



שם טוב

# SHEM TOV

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF TORONTO

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## Keeping up with the journals

I personally enjoy perusing the plethora of Newsletters, Journals and miscellanea of Jewish genealogical interest that I receive. Besides being kept informed of advances in this ever expanding field, I am also able to glean useful leads with respect to my own research.

I am exploring two avenues at present. The first results directly from information obtained in the literature. Over the past years, I have researched my late mother's family, Garcia de los Reyos, in Hamburg and prior to that in Amsterdam.

A recent publication listing all marriages of the Portuguese-Israelite Congregation 1650-1911 in Amsterdam has identified the marriage in 1760 of Jacob Garcia de los Reijes and Sara Robles (my g. g. g. g. grandparents), and in 1735 Isac Robles and Rachel Alvares Correa (my g. g. g. g. g. grandparents). I hope to obtain copies of these particular 'Ketubot'.

Then I read in Israel's SHARSHERET HADOROT (June 1988), that Joseph Ben-Brit, in Israel, was knowledgeable about Sephardi families. A letter to him brought a very helpful response and has been instrumental in clarifying some of my research. I am now in a position to follow up some leads and even look further afield, perhaps to London (and maybe even to Portugal).

On the Lederer side too, I am making progress. With the help of my father, I am in contact with a historian in Gladenbach, Germany, who is interested in writing a history of the Lederer family from the beginning of the 19th century to the present.

This historian has been instrumental in unearthing a variety of relevant documents, dating to the arrival of the first Lederer family members in 1811. Prior to their settlement in Gladenbach, the family lived in Bohemia (Petrowitz and Chynow).

I shall now approach this part of my research from an angle that involves the Czechoslovakian Embassy, as described in another of the regular newsletters our JGS receives on a reciprocal basis, the CLEVELAND KOL, (August '88 and February '89 issues)...

To transgress briefly I would like to give some mention here of the well produced MAAJAN, September '88 issue, newsletter of the Swiss Society of Genealogy, in which we find a very informative introduction to genealogical sources in Switzerland and Germany, as well as an extensive listing of pertinent libraries in countries of Western & Central Europe as well as Israel.

In order to give all attending members at our monthly meetings a better opportunity to peruse the international newsletters and the Computerized Family Finder, we shall keep this material on display from 7:30 on and shall begin our regular meetings at 8 o'clock.

Back issues of of SHEM TOV, (No. 1, 2, 3), can still be purchased at meetings.

Dr. Rolf Lederer  
President, JGS of Toronto

# News and Views

## At our meetings:

A good attendance was recorded at the meeting on January 25, 1989. Reflections by Gert Rogers and Peter Cullman on their recent overseas trips are published in this issue.

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## Upcoming meetings:

Please note that there will be no meeting in April, on account of Pesach, but instead we shall have two meetings in May.

### March 29:

Cantor Zvi Slotki will speak on research into his own family.

### May 3:

Mr. Ken Gowie will give a presentation on the latest in computer software in terms of its specific application to genealogy.

### May 31:

Dr. Rolf Lederer will discuss the genealogy of Sigmund Freud.

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## New Members:

We are again pleased to welcome several new members to our fast growing Society:

DR. EUGENE TOZMAN, MRS. DORIS NEWMAN, MRS. JOAN E. LANDY, MR. MITCHELL HERRON, all of Toronto, and MR. JULIAN FALK OF PITTSBURGH.

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## Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies \*

Ever since this umbrella organisation took roots during the 1988 Summer Seminar in Washington great progress has been in evidence.

Two projects of interest to all groups begin to crystallize, quoting from the latest AJGS letter:

- (1.) Providing all societies, on microfiche, with the ever growing number of computer projects being accomplished by various interest groups.
- (2.) Completing the indexing of newsletters and maintaining it as an ongoing project.

1. Microfiche project. There are now eight major computerized indexes of interest to Jewish genealogists:

1. Russian Consular Records.
2. Palestine Gazette
3. Gazetteer of Eastern Europe
4. Localities Whose Jewish Population Was Exterminated by the Nazis

5. Jewish Genealogical Family Finder
6. Emergency Passports
7. Index to Klarsfeld's French Deportations
8. Consolidated Surname Index

As it is impractical, bulky and costly to make them available to each society as computer printouts it has been suggested that they may be made available on microfiche because of the very low cost and portability of microfiche.

