Roots

A Family History Project

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Introduction

My name is Yaeli Berkowitz. This book is the product of my year-long endeavor researching my family history. I have always been interested in my roots and I was excited to be assigned this project which I would otherwise not have the time for.

I am currently 18, the oldest of a lively family of six. My parents are Yechiel Berkowitz and Brenda Berkowitz nee' Heisler. My siblings: Chavi, Natan, Faigy, Matisyahu and Dovid, always keep my home buzzing with energy.

I was born in Syracuse, NY on March 22nd 1998. My parents lived in Syracuse because my father is a doctor and was completing medical school there. When I was a year old, we moved to Brooklyn, NY in a two family house on 1572 East 3rd Street. There, Chavi and Natan were born. Soon after Natan's birth, we moved a few blocks over to 1365 East 8th Street where Faigy and Matisyahu were born. In 2010, my family moved to Ditmas Park, Brooklyn at 685 E 18th street, where Dovid was born as well as where we are currently living.



My family traces back to many places in Europe. My father's side of the family originally comes from: Poland, Romania and Belarus. My mother's side of the family originally comes from: Czechoslovakia and Poland. My family is Ashkenazic with some Chassidish roots. The surname "Berkowitz" is also of Ashkenazic descent, which ancestry.com says: is patronymic from the Yiddish male personal name Berke. My family is currently following Orthodox Ashkenazic customs and affiliate with the Flatbush Jewish community.

Throughout this project I have contacted many relatives in my extended family. I discovered that my family is spread out all over! I have relatives in England, Argentina, Israel, Chicago, St. Louis, Florida, New Jersey, New York, and many other places.

This year, I spent days and days researching my family history. I wrote four core essays: each detailing the history of one of my grandparents and their ancestors. I wrote an additional essay which tells the story of my greatgreat uncle, Menachem Mozes, and his wife Lola's experiences on the Exodus of 1947.

I hope you, my reader, enjoy reading this project and I hope it will be informative for the generations to come. Because after all, "Maaseh Avot Siman L'banim", the actions of our ancestors pave our actions as well.

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Berkowitz Family Pesach 2015 Natan, Brenda, Faigy, Dovid, Yaeli, Matisyahu, Chavi, and Yechiel (above)



Berkowitz Family at Natan's Bar Mitzvah, June 2015 Top Row: Yaeli, Sylvia Heisler, Brenda Berkowitz Sr., Brenda Berkowitz Jr., Natan, Yechiel, Simcha Berkowitz, Geoffrey Heisler, Chavi Bottom Row: Dovid, Matisyahu, Faigy



Berkowitz Family at Natan's Bar Mitzvah, June 2015 Top Row: Yaeli, Brenda, Natan, Yechiel, Chavi Bottom Row: Dovid, Matisyahu, Faigy



Berkowitz Family Chanukah 2015 Natan, Faigy, Yaeli, Chavi, Yechiel, Matisyahu, Dovid(behind menorah)

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Berkowitz, Werther, and Halpert grandchildren at Geoffrey Heisler (maternal grandfather)'s 71st birthday party in 2015 in Brooklyn, NY.

Top Row: Yaeli Berkowitz, Priva Halpert, Chavi Berkowitz, Natan Berkowitz. Middle Row: Ahuva Halpert, Dovid Berkowitz, Dovid Halpert, Faigy Berkowitz holding Benny Halpert, Matisyahu Berkowitz. Bottom Row: Becca Halpert, Baruch Halpert.



Brenda Berkowitz, Yaeli Berkowitz, Tzippora Halpert, and Chavi Berkowitz in 2013.



Berkowitz, Werther, Halpert, and Heisler families at Geoffrey Heisler's 71st birthday party in 2015 in Brooklyn, NY. Top Row: Eli Halpert, Chaim Werther, Dovid Werther (behindhat), Aviva Werther, Chavi Berkowitz, Benny Halpert, Tzippora Halpert, Brenda Berkowitz, Natan Berkowitz, Priva Halpert, Yechiel Berkowitz, Yaeli Berkowitz, Sylvia Ettlinger. Middle Row: Geoffrey Heisler, Dovid Halpert, Matisyahu Berkowitz, Ahuva Halpert, Sylvia Heisler, Faigy Berkowitz. Bottom Row: Baruch Halpert, Ari Werther, Dovid Berkowitz, Becca Halpert,



The Berkowitz family biking in 2014. Yaeli, Yechiel, Natan, Matisyahu, Chavi, Dovid and Faigy Berkowitz.

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Researching and compiling this Family History Project was a huge undertaking! It took an entire year and hours upon hours of work to present the finished product. I decided to format my project differently than the suggested guidelines because I really wanted to explore and cover my entire family, not just one side or individual. I therefore chose to write four essays, each detailing the experiences and stories of a different grandparent's ancestors.

Methods

When I heard the incredible story of the Exodus of 1947 which my great-great uncle, Menachem Mozes, and his wife Lola experienced, I knew I had to write an additional essay with that story. I began with my paternal grandfather, Simcha Berkowitz. I first interviewed him about his family, and then purchased the book Return to My Father's House written by his great uncle, Maurice Malkin, which largely contains the history of his mother's family.

I then continued to my paternal grandmother, Brenda Berkowitz (sr.). I began with an initial interview of my grandmother and then proceeded to watch and take notes on the Steven Spielberg, Shoah interview of her uncle, Menachem Mozes. To help me learn more, my grandmother brought me to interview Menachem's wife, her aunt Lola Mozes in Georgetown, NY. Lola showed me pictures, poems, writings and told me stories of Menachem and her experience on the Exodus ship. My grandmother also brought me to her uncle Shmulke in Boro Park where I learned a few new facts about the Mozes family's experiences in Russia.

My next step was to research my maternal grandfather, Geoffrey Heisler. After initially interviewing my grandfather and looking through his personal scrapbook, I called and emailed various relatives of his including: cousins Linda Eckstein in England, Elazar Sapphire in Israel, Susan Stein in Chicago, and Sylvia Ettlinger in Canarsie. I gathered much valuable information from these sources and it was touching as well to reach out to these distantly located relatives.

My cousin Susan mentioned two things which especially allowed me to dig deeper into my research. Firstly, she mentioned a family tree genealogy project created by Adolf Kuchler, a cousin in Paris. I recalled seeing the family tree in my house because we store a lot of my maternal grandparent's old pictures. I searched for the family tree and found it within one hour! The tree contained an enormous amount of information as well as pictures dating back to the 1850's. Secondly, Susan mentioned a Spielberg Shoah interview of her father, Ben Heisler who is my great-grandfather, Nathan Heisler's twin brother. I contacted Columbia University which has access to the archives and one day after school, my mother and I went down to Columbia to view and take notes

on his interview. It was fascinating, informative and emotional to watch.

I went ahead and continued my research in my maternal grandmother, Sylvia Heisler's family. I began 7 with an interview of my grandmother and then visited my grandmother's first cousin: David Handfling and his wife Miriam Sunshine in Brooklyn. We discussed his family over dinner and it was really enjoyable. They then showed me pictures and an old marriage document of my great-great grandparents back in Poland.

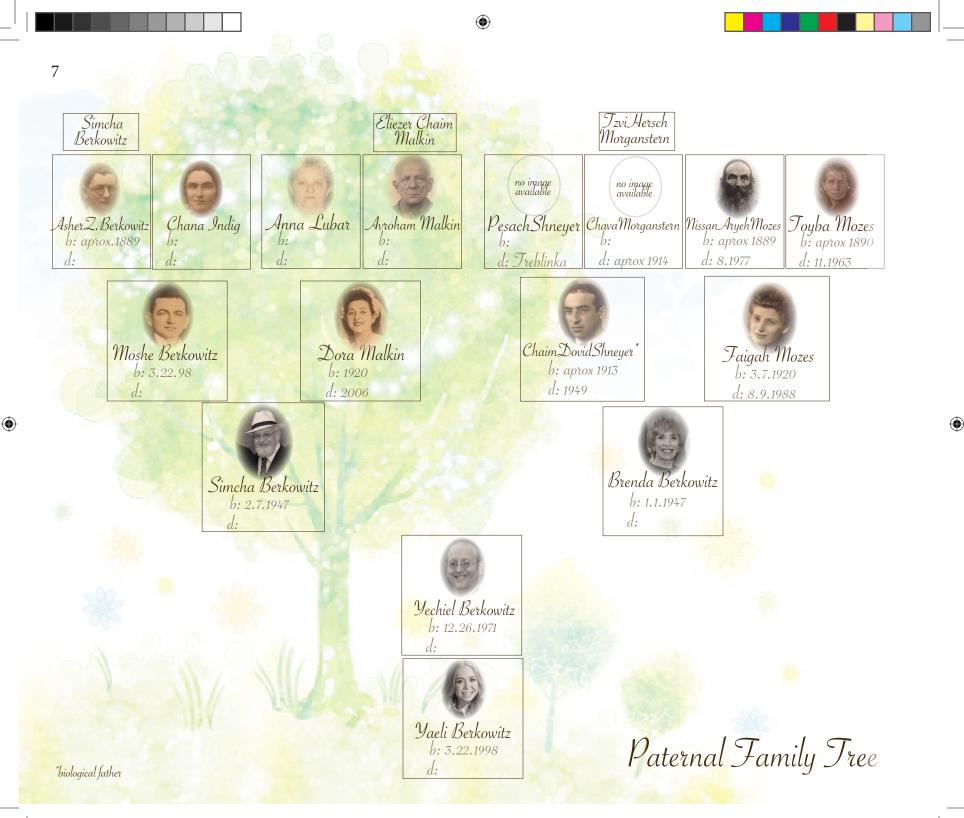
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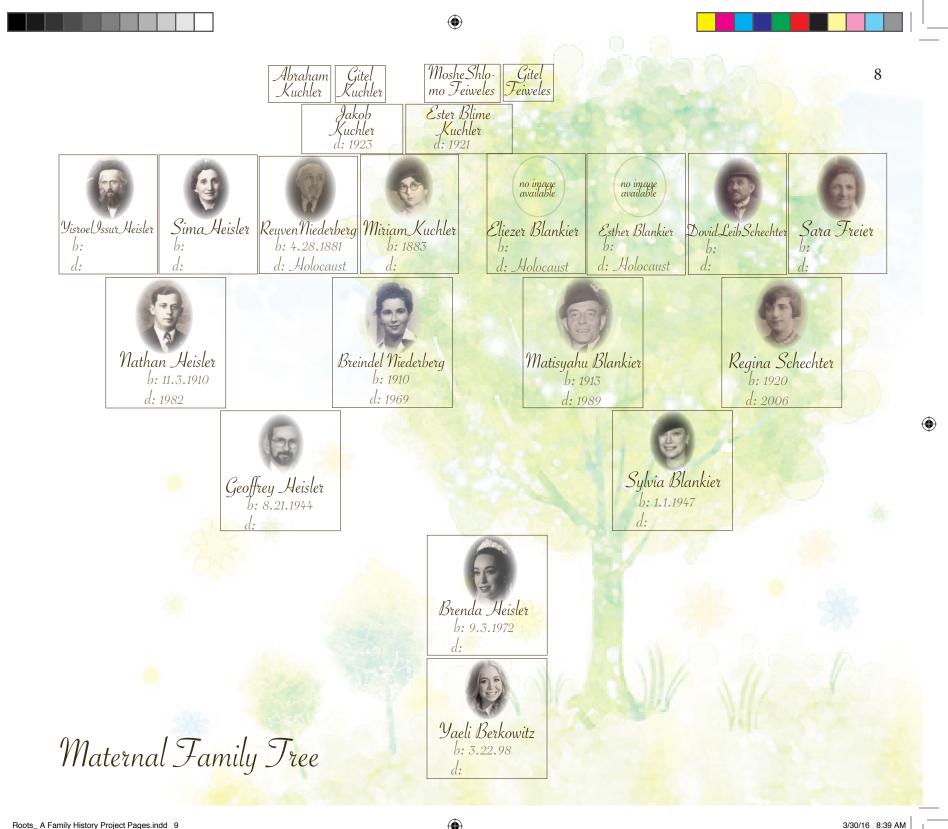
Later on, I visited my paternal grandparents a few times to look through pictures and documents. My grandmother, Brenda Berkowitz, pointed out her mother, grandparents, and uncles in the Goworowo yizkor book.

When the project was just about completed, I was informed about several heirlooms such as: leichters, menorahs, kiddush cups, ciggerette cases, and jewlery that I obtained pictures of and identified the original owners.

Additionally, I used other sources for researching my family history. I utilized the databases of yivoencyclopedia, Jewishgen, USSHM, myheritage.com, jewishvirtuallibrary.com, ancestry.com, and many more research websites. My Jewish History teacher, Ms. Gotlieb was also tremendously helpful and was essentially my "advisor" throughout the entire journey.

