

וְכָל פְּנֵיךָ לַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְרַב נְשָׁוִים פְּנֵיךָ: (ישעיהו נד:א-ג)

לְכָל גְּבוּלְךָ לְאֶבֶן הַפֶּזֶז



gentones

מכון יעקב לבנות

Manhattan High School for Girls

תשפ"ב • GENEALOGY ANTHOLOGY

With profound appreciation to

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A Message from our Menacheles

It is a great pleasure and honor to write this foreword. As I read through the colorful accounts and charming vignettes contained in this volume, I was struck by the power of a literary snapshot to convey the richness of Jewish life. It is a great testament to the force and vitality of our *mesorah* that students take such an interest in accessing their families' lore.

Our senior students delved into primary sources. They searched through archives for evidence in diaries and manuscripts, sermons and speeches, forgotten notes and rough drafts, recorded or transcribed interviews and correspondences. And, of course, they conducted interviews of their own. Some of these stories took place nearly a century ago, and the finer details have, perhaps, blurred and altered with the passage of time. If some chronology or a fact here or there is inaccurate, we beg the reader's indulgence. That is the nature of oral history, and the dialogue between generations which is nurtured through these *tete-a-tetes* is well worth the price.

Perhaps it is that priceless connection which I treasure the most. Grandparent and grandchild, parents and children, engaged in the most important and qualitative conversation, transmitting their past, so that it can inform their future.

The ultimate benefit yielded by this project is the mobilization of youthful energies in the service of *yiddishkeit*. One of our beloved seniors wrote, "as I peruse my family tree, it strikes me that, generation after generation over the last two hundred years, my family has never shirked the mantle of leadership which is our mission." Researching the traditions of past generations and internalizing the stories told to them by beloved grandparents and family members, the images of the teachings, all creates enduring images that mold our students by giving them goals to strive for, and the means to achieve them. To quote one of our wise seniors, "If I am being raised in a home that treasures Torah and *mitzvos*, it is owing to the fortitude of my great-grandfather."

No endeavor of this scope can be accomplished without a grand architect. I am forever grateful to Ms. Chani Gotlieb for her brilliance and creativity in initiating and spearheading this monumental genealogy project. Among her many talents, Ms. Gotlieb is well-known for her uncanny ability to ferret out a good story, and it is her deepest wish that every student walk away from her high school experience enriched by the legacy of her forebears. In sync with the compelling sobriquet for this year's genealogy project, I would like to highlight the devoted efforts of Rebbetzin Neuburger, who works tirelessly to provide the proper setting for our students' gemstones. Her ardent desire is to showcase each one of our treasures to greatest advantage. Our students are forever enriched by working with this outstanding *mechaneches*. Kudos to Mrs. Dena Szpilzinger, whose sterling character and temperament are nearly matched by her consummate skill. She is truly a "jewel." Her graphic art prowess did justice to this outstanding project. With appreciation to Mrs. Ettie Cohen, esteemed *mechaneches*, who works behind the scenes for so many MHS projects and endeavors. We are truly fortunate to be the recipients of her largesse.

As for our beloved Seniors – each and every one is a multi-faceted gemstone whose luminosity will לאורך ימים טובים shine brightly בעזרת ה'.

Mrs. Tsivia Yanofsky

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Introduction



”וְהֵייתֶם לִי סִגְלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים” (שמות י”ט:ה')

רש”י: ”אוצר חביב... כלי יקר ואבנים טובות שהמלכים גונזים אותם.”

A beloved treasure, like...costly vessels and precious stones, which kings store away. So will you be [more of] a treasure to Me than the other nations (Mechilta).



In 1928 the Maharaja of Patiala commissioned Cartier to create a ceremonial necklace. It took the King of Jewelers three years to fashion one of the costliest pieces of jewelry ever made; a set of five platinum chains joined together and studded with nearly three thousand diamonds, rubies, emeralds, with one of the largest diamonds — De Beers — as its centerpiece. The magnificent piece bedecked the Indian ruler and his son for two generations, a symbol of power, wealth, and exquisite European taste, before it mysteriously disappeared from the royal treasury in 1948. Nothing was heard of it for the next thirty-four years, at which point the De Beers diamond mysteriously reappeared, without the necklace, at a 1982 Sotheby's auction, valued at three million dollars. Sixteen years after that, part of the necklace appeared in a small antiques shop in London. Obviously, the De Beers stone was missing, as were all the other big diamonds. It was bought by Cartier, who replaced the missing stones with replicas. Had the original creation existed today, with all its diamonds, it would have been valued at between thirty and fifty million dollars.

Just over thirty three centuries ago the King's most cherished jewels were artfully assembled in perfect harmony and grandeur at the foot of Mount Sinai, set side by side to proclaim the glory and power of His Majesty. Tragically, the striking masterpiece soon began to shed its splendor. Envy and strife chiseled away its magnificence and weakened it; the precious stones were strewn across time and space, and only a few retained their former luster and radiance as they faced unimaginably harsh conditions. Those hardy stones reappeared periodically in different locations, remnants of the once glorious masterwork, and a reminder of the majestic Kingdom of old. They shimmered with promise, and offered hope that the sublime magnum opus would be reassembled and once again herald its Sovereign. Some of the multi-generational stories of the steadfastness and unswerving strength of those everlasting gemstones are shared in the following pages; unearthed by our senior students, and masterfully polished to reveal their many facets and showcase their singular shapes and colors.

Chani Gotlieb



עֲנִיָּה סְעָרָה לֹא נִחְמָה הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי מֵרַבִּיץ בְּפוּךְ אֲבֵנֶיךָ וְיִסְדֹּתֶיךָ בְּסַפִּירִים...
וְשִׁמְתִי כְּדָכָד שִׁמְשֹׁתֶיךָ וְשַׁעֲרֶיךָ לְאֲבֵנֵי אֶקֶדָח וְכָל גְּבוּלְךָ לְ

אֲבֵנֵי חֶפֶץ

וְכָל בְּנֵיךָ לְמוֹדֵי יְקוֹק וְרַב שְׁלוֹם בְּנֵיךָ:

(ישעיהו נד:יא-יג)

From the blackness of destruction comes the promise of color. *Yeshayahu Hanavi* consoles a ravaged *Yerushalayim* with the assurance that the luster and vibrancy of the royal city will return; its foundation will be set in sapphire upon variegated stones, its windows in rubies, its gates in garnet, and its borders in precious gems. The crown jewel, though, will be its children, all of whom will be disciples of G-d and live with abundant peace.

Malbim, himself battling the spiritual darkness and devastation wrought by an 'enlightened' generation, found solace in this richly metaphoric prophecy. As he saw it, each stone represents a particular tribe of Israel. The foundation conjoins the *even nofach* of *Shevet Yehudah*, with the *even sapir* of *Shevet Yissachar*; Jewish royalty and Torah wisdom which are the bedrock of our people. The *even kadkod* of the windows is the *even shoham* of the descendants of Yosef, who are associated with the blessings of wealth and prosperity, and the crimson-red *avnei ekdach* of the gates bring to mind the *Levi'im*, who are singularly dedicated to the service of G-d in the *Beit Hamikdash*. The multi-hued *avnei cheifetz* which adorn the boundaries denote the remaining *shevatim* who complement one another with their unique talents and strengths. The Holy City will shimmer, one day, with a sure and newfound knowledge of Hashem that soothes all discord among its inhabitants. United, they are a jewel-mosaic far more exquisite than the sum of its parts.

Our seniors have undertaken a serious and transformative journey of self-discovery which has helped them understand this portrait of redemption. They have found themselves rooted in the sacred cities of Israel, in the countless *shtetls* of Eastern Europe, in exotic Middle Eastern countries where Jews flourished against all odds, and in America where their forebears distinguished themselves as valuable contributors, yet resisted melting into the pot. In sharing their odysseys with each other, our budding genealogists have caught a glimpse of the iridescence of the Jewish People, whose differences add color and texture to the one enduring heritage which makes us the same. This volume is a compendium of the highlights of their ancestral journeys, indeed, their precious ge(n/m)stones.

Treasures From The High Land



Adi Hacker

Sometimes, a name becomes a trademark, as has my family name in Israel. When I introduce myself as a Hacker (shortened from the original Fleishhacker meaning butcher,) the “oh, from the meat store?” is sure to follow. And while my grandparents have been the owners of *Basar Hacker* on *Rechov Achinoam* since 1969, their legacy dates back much earlier than that. Saba Hacker’s grandfather, Rav Yitzchak Hacker, began a meat business in Zelem, Austria. Shortly after the Holocaust began, he was imprisoned by the Nazis, and then released and given twenty four hours to leave. Rav Yitzchak fled with his family to Israel where he reestablished the business. Eventually, his son, Binyamin Zeev, took over, and my grandfather continues to manage it to this very day.

The Hacker meat store has long been associated

with extraordinary acts of *chessed* [see sidebar], and I am proud to be a descendant of its owners. Yet what I regard as my most precious “family heirloom” is not the store, but the unique *mesorah* which we received from my grandfather.

Saba Hacker is an *Oberlander* Jew, one who comes from the “High Land,” which includes Hungary, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. An *Oberlander* Jew hails from one of the seven *kehillot* whose spiritual leader was the *Chasam Sofer*, famed *rosh yeshivah* of Pressburg. Such a Jew lives by three core values. Firstly, he does not deviate one iota from his *mesorah*, lest the whole tradition come crashing down. This is in keeping with the *Chasam Sofer’s* mantra, and homiletic interpretation of the famous halachic dictum regarding new wheat, *chadash assur min haTorah*. Rabbi Sofer believed that *any new practice* was forbidden from the Torah. Saba Hacker follows his *Oberlander mesorah* uncompromisingly: he waits six full hours between milk and meat, washes for *hamotzi* before making *kiddush*, and has worn a *tallis* since the age of *bar mitzvah*.

The second defining characteristic of an *Oberlander* is *emunah peshutah*, a deep and unquestioning faith. This strength of conviction prevented the *Oberlanders* from being drawn into the Western world culture during the 20th century, although they were surely exposed. Now, well into the 21st century, Saba Hacker life is still practically devoid of new technology. He has no internet access (not even an email address!) and was at a loss when I asked him what he remembers of the technological advancements of his time. Conducting a genealogical interview with him proved to be very complicated because I couldn’t do it on Zoom, Skype, or Facetime. My grandfather manages quite well with just a simple kosher phone!



Saba Hacker with my sister Noa in the meat store. Behind them the sign reads, “it’s a mitzva to say Lichavod Shabbos Kodesh”.



Clara Hammer in the Hacker Store in Jerusalem. Clara, the legendary 'Chicken Lady' ran her operation of delivering chicken to the poor from my grandparents' store.

grandfather giving meat skins and bones to a poor customer, a woman named Clara Hammer asked to partner with him in providing for them. That was the beginning of the Keren Clara Hammer which operates out of *Basar Hacker* and now feeds one hundred fifty families each week. How privileged I feel to be the granddaughter of such *gomlei chassadim!*

My grandparents' meat store in *Yerushalayim* is the site of many acts of kindness which do not go unnoticed by their more observant customers. One such patron is Dr. Devora Rosenwasser, dean of the *Michlalah* College for Women. As she interviewed me for her prestigious seminary, she recognized my name, and shared with me the details of some *chessed* moments that she has witnessed in the store. Another woman once told me that every time she is in the shop she is struck by the easy and understated manner in which Saba Hacker practically gives meat to the needy. And my father recalls how his father always encouraged the people who were short on funds to pay whatever and whenever they could. Indeed, my grandparents seize every opportunity to provide meat for families who cannot afford it. Years ago, after watching my

Lastly, the third distinction of an Oberlander is that he is an *erliche balabus*. Not a *rav*, but an individual suffused with *yiras Shamayim*, who is well-educated in *Torah, halachah, and minhagei Yisrael*. His goal is to establish a home focused on Torah and the *Ribono shel Olam*, which he accomplishes through serious Torah study every single morning, before setting out for work. Saba Hacker most certainly fits that bill as well. He owns and manages a thriving business, but never *davens* without a *minyan*, and always makes time to learn. So, while many, if not most, people identify Saba Hacker as the proprietor of the meat store on *Rechov Achinoam*, I know well that his true claim to fame is that he is an *erliche balabus* who follows his Oberlander *mesorah* with steadfast *emunah peshutah*.

Description of an Oberlander Jew drawn from <https://mishpacha.com/we-wont-let-go/>

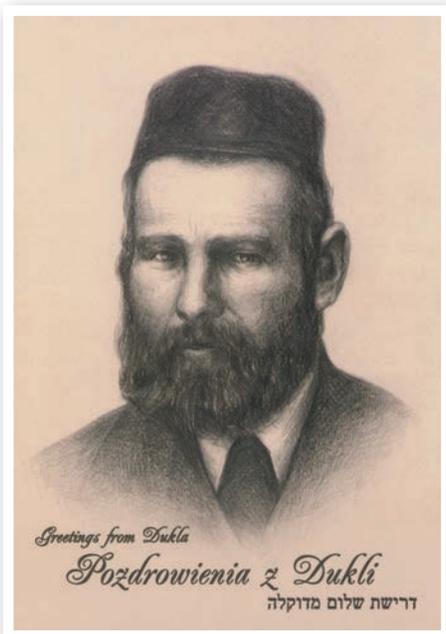


Kevarim of Rav Yitzchak and Yenta Leah Hacker, the founders of the Hacker meat business. They fled from Nazi Austria with their family and reestablished a meat store in Israel.

The Girl Next Door in Dukla



Avigael Hammer



Depiction of Renia's father,
Elimelech Altholtz.

Just before he passed from this world, Avraham Leib Tisser, my great-grandfather, shared the following story with his beloved wife, Renia. When he was seventeen, and a prisoner in the Plaszow-Krakow concentration camp, the notorious Nazi general in command enjoyed a peculiar and cruel morning pastime. Every day, just before breakfast, he would send out his German shepherd to kill a Jew. One morning he instructed the dog to attack Avraham, but the canine simply stared at my Zaida and sat motionless. Perhaps it knew that, small and quiet as he was, Zaida was a force to reckon with.

They were both from the same *shtetl* of Dukla in Galicia, Poland. Renia Atholz, my great grandmother, was the only daughter of Elimelech and Leah. She attended the Bais Yaakov school in town. Avraham Leib Tisser was the middle child of five, and studied at a *cheder*. But when Avraham was fifteen and Renia just two years younger, the Nazis occupied Dukla and life as they knew it was harshly interrupted.



Altholtz family,
Dukla Poland 1933
R-L: back row: Elimelech, Leah,
Mendel, Sabena (Mendel's wife)
Front row: Herman,
Chaim, Renia.



Renia's (circled) class in
Bais Yaakov 1937.



Avraham Leib's childhood home in Dukla, Poland.



Renia Tisser' brothers standing in front of their childhood home in Dukla in 2012. R-L: Chaim and Herman Altholtz



Avraham Leib c. 1960.



Herman Altholtz, Renia's older brother unveiling a plaque at the mass grave in Dukla Poland in 2012.

Renia's family found itself in the Russian occupied zone and spent the war years in Siberia. There, they struggled with hunger, which eventually took the life of her father. Avraham's family remained in Nazi-occupied Dukla where his little sister Chana was killed by the Nazis during the first weeks of the occupation. His parents, Moshe and Esther, were deported to Belzec extermination camp in the summer of 1942. Avraham was thrown from one concentration camp to another, five in all, and survived hard labor and unspeakable cruelty. More than once he brushed with death, but was finally liberated in May of 1945. He returned to his hometown only to find that his older sister Golda, and younger sister Oodie had perished. Several months later he learned that his brother Jack had survived, but it was nearly two decades before they saw each other again.

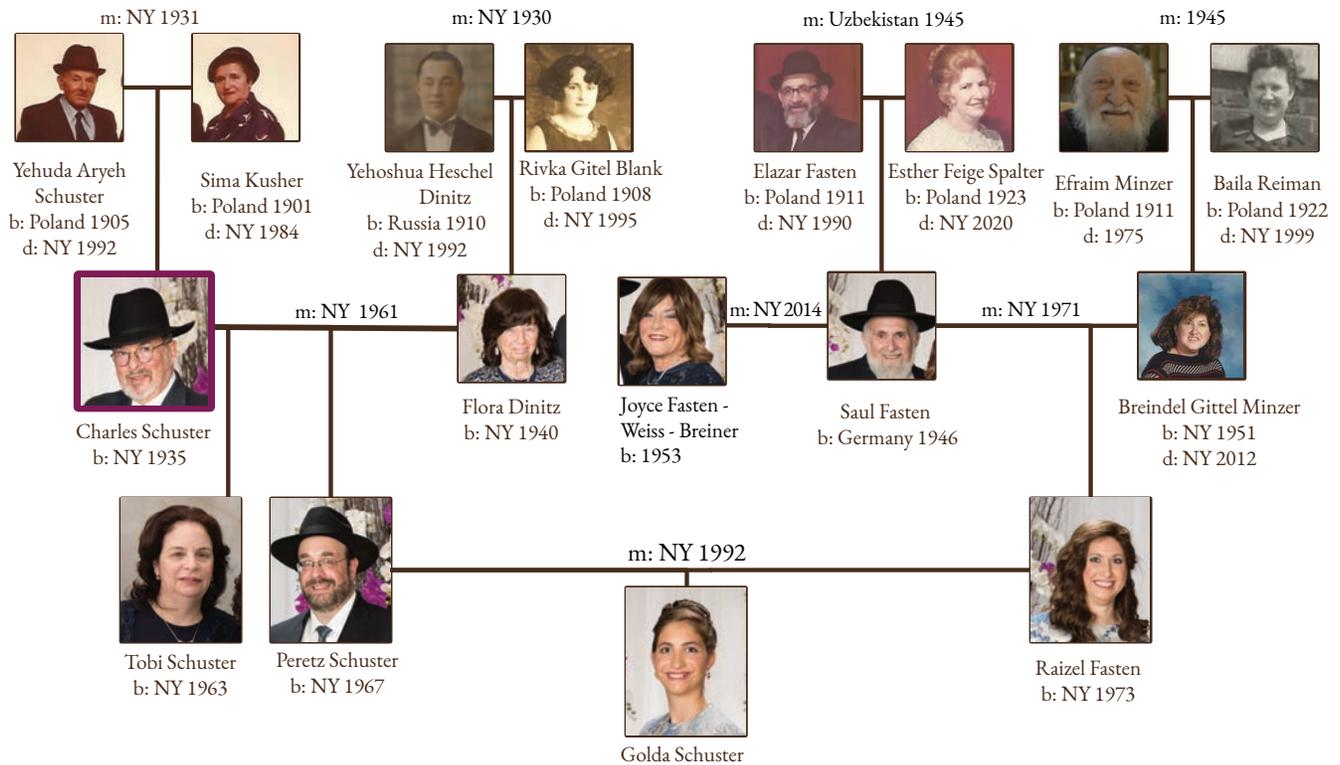
Avraham Leib moved to Krakow hoping to find work. One day, he bumped into Renia, who was in Poland accompanying her brother to a medical appointment. Happy to see each other, they began a correspondence which continued through his move to Paris and her *aliyah* to Israel in 1949. In 1950, much to Renia's surprise, Avraham Leib arrived in Israel and proposed to her, the former girl next door. In Israel they had two children, Elimelech, and my grandmother, Esther. Encouraged by an uncle in America, Zeida and his family emigrated to the United States. There, he worked with furs, but was warmed by his regular study of Torah, and the privilege of serving as *gabbai* to the Bluzhever Rebbe for over forty years. He was deeply committed to providing his children with a stellar Jewish education, and his daughter, my Bobba Esther, vividly remembers the day she needed help with her *Chumash* homework but couldn't find a *sefer*. Much to her astonishment, her father was able to cite all the *pesukim* and *meforshim* from memory.

