

Expanded Issue

SA-SIG

*The journal of the Southern African Jewish Genealogy Special
Interest Group*

<http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/>

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Firstly, an initiative by Randy Schoenberg has led to a new and rapidly growing Jewish genealogy portal. A portal is a type of "gateway" to a large number of Internet based sites relating to Jewish genealogy. For full information, see the *Jewish Genealogy Portal: A Guide to Jewish Projects and Resources* on *Geni.com* at:

<http://tinyurl.com/Jgenportal>

Geni has been bought by *myheritage.com*. This should greatly expand the functions of both sites.

The LDS site *Familysearch.org* has added a considerable number of new records and newspapers. Of particular interest are a large variety of South African records, both civil and church related, including the Slovakia Church and Synagogue Books from 1592-1910, and the United States (New England) Petitions for Naturalization from 1787 to 1906. Search these diverse collections and more than 3.5 billion other records for free at *FamilySearch.org*.

FamilySearch is also appealing for volunteers to assist with indexing of the databases.

The wonderful South African-based site, *Ancestry24.com*, closed at the end of February as it was not financially viable. This site was put together and run by Heather MacAlister. I believe the contents of the databases are going to be housed by *EGSSA*, the online site of the Genealogical Society of South Africa (www.eggsa.org).

JewishGen.org now has over twenty million records. For details of new material go to the website.

The International Institute of Jewish Genealogy has announced the retirement of the founding director, Neville Lamdan, and the appointments of Ami Elyasaf as Executive Director, and Michael Silber as Academic Director.

The IJG is housed at the National Library of Israel, on the Givat Ram Campus of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Its web site can be found at www.ijg.org.

I would also like to congratulate all those behind the resurrection of the Jewish Genealogy Society of South Africa in Johannesburg. *Kol hakavod*, may it grow from strength to strength. You can see a notice

The Southern Africa Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group (SA-SIG)

The purpose and goal of the Southern Africa Special Interest Group (SA-SIG) is to bring together Jewish genealogy researchers with a common interest in Southern Africa and to provide a forum for a free exchange of ideas, research tips and information of interest to those researching Jewish family history in the communities of South Africa, Lesotho (Basutoland), Botswana (Bechuanaland), Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), Zambia (Northern Rhodesia), Swaziland, Mozambique, Kenya, and the former Belgian Congo.

The SIG has been producing a quarterly Newsletter since 2000 in which is included articles on personalities in the Southern African Jewish community, religious congregations, communities – past and present and general news about the lives our Southern African families led.

Further information on how to subscribe to the Newsletter, as well as an archive of previous Newsletter issues, can be found at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/newsletter/index.htm>

If you would like to contribute articles to the Newsletter, accounts should include descriptions of families of the community, aspects of local Jewish life, its institutions and particular character. Jewish involvement in the community at large, its history, business life and development could be featured as well.

Articles for inclusion in the Newsletter should be sent to Colin Plen, Editor, at colplen@iafrica.com

General enquiries about the Newsletter can be sent either to Colin or to Roy Ogus at r_ogus@hotmail.com

The SA-SIG maintains a set of Web Pages that can be found at: <http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica>

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about the re-opening at <http://tinyurl.com/jgssa-jhb> and for further information about the Society, you should contact the chairman, Mo Skikne, at moski@global.co.za.

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EDITORIAL

Thank you to the many readers who have sent me interesting items for inclusion in this issue.

One of the matters causing a great deal of bitterness in Southern African Judaism today is the closing of the South African Board of Deputies Beyachad Library.

Eli Rabinowitz, well known for his work in genealogy in South Africa, wrote an article which was spotted by Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg of Cape Town. So, Rabbi Liebenberg became a genealogist as well, and even gave a sermon on it.

Sarah Welham and Flo Bird, who do a great of work in publicising Johannesburg, investigated the Brixton Cemetery

Do you call your Friday night bread *challah* or *kitke*? This has been the subject of many discussions especially as South Africans (the *kitke*-sayers) go abroad and find nobody else says *kitke*. We have some erudite comments on the subject.

I meant to include one of my “condensed book reviews” some time ago and it was mislaid. So this issue I am featuring a book called *They Fought Back*.

We might never have heard the name Flip Slier if a Dutch mother had not hidden her son’s letters in the ceiling of their house before the mother, the son, and the father were gassed in Auschwitz. The Durban Holocaust Museum has been able to put up a story about this family.

Harry Spanier was a soldier who fought on the side of the Boers. We have a very good description of his actions.

My old buddy Maurice Skikne has many interests; Yiddish is one of them. He has written a first class

article for us on the influence of Yiddish on other languages.

Ralph Yodaiken died in 2012, and we have an obituary on this colourful character.

Rabbi Zaiden in England has sent us an article about Trooper John Barrow Cohen who fought on the British side in the Boer War, and after he was killed, he was not buried in the main cemetery, out of respect for his religion. He had to wait for a few years before getting a Jewish prayer on his grave. My friend Ben Lurie in Pietermaritzburg even provided a newspaper cutting of the event.

Another Holocaust story being exhibited by the Cape Town and the Durban Museums is entitled *Paragraph 175* and it is about the treatment of homosexual men in Germany and the occupied countries by the Nazis. While not Jewish and not genealogical in nature, I felt it was of sufficient interest to include the story this month.

Please continue to send me articles and comments about anything on your mind! I will see for myself if our readers will enjoy them.

Colin Plen

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HARRY SPANIER: AN UNTOWARD BOER SOLDIER

Ann Rabinowitz



*Harry Spanier
Lancaster, Ohio*

Earlier versions of this article were previously published in Jewish Affairs, Volume 64, No. 3, December, 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa, and in the JewishGen Blog in the same month.

This story ends on December 11, 1899, with an American, the first Jewish casualty on the Boer side, killed needlessly on the field of battle during a night attack of Surprise Hill, at the siege of Ladysmith, South Africa. However, it begins fortuitously enough with a German Jewish boy, Harry Spanier, who came to America with his siblings Joseph and Pauline as part of the mid-19th Century German Jewish migration to America.

The Spanier siblings were barely teenagers when they arrived and strove to integrate into the American melting pot. Siblings, Joseph and Pauline, settled in post Gold Rush era San Francisco, California, and Harry took to the East Coast, New York, and then Columbus in mid-western Ohio.

According to Harry's passport application, he was the son of Abraham Spanier of Wandsbek, Germany. He had two passports with varying birth dates, one in 1840 and one in 1853. Records are never accurate it seems, even on important documents such as a passport.

Later, as he became acclimated, Harry Spanier became a grocer, a fish market owner, and a speculator in America. He was someone who looked for the main chance, a good idea, a way to make his mark. He was eager to make his first million like he had heard it was possible to do in America, the land of opportunity. The streets were paved with gold were they not?

To others, he appeared to be a fine figure of a man, attractive with blue eyes and light hair, hardly with the look of a Jew about him. He fit in everywhere. He must have been a persuasive talker as he gained the attention of many a prominent businessman, belonged to civic organizations and lodges, and he had many devoted friends.

At some point, he met the lively, ebullient and social Frances Emma Vagnier, the daughter of Bartholomew and Frances Vagnier, who were French Catholics and early settlers of Lancaster, Ohio, a small town not too far from Columbus, Ohio. It was not known how "Emma" met Harry Spanier. She was young, much younger than he was, and eager to see the world and he was a worldly man intent on making things happen. She was smitten despite the difference in their ages and their religions. However, she took her religion seriously, seriously enough to require that their forthcoming children would be brought up Catholic.



*Frances Emma Spanier
Columbus, OH*

So, they were married in approximately 1884, although no records remain of their joining and whether it was done civilly or in a church. Intermarriage or marrying out whilst frowned upon, occurred frequently in those days where Jews were located in areas where there were few other Jews. The fact, too, was that many of these early German Jewish settlers were of the reform persuasion and also may have become much less observant in the less restrictive confines of America.

The Spaniers had their first child, Joseph, immediately, and two more, Clara Belle and Lewis J., followed. However, their first son Joseph died in 1890 as did Harry's brother Joseph. It was a terrible year, but Harry carried on.

It was difficult trying to make something of oneself and raise a family too. However, Harry was a hustler and always eager to find his niche. He kept up with current affairs and what was going on in the world. Eventually, he concocted the idea that he should become involved in South African-related commerce. South Africa was teeming with possibilities as they had much in the way of natural resources such as diamonds, gold and other things, but little in the way of standardized or commercially mass-produced products such as carriages, railroad cars, mining machinery, explosives, etc.

His first successful venture was to represent a combine of New Yorkers in the shipping of mules to South Africa. Since mules were not naturally raised in South Africa and were stronger and more long-lasting than horses, there was a great desire for them, especially in mining where twenty mule teams pulled ore from the mines as well as equipment. They were essential ingredients in the mining industry. In addition, they were most important in military operations such as carting food, guns, and equipment, as had been found in the First Boer War (1880-1881).

As it so happened, the major companies in Columbus, Ohio, the Columbus Buggy Company, Inc., and Kilbourne and Jacobs Manufacturing Company, were intent on providing items related to mining, transportation, and other similar areas. Harry established connections for selling their products overseas in far-off South Africa. A group of the companies hired Harry to go directly to South Africa and negotiate contracts with the government for many diverse items. This was his chance at making it rich. His ambitious plan was to spend a

year or two in South Africa, make his fortune and bring his family out to join him.

It was now 1896, and he got his passport and packed his bags and bid good-bye to his devoted wife and two young children and away he went on a ship to South Africa. As he left the coast of America for a daunting and unknown foreign shore, like all adventurers, he penned a letter to his wife of which only the first page remains:

"On board ship, Saturday, Oct. 17, 1896.

My own dear wife and children,

This is a great moment for me. It almost breaks my heart, but we will trust in God to land us safe and may God keep you and the children until my return. I have set my teeth together to keep from almost breaking down not because I am a coward, but because I miss you so much my darlings. We are just leaving the shore of our country behind and with a heavy heart I am looking at the ..."

And so, Harry sailed across the seas and arrived in South Africa and immediately set about making connections, so he could consummate some deals. He was widely accepted in the halls of government in Pretoria where many other speculators competed with him for the lucrative government contracts. His friends were other Americans, who hung out at certain social clubs, but also the Boers officials who he had to deal with. He was a fresh face who represented companies that had a worldwide reputation which boded well for his future success in closing some deals.

He began to have some successes and American products from Columbus, Ohio, flowed to the Boer Republic in significant amounts. Despite this, he recognized that the big money was going to come from the provision of the railroad cars and lines for new main and branch rail lines being constructed as well as other related machinery for the mines.

In 1898, he represented a group of companies in the following undertaking:

*News by Wire, Transvaal
The New Branch Lines
A Syndicate Offer
Undertaking the Work at Eight Thousand a Mile*

Pretoria, 3rd (Central News Agency)

An American syndicate, which has practically secured the contract for the Vryheid-Dundee line, has submitted a proposal to the Government offering to construct all the new branch lines at an average rate of £8,000 per mile, to be paid in State debentures bearing four percent interest. The proposal will have to be submitted to the Volksraad.

This was an important arterial rail line which was scheduled to connect the Richards Bay coal line with the Durban-Gauteng main line. The initial section of 11 km was built in 1896 from Glencoe to Talana. Due to the onset of the Second Boer War, the line was not extended to Vryheid until 1903.

