; three individuals, in the first modern exercise of international lobbying by emancipated Jews in the face of fundamental injustice. They came after the outcry of European Jewry and many non-Jews, informed of two blood libel accusations, those of Damascus and the island of Rhodes.

It is our contention that the 1840 Census was taken during that period of time, with a view of defining the population by individual listing, in case of further problems, and to take stock of the forces of the community and determine how best to build on it for the future.

The result was the census in itself, and the recognition of the discrepancy between the educational level of Jews in Arab countries and the European standards, ultimately leading to the blending of the community into one despite the different origins of its members.

Each of the protagonists stands above credit and praise:

Crémieux recognized the need for a broader secular education, including the national language. He encouraged young girls to become part of the educational system.

Munk issued an appeal in Hebrew and Arabic, to combat the low level of enlightenment of the community.

Montefiore for his part, commissioned the Census. It is not clear whether the request for the census could have been made on his previous trip in 1839. It is however evident from its content (for example the comment about the loss of the rabbi's 3 children in Nisan followed by a 3 month period of mourning) that the list was drawn between Av and the end of Elul 5600 (27.09.1840).

Unlike the Eretz Yisrael Census, the objective of this census was not philanthropic; rather it was driven by the necessity of understanding the constituents of the community, their level of autonomy, of responsibility and of influence. A major consideration was that this community lived in a non-European environment, a country drifting away from an otherwise tolerant Ottoman empire, and faced with paroxysmal anti-Jewish feelings in one of its provinces.

The first and foremost conclusion of the Census was the need to bolster the educational level of the Jews in Alexandria.

#### **Who were these recent Alexandria Jews and where did they come from?**

Meshulam of Volterra in the course of his travels encounters 60 Jewish families living in Alexandria in 1481. They have the same life style as their Muslim neighbors. The closure of the port to commercial traffic by the Turks, the circumnavigation of Africa in the early part of the 16th century coupled with precarious and unhygienic living conditions and epidemics are indicators of the inevitable dwindling of this community and its eventual disappearance.

It is said that the 100 or so Jews that Napoleon found in Alexandria were descendants of fishermen from Rosetta and Edkou who moved there around 1700. They were followed by a further influx from Damietta, Rosetta and Cairo in the second half of the 18th Century. The first

documented contemporary rabbi in Alexandria, to my knowledge, seems to be Eliahu Israel in 1773.

But the real growth of the community started because of Mohamed Ali, who from 1811 eliminated the Mameluks and established internal security. The Mahmudeia Canal, built between 1819 and 1821, opened up the coastal hinterland and linked the city with the rest of the country. The dockyards were inaugurated in 1829-1830.

Trade with the East resumed once again through Alexandria, long before the Suez Canal was envisaged. This in turn attracted more Egyptian and Italian Jews, both seeking better opportunities. A traveling English quartet, Keith, Black, Bonar & Mc Cheyne who left Dover in April 1839 will find 100 European Jewish families in Alexandria alongside 300 Egyptian Jewish families, for an estimated total of 1000 Jews. They also talk of 2000 Jews in Cairo in their book *The Jews of Europe and of Palestine*.

The count is remarkably close to what the Census would establish systematically a mere 12 months later. We now have 1100 in contrast to only 100 Jews 40 years earlier.

### **The Census Information**

The census lists the first and the family names of male individuals, widow's first name, marital status of individuals, age and place of birth, number of years since arrival in Alexandria, occupation, property owned, the names of children under 13 years old and over the age of 13. It makes occasional specific commentaries on a person.

The population bears 174 different family names.

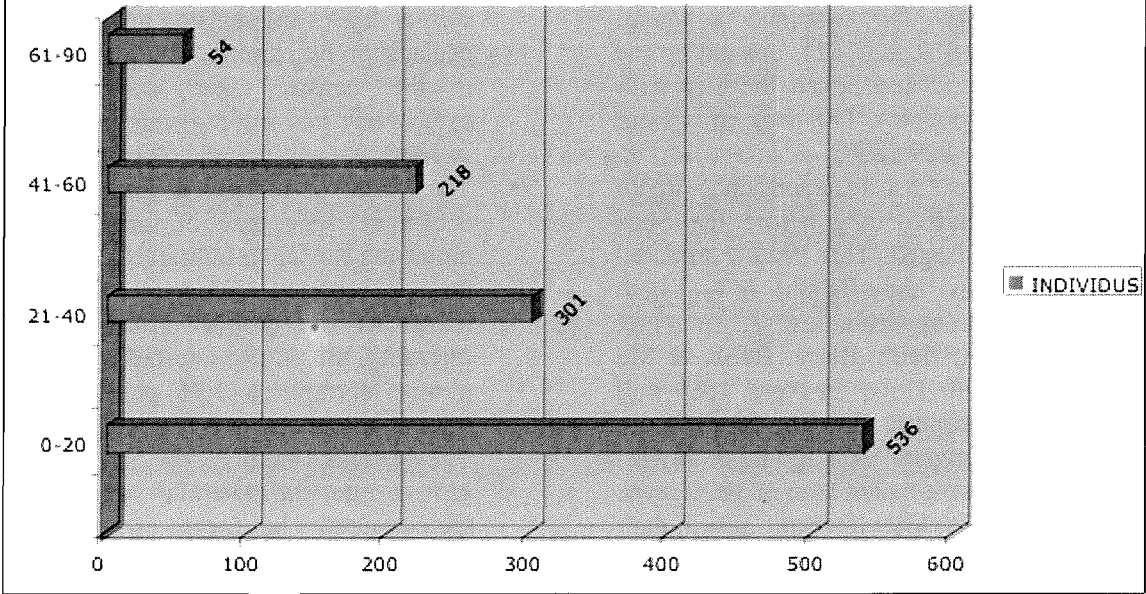
We can extract from the census elements of that society's structure and prevailing values:

- The identity of a widow is only by her first name, and married women are totally anonymous.
- A motherless child is said to live in a household with a "single" father, whereas a fatherless child is considered

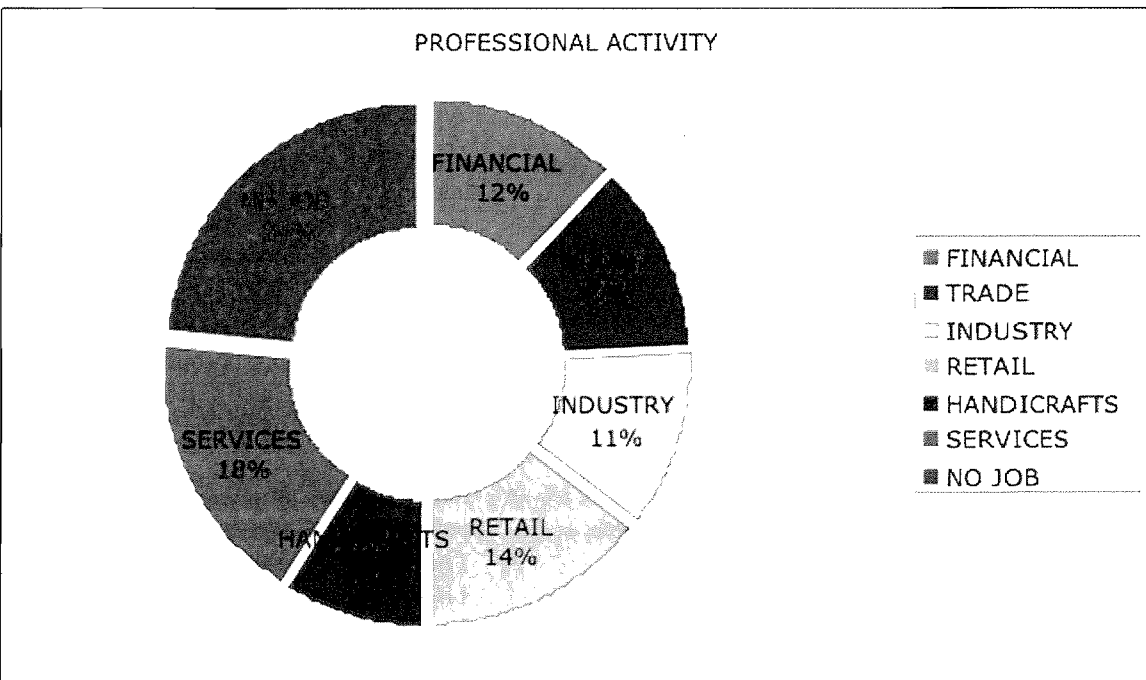
an orphan even though his mother may still be alive.

- There appears to be a numerical imbalance between the sexes. Young girls represent only 42% of all children. This imbalance can be the result of the census taker's imprecision or the lack of declaration by parents for a girl, or both if the census taker were relying exclusively on birth registers introduced in 1830.
- The extent of bigamy is impossible to determine. One case of three widows mourning the same husband is probably the exception. Women are less numerous and despite probable infant mortality, this is also attested by the low number of children (1.86) per household for the parent's average age of 37.5-40. The census entails, by its inferred growth rate, the potential shrinkage of the community but for the arrival of new immigrants. According to Uziel Schmelz, in *Studies on Palestine during the Ottoman Period*, edited by Maoz, this was also true of Eretz Yisrael. In 1856 in Jerusalem we have an average of 1.6 children for parents between the ages of 35-44.
- Then, as now, women lived longer and married younger than men; as a corollary, there are more widows. There are 2 divorced women (less than 1%) and 2 agunot whose husbands left for "the land beyond the sea" - a Talmudic reference for any country apart from Babylonia and Eretz Yisrael. They retain the husband's name in the absence of proof of death.
- Nine entries out of 418 refer to blind people, including a midwife.
- The population counted consisted of 1109 individuals, nearly 4 times the Jewish population of Jaffa and Haifa combined. Like Beirut or Acco, these towns have difficult access to their hinterland therefore their economic and population growth is limited.

## INDIVIDUALS BY AGE



## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY



- There are 242 different complete households (married couples who may be with children). This means that 84% of the population is leading a normal family life. If we counted widows and widowers each as representatives of families the total households would be 374. If we further included orphans for the average number of children per household, then the figure of 400 families presented by the English quartet is correct.
- We count 501 unmarried children under the age of 18, which is over 45% of the population (compared with 41% in Jaffa and Haifa). There are 52 children (10.4% of the children under 18 years) who have lost both of their parents. This seems rather high but also correctly reflects epidemics and hygienic considerations and a volatile living environment. Both these figures are not to be forgotten when we think that the conclusion drawn from analyzing the figures was the need to advance education. The average age of these children is 8.5 years. We have assumed 7 years for children under 13, and assumed 15 years for children over 13. Orphans are listed by their exact age.

