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CONGREGATION CHARLAP/YAHYA**

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*THIS ISSUE OF B'RAYSHIT IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
AHARON MANOR Z"L (6298, PL. 217)*

GENETIC TESTING

We have made a major breakthrough in confirming and understanding the genealogy of our family. Dr. Neil Bradman, who did the landmark DNA testing regarding the Cohanim, agreed to test certain characteristics concerning the genetic makeup of our family. This was done in conjunction with the Shaltiel family and came about through the vision and persistence of Moshe Shaltiel.

Samples were collected from male members of the family who we believed to belong to a continuous male line of family ancestry. This was so because testing is done on the Y chromosome which is handed down patrilineally. The purpose of the tests on our family was to prove that the Charlaps are, indeed, a family that descends from the group of Spanish/Portuguese Jews that gave rise to the Don Yahya (Ibn Yahya) and Shaltiel families. If that were proven, then the claim that our ancestors were the Exilarchs in Babylonia would be scientifically established and our lineage traced back to King David would be confirmed. A corollary was to prove that such modern families as Ser, Mankuta, Kur, et al descend from the Charlaps.

Preliminary results are in and they *confirm that the Charlaps and associated modern families descend from the same branch of Exilarchs as the Shaltiels. The only way that would be possible is for the Charlaps and Ibn Yahyas to be one and the same family!* We thank Moshe Shaltiel for his leadership in this project. Some of his views are expressed in the following excerpts from his essay.

AN ANALYSIS OF SOME JUDEO-SPANISH FAMILIES

by Moshe Shaltiel

On Aug. 7, 1160, Count Ramon Berenguer IV of Barcelona licensed one Pere de Balma to pitch a tent in the market for a fee of 600 sueldos or 200 pigs. As was common in those times, the document bore the signatures of the Count himself, the Bishop of Barcelona, and other notable courtiers. Two years earlier, on Dec. 13, 1158, Berenguer ceded to Ramon Tureddel a quarter interest in a mill he owned in the area of Villa Terrassa. Here again, the Count's signature was accompanied by those of some of his courtiers.

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JUDEO-SPANISH FAMILIES (cont.)

These two documents record straightforward legal and business transactions in Latin. What makes these ordinary remnants of history so unique is the signature of one of the members of the Count's court. Not only was it the signature of a Jewish courtier, but he signed his name in Hebrew. The Jewish signatory was Shealtiel, son of Sheshet z"l. Who was this Shealtiel, a man whose talents and pedigree were recognized by the Royal Court and whose pride was such that he saw it as natural that he should sign his name in the script of his ancestors? In order to answer this question we need a little history.

From its inception, the Spanish Reconquista, led by the Counts and Kings of Aragon and Catalonia, created a need for settlers to fill the vacuum created by the retreating Muslims. This led to openings for loyal administrators, skilled physicians, sources of finance, and skilled diplomats. All these needs were filled by Jews from the south, who were fleeing the increased fervor of Islam. Thus began the second "Golden Era" of Jewish Spain, this time under Christian rule. It was at this point that we see the rise of an aristocratic class - the *Nassiim* of Barcelona - which led, both the Jewish community and served the Royal Courts of Aragon and Catalonia. Shealtiel ben Sheshet was a member of this class, the *Nassiim* (plural for *Nasi*, Prince in ancient Hebrew).

To better understand the *Nassiim* of Barcelona and their role in the history of Spanish Jewry we take a brief detour of 1600 years. In the year 597 B.C.E. Jerusalem surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, thus ending a brief and ill fated attempt to liberate Judea, at that point a vassal of Babylon. The last king of Judea, Jehoiachin, was exiled to Babylon, where, after several years in prison he was released, awarded a palace, a position in the court, and recognized as the head of the Jewish diaspora under the Babylonian Empire. His son, Shealtiel [Assir Shaltiel, #20,p.6, *Ancilla*] was the first Exilarch, or in Hebrew *Rosh Hagolah*. He was the founder of a new dynasty of the House of David which was to last, almost without interruption, for 1700 years.

[In the 11th century] the Exilarch *Mar* Chizkiya ben David [Hezekiah, #74,p.7 *Ancilla*] held his position for 38

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years. In 1058 the Caliph of Baghdad executed him following a court intrigue, so bringing to an end, at least temporarily, the institute of the Exilarchy. Documents of the period state that Chizkiya had sons, two of whom escaped to Granada, Spain where a friend of their father, R' Shmuel HaNagid, held the position of Grand Vizier. [see Chaps. XXV and XXVI, *The Book of Destiny: Toledot Charlap*]. By the time the sons arrived in Granada, Shmuel had died, but his son Yosef took in the refugees. Eight years later, on Dec. 10, 1066, Yosef was assassinated and at least one of the brothers escaped to the north and resettled in the "Edomite Kingdom", a reference to the growing Christian Kingdom of Aragon.

My research is based, in the main, on the study of more than 400 documents which I have assembled, translated, and reviewed. I believe that these demonstrate that the Shealtiel family is descended from *Mar* Chizkiya ben David, the Babylonian Exilarch and known member of the Royal House of David. My reading of the record is that the two sons of Chizkiya, *Mar* Isaac and *Mar* David, both at least in their 50's, escaped with their extended families to Granada. *Mar* Isaac had three sons: *Mar* Shealtiel, founder of the Shealtiels; *Mar* Yosef "Oroved"; and *Mar* Menachem. *Mar* Yosef was the grandfather of R' Yehuda ben Barzilai, *Nasi*. *Mar* Menachem was the founder of the Nathan family of *Nassiim*. *Mar* David, probably the elder son of Chizkiya, was the father of Haim Hiyya [Chiya al-Daudi, #76, p. 9, *Ancilla*], founder of the Ibn Yahya clan, from which descend the Charlap and Don Yahya families.