The South Africa Harry saw was wild and full of possibilities. He continued to write glowing letters to his wife about what he could accomplish. Meanwhile, his letters added that he was terribly homesick and missed his family. The time flew by and it was now three years later, 1899, and Harry had not managed to go home yet. Things were still on the cusp of succeeding for him.

He wrote to his wife that if things did not work out he would come home, but he wanted to stay until he had tried every means of succeeding on a special project he was working on. He told his wife that if he did succeed he would be a millionaire many times over. She wrote back and agreed that he should stay until he reached his goal or his opportunities ran out.

At some point, Harry became a burgher of the ZAR and joined the Boer commandos. He, along with many others from Pretoria, left to defend Ladysmith. It is quite strange that Harry, a man who was considered elderly by most accounts as he was about 59-60, should have done so. It is true that there were older men who joined, but many took non-combatant roles. In addition, he had a wife and two young children who needed his support in America.

What prompted him to take this life-changing and subsequently fatal move which risked everything he had or hoped to accomplish?

- Did he suddenly become idealistic and join a foreign army, despite the fact that he had only been in the ZAR for only three short years? There is no documentation that has survived of his feelings along these lines.

- Was he influenced by his friends? Americans speculators, for the most part, who were in South Africa, supported the British and not the Boers. He was also in the minority as a Jew, although there were those who did join the Boer cause, but they were significantly smaller in number than those who fought for the British. However, he did have some close American friends who did join the Boers and this may have accounted for his decision.
- Was he caught up in something that has not been documented perhaps such as spying for the American government? There were many Americans who were in the same position as he was who just left and went home when the War was declared. They did not stick around. Several descriptions of his activities during the War led one to believe that he was watching and observing the proceedings from the sidelines and not actually participating.
- Or, did he feel that his participation and support would guarantee his success after the War was over and the Boers won? This may be the final answer as he had told his wife he was in it for the long haul until he reached the success he had struggled to get.

This is the missing link in Harry's story. There is nothing to tell us either in his correspondence or in those things which have up to now been uncovered, as to what caused him to end up on a battlefield at Surprise Hill in the dark early hours of December 11, 1899.

One of the unique bits of necrology following Harry's death was the letter written to Harry's wife by a Catholic priest, the Rev. Father A. Baudry, who had shared a tent with him on the battlefield.

*12.12.1899
Hoofdlager*

Madam,

It is my sad duty to ---to you news which will grieve you very much. As you know your husband joined the Boers forces here near Ladysmith. For a couple of weeks he shared the tent where I was. We soon became very friendly and he talked much to me of you and your two children, gave me your address and told me that if anything happened to him to inform you. Though not a R. Catholic he attended mass which I celebrated in the camp

on Sunday. We parted about a week hence; he was going to join the Pretoria Commando.

Our eyes were full of tears when we last shook hands to see each other no more.

Yesterday morning at about two o'clock his picket was attacked by the English; heavy firing commenced and continued for about an hour.

The English were repulsed, but not until they had blown up one gun with a charge of dynamite. On the Boers side there were 2 killed and 14 wounded. Your husband was among the last. He was mortally shot in the stomach. As soon as I heard of it I went to the ambulance, but he had not yet been brought there.

I went again in the afternoon, but to learn that he had succumbed to his wound. He died in the ambulance wagon on his way to the ambulance train, which was to carry him to Johannesburg.

I need not tell you how much I sympathise (sic) with your loss. I pray almighty God that He sends you grace and strength to bear your bereavement with the proper Christian resignation and submission to God's will. Any further information I may gather I shall carefully take down by writing and send to you later on.

Anything I can do for you on my return to Johannesburg I will do with much pleasure. Your husband told me he sent you £400 just before this breaking out of hostilities. He also mentioned something about his affairs in Johannesburg but entered into no details. Your husband was well acquainted with the American Consul in Pretoria and Acting Consul in Johannesburg. They must know the state of his affairs.

If you answer this letter be kind enough to address it to The Rev. Father A. Baudry (sp?), R. C. Priest, Box 430 Johannesburg. The letter will be sent to me, if I am not back in J. H. Burg by that time.

(-----)again my heart felt sympathy and the promise of my humble prayers,

I remain Dear Madam

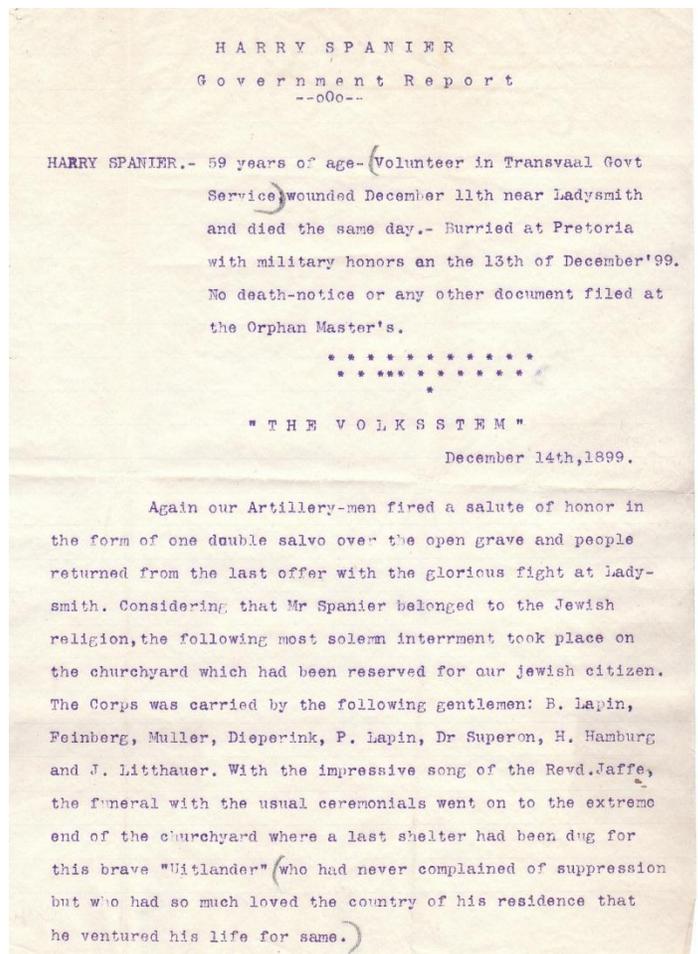
Yours very truly in J & M

Baudry, R. C. P." (Roman Catholic Priest)

In reality, Harry's passing was more than the priest wrote about as it was quite unusual. Actually, he was shot by his own side, the Boers, as they did not recognize him in the pitch darkness of the night when they called out to him and he answered them in English. As he lay there, shot and bleeding, he was then bayoneted by the other side, the British, as they charged Surprise Hill.

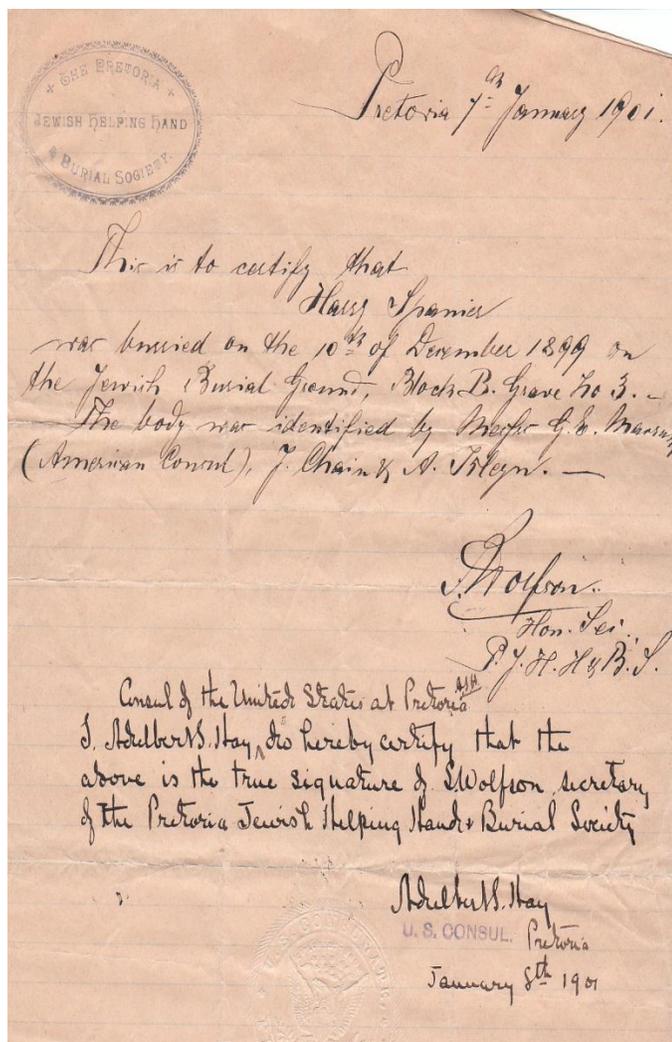
The fact that he was a foreign soldier and a Jew, at that, and was a person well-known in the halls of power in the Boer Republic, caused his funeral to gain a magnitude of celebrity that might not have been felt for a regular soldier.

The following is a government report of what took place at the funeral in Pretoria on December 13, 1899, with President Paul Kruger in attendance:



The certified burial certificate for Harry was attested to by S. [Sigmund] Wolfson, of The Pretoria Jewish Helping Hand and Burial Society, on January 1, 1901. It states that Harry was buried in the Jewish Burial Ground, Block B, Grave #3, Pretoria, SA, on December 10, 1899. It was slightly off a few days

from the correct date of December 13, 1899, but still of interest.



Notice of Harry Spanier's burial, January 7, 1901

As a closing remark, it appears that poor Harry Spanier not only was killed twice, but according to the above letter and its incorrect dating, he was buried before his death!!!! In addition, he was never able to consummate any of the deals that were in the works before his death which had kept him in South Africa for three long years, away from his beloved family. On top of it, he joined the losing side in the War and got himself killed almost as soon as he was deployed in battle.

All I can say is that unlike the popular Yiddish song *Wie Nemt Men A Bissele Mazel*, Harry, poor fellow, had no mazel whatsoever!

Author's Note: On December 11, 2009, the anniversary of the Battle of Surprise Hill, there was a ceremony to rededicate the monument for the

British killed at Surprise Hill and a new monument to commemorate the Boer burghers who fought and died there with a special plaque in Hebrew in honor of Harry Spanier. He, at last, got his due.

THE BRIXTON JEWISH CEMETERY

Sarah Welham and Flo Bird

An earlier version of this article was published on the web site of the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation in 2010. The Foundation undertakes on-going research into the older cemeteries in Johannesburg, and regularly offers tours. The Foundation's web site can be found at <http://joburgheritage.co.za>.

The most interesting aspect of this cemetery is its revelation of the number of Jews who came out to South Africa with few possessions, looking for a new life. The immigrants had a strong sense of community, especially with those who came from the same village in Russia, Lithuania or Poland and, using entrepreneurial skill and very hard work, several ended up making enough money for the next generation to be well educated. As exiles fleeing pogroms and utterly miserable conditions, they showed courage and tenacity in what was a sanctuary from the persecution that they had suffered. Name changes often occurred by accident when the immigration officials misheard or couldn't spell their names correctly, or when, some years later, they found their foreign-sounding names were a disadvantage.

