



THE SER-CHARLAP FAMILY NEWSLETTER

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THE ASHKENAZI IBN YAHYA FAMILY

There is ample evidence, as presented heretofore in this publication, that the modern Charlap family descends directly from the honored Don Yahya (Ibn Yahya) family of Spain and Portugal. Abraham Charlap (2153,Pl.A), the progenitor of our family, represents the ninth generation after Eliezer Ibn Yahya entered Poland and assumed the honorary title Charlap. Eliezer's great-great-grandfather Yosef had been born in Florence, Tuscany where his family had fled after the expulsion from Iberia. Many of the Ibn Yahya family had found temporary havens in Italy, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire. Even before the expulsion of the late fifteenth century, Spanish and Portuguese Jews were plying the trade routes to the East through both the Mediterranean and Baltic Seas. Jewish settlements began to spring up in ports along these routes. Ancient Jewish communities had already existed along the southern routes in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. With the Age of Exploration international trade flourished and Jewish shippers and bankers from Iberia were in the forefront of the newer enterprises. When ecclesiastical tyranny forced the Jews from Spain and Portugal it was natural for them to seek haven in the trading outposts with which they already had commercial alliances and bonds of blood. Many of the exiles fled north to Belgium, Holland, and Germany. Portuguese Jews flocked to Antwerp and through their business acumen transformed that city into the most important Belgian port, replacing the beautiful medieval city of Bruges. Others settled in Altona, near Hamburg. Other Sephardic families ventured further east along the Hanseatic trade route and established presences in Lubeck, Danzig, and Memel. As the Spanish hold on Holland weakened during the 1500s, Jews and *Marranos* showed up in Amsterdam. By the latter part of the century the capital of the little republic became known as the Dutch Jerusalem.

While this dispersion was taking place, Poland was developing into a great power. In 1525, under King Sigismund I, Poland had extended hegemony over Prussia, and was soon to incorporate Latvia and Estonia. Within a few decades the Polish throne would control a vast area from the Baltic to the Black Seas. The eastern city-states of the Hanseatic League fell under Polish influence. On the other side, the Poles were the protector's of Europe's southern flank, repeatedly threatened by the Turks. To ameliorate the latter concern, trade alliances were periodically arranged with the Ottoman Empire. At the time, the Polish regime was one of the strongest and most liberal in Europe. In its better period it allowed a genuine equality to the other races and extensive self-government to some of them. That atmosphere attracted Jews from the south and the northwest. Some, like Eliezer Charlap came from Turkey. Others who had migrated to the Baltic city-states found Poland to be a hospitable respite after generations of wanderings. The Jewish population of Poland multiplied by a factor of six during the sixteenth century. The growth was not only due to a natural increase in the Ashkenazi population. The number of Polish Jews soared in the decades after the expulsions from Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1496. Adding to this increase were Ibn Yahyas who had entered Poland through the Baltic route.

We have already mentioned that, under Christian rule in Spain, some Ibn Yahyas changed their name to Don Yahya. In northern and eastern Europe the name often was altered to give it still more of a native sound. Don Yahya became Dongin, Donchin, Dionis and a myriad of variations. The original name of Alvaro Dionis (Diniz) was Shmuel

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ASHKENAZI IBN YAHYAS (cont.)

Ibn Yahya. He had been master of the mint in Altona and Gluckstadt, near Hamburg. Diniz (also known as Alberto de Nyes) "maintained one of three local synagogues in his house. . . [He] was the author of an abortive scheme to procure a settlement of Portuguese Jews in the kingdom of Bohemia. His descendants were the financial agents to the Dukes of Gottorp (Schleswig-Holstein) and to the Danish crown." [Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1941/5701), pp. 231-232.] "By 1605, Diniz had established his main office in Hamburg with branches in Lubeck, Gdansk [Danzig] and throughout the Polish countryside. In 1622, King Christian IV of Denmark granted Diniz' firm a monopoly on the import of *baysalz* or *boysalz*, a salt from the Bay of Biscay, highly prized throughout the region. . . In the eighteenth century, descendants of this family lived at Lozdzieje and Bakelarzewo in Suwalk *Guberniya* of Poland. Some members engaged in the salt trade and were known by the surname of Bejm (from *baje*, the Polish spelling of bay). The name Diniz was used as a given name, particularly for women (Dina). . . a Dina Ibn Jachia fled the Iberian Peninsula with her family and settled in Italy; the Charlap pedigree descends through her to a great-grandson who settled in Poland. . . The combination of Italian and Dutch elements in his [Diniz] correspondence permit us to assume that he was in the Netherlands and in Italy before coming to Hamburg." [Susan C. Sherman, "Sephardic Migrations Into Poland," *Avotaynu* VI, 2 (Summer 1990): 15] The implication here is that Diniz (Shmuel Ibn Yahya) was related to Dina, wife of David Ibn Yahya ben Yosef. This conclusion appears justified from my research and analysis. Susan Sherman has provided a major service with her *Avotaynu* article; that is, to draw attention to the fact that the gap between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews is somewhat artificial. No Jew from Poland or Russia can state with certainty that he has no Sephardic ancestors. The different traditions of the two groups arose from their varied geographical locations but all

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Jews are in reality one people. Ms. Sherman has made one error. She states that the Charlaps descend from Dina's great-grandson who settled in Poland. She is two generations off; Eliezer Charlap was the great-great-great-grandson of David and Dina Ibn Yahya.

