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# שם טוב SHEM TOV

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA (TORONTO)

VOLUME XXV No. 2

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## GENEALOGY FOR THE REST OF US A Writer's Guide to Diving Into Family History

By Steve Luxenberg

I am not a genealogist. I am a storyteller.

The difference? Well, I'll tell you a story.

In the spring of 2006, I was racing against a loudly-ticking generational clock, trying to find as many living relatives as I possibly could before their advancing age caught up with them. I was hoping that they could shed light on a long-ago family secret, one that my mother had created in the early 1940s and kept throughout her life. She had hidden the existence of a disabled sister who had been institutionalized for 30 years. Mom had died in 1999, her secret more or less intact. I was researching a book on her motivations for keeping the secret, and the consequences to her and those around her.

My working hypothesis: I had relatives I had never met, and I wondered whether their descendants might have some knowledge of my unknown secret aunt. Perhaps a bit of family folklore had traveled down their branch that had never made it down mine.

I had the beginnings of a family tree on my dad's side, courtesy of a cousin who had emailed me a version, but none on my mom's side. So I started to construct one, but got no farther than I had in junior high school, when an enterprising teacher had assigned us to create family trees for a class project. When I had asked Mom back then for the names of my grandmother's parents and siblings, she had just shrugged. That was the old country, she told me, as if that explained everything instead of nothing. Mom, born in the United States, professed no knowledge of my grandparents' early life in Russia or Ukraine or Poland (it was a mystery to me then), or whatever part of Eastern Europe we once called home.

According to a medical record that I had obtained, my grandmother was one of 10 children. I knew none of them. I knew none of their descendants. I just needed one name, and then I could pursue the genealogical trail, perhaps to someone alive, but if not, perhaps to a document, or a photo or some other clue that might lead me deeper into the story of Mom's secret.

Through painstaking work with passenger manifests, I had managed to learn the likely spellings of my grandparents' last names when they left Russia before the First World War. They were born in a small town near the old Austro-Hungarian border, a town that had changed hands several times in the course of the

20th century. Did the town's birth and marriage records still exist? If they did, would they yield the information I needed to trace the living descendants of my grandmother's nine brothers and sisters?

I consulted a genealogist with experience in obtaining records from the archives of Eastern European countries. He gave me a crash course in what I needed to do. The more he explained, the more daunting it sounded -- and the more expen-

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

Programs organized by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto)

Unless otherwise noted, programs take place at the Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue - 470 Glencairn Ave.

Doors open at 7:30, program begins at 8 p.m.

Non-member fee: \$5.00 per meeting

(exception: spouses accompanying members)



**Wednesday, June 24, 2009**

**Breakthroughs and Year-End Meeting:**

*Member presentations (Great Foundations and Brick Walls)*

**Please hold these dates for future informative Programmes:**

**Wednesday, September 30, 2009,**

programme TBA

**Sunday, October 18, 2009**

Workshop programme TBA

**Wednesday, November 4, 2009**

**Holocaust Education Week programme**

Michael Goldstein, a professional genealogist, will speak about the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, Germany

**Wednesday, November 25, 2009**

Programme TBA

**Wednesday, December 16, 2009,**

Programme TBA

*Please be sure to check our website,  
[www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca), for programming updates!*

vol. XXV No. 2

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The Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) was founded in 1986. Membership is \$40 per calendar year, \$18 for students. 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* and on our website at: [www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca).

The goal of the Society is 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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sive. He suggested that I purchase every record with any connection to the family names I already knew.

Worried that I would be overwhelmed with information, I asked whether it would be better to start with the smattering of the records that seemed most relevant. "I'm not a genealogist," I told him. "I'm not trying to build a family tree. I'm writing a book, and I'm trying to find out the things that will help me tell the story."

His genealogical ears couldn't believe what I had just said. "How could you not want to know it all?" he said, his voice reflecting his amazement. "How could you pass up the opportunity?"

I felt sheepish. "I'm interested, of course," I finally said. "But right now, the story is what I'm after."

Genealogists and writers are like distant cousins: They resemble each other, but it's easy to tell them apart. I'm in awe of the discipline that genealogists bring to their craft. I admire their dedication to a well-understood (if unwritten) set of rules for pursuing, finding, sifting, confirming and verifying information, before they connect the dotted lines between a ggf (great-grandfather, in genealogist parlance) and a second cousin once removed. As a writer, however, I'm wary of becoming a member of their club.

