



## NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLDWIDE CONGREGATION CHARLAP/YAHYA

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### JEWISH PIONEER WOMEN

The Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe recently mounted a major exhibition entitled *Stories Untold: Jewish Pioneer Women*. The concept of this show arose from the experiences of Andrea Kalinowski. She explains, "Children have little conception that the world outside of their own could be different from the one they already know. However, as a young girl growing up in the 1950s and 1960s in Montreal, Canada I always felt different; set apart. These feelings stemmed from being an 'Anglo' in a French community, a Jew in a powerfully Catholic province, and lastly female, without an equal voice. This outsider experience challenged, exhausted, and eventually prepared me to tell stories of other Jewish women from another place and time, who also found themselves set apart. Who were these Jewish women pioneering the dusty trails of the [American] West? Brave and willing to stray from their familiar lives in order to endure adventure, hardship, and illness? How did these women impact the isolated and primitive territory they found themselves in? How did they shape the lives of their families and their larger communities? The voices and faces of these early pioneer Jewish women have captured my heart and imagination. I am compelled to tell their stories."

Among the stories told is that of our own Fanny Jaffe Sharlip (9473, Pl. 78). She was born ca 1879 in Borosna, Russia and died in 1963. On the way she married Benjamin Sharlip (9467) ben Leib (Leon) (9462). This branch of the Sharlip (Charlip, Charlap) family is intricately interwoven with the Budowla (Budovitch) family as can be seen on Plate 71. The family had settled in the Lechowicze, Baranowicze, Slonim region of what is now Belarus. Fanny arrived in the USA in 1889. She wrote her memoirs in 1947. Here are the words of Fanny Sharlip from the Museum of New Mexico exhibition:

"Now my father seriously began to make plans to go to America. A good many things had to be settled. He decided to leave the family at home until he could establish himself. He was determined to go where Jews could worship G-d as they pleased, where they could breathe freedom, and where their life was not threatened every minute of the day. . . that was infinitely more important than money. Preparations were made for the great journey to America. Father wrote long instructions to Mother: first you apply for a government pass; every time you change trains be sure to count the children; see that they are properly fed and get milk at every station; do not give the cow away until the last day for the young ones need milk; etc., etc.

The day came at last when we were to depart for America. It was Saturday and my mother went to synagogue to say goodbye to our friends. I took out my prayer book and began to pray wholeheartedly for the future looked so uncertain and I felt the need of G-d's help. I noticed my sister Mary [Miriam] sewing hooks and eyes on her skirt. "On the Sabbath day!" I wailed, "You know what you are doing, you sinner you." Mother came home from synagogue with a sad face, for it is hard to leave relatives and friends and the place where one is established and economically secure. It was a tremendous undertaking on such a

(continued next page)

## JEWISH PIONEER WOMEN (cont.)

long journey with seven small children. Uncle William came over to tie up bundles and pack the 'carsinsky' - a large suitcase made of fiber. All of us were in the wagon and when the horses gave a pull and the wagon began to move, mother started to cry, but we refrained from tears in order to spare her additional trouble. We traveled about three days before we reached the Russian-German border. We had no difficulties crossing the Russian frontier, for we had all the necessary permits, but we were all relieved when we got off the train at Yatcoon, which was the first town in Germany after crossing the border.

The German cars used to transport immigrants were unfit even for cattle. There were no benches, no toilets, no running water. The cars were locked so no one could get out until an important station was reached, which often meant a half day or more. At last, after four or five days we reached beautiful Berlin with its fine railroad station. From Berlin we traveled for about three days in the same horrible 'cattle cars' to Hamburg, which was the port from which we were to embark for the United States.

We traveled steerage and it was not fit for dogs. I can still smell the horrible odor that made me so sick. My mother was very sensitive to smells so I came by it honestly. I was so ill that I didn't care whether I lived or died. Of course, mother did some tall praying; she did not want to feed the fish with the bodies of her children. I practically lived on condensed milk which they fed to babies, but the doctor ordered it for me even though I was too old for baby food, for it was the only thing I could keep in my stomach.

We had our share of storms on the high seas and the ship swayed unmercifully. There were good things to eat in the ship's store such as oranges, candy, cookies, and soda pop, but mother had no money to buy them for us. She went to the family who had befriended me and said, 'Here is one of my rings. Please give me some money, I simply must buy some good things for my children to eat. You are going to Philadelphia also. Here is my address. As soon as I am settled there I will redeem the ring.'

The next morning we saw that great symbol of hope for  
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the immigrant, the Statue of Liberty, and our hearts were filled with joy and thanksgiving. Castle Garden. The name does not fit the place - Stable Barn would be more proper. The authorities checked and examined us and I guess they were satisfied that we would make good citizens for they let us through."

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## MORE ABOUT THE AMERICAN WEST

by Louise Lapin Haines (14637,Pl.313)

*The multi-talented Loiuise Lapin Haines is an artist, research genealogist, and loves to record our family history. All of these talents were combined in her manifold contributions to ANCILLA TO TOLEDOT CHARLAP. These efforts were not given as much credit as they deserved, a shortcoming which will be corrected in future editions of the book. Louise has also written several pieces for previous issues of B'RAYSHIT.*

Here is more about the American West. My paternal grandfather z'l Adam, aka Abraham Israel Lapin (14555) was a cowboy merchant in the "Wild West" and his story is woven in to that saga of American history along with that of Charlie Drebin (14574), who was Grandpa's sometimes partner.