CHURCHILL AND PALESTINE

David Lyon Hurwitz (4062,Pl.A-3ab) has received praise for his scholarly article "Churchill and Palestine" which appeared in the Winter 1995 issue of *Judaism*. United States Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York called it "an important piece of research which should be required reading for anyone interested in the Middle East and the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is folly to try to solve today's problems without understanding their antecedents." Howard Barbanel, President of Likud, USA, exclaimed, "The article is brilliantly written and researched." As an aside, Howard is descended from the Abravanel family of Spain. They are related to us through a branch which split off about the year 1200 C.E. David's article is more than well-researched; it is informed by personal experience. Indeed, David begins by saying, "One day in London half a century ago I met Herbert Samuel at his home on Porchester Terrace - I had a letter of introduction from my father. [Samuel had been British High Commissioner of the Palestinian Mandate.] Another day I heard Winston Churchill speak in Parliament. These personal memories of men who had played central roles in the Palestine Mandate move me now to look back at that formative era, and consider what bearings it may have on territorial changes now under way."

David Hurwitz is retired from a career of research and writing on business subjects but, as the subject article indicates, he is still contributing his talents to writing. He is compiling an index to the complete contents of *The Menorah Journal*, which was published for some forty-six years starting in 1915. David is also working on various historical and biographic studies. David's parents were Henry Hurwitz (4049) and Ruth Sapinsky (4041). Both were prominent in the world of letters, Henry being the force behind *The Menorah Journal*. Ruth's parents were Jacob Sapinsky (4023,Pl.A-3a) and Minnie Charlap (4019), who had settled in the Louisville, Kentucky area. Minnie's father was Yosef Zev (3159,Pl.A), a scholar and teacher in Mariampole, Lithuania.

A nation may be said to consist of its territory, its people, and its laws. The territory is the only part which is of certain durability.

- Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 1, 1862

THE CONFRONTATION

by Aaron Levy

Aaron Levy (1350, Pl. 8b) is a high school senior in Westchester County, New York. His previous contribution to Brayshit: The Ser-Charlap Family Newsletter was "My Grandfather: The Double Agent" [vol. 3, no. 1, Adar 5752]. Aaron was recently honored as his school's "Scholar of the Month." He is the son of Abraham (1343) and Pat (1346) Levy and the grandson of Larry (1339) and Toby (1342) Levy of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

I only met him once. It was a rather unusual confrontation, to say the least. We met in the underground bunker just south of the city. Neck and legs fettered, the Nazi doctor sat motionless, enshrouded in darkness. His constant sobbing echoed throughout the room; his pain chilled the heart. Hearing my footsteps approach, the unkempt man jerked around but, blinded by the light, he reverted to his previous position.

"Who comes here?" he blared out. There was no answer. At least not immediately. I quickly shut the heavy steel door and tried to acclimate myself to the dark and deathly aroma of the cave interior. Listening quietly, almost impatiently, until the guard locked the door from the other side, I responded to Dr. Mengele's questioning call.

"It is I."

"What is it you want? I have nothing more to say to your kind. If the gallows are ready, then so be it. I am ready as well." He returned to his pitiful whimpering, head in hands, sobbing hysterically now. And as he proceeded to bend his head beneath his shackled legs, so as to avoid the faint but piercing light, I paced slowly back and forth, pensive.

"What is it you fear?" I asked. "It is not the light, is it?" Eliciting no response, I continued. "You know it takes a true coward to ignore the searching light, or even the presence of the lighthouse, amidst a sea of darkness. But then, I suppose, it would do no good anyhow. Not for you. You cannot survive the storm. Not this late. Not now."

Having faced the door all the while, a faint stream of light piercing the darkness, I turned around. I discerned, with remorse that he was of small stature. I reminded myself that he was a coward nevertheless. And all those years he had wrought such havoc. He spread evil like never before. Just one man, one neurotic man with an entire people behind him. And what power he had! But there he was before me - a coward. A small coward of a man with no conscience, no goodness.

"What is it you want? I see it is not my life or else I would have been dead long ago. I should have cleansed the world of you when I had ---"

"And I wish I had the chance to do the same to you. But alas, it is not my decision to make. Nor was it yours to murder my people. But you wouldn't understand that, would you? Nor will you ever understand. What a concept! To cleanse the world of the Jews. Now there is true genius, shown in all its glory." I chuckled sarcastically. My pity for his wretched soul was now converted to hatred and the desire for vicious revenge.

"You condemned us to die in our own filth, to drown in mud, in our own excrement. You, your party, your people - all wished to abase us, to destroy our human dignity, to efface every vestige of humanity, to return us to the level of wild animals, to fill us with contempt toward ourselves and our fellows. But from the instant I grasped the motivating principle I saw the light! I vowed not to become the contemptible, disgusting brute that you, my enemy, wished me to be." And with that, I struggled to hold myself back from doing to him what he had done to my people, lest I become just a shade more like his own tragic being.

"So I see you are catching on," he sneered. "You know, all that separates the two of us is a matter of opinion. While I have faith in the absolute truthfulness of my own, your opinion is only relative in nature. In time, you will discover there are more like me. Many more. And the conviction we hold is unstoppable. None of you will ever be safe." And with that he let out an inhuman snort as his visage changed to an ugly grin. He turned himself around once again.

