




en Route

על פי הייסעו...ועל פי הייחנ
(במדבר ט:יח)



מכון יעקב לבנות
Manhattan High School for Girls
תשפ"ג · GENEALOGY ANTHOLOGY



*Thank you to our generous
sponsors for making
our genealogy event and
publication possible:*

Mr. and Mrs. Gerber

Mr. and Mrs. Penson

Mr. and Mrs. Reichmann

(Grandparents of Renée)

Mr. and Mrs. Hirt

Dr. and Dr. Boczko

Mr. and Mrs. Abramson

Mr. and Mrs. Kutner

With profound appreciation to

Ms. Chanie Gotlieb
Project Director

Rebbetzin Peshi Neuburger
Genealogy Project Editor

Mrs. Dena Szpilzinger
Genealogy Project Designer

Mrs. Ettie Cohen
Historia Chair

תהי משכרתכן שלמה מעם ה'

Mrs. Tsivia Yanofsky
School Principal, Menacheles

Mrs. Estee Friedman-Stefansky
Principal, General Studies

MESSAGE FROM THE MENAHELES

It is a great pleasure and honor to write this forward. The genealogy digest is the impressive culmination of a year long research project, and an actualization of the Torah injunction *שאל אביך ויגדר זקניך ויאמרו לך*. Our students proudly hold aloft the torch passed down from generations of ancestors.

Their family trees include giants of spirit who profoundly enriched the world of Torah scholarship, men and women who clung to their religious ideals and convictions with tenacity, individuals who contributed qualitatively to the worlds of *Hatzolah* and Jewish culture, and men and women with uniquely impressive character traits that leave us gaping with admiration many years after they have departed from this world. As I read these riveting accounts, I could not help but reflect upon the honor of educating the progeny of such illustrious forebears.

For this impressive project, our senior students delved into primary and secondary resources. 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. Researching, writing, and presenting their family's lore honed many creative and academic skills.

No endeavor of this scope can be accomplished without a grand architect. I am forever grateful to Ms. Chani Gotieb for her brilliance and creativity in initiating and spearheading this monumental genealogy project. It is her deepest wish that every student walk away from her high school experience enriched by the legacy of her progenitors.

I would also like to acknowledge the indefatigable efforts of Rebbitzen Neuburger, a brilliant editor, writer and beloved *mechaneches*, with whom our students spend so many enjoyable and meaningful hours. She has enabled our students to eloquently and elegantly present their *roots*. Rebbitzen Neuburger, herself, is a great granddaughter of Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop and her roots of scholarship and devotion to the *klal* are readily evident. Our students are truly fortunate.

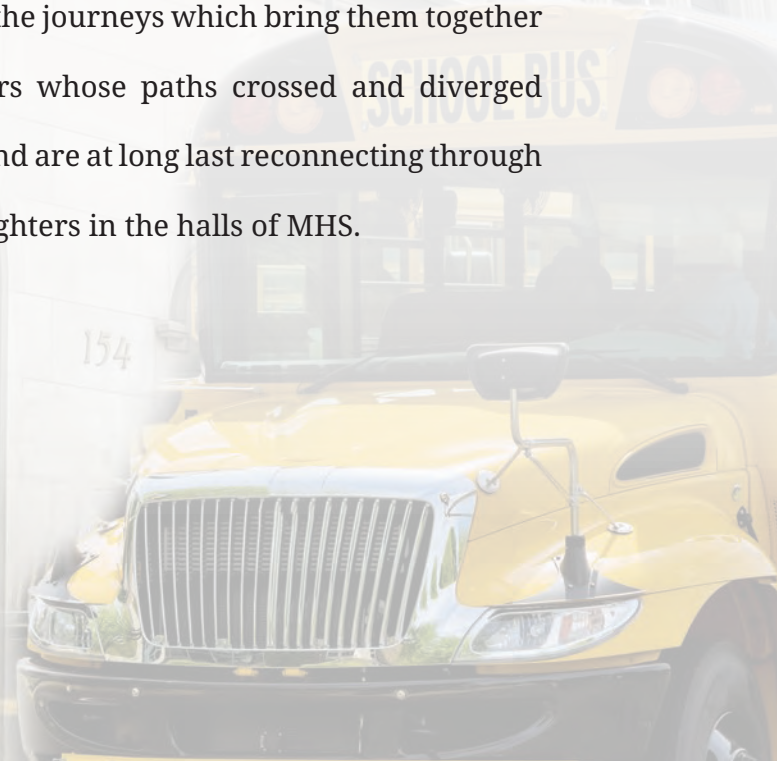
I would also like to thank Mrs. Dena Szpilzinger, our much celebrated and talented layout designer who lends her distinctive flair and wisdom to all of our publications; Mrs. Ettie Cohen, a *mechanechet* par excellence who always goes above and beyond, and Miss Ettie Guelfguat, an alumna, whose expertise is a source of great pride.

I would also like to acknowledge our Senior Class of 2023 *תשפ"ג*, whose contributions to this digest are a reflection of their unique flavor and character. In the spirit of genealogy, may you bequeath that flavor to many future generations who will carry forth the torch to the end of days.

Mrs. Tsvia Yanofsky

BUS ROOTS

It is 7:50 AM, and the energy is palpable. The yellow school buses have arrived and are stopping traffic on East 70th Street in the busiest city in the world. At a steady clip, MHS students alight; they are laden with coats, backpacks, water bottles and the fattest binders known to mankind. Some of them have clearly just woken up from much needed naps; it isn't easy to study into the wee hours of the night, only to rise before the sun. Others have made use of the commute to finish studying, and are still fixated on their notes as they mechanically walk up the steps, whose contour and depth they have memorized. Quite a few are enjoying the camaraderie of their bus-mates, as they continue the lively banter that began along the highway. They come from every corner of the tri-state area and converge on an unmarked and unassuming white building, the home of *Machon Yaakov L'Banos*. Students take pride in sharing their high school experience with classmates who hail from far and wide. The seniors among them, through their research, have just begun to discover that the journeys which bring them together every day began long ago, with ancestors whose paths crossed and diverged throughout the four corners of the earth, and are at long last reconnecting through their granddaughters and great-granddaughters in the halls of MHS.



עַל פִּי ה' יִסְעוּ... וְעַל פִּי ה' יִחַנוּ

כָּל יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּן הָעֲנַן עַל הַמִּשְׁכָּן יִחַנוּ.

וּבְהָאָרֶץ הָעֲנַן עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן יָמִים רַבִּים... וְאִשׁ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָעֲנַן יָמִים מְסֻפָּר עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן... וְאִשׁ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָעֲנַן מְעַרְבַּ עַד-בֹּקֶר... אִו יוֹמִם וְלַיְלָה... אִו-לַיְמִים אִו-חֹדֶשׁ אִו-יָמִים... וּבְהֵעֲלֹתוֹ יִסְעוּ (במדבר ט')

At the bidding of Hashem *B'nei Yisrael* traveled,
and at the bidding of Hashem they encamped.

As long as the cloud hovered above the Mishkan, they encamped.

When the cloud lingered over the Mishkan for many days... Sometimes, the cloud remained for several days above the Mishkan... Sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning... Or, the cloud remained for a day and a night... Whether it was for two days, a month or a year... when it lifted, they traveled.

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

FOREVER en ROUTE

Rooted, uprooted, rerouted and re-rooted. Forever en route, yet always deeply rooted. It is almost paradoxical to consider an entity that is, at once, en route and deeply rooted. The former state is one of transience, of vulnerability, of movement from place to place with an eye toward some final destination. The latter suggests permanence and comfort, the security and stability that comes from being ensconced in the place you call home. And yet, isn't that the story of the Jewish nation since its inception? Is there a people which has been more often and more widely scattered, or more pregnable than ours? At the same time, though, is there a community that has, through all its tumultuous journeys, remained more profoundly grounded in its spiritual soil and bedrock faith than our ancestors?

From the very beginning, in *Midbar Sinai*, we were on the move. We were instructed, repeatedly, to set up camp when the *Ananei Hakavod*, Clouds of Glory, hovered over the *Mishkan*, and to travel when they lifted. We lived by G-d's word, in whatever place and for however long He saw fit.

Ramban explains that because they never knew how long each rest period would be, *B'nei Yisrael*, at the signal of the cloud to encamp, made all the arrangements for an extended stay, well aware that in a few hours they might have to dismantle their tents to follow the cloud once again.

In a breathtaking reflection on the patience required to live in this way, and on the Torah's painstaking and seemingly superfluous depictions of every possible scenario, *Harav Samson Raphael Hirsch* encourages us to stay the course:

"This is the teaching of the journey through the wilderness from which we learned for all time to follow G-d's guidance with devotion and trust, no matter how incomprehensible it may seem to us. At times, He instructs us to leave what we have just now begun to love, and at times He requires us to remain steadfast in an undesirable situation. Nevertheless, we accept and fulfill with joy whatever He commands us... We will always be ready...to follow Him to unknown destinations, along mysterious paths; to wait and long for Him patiently, or to follow Him boldly - all according to the direction of His guidance."

Our seniors have undertaken a serious and transformative journey of self-discovery which has revealed to them ancestors who camped and traveled, ever mindful of G-d's word. At times, they took root in, and sanctified, the countries which welcomed, or, at least, tolerated them. At others, they were uprooted from places which had become hostile to them and their lifestyle, and rerouted to lands that were more inviting. In the worst of times, they were rooted out by savage and cruel powers, and in the best of times, they came home, and were re-rooted in our Promised Land. But always, there were faithful Jews who patiently (and often secretly) waited and longed for Him, or followed Him boldly. Our budding genealogists have found their roots among all of them. Most exciting of all, a number of students have found greater connection with each other in seeing their respective ancestral odysseys intersect. This volume is a compendium of the highlights of their journeys, and we proudly invite you to join us "en ROUTE."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AVRAHAM ABBA LUFFMAN.....10 HAVE TORAH, WILL TRAVEL <i>Kayla Felman</i>	FREIDA SZWARC GORENFELD.....43 FINAL SHOTS <i>Sari Gerber</i>
R' YAAKOV MEIR KAHAN R' YERUCHAM LEIB KAHAN.....12 PAGE BY PAGE <i>Atara Abramson</i>	JACK AND MINDE DIAMOND .....44 SWIMMING AGAINST THE TIDE <i>Lily Perla</i>
THE BAMBERGER FAMILY .....15 SEA-ING MIRACLES <i>FRIEDA BAMBERGER</i>	ELKA HASZ GREENBERG .....46 A LETTER TO BABI <i>Elky Schwartz</i>
ISAAC (ICKO) GENACHOWSKI .....17 HIDDEN GEMS <i>Rikki Genack</i>	JOSEPH DEUTSCH .....49 וּזְאֵת הַבְּרִכָּה... <i>Aliza Wiederkehr</i>
JACOB & DOVID KESTENBAUM.....20 PARTNERS FOR LIFE <i>Sofia Kestenbaum</i>	MOSHE JEGER AND MENACHEM ROSENBERG .....53 TWICE A TWOSOME <i>Shevy Dreifus and Michali Rosenberg</i>
STEPHEN KLEIN.....24 RAISING THE (CHOCOLATE) BAR(TON'S) <i>Reggie Klein</i>	FAGIE FRIED.....56 HARD KNOCKS, SOFT HEART <i>Lilli Hirt</i>
MARION SPIER PENSON ZELLER .....27 BARTON'S CHOCOLATE...HOW SWEET IT WAS MY ROAD TO THE JOURNEY <i>Rebecca Penson</i>	JULIA AND DAVID SCHULHOF.....58 A WALK TO REMEMBER <i>Temimah Schullhof</i>
RENÉE REICHMANN .....29 A LETTER TO MY NAMESAKE <i>Renée Reichmann</i>	YAAKOV SHLOMO FRIEDMAN .....61 A SUKKALEH, A KLEINE <i>Lizzie Boczko</i>
SOLI SPIRA.....32 QUESTION MARKS <i>Tehilla Spira</i>	DRAIZEL SHACHTER .....64 GUEST OF HONOR <i>Yehudis Ginsberg</i>
DAVID AND ESTHER MAYBRUCH .....34 A THOUSAND MILES APART <i>Yocheved Stein</i>	CHAIM SCHLAFRIG .....66 A STITCH IN TIME, AN EPILOGUE COLD HOUSE, WARM HOME <i>Ayelet Herskovitz</i>
ETCHE TORTEN KON .....36 "WHO COULD ASK FOR ANYTHING MORE?" <i>Chavi Weiner</i>	DEVORA CHANA BELZ SCHLAFRIG.....67 A PACKAGE FROM HOME
MOLLY ZOLDAN FUCHS .....41 THREE SISTERS <i>Faye Fuchs</i>	YAKKOV YAKUBOV .....68 A YIDDISHE CUP <i>Batsheva Ben-Itzhak</i>

YITZCHAK LAUFER .....70 תורת חסד <i>Ariella Kornbluth</i>	RABBI JACOB RABINOWITZ.....84 POSITIVELY CHARGED <i>Tamar Eberstark</i>
ELIMELECH LAUFER (IN SIBERIA) .....71 THE HEARTFUL DODGER	DR. SAMUEL SMITH .....86 NAME THAT BABY <i>Rina Giloni</i>
RAIZ FAMILY .....73 UNDER THE RADAR <i>Naomi Genkin</i>	YOSEF DAVID BRANDWEIN.....89 A TIMELY MATCH <i>Tova Berger</i>
CHAYA BRACHA MOSTOV .....75 THE ROAD OF LIFE <i>Chana Guelfguat</i>	EFRAYIM MAMET .....92 BEN ALIYAH <i>Yiskah Cohen</i>
YEHOShUA PESACH SAVA .....77 BETWEEN THE LINES <i>Chana Sava</i>	SHOSHANA NAGAR YAISH .....94 ON THE WINGS OF EAGLES <i>Yael Yaish</i>
DIANE ENGELBERG EPSTEIN CHANA BASHA ROSENBERG GOLD BARBARA KATZ KUTNER .....80 TO MHS FROM MEMPHIS <i>Mali Epstein · Deena Gold · Rena Kutner</i>	ESTER BEN YISHAI ALCOBI .....97 SUSTAINING HERITAGE <i>Hodaya Zerbib</i>

ויהי בנסע הארון



HAVE TORAH, WILL TRAVEL

KAYLA FELMAN

Avraham Abba Luffman looked around in horror and wondered if he had made a mistake. At forty seven, he had uprooted his family from their home in Drohiczyn, Poland, hoping to give them a safer life in America. Avraham Abba, his wife, Zlata, and their seven children, two of whom were married with children of their own, had traveled nearly six thousand arduous miles by boat, train, and horse and buggy. For this. The Baron Hirsch Sonnenfeld Colony in Saskatchewan, Canada, was not what they'd been promised. The rolling expanse of wind-swept plains was desolate; the howling winds were unforgiving and harsh; there was no running water, and even natural waters were scarce. But, Avraham Abba fought despair and got to work. The Luffmans found a store in a neighboring town where they purchased agricultural tools and the necessary living materials. And from the ramshackle quarters they were given, they built a better house and a home.

Their arrival in 1928 aptly coincided with Purim, for they were in need of miracles. Aside from the primitive living conditions, Torah life in the colony was under-developed. There was a small shul of local Jewish farmers who were only too happy to welcome Avraham Abba. As desperate as he had been to escape Europe, he refused to leave without something substantial anchoring him to his Jewish values. Before their departure, Avraham Abba bought a *Sefer Torah* from a widow who needed money to pay for her daughter's wedding. The scroll was inscribed with only the first three of the *Chamisha Chumshei Torah*, so Avraham Abba hired a *sofer* to add *Bamidbar* and *Devarim*. It was from this *Torah* that the colonists *leined* each week.

The Luffmans worked hard, but the frigid climate and rock-hard soil were insurmountable farming challenges. Little by little, his children made their way to Winnipeg, Manitoba, where Avraham Abba joined them in 1938.

Of course, the *Sefer Torah* came with him. Avraham Abba and Zlata made their new home in the basement of the local *Talmud Torah*, where Avraham Abba worked as custodian. He donated the precious scroll to them, and there, too, it was read from every week. He became the caretaker of the community's spiritual needs as well, acting as *Gabbai*, conducting *shiurim* and learning with the various congregants. His wife, Zlata, davened daily from her own prized *Rav*



*The Luffman Torah
(purchased in Poland 1928)*



Avraham Abba's notes as Gabbai (circa 1938)



Zlata Luffman's Rav Peninim siddur (1928)

Peninim siddur, and, together, they infused their family with a love of *Torah* and an unwavering commitment to *Yiddishkeit*.

In 1995, fifty years after Avraham Abba's *petirah*, the Winnipeg Talmud Torah was relocated, and the heirloom *Torah* was returned to my grandfather,

who lovingly guarded it in his home in Los Angeles, California. Every one of my brothers and cousins read from that *Torah* at their *bar mitzvah*. I will never forget how *Bobby* and Grandpa carefully carried that *Torah* on their laps during the five-hour plane ride from the West Coast to New York for each family *bar mitzvah*. After their passing, the *Torah* was moved a short distance to my uncle's home.

For nearly a hundred years now, this *Torah* has symbolized my family's fierce devotion to *Yiddishkeit* above all else. From its inauspicious beginnings in our little house on the prairie, to the multitudes of Luffman descendants who cherish it today, this *Torah* has been our spiritual anchor.



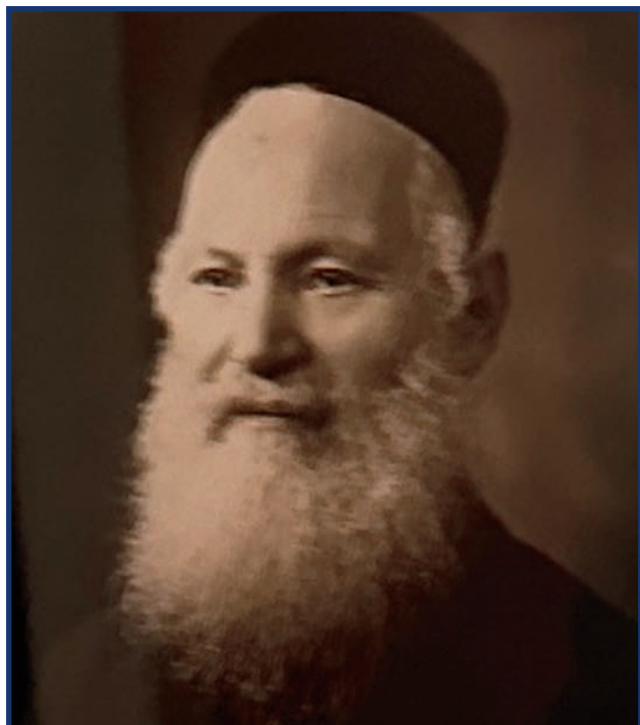
Avraham Abba and Zlata's home in Winnipeg, Manitoba (November 1954)



R' YAAKOV MEIR KAHAN R' YERUCHAM LEIB KAHAN

PAGE BY PAGE

ATARA ABRAMSON



R' Yaakov Meir Kahan

In 1921, in the stillness of the dark Russian nights, *Rav Yaakov Meir Kahan* quietly made his way out of the Soviet Union together with his daughter, Tova, and his son, Avraham Dov. They resettled in Vilna, Poland, having left behind their wife and mother, Basha Rachel, who remained to care for her other son, Yerucham Leib. Tragically, while studying in the *yeshiva* of Rav Elchanan Wasserman in Minsk, Yerucham Leib had contracted typhus. It became so severe that both of his legs had to be amputated. Many efforts were made to get mother and son out of Russia, but none were successful.

R' Yaakov Meir, a noted Torah scholar who

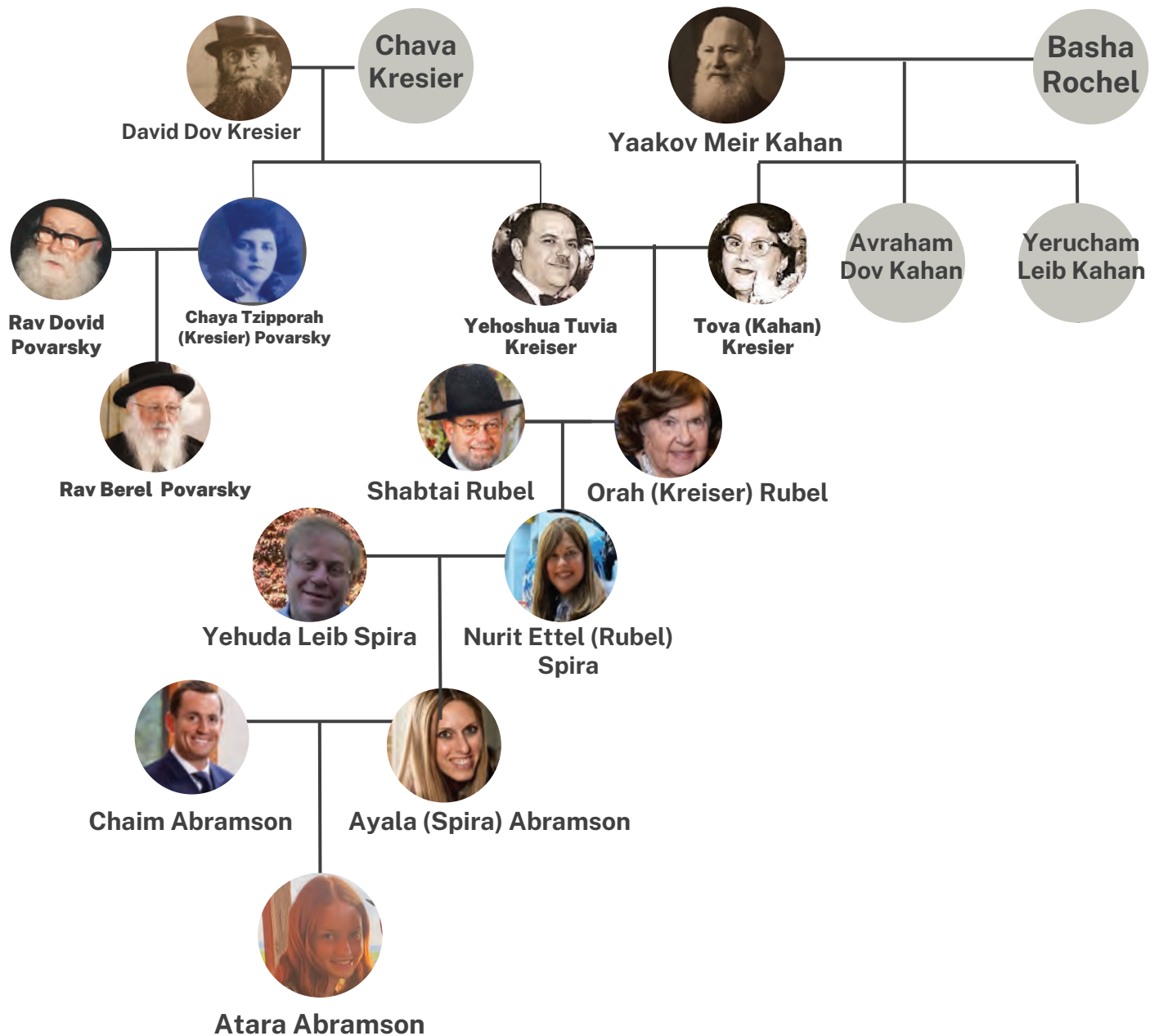
Every page in the book had its own journey. And each one was a testament to the depth of a son's love for the father he had not seen in years.

had been a student of the *Netziv* in Volozhin, left something else behind in Russia. The many precious pages of original Torah insights that he had penned over the years did not accompany him to his new home. Fearing that they could be confiscated and destroyed if found by the Soviet authorities, he chose to leave them with his wife and son. Knowing how his father cherished these *chidushei Torah*, Yerucham Leib resolved that he would, one day, return them to him.

R' Yaakov Meir was the grandfather of my great-grandmother. His reputation preceded him, and upon arrival in Vilna, he was immediately appointed as a *rav*, a post which he held until 1924. He then emigrated to the United States, where he served as a rabbi, first in New York City, and later in Far Rockaway.

Upon learning that his father had reached the free American shores, Yerucham Leib seized the opportunity to begin the return of the *magnum opus*. He began sending letters - many, many letters - and in every one he carefully folded and hid a single page of manuscript. One page at a time, the entire work reached its author's hand. When he died in 1934, though, it had not yet been published.

His son, Avraham Dov, feared he could not do it justice.



But his son-in-law, Rabbi Yehoshua Tuvia Kreiser, Tova’s husband and a *talmid chacham* in his own right, dared to try. He compiled the writings into a book entitled *Ma’or Yaakov*. In the introduction, he pays tribute to Yerucham Leib who “was forced to remain behind this dark curtain, yet in spite of all the challenges he faced, managed to send these masterpieces...Who can imagine the magnitude of this endeavor? May it serve as a merit for him, and a *matzeivah* for his soul.”

And may it serve as a model for me, to rise above any obstacles and limitations that may stand in my way, as I reach for my dreams.

Uprooted



THE BAMBERGER FAMILY

SEA-ING MIRACLES

FRIEDA BAMBERGER

In October of 1943, through a miraculous turn of events, top-secret information regarding a planned Nazi *Aktion* in Copenhagen, Denmark was leaked. The Jews of that city, numbering between seven and eight thousand, were to be rounded up on the eve of *Rosh Hashanah*. On that night, in the Main Synagogue of Copenhagen, the rabbi encouraged those who had gathered there to leave their homes and go into hiding that night. My grandfather, *Hechaver* Zvi Halevi Bamberger z”l, a great-grandson of the illustrious Wurzbürger Rav, had moved to Copenhagen from Wurzburg, Germany with his family several years earlier. He had a relationship with the police commissioner, who placed a large seal on the front door of their home to protect it. At first, the Bambergers hid in the home of the grocer who was a family friend. A few days later, a gentleman from the underground approached my great-grandmother Clara, and told her that on Tuesday night, at six o’clock, there would be a car waiting to take her family to the pier. That night, they hid close to the pier, and were taken by rowboat to fishing boats in the Oresund sea lane. Danish fishermen risked their lives to save them and many other Jews. They crossed the international line and arrived in Sweden on *Erev Yom Kippur*.

