

Expanded Issue

SA-SIG

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

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

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In this Issue

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>President's Message – Saul Issroff</i> | 2 |
| <i>Editor's Message – Roy Ogus</i> | 3 |
| <i>Front-Line Kibbutzim – Joe Woolf</i> | 5 |
| <i>Lithuanian Footprints in South Africa – Aage Myhre</i> | 13 |
| <i>New Book – There Was Once A Home by A. Sarid</i> | 19 |
| <i>A Tragic Romance and Its Consequences – Eli Rabinowitz</i> | 21 |
| <i>De Aar: About A Small South African Town – Ann Rabinowitz</i> | 25 |
| <i>Jewish Origins of Some Durban Street Names – Colin Plen</i> | 29 |
| <i>New Book – Our Litvak Inheritance by David Solly Sandler</i> | 30 |
| <i>Zimbabwe's Lemba Build First Synagogue – Katya Cengel</i> | 31 |
| <i>The Story of the South African Fallen In Defence of Israel – Beryl Ratzer</i> | 35 |
| <i>Obituary – Maurice Ostroff</i> | 40 |
| <i>The Yiddish Book Center's Wexler Oral History Project – Roy Ogus</i> | 42 |
| <i>The Jewish Digital Archive Project (JDAP) – Roy Ogus</i> | 46 |
| <i>New Items of Interest on the Internet – Roy Ogus</i> | 47 |
| <i>New Book – Soap to Senate by Adam Yamey</i> | 55 |
| <i>Keep It Brief... – Adam Yamey</i> | 55 |
| <i>New Book – Letters of Stone by Steven Robins</i> | 57 |
| <i>New Issue – Chanukah 2015 Issue of Jewish Affairs</i> | 58 |
| <i>Letters to the Editor</i> | 59 |
| <i>Surnames Appearing In This Newsletter</i> | 60 |

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The New Year of 2016 marked the 17th year since the SA-SIG started! A lot has been achieved in terms of recording and making accessible Southern African records, but reviewing the activities, the discussion group, the web site, and the sessions at annual IAJGS conferences, highlights that many additional areas need to be worked up.

During the past summer, I spent some time at Beth Hatfusot (The Museum of the Jewish People) in Israel (<http://www.bh.org.il/>). Beit Hatfutsot is undergoing a comprehensive renewal program which will culminate with the opening of the Synagogue Hall in 2016 and a new museum in 2018.

The database section of their web site (<http://www.bh.org.il/databases/jewish-genealogy>) contains a lot of Southern African material particularly relevant to the larger cities and towns. Many of the entries have been derived from family tree submissions to the Douglas E. Goldman Jewish Genealogy Center. The director of the database center kindly provided me with copies of many of these databases, but I feel for privacy reasons that these should not go on the SA-SIG webpages. In due course, Beth Hatfusot will make a lot of this material available on their site, but for the time being, inquiries should be made directly to them.

They have excellent community sections, e.g. for Cape Town:

<http://dbs.bh.org.il/place/cape-town>

However, this highlights the fact that there are still gaps in past South African genealogical research mainly with regard to Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, and Port Elizabeth. The Country Communities Project of the SA Friends of Beth Hatfusot has done amazing and very detailed work on the smaller communities, but little has been done on the larger localities. For further information see Jewish Country communities:

<http://www.jewishcountrylife.co.za/>

The KehilaLinks project on *JewishGen.org* has a large section on South African towns, organised mainly by the very enthusiastic Eli Rabinowitz. The KehilaLinks (formerly called "ShtetLinks") project facilitates the creation of web pages to commemorate the places where Jews have lived

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, or any general enquiries, should be sent to Roy Ogus, Editor, 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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around the world, including in Africa. The KehilaLinks web site is located at:

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org>

and the list of South African KehilaLinks pages already in existence can be found at:

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Asia.html>


Eli Rabinowitz will assist anyone who would like to create a site for a new town, or would like to help out in any other way – volunteers are welcome! You can contact Eli at elirab@iinet.net.au.

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Editor's Note: More information on the KehilaLinks project and the list of pages for Southern African towns can be found on page 47.



EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the latest edition of the SA-SIG Newsletter, once again a bumper issue that is packed full of interesting items! Breaking the record set by the previous issue, this edition contains 60 pages, by far the largest to date.

I'm again very pleased to have been involved in all activities associated with the publication of this issue ranging from the sourcing of the articles, the final editing, as well as the completion of the back-end work which included the layout and distribution of the final version of the document. Once again I have strived to continue the tradition that has been established over the years to produce a high-quality journal which is filled with interesting and compelling content covering a wide range of topics of interest to Southern African genealogical researchers. I hope that you enjoy this issue as much as I enjoyed producing it!

As usual, this issue contains a collection of engaging articles as well as many other items of interest.

At the end of World War II, about 4,000 pioneer settlers from Western countries all over the world arrived in the newly-established state of Israel to help protect the new country against the many threats facing it. In the first article, titled *Front-Line Kibbutzim*, Joe Woolf tells the story of the set of South African pioneers who helped in the struggle.

About 90% of the Jews living in South Africa are of Lithuanian descent (the so-called Litvaks), and this group constitutes the largest pocket of Litvaks living anywhere in the world. In his article, *Lithuanian Footprints in South Africa*, Aage Myhre describes this unique Jewish community that still keeps Lithuania alive in its hearts, museums, and its synagogues.

All Eli Rabinowitz knew about his name was that he was apparently named after his great-uncle Moshe. As Eli understood it, Moshe died in a motor accident, six weeks before his planned wedding around the beginning of the 1930s. Then, in 2011, Eli was given a photo that changed everything, and this event started his journey of discovery about great-uncle Moshe! Read the story in Eli's article titled *A Tragic Romance and its Consequences*.

Ann Rabinowitz has a great fondness for the South African town of De Aar, and she has done a great

deal of research on this location over the years. In her article, *De Aar: About a Small South African Town*, she provides a capsule history of the town together with a detailed timeline of the key events that have occurred there since 1837.

In his article on page 29, Colin Plen describes the Jewish origins in the naming of a number streets in the city of Durban. Colin would like to hear from any readers who can add any names to his list of streets.

Some of the members of the Lemba tribe in Zimbabwe have newly embraced the Jewish religion after genetic tests carried out by British scientists have revealed that many of the Lemba tribesmen in southern Africa have Jewish origins. In her article, *Zimbabwe's Lemba Build First Synagogue, But Struggle to keep the Faithful*, Katya Cengel describes the efforts in a small community to build the first Lemba synagogue in the country.

In the article on page 35, Beryl Ratzer describes the efforts of Gidon Katz from Ashkelon, Israel, to trace and contact the bereaved families of members of the South African community who fell during Israel's War of Independence. With the cooperation of the Telfed organization, the Jewish National Fund, and the Israel Ministry of Defence, Gidon was able to contact the families and compile the details of the 87 deceased who had perished from before the Declaration of Independence up until today.

The Wexler Oral History Project at Aaron Lansky's Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts, is a growing collection of in-depth video interviews with people of all ages and backgrounds, ranging from immigrants from the Old Country, through American-born students, actors, world-renowned musicians, cultural activists, as well as the descendants of Yiddish writers. In my article on page 42, I review the collection of the Wexler Project interviews which took place with South Africans or former South Africans, or with people who have some connection to South Africa.

In his obituary, David Kaplan describes the life of Maurice Ostroff, a former South African from Johannesburg, who emigrated to Israel in 1948 to fight in the War of Independence. Maurice, who became a giant in his community, died on November 30, 2015.

In addition to the above articles, this edition of the Newsletter contains a number of other interesting

features, as well as descriptions of several recently-published South Africa-related books of interest. In addition, the regular compilation of new information, resources, and other items available on the Internet of potential interest to Southern African genealogical researchers, is included as well.



Let me also address a question that is posed to me from time to time, viz. what is the most efficient method to find content of interest that was included in the past issues of the SA-SIG Newsletter?

First, as you know, each issue includes a box on the last page which compiles all the surnames that appeared in the issue, together with the page numbers of the occurrences. The use of this box will enable the reader to quickly determine whether a surname of particular interest was mentioned in the issue or not, and to locate the page of the reference.

Secondly, all the past issues of the Newsletter are available on-line on the SA-SIG web site at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/newsletter/>

From that page, one can locate a past issue, view the Table of Contents of the issue, and with a single click, download the PDF file containing the issue.

The question mentioned above thus relates to the best way to search for content in these previous issues.

Surprisingly, I have found that the use of one of the special features of the Google search engine is perhaps the most efficient and powerful way to find this content. Let me explain further.

One of the Google search engine's special functions is the ability to focus the search for the input keywords to the web pages of a particular web site. Using this feature, one can therefore use the Google search engine to focus the search for content on the archive page for the SA-SIG Newsletters, and thus, in effect, limit the scope of the Google search to only the past Newsletters.

To initiate such a search, one should first go to the Google home page at www.google.com and type the following text in the Google search box:

<search keywords>
[site:www.jewishgen.org/safrica/newsletter/](http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/newsletter/)

FRONT-LINE KIBBUTZIM

Joe Woolf

One should, of course, not include the angled brackets, “<” or “>” in the search box, and the keyword(s) can be specified using all of the usual Google search formats.

The result of the above search will return the links to all the Newsletters in the archive in which the search keywords were found. If the keywords appear more than once in a particular issue, then a link for each of the occurrences will be returned. Each of the returned links can then be followed to access the particular Newsletter issues of interest.

For example, if one enters:

stellenbosch
site:www.jewishgen.org/safrica/newsletter/

in the Google search box, the search results returned will show all the Newsletters which contained the word “stellenbosch” in the issues. When I ran the search, ten links were returned indicating that the word appeared that many times in the archive of Newsletters.

I have found that this method is very powerful for the search of any type of content in the Newsletters, including people’s names, town names, or any other keywords. The only limitation of this type of search is that “sounds-like” searches are not supported.

Let me know if you have any questions or comments about this search method.

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A reminder that the 2016 annual IAJGS conference on Jewish Genealogy will be held in Seattle from August 7 – 12 this year. See the conference flyer on page 59.

Please let me know too if you have any comments or questions about any of the articles in this issue, and I encourage you to submit your own contributions for inclusion in a future edition of the Newsletter.

I hope you find the latest issue of the Newsletter engaging, interesting, and informative. Please read and enjoy!

Roy Ogus

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Introduction

The revelations of the fate of the Jews in Europe which emerged at the end of World War II, combined with the violent conflict in Palestine, strengthened the self-evident fact that the Jews indeed needed a haven in *Eretz Yisrael*, and that they would have to fight to attain it.

The British Mandate’s authority in Palestine progressively limited Jewish immigration and land purchase in order to appease the small but agitated Arab Palestinian population. With the knowledge that a war of survival was impending, pioneer settlers from Western countries who arrived with approved Immigration Certificates from the Mandate authorities after the end of World War II were considered in their own right to be volunteers from abroad, hence *Machal*.

As the movement of *chalutzim* (pioneers) from South Africa to Israel is well-documented in the book, *South Africa’s 800: The Story of South African Volunteers in Israel’s War of Birth*, by Henry Katzew, this narrative will be mainly about South Africans. However, similar movements took place amongst members of Zionist youth organizations from other countries, mainly the United States, as they were also fired by Zionist ideals. Nuclei of young Americans joined many of the *kibbutzim* mentioned in this story.

Leaving South Africa for Palestine

In August 1945, an organized group of some 40 young men and women made for Durban, where 29 of them boarded the British Malaysian Company’s ship *Hon Kheng*, and sailed on September 9th. The *Hon Kheng* took a month to reach Egypt, its passage delayed for a week by a breakdown which necessitated repairs in Mombasa.

Four of the group – Sonia Gamsu, Rona Moss-Morris, Ruth Rosenberg and Yehudith Werbranchik – sailed on the *Chopra* on August 26th; and three of them – Fanny Goldberg, Dot Ogin, and Rebecca Polon – sailed on the *Rio-Pacifico* on August 27th, all northward bound. It was a history-making group, although its members were not conscious of the fact at the time. It was the second organized group of South African Zionist youth to settle in Palestine,

the first having left a few years earlier. The first group left no significant traces on the life of the *Yishuv*: the majority of its members found the life incredibly tough and returned to South Africa. Barney Joffe, today of Ashkelon, is one of the few who remained.

The second group, under the leadership of Karl Silberman of Johannesburg, was to write itself into the history of pioneer settlement from South Africa. It was made up of members of all the Zionist Youth movements with the exception of Betar, the Zionist Revisionist party's youth movement whose political philosophy did not embrace land settlement. The Zionist Socialists of the group later joined the founders of Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch in the Northern Galilee; the Hashomer Hatzair members were amongst the founders of Kibbutz Shoval in the Negev; the Mizrahi group was to go to the newly-founded Kibbutz Kfar Etzion between Jerusalem and Hebron, and then to a settlement in the Bet She'an Valley; and the General Zionists became the founders of Timorim. All these are flourishing settlements today.

Smaller groups and individuals were to settle on Hatzor, Kfar Blum, Beit Herut, Massada, and Messilot. Not all of them remained: a few returned to South Africa, others left the land for the cities and three were to die in the War of Independence three years later. All have their place as pioneers who mapped out a path and made possible the absorption of later groups. Their names unquestionably belong to this record. In addition to the seven girls mentioned above, the group included Karl Silberman, Abe Tooch, Isaac Zagnoev, Gideon Rosenberg, Max Lifshitz, Abe Beinart, Leslie Shandel, Hymie Stein, Meyer Wachs, Zvi Lipschitz, Tefke Kolnick, Max Berman, Cyril Tiger, Clara Alter, Chana Eife, Slavin Fanerov, Jack Gross, Maisie and Basil Lowenstein, Neville Silbert, Eliezer Joffe, Haig Kaplan, Issy Lowenstein, Hillel Fine, Zvi Zipper, Ursula Treuherz (Sachs), Sarah Beinart, Ben-Zion Judelman and Sybil Judelman. Yehezkiel Berelowitz (Chatzki), one of those to die in the battle for Kfar Etzion, had succeeded in arriving in 1944.

South African Jews declined to accept the British imposition of conditional right to enter their spiritual and national homeland, as did Jews from other parts of the world. Accordingly, the Zionist Federation, challenging and defying the British limitations, initiated a pilot plan for "illegal"

immigration. The plan was for a path-finding group of eight, ostensibly on safari, to cross Africa by truck to Cairo, and there to make contact with the appropriate people who would see to the rest.

The eight young men, their ages ranging from 18 – 24, were Benny Miller of Oudtshoorn and the leader of the expedition, Philip Navon of Randfontein, Harry Bloch of Port Elizabeth, Henry Harris, Morris Galp, Issy Rieback, Hymie Zahavi (Goldblatt) and Eddy Magid, all of Johannesburg. Five were chosen from the General Zionist hachsharah farm near Johannesburg, and three were *Betarim*. Eddy Magid was to become Mayor of Johannesburg in the 1980s.

The journey was quite an adventure, with stops and starts all the way. Two hours after midnight on December 15, 1946, the 3-ton ex-army truck nosed its way out of Johannesburg. The plan did not succeed mainly because of an accident that occurred on February 1, 1947 at Ed-Duem, Sudan. A low, overhanging branch knocked down two of the group who were sitting on the roof of the truck. Eddy Magid was not seriously injured, but Henry Harris, who took the brunt of the blow, suffered a cracked vertebra. The truck had to be sold to pay the airfare to fly Henry back to Johannesburg. Of the others, all except one eventually reached Israel in 1948 with the El Al flights from Johannesburg organized for Machal volunteers.

Twelve youngsters boarded the Winchester Castle in Durban in March 1947. The ship had arrived from the Far East and Australia, returning soldiers after World War II to Britain and other countries. The settler group, with different destinations and purposes in Palestine, included ex-SAAF air mechanic Abe Nurick, ex-SAAF pilot Hugo Alperstein (later Hebraised to Hagai Agmon) Shainie Nurock, Bob Damelin with his wife and two children, Mr. Rosenberg, father of Mordechai and Dr. David Kidron, both well-known Israelis today, Val Shaanan (then Levy), Mr. and Mrs. Judkowski of Cape Town, Isaac Fabian and Sara Babrow. The 12 South Africans disembarked from the Winchester Castle at Port Said and reached Lydda on a night train packed with Arab travelers on an April morning in 1947, a few days before the Passover festival.

The South African presence in Israel before 1948

The South African presence in Israel on the day the state was born comprised the two established

kibbutzim of Ma'ayan Baruch and Shoval, and a core of urban residents in the three major cities, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. There was also the non-ideological work platoon of General Zionists, or the ZUPs as they called themselves. After three years of *hachshara* at the *kibbutzim* of Ramat Yochanan and Kfar Glickson, the ZUPs founded their own settlement of Timorim. Meanwhile, they were operating as a workforce based on Ein Sara, a private farm near Nahariya in the Western Galilee. However, some members of the group were earning money in building and harbor jobs in Haifa. Among the latter was Karl Silberman, who had led the 1945 group.

The emphasis in South Africa on recruiting experienced World War II veterans in the early months caused a revolt of organized Zionist youth. They felt this to be a slur on their honor, and demanded that some of their numbers be included. They had been too young to serve in the war. This, they said, should not be used against them. It would be a blot on their records if they were not sent. A compromise was reached. A percentage of Zionist youth would be sent after some preliminary training. Thus, a considerable number of those listed as kibbutz members in the "South Africa's 800" were Zionist youth channeled north with the Machal groups.

Jack Segal, a radar man in the air force, attended a concert of the Philharmonic Orchestra on the night of May 13th, the evening before the state was proclaimed, and the day of the final destruction of the Etzion block of *kibbutzim* near Hebron. The "soul" poured by the orchestra into the national anthem, Hatikvah, can never again be repeated, he says. Two South Africans, "Chatzi" Berelowitz and Zvi Lipshitz, fell at Kibbutz Etzion.

Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch

Three of the South Africans were bound for Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch: Abe Nurick with his wife Riva, and Hugo Alperstein. Nurick's link with the Ma'ayan Baruch project began in 1946 in Cape Town. He had gone there on his first holiday after the war, and had heard about Harry Salber, Haig Kaplan and Issy Lowenstein and their ex-servicemen's group that was determined to found a kibbutz in Palestine. At a meeting of the group he met Riva, whom he married a few months later, by which time the first group of pioneers had already founded the settlement.

Hugo Alperstein was a product of Dale College in King William's Town. He belonged to a family that had always been warmly Zionist. As a youth, he was a member of his town's Young Israel Society and later of Habonim. He served during the war in Italy in 24 Squadron in the SAAF, and on his return to South Africa joined the Johannesburg group of young Zionist Socialists planning the Ma'ayan Baruch project. To prepare himself for his new life, he took advantage of the Government's COTT scheme which trained demobilized soldiers for a trade. Alperstein, living the dream of Jewish redemption by self-labor, joined a builders' course.

Abe and Riva Nurick left immediately for Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch on the Triumph motor-cycle which they'd brought with them and which later became the settlement's transport vehicle. Hugo Alperstein first went to Jerusalem to find the girlfriend whom he had met in Egypt during the war. Within a few weeks, he joined the kibbutz and some months later succeeded in bringing his girlfriend there. The two were married at the kibbutz.

Abe Nurick was made for kibbutz life. A son of the veld, a helper in his schoolboy days in his father's Upington butchery and farm, he had abandoned his university studies in 1937 to learn the building trade. Now he became both the kibbutz builder and its expert on butchering meat. His service in the SAAF, with its 5-year tent-and-workshop life in Kimberley, North Africa and Italy, also turned out to be excellent preparation for the raw life of pioneering. He took Hugo Alperstein under his wing and they began to work together on the settlement's building projects.

Edward (Eddie) Cohen arrived at the kibbutz a few months later. Before the war he had taken no interest in Jewish affairs, and was far removed from contemporary Zionist-minded youth. It is possible that a visit to Palestine on one of his air force leaves transformed the young fighter-pilot into the obsessed 23-year-old, dreaming only of joining Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch. He abandoned his university studies and, like Hugo Alperstein before him, joined a builders' course under the COTT scheme. He was now afire with Zionism. At lunch time he would walk over from the trade school to the nearby University of the Witwatersrand to attend meetings of the Students Zionist Association. His friend, Shaul Bar Levav (Levinson), an early volunteer, described how intensely interested Eddie was in all he heard.

He arrived at Ma'ayan Baruch in October 1947, an urbanite with well-chosen suits and ties, books, a fine collection of classical records and a hungry idealism. Quiet and reserved, he had interior depths which his new life began to stir, but this new life was destined soon to end, for a country at war would need the expertise of war veterans.

On May 29, 1948, Eddie Cohen was the first fatal casualty of the newly-formed 101 Fighter Squadron. He was part of a flight of four Messerschmitts which attacked an Egyptian column of 500 vehicles some 30 kilometers south of Tel Aviv. He was flying wing to Ezer Weizman, who later became president of Israel. The other two pilots were Modi Alon and American Lou Lenart. This sortie surprised the Egyptian commanders, who believed that Israel was without air defenses. The Egyptians would not be in Tel Aviv in forty-eight hours as their press had boasted, and Tel Aviv receded from their grasp.

For recent South African arrivals Lionel Hodes, Jack Fleisch and Horace Milunsky, May 14th was a day spent on the roads traveling in an armored bus heading to join Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch. At Rosh Pina the bus joined a large convoy led by armored cars, and they moved steadily into the "finger" of the Upper Galilee. The British had given the fortress-like police station of Nebi Yusha to Arabs who sniped at the convoy. Doors slammed shut and shutters closed. The pitter-patter of the bullets was their introduction to the war for the South African *kibbutzniks*.

The bus stopped at a small outhouse, the driver opened the door facing away from Nebi Yusha and three men quickly clambered in. They were members of Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, one of the oldest of the Northern Galilee settlements. The men had been working at the kibbutz fish pond directly below the police station. War or no war, work had to go on.

In the distance fires burned and the sounds of a small arms skirmish were clearly audible. The news quickly spread: the Haganah was attacking a hostile Arab village, and the bus moved on.

There was little ceremony to greet the three men at Ma'ayan Baruch, for they had arrived in the middle of an alarm exercise. The situation was briefly explained to them: each settlement in the valley was expected to defend itself until the surrounding settlements could come to its aid. Kfar Szold, Dan

and other settlements near Ma'ayan Baruch had already beaten off attacks. But now organized armies, not irregulars, would bear down on the settlements whose communication systems would be maintained by radio heliograph, lamps and flares.

The briefing showed the situation in all its harsh reality. By accepted military calculations, the kibbutz could offer little resistance to a determined assault. Its arms consisted of about 25 weapons, including one old 2-inch mortar with a few shells, a Chateau light machine gun with several hundred rounds and 20 or so smaller arms of diverse makes and age. The locally made Sten gun, with an effective range of not more than 50 yards, vied for pride of place with a tommy-gun, an old shotgun normally used for hunting buck, and assorted French, German, English and Czech rifles. Each weapon had its idiosyncrasies. An order had been issued by Josef, the military commander, that ammunition was to be used sparingly, for no one knew when replenishments would arrive.

The settlement had been well prepared against attack, both from the air and ground. Bunkers and shelters enabled the whole community to go underground and a small sick bay had been prepared in a shelter. The perimeter of the *meshek* was surrounded by several layers of barbed concertina wire and mines had been laid. Shooting and observation posts ringed the camp and dugouts were linked to one another by wide communication trenches and telephone.

Arab superstition of nighttime had been taken into account. 1000 firecrackers, ready to go off when tramped upon, were strategically strewn around, and phosphorescent figures had been prepared to serve as apparitions. The exercise over, the settlers gathered together for a party while sentries remained on duty. Glasses clinked, the State of Israel had been proclaimed, and what would be, would be.