Grandpa first surfaced in the USA in Shreveport, Louisiana circa 1885. He had come to visit his aunt and uncle who were in America before him. That was Avrum Micha (known as Michael) Lapin (14420,Pl.304) and his first cousin bride Tova Hinde Lappin (14426). They had originally settled at 1445 Light Street in Baltimore, Maryland. I have searched with little success for Grandpa's port of entrance. However, we do know that before long he had bought a horse and wagon along with some merchandise and was traveling the road to Dallas, Texas. He was welcomed by farmers to whom he sold household goods, tools, clothing, and pots and pans.

Once in Texas, Grandpa crossed the Red River and did what white men were forbidden to do; he entered Indian territory; territory that was originally part of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. There were many different tribes he encountered. Among them were the so-called "five civilized tribes" which included Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles. Then there were also the Osage, Kiowas, Comanches, Wichitas, and Cherokees. Several of these tribes kept slaves and were punished by the Union forces for siding with the South during the Civil War. They were stripped of their land, which was set aside for the famous Cimarron Run of ca 1895. The potential white settlers were to race out to stake a claim at sunrise. Some of them cheated by sneaking out the night before to claim preferred lots. As a result they were called "Sooners". Grandpa was there ten years earlier. He was certainly sooner than the Sooners, but he never claimed any Indian land. Later, sometime after the turn of the 20th century,

(cont. on page 4)

## SYDNEY SAHR, FUTURE BROADWAY STAR

You read it here for the first time. Our own Sydney Sahr (6722,Pl.101) is destined for fame on Broadway in the tradition of Mary Martin, Ethel Merman, and Judy Garland. On August 16, eleven year old Sydney had her biggest audience yet at New York's Shea Stadium. The occasion was a baseball game between old rivals, the New York Mets and the Los Angeles (erstwhile Brooklyn) Dodgers. During the seventh inning stretch, Sydney stepped on the field to stretch her vocal cords rather than her legs. With her magnificent ability, she gave forth with a rousing version of *God Bless America* before over 40,000 people.

Sydney started out entertaining her family. In the kitchen, she'd grab a loaf of bread and prance around the house singing the chorus of the Aladdin song *One Jump Ahead*, in which an Arab youth flees captors after stealing a loaf of bread. After memorizing many Disney tunes, Sydney fell in love with the Broadway musical *Annie*, derived from the old comic strip *Little Orphan Annie*. When her family learned that a theatre group of the Jewish Community Center in Commack, Long Island was holding auditions for the play, they decided to let her try out. Sydney won a slot and has since played in three other productions of *Annie*, including the starring role of the curly redhead herself.

After years of regional theatre, Sydney's parents decided it was time she got an agent and started auditioning for commercials and films. She finished her first movie, *Once Upon a Time Never Comes Again*, this past summer. It is a 1950s period piece about the summer the Dodgers moved out of Brooklyn.

When Sydney's mom, Christina (892) learned her daughter would be singing when the Mets played the Dodgers, she knew it would be a perfect way for her daughter to end the summer. A huge Mets fan, Sydney's dad, Seth (27), called around to find out how singers are selected to perform at Shea Stadium and sent in an audio tape of Sydney singing. She had performed at football games in New Jersey and at the hockey rink on Long Island; Shea Stadium was the next logical step. Sydney had time to practice at Shea Stadium before August 16 and since then has sung patriotic songs on other occasions, most notably a Jewish War Veterans ceremony on the first anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. That event received press coverage, "The *Star Spangled Banner* and *God Bless America* were given added beauty by her dynamic, powerful voice, one that pierced the blustery winds . . . she shaped the words of the Irving Berlin classic and the national anthem with clarity and perfect enunciation, starting the first number on a low to moderate tone, only to reveal the power of her 11 year old lungs during the middle verses." We all expect Sydney Sahr to be a major star before long.

Sydney's talent is just the latest example of the musical proclivities of the Charlap family. From King David

on, music has been central to the Charlap/Yahya experience. This is evidenced by the extraordinary number of cantors, composers, and instrumentalists who have been acclaimed over the generations. Indeed, her close relative Hadassah Sahr (20) is the noted concert pianist and music teacher.

Sydney lives in Rockville Centre, New York with her parents and brother Teddy (8541). She has the close support of her grandparents, Donald (24) and Naomi (23) Sahr. Donald's father was Yaacov Eliezer (known as Yankel Flazer) Sahr (3), who came to America circa 1890 from the Ciechanowicz/Nur area of Lomza Guberniya, Poland. After living in Manhattan, Yankel Flazer moved north to Schenectady where he joined a large contingent of Sahr relatives who had settled in that industrial town. All of them were descended from Sender Ser (1,Pl.14) and Chaya Podkowa (2) as well as having connections to the Lewin and Kiejsmacher branches of the family.

It's a long way from Ciechanowicz to Shea Stadium and Broadway.

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## TOUCHSTONES

Touchstones: An Exhibition of Tactile Sculptures in Bronze and Marble is being shown at Lighthouse International, 111 59th Street in New York City. Conceived and executed by Julia Hyman (3718,Pl.8), the exhibition is running from Sept. 19, 2002 through January 15, 2003. An opening reception was held on Sept. 19. Several family members have seen the exhibition, including some who were at the reception.

