



JGSCV

VENTURING INTO OUR PAST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
OF THE CONEJO VALLEY AND VENTURA COUNTY

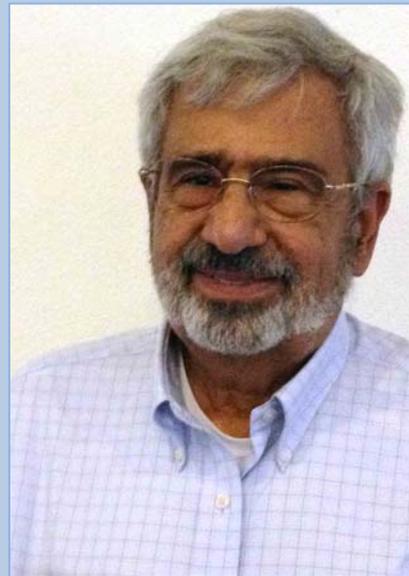
May, 2012

Volume 7 Issue 8

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

JGSCV was privileged to hear the premiere of Arthur Benveniste's new presentation-developed at the request of JGSCV, entitled, *"The Holocaust and Sephardic Jews of the Balkans and North Africa"*. This program also served as JGSCV's annual Yom Hashoah Day commemoration. Yom Hashoah Day was April 19 and I hope you completed the Pages of Testimony forms for Yad Vashem of any family and friends who were lost in the Shoah. The form can be found in last months' *Venturing Into Our Past*—which is posted on our website.

Benveniste's excellent presentation offered the history of the area, including photographs and stories. He talked of the lesser-known plight of the Sephardic Jews of the Balkans and North Africa: Jews of Greece, "Yugoslavia", Bulgaria, and North Africa. He also covered the policies of Fascist Italy, Franco's Spain, Vichy France and the kings of Bulgaria and Morocco. We learned how Spain's Franco, the Turkish Consulate in Rhodes, the police chief of Athens with the Archbishop of Greece and King Mohammad V of Morocco all saved



April speaker, Arthur Benveniste

NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY, May 6th 1:30-3:30 PM

Visiting Your Ancestral Shtetl Towns

Listen as JGSCV members recount personal visits to their ancestral shtetls in Belarus, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Wales. Be prepared to ask questions that may help in preparing for your own visits.

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Jews during WW II. For those of us who are Ashkenazi, unless we have traced our family trees back to the 1400's we cannot be certain that we don't have Sephardic roots. Therefore, the presentation provided history for many of us.

Arthur's family had been in Rhodes for over 400 years, until WWII. There were photographs of his ancestral home where his grandmother was killed by British bombers who were aiming for the occupying Germans. Someone in the audience replied that her family had lived in a nearby home that was similarly destroyed. A brief write-up of the highlights of the program is on page 8. There was no handout for the program.

The 1940 (US) census was released on April 1st and several different genealogical sites have the digitized images for all states and jurisdictions available. The name indexing has started, and several states are already available—but it will take close to six months to name index the over 132 million people and 3.8 million images. I could not locate my parents at the address shown in their 1940 city directory in Connecticut. I did find my grandmothers, aunts and uncles in NYC—so I can't complain. I hope you are having success.

We have removed from the membership roll those 2011 members who have not paid their 2012 dues, which were due in January. Each society annually gets some turnover for various reasons and we are experiencing the "usual" attrition rate—although we hate to lose any member. JGSCV is very fortunate that we are constantly adding new members throughout the year. We are ahead in membership from where we were at this time last year! If you wish to join or renew the membership application is on our website (www.jgscv.org) and available at every meeting. There are member only privileges, which you miss not being a member—our meetings remain open to the public—but JGSCV has more than meetings to offer.

Our May 6th meeting is with our members and friends who have had the opportunity to visit their ancestral towns. We have 5 participants talking about Belarus, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Wales. If you would like to participate please let me know in advance of the meeting at president@jgscv.org.

Jan Meisels Allen



ABOUT JGSCV . . .

The Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County meets once a month, usually on a Sunday. Meetings are oriented to the needs of the novice as well as the more experienced genealogist. Members share materials, research methods and ideas, as well as research success or failures. Members have access to the JGSCV library located on special shelves at the Agoura Hills Public Library. Members also receive our monthly newsletter, which is circulated by email.

2012 dues are \$25.00 for a single membership and \$30.00 for a household unit. To join, please send a check in the appropriate amount payable to JGSCV and addressed to Helene Rosen at 28912 Fountainwood St., Agoura Hills, CA 91301. Obtain the new/renewal membership form on our website at www.jgscv.org by selecting the membership button.

FREE ACCESS TO WW II COLLECTION

Fold3 (formerly Footnote) has made its World War II Collection available at no charge through April 30th. Records include Missing Air Crew Reports, European Theater Army Reports and Old Man's Draft Registrations (Men 43-62). Visit <http://tinyurl.com/82v6agh> for access.

DIRECTME HELPS FIND 1940 NYC ADDRESSES

The New York Public Library website <http://directme.nypl.org/> offers free access to city directories from all 5 boroughs. You need the address to find the Enumeration District (ED) before you can access data from the 1940 US Census. Once you have the address, visit Steve Morse's One Step Website (www.stevemorse.org) for step-by-instructions for finding the ED. There is a seamless connection to the One-Step website from the NYPL directme site.

FIFTY BEST BRICK WALL SOLUTIONS

The website GenealogyInTime has published solutions to what consider to be the top 50 'brick wall' problems. Problems searching Names, Geography, Local Resources and Migration are separated with very specific suggestions on how to overcome those brick walls. Go to: <http://tinyurl.com/c9lthc6>

NEW DESIGN, NEW FEATURES AT YAD VASHEM DATABASE

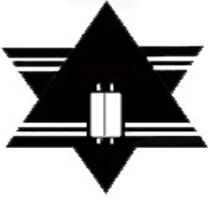
The Yad Vashem Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names located at <http://tinyurl.com/7fyfnaj> has been redesigned. Besides the new look, search results are shown at 50 per page (vs. the previous 15) for quicker browsing and there is now a choice of searching 'Pages of Testimony' or 'Other Material'.

FREE GENEALOGY SOFTWARE

Free software to organize, share and research your family tree is available to be downloaded from <http://tinyurl.com/l58uba>. The program is free and relatively simple to use. It offers the ability to store names, dates, events and photos. The software will index and organize your data into a visual family tree. It also offers a map feature for geographical browsing.

NEW ON ISRAEL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

You can now search for family members in Israel by posting queries on the new IGS Relatives Search Bulletin Board at <http://tinyurl.com/869jir2>



Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County* (JGSCV) (*and surrounding areas)

The JGSCV will hold a general meeting, co-sponsored with Temple Adat Elohim, Sunday, May 6, 2012 at Temple Adat Elohim 1:30-3:30 PM
2420 E. Hillcrest Drive, Thousand Oaks, CA 91362

The Program:

Visiting Your Ancestral Shtetl/Kahila/Towns

One of most poignant and significant activities in genealogy is visiting your ancestral shtetl/kahila/town. JGSCV members and friends who have made trips to their ancestral towns will talk on what they did, how they prepared and what they learned. Thus far, we have speakers on Belarus, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Wales. If you have visited your ancestral town and would like to share the experience please let us know - president@jgscv.org depending on the number of participants- every one can have up to 15 minutes to present. If you are planning to attend the IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Paris this July, this program may be of assistance if you plan to also visit your ancestral towns.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County is dedicated to sharing genealogical information, techniques, and research tools with anyone interested in Jewish genealogy and family history. There is no charge to attend the meeting. Anyone may join JGSCV.

For more information contact:

information@jgscv.org or Jan
Meisels Allen@ 818-889-6616



JGSCV UPDATES . . .

Traveling Library categories A and D will be at the next meeting. Please check the website for the books included in each category

<http://jgscv.org>. To request a book that is not in either category, please email Jan Meisels Allen at least 3 days in advance of the meeting at president@jgscv.org.