Although the gentile section of the Brixton cemetery opened earlier, in 1912, when Braamfontein was running out of space, the first burial in this cemetery took place in April 1921. This was that of Susman Abrahamson who died on April 3rd at the age of 49 years. Burials have continued to take place in this cemetery until recently where there has been a site reserved for someone, but from the 1940's, most Jewish people were buried in the Westpark Cemetery. Brixton Jewish Cemetery has a large section for children, mostly without headstones as the children were stillborn, or had not been named when they died, and there is also a section for Reform Jews.



The Brixton Ohel

As one enters the gates, the *Ohel* is seen straight ahead, a once beautiful building, now somewhat neglected, with the warm red brick painted white while projecting bricks have been painted blue – a reference to the colours of the Israeli flag. Inside, the visitor may page through the burial register, which is in alphabetical order, or peruse the boards on the wall, naming the people who donated money to the *Chevra Kadisha* – all quoted in pounds.

Author's Note: Since writing the above paragraph, the ohel has been destroyed. The Johannesburg Heritage Foundation is appalled by the unlawful demolition of the ohel and the loss of historical artefacts and a place to shelter. This applies not only to Brixton Jewish Cemetery but also to Braamfontein Jewish Cemetery.

We believe the Chevra Kadisha should appoint a landscape architect to design a formal garden within the boundaries of the ohel in both cemeteries, and create benches and places for contemplation, remembrance and prayer.

Respect for the gardens and trees shows thought for the dead and extends courtesy to those who visit the graves. The Johannesburg Heritage Foundation would want to be consulted regarding the plans.

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Listed below are a few of the interesting people buried in the Brixton Cemetery:

ZELDA and SOLOMON KLASS

Zelda – Grave number: N/S 40

Solomon – Grave number: 3534



The Klass grave

The information about the Klass family was supplied in a personal interview with Geoffrey Klass, a grandson of Zelda's, on 18 February 2010.

The Klases came from Lithuania in 1903/4, and their graves are especially interesting as they illustrate how immigrants who arrived with nothing could, through their own hard work and entrepreneurial skills, build a foundation from which to give the next generation an excellent education, thus contributing enormously to the society which had given them shelter, and which allowed them a chance to prove their abilities. It reminds us not to condemn the immigrants from all over Africa who are starting off as street vendors, not expecting hand-outs, but just the chance to work and earn a living.

The graves are very similar and very elaborate. Since Solomon died first, it seems likely that Zelda herself chose the design and probably asked that her stone match that of her husband. There is a slab with four columns and a slab above, and a headstone terminates the short side. Then on top are finials, but these are different for Solomon and Zelda.

The names of her children and her grandchildren are listed on the headstone and the slab.

Of the children, Max was born in Johannesburg and only Bella was born in Russia, so the family seems to have escaped the worst pogrom of 1907, but had

suffered the earlier ones¹. Most non-Jews seem unaware of the pogroms which involved vandalism, theft, rape and murder. On arrival in Johannesburg, Solomon started out selling ginger beer from a handcart. He saved enough to buy a concession and ran a concession store at Crown Mines. From that he earned enough to send his son Max to the University of the Witwatersrand, where he qualified as a medical doctor, went on to London to specialize, fought in World War II and, in 1941, came back from the Western Desert to run the psychiatric unit of the military hospital at Potchefstroom, which moved to Tara. He was given a military bursary to study psychiatric medicine in London and returned to Tara where he worked for the rest of his life.

Granny Janie Zelda Klass also went into business in a small way, owning property and running a shop called Young Agency – for maternity and baby wear.

Klass is the original name and is found in Mecklenburg and in Sweden.

♦♦♦♦

CHAIM SADOWSKY

Buried in grave number N/S 31

Chaim Sadowsky was affectionately known as “The Loafer”. For nearly 30 years (1945 to 1963), he was a hospital visitor and for the majority of the sick he visited, he was simply known by this name. When the papers carried the notice of his being ill in hospital, most of Johannesburg didn’t recognise the name “Chaim Sadowsky”. Chaim would appear at hospitals, nursing homes and mental institutions every day, and go from ward to ward, helping the sick in whatever way he could – feeding them, running errands for them, standing in queues to get a patient’s prescription made up, doing small tasks to assist the staff. He was there from early morning to late at night, and was tireless in his efforts to alleviate the suffering of both Jew and Gentile in whatever small way he could. He was connected in some way with the Jewish Helping Hand and the

¹ *Editor’s Note: While pogroms (i.e. state sponsored massacres) took place in Ukraine, Poland, and other Eastern European countries, none actually occurred in Lithuania. There were, of course, numerous killings of Jews in the country, but none organised by the state. Refer to the book, Pogroms, edited by Klier and Lambroza, at <http://tinyurl.com/Klier-Pogroms>*

committee which ran the kosher kitchen at the Johannesburg General Hospital. He was given the freedom of this institution.

Chaim was born in Lithuania and came to South Africa in the 1930’s. He worked each day, only long enough to make enough money to support himself, and then went visiting the sick and needy. Merchants remembered him as the man who badgered them to make a donation to some needy cause. He remained a bachelor his whole life and died a poor man.

He died of cancer at age 58, on 23 November 1963.

♦♦♦♦

PHILIP FERDINAND ROSETTENSTEIN

Buried in grave number 4185



The Rosettenstein headstone

This unusual spherical marble gravestone records the burial of a member of one of the earliest families to settle in Johannesburg. Philip was born in Pretoria, and at the end of 1886, just a few months after Johannesburg had put down its roots, he is recorded as having opened a bar in the new sprawling town. Since he was born in 1877, he would only have been 9, so there seems some doubt about this fact; but elsewhere, he is recorded as having opened the bar at the age of 14. As part of the early Jewish community that arrived – generally virtually penniless – in Johannesburg in the late 1800’s, there would have been pressure on him to contribute to the family finances. Later, he was to choose a career in law.

Philip married Hannah Goldinger, who died in 1969, and they had two sons, Leo and Max, not to be confused with Philip’s father and uncle! A photograph of this good-looking family is in the

possession of the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation Resource Centre.

Philip died in 1937 at a relatively young age.

◆◆◆

ANNIE SLOVO

Buried in grave number 4785

Annie was the mother of one of the heroes of the Struggle, Joe Slovo. This is another story of one of the early Jewish immigrant families from Lithuania, who arrived penniless and settled in Doornfontein, when Joe was 10 years old. Fortune favoured the family for a while, and they were able to move to Yeoville where Annie (Chaya) opened a greengrocer's shop near a busy tram stop. She had to work 15 hour days in the shop, which left very little time for her family. Then tragedy struck – Annie died in childbirth in 1938. The shop failed and Joe's father, Wolfus, had to resort to hawking fruit from the pavement. The family had to move to Hillbrow and then Doornfontein. Wolfus even spent time in the debtor's section of The Fort. Joe and his sister had to leave school and find work, and the baby was placed in an orphanage. Joe never had close relationships with either his father or his sisters. His father died in 1957.

◆◆◆

HERMANN TOBIANSKY

Buried in grave number 2884

Hermann Tobiansky married Sophia Miller, the daughter of the first Jew on the Witwatersrand, on 31 May 1893 in the "New Synagogue". In about 1897, he bought the ground on Waterval that would become the township of Sophiatown, named after his wife. Sophiatown developed into a vibrant black township, full of colour and noise, and which gave rise to a distinctive culture, until the forced removals of the 1950's. Thereafter, the suburb became known as Triomf. Hermann seems to have been a great family man since, apart from naming the township after his wife, he also named some of the streets after his children.

He died on 5 October 1933, aged 75. Sophia died two years later in 1935.

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JACOB LEOPOLD (JACK) GINSBERG

Buried in grave number 1821.

Jack was a Rand Pioneer. He was also an immigrant from Eastern Europe, having been born on 16 March 1865, in Kovno. He received his education at Russian, German and English schools in Kovno and finished his schooling in Sheffield, England. In 1881, he came to South Africa and tried his luck as a general dealer in Cape Town. He then opened up a store in Beaufort West. In 1887, he and 2 brothers came up to Johannesburg, where they operated a store while prospecting for gold. Jack discovered the Ginsberg Reef and floated the Ginsberg Gold Mining Company in 1889. The three brothers found another reef which became the property of the Great Britain Gold Mining Company. As a result of these successes, Jack forsook commercial trade, and became a stock broker, becoming a popular member of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

He showed great community spirit, being a member of the Board of the Jewish School, and a member of the First Committee of the Witwatersrand Hebrew Congregation in 1888.

He married Bertha, who was born in 1877. They had 5 children – Sybil, Lilian, Ernest, Henry and Florence. Jack died in 1930 and Bertha in 1937. She is buried in the same cemetery in grave number 4437. They have matching gravestones but are separated by some distance in the cemetery.

◆◆◆

JOE BLANKFIELD

Joe was not buried in grave number 1964, for reasons which will become obvious; but he is remembered with a stone on the grave of Ada Blankfield, presumably his mother.

In March 1967, the Vickers Viscount plane, *Rietbok*, was approaching East London airport in bad weather, with 20 passengers and 5 crew members on board. While in the vicinity of Kaysers Beach, it crashed into the sea, killing all occupants on board. One of those passengers was Joe Blankfield, a 47-year-old resident of Victory Park, a company director, a husband and father of 3 minor children, Mark, Robyn and Paul.

At the time, there was not enough evidence to give a cause of the accident and it was suggested that perhaps the pilot had had a heart attack. New

evidence has come to light and there is speculation that the crash was the result of a deliberate act of the security police at the time, with the intention of killing an anti-apartheid activist on board.

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SIR HARRY GRAUMANN

Buried in grave number 4818.

Graumann was born in London in 1868 and came to South Africa in 1882. He wandered around Natal and Griqualand East, and then on up to the Eastern Transvaal goldfields in 1884, where he is listed as one of the pioneers of the Barberton district. Even at that age, he was very public spirited, a trend which continued once he came to Johannesburg, becoming the first Jewish mayor of the town in 1909/1910. By that time, he had brought out to South Africa his four sisters and a brother, Berryman. He possibly found that looking after all these siblings left no time for him to marry, and he remained a bachelor his whole life. There was one woman he was attracted to, Jane Sedgwick, in Cape Town. However, as she was a Gentile, he was unable to marry her and was heartbroken when she died of enteric fever in 1918, at the age of 21. Being a bachelor presented a slight problem as he had no wife to accompany him during mayoral engagements, so he asked his sister, Mrs D W Sims, to act as mayoress, and it is she that one sees in official photographs taken during his term of office. He was elected to Parliament in 1915, and was knighted in 1923.

Having led a very involved life in the community of Johannesburg, Sir Harry retired to Cape Town for health reasons. While convalescing from bronchitis in his Sea Point flat, he had a heart attack and died on 19 September 1938 at the age of 70. His body was brought back to Johannesburg and buried in the Brixton Jewish cemetery. Also buried in this cemetery, is his brother, Berryman.

Editor's Note: An article on Harry Graumann can be found in the SA-SIG Newsletter dated October 2011.

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RABBIS AND OTHERS SERVING THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

There is a special section in this cemetery set aside for rabbis (although not all rabbis are buried in this

section) and those who served on Jewish Community organizations, such as the Beth Din, the Witwatersrand Benevolent Association, the Chevra Kadisha, and others.

