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## Editorial

This issue is quite diverse and its articles cover nearly every aspect of genealogical research.

First, as always, are family research projects and the efforts expended to add more and more names to the family trees, whether by research through the timeline, that is generation by generation or through wide-based research, expanding the family circle by adding first and second cousins, aunts and uncles and connections through marriage. We see this in the articles of Edward Gelles who continues, as in his previously published items, with a description of his family and its links with rabbinic families in Eastern Europe and Beryl Baleson, who combines the description of her family information with the development of Jewish genealogical research in South Africa.

Genealogy must also deal with the 'human side,' since behind each name stands the story of a life. Two articles fall into this category. One is the detailed research of Basil Frank, who describes with love and pride, his relative – Aaron Frank, an educator, author and poet. The second is a touching short account by Shmuel Shamir who relates the story of a foundling abandoned at birth, raised with love and devotion by her adoptive mother, who finally finds her biological family. All of this takes place in Jerusalem, in the first half of the twentieth century.

To these two articles we add from another standpoint the piece by Gilda Kurtzman that actually belongs to the genre of stories and articles that were and are being written today in the wake of the Holocaust. Combining it with details about her own family research, she tells of Jews returning to their ancestral shtetl from various places in the world to erect a monument, to restore the cemetery and to remember the Jews who once were part of the town's life.

The study of names is an inseparable part of genealogical research. Moshe Souroujon presents an exhaustive study of this rare name, its various sources and its transformations.

An important aspect in genealogy is the actual research. How do we uncover sources and reveal new directions? What is the best way to preserve newly found materials and what is the best way to approach family members to involve them in your research? No less important a question is how does the individual researcher relate to his/her study and how does he/she utilize the material that is discovered through the many coincidences one encounters in the progress of research. Two items focus on this question in this issue. Shmuel Even Or brings us a collection of sources to research his Orenstein family in the past and in the present. Shalom Bronstein encourages us telling us never to give up; every piece of information has some worth and it is possible to make use of it either today or sometime in the future.

Now to our regular features: The short stories dealing with rabbis by Yehuda Klausner are becoming a standard item. This time we also have the story of a town. We welcome more short accounts dealing with genealogy and ask our readers to review their research and sources – we are sure that additional interesting stories will be found.

Harriet Kasow presents what for the near future will be her last report on what is new in our library. She will be leaving for an extended vacation and I take this opportunity to thank her from the depths of my heart, personally and in the name of the entire editorial staff, for her selfless dedication and her important contributions to *Sharsheret Hadorot*. I hope she will continue to send us lists and articles from her research and will return to us with renewed energy.

For a number of reasons this issue does not contain abstracts of articles from foreign genealogical publications. Hopefully, they will appear in the next *Sharsheret Hadorot*.

This edition will reach your mailbox after Rosh Hashana 5766 but still close enough to the holidays to have their taste still with us. I extend to all of our readers best wishes for the New Year, a year of health, joy and peace.

*Yocheved Klausner*

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

In light of the great success of the International Conference on Jewish Genealogy that we hosted last year, it was decided to sponsor a one-day seminar whose emphasis would be little known sources that are found in Israel. The First Annual Seminar on Jewish Genealogy whose topic is Genealogical Sources in Eretz Yisrael and the World will take place on Monday, 26 Heshvan 5766, 28 November 2005, at Beit Hatefutzot, Tel Aviv under the generous sponsorship of Mr. Harvey Krueger of the United States.

The program includes seventeen lectures of which thirteen will be delivered in Hebrew. The schedule is posted on the IGS webpage where you can also read abstracts of the lectures and a biographical sketch of the presenters.

Registration will remain open for only a few more days.

To register go to the site

<http://www.isragen.org.il/NROS/YY2005/>  
or through the IGS webpage.

The organizing committee has not spared any effort to make the Seminar a success.

We extend to Harriet Kasow a bon voyage, as she will be leaving for an extended break. Harriet has served as the head librarian of the IGS for the past number of years. She has devoted her knowledge and skills, good will and voluntary spirit to enrich and expand the IGS library that has significantly developed with a wide range of books,

periodicals, brochures and videos. The computerized catalogue of the library due to be completed shortly is one of Harriet's major contributions.

**Additional Brief Notices:**

The Yad Vashem site - the database of names on the Internet: readers in Israel are invited to help locate the submitters of the pages through our site [www.isragen.org.il](http://www.isragen.org.il) going to Search for Submitters of Pages of Testimony in Israel.

Additional volunteers are needed to continue our plan to transfer archival materials to a database. For details and explanations on the project please contact Rose Feldman at [rosef@post.tau.ac.il](mailto:rosef@post.tau.ac.il)

This is also another opportunity to thank all of those who are already involved in the undertaking.

The General Meeting of the Israel Genealogical Society will be held at the Beit Hatanakh, Rothschild Blvd. 16, Tel Aviv, on Monday 12 Heshvan 5766, November 14 2005. It is open to members only. Information, the schedule and details have been sent to our membership.

Please do not forget to keep us informed of any changes in your address, telephone or email.

My address is [ehfurman@netvision.net.il](mailto:ehfurman@netvision.net.il).



## **Rabbis of Sototwina near Stanislau** **Their history and genealogical connections** *Edward Gelles*

### **Introduction**

The province of Galicia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1772 until 1918. During that period the city of Lvov went by the name of Lemberg. It is now in the Ukraine and is called Lviv. South of Lemberg lay Stanislau (now called Ivano-Frankovsk). A river route and later a railway line linked Lemberg and Stanislau and continued in a south-eastwardly direction to Kolomea and on to Czernowitz, the capital city of the neighboring province of Bukowina.

A few miles to the southwest of Stanislau were the little towns of Bohorodshany and Sototwina. They had flourishing Jewish communities in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The population of Sototwina from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century up to 1914 approached 4,000 of whom about half were Jews. The community never recovered from the ravages of the First World War and was finally destroyed in the Holocaust (Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland. The translation from *Pinkas Hakehilot Polin*, has errors and omissions).

### **Brody and the Fraenkels**

Some of the families involved in our story hailed from Brody. In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century this city, situated not far to the northeast of Lvov, became an important trading entrepot and center of Jewish learning. For a brief time, it had the third largest Jewish community in Europe. One of the scholars of the study group known as the Brody *Klaus* was Moses GELLES or Levush. The Levush epithet was retained by some of his descendants for several generations, most probably in ancestral memory of Rabbi Mordecai YAFFE of Prague (Gelles, 2002). This GELLES family was linked by marriage with the FRAENKELS of Brody and Przeworsk (Gelles 2005).

Joseph GELLES, one of the sons of Moses GELLES, was the father-in-law of Rabbi Meir Shlomo Fraenkel. The latter's father, R'Dov Ber FRAENKEL of Brody, was a first cousin of Abraham Zeev b'Binyamin FRAENKEL, ABD of Przeworsk (Wunder), who had been a *Dayan* at Brody and whose granddaughter Rachel married Abraham b'Yaakov HOROWITZ of Sedziszow (1823-1895) (Wunder, Meir Horowitz).

Yehuda Aaron FRAENKEL of Brody was the father-in-law of Jacob Jokel b'Menachem Mendl HOROWITZ, the ABD of Bolechow. Fraenkel's grandson Yehuda Aaron b' Jacob Jokel was a Rabbi at Sototwina.

There were HOROWITZ rabbinical lines in numerous Galician towns such as Dzikow, Sedziszow, Baranow, and pre-eminently in Stanislau. In the latter city the HOROWITZ family maintained a rabbinical dynasty from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century until the eve of the Second World War. Many of the smaller towns in the area, such as Tysmenitsa, Delyatin, Bolechow, and Brodshin (as the Jews called Bohorodshany) had rabbis who bore the HOROWITZ name or were closely related to them. There was an ancient tradition that in communal appointments a qualified son or, failing him, a suitable son-in-law would generally have preference in the succession.

### **Rabbi Yehuda Aaron Horowitz**

Yehuda Aaron HOROWITZ had a distinguished ancestry (Wunder, Zvi Hirsch Horowitz). He grew up in Bolechow and was later Rabbi at Sototwina. In 1858-59 he moved to the neighboring province of Bukowina and became ABD of Saniawitz. He was succeeded there by his son Rabbi Naftali. Chaim Horowitz, in *The Horowitz Families in Romania* refers to Yehuda Aharon HOROWITZ and his son Naftali as Rabbis of Mihaileni and to later

HOROWITZ Rabbis descended from them. He appears unaware of the Solotwina connection and vital dates. A historical map in *Meorei Galicia* (Wunder) shows Mihaileni adjacent to Saniawitz, a little to the south-east of Czernowitz on the borders of the former Bukowina and Bessarabia. During Yehuda Aaron's time in Solotwina two Rabbis appear to have occupied the post of *Dayan*: R'Yakov BRENNER and R'Zvi Arye (Hirsch Leib) WEINSTEIN.

### **Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Weinstein**

WEINSTEIN, who became ABD of Solotwina at about the time of Yehuda Aaron's departure, had a number of students including two who became his sons-in-law, namely BRENNER's son, Dov Berl, and my grandfather Nahum Uri. When WEINSTEIN died in 1884 my grandfather succeeded to his post and Rabbi BRENNER moved to Czernowitz.

The entries in the birth register at Melnitsa Podolskaya, for my aunt Bertha Feige Rivka in 1881 and for my father David Yitzhak in 1883, give their mother's name and place of birth as Esther WEINSTEIN "of Bukowina." Esther was born in 1861. Her mother would almost certainly have gone to her parents' home for the birth, so the registration entries for two of Esther's children tie in with the removal of the HOROWITZ family to Bukowina in 1859 and lend some support to the idea that Zvi Arye WEINSTEIN might have been a son-in-law of Yehuda Aaron HOROWITZ.

### **Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles and his family**

Nahum Uri GELLES married Esther WEINSTEIN in 1877-78. Their eldest son Efraim Fischel was born in 1879. He became a Rabbi but died at a young age. My father David was the second son. He studied at the Munkacs yeshiva in Hungary before going on to Czernowitz in his quest for a secular education, and then on to Vienna, where he became a doctor of law and an advocate. His younger brother Moshe Max and sister Lotte followed him in his profession.

At the outbreak of the First World War contact with our orthodox past appeared to be severed. However, my grandfather did come to Vienna shortly before his death and is buried there. The story of the Solotwina Rabbinate does not end with him. An entry in a Galician newspaper *Neuer Morgen Tagblatt* of 26<sup>th</sup> December 1934 read "Solotwina has still not appointed a successor to the late Rabbi Nachum Uri GELLES....One faction says that the old Rabbi's grandson should be appointed but there are very many who oppose this suggestion." My grandfather, who occupied the position of head of the rabbinical court until his death, was eventually succeeded in that post by R'Yoel BABAD.

The old Rabbi's grandson mentioned in the newspaper entry was Joseph, son of R'Efraim Fischel GELLES of Solotwina. His name appears on a list of students at the prestigious Lublin Sages Yeshiva in an appendix to the book *Imrei Da'at* by the Yeshiva's founder, Rabbi Yehuda Meir b'Yaakov SHAPIRA (Shapira, 1990). Joseph GELLES was indeed the last of our rabbinical line.

Rabbi Yehuda Meir SHAPIRA, who had taken him under his wing, was a direct descendant of Rabbi Pinchas SHAPIRO of Koretz (1726-1790), whose daughter Sarah Rachel Scheindel married Rabbi Shmuel Dov b'Mordechai, a grandson of Moses GELLES of Brody. Yehuda Meir SHAPIRA had been Rabbi at Glina, where my great-grandfather R'David Isaac GELLES (ca 1790-1870) had studied, and he was also a follower of Rabbi Israel b'David Moshe FRIEDMAN of Czortkow (1854-1933). My father's obituary in a Viennese journal in 1964 affirmed that we had a connection with the Friedman dynasty of Czortkow. Joseph's brother Leo (Ahron Leib GELLES), who died in New York in 1973, was described in a memorial notice as of the old generation of Czortkow Chasidim. His mother's family, the LEIFERS of Nadworna, were descended from Rabbi Meir b'Yaakov of Przemyslany (Gelles, 2005).

My grandfather R'Nachum Uri was born at Narayow not far from Rohatyn. HOROWITZ and their kin were rabbis in these towns. Rabbi Efraim Fischel HOROWITZ, who became ABD of Munkacz in Hungary, was a son of Jacob Jokel HOROWITZ of Bolechow by his first wife, a daughter of Menachem Nahum ZAUSMER of Stryj. Jacob Jokel's third wife was Hinde, daughter of Yehuda Aaron FRAENKEL of Brody, and her son Yehuda Aaron HOROWITZ was thus a half-brother of Efraim Fischel HOROWITZ. The latter had a son-in-law Eleazar HOROWITZ, a scion of the Stanislaw HOROWITZ line, who became ABD of Rohatyn, and whose daughter Beila married Joshua Heschel, the son of Jacob Isaac FRAENKEL-TEOMIM. Both FRAENKEL-TEOMIMs held the senior rabbinical appointment at Narayow during their careers (Wunder).

