

שם טוב

# SHEM TOV

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA (TORONTO)

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## A Zionist's Dream

by Mark J. Budman

As family genealogy fascinated me, I always wanted to research my roots. The opportunity arose while I was attending the WUJS (World Union of Jewish Students) in Arad, Israel. There had been a family story explaining how my maternal great grandfather once owned land in Israel. There was not much information except that the Israeli government had expropriated whatever we had. Little did I know at the time that I was about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime.

My first step was to write a letter to my mother's cousin, who was also interested in genealogy. She immediately sent me eight documents concerning our land case dated from 1951-68 along with a family tree. My great grandfather's name was Abraham Yakov SOLOMIN who married Chienna KATZ. They had 4 children, Esther, Moshel (Moshe), Shimon (my grandfather), and Lipo (Lipman). Esther married Moshe KLEINSTEIN, Moshe married Ita HOFFMAN (Ida GOFFMAN), Shimon married Rose KUNST, and Lipo married Dora, and so forth, all the way down to my generation. They were all from Lithuania, with only Shimon and Lipo immigrating to Canada in the twenties. Everyone else remained in Vilkaviski (Lith.).

Among the papers was the name of an Israeli lawyer, whose telephone number I was easily able to trace. I could not believe that on a Wednesday in February of 1996, I actually spoke to the lawyer who had looked after my great grandfather's estate, more than thirty years ago. I briefly explained the reason for my call, asking him if he remembered anything about the family name "SOLOMIN." He repeated the name aloud several times and then insisted that I come see him immediately without any explanation.

We arranged to meet at his office in Tel Aviv the following week.

At two o'clock next Tuesday afternoon I was sitting in front of the man who hopefully had information on our land that was just "a story" traveling through our family. I could not believe my eyes when he placed in front of me what appeared to be a very old file containing approximately 250 pages. I had no idea what details were in store for me. The lawyer then started to explain that this was the file his father had worked on for our family from 1951-60, followed by himself from 1960-69, and that it had been sitting in storage untouched since 1969. He proudly mentioned that under Israeli law he was only required to keep the file for fifteen years after the last entry, and that I was extremely lucky that he had kept it all these

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years.

The lawyer opened the file and started to go through it in chronological order, explaining to me what had transpired. Abraham Yakov Solomin (50%), along with his son Moshel (50%), purchased 5 lots totaling 32 dunams (1 dunam = 10 meters x 100 meters) in the small town of Yokneam (near Nazareth, east of Haifa), from the Palestine Land Development Company in the thirties while they were living in Lithuania. Their dream was to one day move their families to Israel and pioneer the land as it was zoned for agricultural purposes. Unfortunately, Abraham Yakov, Chienna, Moshe, Ita, Aviva Solomin (daughter to Moshe and Ita) and Moshe Kleinstein were murdered on November 15, 1941, in Pilvishki (7 miles from Vilkaviski). Therefore, after Israel was established as a state, Shimon and Lipo started to make a claim from Canada concerning their father's and brother's estate in 1951. However, for some unknown reason, there were complications, and several letters and documents were exchanged between his office and our family in order to resolve this issue. The file contained the parcel numbers, handwritten letters from Lipo and Shimon, notes from

relatives and friends who were living in Israel during the fifties and sixties, eyewitness accounts detailing how our family members were murdered by the Nazis, and a small family tree listing names of individuals that I had never seen before. All these documents were submitted in order to resolve this estate with the Israeli government, but to no avail. Apparently, the testimony from Esther, the family's sole survivor who was living in Vilna (Vilnius), was not recognized or accepted.

The lawyer continued to go through the file, page by page. When he turned to the last page, he read it slowly and suddenly said that I can still do something about our claim. I could not believe it and asked him how this can be. He then went on to say that there was a motion to sell the land, and that he was representing our family at the time (we had given him power of attorney). However, there was no entry indicating anything had been done, and he stated that it was impossible that anything could have taken place without his knowledge. He continued to say that if I wanted him to check it out for me that I would have to pay him 2000 NIS (New Israeli Shekel; 2.40 NIS = \$1.00 CDN) to investigate the matter. I did not know what to

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The Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada was founded in 1985 and currently has about 150 members. Membership costs \$30 per calendar year, \$20 for persons living beyond both Metro Toronto and its adjacent suburbs. Meetings are held September to June, usually on the last Wednesday of each month at 8:00 p.m. (doors open at 7:30) at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, 470 Glencairn Avenue, Toronto (unless announced otherwise). Guests are always welcome. Details are usually printed in the *Canadian Jewish News*.

