

Expanded Issue

SA-SIG

*The journal of the Southern African Jewish Genealogy Special
Interest Group*

<http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/>

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In this Issue

<i>President's Message – Saul Issroff</i>	2
<i>Editorial – Roy Ogus</i>	3
<i>The African Jews of Yeoville – Ilanit Chernick</i>	4
<i>Isaac Ochberg's Travels in Eastern Poland – Sir Martin Gilbert</i>	8
<i>New Book – The Girl from Human Street by Roger Cohen</i>	11
<i>Another Brother in my Family – Basil Sandler</i>	12
<i>New Book – Lost and Found in Johannesburg by Mark Gevisser</i>	16
<i>The Baumann Family, Builders of One Kind or Another – Amanda Jermyn</i>	18
<i>Foreigners in South Africa: Rabbis and their Wives Who Brave It Out – Rabbi Izak Rudomin</i>	25
<i>Holiday in the Hinterland – Eve Fairbanks</i>	28
<i>New Book – Exodus to Africa by Adam Yamey</i>	30
<i>The SA-SIG-Sig Newsletter Article Resource: From Siauliai to Stellenbosch – Ann Rabinowitz</i>	31
<i>An Update on the Jewish Life in the Country Communities Project</i>	32
<i>New Items of Interest on the Internet – Roy Ogus</i>	35
<i>Surnames appearing in this Newsletter</i>	44

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I write this on *Yom HaShoah*, and feel that it is easy to forget and difficult to take in, the sheer enormity of the Holocaust, an industrialised killing process. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that each person killed was a person, with a history and a family. There are many mass murders occurring in Africa and the Middle East, but nothing of this scale.

There are interesting new digital Holocaust activities. See, for example, the Riga Ghetto Latvian Holocaust Museum online walk through (at <http://www.rgm.lv>) that has been nominated for a Webby award.

The new website for SA Jewish Rootsbank database from the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town can be found at

www.jewishroots.uct.ac.za

It is visually an improvement.

We frequently ask that anyone with material relating to any communal lists, e.g. membership lists, *Mohel* registers, etc., to let the Kaplan Centre know about this information.

There is also now a proper website for the South African Friends of Beth Hatefusoth Country Communities Project at either of the following two links:

www.jewishcountrylife.co.za

www.jewishcountrycommunities.co.za

A problem area is that they state: "The following places are not covered in these books, as they are recorded at the Beit Hatfusot Museum in Israel: Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, East London, Johannesburg, Kimberley, Oudtshoorn, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria."

It seems, however that no one at Beth Hatfusot in Israel has any knowledge of this! It will be a major research project to fill this gap.

I hope to see some of the readers at the forthcoming 35th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy (IAJGS 2015) which will be held in Jerusalem from 6 July to 10 July, 2015. You can find the conference web site at:

www.IAJGS2015.org

The Southern Africa Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group (SA-SIG)

The purpose and goal of the Southern Africa Special Interest Group (SA-SIG) is to bring together Jewish genealogy researchers with a common interest in Southern Africa and to provide a forum for a free exchange of ideas, research tips and information of interest to those researching Jewish family history in the communities of South Africa, Lesotho (Basutoland), Botswana (Bechuanaland), Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), Zambia (Northern Rhodesia), Swaziland, Mozambique, Kenya, and the former Belgian Congo.

The SIG has been producing a quarterly Newsletter since 2000 in which is included articles on personalities in the Southern African Jewish community, religious congregations, communities – past and present and general news about the lives our Southern African families led.

Further information on how to subscribe to the Newsletter, as well as an archive of previous Newsletter issues, can be found at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/newsletter/index.htm>

If you would like to contribute articles to the Newsletter, accounts should include descriptions of families of the community, aspects of local Jewish life, its institutions and particular character. Jewish involvement in the community at large, its history, business life and development could be featured as well.

Articles for inclusion in the Newsletter, or any general enquiries, should be sent to Roy Ogus, Editor, at r_ogus@hotmail.com

The SA-SIG maintains a set of Web Pages that can be found at: <http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica>

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I will be giving a talk on South African Resources for Jewish Genealogy, and there will be an SA-SIG Luncheon with Benjie Pogrud as guest speaker with the topic: *SA Jews in Apartheid era, SA Jews in Israel*. See you there!

Saul Issroff

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Editor's Note: The IAJGS Jerusalem 2015 conference took place in July. Links to a few articles which describe the activities at the conference can be found on page 40.



EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest edition of the Newsletter, a bumper issue that is packed full of very interesting content! The SA-SIG Newsletter has now been published on a regular basis for over 16 years – the first issue came out in January 1999, and this edition is by far the largest to date, over 43 pages!

I've been associated with the publication of the SA-SIG Newsletter since its inception, and have taken care of a variety of roles during the publication process, including writer, the sourcing of articles, final editing, as well as the back-end work which involves the layout of the published version and the distribution of each edition. With this issue, I'm very pleased to assume the full editorial responsibility of the Newsletter as well.

As you'll remember, after publication of the last issue, Colin Plen decided to relinquish his editorial role. I'd like to thank Colin for his service over the past 5 years – we have greatly appreciated his efforts. I look forward to continuing the tradition that has been established to produce a high-quality journal that is filled with interesting and compelling articles which cover a wide range of topics of interest to Southern African genealogical researchers. I hope that you enjoy this issue as well as the future editions to come!

This issue contains a collection of very engaging articles as well as many other items of interest. The first article, by Ilanit Chernick, describes the emergence of a new Jewish community in the suburb of Yeoville in Johannesburg. While Yeoville was traditionally seen as a "Jewish suburb" in the past, after the 1994 timeframe many of the Jewish residents left the area. The present-day emerging Jewish community, however, is very different from the past residents.

An article by the late Sir Martin Gilbert, one of Britain's leading historians, chronicles the travels in Europe during the early 20th Century of Isaac Ochberg, the great South African philanthropist who saved 187 desperate and despairing European orphans and brought them to South Africa. Today, there are over 4,000 descendants of the so-called Ochberg Orphans.

Basil Sandler, a former South African now living in Israel, tells the intriguing story of the discovery of a family secret: the existence of another brother whose identity was not previous known.

A multi-generational story of the Baumann branch of her family, spanning multiple centuries in Europe and South Africa, is told with enthusiasm, clarity, and precision by former South African Amanda Jermyn. This story, rich with pictures and reference information, is a fascinating read.

Rabbi Izak Rudomin, Israeli-born but who grew up in South Africa, writes an article that is partly a book review but also includes his personal reflections about the relationship between coming to South Africa and leaving it, “simultaneously, all at the same time!”

American writer, Eve Fairbanks, now living in South Africa, writes about the city of Bloemfontein, once home to Jewish immigrants, but today hosting a very different sort of Jewish practice.

Finally, Ann Rabinowitz, a long-time SA-SIG contributor, describes how a careful review of the past issues of the SA-SIG Newsletter can be an invaluable resource for Southern African genealogical research.

This edition of the Newsletter contains a number of other articles and features, as well as descriptions of several interesting recently-published South Africa-related books. In addition, the regular compilation of new information, resources, articles, and updates that are available on the Internet which may be of interest to Southern African genealogical researchers, is included as well.

Please let me know if you have any comments or questions about any of the articles in this issue, and I encourage you to submit your own contributions for inclusion in a future edition of the Newsletter.

I hope you find the latest issue of the Newsletter engaging and informative. Please read and enjoy!

Roy Ogus

Editor

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THE AFRICAN JEWS OF YEOVILLE

Ilanit Chernick

For decades Yeoville was seen as “a Jewish suburb” until 1994, when many Jewish residents left the area. Now a new Jewish community is emerging. Rabbi Sylvester Obiekwe and his community are Nigerian Jews from the Igbo tribe. Their customs, traditions and beliefs have been passed down for hundreds of generations. But they are not recognised by the orthodox Jewish world for lack of evidence.

For over a century the Star of David was a vibrant sign of Jewish life in Yeoville. In the past 20 years this star has waned as many Jewish residents left the Johannesburg suburb.

Recently it has returned.

In a simple, brick-walled home on Regent Street, a blue and white Star of David is painted on the outer wall. It is a synagogue which houses a small group of Nigerian Jews who now call Yeoville home.

The Beth-El Messianic Assembly is a group of black Jews who come from the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. Igbo Jews believe they are direct descendants of the biblical character Gad, a son of Jacob, and that their ancestors moved to West Africa after being exiled during the destruction of the first biblical temple. They believe the entire Igbo tribe originates from these roots, although not all Igbo are Jewish.

Rabbi Sylvester Obiekwe, spiritual leader of the congregation, says most of the diasporic Jews assimilated into Christianity over centuries. The influence of colonialism and Christianity grew stronger in Nigeria and some Igbo Jewish sects conjoined Judaic law with Christian law. These were the founding roots of messianic Judaism in southern Nigeria.

Controversy of recognition

The Igbo Jews living in Yeoville belong to the messianic Jewish sect and abide by most orthodox Jewish laws but incorporate the belief that Jesus, or *Yeshua* as they call him, is the messiah. The Igbo Jews are not recognised by the orthodox Jewish community because they recognise Jesus as the Messiah.



Leader of the congregation, Rabbi Sylvester Obiekwe welcomes us to his synagogue and to meet his community.

Beth-El congregant Tony Anuluoye says he has met a number of Jews who question his Jewish heritage. “They look at me like I’m crazy,” he says, “They don’t always believe me. They say: ‘But your skin colour, you are black, how can you be Jewish?’”

Obiekwe says he believes that, when people migrate to a country, they take on the features of that country with time.

“You cannot live in a hot country like Nigeria with light skin. You will not be able to survive long. When my ancestors came here their children and children’s children had to adapt to the climate. The skin, the colour and the features all change with every generation that was born until we looked like ethnic Nigerians.”

He believes that assimilation played a role as well: “Some of my ancestors married local Nigerian men or women who converted to Judaism. When they had children together, the children carried Nigerian features handed to them by the parent.”

Orthodox Judaism has recognised black Ethiopian Jews based on written evidence.

But Israel’s orthodox rabbinical court has questioned the Igbos Jewish roots because of the lack of physical and historical evidence and has encouraged them to convert. The Igbos’ evidence lies in the traditions and beliefs which have been passed down orally for thousands of years.

Anuluoye says that being a Jew is everything to him, “I understand that I come from the land of Israel and the people of Israel. It’s an inborn thing that cannot be learned. It is my life and I would never be able to live in any other way.”

Sunday Sgbo, another Beth-El congregant, grew up as a religious Jew in Abuja, Nigeria’s capital city. He was part of an orthodox sect of Jews who lived in the area before he moved to Johannesburg in 2009.



One of the leading women in the community, Charity Nnonyeli, says a prayer of thanks for safe travel. Part of the prayer includes prostrating herself in front of God as a sign of her loyalty and dedication.

Arrival in South Africa

Obiekwe moved to South Africa from Eastern Nigeria in 2006 after “having a dream” about the country. In his dream, Obiekwe saw South Africa as a “hellish place that needed guidance”.

“It was God’s way of bringing me here. He knew that the Igbo Jews who had come here from Nigeria before I arrived were lacking leadership. He sent me a message.”

He was ordained as a Jewish teacher at age 21 and by the age of 25 had been named a spiritual leader in the Igbo Jewish community.

“According to my family tradition and the tradition of my forefathers, the first son of an ordained spiritual leader who is from the tribe of Levi is always trained and taught to take over from his father. This has been happening in my family since [we] migrated to Nigeria.”

When Obiekwe arrived in South Africa, he joined Temple Israel, a reform Jewish synagogue in

Hillbrow, and prayed there for three years. At the beginning of 2009 he moved to Yeoville.

“I had heard there were Igbos in the area and I used my time in Hillbrow to come here and look for them. It took years to find them because some had lost their tradition and faith. The process to create and connect the community was slow. We are still growing.”

His community refers to him as “Prophet Sylvester” but to others, Obiekwe is called “Rabbi” because of his status as a spiritual leader.

The Beth-El congregation has just over 100 members and according to Obiekwe’s assistant, Israel Akpodol, it’s growing by the day.

The synagogue

Although it’s small, the synagogue is a homely but holy place for the congregants to meet and pray. It stands as a temporary structure made from wood and tin.

“The walls are painted blue and white to symbolise the community’s dedication to the land of Israel,” says Obiekwe, “It is our home and we will always support it.”

Until January this year, the congregational gatherings took place in a tent on the premises of the rabbi’s rented home. When the Jewish owner of the home passed away, the congregation was able to buy the house and build a stronger structure.

The Beth-El Assembly was established in 2009 and a permanent synagogue is in the process of being built in Regent Street.

“Prophet decided it was time to renovate his house and make it into the synagogue because the tent was becoming too small because the community is getting bigger. We keep running out of funds because the money to fix things in the house is coming slowly, so it will take time,” says Akpodol.

Before entering the synagogue, a purification ritual is practised by all members of the congregation. A tub of collected river and rain water that has been blessed sits on a chair with special wheat straws next to it. When a congregant arrives he or she is required to dip the wheat straws into the water and shake the wet straws over his or her body and hands.

“This ground in and around the synagogue is holy. You cannot come here or pray unless you have done this purification process. It cleanses the soul and body of any impurities that you may have come into contact with outside of the synagogue,” says Anuluoye.

Akpodol explains that men and women are required to take off their shoes when entering the prayer area. They pray without shoes because the area “is holy ground”. For some parts of the service congregants go onto their knees and pray as a “symbol of their humility and servitude to *Hashem* [God]”.

“We are tied to *Hashem*. We are dedicated and will always serve Him in the best way possible. *Hashem* is good and we need to acknowledge this and show we are committed to him fully,” says Obiekwe.

A platform with three levels stands in front. Upon the top platform is a table which holds olive oil, a menorah, a ram’s horn, prayer books and biblical texts. Obiekwe prays and gives sermons from the platform but will not go on to it during the ordinary days of the week because it is the holiest place in the synagogue.



As the morning prayers commence, Israel Akpodol, Sunday Sgbo, and Tony Anuluoye ready themselves to dedicate their morning to serving God.

The Torah scrolls are kept in a holy place in the rabbi’s home to protect them from getting damaged. “We do not bring them out unless it is Sabbath or Jewish Holidays. They are too sacred,” says Akpodol.

Certain prayers are said in Hebrew but most are recited in English because some members of the congregation cannot read Hebrew.

Beth-El member Ovad Agu says that not all Jews in the community are able to read Hebrew but some

went to Israel to learn the language so they would be able to speak and read it fluently.

“A lot of Igbo Jews go to Israel because they know it is their home. They want to learn the language properly. [In Nigeria] We were taught to read it by our parents so we could pray but we never learned it as a language.”

The men and women sit separately during prayer times and a cloth separates the two. The men sit in the front and the women in the back. Women are also expected to cover their hair, wear long dresses and have sleeves that cover their elbows.

Community Funding and Israel's story

Akpodol says the funding for their community comes from leaders and members of the Igbo Jewish community in Nigeria and individual donors in South Africa. The Igbo Jews living in Nigeria also receive donations from Jews in Israel and America who have discovered their existence and “want to help strengthen their connection to God and Judaism”.

Akpodol, who is also from Eastern Nigeria, says he converted to messianic Judaism in 2012 after falling on hard times while living in Yeoville.

“I had a stall in the market but things became too expensive and I lost everything. I lived on the streets and became a drunk. One day I drank too much and got sick. I knew I needed God and that's when my Jewish friends brought me to Prophet Sylvester.”

After meeting with Obiekwe, Akpodol was given a job to assist Obiekwe while converting. After his conversion was finalised last year, Obiekwe made the job permanent for Akpodol, who now helps to run synagogue services and assist the rabbi with daily tasks and errands.

Ovad Agu went to Israel in 2010 with members of the community to do an official conversion to Messianic Judaism. According to traditional Jewish law, however, his conversion is only recognised by the messianic Jews.

As the Beth-El community accepts more converts into their community, more personal issues have begun to arise. Obiekwe has realised it is important to create a rabbinical body his community can approach. The need to teach the community about Jewish law and scriptures has also prompted the

need for more spiritual leaders. Once the community is more established, he hopes to train more Jewish leaders and ultimately form his own rabbinical court (Beth Din).



Israel Akpodol focusing on the words and their meaning as he prays.

Obiekwe says he needs a way of dealing with personal issues within his community but is not able to get advice on these matters from the local rabbinical court.

“I have a good relationship with some of the Johannesburg rabbis but the Igbos are not properly recognised as Jews here because our beliefs differ from the orthodox [Jews]. They want me to convert but how can I convert to a religion that I already belong to? It doesn't make sense.”

Despite this, Obiekwe's community still keep to the local Beth Din's standard of kosher food and abide by their judicial code of law.

Obiekwe has not allowed the questions surrounding their authenticity to discourage their traditions or beliefs.

“We are all servants of God. God chose us as his people and we will continue to abide by His laws no matter if we are accepted by the orthodox community or not.”

“Women mostly dress as the religious Jews would in Nigeria, in colourful but modest clothing with head coverings,” says Charity Nnonyeli. “The men

wear white and also pray with their prayer shawls on. You have to be dressed properly because we are in the presence of God.”

Nnonyeli, a religious woman in the Beth-El congregation, says her role as a Jewish wife and mother is to “raise a family who understand the laws of God”. She explains that, according to Jewish tradition and the Bible, the woman was created “from her husband”, Adam.

She came to South Africa because her husband moved to Johannesburg from Nigeria in 2012 to find “greener pastures”.

“According to our laws you cannot be separated from your husband. Wherever your husband goes, you must always follow. It is always important to respect your husband in the best way possible.”

On the Sabbath and Jewish Holidays, the congregation spends the entire day together. Part of celebrating includes eating the festive meals together, praying and studying the Jewish scriptures.

Over this year’s high holy days, more than 200 people joined the prayer services and sermons. “Some were people who are interested in converting, others are Igbos who have recently moved to Yeoville from Nigeria and decided to join us this year,” says Obiekwe.