2. Indexing Project. To provide all societies with an index to articles in all the publications of the various JGSs plus TOLEDOT and AVOTAYNU. It is planned that all articles that have appeared in JGS publications be indexed by author and subject. Some initial work has already be done by David Kleinman of the New York JGS, on the indexing of TOLEDOT.

Our society has designated Michael Lieberman who will be responsible for indexing all back issues of SHEM TOV. The work will be done on an IBM-compatible PC in one of the standard word processing languages. The project will be coordinated by Laura Klein of JGS of L.A.

As our discussions with the North York Library continue it is hoped that in time we will be able to house all emerging microfiches there together with our own slow growing library of Jewish genealogical material.

\* (Our membership dues to the AJGS, \$0.50 per person in each group, represents part of your JGS membership fee and is being paid on your behalf by the the JGS of Toronto.)

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## At the L.D.S. Family History Library

Now available at the L. D. S. Library in Etobicoke: Microfiches of the complete book: 'Die Judischen Gefallenen des deutschen Heeres, 1914-18', (Register of Jewish casualties of WW I in the German military services), including birth and death data, - mit index...

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## Jewellery and Genealogy...

Those pretty boxes your favorite aunt left you may contain the key to the mystery of her family: that old gold pocket watch can reveal the long lost birthdate of her late husband, - the old wedding ring your great grandmother always wore on her necklace bears the wedding date everyone had forgotten...

## BERLIN

By Peter Cullman

When I claim that it is in my nature to plan things thoroughly, then this voyage of discovery just had to turn into a near-perfect fact finding tour. I had corresponded with numerous archives in Berlin over the past few years so that my appearance in person at these very same repositories opened all the doors I had have wished for.

My impression during the entire stay in Berlin was that time and again it seemed that people were immensely impressed when I declared that my purpose for this visit was to devote an entire two weeks in Berlin's archives to research my family. By mentioning Canada, everyone virtually bent over backwards to accomodate me. At the odd occasion, as at the cemetery in East Berlin, when I had to deal with a fairly disinterested person to go through the indexes with me, (seemingly a gentile woman, as so few Jews are left there) this opening gambit helped to melt even the most solid of attitudes.

I can divide my visit into three sections and into the following order, though each one with many sub-sections if space would allow me to:

### The Sonderverögensverwaltung

(The repository of the "OFP Files":  
the Gestapo Deportation Index)

### The Weissensee Cemetery.

### The Prussian State Archives.

### Sondervermögensverwaltung

Historically speaking, and for my own research in particular, the Sondervermögensverwaltung was evidently the most recent, the most valuable and most chilling source.

Here I was able to examine, at my own leisure, I hasten to add, and with all the assistance from the archivist I could wish for, the evidence of the Nazis' planned machinery of death, as planned with thorough Teutonic bureaucratic precision: an index of thousands of Jews of the Reich of 1940 who were registered to be deported in the following years, and the subsequent 16 page questionnaires (to be answered to the minutest detail by anyone caught in the net - from young adults to men and women in their 80's and 90's.)

These alphabetical indexes numbering many thousands, discovered at the end of the war, still in their oak wall cabinets, give us, the survivors, a glimpse of the microcosm of terror each and every one in our families had to live through before their subsequent murder.

Yet, the bureaucracy continued to shuffle each person's file for years - adding seemingly endless inter-departmental correspondence to each file - years after the concentration camps had consumed the victims.

When, after the war, the West German government began to institute restitution to survivors of the former regime's terror, these files served as partial evidence of their victims' existence and possible wealth, and it is here that I began to glean genealogical information regarding any possible survivors of which I had no knowledge of.

The archivist in charge was most obliging in photocopying much of what I required.

Many of us genealogists might only realize in time, as our research progresses in a lateral direction, that eventually we are inevitably engaged in Holocaust research. This is an endeavour that invites much strain on us, but the results can give us the strength to tell our children, as I feel very strongly is our duty. We know that if we don't tell - who will know?

