Chapter 19 OUR CHERKES ANCESTORS, by **Yale Wolf Richmond**

In that ethnically and linguistically diverse Bessarabia my father, Chaim (which means “life”) Dovid Cherkes, a son of Yoel Volf Cherkes and Sura (Sarah) Kaufman, was born in the village of Boben, a mile or so from Kelmentsy (Kelmenitz in Yiddish), on January 15, 1893 (February 19, Hebrew calendar), in Khotinsky Uyezd (Chotin District, in English, but pronounced with a throaty “kh”).

Yoel Volf (Joel Wolf in English) was a steward (estate manager) and land surveyor who worked in Kelmentsy for a Jew named Israel Burshteyn (Burstein) [or Brunshteyn?]. Yoel Volf had been previously married, and from his first marriage to (fnu) Freifeld, he had five children – Leib (Leo), Lina (Lena), Polina (Polly), Ruby, and another son (name not known) who drowned as a young man in the Dniestr River. Chaim Dovid, the sole child of Yoel Volf's second marriage, grew up in a household with five siblings and was the youngest in the family.

Chaim Dovid's mother, Sura (Sarah), was a daughter of Aba and Miriam Kaufman, and granddaughter of Hersh Kaufman. The Kaufman family, also known as B'nai Hershkes (Sons of Hersh) before Jews took family names, were prosperous grain traders, general store owners, and lessees of farmland. Most of the Jews in Kelmentsy were Cherkeses, Hershkes, or Kaufmans.

Kelmentsy, the town nearest to Chaim Dovid's birthplace, is on the Dniestr River due east of Khotyn (Chocim in Polish, and Khotin in Ukrainian).[i] Kelmentsy’s geographic coordinates are 48:29 North, 26:50 East, and it can be found on most detailed maps of the region. Khotin, well-known in history, was originally a Polish fortress town and the site of big battles in 1621 and 1673 when the Poles halted the Turkish advance into Europe. Khotin and Kelmentsy, to the north and east respectively of the Dniestr River, are now in Ukraine but were under Russian rule when Chaim Dovid lived there.

Chaim Dovid, a handsome and lively boy, was the apple of his mother's eye and very spoiled. In later life he insisted on having his own way, was difficult to get along with, and had a reputation for getting into arguments and being handy with his fists. The ladies, however, loved him. Our cousin, Eva Beggelman, once told me that, as a young man, he was "devilishly handsome."

When Chaim Dovid was four the family moved to Belkovitz, a village of some 300 families of which about twelve were Jewish. Belkovitz is near the town of Brichany (Brichan, as my father called it, but Briceni today in Romanian or Moldovan).[ii] Brichany is about five miles south of today's Moldavia-Ukraine border, and fifty miles due east of Chernovtsy (Chernowitz), an old garrison town of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to the Russian census of 1817 Brichany had only 137 Jewish families in 1817, but by the 1897 census the number of Jews had risen to 7,184, or 96.5 percent of the town’s population. A Jewish state school was opened there in 1847, and a hospital in 1887. In 1930, the city had 5,354 Jews, still 95.2 percent of the population. Today, with a population of some 80,000, it is the fifth largest city in Moldova, but with very few Jews.

In Brichany, as it was then called, Chaim Dovid's father worked as an upravlayushchi (steward) on the estate of a Jew named Yankel Nafturle who had leased it from a local purets (squire) whose name by chance was also Cherkes, although he was not a Jew.

The following account of Brichany is from the Encyclopedia Judaica:

> On the eve of World War II, the Jewish population was near 10,000. In June, 1940, when the city was annexed to the Soviet Union, Jewish property and the communal buildings

> were confiscated and only the synagogue was saved because it was used as a granary. Some 80 Jews were exiled to Siberia. On July 8, 1941, Romanian and German troops seized Brichany on their eastern offensive and murdered many Jews. Jews from the neighboring towns of Lipkany and Sekiryany were brought to Brichany, and on July 28, all Jews were dispatched across the Dniestr and several were shot en route. When they arrived in Mogilev, the Germans forced the younger Jews to dig graves for the older ones who were shot and buried there. From Mogilev, the rest were turned back to Ataki in Bessarabia, and then on to Sekiryany, with hundreds dying en route. For a month they stayed in the ghetto there, only to be deported again to Transnistria [the east bank of the Dniestr River] where they were murdered in a forest near Soroca. At the end of World War II, only 1,000 Jews returned to Brichany.[iii]

Whatever relatives we may have had in Brichany were most likely murdered in these "actions," as they were called by the Germans.