“We are a family. We celebrate everything together and spend time teaching each other and learning,” says Nnonyeli.

You can see a video, titled “The last Jews of Yeoville,” showing several members of the original Jewish community who remain in Yeoville and continue to receive kosher meals via delivery, at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkFMgBs5Y9o>

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Ilanit Chernick is a Jewish, music-loving, happy-go-lucky journalist at Wits University. She is also a soon-to-be intern at The Star newspaper. She is interested in hard news, life, and people. She loves watching films and hanging out in rustic places. She also enjoys good food with a glass of wine and a bout of jazz. She can be reached at: ilanit.chernick@gmail.com

This article was first published on the Yeoville Now project web site, and is republished here with

permission with permission from the author. The Yeoville Now project web site can be found at:

<http://yeovillenow.co.za/>

All photos in this article were taken by Ilanit Chernick.

Editor’s Note: To learn more about the Igbo Jews of Nigeria, go to the following links:

http://www.shavei.org/category/communities/other_communities/africa/igbo-jews-nigeria/?lang=en

<http://www.cjnews.com/toronto/nigerian-igbos-said-be-descendants-israelites>

ISAAC OCHBERG’S TRAVELS IN EASTERN POLAND

Sir Martin Gilbert

That part of Eastern Europe lying east of the Polish city of Warsaw, saw great upheavals in the Twentieth Century. These upheavals reached a harsh climax during the First World War (1914-1918), during the Russian civil war that followed the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, and during the pogroms, epidemics, and hunger of 1919 and 1920.

During 1919, as the region’s competing ideological and national claims became more and more violent, the troops of the anti-Bolshevik Russian leader General Denikin murdered tens of thousands of Jews throughout southern Russia, in what is now Ukraine. In late 1919 and early 1920, during Simon Petlyura’s rule over the briefly independent Ukraine as many as 60,000 Jews were murdered in pogroms. Several thousand Jews were killed between June and October 1920 in the Belorussian region of Russia by the troops of Stanislaw Bulak-Balachowicz, a Belorussian nationalist who in November 1920 became President of the short-lived Belorussian Provisional Government.

In August 1920, Bolshevik Russian forces, hoping to bring Communist revolution to Germany, advanced as far west as the outskirts of Warsaw. They were then driven back by Polish forces to beyond Kiev. On 18 March 1921, the Treaty of Riga established the eastern border of the newly created Republic of Poland, bringing under Polish rule all the areas – including the Polish provinces of Polesia

and Volhynia – in which Dr Isaac Ochberg sought out orphans four months later.

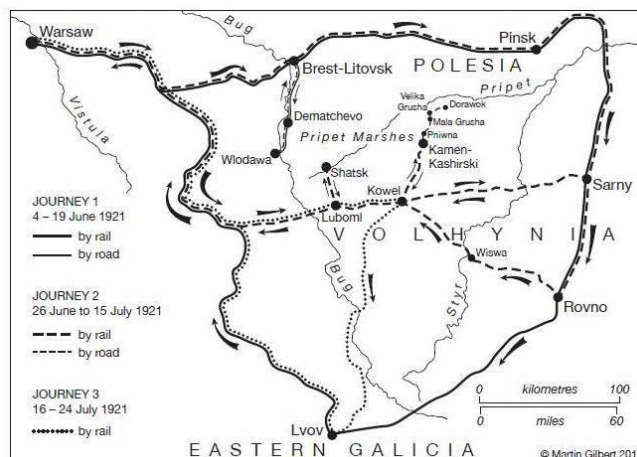
Armies marched back and forth in the struggle of ideologies and nationalities. The ravages of hunger and disease, and the savage of the marauding armies, created as many as 150,000 Jewish orphans. The ability of the local Jewish communities to cope with such numbers and such distress was severely limited: their own resources were minimal. Hunger stalked the region. From a sample of just over half of the parents of Ochberg's orphans, some sixty percent had died of hunger and disease; some fifteen percent had been murdered in the pogroms.

Dr Ochberg was born in the Tsarist Russian city of Uman (now in Ukraine) in 1878. At the age of sixteen he followed his father to South Africa, and was apprenticed to a watchmaker. He returned to Uman when he was twenty-one, having learned that his mother, who still lived there, had been taken ill. Returning to South Africa in 1900, he became successful in several aspects of business, including property, agriculture and scrap metal. By the time news of the terrible persecutions and poverty in the eastern regions of newly independent Poland reached South Africa, Ochberg was President of the Cape Jewish Orphanage in Cape Town. Learning of the desperate plight of orphans east of Warsaw, he determined to find a way to bring some of them to South Africa.

South African Jews had been active in seeking to help the Jewish communities ravaged by war. As early as December 1914 the Cape Relief Fund for Jewish War and Pogrom Victims had been established in Cape Town. On 18 March 1921, the same day that the Treaty of Riga confirmed Polish rule over the regions to which Ochberg planned to travel, he left Cape Town by sea to London. He had already helped raise the funds needed to bring up to 200 Jewish orphans to South Africa. He reached London on 4 April, and began discussion with the Federation of Ukrainian Jews in London, to provide accommodation for the orphans whom he would bring back with him from Poland.

On 18 May 1921, Ochberg left London for Paris, where on the following day he met Dr Bogen, the Paris head of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee ('The Joint'). Dr Bogen promised Ochberg to help him 'in every way' in his 'undertaking' (as Ochberg called it) in 'selecting and transporting a number of Jewish Pogrom orphans from Eastern Europe to South Africa'. From Paris,

Ochberg went by train to Warsaw, the capital of the new Polish Republic. In June and July, after spending a week in Warsaw preparing for the reception of the orphans in Warsaw, he made three journeys eastward, returning to Warsaw for a few days at a time with the orphans he had chosen for the journey to South Africa. (I have mapped these journeys on the attached map.)



Dr. Ochberg's travels in Eastern Poland, 4 June to 24 July 1921

Ochberg could only bring back with him to Warsaw those who were well enough to travel. Many of the orphans he saw on his three journeys from Warsaw were too sick to be able to make the onward journey. Typhus was taking a daily toll.

Each of the 181 Jewish orphans whom Ochberg brought from Warsaw to South Africa had a heart-rending story to tell. Typically, the Ochberg mission's notes on eleven-year-old Abi Ellstein, from Pinsk, record: 'Father killed by the Denikins in 1919. The mother died of hunger in 1920 after living in very difficult circumstances.'

In the town of Kamien Koszyrski, in the devastated region in which Ochberg travelled collecting orphans, more than a hundred Jews had been killed in a pogrom a year earlier. One of his orphans, Bracha Gisis, later recalled the fate of the son of Shimon the builder: 'They shot Shimon's son in the back and he fell forward on his face liked a felled tree in the forest.... My father and Shimon dragged the dead body into the house and laid it together with the other dead.' Later, on entering a barn next to her house, she saw her own father 'hanging there on a length of wire, snorting his last breaths'.

Thanks to the pioneering research of David Solly Sandler, the documentation (such as that above) of

the orphans' stories is voluminous and revealing, often painfully so.

Among the Ochberg orphans was eight-year-old Molly Schapira, from Sarny, one of whose earliest memories was of seeing her parents bodies 'in a room full of people crying, sobbing'. They had died from typhus, as had her two sisters. The mission's notes for one twelve-year-old boy from Lvov describe how 'both parents were killed by Petlyurists ... and a Petlyurist chopped off his left hand. The child suffered greatly and was left alone.' Typical of the orphans' stories was that of Saul Zvengel, from Wlodawa, aged eight. His notes read: 'The father was killed by the Balachowicz. The mother died of typhoid. The child left with no relatives to look after him.' Or the five Pinsky orphans, aged between twelve and five, from Pinsk: 'Father died of hunger and the struggle to survive. The mother ... contracted syphilis after being raped.... The children had nowhere to go.'

Ochberg's mission was a ray of hope. A Jewish woman in the Pinsk district was looking after three orphans, aged 10, 8 and 6, after their widowed father's death. She wrote to the 'African Mission' in Warsaw, Ochberg's headquarters: 'I intend to better their well-being. I freely give them up.'

Half a century later, Ochberg's daughter Bertha I. Epstein wrote: 'Most of the children were in shocking state. They were starving, clad in rags and verminous. Many of them were ... in a state of shock from seeing their parents murdered before their eyes or having to watch their mothers and sisters being raped.'

In the orphanages that Ochberg visited, the orphans were surviving mostly on food provide by the Joint. In Pinsk, Ochberg found thirty-eight-year-old Alexander Obrov (Alter Bobrow), a former analytical chemist in a sugar factory who in 1916 had helped set up three orphanages in Pinsk, and who offered to help choose those who could go to South Africa, and to accompany them there. In fact, the Pinsk Orphanage Committee would not allow the children to leave unless Obrov went with them. During the journey, Obrov was given the care of sixty orphans.

The children gathered in Warsaw, some arriving destitute, in slow, dirty local trains. The *Cape Jewish Chronicle* later reported them 'clutching a precious doll or a dog-eared photograph'. In Warsaw, they received condensed milk, cocoa and

clothes that had arrived for them from South Africa. The Polish authorities provided collective passports, each one for between twenty and thirty children on each passport, with a single group photograph pasted in it, instead of individual photographs and passports. Thirty-seven of the children, having lived in fear for so long, decided at the last moment not to continue on the journey, and ran away. Two were taken ill just before leaving Warsaw. Their names were crossed out on the collective passport photograph lists before the other orphans left Poland. Ochberg appointed several older orphans, whose age made them ineligible for the journey to South Africa, as nurses and tutors, so that they could travel with the others.

On 1 August 1921, Ochberg left Warsaw with his orphans by train to Danzig. The train stopped at many stations on the way. At each station the Jews of that town met them with food and flowers. The children got down from the train, and, with Obrov playing his mandolin, sang and danced on the platform with the local Jews.

From Danzig, the orphans sailed on a small, slow British cargo ship, the *Baltara*, to London. Molly Schapira from Sarny later recalled: 'We stopped in England. I didn't know it was England....' Also stopping briefly in England at this time were several hundred Jewish orphans from Ukraine brought out by the Canadian Jewish Congress, who were taken by ship to Canada.

British newspapers reported on the arrival of the Ochberg orphans on 24 August 1921. Ochberg told the reporters who gathered to watch his orphans come ashore: 'They are all victims of some pogrom or disturbance and when I found them they were roaming about the towns or in the forests, filthy, worse than naked, and starving. In most of the places there was no food, and disease was rampant....' Ochberg added that the Dominion Government in South Africa had given him 'every assistance possible, especially in the way of withdrawing the restrictions against the immigration of orphan children.'

In London for eight days, the orphans slept at the Atlantic Passengers' Hostels for immigrants in transit. During the day, members of the Federation of Ukrainian Jews in London – encouraged by the Federation's Chairman, Dr D. Jochelman – gave them hospitality. From London, Ochberg and his orphans went by train from Waterloo Station to Southampton. The *Daily Mail* had a photograph of

them at the train window just as it was about to leave, with the headline ‘Off to South Africa.’

On 2 September 1921, Ochberg and his orphans sailed from Southampton on the Union Castle liner *Edinburgh Castle* to Cape Town. By then, writes Ochberg’s daughter, the children were calling him ‘Daddy Ochberg’ and during the voyage ‘clustered around him like the proverbial lost sheep’.

The Union Castle line allowed the orphans greatly reduced fares, and provided them with kosher food. After seventeen days at sea, the *Edinburgh Castle* reached Cape Town. A new life, and a renewal of hope, had begun.

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Sir Martin Gilbert was Winston Churchill's official biographer, and one of Britain's leading historians. His book, The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy, is a classic work on the subject. He was the author of eighty books in total, among them the single-volume Churchill: A Life; his twin histories, First World War, and Second World War; the book, Israel, A History; and his three-volume work, A History of the Twentieth Century. He was an Honorary Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, and a Distinguished Fellow of Hillsdale College, Michigan. Sir Martin passed away on 3 February 2015.

For more details of Sir Martin Gilbert's writings, see the web site: www.martingilbert.com

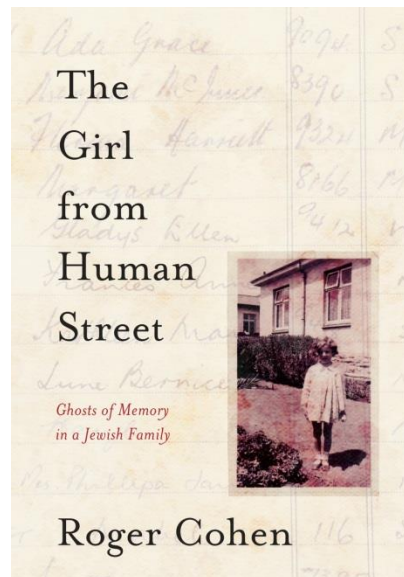
This article was originally published in the brochure for the Jewish National Fund 2012 Edmonton Negev Gala, given in tribute to Ram and Elaine Romanovsky (Ram's late father, Mendel Romanovsky, had been rescued by Ochberg), and is republished here with the permission of A P Watt at United Agents, on behalf of Martin Gilbert.

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New Book

THE GIRL FROM HUMAN STREET: GHOSTS OF MEMORY IN A JEWISH FAMILY

by Roger Cohen



Published January 2015, by Knopf. Available from Amazon.com as well as from bookstores.

Roger Cohen is a columnist for The New York Times, where he has worked since 1990: as a correspondent in Paris and Berlin, and as bureau chief in the Balkans covering the Bosnian war (for which he received an Overseas Press Club prize). He was named a columnist in 2009, and became a foreign editor on Sept. 11, 2001, overseeing Pulitzer Prize-winning coverage in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack. Raised in South Africa and England, he is a naturalized American, and currently lives in London. His columns appear twice a week, and he has written a number of books. His latest book, a family memoir, *The Girl From Human Street: Ghosts of Memory in a Jewish Family*, was published in January 2015.

The description of the book, taken from the Amazon.com web page, is as follows:

An intimate and profoundly moving Jewish family history – a story of displacement, prejudice, hope, despair, and love.

In this luminous memoir, award-winning New York Times columnist Roger Cohen turns a compassionate yet discerning eye on

the legacy of his own forebears. As he follows them across continents and decades, mapping individual lives that diverge and intertwine, vital patterns of struggle and resilience, valued heritage and evolving loyalties (religious, ethnic, national), converge into a resonant portrait of cultural identity in the modern age.

Beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing through to the present day, Cohen tracks his family's story of repeated upheaval, from Lithuania to South Africa, and then to England, the United States, and Israel. It is a tale of otherness marked by overt and latent anti-Semitism, but also otherness as a sense of inheritance. We see Cohen's family members grow roots in each adopted homeland even as they struggle to overcome the loss of what is left behind and to adapt—to the racism his parents witness in apartheid-era South Africa, to the familiar ostracism an uncle from Johannesburg faces after fighting against Hitler across Europe, to the ambivalence an Israeli cousin experiences when tasked with policing the occupied West Bank.

At the heart of *The Girl from Human Street* is the powerful and touching relationship between Cohen and his mother, that "girl." Tortured by the upheavals in her life yet stoic in her struggle, she embodies her son's complex inheritance.

Graceful, honest, and sweeping, Cohen's remarkable chronicle of the quest for belonging across generations contributes an important chapter to the ongoing narrative of Jewish life.

The New York Times review of the book can be found at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/01/books/review/the-girl-from-human-street-by-roger-cohen.html>

Note that the SA-SIG Board has no financial interest in this book.

ANOTHER BROTHER IN MY FAMILY

Basil Sandler

On a visit to Cape Town, South Africa, in 1999, I telephoned my cousin, Ronnie Levinsohn, whom I last had seen as a child. I was telling him of our visit to Latvia the year before and that we had visited Kuldiga (Goldingen). There we visited the synagogue and the square where the Jews were killed, and we found the monument in the forests where the bodies of the Jews were thrown into a mass grave. I told him that our grandfather, Nissim, was killed on July 1, 1941, and that Dora, our grandmother, and our aunts, Ralla and Rachel, were killed on July 3, 1941. Ronnie asked how I knew, and I responded that a letter had come. When he asked who had written the letter, I said I did not know. After a lengthy silence and some pressure from me, he explained that the letter, addressed to Ronnie's father Adolph, had come from a boyfriend my mother had when she was very young living in Latvia and that they had a child. A boyfriend I could believe, but I thought he was being malicious about a child. At that time, I made a joke about a possible child.

In May 2001, we visited Vancouver, Canada. One of our first visits was to my aunt, Gwen Hermann Levinsohn (my mother's youngest brother had been married to Gwen), and we told her the story of our conversation with Ronnie. She told us that Hermann had spoken about Maxim (Maximillian), an adopted baby brother whom he remembered since he was 10 years old when Maxim was adopted. This was the first time in my life, at the age of 73, that I heard the name Maxim.

That week we met Philp Levinsohn, Gwen's son, and we spoke with Lesley, Gwen's eldest daughter, who lives in Cleveland, Ohio. This was my first contact with them. After Hermann was killed in a car accident, Uncle Adolph, my mother's eldest brother (they were not on good terms and we never knew why) was very nice to Gwen, Lesley, and Philip. Lesley was then a teenager, and she was pressing Adolph to tell her about Kuldiga, the family, and particularly Maxim.

The Family Secret

At first he refused, but after a few months, he agreed to tell her the story on one condition – that

the boys (my brother and I) – must never know since it was a terrible scandal that could harm us. These were the standards in those days. Lesley told us that Ida (my mother) had an affair with a neighbor, resulting in the birth of Maxim. He was adopted by my grandparents as a son, and Ida was sent – banished – from Latvia to Aunt Ralla Sebba in Cape Town. Ida was 15, and during the next few months, she was introduced to my father; they married and lived in Wellington, a small country town.

