



SOUTHERN JEWISH HERITAGE

VOL. 14, NO. 1

WINTER 2001

From Chastnick in West Russia To Memphis in West Tennessee

The following article has been extracted from "Ben Ballin-A Memoir" written by Bill C. Clifton on the occasion of his 90th birthday, January 9, 1994. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to read and edit this article.

David Schneider



Ben Ballin at age 19

Part I

Ben Ballin was born Joseph Berel Balen, January 9, 1904 in the town of Chastnick on the dreary, windswept

steppes of Western Russia.

The village had about 2,000 inhabitants, half of whom were Jewish and they worked with their gentile neighbors as shopkeepers, tradesmen, and farmers. Mendel and Rachel Balen raised seven children, Dora, Alfred, Fannie, Joseph, Rose, Lillie and Ben. They lived in a five-room frame house with a wall-to-wall rock fireplace where all the cooking and baking was done, and in the winter the family gathered to this only source of heat. Mendel, a capable tradesman, bought flax, which he sold to craftsmen who processed it into fine linen napkins and tablecloths which in turn Mendel sold to the public. Mendel was called by the Czar to serve in the Russo-Japanese war from 1904 through 1905 and closed his business while he was in the army. Upon his return, Mendel attempted to revive his enterprise, but he could not earn enough to keep his family from impoverishment and conditions never improved.

While no public education was available in Chastnick, Ben had a religious education. "True, there was no

(secular) school", Ben explained, "I did not go to school, what I learned I taught myself, but I had a Hebrew teacher." Ben went to "Cheder", a room with plain wooden benches where 25 boys were crowded, side-by-side as they chanted their lessons together.

During this period of time, Jews lived under the ever-present threat of pogroms. Mobs often lead by a priest would attack Jewish districts raping, killing, and pillaging homes before setting them afire. Ben remembered hearing his elders tell of Jews meeting violence with violence. There were towns somewhat larger than the village of Chastnick where Jews formed self-defense organizations.

Ben was born into an era in which his people were questioning their future and were searching for new direction, which required them to leave Russia. Some Jews believe it was their duty to go to Palestine and they went. But, Mendel had some trust and faith in America; because he had his cousins who had set off on the arduous journey by land and sea and within two years they had

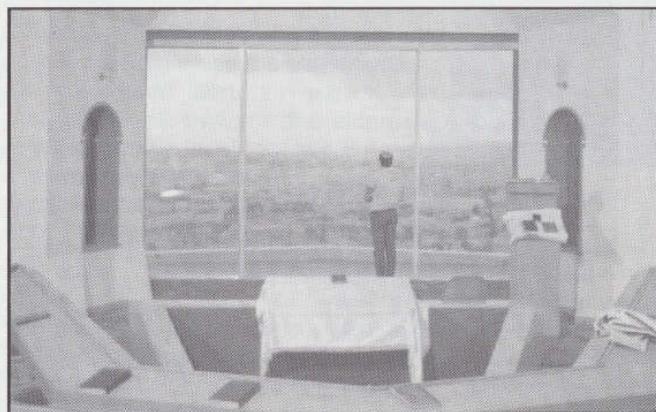
Please see Ballin, page 4

Jerusalem's Mt. Scopus Home to Hecht Synagogue Edited by David Schneider

In our last issue of "Southern Jewish Heritage", Harry Samuel's wonderful article about the Jews of Cape Girardeau, Missouri, told how a phone call from Alan Hecht, at that time a student of Hebrew University in Jerusalem, to his parents complaining that there was no place there to pray. His parents Chick and Gail Hecht from Las Vegas, his aunt and uncle, Teedie and Irv Applebaum, made a significant financial commitment to build a synagogue at Hebrew University. They were joined by the surviving founders of the Cape Girardeau Synagogue, some of their descendants and friends throughout the country and in June 1981, the magnificent Hecht Synagogue was dedicated and given to Hebrew University on Mount Scopus.

On our recent trip to Israel in June, my family and I had

Please see Hecht, Page 5



Synagogue interior overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem

**JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MEMPHIS AND THE MID-SOUTH - FOUNDED IN 1986
P.O. BOX 17304, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38187**

President's Message



Marjean Kremer

The "hard act to follow," that of continuing the outstanding programs the JHS membership has come to expect, has proved to be a lot easier than I anticipated, thanks to the wonderful support I have received from the newly elected board AND the fabulous cadre of former presidents of this unique organization. Special mention—and my special thanks—to immediate

past president BF Sumner Levine for his always available, invariably correct advice. My other BF, Harriet Stern, is likewise always "here" for me as are Leonid, David, Gloria, Tom and Steve. Thanks, Guys (and gals)!

