THE (WORLD’S BIGGEST-EVER) GLOBAL FAMILY TREE REUNION

National Public Radio (NPR) has a 7-minute podcast from August 23, 2014 entitled “Magazine Editor Sets Out To Join The Global Family Tree” wherein Esquire editor A.J. Jacobs is interviewed by Scott Simon. You might be familiar with Jacobs who wrote a book, among others, called The Year of Living Biblically, wherein he and his family did just as the title suggests. In this interview he discusses his current project: to attempt to prove that he is related to everyone. Included in the podcast are experts from geni.com and Wikitree and several celebrities. Listen/watch at www.npr.org/2014/08/23/342652079/editor-sets-out-to-join-the-global-family-tree.

Jacobs is currently organizing the world’s biggest family reunion ever, to be held on June 6th, 2015 at the New York Hall of Science, located on the grounds of the 1964 New York World’s Fair. The $20 admission to this family reunion of literally thousands of cousins will go to Cure Alzheimer’s Fund and the Alzheimer’s Association New York Chapter. Branch reunions will also take place in other cities.

To learn more about this very grand project, and register, if you’d like, go to www.globalfamilyreunion.com.
Message From the President

As members of a genealogy society, many of us invest a lot of time in collecting, organizing and archiving information. Examples are event dates (as in birth, marriage, death), documents, artefacts, and last but not least, photographs. I know that, from my perspective, whoever said that “a picture is worth a thousand words” got it right on. I never tire of looking at my collection of family tree photographs.

It is somewhat ironic that despite our archiving efforts as individuals, we, as a society, do not have archives. Some would say that since we are a “young” society, having not yet reached our 30th birthday, there is really no need for formal archives. And I am really not ready to debate that point of view. However, there is one exception. I would like to see us create a collection of photographs from over the past 30 years which would represent a pictorial history of the Jewish Genealogy Society of Toronto.

Elaine Cheskes, who looks after our library collection, has already embarked on this project, but we need more photographs. So this is a plea to all of our members to please send any photographs that you have in your collections (or shoe boxes) to library@jgstoronto.ca. If you don’t have a digital version of the photograph, we will be happy to have it scanned and then we will return the original to you. We will be archiving the photographs on our website. We look forward to having many photographs of our members, past and present, participating in events, meetings, discussions, international and local conferences and tours.

Also if any member is interested in helping Elaine with this project, please let her know at library@jgstoronto.ca.

Les Kelman
President, JGS Toronto

DIRECTORS OF JGS TORONTO

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<td>Marla Waltman</td>
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<td>TREASURER</td>
<td>Paul Teitelman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:treasurer@jgstoronto.ca">treasurer@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
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<td>Elaine Cheskes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:library@jgstoronto.ca">library@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
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<td>MENTORING COORDINATOR</td>
<td>Valerie Fox</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mentoring@jgstoronto.ca">mentoring@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
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<td>Neil Richler</td>
<td><a href="mailto:membership@jgstoronto.ca">membership@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
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<td>SHEM TOV EDITOR</td>
<td>Judy Kasman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shemtov@jgstoronto.ca">shemtov@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEBSITE COORDINATOR</td>
<td>Shelley Stillman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sstillman@jgstoronto.ca">sstillman@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
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<td>IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT</td>
<td>Harvey Glasner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hglasner@jgstoronto.ca">hglasner@jgstoronto.ca</a></td>
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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Elaine Cheskes, Valerie Miller Fox, Judy Kasman, Les Kelman, Myrna Levy, David Price, Shelley Stillman, and Marla Waltman
UPCOMING EVENTS
At Temple Sinai, 210 Wilson Avenue, at 8 p.m., unless otherwise stated
Doors open 30 minutes prior to events
Members: Free • Non-Members: $5

Wednesday, December 17th
7:45 p.m. – Annual General Meeting
8:00 p.m. - Tradition and Transition:100 Years of the First Narayever Congregation
A lively history of the First Narayever Congregation, located at 187 Brunswick Avenue, from its humble beginnings as an immigrant landsmanschaft to its pivotal role in the renewal of downtown Jewish life today. Presented by Sharoni Sibony, Manager of the Jewish Life Department at the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre. Sharoni sits on the Board of Limmud Toronto and serves as a tour guide for the Ontario Jewish Archives’ Sense of Spadina tours. She has taught adult education classes on Jewish literature and pop culture at Temple Emanu-El and the Florence Melton Mini-School.
PLUS: Have some cake to celebrate the 80th birthday of two JGS Toronto Past Presidents!

Sunday, January 25th, 2015, 10:30 a.m.
Making History Accessible: Illustrating and Publishing Your Family Story
Most genealogists work on their family histories with the intent of eventually sharing it with their family, and possibly a broader community of “very distant cousins”. This presentation by Gregg Loane will show you: some of the reasons for, and methods of sharing your story with others; effective page layout design guidelines, and methods for illustrating your family history to help bring the story to life.