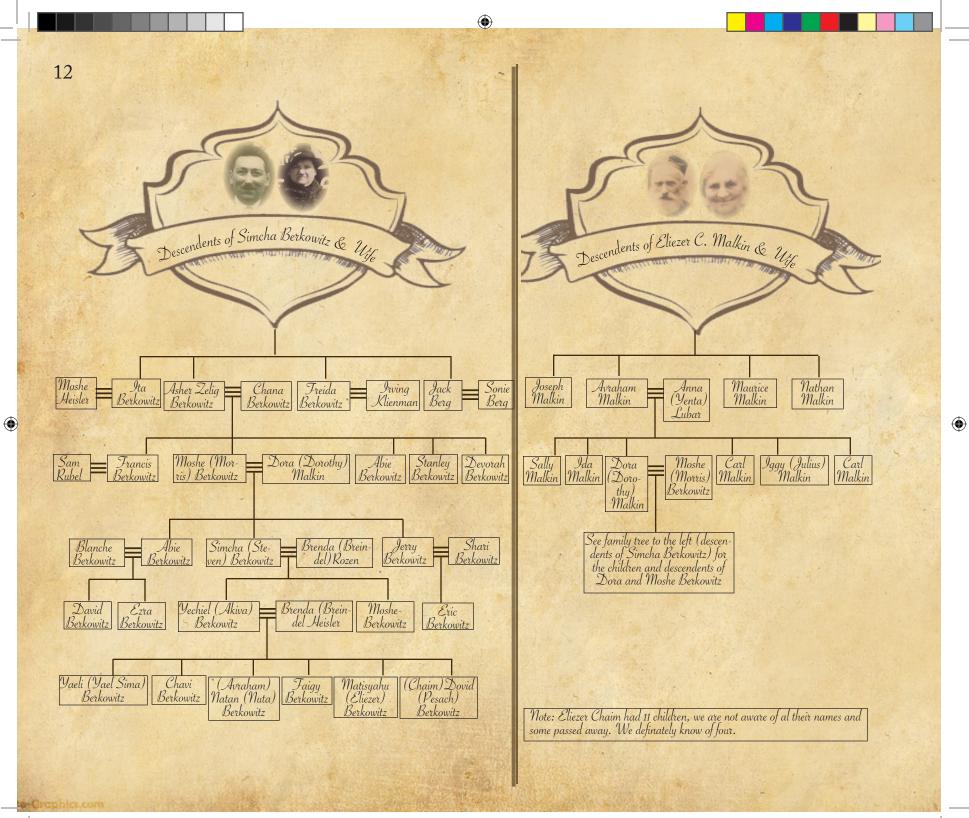
Dedication











Introduction

My paternal grandfather, Simcha Berkowitz, has a rich lineage originating in Romania and Russia. Though he was born and raised in America and his parents lived mainly in the US as well, the stories of how they arrived are fascinating.

The Berkowitz Family Roots

Simcha Berkowitz (Jr.)'s father, Dovid Moshe Berkowitz, was born in Romania around the year 1921 in a town called Viseu-de-jus in the Szighet¹ area. His family had lived in Romania for as far back as anyone remembers. Moshe's grandfather was Simcha Berkowitz (Sr.), a prominent and respected man in the small community. Simcha was an electrician who was blinded by sparks. Nonetheless, Simcha knew the tefillos of the Yamim Nora'I'm by heart and was able to daven despite his blindness. Simcha also had the honor to host the Sigheter Rebbe, the father of the Satmar Rebbe, everytime he visited town. Unfortunately, the family couldn't remain in Romania for long. After World War I, when Pogroms were coming toward Romania, Simcha and his family



Maramures County in Romania where Viseu-de-Jus was located.

emigrated from Romania in the late 1910's. Simcha took his wife, mother, and three of his children: Ita, Freida and Jack to America. However, Simcha's fourth son Asher Zelig Berkowitz and his wife Chana Indig, from Budapest, had been separated from the family.

Asher Zelig Berkowitz had been drafted from the Seder table to serve in the Romanian army. He went to battle, and cleverly traded his new looking uniform for an old bloody one and faked shellshock to get out of army.

At this point, Asher Zelig, a religious Zionist, decided to make Aliyah. He journeyed together with his wife, Chana, and their three children at the time: Devorah, Moshe, Avraham (Abie).

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Life in Palestine

Asher Zelig and his family first moved to Zichron Yaakov², a moshav on the coast of Israel. Asher Zelig made a living by working in a field. He recounted stories of his days in Zichron Yaakov, being surrounded by Arabs and bribing his way out with cigarettes. The family then moved to the neighborhood of Batei Ungarin³ in Meah She'arim. Asher Zelig and his wife had four more children together in Palestine: Sylvia, Stanley, Francis and Abie. Unfortunately, the eldest daughter Devorah passed away in Palestine from disease.

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Asher Zelig and his family were poor and Moshe was put to work at a salami factory at the early age of ten. Asher Zelig worked fixing farm machinery and but also made time to study Torah. He succeeded in his Torah studies and received Smicha from Rav Kook⁴.





Early photo of Asher Zelig Berkowitz's family in Palestine. (Left to right) Sylvia, Asher Zelig(father), Stanley, Francis, Chana(mother), Moshe, Devorah.

Later photo of Asher Zelig Berkowitz and family in Palestine.

Moshe Berkowitz, Chana Berkowitz, Abie Berkowitz, Stanley Berkowitz, Devorah Berkowitz(daughter above), Francis Berkowitz, Asher Zelig Berkowitz, Sylvia Berkowitz (left to right)

Conflict in Palestine

There was conflict among the Jewish sects even in the early 1900's. Asher Zelig and a group of like-minded religious Zionists, had a shul in Batei Ungarin. A group of more right wing Jews stole the sefer Torah from their shul.

However, the family faced more terrifying conflict than between the Jewish sects. The conflict between the Jews and the Arabs was violent and frightening. Moshe remembered walking through the streets of the old city frightened by the Arabs with knives. The friction quickly escalated between the two groups in Palestine. The family's decision to leave Palestine was solidified with The Arab Riots of 1929⁵ which started with rock throwing and culminated with the Chevron Masscre⁶.

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- 3. Batei Ungarin Palestine,
- 4. Brooklyn New York

Immigration

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Asher Zelig and his family immigrated to America around the year 1934. Asher Zelig came on a Rabbinical Visa and they quickly settled into their new life in Brooklyn. Moshe's education ended at about grade four in Palestine, and he did not resume education in America. The only education that Moshe did gain in America was learning the English language. Moshe presumably learned English in night school, and during the day, Moshe worked in a bottlecap factory. Asher Zelig worked as a machinist, fixing diamond machinery on 47th street in Manhattan⁷. The diamond business was especially appealing to Jews because in most cases it did not require work on Shabbos. Asher Zelig worked his

Simcha Berkowitz and Family in America.

The children belong to Ita, Freida or Jack.

his mother to the right.

Top Row: Freida Klienman nee' Berkowitz, Freida's husband Irving

Berg (wife of Jack Berg), Jack Berg (name shortened from Berkowitz) Bottom Row: Simcha Berkowiz in center, Simcha's wife to the left, and

Klienman, Ita Heisler nee' Berkowitz, Ita's husband Moshe Heisler, Sonia

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16 PEON AND DEVENDENCE DEVI DUPLICATE No. 4144539 ORIGINAL KANAR KERKERAN Upplication No. 2-3-39293 Personal description of holderas of tate of issuance of this certificate lige 18 years ser Vale color Thite colorof eyes Blue colorof hair Brown height 5 6 inches; feet amplexion_ Fair weight 158 pounds; visible disfinctive marks None former nationality Rumanian Manial status Varried Jolig Berleoviz (Complete and Init Signature of holder) The United States of Umerica \$51 District of Columbia Be if known that ---- ZELIC HERMOVITZ--residing at 164 Allen Street, New York, New York having applied to the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization for a certificate of Vialuration and having proved to the satisfaction of the commissioner that (3) he was naturalized by the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York, at Brooklyn, on January 19, 1937. Row Therefore, in pursuance of the authority contained in Section 2411 51 of the Nationality (let of 1940 this certificate of natural contion is issued this 24th in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred dayo Wer putaken of the and of our Independence the one hundred and forty-one and Code on Aunistrate as dis and the seal of the Department of Justice affired sixty-fifth to copy, print, photo par hurswant to statute er officient and allegallas 1120 DESIGN REVIVE BENVEL CORRECTORS

Asher Zelig Berkowitz naturalization papers. Notable information includes:

Asher Zelig was naturalized on January 19, 1937. Asher Zelig wrote his legal name as "Zelig Berkovitz". He was Romanian and arrived in America age 48. He was married when he arrived and moved to 164 Allen Street, New York, New York.

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way up and soon learned how to cut the diamonds himself. Fortunately, Asher Zelig stayed true to 17 Judaism and also taught a Mishnayos class to a group of boys on Avenue U.

Moshe Berkowitz, Later Life

Moshe Berkowitz was an avid Zionist and met his wife, Dora Malkin, at a Mizrachi dance. Once Moshe saw that the "American Dream" was not a dream at all, Moshe always discussed his wish to return to Israel. Unfortunately that was never possible.

Moshe, and the entire Berkowitz family, became involved in the necktie business. Two of Moshe's brothers owned necktie stores, his sister Sylvia sewed neckties and his aunt and uncle, the Heislers, owned a necktie factory. Moshe was a necktie presser in Manhattan. Moshe earned two cents a tie and usually pressed about twelve hundred ties a day in the sweltering heat of the iron. Moshe worked daily at his tedious job until he was about fifty years old when he became sick and was forced to stop working.

Malkin Family Roots

Dora Malkin, Simcha's mother, was born in America. Her father, Abraham Malkin grew up in Russia, and her mother Anna Lubar was born in Odessa, Belarus.

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Abraham came from a religious family of eleven children. His ancestors had immigrated to Russia from England. The family moved to a town named *Malkin*⁸, a name awarded to them by Czar Nicholas I⁹ in appreciation for excellent military work. Because of anti-Semitism, they soon proceeded to *Petrikov*, a region under the Russian/Soviet Union rule in the Province of *Minsk*. The Malkins remained a prominent family in *Petrikov* until the year 1881 when they refused to serve in the Russian army. At that point, the Malkin family lost the upper class status they held and were treated poorly, with little civil rights. The family was barely able to make ends meet in Russia.



Photo of Malkinia Gorna

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Life in Petrikov

Fortunately, the Malkins had always been in the carpentry business and Eliezer Chaim, Avraham's father, was hired occasionally for small carpentry tasks. When he wasn't busy with carpentry, Eliezer Chaim worked on peasant farms and was paid with food. However, the large family was still often hungry. Sadly, one of Avraham's sisters passed away from Pneumonia and starvation.

Life was cold and dangerous in Petrikov. Winters lasted from September to May. The Malkins couldn't afford shoes and wrapped their feet in potato sacks to protect their feet from the cold. When temperatures dropped to frigid levels, the children recounted sleeping on the stove of their one room log cabin to remain warm. The family was always on-guard and remained careful around everyone, because even the chief of police was often drunk and violent.

Throughout the hardship, and suffering Eliezer Chaim remained unwavering in his Jewish faith. The family kept Shabbos and the children were taught by private tutors. On one occasion, Eliezer Chaim sold his house and took Avraham in an attempt at Aliyah to Palestine but they were soon caught and sent back to Petrikov with a warning.

Malkin Bolshevik Involvement

Contrary to their father's beliefs, Elizer Chaim's older sons, especially Joseph, blamed Judaism for their troubles and turned to Bolshevism. While Eliezer Chaim was away, meetings were held in the small Malkin home and ammunition was stowed away under the floorboards. Later, these boys were caught and sent to jail in Russia for their suspected activity in the Bolshevik party.

Luckily, Abraham and his brother Harry were able to successfully escape to America with forged passports and travel documents provided by Harry's father in law. The rest of the family continued suffering in Russia, work became harder and harder to find. Eliezer Chaim sent a letter to his sons Abraham and Harry in America in an effort to obtain a ticket to the hopeful land of America. In March, 1905, Eliezer Chaim departed to America using a counterfeit passport provided by his son's Bolshevik friends. His immigration was a success and

Eliezer Chaim Malkin and wife. he quickly adjusted, moving in with Harry and Abraham in Brooklyn and working as a carpenter.

Unfortunately, Eliezer Chaim couldn't enjoy the American freedom for long. He heard news of Joseph's arrest back in Russia, due to the discovery of a letter detailing Bolshevik bombing plans in Joseph's possession, and about his sentence to ten years in Siberia.

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Miraculously, Eliezer Chaim was able to reduce Joseph's sentence to a little over a year with the help of the Bolsheviks, a well-known lawyer and Joseph's good behavior. The good times continued for the Malkin family as Eliezer Chaim exercised his newly acquired carpentry skills and became known as the best carpenter in town. With a steady income from large contracts, the family was hardly ever hungry.



Nathan Malkin Bolskevik activist later in America

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In 1911, Joseph returned home and together with his younger brother Nathan, launched into illegal Bolshevik planning once again. When the two were drafted to the Czar's army, they knew it was time to leave Russia. Harry and Abe sent over steamship tickets and the Bolsheviks schemed for their getaway and they escaped to America. While the escape was successful for Joseph and Nathan, the blame of coconspiracy fell on their father Eliezer Chaim. The result of this arrest was a fine and outlaw status. The Malkin family was starving once again.

In 1913, Eliezer Chaim left to America. He continued his carpentry and sent some monthly pay to the rest of the family who remained in Russia. Those in Russia were tormented. One son, Maurice, was thrown into the river with rocks shoved into his pockets by a group of Russian teens. He was amazingly saved and when news of the near-death experience and Russian cruelty reached the family in America, Eliezer

Chaim rapidly arranged tickets to America for the last of the Malkin family in Russia.

Immigration to America

The Bolshevik's smuggled the family out, first to Austria and then to Hamburg where they boarded the S.S. President Lincoln¹¹ steerage to the US.

After passing through Ellis Island, the entire family was reunited in Abraham's Brooklyn tenement on Scholes Street in Williamsburg¹². Abraham lived in the back of his carpentry shop together with his wife whom he met in America. Harry and Nathan also lived in Brooklyn while Joseph, in his shared apartment with the famous David Dubinsky¹³ and the rest of the family lived in the Lower East Side¹⁴.



S.S. President Lincoln The Malkin's ship to America



Map of Malkin Travels from Petrikov: 1. Petrikov, Belarus (red) 2. Austria (orange) 3. Hamburg port, Germany (green) 4. America

Malkin Bolshevism in America

Joseph Malkin's relocation to America didn't put an end to his Bolshevik activities. He joined the Socialist party and educated his younger brothers on Marxism. In 1917, Joseph became a leader of the Russian Federation where he befriended Leon Trotsky¹⁵, who soon became a frequent guest in his home.

When Czar Nicholas I was overthrown on March second, Trodsky recruited Joseph to return to Russia with him. Meanwhile, while America entered into World War One in 1917, Abraham and Eliezer Chaim practiced carpentry in Camp Upton¹⁶, a New York army base on Long Island which trained soldiers to fight.

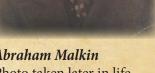
Eliezer Chaim was the only one who remained steadfast in his beliefs and didn't Abraham Malkin give in to communism. The rest of the family busied themselves in the matters of the Photo taken later in life. Socialist party. Maurice distributed literature and helped smuggle funds for the movement. Sisters Bertha and Elsie joined unions.