"Wrong!" I yelled out. "More than opinion separates us. Both mouth and hand separate the two of us. Both by word and deed are we different. For thousands of years fools like you have told us the same thing, prophesying our doom, speaking of us as the wretched of the earth. We have survived you all. Sometimes we found ourselves in better positions, sometimes we were worse off than before, but never have we been defeated. So now the light shines on your failure and the failures of people like you. You do not have the foresight to see your own foolhardiness. Truth is not relative; with beauty it goes hand in hand. There is no truth in your life. You and your people are truly ugly. In darkness the eye sees nothing. Only what the mind wants to see does the mind think it sees." And with that I returned to my position at the lighted door. "You see, I am not like you. I have goodness in me. I am not completely selfish. You are evil incarnate. You have learned to kill, to abominate, even to exterminate. Your eyes perceive darkness as if it were the

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THE CONFRONTATION (cont.)

lighted truth. We are entirely different. We see through two different sets of eyes." I continued lecturing this aged criminal as he turned his smirking face towards me. "And now my fiendish friend, I wish to tell you a story, a story of true rabbinic wisdom:

One day, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi asked the Prophet Elijah, "When will the Messiah come?"

Elijah answered, "Go to him and ask him."

Rabbi Joshua wanted to know, "But where is he?"

Elijah replied, "At the gates of Rome."

"And how shall I recognize him?"

"He is sitting among the poor lepers. But, while all the others take off their bandages at once and put them on again all together, the Messiah takes off his bandages one after the other and puts them on again one after the other. For he thinks that G-d might call him at any moment to bring redemption and he therefore holds himself in a state of constant preparedness."

Rabbi Joshua went to the gates of Rome and greeted him. "Peace be upon you my Master and Teacher."

The Messiah replied, "Peace be upon you, son of Levi."

"When will the Master come?"

"Today!". . .

Later, Rabbi Joshua complained to the Prophet Elijah, "The Messiah has lied to me. He said that he was coming today; but he did not come."

Elijah answered, "You did not understand him correctly. He was quoting Psalm 95:7 to you: 'Today, if you will but hearken to His voice.'"

"So you see, I and my people are very different from you and your people. And now I must hearken to His voice. It is your lot to begin the hard task of restoring the name of the German people. But this cannot be done until you have reared a new generation amongst whom it is impossible to find those prepared to commit such crimes. I truly have little faith in you. After all, you failed even to perceive the light of the lighthouse when beaming straight at you. However, your life is not in my hands. It is not my decision to make. Perhaps one day you will understand; see the light and leave the cave. I can only hope for that day. If it comes it will be the day the Messiah appears forever, permanently. I must leave. I have nothing more to do here, nothing more to say."

With that, I knocked on the door for the guard and silently left the cave of darkness. I kept looking back, listening for that one necessary knock from the other side. It never came. Perhaps one day . . . Today, if he will but hearken to His voice.

NEW ADDITIONS

Rachel Sarah Beth Brown (9283,Pl.21aa) was born on Feb. 7, the second child of Adam (4584) and Giselle (7211) of Englewood, New Jersey. Rachel and her brother Jacob are grandchildren of Beatrice (4523) and the late Manuel (4514) Brown. Manuel's mother, Sarah (4492) was a Lew through her mother and her father. Her parents were Pinchas Beryl (4478,Pl.21) and Esther Malka (4479). Pinchas assumed the name Goldstein after emigrating from Ciechanowiec and settling in Indianapolis. Rachel's father, Adam, is a graduate attorney and real estate developer. Giselle is a physical therapist.

Zachary Gordon (9374,Pl.17b) was born on Jan. 25 in Trenton, New Jersey. He is the first child for Michael (1842) and Muriel (1840) and the first grandchild for Irv (1833) and Shulamit (1837) Mankuta. Zachary's great grandparents were Kalman Mankuta (1787) and Yehudis Parczewski (1785) and Kalman's mother was Rachel Leah Tama (1852,Pl.18). Hence, Rachel has genes from three branches of our family. Michael and Muriel are both medical doctors.

Sarah Rachel Hirschfield (9292,Pl.18c), born Jan. 16, is the second daughter for Joel (2810) and Amy (1935) of Simsbury, Connecticut. Amy is the daughter of Dan (1895) and Marcia (1893) Gikner who now have four grandchildren. Marcia's parents are the late Velvel Simon (1872) and Sarah Mankuta (1864). Sarah's parents were Yankel Mankuta (1855,Pl.19b) and Rachel Leah Tama (1852). So Sarah Rachel and her cousin Zachary Gordon have the same great-great-grandmother.

Gabriel Garey (Yisrael Noah) Levine (9293,Pl.26b) was born in New York City on Feb. 21. He is the first child of Michael (5699) and Julie (5721) and first grandchild of Jack (5658) and Anita (5661) Levine. Jack's father was Harry (5642), who was a Lew/Lewin from both his parents. Their names were Kalman Lewin (5007) and Chaya Faiga Lew (5012). The baby's father is on sabbatical from Yale University where he is a professor of comparative literature. His latest book is *Writing Through Repression*, published by Johns Hopkins University Press. Julie is also a writer and film critic for *US Magazine*.