The title *Mar* went unrecorded in Iberia until the 1061 record of a land transaction which contains the first Catalan reference to a Shealtiel (the title passes from the record after the 2nd and 3rd generations). It was certainly a hereditary title. The chronicler of the Spanish *Nassiim*, Dr. Elka Klein, names only twelve persons as bearing the title *Mar*. Those who are identifiable are related to each other and it is reasonable to assume that the others are similarly related. In Catalonia, *Mar* preceded the title *Nasi*. The Barcelona *Nassiim* were a close knit group of inter-related families who were acknowledged as "seed of the son of Jesse." All this suggests that only the sons and grandsons of the late Exilarch were entitled to the title *Mar*. As we will elaborate, use of the title was a token of recognition and hope that they should resume the Babylonian Exilarchate. {We will also show that} this reading is consistent with the record of the eastern Abbasid Caliphate and the emergence of Egypt as the new power base of the Fatamids, the North Africa Ismaili Shiites.

Why did the sons of Chizkiya ben David maintain the title *Mar*, despite the fact that they were exiled, out of power, and certainly not functioning as Exilarchs? On my initial reading of the historical accounts, I took the view that the kin of Chizkiya, the last Exilarch, wanted to preserve his memory and the uniqueness of their identity by comparison with the

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TAMA - DISCOVERING SOME MISSING RELATIVES

Through some recent correspondence with Steve Rosenwasser (16869,Pl.352) of Pacific Palisades, California, we discovered a hidden branch of the Tama family. Tama means dam in Polish. Northeastern Poland is a land of lakes, rivers, and streams. The many waterways were used by Jewish raftsmen in the conduct of commerce. Some tried to control the flow of the rivers to minimize the perils of the rapids and to prevent seasonal flooding. That is the probable derivation of the name.

The earliest proto-Tama was Aharon (8714,Pl. 3), born circa 1734, somewhere in Lomza Guberniya, Poland. He was the son of Kalman (13954) who was a brother to David Charlap (4082). We do not know if Kalman used the honorary Charlap title. Aharon had several children who were antecedents of various branches of our family including Kiejmacher, Kopyto/Podkowa, and Tama. There was also a close inter-connection with the Lewin and Ser families. Indeed, Ser and Kiejmacher were often interchangeable names. But it was Aharon's son Yitzhak (4781) who gave rise to the Tamas. Yitzhak was born ca 1767, probably in the vicinity of Nur. His son Bendit (3057,Pl.141) was the first known member of the family to use the name Tama. Records indicate that he died on April 29, 1836 in Nur at the age of 58. He was an innkeeper who was married to Sarah of the Spaleniec family. We know of four sons and two daughters of this marriage. One son, Hersch (4783) died at the age of seven. All the other children married. The youngest son, Azyk (3061), had six children by his wife Chana "Chinka" bat Yaacov v'Yente Lin (3064) of Czyzewo. Azyk, a tailor, had been born in Tymianki Bucie on Dec. 7, 1824. He and Chinka were about the same age when they married in Czyzewo on Oct. 15, 1843. This lineage had ended with the six children until we were able to match Steve Rosenwasser's genealogy to the Tama branch of our family tree.

Previously, we had known that Azyk and Chinka lived in Nur for the first ten years of their marriage. They then moved to Czyzewo where three more sons were born. We believe that only the two youngest sons survived to adulthood but heretofore we had no indication of what had become of them. Now we know that Hersch (5538,Pl.350), born in the early 1860s left for America in 1884 or 1885 after marrying Miriam Steinberg (16715). He lived in Manhattan where he was called Harris Greenberg and worked as a shoemaker. Miriam became Mary in New York City. They had eight children but several died in childhood. We know of descendants of only the youngest, Herman Greenberg (16790). Hersch's brother, Shmuel (5537) was three years older but didn't arrive in America until ca 1890, after having served in the Russian army. Shmuel became an expert fitter in the garment trades. Marshall Fields Department Store offered him a good job in Chicago but he turned it down as he was Shomer Shabbat and refused to work on Saturdays. He married Molly Rubold (16714), sired five sons and a daughter who multiplied into a large family. Shmuel's oldest son was Jacob (16716,Pl.351), born in Czyzewo in 1878. On Nov. 20, 1898 at Liberty Hall on East Houston Street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, he married Shayna Yehudit Schneider, a recent immigrant from Ostrolenko. Steve Rosenwasser is the great-grandson of that union between Jacob and Shayna.

As a result of the described synergistic encounter, we have added over 100 new Tama relatives to the tree. They are all descendants of the two brothers who came to America from northeastern Poland and changed their name to Greenberg. One interesting coincidence emerged from this new information. David Greenberg (16834,Pl.352) of Gainesville, Florida works for Dillard's Department Store. The Chairman of the Board of Dillard's was Theodore Gastman (5876,Pl.254), a member of the Lew branch of our family. Thus David Greenberg was unaware that he was working for a relative. Theodore Gastman's mother was Ida Levine (5868) daughter of Abraham Tuvia Levine (5859) and Sarah Danowitz (5863). The latter two were cousins as Danowitz is another branch of our family. Indeed, the children of Abraham Tuvia and Sarah have been among the most active and concerned members of the family. Their son Jacob (Jack) (411) married Jeanette Danowitz (407), daughter of Shmuel Danowitz (193,Pl.104) and Rivka Ser (192). Though both are deceased, their activities on behalf of the family and the Ciechanowiec landsleit are legendary. Their work was continued by their son Albert (413) who we unfortunately lost just a few months ago. The third child of Abraham Tuvia and Sarah is Tillie Levine Kaplan (5867), now retired in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Tillie has always been a concerned family member.

