

שרשרת הדורות

Sharsheret Hadorot

חקר תולדות המשפחה היהודית

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EDITORIAL

This issue of *Sharsheret Hadorot* opens with a topic that is seldom dealt with – Jewish soldiers in George Washington’s army. The article is based on the captivating lecture presented to the Negev Branch of the IGS in 2006 by its author Joseph Andrews of the United States. A physician and an historian he is a direct descendant of people presented in his article.

Along with this article, we have two more that focus on Jewish soldiers, but in a time closer to our days: Professor Dov Levin describes the Jews of the small Jewish towns of eastern Europe who were drafted to serve in the Red Army during World War II; Ms. Rachel Silko tells us about the Beit Hagedudim Museum on Moshav Avihail that documents and commemorates the soldiers of the Jewish Legion of the British army during World War I. Both of them are based on lectures delivered at the Second Annual Seminar of the IGS held in 2006. The topic of the Seminar was certainly not commonplace for Jewish genealogy: Jewish soldiers in foreign armies. We have on hand a few more articles based on the Seminar lectures that we hope to publish in forthcoming issues of the journal.

The 2007 Seminar with its promising topic *The Wandering Jew: Jewish Migration between the 18th and 20th Centuries* is drawing near. Please go to the IGS Internet site for all the details on the Third Annual Seminar.

An unusual piece in this issue is by Israel Pickholtz who is well known to the readers of *Sharsheret Hadorot*. He discusses the battle he waged with one of the largest firms in the insurance industry, Assicurazioni Generali S.P.A. As the author himself points out – some times the good guys win.

It seems that it is impossible not to have at least one contribution that focuses on names. Perhaps because I am very interested by the topic or perhaps, as an expert in the field once said to me, because names are really the soul of genealogy. This subject is covered by Professor Israel Zak who explores the various origins of his distinctive family name and the diverse interpretations of its meaning.

We can say that the stories of Dr. Yehuda Klausner relating episodes from the rabbinic world have become a regular feature of our journal. On occasion I have asked others to participate and provide us with out of the ordinary accounts that they have heard or read about. We now have our first example: our veteran specialist Ms. Mathilde Tagger joins in the effort with a special story. I again invite others to join.

We welcome back our librarian Ms. Harriet Kasow from an active year of involvement in the United States who again provides us with her lists from the library.

This issue is scheduled to arrive in your mailbox in the middle of August, when summer vacations are almost over and we are getting closer to the Jewish New Year. I hope that all of our readers are enjoying themselves and taking advantage of the time in the most pleasant manner and even now, at this early date, I extend to all of you best wishes for the New Year.

Yocheved Klausner



From the Desk of Chana Furman
President, Israel Genealogical Society

This issue of *Sharsheret Hadorot* arrives at the height of the 5767/2007-summer vacation. Some of us will be attending the 27th International Jewish Genealogical Conference meeting this year in Salt Lake City, Utah in the United States. Some will continue on to research trips to their ancestral homelands. Others will be attending family reunions to maintain the story of generations or will pore over the documents and papers continuing to decipher and record while some will simply go on vacation.

We are witnesses to the increased opportunities unfolding in genealogical research – to accessibility of Eastern European archives, new Internet sites in Israel and in Hebrew, the upgrading of existing sites and the improvement in ease of use – we are grateful for all of these.

However, we must consistently strengthen the monthly meetings held by the various branches of the Israel Genealogical Society. They enable us to meet other members face-to-face, to exchange ideas, obtain clarifications and sometimes find an answer to a problem that has bothered us. The new members and researchers who have joined us also need our encouragement with their first basic steps and our meetings provide the perfect opportunity for this.

Within this framework the Jerusalem Branch of the IGS held a workshop titled: *Breaking Brick Walls II* – and our experts were available for

one-on-one guidance for both beginning and advanced researchers. This session was held both in Hebrew and English.

The third annual seminar on Jewish genealogy, ***Family Roots in Eretz Yisrael and in the World***, will take place on Monday, 3 Kislev 5768 November 2007 at Beit Wolyn, the Givatayim branch of Yad Vashem. This year's topic is: **The Wandering Jew: Jewish Immigration between the 18th and 20th Centuries.**

For full details go to our Internet site:
[http:// www.isragen.org.il/NROS/YY2007/index.html](http://www.isragen.org.il/NROS/YY2007/index.html)

Yad Vashem Names Database

Our readers in Israel are invited to try to locate submitters of Pages of Testimony. Go to www.isragen.org.il and then to Search for Submitters of Pages of Testimony in Israel.

From the knowledge accumulated since the site went online there have been a number of successes by way of the information recorded on the Pages of Testimony, if not connecting to the actual submitter then with descendants or other relatives of the submitter.

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George Washington's Jewish Soldiers *

Joseph L. Andrews

For, happily, the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

Thus, George Washington, our newly elected first President, states his strong support of religious liberty in his 1790 letter, addressed to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island. Washington was replying to a letter of congratulations written by members of the Newport synagogue. Seven years after the end of the Revolution, President Washington's statement promised religious freedom in America for all citizens.

To Jewish Americans, most of whom had been patriots, fighting for and supporting independence, these promises were particularly glorious, since one of the most important reasons for leaving Europe and coming to America had been to escape centuries of religious bigotry and persecution, intolerance, denial of human rights, confinement to ghettos, pogroms, murders, forced conversion and expulsions.

Jews constituted but a small percentage of Americans at the time of the Revolution, about 2,500 out of 2.5 million, or about one tenth of one percent of the population. However, their contributions to the cause, both as soldiers and patriotic supporters, were truly remarkable and out of proportion to their small number, as we will see in this review.

The first group of Jews to settle in North America were twenty three refugees from Recife, Brazil. In 1654 they arrived at the docks of Dutch Nieuw Amsterdam on board a French privateer, the Saint Charles (sometimes dubbed the "Jewish Mayflower"). They were escaping persecution that resulted when Portugal reconquered Dutch Brazil in the same year. Most were descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jews who had been expelled

from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1497. These first Jews had little freedom. Initially, they were forbidden by law to own land or houses, worship in public, hold public office, vote, travel, stand guard, serve in the militia or enter most trades or professions. Most early Jewish immigrants eventually clustered in the five port cities along the eastern seaboard, which were the most tolerant of religious diversity: Newport, New York City, Philadelphia, Charleston and Savannah.

Patriots and Loyalists

In the years preceding the Revolution the majority of American Jews were Whigs, supporting independence from England. Jonas Phillips, protesting religious restrictions in the Pennsylvania Constitution after the Revolution, reminded delegates to the Federal Constitutional Convention in 1787 that:

It is well known among all the citizens of the thirteen United States that the Jews have been true and faithful Whigs and during the late contest with England they have been foremost in aiding and assisting the states with their lives and fortunes; they have supported the cause, have bravely fought and bled for liberty which they cannot (yet) enjoy.

His contention was confirmed by the Philadelphia physician Dr. Benjamin Rush's observation that Jews were patriots (or Whigs) "in all the states." However, as was true with the Colonial population in general, there were a few Jewish Loyalists (or Tories), who maintained their allegiance to England's King George III. Several families, like my own, the FRANKS of New York and

* This article is based on a lecture given at the Negev Branch of the Israel Genealogical Society, May 2006.

Philadelphia, were unfortunately, split between patriots and Tories.

Why did most American Jews support the patriotic cause against England? Historian Jacob R. Marcus points out that even though Jews had more rights in British America than their relatives in Central or Eastern Europe, these new rights made them desirous of even more: "They owed no special loyalty to an empire that granted them only second-class citizenship... They wanted autonomy... They craved self-rule and finally independence."

In 1765, following the Stamp Act, which imposed new import duties, ten out of 375 signers of the Non-Importation Resolutions in Philadelphia were Jewish merchants. The Stamp Act was repealed the following year, mainly due to British merchants' losses from the boycott.

The British then, in 1767, imposed the Townshend Acts, which meant more import duties on important commodities. A Non-Importation (and non-consumption) Resolution in New York in 1770 contained the names of a dozen Jewish merchants and tradesmen, including subsequently prominent patriots. Again the Crown retreated from the Townshend Acts, so that by the spring of 1770 only the tax on tea remained.

The Revolutionary War began with the battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, followed by the siege of Boston, the battle of Bunker Hill in June and the forced departure of all British troops from Boston on March 17, 1776. Then, following fighting in New York City and Long Island and the withdrawal of Washington's Colonial troops, British soldiers occupied New York City and Newport, Rhode Island, for the remainder of the war. Citizens, including Jewish residents, had to choose whether to remain in their occupied city or flee to a patriot-controlled area.

Newport, Rhode Island

In Newport the congregation of the recently built (1763) Jeshuat Israel Synagogue (later called the Touro Synagogue) was split in 1776 between Whigs and Tories. Aaron Lopez, a successful patriotic merchant, fled

with seventy members of his family and related Rivera, Lopez and Mendes families, first to Providence, then to Leicester, Massachusetts. His object was to find refuge "secured from the sudden alarms and the cruel ravages of an enraged enemy." Tragically, Lopez was drowned in 1782 on his way back to Newport. At his death his once prosperous estate became insolvent. Moses Michael Hays, another successful Rhode Island merchant and patriot, fled Newport and settled in Boston.

Several Jews remained in Newport during the British occupation, thereby affirming their loyalty to the Crown. Rev. Isaac Touro, Newport's religious leader, remained in Newport until 1780, then moved to New York and from there to his birthplace, Jamaica, where he died. Isaac Hart affirmed his loyalty to George III and paid with his life. He was killed while defending a Tory fortification in the battle of Long Island.

By the end of the war, the once prosperous Newport Jewish community was decimated. Two decades later, the only remaining Jew was Moses Seixas, who had written the famous welcome letter to George Washington in 1790 and upon which Washington's reply had been based.

New York City

In New York City the 1776 British occupation also caused a split in the Jewish community. Most members of New York's first and only colonial synagogue, the Spanish and Portuguese Shearith Israel, founded in 1654, followed the lead of the spiritual leader, Rev. Gershom Mendes Seixas, and fled from New York. Most members relocated to Philadelphia. Rev. Seixas, the first American born Jewish spiritual leader, was a dedicated patriot. His prayer after the start of the Revolution showed clearly where his allegiance lay:

May the supreme King of kings through his infinite mercies, save and prosper the Men of these United States, who are gone forth to War; the Lord of Hosts be the shield of those who are Armed for War by Land, and for those who are gone in Ships to the war on the Seas. May the Lord fight

for them...And may a permanent Peace subsist between them, ...so that Nation shall not lift up their sword against nation, neither shall they combat or make war any more, Amen....

After the war ended in 1784, Rev. Seixas and his congregants returned to Manhattan. He was one of fourteen clergymen who participated, in 1789 in New York City, in the Inauguration of George Washington as America's first President.

About thirty Jewish families remained in New York City during the British occupation. Among some thousand New York signers of a pledge of loyalty to the British Crown, there were sixteen Jewish signers. After the war many of the New York (and Philadelphia) Loyalists returned to England with the British troops. Most Jewish patriots returned to New York from Philadelphia.

One New Yorker, who volunteered for combat on the colonial side was Isaac Franks. When only seventeen he enlisted in Colonel Lasher's Volunteers of New York. In 1776 he participated in the disastrous Long Island campaign under General Washington, where he was wounded and taken prisoner. He was able to escape to New Jersey by rowing across the Hudson River with one paddle in a leaky skiff. There he rejoined Washington's army and stayed with it for the next six years through all of its many defeats and its few victories. In 1781 Franks was commissioned as ensign in the Seventh Massachusetts Regiment and remained with them until the next year when he resigned due to illness.

After the war Isaac Franks stayed in Philadelphia, where he became a broker and land speculator and bought a large house in Germantown. In 1793, in the midst of a yellow fever epidemic, President Washington was hesitant about returning in the fall to Philadelphia, then the nation's capital, from Mt. Vernon. He therefore rented Isaac Franks' country house, because, to quote Washington: "unquestionably Col. Franks' (if to be had) would suit me best, because (it is) more commodious for myself and the enter-

tainment of company." Washington paid \$66.66 for two months rent. Franks new rank as Colonel was acquired in 1794, when he was given command of the Second Regiment, posted to Western Pennsylvania during the Whiskey Rebellion.

In Congregation Shearith Israel's three burial grounds in Manhattan twenty-two New York Jewish Revolutionary soldiers and other patriots are interred. Most are buried at the Chatham Square Cemetery (now in Chinatown), where today these Revolutionary era graves are decorated each Memorial Day by the veterans' present day descendants. Many of these men, often at advanced ages, volunteered for Pennsylvania militia or regular Army units. Most returned to New York after the Revolution.

Solomon Myers COHEN served as a private in Captain Isaac Austin's 5th Battalion, Upper Delaware Ward Pennsylvania Militia, as well as in three other Pennsylvania militia units.

David HAYS was a merchant who had served with the New York Militia at Braddock's Fields during the French and Indian War. He enlisted in the Continental Army at age forty-four. In 1779, while he was stationed in Long Island with colonial troops, Tories destroyed his house and store.

Hayman LEVY HAYS was born in Hanover Germany in 1721, immigrated to New York, where he became a merchant and in 1770 was a signatory of the Non-Importation Resolutions. At age fifty-five he enlisted as a private in Captain Adam Foulk's Company, 4th Battalion, Pa. Militia.

Simon NATHAN was born in England in 1746. He was thirty when he enlisted as a private in Captain Andrew Geyer's 3rd Company, 4th Battalion, Philadelphia, Pa. Militia. Nathan also provided large sums of his own money for the Revolutionary cause.

Born in Prussia, Jonas PHILLIPS at age forty enlisted as a private in Captain John Linton's Company, Colonel William Bradford's Battalion, Philadelphia, Pa. Militia. Phillips had also signed the 1770 Non-Importation Resolutions.

Benjamin MENDES SEIXAS, a native New Yorker, served as Third Lieutenant in Fusilier's Company, 1st Battalion, New York Militia. He was the brother of Rev. Gershon Mendes Seixas, the patriotic spiritual leader of Shearith Israel, who is also buried at the synagogue's Chatham Square Cemetery.