Galit Mimram (9376,Pl.26b) is a new Sabra in the family, born on April 2 in Ashkelon. She is the fourth child for Michael (5702) and Marcia (5697) and the fourth grandchild of Arthur (5657) and Sybil (5660)

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THE ROYAL HOUSE OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

The Ser-Charlap family has a tradition of descent from King David. That illustrious ancestry has been documented by rigorous research. The family archives contain fourteen independent sources of family trees which, considering the span of time, show remarkable consistency. All available data on the Davidic descendancy have been correlated and an authoritative version, with supporting material, will be published in the forthcoming book on the history of the family. The following is the patrilineal line starting with King David. Mothers, when known are indicated.

1. King David, (ca 1040 B.C.E.-ca 968 B.C.E.)
2. Solomon (ca 992 B.C.E.-ca 928 B.C.E.), son of Bathsheva.
3. Rehoboam, son of Naamah, King of Judah until 916 B.C.E.
4. Abijah, son of Maacah, reigned to 913 B.C.E.
5. Asa, ruled from 872-867 B.C.E.
6. Jehoshaphat, son of Azubah, reigned to 847 B.C.E.
7. Jehoram (ca 878-838 B.C.E.)
8. Ahaziah (ca 880-837 B.C.E.), son of Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.
9. Joash, son of Zibiah, assassinated 792 B.C.E.
10. Amaziah, son of Jehoaddin, died in 763 B.C.E.
11. Azariah (Uzziah) (801-733 B.C.E.), son of Jecoliah.
12. Jotham (784-743 B.C.E.), son of Jerushah.
13. Ahaz (763-727 B.C.E.)
14. Hezekiah (752-698 B.C.E.), son of Abiah.
15. Manasseh (710-643 B.C.E.), son of Hephzibah.
16. Amon (665-641 B.C.E.), son of Meshullameth.
17. Josiah (649-610 B.C.E.), son of Jedidah.
18. Jehoiakim (Eliakim) (634-598 B.C.E.)
19. Jehoiachin, b. 606 B.C.E., son of Nehusta. First of the Exilarchs.
20. Shaltiel (Assir Shaltiel)
21. Pedaiah
22. Zerubbabel, b. ca. 540 B.C.E., Governor of Judah under Darius of Persia. Temple restored in Jerusalem.
23. Meshullam
24. Hananiah
25. Berechiah, b. ca 450 B.C.E.
26. Chisdiah (Hasadiah), Exilarch
27. Hezekiah
28. Yeshaiah, Exilarch
30. David
31. Shlomo
32. Shemaiah, Exilarch
33. David
34. Shechanaiah, Exilarch, Second Temple destroyed.
35. Hezekiah, Exilarch
36. Shalom
37. Nathan De-Zuzita, contemporary of Rabbi Akiva.
38. Huna
39. Shlomo
40. Yaacov
41. Nahum, Exilarch
42. David
43. Yohanan, Exilarch
44. Shafat
45. Anan
46. Hiyya (Chiya)
47. Huna, "the Babylonian." (ca 216-296 C.E.); 1st *Rosh Yeshiva* at Sura.
48. Nathan (Mar Ukban II), son of Hobah. Exilarch ca 260-270.
49. Nehemiah, Exilarch ca 313.
50. Nathan De-Zuzita (Mar Ukban III), Exilarch, 4th century.
51. Abba, Exilarch
52. Mar Kahana or Nathan. It is not clear which of these brothers continues our line.
53. Mar Zutra I, Exilarch from 401-409, d. ca 414.
54. Kahana II, Exilarch.
55. Huna VI, appointed Exilarch in 488, d. 508.
56. Chiskiah (Hezekiah); brother of Mar Zutra II, King in Mahoza.
57. David
58. Mar Zutra III, Exilarch. Returned to *Eretz Yisrael*. *Palestinian Talmud* completed. b. ca 523.
59. Guriah (Bostenai), Exilarch
60. Mar Zutra IV
61. Yaacov
62. Magus
63. Nehemiah
64. Abdimi
65. Chatzov
66. David
67. Nathan
68. Abraham
69. Zakai, b. ca 880, Exilarch.
70. David, Exilarch, d. 940.
71. Yehuda, Exilarch; supported by Saadiah Gaon.
72. ben Yehuda; lived with and was student of Saadiah Gaon.
73. Chiskiah (Hezekiah), last of the Exilarchs; executed in 1040.
74. Ben Chiskiah - 2 sons of Chiskiah fled to Spain under the sponsorship of Joseph Hanaggid ben Shmuel. One son settled in the region of Saragossa, the other went to Portugal. Their descendants gave rise to two great families of Iberia, the Abravanel and Ibn Yahya.
75. Grandchild of Chiskiah; name unknown.
76. Chiya (Hiyya) al-Daudi; (ca 1085-1154), rabbi, composer, poet, and royal advisor.
77. Yaish Ibn Yahya (ca 1120-1196); scholar and politician in Portugal, royal advisor.
78. Yahya el Negro (ca 1150-1222)
79. Yehuda Ibn Yahya, known as "Prince."
80. Yosef ha-Zaken Ibn Yahya, b. ca 1210; royal advisor, poet, Talmudist; built magnificent synagogue in Lisbon, ca 1260.
81. Shlomo ha-Zaken Ibn Yahya; philosopher, royal military advisor.
82. Gedaliah Ibn Yahya; physician to King, scholar and administrator of Jewish communities of Castile. Settled in Toledo.
83. David Ibn Yahya, d. 1385; Chief Rabbi of Castile, royal advisor.
84. Shlomo Ibn Yahya, born in Toledo, fled to Portugal, royal advisor.
85. David Ibn Yahya, d. ca 1450.
86. Yosef Ibn Yahya (1425-1498); King Alfonso V called him the "Wise Jew of Portugal." Fled forced conversion and settled in Italy. Scholar and Talmudist.
87. David Ibn Yahya (1465-1543), b. Lisbon, m. Dinah [see "The Ashkenazi Ibn Yahya Family," p. 1]; rabbi, philosopher, Talmudist, writer, teacher. Lived in Italy.
88. Yosef Ibn Yahya b. 1494 in Florence, m. Abigail. Scholar, writer.
89. Gedaliah Ibn Yahya (1515-1587), b. in Imola, Italy. Author of *Shalshet ha-Kaballah (Chain of Tradition)* which contains a family genealogy.