Today, I try to imagine the state of mind of a 14- or 15-year-old girl expelled from her loving home and sent on a voyage to England and then from Southampton to Cape Town, which in those days took many months. Her fears, her insecurity, her trials and tribulations must have been traumatic – to say the least. Only now, having heard the story, do I ask many questions. I never ever thought about my mother's age or how she came and why she was the first to come to South Africa before her brothers. In retrospect, it was because of these circumstances that her life was saved from the Nazis; otherwise, she would have been in the same situation as her two elder sisters who were killed by the Germans.

Gwen remembers that Maxim wrote a letter to Hermann asking him for money so that he could buy a bike for his bar mitzvah. The money was sent, but then the war came, and all contact ceased. After the war, in 1947, Adolph received a letter from Maxim telling him that he had witnessed the death of the family, that he had been saved by a neighbor, and that he had served with the partisans. He had then returned to Kuldiga. He had no one and nothing, and he needed help. He might have written twice.

According to Anita, Adolph's daughter, her mother, Minnie, wrote twice but never heard further. This is possible, since the Russians took control of Latvia and closed all borders and contact with the West. These letters were destroyed, and no one had any idea whether Max was alive and, if so, where he might be.

So the secret of Maxim that was so successfully kept by everyone, including my Mum, suddenly popped out of the hidden box. Where is he? Can I find him? How do I go about looking for him? These are million dollar questions – and it is like looking for a needle in a haystack, but I made up my mind that it would not be for a lack of trying, and I

started a relentless search for my long-lost brother whom I had recently discovered.

I checked with the Jewish Agency, but no one by that name appears on their lists. I checked the population list of Israel without success. I contacted the Hebrew Immigrant Aid society (HIAS) to check their American and Canadian lists in case Max had gone to America. I searched the Internet and wrote e-mails to about 50 Levinsohns. Some replied; three of them were relatives.

I contacted the JewishGen genealogy site and asked relevant questions. I visited the Archives of Latvian Jewry in Shfayim and found files concerning Kuldiga. Interesting, but no results.

I made contact and visited with Martha Levinsohn-Lev Zion in Beersheva. Her father also came from Kuldiga and went to the United States, but we do not know if we are related. She is an expert on Latvian Jews with emphasis on Jews from Kuldiga.

Searching in Kuldiga

On our last visit to Kuldiga, I had the telephone number of the local tourist office, and I decided to call. A nice woman answered and spoke to me in English. Her name is Daina, and she gave me her home telephone number. She became my Good Samaritan and said she would try and help me find the missing relative. Two days later I telephoned, but she had found no records held by the municipality. She promised to go to the archives, and when I spoke with her a few days later, she had found the birth certificate of Maxim. He was born on November 29, 1924, in Kuldiga. My mother's name appears, but no father is recorded. The address of the family farm also appears. Daina sent the birth certificate to me and said she would make further inquiries with older people. When I spoke with her a week later, she said that she met a man, a schoolteacher, who claims to have known Maxim for 30 years and that he lived somewhere in the neighboring villages. She was going to put an advertisement in the local newspaper, and she told me to contact her on Friday. At this point, we knew that Maxim had remained in the area, and we had a fair chance of finding him.

It was Thursday night, the end of July, two months after I had heard about Maxim. The telephone rang. My wife Riva answered, told me that I should sit down, and gave me the telephone. A voice said, "My name is Rita Levinsohn. I am Max's

daughter.” I was in shock. I cried – I could not believe it. Rita speaks poor English, which was frustrating since I wanted to know so much. Max had died 10 years earlier of cancer. Rita gave me her youngest daughter Iveta’s telephone number, and when I telephoned her, a new world opened up for me. I realized that I had found our new family. The next morning, I spoke with Daina, who told me that two people had called her concerning the advertisement. They were from the Burkovska family, the family that had adopted Max after his grandparents were killed by the Germans. She also told me that she had telephoned Maxim’s wife, Elena, who lives in the small village of Edole, 16 kilometers from Kuldiga.

My brother Jos and I decided that we must go to Latvia. Iveta became my main contact, and during the next few weeks, I discussed with her our planned visit as well as the many questions about our newly discovered family. They had no idea about us – all they knew was that Max’s mother had run away.

It seems that Maxim hardly spoke about the Levinsohn family; it was too painful for him. He worked as a driver for the local fire brigade and played the saxophone, piano, and accordion. He also had his own band that played at local festivities and parties. Rita, his only child, moved to Riga to study and then married and had two daughters, Ilona and Iveta. Some eight years ago, she divorced her husband who was half Jewish and married Alex, her present husband. Ilona is married to Raymond, and Iveta lives with her boyfriend, Sasha. They all live in Riga. They wanted to know all about us, so I was writing to Iveta daily. She also helped us with our hotel booking, and together we planned our week in Riga.

I was on a high, and we were all very excited with our trip and meeting them in person. I had such a good feeling, and I knew we would be happy with them, but until we met them we could not be certain. As the day of departure became nearer, the excitement grew. On August 27, we were on our way to Riga via Prague, where we landed that Friday afternoon.

Meeting Maxim’s Family

Our meeting was very emotional – tears, kisses, hugs, and simply looking at them and vice versa. Rita and Alex, Ilona and Raymond, Iveta and Sasha, Jos and Diana, Riva and yours truly were overcome

with a warm feeling that finally we had met. Unfortunately, Max and Ida, our mother, were missing. Throughout our visit, the fact that my Mum did not have the pleasure of meeting this loving family was on my mind. That night, there was a Friday night dinner at Rita’s place. The atmosphere was warm and loving. The weekend was a getting-to-know-you period, so while touring or dining, many questions were asked and answered by all. A lifetime of events and stories unfolded – they were amazed at all the new relatives they suddenly found, and we were interested in their history and the way they lived.

The three women are beautiful ladies, well dressed and educated. They all work in good positions. Their men too are good-looking and decent people. Life in Latvia is still difficult. Major changes have taken place there since its independence from Russia 10 years ago, but Latvia has a long way to go before it will reach Western standards. The income in dollars is the equivalent of that of a secretary in Riga earning between \$150–200 a month, so a couple earning two salaries can manage. The apartments are usually one small room plus a small kitchen, and the buildings are in need of major repair. These are the Russian housing projects. The old central city of Riga is beautiful, with many beautiful buildings, lots of parks, monuments, and shopping areas.

That Monday we all went by a rented minibus to Kuldiga and Edole. We stopped at Kuldiga and visited the synagogue which today is a cinema. Elena was waiting for us in Edole, and meeting with her was emotional. She was Max’s wife and knew him better than anyone else. We were shocked to see that she lived in an old house with four other families and had to fetch water from a pump 100 meters away. The toilet was outside. Her home consisted of one large room plus kitchen that held all her possessions, but it was comfortable and pleasant. A serious discussion took place before lunch with many questions asked by all, with Iveta translating. A key question was why, after Ida had settled in South Africa, she did not try to find Max. It was Riva who came up with the probable answer – that she was told by Adolph, her eldest brother, that everyone including Max had been killed, and with that she decided to block him out of her mind.

Elena prepared a delicious lunch that included many items from her garden. We then went to the cemetery where Max is buried. Elena gave us

permission to say *kaddish* (prayer for the dead) which both Jos and I said. I made a speech telling him how sorry we were not to have met him and what a wonderful family he had. I also asked for his forgiveness if anyone of our family did him harm. It seemed strange when, just before we left, Elena stood in front of the grave and made the sign of the cross.

Then we went to the Levinsohn family farm. Rita knew where it was, since she had visited a friend there without knowing that it had belonged to her great-grandfather, Nissan Levinsohn. The farmer was pleasant and showed us the large old house with its more than 15 rooms. The house was in a mess, most of the rooms being storerooms. This visit was traumatic for us, since this is where my family had lived and where my mother had grown up. The farm is about 16 kilometers from Kuldiga.

It was supertime and we went to the Edole castle built in 1270, the oldest castle in Latvia. The castle rents rooms, and that is where we stayed that night in a very large comfortable room that cost \$15.

The next morning, we toured the castle which has a museum, gallery, and beautiful grounds. My niece told a guide that we were her grandfather's brothers, and to my amazement, the guide said that she had recognized me. I looked and acted a lot like Max.

We had been invited to visit by the Burkovskas in Kuldiga. The Burkovskas were our grandparents' neighbors. Their father, Janos, had saved Max from the Germans. Sasha and his sister, Ingrid, as well as Indre, Sasha's daughter who is a well-known actress in Riga, were there. In fact, Indre came all the way from Riga to meet us. Again it was very emotional. Sasha, who is recovering from a stroke, shed many tears. They were friendly with my grandparents, Nissan and Dora, and my aunts, Lilly and Rachel, so for the first time we were able to ask questions about our grandparents and aunts, questions from the grave. Why didn't Rachel and Lilly marry? Ingrid said that Lilly had a boyfriend but did not want to marry him. Was the family religious? Sasha said that they were, and they went to the synagogue on the holidays and on Saturdays. Who was Max's father? Sasha hesitated and said, "Yakobson," but did not know more. The scandal still haunted them. Photographs were shown, and I chose one that was given to me. It is the day of Maxim's confirmation showing Max, Janos, his wife and Sasha and Ingrid as children, taken in the summer of 1941.

Having spoken with the Burkovskas, with Elena, Rita, Iveta, and Ilona, as well as with Gethmane, Iveta's father, and having heard the stories and read the letters received, these are the correct facts of Max's life, a well-kept secret.

Maxim's Story

My mother, Ida (Yetta), had an affair with Janos Burkovska, a neighbor. Ida was 14 years old. Maxim, (Maximillian) was born on November 29, 1924. Ida was sent to South Africa, and Max was adopted by Nissan and Dora; Lilly and Rachel raised him. The photographs we have of Max's childhood are with his two aunts. We know that Hermann, Ida's youngest brother, was 10 at that time, and he spoke about Max to Gwen. I was friendly with Hermann, who once took me on a week's business trip to the east coast of South Africa. I remember talking with him about the family, but Max was never mentioned. Hermann and Gwen lived in South Africa, but when Hermann died, Gwen joined her son in Vancouver, Canada.

Max wrote to Hermann and asked for money to buy a bicycle for his bar mitzvah, and the money was sent. Nothing was heard during the war except for terrible rumors about what the Nazis were doing to the Jews. In 1947, a letter, possibly two letters, came from Max to Adolph Levinsohn, my mother's eldest brother, telling him that Max had survived the war; that Nissan was killed on July 1, 1941; and that Dora, Lilly, and Rachel had been killed on July 3, 1941. Max had been adopted by a neighbor, and he had fought with the partisans. After the war, he returned to the Kuldiga area and said that he was all alone and needed help. He never received a reply from South Africa.

The truth was that when the Germans came, they collected all the Jews and put them in the synagogue in Kuldiga without food and water. Janos Burkovska tried to give food and water to the Levinsohns, but the Germans would not allow this. Burkovska then went to the Gestapo and told them that they had made a mistake since there was a boy, Max, who was not a Jew. He said to them that he was one of us. "He is my son. Look at him; he is a Gentile." Janos risked his life and angered his wife, who did not want Max.

After two days, the Gestapo agreed to release Max on two conditions: he be confirmed as a Christian and that he be adopted, to which Janos fully agreed. That is how Max's life was saved. Max stayed with

them for a while, but Janos's wife always blamed Maxim for everything.

Then Maxim was sent to a work camp and, remarkably, was conscripted (he had no choice) into the German Army and was sent to Germany and to Italy. When the war ended in 1945, he was a prisoner of war in Italy. Max returned to the Kuldiga area and was on his own. Times were difficult. The Burkovskas were not helpful, so Max became a driver for the Edole fire brigade. He taught himself to play the accordion, saxophone, and piano; organized a band; and wrote music. His band played at local festivals at the castle, weddings, and other events. He was a popular figure, full of stories and jokes. At one of these functions, he met Elena and married her in 1955. They lived in the house where Elena lives today. Rita was born in this house. At school, she was called a beautiful Jew. She did not know what a Jew was, so she started reading about Jews, and Max confirmed that he was born a Jew. All she knew was that her grandmother (Max's mother) had run away and that her name was Levinsohn.

Later Rita went to Riga to study. She met Gethmane, whose father was Jewish, married, and had two daughters, Ilona born in 1977 and Iveta born in 1978. Rita divorced Gethmane and, in 1994, married Alex. Ilona married Raymond, and Iveta lives with her boyfriend, Sasha. Max died of cancer in 1991. Today, Elena lives alone in the same house in Edole.

While in Kuldiga, we met Daina, my "Good Samaritan," and we all went to lunch to celebrate the discovery of our new family. We parted with Elena after emotional good-byes. We returned to Riga exhausted, but happy. We visited the Jewish center in Riga and spoke with the secretary and asked that Janos be recognized as a Righteous Gentile. We understand that they are investigating the facts.

It all ended quickly. The moment of our departure arrived, and we were heartbroken to leave them. We had fallen in love with our new family and wanted more of them. Rita, Alex, Iveta, and Sasha visited us in 2003. We decided to help Elena move to Riga, so she can be with her children and live in better conditions. Money was raised with the help of Lesley, Philp, Jos, and Israel. A suitable apartment has not yet been found, but hopefully it will work out soon.

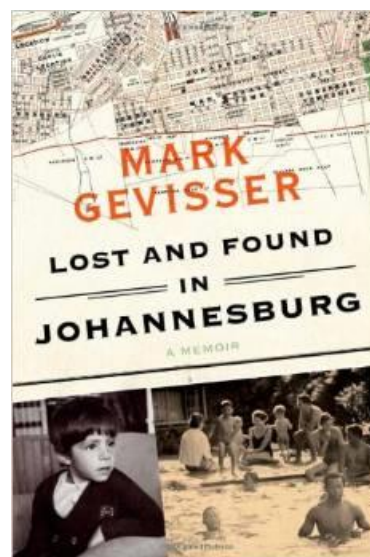
Basil Sandler was born in South Africa where he studied law. He and his wife, Riva, settled in Israel and live in Netanya. Sandler retired in 1966 and became a genealogist. He researches the Sandler (Shuster), Chait, and Kretzmer families from Birze, Lithuania, as well as Hurwitz from Linkuva, the Proos from Ludnik, the Kimmels from Yoniskis, and the Levinsohns and Levenbergs from Goldingen, Latvia. Sandler has 10,000 relatives on his family trees. He is a member of the Netanya branch of the Israel Genealogy Society.

This article was first published in the journal Avotaynu, on December 1, 2008, and is republished here with permission from the author.

New Book

LOST AND FOUND IN JOHANNESBURG: A MEMOIR

by Mark Gevisser



Published April 2014, by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Available from Amazon.com.

Mark Gevisser, one of South Africa's leading authors and journalists, was born in Johannesburg in 1964, and educated at King David and Redhill Schools. He graduated from Yale in 1987 with a degree in comparative literature and worked in New York as a high school teacher and writing for Village Voice and The Nation, before returning to South Africa in 1990. His journalism has appeared in publications and journals including Granta, the New York Times, Vogue, the Wall Street Journal,

the Los Angeles Times, Foreign Affairs, Public Culture, Foreign Affairs and Art in America. He currently writes most regularly for The Guardian in the UK and the Mail & Guardian and the Sunday Times in South Africa. He currently lives in Cape Town.

Mark's last book, titled *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred*, was the winner of the Sunday Times 2008. His latest book, *Lost and Found in Johannesburg: A Memoir* is about his personal relationship with his home-town, Johannesburg. The link to the author's web site is:

<http://www.markgevisser.com>

The description of the book, taken from the Amazon.com web page, is as follows:

An inner life of Johannesburg that turns on the author's fascination with maps, boundaries, and transgressions

Lost and Found in Johannesburg begins with a transgression – the armed invasion of a private home in the South African city of Mark Gevisser's birth. But far more than the riveting account of a break-in, this is a daring exploration of place and the boundaries upon which identities are mapped.

As a child growing up in apartheid South Africa, Gevisser becomes obsessed with a street guide called *Holmden's Register of Johannesburg*, which literally erases entire black townships. Johannesburg, he realizes, is full of divisions between black and white, rich and poor, gay and straight; a place that "draws its energy precisely from its atomization and its edge, its stacking of boundaries against one another." Here, Gevisser embarks on a quest to understand the inner life of his city.

Gevisser uses maps, family photographs, shards of memory, newspaper clippings, and courtroom testimony to chart his intimate history of Johannesburg. He begins by tracing his family's journey from the Orthodox world of a Lithuanian shtetl to the white suburban neighborhoods where separate servants' quarters were legally required at every house. Gevisser, who eventually marries a black man, tells stories of others who have learned to define themselves "within, and across, and against," the city's boundaries. He recalls the double

lives of gay men like Phil and Edgar, the ever-present housekeepers and gardeners, and the private swimming pools where blacks and whites could be discreetly intimate, even though the laws of apartheid strictly prohibited sex between people of different races. And he explores physical barriers like The Wilds, a large park that divides Johannesburg's affluent Northern Suburbs from two of its poorest neighborhoods. It is this park that the three men who held Gevisser at gunpoint crossed the night of their crime.

An ode to both the marked and unmarked landscape of Gevisser's past, *Lost and Found in Johannesburg* is an existential guide to one of the most complex cities on earth. As Gevisser writes, "Maps would have no purchase on us, no currency at all, if we were not in danger of running aground, of getting lost, of dislocation and even death without them. All maps awaken in me a desire to be lost and to be found . . . [They force] me to remember something I must never allow myself to forget: Johannesburg, my hometown, is not the city I think I know."

The Los Angeles Times review of the book can be found at:

<http://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-ca-jc-mark-gevisser-20140803-story.html>

Note that the SA-SIG Board has no financial interest in this book.