Among those who remained in New York during the early days of the war was Haym SALOMON. Born in Lezno, Poland in 1740, as a young man he traveled much in Europe, where he learned several languages and mastered the intricacies of trading in European currencies. Salomon arrived in New York around 1772, where he entered business as a commission merchant, dealer in securities and ship broker.

Salomon had his first direct confrontation with the British in 1776. Five days after British General Sir William Howe and his troops captured New York City there was a fire, which destroyed about one fourth of the city. The British suspected the Sons of Liberty, which was probably a correct assumption. Haym Salomon was arrested as a suspect and jailed. Because he was fluent in German, the British found him useful as a translator to help them communicate with their Hessian mercenary soldiers, who comprised about half of their troops. They permitted him to leave prison and resume his business. He also became a purveyor of goods to Hessian officers. But at the same time, acting under cover as a secret agent and perhaps a spy for the Americans, he was able to help American and French prisoners of war escape. He also helped Hessian soldiers to desert to the American side.

In 1777 he married sixteen-year-old Rachel FRANKS, sister of Isaac Franks. A year later they had a son. In August 1778 Salomon was again arrested by the British on suspicion of espionage and sabotage. He was confined to the notorious Provost prison and sentenced to death by a British court martial. He avoided the hangman by escaping from prison and made his way past British lines. Two weeks later he reached Philadelphia.

Philadelphia

In Philadelphia Salomon boldly presented a Memorial (request) to the Continental Congress. It told of his patriotic activities in New York and stated that he had left both his wife and baby son behind and that he had "irrevocably lost all his Effects and Credit to the amount of five or six thousand pounds sterling." He then petitioned Congress for "any Employ." However, no job resulted from his plea.

So, again penniless, Salomon started from scratch in business for the second time. He became a commission merchant, trading in a variety of goods. Shipping was still a gamble, due to the continuing British ship blockade. He also functioned as a bill broker, representing the French government. He sold bills of exchange from France, Holland and Spain to raise hard currency for both French and American troops. "Salomon was something of an alchemist. He turned paper bills of exchange into ready money," according to historian Jacob Marcus. In this role in 1781 he became indispensable to the new Superintendent of Finance for the Continental Congress, Robert Morris. The American government was then so close to bankruptcy that often there were not enough funds to pay American soldiers.

Between 1781-1784 there were over 100 entries in Morris's diary detailing transactions with Salomon. The first such entry was on June 8, 1781: an agreement is noted with "Haym Solomon (sic), the Broker...to assist me in the sale of the Bills." Thus, Salomon used his skill at international finance and his flawless reputation for honesty, integrity and reliability to raise funds desperately needed by America. His usual miniscule fee of one half of one percent was much below the standard broker's sales fee for bills of exchange of three to five per cent. A huge challenge for Morris and Salomon was to raise enough funds to outfit both American and French armies to prepare for the decisive Yorktown campaign, which forced Cornwallis' British army to surrender in 1781.

On July 12 1782, Morris granted Salomon's request to add "Broker to the Office of

Finance” to his name in newspaper ads. Both before and after the end of the war in 1783 Morris and Salomon were repeatedly pressed to raise enough money to pay unpaid American troops. Salomon came through time and again by selling Bills of Exchange on his good name to help the new nation avoid insolvency.

One other important aspect of Salomon’s contribution to the Revolution were his loans, mostly never repaid, to impecunious delegates to the Continental Congress. Future President James Madison in a 1782 letter remarked: “The kindness of my little friend in Front Street (Salomon) will preserve me from extremities, but I never resort to it without mortifications as he obstinately rejects all recompense....To a necessitous delegate he gratuitously spares a supply (of money) out of his private stock.”

Among others, Salomon also gave generous financial aid to Alexander Hamilton, Edmund Randolph of Virginia and Don Francisco Rendon, Spain’s emissary in Philadelphia.

Haym Salomon’s later life was tragic. He had planned to return to New York, but his health weakened from his earlier imprisonments, he died in 1785 at age forty-five. He left a destitute widow and three children. All his efforts on behalf of his adopted country had left him a pauper. His total assets amounted to \$44,732; his debts were \$45,292. His estate was insolvent by \$560. Many years later his son Haym M. tried, repeatedly but unsuccessfully, to convince Congress that Salomon had loaned the government over \$350,000 of his own funds. His heirs have never collected a penny. Historians have since argued whether these were really Salomon’s private funds, or rather, money that he had negotiated on behalf of other countries. But as historian Richard B. Morris summarizes: “Salomon, who had lost two fortunes in the course of the Revolutionary War, had risked his property and pledged his credit on behalf of the Revolutionary Congress when a crisis of confidence existed... ended up broke.”

Many Jews from Philadelphia saw combat. For example, Benjamin NONES, born in

Bordeaux, France in 1757, came to Philadelphia at age twenty in 1777 in time to fight for the patriots. He volunteered as a soldier. In an autobiographical note to Thomas Jefferson in 1800 he stated that “as an American throughout the whole of the Revolutionary War, in the militia of Charleston, and in Pulaski’s legion, I fought in almost every action which took place in Carolina and in the disastrous affair in Savannah.” He was captured by the British in the siege of Charleston, South Carolina and not released until the battle of Yorktown. He later became a Major in the Pennsylvania militia.

Another Jewish officer, who served in a variety of both military and diplomatic roles, was David Salisbury FRANKS (not to be confused with his Philadelphia cousin, David Franks, a Tory.) Born in Philadelphia in 1743, David S. moved to Montreal with his father in 1767 for business purposes. When the American army captured Montreal in 1775, he assumed the role of paymaster for the army and followed it south to New York the next year. He may have participated in the Battle of Saratoga in 1777. In 1778 Franks was commissioned as a Major in the American army and was appointed as an aide to General Benedict Arnold, who took command of Philadelphia following the British evacuation. When Arnold was transferred to take the command of West Point in 1780, Franks accompanied him there.

After the notorious affair of General Arnold’s treason and attempted surrender of West Point in 1780, Arnold’s aides understandably also came under suspicion. To clear their names Major Franks and another aide, Colonel Varick, requested a public court of inquiry, to which Washington consented. After public hearings the court exonerated them completely.

Promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, David S. Franks carried out diplomatic assignments in Europe. He shuttled back and forth between America and Europe, meeting with America’s emissaries in Paris, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and John Jay. He was demobilized

from the army in 1783, having served as an officer for the entire Revolutionary War. Early in 1784, now as a civilian diplomat, he sailed to Europe again, carrying three copies of the 1783 Treaty of Paris, which had been ratified by Congress and officially ended the Revolutionary War. He served as the Vice Consul in Marseilles and participated in negotiations for a trade treaty with Morocco in 1785 before returning to America. Citing his eleven years in the service of his country, Franks petitioned Congress for a federal office in 1789, but with no success. His last position was as assistant cashier of the newly established Bank of North America from 1791 until his premature death in 1793 at age fifty, presumably from yellow fever.

Another Philadelphia Jew, who saw combat and attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Continental Army was Solomon BUSH. Bush enrolled as a captain in the famed "Flying Camp of Associators of Pennsylvania" in 1776. He first saw action in the Battle of Long Island. In 1777 his unit was mobilized for the defense of Philadelphia. The now Major Bush suffered a broken thigh in the Battle of Brandywine. He was then promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and made Deputy Adjutant General of Pennsylvania militia.

During the British occupation of Philadelphia Bush hid out in his father's house, but was discovered and taken prisoner, then placed on parole. After the war was over he became a frequent, but unsuccessful, petitioner for public office. Bush, like many other Jews in the period, was an active Mason and was named Deputy Inspector General of Masonry in Pennsylvania (Masonry established a common bond between many Jews and non-Jews in the Revolutionary era). Bush drifted away from Judaism in his later life, intermarried, and, upon his death in 1795, was buried in the Friends (Quaker) cemetery of Philadelphia.

Another Philadelphian, Phillip Moses RUSSELL, joined the Continental army in 1776 as a surgeon's mate. He volunteered to be an assistant to the regiment's surgeon, Dr. Norman of the Second Virginia Regiment.

During the winter of 1777-1778 he served directly under General George Washington at the disastrous encampment at Valley Forge. Russell worked tirelessly, tending to the sick and wounded at eleven makeshift camp hospitals, many of them no more than shacks (it is estimated that hospitals – and their accompanying diseases – accounted for ten times more deaths than British guns). General Washington wrote a letter of commendation, asserting that surgeon's mate Russell gave "assiduous and faithful attention to the sick and wounded" during the terrible winter at Valley Forge, and stated that he displayed "cool and collected deportment in battle." He remained in the army until 1780, when he resigned due to worsening health.

South Carolina

Turning our attention to the south, we focus on Francis SALVADOR, who became the first Jewish casualty in the Revolution. Born in London in 1747 to a prominent Sephardic family, he immigrated to America in 1773, where he joined his family working on an indigo plantation on the South Carolina frontier. Despite his English birth, he shared strong anti-British sentiments, often characteristic of the frontier. He was a member of both the First and Second South Carolina Provincial Congresses in 1773 and 1776, participated in the state's constitutional assembly and served in the first General Assembly. Thus, he became the only Revolutionary Jew to be elected as a member of a state legislature.

He volunteered for the militia force raised by Major Andrew Williamson. On August 1, 1776, this militia unit was ambushed by a band of Cherokee Indians, who had been incited by local Tories. Salvador was shot, then scalped by the Indians before he died. A friend, John Drayton, who had worked with Salvador in the first state legislature, thus described him: "His manners were those of a polished gentleman, and as such he was intimately known and esteemed by the first revolutionary characters of South Carolina." The plaque dedicated to Salvador in a Charleston park reads:

Born an aristocrat, he became a democrat, | An Englishman, he cast his lot with America;

True to his ancient faith, he gave his life | For new hopes of human liberty and understanding.

Although somewhat controversial, the existence of a “Jew Company” from Charleston, South Carolina is recognized by many historians. The narrative of a participant, Jacob I. COHEN, later of Richmond, Virginia, describes how twenty-six Jews, many of them living on King Street, enrolled in the company, led by Captain Richard Lushington. It was the only known instance of a group mobilization of Jews in one city and into one company. Lushington’s men (about half of whom were Jewish) fought at the Battle of Beaufort as part of the Charleston Militia Regiment, known as “Free Citizens” and with General Benjamin Lincoln’s troops, who attempted to recapture Savannah late in 1779. Jewish soldiers in this company included Abraham SEIXAS, Nathan PHILLIPS, and Isaiah ISAACS.

Lushington’s “Jew Company” also fought to defend Charleston during the two-month British siege in 1780. One of the most disastrous battles for Americans in the war ended with the surrender of Charleston and General Lincoln’s entire army to the British. Rachel MOSES, youngest daughter of Myer MOSES, was killed by a cannonball during the siege, apparently one of the only Jewish female casualties during the war. Many Jews, including refugees from Savannah, were among those who were taken prisoner by the British. After the war was over the South Carolina Gazette boasted that “the Jews are here admitted to the full privileges of citizenship and bid fair to flourish and be happy.”

Savannah, Georgia

Georgia’s Jewish community was very active during the Revolution. Philip MINIS, a native Georgian, was reputedly the first white child born in newly settled Savannah in 1733. As early as 1776 Minis was acting paymaster and a commissary to Georgia’s

army and reportedly advanced eleven thousand dollars to the troops. Philip Minis and Levi SHEFTALL acted as local guides in planning a 1779 attempt to recapture Savannah by a combined force of the French Navy and American army under Major General Benjamin Lincoln. Unfortunately the expedition failed and Savannah remained in British hands until the end of the war.

The SHEFTALLs were one of the first families to settle in Savannah in 1733. Benjamin Sheftall’s two sons, the half brothers Mordecai and Levi, both played a prominent role during the Revolution. Mordecai Sheftall was named to the general staff of the Georgia Brigade with the rank of Colonel. In 1777 he was appointed Deputy Commissary General for the Georgia troops and the next year he became Commissary General for Purchases and Issues for the Continental troops in Georgia and South Carolina. He named his son Sheftall Sheftall, then just seventeen, to be his assistant. On the British capture of Savannah on December 29, 1778, both father and son were captured by the British and held on a prison ship, where they were harshly treated. They were later transported by a British frigate to Antigua in the West Indies. There they were exchanged for British prisoners, paroled and allowed to leave for Philadelphia.

In 1780 George Washington requested safe passage for a sloop, the Carolina Packet, to proceed under a truce flag to British-held Charleston to carry food, clothing and money to supply General Moultrie and the American prisoners held there. Young Sheftall Sheftall was named flag master of the ship and was responsible for executing a successful mission. At the war’s end the Sheftall family returned to Savannah. Mordechai Sheftall’s finances were considerably reduced. Although he submitted claims to the new Federal government for funds that he had advanced them during the war, these claims were never redressed. Sheftall Sheftall became a lawyer and his brother Moses, a physician. In 1832, then seventy and indigent, Sheftall, citing his war

contributions, applied for and received a veteran's pension, which sustained him until his death in 1847.

Another Georgia Jew, David EMANUEL, was active in frontier warfare during the Revolution. On one occasion he was captured by some Tories, who shot his two companions, while Emanuel escaped into a swamp. He lived to become active in politics and in 1801 was elected as Governor of Georgia.

Conclusion

The Revolution was significant to American Jews, because it was one of the first wars since antiquity in which Jews were permitted to participate actively. They "gave money, ran the British blockade, fought as regulars and militiamen, and died or bled on the battle fields to win rights and immunities for themselves and their children" (Marcus). They fought for and gave monetary aid to their adopted country, often at great personal and financial sacrifice, which frequently left them and their families in poor health and impoverished.

In light of the widespread prohibition of military service by Jews throughout the previous seventeen centuries of the Jewish Diaspora, it was a significant achievement that at least fifteen Jewish soldiers became officers in the Continental Army (under the previous British rule no Jew could become a commissioned officer unless he took a standard Christian test oath). Many children and grandchildren of Revolutionary Jews participated in the Army and Navy, both as enlisted men and officers, in the War of 1812 and later in the Civil War.

Jews of the Revolution lived to see the religious test for public office abolished in the New York State Constitution during the war, and after the war by Article VI of the Federal Constitution (1787) and by the Bill of Rights (1791). However, in practice many states did not grant full religious freedom until many years later.