No need to be daunted, however. Genealogists are a welcoming bunch. They not only love company, they invite anyone to join their growing numbers, and millions have taken trips down the genealogical trail. The sudden accessibility of information online, such as census and immigration records, has made it possible for anyone to make a stab at researching their family origins, often without leaving the comfort of their living room. Amateurs like me vastly outnumber the professionals. Ancestry.com, which calls itself "the No. 1 source for online family history information," claims nearly 1 million paying subscribers and says that online visitors have created more than six million family trees since that feature was introduced three years ago.

You won't find mine there. My tree, with more broken branches than sturdy ones, exists only on paper, two pages taped together to accommodate the bits and pieces I had collected. I constructed it as an aid for interviewing a long-lost cousin, and then kept it on my desk as I wrote my book.

It was a huge help, a reference that I used so often that it became a bit tattered. Someday, I'll go back to it. I'll try to flesh out a few of the bare branches. I might even take a risk, and order some of those records from Eastern Europe. I'm curious, after all.

But not just yet. I have to finish this new story I'm working on.

©2009 Steve Luxenberg, author of *Annie's Ghosts: A Journey Into a Family Secret*

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*Steve Luxenberg has been a senior editor with the Washington Post for twenty-two years, overseeing reporting that has won numerous awards, including two Pulitzer Prizes for explanatory journalism. He lives in Baltimore, Maryland. For more information please visit [www.steveluxenberg.com](http://www.steveluxenberg.com)*

## **New Feature for Society Members!!!! JGS Toronto Presentations Now on Our Website**

We are pleased to announce that we have started to post an audio recording of our speakers' lectures on our website, [www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca). The presentation of our recent guest, Dr. Margaret Ann Wilkinson, is the first to be available in this format. Dr. Wilkinson had spoken at our April 29th general meeting on the subject of privacy and rights to information legislation and their subsequent implication on the pursuit of genealogy. See p. 5 of this *Shem Tov* for an article about this lecture.

To listen, go to [www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca), log on as a member. Then you can click on Calendar, and choose Speakers' Presentations. To read about Dr. Wilkinson and our other guest speakers, simply select Speakers' Biographies.

## **The Revival of Jewish Life in Poland – Is it Really Happening?**

*by Harvey Glasner*

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation sponsored a lecture by Dr. Michael Shudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland. Many of our members attended this meeting at Beth Haborim Synagogue. Rabbi Shudrich delivered a very interesting, funny but yet sobering presentation on the realities of Jewish life in Poland at the present time.

Of the 3 to 3 ½ million Jews that lived in Poland before World War II, it is roughly estimated that 10% survived. Many of these survivors converted to Catholicism (or hid their Jewish identity) in order to survive and meld into the general population. Soviet occupation did not offer crypto-Jews any respite from anti-Semitism.

With the emancipation of Poland from Soviet domination came freedom of expression. Some grandparents and parents were emboldened enough to tell children and grandchildren of their Jewish backgrounds. Some Poles learned of their Jewish lineage by accident, and some young people began to practice Jewish traditions (with the help of Rabbi Shudrich and other Jewish clergy).

The Polish government is working with Rabbi Shudrich to preserve Jewish cemeteries and other public properties such as sites of mass executions. Sadly, the restoration of private property rights for those families that were dispossessed will not be realized. On balance, a Jew can openly be Jewish in the Republic of Poland and not worry about personal safety or recrimination.

All in all, there is great optimism for the survival of a Jewish population in Poland. This, of course, is bittersweet as Poland for over 1,000 years once was home to the largest numbers of Jews in the world.

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## Genealogy Websites, Past and Present, and the Impact of Social Interaction Networks

*The following is a synopsis of the March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009 presentation  
by JGS Toronto member, Henry Blumberg, at our monthly general meeting*

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Many genealogists have discovered the value of the internet to search for information about their Jewish ancestors. Websites proliferate at an exponential rate, driven in part by volunteer genealogical enthusiasts, by organizations that place data on the internet, and also by entrepreneurs who seek financial gain by developing sites that primarily use research provided by others.

Jewish genealogical research has been immeasurably enhanced by the creation of search engines such as Google and as well of directories such as Cyndi's List, providing links to other databases. *In addition, archival databases have been created; for example, the JewishGen site has been designed, maintained, updated, and secured, with its functionality constantly being improved.* Other categories of databases are personal databases such as Liepajajews.com, family websites created by programmers with their own code and hosting arrangements, and also *shtetl* sites that might tell you about families and their histories. In addition, there is the new frontier of the world wide social interaction networks such as Facebook, YouTube and Geni, among others, that are all based on the same concept of data sharing.

Novice genealogists frequently try to find information about ancestors and extended family by using search engines and directories. They often "swing for the home run" but are rarely successful. However, search engines and directories are very valuable. Google is the best known but many others provide different and very useful search methods.

It is highly recommended that you familiarize yourself with how search engines work. That way you can optimize your use of these very valuable tools.