THE BAUMANN FAMILY, BUILDERS OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER

Amanda Jermyn

Long ago and far away, two young sisters, chosen for their beauty, danced around a statue of liberty in Strasbourg during the French Revolution. This ancestral story has been passed down in the Baumann branch of our family, appearing most recently in the memoirs of the late Penelope Bond.¹ Is it true? Probably not, yet I have chosen to tell it because of what it says about us, our family. Perhaps we are simply romantics, embellishers and wishful thinkers, or perhaps this tale explains something of the time and place our ancestors lived in and why they felt it necessary to hold onto a story like that. The point of this tale may be to emphasize how important the Revolution and emancipation by Napoleon would have been to a Jewish family living at that time, important enough that their daughters might dance for joy in the streets. This emancipation made a huge difference to the daily lives and personal freedom of Jews under Napoleon's rule. Truth comes in many forms - the literal, the fairy tale, and occasionally the sublime. To me, this is what makes family history so fascinating - not just the names, the places and the dates, but what it tells us about our ancestors, so that we can have a richer sense of our place in history, of who we are and where we came from.

The tale of the Baumanns begins for us in the seventeenth century in the village of Mutzig in Alsace. This is the first place we know for certain that they lived. There is some evidence that the family may have migrated there from Prussia but we do not know this for sure. At the time, many Jews did not have last names, and were known as so-and-so, son of so-and-so. The first ancestor we know of living in Mutzig was Benjamin, son of Wolff, probably born around 1660. Benjamin's grandson, Lazare, a second-hand dealer born in 1741, married Bella Reichshoffer from nearby Bouxwiller, and it is amongst their children, all born in Mutzig, that the name "Baumann" first appears, some time before 1808 when last names were required under Napoleon's rule. One of their sons, Jacques, a shopkeeper and day laborer, married Sara Kuppenheim, a rabbi's daughter. They had five

children: Leopold, Samuel, Joseph, Emmanuel and Balbine. Given the timing of Balbine Baumann's birth in 1784, she remains the only serious candidate for the story, mentioned earlier, of the Baumann sisters dancing around a statue of liberty during the French Revolution in 1789. Did she have a sister who danced with her? We have no evidence of one, but perhaps it was a friend or a cousin, or perhaps the family was too religious for such frivolity and she never danced at all. Was there such a statue in Strasbourg? I never found one when I went there, and it was certainly not the Statue of Liberty that now graces New York harbor. It's a good story though, and one that we, as a family, have chosen to keep. As Napoleon himself said, "What is history but a fable agreed upon?"

While Balbine and her brother Leopold remained in Alsace, some time between 1806 and 1807, brothers Samuel, Joseph and Emmanuel moved into Hesse, Germany with Napoleon's army, providing horses, food, blankets, leather goods and livery to the military. By 1808 all three were living in Kassel, serving as contractors to Jerome Napoleon, King of Westphalia, brother of Napoleon Bonaparte. In the Jewish community records of the time, all three brothers are listed as merchants, horse dealers and animal feed dealers.² At this time they had added the name "Picard", and were known as the Picard-Baumanns. In those days the word "Picard" was often used simply to mean a person who came from France, and I suspect that it suited my ancestors to be known as such, to show their connection to the conquering armies of Napoleon, both for business reasons and prestige. In later generations, some kept "Picard" while others discarded it. Under the rule of Jerome Napoleon, the family flourished, but in 1815 Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, and the fortunes of Jews in the lands he had conquered changed. In her book "Memories," Sophie (Baumann) Leviser writes: "When Napoleon had been taken prisoner and the French had left Germany, our family grew very poor. Our grandfathers were considered foreigners in Germany and not allowed to do business on their own, so they were only agents, and, besides, they had lost their money when the Prussians had taken possession of all their magazines,³ which were filled with goods which Grandfather (Joseph Baumann) had furnished

² Die Israelitische Gemeinde zu Kassel im 19. Jahrhundert, Helmut Thiele, p. 33, 43, 55, 57, 102, 1986.

³ Storehouses for arms and other supplies for the military

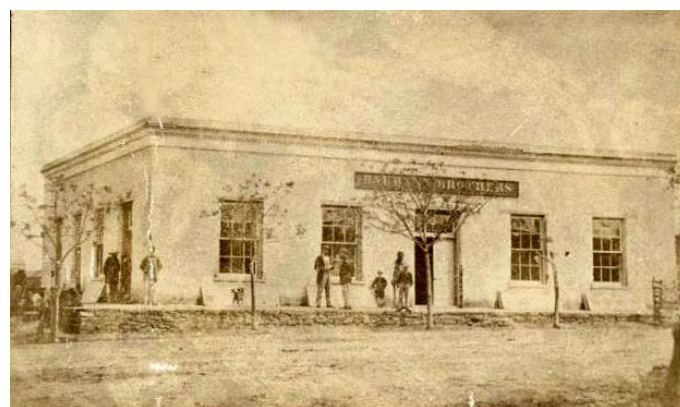
¹ Penelope Elfrieda Bond's Memoirs, Unpublished, p. 3.

for the French Army.”⁴ In her unpublished family history, Hannchen Baumann writes that as long as Jerome Napoleon’s kingdom lasted, conditions for the family were excellent: “As Grandmother (Jeanette Seligsberger) often told me, the money was carried in to Grandfather (Joseph Baumann) in wheelbarrows, and to save time, the coins were weighed, not counted.” After things turned bad, “the heads of the families were absolutely unable to keep their families alive... I am proud to say that the families were poor, very poor, but very respectable, and both families were very well-known for their cohesion.” The new regime in Kassel viewed the Baumann brothers as foreigners and wanted to repatriate them and their families to France. However, by this time they had established their large families in Kassel and did not wish to leave their new home.

This type of uncertainty has always spurred Jews to make sure their children are well-educated and have some sort of trade that will serve them well in good times and bad. This is certainly true of the Baumanns. In their memoirs, both Sophie Levisieur and Penelope Bond mention Joseph’s insistence on a trade for his sons. Several of the Baumanns in Kassel, including Joseph’s son Isaac, became watchmakers. Isaac Baumann, however, chose to emigrate, another of the options available to young men in Europe during uncertain political and economic times. According to Sophie Levisieur’s “Memories”⁵, he arrived in South Africa in 1836 by sailing ship to work as a clerk for the Mosenthals, family friends from Kassel who had established a business in Graaff-Reinet. However, other sources⁶ maintain that Isaac opened his own trading store in Graaff-Reinet in 1837, becoming the first Jew to settle there. In “The Jewish Community of Graaff-Reinet” we read: “He was well established by the time the Mosenthal brothers, Joseph and Adolph, came to Graaff-Reinet in 1842 from Cape Town and Port Elizabeth to expand their network of trading stores in the Eastern Cape. Baumann’s shop soon became connected with the Mosenthals’ business...”⁷ Later, Isaac started a business in

Colesberg after which he set up shop in Bloemfontein.

In 1845, during a shooting trip with some friends, Isaac first crossed the Orange River where he saw, and was impressed by, the land that would later become the Orange Free State. In 1848, after the Battle of Boomplaats, the Orange River Sovereignty was established there by the British, and Isaac became the first civilian in what would become the city of Bloemfontein. He was the first Jewish settler there, and established the city’s first trading store. In 1849 he became the first mayor of Bloemfontein. After his death, Baumann Square was named after him. According to Sophie Levisieur, when her grandfather Isaac Baumann came to Bloemfontein “... there were scarcely any houses, or bricks to build them with, and very little timber, so his first shop was a tent made of skins with a lean-to where he kept his watches, though there was no manufacturing of watches, only selling and mending.”⁸



Isaac Baumann’s store on the corner of Henry Street and the then Bo-Kerk street (now Hill Street) The building was sold in 1863 to Standard Bank who still occupies the property.

Once Isaac had established himself in business he brought out from Germany his brothers Jacob and Louis, with whom he formed the trading company Baumann Bros. in Bloemfontein. In 1854 Jacob joined his brother August in Graaff-Reinet where they had formed Baumann Bros. & Co., together with their cousin Joseph, son of Emmanuel Baumann. Louis later headed the Port Elizabeth branch of Baumann Bros. While Jacob and his cousin Joseph eventually returned to Germany, most of the Baumanns and their descendants remained in South Africa, and other Baumanns came out to join

⁴ Memories, Sophie Levisieur, p. 17, 1982

⁵ Memories, Sophie Levisieur, p. 18, 1982

⁶ The Jewish Community of Graaff-Reinet, South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth, 1998, p.12-13, and A History of the Jews in South Africa, Louis Herrman, 1935, p. 210.

⁷ The Jewish Community of Graaff-Reinet, South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth, 1998, p.12-13

⁸ Memories, Sophie Levisieur, p. 19, 1982.

their pioneering relatives. Jacob's son Joseph fought for the Boers in the Bethlehem Commando in the Boer War and was taken prisoner near Bethlehem. Another son, Carel, lived in Brandfort and later Bloemfontein where he was a broker and general dealer. Adolf Baumann, son of Emmanuel, set up shop in Calvinia.

My own connection to the Baumann family is through my great-great grandmother, Zerline Picard-Baumann, daughter of Samuel, one of the three brothers who moved to Kassel with Napoleon's army. She married Isaak Wertheim in Kassel, and they had four children, Marianne, Hermann, August and Mathilde (my great-grandmother). In about 1863 August and Hermann Wertheim were brought out to work for their Baumann cousins in Graaff-Reinet, arriving on the sailing boat, the Steinwerder. This voyage took place during the American Civil War, and Hermann, then aged 14, recalled seeing the Confederate raider ship, the Alabama, put in to Cape Town.⁹ In about 1866, August Wertheim opened a general store, Wertheim & Co. General Dealer, in Fauresmith, Orange Free State. Meanwhile, Hermann worked as a salesman for Baumann Bros. in Graaff-Reinet. Later, he and the store's bookkeeper, Carl Wille, took over the business, calling it Wille & Wertheim.¹⁰ Wille later married Helena, daughter of August Baumann. Meanwhile, back in Kassel, Mathilde Wertheim married Isaac Katz, and together they had eight children, including my grandfather, August Katz, born in 1879. In order to help provide an education for the younger children in the family he and his brother Julius were sent to earn a living in South Africa, each at age fifteen. My grandfather set out from Hamburg on a ship called The Pretoria on August 3rd, 1895, arriving at Port Elizabeth in Algoa Bay. In nearby Graaff-Reinet he began helping his uncle Hermann Wertheim in the business he owned with Carl Wille that had previously been Baumann Bros. & Co. He later worked for Saffery & Co. in Humansdorp. During the Boer War, as he was based in British Humansdorp, he fought for the British, while his brother, Julius, based in Boer territory in Fauresmith, fought for the Boers, although this did not in any way diminish their affection for each

other. After the war, in 1904, when their uncle retired, my grandfather and his brother Julius bought out August Wertheim's store in Fauresmith, and ran it together. My father, Robert Katz, who was born in Fauresmith, recalled that his father kept in touch with his Baumann cousins in Bloemfontein, particularly with Isaac Baumann's daughter, Sophie Levisieur.



Zerline Picard-Baumann, the writer's great-great grandmother

In 1852 Isaac Baumann returned to Kassel to see his mother (Jeanette Seligsberger) and to seek a wife. There he married Caroline Allenberg, the 18-year-old daughter of Gumpert Allenberg, a well-known mathematics professor in Kassel. Her mother was Betty Maimon, said to be descended from the famous Jewish philosopher and physician Maimonides. The pioneer life in Bloemfontein, with its dust storms and plagues of locusts, must have been quite a shock for the delicate, cultured young girl, a talented musician who spoke only German and French. Over time, however, she came to enjoy her new life, and the Baumann household on Church Street became a center of culture in Bloemfontein. Caroline and Isaac Baumann had eleven children: Joseph, Alexander, Bertha, Sophie, Gustav, Helen, Alfred, Herbert, Janet, Louis and Otto. They were the first Jewish family in Bloemfontein and played a major role in that city's development. According to Sophie Levisieur, the children were "...taught to be proud of being Jews, but that was all the religious teaching we had. Our instruction consisted of half an hour of prayer and a little reading every Sunday morning, for which we

⁹ Neville Kearns, great-grandson of Edward Wertheim of Graaff-Reinet, provided this information.

¹⁰ The Jewish Community of Graaff-Reinet: A Brief History, compiled by South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth, 1999, p.14

were dressed as if we were going to church. We had no church to go to.”¹¹

With the onset of the Basuto War Isaac sent his wife and seven children by ox-wagon to Port Elizabeth where he later joined them. During the three years they spent there the children learned English. Until then they knew only Dutch. Herbert, the eighth child, was born in Port Elizabeth, and the last three, Janet, Louis and Otto, were born after the family returned to Bloemfontein in 1865. When Louis died in 1871 at the age of sixteen months, he was buried in a plot of land Isaac purchased next to the Christian cemetery. This became the first Jewish cemetery in the Orange Free State.¹² That same year the first Yom Kippur service was held in the Baumann home.¹³

In 1874, Isaac and Caroline’s daughter Bertha married businessman Henry Adler from Winburg. The wedding of the first Bloemfontein-born girl to be married there was quite a sensation. President Brand declared a half-holiday, and all members of the Volksraad¹⁴ attended the wedding. The Reverend Rappaport from Port Elizabeth officiated, and President Brand’s daughter Hannie was a bridesmaid. Bertha would later found the Queen Victoria Hospital in Winburg and the Children’s Undenominational Home in Johannesburg. Her husband Henry, originally from Luebeck, Germany, started a business with his brothers, which became known as Adler Bros. and Escombe. He later became a financier involved in gold mining. The couple had seven children, including Heine who became the general manager of Crown Mines in Johannesburg, Fritz, a brigadier in the South African forces in World War II, and Alice, one of the first professional women journalists in South Africa and the social editor of the Pretoria News.

In 1877 the Reverend Rappaport was again called upon to officiate at a Baumann wedding, this time that of Sophie Baumann and Moritz Levisieur of Bloemfontein. Moritz, originally from Kassel, Germany, had fought with distinction in the Basuto Wars. He was a founder of the Bloemfontein

Chamber of Commerce, helped establish the Volks Hospital and the Bloemfontein Museum, and was active in the Bloemfontein Synagogue. He became a grain and coal merchant with a general store in Bloemfontein, and owned the Halevy House¹⁵ Hotel. His wife Sophie became the Grand Dame of Bloemfontein, presiding over a family of eight children and living till 104. Her memoir, “Memories,” her novella “Ouma Looks Back,” and her Boer War diaries are of historic interest, with copies housed in the Bloemfontein War Museum. The Boer War diaries of her daughters Elsa and Clara are housed there too. Sophie Levisieur was a suffragette and founder of the Bloemfontein Jewish Benevolent Society and the Child Welfare Society. She was also a member of the National Museum Commission. Her daughter Elsa was a talented musician, singer, composer and playwright. She married English solicitor Henry Montefiore Cohen and moved to London.



Moritz Levisieur 1842 – 1923 and his wife Sophie Baumann 1857 – 1962

Clara was a suffragette and playwright, known for her play “The Voortrekkers’ Dream.” She married Isidor Douglas Abrahamson. Sophie and Moritz Levisieur’s son Ivan was a land surveyor in Fauresmith and Wepener who fought for the Boers and was injured during the Boer War. Another son, Max, invented a long life battery and sold the idea to the battery company Exide. Sophie’s daughter Josephine married Reginald van Breda Pritchard, a physician and the last United Party MP for Bloemfontein. Sons Ernest Alfred and Herbert were eminent physicians. Herbert qualified at Guy’s

¹¹ Memories, Sophie Levisieur, p. 22, 1982.

¹² Address by Dr. Sheila Aronstam at the opening of the Jewish Community Archives, Bloemfontein, 2001, taken from her doctoral thesis.

¹³ Address by Dr. Sheila Aronstam at the opening of the Jewish Community Archives, Bloemfontein, 2001, taken from her doctoral thesis.

¹⁴ Orange Free State Parliament

¹⁵ The Levisieur family name was originally Halevy, so Moritz named Halevy House in his family’s honor.

Hospital in London, practiced in Honeydew, Transvaal, and for a while was a ship's doctor for the Union Castle line. In addition, he wrote and published children's stories, as well as short novels in Afrikaans. The youngest son, Wilfred (Billie) ran his father's business after Moritz passed away.

In 1880 Helene, third daughter of Caroline and Isaac Baumann, was married in Bloemfontein by the Reverend Rappaport to Wolf Ehrlich, a businessman, originally from Erfurt, Germany. Ehrlich opened the first shoe shop in Bloemfontein and was a founder of the Bloemfontein Chamber of Commerce. A Member of Parliament in the Orange River Colony, and Senator for the Orange Free State, he was also a three term mayor of Bloemfontein, and for a while, the Portuguese Consul! He helped found the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and was the first President of the Bloemfontein Hebrew Congregation. Helene was a suffragette, and active in the Jewish Women's Benevolent Society. The Ehrlichs had nine children: Theresa, Minnie, Rosalie, Julian, Hedwig, Henry, Carl Otto, Gladys and Caroline. Rosalie was a well-known theater producer, suffragette and founding member of the South African Communist Party. She won the British Empire Shakespeare Competition and founded the first Afrikaans Eisteddfod. She too wrote her memoirs.

Jeanette (Janet) Baumann, fourth daughter of Isaac and Caroline, married Albert Gottschalk from Magdeburg, Germany. The couple lived in Magdeburg, and had two children, Ernest and Charlotte. According to Ivan Levisseur's daughter, Margaret Hill, in 1939, Gustav Baumann's son Hal managed to arrange for Janet and her daughter to be evacuated to South Africa on one of the last boats to leave Germany. Albert and Ernest remained in Germany and, as Jews, were sent to a concentration camp where Albert perished. Ernest survived and later came to join his family in South Africa.