On March 4, 1784, a "Jew Broker" – probably Haym SALOMON – answered an anti-Jewish attack by a former Tory exile.

This open letter published in a Philadelphia newspaper, *The Independent Gazetteer*, according to historian Jonathan Sarna, "offers striking testimony to the freedom and security Jews felt in wake of the Revolution:"

"I exult and glory in reflecting that we have the honor to reside in a free country where, as a people we have met with the most generous countenance and protection; and I do not at all despair, notwithstanding former obstacles, that we shall still obtain every other privilege that we aspire to enjoy along with our fellow citizens. It also affords me unspeakable satisfaction ...to contemplate that we have in general been early (in) uniform, decisive Whigs, and were second to none in our patriotism and attachment to our country!" (Sarna, 1985).

I would like to thank historian Jonathan Sarna of Brandeis University, Rabbi Marc Angel of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City and Rabbi Mordecai Eskovitz of the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, for their helpful reviews of this article.

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- Joseph L. "Joel" Andrews, M.D. is a physician, author, social and environmental activist and Jewish and American history enthusiast. A native of New York City, he lives in Concord, Massachusetts and is a member of the Jewish Geneological Society of Greater Boston. Currently he practices internal medicine part time and is Lecturer in Medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston. He is a free-lance writer for The Boston Globe and author of the best selling history and guide book Revolutionary Boston, Lexington and Concord: The Shots Heard 'Round the World! His forthcoming book is Moses and Miriam in America: Jews Fight for Freedom and Human Rights in Colonial and Revolutionary America. Dr. Andrews is a direct descendant of Revolutionary soldiers and patriots portrayed in this article: Haym Salomon, Colonel Isaac Franks and Major Benjamin Nones.*



**In the Matter of
The Memory of Chaim Mendel Pickholz**

vs.

Assicurazioni Generali S.P.A.

Israel Pickholtz

In the words of the website of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC), "ICHEIC was established in 1998 following negotiations among European insurance companies and United States insurance regulators, as well as representatives of international Jewish and survivor organizations and the State of Israel...to collect and facilitate the signatory companies' processing of insurance claims from the Holocaust period." These claims resulted from the fact that many Holocaust victims held life insurance policies that were never paid after their deaths or for which payment of premiums was discontinued due to the events of the Holocaust.

During the course of 2003 and as the 31 December deadline for filing claims approached, I learned that ICHEIC maintained a searchable online database with names of policy holders and that this database had a Pickholz listed. The man in question was Chaim Mendel Pickholz and the only information listed was that the policy was issued in Czortkow, by the Italian insurance company Assicurazioni Generali S.P.A. (Generali).

I did not have a clue who this man was. Czortkow is in the general area of Skalat (east Galicia), where the main branches of the Pikhholz families lived, but we knew of no Pikhholz who actually lived in Czortkow. Mendel is a very rare Pikhholz first name and of course I had no way of knowing if Chaim was originally part of his name, or if it had been added later due to illness – a common phenomenon. In fact, my own grandfather, born Mendel Pickholz, had Chaim added to his name around the time I was born.

To tell the truth, my interest in pursuing this lead was more to identify the man himself,

rather than any insurance benefits, but things do not always end up the way they begin.

While I was at it, I searched for additional Pikhholz descendants in the ICHEIC database, using variant spellings and wildcards and eventually turned up two others: Chaim Pickholz Muhlrak (sic) and Izrael Isser Pickholz vel Kupferschmied, both of whom bought their policies from Generali in "Skala." The fact that both these men were listed with double surnames made it impossible to find them without a wild card search, because a simple "Pickholz" search was not considered a match. But those same double surnames made it easy to identify the men themselves and to contact their nearest surviving relatives.

Chaim Pickholz of Skalat (not Skala, of course) was the son of Moses Pikhholz and Chancie Muhlrak and I know the six grandchildren of his brother. There was no one closer who survived the Holocaust. I helped them file a claim and after considerable hemming and hawing about non-payment of premiums, Generali offered the cousins a settlement of \$3354.34, which I believe they accepted and received.

Izrael Isser Kupferschmid had a Pikhholz mother and a Pikhholz wife, so the identification was easy. In his case, I know the two granddaughters of his wife's brother. I helped them file a claim and Generali acknowledged that he had had two twenty-year policies with them, both issued in 1929. One they claimed was invalid and for the other they offered the princely sum of \$1462.16. I believe that the sisters took what was offered and did not appeal the decision regarding the second policy.

In neither case did ICHEIC play any role that we could discern. The claims were filed with ICHEIC but all the subsequent correspondence came from Generali.

But Chaim Mendel was entirely another story. We simply had no idea who he was. One Pikhholz descendant in the United States knew that her grandmother had a brother – Shoil ben Aryeh Leib Pikhholz – who lived not far from Czortkow and that this uncle had made aliyah sometime after World War I, leaving two grown sons in Galicia. No one knew anything about these two sons, so I suggested she file a claim, because if this Chaim Mendel was Shoil's son, it would be easy enough to prove the relationship. I also filed a claim, based on the possibility that Chaim Mendel was part of the Pikhholz family in neighboring Budanow and I thought at the time that this Budanow family might be closely related to my own. We have never been able to find living descendants of the Budanow family itself.

These two claims were pretty weak, but our purpose was to get a file open and to learn who Chaim Mendel was. ICHEIC's rules stated that even if the insurance company rejected a claim, they had to show documentation and that, we figured, would tell us who Chaim Mendel was.

So on 9 December 2003, I filed my claim and on 17 November 2004 ICHEIC in London informed me that it had been submitted to Generali for their attention. On 9 August 2005, twenty months after my filing, Generali informed me that they had no life insurance policy that fit the information I had given them. Generali invited me to appeal to ICHEIC.

By this time I had learned that there was likely no Mendel in the Budanow Pikhholz family and that this family was not closely related to my own, so the entire basis for my original claim was invalid. But I still wanted to identify Chaim Mendel, so I pushed on.

In my appeal, dated 26 August 2005, I reminded ICHEIC that according to their own rules, the claimant is entitled to see any relevant documents and protested that this rule was not being honored. On 21 September, ICHEIC sent the appeal to Generali and on 24 October Generali rejected the appeal, once again without showing any relevant documents. This time

they said I had thirty days to request an arbitrator.

In my request for arbitration, dated 7 November, I reviewed all that I knew about the eleven Pikhholz descendants named Mendel born before 1920, and suggested that the best candidate would be Mendel Liebergal, the son of Sara Pikhholz and Moshe Liebergal of Skalat, who was born in 1890. In my petition I reminded ICHEIC that according to their website "ICHEIC's mission is to identify, settle, and pay individual claims" and I pointed out that if they would simply tell me when and where Chaim Mendel was born and who his parents were, I could help them fulfill their mission.

On 15 December 2005, Generali informed ICHEIC that they rejected my claim once again and "there is nothing further to add." On 21 December, ICHEIC informed me of Generali's decision and on 13 January 2006 I wrote back, telling them what I thought of them and their charade.

On 2 March 2006, Generali wrote that "all possible explanations regarding this claim have already been provided" and that again they "have nothing further to add with respect to the appeal in question." On the matter of showing relevant documentation, I may as well have been talking to the walls.

The arbitrator saw the material on 19 June 2006 and on 23 June I was informed that I had fourteen days to reply to Generali's "last word."

On 20 July 2006, Mark Halpern of JRI-Poland sent me a sneak preview of the newest Skalat records, births for 1902-05, in the form of an Excel file, this in my capacity as town leader for Skalat for JRI-Poland. And there in 1902 was the birth of Chaim Mendel Pikhholz, born in nearby Kaczanowka to Josef Pikhholz of Kaczanowka and Bertha Schwebel of Czortkow.

I knew that Josef and Bertha had three sons. Abraham who was born in 1900 and died in 1901, Yitzhak (1906-1977) who was buried in New Jersey and Munio, whose name I knew from a submission to JewishGen's Family Tree of the Jewish People by a Schwebel relative. Munio must be Chaim Mendel. I

had assumed that Munio was a nickname for Moshe, because that was the case with another Skalat-area Pickholz. I learned later that I was not the only one who made that mistake.

Yitzhak – who went by the name Irwin in the United States – had no children, but as recently as 2000, his wife was still living. Back then, I had found Else Pickholz in the phone book and wrote to see who she was. I received a response from her nephew, Len, who said that she was Irwin's widow, that they had no children and that Irwin had a brother killed in the Holocaust, but she knew nothing more about the family. Or more likely, she no longer remembered anything about Irwin's family.

But this was 2006 and Else was no longer in the phone book. So I called the cemetery in New Jersey, where I learned that the other half of Irwin's double grave was unoccupied. They would not tell me more, but gave me the number for the burial society. The woman at the society found my inquiry rather suspicious, but promised to pass a message to the family. Soon after, I had an email from Len, telling me that Else was ninety-five years old and that he was handling her affairs. He too regarded me with a bit of suspicion at the outset.

I faxed ICHEIC with all this news and advised them that from here on, they should consider Else to be the claimant, although I would continue working with them (or perhaps against them) on her behalf.

Of course, I immediately ordered Chaim Mendel's birth record from Warsaw. In the meantime, Len provided Irwin's birth certificate and marriage certificate showing the same parents as Chaim Mendel and demonstrating Else's relationship. On 7 August I faxed Len's documents and power of attorney to the arbitrator, together with Irwin's application for Social Security (SS-5) which showed his parents' names and his birthplace in his own hand – a document which I had acquired some years earlier.

When I left for the Conference in New York, I had not received an acknowledgement from

ICHEIC's arbitrator for any of my new material. During the Conference, I consulted with others on the subject, particularly with Sidney Zabludoff, who had extensive ICHEIC experience and who thought I had a good chance for a hearing and a favorable ruling, despite the fact that I was presenting new material after the appeal process had formally ended.

By now, things were falling into place. I did a search on my database for Czortkow and found two Pages of Testimony submitted in 1956 by Mrs. Genia Stock of Kiryat Motzkin. Mrs. Stock had taken it upon herself to submit Pages for everyone she could remember from her hometown of Probuzhna, including Moshe Pickholz, his wife Sarah and their three children – Freide, Josef and Avigdor. I had a copy of these Pages from the very first days of my Pickholz research and in fact in my file of 325 Pages of Testimony, the one for Sarah is numbered "1." I had spoken with the eighty-year-old Mrs. Stock at the time (1998) and she told me that she knew little of this Moshe, except that he had come from Czortkow, but his wife was from Probuzhna, so she remembered her family. She did recall that he had a brother someplace outside Galicia – maybe Vienna. My strongest impression of my conversation with Mrs. Stock was that she was sorry that she was able to submit Pages of Testimony for only 975 of the nearly twelve hundred Jews of Probuzhna, and in that she felt that she had failed the others.

I suspected that Mrs. Stock had known "Munio" Pickholz and had assumed him to be Moshe, just as I had. She had the 1902 year of birth and his father's name Josef.

Sarah's maiden name was not listed, but her parents were identified as Avigdor and Miriam. Mrs. Stock had submitted two other Pages for people with these same parents, both with the surname Klinger, so I guessed that Sarah may have been Klinger as well.

Mrs. Stock testified that the family was killed in Belzec in 1942.

On 17 September, I notified the arbitrator that I now had Chaim Mendel's birth record

in hand and informed him the precise date and house number. I also told him that I believed he lived in Probuzhna and that his wife and children were Sarah Klinger and Freide, Josef and Avigdor. I also reminded him that ICHEIC had not acknowledged receiving any of my new information since July.

On 19 September, I received an email message from ICHEIC telling me that the arbitrator needed further information and clarifications, particularly regarding the changes I had made in the claim – a fully reasonable request, under the circumstances.

My 21 September faxed reply summarized the entire claim from beginning to end and included a copy of the birth record – all of which ICHEIC duly forwarded to Generali for comment on 24 October, advising them that they had ten days to respond.

On 13 December I reminded ICHEIC that Generali's ten days had long passed.

On 27 December Generali sent me a copy of the policy, confirming that Sary Klinger was Chaim Mendel's wife, and offering a low five-figure settlement in the name of Else Pickholz for a twenty-five year policy issued in 1937. They said that I had three business days to advise them if I was withdrawing the appeal. ICHEIC was closing their London offices on 31 December and it was suddenly urgent to close all their files.

I checked the math with Sidney Zabudoff, Len accepted Generali's surrender on his

aunt's behalf and I withdrew the appeal. Len received the check in February 2007.

Sometimes the good guys prevail. I would be remiss if I did not mention the moral support and advice I received along the way from Tom Venetianer of <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/h-justice>.

I have not been successful in locating Mrs. Genia Stock to tell her the full story and I suspect she has passed on.

On this occasion, we pause to remember Chaim Mendel (Munio) ben Yosef and Beile Pickholz, his wife Sarah bat Avigdor and Miriam Klinger and their three young children, Freide, Josef and Avigdor. May God avenge their blood.

Israel Pickholtz was born in Pittsburgh shortly before the establishment of the State. He has been in Israel for thirty-four years, mostly in the Negev but the last sixteen years in Gush Etzion. His interest in genealogy began as a child, but he did not do much about it until about thirteen years ago. For the last nine years, he has been working on a project to identify and connect all Pikholtz families everywhere. Israel is married to Frances Silberstein Safien (of the London Silbersteins) and is a member of the Negev Branch of IGS. He is also a member of the Steering Committee of Gesher Galicia.

The Pikholtz Project web site is at

www.pikholtz.org.

Email: IsraelP@pikholtz.org



Remarks on the Genealogy of the Zak Family The Origin of the Name and its Meaning *

Israel Haim Zak

Translated from the Hebrew

Introduction

Today the family name ZAK – as an acronym (ק"ץ *zayin, kuf*) – is not very widespread. For example, it is not included in the list of *Two Hundred Most Widespread Family Names in Israel* (Ariel, 1997). On the other hand, throughout the generations, members of the Zak family have been interspersed among the old and prestigious families in the “Intertwined Rabbinical Tree,” where they are found interwoven with other names (Ish Horowitz, 1978, Shapiro, 1981).