Gregg Loane has been working on his children’s family tree for over 20 years. He has recently completed a Second Edition of his family history that was 19 years in the making. His immediate and extended family are spread far and wide, and so publishing and sharing this history has been a priority from the beginning.

Sunday, February 22nd, 10:30 a.m.
Jewish Immigration to Canada: The Ships that Brought Our Ancestors
Steven Brock, Treasurer of the Hamilton JGS, will walk us through the growth of the Jewish community in Canada, the ports they departed from and arrived to, as well as the ocean liners that brought our ancestors from Europe.

Wednesday, March 25th, 8 p.m.
DNA Testing for Genealogy: Not Just For Men
The presentation by John D. Reid explains how the powerful DNA tests offered by 23andMe, Family Tree DNA and AncestryDNA can assist your genealogical research.

John D. Reid is an English-born Ottawa-based family historian and genealogy blogger at www.anglo-celtic-connections.blogspot.ca/. He has authored books on home children, the 1885 Northwest Rebellion and numerous articles including many as an environmental research scientist. He is a past president of the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa, member of the UK Society of Genealogists and often speaks on family history topics.

Wednesday, April 29th, 8 p.m.
Non-Jewish Poles doing Jewish stuff... and the Jews who love and hate them
Jewish heritage revival in Poland is a phenomenon that has attracted a great deal of attention and provoked many controversies. Described as the world’s largest Jewish cemetery and the realm of “virtual Jewishness,” Poland is a space where the non-Jewish interest in things Jewish has been looked upon with particular skepticism. American cultural anthropologist Erica Lehrer ventures into this territory, both fascinating and fraught with tension, giving a fresh glimpse into the backstage of the Jewish heritage industry.

Presented by Erica Lehrer, Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair in the departments of History and Sociology-Anthropology at Concordia University, Montreal.

Co-sponsored by the Polish-Jewish Heritage Foundation of Canada

Sunday, May 31st, 10:30 a.m.
Nolan Altman, Coordinator of JewishGen’s Jewish Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR) and IAJGS Vice President Topic: JOWBR

Wednesday, June 17th, 8 p.m.
Our annual Brick Walls & Breakthroughs
Presentations by JGS Toronto members. It’s time to start thinking about what YOU would like to talk about!

KEEP SHEM TOV RELEVANT!
Submit a personal story (up to 1,500 words) for On A Personal Note. And send in:
● helpful tips
● useful websites
● interesting anecdotes
● news of discoveries
● photographs
● travel information

Please email your submissions to shemtov@jgstoronto.ca

www.jgstoronto.ca
JGS TORONTO MEMBERS SHOWCASED AT BETH TIKVAH DURING JEWISH BOOK MONTH
by Myrna Neuringer Levy, JGS Toronto member

An idea to celebrate Jewish Book Month at Beth Tikvah Synagogue in Toronto by exhibiting books written by members of the congregation mushroomed into a discovery of unknown talents.

When I approached Anna Van Delman with a suggestion to fill the glass showcase in the foyer with books, neither of us had any notion of the number of shul members who have written books or the variety of genres represented. What we also didn’t know was how many of those are also members of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto as well.

Once the call went out, twenty-five members lent their books for the display. These included books written for children, those written by survivors of the Holocaust, family history and memoirs published privately, works of fiction, history, science and cookbooks. Included in the collection were volumes translated into English from their original Yiddish versions. A picture of the author and a short biography went next to the book.

Along with celebrating the writing of those who have published, Anna and I hope that this will give others the inspiration to tell their story, either fictional or real.

Authors who are members of both Beth Tikvah synagogue and JGS Toronto:

Miriam Beckerman, Dr. Simon Kreindler, Edward Levy, Myrna Neuringer Levy, Gerry Zeidenberg

In addition, both Miriam Beckerman and Myrna Neuringer Levy wrote family stories that appeared In Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories, published by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada (Toronto) in 2011.

Another author who recently presented to our Society: Fiona Gold Kroll

MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE: 
A LIVING MEMORIAL TO 
THE HOLOCAUST
by Judy Kasman

I just had the opportunity to visit this Museum. Its location at the lower west tip of Manhattan, facing the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, is a symbolic setting, given the subject of the Museum.

The three levels of the Museum each deal with an era:
Level 1: Jewish Life a Century Ago: 1880-1930
Level 2: The War Against the Jews: 1930-1945
Level 3: Jewish Renewal: 1945-Present

The displays are well laid-out, and showcases are filled with so many artefacts and narratives from each era. Among the items on display is a challah knife from Germany that once belonged to the family of Toronto Rabbi Gunther Plaut z”l; it is accompanied by an early photo of Rabbi Plaut and his parents.

Viewing is enhanced by personal audio devices with narration by Itzhak Perlman and Meryl Streep.

