

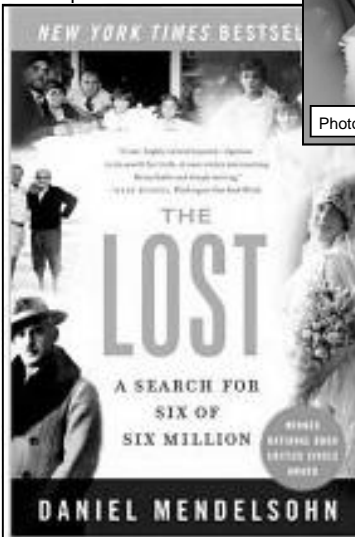
MASS-POCHMA

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Photo: George Abbott White



Inaugural Lecture in Jewish Genealogy Daniel Mendelsohn: Finding "The Lost"

Page 6

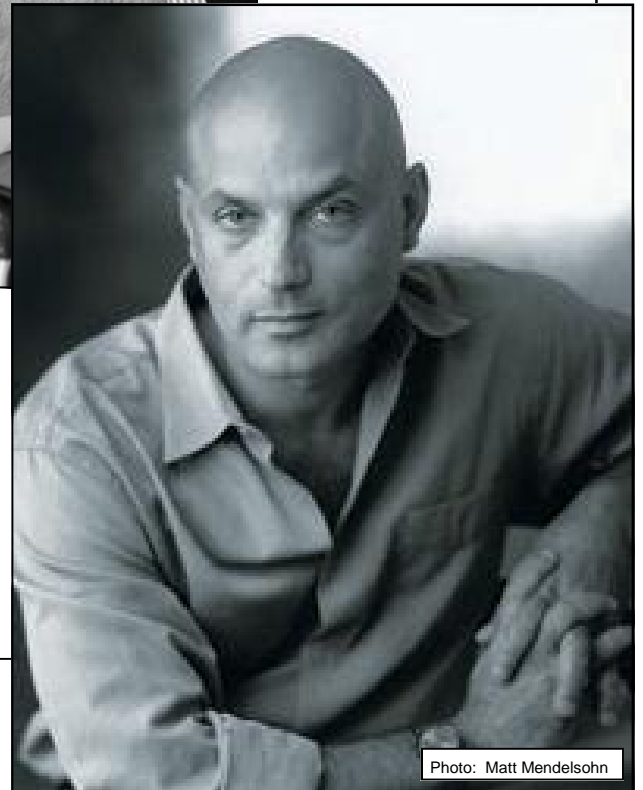


Photo: Matt Mendelsohn

In this issue

President's Column	2	Henry Wellisch: Austro-Hungarian Empire	14
Editors' Column	3	Restoration of a Lithuanian Cemetery	17
Upcoming Programs	4	Moshe Tessone: Sephardic Communities	20
Jewish Genealogy Course	5	Boston Queries	22
Daniel Mendelsohn: <i>The Lost</i>	6	Austrian Cemeteries Database	24
Member Benefit: Audio Recordings	10	Uncovering My Father's Heritage	26
Keith Stokes: Jewish Newport	11	Judith Romney Wegner: Jews "Down Under"	29
IAJGS Conference in Chicago	13	Greater Boston Genealogy Calendar	30

From the President

by Heidi Urich

I recently returned from a wonderful week spent visiting relatives in Israel. It's a trip that would not have been possible had I not gotten hooked on genealogy. Most of my Israeli relatives were unknown to me before I began searching for my family history. It was through conducting successive interviews that I grew closer to known cousins and discovered new ones.



My approach to research has been deep and wide – deep in the sense of tracing ancestors back in time through documentary research, and wide in embracing second, third, and more distant living cousins where ever I find them. I come

from a family that was decimated by the Holocaust, so I grew up without grandparents and with very few relatives. My greatest rewards in doing family research have been discovering living *mishpocha*.