Another interconnection of the Tamas with other branches of the family, arises from Azyk Tama's oldest sibling, Yitzhak Leml (2092), known in the family simply as Leml. He was born circa 1808, married several times, though we know the name of only one wife, and lived well over 100 years. During World War I, he slipped on some ice after a winter swim in the Bug River. The accident resulted in his "premature" death. Leml's son Yisrael Tama (1849,Pl.219) was married three times. Children of two of his marriages married into the Mankuta branch of our family. Thus they married their cousins. Rachel Leah Tama (1852,Pl.215) of Nur and Yankel Mankuta (1855) of Andrzejewo were wed in 1884. Several of their children married relatives: Kalman Mankuta (1787) to Yehudis Parczewski (1785), Frieda Mankuta (1862) to Morris Kafka (1870), Itche Mankuta (640) to Tillie Kiejmacher (636), and Chana Mankuta (1863) to Itche Lew (1871).

Still another interconnection involves Moshe David ben Bendit Tama (3083,Pl.223), a nephew of Yisrael Tama. Moshe David's son Harry (4181) married his cousin Thelma Smolarczyk (4182). Of their children, daughter Shirley (4156) married Samuel Kwiatek (4160). We are still investigating the connection of the Kwiateks to our family tree.

JUDEO-SPANISH FAMILIES (cont. from p. 2)

Nassiim of Provence, Cairo, Alexandria and its hinterland, Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, and Palestine. All were of the House of David, but the Barcelona *Nassiim* were the last in the line of the Babylonian Exilarch or *Rosh Hagolah*. This left the question of why they [later] discontinued this custom and reverted to the title *Nasi*. The true state of affairs in Baghdad, seat of the Exilarchate, and the answer to this nagging question were answered in the monumental work of Prof. S.D. Gotein, *Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in Documents of the Cairo Geniza*. From the scraps from the Geniza horde, it emerges that the office of the Exilarch was indeed vacant from 1058 until 1061. This was due to internal struggles within the Jewish community and a weakening of court patronage. In 1061, however, a new *Rosh Hagolah* was appointed. The Geniza documents reveal that this Exilarch, Daniel ben Chasdai, gave rise to a controversy when he violated convention by immediately taking up office as Head of the Academy. Unlike the unassuming Chizkiya, Daniel assumed the title Gaon at once and sent letters patent confirming his claim to the Egyptian *Gaon* Nathaniel Ha Levi. Another Exilarch was chosen in 1069. It appears that his appointment reflected the patronage of Abu Ali II Ibn Fadlan, a Jewish courtier who had regained his influence after eleven years of eclipse.

These findings enable us to speculate that the Barcelona family might reasonably have hoped to gain the Exilarchate while it stood vacant and during the first few years of controversial appointments. As time went by, other members of the family began laying foundations to claim the seat. One, whose pedigree was as noble as any, was Daniel ben Azarya, son of Exilarch *Mar* Azarya ben Shlomo, the immediate predecessor of *Mar* Chizkiya. Daniel became Head of the Academy in Palestine. In 1080-1081 Yosef, youngest of his three sons, moved to Cairo, where he tried to establish a new Exilarchate with some degree of success. A document found in the Cairo Geniza dated 1090 was issued by "The Court of the *Rosh Hagolah*" and signed by Yosef ben Daniel. In other documents issued in Fustat, Egypt in 1088 and subsequent years, David ben Daniel was identified as "the great *Nasi*, *Nasi* of all the Diaspora of Israel." Meanwhile the Catalan exiles were putting down roots in their new home where they were prospering as courtiers, landowners, and merchants. We may take it that they were fully aware of the changes in the Islamic world. Former provinces such as Egypt were becoming increasingly independent and the power of the Caliph was declining, in turn reducing the prospect of restoring the Baghdad Exilarchate with its old prestige. Indeed, the decline in tolerance and the increase of fundamentalism in Baghdad made it unattractive, even as a place to live. By contrast, life in Christian Spain was good.

To support my conclusions, I start with a key

document dated Oct. 12, 1061, a real estate transaction in Barcelona. The original Latin text reads: "Bonhom, a Jew, trades with Miro Guadall and his wife Ermessenda, land located within the boundaries of Barcelona." In the English translation of the Latin text published in the Miret edition of *Documents sur Les Juifs Catalans* there is a reference to accompanying Hebrew text recording the same transaction. The translated Hebrew reads: "Reina, a daughter of Master Saltel and her husband Gerson, son of R' Mosse exchanged some land with Miro Guadall and his wife." The different name of the husband arises out of the use of a vernacular name in the Latin text. I have had a copy of the original Latin document and the English translation of both the Latin and the Hebrew texts as they appear in the Miret edition for some time, but it was only the reading of Arthur Menton's *The Book of Destiny: Toledot Charlap*, the thoroughly written saga of the Charlap family and their tradition of a celebrated forebear, Chiya al-Daudi, who claimed descent from the surviving son of the last Exilarch, that redrew my attention to the Babylonian Exilarchate.