In 1923, Joseph returned briefly to America together with his wife. They were shocked and scared when the announcement of Lenin's death was made on January 21st 1924. They believed that Trotsky would be targeted by Stalin and that as close friends and subordinates to Trotsky it was necessary for them to return to Russia. Eliezer Chaim sat shiva when Joseph departed because as just as he thought, that was the last time he saw his son.

Maurice continued his communist activites and was imprisoned in prison in Comstock, NY where he began

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to doubt his allegiance to communism. His father, Eliezer Chaim, and his mother visited frequently. Maurice was released and was considering a trip to Russia but his mother had become ill and her death caused Maurice's decision to remain in America.

In 1936, Eliezer Chaim died from pneumonia and Maurice saw that his father was right all along about religion and decided to return to Judaism. Maurice was informed by an anti-Stalinist, General Walter G. Krivitzky¹⁷, that Joseph and his wife had been killed immediately after they had returned to Russia. The morning that Joseph and his wife had arrived in Russia, they were interogated and thrown to the dogs in the Lubianka prison.

Fed up with communism, Maurice wrote to the House Committee on Un-American Activities¹⁸ and offered to give complete testimony and inside information on the American communist party. He was called to Washington and the other siblings were called to testimony as well.

Avraham Malkin and Children

Avraham Malkin married a woman named Anna Lubar. Anna's hebrew name was Yenta, and her last name

Lubar is shortened from Lubarsky. The family is from Odessa, Ukraine and is of Lubavich descent. The couple had six children in America: Sally, Carl, Ida, Iggy (nickname for Julius), Dora and Joey Malkin.

Dora Malkin met Moshe Berkowitz at a Mizrachi dance, and together they had three children: Simcha, my paternal grandfather, and his two brothers Abie and Jerry. After Moshe Berkowitz passed away, Dora married her second husband: Joe Megerman.

Simcha went to Chaim Berlin Yeshiva and recieved semicha from



Anna and Avraham Malkin

Anna Malkin

Anna Malkin nee' Lubar's Father

Rabbi Gustman's Rabbinical Academy. In 1971, Simcha Berkowitz married Brenda Rozen and they had two sons: Yechiel Berkowitz, my father, and his brother Moshe Berkowitz.

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Conclusion

It is clear that although the Berkowitz family has been in America for five generations, there lies a bountiful history. Both for better and for worse, my family has been prominent in America and in their homelands, trying to make a difference wherever they go.



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Anna Malkin, Abraham Malkin, Frieda (Iggy's wife)



Dora and Ida

The six Malkin children: Sally, Carl, Ida, Iggy, Dora, Joey



My Favorites Cohen Diologni Catino

Dora Malkin H.S. autograph book



Wedding of Dora Malkin and Moshe Berkowitz $(\mathbf{ })$



Ida Malkin, Frieda Malkin (Iggy's wife), and Dora Malkin



Simcha Berkowitz and wife.



Moshe, Simcha and Dora Berkowitz



Malkin siblings: Iggy, Ida, Sally, Dora, Joey (standing), Carl (sitting)



Carl, Sally, Ida, Dora and Iggy Malkin Joey is missing, he was in Iowa at the time.



Simcha, Jerry, and Abie Berkowitz

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Malkin family in the fourteenth census of the US, 1920: Abraham, Annie, Charles, Julius....Father's place of birth: Russia. Native Language: Yiddish. Abraham's profession, carpenter.

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Malkin family in the sixteenth census of the US, 1940: Zelig, Hanna, Morris, Sylvia, Abraham, Francis Berkowitz. According to these records, all of the Malkins except for Francis and Stanley were born in Romania. Francis and Stanley were born in Palestine. Asher Zelig is a cutter in a shirt factory. Morris is an apprentice cutter in a shirt factory. Sylvia was a salesgirl in a wholesale tie factory.



Dora Berkowitz's Pesach china.

Dora Berkowitz's decorative brass candlesticks. Dora Berkowitz's charm bracelet band.

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Dora Berkowitz at Natan Berkowitz's Upsherin in June, 2005.



Dora Berkowitz and Great-Grandchildren (and Priva Halpert) on Chanukah 2006. Bubby Dora, Yaeli Berkowitz, Natan Berkowitz Chavi Berkowitz and Priva Halpert (smallest girl)

Appendix A



Dora Berkowitz watching her son, Simcha, and grandson, Yechiel, at the Purim Seudah of 2006.

¹**SZIGHET** is a city in Romania, originally belonging to Hungary before World War One but later was acquired by Romania. By 1969, the Jewish population in the region grew to around 2,300. After World War One, Zionism flourished in Szighet. The Reli gious Zionists were led by impassioned Hillel Lichtenstein.

²**ZICHRON YAAKOV** is a city on the coast of Israel very close to Haifa. It was one of the earliest settled regions inPalestine and the community, comprised of many vineyards and wineries, was established by Baron Edmond de Rothschild who named it in memory of his father. Zichron Yaakov was originally mainly settled by Romanian Jews.

³ **BATEI UNGARIN** is a neighborhood which was settled by mostly Hungarians, established by Kollel Ungarin in 1891. The name "Batei Ungarin" literally means "hungarian houses." By the time of World War One the community was thriving, composed of many Jewish apartments, a shul and a mikvah. Many other Jewish kolel communities followed Batei Ungarin's model.

⁴**RAV KOOK** was the first Chief Rabbi in Palestine who accepted the position in 1904. During World War One Rav Kook lived in Switzerland and London, returning to Palestine after the war. He became world renowned and built Yeshivat Merkaz Harav in Yerushalayim.

⁵**THE ARAB RIOTS OF 1929** were initiated by conflict between the Arabs and Jews in Palestine over rights to the Kotel. 133 Jews were killed by Palestinians. Arabs attacked Jews with knives, rifles and daggers. The violence especially worsened after a few Arabs were killed. This spurred many Arabs to attack Jews in attacks like the Chevron Massacre.

⁶ **THE CHEVRON MASSCRE** took place on August 23rd 1929. Arabs attacked the Jews of Chevron. Arabs threw rocks at and killed in nocent Yeshivastudents. Sixty seven Jews were killed and the rest were relocated to Yerushalayim and the British prohibited them from moving back to Chevron.

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⁷ Along **FORTY-SEVENTH STREET IN MANHATTAN** is the area: West 47 th street between Fifth avenue and Sixth Avenue are known as the diamond ditrict in New York City. It was busied with working Jewish immigrants who were both diamond dealers and crafts men. Judaism was embedded in this profession, with many Jews in the practice, they often listened to Jewish classes on tape as they worked.

⁸**MALKIN**, or Malkinia Gorna, is known to be an important villiage because of its railroad junction. It was located between Warsaw and Bialostok. Originally was under the Russian empire, until 1900 when the village became part of Poland. Many businessmen travelled through the station in Malkin because it was the closest station in the Ostrolenkan region. It was also an area where the Russian army would train their soldiers. The railroad lines were later used to transport Jews to the death camps in Treblinka, just five miles North of Malkin.

⁹**CZAR NICHOLAS I** was the Russian Emperor from 1825 until 1855. He was viewed as the ultimate autocrat and ran his country on the doctrines of the Official Nationality which was based on three main beliefs: Orthodoxy,autocracy, and nationality. The Czar believed in militarism and was always surrounded by soldiers. He viewed the Jews as a unified group that were dangerous, whom he had to break their unity and assimilate into Russian culture. Anti-Jewish laws were passed and the Jews were classified into "use ful" and "non-useful" groups.

¹⁰ **THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY** was the name coined for a wing of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party lead by Russian com munist, Vladimir Lenin. They believed in a class-less society and was mostly comprised of the working class.

¹¹ **THE S.S. PRESIDENT LINCOLN** was a steamship with a line from Hamburg to America. In 1918, it was torpedoed and sunk by the Germans.

¹² WILLIAMSBURG gained an influx of Jewry when the Williamsburg Bridge opened, which prompted Jews to move from the cramped Lower East Side. In addition, the area became highly populated with immigrants. Later, Jews fleeing Nazism would make Williamsburg their home.

¹³ **DAVID DUBINSKY** was the longest leader of the ILGWU, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, from 1932-1966. The union grew enormously under Dubinsky's leadership and made many negotiations. He was also heavily involved in American politics, both state and national.

¹⁴ **THE LOWER EAST SIDE OF MANHATTAN** was the center of American Jewry in the early nineteenth century. It was packed with immigrants, tenements, and factories. Almost everyone was Jewish and there were many Shuls, libraries and shops opened. Many Jews worked in garment factories. Tenements housed large families in addition to boarders for another source of income.

¹⁵ **LEON TROTSKY**, born as Lev Davidovich Bronshtein, was a major communist leader. He lead Russia's October Revolution in 1917. When Lenin died, there was a power struggle between Trotsky and Joseph Stalin. Stalin was victorious and Trotsky lost all power and was subsequently exiled. For the remainder of his life he lead opposition against Stalin. He was eventually murdered by a follower of Stalin.

¹⁶ CAMP UPTON was a New York army base on Long Island which trained soldiers for World War One.

¹⁷ WALTER KRIVITZKY was a top spy who informed the West of the events in Russia and the Stalin regime.

¹⁸ **THE HOUSE COMMITTEE OF COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES** was a American government organization who lead searches on supposed American communist citizens and arrested them for communist activities. The case of Alger Hiss was one of the most famous of these cases.

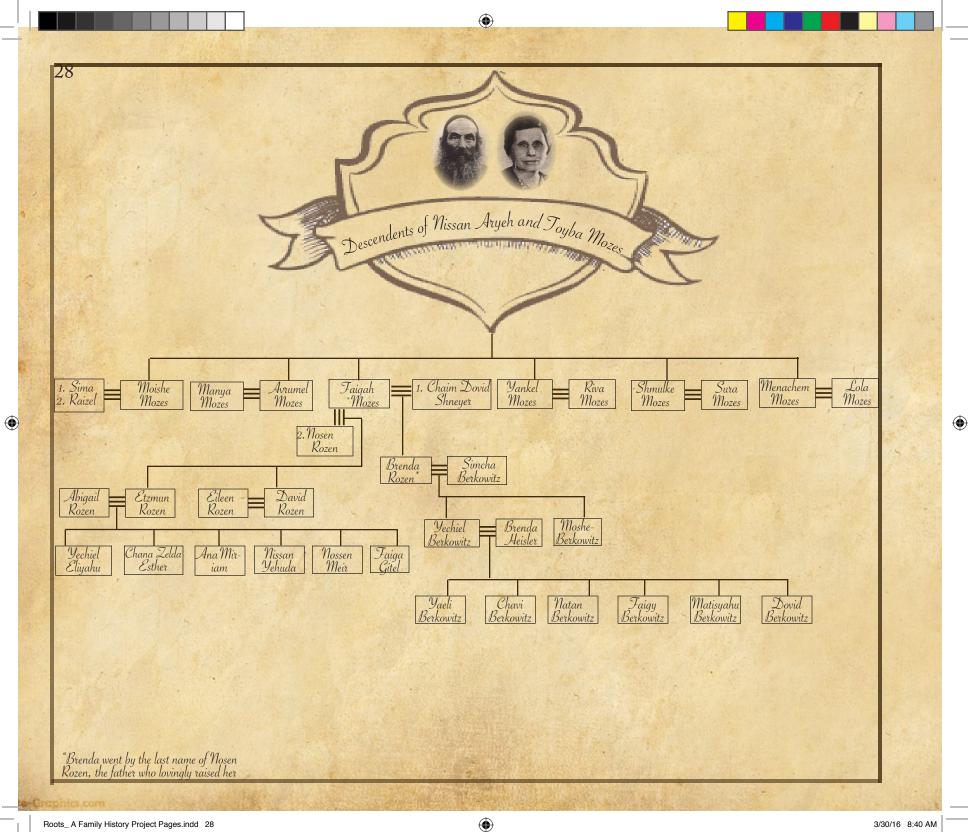
The Mozes Family The Mozes and Shneyer ancestors of my paternal grandmother,

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Brenda Berkowitz Sr.

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Introduction

My paternal grandmother, Brenda Berkowitz nee' Rozen, was born to Faigah Mozes and first husband Chaim Dovid Schneyer on January 1st 1947. Brenda was raised with infinite love by Faigah Mozes and her second husband Nosson Rozen, which is why the maiden name she went by was Brenda Rozen.

Faigah Mozes had a difficult life in Europe and was known for her bravery and strength.

The Mozes - Before the War

Faigah Mozes was born in 1920 to Nissan Aryeh Mozes and Toyba Mozes nee' Rozen. She was the fourth child in her family of six: Moishe, Yankel/Jacob, Avrumel, Shmulke, and Menachem. The family lived in a small town called *Goworowo*¹ in the Ostrolenka County. The town was mostly Jewish, filled with merchants, shoemakers, craftsmen and businessmen². A large part of the profits were made on Thursdays when the gentiles would go shopping the marketplace. Nisan Aryeh worked as a Mohel and a Shochet. He was well known and proficient at his job. Menachem recalled carrying the knife for his father because later during WWII, Nissan Aryeh was afraid of being caught by the police for violating the law by slaughtering for kosher.

The younger Mozes boys attended public school until one o'clock. Anti-semitism was present in the public schools and although the Jews were the majority in the schools, the gentile children would often beat the Jewish children. Some gentile teachers were anti-semetic as well. On one occasion in the late nineteen thirties, the gymnastics teacher in Menachem's school took the children for a swim at the river. A Jewish girl began to drown

and the teacher purposely didn't save her, the girl therefore drowned while the Polish laughed at the situation. Additionally, some teachers would refuse to let the children out of school on Friday purposely to harass them.

The family was frum and the older boys, besides Moishe who was married, boarded at the Yeshivos of Lomza³, Vilna⁴and Baranovitch⁵. Menachem, the youngest, remained home and attended Cheder with about fifteen children in addition to morning public school. Besides for their Jewish education, the boys were also socially involved in the Agudah organization. Faigah, the only girl, attended a Bais Yaakov⁶. The children



Faigah Mozes and her Bais Yaakov class.