The Bambergers remained in Sweden for about two years. During that time, to support the family and ensure that they would have enough food to eat, Clara Bamberger opened up a restaurant. The children attended public schools and had Hebrew tutors in the afternoon. Yet as gracious as the Swedes were to the Danes, in 1945, with the liberation of Denmark from the Germans, the Bambergers and many other Danish Jews were happy to go home. A great number of Danes waited at the pier to welcome the Jews back. The Bambergers headed

straight for their apartment. Amazingly, nobody had been inside; the table was set just as they had left it on that *Rosh Hashanah* night.

My great-uncle, Rabbi Ib Nathan Bamberger, described the successful rescue mission of the Jews of Copenhagen as ‘a miracle of the first order.’ I have grown up in the aura of that miracle; it is the backdrop of our home, and I know that I am here only because of that Divine intervention, through the kindness of the people of Denmark.





From left to right- Helen Bamberger, Clara Bamberger, Ib Nathan Bamberger, Bjorn Bamberger, Moshe Bamberger, Neils Bamberger (Denmark 1940)



One of the boats that brought the Jews to Sweden (October 1943)

ISAAC (ICKO) GENACHOWSKI

HIDDEN GEMS

RIKKI GENACK

It began as an ordinary customs inspection. Isaac, then Icko Genachowski stepped forward from the line and handed his luggage to the American Customs official. Its contents, once revealed, appeared pretty standard; clothing, toiletries, some books

and shoes. Suddenly, Icko reached for his valise and broke open the frame. One hundred fifty six carats of sparkling diamonds came pouring out onto the inspection counter. The shocked official whisked them away and Icko left the Miami airport with his wife, Rosa, and their three-year-old son, Schneur, to begin their life in America.



Isaac, Schneur and Rosa Genachowski (circa 1942)

My grandfather, Schneur Genack, was that little boy. The story is one I have always known. It is a tale of fortitude, courage, and honesty, and has been enhanced by the discoveries I've made in the course of my genealogical inquiry.

Pepa, as we lovingly call him, was born in Antwerp, Belgium in March of 1939. 204 Lamoriniere Street was bursting with celebration as Isaac and Rosa brought home their first child. Schneur's future looked bright; Icko and his two brothers owned a diamond company called Genachowski Bros., and business was booming. But a year later the sparkle dulled when the Nazis invaded Belgium, and it became clear that they had to leave.

Icko and his three brothers divided the assets of Genachowski Bros leaving him with one hundred

fifty six carats hidden in the frame of his suitcase. After many failed attempts at escape, Icko, his family, and the gems were finally smuggled out of Belgium to Paris, France on January 15, 1941. Two months later they moved to Marseille, and three months after that they boarded the *Monta Vista*, on which they were detained near Casa Blanca, Morocco for seven weeks. After a five week confinement in the *Sidi El Ajachi* concentration camp, they traveled to Tangier, then to Seville, Spain, and next to Portugal. From there they sailed on the *Nyassa* to Havana, Cuba. Finally, on August 7, 1942, thanks to visas obtained by Rosa's uncle, Israel Matz, they flew to Miami, Florida. It was a moment of great relief; after two years of covert journeys and evasive movements, the Genachowskis were in America, the mecca of freedom. Here, Icko could resume being 'Honest Isaac'; here, there were people to talk to. And so, he unveiled the diamonds.

Icko Gornachowski
423 Atlantic Avenue
Brooklyn, New York

September 29, 1942

Federal Reserve Bank of N.Y.
Foreign Property Control Dept.
70 Pine Street,
New York, N. Y.

Gentlemen: Attention: Mr. V. C. Hartman
Safety 2-1-25-3745-6099

In reply to your letter of Sept. 26, 1942, refer # as above, please be advised as follows regarding your inquiries:

1. At the time of the invasion of Belgium on May 10, 1940, my family and I left Belgium to go to France, but on the way, in Calais, France, we were stopped together with other refugees and forced to return to Antwerp, Belgium in June 1940. We continued to try to leave Belgium and finally on January 15, 1941 we managed to be smuggled out of Belgium and went to Paris. We arrived in Paris on January 17, 1941, and remained there until Feb. 15, 1941. Then we went to Marseille, France, arriving there Feb. 17, 1941, and remained there until May 10, 1941. Then we obtained a visa to Cuba and obtained passage on the French boat Santa Vira which left Marseille on May 10, 1941 bound for Martinique. However, this boat was stopped and detained by the French Government near Cape Blanc, Africa, and we were forced to remain on the boat for seven weeks. Then the passengers including my family and myself were taken off the boat and put into a concentration camp named Elid El Island about 30 miles from Cape Blanc. After five weeks in this camp we obtained, through my uncle Mr. I. Metz, President of Ex-Lux Co., 423 Atlantic Ave. N.Y., passage for my family and myself for the Portuguese boat Espana. We were permitted to leave the concentration camp after being there five weeks, leaving on about Aug. 15, 1941. We went by train to Tangora and from there by a small boat to Sevilla, Spain, arriving about Aug. 18, 1941. We were in Sevilla for three weeks and then went to Portugal, arriving Sept. 10, 1941. On Sept. 12, 1941 we left on the boat Espana which arrived in Havana, Cuba Sept. 27, 1941. We remained in Havana until August 7, 1942 and then went by airplane to Miami, Fla., arriving the next day, Aug. 7, 1942.

2. The diamonds were hidden by me in the small wooden frame of my suitcase when the Germans invaded Belgium, and remained there until my final arrival at the Customs in Miami, Fla., where, before the Customs officials, I broke the frame of the suitcase revealing the diamonds to the U. S. Customs. Thanks to this witness I was able to save my fortune from the Germans, and I still have the suitcase.

Page 2. Icko Gornachowski
423 Atlantic Avenue
Brooklyn, New York

(continued)

3. The 136 carats of diamonds were carried by me at all times in my trips and journeys from the first time I left Belgium on May 10, 1940 until I finally arrived in Miami on August 7, 1942, and were carried in my suitcase as mentioned above in item "2".

I want also to mention that almost my entire fortune consisted of these diamonds, and that my family and I travelled through the aid of my uncle, Mr. I. Metz who advanced me sums of money for passage and other living and traveling expenses, amounting to about \$4,500. For which I have applied for a license to repay him as soon as I obtain my diamonds from the Customs.

As the present time, before Christmas, is the peak of the season in the diamond industry, I should appreciate it very much if I may obtain a license as soon as possible to get my diamonds from the Customs.

Very truly yours

Icko Gornachowski

New York, N. Y.
Sworn to and subscribed to
before me this 29 day
of September, 1942.

Letter to Federal Reserve Bank (1942)

On September 19, 1942, Icko sent a letter to the Federal Reserve Bank detailing every leg of his arduous journey, and requesting the return of his diamonds. Four months after that, he penned another letter, this time to the Foreign Funds branch of the U. S. Treasury. His words are moving: "After all the suffering I've gone through in my escape from the Germans, up until my arrival in this country, I am very happy to be here and would like to establish myself as a business man here, and hope someday to become a U.S. citizen. However, my entire fortune is in these diamonds which I brought here with me and for which I request a release



Isaac, Rosa and their children - Atlantic City

Isaac Gornach
29-01 47th Street
Long Island City, New York

January 5, 1943

Foreign Funds Control
Treasury Department
Washington, D. C.

Gentlemen:

With reference to my application No. NY 45-0099 and your letter of Nov. 25, 1942 refer 21129, I communicated recently with the Federal Reserve Bank of N.Y. and it was suggested to me that I write to you directly again in order to obtain some definite information regarding my application. As this application has been pending for a considerable time, I feel that you might give me some information regarding its status. I refer you to all the previous correspondence with respect to this application, and that I have supplied all the information as requested.

After all the suffering that I've gone through in my escape from the Germans up to my arrival in this country, I am very happy to be here and would like to establish myself as a business man here, and hope some day to become a U. S. citizen. However, my entire fortune is in these diamonds which I brought here with me and for which I request a release from the U. S. Customs.

I have always been a man of fine character and integrity and am and would be glad to refer you to reputable people both here and abroad, (in addition to the ten names I have already supplied), who will testify for me. I have recently been elected a member of the executive board of the Palestine Hebrew Culture Fund, Inc., 1133 Broadway, N.Y. City.

Please note also that my name has been legally changed in my application for first papers for U. S. citizenship, and that I now have a new address, as follows:

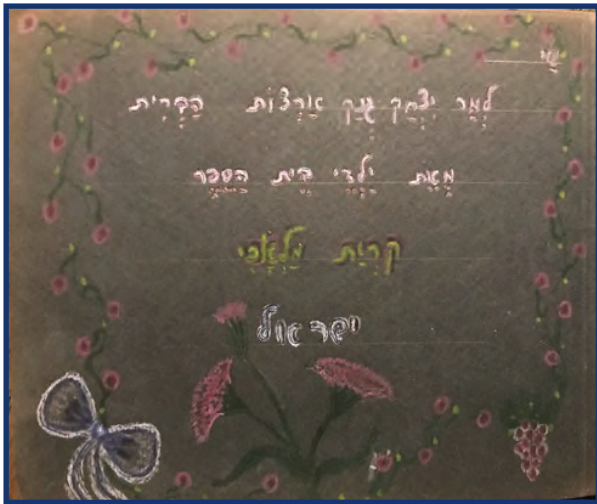
Isaac Gornach, 29-01 47th Street, Long Island City, New York.
Formerly was:
Icko Gornachowski, 423 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, New York.

I would more than appreciate it, then, if you would kindly let me know by return mail the reason why my application is being held up so long and when I can expect its approval.

Very truly yours,

Isaac Gornach

Letter to Foreign Funds Control (1943)



Page of publication presented to Isaac for his donation to the vocational school

from the U.S. customs. I have always been a man of fine character and integrity and can and would be glad to refer you to reputable people... who will testify for me." Finally, after much back and forth with the Federal Reserve Bank my great-grandfather got his diamonds back.

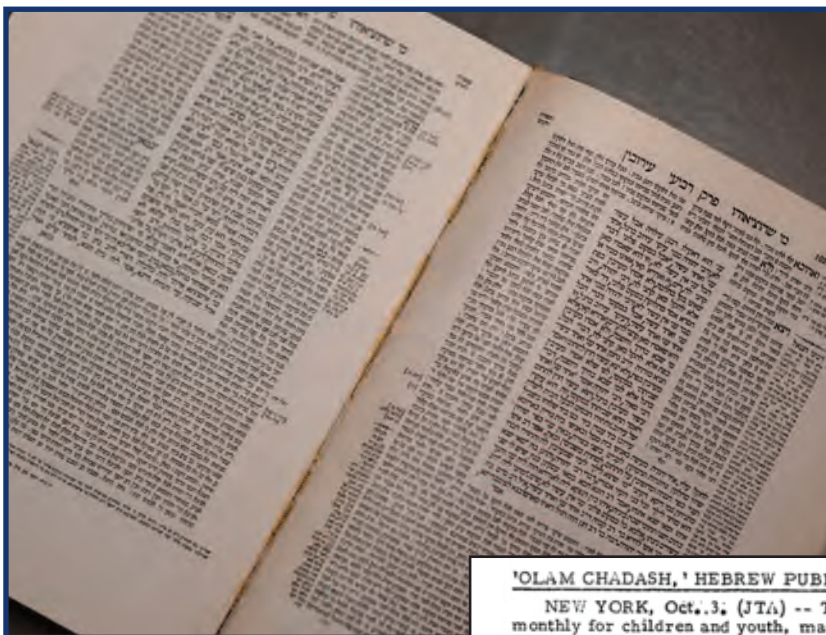
While diamonds were his livelihood, Isaac's life centered around other treasures. In America, he was a devoted community leader. And yet, his heart was always in Israel. He and a friend published a Hebrew weekly and monthly, *Olam Chadash*, which circulated in Jewish elementary schools. It included narratives from *Tanach*, and stories about Israel. Isaac also supported a vocational school for *olim* in *Kiryat Malachi*. As a token of appreciation the children presented him with a publication which Pepa and I enjoyed together.



Kiryat Malachi Vocational School student receiving the Degel Yerushalayim

In 1951, Isaac embarked on what he hoped would be the last leg of his life's journey, and the fulfillment of a dream, and moved to Israel. There, he and his brothers founded a branch of their diamond business, as well as a Judaica publishing house, *El Hamikorot*. They produced the first punctuated *shas* in Israel.

Contrary to popular thought, diamonds are not forever. My family has long since moved on to other professions. But that Talmud, a set of which we are honored to possess, and the many other *sifrei kodesh* that they printed, are eternal gemstones in our crown.



Seforim published by El Hamikoros



'OLAM CHADASH,' HEBREW PUBLICATION FOR CHILDREN, APPEARS IN NEW YORK

NEW YORK, Oct. 3. (JTA) -- The first issue of "Olam Chadash," illustrated Hebrew monthly for children and youth, made its appearance here today under the editorship of Elchanan Indelman, well-known Hebrew educator. It will be disseminated in Jewish schools and will reflect the activities of Hebrew schools in the United States; It will also bring news about Jewish life in America; Israel and other countries.

The magazine is published by Hebrew Publications for Children, Inc., a non-profit organization of which Jacob Kinzler is president; Jacob Goodman and Isaac Genack are the vice-presidents of the organization. Asher Wolk is managing editor of the publication.

JACOB & DOVID KESTENBAUM

PARTNERS FOR LIFE

SOFIA KESTENBAUM

My journey of genealogical discovery began just seven miles from home, in the Museum of Jewish Heritage in downtown Manhattan. There, I was able to view an exhibition of a decade ago, in which the ceilings drooped strikingly with a myriad of papers. They were an artist's attempt to depict the bureaucratic piles of correspondence that blocked the way of European Jews as they sought to flee the Nazis. "Against the Odds" details the kindness and dedication of five Americans who heeded their desperate calls for help. Two of those heroes were Jacob and Dovid Kestenbaum. Reading the original letters stored in the archives allowed me to connect personally to the addressees whom I only knew from stories and family portraits. But it was high time that I got to know the family Zaida, my great-great grandfather, and his brother.



Dovid Kestenbaum was born in 1895 in Tarnow, Poland to Elias and Leah Rochel. In 1914, the family relocated to Leipzig, Germany, where they established a successful fur business with branches in Paris, London, and New York. Dovid married Gisella Goldman in 1918 and together they had seven sons.

The Nazi rise to power, followed by the arrest of Elias and Dovid, convinced the shrewd businessmen that they had no future in Germany. Bernard, Dovid's oldest son, vividly recalls the urgency with which the family patriarch urged them all to flee, "out, out, get out!"

In 1936 after spending three years in Holland, France, and England, they arrived in NY on board the SS Washington. Dovid joined the New York branch of Kestenbaum Bros. founded by his older brother Jacob. But it wasn't only in business that the two partnered. Jacob and Dovid immediately set out to help their fellow Jews still trapped in Nazi Germany. Enid Boxer, a granddaughter of Elias Kestenbaum, and secretary for the business, described how letters poured in from all over Europe at a hectic pace.

Elias and Leah Rochel (Feigenbaum) Kestenbaum



Dovid and Gisella Kestenbaum



Jacob Kestenbaum

Working creatively within the constraints of American laws that strictly limited immigration, they overcame formidable obstacles, and enabled hundreds of refugees to reach safety. Dovid and Jacob’s personal prosperity made it possible for them to sign affidavits of support in which they assumed financial responsibility for numerous alleged “cousins,” as they called the strangers, still in Europe. By the time the authorities caught on to their ‘tricks,’ the Kestenbaums had signed over eight hundred affidavits.

I was in awe when I noticed the world renowned names of illustrious Jewish leaders signed on the letters requesting the help of my ancestors.

Rav Aharon Kotler, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, the Lubavitcher *Rebbe*.

Suddenly, I recognized that it was the dedicated persistence of my forebears, and their refusal to let the Torah of the European *yeshivos* go up in ashes, that made way for the explosion of Torah learning that I have come to take for granted.

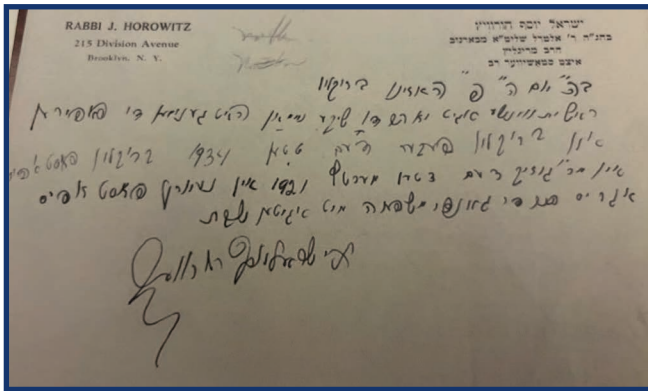
Unfortunately, not every one of their affidavits actually brought the named refugees to safety . Yet, a great many did, and the herculean efforts of the Kestenbaum Brothers remain legendary. They lived by the well-known mantra, *kol Yisroel areivim zeh ba’zeh*, all of Israel is responsible for one another,



Kestenbaum Family: L-R: Joseph (Jo), Ben (Wolfgang), Dovid, Leonard, Menashe (Nash), Ephraim, Gisella, Bernard (Bernie), and (center on top) Rafael (Ray)



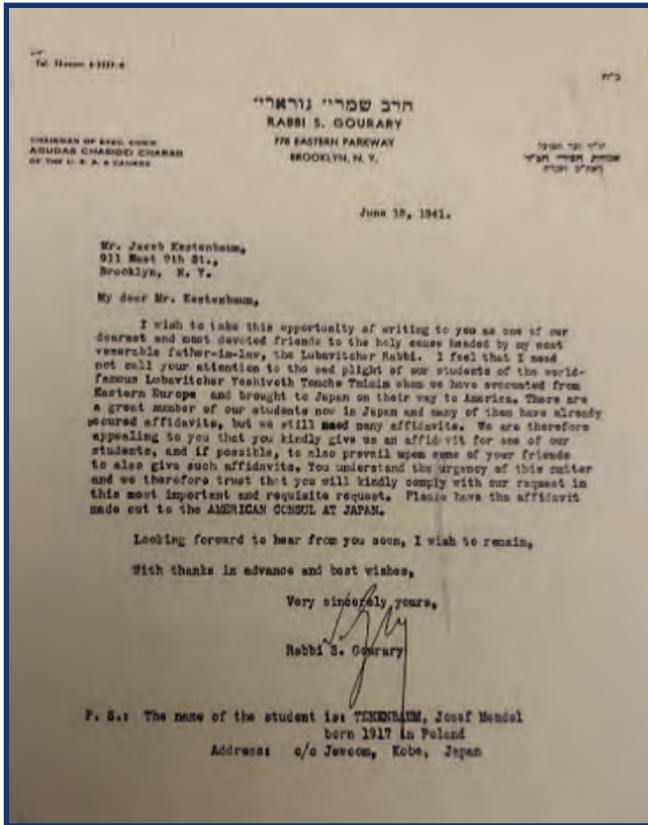
Enid Aussenberg-Boxer (at her wedding)



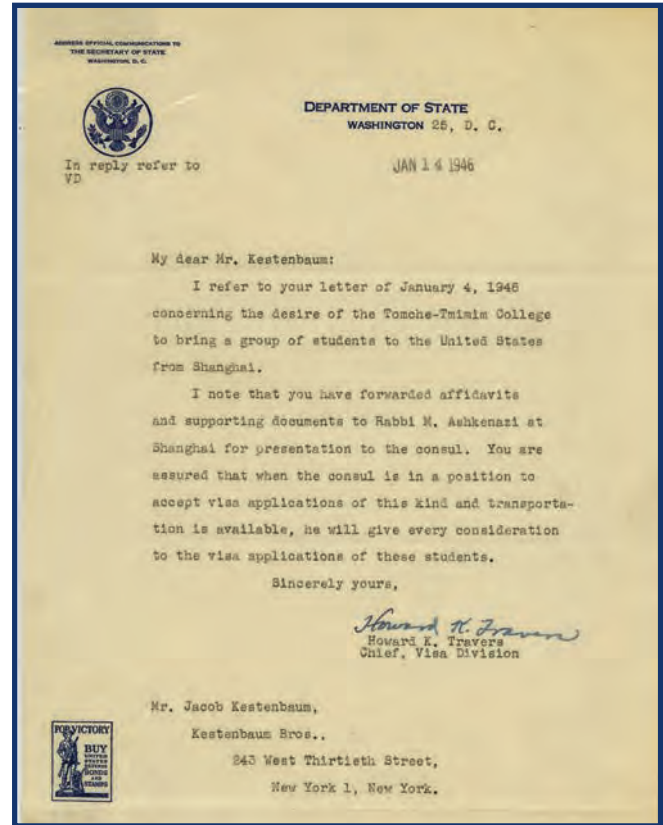
Letter from Rabbi Yisroel Yosef Horowitz

as very few have. And while their fur business closed long ago, their legacy of boldness, generosity and kindness will forever provide heartwarming inspiration for our family.

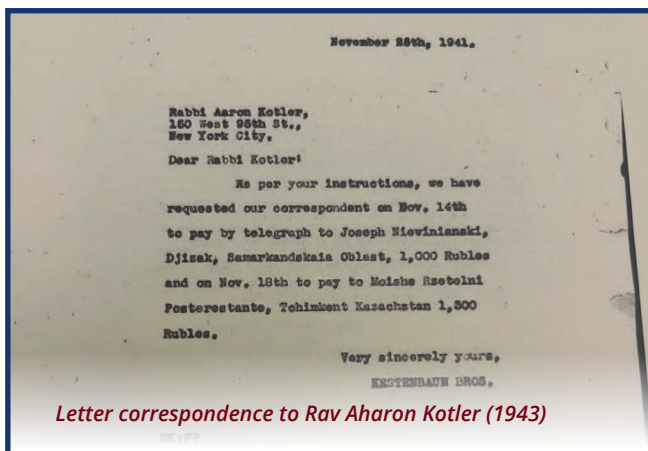
It is daunting to capture an ancestor of this stature in a limited space. Perhaps that is how the revered Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l felt when, at Dovid Kestenbaum's levaya in 1957, he asked if he could speak, but then said only nine words, 'the man lying before us today was a tzadik,' and sat down. Yehi zichro baruch.



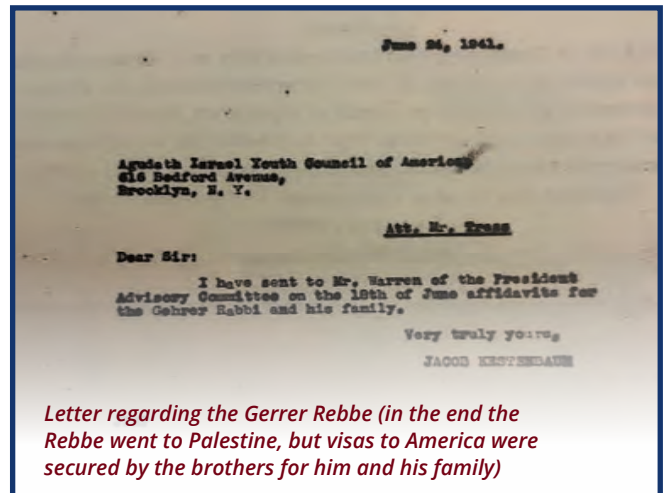
Letter from Rabbi Shemaryahu Gurary (He was a son-in-law of R' Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson, the sixth Chabad-Lubavitch rebbe, and the brother-in-law of Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the seventh.) (1943)



Letter regarding the Tomche-Tmimim College (Yeshiva) in Shanghai (1946)



Letter correspondence to Rav Aharon Kotler (1943)



Letter regarding the Gerrer Rebbe (in the end the Rebbe went to Palestine, but visas to America were secured by the brothers for him and his family)

STEPHEN KLEIN

RAISING THE (CHOCOLATE) BAR(TON'S)

REGGIE KLEIN

As a little girl, my Sundays centered around spending time with my grandfather. They were fun days, enriched by the stories he told; tales which informed my childhood. Here is one of my favorites:

In the early fall of 1997, at the opening ceremony for the Museum of Jewish Heritage (a Living Memorial to the Holocaust) in New York City, an elderly couple approached my grandfather, Mr. George Klein, and asked if he would touch the wall of the museum together with them. Catching his bewildered look, the woman shared their story:

“We arrived in America after our families had been murdered by the Nazis. One *Shabbos* afternoon, we were walking in downtown Manhattan and passed a Barton’s store. We looked inside, and were surprised to see that it was closed. Curious, we questioned a nearby policeman who replied that the shop was owned by ‘some immigrant who keeps his business closed on Saturdays.’ I turned to my husband and said, ‘if this man can manage not

to work on *Shabbos and Jewish holidays*, so can you.’ From that day on we were a *shomer Shabbos* family. Mr Klein, you are the son of the man who gave us *Shabbos*, and now you gave us a memorial because of *Shabbos*.” Together, they touched the wall.

Fifteen years earlier, my grandfather had agreed to help found the museum. A board of overseers was assembled, and the greatest point of contention was *Shabbos*, the most profitable museum day of the week, and *Yamim Tovim*, which knocked out another few days of revenue. But my grandfather would not budge. He looked his opponents in the eye and challenged them: ‘Think of your own grandparents; would they feel honored by a museum which is open for business on our holiest days??’



Stephen Klein with the refugee children (1946)

His unwavering loyalty to *Shabbos* is not surprising.

My genealogical journey with my grandfather has unveiled for me my larger-than-life great-grandfather, Stephen Klein *zt'l*, who at the age of sixteen was blessed by the Chofetz Chaim ‘to attain success in all of your endeavors, and to sanctify the name of G-d.’ I have come to know the saga of the thirty-one year old man who, immediately after the Anschluss of 1938, left Vienna and his family’s premier chocolate business. In his tiny Brooklyn kitchen, he experimented to find recipes for chocolate treats that would entice the palates of his neighbors. He peddled his goods on the streets in attractive pushcarts, and in time built a thriving



Left to right: Shabse Frankel, Stephen Klein, Menashe Stein, and Irving Bunim with packages for overseas relief, shown at the Vaad Warehouse (1946).