The goals of the Society are to provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge and information through meetings, outings, workshops and guest lecturers, and thereby to promote an awareness of genealogy within the Jewish community of Canada. The Society is affiliated with the Jewish Federation of Greater Toronto and is registered as a non-profit charitable organization.

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say: this information had caught me totally off guard. I mentioned that I was interested in the file, but he refused to part with it. If I wanted it I would have to pay 1500 NIS + 17% VAT. I could not pass up such an opportunity to obtain so much information on my family history, so I purchased the file and said that I was not interested in pursuing the matter with this lawyer.

I did not know what to do. There were several unanswered questions: What if something could still be done? How can we make a claim after all this time when nobody had paid any land taxes for years? Our family was positive the land had been expropriated. Surely if something was to be done I needed more proof.

A friend of mine suggested I give his lawyer a call. The lawyer had dealings with land in Yokneam, and perhaps he could give some advice. I called him and he told me that if I knew the parcel numbers (each parcel was indicated by a lot and part number), I should go to the land registry in Nazareth (which was responsible for Yokneam). There I could order documents indicating who are the current land owners along with the history of each parcel. Once these documents were in my possession, I could meet with him and he would be more than happy to explain what was written.

The following week, I traveled to the land registry with my Israeli friend, who was fluent in Hebrew, and together we visited the office. I ordered two documents for each parcel, its current status and its history, for 41 NIS each, totaling 410 NIS. My friend spoke to the workers in Hebrew, verifying that these were indeed the correct documents. After determining that everything was in order, I went immediately to the new lawyer. I gave the lawyer the documents I had ordered along with the old file, and he examined them for about fifteen minutes. He asked me some questions, and then went on to explain that it seemed our family no longer owned any land in Israel. It appeared that all the parcels linked to my family had been sold, but in general there are no taxes for agricultural land. He continued saying that even though the land was sold, the government puts the proceeds into a trust account, holding on to it until someone comes along proving that it belongs to them or their family.

He then said he would write a letter on my behalf to Aron Schindler of the Administrator General's (AG) office (the government agency that handles unclaimed property),

and that I should get an answer within a few weeks. The letter went out the same day, and I called Mr. Schindler the following month. I explained who I was and Mr. Schindler said that there was a trust account in my family's name. He would not provide any details until I provided him with appropriate documents. He said he would mail me forms that would have to be completed and that it would be in my best interest and worth my while (there was a small sum in the account) to hire an Israeli lawyer.

The lawyer who wrote the letter was not available for further assistance. However, someone had recommended another lawyer in Jerusalem, and I made an appointment to see him. I presented the new lawyer with all the documents. He explained what had to be done and that I needed a probate will for each person that had died who was entitled to the estate since the death of the original owners. This meant I needed five probate wills at 860 NIS each to be issued by the Israeli court. He also checked a list (available in book form for 150 NIS or on view in government offices) that the government had recently published containing names of individuals who had unclaimed assets (land, money) in Israel.

One thing that should be noted is that this list is quite useless, as it contains only names and a reference number. Since names like Yakov Solomon and Moshe Katz (for example) are quite common, it is impossible to determine if there is a family connection by examining these lists. However, two articles have appeared in *The Jerusalem Report*: September 4, 1997, page 22, "Shamed into Action," and October 30, 1997, page 8, "Holocaust heirs claim Israel still blocking them from their assets."

I asked the lawyer if there was a place where archives were stored as I wanted to see for my own curiosity the actual land transaction. He said I should visit the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. Following his advice, I went there and met with archivist Batya Leshem. She said I needed to know the region where the land was before she could help me. Since I had this information, she was able to provide the file numbers I needed. I started to search through the archives. To my amazement, I discovered that a mistake had been made and that the original land purchase had been 41 dunams instead of 32.

I presented the new information to the lawyer. He said he would check it out for me, and I also had to pay \$2000

*(Continued on page 4)*

US for lawyer's fees. The lawyer told me that the state takes up to 75 days to respond, and that the matter should be settled within five months. I paid a deposit for the fees along with the court costs. I am still waiting for some additional progress and answers.