The only grave which resembles a mausoleum in the entire cemetery is that of Reb Moishel as he was known (**Rabbi Moses Friedman**). He is buried in grave number 3209, and was greatly beloved throughout the community of Johannesburg, so much so that approximately 10,000 people attended his funeral when he died in May 1925. He was a renowned scholar, the spiritual leader of the Beth Hamedrash congregation and a member of the first Beth Din, established in 1903. He was 63 when he died.

He had been born in Kros, Latvia, in 1862 and it is said that his most valuable possession was his library of some 500 Hebrew volumes.

Joseph Ratzker was a President and Honorary Life President of the Witwatersrand Hebrew Benevolent Association. He had arrived in Johannesburg in 1886 and was a land speculator. His first wife, Bloomah Esther, died in 1895 at the age of 25 and is buried in Braamfontein cemetery. His second wife, Bella, who he married in Oudtshoorn in 1904, is buried near Joseph.

Jacques Klisser was Vice President of the Chevra Kadisha in 1897, and President in 1898. He also worked for the Ambulance Corps during the Anglo Boer War. He was a Dutch Jew who emigrated from Holland in 1880 when he was 20. He came to join his brother, Bernard, a diamond dealer, in Kimberley, and moved from that town to Johannesburg in 1888. He established himself as a grocer and draper and later added a wine and spirit store to his activities on the Market Square. By 1894, he had disposed of those businesses and become a stockbroker. His first wife and family were killed in the Natal Railway disaster, and he then married Bertha who bore him 2 more children, Philip and Willie.



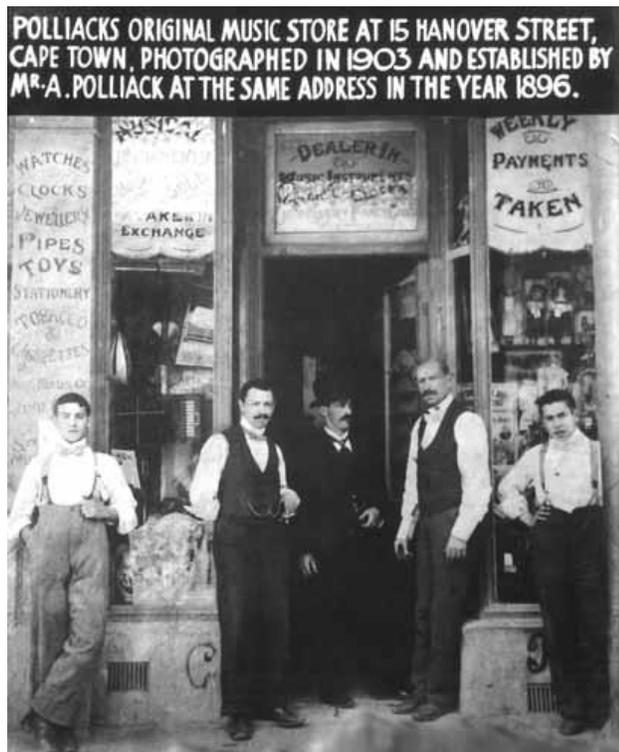
DISTRICT SIX OF OLD CARRIES MANY FOND JEWISH MEMORIES

Moira Schneider

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While District Six may be no more, having been razed to the ground by the apartheid government, an exhibition at the South African Jewish Museum is highlighting its importance in the early Jewish life of this city.

The Jews of District Six: Another Time, Another Place documents a period when Jews coexisted with others in what was a melting pot of races, cultures and faiths. With research and text by Millie Pimstone and convened by Prof Milton Shain, it is a joint undertaking by the Museum and the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at UCT. Photographic research was by Adrienne Folb.



One of the photographs on display at The Jews of District Six exhibition at the SA Jewish Museum in Cape Town

During her research, Pimstone was most struck by the way in which the immigrants brought their way

of life with them and established communal organisations to meet their own needs, as well as the easy relationship between the working peoples of District Six of all races.

“They lived cheek by jowl and I didn’t come across any personal anecdotes of discrimination or ill-treatment – only one example of anti-Semitism that came from a poor white Afrikaner family.”

She was also impressed by the importance the newcomers attached to education, and that they would “really sacrifice” to ensure that their children benefitted in this way.

Eastern European Jewish immigrants began arriving in Cape Town’s most vibrant neighbourhood neighbourhood in the mid-1880s, attracted by its proximity to places of employment in the central city and the low cost of accommodation. At one point, there were no less than nine synagogues catering to the community.

Lily Cammerman arrived in District Six in 1931, aged six, having been born in Lithuania. Her mother was a dressmaker and her father had a shop on the corner of Mount and Constitution Streets.

“The relationship between the Jews and the coloured people was unbelievable,” she remembers. “My mother had three Muslim women working for her and I used to go and play with their children.

“Times were hard - it was the time of the Depression - and everyone helped one another.” In Harrington Street, just outside the area, “99 per cent” of the inhabitants were Jewish.

As a child, Cammerman remembers taking part in Yiddish theatre there, a popular form of entertainment.

Years later, her first job took her back to District Six where she was recognised as “Liebke” by one of the “skollies” of the area. Such was the feeling that had existed between the groups that he insisted on escorting her safely out of the area when she finished work late on a Friday evening.

Families often lived above their shops and accommodation was often shared with grandparents, extended family or lodgers who could supplement the family income.

One interviewee remembers a grandmother going to the docks every Friday and shouting: “Who is

from Dvinsk?" If someone answered, she would take them home and arrange jobs and accommodation for them.

The exhibition doesn't gloss over less positive aspects of Jewish life at the time, dealing with, among other issues, divisions in the community occasioned by the newcomers' arrival.

The established German and English (Jewish) pioneers, we learn, were "embarrassed" by their "appearance and demeanour", with their language, Yiddish, being regarded as "a sign of lack of education".

By the mid-1940s, most Jews had moved out of District Six to more upmarket areas, but many still retained their businesses there.

The Jews of District Six exhibit was on at the South African Jewish Museum in Cape Town until the end of March 2013.

ELI RABINOWITZ TALKS ABOUT HIS FAMILY FROM ORLA

Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg

Rabbi Liebenberg has been the senior Rabbi at the Claremont Wynberg Shul, Cape Town, since August 2001. This article republishes one of his weekly sermons.

Eli Rabinowitz commented on this sermon as follows:

Rabbi Liebenberg of the Claremont Synagogue has used our Rabinowitz family genealogy and specifically my grandfather, as the theme of his Good Shabbos Droscha [Shabbat sermon].

My grandfather, Rev Nachum Mendel Rabinowitz, was born in Orla, near Bialystok in Poland in 1887. Orla was part of the Grodno Guberna. Records of Orla can be found in the archives in Grodno, Belarus.

Nachum Mendel moved to South Africa from Palestine in 1911 and became a leading religious figure in Cape Town. He was known for his many roles at the Constitution Street and Vredehoek shuls and also was the secretary of the Bikkur Cholim for 42 years.

Records and articles about Nachum Mendel can be found at the National, Gitlin, and Kaplan Libraries in Cape Town.

I think Rabbi Liebenberg gave genealogy a great plug by highlighting and personalising a strong genealogical theme in his weekly droscha to all his congregants. He told a story so appropriate to those of us with South African Jewish roots. The Claremont Wynberg Shul is the main orthodox community in the southern suburbs of Cape Town.

A few years ago I stumbled upon a family tree on the internet that contained my name. Intrigued, I began to follow the many branches going back generations and in the process I discovered "new" relatives, some of whom are congregants of the shul!

I also recognised some names, but had no idea that they were related to me albeit very distantly. I was able to make contact with the author of the family tree, one Eli Rabinowitz, originally from Cape Town, now living in Perth, Australia. Eli and I are fourth cousins, once removed, as is Philip Hirschsohn, another relative I discovered on the tree.

After contacting Philip by email he told me that his great-great-grandfather, Isaiah Hirschsohn, and my great-great-great-grandfather, Isaiah Grusd, who were first cousins, were in business together at the turn of the century as the founders of the American Swiss Watch Company. Their grandparents, Yitzchak Yaakov and Sarah Rivkah Hirschsohn, migrated to Israel in the 1860s and both their fathers, Yuda and Azer, were rabbis.

The name Hirschsohn reminded me of Judah and Rachel Herison, who were congregants at the Schoonder Street Shul when I was the rabbi there. Mrs Herison had told me that she and I were related and that her husband was also her first cousin. She also told me, following a visit to blow the shofar for her (she was immobile), that although my shofar blowing was good, it did not come close to that of her late father who could blow the shofar "as if it were a musical instrument."

Unfortunately both Herisons have since passed away so I was unable to obtain further information from them. However, now that I had an expert on the family, I once again contacted Eli Rabinowitz to ask him more about the Herisons, and, in particular,

Mrs Herison's late father. Eli confirmed that the Herisons were first cousins and that Rachel had been a Rabinowitz. In fact, she and Eli's father were siblings.

He then sent me a chapter from the autobiography of his surviving aunt, Sarah Stepansky (Rachel's younger sister), who is over 80 and lives in Bayit Vegan, Israel. The excerpt, entitled *My Father, the Lamdan, the Man of Chessed* concerns Eli's grandfather (Rachel's father). His name was Nachum Mendel Rabinowitz and, by all accounts, he was a righteous man. Here is a short outline of his history and character.

He was born in Orla, near Bialystok in White Russia in 1887. At the tender age of nine he was sent to study in the great Lomzhe Yeshiva. After being there for two years, he continued learning as a yeshiva bochur for many years at the Brisk Yeshiva, before coming to Israel.

He married in 1905 and studied in Yeshivat Torat Chaim, not far from Sha'ar Shechem in the Moslem Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem which currently houses Yeshivat Ateret Cohanim. He learned with the first Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Kook, and with many other well-known rabbis.

As a result of the terrible famine in Jerusalem prior to the First World War, Nachum Mendel, his wife and their two little sons immigrated to South Africa. There were members of the family who remained in Palestine and Nachum Mendel faithfully sent money regularly, helping his sister to support her family. The author recalls how her mother had to make do with her old coat in order to permit her husband to continue his aid to those in greater need. Such was his *chessed*, always thinking how to do for and give to others.

Mrs Stepansky records:

My father was a man of all trades in the realm of being a *kli kodesh* (clergyman), in his service to the Jewish community. He knew how to be a *chazzan*, a *mohel*, and a *shochet*. He was the *chazzan* and *ba'al koreh* at Cape Town Orthodox Hebrew Congregation for thirty years, from 1920 till 1950. His *chazanut* and his *leining* were perfect, and when he blew the *shofar*, not a heart in the congregation could remain unmoved. His *shofar* blowing was truly beautiful, and his reading from the Torah was clear as could be.

I had already heard of Rev. Rabinowitz's outstanding *shofar* blowing, but I had not heard about his kindness, some of which his daughter describes:

When my father became the secretary of the Bikkur Cholim (visiting the sick) Society in Cape Town, he saw to it that a kosher kitchen was installed in the biggest hospital in Cape Town, Groote Schuur Hospital, where the first heart transplant was to be performed almost half a century later by Dr Christiaan Barnard. My father insisted that every Jewish patient, regardless if he was or wasn't a Torah observant Jew, who was *shomer mitzvot*, would be given food from the kosher kitchen. Every Jew would be entitled to have the possibility of observing the *mitzvah* of *kashrut*.

Not only did he ensure that the food was of the highest standard of *kashrut*, he made sure that it was tasty, too. The food from the kosher kitchen was so good that even the *goyishe* patients would come up to my father and ask, "Reverend Rabinowitz, could we also get food from your kitchen?"