Lighthouse International is a leading resource worldwide on vision impairment and vision rehabilitation. It seems especially appropriate that this collection of "tactile" sculpture should be mounted there. For, all of the works are meant to be touched. Each sculpture rests on a waist-high pedestal making them very accessible. Along with the sculptures, several large photographs are displayed that illustrate some of the carving processes.

Julia Hyman's first medium was clay, which she tended not to model but to carve. She then moved on to stone and wood and easily adapted to the more unyielding materials. An additional influence on her sensibility as a sculptor was her career as a restorer of buildings, which gave her additional spatial engineering skills.

Each of her finished pieces is a tactile invitation. The final visual aspect is a development of her hands-on relationship with the basic stone. She says, "I feel my pieces as I work on them. I trust my sense of touch to tell me when a piece is finished."

Well known in Florida where she does most of her work, her pieces are widely displayed and collected. Julia grew up in Mt. Vernon, New York and attended Parsons School of Design. She and husband Dick Hyman (3716), the prominent pianist and composer, live in Venice, Florida and New Jersey.

## MORE ON THE AMERICAN WEST (cont. from p.2)

this former Indian territory became the State of Oklahoma.

From what was to become Oklahoma, Grandpa traveled up the fabled Chisholm Trail, named for the half-breed trader who hacked it out of the wilderness. Chisholm drove heavy wagons loaded with Buffalo hides up to Abilene Kansas. Grandpa was not far behind. He traveled up this desolate trail and crossed the Mississippi River to reach St. Louis, Missouri, known as the "Gateway to the West." This was where pioneers brought their covered wagons to begin the trek across the vast uncharted western lands. The pioneers went from east to west. Grandpa came to the east at St. Louis from the west, the opposite direction of the pioneers.

Having reached St. Louis, Grandpa sent for my Grandma, Hannah Rachel Goldstein Lapin (14559) and their two infant daughters Ruth Florence (Feiga Rivka) (14563) and Rosa (14564), who were still in Lithuania. Grandma first stopped to visit her bachelor brother, Max Goldstein, in Montreal and then entered the United States through Maine. Crossing the Great Lakes, they made their way down the Mississippi to be reunited with Grandpa. My father Morris (Moshe Sheftel) Lapin (14565) was the first Yankee born in our family. Arriving in 1886, he was also the first boy and first blue-eyed, blond child. His brother Samuel Bernard (Bearah) was born two years later. Then came Chaim who died during his first year. Deborah was born in 1890 in Chicago, Illinois, where my grandfather was hoping to set up a business. Dad later told me that the sidewalks of Chicago were wooden boards and the streets were often muddy. All the vehicles except for the trains were drawn by horses. Grandpa sent to England for his younger brother Meyer (14558, Pl.305) and established a clothing store for him. Meyer fell in love with Ida Geis (14562), whose father owned a furniture store across the street. Nearby was the settlement complex run by the famous Jane Adams. Ms. Adams and a girl friend were college educated debutantes who could find little respectable work in the social climate of those days. These two angels worked selflessly to educate the multi-ethnic immigrant children. Jane convinced a wealthy man to donate an entire block of mansions that became her settlement houses. My Dad worked there as a volunteer librarian as a young lad and he read every book in the library. My brothers who had the benefits of the highest formal education agreed that our Dad was better educated than either of them.

Another nearby residence was the home of the infamous Chicago matron, Mrs. O'Leery, whose cow was blamed for knocking over a lantern that allegedly started the fire that burned down most of the city. In the Mormon library I found the true story. Mrs. O'Leery had two roomers who had sneaked into her barn to get drunk. It was these two besotted men who knocked over the lantern. The cow perished in the fire but her calf survived.

Later, Grandpa had a clothing shop in Salt Lake City, Utah. It was two blocks from where the Mormons were building their magnificent temple. Grandpa's partner in Salt Lake City was Mike Gordon who was married to our cousin Esther Drebin. They had moved to Butte, Montana and were accumulating quite a fortune. Meanwhile, my grandparents had another child, Sally (14569), born in Salt Lake City in 1893. In that same year, Grandpa encouraged his brother Meyer to bring his family to Salt Lake City. Meyer was in financial difficulty so Grandpa turned over the clothing store to him and opened a pawn shop. But the depression of 1893 descended upon the land. It was said to be worse than the Great Depression of the 1930s. Discouraged, Grandpa moved his family north to Butte. Unlike immaculate Salt Lake City, Butte was a dirty, dusty mining town, full of abandoned shafts and with little greenery. My father said that it was a miracle that none of the kids fell into the abandoned mine hole in the back yard. Nothing went right for Grandpa in Butte and he decided to visit the family back in England. When they reached New York City, Grandma gave birth to still another child, Joseph (14570). They took a six week hiatus, staying with a cousin (not on the Charlap tree) who was an electrical engineer.

Arriving in Liverpool, Grandpa was still restless and decided to see Cape Town, South Africa where his sister Rose Lapin (14556) had moved after her marriage to Moses Solomon (14560). There were also cousins in Johannesburg, where his uncle had built the Fountain Hotel. Other Lapin relatives were in Durban. So Grandpa left his family with relatives in England and set sail once again. But in 1898, the Boer War erupted and Grandpa's English money was suddenly without value. He managed to get taken on as a crew member of a ship that was returning to the British Isles.