All I can do is hope that this matter will finally come to an end in the near future, but after over 60 years, I still have my doubts. The AG office is making it extremely difficult to resolve these claims, and impossible without the aid of a lawyer. After lawyer's fees, there probably won't be much money left, although I feel it would have made my grandfather and his brother (both deceased) very happy if this case were finally solved.

I have access to the list of names published by the government. If anyone would like information, please e-mail me privately at: <Budman@generation.net> or I can be contacted by regular mail:

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CANADA

Researching:

SOLOMINAS/SOLOMON/SALOMON from  
Kaunas/Kovno/Vilkaviskis/Vilna/Vilnius  
KATZ/KAHN from Pilvishok/Pilvishkai  
HOFFMAN from Vilkaviskis/Vilna/Vilnius  
KLEINSTEIN from Vilkaviski/Vilnius/Vilna

**We Welcome These  
New Members  
To Our Society**

Tracy Jay Green      Dorene E. Jacobs

Meira Taube          Karol Zenwirt

## A Childhood Fantasy

Lily Poritz Miller

In the June 1997 issue of Shem Tov, I read of the formation of the Jewish Family History Society of Cape Town. As I was born in Cape Town and left as a child with my mother and siblings, I was especially interested in this news; and the fact that the society was accessible via e-mail made the communication more effortless.

I passed this information along to my sister in Washington, who is the prime force in unraveling our family history. Since we knew our parents had emigrated from Lithuania to South Africa in 1929, she e-mailed the society to determine what records they may have. This contact immediately produced a response, and one thing led to another. Since my father died in Cape Town when we were children and the family left for the United States soon thereafter, we were eager for more details of my father's burial.

The most astonishing revelation, however, related to what had remained as a fantasy in our minds. As children we remembered that a sibling had been born to us - a child with golden curls and bright blue eyes. We had seen this newborn for but an instant, and the infant was never seen again. Through the years we fantasized about this mysterious sibling; and since it appeared in memory as the doll every little girl dreams of, we sometimes wondered if indeed it had been a fantasy.

As my sister's communication with the society developed, she ventured to inquire if there was any record of a child born to our parents around the year which we estimated to be 1941.

In less than a week there was an e-mail from Cape Town: "I went to the cemetery index this morning and found the following which I'm sure will be of interest: Rose Poritz, died on 31 July 1941, aged 12 hours. She is buried at Woltemade Gate 8 in Maitland. Grave number: 76614BE."

So the beautiful Rose who had lived for a mere twelve hours had been more than a childhood fantasy; and she departed during that savage time which wiped out most of her family in Lithuania.

*Lily Poritz Miller is a member of our society.*

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## Growing My Family Tree

by Sylvia Charles

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As a child of Holocaust survivors who emigrated to Canada from Czechoslovakia without any relatives, my memories of family gatherings were punctuated by my late father's yearnings for a table surrounded by scores of relatives. Knowing only my immediate family, I must admit my father's ramblings about the past never had their intended impact on me until just a few weeks ago.

What struck me most about a recent trip to the Czech Republic and Slovakia was a young child's simple rendering of a seder table surrounded by many empty chairs (Jewish Museum of Prague). Although there were a great many heart-rendering images produced by the children of Theresienstadt, I was poignantly connected to this one.

During my 3-week odyssey for my roots, a feeling of connectedness to a pre-Holocaust life grew. I knew that a handful of relatives had survived. My father's sole remaining brother (out of seven siblings) had chosen to stay in Slovakia. We had communicated over the years, but less often after my father's death.

It was only about 10 years ago that an interest into the past began to take hold of me. Thanks to the Mormons' addiction to genealogy, a cousin whose grandparents had emigrated to the U.S. before the first world war found us through a fascinating and circuitous hunt.

My new cousin Jimmy began his search for family roots with the Mormons' records. A letter from the Slovakian authorities brought out the surname Alter. When he took it to a translator in New York, the woman remembered the family's name had been changed to *Andreansky* following World War II. She also suggested he try looking in Canada, in the Toronto phone book. Since there was only one person with that surname in Toronto, it proved to be the right connection. My father was thrilled to re-acquaint himself with his many first cousins in North America.