Joseph, the eldest son of Caroline and Isaac Baumann, was educated in Germany. He was a noted gymnast and general dealer in Thaba N'chu, Basutoland. He died there of typhoid at age 31. Their second son, Alexander, was an administrative agent and auctioneer in Winburg. Their third son Gustav, was educated at Grey College, Bloemfontein and at the South African College in Cape Town. He became a legendary figure in South African history - a notable land-surveyor and Surveyor General of the Orange Free State. He

started the firm of G. Baumann and laid out most of the city of Bloemfontein. A street was named after him in Trompsburg. He wrote two books, "The Practice of Land-Surveying" and "The Lost Republic, the Biography of a Land-Surveyor," the latter together with his daughter, Elfrieda Baumann Bright. On one occasion, on a farm he visited as a land-surveyor, he was asked why he didn't take part in the religious devotions. Was it because he was a Lutheran? "No, Oom Gert, I'm a Jew," he replied. To which Oom Gert responded, "Baumann, you lie, you're a surveyor!"¹⁶ Folklore has it that he only went to synagogue after someone called him a "Bloody Jew."

In 1887 Gustav Baumann married Penelope Bagley in Fauresmith. Her grandfather, Admiral Herman Pieter van Hees, was a nephew of Sir George Yonge, governor of the Cape from 1799-1801. She was descended from the British Plantagenet Royal Family on both sides. During the Boer War, Gustav was on the staff of the Commissariat, involved in military intelligence, and was appointed Under-Secretary of the Orange Free State Boer War Council by President Steyn. He was responsible for introducing the Red Cross and Scouts Corps to the Orange Free State at this time.¹⁷ When it became clear that things were going badly for the Boers, before retreating to Kroonstad, President Steyn asked Gustav, as Surveyor General, to remain in Bloemfontein to guard the land titles of the Republic and hand them over to the British, should they occupy the town. This indeed came to pass, and Gustav did as he was asked. After the British took control, he was treated well as a prisoner of war on parole in Cape Town, the only prisoner allowed the entire run of the Cape Peninsula! He was later able to arrange a transfer to Ladybrand where his wife was then living.

After the war he took up land surveying in Bloemfontein once more. By then he was the father of five children: Hermina (Minnie), Maximilian Otto (known as Otto), Elfrieda, Henry and Gurling (Tockie). His youngest child, Alice, was born in 1905. His son Otto, a mining engineer, was a second lieutenant, 70th Squadron, in the Royal Flying Corp, during World War I. When he was

¹⁶ The Lost Republic, The Biography of a Land-Surveyor, by Gustav Baumann and Elfrieda Bright, Faber and Faber Ltd, 1937, p.92.

¹⁷ Boerejode, Jews in the Boer Armed Forces 1899-1902, David Saks, Charlie Fine Printers, 2010, p.20

killed in action over Flanders in 1917 it broke his father's heart. Elfrieda, known as Elfie, led an adventurous life. After the untimely and tragic death of her husband, Wilfred Francis Laurie Bright, while serving in the British military on the Pakistan border, Elfie learned to fend for herself and her children. A photographer and skilled carpenter, she served in the army during World War II. Henry, known as Hal, was a Rhodes Scholar, land-surveyor, engineer and the unofficial inventor of the tellurometer¹⁸, an electronic distance measurement device. Tockie, a writer, was one of several Baumann family members to pen her memoirs, as did Elfie's daughter, Penelope Bond. When Gustav passed away in 1930, Bloemfontein lost a much-loved and respected member of the community. Unfortunately, the Anglican Church would not bury him because he was not a Christian, and the Rabbi of the Bloemfontein Synagogue wouldn't either because Gustav had never belonged to the congregation. In the end, as he had long been a member of the Freemasons, it was they who conducted the funeral.¹⁹



Gustav Baumann, land surveyor. (From *Men of the Times: Transvaal*, 1906)

Gustav Baumann, 1858 - 1930

¹⁸ Dr. Trevor Lloyd Wadley of the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research took all the credit.

¹⁹ Penelope Elfrieda Bond's Memoirs, Unpublished, p.34 - 35.



Penelope Georgina Treadwell Bagley, 1865 - 1926

Alfred Moritz Baumann, the fourth son of Isaac and Caroline, received his MD degree from the University of Leipzig in Germany. He later returned to Europe to study ophthalmology and became the first ophthalmic surgeon in Bloemfontein. During the Boer War, he was appointed medical officer in the Bloemfontein concentration camp. He loved this work, but in April 1902 contracted enteric fever and almost died. Happily, he recovered from this illness and survived for many years.²⁰ Alfred was also a singer and composer, establishing an amateur dramatic society in Winburg where he produced Gilbert and Sullivan operas. During a time of religious austerity, he and his brother Gustav provided entertainment for the town in the form of dances, concerts, paper chases and cycling parties.²¹ Another son, Herbert James Baumann, graduated from Grey College and studied engineering in Germany. He farmed in Winburg, then worked as a clerk in Smaldeel (later known as Theunissen), and managed Wolf Ehrlich's farm in Ladybrand.²² A

²⁰ John Boje, in his thesis on the Winburg district, notes that this is mentioned in G. Saron and H. Hotz, *The Jews in South Africa: A History* (Cape Town: O.U.P., 1955), p.329.

²¹ John Boje, in his thesis on the Winburg district, notes that this is mentioned in Baumann and Bright, *The Lost Republic*, p.140-141.

²² *Jewish Life in South African Country Communities*, Vol. V, The South African Friends of Beth

veld-cornet, he fought at the Siege of Kimberley and the Battle of Magersfontein and, as a prisoner of war, was sent to St. Helena. He came back almost blind. The youngest child of Isaac and Caroline, Carl Otto, was a life insurance agent in Bloemfontein. He fought at the Battle of Magersfontein, was captured at Paardeberg, and sent to the Green Point prisoner of war camp in Cape Town. At the time, his capture seemed to go against the accepted practices of war as he had been sent under a white flag to alert the British that one of their majors lay seriously wounded near the Boer lines. When his brother Gustav later met the British officer who had captured Carl Otto, the officer explained his reasoning: "I noticed that he was very young, he was intelligent, and an educated man. I knew we were going to bombard Cronje's laager heavily the next day, and I didn't want the boy to be in danger. I felt that perhaps I was saving his life."²³

August Baumann, son of Joseph Baumann and Jeanette Seligsberger, married Bertha Rosenstein of Kassel. In 1850 he arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, later moving to Middelburg, Johannesburg and Graaff-Reinet. He was a jeweler, watchmaker and businessman, and eventually retired to Kassel in 1892. He and Bertha had eight children, all of whom were born in South Africa. Their son Richard, who later Anglicized his name to "Bowman," was the lawyer who drew up the articles for the diamond mining company, De Beers. During the Boer War he was member of the High Commissioner's Consultative Committee in Cape Town, and also of the Permit Committee that dealt with the granting of permits to Uitlanders²⁴ to return to the Transvaal after the war²⁵. Another son, Lorenzo, traded on the Johannesburg stock exchange and also changed his name to "Bowman." Yet another son, Emil, was the first doctor in Johannesburg to specialize in the health and welfare of children, and a founder of the Children's Hospital

there. He was a Member of Parliament for Rosettenville, and responsible for the Children's Act that ended the exploitation of children for adoption. He worked on this with Princess Alice, wife of the Governor General.²⁶ As we have already seen, Bertha and August's daughter Helena married Carl Wille, bookkeeper for the Baumann store in Graaff-Reinet. This store was later taken over by Wille and my grandfather's uncle Hermann Wertheim. Another daughter, Sophie, married Carl Hanau, a financier and prospector in Uitenhage, originally from Germany, who later became acting President of the Witwatersrand Chamber of Mines.²⁷

The name "Baumann," in archaic German, means a farmer, builder or laborer, and I do believe this to be a fitting name for our family. At different times we have been farmers, laborers and builders of one kind or another. My late father, a civil engineer, had his own construction company in Cape Town, so he was a builder too. As we have seen, the pioneering Baumanns played a significant role in the early history and development of South Africa. Other family members who remained in Europe or migrated elsewhere made similar contributions in the places where they lived. Unfortunately, their contributions and those of later generations in South Africa are too numerous to recount in this article. The Baumann family, with its high regard for education, its spirit of adventure, and family cohesiveness, has grown and flourished, with talented descendants spread around the world – in South Africa, America, Canada, England, France, Germany, Israel, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Zimbabwe and elsewhere. We've come a long way from our humble beginnings in Alsace.



The Joseph Baumann building in Graaff-Reinet, later taken over and renamed Wille & Wertheim

Hatefutsoth, Johannesburg, 2012, p.50, p.86, p.487, p.517

²³ The Lost Republic, The Biography of a Land-Surveyor, by Gustav Baumann and Elfrieda Bright, Faber and Faber Ltd, 1937, p. 178

²⁴ "Uitlanders" ("foreigners" in Dutch) were migrant workers (mainly British) who came to the Transvaal Republic following the Gold Rush of 1886. Resentment of their presence and the limitation of their rights by the Boer republic was a contributing factor to the outbreak of the Second Boer War in 1899.

²⁵ The Jewish Community of Graaff-Reinet, South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth, 1998, p. 18.

²⁶ The Jewish Community of Graaff-Reinet, South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth, 1998, p. 18.

²⁷ The Jewish Community of Graaff-Reinet, South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth, 1998, p. 29.

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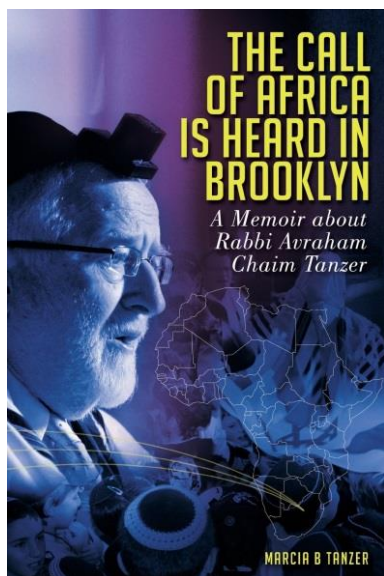
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FOREIGNERS IN SOUTH AFRICA: RABBIS AND THEIR WIVES WHO BRAVE IT OUT

Rabbi Izak Rudomin

A partial book review and personal reflection about the relationship between coming to South Africa and leaving it, simultaneously, all at the same time!

Based on the book, The Call of Africa Is Heard in Brooklyn: A Memoir about Rabbi Avraham Chaim Tanzer, by Marcia B. Tanzer, published in 2013 by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, available on Amazon.com.



The Pesach season is a time of “migrations” and “changes” – of Israelites who left Egypt to travel to the Promised Land that is the Land of Israel, and of Jews during all the millennia up to our own days who leave behind their usual home-life and lifestyles and “migrate” from their usual standards of trying to keep Kosher to the even higher

standards of *Kosher for Passover* with its special foods, products and special nights and days. It is all about change and leaving the past behind and moving into an unknown future. This is a metaphor and a description of the Jewish People, individually and collectively, in the past and in the present, as they move about from place to place, country to country, continent to continent, and as they await a historic Final Redemption and a final Ingathering of all their Exiles as in the days when Moses led the Children of Israel out of the bondage of ancient Egypt into the Wilderness of Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and the Torah at Mount Sinai. All mystical, mysterious and adventurous encounters with Destiny and God, and it’s all part of being Jewish!

By now, South African Jews all know that certainly since 1976 the trend has been for South African Jews to migrate away to America, Canada, Israel, Australia, the United Kingdom and elsewhere. But there has also been a very tiny, almost infinitesimal, yet significant counter-flow of North American and Israeli clergy and teachers, that used to include rabbis from the old Great Britain but now its mostly of Americans and Israelis, either as singles but usually with spouses travelling to and remaining in South Africa as it drains of its former local Jewish population. As someone who has met and studied with such people in my six decades of life (thank G-d) in Israel, South Africa and America, as well as having personally travelled to and fro from South Africa to North America and back again, this dissonant back and forth between continents has also been something I have experienced and “practised” over the decades, like many others.

Usually it has been rabbis and their wives, the proverbial “*rebbetzins*” (“*rebbetzin*” is Yiddish for “rabbi’s wife” or simply in a way, a “*female ‘rabbi*”), who have been the miniscule brave few “foreigners” who have undertaken the “reverse” flow of traffic by travelling “against the current” so to speak into the “jaws” of South Africa while locals have tried hard by the tens of thousands to move to “calmer” political climes. The numbers are virtually microscopically small of those rabbis and their wives and children moving to South Africa, whether at the peak of the Apartheid-era or during the arrival of Black majority-rule. Maybe it’s a few dozen couples and then add in all their descendants. However, this belies the deep and profound power of their influence. There are a number of such famous “rabbinical couples” that have moved to

South Africa and made their marks. Any Jewish person active in a South African *shul* or in any one of South Africa's Jewish communities or schools knows and has interacted with such rabbis and their *rebbetzins-wives*.

One such very famous couple is Rabbi Avraham Chaim and Marcia Tanzer, the heads of the Yeshiva College school complex and campus and the leaders of the attached Glenhazel Hebrew Congregation network in Johannesburg. In the course of sending out some e-mails about South African Jewry, I received a kind response from Rebbetzin Marcia Tanzer sending regards with some of her own comments. She really surprised me when she wrote that she had recently written and published a book through Amazon about their life stories. I immediately did a search on Amazon and found the book *The Call of Africa Is Heard In Brooklyn: A Memoir about Rabbi Avraham Chaim Tanzer*, and I also ordered it online.

The day the book arrived I started reading it and could not put it down. It took me about five hours to get through its 260 pages. I skipped over "political commentary" about general South Africa history, and focused on the "real stuff" about the life and times and accomplishments of the two co-authors, as both Rebbetzin Marcia Tanzer writes and there are lots of added comments by her husband Rabbi A.C. Tanzer in italics. There are also 40 additional pages with fascinating family and communal pictures to spice it up!

And what an amazing and exciting read it was. Thoroughly refreshing and revealing so much about the usually hidden and very private lives of a famous rabbi and his wife! The book had special meaning for me for a number of reasons. One is obviously that I recall many of the names and rabbis and famous personalities in the book, such as the former Chief Rabbis of South Africa: Rabbis Rabinowitz, Casper, and Harris, and many of the famous communal leaders such as Rabbi Joseph Bronner and Mendel Kaplan; the fact that my sister, Mrs. Chana Lichtenstein, is a long-time Hebrew and Judaic Studies teacher at the Yeshiva College school, and that when I was a boy, Rabbi Tanzer tried to recruit me but I was too attached to King David School to take him up on his offers, and much, much more.

But as I finished the book, I realized that another reason it resonated with me so strongly was that my own journey in life is something of a "reverse story"

of their book, as my personal story could rightly be called "The Call of Brooklyn Is Heard In Johannesburg," because since 1976 I came from working and studying in the Jewish community of Johannesburg to study in Yeshiva Chaim Berlin in Flatbush, Brooklyn, going back to South Africa to work and teach on and off for a total of a year since the time I left and still keeping up very strong ties with quite a few rabbis, family and people I know still living and thriving in South Africa.

But this is about the Tanzers' epic story. Rabbi Tanzer was born in Brooklyn in the mid 1930's to devout European religious Jews who for his high schooling sent him to the famous Telz Yeshiva in Cleveland, Ohio. It was there that he came into contact with its dynamic rabbis, such as its Rosh Yeshiva (Dean) Rav Mottel (Mordechai) Katz who "just happened to have" six siblings and his parents (according to the book) who had moved to South Africa prior to World War Two (no wonder there were so many "Katz" families in South Africa! Just kidding!)

Seriously, what the young Avraham Tanzer did not know was that he was with *Talmud* and *Torah* teachers in a yeshiva who had "vested interests" in South Africa, and were in touch with rabbis and family in South Africa, such as Rabbis Michel Kosowsky and Joseph Bronner, who wanted to set up a "Yeshiva" in Johannesburg looking to the Telz Yeshiva as a kind of "mother institution" to send young staff members to help build it up.

One such person was Rabbi Dovid Saunders who had already "been sent" by Telz in Cleveland to teach at Yeshiva College in South Africa in the early 1950s. But when another staff member was needed they called in the young newly married Rabbi Tanzer and "offered" him a "teaching job" in Johannesburg with the line, "well, if we offered you a job in Seattle you would fly there, so just fly a little further until you get to South Africa"!

In 1963 the young Tanzers in their twenties with three young children arrived in Sunny South Africa "just for two years" and have remained there ever since being honored and lionized by the various local communities, all sorts of government and business leaders and even being awarded the prestigious Jerusalem Prize by the Israeli Knesset for contributions to, and excellence in, Jewish Education in the Diaspora.

The young lady who married Rabbi Tanzer was Marcia from Baltimore whose father and grandfathers were all important scholars and rabbis in Baltimore that hailed from famous Lithuanian communities. She was always very adventuresome and claimed she was always dreaming of going to Africa and so therefore encouraged her husband to take the job. And they never looked back as they went from one success to another teaching Torah on all levels to all age groups, and radiating a “special something” an irresistible and winning mix of Charm, Holiness, Jewish Genuineness, Friendship, Charisma, *Yiddishkeit*, Torah Scholarship, Leadership, Supreme Practical Rabbinical Skills, Brilliance, Political Acumen, Team Building, Instilling Team Spirit, Inspiration, Oratory, Kindness and Compassion, Brilliant *Kiruv* (Outreach), Successful *Chinuch* (Education), Mastery of the *Rabbonus* (Rabbinite), *Klal* (Community) Leadership and Responsibility, *Mazel* (“Good Luck”) and *Brocha* (Blessings), *Siyata Dishmaya* (“Heavenly Help”) and much more, that made them popular local celebrities as they continued adapting to South African Jewry and its warm sense of community, its unique unbending pro-Zionist and pro-Israel pride but still with loyalty as productive South African citizens. As they say nowadays, they “grew” the Yeshiva College from a handful of students to a ten-acre campus now with around 1,000 pupils from the youngest grades to high school with hundreds of families belonging to the famous on-campus Glenhazel Shull that has been headed by Rabbi Tanzer himself since its inception and is the heart and soul of the now-pulsating Jewish community of Johannesburg with its dynamic religious life to be found everywhere in that concentrated area of Jo’burg.