When my father had finished 8th grade, the family was on the move again. This time it was Ireland to visit Grandpa's other sister Hinde Anne Lapin Robinson (14557). Cousin Jacob Lapin (14454, Pl.321) was also there. His was the first Jewish wedding in Waterford and we reprinted the announcement right here in *B'rayshit* (vol. 10, no. 4). Grandpa settled for a while in Belfast, Northern Ireland where baby Esther (14571) was born ca 1900. My father felt very grown up by now and no longer believed that storks brought babies or that the midwife carried the baby wrapped in her satchel. But Dad said he certainly had no idea that Grandpa had anything to do with all these babies; he was never there when the babies were born. Poor Grandma, going through all those births alone. This time he was off to Scotland. There must have been relatives there as well. I have found some Lapin graves in a Scottish burial ground.

Sweet little Cecilia (14572), the youngest of my grandparents' ten children, was born in Chicago ca 1905. A census taker once asked Grandma, "How did you ever get together to make a family?" Considering the travels of the peripatetic Adam Lapin, that was an appropriate question.

## ZVI KOLITZ

*This article is drawn from those that appeared in The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and the Jewish Theological Seminary website.*

Zvi Kolitz (17782,Pl.383), eclectic Jewish writer and producer who penned a fictional personal account of the Holocaust so moving that it was accepted as fact for many years, died on Sept. 29 in New York City. He was born in Alyta, Suwalk Guberniya in what is now Lithuania in 1919. In 1936, when he was 17, Zvi fled to Italy and then, in 1940, to Jerusalem, where he led the sort of adventurous life that gives pre-state Palestine, despite the darkness engulfing European Judaism at that hour, its unlikely romance. Zvi was, in the next few years, a prisoner of the British, a soldier in the British army, an official emissary for the World Zionist Congress, and an unofficial recruiter for the Irgun Zvai Leumi, led by Menachem Begin. It was while traveling to promote his multiple agendas that he found himself in Buenos Aires, giving speeches. In Argentina, he was asked to contribute to a Yiddish newspaper for a special Yom Kippur edition. As a result, Zvi wrote *Yossel Rakover Talks To G-d*, the imagined final plea of a Holocaust victim and his struggles to believe in G-d when the world has been turned inside-out all around him. This story has become a recognized classic.

While living in Israel in the early 1950s, Zvi was a co-writer and co-producer of another classic, *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer* (1954), a film about Israel's War of Independence. It was the first full-length motion picture produced in Israel and won an award at the Cannes Film Festival. Later, in the United States, he was co-producer of Rolf Hochhuth's acclaimed stage success *Deputy*, one of the first plays to challenge the Vatican's silence during the Holocaust. It ran on Broadway, amid considerable controversy, for nine months in 1964. Zvi was co-producer of several other Broadway shows, including *The Megilla of Itzik Manger* (1968), and a musical, *I'm Solomon*, an expensive flop that ran for only seven performances in 1968.

But he was best known for *Yossel Rakover Talks To G-d*. Dated April 28, 1943, the manuscript was reportedly found in a bottle in the charred ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto. In the story, the pious Yossel challenges G-d, "And so my G-d, before I die, freed from all fear, beyond all terror, in a state of absolute inner peace and trust, I will allow myself to call you to account one last time in my life. . . I believe in the G-d of Israel, even when He has done everything to make me cease to believe in Him." A few years after it was published, the story was translated into English and Hebrew but without Zvi Kolitz as the author. It was passed on as an authentic testimony of the Warsaw Ghetto and ended up in several Holocaust anthologies and even as a meditation in Jewish prayer books. It was many years before Zvi was able to recapture his story and claim it as his own. It was later translated under his name in editions in French, Italian, German, Spanish, Danish, and Swedish. In 1999, Pantheon published the story in a slim volume with afterwords by Paul Badde, Emmanuel Levinas, and Leon Wieseltier. Dr. Levinas called it "a text both beautiful and true, true as only fiction can be."

As a youth, Zvi studied in the Slobodka Yeshiva and, while in Italy, he attended the University of Florence and the Naval Academy at Civitavecchia. He then made aliyah and became intensely involved with the Zionist Revisionist party of Ze'ev Jabotinsky and was arrested by the British for his political activities. After Israel's independence in 1948, Zvi was an important figure in the country's literary and cultural life. Among his other works are *The Tiger Beneath the Skin: Stories and Parables of the Years of Death* (Creative Age Press, 1947), *Survival For What?* (The Philosophical Library, 1969), *The Teacher: An Existential Approach to the Bible* (Jason Aronson, 1982), and *Confrontation: The Existential Thought of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik* (Ktav, 1993). Until a few weeks before his death, Zvi was writing a weekly column for the Yiddish newspaper *Algemeiner Journal*. The column had appeared under his name for 32 years. He also taught courses in Jewish thought for many years at Yeshiva University.

Zvi Kolitz's prominence was no anomaly. There are many distinguished rabbis in both the Kolitz genealogy and the Lapin/Charlap line of his maternal grandmother Malka Lapin Hesselson (17103,Pl.377). Malka was one of 13 children of Pinchas ben Sheftel (11985,Pl.300) of Kretinga, Lithuania. Sheftel, or Shepsel (Shabtai) was the progenitor of the Lapin branch of the family. Oral testimony indicates his descent from David Charlap (4082,Pl.3) but that is before the time frame of existing records. We do know that after the dispersal from Iberia and the arrival of the Don Yahya/Charlap family in northeastern Europe, especially in Kurland (Latvia) and Lithuania, there had been continuing intermarriage among the Don Yahya, Charlap, Shereshevsky, and Lapin families. These intermarriages essentially created one vast family and that tradition was carried on in Suwalk and Grodno Guberniyas as Lapins, Shereshevskys, and Charlaps continued their traditions of arranged marriages with relatives.

