

BAGEL SHOP

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Dear readers,

We present a number of interviews in this colorful spring issue of the Bagel Shop. Lithuanian Jewish Community member professor Adolfas Bolotinas speaks about the situation inside the Lithuanian Jewish Community and his academic career. Eugenijus Simonas Kisinis presents biographical essay “We are the Kisinis” and hopes to find lost family members in the USA and Russia. We mark the anniversary of Zionism. We revel in the victories of the table tennis athlete Neta Alon. We mourn the loss of the talents of Yitzhak Rudashevski in the pits of Ponar. We remember the Jews of Pasvalys. We present a Jewish heritage tourist itinerary in Palanga. We hope you will find this an interesting read.

As always, we invite you to send us your thoughts and suggestions for the next issue. Write an email to radvile@lzb.lt

Radvilė and Zina

NEWS ROUND-UP

October For the first time since the restoration of Lithuanian independence the Lithuanian Makabi Chess Club competed in the European Club Chess Championship in Turkey. They won three and lost four. Makabi took 22nd place among the 36 national teams competing.

October 15 First Makabi Fun Run held at Vingis Park in Vilnius with a number of jogging enthusiasts participating, including Makabi Lithuanian Athletics Club members from Kaunas and Vilnius, students from the Sholem Aleichem ORT Gymnasium, running enthusiasts from the Inžinerija, Stajeris and Sigma sports clubs, members of the Lithuanian Soccer Referees Association and others.

October 20 Lithuanian Jewish Community calendar featuring Righteous Gentiles wins the Laurynas Ivinskis prize for best calendar of the year at a ceremony in Kuršėnai. Maša Grodnikienė came up with the idea for the calendar, Danutė Selčinskaja compiled the texts, Jūratė Juozėnienė designed it and Jovita Stundžaitė and Geoff Vasil edited the Lithuanian and English versions.

October 27 Stele unveiled to commemorate Righteous Gentile Marija Rusteikaitė, the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Love of God, a public figure, medical technician and teacher, at the corner of Jurgio Tilvyčio and Krekenavos streets in Panevėžys.

October 28 Chess tournament held at the Lithuanian Jewish Community to commemorate Vilhelmas Šteinicas, tournament on November 19 to commemorate Algimantas Butnoris, on December 21 in honor of Emanuelis Laskeris.

End of October Thomas Yazdgerdi, US State Department special envoy on Holocaust issues, visited the LJC and discussed problems and progress in Holocaust commemoration in Lithuania and the tasks the LJC has set for itself and the state in appropriately commemorating Holocaust victims, as well as restitution issues.

November 9 Presentation of book about Dmitri Gelpert called “Iš pirmųjų lūpų” at the LJC. Book compiler Dr. Lara Lempert, Ilona Murauskaitė, Danutė Selčinskaja and Fania Brancovskaja spoke. Famous Lithuanian photographer Antanas Sutkus and violinist Boris Traub participated.

November 9 LJC held international conference Remembrance, Responsibility, the Future to mark the international day against fascism and anti-Semitism. The event was part



Righteous Gentile Marija Rusteikaitė commemorated in Panevėžys

of the project Preparation and Publication of Recommendations for Actions to Fight Anti-Semitism and Romophobia in Lithuania which was supported by the EVZ foundation (Erinnerung, Verantwortung, Zukunft) in Germany and the Goodwill Foundation.

November 11-14 The Raudondvaris Castle in the Kaunas region was the venue for the international conference “Self-Respect and Civil Bravery of the Lithuanian Nation in Diplomatic Documents in Nazi-Occupied Lithuania during World War II”, dedicated to a memorandum by Lithuanian president Kazys Grinius and Lithuanian government ministers Pranas Aleksas and Mykolas Krupavičius 75 years ago. On November 14, 1942, this memo was presented to Theodor von Renteln, the Nazi commandant of Kaunas. Historians sometimes call it the Memorandum of the Three. They protested the colonization of Lithuania, the seizure of property from Polish and Lithuanian farmers and the mass murder of Jews and people of other ethnicities.

November 12 The Lithuanian National Drama Theater hosted the literary festival “Leaves of Vilnius” and invited the public to “Lunch with Amos Oz.” Reporter Donatas Puslys and literature expert Dr. Mindaugas Kvietkauskas interviewed the writer in a direct link to Tel Aviv.

November 13 The Ethnic Minorities Department under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania named the winners of their Prize for Cross-Cultural Dialogue. Reporter and editor Vitalijus Karakorskis was recognized for his originality and surprising discoveries of common ground among the ethnicities living in Lithuania in the Lithuanian Public Radio and Television program Menora, specifically in the episode about Dr. Jonas Basanavičius and Lithuanian Jews. The reporter and television editor Siarhejus Hau-rylenka was recognized for the exceptional attention paid to the culture of Lithuanian ethnic minorities and the Belarusian language in the the Lithuanian Public Radio and Television television series “Kultūrų kryžkelė. Vilniaus sąsiuvinis” [Crossroads of Cultures: The Vilnius Notebook].

November 14 Ina Pukelytė, a lecturer at the Theater Studies Cathedral of the Arts Faculty of Vytautas Magnus University spoke about the significance of Jewish theater for Lithuanian culture in her lecture “Jewish Theater: The Facebook of the Interwar Period” at the State Drama Theater in Kaunas. She recently published book called “Žydų teatras tarpukario Lietuvoje” [Jewish Theater in Interwar Lithuania].

November 15-December 31 The Old Town Hall section of the Kaunas City Museum held an exhibit on Ludvik Zamenhof, aka Dr. Esperanto. The exhibit then moved to the Vaclovas Biržiška Library at Vytautas Magnus University. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO named 2017 the Year of Zamenhof, the inventor of the language Esperanto.



Israeli ambassador Amir Maimon was honored with the Ethnic Minorities Department's Great Honor Mark “For Merit”

November 16 To mark International Tolerance Day the Lithuanian parliament hosted an event to award people for making important contributions in uniting multicultural Lithuania and creating a discrimination-free environment. The event was organized by the Ethnic Minorities Department to the Government of Lithuania and was sponsored by parliamentary speaker Viktoras Prancietis.

November 16 The LJC hosted a meeting with master violinist Eugenijus Paulauskas, one of the most famous violinists in Lithuania who has performed over 1,000 concerts in Europe and America. Paulauskas was awarded the Order of Grand Duke Gediminas and the National Prize as well as being recognized as an important Lithuanian figure and artist contributor to Lithuanian culture.

November 16 Samuel Bak museum opened in Vilnius, one of the sections of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. This is the only museum in the world wholly devoted to the works of this Litvak painter.

November 21 The Lithuanian Consulate in Chicago opened an exhibit called “One Century out of Seven: Lithuania, Lite, Lita” at the Chicago Cultural Center. The exhibit spans Litvak history from the time of first settlement in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 14th century to today.

November 22 Book launched in Panevėžys, “Holokaustas nacių okupuotose Rytų ir Vakarų Europos valstybėse: tyrimai ir atmintis” [The Holocaust in Nazi-Occupied States of Eastern and Western Europe: Research and Memory].

November 23 Jakov Bunka Fund director Daumantas Levas Todesas held a private screening of the film “Aš turiu papasakoti” [I Must Tell] at the LJC. The film is a testimony by Maša Rolnikaitė (1927–2016) telling of her nightmarish experience in the Vilnius ghetto and at the Strazdamuiža (aka Strasdenhof, a satellite of Kaiserwald concentration camp in Riga, Latvia) and Stutthof (Poland) concentration camps.

November 28 The Bagel Shop Café and the Israeli embassy to Lithuania presented Jewish treats at the traditional Christmas charity fair at Vilnius Old Town Hall.

November 29 Grigori Kanovitch's latest autobiographical book "Shtetl Love Song" launched at the Central Synagogue in London.

November 29 The Saulėtekis school in Vilnius staged "Litvaks: A 900-Year Story" at the Russian Drama Theater in Vilnius.

November 29-30 The Lithuanian embassy and the University College of London invited the public to Litvak Days in London. A regular event, this seventh in the series showcased Litvak artists who have achieved global art fame.

November 30 Exhibit of miniatures by Valius Staknys called "Letters" opened at LJC.

November 30 The Sugihara House museum in Kaunas opened an exhibition by the Swedish Institute called "I Didn't Have Another Choice" about Swedish diplomat, businessman and architect Raoul Wallenberg. Wallenberg issued Swedish passports to Hungarian Jews in Budapest in 1944 showing residency in Sweden.

December 7 Over 150 wards from Save the Children day care centers in Pasvalys, Širvintai, Šakiai, Kazlų Rūda, Marijampolė, Kupiškis, the Zarasai region and Antazavė, Lithuania visited Vilnius thanks to an initiative by the Israeli embassy to Lithuania.