The real as opposed to the estimated age of the individuals is one of the telling inadequacies of the census. For only 20 individuals out of 341 over the age of 20 is a precise age given, the majority of the population having an age ending with a 5 or a 0. Though many did not know their exact year of birth, a frequent occurrence in those days, its extent reflects either haste or ignorance on the census taker's part by relying more on recollection of physiognomy. The average age for the adults is 41. By contrast the Eretz Yisrael censuses are more accurate. Another inadequacy is that there is no proper accounting for the birthplace of the individuals.

For the census taker, 1099 people were from Alexandria and only 10 (that is under 1%) from the rest of the world, and none from

the rest of Egypt. This is incompatible with the noted low growth rate pattern and travelers' information. Beyond evident haste and ignorance of their real birthplace, one could construe it as evidence of openness and hospitality. Once in Alexandria, you had always been from Alexandria! One could also venture in typical Alexandrian Jewish hubris mode, anyone from any other part of Egypt itself would be from Alexandria, as Alexandria was Egypt. However, it is more likely that their origin did not seem to matter for the greater objective of the census, in contrast with Jerusalem where Ma'aravim /Sephardim/ Ashkenazim/ Kolelim are scrupulously detailed, following Haluka and their pattern of prayer.

I.J. Benjamin, a Jewish traveler from Moldavia, in June 1847 finds that there are 150 Europeans (Italian) out of a total of 650 families. The proportions are similar even though the figure may seem inflated, as we learn from a Jewish Chronicle article of 10 August 1849 explaining that the increase from 1200 Jews in January 1847 to 2000 in 1849 is due to the increase of traffic with the Far East. We then comfortably conclude that 25% had come from outside Egypt at that time, and accounted for the past and future growth of the community. With one exception, the census taker underlines only those that to his knowledge originated in Ottoman Palestine or in North Africa. They were still few in numbers then, because of navigation difficulties. Of course the big influx from North Africa would start following the Spanish Moroccan war of 1860 yet even these origins too could be underestimated. We also should be reminded, without being able to quantify them that many Alexandrians came from other Egyptian towns following the Mahmudeia Canal opening.

The later Eretz Yisrael census will confirm this North African influx. In Jerusalem in 1866 the Mughrabim would represent 77 % of all new arrivals of the previous 10 years.

The most interesting part of the census concerns wealth and employment. One can



sense the bustling Egypt and opportunities coming to life.

The census divides the population into three categories, rich-average-poor, without further refinement or quantification. There are no intermediate or objective measures for the categories. You either have a lot, a little, or you have not. There again one wonders whether this is based on the personal appreciation of the census taker and his particular slant on wealth and poverty.

- Nine family heads representing 37 individuals in their families (3.3% of total Jewish population) are considered rich as bankers and manufacturers. Six individuals or 24 family members (5.5% of the Jewish population of Alexandria) are listed in the lower category, having lost 50000 to 90000 Piasters through coercive measures from the highest authority. One can understand the need for foreign protection.
- Ninety-three family heads representing 348 individuals in their families (31.3% of total population) are considered average. This means 65.7% of the population (about 2/3) is considered poor, although it is difficult to say how poor.
- Twenty-four per cent of the male working population between 18 and 60 (60 men) are unemployed. Two hundred eight individuals (76%) are gainfully employed. By contrast, Netter states that in 1869 only 15% were gainfully employed in Eretz Yisrael and 85% were involved in religious studies.

It is always wonderful to note all the trades occupied by Jews. There is an even distribution across the board. We find tailors, silversmiths, peddlers, agents and merchants of all sorts and bankers to finance all that.

Naturally, we also find a profusion of moneychangers - a constant throughout the Ottoman Empire. We find many servants (probably due to the wealth of other existing communities, in contrast with Eretz Yisrael). We even find a dedicated donkey driver, alongside more noble professions, but only 3

teachers for a population of 501 individuals below the age of 18!

Also interesting are professions unique to the country - 22 silk-weavers and 8 industrial manufacturers. There are even 4 sandalwood merchants probably linked to the perfume industry.

Growth accelerated even faster in the latter part of the decade when trade increased with the introduction of steamers from the French lines and the Austrian Lloyds, both in the Mediterranean and from Suez headed for the Far East. Later the cotton boom of 1861 to 1865 accompanied by the Canal construction frenzy of 1859 to 1869 would be major factors of attraction to Egypt. The birth rate factor would otherwise have seen this community wither.

The development of the infrastructure, allowing economic expansion in a politically favorable context, coupled with the growth of education and cultural blending of the Egyptian Jewish community helped integrate numerous Jews pushed by historic and economic upheavals from all around the Mediterranean basin, the Middle East and Eastern and Western Europe. In over 100 years, in Alexandria alone their number would increase from 1,100 to just under 40,000.

We understand from contemporary travelers like Jacob Saphir that there were at the time principally two synagogues, the "El Azziz" and the ancient (late 14th century) "Saradhel" synagogues. In 1850 both the financing, to which Montefiore contributed, and the encouragement of Mohamed Ali, remarkable for a Muslim country, saw the erection of the Eliahu Hanavi Synagogue (see photograph in the Hebrew version of this article). This synagogue is among the largest in the Middle East and preceded the building of many of the large European synagogues. Montefiore prayed in it in 1855 and it was enlarged as early as 1856 witness to the population growth of that time. By its sheer size and beauty, it helped blend together Jews from different cultures.

The civil records of these Jews - especially

of those deprived of that very Egyptian nationality they had been offered to embrace – are locked away in Egypt. These records, which could teach us a great deal more than the census ever would, are essential to their descendants as proof of Judaism for burial, marriages etc. The religious artifacts brought from around the world in the past 150 years by these Jews, are still considered as antiquities by the Egyptian authorities. Cemeteries in which they are at rest are tempting for real estate deals, and some in Israel cry out for their loved ones to be brought home. The International Nebi Daniel Association, to which I belong, is striving to preserve, maintain and provide unrestricted access and knowledge for future generations.

### Conclusion

We are told that statistics can sometimes even tell the truth. In the case of the Montefiore Census they offer a vibrant insight into the starting point of Alexandrian Jews' "founding fathers." We can with pride and honor apply to them the words of the writer Albert Cohen:

"Ils sont les fils et les pères des princes en humanité..." (They are the sons and the fathers of the princes of humanity).

May this article be an appropriate tribute to their memory.

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<http://homepage.mac.com/fedida/CEMETERIES/PhotoAlbum7.html> Password MAZARITA

<http://homepage.mac.com/fedida/Synagogue/PhotoAlbum8.html> Password ZAKHOR

*Yves Fedida was born in Alexandria in 1945 and was among the Jews expelled from Egypt in 1956. He studied in England (B.A. Sussex University 1967) and France (M.B.A.-INSEAD 1968). Was Director of Reynolds European LTD (International Metal Trading) 1970-1990, President of Atub LTD (Fittings Manufacturing) 1985-1990, President of Fitac LTD (Promotional Foam Manufacturing) 1991-1999. Currently retired, Mr. Fedida is the secretary of Association Internationale Nebi Daniel, for Alexandria Jewish Heritage. His interests include History and Sefardi/Moghrabi Genealogy (Spain, Morocco, Eretz Yisrael). He is married, has two children and four grandchildren.*

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## Sources and Bibliography of the Genealogical History of the Romanian Jews \*

*Lucian-Zeev Herscovici*

The purpose of our paper is to present some documentary sources for the genealogical research of Romanian Jewry. We shall attempt to answer two questions: what are the Jewish and non-Jewish sources in this field, and where are those sources now. The Jewish sources are the records of Jewish communities, burial societies, craftsman and merchant associations; inscriptions found in Jewish cemeteries; lists of pupils from Jewish schools; rabbinical Responsa literature; written and oral memoirs recorded in writing; family letters and records. The non-Jewish sources are population censuses and a variety of other documents, chiefly in the Romanian language. We may also mention the Jewish press.

### **Jewish Sources**

Although small Jewish communities existed in Moldavia and Wallachia from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we shall deal mainly with the 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, following the great waves of immigration into these Romanian principalities (joined together to form a united Romania in 1859), from the three neighboring empires: Austria, Russia and Turkey. Most of the Jews of Moldavia and Wallachia were Ashkenazic, belonging to Galician and Russian Jewish kulturkreises, though within this community there also existed a small Sephardic Balkan community. The records of the communities and its various societies were written down mainly in the period 1770-1870. In 1999, the historian Ițic Schwartz-Kara published a list of 75 registers (Pinkasim) from Greater Romania (the Old Kingdom of Romania, Transylvania, Bessarabia, Bukovina). This list includes both preserved and lost registers, known through references and

published fragments. No complete community register from Romania has ever been published. Some of the preserved registers mentioned by Ițic Schwartz-Kara were in his private collection. After his death in 2001, his collection was transferred to the National Archives of Romania, Jassy branch. There are rumors that some documents (among them registers) from his collection were donated or sold in the last years of his life, and perhaps reached archives and private collections in Israel and the USA with no indication of provenance.

In Ițic Schwartz-Kara's collection there may have been some registers (and other documents) originally in the collection of the Historical Society "Dr. Julius Barasch," established in the 1880's in order to prove the length of the Jewish presence in Romania. Subsequently the society went out of existence with its collection remaining in the possession of Moses Schwarzfeld, its secretary and a Jewish journalist. His collection also included community registers and Hebrew manuscripts. After his death in 1943 his collection was dispersed. Parts of it are in Israel, in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, parts in the Jewish National and University Library, parts in the archives of the Center for Jewish History, Federation of Jewish Communities in Bucharest, and parts in a private collection in Israel.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the reorganization of the "Mosaic Religion" in Romania as a result of emancipation (1919-1923), Jewish communities, together with their rabbinical courts, maintained registers in a modern form, as associations. Members were registered and births, marriages, divorces and deaths were recorded. Not all the Jews were members of the community however, and sometimes only synagogue members were listed. Sometimes deaths were only recorded in the records of "Hevra Kadisha," indicating the location of the grave.

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\* *Based on a lecture given at the 24<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Jewish Genealogy held in Jerusalem July 2004*

Unfortunately, many registers have been lost. Others are preserved in the archives of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Bucharest or in the communities themselves. Archives of the Jewish schools in Romania (“școlile Israelito-Romane”), including lists of pupils, are preserved in the Romanian National Archives and in various local branches (e.g. Jassy branch). Some are in the archives of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Bucharest. Several are also to be found in the Central Archives of the Jewish People in Jerusalem and in the archives of the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris, but these documents concern mainly financial aid.