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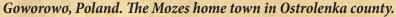
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30 learned to love Judaism through the example of their father Nissan Aryeh. Nissan obviously made Judaism a priority as he would wake up at five o'clock in the morning and sing prayers before leaving to work at seven thirty. Nisan would then attend shul regularly which was located a few minutes away from their home. When work ended at nine o'clock in the morning, Nisan would learn from his friend a watchmaker and also dedicate time to learning.

Preparation for Shabbos started on Friday morning while it was still dark. It was a whole day's worth of hard work. The Friday night meal lasted about two hours, filled with pleasant Zemiros, Kiddush and family time. On Shabbos Nissan always made time to learn with his sons.

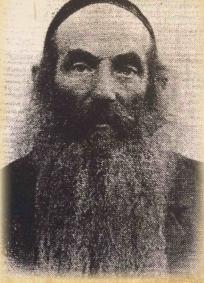


Yankel Mozes





Toyba Mozes



R' Nissan Aryeh Mozes



Moishe Mozes with the Agudas Yisroel of Goworowo.

Loland, Before World War Two

World War II broke out on September 1st, 1939⁷. The following week, the Germans arrived outside of Goworowo. When the Mozes family approached their Rav for advice, he told them it would be best to leave town. The family walked for hours and arrived in a deserted town seven kilometers away. Toyba and her sister, Breina Eisenberg⁸ were concerned, and so the following day they walked to Goworowo and returned with a report that the Germans had arrived there and were coming toward the deserted town as well. The family decided to go back to Goworowo. On their way back, they encountered Germans who stopped Nissan Aryeh and took away his knife. Faigah bravely stood forward, grabbed the German officer's hand and said "how dare you take away the knife from my father, do you know who he is?" and proceeded to explain how he was a Shochet and used the knife for Shechitah and Bris Milah. To the family's amazement, the German gave back the knife and let them go. Three days later, the family heard that a few miles from where they were stopped, another Shochet was stopped and the Germans cut his throat with his knife. There is no explanation for this other than a *Nes*.

The family arrived back in Goworowo on a Friday afternoon. Promptly upon their arrival, the Germans gathered the men overthe age of eighteen; everyone else were sent home. Many restrictions were placed on the Jews. That night shots were sounded and the Germans yelled "araus! araus!", meaning get out. The entire town was taken into the marketplace⁹. Everyone was terrified. Many Jews were shot. Nissan Aryeh prayed Viduy with his children, because he thought this would be the end of his life.

After a few hours, the town was rounded up and packed into the Shul. They watched in horror as the Germans poured cans of Gasoline over many houses in the town. The Germans lit a fire and soon the entire town was in

flames. The fire inched closer and closer to the Shul. The Jews waited for their deaths. However miraculously, a car pulled up and a German higher official stepped out. He assessed the situation and addressed the Germans in charge of the invasion. The official left as the Shul began to burn. The Germans began to yell again, "araus! araus!" and the Jews stampeded toward the back exit. They watched from the other side of the river as their town burned through almost four days.

After the burning stopped, most of the town, consisting of around eight hundred people, stayed temporarily at the few untouched houses near the town's church. One house be



Town of Goworowo in flames

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³² longed to Chaim Potach, the family was well known and wealthy as well as Moishe's in-laws. The Mozes stayed there through the Yamim Noraim for around seven weeks. They had lost all their belongings and valuables. The Mozes family found that even their American dollars, stored in a metal tea box behind a brick in the cellar, were burned to a crisp. The Germans still inhabited Goworowo and continued to torment the Jews at their disposal.

The Germans disappeared when Poland was divided between Germany and the USSR in September 1939¹⁰ and the Jews were given the opportunity to leave Goworowo. The Mozes family travelled to Nissan Aryeh's sister in Lvov¹¹.On the way, at the Bialostok train station, the family encountered one of the Mozes boys who had been in Yeshiva in Vilna. He invited his family to his home in the outskirts of Vilna instead of travelling to Lvov. The family travelled to Vilna, where they were advised by a friend to go to Lvov, which was their original plan, because the Lithuanians would soon invade Vilna¹². So the entire family went to Lvov.

In 1940, the Mozes settled in Bialostok¹³ where many family friends had situated. Life was manageable under the Russians, and the Mozes were able to do some business. However, soon the Russians ordered the refugees in Bialostok to register themselves. The Mozes heeded the order and went to register and were given choices for their next step. The options were travel to America, Palestine, Germany or to stay put. Most of the refugees, including Nissan Aryeh and Toyba, decided to immigrate to America with their families.

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USSR Northwestern Gulag camps. The Mozes worked four stops from the Archangelsk camp

Six weeks later on a Friday night in June 1940, Russians burst into the Mozes home and allotted them an hour to pack up their belongings. The family was thrown into cattle cars along with thousands of other Jews considered politically undesirable because they didn't register to stay. After a week of travel, by train, truck, boat and finally horse and buggy, the exiles arrived in a work camp four trainstops North of Archangelz¹⁴. The camp was situated in the middle of the woods and the main labor was cutting timber and bringing it to the river.

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Life in Russia

The conditions in Archangelsk were similar to those described in Siberia. The large Mozes family was only given one small room. It was freezing, and the Jews had to work at all temperatures until forty below zero. To keep their feet warm and dry, the workers would wrap rags around their feet and freeze ice around them. The Mozes family sustained themselves by gathering cranberries in the neighboring marshes. Yet, from lack of vitamins, many inhabitants, including Shmulke Mozes, contracted a sickness nicknamed "chicken blindness"¹⁵ which caused the ill to become blind from dusk until morning¹⁶.

The Mozes remained unwavering in Judaism despite the Russian resistance and celebrated all holidays, including Pesach, in the camps. Nissan Aryeh baked matzos out of flour sent by his brother in Odessa. Daringly, Nissan Aryeh made a Seder and invited a few friends. A Russian commander caught him and demoted him from his relatively prestigious job as the head of the bathhouse¹⁷, to the lowly job of cleaning the Gulag sewage.

In 1941, the Soviet-German war¹⁸ broke out and the Polish negotiated to help the Russians if they release the Polish prisoners in the work camps. The Mozes family and the other Jews in their camp were told they were released. The Mozes travelled deep into Kutaisi, Georgia¹⁹ located in southern Russia. This was the place in which Faigah met her early husband, Chaim Dovid Shneyer.

In Georgia, the family managed to make a small living, by making shoes²⁰, soap and cotton. Nissan was a Mohel and on one occasion, he performed bris milahs on teens because no other mohelim were willing to go there. While the family had some money, in Russia, supply of everything was scarce. Citizens bought anything available in stores. Once, Faigah bought a bundle of ties for sale and sewed them to create a colorful skirt. At that time, Faigah also attended a university in Georgia, which was unusual at that time.

However, the Communist regime was extremely strict and a few of the Mozes children were arrested and sent back to Siberia until Stalin granted them amnesty²¹. Faigah was one of the Mozes children who were hunted by the KGB for a period of the family's stay in Russia.

Tragic and colorful was your forebears life. Utter poverty in "RUTAISI" yet oranges grev in The courtgard. One room you Two families, and a daily MINTAN Too boot. I met your Grow Brenda when

Excerpt from a letter from Lola Mozes to Yaeli Berkowitz written on February 8th, 2016 describing Kutaisi, Georgia.

"Tragic and colorful was your forebears life. Utter poverty in Kutaisi yet oranges grew in the courtyard. One room for two families and a daily minyan to boot."

Toyba Mozez. Russia, around 1944.

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After the War

In 1945, the war ended and the Mozes returned to Lodz²², Poland escaping from the Communist oppres-

sion. Anti-semitism was still strong²³. The Mozes wanted to leave Poland. They progressively made their way out, stopping in a city near Prague²⁴, Czechoslovakia. In Czechoslovakia they met with Rabbi Herzog's group of over 600 Polish orphans whom he rescued²⁵. Menachem joined with the group of orphans²⁶. And the rest of the family went to France to live in the DP camp Chateau Bois de Rocher. My grandmother, Brenda was born to Faigah and her first husband Chaim Dovid Shneyer in 1947. When Chaim Dovid went to America their marriage ended. Faigah married her second husband, Nosen Rozen, who was originally from C

Gradually, the Mozes left Paris for America. Menachem and Lola were the last to immigrate in 1951. Faigah passed through Ellis Island and moved to Boro Park to join her late husband, Nosen, who had arrived on a student visa a short time earlier. The family proceeded to Williamsburg where Brenda was raised and her (half) brothers David and Eztmun were born.



DP Camp Chateau Bois de Rocher, France.



Mozes family in the DP camp Chateau Bois de Rocher in France, 1949:

Top row: Cousin, Syma (Mozes Sister-in-law), Moniek (Mozes Sister-in-law), Menachem Mozes, (unknown cousin above),

Middle row: unknown cousin, Toyba Mozes, Avrumel Mozes, Nissan Aryeh Mozes

Bottom row: unknown cousin, Icek, Avrumel, Brenda, Renee (Brenda and her first cousins)

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Menachem Mozes and the Exodus of 1947

Menachem Mozes separated from his family in Czechoslovakia and had a unique experience aboard the illegal Exodus ship in 1947.

After the war the Mozes family left Russia for Czechoslovakia. In Czechoslovakia, Menachem left his family and joined the group of Rabbi Herzog's orphans who were travelling to Strausberg²⁷, France. Menachem and his future-wife, Lola, went to the port city of, Marseille²⁸, from where they hoped to board a ship to Palestine. Together with around 500 Jews from Germany, Menachem and Lola were driven to Port De Bouc in southern France. The group boarded a crowded ship flying a Panamanian flag planning to dock on a beach in Tel Aviv. The ship would later become the famous Exodus ship of 1947.

The S.S. Exodus was an illegal immigration ship belonging to the Israeli Hagana²⁹, the zionist military organization in Palestine. After World War II ended, the British didn't allow unlimited Jewish immigraton and settlement in Palestine, and the Hagana became involved in illegal activites such as the Exodus of 1947.

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The Hagana planned for the S.S. Exodus to dock on a beach in Tel Aviv and have its passengers blend in with the local Israelis. The ship departed and was soon surrounded by English warships which attacked even before the S.S. Exodus reached English waters. Menachem recalled throwing hot oil, cans and cannons at the attacking English ships. The captain of the Exodus ordered his passengers to surrender when the English began to use ammunition. The English captured the ship and forced it to dock in Haifa and the heartbroken passengers were distrubuted between three English ships and were brought back to France. Menachem and Lola were placed on the Empire Rival ship along with 1500 other refugees.

The English were very cautious with the passengers because they were frightened of possible uprising³⁰. The refugees refused to leave the ship and the Hagana, ensured no passengers left. The ship then sailed to Hamburg, Germany where the passengers were forcibally transferred to a DP camp³¹. After a month, the English disappeared thinking the passengers would quickly disperse on their own. The Hagana appointed Menachem as one of the policemen to ensure no one exited the camp. In February 1948, Menachem and Lola left to Chateau Bois de Rocher,³² to rejoin with the rest of the Mozes family.

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1947 - -= CARGO ON THE SHIP EMPIRE RIVEL - JUNE 2015 ~ A PHOTOGRAPH A MEMORY ~

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Looking at the picture, one must use ones imagination. The photo should a mass of bodies, but setually it was more like a putch work quitt. Small groups, each forming a square. The sixe of a blanket ... Out of sight, in the lover part, to the left is a Maircase from where The picture was Taken-leading up to the steek with a shack for a washroom. To The right of the stairs a group of six young, strapping boys with an inerhaustible tibido, and a English, bland, pretty gist - Though a bit mousey looking-a quite villing recipient. He bordered Them. That, Ela, myself and one of The other kicks. - We dere then just best friends from The Strasbourg childrens home - mor always immaculate, put his pants under the blanket de stept on- to keep the crease. - He spit-polished his shoes. I am jotting it down to let you know, that Ne still have quite a lot of olignity Right above in, a young also blond blue eyed girl, with her dark burly lover, and the of their friends. She was sweet and friendly. Gave me a searf to make a Top when my dress Tore. A boy gave me a pair of thorth - a fantantic treasure -To form the bigger square -above the boys - a family with a small whild resided. One morning The morth, while cleaning the crumbs and what not, overlooked a Tiny Toundle, then shaking out the

blanket, and how somewhere between Themsalestime blanket, and how somewhere between Themsalestime and Europe, on the bottom of the Mediterranean sea lays a meatly knotted handkerchief witt all their Imoney and jevelry, their measly earthly possessions. The big square shared one boost of some kind of gruet with a few wormy erachers, while sitting in a bircle. The food: a laugh and a half ! The a The Wittle groups - a make believe family - stretched out in the gigantic, bot bovel of the skip. At That time the meighboring cluster of people

brought an accepting smile, but looking back I pondet how macable the show and our lives were. Lola Mozes - personal account describing the conditions aboard the Empire Rival



Living quarters aboard the Empire Rival



Empire Rival newspaper clipping from Lola Mozes

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And yet ... a colorful, amazing sight ve made. We the coptured ones, the prisoners, scared the English overlords by simply singing the Halikroh." In Gibrattar, just to amuse ourselves and to Toxment the roldiers-who quarded us, who had to open the gates to let us go to the "latrines -one on reach side of The deck - He stood in a row, and went through the gate one at a time, which meant: That the hot, frustrated, bored "Gersy" had to put down his riffle, unlock the gate, let one kid out, lock it back, put on the riffle, and them... start all over again. On Top of it, such one of us asked : if de should go to the African side or the Spanish one-Our ship was anchored between the too continents .- They vere silly kids pranks. It kept us going. He usually Mopped when ve got Tired, and soid enough unkindly vords? We fought the armed English mary with: potatoes and cans of Spam. We fought Them With a hymn and childish mischief, above all with a stubborn will. He were not a mans of bodies, we were a vibrant, enthusiastic, full of hope, full of life, full of eagerness family, searching for a home, no matter how long it took, no mostler the hardship. With an animalistic drive to make a mest! So this is how it partly Jas! And This I have Written in the mame of fifteen hundred trindred, brave souls, on an English greight ship going to mowhere. AP.S. An Ere An Erodus 1947 passenger Holas The English girl turned out to be a spy. Suddenly the disappeared. Irowned? I hope not, I detest violence.