My suggestion that my great-grandmother Sarah was perhaps a daughter of Rabbi Efraim Fischel HOROWITZ is based on the following circumstantial evidence: [a] known GELLES-FRAENKEL and HOROWITZ-FRAENKEL connections; [b] tradition of rabbinical succession of sons or sons-in-law; [c] the strong tradition governing the naming of children in honor of their forebears, perhaps exemplified in this instance by Nahum (ZAUSMER), Efraim Fischel (HOROWITZ), Nahum Uri (GELLES), and his eldest son Efraim Fischel (it might be noted in this connection that David Halevi HOROWITZ of Stanislaw, who was a grandson of Efraim Fischel HOROWITZ, had both a brother and a son named Efraim Fischel; [d] my father David Isaac, who was the younger brother of Efraim Fischel GELLES, was sent at a tender age to study at the yeshiva in Munkacs. Was he sent quite some way to Hungary, rather than say to the yeshiva at Brodshin, because there were close relatives in Munkacs?

The GELLES family had several earlier links with the ancient HALPERN rabbinical clan. Abraham HALPERN, who became civic leader of the Jewish community in Stanislaw and a member of the Austrian

Parliament, married Nechama, a daughter of Rabbi Enzel ZAUSMER of Stryj, whose sister was the mother of Rabbi Efraim Fischel HOROWITZ.

### **Rabbi Yoel Babad**

The family name BABAD is formed from the Hebrew acronym of "the sons of the Av Beth Din" rendered in the vernacular as "RABINOWITZ" by which name the BABADS were also known.

The last Rabbi of Solotwina presided over the tragic final years of a once flourishing community. The progenitor of his line was Jacob BABAD, a son of Isaac KRAKOWER, the ABD of Brody and head of the BABAD family. Isaac Krakower was the son of Yissachar Ber, President of the Council of the Four Lands and son of Abraham Joshua HESCHEL, the Chief Rabbi of Krakow, a descendant of the KATZENELLENBOGEN Rabbis of Padua and Venice. R'Avraham Moshe BABAD, confirms in *Imrei Tava* (Babad), that R'Yoel BABAD was ABD of Solotwina and the grandson of Rabbi Isaac b'Chayim BABAD, ABD Sassow.

A BABAD line ran from Jacob BABAD of Tarnopol (d.1748), to Isaac of Brody (d.1761), Joshua Heschel, ABD of Tarnopol (1754-1838), Moses, ABD of Przeworsk, Chayim, ABD of Mikulince (1811-89), to Isaac, ABD of Sassow, who was Yoel BABAD's grandfather.

Yoel's grandmother was of distinguished ASHKENAZI and FRAENKEL-TEOMIM descent. She was a daughter of Yoel ASHKENAZI (ca. 1810-1882), ABD of Zloczew, one of the rabbis who ordained my grandfather, Nahum Uri GELLES (Gottlieb). A grandson of Yoel ASHKENAZI, Zvi Hirsch ASHKENAZI, was Admor of Stanislaw and married a granddaughter of Meshulam Issachar HOROWITZ (1808-1888), ABD of Stanislaw.

Yoel BABAD's great-aunt Beile was the wife of David b'Eleazar HOROWITZ of Stanislaw, who was a grandson of Rabbi Efraim Fischel HOROWITZ. It should be noted that Yoel BABAD, Efraim Fischel

HOROWITZ, and Yehuda Aaron HOROWITZ were all descendants of Jacob BABAD.

The Rabbis of Solotwina with their ancestry and family connections can be seen as a microcosm of the Galician Rabbinate that gave spiritual leadership to countless communities over many centuries. This is one of the main themes of my forthcoming book *An Ancient Lineage – European Roots of a Jewish Family* to be published by Vallentine Mitchell.

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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 forthcoming book on his family including Gelles, Griffel, Wahl, Chayes, Safier, Loew, and Taube is referred to in the text.*





## Sources in Researching the Orenstein Family

*Shmuel Even-Or*

Translated from Hebrew

### Introduction

My father, R'Yitzhak Avigdor ORENSTEIN, who faithfully served as the supervising rabbi at the Western Wall, was a multi-faceted personality. His face always projected an aura of joy, he approached people modestly and humbly and he always spoke calmly. Whoever met him, felt the inner light that emanated from him. It was his special character that led him to assume responsibility for the entire family. Family members would seek his advice, both in times of joy and also unfortunately in times of sorrow and distress. He helped them all to the best of his ability whether with deeds or with soothing words.

My father was the first in our family who decided to write a family history. To accomplish this he gathered a large amount of material that dealt with the history of people in general in Jerusalem and with particular individuals of our family. My father would interview the living family elders and the elderly men of Jerusalem who personally were acquainted with his parents' and grandparents' generations. One of the interviewees was his great great-aunt Mrs. Zlate Alte LEVY, the daughter of the family ancestors R'Uri and his wife Zissel, from whom my father garnered many important facts about her parents, her brother R'Isaiah, her husband R'Aaron LEVY and his distinguished family, about her son R'Isaac Nahum, about his grandfather, the son of her brother, the Jerusalem Gaon R'Yaakov. Aunt Zlate Alte, as she was known in the family (Grandmother Alte to the Levy branch) lived a long life. She was 93 when she died and was a well of information, filled with stories and legends of early Jerusalem life in general and about family members in particular. Likewise, my father published an article in the weekly *Hator* sponsored by the Mizrahi World Center in memory of his grandfather, the noted Jerusalem scholar R'Yaakov, in which he

describes his highly regarded personality and his extraordinary spirit. In his article titled *My Father and My Grandfather* that appeared in the book *Ha'ahvah* he discusses his own father, R'Moshe.

It was my father's intention to add details about R'Uri that became known to him once the rich archives of Moses Montefiore were opened to researchers. He also planned to publish the history of the rest of the family and its members. However, to our great misfortune, he never achieved that goal and the large collection of rare materials he possessed was destroyed when the Old City fell to villainous scoundrels. His home was destroyed, his library and the manuscripts he wrote were burned and my father along with my late mother, sacrificed their lives in the Name of God when they died in the enemy's bombardment – May God Avenge Their Blood.

While at home when I was still young, I would hear my father relate some of the stories of his forebears. They were recorded in my memory bank but that was it. Like many youthful individuals in those years I was not interested in the history of the family and I did not gaze in on the enchanted world of bygone days. Only with the passing of years did the vital importance of the appreciation of the story of our family and the recording of its history penetrate my consciousness. I then began to collect data on the members of our family. To my great disadvantage, I did not have the most important resource – family elders, but with a little from here and a little from there, I succeeded in gathering important and interesting details.

### Sources for Researching the Family

Sources for studying the family are for the most part identical to the records we have for studying general history. However, the family researcher must investigate additional materials that relate to his specific project.

Oral traditions are considered accurate for up to three generations of a family since practically everyone knows in a general sense the names and dates of his parents and grandparents. He can obtain this data from his parents, aunts and uncles and other relatives. There are certain families who have information dating back much further to even earlier generations.

Written records include documents, letters, diaries, memoirs and newspaper announcements about family events. In addition, there are books written by family members and listings of individuals in encyclopedias or citations in biographies.

Following are some of the sources that I made use of:

[These are all Hebrew works; it is suggested that the readers refer to the Hebrew version of this article if they wish to make use of any of them.]

1. Certainly, the most important resource at my disposal were my father's booklets about his great-grandfather R'Uri, which served as the foundation along with his articles about his father and grandfather mentioned earlier.

2. Over the years a number of books have appeared that were written by various family members and I was able to garner important information from them. They were written by R'Moshe Blau, Mr. Yaakov Orenstein, Mr. Eliashiv Oren, R'Amram the son of R'Moshe Blau and are often referred to in family genealogical studies.

3. *Sefer Hayahas L'mispahat Rivlin* published by R'Eliezer Rivlin served as a basic book for getting to know the personal names of family members over the generations, which were submitted by my late father to the author of the volume. We are connected to the Rivlin family in two ways: (a) The wife of our ancestor Isaiah ORENSTEIN, Tzipora Tzipah was the daughter of R'Moshe (Magid) RIVLIN; (b) The wife of our great-grandfather R'Jacob Orenstein, Tzipora Dreiza, was the daughter of grandmother Rasha, who in turn was the daughter of grandmother Rivka, the daughter of R'Moshe (Magid) RIVLIN.

4. There are articles from which I gleaned information, and in journals I found relatives in the lists of contributors to the JNF (Jewish National Fund). In various archives I found a tremendous amount of information from which I could build a history of the family: the Central Zionist Archives, the microfilm department of the JNUL (Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem) and the Archives of Religious Zionism.

5. I read the numerous accounts of relatives who related information that they heard from previous generations.

6. From correspondence with family members I received information on the towns of the family's origin and I checked accounts appearing in the books devoted to these locations. Most were in the region of Pinsk and Minsk. The memorial books on towns that have been published over the past few years by Holocaust survivors and their descendants are an important additional resource. Following are a number of the Yizkor books that were of help in researching my forebears:

\* The book on the community of Zdziesciol a town in Byelorussia where R'Uri Orenstein, the founder of the family was born. In order to better understand the mold in which he was cast and his boundless devotion to God, I began to search the background of the town of his birth and I found what I was looking for. The town of Zdziesciol where the young Uri was raised was a place of Torah and commerce that produced some remarkable people. Although small in number the Zdziesciol Jews were unsurpassed from a spiritual, cultural and societal standpoint. They were noted for their love of their fellow Jews, their devotion to others and their loyalty to God. Faithfulness and the spirit of mutual help paced the beat of their hearts. It was these values that our ancestor R'Uri upheld.

\* *Sefer Slonim* – An attractive and interesting regional town on the Shchara River that had one of the oldest Jewish communities of Lithuania and Byelorussia. It was a notable town where previous generations produced a combination of rabbis and intellectuals, notable scholars of

the Torah and illustrious Jewish leaders. R'Uri began studying in the town's famous Yeshiva in his teenage years continuing until the age of twenty-five when he came on Aliya to Eretz Yisrael. In *Sefer Slonim* I found the answer to why our grandfather joined the Habad Hasidim even though he was from a family of *Mitnagdim*, why he left behind his large and supportive family, his enviable rank in society as 'the genius of Slonim,' and a good living as the deputy director of a bank, and settled in Eretz Yisrael.

\* *Sefer Pinsk – Karlin*. Here I found a good deal of interesting information about R'Yitzhak the head of the rabbinical court of Karlin. He was the father of the matriarch of the family, Zisl, and the author of the commentary on the Talmud *Keren Orah*. There was material on his brother R'Yaakov, also the head of the Karlin rabbinical court and the author of the rabbinical works *Mishkanot* and *Kehilat Yaakov*. They both served as rabbis of the city, one following the other. Their descendants include members of the MINKOVSKY, BRUCHIN, ORENSTEIN and MACHNES families and related branches.

\* In both the book *Shiva' K'ruim* on the Minsk community and in the Karlin Hevra Kadisha book there is an abundance of information.

Veteran researchers believe that one should start with the history of the matriarch of the family and then work on the male side. I researched the history of the family's matriarch, Zisel, the daughter of R'Yitzhak, the author of *Keren Orah*, a nine-volume work on the Talmud, and his wife Sheine Esther the daughter of R'Leib and Zlate Machnes. I found six generations of notable scholars (geonim), rabbis of towns and outstanding Torah authorities, they and their descendants, from grandmother Zisel back to R'Leib, the head of the rabbinical court of Minsk. Unfortunately, I was unable to research the ancestors of R'Uri because of a lack of information. Perhaps, with God's

help, I will still find the necessary building materials.

The family of my mother, Mushka Leiba, is interconnected with two well known and important families in the history of the settlement of Eretz Yisrael: on the side of my mother's father, R'Asher WIDMAN, the SOLOMON family and on the side of my mother's mother, Chaya Rikel nee SLOTKIN, the SLONIM family. A number of years ago a book titled *Sefer Hatzeatzaim* appeared listing those descended from R'Schneour Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Habad (Lubavitch) Hasidism in which the Slonim family occupies a large part.

Arieh SOLOMON was the great grandson of R'Avraham Shlomo Zalman TZOREF, the ancestor of the noted Solomon family of Jerusalem. He married a woman from the Orenstein family and he prepared a Solomon family tree. The cards on which he recorded all of the information were transferred after his death to attorney Dr. Simcha Mandelbaum, a descendant of the *Rashaz* [R'Avraham Shlomo Zalman Tzoref]. He published a two-volume work on ten generations of the descendants of the *Rashaz*.

A few years ago, in the framework of the IGS, I lectured on the six generations beginning with R'Leib, the master of the Tosafot from 1640 (that is what is known) up to R'Yitzhak the author of *Keren Orah* who died in 5512/1852. The title of the lecture was *A Journey in Quest of Ancestors – from Minsk to Pinsk by Way of Shklov*.

I continue to seek data on the Minkovsky family, beginning with R'Yitzhak and his descendants. After his and his brothers' generation, who were all noted rabbinic scholars and rabbis, we do not have records of further outstanding scholars with the notable exception of the late Professor Saul Lieberman, the world renowned expert in the Jerusalem Talmud and the Tosefta in our generation and the rabbis of the Orenstein family about whom I wrote in the booklet *Toldot uMa'asim II – Annals and Deeds II* [IGS 1989]. In contrast, we have data on people involved in commerce, physicians,

scholars and even a noted artist Mauricy Minkovsky.