The metallic clang of the alarm sent everyone dashing to action stations. What menaced in the darkness? The word went around: "Relax, false alarm." The alarm had been struck accidentally. The members of Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch slept peacefully on the night of May 14, 1948. The kibbutz had already given two of its members, pilots Eddie Cohen and Hugo Alperstein, to the Israel Air Service. Abe Nurick was soon to join them.

Ma'ayan Baruch was preoccupied with the war throughout the month of May, but was spared the ordeal of it. Its members were watchful, tense and alert. The Syrians, who had four options for penetrating the Galilee, made their thrust on the Jordan Valley, presumably arguing that once the settlements there were rolled up, those in the 'finger' of the Galilee would be cut off and fall anyway. The Lebanese on the west were fighting at Nahariya, which changed hands and was to change hands again, and at Kadesh Naftali the possibility of a link-up of Syrian and Lebanese was thwarted on May 16th by the Palmach's capture of the police fortress of Nebi Yusha, with the loss of twenty men; this was the fortress which had fired on the bus that had brought Lionel Hodes and his friends to Northern Galilee.

The settlers of Ma'ayan Baruch carried on with their labors. They had a vegetable garden, five cows and cereals growing in the fields. It became clear that while working under skies that belonged to the Syrians, when danger threatened they should take cover in slit trenches. Eventually they became indifferent to the planes. The Syrians were not interested in them but in the roads, which they were dive-bombing. The flashes of Syrian guns shelling the Jordan Valley settlements were visible and the South Africans and their American *chaverim* (members) felt the pain of a country which had no artillery with which to reply.

Nights at the kibbutz were eerie, both because of the howls of scores of jackals which sometimes became translated in tense minds to Arab war cries as well as by the bright lights of the tracers and flares somewhere further south when an Israeli target was under fire. All the kibbutz dug-outs were manned, two to a dug-out: one member on duty, the other resting. The women, having been taught to shoot, shared in the vigil. When it seemed safe, some settlers would probe around in abandoned Arab villages in the neighborhood. Articles stolen from the kibbutz were recovered. Lionel Hodes noted in his diary, "Some of the friendly Arabs who had remained were armed by the Jews, despite their own meager armaments. The Arabs sought to protect themselves from reprisals by their fellow Arabs. Every night there was a movement back into Palestine by Arabs who regretted having fled."

Hodes, Horace Milunsky, and Jack Fleisch, concluding that Ma'ayan Bruch would be safe without them, sought permission to leave the

kibbutz to join a regular army unit. The kibbutz committee demurred, but the issue was settled by a new turn of events. The Syrians launched an attack on Kibbutz Mishmar Hayarden in the east, and from the west the Lebanese recaptured Malkiya. It was immediately surmised that the Arab advance would be on the key settlement of Rosh Pina, gateway to the Northern Galilee. Trained men were collected from every settlement in the region to meet the threat. Ma'ayan Baruch contributed the Hodes trio, who found the Druse at Rosh Pina in their flowing robes and kaffiyas most interesting; these Druse had thrown in their lot with the Israelis.

An American member of Ma'ayan Baruch, Israel Avraham Sevin, was to die driving a truck in a Haganah convoy on the road from Safed to the kibbutz. Jack Fleisch, a demolition expert, separated from his friends Hodes and Milunsky. Captured a few months later in the Negev, he was taken to a POW camp in Egypt where he suffered grim days that were to shatter his life. Hodes and Milunsky were sent to an artillery training camp at Pardess Katz.

Kibbutz Shoval

Kibbutz Shoval consisted then of three huts, one used as a dining room and kitchen, while the other two served as living quarters. There was the customary kibbutz water tower and by May 14th, a barbed wire fence encircled the settlement and a two-storey security house with a parapet and emplacement had been prepared. From the heights of the tower, the kibbutzniks on guard duty could see the village of Hatzirim and a glimpse of the aluminum roofs of Kibbutz Mishmar Hanegev. The Iraq-el-Suweidan fortress was nearby, but not visible from Shoval. In the whole large area between Gaza and Hebron there were not more than three or four trees, and the talk in the kibbutz dining room was not of war but of how their recently-purchased cows, then on a settlement near Nahariya, would fare when brought down to this arid region. (To jump a little in history, a few years later the kibbutz won the prize for the best herd in the country.)

The situation at Kibbutz Shoval, at the other end of the state and in what was then, though not today, the Negev, was interesting. Across the road from the kibbutz was the encampment of a famous Bedouin sheik, Abu Sheik Suleiman Huzeil. There had never been any tensions between the young kibbutz with its South African, Israeli and Buchenwald-survivors

nuclei and the Arabs. Indeed, the two peoples got on well together; the kibbutz tractor had often been placed at the disposal of the Arabs. Flight did not enter the minds of these Arabs. The area was one of several examples of good relationships, indicating that there need never have been an Arab refugee problem. The relationship between the kibbutz members and their Arab neighbors was good: a young *kibbutznik* of Czech origin from Shoval would go over nightly to the encampment to translate the Arab radio news service for the sheik into spoken Arabic, for although the sheik was a judge of the Bedouin High Court, he was not fluent in literary Arabic.

Not that the menace of war had not threatened the young kibbutz. Up the road, a small fort manned by a detachment of the Transjordan Frontier Police had been established, but as sometimes happens in war, this force inexplicably disappeared shortly before May 14th, and the kibbutz members took over the fort.

Before May 14th, an order had been given that no one could leave the kibbutz compound without a guard, and that a sentry had to be on duty at the watchtower all the time. "It was there," said Issy Greenberg, "that I had time to read most of my copy of a Greek tragedy."

The entire South African *garin* (group) consisted of no more than 30 young people, the majority of whom were women, among them the Rosenberg sisters of Johannesburg and Nina Herbstein of Cape Town. Zvi Zipper of Rhodesia and Gideon Rosenberg were on service on other fronts in the country. Other kibbutz men were earning money for the struggling settlement in various jobs near Netanya. The kibbutz armory consisted of a few British rifles, three Stens, Molotov cocktails, a couple of hand grenades and 1,000 rounds of ammunition, the standard arsenal of the Negev *kibbutzim*.

On May 14th, the fierce encounters that were to take place in the region were not foreseen; notable amongst these encounters were the seven Israeli attempts to dislodge the invading Egyptians from the Iraq-el-Suweidan fortress, "the monster on the hill," before finally succeeding on the eighth attempt on November 9, 1948.

Kibbutz Shoval had several South African settlers in the army; amongst them were Issy Greenberg (Granoth) of the *Drom Afrika 1* crew, Zvi Zipper of

Rhodesia, and Gideon Rosenberg of Johannesburg. Rosenberg fell two weeks before the state was declared in one of the many battles for the hills of Jerusalem.

Down in the south the friendly relations between the Bedouin encampment and the South Africans and their companions at Kibbutz Shoval were maintained. Issy Greenberg joined a unit at Mishmar Hanegv. From here, the unit made a nightly foot patrol to Hatzirim, a kibbutz near Beersheba, keeping a watchful eye on the Beersheba-Gaza road. Towards the end of May the patrol unit was taken out of the Negev and stationed at Be'er Tuvia, near Kastina, a former British army base and an airfield which was later called Hatzor. Many South Africans served there in the Israel Air Force.

The following night this unit took part in the Isdud battle that had been planned to stop the Egyptians on their advance on Tel Aviv. The Israelis (say the historians) lost the battle, but won the war at Isdud. Be that as it may, the Egyptians stopped at Isdud – the Ashdod of today – and were not able to advance any further.

Kibbutz Ein Sara

Of the three agriculture-based groups – Ma'ayan Baruch, Shoval, and Ein Sara – it was perhaps the group at Ein Sara which experienced most vividly the prologue to the state's rebirth. With the partition decision, the Western Galilee fell into the Arab area. The army ordered the work platoon to stay put. Haifa, as a work centre, now became closed to the peripatetic workers when the Arab city of Acre was blocked. Only irregular trips by sea were possible at first.

Ein Sara's owner, an elderly German Jew, quit his farm when the partition decision was made, and gave over his handsome two-storey stone house to the group. In the months before that, the Jewish Agency had built them three wooden pre-fabs, a dining room and a storeroom.

What had given the work party its keenest sense of drama was the beaching in the pre-partition period of two small immigrant ships. The two beachings took place within a period of twenty-four hours. The first ship came in at night and the South African settlers were among those assigned to help the immigrants – men women and children – off the ships. The reception group was under orders to

resist physically should the British get wind of the ship's arrival, and would then attempt to detain the immigrants and send them to Cyprus. However, the British were caught by surprise. The immigrants vanished into the population by a well-organized "melting" procedure. A beached hulk was all the British found.

The second ship erred, and came in by day. The British commander immediately had the area cordoned off. What followed was a comedy: the Jewish leader in the area gathered together some girls, provided them with bottles of liquor, and sent them down to the beach to chat up the British soldiers, who were not averse to the girls' overtures. They became preoccupied, enough to make it possible for the reception team to whisk the immigrants out of sight.

This was not the end of the comedy. The British commander, on friendly terms with the Jews, sought from them "a handful of chaps" to show his superiors in Haifa that his men had rounded up at least some of the illegal immigrants. The "chaps" the Jews gave him were men they wanted on Cyprus to instruct the DPs in Hebrew and physical training as well as psychological preparation for their new life in the new state.

The "Mary Line" to Haifa was also organized in the passage of time. Mary was friendly with an officer of British Transport Command in Nahariya. She persuaded him to allow a daily truck to travel to Haifa to bring back supplies and mail for the settlers; wearing khaki and English-speaking, settlers passed as British soldiers when they had occasion to use the line. But this was a land of tragedy and death as well as of comedy and guile.

The South Africans felt the pain of Yechiam, a collective settlement occupying the site of a Crusader castle. It came to denote the ill-fated convoy from Haifa bringing supplies and reinforcements to the Western Galilee.

The convoy succeeded in slipping past Acre undetected, safely reaching the South Africans at Ein Sara which had become the "clearing house" for the Western Galilee. That night the South Africans celebrated the convoy's arrival with a party.

On its way inland to Yechiam, the convoy was ambushed near a bend in the road. The first few cars managed to escape and reached besieged Yechiam, but most of the trucks, with their drivers and

passengers, were mowed down. The tidings hit the people of Israel hard, but the most affected was the South African ZUP platoon which had entertained the ill-fated guests the night before.

History was now moving fast. The exodus of 70,000 Arabs from Haifa in April, and the Jewish encirclement of Acre, foreshadowed Jewish victory in the north. Seen 27 years later, the big event in the experience of the South African work platoon at Ein Sara was not Ben-Gurion's proclamation of the state ("We expected it") but the UN's decision on partition. They listened, ears glued to the radio, in their primitive prefabs. When the final count was given and, with it, the recognition of Jewish statehood by the international community, the settlers hugged one another and sang and danced. "After that," said Karl Silberman, "no one ever doubted that the Jewish state would arise." They listened to Ben-Gurion's ringing Hebrew declaration on May 14th 1948 as young people confident of their future. The work platoon had no men serving in the army; their service in founding the border Kibbutz Timorim on the morrow was seen both by themselves and the army as equivalent to military service.

Kibbutz Timorim

Early in June the South African ZUP work platoon left their temporary farm at Ein Sara to establish Kibbutz Timorim on a gentle hill overlooking Moshav Nahalal; though not visible from Timorim, it was not more than ten kilometres away. Timorim became, in fact, a border settlement and looked immediately to its security and building defensive emplacements.

Timorim was the fruition of a way of thinking that had its origin in Johannesburg some years earlier. Seven men – three brothers, Israel, David and Zelig Dunsky of Germiston, Zundel Segal, Harold Stutzen, Philip Zuckerman and Karl Silberman (all of them in Israel today) launched the United Zionist Party. They came together as an entity to give non-ideological Zionists a voice in the affairs of the Federation. The United Zionists grew in strength. The group that founded Timorim were its first pioneers. Their reaction to the "Altalena" affair was characteristic. "We discussed it," said Silberman, "without warmth, without heat. The affair should not have happened. In historical perspective it was an important event, but at the time it did not loom large for us. We were people who could not get hot-headed about any ideology. We could never split on

political issues as, a few years later, the Mapai party's *kibbutzim* did."

In a few swift days the settlers, then numbering about forty, the majority South Africans, put up their pre-fabs and dining room and established a small sheet-metal factory. The prime initiator was Pretoria's Hymie Chait of the Drom Afrika 1 crew. He was soon joined by his brother, Max. The settlement followed the usual pattern of those days, planting vegetable fields and running a modest dairy.

The settlement had a three-fold significance: first, it protected a part of the Migdal Ha'emek border; second, it opened the road to Ein Hachosh; third, it was neighbor of the British-built Ramat David airfield which was then filling up with scores of South African air force personnel who, during the following months, would share in the kibbutz Sabbath-even parties.

Nazareth fell to the Israelis on the evening of July 16th, with little blood-shed on either side. The Arabs did not run, but surrendered, and they and their children remain in Nazareth to this day.

None of the South Africans on nearby Kibbutz Timorim participated in the convergence on Nazareth; their task had been to pin down the Arab village of Malun, and this they did. The Arab surrender was meaningful to them because, in Karl Silberman's words, "We were now free to get organized."

Volunteers from Other Countries

Many Americans and Canadians were *chaverim* of front line *kibbutzim*, and known to the World Machal Association. The *kibbutzim* where they lived were Ma'ayan Baruch, Kfar Blum, Ein Dor, Ein Hanatziv, Schluchot, Ginegar, Gan Hadarom, Ein Hashofet, Kfar Menachem and Ramat Yochanan.

In addition to American Avraham Sevin of Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch, Dov Seligman of Kibbutz Ein Dor was ambushed and killed on January 19, 1948 while plowing the kibbutz fields.

Ari Lashner of Kfar Blum was killed by a sniper on March 18, 1948 while repairing an electrical fault on a lamp-post on the kibbutz security perimeter.

Though not a kibbutz member, David Guenther Livingston, a soldier of the Palmach Yiftach, fell on

April 14, 1948 in the defense of Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek. All three, Seligman, Lashner and Livingston had served with the crew on Aliyah Bet ships.

Latin America had a small group of members a Kibbutz Negba; a considerable number of Machal volunteers served in Givati units in the defense of Negba and Kibbutz Nitzanim. Mordechai Wainerman of Argentina fell on July 12, 1948 at Negba, and Debora Epstein of Uruguay fell at Nitzanim on June 7, 1948.

List of *kibbutzim* referred to in this article

Ein Dor, Ein Hanatzvi, Ein Hashofet, Ein Sara, Gan Hadarom, Ginegar, Kfar Blum, Kfar Etzion, Kfar Giladi, Kfar Glickson, Kfar Menachem, Ma'ayan Baruch, Mishmar Hayarden, Negba, Netzanim, Ramat Yochanan, Schluchot, Shoal, Timorim

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The biography of Joe Woolf, a Lithuanian-born former South African, can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/JoeWoolf>

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LITHUANIAN FOOTPRINTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Aage Myhre

It is considered that around 90% of the approximately 80,000 Jews living in South Africa are of Lithuanian descent (the so-called Litvaks), which thus constitutes the largest pocket of Litvaks in the world! You are hereby invited to learn more about this unique Jewish community that still holds Lithuania alive in their hearts, museums, and synagogues.



Lithuanian immigrants celebrating the Jewish New Year at sea in 1903



For the tens of thousands of Litvaks who came to South Africa during the years 1860 – 1940, the Cape Town harbour was the first glimpse they had of their new homeland.

The Jewish Museum in Cape Town offers visitors a journey back in time. Most museums do. The striking feature of this museum, however, is that the journey to the past also brings us to a completely different part of our world, from Africa's southern tip to a seemingly modest little country far to the

north, to a country where around 90% of South Africa's Jewish population has its roots (there are today about 80,000 Jews in South Africa). [*Editor's Note: This article was written in 2011.*]

The museum's basement is dominated by a village environment (*shtetl*) from the late 1800s. A few houses are reconstructed in full scale, and you can clearly see how people lived and co-existed at the time. The village is called Riteve. It was recreated in the museum on the basis of entries made in the 1990s by a group of experts who went from South Africa to Lithuania to find traces of the family of the museum's founder, Mendel Kaplan.

The village is called Rietavas in Lithuanian. It is there to this day, less than a half hour drive from Klaipeda, at the highway direction Kaunas and Vilnius. The Kaplan family emigrated from here in the 1920s, while the village's population was still 90% Jewish. Today, no Jews live in Rietavas.

A stroll among the house-models in the Cape Town museum's basement is like walking around in a part of Lithuania, almost more Lithuanian than Lithuania itself. This impression is becoming no less strong when I discover that the café that is a part of this comprehensive Jewish complex in Cape Town, is also named after the founder's home town in Lithuania, and that the older part of the museum is a replica of a Vilnius synagogue. This synagogue was built in 1863, and was the first ever built in South Africa.



The Jewish Museum in Cape Town is more Lithuanian than Lithuania itself!

The museum and Café Riteve are just two of the elements of an extensive complex of Jewish-related buildings here in Cape Town's incredibly beautiful botanical garden, so if you first come here, I

recommend that you take your time. Worth a visit is the Great Synagogue from 1905, the Gitlin Library (including a large collection of books in Yiddish that the Litvaks brought with them on the long sea voyage from Lithuania to Cape Town), and the Cape Town Holocaust Centre (see below).

Lithuanians dominate the Jewish community in South Africa

Lithuanians dominate the Jewish community in South Africa to an extent seen in no other country. Casino magnate Sol Kerzner (1935 –), communist leader Joe Slovo (1926 – 1995), and veteran anti-apartheid activist Helen Suzman (1917 – 2009) make an unlikely trio but have in common that they are all of Lithuanian descent.

Like their Lithuanian ancestors, whose political ranks included wealthy capitalists, zealous Zionists, prominent religious scholars and committed communists, South Africa's Litvaks, have spanned the political spectrum. On the left stands Slovo, the former head of the South African Communist Party, who was born in Lithuania in 1926 and came to South Africa at the age of nine. On the right stands Kerzner, a flamboyant businessman who built the famous casino resort Sun City (north of Johannesburg) and founded the entertainment and leisure giant Sun International.

Jewish emigrants from Tsar occupied Lithuania are generally thought of as having fled the persecution and poverty for the safe shores of America. A much less known story is that of the many Litvaks who travelled to South Africa. Many of these migrants came from the Kaunas region (Kovno in Yiddish), but many also came from towns such as Palanga, Panevėžys, Rietavas and Šiauliai.

Many travelled via the Liepāja (*in German, Libau*) port in Latvia on ships bound, via the Baltic Sea and (after its opening in 1895) the Kiel Canal shortcut, for English east coast ports. From there, they travelled overland, usually via London, to Southampton to embark for Cape Town.

This movement of people was not accidental: a whole business existed to cater for them, from the ticket agents in Kaunas or Vilnius, to shipping lines such as the Wilson Line shuttling between Liepāja and Hull, to the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter in London which housed and orientated many of the trans-migrants, to the Castle Line and the Union Line which specialised in the route to South Africa.

And like any successful movement of people, it became self-perpetuating, as the new South Africans sent home letters, and money, encouraging others to follow suit. The first countrywide Union of South African census in 1911 indicates a population of 46,919 Jews, a majority of whom were Litvaks. By 1921, the Jewish population had risen to 62,103, but with more of a shift in gravity towards the gold-mining and commercial centres of Witwatersrand in the Transvaal area (which accounted for 33,515).

What this means is that a great many of those North Americans and British with Litvak ancestors are likely to have kin in South Africa. There are many good sources for Jewish family history research in Lithuania and prospects of success are often favourable, as long as the place of origin within the country is known or can be identified.

The extraordinary story of Sammy Marks (1843 – 1910)



The entrepreneur Samuel Marks was born in the Lithuanian district of Taurage in 1843. He was one of the very first Litvaks to arrive on African shores. He came here via England in 1868 and began his career by hawking cheap jewellery and cutlery in Cape Town. Later he moved on to Kimberley where he went into business with his brother-in-law Isaac Lewis and Jules Porges. Together they formed the French Diamond Mining Company.

Following this, Lewis and Marks decided to relocate to the Eastern Transvaal where they established the African and European Investment Company. This company proceeded to become a major Rand finance house with controlling interests in several gold mines. Mr. Marks had become a leading magnate and one of South Africa's richest men.

An example of his many success stories is one of the companies he started, the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Oranje Vrystaatsche Mineralen en Mijnbouvereiniging*, which became the basis of the town Vereeniging. Marks also developed the Viljoen's Drift coal mine and encouraged the expansion of the Witbank coalfields.

Sammy Marks was also a close friend and admirer of South Africa's State President Paul Kruger (who is often called the father of the Afrikaner nation) and a popular figure within the Transvaal business community. It was Marks who advised Kruger to build a railway line from Pretoria to Lourenço Marques. He served as a senator in the Union Parliament from 1910 until his death in 1920 in Johannesburg.

Worth a visit is the Sammy Marks Museum north of Pretoria and Johannesburg. The museum building, a splendid Victorian mansion dating from 1884, was the residence of Marks, whose significant contribution to the industrial, mining and agricultural development of the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* has given him an outstanding position in South African history, so very far away from his birthplace in Taurage, Lithuania.

Some of today's Litvaks in South Africa

Let me introduce you to some of my good friends in South Africa. Most of them are second and third generation Litvaks (plus one single first-generation Litvak). There is also a small colony of Lithuanians who have moved down here the last 20 years. My conclusion is that Lithuania and the Lithuanian spirit is alive and present, even in modern South Africa.

Sam (Shmuel) Keren

Born in Pabrade, Lithuania, in 1934. A holocaust survivor



Sam's life story is worthy of a screenplay. His autobiographical book, *Mulik the Zulik*, says it all. Sam was the only person of his family able to escape the Holocaust in Lithuania. A Polish neighbour family acted as if he was their son and managed in this way to smuggle him out of Lithuania during the war. The rest of his family was executed. After WWII, Sam managed to get to Switzerland, and later to Israel. But it was South Africa that was to become his new homeland, in the 1960s. Here he has done well in business and private. Sam visits Lithuania and his home-place Pabradė every summer since the 1990s. He likes Lithuania, but is still sceptical of Lithuanians and their involvements in the killing of Jews during the Holocaust. I took the above photo of Sam in his office in downtown Cape Town. On the walls hangs many of the memories from his enormously challenging youth. The image he shows me (see above) is of the tombstone he installed on his mother's grave a few years ago in Pabradė village, Lithuania.

Jeanette Jegger

Film producer and director. Preparing a documentary about Litvak Lithuania



Jeanette completed an MA in Film Production at the University of Bristol, UK, in 2000 and, upon returning to South Africa, realised that the only way to make a film was to get out there and do it. And so, with the support of friends and other grassroots filmmakers, she made *Krisimesi*, also exploring

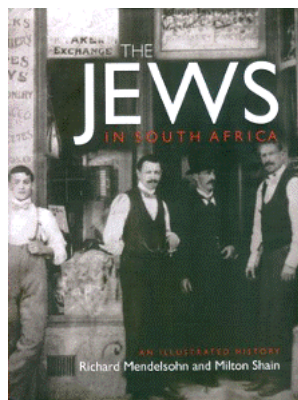
children's unique perspectives, which has, in its different versions, screened at various international film festivals and won several awards. She teaches film and has a production company with Matthys Mocke.

During my meeting with Jeanette she told me much about her so far only visit to Lithuania. She told me about when she came to Kaunas to try to find the house where her ancestors had lived, and how nervous the woman who now lives in the house became when Jeanette knocked on the door, and the fantastic three days that followed when she and the woman, a known Lithuanian artist, afterwards sat down in mutual trust and dialogue.