At the time of my visit there were two special exhibits, A Town Known as Auschwitz: The Life and Death of a Jewish Community (there is an interactive exhibition website at www.mjhnyc.org/town) and Against the Odds: American Jews & the Rescue of Europe’s Refugees, 1933-1941.

See more about the Museum at www.mjhnyc.org

Myrna Levy (l) and Anna VanDelman, coordinators of the Beth Tikvah Jewish Book Month authors display, in front of the showcase of books at the shul
GENEALOGY ON TV

FINDING YOUR JEWISH ROOTS

The November 4th episode of Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates Jr. on PBS was a particularly relevant episode for Jewish genealogists as it delved into the background of three famous Jewish New York-born people, namely attorney Alan Dershowitz, singer/songwriter Carole King and playwright Tony Kushner. Figuring in the featured stories are discussions, among other topics, about the Holocaust, Ellis Island, Galitzia and Yizkor books. Do not worry if you missed the show as you can watch it in its entirety at http://www.pbs.org/wnet/finding-your-roots/.

There is a most interesting November 12, 2014 article at the show’s website entitled “Ashkenazi Jewish DNA and the Potential to Piece Together Shattered Family Branches” by Finding Your Roots Genetic Genealogy Consultant, CeCe Moore.

Ms. Moore’s article delves into the DNA aspect of Finding Your Roots, referring specifically to the Jewish heritage episode mentioned above. She discusses the fact that it is difficult to trace Ashkenazi Jewish cousins through DNA since “…Jews today have historically been an isolated population, typically marrying within their own group.”

She also discusses the difficulty of using DNA to find family after the Holocaust, specifically mentioning the case of Menachem Bodne, a Mengele twin. Moore writes: “For the last two and a half years he has been assisted by genealogist Ayana KimRon who helped him to determine through extensive archival document searches that Joli [his twin brother] did, in fact, survive the war. Unfortunately, so far they have been unable to locate him. As part of the search, two of the major DNA testing companies sent Menachem kits on the very slim chance that Joli or one of his children or grandchildren had already been tested. They didn’t find Joli in the database, but Menachem was matched to a first cousin!...It turns out that Menachem’s maternal aunt had immigrated to the United States before the war. She too, believed her sister and all of her extended family was lost in the Holocaust. Personally, along with African American and unknown parentage genetic genealogy research, I find this the most meaningful and promising application of genetic genealogy…for every family reunited, it is a triumph over evil made possible finally and only through our work.”

JRI-Poland played a major role in doing research for this episode. The JRI-Poland website posts the following from Finding Your Roots director/producer, Josh Gleason:

“JRI-Poland was a tremendous resource as we worked to uncover the Eastern European ancestry of our Jewish guests. This organization’s work in indexing and digitizing thousands of records led us on a paper trail going back to the 18th century! We were able to provide our guests with information about their 3rd and 4th great-grandparents that would have been virtually impossible to uncover without this resource. JRI-Poland’s database is truly a gift to family historians and genealogists around the world.”

(Visit www.jri-poland.org)

At the Finding Your Roots website mentioned above, you can share your own family roots story and as well, read the stories that others have posted.

CNN’S GENEALOGY SERIES
ROOTS: OUR JOURNEYS HOME

This fall, CNN presented thirteen of their on-air personalities in searches for their roots. Among those featured were Wolf Blitzer and John Berman, both of whom traced their Jewish ancestry.

Wolf Blitzer was born to Holocaust survivors in Germany and was raised in Buffalo, NY. For this film, he travelled to Yad Vashem where he met with a researcher. He also went to Oswiecim, Poland (see p. 4) (known as Auschwitz in German & Oshpitzin in Yiddish), the town where the Blitzer family hailed from, looking for traces of his family. There he visited the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp and a local cemetery, reciting kaddish at a matzevah for a woman named Blitzer, not knowing whether or not this was a relative. He also spent time in Buffalo, visiting various old haunts of his early years.

John Spinoza Berman, of Boston, travelled to Amsterdam, trying to determine if he is descended from the famous 17th c. philosopher Baruch Spinoza (who was expelled from the Jewish community in 1656 due to his radical views). Working with researchers, Berman discovered that he in fact is not a direct descendant of this philosopher. He did learn, however, that his Spinoza (originally Espinoza) line had emigrated from Morocco to Amsterdam in about 1722 and formed part of the large Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam. In fact, researchers could trace back to Berman’s 7th great grandfather! Benjamin Spinoza, born in Amsterdam in 1850, was Berman’s great great grandfather, and was the first of his family to emigrate to the US, in 1867.

To view these (and the other ten) interesting short films, go to http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/us/roots/index.html.