Left to right: Stephen Klein, Rav Kotler, Zev Wolfson, Rabbi Porush

THE SYNAGOGUE
its holy objects and their significance

1. The TORAH (Scroll of the Law)
2. The ORON HAKODESH (Holy Ark)
3. The POROCHES (Curtain)
4. The MENORAH (Candelabrum)
5. The NER TUMID (Eternal Light)
6. The DIMUD (Reading Stand)
7. The BIMA'AH (Pulpit)
8. The MACHZIZEH (Holiday Prayer Book)
9. The SHOFA'AR (Korn's Horn)

THIS PAGE WAS PUBLISHED BY BARTON'S IN THE NEW YORK TIMES AS A PUBLIC SERVICE.

A ad in the NYT

My grandfather vividly recalls the scene. It was 1946, and hundreds of boxes of Barton's chocolate were loaded onto the ship which would take his father, Mr. Stephen Klein zt"l, to Europe for six months. My great-grandfather, who was traveling as a captain in the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration,) explained that with chocolate he could obtain entree into the consulates and embassies from which he planned to extract staggering numbers of visas. Stephen Klein left no stone unturned to save the life of a fellow Jew, and it was because of his legendary persistence, both during and after the war, that he was appointed chairman of the Va'ad Hatzalah Immigration Committee by Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l. While in Europe he invested all of his energies into finding hidden Jewish children, and resettling refugees from DP camps. In the early 1950's, again at the request of Rav Aharon, he became 'Mr. Chinuch Atzmai,' and supported the development of an independent educational system serving the needs of chareidi families in Israel. At the same time, he devoted himself to Torah U'Mesorah, and facilitated the establishment of Jewish Day Schools in America. All in an effort to insure the primacy of authentic Yiddishkeit. It is no wonder that my grandfather "never saw him sleep except on Shabbos."

chocolate company. A company which he used to save countless Jewish lives, and through which he educated American Jews about traditions which were in danger of falling by the wayside. Every one of his retail stores was closed on *Shabbos* and *Yomtov*. Tucked away in many Barton's boxes were educational pamphlets highlighting the significance of every Jewish holiday. In the 1940's and 50's he was *mekadesh shem Shamayim* by placing advertisements in newspapers around the country - including The New York Times - announcing the times for Sabbath candle lighting.

His, indeed, was a life of *hadlakas haneiros*. The many lives that were not extinguished due to his efforts, and the souls he ignited with his own religious passion, will forever be a beacon of light directing my own commitment to the Jewish People.



Stephen Klein addressing Chinuch Atzmai



Inside a Bartons Store

Store hours put outside the Bartons store

BARTON'S CHOCOLATE... HOW SWEET IT WAS

Growing up in the Bronx in the 1960's and 70's, I was a rarity. My parents were both American, and I, thank G-d, had four living grandparents, three of whom had been born in the Land of Israel. The latter detail was a source of pride for me, and in conversation with my classmates at Bais Yaakov Bais Miriam, many of whom were children of Holocaust survivors with European customs, I often showcased my quaint *Yerushalmi minhagim*.

Among them was the way we observed *Pesach*. We took 'not *mishing*' to another level. Not only would we not eat food prepared in anyone else's home, but we would not consume any product which had not been processed by us. My father and grandfather supervised the baking of our *matzos* at the Shatzer Matzah Factory, and from our batches they ground a few pounds of *matzah* meal which lasted us the week. Unprocessed sugar was one of the few grocery items we purchased; no jarred or canned food for us. One of the jobs delegated to my sister, Leebee, and me was greasing the cake pans. Because we didn't buy oil, we would scrape the pans with walnuts to achieve that smooth greasy feel. As for sweets, my Bubby *a"h* got creative. She would cook beets and carrots, squeeze all the water out, and mix a bit of sugar and *matzah* meal into them. She then rolled them into balls, coated them with more sugar, and stuck them in the freezer. That was our candy for seven days.

And then came the eighth day, *acharon shel Pesach*. The final day of the *chag*, when many of the restrictions were lifted and we could 'let the good times roll.' How Leebee and I looked forward to that moment!

Of course, there was the *kosher l'Pesach* sherbet from Lou G. Siegel's restaurant which was relegated to the window sill all week long because my grandmother wouldn't allow it into her *Pesach* freezer. If the weather had been wintery, we were in luck; but if it had been a balmy *yom tov*, we were left with sherbet soup.

The *piece de resistance*, though, was the box of Barton's *kosher l'Pesach* chocolate. All through *yom tov* it sat in its signature gold wrapping, tantalizing us. But on that last day, we broke out the bonbons, and bit into them one by one until we found the gooey fillings that we craved.

Yet we had no idea how sweet it was. We had no knowledge of the Jewish educational advertising, of the pioneering *shmiras shabbos*, of the bold and vast rescue efforts of Stephen Klein and the *Va'ad Hatzalah*. No, we were a couple of kids who didn't *chap* that Barton's chocolate was not simply the living end, but, also, the living means.

—Rebbetzin Peshi Neuburger

MARION SPIER PENSON ZELLER

MY ROAD TO THE JOURNEY

REBECCA PENSON

“Suddenly, the Consul appeared and gave the anxiously awaited news. Very shortly, a ship would leave the harbor for England and we had to hurry to get there. Ruth Spier took the little one, Marion, in her arms, leaving behind the baby carriage she had bought in dePanne... As we neared the ship, a bomb exploded next to us. We saw large metal splinters flying around us. People were shouting and running excitedly. Amid all the upheaval came a firm but quiet command, ‘women and children first!’ All of us were conducted via a narrow staircase further and further down to a cabin where we were locked in. ...We held our collective breath as the destroyer, ‘Keith,’ started to move. We passed the British coast with its White Cliffs and landed finally in Folkstone. Not much later we read in the papers that the destroyer ‘Keith’ had received a direct hit on the return journey and was never seen again.”



Freddy, Ruth and Marion (Post war in London)

In 1938, traumatized by the horrors of *Kristallnacht*, Ruth and Freddy Spier and their baby daughter, Marion left the Germany they had once loved, and headed for Holland. They settled in the quaint and pretty town of Breda. Sadly, though, they never got to see the flowers that they planted there, because less than a year later Hitler invaded The Netherlands and they were on the run again. They fled to Belgium, where the young parents were separated; Freddy was imprisoned and deported to the south of France, while Ruth posed as a ‘refugee from Holland’ and made it with her baby to the Belgian coastal town of De Pannes. It was there that she bought the carriage, and then crossed over into France. After a night’s rest in a barn, she trekked 10 kilometers with little Marion to Dunkirk, in Northern France, just two days before that town made world history. She joined the huge crowds of refugees who flooded the British Consulate in Dunkirk for passage to England, a mere 21 miles away. The destroyer ‘Keith’ got them there, but at Immigration in Folkstone her German passport was found, and she was taken with many fellow refugees; first, to Holloway, the English prison for women, and

later to an old internment camp on the Isle of Man. It wasn't until after the war that mother and daughter were re-united with Freddy, who had endured his own wanderings from France to Portugal to Brazil and finally to the US. Marion never recovered from that long and unnatural separation; she always felt distant from the father who loved her but hadn't been around during her formative years. I know, because she is my Savta, Marion Spier Penson Zeller. Not that I ever heard a word of this from her.

I suppose it all began for me with a small tan leatherbound volume my father gave me a few months back when I was looking for family artifacts. It seemed to be a jubilee journal, commemorating the hundredth year since Freddy's grandfather, Zacharias Spier, had established a leather company in Wickrath, Germany. The book was a promising start, but written entirely in German, a language which is Greek to me. Mrs. Klugmann suggested that I arrange a meeting with Mrs. Meta Bechhofer,

a much adored German-born translator of the writings of her father, Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer, and great-grandfather, Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch.

Packed into the back seat of an Uber, I tried to have a normal conversation with my friend Aliza, who came along for the experience. But Rebbetzin Neuburger, who accompanied us, (and was way more interested in uncovering my roots than I was,) had so many questions about Zacharias, and I had very few answers. So somewhere between the West Side Highway and Overlook Terrace in Washington Heights, I called my father, who, thankfully, filled in many blanks. And then, kind of casually, he said: 'we actually have the memoir of a family friend that interweaves her own escape with that of my mother. Would you like to see it?'

A few days later the memoir was in my hand, and the rest is history...the history I have just shared.



My visit with translator, Mrs. Meta Bechhofer, in Washington Heights with the book that commemorates the 100th year anniversary of Zacharias' leather business (May 2023)

RENÉE REICHMANN

A LETTER TO MY NAMESAKE

RENÉE REICHMANN

My dear *Nagymama* Renée,
They say that your soul gets some of the qualities of the ancestor you were named for. In that case, it is my privilege and honor to be named for you.

You spent the war years saving thousands of Jews from the Holocaust. But what most inspires me is the unassuming, simple *chessed* you did that enabled you to do all of the others.

It was early in March of 1938 in Vienna. You were a forty-year-old mother of six. It was the week of your eldest son, Eli's *bar mitzvah*. I can only imagine what a special moment that was for you. Yet, when your father-in-law suddenly took ill and

was unable to attend, you sacrificed the party you had prepared for months, gave the food away to the poor, and spent the weekend of the *bar mitzvah*, *Shabbos Parshas Zachor*, in your father in law's house. That *Shabbos*, while you were tucked away in Hungary, safe and sound, the Nazis marched into your hometown of Vienna, Austria. They stormed the city, looking for the rabbinical leaders and influential figures. They were looking for you, but you weren't there. You were celebrating your son's



Eva and Renée Reichmann (Tangier 1946)



*Louis Reichmann (left) and Isaac Klein (on truck) (Tangier, 1945)
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee*

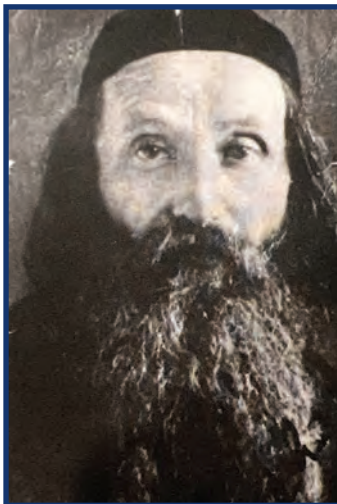
bar mitzvah in the most awe-inspiring way, with the *mitzvah* of *kibbud av v'eim*. A *mitzvah* that lengthened your life, just as the Torah said it would.

From that moment on, though, it was a run for your life. You traveled to France, Spain, and finally to safety in Tangier, Morocco. In Tangier, you were finally able to relax, yet your soul was not at peace knowing that millions of others were not as lucky as you.

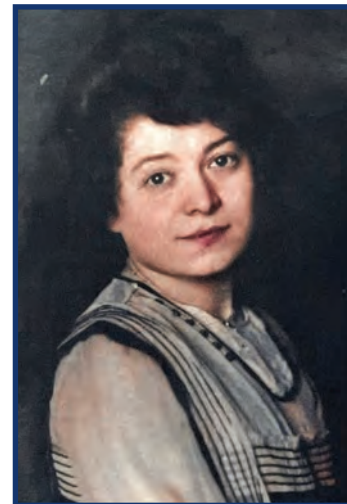
At first, you threw yourself into relief efforts. Your family friends, the Kleins from N.Y., asked you to send packages to their parents, Simcha and Yache, and their brother, Isaac, in a ghetto in Poland. Once you accomplished that, you realized you could send food packages to many Jews hiding in Belgium and France. Remarkably, with the help of your brother, Chesky Gestetner, you even managed to send food packages to thousands of girls in concentration camps. The Spanish Red Cross facilitated the labeling and sending of those parcels, and all of your sons and their friends helped with the packaging, often into the wee hours of the morning. In 1944 you were sending two thousand packages per week.

A young girl named Chaya Meiselman¹ was one of the many recipients. She had been deprived of every basic human need, even the dignity of a name. And then she got a package from you. It was addressed to 'Chaya.' The fact that someone knew her name and cared to send her a package filled her with strength. So taken with the generosity of its sender, she shared the delicious contents with all the women around her. Without knowing this story,

1 - The account of Chaya Meiselman's experience is detailed in *To Save a World*, by David Kranzler and Eliezer Gevirtz.



*David Reichmann
(Hungary, mid-1930s)*



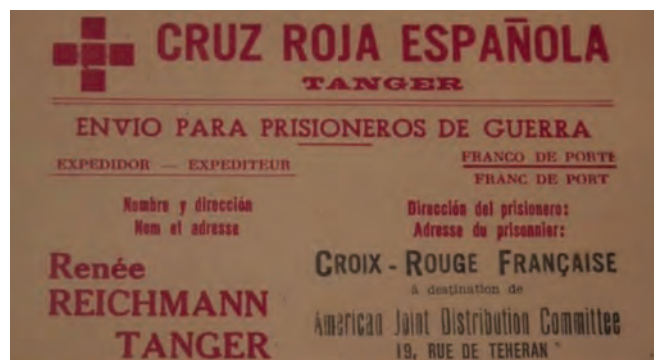
*Renée Gestetner
(1919)*

my parents named me Chaya Renée; I wonder if, in some way, my name honors not only you, but her as well.

In March of 1944, the Nazis invaded Hungary, and Hungarian Jews were slated for death. You, of course, could not stand idly by. Together with your eldest daughter, Eva, you threw all of your energies into saving as many Jews as you could.



*Edward Reichmann, at microphone, addressing Agudath Israel dinner (New York, 1962)
Rav Moshe Feinstein is seated immediately to his left*



Spanish Red Cross in Tangier card for Renée Reichmann

You turned to the American *Charge de Affaires* in Morocco, James Rives Childs, for help. He asked the High Commissioner of Spanish-occupied Tangier, General Luis Orgaz, to secure a staggering number of Spanish visas - the twelve hundred you dared to ask for. He did, and with them, you saved twelve hundred Jewish souls. I have learned that most of those were children, and that later, you obtained even more visas, for as many of their family members as you could.

Nagymama Renée, you have taught me that to give to others is the greatest thing we can do for ourselves. It is my honor, my privilege, and my call to action to be named for you.

Your proud and loving great-granddaughter,

Chaya Renée Reichmann



Albert, Paul, Renée, Reichmann with Israeli President Yitzchok Ben-Zvi in his office (Jerusalem 1956)



Left to right: Albert, Paul, Louis, Edward, and Ralph Reichmann. Their mother, Renée Reichmann, seated in front.

QUESTION MARKS

TEHILLA SPIRA

“I didn’t have a childhood,” said Zaidy tearfully. Suddenly, I am afraid to ask questions because they evoke pain. And yet, my grandfather will soon teach me that when we don’t ask questions, we are destined to live without answers.

Nosson Shalom Spira was born in Antwerp, Belgium on October 29th, 1940, a *b’chor* to Baruch and Bella Spira. Their joy, though, was dampened by the timing: The Nazis had taken control of Belgium in May of 1940¹, and Antwerp’s Jews feared for their future. On October 28th, 1942, one day before Zeidy’s second birthday, Baruch Spira was deported, first to France where he was forced to build Hitler’s Atlantic Wall², and then to Auschwitz³. Zeidy has absolutely no memories of his father.



Baruch Spira, Father of Soli Spira my grandfather

After Baruch was taken, Bella gave birth to a baby girl, Evelyn. Zeidy and his family moved from their very comfortable life in Antwerp to Heer-Agimont, a small village in the south of Belgium. There, together with two of his aunts and their children, they hid in the home of a gentile family for the duration of the war. This was a monetary arrangement which they could well afford because of the money they

had saved from Baruch’s dealings in the fur trade. Zeidy remembers not feeling cooped up, because he was taken outside from time to time. He also recalls vignettes from the local church. His sister, Evelyn, puts some of the pieces together for us, and explains that he alone had blond hair and blue eyes, so their hosts brought him to church as their ‘nephew.’

By the end of 1944⁴ it was safe to come out of hiding, and the Spiras moved to Brussels. About a year later they moved back to their home in Antwerp⁵. While they had known in their hearts that Baruch

was no longer alive, the confirmation of his death⁶ was devastating. Zeidy’s mother was left to care for him and his baby sister, alone. They went from being a well-to-do family to an impoverished one, and were forced to lean on Zeidy’s maternal uncle, Yisroel Stern, for financial support. As a diamond dealer, he was

1 - The German troops occupied Belgium as well as other countries in six weeks beginning in May of 1940. Belgium and the Netherlands surrendered in that month as well.

2 - “The Atlantic Wall was an extensive system of coastal defenses and fortifications built by Nazi Germany between 1942 and 1944 along the coast of continental Europe and Scandinavia as a defense against an anticipated Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe from the United Kingdom, during World War II.”

3 - The Germans in Belgium carried out the deportations of around 25,000 Jews from Belgium to Auschwitz between 1942 through 1944. Most of the Jews that were sent to Auschwitz from Belgium perished.

4 - Belgium was liberated after four years of being ruled over by Germany. The Belgian Government returned to power on September 8, 1944 after being liberated by allied forces.

5 - Antwerp, Belgium sustained serious damage from bombing during the war, that is why Zeidy’s family moved to Brussels temporarily before moving back to Antwerp in 1945/1946.

6 - After the war, Zeidy’s family was informed that Baruch was killed on the 23st of Cheshvan, but upon receiving Baruch’s death certificate from the Auschwitz archives we realized that the wrong Yahrzeit was being commemorated. They assumed that he was gassed immediately upon his arrival to Auschwitz, but he survived almost a month before he was killed on the 8th of Kislev.



Bella Spira, my Zeidy’s mother, holding Zeidy’s oldest child, Chantal

able to supply them with the staples they needed in order to survive. But there wasn't much money for extras; they lived mainly on bread and potatoes. They couldn't afford to pay a *bar mitzvah* teacher, so Zeidy never learned to read from the *Torah*. Instead, at his *bar mitzvah*, he simply recited the *birchos haTorah* when he was called up for an *aliyah*. They made a *L'chaim* with cake and some Alcohol 96, pure medical grade alcohol mixed with extracts.

Zeidy attended the *Jesode Hatorah* Elementary School in Antwerp and when he turned fifteen, began to work alongside his uncle in the diamond business. His *rebbe* at the time, Rav Kreiswirth⁷, begged my great-grandmother to send him to *yeshivah*, but the tuition was prohibitive.



Chief Rabbi of Antwerp, and my grandfathers Rebbe, Rav Kreiswirth

The will to learn, however, never waned in my grandfather. To this day he spends every free moment, no matter where in the world his business takes him, with his face buried in a *sefer*. He has sponsored many volumes of the Artsroll Talmud series as an expression of his gratitude to them: "... I have to travel around the world, with no *chavrusa*, no companion, no reference library. Which makes it difficult to study. The Artsroll *Gemara* is my portable *chavrusa* ... with the incisive notes on every page I discover more profound meaning and deeper layers of ideas in every page of the *Talmud*."

I can't help but notice the contrast. Throughout our conversations, Zaidy remembers only fragments of his early childhood. The more I ply him with questions, the more he cries. Not only for the life and the people that he lost, but also for the opportunities to ask that he has squandered, "My mother never volunteered, but maybe it is my fault that I didn't ask questions." And yet, his life has been dedicated to the study of Torah. To Talmudic analysis, to the *shakla v'tarya*, give and take, that depends upon posing questions and seeking answers. Now, Zeidy never stops asking.

Nor will I. I will ask, and ask again, so that when my grandchildren come to me, they will walk away with a full and beautiful picture of the Zeidy that I love.



Zeidy with his first wife Hindle Malka Peterfreund



Zeidy has an intense love for Torah learning and spends hours at a time delved deep in a Sefer



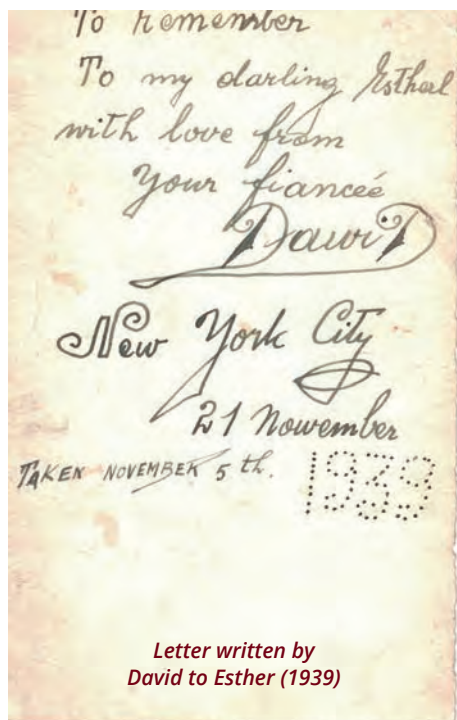
Zeidy and Vera Zack (his second marriage). Zeidy and Vera are now enjoying life together in Jerusalem

7 - After the war, Rav Kreiswirth traveled to Poland to try to rescue Jewish children who had been sheltered by the Catholic Church. He then moved to the USA, in 1947 and became the Rosh Yeshiva of Skokie Yeshiva. In 1953, Rav Krieswirth moved to Antwerp Belgium in the attempt to build up the community there. He spent the rest of his life devoted to the community in Antwerp.

DAVID AND ESTHER MAYBRUCH

A THOUSAND MILES APART

YOCHEDVED STEIN



Letter written by David to Esther (1939)

My very beloved dear sweet Esther,
I am engaged to you, but the dark war came and destroyed the joy that belonged to us. How happy could I have been if I were together with you. Now I think to myself, when will I see my dear and only bride Esther with beautiful shining eyes.

I can see you standing in front of me.

Do you already have the visa in your hands? Then buy a big suitcase and put your clothes nicely in it and do not worry about anything. Hopefully you will have a good journey.

Your one and only dear and very loving,

David

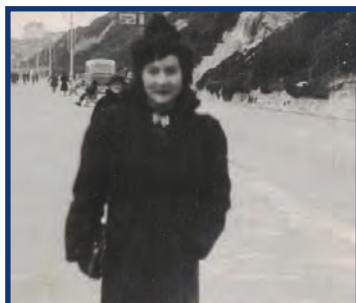
Esther Hillel was born in 1916 to parents who had made the ultimate sacrifice for *Shabbos*. Their London furniture shop could not stay afloat without the bustling Saturday business, so they closed it down. Instead, they purchased the only kosher dairy delivery service in the city, and supplied dairy products to Jews all over London. When Esther's father died suddenly in 1930, her mother had to

take over the business, and at the age of fourteen, Esther dropped out of the school she loved, to help out with receipts, orders, and billing.

During the summer of 1938, Esther and her family vacationed in Switzerland where she met the man who would change her life forever.

David Maybruck was born in Poland in 1910. His family owned a textile business, and he often traveled for work. In the summer of 1938, he traveled to Switzerland for business purposes, when he unexpectedly met the woman who would become his wife.

David visited Esther in London many times that year, and they soon became engaged. Often, they were thousands of miles apart, but they spoke all the time....in the form of letters.



Esther in London (circa 1938)

There was one day, though, when everything changed.

On September 1, 1939, while David was on business in Belgium, the Nazis marched into Poland and David's whole family was arrested. He wrote to Esther frantically, worried for his loved ones and his home. She desperately tried to keep him calm; to assure him that no matter how alone he felt, she would always be there with him. Behind her pen.

David knew he couldn't stay in Belgium, but with the onset of war the British Government had canceled all visas, so he had nowhere to go. Finally, he managed to obtain a business visa to the United States. Alone, he



David (circa 1938)

traveled to a country he did not know, whose language he did not speak, where not one person would greet him after his long long boat ride.

In London, Esther waited with bated breath for the documents that would allow her to join David in America. When the papers finally arrived, and she had to pick up and leave her life in England behind, she was terribly sad. It was so hard to say goodbye to her mother who had suffered so much, her brother who was soon to be drafted into the army, and

her beloved sisters. But she longed to be with David, so she got on the train to Genoa, Italy, where she boarded the ship "Manhattan" bound for the US.

Esther arrived in America on March 18, 1940. David picked her up and they were married one week later, on *Purim* - March 24th - of 1940. The ceremony was full, Esther recalled, not of family, but of people who wanted to see the marriage of the new English girl and the Polish man.

I am thankful that they finally reunited.

I am their great-granddaughter, and proud to be a part of their impressive legacy of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. We are the results of their sacrifices, and their strength is in our genes.



Picture of Esther and David at their engagement (circa 1939)



ETCHE TORTEN KON

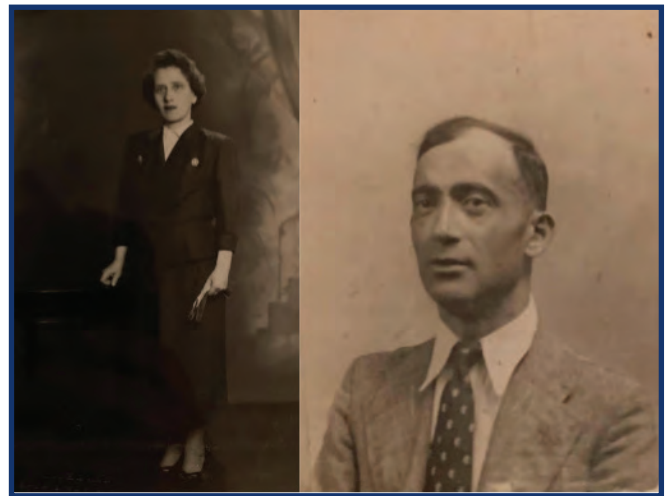
“WHO COULD ASK FOR ANYTHING MORE?”

CHAVI WEINER

Bubby loves the *sukkah*. What truly captures her heart are her beloved family's handmade decorations adorning each wall. They evoke memories that transport her to the many cherished moments that have enriched her life.

And yet, the *sukkah* is much more than just a place of comfort and warmth for Bubby. It is a metaphor for her own life, one that has been marked by constant change and transience.

My Bubby, Etche Torten Kon, was born on January 6, 1936, to Shaul and Chava Torten. Her early years were idyllic, surrounded by loving grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, in a beautiful apartment in the second district of Vienna. Her grandfather owned a textile factory, helped to build the *mikvaos* of Vienna, and often



Chava Mermelstein-Torten (left), Saul Torten (right) (Vienna, Austria circa 1930)



Saul Torten, Bubby, Chava Torten, and au pair in Marienbaud (Czechoslovakia 1938)



My Bubby and her parents in their apartment right before they left for Italy (Vienna, Austria 1939)



A ticket for the tramline, line 29/30 for Eva Torten (Milan, Italy 1940)

hosted the many *rabbanim* who visited the city. At that time, Bubby's father was a banker and her mother ran her grandfather's textile business. Bubby remembers those days as the most loving and tranquil in her life.