Professor Milton Shain

Director of the Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Cape Town

Professor Shain excuses himself, mildly and courteously, as he welcomes me in shorts this December day. “It’s really all in the middle of summer here,” he says as he leads me into the facilities he is the head of, here at the Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town. And it is by his crowded desk that I get to know so much more about the amazing relationships between his ancestral homeland, Lithuania, and the intellectual South Africa he represents. So, dear reader, if you want to know more about Jews in South Africa, you should definitely read Milton’s latest book *The Jews in South Africa*.



Richard Freedman

Director of the South African Holocaust Foundation, Cape Town



Richard meets me at the entrance to the Holocaust Centre in Cape Town. I was expecting a man that

would put the most emphasis on the many tragic events of the Holocaust in Lithuania and in Europe in general. Richard is, after all, a Litvak himself. But what he instead emphasizes is that there are an infinite number of comparison points between the Holocaust in Europe and the apartheid in South Africa. “Whites who look down on blacks, Nazis who look down on Jews, people who think themselves better than others, aren’t they all of the same kind?,” he asks.

Kim Feinberg

The ‘Jewish tea mother’ and her relentless fights against HIV-AIDS in South Africa



The Christmas trees are beautifully decorated in the district of Rosebank, Johannesburg, this summer afternoon in December. I am slowly strolling around when I suddenly see an energetic white young lady in the middle of a crowd of black youths. It turns out that she is a genuine Litvak, and that she is the head of the organization *Tomorrow’s Trust*, which in recent years has become a leading institution in the fight against AIDS-HIV in South Africa.

Kim is the one who some years ago walked out of the movie ‘Schindler’s List’ filled with a sense of purpose. “I just thought, ‘I have to do something. I spoke to my rabbi and then started my own oral history project,” she explains.

What an amazing person and determination. Her name is Kim Feinberg, soon 50 years old, still young forever.

Ruth Rabinowitz

The Litvak medical doctor who represents the Zulus in the South African parliament



An unlikely Zulu, Ruth Rabinowitz represents the Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party in the South African parliament!

I meet Ruth in the library of the Johannesburg Grace Hotel to talk about her unusual life and political career. And Ruth tells

an almost incredible story. About how her Litvak family, many years ago, became close friends with the Zulu king and his family. She tells about her medical background, but first of all, she focuses on the circumstances for Africa's largest tribe, the Zulus, that today includes three million people, almost as many as the number of inhabitants in Lithuania, the country her ancestors came from (if to count only the present, local population of Lithuania, of course).

The honorary consuls of Lithuania To South Africa

Three successful attorneys – all Litvaks



Left to Right: Raymond Joffe, Honorary Consul of Lithuania, Johannesburg; Alan B. Schmiedt, Honorary Consul of Lithuania, Cape Town; Ivor Feinberg, Honorary Consul of Lithuania, Pretoria

Here they are. Lithuania's three musketeers in South Africa: Raymond, Alan, and Ivor. Three skilled lawyers, all of them genuine Lithuanian Jews. It is these three who make up the front line in terms of current relations between Lithuania and South Africa. It is these three who help facilitate Lithuanians arriving to Africa's southern areas, and they are also the ones constantly informing South Africans about the wonderful country called Lithuania.

They were, some years ago, recommended as consuls by the Lithuanian ambassadors to Israel. Israel? Yes, believe it or not, but the fact is that Lithuania does not have its own ambassador to the country having the largest pocket of Litvaks in the world. The Lithuanian ambassador in Tel Aviv must

serve Israel, Cyprus, and South Africa altogether. But then, in turn, the ambassadors we've had so far have done a good job. It was, as an exemplary example, the very capable Lithuanian ambassadors Romas Misiunas and Alfonsas Eidintas who recommended these three smart guys we today are naming Lithuania's three musketeers in South Africa.

I have had the pleasure of meeting all three of them several times, both here in Lithuania and in South Africa, and I know that they all burn for stronger ties between our two countries. But I've also heard them talk about how sad it was to experience the Lithuanian Constitutional Court rule that Lithuanian citizens around the globe could no longer be registered as Dual Citizens. They feel, as I do, that it is terribly sad to see nowadays Lithuania burn bridges instead of seeking renewed contact with its fantastic diasporas around the world. In this aspect, sadly, every day that passes is a day lost.

Rietavas and the Kaplan family

The impressions from the Jewish Museum in Cape Town were as glued to my memory. So in August last year [2009], I decided to visit Rietavas, the village the Kaplan family emigrated from almost 100 years ago. I had expected to find proud traces of the family; a museum, a memorial, or maybe even something more sophisticated. But I got terribly disappointed. What struck me, then and there, was that this was almost like coming to Salzburg without seeing Mozart mentioned at all.

What a shame. I took some pictures and went from there with bowed head. Mendel Kaplan, by far the wealthiest and certainly one of the wisest Lithuanians ever, was not mentioned with a single word or symbol in the very home village of his own family.



Rietavas at the time Mendel Kaplan's parents lived here (around 1900).



Old wooden buildings in today's Rietavas (August 2009)

When I came back to Vilnius from Rietavas that August evening, I sent my photos and comments to Dr. Kaplan in Cape Town. This is what he replied a few days later:

Dear Mr Myhre,

I thank you for your correspondence on Riteve and your complimentary remarks about our family.

When President Landsbergis was surrounded by tanks and holed up in parliament I visited him with my wife and friends in the building and established a very warm relationship. I hope he is still well and I remember the fact that his wife was responsible for saving a number of Jews during the Second World War.

Yours sincerely, Mendel Kaplan

Mendel Kaplan (1936-2009) died of a stroke three months after he sent me the above message. In the obituaries that followed, leading Jews stated that Dr. Kaplan was a man who could be termed "the father of the South African Jewish community." They

wrote that he had served as a leadership capacity in several Jewish organisations, that he was involved in the establishment of the South African Jewish Museum in Cape Town and was also one of the first founders of the City of David Archaeological Excavation Project in Israel.

Born in Cape Town, Dr. Kaplan had qualified both in law and with an MBA, survived by his wife, four children and grandchildren.

I never met Mendel Kaplan face to face, but I was told that there had been much for him to celebrate in his 73 years of living: The steel company Cape Gate had been transformed from a modest business selling products like wrought iron and garden benches into a vast conglomerate producing its own steel; becoming one of the largest privately owned companies in South Africa, an expansion largely orchestrated by Mendel and his brother Robert.



Dr. Mendel Kaplan, a world leading Litvak philanthropist, lawyer, writer and business magnate passed away just four months ago. His ties to and care for Lithuania were strong and impressive. Isn't it time for

Lithuania to offer a proper response?

Lithuanians settling in South Africa after 1990

If to compare with the more than 70,000 Litvaks living in South Africa, the numbers of Lithuanian expatriates of today are very modest. But there are a few of them, and I want to tell you all a little bit about Jadvyga Kazlauskiene from the village Vievis, located between Vilnius and Kaunas. Jadvyga emigrated to South Africa mid 1990s with her daughter, now 20 years old. She started her career down under as a waitress in a Johannesburg restaurant, but began gradually to climb up the career ladder after she came in contact with the property industry in South Africa's main city and most densely populated area.



Jadvyga Kazlauskiene and Wendy Machanik

My personal impression is that Jadvyga's success started the day she met her current manager and boss, property queen Wendy Machanik (seen with Jadvyga in the above photo). Wendy is an amazing Litvak with phenomenal successes within real estate brokerage in the Johannesburg area for many years.

Last time I saw Jadvyga and her family was at her home village Vievis, here in Lithuania, on a very cold winter day just a few weeks ago, when they all came here to bring their beloved mother to her final rest. The contrast between warm Johannesburg and freezing Lithuania must have been enormous. When the funeral was over, I thought that now one more link between Lithuania and South Africa had been cut. How often will Jadvyga come back up north now when her mother is gone?

But maybe there is something we can do to keep the ties and connections alive, all of us who love both Lithuania and South Africa? Please feel free to write me with your suggestions and ideas.



Aage Myhre, is the Editor-in-Chief of the VilNews e-magazine, a leading online source for Lithuania-related news, opinion blogs, and information. He can be reached at editor@vilnews.com.

This article was originally published on the VilNews web site in 2011, and is republished here with permission. The VilNews web site can be found at:

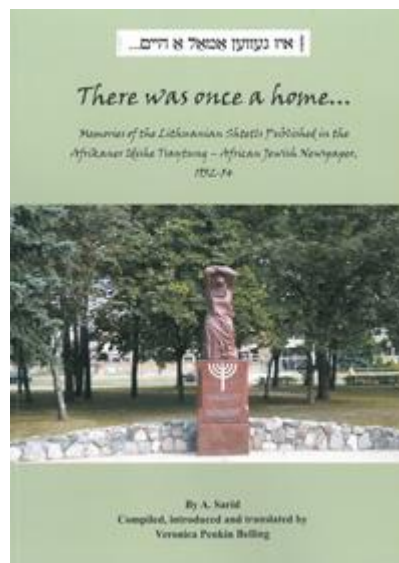
<http://vilnews.com/>

New Book

THERE WAS ONCE A HOME ***Memories of the Lithuanian*** ***shtetls published in the*** ***Afrikaner Idishe Tsaytung –*** ***African Jewish Newspaper,*** **1952-54**

by A. Sarid

Compiled, introduced, and translated
by Veronica Belling



Published in 2015 by the Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, Cape Town. Available from the South African Jewish Museum shop, via e-mail at:

info@sajewishmuseum.co.za

A description of the book from Moira Schneider's article in the *South African Jewish Report* on June 10, 2015, is as follows:

A world lost forever is memorialised in "There was once a home", an anthology of memories of life in the Lithuanian shtetls, that first appeared in the Johannesburg Yiddish newspaper, Afrikaner Idishe Tsaytung (African Jewish Newspaper).

Published as a series of articles between 1952 and 1954, in a first for this genre, the stories and anecdotes have been translated by Dr Veronica Belling and serve as a

poignant memento for the South African Jewish community of its Lithuanian roots.

Belling, who was the Jewish Studies librarian at the Kaplan Centre for 31 years, studied Yiddish on the Uriel Weinreich Yiddish Summer Programme under the auspices of the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research and Columbia University in New York.

The book affords one glimpses of the religious and secular life in the 25 featured shtetls, including Shidlova, Rakishok, Oran, Poshelat, Ponevezh, Kupishok, and Birzh, among others. Descriptions relate to the period 1918 – 1940 and are illustrated with photographs that, together with information, were sent in by readers of the newspaper.

Belling has also included photographs of Jewish sites and memorials that she took on a tour to Lithuania in 2013 that included 13 of the 25 towns mentioned in the book.

It is, however, the inclusion in all too many captions of the simple words, “The majority in the photo perished” that drives home the reality of the destruction of 90 per cent of the 220 000-strong Jewish community during the Holocaust, more than any elaborate descriptions could.

The main focus of the articles is on the people who lived in the shtetls. Also reflected is the richness of communal and cultural life, with Zionist societies constituting the largest political grouping.

One reads of the “first lady” of Kurshan, a Mrs Gelbart, whose husband was the director of the Jewish People’s Bank. “She was a milliner by trade, who was involved in fashion so that the whole atmosphere in her home was very modern, very European.

“Moreover, Mrs Gelbart was also an exceptionally beautiful woman with excellent taste and true European manners. The secular intelligentsia of the shtetl used to gather in and around the Gelbart home, because in the same way that the rabbi’s home was an expression of religious Zionism, the Gelbart’s home was a synonym for Jewish worldliness.

“Both small worlds, however, lived in harmony in the small world of the shtetl in true friendship and deep mutual respect.”

While the support from Africa was a great help to many families in Lithuania in the years leading up to the Second World War, this was particularly the case for the Jews from Krakinova, where the majority survived thanks to this help.

“The Jews of Africa exported pounds to the shtetl, but in turn they imported Jewish spirituality, warm bonds, and a great deal of love that was conveyed in heart-warming letters and close family ties,” writes A Sarid, the initiator of the project and author of the majority of the articles, who lived in Lithuania until approximately 1942 before emigrating to this country.

In the tiny shtetl of Vashki lived a Dr Ganandski who “would travel for miles to attend to a wretched peasant couple, in rain or snow... The doctor doesn’t ask for money. The peasants know that he will accept whatever they are able to pay him.”

For his trouble, the beloved doctor lies buried in a mass grave along with all the Jews of Vashki, murdered by the very people he had helped.

Editor’s Note: A longer article about this book, written by the author, Veronica Belling, can be found in the Chanukah 2015 issue of Jewish Affairs. See the article below on page 58 for more details about this special issue of the newspaper.

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Veronica Belling was the Jewish Studies Librarian at the University of Cape Town Libraries and the Isaac & Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies & Research for 31 years, 1981-2012. Currently an Honorary Research Associate, all her research (Masters and Ph.D) incorporated Yiddish sources, her passion. Her publications have addressed South African Jewish bibliography, Yiddish theatre, South African Jewish women, the Jews of Johannesburg, satirical columns in Yiddish in the newspaper, Der Afrikaner, 1911-1913, a centennial history of the Oranjia Jewish Child and Youth Centre (1911-2011), and most recently memories of the Lithuanian shtetls published in the Afrikaner Idishe Tsaytung in 1952. Her bio page can be found at:

https://limmudcapetown2015.sched.org/speaker/veronica_belling.1u0s78ex

Moira Schneider is a journalist at the South African Jewish Report. The Jewish Report home page can be found at: <http://www.sajr.co.za/>

Note that the SA-SIG Board has no financial interest in this book.

A TRAGIC ROMANCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: FROM ONE PHOTO TO JOURNEYS OF RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

Eli Rabinowitz

All I ever have known is that I am named after my great uncle Moshe; Moshe died in a motor accident, six weeks before his planned wedding; the date of his death is unknown, but is sometime between the late 1920s and early 1930s. Then, a photo given to me in 2011 changes everything!

I first become interested in genealogy in 1992 when a cousin jots down, on a piece of scrap paper, the seven names of my paternal ancestors. The result is the discovery of my connection to the Katzellenbogen rabbinic family tree through my great-great-grandmother, who appears in Neil Rosenstein's book, *The Unbroken Chain*.

My second boost comes in 2001 when a Hungarian politician makes contact via Saul Issroff in London, resulting in some unusual revelations on my maternal side, including two secular Muslim second cousins, who are actually halachically Jewish, living in Istanbul.

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In 1887 my *zaida*, Nachum Mendel, is born in Orla, a small village in Northeast Poland near Bialystok in the Grodno district. His original family name is Skarasjewski, but he changes it to Rabinowitz to escape being drafted into the Russian army. In the early 1900s my *zaida* leaves for Brest-Litovsk where he studies at the Brisk Yeshiva under Rav Chaim Soloveichik. Nachum Mendel then travels to Palestine, marries Chana Cheshe Miriam Herison in 1905 and migrates in 1911 to Volksrust, a *dorp* (small town) in Transvaal, South Africa. My dad, Zvi Hersh (Harry), is the first of his family to be born in South Africa in 1914. His two older brothers were born in Palestine. By 1919 the family has moved to Cape Town, where his two sisters Rachel

and Sarah, are born, with Sarah, the youngest, in 1927. The family is joined by Nachum Mendel's younger brother, Moshe Zalman in 1921, and later by his sister, Chana.

On 8 November 2010, a Polish researcher, Wojciech Konończuk of Warsaw, makes contact after seeing my post on JewishGen's Family Finder. His family also comes from Orla, the same *shtetl* as my grandfather. Although not Jewish himself, Wojciech is writing a book on the Jews of Orla. There is no Yizkor book for Orla, so I volunteer to write and manage the Orla KehilaLink page for JewishGen, the first of my 57 pages! In May 2011 I visit Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and Turkey, all for the first time.

On my way home to Australia, I visit my last surviving aunt, Sarah Stepansky, in Jerusalem. Sarah presents me with the following photo as a "reward" for my enthusiastic interest in our family history. I was the first of my family to make the journey back to Orla in over 90 years. The school photo contains the following information: Orla Folk School II in Yiddish on the front, and 1920 written on the back. My great uncle, Moshe, is identified by my aunt Sarah as the teacher in the bottom left of the photo.



Photo of Orla School from Sarah Stepansky

I scan the photo on 7 June 2011 and email it to my family as well as to Wojciech. On 25 July 2011, Wojciech emails me that he has received a photo from "Mary", a researcher in London. Mary is researching the Lacki and Lichtzier families, also from Orla. She sends him the photo as it has Orla on a banner in the photo. Mary doesn't know the names of the people in the photo but on seeing it, Wojciech immediately recognizes the teacher in the top left as the same person in the photo I had sent him in June, namely Moshe Rabinowitz.



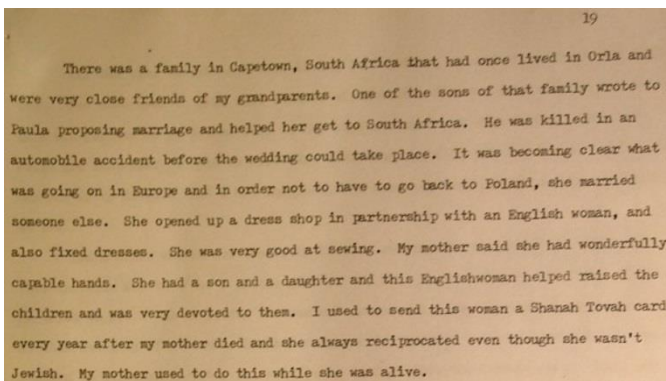
Photo of Orla School from Wojciech Konończuk

The puzzle starts falling into place when Wojciech tells Mary that the man's name is Moshe Rabinowitz. She responds that a Moshe Rabinowitz from Orla was engaged in South Africa to Paula (Polly) Lichtzier from Orla, a member of the families she is researching. Mary adds that Moshe was killed in a motor accident six weeks before his planned wedding to Paula.

On making contact with Mary, she provides me with the name and address of Ray Hengy who lives in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany. Ray is the daughter of Paula and Joe Pinn, the man whom Paula subsequently married, sometime after the tragedy. Ray also sends me a series of photos including several of Paula with her late fiancé's family. It is somewhat eerie receiving photos of my family from a stranger in Germany!

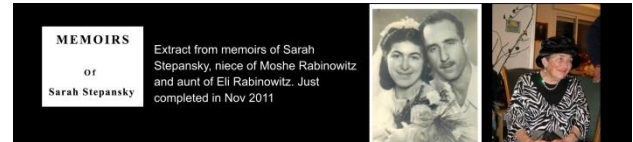
Ray provides me with more details of what she knows about Paula and Moshe. Apparently, her mother maintained a close relationship with Moshe's family in Cape Town after Moshe's tragic death.

Hungry for more details, I am able to access Paula's late cousin, Sylvia Kaspin's memoir.



Excerpt from Sylvia Kaspin's memoir

By now, my aunt Sarah has also published her own memoir:



About a year after Avraham Yaakov left Orla to go to Israel, his son, Moshe, went to South Africa. He had already studied English by himself in Russia, so the language was not a problem for him. He studied bookkeeping at the University of Cape Town in three months and became an accountant and was also a teacher. He had been engaged to be married to Paula (Polly) Lichtzier, but, tragically, six weeks prior to his marriage he was killed in an accident. I remained very close to his fiancée. When I was getting married, it was Polly who sewed my wedding gown, sight unseen, to a perfect fit, and sent it with my parents, who came from South Africa to the kibbutz for my wedding.

Excerpt from Sarah Stepansky's memoir

In May 2012, I meet Ray and her husband Heinrich in Warsaw, and together with Wojciech and my wife Jill, we travel to Treblinka, Orla, and Bialystok.

Ray shows me something she is wearing. It is the engagement ring that Moshe had given to her mother. Ray wears it on special occasions. The ring was treasured by her mother throughout her life as the physical memory of Moshe.



Engagement ring given to Paula by Moshe. Eli and Ray Hengy in Orla

In May 2013 I visit Ray and Heinrich in Freiburg. We search for more photos of Moshe and Paula and we find a framed photo of them on the wall.

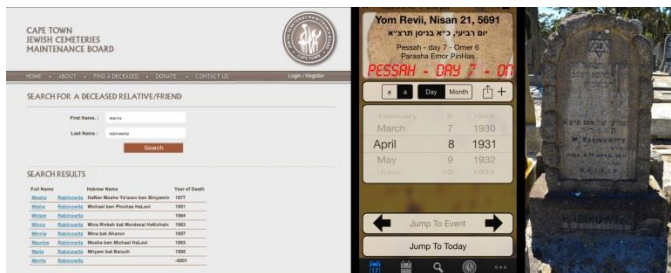
However, I am still missing dates and details of the tragic circumstances of Moshe's death.

I ask two of my cousins whether they have any further information. They give me one clue: they remember that their dad, my uncle Isaac, recited the mourner's *kaddish* for his uncle Moshe each year, on the second last day of Pesach.

I check the website of the Cape Town Jewish Cemeteries Maintenance Board for any deaths or

burials in Cape Town with the name Moshe Rabinowitz or similar. I find one Morris Rabinowitz, but for some strange reason, the date is shown as “-0001”. The information I was hoping for, was missing.

I call the Chevra Kadisha in Cape Town, and am given the date of 4/9/31 (4 September 1931), which is nowhere near *Pesach* in the Hebrew calendar. I check my iPhone’s Pocket *Luach*, transpose the date to 9/4/31 and voila! It is the 2nd last day of *Pesach* in 1931!



Morris Rabinowitz information from Chevra Kadisha

I get back to the Chevra Kadisha. They find their error, update their database and give me the correct details and the location of the *matseva* (tombstone): Woltemade / Maitland Cemetery (Gate 8). Those who know Cape Town will tell you that it is not safe to visit this cemetery alone. The Chevra Kadisha assigns a security guard, affectionately called Dovid Ben Yok, to accompany me. I take photos and have the inscription interpreted by my cousin, Hadara Boczko, daughter of Sarah.

Now armed with a date, I ask Jocelyn and Tammy at the Gitlin Library in Cape Town to be on the lookout for any articles around this date. This library has an excellent collection of old Jewish newspapers bound in folders. Jocelyn finds a report in the SA Jewish Chronicle from April 1931.

Condolences.

We regret to announce the death, as a result of a motor accident early on Wednesday morning, of Mr. M. Rabinowitz, of Wynberg. He was a brother of Rev. Rabinowitz, of Cape Town, and of Miss Rabinowitz, teacher at the New Kindergarten just opened at the Zionist Hall.

Mr. Rabinowitz was a member of the teaching staff of the Wynberg Hebrew School and was highly respected by all who knew him. He will be sadly missed and we cannot all but regret the untimely end to a promising career.

The funeral took place on Thursday afternoon from the Wynberg Synagogue and was attended by a representative gathering of friends and colleagues.

Our deepest sympathies are extended to his family, as well as to his fiancée.

Condolence notice from SA Jewish Chronicle, April 1931

Jocelyn and Tammy suggest I visit the National Library to check the microfilms of the two local newspapers, The Argus and The Cape Times. I find the accident reports. I also locate the Death Notice and other legal documents at the Western Cape Archives in Roeland Street.

FATAL CAR CRASH AT SALT RIVER

YOUNG TEACHER KILLED

A young Jewish teacher of Hebrew named Rabinowitz, living at Coghlin's Hotel, Wynberg, was fatally injured in a collision between a motor-car and a bus at Salt River at 12.40 a.m. to-day.

He was a passenger in a motor-car driven by Mr. Katz, manager of the Mowbray Hotel, Mowbray. The collision took place at the corner of Durham-avenue and the Main-road, Salt River. The motor-car struck the rear end of the bus, which had turned down Durham-avenue on the way to a garage.

The car swerved across the road and mounted the pavement on the sea side of the road. The car was badly smashed. When Rabinowitz was extricated he was taken to the Woodstock Hospital, where he died a few minutes after admission.

The dead man was a brother of the Rev. Mr. Rabinowitz, a Jewish minister of Constitution-street. He was engaged to be married to a young woman who recently arrived from Palestine.