My prepared list of names, fairly complete with dates and places of birth, saved much time and gave the various people I came into contact with during my entire stay in Berlin the right understanding that I was very serious indeed about my research.

The wellknown axiom to be at the right place at the right time was proven again: My visit to these archives couldn't have been more timely. Days after my visit there, the entire contents of these old cabinets was going to be packed and sent to the "Landesarchiv", located in Berlin - but several miles away. To the chagrin of the attending archivist, he was not going to accompany this move but expected to be relocated elsewhere instead. His feeling was that much of this invaluable collection was going to be out of reach for most people for the foreseeable future.

I, however, was able to spend two full days at this repository and came away with information beyond my most optimistic expectations, keeping my research going for years to come. I not only found scores of new names but was also given numerous new addresses and references for further correspondence.

The staff at the Restitution office, the last authority I had visited in search for possible survivors of my family, was most sympathetic and helpful too, though their offices and holdings will become an archive in the near future as their original mandate is nearing an end.

### Weissensee

My own sentimentality has much to account for my pre-occupation with this, the second largest Jewish cemetery in Europe, so that the Weissensee cemetery in East-Berlin became the second station of my journey into the past.

Although over the years I've had much correspondence with the administration there, this visit to the locale was going to be an opportunity to see some old records for myself for the first time.

Miraculously, practically nothing was destroyed during the Nazi reign, nor was it damaged during the bombing of Berlin. 115,000 index cards, meticulously kept from the beginning of this now unique necropolis in 1880 can be consulted, giving exact information as to every person's vital statistics, often complete with the names of the bereaved and of course, exact location of the gravesite. Interestingly, occasional burials are still taking place to this very day, (though no separate burials for men and women here for the Jews of liberal Berlin...).

Finding a gravesite in this veritable city of the dead involves much patience, determination and perseverance, all of which was part of my luggage, so that little time was lost to the unexpected.

The first day of my visit there was evenly divided into the examination of the indexes and the actual locating and visiting of many of the graves I had planned to find. I saw this as a preliminary trip for a later excursion when I was going to photograph each and every grave of my extended family.

I was fortunate to share this emotional adventure with my seventeen-year old son who, on the second visit here, provided not only the much appreciated spiritual, but also physical support for me.

But not all proverbial plans of mice and men come to fruition. The day I had set aside to photograph the graves, January 1st, 1989, a fine drizzle had settled over much of Berlin, only to mature into a fairsized rain that mingled with the acrid smells of countless chimneys in the vicinity and with the exhaust

fumes of the Socialist State's two-stroke engines littering the streets of East Berlin. East Berlin truly had a scent of it's own, providing me with everlasting memory of the moment.

Although my great-grandparents are resting in Weissensee, neither of their graves could we find in the thick undergrowth of over 100 years. My grandfather's gravestone of black granite however had withstood nature's ravages, and my son could photograph the site despite the now fairly steady rain. The German inscription sounded passionate, giving evidence of the sentiment of his family at his sudden death at the early age of 37 in 1907.

In my early childhood, my late mother often went with me to the grave of her mother, - those must have been periods when melancholy befell her. Those days I remember as being as grey and desolate as these, four decades later.

I recall that the remarkable feature of my grandmother's grave was a birch tree that had grown right out of the middle of her final resting place in the midst of thick undergrowth. On this grey and rainy Sunday, however, we found the vegetation cleared around the area, the remarkable birch tree evidenced only by a stump under the collapsed grave stone. With combined strength we lifted and turned the stone to uncover the practically new gold-inlaid inscription, - no Hebrew lettering here either - a sign of the time of assimilation of Germany of 1928...

Only a few of the other graves could be located as we meandered further, map in hand, through this fascinating necropolis, though the quality of the stones was often to blame for the difficult identification process.