Very good search engines are Dogpile, [www.dogpile.com](http://www.dogpile.com); Cuil, [www.cuil.com](http://www.cuil.com); Live Roots; [www.liveroots.com](http://www.liveroots.com). Other important websites and directories are Cyndi's List of Genealogical Sites, <http://www.cyndislist.com>; Steve Morse's One-Step Search Tools, [www.stephenmorse.com](http://www.stephenmorse.com); Avotaynu, inc., [www.avotaynu.com](http://www.avotaynu.com); Yad Vashem, [www.yadvashem.org.il](http://www.yadvashem.org.il); Family Search, <http://www.familysearch.org/>.

Personal family websites are important and can yield vital information. There are virtually thousands of these sites. One good example is Digging for Roots, <http://www.digging4roots.com/>. This site provides information in regard to a number of Jewish families such as Ginsburg (formerly Ginsburski), Hof(f)man(n), Koenigsfest, Levinson (Loewensohn) and Wolfson (Volfsohn).

*Shtetl* and city sites can be a treasure trove of information. Through these sites, genealogists can find other researchers with mutual interests and discover living descendants who bridge the gap between the present and the archival material of the past.

The Israeli-based My Heritage site, [www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com), located in B'nei Atarot near Tel Aviv, claims to have more than

26 million members and more than 278 million names with more than 4.5 million family sites. Innovations are said to include face recognition technology and a search engine that aggregates hundreds of online databases. Genebase, [www.genebase.com](http://www.genebase.com) claims to offer a "wide panel of personal genomics assays which allows people to use DNA to find out more about themselves".

In conclusion, the internet dramatically improves the genealogist's ability to conduct research. However, with all of the benefits that the internet provides, there are many concerns. Social interaction groups may reveal personal information that holders may wish not to be published. Identity theft is a serious consideration, so putting up information such as dates of birth or mothers' maiden names may be dangerous (banks and other institutions are moving away from using this kind of data as identifiers). Many sites have attempted to meet such concerns by providing users with a number of controls to protect them online. It is up to users to check and ensure that they are taking precautions, such as choosing the appropriate settings.



Henry Blumberg

*JGS Toronto is pleased to welcome  
its new members*

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Stan Corbett

Allen Halberstadt

Bob Kates

Myrna Stone



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## Who Controls the Information In My Family Tree and How Do I Get Access To That Information?

Lecture by Dr. Margaret Ann Wilkinson  
April 29, 2009

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Unfortunately, the answers to the above topic question are not straightforward. Our Canadian forefathers in 1867 only concerned themselves with copyright when they were establishing the framework of personal information legislation. There were no electronic databases or the means of disseminating that information through networks in those days.

Today, laws dealing with privacy and the protection of personal information (separate matters) are dealt with in a tangle of legislation and regulations emanating from municipal, provincial, territorial and federal authorities. There are at least 25 pieces of legislation dealing with privacy and the protection of personal information for both public and private domains in this country. To complicate matters, the Charter of Rights “deepens the debate” because it talks about freedom of information. However, over the last 30 years, the privacy impulse has countervailed the access issue. In a recent Supreme Court of Canada decision, the Court ruled that in the context of Personal Data Protection Law, privacy includes personal information privacy. As we have such a large body of law and regulation dealing with privacy, the practice of genealogy becomes more difficult and challenging. As these laws can be confusing in their intent and application, it is necessary for genealogists to lobby for their interests.

Personal Data Protection legislation started to be written in 1977 and applied to public sector organizations (both federal and provincial). Then it spread to private organizations. All of this, of course, affects us as genealogists. It even affects our ability to gather data from cemeteries!

Cemeteries were once considered to be public domain. Nowadays cemeteries can be both private and public. The rules regarding cemeteries can vary widely from one province to another.

The law assumes that people wish to have privacy (in terms of the dead this extends to personal data protection).

Privacy legislation specifies to whom personal information can be shared with. This is what affects the practice of genealogy in terms of its relationship with the law.

Canada’s legal requirements with regard to privacy and personal data protection are much more advanced than the U.S. In fact, the U.S.A. doesn’t have a body of Personal Data Protection legislation.

In Canada, there is no access to information legislation that pertains to private organizations. Therefore, a former employer or a private cemetery can refuse to give a genealogist any information.

At the international level, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) became concerned in the late 1970s with the development of large computer databases and the means to disseminate information over networks. The OECD established guidelines in 1984 to balance data transfer interests with privacy interests. Canada complied with the

OECD rules and began implementing privacy laws. The U.S.A. did not sign on with the OECD agreement.