I call the stem that connects these ancient families over dozens of generations the “Intertwined Rabbinical Tree.” Its members are well documented in rabbinic and genealogic literature from early times. Some twenty rabbinic families are found in this tree including Ashkenazi, Horowitz/Ish Horowitz, Isserles, Katz, Katzenellenbogen, Klausner, Luria, Margalio (Margolies), Meislish, Rapaport, Shapira, Shor, Treves, Weil and Zak (see Rappaport *Et-Mol*, Elul 5765).

There are various explanations and conjectures for the origin and significance of the name. The argument is over the meaning of the name Zak – whether it is an acronym for Zera’ Kodesh [Holy Seed] or Zera’ Kedoshim [Martyrs’ Seed], and also whether it is an early name of a family from a single ancestor or a name that was used, over the centuries, originating from various sources. Phrased in another way the question is whether the family name Zak (1) mainly conveys holiness in essence or in the actions of a specific early branch – (see Isaiah 6:13, “even when they are felled; its stump shall be a holy seed”¹ and Ezra 9:2

“the holy seed has become intermingled with the peoples of the land,” or (2) reflects the courageousness, in various instances, of martyrs and their descendants because they sacrificed their own lives for the sanctification of God’s name; or perhaps (3) is based on the name of a geographical location or derived from an ancestor’s name.

Branches of the Zak (Sack) Family over the Centuries

Five branches of the family will be discussed starting from the earliest; each prides itself with a different explanation of the origin of the name.

I. A Personal Name as the Source of the Family Name

The earliest members of the Zak/Sack family known to us are found in Nuremberg and are discussed by Dinari (5744), Peles (5746), Yuval (5749), Havatzelet and others (5753). These five generations span approximately the years 1390 to 1550. They originate in Nuremberg with the founder of the family being Yitzhak-Isaac. According to the conjecture of Rabbi Peles, he is the source of the family name of this branch. The rabbinic part of this family continues father and son – R’Simon Sack, his son R’Joel Sack and his son R’Nathan Sack. The last one known to us is the son of Nathan, R’Judah (Zalkali) MAHARAZ Sack the author of a commentary on the book *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* [SEMAG] by R’Moshe b’Jacob of Coucy, one of the leading French Tosafists of the 13th century. Because of the importance attributed to this book by the rabbis, it was one of the first Hebrew books published after the development of the printing press in Europe, before 1480 (Peles, 5743).

* A shorter version of this paper – *Family Holiness (Zak)* appeared in the periodical *Et-Mol*, Tamuz 5766, 31:188.

1. All biblical translations in this article are from NJPS.

MAHARAZ Sack moved to Schweinfurt where he served as the community rabbi and he died in Prague, where he is buried (Havatzet and others). Perhaps his wanderings have relevance for the Zak family in Krakow whose origins were in Prague (II following).

Some are of the opinion that names similar to Sack and Zak [in Hebrew spelled the same], for example Zack and Zakh are not identical and were in use hundreds of years before the events described above (Beit Hatefutzot with no attribution).

II. The Name of a Town as the Source of the Family Name

In the Krakow National Archives there is documentation from the governor dated 4 June 1507 (24 Sivan 5267) that prohibits fifteen Jews including “Doctor Israel Zak” from emigrating from Krakow (see illustration). Wettstein in his short article from 1902 records the name as an acronym and posits that Doctor Zak came from the town of Zaki located about sixty kilometers east of Prague. Wettstein supported his theory with an interesting technical explanation of the diacritical mark separating the Z and K. He comments that the way to indicate foreign words written in Hebrew in manuscripts was with two lines above the word and with quote marks when the foreign word was printed. According to Wettstein it is most certain that the quote marks do not indicate that the name Zak is an acronym. He does not explain why he chose this particular town over the many others in Bohemia (Czech Republic) whose names begin with Zak’ as the first syllable. Farber (*Peer Mordecai*, 1951) and in his wake Wunder (*Elef Margalio*) quote this unknown article that appeared in an obscure brochure. Reference to this article by Kahana (*Anaf Eitz Avot*, 1903, p. 31) is relegated to a reference to the branch of R’Avraham Zak and his son R’Meir Zak, the ABD [Av Beit Din – Head of Rabbinical Court] of Lwow (See IV 1 below). Naftali Y. Hakohen (*Otzar Hagedolim*, 1967-1970) discusses Doctor Israel Zak (p. 69) as one of the early Krakow rabbis from about 1490-1540 where he died. Naftali Hakohen also

discusses the prohibition to leave Krakow. Thanks to the special kindness of the archive in Krakow we received a photocopy of the document hand-written in pen in Latin as well as a typewritten copy of the Latin text.

III. Holiness in Essence and Behavior as the source of the Family Name.

R. Jacob Israel Emden, known as Yavetz, in his book about his father *Toldot Rabeinu Tzvi Hirsch Ashkenazi – Haham Zvi*, begins the tree with his great-grandfather R’Benjamin Zev Ashkenazi from the Zak branch, and his grandfather R’Jacob, both of them scholars in Vilna. He concludes with his father our teacher Tzvi Hirsch Ashkenazi Zak with his own name being Jacob, the same name as his grandfather. In his book he explains in detail the source of the name Zak: “they were accustomed to sign their name Zak because they were of the holy seed who, after trials and ordeals in the time of the persecutions remained loyal to God for several generations as members of the early Ashkenaz Hasidim.” This text seems to be taken from the *Sefer Yuchasin Hashaleim* by R’Avraham Zacut (p. 222b) and reworked by R’Jacob Emden. This version relates to the family of R’Asher, that is the Rosh, who was originally from Cologne and Worms and from there the family relocated to Barcelona finally settling in Toledo. In this way, R’Jacob Emden connects this branch of the Zak family to that family. R’Jacob Emden was very familiar with the book of Avraham Zacut, since he edited the handwritten manuscript for publication. The title of the chapter that describes the source of the name Zak in the book of R’Jacob Emden *Zera Kodesh Matzavta* “Its stump shall be a holy seed,” Isaiah 6:13) raises special interest regarding the significance of the Zak name (see the traditional Biblical commentaries as well as Noga Hareuveni in his book *Siah v’Eitz b’Moresheet Israel*). Avraham Zacut, who lived at the time of the Expulsions from Spain and Portugal, adds the following regarding the family of the Rosh: “...this family always contributed a tithe from their profits and were thus called Kedoshim [Holy ones].” There appears to be special importance in demonstrating their holiness

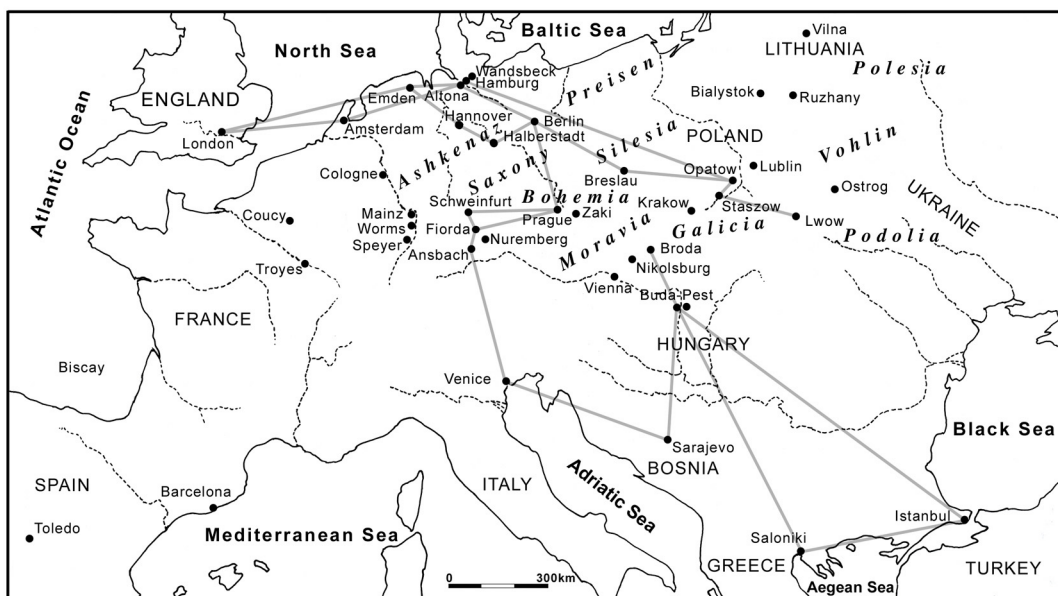
to this obligation that went beyond sacrificing their lives for the sanctification of God's name. Ish Horowitz (1978) and Shapiro (1981), call attention to the tradition that members of the Zak family are connected to R'Jacob the author of the authoritative rabbinical work the Arba'a Turim, who was the son of the Rosh [R'Asher].

The four generations of the Zak branch of the Haham Zvi mentioned above lived approximately between the years 1576-1776. The rabbinic positions of the Haham Zvi (see illustration in the Hebrew section) encompassed all of Europe. He begins his travels in Broda, Moravia, went via Buda (Ofen/Buda-pest) to Saloniki and Istanbul, where he was granted the title Haham Zvi. From there he turned back to Buda, then to Sarajevo, Berlin, Altona, Hamburg, Amsterdam and London from where he moved to Emden, Altona, Breslau, Opatow (Apta), Staszow and finally to Lwow, in eastern Europe, where he died (Emden 1953, Wunder 1993). One must remember that he traveled on land by wagon (for his route see illustration). His son, R'Jacob Emden was exacting in his research and adroit in his

writings, and both bitterly fought against any influence of Shabtai Zvi. Very well known is the confrontation of Jacob Emden with Jonathan Eybeschutz whom he suspected of being a secret follower of Shabtai Zvi. This battle bitterly divided the Jewish people throughout Europe. The Haham Zvi and his son R'Jacob Emden were colorful personalities in spirit, belief and action. The story of their lives is vital to gain an understanding of Jewish history in general and their period of time in particular.

IV. The Family Name as an Indication of Martyrdom – Dying for the Sanctification of God's Name

1) In the book *Melitzei Esh* by Avraham Stern (volume 2, paragraph 49) and in the book *Mishpahot Atikot B'Yisrael* [Ancient Jewish Families] by Y.L Shapiro (p. 262) it is recorded that R'Mordecai Zak died for the Sanctification of God's Name in Lublin in the Blood Libel of 1636 and from that time on his family took the name Zak – Martyr's Holy Seed. Stern proposes that he was the brother of Avraham Zak, the head of the rabbinical court of Ostrog (Ostraha), the father of Meir – Maharam Zak, the head of



A map of locations mentioned in the article and the communities under the jurisdiction of the Haham Zvi outlined on the map.

the rabbinical court of Lwow. This suggestion is not plausible since Mordecai was a contemporary of the Maharam. Shapiro repeats this assumption but admits to the possibility that he was a son of Avraham and thus the brother of Maharam Zak. This seems reasonable since Maharam died in old age, some eighteen years after the execution of Mordecai, may God avenge his blood. It should be pointed out here that the name of Maharam's first-born son was also Avraham, and he died during his father's lifetime. In his memory, Maharam also named the son born to him late in life Avraham. The third son of Maharam was named Mordecai, perhaps in memory of his martyred uncle. With this, Ish Horowitz and Shapiro attribute the origin of the name Zak with the family of the Rosh (cf. III above). This rabbinic family from Lwow was widespread and over eight and more generations many rabbis were among its descendants (Ish Horowitz 1978, p. 81).

2) In the middle of the 17th century, some twenty years after the execution of Mordecai the Holy (above IV, 1) a shocking and infamous blood libel occurred in Ruzhany on the border of Lithuania and Poland, east of Bialystok. It began with the tossing of the battered body of a Christian youth into a cave located next to the home of R'Israel Zak. It culminated with the execution of two leaders of the community, R'Israel Zak and R'Tuvia Bachrach on the second day of Rosh Hashanah 1659/5420. The two of them volunteered to sacrifice their own lives to save the entire community. After a trial lasting some three years (Eisenstadt 1897-98) and in spite of the fact that the sham trial was unable to prove their guilt, they were sentenced to death and beheaded. According to some, notables from the community, or the wife of one of the two, traveled for many days by wagon to the residence of the King of Poland Jan Kazimierz, who at that time was deeply involved in difficult local and foreign wars. Another version has them going to the Duke of Sapiieha, as Ruzhany was under his jurisdiction. Kept waiting and with other delays they finally managed to get an audience with him and obtain a pardon. However, they returned to Ruzhany too late,

after they were executed. Eisenstadt describes the event in detail and lists many generations of descendants of these two martyrs. The researcher Sackheim, who is descended from R'Israel, in his book *Scattered Seeds* adds and expands the tree of descendants of R'Israel the Holy to our day. Sackheim postulates that the sons of R'Israel the Holy of Ruzhany adopted the name Zak – Martyr's Holy Seed; that is to say that he does not consider the possibility that R'Israel's name was originally Zak. However, we have not found any support in the sources for this proposition, not in the book *Da'at Kedoshim*, which is Sackheim's main reference, not in the book *History of the Jewish Communities of Poland* nor in Farber's book *Pe'er Mordecai*. We should also point out that Shlomo Zak, the youngest of the three sons of R'Israel the Holy and the Haham Zvi Ashkenazi Zak, at least the third generation of those using the name Zak (see III above) were brothers-in-law, married to two sisters, the daughters of R'Meshulam Zalman Neimark Mireles, the head of the rabbinic court of AHW – Altona, Hamburg and Wandsbeck (*Da'at Kedoshim, Scattered Seeds* and *Elef Margalioi*). In Sackheim's book there are relatively few branches in which the name Zak was handed down from generation to generation to our time. Many of the names utilized are diverse forms such as Zackheim, Zakun and others. Numerous branches bear family names introduced by husbands who married women from this extended family.