However, life changed for the family on March 12, 1938, when Germany annexed Austria and the Nazis assumed control. Shortly after *Kristallnacht*, my Bubby's father was taken to Dachau. Bubby's mother was strong and courageous; she marched right into Dachau with her diamond ring and bribed a guard to release her husband. When they returned home, they began to pack suitcases so they could leave Vienna at a moment's notice.

The moment came quickly, on July 31, 1939, when the Gestapo knocked at their door. My Bubby's parents did not budge, having witnessed their Jewish neighbors forcefully taken from their homes. Although the four locks on the door prevented the Nazi secret police from entering, they promised to return with a locksmith the next day. In a desperate attempt to flee, the family left in the middle of the night by horse and buggy with few possessions, hoping to join Bubby's uncle in America.

They left just in the nick of time, but life did not get any easier. The family arrived in Milan, Italy with little money and lived in a building with many

FIFTY YEARS LATER, MORAH KON'S TALMIDOS REMEMBER...

When my sister asked if I remembered *Morah* Kon, the first thing that I said was, "She liked me!" I think every girl in the class felt that way from the first day of third grade when she came into our class so happy and excited to be teaching the "best class" in the school! She even brought other teachers in to show off her wonderful class. We always felt that she loved us and loved teaching us! *Morah* Kon said that we were her *cholent*- I was the *flanken*, G was the bones, T was the potatoes etc.

Morah Kon introduced us to Rashi. We would copy Rashi on many *pesukim* into our Rashi *machbarot*. I still remember copying what we thought must be the longest Rashi in the *Chumash* – ויתרוצצו!

Morah Kon taught us the tunes of *Hallel* as well as the "Parshiyos of *Sefer Breishis* Song" that I eventually taught my children. We put on a great Purim play in fourth grade. *Vashti* sang, "I'm gonna wash that king right out of my hair and send him far away."

Morah Kon cared for her students. I remember when a classmate lost her father, and *Morah* Kon piled most of our class into her old car and took us to be מנחם אבל. May *Morah* Kon have many years of continued health and happiness with lots of *nachas* from her family!

– Zippy Raymon

I was so excited when you mentioned *Morah* Kon to me! I've often wondered about her, and I'm so happy to hear that, *BH*, she is well (*amush!*) As I told you, she was my third and fourth grade *morah*, and made everything exciting and interesting. I loved learning with her! One example of her lasting impact is my refusal to wear contact lenses or do anything that might impact my sight: that's because every Rashi she taught -- including the one about *Yitzchak* being considered dead because he was blind -- was so vividly imparted!

– Shoshana Schneider

P.S. Another favorite Rashi/lesson was the "*pachim ketanim*" -- which I often refer to!

Morah Kon was a most devoted and unforgettable teacher who understood and valued each of her charges.

– Annie Prager

FÜRSORGE-ZENTRALE
der Inn. Kolonialgemeinde Wien
Auswanderungsabteilung
37061/1

FRAGEBOGEN
37061/1

37061/1

Name: Tortore Vorname: Saül

Wohnort: Wien genaue Adresse: T. Blumengasse 2

Geburtsdatum: 24/6 1897 Geburtsort: Catagoz, Italien

Stand (ledig/verheiratet/verwitwet/geschieden): verheir.

Staatsangehörigkeit: Italien In Wien wohnhaft seit: 1919

Eventueller früherer Aufenthalt (Orts- und Zeitangabe):

Beruf (Spezialfach): Fachlehrer/Lehrer

Berufsbildung:

Bisherige Tätigkeit und letzte Stellung im Beruf: Beauf. Angestellter

Wurde ein neuer Beruf erlernt? Wenn ja, welcher?

Ausbildung für den neuen Beruf:

Sprachkenntnisse: italien., polnisch, englisch

Gegenwärtige wirtschaftliche Lage und monatlicher Verdienst: ohne Beschäftigung

Sind Sie in der Lage, sich alle für die Auswanderung notwendigen Dokumente zu beschaffen? ja

Wenden!

Wohin wollen Sie auswandern? USA

Welche Pläne haben Sie für Ihren neuen Aufenthalt? wenn möglich in einem Restaurant arbeiten

Welche Mittel stehen Ihnen für die Auswanderung zur Verfügung? Reisekosten

Welche Beziehungen haben Sie im Ausland, besonders in dem Land, wohin Sie auswandern wollen?

Von und Zutun	Wohnort	Genaue Adresse	Verwandtschaftsverhältnis
<u>U. J. Kuber</u>	<u>London</u>	<u>112, N. 11th St.</u>	<u>Vonvater</u>
<u>U. Kuber</u>	<u>London</u>	<u>245 Jefferson</u>	<u>"</u>
<u>U. Kuber</u>	<u>London</u>	<u>100, 1st St.</u>	<u>"</u>

Referenzen:

Haben Sie einen gültigen Paß? ja

Angestellt von: gültig bis August 1938

Angehörige

Verwandtschaftsverhältnis	Name	Geburtsort	Geburtsdatum	Beruf
<u>Elter</u>	<u>Ewa Tortore</u>	<u>Italien</u>	<u>10/10 1896</u>	<u>Lehrer</u>
<u>Elter</u>	<u>Saül</u>	<u>Wien</u>	<u>24/6 1897</u>	<u>"</u>

Welche der obgenannten Angehörigen sollen jetzt und welche später auswandern?
alle gemeinsam

Wien, am 6/7 1938

Saül Tortore
Unterschrift

My Bubby (circled) and her class in the Tarbut School in Cuba (Cuba 1941).

other people, sharing a single room. Food was scarce, and they relied on Bubby to collect the old pieces of bread from the baker early in the morning.

In July 1940, Bubby's father was taken to Ferramonti labor camp (and later transferred to Nereto,) leaving the family in a difficult situation. Uncle Sender, Bubby's mother's brother, worked tirelessly to bring them to America, but the process was complicated. Bubby contracted many childhood illnesses, and the American Consul would not let the family enter with a sick child. When Bubby came down with scarlet fever, she was taken to a hospital. In Italy, the hospital and convent were one unit, and she was moved to the convent when she got better. She stayed there for months, and her mother became preoccupied with her release; daily, she begged the nuns to let her only child out, until they finally returned Bubby to her mother. Eventually, thanks to her Uncle Sender's efforts, they were granted a quota number to enter the United States.

On October 22, 1941, they flew on an army plane from Italy to Portugal. Their stay in Portugal

was brief, and finally, on November 11, 1941 they boarded the S.S. Colonial to Cuba to await their turn which would enable them to enter the United States.

Bubby remembers Cuba as a colorful place, full of singing, dancing, and music. Despite being



My Bubby (circled) and her class in the Tarbut School in Cuba (Cuba 1941).

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
RAFT COMMANDER (Entry Immigration and Customs)
 July 28, 1944. Aircraft No. 33612
 Miami, Florida, whereof E. A. Marshall is first officer
 on July 28, 1944.

4320

SS COLONIAL sailed November 11th, 1941

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF PASSENGERS

- 11 -

356.	THALER	Joseph	CUBA
357.		Dora	
358.		Simone	
359.	TORRES	SAUL	CUBA
360.		Eva	
361.		Edith	
362.	TURKOWITZ	Billy	CUBA
363.		Fanny	
364.	TYGEL	Chaja	USA
365.	ULLMANN	Mathilde	CUBA
366.	URDICH	Jeanette	CUBA

ION LISTS (See instructions on back hereof)
 LIST OF THE TIME OF ARRIVAL FROM OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES (to include date arriving at a land border airport from Canada or Mexico)

No.	RACE	NUMBER OF AIRMAN'S CERTIFICATE IF ANY	EMPLOYMENT		POSITION ON AIRCRAFT	WHETHER TO BE DEPORTED IN THE UNITED STATES			
			Place	Date					
* 4 * AMERICAN CREW ABOARD									
LEADS CITIZENS ARRIVING ON THE AIRCRAFT from Canada or Mexico or arriving in land between the mainland and Alaska									
No.	Country	NAME IN FULL			AGE	SEX	COUNTRY OF WHICH CITIZEN OR SUBJECT	ENRAGEMENT	
		Family Name	Given Name	Place of				Country	
359	Cuba	Torres	Saul	27	M	Polish	Havana	Cuba	
360	Cuba	Torres	Eva	28	F	Polish	Havana	Cuba	
361	Cuba	Torres	Edith	8	F	Polish	Havana	Cuba	
362	Cuba	Turkowitz	Billy	28	M	Cuban	Havana	Cuba	

My Bubby (circled) and her class in the Tarbut School in Cuba (Cuba 1941).

My Bubby (circled) and her class in the Tarbut School in Cuba (Cuba 1941).

poor and suffering from the mumps, Bubby fondly recalls those years. She attended the Tarbut School where Yiddish was spoken and they later moved to Vedado, a suburb, while waiting to immigrate to America.



My Bubby (circled) and her class in the Tarbut School in Cuba (Cuba 1941).

In the summer of 1944, their turn came and on July 28, 1944 they boarded flight 33612, Pan American Airways, to Miami. The family stayed there for a couple of days, and then came to New York to stay with her aunt and uncle, Tante Frieda and Uncle Sender, who had rented a little summerhouse in Haverstraw, New York. Together with all her "new" cousins, Bubby spent her first two months in America there.

to live the legacy of the old world, the *mesorah* she has guarded. This family extends far beyond her blood relatives and includes the scores of students who felt her touch during her nearly two decades as a beloved *morah* at Bais Yaakov Bais Miriam in the Bronx. They, too, ensure the endurance of her teachings. And, as she sang at the conclusion of our interview, "Who could ask for anything more?"

Yes, it is not surprising that Bubby loves the *sukkah*, which stands strong though its walls are shaky. By the age of eight, she had been shaken out of one home into another many times. She has virtually nothing tangible from her past; her memories and stories are the only remnants of the world she lost. But *she* is unshaken. Her present, and her future, are aglow with the loving family she has nurtured, whose every member continues



Rooted Out



MOLLY ZOLDAN FUCHS

THREE SISTERS

FAYE FUCHS

36957. 36958. 36959.

Three consecutive numbers seared by the Nazis into the arms of three loving sisters, Molly, Reizy, and Henya Zoldan. Together with their parents, Shmuel and Shaindel Zoldan, they were ripped from their home in Chust, Hungary and deported to Auschwitz. Molly, twenty three years old, and the middle daughter, had a quick eye and a bold hand. She and Henya had been signaled to the right, but their eldest sister, Reizy, was sent off to the left with their parents and the elderly and infirm. Knowing well that what she was about to do would mean certain death if she were caught, Molly nevertheless overcame fear with love, and in a split second pulled Reizy off the doomed line to join her sisters on the line of life. Thankfully, the SS guards missed the switch.



*Molly Fuchs
March 30th, 1921- December 2012*

For eleven excruciating months the sisters stood by each other's side, and it was often Molly who would pull them through with the extra potatoes she always managed to get her hands on. After liberation, they were brought to a DP camp in Prague, Czechoslovakia. It was there that Henya and Molly met and married their husbands. Molly moved to Paris, and Henya left for Israel. Several years later, Reizy married and moved to New York.

36.951	Wolf	Eva	Hasag-Ta	
2	Wolf	Sareta	"	
3	Würidiger	Elzo	"	
4	Würidiger	Eszer	"	
5	Würidiger	Iren	"	
6	Zelakowits	Rozsi	"	
7	Zoldan	Helen	"	
8	Zoldan	Rozsi	"	
9	Zoldan	Szeren	"	
36.960	Zoldan	Szeren	"	
1	Zimmermann	Erzsebet	"	
2	Zimmermann	Klara	"	
3	Zuckerbrod	Guszt	"	
4	Zuckermann	Magdalena	"	
5	Zuckerbrod	Rozalia	"	
6	Andrejewskaja	Vina	HASH	
7	Andrejewskaja	Walentina	"	
8	Antonowa	Lida	"	

The digits that each person had tattooed to their arm in Auschwitz



Reizy during the transport from Chust to Auschwitz

By 1959, Molly, Henya and their families had also immigrated to New York, and the three sisters were re-united. Sadly, Reizy's husband passed away in 1977, and just as Molly had pulled her close at the entry to Auschwitz, she now insisted that her older

sister move in with her so as not to be alone.

My great grandmother Molly taught me what it means to be selfless, and to care for a sister as you care for yourself. And maybe even more.



Left to right: Molly Fuchs, Reizy Lerner, and Henya Feintuch in Cutlers bungalow colony (South Fallsburg, 1995)

FINAL SHOTS

SARI GERBER



Freida Szwarc Gorenfeld and her mother in four final photos of all of her siblings and their children taken on her last visit to Poland before the war (1939)

A picture is not always worth a thousand words. Sometimes, it raises a thousand questions. Or elicits a thousand tears. Sometimes its silence is deafening.

In 1939, unaware, perhaps, that the winds of war were quickly blowing through Europe, Freida Szwarc Gorenfeld boarded a ship bound for her birthplace. She was excited to visit the close-knit family she had reluctantly left behind in the *shtetl* of Jozefow, Poland, a quarter of a century before. There are no recorded details of that homecoming, other than the photographs of Freida posing with her siblings and their families. In each of those pictures, there sits an older woman whose modest garb lends her an air of piety. She is their mother.

Freida returned to her home in Brooklyn, N.Y. and to her life with Felix and their three grown daughters. She never saw her family again. Not Josef or Berko, not Berish or Eli-Leib, not Leepa or Branna or Malke or Mutel. Did they die in the typhus epidemic of 1941? Were they murdered in the German *Aktion* of 1942? Or did they meet the fate of hundreds of Jews who were shot at a quarry or in the streets? I will never know for sure. But I wish I could, because Freida was my great-great grandfather George's sister. Of the nine Szwarc children only they left Jozefow before the war, and only they survived. I am forever grateful that they did. But I ache for the many cousins I might have had. For the ancestors whose *mesorah* my family has re-embraced, but whom I will only know from the four pictures that remain. Photos that preserve their memory, but do not tell their story.

<https://www.holocausthistoricalsociety.org.uk/contents/ghettosj-r/jozefow.html>



JACK AND MINDE DIAMOND

SWIMMING AGAINST THE TIDE

LILY PERLA

On a cold, wintery night in 1980, Jack and Minde Diamond were having dinner when there was a knock on the door of their Omaha, Nebraska home. The couple was not expecting company, and curious, Minde opened the door. Standing before her were two middle-aged men and an elderly one who appeared to be their father. They were strangers to Minde, and to Jack, who had joined her at the entryway. The older man was the first to speak. With his eyes focused on Jack he said: 'Because of you, these boys are alive.' Jack needed no more information. He knew exactly who they were.

Zeidy Jack (Zelik Dimenstein) was born and raised in the small *shtetl* of Dolhinov, Poland. When he was 20 years old, in 1942, the Nazis carried out three horrific slaughterings (*shechitahs*) of Jews in his town. His family was forced to hide in a small bunker dug into the floor of the kitchen, under the stove. But he, a strapping young man, had been sent by the Nazis to cut down trees in the forest, and was not with them. When he returned to the ghetto, he learned that his beloved mother had been brutally killed, and that the living remnants of his family had made for the woods.

Bubbie Minde (Katzovich) and her family also lived in Dolhinov. In the first massacre, in March of 1942, Bubbie's mother, grandmother, and nineteen-year-old sister were murdered. After the second *shechitah*, she, her father, and one sister went into hiding at the home of a gentile acquaintance in a nearby town. When the third massacre was carried out, they ran to a labor camp hoping that they might be safer if they worked. But one night, a Nazi named Corporal Willy let them know that if they didn't manage to leave the camp that night, they would all be killed the next day. Bubbie and the few family members that were left at this point knew they had no choice. They put their trust in Hashem, and managed to crawl under barbed wire and run across railroad tracks that were under constant surveillance by the Nazis. Bubbie Minde always said, the fact that they were able to make it across and out alive was truly a miracle; she saw it



Zelik and Mindel in the DP camp (1946)



Memorial to the Jews of Dolhinov who were massacred in 1942

as a sign from Hashem that she was going to live.

After escaping the camp, they went into hiding in the forest and joined a partisan group for the remainder of the war. By this time, Zeidie Jack had also escaped to the woods, and was fighting with the Russian partisans, saving countless lives.

During this period of time, he came across two little Jewish boys struggling to make it across stormy waters. He took each of them, put them on his shoulders and carried them across, while swimming to keep them afloat. Those were the two men who came to his door with their father decades later.

Zeidy Jack always said that when a person leaves this world, there are two things that will define him; his shem tov (good name,) and the doros (generations) that he leaves behind. He and Bubbie Minde, who died ten months apart from each other, left with both. And not only their own generations, but the descendants of the people that were saved by Zeidy Jack when the world was a very dark place.



Zelik and Mindel's wedding in the DP camp (1946)



Zelik and Mindel at their 70th wedding anniversary (2016)

A LETTER TO BABI

ELKY SCHWARTZ

I'm sitting looking at your photo contemplating, wondering. I didn't have the privilege of knowing you nor do I know much about you. All I ever really had was a picture and a name. A name given to me in your honor in the hopes that I would emulate the *chessed*, *hachnasas orchim*, and generosity for which you were known. But I'm determined, determined to learn and to discover where you came from and what you were like. I want to understand who you are and what tragedies and challenges you faced and the sacrifices you made so that I can be here today, proudly bearing your name.

Often throughout my childhood I wondered what your life looked like at different stages. At six or seven I might have wondered if you liked playing with dolls like I did. At twelve, if you, too, felt all grown up and responsible. Now, at seventeen, I wonder if you felt like you were on the brink of adulthood and what your dreams for the future were. I cannot imagine you had an inkling of what lay ahead of you.

I learned that you were born in Grosswardein, or Oradea, on August 6, 1919. The third of five children to Avraham and Rachel Hasz. A beautiful baby girl after two boys with a sister and another brother soon to follow.

You shared a precious few memories about your childhood. Namely, about growing up next to the *Vizhnitzer Rebbe* and the *Vizhnitzer Shul* in Grosswardein. The picture of an unknown building makes so much sense now, it was of sentimental value. A reminder of a childhood innocence never to be returned to you.



*My great great-grandfather
Avraham Hasz*



*My great-grandmother Elka
Hasz Groisswardein (1945)*

A strong dedication to *mesorah* and to family, I know, was ingrained in you. The boys were sent to Yeshiva and the girls to an Orthodox school where *tefillah* seemed to be the subject that touched you the most. Your cherished *siddur*, rebound many times, is still cracked open daily. That you were beloved to many friends isn't difficult to understand, one look at your picture and it's so easy to see the *chein* radiating from your face.

The Nazis marched into Hungary in March of 1944 turning your lives upside down. Anti-Jewish laws and policies were immediately enacted. First you were all stuffed into one of two ghettos containing thousands of people. Cramped conditions and filth that cannot be described. Diseases and bad news spreading like fire. Stripped of everything but your faith - and your family, for now.

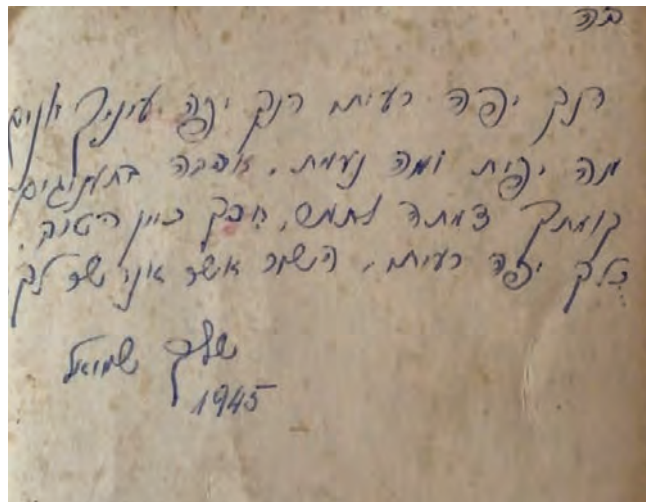
Then you were deported; I don't know if you knew or understood where it was you were going. Auschwitz. You arrived on a train packed in with a hundred other people. Then you just stood on those

lines, choices taken away from you. I cannot even begin to understand the suffering and horrors you must have experienced and seen here.

And then you were transferred, this time to Stutthof, followed by Sachsenhausen, then Leipzig, and lastly Buchenwald. Time and again packed into those cars, forced to march, and report to duty, work even the strongest of men could not perform. You weren't even given the dignity of a name, your beautiful name, given to you for a grandfather and now passed on to me. Instead you were given the number 45186. Forced to respond to it over and over again.

And yet you survived, Babi, your faith intact but little else. You returned to the town you called home but so few remained, so little was left. You reunited with and married Shmuel Greenberg. A familiar face in a sea of strangers, questions hovering over your *chuppah*. A white dress to wipe away memories, pain, and yet some things cannot be recovered. There is no turning back.

And then, despite everything, you picked up and moved to a land with an uncertain future.



A note from my great-grandfather Shmuel Greenberg to my great-grandmother Elka (1945)

A country where wars, hardships, and shortage almost certainly awaited you.

You built a life and a home. Settling in Giv'atayim, you raised your children there, instilling in them the loving kindness that was instilled in you. Most notably your home was always open to those less fortunate, feeding and nurturing them in a way they hadn't experienced in years.



The back of the Vizhnitzer shul in Grosswardein (1945)

And here I am decades later. I have learned and discovered who you are, what your values are. What makes you, Babi, different from me, and how despite the generational gap, there is a thread connecting the two of us, two Elkas in two different generations, and yet somehow similar. And with all I have learned and discovered, I am still missing so much. And so my hope and wish is that we be *zocheh* to greet *Mashiach B'meheira B'yameinu*, so that you and I can be connected by more than just a thread.



My great-grandmother Elka Hasz (left), her cousin Elka Perel Feldman (right), my great great grandmother Rachel Hasz (seated)



My great-grandmother Elka Hasz on her wedding day (Groisswardein, 1945)



My great-grandparents Elka Hasz and Shmuel Greenberg I'm their wedding day (Groisswardein, 1945)



My great-grandfather Shmuel Greenberg under his chuppah (Groisswardein, 1945)



My great-grandparents Shmuel and Elka (Hasz) in a carriage at their wedding (Groisswardein, 1945)

JOSEPH DEUTSCH

וזאת הברכה...

ALIZA WIEDERKEHR



Rabbi Yaakov Bentzion Vais¹

Clotting ripped and *peiyos* shorn, Rabbi Bentziyon Vais of Medzilaborce¹ walked somberly through the streets followed by his five sons, and flanked by Nazi soldiers. Surrounding him on that dark and gloomy day in Czechoslovakia, May 20, 1942, were hundreds of hopeless townspeople who felt crushed by the humiliation of their spiritual leader. Suddenly, a middle-aged man broke through the crowd, dropped to his knees to kiss the hands of his *rav*, and begged for one last *berachah*. The *Rav*, with his last ounces of strength, blessed his petitioner to have many years of *nachas* from his children and grandchildren. Satisfied, the man rose and ran back into the crowd. Amazingly, the gunshots he half expected never rang.



Joseph Deutsch and my Zaidy (circa 1948)

That man was Joseph Deutsch, my great-great-grandfather, who miraculously survived the war with his wife, Irene, and their three children. And that final, fateful *berachah* never ceased to accompany his daughter Edel.

My Omi, Edel Deutsch, narrowly escaped the clutches of the Nazis on her sixteenth birthday, when all the women of her town between the ages of sixteen and thirty five were ordered to report to work detail, 'to work the fields in other countries.' Knowing well that this was a transport to death,



My Opi and Omi with my Zaidy (1948)

1 - Rabbi Yaakov Bentzion Vais was born in Sighet, Romania to Yisrael and Sara née Kahana. He was married to Nisel. Prior to WWII he lived in unstated place. During the war he was in Sighet, Romania.

2 - In 1930, 874 Jews lived in Medzilaborce. A year before World War II broke out, the Munich Agreement was signed in September 1938 and as a consequence, the Republic of Czechoslovakia was separated. In October of that year, Slovakia declared its autonomy and on March 14, 1939, became an independent state, a satellite of Nazi Germany. The Jews were soon removed from the social and economic life of the country and their places of business were given to Slovaks "of the Aryan race". Some 10 Jewish young men of Medzilaborce were drafted into the Sixth Battalion of the Slovak army as forced labor. In December 1940, 859 Jews were living in the town. On May 20, 1942, 1,001 Jews in Medzilaborce and the surrounding area were deported to Puławy, Poland, where most of them were killed by the Germans or died of hunger or disease. Source: Jewish Gen



My Omi's family (From L-R) Mary Malka Deutsch (whom I am named for), my grandfather's great grandmother- name unknown, Gabriel Deutsch, Irene Deutsch, Edel Deutsch, and Joseph Deutsch. In Joseph's pocket- a newspaper that announced the war. (circa 1940)



My Opi's family who all perished in the Holocaust. His parents Baila and Tzvi Sandel are in the center

My Zaidy with his parents on the way to America (Raucher means smoker) (1951)



Irene and Joseph Deutsch Gabriel, Edel, and Mary (circa 1930)



My Omi and Zaidy (circa 1952)



My Omi and Opi at their wedding on March 3, 1946



My great-grandmother and me (2005)

Joseph enlisted the help of a brave physician to save his daughter's life. Dr. Pedan submitted the x-ray of a dying young woman as Edel's, thereby exempting her from work. During the years that followed, she and her family had many brushes with death. They spent the final months of the war in an underground bunker, creeping out only at night to find food. At the same time, my Opi, Marcel Sandel, also a Czechoslovakian Jew, hid in the home of a gentile, between two walls separated by a gap of ten inches. He, too, emerged only at night. Edel and Marcel, who had been slightly acquainted before the war, re-met in its aftermath in a large Slovakian town called Kosice (Kashau).



My Opi and Omi

There, on March 3, 1946, twenty-five couples, eager to begin their lives again, were married by Rabbi Refoel Bloom, the Kashauer Rav. The weddings took place in the Bergen-Belsen Displaced Persons camp at half hour intervals, with each successive bride wearing the dress that had just been worn by the bride before. Marcel and Edel were among those newlyweds. My Zaidy, Tomi (now Tommy) Sandel, was born two years later.