Zvi is survived by his wife of 50 years, Mathilde (17946); son Dr. Jonathan Kolitz (17947) of Roslyn Heights, New York; two daughters, Daliah Shiloni (17948) of Kfar Saba, Israel; and Elinoar Rozen (17949) of Avichail, Israel; and eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. He also leaves a brother, Rabbi Yitzhak Kolitz (17783) and a sister Rachel Maralioth (17780), both of Jerusalem. Five other siblings predeceased him.

## A VISIT TO POLAND

by Sarah Brown (807,Pl.160)

*Around the time of the American Revolution, two cousins who were destined to marry, were born on the other side of the world in Nur, Poland. They were Chuna (3017,Pl.145) ben Yosef Kur (Kuropatwa) and Gittel (3019,Pl.6) bat Zevulon (Zawel) Ser. By 1860, the union of these cousins had produced many children. In that year, just before the American Civil War, their granddaughter Kayla Kur (503) married her cousin Baruch Pasternak (504). They had eight children in Nur, one of whom was a boy named Hanoch (556,Pl.153). In 1900 he wed Yehudit Tihilim (561) and settled in Ostrow Mazowieckie where he was a baker. Hanoch and Yehudit had five children including a boy named Ben Zion (800,Pl.160). He continued the Pasternak's baking tradition and in 1932 wed Batja Wishniak (804). Two years later, the young couple made aliyah. Three children were born to them in Israel: Sarah (807), Hanoch (588), and Eliezer (806). All have led exemplary lives, Sarah as a teacher, Hanoch a biologist/agronomist, and Eliezer a chemist. Sarah and her engineer husband Ben Zion Brown (865) live in Kiryat Ono. They have three married children and seven grandchildren. Sarah sent in the following to be shared with the family.*

I wish to tell you about my visit to Poland during this past summer. After making aliyah, my mother always said, "My foot will never again step on that cursed, hateful land." But my parents of blessed memory have been gone from me for a long time and I felt it necessary to see the land of their youth; the land that influenced them, the air they breathed, the smells they smelled. I hope they will forgive me.

My first visit was to Ostrow Mazowieckie; specifically 3 Czego Maja Road (Third of May Road). It is the main street in the town and my father Ben Zion Pasternak z"l lived there. The family lived on the second floor of a two story house. Their bakery was on the first floor. I was very excited to be there, but to my sorrow, #3 no longer exists. It was here that Polish soldiers shot my dear grandfather Hanoch Pasternak z"l. They wounded him badly in the stomach because he refused to bake bread on Passover that they wanted for the army. It was here that my father brought my mother after they were married in 1932. They lived and worked here for two years until they left for Israel. Now their home has been demolished, replaced by a parking lot for a nearby church.

From Ostrow Mazowieckie I went to Czyzewo where my mother Batja Wishniak Pasternak z"l had lived. This town is close to Treblinka and the railroad station is a reminder of the way Jews were taken to that accursed place. The Wishniaks had lived in a wooden house and I knew that much of Czyzewo had gone up in flames as a result of German bombing raids during the War. My mother's grandfather, Meyer Richter z"l

## LETTERS

I am looking for a Hassiba Benhaim [Ibn Yahya] from Marrakech, Morocco, daughter of Jacob Benhaim. She might have been born around 1910, give or take a few years. There is also a Hassiba [believed to be another person] who may have married an American. Also interested in any information about Salomon Benhaim, Aharon Benhaim, and Hananiah Benhaim. In addition, I am looking for the sisters of R' Menachem Serfaty, husband of Hanina Abecassis. Thank you for any help.

- Renee Payne

Washington, D.C.

E-mail: ReneeP8546@aol.com

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I am a genealogist who is trying to find connections to my family in Grodno and Suwalk. I came across your website and have been reading your Newsletters. I find them generally interesting and you are doing a real service. However, I must register a complaint. It appears that you often print articles that are hawkish on issues dealing with Israel. I do not feel that these have a place in a family newsletter, especially from the perspective of a secular American Jew.

- Irv Mandel

New York, NY

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The exchange of letters between Alec Dubro and Sam Ser (1655,Pl.115) that you published in a recent issue [*B'rayshit* vol. 13, no. 2] was illustrative of a problem that exists among many Jews who are not conversant with the real issues in the conflict. That is because their views are shaped by reports they get in the biased mass media. Sam Ser did a fine job in responding to Mr. Dubro. I would like to add the following perspective: To justify their violence and irredentism, Arab propagandists have developed an elaborate mythology about a stolen homeland, an ancient Palestinian nation, and a cruel expulsion at the hands of the Jews. They have repeated it so often and so loudly, and the media have echoed these lies, that much of the world has come to believe it. But none of it is true. The Arab myth of an ancient homeland stolen by Jews is dramatic and affecting, but it is still a myth. The truth is that in all history, there is only one people who have had a sovereign nation in the Holy Land with Jerusalem as its capital - the Jews.

- Bernard Eisenberg

Brooklyn, New York

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was a rich and well-known man. But nothing remains of his substantial house. My maternal grandfather, Eliezer Wishniak z"l was a respected Talmudist. They used to call him a genius. To my sorrow, nothing remained of his home. It is difficult to write more. Too many of our people and too much of our heritage in Poland has been destroyed. I can understand my mother's vow never to return there.