I have a theory, a hypothesis, that says almost all American Jews have relatives living in Israel. Many of my Jewish friends say they have no family connections in Israel. My response is: you may not have met them yet, but they are there, waiting to be found. Just as your direct ancestors were mobile and resourceful enough to find their way to this *goldene medina* (golden land), other members of your extended family may have left Europe to settle in the original *goldene medina*. And it's possible that a number of those who remained in the old country had descendants who made it to Palestine/Israel before or after the Holocaust.

If you don't know any relatives in Israel, how do you begin the search? The place to start is the Shoah Victims' Database on the Yad Vashem website.

www.yadvashem.org

Yad Vashem is Israel's Holocaust Memorial, located in Jerusalem. It has collected information on approximately three million Holocaust victims based on Pages of Testimony submitted by family and friends. The online database of victims can be searched by surnames and towns. An exact copy of each Page of Testimony can be viewed along with an English translation.

In addition to providing information on Holocaust victims, each Page of Testimony contains information on the person who submitted the information, often a family member living in Israel. You can also search for your surnames among the submitters. If you are fortunate to find a family name, you might be able to locate the submitter using the address and phone number provided. If this doesn't work, you can try the Hebrew-language Israeli online telephone directory. Steve Morse provides instructions at www.stevemorse.org/hebrew/bezeqhebrew.html or seek help from the Israel Genealogical Society www.isragen.org.il

For other ideas on finding family members in Israel, see the *Avotaynu Guide to Jewish Genealogy* (2004).

A trip to Israel always offers fascinating opportunities to observe its ancient treasures and latest achievements. However, once you've discovered an Israeli relative, you can hope for another treat—an invitation to a national custom that is observed by secular and religious Jews alike—Friday night dinner with the family.

Heidi Urich is researching her MORTENFELD ancestors in Poland and her URICH ancestors in L'viv and Brody, now in Ukraine. She can be reached at PRESIDENT@JGSGB.ORG

From the Editors**In this Issue**

by Daphnah Sage, Jay Sage, and Carol Bogin

What a rich, program-filled fall we have had this year! You can enjoy the five programs all over again via the summaries in this issue.



Daphnah and Jay Sage

We began the program year in September with a presentation by a descendant of Judah Touro on the Jewish history of Newport, Rhode Island. In October, Henry Wellisch came down from Toronto and helped make the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its many components more comprehensible to us.

In November, we learned about the many Sephardic and Middle Eastern Jewish communities in the world and where immigrants from those communities have settled in the United States. The subject of December's talk was one family's migrations—and the records needed to trace them—between England and the "Down Under" countries of New Zealand and Australia.

These regular programs were a wonderful lead up to our inaugural Annual Lecture on Jewish Genealogy, cosponsored with Hebrew College. Daniel Mendelsohn spoke for an hour—without notes!—combining personal history and genealogy and humbly showing how assumptions one makes can lead one down wrong paths. This over-subscribed lecture was a very successful step in revitalizing

our connection with Hebrew College. This relationship will continue with the offering of our high-level course on Jewish genealogy at Hebrew College. More information on the course can be found on page 5. Sign up now!

The theme of receiving unexpected help, given selflessly, can be seen again and again in articles in this issue. Daniel Mendelsohn, Elaine Abrams, and Joel Alpert all received surprise assistance from strangers.

David Rosen provided his friendly assistance to a JGSGB member with Boston origins now living in Maryland. The interchange appears in the second installment of our Boston Queries column.

We are introducing another regular column, Technology and Genealogy, that will deal with computer and Internet subjects. Tom Weiss, our program committee co-chair, begins the series by guiding us through the process of accessing the database of Jewish burials in Austria.



Carol Bogin

Returning to the subject of our informative programs, we want to call your attention to an apparently little-known membership benefit. Audio recordings of our program lectures (with permission of the speaker) are available on CDROM disk. See the article on page 10.

In sum, every article offers hints, clues, advice, information—something that enriches our knowledge in general and that suggests a new avenue of approach to our own research.

Mass-Pocha is the journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston

Mass-Pocha is a word play on "Massachusetts" and the Yiddish word for family, "*mishpocha*."