GENEALOGY ROADSHOW
returns to PBS on January 13th, 2015 for 6 episodes www.pbs.org

December 2014 Kislev 5775 5

www.jgstoronto.ca
The project is pretty simple. You will find clear instructions about how to participate in the MEMPLAQ project at http://www.iajgs.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/MemPlaq-Instructions.pdf. After reading these short instructions, select a synagogue (why not start with your own?) and email me at secretary@jgstoronto.ca to ensure that no one else is covering the same venue. Then register for the Challenge with the IAJGS http://bit.ly/1xb6AVB by signing the volunteer agreement.

Your next step is to contact the synagogue, using the template letter provided in the toolkit on the project website at http://www.iajgs.org/blog/memplaq/, to arrange for permission to photograph and record their plaques. Once you have the go-ahead, visit the synagogue with your camera and snap away. Finally, in the comfort of your home, you can transcribe the information that you have collected and send it in. It’s as easy as that!

Please join us, and your fellow JGS Toronto members, in this enjoyable and worthy project that will create a permanent Yahrzeit record for use by current and future generations of genealogists. It’s also a great way to ensure that your family’s Yahrzeits are recorded for your use, and with easy access, wherever you are in the world.

As this project proceeds, I will be reporting back to the membership on our success. I hope we can include your work in this report. You may also follow the project’s progress in cities and Jewish genealogical societies around the world on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/IAJGSjewishgenealogy, and Twitter: https://twitter.com/hashtag/memplaq.

As of the beginning of December, four JGS Toronto members have undertaken to photograph and index memorial plaques in local synagogues: Jerry Scherer – BAYT; Dr. Rolf Lederer -Shaarei Tzedec (Markham Street Shul); Bill Gladstone – the Zionist Centre and Beth Lida, and yours truly - Beth Tzedec. The next step is to expand the project beyond Cheshvan and record information from all synagogue memorial plaques in Greater Toronto. In order to do so, we need your help.

You can participate by choosing a synagogue (or two!) to visit where you can photograph memorial plaques and then record the data from them (i.e. English & Hebrew names and date of death on both Gregorian and Hebrew calendars) for entry into the JewishGen Memorial Plaques Database. It’s easy to do and it is a mitzvah that will help genealogists worldwide.

Worldwide MEMORIAL PLAQUES Indexing Challenge

MARK A SPECIAL OCCASION WITH A DONATION TO JGS TORONTO

Go to http://donate.jgstoronto.ca

Get a tax receipt instantly!

Thanks for your support!
Registration is now open for the IAJGS 35th International Conference on Jewish Genealogy taking place at the Jerusalem Ramada from July 6 to 10, 2015. The Conference is being held in cooperation with MyHeritage and with the support of individual, organizational and corporate sponsors presently including Harvey Krueger of New York and Yad Vashem. To get the Hotel Conference rate and special perks such as in-room free wi-fi you must register and reserve through www.iajgs2015.org.

A Shabbaton (Friday & Saturday weekend July 3-4 program) - Shabbat experience for everyone -will precede the Conference and will be followed by an “Exploration Sunday” on July 5 with touring and archive options.

The program for the 2015 Conference promises to be varied and unique! There will be sessions relating to research in different countries, techniques and a focus on how the end of World War II impacted the Jewish people and their lives across the world.

Visit the Conference website, www.iajgs2015.org for registration. Additional information on Family Finder, Exploration Sunday, Shabbaton and meal functions and more will be available shortly. You are encouraged to watch the website, sign up for the Conference Discussion group (http://lists.iajgs2015.org/mailman/listinfo/discussion-3), follow the Conference on Facebook (www.facebook.com/IAJGSConference) or Twitter (twitter.com/IAJSConf).

RARE CANADIAN JEWISH COMIC BOOK FOUND

An article by Sarah B. Hood, “Rare ‘Jewish War Heroes’ comic from 1944 found in box of donated used books”, appeared in the National Post on October 31, 2014. Sylvia Lovegren, a volunteer sorting books donated for the annual Friends of the Kelly Library at St. Michael’s College, came across this unusual find, which was in good condition.

It features real heroes, such as Capt. Israel Fisanovich, Soviet Submarine Hero, and Yank Levy “Guerilla” (born in Hamilton, Ontario in 1897, “…who wrote a well-known book on guerrilla warfare techniques, and even made the cover of Life magazine in 1942.”)

The article states: “As Ms. Lovegren discovered, the comic book was the first of three issues published by the Canadian Jewish Congress to highlight the courage and dedication of Jewish soldiers at a time when some Canadians were claiming that Jews weren’t doing enough for the war effort.”

The comic book is not being sold at the present time.

Leonard Nimoy, widely known for his role as Spock in TV’s original Star Trek, is interviewed by about his life, beginning in his childhood as the son of Ukrainian Jewish immigrants living on the West Side of Boston. The interview is conducted by Christa Whitley and was published on February 6, 2014 as part of the Yiddish Book Center’s Wexler Oral History Project. Part of Nimoy’s interview, including Hamlet’s famous soliloquy, is in Yiddish with English subtitles. It can be viewed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QAYv15CC5s

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!