It must be kept in mind that the only information that you control is your own personal information. You can inadvertently give that right up when you sign an agreement to use the facilities of a social network such as Facebook or My Space. You can even give up rights to your family research when you sign a family tree software agreement.

There are things that you can do to protect your privacy and research, such as set up a private family site on the internet that can only be accessed by members by way of a password. Keeping in mind all of the barriers and restrictions to conducting research, genealogists must learn the rules and join together to lobby for access in the name of family research.

*Dr. Margaret Ann Wilkinson is Director of the Area of Concentration in Intellectual Property, Information and Technology Law at the Faculty of Law, University of Western Ontario. She teaches several courses, speaks and writes in the areas of intellectual property law (copyright, patents, trademarks, industrial design, confidential information, etc.), other information law (privacy, personal data protection, censorship, telecommunications regulation, etc.), and professional ethics and professionalism. She also received training as a professional librarian.*

*Dr. Wilkinson has had her articles appear in four issues of **Families**, the journal of the Ontario Genealogical Society. These articles will form a book entitled **Genealogy and the Law in Canada**, to be published jointly by the Ontario Genealogical Society and Dundurn Press; the book is to appear in about January, 2010.*



**Dr. Margaret Ann Wilkinson**



## A Personal Journey of Discovery

by Karen Lasky



*This is Part 2 of a 3-part series*

**M**y obsession to learn more grew fiercely, sparked by many surprising discoveries. A spontaneous search of Yad Vashem yielded a page of history documenting my Paternal Grandparents in 1957 by an Israeli relative, still unknown to me. So, you can imagine my utter disbelief, as I knew of no living relatives other than the Toronto connection, which I am about to share.

Prior to the Holocaust, some of my father's cousins had emigrated to Canada, and my mother's family, to Britain. The balance of my parents' families, the numbers still unclear to me, remained in Poland, only to perish in the death camps. My parents came from neighbouring *shtetls*, and their entire families were deported 1941 to the Lodz Ghetto, never to be seen again. More unbelievable details unfolded, including the painful truth about my mother's personal survival: she had leapt from the train that carried her entire family to their death, a memory that imprisoned her for her entire life.

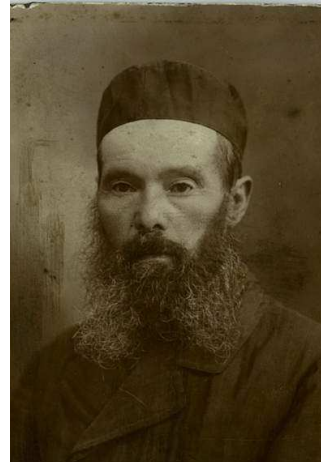
Stunned by their miraculous survival, my parents met in the Belsen DP camp following liberation, married, & I became their **only** family member, and one of 2,500 babies born post-war in this Camp.

The British set about finding homes for hundreds of thousands of survivors, and by some cosmic intervention, my father's cousins in Toronto spotted his name in a DP list published in the newspaper. Not having heard from my father's Family in over 20 years, they put a sponsorship into action. In March of 1948, some three years later, we arrived in Canada, and began our struggles through life like many survivor families. This sums up the little knowledge I possessed of my parents' histories.

Suddenly, in 2007, an opportunity to continue my historical discovery presented itself. The German Government invited Belsen Survivors & 2nd Generation to the Official Opening of their Memorial Museum in October of that year. My motivation soared with this unique opportunity to return to Poland and I put my research into high gear.

Years prior, my mother's England family provided me with two very old photos, thought to be my maternal great grandparents; these bore almost unreadable stamps from a photo studio near my mother's town, a likely place to start. The Polish Embassy provided detailed maps of my parents' towns, I had hired a Polish tour guide, Andrew, and fully prepared him for my **very limited** 2 day research Mission.

**Day 1: Wloclawek, major town near my parents' shtetls.** The first stunning surprise was locating the photo studio where the 2 photos were taken, over 125 years earlier. The current owner confirmed these photos were taken circa 1880; indeed, these were my maternal great grandparents, the names of whom I was still unaware:



**Great Grandfather & Great Grandmother Markovskiy**

**Brzesc Kujawski:** It was an incredible feeling to be suddenly driving into my mother's *shtetl* and into my own history. Here, the City Hall registrar informed us that some people with my mother's surname still lived on the street where, I later learned, my mother had been born. The anticipation was overwhelming, as Andrew bravely approached their home; after a short discussion, we were invited in and here we uncovered our stories together through translation and examination of photographs.

I had no knowledge that this branch of my family existed. Derek, now a Polish Catholic, was born of Jewish roots in direct lineage to my maternal great grandmother. His grandfather, my mother's first cousin, hid from the Nazis, then converted to Catholicism to survive. While this was an incredible discovery, they had no photos or hard evidence about my mother's family's existence.