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NEW ADDITIONS (cont. from p. 4)

Levine. Arthur and Jack, grandfather of new addition Gabriel Levine, are brothers. Marcia made *aliyah* from New York and Michael was born in Fez, Morocco. They live in Kiryat Gat. Marcia, in addition to being a mother of four, owns two successful book stores. Michael is a manufacturer of lithographic plates.

Laura Devin Peterson (9312,Pl.3c) was born on March 8 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Parents, Curtis (1482) and Alison (64), are happy that their son Dale (8446) has a sister. Laura's grandparents are Bob (51) and Hazel (52) Reichard. Bob's mother, Etta (38), is the reigning matriarch of the family. She will be 100 years on Nov. 14. Etta, widow of Ted Reichard (37), is the daughter of the late Isaac (Max) (7) and Esther (Elsie) (8) Sahr. Isaac was descended from Sers, Kiejsmachers, Lewins, and Charlaps.

Nadav Rotem (9377,Pl.3eb) is our latest Sabra, born on April 24, the first child for Yahli (8619) and Rivka (251). Nadav is the sixth grandchild for Joseph (247) and Bella (248) Familja. Joseph's parents, who were martyred during the Holocaust, were David Familja (380) and Rivka Ser (379). Joseph's story is one of heroism during and after World War II. His, and Bella's, three children and six grandchildren are a testament to the rebirth of our family and people in Israel.

MARRIAGES

Jerome Fortinsky (9169,Pl.A-9e) married **Gila E. Gellman** (9173) on Feb. 25. Rabbi Adam Mintz officiated at the Jewish Community Center of Harrison, New York. Rabbi William Horn, an uncle of the bride, took part in the ceremony. Jerry is the son of Albert (9166) and Marjorie (9162) Fortinsky. Marjorie, who teaches life science at NYU, is descended from the Charlap family branch that settled in the area of Slonim. Her great-grandmother, Breine Charlap (9016) married Noah Rosansky (9017). Jerry Fortinsky was an assistant to the Governor for regional affairs in the Cuomo administration. He graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University and received his law degree from Yale University. Gila is also a graduate attorney from Georgetown University. She graduated summa cum laude from Boston University where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Jerry and Gila are both working with New York law firms. Albert is retired as Chief Financial Officer of Oppenheimer & Co., the investment bank.

OBITUARIES

Eugene Levine (5680,Pl.26ba) died on Jan. 27, 1995 at age 57. Eugene lived in California where he operated a chemical sales business. He was the son of Louis (5666) and Pauline (5671) Levine and grandson of Joseph Levine (5643). His biological grandmother, Esther Lewin (5654) was from the same Lewin family of Ciechanowiec as her husband. She died in Europe after Joseph had emigrated to Kansas City. Louis had already been born and joined his father in America after World War I. Eugene was raised in Kansas City where he grew up with the large numbers of his family who had settled there. He was especially close with his grandparents Joseph and Blanche Jaben (5655) Levine. He is survived by his wife Jacqueline (5693) and four daughters: Janet (5713), Kathy (5714), Heidi (5715), and Lisa (5712), and two grandchildren, all of Los Angeles. He is also survived by his mother Pauline; two brothers, Harvey Levine (5681) of Santa Ana, California and Sanford Levine (5683) of Overland Park, Kansas, and a sister, Cheryl Borden (5682) of Tampa, Florida.

Jacob Levine (5022,Pl.26b) of Kansas City, Missouri died on March 13 at age 94. Jacob is survived by his wife Rose Pittell Levine (5030); two daughters Bettye Rose Steinhaus and Beverly L. Newman, both of Leawood, Kansas; a sister Tillie Koch of Overland Park, Kansas; five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Jacob was born in Ciechanowiec, Poland, the son of Avraham Yoel (5008) and Esther Katz (5013) Lewin. He emigrated to Kansas City in 1913. Jacob was senior partner in the L & M Shoe Co., Kansas City for 24 years. He had been a sales representative for the International Shoe Co. in St. Louis for 44 years. He was a past-president of the National Shoe Travelers' Association. Jacob was a member of Congregation Beth Shalom, a charter member of its Men's Club, a member of its ritual committee and a *gabbai*. He studied *Torah* and *Talmud* and tried to instill that love in his descendants. He was a 60 year member of B'nai B'rith and a member of the Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy. Jacob was also a 32nd degree Mason in Grand Lodge of Tennessee. Jacob is at rest in Mt. Carmel Cemetery, Kansas City.

(Kindly see B. Newman's piece on p. 8.)