I revisited the Jewish history of Babylon and in particular the history of the Exilarchs. It was then that I was struck by the designation in the [Barcelona] Hebrew document of Saltel as *Master*. I decided to examine the Hebrew text [of the real estate transaction.] The reading was one of the most exhilarating experiences of my life. My hunch was correct. The translation was in error. The word used in the Hebrew text was *Mar*. This does indeed translate as *Master*, but and this is a huge but, only in contemporary Hebrew, not at the time it was written. In ancient Hebrew the word *Mar* was a title. As Rav Sherira *Gaon*, the great Babylonian scholar, and himself of the House of David, asserts in his *Igrot*, it was a title given exclusively to the *Rosh Hagolah*, the Exilarch, a scion of the House of David, from the first Shealtiel, son of King Jehoiachin to *Mar* Chizkiya. Incidentally, a study of the Hebrew text by Dr. Elka Klein, whose dissertation *Power and Patrimony: The Jewish Community of Barcelona* was of great help to my research, revealed an additional error of translation. The name of *Mar* Shealtiel's daughter, the wife of Bonhom, was Druda and not Reina. The reason for the error is interesting; an attempt to reconcile inconsistency between two documents. {So the conclusion is that} three years after the execution of the last Exilarch, in the area to which his sons reportedly escaped after the death of their protector Yosef HaNagid, we find a new *Mar*, Shealtiel, whose descendants were to become the *Nassiim* of Barcelona. One of them was Shealtiel ben Sheshet, a signatory to the 1160 "Protestation". He was a great-great grandson of *Mar* Shealtiel, father of Druda, himself a grandson of Exilarch *Mar* Chizkiya.

In 1165 the famous Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela wrote, "...two days thence lays Barcelona in which place there is a congregation of wise, learned, and princely

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ORIGINS OF THE YAHYA NAME

This column continues a list of various individuals in the Yahya family that began in *B'rayshit* (vol. 10, no. 4 and vol. 11, no. 1). The list was compiled from descriptions by Abraham I. Laredo in *Les Noms Des Juifs Du Maroc*. Laredo points out that relatives from this family used many variations of the name, some that were phonetically quite distant from the original.

52. Yahya ben Wizeman: Grand Rabbi of Marrakesh, Morocco; died 1796. The Wizeman name is probably derived from Ait Izmen, a Berber tribe at the Todgha oasis, in the basin of L'oued Ziz; or from the Berber tribe Izemin. Many Berbers were adherents of Judaism.

Vidal, Vital

Two names derived from the Latin *vita*, translation of the Hebrew *chaim* (life), having given rise to the variations: Vidal, Vidala, Vital, Vitalem, Vitalis, Vitalon (13th cent.), Bitalis (14th cent.), and Viton (15th cent.).

53. Yaacov Vital: A figure who was witness to a contract on the location of several fields and vineyards in Calatayud, under the commander of the Templars, signed in Valencia on Feb. 24, 1255.

54. Bonafos Vidal: Secretary of the Call (Jewish District) of Barcelona. On May 14, 1282 participated in the ratification of an important act of Don Pedro III, King of Aragon. Son of Shlomo Vidal, Bailiff of King Jamie I.

55. Rabbi Selomah (Shlomo) Vidal: Bayle (Bailiff) of King Don Jaime I of Aragon and Barcelona in the 13th century.

56. Rabbi Crescas Vidal: Famous medical doctor; personal physician of King Don Jaime II of Aragon in 13th century. Pupil of Rabbi Aharon Ha-Levi and author of *Hiddushim on the Talmud*. Resided in Barcelona in 1291.

57 & 58. Jocef (Yosef) "Sedero" Vitalis and Issach (Yitzhak) "Torero" Vitalis: Figures in notarized acts of Barcelona, 1383-1384.

59. Shmuel Vidal: Tax magistrate; figure in notarized documents, Barcelona, 1391.

60. Goio Vidal: Mother of Shmuel.

61. Bonet Vidal: Member of the Superior Council of the Aljama (Jewish Town Council) of Gerona. Attacked according to a letter from Zaragoza dated April 27, 1391.

62 & 63. Reuven Vitalis and Astrug Vitalis Gratiani: Figures among the secretaries of the Aljama of Barcelona, according to a letter dated April 1, 1326 of King Don Jaime II of Aragon.

64. Ephraim Vidal: 14th century Spanish Rabbi; Professor of Simeon Zemach Duran.

65. Cecri Bitalis: Councilor of the Aljama of Zaragoza; subscriber of *Taqqanah*, 14 Nissan 5157 (1397); instituted taxes on meat and wine in a public pronouncement in the synagogue.

66. Councilor of the Aljama of Perignan, as stated in a notarized act dated Dec. 11, 1412, Valencia.

67. Belsom Vidal: Described as owner of a farm in Cervera in documents from 1467 to 1475.

68. Bonafos Vidal: Secretary of the Aljama of Lerida, as stated in a letter of King Don Juan II, Barcelona, Oct. 17, 1477.

69. Maestre Vidal: Surgeon of Olit; object of a warrant for payment dated Sept. 14, 1434.

70. Yosef Vital: Celebrated scribe in 15th and 16th century Calabri. His tefillin became highly valued because of his meticulous work and became known as the Tefillin of Rav Calabrese; author of *Sheelot u Teshubot*, about the art of scribing phylacteries, contained in the Responsa of Menachem Azariah de Fano.

71. David ben Salomon Vital: Known as ha-Roffe (Doctor); emigre rabbi of Spain at beginning of 16th century. He went to Turkey and afterwards to Patras, where he lived until the surrender of that city in 1532. He lost his entire library and returned to Arda (or Narda) in Greece, where he spent the remainder of his life. Author of *Kether Torah* (Constantinople, 1536), a work of some 615 precepts; *Hilkhot Bediqah* (1570, 1682), rules for the killing of insects; *Shir Haruz Bemishqad* (1687, 1712), poetic composition on the same subject published with the Responsa of Jacob Weil (Mantua, 1740); *Mikhtam le-David* (Venice, 1540), verification of the 13 articles of faith of Maimonides; a poem on the seasons of the year (Berlin, 1850-1851); and numerous piyyutim.