In addition to taking care of the patients' physical needs, he tried to alleviate their spiritual needs, procuring for them good reading material of Jewish content and nature. Despite the fact that my father didn't have a car and would travel by bus, quite a distance from where we lived, to a different neighbourhood, he used to bring all sorts of Hebrew and Yiddish newspapers, like the *Forwards* and the *Morgen Journal*, arriving from America, and the *HaDoar*, which was a Hebrew paper from *Eretz Yisroel*, for the patients.

Years afterwards, people would come up to him in the street in town and would hug him, thanking him for his kindness. Half of the time, he couldn't even remember their names, because he had been visiting the sick for so many years, and couldn't remember everyone.

But they never forgot him. His *chessed* knew no bounds. Not only did he seek out the welfare of the physically ill, he also sought out those who were shunned by society, visiting the Jewish patients in the asylum for the mentally ill.

In the manner he went about doing his kindness, he taught us a very important

lesson. The Bikur Cholim Society got to know about people who were in need. My father used to prepare packages of food and clothing to bring to the homes of the poor at night, leaving it on their porch, so as not to have them see it being delivered. In such a way, when they woke up in the morning, they had the necessary clothes and food without the added embarrassment and loss of their self-esteem, which accompany the receiving of *tzedaka*.

I have read many biographies of great Jewish leaders and rabbinic personalities who lived in Europe, Israel and America, but I had no idea that right here in South Africa lived a distant relative who was a Torah scholar, an accomplished *chazzan* and a man of incredible kindness.

When I received the excerpt from the book it was the week of *Parshat Vayeitzei* and I was moved by a verse in the *Haftorah* that seemed to describe Nachum Mendel Rabinowitz so perfectly.

The Prophet Hosheah states in the name of G-d (chapter 14:5): “I shall heal their rebelliousness; I shall love them willingly, for My wrath will be withdrawn from them.”

The phrase “I shall love them willingly” in Hebrew is *ohaveim nedava*, which can be rendered as “I will love them for no reason.”

The commentators (see Rashi and Metzudot David) explain that *Hashem* informed the prophet that He will love the Jewish people even though they are undeserving of His love due to their betrayal of Him and His Torah. However, because they commit to repent and confess their sins (see verses 2-3), *Hashem* will love them for no reason other than “out of the goodness of His heart.” (See commentary of Radak.)

We are commanded to emulate G-d (see *Devarim* 26:17 and *Sefer HaChinuch* #611) and therefore just as He loves people gratuitously, so too should we engender within ourselves *ahavat chinam*, baseless love, for our fellow man.

By all accounts Rev. Rabinowitz was such a person. His commitment to the *mitzvoth* of *bikur cholim*, *chessed*, and *tzedakkah* clearly indicate that he loved his fellow man regardless of his level of observance or status in the community.

In stark contrast to gratuitous love is the concept of *sinat chinam*, baseless hatred. The Talmud (*Yoma* 9b) notes that the spiritual reason for the destruction of the First Temple was the proliferation of the three cardinal sins amongst the populace: idolatry, sexual immorality and murder.

“However,” continues the *Talmud*, “in the era of the Second Temple, when the populace engaged in the study of *Torah*, the fulfilment of *mitzvoth* and the performance of kind deeds, the Temple was destroyed because of the sin of baseless hatred.

This teaches that baseless hatred is equal to the three cardinal sins combined.” The people may have been “religious” and even kind (to those they liked), but they were mired in arguments, bickering, and hatred.

Baseless hatred can have terrible consequences on the personal level too, as is clear from the following passage (Tractate Shabbat 32b):

“Rabbi Nehemiah said, ‘As a result of the sin of baseless hatred, arguments become prevalent in one’s home, one’s wife might miscarry and one’s children might die when they are young.’”

But what is baseless hatred? How can one hate for no reason? And, furthermore, the word ‘baseless’ implies that sometimes there is cause to hate someone.

Rashi explains (ad loc): “Baseless hatred is when one does not see one’s fellow commit any sin for which he is entitled to hate him and yet he still hates him.”

This is not to say that the person did nothing wrong, but he did not do anything for which he deserves to be hated. In other words, he is hated for a petty, inconsequential reason.

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, the famed *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Mirrer Yeshiva (Sichot Mussar, Maamar 10) explains that baseless hatred is “the lack of peace, friendship and love between one man and his fellow.” When these elements exist people are willing to forgive trespasses made against them. But when these elements are not present, people will inevitably fixate on every petty issue and will blow them out of proportion with tragic consequences. Only if one can arouse a feeling of baseless love for his fellow man, as Rev. Rabinowitz did, will he be saved from the terrible effects of *sinat chinam*.

Editor's Note: To read more about Orla, visit the JewishGen KehilaLink page at:

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/orla>

To read Rabbi Liebenberg's bio, refer to:

<http://www.clarewynshul.co.za/liebenberg.asp>

HOW YIDDISH HAS INFLUENCED OTHER LANGUAGES AND HOW THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO YIDDISH

Yiddish – A Redenis Far Unsere Elteren Blaibhois

Mo Skikne

*Varerst wil ich ois braingen as ich bin a higger
geborene mensch, und greis gemacht in Brakpan.*

*Mein glik is geven tsu ufvaksen as kind tsuwissen
baide Bobbes und Zaides. Mir hobben zich zair nont
geblibben, Un azoi hob ich free gellerent die
sprach.*

*Tsvaitens hobben eleterer, intelligente Kosins und
Kusines und andere Familiye, oichet gehad mit mir
durch tsu reddem.*

*Dritens hobzech ich a fotografishe moyirch und
sprach vert nischt vargessen.*

*In spetere yoren hob ich ufgenoemen a Sabbatike
vakatziyeh fun myn akademische arbeit, und die tzeit
in*

*Eretz Ysroel in 1979 varbrainkt. In die 4 monaten,
hob ich gearbet mit tswai Russise Professoren ver
hobben a beserer Yiddish geret as Anglit. Die
laboratoria vu ich hobzech gearbet is gefestiget in
Rehovot in Faculta Le'Chaklout. Mi ken varstyen
undzicher zain as "die" tzeit hot mein Sprach
varhegert.*

You will pardon me now for switching to English for the balance of this article, as many of the readers are not as familiar as they ought to and could be with Yiddish. I happen to be very passionate about our Ashkenazi *Mame Loshen* (mother tongue), and endeavour to speak Yiddish whenever I can. Today, Yiddish is classified as a Dying Language.

Unfortunately, that was brought about by 4 factors:

- Firstly, the *Shoah* certainly almost eliminated the majority of the language's speakers, their books, and other literature.
- Then it became *infra dig* for immigrants to the American and African continents to speak it, and thus publications there diminished.
- Then it became the turn as well of the Stalinist oppressors in the USSR, to help things along over some 70 years; literally destroying Yiddish by banning it.
- Finally, modern Hebrew was chosen as the language of newly formed Israel, and it was stated that Yiddish had no place in the fledgling State.

And so the language receded and shrank into pockets of communities, like Chabad and other Yiddish speaking enthusiasts, where today it is enjoying a fair amount of growth. This is now a world-wide phenomenon and it is gratifying to know that young people are beginning to take up talking and reading Yiddish.

With the advent of Aaron Lansky's World Jewish Book Centre in Boston, Massachusetts, literally millions of Yiddish books have found a home there. Here they are redistributed to various centres world-wide, whilst the very rare Yiddish tomes land up in specific libraries in the USA, UK, and Israel. In fact, it has elicited the setting up of new chairs of Jewish history, and even in a few cases, chairs for Yiddish studies (for example, in Columbia University and in Alsace Lorraine). In Vilnius, Lithuania, a summer school for Yiddish is held each year by visiting lecturers and professors.

History

An older theory is that Yiddish first became a spoken tongue in Southern Germany (now Bavaria), where first Jewish migrants of the Dispersion manifested themselves in a German state after the destruction of the second Temple. As they spoke mainly Hebrew, they transferred numerous Hebraic words into the German tongue of that time. The German being spoken was likened to modern *Hoch Deutsch*. With time the Jews there developed their own patois which evolved into what we know as Yiddish. Jews were initially welcome as they had the reputation for cultivating prosperity. As many of

them were merchants, they tended to visit other parts of Europe, and adopt particular other terms and words from adjacent countries.

Thus, it seems that four main dialects of Yiddish evolved in Europe. Each had its own inflections and pronunciation, as well as a particular limited vocabulary of words, especially native to that country.

Over the centuries, the four dialects became:

- Litvisch
- Poilisch
- Czecklovakisch
- Hungarisch

Later, two other semi-dialects have sprung up, namely:

- Brooklanisch
- Dorem Afrikanisch

The latter are basically manifestations of extra words and phrases which are adapted from other local languages, and slang.

During the past couple of years another theory has manifested, and that is that modern German is a derivative of Yiddish from which the majority of Hebraic words have been culled out. The theory advanced is that about 1100-1200 years ago, Germany was divided up into feudal dukedoms, each ruled by its own squire or duke, and each speaking its own dialect. It took the Jewish merchants to develop a single central tongue which slowly but surely manifested itself in the dukedoms until eventually when these were amalgamated, the modern tongue began to be established. For what it is worth, Yiddish itself, once Jews were ejected from Germany in many incidents [and these included-blood libels – blame for the then plagues (Black), Crusader pillaging, and Lutheran Calvinist persecution (for not converting to Christianity)] became infused with Polish, Russian, French and even Dutch.

Thereby the various dialects evolved. On a personal note, I am of course familiar with Ashkenaz seeing as both sets of parents stem from Lithuanian roots. However, I am sufficiently familiar with Poilisch to appreciate that as spoken, it is a most beautiful dialect. Firstly, it is spoken in a pseudo-singsong way, and many word inflections make it very distinctive. Personal experience with friends of my

late in-laws has given me a taste of Poilisch. I am not familiar with Hungarisch, Czecklovakisch, or Brooklanisch, as we have almost no such Jews in South Africa, and thus cannot comment on them.

Equivalent Languages to Yiddish

Yiddish is not the only language adopted and spoken by the Jews.

Research has not uncovered any special dialect spoken by our people when enslaved in Egypt. So far it is thought that they primarily spoke Hebrew with some Egyptian words or expressions infiltrated into everyday speech. However, one may be assured that this very thing must have happened. Not being a Hebrew scholar, I have not made an especial effort to delve into the vocabulary books and search out such material. One can however be sure that many Egyptian words and expressions must form part of the Hebrew language.

However, wherever Jews were dispersed to, they seemed to develop their own special tongues. Thus, for example following destruction of the First Temple, Aramaic became their common conversational tongue. This was spoken by the Babylonians, and the Jews of Persia quickly took it up as their lingua franca, leaving Hebrew as their intonation for religious purposes. This adaptation format became the normal, with Hebrew used only for religious purposes and the adopted tongue for everyday conversation, and still persists. Remnants of the Aramaic are used until this day, when a marriage *Ketubah*, and *Kaddish* are said entirely in Aramaic. There are, of course, other instances of the use of Aramaic in Hebraic texts, but regretfully I am not familiar with them.