This is just an explanation of a photo. The month on The sea is eloquently described in The Erodus 1947 book, by un exceptionally talented journalist as well as a personality in her own right. Mrs. Ruth Gruber. dola,

Lola Mozes - personal account describing the conditions aboard the Empire Rival.

Excerpts from Lola's Account:

"Max*, always immaculate, put his pants under his blanket to keep the crease. He spit-polished his shoes. I am jotting it down to let you know, that we still had quite a lot of dignity."

"And yet...a colorful, amazing sight we made. We the captured ones, the prisoners, scared the English overlords by simply singing the *Hatikvah*"

"We fought the armed English army with: potatoes and cans of Spam. We fought them with a hymn and childish mischief, above all with stubborn will."

"We were not a mass of bodies, we were a vibrant, enthusiastic, full of hope, full of life, full of eagerness family, searching for a home no matter how long it took, no matter the hardship. With an animilistic drive to make a nest!"

*Lola refers to Menachem as "Max" in her accounts.

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Faigah Mozes: various documents

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APITAL FONDATION DE ROTHCHILD - 15, Bue Santerra, FAMILATE Stationers of only Many Properties of Art.

CERTIFICAT DE PRÉSENCE A L'HOPITAL

Je soussigne, Directeur de l'Hispital Fondatio de ROTHSCHILD, 15, Rue Sasterre, Para-125, un la minie MOSES tafa un Maigon de VAUX pel Sections (120) e Ch ans, profession haspillalisé à natre bopital 31. 12.46

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Faigah Mozes naturalization papers

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Faigah and Nosen Rozen marriage license

The University of the State of New York THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT Er it knumu thut the person whose name and address are entered herein, having met the requirements prescribed in section 165 of the Election Law, and rules and regu-lations of the Regents of the State of New York, and having made the signature appearing herein in the presence of the examiner, is berewith granted a CERTIFICATE OF LITERACY. [Sign your same on this line] [Address number and street] 9 N.V. - [Zip right] Calin E ha

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Faigah Mozes education certificate

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Map of Menachem and Lola Mozes's travels: 1. Strausborg, France. (red) 2. Marseille, France. (orange) 3. Port de Bouc, France. (yellow)

- 5. France.
- 6. Hamburg, Germany. (blue)

Menachem Mozes on the Hagana, the DP camp policman in Hamburg, Germany around the year 1947/48.

The Shneur Family

Brenda's biological father was Chaim Dovid Shneyer³³. He was born in Kurow³⁴, Poland to Chava Morganstern and Pesach Shnever. Chava Morganstern was the daughter of Rav Tzvi Hirsch Morganstern³⁵, the grandson of Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Kotsk. At the age of one Chaim Dovid's biological mother passed away and his father remarried a cousin from the Sokolover Rebbe³⁶, Toyba Shneyer, and had three children together, all of which passed away. In Kurow, Chaim Dovid's father was active in the textile business and the HaPoel Hamizrachi³⁷.

The family moved to Warsaw³⁸ when Chaim Dovid was 17. Pesach worked as a merchant and Toyba was a housewife. The family was eventually separated, Chaim Dovid's father and stepmother were sent to the Treblinka death camp³⁹ and killed. While thank-

fully, Chaim Dovid ended up in Georgia, southern Russia. In Georgia, he married Faigah Faigah Mozes and Chaim Mozes and she gave birth to Brenda. He travelled to America intending for his family to Dovid Shneur follow. However it didn't work out as planned and he sent her a divorce.



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Brenda never met her biological father Chaim Dovid, and she was raised with an infinite love by Nosen ⁴¹ Rozen whom Faigah married in Paris when Brenda was born. Nosen Rozen was a tzadik and when Brenda warmly refers to her father; her only thoughts are of Nosen. He was very learned: both in Judaic studies, an education provided by his cheder and yeshivos starting at the age of seven, and in his secular studies which he either taught himself or learned in night school in America.

א שמייכל

אויף די וואלקנס פון מיין ליולקע. שוועב איך אפט אין ווייטע ווייטן, טעג זיך וויקלען דארטן טריבע, מיט שרעקעוודיקן שיין פאר נאכטן.

וואסזשע לאכם דער מארגן פול, ווען אים ווארם נאך היינם דער מוים? צי דען קוקם ער נישם אין מאל – ווי די שמראלן מונקלען רוים?...

און ער לאכט דארך מארגנטוי, ווישט די טרערן פון די גראון. און אין פארגאכטן טונקל גרויע, אין קברים־פעלדער גאנין פארגעסן.

שזוי איך שוועב אין ווייטע ווייטן, מיט שרעק פארשמידם ווי אין קייטן, אויף די וואלקנס פון מיין ליולקע, און מעפיסמא ביי די זייטן...

ס׳מעג דער מאָרגן לאָכן פול, ווייל ס׳שרעקט אים נישט דער מאָל, און די קליינע שמערן ווינקען, אז באלד שוין קומט ער ווידער זינגען.

צוויי לירער פון יונג־פארשטארבענעם

בעריאזקעלע

אויך דו, בעריאזקעלע, ווי איך, שמייסם אליין, פארלאזמ אין פעלד, ס'לייענט ווינט דיין מרויעריק בוך — פון א פאלנדיקן העלד.

> ווי אין מיפן וועג א בלום, אייף איר אלע מרעמן, — שמייסמו פארן ווינמן-שמראם, און ס'העלפט ביי זיי קיין בעמן.

נאָר מתפלל זיי צו נאָט, היים מתפלל זיי פאר דיר, זוייל דערהערט ער דיך האָט – און זיי מתפלל אייך פאר מיר...

Two poems by Chaim Dovid Shneur in the Goworowo yizkor book, page 1117



Faigah Rozen and Chaim Dovid Shneur

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YAD VASHI The Holocaust Martyrs' an		re Authority	3	עם רון לשואה ולגבורה	דוש		
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Yad Vashem Testimony of Pesach Shneyer - Chaim Dovid Shneyer's father.

Important content:

- Wife's maiden name: Toyba

Morganstzern (second wife)

- Number of children: 1

- Permanant Residence: Warsaw

- Profession: merchant

- Residence before deportation: Warsaw

- Death: murdered in Treblinka

Yad Vashem Testimony of Toyba Shneyer - Chaim Dovid Shneyer's stepmother.

Important content:

- Place born: Pulawa, Poland
- Year born: 1890

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- Permanant Residence: Warsaw
- Father: Yitzchak Zelig Morganstern
- Mother: Chaya Hinda Morganstern
- Profession: housewife
- Death: murdered in Treblinka

YAD VAS				U	U				שם	17
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Faigah Rozen and Yechiel Berkowitz

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Faigah Mozes at the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. Washington D.C. 1983



Brenda Berkowitz Sr., Faigah Rozen, Moshe Berkowitz, Nosen Rozen



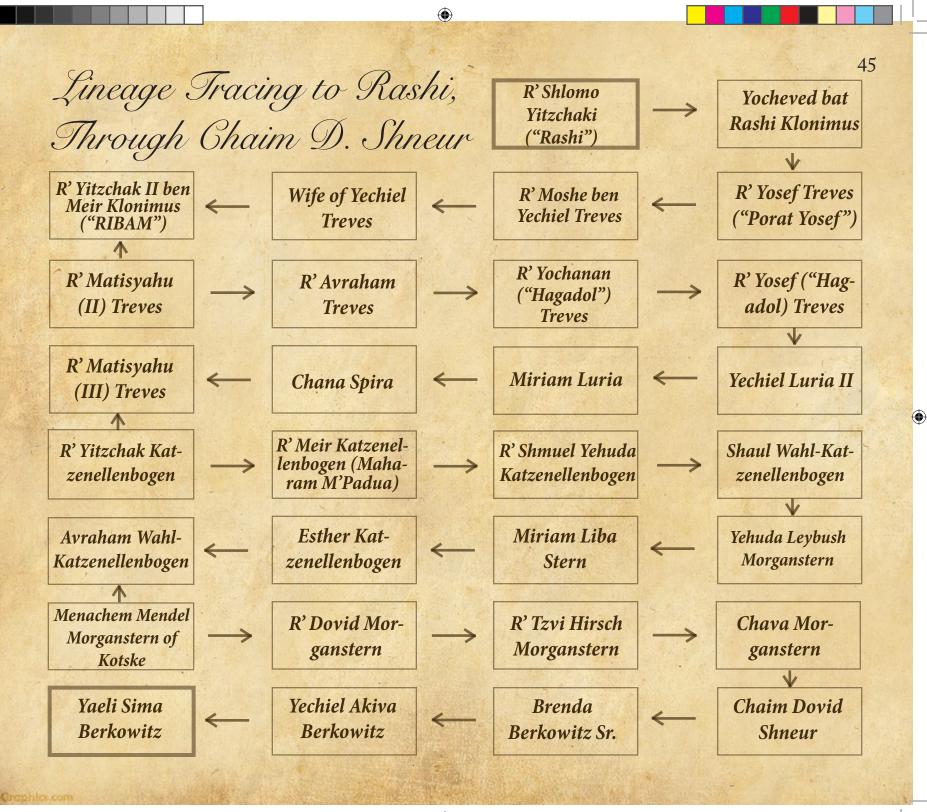
David Rozen, Etzmun Rozen, Brenda Berkowitz Sr., Faigah Rozen, Nosen Rozen



Etzmun, Brenda, Faigah and David Rozen.



Faigah and Nosen Rozen



Nosson Rozen

Nossen Rozen was Brenda Berkowitz Sr.'s true father because although she wasn't her biological daughter, he was the one who raised her with an immeasurable amount of love.

Nosen Rozen was born in a town near Czyzew, Poland. He was sent to dorm in Cheder from the age of seven, only returning home on Shabbosim. He continued his education in the Novordok Bais Yosef Yeshiva. When the war broke out, he travelled to the Russian side of Poland together with his yeshiva. His entire family was killed. Nosen survived and ended up in Siberia where he worked in the mines and eventually arrived in the DP camp at Chateau Bois de la Rocher, Paris, where he met Faigah Mozes.

Nosen Rozen was a prodigy as a child. He was proficient in Judaic studies but knew nothing involving secular studies until he arrived in America. Nosen taught himself to the extent where he was eventually able to read classical books, stock prosepectives, and figure out Brenda's complicated math problems without any foundation in math. In America, he worked first in a grocery store and then delivered and was the bookkeeper for a Williamsburg bakery. His great business sense was then clearly displayed when he moved on to his next successful job of leasing a car garage near the UN in Manhattan.



Credenza of Nissan Aryeh and Toyba Mozes.



Engraved kiddush cup from Nissan Aryeh Mozes's estate.

Toyba Mozes tin mixing spoon used on Pesach.



Esrog box of Nossen Rozen



Candlesticks of Faigah Mozes



Faigah Mozes wooden bowl Used every Thursday for chopping whitefish and yellow pike to make gefilte fish.



Faigah Mozes's ring. Made from Topaz in Israel

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Appendix B

¹ GOWOROWO was a mostly Jewish shtetl in the Ostroleka country. The nearest large city was Bialostok.

² **THE MARKETPLACE** - The middle class of craftsmen provided for the Christians in the vicinity who came to their marketplaces.

³ **THE YESHIVA IN LOMZA** was "The first yeshiva in Poland, founded in 1883 by Eli'ezer Szuliewicz in the style of Lithuanian yeshivas." [Yivoen-cyclopedia.com]

⁴ **THE YESHIVOT IN VILNA** were the place where scholars such as: Eliyahu ben Shelomoh Zalman, Shemu'el Strashun, Avraham Dan zig, and Yisra'el ben Ze'ev Volf Lipkin (Salanter) studied.

⁵ THE YESHIVA IN BARANOVICH is now under the control of Belarus.

⁶ In the 1920's, the **BAIS YAAKOV** school for girls of the Agudas Yisroel was established.

⁷On SEPTEMBER 1ST 1939, Hitler's German army invaded Poland. The Polish army was destroyed within the next few weeks.

⁸ BREINA EISENBERG's maiden name was Rozen, she unfortunately became a widow.

⁹ Goworowo was invaded by the German "Kempf" Panzer division.

¹⁰ THE DIVISION OF POLAND occured on September 29 th, 1939.

¹¹ Lvov was also known as Lemburg and Lviv. In 1939 the town was taken by USSR Ukraine, and in 1941 it was conquered by the Germans.

¹² VILNA was given over to Lithuania by the USSR in October, 1939.

¹³ **BIALYSTOK** is a city in northeastern Poland. Because of shifting control of many different countries, the cities was filled with all different ethnicities, such as: Germans, Lithuanians, Polish and Russians. The famous Bialystok Jewish revolt happened in 1943.

¹⁴ **THE REGION OF ARCHHANGELZ**, also known as Archangel is located in northeastern Russia. Many Soviet Gulags, labor camps, were located there. The city was a port town. There were 545 people imprisoned in this region, and over 100 of them died.

¹⁵ "CHICKEN BLINDNESS" is caused by vitamin A deficiency. "Vitamin A is ingested in the form of retinaldehyde from milk, meat, fish, liver, and eggs. It is also ingested as carotene from green leafy vegetables, yellow fruits, and red palm oil... a constant supply of vitamin A is needed. Vitamin A deficiency can therefore lead to night blindness" (webeye.ophth.uiowa.edu). Menachem said in his interview that in Russia, they would use fish oil as a remedy but it was difficult to obtain. Additionally, this illness would only afflict the malnourished in the winters, it went away in the short summers.

¹⁶ The chicken blindness went away in summer months. In the winter months, fish oil helped the chicken blindness but it was difficult to get fish oil.

¹⁷ THE GULAG BATHHOUSES had very little water supply which was never warm. The bath-house worker was a job that workers desired because the job offered them priority to the clean water and the ability to deny the right to other prisoners.

¹⁸ **THE SOVIET-GERMAN WAR** started when Germany attacked the USSR in 1941 because they feared the Russians would conquer too much land in Eastern Europe. The Soviet-German war ended in 1945. With the wars end, World War II ended with the victorious team of the Allies: USSR, Britain, and America.