In 2012, Bobba Esther and my great-great-uncles went back to visit their hometown. They renovated the neglected Jewish cemetery and unveiled the memorial for the two thousand Jews of Dukla who perished in the war.

Unearthing My Gem



Golda Schuster



From the start, I was worried about genealogy. *Baruch Hashem*, I have three sisters who preceded me at MHS. Rivka focused on my paternal Bubby. Miriam highlighted my mother's Zaidy. And Baila captured the legacy of my maternal Bubby. I was left high and dry. At first, I searched for some undiscovered family jewel in far-flung fields. I interviewed my step-grandmother. Which yielded an interesting story, and a decent grade, but no feeling of connection. Frustrated by the dearth of family members available to me, and desperate, I approached the *rebbezin* of my shul, thinking that, at the very least, I would get a good interview. She declined, which, I can say in retrospect, was fortunate. I turned to another stranger, the grandmother of a childhood friend, who davens in that same shul, and she graciously agreed. But something didn't feel right. So I decided to take one last look in my own backyard. And sure enough, there was my gem. I

finally discovered Charles Schuster, the Zaidy I have always deeply loved, but never really known.

The reserved and highly intelligent grandfather I grew up with turned out to be so colorful, and, unexpectedly, emotional. I was surprised to hear about the outgoing, rambunctious child he used to be. And after learning that he was the only child in his family to hold on to his *Yiddishkeit*, my admiration grew. He grew up in a traditional home, where Torah played a role but was not the main focus. His parents sent him to the local *Talmud Torah*, more because their uncle was a close friend of the *menahel's*, than out of a sense of commitment to Jewish values and education. Zaidy's Jewish education came to an end in 1949, when he began to attend a public high school. In 1954, at the height of the Korean War, and after dropping out of college, he was drafted into the army.

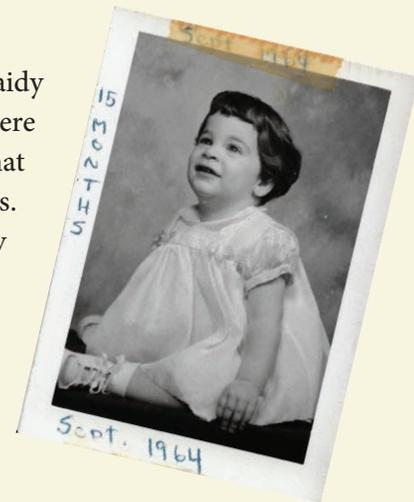
In no uncertain terms, the chaplain told the Jewish soldiers that the rules of the military must always come before any religious beliefs or practices. No *yarmulkas*, no *Shabbos*, and no *kashrus*. But whatever little connection to Judaism was possible, my Zaidy held onto. On Saturday they managed to get half the day off, so there was some semblance of *Shabbos*. And while he had to eat to stay alive, he was careful to never consume shell food, ham, or bacon. He even hated their smell, and whenever he was assigned to kitchen duty he would wash the dishes outside in the freezing cold, to avoid getting even the slightest whiff of the stuff. To this day, Zaidy can't stand the smell of grease.

After the army, Zaidy returned to college. There, he befriended a boy who inspired him to grow in his *Yiddishkeit*, and eventually convinced him to attend a *shiur*. That *shiur* changed his life in more than one way: it was there that he met my grandmother, and promised her a life of uncompromising religious commitment.

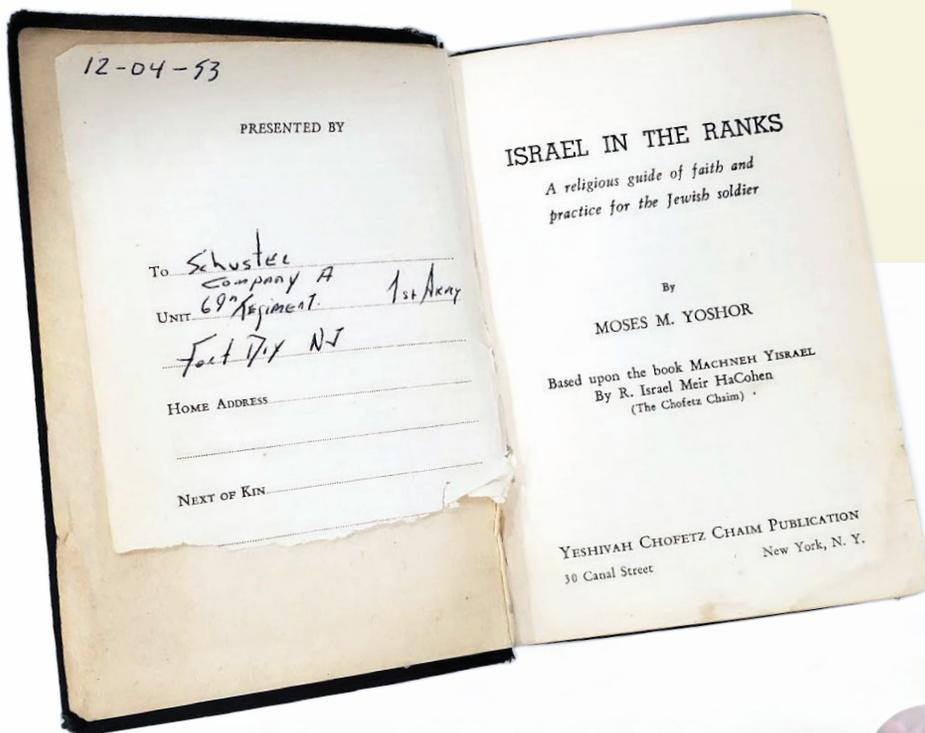
It wasn't easy, and he did not receive much family support or encouragement. But Zaidy persevered and was richly rewarded: sixty one years later, he and Bubby have two children, seven grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren, all frum, and living a Torah life.

It took a while to unearth my gem. But I feel so very rich for having done so. And now, my family mosaic is full, as we insert the fourth and final branch of my parents' heritage.

Like many gems, Zaidy is multi-faceted. And there is one side of him that particularly sparkles. In 1963, he and Bubby had their first child, a daughter, my very dear Aunt Tobi. Tobi was born with Cerebral Palsy, and my grandparents were warned that she would never walk. But that same determination which helped Zaidy embrace the fullness of *frumkeit*, gave him the strength to defy that verdict. 'She will walk,' he assured everyone. Especially the wheelchair salesman who tried to sell him the plushest wheelchairs. "Your daughter will spend all her time in it – you want it to be as comfortable as possible," he explained. 'No,' answered Zaidy, 'Actually, let me see the *least* comfortable one you have, please. I want her begging to get out of it.' At the age of eight, against all odds, and with Hashem's help, Tobi began to walk. She is a source of joy and optimism to all of us, and a testament to the fortitude and spirit of both of my grandparents, especially Zaidy.



**Golda (l.)
with Aunt Tobi**



A Sefer that Zaidy got when he was inducted into the US army, based on Machane Yisroel of the Chofetz Chaim to help soldiers remain strong to Judaism.

The Woman Behind, and Alongside, The Man



Emma Cohen



Rebbetzin Cohen

On Ruthie Fischbein's birthday in British Mandatory Palestine, her family splurged on an apple. Everybody got one slice to savor. Such was the poverty of my Savta's youth. Yet there are few people who are richer than she.

When Savta was nine years old, the Fischbeins emigrated to New York City. In the *Bais Yaakov* of Williamsburg, young Ruthie was nurtured by world-class *mechanchos*. Most notable among them was the famed Rebbetzin Vichna Kaplan. Inspired by their passion, my grandmother set out on a quest for real gold - a life dedicated to supporting *limud haTorah*. Which is why she married the athlete-turned-Torah-scholar, Harav Yankel Cohen. He was young, spiritually charged, and intensely driven to become a *talmid chacham*. Together, they forged a life and family with Torah as its pulse. It was a life of great sacrifice, but of spectacular partnership as well. Savta took her place behind the wheel so that Aba (as we refer to my grandfather) could learn. She bore the brunt of financial support. She never tired of her husband's multitudes of *chevrusos*. To this day she takes pride in the zany but loving



Rav Yankel Cohen as a young Yeshiva boy in Telz



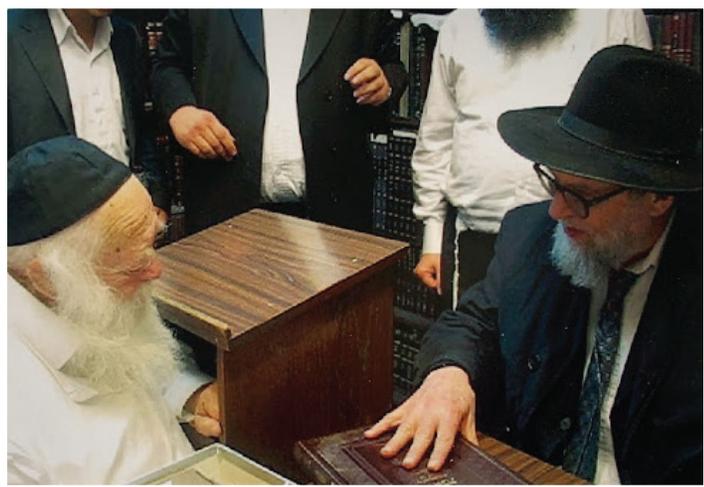
Rav Yankel Cohen



*My grandparents under their chuppah, NY, 1963
Rav Gifter is reciting a beracha on the kos*

בקוהסיית
 נקלה את ירושלים על ראש שפתה
 על ישיבת בקרי יהודה ובחוצות ירושלים
 קול חתן
 קול ששון
 קול סבה
 קול בלה
 הנונו מתכבדים בזה לחזמין את קרובינו וידידנו לבוא לקחת
 חבל בשמחתנו ולהשתתף בשמחת כללות בנינו היקרים
 הבתור החתן המופלג בתו"ש
 הרב ישראל יעקב נ"י
 עביג הכלה הבתולה המהוללה
 מרת רייזל רות תחי
 שהתקיים א"ה ובשעה טובה ומוצלחת
 יום כ' פ' תרמ"ה, כ' דר"ה אדר תשכ"ג הבע"ש
 בשעה 7:30 בערב
 באולם בענטאן שאטון
 ברוקלין, נ. י.
 1765 רחוב 86,
 הור"י החתן
 חיים דוד פישביין ורעייתו
 אליעזר בןן ורעייתו


 Rabbi and Mrs. David Fischbein
 Mr. and Mrs. Louis Cohen
 request the honor of your presence
 at the marriage of their children
 Ruth
 to
 Yaakov
 Monday evening, the twenty-fifth of February
 seven-thirty o'clock
 Chupa will be at 8:30
 Benson Chateau
 1765 - 86th Street, cor. Lee Avenue
 Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Ladies: Kindly refrain from wearing low cut,
 sheer or short sleeved dresses.
 Chartered Buses will leave at Bockling St. cor. Lee Ave.
 (Adas Yereim) at 7:00 P.M. sharp



*Rav Yankel with the Steipler who referred
to him as "THE MASMID OF AMERICA"*



*Rebbetzin Cohen visiting
with Rebbetzin Kanievsky*

personality through which he transmitted Torah to legions of *talmidim* across the globe. She basks in the glow of his shining reputation, the thirteen-year-old thoroughbred American boy who came to Telshe and never left. The legendary *mashgiach* who was dubbed “The Masmid of America” by Rav Chaim Kanievsky *zt”l*. Aba, in turn, ever appreciative of his wife’s devotion, tried to ease the burden of her life. He did the lion’s share of cooking, cleaning, and laundry. He mowed the lawn. And when she, a mother of four teenagers, decided to earn a law degree, he studied with her until both he and she had mastered the legal texts. They worked together, and made it work. All for the love of Torah, and the desire to support their family respectably. Never for material wealth.

Which is not to say that she didn’t love nice things. In fact, Savta has taught me that when you feel like a

mentsh it is easier to be selfless. So as a young wife and mother on Yeshiva Lane in Cleveland, Ohio, she found ways. While her husband immersed himself in Torah in the *Telshe Beis Midrash*, she wall-papered their house by herself. She provided her kids with little extras: summer camp, tickets to baseball games, piano lessons. She was the only *Kollel* wife who planted flowers every year.

When their children were grown, and personal finances were no longer the strain they had once been, Savta tended more spiritual gardens. To this day, she, personally, collects *tzedakah* for *talmidei chachamim* and their families. She sees to it that they have food on their tables and shoes on their feet. Indeed, her youthful enthusiasm has never waned; she longs to acquire a precious portion in the world to come by supporting Torah and those who delight in its study.

Some of Rav Yankel's notes and tapes of his shiurim



A Fairy Tale Come True



Mindy Bober

My alarm rings at 5:30 in the morning, reminding me that it's time to get ready for my two-hour journey to Manhattan High School. A half-hour later, my sixteen-year-old brother, Anchel, positions himself comfortably on his bike, as he makes his way to Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim which lies atop a steep hill. Yet, despite the long journey and the steep hill, Anchel and I are determined to get to school. At all costs, we have resolved to make our namesakes' dreams come true.

Over eight decades ago, my great-grandparents, Anchel and Mindy Farber lived in Balti, Moldova. As a young couple, they longed to raise a family steeped in *Yiddishkeit*. Their dream, however, was all but extinguished when the USSR occupied Moldova. Under their rule, even a simple *mitzvah* entailed much effort and was fraught with danger. Nevertheless, unflinching in their mission to pass on their precious *mesorah* to their one and only daughter Golda, my great-grandparents took the risk over and over again.

The Farbers found creative ways to defy Soviet

religious restrictions. Anchel would buy chickens from the market early in the morning, keep them in his bathtub throughout the day, and then whisk them off to a local shochet for proper slaughter. When he brought them home to Mindy she spent hours kashering them according to the letter of Jewish law.

Each springtime, as *Pesach* approached, Anchel would tiptoe out of his house late at night with five European-size pillowcases scrunched in his hand. Quietly, he would make his way to a home in Bălți that secretly sold handmade matzos. At the same time, Mindy worked tirelessly preparing homemade *Pesach* meals for her extended family who gathered together in her home each *yom tov*.

But try as they might to instill the love of *Yiddishkeit* in their daughter, under the Soviet Regime Anchel and Mindy's hands were tied. In school, Golda was indoctrinated to believe that religion was unhealthy, and her parents were forced to insist that she keep her Jewishness a secret. Although Anchel tried to avoid actually working on Saturdays, he had no choice but



L-R: Mindy Farber, Golda Bober, Eliyahu Bober, Abram Bober, and Yosef Bober (front) at the kever of Anchel Farber Balti, Moldova, 1977.



Anchel's family in front of their house in Bălți, Moldova. The picture was taken before Rosh Hashannah of 1964 when the family usually got together.
Back Row L-R: Anchel Farber and Meir Shraer
Middle Row L-R: Devorah Shraer, Mindy Farber, and Golda Farber
Front Row L-R: Faye Giber and Ida Shraer

to at least show up at the fur shop. And so, the real Shabbos aura was missing from their home. But every Friday, Mindy would light candles in her two brass candlesticks, and then serve delicious home-baked challah and chicken soup. Nostalgically, she and her husband reminisced in front of their daughter about the beautiful *Shabbosos* they had had before the war. Golda listened earnestly as Anchel described his family's special tablecloth and the silverware that was reserved for that day only. And she was mesmerized by Mindy's portrayal of her father and grandfather coming home from shul to a family bedecked in beautiful attire and a heavenly four-course meal. It felt as if they were telling her a fairy tale, and oh how Golda wished it would one day come true!

In 1967, Golda married Abram Bober and a year later the couple had their first son, Eliyahu. Yosef, my father, followed three years later. With the birth

of two boys came an overarching problem: how could their sons undergo *bris milah* when the Soviet Regime expressly forbade that ritual? Not knowing what to do, Anchel sought guidance from the Ribnitzer Rebbe, who assured him that both boys would be circumcised by the age of *bar-mitzvah*.

Anchel didn't live to see that *berachah* come true, but his wife, Mindy, did. In 1979, Mindy left Soviet Russia together with her children and grandchildren, and embarked on the long journey to America. Of particular note was the stop in Vienna. There, for the first time in his nine-year-old life, my father witnessed many little Jewish boys exiting a school bus all at once. Entranced by that sight, my father exclaimed, "Mama! Papa! I want to be like them!"