This year, Zaidy and I have spent much quality time together, bonding over my genealogy questions. Together, we looked at the slim volume of his mother's memoirs, *Buying Time*. I read it when I was twelve, but never saw the inscription she personalized for him: "...I still don't know how we survived, only with G-d's help and the wisdom of my parents...I am very thankful to the Almighty for all of you. Stay close to us, we need you."

She would be very proud. Zaidy, her only child, does not allow her story to be forgotten, or the *Yiddishkeit* his ancestors proudly preserved to be diluted. It is clear from the way he looks at me that he knows I will do the same for my own children and grandchildren, thereby perpetuating Rav Vais's *berachah* to our family.



My Zaidy and me at his first great grandchild's Pidyon Haben, Bergenfield, NJ (March 30, 2022)



Rerouted



MOSHE JEGER AND MENACHEM ROSENBERG

TWICE A TWOSOME

SHEVY DREIFUS AND MICHALI ROSENBERG



Michali (left) and Shevy (right)

Some things just go together. Like peanut butter and jelly. Cookies and milk. Jack and Jill. My name is Michali Rosenberg. And I'm Shevy Dreifus. And we have always gone together. We sat side by side in our booster seats as our moms carpooled us to nursery school. We shared a seat on the school bus to TAG every day for ten years. Same story on the bus ride to MHS these past four years. And, of course, the summers were no different. There was Atara Day Camp when we were little, and then Camp Raninu. Always together.

But we were not the original twosome. Togetherness is actually in our blood. Our roots/routes converged long ago in Sighet, Romania, where our grandfathers developed a friendship that is rock solid to this day.



MENACHEM ROSENBERG
Graduated Brooklyn College with PHI Beta Kappa honors, attended Princeton, got his MBA at NYU, worked at a tax partner at Coopers and Lybrand



MOISHE JEGER
Ph.D, FAODME Professor, Department of Social, Behavioral and Administrative Sciences Touro College of Pharmacy-NY

Shevy: After WWII my Zeidy's mother, Shenya Malek, returned to her hometown of Slotvin and found nothing there. Luckily for me, she moved to Sighet where she met and married my Zeidy's father, Shea Jeger. Zeidy was born four years later, in 1952.

Michali: After surviving

From 1948 to about 1960, totalitarian regime in Romania, intolerable. They were forced public school, and they lived in holidays. By the end of the 1950's search of a better life. Moshe Jeger among them.

Michali: I loved Zeidy's description of packing for Israel. His father couldn't bear the thought of what might happen to the last *Sefer Torah* in Sighet, so he packed it into the one wooden box allotted to them for transporting all of their belongings from Romania to Israel. Zeidy can't recall what happened to that *Sefer*, but he will never forget that Torah always comes first.

Shevy: My grandfather immigrated to Israel in 1958. At first, his family was placed in a *tzrif*-a cheap bungalow in *Masu'ot Yitzchak*. About six months later they moved into a gorgeous newly renovated spacious home. At six and a half years old, the



Zeidy Rosenberg in Romania (1957)



Zeidy Rosenberg and his family in Romania (1957)

Auschwitz, my Zeidy's mother, Sima Katz, moved to Sighet with her surviving family members. There, she met Yaakov Rosenberg who had returned to his hometown after the war. They decided to rebuild their lives together, and were married in 1945. Zeidy was born in 1951.

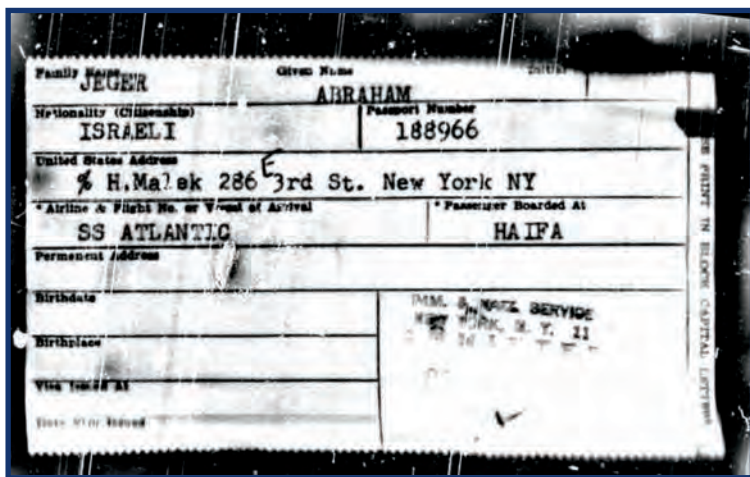
the Communists established a For Jews, in particular, life became to work on *Shabbos* and attend fear, especially during Christian almost all Romanian Jews left in and Menachem Rosenberg were

first thing that came to Zeidy's mind was that they had struck it rich; in fact, though, it was a *moshav shitufee* where everyone contributes and enjoys the same standard of living.

Michali: While life in B'nei Brak was good, Zeidy's parents were determined to give their only son a stellar secular education, and so, in 1964 they moved to America, and settled in Brooklyn.

Shevy: And my Zeidy's parents were not comfortable with the *moshav shitufi* lifestyle, so they left Israel in 1960 aboard the SS Atlantic bound for New York, and moved in with his great uncle Herman Malek in Washington Heights. A few years later they moved to a place of their own, also in Brooklyn.

For both of our grandfathers, this was the third country in which they were enrolling in a school. Their third language of instruction, with no money for tutoring or coaching. Daunting, to say the least. And yet, they are both highly accomplished career men, devoted grandfathers, and most importantly, *talmidei chachamim*.



Moshe Jeger's ticket for passage on the SS Atlantic (1960)

How did they do it?

Zeidy and Zeidy live by the mantra, 'hard work brings success.' They view every obstacle as a speed bump rather than a road closed off, and they keep on moving. As for us, when something seems too overwhelming or impossible to tackle, we remember whom we come from, and try to do what they would do.



Zeidy Rosenberg's passport for emigrating to America



Menachem Rosenberg traveling papers

HARD KNOCKS, SOFT HEART

LILLI HIRT

My family's journey from Romania to America began in 1962 with an unexpected knock at the door of their rural home in Ruskova. A stern looking police officer filled the frame of the door. It was about Ben. He was defying school policy. That came as a surprise to Fagie Fried. Twelve year old Ben was a studious, conscientious student. Why was he in trouble?

“He wouldn't take notes even after he was reprimanded. He wouldn't budge.”

Of course not, it was *Shabbos*. Bentzi was forced to attend school on *Shabbos* but he wouldn't write. And that was deemed a crime by the Communist Regime.

It was then that Fagie, my great-grandmother, decided it was time to leave.

One year later, the Frieds were standing at the airport in Vienna, about to board the plane that would take them and other Romanian Jews to Israel. But Fagie wouldn't get on that plane. The insistence of the airline personnel, the tears of her husband and two children, nothing moved her. “When we get to Israel,” she finally explained, “I will have no profession. And my two children will be placed in

an orphanage.” “But where will you go?” my great-grandfather David asked his wife. Confidently, she replied: “You have two brothers in America. We will go to America. In America, there is gold on the street!”

The road to America, though, wasn't smooth. David Fried had endured many beatings in the labor and concentration camps. As a result, he was not a well man - certainly not well enough to obtain a visa for entry into the United States. They had no sponsor willing to guarantee that David would not become a burden to the American people, so Fagie found another way. She asked a neighbor from the HIAS rooms if he would impersonate David at the doctor. He was moved by the urgency in her voice, and agreed. They used his clean bill of health to get



Bentzi and Gail in front of their home in Ruscova Romania (1956)



Fagie Fried's passport



Bentzie and Gail in Vienna (1963)



Bentzie and his children visiting Ruscova (2003)

David's visa to the US.

But Fagie didn't find gold on the streets of California, and putting food on the table turned out to be a formidable task. My grandmother, Gail, remembers her mother constantly sewing ties; when she went to bed each night, her mother was hard at work with needle and thread, and when she woke up every morning, she was still sewing. The only time she wasn't sewing was on *Shabbos*.



Fagie and Gail at Gail's wedding (1976)

Fagie didn't spend any of her hard earned money on herself. She bought her first dress in America when she traveled to New York to meet Gail's future in-laws. She often said, "I just want to live long enough to see both of my children married." Which she did. In her entire life, Fagie attended just two weddings, those of her two children. On her way back from her son's wedding, Fagie mentioned that she wasn't feeling well. Seven months later she passed away.



Fagie and her husband Dovid at their son Ben's wedding (1976)

I was privileged to meet two great women in the course of this project. Fagie Fried, whom I never knew; the selfless, hard working, gentle yet strong woman who would do anything for her children, and her daughter Gail, the grandmother whom I thought I knew but only now fully discovered to be a principled, persistent, and selfless. They will always be my models for overcoming obstacles with cleverness, faith, and grace.



JULIA AND DAVID SCHULHOF

A WALK TO REMEMBER

TEMIMAH SCHULHOF

Julia Schulhof had just lit her *Shabbos* candles when the phone rang. Her brother, Bentzion Friedlander, took advantage of the additional eighteen minutes before sunset, and picked up the receiver. The HIAS¹ representative on the other end informed him that David Schulhof had just arrived at Grand Central Station and was waiting to be picked up. Bentzion thanked him, assured him that someone would come soon, and hung up. Julia had only heard one side of the conversation, but was already on her way out the door to pick up the husband she hadn't seen in over a year. Their one-year-old baby, Harry, stayed home.



*Heshie and his mother
(November 4, 1948)*



*Heshies father, David
Schulhof around the time
of his engagement (1940)*

My grandfather, Heshie Schulhof, was that baby.

Julia Friedlander and David Schulhof had both grown up in Ungvar (Uzhorod) Czechoslovakia, and in 1941 David asked Julia's father, Herman Friedlander for his daughter's hand in marriage. Herman agreed on one condition; that David, who was a member of the "big *shul*," would take on some of the more strictly religious observances of the Jews who belonged to the *shtiebel*. David promised

that he would, and he and Julia got engaged. Unfortunately, the war disrupted their lives before they could marry, and a long separation ensued.

Before the war, David had served as a chauffeur for officers in the Czech army, and as a result, was an expert in the workings of automobiles. At some point after Uzhorod was returned to Hungary,² David suffered the fate of many Jewish men, and was forced into a brutal Hungarian labor unit. There, they took advantage of his proficiency with vehicles, and put him to work as a mechanic for one of their convoys. He was often beaten, had his arms tied behind his back, and was hung by his wrists; for the rest of his life he was unable to lift his hands above his shoulders. During the frigid nights, he was made to sleep under the trucks, but because they were still warm from a day of travel, he was able to survive.

Julia was taken to a work camp where she was charged with making bricks, and was moved from there to Bergen Belsen, and then to Mauthausen.

After liberation, Julia and David both returned to Ungvar. There, they found each other, and Julia

1 - Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, a relief organization that has assisted refugees fleeing persecution since its founding in New York City in 1881. During the years of Nazi rule, between 1933 and 1945, HIAS estimated that it helped approximately 250,000 people flee from persecution in Nazi-occupied Europe.

2 - After the First Vienna Award which resulted in the partition of Czechoslovakia in September of 1938, Uzhorod was given back to Hungary from which it had been separated after WWI.

TRIPPLICATE
(To be given to declarant when originally issued; to be made a part of the petition for naturalization when petition is filed and to be retained by the declarant in the absence of the court)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DECLARATION OF INTENTION
(Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof)

No. 590652

STATE OF NEW YORK DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

I, Juliana Schulhof, do hereby declare that I am a native-born citizen of the United States of America, and that I have never been naturalized in any other country.

(1) My full, true, and correct name is Juliana Schulhof
 (2) My present place of residence is 1440 Undercliff Ave. New York, N.Y.
 (3) My occupation is housewife
 (4) I was born on June 30, 1918 at Ushorod, Czechoslovakia
 (5) My personal description is as follows: Female
 color White complexion Fair color of eyes Blue color of hair Light height 5 feet 6 inches weight 157 pounds
 visible distinctive marks Birth mark on left cheek & forehead white
 (6) I am single
 (7) I was married to Ushorod, Czechoslovakia on July 7, 1948
 (8) I have one child, the name, sex, date and place of birth, and present place of residence of each of said children who is living, are as follows:
Harry (M) July 4, 1948, born and resides in NY
 (9) My last place of foreign residence was Prague, Czechoslovakia
 (10) I emigrated to the United States from Prague, Czechoslovakia on Apr. 15, 1948
 (11) My last entry for permanent residence in the United States was Apr. 15, 1948
 (12) I have never had entry for permanent residence in the United States, for a period or periods of 6 months or longer, as follows:

DEPARTED FROM THE UNITED STATES			RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES		
Port	Date (Month, day, year)	Vessel or Other Means of Conveyance	Port	Date (Month, day, year)	Vessel or Other Means of Conveyance

(13) I have not heretofore made declaration of intention: No. _____

(14) It is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States and to reside permanently therein. (15) I will, before being admitted to citizenship, renounce absolutely and forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which at the time of admission to citizenship I may be a subject or citizen. (16) I am not an anarchist, nor a believer in the industrial conspiracy, history, or destruction of property, or sabotage, nor a disseminator of propaganda in organized government, nor a member of or affiliated with any organization or body of persons teaching, disseminating, or advocating the overthrow of organized government. (17) I certify that the photograph added to this declaration and typewritten name is a likeness of me and was taken by me. (18) I have never taken the oath of citizenship. I have made and the intention I have expressed in this declaration of intention submitted by me are true to the best of my knowledge and belief: SO HELP ME GOD.

Juliana Schulhof
 Subscribed and sworn to before me in the State of New York on the _____ day of _____ 1948 at _____ New York, N. Y.
 I, _____, Clerk of said Court, do hereby certify that _____ is the true and correct signature of the declarant as shown on the face of this declaration of intention, and that the photograph added to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant.

By William V. Donnell
 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
 IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
 (Division of 15-42)

United States of America- Julia Schulhof - Declaration of Intention - intention to become a citizen

TRIPPLICATE
(To be given to declarant when originally issued; to be made a part of the petition for naturalization when petition is filed and to be retained by the declarant in the absence of the court)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DECLARATION OF INTENTION
(Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof)

No. 158536

State of NEW YORK DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
County of Bronx

I, David Schulhof, do hereby declare that I am a native-born citizen of the United States of America, and that I have never been naturalized in any other country.

(1) My full, true, and correct name is David Schulhof
 (2) My present place of residence is 1865 University Ave. New York, N.Y.
 (3) My occupation is Electrician
 (4) I was born on June 19, 1918 at Ushorod, Czechoslovakia
 (5) My personal description is as follows: Male
 color White complexion Fair color of eyes Blue color of hair Dark height 5 feet 11 inches weight 155 pounds
 visible distinctive marks None
 (6) I am single
 (7) I was married to Escho, Czechoslovakia on July 7, 1948
 (8) I have one child, the name, sex, date and place of birth, and present place of residence of each of said children who is living, are as follows:
Harry (M) July 4, 1948, born and resides in NY
 (9) My last place of foreign residence was Breslau, Germany
 (10) I emigrated to the United States from Boston, Mass. on June 24, 1949
 (11) My last entry for permanent residence in the United States was June 24, 1949
 (12) I have never had entry for permanent residence in the United States, for a period or periods of 6 months or longer, as follows:

DEPARTED FROM THE UNITED STATES			RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES		
Port	Date (Month, day, year)	Vessel or Other Means of Conveyance	Port	Date (Month, day, year)	Vessel or Other Means of Conveyance

(13) I have not heretofore made declaration of intention: No. _____

(14) It is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States and to reside permanently therein. (15) I will, before being admitted to citizenship, renounce absolutely and forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which at the time of admission to citizenship I may be a subject or citizen. (16) I am not an anarchist, nor a believer in the industrial conspiracy, history, or destruction of property, or sabotage, nor a disseminator of propaganda in organized government, nor a member of or affiliated with any organization or body of persons teaching, disseminating, or advocating the overthrow of organized government. (17) I certify that the photograph added to this declaration and typewritten name is a likeness of me and was taken by me. (18) I have never taken the oath of citizenship. I have made and the intention I have expressed in this declaration of intention submitted by me are true to the best of my knowledge and belief: SO HELP ME GOD.

David Schulhof
 Subscribed and sworn to before me in the State of New York on the _____ day of _____ 1948 at _____ Bronx Co., NY.
 I, _____, Clerk of said Court, do hereby certify that _____ is the true and correct signature of the declarant as shown on the face of this declaration of intention, and that the photograph added to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant.

By John J. Hanley
 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
 IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
 (Division of 15-42)

United States of America- David Schulhof - Declaration of Intention - intention to become a citizen

CLASS OF SERVICE
This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

WESTERN UNION

JOSEPH L. EGAN
PRESIDENT

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.

ZC515 D413CDC DAA INTL
 CD PRAHA VIA RCA 15 APR 9 1948
 NLT SAM ZUCKERMAN *now*
 1440 UNDERCLIFF AVE NEWYORK BRONX
 ARRIVING MONDAY 4/12 LGA 12.30 FLITC 117
 JOLLY
 328P

SYMBOLS
 DL = Day Letter
 NL = Night Letter
 LC = Deferred Cable
 NLT = Cable Night Letter
 Ship Radiogram

Western Union Telegram- Telegram Julia sent her brother from DP camp that she would be arriving 4/12/1948



David Schulhof (top left) in the DP camp (Purim 1948)



Peppi Hoffman (Serka's sponsor) 1953, Heshie at five years old and Yankie, his three year old brother



Julia (in middle) with her family - David and Julia's wedding (August 13, 1946)

found three sisters and her brother, Bentzion. Having nowhere to live, they all moved to a DP camp, where Julia and David were finally married on August 20, 1946.

Shortly before the war, Julia's father had had the foresight to send his eldest daughter, Serka, to a cousin in America. He had hoped that if it became necessary, she would be in a position to sponsor family members who were fleeing a war-torn Europe. His efforts paid off. She was able to bring Bentzion, and then Julia, out of Europe. By that time, Julia was pregnant with my grandfather, but David was not permitted to join her. It was a difficult parting, but Julia hoped that eventually, she would succeed in bringing David to America as well. She arrived in the US on April 12, 1948.

Three months later, Julia gave birth to a boy. His father was thousands of miles away. Julia went right to the top. She sent a letter to President Harry S. Truman, promising to name her baby "Harry Truman" if he would arrange for her husband to be released from the DP camp and sent to the US. Disappointingly, the reply from the president was generic, expressing his empathy, yet insisting that he was unable to expedite the process. She named my grandfather Harry, but omitted the 'Truman' because the president had not come through for her.³

Ultimately, a lottery was held in the DP camp, and David Schulhof was selected to be shipped to America. He arrived on Friday, June 24, 1949, and the long-awaited phone call came in. Julia walked alone, from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, to Grand Central Station in Manhattan, a four mile trek, to pick him up. She carried nothing with her, because it was *Shabbos* and there was no *eiruv*. They reunited in the station, and dreamily walked back together. They finally arrived at her brother and sister-in-law's apartment, where David first laid eyes on his son.

The son who is now my Zeidy, and connects me, with his warmth and his faith, to his parents' legacy of boundless love, and steadfast commitment to *mitzvos*. It will be my precious privilege to further their *mesorah*.

3 - Family members speculate that Julia needed a name beginning with 'H,' and did not like 'Herman' or 'Henry,' so she settled on 'Harry,' because if it was good enough for the president, it would be respectable for her child.

3.3 million Jews lived in Poland before WWII. Only 300,000 survived the Holocaust. Eighty percent of those survivors were saved by deportation to Siberia following the Soviet annexation of Eastern Poland in 1939.

YAAKOV SHLOMO FRIEDMAN

A SUKKALEH, A KLEINE

LIZZIE BOCZKO



HaRav Yaakov Shlomo Hakohen Friedman

Yaakov Shlomo Friedman built a *sukkah* in a labor camp in Siberia in 1941. Right under the noses of the Soviet guards. How, you may ask, is that possible?? A *sukkah* stands out in the open, and is hard to hide! But when there is a will, there is a way. And my great-great grandfather, Yaakov Shlomo, had the will.



Can you find the *sukkah* in the painting above? Look again.

Yes, there in the Siberian tundra, in a clearing in the forest, my ancestor found a deep hollow space...deep and wide enough that he needed only to cover it with *s'chach* at the ground level, and he had a kosher *sukkah*. Tree stumps became a table and chairs, and a pail of water was set up for *netilas yadayim*.



Although the estate was quite large, Rav Friedman had the artist depict the entire estate in a microscopic scene. On the left is the bake house where matzos were baked for Pesach. Baking was done there all year and the oven had to be kashered for Pesach. On the right is the Sukkah. In front of the house sits my grandfather as a young man, with his father-in-law Reb Elimelech Meller. In the background and foreground are all the elements of the commercial enterprises that constituted the estate; wheat, hay, cattle, and forestry in the back. Vegetables, poultry and eggs are in front.

At 11:00 on the first night of *Sukkos* the lights in the commandant's quarters went out, and twelve-year-old Mechele Friedman ran to tell everyone it was time. The night was clear and starry, and the light of the moon led them to the *sukkah*. Using a loaf of bread they had saved for the occasion, they made *Kiddush*, a *Shehecheyanu*, and a *Leishev Ba-sukkah*. Never before had they recited such heartfelt *brachos*. And never since. They sat in that *sukkah* every day until *Hoshana Rabba*, when snow fell and it was buried.

That *sukkah* was one of many that Zeidy built in his lifetime. After the war, he hired an artist to paint the various *sukkahs* he had crafted with faith and ingenuity, in times of confusion, pain, and fear. Alongside each one he placed descriptive lyrics. Like these, which sound so pretty when my Omi reads them in *Yiddish*, and which go with the painting of the *sukkah* in Siberia:

פערשיקט אין די סיביר וועלדר הער
אן צוריק וועלין מיר ניט מעהר
*Exiled to the Siberian forest we were;
And return, we would never more.*

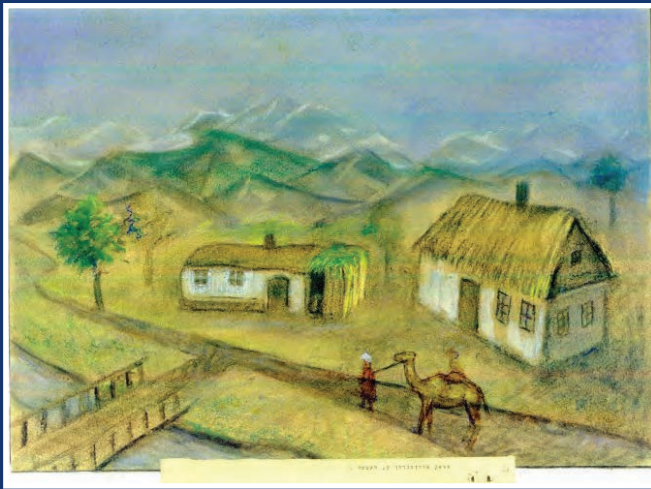
די יונגע קינדער צו די ארבייט מט א האק אין זעהג,
אויפן וואלד מאכען א וועג
*Young children go to work with ax and saw,
To cut a road through the forest floor.*

פאר דאווענען לערנען אין טורמע געברכט
דאך אין א לייבן-גריב א סוכה געמאכט
*For davening and learning to
prison we were brought,
And in a lion's den a sukkah we wrought.*

What drove Yaakov Shlomo's passion for this *mitzvah*?

Before the first World War, the holy *Bluzhever Rebbe zt"l* had shared with him a secret of survival, the *segulah* for a safe return from exile. Be especially careful with the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*, said the *Rebbe*. No matter what. No matter where.

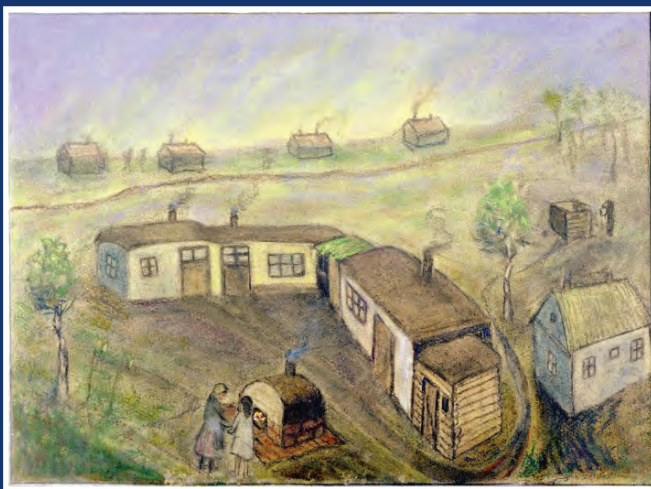
About ten years ago, a cousin of ours traveled to Northern Asia to re-trace the family's route through the Siberian tundra. And sure enough, right there, near what looked like barracks in an abandoned labor camp, was a dugout hidden in plain view ... just big enough for a *sukkaleh*, a *kleine*.



First Sukkah in Belovodskoe, Kyrgyzstan (1942)



Second Sukkah in Belovodskoe, Kyrgyzstan (1943)



Third Sukkah in Belovodskoe, Kyrgyzstan and Matzah Baking (1944)



The Sukkah in Seragina

DRAIZEL SHACHTER

GUEST OF HONOR

YEHUDIS GINSBERG



Draizel Schechter

One day, when Draizel Shachter was fourteen and trudging home through the Siberian snow in torrential rain, she noticed an elderly man and his family trying to keep warm under their drenched *shmattes*. She quickly introduced herself, and learned that they had just arrived and had nowhere to go. She hurried home to tell her parents,



Rav Yitzchok Gevirtzman

and her father told her to take a wheelbarrow, (perhaps some of the strangers would not be able to walk,) and go back and invite them to their home. Only then, did they find out that their guest was the esteemed Rav Itzikel of Belgium, Rav Yitzchok Gevirtzman, who later became the Rav of Antwerp. For years, the Shachters hosted his family, and showered them with kindness and generosity. He brought the warmth of Torah into their frigid Siberian hut, and repeatedly blessed Draizel to merit great descendants.

I am her great-granddaughter.