Interesting genealogical documents such as family correspondence including information about family members of the Jewish elite (social, religious, intellectual, political, economic), some dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and especially from the 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are preserved in the National Archives of Romania in Bucharest, Jassy and other local branches. They are mostly in Romanian, though some are in Hebrew, Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish, French, German, Russian, Turkish, or Hungarian. The difficulty for scholars is that these letters were not written with a genealogical purpose, but rather with an economic, familial, intellectual, or personal aim, and are on various subjects. A family history may be reconstructed only by searching files containing correspondence, registered under a family’s name.

Responsa literature also contains genealogical information, such as in Responsa of rabbis from Old Romania (e.g. R’Joseph Landau, R’Aryeh Leib Rosen, R’Bezalel Zeev Safran, R’Hayim Roller, R’Hanoch Safran and others), from other provinces of Greater Romania (e.g. R’Meshulam Rath, R’Yehudah Leib Tzirelsohn and others), and from other countries (e.g., R’Moshe Sofer). There are notes and prefaces to rabbinical books (“Haskamot”), containing information about the author and his family.

Tombstone inscriptions are an important genealogical source, due to the information

about the deceased and his or her family: name, father’s name, place of origin, occupation, level of Torah knowledge, date of death, and sometimes for women, the husband’s name. In Romania, “old cemeteries” are those operating until 1866 and closed when a law came into effect forbidding burials in residential areas. Some old Jewish cemeteries were active in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Jassy-Ciurchi, Botoshani, Dorohoi), in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Bucharest-Sevastopol, Bacău, Piatra-Neamtz, Galatz, Roman, Siret and others), and in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, on land near the Jewish quarter given to them or bought for this purpose. If those cemeteries had been preserved, they would give us semi-complete picture of Jewish life in the past. Unfortunately many old Jewish cemeteries in Moldavia and Wallachia were destroyed, some because of maintenance difficulties and others due to anti-Semitic vandalism. The old Jewish cemeteries in Piatra-Neamtz and Roman were partially destroyed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by order of anti-Semitic mayors, who justified the destruction with arguments of public health and architectural reasons. Other old Jewish cemeteries were destroyed in the Holocaust period, such as those from Bucharest-Sevastopol, Jassy-Ciurchi, Galatz, using the same arguments.

Most of the inscriptions were not copied and have been lost. In expeditions organized by the Historical Society “Dr. Julius Barasch” (in the 1880s) and other later recordings up to 1940, only inscriptions of important personalities (rabbis, physicians) Torah scholars, community leaders, or wealthy Jews) were transcribed, occasionally with the addition of their wives, sons and daughters. The old Jewish cemetery in Jassy-Ciurchi was researched in the framework of the Historical Society “Dr. Julius Barasch,” by N. Beldiceanu, W. Schwarzfeld, M. Braunstein-Mibashan. Later studies were based on their transcriptions. Only a small number of tombstones were moved from the older to the newer cemeteries. The cemetery in Siret is the only old Jewish cemetery in Romania that was systematically researched for

epigraphic information. Modern Jewish cemeteries in Romania (opened after 1866) remain unexplored, though they can reveal interesting genealogical information.

### **Non-Jewish Sources**

Population censuses are important non-Jewish sources for the genealogy of the Romanian Jews. Old fiscal censuses, up to 1859, registered useful information about the heads of Jewish families (taxpayers) and their families. The first of these censuses from Moldavia and Wallachia is from the 1750s, made by the Russian administration in the period of the Russian occupation of the Principalities. A very useful census made by the Moldavian prince in 1824 for fiscal and political reasons was partially published. The results of modern censuses are also interesting and useful. This documentation is preserved in the National Archives of Romania in the Bucharest and Jassy branches. Useful non-Jewish sources from 1870 to the present are the civil municipal and local council registers. Births, marriages and deaths began to be registered in Romania relatively late. These sources include only Jews born, married and deceased in Romania that have been declared at the municipal registry. Many persons and families also kept personal documents issued by the municipal authorities. The municipal registries are preserved by the National Archives of Romania in various municipal archives.

Another useful non-Jewish documentation is the registration of naturalizations. Romania was the last European country that naturalized its Jews and emancipated them only in 1919. The process began in 1880 on an individual basis and in 1919 a general emancipation was declared after Romania signed the Treaty of Minorities of Paris and confirmed by the Romanian constitution of 1923. Personal dates of naturalized Jews and their families were recorded in registers of municipalities and local councils. These registers are preserved in the National Archives of Romania in various branches. Many families also kept the naturalization documents of their grandparents.

Various Jewish and non-Jewish documents and photos dealing with the genealogical history of Romanian Jewry are found in Israeli archives and collections: the Central Zionist Archives (Jerusalem); Yad Vashem (Jerusalem); Diaspora Research Center "Goldstein-Goren", Tel Aviv University; Bar Ilan University; Center for Research of Romanian Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; A.C.M.E.O.R. (World Cultural Association of Romanian Jews), Tel Aviv; Yad Zikaron Leyahadut Romanyah, "Ya'qov, Yosef, Harav Zvi Gutman" Synagogue (Tel Aviv); Association of Dorohoi District Jews (Haifa); Buhushi Institute (Bene Berak); Shiftey Tzadiqym Institute (Jerusalem); Kolel Romania (Jerusalem); Beit Basarabia (Tel Aviv) – and in museums of Romanian Jewish history in Bucharest, Jassy, and Bacau in Romania.

The Jewish press in Romania (which dates from the 1850s) also includes very useful genealogical information, chiefly dealing with famous personalities and their families. The information is included in various references and letters to editors published in important and in local journals. Jewish journals from Romania in various languages are preserved mainly in the library of the Romanian Academy (Bucharest) and in the library of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania in Bucharest. Most of the preserved journals were microfilmed and can be found at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem.

Interest in the sources of genealogical history of the Romanian Jews began in the 1870s. Without being historians, Jewish "maskilim" from Romania tried to prove their "Romanian Jewish" origin in order to demonstrate that their forefathers had lived in Romania, promising them emancipation. The first of these "maskilim" with a historical interest was Jacob Psantir, in his Yiddish book (Psantir, 1873). In the years 1887-1889, the Historical Society "Dr. Julius Barasch" was active. Its members – among them the brothers Elias, Wilhelm and Moses Schwarzfeld, Jacob Psantir, Moses

Gaster, Eliezer Schein-Saineanu, Isaac David Bally, Menahem-Mendel Braunstein-Mibashan, A.D. Birnberg, I. Feigeles, Israel Sapira, David Paves and others – collected sources on Romanian Jewish history with the same purpose. They also published lists of collected historical sources and memoirs by elderly Jews born in the Romanian principalities in the annual of their society and in a “Yearbook for Israelites” edited by the secretary of the society, Moses Schwarzfeld.

Later, in 1930 some Jewish sources of genealogical interest such as fragments of “Pinkasim” and selections of tombstone inscriptions were published by Meir Abramovici Halevy and his associates in the Yearbook “Sinai” in Bucharest. Various documents were republished in a booklet by Lazar Rosenbaum (Eliezer Ilan) in 1948 in Bucharest. Fragments of “Pinkasim” were published by Itic Schwartz-Kara in various periodicals and booklets in 1938-1955 and in the 1990s. Later (1969-1994), the same historian published gravestone inscriptions from the Jewish cemeteries of Bacau, Piatra-Neamtz, Botoshani, Dorohoi, Jassy, chiefly based on copies from the 1880s, and from tombstones identified by him. Inscriptions from the old Jewish cemetery in Bucharest, collected by Meir Abramovici Halevy, were prepared for publication by Lazar Rosenbaum and Athanase Negoita and published by Alexandru Elian in 1965.

Various genealogical documents, Jewish and non-Jewish (up to 1850) were published in a special series of sources for Romanian Jewish history by Victor Eskenasy, Mihai Spielman-Sebestyen, Lya Benjamin, Ladislau Gyemant (Bucharest, 1986-1998). Some “pinkasim” were mentioned and analyzed by Theodor Loewenstein-Lavi in “Pinkas Hakehilot Rumania” (Jerusalem, 1969 and 1980) and by Eliyahu Feldman, in his study concerning the Jewish craftsmen and their associations in Moldavia (ca. 1770-1860).

Documents concerning the Romanian Jews during the Holocaust period (some of them also of genealogical interest) were published by Jean Ancel (1986-1987). Various

documents, fragments of registers and tombstone inscriptions were published in various Jewish nostalgic and local history books from 1929 to the present. Some censuses were published at that time, but only partially. Scholarly editions of old censuses were published in the last decades, e.g., by Stela Maries (1996).

Documents concerning pupils at Jewish schools from Romania were mentioned by Liviu Rotman and Carol Iancu, also in the last decades. Documents concerning Romanian Jewish students in France, Romanian-Jewish pupils at Mikveh-Israel School, Jewish emigrants from Romania in the Habsburg Empire, in the USA and in Argentina (end of 19<sup>th</sup> – beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) were mentioned but not published completely. In the last few years, a list of Jewish students, teachers and workers from the University of Jassy from 1860-1948 and a list of Jewish businessmen from Moldavia (1879-1950) were published by Iancu Braustein, based on documents existing in the National Archives of Romania, Jassy branch. Jewish businessmen from Romania and their families were mentioned recently in studies by Avram Rosen. Tombstone inscriptions from the only systematically researched Jewish cemetery in Romania, Siret, were published by Silviu Sanie (Bucharest, 2000). Various documents were published in the Internet. A special review, ROM-SIG was published in recent years.

Several genealogical trees and family stories were published by Romanian Jews, most of them being of Ashkenazic rabbinical families mentioning their Galician origin with ramifications in other countries. Some histories of families were researched and reconstituted by Rabbi Meir Wunder. Some rabbis from Romania or Romanian born wrote about their families, including genealogical information. Jacob Geller and Shlomo Leibovici-Laish published some genealogical information about rabbinical families from Romania. Other family stories were published by Israel Bar-Avi, Shimon Rubinstein and Tiberiu Lustig.

We must add that if scholarly research of Romanian Jewish history was difficult

during the communist period, researching Romanian-Jewish genealogy was nearly impossible. Genealogy was rejected, considered a non-scientific discipline, a remnant of the aristocratic trend of demonstrating their origins, useless for the masses building socialism. For this reason, not only Jewish, but also Romanian genealogy was neglected except for some special cases of princes and politicians from the past. Second, many people were fearful of building a personal genealogy: communist society rejected persons of “bourgeois” and “aristocratic” origins and discriminated against them in favor of persons of a “healthy social origin” – sons, daughters and nephews of “proletarians” and “poor peasants,” all of them natives of Romania. Thus many families were not interested in presenting their history and destroyed documents in their family’s collection. The renaissance of genealogical interest was difficult due to the lack of family documents, difficulties in searching archives and insufficient knowledge of their languages (Hebrew, Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish, Old Cyrillic Romanian).