On December 30, 1979, shortly after arriving in America, and coinciding with the fast of *Asarah B'Teves*, Yosef and Eliyohu, ages nine and twelve respectively, each received a *Bris Milah*. Finally, the hopes of their grandparents had been realized. Eager to share the joy of the moment with the Ribnitzer *rebbe*, who by then had settled in Brooklyn, the family visited him at his shul. He fully remembered having given his blessing, and added another one: "there's nothing to be afraid of... here in America your children will... remain strongly committed." Because of Mindy's insistence on enrolling her grandsons in *yeshivos*, that *berachah*, too, has been fulfilled.

Long after the sun settles and the moon rises, I begin my journey home from Manhattan High School. At about the same time, my brother Anchel glides down the hill from Yeshiva headed towards our house. As I glance through the windows of the bus, peering at the stars twinkling against the night sky, and as the breezy night wind strikes my brother's face, we each reflect on how lucky we are to have just experienced a full day of Torah learning in a Jewish environment. How lucky we are that our great-grandparents stuck to their guns in maintaining *Yiddishkeit*. And how lucky we are to live in a time and place where we are free to be thoroughly Jewish. Most of all, though, we think about how lucky we are that after a full week at school, we have the treasure of *Shabbos*, a day that I'm proud to say is no longer a fairy tale.

Stitched with Love



Shifra Giloni

Meme so wished to come to my brother Moshe's *bris*. But poor health did not allow our beloved matriarch to travel. Insistent on participating in some way, she asked if she could have the leftover fabric from my mother's exquisite wedding gown.

Out of that intricate and finely patterned cloth, Meme painstakingly sewed a tiny, breathtakingly beautiful gown by hand. She sent it from Montreal to New York to be worn by Moshe at his *bris*. That ornate baby outfit, and the hat to match, have become prized family possessions, and have been worn, to date, by eight babies on the occasion of their *bris*. *Kein yirbu*.

Esther Dahan, my great grandmother Meme, gifted our Ashkenazi family with a precious legacy of *chessed*, and a keen appreciation of the beautiful Moroccan Jewish *minhagim* with which she was raised.



Meme on the right, with her friends in traditional caftan at a wedding.



Mémé in traditional garb, Fez 1967

Bris Outfit

Meme's descendants on their bris dressed in the outfit she tailored.



The bris outfit that Mémé made from my mother's extra wedding dress material



Rock-Solid



Ayala Klugmann

Like a rare diamond that emerges from intense pressure, Philip Garelick, my great-grandfather, was rock-solid. Over time, nearly all of the Garelick family in Rochester, N.Y. succumbed to the lure of unbridled freedom in America. He, alone among his siblings, remained true to the aspirations of his parents, and the ideals of his pious ancestors in Slabodka, Radin, and Lomzha. As I delved into his life and accomplishments with his daughter, my Bubby Felise, I was struck by the profound influence he has had on her mind and heart. After all, she was only nine years old when he died at the age of forty.

At a young age, Philip decided to become a *rav*, and shortly after his *bar-mitzvah* he left home to study Torah. From New York to Cleveland to Baltimore, he attached himself to illustrious *rebbeim*. Ultimately, in the 1930's, he received *semichah* from the Hebrew Theological College in Skokie, Illinois.

In 1942 he began his career as a pulpit rabbi in Beth Eliezer, a shul in Chicago. There, Rabbi Garelick was particularly concerned with providing a substantive and meaningful education for the children of his community. But more than anything, he was determined that his *own* two children would remain steadfast in their *frumkeit*. My grandmother recalls that when they lived in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, she would have to get up an hour early each morning so that her father could teach her *Chumash* and *Kriyah*. She remembers that he wouldn't even let her drink a glass of water in the home of a friend who wasn't kosher. And how he insisted that she say every word of the *bentching* - before she even knew the song! Each time I listen to Bubby speak, I am impressed that she does not resent her strict upbringing. On the contrary, she glows with pride as she sums up her father's approach to life:

**Rabbi Philip L. Garelick, Chicago,
Named Director of Jewish Center**

**Will Conduct First Service
Friday; Succeeds Irving
B. Faden.**

Rabbi Philip L. Garelick, Chicago, has been named as director of the Tri-City Jewish center to succeed Rabbi Irving B. Faden who has entered war service work.

Rabbi Garelick has been rabbi for the Congregation Beth Eliezer in Chicago. His first services at the Center will be conducted next Friday night.

He was graduated from the Hebrew Theological College of Chicago, having studied at the Mesifita Trah Vodaath and the Rabbinical college Nei Israel in Baltimore, Md. His secular education was received at the University of Baltimore and the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago.

Rabbi Garelick is a member of the executive board of the Rabbinical Council of America, a member of the Round Table of Christians and Jews and is secretary of the Chicago Rabbinical committee for the army and navy. He has served as civilian chap-



RABBI GARELICK.

lain of the Gardner General army hospital.

The new Center director, who is married, is a member of the executive committee of the Jewish National fund and a member of the executive board of the Miz-

**D. M. Synagogue
Has New Rabbi**

Selection of Rabbi Philip L. Garelick to serve as associate rabbi of Congregation Bethel Jacob synagogue was announced Saturday by the board of trustees of the congregation.

Rabbi Garelock, a graduate of the Hebrew Theological College of Chicago, has occupied pulpits in Chicago and Rock Island, Ill.

In Rock Island, he occupied the

pulpit of the Tri-City Jewish Center; was actively affiliated with the Zionist organization Bnai Brith and the Conference of Christians and Jews.

He served as guest lecturer at Augustana college and was civilian chaplain of Schick General hospital at Clinton, Ia., and associate chaplain at Mayor General hospital at Galesburg, Ill.

Rabbi Garelick has assumed his duties with the Des Moines congregation and plans to bring his wife and 2-year-old daughter to Des Moines soon.

**R' Philip L. Garelick
Rochester NY
June 1913-June 1953**



“You gotta do what you gotta do. This is *halachah* - follow it! We don't discuss it, it's black and white.” But then, says Bubby wistfully, ‘he would remind us how lucky we were to have Torah and *Shabbos*. We grew up knowing they were gifts from *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Every school I went to, every decision I made was with this in mind: “this is what your father would want.” We knew how he would feel; that Torah was the answer to everything.’

Rabbi Garelick teaching students at the Hebrew School in Chicago

Rabbi Garelick giving a Hebrew class to the children of Des Moines (Circled: Bubby Felise)



מאפלה לאורה

From Darkness to Light: Redemption



Rivka Hakimi



My father, Ramtin Hakimi, first row, second from the left, with his classmates in Tehran, Iran. Circa 1979



My father arriving as a refugee to Vienna in 1987 after smuggling illegally across the border from Iran to Pakistan.



My father reunited with his Baba after seven years of separation. New York, 2010

It was a star studded night in March of 1987. My father, Ramtin Hakimi, lay very still at the back of a pickup truck which would bring him and thirteen other Iranian boys to freedom. The Hakimis had spent nine long years trying to make life work under the new regime. They loved their life and culture. My father's mother, Setareh Tabibi, had been raised in Kordestan, Iran, the last Aramaic-speaking community in Persia. Her husband, Parviz Hakimi, hailed from *Shushan Habirah*, the site of the Purim miracle. The thought of leaving their homeland pained them. But ever since the Revolution of 1979, day-to-day living had become harder for the Jews of Iran. When my fifteen-year-old father received his school's graduation gift, it was different from everyone else's. The book, entitled *Why I Converted to Islam* left no question: it was time to escape. At the age of sixteen, clutching a small bag and some money he had sewn into his shirt, my father left his family in Teheran and set out on the risky trip to Vienna. Eight months later, he arrived at American shores. For the next three years, his mother worked hard to obtain the necessary papers to join him. The Iranian authorities were nobody's fool; they doubted that she was going to visit her sick mother, and refused to issue a passport. But Mamoni was resourceful. She



My father with Rav Ovadia Yosef, Yeshiva University, New York, 2010



Mamoni, Setareh Tabibi, with her family. Holding the baby is her mother, Malka Tabibi. Tabriz Iran 1956

remembered a former science student of hers at the University of Tehran, a young man related to the Ayatollah Khomeini. He intervened, and the long awaited documents were issued. At a hefty price. Her husband Parviz, my Baba, guaranteed her return by signing himself into custody until she would come back.

In 1991, Mamoni and her two daughters, Ramona



Mamoni, first from the right, at Tabriz University, circa 1970, before the revolution, note the uncovered hair of the women.

and Rhonda, boarded a plane bound for Vienna. From there, they continued on to JFK airport, where they were reunited with my father. It was a moment of joy, dampened by the absence of their husband and father. It was hard to imagine how they would free him from the bondage of the Islam Republic.

Three years later, in 1994, their dream came true. *Harav Ovadiah Yosef zt"l* was invited to address the Yeshiva University student body. My father, who was studying there, managed to squeeze his way up to the front of the line. When he was in earshot of the chief rabbi, he spoke the words: *Ratziti lekabel berachah mei'Harav. Abba sheli asir b'Paras.* 'I was hoping to receive the Rav's blessing; my father is a captive in Persia.' Rav Ovadia, who was about to shake hands with Yeshiva University President Norman Lamm, heard these words and whisked my father away to a private room. A number of detailed questions were asked and answered, and then the two men cried together. A few minutes later the Rav pronounced the words, *Al tid'ag - Abba yavo!*, 'Don't worry, your father will come!' Twenty three hours later my grandfather received a passport, and a short time afterward the entire Hakimi family was together in the US.



After the revolution, Mamoni, second from the right, with her colleagues at the Tehran university, all forced to wear hijabs to cover their hair, circa 1985

Forging a Future



Bracha Lewittes

The shades were drawn in the Garber home in Vilna. It was Friday night, and Rabbi Garber had ruled that his daughter Bracha could forge a passport. Only she, whose handwriting was fine and gentle, had the skill to transform the well-worn document they had purchased into one that would bring her brother Yisroel to safety. Knowing that *pikuach nefesh* trumped nearly every *mitzvah*, Bracha sat down to the task, but insisted that the curtains be closed to conceal her *chilul Shabbos* from public view. Her efforts were successful, and her brother was able to leave Lithuania before the Nazi invasion. Bracha and her husband,

Rav Betzalel Kajanowski, and their two daughters, joined the Mirrer Yeshiva, where preparations were well underway for the long journey that would bring them through Russia to Kobe, Japan, and ultimately to Shanghai, China.

Shortly after their arrival in Shanghai, Bracha sought to provide Jewish education and spiritual inspiration for the daughters of the Mirrer families, who had no place in the *yeshiva*. She began to teach a few of them informally, and before long was asked to be the principal of a grass-roots *Bais Yaakov*, which



Bracha Garber-Kadin surrounded by her students at Bais Yaakov, Shanghai 1943. To her left is her niece, Rebbetzin Esther Rogow- Bakst

educated girls of all ages until 1946 when the Mirrer Yeshiva left Shanghai. Bracha and her family traveled to America, and settled on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where they became close neighbors of Rav Moshe Feinstein. She acquired a formal teacher's certificate, and continued to teach at Bais Yaakov of the Lower East Side, a school of great renown established by the brother she had saved, Rav Yisroel Garber.

Bracha Garber Kajanowski was my great-grandmother and I am, at once, humbled and proud to carry her name.



Rav Eliyahu Bentzion Garber and Rebbetzin Rochel Garber, nee Lebowitz, (Sister of Rav Boruch Ber Lebowitz) Both were murdered in Ponary forest in the outskirts of Vilna in 1941.



Still photos extracted from a rare movie capturing the shtetl life of Horodok in 1933. The movie was shot by David Shapiro, originally a native of Horodok, who came from the US to visit his family.

Bracha Garber-Kadin (middle) with her mother, Rebbetzin Rochel Garber (right) Horodok 1933



L-R: Rebbitzin Rochel Garber, Chienna Garber-Kossowsky, Zalman Garber, Bracha Garber-Kadin

Glass Gems



Shani Brody

As the Great Depression intensified during the 1930's, multitudes of people in New York City lost their fortunes and were forced to declare bankruptcy. In turn, many of the charities and institutions which depended on them had to close up shop. But Reb Shlomo Ze'ev Yosef Glass, my great-great-grandfather, was among the fortunate ones whose businesses continued to thrive, and the kind ones who carried the financial burden of Yeshiva *Torah Vodaath* through those cruel and depressing years.

About a decade later, his grandson, Yehuda Yudel (Jules) Brody, was ready for pre-school. Reb Shlomo

realized that the Crown Heights Jewish community was in dire need of a high-caliber elementary school, one that would promote the same values as the gold-standard *yeshivos*, Chaim Berlin and *Torah Vodaath*. So he made it happen. Meetings were held, a board was organized, and the Yeshiva of Eastern Parkway officially opened its doors with a preschool class in 1944. My foresightful ancestor was the founder and president.

The main attraction of the new *yeshiva* was its faculty of illustrious *rebbeim*. Rabbi Shlomo Prager, private rebbe to my grandfather when he was six, was



The first class of Yeshiva of Eastern Parkway. My grandfather is on the third row up, second boy from the right

the first hiree. In time, he distinguished himself as a phenomenal and beloved eighth grade *rebbe*, and was very quickly promoted when his eighth-graders agreed to enroll in the new *mesivta* only if Rabbi Prager would move up with them! Of course, for my classmates and me, Rabbi Prager's greatest gift to Jewish education was his renowned son, Rabbi Mordechai Prager *shlita*, treasured *rav* and revered *posek* of Manhattan High School. When I asked *our* Rabbi Prager to share his memories of the Yeshiva of Eastern Parkway, he waxed nostalgic: 'It was a *shem davar* in the *yeshiva* world... so many *talmidei chachamim* and *roshei yeshivos* came out of that *yeshiva*... Reb Shlomo Glass dedicated every free moment to [insuring] the success of the *yeshiva*. He was a great *ba'al derech erez*t, and truly understood *kavod haTorah*.'

In time, there was a change in the Crown Heights demographics, and the Yeshiva of Eastern Parkway was forced to close its doors. Nevertheless, to this day, its many preeminent graduates continue to have an impact on Jewish communities across the country. All because of a man of vision and action who committed all of his resources - intellectual, emotional, and financial - to providing Jewish children with a stellar education, and love for our *mesorah*. He may have been a Glass, but will forever be a diamond in our family's treasure chest.



R. Shlomo Glass with my grandfather at his bar mitzvah on October 15, 1953



Rav Hutner sitting with R. Shlomo Glass to his right and Rabbi Eliezer Zev Brody to his left at a function of Mesivtas Chaim Berlin

On the Front Lines



Bruria Schwartz

I've always known that Yehuda Cooper, my maternal great-grandfather, served as a soldier in the US Army during WWII. As an immigrant from Poland, he arrived in the United States fleeing the Nazis, only to be sent back to the front lines in Europe, where he was wounded in battle and won a Purple Heart medal. I am so proud of Zaida Cooper and what his story represents.

Except that none of that is true.

My genealogy research debunked this mythological image of Zaida Cooper. Through archival research, analyzing primary sources, and numerous conversations with my grandmother, I learned the truth. Zaida Cooper was born in Poland in 1919. After his mother's death,



*Zaida Yehuda Cooper
and Rivka Cooper*

he and his brother, Isaac, traveled to America to reunite with their father, Yosef Michel Krupinsky. They arrived in 1928, when Zaida was only eight, long before the rise of the Nazis. And, while Zaida Cooper did serve in the US Army during WWII, he was stationed very far from active combat, in the Quartermaster Unit. There he was charged with assigning duties to the soldiers, as well as managing logistics of supplies on the front lines. Perhaps most shocking to me of all was the fact that Zaida Cooper's purple heart, a prestigious medal awarded for injuries sustained in battle, was a total fabrication. Instead, I found records of Zaida's Bronze Star medal, awarded to members of the military for exemplary service.

My disappointment over the alleged purple heart soon turned into pride when I discovered his accomplishments on the home front. He was recruited to the front lines to spearhead the battle for Jewish education. Zaida Cooper's wife's uncle, Yisrael Jacobson, was trying to open a Chabad girls' school in Crown Heights. He needed a principal. Zaida Cooper wasn't a principal. He had no educational background and none of the skills required for curriculum development. What he did have, however, was experience as an organizer and a salesman. Jacobson needed someone to "sell" the idea of a Bais Rivka School to parents. Zaida Cooper was the right man for the job. And so, he became the first principal of the Bais Rivka School for Girls in Crown Heights, beginning a legacy of education that has lasted three generations, and counting.



*Zaida Cooper's military
award, c. 1943*



*Zaida Cooper while in
the US Army, c. 1940.*

Above All Tides



Sylvie Jacobowitz



Saul Sigler, my great grandfather, before he escaped from Galitza, Poland

In 1928, at the age of 25, my Grandpa Saul climbed onto the back of a swimmer whom he had hired with his last pennies to transport him across the Danube River. With one arm tightly gripping the swimmer's neck, and the other raised high above the water and clutching his beloved *tefillin* bag, he set out from his hometown of Kozowa, Galicia. He was hoping to join his sister Basha in Canada. He had high hopes of making enough money to send for the many family members he had left behind. Unfortunately, all sixty of them perished before he was able to do so. The *tefillin*, however, survived, and he donned them every day. More importantly, he never let go of the rich *mesorah* they represented; he elevated his sacred heritage above all tides, and perpetuated it in his new home, in the

city of Toronto.