One also needs luck in research. Sometimes you find the end of a string and when you pull you find an entire world while other times you come up empty handed. Family members who came to Eretz Yisrael during and after World War II, lost connection with their grandparents' generation. They came as Holocaust survivors aged 12 to 15 and could not tell us their grandparents' names. I hope one day to recover their roots and retrieve that which was lost.

There are articles in encyclopedias both in Hebrew and foreign languages on the famous professors of the Minkovsky family. Recently, I began corresponding with descendants and I hope to receive further data on them and their descendants.

#### **Books Dealing with Genealogy:**

The full list, along with bibliography of the articles on the history of his family published by Shmuel Even-Or is in the Hebrew section.

*Shmuel Even-Or Orenstein, born in 1929 and the son of Rabbi Yitzhak Avigdor and*

*Mushka Leiba Orenstein, is a 6<sup>th</sup> generation Jerusalemite. When his father was appointed the supervising rabbi of the Kotel (Western Wall) he moved to the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. Both his father and mother fell in the battle for the Jewish Quarter during the War of Independence. He studied at ultra-Orthodox institutions and was a member of the Bnai Akiva Youth Movement. He volunteered for the Palmah at the age of 17 and in the War of Independence he fought in the Negev and in the battle for Jerusalem. He wrote about this period in his book Poza v'Anashav – A Memorial Book for an Esteemed Friend who Fell in Battle. For many years he worked for the Jewish National Fund. He is a licensed guide and for more than 35 years he has given guided tours of Jerusalem on a voluntary basis. He has written books and articles on the history of the city and its inhabitants. Among them are B'lev Yerushalayim and Yoman Hakotel Hama'aravi. In recognition of his years of voluntary services that have enabled many to learn about Jerusalem and his efforts to perpetuate the legacy of those who fought for her he was awarded the honorary title of "A Worthy of Jerusalem."*



A One Day Seminar  
**“Family Roots in the Land of Israel and in the World”**  
Will be held on November 28, 2005, Beit Hatefutzot, Tel Aviv  
Schedule and Registration Form can be downloaded from  
[www.isragen.org.il/NROS/YY2005/](http://www.isragen.org.il/NROS/YY2005/)

# The Enigma of the Family Name Souroujon

*Moshe Souroujon*

Translated from Hebrew

## 1. Introduction

The Jews who freely chose to settle in Italy, Greece, Egypt and Turkey during the time of the Second Temple, established communities along the coasts of these countries in the Mediterranean basin, the Balkans and Asia Minor. After the destruction of the second Temple, the Bar Kokhba rebellion and Hadrianic persecutions additional refugees as well as Jews who were sold as slaves joined them. Together, they formed the group of Jews in exile known as the Romaniots. In addition, another group of Jews arrived in Spain after and subsequent to the destruction of the second Temple. A minority came as slaves while most of them arrived with the waves of spreading Islam from North Africa, Gibraltar to Andalusia. For some seven hundred years, until they were expelled in 1492 they developed into what is known today as Sephardic Jewry. After the Expulsion, those who wished to live openly as Jews spread about in every direction. While some went to Portugal, others chose Amsterdam, Holland, North Africa (Magreb) and the Mediterranean Basin, that is Italy, Greece and Turkey.

The majority of the Souroujon family members who are in Israel came from Bulgaria and Turkey. The Turkish branch is almost certainly the older of the two and originates either with Romaniot Jews or those who came as refugees either in the wake of the Expulsion in 1492 or in subsequent smaller waves. While most of the Turkish Souroujons arrived from the city of Istanbul a smaller number came from Adrianople – Edirne. The Bulgarian branch of the family almost certainly arrived in that country after the great fire in Edirne, which is near today's border with Bulgaria. At first, the family settled in the city of Shumen and from there moved to Varna, Ruschuk and Sofia. As all of this area was

under Ottoman rule, it was not difficult to move from one part of the country to another.

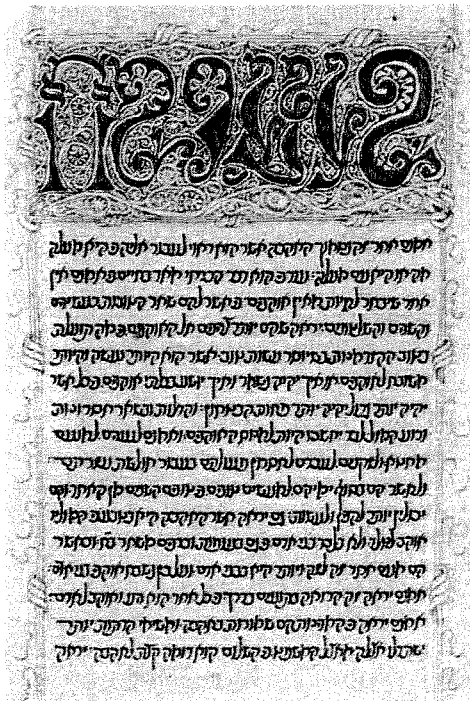
Another support for this theory is that both the male and female personal names of the two groups are the same. Commonly used male names are Aaron, Nisim, Judah, Isaac, Raphael, Samuel, Leon, Moses, Abraham (Albert) and David. Women's names include Diamanta, Lina, Luna, Sultana, Stella, Rebecca, Flora and Sara.

There are a number of theories surrounding the origin of the family name and I will attempt to analyze them in this article. One opinion places its origin in Spain, as there is a town by this name in the Iberian Peninsula. I have not found any support for this idea. A second theory traces the name to Portugal as in the early language of the country the name means surgeon. One of my aunts claims that during her visit to Lisbon a local woman told her that she was going to the *Surujon Dentista*, that is an oral surgeon. According to Dr. Haim Beinart, the authority on medieval Spain and the Inquisition, the word in Old Spanish means physician. It appears that the English word surgeon also shares the same source. The claim that the family originated in Spain since all branches of the family spoke Ladino is not conclusive. Within a generation or two after the arrival of those expelled from Spain, Ladino became the *lingua franca* displacing the Greek spoken by the Romaniots. Greek speakers quickly became the minority in their communities. (Rosanes, 1934).

## 2. A Spanish town named Hita

About 80 kilometers northeast of Madrid is a Spanish town called Hita. According to various sources and documentation in an article published in 1972 in the periodical *Sepharad*, this town had an active Jewish community until the Expulsion. Among the Jews mentioned by name in the article are

Moses, Samuel, David and Jamillah Souroujon. The name was spelled Çurujon or Çurujano. The 'S' has replaced the 'Ç' in modern Spanish. Sometimes the name is written Çirujano, but this probably refers to the profession and not to the family name. With the Expulsion Edict, the Hita community dispersed and the Souroujon name is no longer found there. It is most likely that this article represents the first proof that the family name originated in Spain and that those who bear the Souroujon name today can trace their origin to Spain.



A document found in Hita, Spain, written in Medieval Hebrew script

### 3. The System of Population Relocation Called Sürgün

After the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, the sultans Mehmet II (1451-1481) and Bayazid II (1481-1512) sought to consolidate their control over the cities and territories they now ruled. One approach was to settle amicable populations in them and among those chosen to fill this role were Jews. It can be assumed that these Jews came against their will and one can say that they were expelled from their original areas

and forcibly moved to Istanbul, Adrianople and other places.

Here the name Surgun comes into the picture. There is a word in Turkish – sürgün, which means expelled or displaced. The scheme of relocating populations, which had its origins in ancient times, and which was chosen by the sultans was known as 'the surgun system.' The historian Salomon Rosanes in his book *Histoire des Israelites de Turquie*, Part 2 (1934) and Rivka Cohen (1984) in studying Greek Jews, mention the existence of groups of these resettled 'sürgün' people in Istanbul. In an expansive article on the Sürgün system, Joseph Hacker, who studied Ottoman Jewry (1990), offers the explanation that families that bear the name Souroujon and its variants today are the descendants of those Jews resettled under this system (page 72). However, Jews relocated by the Turks in the centuries following were also called 'sürgün' and so the name may include those from a later period of time.

The sürgün system, as was common practice in ancient Hellenistic Greece, was also used to expel or exile individuals who violated the law in one way or another and were required to leave their homes. For some of the exiles their classification as 'surgun' became their family name.

Another opinion is that when those expelled from Spain settled in the suburbs of Istanbul they encountered the already established community. The new Jewish arrivals were called exiles or *surguns* by the veteran dwellers and some of them adopted that term as their family name.

In my opinion, there are three difficulties with these explanations:

a. Nearly all of the Souroujons that I interviewed in Israel and around the world, some sixty families, spell or pronounce their name closer to the Spanish way that is with a 'Z' or 'J' rather than with a hard 'G,' which is the Turkish way. The fact that sometimes the name appears in the telephone book with a 'G' is because of an error on the part of the telephone book that those families have not corrected. Those who use the letter 'G' have

told me that their parents or grandparents spelled the name Souroujon or Surujon.

b. Since the name's Turkish counterpart has a negative connotation, it does not stand to reason that it was adopted willingly. If it were forced on them, it certainly would not be so widespread.

c. If the Turkish Surgun system were so widespread, one would expect to encounter Christians and Moslems bearing this family name. I have not come across anyone, including an Internet search with this name that was not Jewish.

#### 4. Souroujon from 1207?

The Jewish historian Avram Galante (1873-1961) who researched the history of Turkish Jews at the University of Istanbul mentions in his book *Histoire des Juifs de Turquie* an article published in Izmir in 1901 in the Turkish and Ladino periodical *El Meseret*. In it, the editor Alexander Ben Ghiat quotes from a book written in 1240 and published c. 1590, where two Jews, one by the name of Israel Souroujon, left the city of Skalanova, Kushadasi today and traveled to Smyrna (Izmir) to meet a wealthy Jew named Isaac Alfasi in 1207.

This is astounding but it is a pity that Galante did not provide the title of the book or the chapter. Interestingly, the author of the newspaper article in *El Meseret* spelled the name Surujo and he apparently meant Souroujon.

Scholars specializing in the Jews of Turkey and Spain that I consulted, were all of the opinion that Jews bearing this name randomly wandered around Turkey during these years. They believe that a three hundred year error occurred in converting the Hebrew date to the secular date. This story is not mentioned in the book of Salomon Rosanes *Histoire des Israelites de Turquie*.

#### 5. Rabbi Aharon Souroujon

Abraham Franco published a Hebrew book in Rashi script of commentaries on the various Torah portions titled *Beit Aharon* in Istanbul in 5438/1678. It was written by R. Aaron Souroujon (Rosanes 1934). He

spelled his name differently in two places. Original copies are located in the JNUL and in the library of Bar Ilan University. Reprints are available in Brooklyn, New York. The introduction mentions nothing about the author or his background. As far as I know, this is the earliest reference to the family name in Turkey.



The first page of the Beit Aharon book, Constantinople, 1678

#### 6. The Crypto-Jew Surujon from Tarragona

In my search for any Souroujon in the world via the Internet, one day I ran across a Souroujon who was a pharmacist by profession who worked in a drug store in the city of Tarragona, located close to Barcelona, Spain. His full name is Enrique Gheron Surujon. I was quite excited with this find. Who could ask for more than living evidence for the source of the name? That was not all, for he also bore an additional name that indicated a connection to the city of Gerona. A name in itself that was no less well noted among many of the Spanish exiles spread throughout the Balkans.

As great as was my excitement, so was my disappointment. I phoned him to clarify if indeed he was a Surujon although apparently not a Jew or maybe did not know that he had Jewish connections or maybe did not want to reveal his origin. When he understood that I was calling from Israel and that I was a Souroujon too, he showed no further interest in continuing the conversation and sought to end it. The question remains, who is this solitary Surujon in Spain? Is he a descendant of the Marranos that still retains the family name? If he were cooperative I could have learned more from him, not to speak of a DNA test that would shed additional light on a family relationship.

### **7. A Census of the Souroujons in Israel and throughout the World**

At a certain stage, I decided that if I were to list all of the Souroujons throughout the world, perhaps I would get an answer to some of the remaining unsolved questions such as the possibility of finding additional sources for the name, locate further family members, group the Turkish branch and the Bulgarian branch under one tree or find the missing link between the two of them.

As a first step, I printed a computerized list of all the names, using every possible variant spelling, of the Souroujons living in Israel along with their telephone numbers. Then I contacted all of them by phone and interviewed those family members who were more prepared to co-operate and to pass on further information. Some were motivated to include me in their endeavors, some were of the optimal age, that is old enough to remember previous generations yet still clear-minded enough not to confuse names and generations. In order to reduce errors as far as possible, I circulated the results among family members. Afterwards, I constructed a family tree for each family grouping and looked to see if there were any connections with previous listings based on interviews. Here and there, I was fortunate and found connections that even family members were unaware of. Locating Souroujons outside of Israel was done via the Internet and I obtained email addresses

from various local families who were in contact with families living abroad.

By the end, I was able to chart all of the Souroujons living in Israel and abroad arriving at sixty family units numbering approximately 500 individuals.