THE SCHMOOZING CORNER is open 15 minutes before each meeting where a knowledgeable JGSCV member will be available to answer questions, offer direction



and maybe even a solution to some of your concerns. On April 1st Werner Frank (right in photo left) led The Schmoozing Corner.

Marion Werle will lead the Schmoozing Corner at the May 6th meeting.

The April meeting began with a Five Minute Genealogical Technique:



Things You Learn From Marriage Records that was presented by JGSCV President, Jan Meisels Allen. It was clear that marriage records contain useful family history information. Jan showed how it is not only US marriage records that are helpful.

Join or renew your Ralphs Community Contribution Program membership at www.ralphs.com. Simple directions are also available on our website at www.jgscv.org under 'notices'. Starting with our May meeting, you may sign up for Ralphs Community Contribution at our meetings—but you **MUST** bring with you a Ralphs card obtained from any Ralphs store. For more information contact Karen Lewy at karen@jgscv.org Remember, just by shopping at Ralphs, JGSCV receives a contribution at no cost to you.

You can also help JGSCV when you shop at Amazon.com simply by entering the Amazon site from JGSCV's home page. Start at www.jgscv.org and scroll to the bottom to click on the Amazon graphic (like the one below). This will take you to the same page you always start at – except JGSCV will receive a marketing fee at no cost to you.



Don't forget to 'friend' us on facebook and visit often for updates between meetings: <http://tinyurl.com/4yqs7bk>

facebook

**JGSCV WELCOMES
NEW MEMBERS**

ALISSA BROWNSTEIN

AURA CYGER

GILBERT EPSTEIN

THE SMALL WORLD OF JEWISH GENEALOGY

(Reprinted with permission from *CHRONICLES Journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia, Vol 28-3 Fall 2011*)

By David Mink

When I first started to build my family tree, about 5 years ago, I was constantly searching JewishGen for Mink, Minkowsky, Menkovski, etc. Most of the hits led nowhere, but I did meet a Ron Mink from South Africa on line. This contact would later reveal a side of my mother's family who live in Philadelphia and had survived the Holocaust.

After a few email exchanges with Ron Mink, we established we were not related. His family name was always Mink and was not shortened from Minkowsky as was mine. His ancestors originated in Latvia, mine in the Kiev Gubernia.

Turn the clock to June 2009. Preparations are in full gear for the 29th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Philadelphia. I am also busy helping my son re-open the Oyster House after a year of renovations. There is a knock on the restaurant door and in walks Ron Mink and his wife. Their son-in-law had just joined the U of P Hospital and moved to Philadelphia from Johannesburg. We chatted over coffee about who we were and what we knew about our ancestors. Our one dimensional internet relationship became three-dimensional. Ron regretted that he could not attend the Conference in August because as director of his Hebrew School, he had to prepare for the upcoming school year. We parted marveling how Jewish Genealogy had brought together, face to

face, two unrelated Minks- one from Philadelphia, one from Johannesburg.

Fast forward to this past fall. I get a call from the restaurant that a Len Huber wants to speak to me. Huber was my maternal grandmother's maiden name. My genealogy antennae were twitching. I knew of no Hubers living in the United States. I called him back and we made plans to meet. Len has been living in Philadelphia for over 60 years. I asked him how he came to call us –

“Well,” he said, “it happened at a malfunctioning coffee maker at U of P Hospital's Pain Management Clinic.” His wife, Rhea was being treated at the time and Len started talking to a man trying to make a cup of coffee. Len was intrigued by his accent and after asking some questions, found out that his name was Ron Mink. Len asked if he knew a David Mink and surprisingly he said “yes”. Len knew it was time to contact me. It was *bashert*.

Although I felt strongly that there was a family connection, Len was not sure. He knew my grandmother as Doby Pseny and had no knowledge that her maiden name was the same as his.

Our first meeting uncovered some very interesting facts:

1. Len and his family immigrated to the US from a DP camp in Germany in 1949.
2. My grandmother had sponsored them and they lived with her for a few weeks after their arrival.
3. HIAS served as the agency to facilitate the immigration.