### BIRTHS

**Aiden Seth (Sender) Berklee** (17825,Pl.105) was born in West Hartford, Connecticut on May 31. He is the second son of Kenneth (223) and Betty (8735) and second grandchild of Beth Berkowitz (211). He is the sixth great-grandchild of Mimi Family (204) and the late Sidney Family (198), for whom he is named.

**Emma (Esther) Feldman** (17945,Pl.49) and **Samuel (Simcha) Feldman** (17944) were born in New York City on Oct. 6 to new parents Joseph (9787) and Lorraine (4429). The twins make three grandchildren for Albert Jablowsky (4408) and his wife Lynn Gross (16700). Albert's mother was the late Esther Charloff (4392), the noted Yiddish poet.

**Rachel Guttentag** (17973,Pl.326) was born in Israel on Aug. 2. She is the second child for HaRav Tuvia Yehuda (15528) and Nechama (16398) and ninth grandchild for Rabbi Nachum (15514) and Dvora (15507) Guttentag. Dvora is the daughter of Rabbi Reuven (4739,Pl.325) and Shoshana (15504) Elitzur, who now have 32 great-grandchildren.

**Chana Jacobson** (17970,Pl.325) was born on Sept. 3 in Israel, the first child for HaRav Tuvia (17076) and Tova (15586). Tova is the daughter of Rabbi Yaacov (15519) and Tziviva (15512) Weil and Chana is their first grandchild. Chana's great-grandparents are Rabbi Reuven and Shoshana Elitzur. (see previous entry).

**Ahuva Orenstein** (17971,Pl.384) was also born on Sept. 3 in Israel, the first child of HaRav Ze'ev (15572) and Miriam (16387) and first grandchild of Yitzhak (15517) and Yehudit. (15510) Orenstein. Yehudit is the daughter of Rabbi Reuven and Shoshana Elitzur. (see previous entries).

**Yesheyahu Panik** (17974,Pl.326) was born in Israel on June 28, the first child for HaRav Eyal (16136) and Batja (15530). Yesheyahu is one of nine grandchildren of Batja's mother and father, Rabbi Nachum and Dvora Guttentag and a great-grandchild of Rabbi Reuven and Shoshana Elitzur. (see Rachel Guttentag above).

**Ruth Schwartz** (17975,Pl.327) was born in Israel on Aug. 27. She is the second child of HaRav David Zvi (15539) and Tamar (16392) and the 22nd grandchild of Rabbi Dov (15515) and Pua (15508) Schwartz. Pua's parents are Rabbi Reuven and Shoshana Elitzur. (see previous entries).

**Abigail Waverly Simon** (17942,Pl.163) was born in Walnut Creek, California on Sept. 20, the first child for Jason (16311) and Rachel (1150). Abigail is the first grandchild for Rachel's mom, Marcy Golden (1144) and first great-grandchild for

Marcy's mom, Ada Kuhr Golden (1132). Ada's father David (678) was the youngest son of Mattis Leml Kur (672) and Shayna Parczewski (671) of Ciechanowiec and Milejchyce, Poland.

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### MARRIAGES

**Cheryl Family** (227,Pl.105) was wed to **Kenneth Saji** (17943) in Abscon, New Jersey on June 1. Cheryl is the daughter of Marshall (214) and Pamela (219) Family and granddaughter of the late Harry (199) and Betty (205) Family. Harry's parents were Shepsel Family (195) and Etka (190) bat Sender Ser.

**Chaya Ruchama Guttentag** (15529,Pl.326) was wed to **HaRav Uriel Yosef Arnest** (17972) in Israel on Oct. 3. Chaya is the daughter of Rabbi Nachum (15514) and Dvora (15507) Guttentag. Dvora's parents are Rabbi Reuven (4739,Pl.325) and Shoshana (15504) Elitzur. Reuven's mother was Shoshana (4702) bat Yaacov Chaim Betzalel Charlap (4699,Pl.53).

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### PERSONALS

*Since the very first issue of this Newsletter, we have been asked to start a personal column for those seeking mates, companionship, employment, etc. This issue marks the first regular appearance of such a column. We urge our readers to pay special attention to these requests as they are all from our own mishpocha. Interested replies should be sent to our e-mail address or post office address shown on page 2.*

Israeli gentleman, 35 years old, seeks life-long mate. She needn't be from Israel but should be between 25 and 40, intelligent, attractive, a non-smoker, and not overweight. I am an intelligent and romantic eligible bachelor, freelance photographer, who seeks a committed relationship. [refer to P801]

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Attractive, articulate, well-educated, and healthy woman, a young 70 years old, seeking the equivalent in a man of manners who wants to share the so-called golden years. I live in New York City and love the theatre and the myriad cultural pleasures the city offers. Let's enjoy them together. [refer to P802]

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Technically oriented entrepreneur is interested in business opportunities. Will invest in going business looking to expand, or entertain business initiatives. Can offer managerial expertise and team of professionals (accounting, legal, architecture, engineering, information technology) to those with serious proposals. [refer to B701]

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## OBITUARIES

**Frieda Cohen Basbaum** (17565,Pl.373) died on Aug. 29 at the age of 87. She was born on Oct. 22, 1914, most likely in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Her father was born David Kopyto (17527) but changed his name upon arriving in Canada. David's father Abraham was born in 1860 in Andrzejewo, Poland but died in Israel. Abraham's parents were Hersch Zvi Kopyto (5561) and Sarah Esther Pianko (5567). Pianko was a well-known Ciechanowiec family and had connections with the Sers. Indeed, Abraham's sister Chaya (1286) married her cousin Zebulon Ser (1285). This couple gave rise to a large family, many centered in Chattanooga, Tennessee. (see Pl.120). Freida had four children by her husband Ben Basbaum (17570): Melvin (17575), Alan (17576), Elinor (17577), Nissa (17578).