**Author with descendants of her mother's family living on the same street where her mother had lived**





**Author on street where mother had lived**

**Lubraniec:** My father's neighbouring *shtetl*. I had even less information of my father's family, and an extensive research at the City Hall yielded no information that it had ever existed. I tried not to let my disappointment steal my motivation. We were advised that perhaps the Main Archives in Wloclawek may still possess some historical records.

Prior to my arrival, Andrew had consulted an historian who researched the Jews of this area. This day, he became the first person to provide me with concrete evidence that my families existed, through census, taxes and street addresses. He even had my grandparents' marriage certificate and my father's birth home address. Excitedly, we returned to Lubraniec after dark; in the accompanying photo, you can see me positioned in front of my father's birth home. The sense of validation for me was incredible, but the hunger did not stop here. My plan was to depart the following afternoon, but I vowed not to leave this part of the world without the archival records I longed for...



**Author in front of Spivak House, her father's birth home**

## **Congratulations to Peter (Piotr) Jassem!**

On April 20, 2009, Peter received the  
**Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit  
of the Republic of Poland**

an award bestowed by  
The President of the Republic of Poland  
at The Consulate General of the Republic of Poland, Toronto

Peter Jassem is a Polish-born architect and urban planner. His interest in Polish-Jewish heritage started with the discovery of his Jewish roots some 14 years ago. He has served as an executive member of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) for several years, has published articles in *Shem Tov* and organized the International Conference on Jewish Genealogy as a program director in Toronto in 2002.

Peter is a very active member of the Board of Directors of Jewish Record Indexing-Poland, an organization that has created the world's largest searchable online database of over 4 million Jewish records from Poland. He was a long-time member of the Steering Committee of Geshet Galicia, the worldwide Jewish genealogical organization of researchers tracing their roots to the province of Galicia.

Peter joined the Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada about ten years ago and has been its Chair since 2002. As a Canadian representative of the North American Council for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, Peter promotes among Canadians this outstanding upcoming institution, to be built on the site of the Warsaw Ghetto.

To find an article about Peter Jassem by Sheldon Kirshner, which appeared in *The Canadian Jewish News* on May 21, 2009, visit [www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca), and click on the link to the CJN.



**Author, Karen Lasky**

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## Branching Out

by Elaine Cheskes

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### New Acquisitions to the JGS of Canada (Toronto) Library Collection at the North York Central Library (Gladys Allison, Canadiana Room, 6<sup>th</sup> floor)

Irvine, Sherry, and Dave Obee. *Finding your Canadian Ancestors: a beginner's guide*. Provo, Utah, 2007.

Kessel, Barbara. *Suddenly Jewish: Jews Raised as Gentiles Discover Their Jewish Roots*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 2007.

Spector, Shmuel, and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds. *Encyclopedia of Jewish Life Before and During the Holocaust. 3 vols.* Jerusalem: Yad Vashem; New York: New York University Press, 2001.

### JGS TORONTO AT THE BARBARA FRUM DISTRICT LIBRARY

#### TRACING OUR JEWISH ROOTS: SELECTIONS FROM THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA (TORONTO) LIBRARY COLLECTION curated by Elaine Cheskes

in association with  
The Barbara Frum District Library  
The North York Central Library

Do not miss an opportunity to view *Tracing Our Jewish Roots!* The exhibit is currently at the Barbara Frum District Library and will run throughout the month of July, 2009. The display includes selections of Jewish genealogical reference books from the JGS Library and provides excellent resources for researching family histories. Highlights include: photographs of life in the *shtetls* of Europe, texts that describe the building of Jewish settlements from the Atlantic Provinces to the Pacific coast, scenes of Jewish immigrant culture in early Toronto, and statistical records from the Holocaust.

The Barbara Frum District Library is located at 20 Covington Rd., Toronto (Lawrence & Bathurst area). The original copies are for reference use only in the Gladys Allison Canadiana Room, 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street, Toronto.

## Ontario Genealogical Society Conference 2010

### *Essentials, Innovations and Delights*

The Toronto Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society will host the provincial Summer Conference from May 14-16, 2010.

In keeping with the theme - *Essentials, Innovations and Delights* - the Conference's goal is to present information that has practical essentials, recent innovations and unique case histories.

For further information regarding this Conference, please visit <http://www.ogs.on.ca/conference2010/>

To learn more about the Ontario Genealogical Society, go to [www.ogs.on.ca](http://www.ogs.on.ca)

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### Volunteers Needed: Toronto Cemetery Photography Project

Now that the nice weather is here, we are resuming our cemetery photography project. Volunteers are needed to photograph headstones and also to transcribe monument data on computer (at your own pace). Training will be provided for whichever assignment you choose.