In the summer of 1956, Gina's family spent a month in Russia trying to convince her Uncle Chaim and his family to join them and emigrate to Israel. Bubby Gina (girl in braids on the right) and Lola (girl in braids on the left) are eight years old. The man on the left is her Uncle Chaim and the man on the right in glasses is her father. The woman on the left is Chaim's wife, Zena, holding their son Borek and their other son Marek is in the center. Gina's mother Draizel is on the right and she is holding Ziggy who was the same age as Borek and Dassi is in the center ([Chernivitsi, Ukraine formally] Chernovitz, Russia, 1956)



DRAIZEL AND MEYER HIRSCH

A STITCH IN TIME, AN EPILOGUE



My grandmother Gina and her twin Lola playing on a donkey. It is unclear which girl is which as they were identical twins.

After five brutal years in Siberia, a cattle-train brought my great-grandmother, Draizel Schechter, to the city of Wroclaw in western Poland. There, she met and married my great-grandfather, Meyer Hirsch.

In a region devoid of *Yiddishkeit*, my great-grandparents remained Torah-observant. But it was hard to expect the same from their twin daughters, Gina and Lola, if they remained in Wroclaw. The Polish government, however, permitted very few Jewish families to leave Poland each year, so it was difficult to get visas.

Every month, Meyer would take the overnight train from Wroclaw to the Immigration Office in Warsaw, to try to get visas for his family. In 1960, on one fateful trip to the Immigration Office, he asked the head office administrator to show him his application file. She explained that there were stacks and stacks of files with names of countless families waiting for their turn to leave the country. The realization struck hard: It would take his family fifteen years to secure visas! He began to beg, “My daughters will need to get married in a few years and we are Jewish!” He pleaded with all of his heart, to no avail.

Eventually, Meyer left the building, but instead of returning to Wroclaw, he waited outside the office and followed the woman home. He hoped that they would be able to speak freely outside the Communist office structure.

When Meyer knocked on her door, the administrator was furious. “This is extremely inappropriate - to come to my home!” He implored her, “Please, you don’t understand! We must leave Poland!” He explained his family’s needs, and that he even had someone to whom he could entrust his successful men’s suit and clothing manufacturing business. He made it clear that he was willing to sacrifice everything for the future of his family. The administrator’s interest was piqued, and she replied excitedly:

“Really? You manufacture clothing? I saw beige gabardine wide-legged pants in a French fashion magazine. They are the type Marlene Dietrich wears.” Of course, this was a Communist country where items like these were hard to come by. She proceeded to show Meyer a picture of the pants. “Do you know how to make them?” she asked. He replied “Of course I do!” He quickly took her measurements and assured her that he would be back in two days with her pants. He chose the best gabardine fabric and had his workers make the pants overnight.

Two days later, my great-grandfather traveled back to Warsaw and brought her the custom-made pants. “Come to my office Mr. Hirsch,” she said, “I want to show you something.” Meyer watched as she pulled a card with his name on it out of a large file, and brought it to her desk. She then slipped it into a smaller box of file cards, in front of all the other cards. She said, “This is June, Mr Hirsch. You have three months. In September you will be leaving for America.”



Gina's siblings From left to right: Gina, Lola, Grandma Draizel, Ziggy, Dassi



Emigrating to US. On a Cruise ship MS Batory from Gdansk, Poland to Montreal, Canada in 1961

COLD HOUSE, WARM HOME

AYELET HERSKOVITZ

Before the war, Chaim Schlafrig's father, Bunim Menachem, was the *Rosh Hakahal*¹ of the Polish town of Jaroslaw, and his mother, Chaya Bayla, was a resourceful entrepreneur who opened and ran a *sklat*, a lumber yard. They were very wealthy, and well known throughout the town for their *hachnasas orchim*. Being descendants of Rabbi Shimon Yeruslaver², the Schalfriks were particularly connected to *chassidic* leaders. The Belzer Rebbes, Yissachar Dov Rokeach and Rav Ahrle, often lodged at their home, with all of their *chassidim*. Rav Ahrle would peer over the lumber yard and say “*mazel u’bracha, mazel u’bracha*,” and indeed, their business flourished. With the partition of Poland between Russia and Germany in September of 1939, their good fortune changed. But the signature Schlafrig kindness and hospitality never waned.



My grandmother Devora Chana Schlafrig (left) and her sister Sula Ehrlich (right)

The Schalfriks fled to the Soviet Union, first to Balakovo, and then from one town to another. They were thrust into poverty. Despite the sub-standard living conditions in their many temporary homes, the Schalfriks continued to host many guests, sometimes ten or twenty at a time, in the bitter cold. People would even sleep in the bathtub, as long as they had a roof over their heads.

In the city of Ufa, they were crammed into a small cabin where their noses would freeze at night, and they watched as their father swept the icicles that formed from the steam of the stove off of the ceiling. On one bitterly cold day, Chaim decided to make the trek of nineteen miles by horse in search of wood. A massive blizzard struck, and he was stuck in a world of snow, not having any sense of direction. The old horse, however, instinctively knew the way home. It continued traveling while Chaim nearly froze to death, as many others had. He finally arrived home at midnight, a solid block of ice. His family toiled for hours to thaw him out enough even to remove his clothes. Thankfully, Chaim Schlafrig survived. He was to become my strong and loving Zaidy.

By the time they moved to Dzhambul, Kazakhstan, food had become so scarce that they barely ate all week. But their warm hospitality continued. Zaidy's mother traded the last of her clothes to make enough soup for all her *Shabbos* guests. Yoshe Brodt, a relative, said that the warm soup kept him alive.

1 - Every town had a *Rosh Hakahal*, overseer of Jewish communal affairs.

2 - Rabbi Shimon Maryles (1758–1849) from Jaroslaw (Yiddish: Yeruslav), also known as Rabbi Shimon Yeruslaver, was the founder of Yeruslav Hasidism.

Zaidy learned at a young age to forgo his own comfort so that others could benefit, and often gave up his bed for guests. It was this selflessness and goodness which were his trademark qualities to the end of his life. But there was also the clever, quick-witted, and charming side to Chaim Schlafrig that helped his family endure those grueling years.

In communist Russia, no matter how hard you worked you barely had enough to put food on the table. To survive, you had to have your wits about you. Zaidy charmed storekeepers. Alcohol would arrive at their stores and Zaidy cleverly managed to *finagle* some of it. When the proprietors were drunk and there was no more liquor left, Zaidy came in and offered alcohol at a price. He often used those bottles to bribe the Russians to get what his family needed. And with just a little ingenuity, Zaidy and his family got by.

After the war, the Schlafrigs returned to Poland, and saw the devastation with their own eyes. They smuggled themselves into Germany, where they moved from town to town for five years until they were able to get visas to the US from the HIAS organization.

In America, Zaidy was a businessman who earned his livelihood selling comic books. He wouldn't buy a new car, so that he could give more money to those in need. Many remember him fondly as the man who doled out vodka to the men, and candy to the children. I was privileged to grow up in the apartment next door to his, and much of the wisdom he shared has become a part of me. Most of all, I remember how he taught me to deal with difficult people. "Kill 'em with kindness," he would say. How apt for the man who loved every Jew; whose charm and positivity made him a magnet for friends.



DEVORA CHANA BELZ SCHLAFRIG

A PACKAGE FROM HOME

Two sisters, Devora Chana and Sula Belz and their family were about to bring in their first Pesach in Siberia, feeling anything but liberated. They could not imagine how it was going to happen. And then they got word that there was a package waiting for them in the post office. It had been sent by their brother and grandparents who had remained in Przemysl, Poland, and were able to confirm the whereabouts of their family in Siberia through the Red Cross. The package, they found out later, contained a *Hagaddah*, some *matzos*, and a container of *schmaltz*. Their father, Binyamin Belz, set out to get it, and on the way back was caught in a sudden, fierce and blinding blizzard. The guards realized that something was amiss when he did not show up for work. Binyamin was among their best log-sawers, and had an excellent work ethic. They liked him and were worried when the family said that he had only gone to the post office. At great personal risk, two of them mounted horses and braved the blizzard to try and find him. They spotted him covered in snow and barely breathing, and revived him. My grandmother, Devora Chana Belz Schlafrig *a"h*, and Sula, never stopped thanking Hashem for their family's personal *geulah* that year; the miracle of gentile guards who dared to endanger themselves to look for a Jewish worker, and were, thank G-d, able to bring him back to life.

KAZAKHSTAN

In June of 1941, Germany violated the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non Agression Pact of 1939, and took the Red Army by surprise with the vicious Operation Barbarossa. Three months later, after negotiations with the United Kingdom, Soviet allegiance turned to the Allied Forces. As a result, Stalin announced an amnesty, and released all Polish prisoners of war from prisons and labor camps in Siberia. The Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, located in the warmer climates of Central Asia, were the preferred destination for the released prisoners. It was in those largely Muslim societies, in the cities of Samarkand, Almaty, and Tashkent, that the Polish Jews first encountered the Bukharan communities. Yiddish speaking Polish Jews met the Bukharan Jews, who had been there for about two hundred years, and were culturally very different.

YAKKOV YAKUBOV

A YIDDISHE CUP

BATSHEVA BEN-ITZHAK

My father picks up the tiny blue ceramic cup that still sits on his plate. It is *leil haSeder*, and in the spirit of the night, he begins to tell its, and our, story. Our great-great-grandfather, Yakkov Yakubov, bought the cup in 1890. He was a wealthy Russian man from Pan Shame, Uzbekistan, whose life centered around the *shul* he set up in his home. On the *Motza'ei Yom Kippur* of his forty-fifth year, Yaakov was feeling unwell, and lay down to rest. One of the *shul's kohanim* gently reminded him to recite *keriyas shema*. Yaakov did so, laid his head on his pillow, and passed away peacefully in his sleep.

Now the tiny, blue, ceramic cup moved to the possession of his eldest son, Michael. While living under the Communist Regime in Navoi, Uzbekistan, he did what he could to keep his Judaism alive. He observed *Shabbos* and *chagim* to the extent that he could, and put on *Tefillin* every day. He served in the military and lost his life during WWII. As did ten of his twelve children – some on the battlefield, and others from disease. He was buried in an army cemetery in Moscow, grave number four two four.

My grandmother, Liza, inherited the little blue *kiddush* cup (and not much else) after her father passed away. She was a deeply religious person, and tried to uphold all that she could in Navoi. Because she celebrated *Shabbos* and Jewish holidays, the

Pesach cup continued to be used, and cherished. Unfortunately, Liza's position as the principal of an Uzbekistan school made it difficult for her to observe all the *mitzvos*, because she needed her job to support her family.

My father stares down at the cup, which triggers memories of other things his widowed mother did to support them. Quietly, he reminisces about Savta Liza taking him and his brother Gabriel to places where they could buy things to sell on the black market. He recalls how, as young boys, they would hide fabrics in their shirts and clothes and smuggle them into the Soviet Union. And then, the hidden movements through which they made the exchange of goods for money with the people in Uzbekistan.



The cup that my great great-grandfather used on Pesach

My family is listening intently, getting to know our ancestors. They faced different challenges, but were all strongly connected to, and touched by, some aspect of their *Yiddishkeit*. I look at the ceramic cup, and marvel how, with Savta Liza, it

traveled from Uzbekistan, to Israel, to America, all in one piece. I no longer see it as a cup, but rather as the vessel through which my brother, David, who is next in line to inherit it, will one day share the stories of generations with his own children.



YITZCHAK LAUFER

תורת חסד

ARIELLA KORNBLUTH



Picture of Yitzchok Laufer, age 12, 1918 in Krakow Poland.

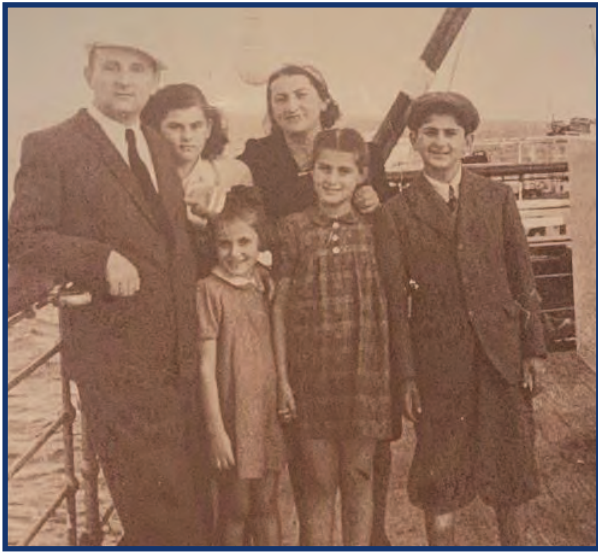
Yitzchak Laufer and his children, including my grandmother, Rachel Laufer Fischer, fled Bielsko, Poland in early 1939. They ended up in Lviv, where eventually, Soviet soldiers broke into their home in the middle of the night and forced them on a train to Siberia. Throughout their struggles in the war, my family always did anything in their power to cling to their *Yiddishkeit*.

After their release from Siberia, Yitzchak and his family ended up in Leninsk, near Samarkand. There, they heard that the Bukharan Jews in nearby cities had been forced by the Soviets to close all of their *shuls*, but still had *Sifrei Torah* in their possession. Yitzchak was bent on acquiring one of them. He sent his eight-year-old son, Elimelech¹, with his uncle to borrow a Torah. They traveled to Andijan, where they asked a Jewish passerby where they might find the *shul gabbai*. The Jew hesitated, until they were able to convince him that they were not spies, but Jewish refugees. He then led them to the

1- See sidebar for more on Meilich, the wonderboy in Siberia

TOURIST CLASS 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, or a port of the insular possessions of the United States.														
S. S. SOBIESKI Passengers sailing from Gdynia, Poland, November 22, 1947														
No. on list	HEALTHY STATUS (This column to be filled in by the Surgeon General's office)	NAME IN FULL (Last name, first name, middle name or initial)	Class	Age	Sex	Color of eyes	Color of hair	Place of birth	Immigration Yes (If alien, date of last admission to U.S.)	Notes	Date of arrival	Place of arrival	Country of origin	City or town, State, Province or District
1		HEAD TAX PAID - \$9.44		26	F	blue	brn	Hungary	yes	stateless		11-12-47	France	Paris
2		Lilly		49	F	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	10-17-47	France	Paris
3		Isidore		31	M	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	10-17-47	France	Paris
4		Estera		51	F	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	8-14-47	France	Antwerp
5		Simon		33	M	blue	brn	Hungary	yes	Hungary	Budapest	10-10-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
6		Margit		35	F	blue	brn	Hungary	yes	Hungary	Budapest	10-10-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
7		Judith		14	F	blue	brn	Hungary	yes	Hungary	Budapest	10-10-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
8		Konigsberger		26	F	blue	brn	Germany	yes	Germany	Berlin	10-9-47	France	Marseille
9		Eveline		27	F	blue	brn	Germany	yes	Germany	Berlin	10-9-47	France	Marseille
10		Alexandre		4	M	blue	brn	France	no	stateless	France	10-9-47	France	Marseille
11		Dezora		27	F	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Lodz	11-17-47	France	Paris
12		Henri		2	M	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Lodz	11-17-47	France	Paris
13		Isak		31	M	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Lodz	11-17-47	France	Paris
14		Ernest		40	M	blue	brn	Austria	yes	Austria	Vienna	10-21-47	France	Paris
15		Claude		15	M	blue	brn	Austria	yes	Austria	Vienna	10-21-47	France	Paris
16		Pierre		9	M	blue	brn	Austria	yes	Austria	Vienna	10-21-47	France	Paris
17		Marguier		3	F	blue	brn	Austria	no	stateless	France	10-21-47	France	Paris
18		Mela		61	F	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-8-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
19		Blima		30	F	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-8-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
20		Regina		28	F	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-3-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
21		Chaim		61	M	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-3-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
22		Leiser		33	M	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-3-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
23		Usser		26	M	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-3-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
24		Salma		25	F	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-12-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
25		Isak		41	M	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-11-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
26		Rebeka		40	F	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-11-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
27		Lee		15	F	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-11-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
28		Blum		14	M	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-11-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
29		Paula		11	F	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-11-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague
30		Rebecca		8	F	blue	brn	Poland	yes	Poland	Warsaw	9-11-47	Czechoslovakia	Prague

SS Sobieski ship passenger list, 1947. The last six names are the Laufer family.



My grandmother, Rachel Laufer's family on the SS Sobieski boat to America, 1947. (Left to right: Yitzchok, Lea, Rachel, Rivka, Pearl, Elimelech).

man who had the *Sifrei Torah* in his possession. They pleaded with him to lend them just one *Sefer*, and seeing his reluctance, promised to return it after the war. But how does one transport an illegal *Sefer Torah* in the Soviet Union? A gentile wagon driver was hired and the holy scroll was covered. It arrived safely in Leninsk and was used regularly during the four remaining years of the war. While hunger and poverty were rampant, and every object of value was bartered for food, no one dreamed of selling their precious *Torah*. At the end of the war, my great-uncle Elimelech, then twelve years old, personally traveled back to Andijan to return the *Sefer* to its kind owner. Years later, after immigrating to America, Elimelech taught *Torah* to young Bukharan Jews in a *shul* in Queens, happy that he could pay forward the kindness the Bukharan Jew had done for him years before.



Pictures of the Laufer family in 1947 after coming to the USA (Left to right) Rivka, Lea, Rachel, Yitzchok

ELIMELECH LAUFER (IN SIBERIA)

THE HEARTFUL DODGER

In the middle of a Siberian labor camp there stood a wagon attached to two horses. Situated at the back of the wagon were two large barrels of herring soup. If you could call it that; the herring usually got stuck under the rims of the barrels, and the Jews in the camp, who were expected to subsist on that soup and perhaps a piece of bread, ended up with faintly flavored water for dinner. Meilich Laufer was among the younger inmates, about seven years old (though who kept track of time during those miserable years?) and one night, he set out to alleviate the hunger of the prisoners. He climbed into one of the tall barrels, retrieved the fish from the underside, and stuffed them into his clothing hoping to sneak them into the barracks. But when he tried to climb out of the barrel, he was horrified to realize that the sides were too greasy to grip. He was trapped. He began to shout, fearful that he would die in that small, reeking liquid prison. Startled by the noise, the horses became jittery. As they shuffled, the barrels jostled. Struck by an idea, Meilich screamed louder to further unsettle the horses, and the barrels. At the same time, he pushed against the sides of the oval container that held him until it fell on its side and he was able to escape. Undeterred by his near-miss, Meilich made this exercise a part of his nightly routine, and salvaged the leftover herring scraps for his fellow captives. He was their hero, though just a boy.

Family lore about the brave antics of Ariella Kornbluth's great-uncle, Elimelech Laufer, is plentiful. He was only six years old when his family was forced to flee Poland to escape the Nazis. After liberation from Siberia, they ended up in Leninsk, a small village near Samarkand, on the way to Uzbekistan. The winters were long and harsh, and they had no real means of support. The black market, where they sold their meager belongings for cash, became their lifeline for food. Meilich, who appeared youthful and innocent, became the town's top smuggler. He was clever and agile, and able to jump on top of moving freight trains transporting Soviet soldiers, in order to get his goods to towns that were large enough to need them. It is said that he kept his whole town alive.

Unearthing Roots



UNDER THE RADAR

NAOMI GENKIN

Under the guise of vacationing in summer homes on the outskirts of Moscow, my parents and other Soviet Jews returned to their *Yiddishkeit*, after close to sixty years of no religious observance. The vacation homes, which were more like simple cabins, were called *dachas*. Evading the watchful eye of the KGB¹, my great aunt and uncle, Zev and Carmela Raiz, organized illegal classes on Judaism.



My mother, at the dacha in 1988. She is in the front row, second from the right.

Zev and Carmela were the longest-waiting *refuseniks*² in the Soviet Union, having been denied permission to emigrate for eighteen years. This, though, did not deter them from their mission. At the *dachas*, there was learning around the clock

with some of the best *rebbeim* and *roshei yeshivos* from the United States. The teachers devised different strategies to keep the KGB informants from tailing them. For example, Mrs. Alice Neustadt, an enthusiastic and dedicated educator, would buy tickets to performances at the *Bolshoi*³, enter the theater, promptly sneak out the back door, and take a taxi to go teach at the *dacha*. The KGB were under the impression that she was still at the theater.

In 1988, Zev and Carmela invited their sixteen year old niece, Devora Raiz, to join them at the *dacha*. It was her first time, and she recalls the atmosphere being intense and charged, truly on fire. Learning was happening everywhere. On one side of the room a group of Jews learned *aleph bais* for the first time, while to the right, the more advanced ones were trying to figure out a *daf gemara*. Devora especially remembers a transcendent *Shabbos* experience at the *dacha* with the two highly acclaimed inspirational musicians, Rav Shmuel Brazil and Abish Brodt. The Friday night ritual began with their famous *Shalom Aleichem niggun* and *Shabbos* concluded with a musical *havdalah* and *kumzitz*. The day was transformative, and Devora knew there was no way she could return to the life she had led before. She and her parents, Chaim and Ludmilla Raiz, were on the path to becoming *frum* Jews. Which is fortunate for me, because I am Devora's daughter.

¹ - KGB was the notorious security agency for the Soviet Union from March 1954 until December 1991. It harshly punished any "ideological subversion" – anti-communist political and religious ideas and the dissidents who promoted them.

² - Refuseniks were Jewish people in the former Soviet Union who were refused permission to emigrate to Israel.

³ - The Bolshoi is the premier theater in Moscow.

My grandparents' small apartment in Kiev became an underground meeting place for Jewish classes. The family often returned to the *dachas* and inspired others to come as well. It is not surprising that my mother met my like-minded father there, a

young medical student with a strong Jewish identity and a deep curiosity about religion. They were married in 1992, and have created a home which makes it natural for me to travel on the inspired trajectory of a *Bais Yaakov* girl.



My grandfather, in the top left corner, learning at the dacha with Rav Yitzchok Zilber



My mother and grandmother on erev shabbos at the dacha



THE ROAD OF LIFE

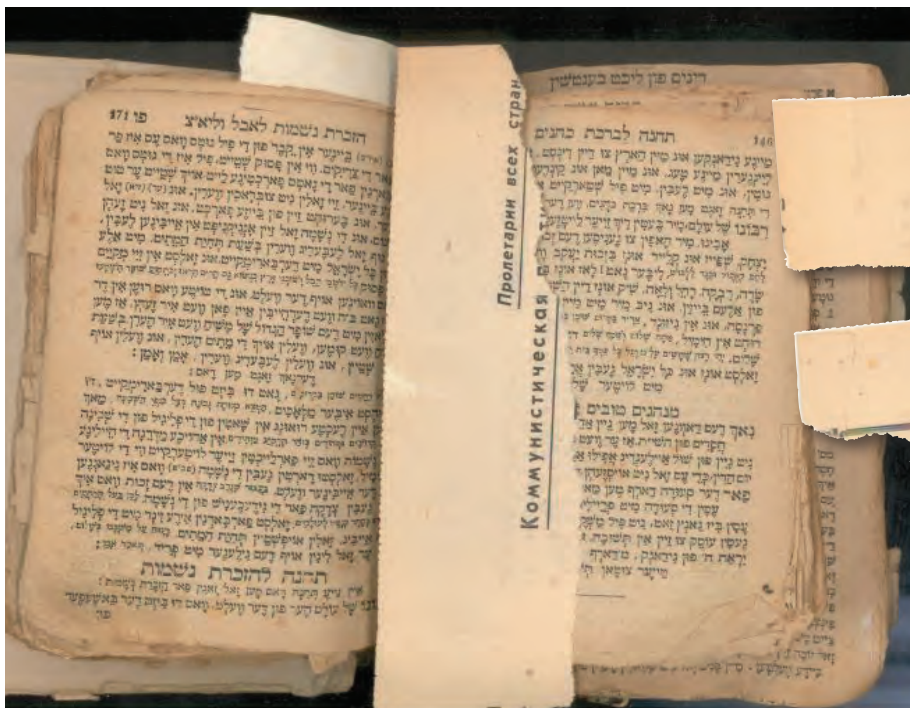
CHANA GUELFGUAT

Chaya Bracha held on for dear life. Lake Ladoga was covered with trucks slogging through the ice, carrying desperate refugees from a besieged Leningrad to Siberia. Intermittently, bombs would fall on the lake, cracking the thin ice of spring and submerging the trucks and its passengers in the frigid waters.

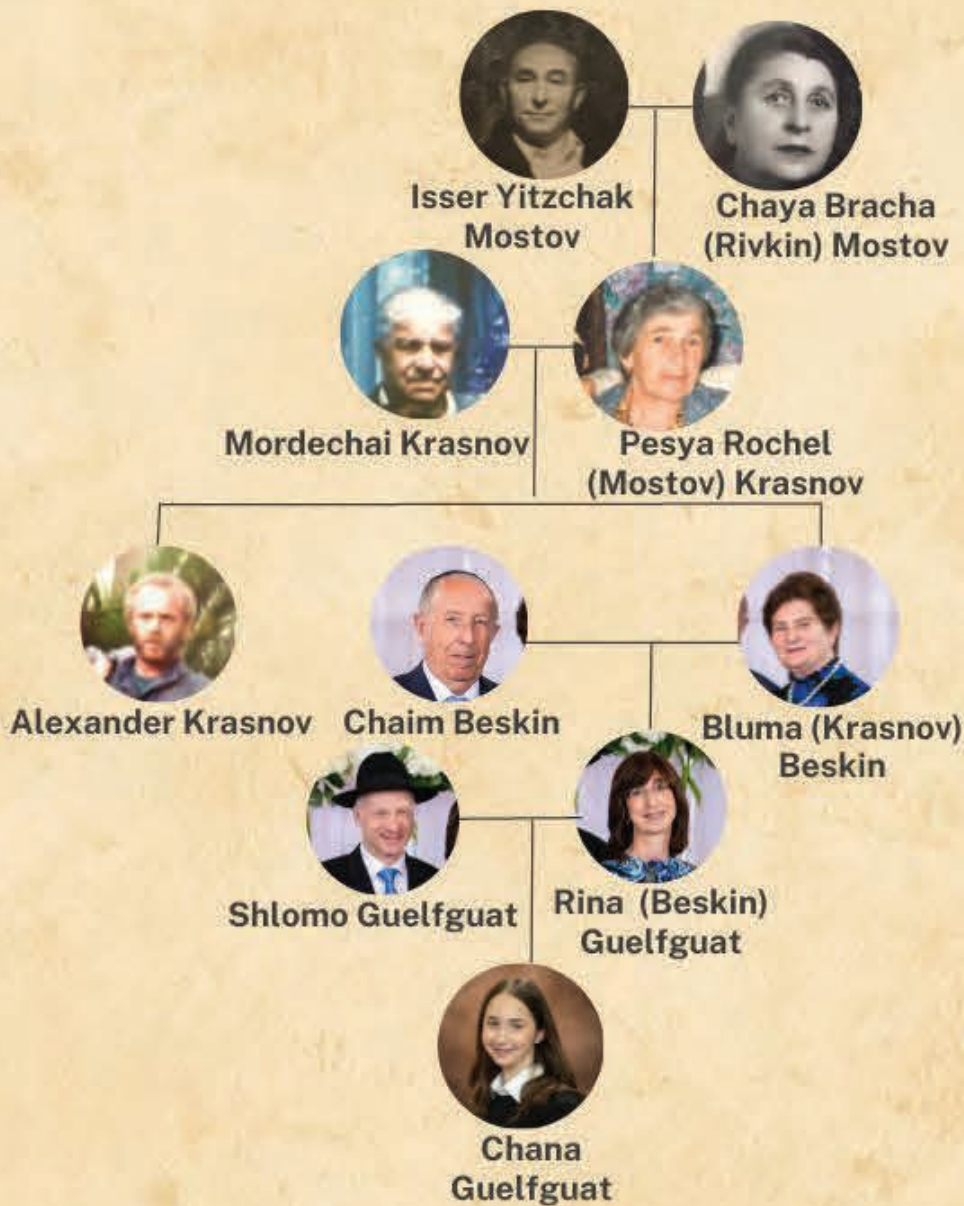
(Дорога жизни, doroga zhizni)/Operation 'Road of Life' was underway. The Siege of Leningrad had begun in September of 1941, and by November the second largest city in the country was completely surrounded and controlled by the Germans. All rail and supply lines leading to the city were blocked. No food or medicine could enter. Thousands were starving and disease was rampant. 'Road of Life' was a dangerous escape plan, but their last ray of hope. Chaya Bracha Mostov, my great-great-grandmother, was on one of those trucks with her husband, Isser Yitzchak and their daughters; one of them was Pesya Rochel, my great-grandmother.