Kenneth Sterling (4057,Pl.A-3a) died on Jan. 12 at his home in Riverdale, the Bronx, New York. He was 74. Kenneth was the son of the late Lee Sterling (4042) and grandson of Jacob Sapinsky (4023) and Minnie Charlap (4019). A medical doctor, he was a specialist in thyroid

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MEMORIES OF SUWALK: EXCERPTS FROM THE SUWALK MEMORIAL BOOK

The following pieces are excerpts from the Suwalk Yizkor Book which has been completely translated into English under the sponsorship of Jack and Lana Rosenfeld. It is now being edited and updated with new material being provided by Alex Friedlander and Arthur F. Menton.

SCHOOLS AND CHEDERS

by Caleb Chonowitz, Stockholm

At the approach of World War I, the biggest school in Suwalk was that of Chaikel Maidades. The school was part of Chaikel's dwelling on Synagogue Street. He was a well-educated man and an ardent Zionist. Herzl's picture was hung in a prominent location in the school. Chaikel hired the best teachers. One of them was R' Wishinsky who later taught Hebrew in Warsaw and became director of a gymnasium in the Polish capital. Another excellent teacher was R' Weinstein. The children put on performances for each Jewish holiday and these were very popular events. There was no favoritism given to the wealthy; rich and poor studied side by side in Chaikel's school. At graduation, the students had received a superb education in pragmatic studies and were imbued with the best of Jewish learning.

R' Gelman's *Cheder* was housed in Zerah's shoemaker shop on Wesaler Street. Gelman was a sturdily built man with a long blond beard. He would never sit in class but would stride back and forth, energetically lecturing his students. His explanations of difficult *Torah* portions were exemplary. R' Polatshok's *cheder* was also located on Wesaler Street, opposite Zilberstein's bakery. His teaching methods were the opposite of Gelman's. Polatshok would sit down next to each child, put his arm around him, and gently explain the lesson. He was very devoted to his students. R' Hurwitz's *cheder* for beginners was on Turme Street. This was the place "where the angel threw coins down from heaven." Hurwitz would occasionally strike his students, but they all knew the blows would never hurt them. They were seen as love taps, applied lightly and affectionately. His *cheder* had four windows and was light and airy.

There were separate schools for girls. One was run by Shimon Wishaisky. One would be hard-pressed to find such a teacher today. He was knowledgeable in secular subjects and was an excellent Talmudist and Hebraicist. The girls who completed his curriculum knew Hebrew and Yiddish to perfection. Another girl's school was headed by R' Wilkowsky.

The young people of Suwalk were avid readers. The latest publications from the large cities were always available in addition to the classic texts. R' Zshilkowitz had a well stocked bookstore on Shul Street. His customers could select from this treasure trove and pay on the installment plan. Another bookstore was run by R' Javit. The store had inadequate heat and poor Javit would stand there with frozen fingers, surrounded by the finest books in Hebrew, Yiddish, and many other languages. Both stores were always crowded with young people thirsty for knowledge.

Alas! Where has all this gone? Never again will there be such people, such children, such schools.

MEMORIES OF SUWALK LIFE

by Yehezkiel Berelson

In the period before World War I, life was relatively calm for the Jewish community. Many young Jews were inspired by libertarian ideas. Others, especially the intellectuals, developed a sense of Jewish nationalism. A deep class consciousness developed among some of the workers. Yet life went on as it always had. . . Relations with the gentiles were as good as could be expected. On market days, there might be a few scuffles - a bit of a fuss, but that was the end of it. We also found ways to get along with the authorities. There was no great love of Jews but anti-semitism had not yet surfaced with the ferocity of later years. In economic life, Jews suffered from the competition of Poles and Lithuanians. Jewish bakers faced competition from newly established Turkish bakers. Yet, these new forces were not strong enough to undermine the predominant Jewish economic position. The most important export, lumber, was still in Jewish hands. Trade in grain, poultry, and horses was also dominated by Jews. And Jews ran the buses for inter-city transportation.

Zionists of all stripes were very involved in practical work for the *Yishuv* in Palestine. Zionists and their rival Bundists actively propagated their programs. Illegal and revolutionary groups often met under the guise of picnics and strolls in the woods. There were evenings of fiery debates, where each speaker fervently attempted to sway the audience to his world view. . .

(continued on page 10)

I ALWAYS CALLED HIM YANKEL

by Beverly Newman (5042,Pl.26a)

Beverly's father, Jacob Levine (5022), died on March 13. (see p. 6). She writes: "Dad was quite ill during the last five months of his life. I had always thought that he would just not wake up some morning, but that was not what G-d had in mind for him. The way things turned out, we were able to say goodbye. Dad was religious and davened daily. We often said that he had a direct line to G-d. I relished the time I spent with Dad the last few months of his life, and so did my children. I wrote a tribute to him and the Rabbi allowed me to deliver it at the funeral. One thing more I'd like to share: Dad was Gabbai of our synagogue and I asked the Rabbi if there was an appropriate way to honor a man who held that position. He said there was not any precedent, but he had the entire funeral procession drive by our synagogue, pause in front while the doors were thrown open to welcome us, and then we drove to the cemetery. It was a beautiful moment for us." Beverly's eulogy for her father follows.