I was unable to uncover any new details about the origin of the name or the family; neither was I able to connect the various branches onto one tree or find the missing link to unite the Bulgarian and Turkish segments. Because of a lack of information, I was stuck at 1850, the earliest I could go back. I should also point out that a number of Souroujons in Israel, Hebraized their names choosing Yarden, Yisrael, Zur or Sarid. This fact makes tracing families even more difficult and these people were found in the end through the help of other family members who knew of them and directed me to them.

Following is a list of the earliest Souroujons I was able to identify through the help of various families.

#### ***Turkish Branch***

1. R. Samuel*	Souroujon 1800	Istanbul
2. Raphael	Souroujon 1830	Istanbul
3. Abraham	Souroujon 1830	Istanbul
4. Isaac	Souroujon 1850	Istanbul
5. Jacob	Souroujon 1850	Istanbul
6. Samuel	Souroujon 1850	Adrianople
7. Aaron	Souroujon 1860	Istanbul
8. David	Souroujon 1860	Adrianople
9. Joseph	Souroujon 1860	Adrianople
10. Ben-Zion	Souroujon 1860	Istanbul
11. Judah	Souroujon 1860	Adrianople
12. Solomon	Souroujon 1870	Istanbul
13. Bekhor	Souroujon 1870	Adrianople
14. Marco	Souroujon 1880	Istanbul

#### ***Bulgarian Branch***

1. Elijah*	Souroujon 1840	Shumen
2. Joseph	Souroujon 1850	Shumen
3. Isaac (Hako)	Souroujon 1870	Shumen
4. Israel	Souroujon 1870	Varna
5. Joseph	Souroujon 1870	Shumen
6. Shabtai	Souroujon 1870	Shumen
7. Jacob	Souroujon 1870	Shumen
8. Solomon	Souroujon 1870	Shumen
9. Mirkush	Souroujon 1870	Varna
10. David	Souroujon 1870	Varna
11. Isaac	Souroujon 1890	Ruschuk
12. Solomon	Souroujon 1870	Varna
13. Nisim	Souroujon 1870	Varna



\* It is possible that some of the names in the above lists are brothers or cousins. The year is the estimated year of birth.

All in all, twenty-seven heads of families that broke up into sixty independent family units that have no familial or social connections were found. I did not include in this number the women that were born and married since these people changed their names and their descendants no longer bear the family name even though they are an integral part of the Souroujon family.

Today members of the extended family live in Turkey, Bulgaria, France, Morocco, Cuba, Argentina, Mexico and the United States.

### **8. A Souroujon Anecdote**

Among the people I interviewed was a woman bearing this name. As usual, I opened by asking her if she came to Israel from Bulgaria or Turkey. On rare occasions I am told that the family came from Egypt or Russia. This time, a surprise awaited me as it turned out that this family came from Poland. It further developed that they were of Ashkenazi origin on both sides. The explanation was as follows: the way that the name was pronounced, 'Surezon,' had a Yiddish meaning, 'the son of Sara.' So, this family had no connection with the Souroujon family but when Hebrew is written without vowel sounds, one can easily make a mistake.

### **9. The Metamorphosis of the Spelling and Pronunciation of the Name**

I will now present the variations in the spelling of the name both in Hebrew and foreign languages that I have so far come across. They result from the fact that the name no longer has a contemporary meaning although it did have a meaning in archaic Spanish. The variations in Hebrew can be traced to the postal service, the phone company and the Ministry of the Interior none of whom were meticulous in transcribing foreign names as they were pronounced. On more than one occasion during an interview that resulted from finding the name in a telephone book, my

pronunciation of the name was corrected. The older generation who came as Olim from abroad, almost never pronounced or spelled the name using the letters 'g' or 'j' but used 'z' or 'zh' instead. The listing of non-Hebrew variant spellings follow: Surujon, Suroujon, Surojon, Souroujon, Sourigon, Soroujon, Sorojon and Sorogon. The Hebrew text of this article contains the Hebrew variants.

There is an interesting detail concerning the variations in the spelling the name in foreign languages. If the origin of the name were in Spain it would have first been spelled Çurujon and subsequently Surujon. When it came to the Turkish areas where French was dominant, the name was written showing French influence – the 'u' became 'ou.' With the rise of nationalism in Europe and the displacement of French from its dominant *lingua franca* position, some Jews changed the 'ou' back to 'u.' Those who settled in Cuba and South America reverted to the Spanish origin of the name while others maintain the French spelling to this day.

### **10. Souroujons and the Holocaust**

One of the emotionally charged incidents in the search for the origin of the name came when a young representative of the family from Cherbourg, France approached me. In the copy of his family tree that I asked him to send me, a father and son who perished in the Holocaust were listed. This was my first encounter with the fact that members of the family were among the victims. Until then, I incorrectly thought that since most of the Souroujons were in Turkey or Bulgaria during World War II, they all survived.

When I received this information, I contacted Yad Vashem to see if they had any information on additional family members who may have perished in the death camps. A week later I received a list with ten names. They were all from France and were caught by the Gestapo when Paris fell to the Germans.

The contact from Cherbourg related a strange detail to me. His great-grandfather Judah Sourijon was born in Istanbul in 1860,

but his son who immigrated to France in 1925 changed his name with the rise of the Nazis to Moise Sourigon. This change did not help him or his son escape from the Nazi fangs. In retrospect it is strange why he believed this minor change would have saved him.

### 11. Souroujons in the Arts

It is known that the Souroujons have an artistic aptitude. At least two well known personalities have left their mark in this noble area. One was the artist Sultana Souroujon, whose first steps in the field were taken in her native city of Sofia. Later, she studied at the Sorbonne and settled in Israel where she mostly painted portraits of people she met here. She lost her life in an auto accident in 1961. Her works are on display in the Sofia Museum, Tel Aviv Museum and in private homes. Her brother Leon is a noted violinist who still lives in Sofia. Hila and Aram, an actress and disc jockey respectively represent the young generation.

### 12. Inbreeding or 'Protect Me and I will Protect You'

Among the Sephardic families in the last century and even more so in earlier times, there was a widespread custom for relatives such as first cousins and uncles and nieces to marry each other. There are many examples in my collection of Souroujon family trees. The reason, as explained to me by various family members, was mostly economic for in this way the family inheritance would be protected. However, there were negative results. We know from the fields of medicine and biology that one consequence of inbreeding is the appearance of certain genetic illnesses and some forms of mental illness. Thus, I have recorded a large number of Souroujon descendants throughout the generations where the number of unmarried individuals was proportionally higher than in other families.

### 13. The Importance of Cemeteries

One of the approaches to the study of old Jewish communities is to visit the

cemeteries of the diaspora and record as far as possible the inscriptions on those tombstones that have survived the ravages of time and war. Among the researchers who follow this method, are Professor Mina Rosen of the University of Haifa who has recorded Turkish cemeteries, Professor Daniel Kazez, a musicologist at Wittenberg University in Ohio, who focused on the reconstruction of the marriage and necrology lists on the Jews of Istanbul and Mr. Joseph Covo of Herzliya who has recorded the names of those buried in the Jewish cemetery of Shumen, Bulgaria. Data has been published in the past few years that may enable researchers to find familial relationships between various branches when there is no longer anyone alive who can verify such connections.

### 14. Various Historical Souroujons in Eretz Yisrael and the World

[Full references are found in the Hebrew section]

The researchers Dov Hacohen and Yaron Ben-Naeh have collected for me references to Souroujons found in responsa and other literature in the library of Yad Ben Zvi Institute in Jerusalem.

- a. One of the followers of Shabtai Zvi was Jacob ben Isaac Souroujon whose manuscript is still extant.
- b. A wealthy Jewish merchant from Istanbul who served as a diplomat in Calcutta in the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Mentioned in the Encyclopedia Judaica. Fischel, W. J.
- c. A family that lived in the Istanbul suburb Piri Pasha before 1713.
- d. Zinbul de Souroujon is buried on the Mt. of Olives, c. 1800.
- e. The prominent Jilibi Yauda Souroujon from the village of Hasko is mentioned among those who made possible the publication of *Yismah Moshe*, Izmir 1868.
- f. Nisim Jacob Souroujon who lived in Jaffa in 1852
- g. Isaac Souroujon, who was an emissary from Tiberias 1774-1777.
- h. Hayim Souroujon, a military physician who was part of the Salonica (Thessalonica) community from 1870 on.

i. Nisim Souroujon who lived in Istanbul in 1880 and served for a time as a diplomat in Greece.

### 15. Now What?

There are still Souroujons in Istanbul and in spite of the multi-level family and geographic relationship the connection with them remains weak. Some of them are assimilated and continue to be absorbed into the local Moslem population. In a generation or two they will disappear. This is a sad fact that is not unique to the Turkish diaspora.

Lately, with the warming of relations with Turkey, the universities and the various archives of key cities have opened to Israeli researchers of Jewish history. It is hoped that the current intensive research will shed new light on the enigma of the Souroujon name.

The definitive answer to the origin of the name will be given only if DNA samples are taken from a number of sixty branches from Bulgaria and Turkey that I have collected and are checked for genetic relationship. Then we will be able to determine the genetic closeness of the Souroujons to some other Jewish families of strict Spanish origin, to find out if there is a common genetic pool that will prove the relationship to the early form of the name in Spain before 1453. This will also separate those with a peripheral link or those in the Turkish Empire who adopted the name because of the expulsion/relocation system then operating.

### Acknowledgments

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## Aaron Frank and Family

### *Basil Frank*

My interest in Aaron FRANK and the quest for the family history was catalyzed first in 1965. In looking through family photo albums, I was drawn to him because of the aura emanating from this photo of an East European intellectual. At the time I was into reading many of the intellectual giants such as Brecht, Dostoevsky and Marx. I was curious as to who he could be. My late father told me he was a cousin of my *zaida* (my grandfather). That was the beginning. Other bits and pieces of information came by way of family members. My third cousin Miriam NOVIKOFF (see chart) told me that he had been the teacher of former MK Dov Shilansky. He remarked to her that he had learned everything from Aaron Frank. In 1999 when my father's cousin Simah EKSTEIN of Tel Aviv was very ill she told her son Gaby about the family and had him draw the family tree. Next to Aaron's name the word genius was written. When my father died, in 1999, I decided to do family research. During spare time between my art projects, I began questioning second and third cousins who were living in Israel. I had to puzzle together all the pieces utilizing with much patience the snippets of family information provided me in a sea of emotion and disjointed stories. This led me to family testimonies at Yad Vashem, which then went from what had been a part-time project to full time Holocaust research on the family. I read *Lithuanian Jewish Communities* by Nancy and Stuart Schoenberg. I jumped with joy when under Schidlova (Siluva) there was a reference to the educator and writer Aaron FRANK. Finally I had discovered another artist in the family, who had also been a poet and a friend of Chaim Nachman Bialik.

My grandfather, Rav Isaac Jacob FRANK (b. Shidlova [Szydlow] 1878-1965) formerly a *talmid* (pupil) of the Yeshiva Telsz (Telsiai), Lithuania and his wife, Bella (RABINOWITZ) and their 3 sons (see chart)

left Lithuania in 1921 for South Africa via London. He had received a letter from his wife's uncle, a Mr. Krieger from Cape Town with money for the journey.

In 1961, he decided to visit his surviving family in Israel, who had immigrated to Palestine in 1931, 1933, 1939 and 1945/46: Israel KIMCHI formerly MILLER, Chassia Frank's son who was born in 1912 in Shidlowa and died in 1970 in Natanya; the daughters of Elije FRANK, born in Shavli (Siliai): Fania (Novikoff) born in 1905 and died in Tel Aviv and Batya FRANK (ZIF) 1900-1994; Elije Frank's son Tolleck was born in 1913 and died in Vilna in 1998. He was an accountant and a communist and therefore made a living. He came to Palestine in 1933. Batya's son, Yitzhack ZIF born in 1919 and currently living in Ra'anana came to Palestine after World War II. The daughters of Martje Frank (OKOOR) were Genia (GROSSMAN) and Sima (ECKSTEIN).

Martje Frank (Okoor), Aaron Frank and Elije Frank were the children of Nathan Frank, Nathan's brother was Berchik Frank and his children were Isaac Frank, Chassia Frank (Miller/Kimchi) and Chana Frank (Miller).

After staying three months in Israel, my *Zaida* returned to Cape Town. While I know that during his visit to Israel he had learned the horrendous stories the family had suffered during the Holocaust, he skillfully avoided relating them further. There was too much pain involved for him to be able to relate to his son and grandchildren. He did not mention the family losses in the Holocaust including that of his sister. The only story he did relate, however, was how he had given advice to a friend (whom he visited again in Ramat Gan) to study in a Yeshiva in Lithuania and how his friend's wife had subsequently suffered bitterly, leading to near starvation. It has dawned

upon me that this was his way to distract us from the harsh reality of the Holocaust. He repeated this story as the highlight of his trip. Like many South African Lithuanian Jews he took his family history to the grave, and refrained from sharing that his beloved Chassia Miller was bombed in Operation Barbarossa in 1941 in Kovno. This information has since been confirmed by Tova Kimchi (Miller) of Natanya, the late mother of my cousin Chassidah Kimchi-Cohen and granddaughter of Chassia Miller as well as by the research of Saul Isseroff and Rose Lehrer Cohen in their book *The Holocaust in Lithuania*. Rav Isaac Jacob Frank's first cousin Martje Okoor and her family were massacred in Kol Noij Raseinai in Lithuania and his first cousins Elije and brother Aaron (Ohrel), students in the Hebrew Gymnasium, as well as the teacher, writer and friend Eliezer Yerushalmi survived. According to Professor Dov Levin's *Pinkas Lita* Aaron Frank died in Dachau. Elije Frank's wife Chaya Volozinsky was murdered in a bunker in Shavli.