About IAJGS:
The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization of organizations formed in 1988 to provide a common voice for issues of significance to its members, to advance our genealogical avocation, and to coordinate items such as the annual International Conference on Jewish Genealogy.

Leonard Nimoy’s MAMELOSHN: A YIDDISH STORY

Leonard Nimoy, widely known for his role as Spock in TV’s original Star Trek, is interviewed by about his life, beginning in his childhood as the son of Ukrainian Jewish immigrants living on the West Side of Boston. The interview is conducted by Christa Whitley and was published on February 6, 2014 as part of the Yiddish Book Center’s Wexler Oral History Project. Part of Nimoy’s interview, including Hamlet’s famous soliloquy, is in Yiddish with English subtitles. It can be viewed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QAYv15CC5s

www.jgstoronto.ca
After years of running down to the Toronto Reference Library microfiche readers to extract LDS (Mormon) films of Jewish vital records of Poland, with the magic of digital technology, I can now extract in the comfort of my own home. You can too! That is, if you are willing to learn how to read handwriting in Polish (all the records from 1808 to 1867) or Russian (most of the records from 1868 to 1914).

To follow the paper trail in researching your family tree, you first have to conquer the Russian Cyrillic written in the “old” Russian alphabet

I learned how to read Jewish records from Poland using Judith Frazin’s A Translation Guide to 19th-Century Polish-Language Civil-Registration Documents for Polish and Jonathan Shea’s In Their Words for Russian. To decipher Cyrillic handwriting, I first familiarized myself with the letters I could read easily and extrapolated the balance of the word/name/town/age. Having surname and town lists by my side was essential reference for the translation process. Although it took many years to master the Cyrillic, I could function in it within about one year. I wasn’t perfect but as I made progress, it was both satisfying and exhilarating.

One of the ongoing challenges in transcribing records in any language is learning the handwriting style of each new scribe. But the learning curve becomes shorter and shorter as one learns the idiosyncrasies of each of the registrars responsible for record-keeping in the 19th and early 20th century. Being able to enlarge the text with a computer program also was an enormous help when the scribe wrote in small letters. Reading faded documents is an ongoing challenge but adjusting the image (darkening or improving contrast) usually helps.

Navigating images on the Polish State Archives “NDA” website:

The largest group of images of Polish-Jewish records currently available online is from the many towns in the Lublin branch of the Polish State Archives. Here are the key points to remember when extracting digitized images of Lublin province records on the National Digital Archives (NDA) website: www.szukajwarchi-wach.pl

Click on ‘Units’ to get the type of record (urodzina - birth, malzentow - marriage, umart - death) and the range of years.

Each digitized image of record book pages is numbered. The record numbers for each type (in Polish “AKT” number) start at #1 each year. There are usually four birth or four death records on each scan. Typically, there are two marriages on each scan.

Almost all registers include index pages for each type of record. They are located after the last record (AKT) of each type. This makes it much easier to find records of specific interest for your research. Index page entries include the surname and given name of the individual and the AKT number. After identifying an AKT of interest, scroll back to the actual record.

Scan Controls
The NDA website has various tools for adjusting the scans. The scan controls are in the two boxes on the left side of the image.

The Preview box allows you to move to any part of the image by dragging a square.

The Tool box enables you to enlarge the image or reverse to a negative view (white on black instead of black on white), and change the brightness of the image.

To move to the next scan or return to the previous one, click on the arrows above the image. To “save” a scan, close the scan and right click and “save image to your preferred location on your computer.

Extractions
Now that you have saved the records of interest to your computer, what’s next? While a full translation of an important family record may be a keepsake, it can be a time-consuming process for either you or a translator. Remember that the goal of extracting records is to obtain the genealogically-useful information.

JewishGen’s “Viewmate” is the fast and easy way to obtain extractions of your Polish or Cyrillic records www.jewishgen.org. Volunteers will extract the records for you. When posting a scan on Viewmate, it is important to provide the surname, town, year and type of record. This information is a starting point for the volunteer translator and helps expedite the extraction! And don’t forget to thank the volunteer and perhaps show your appreciation by making a donation to a JRI-Poland project. It will be appreciated!

HAPPY 80TH BIRTHDAY!

At our meeting on December 17th, we will be treating ourselves to birthday cake in honour of two JGS Toronto Past Presidents who recently celebrated their 80th birthdays. If you would like some cake, and if you would like to know which Past Presidents, please join us for this event at Temple Sinai. Obviously, serving on the Board of Directors as President was good for their health (hint!!)
New Acquisitions to the JGS Toronto Library Collection at the Gladys Allison Canadiana Room, North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street, 6th floor, Toronto

1. JGS 305.520971 MEN

2. JGS 929.50899 SEG

3. JGS 971.304092 TUL

4. JGS 945.004924 REG

5. JGS 943.805309 GIL

6. JGS 929.1089924 2014 MOK

   Would you reread the same book every year? Would this book continuously engage your interest? *Getting Started In Jewish Genealogy* publishes yearly a new edition that demonstrates how Jewish genealogical research has changed in the past five years. Some of the major advancements that have taken place from 2011-2014 are outlined in *Avotaynu*, Spring, Volume XXX, Number 1.