Several years passed before I decided to follow up on this renewal of relatives. My elder son's bar mitzvah had me searching for family to invite to our simcha. I found Jimmy's address and sent him an invitation. He responded positively. Phone calls followed, then an actual visit. Now we've become more than "kissing cousins;" we are actually

good friends. Additional relationships with several other cousins have materialized, as all of us became more interested in exploring our heritage.

So, as luck and some planning would have it, Jimmy and another American cousin ended up in my uncle's house in Slovakia exactly when we did.

Pouring over photographs of long-dead relatives, the lives behind the very same few photos which remained in my parents house came to life. As my uncle Tibor explained, there was his brother Isador, a genius of manual dexterity, my striking aunt Alicia after whom my sister was named, his father the tailor, and on and on. My uncle filled in the gaps left open for decades and I dutifully recorded the history for my own children.

Tibor's joy at meeting his relatives was indescribable. It prompted an outpouring of Yiddish, Hungarian and Czech songs which stirred forgotten memories in us all. Photos from our cousin's album were shared and the branches of the family tree became increasingly heavier.

Another phenomenon surfaced at our reunion of which I suppose most families who grow up together might be less conscious. Never having had the pleasure of meeting so many relatives, I found myself looking not only at obvious resemblances, but also at more subtle hints of familial characteristics. Though separated by distance and time, my 79-year-old uncle's stubbornness to personally fetch us from the train station and carry our heavy bags reminded me of my father's exact reactions a lifetime ago.

As we moved on to Israel to solidify the quest (this time on the maternal side of the family), it finally became superbly evident to me that my mothers only surviving sister not only looks like her and me, but our features have the same patterns of aging. We share the same outrageously obscure diseases, and our penchant for the same style sweet cravings definitely marks us as blood relatives.

Not only does my aunt's philosophy of life but also her turns of phrase mimic my mother's, even though they were still teens when they were separated. Time and distance, the influence of different resources and experiences, seem

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to have no impact on her predictable reactions. The *Stern* family's characteristic of conservatism is firmly implanted in not only her, but my cousins and their children as well. Blood ties are forever, it seems.

Many more branches of the family tree were filled in on both sides by the end of my travels. The Holocaust drastically reduced the number of seats at many of our celebrations, but now I'm happy to report that gradually we're replenishing them with our new descendants.

*Sylvia Charles is the wife of our member Michael Charles.*

### **International Postal Reply Coupons - How Canadians can save money.**

by Stanley Diamond

We all know it is normal practice and courtesy for genealogical researchers to include stamped, self-addressed envelopes (SASE) with their letters requesting help or information. Since stamps from foreign countries may not be readily available - unless at much higher prices from a stamp dealer catering to hobbyists - the most convenient option is to purchase International Postal Reply Coupons from Canada Post.

Unfortunately, the cost from Canada Post for each coupon has risen to the astronomical level of CAN \$3.50 plus 7% GST. In Quebec, provincial sales tax is also added.

There is a money saving option! The U.S. Post Office only charges US \$1.05 each and no taxes applicable. Based on current exchange rates, that is a saving of over CAN \$2.00 for each coupon. If you are sending many research letters, this difference can really add up.

It could, of course, require a trip to a U.S. post office but most Canadians have American relatives or friends who can help. One note; not all small sub-stations carry these coupons so people must be cautioned to check with the main or larger post offices.

*Stanley Diamond is the President of the JGS of Montreal and also one of our members.*

# UPCOMING EVENTS

☞ ☞

## **The Jewish Genealogical Society Of Canada (Toronto)**

invites you to the last meeting of the year.  
Because of the Holiday season  
we had to move to:

**Tuesday, December 23, 1997 - 8:00 p.m.**  
at the Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue  
470 Glencairn Ave.

Instead of a speaker addressing the audience,  
we will have more of a social gathering,  
to be called: **"News and Schmooze"**

In a more relaxed and informal setting  
members will discuss their discoveries, ask  
questions, bring their documents, their family trees  
and learn from each others' experiences.