What Professor Levin did not know was that the Yiddish version of Aaron's name was Ohrel and it was found in the Frank family Pages of Testimony at Yad Vashem, named after his grandfather Ohrel Frank. With the help of Isseroff's and Lehrer Cohen's book and the search through the German Red Cross Nazi Arolsen microfilm death notices located at Yad Vashem, the following entry was found: *B. 1891/2 Schiluna (Sidlova) Lith. Jew name Ohrel Frank 27/7/44 to c/c prison Stuffhof from Kauen; transferred 28.8.44 to Dachau. On 25/9/44 transferred to Auschwitz.*

I am deeply indebted to Professor Yechiel Zilberman who had been a pupil of Aaron Frank. Formerly of Moscow University, he had fled Shavli, Lithuania in 1941 and immigrated in 1994. Yechiel guided me precisely as to where to research Aaron's work in the Jewish National and University Library where the Lithuanian newspapers *Hasofer*, *Hed Lita*, *Netivot*, *Di idische shtime* (publ. Kovno, editor Leib Garfunkel 1896-

1976) and *Bemisholei Hachninuch* are located. I found a book commemorating Aaron Frank on the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday written by his former pupils. Eta Goz, Archivist of the Igud Yotsei Lita, who was another pupil in the Shavli Hebrew Gymnasium and a Dachau survivor, supplied me with photographs of Aaron Frank and his pupils.



*Homage to Mr. Aaron Frank on the occasion his fiftieth anniversary 1889-1939 by his pupils and colleagues in the Hebrew High School in Shavli (Hagymnasia Ha'ivrit BeShavli)*

Additional resources for tracing Ohrel Frank included the lists of *Rabbis in Eastern Europe* and the Litvak SIG of JewishGen on the Internet. My paternal great grandfather Berchik (Reb Dov Ber) and his brother Nathan (Nosel) who was born in 1852 were nominated to the Rabbis' Electors list. From among 300 rabbis in the Shidlova community Nathan was one of several nominated to this list to be chosen Rabbi of the community. Ohrel Frank was the

grandfather of Aaron (Ohrel) Frank the educator, poet and author.

The other avenue for research of Aaron Frank is the former Lenin Library of St. Petersburg, which includes a Jewish Library and is called the St. Petersburg Library. To date we have found 20 poems and articles. Some of his work may have been stolen by the Soviets. This story as related by Dov Shilansky, former MK, gives witness to this fact. Under Soviet rule, Aaron Frank was arrested by Soviet troops while hiding his writings in the school bunker where they learned Hebrew secretly at night. His writings were confiscated by the Soviet troops. Aaron was released thanks to the influence of one of his former students who was a member of the Communist party. Most books connected to Jewish education and in particular the study of Hebrew from the Baltic countries was transferred to the libraries located in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Later many libraries were destroyed by the Nazis.

Following are some facts that are undocumented. The first names of Martje and Elje Frank (sister and brother of Aaron) are of Dutch origin. Martje's married name was Okoor and as my second language is Afrikaans the indications are that the Frank family hails from Holland after their expulsion from Spain. Prof. Dov Levin states that their origin is Navarro, Spain the original name being Franco. A Charles Frank of Washington DC, USA wrote to me that his sister Bertie told him that she remembered sending packages to relatives addressed to Franco in Kovno and was told by his family they came from Villafranka a town within the province of Navarro (The Juderías of Navarre in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries).

The children of Elje and Chaje Frank include Solomon who died in Tashkent of tuberculosis after having been imprisoned by the Russian authorities in Uzbekistan for the crime of being a member of the Hechalutz Movement and for possession of Zionist propaganda. The Frank residence was raided

by the police after they observed Joseph Trumpeldor, the highly decorated Russian Jewish soldier and Israeli hero and fighter of Tel Hai visiting the Frank home. Yitzchak Frank (1904-1940) a lawyer who according to his sister Batya committed suicide after refusing to pass on a directive as a Prosecutor of Siaulau (Shavli) district from the judge to the Soviet commander to kill selected dissident Jews. Martje's son Yakow Okoor (1920) was active as a partisan in Lithuania in the Kovno area and was killed in action as reported by the family.

This is just the beginning of my family search. I do believe all the Franks in the world are related. I started with Aaron Frank as an artist with whom I could identify but I ended up identifying and wishing to know more and more of the family.

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*Basil Colin (Elchanan) Frank was born in Cape Town, South Africa in 1945. Undergraduate degree in sculpture at the Michaelis School of Art, University of Cape Town. Post graduate St. Martins College of art, London, majored in sculpture. Lectured and worked as an artist in London 1972-1983. Exhibited in Edinburgh, London, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, New York and*

participated in group shows throughout Europe and in Israel. Won 7 international awards in Osaka, Los Angeles, Krakow,

Florence, and Cologne. Lives and works in Jerusalem. Married with one daughter.

**Aaron Frank's Descendants:**

* 1 Aaron (Ohrel) Frank;	***** 5 Nomi Ziv; 1933;
** 2 Nathan Frank; 1852;	+Engelshen;
*** 3 Aaron (Ohrel) Frank; 1889 - 1944;	** 2 Dov (ber) (berchik) Frank;
+ Pesche (paulina) Prachelzeug	+Taube Kaplan;
(Pracherkrug); 1908 - 1944;	*** 3 Jacob (Isaac) Frank; 1878 - 1965;
*** 3 Martje Frank; - 1941;	+Bela (beila) Rabinowitz;
+Zalman Okoor;	**** 4 Shaul (Saul) Frank; 1908 - 1917;
**** 4 Tova (touba) Okoor; 1914 - 1941;	**** 4 Taibele Frank; - 1917;
**** 4 Jonanena (Jda) Okoor; 1918 - 1941;	**** 4 Chaim Shlomo (Solly) Frank; 1910 - 1999;
**** 4 Sara Okoor; 1916 - 1941;	+Sophy Stein; 1916 - 1986;
**** 4 Nathan Okoor; 1922 - 1941;	***** 5 Rachel (Rochelle) Frank; 1943 - 2001;
**** 4 Yakow Okoor; 1920 - 1941;	***** 5 Basil C Frank; 1945;
**** 4 Sima Okoor; 1917 - 2001;	+Naomi Shoshani; 1950;
+Eksteen;	***** 5 Myrna Frank; 1951;
***** 5 Gabi Eksteen;	+Allan Lichtenstein;
***** 5 Nathan Eksteen;	***** 5 Susan Frank; 1956;
***** 5 Zohar Eksteen;	+Ari Noy; àøé; 1952 - 2003;
**** 4 Genia Okoor; 1912 - 1995;	**** 4 Israel (Issy) Frank; 1914 - 2002;
+Grossman;	+Rae Michalowski;
*** 3 Elije Frank; 1870 - 1944;	***** 5 Stanley Frank; 1947;
+Chaje Volozinsky; - 1943;	+Michelle Levi;
**** 4 Solomon Frank; - 1917;	***** 5 Annette Frank; 1953;
**** 4 Yitschak Frank; 1904 - 1940;	+Gavin Fialkov; 1947;
**** 4 Tollek Frank; 1913 - 1998;	***** 5 Linda Frank; 1957;
+Miriam ?;	+Hershy Pakter;
***** 5 Ella Frank; 1952;	**** 4 Nathan Frank; 1920 - 1975;
+Yacov Mendeleovich;	*** 3 Chassiah Frank; - 1941;
**** 4 Fania Frank; 1905 - 1994;	+Shlomo Miler Kimchi;
+Novikoff;	*** 3 Chana (Possibly) Frank;
***** 5 Miriam Novikoff; 1927;	+Shlomo Miler Kimchi;
+Glazer;	**** 4 Israel Miler Kimchi; 1912 - 1969;
***** 5 Zahava Novikoff;	+Tova Veinstein; 1913 - 2005;
+?;	***** 5 Chassidah Miler Kimchi; 1944;
***** 5 Naomi Novikoff; 1928;	+Mordechai (motti) Cohen;
+David Allon;	***** 5 Chana Miler Kimchi; 1950;
**** 4 Batyah Frank; 1900 - 1994;	+Seef;
+Zif;	***** 5 Shlomo Miler Kimchi; 1940;
***** 5 Yitschak Ziv; 1927;	
+?;	



**From Lithuania to Israel Via South Africa**  
**A look at Jewish genealogy in South Africa**  
*Beryl Baleson*

I was born in South Africa where I received my education. I was an active member in the Habonim Zionist Youth Movement. My paternal YUTER family came from Lithuania and my maternal RACHSMAN family from Latvia, although my Latvian family left Subate at the turn of the 20th century to make their home in England. My mother Edith, daughter of Barnett and Golda RICHMAN (nee FAKTOR) was born in England. They anglicized their Latvian surname of RACHSMAN to RICHMAN when they came to England in 1900.

Not only did I receive a Zionist/Jewish education in the Youth Movement, but also in our home where my parents and grandparents were very much traditionally Jewish as well as being Zionist oriented. It was therefore no wonder that I felt as a child and then as a teenager, that Israel was the only place where Jews should be living. I came to Israel in 1958 on the "Machon Le'madrichei Chutz Le'aretz" (Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad) – and that year, convinced me more than ever, that Israel is where I belonged. Unfortunately it took us almost twenty years to return, but this time it was with my husband and children!

From my childhood I wondered about our family, its origins, and its way of life before immigrating to South Africa. However, no one could tell me much, as they were not prepared to talk about their past. As I grew older and learned more about the situation in Europe, I realized why my parents and grandparents never answered any of my questions. The only person who was prepared to speak and then not much, was my mother who spoke of terrible anti-Semitism in England. She left England with her brother Samuel in 1926; my father's family had left Lithuania in 1920 for South Africa.

With the demise of the former Soviet Union, and the fact that invaluable records and

documentation became available to the public, along the advent of the Internet, I started researching my family and their way of life in Lithuania and Latvia.

A turning point came in 1998 when I was given the name of Galina Baranova at the Lithuania Archives in Vilna. I gave her details of my paternal family and within a short time she sent me all the information I required i.e. marriage certificates from previous generations; the birth and marriage certificates of my grandparents Berel YUTER and Gode-Leah SANDLER and birth certificates of three of their four children i.e. my father Abram-Mairim, and his two brothers Efroim-Yudel and Sharia-Ruven.

My paternal grandfather Berel YUTER, born in Subacius in 1875 went to Pumpian in 1900 where he met my grandmother, Gode-Leah Sandler who was born there in 1877. They were married on the 17<sup>th</sup> October, 1900. They left for South Africa in 1920 with their four children, all born in Pumpian, Lithuania:

Efroim-Yudel, born 21 November, 1902.

Abram-Mairim, born 20 August, 1904.

Sharia-Ruven, born 25 June, 1911.

Chana, unfortunately no birth records could be found. Chana never married.

The family left Pumpian by horse and cart and went to Ponevezhs. Their next steps, by train, were Kovno, Koningsberg (Germany), where they stayed a few days, and then Bremen. There they stayed quite a while, until they could get a boat for Amsterdam. From Amsterdam they took another boat to London where they stayed for a week at the Jewish Temporary Shelter until they could get on a boat to take them to Cape Town, South Africa.

In South Africa Berel's name was changed to Barnard; Gode-Leah, my grandmother was known as Leah; my father took on the nickname of Mike; Chana changed her name to Ann; Efroim-Yudel changed his name to



Julius and Sharia-Reuven became known as Reuben, in later life shortened to Reuby.

They went to live in a seaside town, named The Strand (the Afrikaans name for Beach), 30 miles northeast of Cape Town. My grandfather opened a General Dealer Store and my grandmother opened the one and only Kosher Boarding House in the area, which attracted a large number of the Jewish population in the summer time. My father and his siblings attended the local school.

Afrikaans was the second language in South Africa at the time, especially in the towns outside of the major cities in South Africa. The Jewish population's spoken language in these small towns, at home, was Yiddish, but in business and in contact with the non-Jewish population they spoke Afrikaans. As a matter of interest my grandparents only spoke Yiddish and Afrikaans, which they learnt very quickly. English was never a part of their vocabulary. As I child I conversed with them in Yiddish. I must add here that anti-Semitism never played a part in their lives until the 1940's, as the Afrikaans population themselves were very religious and respected the Jewish people as being the "People of the Book" with whom they could identify.

My maternal RACHSMAN grandparents who lived in Subate, Latvia, also married in 1900 and immediately thereafter they left Latvia for England where they settled in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. All of their six children: Samuel, Edith, Sarah, Mary, Milly and Esther were born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in the North Eastern part of England. Only my mother Edith and her older brother Samuel left England to come to South Africa in 1926. The rest of the family remained in England and most of the following generation today live in suburbs of London.