In 1938, as Europe was on the brink of war, Saul Sigler applied to the Canadian Department of Immigration requesting immigration papers for eight of his family members back in Poland. His request was firmly denied by Frederick Charles Blair, a powerful government official and rabid anti-Semite, who dismissed him harshly, saying, "Why don't you people learn to live with your neighbors wherever you are? Why are you hated?" Saul was undeterred. Knowing that under Blair's immigration policies the only Jews who stood a chance were the rare ones who owned farmland, my great-grandfather traveled to the northern part of Toronto, and purchased two farms, one for each of his siblings and their families. The cost of these properties was about twenty five thousand dollars, practically all he had. From the remaining money, he bought eight tickets to cover his family's journey to Canada. Tragically, both literally and metaphorically, they missed the boat. Protocol demanded that each ticket be attached to a permit signed by the prime minister, who was traveling at the time with the King and Queen of England. By the time he returned to Canada, it was too late. My great-grandfather had already received news that his sister Shaindel's husband, Yakov Shimon Frank, had been murdered in Buchenwald. Desperate to save his remaining relatives, Saul resubmitted the application, this time for seven. Blair refused to issue permits for Shaindel's family on the grounds that now the main breadwinner of the family was deceased and could no longer assume financial responsibility for his family. And while Saul's brother Chaim and family were given permission to immigrate to Canada, they refused to leave his sister Shaindel alone. Ultimately, all of them were killed in Auschwitz. Saul's heart was broken, but he would not allow himself to become a broken man.

Fiercely loyal to his *chassidish* Galitzianer roots, he hustled to earn a living. He was ambitious, and rose from being a milkman to establishing a thriving real estate company called Parkway Realty. His success in business was impressive; his accomplishments in building a bustling Jewish infrastructure in Toronto are legendary. Shaarei Shamayim, the largest shul in Canada, president. JIAS, which provided aid to Jewish immigrants, president. Gemilus Chassadim

Organization, president. COR Kashrus, chairman. Ner Yisrael Toronto, founder. CHAT Day School, founder and vice president. The colorful mosaic of Canadian Jewish causes and institutions encompasses many jewels skillfully set by my great-grandfather. His is a precious legacy of commitment to the *Klal* to which I am an heiress. I will work hard to hold it high above all tides.



The tefillin bag and yarmulke belonging to Saul Sigler, with which he swam across the Danube River in 1928

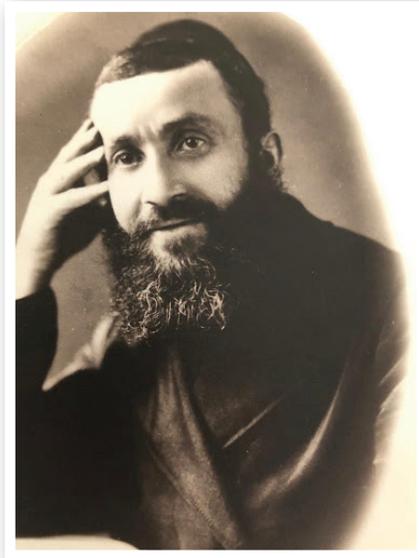
פה מפיק מרגליות

A Mouth Dripping With Pearls



Chanie Malek

As *Shabbos Shuva* of 1925 drew near, the stone walls of Jerusalem were plastered with posters announcing an abundance of *derashah* opportunities in the various *Yerushalmi* shuls and *shtieblach*. Each highlighted a noted *rav* and orator. One was different, and raised some eyebrows. It advertised a *derashah* to be given by a young *bochur* named Dov Berish Kin, a newcomer to *Yerushalayim* from Radin. In that debut *shiur*, he wowed his mesmerized audience with his eloquence, wit, and



Rav Dov Beresh Kin

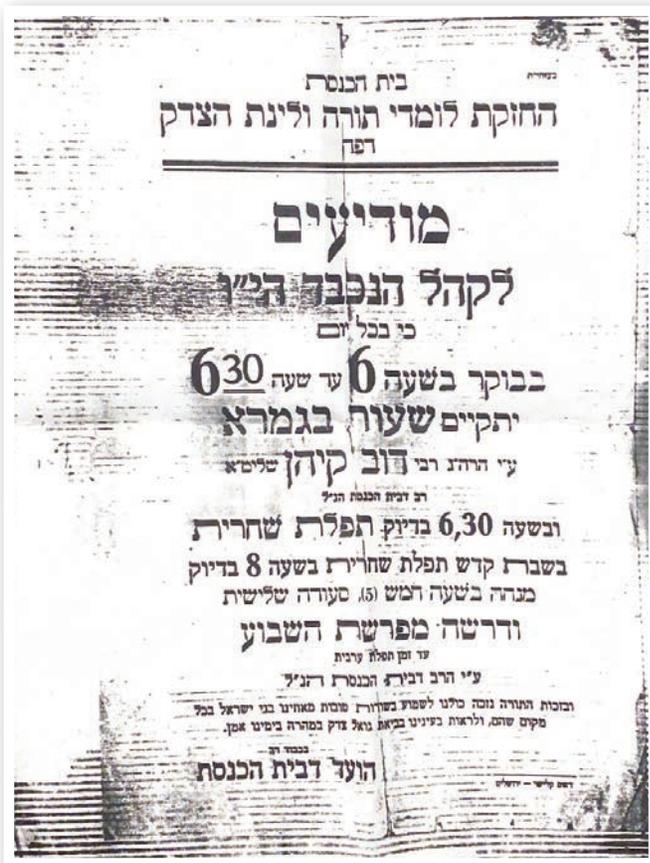
erudition, and it was not long before he had made his way to the front line of *darshanim* in the Holy City. That *bochur* was my great-grandfather, and that *derashah* was the beginning of the fulfillment of a *berachah* he had received from the saintly Chofetz Chaim just before leaving Europe.

It is hard to know why Saba moved to Israel. Rarely did a *yeshiva bochur* possessed of his talents in inter-war Europe feel compelled to do so. But this twenty-seven year old budding scholar at the Yeshiva of Radin

made up his mind. After receiving his parents' approval, he asked his revered and beloved *rosh yeshiva* for permission to make *aliyah*. The *Chofetz Chaim* gave him his blessing, together with the explicit *berachah* that Dov's natural eloquence would positively influence *Klal Yisrael*.

Because of his conviction, Dov was the only member of the highly regarded Kin family in Lodz to survive the war. Fortunately, his rebbe's blessing was realized in great measure.

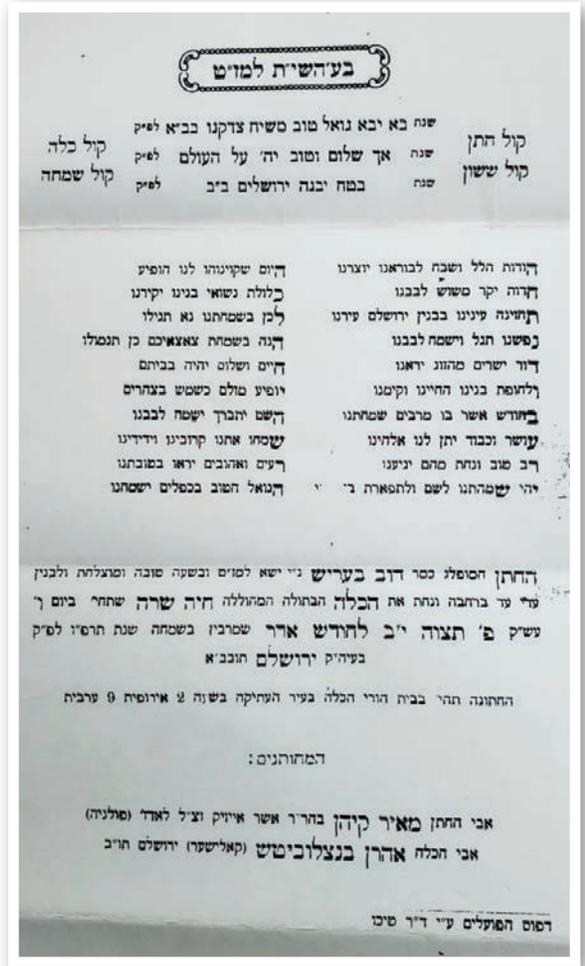
After his marriage to my *savta*, Chaya Sara Benzlovitch, in 1926, Saba was asked to be a *rav* in *Nachlas Shiva*, a courtyard neighborhood just outside the Old City. He remained there until the end of WW II, when they moved to Tel Aviv in search of a more substantial income. But the rewards of *rabbanus* are often more spiritual than material, and money was scarce for this young family.



Flyer Announcing Saba's Daily Shiur



*Saba and My Savta, Chaya Sara
Weeks After Their Marriage*



Saba and Savta's Wedding Invitation



Saba in Vienna, 1924

What Saba Kin lacked in cash, though, was made up in spades in *bitachon*. One Wednesday, Chaya Sarah was worried about preparing for *Shabbos*. Dov assured her there was no need for concern, ‘*zorg zuch nit*, Chaya Sarah, don’t worry...’ Later that afternoon, he returned home with five pounds, enough money for the rest of the week. Amazingly, a man had stopped him in the street and begged him, “Rav Kin! We need someone to give a *shiur* in our shul. Can we count on you?” Dov agreed, and was offered five pounds on the spot. He protested but the stranger insisted on paying in advance.

Ultimately, Saba used his oratory talents as a collector for *Yeshivas Bais Yosef Novardok*. For years, he traveled the world over with Rav Hillel Vitkind, the *rosh yeshiva*, who compared their relationship to that of Moshe and Aharon. Saba would convey Rav

Vitkind’s thoughts in words that moved his listeners to contribute. The two journeyed together to Vienna, South America, South Africa, and Canada. This became Saba’s primary source of income, and while he enjoyed visiting museums and libraries in every country, his greatest joy was to return to his precious family and his beloved land.

In 1955, Saba and Savta decided to move to America to be closer to their children, who had by then settled in Brooklyn. His heart, though, never left his cherished *Eretz Yisrael*. Often, he would say to my grandmother, “why should I live in America on Church Street when I can live on *Kikar Shabbos* in Israel?” And true to his principles, they returned to *Yerushalayim* in 1967, where he spent the remainder of his days absorbed in the study of Torah.



Saba and Savta's Mandatory Palestine Naturalization Certificate 1925

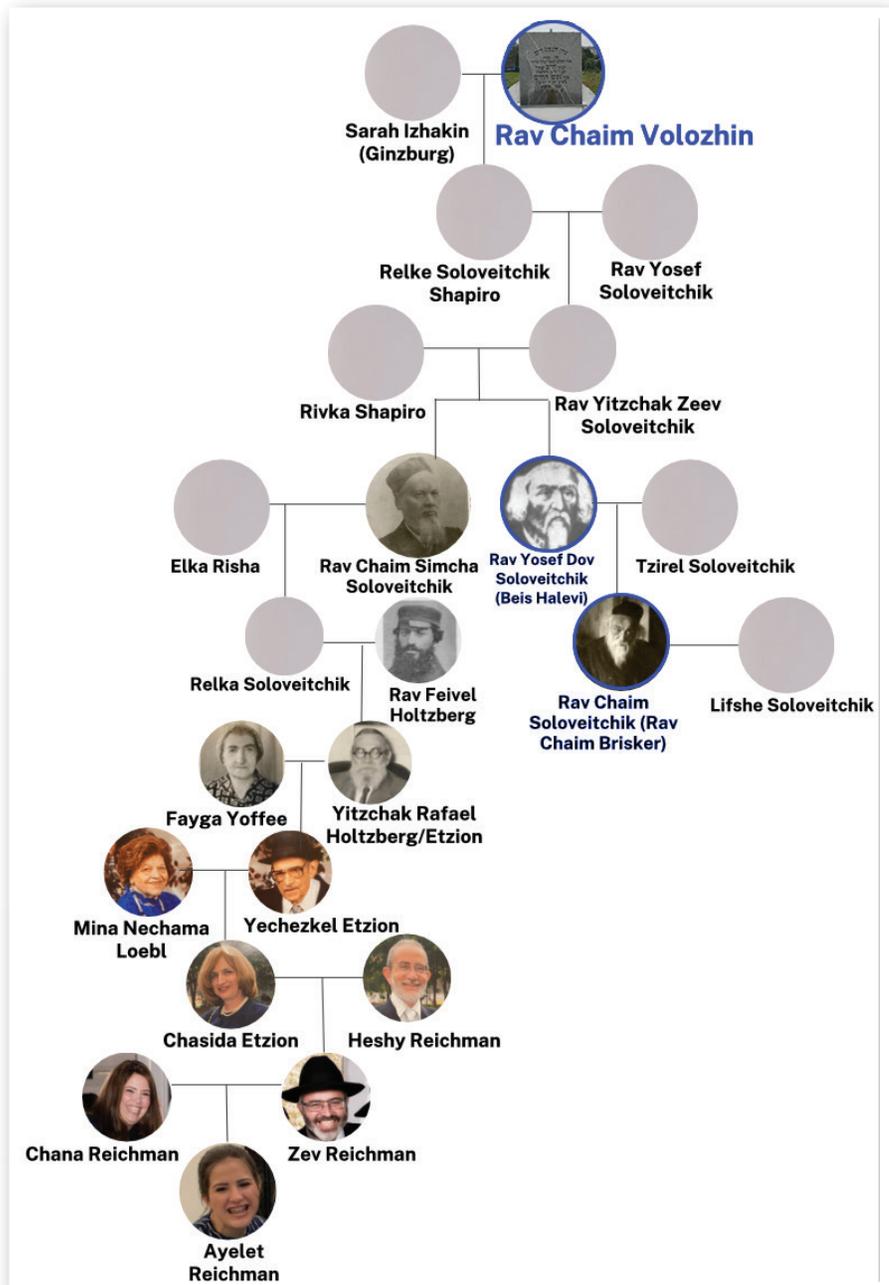
Ma'aseh Avos Siman L'banim: Ancestral Treasures



Ayelet Reichman

I sat in class and the penetrating words of Rav Chaim Volozhiner washed over me. *Ma'aseh avos siman l'banim*, he explained, means that my ancestors have planted within me the power to accomplish lofty goals, and to overcome unthinkable difficulties. What we now call spiritual DNA. What I did not realize was that Rav Chaim *MiVolozhin* was, in fact, my ancestor. I was aware that, somehow, I was related to the *Beis Halevi*, but could not have told you how.

And then came genealogy. A humbling journey of discovery. One that connected *me* to legendary leaders of our people. My *Savta* carefully opened her ancestral treasure trove, and revealed to me priceless gems, each one a tangible link in our multigenerational chain.





Yechezkel Etzion

Savta's father, Yechezkel Etzion, was forced to leave his beloved *Eretz Yisrael* for medical resources in America. But his passion for the land of our *Avos* never waned, and the poetry of his soul-stirring will is a gemstone which we treasure.

אל תכרו את קברי בגלות
Don't dig my grave in the Diaspora
לא אוכל בה לבא למנוחות
I will not be able to rest there
החזירוני אל ארץ אבות
Return me to the land of my fathers

Indeed, Yechezkel was buried on *Har Hamenuchos* in *Yerushalayim*.

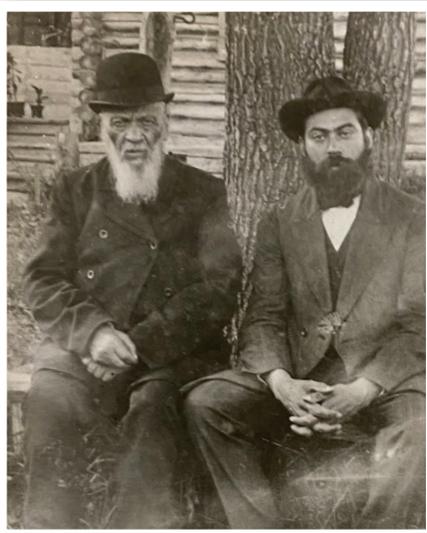
Savta's grandfather, Yitzchak Rafael Holtzberg, purchased a precious silver bowl for twenty five rubles. He had received the money as a wedding gift from his cousin, Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, known to many of us as Rav Chaim Brisker. An heirloom I knew nothing about. I was, quite literally, bowled over.

Yitzchak Rafael lost his mother when he was 12 days old. After her passing, at the recommendation of Rav Yisroel Salanter, his father, Rav Feivel Holtzberg, immigrated to France to serve as a *shochet*. The young orphan remained in Kovno. He was taken in by his grandfather, Rav Chaim Simcha Soloveichik, who insisted on raising his only grandchild.

Yitzchak Rafael and Rav Chaim Simcha eventually parted ways, but only geographically. The grandson left Kovno to learn in Kharkov and then Telshe. The grandfather traveled throughout Russia doing business and giving advice. Yet he maintained a warm and loving relationship with Yitzchak Rafael throughout.



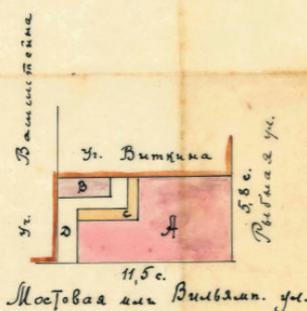
A sugar bowl gifted from Rav Chaim Brisker to his cousin, Yitzchak Rafael Holtzberg on the occasion of his wedding 112 years ago.



Rav Chaim Simchah with his grandson, Yitzchak Rafael Holtzberg

**Translation of the Russian Text:
copy of the site plan
Kobrynskoj city appraisal commission of the site
belonging to Itsk Volfy Soloveychek on Vilyampolskoj
str #3 or on Rubnoy str #4**

Копія ситуаціоннаго плану
Ковенской городской оцѣночной Комиссии участка
принадлеж. Ицки Вольфу Соловейчику по
Вильямпольской ул. №3 или по Рубной ул. №4



Описание строений по плану:
А Камень, двусвѣт. домъ
Б " " одност. домъ
С Деревянк. пристѣп.
Д пустырь.

С Подлинныя выписи
Искандеръ Голубъ
3/20 20.

Планъ внесенъ въ оригиналы
Искандеръ Голубъ
Civil. Inžinieris
Statybais Skyrizaus Vedėjas
5/10 23



Among the precious jewels I have only recently discovered are century-old letters, which were long lost to our family, and returned to my father just six years ago. Their contents testify to that love. Included, as well, among those letters was the deed to a lot in Kovno purchased by Rav Yitzchok Zeev Soloveitchik, the father of Rav Chaim Simchah and his renowned brother, the Beis Halevi. Rav Yitzchok Zeev’s passport was an additional treasure.

As my research progressed, my father took me back three more generations and showed me that I am actually a direct descendant of Rav Chaim of Volozhin. I was shocked. And then I wondered.

