Highlights of the Seventh Jewish Genealogical Summer Seminar

The recent seminar held in Washington, D.C. was an unqualified success. About 255 people, the majority from the United States, included five Canadians, several Israelis, and one participant from the U.K. It was a valuable opportunity to meet old friends and to start new genealogical friendships, as well as (for those who had attended the 1982 seminar), refamiliarize oneself with the rich resources available in Washington.

For U.S. research, undoubtedly, the Library of Congress and the National Archives are very important facilities. Both centres seemingly were utilized to the maximum during the week by the participants. I noted with genuine amazement and gratitude the cooperation that exists between these two bodies and the leadership of the JGS of greater Washington. Essentially, the Library of Congress, housed in three separate buildings, but inter-connected by subterranean tunnels, has a wealth of information, including: newspapers and periodicals; Hebraic; Maps and Gazetteers; local history and genealogy and European sections. One is thus able to access City Directories and telephone books for the United States and major European cities, both current and non-current. Unfortunately, the attractive reading Room in the Rotunda was closed due to renovations.

The National Archives is a repository of Federal Government records, including census records, passenger lists and passport applications. Also available are the Russian Consular records and Holocaust and cartographic material. Most records are available on microfilm.

A trip to the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis proved rewarding for participants with Maryland ancestry.

A series of lectures and discussions occupied the afternoons and evenings and frequently ran overtime. A most informative lecture was given by Mr. Lawrence Tapper, of the National Archives in Ottawa, on Canadian resources for Jewish Genealogists. His talk is available on tape (as are all the different lectures) from 'Triad'. The Czechoslovakian Consul in Washington spoke on genealogical research in his country and on his willingness to facilitate enquiries, etc. Several very interesting talks dealt with trips to Europe including Poland, Romania and the USSR.

The Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies also met during the Seminar. A new executive has been selected: Gary Mokotoff, President; Suzan Wynne, Vice-President; Laura Klein, Secretary; Freya Maslov, Treasurer. Gary Mokotoff discussed the direction he would like to see the Organization take.

At the closing banquet, Rabbi Malcolm Stern (the 'father of Jewish Genealogy') reviewed his involvement with Jewish genealogy and his satisfaction with the phenomenal growth experienced since the founding of the first Society in 1977.

All in all, it was a gratifying and rewarding experience and hopefully the seminars planned for 1989 in Philadelphia and 1990 in Los Angeles will be equally exciting.

Dr. Rolf Lederer
President, JGS of Toronto
News and Views

Upcoming Meetings:

**October 26:**
Rabbi I. Witty, Executive Director, Jewish Board of Education, will speak on his recent trip to Poland and Czechoslovakia.

**November 23 + December 21:**
to be announced

We are planning an exciting schedule for 1989, including lectures by Miriam Weiner, Lawrence Tapper and Dr. Danny Lowe.

We will discuss the Toronto Cemetery Project, and a workshop on the use of computers in Genealogy is being planned.

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**Jacobson Family Reunion in Toronto**

Of the ca. 5000 members worldwide of the Jacobsons who started out as the Jacobs Family in Dorbyan, on the Baltic coast of Lithuania, an estimated 300 are hoped to meet at a gathering in Toronto from August 26 - 28. Mr. Raymond Whitman, who also heads the Jewish Genealogical Society of Montreal, has spent seven years researching his family who has spread to Israel, South Africa, U.S.A. and Canada since leaving "the old country" in the 1890's.

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**Family Finder**

Bill Gladstone, who has researched his own family extensively for many years has volunteered to begin a family finder for our Toronto Society. The aim is to build a data base of our members in Canada, many of whom may well share common roots. We urge all of you to support his effort and all who have not yet submitted the information cards to do so by our next meeting.

The (computerized) Jewish Genealogical Family Finder begun by Gary Mokotoff of N.Y. should be a must for any serious researcher. As your membership to your JGS entitles you to submit up to eight entries, don't hesitate to ask for the submission forms at our next meeting and do peruse the updated version of the computer printout...the world is waiting for your response.

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**Mazal Tov!**

Mazal Tov to our treasurer Annette Otis who got married this summer!

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Rayzel Robinson and Simcha Paull have left for a year in Israel on a Sabbatical.

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**New Members:**

We are pleased to welcome Judy Persia of Sacramento, CA. who joined our society in July, in search of her Canadian roots.