DEATH NOTICE.

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

Present to the Registrar in accordance with "The Administration of Estates Act 1913"

1. Name of deceased: *Morris Rabinowitz*

2. Birthplace and Nationality of the deceased: *Orthodox Jewish, Cape Town, South Africa*

3. Name and Address of the Executor: *Mr. M. Rabinowitz, 101, Wynberg, Cape Town*

4. Age of the deceased: *34*

5. Occupation to last of the deceased: *Hebrew teacher*

6. Name of the medical practitioner: *Dr. J. J. van der Merwe*

7. Name of the medical practitioner: *Dr. J. J. van der Merwe*

8. Name of the medical practitioner: *Dr. J. J. van der Merwe*

9. Name of the medical practitioner: *Dr. J. J. van der Merwe*

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20. Name of the medical practitioner: *Dr. J. J. van der Merwe*

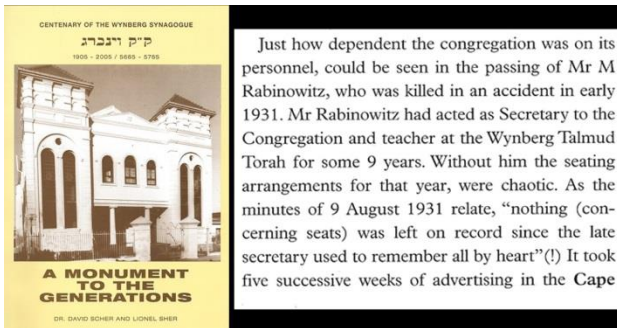
Newspaper article about Morris Rabinowitz' accident, and his Death Notice

I am now in possession of other vital details that allow me to follow up. I visit the scene of the accident, 82 years after it happened!

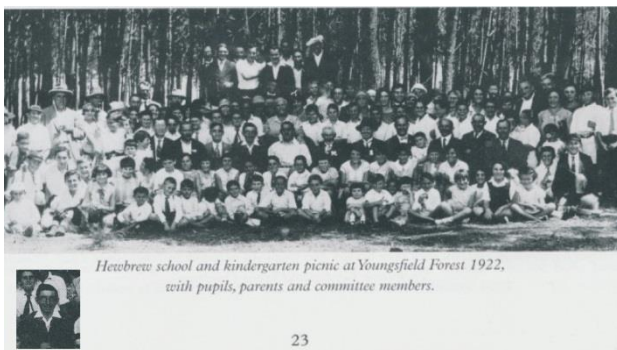


Accident scene

Knowing that Moshe was a teacher at the Wynberg Talmud Torah at the Wynberg Synagogue, I find out that Moshe was also the secretary at the *shul*. An excellent source is this book written by historian Dr David Scher and Lionel Sher, a copy which can be found in the library at the Kaplan Centre at the University of Cape Town.



Excerpt from book by David and Lionel Sher



Hebrew School Picnic, 1922

Wanting to research further and keen to connect with descendants who may have more to contribute, I meet Paula's extended family in New York, Toronto, and Israel: Robby Gordon, Glenna Gordon, Rose Kamnitzer, and Michal Itzhaki.



Eli with Paula's extended family

Rose Kamnitzer in Toronto has a collection of family photos from her parents Berl Lacki and Bella Lichtzier, Paula's sister. Berl was also Moshe's good friend. They corresponded by postcard after Moshe arrived in South Africa in 1920 until Berl arrived in 1929. These photos in Rose's collection were taken in Poland and South Africa and are special in many respects.



Rose Kamnitzer's images

The following are the only photos of Moshe and Paula taken together, in Cape Town.



Pictures of Moshe and Paula together



Moshe and his family Left to right: Moshe with his nephew Isaac, with nieces Sarah and Paula, an unknown man, and Moshe's friend, Berl Lacki

My journey of discovery, starting with a photo given to me in Israel, has taken me to Germany, South Africa, Poland, the USA, the UK, Canada, and back to Israel, with updates to my research findings in each destination!

It has been the subject of my lecture at the IAJGS international conference in Jerusalem in July 2015, and at subsequent venues and presentations in South Africa and Australia.

But my search isn't complete.

The details of the driver of the vehicle in the fatal accident are still of interest. The newspaper cutting tells us that Mr M Katz was the manager of the Mowbray Hotel. I've tried accessing the archives of the company that once owned the hotel, the bus company most likely involved in the accident, and have consulted various Cape Town historians. So far, I have struck out on these.

I am still hopeful that more leads will come my way. And so ... to be continued ... !

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Eli Rabinowitz, a former South African, born in Cape Town and who has lived in Perth, Australia, since 1986, is involved in a wide range of Jewish community activities, including filming events, genealogical research, and bringing the Memories of Muizenberg Exhibition to Australia, now on its way to Toronto and North America. He gives talks

and presentations on his worldwide Jewish heritage travel and photography. He has generated a number of KehilaLinks pages for the JewishGen web site, which include 23 sites in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Germany, China, South Africa, and Australia. He maintains a regular blog at: <http://elirab.me>. His website at <http://elirab.com> invites you into his world of digital storytelling.

Additional information relating to the story of Moshe and Paula can be viewed at the following links:

Blog:

<http://elirab.me/remembering-uncle-moisey/>

Web site:

http://elirab.com/Moshe_%26_Paula_Online.html#5

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/mosheandpaula/>

Litvak Portal:

<http://elirab.me/litvak-portal/moshe-paula/>

DE AAR: ABOUT A SMALL SOUTH AFRICAN TOWN

Ann Rabinowitz

This morning, I noticed that Eli Rabinowitz (no relation) is planning to create a new KehilaLinks site for the South African town of De Aar and was asking for help in obtaining information on it.

I have a great fondness for the town and have done much research on it over the years. It began with my research on the Hillman family and their relationship to the Friedlander family who they married into.

What follows is a capsule history of the town which I put together on July 19, 2002.

The South African Cape landscape was broad and desolate in some areas prior to the arrival of the white settlers. The plains portion that reached through the spine of Africa to Ethiopia thrived with human life from prehistoric times. This was particularly the case of the De Aar area that was

nestled in the high dry Karoo or “thirstland” as it was known by the Hottentots or Khoisan Bushmen.

Originally, the Karoo was a great prehistoric inland sea and the soil provided the later white inhabitants with the wherewithal to engage in profitable farming. The scrub brush vegetation of the Karoo was perfect also for the development of the merino sheep industry that became a staple of the area. In addition, the arid climate attracted many for its salubrious effect on curing consumption or tuberculosis.

In 1837, the first farms were allotted to the *trekboers* or Afrikaner farmers. In 1839, the Afrikaner farmer “Swart” Jan Vermeulen took possession of the “De Aar” farm in exchange for a span of oxen and a wagon. The farm became known as “De Aar” or the “artery” from the underground waterway that flowed beneath the property.

On another continent and in a country faraway, a family was living and dreaming of new opportunities. This was the Friedlander family and their relatives, the Hillmans, who lived in Sabile and Riga, Latvia. In 1846, Wulf Friedlander, the son of Hirsh ben Hessel Friedlander and Zelda Hillman, was born in Sabile. His younger brother Isaac Friedlander was born in 1858. By 1878, the two young men decided to leave Latvia and arrived in Cape Town, South Africa.

Their Hillman relatives also came to South Africa and made their mark in the Johannesburg area.

Taking advantage of what they thought would be good commercial opportunities in the Western Cape, Isaac and Wulf Friedlander obtained an ox wagon, and in 1879 travelled to the De Aar District and settled in Rhenosterfontein. There they opened a trading station with a small hotel adjacent to it. They did well in the quickly developing area. Up to that time, there were few Jewish families other than the Friedlanders in the area, although there was a Goldscheider who was a trader who lived in the area. There was virtually no anti-Semitism among the community.

The government, noting the increasing population in the Western Cape and the need for transportation which would connect the area with the already existing large cities in the Cape Province and beyond, passed an Act of Parliament in 1881 to construct a railway line from Beaufort West to Hopetown. A junction was fixed with the Colesburg

extension at a point near the 180th mile from Beaufort West. This junction was known initially as “Number Six”, then “Von Brandis Junction”, and finally “Brounger Junction” after the General Manager of the railways.

This major public works project attracted 1,400 natives, Zulus, and Fingoes, who pitched their tents on the De Aar farm that was in the junction area. The natives began working on the railroad construction and made great progress. However, in 1883, certain disputes arose between approximately 800 Zulu and Fingo railroad workers and they clashed repeatedly. The final “battle” which took place on Christmas Day, December 25, 1883, resulted in 60 dead and many more wounded. A large body of Cape Mounted Rifles under Colonel Southey that became known as the “De Aar Expedition” arrived to successfully bring order to the situation.

Eventually, the railway construction was completed in March, 1884, and the first train steamed into De Aar Station, the new name for what had been called “Brounger Junction”. Seeing the opportunities afforded by the new railroad station, Isaac and Wulf Friedlander decided to purchase the “De Aar” farm in 1899. The farm’s price of BPS 11,000 was a far cry from the BPS 400 amount that the prior owner had paid for the property from the original owner, “Swart” Jan Vermeulen. The Rt. Hon. G. Brand van Zyl (later Governor-General of the Union), De Aar’s first lawyer, signed the deed of sale.

At this point, October 11, 1899, the Boer War began, a war that was to have such a traumatic effect on not only the entire country, but the De Aar area as well. The hostilities stretched through to May 30, 1902. As a major junction on the rail line, De Aar became an important focus during the war as a well-known troop depot and hospital facility and several key events took place there.

On May 30, 1899, Sir Alfred Milner took a special train to De Aar to have a secret meeting with H.C. Hull, an *Uitlander* solicitor who was Percy Fitzpatrick’s closest political ally from the Rand. British troops were deployed to De Aar on October 7, 1899, to hold the railway junction for Sir Redvers Buller, the British Commander-in-Chief, and his Army Corps on their way to Bloemfontein. Following that, in November, 1899, Colonel Herbert Miles, Assistant Adjutant-General, took command of De Aar, so that Lord Paul Sanford Methuen’s relief expedition could be mounted.

The official British mobile headquarters train was sent to De Aar on February 6, 1900, but without Field Marshall Lord Frederick Roberts or his Chief-of-Staff, Field Marshall Lord Horatio Kitchener, on board due to fears of sabotage. On February 9, 1900, Field Marshall Lord Frederick Roberts manage to arrive in the area via alternative means and visited De Aar Army Hospital. This was one of the large Army facilities that gained such a terrible reputation during the War. It was adjudged in poor condition as were many of the other medical facilities in the region. They were hotbeds of disease and infection that had been given little money, supplies or attention by the British.

In 1902, at the end of the Boer War, the Friedlander brothers decided to convert the De Aar farm to commercial use so that a town could be built. They surveyed the De Aar farm and thereupon divided it into building plots that were sold at public auction.



Photo of Wulf Friedlander's family, when he took his children from his first wife, Jenny, to see her family in 1904. His second wife, Johanna, is included in this picture as well. (Photo from Ann Rabinowitz)

According to Mrs. Ethel Herrmann, daughter of Isaac Friedlander and wife of Dr. Louis Herrmann, the well-known SA Jewish writer and historian, her father and his brother Wulf "... granted building sites for a synagogue, churches of all denominations, schools, a hospital, a town hall and even land for sports fields and commonages."

In 1903, the Municipality of De Aar was created under the control of a Board, and in 1904, Cronwright Schreiner, the husband of writer Olive Schreiner, became Town Clerk and served until 1912 when Hendrik Hanekom took his place.

Hanekom later became a famous Afrikaner actor. In 1907, De Aar's first Mayor, Dr. Harry Baker, was appointed.



Wulf Friedlander, his second wife, Johanna, and his children from his first and second wife in 1912. (Photo from Ann Rabinowitz)

The town continued to thrive and on Thursday, March 8, 1918, the new De Aar Synagogue was opened. The event was officiated by Chief Rabbi Dr. J.L. Landau who came from Cape Town, and was hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Friedlander. A treasured Friedlander family heirloom, presented to Isaac Friedlander as Life President of the Congregation, is the silver trowel that was used at the laying of the foundation stone for the synagogue in 1917.

Individuals who participated in the ceremonies included Leo Baumgarten, Samuel Blumberg, Rev. Israel Hirsch Borkowf, Feodora Friedlander, Isaac Friedlander, Mrs. Isaac Friedlander, Hessel Friedlander, Wulf Friedlander, I. Goldberg, B. Goldstuck, M. Hoffman, I. Jacobsohn, B. Jassenowsky, S. Joffe, A.M. Lowenberg, W. Lowenberg, M. Rudansky, P. Salkinder, and J. Thal.

The founders of De Aar lived long and fruitful lives and did much to create a continuing presence in the area. In 1925 Isaac Friedlander died in Cape Town and was buried in De Aar and his brother Wulf died in 1928.

Present day attractions in De Aar include a Garden of Remembrance honoring the British soldiers killed in the Boer War; the house that is presently being utilized as a restaurant where famous South African writer and feminist, Olive Schreiner, lived for eight years with her husband Cronwright Schreiner, who

was the De Aar Town Clerk; and Khoisan rock engravings which are to be found on the Nootgedacht and Brandfontein farms.



De Aar Timeline

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|---------------|--|
| Pre-1837 | Bushmen inhabited De Aar district. |
| 1837 | First farms allotted to <i>trekboers</i> . |
| 1839 | “Swart” Jan Vermeulen took possession of the farm De Aar. |
| 1846 | Wulf Friedlander born in Sabile, Latvia, son of Hirsh Friedlander and Zelda Hillman. |
| 1858 | Isaac Friedlander born in Sabile, Latvia, son of Hirsh Friedlander and Zelda Hillman. |
| 1878 | Isaac and Wulf Friedlander arrived in Cape Town from Sabile, Latvia. |
| 1879 | Isaac and Wulf Friedlander arrived in De Aar district by ox wagon from the Cape and settled in Rhenosterfontein where they opened a trading station and small hotel next door. |
| 1881 | Act of Parliament, authorizing construction of a railway line from Beaufort West to Hopetown. Fixed junction with the Colesburg extension at a point near the 180th mile from Beaufort West. 1,400 natives, Zulus and Fingoes, pitched their tents on the De Aar farm. |
| 1883 | Clash between approximately 800 Zulu and Fingo workers on railroad occurred on December 25th with resulting 60 dead and many more wounded. Large body of Cape Mounted Rifles under Colonel Southey arrived as “De Aar Expedition”. |
| 1884 March | first train steamed into De Aar Station then known as Brounger Junction. Previously known as Von Brandis Junction and before that as Number Six. |

| | |
|--|---|
| 1899 | Isaac and Wulf Friedlander purchased De Aar Farm for BPS 11,000. Previously, it had changed hands for BPS400 and prior to that for a span of oxen and a wagon. Rt. Hon. G. Brand van Zyl (later Governor-General of the Union), the town’s first lawyer, signed the deed of sale. |
| 1899, October 11 – 1902, May 30 | Boer War Earl of Athlone (Prince Alexander of Teck), Sir Arthur Wauchope. |
| 1899, May 30 | Sir Alfred Milner took a special train to De Aar to have a secret meeting with H.C. Hull, an Uitlander solicitor who was Percy Fitzpatrick’s closest political ally from the Rand. |
| 1899, October 7 | Imperial troops deployed to De Aar to hold the railway junction for Sir Redvers Buller, British Commander-in-Chief, and his Army Corps on their way to Bloemfontein. |
| 1899, November | Colonel Herbert Miles, Assistant Adjutant-General took command of De Aar, where Lord Paul Sanford Methuen’s relief expedition was mounted. |
| 1900, February 6 | The official mobile headquarters train, was sent to De Aar, but without Field Marshall Lord Frederick Roberts or his Chief-of-Staff, Field Marshall Lord Horatio Kitchener, on board due to fears of sabotage. |
| 1900, February 9 | Field Marshall Lord Frederick Roberts visited De Aar Army Hospital which was in a poor condition. |
| 1902 | De Aar Farm surveyed and Friedlanders divided it into building plots which were sold at public auction. Several Jewish families in the area at the time including Goldscheider, a trader. |
| 1903 | Municipality of De Aar created under control of a board. |
| 1904 | Cronwright Schreiner was town clerk of De Aar from 1904-1912. |
| 1907 | De Aar’s first Mayor, Dr. Harry Baker, was appointed. |

| | |
|------|--|
| 1912 | Hendrik Hanekom became De Aar town clerk. Later became a famous Afrikaner actor. |
| 1918 | Opening of new De Aar Synagogue, on Thursday, March 8, 1918, officiated by Chief Rabbi Dr. J.L. Landau. Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Friedlander, hosts. |
| 1925 | Isaac Friedlander died in Cape Town and was buried in De Aar. |
| 1928 | Wulf Friedlander died. |



Ann Rabinowitz is a long-time contributor to SA-SIG, both to the web site resources as well as to the Newsletter. She is also a frequent contributor to several other Jewish genealogy blogs and web sites. Her JewishGen profile can be found at:

<http://jewishgen.blogspot.com/2009/12/volunteer-profile-ann-rabinowitz.html>

Ann can be reached at: arabinow@bellsouth.net

Editor's Note: Some other De Aar links of interest are as follows:

- *JewishGen KehilaLinks page*
http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/de_aar
- *El Rabinowitz blog posting*
<http://elirab.me/genealogy/researching-de-aar-it-is-a-small-world-after-all/>
- *SA-SIG web site community page*
http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/de_aar/SASIG.html

JEWISH ORIGINS OF SOME DURBAN STREET NAMES

Colin Plen

It might seem haphazard, but there is a reason for the naming of every street in a municipality. It might be that the councillors of a city decided to use their own names when naming the streets in their town or a new suburb in an attempt at immortality, or there might be a historic reason for a Council wanting to bestow immortality on a chosen leader of men.

One land-development company which has set up townships that became suburbs throughout South Africa, has a policy that their directors name the streets according to the names of family members. This might be the reason why Glenashley has road names like Adrienne, Ashley, Daphne, and Lydia, and other suburbs in Johannesburg and Cape Town which are Glen- somethings, also have similar names.

Some years ago the Durban Council decided to change the names of some roads in the town and regardless of criticism they went ahead and renamed some roads making it difficult for old-timers of Natal to find their way around. But in doing this they chose two Jewish names. Part of the M4 freeway is named for Ruth First, the wife of Joe Slovo, both staunch members of the Struggle for a liberal South Africa. The name *First* is a Jewish name having been used in Lithuania meaning a Prince. The name *Slovo* is also a Lithuanian name meaning either, depending on which part of the Russian Empire his forefathers came from, a slave or glory. Joe Slovo Road is in KwaNdengezi as well as in the city.

Near the Davenport Shopping Centre, Mutual Square there is a Cohen Road. I have been trying for many years to ascertain who the Cohen was, but all I can be sure of is that the Cohen had Jewish forebears.

In the Point suburb (it says in my Atlas) Sol Harris Crescent is a major landmark. It runs behind the Elangeni and the Maharani Hotels.

There is a Yiddish word *stiebel* which means a small or makeshift place of prayer. There is a Stiebel Street near the Blue Lagoon, and also one in Nzumbe on the South Coast. For all sorts of reasons I can understand that it is unlikely to have been named after a Jew but I must point out that in Sandton there is a Chabad Street!

In Bloemfontein there was a family with the name of Baumann and they were Jewish. But I have been assured that the Baumanns of Durban, who have a road named after them, alongside Beth Shalom on the Berea, were not Jewish. But both families were bakers. Bauman means a neighbour, like our South African *buurman*.

When you travel down the South Coast after Umbogintwini there is a turnoff for the Moss Kollnick Drive. Moss Kollnick was an engineer.

While there is a dearth of Jewish names in Durban, I was surprised to find that on the lower South Coast, there are no less than six roads with Jewish names. Aside from the Stiebel mentioned above in Nzumbe, there is a Tanchum Road in Shelley Beach, Sir Ernest Oppenheimer road in Palm Beach; there is a Kahn Road and a Feinberg Road in Margate. Interestingly, I have made contact with Frederic Kahn in London, whose mother was a Feinberg, and he has no knowledge of any Kahn or Feinberg relatives who lived in Margate.

We must include roads which have a Jewish history, even though they might not be named after Jews. Around 1902 my grandfather M. J. Plen and his brother C. Z. Plen, who was the grandfather of Zander Plen, started a fertilizer business in Sarnia in Pinetown. Their sons, Leon and Harry took over the business in about 1945 when Leon returned wounded from the War. My uncle, Leon, was on the Pinetown Council, and when Sarnia was officially laid out, probably around 1960, they named the road that the fertilizer factory stood on, as Bullbrand Road. The factory was Bullbrand Fertilizers!! The company no longer exists having been swallowed up years ago, but the road is still there with its Bullbrand name. And also in Sarnia is Leon Road, named by the council after Leon Plen.

In Westville there is a Driman Road, and in Doonside there is a Ostilly Road named after the father of Basil Ostilly.

I would very much to hear from readers who have any comments about any of my suggested histories, and also readers who can add some names to my list. A reader, Nick Meyerowitz, wrote to me as follows:

Having read your very interesting article on the Jewish origin of some Durban street names, I can add a few to your list: Linze Road off Umgeni Road was named by my grandfather, Nicolai Meyerowitz, for his wife, Linze (parents of Meyer and Boris Meyerowitz) where he was building some blocks of flats. And in Glenmore, Nicolai Crescent and Myro Drive were named by my uncle, Meyer Meyerowitz, who owned and subdivided a large area of Glenmore.

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An earlier version of this article was published in the periodical, Hashalom, the Durban monthly

newspaper, in July 2015. Hashalom's web site can be found at <http://hashalom.co.za>.

Colin, a former SA-SIG Newsletter editor, lives in Durban, and can be reached at evancol@telkomsa.net.

Editor's Note: An article about the street names in Pretoria by writer Nicki Gilbert (a former Pretoria resident, now living in the San Francisco Bay Area in California) can be found at:

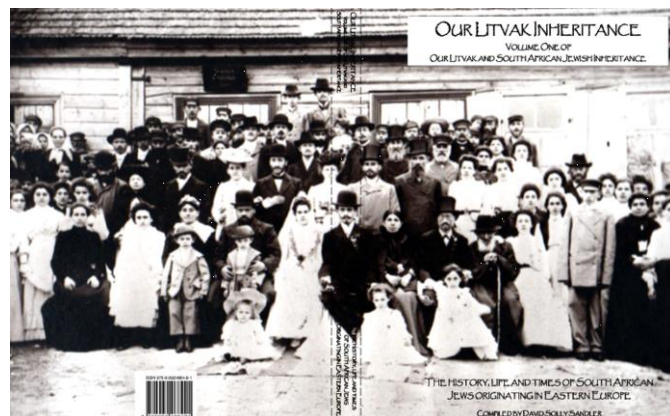
<http://redboots.me/2015/12/02/where-the-streets-have-a-name/>

New Book

OUR LITVAK INHERITANCE

Volume One of book series: Our Litvak and South African Jewish Inheritance

Compiled by David Solly Sandler



The book covers the history, life, and times of South African Jews whose families originated in Lithuania.

Section 1 of the book commences with a timeline of Jewish history, leading to a detailed history of the Jewish settlement of Keidan and of Lithuania in general. It reports on the migration of the Jews from the east to the west and discusses the origins, philosophies, and values of South African Litvak Jews.

Section 2 describes the horrors of World War I and its aftermath through reports in the foreign press and from the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). The section also covers the displacement of Jews from Lithuania and Latvia in 1915.

The third section recounts life in the shtetl through family histories and photographs, as well as articles and photographs from the books, *Yizkor book of Rakishok and Environs*, and the *Keidan Yizkor book*.

The fourth section tells of the massacre of the Jews during the second half of 1941. Also included is the Jäger Report documenting the murder of the Jews in 21 Lithuanian towns.