Why didn’t I know? Why didn’t my parents and

grandparents highlight our impressive *yichus* as they raised us? Surely they are proud.

And this is where I learned the greatest lesson. From my Savta. Who believes that knowing we come from giants is nothing, until we live their legacies. In her words, “*yichus* is only meaningful when you continue the chain, when you do something with it. Otherwise, it’s a mere decoration.”

It is in this spirit that I, and all of my classmates, have spent a year focused on the actions and events of our personal *avos*. With great humility, and a *tefilah* that we maintain the brilliance of the jewels they have bequeathed to us. *Ma’aseh avos siman le’banim. V’chein yehi ratzon.*

כוס של ברכה



Mindy Weiss

In 1944, Mindel Maged boarded a train with five of her siblings and her parents, as they left the life they loved in Teitch, Hungary, to begin their long journey toward Palestine. The Nazis had not yet invaded Hungary but the winds of war were blowing, and thankfully, the Mageds had obtained visas. Still, their future was one big question mark. Mindy's father, Levi Yitzchak, looked sad. Just before leaving home, he had asked his mother for permission to take the heirloom bequeathed to him by his father before his death. Levi Yitzchak believed that it would afford him

an extra measure of *shemirah*. His mother's reluctance to part with it, though, was clear; she wanted to keep the heirloom close-by until the end of her days. And so, Levi Yitzchak left without it.

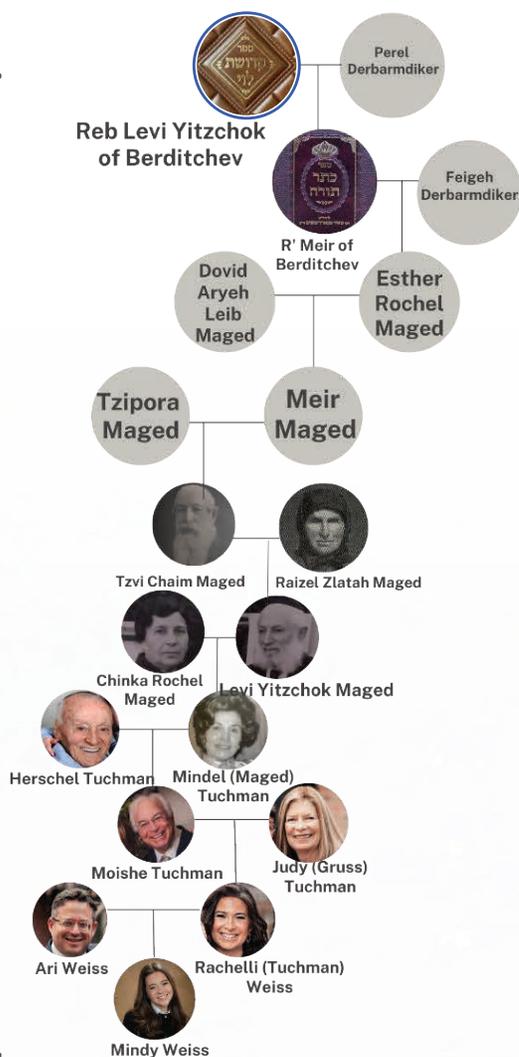
Suddenly, through the window of their train car, Mindel caught a glimpse of her grandmother. In her hand was a silver goblet, the cherished inheritance! Quickly but firmly she handed the *becher* to her son, together with a farewell blessing: 'May this *kos* serve as protection for all those who embark on a journey!'

That was the last time Levi Yitzchok Maged saw his mother. Only a few months later, she was deported to Auschwitz and murdered there. And it was that last-minute decision of my ancestor, to run to the station just before the train took off, that has kept that *becher* in my family to this very day.

Why, one might ask, are we so attached to a *kos*? To be sure, it is not for the value of its silver. Rather, it is for the pride we take in our ancestor who once possessed it: the author of the *Kedushas Levi*, and the legendary *Saneigoran shel Yisrael*, Defender of the Jewish People, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev.

The first time that a *kos* passed between my father and mother was under their *chuppah*. That night they drank from a goblet, brimming not only with wine, but also with the rich and finely-aged legacy of our *Zeide*, R' Levi Yitzchok . Twenty six

1740



2022

years earlier my grandparents shared that same *becher* under their *chuppah*, just as my great-grandparents had done in 1947. I imagine that each time, from some mysterious heavenly place, *The Berdichever's* kind and smiling eyes looked on with joy, as yet another generation held on to his *kos*, and more importantly, to the *mesorah* he had bequeathed them.

After Mindel's brother, Fischel Maged, inherited the cherished goblet, he went to great pains to have it transported overseas for all of my family's weddings. But with the passage of time, and the blessing of an ever expanding family, this long-standing custom has become way too difficult to maintain. And so, being able to trace my DNA back to that holy giant will no longer be a compelling enough merit to have the heirloom *kos* flown in for *my* wedding.

But do I really need the *becher* to connect to my

great ancestor? After the holocaust, when the remnants of our family were scattered far and wide, a descendant of the *Kedushas Levi*, Aron Maged, authored a *megillas yuchsin*, a book of pedigree. His goal was clearly stated: that the *Berdichever* descendants never lose sight of their prestigious heritage, and perpetuate it by maintaining the ways of their fathers.¹

And so, while I will be disappointed if the *kos* does not make its way to my own *chuppah*, its absence will not weaken my deep connection to the great *mesorah* I have inherited. How do I lay claim to that metaphysical inheritance? How do I earn my *yichus*? By attaching myself to the *Berdichever* mission and following the instructions of my wise and beloved grandfather, Moishe Tuchman: "We have no shortage of people who criticize other Jews. We need people to defend them. Be such a defender, and a good Jew."

ובהיטם על יחוסם ושורשם בטח יאחזו בדרכי האבות הקדושים 1



The Kos at the weddings of my cousin (2016), my parents (1997), my grandparents (1972)

An Ocean Apart



Shoshannah Ovitsh

One day in 1939, before the war broke out, Adolf Eichmann walked into the Frankel family's world-renowned Judaic book store in Vienna. He claimed to be a "Judaica expert" as he browsed through the sacred tomes. Suddenly, he approached the Frankels and coldly instructed them to pack up all the *seforim*. They would have twenty four hours to leave town, he assured them, as long as they left all of their valuable volumes behind for the Nazis. With heavy hearts, they abandoned fifty four crates of holy books, many of which were rare and priceless antiques. It was a devastating emotional and financial loss for the family, but it saved their lives.

Forced into immediate action, the proprietor of the store, my great-great grandfather, Zaidy Dovid Frankel, obtained visas for himself and all of his

children living in Vienna at the time. They escaped to Italy, then Cuba, and then America.

At this time, Zaidy Dovid's son, Zaidy Yoel Frankel, was in the United States on business from Vienna. His wife, Bobby Shifra, and their young daughter, Esther, had gone back to her hometown of Tarnobrzeg, Poland to visit her widowed father and siblings. It was comforting for her to spend time in the home she had enjoyed as a banker's daughter. But her sojourn quickly turned into a death trap as the Nazis invaded Poland in September of 1939. World War II began, and my great-grandparents, Bobby Shifra and Zaidy Yoel Frankel, were on opposite sides of the ocean. For the next three years, they communicated entirely through letters.



*Bobby Shifra c. 1927,
Tarnobrzeg, Poland*



*Zaidy Shabse and
Aunt Esther Frankel, Williamsburg, 1945.*

On September 17, Nazi troops gathered the Jewish families of the Tarnobrzec community for deportation. Bobby Shifra, Esther, her father and siblings fled eastward to the Soviet Union. Across the sea, Shifra's husband, Yoel, worked tirelessly to rescue Shifra and his daughter, Esther. He even moved from New York to Washington, D.C. for two years, in order to expedite the process. Finally, in 1941, his efforts paid off, and he succeeded in obtaining the necessary documents.

in Moscow, and then traveled by train to Vladivostok, a city on the Eastern coast of Russia. From there, they traveled to Yokohama, Japan by boat, and finally sailed to American shores. Amazingly enough, Rav Aharon Kotler was on their voyage. The ship arrived on *Erev Pesach*, April 10, 1941, and Rav Kotler's *talmidim* in the United States arranged for *sedarim* in San Francisco, which were attended by all the Jewish refugees on the boat. Bobby Shifra was among them.

Bobby Shifra and Aunt Esther picked up their visas

At that time, my great-grandmother was a young

List *fe*

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

ALL ALIENS arriving at a port of continental United States from a foreign port or a port of the insular possessions of the United States, and all aliens arriving at a port of said insular possessions from a foreign port, a port of continental United States (this sheet is for the listing of)

S. S. *M.S. Kamakura Maru* Passengers sailing from *Yokohama, Japan*, *March 27th, 1941*, 19

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		12		13		14		15			
										Country	City or town, State, Province or District	Insular Visa, Passport Visa, or Entry Permit number (This column for use of Government officials only)	Place	Date	Country	City or town, State, Province or District					
1	TAX	Frankel	Shifra	37	5	F	M	None	Yes	German English	Yes	Poland	Hebrew	Poland	Tarnobrzec	NOIV# 13	Moscow	3-6-1941	FORWARDED	Poland	Stanislaw
2		Frankel	Estera Ita	6	2	F	S	None	No	-----	No	Poland	Hebrew	Poland	Kartovitz	NOIV# 14	Moscow	3-6-1941	FORWARDED	Poland	Stanislaw
3	TAX	Goldmacher	Dvojra	23	10	F	S	None	Yes	Polish German	Yes	Poland	Hebrew	Poland	Pultusk	Polish QIV#5494	Moscow	3-3-1941	FORWARDED	Lithuania	Vilnius
4	TAX	Goldmacher	Syma	21	6	F	S	None	Yes	Polish German	Yes	Poland	Hebrew	Poland	Pultusk	Polish QIV#5494	Moscow	3-3-1941	FORWARDED	Lithuania	Vilnius
5	TAX	Gothajner	Jozer	34	M	M	Clerk	Polish	Yes	Poland	Hebrew	Poland	Hebrew	Poland	Zduvakska	89 3(S)AMOT	-----	3-10-1941	FORWARDED	Poland	Isell
6	TAX	Glass	Marian	28	10	M	M	Lawyer	Yes	German	Yes	Poland	Polish	Poland	Warsaw	Transit Certificate #675(3)	Yokohama	3-24-1941	FORWARDED	Lithuania	Wilno
7	TAX	Glass	Wanda	28	5	F	M	None	Yes	Polish German	Yes	Poland	Polish	Poland	Warsaw	Transit Certificate #685(3)	Yokohama	3-24-1941	FORWARDED	Lithuania	Wilno
8	TAX	Glass	Andrej	5	4	M	S	None	No	-----	No	Poland	Polish	Poland	Warsaw	Transit Certificate #685(3)	Yokohama	3-24-1941	FORWARDED	Lithuania	Wilno
9	TAX	Konig	Malva	28	9	F	S	Lawyer	Yes	Polish German	Yes	Poland	Polish	Poland	Warsaw	Transit Certificate #645(3)	Yokohama	3-26-1941	FORWARDED	Sweden	Uppsala
10	TAX	Konig	Malva	28	9	F	S	Lawyer	Yes	Polish German	Yes	Poland	Polish	Poland	Warsaw	Transit Certificate #645(3)	Yokohama	3-26-1941	FORWARDED	Sweden	Uppsala

THIS AND THE FOLLOWING LINES NOT USED

U.S. Immigration & Naturalization Service
 APR 4 1941 AM
 SH L LEAVE GRANTED

Shifra Frankel and her daughter Ita listed as passengers on board the Kamakura Maru. They boarded the ship in Yokohama, Japan and arrived in San Francisco in April 1941

List *20*

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

ALL ALIENS arriving at a port of continental United States from a foreign port or a port of the insular possessions of the United States, and all aliens arriving at a port of said insular possessions from a foreign port, a port of continental United States (this sheet is for the listing of)

S. S. *M.S. Kamakura Maru* Passengers sailing from *Yokohama, Japan*, *April 10th, 1941*, 19

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		12		13		14		15			
										Country	City or town, State, Province or District	Insular Visa, Passport Visa, or Entry Permit number (This column for use of Government officials only)	Place	Date	Country	City or town, State, Province or District					
1	TAX	Berthel	Esther	41	8	F	M	WIDOW	Yes	English	Yes	Switzerland	Hebrew	Switzerland	Basel	Polish Q # 2022	Stockholm	3-4-1941	FORWARDED	Sweden	Stockholm
2	TAX	Berthel	Esther	26	2	F	M	Wife	Yes	German Polish	Yes	Poland	Hebrew	Poland	Warsaw	NOIV# 120	Warsaw	3-7-1941	FORWARDED	Lithuania	Estuon
3	TAX	Berthel	Esther	41	8	F	M	WIDOW	Yes	English	Yes	Switzerland	Hebrew	Switzerland	Basel	Polish Q # 2022	Stockholm	3-4-1941	FORWARDED	Sweden	Stockholm
4	TAX	Berthel	Esther	26	2	F	M	Wife	Yes	German Polish	Yes	Poland	Hebrew	Poland	Warsaw	NOIV# 120	Warsaw	3-7-1941	FORWARDED	Lithuania	Estuon
5	TAX	Berthel	Esther	41	8	F	M	WIDOW	Yes	English	Yes	Switzerland	Hebrew	Switzerland	Basel	Polish Q # 2022	Stockholm	3-4-1941	FORWARDED	Sweden	Stockholm
6	TAX	Berthel	Esther	26	2	F	M	Wife	Yes	German Polish	Yes	Poland	Hebrew	Poland	Warsaw	NOIV# 120	Warsaw	3-7-1941	FORWARDED	Lithuania	Estuon
7	TAX	Berthel	Esther	41	8	F	M	WIDOW	Yes	English	Yes	Switzerland	Hebrew	Switzerland	Basel	Polish Q # 2022	Stockholm	3-4-1941	FORWARDED	Sweden	Stockholm
8	TAX	Berthel	Esther	26	2	F	M	Wife	Yes	German Polish	Yes	Poland	Hebrew	Poland	Warsaw	NOIV# 120	Warsaw	3-7-1941	FORWARDED	Lithuania	Estuon
9	TAX	Berthel	Esther	41	8	F	M	WIDOW	Yes	English	Yes	Switzerland	Hebrew	Switzerland	Basel	Polish Q # 2022	Stockholm	3-4-1941	FORWARDED	Sweden	Stockholm
10	TAX	Berthel	Esther	26	2	F	M	Wife	Yes	German Polish	Yes	Poland	Hebrew	Poland	Warsaw	NOIV# 120	Warsaw	3-7-1941	FORWARDED	Lithuania	Estuon

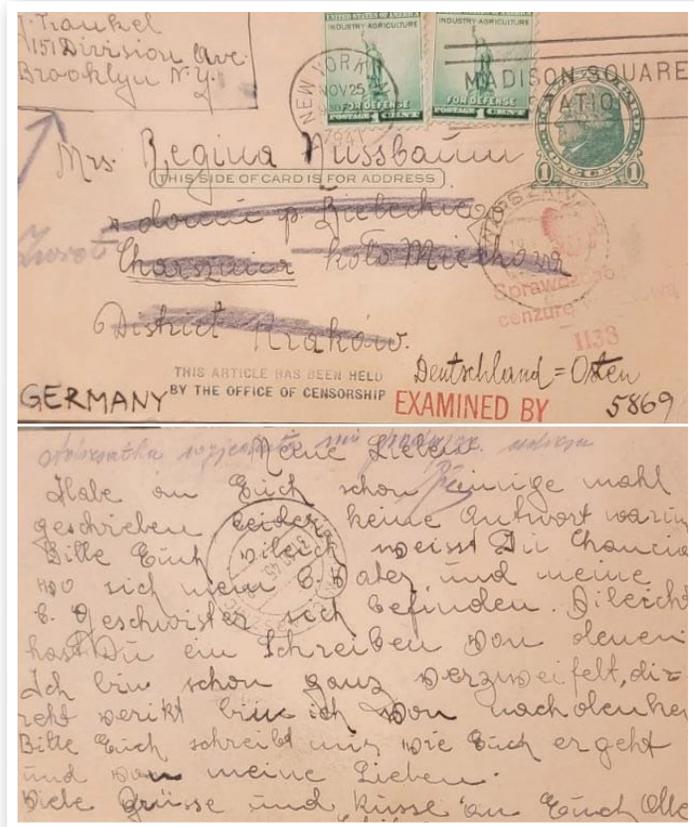
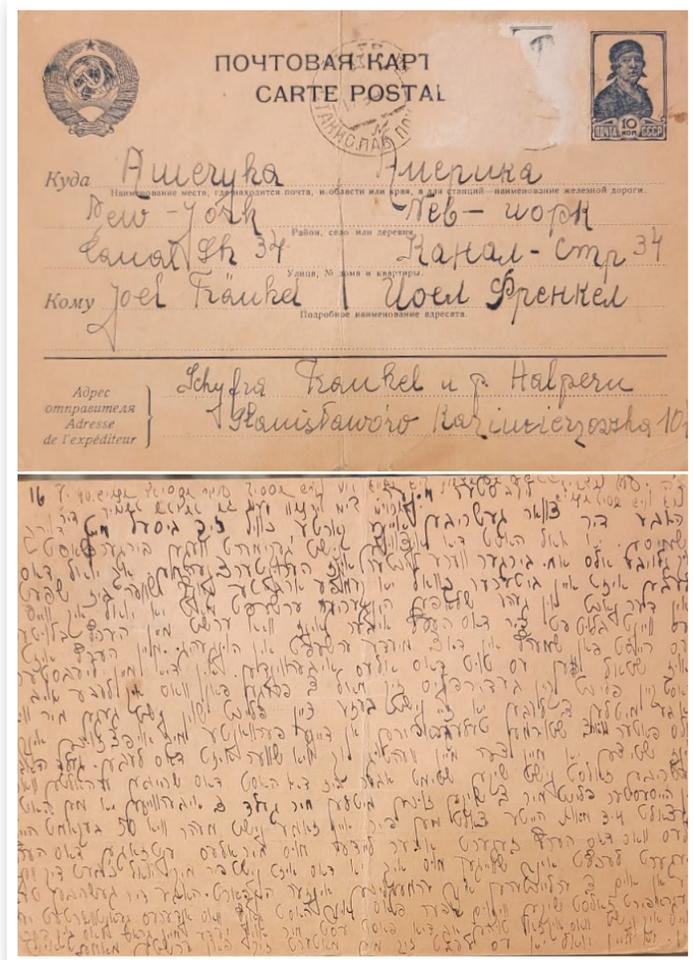
Rav Aron Kotler is also listed as a passenger on the same ship

mother from a small Chasidic town, who had no concept of the magnitude of Rav Aharon's scholarship or the sanctity of his character. During the journey it had become clear to her, from the reverence with which he was treated, that this was no ordinary rabbi. And yet, she, who was familiar only with Chasidic customs, was confused by some of Rav Ahron's behavior that *Pesach*. When he sat in his place as he recited the *kiddush* at the *sefer*, she assumed that he was unable to stand, and felt sorry for him. When she saw him eating *gebroychtz* during *shulchan oreich*, she could not make any sense of it at all, because to her that was as bad as eating *chometz* on *Pesach*. In her later years, though, she took great pride in having spent her first American *yom tov* with the saintly *gadol hador*.