As we all know, following the Dispersion, two streams of Jewish migrants came into being. The one – the Ashkenazi – moved in a generally northern direction; the other moved westerly and became the Sephardim. Those Sephardim who landed up in the Iberian peninsula (what became Spain and Portugal), developed a tongue which was primarily Spano-Portuguese called Ladino. Doubtless those Sephardi Jews who lived in Morocco and Algeria also were influenced by Arabic, but once more I have no knowledge of that. Ladino is essentially Spanish with numerous Hebraic words and expressions inserted, so that an almost new language emerges. Ladino is still spoken by some Sephardic communities today, but not to the extent that Yiddish has covered. I could

be wrong but I have the idea that Esperanto, which had been hoped to become the international lingo in the 1920's, has some roots from Ladino. That died out well before WWII started.

Once Jews began to settle in India, having come primarily from Persia/Iraq in the Mediterranean basin, and from Europe, they also adopted Maharati expressions and words (spoken by most Indians). Thus, the Jews of India developed a minor tongue, which is mainly Maharati interspersed with Hebraic words and expressions.

Finally, in Western Germany, as distinct from "normal" Yiddish (spoken by 99% of Ashkenazi Jews), Judendeutsch (Judeo-German) was spoken. This was spoken by the Jews who resided in Alsace-Lorraine, eastern France, Switzerland, and Western Germany. This tongue was distinctive from Eastern Yiddish. For example, one *orened* from a *tfile*" in Judeo-German, or davened from a *sider* in Eastern Yiddish. On *Shabbat* one ate *scholet* in Judeo-German, or on *Shabbos* one ate *tcholent* in Eastern-Yiddish.

As an aside, Yiddish writers referred to the *sprach* as *zhargon* (jargon) – essentially a bastard language. Many authors considered Yiddish as a reminder of peoplehood, a mixture of different languages. Max Weinrich, a fairly famous writer of the early 20th Century, in analyzing Yiddish, gave an example of a random sentence such as: *Di Bobe est tscholent af Shabbos*.

Bobe = grandmother (Slavic word, adopted in the 13/14 Century)

Est = Eats (Middle High German, adopted 1000 years ago)

Tscholent = bean stew (adopted from Old French, also 1000 years ago)

From *chaud* = hot, and *lent* = slow – the term thus meaning a dish kept warmed for *Shabbos*

Shabbos = Shabbat, from the Hebrew

In the 14th Century the *Bove Antona* was printed. This book, in Yiddish, was translated from an Anglo-French romance, an adaptation of medieval tales about chivalry and knights in shining armour. The work became known as the *Bove bukh*, and because of the tales, the title was corrupted to *Bobe Mayses*, i.e. "Granny tales". And this ties up with the fact that we must recall that Yiddish literature was mainly intended for women and not for men. The men used Yiddish for talking but Hebrew for prayer. Thus, printed Yiddish was for women and

uneducated men. The *tkhine* or *techine* (= *siddur*) was used by women, as well as the *tsene u'rena* which was a loosely translated bible.

Influence of other Languages

Beside the German root, terminology from Polish and Russian, have infused themselves into Yiddish.

For example:

- the term for **tobacco** in Russian is **markovke cigarette** is **paparo**
rifle is **biks** (German = *gever*)
bullet is **pulle** (German = *patroon*)
- the term for **flat biscuit** in Polish is **kichel taigel** is **taigel**
- the term for **bicycle** in French is **biciclette** or **velociped**
cigarell is **cigar**
gentille is **yenta**

English also being a Germanic language has contributed many words to Yiddish:

anti-Semite is **antismit**
pound is **pfund**
loafer is **loifer**
hooligan is **chulegan**

The term for **hawker** in Dutch is **smous** (from "is Moses")

klaberjas is **klabberjas**

Contribution to other Languages

Yiddish has donated numerous words to other languages. In English alone, partly due to use by lawyers, business persons, and stock exchange workers and others, a number of Yiddish terms have found their way into English. Some notable examples are:

Chutzpa – Absolute cheek
Kosher – A good deal, a clean deal
Ganefed – stolen, thieved, copied
Shlepp – dragged, pulled
Mazal – luck; lucked out
Bagel – bread doughnut
Moke – defective
Schnorrer – scrounger
Tacheles raiden – talk straight
Ayn – eye
Dalles – poverty

Moire – fear
Teschuwe – answer

Many other Yiddish words or terms have been used in English.

The Future of Yiddish

With the passing of the *Shoah* and its aftermath, and the advent of the Jewish homeland, Yiddish has become to be considered a dying spoken language. But the latest surveys worldwide have indicated that the *Sprach* is today enjoying a favorable resurgence. This is in many ways considered to be due to the following factors:

- Younger Jews today have realized what they have lost in Yiddish culture, and the colorful world of Yiddish literature, and speech.
- Whereas Yiddish had limited teaching in the USA 25 years ago, mainly at Brandeis and Columbia universities, today it is taught at numerous institutes.
- The National /World Yiddish Book Centre, in Boston, because it has literally saved millions of Yiddish tomes from annihilation, has injected a new enthusiasm for the language's literature, and indeed culture. This institute distributes duplicate books worldwide to communities, learning institutes, and to certain universities which maintain reference libraries.
- International Chabad, the Lubavitch sect, teaches their members and children Yiddish. As they have set up branches in almost every country in the world, where there are Jews, one can safely assume that Yiddish will be spoken there. This even extends into the former USSR and Germany – a magnificent rebuke to Hitler and his Nazis, as well as the Stalinist thugs, who sought to annihilate the people and its speech.
- Lastly, klezmer music is also enjoying a resurgence of popularity, not only amongst the Jewish world, but more so amongst young Gentiles.

What more could we ask for?

In closing, Yiddish speech and Yiddish literature's death knell was sounded by the *Shoah*. However, it gave us Jews the most powerful sense of expression. In Poland, poet Mordechai Gebirtig wrote with

blood chilling prescience as follows in the late 1930's:

Es brent, briderlekh, es brent!
Oy, undzer orem shtetl, nebikh, brent!
Shoben shoyrn di fayer-tsungen,
Dos ganse shtetl ayngeshlungen-
Un di beyze vintn hudzhen,
S'gantze shtetl brent.

On fire, brothers, it's on fire!
Oh, our poor little village is on fire!
Tongues of flame are wildly leaping,
Through our town the flames are sweeping-
And the cruel winds keep it burning,
The whole town's on fire.

Gebirtig, his wife and young daughters, needless to say, perished in the Holocaust.

To quote an unknown philosopher:

“People are dying today who never died before”

Obituary

RALPH EMIL YODAIKEN

1924 – 2012

Anne Lapedus Brest

Ralph Emil Yodaiken was born in Johannesburg, South Africa to Maurice Simon Yodaiken (ex-Dublin, Ireland) and Audrey Mallinick of Kimberley, South Africa.

He grew up in the family home on Oxford Road, Johannesburg, and as a student, he met and married his childhood sweetheart, Naomi Baumslag, who also lived on Oxford Road. They went to Wits (Witwatersrand University) together and they married in 1955 at the Oxford Road *Shul*, Riviera, Johannesburg.

At the age of 17, he joined the “South African Irgun”, and trained at “Greens Farm.” He was sent to Italy under an assumed name, where he helped to train and smuggle Jewish concentration camp refugees to fight in Israel.

Ralph accepted the flag of surrender for the Israelis following a battle with the Egyptians at the Faluga Gap.

As a young man in 1954, Ralph Yodaiken travelled to Ireland to visit his Auntie Rosie Yodaiken Lapedus, one of his Father's sisters who had remained behind in Ireland. He caused a stir of note, and was thought to have been a film-star. He was tanned, good-looking, and spoke with a wonderful South African accent, something the Irish were not used to in 1954.

On qualifying as an MD, Ralph, who had specialized in pathology and lectured at Wits University in Johannesburg, was a researcher and teacher, practicing physician,

In 1963, Ralph and his wife Naomi (also a professor) Baumslag, and his family of two sons, Victor Joel, and Barry, left South Africa to settle in Atlanta, Georgia, in the United States of America, where he became a professor of pathology at Emory Medical School in Atlanta, an institution funded by the Coca Cola family.

He worked in the United States service. He spent the last part of his career as the director of the Office of Occupational Medicine, in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, where he was a fierce advocate of protection of workers' health.

The couple's third child, a daughter, Ruth, was born in America and the family lived in Bethesda, Maryland.

He had a full, adventurous life, was a deeply principled physician, and was devoted to his family.

Ralph had a deep love for his family and his family roots, and together with Naomi and cousin Lennie Yodaiken, an Irishman then living in Kfar Hanasai, Israel, (the founder of the Yodaiken/Judeikin etc. family tree), they embarked on a visit to The Baltic States in 1995, visiting Estonia [where they found the last of the Estonian Judeikens (Yodaiken family)], as well as Latvia and Lithuania, where they visited many *shtetls* where Yodaikens had once lived. Ralph made a video of this trip which was shown at a Yodaiken Family re-union some years later.

Ralph Yodaiken was a wonderful person; he had a great sense of humour, an infectious laugh, and was loved and respected by all those who knew him.

He died on Saturday, December 22, 2012, aged 88, in his home, but always keeping his trademark smile and sense of humour in spite of a long illness.

He is survived by his wife (Professor) Naomi Baumslag Yodaiken, his daughter, Ruth, son and daughter-in-law, Victor and Beth, grandchildren Aaron and Chaia Yodaiken, and many relatives and friends. Sadly, he was predeceased by his son Barry in 1980.

Note from Anne Lapedus Brest: Ralph was my Dad's first cousin, and he was adored by our family. He was charming, brilliant, and had a wonderful personality. He was very close to our family. My mother, Julie Marcus Lapedus, spent a holiday with Ralph and his father in South Africa in 1955, and when we came to live in South Africa, we spent a lot of time with both Ralph and Naomi, who showed us the ropes and guided us through a difficult transition, along with another cousin Clarrie Yodaiken Rostovsky, with whom we lived for our first three months.

The Yodaikens were well known for being organizers of note. There are cousins and cousins, but Ralph and Naomi have always been very much a part of our family, albeit they left for the USA not too long after we came to live in South Africa. We all met up in Ireland in 1997 for a Yodaiken re-union.

Long Life to the family!

On Language

SOUTH AFRICAN CHALLAH?

Philologos

This article was previously published in The Jewish Daily Forward on November 18, 2005, and is re-published here with permission. The original article can be found at:

<http://forward.com/articles/2303/south-african-challah/>.

Michael Cole from Toronto writes:

“My wife’s South African relatives refer to a Shabbat or festival challah as a ‘*kitke*.’ This seems to be a uniquely South African term, unknown, as far as I am aware, even among other people of Lithuanian descent. [Mr. Cole is referring to the fact that South African Jewry originated largely in Jewish immigrants from Lithuania.] In fact, South African Jews are unaware of the term ‘challah’ until they arrive elsewhere in the Jewish world. ‘*Kitke*’ doesn’t sound particularly Yiddish, but neither does it sound like Afrikaans or Zulu or any other African language. Do you have any idea on this matter?”

Mr. Cole can find the answer to his question in Volume III of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research’s Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry, in which no fewer than nine pages, complete with linguistic maps and charts, are devoted to the various words by which Sabbath and festival breads were known to the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe. Although “challah” has taken over completely among the Jews of the United States, effacing all its rivals, a look at Ashkenazic Europe from Alsace in the West to Belarus and Ukraine in the East reveals, in addition to Western and Eastern Yiddish *khale*, five other words for such a bread: *berkhes*, *dacher*, *koylatsh*, *shtritsl* and – the word asked about by Mr. Cole – *kitke*.