**2011** - The major improvement from the 2010 edition is the addition of information about using DNA testing for family history research and a section on the Association of Professional Genealogists.

**2012** - There is no longer a company called Footnote.com. It is now Fold3.com. ShtetlLinks has been changed to KehilaLinks. There are two new SIGs: Bessarabia and Sub-Carpathian. The 1940 census access will be a fact in 2012 rather than a future resource. The Family Search section is rewritten to reflect the new design of the web site.

**2013** - The new chapter is “How to Search Online Databases,” which was originally published in the Fall 2012 issue of AVOTAYNU. It describes the various types of searches some sites offer such as wildcard, phonetic, fuzzy and synonym searches. It also discusses the nuances of one-name searches and sites in non-native languages.

The chapter previously titled “Genealogical Software.” It has been re-titled “Getting Started Properly.” It discusses the importance of genealogical software, citing sources, entering data in a standard way (names, dates, places) and the value of maintaining a research log.

**2014** - Significant additions to the book are sections on MyHeritage.com, Geni and American Joint Distribution Committee. As is true every year, other chapters were reevaluated to confirm that the information is still current. Statistics about database sizes and websites are now more current. The book has grown since 2010 from 94 pages to 104.

*Reprinted with the kind permission of Gary Mokotoff*

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**POLIN MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF POLISH JEWS**

Although this Museum opened in Warsaw in April 2013, the Core Exhibit officially opened October 28, 2014, the start of three days of culture-filled festivities, concerts and ceremonies.

From the Museum’s website:

“The Core Exhibition is a journey through 1000 years of the history of Polish Jews – from the Middle Ages until today. Visitors will find answers to questions such as: how did Jews come to Poland? How did Poland become the center of the Jewish Diaspora and the home of the largest Jewish community in the world? How did it cease to be one, and how is Jewish life being revived?

The exhibition is made up of eight galleries, spread over an area of 4000 sq.m., presenting the heritage and culture of Polish Jews, which still remains a source of inspiration for Poland and the world. The galleries portray successive phases of history, beginning with legends of arrival, the beginnings of Jewish settlement in Poland and the development of Jewish culture. We show the social, religious and political diversity of Polish Jews, highlighting dramatic events from the past, the Holocaust, and concluding with contemporary times.

We present 1000 years of Polish-Jewish coexistence, speaking of cooperation, rivalry and conflicts, autonomy, integration and assimilation. While seeking to confront thorny issues, we also bring attention to bright chapters in our common history.”

The director of the Core Exhibit is Professor Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett of New York University, who is originally from Toronto. [www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/en](http://www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/en)
JGS TORONTO RESOURCES

USING GOOGLE CALENDAR ON JGS TORONTO WEBSITE

by Shelley Stillman, JGS Webmaster

We have a fresh, new look – Google Calendar is now on our website (www.jgstoronto.ca).

From the home page, find the Calendar by clicking on Event Calendar at the bottom of the list of events in the Google Calendar image. You can also access it by clicking on the drop down menu item under Calendar on the main menu bar. You can choose to view the Calendar by the week, month or agenda formats.

We have created a calendar that displays JGS Toronto programmes, as well as a second calendar for Other Events of interest to genealogists. You can select either or both of these calendars by clicking on the little down arrow in the upper right hand corner of the Calendar.

The + Google Calendar button will add events to your own Google Calendar.

When more information is available, the link will be displayed as text in the calendar. It will become an active hyperlink if you click on More Details. If you use Google Calendar, you will also have the option to Copy to My Calendar.

SHARING YOUR FAMILY TREE ONLINE

by Shelley Stillman, JGS Toronto Website Coordinator

JGS Toronto is pleased to announce a new feature for members only.

Beginning in 2015 all JGS Toronto members who wish to post links to their family trees on the Society website will have the opportunity to do so. The links will be accessible only to other Society members. We hope you find this new feature useful.

If you are interested in added your family tree link, please contact webmaster@jgstoronto.ca.

HAVE YOU HIT A BRICK WALL?

by Judy Kasman, JGS Toronto member

My mother, Jennie (nee Golomb) Kernkraut z”l, was born in Vilna, Lithuania (Poland at that time). In 1948, she arrived in Toronto from Stockholm, after having endured the rigours of numerous slave labour camps during World War II.