Soon after, Bobby Shifra and Zaidy were finally reunited in Brooklyn. There, they had a second child, my grandfather Shabse. They were a truly loving couple; two people who had grown up in the lap of luxury, but were transplanted to a foreign continent where they lived a life of dire poverty. Zaidy Yoel, the erstwhile book merchant, washed floors until he found a civil service job. Bobby Shifra often bought her fruits and vegetables on credit until they scraped together the money to pay back. Once, they even sold Esther's beautiful new coat so that they could afford to make *Pesach*. But their spirits were never broken. They remained forever grateful that they were able, as many were not, to rebuild their lives after the war.

I am so proud to count myself among their treasures.

Postcards exchanged between Yoel Frankel and his wife Shifra in 1940-1941. Yoel was in New York working to get his wife and daughter out of Nazi occupied Poland. Note the German censorship stamp on the postcard sent to Poland.



Nine Out Of Ten



Rikki Klein

Nine out of ten. Almost perfect. But not quite.

Yankel, my great grandfather, was the oldest of the ten Katz children growing up in Ungvar, Czechoslovakia. On April 20, 1944, a month after the Germans occupied Hungary, the deportations of Jews began. With an hour to spare, Chaim and Chaya Katz called all of their ten children together and assigned a hiding place to each one for the war. Zeidy Yankel refused to leave his parents behind – and only when his mother threatened to take her own life, did he surrender to her will and leave. He never saw her again. He hid in a wine factory and then was smuggled to Slovakia where he took cover as a gentile until the Nazis tracked him down. They saw he had a *bris milah*, and sent him to Auschwitz.

Chana escaped to Budapest, where she was ultimately caught, thrown into jail, and also sent to Auschwitz. She, though, jumped out of the train that was en route to the concentration camp, and successfully made her way back to Budapest.

Joe left for Switzerland before the war and lived there on his own during the war years; he tried valiantly to help the rest of his family escape.

Louis was smuggled into Slovakia and concealed himself as a gentile named Horvath. There, because of his flourishing brush business, he became a member of high society, and sent food packages to Jews who were in hiding. He was eventually caught and sent to Theresienstadt concentration camp, but they never discovered that he was a Jew.

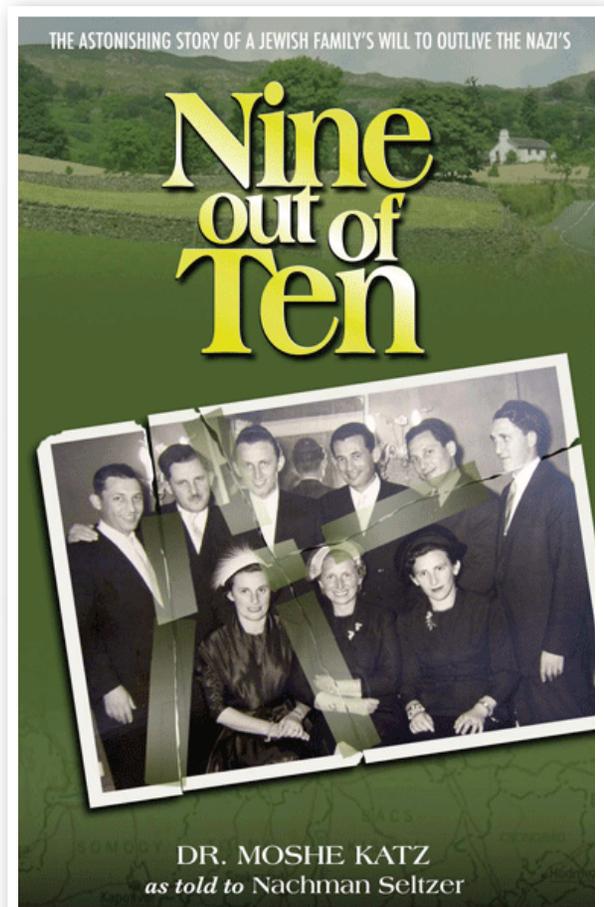
Terry hid in a pigsty until she escaped deep into Hungary where she, too, posed as a gentile. She wore a cross pendant around her neck, but hid a tiny *mezuzah* in the pack of cigarettes she always carried with her.

Manca escaped to Slovakia where she was a cook and nanny for the German military who were installing a new railway line there.

Sonny hid with nineteen other Jews in a wine cellar, until he was able to escape to Budapest. In Budapest he hid in plain sight as a police officer with a

The cover of a book written by Dr. Moshe Katz, my great-great uncle about the family's Holocaust experience.

The photo shows the surviving nine Katz siblings at the wedding of their brother Yisroel. Standing: Moshe, Yankel, Yisroel, Joe, Louis, Sonny Sitting: Manca, Chana, Terry



uniform he found in a flea market.

Moishe hid on a farm for a few months before escaping to Budapest where he lived disguised as a gentile. His apartment overlooked the Danube River, where truckloads of Jewish children were infamously unloaded, shot and drowned. He witnessed this barbaric event and made a deal with G-d: 'Hashem,' he said, 'if you let me survive this war, I will reproduce the souls of the Jewish children who were lost.'

'The youngest child, my uncle Sruei, was only 15 years old when he was sent to the Ghetto of Ungvar with his parents and Pinchas, and he and a small group of boys would sneak out to the bakeries for bread to distribute to the Jews there. They were ultimately taken to Auschwitz.

Chaim and Chaya, the parents of the ten children, along with Pinchas, their second-to-oldest son, his wife Chana, and their daughters Malky and Shaindel, all perished in Auschwitz. Pinchas was the only child out of the ten who did not survive the war. All that remains of his family is one photo of Malky.

After the war was over, the nine out of ten surviving Katz children who were scattered

across Europe found each other and went to Paris. In time, they emigrated to America and were instrumental in rebuilding Jewish life in the Five Towns.

My uncle Moishe was true to his word about the Jewish children who were murdered on the Danube River, and with the involvement of my Zaidy, he founded my elementary school, Torah Academy for Girls, better known as TAG, as well as other *yeshivos* and institutions. I am grateful for the *nissim* that were bestowed upon my family, and take pride in all they have accomplished for *Klal Yisrael* by seeing Moishe's 'deal' to fruition. I aspire to build upon their, and now my, rich and meaningful legacy.

Salvadoran citizenship certificate obtained by Joe for his parents and older brother. Tragically, they perished in Auschwitz.



The Life She Never Shared



Zahava Schwartz

“We walked very fast, without having a definite idea where to go. Or maybe we knew. Our way was leading to freedom. That wonderful feeling around us. I felt that freedom must be an end in itself. Something you cannot express but your soul longs for it.”

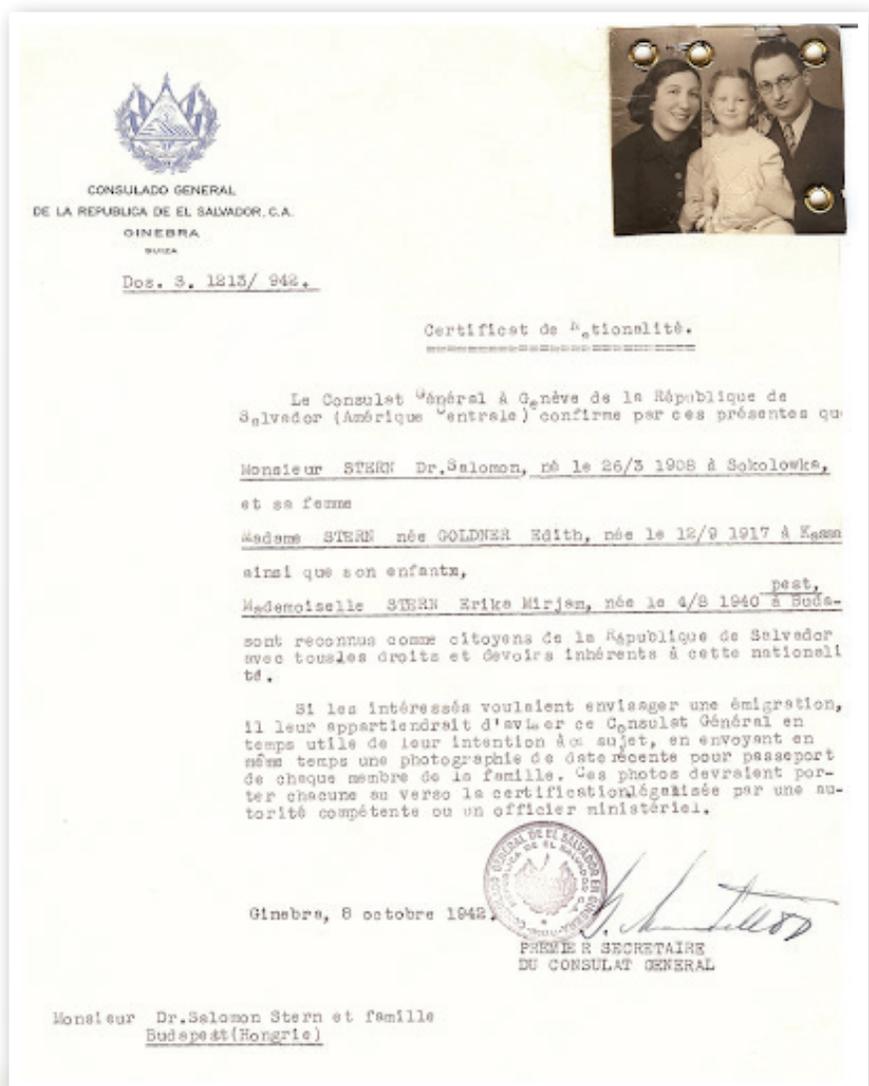
These are the words of Grandma Edith. To me, she was the loving great-grandmother everyone dreams of: always welcoming us with freshly baked cookies in the kitchen. She passed away when I was only six years old, and though I had often seen the number on her arm, A21347, I didn't know its significance or the courage it represented. At some point, she wrote an account of her experiences in the Holocaust, but kept it hidden in her closet along with pictures of her two children and her first husband, all of whom died in the war. Most of what our family knows of her story was discovered only after she passed away.

The documents I discovered show that Edith had made multiple escape plans. Her name appears on List 2 of the Kastner train records, and she was registered for the Mantello Rescue Mission of 1942. Tragically, and due in part to informers, neither of those survival schemes was successful, and

Mantello Rescue Mission of 1942 (L) Unauthorized Salvadoran citizenship certificate issued by George Mandel-Mantello, First Secretary of the Salvadoran Consulate in Geneva, who sent thousands of similar documents to Jews in Budapest

on June 13, 1944 she and her family were taken to Auschwitz along with many other Hungarian Jews.

Grandma's children, George and Erica, were sent to the gas chambers. Her husband, Samu, was sent to an unknown labor camp where he reportedly died of pneumonia in January of 1945. Grandma and her sister-in-law, Lily, though, survived the selection process because they were young, healthy and fit for work. The two women stayed together as they were transferred from camp to camp. The last camp was



Gebhardsdorf, a small camp of women prisoners assigned to work in a nearby factory. It was there that Grandma and Lily planned their escape. Grandma recorded her thoughts and feelings as the hour of freedom drew near:

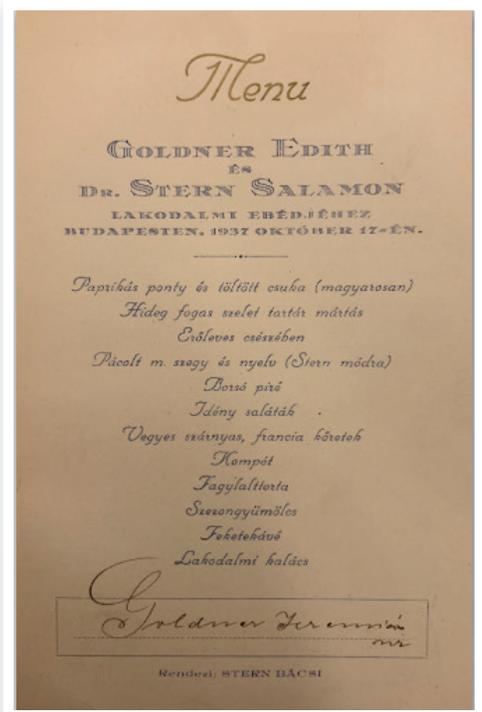
“My last night in the camp I did not sleep. I looked at my sister-in-law who was lying near to me. Her eyes tried to ask me: are we going to succeed? Finally the hour of rise arrived. I looked around and saw the poor creatures starting their usual miserable day. Somehow I felt self-assured. Today I go out in the freedom. It is decided. Freedom, I thought again and again. How does it look? Will I be able to walk on the street like a human being without hearing the shouts of the SS? Will I be able to sit down when I am tired?”

After their morning shift ended at 11:30, Grandma and Lily made their move. They brought nothing but the dresses they were wearing, the hats they had made for themselves to cover their shaved heads, their coats and their tattered shoes. Edith went first. Tucking the treasured bag of bread they had squirreled away from their daily rations in her coat, Edith started walking backwards slowly, farther and farther from their work site. Lily followed a few moments later and quickly caught up to her sister-in-law in the thicket of the forest trees. Together, they began to quicken their steps, walking without a destination, but never looking back. Soon they reached a Polish town where they stayed and worked as seamstresses.

After the war ended, they made their way back to Budapest where Lily was reunited with her husband. Grandma and her oldest brother, Charles, boarded the Queen Elizabeth to New York. There they joined another surviving brother who was already in America.



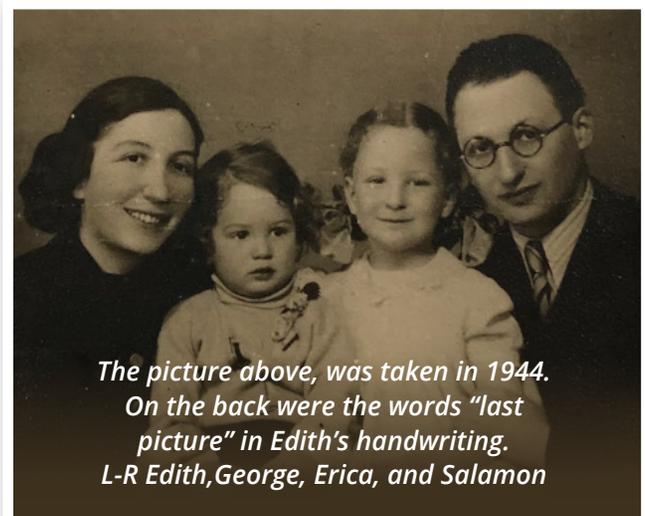
Edith Steinlauf
1917-2010



Picture of the menu from Edith and Salamon's wedding



Edith (l.) and Lily (r.), her sister-in-law, who stayed with her throughout the war



The picture above, was taken in 1944. On the back were the words "last picture" in Edith's handwriting. L-R Edith, George, Erica, and Salamon

Zaidy's Gems



Rina Rosenberg

My grandfather, David Rosenberg, used to be a diamond cutter. At a glance, he could tell a real stone from an imitation. A flawed gem from a perfect one. But this year I have discovered the more valuable treasures which sparkle deep within Zaidy's memory.

Zaidy was only eight years old in March of 1944, when the Germans invaded the town of Mako, Hungary. He and his family moved into his maternal grandparents' home which was located within the ghetto walls. But unlike the majority of Hungarian Jewry, the Rosenbergs were not deported to Auschwitz. They were among the 15,000 lucky Jews who were taken to a camp in Vienna, Austria. There, families were allowed to stay together while the able bodied worked in various forests and factories. In the winter of 1945 the Rosenbergs were transferred to Theresienstadt, where they were liberated a few months later by the

Russians. All ten members of the Rosenberg family survived and returned to their home in Mako. Zaidy was sent to various children's homes, and eventually went to study in a *yeshiva* in Budapest.

At the age of fourteen Zaidy joined a group of other Jewish youths on their way to Israel. He stayed with his older sister Chana who lived in B'nei Brak. She suggested he try out for the Ponevezh Yeshiva. Zaidy was placed in the top *shiur* and for five years studied under the Torah giants of his time: Rav Yosef Kahanaman (the *Ponovezher Rav*), Rav Eliyahu Dessler, Rav Shmuel Rozovsky, Rav Dovid Povarsky. He observed the *Chazon Ish* taking his daily *shpatziers*, or constitutionals. Yet, believing that he was just not cut out to be a *Rosh Yeshiva*, Zaidy changed courses and joined the Israeli armed forces. He served during the Sinai Campaign.



Zaidy In Yeshiva Budapest, 1947 (Circle)

After being discharged from the army, Zaidy learned to cut diamonds. This craft accompanied him to America, where he found work as a diamond cutter in New York City. But there was a big problem. Those were the days when you were fired if you were unwilling to work on *Shabbos*. Zaidy was unwilling, and was fired. Numerous times. Finally, when his Jewish boss left work one Friday but insisted that the Jewish workers remain on the job, Zaidy had had enough. "If this *schmo* can run a business," he thought to himself, "so can I!" So he and his two brothers left the diamond industry, and started their own business, manufacturing coats.