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**Obituary**

It was with great regret that we learned of the passing of Maude Leibert. We wish to extend our sincere condolences to her family.

Ms. Leibert enjoyed many of our meetings and our Society has donated a book in her memory to the Toronto Jewish Public Library.

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The executive of the JGS of Toronto wish all our members a year of good health, contentment and peace. L'shana Tova!

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**Forum**

"When the heart is full, the mouth runneth over..."

Any joyful experience in the course of genealogical research is not only worth sharing, - it is your way to communicate with the rest of your society! Questions and answers to situations in your continuing quest for your roots will find a wider audience if they were aired here in the forum. After all, - no man is an island....
Archives + Addresses:

Russian Business Directories as Aids in Genealogical Research.

AVOTAYNU’s summer issue, Vol IV, No. 2 again excels in new information for researchers in many a field. Three items of note bear repeating: Of particular significance to most North American Jewish genealogists are the five pages devoted to their writer’s most recent and most successful experiences with seemingly new records of Russian Business Directories. These were only just discovered as hard copies and on Microfilm at the Library of Congress and at other Western Libraries such as the New York Public Library! The most extensive collection is apparently housed at the University of Helsinki in Finland, having once been one of the six Imperial repository libraries of Tsarist Russia. Spanning the eventful periods from 1892 to 1936, these Russian Language City Directories for St. Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad and Moscow and the All-Russia-Country Directories can now be perused at leisure and much will obviously be gleaned from these hitherto unknown sources. A veritable light in the semi darkness covering much of East-European research!

To carry the ray of light a step further Rabbi Malcolm H. Stern reports on a meeting at the US National Archives in April this year for initial steps in an USSR/US Archival Exchange of genealogical information. Although an optimistic air persists, much ground must still be covered until the 'Aparatchiks' learn of the lucrative side of genealogy in the West, by opening their archives’ vast holdings to the rest of the world.

Miriam Weiner summarizes sources that are not normally associated with genealogy in her account: “A Network of People Finders”. By stressing the ‘detective approach’, unorthodox areas such as Armed Services Locators, Department of Motor Vehicles, Trade Associations and Voters Registration Records could be tapped to further one’s explorations when all else seemed to have failed.

Books + References:

Sun vs. Moon:

Translating the Jewish calendar to dates of the Common Era has recently become less of a headache for those with the right computer ‘connection’. What used to take laborious efforts can suddenly be done at the touch of a key by way of the right software. Alas, for those of us who happened to be computer illiterate or the embarrassed owners of the ‘wrong hardware’, - not all is lost. As early as 1916 a reference book on the subject, covering dates over a period of 2000 years, was published in Leipzig, Germany. If you have a smattering of German, this may solve your dating problems. Robarts Library has a copy of: HANDBUCH DER JUDISCHEN CHRONOLOGIE, by Eduard Mahler. The call numbers are: CE 35 M 25

A "Who is who" with a difference can also be found at Robarts: SOUTH AFRICAN JEWRY 1965. Considerable genealogical data can be gleaned from the pages of this perhaps not-so-new source, often interspersed with black and white photographs of many of the prominent faces - if South Africa plays an important role in your research. (Disproportionately large numbers of Lithuanian and Latvian Jews immigrated to South Africa in the 1920’s, ancestors of the thousands of immigrants who, over the past fifteen years, began a new life in Canada, specifically so in Toronto.) The call numbers are: DS 135 S 66 1965

In addition to the more recently published sources for vital records in South Africa the following address might prove helpful for such queries of your ancestors as citizenship, birth-, marriage and death certificates. Write to: DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS, Civitas, 242 Struben Street, Private Bag X114, Pretoria 0001, Republic of South Africa.

Another helpful source could be: GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA, P.O.Box 3057, Coetzemburg 7602, Republic of South Africa. Inquiries are often referred to individual members who will handle cases in their private capacities.
We dug into our roots for an International Family Gathering

By Alan L. Simons

One by one, we posed before the video camera, stated our names and from where we came. Some introduced children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters or cousins. Some laughed; others had tears in their eyes.

At our International Family Gatherings more than 250 people come from as far as Australia, Brazil, Bolivia, Israel, France and Britain. Participants' age from seven weeks to over 90 years.

International Family Gatherings of the Gelernter Family take place every three years.