Later, with the help of Ann Rabinowitz, of Miami Beach, FL, USA, who serves as the Research Coordinator for the South Africa SIG I managed to find family in New York who were also researching the same surname as I. Ann also told me about the South African Special Interest Group which

I then joined. The Group was started in 1998 by Mike Getz and Saul Issroff.

The South African SIG, whose website is <http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica> is more important today than ever before. Just as our parents and grandparents left Eastern Europe at the turn of the 20th Century, the 21st Century now finds the circle turning towards other countries as South Africans are leaving and moving to various countries i.e. Israel, Australia, England, United States and Canada. The result of this emigration from South Africa has left its mark on South Africa today as many Jewish communities, which were thriving until the mid-1960s have now disappeared.

An exodus of about 40,000 people occurred due to the deteriorating political situation. The Jewish population in South Africa peaked at 120,000 – today there are about 60,000 Jewish residents, living mainly in the large cities of Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg.

The S.A. Jewish Board of Deputies is the umbrella organization for all Jewish organizations and is the central representative institution of the Jewish community. All of South Africa's congregations, Jewish societies and institutions are affiliated with them. It was formed in the Transvaal in 1903. A similar body was established in Cape Town in 1904 – "to take action, with reference to all matters affecting the welfare of Jews as a community." In 1912 the Johannesburg and Cape Town societies merged into one body. The Board has regional committees and offices in Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria. These regions are represented on a National Executive Council.

A "Yad Vashem" organization is very active with speakers and activities.

A Holocaust Museum was opened five years ago in Cape Town and the subject has been introduced into the National School curriculum. The visitors are not only Jews; the museum is visited by school pupils, members of the Police Force as well as South African Army groups.

As far as Jewish Genealogy is concerned, Johannesburg has monthly meetings, an active committee and a growing membership. They publish a Newsletter called "Yichus." Cape Town does not have an organized Jewish Genealogy group and most people work through the Internet and Archives in the countries in which they are interested. In Durban a Jewish Genealogy group is also active.

Unfortunately, I have to end on a negative note regarding genealogical research in South Africa. Neither the Archives, Home Affairs Department, nor any of the Jewish bodies have enough staff to do research. Therefore, one has to rely on researchers to go to the places for information required. However, the Consular Section of the South

African Embassy is willing to assist in trying to locate information required in South Africa – mainly the Home Affairs Department and the Archives that have immigration and naturalization records.

*Beryl Baleson was born in South Africa, where she matriculated, after which she came for a year, as a Habonim counselor to the Machon Le'Madrichei Chutz Le'arets i.e. Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad in Jerusalem. Upon her return to South Africa she studied English Literature. In 1986 she took a course in Israel on Teaching English as a Foreign Language i.e. TEFL. balden@zahav.net.il.*



## **The Day the Jews Returned to their Shtetl**

*Gilda Kurtzman*

**O**n July 3, 2005, over 200 years since the first Jews settled in the small hamlet of Pusalotas, Lithuania, and over 60 years after its last Jewish residents were slaughtered by the Nazis, eleven descendents returned to the shtetl to pay tribute to Holocaust victims and to mark the restoration of the town's 150-year-old Jewish cemetery.

This emotional gathering was the highlight of a year of activity, which united Pusalotas descendants for the first time, resulting in the launch of two major projects. It all began last summer when I suggested to fellow-Pusalotas descendant, Howard Margol, an expert on Lithuanian genealogy and the most active researcher of Pusalotas, the creation of a Special Interest Group e-mail list for Pusalotas researchers. With Howard's enthusiastic endorsement and the help of

Micha Reisel, we set up the group with an initial membership of around fifty names. Today the list has grown to 106.

Last September my husband Bob and I went on a roots tour to Lithuania. A major destination was Pusalotas, the birthplace of my grandfather, Philip SHERMAN, and my great-grandparents Kasriel and Rashe SLOTT SHERMAN. When we reached the town's Jewish cemetery, miraculously spared the destruction of so many Lithuanian cemeteries at the hands of the Russians, I even found the grave of Rashe Slott's father, Macy Meisel ZLOT. I was moved to tears when I placed a stone on this precious stone, yet I was appalled at the neglected condition of the surrounding cemetery. I asked our guide, Yulik Gurevich, about the feasibility of cleaning and restoring the cemetery,

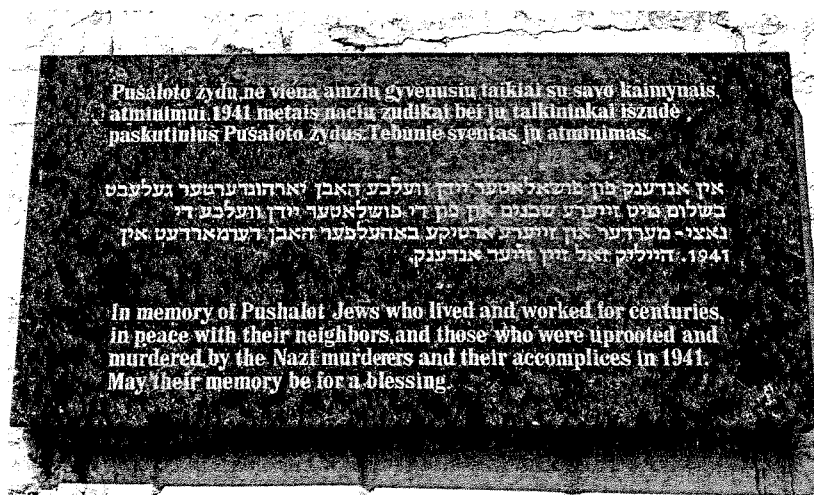
including taking "rubblings" of the tombstones, photographing them, and organizing the data on the graves for use by Pusalotas researchers. The fee he suggested for the project seemed reasonable to both Howard and me. To raise the funds, we turned to everyone on our e-mail list as well as other family members to inform them of the restoration efforts and to solicit donations. The response was overwhelming. Donations came from across the globe, enabling us to retain Yulik Gurevich's services for the following spring, when the weather would permit the painstaking work to begin.

In January 2005, we capitalized on Yulik Gurevich's visit to Israel to organize the first-ever gathering of Israeli Pusalotas descendants. Dina Schwartz graciously opened her home in Givatayim to host participants who came from across the country. The attendees were young and old alike, natives of Europe, the former USSR, South Africa, Australia, North America and Israel. In addition to the opportunity to socialize, the Pusalotas descendants had the rare treat of learning more about their families, particularly from very young 94-year-old Yehudit ZAKS who remembered someone from almost every family represented at the meeting. Yulik spoke to the group about the history of the town and area, and gave details of the upcoming

cemetery restoration project. We solicited donations from the Israeli descendants, and again the response was far beyond our expectations.

At this point I came up with the idea to extend the goals of the Cemetery Restoration Fund to include the erecting of a fence around the premises. The many animals that wander there freely constantly desecrate the cemetery, which borders on a small farm. Yulik explored the cost of purchasing the fencing material and hiring a local crew to carry out the labor. His resulting estimates were within our budget, and we gave him the green light. The descendants were all informed of our progress, as our shared excitement began to grow and grow.

Donations continued to pour in, much to our delight. My next idea was to put up a plaque memorializing the Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Under present Lithuanian law, a monument must be placed at the entrance of every cemetery. However, since most of the Jews of Pusalotas were rounded up and murdered in the nearby Panevezys forest, there is no memorial for them in the town. We thus decided to create a memorial plaque, in Lithuanian, Yiddish and English, to be affixed to the former synagogue building which still stands on Pusalotas' main street.



Memorial Plaque

In January, Howard Margol publicized the 13<sup>th</sup> tour he would be leading to Lithuania, scheduled for July. When a number of Pusalotas descendants registered, I suggested that there be a ceremony during the tour to dedicate the newly renovated cemetery and the plaque. Plans were then finalized, with invitations to the event extended to various Lithuanian dignitaries, Jewish and non-Jewish. The mayor of the town, Mrs. Stavinskiene, cooperated with us in every aspect of the project, pleased that the work would bring welcome employment and income to some of the town's residents. Meanwhile, thanks to the increased communication between the "Pusalotas Descendants List" and their immediate relatives, a second major project was launched. While researching my own extended family, I realized that many relatives had married into other families in Pusalotas. The town's Jewish population at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century numbered 920 out of a total of 1,200 residents (Schoenburg, 1996). To test my growing hypothesis that the entire shtetl was somehow connected, I put out a call to other descendants to send me their family trees. Using sophisticated software, I was able to take the twenty-five trees I received merge them and create the initial master Family Tree of the Jewish Families of Pusalotas. The results were conclusive – out of the twenty-five family trees, twenty included "overlapping" ancestors from other Pusalotas families. If the shtetl's residents were not directly related to each other, they were at least connected. The resulting Tree, containing 9,590 names, is a work in progress, which I plan to update as often as possible. I prepared copies of the database to present to the Jewish Museum in Vilna, the Jewish Museum in Panevezys, the Pasvalys Museum, and the Lithuanian State Historical Archives. I chose the dedication ceremony in Pusalotas to present the first copy of this master Family Tree to the town of Pusalotas.

On July 3, 2005, eleven descendants of the town gathered at the site of the former

synagogue in Pusalotas, today a textile mill. To our surprise, we saw that Mayor Stavinskiene had invited the townspeople, who came out in large numbers to honor our ancestors. Also in attendance were the director of the Pasvalys Museum which has a Jewish section, Ms. Galina Baranova, the chief archivist of the Lithuanian State Historical Archives, Mr. Milan Chersonskij, the editor of the newspaper "Jerusalem of Lithuania" and the representative of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC/Joint) in Lithuania, Mr. Ivan Glait.

Howard Margol was the main speaker. Mayor Stavinskiene then presented him with a gift, commenting how impressive it was for the Jewish people come back to honor their ancestors, since the Lithuanians do not have such a tradition. I joined Panevezys Jewish community head Mr. Genady Koifman and a Lithuanian Jewish organization head Rabbi Feffer in giving greetings, with Yulik translating all proceedings into English or Lithuanian. Mayor Stavinskiene had also arranged for the town choir to sing two Lithuanian folk songs, providing a charming touch.

After the very impressive plaque was unveiled, we walked from the synagogue to the cemetery where the Yizkor prayer was recited. The grounds had been cleaned up very nicely, a welcome contrast to the cemetery's previously neglected state. Several people found the tombstones of their ancestors. Other stones were not readable in their present state, but they have been rubbed and will be included in the database to be completed in the near future. This record will be forwarded to all those who donated to the fund and had such a major part in making this very emotional and exciting day come about.

Today's descendants of Pusalotas may be spread all over the world, but part of our hearts still remain in this small shtetl where our ancestors put down roots for a short period of Jewish history. Thankfully we have been given the privilege to honor and sustain their blessed memories.

## Descendants of Macy Misel ZLOT

- \* 1. Macy Misel ZLOT, b. 1824 in Joniskelis, Lithuania d. Feb 20, 1907 in Pusalotas  
m. Feyga, b. 1834 d. 1876 in Pusalotas
- \*\* 2. Michla SLOTT  
m. Itzic SCHEMER
- \*\* 2. Rashe SLOTT, b. 1854 in Pusalotas  
d. Nov 13, 1891 in Pusalotas,  
m. (Pusalotas) Kasriel Sharya SHER-  
SHERMAN, \*\* d. Sep 18, 1922 in  
Columbus, OH
- \*\*\* 3. Philip SHERMAN, b. July 24,  
1879 d. Dec 12, 1972 in Baltimore, MD  
m. (USA) Kate LEVY, b. 1880 in  
Baisagola, Lithuania d. Mar 1920 in  
Baltimore, MD

### Notes

1. I have also included Michla Slott, my great-grandmother's sister, in this outline because her husband was a brother of the grandmother of Ehud Barak (originally Brog), another proof that we are all interconnected.

2. We have documented Kasriel Sher, Kalman Pusalotas in 1864 as the father of Homeowner's List. a home in Town

My Zlot family from Pusalotas names. This does not include 1891 family of my grandfather's parents. Zlot/Slott married Kasriel Sher, he includes an additional six or seven. Basically, one can say that my Pusalotas family then is 1900 names.

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*Gilda Kurtzman has been researching her families in Lithuania for about eight years. She can trace two of them back to approximately 1750 encompassing eleven generations. She is involved in several genealogical activities, mainly translating/transliterating cemetery databases for JewishGen (JOWBR) and the ongoing projects in Pusalotas.*



Pusalotas Descendants

## Never Give Up *Shalom Bronstein*

Anyone engaged in genealogical research must have a very high frustration level. If they do not, they may give up and quit before some very important information is discovered. If a survey were taken, I am sure that it would show that there are on the average more frustrations than successes. How many of us have found a distant relative, such as the great-grandson of a great-grandparent's sibling. We call or write with excitement, set up a meeting, but it never takes place. Our newly discovered relation is not interested. However, if we do not keep trying, we will be the loser. Unexpected discoveries await us but they are there only if we never give up and do not succumb to frustration.