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(See also Hebrew bibliography at the end of the Hebrew version of this article.)

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### ***Pages of Testimony Online***

*Yaacov Lozowick, archivist of Yad Vashem, has indicated the date for launching the public access to their Central Database of Holocaust Victims' Names will be November 22.*

*The database consists of an index to some four million digitized records that includes:*

*Austria (Dow)*

*Berlin (Gedenkbuch)*

*France (Klarsfeld deportation lists: 70,000 Jews deported from France primarily to Auschwitz)*

*Germany (Gedenkbuch: 128,000 German Jews murdered in the Holocaust)*

*Hungary (Nevek series of name lists)*

*Lodz Ghetto (Censuses of the ghetto)*

*Luxembourg (All victims)*

*Mauthausen (Jewish inmates)*

*Megilot - Memorial Lists (Small lists)*

*Netherlands (Oorlogsslachtoffers)*

*Pages Of Testimony Collection (3 million victims)*

*Slovakia (Deportations in 1942)*

*Theresienstadt Camp - Bohemia/Moravia*

*Thessaloniki (Deportations)*

*Yugoslavia (State register)*

**Meetings of the Special Interest Groups (SIGs)**  
*At the 24th International Conference of Jewish Genealogy*  
*Jerusalem, July 2004*

**The Second International Meeting of the Sephardic SIG**  
*Mathilde Tagger*

About 50 people attended the meeting including some old-time members. We were honored that Ms. Mazal Linenberg-Navon graced us with her presence.

According to my request made before the Conference, Dr. Jeffrey Malka agreed to chair the session. Dr. Malka opened with a review of the present state of Sephardic genealogical research. In the last two years, three very important volumes have appeared on this topic:

1. The book by Dr. Jeffrey Malka, *Sephardic Genealogy*, which appeared in 2002.
2. The book by Guilherme Faiguenboim, *Dictionary of Sephardic Surnames*, which was published in the end of 2003.
3. *The Guide to Sephardic and Oriental Jewish Genealogical Sources in Israel* by Yitzhak Kerem and Mathilde Tagger that was presented as one of the projects prepared for the Conference.

Dr. Malka thanked the organizers of the Conference for arranging such a wide-ranging program in Sephardic genealogy. No previous Conference had so many sessions on the subject.

At this point, the microphone was passed from person to person with each briefly introducing themselves – giving their name,

place of residence plus the names of families and locations that are the focus of their research.

Even before Dr. Malka's arrival in Israel, the two of us prepared a varied list of projects that we wanted to suggest to this forum. Most of the data was taken from *The Guide to Sephardic and Oriental Jewish Genealogical Sources in Israel* but we also included material found in the United States. This list covers eighteen countries and close to one hundred collections. The majority of the lists have to be translated into English and indexed for the benefit of those who would make use of them. This list can be viewed at the following website:

<http://www.orthohelp.com/geneal/projectlist.htm>

A number of people volunteered to assist and we are now looking for funds to finance this project as most of the sources are found in the form of microfilms. Since the required amounts are not great, we hope that after the holidays, in the months of September and October 2004, the volunteers can commence their work.

This was an important meeting and I hope that the future international conferences will follow in the path of the organizers of the 2004 Jerusalem Conference providing a rich program on Sephardic research.

**SIG Latvia Meeting**  
*Martha Lev-Zion*

I am finally recovering from having been totally bereft of energy after the Conference in Jerusalem. It was an incredible conference. We had over 760 attendees from 22 countries: a real international conference! Most of the lectures were on a very high level. By evening, people were holding their

heads and saying that they could not absorb one more thing and how wonderful the lectures were.

Our SIG meeting was at the very beginning of the week, and we had a good representation of members. Professor Dov Levin, who was interested in helping people

with their brick walls, graciously answered personal questions from the audience. Eli Valk of the Association of Latvians and Estonians in Israel also gave a short talk and explained how the SIG members could profit from connecting with the Association. He passed out a pamphlet on the Archives and the Association. Evelyn Waldstein briefly explained the project that she is working on, databasing all the Jewish school children before World War II in Latvia. We had elections and Barry Shay, the editor of our SIG Bulletin, was elected president. I do not think he knew that he had been nominated, but the vote was unanimous! We

agreed to keep Mike Getz as treasurer. We organized a committee to work on the bylaws. The following people volunteered: Zeeva Levy, Don Hirschhorn, and Cissie Eppel. If any other members are interested in helping, please let us know. In addition, Stan and Bobbye Hertzbach volunteered to help database the information in my possession on the Courlander section of the cemetery in New York City.

As you can see, we are moving forward and have a new core of volunteers and people with ideas. I encourage any and all of you to join us in being creative in moving the SIG forward.

### **The Anglo-Jewish SIG Meeting**

*Joe Isaacs*

Over 35 people attended the meeting, which was co-ordinated by Joe Isaacs.

A panel consisting of Anthony Joseph who is President of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain and a past board member of IAGJS, Doreen Berger who runs the JCR-UK SIG and has written 2 volumes of *The Jewish Victorian* and Harold Lewin (who lives in Jerusalem), who transcribed various synagogue records and has just published the *Marriage Records of the Great Synagogue London 1791-1885* and answered questions.

Various questions were posed by the participants at the meeting, who came from Israel, USA, France, Holland, Italy, Australia and Canada as well as the UK and they ranged from finding BMD records,

cemetery records, how to find where a relative had been buried, wills and many more. These related not only to London but also to Manchester and Ireland.

There were many discussions and exchanges of information between the participants.

Doreen gave a brief talk on her new book – Volume 2 of *The Jewish Victorian*.

Joe asked the Israeli participants if there would be interest in holding SIG meetings periodically in Israel and there was a favorable response.

The meeting then ended with a vote of thanks to the panel and for Leonie Flack for taking the minutes.

### **The LitvakSIG Meeting**

*Shalom Bronstein*

The LitvakSIG meeting took place with some 75 people in attendance on July 8. While many of those present previously knew each other, for some it was the first time for us to meet those with whom we have been in email contact for years. Judy

Baston and Judy Langer-Surnamer Caplan chaired the session. A number of items were discussed and quite a few people from the audience had suggestions on how to solve some of the questions raised. Among those in the audience who introduced themselves

was Emmanuel Shlom who since his retirement has devoted much of his time to the Igud Yotzei Lita (the Association of Lithuania Jews in Israel) in Tel Aviv. A native of Kovno who moved to South Africa after the war with his mother, Emmanuel now serves as the administrator of the Igud. He discussed plans underway to make the very full resources of the Archives of the Igud more available to Litvak researchers. Hopefully, there will be much more give and take with LitvakSIG and the Igud in the future. Something we will all benefit from.

A most pleasant surprise was the gift from LitvakSIG of a CD to all the Litvaks present. It contains a (1) District Coordinator Directory; (2) a donor form for contributions; (3) a Shtetl Directory that

gives the current Lithuanian name, old name, coordinates, Uyezd (district), Guberniya and home page where there is one. Two hundred eighty four locations are listed. This is a wonderful tool for all. The other items on the CD are publications, how to search the All Lithuania Database and vital records filmed by GSU (Genealogical Society of Utah).

The meeting could have gone on for hours. There was not enough time for all who wished to speak to do so and the discussions in small groups went on for some time until we had to vacate the room for the next session. We are grateful to the coordinators of LitvakSIG for all of their efforts in making so much available to us.

### **RAVSIG Meeting** ***Yehuda Klausner***

Tuesday afternoon 6.7.04 the RAVSIG meeting took place chaired by Yehuda Hershkovitz, the newly appointed interim coordinator of JEWISHGEN's RAVSIG, and attended by some 50-60 persons. The meeting lasted for close to two hours. After the introduction by Mr. Hershkovitz, there was a discussion/question/answer period and a short closure period. The main problem raised by Mr. Hershkovitz and later discussed was the doubtful reliability of certain Rabbinic data and some references. The discussion was lively and comprehensive.

Mr. Hershkovitz made many contacts during the conference and secured the support and future cooperation of many of the participants.

Thursday morning 8.7.04 the RAVSIG lecture session, chaired by Michael Honey and Dr. Yehuda Klausner took place. After a short introduction by Y. Klausner and short "Divrei Torah" from the weekly portion (Parashat Pinchas) that pertains to genealogy, the first lecturer, Rabbi Meir Wunder, was introduced. The topic of Rabbi Wunder's talk was sources that have to be

considered with care. He also mentioned the sixth volume of his work *The Sages of Galicia* that he is preparing for publication, and two projects he is working on: a private project of short biographies of Torah scholars and Rabbis, and a project on the Holocaust victims not yet recorded. The latter is carried out by the Michlala, College for Girls in Jerusalem, in cooperation with the Center of Holocaust Research.

The second and third lecturers introduced by M.Honey were Rabbi David Shapira and Mr. Dov Cohen.

Rabbi Shapira talked about the ways to find rabbinic sources not genealogical by nature, like dedications, approbations, prenumeranten lists, appendices and references, as well as rabbinical correspondence, general or in conjunction with Responsa.

Mr. Cohen's lecture was about sources of Sephardic rabbinic literature following the expulsion from Spain. He classified it as "homiletic" (relating to informal discourse of religious matters) and "halakhic" (dealing in matters of Jewish law) both very rich in data and details. He presented numerous samples from families of Izmir, Turkey.

The fourth lecturer who many looked forward to hearing, Rabbi Dr. Yitzchak Alfassi, did not show up.

The moderators were asked to reserve several minutes at the end of the session and introduce Mr. Yitzchak Pomerantz and his group acting under the auspices of the Jewish Agency, who are building a site through which elderly persons can connect. In the absence of the fourth lecturer, they had ample time to present their work. This improvisation seemed to have attracted

much attention and was followed by many questions.

Judging by the questions/answers that followed each presentation, I believe the lectures were of much interest. Before closing the session the moderators in the name of the public present expressed their thanks to the founder and first coordinator of RAVSIG, Ms. Shirley Rotbein Flaum, and wished the new interim coordinator, Yehuda Hershkovitz, much success in his future undertaking.

### GERSIG Meeting

#### Sources for Jewish German Genealogy in Jerusalem

*Esther Ramon*

The meeting of the German SIG took place on Sunday 4.8.04. There were about 30 participants, among them Martha Lev-Zion, Suzan Salmon and Jim Bennet. The chairman was Werner Frank from California. The theme of my talk was: *Genealogical Resources for German Jewish Research in Jerusalem from My Personal Experience.*

The progress in genealogical research is possible thanks to the rich genealogical resources existing in Jerusalem. I have chosen to elaborate somewhat my discussion on this research during which I utilized the Leo Baeck Archives, the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (CAJH) and Dr. Paul Jacobi's monographs.