I am an 18th generation descendant and can trace my family history back to 1581. The name Gelernter, which means 'the learned one' in German, is an honorary title given to Zacherie Mendel, an Ashkenazi Jew and Chief Rabbi of four large Jewish communities in Central Europe. Sixteen generations of rabbis descended from Zacherie Mendel, one of them being Rabbi Charles Gelernter, currently living in Millville, New Jersey.

Mendel is the name of a prominent Hungarian family which flourished in the latter half of the 15th century and first half of the 16th century in Ofen, Buda (now Budapest). Members of three generations are known: Jacob, Israel and Isaac Mendel, who held the office Princeps Judaeorum, Supremus Judaeorum or Praefectus Judaeorum between 1482 and 1539. This office, which seemed to have existed only during that period, was created by King Matthias in order to give the Jews an accredited representative at court, who at the same time should be responsible for the payment of taxes. The Praefectus Judaeorum was empowered to impose fines and other penalties on the Jews. As an official of the crown, he was exempted from wearing the Jews' hat.

During the middle 1500's the plight of the Jews in Poland had taken a very positive stature. It was a time of quiet solitude. The Jewish population was relatively well organized in committees and had formed a Council, known as "The Council of the Four Lands", consisting of Great Poland, Little Poland, Volynia and Podolia with Galicia.

The Council met every year in Lublin during the spring fair and lasted about a month. The council consisted of 36 delegates: six rabbis, the rest being lay leaders.

The Council was concerned with the welfare of the Jews as a whole, including collection of annual taxes from the Jews to the government; bribing high officials; defending Jews charged with crimes; and lobbying against hostile legislation.

In August 1551, Jews were permitted to organize their inner affairs in their own way. The edict of Sigismund Augustus has been called the 'Magna Carta' of Jewish self-government of Poland.

The Jews of Great Poland and Masovia (Warsaw) were empowered to elect, whenever a vacancy occurred, their own Chief Rabbi.

The Chief Rabbi was answerable only to the King and not to the court.

By special permission, the community of Posen received approval by the King to appoint for its Chief Rabbi a foreign scholar, a learned one. This was done since according to Jewish Law a resident of the city itself might become unfit to pronounce judgement on blood relations.

Zacherie Mendel of Buda, and a member of one of Hungary's prominent Jewish families was appointed Chief Rabbi and subsequently moved to Posen. The King at that time, Stefan Bathory insisted on equal treatment of his Jewish subjects by the Christian population. Jews could even trade on Christian festivals.

Unfortunately, by 1618, Posen had become the hotbed of anti-Jewish agitation, primarily instigated by Jesuit priests and their students.
Chief Rabbi Zacherie Mendel was awarded the honorary title of the 'Learned One - "Gelernter" in German, in 1581. To this day, none of his worldwide descendants changed this surname.

In the family's possession is a commentary on the scriptures by Rabbi Moshe Gelernter printed in Ramat Gan, Israel, which contains an account of the family history back to 1581.

According to information from London, England, there is some substance to the rumour that Chief Rabbi Mendel is a descendant of Rashi. Rashi lived between 1040-1105, for many years in France. Rashi had three daughters, all brilliant, who married learned men and were mothers of scholars of repute, including one son, Rashban.

I am a Gelernter from my mother's side of the family. My great-grandfather, Leizer (Louis) Gelernter immigrated to England at the age of 23 from Jasnowicz, Poland, with his wife Jane. Leizer was one of 12 brothers and sisters. Most of them scattered throughout the world and never reunited until recently at the International Family Gathering. Those of them who remained in Poland, especially his close relatives who stayed behind in Warsaw, perished under subsequent anti-semitic regimes of Tsar Nicholas III and Hitler.

Being Chief Rabbi of four large communities obviously had its rewards for Zacherie Mendel, especially with respect to marriage and family.

Zacherie Mendel married the daughter of Rabbi Bezalel. Mendel's son married the daughter of Ma'ham. Mendel's granddaughter married Moshe Katzenellenbogen. And his grandson, Zacherie Mendel II, married the sister of Rabbi Ha'asheel.

The Gelernter International Family Gatherings take place over a four-day period, every three years. During the Gathering a series of genealogical workshops occur where family members are able to fit together 'missing pieces' of the family tree. Some family connections are discovered quite by accident.

Boas Gelernter, originally from France, pointed to the French branches of the family tree and mentioned that everyone had gone. However, a Gerald Gelernter from France, stood up and said: "We're not all gone, - I am here."