The origins of Cherkes (Cerkez in modern Romanian), the family name, are a mystery but there are several possible explanations, all of them plausible. To begin, the Cherkessy (in the plural) are a Sunni Muslim Turkic tribe that dates back to the thirteenth century. Here is how one scholar describes their origins:

> The term "Cherkess" itself is confusing because, like "Tatar," it has been used with different meanings in different periods. The Cherkess belong to the Adygei group...and their name appears to be derived from Kerkety, one of the Adygei tribal names. The whole group are referred to in the early Russian chronicles as Kasogi/Kasagi; at about the same period (c. tenth century, AD) they were known to the Arabs, Persians and Georgians as Kushak. From the thirteenth century the name Cherkas began to be used (though not specifically for the Adygei, rather more for the people of the southern Ukraine). This term, in the form Cherkess, came to be accepted as the general designation of all the north Caucasian peoples (e.g. Abkazians, Abazins, Ossetians, etc.) and is still often used in this sense in Turkish and western European sources.[iv]

The term Cherkessy, however, is also used for a Sunni Muslim people who inhabited the North Caucasus mountains between the Kuban River and Black Sea coast. Russian vassals since 1557, the Cherkessy, nevertheless, in the nineteenth century successfully resisted Russian military expansion for fifty years until they were overwhelmed by superior forces, much as the Chechens also were, then and in our time as well. After their defeat by the Russians, many of the Cherkessy fled to various parts of the Ottoman Empire. One group of Cherkessy, around 1600 of somewhat privileged descent, settled in the Principality of Moldova and eventually became one of its 72 boyar (higher nobility) families. In time they were assimilated into the general population.

In English, the Cherkessy are called Circassians, a name well known in the West, and especially to the British. In the early nineteenth century, the British cultivated people who might help them stop Russia's advance to the Middle East and India. Many books about the Circassians written by British travelers and scholars can be found today in major research libraries. Those books stress the beauty of the Cherkessy women – Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible married one – and the ferocity of their warriors.

Most of Eastern Europe's Jews originally lived in historic Poland, in the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a multi-ethnic state with people of many religions. But very few Jews at that time lived in Orthodox Russia where Jews were not allowed to settle. In the early eighteenth century, however, when Russia began to acquire Polish lands in Ukraine, it also acquired a few Jews. Those Jews were initially tolerated by Russian rulers but were expelled from Russia in 1727 by order of Empress Catherine I, an expulsion that was confirmed in 1744 by her successor, Empress Elizabeth.

But when Russia, under Catherine the Great (who ruled 1762-1796), absorbed Eastern Poland, Central Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania, the greatly enlarged Russian Empire acquired hundreds of thousands of Jews and had to come to terms with its new subjects. One result was the imposition of the so-called Pale of Settlement which initially restricted Jewish residency to the western and southern lands of the Russian Empire, including the Caucasus where the Cherkessy lived.[v]

In 1825, however, at the start of the reactionary reign of Tsar Nicholas I and his suppressive policies against Jews, permission was withdrawn for Jews to live in the Astrakhan and Caucasus provinces where Jews had lived in small communities since the first millenium after arriving from Persia. It is quite possible, therefore, that one of Chaim Dovid's ancestors was forced to leave the Caucasus at that time and migrate to Bessarabia which was within the Pale of Settlement. Jews in those years commonly took family names from their places of origin, and because he came from the land of the Cherkessy, he may have been called Cherkes. Similarly, some Jews are named Astrakhan, which may indicate origin in that province.

With Russia's acquisition of the Caucasus region it was faced with long-lasting insurgency and guerrilla warfare by the Muslim peoples of the region – Chechens, Ingush, Cherkessy, and others -- who did not want to live under Russian and Christian rule.