### "Geheimes Staatsarchiv Berlin" (Prussian State Archives)

What could be salvaged during and after the last war of archival material of the Prussia of old, material over 200 years old, also including documents of cities and towns of the end of the "Third Reich" and reams of volumes of vital statistics or trivial correspondence regarding the affairs of the Jewish communities in the once Prussian lands - genealogical treasures like these were painstakingly collected, cleansed and catalogued over the past 40 years and deposited in the "Geheimes Staatsarchiv" in Berlin.

Here I was hoping to extract some final bits of information on the early days of my ancestors' community in the former province of Posen.

I soon realized, however, that many of the tomes that were brought to me from the stacks were of such general nature, not to mention the difficulty in reading the less than perfect long hand of the Prussian civil service of the day, that I had indeed attempted to find grains of sand in an ocean. I nevertheless devoted two days in these staid archives, a modern civil servant's paradise, where loud whispering in the reading room is a no-no...

When I finally drifted away from the ancient material to the more recent: city address books of Berlin 1926-43, my notepads soon overflowed, (I feel always that cross-references are vital to corroborate one's finds).

In conclusion I can say that I came away from this trip of explorations much enriched and impressed. I was able to attend a Shabbat service at the Pestalozzi-Street Synagogue in West-Berlin where Cantor Nachama was officiating. I was received with interest and compassion by some members of the West-Berlin Jewish community, and had an opportunity to meet with Dr. Simon, one of the executives of the East-Berlin Jewish community who gave me a first hand report on the future of the revival efforts by state and community.

FOOTNOTE: I can report with enormous satisfaction that two weeks after my return, as a direct result of a letter from the Restitution office in Berlin, I was able to make a most remarkable discovery: two first cousins with their families have been living in New Jersey since the late 1940's! They had survived in England, having been so fortunate to be on the 'Kindertransport' in 1939. They are the surviving children of an uncle who had perished in the Holocaust, who I didn't know was married. I also found that a stepsister of my late mother still lives in Florida!

## Books + References:

### Tempelhof Book

('Erinnern und nicht vergessen')

published 1988 by Bezirksamt Tempelhof von Berlin and Edition Hentrich, Berlin.

Great efforts were being made in Berlin of 1988 to recall the events of 50 years ago and to tell the younger generations of the horrors of the time. Years ago, several districts of Berlin have independently begun to document the plight of their former Jewish citizens in their particular district. Exhibitions on the subject are now being held and the events of the Nazi era are being put into print in the form of catalogues as the one quoted here.

At the time of my visit, I was given one such book on the plight of the Jewish population of Tempelhof, the district my family had lived in. Included in the documentation are also non-Jewish members of socialist and communist resistance movements who were not spared either and whose fate was shared with their Jewish neighbours.

I was able to glean some personal genealogical information from this documentation, - it thus became an additional source of reference for my research.

## Archives + Addresses

With particular reference to the above article, the first two addresses are in West-Berlin:

### LANDESARCHIV BERLIN,

Kalkreuthstr. 1-2,

D-1000 Berlin 30

(New repository for the 'OFP files')

### LANDESVRWALTUNGSAMT BERLIN,

Abt. III Entschädigungsbehörde

(Restitution office)

Potsdamerstr. 186

D-1000 Berlin 30

Addresses in East-Berlin:

### VERBAND JÜDISCHER GEMEINDEN IN DER DDR

DDR-8060 Dresden, Bautzner Str. 20

### JÜDISCHE GEMEINDE BERLIN

DDR-1040 Berlin, Oranienburger Str. 28

### JÜDISCHER FRIEDHOF BERLIN-WEISSENSEE

Friedhofsverwaltung (Cemetery in East-Berlin:)