The fifth section consists of reports of visits back to Lithuania after Lithuanian independence in 1990.

Also included is a history of Latvia, Riga, and Libau as well as visits to these areas after independence.

The sixth section discusses the reasons for immigration, the problems encountered along the way, and why Lithuanian Jews chose to emigrate to South Africa.

Also included in the book are memories of the early immigration to South Africa.

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For further information about this book, or to obtain a copy, please contact David Sandler at:

sedsand@iinet.net.au

Proceeds from the sale of this book will be given to the Arcadia Jewish Orphanage, the Oranjia Jewish Child and Youth Care Centre, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

Volume Two of this book series, titled South African Jewish History, is planned to be published before the end of this year.

Note that the SA-SIG Board has no financial interest in this book.

ZIMBABWE'S LEMBA BUILD FIRST SYNAGOGUE, BUT STRUGGLE TO KEEP THE FAITHFUL

Katya Cengel

Some Lemba, Africans who adhere to Jewish beliefs, have newly embraced the religion after testing proved Semitic origin

Mapakomhere, Zimbabwe – The village mosque is easy to spot, a modest one-story structure not far from the main road, just a little nicer and larger than the surrounding homes.

“There is one in every Lemba town,” said Modreck Maeresera, coordinator of the Lemba Cultural Association in Zimbabwe.

While the Lemba don’t appear physically distinct from Christian and Muslim Zimbabweans, their practices of male circumcision and *kashrut* – strict Jewish dietary laws – align with their belief that they are the descendants of Jews who fled the Holy Land thousands of years ago. Yet, because they had to hide their Jewish connection for much of history, many have converted to Islam and Christianity, which is why there is a mosque in almost every Lemba town in Zimbabwe.

But in Mapakomhere, in Masvingo District, the heart of Lemba territory, there is now the beginning of something else – the region’s first Lemba synagogue.

Located near the village center, atop a hill overlooking a valley, the spot was chosen to help convey the image of ascending to a place of worship, said Rabson Wuriga, secretary of the new synagogue and Lemba Cultural Association. The foundation for the 100 foot long and 33 feet wide structure has been laid and the walls are being built. It is hard work, and few of the men are paid. They do it because they place immense importance on their connection to the Jewish religion and the synagogue is a symbol of their commitment to that religion, said Sandy Leeder, the Lemba coordinator for Kulanu, a New York-based nonprofit dedicated to supporting isolated and emerging Jewish communities.

By the time it is complete, Leeder estimates Kulanu will have spent \$40,000 on the synagogue. Kulanu

has been helping a group of Lembas in their almost two-decade quest to become religious as well as cultural Jews.

The Lemba's motivation is the preservation of their culture.

"They realize they can't do it by themselves, because they don't have the structure and they're being missionized," Leeder said.

Because they consider circumcision and *kashrut* extremely important, Judaism is the only religion that aligns with their beliefs. While there are other cultural groups that practice male circumcision, only about 10 percent of Zimbabwe males reported being circumcised in the early part of this century, one of the lowest rates in the region, according to government demographic and health surveys. Recently, there have been health programs tied to HIV prevention aimed at increasing this rate.

"If they become Christian, they lose these traditions," Leeder said. And, "if they become Muslim, they lose drinking – and they like to drink."



A local leader of the Lemba people, right, wearing a tallit (prayer shawl), speaks on January 28, 2012 in Gutu, about 150 miles southeast of the capital Harare in Zimbabwe. (Jekesai Njikizana / AFP / Getty Images)

In a quiet neighborhood in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, barefoot boys wearing *yarmulkes* run around a small compound. Inside the walled enclosure is a single-story building that serves as both Maeresera's home and a makeshift worship center. On Saturday mornings the front door remains open as members of the congregation stream in and out during the course of a two-plus hour service.

Maeresera, the closest thing the community has to a rabbi, leads the congregation. He stands tall and

composed, reading, speaking and singing in a mixture of English, Hebrew, and the local Shona language. Among the boys in attendance are Maeresera's sons; Aviv, age 5, named for the Hebrew word for spring, and Shlomo, 2, or Solomon in Hebrew. Seated in the back is Maeresera's father, Adin, 83. Like many of his generation, Adin is considered a "strict Lemba," someone who takes the tribe's traditions and customs extremely seriously. He is attending his son's service for the first time and is surprised, and proud, to hear him conducting parts of it in Hebrew.

"I grew up being told the Lemba were Jews, but when I was growing up I never saw a [practicing] Jew," said Adin.

Where he is from, near Mutare, in the east of the country, locals refer to the Lemba as "mwenye Lemba" or "people from elsewhere." Oral traditions recount how the Lemba left Judea around 2,500 years ago and made their way first to Yemen and later to Africa. They were said to be traders who lost their holy book while fleeing Arab persecution en route to southern Africa.

The Lemba maintained a number of practices in line with Jewish tradition. As a child, Maeresera, now 40, learned never to eat or drink anything served in a non-Lemba home, and only to eat meat slaughtered by a circumcised Lemba. Maeresera was circumcised at the age of eight as part of a larger initiation program that is conducted in the bush and includes the learning of songs and poems. Later, he took on the role of *shochet*, traditional Jewish slaughterer, at his school. It was a Roman Catholic boarding school and he was required to attend church service every Sunday. But the school also made sure Lemba students were served food prepared in the proper Lemba way. It was a strange duality, but one in which Lemba are well practiced.

Before Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, many Lemba converted to Christianity for employment or educational opportunities. Along the way, the age when boys are circumcised changed from eight days to eight years, because children under eight are not always clothed and therefore circumcised youth could be identified as Lemba. In recent years the Lemba have begun to practice their customs more openly, and Maeresera is among a group who would like to return to circumcision at eight days instead of eight years and practice it indoors. Once the synagogue is complete, they plan

to build a clinic where circumcisions can be performed on babies.

Although the pressure has eased, the presence and pull of Christianity is still there. Some of the best schools in the country are missionary schools and it is there that many Lemba become Christian.

Maeresera said that because of their similarities in dietary law and circumcision, Lemba are also a “target” for Muslims looking for converts. Further loss for the community comes through marriage. Women are considered lost to the community when they marry a non-Lemba, one reason intermarriage has traditionally been discouraged. Maeresera estimates that only 50 percent of Zimbabwe’s Lemba are Jewish and have not converted to Christianity or Islam.

Fearing further erosion of their culture and practices, a group of Lemba leaders in Zimbabwe formed the Lemba Cultural Association in 1996. They decided that one of the most important things they could do for the community was to lead it back to mainstream Judaism. Kulanu provided monetary support and guidance. But how the larger Lemba community feels about this is not something even Leeder will hazard a guess on.

“It’s hard to say what the Lemba really want,” Leeder said. “I believe they really would like to be Jewish, but there is a minimalist Jewish presence – in fact the only Jewish presence is Kulanu, period.”

Recent events have increased interest and added legitimacy to the Lemba Jewish connection, including the rediscovery of a cultural artifact and the revelation of genetic proof backing the Lemba claim of Jewish ancestry. The Lemba have long told stories of the *ngoma lungundu*, a biblical wooden ark they carried into battle for luck. Scholars believe the ark was regularly destroyed and rebuilt and made the journey with the Lemba from Yemen to southern Africa. In 2007, explorer and religious scholar Tudor Parfitt rediscovered a 700-year-old replica of the Ark of the Covenant, a chest allegedly built by the Israelites 3,000 years ago to hold the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed. Around the same time, a series of genetic studies were conducted, proving the Semitic origin of the tribe. Lemba men carry the Cohen modal haplotype Y chromosomal type characteristic of the Jewish priesthood at about the same rate as that of major Jewish populations. The results convinced the world and members of the Lemba

community themselves of the validity of the legends, something some members of the younger generation had doubted.

“I knew I was a Jew, but from the start I wanted proof,” said George Zvakavapano, a 24 year old in tight jeans and a yarmulke.

After the DNA results came out, Zvakavapano was confident that “this is real.” It was then he started taking Judaism seriously as a religion, studying Hebrew and even adapting some of the clothing of Orthodox Jews like a *tallit katan*, the vest-like garment with ritual fringes attached to it. During Saturday services in Harare he serves as a Shamashi, or helper, distributing prayer books, setting out chairs and cleaning up after the service.

On a Saturday in March, Zvakavapano draped a prayer shawl over his shoulders and stood up front beside his uncle, Maeresera, at various points throughout the service. When ritual grape juice and challah are served toward the end, it is Zvakavapano who offers them to the dozen or so congregation members in attendance. To him, Judaism makes sense. The rituals surrounding food help keep the food free of contamination and circumcision may decrease the risk of certain diseases. The religion has become so much a part of his identity it is more important for him to marry a Jewish woman than a Lemba.

“I have to marry a Jew, even if she’s non-Lemba,” he said.

Which leads him to his first difficulty with practicing Judaism in Zimbabwe; there are few marital prospects. He points out that there was only one eligible young woman in attendance that day at service.

Estimates as to the number of Lemba range from 50,000 to 200,000. Most of the white Jews in Zimbabwe left in 2000, after the country’s long-standing president, Robert Mugabe, forced white farmers off the land. There is a small, dwindling community left, which is largely older, but the Lemba have not interacted with them much. Benny Leon, the “Honourary Life Secretary” of Zimbabwe’s Sephardi Hebrew Congregation, said the two groups are “totally apart.” A Cape Town-based field producer for a TV documentary on South Africa’s Lemba, Jeffrey Link, said, however, that he has found there “is interest in involving them” in South Africa’s white Jewish community,

both from Orthodox and Progressive communities, but no real action.

The diminished Jewish congregations in Harare are not able to serve as much of an example, so Kulanu sends visiting instructors to teach the Lemba about Jewish history and holidays and the Hebrew language.

It was from an early volunteer that Maeresera's wife, Brenda, 31, learned to make *challah*. A more recent instructor taught her how to braid four lengths of dough instead of three. Now she makes *challah* weekly – when there is electricity. Other difficulties include the lack of trustworthy kosher restaurants, making it hard to travel far from home, and the struggle to observe Saturday as a day of rest in a country where most do so on Sunday.

After the service, Brenda serves the women lunch in the kitchen, a Star of David necklace dangling from her neck. She was not born Jewish, or even Lemba, but she has adopted the religion and culture with enthusiasm. Earlier she led the others in singing a prayer in Shona. The congregation was taught to chant the prayer in Hebrew, but converted it to a song in Shona. Other prayers have been similarly adapted, their tunes changed, their words translated, their presentation somehow altered. The original tunes were “a little boring,” explains one of the women.

“Not African taste, you know,” adds Brenda. “It’s easier to learn the song when you’re using your own tunes. To make it comfortable, especially for visitors.”

They adapt not just to please African ears, but to please those of their visiting instructors as well, changing a French style tune of one prayer to a more American version. The majority of their teachers come from the United States, and it is in the U.S. that Maeresera officially converted to Judaism. To be recognized by the larger Jewish community, it is often necessary to officially convert. Kupakwashe Marazani also converted while he was in the U.S.

Marazani studied at the American Jewish University's Brandeis Collegiate Institute in California. A small, soft-spoken 25-year-old, he also participated in Taglit Birthright Israel, a program that provides a free trip to Israel for young Jews. When his fellow participants expressed surprise at seeing a black African on the trip,

Marazani responded: “Africa is not so far, you should not be so surprised to find Jews in Africa.” Yet he knows southern Africa is far from Israel, and it was this epic journey taken by his ancestors that inspired him to learn more about Judaism.

As a child, Marazani attended Christian schools where he said classmates and teachers regularly tried to convert him. Zvakavapano recalls being mocked for eating food cooked separately from other students. Back in the village, Wuriga has noticed that young Lemba come to meetings when they are billed as cultural gatherings, while the older members of the community attend when they are called Jewish. He believes this is because many have already lost their religion. In that way, Marazani and Zvakavapano are a rarity. But when asked if he plans to bring his three siblings to service, Marazani replies: “I don't think so.”

Maeresera is more direct: “His brothers and sisters converted to Christianity.”

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Katya Cengel, a writer who reports from around the world for numerous publications, has written about everything from retired dancing bears in Bulgaria to the world's largest machine gun shoot in Kentucky. Her articles have appeared in Newsweek, National Geographic, Time.com, as well as in many other publications. Her web site can be found at www.katyacengel.com.

Her University of Nebraska Press book, titled Bluegrass Baseball: A Year in the Minor League Life is available from Amazon, Kindle, and other sources. (Note that the SA-SIG Board has no financial interest in this book.)

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<http://america.aljazeera.com>

THE STORY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN FALLEN IN DEFENCE OF ISRAEL

Beryl Ratzer

In 2012, Gidon Katz, from Ashkelon, Israel, arranged with Telfed (the South African Zionist Federation in Israel) to trace and contact the bereaved families of members of the South African community, who fell in the defence of Israel. With cooperation of the Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael (KKL, the Jewish National Fund) and the Ministry of Defence, they were able to contact the families of the 87 deceased from before the declaration of Independence up until today. Through the years more than 25,000 men and women have given their lives in the defence of Israel.

Gidon has a file for each of the 87 deceased containing material received from the families, which includes letters, photos, articles, and more. There is also a file of each one in Hebrew from the Ministry of Defence.

In 1986, Telfed, the KKL, and the bereaved families dedicated an Andarta (war memorial) and Memorial Wall of Names at the Lavi forest. In May 2012, there was a rededication ceremony at the new wall erected by the KKL with more than 20 new names.

Gidon, who lost a brother in the Yom Kippur War and who was largely behind the restoration of the stone monument alongside the Wall of Names, has been to and photographed all the graves from Hatzeva in the south to Maayan Baruch in the north.



Photo of the KKL Memorial at the Lavi Forest

Every year, on the National Day of Mourning for those who have fallen while serving the country, we, the Southern African Jews in Israel, collectively remember the eighty seven fallen from our community.

Their names are engraved on a memorial wall in the heart of the JNF-KKL Lavi forest close to the Golani junction, on a plaque in the offices of the SAZF in Raanana and appear at the end of this article.

For the grieving families each name encapsulates the individual life story of their beloved sons and daughters. But those names do more than that. They tell the story of Israel's long battle for safety and security in an often hostile neighbourhood.

That is the story I would like to tell. Gidon Katz, who lost a brother in the Yom Kippur War and who was largely behind the restoration of the stone monument alongside the wall of names, provided me with details of all eighty seven fallen. As I read them and made my own notes I realised to what extent these eighty seven soldiers not only fought in all Israel's wars but are a cross section of Israeli society.

Some came on aliya with their parents; some came on their own immediately after completing school; some were Sabras whose parents had come on aliya; some studied in universities both in Israel and abroad;

Some were very young, still doing their national service while others were much older, serving in the reserves. Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel they served in the Irgun (Etzel), the Hagana and the Palmach, and thereafter they served in the paratroopers, the armoured corps, the artillery, the navy and the air force and a few had even served in the SA air force and navy. They were in Nachal, in Givati, in the Security Services and in the border police.

Some were career soldiers and officers, others were promoted posthumously. Many were outstanding soldiers in the courses in which they participated and some were awarded medals of valour for their bravery beyond the call of duty. One fell in a training accident in the US, while the family of another donated his organs to seven recipients.

Some were not yet married while others left young, heartbroken wives. Some had not had time to have

children while one left seven devastated orphans. They lived in cities, in villages, on kibbutzim and moshavim, within the 1949 cease-fire lines and beyond them in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.

Israel's War of Independence began during the British Mandate and the first South African to fall in 1938 spent four months in the Acco prison before being fatally wounded while on guard in the fields of Hanita on the Lebanese border. During the months between the UN Resolution on the partition of Palestine in November 1947 and the final ceasefire agreements in April 1949 there were battles throughout the land, some better known some less so. South Africans fell in the battle for Jaffa, on the convoys through Bab el Wad to Jerusalem, in Operation Hiram in the western Galilee and against the Egyptians near Ramat Rachel.

Eighteen months passed before the bodies of those who fell at Kfar Etzion and the pilot shot down over Syria, near Mishmar HaYarden were reinterred in Israel while the remains of the pilot shot down while strafing the Egyptian forces near Asdud (modern Ashdod) were only recovered three and a half years later.

Over the next years there were South African losses during the numerous skirmishes and terrorist attacks from the Egyptian Sinai desert culminating in Operation Kadesh, the Sinai Campaign, in 1956. The Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal led to the Anglo-French attack on Egypt. As Egypt had closed the Straits of Tiran to all shipping to Eilat Israel was invited to participate. Israeli troops reached the Suez Canal and Sharm el Sheikh, thereby ending the blockade of Eilat. Under pressure from the US Israeli troops withdraw from Sinai and were replaced by UN troops.

In May 1967 Egypt once again closed the Straits of Tiran threatening a full scale war with Israel. Jordan signed a Joint Military Pact with Egypt and Syria continued her bombardment, from the Golan Heights, of Israeli settlements in the eastern Galilee. Throughout the world Jews and non-Jews feared for the State of Israel, 350 miles from north to south, 10 miles wide from Netanya to the Jordanian border.

During the very brief Six Day War in 1967, in which many South Africans took part, there was one South African casualty. When the ceasefire agreements were signed Israel was in control of the entire Sinai Peninsula right up to eastern bank of the

Suez Canal. On the Jordanian front Israel was in control of the entire West Bank right up to the western bank of the Jordan River. On the Syrian front, the Golan Heights were under Israeli control.

Israeli offers of withdrawal in return for peace treaties were rejected by all Arab states. The War of Attrition on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts began as did terrorist acts in Israel itself coupled with airplane hijackings and the massacre of Israeli sportsmen at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972. The PLO leadership, expelled from Jordan by King Hussein, moved to southern Lebanon

While Russia provided Egypt and Syria unlimited and updated armaments, including SAM and Sager missiles and RPG's, France, previously Israel's main supplier, had imposed a boycott on Israel. For the first time Israel began to get supplies from the USA.

During this period South Africans fell on the Suez Canal, on the Syrian front and on a special mission to destroy the PLO headquarters in Lebanon.

Despite all indications to the contrary the Israeli Intelligence believed that a full-scale war was not imminent and so it came as a complete surprise when Egypt and Syria opened their attack at 14.00 on Yom Kippur 1973.

Within forty eight hours the Egyptians crossed the Suez Canal and captured all the Israeli positions on the Bar Lev line, excluding the northernmost fortification, 'Budapest'. It was here that the first two South Africans to lose their lives in the Yom Kippur fell. One had returned from abroad to join his unit, as had others among the fallen. His comrade had married a few months earlier, not the only one to leave a new bride.

The tables were turned when Israeli troops succeeded in creating a bridgehead across the canal and began storming into the African part of Egypt separating the Egyptian army in Sinai from their logistic supplies.

From Port Said to Kantara and Ismailia and in the 'Chinese Farm' South Africans fell with IDF heroes fighting relentlessly in tanks and with whatever was still operable. They won the Oz and Mofet medals of valour. Two members of a kibbutz fell in the same tank. Medics fell while trying to save fellow soldiers.

On the Golan Heights the Syrians almost reached the Bnot Yaakov Bridge on the Jordan River before the tables were turned thanks to the heroic stand of the tanks crews who persevered against unbelievable odds. Israeli troops crossed the 1967 ceasefire lines and destroyed the Syrian airfields, infrastructure and the Iraqi units assisting the Syrians but refrained from attacking Damascus.

Among those who fell on the Golan Heights was an officer who insisted on joining his unit although he had lost a brother, he too an officer, on the Suez Canal during the War of Attrition.

In 1977 Anwar Sadat visited Israel. Prior to his visit the Egyptians returned the bodies of twenty soldiers who had fallen in Sinai, among them one South African. Within two years of the historical visit Israel and Egypt had signed a formal Peace Treaty and by 1982 Israel had withdrawn from the entire Sinai Peninsula. Wisely perhaps, Egypt refused to include the Gaza Strip which had been under Egyptian control prior to the Six Day War.

With the Palestinian terrorist groups firmly ensconced in Lebanon, the towns and villages of the Upper Galilee now came under fire. After an attack on an Egged bus on the coastal road Israel launched Operation Litani in 1978, with the express aim of expelling the PLO from Lebanon. Among the casualties was a South African paratrooper.

The South Lebanon Army (SLA) filled the vacuum left by the withdrawal of the Israeli troops. Over the coming years there were a number of daring operations whether in Lebanon or the destruction of the Iraqi nuclear installations in 1981. As many of them still secret it is impossible to know just where and how our soldiers fell.

The SLA were unable to prevent the rain of Katyusha rockets, which now had a longer range, on the Upper Galilee so Operation Peace for the Galilee (Lebanon War) was launched in 1982, as part of an agreement with the Lebanese President Bashir Gemayel. With his assassination, instigated by Syria, Lebanon came under Syrian control. However, Yasser Arafat and the PLO were expelled to Tunis.

Six South Africans fell during this war including one who fell while rescuing injured soldiers at Sultan Yakub. Another SA medic fell in 1985 which was when Israel withdrew from Lebanon, excluding a 14 km buffer zone. Despite two more operations

in Lebanon (Operation Accountability in 1993 and Grapes of Wrath in 1996), during which a SA soldier fell, Israel was unable to prevent Hezbollah's continued attacks on northern Israel and in 1999 Israel withdrew, unilaterally, to the international border. This was confirmed by the UN in 2000.

In 1987, with the outbreak of the first intifada (uprising), due to the spread of a false rumour and incitement from the PLO, road blocks were set up in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) and Gaza. For the first time since the Six Day war entry to Israel was no longer unrestricted. One year later Jordan cut her links to the West Bank, including administration of the Temple Mount and with the Peace Treaty signed in 1994 relinquished all territorial claims to the West Bank.

There were occasions when soldiers fell in training accidents but a particularly rare incident occurred in the USA when two young officers who had been sent to take part in the development of an improved weapon were killed when a shell exploded in the barrel. The Americans erected a memorial to both, one of whom was a South African, in the base in Arizona.

1990 saw the Temple Mount riots and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and 1991 Operation Desert Storm when Iraqi scuds fell on Israel while Israel took no action even though the USA did not destroy the launching sites. But the 1990's also saw the beginnings of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The handshake between Rabin and Arafat on the White House lawn; the Declaration of Principles (DOP) in Oslo; the Israeli withdrawal from Jericho and other towns and villages in the West Bank; the Interim Agreement (Oslo II) and the withdrawal from Hebron.

Through all these discussions terrorism and rockets from Lebanon continued as did Israeli casualties, including a SA soldier who fell in a skirmish on the Lebanese border and one who was among the 76 killed when two helicopters collided near Shear Yishuv.

Despite the Wye River Memorandum at Camp David in 2000 when Netanyahu and Arafat agreed to facilitate the 1995 Interim agreement, to the surprise of Clinton, Arafat refused to accept any proposal drafted by American negotiators and the second intifada began, at his instigation.

As the terrorist attacks and suicide bombings increase culminating in the Passover Massacre, Israel initiated Operation Defensive Shield, the largest in the West Bank since the Six Day War. South African soldiers fell in terrorist attacks in Nahariya and near Ofra and in clashes near Kisufim, Shechem and the Hebron Kasbah.

In Aqaba Abbas promised to end the intifada and Yossi Beilin and Yasser Abed Rabbo signed the Geneva Accord, which has no legal standing as it is not signed by a government, but terrorism continued and in an attack at Itamar seven young children are left without a father.

Another truce in 2005 at Sharm el Sheikh followed by a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and a number of settlements in the northern West Bank area was rewarded with a bombardment of rockets from the Strip. The kidnapping of Gilad Schalit brought Operation Summer Rains and Operation Autumn Clouds during which Hamas and other militant groups, their infrastructure and smuggling tunnels in the Philadelphi Corridor between the Strip and Egypt were targeted. The ceasefire between Israel and Hamas was short lived.