V. An Attempt to Join all the Branches of the Zak Families

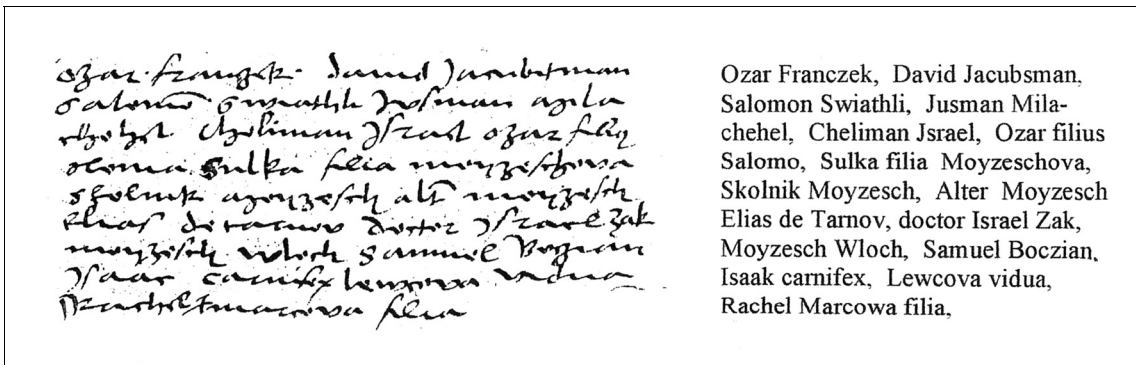
Rabbi Farber in his book *Pe'er Mordecai* discusses seven core families descended from Rabbi Mordechai Benet of Nikolsburg (Mikulov), in his terminology “seven candles in the Menorah of Mordecai.” The fifth candle is that of the Zak family. Like most of the sources we have cited, Rabbi Farber does not report on the Zak family of Nuremberg and perhaps he did not know of its existence nor of the tradition according to which the Zak family descends from the author of the *Arba'a Turim*, the son of the Rosh. He dismisses the explanation of

R'Jacob Emden (III above) and focuses only on the branches known to him beginning with Doctor Israel Zak from the community of former Prague residents now living in Krakow. He accepts Wettstein's supposition that the name is derived from the town of Zaki in Bohemia (II above) and connects the branch of the Haham Zvi to it (III above) and its continuation in the branch of R'Meir Zak, head of the rabbinical court of Lwow (IV 1 above) and also with the branch of R'Israel the Holy of Ruzhany (IV 2 above). Farber attempts to weave them together into a single unit of branches intertwined with each other. In his discussion of the names of the children and grandchildren of the Haham Zvi, Farber connects their personal names with teachers and rabbis, among them fathers of the family. But on the other hand he is not aware of the fact that some of these names such as Nathan and Judah appear in the Nuremberg branch. Farber's linking

attempts are surprising – is it possible that the Haham Zvi and his ancestors knew of the connection to the Nuremberg branch that moved to Prague and from there to Krakow? Is it not possible that some of the names in the family branch of the Haham Zvi come from this source?

Conclusion

We have before us several differing and varying explanations with comments, evaluations and critiques on the origin or origins of the Zak family name. Each one of the scholars in his analysis relates to a segment of the branches listed above. It is possible that some of the commentators were not aware of all of the sources. We hope that the readers will bring to our attention sources, traditions and documentation that we have overlooked and comment on the methodology and suppositions presented in this paper.



Names of Jews from Krakow in a 1507 Latin Manuscript, hand written. Courtesy of the Krakow Archives (Libri Inscriptiones Castrenses Cracovienses).

A Word of Thanks

I express my deepest thanks to my friend Dr. Chanan Rapaport for availing me of the scope of his knowledge and for his important comments and suggestions; Dr. George Sackheim on his clarifying comments on the story of the Holy Martyr of Ruzhany and the branches of his descendants; Rabbi Dr. Israel Mordecai Peles for his helpful comments and clarifications of the early Zak generations

from Nuremberg; to my friend Shlomo Sneh for creative review; to the Archive in Krakow and Professor Amnon Linder of the Hebrew University for their help in deciphering the handwriting of the Krakow document.

Bibliography

See extended bibliography at the end of the Hebrew version of this article.

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few years he has focused on the genealogy of his family and on the "Intertwined Rabbinical Tree," in which the connection of the old rabbinic families dating back some 1,000 years to the history of our people in Europe and in the Circum Mediterranean are studied.
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Second Annual Seminar of the Israel Genealogical Society

Shalom Bronstein

We are pleased to be able to present in this issue of *Sharsheret Hadorot* two of the excellent lectures delivered at the Second Annual Seminar of the IGS (other lectures will be presented in the future issues). About one hundred participants gathered in Givatyaim at Beit Wolyn on 20 November 2006 to hear a wide range of lectures on Jews in the Military and its effect on our family histories. Up to the time of Emancipation, few if any European Jews served in the military forces. Some may have heard stories of Jewish Hessian soldiers fighting with the British forces during the American Revolutionary War. There are also accounts of Jews serving in Napoleon's army when it invaded Russia and how they interacted with the local Jewish population.

During the 19th and 20th centuries countless Jewish soldiers fought and died for their respective countries. The re-establishment of the State of Israel and the subsequent victory over the invading Arab forces during the War of Independence immediately comes to mind when we think of Jews in the military. Therefore, it was most appropriate that Meir Pa'il, who needs no introduction to Israelis, as he is a noted expert on military history, opened the Second Annual Yom Iyun of the Israel Genealogical Society with a talk on Military History.

The assembled group then separated to attend simultaneous lectures. While most of the talks were in Hebrew, two were presented in English. The wide range of areas covered by the speakers clearly indicates the modern

dispersal of our people and their return to Eretz Yisrael.

Following is a list of the lectures. Some of these lectures are included in this issue of *Sharsheret Hadorot*.

- The keynote speech on Military History – Me'ir Pa'il.
- The Haganah Historical Archives as a tool for genealogical research, a case study – Ilan Shtayer.
- Sources for researching military records of Sephardic Jews in the Balkans – Yitchak Kerem.
- Gavriel Berkowitz, from Kvutzat Hulda to the Jewish Legion – Zeev Sharon.
- The contribution of Machal to the Israeli War of Independence – Gordon Mandelzweig.
- Learning to use multiple military resources through a specific case study – Aharon Shneyer.
- Military sources in the Central Zionist Archives – Rachel Rubinstein.
- The Shtetl experience in the framework of the Red Army – Professor Dov Levin.
- Military Genealogy: an example of the Jews of Algeria who served in the French army – Mathilde Tagger.
- A passing episode or the beginning of a military tradition? The military aspect in the families of the Brigades of World War I – Rachel Silko.

- North American and British military records: Opening doors to new discoveries – Michael Goldstein.
- At the closing session Haim Ghiuzeli gave a lecture on: Resources for visual documentation of Jewish soldiers in armies around the world that was illustrated with a comprehensive Power Point presentation based on the treasures of Beit HaTefutzot.

At the opening session of the Annual Seminar, the Israel Genealogical Society confers the title of IGS Distinguished Member to its members who contribute to

IGS development. This year, Mrs. Esther Ramon, IGS Honorary President, presented the award to Mrs. Yocheved Klausner who, since 1999, has served as chief-editor of *Sharsheret Hadorot*, the Israel Genealogical Society quarterly.

Those who attended left Beit Wolyn both tired and informed. The organizing committee deserves our thanks for arranging such a rewarding intellectual experience for all of us. Within a week, the committee was meeting again to plan the 2007 Seminar that will also take place at Beit Wolyn.



The Shtetl Experience in the Framework of the Red Army in World War II *

Dov Levin

This essay is dedicated to Dr. Martha Lev-Zion in appreciation

Translated from the Hebrew

At first glance, there could be no greater contradiction than between the structure of strict discipline in an army battle unit and the typical socio-familial experience that characterized Jewish town life in Eastern Europe. However, as it will be made clear, there was indeed affinity between these two opposites for those of our generation who were confronted at the time of World War II with an unfamiliar and strange reality. Together they also embodied a fair amount of home-style warmth and feeling, *heimishkeit* that today perhaps would appear only to have been imaginary.

We are discussing a group of approximately 6500 Jews of military age from the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, who fled at the beginning of the Nazi occupation in the summer of 1941. After they found refuge deep in the Soviet Union, they

volunteered or were drafted into the Lithuanian, Latvian or Estonian Divisions and fought on the front with heavy losses until the end of the war in 1945. Because of the losses, their numbers in those divisions, both absolute and percentage, significantly declined during this time. At the very same time the vast majority of their people and their dear ones who remained in their countries of birth were persecuted more severely than Jews anywhere else in Europe – with 96% perishing! For this reason it is most fitting to recall their names and the names of their families, just as we knew them at home and in our communities before the war.

In the following sections we will bring noteworthy examples of this phenomenon and of similar ones based on material that was collected in personal interviews with the

* Based on the lecture delivered by the author at the Second Annual Seminar of the Israel Genealogical Society, November 2006.

soldiers that is found in the books by Dov Levin and Israel Rudnitzky (see bibliography at the end of the article).

Searching for Family, Friends and Acquaintances ('Like a Needle in a Haystack')

By the nature of things, friendly contacts between the Jewish soldiers began on the first days, before being assigned to units and before being sent into battle. These contacts were based on the search for relatives, as well as mutual friends and acquaintances. As such they served as a kind of de-briefing on how they got here and what happened to the others. Incidents are known where a soldier discovered his wife with whom he had lost contact along the way and whom he thought was dead. Likewise, people found parents, children, brothers and uncles, as well as classmates, fellow members of youth movements and natives of the same towns. Over time, an informal framework developed, that transcended army units, that was generally known as "the first groups" that were well known for the mutual aid they provided between friends united by ideological leanings that were not necessarily acceptable to the Soviet establishment.

However, it is possible to point to the solidarity that existed between most of the Jewish soldiers, not only because they previously knew each other, but because they were Jews with all that it implied during those critical days when the Holocaust was taking place 'literally beyond the wall' – on the other side of the front.

Because of the turmoil that reigned at the time of the hasty escape to Russia when the war broke out in June 1941, not only were many of the young people killed or wounded during the heavy bombing by the Luftwaffe, but friends lost contact with each other and wives were separated from their husbands. Following is one case from the hundreds of interviews that I conducted with members of the regular Baltic units as well as with those in the irregular units such as partisans and the like. The interview was conducted shortly after they arrived in Israel.

Mordecai MILLSTEIN, a former member of the Latvian Division (Regiment 121, Company 9, Battalion 3) relates: "Since my brother and I were the only survivors of our entire family we tried to stay together all the time. When I was wounded, my friends called my brother who came running and as he was leaning over me, an enemy bullet hit and killed him on the spot." His older sister, who also managed to flee to the Soviet Union and arrived at the Chuvashi Autonomous Republic corresponded at that same time with her other brother Abraham Millstein and knew nothing about this. One of the early letters to his brother got to him by mistake and thus the family was reunited, at least from the standpoint of communication. She ended up in Bukhara where she was supported by representatives of the Latvian government. He found out that his wife was alive and living in Tashkent and when he was discharged from the hospital after being severely wounded he went there and remained with her until the war's end.

Friendly Relations between the Fighters and Their Rear Guard Acquaintances

The BARTCHEVSKY family of Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania fled in June 1941 and reached Kazakhstan. After the family head, Shevach, was drafted into the Lithuanian Division, his son Moshe who was not yet seventeen years old, pestered the workers at the induction office with his request to enlist so he could fight together with his father. One day he received a positive response and was assigned to Regiment 167 where his father served. "We kissed, we looked at each other in the eyes for a long time, overcome with excitement, unable to utter a single word." Their conversation, of course, was in Yiddish, as two Jews in the Division would not speak any other language to each other. It was that way in every rank and in every job, from the teamster, who urged his horses on in Yiddish, to the company physician who cared for the ill. In the fury of battle Jewish soldiers encouraged each other with shouts of "*Far unzere tates un mames,*" [For our fathers and our mothers].

Because furloughs were rare and transportation was difficult over the vast distances, with the exception of those wounded or hurt in accidents soldiers almost never had the opportunity to visit with their families on the home front. Communication with them was maintained, therefore, mostly by intense letter writing in Yiddish and also by sending money or packages. So, for example, an officer who received a salary of 780 rubles a month, would send half of that to his relatives who were exiled to Siberia in the beginning of the war. A private, whose salary was less would sell his tobacco ration and send the money to his wife. Over time, letter writing increased thanks to the additional available addresses of family and friends that the soldiers themselves located through their families, fellow townsmen and acquaintances as well as the fact that the many wounded soldiers were returned to the home front. There were practically no soldiers who did not correspond with someone in the rear. Correspondence was especially important as the battles became more severe and the worry for the wellbeing of the soldiers on the front increased. In many cases, the soldiers exchanged the names and addresses of their relatives in the rear and shook hands promising that if something happened to them they would notify their families.

That is what the soldier Zvi ROSENZWEIG of Serejus (Serhey), Lithuania did in 1943 when he wrote to the sister of his friend Z. Telem who fell in battle two months earlier: "Comrade Chaya Telem whom I do not know but in spite of that I address you as Dear; you are very dear to me for you are one of the suffering daughters of our people and one of the thousands of sisters who because of the murderer Hitler have been driven from your home. Like all of us, so you must be comforted in the knowledge that the blood of your brother was not shed in vain: not in a pogrom carried out by the Tsar's bandits did your brother fall, but in battle with the German fascists, with the murderers who drove you from your home, and for a bright and free future for all of us."

Age Groupings and the Makeup of the Fighting Families

According to the statistics on 1,000 Jewish soldiers in the Lithuanian Division gathered in 1941, we have a rather reasonable sample to represent the more than 3,500 that served during four years of battle. Ninety-seven percent of the Jewish soldiers were born between 1895 and 1925. In other words there was a thirty-year difference in age between the youngest and the oldest in the group. The youngest soldiers, aged 16 and 25 and born between 1916-1925 made up two-thirds, with most of them having been born in Lithuania between the two world wars. There were more than eighty, mostly young, women among the volunteers. The 'old soldiers' were born between 1895-1915 during Tsarist rule in Russia. Of the 1,000 of these soldiers for whom we have demographic details, 116 or 12% were related to each other, showing that there were dozens of cases of "fighting families" that consisted of between two and five soldiers as well as spouses. There were at least forty-six couples that got married during the course of the war. If we add to these members of the extended family including in-laws, uncles and cousins who are mentioned often in the soldiers' accounts, there is room to speculate that at least 15% of the Jewish soldiers fought alongside relatives. As will be seen further on, this phenomenon had a clear impact on the social interaction of the Jewish soldiers in this division, Infantry Division 16, which at its high point, May 1942, numbered 12,000 soldiers including more than 4,000 Jews with the balance Russians, Lithuanians and others.