When I reflect on my grandfather's life I am not awed by the coats he fashioned or the precious stones he cut, but by the rock-solid *mesorah* he guarded for my family and me. His pursuit of Torah in Ponevezh, his military contribution to the State of Israel, and his steadfast adherence to *shemiras hamitzvos* in the face of adversity, are his most glistening gems. I am so proud that they adorn my crown, and recall with a smile Zaidy's response when I asked him if he would allow me to interview him: "for you, I would do anything." Zaidy, you have done more for me than you know.



*Zaidy brushing shoulders with the Ponevezher Rav, circa 1950
Rav Yitzchak Gerstenkorn, center, the
first mayor of B'nei Brak*



*Zaidy and his family in front of his
childhood house in Mako, Hungary*

*Zaidy with his children on a visit
to the Theresienstadt Camp where
he was interned with his family
towards the end of the war*



Homeland?



Fayga Tzipora Pinzcower

My genealogy research took me back to my ancestral homeland. When I landed in Hungary the first thing that hit me was Budapest's dichotomous nature. Modern chic nightlife on historically devastating streets. The city is all too refined for its history.

Both my maternal grandparents, Rabbi Harry and Dr. Elizabeth (Fenakel) Rieder, Zaidy and Grandma, were born in this country. The first stop on our tour was my grandmother's hometown - Budapest. We walked up the steps of her apartment building, situated in a small complex. As my family approached her door a sudden pang of sadness washed over me. I desperately wanted to meet my great-grandparents who had lived there, but alas they are gone.

Then we visited the *shul* - the same *shul* Grandma watched being looted by the Nazis on that fateful day in 1944 when they stormed into Budapest.

From there to the Glass House, where Grandma found refuge with her parents under the protection of Carl Lutz - a Swiss diplomat. We entered the courtyard where Yona, my great-grandfather, was shot just three weeks before liberation. Here I was, the great-grandchild of a martyr returning to the place my great-grandfather once stood, now tainted by his murderers.

Next on our itinerary was Kerestir, Zaidy Rieder's birthplace, and a dramatic shift from the bustling metropolis to the quiet rural Hungarian countryside.



My sister, Chana, davening in the courtyard of the Glass House in Budapest where our great-grandfather, Yonah Fenakel, was killed a few days before the Russians took over the city

We spent *Shabbos* in the house of the *Kerestirer Rebbe* which was restored by my family and now hosts thousands of Jews annually. While standing inside Reb Shayele's room, ensconced by the walls that had heard the *berachos* of the *Rebbe* and witnessed them come true (some of them pertaining to my own family,) I forgot for a moment that I was in the homeland of anti-Semitism. Well - almost.

We walked down two blocks to the home where my legendary great-grandmother Chaya Babi Rieder raised her children. The house had been renovated and turned into a school. The plaque that tells its alleged history doesn't mention the Rieders who were disowned of their property by the Nazis and never got it back.

Chaya Babi survived the war with eight of her children, one of whom was my grandfather. She returned from Auschwitz and opened the house to orphans, following the guidance she had received from the *Rebbe* before the deportation. Then, when the Communists took over, she emigrated to the US and reestablished the family in Washington Heights.

In a poignant moment, Grandma shared her thoughts: "I often ask, why me? Why was I saved? But I cannot take responsibility for that. I just feel that I owe them something, those that didn't survive." My grandmother understood all too well that life is a gift, and made sure to maximize her own. So after the war she worked in England, as a nanny, and a medical student, until her visa expired. She then left for Switzerland and finished her medical degree despite facing fierce discrimination as a Jew, a woman, and a foreigner.

While highly accomplished, Grandma was lonely, but determined to marry someone her parents would be proud of. So she traveled to America in search of a spouse. Just a few months later she met Zaidy and they married in 1960. Together, they raised two daughters and lived to see great-grandchildren. Occasionally, Grandma would comment how proud her parents would have been - of Zaidy and the generations that are following in their footsteps. On *Pesach* 5775 Grandma passed away, and Zaidy joined her just seven days later.



Chaya Babi Rieder



Yona Fenakel commemorated on the external wall of the glasshouse in Budapest with the other victims who found their death there

Warmth in the Windy City



Adielle Rosenblum

After a year-long correspondence with his cousin Yuta Schwartz, Zev Rosenblum caught his first glimpse of her in March of 1939 when she arrived in Negrovo, Czechoslovakia, having crossed the ocean from her hometown of Chicago to meet him. She spent the spring and summer with his family, and was there as the political climate grew more ominous and Negrovo moved from Czechoslovakian to Hungarian hands. At the end of the summer Zev and Yuta were civilly married at the American Embassy in Budapest, and in the fall they traveled to Italy, where they boarded a ship bound for New York. Their Jewish wedding took place in Chicago in 1940.

Zeidy Rosenblum started out as a *shochet* in his father-in-law's poultry business, but soon realized that chickens weren't his calling. During his formative years, he had studied under the finest educators, from the *Munkacser Rav*, the *Minchas Eluzar*, to Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky, founder of the Dushinsky Chassidic dynasty in Jerusalem. Their teachings had nurtured in him a passion for *seforim* which never waned, and was the impetus that compelled him to open Rosenblum's Hebrew Bookstore in 1940/41. Among other things, he published a colorful Hebrew calendar which sold

well and found its way to Jews in far flung places. One calendar ended up in the pocket of an American serviceman at the Feldafing DP Camp in Bavaria. He showed it to a young survivor who noticed that his own last name, Rosenblum, was printed on the bottom. Abe Rosenblum followed the address on the calendar to reunite with his only surviving sibling, my great-grandfather Zev.

As more survivors arrived and the Chicago community grew, so did Rosenblum's. It became the hub of Jewish life in Chicago and the Midwest. Zeidy retained his fervent commitment to Torah and his Chassidic roots, yet was determined to learn to speak English perfectly. Because he was conversant with a broad range of topics, Jews of all stripes would stop in to talk, or get his advice. Indeed, Rosenblum's prominence in Chicago was confirmed when President



*Zev and his siblings in Negrovo,
near Munkacs circa 1920*



*My great-grandparents on their
wedding day in Chicago, 1940*

Begin Studies At Arie Crown

Youth Tuned To New Wave Lengths



FIRST GRADERS at Arie Crown Hebrew Day School, Miriam Turner and Dov Shandalov, are shown receiving their first Chumash (first of the five books of the Torah) to begin their studies. Making the presentation are (1-r): William Rosenblum, president of the school; Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik, Rosh Yeshiva at the Hebrew Theological College; Rabbi Meir Shapiro, principal, and Rabbi Ben Dov Leibenstein, supervisor, Associated Talmud Torahs.



First graduating class of Central Hebrew Day School. Marvin Rosenblum is on the first row second from right; (Rabbi) Nosson Tzvi Finkel, the late Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, is in the middle row second from right. Chicago 1956



*Durring President George HW Bush's Presidential Campaign, 1988
L-R: Zeidy, President George HW Bush, photographers and workers in the store*



Zeidy, second from the left, at a fundraiser for the Ponevezh Yeshiva. In the center is the Ponevezher Rav.

George H. W. Bush visited while on the campaign trail.

As the business grew, so did the Rosenblum family. At first, the children attended a local public school. But when my grandfather, Marvin Rosenblum z"l came home with a seasonal holiday decoration he had made in class, Zeidy knew it was time to start a Jewish School. That same night he called a meeting of a number of *ba'alei batim* and together they conceived of what became the Arie Crown Hebrew Day School. My grandfather was in the first graduating class along with Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, who later became the famed *Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva*. Zeidy remained president for many years, long after his own children had graduated. From his perch at Rosenblum's Hebrew Bookstore, he recruited students for the day school. Zeidy told one customer whose children were in public school, "pay when you can." Those children transferred to the day school, and two of them became accomplished *talmidei chachamim* and Jewish educators.

Prominent rabbinic leaders were often hosted by Zeidy when they visited Chicago from abroad. The *Munkacser Rav*, the *Satmar Rebbe*, the *Rosh Yeshiva* of Telz, the *Ponevezher Rav* and Rav Aharon Kotler were among the legendary rabbinic leaders who were warmly received by the *askanim* of the Chicago community because of their respect for Zeidy, a reverence which I will forever share.

Full-Blown Leadership



Cherri Citron



Hadassah Carlebach during the war

As I peruse my family tree, it strikes me that, generation after generation over the last two hundred years, my family has never shirked the mantle of leadership which is our mission. I take pride in the courage and commitment of the namesake of the Ba'al HaTanya, my great-great-grandfather, Schneur Zalman Schneersohn.

The year was 1943 and *Rosh Hashanah* was approaching in Nazi occupied Nice, France. Rabbi Schneur Zalman Schneerson was responsible for about one hundred people, including children, *yeshivah bochurim*, and his own family hiding in the city. Yet, even under such dire circumstances, he wasn't willing to give up the once-a-year *mitzvah* of sounding the *shofar*. With undeterred determination and ingenuity he devised a brilliant plan. He precisely timed the blowing of the *shofar* to coincide with the deafening horn of an approaching train, thereby drowning out the blasts of the *shofar*, and allowing him and his charges to fulfill this holy *mitzvah* undetected.

My great-great-grandfather was no stranger to defying oppressive governments. As a direct descendant of Shneur-Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, Schneur Zalman inherited a legacy of spreading *Yiddishkeit*, despite persecution. In his native Russia, Rabbi Schneerson faced the constant risk of arrest for his religious activism. He and his family left for Palestine in 1935, but then moved to Paris at the direction of the *Frieddiker Rebbe*, Rav Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, in 1936. There, he founded the *Association des Israelites Pratiquants* (AIP), the Association of Orthodox Jews. After the Nazis invaded Paris, Schneerson and his organization fled to the Vichy controlled South.

Until the liberation of France, Rabbi Schneerson and the AIP worked tirelessly to provide aid to thousands of interned Jews. Aside from the vital food packages they supplied, Schneerson also helped deliver religious items - *siddurim*, *tefillin*, and *taleisim* - to the imprisoned Jews. He believed that providing for their spiritual needs was just as important as tending to their physical requirements, because that would give them the necessary courage and determination to persevere.



Schneur Zalman Schneerson and his son in a yeshiva in post-war Eragny, France

<https://www.yivo.org/Zalman-Schneerson>

Though they confronted many situations that certainly merited halachic leniencies due to *pikuach nefesh*, Rabbi Schneerson rarely compromised on the integrity of the Torah, or on its study. In 1942, he created a children's home, La Maison d'Enfants de la Vieille Chapelle, where he provided for the needs of the youngsters and taught them both religious and secular subjects. He housed approximately eighty Jewish children during the war, hiding them throughout the South of France and preparing many of them to be smuggled into Switzerland. Despite the constant urgency to change locations in order to evade capture, Rabbi Schneerson still prioritized and ensured the Jewish education of



Rabbi Schneur Zalman Schneerson

these children throughout the war years. His daughter, Hadassah Carlebach, my great-grandmother, rode her bicycle from place to place, as she helped her father supervise, teach, and transport the children, despite being a young girl herself at the time. There were numerous organizations that operated in France during this period to save Jewish children, and many that greatly exceeded the scale of Rabbi Schneerson's operation, but my great-great grandfather put a special emphasis on preserving their Jewish identities. His unwavering dedication to Judaism helped to save not only their physical lives, but their spiritual ones as well.

תקיעה. שברים. תרועה. תקיעה גדולה. A Lifelong Blast of Faith



Esti Grosberg



*Gabriela and Samuel Grosberg,
New York June 1, 1945.*

If I am being raised in a home that treasures Torah and *mitzvos*, it is owing to the fortitude of my great-grandfather, Samuel Judah Grosberg. Samuel's life was difficult, and he struggled and fell many times. Many individuals in his time lost touch with *Hashem* as a result of the adversities they faced. Not he. Samuel remained a devoted servant of Hashem, and made certain that *Torah* was constantly present in his life. In doing so he ensured that the *mesorah* would be passed down to future generations.

Samuel Grosberg was born in a Lower East Side apartment on November 6, 1906. His childhood was pretty ordinary, except for the fact that he was a prodigy. In his teens, he attended Townsend Harris High School,¹ a prestigious math and science school for gifted students.

Samuel was presented with his first major challenge in his mid-twenties, when he became engaged to a woman who appeared to be a religious Jew. Heartbroken when he learned that his future wife was unwilling to follow certain *halachos*, he compromised his chances of ever getting married by calling off the engagement.

Samuel was put to the test once more in 1929, when his father, a real estate magnate, lost his fortune during the Great Depression.² As a result, Samuel, who was only in his mid-twenties at the time, became the sole breadwinner, responsible for supporting his entire family.

Samuel married a woman named Gabriella Schiffer in 1945, when he was nearly thirty-nine years old. Together they had two children, Debbie and Robert. Debbie, sadly, was a thalidomide



*Samuel Grosberg with his son
Robert Grosberg on his lap,
circa 1951, Bronx, New York.*

¹ Townsend Harris High School opened in 1904. It is a public magnet high school in Queens, New York City, dedicated to the humanities. Townsend Harris is frequently ranked in the top 100 high schools in the country. To be considered for admission, all applicants must have a minimum grade point average of 95. Minimum 90th percentile standardized reading and math scores are also necessary. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Townsend_Harris_High_School

² The Great Depression was the United State's biggest economic downfall, which lasted from October of 1929 up until 1939. The economic depression was a result of the stock market crashing, and when the Great Depression was at its lowest unemployment reached a staggering 25% of the country's population. <https://www.history.com/topics/great-depression/great-depression-history>

baby³ born with physical defects. Gabriella and Samuel were concerned about her ability to adjust and integrate into society, which caused them emotional distress. At the same time, they were experiencing financial distress which forced Samuel to work three different jobs in order to keep the household afloat.

Sadly, while their children were still young, Gabriella was diagnosed with cancer. She underwent numerous operations, as well as chemotherapy and radiation, but the cancer continued to spread. While his beloved wife was unwell, Samuel was entirely committed to finding a treatment for her. He would spend hours studying and talking to doctors. Gabriella eventually went into a coma in 1968. A few weeks later, Samuel's mother died unexpectedly from a sudden, major heart attack. Four days after her death, Gabriella died as well, at the age of fifty one.

Following the untimely and tragic deaths of his wife and mother, Samuel fell into a severe depression. He was furious with himself for failing to find a cure for his wife's sickness. My great grandfather isolated



Samuel and Sally Grosberg at the wedding of Samuel's grandson, Esti's father, Gabe Grosberg, 1997, Queens, New York.

himself from the outside world, especially his children. He did maintain his job, but aside from that spent much of his time in his room reading and studying Torah, only leaving to get something to eat. He appeared dispassionate to the outside world; nothing seemed to matter to him; it was as if his life had come to an end. For eight years, Samuel was miserable.

Ultimately, Samuel's younger brother persuaded him to come out and socialize once more. Thankfully, he listened to him, and with the aid of friends Samuel was able to overcome his grief. In time, he met a woman named Sally and they married.

He then became the polar opposite of the man he had been during his depression; he was outgoing and open. Samuel became involved in his Florida shul, and continued to learn *Torah* on a daily basis. Even as he aged and his mobility was compromised, he consistently prayed three times a day, and donned his *tefillin* every morning. He also continued to blow his *shofar* until he was ninety-nine years old. Samuel passed away in 2006, at the age of one hundred, having clung to Hashem through thick and thin.

³ An infant who is affected by prenatal exposure to the drug thalidomide.

A Man of Standards



Adina Hoffman

My grandfather, Solomon David Hoffman, or Papa, was an officer in the Navy, a leader of the American Standards Association, a spy, Vice President of Underwriters Laboratories, and even an artist. However, perhaps his most hard-earned title was that of 'A Jew Who Sacrificed for the Sake of *Shabbos*.'

Papa enlisted in the United States Navy where he was taunted for being a Jew. Undaunted by the barbs that came his way, Papa went on to win a scholarship to Yale. There, he trained to be a naval officer, and subsequently served during World War II and the Korean War. Papa refused to work on *Shabbos*, knowing well that this could prevent his promotion to the command of a large naval base, and lead to his forced retirement from the Navy.

Papa worked at the American Standards Association, establishing international standards for products; he went all over the world in order to do this, even behind the Iron Curtain. Because of his past connection to the US Navy, and his ability to travel freely, Papa was approached by the CIA to spy for the United States. He agreed. As a skilled photographer, he took photos of enemy Communist installations while acting as a businessman during his visits behind the Iron Curtain, to the Soviet Union.

In 1967, my grandparents moved to Illinois,



Solomon David Hoffman's self-portrait in the Navy upon his retirement

where Papa became the assistant to the President of Underwriters Laboratories. Eventually, Papa rose to become a Vice President and General Counsel, helping to establish various standards for safety in products that saved countless lives.

While at UL, Papa was asked to participate in a presidential exchange program which would entail a year of service in the administration of President Gerald Ford. He accepted the position on the condition

that he could fly back home to his family for every *Shabbos*. Though Papa was constantly pressured to work on *Shabbos*, he never budged.

Papa desperately wanted to become the President of Underwriters. The board, however, voted for someone else. One of the board members told my grandfather that they didn't want a Jew as President. Then, when Papa turned sixty six he was forced to retire for the second time in his life, a rule which he could have skirted had he become president of UL.

Most importantly, Papa took family seriously. He created portraits of family members in his free time. While my Papa may no longer be with me, his pride in *Yiddishkeit* and the wisdom he taught is his own self-portrait, and one which will stay with my family and me forever.

Unbroken



Racheli Farhi

I never met my Zeidy Rausman. He left this world before I was born. But through my research I have come to admire, and cherish the memory of, my great-grandfather, Yisroel Rausman.

As I watched the interview which was conducted in his home years ago, I learned of his incredible *yiras Shomayim*, the sheer joy he took in his Judaism, and the *nachas* he derived from his family and community.