On the Lebanese front a barrage of rockets on Israeli towns and villages the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah resulted in the IDF sea and air blockade of Lebanon and then to a land attack in an attempt to destroy the Hezbollah infrastructure. The campaign was not a success and the Israeli losses were high, among them a South African member of a tank crew, a medic and a reservist officer trying to assist the injured. One and a half million Israelis in northern Israel were confined to the proximity of their bomb shelters by four thousand rockets fired by Hezbollah.

In the meanwhile Hamas succeeded in greatly increasing the range of Qasam rockets which now reached as far as Ashdod and Ashkelon. After three years of restraint at the end of 2009 Israel launched the three week long Operation Cast Lead which ended when Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire followed by a complete withdrawal.

Once again the ceasefire was temporary and lasted only until Hamas and the other terrorist organisations in the Strip had replenished and improved on their arsenals. 2012 saw Operation Pillar of Defense in Gaza. During this time intermittent sniper firing on the Lebanese border resulted in another South African casualty.

Initially the sporadic rockets and mortars fired from the Gaza Strip were “tolerable” thanks to the introduction of the Iron Dome which reduced both civilian casualties and damage to property. However by July 2014 thousands of rockets were fired, many reaching the main cities of Israel, giving Israelis between thirty seconds and a minute, depending on where they lived, to reach bomb shelters.

This resulted in the launching of Operation Protective Edge (Tzuk Eitan) during which the IDF entered the Gaza Strip and destroyed underground tunnels and launching sites. Since then, by and large, there has been quiet on the Gaza Front.

The intrinsic involvement of the Southern African community in Israel, which has been illustrated by the stories of the fallen, extends not only to those serving in the various branches of the IDF but also to those who were killed in terrorist attacks over the decades and to those who volunteered to serve as overseas volunteers in Machal and Nachal.

Indeed a community of which to be proud.



List of South African Fallen

| | <i>Name</i> | <i>Birth date</i> | <i>Passing Date</i> |
|----|---------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Katz Avraham Isa | 1912 | 1.7.38 |
| 2 | Levin Yonatan | 12.1.30 | 13.3.48 |
| 3 | Kaploun Oded | 19.12.25 | 28.4.48 |
| 4 | Berelowitz Yechezkiel Chatzi | 17.4.18 | 12.5.48 |
| 5 | Lipshitz Zvi | 1920 | 13.5.48 |
| 6 | Rosenberg Gideon | 7.2.23 | 16.5.48 |
| 7 | Cohen Eddie Shlomo | 2.7.22 | 30.5.48 |
| 8 | Bloch Lesley Morris | 30.11.21 | 10.7.48 |
| 9 | Hack Louis | 14.8.23 | 23.10.48 |
| 10 | Silber Meir Matey | 18.8.27 | 23.10.48 |
| 11 | Sanders Benzion | N/A | 11.7.50 |
| 12 | Levinson Shmuel | 21.1.26 | 11.5.51 |
| 13 | Chait Chaim | 14.1.25 | 23.9.51 |
| 14 | Friedman Natan | 1.6.29 | 29.10.51 |
| 15 | Sidlin Moshe | 17.1.28 | 25.12.51 |
| 16 | Levy Joshua | 12.1.34 | 30.5.52 |
| 17 | Glazer Yitzchak | 28.9.35 | 1.11.56 |
| 18 | Lemkin Donald | 6.7.37 | 6.6.67 |
| 19 | Lavi Orit | 17.6.49 | 12.8.68 |
| 20 | Leibowitz Harold | 7.10.46 | 1.9.69 |
| 21 | Weiler Adam | 22.9.44 | 31.3.70 |
| 22 | Kahan Daniel | 22.5.45 | 2.4.70 |
| 23 | Shur Avida | 23.4.51 | 10.4.73 |

| | | | |
|----|---------------------------|----------|----------|
| 24 | Katz Rami Norman | 15.4.49 | 6.10.73 |
| 25 | Kaye Terrence | 11.9.52 | 6.10.73 |
| 26 | Lowenberg Raymond | 4.4.47 | 6.10.73 |
| 27 | Goldman Michael | 10.4.52 | 7.10.73 |
| 28 | Katz Avraham David | 12.4.39 | 7.10.73 |
| 29 | Tamari Michael | 23.1.53 | 7.10.73 |
| 30 | Bar-El Jacob Meir | 17.6.52 | 8.10.73 |
| 31 | Weiler Gideon | 9.5.50 | 9.10.73 |
| 32 | Urie Micha | 1.5.52 | 12.10.73 |
| 33 | Shanan Gideon | 9.6.49 | 14.10.73 |
| 34 | Agayev Yigal | 25.11.52 | 15.10.73 |
| 35 | Aviram Eli | 1.6.39 | 16.10.73 |
| 36 | Shapira Ilan Haim | 13.2.49 | 16.10.73 |
| 37 | Melcer Yitzhak | 13.5.49 | 16.10.73 |
| 38 | Silbowitz David Jonathan | 6.12.49 | 18.10.73 |
| 39 | Freed Neil | 13.4.48 | 18.10.73 |
| 40 | Rubin Rami Avraham | 21.1.48 | 22.10.73 |
| 41 | Comay Yochanan | 22.9.39 | 24.11.73 |
| 42 | Shomroni Jonathan | 10.12.53 | 4.9.74 |
| 43 | Whiteson Paul | 22.9.55 | 21.1.75 |
| 44 | Meir Dr. Yehonatan (John) | 6.2.27 | 23.7.76 |
| 45 | Solomon Chaim | 10.8.58 | 10.5.77 |
| 46 | Wittert Shai | 31.8.58 | 15.3.78 |
| 47 | Adar Boaz | 25.10.58 | 15.1.79 |
| 48 | Feldman Alan | 8.1.60 | 20.6.79 |
| 49 | Golan Guy | 19.9.53 | 29.9.79 |
| 50 | Preiss Yochai | 1.9.59 | 11.3.80 |
| 51 | Berman Ofer | 25.10.58 | 8.10.80 |
| 52 | Chemel Roi | 20.1.56 | 10.9.81 |
| 53 | Myers Gary | 29.10.61 | 16.12.81 |
| 54 | Lipshitz Zohar | 20.6.56 | 11.6.82 |
| 55 | Zipper Ran | 2.10.49 | 11.6.82 |
| 56 | Eidelman Ronen | 6.9.60 | 12.6.82 |
| 57 | Messerer Ron | 25.6.61 | 16.6.82 |
| 58 | Lahak Joel | 20.6.48 | 25.6.82 |
| 59 | Fredman Dan | 18.10.58 | 28.8.83 |
| 60 | Weinberger Jonathan | 21.5.64 | 30.11.84 |
| 61 | Gotsman Yaron | 20.5.66 | 16.2.85 |
| 62 | Ben-Atar Neil | 28.12.66 | 16.6.86 |
| 63 | Gordin Yonat | 8.7.69 | 22.2.87 |
| 64 | Katz Barry David | 17.5.55 | 9.9.87 |
| 65 | Rabinowitz Idor | 3.12.67 | 25.11.87 |
| 66 | Eilon Mark | 24.9.67 | 6.11.89 |
| 67 | Kaufman Ilan | 9.9.63 | 22.4.90 |
| 68 | Zlotnik Tamar | 15.9.70 | 1.10.90 |
| 69 | Shemer Avi | 24.6.70 | 27.3.91 |
| 70 | Rockman Daniel | 1.2.75 | 15.2.95 |
| 71 | Shefts Natai | 7.3.72 | 19.9.95 |
| 72 | Mishieker Gilad Moshe | 13.5.76 | 4.2.97 |
| 73 | Aber Raz | 8.10.76 | 25.6.97 |

| | | | |
|----|----------------------|---------|----------|
| 74 | Loew Guy | 2.2.81 | 20.12.00 |
| 75 | Ifrac Danny | 18.6.82 | 9.9.01 |
| 76 | Damlin David | 8.6.73 | 3.3.02 |
| 77 | Kenisberg Steven Ian | 17.7.?? | 3.3.02 |
| 78 | Yacob Avihu | 13.2.78 | 3.5.02 |
| 79 | Gadri Matan | 16.4.82 | 8.6.03 |
| 80 | Miller Mark Shlomo | 20.3.54 | 13.8.04 |
| 81 | Bar-On Yaniv | 9.11.86 | 12.7.06 |
| 82 | Slavin Lotan | 3.5.85 | 24.7.06 |
| 83 | Calo Naor | 13.3.81 | 9.8.06 |
| 84 | Novick Asher | 24.7.70 | 9.8.06 |
| 85 | Rothenberg Maayan | 7.12.88 | 30.11.07 |
| 86 | Harari Dov Barry | 7.1.65 | 3.8.10 |
| 87 | Walt Daryl | 30.3.95 | 23.12.14 |

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Beryl Ratzer, an Israeli tour guide, is the author of the book, A Historical Tour of the Holy Land. Her web site can be found at: <http://www.ratzer.com>

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Obituary

FAREWELL TO A GIANT – A TRIBUTE TO MAURICE OSTROFF

(1925 – 2015)

David Kaplan



Metaphorically speaking, he left us with his boots on – his MAHAL boots! The sad passing of Maurice Ostroff on [November 30, 2015] at the age of 90 brought to an end the tenacious spirit of a warrior who fought passionately to his last breath for the right of the Jewish People to be free in their ancestral homeland.

When once asked why he volunteered in 1948 to fight in Israel's War of Independence, this former South African from Johannesburg said it simply and modestly: "I had a strong desire to identify myself with the struggle of the Jews in Israel and with the displaced persons fighting for the right to enter Palestine. I had served in WWII and felt I could help."

He did more than help, and he never stopped.

If, in 1948, Maurice commandeered a strategically important mobile radar unit near the Weizmann Institute, six decades later he still had his antennae up.

Operating from "my ops room" on the fifth floor of Beth Protea – the Southern African Retirement Home in Herzliya – he tracked the movements of Israel's enemies with his overworked computer challenging the lies and distortions of journalists,

jurists, academicians and politicians around the world.

Morrie was unafraid to take on the mighty and prick their puffed up libelous bubbles.

Who isn't familiar with his well-researched epistles appearing in esteemed newspapers and blogs around the globe? Always respectful, never personal, but always hitting his target with pin-point verbal accuracy, this exceptional commentator on current affairs had the knack to marshal the English language and send it forth into battle on behalf of the Jewish state.

However, Maurice was not one to compromise his integrity in this quest – his mission was always "to reveal the truth" and "to set the record straight" as he so frequently expressed.

This attribute was poignantly articulated in an op-ed in *The Jerusalem Post* when taking on Judge Richard Goldstone for his faulty report on Operation Cast Lead: "It is disappointing to observe the disproportionate amount of conjecture about, and attacks on, Goldstone the man, compared with the paucity of discussion about the actual content of the report and the faulty methodology used in preparing it."

The exchange of the open correspondence between Maurice and Goldstone led to a close relationship and, finally, Goldstone retracting key findings in the infamous report that bears his name.

Who, today, seriously refers to the Goldstone Report as having any value? If it came to military budgets and a choice in deciding between another multimillion dollar F16 or Ostroff, "Our Mo" should have won hands down – such was his value in blunting the poisonous arrows of Israel's enemies.

I was privileged to have known Morrie, as he was affectionately known, as a close friend and "comrade-in-arms."

Three years ago, we co-founded with others, TbT (Truth be Told), a "Rapid Response Team" that tracked untruths about Israel in the word media and quickly researched the facts and responded within hours.

Because of the stature of this giant and the respect he engendered, our reports were published widely and we earned the respect of friends and foes alike.

His legacy is such that I pledge we will continue the work with increased vigor in this ongoing global assault against the Jewish state that we have coined: “The War of Words.”

Maurice was also a founder member of the international Coalition of Hasbara Volunteers, better known by its acronym CoHaV, (star in Hebrew), a worldwide umbrella organization of volunteers active in combating anti-Israel media and political bias.

While most revered for his achievements with the pen, Maurice’s background lay in the sciences. In fact, he constructed the radar station he commanded in 1948 – Israel’s first – “from assorted junked parts.”

Such was his extraordinary talent to read a landscape and make magic from whatever was available. His versatility knew no bounds.

Educated at the University of Witwatersrand, Maurice held a master’s degree in industrial engineering, a B.Sc. degree in mathematics and physics and a B.Sc. degree in electrical engineering. He was elected a Fellow of the Institute of Administration and Commerce of South Africa where he was the Group Administrative Director of Morlite Holdings Ltd., an industrial conglomerate listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

He was a former chairman of the South African Technion Society and of the South African Stainless Steel Sanitaryware Manufacturers Association, as well as president of the Federation of Sanitaryware and Hardware Merchants Associations of South Africa, which elected him as honorary life vice-president.

Upon immigrating to Israel in 1980, he was appointed managing director of Orbit Medicenters Ltd., the company that initiated and brought to fruition, the Herzliya Medical Center.

He was also a member of the team that inspired and created Beth Protea and served as a member of its “chevra.”

A strong advocate for increased bilateral trade relations with his native South Africa and of advanced education, he served as chairman of the Israel-South Africa Chamber of Commerce and on the Board of Governors of the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology.

While most residents at retirement homes may feel they have earned the right to take it easy, this was not the case with Maurice, who was always revving up to launch into a new career.

Long retired from business, eight years ago Maurice made the news when he took on the “youngsters” in the competitive world of hi-tech.

Well into his 80s, he was granted a patent to secure authentication for credit card and other online Internet transactions.

Maurice’s patent attorney at the time explained that “patents are not granted until it is established that the prototype is indeed unique.”

Maurice himself may well fit into this category – he was unique.

At Beth Protea in March, Maurice was honored by TbT, Beth Protea and TELFED (The South African Zionist Federation in Israel) for his contribution to the State of Israel and the Jewish People.

Editor’s Note: Maurice Ostroff’s current affairs web site can be found at:

<http://www.maurice-ostroff.org/>

Ostroff authored an article, Arthur Goldreich – A Tribute, in the October 2011 issue of the SA-SIG Newsletter, which can be found at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/newsletter/SA-SIG-NL-v12-01.pdf>

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David E. Kaplan is a journalist, a cofounder of TbT and a former chairman of Telfed.

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THE YIDDISH BOOK CENTER'S WEXLER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Roy Ogus

Yiddish Book Center

The Yiddish Book Center, based in Amherst, Massachusetts, is a nonprofit organization which plans to tell the complete Jewish story by rescuing, translating, and disseminating Yiddish books and presenting innovative educational programs that broaden understanding of modern Jewish identity. Located on the campus of Hampshire College in the town of Amherst, Massachusetts, the institution is dedicated to the preservation of books which were written in the Yiddish language as well as the culture and history which those books represent.

The Center was founded in 1980 by Aaron Lansky, a twenty-four-year-old graduate student of Yiddish literature, when he realized that untold numbers of irreplaceable Yiddish books were being discarded by American-born Jews who were unable to read the language of their Yiddish-speaking parents and grandparents. Lansky is now the Center's president.

The home page of the Center can be found at:

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/>

Wexler Oral History Project

The Center's Wexler Oral History Project is a growing collection of in-depth video interviews with people of all ages and backgrounds, ranging from immigrants from the Old Country, through American-born students, world-renowned musicians, actors, cultural activists, as well as the descendants of Yiddish writers. Through these interviews, the memories of bygone neighborhoods, foods, family rituals, their stories of traditions and survival, and their personal reflections on the Yiddish language and Jewish culture offer a colorful and complex chronicle of Jewish life. Since its founding in 2010, the Wexler Oral History Project has recorded more than 450 interviews, both at the Yiddish Book Center as well as on field work trips across the U.S. and around the world. Many of these interviews are available on the Yiddish Book Center web site, both as a complete interview, as well as through excerpts of the complete interviews.

The home page of the Wexler Oral History Project can be found at:

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/oral-history/home>

To browse the available interviews, consult the web page:

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/oral-history/archive>

To search the descriptions of the interviews, go to the following web page:

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/oral-history/archive-search>

A number of these interviews were made with South Africans or former South Africans, or with people who have some connection to South Africa. As of this writing, the set of these South Africa-related interviews available includes the following recordings.

Interview with Naomi Bloch



Naomi Bloch, a Yiddish librarian and translator, was born in Cape Town in 1938 to Yiddish-speaking parents. Her father owned a factory and their home was a typically observant Jewish household built on the slope of Table Mountain. She describes

speaking Yiddish among her family and Cape Town's Jewish community as a young girl. In high school, Naomi went to *Talmud Torah* five times a week and was a member of the Jewish youth groups.

She later went on to study Library Science and worked as a librarian in addition to being a housewife and mother. She eventually moved to Melbourne, Australia, where she continues to work in university libraries as well as Kadimah, a library dedicated to Yiddish works.

Naomi was interviewed by Lynn Yanis on August 12, 2013 at the Yiddish Book Center, and the complete interview can be found at:

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/oral-history/naomi-bloch>

Also available on the web site are the following excerpts of the interview with Naomi:

- My Family's Expulsion from and Return to Lithuania

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/my-family-expulsion-from-and-return-lithuania>

Naomi discusses her mother's family's expulsion from Lithuania during the First World War.

- Yontef Treats: Memories of Ashkenazi Foods

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/yontef-treats-memories-ashkenazi-foods>

Naomi describes growing up in the only Jewish home in her Cape Town neighborhood. She speaks as well about her mother's typically Ashkenazi cooking, especially the sweets that they ate at yontef (holidays).

- Growing Up With War

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/growing-up-war>

Naomi shares her early memories of World War Two, such as the blackout curtains that every home was required to hang and watching ships sail into Table Bay in Cape Town. She speaks about not remembering when she first learned of the Holocaust and worries about educating her own grandchildren on the subject.

- "That Put an End to Her University Education": My Mother's Move to South Africa

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/put-end-her-university-education-my-mothers-move-south-africa>

Naomi discusses her mother's brief stint at the University of Kovno and her family's emigration to South Africa.

Interview with Zvi Jankelowitz



Zvi Jankelowitz is the Director of Institutional Advancement at the Yiddish Book Center. He was born in Port Elizabeth in 1956. He was interviewed at the Yiddish Book Center by Jessica Parker on April 11, 2013, and the complete interview can be found at:

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/oral-history/zvi-jankelowitz>

Also available are the following excerpts of the interview with Zvi:

- "Everything was about *der heym* (back home)": My Grandfather's Nostalgia for the Shtetl-Life of Lite

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/everything-was-about-der-heym-back-home-my-grandfathers-nostalgia-shtetl-life-lite>

Zvi talks about the nostalgia for the Old Country of Lite (Lithuania and Latvia) that he overheard during his childhood in South Africa.

- "Not the Hands of a Maid": How My Grandmother Ended Up in South Africa

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/not-hands-maid-how-my-grandmother-ended-up-south-africa>

Zvi tells the *story* of how his grandmother was rebuffed at the Canadian border, so had to go to South Africa *instead*.

- The Fate of the Last Jews of Kruk, Lithuania

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/fate-last-jews-kruk-lithuania>

Zvi talks about the fate of the Jews of the town of Kruk, where his grandfather and other ancestors came from.

- An Unforgettable Journey: From South Africa to Brooklyn by Boat, 1936

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/unforgettable-journey-from-south-africa-brooklyn-by-boat-1936>

Zvi relates the story of his grandmother and mother's long, arduous journey by ship, from South Africa to North America, to visit family after a long separation.

- My Father's Sense of Duty as a Lawyer in Apartheid South Africa

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/my-fathers-sense-duty-lawyer-apartheid-south-africa>

Zvi describes his father's work as an attorney, defending leaders of the African National Congress.

- Great Food! - Well, Great If You're From Lithuanian Heritage

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/great-food-well-great-if-youre-from-lithuanian-heritage>

Zvi describes his grandmother's legendary cooking and recipes she memorized and brought with her from Lithuania.

- Kibitsing in Xhosa: Childhood Memories from the Jewish Kitchens of South Africa

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/kibitsing-xhosa-childhood-memories-from-jewish-kitchens-south-africa>

Zvi remembers overhearing gossip as a child about his Jewish community from his household's maids and cook in South Africa.

- May 4, 1968: Shimon Peres Quizzed Me in Hebrew in Our South African Living Room

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/may-4-1968-shimon-peres-quizzed-me-hebrew-our-south-african-living-room>

Zvi remembers meeting Shimon Peres as a child, and getting his signature for his autograph book.

Interview with Ghita Wolpowitz



Ghita Wolpowitz is a Litvak (Lithuanian Jew) who grew up in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Ghita was interviewed at the Yiddish Book Center by Christa Whitney on April 22, 2012, and the

complete interview can be found at:

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/oral-history/ghita-wolpowitz>.

Also available are the following excerpts of the interview with Ghita:

- Early Memories of Bulawayo

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/early-memories-bulawayo>

Ghita shares some of her childhood memories of growing up in Bulawayo, including the privileged status she held as a white Zimbabwean and her experiences at cheder.

- "The Deraiment of the Country": Reflecting on the Political Situation in Rhodesia Growing Up

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/derailment-country-reflecting-political-situation-rhodesia-growing-up>

Ghita speaks to her memories of the political situation as a girl in what was then Rhodesia. She remembers the elections which returned control of the country to segregationists and halted its movement towards egalitarianism, and her subsequent decision to leave Rhodesia permanently and become a South African citizen.

- The "Glorious" Jewish Community of Bulawayo

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/glorious-jewish-community-bulawayo>

Ghita fondly recalls her memories of the vibrant Jewish community of Bulawayo.

- The Jewish Community of Bulawayo (History)

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/jewish-community-bulawayo-history>

Ghita discusses the origin and evolution of the Jewish community in her hometown of Bulawayo. She touches on the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, the various youth movements to which she and her peers belonged, and the Jewish elderly home which her parents helped to establish and which today constitutes the last remaining Jewish community in Zimbabwe.

- Being the Boss' Daughter: Uncomfortable Experiences with Racial Privilege in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/being-boss-daughter-uncomfortable-experiences-racial-privilege-rhodesia-now-zimbabwe>

Ghita discusses her early awareness of her privileged position in Zimbabwe's racial hierarchy.

- "Look How They Know Who I Am": Connecting With My Children Through Jewish Identity

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/look-how-they-know-who-i-am-connecting-my-children-through-jewish-identity>

Ghita recalls how she first learned of the Yiddish Book Center when her children bought her a membership as a birthday gift.

- "Like Walking On Blood:" A Roots Trip to Lithuania

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/like-walking-blood-roots-trip-lithuania>

Ghita talks about visiting Lithuania in 2008 to visit her mother's hometown and other sites from her family's history.

- "I Feel the Richness of This Peoplehood": Importance of My Jewish Identity

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/i-feel-richness-peoplehood-importance-my-jewish-identity>

Ghita describes the sense of richness and continuity which she feels in connection to her Jewish heritage.

- "The Derailement of the Country": Reflecting on the Political Situation in Rhodesia Growing Up

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/derailment-country-reflecting-political-situation-rhodesia-growing-up>

Ghita speaks to her memories of the political situation as a girl in what was then Rhodesia. She remembers the elections which returned control of the country to segregationists and halted its movement towards egalitarianism, and her subsequent decision to leave Rhodesia permanently and become a South African citizen.

- *For gezunt, zay gezunt, un kum gezunt*: A Mother's Yiddish Blessing for Safe Travel

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/video/gezunt-zay-gezunt-un-kum-gezunt-mothers-yiddish-blessing-safe-travel>

Ghita remembers how her mother would say "*for gezunt, zay gezunt un kum gezunt*" before departing for a trip. Today, she still invokes her mother's blessings before she or her children set off.