While in Johannesburg, the young Rebbetzin Marcia Tanzer went to get her degrees at Wits University and during one Hebrew lecture a famous professor tells her that he knows her father, to which she replies, “you don’t know my father” but the professor insists that he does. After more back and forth she finally asks him who he thinks her “father” is? And he replies: “Isn’t your father Avraham Tanzer?” to which she responds “he isn’t my ‘father’ – he’s my *wife*!”

Aside from being sharp and witty, Marcia and her husband are incredibly kind people. When Marcia’s father passes away she convinces her mother to come stay with her in South Africa that results in a thirty year sojourn of her mother in Marcia’s own

house. When Rabbi Tanzer’s own parents get frail and old in America he brings them both out to live their last years with him in his own home in South Africa! What a moral lesson to others when so many who leave South Africa struggle with the personal test of how to care for the elderly parents they have left behind.

The book describes how along the way the Tanzers raised a family of six amazing children, three of whom are now still living in South Africa and all married by now. Five of their six children married South Africans. Their son Rabbi Baruch Tanzer lives in Jerusalem and heads a successful Kollel or Post-Graduate Talmudic School of Halachah (Jewish Law) having ordained dozens of rabbis in Israel. Their son Rabbi Dov Tanzer is the Assistant Dean at the Yeshiva College helping his father and great scholar in his own right. Two daughters are successful lawyers: one lives in Montreal Canada and another in Washington DC. One daughter is married to Rabbi David Masinter a famous Lubavitch rabbi in South Africa. One daughter had to undergo a kidney transplant decades ago and her mother, the author Rebbetzin Marcia Tanzer was her brave kidney-donor, and in spite of the challenges everyone has been doing very well, and all the children are happily married and have many children of their own, with some of the Tanzer grandchildren getting married and having babies that in turn makes the senior Tanzers into proud Great-Grandparents.

The Tanzer’s arrival and success continued the chain-reaction as they brought out fellow “foreign” rabbis to continue in their footsteps. Rabbi Tanzer brought out his good friend from his Telz Yeshiva days from America Rabbi and Mrs. Azriel Goldfein to assist him. In time Rabbi Goldfein left to set up his own “Yeshiva Gedolah of Johannesburg” with its own network of schools with hundreds of children attending known as the Hersh Lyons School that are run by his sons Rabbis Avi and Dovid Goldfein since the senior Rabbi Goldfein’s passing. Rabbi Tanzer then brought out Rabbi and Mrs. Aron Feuffer a dynamic Israeli Talmudic scholar to assist him. After a while Rabbi Feuffer left to set up his own “Yeshiva Maharsha” and community that today encompasses a large campus and many families and students led by his disciples mainly Rabbi Menachem (Mark) Raff since the passing of Rabbi Feuffer. Rabbi Tanzer says in the book that he is rightly proud that in the course of being brought out to South Africa to help build up

one yeshiva, he has in fact helped to give birth to three yeshivas in Johannesburg instead!

There are so many details that readers acquainted with South Africa and its unique foreign-born rabbis can identify with, about those who have made the brave sacrifice to grow roots into South African soil while so many of their congregants and students have moved to other continents and countries. This book is like looking into a two-way mirror, or looking in opposite geographic directions yet in the end seeing one picture and getting one united view.

Probably it's part of the Jewish ability to unite and make the best of paradoxes and opposites as we all try to make the best of the seemingly strange conflicting situations life puts us into forcing us to make the best of everything no matter where we find ourselves. This book, based on the amazing life histories of the larger Tanzer family and all its branches and roots, is a beacon of hope and encouragement to everyone everywhere that no matter where one finds oneself, it is always possible not just to build but to exceed beyond one's wildest dreams no matter where you are eventually if you are given the freedom to be a Jew and to freely practice Judaism.

Rabbi Izak Rudomin was born in Israel and lived in South Africa. He matriculated from the King David School (Linksfeld) in 1971. He qualified as a history teacher in South Africa before coming to learn at Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn, New York. He is currently the director of the Jewish Professionals Institute in Brooklyn, and can be reached at rudomin@optonline.net.

This article was originally published by the Southern African Jewish Association of Canada (SAJAC) in their Pesach 2015 edition, and is republished here with permission. Thanks to Heather Super at SAJAC for her help to secure the permission.

Note that the SA-SIG Board has no financial interest in the Rabbi Tanzer book.

HOLIDAY IN THE HINTERLAND

Eve Fairbanks

Once home to Jewish immigrants, a South African city today hosts a very different sort of Jewish practice



A Jewish cemetery in the small rural town of Ladybrand, outside Bloemfontein. (Eve Fairbanks)

A personal decision I made in early 2009 to get more serious about my Jewish practice happened to correspond with a professional decision to move to South Africa for work. Now, South Africa has a lot of Jews, but they're almost all in Cape Town or Johannesburg, and I would be traveling in the hinterlands, through remote Afrikaner cow-towns and black settlements. So, last year, 5770, became one of heightened observance, but with weird modifications. I broke my Yom Kippur fast an hour early to get to the bottom of whether I'd picked up bedbugs in the sheep-farming village of Ladismith. (At the time, this problem seemed exotic, a pesky corollary to the fun of adventuring through a rougher frontier than America; now I hear it can ruin one's High Holidays even in New York.) A Hanukkah party I attended was marred by an accident involving an enormous digeridoo the party's host had brought back from Australia. I've come to relish the spirit of adaptation that trying to keep up the rituals here can fuel. The friend of mine with the digeridoo, an Afrikaner who's fascinated by the biblical Jews' wanderings through hostile lands, assembled a seder plate with me last year out of wasabi maror and a faux rhino horn for a shank bone.

But even I was disappointed to realize that I would be stuck in Bloemfontein this Rosh Hashanah. Bloemfontein is a very old city in the middle of absolutely nothing on the country's high, windswept central plain. Historically, it was a gathering-spot for Afrikaner generals and intellectuals, but now it's

also home to a growing and socially ascendant black population. This double life makes it a rich vein for stories but an unlikely place to find people for whom September means watching Barbra Streisand sing *Avinu Malkeinu* on YouTube.

Imagine my surprise at seeing people walking into the building where I'd been directed to worship wearing yarmulkes and prayer shawls. Some of their children had blond *peyes*. Many of them were carrying kudu shofars. It turned out Bloemfontein has a burgeoning group of locals who celebrate every Jewish holiday and a lot more intently than I do – only they celebrate it in the name of *Yeshuah*. The Jews on the upswing in this part of South Africa are the ones for Jesus.

Before the service began, I met their spiritual leader, who introduced himself as “Da-VEET.” He told me he grew up snug in the crucible of the Afrikaner community's strict Calvinist faith and yet was always troubled by a mystery: Why was he circumcised, when other Afrikaner boys were not? Around the time his wife started to take an independent interest in Messianic Judaism, David learned that an ancestor of his had been a Jewish emigrant to South Africa from Lithuania. Everything began to come together. “Baruch Ha Shem,” murmured David's co-leader Theo.

Once, there were many Jews – traditional Jews, I mean – in Bloemfontein. Jews came to South Africa in the 19th century as peddlers and merchants, and they embraced country life. Every little hamlet around Bloemfontein boasted at least one Jewish family, many of them hailing from the same town in north-central Germany. The Lithuanians spread down into the mountains to the south and became ostrich-feather barons. Even Ladismith, the sheep-farming village where I feared I'd picked up bedbugs during last year's High Holidays (just fleas, it turned out), had its own synagogue, though nobody uses it anymore. In time, the children of the Jewish emigrants entered the professional class, and those who didn't decamp for New York left for the bigger South African cities to open law firms or work in hospitals.

This cosmopolitan ambition has left something sad in its wake: the disappearance of the bright Jewish thread out of the fabric of rural South African life. In the early 20th century, Bloemfontein had three Jewish mayors. Now almost nobody I meet from Bloemfontein or similar towns has ever met a Jew before me. And if they have, their familiarity with

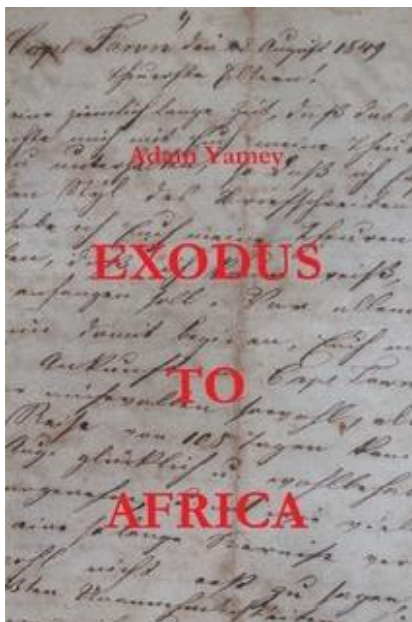
Judaism is such that they foresee no particular difference between celebrating Rosh Hashanah as I normally would and celebrating it with Bloemfontein's contingent of Messianics.

To be fair, the Messianic Jews of Bloemfontein were very hospitable – David and Theo had me sing the Kiddush, although usually women in their community aren't allowed to lead prayer—and they went to great pains to get the trappings right. They blew a perfect *tekiah*, *shevarim*, and *teruah* on the shofar; they sang with the ardor of Miriam. But, this year, worshiping with a ritual-fastidious group made me realize how important the liturgy is to the High Holy Days, and not just the customs. They had changed the English text to reflect a more Christian perspective on sin, one in which atonement equals not one more year's struggling to improve our complicated relationships with our friends and with God but a permanent triumph over the corrupt “Self,” capital S. The sermon was on the book of Matthew, and in Afrikaans. The prayer of *Avinu Malkeinu* – Our Father, Our King – emphasized a Father-Son motif, and the whole New Year theme was downplayed, since rebirth, for Messianic Jews, more properly begins around Passover, when the lamb of God also purportedly gave up the ghost. Oddly, among these Messianics, there actually seemed to be a direct correlation between ardor for the trappings of Judaism and ardor for Jesus. David told me he'd Christianized the Rosh Hashanah service more than usual to appeal to some newcomers, who turned out to be the same people who'd come in toting their own shofars.

After the Kiddush, Theo led me over to what he called the “Jewish corner” of the dinner hall, which consisted of one single, cranky old man named Herman. Herman told me he was a “real Jew, a Jew-Jew,” and he lamented the flight of his fellow Jews out of rural South Africa. Still, he seemed able to find strength in what remained behind. This Messianic stuff “was OK,” he guessed: At least they don't swear constantly using the Lord's name in vain, as he gathers they do nowadays in New York.

Eve Fairbanks is an American writer living in South Africa as a fellow of the Institute of Current World Affairs. This article was originally published in Tablet Magazine, the online magazine of Jewish news, ideas, and culture, on September 17, 2010, and is republished here with permission. Tablet Magazine can be found at tabletmag.com.

New Book
EXODUS TO AFRICA
by Adam Yamey



Published June 2015. Available from lulu.com and Amazon.com.

Almost as soon as the British took over the Cape Colony from the Dutch at the beginning of the 19th century, practising Jews began arriving there. At first, most of them were occupied in trade although at least one was a medical practitioner. Amongst the earliest traders were well-known names such as Bergtheil, Norden, Solomon, Thalwitzer, and the Mosenthals. The latter were responsible for opening up the interior of the Cape to trade, as well as bringing out more Jewish men from Germany (mainly) to work in their network of trading stores.

Until the discovery of first diamonds and then gold in what is now South Africa, most Jews leaving Europe tended to head westwards to the USA. After the valuable products started being unearthed, the number of Jews heading towards South Africa rose sharply. Both the increasing prosperity of the 4 constituent territories (that were to unify in 1910 to become South Africa) and also the pogroms in Tsarist Russia led to Eastern European Jews, especially from Lithuania and its neighbours, flowing into the country in ever increasing numbers.

Despite the Jewish people always being a small proportion of the European population of South Africa, they 'punched above their weight' – they

made a disproportionately large contribution to its development, economically, politically, and in many other ways. This has been described masterfully and in great detail in *The Jews of South Africa*, edited by Saron & Hotz, which was published in the 1950s.

Adam Yamey's book *Exodus to Africa* approaches the story of Jewish migration from Europe to South Africa from a different angle. He has used the stories of some members of his large South African family to exemplify and illustrate a range of aspects of this movement of Jews out of the lands where they were subject to oppression to a place where they were largely respected and allowed to lead their lives without undue hindrance. The story begins with the earliest member of his family to arrive in the Cape (in 1849), the German Heinrich Bergmann, and it ends with the last person to arrive from Europe, Hendrik Jami. He arrived in the Cape in 1949, having travelled from Lithuania via Shanghai.

Exodus to Africa describes why Jewish people left Europe; how they got to South Africa; what they and their descendants did there; and how some of them influenced the history of the country. The stories include those who witnessed, or were in some way directly involved in: the Cape Convict Crisis of 1849; the Anglo-Boer War; the Union of South Africa; railway building in the Eastern Cape; diamond 'mining' in South West Africa; Jewish Territorial Organization; the Grey Shirts; building 'locations'; fighting in both World Wars; municipal government; and opposing apartheid. The book adds a personal flavour to spice the general history. The examples chosen from his family all illustrate general points relevant to the history of the Jews in South Africa. The story might well be subtitled "From Mosenthal to Mandela."

Adam Yamey was born in London, son of South African parents. He lives in London with his wife and daughter. Educated at Highgate School and University College London, he is a practising dental surgeon and a writer. Author of a number of academic papers about Jewish genealogy and two novels about South Africa (Aliwal and Rogue of Rouxville), Adam has also written several books about the Balkans. His web site can be found at: <http://www.adamyamey.com>.

Note that the SA-SIG Board has no financial interest in Adam Yamey's books.

THE SA-SIG NEWSLETTER ARTICLE RESOURCE: FROM SIAULIAI TO STELLENBOSCH

Ann Rabinowitz



Very often, genealogy researchers spend a lot of time looking for records relating to their families. However, much information can be gained by joining like-minded groups called Special Interest Groups (SIGs) which focus on countries, regions or towns. One such group is the Southern Africa Special Interest Group (SA-SIG) which can be found on the JewishGen site at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/Safrica/>.

This SIG publishes a Newsletter and the index for it, as well as links to prior articles for all previously-published issues (Volumes 1 through 14, January 1999 – December 2014), can be found at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/Safrica/newsletter/index.htm#MENU>

It is a great resource for information on all sorts of topics relating to the Jews of South Africa. For instance, I noticed this morning that South African researcher Paul Cheifitz posted on Facebook that he was visiting Stellenbosch, South Africa, and another researcher Veronica Belling had mentioned that she was going there too due to the Limmud Conference which was happening on August 7-9, 2015.

As I was contemplating my own visit to lovely Stellenbosch, some years ago now, I remembered that another longtime South African researcher, Bubbles Segall, had written an interesting article about her family's roots in Stellenbosch in the SA-SIG Newsletter, Vol. 7, Issue 2, December 2006, pages 4-8.

So, it was an easy matter to go to the Newsletter index page and find the link to the above Newsletter, which I then downloaded.

In that issue, I found the article written by Bubbles which was entitled *From Siauliai to Stellenbosch*.

Not satisfied with just the one article, I went to the first issue of the Newsletter and found that in Vol. 1, Issue 1, January 1999, pages 6-7, there was an article by Mike Getz entitled *Generations in Woodstock and Beyond*. It was about the town of Woodstock which he came from and it detailed the Jewish families who lived there. It is an invaluable reference for those who are researching that town.

Other articles in the Newsletters have covered a broad range of topics such as music, heirlooms, various families, historic incidents, military matters, and many other things. It also appeared that I had quite forgotten about my own articles that I had written too!

In addition, the articles in the Newsletter have been written by many of the primary genealogy researchers on South African Jewry which one might not find anywhere else. So, I recommend that South African researchers take time to look through the Newsletter and find the many tidbits that await you.

The SA-SIG web site, in general, is also of great assistance as it contains many items such as databases and photographs, as well as links to other sites. Some of these are ones which I created myself, including the following:

- South African Jewish Board of Deputies Holdings in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, Israel, May 2000
<http://www.jewishgen.org/Safrica/cahjp-1.htm>
- The South African Jewish Year Book Database
<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Safrica/sayb.htm>
- Cape Colony Jewish Naturalization Registers, 1903-1907
<http://www.jewishgen.org/Safrica/natrec.htm>

- From the Morris Alexander “Immigration” Notebook, 1911

<http://www.jewishgen.org/Safrica/alexander-immig.htm>.

You can join the SA-SIG, whose President is Saul Issroff, and you can request to receive copies of the Newsletter as they come out from the Editor, Roy Ogus.

Ann Rabinowitz is a long-time contributor to SA-SIG, both to the web site resources as well as to the Newsletter. She is also a frequent contributor to several other Jewish genealogy blogs and web sites. Her JewishGen profile can be found at:

<http://jewishgen.blogspot.com/2009/12/volunteer-profile-ann-rabinowitz.html>

Ann can be reached at: arabinow@bellsouth.net

Editor’s Note: You can sign up to receive messages that are posted to the JewishGen SA-SIG discussion group at:

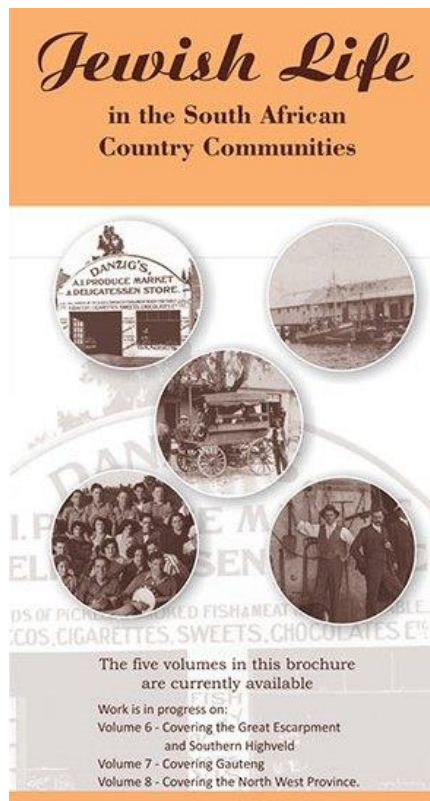
http://www.jewishgen.org/ListManager/members_add.asp

If you wish to be notified when a new Newsletter issue has been published, please contact the Editor at r_ogus@hotmail.com.