In 1984, I began to research the family of my maternal grandfather, the HOMBURGER family from Karlsruhe. The first source was the CAJH. In the G5 and G1 sections, I examined the booklets of the Jewish Community in Karlsruhe for the years 1810-1940. These are very small photocopies of handwritten pages in Gothic letters. I found many members of the family and a family tree of the ETTLINGERS who intermarried with the Homburgers. But the most exiting find was a big black bound book with the title *Die Stammtafeln der Familie HOMBURGER*, which contained 37 genealogical pages, beginning from Loew

Homburger who came to Karlsruhe in 1721 to the generation of my mother. Every member of the family was shown with the names of the spouse, the grandparents and the children with the respective dates. When I looked closer, I recognized the handwriting of my mother and realized that she wrote the information after 1920, the year of the birth of my elder brother. Nobody in the family knew that she had written those pages. Later I received similar pages from members of the family in Haifa and in Zurich, who had more pages on their respective branches.

In the section called Inventar, I found letters handwritten by my grandfather some months before the Jews were expelled from Karlsruhe to Gurs.

I learned a great deal from these pages. My maternal grandmother, born in Hanau, was from the OPPENHEIM family from Witzenhausen. I found a photocopy of a beautiful hand drawn family tree of the OPPENHEIM family. On every branch were the names of the members and the spouses, sometimes with dates. After many attempts to connect with my branch, I finally deciphered in the last generation the name of Dr. Heinz OPPENHEIMER, botanist in Jerusalem. With the help of colleagues, I found his daughter and received from her information about her grandfather Dr. Julius OPPENHEIMER and her uncle Prof. Franz OPPENHEIMER, a famous sociologist who

planned the first communal settlements in Eretz Israel. In this way, I could add my branch, which was not in the drawing.

My paternal grandmother was Clara BUCHSTEIN from Kunreuth, Bavaria. I found in the archives the original book of the Jewish community in very clear handwriting. So, it was quite easy to reconstruct the first generations of this family.

Another source in Jerusalem is the Leo Baeck Institute and its library and archives. They possess material that German Jews deposited there, containing much genealogical information, as well as many books about Jewish communities in Central Europe, sometimes even more than at Yad Vashem and the LBI in New York. With the

help of those books, I could contact members of my family in Israel and elsewhere.

Last but not least: the monographs of Dr. Paul Jacobi. If a researcher is lucky and Dr. Jacobi had researched his family, or a family that intermarried with his, he may find a treasure of information.

To summarize – the important sources that I cited and others such as Yad Vashem, the State Archives, the Central Zionist Archives, are all in Jerusalem within easy reach. Today, the Internet, added to these resources, opens up new possibilities of research and of strengthening the connections with other genealogists around the world.

### **South African Special Interest Group (SA-SIG)**

*Beryl Baleson*

The South African Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group (SA-SIG) was officially formed by Mike Getz and Saul Issroff at the Los Angeles IAJGS Conference in 1998. It was created to provide a forum for a free exchange of ideas, research tips and information of interest to those researching Jewish family history in the communities of South Africa; Lesotho (Basutoland); Botswana (Bechuanaland); Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia); Zambia (Northern Rhodesia); Swaziland; Mozambique and the former Belgian Congo. Since 1998 the SA SIG has been respresented at every IAJGS Conference.

We have a membership of 300, as well as co-ordinators in Australia, England, Israel, South Africa and the United States.

The SA-SIG maintains a set of web pages that can be found at:

[www.jewishgen.org/safrica](http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica)

These web pages are a portal to the SIG's extensive information about Southern African genealogical research, as well as providing access to other resources such as SA-related databases, and the South

African-related microfilms available in the Mormon Family History Library (FHL).

JewishGen Info Files on Southern Africa Jewry are at [www.jewishgen.org/infocfiles](http://www.jewishgen.org/infocfiles) and these files provide a wealth of information on the history and background of the Jewish communities in South Africa.

The SA-Special Interest Group has been producing a quarterly hardcopy newsletter since 2000 and members of the SA-SIG receive the newsletter as part of their membership. For instructions on how to become a member of the SA-SIG and to receive the newsletter – see [www.jewishgen.org/Safrica/newsletter/index.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/Safrica/newsletter/index.htm).

#### **Jerusalem2004 Conference SA-SIG Session.**

Saul Issroff and Beryl Baleson addressed the SA-SIG Session. Saul gave a comprehensive review of the SA-SIG giving information on the work done through the Jews' Temporary Shelter Database and the Center for Jewish Migration and Genealogy Studies at the Kaplan Centre, University of Cape Town, South Africa. The website for interested parties is

<http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/kaplan/>

Saul also spoke on the German Jewish Migration to South Africa during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as the South African Cemeteries Project; Zionist Youth Movement project and general details of the National Archives Website where information can be obtained re Naturalization Certificates; the Department of Home Affairs where details of births, marriages and deaths are available.

Beryl distributed a List of Genealogy

Resources in South Africa. Attendees showed a strong interest in the SA-SIG and its activities and a lively discussion followed. Many attendees were aware that they had family in South Africa but did not know how to locate them. They were confident that the Resource List would help to find these families.

*Beryl Baleson is the SA-SIG coordinator in Israel. [balden@zahav.net.il](mailto:balden@zahav.net.il)*

## SIG-Hungaria

*Robert Neu*

SIG-Hungaria covers the pre 1918 Hungarian portion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, sometimes also referred to as "Greater Hungary" or Pre-Trianon Hungary (the Post World War I Trianon Treaty that dismembered the Austro-Hungarian Empire).

At the meeting, SIG-Hungaria presented the mission, the people, the projects completed and the future projects. The presentation was supported by a set of 13 slides.

Questions asking for clarifications were handled.

The principals of SIG-Hungaria are: Vivian Kahn, Coordinator, Carlo Robinson Research Coordinator and Acting Webmaster and Alfred Klein Treasurer.

SIG-Hungaria has its own on line e-mail exchange within the Jewishgen confine.

The main projects are transcriptions that put data on line in the All Hungary Data base (AHD):

- Jews on the 1828 Hungarian Census, coordinated by Eric Bloch, contains 23,800 records.
- The 1848 All Jewish Census coordinated by Robert Neu, contains 42,000 records
- Jews on the 1869 Census. No coordinator. Contains 16,000 records.

- Other censuses contain 11,680 records, including 6,100 from the Trecin group.
- B,M,D records - about 11,00 records.

Coordinated by:

Gary Deitch for Miskolc  
Alfred Silberman for Satoralujhely  
Robert Hanscom for Llara  
Pam Weisberger for Karsz  
Adina Michelson for Jaszbereny  
Stanley Blum for Mad

- Yizkor Books.
- JOWBR (burial records): Gyor, Eger, Kisvarda, Presov, Doba, Kosice, Vranov, Taplou, Munkacs, Szighet.
- Vranov Transport lists.
- Some records from the US State department.
- Holocaust Records. Coordinator Carol Robinson, 10,000 records.

### **Future Projects**

To formalize the 1869 Census project: Bereg, Maramaros, Bihar, Heves, Lipto, Komarom, Moson, Nograd, Nyitra, Saros, Szabolcs, Szepes and Zemplen Megyek counties. We need a coordinator.

To continue the Yizkor Books and the JOWBR projects.

The greatest need is for volunteers.

## BIALYGen at the Jerusalem Conference

*Mark Halpern*

BIALYGen had its Second Annual meeting on Thursday, July 8, 2004. More than twenty family researchers interested in Bialystok, Bielsk Podlaski, Bocki, Bransk, Ciechanowicz, Grodek, Hajnowka, Jalowka, Jasionowka, Krynki, Sokolka, Sokoly, Trzcianne and Tykocin attended. The meeting provided a chance to share with the group new sources of information for Bialystok and the surrounding area, especially collections available in Israel.

Below is a list of some of the resources mentioned.

The Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem: Many Bialystok and area collections are catalogued by town. The following Bialystok collections were identified:

- a. Approximately 500 tombstone inscriptions from the Bialystok Cemetery translated to Polish in 1985 by the Polish Conservation Authority.
- b. Rabbinate Books of Marriage 1923-1924.
- c. Fragments of Kahal birth, marriage, and death records 1896-1939:  
Death Book 1926-1927  
Marriage Protocols 1929-1930  
The Tombstone inscriptions and 1929-1930 Marriage Protocols were copied and will be indexed.

The Bialystoker Center in New York City has a large collection of index cards containing information about people memorialized by members of the New York Landsmanschaft. One of our members volunteered to try and gain access to this collection.

The Hebrew University Library has boxes of archival material that was never catalogued. One of the attendees offered to help organize and catalog the materials.

A 1910 list of Bialystok property owners was mentioned by someone. Will this person

please tell us more about this information and other material available.

The Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw has materials concerning Bialystok.

Two of the original seven objectives for BIALYGen identified at the first annual BIALYGen meeting in Washington, DC were:

1. Acquire and index records of the Bialystok Hebrew Gymnasium.
2. Search repositories in Israel for records applicable to the BRRG region and index those records.

Representatives of BIALYGen at the Jerusalem Conference made a start on these objectives. The Israel Landsmanschaft has very strong connections to the Hebrew Gymnasium and the author of the "The Immortal Spirit – The Bialystok Hebrew Gymnasium – Poland 1919-1939."

### **Visit to Kiriath Bialystok – Bialystoker Community in Israel**

Sponsored by BIALYGen and coordinated by Ada Holtzman, a great friend of Bialystokers in Israel and around the world, about 12 Bialystokers, who attended the Conference, visited Kiriath Bialystok on Friday morning, July 9<sup>th</sup>. For photos and more information about Kiriath Bialystok, visit Ada Holtzman's Bialystok Memorial website at

<http://www.zchor.org/bialystok/bialystok.htm> and click "Kiriath Bialystok."

Ze'ev Balglej, the Chairman of the Landsmanschaft, introduced the organization and its beginnings in the early 1950s as a community where Bialystok survivors could settle. Funds were raised by the New York Bialystoker Center to build 251 original housing units. This community is now part of the city of Yehud. Streets in the community are named after famous Bialystok personalities. The community has a medical clinic, two nursery schools, a



beautiful synagogue, a recreation hall, an archive and library and a memorial wall. Many members still have strong connections to Bialystok. The Organization has provided funds to maintain the Jewish history in Bialystok. The Organization erected a memorial in Bialystok to the Great Synagogue, which was burned to the ground by the Nazis with 2,000 Bialystok Jews inside.