Quite a few years ago when the Pages of Testimony at Yad Vashem were available only on microfilm and only by previous appointment between 8:00 and 10:00 AM, I had reserved a two-hour slot to do research for a client. I finished before the two hours were up and since I had some time remaining, I decided to order the microfilm reel that contained names beginning with 'Dim.' My paternal grandmother's maiden name was DIMMERMAN and she was a native of Ostrog, Volhyn. To my surprise, I found two Pages of Testimony under that name, a husband and wife, and both were from Ostrog. I had the pages copied and decided to try to locate the submitter who completed them in 1955 and who at that time lived in Kiryat Hayim. Fortunately, DIMMERMAN is not a common name. I checked all the telephone books and found one person with that family name in Kiryat Bialik. I wrote to him introducing myself and explaining that I was attempting to see if there was any family connection. A few days later, I received a letter in Yiddish and a phone call. The letter was from the sister of the person to whom I wrote and it later turned out that we were distantly related. Their family came from Kostopol, not far

from Ostrog. The phone call was from the daughter of the person who completed the Pages of Testimony. I will never forget her first words to me, which were in Hebrew – “I am Aviva Dimmerman; that was my name before I got married and that is my family name now.”

מדברת כאן אביבה דימרמן, דימרמן מן הבית  
ודימרמן אחרי הנישואין

She then explained that her husband Yitzhak who came from a large family legally changed his name to Dimmerman after they were married to keep the name from dying out. He was especially close to her father Naftali. I spoke to Yitzhak whose affirmative answer to my next question “Was your father-in-law a Levi?” left no doubt about it, I found a lost relative – although I do not know which one of us was the lost one.

Our lengthy conversation was followed by meeting Aviva and her husband Yitzhak on a cold rainy winter day. Aviva brought some photo albums and her late father's address book. I have always been of the opinion that one can confirm familial relationships through the first names the family uses. Many of the first names in our respective families matched – Naftali, Moshe, Meir, etc. Unfortunately, while many of the faces in the photo albums looked vaguely similar to family pictures I had seen, there were no names on them. When I read through Naftali Dimmerman's address book, I had a most pleasant surprise. Listed in it were my grandmother's siblings, their addresses and telephone numbers. I needed no further confirmation. Aviva had done extensive family research and provided me with a list of the various branches of the DIMMERMAN family. I, in turn, provided her with ours. I spoke to the husband and daughter of one of my great-aunts whose name appeared in Naftali Dimmerman's address book. They both confirmed that she carried on an extensive correspondence with relatives but they had no further information.

I also learned that the occupations of the Dimmermans who remained in Europe and those who settled in Philadelphia corresponded. They were pharmacists, textile merchants and specialty tailors. My late father was a textile merchant, one of our daughters has a bachelor's degree from Shenkar College and a Master's degree in textile technology and five of our immediate Dimmerman relatives were pharmacists.

\* \* \*

As a native Philadelphian and although it has been more than forty years since I lived there, I am still interested in the history of the Jews of that city. Over the years I have developed a working and sharing relationship with one of the city's foremost chroniclers of its Jewish community, Harry D. Boonin. Two of his books, *The Davidows* and *The Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia* (both books reviewed in *Sharsheret Hadorot*) are in the library of the Jerusalem branch of the IGS. Harry is currently working on a third book, the history of one of the city's early immigrant synagogues. In reviewing one of the Yahrzeit plaques he came across something very unusual. There were five names of the Blatt family all bearing the same date of death – 13 Adar 1942. Harry asked me if I could check the name in the various databases of Yad Vashem. I was not surprised that there were no Pages of Testimony for any of them. The first large campaign to submit Pages of Testimony in the mid 1950s did not extend to Jewish communities outside of Israel. When I checked the Arolsen/International Tracing Service listings, I found four of the five names. Not only that, but also listed was the name of the relative in Philadelphia who inquired about his missing family members. It included his address, which was just around the corner from the synagogue. Harry will now try to locate descendants of that family. The fate of four of the names on the plaques has now come to light.

A mother born in Poland and her daughter born in Frankfurt-am-Main were deported on 22.11.1941 to Kovno and murdered three days later in the notorious Ninth Fort

together with 1159 Jewish men, 1600 Jewish women and 175 Jewish children from Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt. [The Ninth Fort was one of a series of pre-World War I Russian fortifications constructed in the area. A picture of the fort where over 30,000 Jews from Lithuania and other areas were murdered appears on page 221 in Dov Levin's book *The Litvaks*.] Two other family members born in Munich were deported to Lublin and never heard from again. Harry felt that checking records at Yad Vashem was a 'long shot' but it worked out. We will now enter Pages of Testimony for these four members of the Blatt family who did not survive.

\* \* \*

In the mid 1990s, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum embarked on an ambitious project. The year 1999 would mark sixty years since the ill-fated Hamburg-Amerika Line ship the S.S. St. Louis left Hamburg for Havana, Cuba. To commemorate the event, the Museum was mounting a major exhibition. I was engaged to do research in Israel. One day the *Jerusalem Post* carried a small item about the upcoming exhibit in Washington and a few days later a letter to the editor appeared. In it a woman wrote that her husband had played a central role in the saga and she felt that his name should have been mentioned. Even though I had been working on this project for some time, the name was completely unfamiliar to me. The Museum research staff in Washington with whom I was in constant touch also did not know of this person. The woman who wrote the letter to the editor indicated that she lived in Jerusalem. I looked in the telephone book and found a listing for her. I called and after explaining that I was working on the St. Louis project asked if I could meet with her. She graciously received me in her apartment and told me that although her husband was a key figure in dealings with the French government when the St. Louis returned with its passengers to Europe, she did not know a great deal since they were married after World War II. However, in conversation she mentioned that her late

husband's papers were located in an archive in New York City. This material was made available to the Washington staff, which found it invaluable. All it took was a simple phone call to recover long forgotten information that was of very significant importance.

\* \* \*

Two other searches neither of which had any great expectation of success also produced unanticipated results. A professor I know quite well wrote a book a few years ago where he chronicled his experiences before, during and after the Holocaust. In it he describes the death of his father, which he did not witness but it was related to him by another slave laborer on the same Death March to Dachau. He was told that in a severely weakened state, his father collapsed and was attacked by dogs. In the book my teacher wrote that he had no Yahrzeit to observe for the majority of his relatives. I asked him if I had his permission to check the Arolsen records to see if there was any further information. There I found that his father's name was listed in the Dachau Entry Book and that he died one month before liberation. I also checked the name of the professor's father-in-law who came from a prominent Hasidic family. There, too, I came up with his date of death, and another Yahrzeit had been recovered. I immediately faxed my findings to the United States. A few days later late at night I received a telephone call in Yiddish from someone in Bnai Brak. He had received copies of the material I sent to the United States and wanted to know how accurate the dates of death were on these records. As they were taken from official German documents there was no question about their reliability. His next question was if I knew whether the death occurred before or after sunset. The question was not as outlandish as it first sounded, because there are a small number of the Arolsen/ITS cards that bear the actual time of death.

\* \* \*

An almost parallel experience took place with a neighbor. In conversation, he mentioned that he did not have a Yahrzeit date for his father who perished in the Holocaust. I asked him his father's first name and I photocopied all the Arolsen/ITS listings of people bearing that name who were born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One evening my neighbor came over and sitting at the dining room table I gave him the dozen or so pages. He flipped them one after another until coming to one when like Lot's wife he froze. It seemed that he did not move for an eternity. He found the listing for his father and the date of his death. This story has an interesting follow-up. A few weeks later at the ma'ariv minyan I usually attend, someone who regularly attends a parallel minyan joined us. He said that he had Yahrzeit and so led the service. Afterwards, we asked him why he left his regular minyan to join ours. He said that someone else said that he had Yahrzeit and wanted to lead the service. He then asked that person how come he never mentioned to him previously that they both were observing a Yahrzeit on the same day. His reply was that this was the first time he was observing his father's Yahrzeit. Although he had died in a German forced labor camp more than fifty years before, he had gotten the actual date only a few weeks before.

The moral of all of the above is that one never knows what he will find but unless the search is begun, nothing will come to light. Vitaly important information waits to be discovered, as long as we do not let frustration play a role in our decision-making.

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Vol.15, No.1]

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## **The Foundling Who Sought and Found Parents, Siblings and an Inheritance** *Shmuel Shamir*

Translated from Hebrew

**T**he status and rights of adopted children and foundlings will continue to occupy genealogists and legal authorities throughout the world.

Following is a dramatic account from our very own Eretz Yisrael:

A day old baby girl is left at the entrance to one of Jerusalem's hospitals in 1926. She bore no signs of identification and there was nothing indicating the identity of her biological parents. The head-nurse, who was childless took her in and adopted her as her daughter.

The baby matured to adulthood. She married and brought children into this world. When she reached the age of thirty, she began to investigate her roots. Out of necessity, she turned to an attorney to assist her in solving the puzzle. Her adoptive mother had died. In the official record of births maintained by the Mandatory government, there were no details of the birth. The only thing the woman could point to was the date she was left at the hospital entrance. Adoption

records, as everyone knows, are sealed documents and only if special conditions are met is it possible to examine them. In this case, the key to entry into the adoptive records was missing.

After some bewilderment the attorney decided to check and scan the Palestine Gazette that contained all the official announcements of the Mandatory Government. Along with this, he checked court records from that year and those close to it hoping that he would find a hint that would aid in his search. As is well known, adoptions are carried out by the courts after the publication of an official notice. The attorney hoped to reveal through this search if indeed, an official request for adoption was submitted, who was the individual or the attorney who presented the request for adoption and represented the merciful nurse who adopted the child.

The search revealed an announcement for the request to adopt the day-old child, with a date that matched the birth date of the woman. The notice mentioned the name of the attorney who presented the request. An

additional search revealed that the attorney had reached an advanced age and had retired. There was concern whether or not his records were still in existence.

Nevertheless, the woman's attorney decided to phone the house of his fellow attorney who had retired some years before in hope of finding him alive and his records intact so he could make use of them. To his great fortune, he found the retired attorney alive and he remembered this adoption case that he had handled dozens of years previously. However, he requested time to enable him to go through the records in his possession to see if he could add any information.

A telephone conversation a few days later heralded a breakthrough in solving the

mystery. The file was found and it contained details of the investigation in the attempt to locate the biological parents. They were not married and for their own personal reasons they sought to free themselves of the newborn baby. Additional checking and searching of tax and property records as well as the census discovered the address of the parents' residence. It was also found that one of the parents, who had since passed away, owned real estate that was recorded in his name. In an additional process executed by the attorney, the woman was granted rights of inheritance. These documents contained the names of her brothers and sisters along with whom she inherited her late parents' property.



## Joy That Turned to Sorrow \*

*Yehuda Klausner*

**T**he Gaon Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak b'Aharon MASKIL L'EITAN (HAGRAI) (1839-1904) was the grandson of Rabbi Avraham MASKIL L'EITAN (1788-1848), the author of the book *Maskil L'Eitan*, a collection of novella [new interpretations, *hidushim*] on the laws from the tractates Moed and Kodashim. The name of the book is based on the verse in Psalm 89:1 "A *maskil* of Eitan the Ezrahite." Rabbi Avraham, son of Rabbi Yehuda Arye Leib, was the founder of the MASKIL L'EITAN family, also known as MASKILEISON. However the family dates back much further through the KALMANKES and YOFFE families to Rabbi Simha b'Samuel VITRI in 1105 and perhaps even further back.

R'Avraham Yitzhak was born in Smolevichi, studied in Bobruysk and in the yeshivot of Minsk and Volozhin. He was recognized as a prodigy especially sharp in his analysis of the Talmud and Tosafot, and his name was well known. At the age of eighteen he married Hanna Yehudit the daughter of R'Yom Tov Lipman b'Israel HALPERIN who was then the rabbi of Miedzyrzec and the author of the book *Oneg Yom Tov*. He lived with his father-in-law for a period of five years.

The rabbi and his wife, who died in 1918, had three sons and four daughters: R'Arye Leib, R'Jacob, R'Eliezer, Rachel the wife of R'Reuven KATZ, former chief rabbi of Petah Tikvah, Hasia the wife of R'Joel the

son of Ben Zion SOROTZKIN, Dina and Fruma the wife of R'Meir SHAPIRA.

In 1868, he moved to Lida, studied there for two years and received rabbinic ordination. For a period of time he was involved in business as he refused to accept a rabbinic position. However, in 1874 he was persuaded to assume the position of rabbi in the city of his birth Smolevichi where he was most highly thought of by both the community and the surrounding area. He served for fifteen years with firmness and great devotion working to improve the community. He was elected rabbi of Haslavitz in 1884. His former position was filled by R'Eliezer b'Yehuda RABINOWITZ (1859-1924), son-in-law of R'Yeruham Yehuda Arie' b'Shlomo Zalman PERLMAN (1835-1896). R'Yeruham Yehuda Arie' PERLMAN was known as "The Luminary of Minsk."