☞ ☞

**Wednesday, January 28, 1998 - 8:00 p.m.**

At the Lipa Green Building  
4600 Bathurst Street

***Jewish Genealogy on the Internet***  
Presented with projector on screen  
by Neil Richler

☞ ☞

## Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) Library Update

by Deborah Pekilis, Librarian

**Following are the new materials in our collection, located in the Canadiana Room of the North York Central Library:**

*Association of Holocaust Organizations - Directory*, Dr. William S. Shulman, editor (New York, 1996)

*Bronfman Dynasty, the Rothschilds of the New World*, Peter C. Newman (Toronto, 1978)

*The Cemetery Records of the Beth Israel Congregation of Kingston, Ontario*, Beth Israel Congregation (Kingston, 1997)

*Consolidated Jewish Surname Index*, Gary Mokotoff (Teaneck, NJ 1996)

*Educational Resource Guide on the Holocaust*, A selected bibliography and audio-visual catalogue, Dr. William S. Shulman (New York, 1997)

*Expulsion and Extermination - The Fate of the Austrian Jews 1939-1945*, Florian Freund and Hans Safrian (Vienna, 1997)

*From Belarus to Cape Breton and Beyond - My Family - My Roots*, Lawrence I. Gaum (Toronto, 1994)

*1996 Honour Roll*, Arthur Siegel et al, eds., Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care (Toronto, 1996)

*Honour Roll, Baycrest 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*, Arthur Siegel et al eds., Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care (Toronto, 1997)

*The Jewish Genealogical Exploration Guide for Manitoba and Saskatchewan (J-GEMS)*, Louis Kessler (Winnipeg, 1997)

*Jewish Mutual Benefit & Friendly Societies in Toronto, the First Fifty years 1896-1945*, Louis Rosenberg (Toronto, 1991)

*The Jewish State Museum of Lithuania*, Rachel Kostanian and Dr. Solomon Otamkas (Vilnius 1997)

*Der Judenfriedhof Endingen-Lengnau (The Jewish Cemetery Endingen-Lengnau, Switzerland)*, Two Volumes, (Switzerland, 1993)

*Land of Promise, The Jewish Experience in Southern Alberta, 1889-1945*, The Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta (Calgary, 1996)

*List of 7,300 Names of Brides and Grooms Who Married in Izmir [Turkey] between the Years 1883-1901 and 1918-1933*, Dov Cohen (Israel, 1997)

*Pathways to the Present, Canadian Jewry and Canadian Jewish Congress*, Faygie Schwartz et al., Canadian Jewish Congress (Toronto, 1980)

*Report on the Cemetery at Kingsbury Road, London*, The Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain (London, 1977)

*Sources, Networking For You*, Barry Zwicker (1977)

## The Katz-Greenspan Mystery

by Carolynne Veffer

Most of my time doing genealogy has been spent on my paternal family tree. But I did get some very basic information about my mother's family and it was very puzzling: the last names of my maternal grandmother's siblings were not the same. My grandmother and her sister were both named Greenspan but their brothers were all named Katz! Why? This is how my mother described her maternal family tree:

Her grandfather Chazkiel Greenspan had had three wives (my mother didn't know the names of any of the wives). By his first wife he had one daughter, Beena Greenspan. His first wife died and he remarried. By his second wife he had the following children: my grandmother Esther Greenspan, her sister Sarah Greenspan and four sons: Meyer, Sam, Harry, and Nathan Katz. All the children of the second wife except Meyer had come to Canada (probably in the 1920s my grandmother and grandfather who came in 1929 were the last to arrive). All my life I had known about my mother's relatives "the Katzes from Hamilton" but never knew how they were related exactly (there were a lot of them). And I had never known my grandmother's maiden name before (I called her Bubbie). So this made no sense. Why would the daughters be called Greenspan and the sons Katz? My mother didn't know - or didn't remember.

The mystery was solved by one of the Katzes. According to him, my great-grandfather Chazkiel's second wife had been divorced. That was fine in Jewish law, but the civil authorities in Poland didn't recognize divorce. So all the civil records for the children of the second marriage were in the name of Katz, the second wife's maiden name, and not Greenspan. When all the children emigrated (as adults) to Canada, the sons all had documentation in the name of Katz. Both daughters, however, were already married so their documents were in their married names. My grandmother's name was Esther Malach and her sister was Sarah Sugar. When

they were asked about their maiden names they, of course, said Greenspan. It all made sense.

I presume once I start getting documents from Poland my grandmother will also be called Katz and not Greenspan as I would have supposed. Having solved this mystery ahead of time may well expedite some of my searches and avoid a lot of confusion. And perhaps reading this may help you solve a similar mystery in your family history.