For many years I called my father Yankel. Whenever I did, he would grin and say to me, "Have a *bisle Derekh Eretz* - a bit of respect for your father." I always knew that he was teasing me and that he knew I was teasing him. My father had a wonderful philosophy concerning life: The glass is half full; the glass is never half empty. No matter what happened, he had a positive outlook. Tomorrow would be a better day. I don't think I really appreciated "Yankel" until a few years ago. We had a special rapport for we discussed Judaism and its teachings extensively. From Dad I gained a profound love of our marvelous heritage and our religion. It has always been a privilege to keep a *kosher* home so that my parents could feel comfortable in sharing holidays in my house. I learned as I watched Dad truly live Judaism - his deeds of loving kindness, his charitable contributions, putting on his *tefillin* each morning, his love of the holidays, the importance of going to *Shul*. By American standards my father was not well educated, but to me he was brilliant. He read extensively and retained everything he ever read. We discussed book after book - from Heschel to Maimonides to *Chumash*. A new Jewish book would be reviewed in the newspaper or a magazine and immediately he would want to read it. Dad was so proud of the achievements of his family - Mom's involvement with *Hadassah*, my sister Bettye's presidency of the *Beth Shalom* Sisterhood and her activities with Women's League, Henry's [Bettye's husband] presidency of *Beth Shalom* Congregation, my vice-presidency of the Association of Jewish Libraries,

and my husband Peter's radio show. I think he was Peter's most loyal listener. The last few months were not easy for Dad. He told Mom he wanted to attend to attend Neil's [Beverly's son] wedding to Cathy and Joel's *Bar Mitzvah*. He succeeded in doing both and was supremely happy on both occasions. Neil and Cathy and my daughter, Felice, I thank you for your devotion to your grandfather over the past few months of a not very happy time for us. I know you will always have wonderful memories of a very special man, and I hope the way he lived his life will set guidelines for the conduct of yours. Cathy, I think one of the reasons you married Neil was so you finally would have a grandfather. I am only sorry you had a grandfather for such a short time. I don't think Dad ever met anyone he disliked. I don't think anyone who met my father ever disliked him. To me Yankel will always be immortal for we carry such beautiful memories of him which we will pass on to future generations.

OBITUARIES (cont. from p. 6)

diseases and acclaimed for his research into how thyroid hormones affect human metabolism. Kenneth was a clinical professor of medicine at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. He was also a staff physician in nuclear medicine and director of the protein research laboratory at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in the Bronx. Kenneth was born in Baltimore and graduated from Harvard University in 1940. He received his M.D. from Johns Hopkins University in 1943. He is survived by his wife of 35 years, Ruth (4069), and a daughter, Donna (4082).

ROYAL HOUSE (cont. from p. 5)

90. Yehuda Ibn Yahya, b. ca 1540. Found refuge in Turkey.
91. David Ibn Yahya, b. ca 1568, rabbi in Constantinople and Salonika.
92. Eliezer Ibn Yahya, b. ca 1585, rabbi in Constantinople and Salonika. Took name Charlap upon entering Poland in the early 17th century. Charlap was a title formed from Hebrew letters, the acronym standing for "Chief Sage of the Exile in Poland." The name was taken to honor Chiya al-Daudi, also known as Charlap some 500 years earlier. Then the acronym stood for "Chiya, First in the Exile in Portugal."
93. Shimon Shaltiel Charlap
94. David Charlap
95. Shalom Charlap
96. Ze'ev Charlap
97. Abraham Charlap
98. Shimon Charlap
99. Shimshon Charlap
100. David Charlap
101. Abraham Charlap, progenitor of the modern Ser-Charlap Family Tree. Listed as # 2153 on Plate A of that tree.

PROFESSIONAL NEWS

LIVING WILLS

by Morris G. Sahr (21,Pl.3a)

More and more prominent people have been writing detailed instructions for their treatment should tragedy strike. This, coupled with the national debate over health care, has resuscitated interest in a legal instrument that nearly all adults should have - a living will.

A living will basically is an individual's written declaration of what life sustaining medical treatments a person will allow or not allow in the event the individual becomes incapacitated. For example, the person may request that artificial nourishment be withheld if they're terminally ill or in a coma.

Richard Nixon and Jackie Onassis left living wills. Onassis, terminally ill with cancer, returned to her home to die with specific instructions. Nixon had signed his will before his massive stroke.

The debate over health care reform has sparked renewed interest in living wills due to the high cost of dying. (There is nothing wrong with health care in this country, it's just that the premiums are too high.) Approximately 30% of the total health care bill each year is racked up in the last six months of the patient's life. Unfortunately, physicians and family know the situation is helpless but do not want to "pull the plug." So the patient suffers the ignominy of dying and the folks in the medical system make a buck and avoid a law suit at the expense of the poor patient.

Recently, a husband refused to pay the bill for his wife after he requested she be taken off life support systems. The court said he was responsible in the absence of a living will. The court was telling us that it is our choice while we are still able to make the decision.

Morris (Morey) Sahr is a Certified Financial Planner in Fairfax, Virginia. He will be happy to answer any questions from the family concerning living wills. He can be reached at (703)631-2424.

TEACHING IN EASTERN EUROPE

Allen Menton (69,Pl.3c) is on a Fulbright Grant teaching in a Prague university. He has also been invited to Slovenia to provide expertise on the creation of a program in American studies. Allen received his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Cornell University. He is the son of Seymour (55) and Cathy (56) and grandson of the late Alexander (39) and Mildred (40) Menton. His

great-grandparents were Yitzhak (Max) (7) and Esther (8) Sahr. Yitzhak, a blacksmith from Ciechanowiec, arrived in New York in 1891.