VP Peggy Jalenak didn't even blink when she accepted that most challenging of jobs, membership. And new program chairman David Patterson, Director of University of Memphis' Bornblum Judaic Studies Program, brings an expanded dimension to JHS meetings with that department's co-sponsorship of the year's programs. THE incomparable David Schneider agreed to continue as editor!

And what a year this promises to be! Dr. Patterson himself was the featured speaker at the opening meeting in September. October brought *SUNSHINE* into JHS lives with the morning showing of the film, compliments of Malco, and the evening lecture at the new Beth Shalom. The JHS was delighted to sponsor former Memphian Dana Sachs as "our author" during the JCC's Jewish Book Week. Future programs (the blue postcards will remind the membership as usual) will focus on our growing interest in genealogy with December 3's Arthur Kurzwel's WHAT'S IN A NAME: THE HISTORY AND MEANING OF JEWISH NAMES (1 P.M., JCC) and January 14's talk by Rabbi Gary Zola, director

Jewish Historical Society of Memphis & The Mid-South Officers 1998-2000

PRESIDENT	Marjean Kremer
1ST VICE PRESIDENT	Peggy Jalenak
2ND VICE PRESIDENT	Abe Kriegel
3RD VICE PRESIDENT	Allen Cohen
TREASURER	Arthur Buring
SECRETARY	Bob Kalin
LEGAL COUNSEL	Stephen Biller
HISTORIAN	Shirley Feibelman
EDITOR	David Schneider


DIRECTORS

Mel Grinspan, David Patterson, Jane Ross, Keith Parker, Jimmy Ringel, Gil Halpern, Irwin Kaufman, May Lynn Mansbach, Harvey Reisman, Sumner Levine, David Schnieder

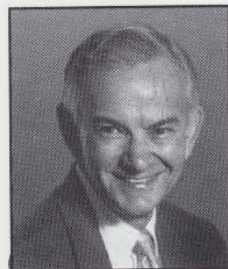
HONORARY OFFICERS

Helen Wax, Lester Sewel, Laura Spiegler, Elias Goldsmith, Harry Jaffe, Abe Schwab, Harriet Stern, Leonid Saharovici, Gloria Felsenthal, David Schneider

of the American Jewish Archives (2 P.M., JCC). Blu Greenberg will be here March 28!!! June's annual meeting will showcase our own young genealogists.

In early November, Richard and I, Sumner and Phyllis attended the annual meeting of the Southern Jewish Historical Society in Cincinnati where we were privileged to hear Memphis' beloved HELEN WAX talk about her late and equally beloved husband, Temple Israel's venerated RABBI JAMES A. WAX, as a featured panelist at the meeting's Sabbath program. "Civil Rights and the Outspoken Rabbi: Views From the Homefront." When he was my rabbi, I was proud to be known in this community off one of "Rabbi Wax's people," there we Memphians were proud to be known as "Helen's people." 

Sumner Levine Elected to SHS Board




Sumner Levine

Sumner Levine was elected to the 10 member executive board of the Southern Jewish Historical Society during that group's annual meeting November 3-5 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The immediate past president of the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South, Mr. Levine continues his commitment to our organization serving as convention and travel chair. He is also

a past president of the Temple Israel Brotherhood and a former board member of the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods.

Mr. Levine served as secretary of the board of Temple Israel. He is presently on the board of United Cerebral Palsy and is a volunteer for the Memphis Food Bank. He and his wife Phyllis are the proud parents of two daughters and the proud grandparents of five grandsons. 

In Memory of Selma Lewis

Mrs. Selda Nussbaum Massion
Mr. James M. Lewis, Jr.
Estate of Selma S. Lewis

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Mr. & Mrs. Allen Exelbierd	Mr. & Mrs. Keith Parker
Mr. & Mrs. Marshall Gerber	Mr. & Mrs. Sidney I. Baer
Mr. & Mrs. Elliot Abel	Mrs. Diane Sacks
Mr. & Mrs. Jay Kochman	Mrs. Helen Weiss
Mrs. Isabel Klitzner	Mr. & Mrs. Harry Samuels
Dr. & Mrs. Victor Schlesinger	

A special "Thank You" to our dear friends Herman and Bobbie Goldberger and *The Hebrew Watchman* for allowing us to utilize pictures and information from recent issues of *The Hebrew Watchman*.

Herman and his wife Bobbie are always available and most gracious with their time and newspaper expertise. Their great cooperation makes our work much easier.

David Schneider, Editor

Tova Mirvis Book Becomes National Bestseller

Tova Mirvis grew up in Memphis and was a graduate of the Margolin Hebrew Academy/Finstone Yeshiva of the South. She is the first published novelist who is Orthodox from Memphis and the first female novelist to write about Orthodox Jews in the Mid-South. Today she lives in New York City with her husband, Allan Galper and her son Eitan. She received her M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Columbia University and taught composition at Columbia College. Currently she is working on completing her second novel.



Tova Mirvis

Tova Mirvis wrote her first novel, "The Ladies Auxiliary" and it was published by Norton in 1999. The book received critical acclaim and has now been published in the Netherlands, England and Germany. The novel was a finalist for the Book of the month Club's First Fiction award and a selection of the Barnes and Nobles Discover Great New Writers Program.

On September 5, 2000, Ballantine published the novel in paperback as a Ballantine Reader Circle selection. Since then it has become a national best seller. And, when I was in Jerusalem in June 2000, I saw a copy of the book in the window of a bookstore just off of Ben Yehuda Street. Knowing Tova's parents, Dr. David Mirvis and Lynnne Mirvis, it was a special thrill to see "The Ladies

Auxiliary" in Israel.

Here are a few excerpts from reviews of Tova Mirvis's "The Ladies Auxiliary":

"Appealing... Batsheva flourishes as an effective character, full of verve and chutzpah, like an Ellen Gilchrist heroine whose iconoclasm, unremarkable by cosmopolitan standards, takes on bright colors in conventional society."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Generous with humor and compassion, Mirvis paints tenderly nuanced portraits of strong female characters while scrutinizing an entrenched religious subculture who traditions are threatened by modern temptations... A gentle story that captures its milieu with tolerant understanding, and plucks the heartstrings."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Compassionate and perceptive... The triumph of the book is its portrayal of these women, whose community is a treasure of tradition and moral values... This book is not just for Jewish audiences... Mirvis has written a book that poses poignant questions even as it acknowledges that there may be no answers to them."

—*USA Today*

"An interesting story of assimilating into a closed culture, it is provocative in the questions it raises and keeps open."


—*Commercial Appeal*
Memphis, TN

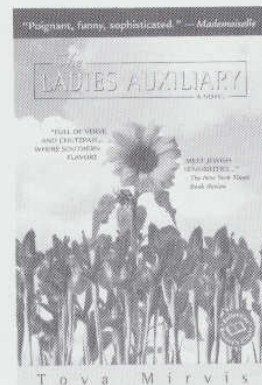
When free-spirited Batsheva moves into the close-knit Orthodox community of Memphis, Tennessee, the already precarious relationship between the ladies auxiliary and their teenage daughters is shaken to the core. In this extraordinary novel, Tova Mirvis takes us into the fascinating and insular world of the Memphis Orthodox Jews, one ripe with tradition and contradiction. Warm and wise, enchanting and funny, *The Ladies Auxiliary* brilliantly illuminates the timeless struggle between mothers daughters, family and self, religious freedom and personal revelation, honoring the past and facing the future.

An unforgettable story of uncommon atmosphere, profound insight, and sinning humor, *The Ladies Auxiliary* is a triumphant work of fiction.

Recently, Tova Mirvis returned to Memphis for book signings to promote the recent release of her book in paperback. On October 17, Ms. Mirvis appeared at Davis-Kidd Booksellers in Laurelwood Shopping Center and on Wednesday, October 18, she appeared at The Deliberate Literate on Union Ave. And, on Friday morning, October 20, she spoke in Columbus, Mississippi at the annual Eudora Welty Conference, sponsored by the Mississippi University of Women. The hardback version of "The Ladies Auxiliary" is in its third printing and the paperback version, which was first released in September (40,000) has also entered its third printing. Recently, the paperback edition was 8th on the San Francisco Chronicle's bestseller list and also appeared on Book Sense's bestseller list. During the first two weeks of September, Ms. Mirvis toured to promote her book and during November will attend fifteen Jewish book fairs.

Ms. Mirvis continues to receive accolades. She and "The Ladies Auxiliary" are featured in the winter issue of "Jewish Women Magazine".

Ms. Mirvis is the daughter of Lynnne and Dr. David Mirvis of Memphis, the granddaughter of Dotty and Harold Katz of Memphis and Rabbi Allan and Naomi Mirvis of Israel and the late Lena Sear Mirvis. 



saved enough money to send for some of their kin. Ben was five years old in 1909 when Mendel followed his heart and courageously left Russia for America. Ben wondered if he would ever see his Daddy again. Mendel found work as a house painter and in 1911, Ben's oldest sister, Dora had at age fifteen followed her Father to New York where she obtained work as a seamstress in a sweatshop.

In 1913, Ben was nine when he and the remainder of his family, in the loving care of Rachel, said, "Goodbye", to Chastnick to join Mendel and Dora in New York. With his brother and sisters, Ben set out by railroad first to Libava for a United States visa. The family was excited and Ben was awed by the train chuffing out its cloud of smoke and steam.

At Libava, before a visa was issued, immigrants were examined by doctors and had to pass a physical, for only those immigrants in perfect health could enter America. The family was quartered in a quarantine station where they waited for the medical examination. In the bewilderment of the quarantine station, after the endless waiting in lines, bad luck stomped on Rachel and her clan. The family sat in a stunned huddle, their belongings at their feet, when they heard the American Consul declare that Ben could not leave Russia. Ben had contracted trachoma, a treatable eye disorder that closed the door of immigration for him indefinitely until he was cured.

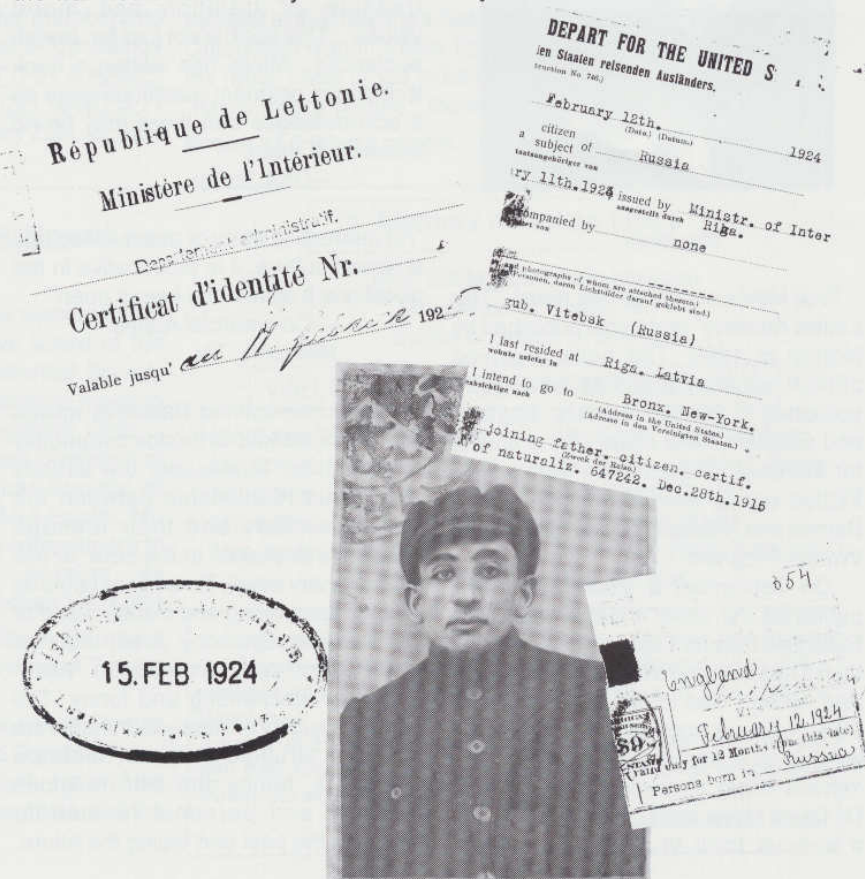
It was 1913 and the family settled in at the quarantine station at Libava on the Baltic Sea. They lived in buildings that were like graceless mausoleums, drab and cold, cut down the center by a single corridor. Their quarters had not indoor plumbing. The outbuilding showed light flapped forlornly. Ben was treated twice a week by a doctor who put a medicine in his eyes, which hurt and stung so badly that he could not open them for hours because of the burning pain. The government doctor was no eye specialist and probably poorly trained to treat such eye disorders. After a year and a half, when there was no cure, Rachel decided to go ahead, leaving Ben behind. Her

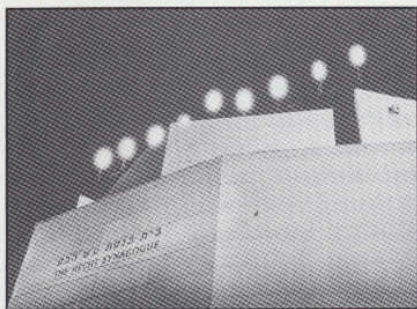
heart literally broke in silence. Rachel's dilemma was simple, but agonizing. The family could not stay in the camp indefinitely, but leaving a small boy behind gnawed in her heart. The ache she felt over leaving Ben behind never left her. She took slight solace and comfort because her son would live in a comfortable home of her sister, Shima, who lived in the village of Smolyn, which was twelve hours by train from the quarantine station. As Ben's train pulled out, tears flew down his cheeks like rain. Today, Ben minimizes the anguish of separation from his family. He will only say, "I understood that I had to stay until I was fit." But the little boy of nine years was sorrowful because he knew he would never see his family again in Russia, "when you went to America, you went forever". But Ben tried to believe he would be "going to America pretty quick. I dealt with it alright."

It was not until 1915, after two years of daily treatment, that the doctor told Ben he was cured. However, World War I kept the door to America closed, but Ben's perspective was ever optimistic. He recalls, "In 1915, everyone thought the war would be over very soon". The

Romanov dynasty's collapse on March 8, 1917 happened suddenly and violently. In 1917, Ben was twelve and he recalls, "Russia was losing the war and her army deserted the front lines and refused to fight". He remembers the deserters fleeing through his town, Smolyn. Ben remembers the day when he felt the full impact of the war and the frightful rancor, fear, and hatred between the two countries. Four soldiers who were stationed twelve miles away came to pillage Smolyn.

This was our first face-to-face contact. Several of the neighbors got together and attacked the German soldiers. They were running and trying to get away. One of the soldiers, a great big fellow, came into our house and I knew he was going to kill me. He wanted to hide in our cellar, but we didn't have one. Four of them were trying to get away; two of them and one other got killed real close to our house. The big one was killed close by. Their bodies were put on a sled and carried off to be buried and I remember their hands dragging the ground, leaving a trail of blood in the snow. One was shot and the other one was stabbed with a bayonet.





The Hecht Synagogue at night

the privilege of visiting the Hecht Synagogue and saw for ourselves the magnificent view of the Temple Mount and the old city of Jerusalem as seen through the floor to ceiling windows with twin Torah Arks, one on each side of the windows so as not to interfere with the breathtaking view below.

Ram Karmi, one of Israel's foremost architects, designed the Hecht Synagogue. He created an interior sanctuary which is evocative of the "Tent of Meeting", the mobile tabernacle which traveled with Moses and the Israelites through their wanderings in the desert. In keeping with tradition, the sanctuary faces the temple mount and the magnificent panoramic view of old and new Jerusalem is a constant inspiration to those who pray at Hecht Synagogue.

The many programs at the Synagogue are described in a brochure as, "the best of both worlds", and reads as follows,

"The use of ancient and traditional motifs to form a striking, modern house of prayer reflects the role of the Hecht Synagogue in campus life. This is where the religious and the secular worlds meet. This is where students of science, literature and society come for informal study of Bible, Talmud and Mysticism. This is where the enriched mind finds inspiration to stir the soul.

The programs at the Hecht Synagogue are geared to meet the diverse religious needs of all Israeli and overseas students at the Hebrew University. They include:

- Daily Services. Prayer services are held daily, including Shabbat in the morning, afternoon and evening.
- The Beit Midrash Program. Every Monday night over 200

students gather in the Hecht Synagogue to study in groups of two and three with specially selected tutors. The subjects studied span the full spectrum of Jewish Studies, from Bible to Talmud, from Jewish philosophy to Jewish law, from ethics to Jewish psychology.

- Kollel -Midrasha Program. Jewish Studies classes and "Chavruta" (small group) learning are offered to students with advanced backgrounds.
- Friday Night Communal Dinners. Once a month, the Hecht Synagogue plays host to a capacity crowd of students who celebrate the Shabbat with good food and comradery.
- Lecture Series. Weekend Retreats and Torathons. The staff of the Hecht Synagogue regularly organizes various study and experiential programs at different times during the academic year.

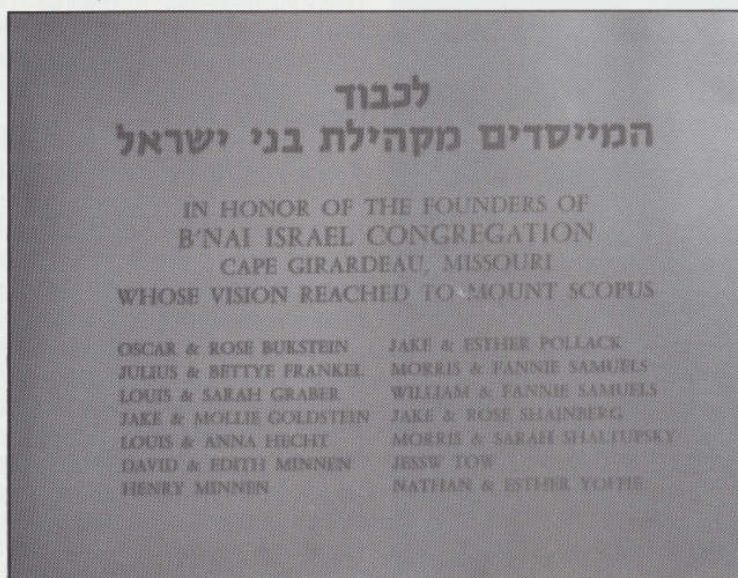
The Hecht Synagogue has become a favorite venue for family celebrations. Students, Faculty University staff and others have celebrated weddings, circumcisions and Bar Mitzvahs at the Synagogue. The inspiring interior and breathtaking view combine to create an aura of grandeur and solemn inspiration which makes these occasions especially meaningful. ✡



David Samuel's Bar Mitzvah at the Hecht Synagogue

The brochure, from which this information was taken, was dedicated to the memory of David Samuels, who passed away at the age of 19 after a prolonged illness. David was the first young man to celebrate his Bar Mitzvah at the Hecht Synagogue.

The first annual memorial program for David Samuels was conducted at the Hecht Synagogue in April, 1989, and continues each year as an integral part of the Synagogue's program.



This plaque at Hecht Synagogue honors its founders from Cape Girardeau, MO. Many of their descendants now live in Memphis, TN.

In the spring of 1918, a 1,000-man battalion of calvary and infantry came marching in the town to set up a temporary billet.

They had those great big helmets. Nine of them were quartered in our house. They were right in the house. They even brought a machine gun inside. Yiddish and German are very close and I picked up their language real fast. Besides taking all the weapons in town and stealing our food, they behaved themselves. They left in August of 1918. That is when Russia got into the fight with Poland. In 1918, there was a shortage of everything and rationing was tried without much result. There was an epidemic of dysentery with so many people dying that we did not have enough time to bury them. Ben and his uncle were infected with dysentery and his uncle did not survive 1919. It was a year of terror still locked inside until this day. Ben was fifteen years old. The only family he had left was Tytoya. Throughout the grim times, Ben abided his destiny by believing and trusting in G-d. He believed that nothing happened in G-d's world by mistake; he relied on Torah and accepted life completely on life's terms and survived with his sanity because of his faith. "I practiced my religion all during this time."

To be continued in our next issue



Ben Ballin at age 18

After reaching America, Ben Ballin lived for about 6 months in New York with his father. Upon the death of his father he moved to Memphis and went to work for Harry Scheinberg who had a clothing store at McLemore and Bellevue. He lived with the Scheinberg's near the store and was paid \$5 a week. Out of this salary, he sent \$1 per week back to Russia to the aunt who raised him.

On Saturdays he walked from McLemore and Bellevue to Anshei Sphard Synagogue located at Main and Jackson, (Market Square), to say kaddish for his father.

In 1929 or 1930, the family got together, raised money and bought him a store from a Mr. Kaminsky. Having a business, Ben then married Honcie Kaplan and they struggled to make a living in the store. Then came the depression, and Ben turned up with a goiter, a serious illness at that time, and spent several weeks in St. Joseph Hospital. During this time, Honcie continued to run the store. She sold most of the inventory but had not purchased anything because she had no experience in purchasing goods. Therefore, when Ben got out of the hospital, they practically started over. Like most other immigrants, they worked during the week until 7 p.m., and 9 p.m. Fridays and 11 p.m. on Saturdays. They now lived over the store on Mississippi at Wellington and people would knock on the side door on Sundays (since the "blue laws" were in effect) and at times they would sell items on Sunday.

As the years went by, Ben made a few dollars. He invested in real estate, which helped supplement his earnings from the store. Ben and Honcie Ballin raised three children, Marvin, now recognized as one of the finest criminal attorneys in the Midsouth, Jerry, a successful electronics factory representative and Ilene Goldstein, a retired teacher now living in California.

Ben is the oldest member of Baron Hirsch Congregation where he attends every Shabbat and every holiday, and he still excites the congregation when he chants an articulate and beautiful haftorah.

To be continued in our next issue

Jews In The Arts -- Part III

by Richard Kremer


The June 2000 annual meeting of the JHS presented the third and final in the series of panels exploring the role the panelists' Judaism plays in their involvement in the arts.

Moderated by a former president of *Concerts International*, Richard Kremer, **JWS IN THE ARTS III** featured three immediate past presidents of citywide arts groups as well as Joseph Parker, M.D., the impresario of the Belz-Parker *Artists Ascending* series and a past president of the Memphis Orchestral Society.

Dr. Parker pictured his early years in Chattanooga, maintaining that his older brother's interest in classical music had helped to foster his own. *Artists ascending*, he reminded his audience, was committed to bringing young mostly Jewish, artists to Memphis. He graphically described his experiences with some of the series' guest artist—from a young Itzak Perlman to his pianist daughter Nava—during its more than 25 years.

A past president of the board of *Theatre Memphis*, Bert Barnett was visibly moved as he related the impact his family had on his own involvement in the arts community. He pointed out that his grandfather had assured him that whatever he gave to others multiplied on its return. He added that his activity at the *Theatre* was initiated by his son's participation and that his life has been enriched by the people he met through his participation.

Community activist Marcia Bicks brought extensive experience to her recent leadership role in the *Brooks League*. The former president of the women's auxiliary of *Opera Memphis* as well as the *League*, Marcia attributes her interest in the arts to the cultural environment in which she was raised.

Joyce Lazarov, the immediate past president of *Art Today*, feels that her interest in the arts is an evolving one, deepening as she matures. Daughter Melissa manages a successful art gallery in New York—and her two young daughters as well! Joyce's son is a producer of a critically acclaimed TV series. 

Making Jewish History Today

Glenn Graber Honored
With The Gift of ATorah

In a portion of the Torah, Vayilech, we receive the last of the 613 Commandments. The Torah says, "So now, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the Children of Israel" (31: 19). In this verse, the last of the 613 Commandments, G-d commanded Moses and Joshua to write the Torah and teach it to the people. Our sages derive from this verse that every Jew is commanded to write a Torah scroll.

On Sunday, September 10, Glenn Graber, with family and friends was able to fulfill this commandment as he sat with Rabbi Chaim Pinchas, a Sofer (scribe), from Brooklyn, New York, as he completed the last 10 letters of his Torah scroll. According to the Rambam, the commandment of writing a Torah can be fulfilled by writing a single letter of a complete scroll.


This wonderful celebration had its beginning when Pammy Graber wanted to mark the occasion of her husband's 40th birthday by doing something of special significance. At a Shabbos kiddish last February 10, on Glenn's birthday, Pammy announced that she had commissioned Rabbi Chaim Pinchas to write a Torah in Glenn's honor.

The dedication of the Torah was at Congregation Kesser Torah and the experience was shared by the entire community. In the morning, at the Jewish Community Center, Rabbi Pinchas gave a demonstration and explained some of the intricacies and preparations needed for writing a Torah. He demonstrated the writing of Hebrew letters and explained the special ways that some letters are written in the Torah. Later in the

day, the ceremony continued at the home of Rabbi Yehuda Silver, spiritual leader of Congregation Kesser Torah. Here, many of Glenn's family, many friends and members of the Memphis Jewish community had the opportunity to have Rabbi Pinchas complete a letter in their honor.

When all but the last 10 letters were completed. The Torah was taken in a procession from Rabbi Silver's home to the synagogue. The Torah was carried under a chupah, a marriage canopy, symbolic of the fact that the Torah is a marriage contract between G-d and the Jewish people. There was live music and dancing in the streets as the Torah was passed by Rabbi Silver to Mr. Graber's father, father-in-law, brothers and sons, and finally to Glenn Graber.

As the procession approached the entrance to the synagogue the men formed two lines facing each other and held their hands up to form an archway. Mr. Graber, with tears in his eyes, and his arms wrapped tightly around his magnificent birthday present, walked under the archway, up the steps bringing the Torah to its new home. Here at the synagogue, the last ten letters forming the last three words of the Torah were completed. The Torah was dressed with its cover, breastplate and crown and placed in the Holy Ark. The crown was donated by the children of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Fink in honor of their parents. The breastplate was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Sam Chafetz in honor of their children. And the Ark curtain was donated by Dr. and Mrs. Robert Fink in honor of their children. The curtain was made by Adina Gott in Israel, and depicts the twelve tribes of Israel.

This was truly a beautiful, moving and emotional experience and will enrich the Memphis Jewish Community. When asked his feelings about the entire event, Mr. Graber responded saying, "Certainly Pammy outdid herself. I was completely surprised. Our sages tell us that the month of Elul, which is the month we are currently in, leading up to Rosh Hashonah, is a month that is conducive to new beginnings. How appropriate that, at this time of new beginnings, our community had the opportunity to witness the birth of a new Torah. I feel blessed to have had a part in this." 



Glenn Graber

Sarah Lipsey A National Winner
In U.S. Postal Service Project


Sarah Lipsey, a National winner in last year's US Postal Service's Global Project "Stampin' the Future", participated in the first World Kids Congress, July 10-14, along with other winners from 17 countries, including Israel. In the "Stampin' the Future" program, children ages 8 through 12 were invited to make a stamp showing their hopes, dreams and visions of the future. About 120,000 children from the US responded. A total of 110 were selected as finalists and Sarah Lipsey's stamp was one of the 4 chosen for the 33 cent stamps to appear in the "Stampin' the Future" stamp set.

The stamps were issued in Anaheim, California in conjunction with the world Kids Congress at World Stamp Expo 2000. International postal administrations from 27 other nations hosted their own competitions. All the competitions were part of an international celebration of the new millennium.



Sarah Lipsey

Sarah an 8th grade student at Ridgeway Junior High is the daughter of Rieva and Jake Lipsey. She is the granddaughter of Fritz and Morris Resenberg and Esta Lipsey and the late Irving Lipsey.

Congratulations Sarah, for making your stamp a part of both Postal and Memphis Jewish history. 

Making Jewish History Today

A Promise Fulfilled -- Beth Shalom

Dedicates New Synagogue

On Monday afternoon, September 4, members of Beth Shalom Congregation and the community gathered for the dedication of the congregation's new facilities at the corner of Humphreys Blvd. and Kirby Road. Rabbi Peter Light, the synagogue's current president, David Krueger, immediate past president, Audie Uiberall, past presidents, past sisterhood presidents and many other people were honored as they participated in a ribbon cutting ceremony. Following the ribbon cutting, Rabbi Light kept two pieces of ribbon, "for each of my children to remember this remarkable day." Representatives of Anshei Sphard-Beth El Emeth synagogue, Baron Hirsch Congregation, Temple Israel,



New home of Beth Shalom Congregation

Bornblum Solomon Schechter Day School and Michael Lee, congregation chairmen of the construction committee, planted trees on the grounds. Herb and Marlene Gerson buried a time capsule and Mezuzah were affixed to the main entrance to the sanctuary and chapel. What a wonderful experience.

As visitors toured the new building, volunteers were available to answer questions and hand out material explaining various features of the building, such as the library/board room, the 4,326 square foot sanctuary, which will seat up to 700, the 49-person chapel, a 6,000 square foot social hall, the mikvah, kitchen and offices. When completed, the Rabbi Arie Becker chapel will feature the stained glass windows donated from the Synagogue in Blytheville, Arkansas.

Masters of Ceremonies for the event were Allan Israel and Herb Notowich, both past presidents of the congregation who also served as chairpersons for the building steering committee. The dedication and open house was actually the completion of the dedication weekend which began Saturday morning, September 2. On Sunday morning, the regular morning minyan and Torah study was followed by a brunch. In the evening there was a gala dedication dinner in the new social hall. Kay Usdan, dedication weekend co-chairperson said, "We are so proud to be able to share with everyone what we call a promise fulfilled.

Speaking at the celebratory dinner Sunday evening, September 3, Rabbi Light called congregants "a remarkable group of people. I wish I could put my arms around each of you and will try to do so during the course of the evening." Rabbi Light also praised the memory of Rabbi Arie Becker, "without whom the congregation could never have developed into the warm, caring congregation it is."

THE MEMPHIS JEWISH
COMMUNITY CENTER

AND
PRESENTS

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF MEMPHIS AND THE MID SOUTH

AN EXHIBITION OF ILLUMINATED HAGGADOT AND ARTIFACTS FOR PASSOVER

SELECTIONS FROM THE JUDAICA COLLECTIONS
OF THE BELZ-SAHAROVICI-WEISER FAMILIES

THE EXHIBITION WILL BE IN THE SHAINBERG GALLERY OF THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER, 6560 POPLAR.

MARCH 11 - MARCH 18, 2001

THE OPENING OF THE EXHIBIT AND A RECEPTION WILL TAKE PLACE ON SUNDAY, MARCH 11, 2001 AT 2:00 P.M.



SOUTHERN
JEWISH
HERITAGE

P.O. Box 17304 • Memphis, TN 38187

Address Correction Requested