Earlier this year, I came across a notebook with nothing more than the year “1947” hand-printed on its orange cover. Inside were pages of my mother’s Yiddish handwriting. I could see that the first article’s title was “My First Impressions of Sweden”, and dated July 30, 1947; other pages followed, about 20 in total. Although my mother had written a lot over the years, much in Yiddish, I didn’t recall ever having seen this particular notebook before. I was very curious to read its contents but I knew that would take me “forever” to decipher the Yiddish. I decided right away that I would hire someone to translate these precious pages into English for me.

So I went to the Service Providers section of JGS Toronto’s website (www.jgstoronto.ca), where I found the name of Gloria Brumer. This was particularly exciting for me as I knew that Gloria’s daughters had been in my mother’s nursery class! I was very pleased that Gloria was able to undertake the translation for me, and several months later I was the proud possessor of my mother’s words and thoughts: three articles and one poem.

However, there was a wrinkle: since the first story took place in Stockholm, there were some Swedish words transliterated from Yiddish that neither Gloria nor I knew, and I realized that the piece would make more sense if I knew what these words were supposed to be. That’s when I contacted Valerie Fox, JGS Toronto’s Mentoring Coordinator, asking her if there was a member who knew Swedish. Sure enough, Valerie came through, providing me with the name of our member, Jytte Birnbaum, who came to my rescue. With Jytte’s assistance, my mother’s fish-out-of-water account made more sense!

The moral of the story: there are many benefits of being a member of JGS Toronto. Take advantage of the resources available to you to assist you in your family research.

BENEFITTING FROM JGS TORONTO’S RESOURCES

by Judy Kasman, JGS Toronto member

Valerie Fox, JGS Toronto’s Mentoring Coordinator, is ready to help you make a breakthrough in your research! Send your conundrums and questions to mentoring@jgstoronto.ca.
At the 2014 International Jewish Genealogy Society Conference held in Salt Lake City, I was surprised by the large show of hands when the speaker asked who had done their DNA profile. I had always used JewishGen’s Jewish Family Finder and Family Tree of the Jewish People, but I was not getting any responses lately. When I returned from the Conference, my husband and I decided to have our DNA analyzed by 23andMe (www.23andMe.ca), a genetic-testing company. My husband hoped to connect with relatives who had left Poland or Ukraine before the Holocaust; I hoped to find relatives who could help me with the gaps on my family trees.

We ordered the kits online, and they arrived in a few days. That was the easy part. There were instructions to follow. According to 23andMe’s website, I had to make sure that I did not eat, drink, smoke, chew gum, brush my teeth nor use mouthwash at least 30 minutes before providing a saliva sample. The instructions stated: to produce saliva, spit into a vial up to a certain level, making sure there are no bubbles, but if there are, the bubbles have to be above the allotted line. What followed seemed to me, in retrospect, a comedy sketch reminiscent of the early days of television. I was clueless as how to produce saliva in my fairly dry mouth. The company’s website offered advice. I rubbed my cheeks, I made chewing motions, I imagined different types of foods that I like. It was to no avail. I couldn’t produce a sample quickly enough. Holding the vial in one hand, I turned on my laptop to consult the company’s website once again. It suggested that I imagine or smell something sour, like lemons. Sounds easy - not so. Imagine this scenario: with one hand holding the vial, I opened the refrigerator and found a sliced lemon in my fruit drawer. I smelled and smelled. No luck. The thirty-minute time limit was approaching. I imagined my sample degrading! I thought of pickles! Wasn’t that sour? Again, with one hand I tightly gripped the vial, and with the other hand, I managed to twist open the pickle jar’s top. I gagged! My husband’s favourite brand of pickles was not mine! Tick-tock! I telephoned my daughter for advice. “Mom, she said, “Calm your self. Some bubbles will eventually turn into saliva.” In the end, after 45 minutes, mission accomplished!

Was my saliva DNA-worthy? I was overjoyed when I received an email to confirm that my sample arrived and that my results would follow shortly. According to my friend Toba, who is also member of our Society, I should have pressed my tongue on the salivary glands and tilted my head back as if I were sitting in the dentist’s chair. A few days later, my husband took Toba’s advice and he was able to get a saliva sample in 13 minutes! A few weeks later, I received my results by email. I have to date 300 2nd and 3rd cousins, and more than 650 distant relatives who provided their DNA. I have my work cut out for me for years to come!

My paperwork and interviews have now intertwined with my DNA results. I am hopeful that DNA results will lead to a breakthrough in my own brick walls.