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JGSGB Programs

Problem Solving with Experts in Jewish Genealogy

February 3, 2008, 1:30-4:30 PM

Temple Emanuel, 385 Ward Street, Newton Centre, MA

Problem solve with our "experts." Learn how to get started or get over that "brick wall" in your family research. Visit various roundtables, some with computers connected to the Internet for online research.

Included are tables dedicated to the following topics:

- * Finding your ancestors using immigration, naturalization, and vital records;
- * Getting started with Jewish genealogy (e.g., using the JewishGen and Steve Morse websites);
- * Holocaust research (e.g., using the Internet and Transport Books);
- * Country-specific research (e.g., Polish, German, Lithuanian);
- * Translation of foreign-language documents (e.g., Yiddish, Polish, German, Russian).

Genealogical reference materials will be available for perusal. So bring in your research questions and your foreign documents for translation.

Film: Who Do You Think You Are, Stephen Fry?

March 16, 2008, 1:30-4:30 PM

Needham Library, 1139 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA

The BBC followed popular figures as they traced their roots. Stephen Fry—star of *Jeeves and Wooster*—is the subject of this installment. We follow him as he journeys (literally and figuratively) to unlock his roots and to uncover some engaging secrets.

This film portrays the joys and sorrows of the genealogical search: interviewing family, going to archives, traveling to ancestral lands, visiting people and places of the past, using a hired researcher, and Internet research. The film will be followed by a discussion. Hear from an expert panel how others go about their research.

Suzan Wynne : The Lives of Our Galician Ancestors

April 6, 2008, 1:30-4:30 PM

Temple Emanuel, 385 Ward Street, Newton Centre, MA

Ronald Grim : How to Use Maps in Genealogy

Monday, May 5, 2008, 6:30-9:30 PM

Boston Public Library, Copley Square, Boston, MA

Norman H. Finkelstein : American Jewish History for Genealogists

June 8, 2008, 1:30-4:30 PM

Vilna Shul, 18 Phillips Street, Boston, MA

Admission is free for members, \$5 for non-members. Refreshments are available.

Check our website or call the JGSGB at 617-796-8522 for updates.

Now Enrolling
JGSGB Course on Jewish Genealogy
at Hebrew College

by Heidi Urich

“Why can’t I find my ancestor on the Ellis Island website?”

“I’m told they came from Russia—now what do I do?”

“How can I find prewar records for Eastern Europe?”

The pursuit of family history requires knowledge and skills that may take years to acquire. For beginners, the unfamiliar terrain can be daunting despite the wealth of information that is available online and in reference books. Sometimes the highest hurdle is figuring out where to begin.

As part of our new partnership with Hebrew College, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston has developed an intensive 16-hour course for adult students to provide them with a solid foundation for researching their Jewish family origins. The course will be offered at Hebrew College, starting on February 25th.

“Foundations of Jewish Genealogical Research” will meet on eight successive Monday evenings from 7 to 9 PM. The course will be taught by a team of experienced genealogists from our Society under the leadership of Heidi Urich and Tom Weiss and will introduce students to relevant world history, geography, methodology, technology, and basic print and online resources.

8 sessions: February 25–April 14, 2008 Mondays from 7 to 9 pm

1. Getting Started on Family History Research: Basic Steps, Strategy, and Skills.
2. Technical Tools and Online Resources for Genealogy.
3. History of Jewish Migration, the Diaspora, and Changing National Borders.
4. Identifying Your Immigrant Ancestors: Methods and Resources for Researching Family Members in the U.S.
5. Finding Your Ancestors in European Records and Learning about Their Lives.
6. Identifying Holocaust Victims and Survivors & Finding Family Members Living in Israel.
7. DNA Research: The Next Frontier in Genealogy.
8. Using your Research: Making Connections and Publicizing Your Findings.

Registration is limited to 25 students. Tuition is \$250.

WWW.HEBREWCOLLEGE.EDU/GENEALOGYCLASS