In 1864, when Russia had finally completed its conquest of the Caucasus after a fifty-year struggle, some 600,000 Circassians left their homeland at the urging of the Turks who considered themselves responsible for their fellow Muslims. In their migration, some Circassians wended their way westward along the northern coast of the Black Sea and then south through Romania and Bulgaria on their way to refuge in the Ottoman Empire. Some settled in Syria, Lebanon, and what are now Jordan and Israel – then also a part of the Ottoman Empire – where they were enlisted by the Turks in the defense of Palestine. In World War I, descendants of those Circassians fought on the side of the Turks and, after the war, during the British Mandate of Palestine, served in the British army. In 1947, as professional soldiers, the Circassians fought alongside the Jewish Haganah to defeat the Arabs in the Galilee, and they have fought for Israel in every war since it gained independence. In our time, Circassians have also served in the Israeli forces that maintain security in the occupied West Bank. Although they are Muslim and speak their own language, in addition to Hebrew and English, the Israeli Circassians, who now number some 3,000, are highly regarded and trusted members of the Israeli Defense Force.[vi]

So, does that make the Cherkes family Circassians? Not necessarily, although that possibility cannot be eliminated. Some Circassians did indeed pass through Romania at about the time that Jews in Bessarabia were taking family names. Chaim Dovid's black wavy hair, blue eyes, dark complexion, short stocky build (5 ft., 5 in.), broad facial features, and high cheek bones indicate that he may indeed have been descended from a Circassian warrior who dallied in Bessarabia. Neither Chaim Dovid nor his siblings – Polly, Lena, and Ruby, all three from their father's first marriage – could be said, from the photos we have of them, to have typically Jewish features. Young Chaim Dovid and his brother Ruby, in their early photos, indeed look more like sons of

the Caucasus than sons of Israel. And because Jews practiced matrilineal descent -- anyone whose mother was Jewish was recognized as a Jew -- there may indeed be a Circassian in our family tree.

To be more speculative, one might also consider the Khazars, the Tatar rulers of the North Caucasus region who converted to Judaism in the eighth century and maintained their independent empire for more than two centuries before being conquered by Svyatoslav, Duke of Kiev. The peoples of Khazaria, as the Khazar land was called, after being overrun by Ghengis Kahn's Mongols in the twelfth century, fled west to Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, and Romania (which included Bessarabia at the time). One theory has it that some East European Jews are descended, not from Asheknazi Jews of Western Europe, but rather from those who fled westward from Khazaria.[vii]

Another possible explanation for the Cherkes name is that one of Chaim Dovid's ancestors may have come from Cherkessk (an adjectival form of Cherkess), the North Caucasus city in the center of the region where the Cherkessy lived. When Russian Jews, in the nineteenth century, were required to take family names in order to facilitate collection of taxes and conscription lists for the military, they had to choose family names. Until that time most Jews were known by their patronymics, e.g. Chaim Dovid ben (son of) Yoel Volf.

Jews often took family names that indicated their city or place of origin – Minsky, Krakower, Berliner, Rovner, Filene, Rohatyn, Wiener, and Prager. A Cherkes, therefore, might indicate someone whose ancestors had come from Cherkessk, or perhaps Cherkassy, a city on the Dnieper River in Ukraine about 120 miles southeast of Kiev. Witness all the Jews named Cherkassky – the masculine adjectival form – the best known of whom was the great romantic pianist Shura Cherkassky, who was born in Odessa in 1911, and died in London in 1995.

Another explanation, offered recently by a Russian scholar in St. Petersburg, is that the Russian word "Cherkes or Cherkas" is also an old synonym for the word kazak, and among common Jewish family names are Kazak, Kazakov, Kazakevich. Kazak was also a common Jewish nickname which meant "strong, brave man."

To add another question, the name “Wolf” is not Jewish or Russian. So, how did my father’s father get the name Yoel Volf? Whatever the possible explanations, at the present time we can only speculate and may never know, with certainty, the origin of the Cherkes family name. Some hope, however, may come with the new development of DNA genealogy which may be able to tell us if we are indeed descended from a Cherkes warrior who dallied in Bessarabia.

What is certain, however, is that my father was a Bessarabian Jew, a people known as shrewd traders, crafty businessmen, and no strangers to underhanded practices, traits that aptly describe my father. That well-earned Bessarabian reputation, however, has a basis in history.