¹⁹ **GEORGIA**, otherwise known as Gruzia, has been Independent state since 1991. The country is located in between Europe and Asia.

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Appendix B

²⁰ The shoe soles were made with the covers of Communist books from the library. This was a dangerous act against the USSR.

²¹ **AMNESTY** was granted by Stalin in September 1941.

²² LODZ was located in central Poland, and was liberated by the USSR in January of 1945.

²³ **ANTISEMITISM** was desribed in the interview of Menachem Mozes. In his interview, Menachem Mozes mentioned that he remembered the Kielce Pogrom in 1946 as an example for the rampant anti-semitism. The pogrom was a result of a young gentile boy's kidnap and placement into the basement of a Jewish building where others were hiding. When the kidnapping was investigated, Jews were shot and beaten, resulting in many Jewish deaths and injuries. In the following months, over 70,000 frightened Jews left Poland.

²⁴ **PRAGUE** is a central eastern European country. After the war, the USSR Communist party took power in Prague. By 1950 most of the Jews who resided in Prague made Aliyah.

²⁵ **RABBI YITZHAK HALEVI HERZOG** was the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, who after the war, made it his mission to gather the lost and alone orphans of Europe. His misson was funded by the Joint Distribution Committee. Besides for his famous leadership of this group of orphans, Rabbi Herzog is also famed for his discovery of the possible Chilazon for the Techelet.

²⁶ Information in next essay.

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²⁷ **STRAUSBOURG** originally belonged to the Germans. During WWI the French took power in the city. However, during WWII the Germans occupied the city.

²⁸ MARSEILLE is a port city of major economic importance. Marseille is located in Southern France.

²⁹ **THE HAGANAH** was the Zionist military organization in Palestine from 1920 until 1948. After Israel's independence in 1948, the Haganah became the official military of Israel: Tzva Haganah L'Yisroel.

³⁰ In his interview, Menachem Mozes remembered that the British wouldn't even give the passengers sardines to eat out of fear that the passengers would use the cans as weapons.

³¹ The cruelty of the British was publicized which caused a change in public opinion and in British policy.

³² CHATEAU BOIS DE LA ROCHER was a DP camp outside of Paris.

³³ SURNAME SHNEYER has alternate spellings: Sznajer, Shneer, Shneir.

³⁴ KUROW was a Polish city located in the province of Lublin.

³⁵ RAV TZVI HIRSCH MORGANSTERN was the Lomazer Rebbe of Lomazy, Poland.

³⁶ THE SOKOLOVER REBBE was Rav Yizchak Zelig Morganstern who was married to Chaya Hinda Morganstern.

³⁷ HAPOEL HAMIZRACHI was a "religious pioneering and labor movement in Eretz Israel." (www.jewishvirtuallibrary)

³⁸ WARSAW is the capital of Poland and is a city which contained a large ghetto.

³⁹ **TREBLINKA** was a death camp to which there were mass deportations from Warsaw in 1942 and 1943.

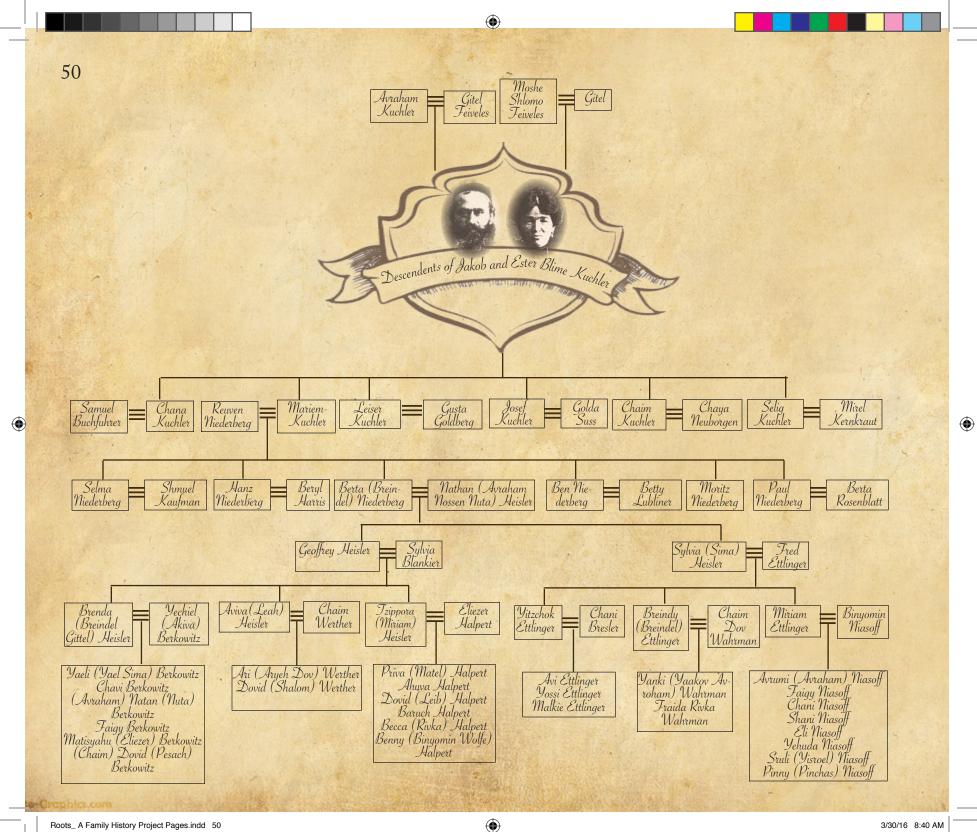


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Geoffrey Heisler.

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Introduction

My maternal Grandfather, Geoffrey¹ Heisler comes from a large European family. He was born in London to Nathan and Berta Heisler. Berta's maiden name was Niederberg, a family which traces further to the Küchler family.

The Niederberg Family Roots

Geoffrey's mother's name was Berta² Heisler nee' Neiderberg. Berta was born to Reuven³ and Miriam⁴ Niederberg in Poland. Reuven Niederberg was originally from Tarnow, Poland. His wife, Miriam Niederberg nee' Küchler was originally from the Shtetl in *Wisnicz, Poland*⁶. Throughout the 1930's some of the Küchler families, including Miriam's⁷, moved to *Scheunenviertel*⁸ in Berlin, Germany. Though, a few Küchler family members remained in Wisnicz⁹. In 1933, when Hitler was named the Chancellor of Germany, some of those Küchler's who lived in Berlin were able to leave to France, Palestine, England, and Argentina. However, Miriam's family, along with other Küchlers, were unfortunately unable to leave Berlin.



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As a result, Miriam and Reuven were forced to raise their family of five children, *Reuven Niederberg* Hans, Paul, Selma, Ben, Berta, and Moritz, in Berlin. Reuven worked as a goldsmith but the family did not have a lot of money. When the children grew up, all of them left Berlin besides for Moritz.

Hans and Paul moved to England. Reuven's last words to Hans and Paul before they departed was "Don't forget to be a Jew!" Ben followed his brother's footsteps and went to England as well. Selma had always wanted to make Aliyah and moved to Israel. My great-grandmother Berta went to England with her husband Nathan Heisler whom she married in Berlin. Although most of their children were able to escape Berline, Reuven, Miriam and their son Moritz, remained in Germany and were eventually sent back to Poland and killed by the Nazis.



Photo of Reuven and Miriam Niederberg from Shoah page of

Important Information from Reuven and Miriam's Yad Vashem Pages of Testimony and Kuchler Genealogy:

- Reuven's birth place, Tarnow, Poland.
- Reuven's permanent residence, Berlin, Germany.
- Reuven's wartime residence, Poland.
- Reuven approximate birth date, 1880.
- Miriam's birth place, Vischnitz, Poland.
- Miriam's approximate birth date, 1883.



Berta Niederberg

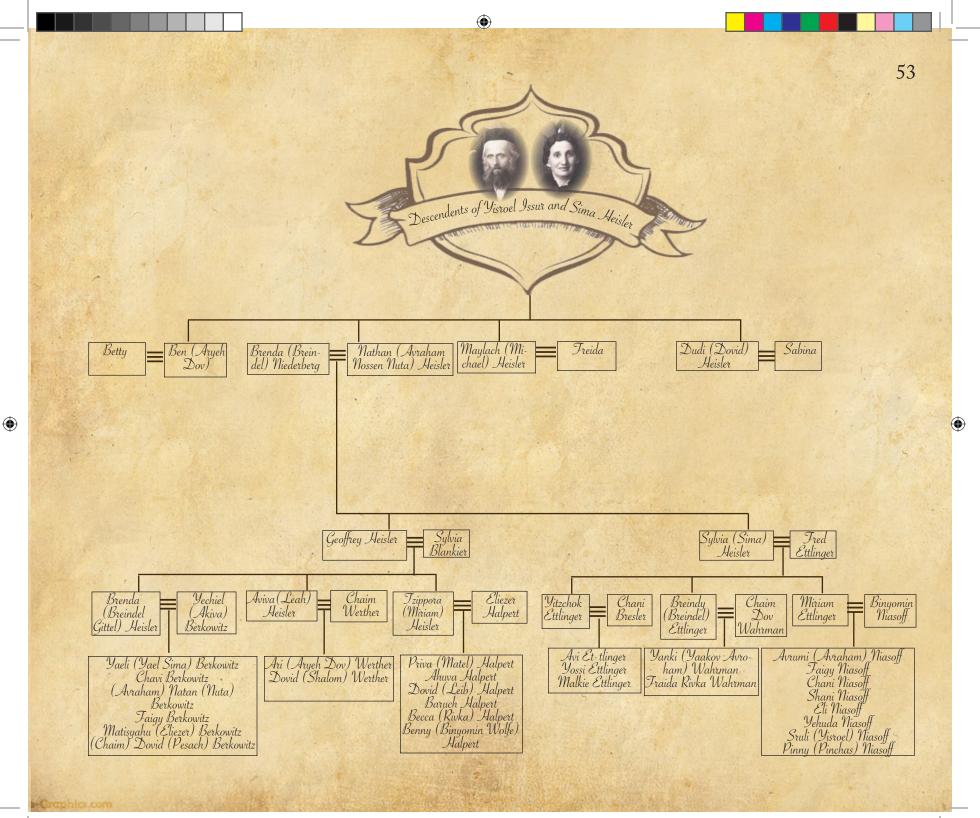
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photos from Susan

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Ester Blime and Jakob Kuchler, Miriam Niederberg's maternal grandparents. Photo obtained from the Kuchler genealogy by Adolf Kuchler.



The Heisler Family Roots

Geoffrey's father's name was Nathan Heisler⁹. On November 23rd 1910, Nathan and his twin brother, Ben, were born in Munkacs, Czechoslovakia¹⁰ to Yisroel Issur Heisler¹¹ and Sima Heisler. The Heisler family consisted of three sets of twins: Nathan and Ben, Dudi (Dave) and Meilach (Michael) and a boy and girl set of twins who passed away at eighteen months from consumption, the disease of Tuberculosis.



Heisler family and Berta Niederberg. Photo taken in August, 1937. Top row: Nathan, Meilach, Dudi, and Ben Heisler. Bottom row: Berta Niederberg, Sima, and Yisroel Issur Heisler.

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 $(\blacklozenge$

Life in Munkacs and Berlin

he Niederberg family's life in Munkacs before World War Two was difficult but managable. Interactions with non-Jews were not usually a problem. Yet, the Heisler's struggled economically. Yisroel Issur owned a delicatessen together with a brother or brother-in-law. Besides for her work at home, Sima also worked waiting tables in the rear of the delicatessen. Despite the economic hardship, the children were raised in a nice sized house rather than an apartment.

The boys attended Cheder at six o'clock each morning. In the dark hours of winter mornings, the children carried lanterns to light their path to school. When Cheder commenced, the chil-



Munkacs, Pre-World War Two. Photo from Yad Vashem.

dren headed to public school which began at nine o'clock in the morning. The boys also attended the local shul, the *Beis Medrash Hagadol* two times a week and every Shabbat. Munkacs was filled with Jews under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Eliezer Shapira¹².

When Ben and Nathan turned seventeen, they decided to go to Berlin, "the big city" to earn an additional income for their family. Nathan left Munkacs first. The only thing required of Nathan was a passport¹³. In 1929, Nathan sent for Ben to move to Berlin.

Because the twins were not German citizens it was difficult for them to find work. A job in a linen and textile headquarters came up and the Heisler boys were quick to take up the opportunity. Nathan and Ben sent



Munkacs on a Czechoslovakian map, 1933.

part of their salary home each week to subsidize the Heisler family income. The boys lived comfortably and remained in Berlin from 1930 to 1937. They ate meals at their aunt and travelled back home to Munkacs occasionally by train.

After the Nuremberg Laws were passed, the Heislers felt a significant change in relations between Jews and non-Jews. When Ben was travelling, he frequently saw hotel signs which read "Jews and dogs are not permitted." Ben once hid in a train station to avoid Nazi arrest. Moreover, in 1936 Ben was arrested for almost two

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days after being brought to the police by a stranger in his hotel. Luckily for Ben, Czechoslovakia demanded



Distance between Munkacs and Berlin that the Heisler twins traveled.

for his release. Germany obliged and released Ben, however, Ben was not allowed to renew his certificate to stay in Germany and was ordered to leave within a week. Ben ignored the ruling and remained in Berlin under Nathan's certificate which was still acceptable.

Meanwhile, conditions in Berlin were worsening. The Nazis began boycotting Jewish merchandise. Ben left in early 1937. Nathan, on the other hand, was already married and remained in Berlin. Nathan finally fled Berlin on November 9th, 1937, otherwise known as *Kristallnacht*¹⁴. Nathan decided to move to London from where the couple would hopefully follow Ben's footsteps and immigrate to America.

In order to get passage granted for his wife Berta back in Berlin, Nathan sent a fake wedding invitation¹⁵. Meanwhile in Munkacs, the Nazis were entering and the men were taken first. Yisroel Issur was taken off the streets and sent to a concentration camp where he presumably perished. Sima died of natural death in 1938. Dudi and Maylach couldn't even stay in Munkacs for the duration of the Shiva because the Nazis were gaining power. Being that Dudi and Maylach were twins, Nathan was able to file a duplicated document which enabled them to leave Munkacs to join Nathan in England. Nathan was known for having "talked his way across the English channel."