Interview with Claudia Braude

Aaron Lansky interviews South African native Claudia Braude to discuss the rich – and largely untold – history of South African Jewish culture in the 20th and 21st Centuries. The interview, an audio podcast, titled *The South African Jewish Experience* was made on March 20, 2012, and can be found at:

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/audio/south-african-jewish-experience-0>

THE JEWISH DIGITAL ARCHIVE PROJECT (JDAP)

Roy Ogus

The South African Jewish Museum and the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town have created an extensive community project to document the history of the South African Jewish community through the collection and digitization of communicate archives, family photos, films and documents. Called the Jewish Digital Archive Project (JDAP), the project serves as a record and a resource for South African Jewry.

The migratory nature of Southern African Jews has resulted in SA Jews settling all over the globe. Despite this broad footprint, many of these Jews have retained close links with South Africa and remained a distinct cultural grouping with shared memories and common experiences. The JDAP site aims to secure and share this common history for future generations. Digital technology enables anyone to create a record of their family history, and provides a central, internet-based resource to do this.

The archive integrates the present with the past by making it a living repository, ensuring that future generations benefit from stories of the past, and are able to keep up with the present. The JDAP repository is *not* an academic archive, but rather a vehicle to enable Southern African Jews to secure and explore their shared heritage.

The archived material has been made available online via a website where users are able to upload and store their own family's historical records for posterity. Families can explore their heritage and share their own stories. By scanning and uploading photos, documents, films, stories – essentially any historical materials – JDAP members are able to add to the richness of the community's past. JDAP thus belongs to the wider Southern African Jewish community, wherever they may be located.

Two sections of particular interest on the JDAP web site are the following:

- *Roots bank*: The Roots bank tells the story of South African Jews, providing information about their origins in Europe, the *dorps* and towns in which they settled in South Africa, as well as a compilation of narratives about individual families.

- *Jewish Life in Cape Town*: This section provides additional information on the city of Cape Town, including links to further explore materials about shuls; culture and media; food; education; the community; and Judaica, books and gifts

The *Dorps and Towns* section provides an extensive summary of the histories of a nearly 90 South African cities and towns. Currently, overviews of the following towns are provided:

Aliwal North, Amersfoort, Barberton, Barkley East, Belfast, Benoni, Bethal, Brandfort, Bronkhorstspuit, Calvinia, Cape Town, Clanwilliam, Darling, Delmas, Devon, Dewetsdorp, District 6, Dordrecht, Duiwelskloof, Dullstroom, Durban, East London, Edenburg, Ficksburg, Graaff-Reinet, Grahamstown, Graskop, Gravelotte, Humansdorp, Henneman, Indwe, Jamestown, Jansenville, Johannesburg, Kenhardt, Kestell, King William's Town, Kirkwood, Komatipoort, Lady Grey, Ladybrand, Lichtenburg, Louis Trichardt, Lydenburg, Machadadorp, Makwassie, Malmesbury, Marseilles, Molteno, Moorreesburg, Nigel, Paarl, Parys, Phalaborwa, Pietermaritzburg, Pietersburg, Piketburg, Pilgrim's Rest, Port Alfred, Port Elizabeth, Porterville, Potgietersrus, Prince Alfred Hamlet, Pretoria, Rayton, Reddersburg, Reitz, Robertston, Rouxville, Sabie, Sophiatown, Springbok, Sterkstroom, Thabazimbi, Theunissen, Tweespruit, Uitenhage, Van Rhyndorp, Vredehoek, Warmbaths, Waterval Boven, Welkom, Westminster, White River, Willowmore, Winburg, Yzerfontein

To access or contribute to the JDAP web site materials, the following links should be consulted:

- JDAP home page
<http://jdap.co.za/>
- JDAP Dorps and Towns page
<http://jdap.co.za/roots-2/dorps-towns/>
- How to use or contribute to the JDAP materials
<http://jdap.co.za/how-it-works/>
- JDAP FAQ
<http://jdap.co.za/frequently-asked-questions/>
- JDAP contact information
Phone: +27 (0) 21 465 1546
Email: jdap@sajewishmuseum.co.za

or send a message via the following web page:

<http://jdap.co.za/contact-us/>

- Link to South African Jewish Museum
<http://sajewishmuseum.org.za/>
- Link to Kaplan Center
<http://www.kaplancentre.uct.ac.za/>
- Link to SA Jewish Rootsbank
<http://www.jewishroots.uct.ac.za/>

NEW ITEMS OF INTEREST ON THE INTERNET

Roy Ogus

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

Eli Rabinowitz blog entries

As mentioned in previous Newsletters, former South African, Eli Rabinowitz, maintains an interesting blog at: <http://elirab.me>.

Some interesting recent postings relating to South Africa include the following:

- *Shalom Pinkasovitch – Forgotten Chazan?*

<http://elirab.me/jewish/shalom-pinkasovitch-forgotten-chazan>

This posting tells the story of the long forgotten chazan, Shlome Pinkasovitch, who was the cantor at the Wolmarans Street Synagogue in 1930, returning in 1941 as cantor of the Beth Hamedrash Hagodel, succeeding the famous Cantor Berele Chagy. In 1946 Shlome retired to London, England and served as a lecturer and Dean of the School of Music at Jews College, until his death in 1951.

- *The Ponevez Shul in Cape Town*

<http://elirab.me/jewish/the-ponevez-shul-cape-town/>

Eli documents his visit to the Ponevezher Shul in Maynard Street in Cape Town.

- *The Great Synagogue, Cape Town is celebrating 175 years.*

<http://elirab.me/jewish/were-you-married-at-the-great-synagogue-cape-town>

The Great Synagogue, Cape Town, a.k.a. the Gardens *Shul*, is celebrating its 175 years anniversary. Eli is putting together memorabilia of the synagogue over the years and would welcome contributions. (Eli was actually married in the synagogue in 1977, and shows some artifacts from his wedding in the blog posting.)

- *The last of the Ochberg Orphans in South Africa*

<http://elirab.me/jewish/the-last-of-the-ochberg-orphans-in-sa/>

Eli's blog entry dated 3 January 2016 notes that David Sandler informed him that the last of the Ochberg Orphans living in South Africa, Solly Jossel, has passed away. The blog entry provides an extensive amount of information about Jossel's life, including an excerpt about Jossel from David Sandler's *More Arc Memories* book.

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Southern African KehilaLinks sites

A reminder that there are a number of South African *KehilaLinks* pages which can be found on the JewishGen's *KehilaLinks* project web site. (The *KehilaLinks* project provides a set of web pages which commemorate the places where Jews have lived.)

The full list of South African *KehilaLinks* pages can be found at:

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Asia.html>

and now includes the following towns: Benoni, Bloemfontein De Aar, Cape Town, Germiston, Graaff Reinet, Grahamstown, Kwekwe (Que Que) in Zimbabwe, Johannesburg, Kimberley, Muizenberg, Oudtshoorn Pietersburg, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria, Springs, Stellenbosch, Uniondale, Upington, and Witbank.

The *KehilaLinks* project home page can be found at:

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

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JewishGen Identifies Top 10 Myths of Jewish Family History Research

JewishGen has created a web page that identifies what it considers to be the top ten myths of Jewish family history research. These myths are usually postulated by a so-called “family historian” without any basis. In addition to identifying these myths, the JewishGen page also provides the perfect response to someone proposing them. The following myths are included on the page:

- *Myth #1:* Your family surname can be traced to BEFORE the 18th century.
- *Myth #2:* Spelling of surnames is important.
- *Myth #3:* We have the same last name, so we are probably related.
- *Myth #4:* Our family surname changed at Ellis Island.
- *Myth #5:* All of the vital and other family records were destroyed in the Holocaust.
- *Myth #6:* Our ancestral town no longer exists.
- *Myth #7:* People knew their birthdates.
- *Myth #8:* Family Stories (“bubbe meises”) are absolutely true.
- *Myth #9:* DNA Analysis is THE way to find out who is in your family.
- *Myth #10:* The United States Census provides the Truth about your American family.

The complete list together with the justification for each of these myths can be found at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/JewishGenerosity/MythBusters.htm>

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Seven Unique Technologies for Genealogy Discoveries

This item appeared in a recent edition of the *Avotaynu* E-zine, *Nu? What's New?:*

Many of us are aware of the amazing technologies being developed in the tiny country called Israel. Genealogy is blessed with having Israeli technologists focusing on the problems we face in documenting and researching our relatives and ancestors. This technology exists through MyHeritage.com.

At the recently completed 35th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy [in Israel during August 2015],

Gilad Japhet, CEO of MyHeritage, discussed seven technologies unique to the MyHeritage environment. The 45-minute lecture is a must to listen to, if you consider genealogy a serious hobby. It describes technological advances at MyHeritage that focus on the very problems genealogists face on a regular basis that can be solved or lessened by using computers. None of its competitors have these features.

The talk can be viewed on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrVrx5zy4eU>.

Japhet discusses in some detail each of these technologies, how they work, and why they are important to genealogical research.

Two of the technologies described by Japhet were as follows:

Search Connect: Providing the user with the names of other genealogists searching for information about the same person. Every search made at MyHeritage becomes a record that is matched against searches with other users. When appropriate, the two users are connected.

Global Name Translation: This addresses the idea of matching names in records of various languages. The most obvious example is that now the tree created by your Israeli cousin, who has been building his family tree in Hebrew, can be matched with your family tree written in Latin characters. MyHeritage now is applying this technology to records. It will find records of potential interest to you written in languages and alphabets that are not your own. The system now supports all Latin-based languages (French, English, Spanish, etc.), Hebrew, Russian, Ukrainian and Greek. Asian languages are in the works. It also includes soundexing of Russian and Hebrew names so spelling variants within these languages will match. There is a synonym index for given names so that pet forms of these names (example, Sasha for Alexander) will produce a match.

The MyHeritage web site can be found at:

<https://www.myheritage.com/>

The *Nu? What's New?* Web site can be found at:

<http://www.avotaynu.com/nu.htm>

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How to Tell Someone's Age When All You Know Is Her Name

According to Nate Silver and Allison McCann of the FiveThirtyEight web site, it's pretty easy to guess someone's age by their first name, assuming you have access to Social Security name records and actuarial tables. Of course, that is much easier for someone like Silver, who lives and breathes statistics. However, for others, Silver and McCann have already done the research on a significant number of names.

For example, you can guess that women named Mildred, Opal, Ethel, Gertrude, or Beulah would be elderly, and that kindergartens are full of girls named Eva, Mia, Sophia, Ella, and Isabella. The article provides tables with the oldest, youngest, most spread-out names in time, and the most common names for both men and women. Some outlier names such as Violet, might be elderly or might be young, but probably wouldn't be middle-aged.

While focusing on the names of individuals living in the USA, a similar analysis could be carried out for other countries for which similar data is available. In any event, the article is an interesting and informative description, and an enjoyable read, which can be found at:

<http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-to-tell-someones-age-when-all-you-know-is-her-name/>

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Anne Lemkuhl blog sites and South African timeline

Anne Lemkuhl, a South African researcher and professional genealogist, maintains two blogs of interest to people researching South African genealogy, family histories, and heritage. These sites can be found at:

South African Family History and Genealogy

<http://southafricanresearcher.blogspot.com/>

Bygones and Byways

<http://bygonesandbyways.blogspot.com/>

An interesting item on the first blog is a South African timeline covering the period 1488 through 1999 which can be found at:

<http://southafricanresearcher.blogspot.com/p/south-african-timeline-1488-1999.html>

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Pictures of South African cities during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries

The BusinessTech web site has published a stunning collection of pictures of several South African cities which covers the period from the late 19th Century through the early part of the 20th Century. Pictures of the following cities can be viewed as follows:

Pretoria

<http://businesstech.co.za/news/general/105329/this-is-what-pretoria-looked-like-in-the-1900s/>

Johannesburg

<http://businesstech.co.za/news/general/101522/this-is-what-joburg-looked-like-in-1900/>

Cape Town

<http://businesstech.co.za/news/general/98839/cape-town-like-youve-never-seen-it-before-1940-1980/>

In addition, Cape Town Magazine has published its own set of photos which show the evolution of Cape Town during around the turn of the 20th Century, showing also comparisons with the same sites in the present-day city.

http://www.capetownmagazine.com/cape-confidential/photographs-showing-the-evolution-of-the-mother-city/123_22_19859

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How robots are preserving our old newspapers

In a Yorkshire outpost of the British Library, archivists using the latest conservation technology are racing to digitize 300 years of newspapers before they crumble to dust. A gigantic robotic vault, called the National Newspaper Building in Boston Spa, near Leeds, England, is the British Library's high-tech approach to safeguarding what it terms the "national memory" – 750 million pages of news, covering more than three centuries, as

reported in papers across the nation. Preserving an ageing memory is no small feat. Conservators up and down the country are waging war with time itself to battle deterioration of the documents, be it the Magna Carta, which has recently celebrated its 800th anniversary, or yesterday's broadsheet.

In the dark void of the building, robots are being used. Towering 20 meters high and stretching far into the distance is an imposing expanse of racks, heaving with trays bearing volume upon volume of newspapers, laid flat and strapped between metal sheets. Suddenly, an enormous autonomous crane zooms forwards, stops abruptly and, with a hydraulic gasp, shoots out an arm. Lifting a large metal tray off the scaffold, it deposits it on a conveyor belt and races into the dark. One of three poised for action, it lurks in the gloom, awaiting a command – robots, after all, don't need the lights on. The tray and its heavy load are whisked away, making a swift right angle at a turntable, and exit through an airlock. A driverless shuttle car then speeds it to a workstation. Somewhere out there a researcher has put in a request, and the machines are on the case.

You can read the full article at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/05/british-library-digitising-newspapers-boston-spa>

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10 Maps that will change how you view the World

Since their humble origins as scribbles in the sand thousands of millennia ago, maps have been useful companions during the development of human culture and society. Now, in an age of seemingly endless information, maps are more abundant, advanced and fascinating than ever before. The following article shows an interesting collection of maps that should leave you looking at our earth with a fresh perspective!

<http://www.iflscience.com/environment/10-maps-which-will-change-how-you-view-world-0>

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Interesting programming from the SABC series Simcha

Simcha – a celebration of life is the South African Broadcasting Corporation's premier Jewish

Magazine program, produced by Spirit Sister Productions. *Simcha* combines insights on Jewish wisdom and spirituality with cultural content of interest to the South African Jewish Community. The program also features interesting inserts on Jewish arts as well as trailblazers and leaders who are impacting the community and the South African society at large.

Two recent programs of interest are available on the YouTube web site as follows:

Muizenberg – The Shtetl by the Sea

Hedy Davis, the author of the book, *Memories of Muizenberg*, narrates an extensive series of the story of Muizenberg. This program can be viewed as follows:

Part 1: The Hotels of Muizenberg (or the reason for Muizenberg's existence)

<http://youtu.be/zXyDtUsNfGM>

Part 2: The People of Muizenberg (or the sea, the luft, and a few of the characters of Muizenberg)

http://youtu.be/LUfHZsrQ_r4

Part 3: The Muizenberg Synagogue (or the beautiful *Shul* that has never closed its doors)

<http://youtu.be/BenL87Km8oY>

Part 4: Muizenberg today (or from *shtetl* to the beautiful surfers paradise of today)

<http://youtu.be/EVivuLHoJQw>

The greats of Jewish South African rugby

The program recently celebrates the Springbok Rugby *Minyan*, i.e. ten Jewish rugby players who have represented South Africa. This program can be viewed as follows:

Part 1:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9chjedobW0>

Part 2:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WNFfmEhHos>

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A South African describes his Ancestry DNA test results

Matthew Bode, a former South African (from Durban), now living in Australia, describes his Ancestry DNA test results in a short video. While not directly related to Jewish families, his story is interesting. You can watch his video at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVIon9TWEC>
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Skullcap, Kippah, or Yarmulke?

The three words in the title are all words used for the same Jewish head covering. Are these words interchangeable?

While not related to South African genealogical research per se, the discussion in this Mosaic Magazine article is interesting, informative, and entertaining, and covers the history, etymology, and current usage of these three terms. Hope you enjoy it!

<http://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/2016/01/skullcap-kippah-or-yarmulke/>

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Name Voyager: An interactive graph of baby names

I came across this interesting interactive web tool which dynamically plots the frequency of the use of a given baby name over time. You type in the name of interest and the tool plots the usage of the name from the 1880's until the present. You can try out the wizard at:

<http://www.babynamewizard.com/voyager>

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Twins Born in Different Years

Dick Eastman reports the story of two twins who were born a few minutes apart on a Thursday evening / Friday morning in San Diego, California. The confusing part is that the clock struck midnight during those few minutes, and not only were Jaelyn and Luis Salgado born on different days, they also were born in different years! They became the last baby of 2015 and the first baby of 2016 at San Diego's Kaiser Permanente Zion Medical Center.

More details and a short video can be seen at:

<http://tinyurl.com/twins-years>

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South African Genealogy in the USA

A February 13, 2016 post by Keith Meintjes on the eGGSA Facebook page provides the following information:

Some years ago, Francois Greeff posted a message on an Internet list. He said you should write a letter to go with your will. Specify how your genealogy records should be catalogued, sorted, published, and preserved.

And, then he said: "Do it yourself, now! They won't do it."

With that in mind, I was looking at my remarkable library on South African genealogy, about ten meters of shelf space, all the classics and some books that are now impossibly rare. After some searching, I offered the collection to the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA. That is less than 200 miles (300 km) from where I live, near Detroit, Michigan, USA.

ACPL has not only accepted the donation, they are enthusiastically embracing it. So, I am in the process of adding more items to the collection, and we are also organizing a workshop on SA genealogy at the ACPL during this northern summer (July – August 2016).

The library building occupies a complete city block. There are two floors above ground; the top floor is devoted to genealogy. There are also two basement floors below ground, one of which is devoted to genealogy.

About 250 titles have been cataloged so far, and many more electronic titles are to follow. For those in, or visiting, the USA and Canada, the intent is that this will become a destination for their South African genealogy research.

Fort Wayne is in Northwest Indiana, equally inconvenient to Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati and Indianapolis. It is an interesting story how that community has chosen to tax themselves four times the national average to support their cultural resources like the ACPL.

You can look at the catalog here:

<http://alpl.ent.sirsi.net/client/genealogy/search/results?qu=%22South+Africa%22&te=ILS>

This is a work in process as the library works to organize their South Africa collection. I should note that both the physical books and the electronic items are only available to patrons on site and inside the area of the library that houses the ACPL genealogy collection.

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A study finds that Ashkenazi Jews descend from just 350 people

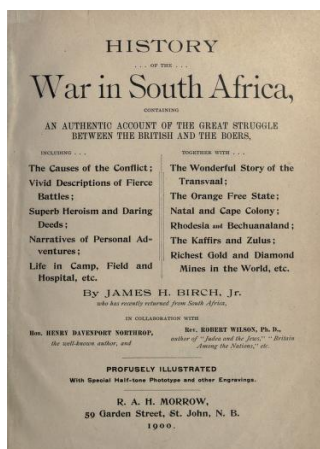
The *Times of Israel* reports that a new study concludes that all Ashkenazi Jews can trace their ancestry to a “bottleneck” of just 350 individuals, dating back to between 600 and 800 years ago. The researchers concluded that among Ashkenazi Jews, “everyone is a 30th cousin.”

The full article can be found at:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/ashkenazi-jews-descend-from-350-people-study-finds/>

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Historic book about the Boer Wars



The Internet Archive, a non-profit library of millions of free books, movies, software, music, and more, has placed on-line the complete scan of a historic 824-page book about the Boer Wars titled *History of the War in South Africa containing an authentic account of the great struggle between the British and the Boers*. Written by James H. Birch, the book was published in 1900. A free download

of the complete book, which is fully searchable, is available at:

<https://archive.org/details/historyofwarinso00bircuoft>

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Blog postings on strategies to find Eastern European records

Lara Diamond maintains an interesting blog about Jewish genealogy research titled *Lara's Jewnealogy* which is hosted at:

<http://larasgenealogy.blogspot.com/>

An interesting series of blog postings covered strategies for locating the sources of Eastern European records, and can be found at:

<http://larasgenealogy.blogspot.com/2015/10/FindingEasternEuropeanRecords.html>

The series contained five separate postings which addressed the following topics:

- Part 1: LDS Microfilms
- Part 2: JewishGen
- Part 3: Yizkor Books and KehilaLinks
- Part 4: FamilySearch.org and Ancestry.com
- Part 5: Locating records in European Archives

Lara also gives the award for going through the most difficulty to get a birth registered to Eizik Fuchs, the brother of her great-great grandmother Rochel Fuchs Rutner! The interesting story of Eizik's journey to get his birth registered, which spanned an ocean and more than seven decades, can be seen at:

<http://larasgenealogy.blogspot.com/2016/04/award-for-greatest-distance-and-time.html>

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How to Fail at Family History Research in 10 Simple Steps

This item appeared in a recent edition of the *Avotaynu E-zine, Nu? What's New?:*

With all of the “How to” articles written on successfully doing genealogical research, Family History Daily concluded it would be worthwhile to identify 10 things to avoid when doing family history research.

Some may be obvious to you; others may make you think. The article can be found at:

<http://familyhistorydaily.com/genealogy-help-and-how-to/how-to-fail-at-family-history-research-in-10-simple-steps/>

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FamilySearch Wiki page on South African Genealogy

The FamilySearch Wiki provides a comprehensive guide to South African ancestry, family history, and genealogy research, including links to information about birth records, marriage records, death records, census records, parish registers, and military records. The page features a section titled *Getting Started with South Africa Research*, as well as links to tools, articles, and other websites that assist with South Africa research. The page can be found at:

https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/South_Africa

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Updated South African Jewish Report web site

The *South African Jewish Report* newspaper launched a new website a few years ago, together with the opportunity for readers to receive a new weekly newsletter. The web site provides access to the latest articles published, and readers can also subscribe to the newsletter directly from the site, or download a PDF version of the latest print edition of the newspaper. The newsletter is distributed by e-mail. The web site has to date published over 15,000 content items, and can be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.sajr.co.za/>

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Video about Cape Town Jewish community

The *Haaretz* newspaper describes a *Jewish Discoveries* video titled “Cape Jews: A Journey to South Africa” which reviews the history of the Cape Town Jewish community. A description of the video’s highlights, as well as a link to the video can be found on the following page:

<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/travel/jewish-world/1.624529>

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The eGSSA Passenger List Project

The eGSSA branch of the Genealogical Society of South Africa has embarked on a project to transcribe all the passenger lists in the South African Archives, and make the data from these records available in a searchable database. To date, information has been found at the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository and at the Roeland Street Archives in Cape Town. Due to agreements signed with the archives, the project will only be publishing the transcribed data and not the original images.

In addition, transcriptions of passenger lists from a number of other primary sources are proceeding in order to expand the scope of the database.

The project’s home page, from which the database can be searched, can be found at:

<http://www.eggasa.org/arrivals/eGGSA%20Passenger%20Project.html>

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Book about the immigration of Jews from South Africa to Canada

The book, *From Diaspora to Diaspora: the immigration of Jews from South Africa to Canada*, by Stuart Schoenfeld, Joan Schoenfeld, and Gail McCabe, has been uploaded to the *Academia.edu* web site, and is available via a free download.

The abstract of the book states the following:

By examining what it meant to Jews in the period from 1970 to 1990 to move from one diaspora — the Jewish Community of South Africa — to another — the Jewish community of Canada, we get a detailed case study of a much larger phenomenon: the way in which transnational cultural and social networks affect group identification. How do people who think of themselves as part of a diaspora explain why they have chosen not to go to a homeland that wants them but to go to another diaspora country? How do they understand their relationship to those in the diaspora that they have left and to those in the diaspora they have entered? How do they explain their relationship to the “homeland” and its people and to the diaspora as a global transnational network?

The 30-page book is downloadable, after creation of a free Academia.edu account, from the following web page:

<http://tinyurl.com/Canada-Jews>

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Signs You Might Be Addicted to Genealogy

For your amusement, a Geni.com blog entry, lists the warning signs that may indicate that you are addicted to your genealogy research! Feel free to add your own items to the list!