*Carolynne Veffer is a member of our society.*

### ADVERTISING RATES

SHEM TOV is now accepting display advertising for publication. Advertisers are requested to supply camera-ready art and payment by February 1998 for the Spring issue. Please indicate how many insertions you would like. As the chart indicates our basic rate is discounted for advertisements placed in four consecutive issues (one year) instead of a single issue only. By placing an ad in SHEM TOV, you are reaching a growing number of readers in Toronto, across Canada and internationally, and helping to support a unique and vital journal.

	One Issue	Four Issues (1 year)
Full Page	\$60	\$200
Half Page	\$30	\$100
Quarter Page	\$18	\$ 60
Eighth Page	\$10	\$ 32

Search ads are also available. Rates are \$5 for the first 25 words and 25¢ per word thereafter, your name and address are free. Please write advertisement clearly with family surnames you are researching in UPPER CASE letters. Make your cheque payable to Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) and mail to: JGS of Canada (Toronto), P.O. Box 446, Station A, Willowdale, Ontario M2N 5T1.



## Holocaust Global Registry

Kathy Altman, Manager,  
JewishGen Holocaust Global Registry

JewishGen, Inc., the leading Internet site for Jewish genealogy, announces the opening of the Holocaust Global Registry, an interactive searchable database accessible worldwide at: <http://www.jewishgen.org>

The hope is to reunite people separated more than half a century ago. Over the years, JewishGen has already facilitated many family connections. The Holocaust Global Registry, using the widely accessible tools of modern communication, could succeed where nothing else has.

While the names of the victims and oral testimonies have been collected, the one thing which has been overlooked is a worldwide mechanism for helping people reconnect with loved ones. Until now there has not been a central place to maintain the data on the Holocaust survivors living around the world. Without such a tool, searching has been extremely difficult, costly and relatively unproductive.

During the past few years, sporadic reports of joyous reunions of survivors have surfaced. The JewishGen Holocaust Global Registry was created in the hopes of significantly increasing the frequency of these reunions.

*The JewishGen Holocaust Global Registry became available at our website on Nov. 10, 1997.*

## The Poor Jews Temporary Shelter Database

Paul Cheifitz, President,  
The Jewish Family History Society of Cape Town

I am excited to report that the records of the Poor Jews Temporary Shelter in London are now on the Web. The shelter was situated in Leman Street, Whitechapel, in London. The database spans the period 1896-1914 and contains some 43,000 names. The shelter was set up to house immigrants on their short stay over in London before embarking on their cross continental journey. Some of the destinations include, South Africa, America, South America, Holland and England, among many others.

This project was coordinated and sponsored by the Kaplan Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town. The project was headed by Prof. Aubrey Newman

of the University of Leicester.

Although there are a few gaps in the registers themselves these records will surely prove to be an extremely useful resource and significantly alter our knowledge of our immigrant ancestors.

The site can be reached at:  
<http://www.hrm.uct.ac.za/shelter/shelter.htm>

## Genealogical records in the UK

H. Peter Sinclair

London's Beth Din Court (Court of the Chief Rabbi) holds valuable records at their premises in North London of births, deaths and orthodox marriages in Anglo-Jewry. This information is available to assist any personal enquiries, both legal and non-legal, and the information sought can be provided free of charge, where a relevant date is known. In addition, extended investigations or research carried out for legal or genealogical purposes is undertaken for a charge of Pound Sterling 12.00 an hour plus any costs incurred. Copies of the relevant documents are made at a charge of Pound Sterling 5.00 each. Free estimates are available on request and fees are required in advance.

For further information please contact:

Charles Tucker  
Research Unit, London Beth Din, Adler House  
735 High Road  
North Finchley, London N12 0US  
Tel: 44-181-343-6270

AJR Information, October 1997

## Genealogy website

Adelle Gloger

I was surfing the net and found an excellent and comprehensive site. It is the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The site covers many areas. The genealogy pages cover listing of resources in USA as well as foreign. They have a link up with Yahoo genealogy resources. Couldn't believe all the info in one place.