You can also find many other articles and links of interest on the following SA-SIG web site pages:

- *Articles and Commentaries*
<http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/index-a&c.htm>
- *Lists and Directories*
<http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/index-l&d.htm>
- *Web-site and E-mail addresses, Newsgroups*
<http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/websites.htm>
- *South African Rabbis and Cantors*
<http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/rabbis&cantors/names-a2z.htm>

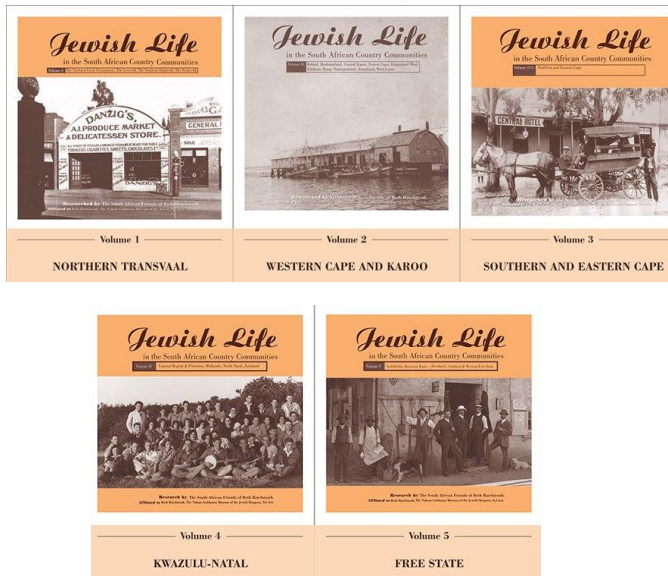
AN UPDATE ON THE JEWISH LIFE IN THE COUNTRY COMMUNITIES PROJECT



The Jewish Country Communities project of the South African Friends of Beth Hatefusoth has a new web site, which can be found at either of the following links:

www.jewishcountrylife.co.za
www.jewishcountrycommunities.co.za

This series of volumes on *Jewish Life in the South African Country Communities* covers the history of Jewish immigration to South Africa from as early as 1820 when a group of 18 Jews arrived with the 1820 Settlers. This fascinating story, at present covering five volumes based on different regions of South Africa, has been extracted from an extensive database captured over the past 20 years, from records preserved in the archives of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the South African Zionist Federation, the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town, and from interviews among many other sources listed in the books.



Some profiles of towns already covered in the first 5 volumes include the following:

Volume 1: Northern Transvaal

Witbank is a major coal mining centre in Mpumalanga situated 115 km east of Pretoria. The first coal deposits were discovered by a Jew called Woolf Harris in 1878. These became more important as the goldfields of the Witwatersrand developed and the country became industrialised. Other Jews arrived before 1896 and played an important role in the coal industry, in business and in civic life of the surrounding areas. The first minyan took place in 1905 and their first synagogue was built in 1913. Now only two Jews remain.

Pietersburg is situated in the Limpopo province 275 km north of Pretoria. In 1881 a new centre was laid out to serve Eersterling in the northern Transvaal where gold had been discovered. The town which developed was named Pietersburg in 1886 became a Municipality in 1903 and was the seat of the Transvaal Government. The Jews were inextricably linked to the growth of the town which became a major industrial, commercial and financial centre. The Zoutpansberg Hebrew Congregation was established in 1897 which included Pietersburg. In 1912 it became the Pietersburg Hebrew Congregation which also served other neighbouring towns. A new synagogue was opened in 1953. But by 1960 the vibrant community began to decline. Only 13 Jews remain in the town.

Volume 2: Western Cape and Karoo

The historic town of Stellenbosch is situated 48 km east of Cape Town. It is the second oldest town in South Africa and is famous for its educational institutions, historical monuments and old oak trees. The first Jewish settlers from Lithuania were there in 1885. In 1903 the community bought a house which they consecrated as the Stellenbosch Hebrew Congregation synagogue and used until 1920s. They built a small synagogue and a communal hall in 1932 and always had good relations with the Stellenbosch University and the people of the town. It remains a fully functioning congregation and community centre. The Jewish community of 19 families was instrumental in restoring the “Skuinshuis” complex in 1975. Over 200 years old, and the second dwelling in the town, it is the best known landmark in Stellenbosch. The façade was probably built in 1803 after a fire and bears the Historical Monuments Plaque. This remains a fully functioning congregation.

Springbok’s history goes to the time when Governor Simon Van der Stel discovered copper in the area of Namaqualand. The town lies on the main road to Namibia and was founded in 1862. Several of the earliest pioneers of the area were Jews but the first services were only held in 1911 and the congregation was founded in 1919. A synagogue was built in 1929 and served the congregation until it closed in 1972 when the Namaqualand Hebrew distributed and the building became the Joseph and Rebecca Jowell Museum depicting the life of the early Jewish and Afrikaner pioneers .

Volume 3: Southern and Eastern Cape

Graaff Reinet is the oldest town in the Eastern Cape Province and has many famous monuments. The 1820 settlers from England and Jewish immigrants, like the Mosenthals, from Germany, came to the region and helped to develop this part of the country. The Hebrew congregation was started in 1839. Business profited from merino sheep farming and the sale of ostrich feathers. The defunct congregation was revived in 1941 when Manfred Halberstad from Germany revived the services. He went on Aliyah in 1966 and the synagogue was sold in 1975. Today only two Jews remain. In order to pay tribute to the role the community had played in the development of the area, a monument to the Jewish *smous* was unveiled in 1989.

Hermanus lies 120 km south east of Cape Town. The first Jews from Lithuania arrived in c1880 and the congregation was founded in 1906. The local community is strengthened by the influx of holiday makers each summer. Unlike other communities, when it fell into a decline the congregation rejuvenated itself. After a lapse of 23 years a Rosh Hashanah services were held again in 1998. In 2006, after several meetings of the fully functioning community, the old synagogue was sold and a new building was completed using the proceeds of the sale. Hermanus was chosen by the late Chief Rabbi and Mrs Cyril Harris as their place of retirement and he passed away there in 2005.

Volume 4: KwaZulu-Natal

Vryheid is one of the oldest towns in Natal lying north of Durban. At the start of the Anglo-Boer war in 1899, Vryheid was occupied by British forces and was later incorporated into Natal. The earliest Jewish families, mostly from Eastern Europe settled in 1880 and were involved with the start of the town. Famous Jewish families like the Trems, Baranovs, Werners and Kantrowitches (later Kentrich) were amongst others who helped to start the congregation which was the first in Natal. The community peaked at 65 families in the 1950s and today no longer exists. A Memorial Trust was formed in 1987 and the records, the Sifrei Torah and remains of the synagogue building were placed in the Durban Jewish club where it still remains.

Umhlanga Rocks is situated on the seacoast north of Durban and was originally a sugar plantation. Most of the early Jews were there in 1890. It is a very popular seaside resort so that visitors and residents come and go. Chabad House was established in 1987 and has supplied a very adequate religious centre for Jews along the Natal coast. Recently a beautiful new Jewish Centre has been built consisting of a new synagogue and Rabbi, Jewish day school and nursery school.

Volume 5: Free State

Winburg is 116km north of Bloemfontein in the Free State. The first Jewish settlers arrived in 1870 from Germany and Eastern Europe. Several wellknown families settled there and members of the community fought on both sides in the Anglo-Boer War. The Winburg Congregation was started in 1900, the first Synagogue was built in 1922 and reached 120 persons in 1936. By 1951 only five families were left. When the synagogue closed in

1977 much of its furniture was sent to new Kempton Park synagogue near Johannesburg. Rabbi Casper sent one Sefer Torah to Israel.

Welkom is a new town established especially to serve the people, including many young Jewish families, who came to work in the new gold mines in the Free State. Before the discovery of gold in 1939, there were only a few Jews in the area. The Anglo American organisation created it as a model town with all facilities. The Odendalsrus-Welkom Hebrew committee was formed in 1955 and a synagogue/hall was built for services and functions for the approx. 330 Jews in the town. A minister was appointed in 1957. The first *Sifrei Torah* were borrowed from nearby congregations. Despite help from the SAJBD and other congregations the number of persons declined fast and today only four are left. In 1995 the synagogue/hall was sold and congregation closed.

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The project is currently working on the completion of Volume 6 (covering the Great Escarpment and the Southern Highveld), and Volume 7 (Gauteng), and would be interested in hearing from you if you have any information on any of the following towns:

Alberton, Amersfoort, Balfour, Bedfordview, Benoni, Bethal, Bloemhof, Boksburg, Brakpan, Breyten, Carletonville, Carolina, Christiana, Coligny, Delareyville, Delmas, Devon, Edenvale, Ermelo, Florida, Fochville, Germiston, Greylingstad, Groot Marico, Hartebeesfontein, Heidelberg, Hendrina, Irene, Kempton Park, Kinross, Klerksdorp, Koster, Krugersdorp, Leandra (Leslie), Leeudoringstad, Leslie, Lichtenburg, Magaliesburg, Makwassie, Maraisburg, Meyerton, Midrand, Morgenzon, Nigel, Ogies, Olifantsfontein, Ottosdal, Piet Retief, Potchefstroom, Randfontein, Roodepoort, Rustenburg, Sannieshof, Schweizer-Reneke, Springs, Standerton, Swartruggens, Trichardt, Vanderbijlpark, Ventersdorp, Vereeniging, Verwoerdburg, Volksrust, Voortrekkerhoogte, Wakkerstroom, Westonaria, Wolmaransstad, and Zeerust.

To submit any materials or information about these towns, or to purchase any of the first five volumes, please contact Elona Steinfeld at museum@beyachad.co.za, or call +27 (0)11 645 2598.

NEW ITEMS OF INTEREST ON THE INTERNET

Roy Ogus

The section describes new information, resources, articles, and updates that are available on the Internet, and which may be of interest to Southern African genealogical researchers.

New web site: Avotaynu Online

Avotaynu Inc. has announced the creation of a new web site called *Avotaynu Online*, a new venture which is intended to stimulate collaboration among genealogists and historians, with a particular focus on Jewish genealogy. Leading participants in the various areas of genealogical research will provide in-depth articles on events and discoveries on a regular basis.

Avotaynu Online is available free of charge from its website at:

<http://avotaynuonline.com>

Reports will be delivered in different formats, including text, video, and podcasts. As a bonus to readers, all articles that have been published in Avotaynu's print journal from 2007 through 2011 are also available at no charge on the website.

Readers are encouraged to subscribe to the Avotaynu Online news feed by registering their e-mail addresses at the top of the web page, and to also follow public commentary on its articles by "liking" the official Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/AvotaynuOnline>, as well as their pages at Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest and other social media outlets.

By virtue of its focus on the in-depth reporting of specific subjects, Avotaynu Online is intended to be distinct from the existing print journal, or from the weekly e-mail digest called *Nu? What's New?*, which reports breaking stories in the world of genealogy.

Avotaynu's home page can be found at:

<http://www.avotaynu.com/>

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The Knowles Collection database of Jewish families

FamilySearch.org reported in March 2015 that the Knowles Collection, a quickly growing, free online Jewish genealogy database linking generations of Jewish families from all over the world, has reached its one-millionth record milestone and is now easily searchable online. The collection started from scratch just over seven years ago, with historical records gathered from various FamilySearch collections. At present, the vast majority of new contributions are coming from families and private archives worldwide.

The databases from the Knowles Collection are unlike other collections in that people are linked as families and the collection can be searched by name, giving researchers access to records of entire families. All records are sourced and show the people who donated the records so that cousins can contact one another. New records are added continually, and the collection is growing by about 10,000 names per month from over 80 countries. Corrections are made as the need is found, and new links are added continually.

The full FamilySearch.org announcement can be found at:

<https://familysearch.org/blog/en/popular-online-jewish-genealogy-collection-surpasses-million-entries/>

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YIVO Jewish archives being brought back to life

Agence France-Presse reports that after seven decades holed up in a Catholic church basement in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, thousands of Yiddish manuscripts that survived the Holocaust and Stalin's anti-Jewish onslaught have finally become available.

Thousands additional documents ended up in the United States after the Holocaust decimated the once-vibrant Jewish community in the Baltic state.

Archivists are now hard at work to prepare these documents for digitization in both Vilnius and at the New York-based YIVO Institute for Jewish Research that has spearheaded the bid to reunite the "lost" collection. The aim is to put the more than one million manuscripts online in a digital archive

highlighting pre-war Jewish life in Eastern Europe. It is expected to take seven years.

The full details of the project can be found at:

<http://www.biznews.com/briefs/2015/03/02/note-sa-descendants-yivo-jewish-archives-brought-back-life/>

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Watch 1000 Years of European Borders Change In 3 Minutes

An incredible time-lapse video illustrates how drastically the European borders have changed over the last 1000 years. Note that the video has a soundtrack as well.

<http://www.viralforest.com/watch-1000-years-european-borders-change/>

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From South Africa to an Israeli settlement in the West Bank

The story of a small community of Afrikaners who converted to Judaism, moved to the Holy Land and made their home on a settlement deep inside the West Bank, on land contested by a Palestinian family living nearby is shown in the following video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHP_KS5Fe_nU

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South Africa records on Ancestry.com

Ancestry.com now has a significant collection of databases that contain South African records. Many of these databases are cross-linked from Familysearch.org, but a few are unique. The full list of databases can be seen at:

<http://search.ancestry.com/Places/Africa/South-Africa/Default.aspx>

Unique Ancestry.com record sets include the following:

- South Africa, Voter Indexes, 1719-1996

<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=60671>

- South Africa, Immigration Index, 1858-1986

<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=60741>

- South Africa, City and Area Directories, 1813-1962

<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=60717>

- South Africa, Estates Death Index, 1999-2014

<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=60777>

Note that access to the data in these records requires a subscription to Ancestry.com.

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Articles on the Ancestors South Africa web site

Heather MacAlister includes a number of interesting articles on her web site *Ancestors South Africa* at:

<http://ancestors.co.za/articles/research-help>

Articles of interest include the following:

- Birth Records in South Africa

<http://www.ancestors.co.za/articles/research-help/birth-records-in-south-africa/>

- Birth, Marriage and Death Records

<http://www.ancestors.co.za/articles/research-help/birth-marriage-and-death-records/>

- Did your Ancestors qualify to vote in South Africa

<http://www.ancestors.co.za/articles/research-help/voters-records-in-south-africa/>

- The Law of Marriages and Divorces in South Africa

<http://www.ancestors.co.za/articles/research-help/the-law-of-marriages-and-divorces-in-south-africa/>

- Adoption Records in South Africa

<http://ancestors.co.za/articles/research-help/adoption-records-in-south-africa/>

- Voting information in South Africa (1853 – 1970)

<http://ancestors.co.za/voting-information-in-south-africa-1853-1970/>



New Rootsbank database page

The SA Jewish Rootsbank database of the Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research at the University of Cape Town now has a new website, which can be found at:

www.jewishroots.uct.ac.za

The new web site has an improved format, and also provides a link to the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter Database, also housed by the Kaplan Centre.

The Kaplan Centre was established in 1980 to stimulate and promote the entire field of Jewish studies and research at the University with a special focus on the South African Jewish community.



Information about the town of Witbank

A reminder about a number of web sites which contain an extensive amount of information about the town of Witbank. The information for these sites has been compiled by Barry Mann (mmannbarry@gmail.com).

Witbank KehilaLinks page:

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Witbank/Home.html>

Pictures and more information Witbank:

<http://www.barrymann.net/index.html>

<http://www.mannbarry.net/Witbank.html>

Witbank information listed In the London Jewish Year Book (1915 – 1977):

<http://www.barrymann.net/Yearbook/Yearbook.htm>



Genealogy projects on the Geni.com web site

The Geni.com family tree website maintains a collection of a large number of genealogy projects

in which Geni.com account holders can participate. The projects portal can be found at:

<https://www.geni.com/projects>

A large number of these projects are related to Jewish genealogy research, and others are focused on research in South Africa. A search field is provided on the projects page to locate projects of interest.

Projects tagged with the key words “South Africa” can be found at:

http://www.geni.com/projects/tag/south_africa

Of particular note is the portal, *Jewish Genealogy Portal: A Guide to Jewish Projects and Resources on Geni*, created by Randol Schoenberg, the noted genealogist, found at:

<https://www.geni.com/projects/Jewish-Genealogy-Portal-A-Guide-to-Jewish-Projects-and-Resources-on-Geni/13121>

This Portal is a guide to significant Jewish genealogy umbrella or resource projects on Geni. After the Historical Projects overview, the Portal is organized primarily by geographic region, similar to the database structure at *JewishGen*.

Among others, the *Portal* includes several projects which focus on Jewish research in Southern Africa, as follows:

- *Jewish South African Settlers*, a project devoted to the Jewish settlers and progenitors in South Africa.

<http://www.geni.com/projects/South-African-Settlers-Jewish/9736>

- *African Jewry: A Microcosm of the Jewish Diaspora*

<http://www.geni.com/projects/African-Jewry-A-Microcosm-of-the-Jewish-Diaspora/12510>

- *Jewish Communities in Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi)*

<http://www.geni.com/projects/Rhodesia-and-Nyasaland-Zambia-Zimbabwe-Malawi-Jewish-Community/9551>

- South Africa – a new home for Lithuanians

<http://www.geni.com/projects/South-Africa-a-new-home-for-Lithuanians/17103>

Users with Geni.com accounts (which are available at no cost), can collaborate and participate in any of the projects found on the site.