Ben's Immigration to America

In 1937, Ben wanted to leave Berlin. His emigration paved the way to America for the rest of his family. During the Spring of 1937, Ben spoke to a lady in shul who said the US council would allow him to obtain a Visa. Ben was doubtful; however, he tried his luck at the US Council, filled out papers and answered questions. They told him to come back in two weeks and he was then given a Tourist Visa for a weeks stay in America¹⁶. Ben went back to Munkacs for a three week period and spent time with his

family before he departed to America. in November of 1937 on the Normandie ship. Ben docked in Southhampton and arrived in New York almost five days later. He was greeted in Ellis Island by an uncle whom he never met. He stayed for a short time

in New York his uncle, and moved around to various cousins. Ben needed to go to Ellis Island numerous times to prolong his stay while he searched for a sponsor for his immigration.

To become an immigrant, Ben needed to leave the country and reenter. Ben took the bus down to Miami from

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where he travelled to Cuba and waited six weeks for a Greencard which enabled him to return to the New 57 York as a legal immigrant. He was then sent to Omaha, Nebraska by the organization HIAS¹⁷ whose goal was to disperse new Jewish immigrants.

In Omaha, Ben was first employed as a teacher and was then hired by a department store to work in the toy department stockroom. He was paid a meager fourteen dollars and fifty cents a week. Ben spent seven of those dollars to board, kept six dollars for himself, and placed one dollar in the bank. After Ben was laid off, he was drafted to the US army in 1942 after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

Ben was stationed in four places and maintained his yiddishkeit throughout. He underwent basic training in Tennessee. There was a kosher restaurant nearby in Nashville and Ben made sure not to eat any meat the army provided. Ben gave his portion to a friend and survived on mainly potatoes. In 1944, Ben lead 400 servicemen in a Pesach seder. Ben was also sent to Seattle, the Hawaiin Islands Guam, New Guinea, and Japan. Throughout his army service and intense training Ben did not part from his religious beliefs...

Nathan Heisler - Life in England Nathan and Berta had three children in England. Their first son passed away at a young age from kidney

complications. The other children were unaware they even had a brother until later in life. In 1940, Sylvia was born and Geoffrey followed in 1944. Dudi and Maylach also married and had their children in England.

Life was tough in England. Sylvia recalled the constant fear of German bombing. The family lived on 32 Warwick Road, and often hid in the bomb shelter on their corner. Once, when the siren was sounded, the family was unable to make it to the bomb shelter on time. Berta hid herself and her children in the closet and were thankfully not harmed. However, when the threatwas over and they emerged, their mantel was smashed to pieces and the entire block opposite theirs was demolished. Maylach's wife Freidel would alw



Nathan Heisler and Family in England. Top row: Nathan, Sylvia and Berta. Bottom row: Geoffrey Heisler at 9 months old.

ways say that she would send Maylach to shop for Shabbos and didn't know if he would come back alive.

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Besides for the physically dangerous conditions, life in England was also economically difficult. Nathan worked as a diamond cutter and Brenda worked as a housewife. Nathan's diamond cutting business was slow in England and his boss persuaded himto move to America where he could find greater economic opportunity. On top of this, Nathan's twin Ben was already in America serving in the American Army. For these reasons, Nathan decided it was time to pick himself up and immigrate with his family to America.

Nathan's Immigration and Life in America

In 1947, Nathan, Berta, Geoffrey and Sylvia boarded the Queen Mary ship. It was a frightening experience for them all, especially for young Geoffrey. Geoffrey remembers playing with his toy train on the ship's deck. When the Heisler family arrived in America, Nathan's first thought was to move near his twin brother Ben in Omaha, Nebraska. After living in Omaha a short while, Nathan and his family decided that a small town life did not suit them and Nathan brought his family to New York. They moved immediately to Crown Heights¹⁸ where they joined Nathan's brother Dudi, his wife, and their son Moishe. Geoffrey became very close with his first cousin and in the hot New York summers, the two would often have sleepovers on the roof of the apartment building.

As per the instructions from Nathan's former boss, Nathan headed down to 47th street for aninterview in the diamond business. However, business was as slow in America as it was in England and Nathan was forced to find other work. Nathan met an old acquaintance from Berlin, Mr. Straumann, and became business partners and bought a grocery store on Fort Hamilton and 51 st street, and called it *S&H*.



Geoffrey and Sylvia Heisler in aprox. 1950. Geoffrey is age 6 in the photo.

In 1950, the Heisler family moved to the Italian section of Boro Park to be ^{1950, Geoffrey is age 6 in the photo.} closer to the grocery store. For elementary school, Sylvia attended Bais Yaakov Boro Park and Geoffrey attended Toras Emes. The children both switched schools for highschool, Sylvia attended Central High School and Geoffrey attended RJJ.

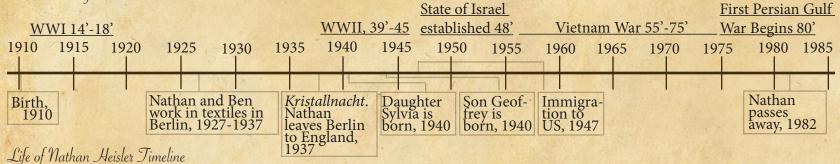
When Geoffrey finished his childhood education, he earned a degree in engineering in Polytech University. In the summer of 1970, he met his wife Sylvia Blankier. They lived in Brooklyn where they built a beautiful family of three daughters: Brenda, Tzipporah and Aviva.

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Nathan Heisler Timeline

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World History Timeline





Geoffrey at age three with his immediate family, aunts and uncles at a wedding in England in aprox 1947. Bottom row and laps: Bertl Niederberg, Hanz Niederberg, Malka Niederberg (lap), Beryl Niederberg, Betty Niederberg, Geoffrey Heisler (lap), Dudi (Dovid) Heisler, Sylvia Heisler (lap). Top row: Berta Niederberg, Nathan Heisler, Selma Kaufman. $(\mathbf{\Phi})$



Moishe, Sylvia and Geoffrey Heisler in aprox. 1949. Geoffrey is age 5 in the photo.

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Geoffrey and Sylvia Heisler. Geoffrey is ten months old. The approximate date of the photo is 1945



The Heisler Family visiting Geoffrey in Camp Munk in approx. 1956. Berta, Nathan, Sylvia and Geoffrey Heisler.



Geoffrey Heisler at age 11.



Geoffrey Heisler at his Bar Mitzvah, age 13.



Geoffrey Heisler's high school graduation photo, age 18.



Leichter that belonged to Berta Niederberg and previously to her mother, Miriam Kuchler. The Leichter is now in the possession of Aviva Werther.



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Geoffrey and Sylvia Heisler at Natan Berkowiyz's Bar Mitzvah, 2015



Geoffrey and Sylvia Heisler



The extended Heisler family at a Uncle Ben's 90th birthday in aprox. 2001. Top row: Middle row: ____, Sidney Heisler, ____, Sylvia Ettlinger, ___, Sylvia Heisler, _____ Bottom row: _____, Eve Heisler, Ben Heisler, Suzan, Sylvia Nachtigal,



Menorah that belonged to Nathan Heisler. The Menorah is now in the possession of Tzippora Halpert.

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Appendix C

¹GEOFFREY's Hebrew name was Yosef Mordechai. His name sometimes appears as Jeffrey or Josef.

² **BERTA NIEDERBERG**'s Hebrew name was Breindel. The name Alta was later added on to the beginning of Breindel's name because she passed away at a young age.

³**REUVEN NIEDERBERG** is also known as Rubin, son of Binyomin Neiderberg.

⁴ MIRIAM KUCHLER's name has alternate spellings such as: Mariem and Marjem. She was the daughter of Jakob Küchler, and Ester Blime Küchler nee' Feiweles.

⁵ WISNICZ was a town located in between the larger cities: Krakow and Tarnow. The Küchlers lived in Wisnicz under the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the end of World War One when Wisnicz became part of Poland.

⁶ At the time, the family consisted of Miriam, Reuven and Berta. The rest of the children were born in Berlin: Selma, Hans, Paul.

⁷ **SCHEUNENVIERTEL** was the Jewish quarter in Berlin. It was named this by the Nazis as a derogatory term meaning "the barn quarter."

⁸ **SELIG AND LEISER KÜCHLER** and their families remained in Poland. Leiser and Selig were killed along with most of their families, only a few children survived.

⁹ NATHAN HEISLER'S Hebrew name was Avroham Nossen Nuta. Nicknamed Avrom Nutti.

¹⁰ MUNKACS only belongs to Czechoslovakia from 1920-1938, the remainder of the years Munkacs belonged to Hungary.

¹¹ YISROEL ISSUR HEISLER was the son of Yosef Mordechai Heisler, Geoffrey's namesake. His English name is Isador Heisler.

¹² **R' ELIEZER SHAPIRA** was born in 1871 in the town of *Strzyżów* in Galicia, Poland. He was a chassid who became the chief rabbi of Munkacs. He was known to be a fierce opponent of zionism.

¹³Citizens of Czechoslovakia were not required to have visas to enter any other country except for Russia.

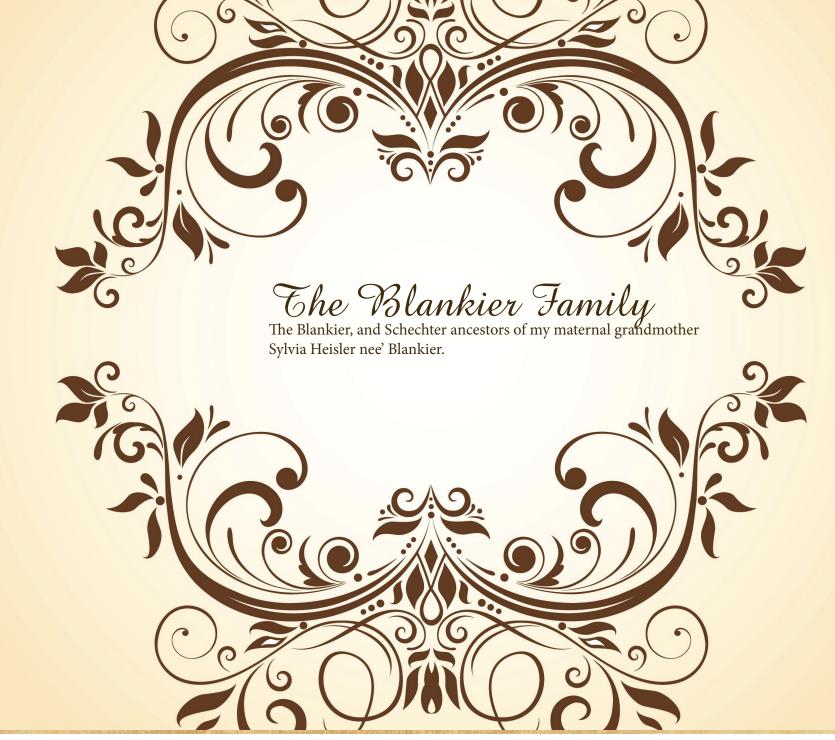
¹⁴KRISTALLNACHT is often translated as "the night of broken glass." This term refers to the wave of pogroms that swept through Germany, Austria, and parts of Czechoslovakia on November 8th and 9th in 1938. The event were nicknamed "Kristallnacht" because of the broken windows of houses, stores and shuls as a result of the violent pogroms.

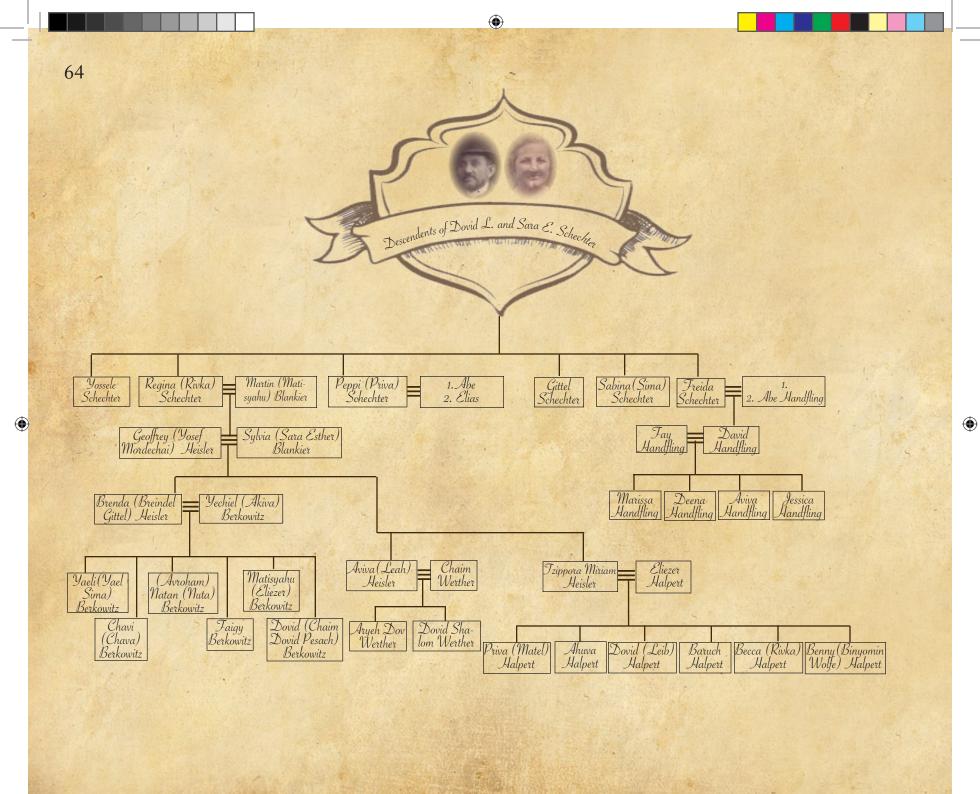
¹⁵ **THE FAKE WEDDING INVITATION** was a brilliant idea on Nathan's part. Berta herself didn't even know the invitation was fake. Nathan always said that he didn't let even his wife know it was fake because he wanted to make sure there were no interceptions and that Berta wouldn't falter when she lied at the border.