Please note that thanks to the efforts of our members and other volunteers, Toronto has among the largest number of burial records on the JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR).

If you would like to direct your efforts to a cemetery where you have family members buried, we will try to accommodate your needs.

To volunteer for this project or to obtain information, please contact our project coordinator at: [cemetery@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:cemetery@jgstoronto.ca).

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### Check Our Website Often!

Be sure to visit [www.jgstoronto.ca](http://www.jgstoronto.ca) frequently as we often receive and post new information from various sources such other genealogical societies, as well as updates on resources and community events.

Be sure to look at our *Home Page* and also click on *Our Society/Announcements*, and don't forget to take advantage of the many links to other useful sites!!

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## Conservation of Original Documents at the ITS Archives

May 5, 2009

Press Release – Published with permission of the ITS



*This year the International Tracing Service (ITS) of Bad Arolsen will be conserving around 400,000 original documents from the Nazi era. Starting today, facsimiles of important documents are being used for visitor tours. “ITS stores documents of enormous historical relevance on the persecution, exploitation and murder of millions of people. It is essential that these files are conserved for the coming generations”, said chief archivist Udo Jost.*

More than 30 million documents on the fate of approximately 17.5 million victims of the Nazi regime are stored in the archives of the International Tracing Service. Around three-fourths of the documents are originals from the twelve-year regime of the National Socialists and the immediate post-war period. Among the original documents to be preserved this year are individual files from the Buchenwald concentration camp such as prisoners’ registration cards and personal property cards, lists from the concentration camps Neuengamme, Natzweiler and Mauthausen, and Gestapo cards from Koblenz and Frankfurt am Main.

ITS has now made facsimiles of some of the originals such as the death book from the Buchenwald concentration camp, a list of Jewish forced labourers who worked for Oskar Schindler, a transportation card from Anne Frank, and a Gestapo card for Konrad Adenauer – 60 individual documents, two folders and two books in total. They will be shown during visitor tours. “The goal is to protect the originals in view of the growing number of visitors to ITS ever since the archive opened up in November 2007”, said Jost.

The documents had been used as working papers for many decades. With their help, ITS clarified the fate of those persecuted by the NS regime and was able to issue certificates for pension funds and indemnification payments. “This usage has left its marks”, said the chief archivist. In addition, paper undergoes a natural ageing process. The documents have already held up in the facility’s archives for at least 60 years. “The quality of paper declined drastically around the end of WWII, so the documents are extremely acidic and thus decay faster”, explained Jost.

Because the entire inventory of the archive is currently being digitized, access to the original documents will only be necessary in certain individual cases in the future. This opens up the perspective of long-term conservation. In 2001, the International Tracing Service conducted a damage analysis. A priority list was compiled according to which the documents have been conserved step-by-step ever since. The analysis revealed an urgent need for action in the case of 4.3 million documents from concentration camps, ghettos and Gestapo prisons. The German federal government currently subsidizes this effort with 250,000 Euros per annum.

The degree of damage in the original documents can vary. To conserve and restore the papers, ITS is working together with the PAL Preservation Academy GmbH of Leipzig. This is primarily being done through mass deacidification in a complex chemical process which extends the durability of the paper sev-

eral times over. Yet conservation efforts also include delamination, stabilizing the paper, closing tears, removing any adhesive tape or punched holes, eliminating mildew and restoring ink corrosion.

Throughout 2008, 12,826 original lists from concentration camps were delaminated and deacidified. Mechanical damages to these documents were also repaired. In addition, 224,467 individual documents were deacidified and 1,653 were restored. All together, a total of nearly two million items from the ITS inventory have been processed to date. By 2018, all of the documents on incarceration can be restored. “We would like to intensify our efforts even more, but of course, that’s also a matter of finances”, said Jost.

### ADVERTISING RATES

SHEM TOV is now accepting display advertising for publication. Advertisers are requested to supply camera-ready art and payment by August 2009 for the Fall 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 (one 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 91006, 2901 Bayview Ave., Toronto, Ontario M2K 1H0.

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## Ask a Society Member

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In the March Issue of *Shem Tov*, a long-time member of our Society asked this question:

*Who is a family member for genealogical purposes?*

Banai Lynn Feldstein of Utah contacted us and kindly provided the following answer:

A relative is someone who you are blood-related to; you need to share a common ancestor. The definition of relative can also be extended to children who are adopted, so that they are related (as are their descendants) just as if they were blood-related to their adoptive family. (Not everyone extends the definition as such; some will often show an adopted child and then end that branch of the tree, as the blood relation has ended.)

I think that even though marriage is a legal and/or religious binding, your spouse is also considered your relative.