DDR-1120 Berlin, Herbert-Baum Str. 45

### JÜDISCHE GEMEINDE ZU HALLE/SAALE

DDR-4020 Halle/Saale, Gr. Märkerstr. 13

### JÜDISCHE GEMEINDE ZU DRESDEN

DDR-8060 Dresden, Bautzner Str. 20

### JÜDISCHE GEMEINDE KARL-MARX-STADT

DDR-9048 Karl-Marx-Stadt, Stollberger Str. 28

### ISRAELITISCHE RELIGIONSGEMEINDE ZU LEIPZIG

DDR-Leipzig, Lohrstr. 10

### SYNAGOGEN-GEMEINDE ZU MAGDEBURG

DDR-3024 Magdeburg, Gröperstr. 1a

### JÜDISCHE LAND GEMEINDE MECKLENBURG

DDR-2750 Schwerin/Mecklenburg,

Schlachterstr. 3-5

### JÜDISCHE LANDESGEMEINDE THÜRINGEN

Sitz Erfurt,

DDR-5020 Erfurt, Juri-Gagarin-Ring 16

## A visit to the 'old country'

By Bill Gladstone

Gert Rogers, one of our JGS members who visited Poland recently, felt surprised when she finally arrived in Miedzyrzec, the town in Podlaski region, 120 km east of Warsaw, where her mother was born. What her mother had always called a very small town had in fact been a town with a pre-war population of 25,000. Sadly, of the once thriving and vibrant Jewish community of 18,000 only two Jews are left today.

To see the different cities of Poland, the Jewish cemeteries and the camps, though more specifically the town of her mother's, the streets and possibly find a birth certificate or some other records was the purpose of her trip.

Officials at city hall of Miedzyrzec were most helpful. With the assistance of a clerk who actually left his desk to help her, Gert found the street where her mother used to live, though the streetname had long since been changed.

When she explained to the clerks at city hall that she was seeking records dated 1905 and earlier they were most obliging and virtually emptied their files for her, finding a remarkable ten years of records! But as it happens so often in this endeavour of ours, - genealogy is so inextricably tied in with history and geography, so that these volumes of seemingly important records, all in Russian, became valueless for a frustrated Gert Rogers at that moment, not knowing the language... On reflection though, she ponders whether there have ever been any records in her mother's case, - her mother had been orphaned when she was eight years old and as the family was very poor they may not have registered themselves in those days.

The Jewish cemetery in Miedzyrzec, being looked after by two men, is fairly overgrown with grass but numerous tombstones were in evidence, though Gert had the impression that some of the stones may have been relocated there after the war.

Gert had been told by her mother that Gert's father was buried in Locice. On arriving in this little town she found only what can be described as a Park bereft of any sign of a former cemetery.

To deal with the language problem that inevitably arises when non-Polish-speaking people visit Poland, Gert and her daughter-in-law, who accompanied her on this trip, hired a guide in Warsaw to take them around the country. His name was Paul, and although he professed to be neither Jewish nor a genealogist, his assistance was invaluable. "He seemed to know what we wanted and took us exactly where we wanted to go," says Gert, "he just had a sense of what we were doing." (Incidentally, Paul's fee was a mere \$30.00 per day, and his Hotel room, which Gert paid for, was only \$2.00 a night due to a special arrangement between hotelier and tour guides in Poland.)

It was Paul's wife, Anna, who spoke a little English and helped search through old records and documents. Gert feels, Anna was responsible for finding Gert's grandmother's death certificate. "I had thought of Poland as the place where my grandmother was born, - I needed Anna to suggest to look for a death certificate too, and how fortunate for me that this document, dated 1917, was in Polish and could be translated immediately."

In Stasov, where Gert's father was born, she went to his street and found the very location where his house used to be. The next-door neighbour invited her in and explained that her father's house had been taken down prior to the war...

Among the numerous cemeteries, such as the centuries-old one in Lublin, that has been miraculously preserved, resting place of great Jewish illuminati, Gert Rogers visited many other sites important to her own family history. In Auschwitz she found that family names can be searched. At the Jewish Agency in Warsaw books can be found filled with names of Jewish survivors who had registered after the German surrender, recording birthplaces as well as current or future domiciles. At the Archives of the Institute of Jewish History in Warsaw she actually found the names of possible cousins who had survived the war. From here the search can begin, - names..., but little else to go on with at this stage...

For those contemplating a trip to Poland, Gert Rogers advises not to expect anything in the nature of modern information-processing equipment in libraries, archives and municipal record facilities. With few exceptions instant computerized information retrieval remains something only North Americans are spoiled with, - even electric typewriters and copiers are not often found in Poland.