¹⁶ The simple way that Ben obtained a Visa was a Nes Min Hashamayim. There is no other way to explain how such a politically unimportant Jew obtained this document with such ease in the years leading up to World War Two. However, Ben's daughter Susan discovered that contributing factors may have been righteous gentiles in the Embassy and/or Czech Passports that Ben and Nathan owned because the Czech quota was not fully met. His daughter Susan stresses the miracle of Ben's easy emigration and said that even Mark Chagall barely got out of Berlin.

¹⁷HIAS stands for Hebew Immigrant Aid Society, a resettlement organization which started in Manhattan's Lower East Side.

¹⁸ In CROWN HEIGHTS, the Heisler's lived on Utica and St. Johns.





Introduction

My maternal grandmother, Sylvia Heisler nee' Blankier, comes from a family that was brutally affected by the Holocaust. Sylvia's father, Matisyahu Blankier was the only child who survived from his family. Sylvia's mother, Regina Blankier nee' Schechter was one of three sisters who survived. Sylvia is an only child with only one first cousin, David Handfling. Because the war was a painful topic for Sylvia's family to discuss, the topic was avoided almost entirely. Therfore, while there is some information about the family, a lot of it is unclear and not definite.

The Schechter Family

Regina (Rivka) Schechter was born to Dovid Leib and Sara Esther Schechter nee' Freier's family of six in Kolomea¹, Poland which was located in Galicia. Before the war, Dovid Leib worked in a small bristle brush factory. The family was well to do with a nice home. Almost no Jews survived the war in Kolomea.

The town had sixty thousand Jews at the height of its Jewish population. It is estimated that two-thirds of the town was killed and most of the rest were deported to the Belzec death camp². Dovid Leib was taken away from his family during a Pesach seder and was presumably killed. Sara Schechter and three children: Yossele, Simale³ and Gittale were horribly killed as well. The three surviving siblings: Freidel, Regina and Priva, were hidden by a family of Polish gentile family with the surname Gaczynka⁴. Priva was the oldest sister, also known as Peppi, and she most probably was the sister to organize the girl's hiding. Regina was the youngest of the three, and during the war she was a teenager. Freidel had been married before the war but her first husband was killed. Regina married her husband Matisyahu Blankier immediately after the war in Stuttgart. Regina was 25 years old and Matisyahu was 33 when they immigrated to America in 1946 on the Marine Perch ship from Poland. Regina's sisters moved to America as well.

: האָר־בארשטן פאבריק --- קלמן בער העגער. קלענערע פון דעם מין ציפּער און דוד לייב שעכטער.

Record of the Bristle Brush Factory. Kolomyya Yizkor Book page 92: "Bristle Brush Factory – Kalman Ber Hener. Smaller ones of the sort: Cyper and Dovid Leib Shechter.



The Schechter Family: Assumed identification - Top Row: Sima(Sabina), Gittel, Yossele, Regina. Middle Row: Sara Esther, ____Dovid Leib,

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Polish marriage document of Dovid Leib Schechter and Sara Esther Freier. The document is currently in the possesion of David Handfling, their grandson.



The Schechter Family:



Kolomyya on a Map of Galicia. Borders date to about 1850.

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Sima (Sabina) Schechter's Beis Yaakov class. The circled child is presumably Sima Schechter but it was not verified



Sima (Sabina) Schechter, Bais Yaakov aged.



Yossele Shechter



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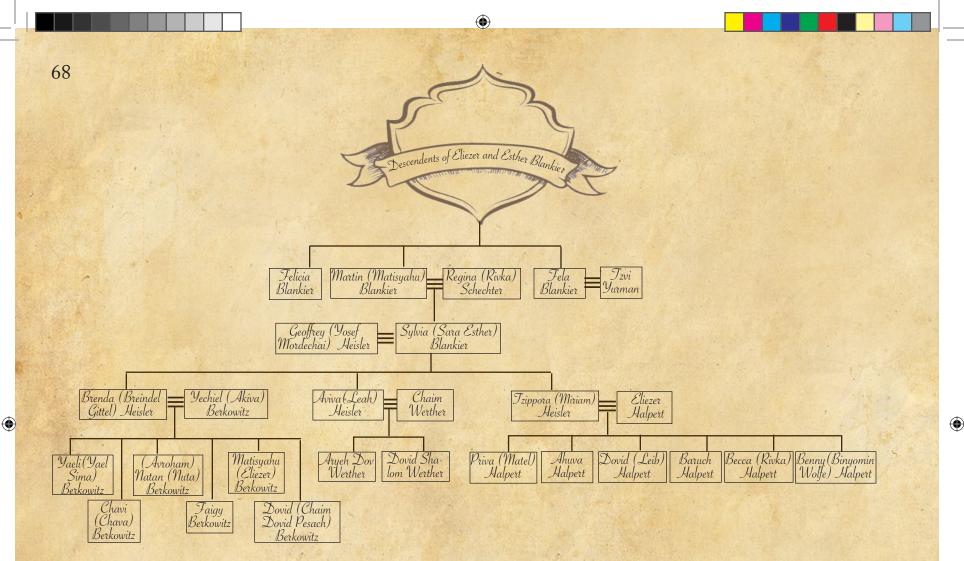
Frieda Shechter



A rubbed out picture of the five Schechter girls.

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The Blankier Family

Martin (Matisyahu) Blankier was born in Warsaw, Poland to Eliezer and Esther Blankier in 1913. The family was wealthy before the war. Sylvia recalls Matisyahu telling her that he would be able to call a maid at the sound of a bell.

Martin had two sisters: Fela and Felicia who were both killed during the war. Fela was married to Tzvi⁶ Yurman who was also killed during the war. These facts are the only information from the Blankier family and were obtained from Yad Vashem testimonies submitted by a brother of Tzvi Yurman⁵. There are also unconfirmed records that Eliezer worked as a bookbinder. The family does not know how Martin survived and ended up in Stuttgart.

Life in America

I he Blankiers were eager to quickly accustom themselves to American life. The couple first moved to Williamsburg and had their only daughter Sylvia was born in 1948. The family lived in Williamsburg for about ten years and then moved to Ocean Parkway. Regina attended night school where she learned English. Martin had been a lawyer back in Warsaw, however, there he practiced Roman law and his skills did not apply in America. Martin was forced to find another job and worked as a salesperson in a bakery and Sylvia recalls the treats he would frequently bring home for her. For the first few years of elementary school, Sylvia was sent to public school. However, her mother and her sister Peppi (Priva) feared that Sylvia was becoming too close with non-Jewish



The Heisler Family, honored at Rabbi Balcany's school, in aprox. ____(*year*). Aviva, Brenda, Geoffrey, Sylvia, Tzippora

children and switched her to Bais Yaakov of Williamsburg. It was a tough switch and Sylvia was behind in her Hebrew studies but she quickly caught up with her peers.

Sylvia was very close friends with her first cousin David Handfling, Freida's only son, as shegrew up. Since they were both the only children in their families they were practically siblings. In the summers, the family would go to Tannersville.

Sylvia later met her husband Geoffrey Heisler. They wedded on June 20th, 1971 and had three girls: Brenda (Breindel Gittel) in 1972, Tzippora (Miriam) in 1980, and Aviva (Leah) in 1982. After Sylvia's father passed away in 1989, Regina lived with Sylvia until she passed away in 2006.



The wedding of Geoffrey and Sylvia Heisler in _____.



Regina Blankier and Sylvia Heisler at Sylvia's wedding in

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Martin and Regina Blankier at their wedding.



Sylvia and Martin Blankier, her father, on Sylvia's wedding day.



Sylvia Blankier



Regina Blankier

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Sylvia Blankier, age three, and David Handfling, age four. Aprox. 1950.



Bracelet with a coin of Dovid Lieb Schechter. Currently in the possesion of Brenda Berkowitz.

Brenda Berkowitz, my mother, as a child.



Stuttgart, Germany. Place where both Regina and Martin Blankier found themselves after the war.

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Sylvia Blankier's 8th grade graduation picture.



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Ciggerette case of Dovid Leib Schechter. Currently in the possession of Sylvia Heisler.

Pocketwatch of Dovid Leib Schechter. Currently in the possession of Sylvia Heisler.

Chanemu Roleaze na pamintka Purker 19 19.30.

Chair handing

Exterior (left) and interior (right) of another ciggerette case belonging to Dovid Leib Schechter. Translation of the Polish transcription on the exterior: "Dear colleague, in remembrance...1930" This heirloom is currently in the possession of Sylvia Heisler.

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Regina and Mathias (Matisyahu/Martin) Blankier on the passenger records of the Marine Perch ship from Germany to America.

M. 9.4"

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3820RC רשות זכרון לשואה ולנבורה, ירושלים דריעד לרשום חללי השואה והנבורח ירושלים, רתוב בן־יהודה 12 אנא, מלא(י) עד כמה שידוע לך ו 33/97 110 THEN TO בעברית 2% ו. שם המשפחה wiman בשפת ארץ המוצא (באותיות למיני SID בעברית .2 שם פרטי Fela כשפת ארץ המוצא (באותיות לטיניו DN שם האם 21-26 44 ממונה 1902 17 .5 תאריך הלידה 6. מקום וארץ הלירה Vastava Dalo (כם באותיות לסיניות מקום המגורים הקבוע 5 22 (גם באותיות למיניות) 8. המקצוע 1110 9. הנתינות לפני הכבוש הנאצי NI 10. מקומות המנורים במלחמה (גם באותיות לסיניות) חוק זכרון השואה והגבורה – 11. מקום המות. הזמן והנסיבות יד ושם hanan (המקום גם באותיות לסיניות) תשריג 1953 דוק,/ נשוי / מספר הילדים 12. מצב משפחתי קובע בסעיף מס׳ צ 13. שם האשה ושם משפחתה בילח תפקידו של ידרושם הוא לאסוף אל לפני הנישואין המולדת את זכרת של כל אלה מבוי גילו 431 125 שם הבעל העם היהודי, מעפלו ומסרו את המקום והומן שנספו הגיל 1. שמות הילדים עד גיל 18 שנספו נפטס, נלחמו ומרדו באויב הנאצי (מצל לגיל זה רושמים -דףיעדי מיוחר) ובעחריו, זלהציב שם חכר להם, לקהילות, לארגונים ולמופדות שכחי רחבו בנלל השתייכותם לעם היי הרדי, ולמטרה זו יהא מוסמך – ..(4)להעניק לבני העם היהודי מהושמדו ונפלו בימי השואה והמרי אזרחות זכרון של מדינת ישראל לאות היאספס אל עמם. (ספר החוקים מסי 28ו את הילדים יש לרשום ב.דףיהעד" של אחד ההורים אך לא יותר מפעם אחת. הערהו (28.8.53 J*** un 717# 1** NOI הרוב/ה מכר/ה מצהיר/ה בזה כי העדות שמסרתי כאן על פרטיה היא נכונה ואמיתית, לפי פיפב ידיצתי והברתי אזרחות־זכרון הוענקה

Appendix D

¹ KOLOMEA is also spelled Kolomyja or Kolomyya. This is a small town that was a part of the Austrian province of Galicia, and later was under Polish and Soviet Union rule. Today, the town is a part of Ukraine.

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² BELZEC was a death camp located between the cities of Zamosc and Lvov as a part of the Operation Reinhard plan.

³ SIMA SCHECHTER was my namesake. My full name is Yael Sima Berkowitz.

⁴ There are variations to the story here, David Handfling says that his mother Freida was experimented on by Mengala at some point, and the family was not together the entire time.

⁵ Tzvi Yurman's English name was Henryk.

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Yad Vashem Testimony of Fela Blankier, submitted by brother in law, Shimon Iurman (Yurman).

Important information:

- Born in Warsaw, in 1902.
- Place of death, Warsaw ghetto
- Year of death, 1942.

Conclusion

After reading this project, one can see how much research and thought went into it. Truthfully, this project was very difficult especially because we were given a time limit. Research is endless. There is always more to discover. Just when I thought I had enough information for an essay, I would uncover something new and have to shift everything in my essay to incorporate it. I learned that there is always more to learn, one can never be finished! I also learned that research takes a lot of time. Sometimes I spent hours following a lead that could sometimes lead me to a treasury of new information or it could sometimes simply be a dead end.

However, throughout all the stress and excitement, this project really taught me to appreciate my existence today. So many of my ancestors barely survived because everyone and everything was not in their favor. But Gd performed so many miracles for my family and here I am today. I was humbled to learn about my ancestors who were giants and persevered under such oppression and harsh conditions. It made me strive to reach the levels and precedents that my ancestors set.

I also enjoyed contacting and spending time with distant relatives that I would probably otherwise only be able to meet with at Simchos. It was so interesting to see how diverse and spread out my entire family is and to understand that we all come from the same roots!

Because of the time limit and other factors, there are some areas I would have liked to research further but didn't have the chance. Therefore I suggest further research in the Berkowitz, Lubar, Blankier, and Schechter families. Regina Schechter was hidden by a Polish family that my grandmother has in her address book as: Elzbeita Gaczynska from Brezko. I would have liked to research more about that kind, gentile family. Additionally, I found a Shoah testimony by Adolf Kuchler who compiled the family tree I found. I would have liked to verify that he is the same Adolf Kuchler and then view the testimony and have it translated from French to English. I additionally would have wanted to translate the Yiddish documents of Chaim Dovid Sznajer which my paternal grandmother, Brenda Berkowitz, has in her home.

Overall, this research project was a learning experience for my entire family and I. I have always been a sentimental person and felt an attachment to my forefathers, and this project enabled me to really get a clear picture of my *entire* family history.

Besides for the fullfillment this project gave me, I am overjoyed that my research will be passed on to further generations. Godwilling, my descendents will learn an abundance of information about their ancestors who lived centuries before them!

For this, I owe everything to Ms. Gotlieb and Manhattan High School for Girls for giving me this opportunity which requred me to actually take the time and complete the project in a clear, and beautiful way. Thank you.

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