December 8 Yuko Kuwabara, director of the International Affairs Department of Gifu Prefecture in Japan, whence came Righteous Gentile Chiune Sugihara, visited the LJC. She and LJC chairwoman Faina Kukliansky shared ideas on further commemoration of Sugihara and possible cultural exchange programs.

December 12-13 The Judaic Studies Center hosted a series of lectures called "Construing Jewish Cultural Heritage: Past and Present" with a lecture by Aleksandras Ivanovas called "To Make a Portrait of the Jewish People: Photographic Archive of the S. An-sky Expeditions (1912-14)" and Dr. Alla Sokolova's "Selection and Reflection of Material and Non-Material Heritage: Authenticity and the First Community of Sources."

January 3 Israeli ambassador Amir Maimon, US ambassador Anne Hall, LJC chairwoman Faina Kukliansky, Lithuanian deputy foreign minister Darius Skusevičius, Molėtai regional administration head Stasys Žvinys and Lithuanian Cultural Heritage Department senior expert Alfredas Jomantas toured the wooden synagogue in Alan-ta, Lithuania, a site listed on the registry of cultural treasures. The building needs to be restored quickly.

January 11 The LJC hosted the launch of the book "Izraelis ir jo žmonės: viena šalis, daug veidų" [Israel and Its People: One Country, Many Faces] by former Bagel Shop newsletter editor Živilė Juonytė.

January 14-28 The art gallery of the Šiauliai district Povilas Višinskis Public Library hosted an exhibit by the Savickas Art School to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the restoration of the Šiauliai Jewish Community.

January 17 The leader of and a delegation from the American Jewish Committee (AJC) ended a two-day visit to Lithuania. The delegation headed AJC CEO David Harry met with speaker of parliament Viktoras Prancietis, foreign minister Linas Linkevičius, US ambassador Anne Hall, Israeli embassy chief of mission Efrat Hochstetler and with the chairwoman of AJC's partner the LJC, Faina Kukliansky.

January 18 The Vincas Kudirka Public Library in Kaunas hosted an evening to celebrate the 210th anniversary of the birth of the father of the modern Hebrew novel, Abraham Mapu, who was born and raised in Kaunas.



Sculptural composition commemorating A. Mapu

January 25 LJC executive director Renaldas Vaisbrodas and LJC heritage expert Martynas Užpelkis visited the Šilalė regional administration and met with administration head Jonas Gudauskas to discuss issues surrounding preservation, restoration and utilization of the Kaltinėnai synagogue. They also discussed restoration and maintenance of the old Jewish cemetery there and educating the public about the history of Litvaks in the Šilalė region. Afterwards a book by Jurgita Viršilienė and Hektoras Vitkus called "Šilalės krašto žydai: istorija, atmintis ir paveldas" [Jews of the Šilalė Region: History, Memory and Heritage] was launched at the Šilalė Public Library.

January 25 Presentation of Lithuanian translation of Emmanuel Levinas's book "Time and the Other" at the LJC. Participants included translator Viktoras Bachmetjevas, Vilnius University Religious Studies and Research Center associate professors Dr. Aušra Pažėraitė and Dr. Danutė Bacevičiūtė and Vytautas Magnus University Communications Cathedral lecturer Algirdas Davidavičius.

January 26 Conference "Stories of the Jews Who Lived in Lithuanian Cities and Towns" held in Ariogala, Lithuania.

January 26 Lithuanian Foreign Ministry marked International Holocaust Day and invited members and staff of the LJC to the event at the ministry.

January 28 LJC marks Holocaust Day with an event called “Embrace the Past Tense,” a multimedia project by writer Sergejus Kanovičius, opera singer Rafailas Karpis and pianist Darius Mažintas.

January 29 The Vincas Kudirka Public Library in Kaunas marked International Holocaust Day with a composition entitled “Saved Worlds” and a screening of the film “Sketches of Hope.”

February 11 The Šiauliai Jewish Community held their 9th sporting tournament, this time dedicated to the memory of Liova Taicas, at the Kane's Arena. This year over 120 athletes turned out with an audience of more than 200.

February 13 The Museum of Lithuanian Theater, Music and Cinema hosted a retrospective of illustrator and animator Ilja Bereznickas's works called “It Would Be Said If It Weren't Funny” to celebrate the artist's 70th birthday.

February The two-story wooden synagogue at Jono Basanavičiaus street no. 14 in Varėna, Lithuania, was added to the Lithuanian registry of cultural treasures. The synagogue is a unique example of Lithuanian cultural heritage and a witness to the history of the Jews of Varėna.

February 15 Lithuanian president Dalia Grybauskaitė awarded the medal “For Merit to Lithuania” to writer, poet and Šeduva Jewish Memorial Fund founder Sergejus Kanovičius.



S. Kanovičius received state award for his work to preserve Lithuanian Jewish heritage

February 15 The exhibition “We Built Lithuania Together” was opened at the House of Ethnic Associations in Vilnius. The exhibit showcased ethnic minority communities in Lithuania and their contribution to Lithuanian statehood, the battle for independence, celebration of Lithuanian culture and international recognition of the country.

February 25 The Vilnius ghetto diary of Yitzhak Rudashevski in Lithuanian translation was launched at the Vilnius Book Fair.

February 26- March 26 The Žemyna primary school in Parkruojis, Lithuania, exhibited the international mobile educational exhibition “Let Me Be Myself...” about the life story of Anne Frank.

February 25 Ceremony to award 2017 Tolerant Person of the Year and Leonidas Donskis Prize held in the large hall of Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, organized by the Sugihara Foundation/Diplomats for Life. Writer Marius Ivaškevičius won Tolerant Person of the Year for 2017. The first-ever Leonidas Donskis Prize was awarded to professor Saulius Sužiedėlis by the decision of the executive board of the Sugihara Foundation and Jolanta Donskis.

February 27 The Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum at its Tolerance Center in Vilnius opened the exhibit “We Look at Them, They Look at Us. Rafael Chwoles: Portraits of Vilnius Residents, 1945-1959.” The exhibit ran till May 27. The son of the artist pledged to donate some of his father's paintings to the museum.

February 28 Jews from Vilnius, Kaunas and elsewhere and others celebrated the most fun Jewish holiday, Purim, at the Choral Synagogue in Vilnius.

March 3 For the 24th time now the “Lithuanian Parliament Cup” chess tournament for 2018 was held at parliament, held to celebrate the day of the restoration of Lithuanian independence. The Makabi Rositsan team took 5th place among the 17 teams competing and FIDE master Boris Rositsan took 7th place among all 106 players. Šiauliai Jewish Community representative Danielis Šeras won in the category of players under 10 and took second place in the category of all players who were under the age of eighteen.

March 7 Lithuanian president Dalia Grybauskaitė presented thank-you letters to Lithuanian musicians who took first place in international competitions, including to clarinet player Rokas Makštutis, a member of the Kaunas Jewish Community.

March 14 The LJC marked the 100th birthday of Jewish partisan Abba Kovner by unveiling a plaque within the LJC, a building which formerly housed a school Kovner attended.

March 15 The LJC hosted a concert by violinist Boris Traub, violinist Boris Livschitz and pianist Rūta Mikelaitytė-Kašubienė called “Brief Conversations.”

March 18 The Makabi Lithuanian athletics club held swimming competitions in the pool at the Girstutis recreational and athletics complex in Kaunas with swimmers from Vilnius, Kaunas, Panevėžys and, for the first time, Šalčininkai, as well as Israeli exchange students studying at institutions of higher learning in Kaunas.

March 28 The Lithuanian National Philharmonic in Vilnius screened a restored silent 1923 film by Ewald André Dupont accompanied by the music of Philippe Schoeller performed by the Orchester Jakobsplatz München conducted by Daniel Grossmann.



The Lithuanian Jewish Community enters spring continuing old work and starting new work with new ideas and inspiration. It's worthwhile remembering the origins of the Bagel Shop publication, which goes back to the Bagel Shop project initiated by the LJC in 2013, whose implementation was enthusiastically taken up by intelligent young people. It was dedicated to teaching tolerance, promoting Jewish culture and educating the public about Jewish culture, which engendered and continues to engender great interest among you, the public. We are grateful for the support and fostering of Jewish culture.

Although it proved impossible to avoid internal division and problems which had to be solved through legal means, the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, society's changing attitude towards the Holocaust and the topic of educating the public on Jewish culture encourage us not to stop and not to give up, to concentrate on working for the good of the community and towards cross-cultural dialogue.

We are happy we have completed a project long in the making, we have published the diary of Vilnius ghetto chronicler Yitzhak Rudashevski in Lithuanian and Yiddish. Rudashevski's tes-

tament has been presented to the public in Vilnius and Alytus and its path will continue to Kaunas and other Lithuanian cities. In May we plan to present the book in Israel. The LJC considers Rudashevski's monument to the Vilnius ghetto and Yiddish culture very dear, and we are happy the Lithuanian public has also found its significance.