A similar composition was found in the beginning among the some 3,000 Jewish soldiers in Latvian Division 201 (later changed to Division 43). As in the Lithuanian Division, in the beginning the Jews made up the largest national grouping serving. After a series of difficult battles with many losses there was a slow decrease in their number that occurred even before these Baltic units participated in the liberation of their homelands from Nazi conquest 1944-1945.

Impact of the Social Background of the Soldiers' Families in the Latvian Division

In spite of the official opinion that only former laborers, clerks and farmers, served in the Division, and perhaps because of it, the officers of the Division were alert to the fact that the societal background of some of the soldiers was not pure enough for them and in some instances reacted on this very strongly. A case in point is the incident with the soldier Benjamin GERTCHIK, born 1904 in Kraslava (Eastern Latvia), who enlisted in 1942 along with his younger brother David who was born in 1917. Their family was in the building supply business and among their customers were officers from the Latvian border area. When he was issued his uniform at the induction center, a soldier who was present greeted him in Latvian upon hearing the name Gertchik. It turned out that he was a teamster for one of the officers who patronized the Gertchik store. After verifying who he was, the Latvian turned to the commissar and said: "Comrade Commissar, do you know who this man is? He is a bourgeois and his father was a bourgeois!" "At that very moment," Gertchik writes in his testimony, "a current went up my back as though someone hit me with an electric shock and I began to mutter. Sparks of fire began to leap in my eyes and I did not know what was happening to me. After all, they confiscated my father's store. The commissar who noticed my discomfort said, Comrade, don't worry, you are now in the Red Army; you are getting the uniform and you are going to the front to defend the homeland. . . ' and so a few days passed. I returned from maneuvers and was called to come to headquarters. I ran to my brother and asked him if he was also called to report to headquarters. He told me that neither he nor any of his Latvian friends was called – they just called me. I arrived at headquarters and asked what was going on? The answer was: we decided that you will serve on the home-front!" All the time I wanted to be together with my brother so I told them that my brother was also a bourgeois. They responded that my brother may become a communist but that

I was a bourgeois and my father was a bourgeois."

The Gertchik story concludes with Benjamin Gertchik being expelled from the Division about two weeks after his enlistment with twenty other Jews and being assigned to very difficult work in the forest. After many requests he was reinstated to the Division. There he grew a thick mustache and appeared under the name of Gratchkov. In the battles of 1943 he was severely wounded and was in an army hospital until 1944.

Here is the place to point out that a fair number the families of Jewish soldiers were incarcerated in Russian exile camps for being part of an untrustworthy element from a socialist or political standpoint. A typical example is the following illustration: On the eve of the Nazi invasion on June 4, 1941, the family of Alter ABRAMOWITZ was arrested. The head of the family was sent to Sulikamsk camp and his wife and young son were sent to the Narim camp. The father worked as a water drawer and died about a year later from exhaustion, the mother died from pneumonia and the surviving son died from influenza. At the time of the arrest, the oldest son, *Izia* was not at home and because of that was not arrested. When the war broke out he arrived in Russia, volunteered for the Latvian Division and fell in battle.

The Special Connection with Friends and Relatives Living Abroad

The first attempts to communicate with family and friends living abroad, including Eretz Yisrael, were made by Jewish soldiers when they enlisted. So, for example, a former member of the pioneer training camp of Hashomer Hatzair, Hasia GOLDFARB in his letter of 1 September 1942 to his girlfriend in Kibbutz Hazoreah in Eretz Yisrael writes: "I already wrote several letters to you but have never received a reply. Unfortunately, I will also never receive any; today I joined the ranks of the Red Army to fulfill my obligation to my homeland. If I am able to write to you, I will. If you do not receive any mail from me, remember that I will always

love you and that you should never lose hope.” In a number of instances, answers were received. A young Vilna native Nachum SKURKOVITZ wrote to Kibbutz Degania before being drafted asking them to let his uncle in Jerusalem know that he was alive and that he was on his way to the front to fight the Germans. One day, while he was already serving in the Lithuanian Division, he received a telegram telling him that his request was satisfied. This soldier was delighted that someone abroad thought about him and knew his situation. Lone soldiers continued to correspond, some in Hebrew, with their relatives in Eretz Yisrael and other places abroad from the very beginning of their military service.

In May 1942, with the beginning of the political campaign by the Soviet Union directed to the west to open a second front, a commissar of the 48th Army arrived at the Division and instructed the political corps to focus in their units on opening the “the second front.” They were told to enlist those soldiers who corresponded with their relatives in emphasizing its importance not only with regard to the Soviet Union but also for the entire free world. They also were told to add details of the bravery of the Red Army. To carry out this mission, the soldiers were provided with writing materials, which because of the shortage of paper they would even utilize newspapers and write between the lines. If they did not have addresses, they were helped by the inventiveness like the Jewish officer who wrote to his brothers in Eretz Yisrael, “send me addresses in America; I also want to write to them.” The Soviet embassy in Washington helped find the addresses that were not clearly written. According to the political explanations in the Division, the main point of their claim was based on the fact that “England is already threatened by Fascism that will also extend to the United States, which will suffer if Fascism is not stopped.” Eventually, and not without a struggle on the part of Jewish soldiers with some of the party functionaries, the letter writing campaign was extended to include Eretz Yisrael, with the contention that “Today Palestine is also tied to England.”

The Concern for Family Remaining under the Nazi Occupation

The worry and longing for family members, relatives and acquaintances who remained behind overwhelmed the Jewish soldiers from the day they fled their homes and throughout their service in the Division. Their great sorrow found expression also in encounters and conversations with friends. “We all shed tears whenever we think about our parents,” wrote a Jewish officer to his brothers in Eretz Yisrael, “when we are together with friends from our town. God knows if they are still alive and if we will ever see them again.” Many believed that the fragmentary information and notices that occasionally appeared in the Division’s newspaper on the horrors that the Nazis perpetrated on Jews in the areas that they captured, and especially in Lithuania and Latvia, were only propaganda. Furthermore, there were soldiers who deluded themselves over a long period with rose-colored’ hopes of returning to their homes and families in these countries, engulfed in love and praise, welcomed with great enthusiasm. “For example, I thought,” relates sergeant-major Reuven LEVITAN from Kaunas (Kovno), “I would return from the army by train, get off at the station, contact home and tell my father and mother, ‘Your son has returned from the army, from the war.’ So things seemed to me; we thought we would return to Lithuania and be greeted with kisses and flowers, when we would pass in the streets. This illusion remained in our hearts actually until the beginning of 1943 or perhaps to the end of 1943 when we were stationed at Tula.” [Tula – the estate of Leo Tolstoy]

Even after the rather detailed reports on the situation in Lithuania that the soldiers heard for the first time from authoritative sources such as commissars and political operatives in the fall of 1942 in preparation for moving to the front, the hidden hope remained that the horrors only happened to the others. “For sure my parents survived and certainly I will find someone else from my family,” the Jewish soldiers consoled themselves. The feeling of dread of what waited for them in

Lithuania began with the encounters with lone survivors in Belarus and with stories from Jewish and non-Jewish partisans who recently came from Lithuania. Among them was the poet and partisan Abraham SUTZKEVER who arrived in Moscow by plane from the forests on the Lithuanian border. His accounts of the slaughter of the Jews in Lithuania aroused bitter emotions among the Division's soldiers with whom he met. Among the expressions of sorrow, anger and desire for revenge it is appropriate to mention the words of the female-soldier Elka FLAX on the reactions of her fellow soldiers during those days: "We were broken and we lay on our beds in the bunks and cried... until one of us got up and said, Friends, if this war will ever end and we will survive, each of us must bear ten children considering what they did to us."

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

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Professor Dov Levin, the dean of Lithuanian and Baltic Jewish research, was born in Kovno in 1925 where he received a traditional Hebrew Zionist education until Soviet Union annexation in 1940 when his formal education and Zionist activity in Hashomer Hatzair ceased. During the Nazi occupation he was in the Kovno Ghetto with his father Tzvi-Hirsh LEVIN, his mother Bluma nee WIGODER and his twin sister Batya, none of whom survived. He joined the partisans fighting against the Nazis and their local Lithuanian collaborators arriving in Eretz Yisrael at the end of 1945, under the auspices of the B'riha movement. He fought in the War of Independence, studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem receiving a PhD in history and was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Chicago. He served as Director of the Oral History Division of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He authored 520 articles and eighteen books in Hebrew, English and Polish, which are listed in the Internet under Lithuania Yizkor Book translations in JewishGen. Married to Bilha nee DEUTSCH and the father of two daughters and a son.

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A Passing Episode or the Beginning of a Military Tradition? The military aspect of the Jewish Legion families in World War I *

Rachel Silko

Translated from the Hebrew

Approximately six thousand Jews from Eretz Yisrael, Egypt, England, United States, Canada and Argentina volunteered for the Jewish Legion, in the framework of the British army during World War I. For the first time, an army unit whose soldiers were Jewish volunteers from Eretz Yisrael and the Diaspora, fought for the Zionist ideal of freeing Eretz Yisrael from the Turks.

In his research on the Jewish Legion, Yigal Elam claimed that though their role in conquering Eretz Yisrael was small, what was important was the fact that they had participated in a military capacity and this served as a precedent for the future. After they disbanded, their role in educating the next generation to fight for the Jewish entity in Eretz Yisrael was crucial. I will examine various aspects of the families of the Jewish Legion members during the pre-state days. How did they view their military activity? What were their goals and messages? What was their role in organizing the Jewish defense in Eretz Yisrael and as volunteers to the British army during the Mandate? How did this message of volunteering get through to their families and to the general Jewish population?

In order to evaluate the data I used both historical documents and relevant genealogical sources. Among them were correspondence between the soldiers and their families both during the war and afterwards. Another tool was the press. These newspaper clippings are available at Beit Hagedudim. In addition, there are biographies of the soldiers. The archive has over 1,700 documents dealing with both the military and personal aspects of World War I. The format of the documents include the following: first and last name of the soldiers,

ID number, name of battalion in which he served, his photo usually in uniform, and biographical information. The latter gave his date and place of birth, story of immigration, details of enlistment, his life after discharge including information on his family and occupation. These pages were written from the beginning of the 1950s by the veterans themselves or members of their families.

These documents have historic value. The famous soldiers who later became leaders of the State of Israel are there but more important is the information that can be gleaned from the lives of the simple soldiers. Despite the above, there are some limitations in using these documents as historic evidence. The information is brief and the testimony, given years after the events, enables the witness to embellish on his past to make it look more glorious. However, when it is possible to compare the data with other sources, a more balanced picture is achieved. Most of these battalions were engaged in training and not in combat. The veterans emphasized their role in their struggle for national identity in their battalions, which is reflected both in their flags and emblems. Some of the veterans said that their desire to fight was connected to their longing for the past when Jews were soldiers at the time of the Maccabees and Bar Kochba. For example, Shmuel Dov Kris volunteered to both the "Zion Mule Corps" and the "38th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers." He saw himself as the first volunteer after the Bar Kochba rebellion.

The same motif appeared in the promotion campaign for enlistment for the 39th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers in the United States. One of the New York newspapers in 1917, published a drawing of

* Based on the paper presented by the author at the IGS Second Annual Seminar on Jewish Genealogy, on November 20th 2006

Judah Maccabee handing his sword to a Jewish legionnaire. The Yiddish caption said "Here is my sword. If you fight like I did, you will win." The picture hangs in the Beit Hagedudim Museum.

The national aspect, redemption of Eretz Yisrael, which was the reason for the enlistment of some of the veterans, had its personal and family dimensions. David Ben Gurion, who enlisted to the 39th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, saw the symbolism of his military work tied up with his personal life. When he left the United States, his wife Paula was pregnant with their first son. He left a will stipulating that with his departure to fight for Eretz Yisrael, if something happened to him his relatives should carry on with his work. He even wrote the name he wanted his first-born son to be called, Yariv or if a daughter, Geula. Indeed, his daughter was named Geula symbolizing the aspirations of the battalion for the redemption of Eretz Yisrael from the Turks. Ben Gurion pleaded with Paula to be patient and he wrote that both of them had volunteered for the Jewish legion. In order to illustrate the importance of his deeds on a personal level he wrote the following from Cairo in September, 1918: "our first born child came to this world at a tragic and holy moment, and from our sad and difficult experience today a big future will emerge, which will be both happy and blissful, and a big light will shine on the new life of our child."

When the Jewish soldiers demobilized, most of them returned home. Some decided to stay in Eretz Yisrael and one group organized to settle the land. Thus, in 1932 Moshav Avihail was founded in the Hefer Valley. The founders, mostly from the United States and Canada, saw their future as redeeming the land. Among the leaders of Avihail were Shlomo Dror Friedlander and Shmuel Dov Kris. In August 1932 the settlement came into being with five ex-soldiers and one child aged twelve. The child Yoske, son of Shmuel Dov Kris, recalled the excitement at this historic moment. In the Second World War Yoske Kris enlisted in the British army.

The founders deliberated on the choice of a name for their village. A temporary name was "the hill of soldiers" but finally the name "Avihail" was chosen. Shmuel Kris told his son that the poet Bialik had suggested the name saying: "that you were indeed soldiers and your children will say this about you 'my father was a soldier' so call your village by that name." The origin of the name appears in a number of places in the Bible including Esther the daughter of Avihail.

The village grew and developed. As its symbol they chose the menorah, the emblem on the helmets of the First Judeans. The names of the streets reflect the aims of the founders and their military spirit: Hashomer, Jewish Legion, Galipolli, Ben Zvi, Ben Gurion, Tel Hai, Hagana, Hapalmach, and Ha'atzmaut. The founders established all the necessary public institutions and private ones. The village flourished and in the 1970s housing for the second generation was built.