<http://www.geni.com/blog/signs-you-might-be-addicted-to-genealogy-389518.html>

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Articles on the town of Graaff-Reinet

The new Graaff-Reinet *KehilaLinks* page contains two interesting articles about the town, viz.

Graff-Reinet's tribute to the Jewish smouse

An impressive delegation of local dignitaries were in attendance of the re-unveiling last week of Graaff-Reinet's unique monument to the Jewish *smouse*, those itinerant pedlars who were a familiar feature of the rural economy a century and more ago. Also present were Country Communities Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft and Brenda Horwitz, the last remaining Jewish resident of Graaff-Reinet. Brenda Horwitz's late husband, Frank, was a prominent citizen in the town and also served a number of terms as its mayor.

Tracing Graaff Reinet's Jewish Heritage

At the headquarters of Rembrandt International in Stellenbosch, an unusual meeting took place in Dr. Anton Rupert's private office recently. The occasion was the completion and official launch of the brochure on the Jewish Community of Graff-Reinet – A Brief History – a smart, illustrated publication.

The above two articles can be found on the *KehilaLinks* page at:

http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/graaff_reinet/Smouse.html

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Amy Crow research blog

Amy Johnson Crow is a professional genealogist who maintains an interesting blog containing articles and tips about genealogy research. Amy also contributes to numerous other research blogs. You may find her following two articles interesting:

Three Things to Periodically Do in Your Genealogy Research

Genealogy is far from a routine pursuit. There is always something new to learn, whether it is a new resource or a new method to try out. For [Amy], that's part of what makes genealogy so enjoyable! But for as much fun as it is to learn about new things and add more people to the family tree, we need to make sure that we do some things on a regular basis. Just like regularly changing your furnace filter, these three items will keep your research humming along and not burning out.

<http://blogs.ancestry.com/ancestry/2016/04/21/3-things-to-periodically-do-in-your-genealogy-research/>

5 Types of Maps Every Genealogist Should Know

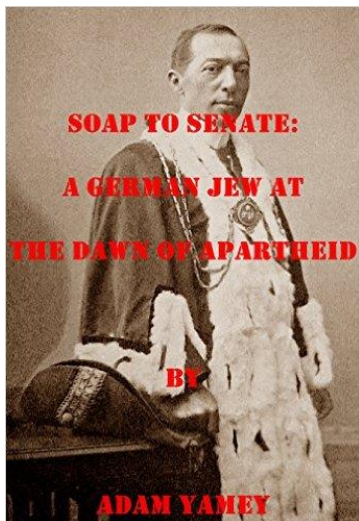
Maps are incredibly useful in our genealogy. They can put our ancestors in context with their surroundings like few other sources can. There are numerous types of maps, each with its own benefits to our research. Here are 5 types that you should know.

<http://www.amyjohnsoncrow.com/2016/05/05/5-types-maps-every-genealogist-know/>

New Book

**SOAP TO SENATE: A GERMAN
JEW AT THE DAWN OF
APARTHEID**

By Adam Yamey



Published in April 2016 by Adam Yamey, and available from Amazon.com (in Kindle form), and as a paperback from Lulu.com, as follows:

Amazon.com: <http://tinyurl.com/Yamey-Amazon>

Lulu.com: <http://tinyurl.com/Yamey-Lulu>

More information about the contents of the book can be found at:

<http://www.adamyamey.com/page20.htm>

The following description of the book is provided on Amazon.com:

This is the story of a remarkable man. He was a politician who lived in South Africa during the years leading up to apartheid.

Franz Ginsberg left Germany in 1880. He settled in South Africa as an 18-year-old photographer, escaping the restrictions on Jews, only to adopt a homeland with escalating restrictions on 'black' and other non-European people. Franz flourished as a manufacturer of a large variety of domestic products, becoming well-known as an industrial pioneer. Soon, his concern for people's welfare plunged him to politics. From 1927 onwards, as one of the 32 elected Senators of the Union of South Africa, he

attempted to mitigate the racist policies that many of his fellow legislators promoted. During his progression from Town Councillor to Senator, Franz questioned the law-making processes that were to lead eventually, after his death in 1936, to the establishment of apartheid. Franz Ginsberg, the author's great-grandfather, battled for a better world in a time not yet ready for that change - leaving a unique story and legacy on the blueprint of our modern world.

This is more than a biography: it offers a new insight into the genesis of apartheid in South Africa.

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Adam Yamey's web site can be found at:

<http://www.adamyamey.com/>

Note that the SA-SIG Board has no financial interest in this book.

KEEP IT BRIEF...

Adam Yamey

When I was a child in the early 1960s, I loved chatting over the telephone. My father, whose childhood was spent in South Africa, did not share my enthusiasm for this; he kept his calls brief and to the point, and continues to do so today. I remember him telling me at least once that the telephone was designed to be used for giving short messages and for emergencies only, not for chatting. I often wondered why he had that idea.

Recently, as part of my research for a biography of my great-grandfather Senator Franz Ginsberg (1862-1936), I was leafing through some old issues of the *Cape Mercury* (published in King Williams Town in South Africa) dating back to 1924, when my father was a child. Almost every issue had a large advertisement giving the prices of three minute telephone calls from King Williams Town to other parts of South Africa. When I saw the prices, I began to understand my father's feelings about telephone usage.

Authorised Medium for Government, Municipal and Divisional
 KING WILLIAM'S TOWN, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2, 1924.

TRUNK TELEPHONE CALLS.

THE "KING" TARIFF.

For the benefit and convenience of our readers we give below the complete tariff of telephone trunk calls which can be made from King William's Town, and in this connection attention is drawn to the fact that there is a considerable reduction in the charges between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m. Thus, a 4s. call (Zuurpoort) can be made for 2s. 9d., 3s. 6d. calls (Graaff-Reinet, Humansdorp, Klipplaat, Marais, McKinnon's Post, Gatlands, Oudeberg, Willows, Bowdenhall), can be made for 2s. 6d., 3s. for 2s., 2s. 6d. for 1s. 9d., 2s. for 1s. 6d., 1s. 9d. for 1s. 3d., 1s. 6d. and 1s. 3d. for 1s., 1s. for 9d., and 9d. for 6d. Subscribers are also now able to book trunk calls in advance at a specified time, and, although 25 per cent. more is charged for these calls, the advantages are obvious. For details of this scheme subscribers should consult the operators. The full tariff for a three minutes' conversation to the undermentioned call offices from King William's Town is as follows:—

| | | |
|--------------------|-------|---------------|
| | s. d. | |
| Adendorp | 3 9 | |
| New Bethesda | 3 0 | BUILDING |
| Oranje | 2 0 | S |
| Oatlands | 3 0 | |
| Oudeberg | 3 0 | |
| Peolton Rail | 3 | Manito |
| Pearston | 2 6 | Perhaps the |
| Peddie | 6 | mind of the |
| Poplar Grove | 1 0 | that of our |
| Port Alfred | 1 0 | man behold |
| Port Elizabeth | 2 6 | Maker and |
| Post Retief | 1 0 | and sustena |
| Queenstown | 1 3 | family, write |
| Nedhouse | 2 6 | in the Glasg |
| Niebeek East | 1 3 | Manitoba |
| Rosmead | 3 0 | er down. W |
| Sheldon Rail | 1 6 | it can prod |
| Schoombie | 3 0 | year. The r |
| Salem | 1 3 | branch lines |
| Sandlats | 1 9 | Province as |
| Sapkamma | 2 6 | goods on the |
| Selborne | 2 0 | quickly settl |
| Seymour | 9 | a network |
| Sidbury | 1 6 | 1,000 miles. |
| Somerset East | 2 0 | in most of |
| Southwell | 1 0 | as the larg |
| Sterkstroom | 1 9 | and wires |
| Stormberg Junction | 2 6 | more remot |
| St. Matthew's | 6 | of what is |
| Spring Valley | 1 3 | Manito |
| Stutterheim | 6 | educational |
| Springmount Rail | 1 6 | school syste |
| Steynsburg | 2 6 | in the less |
| Tarkastad | 1 6 | veyance is |
| Thomas River Rail | 6 | morning, 4 |
| Thornhill | 3 0 | |
| Tidbury's Toll | 9 | |
| Toise River Rail | 6 | |
| Tylden | 1 0 | |
| Thorne Rail | 2 6 | |

The same decaying newspapers that contained the telephone tariffs, also contained the daily market prices for foodstuffs and other commodities in the market at King Williams Town. These prices of everyday foodstuffs and so on put the prices of telephone calls into realistic perspective. For the same price as between 1 to 6 cabbages, sixpence, one could make a 3 minute call to nearby Peddie. The two shillings and sixpence that you might have spent on a three minute call to Port Elizabeth could have bought you any of the following: a dozen eggs; a live chicken (a good breed); a pound (454 grams) of butter; at least 33 pounds of forage for animals; or almost 100 pounds of tomatoes.

Morning Market
 WEDNESDAY.

Forage, loose, 7s 6d per 100lbs.
 Birdseed, 2½d per lb.
 Mealies, yellow, 9s; white, 9s 6d to 9s 9d per 100lbs.
 Beans, yellow, 18s; sugar, 17s per 100lbs.
 Potatoes, up-to-date, 6s to 9s; 2nd quality, 3s to 4s per 100lbs.
 Fowls, traders, 1s to 1s 10d; good breed, 2s 6d each.
 Butter, fresh, 1s 4d to 2s per lb.
 Eggs, fresh, 2s 2d to 2s 7d per doz.
 Pumpkins, medium, 3s to 3s 9d; small, 1s 6d to 2s 6d per dozen.
 Marrows, 1s 3d to 1s 9d per dozen.
 Cabbages, 1d to 4d each.
 Carrots, 1d per lot.
 Beetroot, 1d to 2d per lot.
 Turnips, 2d per lot.
 Peas, green, ½d to 2d per lot.
 Tomatoes, 6d to 1s 6d per box.
 Apples, 3s to 5s 6d per box.
 Grapes, 2s 6d to 4s 9d per box.
 Wood, cut, 8s to 20s; uncut, 10s to 32s per load.
 GILBERT FOX & SON,
 Market Agents.

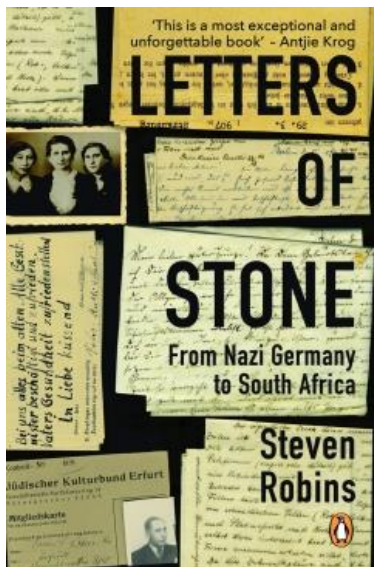
In 1924, when my father was a child, telephone calls were really expensive!



Adam Yamey, who lives in London, is a frequent contributor to the SA-SIG Newsletter. His web site can be found at: <http://www.adamyamey.com>

New Book
LETTERS OF STONE
From Nazi Germany to South Africa

by Steven Robins



Published in January 2016 by Penguin Books, and available from the following retailers:

Takealot: <http://www.takealot.com>
Loot: <http://www.loot.co.za>
Exclusive Books: <http://www.exclusives.co.za>

A description of the book, taken from the Penguin books web site is as follows:

As a young boy growing up in Port Elizabeth in the 1960s and 1970s, Steven Robins was haunted by an old postcard-size photograph of three unknown women on a table in the dining room. Only later did he learn that the women were his father's mother and sisters, photographed in Berlin in 1937, before they were killed in the Holocaust. Steven's father, who had fled Nazi Germany before it was too late, never spoke about the fate of his family who remained there.

Steven became obsessed with finding out what happened to the women, but had little to go on. In time he stumbled on bare facts in museums in Washington DC and Berlin, and later he discovered over a hundred letters sent to his father and uncle from the family in Berlin between 1936 and 1943.

The women who before had been unnamed faces in a photograph could now tell their story to future generations. Letters of Stone tracks Steven's journey of discovery about the lives and fates of the Robinski family. Most of all, this book is a poignant reconstruction of a family trapped in an increasingly terrifying and deadly Nazi state, and of the immense pressure on Steven's father in faraway South Africa, which forced him to retreat into silence.

A review of the book by Marianne Thamm, an assistant editor of the *Daily Maverick* web site can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/Thamm-Maverick>

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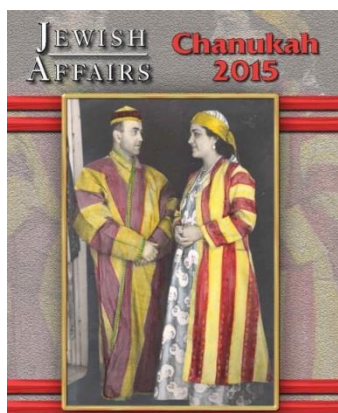
Steven Robins is a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the University of Stellenbosch. He has published on a wide range of topics including the politics of land, development and identity in Zimbabwe and South Africa; the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC); urban studies and most recently on citizenship and governance. His biography can be found at:

<http://sun025.sun.ac.za/portal/page/portal/Arts/English/research/nrf/robins>

Note that the SA-SIG Board has no financial interest in this book.

New Issue

CHANUKAH 2015 ISSUE OF JEWISH AFFAIRS



The Chanukah 2015 issue of the newspaper *Jewish Affairs*, published in December 2015 by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, focuses on the Lithuanian heritage of most South African Jews. A summary of the contents of the issue, provided by the SAJBD, is as follows:

The Jewish Lithuanian legacy comprises a substantial part of this issue. Amidst the inevitable reflections on a community that did not die a natural death but was deliberately destroyed, in part with the connivance of the local population, it is encouraging to feature an example of modern-day Lithuania formally recognising one of its Jewish citizens who achieved renown after emigrating. This is related by Kathy Munroe in her article 'Herman Kallenbach: Lithuania Remembers a Forgotten Son', on the life of a pioneering Johannesburg architect and human rights activist who played a significant part in the early career of M K Gandhi. Memories of the Lithuanian shtetlach, as well as efforts currently underway to educate and commemorate their legacy, are dealt with by Veronica Belling in 'There was Once a Home....' – Memories of the Lithuanian shtetls in the Afrikaner Idishe Tsaytung, 1952-4' and In 'Remembering Birzh' by Bennie Rabinowitz, Gwynne Schrire and Veronica Belling. A reprinted chapter from the memoirs of the late Alec Natas is a droll recounting of a Chanukah episode from his Lithuanian childhood, while a recently discovered letter from a Holocaust survivor in Kovno unsparingly records the complicity of non-Jewish Lithuanians in assisting the

Germans in the murder of their Jewish neighbours (as well as the looting of their property).

The most comprehensive account of the landmark 'Greyshirts' libel trial, held in Grahamstown in 1934, appears in Hadassa Ben-Itto's acclaimed book *The Lie That Wouldn't Die: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (2005). In this issue, with Judge Ben-Itto's kind permission, we publish the first of a three-part feature reprinting the relevant chapter recounting how the SAJBD assisted Port Elizabeth's Reverend Abraham Levy in bringing a criminal libel charge against local pro-Nazi activists who had falsely accused him of authoring a document whose contents were based on the antisemitic conspiracy theories of *The Protocols*.

David A Sher, who has previously written on aspects of Jewish religious and communal life in SA, focuses on the life of the eminent 19th Century religious leader Nathan Marcus Adler, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire. To mark the centenary of the famous Gallipoli Campaign in World War I, an operation that involved and impacted on the Jewish people in significant ways, there is Gwynne Schrire's 'Dardanelles, Dried Flowers and a Dried Leaf: Who was J Rabinowitz Drechsler?' In the contemporary SA Jewish art field, Ute Ben Yosef again brings to bear her insight and expertise in 'Keeper of the Hearth: The Art of Gwen van Embden'.

Eugenie Freed's short story 'Honey Cake' is set in pre-war Cape Town. It movingly describes the parallel struggles of a child seeking to break through the veil of secrecy imposed by her family to learn more about her origins and of a young Lithuanian-Jewish woman to overcome the challenges of a loveless marriage and difficulties of adapting to a still foreign land to forge her own destiny.

The link to the full issue can be found here:

<http://www.jewishsa.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Jewish-Affairs-Chanukah-2015.pdf>

The SAJBD home page can be found at this link:


<http://www.jewishsa.co.za/>

Save the Date!
August 7-12, 2016

**The 36th IAJGS
International Conference
on Jewish Genealogy**

IAJGS Seattle 2016

**Sheraton Hotel
Seattle, Washington, USA**



Come to Seattle for the conference – then stay to explore the wonders of the Pacific Northwest

Connect with your extended Jewish family in beautiful downtown Seattle

- Lectures, workshops and presentations
- Hands-on help with the latest genealogical technology, translations, databases and search tools
- Exhibits and films
- Special programs devoted to Sephardi families, the westward migration of Jews, patterns of relocation in Europe and around the world

For more information see www.iajgs2016.org or email info@iajgs2016.org to reach the three conference chairs: Janette Silverman, Chuck Weinstein, Phyllis Grossman

Conference web site: www.iajgs2016.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Levitts family

In a 1955 issue of the *Southern Israelite* newspaper, published in Atlanta, Georgia, I found the following item about my grandmother, Lena Kaplan:

Mrs. Lena Kaplan of Atlanta has returned home after 6 months' visit with relatives. In South Africa, she visited with her brother and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Klassnick in Bloemfontein; her brother H. Levitts, in Nisel (sic); her niece and nephew, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Margolis, in Johannesburg; and Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Levin in Cape Town.

I would guess, but am not sure, that the name "Nisel" likely refers to the town of Nigel.

Does anyone have any information about the Levitts family who lived in that town, and who the individual "H. Levitts" may have been? I believe that the original ancestral family name of this family was Mischelevich, who were from the towns of Kedainiai and Vandziogala, in the Kovno gubernia, in Lithuania.

Please contact me if you have any information about this family. Thanks!

*Ronald Kaplan
Atlanta, Georgia
rik@kaplanlegal.com*

SURNAMES APPEARING IN THIS NEWSLETTER

Vol. 14, Issue 4 – June 2016

The numbers in parentheses refer to the page numbers where the surname appears.

Aber (39), Adar (39), Agayev (39), Agmon (6), Alon (8), Alperstein (6, 7), Alter (6), Aviram (39), Babrow (6), Baker (27, 28), Baleson (2), Bar-El (39), Bar-On (39), Baumgarten (27), Beinart (6), Belling (19, 20, 58), Ben-Atar (39), Berelowitz (6, 7, 38), Berman (6, 39), Birch (52), Bloch (6, 38, 42), Blumberg (27), Bode (51), Borkowf (27), Braude (45), Buller (26, 28), Calo (39), Cengel (4, 31, 34), Chagy (47), Chait (12, 38), Chemel (39), Cohen (2, 7, 8, 29, 38), Comay (39), Crow (54), Damelin (6), Damlin (39), Davis (50), Dunsky (11), Eastman (51), Eidelman (39), Eife (6), Eilon (39), Epstein (2, 12), Fabian (6), Fanerov (6), Feinberg (16, 17, 30), Feldman (39), Fine (6), Fitzpatrick (26), Fleisch (8, 9), Fredman (39), Freed (39, 58), Freedman (16), Friedlander (26, 27, 28, 29), Friedman (38), Gadri (39), Galp (6), Gamsu (5), Gelbart (20), Getz (2), Gilbert (30), Ginsberg (55), Gitlin (14, 23), Glazer (38), Golan (39), Goldberg (2, 5, 27), Goldblatt (6), Goldman (2, 39), Goldreich (41), Goldstone (40), Goldstuck (27), Gordin (39), Gordon (24), Gotsman (39), Greeff (51), Greenberg (10), Gross (6), Hack (38), Hanekom (28), Harari (39), Harris (2, 6, 29), Hart (2), Hengy (22), Herbstein (10), Hillman (25), Hodes (8,9), Hoffman (27), Horwitz (54), Ifrah (39), Issroff (2, 3), Itzhaki (24), Jacobsohn (27), Jankelowitz (43), Japhet (48), Jassenowsky (27), Jegger (15), Joffe (5, 6, 17, 27), Jossel (47), Judelman (6), Judkowski (6), Kahan (38), Kahn (30), Kamnitzer (24), Kaplan (4, 6, 7, 13, 17, 18,19,24,40,41, 60), Kaploun (38), Kaspin (22), Katz (4, 25, 35, 38, 39), Katzenellenbogen (21), Kaufman (39), Kaye (39), Kazlauskiene (19), Kenisberg (39), Keren (15), Kerzner (14), Kidron (6), Kitchener (27, 28), Klassnick (60), Kolnick (6, 29), Konończuk (21, 22), Kruger (15), Lacki (24), Lahak (39), Landau (27), Landsbergis (18), Lansky (4, 42, 45), Lavi (38), Leeder (31), Leibowitz (38), Lemkin (38), Lemkuhl (49), Lenart (8), Levin (38), Levinson (7, 38), Levitts (60), Levy (38), Lichtzier (22), Lifshitz (6), Lipshitz (6, 7, 38, 39), Livingston (12), Loew (39), Lowenberg (27, 39), Lowenstein (6, 7), Machanik (19), Maeresera (31, 32, 34), Magid (6), Marazani (34), Marks (14, 15), McCabe (53), McCann (49), Meintjes (51), Meir (39), Melcer (39), Mendel (21), Messerer (39), Methuen (26, 28), Meyerowitz (30), Miles (28), Miller (6, 39), Milner (26, 28), Milunsky (8, 9), Mishieker (39), Moss-Morris (5), Myers (39), Myhre (3, 13, 18, 19), Natas (58), Navon (6), Novick (39), Nurick (6, 7), Nurock (6), Ogin (5), Ogus (2, 5, 42, 46, 47), Ostilly (30), Ostroff (40, 41), Parfitt (33), Parker (43), Peres (44), Pinkasovitch (47), Pinn (22), Plen (2, 4, 29, 30), Polon (5), Preiss (39), Rabinowitz (2, 3, 21, 22,23, 25, 27, 29, 39, 47, 58), Ratzer (4, 35, 39), Rieback (6), Roberts (27, 28), Robins (57), Rockman (39), Rosenberg (5, 6, 10, 38), Rothenberg (39), Rubin (39), Rubinowitz (16), Rudansky (27), Sachs (6), Sadat (37), Salber (7), Sanders (38), Sandler (30, 31, 47), Sarid (19), Schmiedt (17), Schneider (19, 21), Schoenfeld (53), Schreiner (27, 28), Schrire (58), Segal (7, 11), Seligman (12), Sevin (12), Shain (16), Shanan (39), Shandel (6), Shapira (39), Shefts (39), Shemer (39), Sher (24, 58), Shomroni (39), Shur (38), Sidlin (38), Silber (38), Silberhaft (54), Silberman (6, 7, 11), Silbert (6), Silbowitz (39), Silver (49), Slavin (39), Slovo (14, 29), Solomon (39), Southey (28), Stein (6), Stepansky (21, 22), Stutzen (11), Suzman (14), Tamari (39), Thal (27), Thamm (57), Tiger (6), Tooch (6), Treuherz (6), Urie (39), Van Zyl (26, 28), Vermuelen (26, 28), Wachs (6), Wainerman (12), Walt (39), Wauchope (28), Weiler (38, 39), Weinberger (39), Weizman (8), Werbranchik (5), Whiteson (39), Wittert (39), Wolpowitz (44), Woolf (3, 5, 12), Wuriga (31), Yacob (39, 55, 56), Yanis (42), Zagnoev (6), Zipper (6, 10, 39), Zlotnik (39), Zuckerman (11), Zvakavapano (33)