KANSAS CITY JEWISH CHRONICLE

Rick Hellman (7409,Pl.26f) has been named managing editor of The Kansas City Jewish Chronicle. He has been a member of The Chronicle's staff since 1988, serving most recently as associate editor and before that as editor of business and entertainment. Rick is a 1980 graduate of the William Allen White School of Journalism at the University of Kansas. Rick, his wife Teresa (9360), and daughter Sarah (9366) live in Prairee Village, Kansas. He is the son of Lloyd (7398) and Judith (7391) Hellman and descends from Yospe Lewin Cohen (7368), wife of a blacksmith from Nur. Yospe and her husband Itche (7369) emigrated to New York.

BEST IN NEW JERSEY

Dennis Krumholz (1717,Pl.8e), an expert in environmental law, has been honored as one of New Jersey's leading attorneys. He is listed in *The Best Lawyers in America* for 1995 and 1996. Dennis is married to Estelle (1716), daughter of Anna (1414) and the late Abraham (1412) Sir. This branch of the family originated in Zareby Koscielnie (Zaromb).

TALON TALENT

Leonard A. Brams (66,Pl.3c) has been named Chief Financial Officer and Vice President for Administration of the Talon Group, a privately held investment company with interests in manufacturing, retailing, real estate and development. Leonard, a CPA in the footsteps of his father Isaac (Bill) (53), lives in Farmington Hills, Michigan with wife Susan (67) and daughter Jennifer (447). His mother Audrey (54) is the daughter of Etta (38) and the late Ted (39) Reichard. Etta, who will be 100 in November of this year, is the daughter of the late Isaac (Max) Sahr (7).

ERRATA

Eliot Charlip (7615,Pl.A-14) points out an error in "The Baronowice Charlaps," *Brayshit: The Ser Charlap Family Newsletter*, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 2. "My brother's name was Avrum 'Bud' (7616). It was he who met the Director of the Kennedy Center. The Director's name was Elliot Charlip!"

SUWALK MEMORIES (continued from page 7)

With the outbreak of World War I everything changed radically. Some Jews fled as the battlefield moved ever nearer. Young men were conscripted into the Russian army. As in every war, there were some people who profited from the deteriorated conditions, but most could not adjust. The Jewish economy was disrupted and poverty was widespread. Before long, Jews were blamed for the problems. Rumors circulated that Jews were hoarding food, that they were German spies; and they were accused of any other calumny that could be imagined. With the German occupation we had to become accustomed to new masters, a new military regime, and forced labor. As the front moved on, the military were replaced by a German civil administration and living conditions gradually stabilized. Kaiser Wilhelm's Germans were not like Hitler's savages. They could communicate with Yiddish speaking Jews. Yes, we were exploited, but they also improved things. In 1916, the Germans opened a large bucket manufacturing facility which employed many of us. Leather factories also employed 1200 people making equipment for the army. The Germans badly needed leather goods for the calvary, for uniforms, and gun straps. The authorities made sure that the leather factory was supplied with raw materials.

Cold and hunger were frequent visitors to many Jewish homes. We were also flooded with Jewish refugees who had come from the war-ravaged countryside. The Suwalk Jewish Community Council was busy trying to provide for these refugees and our own poor. We did receive aid from the Joint Distribution Committee. A loan society, *Ezrat Achim*, was established with help from the Suwalk *landsmanshaft* in New York. Aid was in the form of loans so as to prevent Jews from becoming dependent on charity. . .With the end of the war, refugees started to return. With the help of relatives in America and South Africa, and from international Jewish organizations, they rebuilt their homes, stores, and workshops. But peace and stability did not return immediately. On one hand, there was the fear of a Bolshevik invasion; on the other, loomed Lithuania's demand to incorporate Suwalk into the newly independent republic. For some six months Lithuanian troops occupied the city but Polish power proved stronger. . .Suwalk was alive with cultural activities. There was a Hebrew language gymnasium and a new girls' school, *Tarbut*. Our young men and women once again exhibited a thirst for more Jewish learning and they subscribed to the Jewish libraries in town. Many wanted access to improved Jewish education and left for Wilna to study and do research at YIVO and other institutions. The religious community was also involved politically and socially. A great deal of their attention focused on local *cheders*, *Talmud Torahs*, and *yeshivot*. But most of the Suwalk area rabbis were involved in projects for *Eretz Yisrael*. . .Communal groups planning to settle in Palestine also contributed to the renaissance of Jewish life. Their facilities became local youth centers. In 1923, *chalutzim* leased a few acres for cultivation. Each summer they worked the land and trained new recruits in agriculture. Between the two World Wars, a fairly large number of emigrants left Suwalk for Palestine. Among them were single people and whole families. The faltering economy in Poland and newly emergent anti-semitism prompted still more to emigrate to America, Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, and South Africa. This constant stream of emigrants depleted the local community. In 1913, just before World War I, there were 13,000 Jews in Suwalk. At the eve of the Holocaust, only 10,000 were left. Thanks to this emigration, several thousand Suwalk Jews were saved from obliteration in the Nazi death camps.

THE SER-CHARLAP FAMILY ASSOCIATION

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