In 1997, just by chance, I met a woman at a Jewish genealogical conference who either noticed the name Gallay or the town Gorodische on my badge. She photocopied for me pages from the book, The Family Tree Revised 1978 Descendants of Velvel Pochapovsky, Horodyszcze, White Russia (1800-?), by Howard Picker of Albany, New York. Horodyszcze (Gorodische), Belarus was the town where my paternal grandfather was born in 1890. Velvel Pochapovsky’s granddaughter, Miriam, married Eliyahu Meir Galai. My paternal great-great-grandfather was Avraham Abba Gallai. According to my records, Eliyahu Meir was one of the many sons from whom the Gallai/Gallay family is descended. By coincidence, Eliyahu Meir’s grandson, who was living in Ottawa, telephoned me to ask me about another Gallay family who had moved from Ottawa to Toronto. I decided to go to Ottawa and attend the Shabbat services when his daughter was giving a D’var Torah as a Bat Mitzvah. I had the opportunity to meet Eliyahu Meir’s daughter Feiga for a few minutes. As it was Shabbat, I could not take notes. Now, through genetic genealogy, I might be able to link Eliyahu Meir Galai to Avraham Abba Gallai. Perhaps the key lies in my DNA.

Keep in mind that when choosing which company to use to analyze your sample, you have to consider what companies are available, the costs and services as well as your needs and wants. Look at different websites.

The biggest surprise of all: my husband and I share tiny segments of DNA on three chromosomes. We are .22 percent related.

Happy Hanukkah

To All of Our Members and Friends!
**OLD EUROPEAN JEWISH CEMETERIES IN THE NEWS**

**JEWS IN BREST DISCOVER 1,500 JEWISH HEADSTONES**

In an October 31st, 2014 article by Ted Thornhill on England’s MailOnline reports that over the past six years, about 1,500 Jewish headstones have been uncovered in structures (e.g. basements, road, sidewalk pavings) in the Belarus town of Brest, on the border of Poland.

The Brest Jewish cemetery dated from about 1832; the town’s Jewish community was all but wiped out during the Holocaust.

Ted Thornhill: “Hundreds [of headstones] were discovered in May during the construction of a supermarket. Debra Brunner, co-director of The Together Plan (www.thetogetherplan.com), a UK-based charity that promotes the development of skills and education in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, has been helping with efforts to have the headstones protected...”

The Together Plan is hoping to attract the support of the U.S Commission For Jewish Heritage Abroad, so that funding can be raised to build a memorial using the headstones at the site of the original cemetery, which lies on scrubland next to a running track.”

**NEW DOCUMENTARY ABOUT “RABBI’S CEMETERY” IN BIALYSTOK**

Mark Halpern, BIALYGen Coordinator and JRI-Poland Bialystok Coordinator, advises about a new 27-minute documentary film by Tomek Wisniewski, a well-known journalist, filmmaker, old post card collector and historian of Jewish Bialystok. The film is entitled “Park Centralny” or “Central Park,” the location of Bialystok, Poland’s former Jewish Cemetery, often called the Rabbi’s Cemetery. Its aim, according to Halpern, is “…to inform the public about a fascinating Jewish Cemetery in Bialystok and to realize a project to preserve what might be left.”

You can view the documentary at [http://www.viewster.com/movie/1286-18878-000/central-park/](http://www.viewster.com/movie/1286-18878-000/central-park/). It is in Polish with English subtitles.

**MISSING LINKS**

I am interested in locating either the tombstone or any information about the death of my great-great grandfather, Naftali Picele (1840-1914). I think he lived in Gribow, Poland but belonged to the synagogue in Nowy Sacz. My suspicion is that he was somehow killed in the Czarist invasion of the late summer of 1914. Earlier this year I visited Nowy Sacz with my recently-discovered Polish cousin, Jan Wolenski.

My grandmother, Shaindel Picele Fetter (1884-1952), was born in Jaslo and immigrated with her parents to Bridgeport, CT in 1891.

Bruce Fetter, Milwaukee

If anyone has any knowledge to share with Bruce about the above-noted people, please write to shemtov@jgstoronto.ca.

**DIGITIZING CEMETERIES: MYHERITAGE IS AT IT AGAIN (WITH FRIENDS)!**

December 4, 2014 - As part of the global initiative we launched with BillionGraves earlier this year, the MyHeritage team recruited a group of enthusiastic volunteers to continue our efforts to digitize cemeteries.

After successfully digitizing a medium sized cemetery of historical significance earlier this year (see video), we decided to undertake our biggest challenge yet - to digitize Israel’s largest cemetery - with over 200,000 graves. So earlier this week, we embarked on a one-of-a-kind project to photograph all headstones of the huge Holon cemetery in central Israel.

This was one of largest events of its kind ever organized - in the world!

The best aspect of the event was the true collaboration between MyHeritage and all leading genealogy organizations in Israel, in addition to MyHeritage power users. In total, some 120 people joined our initiative and participated, and approximately 150,000 gravestone photos were taken throughout the day! It was heart-warming to see such collaboration among so many people who care about genealogy, from all ages, and all groups, working together to create an incredible resource that is free for all to use.

**SAVING MANHATTAN’S CAFE EDISON**

There are protests taking place to prevent this iconic 34 year-old family-owned Jewish eatery (aka The Polish Tea Room) in New York’s Theater District from being evicted by its landlord, Hotel Edison.