Later Gerard added that he was amazed at the resemblance Boas had to his own father. "For a moment, I thought my father was standing up, facing me."

I too had an experience of a similar nature. During a workshop I happened to leave on a table some photographs of my Great grandfather, Leizer Gelernter, taken during the early part of the century in London, England. While talking to a family member, I realized the photographs had disappeared, only to be returned a minute later by someone I had yet to be introduced to.

"Excuse me, how did you come to be in possession of these photographs," the lady from California asked me.

"They're of my great grandfather," I replied.

She smiled, one of those suntanned California looks, and asked me to join her family and especially meet her father, Max Gelernter, who I learned was just over 90 years of age.

"Dad, who's this photograph of?" she asked Max.

Max looked at the photograph, and without hesitation said, "It's my father, Samuel Gelernter."

Max looked at me.

"No it isn't. That's my great grandfather, Leizer Gelernter," I remarked.

"And that's my Uncle Leizer, my father's brother," responded Max.

Then Max proceeded to tell us the story of Leizer Gelernter...

(...continued in the next issue of SHEM TOV)
From our meetings:

-LANDSMANNSCHAFTEN-

Mr. JERRY DIAMOND was introduced as the guest speaker of the evening at our well attended meeting on January 27, 1988.

In his introduction Mr. Diamond admitted that although he was not a genealogist it was his natural curiosity on the subject that left him most interested in his own inheritance, and he decided to make the study of Landsmannschaften his retirement project.

While working for Jewish Family & Child Welfare Services for over 30 years he had discovered many selfhelp groups and had encountered many Landsmannschaften early on in his work with the agency.

Mr. Diamond explained the phenomenon of Landsmannschaften, the historical and sociological aspects which still need to be studied. These organisations were basically networks of newly arrived landsleit, people from the same shtetl to help each other, for financial selfhelp, child welfare, medical help, etc.; Burials were arranged according to Halacha despite members' political affiliations. Many groups met just once a month, and women rarely had voting privileges with membership.

Mr. Diamond has located and retrieved records of many Landsmannschaften in Toronto, has begun to make an inventory of the records found and seems to have covered one third of the material, though unfortunately much information has apparently already been lost over time. He suggested that a body such as our Genealogical Society could be instrumental in retrieving more of the existing material, documents so useful to genealogical researchers.

The first Landsmannschaften in Toronto began to form in 1898, mainly of Polish villages. Seals and early minute books of some groups were given to the Toronto Jewish Archives and are housed at the Jewish Library on Bathurst Street. Surprisingly, some minute books were apparently written in code... although basically all are in Yiddish. Much old material is still found every now and then and at times retrieved by Dr. Speisman of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

Mr. Diamond has personally interviewed many presidents of Landsmannschaften and, with the help of maps, has produced 23 oral history tapes for posterity. Out of approximately seventy three organisations, twenty six began before 1931. Most groups were established by 1940/42, though nine Landsmannschaften were begun after World War II. Many consisted of 125-150 families, representing approx. 10,500 families.

Mr. Diamond could not give membership lists but the addresses of most Landsmannschaften can usually be obtained from the Jewish Information Service of Toronto.

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A fascinating and absorbing subject that needs much attention, considering the advanced age at which many of the members of these groups are by now.

We are indeed fortunate that ca. 300 YIZKOR-BOOKS can at present be found at Robarts Library at the University of Toronto, out of a current total of approx. 700 such published works in the world.
In Search of.....

SHEM TOY, the first Canadian Jewish Genealogical Newsletter, introduces what has developed into one of the most popular services for genealogists anywhere: search columns in which readers may advertise their personal field of research in terms of names and localities of families they are seeking, thus discovering others in pursuit of similar or identical families.

Although the enthusiastic proliferation of Jewish genealogical news bulletins all over North America may result in duplications, we feel very strongly, that in spite of this, much ground can still be broken in our own backyard, in a Canadian context so to speak. We may also consider that newsletters such as this will soon become permanent sources of reference, collectors' items in any Genealogical Library.

A search ad in which you can list surnames, towns, geographic areas and other personal information may contain up to 25 words at a cost of $ 5.00, each additional word will be charged at $ 0.25; abbreviations will be counted as words. Your own name, address and Tel. No. are free of course.

As a courtesy to others we strongly suggest to reply to any written inquiry, even if not able to assist.

Please submit your entry printed or typed, showing all SURNAMES underlined in CAPITAL LETTERS. Cheques are payable to: Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto.