The homepage URL is: <http://www.acpl.lib.in.us>

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# The Genealogy and Family Tree of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield

By Glen Eker

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British novelist and statesman Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, was the only person of Jewish origin ever to become Prime Minister of Great Britain. Disraeli's ancestors were Sephardic Jews from Portugal and Spain who immigrated first to Italy and then to England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Disraeli's great grandfather, Isaac Israeli, or his ancestors, came to Italy in the eighteenth century from somewhere in the Spanish peninsula. His great grandmother, Rica Rossi, Isaac's wife, was a descendant of one of the four noble families of Jerusalem who had been brought to Rome as captives of the Emperor Titus, becoming ancestors of the first eminent Italian-Jewish families. Little else is known about these early forbears.

Isaac Israeli's son and Disraeli's grandfather, Benjamin D'Israeli, was born in Cento in Ferrara in 1730. (Ferrara was an Italian papal state with large numbers of Spanish and Portuguese Jews). Benjamin came to England in 1748 as a tradesman. In 1756 he married Rebecca Mendes Furtago, a woman of Portuguese Jewish ancestry, with whom he had a daughter Rachel. Rebecca died in 1764; their daughter Rachel eventually left England and settled in Livorno, Italy, where she raised a family.

His second wife, whom he married in 1765, was Sarah Shiprut de Gaby, also of Sephardic origin and from a wealthy family. Their only child, Disraeli's father Isaac, was born in 1765. The elder Benjamin was at one time a merchant, farmer, and stockbroker, achieving monetary success in the latter. He was a devoted member of the Bevis Marks Sephardic congregation in London; his wife, Sarah, however, disliked both her faith and her social position. Their son Isaac was interested in books, libraries, museums, and travelling, and became a writer. In 1802 he married Maria Basevi, who was descended from a wealthy family of Italian Sephardic origin. The Basevi's had settled in Verona, Italy, at the end of the sixteenth century before coming to England. Maria's father Naphtali was a merchant while other family members were barristers,

businessmen, and professionals in other fields. Maria's mother, Rebecca Rieti, was descended from a family called Cardoso which had settled in England at the end of the seventeenth century but claimed Spanish descent. Isaac and Maria were both ambivalent about their faith, although they retained a formal connection to the Bevis Marks congregation.

The couple had five children, four of whom survived: Sarah, born 1802; Benjamin, born 1804; Raphael (Ralph), born 1809; and Jacobus (James), born 1813. Another son, Naphtoli, was born in 1807 but did not survive the year. Isaac quarrelled with the Bevis Marks congregation over his unwanted appointment as warden and over a number of monetary matters. In 1817, he resigned from the congregation. The Basevi family withdrew at the same time. After being informed by a friend that his children should belong to a religious organization, Isaac had his four children baptized into the Church of England in 1817.

Sarah never married but worked for charitable causes and helped Benjamin with the preparation of his novels. Both Ralph and James became public servants. Ralph became Deputy Clerk of Parliament; he died in 1898 and his wife, Katherine Trevor, in 1930. Their son Coningsby never married and died in 1936, appearing to allow the male line of the family to become extinct. James became a Commissioner of Excise. He never married and died in 1881; however, he fathered a daughter named Annie in 1857 with his housekeeper/mistress, Mrs. Bassett. Benjamin became a successful novelist and politician, rising through the ranks of the Conservative Party to become Prime Minister of England. He maintained a lifelong pride in his Jewish ancestry and heritage and strongly identified with it. Many of his novels have clearly identifiable Jewish heroes and are calls for Jewish and working-class rights and these are issues he fought for in Parliament. He also sought to make Britain a strong

*(Continued on page 11)*

imperial power. He had no children with his wife Mary Ann Evans. While still married he had liaisons with two women who had children by him. The first, Lady Dorothy Walpole Nevill, was married but kept the illegitimate child and raised him with her husband Reginald Nevill's surname. The child of that union, Ralph Nevill, was a wealthy gentleman and fairly successful writer; he never married and left no descendants. The second was an unknown French Jewish woman; she gave birth to a daughter Catherine, who was raised by a young Christian couple.

Catherine was told of her ancestry when she was young. She married twice and raised her four children as Jews. Her descendants live today in Australia and New Zealand and consider themselves Jewish.