**Ephraim Eliezer Zvi Charlap** (3835,Pl.10) died during the month of Cheshvan 5763 (Oct. 2002). He was educated as a rabbi and was in the import/export business. He was a resident of Kew Garden Hills, New York. Ephraim was born in Jerusalem on Feb. 17, 1934. His father Rabbi Yosef David Charlap (3737) was Rosh Yeshiva of Bais Zvul. His grandfather was Rabbi Yaacov Moshe Charlap (3730), the esteemed religious leader and colleague of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. Ephraim is survived by his wife Sarah (3839), sons Yaacov Moshe (3843) of Flushing, New York and Chaim Leib (3844) of Jerusalem and nine grandchildren.

**Sally (Sarah Malka) Beit Charloff** (4413,Pl.49) died in Florida on Sept. 26. She was born in Norwich, Connecticut on April 2, 1927 and married Sol Charloff (4403) on Sept. 3, 1951. Sol is descended from a long and distinguished line of Charlap cantors who were centered in Tykocin, Poland. Sally received a B.A. degree from the University of Connecticut and an MSW from Rutgers University. She was a social worker for many years before retiring to Florida and Hiawasee, Georgia. Sally is survived by her husband; daughter Beth Neider (4424) of Hendersonville, Tennessee; daughter Candice Buchman (4423) of Marietta, Georgia; son Leonard (4422) of Miami, Florida; and five grandchildren.

**Lily Stambovsky Donchin** (12521,Pl.192), age 95, of Delray Beach, Florida, died on Sept. 27. Born in Point Pleasant, New Jersey, she lived there and in Perth Amboy, Jersey City, and Manalapan for 90 years. Lily graduated from Trenton State Normal School and was a teacher in Woodbridge and Jersey City, New Jersey. She was married to Herman Donchin (12516) in 1941. Herman was descended from that branch of the Don Yahya family that moved north from Spain after the expulsion of 1492 and entered northeastern Europe through the Baltic region of Latvia and Lithuania. He was also descended from the Vilna Gaon. Lily is survived by a daughter, Gertrude

## ISTANBUL MARRIAGE RECORDS

*A partial index of Istanbul Jewish marriage records between 1904 and 1935 reveals several marriages involving Yahya relatives. Many of our ancestors found safe haven in the Ottoman Empire after fleeing from Spain and Portugal. These Yahas are descended from that group. Others migrated north to Russian controlled territory and became known by the honorary title of Charlap. Some of the entries have no date. It is assumed that the year is approximately where the entry is placed.*

- 1904 Yosef ben Avram Dana m. Luna bat Shabtai Yahya
- 1905 Isak ben Moshe Alouf m. Bulisa Hanula bat Merkado Elia Yahya
- 1905 Yosef ben Moshe Eskenazi m. Sinyuru bat Elia Yahya
- 1905 Yosef ben Chaim Kohen m. Miryam bat Elia Yahya
- Nissan ben Yosef Eskenazi m. Sara bat Celebon Yahya
- Daniel ben Avram Mayorkas m. Esther bat Nissan Yahya
- Moshe ben Israel Pardo m. Roza bat Elia Yahya
- Shabtai ben Chaim Yahya m. Kalo bat Nissan Behar
- Elia ben Chaim Yahya m. Zunbul bat Isak Lar
- Isak ben Ref. Yahya m. Esther bat Ref. Rozales
- Israel ben Avram Yahya m. Sara bat Lazar Saban
- Avraham ben Aaron Yahya m. Sultana bat Elia Atias
- 1907 Elia Mordecai ben Moshe Yahya m. Sinyuru bat Yehuda Behar
- 1907 Yomtov ben Salomon Yahya m. Malkuna bat Chaim Pinto

(cont. next page)

\*\*\*\*\*  
 Chityat (12571), of Boca Raton, Florida; a son, Norman (12572), of Billerica, Massachusetts; and three grandchildren.

**Zvi Kowitz** (see article on page 5)

**Esther Auerbach Sahr** (95,Pl.103), age 88, of Schenectady, New York died on Aug. 22. She was born in Ashley, North Dakota on June 8, 1914. She married Jacob Sahr (78) in 1941. Jacob's father Mottel (74) was born in Nur or Ciechanowiec, Poland to Sender Ser (1,Pl.101) and Chaya Podkowa (2), who were cousins. Mottel followed his older brothers Yankel Lazer (3) and Yitzhak (7) to America and settled in Schenectady. Esther was a member of Congregation Beth Israel in Schenectady and the Daughters of Sarah Auxiliary. She had worked as a bookkeeper for many years with the Schenectady County Public Library, retiring in 1973. Esther studied art at SUNY Albany and expressed her exceptional talent in painting, lithography, etching, stained glass, quilting, and sewing. She is survived by her son Richard (100) of East Nassau, New York and two grandchildren Aaron (102) and Benjamin (103).