The most startling moment happened while we were going through a box of my grandmother's photos. There were lots of pictures from Poland, Argentina, Mexico and many contain Yiddish inscriptions of the reverse side. We were going through them to see if we recognized anybody. Then Len looked at a picture in amazement and said, "Where did this come from?" It was a picture of Len with his parents taken in 1947 at the DP Camp. The inscription on the back (in Yiddish) was "This photo is sent to you as a remembrance of our son's 9th birthday from the Huber family. I am sending his to our beloved Pseny family. Freiman March 15, 1947.

We are definitely related!



Now I needed to have all the inscriptions translated. This was accomplished for a small fee by Rita Ratson, a Yiddish language teacher at Gratz College. The results were unbelievable. There was a picture of my grandfather's two nieces taken in 1938 with an inscription pleading for him to send a ticket to America. I don't know what happened to this family. There were pictures from Velvl Huber of his mother, sister and brother who all perished in the Holocaust. He sent them from the DP Camp Neu Freiman in 1947.

Names were now put on several faces. Three different branches of Huber's came to light. And now I am researching these branches to connect them to the family tree. Len and I are still working on finding our common relatives but at least our families are reunited. And this whole discovery of my grandmother's side came about by two unrelated Minks, a Pain Clinic, a broken coffee machine, and of course, Jewish Genealogy.



David Mink (left with Len Huber) is a member of JGSGP and served as Co-Chair of the 2009 IAJGS Conference hosted by JGSGP in Philadelphia. David gave his permission to reprint this story.

Highlights from Arthur Benveniste's Presentation:

"The Holocaust and Sephardic Jews of the Balkans and North Africa"

By Jan Meisels Allen



The Romaniotes were a Jewish population who lived in the territory of today's Greece and neighboring areas with large Greek populations for more than 2,000 years. Greek was also the language in Alexandria (Egypt) of the Jews who were there from biblical times.

There were 125,000 Jews in what were Yugoslavia and Greece and 140,000 in Macedonia.

In 1492, the Jews were expelled from Spain and some went to Salonika.

In 1528 Rhodes Jewish families were settled by Suleiman (Sultan of the Ottoman Empire) who took 40 Jews from Salonika Central Macedonia, Greece) and settled Rhodes Greece (an island in the South Aegean Sea). Rhodes was part of the Ottoman Empire for nearly 400 years. As late as 1900 Salonika had a population that was a majority of Jews—even the port was closed on Saturdays in observance of the Sabbath. The language of commerce was Ladino (Jewish-Spanish language), not Greek, demonstrating the influence of Spanish Jews in Salonika. At one time Salonika had 50 synagogues.

Benveniste reviewed the time of colonial rule—

19th century:

France- ruled Algeria, Tunisia, and most of Morocco.

Spain- ruled part of Morocco

Britain ruled the Suez and had influence over Egypt.

Italy ruled Libya.

Tangier was in the International zone.

20th century

Balkan War of 1912-where Greece takes Salonika, part of Macedonia. Bulgaria takes part of Macedonia and Italy takes Rhodes.



1922 Fascism comes to Italy—the Anti-Semitic Laws of 1938, which defined “Jews”, removing Jews from government jobs, banned marriages between Jews and non-Jews, dismissed Jews from the armed forces, incarcerated Jews of foreign nationality, and removed Jews from positions in mass media.

WWII Bulgaria joined the Axis and invaded Macedonia. Italy moved on Greece toward Salonika and was pushed back by Greece.

However, Greece was not able to force back the Germans. April 14, 1944 was the first shipment out of Athens to the concentration camps. The chief rabbi of Athens was close to the police chief of Athens who issued false identity papers to Athenian Jews and the Archbishop of Greece issued false baptismal certificates. As a result 66 percent of Athenian Jews survived WWII.

While Spain evicted Jews in 1492 and it was illegal for any Jew to be in Spain, by the late 19th century it was not enforced and by the early 20th century, Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja (appointed by the King as prime minister of Spain 1923-1930) allowed any Jew who was a descendent of those expelled in 1492 to claim Spanish citizenship—an edict, which is still in effect today. (Note: there is no dual citizenship between the United States and Spain). As a result of this “return” policy, Spain rescued 60,000 Jews during WWII.