Khale was by far the most widespread of these words, thus explaining its predominance in America. It derives from Hebrew *h.allah*, which has the meaning in the Bible of a flat cake, baked on coals, that constituted the simplest and most inexpensive of sacrifices that could be offered on the altar. (Its association with sacred ritual was very likely the reason that *h.allah* later became attached to Sabbath and holiday breads.) Apart from much of Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Transylvania,

khale was used in almost every part of Ashkenazic Europe, often in conjunction with other terms. Sometimes but not always, *khale* was the general term for a Sabbath and holiday bread while another word designated to a local variety, or else *khale*, referred to a plain bread as opposed to a fancier one. Thus, for instance, the word *koylatsh* was used widely throughout Poland and Russia to denote, in some areas, a braided challah; in others, a decorated challah baked for weddings and celebrations, and in still others, any braided roll, braided yeast cake, or even filled cake or pastry. (The word *koylatsh* itself, though its ultimate etymology is unclear, already was in use among French Jews in the lifetime of renowned 11th-Century rabbinic commentator Rashi; he speaks of a *coilush* as a kind of long, thin bread, like a baguette.) *Shtritsl* (apparently from medieval German *Struz*, a swelling – of dough with yeast? – or a protuberance) had much the same range of meanings as *koylatsh* but was more restricted in its geographical range and was used occasionally to designate a festive Christian bread rather than a Jewish one.

Birkhes (or *barkhes*) and *dacher*, on the other hand, were general terms like *khale*, limited to Germany and to Central Europe. Both words come from the same verse in the Book of Proverbs, *Birkat adonai hi ta’ashir* (“The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich”). The verse traditionally was (and still is) embroidered on the cloth napkins with which the challah is covered on the Sabbath table, or else it was engraved on a special challah knife.

This brings us to *kitke*. Why Mr. Cole thinks it doesn’t “sound like” Yiddish is unclear to me, since it certainly sounds like Yiddish to my ears. The word is composed of the German *Kitt* and the Slavic suffix *-ke*, which is found in many Yiddish words and names. (Think of *pushke*, *kishke* and *katshke*, or of such familiar forms as *Motke* and *Tsvika*.)

Moreover, *kitke*, as is shown by the Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry, was a Yiddish word restricted entirely to Lithuania, where it generally existed in tandem with *khale*. This explains why it is so prevalent to this day among South African Jews.

Kitt in German means “putty,” which is to say, a quick-drying plaster or cement that is used as a filler or adhesive, as well for making ornamental patterns or figures on such surfaces as walls and ceilings. Indeed, in some areas of Lithuania, *kitke* referred not to the whole challah but simply to the braids or

decorations that were attached to the challah like putty before baking, and the word must have originally referred to these. (*Kitka* in Polish, also from *Kitt*, means an ornamental plume.) In many places, however, *kitke* came to designate an entire kind of bread – one that, like a *koylatsh* or a *shtritsl*, differed from a plain *khale* by virtue of its decorative features. And in still others, *kitke* replaced *khale* entirely as the word for a challah of any kind, as it also did in South Africa. No need to search in Afrikaans or Zulu, Mr. Cole; plain *Litvish* Yiddish gives you your answer.

Questions for Philologos can be sent to philologos@forward.com.

NEW ITEMS OF INTEREST ON THE INTERNET

Roy Ogus

The section describes some interesting new resources and updates that are available on the Internet which may be of interest to Southern African genealogical researchers.

Updates from the Israel Genealogy Research Association (IGRA)

The Israel Genealogy Research Association (IGRA) has released its new search engine for the AID (All Israel Databases) section. See:

<http://genealogy.org.il/AID/>

This search engine currently features 150,695 records from more than 100 different databases and was last updated on 15 April 2013.

In July 2012, at the IAJGS International Conference in Paris, IGRA was awarded the Stern Grant with the intent that these monies to be used to develop a bilingual search engine to improve its website. They contracted with Brooke Schreier Ganz and worked closely with her to build what is hoped to be a much improved search experience. Rose Feldman, Carol Hoffman, Daniel Horowitz, Garri Regev and Philip Trauring have each given from their special fields to make this possible.

IGRA believes that they bring you now a balanced assortment of databases from the Ottoman, British and Israeli Administrations, relating to communities from the north to the south, and in many different

fields. Some of the databases are in English but most are in Hebrew, with a few additional languages as well. Each database is presented in the language of the material found. The search engine, however, is able to understand both English and Hebrew, and will bring you matches in both languages even if you only entered the name in one language.

There is a virtual keyboard if you do not have a Hebrew keyboard and want to use one.

You will notice that in addition to entering the names you are searching, there are possible filters on the right side of the page to help you fine tune your search. Try them out! Adding more or taking them away is quite simple.

The databases and search engine page is available to all registered users of the website (at no cost). Please be sure to log in. You will be alerted if you do not have permission to access information.

Due to restrictions from the various archives they have had to layer the accessibility of the databases. There are databases available to everyone. Some of our databases allow you to search but not to see all of the details. Other databases are only for paid IGRA members. The same is true for the images of the databases. Almost all of the images have been added and more will be added in the coming days.

Johannesburg Heritage Foundation

The Johannesburg Heritage Foundation maintains a comprehensive web site which contains many items of interest to researchers, as well as an online Journal. The site can be found at:

<http://joburgheritage.co.za>

Formerly called the Parktown Westcliff Heritage Trust, the foundation changed its name to its current incarnation in July 2012 in order to reflect more accurately the work done by the Trust, and to embrace the changes in circumstances in Parktown and Westcliff over the last 27 years. Flo Bird, the chairperson, indicated that the name was changed to more accurately reflect the role that the organization has been playing for many years, viz. protecting the heritage of greater Johannesburg.

Note: An article co-authored by Flo Bird on the Brixton Cemetery can be found in this issue of the Newsletter.

Eli Rabinowitz blog

Former South African, Eli Rabinowitz, maintains a very interesting blog at: <http://elirab.me>

On May 2, Eli left on his third European Roots trip, and will visit Freiburg and Dresden in Germany; Wroclaw, Lodz, Warsaw, Lublin, and Kazimierz Dolny in Poland; Tallin, Estonia; Riga, Latvia; Vilnius, Lithuania; Israel; Istanbul, Turkey; and London, England. He will be blogging about his travels on the website. To follow his blog, simply go to his blog page, and click on "follow". Then enter your email address. Registration is free.

Note: An article on Eli's family can be found in this issue of the Newsletter.

Update

BEYACHAD LIBRARY

Colin Plen

The issue regarding the impending closure of the Beyachad Library in Johannesburg was mentioned in the last issue of the Newsletter. This is an update on the situation.

Some years ago there was a serious problem in the Johannesburg Jewish community in that the Zionist Federation had a building in a rundown part of town and which was only partially utilized. The Jewish Board of Deputies had premises elsewhere which were not economical to maintain. It was decided to sell the Zionist building in town, and to consolidate as many Jewish organisations as possible into a single new place. A building previously owned by L. Susman, the tobacconist, in Rouxville near Highlands North, was unused and was offered to the community. This became Beyachad (which means unity or in one), and the two Jewish libraries, the Board of Deputies, and the Zionist Library, were amalgamated into one organization which owned a huge amount of Jewish records of all kinds. At the same time, many other Jewish organisations were housed in the same complex.

In due course, quite recently, somebody examined the whole scheme and found that the place was not profitable. Some organisations, such as the Jewish Genealogical Society, Johannesburg, were bluntly told to pay 12 times what they had been paying as rent for their monthly meetings, so they folded up

and went into hibernation. Then, the Governing Board decided that libraries are not profitable, so they announced that they would close down the library. There is no other reference library for Jewish material, other than in Cape Town, 1600 kilometres away!

Students and researchers were frantic. Meetings were held to raise money by voluntary offerings to pay the rent demanded by the Beyachad management. It was then that the Board of Deputies stepped in and helped to placate all feelings and a compromise has been found. To explain the details, here is the letter, sent to us by Mrs Mary Kluk, the head of the Board of Deputies.

Dear Community

There has been an enormous amount of misinformation and confusion regarding the materials contained within the Beyachad library. We would like to provide clarity on this issue.

1. Archival materials and reference books will be incorporated into a newly created SAZF archive to ensure that the documents are correctly, safely and effectively housed. The emphasis on this archive is to ensure that the public and researchers have easy and effective access to these important resources. The intention is to electronically record these documents for posterity. This is essential as many of them are old and deteriorating. We are working closely with experts in the field of archiving to ensure that our precious documents are responsibly maintained.
2. The SAJBD has an existing archive which has been functioning effectively for many decades under the guidance of two highly respected library and archive experts. This important resource is accessed regularly by both local and international researchers. This archive will continue to run in its present form but be expanded to incorporate further relevant materials.
3. The remainder of the books currently housed in the Beyachad library will be put into a professional storage facility until it is decided where they can be best utilized.

Signed, Beyachad Management Committee

EDITOR'S MUSINGS

Colin Plen

Flip Slier

There is a newly reinstated exhibit at the Durban Holocaust Museum, and I am sure you will be interested in reading about it. I use the expression "newly reinstated," because when the Museum was first opened, this exhibit was in use but when the Museum was remodelled and moved to the spacious premises it now occupies, the exhibit languished, waiting for someone to put it back up. Which has now been done.

Flip Slier was born in Amsterdam in 1923. He was a printer like his father before him, but in 1942 he was arrested and sent to a work camp in Molengroot. He wrote some letters to his parents, and asked them to keep the letters in a safe place.

He escaped from Molengroot but was recaptured and sent to Westerbork. He sent several more letters to his mother, stressing the need to keep them hidden in a safe place. It is frightening to know that 107,000 Dutch Jews were deported and only about 5000 returned.

Flip died in Auschwitz at about the same time that his parents did.

In 1997, a builder in Amsterdam was demolishing a building in Vrolijk Street (ironically Vrolijk means happy), and in tearing down the ceiling, found a packet of letters. These were Flip's letters that he had been sending to his mother while he was in captivity.

Cousins of Flip live in Durban. Phyllis Levinsohn and Deborah Shine, and Lionel Slier, a well-known journalist, live in Johannesburg. They managed to get hold of these letters and Deborah has written a book called *Hidden Letters* about the contents. There is a collection of photographs of the Amsterdam Slier family in the Durban exhibition, as well as copies of some of the letters.

Sad, but most interesting!

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Is Your Hebrew Name Shrager?

This is from an enquiry addressed to Issy Fisher, one of the wise men of Durban:

Dear Issy,

You may or may not know this, but I am very interested in the origins of surnames, and first names. I have long been interested in the origin and or meaning of the first name Shrager. Most people just shrug and say they don't know. However I picked up an article about names and this article said that Shrager comes from the Aramaic, meaning a candle. Do you have any comment for me on this, please?

Colin

...

Dear Colin,

Indeed, the name Shraga and its variants have their origins in the Aramaic 'shragoa' meaning candle. It appears in the list of *Surnames from the Russian Empire* but not in the Kingdom of Poland. The name Phillip is usually rendered in Hebrew as Shraga.

Issy

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Interview with Abe Sher

Eli Rabinowitz (see also the article about Eli's family in this issue) has told me that he filmed an interview with the well-known ex-Capetonian, Abe Sher, in 2005 in Perth when Abe was about 84 years old. Abe's son, Julian has made available a short clip from the 2 hour interview in which Abe talks about the Constitution Street *Shul* in Cape Town, which can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALeKcpzUYVo>

Abe and Lottie Sher are both well and still live in Perth.