## KRISTALLNACHT REMEMBERED

A major concert dedicated to the memory of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust and as a musical expression in support of universal understanding was held on October 30 at the Mahaffey Theatre in St. Petersburg, Florida. Aaron Harlap (4401,Pl.50) was the guest conductor of the Florida Orchestra and composer of an important part of the concert. The piece entitled "Pictures from the Private Collection of G-d" made its USA premier at this concert. It was accompanied by works of Kurt Weill, Morton Gould, Michael Tilson Thomas, and John Williams.

Aaron was born in Chatham, Ontario, Canada on Nov. 9, 1941, the son of Mottel (4386) and Etta (4394) Charloff. His father was a noted cantor, as was his grandfather Yitzhak Yaacov Charlap (4383), director of the famous Tykocin Conservatory. Mottel had left Tykocin for Bialystok, where he got involved with Zionist groups. He made aliyah and, despite his religious training, was thrilled to work in the construction of the Jewish yishuv. Mottel and Etta were married in Israel in the 1930s and spent five years together continuing to build the Jewish community. Mottel had been in Israel about 16 years when the couple left to join Etta's family who had settled in Winnipeg, Canada. It was said that Mottel was "a man of great knowledge that reflected his renowned family name. Every conversation was spiced with *Torah* and sparkled with wisdom. His keen and gentle sense of humor was a delight to the joy and heart and mirrored his kind, loving, optimistic personality." This heritage informs Aaron's music.

Aaron began his career as a pianist. In 1963 he completed his studies at the University of Manitoba, majoring in mathematics and music. In 1964 he made aliyah to Israel. He continued his studies at the Royal College of Music in London, England and at the Rubin Academy of Music in Tel Aviv. He studied conducting with Sir Adrian Boult in London, with Hans Swarowsky in Vienna, and Gary Bertini in Israel.

Aaron is famous as a choral, operatic, and orchestral conductor. He has been guest conductor of orchestras and opera in Canada, the United States, Europe, and South Africa. In Israel he has conducted the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the Israel National Opera, and the Tel Aviv Philharmonic Choir.

As a composer, Aaron's works have been performed frequently in the aforementioned countries, as well as in Israel, and include compositions for chorus, chamber ensembles, and symphony orchestras. He is a Senior Lecturer at the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem, where he also holds the position of Head of the Opera Department. He is also Music Director and Conductor of the Kfar Saba Chamber Choir and "Bel Canto" - the Israel Male Choir, Kfar Saba.

Aaron and his wife Hadassah (4411) live in Kfar Saba. They have three children: Dana (4442), Jonathan (6988), and Leor (6963).

## ISTANBUL MARRIAGE RECORDS (cont.)

- 1908 Mordecai ben Avraham Yahya m. Malkuna bat Beh. Sarfati  
 1908 Daniel ben Salomon Yahya m. Rivka bat Salomon Beraha  
 1908 Isak ben Celebon Yahya m. Esther bat Yaacov Barlia  
 1910 Isak ben David Fis m. Shulamit bat David Yahya  
 1910 Nissan ben Shabtai Yahya m. Perla bat Isak Baruch  
 1910 Mordecai ben Yaacov Yahya m. Vida Bat Nissan Behar  
 1910 Yomtov ben Nissan Yahya m. Esther bat Moshe Sevi (Zevi)  
 1910 Isak ben Yaacov Yahya m. Esther bat Isak Behar  
 1910 Yaacov ben Salomon Yahya m. Sunbul bat Yaacov Mardil  
 1911 Salomon ben Behar Yahya m. Esther bat Nisim ben Ezra  
 1912 Isak ben Nissan Moshe Yahya m. Esther bat Chaim Mizrahi  
 1913 Chaim ben Elia Yahya m. Rivka bat Moshe Morhaim  
 1920 Yaacov ben Moshe Yahya m. Sinyuru bat Ben Sion Baruch  
 1920 Yaacov ben Shmuel Yahya m. Sara bat Yeshua Razon  
 1920 Israel ben Behar Yahya m. Estreya bat Semaya Medina  
 1921 Yaacov ben Nissan Yahya m. Miryam bat Daniel Altalef  
 1921 Nissan ben Avram Iguar m. Esther bat Elia Yahya  
 1922 Moshe ben Isak Bella m. Sara bat Moshe Yahya  
 1922 Aron ben Nahum Cukriel m. Sara bat Moshe Yahya  
 1930 Yahiel Kalaonra m. Rivka bat David Yahya  
 1935 Avraham ben Elia Bicaci m. Coya bat Isak Yahya  
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## ACTOR JOHN GABRIEL

John Gabriel is an actor who has starred in films and on television. Among his credits are the movie *It's My Turn* (with Jill Clayburgh and Michael Douglas), *Yentl* (with Barbara Streisand) and the ABC soap *Ryan's Hope*. John's wife, Sandy, was a star on another ABC soap *All My Children*.

John's father, Harry Monkarsh, was born in Eretz Yisrael circa 1901. But his family apparently returned to Poland and he was raised in Zambrow and Czyzewo. Both are towns that were home to many of our ancestors and the Monkarsh family had intermarried with our Kur-Pasternak branch. We have been investigating whether these marriages were arranged among cousins. Another family, the Blattmans, are involved in this complexity.

Both John's and Sandy's parents ran grocery stores. John was born in Niagra Falls, NY and was bar mitzvah at Congregation Beth El. Sandy's father went from Montreal to Los Angeles, where she was born.

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