Post WWII European colonies in North Africa took citizenship away from thousands of Jews. They could not go to Israel directly and as they had no passports, no other country could issue them passports— they were deemed stateless. Rabbi Solomon Gaon, a Yugoslavian born Sephardic Jew with Spanish and Portuguese roots, went to Francisco Franco, head of state of Spain, and persuaded Franco to intervene— successfully. Franco gave all of the “stateless Jews from North Africa” passports so they could immigrate to Israel. There have been rumors that Franco had Jewish roots, and a guard who was present during the meeting between Rabbi Gaon and Franco implied Franco had Jewish roots. (Benvensite cited Lipschitz’ book “ *Franco, Jews, Spain and the Holocaust*” for the source about the Franco Jewish roots information).

Ninety-four percent of Jews in Salonika were lost during WWII. The Jews were deported from Salonika on March 15, 1942—2,000 Jews per rail car on the trains going to Auschwitz. Salonika was under direct German influence. The Jews of Salonika spoke Ladino and spoke Greek with an accent in contrast to the Jews of Athens who spoke Greek without an accent.

Ioannina (Jannena) the largest city of northwestern Greece, spoke Greek not Ladino and on March 25, 1944 1,860 people were deported to Auschwitz.

The British bombed Rhodes in WW II to try to destroy the Germans. Of the Jews in Rhodes, 1,600 perished with only 151 surviving the War. Today, only thirty-five Jews are left on the Island. Kal de Shalom Rhodes is the oldest synagogue in Greece, dating back to 1572. Each year for the High Holiday service Jews with Rhodes affiliations go back to celebrate the holidays at the synagogue in order that the Greek government recognizes that it is still a practicing congregation permitting it be preserved. Today the synagogue is a monument declared by UNESCO.

The Grand Mufti of war. It was donated (Los Angeles) Jewish it. It was found to be suggested, not the



Rhodes hid a torah during the war and returned it after the to Jews in Argentina. Several years ago the local (Los Rhodes community asked to borrow the torah back to study over 800 years old and written in a way Maimonides current way Torah’s are written, leaving the question if the

torah was originally brought to Rhodes from Alexandria—which had a large Jewish Greek speaking population from early days.

The Turkish Consulate in Rhodes rescued 42 Jews—they did not leave the Island, but protected them even though they had to go to roll call with the Gestapo. Turkey was neutral during the war—and Germany would have to cross Turkey to get to Palestine. The assumption is that they let Turkey protect the 42 Jews in anticipation of cooperation to cross Turkey to get to Palestine—that never happened.

As many of the Jews of Rhodes perished in the Shoah, there was no “body” to bury. The Rhodes Cemetery Memorial to the Holocaust victims puts a plaque commemorating the Shoah victim on the grave of their next of kin.



Crete—the Germans gave the order in May 1944 with only 45 minutes to get ready. In Chania – the second largest city of Crete— 340 Jews, 48 resistance fighters and 112 Italians put aboard the boat Piraeus—all were lost at sea.

Bulgaria and Yugoslavia deported 3,000 Jews. The King of Bulgaria protected the Jews who were citizens of his country, but Jews in the areas that Bulgaria occupied and Jews who entered Bulgarian territory seeking asylum, were sent to Treblinka. (Today what was Yugoslavia is Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Montenegro).

Albania- the Jews survived.

King Mohammad V of Morocco refused to turn over the Jews to the Vichy Government (puppet government in South France). The Sultan said all people in Morocco are Moroccans. The Moroccans were always good to the Jews.

Benveniste’s overview included the countries of the Balkans and North Africa and included exceptional photographs highlighting his excellent presentation.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

2012

Sunday, May 6th 1:30-3:30PM

VISITING YOUR ANCESTRAL SHTETL TOWNS

Sunday June 3rd 1:30-3:30PM

Hal Bookbinder, SHIPS OF OUR ANCESTORS

July no meeting - IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy Paris, France July 15-18, 2012

Sunday, Aug. 5th 1:30-3:30 PM

GENEALOGY IN THE ROUND, share your successes, failures, brick walls and artifacts.

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