72. Hayyim Vital: Son of Yosef (70); famous Cabalistic Rabbi, born in Safed in 1543, died in Damascus in 1620; student of Moshe Alshekh and Yosef Caro. In 1570 he became disciple of the greatest Cabalist of that era, Rabbi Isaac Luria, whom he succeeded at his death in 1572. In 1577 he made a short trip to Egypt and returned to Palestine before traveling to Damascus. Later, he returned to Jerusalem, where his first teacher, Moshe Alshekh, named him Rabbi in 1584. Shortly afterwards, he left Jerusalem for Safed and then went on to Damascus where he preached of the impending arrival of the Messiah. Despite his popularity, Rabbi Yaacov Abulafia succeeded in curtailing his activity under the threat of excommunication. He was author of a number of works published in an anthology entitled *Etz Hayyim* (Zolkiev, 1772; Korzec, 1785; Sklov, 1800; Dubrovna, 1804; Sudzilkov, 1818; Laszow, 1818). His *Sefer Ha-Kavanot* (Venice, 1624; Hanau, 1624) discusses blessings, rituals, and festivals. Five versions of this work have appeared: by Moses Vital, grandson of the author; by Zacuto, which included a glossary; by Nathan Spira, with a commentary entitled *Meorot Nathan*; by Avraham Azoulai of Marrakesh, with a glossary by M. Popper under the title *Per Ez Hayyim*. Other works include: *David Yarad le-Gano*, Piyyut printed in *Shaarei Tzion* (Amsterdam, 1671); *Nof Ez Hayyim* (Frankfort-am-Main, 1684; Zolkiev, 1722, 1775); *Sefer Ha-Guilgulim* (Frankfort-am-Main, 1684;

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JUDEO-SPANISH FAMILIES (cont, from p. 4)

men, for instance R' Shesheth, R' Shealtiel, R' Shlomo, and R' Abraham ben Chisdai. The city, though small, is handsome and is situated on the seashore. Merchants resort thither for goods from all parts of the world: from Greece, Pisa, Genoa, and Sicily, from Alexandria in Egypt, from Palestine and adjacent countries." Benjamin's depiction of Barcelona and its Jewish princes was accurate. The Shealtiel family, along with its branches and related families (Perfet, Benvenist-Cavaller, Gracian, Chasdai, and Cresques) flourished, enriching their community, their rulers and themselves for more than 400 years.

My research indicates that all the families of the *Nassiim* of Barcelona were the descendants of *Mar Chizkiya*, in the main directly from his grandson *Mar Shealtiel*. These new findings, which I have been able to document, shed new light on the life and accomplishment of the *Nassiim* . . .

Another *Nasi*, Abraham ben Hiyya, an early ancestor of the Charlap family, is known as the person whose command of geometry and finance helped the King of Aragon to divide and redistribute the conquered Muslim lands. He is also known for a controversy which erupted between him and *Sapiens*. In this dispute, R' Yehuda ruled, contrary to R' Abraham ben Hiyya, that it is against the scriptures to postpone a wedding because the stars displayed bad omens. This early display of antagonism to superstition was to become a battle cry of the *Nassiim* during the dispute between the Cabalists and Rationalists, better known as the "Maimonides Controversy." What was unknown, or unnoticed, until now is that Abraham ben Hiyya and his brother, the famous Bailiff of Zaragoza, Bonjudah Vital, had a third brother, Moshe and that their father Hiyya can be identified as *Mar Haim* [Chiya al-Daudi], another brother [cousin?] of *Mar Shealtiel*. . . all of course, the great-grandchildren of *Mar Chizkiya*. . . [Note: Chiya al-Daudi had at least one more son, Yaish Ibn Yahya, #77, P. 9, *Ancilla*]

What is the accepted standard of proof required to make one's theory a compelling account of family history, yet history with meaningful implication to the generality of Sephardic history? When I asked Elka Klein this question, her answer was very revealing. She explained that the more she feels emotionally involved in her research, the higher she raises the bar. Another standard was applied by a friend, Victor Perraira, who penned a wonderfully written, heart warming book about his family, *The Cross and the Pear Tree*. He concluded that a certain Rabbi Ferreira in Spain was one of his ancestors because, "I feel it in my bones." [Though no] amount of historical data which I might have assembled would meet the standards of academic proof, luckily I was able to use another approach that, to the best of my knowledge, had not been used in historical research. Neil Bradman is a London based scientist who recently completed the study that used DNA sampling to prove that the *Cohanim* are descendants of a single person,

most probably Aaron, the first priest. He has taken DNA samples of members of families which my research has suggested descend from *Mar Chizkiya ben David*. At my request, two more conjectural families were added to the study: a Shealtiel family from Yemen, without any apparent historical or genealogical links to the Sephardic Shealtiels other than name, and another family, the Saltijeral, a large Catholic clan, mostly from Mexico. With the help of Prof. Jorge Saltijeral, I was able to prove their roots to Catalonia and to recognize the possibility that they are in fact Crypto-Jews and Shealtiels. To further test my theories about the origins of the Benvenist family and the Charlaps, we obtained samples from these families as well. Since the Charlap family did not descend from the Shealtiel family, a match would confirm that both families descended from the same male line, corroborating their identical, yet independent, tradition of Davidic heritage.

Preliminary results of the sampling are in and it is clear that the Shealtiel, Charlap, Gracian and Benvenist families, and what's more, the Yemenite Shealtiel and the Saltijeral share the same Y chromosome and are thus proven to be genetically one family.

BIRTHS

Sarah Rose Saxe (16708,Pl.248) was born in Las Vegas, Nevada on Nov. 21. She is the first child of Joshua (15498) and Felice Newman (5056) Saxe. Felice's parents are Peter (5048) and Beverly (5042) Newman of Leawood, Kansas, who now have two grandchildren. Beverly's father is the late Jacob Levine (5022) who was born in Ciechanowice, Poland.