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Paragraph 175

In 1879 a law was passed in Bavaria declaring that homosexuality was illegal. This statute was called "Paragraph 175," and when Germany became a state, the provision was included in the state's laws. When the Hitler regime began in 1933, the law was retained. Homosexual men were arrested by the Nazi government, and sent to concentration camps. Many died, but they were not systematically killed as the Jews were, but instead died from the terrible conditions they experienced. If, however, a

homosexual was found to be Jewish, he was 'demoted' to be a Jew and was sent to the gas chambers immediately.

More than 50,000 homosexual men are thought to have died during the Nazi period. After the war, in both Western and Eastern Germany, Paragraph 175 remained on the statute books and men who had been incarcerated by the Nazis were kept in jail. It was only in 1968 and 1969 that the two countries started to change their laws relating to Paragraph 175.

This story has been investigated by a German, Karl Mueller, who has written a book and produced a film about the topic. An exhibit is currently on show at the Holocaust Museum in Cape Town (as of February 2013), and will later move to Durban and then Johannesburg.

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Thoughts on Israel

Where do the Israeli, and for that matter the Palestinian young men, get those razors which shave them leaving just smooth black stubble? Ever since I can remember I have never been able to achieve anything other than speckled stubble.

If one goes into a mall in South Africa there is invariably a stall with a couple of Israelis, usually very pretty young ladies, selling *Ahava* or other beauty products. I was approached by a Hebrew accented man who offered me a sample of his after-shave lotion which he then offered to sell to me for R850, which I thought was an inordinately high price to pay for a nice smell. Maybe I am out of touch and you have to pay R850 for these things, but it made me think that there might be chance for a reciprocal trade. Maybe we should be allowed to send our pretty girls and good looking guys to stand in the *kanyonim* and to sell rooibos tea and peppermint crisp chocolate?

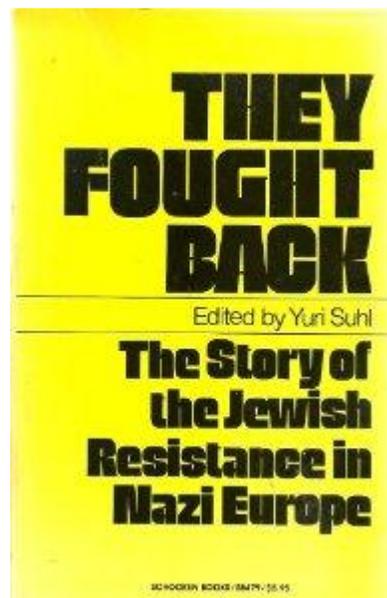
A problem is arising in South Africa because of underlying anti-Israel or anti-Jewish feelings of certain Government officials who are stopping or limiting the sale of Israeli products here, saying that unless the Dead Sea products have a label on them reading "made in the occupied territories," it is illegal for them to be sold. The Board of Deputies has sent delegations to the Government to discuss this and the discussions are still going on.

Book Review

THEY FOUGHT BACK **The Story of the Jewish** **Resistance in Nazi Europe**

Edited by Yuri Suhi

Colin Plen



Published by MacGibbon and Kee. London, 1967

Since the Nazi organisation began its 'hate the Jews' campaigns in 1933, the Jews have been accused of going like lambs to the slaughter. This book shows the complete antithesis to this, quoting examples of Jews fighting back. It gives examples of Christian Poles, Danes, Italians, and even Germans who resisted the mighty force that was the Nazi movement, to rescue Jews. It gives examples of countries where senior ambassadorial staff helped the Jews, in Sweden, Denmark, Portugal and Spain and occupied countries like Holland and France.

If only more people had the guts to 'do something,' so many more could have been saved.

We generally do not know that almost every ghetto had an underground organisation of some kind, which provided food, education, carried out acts of sabotage, organised escapes, collected arms, and generally did a great deal to keep up the morale of the Jewish population.

One of the most thrilling chapters is the story of how thousands of Jewish partisans fought in the forests of Eastern Europe. I especially liked the line “the hand grenade took the place of the yellow star ...”

In Auschwitz, women prisoners helped to smuggle in dynamite which was used to blow up a crematorium in Auschwitz, and similar sabotage activities caused some of the smaller camps to be closed as early as 1944. There were escapes from the trains, and from Auschwitz and other camps.

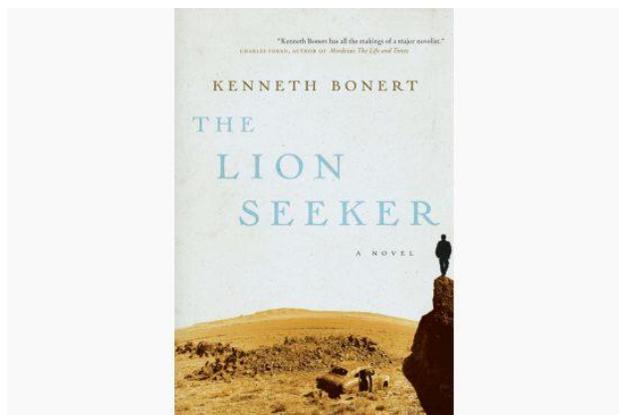
Some of these acts were confirmed by the Germans. The final battle of the Warsaw Ghetto began on April 19, 1943 when a battalion of German soldiers marched into the ghetto and were met by gunfire and firebombs. It is on record that Hans Frank, General Governor of Poland, sent a letter to Hitler stating, “as of yesterday we have in Warsaw a well organised uprising which we have to combat with artillery ...”

This book is an exciting tale and is highly recommended.

New Book

THE LION SEEKER

by Kenneth Bonert



Published by Knopf Canada, 2013

An epic and a vast story about the community of Ashkenazi Jews who emigrated to South Africa before World War II. A review of the book can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/LionSeeker>

Note: The Board of the SA-SIG has no relationship with the author of this book, nor has any financial interest in the sale of his books.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More on Challah and Kitke

Editor's Note: This letter refers to the article "South African Challah," found elsewhere in this Newsletter issue.

There is little that I can add to the article which I have seen before. However, there is a story which appeared in one of the cookbooks from overseas of a baker that fell in love with the young assistant in the bakery in which he worked. She had long, beautiful plaits. She spurned his display of affection and, one day, while kneading a loaf of bread, he gazed lovingly at her and reproduced her plaits in the dough before him. Hence, *kitke* means plaits. In some overseas communities, *challot* are decorated with birds (to bring man's prayers to God) or with ladders to commemorate the giving of the Torah on Sinai. The numerical value of Sinai is the same as the word for ladder (130). The Purim *challah*, called *keylich* in Russian, is giant-sized and braided, designed to represent the long ropes used to hang Haman.

*Issy Fisher
Durban*

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Jewish Family Names

I have read the [December 2012 / January 2013] edition of SA-SIG with usual interest and thanks to its contributors.

One item in particular caught my eye: your comments on Jewish Family Names.

In my opinion, your description of Kaganoff's dictionary on page 6 needs critical reappraisal.

Herewith is an excerpt from Beider's book that says it all:

Some general works about Jewish surnames that consider surnames from Eastern Europe have been published outside this region. Among the first was Benzion Kaganoff's *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames and Their*

History, published in 1977. Probably the first major book about the meaning of Jewish surnames for the layman, it undoubtedly has provided hours of fascinating reading for many people. Numerous enthusiastic reviews appeared in print, all written by laymen in onomastics.

The opinion of professional linguist P. Wexler (1979), however, was quite different. He considered Kaganoff's book "a disappointment [that] can be recommended neither for the specialist nor for the novice" (Wexler 1979, 23:96-113). Wexler cited the large number of errors in Kaganoff's book and found that all the major problems of Jewish onomastics were treated inadequately. Although Wexler's critical evaluation of Kaganoff's book is closer to the truth than the enthusiastic reviews, the book made a certain contribution in that it demonstrated the mediocre state of Jewish onomastics.

Kaganoff's book was also valuable in that it led to Wexler's interesting article and, later, to an excellent review of Wexler's article by David Gold in *Jewish Language Review*.

[Source: *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Russian Empire: Revised Edition*, page xiv.]

I own Kaganoff's and Beider's books. I see the total lack of documentation and references in Kaganoff's work as a serious omission. I now only use Beider for my descriptions of family history, and recommend that other serious students of the subject do so similarly.

Dennis Kahn

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Trooper B J Cohen

This may be of interest to the Newsletter readers.

In 1984, I had a meeting with Mr G. A. Chadwick, the head of the National Monuments Council in Pretoria. He informed me that during the siege of Ladysmith, which lasted for 118 days during the Boer War (between 2 November 1899 and 28 February 1900), a Jewish man named Trooper John Barrow Cohen, who had served in the Natal Carbineers, died of dysentery. The Natal Carbineers is the regiment from Pietermaritzburg where Trooper Cohen came from.

All the military men in the British army were buried in the British cemetery just outside Ladysmith, called Itombi. However, since Trooper Cohen was Jewish, he was not buried in the British cemetery, but a short distance away in an unmarked grave under a tree.

I arranged that the National Monuments Council would erect a tombstone over the grave. The body was never re-interred, as is stated in *Jewish Life* in the South African Country Communities book on Natal, Volume 4, page 110.

About 50 people attended the consecration of the tombstone. I conducted the service assisted by Rabbi I. Rubinstein, liaison chaplain to Jewish servicemen in the South African Defence Force. Mr John Moschal of the Council of Natal Jewry spoke, as did the mayor of Ladysmith, Councilor D. A. Reyneke, and Mr G. A. Chadwick of the National Monuments Council, British Graves Committee.

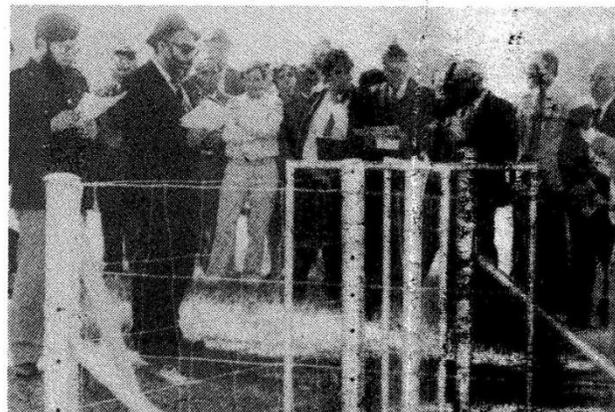
The chairman and vice-chairman of the Pietermaritzburg Hebrew congregation, Mr Joe Epstein and Mr Ben Lurie, also attended, as did the two Jewish residents of Ladysmith, Mr Goldberg of the CNJ, a number of MOTHS (Memorable Order of Tin Hats) from Ladysmith, and members of the Natal Carbineers. Last post was sounded and Mr Moschal intoned the *kaddish*.

A photo from an article about the ceremony in the *Ladysmith Gazette* is shown below.

Rabbi Shalom Zaiden, London

Editor's Note: Rabbi Zaiden wrote the article about the Jews of Bothaville, OFS, in the December 2010 issue of the Newsletter.

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From left, Rabbi I. Rubenstein, Chief Rabbi of the South African Defence Force, and Rabbi S. Zaiden conduct the ceremony at the laying of the new headstone for Private Cohen.

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