When Romania – of which Bessarabia was then a part – came under the Ottoman Turks in the sixteenth century, it was ruled by Phanariot Greeks serving as agents of the Turkish Sultan. The Phanariots, named after the district of Constantinople where they originated, filled many of the Romanian princely positions which they purchased at a price for periods of one or two years. During their short tenure in office, the Phanariots sought to maximize the return on their investment through corrupt practices which included excessive taxation, smuggling, the sale of offices, speculation in foreign currency, and otherwise robbing Romania of its riches. The entire Romanian nation suffered, and the legacy of the Phanariots lingered on long after they had departed. They left behind in Romania and Bessarabia a tradition of opportunism and shady dealings which long outlasted their tenure.

The first Cherkes family member we know of was my great grandfather, Yoel Volf Cherkes. As told by my father, Yoel Volf was a strong and healthy man, and during one of the frequent cholera epidemics in Bessarabia he volunteered to massage people who came down with the illness. Massage, at the time, was believed to be a cure for cholera, but with Yoel Volf's contact with infected people, he himself contracted the disease and succumbed to it.[viii]

Yoel Volf's son, also named Yoel Volf Cherkes, and the grandfather for whom I am named, was born in Sokyryany (Sokoran), just west of Kelmentsy on the Dniestr River. This raises a question since Jews, by tradition, are not named after living people. It is quite likely, therefore, that my great grandfather died before his son was born, and the son was named after his deceased father. This seems plausible, since in 1872 there was a major cholera epidemic in Russia.

Chaim Dovid lived with his parents on farms near Brichany where his father was the steward of an estate owned, as noted above, by a Russian squire also named Cherkes. The many Cherkes names in that part of Bessarabia indicate that some Circassians, as well as Jews from Circassia, may indeed have settled there after their exodus from the Caucasus.

My grandfather Yoel Volf, died in Belkovitz in 1900, at age fifty-five, when Chaim Dovid was only seven, from injuries suffered four years earlier when he was thrown from a horse and dragged some distance with his foot caught in a stirrup. Yoel Volf is buried in Brichany in the Jewish cemetery "on the hill across the bridge," as my father described it to me.[ix]

After Yoel Volf's death, Chaim Dovid and his mother Sura moved to Brichany where they lived for a year with Sura's sister, Chana (Eva) Roshashonsky. They next moved to Kelmentsy, Sura's birthplace, where they remained for three years and where Sura married Leib Bravman, a grain merchant, who raised Chaim Dovid. It was Sura's third marriage, her first being to (fnu) Reines of Novoselets. It was quite common in those days for Jews to remarry shortly after a spouse had died, and marriage brokers were always ready, willing, and able, for the right price, to find a suitable match.

Sura and Leib Bravman lived in Kelmentsy for three years and then moved to Nahoring (Nagoryan in Russian, Nahorian in Ukrainian) on the Dniestr River, where Bravman had brothers. The squire in Nahoring, according to my father, was a Polish medical doctor named Volsky (Wolski, in Polish). Volsky had a younger brother, Isu (phonetic), who, according to my father, was killed by peasants in his brother's manor house in one of the revolts of the Russian Revolution.

Chaim Dovid attended kheder (hebrew school) in Kelmentsy until the age of sixteen, and for a short time in Kamianets-Podilsky (Kamenets-Podolskiy in Russian). He was proficient in his Torah and Talmud studies, and years later, although neither a believer nor a synagogue goer, he would often recite from memory lines learned from his boyhood studies. After finishing kheder, Chaim Dovid became a grain trader, a common Jewish occupation in Eastern Europe.[x]

Like most Jews of Eastern Europe, Chaim Dovid could speak, or at least understand, several languages. Among themselves Jews spoke Yiddish, but Chaim Dovid also knew Hebrew, was conversant in Russian and Romanian, and could understand Ukrainian, Polish, and German as well. English, however, he spoke with a heavy accent and never fully mastered.

Chaim Dovid had four siblings--Leib (Leo), Lena, Polina (Polly), and Ruby. Leib Cherkes, the eldest, came to New York in 1908, two years after his father's death and two years before Chaim Dovid.[xi]

Leib made the long trip from Russia to New York twice, which was not unusual in those days. Many men came to look things over, and then went back and returned with their wives and children. Leib arrived in New York on June 27, 1908, age twenty-six, on the SS Campania from

Liverpool, which must have been the first trip. We do not know the date of his second arrival but at that time he must have come with his wife Shaya. Leib and his wife returned to Russia in 1910 and he died there in Lipkany, Bessarabia, on the Prut River, in 1917 or 1918, at age thirty-five or thirty-six, rather young, but those were years of war, revolution, and much violence. Leib's son Gerald Cherkes arrived in New York around 1917, at age seventeen, presumably to avoid the Russian draft, went to high school in New York City, and became an upholsterer. Leib also had several other children who remained in Lipkany, and their fate is not known. They were either killed by the Germans or Romanians, fled east with the Soviet Army and perhaps survived World War II, or immigrated to Israel.