MARRIAGES

Jamie (Itche Ber) Shifrin (721,Pl.169) was married to **Barbara Weissman** (16713), daughter of Cookie and David Weissman of Sun City Center, Florida on Nov. 24. Jamie is the son of Gail Shifrin (700) and the late Gerald Shifrin (712). His grandparents were Max (686) and Ann (691) Kuhr. Jamie and Barbara reside in Brussels, Belgium, where he is Systems Engineering Manager for an international law firm.

LETTERS TO THE NEW YORK TIMES

The NY Times recently printed opinions of two of our members.

To the Editor:

For years, the countries of the world, at the United Nations and elsewhere, pressured Israel, in the name of peace, to soften its stance toward the Palestinians. Israeli hard-liners insisted that mollifying Israel's critics was pointless because the criticism was so consistently one-sided and unfair.

Now, after ceding Gaza and much of the West Bank to the Palestinians, permitting the Palestinians to re-arm their police force,

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ORIGINS OF YAHYA NAME (cont. from p. 5)

Zolkiev, 1772), on the transmigration of souls; *Shaarei Quedishah* (Constantinople, 1734; Sulzbach, 1758; Zolkiev, 1810), on the future life; *Liqute Torah ve Ta'ame ha-Mitzvot* (Zolkiev, 1775), a Cabalistic exposition on the Bible based on the teachings of Isaac Luria; *Sha'ar ha-Yehudim ve Tiqum Avonot* (Korzec, 1783), on the Prophets, the Holy Spirit, and repentance; *Sefer Ozerot Hayyim* (Korzec, 1783), edited by his disciple, the Portuguese physician Yosef Zemah. There exist two shared manuscripts with glossaries, one with Moses Zacuto ("Codex Michael", no. 23) and one with Nathan Spiro (nos. 27, 28) [sic]. Additional works are: *Liqute ha-Shas* (Livorno, 1785), Cabalistic interpretations of Talmudic Aggadot after the teachings of Luria; *Arba Meot Shegel Kesset* (Korzec, 1804), Cabalistic treatise on the two shekels paid by Abraham for the Cave of Machpelah; *Sha'ar ha-Pesquim* (Jerusalem, 1923).

73. Shmuel Vital: Son of Hayyim (72). Cabalistic Rabbi, born in Damascus in 2nd half of 16th century. He directed the Cabalistic society *Tikun ha-Teshuvah* in Egypt and was teacher in Safed of Dr. Yosef Zemah. Author of *Shenonah Shearim* (Zolkiev, 1772; Korzec, 1785), an introduction to Cabala; *Sefer Tozeot Hayyim*, commentary on the Bible; *Ta'alumot Hokhmah*, on Kabbala; *Sheelot u Teshubot*; *Sefer Hokhmot Nashim*; *Sefer Hemdat Yisrael*, a commentary on the ritual of praying.

74. Yaacov Vidal: Rabbi in Carpentras from 1580 to 1589.

75. Salomon Vidal: From Venice; physician in Corfu, 16th century.

76. Moshe Vital: Son of Yosef (70), Cabalistic Rabbi in Safed, 17th century.

77. Moshe Vital: Son of Shmuel (73), Rabbi, Talmudist, and Cabalist in Egypt, 17th - 18th centuries. Nothing remains of his works except Responsa in the collection of Avraham Ha-Levi, *Quinat Veradim*.

78. Abraham Vita: "Of Cologne"; Italian Rabbi, orator, and important political figure, born in Mantua, 1755 and died in Trieste, 1832. He filled the position of Grand Rabbi in his native city and was elected member of Parliament during the Napoleonic realm of Italy. In 1806, he was a deputy in the Assembly of Notables in Paris. At the creation of the Sanhedrin in 1807, he was named Vice President, then in 1808 he was appointed to the Consistoire Central. Later he became a member of the Consistoire of Turin. A collection of his essays and sermons survive.

79. Yosef Vidal: Of Mascara, Algeria; among subscribers to the publication of Abraham Anqawa, *Sefer Zebahim Shelemim* (Livorno, 1837).

Ayash, Ayache, Aiche, Ayyas, Ayas

An Arab name, common among both Jews and Muslims of Morocco. It is derived from the term for "so alive." Childhood

death was common in this family resulting from the superstitious practice of piercing the newborn and inserting a buckle called "ayasha" or "life", which was then worn perpetually.

80. Hayyim Ayash: 18th century Rabbi in Fez, Morocco.

81. Yehuda Ayash: Rabbi, born circa 1690 in Medea, Algeria, died in Jerusalem, 1761. From 1728 to 1756 he was Grand Rabbi of Algiers and became very popular as a result of his consultations on religious matters. Later, in disagreement with the progressive spirit of the community, he relinquished his post and settled in Jerusalem by way of Livorno. Author of *Lehem Yehuda* (Livorno, 1745), a commentary on Maimonides' *Yad ha-Hazaqah*; *Bet Yehuda* (Livorno, 1746), Responsa on the "Quatre Turim", containing details on the social and economic conditions of North African Jews including analysis of statutes issued by Rabbis Isaac bar Sheshat and Shimon ben Zemah Duran; *Ve-Zot le-Yehuda* (Livorno, 1776), diverse commentaries; *Bene Yehuda*, on the terminology of Maimonides in *Tosafot* and of *Mizrahi*, also with Responsa; *Ot Berit Kodesh* (Livorno, 1758), on circumcision; *Matteh Yehuda* (1783) and *Shebet Yehuda* (Livorno, 1783, 1788), works on the *Shulkhan Arukh*; commentary on *Ar'a de Rabbanah* of Jacob Alghazi (Livorno, 1783); *Kol Yehuda* (Livorno, 1763), sermons; *Peletat Bet Yehuda* and *Sheelot u-Teshubot* (Livorno, 1783).