Chana Kizelstein (nee Lin), the archivist for Kiriath Bialystok, spoke to our group about life in prewar Jewish Bialystok where 60,000 Jews (comprising 70% of the total population) lived and how proud former residents were to be Bialystokers. She also talked about the events that led to the establishment of Kiriath Bialystok and provided an overview of the archive and library collection. See

<http://www.zchor.org/bialystok/children.htm>.

Eva Kracowska was one of the young fighters of the Bialystok Ghetto revolt and one of only four survivors of the revolt. She talked about her experience in the Ghetto, fighting as a partisan after she escaped the liquidation of the Ghetto and her return to

Bialystok after the World War II. See <http://www.zchor.org/bialystok/response.htm>.

Shamai Kizelstein, a survivor of Auschwitz and other camps, talked about his memories of the Nazi march into Bialystok and the early days of the occupation. Shamai witnessed the burning of the Great Synagogue in Bialystok. See

<http://www.zchor.org/bialystok/kizelstein.htm>.

The relationship created by BIALYGen's visit to Kiriath Bialystok will hopefully lead to benefits to members of our group and to the Israeli organization. Both groups are interested in preserving and memorializing our ancestors who lived and flourished in Bialystok before the Shoah.

*Mark Halpern, President of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia (JGSGP), has been actively researching his Polish (Bialystok) and Galician roots for the last eight years. He is the originator and coordinator of the Bialystok Region Jewish Genealogy Group BIALYGen.*



# Jewish Community Life in Brody

## As Revealed in Researching the Gelles Family

*Edward Gelles*

### Introduction

This study of family connections proceeded from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century records of the Brody Beth Din to the land and property registers in the Lviv archives, which carry the story forward by a generation to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A fragment of the Brody Beth Din Records has survived in the Jewish Theological Seminary Library in New York. It has proved to be an invaluable source of genealogical and sociological material for a town within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which had a large Jewish community and was for a considerable time an important center of Jewish learning. For ten years from 1808 to 1817 the Beth Din Records detail all manner of transactions that make up the warp and weft of the social fabric, such as the purchase and sale of houses, land, and other property, wills and bequests, marriage contracts, and much else.

The names of people and the details involved in these transactions, when combined with the civil records of births, marriages, and deaths, and the registers of landed property, throw much light on family connections and the life of the community (Gelles, 2002).

### Surnames of the Family

The procedure followed in the study of the GELLES family is of general applicability, and so are some of the conclusions. For example, Moses GELLES of Brody was a scholar of the study group called the Brody *Klaus* around the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Gelber, 1994). He was variously referred to as GELLES and LEVUSH. I suggested that the epithet *Levush* recalled a descent from the 16<sup>th</sup> century Rabbi Mordecai YAFFE of Prague and the title of his magnum opus, the *Levushim*. This Hebrew epithet, which continued in use for three generations, was quite distinct from vernacular trade

soubriquets, such as *WOSKOBOINIK* (wax chandler or candle maker) used by some members of the GELLES family. A perusal of the Beth Din Records reveals that, at least in this place and period, it was general practice to refer to men of distinguished ancestry by adding the ancestor's epithet or the title of his major work of scholarship.

Instances are entries Nos.1132, 1138, 1278 for Reb Mendel *Tevuos Shor*, Reb Alexander Chaim *Tevuos Shor*, and Reb Yosef Yisrael *Tevuos Shor* (members of the SHOR family descended from the author of *Tevuos Shor*), and No.1350 for Leah, daughter of R'Avraham Yitzchak Halevy *Turei Zahav* (after his ancestor David Halevy SEGAL, the author of the book *Turei Zahav*). The case for the derivation of the epithet *Levush* is strengthened by these examples from the Beth Din Record. The civil birth, marriage, and death records of Brody confirm that GELLES and LEVUSH were alternative or additional names in the family for several generations. There is a previous record of this epithet attached to known progeny of the Levush. The tombstone of a R'Nehemia LEVUSH of Svierz and later of Vilna has an inscription stating that his father Rabbi Zvi LEVUSH was a descendant of Rabbi Mordecai YAFFE (Gelles 2002).

This custom of recalling famous forebears clearly provides useful pointers in rabbinical genealogy. It also indicates the importance attached to lineage [*yichus*] and to standing in the Brody community, in which learning tended to take precedence over wealth in determining social position. Families like the BABAD, CHAYES, MARGALLOT, SHAPIRO and others combined ancient lineage, intellectual distinction, and wealth. The balance between lineage and learning on one hand and material attributes on the other was delicately struck in arranged marriages. The leading rabbis featured prominently in the social hierarchy.

## Marriage Connections

The GELLES family owned some land, several houses and a chandlery [Vaskievonie].

They appear to have had a monopoly for the supply of candles to the community (Gelles 2002). From the mid-1700s to the early 1800s, a part of which is covered by the Beth Din Records, the family was quite prosperous. Membership of the *Klaus* certainly carried considerable prestige. This is the period for which there are records of marriage alliances with the families of Brody Rabbis Heschel HAKOHEN, Meir FRAENKEL, Yehuda Leib ZUNDEL, Berach MARGOSHES, and others. A marriage contract [*Ketubah*] from the year 1817 between the GELLES and MARGOSHES families contains several items of interest, viz. the relative status of the participating families, the apparent youth of the bridegroom, the use of the Russian ruble, among other currencies, in a town which was a trading entrepôt between the Austrian and Russian Empires, and a reference to the *chalitza* ceremony.

Another example of a *Ketubah* we find in entry No.1420. Abraham (a bachelor) son of Rabbi Moshe GELLES, son of R'Joseph VASKIEVONIE married Taube, daughter of Rabbi Josef KALISCHER, son of R'Berach MARGOSHES, on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> Tammuz 5577 [July 1817]. R'Moshe GELLES promised to pay the sum of 450 Russian rubles, support the couple for the first three years of their marriage and pay for their clothing, as well as tuition fees.

R'Josef KALISCHER gave the sum of 100 Russian rubles. The bridegroom's brother R'Yankel GELLES gave an undertaking to carry out the *chalitza* ceremony if necessary [the release of a childless bride by the brother of the bridegroom in the event of the bridegroom's death].

The marriage contracts of the period refer to varying sums of money and years of support. Thus, in entry No. 277, the marriage of Yitzchak, a son of R'Benjamin Zeev BOLECHOVER, which took place in

1808, the bridegroom was endowed with 1980 *reinish* and a promise of 5 years of support by the father of the bridegroom and separately by the mother of the bride. Other entries refer to various sums in rubles, from the bride's father or the bridegroom's father. While the most common currency of the period was the Russian ruble, other currencies are mentioned as well: Austrian ducats (*Kaiserliche dukaten*), Prussian currency (*Preussisch*) and Dutch coinage (*rendelech Hollander*). In this period, the use of a variety of coins was widespread and by no means confined to Brody.

In the short span of ten years, the Beth Din Record encompasses information on four generations of related families. Several entries show that Moses GELLES of the *Klaus* was one and the same person as Menachem LEVUSH and that his sons Michel LEVUSH or GELLES, Joseph GELLES VASKIEVONIE, and Mordecai GELLES had numerous issue known by various names. R'Moshe Gershon, a son of Joseph Gelles, sometimes referred to as R'Moshe, can be distinguished from the R'Moshe GELLES, whose name is given on the Brody tombstone of his son, Rabbi David Isaac GELLIS. This R'Moshe was probably a son of the above-mentioned R'Mordecai GELLES, who was a *mechutan* [in-law] of Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz. More light is thrown on other in-laws. Thus, Rabbi Yehuda ZUNDEL, grandfather of another Moshe LEVUSH or GELLES, appears to be identical with the Rabbi Yehuda Leib ZUNDEL RAMRAZ, who belonged to the circle of the wise men of Brody and died in 1804. R'Berach MARGOSHES' granddaughter married a GELLES and Berach's wife may have been the daughter of R'Shmu'el GELLES.

R'Mordechai GELLES, a brother of R'Joseph VASKIEVONIE is mentioned [Nos.762, 1035] and R'Shmu'el may be a kinsman of Moshe GELLES of the *Klaus* [Nos.481, 530, 953]. His daughter married R'Berach MARGOSHES. The MARGOSHES also had marriage links with

the SHAPIRO family [Nos. 860, 863]. The identity of Rabbi Yehuda Zundel whose daughter Sarah Batya married Mordecai LEVUSH, son of R'Michel GELLES, is indicated by the entries for a property sale to their son R'Moshe LEVUSH in March 1814 [No.1194] and the entries relating to land belonging to the heirs of the late R'Zundel son of R'Zelig RAMRAZ in December 1814 [No.1260]. Rabbi Yehuda Leib ZUNDEL carried the epithet *RAMRAZ*, an acronym for Rabbi Moshe R'Zelig's.

### The Community Life

The community was strong in its religious faith, the winds of enlightenment blowing from post-revolutionary France not yet having made much impact in this distant outpost of the Austrian Empire. The synagogue was central to the life of the community and there were many smaller houses of prayer to cater to special groups. Synagogue seats were bequeathed, sold, and rented. A good example is provided by Finkel, a daughter of R'Dov Ber FRAENKEL and the wife of R'Wolf BOLECHOWER, who purchased 35 seats, later selling some or using the funds from their rental for charitable purposes (entry No.1133). The sale was in memory of the soul of the late Feiga, daughter of R'Yehoshua Heshel Hakohen, the wife of Rabbi Michel, son of R'Moshe GELLES "...so that this should be an everlasting memorial to her soul, never to be sold. The rental income from the seat is to be used to pay for a *Jahrzeit* and the remainder to be distributed to the local poor on the day of her *Jahrzeit*. Elul 5573 [September 1813]." Finkel was the sister of Rabbi Meir FRAENKEL, a son-in-law of R'Josef Gelles VASKIEVONIE, who was a son of R'Moses GELLES.

Other examples include:

No.401. Gittel Malka, the widow of R'Todros ben Ramraz (of the ZUNDEL family) sold a seat on the eastern wall in the women's section, next to the seat belonging to Malka MARGOSHES. Iyar 5568 [May 1808].

No.1308. Chaya, widow of R'Shmuel GELLES, sold half a seat in the women's section of the Synagogue to Ektish, wife of the wealthy R'Yehoshua MARGALIOTH. 28<sup>th</sup> Menachem Av 5575 [August 1815].