The term “in-law” refers to a legal binding via someone else’s marriage and does not constitute a relationship by this definition, but they can be considered family. My uncle’s wife is not technically my aunt but, outside of genealogical applications, I would call her my aunt and consider her to be family. The same goes for spouses of my cousins, etc.

This person who uploaded her tree to Geni was just including her husband’s family, and the writer is his family. Perhaps she feels that his family is now also hers, which is not so unusual.

In my own database, I will add the family trees of my relatives and their spouses if the information is shared with me. I don’t consider all of these extended family groups to be my family; they are connected, but not related, to me.

In the same way, Geni’s ultimate goal, I believe, is to show how we are all connected, though not necessarily “related”.

Banai Lynn Feldstein,  
Professional Genealogist  
Utah JGS Newsletter Editor

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## “Could We Be Related?”

We know what a great thrill it is to be contacted by a new or long-lost relative!

It has come to our attention, however, that there are those who prey upon unsuspecting genealogists, using claims of kinship as a pretext for a request for money. We hope that you connect with many relatives, but urge you to be on the alert for scams so that you do not become a victim of fraud.

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## The DNA Shoah Project

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The DNA Shoah Project is a project founded by the son of two Holocaust survivors, Dr. Syd Mandelbaum, who is an American scientist at the University of Arizona. Late in 2005, Dr. Mandelbaum read about the discovery in Stuttgart of remains of people of World War II and realized that there was no means of discovering the identities of the remains. Through a colleague, he was introduced to Dr. Michael Hammer, director of the Genomic Analysis and Technology Core facility at the U. of Arizona. These two scientists teamed up with Howard Cash, President of Gene Code Forensics Inc., to found the DNA Shoah Project; their special advisor is Dr. Karl Skorecki of the Rappaport Research Institute at the Technion – Israeli Institute of Technology.

The main particulars of this fascinating Project are excerpted below from [www.dnashoah.org](http://www.dnashoah.org):

“The Project is building a database of genetic material from Holocaust survivors and their immediate descendants in hopes of reuniting families disrupted by the Shoah (Holocaust). The Project aims to match displaced relatives, provide Shoah orphans and lost children with information about their biological families and, eventually, assist in the forensic identification of Holocaust-era remains.

DNA is the genetic material in our cells that makes us each unique. For the purposes of this project, it may be obtained from pre-war immigrants, survivors, and second and third generation family members via a painless cheek swab. The Project contains an educational component as well, employing current science and technology to teach the Holocaust in our schools.

This project stands at a unique confluence of technology and history: for the first time, the science necessary to make this effort a success is available, but we are losing aging Holocaust survivors at an alarming rate. The Project’s goal is to use this window of opportunity to collect as many DNA samples as possible from living survivors and their family members around the globe.

Participants’ anonymity is assured by the separation of genetic information from personal identifiers. At no time will information be shared with any unauthorized, non-forensic agency. Contributors will be part of the first-ever effort to construct a genetic testimony and legacy for victims of the Holocaust.

There is no fee to participate.

### Uses for the DNA Database

- Reunite families displaced by the Holocaust
- Assist global orphan-placement organizations to identify siblings and close relatives separated during World War II
- Eventually, when the database has reached sufficient size, assist European governments in Holocaust-era forensic identifications”

For further information, visit the website, [www.dnashoah.org](http://www.dnashoah.org), or call 1-520-626-6203.



## It's Polish/Cyrillic to Me!

By David Price



I like attending lectures at JGS meetings and reading *Shem Tov* but do not have the writing or verbal skills to try to do a talk or write an article. To me, aside from wanting to do one's own family tree, an important aspect of a Jewish genealogical society should also be taking on genealogical projects so people like me can contribute. I once helped with the Roselawn Cemetery project but what has really allowed me to use the skills that I seem to have are indexing and extracting Jewish Birth, Marriage and Death (BMD) records. Fortunately, the resources for learning Polish and Cyrillic for this purpose are readily available. In our JGS collection on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the North York Central Library are Jonathan Shea's *Russian Language Documents from Russian Poland: a Translation Manual for Genealogists* and Judith Frazin's *Translation Guide to 19th Century Polish Language Civil Registration*. Our website has the call numbers or you can email Elaine Cheskes, our Society's librarian, [library@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:library@jgstoronto.ca), for them. There is an amazing website as well for Cyrillic. At the Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP shtetlinks site (<http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/Kremenets/kmain.html>), one can choose from the following:

- Transliteration Guides for transliterating Russian to English and Hebrew/Yiddish to English;
- Translations of the birth, marriage, and death column headings from the Kremenets vital records;
- Russian & Hebrew images of Jewish Given Names from vital records, and their English transliteration - one set for female names, another for male names;
- Russian & Hebrew images of the "Causes of death" entries in the vital records, and their English transliteration
- Russian & Hebrew images of keywords, occupations and social status that appear in the vital records, and their English transliteration
- Russian & Hebrew Images of registration town names from vital records and their current names from ShtetlSeeker.