82. Yaacov Moshe Ayash: Son of Yehuda (81), born in Algiers, died 1817. Rabbi in Jerusalem where he was also financial envoy to North Africa. During his visit to Ferrara, Italy in 1788, he became Grand Rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva Hayyim v'Chesed. There he edited several works of his father. Author of *Derekh Hayyim* (Livorno, 1790; Venice, 1804), a book of prayers.

83. Abraham Ayash: Son of Yehuda (81), Rabbi in Jerusalem. Appointed Director of Yeshiva Knesset Yisrael. Sophisticated by nature, he took a fund-raising tour of Germany and Poland. He re-edited the work of his father *V'zot le-Yehuda* (Zulzbach, 1776). He died in Algiers in 1792.

84. Yosef Ayash: Son of Yehuda (81), 18th century Rabbi in Jerusalem. Was editor of his father's *Kol Yehuda*.

85. Hayyim Yehuda Ayash: Son of Yaacov Moshe (82), Rabbi and in 1810 envoy to Italy of Yeshiva Knesset Yisrael of Jerusalem. On his return, he was delegated as fundraiser for Hebron in North Africa. He returned to Italy in 1816.

86. Yosef David Ayash: Son of Yaacov Moshe (82), Rabbi in Jerusalem and fundraising envoy to Italy in 1820 and to Morocco in 1825. Author of *Kol David* (Livorno, 1821), a commentary on the Pesach Haggada.

87. Baruch Ayash: Rabbi in Jerusalem; grandson of Yaacov Moshe (82).

88. Leon Ayas: Interpreter for French army in Algeria. Died in 1846 as result of wounds received in expedition against Oran.

89. Moshe Ayash: Contributor in 1837 to publication of *Sere Zebahim Shelemim* of Abraham Anqawa.

OBITUARIES

Paula Odesnick Levine (5671,Pl.246) of Lenexa, Kansas died on Aug. 26. She was the widow of Louis Levine (5666), son of Esther Lewin (5654) and Joseph Levine (5643), who were cousins. Joseph's parents were Kalman Lewin (5007,Pl.245) and Chaya Faiga Lew (5012), also cousins. Paula and Louis were both born in Ciechanowicz, Poland. They were owners of the K.C. Iron & Metal Co. in Kansas City, Missouri. After Louis' death in 1974, Paula continued to run the business, retiring in 1990. She was past-President of the Kansas City Chapter of AMC Cancer Research of Denver, was a member of the Ciechanowicz Relief Society, and Kehilath Israel Synagogue. Her oldest son, Eugene (5680) died in 1995, but she is survived by sons Harvey (5681) of Santa Anna, California, Sanford (5683) of Overland Park, Kansas and daughter Cheryl Bordy (5682) of Winnipeg, Canada. She also leaves nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Aharon Manor (6298,Pl.217) - The following shocking e-mail was received from Avi Manor (6301): "With great grief we announce the untimely death of our beloved son, brother, husband, and father. He was a very loved and loving person. The funeral will take place at the New Cemetery of Beersheva on Dec. 11 at 3:00 pm." Aharon was indeed "loved and loving." He had a strong sense of family, history, and attachment to his people. Deeply affected by the memory of the Holocaust and by his father's heroism in eastern Europe during World War II, he was an ardent Zionist who served Israel selflessly. Aharon was a strong supporter of our family research and served on our Board of Directors. He, along with Harry Mankuta (1832,Pl.216), was largely responsible for the success of our 1992 Tel Aviv family reunion. Aharon was born on Kibbutz Klil Yam, near Herzliya, Israel on Oct. 6, 1947, the oldest child of Yehuda (6294) and Bracha (6297) Manor (Mankuta). He married the beautiful and talented Esther Atia on Sept. 11, 1973. Esther, born in Algeria, became a distinguished research scientist at Ben Gurion University, while giving Aharon five children. Aharon was an electrical engineer and pilot. He is survived by his dear parents, his wife and devoted children Avi, Yochai (6302), Moshe (6303), Chen (6304), and Sarai (6305), and sisters Rachel Sharon (7096) and Bathsheva Moskowitz (6299), all of Israel.

David H. Warsowe (3458,Pl.34) died on Sept. 6 at the age of 92. He was born in Jan. of 1908 in Boston, Massachusetts. the son of Robert (3429) and Alice (3422) Warsowe. Alice's father was Charles Lappen (3406), whose parents were Israel Betzalel Charlap (3181,Pl.23) and Shayna Fruma Lapin (3190). David took over his father's business, College Seal & Crest Co., Cambridge, MA, a manufacturer of bronze relief and accessories. It became the third largest producer in the United States of college rings and charms. David's first wife was

Jennie Epstein (3461) who died many years ago. They had four sons. He is survived by his second wife Edna (3460) of Fort Lauderdale, Florida; his sons Robert of Oceanside, New York; Carl (3464) of Sacramento, California and Marc (3465) of San Francisco, California; as well as nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

WINGS

by Lionel Robinson (14737,Pl.305)

Lionel Robinson was born in Lancashire, U.K. and moved to New South Wales, Australia in 1958. He is the great-grandson of Moshe Sheftel Lapin (14422) and Henia Chana Lappin (14428). "Wings" is from a 1999 collection of his poems.

Amazing things are wings
Eagles falcons birds of prey
Sweeping soaring through the sky
Singing cawing praises
To the Great Power who has the skill
To confer on them the will to fly
singing praises till the day they die
When a new set their spectre will adorn
Which they will wear until reborn
Insects bees and butterflies
wear even finer wings
Sing a different song to make their mark
Often for their trouble get swallowed by the lark

LETTERS (cont. from p. 6)

withdrawing from Lebanon and offering the Palestinians part of Jerusalem, Israel finds itself again the target of condemnation by the Security Council, even though the recent violence in the region was started by the Palestinians. It turns out the Israeli hard-liners were right after all.