Following are some brief references to archives in Poland, extracted from a lengthy article in the Pittsburgh JGS newsletter, Vol. IV, No. 1, Fall 1986:

ARCHIWUM GLOWNE AKT DAWNYCH (Main Archives of Older Records), in Warsaw, located at ul. Długa 7, controls all the Regional and State Archives in the country. A letter from the Director, whose office is at Długa 6, will open almost every archive in the country...

URZĄD STANU CYWILNEGO (USC): Every city has a USC. These offices are keepers of current local records. "Current" in some places is defined as 1900 or later, 1890 or later, or even 1876 or later.

ARCHIWUM GLOWNE AKT DAWNYCH: This archive is the repository for over 1000 volumes of Jewish birth, marriage, and death records for communities that are now located in Russia. The archive was in the process of conducting an inventory of these records and efforts will be made to get this inventory released to the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, and through them to the genealogical community. A large number of records from Lwow are included in this collection as well as the following: Rawa Ruska (births, 1845-1870; deaths, 1844-1870); Drohobycz (births, 1877-1881; marriages, 1877-1881; deaths 1852-1881).

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(Report in AUFBAU, Jan. 6, 1989)

### 'KINDERTRANSPORT' Reunion

A reunion of Jews who were able to go onto the 'Kindertransport' to England in 1939 is being planned for June 20 and 21, 1989. The meeting will take place at Byron Hall in Harrow, Middlesex, England, and an estimated 1200 persons are expected to attend.

Only Great Britain was prepared in 1939 to accept a large contingent of unaccompanied Jewish children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. At the same time a similar initiative in the U. S. A., suggested by the then New York Governor Robert F. Wagner had failed.

Large numbers of children came from Vienna, Berlin, Hamburg, München, Nürnberg, Fürth, Frankfurt/M., Leipzig, Köln, Prague, Breslau, Mainz and Danzig. Smaller contingents were from Mannheim, Hildesheim, Ludwigshaven, Halle, Stettin, Düsseldorf, Dortmund, Halberstadt, Karlsruhe, Baden-Baden, Unna, Göttingen and Kappeln.

Many of these young refugees later went to the U.S.A., though very few of these have registered to attend the reunion thus far, - most registrations received are from England and Israel.

A list of names of most of the children who came to England in 1939 is available for £25.00 from:

CENTRAL BRITISH FUND  
Drayton House  
30 Gordon Street  
LONDON WC1H 0AN,  
Great Britain

#### To register:

For American participants of the Kindertransport write:

**Mr. Herbert Rothschild**  
**3 West 35 Street, New York, N. Y. 10001**

For participants from Israel write:

**Mrs. I. Sadan**  
**P.O. Box 71105**  
**Jerusalem**

For all other countries write:

**Mrs. B. Leverton**  
**50 London Rd.**  
**Stanmore, Middlesex, HA7 4NU**  
**England**

or:

**Reunion Committee**  
**Association of Jewish Refugees**  
**9 Adamson Rd.**  
**London, NW3 3 HX**  
Attention: Mrs. R. B. Gordon

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(Our familiar page 'In Search of...' will return in the June issue of SHEM TOV.)

**SHEM TOV**, the quarterly Newsletter published by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto, is free to members; single and back issues are \$4.00. Membership fees are \$25.00 per calendar year. The Society was founded in 1985 and currently has over 40 members. Meetings are held September to June, usually 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). Guests are always welcome.

The goals of the Society are to promote an awareness among Jewish community members of the possibilities of tracing their 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.

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Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto  
P. O. Box 446, Station 'A'  
Willowdale/Ontario  
M2N 5T1 Canada

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
Treasurer:	ANNETTE OTIS-FROMMER	782-4646
Editor:	PETER CULLMAN	964-2196
Hon. Life President:	RAYZEL ROBINSON	

Contributors to this issue are:

Rolf Lederer, Bill Gladstone, Peter Cullman.

If you wish to submit an article for the spring issue of **SHEM TOV**, please send typewritten material to the editor PETER CULLMAN, 99 Yorkville Avenue, Toronto/Ontario, M5R 3K5, Canada, Tel. (416) 964-2196.

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