The husband of the above-mentioned Feiga is identified in No. 270. R'Michel, son of R'Menachem LEVUSH (son-in-law of R'S.GELLES) signed and sealed to his wife Feiga, daughter of Rabbi Yehoshua Heschel, that if she passes away before him, he is obliged to return to her heirs, or to whoever she instructs, half of the value of her *shterentuchel* [the customary jeweled head-dress] and all clothing, bedding, etc, immediately after her death...27<sup>th</sup> Tishrei 5568 [Oct 1807]. An entry in 1808 gives the value of a *shterentuchel* as at least 200 *rendelech Hollander* and an entry for the wedding in 1813 of Benjamin Wolf, son of Zvi Hirsch SCHONBLUM of Lvov, to Rikel Landau, daughter of R'Yosef ben R'Shachna, refers to a *shterentuchel*, earrings and pearls being worth at least 900 Russian rubles.

Moses GELLES died before the period covered by the Beth Din document. His property was divided between his children and in-laws and then went to their children and grandchildren. Their houses and parcels of land were therefore often adjoining to one another or to the land on part of which stood the family *vaskievonie* or waxworks.

Parts of houses and parcels of land were conveyed very frequently between the heirs of Moses GELLES and their descendants. These transactions involved Leah and Bonna and their in-laws of the BENISH family [Nos.713, 813, see also Nos. 1064, 1067], R'Moshe Gershon GELLES, a son of R'Joseph GELLES VASKIEVONIE and his brother-in-law Rabbi Meir Shlomo FRAENKEL [Nos.713, 786, 813], the latter's wealthy sister Finkel and her husband Reb Benyamin Wolf BOLECHOVER [Nos. 574, 922] and other sons of R'Joseph GELLES, namely R'Yaakov Hersh FEIGANG and Rabbi Abraham Yonah REICH [No.786].

These two Gelleses were referred to by the names of their fathers-in-law, which was a common custom at the time.

### Conclusion

The prosperity of the GELLES family declined as the use of candles gave way to gaslight and as Brody suffered from the placement of the new railways, the decline of its importance as a trading center and the loss of its status as a Free City. Many Jews left their ancient hometown. Some, like the BRODSKYs, flourished in Odessa and elsewhere in Russia. In the closing decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the influx of refugees from Russian pogroms led to overcrowding and poverty in Brody, but by that time many of the old families had been dispersed throughout Galicia, Austria, and beyond.

I am indebted to Yissochor Marmorstein for Hebrew translations

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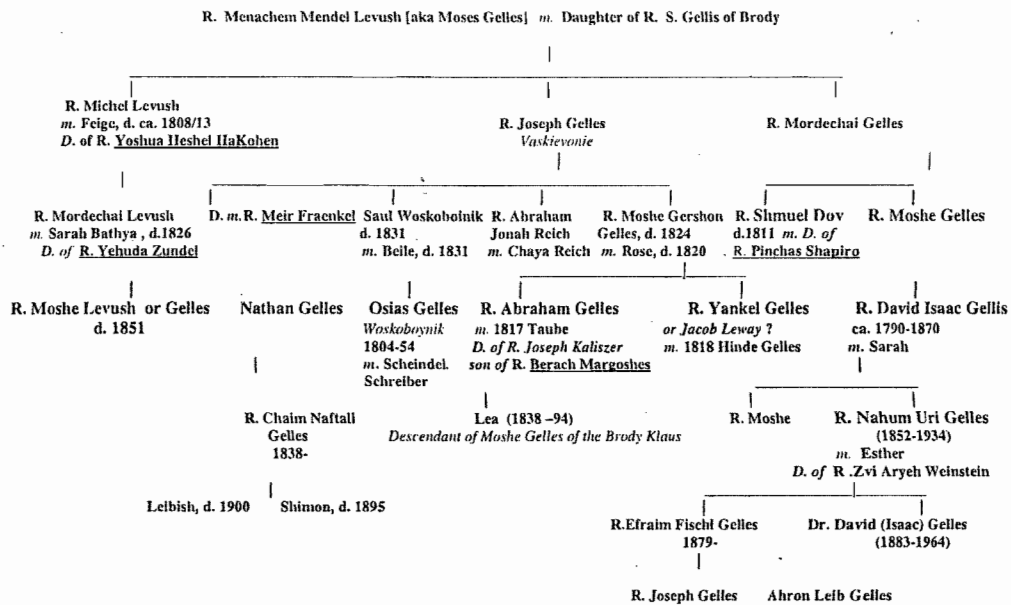
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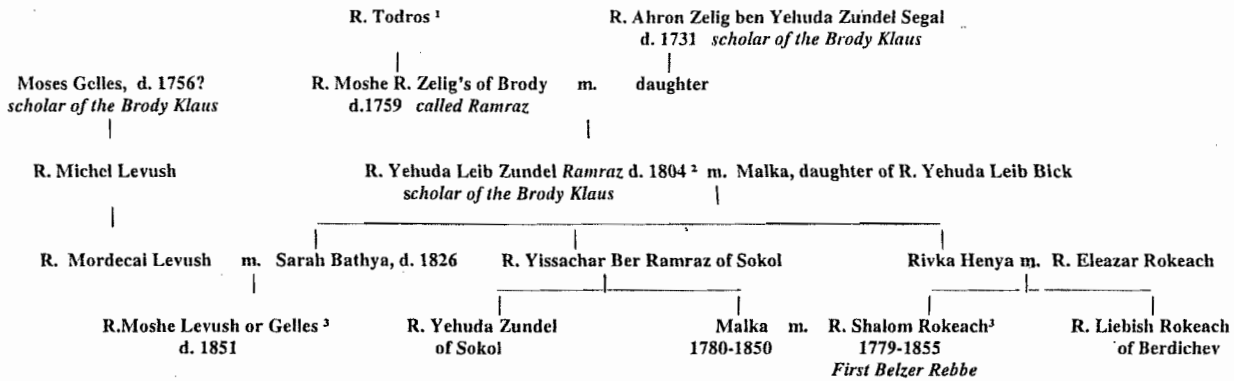
*Dr Edward Gelles was born in Vienna. He fled with his family to England in 1938 where he has lived ever since. He has a doctorate from Oxford University. He was a research scientist and art dealer. He is now devoting himself to writing about historical and genealogical matters. A book on his family including GELLES, GRIFFEL, WAHL, CHAYES, SAFIER, LOEW, and TAUBE is in preparation.*

#### GELLES of BRODY



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**Zundel Ramraz**



<sup>1</sup> R. Todros was a descendant of the Spanish Talmudist, religious poet, and cabalist R. Todros Abulafia (1234-1304), son of Joseph ben Todros ben Yehuda Halevi Abulafia.  
<sup>2</sup> R. Yehuda Zundel of Brody, like his grandfather and Moses Gelles, was a scholar of the Brody Klaus. He may have been married (secondly) to Frieda, daughter of R. Yitzchak of Sokol, who was a descendant of many famous rabbis.  
<sup>3</sup> Some descendants of Moses Gelles of Brody and of the Rokeach Grand Rabbis of Belz share a Zundel Ramraz ancestor. Chaya, a grand-daughter of R. Liebish Rokeach of Berdichev, married Israel Brodsky (1823-89).

Sources: E. Gelles, Finding Rabbi Moses Gelles, Avotaynu, vol. xviii, No.1, Spring 2002  
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 Neil Rosenstein, The Unbroken Chain, pp. 806 -07 and 1103-04 for Brodsky connections.



## Chance Circumstances that brought me to Write My Two Books\*

*Ehud Menachem Zvi Cain (Chaikin)*

Translated from the Hebrew

I do not consider myself an expert in genealogy, but I have had a fair amount of experience and know that I have learned from my teachers and mentors, the veterans of JewishGen. I am more of an artist than a scientist and operate more along the dictations of my instincts, so one should not look upon my words as the ultimate truth. At best, I would hope that it would be considered helpful advice but with doubts and question marks.

### Introduction

My interest in the genealogy of my family started when I understood that my daughter, who was born in 1972 and today is the mother of seven, married a rabbi who was educated at the Porat Yosef Yeshiva specializing as dayan (rabbinic judge) was the recipient of a condescending attitude from her husband's family. Like other Orthodox citizens, they looked upon her 'a newly religious' person with no lineage (Yichus). I could not advise her to cut herself completely off from the world she lives in, but I could indeed provide her with lists that included rabbinic ancestors, Hasidim and Mitnagdim alike.

On my mother's side I found the rabbis of the WRESCHNER family from Filehne (Wielen) in Prussia, descendants of the rabbinic judge Israel WRESCHNER (died 1820), the right hand man of Rabbi Akiba EIGER as well as the rabbis of the ARNHEIM family from the same area. My mother's father, Yechiel Martin LOSZYNSKI (1901-1970) was also an Orthodox rabbi and Kabbalist.

Most of the members of my paternal great-grandmother's family were heads of Yeshivot – the SALASNIK family, descendants of the author of *Tosfot Yom Tov*, Yom Tov Lipmann Halevi HELLER who died in 1654.

The last Admor of the Lubavitcher Hasidim, Menachem Mendel SCHNEORSON, was

my father's cousin (his grandmother was Zelda Rachel the daughter of Schneor Zalman CHAIKIN, whose grandfather was the great-grandfather of my father's grandfather).

My ancestry did help; the attitude towards my daughter changed and she became more acceptable in the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) milieu in Safed where she lives.

### The Beginning of the Research

In searching for the origin of the family, I met with relatives, and Hannah AARONSON, my cousin, gave me photographs from the 20<sup>th</sup> century of my father's grandfather, his sisters and brothers, that I had never seen. She told me about the Jew who 'plowed' the graves of the Habad Hasidim on the Mt. of Olives safeguarding the graves of the descendants of the founder of Habad. Members of his family and our family are buried in the same sub-section of the cemetery. Through him I obtained preliminary knowledge that led me to distant regions.

After this, my appetite was whetted and I wanted to know more about the origin of the family and its makeup. I got to various relatives that I had never previously met; I started research groups connected by electronic mail and it included Ms. Aviva Ne'eman, a relative on my father's side from whom I learned a great deal. Even Chaim Freedman, the genealogist, was in contact with us. The research spread to every corner of the earth. Habad Hasidim, Habad libraries, the Jewish National and University Library, various rabbis and researchers helped me with material and information. I had an extraordinary amount of cooperation and gathered a great deal of material, documents, letters and photographs. Relatives who were interested in genealogy a generation ago and succeeded in interviewing members of the previous

generation before their demise shared information with me. Books that my grandfather's cousin wrote also helped.

In the course of my research, I got to the 'founding father' of the Chaikin family on my father's side. An article written by Rabbi Moshe Avigdor CHAIKIN in the Jewish Encyclopedia in 1912 makes it clear that the family originated with one of the first Hasidic Admorim, Rabbi Hayim CHAIKEL the Admor of Amdur (Indura, Poland).