Another important project was the Recommendations for Actions to Fight Anti-Semitism and Romophobia in Lithuania, drafted by the LJC and partner organizations. We believe this project implemented with the EVZ fund in Germany will have lasting significance in formulating future strategies for fighting anti-Semitism and Romophobia in Lithuania and Europe.

The LJC was also unable to ignore amendments to the Lithuanian law on the protection of consumer rights proposed by the Lithuanian Economics Ministry which would ban retail trade in goods which "distort the historical facts of Lithuania, belittle Lithuanian history, independence, territorial integrity or constitutional order." The adoption of such an amendment would bring to mind the poor example of neighboring states, would raise well-founded concerns about the ability of members of society to make use of their fundamental right to express themselves and,

most likely, would make it more difficult to achieve aspirations to historical justice. These amendments could have a disproportionately large negative significance in potential discussions of the role played by ethnic Lithuanians in the Holocaust and would push for a single centralized "acceptable" version of Lithuanian historical events at the state level, which would not be useful for a real understanding of history, but instead would become a censored interpretation of history. Flags with Nazi symbols raised in public spaces around Vilnius also brought a reaction from the community. This reminds us that the issue of fighting anti-Semitism remains very urgent.

Many milestone dates and anniversaries occur in 2018, and the LJC is currently stepping into high gear in making preparations. September of 2018 will mark the 75th anniversary of the destruction of the Vilnius ghetto. As we mark this important date it's important to remember the victims of the Holocaust and our loss, but also to celebrate the legacy of Jewish life in Lithuania, to stand with the surviving Lithuanian Jewish community. In December we will mark a century of Lithuanian Zionist organizations who supported Lithuanian aspirations to statehood, which will place an important final flourish on this year which also marks 100 years of Lithuanian statehood. We are also preparing a program for what has now become a tradition, the European Day of Jewish Culture.

Let's keep celebrating our old traditions and let's keep making good new traditions, together. I hope the LJC will continue to be united by shared goal and concentration on action directed at fighting anti-Semitism, preserving and teaching Jewish culture, religion and history and strengthening the community. Let's be together and let's be united.

*Faina Kukliansky, chairwoman
Lithuanian Jewish Community*

Zionism's 120th Birthday

*As long as in the heart, within,
A Jewish soul still yearns,
And onward, towards the ends of the east,
an eye still gazes toward Zion;*

*Our hope is not yet lost,
The hope two thousand years old,
To be a free nation in our land,
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.*

Naftali Herz Imber, ca. 1877

Zionism, named after Mount Zion in Jerusalem, is a political movement which seeks to unite the Jewish people and give birth to a national revival in their historical homeland, the Land of Israel, aka Eretz Israel, and is also an ideological conception which forms the basis for this movement. Zionist ideology unites movements with different orientations, from leftist socialists to the religious Orthodox. Before World War II Zionism was one of the main social and political movements of the

Jewish people (along with the workers' movement, the Bund, which sought cultural autonomy, and the territorialism movement). The Zionist movement sought to solve "the Jewish problem" which they considered to be the problem of a small ethnic minority, a powerless nation whose fate was pogroms and persecution, who had no home of their own and were everywhere subject to discrimination because of their foreignness. Zionism's solution was to return Jews to their "historical home," the Land of Israel.

From the 18th century onwards for several centuries Vilnius wielded an influence on Jewish life in the most distant lands and the influence of this unique Jerusalem of Lithuania is even felt today. Vilnius was a world religious center, a center of rabbinical and secular European education and a center of political movements and parties. Professor Meyer Shub says the Vilna Gaon, Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman (1720-1797) was of the strong belief the fallen Jewish state would be restored in the Land of Is-



Isaac Levitan "On the way to Zion", 1890

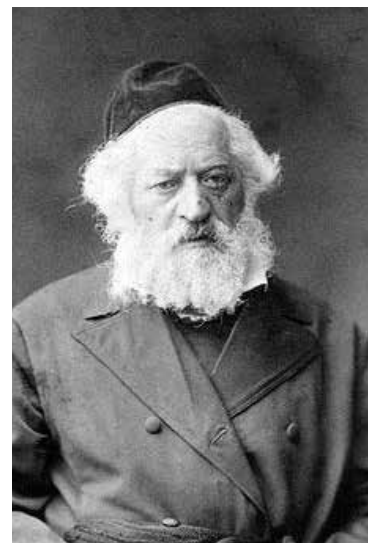
rael. In 1823 a group of the Gaon's followers moved to Palestine and settled in Jerusalem, Tsfat (Safed) and Hebron. In Jerusalem they established a "School of Pharisees" or kolel ha-perushim (not related to the Pharisees of the New Testament) which spread the messianic ideas of the Vilna Gaon and his methods of Talmudic study.



Vilna Gaon, Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman (1720-1797)

A students of the Gaon, Menachem Mendel of Shklov and his friend from Shklov Israel and other Litvaks arrived in Safed in the early 1800s. They all believed the Ten Lost Tribes sent into exile hadn't disappeared and hadn't assimilated with local residents in exile. They believed the lost tribes later crossed the mysterious river Sambation which existed at the edge of the world, and there revived the State of Israel. The former residents of Vilnius wrote a letter in Hebrew to the leader of this hypothetical state describing the difficult social and political situation of the Jews of Eastern Europe and their own hardships in the Land of Palestine, and asked for material aid. The letter sings the praises of the Jews of Lithuania and the Vilna Gaon as their spiritual leader. They proposed the leader send envoys to Palestine and Vilnius in order to receive the Gaon's writings and spread the among the ten lost tribes. Former resident of Vilnius Dovyd Haim Katan and two of his friends travelled to India with the letter in 1832.

When famous rabbi I. E. Spektor of Kaunas (1817-1896) issued an order in 1869, the persecution of Moshe Leib Lillenblum by fanatics stopped in Ukmergė (Vilkomir). When Jews began immigrating out of Russia, Rabbi Spektor supported the Khovevei Tsion (Lovers of Zion Association) movement and this contributed to the prestige and growth of that movement, although Spektor declined the role of honorable patron of the



Isaac Elchanan Spektor (1817-1896)

1887 Khovevei Tsion conference which took place in Druskininkai, Lithuania. After that, when the movement had wide recognition, Spektor declared it was the religious duty of Jews to settle and live in the State of Israel, and wrote an address calling for money to be donated for this purpose at synagogues on the eve of Yom Kippur.

American historian and analyst Walter Laker has formulated 13 main theses illustrating the essence of the Zionist movement:

1. Zionism is a reaction to anti-Semitism.
2. Anti-Semitism acquired its deadly character in Central Europe where the relatively small Jewish communities were most highly assimilated.
3. Zionists consider assimilation the greatest enemy of the Jewish people.
4. The Zionists' chance for success came after World War I.
5. Zionism appeared later than other national movements and therefore Zionists had less time and fewer resources for achieving their goals.
6. Zionists lacked money, military power and political influence and only had moral arguments.
7. The Jewish state came into being when it was already too late to rescue the Jews of Europe.
8. Before 1930 Zionist leaders failed to understand what the main goal of their organization was.
9. The Jewish/Arab conflict was unavoidable because the Arabs were not able to come to terms with the existence of the Jewish state.
10. From the Arab perspective the Zionist movement was an aggressor and Jewish immigration was an invasion.
11. Jewish ultra-Orthodox, proponents of assimilation and leftist extremists opposed Zionism.
12. The main weakness of Zionism was that conditions were never favorable for implementing the goals of the movement.
13. The main goal of Zionism was dual: to restore respect for Jews in the eyes of non-Jews and to restore the native home of the Jewish people so that Jews "might live as free people in their own land and die peacefully in their homes" (Herzl).

The concept of Zionism in its general sense was first used by Natan Birnbaum in a discussion meeting in Vienna on January 23, 1892. The first practical plan for the creation of the Jewish state were elaborated in Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Kalischer's 1862 book "In Search of Zion" and Moses Hess's book "Rome and Jerusalem" (also in 1862).

The Zionist ideology gave birth to several schools of Zionism in the 20th century, among which the more notable are socialist Zionism, Revisionist Zionism and religious Zionism. Nakhman Syrkin (1868-1924) was the founder of the socialist Zionist school of thought, expanding upon the ideas of Moses Hess in the article "The Jewish Question and the Jewish Socialist State" (1898) which sought to prove the Zionist movement would only be successful if the Jewish state were "based on justice, wise planning and social solidarity."

The Zionist ideological direction called revisionist (keeping in mind that the proponents of this school of thought had made a revision to the socialist Zionist ideology which was dominant in the early 20th century) was formed and led by Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky aka Zhabotinsky (1880-1940). According to the views of the revisionist Zionists, the economy of the Jewish state would be based on free-market principles. By the mid-20th century this Zionist movement was marginal, but later Revisionist Zionism's influence grew greatly and the political party representing it, Herut (later Likud) has long been one of the ruling parties in Israel.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935) was the creator of what is called religious Zionism. Rabbi Kook, the greatest religious authority in the early years of the 20th century, held the post of chief rabbi of Israel from 1921 to 1935. He believed that not only did Zionism not contradict Orthodox Judaism (as many rabbis then thought and which some rabbis, mainly ultra-Orthodox, still believe), but to the contrary, Zionism would become the foundation for the rebirth of Judaism. The national religious party Ma'fDaL, which later became part of the haIkhud haLeumi (National Union) bloc, was the proponent of this ideology for many years.