Gerald Cherkes married Betty Winer on April 3, 1937 in New York City, and they had a daughter, Rhoda, later known as Ronnie. Ronnie married Harold Tartar on June 15, 1958 and they had three children, Lori, Caryn, and Glenn. Caryn married Howard Glasser, and they had children named Sierra and Austin. Lori married Howard Oberstein, and they had Jesse and Evan. Glenn was single. Ronnie and Harold Tartar live in Brooklyn, NY.

Lena Cherkes married (fnu) Feinstein and moved with him to California. Their son, George, who studied at the University of California in Berkeley, died while a student there. The Feinsteins had another son, Walter, who worked in advertising in New York City, and a daughter, Julia, who lived in California. Julia came to visit us one summer at Revere Beach, near Boston, and we have photos of that visit. Of Julia and Walter, there is no trace, but Ronnie Tartar recalls visiting Julia in California in 1958. Julia was married then and had a son who was a teenager in 1958. The name of Julia's husband and son are not known. Lena died in Alameda, CA, in 1954.

Aunt Polly (Chaya Perel was her Jewish name), married Philip (Pincus) Seplow (originally Cęplowitz) on March 13, 1905 in New York City. Uncle Philip, as we called him, worked in the clothing industry in New York. When I was about three, he made for me a navy blue sailor suit, very popular with little boys at the time, and we have a photo of that too. Uncle Philip is recalled as a very kind, friendly, easygoing man, always smiling, and fond of telling jokes, some of which I still remember to this day. Cęplowitz (pronounced Tsemp-loh-vitz in Polish) is a name of Polish-Lithuanian origin which was shortened to Seplow in the United States. The origins of the Ceplowitz family are in the town of Daniłowicz in Poland. Philip and Polly's only child, George Warren Seplow, was graduated from New York University and earned a dental degree at Tufts in Boston. His Jewish name, like mine, was Yoel Volf, after our grandfather.

Polly and Hymie (as Chaim Dovid was called in America) were close in their younger years, and in the 1920s and '30s the Seplows would often come to visit us in Boston. We children looked forward to their visits which were big events for us since they always brought gifts – clothing and chocolates or candy. (I recall the boxes from Schrafft's). Polly had a full head of grey hair (as did her brother Ruby), and I was told that she had turned grey at the age of sixteen, apparently the result of a genetic trait.

Polly was as Americanized as her brother Hymie was not, and she was always up to date on what was American and "correct." She also watched what she ate, and never traveled without her mineral water (Saratoga and Poland Spring preferred) and her mission figs. With her, I ate my first mission fig and it was the best thing I had tasted to that time. I have eaten them regularly ever since and become a regular guy. Whenever I see a bottle of Poland Spring water in my local supermarket, I am always reminded of my Aunt Polly.

In later years, there was an estrangement between Polly and Ruby on the one hand, and Hymie on the other, after the three of them went to Florida together one winter in the mid-1930s. My

father went to recover from the "grippe," and Polly and Ruby to chase the winter sun, but they drove back to New York together in my father's Chevy, and I believe they had a falling out during the long ride home. In any event, there were no more visits to us in Boston. That was regrettable because the Cherkes family was so small, and we children used to look forward to their visits.

When George Seplow was studying dentistry at Tufts his mother moved to Boston, and he lived with her, first at 227 Harold Street in Roxbury, in the same house and on the same floor as we did. After a year or so, they moved to Seaver Street, on the second floor of a very nice apartment building on the corner of Maple Street across from Franklin Park, and one block west of Blue Hill Avenue.

After completing dental school, George and his mother returned to New York City where George set up a dental practice and married Daisy Pearl Derfner. They lived in the Bronx where George practiced dentistry.