Yisroel was born in a small town in Bereznik, Czechoslovakia in 1926. He grew up with six siblings and studied at a *yeshivah* in Munkacs. His mother passed away when he was only twelve years old. Decades later, he still choked up when he spoke of her kindness and generosity, and it is clear that he never got over that loss.

Zeidy Rausman became animated as he described the increasing hardships of the war years. At first, things didn't change too much, and he was able to continue his schooling at the *yeshivah*. Slowly but surely, though, things got worse. It started with Jews being unable to buy things at the store, then being subject to curfews, and ultimately being forced to work in a brick factory and live in ghettos.

In the spring of 1944, Zeidy Rausman was taken to Auschwitz with his family. He was separated from his father and two sisters, and understood that they had been murdered by the Nazis when he saw smoke billowing out of the gas chambers. As brokenhearted



R' Yisroel and Charna Rausman during their engagement, 1949



R' Yisroel and Charna Rausman at the wedding of Racheli's parents, 1999, New York

as he was, he continued on with his brother and two cousins. He was assigned to work in the coal mines. It is hard to listen to the story that Zeidy tells with pride and a twinkle in his eye. Just before *Yom Kippur*, he decided that he would not work on the *Yom Hadin*. "So what I did was - I broke my hand." When pressed to give more details, Zeidy Rausman elaborated: "There used to be wagons that were lowered in to take the coal from the mines. I put my hand between two wagons, and I broke my hand." My great-grandfather explained the significance of that decision. He knew that if he would be unable to work, he might be killed, but he took his chances, and thankfully, they sent him to the hospital. It was there that he spent *Yom Kippur*, feeling triumphant that he did not have to desecrate the holiest day of the year.

Zeidy Rausman was sent to six concentration camps in all. Along the way, he was subject to death marches, whippings, and subhuman treatment. Eventually, though, liberation came. I listened to his recollections of that day in Buchenwald: there were no guards at the watchtower, and as the prisoners looked out they saw the American soldiers who had come to free them. They received food (more than their stomachs could handle,) and clothing and began to search for surviving family members. Finally, after spending three years traveling between Prague and Switzerland to do a bit of business, Zeidy was able to move to America. There, he found a home with his uncle, Berish Weiser, whose daughter, my Bobby Charna, he married.

Taking Tehillim to Heart



Pearlie Goldstein



Esther and Yosef Aryeh Simonowits (center), Zeide Yoel's parents with four of their children: Zeide Yoel (top right,) Zalman Tzvi (top left,) Chaim Yehudah, Menachem Dov. Dragomiresti, Romania circa 1916.

Far from his Romanian home and family, having been forced into a Hungarian labor battalion and sent to the Russian front during WWII, Yoel Simonowits stood tall as a gun was fired and the bullet came barreling toward him. For one split second his heart pleaded with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* for mercy - *ana Hashem hoshiya na* - then instantaneously he was hit in the chest and fell to the ground. When he came to, Yoel could not believe he was alive. Carefully, he moved his hand around his torso, probing to find where the bullet had pierced. He felt a hole in his shirt, and his heart beating strongly just below it. 'How am I alive?' he thought. 'The bullet penetrated my heart!' Confused, he continued to finger the area of the hole, and soon pulled out the *Sefer Tehillim* which he stashed in his uniform each day, and from which, at every opportunity, he recited *kapitlach* imploring Hashem to save the Jewish people from their current, unbearable misery. Lodged in the center of that small volume was the bullet.

Born on *Hoshana Rabbah* of 1906 in Dragomiresti, Romania, Zaide Yoel was named for his renowned ancestor, Rabbi Yoel Sirkis, author of the *Bayis Chadash* and known widely as the *Bach*. When Yoel married Chaya Baila Veinstein he moved to her hometown of Grosswardein, where they began a family. But as World War II loomed large and heavy, the life that he knew was abruptly derailed. My great-grandfather was one of many Romanian Jews who were coerced into a military unit supporting the Hungarian army as they marched into Russia. On March 21, 1944 the Nazis moved against the Jews of Grosswardein. At first, they were forced into a ghetto. Then, between May 17-21, the entire Jewish population, including Zeide Yoel's wife and their son Yoseph Aryeh, were deported to Auschwitz. Yoel's mother, Esther, and his four younger siblings were among the deportees as well. According to reports he received after the war, every one of his loved ones perished in Auschwitz on the 26th of Iyar 1944.

Despite his devastating losses, Zeide Yoel began to rebuild his life after the war. He joined *Yeshivah Meor Hagolah in Rome*. Eventually he traveled to Israel where he met the woman who would become his wife, my great-grandmother, Ita Sabo. They had two children in *Yerushalayim*, Mordechai Yitzchok and my grandfather Nachum Yehuda. Zaide Yoel raised them, and his grandchildren, to appreciate the magnitude of the miracle he had experienced on the Russian battleground. A *Tehillim* miracle which continued.

While in the Hungarian army, Zeide Yoel befriended a man named Shimon. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Yoel and Shimon and their families remained connected. One night, after Zeide Yoel had passed away, he appeared to Shimon's son, Yehuda Leib, in a dream, and described the beauty of his new heavenly world. He added, though, that he had been



*Zeide Yoel (top left) with Pearlie's grandfather,
Nachum Yehuda Simonowits (top right)
Baila Esther, Tzvi Shalom, Meyer Ber Simonowits (bottom l
to r), Nachum Yehuda's half-siblings. Israel circa 1967.*

day. Zaide Yoel lost everyone he loved in the furnace of the Holocaust. Yet he never ceased to draw strength and faith from the one miraculous moment which assured him that Hashem was by his side. Nor did he ever stop reminding his descendants to invoke the powerful words of David *HaMelech* which had saved him. I believe that they are the reason that I am here, and I, too, cry out '*ana Hashem hoshiya na.*'

held accountable in the *Yeshivah shel ma'alah* for not saying enough Tehillim in his lifetime. Yehuda Leib was, understandably, left a bit unsettled, and shared his uneasiness with Yoel's son, my grandfather, Nachum Yehuda. The latter took his father's words seriously, and resolved to complete *Sefer Tehillim* each *Shabbos*. One week later, he was diagnosed with colon cancer. He remained true to his commitment, and remarkably, throughout the harsh chemotherapy treatments my grandfather never lost his beard or *peiyos*. He believes that like his father before him, he, too, was protected by the book of *Tehillim*.

A powerful connection to *Sefer Tehillim* informs our family life to this

Living the Dream - Uncle Moshe's Journey



Orly Setareh



From left to right: Avraham at five years old, Moshe at age nine, and Yehuda at age seven in Kashan Iran (circa 1955)

At the age of eleven, my Great-Uncle Moshe stood holding a shopping bag containing only his clothes, waiting for a flight to the land where his deceased father had dreamed of living, Israel.

Born in the center of Kashan, Iran on January 14 1946, Moshe had so many siblings and cousins living in the same courtyard housing, that he had never needed to find friends. There was a small pool of water in the middle of their courtyard where they would play on hot days, surrounded on all sides by living quarters where each family lived. The family earned its livelihood by renting parcels of their land to farmers. Everyone helped around the house; the girls were charged with many of the household duties - they salted the meats, made cheese and sewed clothing, while the boys looked after the sheep, goats, and chickens, and whenever necessary would go to town

to buy produce. Once every week they would bring a *shochet* to *shecht* the animals that provided food for all the families in the house. They kept the meat in a cellar in the basement so that it wouldn't go bad.

Moshe's father, Yedidyah, left Iran three times to visit Israel; the first two times they called it the Jewish version of Hajj, a Muslim pilgrimage, and the third time for medical treatment for a stomach ailment. He dreamed of moving to Israel and planned to send Moshe, but unfortunately he never saw his wish come true. Yedidya died on December 4, 1957 at the age of 47.

The large extended family continued to provide for Moshe and his six siblings. Twice, Moshe's uncles asked him if he would like to go to Israel, and each time he answered 'yes.' When they asked him why, he responded that he could no longer bear to see his mother in pain from his father's passing. In 1958, when he was only eleven years old, he was sent off to Israel, part of an *aliyat hanoar*¹, yet all by himself.

When he arrived in Israel he was picked up from the airport by an immigration officer, who brought him to Kibbutz Lavi. There were other Jewish *olim* in the *kibbutz* from many places, among them Poland, Romania, and Iraq. At first, he could hardly speak the language, but within a few months he had learned to converse easily in Hebrew. He had many jobs to do on the *kibbutz*, from milking cows to paving roads. But in school he excelled in math, and the army, recognizing his potential, sent him to mechanic school at the age of sixteen. At seventeen, he began using his expertise to contribute to the war efforts; he served during four Israeli wars, first as a mechanic for artillery transports,

¹ *Aliyat Hanoar, Youth Aliyah, is a Jewish organization begun in Berlin at the start of WWII, whose mission it is to rescue Jewish children from tyrannical governments and resettle them in Israel.*



Moshe at 17 in a training camp (circa 1963)

and later as a tank mechanic.

After the war he began to work as a car mechanic. As a result, he met his wife, Sara, who was the accountant for the auto shop which employed him. They were married on July 2nd 1970. Over the next few years they had three daughters, Oshrit, Yifat, and Itay. In time, Uncle Moshe established a very successful second-hand car business, and he now lives comfortably and happily in Netanya.

Uncle Moshe's *aliyah* to Israel opened a gateway for his whole family. In 1964, six years after he left home and was forced to communicate with his loved ones only by mail, Moshe was reunited with his mother and all of his brothers who immigrated to Israel. So many years after Yedidya's passing, his entire family was finally living his dream.

עם לבדד ישכון (במדבר כג:ט) A People that Shall Dwell Apart



Tamar Cohen



Yosef and Rivka Cohen, circa 1880's. Rivka made the shidduch between Yocheved and Yisrael

Set against the sharp peaks of the Paghman Mountains, the combative players were poised to grab the goat. Seventeen-year-old Michael Cohen sat waiting for the game to begin. The tension built, as, one by one, the riders rode out bedecked in their uniforms. One of them rode right up to Michael. The boy did a double take when he looked closely and saw

that it was his father.

That boy was my grandfather, who had been invited by an Afghan tribe, together with his extended family, to participate in the national sport, *buzkashi*. And so it was for one hundred and fifty years; my ancestors were well-integrated into Afghan society and culture. They lived peacefully with their Afghan neighbors, doing business together, going to school together, and even playing together.

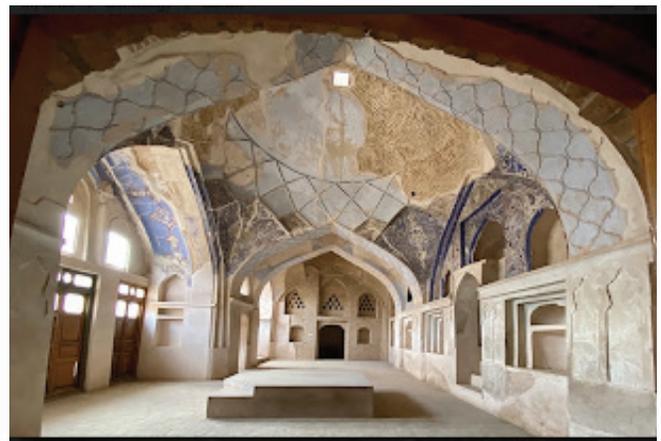
And yet, the members of the small Jewish community never crossed the line. Their coexistence, and even companionship, with the indigenous Muslim tribes never blurred for them the distinct boundaries which kept them apart.

This is my grandfather's story, and the legacy of the Jews of Afghanistan.

It all began in 1870 when my ancestors felt compelled to leave Yazd, Iran in order to escape



Chalifeh Tzvi. Michael's teacher and brother in law, receiving semichah from the great rabbis in Herat, Afghanistan. Tzvi is the man sitting all the way on the left holding the book. Circa 1957



The Afghan Yu Aw shul, located in Herat, Afghanistan.



Michael Cohen in the traditional Afghan garb worn on independence day and special holidays. Michael was chosen along with a few others to hold the flag to greet President Eisenhower when he came to visit the king of Afghanistan. 1959

persecution. They settled in Herat, the city closest to the Iran - Afghanistan border, and stayed there for seventy years, together with three thousand other Jews who, like the Arabs around them, remained untouched by modernity.

Yosef Cohen and Rivka Cohen, my great-great-grandparents, arrived in Herat as children, married when they were grown, and built a beautiful family together. Savta Rivka had a keen eye for *shidduchim*, and matched her twenty-year-old grandson, Yisrael, with his cousin, and her granddaughter, Yocheved, who was merely twelve. This was common practice at that time. In 1940, the young couple moved to Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, where Yisrael invested his energies into developing a Jewish infrastructure. Kabul soon became home to a new and booming Jewish community. The Cohens lived on a beautiful *Haveli*, a property which included

a traditional house and a large yard. The one and only *shul* in Kabul was for decades part of their private residential complex.

On February 11, 1949, my grandfather, Michael Cohen, was born, the sixth of eleven children. He and all of his siblings lived very rich and exciting lives, constantly exploring Afghanistan's beautiful landscapes and culture. They were educated in a strong dual curriculum, half a day in public school and the rest in *chamula*, or *yeshivah*. Michael's teacher, *Chalifeh* Tzvi, was a special man who had received *semichah* from the great rabbis in Herat. He taught Michael how to read from the Torah, and although he was several years older than his student, the two became close friends, and ultimately, brothers-in-law.

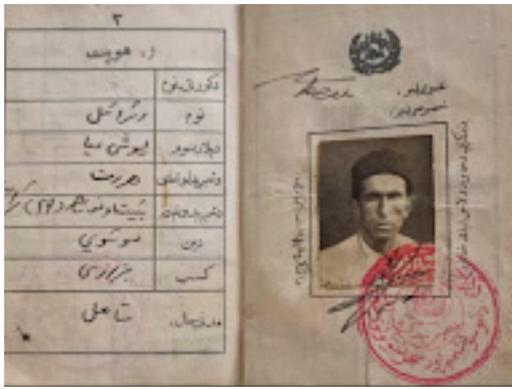
Of his many memories, the one that stands out as most momentous for my grandfather is his *bar mitzvah*. He recalls his diligent preparations, as well as the two hundred hand-written and hand-delivered



Michael Cohen's grade 6 school picture, age 12, 1961, Kabul, Afghanistan



Michael Cohen, standing on a chair, celebrating his bar mitzvah at the family's haveli. 1961



Yisrael Cohen's Afghan passport



Doing business in the Kabul marketplace. The man bent over bargaining is Michael Cohen's brother in law, Asher Levi. The little boy standing all the way on the right is Michael Cohen's brother, Ishay Cohen

invitations. Every single member of the community attended, as they always did.

Perhaps it was this sense of unity that fortified the Afghan Jewish community, and protected it from the assimilation that is all too often the price of comfort in a host culture. In an interview, Michael Cohen recalled that “we used to do occasions, like a *bar mitzvah*, wedding, *brit*, all together. Everyone was always invited and everyone came to celebrate. It was so nice; this is the major thing I hope we can do today either in Israel or America...this is what I miss the most.”



Michael's sister, Bracha, at her wedding to Tzvi Bezalel. Kabul, Circa 1957



Left to right: Ishay Cohen, Yocheved Cohen, Bracha Cohen, Tzvi Bezalel, Yisrael Cohen

והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם (מלאכי ג:כד)

“And He Will Return the Hearts of Fathers to their Sons, and the Hearts of Sons to their Fathers”



(based on an interview conducted by Bailey Schuckman)

It happened in the early 1990's. Grandpa Schuckman looked around the crowded Ben-Gurion airport for any sign of Ken. All around him there were people with welcome signs; family members falling all over each other in joy. Grandma had sent him to Israel to bring their son home from the country of suicide bombings. He had agreed to go, but secretly had no intention of bringing Ken home. “I knew what not everyone else did.

You can't run away from being a Jew. And you can't run away from Israel just because things are bad.” But where was that boy? Suddenly, Grandpa felt someone taking his bag. He turned to face a stranger who said, “Pop, give me a hug!” Grandpa did a double take, and in a moment realized that beneath the oversized yarmulka and beard was his only son.

The ride to Jerusalem was lively; father and son were excited to be together, but every few minutes Grandpa would ask, “Why are you wearing that yarmulka? Why the beard?” And each time my father would respond, “I'll tell you when the time is right.” Grandpa was impatient and wondered if the time would ever be right.

He didn't have long to wait. The next day, as they



Stanley Schuckman

were walking down the stairs to the *Kotel*, Ken turned to his father and said, “Now is the right time to talk about why I am wearing this *yarmulke*. It's because of your *Bar Mitzvah* speech to me.”

As I interviewed my grandfather, Stanley Schuckman, he was eager to tell me this story, and continued to describe the speech in question.

“I was sitting at your father's *Bar Mitzvah* practicing the speech I had written a couple of weeks before. Grandma was sitting next to me and leaned over to whisper, ‘If you mess this one up, don't come home. This is the most important speech of your life. This is your son.’ Grandpa whispered back, ‘But I don't like my speech.’” Feeling uneasy, he folded up his prepared words and put them in his pocket. He then opened a *siddur*, and the words of *Shema Yisrael* appeared in front of him. He read them carefully and they spoke to him. If you do what I tell you to do, and don't veer from it, I will bless you. With rain in the field, and a beautiful life. Moments later Grandpa approached the *bimah*, looked the audience and his son in the eye, and delivered that age-old message. “And that speech,” said Grandpa proudly, “led your *Tatty* to *Yerushalayim*. That speech led him to become religious.”

ROOTS & SHOOTS

Discover the ancestors and relatives
you never knew you didn't know.

Let me guide you through your genealogical journey.

Chani Gotlieb

Experienced Genealogy Researcher
Spielberg Certified Interviewer

chanigotlieb@gmail.com

A decorative border of various colorful gemstones, including round, oval, and square shapes in shades of purple, green, blue, yellow, and pink, is positioned along the top and bottom edges of the page. The background is a light-colored, textured surface with a repeating pattern of interlocking rectangular shapes, resembling a brick or stone wall.

MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS