

שם טוב

# SHEM TOV

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF TORONTO

Volume IV - No.1

June 1988 - Tammuz 5748

## President's Message

**The Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto** has completed its third successful year. What was started in 1985 by a small, but dedicated group, has been transformed into a vibrant, dynamic structure. The Society now meets regularly on the fourth Wednesday of each month (except July and August) at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, 470 Glencairn Avenue. Notices of meetings are advertised in Miriam Herman's column in the Canadian Jewish News, thereby notifying our members and also generally attracting interest from the wider Jewish community.

Our programmes have been of a high standard following a half-hour or so of business. During the past year we have had talks covering "The Landsmannschaften of Toronto"; "Genealogy and the Holocaust"; "A History of the Gelernter Family" and "Jewish Genealogy in Canada Today". In the past field trips were arranged to the local Mormon Genealogy Library, the Robarts Library (which has an extensive collection of Yizkor books) and to the oldest Jewish Cemetery in Toronto on Pape Avenue.

This first edition of our revamped Newsletter is due largely to the tirelessness of Peter Cullman, and he is to be congratulated on a fine effort. SHEM TOV is now being distributed to all our current paid-up members (\$ 20.00 per calendar year), lapsed members, and individuals who have attended meetings in the past, and who appear on our list. Please renew your membership promptly in order to continue

receiving the Newsletter and to show your support to our organisation. We are also mailing a copy of this Newsletter to all Synagogues in Toronto - hoping in that way, to further publicize our activities.

Our organisation is a constituent member of the Toronto Jewish Congress and of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies. As your President I also serve as Corresponding Editor for Canada (together with Lawrence Tapper, Ottawa) for 'Avotaynu'.

We can be proud of our accomplishments to date, but there is still much to be done. We still need a Constitution, tax exempt status and library facilities to store our periodicals and books.

I envisage the Society serving as a vehicle to provide guidelines for individuals researching their own families, as well as fulfilling an educational role. In this latter regard, I continue to meet with members of different organisations, including Synagogue groups and National Council of Jewish Woman groups.

Finally, I would like to thank all, without singling out any individuals, for the help I have received from each of you, - may the Society continue to grow from strength to strength!

Dr. Rolf Lederer  
President  
JGS of Toronto

# A Mystery solved.

By Bill Gladstone

For years this photo - actually a photograph of a photograph or drawing - was in a box of family possessions. No one in my family could say who the man was or how his picture happened to be among our oldest family photos. It was a frustrating mystery, since he was obviously related to us.

The mystery was resolved several months ago when a cousin showed me a family portrait taken in Russia around 1915 - with this same man in the photo. My cousin identified him as Benjamin Rubinoff, the grandfather of my mother's mother, Esther Naftolin, of blessed memory. Benjamin Rubinoff is my great great grandfather!



**SHEM TOV** is the quarterly Newsletter published by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto. The Society was founded in 1985 and currently has 30 members. Membership fees are \$ 20.00 per calendar year. Meetings are held September to June, on the last Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, 470 Glencairn Avenue, Toronto; notices of meetings are also announced in the Canadian Jewish News (Miriam Herman Column). Members receive four editions of SHEM TOV per year. Guests are always welcome.

The goals of the Society are to promote an awareness among Jewish community members of the possibilities of tracing ancestors, to foster an ongoing interest in our heritage, to encourage the sharing of research techniques and to disseminate information on genealogical research to family historians and professional genealogists alike. **SHEM TOV** is dedicated to publish articles of personal research experiences, inform its members of new and tried pertinent research sources and act as part of a growing international network for experienced family historians and beginning genealogists.

## The officers of the Society are:

President:	DR. ROLF LEDERER	922-5134
Vice-President	JULES SAMSON	633-4857
Project Consultant:	ABE GOLDBERG	224-0161
Secretary:	SELMA SACROB	223-0192
Archivist:	BERNIE MORRIS	787-8982
Phone Chairman:	SYLVIA MORRIS	787-8982
Treasurer:	ANNETTE OTIS	782-4646
Hon. Life President:	RAYZEL ROBINSON	783-6351

## Contributors to this issue are:

Rayzel Robinson, Rolf Lederer, Bill Gladstone, Bernie Morris, Peter Cullman

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If you wish to submit an article for the fall issue of **SHEM TOV**, please send typewritten material to the editor PETER CULLMAN, 99 Yorkville Ave., Toronto/Ont., M5R 3K5, Canada, Tel. (416) 964-2196.

**Deadline: July 31, 1988.**

For subscriptions, memberships or changes of address please contact the secretary, SELMA SACROB, P.O.Box 446, Station 'A', Willowdale/Ontario, M2N 5T1, Canada

## Archives+Addresses:

### German Jewish Archives to return to East-Berlin community.....?

A relatively short article in 'Aufbau' made anyone with an interest in this area of research almost jump for joy. It was reported that after endless negotiations, stretching over several years, between the historian Helmut Eschwege and the East-German authorities the "Gesamtarchiv der deutschen Juden" will finally be allowed to return to the Jewish community in East-Berlin. This valuable body of original documents consisting mainly of documentation on all Jewish communities and organisations of 18th and 19th century Germany, was originally begun in 1907 by Prof. Dr. Martin Phillipson and Eugen Täubler, together with the Grand Lodge of the B'nai Brith. Until now this priceless archive was housed in the 'Zentrales Staatsarchiv' in East-Germany. The article ends with the hope that a suitable locality and an archivist be found in time. (P.S: Inquiries at the Jewish community in East-Berlin have since revealed however that so far no sign of any move has been seen, not to mention the financial burden such an endeavour would have on the humble resources of the Jewish community there... One can but hope that the government mills don't actually grind to a complete halt in the end.....)

\* \* \* \* \*

### Breakthrough in Access to Polish-Jewish records.

AVOTAYNU reports in its latest issue, Volume IV, No.1 that at long last Jewish scholars from several western countries are to be given access to vital statistics records, synagogue, communal and rabbinic records. Partners in this major microfilming project are the Research Centre on Jewish History and Culture at the Jagiellonien University in Krakow and the University of Connecticut at Storrs, CT and the work is being supported by the Project Judaica Foundation of Washington, DC with funds raised by private and governmental sources.

Material of hundreds of Jewish towns that are now part of the USSR but belonged to Poland in former times is to be microfilmed in the near future. The 1764 census records of the Jews of Poland, before the first partition, may also prove to be a particularly valuable source of genealogical data.\*

## Books + References:

### Re: German Jewish research:

A most recent article in Search, Winter 1987 deals with the fascinating bulletins of a Jewish genealogical society: "Gesellschaft für Jüdische Familienforschung", which was published from 1924 until 1938 in Berlin. These most interesting Newsletters cover a tumultuous time in terms of German Jewry, yet the enthusiasm and dedication of its founders and members show little of the grave times German Jews found themselves in. Collectors items as these bulletins now are, we in Toronto are fortunate to have numerous copies of these booklets at our disposal at the Robarts Library of the University of Toronto. Although the stacks at Robarts are for members of U of T only, any material may be viewed at leisure in the library's reading room.

The call numbers are: **DS 135 G3 A255**  
(title: JÜDISCHE FAMILIENFORSCHUNG)

\* \* \*

A subject very much in our minds this year in particular is the 50th anniversary of the so-called "Kristallnacht", an event commemorated on the 9th of November 1988. The book: "Die Reichskristallnacht" by Herbert Schultheis, published in 1986 in West-Germany by Rötter Druck und Verlag GMBH, D-8740 Bad Neustadt/Saale deals entirely in documentary style with communities all over Germany which were affected by this pogrom, in part supported by photographs. Although the book is still available in Germany, Robarts Library has a copy of it, the call numbers are: **DS 135 G 33 R36**

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# The Fork in the Road

By Bill Gladstone

In 1944, my father, a sergeant in the Canadian Army, was aboard a ship that struck a Nazi mine at Normandy, resulting in many fatalities. Like many others, he had been sleeping peacefully on the open deck until the moment of the explosion. At that instant he instinctively rolled to one side. He awoke already running. At the ship's rail, he turned around to see a gaping fiery hole in the deck and many mutilated bodies. Had he rolled the other way, he too would have been lost.

Many war stories share this haunting pattern of a seemingly random choice of direction, left or right, resulting respectively in life or death. Many Holocaust survivors have told of such experiences in the death camps, where one way meant life and the other meant certain death. This theme is not limited to episodes of war. I believe that it recurs in the genealogical histories of Jewish families everywhere.

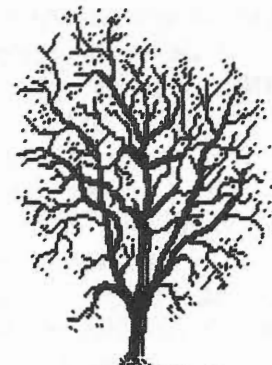
Here is an archetypical example. My maternal grandparents came from Bobroisk, a town 30 Km southeast of Minsk in the Russian-Polish Pale of Settlement. According to a Soviet tourist booklet in the Robarts Library, Bobruisk is still there - but how many Jews live there now the booklet does not say. Possibly there are a few. Some family members - invariably the wealthier ones - remained behind when others fled the pogroms for Canada in the early years of this century. Those who remained behind took the wrong fork in the road: tragically, they and most of their progeny are numbered among the Six Million.

The following tale sent shivers down my spine when I first heard it. Its macabre details may be unique. Like others, it contains the element of a simple fork in the road where one way means life and the other death.

A Jewish woman in Toronto told me that during the war her husband's European parents escaped the Holocaust on one of those ill-fated ships, filled with Jewish refugees, destined for Palestine but forbidden to land. The passengers were forced to live aboard ship for nearly two years. During that time a semblance of normality overtook their uncertain and often perilous existence, and the woman found that she was with child.

Persuaded to perform an abortion, a doctor on board ship uprooted a male foetus from her womb. Nevertheless, several months later, finally in Eretz Israel, the woman was delivered of a son. You see, she was to have been blessed with twins. Grown to manhood, the son was the husband of the woman who told me the story, and a very successful Toronto businessman.

"You shall remain in small number" is an ancient promise to the Jews (Deut. 29:62) that has proven prophetic. Throughout the ages our people have endured massacre upon persecution upon pogrom. Is it any wonder that there were nearly as many Jews in the world in Roman times as there are today?.....•



# A Genealogist's Gold Rush....?

By Bernie Morris

California provides denizens and tourists alike with possibly the greatest variety of scenic beauty and variation of climate from desert to ski slopes, and gives above all an insight into that unique brand of Western American history that the Pioneers established amid the rolling hills and plains leading to the Pacific Ocean.

Not least in the chapter of history which California has written is the great Gold Rush of 1848 - a time when tens of thousands of able-bodied men and women hastened to these beautiful hills south of Sacramento to stake their claims.

One of the small sleepy towns on route 49 south from Sacramento where many of the prospectors worked and lived is known as Mokelumni Hill: two streets, housing an old hotel and hitching post, the General store, the post office and very little else...

On a recent visit to the town I inquired from the local 'Tourist Office' (a room in a tumbledown shack) what was worth seeing in the locality. The little old man who was 'the officer in charge' came up with: "Well, you could see the old Protestant - Jewish cemetery about a quarter mile down that road." He pointed south where a dust road was visible. When I thought I hadn't heard properly and repeated my question he reiterated: "Yeah, the old cemetery down there, - the protestants are all buried there in the front, and there's a plot at the back with nine Jewish graves, - of course we look after the whole lot..."

An archway lead me into the cemetery: the protestant's graves took up most of the allotted space, but in the rear, overlooking the spectacular hills and the valley, an enclosure housed nine graves marked by tombstones inscribed in English and Hebrew. Although I forgot to record each name, two names seemed rather prominent: SHAPIRO and SOKALOWSKI. Then there was a grave of an infant of six months while the remainder of the resting places appeared to be of people who had joined the gold rush and had settled in the vicinity of the mines. Most of these German Jews were early settlers who played a significant role in developing the United States in general and California in particular, and of course they came to America long before the rush of Eastern European Jewish immigrants.

There are many 'Gold Rush towns' south of Sacramento, - towns with names like 'Murphys', 'Jackson', 'San Andreas' and 'Angels Camp'. I didn't have enough time on my trip to investigate whether Jewish cemeteries existed in these places, but if so then information on Jewish settlements in that part of the New World could possibly be gleaned from local historical guides and documentation on the above-mentioned towns.

From the Jewish Genealogist's point of view and for anyone who has good reasons to believe to find roots among the Jewish pioneers of the West, - this may well prove to be an exciting new angle to pursue... •

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## Obituary

It was with great regret that we learned of the passing of Mr. Meyer Bromberg. We wish to extend our sincere condolences to his family. Mr. Bromberg was one of our enthusiastic members who attended our regular meetings. Our Society has donated a book to the Jewish Public Library in his memory.

## New members:

We are pleased to welcome the following new members who joined our society in April:

**Thelma Brown and Thomas & Arlene McMahon** all of Oakville, Ontario.

# Genealogical Wedding Planning

By Rayzel Robinson

When Simcha and I began to plan our wedding (two years ago), we knew we wanted something different. We are committed to the process of Jewish renewal using our creativity to infuse tradition with meaning. As we researched Jewish wedding rituals, we were trying to find an outlet for our genealogical research. We are both tracing our family trees and so far have discovered seven generations on each side. It was one of our indicators of common interest that convinced us we belonged together as a couple.

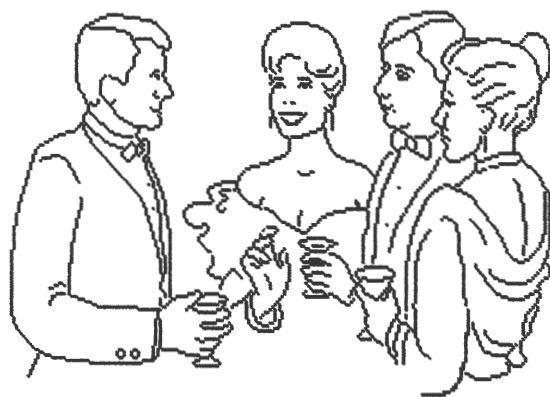
The first thing that we found when studying about traditional weddings was the process called *t'noyim* (engagement). An engagement document was necessary! As we commissioned an artist to draw a beautiful picture full of the symbolism of our relationship, we insisted he leave room for not only us, but for our parents, who thank G-d are still living, to sign too. We now have a gorgeous painting of our official *t'noyim* document in our living room with two generations of signatures. Our grandchildren will inherit the decorated certificate with the grandparents and great-grandparents' signatures on it.

The next tradition we discovered was that Sephardi Jews write their genealogies into the *Ketubah* (marriage document), usually only the father's side. We of course liked the idea and wanted to egalitarianize it to include my name as well. When we commissioned our *Ketubah* we asked the calligrapher to list each of our lineages in a spiral on the painting. Seven generations couldn't fit into the text of the document, so we put them on the side as decoration. We also used the theme of trees as the background for the *Ketubah*.

We also created our own *Chuppah* (marriage canopy) for the ceremony. We asked friends and family to decorate a square of material to make a patchwork *Chuppah*. The Torah portion of the week also mentioned trees, and we made trees the theme of the *Chuppah*. We now have a beautiful wall hanging gracing our hallway with many varieties of embroidered, painted and sequined trees.

Finally, we purchased two large posters from the Benjamin Family Foundation in Toronto. The posters are 2'x3' and are a six-tone fill-in-the-blank gorgeous family tree. We excitedly filled them out, one for my family and one for Simcha's. There is a custom in Jewish tradition to visit the graves of one's ancestors during the week before the wedding to invite their spirits to the ceremony. As we filled in the names on the trees it was our intention to use the posters as a symbolic gesture, an invitation to all our ancestors we had researched! The finished products stood on either side of the *Chuppah* and were a magnificent addition to the decorations.

We were pleased with our efforts and the feedback we received from the guests made it all worthwhile.●



## In Search of.....

**SHEM TOV**, the first Canadian Jewish Genealogical Newsletter, introduces what has developed into one of the most popular services for genealogists anywhere: search columns in which readers may advertise their personal field of research in terms of names and localities of families they are seeking, thus discovering others in pursuit of similar or identical families.

Although the enthusiastic proliferation of Jewish genealogical news bulletins all over North America may result in duplications, we feel very strongly, that in spite of this, much ground can still be broken in our own backyard, in a Canadian context so to speak.

A search ad in which you can list surnames, towns, geographic areas and other personal information may contain up to 25 words at a cost of \$ 5.00, each additional word will be charged at \$ 0.25; abbreviations will be counted as words. Your own name, address and Tel. No. are free of course.

Your entry should be submitted printed or typed, showing all SURNAMES underlined in CAPITALLETTERS

Cheques are payable to: Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto.  
Address: P.O.Box 446, Station 'A', Willowdale/Ontario, M2N 5T1, Canada.

*The deadline for our Fall issue of SHEM TOV is July 31, 1988*

L-1

LEDERER, DR. R. A.,  
100 Antibes Drive, # 1704,  
Willowdale, Ont., M2R 3N1,  
Canada, (416) 663-5195

.....Seeking information  
on descendants of MINNA  
LEDERER and ISAAC MAYER,  
- Samuel, Albert, Louis and  
Harry, some of whom lived  
in Evanston, Ill. (early part  
of 20th century).

LEDERER (Chynow, Bohemia,  
17th & 18th century),  
ROSENTHAL (Mauswinkel,  
Germany),  
SILBERMANN (Oberelsbach,  
Germany).

S-1

SIMONS, Alan, 325 Bogert  
Avenue, Apt. # 480,  
North York, Ont. M2N 1L8,  
Canada, (416) 221-4203

.....Seeking information  
on the KACEV family.  
Gedalja, Leopold & Baruch  
who lived in Riga between  
1900 & 1930.

C-1

CULLMAN, Peter,  
99 Yorkville Ave., Toronto,  
M5R 3K5, Canada,  
(416) 964-2196

.....Seeking information  
on anyone with the  
family names SIMONSTEIN  
and CAMINER, or anyone  
connected with these  
families, all of whom lived  
in Schneidemühl, Krojanke,  
Schönlanke, Tütz, Margonin  
and Weissenhöhe in Posen  
(Germany) since the late  
18th century and in Berlin  
since early 1900.

R-1

ROBINSON, Rayzel,  
14 Elway Ct., #3,  
Toronto, Ont. M6B 2N8,  
(416) 783-6351

.....Seeking information  
on families RABINOVITCH,  
THORF, DORF, DORFMANN,  
MILLINKYCOPLAND,  
AUERBACH and NELSON of  
Kovno Gubernia, (near  
Vilna).

O-1

OTIS, Annette,  
1632 a Bathurst Street,  
Toronto, Ont. M5P 3J5,  
(416) 782-4646

.....Seeking information  
on RAMET family  
descendants from Warsaw  
and Antwerp, believed to  
have possibly originated in  
France.

# Miscellaneous

## **The 7th Summer Seminar**

The Jewish Genealogy Society of Greater Washington will host the much publicized Seventh Summer Seminar on Jewish Genealogy from June 26, to July 1, 1988 in Washington, D.C. This city represents one of the world's storehouses for researchers and it is hoped that many a Genealogist from Canada will attend.

Plans are already being made for a gathering in Philadelphia in 1989 and the following in Los Angeles in 1990.

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## **In our next issue.....**

- \*The International Gelernter Family Gathering
- \*The Toronto Landsmannschaften

## **Computers in Genealogy**

We would like to hear from anyone who has had experience in laying out a family tree with the aid of a computer. What are the shortfalls? Which programme is best suited, what graphics can be used, and what make of computer is most commonly and most practically used? Even in this age of communication, this much bandied about subject tends to be the domain of few in the know.....

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## **Publicity**

Rolf Lederer's TV interview on Genealogy was aired on "Tapestry", on May 15, 1988 at 1:30 pm. on Newton Cable, Channel 10.

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Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto  
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