George and Daisy had two children, Kenneth and Ellen. Kenneth Seplow studied law, went into financial management, and lives in Manhattan. He had two sons, Michael and Andrew. Ellen, a lawyer, lives in Manhattan with her second husband, Morris Zedeck, a toxicologist. Ellen's first marriage to (fnu) Lieberman ended in divorce. From her first marriage Ellen has two daughters, Lisa and Andrea Lieberman.

Polly and Philip Seplow moved from New York City to New Jersey where they owned and operated a small chicken farm in Freewood Acres, south of Freehold. Polly died on September 22, 1964, at about age seventy-seven. After her death, Philip moved to the Bronx and died on July 20, 1973 in New Rochelle. He was buried at the Beth David Cemetery in Elmont, Long Island, in a group plot owned by the Wolkozisker Burial Society. (Wolk is Russian-Yiddish for "wolf," and Wolkozisker may be the name of a Landsmannschaft to which he belonged, and may also indicate that he came from a place named Wolkozisk in Poland or Lithuania.)

George Seplow died in Palm Beach, Florida, on December 6, 1989 at age eighty-three, proving again that the Cherkeses are long-living. Surviving him were his children Kenneth Seplow and Ellen Lieberman Zedeck, and the four grandchildren named above. George and Daisy had been married fifty-five years when she died in 1987.

Uncle Ruby Cherkes also became a chicken farmer, in Freehold, New Jersey. A taciturn and reclusive man, Ruby came to see me in 1943 when I was down with the "flu" at the army hospital in Fort Monmouth, NJ. My mother, recalling the great flu epidemic of 1919 which killed thousands of Americans, was concerned, and she called Ruby and asked him to check my health status. Ruby was married once but there were no children and nothing is known of his former wife. Not much more is known about him but everyone in the Richmond and Beggelman families used to say that I was "just like Ruby," in character as well as physical appearance. I never knew whether they meant it as a compliment or not.

Ruby died in Alameda, CA, in 1969, so it appears that he went there after his sister Polly died in 1964.

---

[i] Place names, given here in parentheses, are alternate spellings in other languages, such as Russian, Romanian, Polish, Ukrainian, etc.) Because these territories shifted back and forth between empires and states, the cities and towns have been known by different names at different times. Similarly, Jewish

family names may vary in spelling, depending on whether a place of birth was Russian, Romanian, Polish, Austrian, or Hungarian at the time. For example, we have Burstyn, Burstin, Burstein, and Bernstein, all of which mean ”amber.”

[ii] Alternate spellings are Briceni, Britchany, Britshan, Brychany. For more on Brichany, see the Yizkor (memorial book), *Britsheni ha-yehudit bemahatsit ha-mea ha aharona* (Brichany: Its Jewry in the First Half of Our Century), (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Brichany 1964), in Hebrew), Yivo 3/70219.

[iii] *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), p. 1370.

[iv] Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*, 2nd edition (London and New York: KPI, 1986), p. 230.

[v] “Pale” is an archaic term for an area enclosed by a fence or boundary.

[vi] For more on Circassians in Israel, see William Claiborne, “A Tight Community Resists Assimilation, in *Washington Post*, 16 March 1986.

[vii] Regarding Khazaria and its Jews, the most provocative work is Arthur Koestler’s *The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and its Heritage*. Also, see the article on Khazars in the Encyclopedia Britannica and Arlene Blank Rich’s article, “Are We Descendents of Khazarian Jews?” in *Avotaynu, The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, vol. ll, no. 2 (May 1986).

[viii] In Yiddish and Russian, a particularly nasty cuss word is *cholera*, used in the sense that the person so cursed should come down with the deadly disease. It was only in 1883 that Robert Koch was able to isolate the cholera bacillus, a discovery that led the way to close supervision of water supplies, and strict disinfection and quarantine protocols.

[ix] Another Cherkes (no relation) from Brichany whom I have contacted and met is Martin Cherkes, an associate professor of finance at Columbia University’s School of Business.

[x] To see what Bessarabian shtetls actually looked like in those days, and how Jews lived at the time, see the Russian film, Komissar, shown from time to time in art theaters. Filmed in Kamenets-Podolskiy, it’s also a great story about the interaction between Jews and Russians during the Russian civil war of the early 1920s.

[xi] Leib is listed in the Ellis Island records as Leib Cerkes. Immigrant names were often misspelled by immigration officials who did not know foreign languages.