The founder of the World Zionist Organization, the herald of the Jewish state and the creator of the political ideology of Zionism became Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), a Jewish public figure and political



Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935)



Theodor Herzl (1860-1904)

activist who presented his own program in the book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) subtitled "A Study of the Modern Solution to the Jewish Question" published in 1896. He and Oskar Marmorek and Max Nordau organized the First World Zionist Congress held from August 26 to 29, 1897, in Basel. There Herzl was elected president of the World Zionist Organization. Herzl failed to foresee an Arab-Jewish conflict and held to the view the Arabs then living in Palestine would welcome new Jewish settlers with open arms.

An early Zionist activist and fellow traveller of Herzl's and the second chairman of the World Zionist Organization who also directed the Colonial Jewish Bank was David Wolffsohn (1856-1914) who was born in the settlement of Darbėnai, Lithuania. He presented two proposals in holding the first World Jewish Congress: to adopt a white and blue cloth reminiscent of the tallis, the Jewish prayer shawl, as the symbol of the movement, and to call the membership fee "shekel." Following Herzl's death he continued as a leader of the Zionist movement and was chairman of the World Zionist Congress until 1911, during which he continued Herzl's policy of seeking out political allies in the struggle to create the Jewish state.



David Wolffsohn (1856-1914)

Scholar Dr. Eglė Bendikaitė says Jews in Lithuania were not attracted to the ethnic and ethnocentric culture of the Lithuanians and therefore didn't face the danger of being assimilated by the majority host nation. Khovevei Tsion formed chapters at different locations around Lithuania in the final decades of the 19th century. The second congress of Khovevei Tsion was held in Druskininkai, Lithuania, in June of 1887. The Lithuanian Jews Moshe Leib Lilienblum, David Gordon, Max Emanuel Mandelstamm, Cvi Hirsh Schapira, Yitzhak Goldberg and David Wolffsohn were well known in Lithuania but also in the world as people who contributed greatly to the creation of Zionist ideology, propagating the movement's ideas and implementing them in reality.

At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Jewish delegations presented a declaration by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to the committee which stated Jews had full political, civil and ethnic rights in newly revived Lithuanian state. The Zionist movement in Lithuania, as in the world at large, was divided into competing Zionist political groups which had lesser and greater influence at different times and involved in discussions of the goals and methods of Zionism, and their relationship with the Lithuanian state. A conference held in Vilnius as 1918 drew to a close united the Zionist organizations operating in Lithuania into a single Union of Lithuanian Zionists. Jewish Zionists entered the political life of the Lithuanian state and actively participated in the creation of Jewish cultural autonomy

and the reformation of cultural and economic life. Two Zionist parties wielded the most influence upon the Jewish communities in the 1920s: the General Zionists and the Socialist Zionists. The General Zionists party considered itself a moderate liberal party representing the larger portion of the influential Jewish intelligentsia and notable public figures. Jews who agreed to sit on the Provisional Council of the Lithuanian State and who later were part of the first Lithuanian Government included minister without portfolio/for Jewish affairs Jakobas Vigodskis, deputy foreign minister Simonas Rosenbaumas and trade and industry minister Nachmanas Rachmilevičius (all from the general Zionists).

General Zionists also worked at the Jewish Affairs Ministry, which represented the Jewish ethnic minority until its closure in 1924, and in the Lithuanian parliament. Zionist Jews represented Jewish interests in Lithuanian state institutions and in the internal structures of the Lithuanian Jewish community. A congress of representatives of Jewish kahals in 1923 resolved to convoke national congresses of Lithuanian Jews whose delegates would be chosen in general elections. The national congress, called the Jewish Parliament, began in November of 1923. The creation of this sort of governance organ, elected democratically with the participation of all parties (except the extremist Orthodox) was an event unprecedented in Europe.

Mark Twain visited the Holy Land and his "Innocents Abroad" published in 1867 wrote of the emptiness and bareness of Palestine. Around this time "A land without a people for a people without a land" appeared as a Zionist slogan. The first ideologues of Zionism including Herzl didn't consider the issue of the Arabs as a significant one. This was due partially to the fact that the Arab population in the country was small before the advent of Zionism in the 19th century. In 1916 World Zionist Organization chairman Chaim Weizmann signed an agreement with sheikh Faisal, a leader in the Arab movement, for peace and good neighborly relations. These principles were enshrined in the Israeli declaration of independence 70 years ago on May 14, 1948.

Some Christian denominations and schools of thought, for example, dispensationalists, see in the restoration of the Jewish state a fulfillment of Bible prophecies. American Baptist reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., is said to have supported the right of the Jewish people to self-determination and is alleged to have perceived God's will at work in the re-establishment of the State of Israel.

German chancellor Angela Merkel in an interview with the Jewish publication *Jewish Voice* from Germany was asked whether anti-Semitism was justified, and responded: "To those who share my opinion that the Jewish people as a people have the right to self-determination, Zionism as a nationalist movement of the Jewish people is the incarnation of that same right which its opponents seek to deny."

Compiled by Geršonas Taicas

Dr. Adolf Bolotin:

The LJC Needs a Council of Elders

Professor Adolf Bolotin is an honored member of the Lithuanian Jewish Community and the former chairman of the Vilnius Jewish Community. He also holds a doctorate in physics and mathematics, is the recipient of the Republic Prize, has received awards as a Lithuanian teacher and is a member of the Israeli and New York Academy of Sciences. He is now 92 years old. Most of his life has been centered around Vilnius University. Aspirantura, doctorantura followed by successful defense of his work, earning him a doctorate in quantum physics. He has published more than 250 scientific articles and "raised" more than 20 doctors of the sciences. He has two children he raised together with his wife Neli. He is highly respected by his friends, colleagues and the Lithuanian scientific community in general.



We spoke with Dr. Bolotin about the Jewish community and Jewish life. The professor seemed optimistic and provided us some good news. His book "Solution of Certain Problems in Quantum Mechanics" will be published soon.

I have written a textbook for students on how to solve problems in quantum mechanics, not just about theory, but how to do this practically, with examples. I imposed upon one of my former students who now lives in the USA to translate it. The translation was sent to a publisher and we received the immediate reply: 'Great, we will publish it within one year, if you want to change anything.' The book 'Solution of Certain Problems in Quantum Mechanics' by Adolf Bolotin should hit the shelves very soon.

The publisher paid me, I didn't pay them to publish it. They came up with the agreement and paid me under very good conditions.

Professor, we often see you at the Lithuanian Jewish Community, even after retiring you visit here all the time. How do you come into the Community, what was it like at the beginning?

After Sąjūdis [Lithuanian independence movement] began, under independence I entered the Community. I was elected to the board of the Vilnius Jewish Community and at that time the Community was led by composer professor Boris Borisov. He wasn't in charge long, he left for America and left me to continue his work. I was elected chairman of the Vilnius Jewish Community and served two terms in

that post. We were a social organization whose goal was to help members of the community living in poverty. It was a difficult time, many poor Jews came to us. At that time it was older people who came together in the Community, the young people weren't participating actively yet.

Now, as a pensioner, I am a participant in the Jewish Community's Social Department programs, I visit the Community, meet people my own age as old acquaintances, we drink tea and eat pastries and talk about current events.

What were the tasks of most concern when you were chairman?

The issue of restitution of Jewish property. As a representative of the exact sciences, I went to the archive and found documents which spoke about the nationalized property, the property seized from the Vilnius community in 1940. I read the decree and law of the Soviet government dissolving the community. All the property taken from the Vilnius community was cataloged in fine detail. I made a copy of that document. All the buildings seized were recorded, how many floors, rooms, plots of land, according to a list with the signatures of a commission, but the property was not assessed monetarily. The money was calculated according to the community's bookkeeping registry, a sum total was determined. I remember the sum in the bank in the interwar currency of litas, it was 900,000 litai, almost one million. I felt the property seized had to be returned to the community, but not all members agreed, saying the property of the entire community of Lithuania had to be returned.

Everyone had the right to express their own opinion. At that time attempts at restitution failed.

I served two terms as chairman. After that Simon Alperovitch (1928–2014) came to power, he became the leader of the entire Lithuanian community. An international commission was formed for property restitution. The Lithuanian state returned religious property to the Jewish community, assessing its monetary value.

What is your opinion about all the disagreements that divide the community today? What solution do you see to put things back in order?

I'm not sure. The situation arising at the current time is not really dear to my heart... It doesn't look good that there is a struggle for power in the Vilnius community. The current chairwoman of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, Faina Kukliansky, is appropriate for her post, she represents the entire community very honorably and is able to visit everywhere, speak and express the community's opinion. To me personally, this is the sort of chairwoman we need. I think there needs to be agreement rather than bringing shame to the entire community. To agree on who controls the community's property, and that's it.

I was born in Ukraine. When my family sensed in the World War II the Germans were drawing near Kharkov, my parents and I left for Kyrgyzia. I went to school there. I remember they sent us to cut hay at the collective farm in the summer. Every village there had a council of *aksakali* [a council of elders, *aksakal* meaning elder in Central Asia]. Their experience was highly respected even by the director of the collective farm who controlled the collective farm property. He always used to ask what the *aksakali* said, 10 or 12 of them would get together, consult, come to agreement and make a decision, and the director had to listen to them and did what they said. I think the time has come for the community to consult with those who have experience.

You suggest consulting with those more experienced. Who would they be? Older people, or those who are respected?

Older Jewish people could play the main role. If they come to agreement, the young people should do as has been decided. I think Faina Kukliansky is older, she is experienced, she understands the needs of the community and she has the right to decide. What should happen is that a group of older members with more life experience, not more than five members, form a council, decide the most important issues and pass their decision on to the operational board. Spiritual life should be differentiated from financial economic and household activities.

With your experience, do you think it's an appropriate time to separate the Vilnius community from the communities of the other cities?

In my understanding, it is not. Vilnius is a community with centuries of history. There should be one LJC in charge of on-going maintenance and financial activities.

How did you end up in Vilnius?

My father was an economist and he received a posting, we moved from Kyrgyzia to Lithuania in 1945. I was a military invalid because of the wound I received and didn't return to the army, so I entered Vilnius University.

I became a student at Vilnius University in 1945, and after studies I worked as laboratory assistant, assistant and teacher, and I defended what was at that time called a candidate dissertation, then a doctorate in theoretical physics and I became as assistant professor. Since 1967 I have been a professor at the Theoretical Physics Cathedral of the Physics Faculty of Vilnius University.

You have worked at all levels of the community, and now you are a visitor to the Day Center of the Social Department. How do you like it?

This Center affects me positively. There is no other community like this in Lithuania. I know what goes on in the Russian community, that's, to tell the truth, a horror, wars, many organizations. God forbid it became like that among us.

I often recall Vilnius University where I worked. I have lots of former students who come visit me. My entire life I've worked in a good collective, the kind you won't find anymore. I often think, and what would those former famous academicians of Lithuania, the intelligentsia of the older generation, the corpus of Lithuanian professors, what would they say now, how would they judge the current situation? For me they set an example. I think it's strange when members of the community cannot get along and start spreading rumors, all of this is unpleasant to me. What does it mean? It's really nonsense to divide a community over finances. I remember when I was chairman of the Vilnius community I was distant from financial affairs, they were taken care of by Lithuanian community chairman Alperovitch. That's why I say we need a council of *aksakali*. There should be more openness, more public disclosure, then rumors won't find a place to take hold. At the current time the community has more opportunities and feels more stable financially. The community building is pretty and comfortable, it has been renovated, they're taking care of the elderly there and many interesting events are held there as well.

Interview by Ilona Rūkienė

The Story of the Family of Jokūbas Kisinai from Panevėžys



Each of us is able to take an interest in family and collect historical material, but not all of us have the patience and resolve to set that all down in a book. But that's what Eugenijus Simonas Kisinai has done. He's a military man, the compiler of a dictionary of military terminology and a colonel. He, his cousin Silvijus and his daughter Justė have written a biographical essay called "Mes – Kisinai: Panevėžio Kisinų pėdsakai" [We Are the Kisinai: Traces of the Kisinai in Panevėžys] about the greater family of Jokūbas Kisinai from Panevėžys. The book was translated into English and Russian.

"Now I can only be sorry that earlier, when my parents and uncles were still alive, I spoke so little with them and didn't look for distant relatives. And I can't justify it by saying that's just how the circumstances of life turned out, when for about half my life I was not in contact with my homeland, that I was too involved in work and so on. It wasn't just I who suffered from this, I owe my family, my children and grandchildren. And although I am in my sunset years (now that I'm counting my age in the 90s), I am trying to at least repay those debts, so that at least my descendants will know more about their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents," the author wrote in his introduction, inviting readers to learn more about the Kisinai family. The family includes scholars, military figures, medical personnel, musicians, politicians, economists, attorneys, businesspeople, teachers and others.

You write in the book that your childhood, at least until 1941, was a happy one. Your parents separated in attempting to keep the children out of the ghetto. Did you speak with your mother later about what happened to the Jews of Kaunas? Why was your father taken to Dachau? How do your children and grandchildren view the complicated family history?

No, my mother and I did not discuss what happened to the Jews of Kaunas. She only knew that Simonas Kisinai was imprisoned in the Kaunas ghetto. What happened beyond that, she didn't know, until he, after the war, returned to Kaunas. When father returned and I met him in 1956, I also didn't learn any more from him. Neither did he tell his son Samuelis from a second marriage anything. The experiences had been too painful to remember and tell.

I have to stress the topic of the Holocaust was forbidden in the Soviet Union, nobody wrote anything about it, it wasn't discussed at school. And overall Jews were ignored in all ways, at least in higher career positions; in the military it was forbidden to appoint them generals, to send them outside the Soviet Union during service and to allow them to enter many higher military education schools, never mind the General Headquarters Academy. In my class at the Leningrad Military Academy there was not a single Jewish officer-teacher and of the 150 auditors of the management faculty there were only two Jews and one Lithuanian with Jewish roots--that was me. My children and grandchildren learned of the life of our family only through my stories. But my information

about the Holocaust, about Jewish life and my family's life, about the tragedy, was limited when I served in the Soviet military. I only knew my father and uncle Abraomas suffered in the Kaunas ghetto and that uncle Abraomas died in the Dachau concentration camp. I had also heard of the Lietūkis massacre, but that was all. When I returned to Lithuania I learned more about uncle Izidorius. But I learned a lot more about the Jewish and also my family's tragedy when I began writing my book of memoirs about the descendants of the Kisinai of Panevėžys. It's understandable the children and grandchildren were horrified by what happened to the Jews during the period of occupation by fascist Germany, by what happened to our family as well. At the same time they were happy their grandfather and great-grandfather Simonas Kisinai and his children Eugenijus Simonas and Rita and other members of the Kisinai family had managed to survive. They and I are also grateful to those Lithuanians who risked their lives and rescued Jews. And I don't agree with those who say the Lithuanian nation is a nation of Jew-murderers. Every nation has its scum which are difficult to call people. But, thank God, they are only a small handful with which it is not worth identifying and not worth sulling the entire nation with them.

I met my father in 1956, I visited him with my wife Marija in Kaunas, and in Vilnius in 1959, where he had gone with his son Samuelis. That was our last meeting. My father died in 1965, when I was taking entrance exams in Khabarovsk for the Leningrad Artillery Academy. I met my brother Samuelis twice more, in Kau-

nas in 2005 when we visited father's grave on his 60th birthday and on the 40th anniversary of father's death, and in Kharkov in 2017. We get along very well with my brother and his family, and during Easter in 2018 my daughter Zita and granddaughter Marina visited them in Israel. I worked closely with Samuelis and his daughters Nurit and Michal when we were preparing the English translation of the book, "We Are the Kasinas." We had to rewrite the entire chapter about Simonas Kisinās, much new material about Holocaust survivors, Simonas Kisinās's wife Michle and Samuelis's wife Rachel's family, had surfaced. And in all instances our surviving relatives either refused to speak or only very reluctantly spoke about what they had experienced.

You have described life in the forest and the horrific images of the front lines. Is it possible this non-childish experience compelled your later selection of a career? What was Kaunas like when you returned with your mother from the countryside where you hid?

No, these experiences in no way caused my choice of profession. That happened completely spontaneously. While we had been in the countryside Kaunas hadn't changed much at all. There were no battles in Kaunas. Everything that was destroyed--electricity plants, bridges over the river, some factories--was the work of the fleeing German army. The only neighborhood of Kaunas that was destroyed by fire was the former ghetto territory in Vilijampolė [Slobodka] which was caused by the SS when they destroyed the Kaunas ghetto. Of course many houses and apartments, including our shack, had been looted. Bandits used the property of those who had fled the city. There was no electricity in the city, all the electricity plants had been destroyed, there was a lack of water, and so on.

In my book I wrote: "And even now I do not find an answer to the question of why I chose the profession of military officer, why I decided to enter military school..." But it was like this. In June of 1953 my son Vladas was born. We lived in a shack. I had to go for three years of mandatory service, leaving my family in horrific conditions. I knew the 16th Lithuanian Division had stopped in Vilnius and that many Lithuanians served in that division. When I got my call-up I went to the military commissariat and there I met a representative of the 1st Leningrad Artillery School who suggested I enter this school and study for two years. The commissar added that after finishing military school there was a high likelihood I could serve in Lithuania, and possibly in the 16th Division. I agreed to this proposal and I wasn't mistaken. In 1955 I was deployed for service in Kaunas, a 10-minute walk from home, the apartment my wife had managed to get through her own efforts when I left for military school.

In the book you devote a lot of space to your 32-year career in the Soviet military and military studies and training. Which period out of those three decades is the fondest for you to remember now? Did you ever consider what life would have been like if you hadn't become a professional soldier?

I fondly remember my studies at the Leningrad Artillery School and the Leningrad Artillery Academy. But my fondest memory is of the artillery battery in Sakhalin and the 849th Artillery Pla-

toon in Lvov. There I was completely in charge, I did everything I had learned and everything I wanted. They trusted me and didn't hinder me. Soldiers never addressed me in any other way than "our captain." After the passage of more than 40 years, my soldiers on the social network *Odnoklassniki.ru* set up the group *849th Automated Artillery Platoon* with a photo album called *We Served under Kisinās's Command*. As back during service, even now my soldiers call me Dad (*Batia*) and send letters and even videos they've made on all sorts of occasions.

It's difficult to say what I would have done if I hadn't become a professional soldier. Although I received a high school diploma in 1953, I really didn't know anything. I can't even remember what or how much I learned in which class. When you have a family higher education requires extraordinary effort. But I did manage to follow in the footsteps of my famous uncle Izidorius Kisinās; I did that after completing service in the Soviet military. Izidorius was the second bibliographer after Vaclovas Biržiška, and Eugenijus Simonas Kisinās, although it's not modest to say so, was the first author of Lithuanian military terminology in independent Lithuania, a recognized lexicographer.

In 2013 Lithuanian defense minister Juozas Olekas awarded you the national defense medal "For Merit" and in February of 2018 you received a prize for promoting the Lithuanian language from the Lithuanian Language Commission. There were the "Snail" sculpture and diploma accepted in your name by Lithuanian military reserve colonel Jurgis Norgėla and General Jonas Žemaitis Lithuanian Military Academy Editorial Department director Jolanta Budreikienė, awarded for the creation of Lithuanian military terminology and the compilation of a dictionary of terminology. This is truly high recognition. In total you have compiled and published over 30 textbooks, dictionaries, glossaries and informational booklets. Do you have unfinished business, plans for the future in this area?

Unfortunately everything which begins must end sometime. I compiled six military and military technology dictionaries forming the basis of Lithuanian military terminology and contributed greatly to the compilation of another two dictionaries, "*Enciklopedinis karybos žodynas*" and "*NATO terminų aiškinamasis žodynas*" ["Encyclopedic Dictionary of Warfare" and "Explanatory Dictionary of NATO Terminology, Third Edition" respectively]. Now a talented and hard-working officer and the wonderful person colonel Jurgis Norgėla continues my work. We keep in close touch and I always try to help when needed. Three biographical sketches have been written and published. But these are only about the life of one branch, the Kisināses of Panevėžys. Where are the Haim, Nakhim and Israeli branches? I now know Haim's son Izidorius Kisinās survived, and his son, Haim's grandson, Jefimas Kisinās and I are trying, so far unsuccessfully, to trace the story of this branch. So if it's possible to find out more about the Kisināses of Panevėžys, it would be possible to write a separate book or expand the books already published. So these are all the plans which will require work by other people to complete.

*Thank you for the interview.
Interview by Radvilė Rimgailė-Voicik*

Currently Eugenijus Simonas Kisinās and wife live in Kharkov, Ukraine. He continues to research his family genealogy and hopes to discover traces of his grandfather Jokūbas Kisinās in St. Petersburg. We hope our readers might be able to help.

It's possible the entry in the book is in error about my grandfather Jokūbas Kisinās having been born in Panevėžys. More likely he was born in St. Petersburg. The fact he and his family left Panevėžys in 1915 for St. Petersburg, when the Germans occupied Panevėžys, and returned to Panevėžys from St. Petersburg in 1918, seems to confirm this version of events. His son, my uncle Jefimas (1897-1976, buried at the Preobrazhensko Jewish cemetery, plot 4-6, burial location no. 259) remained in St. Petersburg. I know almost nothing about my uncle Jefimas Kisinās's family. He had a son whose name I don't know, and perhaps more children and grandchildren. His son was graduated from the Leningrad Military Medicine Academy and served in the Far East in the navy, earning the rank of sea captain, first class. Jefimas Kisinās's address in St. Petersburg was пр. Стачек, д. 155, кв. 167 [Starchek Prospect no. 155 apt. 167]. Jefimas visited his brother Simonas before his death in Kaunas in 1964, and my brother Samuelis visited him in St. Petersburg in 1965 or 1966.

Jefimas Kisinās's father Izidorius was born November 3, 1911, in St. Petersburg, and later lived in Panevėžys, and in 1937 was graduated from Vytautas Magnus University. It seems likely he and his father (Jefimas's grandfather) Haim arrived in Panevėžys in 1918, where Haim Kisinās lived at Ramygalos street no. 78. Jokūbas Kisinās's family also lived on Ramygalos street. The shop at Ramygalos street no. 4 was also owned by Nachimas Kisinās and Izraelis Kisinās. One tends to think Jokūbas Kisinās was born in St. Petersburg as was Haim Kisinās, and it's possible they were full brothers. We still need to look in St. Petersburg for Jokūbas's and Haim's father, who might be the great-grandfather of both me and Jefimas Kisinās. Haim was probably born around 1880 and his father between 1850 and 1860.

Questions arising:

- Where and when was Jokūbas Kisinās born (ca. 1870, in St. Petersburg or Panevėžys)?
- Who was the father (or fathers?) of Jokūbas Kisinās and Haim Kisinās?
- Is this the same Haim Kisinās, the one who was born in St. Petersburg and the one who lived in Panevėžys?
- What possible blood relationships exist between Jokūbas, Haim, Nachimas and Izraelis Kisinās?
- When was Jefimas Kisinās's son born in St. Petersburg, what was his name, and are there other children?
- Which children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Jefimas Kisinās are still living and how can they be contacted?

The other part of the family's story spans the Atlantic. Grandfather Jokūbas Kisinās sold his property and immigrated to the United States after the first Soviet occupation of Lithuania. It's likely he died around 1960 and is buried there. At about that time my mother Agota Birutė Jurkevičienė received notification from the United States about an inheritance. My mother, fearing the inheritance could harm her children (or harm their careers), did not respond to the notification. I know nothing about my grandfather Jokūbas's fate or descendants.

If you are able to help Eugenijus Simonas Kisinās answer any of these questions, please contact him by telephone at +380631697732 or send him an email simonas.kisinās@gmail.com.



Lithuanian defense minister Juozas Olekas awards Eugenijus Kisinās the national defense system's civilian award "For Merit" in 2013.



Daughter Zita, granddaughter Marina and brother Samuelis Kisinās's family: Samuelis and wife Rachel, daughter Nurit Semo with husband Eldar, daughters Shira and Hani, son Tal

The Jews of Pasvalys.

Lessons in Tolerance

About 180 Jewish families lived in Pasvalys (Posvol), Lithuania, in 1939. A large part of the community immigrated to the United States and South Africa, while the remainder were murdered at the mass murder/mass grave site in the Žadeikiai Forest. The Pasvalys Regional History Museum held an event for the European Day of Jewish Culture in 2017. The event presented an exhibition of documents and photography called "Fellow Citizens: The Jews of Pasvalys Region" which was supported by the Goodwill Foundation. Those who turned out for the event exchanged recollections and watched documentary films, while the curator of the exhibit and MC for the event, museum specialist Gražvydas Balčiūnaitis, invited everyone to take a walking tour called "Traces of Jewish Life in Pasvalys." The local press published articles about the Jewish community of Pasvalys and surrounding areas and students collected regional history material, organizing with teachers commemoration events. We spoke with history teacher Vlada Čirvinskienė from Pasvalys about what the Jewish community there left behind and about Holocaust education.

What made you collect and publish regional history materials about the Jews of Pasvalys?

I am a patriot of my region and I've been interested in regional history since my childhood. My parents encouraged my love of my hometown. I began to get interested in the Jews of Pasvalys when I became a history teacher, and the activities of the Gimtinė regional history group and stories from my grandparents and Pasvalys residents helped me get a better picture of Jewish history.

Besides Holocaust sites, what other sites are there to visit in Pasvalys and the area around the town which have a connection with Jewish culture?

There's the old Pasvalys Jewish cemetery, former bath buildings and some residential buildings and streets. The Pasvalys museum has Torahs and other items connected with Jewish life.

How much emphasis do you give regional history in your history lessons? Do children have opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities and to research regional history? How much time do you devote to the topic of tolerance?

We give a lot of emphasis to regional history. I think it's very important for students to have the opportunity to engage in extracurricular activities and study their native region, to listen to and record the recollections of older people. We devote a lot of time to the topic of tolerance. We set up the Gimtinė regional history group with the pupils at school and we have begun taking an active part in different regional, national and international competitions. The students are very interested and active, and our work always earns the highest marks. A real impetus was the competition "My Grandparents' and Great-Grandparents' Neighbors the Jews," and events for Lithuanian Holocaust Remembrance Day

and the tour around Lithuania called "Here Lived the Jews" in Pasvalys, Vilnius, Kėdainiai, Kupiškis, Panevėžys, Kaunas, Plungė, Radviliškis and elsewhere.

Pasvalys hosted European Day of Jewish Culture events in 2017. What other events connected with Jewish culture have taken place in Pasvalys recently?

On Lithuanian Holocaust Remembrance Day we visited the old Jewish cemetery and Holocaust mass graves. On May 30, 2017, the regional historians under my tutelage at the Lėvens primary school in Pasvalys took part in an international conference at the Povilas Matulionis Pre-Gymnasium in Kupiškis, Lithuania, called "The Kupiškis Jewish Community: Connections between Past and Present" and presented a brochure and information stand called "Traces of the People of the Promised Land in Pasvalys."

Interview by Radvilė Rimgailė-Voicik



Exhibit of documents and photographs "Fellow Citizens: The Jews of the Pasvalys Region"

The Jews of Pasvalys: Social life, Customs and Traditions

In 1497 Lithuanian grand duke Alexander issued permission for Jonas Grotas to build a parish church and create the new town of Pasvalys where the rivers Svalios and Lėvens meet. Of the 90 registered city residents in Pasvalys in 1600 only two families were Jewish. In the latter part of the 17th century the number of Jewish residents began to increase. Tensions began to increase between city residents. It is known the Jewish man Jozefovich was murdered and thrown in the river in 1671. Suspicion fell upon Gentvila, who perhaps incited H. Palubinskis's spearmen to desecrate the Pasvalys church by painting the walls with goat and sheep blood and to blame the evil deed on the Jews. The capitulum, the local church governance body, however, defended the Jews and refused to send them to trial at the voivod's court in Trakai.

There were 430 Jews living in the parish and town of Pasvalys in 1775 and they had a synagogue and controlled plots of land along the market square. There were 18 homes on the margins of four marketplaces (1 Catholic, 17 Jewish), 38 on Biržų street (31 Catholic, 7 Jewish), 28 on Palėvens street (21 Catholic, 7 Jewish), 19 on Vilniaus street (12 Catholic, 7 Jewish), 18 on Svalos street (15 Catholic and 3 Jewish) as well as the Jewish kahilla building and the synagogue there, and 27 on Pumpėnų street (25 Catholic, 2 Jewish). So in total there were 164 houses in the town (121 Catholic, 43 Jewish). There were 55 Christian and 25 Jewish houses in Pasvalys in 1839. The decline and fall of the state, wars and invasions by foreign armies in the late 17th and early 18th centuries certainly had an effect upon Pasvalys. For some time after the wars and plagues, Pasvalys had a small population, and there was no one and no reason to repair the manor estate there. Those who settled in the town were relieved of taxation for eight years. Residents began to move into residences along the Pumpėnų highway. There the Jews of Pasvalys built a new mill with their own money, and one tends to think this is the small mill on the Svalios river mentioned in later inventories, because later, very near by this location, a Jewish religious center appeared: a synagogue and other communal buildings were erected and a cemetery set up (on Svalos street).

In July of 1835 at the home of the Jew Mausha Faivelovich, when his wife Revka and the peasant Rozalija Petrauskienė were making candles, the tallow caught fire and the house burned down. Four neighboring houses burned down as well, and the fire managed to jump across to the opposite bank of the Lėvens river--there was a strong wind gusting--burning down two of the parish's food storage and grain barns and the grain storage barn of the peasant Abrakauskas. Upytė's court didn't punish the women, but ordered they be more careful with fire in the future.

In Pasvalys in 1854 there were 1,186 residents, of whom 521 were temporary residents, 559 were Catholics and 598 Jews and Karaïtes; 824 were farmers, 78 tradesmen and 55 craftsmen and artisans. There was a fair held in the town during which dishes, wheels, leather goods, cattle and other things were sold. The market was held on Thursdays.

In 1923 Jews comprised about 8 percent of all residents in the Pasvalys region. Before World War II about 300 Jews lived in Pasvalys, most of them involved in mercantilism and retail trade (of the 15 shops registered, only one belonged to a non-Jew), photography, shoe-making and ironsmithing, and there were some attorneys and doctors as well. Besides this, Jews operated taverns, and the best tavern in Pasvalys belong to the Jew Eliyu. Pasvalys residents still remember the flax and grain buyer Leibas Aizikovičius, the merchants Meyer, Barselis, Shloma and Leila Zak, the doctor Boris Bumshlaka and others. Jochenonas Feldmanas owned an electricity generating plant in Pasvalys and traded in iron, Icikas Chaitas did photography and sold radio sets. Dovydas Kiršonas was an attorney, teacher and social activist. Samuelis Utianskis was a timber buyer, Samuelis Traubė sold lumber but also bought grain from people and used to bring it to the Pasvalys railroad station.

Many Jews travelled around the villages in horse-drawn carts or pulled their own small cart around and sold needles, buttons, thread, dishes, combs, spoons, knives, soap and perfume. If a housewife took more goods than she gave back in used items (worn-out clothes, bronze, bones, scrap metal, etc.) then she had to add some cheese or even a chicken to the deal. Money was almost never used in this trade. This was mostly the domain of elderly Jews who were called "shkarmalninkai" and the peasants considered them to be native rather than exotic people, people from their own ranks.

The Jews of Pasvalys were very united. There were no idlers among them. They never got into trouble with the law. They used to set prices for goods on the eve of market day in common in synagogue. Many Jews were well-to-do. They hired Lithuanian girls to do housework and associated tasks, but Jewish girls never went to work for Gentiles. The Jews were a bit proud, but very friendly, educated and very sincere people. There were very few drinkers, smokers or hooligans among them. The Jews are often remembered as being hard-working, intelligent, educated people. Since the majority of Jews were merchants, they often helped people, selling on credit. They sold fish and bagels brought to Pasvalys from Riga. If purchasers didn't have enough money, the Jews would sell the goods *ant bargo*, on credit, and often enough completely wrote off the debt.

Once per year the Jews used to go to “shake off” all their sins. They’d go to the bridge over the small river and turn out their pockets, believing this was the way to rid themselves of sin. On Saturdays not a single Jew worked. They couldn’t even blow out a candle or unlock the door to their shop or workshop. They asked people of other ethnicities to do these things for them. On Saturdays they couldn’t even bring water from the well. This is how they honored and carried out their traditions.

Jewish children, just like Lithuanian children, went to school. First they went to primary school, grades 1 to 4, then they learned together with Lithuanians at the Petras Vileišis school (now gymnasium) in Pasvalys, and those who so desired travelled to attend the Panevėžys Jewish Gymnasium. Lithuanian and Jewish young people put on different plays and took part in carnival. They appeared in clever and inventive ways. Elderly people remember the fate of the Jews of Pasvalys with tears in their eyes. They tell how after the mass murder in Žadeikiai Forest even the willow

bushes on the roadside blossomed red. To preserve the memory of the Jews of Pasvalys, we will collect regional history material and record people’s stories about the Pasvalys Jews. And we will believe the words of the prophet Isaiah engraved on the UN building in New York (Is. 2:4) about peace throughout the world: “And he shall judge among the nations, and rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

Compiled by Vlada Čirvinskienė

Sources:

Užaugau Pasvaly [I Grew Up in Pasvalys], Antanas Apinys and others, 1998.

Regional history material *Žmonių prisiminimai apie Pasvalio žydus* [People’s Recollections of the Jews of Pasvalys] recorded by members of the Gimtinė regional history student group and teacher Vlada Čirvinskienė.

Gerosios patirties sklaida modernėjančioje XXI a. mokykloje [Promoting Best Practices in the Modernizing School of the 21st Century, a collection of articles], Vlada Čirvinskienė, 2017.

The Jews of Pasvalys were very good. That’s what our mother Marija Morkūnienė who worked for many years in Jewish homes always used to say. She cleaned up rooms. Many girls from Pasvalys worked in Jewish homes. They did all kinds of jobs: some cooked, others washed and ironed clothes. The Jews never complained about our mother’s work. They always paid well and used to give gifts for honesty as well. Once they even gave her silk stockings. After the war began one day a large crowd--young and old, children with whom we had run around the streets and played only a few days before--were marched through the town. We asked where they were marching. To work, they are marching us to work, was the answer we heard. There was fear and sadness in most of the faces of the Jews. As they went to their deaths the Jews threw little bags of valuables from their hands to the people on the side, as if they were trying to get rid of a burden, or thank someone.

Story by Pasvalys resident Laimutė Morkūnaitė-Burbienė



Pasvalys Hebrew School and students. Photo: eilatgordinlevitan.com



"Traces of Jewish Life in Pasvalys" walking tour. Photo: pasvalys.lt



Pasvalys Hebrew teachers with students after a drama performance. Photo: mannbarry.net



Members of the Gimtinė regional history school group from the Lėvens primary school with director and teacher Vlada Čirvinskienė

Neta Alon, the Most Remarkable LJC Athlete



Neta Alon is a young table tennis player representing Lithuania, the Lithuanian Jewish Community and the Makabi Lithuanian Athletics Club. A gold medal in youth singles matches, gold in mixed doubles with an Israeli player and bronze in women's team play with team friend Vanesa Ražinskytė--these are only the 2017 achievements from the Maccabiah Games. On the way to the women's team bronze, Neta defeated professional German table tennis player Katerina Michailova (rated 20 in Germany), winner of the women's gold at Maccabiah 2017 and took all four gold medals there, and who had never been defeated in table tennis at Maccabiah before. This victory surprised both the German team and Israeli representatives. Neta soon began receiving a large number of invitations to play in the German league and to become a member of the Israeli youth team. Obviously promising athletes around the world get snatched up, whereas they may remain largely unknown in Lithuania. Neta's wins are the result of her own efforts, will, stubbornness and money, and those of her trainer, her father. She has received no significant moral or financial support from the Lithuanian Table Tennis Association or any other athletics institution in Lithuania.

Neta began playing ping pong at age 4 when her father, professional table tennis trainer Hen Alon, was training at the only table tennis table at the LJC's Ilan Club, which the LJC acquired at the initiative of Alon. In 2007 Alon founded the New Stars table tennis club. This club gave birth to, besides Neta, a new Lithuanian youth (boys) champion team who now represent Lithuania in Europe as well as other promising Lithuanian table tennis players.

At 8 Neta became Lithuanian champion in the young, under-12 category and later began to represent Lithuania in European championships. In 2011 she took 11th place in the Europe Top 16 tournament of 12-year-old European table tennis players. This was an important victory among the best in Europe for the athlete whose only training came from her father. Neta continued to win medals at Lithuanian and European ping pong championships and several times over became the Israeli champion for her age group. She was successful again in early April at the Israeli championship. Neta came home with 3 medals: 2nd place in girls' doubles, 3rd place in girls' singles and 3rd in women's doubles. Neta still represents Lithuania in European competitions.

Sadly Neta had to put her sporting career on the back burner 3 and a half years ago because of health problems. After consulting with a number of doctors and receiving contradictory diagnoses, she had a knee operation... All of this caused her and her family a lot of time and money and involved much pain and disappointment.

Last year after a break of almost 4 years Neta returned to sport and took 5th and 8th place in the Lithuanian women's championship. This unexpected victory probably reminded the Lithuanian Makabi Athletics Club of Neta's talents. The Makabi leadership started paying more attention to Neta, more than they had before in the 10 years of her sporting career combined. And Neta didn't disappoint: she attended the Maccabiah Games with the Lithuanian delegation and won the three top medals. Her successes at the Maccabiah Games in 2017 motivated Neta to compete harder and while she isn't completely free of her health problems yet, she's preparing for a new start and hopes to re-enter the European Top list.

It's not enough for an athlete to train at his or her club, the athlete needs to compete, in Neta's case at European championships, to vie against others, and that's expensive. "Everything's simple in Lithuania," Neta's mother Victoria Sideraitė-Alon said with a warm smile. "Are you a promising athlete? Great! Train, invest effort, your father's professional knowledge and time, hire partners... If you want to compete at international matches, buy the ticket with your own money, pay the entrance fee yourself, represent your country, and if someone wins, we will take photographs with you, or more likely we'll just say that you won because the other contenders failed to show up... And you can keep on training independently and keep on trying until the next competition, which you may attend at your own cost..."

One hopes this promising LJC athlete who has done so well at the Maccabiah Games winning half the medals for the Lithuanian delegation will not be ignored until the next Maccabiah.

In the Diary – the Reality of Vilnius Ghetto

Title:

Vilniaus geto dienoraštis, 1941–1943
1941–1943 טאגבוך פֿון ווילנער געטאָ

Author:

Yitzhak Rudashevski (1927–1943)

Translated from: Y. Rudashevski, *Tog-bukh fun Vilner geto*, Di goldene keyt, Tel Aviv, 1953 15:17-78.

Year of publication: 2018

This Lithuanian-language publication was published to mark the 75th anniversary of the tragedy of Yitzhak Rudashevski and his family. The diary has been published before in Hebrew, English, French and German. Designer Sigutė Chlebinskaitė came up with a special design for this book, with the young author's face cut in half on the front and back covers, apparently intended to symbolize a life cut in half. The face comes together when the

book is opened. Sorbonne doctoral student Akvilė Grigoravičiūtė edited the Yiddish text of the diary. She thinks this is one of the most beautiful books published in Yiddish in the last 20 or 30 years. Clearly a literary talent, Yitzhak was an only child and attended the prestigious CBS Jewish Real-Gymnasium before the war. "The Rudashevski family was involved in the Jewish press and literary life. ... This explains why Yitzhak began writing his diary in the ghetto. He was a very widely-read child and reading his texts we are surprised by his wisdom and desire to watch people. His artistic astuteness is also surprising because of the quality of his prose," Dr. Mindaugas Kvietkauskas, the translator of the book into Lithuania, said at the book launch at the Vilnius Book Fair.

In his diary Yitzhak recorded for posterity the reality of the Vilnius ghetto, the struggle to survive and hope. There are only about 50 such written records of the Holocaust in the world. One of the best known is Anne Frank's Diary written in Amsterdam. "Yitzhak's testimony is very important for understanding the reality of the ghetto. One of the most painful truths we need to accept is the participa-



tion of Lithuanians in the Holocaust, the role of Jew-killer. There are scenes presented where Jew-killers pull people out of their hiding places, where Lithuanians are looking for Yitzhak, and he lies shaking on boards in a warehouse," Dr. Kvietkauskas said. Rudashevski in his diary wrote: "It seems to me the words on the paper are burning with blood." These are the words of a child whose body lies in the mass grave at Ponar.

A "memory stone" was placed at the former residence of the young chronicler at Rūdininkų street no. 8 in Vilnius at the initiative of the Lithuanian Human Rights Center and partners.



Palanga Tourism Information Center Has Prepared Unique Publication, Itinerary of Jewish Heritage

The topic of the history of the Palanga Jewish community hasn't received much treatment by experts and hasn't been systematically studied yet. It is known Jews lived in Palanga in the latter half of the 15th century and composed a significant portion of the population in the 17th century, attempting to turn the settlement into a thriving city. The tourist itinerary "Traces of Jewish Heritage in Palanga" teaches about Jewish history and culture. It offers visitors the chance to tour and

see surviving buildings and locations testifying to the life of the Palanga Jewish community. This publication compiled using all sorts of authentic sources presents the lesser-known aspects and facts of Palanga Jewish history.

The publication was compiled by Palanga Tourism Information Center manager Mindaugas Surblis. The itinerary includes 14 sites in Palanga. The publication was published in Lithuanian, Russian, English and Polish. A Hebrew-language version is planned.

The itinerary was formulated in consultation with members of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, the Palanga municipality, the regional history collection of the Palanga Public Library, the Palanga Spa Resort Museum, the the Baltic Regional and History Archaeology Institute of Klaipėda University, the Amber Museum in Palanga and the Kretinga Museum.

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Žana Skudovičienė	Abi men zet zich Club	8 678 81 514 zanas@sc.lzb.lt
Geršonas Taicas	Lecture series	8 689 83 293
Home-care service		(8 5) 261 7244
Volunteer doctors	Medical consultations from 12 noon to 3:00 P.M.	(8 5) 261 1736

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Union of Former Ghetto and Concentration Camp Prisoners	Tobijas Jafetas	(8 5) 212 7074	
Jewish song and dance ensemble Fajerlech	Larisa Vyšniauskienė	8 687 79 309	larisa.vysniauskiene@gmail.com

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USEFUL INFORMATION

Simas Levinas, chairman of Vilnius Jewish Religious Community,
e-mail sinagoga1903@gmail.com

Schedule of services at the Choral Synagogue in Vilnius, Pylimo st. no. 39:

- ▶ workdays from 8:30 A.M. to 9:30 A.M.
- ▶ Saturday from 10:00 A.M. to 12:30 P.M.
- ▶ Sunday from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 P.M.

Synagogue telephone: (8 5) 261 2523

Vilnius Jewish Cemetery (Sudervės way No. 28, Vilnius) open:
workdays and Sunday from 9:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.; closed on Saturday.
Telephone: (8 5) 250 54 68

On the cover - The Vilnius ghetto diary of Yitzhak Rudashevski
launched at the Vilnius Book Fair. Photo: Mantas Puida.

Print run: 200 copies