- Jerome S. Fortinsky (9169,Pl.41)

New York, NY, Oct. 10, 2000

To the Editor:

The losers in the vice-presidential debate were the American people. Here we saw two grown-ups having a civil, dignified, intelligent discussion of the issues and their philosophic differences. We are the losers for two reasons: the best men available for the job in 2000 are each at the bottom of their respective tickets, and neither one would have stood a chance of winning the presidential nomination of his party or would even have made it past New Hampshire, for that matter.

- Pierre M. Atlas (2356,Pl.276)

Indianapolis, IN, Oct. 6, 2000

CONFLICT OVER ISRAEL'S SUPREME COURT

Several recent decisions by Israel's Supreme Court have created conflict within the country. At the heart of the dispute is the very nature of Israel's society. Is it a democracy? Is it a Jewish state? Can it be both? Family members have been affected by some of these decisions. Indeed, sitting on the Supreme Court is Dorit Beinisch (260, Pl. 101), a granddaughter of Itche Ser (130) of Ciechanowicz. This problem caught the attention of Chet (3634, Pl. 285) and Stan (3635) Lappen, who sent in the following piece by Robert Lappin (10582, Pl. 37). Robert Lappin is an attorney living in Swampscott, Massachusetts. He is the grandson of Israel Lappin (10538) and Rebecca Collier (10539). His original article appeared in *The Jewish Veteran*. In it he weighs the arguments concerning the above questions.

He starts out by highlighting a recent decision wherein the Supreme Court ruled that the Jewish Agency may not discriminate against Arab citizens by allocating land only to Jews. The Court ordered that an Arab family may purchase land in the Jewish community of Katzir, east of Hadera. The Court equated the Jewish Agency with the State, essentially ruling that the State must treat all its citizens equally. Robert Lappin states that "there are few Americans who would disagree with a ruling outlawing discriminatory housing practices. Many of us remember the days when we were subject to similar discrimination here, not to mention the de facto situation that confronts black people, even today, in some areas. The essence of democracy in our country [USA], is equality of treatment and opportunity for all citizens, regardless of race, creed, color, or religion.

So on the face of it, there can be nothing but applause for decision rendered in favor of the Arab Ka'adan family by Israel's High Court of Justice, handed down by Chief Justice Aharon Barak. However, as is the case with much that goes on in Israel, there is more to this than meets the eye - much more. The implications of this ruling go, amazingly, even so far as to set the stage for the possible dismantling of the State of Israel."

The author asks his audience to have the patience to listen to his explanation of this extraordinary statement. "The fundamental argument of the Ka'adans was that the State of Israel, through the Jewish Agency, cannot establish Jewish settlements, since such a policy is discriminatory, and even racist. The High Court, in ruling in favor of the Ka'adan's right to purchase land in the Jewish community of Katzir, also in effect, inferred that the thousands of Jewish communities founded by the Jewish Agency were illegal from their inception. Because the High Court was concerned about such an inference, the Court stressed that the decision only applies to the future, and only to the case of Katzir. Nonetheless, the Arabs are beside themselves with joy at this ruling of the High Court. They reasonably claim that Israel's High Court has confirmed and validated the infamous U.N. resolution of Oct. 17, 1975 declaring that 'Zionism is racism,' which Israel has fought to annul since its passage. However, this is the least cause of Arab gleeful exuberance. There is little doubt that the High Court's ruling will soon inspire Arabs to seek to use Israel's court system to attack the Law of Return, which grants automatic immigration and citizen rights to all Jews, inasmuch as the basis for such an action would be identical to that of Ka'adan's petition. Following the same logic, it can be expected that Israeli Arabs will press a case that challenges the very legality of the State of Israel. Anticipating this possibility, the Court acknowledged that Jews have privileges over non-Jews in immigrating, under the Law of Return. However, despite the Court's precautions, provisos, and exclusions, there seems little doubt that the 'camel's nose is under the tent.'

How can such a suicidal paradox come to be? Briefly, there is a life-or-death tug-of-war taking place in Israel between powerful left-leaning politicians, jurists, military leaders, and journalists, who believe the supreme value of democracy superseded even the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state; and similar powerful right-leaning figures, including religious leaders, who believe that Israel cannot exist as a secure nation, as a mirror-image democracy of the United States, because Israel is and must be a Jewish state; an imperfect democracy, if you will, but a democracy with a theocratic dimension. Powerful United States figures have entered the fray on both sides, with heavier Jewish weight by far, leaning to the left, to my personal dismay."

We believe that Robert Lappin has described the problem accurately. Alas, it goes even beyond the problem of the Supreme Court. The current round of Israeli-Arab negotiations are a disgrace. The weak, lame-duck Barak government, with the support of less than a quarter of the Knesset, but under the urging of the lame-duck Clinton administration, has apparently agreed to surrender the Temple Mount and most of the Old City of Jerusalem to the Arabs. Thus this "vast left-wing conspiracy" is mocking the Jewish people's 2000 year-old dream of returning to Zion. Zion is the Temple Mount. And we have not even addressed the surrender of Judea and Samaria. We must awaken! Israel must not make a deal with the Arabs until the latter demonstrate that they are interested in real peace. Time and again, even in the United States, Arabs have employed violence to attain political goals. There is trouble wherever Islam interfaces with other peoples - Indonesia, the Philippines, Kosovo, India/Pakistan, etc. Until their culture demonstrates that they are interested in a peaceful co-existence with their neighbors and the world, there will be no peace and the only voice they will understand is the same voice they are using against Israel and Americans around the world - violence. Israel should strive to be a democracy, but should not commit suicide racing after a utopian chimera. Have we learned nothing from history? Appeasing violence gains nothing. There are times when maintaining strength is the only answer. Though peace is always desirable, it is not always possible.

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