The events of the Mandate period (1918-1948) did not escape the residents of Avihail or the other veteran legionnaires. With the establishment of the *Hagana* in 1920, former members of the Legion joined. Dov Hoz, Yaakov Patt, Avraham Ikar and others gave of their experience and expertise. Avraham Ikar of the 40th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers tried to pass on to the *Hagana* members his military knowledge, especially that of taking care of firearms, since he knew that the settlers would have to know how to protect themselves. He joined the *Hagana* and held various positions. The commander in chief of the *Hagana* Eliyahu Golomb, was also a veteran of the 40th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. In the biographies of the veterans there is much information of their role in the underground groups, especially the *Hagana*. They were instrumental in buying arms and hiding them in secret military depots with Moshav Avihail being one of the locations chosen.

When World War II broke out in 1939 there was a stream of volunteers for the British army. For some it was a chance to keep the danger at bay and for others a way to revenge what was going on in Europe.

Posters in the settlements called on veterans of World War I battalions to enlist. Some volunteered despite their advanced age. The biographies provide information on the following people: Avraham ben Moshe Abutbul, Yaakov Elbaz, Shimon Kierzner, Yosef Goldstein, Harry Hanoach, Gidon Merr, David Srur and Zalman Epstein. Epstein wrote: “thank goodness that I was able to be one of the fighters who fought for the state and our homeland.”

In their memoirs the legionnaires emphasized the involvement of the second generation, their sons and daughters, who volunteered for the British army in World War II. Some said that they had educated their children to love Eretz Yisrael and they had indeed continued in this tradition. Some of the legionnaires, like Avraham Tennenbaum, lost their sons in this war.

Amongst the residents of Moshav Avihail, there were those who volunteered a second time. The wife of Yehuda Yisraeli wrote in her memoirs that her husband did not wait for the order to come from up high, and she was left alone again, this time for three years. It was tough going but with the help of her children she was able to manage and keep the farm operating. In honor of the women who enlisted in the British army a song was composed entitled “Woman of Valor from Avihail” which exulted the contribution of the women both to the nation and to the family.

An extraordinary story of enlistment belongs to the Reizer family, all of whom volunteered to serve in the British army. The father Matityahu Reizer was amongst the Canadian volunteers in the 39th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers in World War I. He stayed on in Eretz Yisrael after the war, married and came to live in Moshav Avihail. In World War II he once again volunteered to serve in the British army. His wife also volunteered and served in the A.T.S. as did his daughter Ruth. His son Naftali served in the RAF (Royal Air Force) and in the family album one can see all the family in uniforms of the British armed forces.

The legionnaires saw themselves as creating a military precedent for the next generation to

build on. In 1948 with the formation of IDF (Israel Defense Forces) the first chief of staff, Yaakov Dori said as much. The legionnaires formed the backbone of the *Hagana* leadership and educated the younger generation in building the echelons of a military body, teaching both military and national discipline, fighting techniques and creating a soon to be born army. Army service in the battalions with the strict British discipline was a difficult but enriching experience. The results of this training enabled them to inculcate the fighting spirit and techniques in the younger generation prior to and during the War of Independence. Dori emphasized that the officers of the *Hagana* were to become the officers of the Israeli army in an independent Jewish state. Dori, himself was one of them.

The biographies of the legionnaires also give a picture of the second generation who served in the Israeli army. Fathers whose sons fell in the line of duty wanted to write about them and keep their memory alive. Yitzhak Brodo of the 39th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers wrote briefly about himself and added the following words: “In place of the fathers are the sons. What I started and did not finish my eldest son did until the end and fell in the War of Independence as a member of *Etzel*, missing in action on 4 Sivan 5708 (1948) and buried in a common grave on 11 Iyar 5712 (1952) in the military cemetery in Kiryat Shaul.”

After the establishment of the State of Israel the veteran legionnaires wanted to broaden their influence moving from their small “family” battalion to the general public. They wanted their stories to become part of the collective history of the country during World War I. Several veterans from both Israel and abroad claimed that having Moshav Avihail was not enough to ensure that the public would remember what they had done. In 1949 the old-timers met and suggested the idea of a museum to commemorate their history. The date chosen was the time when the sons returned from their service in the *Palmach* and the Israeli army and the chain of service going from generation to generation could be

preserved. They claimed that this was their last “rebellion,” this time to ensure the past would be remembered. The idea was to found Beit Hagdudim, which would guarantee the story would not be forgotten.

The story of how Beit Hagdudim came into being can be found in the correspondence and in the bulletins of the archives of Beit Hagdudim and Moshav Avihail. Shlomo Dror, one of the initiators of the project wanted to incorporate several layers: a museum, a recreation home for discharged soldiers from Israel and abroad, a library and a study program of seminars for soldiers depicting the bravery throughout Jewish history to the present. In short, a place that would inspire young people and publicize the idea of Jewish self-defense.

The founders of Beit Hagedudim had a sense of history and genealogy, and even before the museum opened they collected artifacts for the museum. In 1957 Shlomo Dror and Leon Chefetz sent a newsletter to former legionnaires both in Israel and abroad, informing them of the building of the museum and requesting any material they had that might be beneficial. Some of the legionnaires donated material, which is the basis of the biographies noted above.

Architects Natan and Hana Golan from Netanya designed the museum. Beit Hagedudim was planned as an elaborate, Jerusalem stone mansion hinting to the struggle to free the city of Jerusalem. There are two main wings: a hall to host lectures with a library and archive next to it. The second area contains exhibition rooms and a memorial corner. A stone pergola with rich vegetation, symbolizing the agricultural work at Moshav Avihail, joins the two wings.

The museum was dedicated in 1961 in the presence of Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and Yitzhak Ben Zvi the president of Israel. Many former legionnaires from Israel and abroad participated. The correspondent of the IDF journal *Bamahane* described the ceremony, which included a military parade by parachutists: “Thousands came from all over the country and hundreds from abroad for the dedication of the museum. Private Yitzhak Ben Zvi reviewed

the parade of the old-timers. Corporal David Ben Gurion recalled events from that period while the grandchildren of these same soldiers presented their arms. The veteran legionnaires – Avraham Ikar, Dr. Moshe Rigay, Moshe Nelson, Leon Chefetz, Zalman Eisen, Shlomo Kandel, Yerushalayim Segal with their wives, children and grandchildren in Moshav Avihail felt that their dream came true.”

After the opening of the museum, the founders decided to pass on responsibility to the next generation. In 1964, they asked their children to continue collecting material especially for the benefit of the youngsters. “Out of belief and hope that the idea of volunteering has been passed on” the board of the museum suggested that the second generation organize as a group and continue to meet and passed out questionnaires. Unfortunately this initiative did not succeed.

In 1967 the museum was passed over to the Ministry of Defense. In the letter of transfer it was described as “a Jewish center for commemorating the Jewish fighting and the volunteers who stood at the head of the struggle to achieve independence.” This museum is now part of the series of museums that belong to the Ministry of Defense, the Museum unit.

Youngsters, soldiers, public figures and officers in the army have visited the museum since its dedication. In 1977, the tenth Chief of Staff, Mordechai (Motta) Gur took part in the conference commemorating sixty years since the founding of the Jewish Legion. He remarked: “I too am the son of a father who served in the Jewish Legion. I can testify from personal knowledge that the spirit of the Legion has passed from generation to generation as we see it in our work. There is no doubt that the fighting spirit continues and it shines until this day. Because of all this, the army congratulates you and is a beneficiary of your efforts.” Mordechai Gur is the son of Moshe Gorban, who served as a legionnaire in World War I. His words expressed the direct connection between the Jewish Legion and the Israeli army.

Beit Hagedudim museum is located in Moshav Avihail near Netanya. The museum offers guided tours for groups of students, soldiers, adults and pensioners. The library and archives continue in their attempt to locate additional relevant materials.
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For additional details: 09-882-2212

Bibliography

See in the Hebrew version of this article.

Ms. Rachel Silko directs the Beit Hagedudim Museum located at Moshav Avihail, one of the twelve museums of the Ministry for Defense. It is devoted to the Jewish Legions who fought in World War I. She holds a master's degree in Jewish history. Her research thesis deals with the attitude of the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael to the Nili underground group during World War I. Her expertise is in the Jewish community of Eretz Yisrael during World War I.



About Rabbanit Ceti

Mathilde Tagger

Translated from the Hebrew

For the past two years, we have been enjoying Dr. Yehuda Klausner's short accounts from Eastern-European rabbinic literature. His latest story, *Eidele Wanted to Be an Admor* appearing in *Sharsheret Hadorot* 21-2 is a fascinating tale to which Dr. Klausner added genealogical information about Eidele's family tree.

Recently, when I was in the Judaica reading room in the Jewish National and University Library, looking through the periodical *Sefarad* I paused when I unexpectedly noticed a small English article titled *A Female Rabbi in Fourteenth Century Zaragoza*. Was the story about Eidele a newer version of the account of the woman from Zaragoza? Or perhaps it was another example of the accuracy of the quote from Ecclesiastes 1:9, "There is nothing new under the sun."

The author, David Nirenberg of Princeton University, relates how he found a letter in the archives of the Princedom of Aragon dated 14 October 1325 written by Prince Alfonso, the heir to the throne. The letter was written at the request of "the Jewish woman Çeti, the rabbanit of the women in the great synagogue of Zaragoza." The rabbanit, who filled this post for twenty years, complained that there were those in the community who wanted to remove her

from her post even though all the leaders of the community and all of the women depended on her. The prince approached the leaders of the Jewish quarter, the Aljama, asserting that the Rabbanit Çeti was to continue in her post if the community was satisfied with her services. David Nirenberg presents this and tries to explain what exactly is meant by the term rabbanit appearing in Latin in the prince's letter and how it should be rendered into English.

I will not stop here to discuss the author's analysis on the issue of Jewish law; this is not the place. But one word in the Prince's Latin letter captured my attention. Please see the illustration of this section in the red frame.

That word is 'rabisse' that calls to memory the common family name of those days (13th to 15th centuries) DE LA RABIÇA. Until the beginning of the 20th century and perhaps even later this name was found among descendants of Spanish Jewish exiles who found refuge in the Ottoman Empire.

On a number of occasions this name has been explained in various articles in the journal *Sefarad* as meaning "the wife of Rabbi Isaac de la Rabi Ça." However, in the many old documents found in archives throughout Spain, the name Isaac appears as Açach, İçach, İçac or Ça.

It is hard to ignore the phonetic similarity and resemblance in meaning of the word *rabisse* to the Yiddish word *rebitzin* for rabbanit, meaning rabbi's wife. Did the exiles from Spain who spread out in every direction bring with them the concept that over time became rooted in the Yiddish language just like the personal names Sprintza, Buna, Kuna and others? I will not be presumptuous to venture an answer to this question.

In reading the deliberations on the title rabbanit, the purpose of which was to limit the area of responsibilities of Rabbanit Çeti, it becomes clear that the title rabbi was applied to the butcher, scribe, cantor and teacher.

Finally, I would like to focus on the meaning of the name of the Rabbanit Çeti. Its source is in Arabic and means noblewoman or lady. In Spain one comes across names such as Dueña and Señora, which have a similar meaning. In Turkey where masses of exiles from Spain arrived, the name Bulisa, which is directly equivalent to lady or noblewoman, is used.

In summary, rabbanit or noblewoman or the two in combination, the rabbanit Çeti was a fascinating woman who even enlisted the Prince to support her position and status – in 1325!

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Mathilde Tagger has an MA degree in Library & Information Sciences from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and is involved in genealogical research since 1986. She is specializing in the genealogy of the Sephardic Jews and is currently engaged in building research tools for the genealogy of the Sephardic community. Her work can be seen at:

www.sephardicstudies.org/entrance.html.

She is Co-author of the Guidebook for Sephardic and Oriental Genealogical Sources in Israel. (Avotaynu, 2006).

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Archivo de la Corona de Aragon, Cartas Reales de Jaime II, caja 133,
#125:

Infans Alfonsus, illustrissimi domini regis Aragonum primogenitus
eiusque generalis procurator ac comes Urgelli, adelantatis aliame
judeorum Cesarauguste, gratiam suam.

Ex parte **Ceti, iudee, rabisse** iudearum sinagoge majoris Cesarau-

Text of letter by the Aragon Prince

The Rabbi who Made a U-Turn *

Yehuda Klausner

Translated from the Hebrew

R'Yitzhak Nahum the son of Mordecai TWERSKY, who was born in Rawa-Ruska in 1888 was the great-great grandson of R'Nahum the founder of the Twersky Hasidic dynasty in Chernobyl. In 1910 (5670) he married Sheva the daughter of R'Issachar Dov ROKACH the second Admor of the Belz dynasty. He perished in the Holocaust in 1942. Following is his family tree:

- His father, R'Mordecai b'Menahem Nahum was born in Spikow. He married his cousin Hava the daughter of Yohanan TWERSKY of Rachmiasriwka, served as the Admor in Spikow and died in 1914;
- His father R'Menahem Nahum b'Yitzhak who was born in Skavira, was the Admor in Spikow and founder of the Spikow branch. He married his cousin the daughter of R'David TWERSKY and died in 1886;
- His father R'Yitzhak b'Mordecai was born in Chernobyl in 1812, was the Admor in Skavira, married the daughter of R'Dan YUNGERLEIB of Radwill and died in 1885;
- His father Mordecai b'Nahum, born in 1770, was Admor in Chernobyl and married the daughter of Aaron "the Great" b'Jacob PERLOFF, the Admor of Karlin and died in 1837;
- His father, R'Nahum Menahem b'Zvi TWERSKY founded the dynasty. He was born in Narinsk in 1730, was Admor in Chernobyl, was married to Sarah SHAPIRA and died in 1797.
- R'Mordecai, R'Yitzhak Nahum's father had an additional five children, a son and at least four daughters:
 - R'Moshe who married the daughter of R'Shlomo Zalmina ZUCKERMAN;
 - Feiga, who in 5667/1907 married R'Shalom Joseph b'David FRIEDMAN, b. Buhush 1868, d. Spikow 1920 and was Admor in Spikow;
 - Haya Hava, who married her second cousin R'Menahem Nahum b'Arieh Leib TWERSKY, 1874-1942, of Hrubieszow. He was Admor in Trisk and perished in the Holocaust. Their marriage failed since Haya Hava was attracted to Haskalah [Enlightenment] literature and to a freer life-style. Her husband could not reconcile himself to her life-style and they eventually divorced. Haya Hava took her children moving to Warsaw, then Berlin and from there to New York;
 - Mirl apparently was the exception among the children. In 1902 she married R'Asher the Yanuka' son of Israel PERLOFF, b. 1885 Stolin and perished in the Holocaust in 1942. She was also attracted to the world of Haskalah and literature, was the author of poems that she sent to the Yiddish author Jacob Denison (1859-1919) in Warsaw. R'Asher, noted for his musical talents, went under the influence of his wife and without getting permission from anyone to study at the Berlin Conservatory and did not become a Rebbe. Later he returned to Stolin and under the pressure of his family divorced his wife. He remarried and Mirl continued to live in the court of Spikow.
 - Apparently, there was another daughter whose name is not known who married her first cousin R'Jacob Judah b'Abraham Joshua TWERSKY who died in 1920. They were first in Skavira and then moved to Linitz.

* Based on *Caught in the Thicket – Chapters of Crisis and Confusion in Hasidic History*. David Assaf. Merkaz Zalman Shazar for Jewish History, Jerusalem 2006. [Hebrew].
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R'Yitzhak Nahum although raised in a rather closed environment was exposed to many and varied influences such as the library of his great-grandfather R'Yitzhak of Skavira that was inherited by his grandfather R'Menahem Hayim and had about four thousand books on a wide range of subjects, bible, Talmud, legal decisions, commentators, Kabala, manuscripts and even books authored by the newly enlightened. He was influenced also by his older sisters all of whom had private tutors, received a wide education and became independent thinkers with progressive viewpoints. He was torn between these divergent influences. Their mother was the driving force behind their literary and cultural development as she herself was attracted to the literature of the day. She encouraged and promoted her children and arranged for private tutors for them in languages, music and general literature.

In this atmosphere, in the beginning of 1910 before his marriage when he was twenty-two years old, in a mood of excitement, R'Nahum composed a "*Vidui*" [confession] of twenty-seven notebook pages, in a good and rich Hebrew. In it he takes stock of himself and especially his environs. With his sister Mirl as the intermediary, he sent the letter to the author Denison. He expresses neither heretical nor ideological thoughts in his *Vidui*, but by and large criticizes Hasidism, the traditional dress, their idleness, their institution of matchmaking and more. He uses such extreme terms as 'idiotic dress,' wild customs decadence' etc.

While we cannot submit the full *Vidui*, selected sections will provide the reader with an idea of the character of the document.

I will reveal the depths of my very being, the light that is therein concealed. Then a new world will open before your eyes, a world filled with song, a world filled with light and radiating, a world filled with lofty aspirations and high hopes. In contrast, I will present my second world, the other one, the external one – in all its blackness will I describe it; nothing could possibly present a blacker picture. I will not use

many colors; I will not be long-winded. I will only open the window to its most awful darkness, in order that you get a glimpse of it, and then in contrast to the sharp brightness of the light in my soul, the darkness of my outside world will appear in all its fearful gloom.

But I – I was never reconciled with this narrow, dark world. I will forever feel the contrast between the big beautiful world and my small and ugly one and I will always say "I am stifled in this narrow place."

Do you know the state of Hasidism in our country now? – In our country and not elsewhere, for the situation in Poland and Galicia is different. Do you know its nature, its substance, its concerns? I think I will not be mistaken if I said "no."

When I say "Hasidim" I am using the word metaphorically; because the name has nothing to do with the "Hasidism" of today. It has been twenty years since my ancestors, the famous "Tzadikim" of Skavira, Tolna and Rachmiasriwka have passed on, and today their brothers carry the banner and rule over the thousands of faithful Hasidim. From that time, the resplendence of Hasidism darkened, its honor banished. From day to day it degenerates until today it resembles a shapeless coin, a name devoid of any meaning.

The new "Hasidism" is no more than simple "shopkeeping." When a Jew comes to his Rebbe he does not seek advice, or learning, or guidance for good conduct; such Hasidim no longer exist. He comes to the Rebbe looking for a miracle-worker who would save him from his sins and afflictions, in exchange for the money he pays him. It is clear that these people are illiterate and vulgar and their "Hasidism" is no more than a reflection of their ignorance. Thus is lost the legacy of our ancestors

I am a young person, full of the strength of youth, the essence of life, ... the bitter and cruel fate forced me to spend most of my days among old people – whether by their

age or by their views, Their God is not my God, their views not my views, and their thinking, aspirations and yearnings are alien to me.

The duplicity, the hypocrisy, the tear in my heart – if you have not tasted that you will not know its bitterness.

I am a freethinker, and I am forced to comply with all the strict rules of my ancestors. I have good taste, I love beauty, and I am obliged to wear uncivilized clothes. A silk “kapota” long to the ankles, a “shtreimel” made of animal tails – this is the “mark of humiliation” that our enemies forced us to wear for many generations and now we Jews consider it holy.

[Please note: R’ Isaac Nahum errs. Hasidim were not forced to wear the kapota and shtreimel, but they adopted the special clothing worn by contemporary Polish nobility, as their own. YK]

How terrible is the idea, when I remember where I am now going, to the blessed Belz in Galicia ... For they are “marrying” me, against my will ... I am going there to marry a woman, who has been my designated bride for six years, I have never seen her face, and know nothing about her, her beauty, her intelligence or her wisdom.

I am entering a new era of my life, the most important period in a man’s life – and who was given me as my companion, to be my wife with whom I will spend all my days, share my happiness and sorrow, my joy and my sadness? – I do not know.

With the remainder of my strength I would cast off my chains, leave my home and my family, my birthplace and all my habits and go to a big city to study there, to fulfill myself and live a new life ... and only a hidden force in my soul, stronger than all these forces together, keeps me and does not let go – it is the force of compassion ... – compassion for my beloved mother.

So I see no hope, and I am throwing myself into the waves, the waves of life, flowing and storming. Where will they carry me? I do not know. I am hoping that they will eventually bring me to the shore, for

without this hope – how terrible life would be!

However, every bad thing has some good in it. Perhaps, by way of Belz it will be easier to reach my goal and my old aspirations, and there I hope to have better means to make the move.

And with this hope, I am taking now the first, difficult step: I am going to marry Belz.

This is my confession, the confession of my withered life, the confession of my tortured and hurting soul, the confession of my talents that are being lost.

The *Vidui* provides us with a picture of R’Yitzhak Nahum as a sensitive, intelligent young man with a full command of Hebrew who could not reconcile himself to his circumstances, which appeared to him to be hopeless. Similar thoughts entered the minds of a fair number of young men in his day, and even in our own time. There are those who leave everything behind and change their direction, but few give expression to their wishes in such fluent and poetic language.

A few weeks after composing the *Vidui* R’Yitzhak Nahum did marry his bride Sheva ROKAH and as was customary went to live with her parents. In spite of his misgivings, the marriage met with success and they had seven children: R’Joel b’ Yitzhak Nahum, an extraordinary scholar who married Beilush the daughter of R’Ezekiel RABINOWITZ Hakohen, ABD or Radomsk, and they in turn had a son; Sheindel, married, with a son; Hava; Mordecai; twins (a son and a daughter) and Issachar Dov. According to his nephew R’Yohanan b’Menahem Nahum Twersky, the son of his sister Haya Hava, R’Yitzhak Nahum adjusted himself to live in Belz and returned to his roots. He was honored and respected by the Belz Hasidim for his knowledge, nobility and gentleness.

Four years later, Pesah 1914 (5674) his father R’Mordecai died and his Hasidim appointed R’Yitzhak Nahum as the Admor in Spikow preventing him from returning to Belz where he left his family. A few months later, World

War I broke out causing chaos throughout the area. Soldiers and wandering bands invaded Spikow and R'Yitzhak Nahum, his mother and sisters barely escaped with their lives. Only in 1918 did he succeed in reuniting with his family in Ujfehértó, Hungary. That is where the entire Belz Hasidic court fled when the war broke out and the Russian army occupied Belz. In 1922 R'Yitzhak Nahum, his family along with the Belzer Rebbe Issachar Dov and his family returned to Oleszyce, a town near Belz. In 1926 with the assistance of his father-in-law he was appointed rabbi in Rawa-Ruska some 35 kilometers from Belz. In the beginning of 1942 (5702) he and his entire family including all his children and grandchildren were murdered by the Nazis, apparently in Belzec.

Correction: My thanks to Mr. Chaim Freedman who called to my attention that the Rokah family of Belz were not Kohanim, as was stated in the story about *Eidele*, *Sharsheret Hadorot*, Vol.21, No.2, May 2007.

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Notes from the Library

Harriet Kasow

Having been away a year, the books have piled up and I have simply recorded them as I entered them on the IGS Library database. On this database you can search by the following fields: title, sub-title, author, place, publisher, pagination, year, call number, subjects, location. The location helps you find what branches have the titles and if they are located in one of Israel's universities or public libraries. The same information is available for items in Hebrew. The Hebrew database can be searched by the same fields in Hebrew.

New on the shelves:

Brit: *Revue des Juifs du Maroc* #25. Ashdod, 2006. 261 p. #: PLA 279.
Articles in French and Hebrew. Selected

contents include: "Les Hitléériques, Le Mellah du Maroc au 20ème siècle, Les Juifs du Maroc: Bibliographie générale".

Subjects: Morocco, Periodicals. Location: JERL, ULS.

Frank, Abraham. *Dinkelsbuehler, Hoenigberger and Wilmersdoefer family history: Floss and Fuerth (Bavaria)*. Jerusalem. 2006. Various paging. # FAM 56.

Subjects: Family History, Germany. Location: JERL.

Gesher Galicia Family Finder. 15th Edition. United States. March 2007. Various paging. # GEN 36.

Subjects: Galicia, Names. Location: JERL.

Hotltzman, Ada. *The Jewish Cemetery of Warta (D'Vort)*. Tel Aviv 2006. 82 p., photos. Based on documentation done in 2000. # PLA 154.

Subjects: Poland, Cemeteries. Location: JERL.

Lebednykiene, Jolanta. *Panevezys: The past and present*. Lithuania, Leidykla Vaga. 2003. 152 p. illus. # PLA 147.

Subjects: Lithuania, History. Location: JERL.

Patai, Raphael, ed. *Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel*. New York, Herzl Press, 1971. 2 v. (we have Vol. 1 A-J.) # PLA 155.

Subjects: Zionism, Israel. Location: JERL, ULI.

Stillman, Norman. *The Jews of Arab lands: a history and source book*. Philadelphia. Jewish

Publication Society of America, 1979. 473 p. illus. map. index. bibliography. # PLA 234.

Subjects: Middle East, North Africa. Location: JERL, ULI.

Teboul, Georges and Jean-Pierre Bernard. *Le livre d'or du judaïsme algérien (1914-1918)*. Fasc. 1. Paris. *Cercle de Généalogie Juive*, 2000. Reprint of the edition *Alger: Comité algérien d'étude sociales, 1919*. # PLA 325.

Subjects: Algeria, History. Location: JERL, ULI.

Yehezkiel, Aliza. *The Davidic families and the genealogy of Colette Aboulker-Muscat*. Jerusalem. A. Yehezkiel. 2005. 194 p. Bibliography. # FAM 27.

Subjects: Sephardim, Family History. Location: JERL.



Foreign Genealogical Journals

English Language Journals

Meriam Harringman

Generations Volume 21, Number 2 Summer 2006

Reprinted from Family Tree magazine there is a table of all kinds of freebies for Genealogy on the Computer worthwhile to photocopy or scan for handy use. In addition, there is a list of free Genealogy charts and forms which can be downloaded.

David Goldis tells how making a family newsletter helped his family learn more and also expand the family tree of Weiner/Wainer/Hoberman families.

There are lists of additions to the JRI-Poland Database and to the Yizkor Book Project.

A new SIG has come into being the Danzig-Gdansk Special Interest Group. There is also update information on Vilna, Lithuania and

the Revision Lists which are now available for 1858.

Stanley Finkelstein gives you the basics about how to find your ancestors arriving by ship to America.

Dorot Volume 27, Number 3 Spring 2006

Seymour Perlin decided to document the synagogues of the south Bronx after he noticed they were disappearing. He gives his research method and the results he collected.

Nancy Polevoy reminds the reader that you need time, tenacity and travel. We don't always find material immediately and it takes time to unravel family histories. She relates her story of German Jewish ancestors Rotheim/Rottheimer from Hochberg,

Wurttemberg and later from Gondelsheim near Bretten.

Dorot Volume 28, Number 1 Fall 2006

Ada Green and Judith Lander-Surnamer Caplan have done a great service by computerizing the list of New York City synagogues from 1939. There are over 2,000 synagogues listed and it is possible to find material online. There are even two sample pages from the survey of the synagogues giving an indication of how the data was gathered and what can be found.

Most of the issue deals with a roundup of the IAJGS conference in New York last summer. It is called "How the Conference Succeeded" which shows that hard work brings in good results.

Online News lets you know what Holocaust resources are available, that Steven Spielberg's video and film archives can be seen, the burials on Long Island, Midwife Records 1892-1916, Suffolk Historic Newspapers and the Jewish Chronicle's scanned pages (for a fee).

Revue du Cercle de Genealogie Juive, Vo. 23, No. 89, January-March 2007

Mathilde Tagger

The Riss Family from Niederhagenthal,

by Gerard Lang

The author's family has wandered from Poland to Upper Alsace and then via

Nancy to Paris where it settled in the early 19th century. The author compared family papers and the 1809 Register of the Paris Community to trace them back in time.

From Czestochova to Tel-Aviv,

by Nicole Chapnik-Perez

Nicole found the tombstones of her paternal great-great-grandparents at the Nahalat Yitzhak cemetery in Tel Aviv. She used the website of the Tel Aviv Hevra Kadisha (burial society) and the Pages of Testimony to trace the migrations of her family.

Jewish Jewelers in Algiers, by Gerard Levy

Gerard has gathered information about jewelers in Algiers from around 1830 to the early 20th century from a 1902 book by Paul Eduel about Algerian and Tunisian goldsmiths. A table including many details about these jewelers has been added to the article.

Deported from France and didn't come back from the Nazi camps,

by Eve-Line Blum-Cherchevsky

For the last six years, the author followed the implementation by the French authorities of a 1985 law about producing death certificates for deportees who died in the Holocaust.