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Litvak Portal

Eli Rabinowitz has set up a new web site, called the *Litvak Portal*, which provides a “gateway to Litvak Jewish life”. The site provides links to a number of resources covering a wide variety of categories, including: General history and facts, Jewish cultural history, the Holocaust, family histories and genealogy, geography, education, touring and travel, photography, museums and libraries, synagogues, Jewish communities, music, food, shtetl and other special projects, and the Litvak Diaspora. The Portal also provides a link to a Facebook page covering the same topic.

The Portal can be accessed at:

<http://elirab.me/litvak-portal/>

and the Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Litvak-Portal/1014205898589973>

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Eli Rabinowitz blog entries

As mentioned in previous Newsletters, former South African, Eli Rabinowitz, maintains an interesting blog at: <http://elirab.me>.

Some interesting recent postings relating to South Africa include the following:

- Habonim Dror Southern Africa History Project
<http://elirab.me/jewish/habonim-dror-southern-africa-history-project/>
- Johannesburg Jewish Life – Chazonim
<http://elirab.me/jewish/johannesburg-jewish-life-chazonim/>

- More pictures of Cape Town

<http://elirab.me/south-africa/more-of-cape-town/>

- The story of Moshe and Paula Lichtzier

The complete story of Moshe and Paula can be found on Eli’s web site at: <http://elirab.com/>

Some updated postings on the story can be found at:

<http://elirab.me/australia/moshe-paula-new-photos-from-canada/>

and

<http://elirab.me/travel/moshe-paula-reblog-and-why-i-am-flying-today-to-freiburg-im-breisgau/>

Eli will be giving a talk about this story at the Jacob Gitlin Library in Cape Town on September 3, 2015. See:

<http://elirab.me/genealogy/talk-at-the-jacob-gitlin-library/>

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New York Public Library Online Guide to Jewish Genealogy

The New York Public Library has created a new online guide for resources available for the research of Jewish genealogy. Links to resources in the areas of vital records, Holocaust resources, name origins, and miscellaneous other Jewish genealogy collections are included. The guide includes a description of each resource as well as tips for its use.

The guide can be found at:

<http://www.nypl.org/blog/2015/08/25/jewish-genealogy-guide?hspace=314575>

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FamilySearch database record collections for Zimbabwe updated

FamilySearch has recently added new searchable collection for Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) records to its online database. FamilySearch is a nonprofit, volunteer-driven organization sponsored

by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All records in their database are available free of charge from the main search page at:

www.familysearch.org/search

The new database addition covers Zimbabwe death notices for the period 1904-1976. The database is searchable, and includes the actual images of the death notice documents.

To search this specific database, use the link:

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1838530>

To access all the Southern African FamilySearch databases (including the browsable, non-searchable databases), go to the complete FamilySearch list of historic databases at:

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/list>

and scroll down to the South African and/or Zimbabwe links.

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GenealogyInTime Magazine publishes its top 100 genealogy websites for 2015

The *GenealogyInTime Magazine* web site has published its top 100 genealogy sites for 2015. The web site, one of the world's most popular online genealogy magazines, publishes this list on an annual basis.

The complete list can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/Genealogy100-2015a>

The top 10 sites on the list are as follows:

<i>Ran k</i>	<i>Website name</i>	<i>Address</i>
1	Ancestry.com	http://www.ancestry.com/
2	FamilySearch	https://www.familysearch.org/
3	Find A Grave	http://www.findagrave.com/
4	Ancestry.co.uk	http://www.ancestry.co.uk/
5	MyHeritage.com	http://www.myheritage.com/
6	GeneaNet	http://www.geneanet.org/
7	Geni.com	http://www.geni.com/
8	Genealogy.com	http://genealogy.com/
9	Ancestry.co.uk	http://www.ancestry.co.au/
10	Find My Past	http://www.findmypast.co.uk/

The JewishGen web site is ranked #33 on the list (same as in 2014), and the Steve Morse site is found at #55 (was #35 in 2014). The Eastman site is at #28 (down from #11 in 2014).

The GenealogyInTime Magazine ranked itself at #16.

Since Internet traffic is now the primary measure of a website's popularity, the survey used this measure to determine the ranking. The following factors were considered: number of visitors to a website, number of page views per visitor to the website, and the amount of time spent at a website.

More details on the methodology can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/Genealogy100-2015-rules>

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South African genealogy web sites of interest

- *Vital record searches on web site GenDatabase.com*

Millions of South African marriage and death records are now searchable on the web site *GenDatabase.com*. The site offers access to a free searchable database where users can search publicly-accessible information, as well as data contributed by genealogy researchers on ancestors during the past 100 years. Search results provide the basic information for each record (names, dates, and location), and this information can be a starting point for further research.

The site can be found at:

<http://www.gendatabase.com/>

- *Web site "South African Genealogy"*

This web site has been on-line for 11 years, but has recently updated its look and feel. The site was founded to provide resources to family historians who are researching their ancestors in South Africa, and provides information about passenger lists, books, CDs and other data. It provides a searchable database to which new records are being added on a regular basis.

The site can be accessed at:

<http://sagenealogy.co.za>

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Crestleaf Identifies 101 Resources for Finding Your Jewish Ancestors

The new genealogy website, Crestleaf.com, has provided a list titled, *Jewish Genealogy: 101 Resources for Finding Your Jewish Ancestors*, which can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/CrestleafJewish>.

Experienced genealogists will likely find many of the familiar sites known to them, but the list will probably also identify a few lesser known sites.

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Tracing the children of the Holocaust - BBC News

After World War Two, the BBC attempted to find relatives of children who had survived the Holocaust – they had lost their parents but it was believed they might have family in Britain. Seventy years later, Alex Last has traced some of those children and found out what happened to them.

The full article can be found at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-32589411>

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IAJGS 2015 conference in Jerusalem

The annual 2015 IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy was held in Jerusalem from July 6 – 10, 2015. The conference web site can be found at:

<http://www.iajgs2015.org/>

An article about the conference, written by Deborah Fineblum Schabb from the JNS.org news service, can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/Jerusalem2015>

The well-known genealogist, Dick Eastman, who attended and also spoke at the conference, wrote about his experiences in his daily Newsletter, which can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/Jerusalem2015-Eastman>

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Zionist Record special issues at the University of Florida



The University of Florida's Isser and Rae Price Library of Judaica has available images of two special issues of the *South African Zionist Record* newspaper, viz.

- Friday, December 10, 1948: The 50th Anniversary of the Zionist Federation and the 40th anniversary of the *Zionist Record*
- Friday November 21, 1958: Golden Jubilee of the *Zionist Record*

The images of the pages of the above issues can be accessed at the following page:

<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/iufjudaica/results/?t=south%20africa>

The home page of the Isser and Rae Price Library of Judaica can be found at:

<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/iufjudaica>

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Items of interest about the Pretoria Hebrew Congregation

The web site of the Pretoria Hebrew Congregation is located at: <http://www.phc.co.za>

The site contains a short history of the congregation:

<http://www.phc.co.za/OurHistory.html>

The community was founded around 1895, and the congregation held a centenary anniversary celebration in 1995. Some excerpts from the anniversary brochure that was produced for the occasion can be found at:

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/pretoria/Centenary.html>

A video of the anniversary celebration can be seen at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=222&v=42SGYiya9c4>

In 1999, it was resolved to erect a new Synagogue in Groenkloof. Named the Adath Synagogue, the new building was consecrated on January 11, 2001. A festive ceremony and cocktail party was held on June 5, 2001, to unveil the Foundation Stone at the synagogue. The ceremony was attended by the Israeli Ambassador, Ms. Tova Herzl, Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, and visiting Rabbonim, Shabsy Chaiton, Michael Katz, Judge Meyer Joffe, and Mrs. Jill Katz, who rededicated the *Bet Hamidrash* in memory of her husband, the late Rabbi Sidney Katz, who was the rabbi of the congregation for many years.

The Pretoria KehillaLinks site can be found at:

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/pretoria/Home.html>

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JewishGen Educational Videos

Phyllis Kramer, Vice President—Education of JewishGen, has created a series of five-minute videos about various aspects of JewishGen and genealogical research, including the following:

- Prepare For Your Search (for USA researchers)
- Navigate JewishGen
- Find Your Ancestral Town (for USA researchers)
- Communicate with Other Researchers via:
 - JGFF: JewishGen Family Finder
 - FTJP: Family Tree of the Jewish People
 - JewishGen Discussion Groups
- Special Interest Groups and Hosted Organizations
 - Jewish Records Indexing - Poland
- Jewish Genealogy Websites & Organizations:

- Jewish Genealogy Websites - Part I (JewishGen and IAJGS/JGS)
- Jewish Genealogy Websites - Part II

These videos can be found at the JewishGen Learning Center at:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/education>

Also found there are links to the JGS Long Island videos:

- 8 Ways To Find Your Ancestral Town
- Passenger Manifests
- Guide to Post 1906 Naturalization

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What is a Genealogical Society?

Avoytanu's E-zine of Jewish Genealogy, *Nu? What's New?* recently included the following item:

The landscape of genealogy has been altered so much by the Internet that one can question "What Is a Genealogical Society?" Randy Seaver gives his views on the answer at his website Gene-Musings by stating that the classical genealogy society model is a group of persons interested in genealogy in a location (neighborhood, town, city, county, state, region, country) who meet in person to share information or help colleagues with their research. Today there are groups and "communities" that can be viewed as genealogical societies. Seaver lists the following forms:

- Facebook Group
- Google+ Communities
- Webinars
- Online forums and message boards
- Daily or weekly newsletters

Seaver concludes, "I consider all of the above to be an 'online genealogical society' where there is regular communication and collaboration between 'members' for the purpose of education and helping the 'members.'"

You can read the entire column at:

<http://tinyurl.com/WhatIsAGenealogicalSociety>

An example within the Jewish genealogy community is the Sephardic Heritage Project which is a member of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies:

<http://sephardicheritageproject.org/>

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How to Find FamilySearch Records that are not searchable

Another item that appeared in a recent edition of the *Avotaynu E-zine, Nu? What's New?:*

An online newsletter, *Family History Daily*, has an excellent article on some of the more subtle ways of searching large genealogy Internet sites such as FamilySearch, Ancestry.com, FindMyPast and MyHeritage. One part the article notes that FamilySearch has millions of images online that have not yet been indexed and, therefore, are not searchable. A technique for accessing these images is discussed. The article can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/FamilyHistoryDaily>.

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A Relationship Chart by Betty Eichhorn

In a recent edition of Dick Eastman's newsletter, he noted that some of the available relationship charts may be difficult to read. He noted that Betty Eichhorn has provided him with a chart that is easier to read, and is also accompanied by a description of relationships.

The chart can be found at the link:

http://eogn.com/images/newsletter/2015/Relationship_Chart.jpg

A two-page version of the chart, which also contains the additional descriptions, can be downloaded from the following link:

http://eogn.com/images/newsletter/2015/Relationship_Chart.pdf

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Crowd Sourced Genealogy: Implications for the Jewish People

Yet another item from in a recent edition of the *Avotaynu E-zine, Nu? What's New?:*

There is an interesting article online that discusses the implications of the fact that the general public now has access to their DNA profile and those of others through direct-to-consumer genealogical mapping from such companies as Family Tree DNA, 23andme and Ancestry.com. The article is titled "Crowd Sourced Genealogy: Implications for the Jewish People."

The article discusses implications that these tools and developments could have on the Jewish people, such as:

- Could these new tools affect connectedness of the Jewish people?
- Could awareness among Jews that they are "distant cousins," based on science, create or reinforce group solidarity?
- How should individuals who believe they have discovered Jewish roots be treated by the Jewish community?
- How do these developments influence the way Jewish identity is conceived?
- Could these tools be used to strengthen an individual's Jewish identity or lead to new forms of Jewish community involvement?
- How can the Jewish people prevent DNA tests from becoming a device of alienation?

The article is located at:

<http://tinyurl.com/CrowdSourcingGenealogy>

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Southern African KehilaLinks sites

A reminder that there are a *KehilaLinks* pages for a number of Southern African towns and cities which can be found on the JewishGen's *KehilaLinks* project web site. (The JewishGen *KehilaLinks* project provides a set of web pages which commemorate the places where Jews have lived.)

The list of South African KehilaLinks pages can be found at:

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Asia.html>

The *KehilaLinks* main page can be found at:

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/>

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27 Golden Rules of Genealogy

From the blogger, Alona: “Genealogy has rules. There are Do’s and there are Don’ts. There are Rights and Wrongs. And it pays to know and follow these rules from the beginning of your research.”

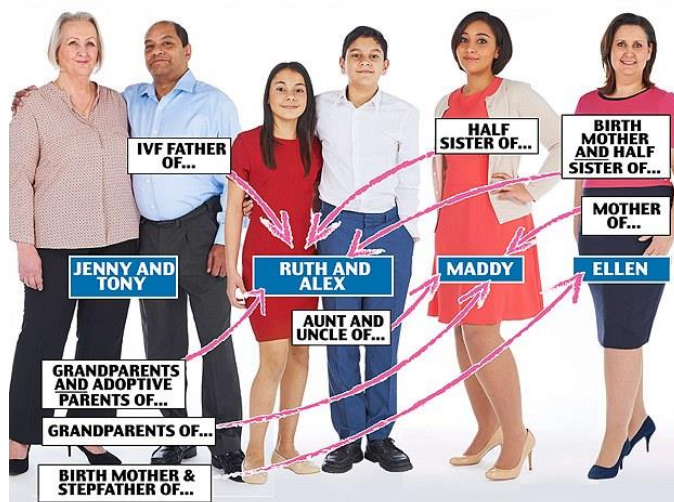
See the full list at:

<http://www.lonetester.com/2014/12/27-golden-rules-of-genealogy/>

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Mother Gave Birth to her Own Brother and Sister!

Dick Eastman alerted us to the story of an English mother, Ellen Bown, who gave birth to all three of the children in the picture below. But only one of them, Maddy, is her “official” child.



When it comes to Alex and Ruth, Ellen acted as a surrogate for her own mother, Jenny. Ellen used her own eggs, fertilized with her stepfather Tony’s sperm. So, biologically, twins Alex and Ruth are teenager Maddy’s half-brother and half-sister. But legally – having been adopted by Ellen’s mother

Jenny and stepfather Tony a week after their birth – they are now her aunt and uncle.

This brings with it another mind-boggling twist: To the twins, Ellen Bown is both their biological mother and their legal half-sister. Meanwhile, Jenny and Tony are their biological grandparents but legal parents.

Try entering the above relationship in your family tree genealogy program!

You can read the full story in the Daily Mail newspaper article which can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/nt5q6rt>

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On the lighter side!

Finally, a few items of a lighter or humorous nature!

- **How All US Presidents Are Related To King John**

For those who are curious about this, a researcher has connected the trees of all U.S. Presidents to the Plantagenet King John circa 1200 A.D! You can see a link to this work at:

<http://tinyurl.com/pmdoazy>

- **Princess Charlotte’s birth certificate**

<http://tinyurl.com/qynkl2k>

- **The 23rd Psalm for Genealogists**

<http://www.pennyparker2.com/psalm.html>

SURNAMES APPEARING IN THIS NEWSLETTER

Vol. 14, Issue 3 – August 2015

The numbers in parentheses refer to the page numbers where the surname appears.

Adler (21), Agu (7), Akpodol (5, 6, 7), Alexander (31), Anuluoye (5, 6), Aronstam (21), Bagley (22, 23), Baleson (2), Baumann (4, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24), Belling (31), Bergmann (30), Bergtheil (30), Bobrow (10), Bogen (9), Boje (23), Bond (18, 19, 23), Bown (42, 43), Brand (21), Bright (22, 23,), Bronner (26), Bulak-Balachowicz (9), Burkovska (15), Casper (26), Chait (16), Chaiton (40), Cheifitz (31), Chernick (3, 4, 8), Churchill (11), Cohen (2, 11, 12, 21), Denikin (8, 9), Eastman (40, 41, 42), Ehrlich (22, 23,), Eichhorn (41), Ellstein (9), Epstein (2, 10), Fairbanks (4, 28, 29), Feufer (26), Getz (2, 31), Gevisser (16, 17), Gilbert (3, 8, 11), Gisis (9), Goldberg (2), Goldfein (26), Gottschalk (22), Halevy (21), Harris (2, 26, 34, 40), Hart (2), Hermann (12, 13, 15, 19), Herzl (40), Hurwitz (16), Issroff (2, 3), Jami (30), Jermyn (4, 18, 25), Jochelman (10), Joffe (40), Jowell (33), Kaplan (2, 26, 32, 37), Katz (20, 25, 26, 40, 41), Kearns (19), Kimmels (16), Knowles (35), Koszyrski (9), Kramer (41), Kretzmer (16), Kuppenheim (18), Last (40), Levenberg (16), Levinsohn (12, 13, 15, 16), Levisieur (18, 19, 20, 21, 22,), Lichtenstein (26), Lichtzier (38), Maimon (20), Mann (37), Masinter (26), Mbeki (17), Morse (39), Mosenthal (19, 30), Nnonyeli (5, 8), Norden (30), Obiekwe (4,5, 6, 7, 8), Obrov (10), Ochberg (8, 9, 10, 11), Ogus (2), Ogus (4, 32, 35), Picard (18, 19), Plen (3), Plen (2, 3), Pogrund (3), Proos (16), Rabinowitz (2, 4, 26, 31, 38), Raff (26), Rappaport (21), Reichshoffer (18), Romanovsky (11), Rosenstein (24), Rudomin (4, 25, 28), Saks (22), Sandler (3, 9, 12, 16), Saunders (26), Schabb (40), Schapira (10), Schoenberg (37), Seaver (41), Sebba (13), Segall (31), Seligsberger (19, 24), Sgbo (5, 6), Shuster (16), Solomon (30), Steinfeld (34), Steyn (22), Streisand (29), Tanzer (25, 26, 27,), Thalwitzer (30), Thiele (18), van Hees (22), Wertheim (19, 20), Wille (20, 24), Yamey (30), Yonge (22), Zvengel (10)