Chaya Bracha's *siddur* bears silent testimony to the source of her inner strength. The words jump out at me. *Unesaneh tokef kedushas haYom... Mi yichyeh u'mi yamus..... Mi bamayim umi baesh... Mi ba'raav u-mi ba' tzama...*

Between the well-worn pages of Chaya Bracha's *siddur* we found a bookmark, a scrap of newspaper dated April 12, 1979. Could it be? In an era when the KGB, the notorious Soviet security agency, hunted down and punished observant Jews, *Chaya Bracha kept davening??*



Chaya Bracha's siddur with a bookmark from a newspaper dated April 12, 1979, indicating that she kept davening despite the risk of severe punishment for observing mitzvos during that time.



Yes, and that is not all she did. Chaya Bracha and Isser Yitzchak resolved that no descendants of theirs would be bereft of their Jewish heritage. No matter the risk.

In 1946, when Pesya Rochel got married they arranged for a clandestine kosher *Chuppah*. Six years later, when Pesya Rochel gave birth to a son, Alexander, they planned another risky affair, his *bris milah*. And of course, every year, at great personal peril, they invited their children and grandchildren to special *Pesach sederim* and *Yom Tov* meals.

Now, nearly seventy years later, Bluma, my grandmother and Pesya Rochel's daughter, remembers those magical nights. She reminisces about the *zemiros* and the traditional dishes Chaya

Bracha prepared, like *teiglach* for *Rosh Hashanah* and *matzo balls* for *Pesach*.

But it is *Imi Morasi* Rina, Bluma's daughter, who truly carries Chaya Bracha's torch. A torch that has never been extinguished, but has, at times, flickered, now burns brightly in her hands. Perhaps it was Chaya Bracha's fervent prayers, perseverance, and devotion that brought my mother to Torah classes and eventually completely back to *Yiddishkeit*.

When I began to research my family history for this project, deep down I hoped to find a *chashuv* relative I had not known about. Indeed, I have. She is the woman who put our family on the "Road of Life." My courageous ancestor, Chaya Bracha.

BETWEEN THE LINES

CHANA SAVA

In the library archives of the University of Moscow, a young engineering student has found a forbidden treasure trove. If caught with it, he'd be sent straight to Siberia, but as he slips it between two textbooks it transports him back to Kletsk.

Yehoshua Pesach Sava studied in Kletsk from the age of fourteen, a devoted *talmid* of Rav Aharon Kotler, and *chevrusa* of his son, Rav Shneur. When Yehoshua Pesach was eighteen, he left the *yeshivah* abruptly to take over the rabbinate of Kolki, which had been vacated by the sudden passing of his father, Rav Avraham Chaim Sava.



Rav Avraham Chaim Sava

When the Nazis invaded, Yehoshua Pesach fled by train with his brother, Asher. In transit, he struck up a conversation with a Russian professor. The academic was impressed with the young man's mathematical proficiency and understanding of engineering, and suggested that he join the University of Moscow. At that point, Yehoshua Pesach separated from Asher and headed for Moscow.

In the university, Yehoshua Pesach craved the Torah of his youth. But the study of Torah was forbidden in Russia, and all *seforim* had been confiscated. Somehow, though, he became

aware that all the contraband Judaica volumes were stored in the library of the University! At the risk of being sent to Siberia, or worse, Yehoshua Pesach retrieved some *seforim*. And so began his new routine: sitting in the library, the *yeshivah bochur* turned university student would hide his *Gemaras* and *Mishnayos* inside his engineering textbooks; they sustained his life even as they threatened it.

Yehoshua Pesach survived the war, married in Lithuania, and emigrated to America. He and his wife settled in Hartford, Connecticut where he earned his livelihood as an engineer, and raised funds for

Rav Aharon's *yeshiva* in Lakewood. It was on a visit to *Eretz Yisrael* that Rav Aharon met Asher Sava, and brought the long lost brothers together. Yehoshua Pesach's son Jeffrey is my Grandpa, and to this day he remembers Rav Aharon's warm hand shaking his own when the *Rosh Yeshiva* visited their home.



My grandfather on the left at his wedding and Rav Shneur Kotler on the right (1974)



Annual Yeshivas Eitz Chaim school photograph (Klesk, 1938)
(Circled is Yehoshua Pesach Sava)

Rooted in the South



DIANE ENGELBERG EPSTEIN
CHANA BASHA ROSENBERG GOLD
BARBARA KATZ KUTNER

TO MHS FROM MEMPHIS

MALI EPSTEIN · DEENA GOLD · RENA KUTNER

Fifty five years ago, in Memphis, Tennessee, seven seniors graduated from the inaugural class of the Finestone Yeshiva of the South founded by *Rabbi Meir Belsky*. Two of them have granddaughters in MHS's Class of '23. Chana Basha Rosenberg Gold is Deena Gold's grandmother. And Barbara Katz Kutner is Rena Kutner's grandmother.

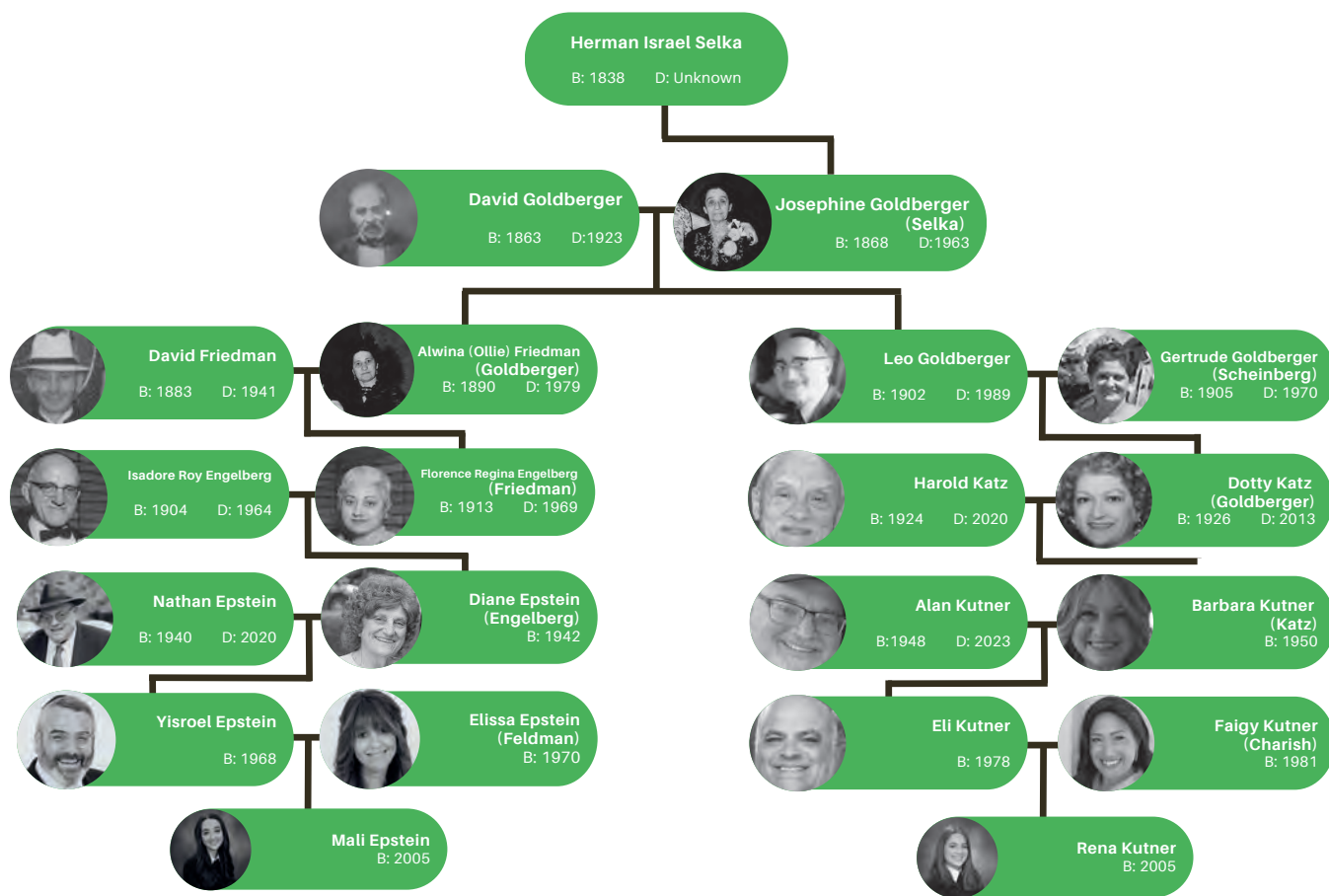
And while Deena's and Rena's *Bubbies* have a relationship that is over a half-century old, Mali Epstein's family has been intertwined with Rena's for far longer than that. As they dug to uncover their roots, Mali and Rena found that they were both on the same Memphis family tree.

Herman Israel Selka arrived in America in 1860 from Hesse, Germany, a young man bent on becoming a Hebrew teacher. His daughter, Josephine, married David Goldberger, one of the founders of the *Baron Hirsch Synagogue*¹, which would later become one of the largest Orthodox

1- <http://www.jhsmem.org/bio/DavidGoldberger.pdf>



Yearbook pages of Barbara Katz and Chana Basha Rosenberg (Fineston Yeshiva of the South, 1968)



shuls in America.

Among Josephine and David's eight children were *Leo*, Rena's great-great grandfather, and his sister *Alwina*, Mali's great-great grandmother, *Ollie*.

Leo was not a regular in the Baron Hirsch synagogue founded by his father, nor was his daughter, *Dotty*. Once, though, when she was sixteen, she showed up at the Baron Hirsch Junior Congregation. She was the second person to arrive; the first was a polite gentleman she had never seen before. His name was *Harold Katz*, and he had grown up in one of the few strictly Orthodox families in Memphis. The two were married three years later, in 1945, and their second daughter, Rena's Bubby, Barbara, was born in 1950. The Katzes bought a house across the street from Baron Hirsch so that they would never have to drive on *Shabbos*. A move which brought the Goldberger family back to their ancestral shul.

Ollie's daughter, *Florence Regina*, took a similar turn toward observance when she married *Isadore Roy Engelberg*, an Orthodox man nine years her

senior, who had moved to Memphis from New York. Their daughter, *Diane*, Mali's Bubby, attended public school and remembers being one of just a handful of girls her age who were *Shomer Shabbos*. Once, she insisted on attending the Friday night birthday party of a close friend. 'I want you to know that if you go, you're making a statement,' her father gently warned her, but when she decided to go anyway, he helped her 'have it all.' He dropped her off before *Shabbos*, and walked to pick her up when the party was over. So impressed was she by her parents' support, and commitment, that despite the temptations of the secularized Jewish world around her, she never felt the need to do anything like that again.

Deena's grandmother, Chana Basha, didn't have to fight the tide. She grew up in a Memphis family that was *frum* as far back as anyone can remember. Her parents and grandparents were models of hospitality and *limud haTorah*, and her grandfather, R' Yehuda Zev Rosenberg, was selected to learn with Rav Nota Greenblatt, the *rav* and *posek* who took Memphis by storm in 1949.

Each of their grandmothers was drawn to her *Yiddishkeit* in Memphis, and moved on to a larger center of Judaism to further her education. Deena's grandmother spent a year at the Esther Schoenfeld Teacher's Seminary on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where she met Rebbetzin Bruria David, the iconic *mechaneches*. She then went on to study for a year in Israel at *Bais Yaakov of Yerushalyim*, before it became BJJ. The *rebbetzin*, "the quintessential *Eishes Chayil*...infused with... *yiras Shamayim* and *ahavas Hashem*," became her lifelong mentor. Rena's grandmother, Barbara, enrolled in the Breuer's Teacher's Seminary in Washington Heights for two years. And, after completing her freshman year of college, Mali's grandmother, Diane, attended a Young Judea Year Course in Israel, which included three months of work on an irreligious *kibbutz*. Far from Memphis but deeply rooted to the *Yiddishkeit* of her home, she banded together with a few other members of the group, and approached the leaders. Firmly, the students announced that they would not live on a *treif kibbutz*. Much to the leaders' chagrin, twelve of their group of forty, Diane among them, chose to move to a *Mizrachi Kibbutz Dati*.

Each of their grandmothers was determined to inspire the next generation of students. Deena's married a Memphis native, Nosson Gold, and after a few years in Monsey, N.Y., returned to her alma mater, The Memphis Hebrew Academy. She taught

there for ten years before relocating to New York.

Rena's Bubby, Barbara, also returned to Memphis. There, she married Alan Kutner *a"h*, the son of Rabbi Yehoshua Kutner *a"h*, who co-founded the Margolin Hebrew Academy Elementary School with Rav Nota in 1949. After a few years in Talmud Torah education she reconnected at the Academy with her old classmate Chana Basha, this time in the Teacher's Lounge. She taught in the Academy for thirty six years.

Mali's grandmother, Diane, left Memphis in 1965 when she married Nathan Epstein *a"h* and moved to Boston. There, she found her first teaching position in The Maimonides Day School in Boston, after which she taught in the Bais Yaakov of Monsey for thirty years. Now, she is still going strong teaching English at Touro College.

And now, following in the footsteps of their grandmothers, Mali, Rena and Deena are off to Seminary to take their Jewish education to the next level.

"We are grateful to our grandmothers and the visionary leaders who pioneered Orthodoxy in Memphis, paving the way for thriving Yiddishkeit and serious Torah study for many generations to come, b'eZRas Hashem."



Root for The Yankees



POSITIVELY CHARGED

TAMAR EBERSTARK

In the mid-1960's, America was rocked by the hippie revolution, which promoted the rejection of conventional values and the use of hallucinogenic drugs. This new subculture appealed to many young adults, and Jewish collegiates were no exception. Rabbi Dr. Samuel Belkin, the president of Yeshiva University at the time, called Rabbi Jacob Rabinowitz, professor of chemistry in Stern College for Women, and said, "I need you to come to our Washington Heights campus as Dean of Students." Rabbi Rabinowitz was in turmoil. On the one hand he was busy with his teaching, and well on the way to earning his long awaited doctorate in Chemistry from Brooklyn Polytechnic University. On the other hand, his rebbe urgently needed his assistance, as the physical and spiritual health of his students was at stake. Rabbi Rabinowitz decided to forgo his PhD and the opportunities that would come with it, and assumed the responsibility with which he was charged. Eventually he became Dean of Students over both campuses, and then, the academic dean of the Erna Michael College of Yeshiva University¹.

As a child, I always looked forward to visiting my great-grandparents' house in Brooklyn. While at first it may have been the tray of rainbow-colored candy and chocolate cookies sitting on the dining room table that enticed me, I later became drawn to the obvious passion for education and love of learning that radiated from my *Ur-Zaidy*, Rabbi Jacob Rabinowitz. Born in Manhattan in 1926, my great-grandfather was an academic and an intellectual at an early age, which made it natural for him to become an educator. It is a testament to his success in that role, in his ability to impart not only knowledge, but values and a



A photo of my great-grandfather, Rabbi Jacob Rabinowitz, teaching chemistry to Stern College students (their names are unknown) (circa 1955)

sense of caring as well, that he was asked to save the day during those turbulent times of the sixties.

Over the next decade, *Ur-Zeidy* became part of the fabric of YU. In 1976, President Belkin passed away, and it was time for Yeshiva University to choose a new president. My great-grandfather was appointed chairman of the search committee. One day, he walked into a meeting of the committee made up of approximately sixty people, each representing a different division or department of Yeshiva University. "Rabbi Rabinowitz, we don't need this meeting anymore," one committee member said. "We have already

¹ - The Erna Michael College was an undergraduate school within Yeshiva University established in 1966. It was designed to meet the critical shortage of qualified teachers in Jewish education.

unanimously chosen a new president, you!" Unaware of how loved and admired he was among the professors, it had never occurred to him that they might consider him for the job. For many reasons, *Ur-Zaidy* was not interested in the position, but he had only a split-second to explain why. He told the committee that his title was not prestigious enough to be recognized among the leaders of universities world-wide. The title of "rabbi" was not respected in academia, and because he had chosen not to complete his PhD in chemistry, he did not have the title of "doctor." It was because of this, he maintained, that he could not be president. The committee, under his guidance, later chose Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm to become the president of the university.

While it seems to me that my great-grandfather displayed unusual self-sacrifice in putting aside his own professional development for the sake of young American Jews, I wonder if his commitment to YU and to yeshivah education in general, led to his many other significant accomplishments. He co-founded Camp Morasha, becoming its first Rabbi and Educational Director, and joined the boards of the Shulamith School for Girls and Ohel Children's Home and Family Services. *Ur-Zaidy* also published several *seforim* on *Chumash* titled *Yemin Yaakov*. And while he never earned that PhD in chemistry, he was, ultimately, awarded an honorary doctorate from his beloved Yeshiva University.

BIRTHS REPORTED IN 1926—BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN						
NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	No. of Certif. cats.	NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	No. of Certif. cats.	
Raab..... Evelyn.....	Oct. 11.....	35496	Radano..... Filomena R.....	June 7.....	22249	
..... Paul F.....	Dec. 27, 25.....	33	Rader..... Lila H.....	Apr. 4.....	12922	
Raabe..... male.....	Mar. 26, 25.....	11536	Raderman..... Stanley.....	Oct. 29.....	22122	
Rabbitt..... John V.....	Oct. 6.....	34933	Radezky..... June Dorothy.....	June 9.....	18909	
Rabe..... Alice A.....	Sep. 3.....	31955	..... Shirley Ruth.....	June 2.....	19919	
Rabenold..... Charles F.....	Feb. 28.....	8493	Radgiewicz..... female.....	Aug. 6.....	27090	
..... Dirk G.....	Sep. 13.....	33493	Radicchi..... Peter O.....	June 8.....	20472	
Rable..... Robert E.....	Nov. 21.....	40973	Radice..... Aurelia.....	May 27.....	19477	
Rabin..... Marvin.....	Feb. 17.....	7018	Radigan..... Jane.....	Apr. 6.....	19499	
..... Richard H.....	Sep. 2.....	31259	Radin..... Eleanor R.....	Nov. 21.....	41219	
..... Shirley.....	May 12.....	17269	..... Frances.....	Feb. 24.....	7590	
Rabinavitz..... Shireley.....	Apr. 11.....	13179	Radisch..... male.....	Mar. 23.....	19799	
Rabiner..... Shirley.....	Dec. 3.....	41905	Radler..... Donald H.....	May 22.....	19029	
Rabino..... male.....	Jan. 21.....	3294	Rado..... Fredrick.....	Nov. 29.....	41291	
Rabinovich..... Joshua E.....	Feb. 16.....	6122	Radoslovich..... Mathew M.....	Sep. 8.....	31899	
..... Joyce.....	June 29.....	32042	Radosti..... Anna.....	June 16.....	22929	
Rabinovitz..... Shireley.....	Apr. 11.....	18179	Radovits..... Helen Mary.....	May 19.....	17599	
Rabinowitz..... Anita.....	Dec. 19.....	42957	Radakin..... Marilyn M.....	Aug. 12.....	20779	
..... Carol P.....	May 7.....	18329	Raduziner..... Howard J.....	May 12.....	17999	
..... female.....	May 11.....	17000	Rady..... Joseph.....	Sep. 3.....	29712	
..... Irving.....	Jan. 9.....	2103	Raess..... female.....	July 15.....	24999	
..... Jacob M.....	June 1.....	19742	Raeviss..... Salvatore J.....	May 1.....	12549	
..... Lawrence.....	Apr. 28.....	15712	Rafael..... Verna.....	Sep. 26.....	29712	
..... Lena.....	May 19.....	18678	Rafanelli..... male.....	Apr. 1.....	22129	
..... male.....	May 9.....	16163	Rafano..... Frank.....	Oct. 31.....	27729	
..... male.....	Oct. 13.....	26149	Raffatto..... female.....	Apr. 4.....	19499	
..... male.....	Oct. 29.....	27789	Raffel..... female.....	Dec. 1.....	41897	
..... male.....	Dec. 18.....	43646	Rafferty..... Dorothy R.....	May 15.....	19729	
..... male.....	Dec. 27.....	43775	..... James F.....	Mar. 16.....	18999	
..... Nina S.....	Aug. 25.....	29995	..... Kathaleen.....	Aug. 22.....	29112	
..... Pearl.....	Sep. 14.....	22553	..... May.....	Sep. 7.....	21222	
..... Robert.....	June 25.....	22643	..... Naomi M.....	Sep. 9.....	29599	
..... Seymour.....	May 8.....	16662	Raffo..... Lawrence J., Jr.....	Nov. 4.....	28912	
..... William.....	Nov. 14.....	29746	Raffy..... June H.....	Jan. 24.....	4169	
Rabitcheff..... Elaine.....	July 1.....	23406	Rafferty..... female.....	Apr. 2.....	12169	
Rabolt..... Frank B.....	June 8.....	20369	..... Luke M.....	Nov. 24.....	40699	
Raboy..... Muriel.....	May 7.....	15679	..... Michael.....	Feb. 1.....	5417	
Rabuffo..... Michelina.....	Feb. 12.....	6264	Raggi..... Virginia.....	June 12.....	21479	
Rachko..... George.....	Aug. 28.....	20423	Raggio..... Estella Maria.....	June 10.....	20449	
..... Joseph.....	May 18.....	17941	Ragnone..... Carolina.....	Dec. 17.....	42599	
Rachet..... Pedro.....	May 17.....	17329	Ragona..... Antonino.....	Feb. 2.....	2972	
Rachlen..... Joseph.....	Mar. 30.....	11499	Ragone..... Antonio.....	Mar. 27.....	11427	
Rachlin..... Harold.....	May 28.....	19554	..... female.....	Sep. 14.....	22772	
Racioppe..... Phillmena.....	Mar. 28.....	10883	..... Paul.....	Oct. 20.....	27112	
Raciti..... Sebastian.....	Nov. 12.....	39344	Ragonesi..... Francesca.....	Oct. 8.....	24999	
Rackovitch..... Zivojin.....	Nov. 9.....	28991	..... Salvatore.....	Mar. 15.....	9425	
Rackovsky..... Judah S.....	Dec. 12.....	42859	Ragonesi..... John.....	Nov. 22.....	40674	
Raca..... Michel.....	Aug. 7.....	28396	..... Rozaria.....	Aug. 12.....	22922	
Radack..... Elaine B.....	Dec. 7.....	42461	Ragowich..... Jerome.....	Mar. 15.....	19424	

Manhattan birth record of my great-grandfather (1926)

NAME THAT BABY

RINA GILONI

Ever mindful of, and grateful for, the freedom and opportunities that America, often dubbed the *Medinah Shel Chesed*, offers us, we, as Jews in the United States, are committed to being model citizens. There are a few individuals who have taken it to the next level, and selflessly served this great country in times of war. Approximately 30,000 Jewish-Americans served in the U.S. Armed Forces in Vietnam, and their accounts of how they confronted the everyday challenges they faced as Jews give us a glimpse of history we don't often see.



My grandfather Sam in Vietnam (sometime between 1967-1969)



My grandfather in front of his living quarters in Vietnam

Dr. Samuel Smith was stationed at the 67th Evacuation Hospital in Vietnam, caring for wounded and sick soldiers, when his wife, Judy, gave birth to their second daughter in Los Angeles on Friday, March 28, 1969. The couple had planned for this moment. Several months earlier, the MARS¹ operator on Sam's military base had been in touch with Judy. Since overseas communication in a war zone was limited, he gave her his personal, highly accessible phone number, and Judy now used it to get the good news to her husband. Knowing that it was unlikely that there would be a *minyan* on the base, the prospective parents understood that this baby would probably not be named in the traditional way, during the Torah reading, by her father. Just before *Shabbos*, Judy shared the name that she and Sam had chosen with a few close relatives. She asked her father-in-law, Al, to name the baby in their Los Angeles *shul*. For some reason (which no one seems to remember,) Al's brother Harold was concerned that Al might not get the job done. His brother-in-law, Joseph Stamfer, was afraid of the same thing. So on that *Shabbos*, each of the three men took it upon himself to do the naming. Back in Vietnam, much to Sam's surprise, he was able

1 - Military Auxiliary Radio System



Uncle Harold (July 1958)

to put together a military *minyán* on *Shabbos* morning, and happily named his newest daughter, Rachel. And so, my Aunt Rachel was named in quadruplicate; in Los Angeles, by her grandfather, Zaidy Al, on the south side of Chicago, Illinois, by Uncle Harold, on the north side of Chicago by Uncle Joseph, and in Vietnam by her father, my Grampa.