After you enter the site, click on "Kremenets Records and Transcriptions", then click on "Kremenets Records Translation Guides".

The following are indexing projects I have chosen to contribute to this year:

1. Kielce/Checiny/Lopuszno/Chmielnik town leader, JRI-PSA BMD 1885-1903.
2. Zawichost birth extracts 1826-1892 for JRI-Poland. Together with Tova Ajzenstat we also indexed the marriages last summer.
3. Minsk/Pinsk births, 1836-1840 for Belarus SIG. There will be more years extracted in the coming years. I tried to get Grodno, my mother's town, but it was already taken.
4. Viewmate on [www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org). I will translate the Russian BMD posted.
5. Lublin SIG Russian extracting. The towns I have worked on this year: Baranow, Janowiec, Janow Podlaski. Next

year: Krasnik and Irena/Demblin.

6. Bogoria (Bogary) BMD1826-1877. Stan Diamond referred me to Bev Lokash who was researching her ancestors. I was so inspired, seeing that it was a small town, I extracted the film and submitted it to JRI-Poland.
7. Anyone who scans their Russian/Polish BMD records can send them to me for translation at [dprice@sympatico.ca](mailto:dprice@sympatico.ca)

### Ontario Jewish Archives Walking Tours

**Sundays, July 19 & August 16, 2009 at 11 am**

*Sense of Spadina: Tour of Historic Jewish Toronto*

\$15 person, \$12 for students/seniors

**Sunday, September 13, 2009 at 11 am**

*Tour of the Pape Avenue Cemetery* (affiliated with Holy Blossom Temple),

Toronto's oldest Jewish cemetery, established in 1849

\$20 per person, \$15 for students/seniors

For details, please visit [www.ontariojewisharchives.org](http://www.ontariojewisharchives.org) or call 416-635-2883 x5170

### Support Your Society

Our Society's revenues are based on our modest membership dues. Your donations would be greatly appreciated so that we can continue to provide high-calibre programming. Several examples of how you can honour or memorialize a loved-one are to donate a book or to sponsor a lecture. Tax receipts are given for all donations.

Please contact Shelley Stillman: [president@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:president@jgstoronto.ca)

### Get *SHEM TOV* by Email

If you haven't yet done so, please subscribe to receive *Shem Tov* as a pdf. This will get you speedy delivery, and, in addition, will help you provide our Society with environmental and cost benefits: less paper & envelopes, less postage, and lower printing charges.

Simply send your request to

[shemtov@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:shemtov@jgstoronto.ca).

We thank you for your consideration.





**International Association of  
Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS)  
Conference  
August 2-7, 2009 in Philadelphia  
[www.philly2009.org](http://www.philly2009.org)**

**WILL YOU BE ATTENDING THE  
CONFERENCE?**

If so, and if you are interested in representing JGS Toronto, please contact Shelly Stillman at [president@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:president@jgstoronto.ca).

Also, some of you would perhaps like to share your thoughts about the event with fellow Society members in September's *Shem Tov*. What were the highlights? Did you make any great genealogical discoveries? Were there any speakers that you especially liked? How was your experience overall?

Please send your comments about the Conference to [shemtov@jgstoronto.ca](mailto:shemtov@jgstoronto.ca)

Please note that all Canadians are invited to the annual Canadian BOF (Birds of a Feather) meeting on: Monday, August 3, 2009, 8:15 am - 9:30 am in Salon 6 of the hotel.

**\*BIG NEWS\*** If you wish to 'brown-bag' your breakfast and bring it with you to the meeting, please do! There are many important issues to be discussed which are particular to Canadian researchers.

Coordinator: Merle Kastner (JGS of Montreal)  
[merlek@videotron.ca](mailto:merlek@videotron.ca)

**AND THE WINNER IS...**

During the International Association for Jewish Genealogical Societies Board Meeting in Philadelphia this past April, a draw was made for the winner of a free hotel room at the Sheraton Philadelphia City Center Hotel during the forthcoming IAJGS Conference.

We are very pleased to announce that the winner is **Allan Halberstadt** of Thornhill. Allan is a new JGS Toronto member, and we understand that this will be his very first attendance at a IAJGS Conference. We wish him a wonderful and fulfilling experience!

**JGS Toronto Members Take Tour of  
Genealogical Resources at the  
Toronto Reference Library, May 27, 2009**

