

# שרשרת הדורות

## SHARSHERET HADOROT

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### FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of Sharsheret Hadorot surveys books of genealogical interest, with a spotlight on two books of special value to the researcher.

The section on sources of Surnames presents Dr. Paul Jacobi's article on the Kara-Caro surname, and Mazal Linnenberg's article on Marrano surnames.

The section on Our Members at Work does not appear in this issue, as we have just published a sheaf of research articles in a separate booklet entitled Annals And Deeds In Family History: Research and Sources.

The articles appear in Hebrew and English.

As always, we are eager to hear from our readers.

Esther Raason and Ruth Rigbi

LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE ISRAEL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY'S  
MEETINGS THIS HALF-YEAR

February: HAROLD LEWIN on RESEARCH INTO HIS FAMILY HISTORY IN BRITAIN, ESPECIALLY IN LONDON. With the aid of slides, he presented some of his most important sources, and made his family background live.

March: ABRAHAM TAL, Chief Librarian of the I. Ben-Zvi Institute, reported on THE DISCOVERY IN TUNIS OF BOOK OF KETUBOTH (MARRIAGE CONTRACTS) OF MANY SEPHARDI FAMILIES FROM TOLEDO. He has prepared the book for the press, and is published in French.

April: Our member EZRY UVAL gave a lecture illustrated by slides on HIS JOURNEY TO HALBERSTADT, today part of East Germany, where his family, the Auerbachs, lived for generations. He showed us the remaining traces of the former Jewish community, which his ancestors served as rabbis, and recounted his impressions of meetings with the townspeople, especially the Vicar who has set up a monument to commemorate the Jewish community.

May: Our member DR. NOAH GINOT (GRUENFELDER) lectured on 285 YEARS OF THE GRUENFELDER FAMILY HISTORY. "In honour of the 100th anniversary of the birth of my father, Prof. Benno Gruenfelder, I decided with my sisters to organize a commemoration.

In order to collect additional material, I travelled (en route for a scientific congress) to Altenkunstadt in Bavaria, where my father's family had lived from 1700 until the rise of the Nazis to power. I met the Mayor, who has very sympathetic to Jews, and a young researcher named Josef Mutschmann. He had studied the history of the Jews of Altenkunstadt, who in 1848 made up about half the population of the village. I was also fortunate enough to discover in Jerusalem, in the half in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, many files on the Jewish community of Altenkunstadt.

"In my lecture, I also played recordings of my mother a pianist, playing the piano, and showed slides from photographs taken by my father, especially during the First World War".

June: Our member MATHILDE TAGGAR lectured on THE GOMEL FAMILY AND THE ALLIANCE ISRAELITE UNIVERSELLE - FROM TURKEY TO THE WORLD AT LARGE.

The story of generations of Alliance teachers in the family reflects the great educational work of the Alliance among Jewish communities, especially in North Africa and Egypt.

After training in Paris, the young teachers went wherever they were sent - to Fez, Marrakesh, Algiers or Cairo. The Alliance worked for civil rights for Jews, in addition to providing them with a modern education.

## FORTHCOMING LECTURES:

July 12th: SHLOMO ALBOHER on THE SHIRIZLI FAMILY.

August 16th: DR. AZRIEL HILDESHEIMER on THE TREVES FAMILY and the sources for the study of this family.

Please make a note the above dates, as additional notices will not be sent.

All the lectures take place at 7.30 p.m. in the hall of Congregation Mevakshei Derech, 22 Shai Agnon Boulevard. The hall is open from 6.30 p.m. in order to permit members to consult books, bulletins from genealogical societies abroad, and Family Finders.

## FAMILY NAMES

From the preface of Vol. I on the Karo Family

by Dr. Paul Jacobi. Jerusalem 1988

1. In the 510 numbered entries of the present chapter, a little more than ca.1020 bearers of the name Kara/Cardo/Karo (קארא, קארדו, קארו) are considered, of whom the vast majority belong to the Aschkenasi Kara-Cardo-Karo Family whilst the rest belong to the Sephardi-Cardo-family and to the (partly), legendary "protohistoric" line of ancestors. The Aschkenasi Kara, Cardo, Karo family ranks high in the category of the "very ancient" Aschkenasi families, whose antiquity is surpassed only by that of the "founding" families.

Contrary, however, to most of the other "very ancient" families, the present family's progenitor entered the limelight of history already fully equipped with a "family-name", i.e. "Kara", though seen to be followed also by some of the others. For it was in the 14th century that the very modest first name of adoptions of family names by Jews occurred for reasons outside the scope of the present chapter. What, then, was the name's etymology and the specific reasons for its adoption?

2. We can discard the proposition that the name derived from the French/German term "carreau" - "Karo" meaning a red square standing on one of its corners, used as pattern for cloth decorations or as distinguishing symbol for playing cards and similar purposes: There is nothing in this proposition to explain its application as family-name.

3. More serious is the proposition of "Caro" being a provenance-name derived from the townlet of "Caro" (south of Ploerael, in North-Western France) in the province of Brittany in which indeed Jews lived till 1240. That proposition, however, is fallacious too. For firstly, (anyway to the knowledge of the present writer) nothing has come down to posterity referring to any Jews having resided therein - let alone Jews of renown. Secondly, nothing is known of any direct or indirect, extended or even merely spurious, contact between that townlet and any of the early members or ancestors of the present Kara-Caro-family. True, R. Schimon, the author of the "Yalkut Schimoni" was previously held to have been none else but R. Schimon I-Kara (b) Chelbo who, was thought to be identical with R. Schimon hadarshan of Le Mans, not far from the townlet of Caro - but Epstein, has disproved that identity. He has pointed out that R. Schimon I-Kara lived in the 11th/12th century and was the father of the exponent of the "Pshat" (literal) - commentary on the Scriptures R. Joseph II - Kara R. Schimon hadarshan of Le Mans, who was an exponent of the "Drash" (moralistic, etc.) - interpretation, lived only in the 13th century and accordingly, there is nothing to connect R. Schimon I-Kara with Le Mans, let alone with the townlet of Caro; in addition, nowadays the Yalkut Schimoni's true author is considered to have been neither R. Schimon I-Kara nor R. Schimon

Darshan from Le Mans, but R. Schimon mi-Frankfurt/M. And, thirdly, even if some contact between R. Schimon I-Kara with the townlet of Caro could be established, that townlet was simply not famous enough to be selected as family-name in the 14th century by descendants of its residents in the 11th/12th century! The townlet of "Caro" could not compare in fame with, e.g., the city of Troyes which, having been the domicile of the great Raschi's and his Yeshiva, was proudly chosen by Raschi's descendants, some 300 years later, as their family-name (Troyes - טרויעס - "Treves"), More-over, descendants of residents of the townlet of Caro would have spelt their name "Caro" כ'ר'ו and not "Kara" (כ'ר'ק), the latter spelling being apt to blur rather than in to indicate the intended derivation from the townlet of Caro.

4. Thus, there remains the etymology of "Kara" from the Hebrew-Aramaic term "Kara", the meaning of which has undergone interesting metamorphoses in its long history. Its original meaning, as applied to 2nd-generation - Anora R.Chanina-Kara of the 3rd century, was a (professional or honorific) designation of someone able to read with understanding the Scriptures and/or a teacher or expert knowing well biblical versions and "teamin". Subsequently, in the 8th century, it came to denote a member to the Karaitic sect who relied on the written law, i.e. on the Bible (כ'ר'ק), disregarding the oral law (i.e., Mishna, Talmud, etc.) Simultaneously, (or somewhat later) it came to mean something like "precentor" (eventually called "שליח ציבור" "חזן" (Chasan), etc.) probably in consequence of the word "Kara" in Arabic serving to denote the "reader of the Koran". Finally, in the 12th century it received the meaning in which it seems to have been attached to the afore mentioned R. Schimon I-Kara and to his son, the said commentator R. Joseph II-Kara i.e., someone preferring the literal explanation ("פשוט") rather than the allegoric or similar exegesis ("דרש") of the scriptures.

5. If so, the question poses itself why some 150 years after the death of the said R. Joseph II-Kara, when Aschkenasi Jews, for the first time, began to adopt, or were called by, family-names, the term "Kara" came to be attached as family-name by or to the Prague progenitor of the Aschkenasi KARA-family, i.e., R. Jitzchak I "KARA", who (anyway as far as the present writer's knowledge goes) is not reported to have had particular qualifications to be called "Kara" in any of the above meanings of the term. The present writer has an inkling that already in the latter's life-time the tradition ran in his family that they were descendants of the said French R. Joseph II Kara and that eventually it had found its way into the family's traditional family-tree indeed the gap of five generations between the said R. Joseph II-Kara and R. Jitzchak I "KARA" is not too wide as to make such tradition incredible. However, as this is pure speculation, the question will remain open as long as no supporting (archival or other corroborating) evidence comes to light.

6. By the way, similar considerations may one day turn out to be applicable also to the Sephardi "Caro" - family. As to the specific form that surname as used by th Aschkenasi-family, it invariably remained, for more than 400 years, "KARA" (in Hebrew "קארא" or "קאָראַ"). It was only in the 18th century that the final "a" ("א") came to be substituted by an "o" changing its pronunciation to קאָר or קאָרו, i.e., "Karo" or even "Kro". The vast majority of the family, however, soon chose to change the initial "K" into "C" and adopt the final spelling and pronunciation variant of "Caro" (קאָרו). The reason for that change seems to have been the erroneous belief that the family, descended from the Sephardi family and from its great scion, the author of the, "Shulchan Aruch" R. Joseph IV CARO, and that the correct spelling of the latter's surname in Latin characters was "Caro" with a "C". Only the learned R. (Zvi-) Hirsch II KARD and his descendants returned, and stuck, to the variant "Karo" (with a "K") (except that one of his grandsons eventually preferred for himself and his descendants the more "modern" "Caro". The latter "Karo" - preference may have had its reasons in R. Hirsch being aware of the family having originally been called "Kara" (with a "K"), thus sharing the view of the German Jewish scholars that for the same reason even the Sephardi family ought to be spelt with an initial "K" - Anyway, it is remarkable that even those Caro-descendants who left Judaism, stuck to the name "Caro" (recorded) one of them only (who stayed within the community) changed it to "Carr".

#### OUR BOOKLET: ANNALS AND DEEDS IN FAMILY HISTORY:

##### RESEARCH AND SOURCES

Published by the Israel Genealogical Society 88 pp.  
in English and Hebrew.

From the contents: Shmuel Shamir- Wills and Bequests as Genealogical Research Sources.  
Shmuel Evenor- The Ornstein Family.  
Esther Ramon- The Homburger Family of Karlsruhe Germany.  
S. Ever-Or- The Dannon Family in Eretz Israel.

Available from Israel Genealogical Society. Uziel street 50 Jerusalem 96424; Tel. 424147.

## GLEANINGS

### The Institute for Research of the Jewish Family Heritage

In conjunction with the Diaspora Museum is planning the Third World Congress on the Jewish Family in the summer of 1990.

Simultaneously, branches of families from all over the world will meet - among them the Eger, Meyuhav, Joffe and Benatar families.

The Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies whose formation we announced in the last Bulletin, is actively in obtaining genealogical material from the USSR, in conjunction with the U.S. National Archives.

Dorot 10/3 announces the formation of a center for genealogical research in Poland: OSRODEK BADAN GENEALOGIC PIAST, UL. ZAVLEK 22, 06-100 POLTUSK, POLAND.

It also gives the addresses of a number of people who are prepared to carry out genealogical research in Poland.

The same issue of Dorot carries an article by Jeffrey Kimmber on personal records from concentration camps, lodged in the US National Archives and not at Yad- Va-Shem. Esther Ramon informed the Yad Va-Shem archives of the existence of this material.

They replied: "The Yad Va-Shem Archives routinely acquires copies of microfilms from the documentation of Section 242 of the National Archives in Washington D.C. and we have in our possession more than 2000 reels from that source".

### An extraordinary book -important to Genealogists

KRAG, HELEN LIESL - "MAN HAT NICHT GEBRAUCHT KEINE REISEGESELLSCHAFT..."

Boehlau Verlag Wien. Koeln. Graz 1988 180 pp.

The facts: The grandmother Ella Schapira was born in 1897 in Berditschew (Russia), in 1905 the family had to flee to Tarnopol (Poland), in 1914 she settled in Vienna and in 1938 she escaped to England where she still lives.

From the preface written by H.I.Krag, her granddaughter "I want to write a book about my grandmother. About my Viennese Grandmother, who originates from Russia and lives in England. I want to ask her about her life, because I am suddenly aware how women of her generation have lived History. Probably she was quite an ordinary woman in her generation, in her environment...

She never spoke about her own childhood, her parents, her sister and her background. This was her Philosophy of life: "You dont have to speak about the past, it is over. One must think about the future"....

Only today in her nineties she perceives that there is no future for herself and she enjoys every day given to her.....

"Ach Gott, hab ich a langes Leben!" she says in this German, which is still the language which comes to her most easily, in spite of all the confusion in her life, her German reflects her personal history and her Grammar and vocabulary remind you of her many homelands.....

Unlike my grandmother I am interested in the past. Her life fascinates me. There sits a woman who herself has lived our century. She is our century....

I began to look for documents. I began to question my grandmother and to verify her answers. I began to read books about her period and her towns and to rummage in old atlases and encyclopaedias, so that I would be able to follow her stories. Where was the town from which she came? How big was it? In the Lexicon I found there was a river in it, does she remember it? Other sources tell about historical events, pogroms for instance. Was she aware of them? Then I was more and more seized by this dedective word. About many themes she did not want to talk at all, others looked unimportant to her. I had to toil how to bring her to talk and had to prepare myself more and more before our conversations...

She does not like to talk about her life, only seldom she begins by herself. But she reports readily and conscientiously in her replies to curious questions. Can we depend on her reports? I had much to check. her stories were so exciting because of the confusion of the events, spontaneous insertions, irrelevant digressions and private commentaries, but many contradictions and perplexities had to be solved. The picture of her life that I try to write here must not be the absolute true image of her life, but it is her life as she lived and remembered it. As such it is exciting enough.....

"Why have you never told us about your life?" I asked her in one of my first interviews. "Nobody has ever asked me about it". She answered smiling knowing better, "Who is interested in the past? It was all so poor and frightening, life was just not interesting... We fought for everyday's bread. We did not have much, but we had also no pretensions. We did not miss anything, because we were not used to anything else. As it was, it was good. the people of today cannot understand it." From then I tried to understand.

....I began to visit her every year, lived with her and asked her my questions. the longer I listened to her the more I understood the conditions in Old Austria, the possibilities of a hard working woman, always selfconcoious and far away from the women of my schoolbooks..."

From this one can learn about everyday life in the above mentioned places and how to interview older people.

### A PERSONAL STORY

#### G U S T A V O - C H A V A A G M O N

On a cold February morning of 1989 my phone rang and on the line was a lady called Graziella, a volunteer in the "DOROT" Genealogy Section of Diaspora House, Tel Aviv.

She informed me of a young man who had been referred to them, as a possible source of help - to solve his problem.

His name -GUSTAVO JOSE CARO, 22, of Buenos Aires, Argentina - who had spent a short time in Israel and had only a few days left before his return home.

As the Genealogy Section was unable to help, beyond giving him the two highly sophisticated in style and language, volumes of Dr. Paul Jacobi's work on the KARA-CARO-KARO Family. This must have been above his rudimentary knowledge on these subjects, so.." they thought of me and my close connection with the CARO Family and its Genealogy.

There and then we fixed a time to meet at my home on that same day.

I realised that this was a rare case, and planned the meeting carefully by preparing a list of documents, records and historical data which he would HAVE to see, in order to make the most of this short, fateful opportunity.



Over hot coffee and cake we got acquainted and shedding his shyness, he told me what brought him to Israel.

He came from a Catholic family, originally of Granada, Spain, - but HE FELT JEWISH, AND AT THE AGE OF 17 HE CONVERTED TO JUDAISM - AN ORTHODOX conversion.

He finished High School, spent some years in England to learn the language and returned to Argentina. He came to Israel in the Jewish Agency's program "r19x" which also included a stay at a Kibbutz -Lehavot Habashan.

He was referred to Diaspora House because he wanted TO SEARCH FOR HIS ROOTS, and so he landed on my doorstep.

After a short introduction into the Jewish CARD History (no easy task) - Ashkenasim, Sephardim, Oriental Jews and of course Marranos I presented him with the documents I had prepared and the marked pages for him to read.

From time to time I heard him whisper "FANTASTIC". "FANTASTIC"

There was one letter which I kept for the end. When he read that he looked at me speechless. The letter was from JOSE CARD, Professor of Endocrinology, South Carolina School of Medicine, in which he states that he was proudly told by his father in GRANADA, Spain of his connection to MARAM R'. JOSEPH CARD of Toledo, Spain (1488-1575) author of "רמב"ם דגדג".

There just was not enough time for all the questions I wanted to ask him, because I felt it was more important for him to read about what must have been the prime motivation for his visit to Israel, - his search and the baring of the CARD JEWISH ROOTS.



# Shtetl Geography Made Easy

By Miriam Weiner

All four of my grandparents came from small villages in the Ukraine. I never knew the names of the towns — they were always referred to as the “old country.” As I got older, I wanted to know more about the old country. Where was it? Is it still there? What is it like now? Is it on the map?

I learned that my paternal grandfather, Morris Weiner, came from Sudilkov, a small village, and that it was a few kilometers from Shepetovka, which later became an important railroad center. I was helped by an unusual reference book called “Shtetl Finder Gazetteer” (Los Angeles: Periday Co., 1980), by Chester G. Cohen.

In his 145-page book, Cohen lists the names of hundreds of cities and towns where Jews lived in the Pale of Settlement of Russia and Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Galicia and Bukovina including some names of residents. Both Yiddish and native spellings are provided along with locations and miscellaneous information (mostly obtained from Yiddish periodicals) about Jews who lived there.

Next I consulted the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress as well as the fine Map Division of the New York Public Library, and was ultimately able to locate detailed maps with references to the villages of my grandparents. Sudilkov was virtually destroyed during the Holocaust, and what little remained was absorbed into neighboring Shepetovka.

In the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., I was able to find small street maps of Pri-luki and Konotop — towns where two of my grandparents had lived. The maps showed the

names of the major streets, the locations of breweries, cemeteries, chimneys and some factories.

I wanted to meet people who had lived in these towns and, of course, it is not feasible for me to travel there now. I went to YIVO Institute in New York City and inquired about the existence of Landsmanshaftn Societies for these towns. Even though many of the societies are now defunct, I was given names and addresses of the officers of several still in existence.

I contacted these people and found them eager to share their memories of our mutual roots. One man in Brooklyn, William Weiner from Sudilkov, spent several hours showing me old photos and documents that he had saved. At the end of our visit, he gave me a Souvenir Journal of the Sudilkov Sick Support Society published in 1948 on the occasion of its Fiftieth Anniversary.

The jewel in this book was a beautifully detailed rendering entitled “Our Sudilkov Synagogue.” I was very touched that this man, who apparently is not even related to me — though we tried hard to find a connection — would part with something so special that he had saved for so many years.

Now I had maps and I knew exactly where these shtetls were — but I had no idea of what life was like there. All four of my grandparents are gone and there is no one left from the immigrant generation in my family.

I decided to advertise for help. I placed ads in 15 Jewish newspapers throughout the country asking former residents of Sudilkov, Shepetovka, Pri-luki, Konotop, Semenovka and Falesti to please contact me. Those ads were the beginning of some fascinating correspon-

dence. There was the man in California (Murray) who responded because his cousin in Florida sent him my ad. He was from Sudilkov and wrote me detailed letters describing life there, the number of synagogues, the daily routine he remembered as a child. Best of all — he remembered the mill my great-grandfather had owned and remembered playing with the children in the family, who would be my cousins.

Murray shared his memories with me in many letters and I wanted to share something with him too. So I sent him the photo of the Shul in Sudilkov and a copy of the roster contained in the Souvenir Journal. He wrote back and said “thank you for the sweet bon bon you included in the letter ... the roster of the Sudilkov Society. What a wonderful thrill and delight for me, but also sad to realize that most of the familiar names are long gone.” Murray goes on to talk about the Shul in Sudilkov and states that the rendering I sent him “must have been done by a remarkably talented artist. I do not remember the fence and gate, but with pogroms every now and then, it was probably destroyed.”

I think what surprised me most in the responses to the ad was the number of people who were eager to talk about their life in the old country. I have met several of these “landsleit” and find that the hours spent with them, to some extent, replace the long conversations I should have had with my own grandparents. I never knew two of them and by talking with their contemporaries, it is easy to imagine that their lives were somewhat similar since they came from the same towns and background.