My Aunt Rachel around two years old



The Vietnam Menorah

*December of 1967, 67th Evacuation
Hospital in Vietnam*

It was getting close to Chanukah and Grampa (Dr. Sam Smith) and his neurosurgeon roommate, Paul, who was also Jewish, realized that they had forgotten to ask their Chaplain to provide them with a menorah. They had to think fast and improvise. For the first night of Chanukah, Grandpa stuffed an old cigarette lighter holder with a piece of cotton, and he and Paul used it as their lone Chanukah candle. For the seven remaining nights they got even more creative, and used a rifle shell casing, a piece of wood, and cotton. My grandfather described that Menorah as 'so beautiful.'

Back to our Roots



YOSEF DAVID BRANDWEIN

A TIMELY MATCH

TOVA BERGER

“If you’re a good boy, we’ll take you to a *t’naim*, an engagement,” Yosef David was told. The seven-year-old, incentivized by the reward, put on his best behavior. As promised, his parents, Rabbi Avraham and Channah Brandwein, brought him all the way from Safed to Jerusalem. It was there that he learned he would not be attending the engagement as a guest, but as the groom. He was introduced to four-year-old Miriam Esther Cohen, who would be his future wife.

I have no idea if this story actually happened. It has been told in my family for at least three generations, but when I read the memoir of the *chassan*, the story was absent. The recorded version, however, is no less interesting, and taught me volumes about the values and character of my ancestors.

R’ Yitzchak Chanoch Henoch HaKohen Cohen and his wife, *Marat* Feiga, were a beautiful couple living in the Old City of *Yerushalayim* in the 1800’s. Unfortunately, their first three sons did not survive infancy. Finally, *Marat* Feiga gave birth to a baby girl, and they named her Miriam Esther. R’ Henoch sent a letter to the Tchartkover Rebbe, Reb Duvid Moishe, to ask for a *berachah*. The *rebbe* told him to find a *shidduch* for his daughter as a *segulah* for a healthy life. Because the *rebbe* was still in Tchartkov, he didn’t know any families



R' Avraham Brandwein

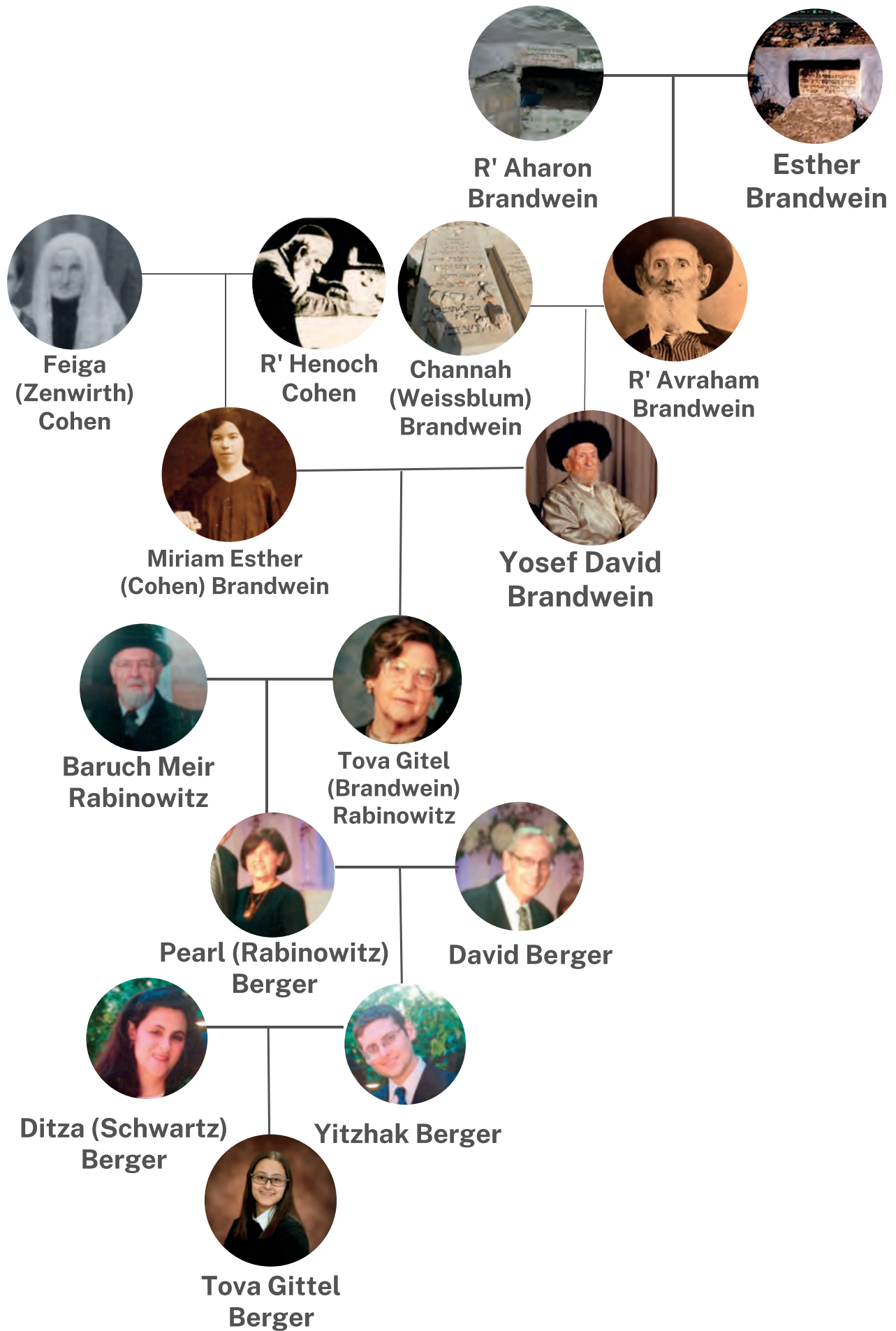


R' Henoch Cohen

in *Yerushalayim*, but he did have a family in *Tzfat*, and he mentioned that maybe they would be able to make a *shidduch* with them.

On *Lag BaOmer*, the people of *Yerushalayim* traveled to *Meron*, and R’ Henoch went with them. He went to *Tzfat* for the *Shabbos* before *Lag BaOmer*, and on *erev Shabbos*, he saw a young boy walking back from the *mikveh* barefoot. R’ Henoch asked him, “Won’t you get cold?” The boy, Yosef David Brandwein, replied, “You’re not from here,” and kept walking. That night, R’ Henoch went to the home of R’ Aharon of Felshtin, a *chassidische mekubal* in *Tzfat*, and he met the boy again, this time with another young boy his age. R’ Henoch wished them a *gut Shabbos*. The boy, a grandson of R’ Aharon, turned to his friend and said, “Let’s go. That *Yid* likes to ask questions.”

R’ Henoch took a liking to the boy, and



after *Shabbos*, sent a *shadchan* to the father of Yosef David, R' Avraham of Stratyn, to suggest the match. R' Avraham did not want to hear of it. After all, his son was only seven years old! But the *shadchan* didn't give up, and eventually, R' Avraham's wife, *Marat Channah*, suggested that they ask R' Aharon what to do. After hearing the story, R' Aharon told them to go ahead with it. He quoted the *Ruzhiner Rebbe*, who said that as long as the girl is a *yiras Shamayim*, one should never refuse to hear a prospective match. If, however, they had doubts about it, they should create harsh *t'naim*, conditions of marriage, and if the other party agreed to them, that would be a sign of a true match.



Yosef David and Miriam Esther Brandwein at their 50th anniversary (1961)

R' Aharon suggested that they demand harsh *t'naim* of R' Henoch, so *Marat Channah* asked their prospective *mechutan* for one hundred coins, around five times the usual dowry. He would also have to support the *chassan* for five years instead of just one. She even demanded that R' Henoch give five coins up-front. He readily agreed to all the terms, because at the time, his uncle in America was sending him a hundred dollars a year, making him financially secure.

The first set of *t'naim* was written on 22 *Iyar*, 5663, in *Tzfat*, and an additional *t'naim* was written before they got married on 14 *Av*, 5671, in *Yerushalayim*. Throughout the eight-year engagement, the *chassan* never traveled to *Yerushalayim* and the *kallah* never

went to *Tzfat*. As a matter of fact, when the *chassan's* parents were in *Yerushalayim*, they never met with the *kallah's* family, because “*es past nisht*” that they should be in the same city as the *kallah*. The only time they saw each other was the night before the wedding, because one is not allowed to marry a woman until he sees her.

At some point during the engagement, R' Henoch's uncle (the one from America) came to visit *Yerushalayim*. As they walked together to the *Kosel*, the uncle noticed that every time he mentioned America, R' Henoch would spit. He asked him why, and R' Henoch responded, “I'm spitting on America.” The uncle did not take kindly to this, and when R' Henoch's father, R' Kasriel,

was *niftar*, his uncle stopped sending him money, causing him to lose his primary source of *parnassah*.

And so, when it came time for the *chassunah*, R' Henoch had nothing to give his son-in-law to fulfill his *t'naim*. Some family members suggested that R' Henoch marry off his daughter and then annul the marriage with a *get*.¹ But R' Henoch refused. A Jewish girl should not have to be burdened by financial matters.

On 15 *Elul*, 5671, Yosef David and Miriam Esther got married. And it's a good thing they did, because their oldest daughter, Tova Gitel, was my great-grandmother.

1 - At the time, a t'naim created such a strong commitment that it was better to get married and then divorced than to break an engagement



EFRAYIM MAMET

BEN ALIYAH

YISKAH COHEN

Towards the end of WWII, Efrayim Mamet made his way to Tajikistan, where many refugees had gathered. Years of hard work in a Siberian labor camp had not dulled his intellectual curiosity, and he was a regular patron of the public library. One day, he was returning a book about Napoleon Bonaparte, and at the checkout counter met Rena Eisenberg, another Jewish refugee, who was interested in borrowing the same volume. This led the young man to share his thoughts on the book, which led Rena to invite him for a *Shabbos* meal with her family. More invitations followed, and eventually the couple was married in 1945.



Efrayim and Rena's passport to go to Palestine

Saba Efrayim Mamet spent his youth learning, first in Baranovitch, and then in Mir. With the outbreak of war and the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939, he escaped with the Mirrer Yeshiva to Vilna, Lithuania. There, the Yeshiva split into three groups heading east. Two of the groups successfully made the journey across Russia to Kobe, Japan, and then finally to Shanghai, China. My great-grandfather's group, however, was caught by the Russians and exiled to Siberia where he was assigned to work detail in a nickel mine for five years. One of his lasting memories of that experience in northern Asia was the unending darkness during the six winter months, and the ongoing light for the milder part of the year.

As the war came to an end, the advancing Red Army freed Poland from Nazi rule, and the Russians allowed refugees to go home. Saba Efrayim and Savta Rena set out for Poland, hoping to find some living relatives.

However, while disembarking at a train station in Poland, they found a note left by Savta Rena's brother, Binyamin, who served in the Jewish Brigade of the British army, telling them to meet him at a certain address in Poland. Unfortunately, by the time they arrived he had already left for his next mission, and it became clear to them that the situation for Jews in Poland, even after the defeat of the Nazis, was, at best, tenuous. And so



Rena Mamet from before the war with her high school friends

they recalculated. They left Poland, and bribed smugglers to guide them stealthily to a DP camp in the US-administered part of Germany. It was there that my grandfather, Saba Yaakov, was born.

During Saba Efrayim's two years in Germany, he worked for the *Tenuat Hapoel Hamizrachi* which afforded him legal documents to make *aliyah*. Impressively, he was also offered a lucrative position in the US, but turned it down. After so many Jews had just been killed in the Holocaust, he was driven to rebuild Jewish life in the Jewish homeland.

It is noteworthy that none of this important family history was known to anyone in our family until the Eichmann trial began. My great-grandfather, always a *matmid* who found it hard to tear himself away from his *sefarim*, was never seen anywhere near the radio before that time. Once the proceedings began, though, he, who had suffered so greatly in the war, felt invested in a guilty verdict, and followed the trial's development with the rest of the family. This led to many discussions and revelations about our own family history. Had the *Mossad* been unsuccessful in bringing the murderous villain back to Israel for trial, they would have killed him in Argentina, and we may never have learned of the Mamet story during World War II.



ON THE WINGS OF EAGLES

Yael Yaish

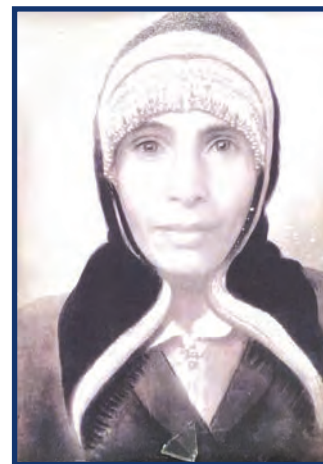
As the scorching sun beat down on the desert sands of Yemen, a weary, yet determined group of Jews traveled its vast expanse on camels, some even by foot, just to reach the port city of Aden. Once there, they stood spellbound by a sight which would forever be etched in their memories; planes waiting to whisk them away to the Land of Promise and Redemption. Operation Magic Carpet, the 1949 mission which would airlift thousands of Yemenite Jews to Israel, was indeed magical. It extended a lifeline to a community which, since the establishment of the State of Israel one year earlier, had been choked by persecution.

A little girl, Shoshana Nagari, about five or six or seven years old¹, was one of those refugees. Her childhood had been shattered by the horrors of pogroms and discrimination. In Saana, Yemen, her birthplace, Jews were relegated to the status of second-class citizens; in disdain, Muslims refused to even eat in the presence of a “Yahud.” Refusing to bow to their oppressors, the Nagars had joined the escape journey, and Shoshana clung to her family, especially her three-month old brother who was cradled in their mother’s arms on the camel alongside hers.

Arriving in Israel, they were not met with grandeur and comfort. Instead, they found themselves placed in *ma’abarot*, tent camps in Rosh Ha’ayin, a temporary refuge near the border. These makeshift homes were far from homey, they lacked the most basic amenities. Hard work became the cornerstone of their existence. Driven by his love for the Land, Savta’s father, Saba Yisrael Nagari, labored tirelessly to pave the streets. And her mother, Sarah Nagari, worked as a cleaning lady, sacrificing her own personal dreams and ambitions in order to support her family.



*My grandmother's father,
Saba Yisrael Nagari*



*My grandmother's mother,
Savta Sarah Nagari*

The two of them sustained their family with pride. Saba Yisrael was a man of deep faith and unwavering conviction. Despite the pressures to integrate into Israeli culture, he refused to compromise on the obvious marks of their Yemenite heritage. Unlike many of their former compatriots, his sons’ and his own *peyot* remained untouched. Savta Sarah had remarkable foresight, and took great risks to protect her loved ones. At that time,

1 - While Savta's recollections of that time are crystal clear, she simply doesn't know when she was born. In Yemen, there were no birth certificates. Her father, Saba Yisrael, would record the date of each child's birth in a sefer. We do not know where any of his seforim are today, though we presume that they were destroyed with all the other holy writings burned by the Muslims at that time.



My Savta's school class picture from Israel (1958)

scandalously, Yemenite babies were disappearing from hospitals.² And so, when, as a child, my great-uncle Yosef took ill and was sent to the hospital, Savta Sarah dared to sneak in and rescue him, to ensure that the family remained intact.

Uppermost in their hierarchy of values was their children's Jewish education. Yeshiva studies became a priority, an investment in their children's spiritual growth. Sadly, though, the children of the Jews who had fled Yemen because of unfair treatment, had to endure similar discrimination in their new homeland. My grandmother and her siblings were victims of the unkind behavior of many of their Ashkenazi classmates. Even the principal of Savta's Tel Aviv high school warned her that "whatever you wish to do in life, you will not succeed." She never graduated because the taunts were too hard to bear. Instead, she helped her mother with the household chores, and the care of her younger siblings.

At a friend's wedding in 1965, Savta was introduced to Tzadok Yaish, a repository of Torah knowledge. They were married in April of that year,

and emigrated to America where Saba's work took him. Once again, Savta found herself in a foreign land. But this time, there was a vibrant Yemenite community in Boro Park, where they made their home, that welcomed them with open arms. Together, these families preserved their Yemenite customs and unique pronunciation in Torah and *Tefilah*. They were able to instill in their children a reverence and love for their distinct *mesorah*.

In the absence of family support, Savta built lasting friendships; she leaned on her neighbors and found solace in their guidance. Her gratitude for their help knows no bounds.

Above all, Savta takes pride in her children and grandchildren. She revels in the knowledge that they dedicate themselves to the study of Torah and observance of their heritage. She has cherished every milestone, beaming with pride as my father graduated from Yale Law School and received *Semichah* from Yeshiva University. Praise to Hashem is always on Savta's lips. Even in hard times, she never complained but would say "*Hashem ya'azor*," Hashem will help. May He help me to be like her: strong, resourceful, and loving.



My Savta and Saba on their wedding day (1965)

2 - Known as the "Yemenite Children Affair," there are over 1,000 official reported cases of missing babies and toddlers, but some estimates from advocates are as high as 4,500. Their families believe the babies were abducted by the Israeli authorities in the 1950s, and were illegally put up for adoption to childless Ashkenazi families, Jews of European descent. The children who disappeared were mostly from the Yemenite and other "Mizrachi" communities, an umbrella term for Jews from North Africa and the Middle East. While the Israeli government is trying to be more transparent about the disappearances, to this day, it denies that there were systematic abductions.

SUSTAINING HERITAGE

HODAYA ZERBIB

“Why do you want to marry me off already? How am I bothering you? I am not even sleeping at home!” At fourteen, living in Missouri¹, Morocco and working as an *au pair* for a family with small children, Ester was a young woman with a free spirit and an unyielding desire for independence. But her father, Shimon, had other plans for her future. Unbeknownst to her, he had already started the ball rolling.



My maternal grandparents, Maimon and Ester's wedding in Sefrou, Morocco (1957)

While on vacation in Rabat, Ester received a surprising phone call from her uncle, Nathan. He invited her to spend *Shabbat* with a family in Sefrou, a small town six hours away from Missouri. Esther journeyed there accompanied by her father. Upon their arrival in Sefrou, Esther was greeted by Maimon Alcobi, a man ten years her senior, and much to her embarrassment his entire family

cheered and celebrated. It dawned on her that she was expected to marry this stranger, and Ester felt her heart race with anticipation, while she wondered what would come next. As she spent time with Maimon and his family, she began to feel a sense of belonging and a sort of love that she had never experienced before. They welcomed her into their home with open arms, treating her like a daughter and showering her with affection. And as the days turned into weeks, Ester realized she had found her soulmate in Maimon.

In 1957, a traditional Jewish Moroccan wedding, steeped in rich culture, was held. The entire community came together to celebrate the union of two souls. As was customary, the festivities spanned several days, and the highlight of the pre-wedding rituals was the *henna* ceremony. My grandmother was delighted to have her hands and feet adorned with intricate designs made from a paste of mignonette leaves, symbolizing good luck and fertility. As the women gathered around her, singing and dancing, the air was thick with the scent of rosewater, and laughter and merriment echoed through the halls. It was a beautiful display of community and tradition, a moment Maimon and Esther would cherish for years.

Soon after, the henna ritual was repeated, albeit in an abridged way, at the couple's wedding, after a moving ceremony. Ester remembers it as the happiest night of her life. She felt blessed to have been married by Harav David Martziano, a rabbi renowned for his wisdom and compassion. But

¹ - Missouri is a town in Boulemane Province, Fès-Meknès, Morocco. According to the 2004 census it has a population of 20,978.

the couple's honeymoon bliss was short-lived.

Mystifying medical experts, Maimon suddenly lost his hearing. Three years later, Ester gave birth to their first son, Itzik, and Maimon's deafness presented a challenge in raising him. It was then that Rivka, Maimon's mother, stepped in to fill the void, becoming a surrogate mother to Ester and helping her navigate the challenges of motherhood. Through it all, Ester remained determined to make the most of her life, never letting her husband's constraints hold her back. She remained a devoted wife, and became a loving mother, building a life with Maimon full of joy and meaning.

As the years passed, Maimon and Esther's relationship deepened, despite, or perhaps because of, the challenges they faced as a couple. They built a family that was grounded in their Moroccan heritage and raised their children with a profound respect for their roots. Their family grew to include eight children with varying levels of religiosity; all of them remained committed to their cultural heritage.

One of them was my mother, Ronit, for whom the journey toward religious devotion was slow and steady. Growing up in Israel, she was surrounded by a society that celebrated diversity but didn't always encourage religious practice. It wasn't until she embarked on her post-army trip abroad that she became reacquainted with the religious traditions that had once been a part of her life. And it was in the United States that she fully embraced her faith, becoming more traditional in her practices and



My maternal grandmother, Ester, at my parents', Ronit and David's Henna ceremony in Rechovot, Israel (1995)



My parents. David and Ronit's wedding in Dimona, Israel (1995).

beliefs.

While in America, my mother met David Zerbib, a young man from Dimona who shared her passion for Judaism. Slowly but surely, their bond deepened, and in 1995 they tied the knot in a beautiful ceremony in David's hometown.

The wedding was an eclectic mix of old and new, with some props differing from Maimon and Esther's wedding. The guests wore sandals, khaki pants, button-down shirts, and *kippot serugot*, attire antithetical to the sacrosanct Moroccan dress code. And yet, the ceremony, which also included the customary henna celebration, closely resembled that of their parents, a tradition that has not changed through generations of Moroccan Jews.

Years later, Ronit and David's son, Yaakov, met a young woman from Chicago. The two of them decided to get married in a beautiful ceremony in the Windy City, surrounded by friends and family. The wedding was a melting pot of cultures.

The guests wore modern Western attire, but the couple incorporated the same traditional Moroccan customs, including the Henna ritual, which 'ever remains a cherished family tradition.

Throughout the generations, Esther's family has traversed oceans and faced countless obstacles, but one thing has remained constant: our deep commitment to our Moroccan heritage. From the traditional Henna ceremonies to the delicious flavors of our family recipes, these traditions have been passed down from generation to generation, reminding us where we came from and the love and resilience that has sustained us.



ROOTS & SHOOTS

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

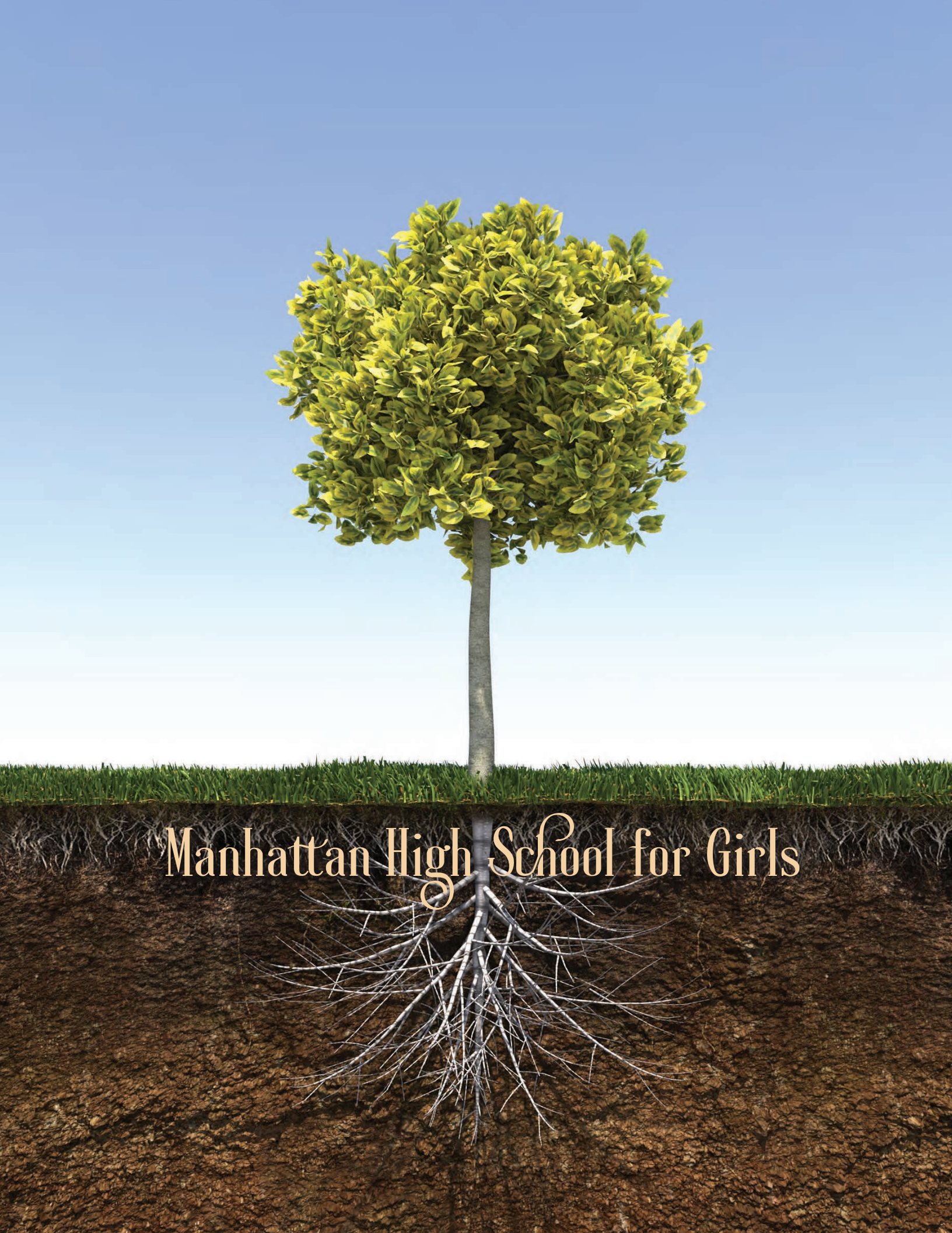
Let me guide you through your genealogical journey.

Chani Gotlieb

Experienced Genealogy Researcher

Spielberg Certified Interviewer

chanigotlieb@gmail.com



Manhattan High School for Girls