Address: P.O.Box 446, Station 'A', Willowdale/Ontario, M2N 5T1, Canada.

The deadline for our Winter issue of SHEM TOY is October 31, 1988

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L-1/fa88
LEDERER, DR. R. A.
100 Antibes Drive, # 1704,
Willowdale, Ontario,
M2R 3N1, Canada,
(416) 863-5185

...Seeking information on descendants of MINNA LEDERER and ISAAC MAYER – Samuel, Albert, Louis and Harry, some of whom lived in Evanston, Ill. (early part of 20th century). LEDERER (Chynow, Bohemia, 17th and 18th century), ROSENTHAL (Mauswinkel, Germany), SILBERMANN (Oberelsbach – Germany).

C-1/fa88
CULLMAN, Peter,
99 Yorkville Ave., Toronto,
M5R 3K5, Canada,
(416) 964-2186

...Seeking information on any descendants of Dr. ISIDOR KALENCSCHER & his wife Dorothea, née SIMONSTEIN, married 1895 in Schneidemuth/Posen. They lived in New York City since ca. 1890.

F-1/fa88
FALK, Julian,
2131 Fifth Avenue,
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15219

......Seeking information on FALK, FALKENSTEIN, ISRAEL, FEIST, ROSENFELD, GRÜNEBAUM, family of Israel FALK or FALK Israel, born 7/5/1823 Meudt, Westerwald, Germany, died 3/21/1908 Nassau, Rheinland Pfalz (formerly Hessen), Germany. Lived also in Singhofen, Dausenau and Nassau. 1st marriage: Johanette ROSENFELD, known children: Isaac, Ferdinand, Elise Esther and Karoline. 2nd marriage: Karoline GRÜNEBAUM, children are: Leopold Israel, Adolf Falk, Moritz and Julius Israel.

F-2/fa88
FINKELSTEIN-ATKIN, Pearl,
Box 950, Briarcliff, N.Y.
10510, U.S.A.

...Seeking Dr. X. & family, great-nephew of HARRY FINKELSTEIN, a.k.a. HERSH PINKU, ex Iasi, (N.Y.C. since 1926). Dr. X. is grandson of DOBRISH PINKU of Iasi, Romania; great-grandson of PERLA & OSSEA PINCU. He is in late 50's – early 60's. His mother (Dobrish's daughter) immigrated to Canada in 1920's or 1930's.

FALK, Julian,
2131 Fifth Avenue,
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15219

......Seeking HERSKOWITZ, HARRIS, MITTLEMAN.
SHEM TOV is the quarterly Newsletter published by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto. The Society was founded in 1985 and currently has 30 paid-up members. Membership fees are $20.00 per calendar year. Meetings are held September to June, on the last Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, 470 Glencairn Avenue, Toronto. Notices of meetings are also announced in the Canadian Jewish News (Miriam Herman Column). Members receive four editions of SHEM TOV per year. Guests are always welcome.

The goals of the Society are to promote an awareness among Jewish community members of the possibilities of tracing ancestors, to foster an ongoing interest in our heritage, to encourage the sharing of research techniques and to disseminate information on genealogical research to family historians and professional genealogists alike. SHEM TOV is dedicated to publish articles of personal research experiences, inform its members of new and tried pertinent research sources and act as part of a growing international network for experienced family historians and beginning genealogists.

The officers of the Society are:

- President: DR. ROLF LEDERER 922-5134
- Vice-President: JULES SAMSON 633-4857
- Project Consultant: ABE GOLDBERG 224-0161
- Secretary: SELMA SACROB 223-0192
- Archivist: BERNIE MORRIS 787-8982
- Phone Chairman: SYLVIA MORRIS 787-8982
- Treasurer: ANNETTE OTIS 782-4646
- Hon. Life President: RAYZEL ROBINSON

Contributors to this issue are:
Alan L. Simons, Rolf Lederer, Peter Cullman.

If you wish to submit an article for the winter issue of SHEM TOV, please send typewritten material to the editor PETER CULLMAN, 99 Yorkville Avenue, Toronto/Ont., M5R 3K5, Canada. Tel. (416) 964-2196. Deadline: October 31, 1988.

For subscriptions, memberships or changes of address please contact the secretary, SELMA SACROB, P.O. Box 446, Station 'A', Willowdale/Ont., M2N 5T1, Canada.