In Haslavitz he decided matters of Jewish law, taught and led his community with dignity and honor. He would occasionally come to Peterburg on community matters and there, too, he was received with great respect. He was known for his honesty, and his exactitude with every detail of Jewish law whether concerning man's relations with God or his dealings with his fellow human beings. His resoluteness developed naturally from the strength of his character and his spiritual integrity that came with his love for truth and humanity. He was loved and admired by all.

His two books, which were edited in manuscript form, *Zera Eitan* and *Naharot Eitan* were lost. However, many of his legal decisions and novella on the Torah were preserved in the writings of others as was his correspondence with individuals, his many articles published in the Hebrew newspaper *Hamelitz* as well as in other journals and in books of Jewish law such as *Hokrei Halakhot*, *Degel Reuven*, *Malbushei Yom-Tov*, *D'var Avraham* and others. He was sympathetic to Zionism and supported the resettlement of Eretz Yisrael and its Jewish community. He was among the initiators of the ban on the use of *etrogim* for Sukkot

from the island of Corfu, in order to support the *etrogim* from Eretz Yisrael.

In 1904, he accepted the call to serve as rabbi of Stoifetz where he was received with the honor fit for kings. The community also built a house for him and its construction was completed on Friday, 12 Heshvan 5665, (21 October 1904). This day became one of celebration for all the members of the community. On the following Sunday a humble scholar of the town died and the GRAI decided to eulogize him. These were the days of the Russo-Japanese War when the government harassed the Jewish community attempting to draft its young men into the army. During the eulogy, the rabbi became overwhelmed by the impending suffering of his fellow Jews, collapsed and returned his soul to his creator.

Deep mourning engulfed the entire city even though he had been in the community for only a short time. At his massively attended funeral, the most prominent rabbis who managed to arrive eulogized him.

#### **List of R'Shmu'el's descendants 24 generations, to Rabbi Avaham Yitzchak MASKIL L'EITAN**

R'Shmu'el  
R'Simcha b'Shmu'el VITRI  
R'Shmu'el b'Simcha  
R'Yitzchak b'Shmu'el the Elder,  
R'Elchanan b'Yitzchak DELTESH  
R'Shmu'el b'Elchanan  
R'Moshe b'Shmu'el  
R'Israel b'Moshe YOFFE  
R'Meir b'Israel YOFFE the Elderly  
R'Israel b'Meir YOFFE  
R'Eliezer b'Israel YOFFE  
R'Moshe b'Eliezer YOFFE  
R'Avraham Bohemian b'Moshe YOFFE  
R'Moshe b'Avraham Bohemian YOFFE  
R'Mordechay b'Moshe YOFFE SINGER  
R'Klonimus Kalman b'Mordechay YOFFE  
SINGER  
R'Alexander Sender b'Klonimus Kalman  
KALMANKES

R'Ahaon b'Alexander Sender YOFFE  
KALMANKES  
R'Israel Saba b'Aharon YOFFE  
Yudit b'Israel Saba YOFFE  
R'Avraham b'Yudit YOFFE  
R'Yehuda Arye Leib b'Avraham  
R'Avraham b'Yehuda Arye Leib MASKIL  
L'EITAN  
R'Aharon b'Avraham MASKIL L'EITAN

R'Avraham Yitzchak b'Aharon MASKIL  
L'EITAN

\*Adapted from: Zvi Harkavi, *Lecheker Mishpahot Maskil L'Eitan v'Harkavi*. Jerusalem 1953 (Hebrew). [Research of the Maskil L'Eitan and Harkavi Families].



## Yekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk) *Yehuda Klausner*

This time the short story is of a city, Yekaterinoslav.

### Background

The city was founded by Field-Marshal Prince Gregory Potemkin, (1736-1791), during the reign of Catherine II (1729-1796) known as Catherine the Great. It is located on the banks of the Dnieper in the Ural basin and was called Novorosisk. It became a district city in 1783 and in 1794 was included in the Pale of Settlement. Its name was changed in 1926 to Dnepropetrovsk.

### The Jewish Community

The first Jew to settle there after it was included in the Pale of Settlement was someone by the name of M. STANISLAWSKI. It is interesting to follow the Jewish population changes over different periods of time.

Year	Jewish Population
1805	376
1847	1,699
1897	41,240 (37% of the town's residents)
1920	72,928 (44.9% of the town's residents)
1926	62,073 (26.9 % of the town's residents)

In 1940, at the beginning of World War II, it had 100,000 Jews (26.5% of the population); however, in the period between 1946 and 1953, in the aftermath of World War II, its Jewish population was negligible.

The agricultural communes surrounding the city had 8,000 Jewish residents between the years 1846-1855, owning a 62,500-acre (250,000 dunam) area. Some were in existence until the Nazi invasion.

Yekaterinoslav was a Zionist center from the days of *Hibat Zion* when the teacher and author Abraham HARKAVY, Michal MAIDANSKY and especially Menachem Mendel USSISHKIN and Dr. Shmaryahu LEVIN and their colleagues lived there. This continued even in Soviet times and included the Zionist underground.

During World War I, many refugees fleeing from the border areas found refuge in the city, including Rabbi Chaim Ozer GRODZINSKY along with his secretary Raphael HASMAN, Rabbi Zvi PSHADAMSKY the head of the rabbinical court of Laizuva along with numerous others.

### Pogroms

In the first one hundred years of its existence, there were very few anti-Jewish incidents. In July 1883, a two-day pogrom against the Jews took place. It was repeated in 1886, 1903 and

in 1905 a two-day pogrom between 21 and 23 October, claimed the lives of sixty-seven Jews with hundreds injured even though Jewish groups organized self-defense. Between 1918-1920 there was another series of pogroms and severe anti-Jewish rampages perpetrated by White Russians, Ukrainians, the Makhno Movement (a Bolshevik offshoot) and others causing hundreds of casualties. As a result, a large number of Jews left the city between 1920-1926, which is reflected in the population chart. World War II and the rise of Nazism resulted in the final destruction of the city's Jewish community.

### The City's Rabbis

Among the first rabbis in the community were R'Ze'ev Wolf KOZNIKOV and R'Benjamin the son of Ya'akov Moshe SACKHEIM who served from 1873 to 1913. Other rabbis were R'Pinchas GELMAN (1880-1921) who served between 1917 and 1921; R'Yehudah Arie Leib LEVIN (1894-1971) who was later the rabbi in Moscow, served the city between 1914 and 1916; R'Levi Yitzhak SCHNEORSOHN (the father-in-law of the Admor of Lubavitch at that time, R'Yosef Yitzhak SCHNEORSOHN and father of the last Admor of Lubavitch, R'Menachem Mendel SCHNEORSOHN) who served in the city from 1909 until his arrest in 1939. Initially, he was the rabbi of only the Hassidic community but from 1920 onwards he was the rabbi of the entire community. He also built mikvaot in Kremenchug located 133 kilometers to the west-northwest.

### Educational Institutions

At the time of World War I, the city had some thirty Jewish institutions of learning including a Yeshiva, three Talmud Torahs and twelve large synagogues not including study houses,

prayer houses, private minyanim and an elementary Yeshiva. The small Karaite community had its own synagogue.

After the February 1917 Revolution, a Jewish polytechnicum was established. Among its founders were R'Gershon HARKAVY, the son of the engineer Yehuda Arie Leib HARKAVY, the engineer Gershon KARPAS and Professor Jeremiah GROSSMAN who was one of the teachers. Some years later, he was my teacher at the Technion in Haifa.

### Commerce and Industry

Yekaterinoslav was a center of heavy industry employing thousands of workers as coal and iron mines were located nearby. This required a large number of mining engineers and technicians. Thus it is no wonder that the Jewish polytechnicum in the city graduated dozens of mining and mechanical engineers. Trade in timber, agricultural and industrial products, and other commodities flourished in the city. A large power station and the water works *Dnieprostroï* were constructed here on the banks of the Dnieper. The considerable number of ships and large boats provided the commercial link with other districts of the country.

The revolutionary workers movement found ample opportunities for their activities.

Some of the families who lived in Yekaterinoslav: HARKAVI, HESHEL, KRANZFELD, KARPAS, LEVIN, NEUMARK, NEZHINSKI, RABINOVITZ, RABINOV, SCHECHTER, SCHNEORSON, TARSHINSKI, ZAKHEIM, YANOVSKI.

Based on Zvi Harkavy, *Researching the Maskil-L'Eitan & Harkavy Families*. Jerusalem (1952).





## Notes From the Library

*Harriet Kasow*

### General Remarks

The project of indexing the list of family trees in the Jewish National Library is ongoing and hopefully will be completed by the end of the year.

The IGS Library database (in Hebrew and English) will soon be at the point where we will be able to put it on the IGS website. We are currently entering the data for the books and periodicals both in Hebrew and English. Call numbers are being assigned and lists will be printed out. The goal is for the library to be easily accessible to the researcher.

The entire run of *Sharsheret Hadorot* has been sold to some university libraries. A project is underway to reprint and bind volumes of the journal for sale on a larger scale.

Some of the books reviewed below are not necessarily new. In going over the collection in order to put them on the database, I have come across a few that may be of interest and are not well known.

### Books

*"...Cousins Should Know Each Other..."; My search for the Descendants of Mordecai Oifman and the village of Nikolayev, Podolski (Mikolaeyev).* By Doris Hoffman Kohn. St. Louis, Missouri. 1985. 124p. illus. diags. Maps.

This is a high quality publication on fine paper with the reproductions of the photos, documents and maps all extraordinarily clear. Some of the family names and families included are Bernstein, Galen, Cwengel, Gervich, Shore, Gralneck, and Rosenbaum. One touching conclusion that I could identify with was that she found relations that were lost in the Holocaust.

That recently happened to me even though both sides of my family left the Ukraine for the United States in the 1920s.

*"Hashomer Hatsair" under Soviet Regime, September 1939-June 1941.* By Shlomo Kless. Tel Aviv. Moreshet Publishing. 1999. 355p. photos.

The text is in Hebrew and the title is slightly mistranslated. It should be prefaced by "The Activities of...". There is an extensive list of members names divided by "kibutzim." This is a nicely printed publication and certainly useful in searching our Jewish roots.

*My Journey to Poland: Summer 1987.* By Yossi Katz. Israel. 2003. 85p. photos.

The text is in Hebrew and again the title is not translated exactly. It should be "Dry Bones; A diary of a journey to ...".

*The Writings of Rabbi Mordechai Yohlin ZT"l Including Kohelet Mordechai and Techelet Mordechai.* Jerusalem. Institute 'Be'oholei Torah'. 5757. 160p.

Rabbi Yohlin was the Rabbi of Byelotzerkov in the Kiev Province of Ukraine and later Rabbi in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The text is in Hebrew but there are several pages of introduction and a family tree in English. The family names are Yohlin and Serebrier from the Ukraine.

### Useful Web Sites for Research

<http://www.weizman.ac.il/wagner/zdunskawola/contents.htm>

*The Jews of Zdunskawola* is the title of this compact home page. It includes links to the Family Finder, From Zdunskawola to Belgium, a list of researchers of the town and an award ceremony held in May 2005

honoring among others a film depicting the Jewish cemetery. The last link connects you with Daniel Wagner's family website. This is an example not only of a work of love but of simplicity itself. An example we all should emulate.

Hebrew interface:

<http://jnul.huji.ac.il/heb/aleph500>

English interface:

<http://jnul.huji.ac.il/eng/aleph500>

The Jewish National and University Library (Hebrew University) has improved their catalog search with a new program. From what I can see, it is easier to search than the previous edition. In the English version, you can search by author, title, keyword etc. and I did a search for genealogy and came up with 2832 hits in the main catalog. In the Judaica Reading room, I only came up with 73. These hits include Hebrew material even though I did the subject/keyword search in English. You can search in Hebrew but you will come up only with material available in Hebrew. This update of the catalog is of enormous use to those who do their genealogical research via the internet as the vast holdings are available to all. With this new program, we are all better served.

[www.surnamenavigator.org](http://www.surnamenavigator.org)

[www.kuijsten.de/navigator/Israel](http://www.kuijsten.de/navigator/Israel)

This is a wondrous tool known as a mega search engine. This Israel version searches

the following as well as those included in the global database: LDS Israel, Geneanet, Google Jewish Genealogy, Rootsweb Message Board, Rootsweb Surname List, Jewish passengers New York, 1892-1924, Genforum, Lezecher, Yad Vashem, Rootsweb Jewish, E-mail finder Israel, Jewish Community England, The Poor Jews Temporary Shelter, Irwin I.Cohn Michigan Jewish Cemetery Index.

I searched for the name Belfer and suddenly windows galore opened before my eyes. I found in the Kings County (Brooklyn NY) Naturalization records, my grandfather Chiel who is listed as being naturalized in 1914. Now I can send away for the record. This explains why he was listed as a United States Citizen on the Ellis Island database when he returned from Europe in 1920. His wife and children did not come to the U.S. until 1922/23. Mega search engines in the genealogical sector are just the thing for all us family researchers.

<http://familytreemagazine.com>

I have been subscribing to the magazine for about five years and find it extraordinarily useful. I photocopy several items from every issue that arrives. It covers all areas of genealogy and as far as I can tell has no axe to grind or point of view other than providing articles and websites that would be use to the genealogist. You can take a gander at the website and see for yourself.