*Here is another article and family tree by our member Glen Eker.*

# JEWISH GEN

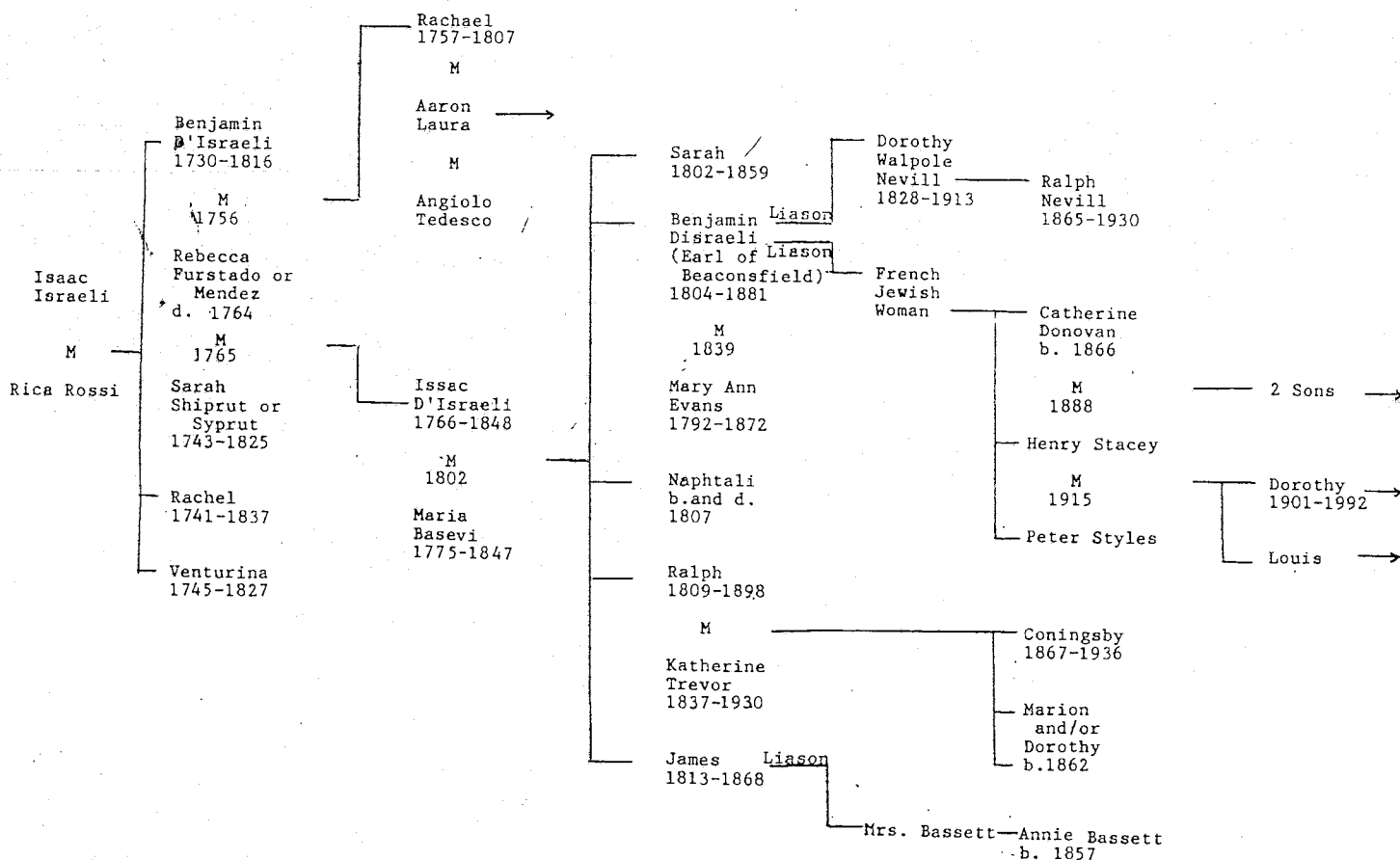
(Continued from page 9)

## Ship Descriptions

Leonard Markowitz (JGS of Philadelphia)

Two years ago I ordered 8 1/2 X 11 repros of three ships with their descriptions. The total charge for this was quite reasonable.

Steamship Historical Society of America Collection  
Langsdale Library  
University of Baltimore  
1420 Maryland Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21201-5779 USA  
Tel: (410) 837-4334  
E-mail: ahouse@ubmail.ubalt.edu



**The Family Tree of Benjamin Disraeli**



Jewish Soldiers in the Austro/Hungarian Army - Dalmatia, 1917



Religious Leaders - Galicia, 1914