Hayim CHAIKEL became a symbol of the struggle between the Hasidim and the Mitnagdim. He was a disciple of the Gaon of Vilna but he preferred Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezeritch. He was subject to beatings, became ill, was shunned but he maintained his point of view valiantly until his death in 1787.

In 1777, Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, the leader of Hasidim in the Mogilev region, left Russia at the head of 300 Hasidim and made Aliya to Eretz Yisrael. The Hasidim, who landed at the port of Acre, went to Safed and from there to Tiberias where they established a community alongside of the already existing Sephardic community. Additional Hasidim continued to make Aliya to Eretz Yisrael and a Hasidic community developed in Safed.

In the course of research, I encountered, for the most part, Hasidim who arrived from Shklov, which was already an important religious center from the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Israel Yofe served as the head of its rabbinic court and that subsequently declined in importance when the Habad center moved to Lubavitch. Between 1797 and 1805, a schism developed between the Hasidim of eastern Belarus, whose leader Schneor Zalman of Liadi set up the Habad movement and the Hasidim of Reisin who were located in Tiberias. Between 1819 and 1823, some of the Habad Hasidim moved from Safed to Hebron and among them was Simon Menashe Chaikin (1798-1893) a cousin of my grandfather's grandfather.

Simon Menashe, (Aviva Ne'eman is the great-granddaughter of his granddaughter Esther 1840-1898, the daughter of Hayim who was apparently his first born son)

became the head of the Hebron Jews. From 1841, he served as the head of the joint rabbinic court of the Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities, headed the Hebron Yeshiva and functioned as the chief rabbi of the Ashkenazi community.

In 1821, the first Habad Hasid, Zadok Halevi from Mogilev was permitted to dwell in Jerusalem. He died in 1861 and his wife died in 1875. I have not fully investigated the family connection between him and the mother of my great grandfather, Menachem Mendel CHAIKIN (1868-1948). Chaya Esther died in Jerusalem in 1918 and the Hevra Kadisha records list her as 'the old woman' and I estimate that she was born between 1830 and 1840. Near her grave, I found the family graves of members of the HALBETZ (acronym for Levites, the sons of Zadok). I located family members that live in Eretz Yisrael and I found out that Rabbi Shmuel Gorr, preceded me and told them of the connection with Zadok Halevi as well as the middle Admor R'Dov Ber SCHNEORSON of Lubavitch. Esther's father, my grandfather's grandfather was named Zadok Halevi. I discovered a familial connection with the HALBETZ family.

In my book, I also mention Rabbi KOOK was the grandson of a Habad rabbi and led the revolution that resulted in the flourishing of religious Zionism. Before World War I, Rabbi KOOK was the chief rabbi of Jaffa where those members of the CHAIKIN family who remained in Eretz Yisrael lived as well as the SLUTZKINs who were related through marriage with the rabbi on one side and with the family of the architect Binyamin CHAIKIN on the other.

Rabbi KOOK lived three years (1913-1916) in the house of my great grandfather Mendel CHAIKIN in London.

Israeli telephone books helped me a great deal in my research and through them I got to many relatives and acquired information worth its weight in gold. The various Hevrot Kadisha, Kolelim and especially that of Habad also assisted me.

It is important to compare the lists of the Hevrot Kadisha and local lists and also to check the places of burial following the



Hevra Kadisha maps. Many family members acquired burial plots during their lifetimes that were near in location to their relatives' graves; thus, I discovered the first connection with the HALBETZ family and others. It is important to check the actual inscription on the tombstone for it frequently differs from the records in the books of the Hevra Kadisha.

The notes and conclusions of the expert genealogist the late Rabbi Samuel Gorr helped me, but I found that he, too, could make a mistake. But I was able to confirm many of his conclusions and especially the one with the HALBETZ family.

The guidance of Ms. Aviva Ne'eman was like fresh water in the desert and I have no doubt that her extensive experience, knowledge, approach and patience saved me a great deal of time and brought me a deeper understanding of the nature of genealogy and the intricate connections that tie various families from different places together. Through this research, I found connections through the generations of the CHAIKIN family with the Slonim, YOFFE, RABINOWITZ, HOROWITZ families and many others. However, most remarkable at the beginning of research were the connections that were forged in Shklov and about which I have written just a tiny bit but I have no doubt that as my genealogical research continues the widest of possible connections will be discovered.

In this essay, I quote from some of what I have written. Of course, I fear the possibility of driving the reader away and I am certain that it is preferable to read from the book itself.

My second volume contains information that I gathered during this Sisyphean task about my mother's family from the Province of Posen in Prussia, but the bulk of the book

consists of translations from articles that deal with the provincial towns where the family lived and about whom the documentation goes back to the sixteenth century. Additional essays deal with the 19<sup>th</sup> century and carry us up to the 1930s and were translated from German.

I enjoyed close help from JewishGen members and from friends and relatives.

- \* 1. Chaikins
- 2. From Prussia With Love

### **Bibliography**

See the Hebrew version of this article.

*Ehud Menachem Tzvi Cain (Chaikin) was born in Jerusalem in 1949 and was raised in the house of his paternal great-grandfather built in the Romema neighborhood that he and twelve other Jews established in 1921. While he was still in elementary school, he developed an interest in archeology and art. He participated in archeological digs conducted by Professor Yohanan Aharoni and audited his lectures. He also joined in the art classes taught by Ms. Gerta Krakauer. After his army service, he studied art at Bezalel and took part in the archeological circle led by Professor Yigal Shilo. In his service in an elite army corps, he was seriously wounded in a skirmish against a terrorist stronghold in Lebanon. In his desire to continue to serve in spite of his injury, he transferred to an armored corps as an officer of a tank unit and saw battle at a Syrian enclave. In the late 1970s, his physical condition worsened because of his battle injury as he is 100% IDF disabled. His involvement with genealogy enables him to be active despite his physical limitations.*



## Publications

### International Sephardic Journal – A New Periodical

*Mathilde Tagger*

The International Society for the Sephardic Progress has just published a very new bi-annual called the International Sephardic Journal; Exploring the Sephardic World Past and Present, Volume I, No.1, Summer 2004.

Judging by its geographical scope, it is indeed an international journal, which takes the reader from Spain and Portugal, to Greece, Sarajevo in Bosnia, Syria, the United States, North Africa, Egypt and Eretz Israel all along its 130 pages.

Jewish scholars from the United States as well as from South Africa, Turkey and Bulgaria wrote the articles, a point that certainly adds to its international scope and to its high level of research. Many of the authors are well known names among the Sephardic genealogical community like: Shlomo Alfassa, Sarina Roffe,

Seth Ward, Rufina Bernadetti, Silva Mausebaum, Marcia Ikonopoulou.

Some articles deal with the Shoah in various countries, while others tell about the Marranos in Portugal and San Benito, and the Iberian garment of shame. Two articles are dedicated to the Judeo-Spanish language, one on the Jewish life in Syria and its influence on the Syrian immigrants in the United States and, at the end, is the first of a series of biographical sketches focusing on Sephardic personalities.

Especially because of the variety of communities treated, everyone will find something interesting in this journal.

Congratulations to the editorial team and best wishes for a fruitful future!

To purchase the journal go to:  
[www.SephardicJournal.org](http://www.SephardicJournal.org).

## Summary of Articles from Foreign Journals

### ETSI, Vol.7, No.25, Juin 2004

*Mathilde Tagger*

The editorial staff of ETSI always strives for a balance in its articles dealing with both the western and the eastern segments of the Sephardic diaspora. Izmir in Turkey and Tangier in Morocco are featured in this most recent issue. The journal's editor, Laurence Abensur-Hazan, discusses the Barki family of Izmir starting with early traces of the family in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with more detail starting from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Three branches are identified and their parallel family trees are presented. A number of photographs accompany the article. The author utilized collateral documentation that she found in the rich archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris.

The second article, by Philippe Abensur, deals with the circumcision ledger of Rabbi Habib Toledano who served in Tangier between 1907 and 1929. The ledger was deciphered, but the

author does not provide us with a list of the 144 individuals included, but only presents their family names. The meticulous recording of the Mohel often includes the names of the two grandfathers of the infant, that is, details about the baby's mother's family.

New information about the Internet site of ETSI is also provided:

[www.geocities.com/Etsi-Sefarad](http://www.geocities.com/Etsi-Sefarad)

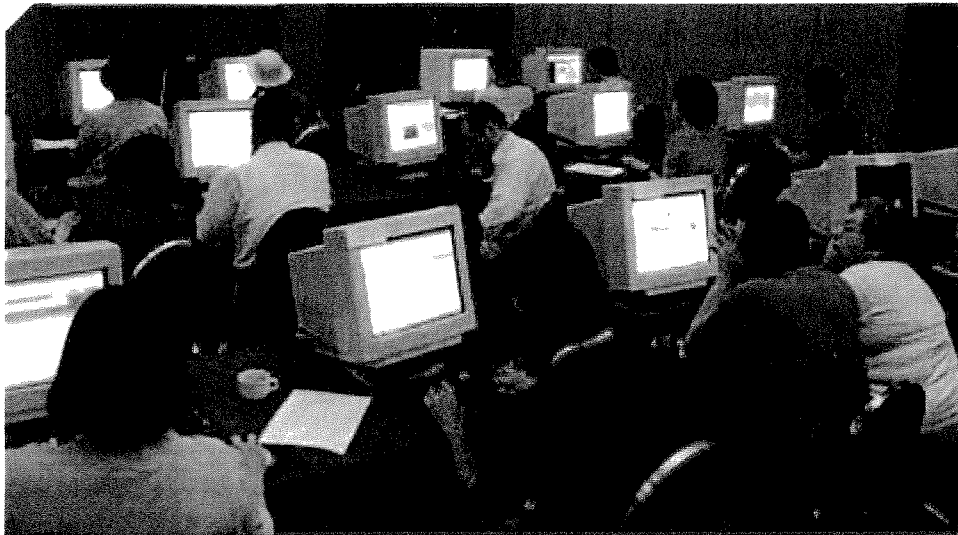
Information on the Internet site of the Association des Juifs originaires d'Egypte can be found at [www.ajoe.org](http://www.ajoe.org). Another site is mentioned that serves to perpetuate the heritage of the Jews of Alexandria, Egypt – Nebi Daniel –

<http://www.ajoe.org/Nebi/nebidaniel.htm>

At this site, one can find the census carried out in Alexandria in 1840 under the direction of Sir Moses Montefiore.



Organizing Committee, International Conference on Jewish Genealogy  
held in Jerusalem, July 2004



Participants in Computer Room at 2004 Conference